

# BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' IN ENGLISH

PARSHAS NETZAVIM – 27 ELUL 5781

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We all continue to say Selichos each weekday until Yom Kippur. Prior to the Viduy of confessing our sins, 'Ashamnu, Bagadnu, etc.', we say, "we and our forefathers have sinned". We often invoke Zechus Avos [merit of the Patriarchs] when davening to Hashem. Why here do we recall the sins of our forefathers and mention our ancestors in a negative light, which seems to further incriminate us.

Another addition at this time of year is L'Dovid Hashem Ori (Tehilim 27), which we say twice daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Simchas Torah. There we find, "Ki Ovi V'Imi Azovuni" [Because my father and mother have forsaken me] (Tehilim 27:10). Once again, during these Yimay Ratzon [opportune days] we find our parents, grandparents and ancestors, described in a negative light? What was Dovid HaMelech's intention when he wrote this?

To strengthen the question, Dovid's father was Yishai, a great Tzadik, who was one of only a few individuals in history to depart this world solely on account of the Nachash [serpent] (Shabbos 55b) and not because of his own sins. As Rashi explains, Yishai only died because of the decree of death upon mankind, due to the influence of the primordial Nachash on Chava, and the subsequent sin of Man vis-à-vis the Etz HaDaas. [Tree of Knowledge]. If Dovid HaMelech had the merit of being raised by a parent like Yishai, then what 'father' is he accusing of abandonment in his lamenting, "Ki Ovi V'Imi Azovuni"

Perhaps, one may suggest that each generation has the responsibility of Tikun Olam, to rectify this temporal world, and bring the Final Redemption. Whether it be the original sin of Adam and Chava, the sin of Chait HaEigel [Golden Calf], or other individual and collective sins of Klal Yisroel throughout history, it is the burden of the present generation to atone for those sins and repair the damage caused by them. The Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:1) teaches that every generation that is unable to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash is considered as if they had destroyed it themselves.

Therefore, immediately before performing Viduy, we acknowledge that not only have we not remedied the sins of generations past, but through our individual and collective errors and shortcomings, our generation is guilty of adding to the cumulative weight of sin, further delaying the Final Redemption. Thus, we implore Hashem to atone for our sins, as well as the lingering sins we have inherited from previous generations.

This idea is echoed in Parshas Nitzovim, "U'Vacharta Ba'Chaim L'Maan Tichyeh Ata V'Zarecha" [you shall choose life, so that you will live, you and your offspring] (Devarim 30:19). There is an inherent connection between ancestors and their descendants. Each generation is a link in the chain of Klal Yisroel. Our actions and choices not only affect ourselves, our families and our generation, but all future generations as well. When we 'choose life' we do so for the betterment of the destiny of Klal Yisroel, and Chas V'shalom, we damage everyone and everything when we choose the opposite.

The fate of Klal Yisroel is like a passenger ship, journeying through the waters of time. An individual who selfishly decides to bore a hole in his private cabin, causes all of Klal Yisroel to sink. "Atem Nitzavim HaYomo Kulchem Lifnei Hashem Elokeichem" (29:9). All of Klal Yisroel – past, present, and future – stand together before Hashem as one indivisible unit. However, the responsibility to put things right falls squarely on the shoulders of the current generation that is alive today.

Perhaps this was also what Dovid HaMelech had in mind when he wrote, "Ki Ovi V'Imi Azovuni". Even though Dovid's father Yishai may have been a Tzadik, Dovid HaMelech's parents and their generation did transfer this collective burden of sin – which they did not completely rectify – upon the next generation. Dovid HaMelech, the leader of his generation, felt a sense of 'abandonment' from the previous generation, as the task to rectify the world was left to his generation, and its leaders.

During this opportune time of the year, when we recite Selichos, Viduy, and L'Dovid Hashem Ori, we must focus on the tremendous responsibility – of rectifying Klal Yisroel – placed in the hands of our generation. As Dovid HaMelech himself concludes, "VaHashem Ya'asfeynee" [and Hashem shall gather me] (Tehilim 27:10). Only with Hashem's assistance is it possible to collect the blemished souls of Klal Yisroel and gather them into a pure united whole. Each one of us must do all that we can with our own hands, and then place ourselves in Hashem's hands.

May our Teshuva, Tefillah and Tzedakah, rid us of the evil decrees of all generations and bring the coming of Geulah Shlayma. May we hear the Shofar of the Final Redemption speedily in our days.