

BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' IN ENGLISH

PARSHAS NETZAVIM – 28 ELUL 5782

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After the Tekiyos we say Hayom Harat Olam, "Today is the birthday of the world. Today all creatures of the world stand in judgment, whether as children or as servants. If as children, be merciful with us as the mercy of a father for a child. If as servants, our eyes depend upon You until You be gracious to us and release our verdict as light – Awesome and Holy One".

Rebbe Pinchas Karlitz zt"l (Imrei Pinchas on Rosh Hashana) explains that this prayer was formulated by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah who also codified the Shemoneh Esrei and many other prayers that we find in the Siddur. It is noteworthy that the Ari z"l only recorded Kavanos for the prayers that were formulated by the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah.

He continues to explain 'If as children' and 'If as servants' demonstrate that we have two distinct merits as per our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We have a merit of a child whose father takes mercy on him. We also have the merit of being a servant of Hashem, which does not provide us with mercy, but with the responsibility of Hashem to provide for his servants.

It is told of the Saar Shalom of Belz zt"l, that once on Yom Kippur night, asked his Chassidim to search the city of Brody for a tailor. They found a local tailor and brought him before their Rebbe. The Saar Shalom asked the tailor what the meaning of a certain Pasuk in the Navi meant. The Pasuk says, "Im Avoneinu Anu Banu", which means, 'If our sins testify against us', however the simple tailor heard the words and was not familiar with how the Pasuk was actually spelled. Therefore, he translated the Rebbe's words to mean, "Even if we sin, we are His sons", meaning that Hashem has mercy on his sons, even if they sin. The Saar Shalom got tremendous Chizuk from this novel 'chassidishe' interpretation and repeated it several times.

Rav Yissachar Dov Belzer zt"l once asked about the passage in the Rosh Hashana davening, "Just as Avraham Avinu conquered his mercy to do Hashem's will with a full heart, so too should your mercy conquer your anger against us". What seems to be the connection between Avraham overcoming his feelings of 'mercy', with Hashem asking that His mercy should overpower his feelings of anger?

He explained by citing the Gemara (Sanhedrin 89b) that when Avraham went with Yitzchak to fulfill the command of Akeidas Yitzhak, the Evil Inclination stood in his way and made repeated attempts to ensnare Avraham and prevent him from carrying out Hashem's decree. The Evil Inclination even told Avraham that he had heard from behind the Pargod (curtain) that an animal would be offered in place of Yitzhcak as an offering. Avraham did not believe the Evil Inclination or listen to his words. This is the punishment for consistent dishonesty and deceit. Even when a pathological liar tells the truth, no one will believe him.

Therefore, just as Avraham refused to listen to the Evil Inclination, because it was coming from a dishonest character, we ask Hashem not to pay attention to the accusations of the prosecuting angels on the Aseret Yemai Teshuva, even if it is true, because it is coming from a disreputable source. We should also not accept the words of others who try to convince that we are too distant from Hashem and that it is too late for us to try to change our ways.

As R' Meir teaches, no matter what, we are always deemed as children of Hashem, no matter how far we may have strayed. If one feels distant from Hashem or feels as if Hashem has ignored them, it is only because a child will sometimes take for granted the unconditional love of a parent and act inappropriately. A parent will sometimes distance themselves from a child as a way to show disapproval of their actions. In reality, the parent is eagerly awaiting for the child to come to terms with their errant actions or lifestyle, correct themselves, and 'open the door' to come back to the parent.

The Sfas Emes (Rosh Hashana 5646) comments in his discussion of the blowing of the Shofar that 'The voice is the voice of Yaakov'. Through the voice of the Shofar and the voice of prayer, Klal Yisroel demonstrates that they are worthy of the creation of the world for their sake. In this way, Klal Yisroel renews their 'lease on life' as it were. This is evident in the davening where most of the requests and supplications for 'life' are written in the plural as we are asking on behalf of the Klal as opposed to our individual life.

May we merit a K'siva V'Chasima Tova as children of Hashem.