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Timely Torah Insights
by Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim
Associate Rosh Yeshiva



Nitzavim – Vayeilech/ Selichos

Expanding Our "I"

This issue is dedicated by **Dr. & Mrs. David and Varda Berkovitz**
L'Ilyu Nishmas her father, **Chaim Yehoshua ben Tzvi Hirsch z"l**, Yahrzeit, 20th of Elul

At the beginning of Elul last year, the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim found itself in an overwhelming deficit. Three weeks before Rosh Hashanah, the Rosh Yeshiva and HaRav Benny Carlebach flew to America for a six-hour visit to meet with 150 close supporters. The situation was dire. The yeshiva was *four months* behind in paying the married men learning in the yeshiva Kollel! The group of supporters launched a plan to raise \$7 million dollars for the yeshiva. A few close supporters offered to donate *half* the needed funds IF the other half was raised before Rosh Hashanah. A three-week, \$7 million dollar challenge! It was frantic—dozens of meetings, working into the wee hours of the night. Thankfully, the goal was reached and the married Kollel students received their checks before Rosh Hashanah, giving them and their families great relief.

I believe the dedication shown by the yeshiva's supporters provides us with a core message for Rosh Hashanah. Parshas Nitzavim opens with Moshe addressing the entire nation before him. The Ohr Hachaim¹ says the purpose of speaking to *all* of Klal Yisrael was to unite the entire nation as one entity. This created *arvus* - a feeling of responsibility of each Jew for the other. The Zohar notes the words, "You are standing here today before Hashem..." alludes to the day when all Klal Yisrael stands before Hashem in judgment - Rosh Hashanah. How is *arvus* related to Rosh Hashanah?

The Mishnah Rosh Hashanah² tells us that on Rosh Hashanah everyone passes before Hashem as if in a flock of sheep—indicating that each person is judged individually. Conversely, Rabbi Yochanan³ tells us we are all judged by Hashem in one glance, implying that everyone is judged collectively. So are we judged independently or collectively?

Rav Chaim Friedlander⁴ explains there is no contradiction. Two areas of each individual's actions are assessed on Rosh Hashanah: his performance as an individual based on his capabilities, plus his actions with regard to his family, community, the Jewish nation and the world. Even if one falls short individually, if his efforts are beneficial to and appreciated by his family and the community, then he will receive a good judgment.

It's puzzling that both these concepts are derived from the same source in Tehillim, "*Hayotzer yachad libam hameivin el kol ma'aseihem*"⁵- Hashem fashioned their hearts together and understands all their deeds. How can the individual assessment and the collective assessment both be learned from one source?

This coming week, Ashkenazi Jews start reciting *Selichos*. The central prayer in *selichos* includes the thirteen attributes of mercy. On Rosh Hashanah, we recite *Tashlich*, which is based on a few *pesukim* from Micha which also correspond to the thirteen attributes of mercy. One of the attributes is how Hashem relates to the Jewish nation as "*She'eris Nachalaso*"⁶ Rav Moshe Cordevero⁷ explains the word "She'er," which usually means 'remnant, in this context means relative, teaching us that Hashem has a special relationship with Klal Yisrael as we are all relatives and not strangers. Similarly, every Jew is considered a close relative to *each other*, as learned from the concept of *arvus*. The Jewish nation is one large, close-knit family and the plight of each Jew affects all of us.

My good friend Rabbi Avrohom Weinrib, Rav of Congregation Zichron Eliezer of Cincinnati, told me that Rabbi Shimon Shkop⁸ says different people mean different things when they say "I." Some people are only referring to themselves. Others are referring to themselves and their family, while still others include their friends, community and nation. A person is capable of increasing the realm of his "I." As Jews, our "I" needs to be inclusive of *all* of Klal Yisrael because we are one. The greater a person is, the larger is his "I."

We live in the 'I' generation: iPad, iPod, iPhone, iCloud, iTunes We need to expand our outlook to include others with ourselves. Think about quarantined individuals and families. Some are stuck alone in their houses. My wife mentioned to me that when I go shopping, I should call someone stuck at home to offer to purchase things for them. My daughter and son-in-law went back to Eretz Yisrael last week and are now quarantining for two weeks. Their friends have been helping them to purchase whatever they need. This exemplifies *Arvus*.

Last year, close supporters of the Mir Yeshiva took upon themselves to ensure the Kollel families had food for Yom Tov. This year, Hashem has created an extra opportunity for us before Rosh Hashanah to expand our "I" to include so

¹ Nitzavim 29:9

² 16a

³ Gemara Rosh Hashanah 18a

⁴ Sifsei Chaim Moadim 1 Maamar Kbnei Maron

⁵ Tehillim 33:15

⁶ Micha 7:18

⁷ Tomer Devorah 1:4

⁸ Introduction to Shar Yosher

many other Jews. When we do that, we are judged not just as individuals but as representatives of the entire Jewish nation. Although each person individually is not guaranteed a favorable judgment, Klal Yisrael as a nation has a guarantee to be judged favorably⁹.

May Hashem bless us all with a *K'siva v'chasima tova*.

⁹ Sifsei Chaim Moadim 1

Inyanei D'Yoma – Selichos

by Rabbi Moshe Silverstein

Maggid Shiur, Yeshiva Ner Boruch-PTI

The *Rema*¹ quotes the minhag that the *Chazzan* for *Selichos* should be the *Chazzan* for the other *tefillos* of the day as well.

The *Mogen Avrohom*² says that this is based on the principle that one who begins a *mitzvah* should be the one to finish it גמור³. The *Rema*⁴ uses this principle as a *Halacha* when saying that the *Ba'al Tokeiya* who blows the *shofar* before *Musaf* on *Rosh Hashana* should ideally be the one to blow during *Musaf* as well.

Rav Shlomo Hakohen⁵, the *Av Beis Din* and *Dayan* of *Vilna* (1828-1905), argues that this principle should not require the *Shliach Tzibur* for *Selichos* to daven the other *tefillos* because the subsequent *tefillos* are their own separate *mitzvos* and not the conclusion of the *Selichos*. After all, on a regular day we never insist that the same person be the *Chazzan* for *Shacharis* and *Mincha* as well. Rav Hershel Schachter⁶ defends the *Mogen Avrohom* by explaining that the institution of *Selichos* is not meant to be its own independent *tefillah* but is rather an introduction to and enhancement of the other *tefillos* of the day. In fact, if an individual says *Selichos* but doesn't daven the regular *tefillos*, the *Selichos* obligation is not fulfilled either. Therefore, the principle of המתחיל במצוה אומרים לו גמור is operative.

R' Shlomo *m'Veilna* himself gives a different explanation for the *minhag*. The *Gemara*⁷ says that the one who reads the *Haftorah* should also serve as *Chazzan* for the davening as well. Since the *Haftorah* does not have the prestige of the real *aliyos*, some may feel that the "honor" is beneath their dignity and turn it down. To appease congregants to accept the honor, we offer them the opportunity to serve as *Shliach Tzibur* as well. Similarly, says R' Shlomo *m'Veilna*, since *Selichos* is only an addendum to the *tefillos*, we must placate one to accept the role by offering him to be *Chazzan* for the "real" *tefillah* also. Accordingly, it is merely a "right of first refusal" rather than a requirement for him to lead the *davening* the rest of the day. He continues based on this reason and writes that the *minhag* was only necessary in the days that the *Shliach Tzibur* davened on behalf of the entire *tzibur*, requiring the whole *Selichos* to be said out loud. It was an arduous task and required coaxing and bribing. Now, however, the *Chazzan* only finishes off the last

words of the paragraphs. It is easy to find someone willing to do it, and we do not have to offer any additional incentives.

*Sefer Elyah Rabbah*⁸ gives another reason for the *minhag*. There was a practice that the *Shliach Tzibur* (and certainly the one who leads *Selichos*) during the *Selichos* days would fast for the entire day. In order not to burden extra people, the practice was for the same individual to lead all the *tefillos* of the day. If this is the reason then nowadays, since the *Chazzanim* usually do not fast, there is no purpose to have the one who davens *Selichos* daven the other *tefillos* as well.⁹

Rav Moshe Shternbuch¹⁰ writes yet another reason for the *minhag*. When choosing a *Shliach Tzibur* for *Selichos*, we tend to look for someone who will arouse the *tzibur* to *daven* with *kavanah*. If after a beautiful and inspiring *Selichos*, eloquently recited by a professional *Chazzan*, the *Gabbai* sends up the regular *Baal Tefillah* to *daven Shacharis*, the message implied is that *Selichos* is more important than the core *tefillah* itself. To prevent this impression, we insist that the same person serve as *Shliach Tzibur* for both. He says, therefore, that the insistence is only on days when we choose a special *Chazzan* for *Selichos* such as the first night and *Erev Rosh Hashana*.

It goes without saying that this *minhag* does not give license for arguments over who has priority. *Aruch Hashulchan*¹¹, when discussing the *minhag*, concludes that anyone who has *Yiras Shamayim* will waive his right, even if he is technically entitled to the *amud*, in order to prevent dispute. This is an area of *Halacha* where the *Satan* "dances" at the opportunity to cause strife, and anyone who makes an effort to prevent *machlokes* will have great reward.

¹ או"ח ס' תקפ"א סע"א א

² מגן אברהם או"ח ס' תקפ"א ס"ק ז

³ במדבר רבה פרשה כב:ד

⁴ או"ח ס' תקפ"ה סע"ד

⁵ בנין שלמה ס' ל"ד

⁶ נפש הרב עמ' קצ"ט

⁷ מגילה כ"ד ע"א

⁸ אליה רבה ס' תקפ"א ס"ק י"ח

⁹ פסקי תשובות ס' תקפ"א הערה 67

¹⁰ מועדים וזמנים ח"ו ס' ב ותשובות והנהגות חא ס' קט"ו

¹¹ ערוך השולחן או"ח ס' תקפ"א סע"א ו

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