

"דע מה למעלה ממך"

As Below, So Above

Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy of Tosh zy'a (d. 2015), the exalted Tosher Rebbe, was an extraordinary holy man, a towering figure of *Avodas Hashem* and *Kedusha*. Beloved for his impeccable *midos tovos* and unconditional love for every Jew, the Rebbe founded "Kiryas Tosh", a Canadian shtetl in memory and in honor of the Hungarian city destroyed during the War.

One frigid Yom Kippur morning in the Beis Medrash of Kiryas Tosh, a simple, unlearned Jew, a plumber, who had joined davening for the High Holidays, left the room during Mussaf, returning a few minutes later. His hands were streaked with oil and his shirt stained with grease, but he looked very pleased. "Now it won't be freezing here anymore," he announced to the others sitting in his section. Proudly, he told them he'd gone to the boiler room to investigate why the heating wasn't working in the Beis Medrash, and found a problem with the old oil tank, which he then repaired, and it restarted. *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs," he said.

Later that night at the Rebbe's tish following the fast, someone told the Tosher Rebbe the unfortunate story of this Jew, who was so unlearned that he was unaware that what he had done was completely forbidden according to Halacha.

The Rebbe looked pained, but just for a moment. His face then turned radiant, and with his signature sweetness told all of those assembled: "That he doesn't know is not his fault; he never learned! It's our obligation to help him, to teach him. But the depth of his words and his intentions, are a message for all of us: *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — 'If we live with warmth down here, if we are on fire with Torah, if our davening is 'warm', then we will create warmth in *Shamayim* as well!"



This is a theme that is present throughout the *Yamim Nora'im* liturgy, and is at the core of *Selichos*, where we return over and over again to the refrain of the *Yud Gimel Midos*, Hashem's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

Following the *cheit haMeraglim*, the sin of the spies, we experience Divine disappointment in our failure to believe in ourselves and Hashem's promise to deliver us into the Holy Land. Moshe pleads with Hashem to give the Jewish nation another chance:

Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this Nation
according to Your great kindness.

סְלַחֲנָא לְעוֹן הָעַם הַזֶּה כְּגִדְל חֲסִדְךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁאַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַנֵּה

The Torah continues,

And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven them in
accordance with your word.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְדִבְרְךָ

(Bamidbar, 14:18-20)

A fundamental teaching pervasive throughout the writings of the students of the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* interprets a pasuk in Tehillim, *Hashem Tzilcha*, "G-d is your protective shadow" (Tehillim 121:5), and sheds 'light' on our *Selichos* liturgy. David haMelech's phrase also implies that Hashem's 'actions' in the world above are a reflection of our actions below. Physically, our shadow 'follows us' and moves whenever we move. Thus, whatever we choose and do in this world, the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, our Shadow, 'chooses' and does as well.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe / Sichos, 1955

תורת מנחם – התוועדות תשט"ז, חלק ג'

יש הטוענים: מי אני ומה אני, ומה נוגעת עבודתי וכו'. על זה ישנו מאמר הבעל-שם-טוב, הרב המגיד ואדמו"ר הזקן, בפירוש המשנה "דע מה למעלה ממך", שכל העניינים שלמעלה הם "ממך". וכמו-כן יש פירוש הבעל-שם-טוב על הפסוק "הוי' צילך", שכפי שיהודי עושה למטה, כך נעשה כביכול למעלה, מכיוון ש"הוי' צילך", בדוגמת צל האדם, שהצל נעשה כמו שהוא באדם.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l (*Alei Shur*, Vol. 2) suggests an explanation why a "shadow" acts as an apt metaphor for Hashem's protection of us. A shadow is unique in that it reflects whatever is held against the light. If our small finger is set before the light, the shadow created will be small. If our whole hand is held up, the shadow is greater. This is a way of framing Hashem's 'reaction' to us in the realm of faith. To the degree that we place our whole trust and reliance in Hashem, the more Hashem will provide what we need.

Vayomer Hashem, Salachti K'devarecha.... Rashi says this means *Bishvil mah she'amarta*, "because (as a result of) of what you said. Selichos helps us prepare us to stand before Hashem, with contrition and sincerity, formally addressing our missteps and shortcomings. We awaken the recognition that *Hashem Tzilecha*, "G-d is our Shadow," and is waiting to and willing to forgive us *k'dvarecha*, 'according to our words of request', according to our own will to be forgiven.

That our efforts, intentions, thoughts and actions are impactful and ‘influence’ the Divine response above is an approach found in both the teachings of the students of both the Ba’al Shem Tov and Vilna Gaon:

R’ Dov Ber, The Maggid of Mezritch d. 1772

תורת המגיד הק' ממזריטש, זי"ע א:ו

זה כלל גדול שצריך כל אדם להיות לו אמונה גדולה לזה, שמה שעושה מצוה, הן בלימוד והן בתפלה או שאר מצות, צריך לאמונה גדולה שבזה המצוה או הלימוד או התפלה מתעורר תענוג גדול למעלה בעולמות העליונים, ועושה בזה המצוה נ"ר ותענוג גדול להקב"ה ושכינתו.

וזה צריך לכוון בכל מצוה שעושה, ולכן צריך לעשותה בשמחה גדולה, ואז נקרא בן נחמד להקב"ה. ולא יאמר איך אפשר שאני אדם השפל אגרום תענוגים כביכול למעלה, ע"ז נאמר (משלי ט"ז) "ונרגן מפריד אלוף". י"ט

Nefesh HaChaim, Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1:4)

את תורת האדם כל איש ישראל אל יאמר בלבו ח"ו כי מה אני ומה כחי לפעול במעשי השפלים שום ענין בעולם, אמנם יבין וידע ויקבע במחשבות לבו שכל פרטי מעשיו ודבוריו ומחשבותיו כל עת ורגע. לא אתאבידו ח"ו. ומה רבו מעשיו ומאד גדלו ורמו. שכל אחת עולה כפי שרשה לפעול פעולתה בגבהי מרומים בעולמות וצחצחות האורות העליונים.

וקרוב לשמוע שגם זה בכלל כוונתם ז"ל באבות (פ"ב מ"א) "דע מה למעלה ממך". רוצה לומר עם כי אינך רואה בעיניך הענינים הנוראים הנעשים ממעשיך, אבל תדע נאמנה כי כל מה שנעשה למעלה בעולמות העליונים גבוהי גבוהים, הכל ממך הוא על פי מעשיך לאן נוטים, על פיהם יצאו ויבואו:

As the well-intentioned plumber of Tosh said, *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben*, "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs." May we believe in Hashem's fiery love for us 'above', and in our ability to fix and restart ourselves here 'below'.

- 🗣️ How much do we really believe that Hashem is hearing our words and forgiving us?
- 🗣️ How much significance and importance do we subscribe to our prayers, apology and supplications before Hashem?
- 🗣️ Are we actually willing to be forgiven and to start our lives anew?
- 🗣️ What action points in our personal or religious lives will we be taking to 'start again'?