

Dear Parents:

Please enjoy and share the following *Divrei Torah* prepared by Rabbi Y. Herzberg.

תכונות המנהיג

כתוב בפסוק (לא:ז) "ויקרא משה ליהושע ויאמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל חזק ואמץ". לפי טעמי הנגינה מצטרף המשפט "לעיני כל ישראל" אל המילים "חזק ואמץ". זאת אומרת שלמלך ישראל צריך להיות שתי התכונות האלו: מצד אחד הוא צריך להיות עניו בלב פנימה, אבל מצד שני, כלפי חוץ הוא צריך לנהוג ביד חזקה, כדי לקיים את כבוד המלכות! (משך חכמה)

The Source of the Problem

In Parashat Vayelech, HaShem informs Moshe that after his death the nation would eventually come to worship idols. The Pesukim state (31: 16-17): "...This people will rise up and go astray after the foreign gods of the land... They will abandon me and nullify My Covenant that I have made with them..." Hashem further tells Moshe that at that point He will become angry with the Jewish people and abandon them such that terrible things will befall them. Hashem adds "...so that they will say in that day: Are not these evils come upon us because our G-d is not among us?" His reaction to this "repentance" will be, "And I will surely hide My Face (v'Anochi haster aster Pannai) from them on that day". The Ramban asks: It would seem that the by stating that the source of their terrible troubles is the fact that G-d is not in their midst should qualify as acknowledgement of their sin and "regret" [charatah] on their part; which are the first steps toward Teshuvah. Why then, is G-d's reaction one of "hester Panim" – hiding His Face from us? Rabbi Yissocher Frand gives an answer in the name of the Yeshuot Yakov. There is something fundamentally wrong with the above Teshuvah. A person comes to worship idols only after a long path full of sin. When a person does Teshuvah, he needs to not only look at the final result of his sins. He must ask himself what got him there in the first place. The only way to correct such an end result is to examine how and where it started. Only through such a process will the sinner be able to do a complete Teshuvah and be able to prevent such a thing from happening again. That is the problem with the "repentance" of Am Yisrael in this Pasuk. They are repenting for having worshipped idols. However, that was only the end result of their backsliding. In order to do proper Teshuvah a person needs to look back and answer where did it begin? What was the beginning of their downfall? What is the root of their sinning? Only with this information can a person do complete Teshuvah.

The Turning Point

The Mishnah in Avot (4:3) teaches us "שאיין לך אדם שאיין לו שעה" – "for you have no person who doesn't have his hour." According to its simple meaning the Mishnah is teaching us that we should treat every person with respect, no matter his present situation in life. For although at the present time he may be of lowly status, or is incapable of defending himself nonetheless, there will certainly come a time when all that will change. However the famed Maggid of Koshnitz expounded on this Mishnah and offered a different interpretation: the word "שעה" also has the meaning of "turning". As the Pasuk states by Kayin and Hevel "וישעה ה' אל הבל ואל מנחתו" – "Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering." The Mishnah is teaching us that there is no person who doesn't have the opportunity to "turn" away from his old habits and start anew. Two men were once in the royal prison. One day, one of the walls collapsed, allowing the prisoners to escape. One of the men immediately seized the opportunity to escape. He asked his friend if he was coming. The friend declined, not wanting to break the law again. Later, the King's Guard arrived and found that one man escaped while the other, who could have easily

have escaped as well, was still sitting there in his cell. The guard began to furiously beat that man with his club. The man asked the guard, "Why are you beating me? It was my cellmate who transgressed by fleeing." "Yes, but you had an opportunity and didn't take it. For that I beat you." Based on this Mashal the Sefer Shaarei Teshuvah teaches us a very important lesson. Sins trap us in a prison. We become so set in our bad ways and so full of shame that it is difficult to repent. Everyday of our lives, and even more so during the Aseret Yamei Teshuvah, we have an opportunity to break out of that prison and do Teshuvah (repentance). If we do not seize this opportunity to escape, we are showing that in our minds, the prison of sin is not such a terrible place to be. That would be the saddest shame of all. Let us all resolve to make this Yom Kippur the "turning point" of our lives and become better servants of Hashem.