

# PARASHAT VAYEILECH & YOM KIPPUR

## 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". שכן למלך ישראל צריך להיות שתי התכונות האלו: מצד אחד הוא צריך להיות עניו בלבו פנימה, אבל מצד שני, כלפי חוץ הוא צריך לנהוג ביד חזקה, כדי לקיים את כבוד המלכות! (משך חכמה)

## The Song of Torah

In this week's Parashah the Torah discusses the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah, the Pasuk states: "And now write for yourselves this song..." [Devorim 31:19]. The Torah refers to itself as a "Song" (Shirah). Why is the Torah called shirah? Rabbi Yissocher Frand in the name of Rav Herzog zt"l offers a wonderful insight: In virtually all fields of study, a person who is uneducated in that area of study does not derive any pleasure from hearing a theory or an insight concerning that field of study. Take physics, for example: A physicist will derive great pleasure from hearing a novel interpretation or insight in his field of expertise. However, someone who has never studied, and never been interested in physics, will generally be unmoved by the very same insight. The same applies to many, other disciplines. However, this is not the case with music. When Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is played -- regardless of whether one is a concertmaster or a plain simple person -- there is something one can get out of it. Music is something that everyone can enjoy on his or her own level. Everyone can relate to music. Rav Herzog says that this is why the Torah is called "Shirah". On one hand, someone can be a great Talmid Chochom and learn "Bereishit Barah Elokim..." [the first three words of the Torah] and see great wisdom there. On the other hand, one can be a five-year-old child, just beginning to read, and learn "Bereishit Barah Elokim..." and also gain something from it. Every person can have an appreciation for Torah on his own level. Therefore, the Pasuk aptly refers to Torah when it says "And now, write for yourselves this 'song'..."

## How To Merit A Good Judgment

As we head into Shabbat Shuvah and we continue to contemplate ways to improve ourselves and to merit a good judgment on Yom Kippur, let me share with you some simple advice that the great Alter of Slabodka (Nosson Zvi Finkel 1849– 1927, a great leader of Jewry in [Eastern Europe](#)) gave his students during these days. On the night of Rosh Hashanah he gave the following speech: "everyone wants to know how we get through these days of judgment with a successful outcome. The answer is by putting a smile on your face, by saying good morning to others, by saying a nice word to those who need it. This is how we merit a good judgment!" Rav Moshe Chodosh zt"l related an experience he had with his own father, Rav Meir Chodosh zt"l, Rosh Hayeshivah of Yeshivat Chevron. One Yom Kippur night his father delivered a speech in the Yeshivah. Rav Moshe Chodosh described it as follows: "It would be hard to describe the atmosphere and the feelings at that time in the Chevron Yeshivah on Yom Kippur night. The speech focused primarily on the subject of bein adam lachaveiro – how one is

supposed to treat others. Everyone there, hundreds of students and alumni of the Yeshivah, along with the entire faculty, was certain that he was going to speak about the greatness of the day, inspiring them with a moving speech. I later took the opportunity to tell him that everyone was surprised by the subject of his speech, and he said to me, 'Moshe, do you also not understand? What else is there to talk about on Yom Kippur if not that?' Let us always remember what the Gemara teaches us "whoever has mercy on others Hashem has mercy on him". If we want Hashem to look favorably on us, to smile at us, to bring us nice things - let us do the same for others.

### **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 says by Kayin and Hevel "וישע ה' אל הבל ואל" – "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). Were we not to seize this opportunity to escape, we would be showing that in our minds, the prison of sin is not such a terrible place to be. Let us all resolve to make this Yom Kippur the "turning point" of our lives and become better servants of Hashem.