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ועל זה באתי על החתם היום

שלמה רפאל לאווי

**Introduction**

Although it’s been several months since I last came out with a Kuntres, I have now pushed myself to publish a new Kuntres for two reasons. First, because recently I got some phone calls from people who told me that the kuntres was a life changer. Not only did it change their outlook, but they actually made serious changes in their life, baruch Hashem. One person told me that he read a kuntres that gave the basic kavanos for the hundreds of daily brachos that we say, and he immediately took action, and B”H he is still going strong.

Secondly, the world is currently a wild roller coaster and there is much upheaval taking place. (From the time I am writing this Kuntres until you read it, many more events could have transpired) And yet, people are walking around as if there is nothing happening out there. I heard from someone who was recently at a shiur by Rav Avraham Schor shlita. Rav Schor related that he did some research and found some Jewish newspapers in America during the second World War. It’s literally mind blowing. He explained that it is evident from the ads and articles how clueless the Yidden were to what was going on in Europe. It was business and pleasure as usual r”l. He declared that we are presently going through a similar situation r”l. **People don’t realize the full gravity of the global crisis taking place in the entire world**.

This contrast is what jolted me back. My goal is to snap us out of our reverie and the world of sheker where the evil and falsehood is getting darker and darker as we approach the crack of dawn. The Zohar Hakadosh says: “There is no light brighter than the brightness that emanates from the darkness”. This is the story of Chanuka and this is our story, as well. We need to get back to he reality using the light of the Torah to guide us in these dark and uncertain times.

My tefilla is that through our perseverance in seeking the truth and facing the true reality, we will be inspired to take action in our Avodas Hashem. May Hashem give all of us the strength to stand up and fulfill our personal obligations regardless to all the norms that were created by the Yetzer Hara, the שעבוד מלכיות and everything in between. May we be zoche to clarity especially in the fundamental area which is from the first questions they ask a person after he passes on, and that’s צפית לישועה.

If anyone would like to donate or sponsor a kuntres l’iluy nishma or l’zchus Refua Shelaima please reach out to me. We have other projects of chizuk opportunities as well. Tizku l’mitzvos. 848-210-5474

***Reminder: Please don’t read this kuntres during Davening.***

**Part I**

***C***hazal state: אם ראית מלכיות מתגרין זו עם זו צפה לרגלי של משיח. “If you see the nations of the world antagonizing each other, anticipate the footsteps of Moshiach.” However, there is a question that needs to be addressed. We say in Shemone Esrei three times daily כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום. We are supposed to be waiting for Moshiach all the time. Additionally, one should be saying at least once a day אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא. So what is added when there is friction in the world?

Upon studying the language of Chazal one will notice an interesting word that they used here, and that’s לרגלי של משיח"”. The key word is “the footsteps of Moshiach”. A Mashal will help explain the concept.

Reuven was a man who fell on hard times. He accumulated tremendous debts due to some business mistakes. To make things worse, his son fell ill and his medical expenses were exorbitant. Baruch Hashem, his daughter was a Kallah, but he didn’t have a penny to his name to pay for the wedding expenses nor the dowry. One day, Reuven heard that there was a rich benevolent nobleman who was passing through the town the following week on Wednesday. He was told that the nobleman would be coming to a certain place. The problem was that it wasn’t known what time he would be arriving, and he wouldn’t be staying for more than a half hour.

Reuven woke up early in the morning, davened at the earliest possible minyan and headed to the place where the philanthropist was supposed to pass through. Reuven stood there and waited anxiously for the arrival of this nobleman. He kept looking at his watch anxiously. Finally, at twelve clock noon he heard the galloping of horses, and he was able to see in the distance an elegant coach coming in his direction. At this point his excitement was mounting and he was beginning to feel exhilarated. He felts as if his yeshua was on the way, even though he hadn’t confirmed yet the identity of the man in the coach that was approaching. Nevertheless, the few indicators that showed that this was the person he was waiting for, made him excited.

Likewise, Hashem promised us that He will redeem us from this long and difficult exile. Many people are struggling with physical illness, mental illness or spiritual sicknesses. Life in Galus is a battle, and unfortunately many of our brothers and sisters have fallen in their battle. Those of us who are at the battlefield are going through many difficulties in all areas r”l. However the good news is we are told that Moshiach can come at any given time. Therefore, it only sensible that we should be waiting anxiously like Reuven in the Mashal.

Furthermore, just like in the mashal, when Reuven saw an elegant coach coming, it gave him a big boost, likewise, there comes a time that we can hear the footsteps of Moshiach. Chazal revealed to us many different simanim that indicate that Moshiach is nearby. One of them is when wars are taking place in the world, as we mentioned. The point of all this, says Rav Moshe Wolfson shlita, is to cause our excitement and anticipation to mount for the coming of Moshiach. This can be compared to Reuven in the mashal when he was excited when the beautiful coach was approaching. We also need to get excited as we see the simanim unfolding, because it means that we are getting closer and closer.

The truth is that we had a similar story in the recent parshios with Eliezer Eved Avraham. Eliezer davened to Hashem that he should find the zivug for Yitzchok at the well, and he established simanim to prove that this girl was befitting for Yitzchok. When Rivka arrived at the well, the Torah says וירץ לקראתה. Rashi explains that the reason Eliezer ran toward her was because he saw the water rising toward her when she arrived. Even though he hadn’t put her to test yet, nevertheless Eliezer was very excited when he saw the water rose toward her. That’s because this served as an indicator that he was on the right track.

The question arises: As the world at large is churning, why are many people not walking around with anticipation for Moshiach? Why isn’t it a hot topic?

I believe we need to get to the root of the problem, and then even deeper than that. The common denominator between Eliezer and Reuven in the mashal is that both of them were waiting for a yeshua. Therefore, when they saw simanim that indicated the imminent arrival of their salvation, it gave them a tremendous boost of excitement. However, if one is not waiting for the Geula ch”v, then the simanim won’t be meaningful.

The Chofetz Chaim on Parshas Vayeira writes something fascinating about the dialogue between Sara and Avraham. The passuk says that Sara laughed when she heard the news that she would bear a child because she was surprised that after all these years she would finally have a child. The Chofetz Chaim asks the following question. “Why is the Torah telling us this story which seems denigrating to Sara, and what can we learn from this”? Says the Chofetz Chaim, we know that Chazal teach us מעשה אבות סימן לבנים. At the end of days before Moshiach’s arrival there will be a group of people who will be skeptical and might be thinking, “After all these years, how can it be?” or other similar thoughts. This is signified in Sara’s laughter - on her level, obviously.

What’s the remedy for this? Says the Chofetz Chaim, we need to internalize what Hashem told Avraham היפלא מה' דבר. We need to internalize that Hashem can do anything and everything. There is nothing too big for Hashem, chalila. We need to strengthen our Emuna in הכל יכול. We should learn Seforim that discuss the greatness of Hashem. For example, Chovos Halevavos Shaar Habechina is a good start. We can ponder how vast the universe and how Hashem is in control of every one of the trillions and zillions of atoms and how He sustains everyone and everything. We also need to internalize that Hashem is in control of the current world events as well.

The סמ"ק says that the source of the obligation of צפית לישועה is derived from the first of the עשרת הדברות. Hashem is telling us that the same way I took you out of Mitzrayim I can take you out of the final Galus. When you study Klal Yisroel’s situation at that time it seemed pretty bleak. It was impossible for anyone to escape Mitzrayim, and they were enslaved to Pharaoh for well over a hundred years. As crazy as it seems, but their dire situation had pretty much become their norm. Furthermore, they had sunk into the depth of tumah and there seemed to be no way out.

However, Hashem showed us that not only did He take us out physically, but He took us out of our tumah as well. Furthermore, Hashem didn’t just take us out like an escapee that goes through many hardships during his escape. To reinforce that He can do anything, Hashem took us out with a staggering amount of Nissim that displayed this concept of היפלא מה' דבר.

The truth is that on Chanuka Hashem also showed us this concept, as well. Klal Yisroel were in a precarious situation. The Greeks didn’t let them learn Torah or do mitzvos. They were killing our beloved Yidden and they were destroying the Jewish pride. Some commentaries say that at that time most Yidden had switched over to becoming Hellenists r”l. It was a real tragedy. The Bais Hamikdash was desecrated, full of idols r”l. The darkness was so immense, and it seemed that there was no hope of return.

However, Hashem with His great mercy showed us otherwise. A handful of tzaddikim known as the חשמונאים got up and declared war on the mighty Greeks. This seemed to be a senseless move as they were outnumbered by hundreds of thousands. But the חשמונאים understood that היפלא מה’ דבר. When it comes to Hashem there are no limits, and they went to war understanding that they were being Moser nefesh for Hashem and the Bais Hamikdash. Yet, at the same time they knew that if Hashem were on their side, there was a great possibility that they would win.

This in turn should give us tremendous chizuk to await the arrival of Moshiach, no matter the situation. Whether it’s globally or personally, Hashem can do anything. No matter how dark and evil the world is and how dim your Neshama has become, Hashem can do anything. No matter how far-fetched it seems, Moshiach can come on any given day, in the blink of an eye. Hashem can and will do the greatest nissim and bring us to our true home- Yerushalayim, as the Navi tells us in the name of Hashem כימי צאתך ממצרים אראנו נפלאות. We need to bake this in to our hearts and into our bones.

**Part 2**

***S***ome people may ask the following question: “If Moshiach is so close by so why doesn’t he come?” Furthermore, there were wars throughout the ages and nothing became of those wars. Says Rav Steinman zt”l, the problem is the fact that we didn’t view the wars as a stepping stone toward Moshiach, which itself possibly prevented it from happening. The fact that people are not excited is an indicator that they don’t realize this. As the Pele Yoetz writes that **“when we see war going on in the world, we need to become excited”**. Unfortunately, some people sometimes blame wars on natural causes or other things. We need to make the words of Chazal a reality. We need to work on אמונת חכמים that when the Gedolim say something they mean it, and that is the reality.

**Current events**

**Russia and Ukraine war -** We need to be aware that the wars that are happening right now are not the typical wars that happened throughout the ages. First of all, this is a war that involves almost every country in the world, and the entire planet is getting affected by this war. This war is similar to the second World War r”l. Russia is getting very desperate as they are incurring great losses and setbacks. They keep threatening to send nuclear missiles to retaliate. The war is going on for over ten months and every single day things are intensifying as missiles are becoming more and more frequent. The death toll is staggering.

While this fighting is going on, we are sitting in our spacious homes enjoying the electricity, tap water and heat, while in most of Ukraine they have none of the above. Currently, Ukraine’s infrastructure is almost totally destroyed. Some of these people are our brothers and sisters. It’s mind boggling how people walk around indifferent to the situation. At least we should wake up and internalize the messages. *Yes,* w*e need to wake up.*

China is telling its country to brace itself for war. This is while they are at war with their own people. They put people in cages *due to Covid*, and the country is an upheaval. The lockdowns in China are hitting three years already. It’s pure evil, and we shouldn’t think that this cannot happen once again America. That’s ignorance. Anything can happen as we saw with Germany. We need to do teshuva when we see the middas hadin in the world.

Recently, Turkey seems to have started a war with Syria. Brazil is at war with its citizens. North Korea, China and Iran are threatening the United States, as well. Anyone that thinks that this country is invincible is either an ignoramus or a foolish person brainwashed by the gaava that permeates this country. We already lost two thirds of our weapons due to this war.

We need to come to the recognition that אין לנו להשען אלא על אבינו שבשמים. We need to work on Emuna and Bitachon in Hashem. No, we cannot wait for Trump or anyone else to save us in two years from now. And most recently Hashem showed us that we can’t rely on the Republicans to save us, as they haven’t received too much power (not that their power does us much good). What about the daily Nuclear threats? What about a president that doesn’t know if he is coming or going in a time like this--does that make you feel safe? What about a crumbling economy--does that make you feel secure? Recently, the railroad system union have threatened a strike that will freeze the railroads, and you know what that could mean r”l.

**Inflation and shortages** - We are living through a historical time when inflation keeps rising, as many large corporations are collapsing all around us. Businesses are struggling mightily to make ends meet. There are people these days who cannot afford the basic necessities. Eggs, which were once between one to two dollars are currently around six dollars in some places. *Officially*, there was some virus that killed many chickens. Then there is a drug shortage and many basic drugs are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain r”l. It doesn’t stop. We can go on and on.

Some people when they hear these things, they shrug their shoulders and say the infamous words, “It is what it is”. Or they say that we need to adjust ourselves to the new reality. Some people are scrambling to make Gemachs for medicines, מי כעמך ישרא-ל. But the truth is that we need to realize that Hashem is talking to us through these historic and strange happenings. It’s pretty obvious that Hashem wants us to feel insecure with our situation, so we will yearn for a better future, in our home, Yerushalayim. The only security that we can have at this point is bitachon in Hashem -אין לנו להשען אלא על אבינו שבשמים. Any expert will tell you that this country and the world at large has taken a nose dive and it keeps plunging downward.

What about the threat to our Chinuch in our Yeshivos r”l? Recently, I got a robocall from a Yid who was literally in tears. He said that the Liberals Ym”sh, want to require a new curriculum in the schools that is so disgusting and repulsive that he couldn’t mention what it was all about. He left a few numbers of some of the Republicans to plead with them to stand up and fight this bill. Yes, we should and have to do our hishtadlus, but we cannot overlook the glaring message, **that we need to stop feeling so comfortable in America.** It’s time to pack our bags and get ready to leave, and this is the attitude Hashem wants to see.

**Anti-semitism** - It’s no secret that we keep seeing the ugly head of anti-semitism rising in this country. Again, some people keep trying to fight, while others try to play it down. Some people just nod their heads and say, “What else is new,” or “It is what it is”. All this is trying to evade the blatant message that Hashem is sending us that we don’t belong here. It’s time to move on and get ready to head home where we belong. When Yaakov Avinu saw that Lavan was showing him contempt, he realized that it’s time to head home, and that’s what he did. We should do the same.

**Terrorism In Eretz Yisroel -** The terror attacks in Eretz Yisroel are starting to get more frequent. Whether it’s the bomb that injured eighteen and killed one precious bachur, or the stabbings r”l that we hear about. There were many attacks that b’chasdei Hashem were thwarted, and we cannot take that for granted. However, the fact that there were many attempts should shake us up and listen to the wake up calls from Hashem. We, in America cannot feel complacent r”l thinking that “we” don’t have this problem. Firstly, we need to realize that yes, our very own brothers are in constant terror and we need to feel for them. Secondly, when there are tzaros anywhere, especially in Eretz Yisroel, it’s a message to every single Yid.

Imagine someone has a large family. One day one child hurts himself and the next day a second child hurts himself. So this person went to check his Mezuzos and his Tefillin. However, the Tefillin and Mezuzos were found perfect. The following morning a fire breaks out in the house and in the afternoon the father is in accident r”l and on the following day the mother is in an accident r”l. At this point, he would run to a tzaddik and do soul searching to find out what Hashem wants from him. He will do a serious teshuva, as the messages from Hashem keep coming.

It’s the same on a national level. We, Yidden are one family and this world was created for us. If a Yid gets sick or is passes away r”l, it’s a tragedy for the whole Klal Yisroel family. If more people pass away r”l, it’s a huge tragedy, and more intensive message. If a Gadol passes away, then it’s a tremendous message, as our Gedolim are considered our father, as Elisha cried אבי אבי רכב ישראל. So many of our Gedolim were taken away from us over the past two years r”l. How can we forget Reb Chaim who was torn away from us so suddenly this past Purim.

What about the continuous Tzaros that are happening on a daily basis? We hear of so many people, old and young suffering from sickness, and many people recently passed away r”l. Are we getting used to it? Recently, I was in a shul of around one hundred fifty people, and over fifteen people were saying Kaddish, some of them teenagers r”l. *These people are our family.* ***Klal Yisroel - wake up****!*

When there is an earthquake, tsunami or fire somewhere in the world, it’s also a message for us, as the entire world was created to serve us, and the earthquakes and volcanoes are supposed to shake us up. There are constant hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanoes that have become the norm in the past two years. There was a meteorologist who did some research and discovered ***that last week there were twenty seven volcanoes happening simultaneously.*** This is mind boggling! There was never such extreme action in the world. What about the Euphrates River which is known to be נהר פרת that’s drying up, which is described openly in a נבואה.

**Covid 19 -** Who can forget a few years full of the Covid madness. We can go on and on with Covid, but we won’t because most people don’t want to hear about it. They just want to forget about the nightmare. However, once again we need to come to the realization that everything comes from Hashem and we cannot point fingers and push the erase button. It doesn’t’ matter if Fauci invented it. At the end of the day, if Hashem allowed it to happen to his children, then Hashem is talking to us. The only question is, are we listening?

There is a נבואה in יואל that talks about what’s going to happen before Moshiach comes. One of the things it mentions is these words “והי-ה הלבנה לדם”. Some people may not be aware, but there is a lunar eclipse known as “the bloody moon”. This bloody moon happened approximately three months ago and it happened once again approximately two weeks ago. When you hear such things *your blood* should start racing from excitement.

**מוצאי שביעית** - We cannot forget that we are currently living in a tremendous עת רצון, which is מוצאי שביעית. Chazal say explicitly in a few places במוצאי שביעית בן דוד בא. Of course, this doesn’t mean that Moshiach can’t come any other year. It’s a whole discussion, but the bottom line is that we see that מוצאי שביעית is a tremendous עת רצון for the Geula, and when we see all the simanim of Moshiach happening this year, our excitement should be on the rise.

All these simanim are written openly in Mishnayos, Gemaros and Midrashim. So at a time like this, how can one be complacent and indifferent to say those dreadful words, “It is what it is”.

Some people reading this might be thinking, “Okay, I get the point, I think it’s time to do something, but where do I start, especially during these trying times, when the world is in an upheaval? First, I would like to make a disclaimer, that panic is definitely not the solution. In general, panic prevents us from thinking clearly and may backfire. But to sit back and sleep is definitely not the solution. As the captain told Yona Hanavi “מה לך נרדם”. So what’s our Avoda these days?

🙧🙥

**Part 3**

**Let’s get practical**

***S***tep number one, is to train ourselves to *stay focused*. We live in a world where there is so much going on. On a personal level, most people have very hectic lives. Whether it’s their jobs, their obligations to their family, health issues and baruch Hashem loads of Simchos (this is just a small sample). The constant buzzing of the cell phone doesn’t help either. On a global level, many people follow the news, and the current events are happening these days on high speed, in so many areas. Whether it’s the wars in the world, the inflation, the elections, or so much more. All this distracts us from being able to focus properly on our tachlis.

Obviously, we can’t release ourselves from our obligations, but we can make two big changes in our life. First, we must start working on Bitachon, and recognize that Hashem is in full control of our life. We need to relinquish the reins and leave them to Hashem. This will give us the Menuchas Hanefesh we need to be able to focus properly. We need to start learning up a storm about Bitachon, and to apply it to our life. There are seforim, books and hotlines that can help you grow in this area. Let’s get moving.

The second thing we mentioned is the news. The truth is that to ignore the news and try not to know anything is incorrect. If someone is sitting in Bais Hamidrash day and night learning and isn’t exposed to any news, it’s debatable whether he should try to know what’s going on, on a basic level (without politics obviously). Otherwise, it’s important to get the general picture of the world.

However, we need to know two things. First, we don’t need to know every last thing that’s going on in the world, as lots of things do not concern us. Second, as we said earlier, Hashem is in full control over the world and over politics. We need to know that we have zero control over the current events, and it’s all in His hands. So when we hear something big happening, we can’t do anything. What we can do is to realize that it’s all messages from Hashem. Whether it happens in Russia, Ukraine or even in Eretz Yisroel, it’s all from Hashem. This will help us stay relaxed and to start focusing on our Avoda.

After we are focused, we need to apply some changes in our life. At this point our Avoda it’s not so much what we do, rather it’s how we do it. We need to become real Yidden who are loyal servants of Hashem. **This entails serving Hashem with all our heart and soul.** In other words, whatever we do, whether it’s learning, doing mitzvos, and especially davening, there needs to be a bittul to Hashem. This means that we are not doing it because we decided to do it, rather we are surrendering our will to the will of Hashem. This is a form of Mesiras nefesh which brings us into the Yom Tov of Chanukah.

**Chanukah -** We are heading toward the heilige lichtige days of Chanuka. Chanuka is a time that we celebrate the great נס that Hashem performed for us with the menorah and the jug of oil. However, from the על הנסים that we say three times a day and during Birchas hamazon, it would seem that Chanuka is about the wars and the victory that we had over the יונים. Which is it? The truth is that Rashi seems to say that this is the Gemara’s question in Mesechta Shabbos מאי חנוכה. The Gemara seems to prove that Chanuka was established due to the נס of the menora. If that’s the case, why are we spending so much time during davening and bentching on the wars and our victory?

I would like to suggest a novel approach. At the end of על הנסים...בימי מתתיהו, we add on ואחר כן באו בניך לדביר ביתך וטיהרו מקדשיך והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשיך וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה וכו' . I would like to say that while it’s true that we are celebrating Chanuka because of the great נס that Hashem performed which brought out the brilliant light of Chanuka. However, the Ramchal says that it was through the great Mesiras nefesh and the great wars that were fought that brought out the great light of Chanuka. This light is still shining until this very day, as we say in Al Hanissim בימים ההם בזמן הזה. That can be why we conclude after we discuss at length the wars and the mesiras nefesh והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה אלו.

Mesiras nefesh are words that may have been used too loosely, and may have lost some meaning in the process. So let me give you a practical example how we can apply mesiras nefesh into our daily avodas Hashem. Note that we can apply this to all mitzvos as well.

We have the great privilege to go before Hashem the מלך מלכי המלכים three times every day of our life. Unfortunately, many of us have difficulties with our concentration. The following three ideas can be used to strengthen ourselves in this area:

1. Learn about the פירוש המילות; become more familiar with the meaning of the words. Especially when one says the name of Hashem.
2. Keep refreshing the concept that we are entering the throne room and we need to be properly prepared. We are going to be ‘עומד לפני ה. Therefore, we can’t just fall into davening and expect ourselves to connect properly.
3. If you noticed, we say the Parshas Akeida before everything, and we say Shema before davening. The basic idea of these two parshiyos is to be Moser nefesh for Hashem. That’s what Avraham did, and we should do the same. How do we apply this to our davening? Before we start davening we say ה' שפתי תפתח, “Hashem, I am surrendering myself to you totally”. I am ready to let go of all my thoughts of worry and frustration and I am here to focus only on You. I am putting myself in Your hands. If a person enters with these thoughts, there is a big chance that he will be successful.

4. As we mentioned, many of us have a problem staying focused. One exercise that can build up focusing skills involves taking a small white blank card and making a small significant black dot in the middle. Before davening or learning, one should sit and relax your brain. Then stare at the dot, while blotting out everything else in one’s life. Start off with fifteen seconds or a bit more. Add more time as one is able to handle more. This exercise trains the brain to stay focused.

After one has achieved somewhat a bittul to Hashem, one can go to the next level, and that’s serving Hashem with the midda of ‘בנים אתם לה. This means that in addition to the bittul, we are serving Hashem out of love for Him. We feel the tremendous privilege that Hashem chose us to serve him and this brings a tremendous nachas ruach to Hashem. **So our focus should be “how can I bring a nachas ruach to Hashem”.**

This can bring us to the level of וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים. If we understand and realize that every time we engage even our personal duties, and even our enjoyments, we do it because this is what Hashem wants from us now. Then we become like a twenty four hour machine that brings nachas ruach to Hashem. What can be sweeter than that? It may sound as if it’s out of our reach, but we know that אין דבר עומד בפני הרצון. Also, we should aim for the top, but our job is to start climbing the ladder.

**צפית לישועה –** Finally, after we internalize the messages, we are ready for the climax. We need to think about Moshiach, especially these days. We need to live a life of צפית לישועה, which is a totally different outlook on life. We need to anticipate the return of the Shechina and the Bais Hamikdash. But the obvious question is how do we connect to this?

Let me give you a mashal. Over twenty years ago the United States experienced an enormous catastrophe beyond any words--the attack on the majestic Twin Towers. Let’s imagine that there was a person who had an extremely emotional connection to the Twin Towers. Obviously, this event broke his heart to pieces, and he literally became dysfunctional for a month. After a while he started getting over it, since as we know, time heals. One year later, he was totally back to himself as if nothing ever happened.

Now it’s over twenty years later and it’s almost forgotten. One day, he decides that he wants to reconnect to those old feelings with the Towers. How can he achieve this? We can suggest three approaches:

1.Time - He can go back in time to revisit that horrifying day when the Towers collapsed with a thunderous roar. He can relive the pain and anguish that he felt at that time. This will give him feelings of yearning for the Towers.

2. Place - He can visit Ground Zero and see the gaping hole, which will bring about his yearning for the Twin Towers.

3. He can go back in time and revisit the good old days when he used to have tremendous pleasure from it. He can try to visualize himself going through the majestic doors touring the building. This will bring a tremendous yearning, as well.

Obviously this mashal pales in comparison to our loss. On a bigger scale, Chazal gave us different times of the year to reconnect to the Bais Hamikdash. On Tisha B’av, we reconnect to the Bais Hamikdash by means of remembering the great Churban and how the Bais Hamikdash was burned to the ground. If we learn about it, we can bring this tragic day back to life, and through our mourning, we start yearning.

Going to the Kosel in a sense is like visiting Ground Zero. Obviously it isn’t a zero, as the kedusha there is immense. However, it pales in comparison to what it should be. We cannot be satisfied with one wall--we need to beg Hashem for all four walls. Additionally, there is a disgusting mosque at the Makom Hamikdash. Does that not bother us? We need to cry our hearts out for the desecration of the Makom Hamikdash.

Then there are the Yomim Tovim, especially on Yom Kippur when we commemorate the עבודת בית המקדש in great detail. We have שמחת בית השואבה which is also supposed to remind us of the Simcha of the Bais Hamikdash. Lulav for seven days is also a reminder of the Bais Hamikdash in its glory. These are means to relive the Avoda of the Bais Hamikdash to reawaken our feelings of yearning.

Now we are approaching Chanuka in which we commemorate the lighting of the menora in the Bais Hamikdash. The ר״ן says that the reason why we are not allowed to benefit from the light of our menora is to commemorate the menora of the Bais Hamikdash. We need to realize that when we light our menora it brings down a special light, and the Seforim teach us that we are tapping into the light of the menora.

However, we shouldn’t be satisfied with this light. Rather, this light should give us the feelings of yearning for the אור חדש על ציון תאיר, the ultimate menora in the Bais Hamikdash. The Bnei Yisaschar and many Seforim say that the light of Chanuka and Moshiach are extremely related. The Bnei Yisaschor says that lighting our menora is the chinuch of the menora of Moshiach. He elaborates greatly on this subject, and it’s fascinating.

So when we stand by the menora looking at the candles, we should have hot tears of yearning to see the menora in all its glory in the Bais Hamikdash. Maybe that can be another reason we are enjoined to look at the candles. When we watch the flames of our silver menora, it should rekindle our hearts to yearn for the menora of gold in the Bais Hamikdash that imbued our nation with so much holiness.

However, our job is to bring this Avoda into our day to day life, and we see that Chazal gave us the tools to accomplish this. Tikkun Chatzos was given to mourn over the loss of the Bais Hamikdash. It’s done at night, which is time of darkness. This enables us to feel the darkness of galus that we are in. It’s never too late to get started. Even if it’s not by chatzos and even if we say one perek in Tehillim of על נהרות בבל while sitting on the floor, is already an accomplishment. It’s time to stop following the norms and just do what Hashem wants of us during these turbulent times.

Then there is saying and learning about the korbanos and ketores an a daily basis. This helps us reconnect to the time of the Bais Hamikdash. This will help us yearn for the Geula so we can once again serve Hashem in the Bais Hamikdash. If we say it too fast, then slow down. If one doesn’t say it, one should say at least a little bit a day. Yiddishkeit is not all or nothing.

If we start to have feelings, then we will be waiting anxiously and we will *let out a thunderous* אמןיהאשמי*-*הרבא *with all our might by kaddish*. One thing is for sure, these days cannot be business and pleasure as usual. Especially on Chanukah when the light of Moshiach is shining ever so brightly.

There is a famous passuk that we read in the weeks after Tisha B’Av ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה. Chazal explain this to mean יש דור שמחכים למלכותי מיד הם נגאלים. As the Chofetz Chaim would often say, we beseech Hashem ממקומך מלכנו תופיע ותלוך עלינו with what zechus? כי מחכים אנחנו לך , because we are waiting for You, Hashem. We see from here that the mere fact that we are waiting can get us out immediately.

ציון במשפט תפדה-if we are waiting for ציון, then במשפט תפדה, we will deserve it. However, ושביה, those who weren’t really waiting for the Geula, but did Teshuva, they will be redeemed בצדקה. With what zechus? With the zechus of tzedaka which we are witnessing these days on a huge scale, as we mentioned earlier.

We need to begin and act quickly as the current events are occurring at an unusually high speed (as we mentioned a small snippet). If Hashem sees that Klal Yisroel is actively preparing for the Malchus Shomayim to be revealed, then Hashem will bring Moshiach speedily. Let us wait together for that great day with hope and anticipation for the third Bais Hamikdash, which will be coming very, very soon, Amen.

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**Addendum**

**Introduction**

***W***e hope you were inspired in the first part to understand and realize the gravity of the state that the world stands at the present moment, and that we cannot be complacent. We can see that Hashem is sending us messages through the current events, and the most basic message is that He wants to bring the geula. He wants us to prepare ourselves so we are at least somewhat prepared for that great day. *Most of all he wants us to be* מצפהלישועה.

This Addendum B”H should serve as a platform to start our self-growth. Obviously there is too much to discuss and we cannot discuss everything, and one needs to continue on their own. However we will Be”H discuss some core topics regarding our relationships that are very crucial for our self-growth. *It’s not so much what we do, rather it’s how we do it*. Beingמצפהלישועה is also very vital to our relationship, as we will explain*.* My tefilla is that we start applying these ideas into our Avodas Hashem, and through this, we will get the proper chizuk to carry them out.

חזקואמץ.

**Addendum**

***R***ecently, I met someone that told me the following story that tragically happened to him. About fifteen years ago, he gave in his tefillin to a Sofer to do a routine check. A little while later, he came to pick up his tefillin. Recently, fifteen years later, he gave in his tefillin to check once again. A few days later, he got a frantic phone call from the Sofer that his tefillin were totally pasul, as a few words were distorted. After a short investigation, he realized that the previous Sofer returned to him the wrong tefillin.

This story shook me up and there is a lot to learn from it. However, I derived from this an interesting powerful lesson. A person can walk around with tefillin that looks just like anyone else, but it’s totally passul. That’s because the inside, which is the the most essential part of the tefillin, is not good. Unfortunately, many of us are walking around and we look like Yidden, but we need to ask ourselves, “How is my פנימיות? Do I think like a Yid? Is my heart coursing with love and Yiras Shomayim or other types of love and fear?”

It’s true that our external appearance and actions are vital for Yiddishkeit, just like the batim of tefillin that are essential to be מקיים the mitzva of tefillin, and they are supposed to be beautiful, as well. However, the true and most important beauty of the tefillin is the parshiyos of the tefillin. Similarly, the ultimate beauty of a Yid is his פנימיות.

What should we put our energy into these days? Obviously, we need to continue with our obligations in life. Whether it’s with the family or at work, we can’t slack off. However, what we can change is our mindset and our relationships, our פנימיות. We will discuss three aspects of our relationships: בין אדם לעצמו , בין אדם לחבירו , and בין אדם לקונו. If you look into the different Maamarei Chazal that discuss the Avoda of before Moshiach, we notice that the common denominator is related to our relationships. Let’s explore these three areas and let’s see what we can improve during these awesome days.

**בין אדם לעצמו**

**Middos** - We will start with the alef bais and that’s our middos, because this is the foundation of our structure. In the parshiyos of these past weeks we were learning about the Avos and our Imahos, and we can learn a great deal from the tremendous middos tovos that they had. A good start would be to analyze these parshiyos and apply the lessons into our life. There are plenty of seforim that delve in depth into analyzing every action of the Avos. It is astounding at how much we can learn from our forefathers.

**בטחון** - As we mentioned earlier, Bitachon is crucial for focusing. However, as the Seforim teach us, Bitachon is also crucial for middos tovos. For example, jealousy, anxiety and anger come from a lack of Emuna and Bitachon. So we need to really work on ourselves extensively in this area. Indeed, Chazal say in a number of places that the Geula will be in the zechus of Emuna and Bitachon.

However, in order to conquer the bad middos and to transform them, we need an overdose of Ayin tov and Lev Tov so we are happy for others and we have humility like our Avos. How do we acquire this? With Torah. Torah is the source of the good in this world, as Chazal teach us אין טוב אלא תורה. The more we cling to the Torah the more good will emanate from us. It’s like someone who works with perfumes. Such a person will have a good smell wherever he goes. When a person clings to the Torah, his life can become full of goodness as bracha descends upon him, and the goodness flows into his heart, as the Torah says ‘אם בחוקותי תלכו וגו. This can help us acquire these tremendous character traits known as עין ולב טוב טוב.

However, many of us suffer from a חולי הנפש called *Negativity****.*** We will need to overdose on keeping our focus on seeing the good. We need to rewire and reprogram our brain from this sickness which is due to the negative world that surrounds us. We need to pinpoint the roots where it’s coming from, and make adjustments in our life. In place of grouchiness and complaints, we need to replace it with non-stop praise and thanks to Hashem for all the goodness that we may be taking for granted. In the place of criticizing other people, ourselves included, we need to start complimenting them (and ourselves). The middos of a person molds a person to become his essence, which is pretty scary if you think about it, but it’s the truth and we need to be realistic.

There is a famous story with Reb Elchonon Wasserman zt”l and the Dybbuk. There is a lot to learn from that story. At one point in the story, the Dybbuk was speaking foul language and Reb Elchonon was taken aback. He said, “I don’t understand how you can act like this when you were just in the world of truth!” The Dybbuk responded that people make a grave error. They think that when they arrive at the next world they will turn into a Baal middos tovos. It’s not like that. A person has to mold himself in this world, and that’s who you are in the next world, as well. Therefore, it’s incumbent upon us to work on ourselves now.

**בין אדם לחבירו**

**צדקה וחסד -** Baruch Hashem, there is so much chessed and tzeddaka going on these days. There is huge variety of chessed organizations, gemachs and tremendous amounts of tzedaka that are distributed daily. The amount of money that’s distributed before Yom Tov is staggering--מי כעמך ישרא-ל. I believe that if the non-Jews would really know about all this, many of them would convert instantly. Indeed, Chazal say that the Geula will come in the zechus of tzedaka and chessed as the Navi says ושבי-ה בצדקה.

Recently, we lost Harav Hagaon Rav Feivel Cohen zt”l (who happens to be my uncle). There was a tremendous levaya with many thousands of people in attendance. The weather was frigid, but that didn’t deter the holy Yidden from attending the levaya of Rav Feivel. There were no hespedim as per his request, but his legacy lives on through his children and his Seforim that have served as a torch to learn areas in Torah in which we otherwise don’t have too much help. For example, בשר וחלב. His bekiyus, his lomdus and clarity was breathtaking.

After the levaya, everyone needed to wash their hands. There weren’t too many washing cups and there were many people waiting outside in the cold. I watched how people were rushing in and out to bring water to their fellow Yidden with such זריזות. However, it didn’t stop there. I noticed that most people as they were refilling the water they added hot water to make sure the water was warm. The day of the levaya, was the Sunday after Parshas Chayei Sara, when we just learned how Rivka ran back and forth with the water with זריזות. Not only did she give the water to Eliezer, but she added on to the chessed by giving the camels. Similarly, these Yidden were adding to their chessed by adding on warm water מי כעמך ישרא-ל.

However, I would like to address another form of צדקה וחסד that may be a bit neglected by many. I believe that with this form of chessed, שנאת חנם would evaporate, and this would speed up the redemption by leaps and bounds. That is **giving chizuk**. This is a very broad topic and it encompasses many different things. Giving proper chizuk in some areas can be a difficult task. For example, one could give chizuk to someone who lost a child r”l. One really needs to be a master in chizuk to be able to give proper chizuk to such a person.

However, generally speaking, it is relatively easy to give chizuk, and the opportunities are endless. Everyone can use chizuk to bolster their self-growth and their Avodas Hashem, and it’s a tremendous chessed that goes a long way. Truthfully, **these days almost everyone needs chizuk to stay afloat.** Whether they need it for their self-image which is extremely low, or to tolerate their yissurim, or for other reasons. Therefore, it’s not only chessed but tzedaka as well, and the opportunities are endless. Whether it’s with our spouse, our children, our friends or talmidim. Everyone needs chizuk daily, just like they need three meals a day.

Some people associate chizuk with a good word or a compliment, but it goes beyond that. Let’s explore a few examples of chizuk that we can do so we don’t miss these golden opportunities that are available at all times.

1**. Compliments** - Rav Asher Makovsky brings from the Rambam that says that encouraging others is the greatest form of chessed. Here are some examples: “You really learn very well.” “Your smile lights up the room.” “You have a huge heart.””You have a heart of gold.” All this brings warm feelings to the recipient and gives him (or her) a boost. It creates a bond between people which is known as אהבה - loving your fellow Yid. Additionally, by giving chizuk to someone one is planting seeds by reinforcing their maalos in their minds as they start focusing on them. Eventually, they may end up using it for Avodas Hashem.

2. **Words of Encouragement –** One can say, for example, “Hashem loves you more than the entire creation.” “Yes, you can do it.” “You are full of energy.” “You have hidden strength beyond your wildest imagination.”. “I see tremendous potential in you.” All these lines can help (at least subconsciously) build up one’s inner strength to face their challenges. It is especially important in these turbulent times when our challenges have become much greater.

3. **Greeting people with a smile -** When you greet someone you are showing that person that you regard their existence. You are showing them that they are not merely another creature roaming planet earth. Smiling at someone shows an extra chashivus that they are very meaningful. It also shows that you are happy to see them. Furthermore, a smile generates simcha, and many people walk around with sadness and melancholy in their hearts. Your smile gives their heart a lift and can open up a small opening for joy in their hearts. Rav Avigdor Miller zt”l brings the Chazal that compares someone that greets someone with a smile to someone that gives all passersby a glass of milk. Indeed Chazal teach us הוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות.

4. **Visiting the sick -** Giving chizuk is more precious than diamonds and you don’t even have to dig it up. There are treasure troves of priceless gems in hospitals and nursing homes where there are bedridden Yidden who are starving for chizuk. Many people live near these places but they may not enjoy entering these facilities for various reasons. However, they should realize that it’s well worth it. Wouldn’t anyone do it for the right price? Furthermore, Chazal teach us לפום צערא אגרא. Doing this despite one’s discomfort will increase the reward immensely.

5. **Thanking people -** In general, hakaras hatov is vital for our own growth and technically this can belong to the previous category of בין אדם לעצמו. However, we need to realize that when we show appreciation to others, it gives them the chizuk they need to continue their Avodas Hakodesh. If it’s a Yid, and it makes a Kiddush Hashem for a non Jew (and for the Yid). Many times people are struggling in their job or their mission and they need the simple thank you to keep them going. Thanking them shows them that their work is recognized and appreciated.

There are many, many more examples of chizuk we can give, like a pat on the back or a firm handshake. Even holding the door open for someone shows a form of chashivus for them. Sometimes a humorous joke can work wonders (as we have elaborated in a different kuntres). Going to a simcha of a relative or friend shows great support. The whole idea of making a simcha is to show support for the chassan and kallah or the bar mitzva bachur who are embarking on a new journey in life. Everyone understands that nichum aveilim shows huge support.

I know someone who seems to have made it his life’s mision to give chizuk to anyone he encounters. Every person he meets gets a huge smile and a compliment on something that they possess. Many times people don’t even realize their maalos until they meet up with him. His children are rock solid and they are following in his footsteps as they are spreading smiles everywhere. They are all beloved by all, as expected, and you can be sure that they are beloved by Hashem.

Recently, this person (malach) lost his mother. I witnessed firsthand how every person that walked in to the shiva, instead of them giving him chizuk, they themselves walked out uplifted. He was throwing around compliments and words of chizuk. A woman who recently joined his family walked in and didn’t know anyone there. The avel ran to the kitchen to introduce her to his family.

This reminds me of a vort I heard from Hagaon Rav Yaakov Landau zt”l who was a Gaon in chizuk, as his students attest. He said on Parshas Vayera ויקומו המלאכים משם. What does the Torah want with these words? Rav Yaakov explained that the Malachim were uplifted by the hachnasas orchim of Avraham. The truth is that everyone that encountered Avraham Avinu was uplifted, הפלא ופלא.

Obviously these people are giants in giving chizuk, and we need to learn from them, including learning from Avraham Avinu as well. As Chazal tell us חייב אדם לומר מתי יגיעו מעשי למעשי אבותי. Yiddishkeit is not all or nothing. Therefore, we should get involved in giving chizuk, as this will wipe away שנאת חנם and will bring only love to Klal Yisroel. This will help us combat the sickness of negativity as well.

**בין אדם לקונו**

**תורה -** As we just mentioned, learning Torah gives us the ability to work on our middos. However, learning Torah goes even deeper than that. When a person learns Torah he gets daas which enables him have a deep connection to Hashem. Obviously Torah is a huge subject and if you want to start getting an appreciation for Torah you should learn the last perek in Pirkei Avos very, very well. Torah is known as the ‘דבר ה because learning the Torah is as if Hashem is talking to us. This brings down the greatest light in the world, as stated in *Derech Hashem* from Ramchal. There are many Seforim that talk about the greatness of Torah, and Chazal teach us that the Geula will come in the zechus of the Torah.

We need to realize that Torah creates our relationship with Hashem. Obviously, if someone has some extra time, he should try to learn some more. As it says in the pasuk והגית בו יומם ולילה. However, in a way it’s more important that one should learn with more intensity. This includes learning ברציפות and with our total concentration. As Chazal say אין התורה נקנית עד שממית עצמו עלי-ה. We need to shut our cell phones and forget about the world out there.

Furthermore, we should make sure that we have a Seder בעיון in depth. The ultimate growth from Torah is when one plunges himself into the deep waters of water. Obviously, any limud Hatorah helps us grow, but the ultimate growth comes with our toil in Torah. This kind of learning is another form of ממית עצמו עלי-ה. Therefore, it’s recommended for someone who learns Daf Yomi to set up another seder (as long as possible) to delve into the deep waters of Torah. This will provide shelaimus on a personal level and it increases zechusim to Klal Yisroel and for the Geula, as well. As Chazal teach us that the Geula will come in the merit of the Torah.

**שמירת הקדושה -** This includes shemiras halashon, shemiras machshava and shemiras einayim. Theoretically, all this fits into the category of בין אדם לעצמו. Obviously, this is true, but it’s even more important for our relationship with Hashem. Hashem, our father, has no association with gashmiyus. Therefore, the more we indulge in earthly pleasures, the less relationship we can have with Hashem, and vice versa. Torah is also ruchniyus, and therefore, the more we indulge in gashmiyus, the less we can have a connection and קנין תורה.

Our generation is a generation full of Torah. Wherever you go there are yeshivos, Bais Yaakovs, shuls, kolellim, mesivtos, and batei midrash. Additionally, you can listen to shiurim in all areas of Torah. In Lakewood, there is a radio station that has twenty four hours, six days a week of non-stop shiurim. There are hotlines on all sorts of topics, and there is Torah Anytime and Kol Halashon with almost unlimited Shiurim כחול הים. This is big dilemma for the Yetzer Hara.

The Chofetz Chaim says that the reason why the Malach of Eisav who is also known as the ס״מ started up with Yaakov more than the previous Avos is because Yaakov stands for Torah and that is the greatest threat to his career.

I would like to add that he realized that Yaakov was too strong to overcome with his koach hatorah, so he took a new approach and that is ירך יעקב. Some meforshim say that this represents the staggering assimilation rate r”l that we are experiencing today. However, in a certain sense we can say that it refers to us as well—to the nisayon of our Kedusha that is ruining our infrastructure, as we explained.

Recently, Russia had many setbacks due to the enormous amount of weapons that were supplied by America and Europe. Russia is realizing that it’s not going to be simple to conquer Ukraine through regular warfare so they started destroying their power plants. This plunged almost the entire Ukraine into darkness with no power or heat to face the bitter winter.

This is precisely what the Yetzer Hara tries doing to us, and in many instances he has succeeded r”l. We need to declare war against the Yetzer Hara. Thankfully, there are filters for phones and computers and many of us have protection, but he doesn’t stop there. Unfortunately, he has breached the tzniyus in many of our own precious נשים צדקניות, and many times shopping in supermarkets and other stores have become increasingly difficult for a ben Torah or any Yid that’s a בן עלי-ה. The Yetzer Hara has breached us in many other areas as well.

What’s the solution? There isn’t any clear cut solution. However I won’t leave you hanging without any chizuk, and I will say this.

1. *It’s crucial for us to wake up in the morning and remind ourselves that we are in the midst of a battle, and we are each one of the soldiers. Just like in the time of Chanuka, we are also at war against the evil, which is similar to what existed in those days***.**

This reality in itself is a tremendous form of chizuk, because if we understand that we are in battle then we will give it all we got. We will build fences, trenches and use all our resources to fight for our life, just like a soldier.

2. We need to recognize that this battle is tailor-made by our loving Father, and as difficult it seems to us, yes, we can prevail.

3. We need to realize how much kochos hanefesh we possess, and these nisyonos can bring out the kochos we have, but we were just unaware of them.

4. Koach Hatefilla – We need to daven to Hashem to help us in this battle, and this will enable us to win.

5. Emuna and Bitachon - We need to work on this as this will turn the tide of the battle. Let us learn seforim on Bitachon and apply it to our life.

**Tefilla -** As a Chacham once said, “Torah is Hashem talking to a person, while tefilla is a person talking to Hashem. We need both for our relationship. The של״ה has a whole lengthy discussion how davening without kavana is like a body without a neshama. The Avoda of tefilla is to bring our heart into the tefilla, as it says לעבדו בכל לבבכם. We need to work on staying focused (key word) on our tefillos and on Hashem. We need to constantly remember what we are presently doing, and that’s connecting with Hashem. Therefore, this calls for mesiras nefesh. We need to search for eitzos for kavana, *especially when we recite the names of Hashem which is an amazing privilege, but an awesome responsibility at the same time.*

Once we are focused on our tefillos, we will notice that a large portion of our day we are davening for the Geula. We don’t need to compose tefillos for the Geula. It’s throughout our tefillos, and during Birchas Hamazon and even in Al hamichya. We need to concentrate more and put more fuel into the fire. It’s recommended to make some time on a daily basis to work on this area. This is similar to Aseres Yemei Teshuva during which we are busy with Teshuva, although Teshuva is every minute of our life. However, the חובת השעה during those ten days is Teshuva. On the same note, during these days the חובת השעה is צפית לישועה. Chazal say that 'ק will be redeemed in the zechus of our tefillos for the Geula.

Furthermore, Rav Moshe Sorotzkin shlita brings quite a few sources that the main Avoda of the time before Moshiach will be tefilla. Our Avoda these days are to storm the heavens for the Geula on a daily basis. We cannot let up for even one day.

I would like to make a suggestion that needs the cooperation of askanim, and perhaps one of our readers can become the askan for this. Wouldn’t it be great if Klal Yisroel as a whole would daven together for Moshiach. For example, if somehow we could get the word out that on a Sunday at chatzos everyone should daven for five minutes for the Geula, I am sure it would make great waves in the heavens. *Food for thought and action.*

**תשובה -** Just like in a relationship it’s vital to apologize and to show remorse when one did something unjust, so too must it be in our relationship with Hashem. We need to show Hashem that although we tend to do aveiros based on our circumstances (which is not justified), but yes, we do care and we want to rectify our actions. The Chofetz Chaim writes in a few places that we don’t need a full teshuva to be zoche to Moshiach, we just need the basic teshuva. Perhaps the reason for this is that we need to show Hashem that we really care about our relationship and that is the message of the basic teshuva.

**‘טוב להודות לה** - We need to focus on all the bracha we have, and then we can focus on all the brachos that we make. Hashem is non-stop giving us an abundance of bracha in our life. Recently, in the past seventy years Hashem has raised the bar of His chessed and הטבה more than ever in the two thousand years of galus. Whether it was the abundance of food, or the technology that enable us to have a tremendous amount of Menuchas hanefesh.

We need to respond in kind. The *Chovos Halevavos* says that the more good one receives, the greater the obligation one has to be מכניע oneself and to thank Hashem. Therefore, we need to thank Hashem non-stop for all the chessed that He bestows upon us. Obviously, as we say in נשמת, we cannot fully enumerate the chessed Hashem, as it is too vast. However, we need to do as much as we can. We cannot suffice with singing a song, “Thank you Hashem” (which is a good start). Rather, we need to elaborate upon the good, like Dovid Hamelech did so eloquently in Tehillim.

There are different approaches to this. One approach is to make a list of for example, thirty things to thank Hashem for. Throughout this month on a daily basis we can take one gift and thank Hashem throughout the day for that gift. In order to achieve the maximum feelings of appreciation it’s recommended to study that gift. Whether it’s reading up literature about the greatness of that gift, or holding it in one’s hands and admiring it’s beauty. Obviously, if we can do both, that’s even better. It can be thanking Hashem for a relationship as well.

**Second approach** - One makes a time limit of ten minutes or so and writes down as much as one can regarding all the good one has in one’s life. This will train our brain to think about the positive, and at the same time work toward building a relationship with Hashem, our Creator and Sustainer. If one can do both approaches that would also be wonderful. We need to start thanking instead of complaining.

Imagine one is hosting a family for Shabbos. This family had a simcha nearby, and one is graciously hosting them for Shabbos. After Shabbos is over the family comes upstairs with a scowl on their faces. One person starts complaining about the couch, and the next complains about the mattresses that weren’t as comfortable as the ones they left behind at home. I believe that everyone will agree unanimously that this family needs serious help.

However, before we jump on them, let us examine ourselves. This world doesn’t belong to us. We are guests in this world and Hashem graciously lets benefit from His world. If instead of thanking Hashem, we are complain that we are not getting the treatment we would like, then we are no different than that family, and perhaps even worse. We are like sick people and we need to identify the roots of this attitude.

I believe the underlying reason may be because we are here in this world for several decades. We settle down and build large houses, supermarkets, shopping plazas, yeshivos and beautiful shuls. Additionally, we live a luxurious life and all this makes us forget that we are guests in this world. Let me bring it out with a story.

Baron Rothchild was a world renowned philanthropist who put a tremendous focus on the mitzva of Hachnasas Orchim. People would stay in his house for months and sometimes years. One day, a man who was a regular guest at the Rothchilds walked into the large house with a younger man. The Baron approached the man and asked him who the younger man was. The middle aged man responds with pride, “This is my new son in-law and I promised him board for three years.” This may sound comical, but it’s the story of our life. We need to internalize this concept that we are mere guests on this world, as our forefather told the Bnei Chais גר ותושב אנכי עמכם.

**שבת קודש -** We are all familiar with the famous Chazal that says that if Klal Yisroel keeps two Shabbosos מיד הם נגאלים. We need to know what Shabbos means to a Yid. It’s not merely a day of rest. Rather, it’s a day during which we spend time with Hashem, our Creator and Sustainer. That’s why we don’t do melacha because it’s a day of ruchniyus in which we spend with Hashem. Furthermore, just like in a relationship one can’t have a proper conversation when the other party is involved in something else, similarly this is a day we need to focus on Hashem.

There were tzaddikim who didn’t sleep all Shabbos and there were rzaddikim who didn’t talk mundane words all Shabbos. The idea we can say is not to lose focus from Hashem even for a second. Many people go to the mikva before Shabbos for extra Kedusha. Based on what we are saying, it’s because we are about to spend the day with Hashem.

We know that Moshiach is also known as Shabbos. The simple reason is that just like in the physical world we work for six days and then on the seventh we don’t toil at work. Similarly, these thousands of years are the time that we toil in our spirituality and when Moshiach comes we will be able to reach great heights without all the toil, since the evil inclination and the שיבעוד מלכיות are out of the way.

There is a story told about the Chofetz Chaim who was walking with a talmid right before Shabbos. They noticed that many people were rushing back and forth making their last preparation for Shabbos. The Chofetz Chaim turned to his student and said that this how it will look right before Moshiach comes. People who were sleeping will finally wake up and will be rushing about doing the final preparations before Moshiach.

When it comes to Shabbos there are people who make sure that everything is ready well in advance before Shabbos. There are other people who rush in on a weekly basis. Obviously, the two can’t be compared. Someone who prepares in advance walks into Shabbos with serenity and can start Shabbos on a much better foot. On the contrary, when one rushes into Shabbos it’s not the same for many reasons. When one rushes into Shabbos on a weekly basis, he is showing that Shabbos is not really on his mind during the week. This can be due to extreme indulgence in worldly pleasures or excessive time at the workforce. One needs to make a cheshbon Hanefesh. The bottom line is that we need to bring Shabbos into our daily life, and even more so, into Shabbos itself.

**צפית לישועה -** We mentioned earlier that the Avoda of these days is to await the arrival of Moshiach. However, we need to know that it’s part of our relationship with Hashem. If an old friend whom you haven’t seen for many years, tells you that he is in the area and wants you to come visit him, and you don’t go, tt’s a sign that you don’t care much about him anymore. If your relative was in jail for a few years for no good reason (especially if it was your fault that he landed there) and you are not doing anything about it, and are not anticipating his release, it is not a healthy sign.

If we are not eagerly waiting to be reunited with Hashem, then it’s not a healthy sign. If we don’t take action to try to hasten the Geula it’s not a healthy sign as well. If we are getting simanim of Moshiach, it’s like Hashem calling us and telling us he would like us to come home already. How do we respond to this? We need to come to the recognition that Hashem wants to bring the Geula and the ship is leaving. We need to wait for Moshiach because we know that this is the best thing for the world and this what Hashem wants. This is how Hashem’s name will become great as everyone will acknowledge His oneness and sovereignty on this world. We must not make cheshbonos if Moshiach is good for me or not. This shows a lack of subservience to Hashem, and getting stuck in ourself. We need to look at the bigger picture in the world, and it’s all about Hashem.

There is a group of Yidden who are well connected to Hashem with Torah, tefilla, and they refined their middos, as well. Obviously, these people can still improve themselves, but they should continue exactly what they were doing (including their mussar seder). Obviously they can also put more fire into their Avodas Hashem. However, there is one thing that these people need to do. They need to sit and wait for the Geula. They need to think about the Bais Hamikdash more. We know that even with all their madreigos, they are not a fraction of what they could be with a Bais Hamikdash. The Chofetz Chaim brings the midrash that voices complaints against talmidei chachamim that are not metzape l’yeshua עסקת בתורתי ולא חכית למלכותי.

Recently I heard a story from Rav Zev Smith shlita about a man who had a golden business opportunity which he could have gone from a simple businessman to become a tremendously wealthy person worth millions and millions of dollars. He thought it over and he declined the offer. He explained to Rav Zev that he looked around the world (this story is pretty recent) as the world has turned over three hundred sixty degrees and is getting wilder by the day. He asked himself, “What does Hashem want? Obviously, Hashem wants to bring the Geula, so perhaps this is not the time start being busy with money.

Obviously, this doesn’t mean that the wealthy should dump their cash in the trash. They are employed by Hashem, and this was given to them by Hashem. The Avoda for the wealthy people these days should be to give more tzedaka and to do their Avodas Hashem with mesiras nefesh despite their busy lives. Give tzedaka with a smile. Give chizuk to the downtrodden.

Let me tell you an extremely mind boggling story told over by Rav Avraham Schor shlita. There was a certain chassid who was very extremely pious. One time he did a tremendous favor for his Rebbe. The Rebbe was overwhelmed by this act and he made an offer to this chassid and gave him two choices: either he could be next to him in the next world or he could be rich. To everyone’s astonishment, he chose to be rich. The Chassidim confronted him and asked how could have made such a poor choice. The Chassid responded that the promise for Olam Haba is for him and it’s all about me. On the other hand, the opportunity of riches gives me a massive opportunity to give to other people.

This story is extremely powerful and we can all get a tremendous perspective here, especially wealthy people. There can be two people with money in their bank account. One person sees himself in the money, while this Chassid saw other people in the money. He saw the great opportunity to be able to give and give and give. When one gives a large donation to a needy person, one is giving him so much simcha and chizuk. If one gives it with a smile, it becomes even greater. If one gives him solace and words of chizuk it’s immeasurably greater We need to rewire and reprogram our outlook of money.

*The bottom line is that everyone needs to make their Avodas Hashem real, and bring Hashem into their life. How? By subjugating their will to Him, thus humbling themselves. This can be a high level in tzipisa liyeshua as we are preparing ourselves immensely for that special day.*

**Let’s conclude with the following thought.** We are getting closer to Chanuka. Chanuka was a time when the Yidden had tremendous downfalls. The darkness in the world was so intense, as the midrash says on the passuk וחשך על פני תהום זו יון. We see how much darkness the Greeks brought into this world. However, Mattisyahu and his children got up and they didn’t give up, but with tremendous mesiras nefesh went out to war. It was through their attitude of אין ייאוש בעולם and their great mesiras nefesh that brought about the salvation and the radiant light of Chanuka.

Klal Yisroel these days is in a very difficult situation, and the world in general is in a very precarious situation. The forces of evil (the חשך) are getting stronger and stronger. We need to stand up and gird ourselves with Torah, tefilla and Gemillas Chassadim with Mesiras nefesh, but at the same time we need to have the attitude of אין יאוש בעולם. With that we will have a ישועה גדולה with the radiant light of אורו של משיח that will finally shine brightly. Let’s be zoche to the אור חדש על ציון תאיר ונזכה כולנו במהרה לאורו and hopefully we will be Zoche this Chanuka to watch the kindling of the light of the menora in the Bais Hamikdash hashlishis, Amen.

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