


**Parashat Shemini/
Hahodesh**

English version

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THE ART OF RENEWAL

Big days are ahead of us. The whole month of Nissan, we don't say Tahanun. This is because the whole month is considered Rosh Hodesh, as it says, הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֹהֵן רִאשׁוֹ הַחֹדֶשׁ. The first 12 days, we don't say Tahanun because those days are the anniversary of the twelve days of holiday each Tribe's Nasi made on his day's inauguration. The 13th of the month is considered Isru Hag of those 12 days. The 14th, Passover eve, is the day of Korban Pesah. From the 15th until the 21st is Passover. The 22nd is Isru Hag. From the 23rd until the 29th are the days we will celebrate the building of the 3rd Temple. The Third Temple will be built on the 15th of Nissan, the first day of Pesah, and the 7 days of inauguration of the Mizbeach will be postponed until after the holiday, so we will be able rejoice over it in its own merit and not on the Passover Holiday, itself.

The month of Nissan is the head of the year, ראשון הוא לחודשי השנה which makes it confusing. Rosh Hodesh Tishrei, is Rosh Hashana, because the world was created on that date. But still, G-d commands us to count the months of the year in such a way that Nissan is Month One, while Tishrei is Month Seven, the holy Jewish number. So, how does it make sense that we start the year with two First Bases? How can there be two first starts, one in Nissan and one in Tishrei, and what is the meaning behind it?

The month of Nissan, we celebrate the New Year for Kings. (Rosh Hashana 2a) This means that a king's official starting date to count each year of his reign, is not from the anniversary of when he started to reign, but from Rosh Hodesh Nissan.

There is a Hassidic twist to this. The month of Nissan is the month when we celebrate *the Jew* becoming a King. As the Talmud calls it, ראש השנה למלכים. Although there

is a Rosh Hashana in Tishrei, that is to commemorate the creation of the world and Man, and the continuous nature in which G-d runs the world from the day He created it, and how G-d judged Man and graciously awarded him another year, despite his sin. Rosh Hodesh Nissan, though, is to commemorate that G-d crowned us as Priests to Humanity, ואתם תהיו־לי ממלכת כהנים and He empowered us to rule our lives and nature, through giving us the power to control perspective and time. We control when it is the beginning of Spring and when Passover starts by deciding if we have a leap year or not, or a leap-month or just a regular month.

What does this mean, that if we are Kings over our Time, over our Schedule, we are Kings over the world?

The Jew has two options. A Jew can be living with a long-term perspective, thinking about his Olam Haba, and then he will be a Melech, a king, because he will be a Rosh-Hodesh-Nissan Jew. Or, a Jew, can live as a Rosh Hodesh Tishrei person, live like a Gentile, and then he will fall into the category of an Eved: he will live like a slave. What does it mean to live like a slave? Living like a slave means living with a short-term perspective, thinking only about Olam Hazeh, with the concept of עבדא בהפקירה ניהא ליה, a slave prefers a life of no responsibilities or rules. (Ketubot 11a, Gittin 13a)

The two calendars are two mindsets. The Orhot Tzaddikim tells us in Sha'ar Yirat Shamayim that everything in the world represents something in Man, as Man is an עולם קטן. Man is linked to the world, as he is responsible for it. The Skull is like the round sky, with the right eye compared to the sun, and the left eye compared to Venus. The veins in the body that transport the blood are like the rivers; the hot air and cold air of Earth resemble when Man blows with a wide-open



mouth, which creates hot air and when he blows with his mouth nearly closed, emitting cold air. There is thunder in the world, which is like when Man speaks, and there is lightening, which is when Man gets mad, and his face “lightens up”. Just like mountains, man has shoulders, knees, and heels and the rest of his joints. Just like different types of rocks, there are many types of teeth. Just like trees that bear fruit and others that don’t, so too, there are people who can bear children and people who cannot. Parallel to the 365 days a year, in the solar calendar, there are 365 sinews in humans. And just like there like is a soul that fills the body, maintains the body, outlives the body, can see but can’t be seen, is pure in the body, and does not sleep, so too, G-d fills his world, supports His world, outlives His world, sees and can’t be seen and never sleeps.

We can add to this Orhot Tzaddikim, that that two Rosh Hashanas, of Rosh Hodesh Nissan, and Rosh Hodesh Tishrei, which essentially are two types of calendars, one lunar and one solar, are the two psychological quests of the Jew: Man’s search for Meaning, and Man’s search for Survival. There are two parts of man. The part of man that needs to take care of his basic needs and the part that needs to make sense out of it all. The power of the Jew is the power of the New Moon, which is the power of renewal. A Jew needs to be a *מהדש*: once man tends to his basic needs for survival, he looks for what Maslow calls self-actualization, to reach goals and become greater beyond just surviving, or going with the flow, or continuing with the everyday. A Jew, has in his psychology, that he needs to be some sort of King. He needs to be the employer, the boss - and most important, he has a need to control his life and schedule, and not allow his schedule to rule *him*.

The Jew always has a way to think out-of-the-box and to be witty, more than gentiles. Rav Ovadia Yosef would say the Jewish Joke. There was this guy, who, after his wife cleaned the whole house for Pesach, he would snap at her, jokingly, after Biur Hametz and say, “Baruch Hashem, we got rid of all the Hametz in the house. But the main Hametz, we never got rid of!”... referring to his wife, as the Hametz. The wife would snap back, “Don’t worry, my dear husband. My father already sold me to a Goy, like you!”

The Parashat HaHodesh is the Parasha where G-d is telling all of us to go through a renewal, like the Moon, to do Teshuva. As we read in the Haftarah, G-d wants us to get ready for His Bet Hamikdash. This power of

renewal is given specifically to the Jew, as it means the Jew has an innate trait of doing Teshuva.

No matter what, G-d wants our Teshuva. No matter what, G-d always forgives us. We have no doubt in that, for we make the blessings, *הרוצה בתשובה*, that *G-d wants our Teshuva*, and the blessing *הגון המרבה לסלוח*, *Gracious, Who grants abundant forgiveness*. We recite these two blessings, using G-d’s Name. You can’t make a blessing if you are in doubt. The rule in Halacha is that *ספק ברכות להקל*. When you are in doubt, regarding making a blessing, better not to do so, as you may mention G-d’s Name in vain, which is stricter prohibition than the Mitzvah of making a blessing. Still, we repeat these blessings, as we are sure that G-d will accept any Teshuva we do, and He will forgive, no matter how far away we have gone.

R' Shneur Guata told a story that he had read recently. There was a young man here in Israel who had a wife and daughter. The wife got cancer, and during the time when she went through treatments, this good man took care of his wife, worked extra jobs to pay for the treatments and at the same time, brought up the daughter. He survived the juggling, until things got really serious with his wife. Then, his wife begged him that if she dies, he will always protect their daughter, Shlomit. When she passed, this man became not only the father of this girl, he also became the mother.

Of course, a man can never replace a mother, and the time that Shlomit reached high school age, she suddenly was taken over by the *טופש עשרה* teenage syndrome. Teenagers, from the age 15 till the age 25 can go through changes of growth in their prefrontal cortex, as the body and brain mature. This can cause teens to lack competency in three main executive areas in the brain. Long Term Perspective, Justice, and Consequence. Especially if there are reasons why the teen brain won’t work effectively, like different causes of trauma. Trauma could come from early exposure to desires, a sibling that gets more attention, being screamed at or other abuse, ADD/ADHD, an identity crisis, and a long laundry-list of other things. The only thing parents can do when their teens rebel is give unconditional love and affection, and pray their hearts out, when they say in the Amidah for the children to have a relationship with G-d, *לדור ודור נודה לך ונספר תהילתך*, *for generation after generation, we will thank You, and we will speak your praise!*



Well, Shlomit who grew up without a mother, with only a father who tried his hardest, looked for other places of love and acceptance that she might have felt lacking. The father warned her to stay away from bad friends, from getting close to boys, from dressing in ways that can attract the wrong type of people and from coming back extremely late at nights. But she told her father, "Dad. It's my life... They are just friends... It is just clothing..." "But Shlomit dear, I promised your Mom, before she died that I would protect you. I can't choose your friends for you, but please realize: the person you will be are the friends you have, and the clothing you wear."

Shlomit said, "Dad! You can't force your values on me. It is my life. Let me learn from my own mistakes."

This went back and forth for a while. Until one day, Shlomit said to her father, that she is flying with her Israeli friends to India, with a one-way ticket, not sure when she is coming back. The father told her, "Shlomit, you are going to dangerous places. You are hurting your soul and your future. I never stopped you. But this is too far. Shlomit, you are not flying! It is out of the question!"

Well, with all the emotions involved, his only daughter and family member, and his promise to his wife, Shlomit's father forgot the first rule of power. *Never try to overpower the one who has more power.* This is what our Rabbis call, תעלה בעידניה סגיד ליה *When you are with the fox in his fox hole, bow to him.* Our teens have the power of choice of their own lives, more power than we. Shlomit's father met her at the airport with her suitcases and friend-hippies. He watched in dismay as Shlomit was *a c t u a l l y* walking through security. This was for real. This was not a joke. With shock, and tears in his eyes, he called to Shlomit and begged her to come over to him before she walked through security towards the gate, with her passport in hand.

My daughter! Why are you doing this to me? I am begging you! Shlomit, if you walk past that gate, if you board that plane, you are walking out on me. I am putting down my foot now, because I love you, and I gave a promise to your Mom that I will always protect you. If you go now, you are going against all of your father and mother's values. You may never come back, and I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU. If you walk on now, I am cutting off all connection with you.

Shlomit turned around, and with tears in her eyes, said to her father what she was saying all along. "Dad, it's hard on me, too. It's my life. I can choose my friends, how I want to dress and the values that I believe in. Your path - Mom's path - does not work for me. I am not holding by where you want me to hold. I don't want what you want. You have to accept me as I am, and this is who I am. Don't force me to live my life your way."

With that, he said, "If so, I am breaking off all connection with you." He turned around and walked away, in tears. Shlomit walked back to her friends and walked passed security.

She had a great time in India... for the first few days. Parties, sin, freedom, drugs, alcohol, music, discos, living like a gentile or, more precisely, like an animal... It was hard, though, to get out of the cycle of guilt and lack of happiness. But at least, she was free, and no one could stop her from trying to find the love and happiness she thought she had missed, because she grew up without a mother. But, of course, she never found that love and happiness that she was looking for. This is because when a person feels like they are not complete, when they feel a lack, they need to connect to G-d to fill that lack. This is what is hinted to, in the words, תְּמִים וְיִתְגַּן אֱלֹהֵיךָ

Three years later, a friend from Israel showed up in India and met Shlomit. She surprised Shlomit and gave her a hug, telling her she is so sorry about her father, and that she could not make it. "What?? Why are you sorry for him? What are you talking about?" The friend turned white. "Your father passed away a few months ago. You did not know?"

Shlomit went into shock. She told her friend, that she did not know, and how her father was so disappointed with her, he cut off all contact. She got on the next plane back from India to Israel and ran straight from the plane towards the cemetery, looking for her father's grave, near her mother's. She read the inscription of her father on his grave, and she fell on his grave, balling. She hit herself, looked up to the sky and said, "Dad, I am sorry!!" But the clear-blue sky was quite, as if her father's soul was repeating the last words he told her. SHLOMIT, I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU.

Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. Shlomit, I will never forgive you. That is all Shlomit could hear in her head. She turned to G-d and said, "G-d!!! I want to do Teshuva! I want to come

back to you! I know that You always accept Teshuva, and that You always forgive, EVEN IF MY FATHER WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME! But this voice in my head is not letting me come back!!! Father in Heaven, HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS!!!" She called a cab, and she went straight to the Kotel, to pray her heart out.

She stood up front, crying, like a daughter who is leaning on her father; she leaned on the Wailing Wall, right near the Mehitzah. As she cried her soul out, she looked up to the sky again, and saw the letters in the Wall. She decided to write a letter, and push it into the cracks between the stones in the Wall. She wrote, *Father in Heaven, send me a sign of forgiveness. Send me a sign of acceptance. Send me a sign that what I have done to my father will not stop me from coming back!!! Send me a sign that my father forgives me!*

She folded this letter and looked for a crevice to put her note in, but there was none. She tried to find a spot, but she could not find one. She felt that maybe G-d is was just telling her, Shlomit, I will never forgive you.

But Shlomit did not give up hope. Any woman who attended a Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel knows there is some

sort of step, on the Mehitzah. She stood on the step and looked over the Mehitzah for a spot on the Wall: maybe she could reach a spot in the men's section. The Kotel was empty, as it was midday, and she noticed that nobody was paying attention to her, when she leaned over the Methitzah. So, she pushed in her note... and another note fell out, into her hand. She was about to put that other note back, but then she saw that written on that note, was the same name as hers. Shlomit.

Out of curiosity, she opened it up to see what was written on it. She started to shake. *"Master of the Universe! My daughter is in India. Please bring her back; make her repent! Her name is Shlomit bat Rivkah! If I could speak to her, I would tell her, I forgive you for everything, just go in the right path in life!!!"*

She cries out thanks to G-d, and she repents completely. A father of flesh and blood can forgive his daughter, no matter what she has done. G-d, who can do the impossible, who is א-ל טוב וסלה, the Almighty of Forgiveness, He for sure can forgive!

THE ART OF ADAPTING TO CHANGE

We all like Seder, order. But life is not Seder. It never was and never will be. When life has no Seder, we are forced to think hard and make an internal Seder. I.e., we are forced to answer the hardest questions in life. "What is important?" "What is more important?" "What are my long-term, 5, 10, 20-year goals? Olam Haba's goals?" "How is my busying myself with my short-term goals preventing me from achieving my long-term goals?"

There is a powerful Segulah from the Mekubalim to save one from pandemics. The Segulah is to read the 42 travels of the Jewish Nation in the desert, and then to read how before each journey, the Jews were not sure where the next trip would take them. Reading this, experiencing this uncertainty of "no order," of no idea where I will be tomorrow, is the Tikun, the rectification of pandemics. Accepting powerlessness with faith, and adapting to the new circumstances, seems to be a trait that G-d wants us all to develop.

How do we survive change we did not ask for, when things are out of order? How do we tap into the correct inner voices and know which voices to ignore? As usual,

life's answers hide in the weekly Torah portion. (see Esther R 7 17)

In this week's Parasha, Aharon experienced the loss of his two childless elder sons, the future Gedolei Hador. Moshe consoled his brother Aharon that the death of these holy giants was for a higher purpose of showing the world not to meddle with the holiness of G-d's Temple, no matter how holy you are. Aharon's response was legendary. וידם אהרן. Aharon stayed silent. The passuk uses the word דום. Not שתק, which is the classic word for silence. Why?

Another question. We see that the rewards that Aharon received for this silence were that G-d spoke to him, (Berachot 6b) and, in the merit of his silence, Aharon and his descendants merited the eternal Birkat Kohanim. (ידם is numerical value of 60, the amount of the words in Birkat Kohanim. Midrash A.) How are these two rewards "measure for measure"?

The word דום is more than silent. It means to hold something that is in motion in place דום בְּגִבְעוֹן דָּוִד. (Yehoshua 10 12) To freeze your inner emotions.



Aharon had so much to say, so many questions, so many tears to cry, so many shattered dreams... But Aharon stopped. He adapted to the situation. When you understand that change has taken place, when G-d does not give you options, we can only accept G-d. When change challenges us, we can only look back. We can never go back. M.J. Ryan, in *How to survive change you did not ask for*, helps us adapt to the new realities we did not choose by adapting seven truths.

1. Change is guaranteed to happen, sometime, somehow. Always embrace yourself for it.
2. It's not personal. You are not the only one.
3. What's comfortable, your habitual thoughts and behaviors, are not your friends. Learn objectivity. Learn to take a new, fresh look at the world that is present, as the first time you realize reality.
4. Change is not the enemy. Fear is. Time to remember your accomplishments and blessings.
5. Adapting emotionally to change is a cycle. Denial. Anger. Bargaining. Depression. Acceptance.
6. You're more resilient than you think.
7. G-d packed inside your soul's suitcase for life, the bedrock of strengths and values that make you unique. Learn what is inside your 120-year bag. Take this suitcase with you to your next stage of life.

Aharon knew that being a Jew means being ready to accept change as fast as it comes. No use in hanging on to the past, wondering what happened, how it happened or why it happened. The way to do this is to silence fear, denial, anger, bargaining, depression. *G-d is everything. And G-d is only good.* In the merit of silencing his inner voices, and listening to the new reality G-d made for him, Aharon merited to hear G-d speak to him. And in the merit of accepting it all, he was gifted with the eternal Birkat Kohanim, the blessing that tells us, that no matter what happens, G-d is blessing us and watching over us. That there is always good hidden in the darkest of times.

One person in Israel was quick on his feet in the outset of Covid 19. The first thing he did after Purim, was to close his business, and get the Misrad Habriut, Health Ministry, to OK his new, home-made 70% alcohol hand sanitizers, within 20 hours! He did not waste time reading more news, watching or sending WhatsApp clips that were irrelevant to him personally. He was not going to ponder the situation, hemming and hawing why it is like it is, whose fault it is, or speculate how long it will take. He was not getting stuck in denial. He did not accept the belief that "there is nothing I can do." Instead, he focused on solutions, and on what new things he was

willing to learn despite that it takes extra effort. He embraced the situation, knew what he needed to do, and he accomplished it. He was not going to wait for someone or something to come along to rescue him from having to change i.e., government grants. Instead, he identified new needs and how to use what's happening to align even more with the market. He was able to say fast enough, *OK, that's over, now what?*

Life is nothing more than adapting to circumstances in which we exist. This perspective is the secret to health, happiness, and serenity. King David took this concept of acceptance and adapting to a whole new level לְמַעַן יְדַבֵּר וְיִתְפַּרֵּץ כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם וְיִקְנֶה אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אֲוֵרָה. *So that Kavod (my soul) will praise you, and it will not silence. YKVK, my G-d, no matter what, I will always praise you (Tehillim 30, 13) I will use the situation, no matter what it is, and find ways how to thank Hashem for it.*

We were all forced during Covid 19 to learn new skills we never realized we could be good at. Haircuts, storytelling, cleaning for Pesach, running a Seder on our own, and learning how to use the internet to better our learning, businesses, connecting with people, and saving time. We are all forced to question what we have been so busy with outside of our houses and families. And we all began to wonder where we were so busy running to and why we need fancy cars or overpriced brand-name clothing. We begin to wonder why we need to make over-attended and extravagant Semachot. And as painful as it is, the circumstance forces us to rethink why we attend our synagogues and how much we miss Minyan.

Probably the best thing I did to regain my sanity was to make a list of things I have no control over, and a list of things I do have control over. One of the things that helped me a lot was the realization of so many things I took for granted that I now have to thank G-d for. One of them, of course, is that I could be thankful for every breath I take. הָאֵל לְכָל נְשִׁמָּה תְהַלֵּל לְה' For every breath, על כל נְשִׁמָּה וְנְשִׁמָּה, we need to thank G-d. (Bereshit R 14 9) This passuk is at the very end of Tehillim, and the passuk that is relevant to the end of times, something that is so pertinent to specifically our times. This passuk, we say before Vayebarech David, which represents King David's blessing G-d for his accumulation of funds to build the Temple. May we merit in our days.

Here are the Selfie Steps to adapt and survive change you didn't ask for.



1. *This is not that.* People compare change to other change. 2020 is not 2008. 2020 is not 9/11. 2020 is not Pearl Harbor. 2020 is 2020. America is not Italy or China or Israel. And we should look at each country, with a new and fresh 20/20 look. Compare only to learn what to embrace for.
2. What is working now? Let us do more of that. What is not working now? Let us do less of that.
3. When there is a lot of change look for “game changers”. Don’t settle with just improving something that could be *so* much better. Steve Jobs taught us that a better “Palm Pilot” is selling yourself short.
4. Don’t make a five-foot wave into a tsunami. Don’t make things worse than they actually are.
5. More often than not, the things we fear most don’t end up happening, and the things we fear least, can metamorphosis into our biggest crisis. Always think of worst-case scenarios and embrace yourself for any change that may come.
6. Stay positive, no matter what. G-d allows us to confine ourselves to our own beliefs. Don’t make your situation worse than it has to be, via negative thinking.
7. Learn how to silence emotions so that you can hear your rational inner voice. Feelings come and feelings go, but logic and rational stay forever. The only way to silence emotions and hear rational is by turning your head into a GemaraKup. תּוֹרַת יְקוֹנָק תְּמַיְמָה מִשִּׁיבַת גְּבִשׁ עֲדוּת. יְקוֹנָק יִצְמָנָה מִהַכְּיֹמֶת פְּתִי

Why Aaron Was Chosen

Vayomer Moshe el Aaron krav el hamizbeach...v’chapter – “And Moshe said to Aaron, ‘Approach the altar...and atone’” (Vayikra 9:7)

Rashi explains that Aaron was afraid and embarrassed to approach the Altar. Moshe responded, “Why are you embarrassed? For this you were appointed!”

Two questions can be posed here on Rashi. Why was Aaron embarrassed? And how did Moshe’s answer to him help?

The Ben Ish Chai explains why Aaron was both embarrassed and afraid. The korbanos of that day were to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. Since Aaron was unintentionally involved in the making of the calf, he first had to bring a korban for himself, and he was embarrassed. He was also afraid that other Leviim might use the fact that Aaron was involved in the sin to undermine his authority, like Korach later did.

However, with just 2 words (L’kach nivcharta – for this you were chosen), Moshe changed Aaron’s perspective. Moshe knew that, rather than being a handicap, it is essential that a leader have some sort of embarrassing episode in his past, so that he does not become arrogant around his fellows.

Skeleton in the Closet

The source of this idea is in the Talmud (Yoma 22b). Chazal explain why King David’s royal dynasty will last all the way until Mashiach, as opposed to King Shaul’s, which ended. David’s lineage was “controversial” – his maternal grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabite convert. The Torah



states that a man from Moav may not convert to Judaism, and there was great debate among the rabbis about whether a Moabite woman may enter the Jewish nation (the halacha is that she may). Also, because of his different hair color and other reasons for suspicion, his brothers rejected him and called him a mamzer, and he was relegated to the role of shepherding in places where he was in danger of attack by wild animals. Because of all this, David remained humble and never felt that he deserved to be a King.

King Shaul on the other hand, had a perfectly respectful background and complexion to be a leader. Therefore, the Talmud concludes that we only appoint a leader who has a “Kupa shel Sheratzim” – some type of background and past that will remind him “go back to where you belong” if he gets haughty.

Moshe told Aaron that, especially as Kohen Gadol, his sin wasn't something to be embarrassed about, and was no cause for fear. In fact, it was his ticket to being a successful leader! Any of the other Leviim wouldn't have qualified for this position because the entire tribe remained clean.

This is a phenomenal perspective which can be perceived from many viewpoints. First, a lesson can be derived about the importance of humility as a leader. This can only be brought about by someone who recognizes that he is not worthy. This is the exceptional trait of Jews – to be baishanim (modest). Modesty is not a social handicap; it means recognition of where one's place is.

Bumpy Road to Priesthood

Another concept that can be derived is that even failure and weaknesses can be “traded in” for assets and strengths after proper recognition of faulty judgment. Repentance can only work when one realizes that he can actually turn his weaknesses into strengths. When one does not recognize this, he still might see himself as an eternally doomed sinner. Even after he comes to terms with his faults and he goes through the proper elements of change and repentance, he will still feel he has a skeleton in the closet which can't have proper burial. This type of behavior is destructive and counter-productive.

By merely focusing on one's past misbehavior, one does not gain the power to stand up against a future tide of nisyonot or to release himself from a guilty, negative mindset. There was truth to Aaron's feelings that his mistake left him unworthy of being a leader. However, a more positive belief and perception would have been to take this opportunity to learn how to empathize with others who have made mistakes and want to repent.

Fulfilling Phylacteries

Consider the following parable: Morris, an observant Jew, wore tefillin every day. When he was eighty years old, he decided to have his tefillin checked to see if they were kosher. One day, a well-known sofer passed through his town and put up a stand in shul offering to check tefillin. To his dismay, Morris discovered that his tefillin were pasul (not kosher). Understandably, Morris was beside himself. He approached his Rav with a choked voice and watery eyes, unable to accept the bitter news that he had never properly fulfilled the mitzvah of tefillin. The Rav



suggested that Morris should offer to donate money for others to get their tefillin checked and fixed for free, and that he should donate kosher tefillin to Bar Mitzvah boys who either didn't have the money or didn't understand the importance of having kosher tefillin. Instead of focusing on what he couldn't do anything about anymore, Morris found in this piece of advice a way to rectify his loss and ensure that when he returned his soul to his Creator, it would be with the merit of having helped many other people to wear kosher tefillin for the rest of their lives.

Contaminated Water Purification

A few years back on Erev Sukkos, a Rebbe for Chassidic Yerushalmi cheder boys told me something he had taught to his students in Meah Shearim on the topic of the joy of Simchat Beit HaShoeva. On Rosh Hashana, there is a minhag to do tashlich – we shake out our pockets to rid ourselves of our sins that we worked to get rid of throughout Elul. This behavior is out of fear of our sins on the Day of Judgment. Sukkos, however, is a time for teshuva m'ahava (repentance out of love). Therefore, we make great celebrations while drawing the water into which we threw our sins. Teshuva M'Ahava turns our sins into merits. We want those waters back so that we can get merits out of them by using the proper methods to change ourselves and purify our deeds. We exchange pain for power, past for future and negative experience for positive lessons and self-awareness.

Moshe taught Aaron how to find the positives in everything, even in his own mistakes. We can experience great simcha and transform ourselves if we can internalize this message as well!

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