



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א  
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

## Parashat Nitzavim

### **The Secret to Success – Small Commitments**

Our *parasha* opens, "You are all standing here today before Hashem, your G-d; your leaders, judges, elders ... from your wood choppers until your water drawers."

#### **Questions:**

- 1- The commentators ask that the word "today" in the aforementioned *pasuk* seems extra; it should have simply stated, "You are standing before Hashem..."
- 2- This question is compounded when we consider the fact that the Torah was given for eternity, for every ensuing generation. Therefore anyone who reads this *parasha*, whenever he reads it, when he reads "today," is referring to that very day – how can this be?

#### **Advice of the Yetzer Hara**

As the High Holy Days draw near, every Jewish heart is aroused to repent and regret his previous deeds, and he wishes to correct them. However, when the *yetzer hara* sees this, he searches for ways to dull these feelings. He therefore doesn't just approach man foolishly and simply tell him not to repent, for a Jew would never listen to him. So he tries the opposite approach – he encourages man to repent even more and try to change himself entirely. The *yetzer hara* knows the rule that if one tries to take on too much, he will accomplish nothing, so that is exactly what he tries to convince man to do. So the Torah advises us that the proper way to triumph during these days and rectify ourselves is by accepting small things upon ourselves, as we will soon explain.

#### **An Allusion to the Day of Judgment**

We can answer the questions we started with by first mentioning the allusion our holy *seforim* find in this *pasuk*. They write that the day the *pasuk* is referring to is none other than Rosh Hashanah, on which we all stand before Hashem and then pass before Him like sheep. The holy Alshich adds that the *pasuk* stresses that on Rosh Hashanah "you are **all** standing before Hashem." In other words, in Hashem's eyes everyone is equal. In the eyes of man there are leaders, judges, elders and the like, while the wood choppers, for example, are viewed to be of a lower social standing. However, as the *pasuk* implies, these are "**your** leaders," and "**your** judges; they are "**your** wood choppers" etc. But the *pasuk* does not state that they are the leaders and judges "of the Jewish people." This is because the various levels and standings in society are from **our** human perspective, because man sees only with his eyes. However, Hashem sees into man's heart, and His perspective is altogether different. From Hashem's perspective, everyone is standing before Him together, on the same level, on the Day of Judgment.

#### **Thinking About Only One Day at a Time**

Understandably, when man stands trial on the Day of Judgment, knowing that a verdict is about to be cast, and that it will affect the rest of his life, he is worried. How can he emerge from this trial victorious? The Torah provides us with the answer in the very same *pasuk*, "You are all standing **today**



## הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
ישיבה קטנה ארצות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

before Hashem, your G-d..." If you wish to come out of the Day of Judgment "standing," you must serve Hashem **"today."** In other words, every day one must think that he has only that day's Divine service ahead of him – and that's it. He should not think about the distant future, for this is the advice of the *yetzer hara*. If man thinks about everything he must do in the future, then the *yetzer hara* can easily put into his head many different doubts and concerns that will eventually deter him and convince him not to change his ways.

### One Step at a Time

When discussing acquiring the trait of abstaining from the mundane, the *Mesillat Yesharim* (end of chapter 15) warns that an individual mustn't skip to the highest level all at once. For then he will certainly be unable to retain the level he has reached – it will be short-lived. Rather, he should do it gradually, stage by stage – today he should abstain slightly, tomorrow slightly more, until he gets accustomed to it. Then it will become like second nature to him.

Similarly, Rabbeinu Tam in his *Sefer Hayashar* (*shaar* 6), extends this principle to the entire spectrum of Divine service. He writes that when one is starting to grow in a certain area, he should not begin with difficult things; rather, with easy things. If he cannot do them even though they are easy, he should do a portion of them. As he continues, he should add additional things. If he sees that he is not happy with what he is doing, he should do less. However, he should not give it up entirely. But if from the outset he will be taught to do the most difficult aspects, then he will grow frustrated, and he will eventually reject everything and not return to it.

### Even a Little is Bit is Inestimably Good

Rav Yisrael Salanter writes that Yom Kippur atones if one repents and stops committing the sin that he is repenting for. However, even just a small improvement is incredibly good. He should try to accept something upon himself on Yom Kippur for the future – no matter how small – and it is a very great achievement. It will serve to save him from many a misfortune and he will benefit immeasurably.

### Small Commitments

To fulfill the advice of Rav Yisrael Salanter according to our level, we do not have to be experts at understanding man's psyche and contemplate what are considered easy things to accept upon ourselves. The simplest way is for us to simply accept upon ourselves to refrain from a particular sin, the easiest one that is in our ability to refrain from. Then we will definitely be able to keep it up for a long time. For in truth, what we will be blamed for the most in Heaven is for what would have been the easiest for us to refrain from. For example, someone who is used to speaking *lashon hara* all the time and feels that that it would be difficult for him to stop entirely, should try to accept upon himself one hour a week where he will be careful not to speak *lashon hara*; no one would find this difficult. Therefore the greatest claim that will be leveled upon him is why he was not careful to guard his tongue at least for one hour a week. If he does so, however, he will save himself from harsh and bitter punishments and will have commenced the *teshuvah* process. Therefore when an individual wishes to accept upon himself ways that he can improve and begin to do *teshuvah*, he must begin with easy



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א  
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

commitments. This is the way that he will be able to succeed, with Hashem's help. This applies throughout the entire year, but all the more so, during these days of *teshuvah*.

### The Power to Save One's Life

There is a story that has become well known, which illustrates that if a person accepts something upon himself to honor Hashem, it can save his life. There was a woman from the US who attended a *drasha* and greatly improved her observance of the laws of *tzinus*. She accepted upon herself not to leave her house without her hair being covered. The next day, she went to hang her laundry in the yard, while her hair was not yet covered. Winds were blowing strongly, and as a result, the door leading to her yard slammed shut. She could not go back inside through her yard; rather, she would be forced to go around to the front of the house. But just yesterday, she had accepted upon herself not to leave her home without a head covering! Left with no choice, she called her husband, who was in middle of work. Her husband answered the phone, and his wife told him to come and free her- for she could not leave the yard! The husband was not pleased, "Tell me," he said, "do you have no other choice but to break up my day for this?! Put your hand on your head, and go inside from the front of the house!" She said that she would not budge from there, and that it would be his fault. Left with no other choice, the husband went home and helped his wife cover her hair. But on his way back to work, he was in for a terrible shock. He smelled the smell of fire coming from his work place – the Twin Towers. Shortly thereafter he discovered that shortly after he had left to help his wife, the tragedy of the Twin Towers took place, and his life was spared. Dear brothers, from this story we can understand the power of accepting something upon oneself in order to change. Even the greatest such acceptance has very great power.

### Words of Mussar and the Specialness of the Last Week of the Year

We have learned that the way to overpower the *yetzer hara* is specifically by accepting small things upon oneself and consistently doing them. This is the way to grow in the service of Hashem. Similarly it is written in the holy *sefarim* about the final week of the year. Each day is the final one of the year – the final Sunday, Monday, etc. It is worthwhile for each person to try and correct each one of these days, for by doing so, he rectifies the previous days of that week of that year. We are taught that everything goes after the conclusion. Therefore when an individual takes care to view each day separately and thinks about how he can improve his deeds, prayers and Torah study, he will certainly succeed in reaching his goal. He will not pursue money, honor, and the like, forgetting his main purpose in the world.

Shabbat Shalom and Ketiva V'chatima Tovah,  
Rav Mordechai Malka



**הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**  
**נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"**

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך