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TOURO TORAH

YOM KIPPUR, SUCCOS AND SIMCHAS TORAH

A publication of the Torah Lishma Club, Women's Division, Touro College Manhattan, Lexington Campus

A servant has transgressed the will of the king and is nervously awaiting the royal verdict of what his fate will be. He is then told that the king is a compassionate and forgiving ruler. The servant breathes a sigh of relief; at least there is some hope. The prospects are not as terrifying.

In Tehillim 130:4 it says, "Ki Imcha Haslichu Limaan Tivareh," But with You there is forgiveness in order that You may be feared. David Hamelech, in this verse, is implying the opposite of what took place in the story above. Here, David Hamelech writes that it is the forgiveness of Hashem that enables us to fear him. Shouldn't the opposite be true? Shouldn't it be that the more forgiveness the less reason to fear?

We learn a very fundamental lesson from the Rambam's introduction to Sefer Devarim which clarifies the difficulty in the pasuk above. Were it not for the possibility of Divine forgiveness, our fear of Hashem would be so overwhelming that it would drive us to despair. This would cause us to remain entrenched in our sins out of the sheer hopelessness of ever returning to HaKodesh Baruch Hu. It is only the mercy of Hashem that allows us to fear Him and do teshuva. Without this mercy, the finality of sin would be too devastating, the situation too hopeless to even begin repairing it.

The Midrash Rabbah explains our pasuk in Tehillim as follows. "Ki Imcha Haslichu," For with You is forgiveness. The love Hashem has for Bnei Yisroel is so abundant that on Rosh Hashanah Hashem stores up the forgiveness and waits to grant it to us on Yom Kippur. The forgiveness is granted on condition that we do teshuva. It is our knowledge of this that enables us to properly fear Hashem and thereby do teshuva.

The Chafetz Chaim in the Mishna Brurah tells us that all we have to do is make the effort to accept some realistically achievable improvement in our conduct and Hashem, awaiting with forgiveness in hand, will help us along. Through this, continues the Chafetz Chaim, we will be sealed in the book of life.

Gmar Chasima Tova!

[Contributed by: Etti Adler adapted from: Majesty of Man]

When a person is awaiting a judgment, he normally acts in an extra special way in order to merit a good judgment. However, once his judgment period is over, he tends to slack off and not be as careful as he was before the judgment.

We as Jews act quite differently. After Yom Kippur, when we repented for all of our sins and acquired a clean slate for the upcoming year, we do not become lackadaisical in our mitzvah observance. Rather, we immediately busy ourselves with more mitzvos, such as building a succah and buying a lulav and an esrog. In fact, on Succos, a Jew envelopes his entire body in mitzvos. His hands hold the lulav and esrog, his mouth sings Hallel to Hashem and his heart fulfills the extra mitzvah of simcha on Succos. A person then enters the Succah with his entire body.

After the intense build up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it might seem easy to feel a loss of spiritual excitement. However, the upcoming holiday of Succos holds so many mitzvah opportunities.

Lets seize the opportunity and make the most of this special Chag!

[Contributed by Leah Yanofsky adapted from Sefer Hatodaah by Rav Eliyahu Kitov.]

On Simchas Torah, we are privileged to once again begin the cycle of Parshios. As we open Parshas Bereishis, we are met with the words "Bereishis Bara Elokim." In the beginning G-d created. When given a closer look, it would seem that this phrase could easily be misinterpreted by a non-believer to mean, "Bereishis created G-d!" Why would Hashem in his infinite wisdom have left such a window of opportunity for heretics to misconstrue the opening words of our holy Torah? There must be a reason why the pasuk is phrased in this way.

The Kli Yakar explains that the reason the pasuk says "Bereishis Bara Elokim" rather than "Elokim Bara Bereishis" is because of Hashem's modesty. Contrary to what a mortal king might do,

Hashem did not want His name mentioned first. The importance of modesty and never chasing after kavod, honor is thereby expressed in these opening words of the Torah.

Rashi chooses to explain the wording of this phrase in a different light. He says that the Torah refers to two things as "Reishis". In Mishlei 8:22, the Torah itself is referred to as "Reishis Darco," the beginning of Hashem's way and in Yirmeyahu 2:3, the Jewish People are referred to as "Reishis Tevuaso," the first of Hashem's crop. Quoted by Rashi, the Bereishis Rabbah explains that the word "Bereshis" actually evolved from the words, "Bishvil Reishis." In other words, the world was created for the sake of those things that are referred to as "Reishis," namely the Torah and Klal Yisroel! We can now understand why the word "Bereishis" comes at the beginning of the pasuk.

We can clearly see why Hashem created the world for Klal Yisroel because without it, where would we exist?! But does the Torah need a world? Obviously not, but the people who learn the Torah certainly do!

We can now conclude that the world was created so that Klal Yisroel could be involved in Limud Hatorah, learning Torah. If we do so, at any level or amount, we are contributing to the purpose for which the world was created. As the new year begins, we have a fresh, clean slate before us. With what may seem like only a little effort-learning a few pasukim a day, a few halachos in Shmiras Halashon at night etc., we can hopefully quicken the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of the world!

[Contributed by Aliza Sukenik]