

Dear Friends,

Times are tough. Days are hard and nights don't necessarily bring much reprieve. Many feel scared and anxious, worried and overwhelmed. **How can we find chizuk in this idea?**

There's a famous principle in the Torah. Every mitzvah that we, klal Yisrael, perform down here has a heavenly counterpart. We wear tefillin and Hashem wears tefillin. We rest on Shabbos and Hashem rests on Shabbos.

We daven...and Hashem davens.

Wait. How can that make sense?

The Navi Yeshaya says:

V'haviosim el har kodshi, v'simachtim b'veis tefillasi... (ישעיהו נז)

And you shall bring them to My holy mountain, and you shall enable them to rejoice in the house of **My prayer.**

Not the house where you pray to me. The house where **I daven.**

What does that mean?

There's a famous Midrash that recounts a debate over which ois the Torah should begin with. Should it be alef, the first letter? No. Hashem skipped over the alef and chose to start the Torah with the second letter, **beis, because it is the start of the word brachah.**

What does this mean?

Let's try to understand.

The world receives its existence every moment from Hashem. He looks down upon us, kviyachol, and fills the world with shefa: **air to breathe, water to drink, health and light and food and offspring.** This is the brachah, the expansiveness and shefa, which Hashem bestows upon the world.

So, of course Hashem decreed that the Torah should begin with beis, for brachah. Because the very creation of the world, and its continued existence—its entire purpose—is the idea of brachah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu created the world l'heitiv, to give us of His goodness. **To bestow kindness on us. Thus, the world is brachah, a place of shefa, of giving.**

Let's take a moment to return to our original question. We daven. And Hashem davens. What exactly does this mean? When we daven, we stand, search our hearts, and ask Hashem for what we want and need. We express our retzonos. Please Hashem... Give us... we want health and we want parnassah and we want children and shiduchim and we want peace of mind. **So, if Hashem davens, that means that He, too, has a ratzon.**

What is His ratzon? What does Hashem daven for?

Derech hatov le'heitiv. Hashem wants to give to us. Hashem wants to pour down his brachos and His shefa upon us, His beloved children. He wants to make this entire universe a place of brachah.

But for Him to do that, He needs us, k'viyachol. **He needs us to start the mechanism. He needs us to look to Him and ask.** He needs us to connect. He wants us to connect to the shefa, acknowledge it, appreciate it, and use it to build a relationship of closeness with Him. He wants us to go through the cycle. He wants us to ask, to make brachos, to daven, to thank, and to ask again—all so that He, in turn can express His biggest ratzon, **which is to shower us with shefa, to give us the endless goodness that He wants to bestow.**

Our tefilah, our brachos, are the spiritual mechanism that enable this to take place. When we look upwards, not just once a day, but every time we put food into our mouth, every time we daven, every time we say baruch Hashem and mean it, we thereby acknowledge the source of everything we wish for. In doing so, we are asking for His shefa, **and that activates a continuous and generous flow.**

So, what happens at a time of hester panim? There's a reduction in the flow of shefa to the world. The bracha is reduced. The gas which fuels the mechanism is low and so the brachah is reduced.

In the generation of Dovid Hamelech, there was a plague, a mageifa. Maybe we never understood the disastrous and all-encompassing magnitude of that word. In the last few weeks we have been given deeper clarity and first-hand experience into the meaning. It is not just a word. It is not just a historical phenomenon. It's an experience. And a difficult one. **One we are living in right now.**

Back then, when we had our own king who served under the direct guidance of Hashem - what steps did Dovid Hamelech take? The spiritual tikkun that he enacted was that we should say 100 brachos a day. That every day, a few times an hour, we would look up to Shamayim and **acknowledge the Source of all**. That each time we took a morsel of food into our mouth, we would be in touch with the Source of that food, that goodness. And in doing so, **we would be putting a turbo power on the mechanism of shefa**. We would be jumpstarting the process by which Hashem can send his brachah down to the world.

We need Hashem's shefa. We need this world to be a place of bracha, not of constraint and illness and bitter mourning. **There is a way forward**. We know that the mechanism of shefa begins here on earth, and it begins with the simple act of uttering a few words, with the sincere lifting of our hearts, of the act of connecting to the Source of all.

Baruch atah Hashem... You, Hashem, are the source of all goodness. **You created this apple that I hold in my hand because You want me to enjoy it**. You gifted me with water that will quench my thirst. And I can use the word Atah, You, because You want us to have a personal relationship with You.

Elokeinu... Our G-d, He Who is all-powerful, Who holds the world in His hand, wants us to reach out to Him.

Melech Ha'olom... King of the world. Even when there is he'elam, hiddenness, **I struggle and yearn and find it in myself to reach up and connect**. Because a King

wants nothing more than to give to His subjects. He wants a kingdom that is filled with brachah.

May we be zoche to lift our eyes and hearts. May we feel and see Hashem's closeness and His pining to shower us with goodness. **May we activate the shefa, and merit to see a world filled with brachah.**

Sincerely,

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