

Parashas
Ki Savo

• 699 •

כ' אלול תשפ"ה
5785

י"ז ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

כל המוסף גורע

טיב המערכת

שבת סליחות

Shabbos of Selichos

This Shabbos is called by everyone "Shabbos of Selichos," although on Shabbos we do not say Selichos, but since immediately after Shabbos all of the Jewish people have the custom to say Selichos – this Shabbos is called by this name, (and in this the members of the Ashkenazic communities join the members of the Sephardic communities, who already say Selichos from the beginning of the month of Elul).

Moreinu HaRav shlit"א told that one year after the recitation of the Selichos of Motzaei Shabbos 'B'motzaei Menuchah', a man approached him with a question on his lips: Behold every year we say Selichos and return in repentance, so it was last year and so it was the year before that, and in all the years, and nevertheless, after the passing of the Days of Awe we return to our deeds and to our repulsive habits, and to our great sorrow we know that also in this year, seemingly, the matter will not be different, so for what reason do we do all this?

The Rav answered him: Although it seems that indeed this claim is correct, the truth is not so, for if we take as an example the days before Pesach in which we clean the house every year, although we know that immediately after Pesach the house will become dirty again, and if one year the mistress of the house decides that there is no benefit in this cleaning, behold it is clear to us that the dirt and filth will accumulate until it will indeed no longer be possible to clean the house from its grime. So it is regarding us: every year we clean our souls from all the filth that clung to us during the year, and even if, chas v'shalom, during the year we repeated our deeds like a dog that returns to its vomit, we shall return again in repentance also in this year. But if, chas v'shalom, we decide that we no longer have any need for that "temporary" repentance, since in any case we return to the same situation, then, chas v'shalom, we are liable to reach a state where indeed we will no longer be able to return and cleanse ourselves from our sins.

Therefore, this year, when we stand before our Creator in the recitation of Selichos, we must not think of the trials that await us during the coming year, but we must remember the words of the Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvah: "And what is repentance? It is that the sinner abandon his sin, remove it from his thoughts, and resolve in his heart never to do it again... and also he must regret that which has passed... and He Who knows all hidden things shall testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again."

Tiv HaMoadim – Elul - Selichos

Whoever adds, diminishes

וְלֹא תִסּוּר מִכָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם יְמִין וּשְׂמֹאל לְלֶכֶת אַחֲרַי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לְעִבְדָם: (כח, יד)

And do not turn away from any of the words that I command you this day, right or left, to follow the gods of others, to worship them. (28:14)

In the *viduy* that Rabbeinu Nissim composed (which is said in the *sefer* "Yom Kippur Katan"), it is mentioned among other things: "That which You permitted I prohibited." Meaning, there is place to confess for having been stringent in matters that the Torah permitted.

At first, when reflecting on these words, astonishment is aroused, for even if we need not be stringent and abstain from what is permitted, we are not sinning when we are stringent, so why should we confess for this?

However, when looking deeply into the recesses of the soul, we can find an answer to this matter. For behold, when a person fulfills with integrity the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* without being stringent beyond its words, he demonstrates thereby that he is a kosher person, and all his ways are for the sake of Heaven, and therefore he acts according to the rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch* and fulfills what Hashem Yisbarach desires of him. But one who seeks to be stringent beyond its words – it may be that he too is among the kosher, and his stringencies come from an added fear that resides in his heart. Yet there is also room to say that his stringencies are not the result of fear, but nothing other than the counsel of the *yetzer*, which entices him to pride himself that he is a '*machmir*' - "stringent"... And if this is the case, aside from the fact that his stringencies themselves are considered sins, the statement of Chazal (Avos 4:2) "One sin draws another sin" will be fulfilled in him, and these stringencies will bring in their wake further sins, for since his stringencies do not come from fear, he will act upon them also in circumstances where they will lead to stumbling. And it is well understood why he is obligated to repent for them...

Even a wise man and a true G-d-fearing person, who is separate and removed from any trace of arrogance and pride, and knows in himself that his stringencies come only from a strong desire to give pleasure to his Creator, still cannot be certain that this is indeed the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and he must examine well whether these stringencies could bring him to stumbling. For one of the stratagems of the *yetzer* is to entice a person that he must show piety with his Creator in a place where it is not appropriate, understanding that in the end a stumbling will come forth from his piety. And primarily he tries this with the righteous and the G-d-fearing, understanding that these he will not succeed in enticing to an outright sin.

And like that incident that was with the *Chafetz Chaim zy"א* who was strict with the students of his yeshiva in Radin that they should go to sleep at ten o'clock at night, in order that they should complete the hours of sleep required for them, and that their minds should be settled upon them and they should be able to serve their Creator properly on the morrow. And the *Chafetz Chaim* himself would urge the young men to go up to their beds, and he would extinguish the light burning in the hall of the yeshiva to ensure that no boys would remain trying to outsmart his will.

However, there were some boys who mistakenly thought that their judgment was better than the judgment of the *Chafetz Chaim*, and they imagined to themselves that they did not need so many hours of sleep and could still apply themselves to their learning another hour or two or more. And these also did so: after the *Chafetz Chaim* went his way, they arose from their beds and returned to the Bais Medrash of the yeshiva and again lit up the hall and returned to their learning.

They behaved thus for a long period, until one day the *Chafetz Chaim* noticed the matter, and he too returned to the Bais Medrash of the yeshiva to instruct those boys to obey his command, and with no choice they returned to their beds.

However, there were some for whom the “yetzer of piety” had still not ceased, and again they returned as before to the Gemara, and they did not know that the *Chafetz Chaim* also recognized the nature of that “yetzer” and did not imagine that he would appear again to rebuke them. But so it was, the *Chafetz Chaim* appeared a third time to ensure that all were obeying his command, and when he again found those “wise ones” bent over their books, he opened and said:

“My dear students, perhaps you think that my will is that you should not engage in Torah, *chalilah*?! Know that it is an error in your hands! On the contrary, only your good and your Torah do I seek! And I will explain to you my actions.

Behold, how could the yetzer gain any foothold among the boys of the yeshiva of Radin, who are immersed only in the world of Torah? Would he come and say to them

חדש בארה"ב ניתן להשיג ספרי 'מכון טיב' מהגה"צ רבי גמליאל הכהן רבינובין שליט"א

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not to learn? He knows that the students of the yeshiva would not obey him. But since he has a mission to divert human beings from uprightness, therefore the yetzer found an invention to entice the students toward “extremes,” to entice them to add more and more hours to their Torah learning. In this way he ensures his success, knowing that the strength of the boys will not sustain them, and they will thereby ultimately turn into the sick in body and soul, *Rachmana litzlan*, and the matter will mark them for all their lives, for they will need to struggle with their weaknesses, and they will no longer be able to persevere in their learning as is proper. And here the *Chafetz Chaim* ended his words, saying: Shall we assist him to destroy us?!”

Behold from this incident, that even one who wants to be stringent must be exceedingly wise in order to know whether his stringencies are kept by their owner for his harm, *chalilah*. And it is better therefore

that he not pursue them, and he should do only according to the counsel of the *Shulchan Aruch*, for only one who takes as a rule not to deviate from what is ruled in the *Shulchan Aruch* merits superior protection, for he will always have an answer in his mouth against the claims of the yetzer hara, for thus he will say to him: I do not turn aside from what is stated in the *Shulchan Aruch*, neither to leniency nor to stringency...

This is the point to which Rabbeinu Nissim alluded in the words “That which You permitted I prohibited” in the wording of his confession, that “whoever adds, diminishes.” It is indeed true that now he is “stringent” and “beautifying,” but as the days pass his stringencies and his adornments will exact their cost, and who knows what price he will need to pay for them. And since this is so, certainly his stringencies are not desirable to the Creator, and he must confess and repent for them.

The Torah before us alluded to this matter, that after it said, “And you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day,” it added “right or left,” to teach that even if it seems to you that the yetzer is not in the category of “sin,” but is nothing other than a stringency – an aspect of “right” – nevertheless be careful of this. And why? The answer is: “or left”! That is to say, when it says “right and left,” its intention is certainly “right or left,” for one whose inclination is to the right, his inclination is not to the left, and one whose inclination is to the left, his inclination is not to the right. So it cannot be interpreted literally that the deviation is both to the right and to the left. And why then did it write “right and left” with a *vav* of addition? To teach that from the fact that you incline to the right, you will ultimately incline to the left – that it is a stringency that leads to leniency...

‘And from it he will be saved’

I have a pocketknife the size of a credit card that I received as a gift many years ago. I use it daily for countless tasks of cutting, measuring, magnifying glass, and screw tightening. It is small and useful.

A week ago, after I used the scissors which are part of the pocketknife, the pocketknife itself simply disappeared, aside from the scissors which remained in my hand. I searched in the car and I searched in the street. I thought perhaps it had fallen outside the car, but I did not find it. A week passed, and I again used the scissors that remained for me from the pocketknife. I requested from Hashem that He provide me the pocketknife so that I should not need to buy a new one...

I had barely finished requesting when the tiny scissors slipped from my hand. I thought to myself that perhaps I had requested improperly, for the scissors slipped into a narrow crevice between the seat and the side wall. Fortunately, I caught sight of the direction in which they had fallen and went behind the seat. I sent my hand to feel, perhaps I would be able to find the scissors, (the car is full of features and there is almost no room to insert a hand). I felt around, and Baruch Hashem, I found the scissors. Except that suddenly I felt something else, and that something else was none other than the pocketknife itself, for which I had searched so much!!!! כ.ה.

‘נמאה לך נפשי’ ‘My soul thirsts for you’

There is a righteous man who bundles complete bags with quality parasha sheets, and whoever desires may order and collect from him on Thursday night for the shul in which he davens. Since I traveled on vacation and was not in the city to collect the sheets, I requested from my son that he collect and arrange them in the shul.

On Thursday night I called to remind my son about the sheets, and he said that he was exactly then traveling with a ride back from Yerushalayim. I told him that he should ask the driver, who is my friend, to stop for him for a moment at the building so that he could collect the sheets. But my son explained to me that the driver was very pressed for time, and he did not dare ask him to stop, not even for a brief moment... The implication was that my son would need to get down and be troubled in his travels because of the favor that I had requested from him.

Not a few minutes passed and my son called and said: “Abba!!! You will not believe what hashgacha!!! Suddenly the driver felt thirsty and stopped to buy himself a can of drink at the store opposite the building of the sheets!!!! I ran down, collected the sheets, and in another moment the driver is returning and I continue with him until home.”

From all the stores, Hashem stopped him exactly at the point that my son needed, even without him requesting a thing!!!! כ.ה.

Your Face, Hashem, I seek

לך אמר לבי בקשו פני את פניך ה' אבקש: (תהילים כז:ח)

To You, my heart has said: “Seek My Face.” Your Face, Hashem, I seek. (Tehillim 27:8)

Rashi explains that לך means “for Your sake” or “on Your behalf.” The Sweet Singer of Yisrael, King David, expresses this yearning: “For Your sake, and as Your emissary, Yisbarach, my heart speaks to me and says, ‘The Jewish people should seek My Face.’ And I indeed heed the stirrings of my heart that arouse me, as Your agent, and thus, Your Face, Hashem, I seek.”

The holy Zohar (3:93b) elaborates further:

“To You my heart has said. The holy chevrah (group) said it means the following: King David said this on behalf of Knesses Yisrael before the Holy King. For Your sake, my heart tells the people of the world: Seek My Face. These are the zemanim and festivals [when people seek Hashem’s countenance], all of which are summoned to a place called ‘holiness,’ in order to crown each one in its time, in its season, so that all should draw from the deepest of depths from where rivers and springs emerge. Thus, all are sanctified together, and joy is found within them.”

This is to say, David prayed on behalf of the holy times and festivals of Yisrael, that for You sake, Yisbarach, my heart says: Seek My Face during these elevated times and festivals—that we should be able to seek His Face, during these holy times, and sanctify ourselves by drawing from the profound depths where flowing rivers spring forth, so that we may all be sanctified together in joy before Hashem.

The Ohr HaMeir (derush for Rosh Hashanah) offers a beautiful explanation of how the festivals and Days of Favor are considered “the King’s Face”—fulfilling the concept of Your Face, Hashem, I seek.

Let us bring a brief excerpt of his illuminating words, which exalt the concept of seeking Hashem’s face during these holy days. He writes:

“The essence of the matter is that we, the Jewish people, are one unified entity. When we better our ways, we enable the revelation of Hashem’s Divinity, as it was His will from the beginning to reveal His Presence through the stature of Adam HaRishon and through the chosen times of the year. His will ordained that His Divinity would be revealed through different times.

“This is the meaning of To You my heart has said—for Your sake, my heart tells me Yisrael should seek My Face. Yet it is unclear what Face means. Therefore, the Zohar interprets, ‘These are the festivals and zemanim,’ for the festivals and zemanim are the ‘Face of the King.’ Through them, the King is revealed to the world and called by name. David says, אֶת פְּנִיךָ ה' אֲבַקֵּשׁ - Your Face, Hashem, I seek—Your Face. The word אֶת comes to include the radiance which is revealed through the various colors. Through this, I hear the call to seek Your radiant Face, to perceive the goodness revealed through the holy times and festivals.

Similarly, Hashem asks of us, the Jewish people, Do not appear before Me empty-handed (Shemos 23:15)—so that the Divine Revelation during these holy times not be in vain. If we, the Jewish people, arouse ourselves to serve Him with enthusiasm and love during all these appointed times, desiring and yearning to hasten them with bonds of love, then we will perceive the Divine radiance.

“Thus, David poured out his plea before Hashem: Do not hide Your Face from me. That is to say, since my primary desire is to grasp the light radiated through these colors—the festivals and sacred times—do not hide from me, so that I may long for and hasten the arrival of the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah, etc.” (See there at length for the full beauty of his holy words.)

[In summary, the pasuk expresses King David’s heartfelt commitment to seek Hashem’s presence, prompted by a Divine call to Klal Yisrael to connect with Hashem during holy times and festivals. The commentaries (Rashi, Zohar, and Ohr HaMeir) emphasize that these times—festivals and holy days—are opportunities for Klal Yisrael to draw close to Hashem, unify in holiness, and experience the joy of His Radiant Presence. Each moment is uniquely suited to reveal Hashem’s divinity, and Klal Yisrael is urged to approach these times with devotion and love to ensure the Divine revelation is not empty-handed.]

The holy Rav Moshe Aaron Stern zt”l, the renowned mashgiach of the Kamenitz Yeshiva in Yerushalayim, was known as profoundly righteous, God-fearing, and meticulous in fulfilling every mitzvah, great or small. He merited to raise numerous talmidim who were God-fearing and whole in their avodas Hashem.

Among his many virtues, his devotion to tefillah shone as a crown upon his head as he poured out his heart like water before his Creator. This was true throughout the year, and much more so during the Days of Favor in the month of Elul and the Yamim Nora'im, when he was entirely enveloped in holy awe, reverence, and love. His talmidim saw a living example of true tefillah during these auspicious times, fulfilling the pasuk: To You, my heart has said, “Seek My Face”—

Your Face, Hashem, I seek!

His adherence to the halachos of prayer, as with all mitzvos, was without compromise. He was vigilant to ensure that the prayers were conducted at their proper time.

During a journey to raise funds for the yeshivah, he traveled to Switzerland, visiting various cities where Jews resided. Wandering amidst the beautiful Alpine landscapes of Zurich and St. Moritz, he did not seek pleasant sightseeing tours but remained steadfastly focused on his mission to strengthen and support the yeshivah. Even as he passed by the rushing streams and serene lakes of Lugano, Basel, and Lucerne, his heart burned with holy fervor to inspire wealthy Jewish philanthropists to raise the banner of Torah in the Kamenitz Yeshivah. During his travels, he heard of a noble *minhag* practiced by a wealthy Swiss benefactor—a man of great means and substance—who began each day with a brief act of *tzedakah*. Before attending to his extensive business affairs, this magnanimous donor would dedicate time after *Shacharis* to distribute charity. This act reflected his simple yet profound faith in the mitzvah of *tzedakah* and his trust in the Divine promise (*Malachi* 3:10), וְבָחֲנוּנֵי כָּא בְּזֹאת אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת אִם לֹא אֶפְתָּח לָכֶם אֶת אֲרֻבוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיִהְיֶה לָכֶם בְּרִכָּה עַד בְּלִי דִי - Test Me in this," says Hashem of Hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of the heavens and pour out for you an overflowing blessing."

The daily distribution of *tzedakah* was brief yet magnificent. The wealthy patron stood joyfully and generously, holding a large bundle of Swiss 100-franc notes—a considerable and impressive sum—and distributing them to every petitioner and charity collector. Naturally, this was only the starting amount, the minimum. To those who continued to plead, תְּחַנְּנוּנֵי יִדְבָּר גַּשׁ - The poor man speaks entreaties (*Mishlei* 18:23), he graciously increased his donations, often giving far greater sums.

Rav Moshe Aaron was pleased to hear of this opportunity and hoped to attend this morning event. With a significant and generous donation, he could save precious time, avoiding the need to go house to house and thus complete his demanding fundraising journey abroad more swiftly.

However, there was a problem: when Rav Moshe Aaron inquired about the prayer time at the shul of this wealthy man, he discovered that they customarily prayed well after the optimal and preferred time for *Shacharis*. Upon hearing this, Rav Moshe Aaron immediately dismissed the idea. "Regarding the proper time of *tefillah*, there can be no compromise—no matter the circumstances!" he firmly declared.

Rav Moshe Aaron thus missed the *tzedakah* gathering following *Shacharis* that day. Yet his heart was at peace with his Creator, rejoicing in his commitment to fulfill the mitzvah of timely *tefillah* with full halachic precision. He did not despair; instead, he decided to attend that shul for *Minchah*, even though he was told that no *tzedakah* was distributed then and that all

charity-seekers approached this wealthy man only after *Shacharis*. Nevertheless, Rav Moshe Aaron, a noble emissary on a sacred mission, did not refrain from trying.

After *Minchah*, he gently approached the prominent benefactor, overcoming his discomfort, and apologized for not attending the *Shacharis* event. He humbly asked for funds for the young talmidei *chachamim* of the Kamenitz Yeshivah, seeking support for these precious talmidim.

At first, the wealthy man was slightly perturbed by the breach of his customary timing for charity. However, upon recognizing that this was a man of stature—a great talmid *chacham*—he chose not to dismiss him until the following morning, as was his usual practice. Instead, he pulled out a 100-franc note and handed it to Rav Moshe Aaron, the standard amount he would give during the morning distribution.

Rav Moshe Aaron expressed his heartfelt gratitude, blessed the benefactor with success, and then immediately turned to the *sefarim* shelf. He eagerly took out a beloved *Gemara*, settled himself comfortably in a corner of the shul, and immersed himself in the sweet toil of Torah study while waiting for *Maariv*.

The benefactor, seated in his dignified place at the front of the shul, was deeply impressed by the sight of the talmid *chacham* engrossed in his learning. He admired his refined demeanor, respectful speech, and the sincerity of the blessing he had received from him. Quietly, the benefactor approached the *gabbai* and inquired, "Do you know the identity of the guest sitting in the corner? Who is he, and from where has he come?"

"Of course!" the *gabbai* replied. "That is the renowned *mashgiach* of the Kamenitz Yeshivah in Yerushalayim, a man of great stature, a distinguished talmid *chacham*, and an exceptional educator."

Upon hearing this, the wealthy man, gazing at the guest with reverence, approached Rav Moshe Aaron again. This time, he discreetly handed him an additional 300 francs (!) along with a blessing for the yeshivah's prosperity and success. Rav Moshe Aaron welcomed him warmly, expressed heartfelt thanks, and blessed him again, wishing him success and abundance.

As the evening fell and darkness replaced the light, the *kehillah* gathered for *Maariv*. Afterward, everyone dispersed to their homes and businesses. Yet Rav Moshe Aaron, unable to part from his beloved *Gemara*, returned to his seat, seizing every possible moment to immerse himself in Torah study before resuming his sacred mission of fundraising for charity.

The shul was now entirely empty. The devoted Yerushalmi sat alone in his corner, basking in the joy of Torah and cleaving to the living God. Suddenly, the door creaked open. Startled, Rav Moshe Aaron wondered who might be entering at this late hour. He didn't know the people of this city and feared that a local non-Jew might

have entered upon seeing the shul lights still on. To his surprise, it was none other than the prominent benefactor. Relieved to see it wasn't an outsider, Rav Moshe Aaron returned to his studies.

The wealthy man walked softly around the grand and elegant shul, eventually approaching the talmid *chacham's* corner. Sitting down beside him, he spoke with warmth and sincerity.

"Please listen to me, my dear *tzaddik*," he began. "Today, I witnessed your honesty, righteousness, and great dedication to the holy yeshiva. I was deeply impressed. When I left *Maariv*, I went directly to my business here in the city center. With extraordinary Divine assistance, my work flourished beyond expectations. Your heartfelt blessing must have had its effect! Everything proceeded smoothly and efficiently, and within a short time, I finalized several profitable deals that yielded substantial gains.

"As I left my business, my heart was full of praise and thanks to the Borei Yisbarach for the day's success. As an expression of gratitude to the One who is good and bestows goodness, I set aside a generous sum for charity.

"As we learn in this week's parashah (*Devarim* 26:3–10), הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ - I have declared this day to the Lord, your God – "that I am not ungrateful" (*Rashi*). וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הֵבִאתִי אֶת ראשֵׁית פְּרִי האֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נתתָ לִּי ה' וְהִנְחִיתוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ - And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the soil that You, Hashem, have given me. Then you shall place it before the Lord, your God, etc.

"While passing by this shul on my way home, I noticed the light shining through the windows and decided to enter, hoping to find charity collectors here to distribute my donation. Finding no one, I have decided to entrust the entire sum to you to honor and uplift the House of Hashem in Yerushalayim, the beautiful city."

Without delay, the wealthy man pulled out a thick envelope filled with crisp Swiss francs—several thousand in total—and handed it to Rav Moshe Aaron. The Rav thanked him with all his heart and blessed him fervently, bidding him farewell with warmth and respect.

And so, we learn how much good and blessing resulted from Rav Moshe Aaron's adherence to the proper time for prayer. By fulfilling *Your Face, Hashem, I seek*, and by being careful with *tefillah* as befit his lofty level, he merited abundant blessing. Had he compromised and chosen to pray later to attend the morning charity event, he likely would have left with just 100 francs and nothing more!

How fitting and appropriate for Rav Moshe Aaron was his well-known statement on the eve of Yom Kippur: if he were not embarrassed, he would break into a lively dance during the *Shehecheyanu* blessing of Yom Kippur!

When the heart fills with song and praise, drawing near to the good God, *Your Face, Hashem, I seek!* Without this holy day, how distant and detestable we would be in our sins, *chas veshalom*. Yet through the great merit of repentance and the sanctity of the day, we cleave to the *Shechinah*. As the Rambam explains (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:6): "Yesterday, this person was hated, despised, distant, and abominable before God. Today, he is beloved, desirable, close, and a friend."