

והיא תהילתך

A collection of essays offering *chizzuk* to the righteous Jewish women whose prayers rise from the kitchen, the playroom and the playground, opening the gates of *Shamayim*.

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Once again, it's here. Yom tov.

The streets change their face. A clearer air seems to be blowing. Men, holding *machzorim* in their hands, hurry to shul. Today, Am Yisrael will be crowning Hashem as King of the world.

Rosh Hashanah has come.

And so did she.

To the porch, that is. A bottle of baby formula in one hand, a children's book in the other.

She sits on the porch with her two young children. The baby cries. She picks him up and feeds him the bottle. Her three year old waits impatiently for the promised story.

She opens the book and begins to read aloud.

But even as her lips mouth the words, her mind takes her far, far away from little Moishy who helped his neighbor carry her bags. It takes her to a different Rosh Hashanah. How many years ago was that?

Wow, those old *Yamim Noraim* seared into her memory... Rosh Hashanah then was *Rosh Hashanah*. Shul. Davening. Crying. Pleading.

Rosh Hashanah then was a day in which she could feel the *kedushah* in the air. A day in which she was lifted higher, and felt so, so close to Hashem.

It was...*Rosh Hashanah*. Simply (?) Rosh Hashanah.

And now?

Now, Rosh Hashanah is a day of storybooks and playgrounds and anything that might keep her little ones occupied.

Now, instead of opening a *machzor*, she opens toddlers' books, and instead of going to *shul*, she heads to the playground to push the little treasures that Hashem had gifted her with on the swings, calms a crying child, and finds herself crying along with him deep inside.

No, she's not complaining, *chas veshalom*. Of course not. She thanks Hashem for every child He granted her, and for the tremendous *zechus* that she knows she has. But...

She knows that right here is where she needs to be. This is her *tafkid* right now, and this is what Hashem wants of her. She knows all that. But it's so hard to *feel* it too!

She davens wordlessly to manage to “grab” a short *tefillah* before the baby wakes up, but even when she does, her *kavanah* isn’t anything she’d hoped for.

She imagines the voice of the *baal tefillah* in the *shul* she had gone to for so many years. Right now, those years seem so far away... *If only I could hear just one part of that davening again*, she thinks wistfully. *Just one! Feel the atmosphere, breathe in the incredible kedushah, sit in that place that is drenched with so many tefillos...* Her entire Rosh Hashanah would be different. She has no doubt about it.

But for now...her Rosh Hashanah is “different”, in a different sense. It’s morning — the *Yom Hadin!* — and she’s *still* busy reading children’s books and occupying bored toddlers.

She finds herself crying. Today, all of humanity will pass under judgment. *What about me?! Where am I in all that?!*

Suddenly she hears a different voice inside her.

Who do you think Rosh Hashanah is meant for? Only those people who get to go to *shul* and sit in crowded yeshivah halls? Only people davening in a minyan? That’s just not possible!

Rosh Hashanah belongs to every single member of Klal Yisrael, and it makes no difference what stage in life they are in now. If you’re at home, or in the playground, if you’re in *shul* or in your living room... You too are part of Rosh Hashanah. Hashem put you here, because this is precisely where you need to be.

You need to be the best mother, hear your three-year-old’s adorable stories of the new toys her teacher bought for their class and her upcoming birthday; read her her favorite story for the umpteenth time, and offer her a treat in honor of Rosh Hashanah.

And maybe...maybe you’ll get to tell her a bit about our Father in Heaven, Who is going to determine our entire coming year now. The new toys her teacher will buy, and what her birthday will be like.

Because our children are so pure, so holy, and they understand everything. With their innocent, pure minds and the huge eyes that want to understand, they drink up your messages.

You are here, at home — and that too had been determined from Above. Which means that this role is precisely the best one for you, righteous Jewish mother.

Because our children are our future — and they need someone to care for them. And you — you! — were given this critical role, to raise the next generation.

Right here, right now.

A Jewish mother, whose *tefillos* might be short — but oh, so valuable. We cannot fathom just how valuable.

Because *they*...they are there, in the huge, noisy halls, crying and pleading and crowning and their voices rise to the Heavens.

While you are sitting here, quietly, without any noise or flying angels...just a *kol demamah dakah*. A silent prayer.

And in that tiny moment of davening that you managed to somehow find, with Hashem's help, cramming in a short supplication of crying, pleading and crowning. It might be a quick *tefillah*. It might be with little *kavanah*. Your eyes may have remained dry. You might have felt none of that old excitement as you did.

But your "Malchuyos" is your crowning Hashem in exactly that place that you are in. This is your place now, this is the role that Hashem gave you — and you are performing exactly that, with love and joy. *That's* crowning. You are fulfilling the role Hashem determined for you with devotion, knowing that it is your holy mission. Right here. Specifically here.

In the meantime, *they* are there, in shul, in the huge halls of prayer, crying and pleading, and their voices rise to the heavens...only to find the gate locked.

What can they do? How can they open the gate?!

And then a tiny *tefillah* rises. The quick supplication of a Jewish mother who is in her home. An unimpressive *tefillah*, with no special *kavanos*. Just a woman who was *zocheh* to repeat the words of the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah.

Your *tefillah*, with no *minyan*, no excitement. With or without warm tears.

It rises to the heavens, this *tefillah*, and approaches the gate.

And this *tefillah* of yours, muttered between the Bissli and the baby formula, between the Clics and the Magnetiles, between "Mommy, he's bothering me!" and "She started first!", between tears of

frustration to tears of request...between a powerful desire to be in *shul* now, and the humble acceptance of Hashem's Will, that this is where I need to be...this *tefillah* arrives and suddenly, all the gates open wide to accept it.

The gates of tears are never closed, and your tears, Jewish mother, open the gates. And as soon as they do, all the *tefillos* of all of Am Yisrael who are davening in *shul* and in a *minyan*, can pour through too, streaming and flowing powerfully all the way to the *Kissei Hakavod* — to Hashem.

And the same happens again on Yom Kippur. While the *shul* is crammed with humans who have turned into angels, garbed in pure white, and the entire world seems to have turned white and pure — back home you remain, continuing to care for your babies with love and compassion, feeding and building block towers and hearing and telling, and in between, sometimes, just a bit, cramming in a word or two of *tefillah*...

Your *avodah* is just like the *avodah* of the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur. Your *tefillah* is his *tefillah*. He too davened a very, very short *tefillah*.

Your job back home is an absolute mission of holiness.

Am Yisrael depends on you. Its future — is in your hands.

Keep davening. You will yet be *zoche* to see how the next generation has grown — thanks to you.

Never stop davening, hoping, begging. Without a *machzor*, without *piyyutim*. For you, for your home, for the entire Am Yisrael.

Because *you're* the one who has the *koach hatefillah*.

A mother's *tefillah*. The *tefillah* of a Jewish mother.

Who davens.

Davens to be able to daven.

Kesivah vachasimah tovah.

Dedicated with admiration to all women of Klal Yisrael, all those who feel a sense of loss as they sit at home with their children. May Hashem be with you, may He accept your supplications and gift you with *doros yesharim mevorachim*.

Chazak ve'ematz!

A Few Words

To the mother who is caring for her children, and while others join the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah in *shul*, spends her time in the playground with her little ones instead.

Mrs. Levy, a young woman, has been blessed with three young children.

It is Rosh Hashanah today. 12:00 PM. Mrs. Levy sits down in her usual seat...on the park bench. Not in *shul*. In the park. She makes sure Yanky doesn't run into the street and that Chani won't fall off the swing.

And as she does, her emotions overwhelm her.

Who could have believed it? Only five years ago, every Rosh Hashanah she would be the first one in *shul*. She had "her" seat. She would stand throughout the entire *davening*, crying, finishing the entire *sefer Tehillim* and a full box of tissues.

And now, only five years later...and this is where she is. In the playground. No *tekios*, no *Unesaneh Tokef*...she even forgot to bring her *machzor* to the park. She hadn't forgotten the diapers or the pacifier — but her Tehillim remained at home. It's been far too long since davening and the Tehillim were part of her day.

Once, she read so much in preparation for yom tov. *Siftei Chayim* and *Nesivos Shalom* and Rav Pincus... Now? She reads recipe books.

Sure, she knows this is what she needs to do now. Of course. But still. It's hard! This disconnection from *ruchniyus* and from the elevated atmosphere in *shul* are something she misses so, so badly!

Mrs. Levy's feelings are not only shared by so many of her peers. They are to be expected...



And the answer to Mrs. Levy is as follows:

Yes, Jewish mother. It is precisely these frustrated and longing-filled thoughts in the playground, as the davening of the *Yamim Noraim* goes on in shul, that should arouse you and prompt you to delve inwards again. To start “refreshing” and “restarting” your true role in the world.

Yes, you can think to yourself. *What am I doing here, in the park? What is my avodah in crowning Hashem over me today — with regard to raising my children, beyond the technical aspects entailed? In what way do I crown Hashem over me?*

It is a holy obligation for every Jewish mother to repeatedly review and remember one of the most fundamental basics of Yiddishkeit:

The Ramak, in his *sefer Tomer Devorah*, teaches us that human beings’ soul (*nefesh*) is connected tightly to the systems of influence up in *Shamayim*.

In simple words, a Jew is a “switch”. Push the switch — and something turns on. Push it again — it is turned off. It’s that simple. *That simple.*

So much so, that the *Tomer Devorah* describes how, the moment a man’s forehead creases slightly in anger, **at that very moment** he **activates** an influence of *din* and anger up in *Shamayim*. A Yid’s forehead is a switch! When you are angry, you “turn on” the *dinim*!!!

Conversely, when a Jew walks down the street and meets a beggar, and the tiniest feeling of compassion ignites in his heart, and he stops to give the beggar a small coin — at that moment, he activates an influencing of *tzedakah* and *chessed* up in *Shamayim* to be poured down below!

Of course, all of this happens in direct proportion to our “activation” down below.

This is the meaning of the words “*Hashem tzilcha* — Hashem is your ‘shadow’”. Hashem’s influence “shadows” yours. Whatever you do down here — activates the same Up there.

A switch doesn’t work in a manner of “*middah keneged middah*” — some kind of “reward” for doing something. It’s not like we push a switch, and then someone somewhere notes that I did that, and he turns on the light in response. No — I myself am that “switch”, and

the moment I push it — the light automatically turns on. That's just how it works. A person with his actions activates all the worlds Up There, for better or for worse.

This is what Parshas Haazinu tells us: "*Ki chelek Hashem amo, Yaa-kov chevel nachalaso.*" Am Yisrael is like a "*chevel*" — rope. One end of the rope is in our hands, and the other end is in Hashem's hand, so-to-speak. And every action we take down here pulls that rope in *Shamayim*. Now, our point of *bechirah* is to choose which direction we are going to pull that rope, and in which area.

Up until here — let us hope the concept is clear.

Up to here is the most fundamental concept that every single one of us must keep in mind from the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to sleep at night.



Now, dear Jewish mother:

No one knows, no one has ever counted, the number of times you woke up for Yanky on one night. It's annoying, it's exhausting, it's frustrating.

But!!!

Dear mother, at the same time, you must know and remember that every single time you drag yourself out of bed for your Yanky, **at that moment, you are activating a G-dly influencing from Above,** of "*urah lamah tishan Hashem!*"

Hashem's compassion at that moment "arise" and wake up, prompting Him to look down at all his various "Yankys".

Yes, Jewish mother. Just as you have an adorable little Yanky, Hashem does too — you included. And we're also not always the easiest children. We also angered him ten times over the past day alone. And we also need so much compassion... So much patience and acceptance is required to handle us and to contain all our issues.

And to activate that compassion for us, **someone down here needs to turn on the switch.** Someone from "Yaaokv" needs to pull that "rope" of *rachamim*, so that up in *Shamayim* the same *rachamim*

will be activated too. We need the “*po’el rachamav badin*” — that actual activation!

We need someone to *take action* (*po’el*), to volunteer to *activate* Hashem’s *rachamim* during the *din*!

Who is that going to be? Who will pull that rope? Who will activate Hashem’s *rachamim*?!

For that precise purpose we have the Jewish mother, who has woken up ten times to Yanky already, and by doing so, she **activates** the “*rachamim switch*” even for the tenth time that night.

So yes, here at the Levy home, this was a nightmarish night. But up in *Shamayim*, on that Rosh Hashanah, the night went beautifully well, *baruch Hashem*. It passed with *rachamim*. Someone down below had made sure to turn on the *rachamim*-switch at the very last moment.

And yet... it is possible that the influence is still limited, for now. After all, Yanky’s mother isn’t whole-hearted about her work, either. Yes, she woke up ten times that night, but she’s human, and she’s losing her patience. She’s angry at Yanky. “Enough, Yanky! Stop driving me crazy! I’m not getting up for you anymore! I’ve had enough!”

And then morning arrives. Mommy wakes up tired and exhausted after a terrible night. She heads over to Yanky’s bed, and Yanky greets her with his adorable smile. And..she can’t hold herself back. Suddenly, the entire long night is forgotten. She takes Yanky out of her crib and hugs and kisses him. Sure, he drove her crazy at night. He hadn’t let her sleep. But he’s still her precious Yanky whom she loves so, so much...

At that very moment, Yanky’s mother awakens in *Shamayim* an outpouring of “hugs and kisses” and endless love — for whom? For that faraway son who over the last day angered and tested Hashem over and over again, with his *lashon hara*, with all his sins. Until now, Hashem was angry but waited, held back His impatience with the sinner and His anger at him. But then at some point...enough already! “Sure,” Hashem says, *kiveyachol*. “I’m still handling you and accepting you, somehow, but I’m angry! Get away from here! Enough with you already! I don’t want to see you anymore!” But when Yanky’s mother wakes up in the morning and **despite everything** hugs and

kisses her child, suddenly, up in *Shamayim* that switch turns on the same ability to have compassion and forgive and hug and kiss Hashem's children, who are coming now to *shul* to say *Selichos*... Their sweet voices rise to the heavens like *korbanos*, even after a full year in which they have sinned and angered Hashem over and over again.

And this is just an example.

Klal Yisrael lives and breathes thanks to those constant *rachamim* that our Jewish mothers activate in *Shamayim* again and again, through all the nitty gritty details of life and the exhausting daily grind of caring for their young children.



Dear Jewish mother, do you think it's "by chance" that you woke up twice at night to change Yanky's diaper?

No!! We'll tell you a secret: Every night, as our bodies go to sleep, "*simu lev el haneshamah*". Every single night the neshamah goes up to *Shamayim* to give an accounting of everything it had done through that day.

And then, *Rachmana litzlan*... "*Yimtza'ah metunefesh me'avonos vetosefes*." Hashem finds the neshamah dirty and filled with sinful filth.

Every single night, hundreds of thousands of neshamos rise to *Shamayim*, and our Father in Heaven receives them and finds them filthy with the sins they did throughout the day. And this happens every single night anew. Every night anew, they need to be "changed" and cleaned. They need to be sent back clean again. How much patience do you think is required to clean up a *neshamah* again and again, every single night, for eighty years?!

Who, better than you, Jewish mothers, can appreciate how much patience and love that requires?!

How much patience does our Father in Heaven need for every single Jew who comes down into the world, and has been here for a dozens of years already with all that he has done through them? And every single night anew, Hashem cleans his *neshamah* and sends it back down refreshed and cleaned.

But...the fact is that Hashem determined that for that to happen, someone needs to turn on that “switch” from below. Someone down here needs to pull the rope! A huge amount of *rachamei Shamayim* must be activated for Hashem to “wake up” with His *rachamim* every night anew and clean up the filth that the *neshamah* has accumulated, giving it renewed *kochos* so that it can rise up in the morning again, “*vachadashim labkarim rabah emunasecha.*” **A huge amount of *rachamim* must be activated from down below.** And who is going to turn on that “switch”?

Who will make sure that Hashem’s compassion is turned toward us again and again, despite everything?

For that, we need an entire “production” of thousands of mothers who get up every night to clean up their crying babies, changing their diapers with all the love and compassion that a mother can have. **And that’s you, Jewish mother!** With your actions, however they may be, to your little Yanky, you are arousing our Father’s *rachamim* so that He will give all His Yanky’s — all those who haven’t been weaned off their filth yet — another chance...

Of course, this is but one very specific example. We don’t really need to give mothers examples of how much patience is necessary for every child. How much holding back, how much time we need to give to a child until he comes to an understanding on his own... That patience, the *koach* that you mothers have, is the main switch that gives us our right to continue to exist in the world.



Once these simple but absolutely fundamental concepts are absolutely clear and internalized, it becomes immediately clear why mothers of young children are completely irrelevant in *shul*. The father comes to *shul* and davens. He *davens* to “arouse” *rachamei Shamayim*. But the mother doesn’t need to “arouse” *rachamei Shamayim* — she **activates** them herself! She doesn’t need to “send in a request” for *rachamim* — she herself makes it happen!

The father stands in *shul* after the shofar blowing and sings, “*Im kebanim, im kaavadim*- whether like sons, or like servants.” But the

mother? The mother is in the park right now with her little children, and every part of her being represents “*im kebanim*- like sons.” I’m the mother of children, and I’m with my children in the park right now. “*Im kaavadim?*” Like slaves? Where are there any slaves here now? Ribono shel Olam, have I ever treated my children as though they are slaves? Never!

You, the man, did not wake up multiple times at night to your children, so please get up and go *daven* and give Hashem two options — to treat you like a son, or like a slave. But me? I’m entirely busy with “sons”, so Hashem too will have compassion for us as a father to his children.



This is precisely what happened at the time of the *Churban*. The Avos *hakedoshim* cried to Hashem and aroused *rachamei Shamayim*, but the gates remained closed. Avraham Avinu davened but was not answered. Yitzchak davened but was not answered. Yaakov, Moshe... they all davened but were not answered.

And then came Rochel Imeinu. Rochel did not daven. She didn’t need to come to *davening*. **Rochel merely presses the switch — the switch of “giving in”. *Vatranus*.** Rochel came in with a “document” — I gave in to my sister! And that was it. She pushed the switch of *vatranus*, and at that moment she activated the same kind of action Up Above.

Rochel, you don’t need to come to *shul*. You “work from home.” “*Min’i kolech mibechi...* - Stop your voice from crying and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your actions.” You don’t even need to cry!

Why was Rochel *zoche* to succeed in bringing about everything that the Avos tried but were unsuccessful in doing?

The seven *ro’im* wanted to open the gates of Heaven, to **arouse** *rachamei Shamayim*. But sometimes the gates are locked, and nothing helps. Nothing can “arouse” the *rachamim*. But a Jewish mother doesn’t “arouse” *rachamei Shamayim*. She can turn on the switch herself! She ***activates*** *rachamei Shamayim*! She pushes that switch

of the compassion of a parent for his child, and makes the same happen up in *Shamayim*. She doesn't knock on the door. She pushes the buzzer that actually makes the door automatically open!

Dear mothers, *chizku ve'imtzu* in your special role and place. We in *shul* need you! We will blow the *shofar*, the sound of "*ganuchi ganoch veyiluli yalil*" — the sound of crying and weeping. But you don't need to sound the shofar. **You yourselves are the shofar!** Am Yisrael in its entirety needs your "shofar blowing" — the *tefillos* that you say through cooking and baking...



Let each one of us take his designated post — we in *shul*, and you in the playground. Each, from his position, will be *zoche* to crown Hashem through the unique role that he was given — whether from the *nussach* in the *machzor* or the one articulated from his own heart, so that we may be written and sealed for a good year, for life, on this Yom Hadin, and merit a year of *geulah* and *yeshuah*, amen.

About the Adapted Piyut “Vehi Tehilasecha”

Two years ago, we published the booklet “*Vehi Tehilasecha*” for the first time, with a section based on the famous *piyyut* said on Yom Kippur, but adapted to the women’s role. (To receive the Hebrew booklet with the *piyyut*, email e.shalhevet@gmail.com)

The main idea of the *piyyut* is a comparison between Am Yisrael and the *malachim*. On the one hand, “*asher eimascha*” — the fear that the *malachim* have of Hashem, and on the other hand, the *tehillah* — the praise that Am Yisrael sings for Hashem, and “*vehi tehilasecha*” — this is Hashem’s praise.

We took it one more step, and made a supposed “comparison” between the men who are in *shul* all day, who show this fear and awe, and the women’s “*vehi tehilasecha*” — the praise that arises from the women who remain at home and do what they need to do. That was the concept and structure of the adapted *piyyut* that we published.

Based on the warm feedback we received, it seemed that the very fact that this idea was raised stirred many emotions in many good Jewish women. Many shared that it gave them tremendous *chizzuk*, healed a deep part of them and changed their approach to getting through the *Yamim Nora'im* at home.

Okay, so it’s a nice message, a beautiful idea, and if it gave someone *chizzuk* it was worth it...

But no. That’s not the point. It’s important to realize that this isn’t just a “good word of *chizzuk*”. It’s absolutely not just something “to give the woman *koach*.” It is far, far beyond that. **It is a message that is true, and essential, and pertains to the innermost *nekudah* of the *avodah* of the *Yamim Nora'im*!**

Not everyone knows this, but those who try to read and understand the *piyyutim* of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur davening will realize that **this is actually the main theme!!**

Yes, if you notice, the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur *machzorim* contain many, many pages. There are lots of pages with small

print. The Litvish skip them, and the Chassidish say them quickly, but...they actually say something. So what do all these long lines of rhymes *say*? What is the main topic discussed there?

Here's a secret: **This is precisely what it says!!** I will not exaggerate if I say that eighty percent of the *piyyutim* of the Yamim Nora'im discuss precisely this topic.

What topic?!

The comparison and contrast between us and the angels! Almost all the *piyyutim* focus on descriptions of this comparison. On the one hand, Hashem has such holy and lofty angels that we can never even imagine how powerfully holy they are. On the other hand, Am Yisrael are so small and low and materialistic... and yet Hashem chooses Am Yisrael, and longs to hear *their* little cries.

That is the entire idea! Almost all the *piyyutim* and *yotzros* discuss this concept — always, but especially those on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Let us take just one example, the famous *piyyut* “*Hashem Melech, Hashem malach, Hashem yimloch le'olam va'ed.*” Everyone sings it with so much passion. But what is the message of the *piyyut*?

It discusses how the angels rush and wear flames and sparkle and beautifully sing...but still, Hashem wants the sounds of His “flock” — Am Yisrael. Yes, the great flames of glory come from the sounds of the angels, but Hashem prefers the voices of the “holy communities” down below...

The entire concept of the *piyyut* is this idea. That's the main topic of everything. That yes, the angels may sing beautifully, but Hashem silences them, because down below there is a little Yid, made of a physical and materialistic body, deeply mired in the lowly world — and He wants to hear *him*! Me!

If we'd have patience, I would begin to quote all the parts of *Shir Hayichud*...and all the *piyyutim* written in *Kedushah*...and the *piyyut* “*Imru l'Elokim*”... (one section talks about how great Hashem is, and the next — about how much Hashem wants little me)...and Shacharis of Yom Kippur... There are dozens of pages that we either skip over or quickly mutter, with hardly a thought or care about what we

say. But if we have some patience to actually read them, we will see that this is the constant message.

The message is the extreme contrast — how Hashem is so great, and His angels are so high, and yet He longs for that Jew, whose two feet are planted firmly in the lowly world. That's who Hashem wants to hear!

How unfortunate it is that no one (me included) has the patience to sit down and read through each *piyyut*, understanding it in depth. Had I been able to explain each one, we would all understand how much *this* is the topic of all of the *Yamim Nora'im*. Yes — the main topic is how Hashem in *Shamayim* is very, very great...**and yet despite all that what He wants most is me! Me!**

And who is that “me”? That “little” person who is deeply mired in the *Olam Hamaaseh*. And the lower I am — the more pleasant my voice is. The smaller I am — the sweeter my voice.

Yes! We all agree that there's a big difference between the bass voice of an adult and the high-pitched tenor of a child. A twelve-year-old's voice calling to his mother is very different than the sound of a four-year-old crying, “Mommy!”, and that voice is different than a baby who doesn't even know to say that. When that baby cries, we leave everything and run. It's the most touching sound there is!

The bass voice of an adult is a more contemplative voice. A voice that is easy to understand. He speaks clearly. He knows what he wants. He can lay out his thoughts clearly. When we want to get thing done, we turn to him, because he understands things.

But when we want to arouse *rachamim*, we send the little ones. The young child who barely reaches his father's knees. And precisely because he is so small and low, his voice is so much more pleasant and touching.

Where are we in this story?

I don't know for sure, but two things are absolutely clear to me: One, that all of us — our entire lowly generation of *ikvesa dimeshicha*, we are all “babies”. We are our Father in Heaven's very, very small babies. And thus, our voice is very, very sweet...

And if our forefathers who authored these *piyyutim* already then

defined themselves as “small” and “lowly”, which Hashem therefore chooses and wants...then we, *kal vachomer*, are the tiniest infants whose sounds are even more pleasant and touching!

This is one thing that is extremely clear to me.

How much we, this entire generation, are tiny, tiny babies...

If we can even define the “hierarchy” — it is possible that in the most subtle sense, we men are still six-week-old babies. In shul, we somehow still try to give an impression of being “older babies”. We still try to give some kind of performance, pretending that we know what we’re doing.

But the mother who stays back home with her wet *siddur* and the cooking and the children...**she doesn’t even do that!** She, in our generation, remains the absolutely youngest “*mezhinikel*” of our Father in Heaven. The infant. She doesn’t even pretend to try and give that six-week-old’s cry. Her quick *tefillah* with the tears that wouldn’t come... she remains that week-old newborn, whose sound is the sweetest sound there is — and the one that is most readily accepted.

And our Father in Heaven refuses to give that up!

Just as our Father in Heaven has multitudes of *malachim* who praise and glorify Him, and yet Hashem refuses to give up on us, the men, the six-week-olds...Hashem does not give up the quick *tefillah* of you, the mother, who didn’t even have an opportunity to try to “daven” properly. One tiny wail of yours shoots straight up to the Heavens, to *Kisse Hakavod*, and our Father in Heaven takes such pleasure in your direct *tefillah*.

No, we are not giving up on your tefillos! We need your tears!

But you don’t have to work hard to “grow up” to be that older child with the sophisticated cry — Hashem wants you right there.

We men will work and put in effort. We men *need* to work hard on Rosh Hashanah. We do need to try and elevate ourselves. We are required to show that we care, and that we are taking this seriously. But you? You stay right where you are!

Hashem wants to hear specifically your “*Shir hamaalos — mimaa-makim — from the depths.*”

May Hashem accept our *tefillos* with *rachamim* — you in your place, and we in ours.

The Woman's Rosh Hashanah Machzor

There is an explicit halachah in the Shulchan Aruch, that every *tefillah* that is “unusual” (i.e. that is not davened at least once every thirty days) and is therefore not as familiar, must be prepared for so that when we say it, we are more familiar with it and will be less prone to making mistakes.

This is the source of the custom to prepare for the *tefillos* of the *Yamim Nora'im* throughout the entire month of Elul.

However, obviously this halachah was *paskened* before there were *siddurim* and *machzorim*. At that time, people needed to daven by heart, and they needed to review their davening before hand. In recent generations, however, we have *machzorim* and the Rama (*Shulchan Aruch* 100) *paskens* that this halachah no longer applies. It's okay, there is no need to prepare, a person can “land” into Rosh Hashanah without any special preparation for the *tefillos*.



All this is true for tmen. The men who daven in *shul*, they have tables, chairs, air conditioning and *machzorim*. They have special *perushim* and speeches and *chizzuk* and they don't need to make any special preparations. They have everything put in place for them.

But what will the women do? The women remain in yesteryear's problems. They daven on Rosh Hashanah too. They also send up a prayer. They, more than anyone else, know how to approach Hashem and offer up their tears. But in their case, they do say everything by heart, with no “assistive devices”.

No, I can't also hold two-month-old Yitzy, also calm down little Moishy who just fell and hurt himself, and also hold a *machzor*. My *tefillah* is said in my own words, heart-to-heart.

If so, women *are* obligated in this halachah written in the *Shulchan Aruch*. They do need to prepare for the *tefillos* of the *Yamim*

Noraim. You more than anyone else must prepare and come emotionally ready for the unique *tefillah* that rises directly and unassistedly to Hashem.

The men are not obligated in this halachah, because each them has at least one elucidated *machzor* (in addition to a long list of thick *sefarim* that explain every word of the *tefillah*). But the halachah remains relevant to the Jewish women who plan to daven to Hashem by heart, between a spoonful of food for Moishy and running after Shoshi...

They, these Jewish women, whose davening bursts out from their hearts, absolutely need to prepare. And of course, their preparation is to get straight to the main place of *tefillah* — their hearts!

You don't need the *nussach*, you don't need the *aron kodesh* opening and closing, you don't need the "*berov am*" — standing in a large congregation, you don't need the *shaliach tzibbur*. In your case, your *davening* passes through a very different track. A direct track, from heart to heart, with no external devices necessary to help it along. All you need is "*yached lev*" — to direct your hearts, to focus on and appreciate your importance and the mission you fulfill in caring for Hashem's precious *neshamos*, and how this mission connects to *tefillah*, where it meets *tefillah*.

The Guide to Serving as the “Shliach Tzibbur” at Home

The very first “*shaliach tzibbur*” who “davened by the *amud*” was Hashem Himself.

“*Vayaavor Hashem al panav Vayikra...*”

Chazal explain, what does “*vayaavor*” mean? Hashem went “before the *teivah*”.

Hashem wanted to teach Moshe Rabeinu the order of davening. Chazal describe how Hashem “wrapped Himself with a *tallis*,” and then, when Hashem “*vayaavor*” — “davened by the *amud*”, He called out, “*Hashem, Hashem, Kel Rachum veChanun...*” At that event, Hashem revealed to Moshe the *Yud-Gimmel Middos shel Rachamim*. Then Hashem concluded and told Moshe, “At the time that you **perform** this order before Me, I forgive them for all their sins.” From there on, Am Yisrael throughout all the generations have used this tactic every day -and especially during *selichos*. And this is also what we say in advance of repeating it, “Hashem, You have instructed us to say the Thirteen - recall for us today the covenant of the Thirteen, as You informed the humble one before...”

But there is one thing that we don’t notice so much.

Hashem did not tell Moshe “At the time that you *say* this order.” He said, “At the time that you **perform** this order.”

At the time that Am Yisrael **do** *rachum*, **do** *chanun*, **do** *erech apayim*, **do** *rav chessed v’emes* — then I forgive them for all their sins.

So...why do we all do it differently? We all know that we come to *selichos* and **say** “*Hashem Hashem Kel Rachum veChanun...*”. We don’t make do with “doing” it. Why?

The answer is frightening.

We leave the mother back home, with all the children, with all the “*rachum*” necessary to contain them, with all the “*chanun*” neces-

sary to give to them, with all the endless patience and “*erech apayim*” necessary just to get through two days of Rosh Hashanah with them and survive... The mother remains at home precisely in order to **perform** that! To “**perform** this order” of the *Yud-Gimmel Middos shel Rachamim* before Hashem!

And then, after the Jewish mother actually performs this in her home, she sends her husband to *shul* with tears and tells him, “Go tell Hashem! Go speak to our Father in Heaven about this. Tell him that we are **performing** this order before Him!”

The husband gets to shul, and now he is the one to speak for his wife. He is here to represent the family. He wraps himself up in a *tal-lis* as a messenger. Whose messenger? The “*shaliach*” of the “*tzibbur*” that he left back home — his wife and his children. And he brings his wife’s words to Hashem and says:

“Hashem! *Kel Rachum veChanun*... - we are trying, and with Hashem’s help we will keep trying to **perform** this order before You. Please, *kerachem av al banim*- like the compassion of the father for his children, have compassion for us!”



Now, dear mother, understand what it is that you are doing back at home on Rosh Hashanah.

You have moments of depressed thoughts, *What am I doing here? I miss those years that I was able to stand in my regular seat in the women’s section and be drawn into the beautiful and inspirational tefillos. Where am I today? Facing a sticky floor and grumpy children?!*

But realize that *you* are the main focus! You’re standing in the actual, main work room! It’s you they are talking about in shul now! You are **performing** this order before Hashem now! Your husband is currently handing over to Hashem the description of what you are doing... Our entire entrance ticket in shul to our Father in Heaven is that we represent you, the women! We are coming there with the list of what *you* are doing.



All that's left for you is to strengthen yourself in your role, your kingdom, the *avodas Hashem* that is expected of you — to **perform** before Hashem this order. To stand before all the thirteen *middos shel rachamim* with which Hashem treats us and accepts us, and receive the *koach* to perform this same order to the precious treasures that Hashem gifted you with.

And to know that with every additional display of patience, and every additional acceptance, dealing with the children, handling their difficulties — with that you are activating Hashem's *rachamim*.

Yes, that is "**lepo'el rachamav badin**" Hashem's *rachamim* need to be **activated**. And we are the ones to activate that. For that, Hashem gave us children — in order to put us in His place, as the Father, and in that way — only in that way, through our actions down below — we activate his Fatherly *rachamim* from Above.

Some parents need to handle very difficult children, especially in our generation. And the reason for that is because Hashem, too, needs to handle some very difficult Yidden, who require endless patience and *chessed* to continue loving them and giving them another chance to return to Him. For that, especially precious parents were chosen arouse Hashem's *rachamim* by showing that they too deal with very difficult children, and if they "perform this order", then Hashem also turns on His *rachamim* in the *din*. They simply activate His *rachamim* and offer Hashem an argument against all the *mastinim* that speak against us.

Can we even stand in the presence of such parents, who with their very heart change nature itself and allow all of Klal Yisrael to be written in the book of complete *tzaddikim*?

We don't need to go too far. Every Jewish mother, with yet another sleepless night that she spent waking up for Yanky again and again, with yet another exhausting morning in which her child woke up on the wrong side of bed but she still loves him and accepts him as he is — this activates Hashem's *rachamim*. We the men in shul turn our eyes to Hashem "as the father has compassion for his children," and you the women from home, from the ball court itself, your eyes should be turned to your young children — "like the mother has compassion for her children."

And so, together, we will cry out to our Father in Heaven, “*usekal bel berachamim uveratzon es seder asiyateinu usefilosainu* — accept with compassion and with desire our performing and our *davening*.”

Why Are Women Exempt From Shofar?

Don't they need an "alarm clock" too?

Yes, you may not know it, but *me'ikar hadin* women are exempt from hearing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. They have no obligation — neither *de'Orysa* or *derabanan*.

Why? Why does the halachah exempt women? The reason for the shofar blowing is to "wake us up" — "*Uru yesheinim mishnatchem venirdamim hakitzu mitardemaschem.*" And if that's the reason, in what way are women different than men in this respect?

Do the men "sleep" more deeply than the women? Don't the women need the same spiritual "alarm clock"?

Don't they need a shofar to shock them into repenting?

Well, with a solid question like that, there's no choice but to give an answer — even though it contains some deep secrets of Kabbalah.

This is obviously a very, very small taste of the secrets of *teki'os*. Clearly we cannot truly understand the depths of these concepts, but we'll raise them only to give us an inkling of what it's about.

According to Kabbalah, the reason for the *teki'os* is to wake a certain "someone" up. Someone who had fallen asleep. Who is that someone?

5783 years ago, Adam Harishon was created. He looked right and left, and couldn't find his partner. He saw that everyone else had one. All the animals had a mate. Only he didn't have one. What did Hashem do? **"Hashem caused a deep sleep to fall upon man, and he slept."** It was at that event that the woman was created! Yes — this "surgery" was performed on the day of Rosh Hashanah!

Nu, so the surgery was over, and now it was time to wake up the patient...

How do you wake up a person? With a shofar, no less.

Yes! Every year anew, the same process takes place — just as Hashem recreates the entire world, He recreates Man too, and then

Man needs a wife. Hashem makes the man fall asleep on Rosh Hashanah, and at the time that Man sleeps, Hashem so-to-speak creates the woman, and...now, after the woman was created, it is time to wake up Man again. **And that is why we have the shofar.**

Is everything understood so far? Yes? So let's go on.

Now it is quite clear why it is the man who needs the shofar blowing, but not the woman. Who fell asleep? Who went through surgery? Who needs to be woken up? The man! The woman never fell asleep, so there is no need to wake her up! And that is why halachically, a woman is not required to hear the shofar...

We'll stop here. Obviously, as we said, these concepts are very, very deep. Every sentence said here is just the tip of the iceberg for endless depths in *toras hanistar* that we have no grasp of.

However, the part that does pertain to us — the lowest understanding that we are allowed to try and conceive — is this:

There is "Malchus" — kingship, and "Melech" — King.

What's the difference between the two terms?

Malchus is not "Melech". Malchus is the *crowning* of the Melech, the King.

For example, a woman is called "Malchus". Why? Because in a healthy home, the husband feels like a king, thanks to his wife. She "crowns" him by accepting him as her leader, by entering his ownership and handing over the responsibility for the *hanhagah* of the home. In that way she crowns him as king.

What is she? She is the "Malchus" (i.e. the queen).

And the same is true in our avodas Hashem. Since our *avodas Hashem* is to crown Hashem over us, this "crowning" is divided into two parts — Melech, and Malchus.

The man represents the role of "Melech". The man's role throughout the year is to guide the home in a manner that is *retzon Hashem* — to make sure that the home will be run based on the King's desires. The man is supposedly the "representative" of Hashem. He is the "Melech", whose job is expressed in that he brings the commands of the Melech Malchei Hamelachim to the home and makes sure that it is followed.

(As a side note, what happens in a home in which the woman is on a higher spiritual level than her husband? Who will be the “king” who will represent and take responsibility to ensure that Hashem’s Will is implemented all year long? This is an issue that we will address at the end of the essay.)

So that is as far as the man’s role as the “Melech”. What about the woman’s role? She is meant to be the “Malchus” — to crown the king; to accept the “King”, her husband! She accepts the *ratzon Hashem* which her husband brings to the home. She implements Hashem’s Will in the home. She subjugates herself to what Hashem wants and accept His *ratzon*.

(Here it is important to note: At the end of the day it is one home, and the two roles intertwine so that it all becomes one. But still, each has his unique position. The man must bring Hashem’s Will into the home, and the woman must serve as the “Malchus” who crowns Hashem over her and accepts His Will. The man needs to make sure that Shabbos is observed properly, and the woman brings in Shabbos and takes care of the atmosphere and spirit, and so on.)

Let us stop for a moment to clarify one issue that may seem unclear but is extremely important: Okay, so the woman is the “Malchus”. She crowns Hashem by accepting His will. That’s easy to understand. But the man — as the “king”? He represents Hashem?! **How can we even say such a strange thing?** Who made him a “representative” of Hashem?! What makes a man suddenly become Hashem’s “representative”? Since when did he receive this role?

Let’s put this bluntly: The man comes home and notes something that isn’t 100%, perhaps in *tznius* or in another area. He asks his wife, gently but decisively, to do something about it. This isn’t Hashem’s Will. His wife responds, “Excuse me, my dear husband, do *you* have a problem with it? No. Hashem does. Well, if Hashem has a problem with it, let *Him* tell me. Let Him chastise me. Hashem is big enough and if He wants, He has many ways to “speak” to me personally. You? Why do you need to get involved?”

Unfortunately this is a response that women give, in some way or another, often. And in a sense, there seems to be a good point here.

What’s the answer, then?

The answer is as follows:

On Rosh Hashanah and throughout the *Yamim Nora'im*, Hashem is the **Melech** hakadosh. Hashem appears, and during the *Yamim Nora'im* Hashem is indeed the only One in the picture. Everyone else move to the side. The husband moves over. The *rabbanim* move over. (Even one's friends move over.) Parents move over. Everyone leaves the picture. Every person stands privately before Hashem.

And then comes *motzai Yom Kippur*, and suddenly the *nussach* changes. We no longer say "*HaMelech hakadosh*." We say "*HaKel hakadosh*" instead. Wait...where's the King? Where did He "disappear" to?

Of course, He didn't "disappear". It's just that as soon as the year begins, the "Melech hakadosh" hands over the "king" responsibility to the husband! The husband will now represent the "*Melech hakadosh*". The husband becomes responsible for ensuring that Hashem's Will is implemented. The husband is the one who needs to come home and make sure that everything is done according to Hashem's *ratzon*.

And so, dear wife, you ask: Why is the husband interfering with areas that are between you and Hashem? Of course he is — it's his job! Hashem gave him that responsibility! On Motzai Yom Kippur 5783, Hashem handed over the crown and placed it on your husband's head, and told him "From here on *you* are responsible for My *Malchus*! I am now (so to speak) going back to being '*HaKel hakadosh*', I am (so to speak) standing off to the side, and I want to see how *you* represent me and guide your home according to My Will."

Then Hashem concludes and says to the husband, "I'll come back again on Rosh Hashanah 5784 and then I'll take the crown and be the Melech again — and you will then move off to the side. But during the year you are the one who is responsible, who determines the rules, who ensures that everything is done properly."

And so, this is why the husband must determine the *ruchniyus* of the home. It's his job! Every day, when we say "*HaKel hakadosh*" instead of "*HaMelech hakadosh*", this means that Hashem gave the "Melech" responsibility to your husband.

What, then, is *your* role? If he is the king — what are you?

You are the queen — the *Malchus*! You crown the king. You crown Hashem by accepting His Will which is channeled through your husband.

Throughout the year the husband is the dominant one; the husband represents the King.

But then Rosh Hashanah comes. Hashem comes. Now, Hashem takes the crown from all the husbands. “*Venigav Hashem levado bayom hahu*” — now only Hashem is King. All the King’s “representatives”, all other “kings”, leave the stage.

Now what happens to the man? He “falls asleep”. What does that mean?

His role falls asleep. Since now only Hashem is King, the man’s job as the King’s representative “goes to sleep”. Who is the only one who remains awake? The “Malchus” — the wife!

Now, when Hashem is King, what is the only thing that remains for us to do? **To accept Him!**

This is something that the woman has been doing all year long already! That is why this is the woman’s big day. Rosh Hashanah is the women’s unique kingdom. Who crowned Hashem all year long? Who accepted the King over her all year long? The woman! And so on this day, when Hashem is the only King, and the only thing that remains is for us to accept him — our “rebbe” who teaches us how to do that is **the woman!**

On Rosh Hashanah, the men are pressured. They don’t really know what to do with themselves. They’re out of sorts — and rightfully so. Because on this day, “Hashem causes a deep sleep to fall upon man, and he falls asleep.” On this day the man’s natural role goes to sleep. All year long the man represents the King, but now his job moves over. Now the man stands helpless, unsure what to do with himself. He’s not so used to doing anything else. He doesn’t really know how to do that. He knows how to represent the King, but he isn’t so proficient in *crowning* Him.

What can he do? The man therefore quickly runs to shul, and the shofar teaches him how to crown Hashem. The shofar sounds one

hundred sounds and cries of labor pains — pain that only a woman can **accept** and get through. She accepts it with love and thus crowns Hashem — and this sound “wakes up” the man now, teaching him a thing or two about crowning and acceptance and how to do what the woman does all year long. How to crown Hashem; how to accept His kinship.

And the woman...the woman doesn't need one hundred sounds of the shofar to know how to crown Hashem over her!

She doesn't need the shofar. She does it with her own, natural voice. The shofar is only an imitation of hers. All year long she accepts Hashem's Will. All year long she does “*ganuchi ganach vey-ilulei yali!*” (sighs and cries) for the difficulties she endures. And she knows how to accept!! To accept Hashem's Will with love and to crown Him over her by accepting him. And so, that is the reason why women are halachically exempted from hearing the shofar.

Because “Hashem caused a deep sleep to fall upon man” is only about the man, not the woman. Only the man must move aside on this day, and needs to be “woken up”. The woman — the queen — remains standing in her usual place...



All the above is a simplification of very, very deep concepts so that we can somehow grasp their externality somewhat. And it's important to know these things.

When a Jewish mother realizes the significance of this idea, suddenly everything takes on new meaning.

A woman needs to know that her true *avodas Hashem* is right here in her home!

This is where she makes Hashem King — all year long! This is where she crowns Hashem. A woman's nature is to receive. By nature, a woman is ready to receive Hashem's Kingship — and this she does in the most perfect way in her real place, with the children, with the circumstances that Hashem orchestrated for her, with all the difficulties and challenges and natural pains that a woman goes through and that only she is capable of accepting with love. And that

is where she meets Hashem's rule.

A man has a rebellious streak to him. He has a tendency to want to rule, and that is why he must constantly bend himself over and overcome this natural leaning again and again. A man must wake up every morning and say *Krias Shema*, accepting Hashem's rule over him every morning and evening. Otherwise, he will forget and begin to say "My own might and power have brought me this success." A woman does not need these reminders. In her very essence, a woman is "*she'asani kiretzono*" — she is close to Hashem's Will. She is inside the kingdom that Hashem placed her, and from there, from within the challenges and struggles that Hashem placed her in, from there she crowns and serves Him.

(And now for the issue of the woman sometimes being on a higher spiritual level than the man, and the question of who here will be the "king" who will represent Hashem's Will and take responsibility to implement it all year long — in this situation, with regard to *retzon Hashem*, the "kings" are the *rabbanim*. They will serve as the representatives of Hashem's Will in this home — but **only with regard to representing Hashem's Will**. In every other area, the woman is the one who needs to crown Hashem's Kingship over her by accepting her husband as her king, accepting him for what he is, with his wonderful qualities...and also with the ones that are less wonderful. Even if it goes against her original wishes. This is her place to crown Hashem, Who has placed her husband as her king, in all other areas other than those which represent Hashem's Will. This is the answer in short.)

Who Is Dovid Hamelech Jealous Of?

The Jewish mother!

In the end of the *mizmor* “*LeDovid Hashem ori veyish’l*” — that very same *mizmor* that we say throughout the month of Elul — Dovid Hamelech concludes, “*Lulei he’emanti liros betuv Hashem...* - had I not believed to see the goodness of Hashem in the Land of the LiHad I not believed in seeing the good of Hashem in the land of the living.” Chazal (Brachos 4a) say: “Said Dovid Hamelech before Hashem: I know...that You give good reward to tzaddikim in the Next World, but I do not know whether I have a share among them or not...” Yes, Dovid Hamelech had moments in which he was not sure whether he has a share in Olam Haba! **He was not sure about his Olam Haba!**

But **shockingly, there is someone whom Dovid Hamelech considers “certain” of their Olam Haba.**

Guess who that is? **The Jewish mother!** We have already mentioned previously in this newsletter, that when Dovid Hamelech returned from his very first *hachnasas sefer Torah*, after he danced merrily before Hashem, he received a welcome from his wife Michal, daughter of Shaul: “How honored was today the king of Yisrael, who exposed himself today in the eyes of the **handmaids of his servants,** as would expose himself one of the idlers!”

Dovid is angry at Michal’s words and answers her harshly, and then concludes by saying “And if I be demeaned more than this, and be abashed in mine own eyes, [yet] of **the maidservants of which you have spoken, with them will I get me honor.**”

Chazal tell us something incredible. What was Dovid Hamelech **mainly** angry at Michal about?

Chazal say: “Said Dovid to Michal: These Jewish women whom you yelled about and called them ‘handmaids’ are not maids [*amahos*] but mothers [*imahos*]. **If only I will have a share with them le’asid lavo.** Therefore it says ‘the maidservants of which you have

spoken — if only with them will I get me honor.”

It says here that Dovid Hamelech’s main complaint to Michal was “Why did you call Jewish mothers ‘handsmaids’? Why did you refer to them as maids? They are not maids — they are mothers! These are our holy mothers!” Dovid Hamelech ends by saying, “If only I will get honor with them! — if only I could have a share in Olam Haba with them.”

So Dovid Hamelech is not reassured about his own share in Olam Haba, but *our* Olam Haba? The Jewish mothers’ Olam Haba? That he is absolutely sure about.

And that is why he is so jealous of us. “If only I had that too. If only I could be as assured as you are of my Olam Haba. If only I could be like those reassured women who know with certainty that they are well taken care of with regard to Olam Haba...”



And of course, we cannot help but ask: Really?! Come on...

Dovid Hamelech, of all people? He isn’t sure that he has a share in Olam Haba? **And we are?!**

What’s the logic in that? If we certainly have a share in Olam Haba — what logic is there in Dovid Hamelech’s fear that he doesn’t?!

The answer is an incredibly powerful truth.

A Jew was sent down into the world to do what he needs to do. Whatever his job is.

Someone who does his job here in this world, will receive Olam Haba, period. It’s that simple. There’s no special complex calculation here. This is what it is about.

Every person must know and clarify to himself what his job in the world is — and if he does it, no matter whether he is Avraham Avinu or the neighborhood butcher — he has a share in Olam Haba.

Is the concept clear so far?

Now here is where the story begins. A Jewish mother has no doubts. She has no gray areas. **She knows precisely what it is she needs to do.** Obviously! There are mountains of laundry to fold and

to put into the closets? Yes? **Is that something I need to do?**

Yes! Okay, great. So I know what Hashem wants of me over the next half hour. To do just that.

Next. I wake up in the morning. Yanky needs to be dressed and be readied for school? I need to prepare a sandwich for Shoshi? Do I need to wash Avi's hands? Do I need to? Yes or no? Yes!

Okay, great. So I once again know exactly what Hashem wants of me this morning.

Next. Do the kids need to eat lunch today? Do I need to fry onions? Do I need to add one cup of water to the pot? Do I need to put in one cup of rice? Do I need to put it on the stovetop and wait five minutes for it to boil? Do I need to or not? Yes! **Great! I know what Hashem wants of me!**

And so on... A Jewish mother knows exactly what Hashem wants of her. A woman receives updated instructions every five minutes as to what she needs to do now...

And as we determined, a person who does what he needs to do has a sure path to Olam Haba. There is no doubt about it.

In contrast, Dovid Hamelech sits in the *beis midrash* and is constantly faced with questions and decisions that he must make, not always knowing what Hashem's Will is right now. Should I close my Gemara to take care of that issue? Maybe I need to wait. Maybe I'll find out that it's a mitzvah that someone else can do instead of me. How do I determine that complex case? Should I reach a compromise or cut through the halachah in the stricter manner?

The man must constantly make decisions, and constantly check himself with a magnifying glass to make sure there are no personal motives in his decisions, and whether he is completely right in choosing one preference or value over another, or one person over the next...

And after all his personal inspection and mental calculations, he still knows that he might have made a terrible mistake. (Yes, Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai, at age 120 and on his deathbed, cried, "There are two paths before me and I do not know which path I am being taken to!") This is what Dovid Hamelech felt. All day long he sits in

the *beis din*, having to *pasken* halachos, and he is constantly unsure, am I right, or not?

And then, the *Yom Hadin* arrives! Dovid Hamelech walks to davening in shul, trembling and pale. "My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I dread Your judgemtns." He is terrified. Who knows whether I did what I needed to do?! And as he walks past a children's playground, he sees a serene-looking mother playing with her child, pushing him in the swing, and he is overcome with jealousy.

*Oy... Dovid Hamelech thinks. I am so jealous of this mother. **She knows exactly what Hashem wants of her now!** She knows precisely what it is she needs to be doing right now! And she does it perfectly. She knows that right now Yanky needs to be pushed on the swing — and that's what she does. With love, with devotion, with endless dedication. And she's calm. Of course she is — she knows she's doing what she needs to be doing!*

If only I could have this same serenity and calm, the clarity that I am doing what Hashem wants me to be doing!

Dovid Hamelech sheds a tear, and turns to Hashem, "Please Hashem, to be absolutely sure of my judgment, on this Day of Judgment, I want You to inscribe me in the same book as that mother. That one who is pushing her child on the swing in the playground. Please, Hashem..."

That's what Dovid Hamelech understands, and that is what he tries to explain to Michal *bas* Shaul, who isn't as clear about this truth.

And this is what Michal is punished for, too — the fact that she did not appreciate enough the mother in her! That motherly part of her that receives constant commands from Hashem, and knows precisely what she needs to do. Michal *bas* Shaul longed to put on tefillin. She enabled Ashkenazi women to shake the lulav every year, and to make the brachah "*al netilas lulav*." She allows the women to come to shul on Rosh Hashanah afternoon, to hear the shofar and to feel great about themselves. "Here, I too was *zoche* to fulfill the mitzvah of shofar even though I'm not required to!"

It is beautiful that Jewish women express their longing for Hash-

em's mitzvos in this way!

But at the same time Dovid Hamelech rebukes Michal and tells her, "Why? Why search for mitzvos that you have not been commanded to do? There is no one who performs Hashem's commandments more than you! Every moment anew Hashem gives you new commands based on the constant and ever-shifting realities of your life. Prepare lunch, put the children to sleep, give some attention to Shoshi who's been sulking for thirty minutes already and is waiting for you to appease her... Why keep searching for mitzvos that you are not commanded to do? You are full of mitzvos already!

Yes, one day Dovid Hamelech was in the bathhouse and suddenly became frightened when he realized that he has no mitzvos on him right now. Then he recalled the mitzvah that is to be performed on the eighth day and he began to praise it, "*Lamnatzeach al hashemimis...*"

What would a woman do if she finds herself with no mitzvos? The answer to that is — that will never happen. A woman will *never* find herself with no mitzvos going on!

There will always be laundry waiting for her, always tasks that she is involved in. There is always going to be that someone who cries and needs her... The *passuk* says about her "*ashrei Shomrei mishpat ossei tzedakah bechol es* — fortunate are those who keep justice, who perform righteousness at all times." Who performs righteousness at all times? That's the Jewish mother, who at every time and every hour is commanded and does, and does...

A woman will never find herself facing the same problem that Dovid Hamelech had. She will never remain bereft of mitzvos.

And that is what Dovid Hamelech rebuked Michal about:

Why are you looking to graze in our fields, the men's fields? Why do you make light of your role? Why do you look at your job, the woman's job, as some kind of maid's job? That motherly role, which you call "handsmaid" is not *amahos*- it's *imahos*, and I wish I could have the same assurance of Olam Haba.



Michal *bas* Shaul understands this already — but what about you?

This is what we have *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* for! To repent means to return. **Every person must return to his place.** Until now, everything was in chaos. Every person sat in the other person's seat. On *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, our Father in Heaven asks us all to return to our original seats. Every person should understand where his true *avodas Hashem* lies, define for himself what his obligation and mission in the world is, based on his particular circumstances — and go back there.

Every person should take his unique position, and together, we will praise Hashem and bring the *geulah* closer.

Ani LeDodi — Does that “Ani” Even Exist?

Going out on a search...

We introduce our preparations for Rosh Hashanah with the word “Ani — I.” “*Ani leDodi veDodi li* — I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me.”

During the days preceding Rosh Hashanah we must focus first and foremost on a personal introspection, who is this “I”, and how much am I really me. Who said this “I” even exists? After all, if I am going to give “myself” to my Beloved, I must first check how this “I” is doing and where it even is.

Therefore, this is when we need to introspect and do some inner work especially on the greatest enemy of the “I” — and that is social pressure. Our lack of appreciation for the things that we do, only because “everyone” does it, so why would it even be considered special?

Here is where it is important to point out something critical:

We all know to point to the spiritual landslides that happen as a result of social pressure — for example, the reason for women being *nichshal* with too-long sheitels or other basic values that everyone may understand are crucial but society pressures us to drop. The moment “everyone” does it, it provides us with a sort of backhanded permission to do the same, with no personal criticism or brakes, asking myself how I can do something if it goes against Hashem’s Will... and never mind what “everyone else” does. If everyone ignores an important spiritual value, or if everyone follows everyone, it makes us automatically follow just because it has become “the norm”.

That’s the better-known damage of the “everyone does it” problem.

However, we must realize that this is actually the *lesser* damage that results from societal norms. The real problem and the truly great damage — a far deeper and more complex problem — is as

follows:

As soon as “everyone does what everyone does”, and everyone *must* do what society has deemed “normal”, this creates a situation in which there is a long list of positive things that we do, but since they have become “normal” and “everyone does it” — we no longer appreciate it. **We begin taking it for granted and have no appreciation for what we are doing.** “What’s so special about it?” we say. “Everyone does it! What credit do I deserve for it? It’s minimal.. it’s what society dictates. *Everyone* does it.”

For example, I was once talking to a young man who had six children close together. This man was sharing how he and his wife felt like they were not getting to utilize their full potential spiritually. They feel like they’re too busy living the day-do-day grind, while they so badly want to also give something to Hashem...They feel like they need to be *mechazek* themselves in some area, take on a *kabbalah* or something like that. So, he asked me, what kind of good resolution should they accept upon themselves? How can they better serve Hashem despite the busyness of daily life?

I told him, “Wait a minute. You have six kids! You raise them with love and devotion and that cannot be easy. And as far as I understand you are doing that for Hashem. Well, then? *Kol hakavod!* You’re already doing an incredible amount for Hashem. Why isn’t that enough for you? Why don’t you feel satisfied with it?”

He looked at me as if I fell off the moon! “What’s there to admire?” he asked me. “You want me to feel proud of myself for being the father of six children? What’s so amazing about that? I mean, I’m *frum*, right? Pretty much every other *frum* guy my age has a few children. That’s just the norm.

But then he stopped and thought for a few moments, and then said contemplatively, “You know what, you’re right. It’s not easy to raise six children! It’s challenging and hard — even very hard! We almost don’t get any time to ourselves. But to feel that satisfaction from this job? To feel like this is my mission and make do with that? I don’t buy it- what did you *expect* me to do with my kids, not to raise them? Send them for adoption?

See? This is the greatest damage of “going with the flow” in

the spiritual sense in our generation.

Here are two parents, whom Hashem asked to serve as babysitters for six of His treasures. Six holy Jewish souls. No, these are not sick children, *Rachmana litzlan*, nor are these children with other unusual problems. But they are children, and there no need to explain how much *tzaar gidul banim* is involved in raising six children; how much pain and worry, how much of a burden the *chinuch* and *parnassah* are and so on. So why aren't you able to appreciate the fact that you are raising Hashem's children?

Well, why not? Because...because all your other neighbors in your Charedi building have seven or eight children. **But so what? Does that make it any less special and incredible?** Here's the problem. This is the main problem with our "going with the flow."

Here's another example: The wife of a kollel *yungeman* who feels like she isn't doing enough for Hashem. She feels that she needs to accept some kind of special *kabbalah* upon herself that will "elevate" her during the *Yamim Nora'im*. So we ask her, "Wait...but your husband learns in kollel all day, doesn't he?" And she looks back at you in amazement and cannot fathom why that has to do with anything. "Sure he does. But what's special about that? Everyone around us does that. There are eight hundred other men in my husband's kollel besides him."

And therefore, what?! Therefore, the fact that you are willing to be *moser nefesh* so that he can learn is worth nothing? You need to search for some kind of "special" *kabbalah* such as davening Minchah in a minyan to feel like you're doing something "worthwhile"?!

This is our problem with our conforming to societal norms! This! Here is where the greatest damage is!

Ani leDodi veDodi li — I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me. It's time for us to move everyone aside. I don't care what everyone else does. Nothing is to be taken for granted. Right now I am standing before my Beloved, just me — **me!** with no one else around. Who am I? What am I doing with my life? And most importantly — why?

I am not obligated to raise a family. A woman is *patur* from this

mitzvah. And even her husband, who is obligated, has fulfilled his obligation once they have had a boy and a girl. And yet we volunteered to open a dormitory for Hashem's children. We agreed to have a larger family and to raise more children for Hashem.

"Ribono shel Olam, *ani* — *leDodi*! I am for my Beloved! I devote myself to You with love. I am willing to devote myself even more, and to continue raising my family for You." That is the greatest "*Ani leDodi*" that one can do!

Not to start something no. No, absolutely not! Instead, to begin isolating the "I" — what I am already doing, but not doing it enough from that place of "I". It is time to do the same thing, but from the perspective of "*Ani leDodi*".

These days, in the *Daf Hayomi*, we find in Maseches Kesubos the *sugya* which Chazal insist on claiming that a person is not obligated to feed his and support his children! As absurd as that sounds, and as minimal as this may seem in our eyes, Chazal insist that in principle, a man is not required to support his children. If theoretically, a person will decide to stay in bed and not go out to work and support his family, there is no way to force him to feed his children. Here's what you need to know: Theoretically speaking, from age six and on a person can decide to send his children out into the streets.

Who? Because these are Hashem's children. They are His responsibility. And just as Hashem makes sure to feed the crow's babies, whose parent is cruel to them, so too Hashem is the One Who will feed these children, and theoretically I can shake that responsibility off of my shoulders.

And yet, I'm not doing that. I am taking responsibility. I provide for my children. I follow my bank accounts anxiously, go to the store and buy them bread — and not only bread; also vegetables and milk and fish...for who? For the Ribono shel Olam's *hachnasas orchim*! Chazal say, "*Ashrei shomrei mishpat, ossei tzedakah bechol eis* — Fortunate are those who keep justice, who perform righteousness at all times." Who are those who "perform righteousness at all times?" The Gemara tells us: "Those who provide for their sons and daughters when they are young."

In other words, that's the loving father who goes to work so that he

can bring *parnassah* home. That's the devoted mother who stands in the kitchen frying schnitzels for a regular everyday lunch. It's a soup kitchen! It's a feeding program for Hashem's children. So you might say, "Well, what did you expect us to do? Not feed our children?"

Oh, but that makes no difference. Tachles — you are now feeding Hashem's treasures! "*Vayachsheveha lo litzedakah* — and He considered it for him a righteousness." Hashem considers it *tzedakah*. Who cares if that's your "hobby" too? So what if these are your children, and they are your entire life? At the same time they are also Hashem's most precious treasures, and you — you! — are taking care of them! *Kol hakavod* to you!

Rav Shmuel Rosovsky once asked, "We say in the *haftarah* '*asher bachar binevi'im* **tovim** — who chose **good** prophets.' What are '**good** prophets'? Are there any 'bad prophets'?" And then he answered simply, "No, there is no such thing as a bad prophet, but so what? Therefore — what? Just because there are no 'bad prophets', does that make the good prophets any less good?!"

In the same vein, a Jewish mother, who devotes herself endlessly for Hashem's children, stands there, and as she dares to begin appreciating her personal "*Ani leDodi*", she immediately stops and chastises herself, "Well, what's the alternative? To throw my children into the sea? Starve them?"

The answer is: So what? So what if the other option is to be a "bad mother"? It's not a contradiction that if there's a good mother here — that's amazing! And the fact that everyone else is a good mother too, and the fact that there really is no alternative option, does not for a single moment detract from the great mission that she is accomplishing, and the appreciation and admiration that she deserves!

And that is the "*Ani*" that we must give "*leDodi*" — *Ani leDodi*...

"I am willing to continue being a mother — for Your sake. I am willing to continue loving Your Torah and devoting myself to my husband's *kvius* even though it's not always easy. I will continue waiting for my son to come back from *cheder* and to love and accept him as he is. I accept upon myself to continue preparing breakfast, lunch and supper, and to clean up the house every night. I accept upon myself to continue taking the children to the playground.

So yes, when I get to that playground I see dozens of other Jewish women who are all doing the same, btu so what? That does not detract from what I am doing! *Ani leDodi!*

It's time we stop searching for that far-away, elusive *kabbalah* that we must take upon ourselves in Elul. Instead of searching under the ground for that, it's time to raise our "*Ani*" from the ground. Elevate whatever I am already doing, and stop minimizing its importance just because everyone else is doing it too.

For that, we have the month of Elul, in which Hashem does not want to see me together with everyone. He wants the *Ani* — me! Only me! True, on Rosh Hashanah I will come daven to Him specifically with everyone, "*besoch ami ani yosheves.*" But in Elul, the emphasis is on "*Ani* — I." He wants me, alone.

The *mazal* of Elul is *besulah*. The *besulah* represents the love of marriage. The *chosson* desires his *kallah* not because she is a devoted mother to his children, and not because she demonstrated any special capabilities. Because a *besulah* is merely a child under age twelve... She doesn't have any special resume to show, no long life story filled with achievements. But so what? He wants *her*! For what she is! He wants her just as she is, without comparing her to others...

The month of Sivan has the *mazal* of *te'omim* — twins. Then, at Har Sinai, we all stood *together*. There, we all accepted "like one man" — "We will do and we will hear." Yes, when it comes to the basic requirements of Yiddishkeit, we need social pressure. It's healthy for us to live in a frum city, where *chilul Shabbos* is unspeakable. Where lack of *tznius* is looked down upon. When it comes to Torah, it is healthy for us to live within boundaries and social norms that draw a red line before anything that isn't Hashem's Will. Therefore in Sivan, we have the *mazal* of *te'omim*. It's good for us to stand together, with that social pressure to do what we need to do, to draw comparisons and keep up with the required spiritual basics.

But when it comes to Elul — now, we are asked to crown Hashem over us. And accepting Hashem's kingship is a personal initiative

on my part! It's what **I obligate myself**. Here, I cannot have anyone else before me — it's just *Ani leDodi* — I and my Beloved. Here I am the *besulah* who stands absolutely alone before Him, and no stranger may share in my joy! Hashem does not put anyone else before me, either. The fact that “everyone does this”, or that this is the accepted norm — that detracts nothing from the *Ani leDodi*! The twins of Sivan have no permission to come close in Elul. Elul is the month of “me” alone! It's the month for the second set of *luchos*, which were given with no fanfare. My Beloved sees only me. He doesn't see anyone besides me. It doesn't matter to Him what everyone else does. He looks at my actions, and only my actions.

Rav Ezriel Tauber would always repeat to the women in the Shalhevet seminars: Don't take upon yourselves any new *chizzuk*! Instead, start appreciating **what you are already doing**! Start appreciating the “*ani*”! And then give that — *Ani leDodi*. Stop drowning your “*ani*” in that muddle called “everyone”. Take that “*ani*” out of the circle and put it alone, as its own separate unit. And then give that “*ani*” over to your Beloved...

This is the first and most basic *chizzuk* that we must take with us to Rosh Hashanah.

Ani leDodi!



Below is a long list of *kabbalos* for you to take on in preparation for Rosh Hashanah.

But this time, the instructions are different than those you are accustomed to hearing. When we speak about taking on a new *kabbalah* for the *Yom Hadin*, we generally hear that we should only take one upon ourselves, and even that *kabbalah* must be a small one.

But here, we will say otherwise. This time we will give you a long list of *kabbalos* to choose from, and you will need to take on most of them. You can choose a few that you won't, but otherwise — this is a long list of *kabbalos* for you to take on.

I accept upon myself:

1. To prepare sandwiches every morning for the neshamos that Hashem has entrusted to me;
2. To prepare clean clothing for them every day — 365 days a year.
3. To change diapers whenever necessary;
4. To take them to the park sometimes;
5. To make sure that on most days of the week there will be ready food at home — bread, milk, eggs, cheese. To try and keep the pantry stocked as needed;
6. **Cleaning services:** To clean the house once a week;
7. **Transportation services:** To share the responsibility of getting my children to and from school every day;
8. **Feeding:** To make sure that the food on the plate actually gets into the child's mouth (Hashem, this one isn't totally up to me — please help me!);
9. **Hygiene:** Give baths to the younger children;
10. **Laundry services:** Ensure that all family members have clean clothes, linens, and towels;
11. **Safety:** Try to prevent the children from putting themselves in danger such as running into the street, playing with unsafe items, or putting small things into their mouths.
12. **Cosmetics:** Cut the entire “dormitory”'s nails every month. My husband accepts upon himself to take care of the boys' haircuts, and I am taking upon myself the girls' hairdos.
13. **Health:** I will try to stay on top of the kids' well-visits, vaccinations, medications and so on;
14. **Education:** I will try to set boundaries, and say “no” when I know that's the right thing to do;
15. Waiting, patience and so on...

Let us ask you a quick question — was anything here an exaggeration? Is there anything here that isn't something you do, with devo-

tion, day in and day out? If anything, this is a very, very partial list! We can add so many other things that you do for Hashem's children. So why don't we appreciate it? Why don't we ever remember what we do?

Why do we keep searching for Hashem's Will in other places? Are we lacking an implementation of daily *avodas Hashem* for the greatest mission in our lives? Do we always have the *koach* to do these tasks that were we given, that we need to find more in other places?

This year, we will find *kabbalos* in the list above. And if anything — we'll *remove* some of them from our list. We will understand that we are human, and we are not meant to be perfect — and we do so, so much already. We will accept upon ourselves to do what we are already doing, and to start appreciating our *shlichus*, stop putting down our "*ani*". We will take that "*ani*", which we will elevate and appreciate, and dedicate it - *leDodi*...

**Dedicated with admiration to the women of
Klal Yisrael.**

**May Hashem be with you, may He accept
your supplications, and may you be *zoche* to
raise *doros yesharim mevorachim*.**

**Wishing all of Am Yisrael a *kesivah*
vachasimah tovah!**



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