**Excerpts from the HAKHEL Community Email during the week of Parshas Nitzavim and Erev Rosh Hashanah 5777**

 **NOT A BEAR!**In the most recent issue of *HaParasha BâMechitzas HaChofetz Chaim*, the Chofetz Chaim teaches that: *Teshuvah Iz Nit Kain Ber*--Teshuvah is not a bear. Importantly, the Chofetz Chaim is teaching us that Teshuvah is not something to be afraid of, and that it is not difficult. One must have remorse over a past aveirah, and accept upon himself not to do so in the future.

 In fact, HaRav Nosson Wachtfogel, Z”tl, related that the Ponovezher Rav, Z”tl, was once traveling to South Africa and asked the Chofetz Chaim what he could relate to the Jews there in the Chofetz Chaim’s names. The Chofetz Chaim answered: “You should tell them that it is easy to do Teshuvah--one has *charata* and a *kabalah* for the future. It is only the Yetzer Hara who tells people that it is difficult to do Teshuvah!”

 **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!** In our Rosh Hashana Tefillos, we recite *Yom Teruah Mikrah Kodesh Zecher L’Yetzias Mitzrayim*. HaRav Mattisyahu Salomon, Shlita, posed a straightforward but startling question:

 We understand how the Shalosh Regalim are rooted in Yetzias Mitzrayim. What, however, does Rosh Hashana have to do with Yetzias Mitzrayim--how is it a Zecher L’Yetzias Mitzrayim?!

 HaRav Salomon explains that, in truth, our experience at the Seder and over Pesach is supposed to leave a great and lasting impression upon us--to effect a change in our attitude. However, after the Seder, although one may feel uplifted, he does not really know what effect, what mark, the experience has made on his life. It is Rosh Hashana where the mark will be felt. The degree, the extent to which one feels that Hashem is omnipotent, and knows and sees all of one’s thoughts, words, and deeds, is the extent to which one has internalized the Yesodos HaEmunah that Yetzias Mitzrayim represents.

 Pesach is a time when we *learn about* Hashem’s power, Sechar V’Onesh and Hashgacha Pratis. **Rosh Hashana is a time when we *live* our belief**. Incredibly, HaRav Salomon continued that HaRav Chaim Brisker, Z”tl, taught that if a person does not learn parts of the Torah he is not an apikores--but if he does not know the Thirteen Ikarim--the Thirteen Ani Ma’amins, then he ***is***!

 It is therefore of utmost importance that we review and understand the Thirteen Ikrim--and put them into practice in our daily life. The extent of our awe of Hashem’s Malchus on Rosh Hashana is indeed a direct result and outcome of the lessons of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

 **PESUKEI D’ZIMRA:**As we prepare for the great day of coronation, one should learn about and grow further in his appreciation of the Melech Malchei HaMelochim. One can accomplish this in a simple and straightforward way by reciting Pesukei Dâ’Zimra with more feeling--paying more careful attention to the words. We do not have to travel to the Far East or ends of the globe in order to accomplish our potential and mission in life. Hashem provides the opportunities for us day in and day out wherever we are in our daily actions--and this itself is something else which should make us grow in our appreciation of all Hashem does for us!

 Hakhel Note: Every day in Modim of Shemone Esrei we recite *Nodeh Lecha U’Nesaper Tehilasecha*(we thank You and we relate Your praise). While the thanks may be evident in Modim itself--when and where do we relate Hashem’s praise? One possibility may be ¦Pesukei D’Zimra!

 **MENTSCHLECHKEIT:**HaRav Naftali Kaplan, Shlita, explains that the basic thrust of Mitzvos Bein Adam L’Atzmo is mentschlechkeit. A person must ask himself: “Does it *pahs* (is it appropriate) for a Tzelem Elokim to do what I am doing or about to do?” “We are faced with numerous situations during a day: Should I enter the elevator while talking on my cell phone?  Should I eat standing up at a smorgasbord?  Should I walk around at home not properly dressed even if I am only going downstairs for a minute? Should I laugh when a person embarrasses himself?”

 One can think of other examples on his own. One must remember that Hashem did not create him as a rock, ant, deer, ape. One should regale in the fact that he is a Tzelem Elokim--and act the role in a way that our Elokim would be proud!

 HaRav Moshe Feinstein, Z”tl, teaches that an *ikar* of Teshuvah is learning *b’simcha*. I think that before one learns, he should do something to show how happy he is to have the opportunity to do the greatest Mitzvah of all. If nothing else--at least say: “Thank you Hashem for the opportunity!”

**SMILE!**At this past Sunday night’s Kinus hosted by the Agudah and Hakhel on *V’Asisa HaYashar V’HaTo*v, HaRav Moshe Tuvia Lieff, Shlita, taught a remarkable lesson. He said that HaRav Avigdor Miller, Z”tl, was asked by a student what one’s Avodah is at this time of year. HaRav Miller responded that it is to smile. Noticing the student’s astonishment, he explained that when one smiles he exhibits a feeling of happiness to others, demonstrating that Torah observance is satisfying and meaningful. The Mashal would be to a factory owner who must lay-off workers. The wise factory owner will not lay off a happy worker--for he needs him to inspire all of the workers that are left. Hashem is also looking for those who are joyful--demonstrating to themselves and to others that they truly value their relationship with Hashem, His Torah and His Mitzvos.

E.Â  Rebbi Yisroel Salanter, Z”tl, taught that a person should be careful to not walk around in these days of judgment with a forlorn or somber face, for oneâ€™s face is seen by others--it is a *Reshus HaRabim*--and one has a duty to make others happy, not sad. The Ba’alei Mussar emphasize that one should show *Panim Meir’im,*a cheerful face, in order to encourage those around him. In doing so, one can go much further in helping himself by helping others. One should always serve Hashem in awe--and in joy!

HaRav Shmuel Berenbaum, Z”tl, teaches that the *midah ra’ah* which leads to all other *midos* *ra’os* is *atzlus*--laziness.Â  Laziness does not only mean that one has trouble getting up in the morning. It can also include the failure of one to exert himself or extend himself a bit more than he has until this point. Simple examples could include picking up one’s Siddur rather than having it rest on the table--if this will help one have more Kavannah; raising one’s hand in order to kiss one’s Tefillin periodically during davening; running or walking at a faster pace when one is in sight of a Mitzvah; taking the time to look up or ask about a Halacha that one is unsure of. The world is a world of opportunities--the better that we are at acting upon them, the greater and more important the world is to us!