



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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We find ourselves in an emotionally heightened time period - the final days before Rosh HaShana when we crown HaKadosh Baruch Hu and recommit ourselves to His service. In this time of introspection I find myself eagerly searching for new ways to connect with the Borei Olam and eagerly anticipate the *selichot* experience and the opportunities it provides.

Since Covid, I join a *minyan* every *motzei Shabbat* next to my home to accommodate neighbors who have difficulty walking to shul. The vast majority of those that join the *minyan* are Sefardi. I was therefore unsurprised when I made an announcement at the end of *maariv* reminding those present that *selichot* would begin at the shul nearby just a few hours later. “*Oh, the time has finally come for you guys! And just in time for Rosh HaShana!*”

Truthfully I am jealous of the Sefardi custom to say *selichot* beginning on Rosh Chodesh Elul through Yom Kippur. Every year I see the videos of the Kotel Plaza, filled to the brim with the words of *selichot* echoing throughout the crowds of thousands, asking *mechillah* in unison leading up to the Yamim Noraim. I particularly enjoy listening to Sefardi *selichot* and appreciate

the relatable way in which the *tefillot* are written - with less poetry and in a mostly communal tone. That said, I have benefited from learning the many commentaries now available on Ashkenazi *selichot*.

But at the end of the day, when building any relationship, time spent is measured by its quality as well as its quantity. Whether one's custom is to say *selichot* for a period of 40 days or four, what matters is



their *kavannah* throughout the experience and how they utilize the time provided. To put it simply, we cannot rely on the routine of *selichot* to bring us closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. It is an *avodah shebalev* that



The OU Israel Family
sends heartfelt condolences to
Rebbetzin Chavi Weinreb and family
on the passing of her brother

YOSSI TAUB Z" L

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלם

requires us to apply our full *neshama* and intellect.

Recognizing the anxiety and overwhelm that can easily overtake us during this time period, I have come to appreciate the intuitive structure of the days leading up to the Yamim Noraim which provides countless opportunities to foster, build and fortify a personal relationship with Hashem:

1. Selichot - Investing in Quality Time, Not Lip Service: In recent years there has been a global movement to make *selichot* more inspiring, gathering massive groups of people to join in the *tefillah*, led by famous *chazanim* and *baalei Tefillah*. This can help us connect this time of year. Whether or not we spent this past year investing in our relationship with Hashem, the days leading up to Rosh HaShana present us with this very opportunity. With a set routine of *selichot*, we put aside the hustle and bustle of the day and spend time connecting to Hashem. However, the powerful words of *selichot* alone will not catapult us to a relationship with Hashem. Rather, for us to experience a true transformation, we must ruminate on the words of *selichot* and internalize them.

2. Rosh HaShana - Adopting The Right Attitude: Gratitude and appreciation are critical elements in any relationship. To fully appreciate the magnitude of Hashem's Kingship, Rosh HaShana provides us with the structure within which we can reflect upon the previous year and identify the ways in which He supported us and challenged us for our own betterment. From that place of gratitude we can tap into humility, contemplate our respective missions on this Earth and identify where adjustments must be made.

With this mindset we can then harness the power of new beginnings and set new goals for our relationship with Hashem to pursue in the coming year.

3. Aseret Yemei Teshuvah - Maintaining Communication, Fostering Connection: Hashem's presence during the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah is infinitely closer than it is all year round. It is during these very days that we have direct access to Him, presenting us with an opportunity and responsibility that we must capitalize on. Whether it be during set times for *tefillah* or speaking to Hashem from the heart as the day unfolds, It is during these precious days of repentance that *teshuvah* is easier to achieve and it is a gift we cannot squander.

4. Yom Kippur & Teshuvah - Self Awareness, Repentance & Forgiveness: Finally, as in every meaningful relationship, we must take accountability for our actions and failures, ask Hashem for forgiveness and make actionable changes. On the day in which Hashem's love for Am Yisrael is the strongest, we come to the table with honesty and humility, owning our mistakes while committing to improve ourselves with the time we are given.

We end this time period with Sukkot, a *chag* with tremendous potential, during

May the Torah learned
from this issue be לעילוי נשמת
our beloved husband, father,
grandfather, and great-grandfather

אליקים גצל בן ר' יוסף לידר ז"ל

GERRY LIEDER ז"ל

on his 4th yarhrzeit - ז' תשרי

Lieder, Schechter, Taragin,
and Kaufman families

which we rejoice in the unique relationship established between Am Yisrael and HaKadosh Baruch Hu. That *simcha* is amplified by the new relationships we have forged individually during the Yamim Noraim. With new goals to achieve we begin to implement changes set in motion during the Yamim Noraim, solidifying the transformation started weeks prior.

When building a relationship with the Almighty it is never too late. The Yamim Noraim provide us with a thoughtful structure to guide our growth. In the coming days, whether we choose to invest more time in davening, learning, deepening our understanding of *selichot*, attending events such as OU Israel's Torah Yerushalayim or *selichot* by the Kotel, we have endless opportunities to deepen our connection with the *Ribono Shel Olam*.

May we tap into the power of the *Yamim Noraim* and reach new heights in our *avodat HaShem* - individually and as a unified nation. May Hashem give all of *Klal Yisrael* a year of unity, peace, prosperity and health.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a Shana Tova!



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