

BILVAVI

Life Line on Rosh Hashanna

בלבבי משבן אבנה

השיעורים של הרב זמינים ב"קול הלשון"

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Meaningful Life, Not the Animal Life

Once there was a man who made himself a list on Erev Rosh Hashanah, a list of his needs for the coming year, in order not to forget what to on Rosh Hashanah that Hashem should fulfill his heart's desires for the good. The list included parnassah (livelihood), health, well-raised children who would do good, and other similar requests.

Three days after Rosh Hashanah, the man died. He got every one of his wishes fulfilled, but he died. Health - he was not sick; parnassah - his family inherited; well-raised children who would do good, but would do so as orphans.

How could such a thing happen?? He asked for everything, but he forgot to ask for life itself! So he got everything he asked for, but that.

The first thing a person needs to ask for is life itself! Once he has life, he can ask for parnassah, health etc., in order that his life is not full of burdens that prevent him from fulfilling his goals, but all of that can only be if he has life itself.

That is indeed why we daven on Rosh Hashanah, "*Zochraynu L'chaim, Melech chofetz bachaim, v'chos-vaynu b'sefer hachaim l'maan'cha Elokim chaim.*" – "Remember us for life, King who desires life, and write us into the book of life, for Your sake, the living G-d."

We must reflect on this a bit: What do we mean by "chaim" (life)? To live and not to die? Horses live, geese live. Does anyone want Hashem to give him the life of a goose or a horse? "Inscribe us in the Book of Life together with all the geese!" . . . Nobody wants that. We want life - meaningful life.

If so, when we say "*Kosvaynu b'sefer hachaim*" and then on Yom Kippur, "*Chosmaynu*", we do not mean to ask for life in the same sense that animals and birds are granted life, but rather that we want the life of a human being.

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Where does this "inscribing" and "sealing" take place? Is there a big thick book somewhere up in heaven where the names of all creatures is written?

Obviously there isn't a pen nor parchment, nothing is written down in a physical sense. It's simple to understand that we are talking about something spiritual. What indeed is it?

The Maggid of Mezeritch used to say that the inscription and sealing take place on each person's heart. That's where a person's life-force is. When the heart ceases to function - that is death. "Inscribe us for life" - we are asking Hashem to write on the tablet of our heart.

In order to understand the depth hidden in these words, let us contemplate the year that's gone by, and what we want for the upcoming year.

A Life of "Chiyus" - To Have Real Vitality in our Life

Everything needs chiyus - some kind of life-giving force that sustains it. If it doesn't have chiyus, it disintegrates, it cannot go on to exist. Plants require irrigation, animals need food and water in order to live, and human beings too require a life-giving force in order to continue to exist.

When we reflect on what is it that gives us life, we can divide the answer into two categories: there are things that give us our existence, and there are things that give us pleasure. In order to exist, it would be enough to have "bread with salt and measured amounts of water". That will enable a person to live, not to die. Yet just to keep staying alive is not enough for us to really survive; a person needs a source of pleasure in his life as well in order to really stay alive.

For example, let's say a person is accustomed to eating three meals every day: three types of cheese for breakfast, four types of meat for lunch, and similar fare for supper. One day he attempts to change over at once to eating bread with salt and measured amounts of water. His body will undergo physical madness.

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Why? Isn't he eating enough? Yes, he is, but this alone will not enable him to survive. Why not? It is because there are two kinds of things that give humans their life: things that enable us to subsist, basic food and the like; and things that give us pleasure. A person who has no points of pleasure in his life cannot really live. There is no such thing.

Each person has the choice as to what kind of pleasure he needs. There are people who derive their pleasure from a certain type of food, while others get their enjoyment in life from reading. Others derive their pleasure from a captivating niggun (Jewish melody), while someone on a higher level gets his enjoyment from Torah, mitzvos, and connection to the Creator of the world.

Every day, a person has some kind of pleasure. Most people get their pleasure from delicious food, a bit of honor or a compliment, maybe a few other external feelings from the material world - these are pleasures are giving people their *chiyus*.

But we are not street people. We are *maaminim bnei maaminim* (believers, sons of believers), and we believe that we must derive our pleasure from our inside - not from the external world.

Let us stop to think about this. A man arises in the morning, davens Shacharis, and goes to eat breakfast. Boruch Hashem, he doesn't eat just eat "bread dipped in salt" - he eats more than that. What did he really enjoy more - Shacharis, or his breakfast?

After all, if he were exempt from davening due to a situation beyond his control, he wouldn't have to daven. If he's busy with a mitzvah that no one else besides him can, or if his wife gave birth and he took her to the hospital and he needs to attend to her there - the halachah is that he is exempt from davening. One doesn't have to daven in these situations - not due to forgetfulness and not *chas v'shalom* with malicious intent. But when it comes to eating breakfast, even if he is exempt from eating it, that exemption won't do a thing. He must eat in order to exist!

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When we come to request life on Rosh Hashanah, "Kosvaynu L'chaim", we are requesting both types of life: 1) Life in its simple meaning - that we should live a long life, and not be written in the opposite book, chas v'shalom. 2) That there will be chiyus in that chaim – that besides for being allowed to live, we should have a feeling of vitality (chiyus) in our life.

There are people who live, but their life is a kind of death – they are living a life of internal yissurim (suffering). This reflects the possuk in Yonah, "Ask for their soul to die".

The fact that a person is alive doesn't mean that he has chiyus. He may be alive, yet he can still be devoid of any chiyus. A man can sit by the Gemara an entire day – he is immersed in "Toras Chaim", the "Torah of life" - yet he himself is kind of dead inside! Yes, he learns Torah, but it can all be for many external factors: because he has no other choice...because he needs the income he gets from the kolel... because it would be more uncomfortable for him to leave than to stay... or simply because he has nowhere else to go to. The learning itself gives him no chiyus and no pleasure.

If so, when we come on Rosh Hashanah and ask Hashem to give us life, our first request, most external and basic, is simply for life itself - that we should not die, and in this concern we are no different from animals and geese. Our second request, though, is that we should get chiyus - real pleasure in our life, and that this pleasure should come from learning Torah and keeping mitzvos.

Many times a person only focuses on external needs, such as that Hashem should give him life and that he not die; he also asks for a variety of needs - parnessah, health, shalom bayis, children who are tzadikim and so on - a long list in all, each person according to his needs.

All this is from the point of view of externalities, but where is the internal focus of the day?

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Two Judgments on Rosh Hashanah

There are two days of Rosh Hashanah. It is explained in sefarim hakedoshim that the judgment on the first day is concerning what will be with our neshamah (soul), and the judgment of the second day is concerning our body's situation.

Why should it make a difference to us when our neshamah is judged and when the body is judged? Whenever Hashem wants, let Him judge; what purpose is there in us knowing this information?

It's clear that the judgment on our neshamah on the first day relates to the internal life the person will have for the year. The person is being judged as to how much internal chiyus he will have, how much "neshamah" he will have this year.

It's possible that person will receive life on the second day's judgment. He is already 90 years old and he is being given another year. And yet on the first day, he was judged to die. What will be with him? He will not be eligible for the cemetery's guest list that year, but he will have physical existence and no more, life with no content. He will sit in the house with no taste to his life, no chiyus.

And that's not only true with a 90-year-old. Even a young 20-year-old, he too can have no chiyus! How many days pass over us in a year that we feel have no chiyus! We daven, we do mitzvos, we may even be immersed in Torah from morning until night, but our chiyus in learning is missing - the possuk that says "V'chai bohem" – "And you shall live by them." The person doesn't feel any pleasure in an inner way.

Even if a person contemplates the year just gone by and feels that he did receive life, let's analyze that a bit. For 24 hours in a day, normally a person sleeps between 6 and 8 of them, during which he certainly wasn't feeling much chiyus. So there are 14-16 hours left.

Now make a cheshbon (accounting) one day; not about what he did - that's a cheshbon hanefesh that relates to the second day of Rosh Hashanah, what he did, did he keep mitzvos or, chalila (Heaven forbid) did he do aveiros. He checks out his

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actions seeing how they fell short, or how they can be improved, he does teshuva sheleima (complete repentance) including charatah (regret), viduy (confession) and kabala l'assid (resolving not to sin again), just like the Rambam says to do. Certainly this kind of cheshbon must be done too, but the cheshbon hanefesh of the first day of Rosh Hashanah is to figure how much time per day did we have chiyus. Before we even check out where the chiyus came from, first of all, how much actual chiyus did we derive from that day?

A person arises in the morning, and he runs to his day's activities. Maybe he goes to the mikveh too; then he goes to daven. Did he derive chiyus from his tefillah? He should check it out. If he did, how much of the tefillah gave him chiyus? He finishes davening, and then he attends to his various responsibilities that each person has. He eats breakfast, goes to kollel, learns for four hours of first seder. But how much chiyus was there?? The comes lunch break, and he continues on - each person according to his own schedule.

Thus, we have to make for ourselves a double cheshbon hanefesh: The first stage is what we did, and for this we are judged on the second day of Rosh Hashanah; but the second part of our cheshbon hanefesh, which is the more internal stage, is: How much chiyus did we have throughout the day?

Of course, not all days are equal. Some days there we have more chiyus, and some days we have almost not chiyus. If a person will be honest with himself, he may find that the chiyus he had on a particular day was possibly the omelet he ate for breakfast, or a certain nice smile that someone cast his way at a particular time of the day. And that's it! Beyond that he was simply running all day long without feeling any internal chiyus.

Then there are people who won't understand what exactly we mean when we say "chiyus" - they're not sad, not happy, just "alive"! They will hear this and wonder, "What are you talking about here...Why do we need to have chiyus...?"

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If a person knows himself just a little, he knows that when his wife gave birth, he was very happy. At that moment, he understood very well what we mean by "chiyus". When he ate a food that he really likes, he felt chiyus, each according to his own tastes and values. It's not possible that he gets no chiyus from anything. One can just check and identify what he "lives" from. How much time out of the day did he have chiyus, and from where did he derive it? That is the question one has to ask myself: Where am I getting my chiyus from?

If an average person finds that he has more than ten minutes a day of chiyus, this is already an accomplishment.

To Feel that Torah Gives Us Life

How many people are really zocheh to learn Torah and every moment to feel the pleasure? Not just to finish the sugya and know it - that's also essential of course, but to receive the chiyus that Torah gives to those who learn it?

The Torah after all is Toras Chaim, it gives a person chiyus. The Mishnah in Avos states, "How great the Torah is, that it gives life to those who learn it in this world and in the next world, as it says, "For they are life to those who find them and a salve for all flesh", and it says "It can heal your flesh and nourish your bones", and it says "For they will add on to your days and years of life, and peace and well-being".

It's not sufficient just to know what is written in the seforim that Torah gives life, nor is it enough even to realize that it's true. If the Torah gives us life, we need to be able to feel this truth.

A person who has a heart attack, chas v'shalom, goes unconscious, and they are trying to resuscitate him. The fact that resuscitation procedure works is not just something that is written in medical books, we see that it really works: one moment ago he was lying on the floor lifeless, then they got him to breathe, and gradually he regained consciousness.

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It is written in many pesukim and in the words of Chazal that Torah literally gives life to those who learn it. Mitzvos also give us life, and so does tefillah. If that's what's written it must be true, the question is whether we feel this truth within our heart?

This is the depth of what the Magid of Mezeritch was saying: that the inscription and the seal take place on each person's heart. One has to be aware that the decree for the year is not only written in heaven - it is revealed also within one's heart. When life is decreed for a person on Rosh Hashanah, the decree is written on his heart; how much chiyus he will feel.

This is not some "segulah" whose reward will be felt at some time in the distant future. The Torah gives life to those who learn it and carry it out, right here in this world! If a person learns all his life long but he's not tasting its enjoyment and the life that the Torah can give him, then he is learning Torah only because he believes that in the distant future he will be rewarded; Hashem will give him his due reward, but this is not the way true life was meant to be.

Even a gadol (Torah leader of the generation) cannot learn for 12 or 14 hours without tasting enjoyment in his learning. If a person receives a satisfying taste in learning Torah, then he will find that he is able to learn even when there is he temporarily loses his taste in it; but to learn his entire life without taste, only because he wants to get a graduation certificate (semichah), or for all sorts of other reasons - that's death, not life! He would be fulfilling the mitzvah of Talmud Torah and will receive his due reward for it, but he is missing out on the real concept of life!

Without Chiyus One Will Never See Success

If we contemplate these things, we will find that a person can think he's all prepared for Rosh Hashanah, when in reality, he has already decreed upon himself to be judged on the second day, and not on the first.

How? He made for himself a cheshbon hanefesh: what did I do this year, what aveiros. He knows that he failed at times guarding his eyes, in loшон hora, in embarrassing

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someone, in wasting time of Torah learning, davening too late; each person knows for himself what his aveiros are. He made a cheshbon hanefesh on what he is trying to rectify these areas for next year, and he feels that this alone will help him succeed...

If he does this, it's not a question of a 70% chance that he will not succeed, not 80% and not 90%. It's 100% for sure that he will not succeed! Why?

Have you ever seen a dead body that can get up on time for Shacharis? So too a person cannot fight for an entire year to get up on time; there is no such thing! We are not such strong people who can fight every morning to get up on time. One day or two we can persevere, at very best a week or two; if one makes it all the way to Hoshana Rabbah, he's really accomplished something . . . but beyond that there is no chance!

We all know very well: every year we make kaballos (resolutions), and 99% of them do not stand up to reality. Why? Is it that we don't really want? We do want. We're not serious? We are serious! So what then is the problem?

The answer is very clear: when a person judges what he does and what he doesn't do, he is making a cheshbon hanefesh and organizing for himself what he will do in the upcoming year. By doing this he has already decreed his own gzar din for the first day and the second. He did real teshuva concerning his maasim (deeds); Hashem accepts his teshuva and will give him physical life on the second day. But as far as the neshamah goes, - the chiyus one will have – he has never even considered this, and he certainly didn't do teshuva on it; so how could he possibly receive chiyus for the upcoming year?!

We can compare this to a someone who comes to the king and asks him, “Give me precious stones, give me a house.” If he didn't specifically request a car, though, he won't get one.

If a person comes on Rosh Hashanah and asks for health, parnassah, a good memory for his learning - each person with his own bag of requests - but he neglects to ask for

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chiyus - he will not receive chiyus! He wants to remember what he learned? He will be like a camera, a computer disc, remembering everything, but he won't have chiyus.

A computer, even the kind that has on it the entire Torah, can never be considered a live entity. Even though it remembers better than anyone - there's no one in the generation who can remember as well as a computer can – in the end of the day, it's an inanimate object, not living. The fact that we remember things doesn't change a person into a living being.

When a person sees how learning the Torah gives life to him, and he enjoys learning it, that's when he goes beyond being a computer and becomes a person who knows the Torah. This is a simple and obvious difference, but when we get to our actual daily life, many times we are occupied more with knowing and keeping the Torah, and less with the chiyus that our learning (and keeping the mitzvos) can give us.

It's actually impossible to keep Torah and mitzvos according to halachah when a person lacks the chiyus they give. A person cannot fight the whole year long with such a battle. Ten days - somehow you can pull it off, but that too is a lot. Everyone understands that if we need to fight the entire year in order to change ourselves - there's not a chance in the world that we'll succeed!

How then can we ever succeed?

We've never seen a chosson whom they need to drag to the chuppah. If they need to drag him to the chuppah - better he shouldn't get married, it's 100% clear that in the end there will be a divorce. Why? Because it's not possible to build a life of 70 years on the basis of a forced marriage! If he understands that this lifestyle has pleasure in it and he is happy with the notion - sure there will be difficulties, life is full of challenges, but he has some chiyus out of it, some pleasure, and on the other hand - challenges, but the chiyus gives him the power to handle. This is a healthy world, a good world.

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If a person who doesn't feel a taste for davening, why would he have the motivation to get up in the morning? Of course, he believes as his fathers did in the holy Torah, and that Hashem gave us a time to daven and a time to say Shema, and that whoever doesn't do it will go to Gehinnom, and because of this fear he wants with all his heart to get up on time. But a person is not capable the entire year to live on the basis of a fear of Gehinnom. Fear of Gehinnom is needed, absolutely; it's not okay to get up only when we feel like it, so we do need to make use of our fear of Gehinnom at times. But it's also impossible to get up an entire year only on the basis of fear of Gehinnom!

If a person has a taste in tefillah - even if at times he doesn't have the cheishek (desire), he can awaken his fear of Gehinnom to get out of bed, but together with it he has to have some taam in the davening itself too, or else he won't be able to get up.

There are people who get up every morning on time, but it's not because they have a taam for davening. It's just that they have a nature that thrives on structure. If they would get up half an hour late - their head would already feel dizzy. L'havdil, there are also people who get up and 6:30 every morning to go to work and arrive at 7:00 on the dot. This has no connection to Torah and mitzvos, it's just on account of their structured nature, but it's still totally possible that they have no taam at all in their tefillah.

When There is Internal Chiyus There is Less Reason to Turn to Outside Chiyus

Let's stop and think a moment about a regular, simple day out of the year that has passed.

Boruch Hashem we all daven, put on tefillin and learn Torah. Certainly we always need to do more and more in every way, but before we get to that, let's consider what we already do: how much chiyus is in it.

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We walk down the street, and how many happy people do you meet? Very few. We go into the beis midrash, how many happy people do you see? Also, very few. There are very few people who are truly happy.

How can this be?? A person is zocheh to learn Toras Hashem for seven or eight hours, and he doesn't have a joy in it?!

We believe that the main part of our life is Talmud Torah that brings us to good deeds. That's the purpose of life. If so, a person who was zocheh to dedicate most of his day to learn Torah, why would he not be happy? It makes no sense!

The problem isn't a logical one. The problem is not with people's heads - it's a problem in the heart: the heart of a person is desiring other things.

In his head, a person truly arrived at the very clear recognition: there is a Creator, He gave us the Torah, and the existence of the entire world depends on learning Torah...and this is what I must do. The recognition may be crystal clear - none of us have any doubt about it. The problem is that these conclusions are located in our brains, not in our hearts, and you can't derive any chiyus from them. A person needs some chiyus, and he cannot live without chiyus - so he has to get it from other things. He may receive it from eating delicacies, from reading books, or from all manner of other external things, but it's not possible to live without feeling chiyus. If a man doesn't receive his chiyus from Torah, from mitzvos, from tefillah, from emunah and from his relationship with the Creator- he is forced to receive it from some other place.

It can be that a man sits and learns, keeps all the mitzvos and davens, but he gets his chiyus from totally other things, just like a man of the street - not less, and not more! He does 1000 times more than the man of the street does, but his chiyus he derives from outside, not from inside.

When he finishes davening, he feels no chiyus. At the end of first seder, he also doesn't feel chiyus. So he needs to go outside a bit during lunch break to derive chiyus from

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something else: a cup of coffee and a cigarette, gadgets or something. But he needs to get some chiyus.

When a man eats physical food, he enjoys it, it feels very good inside, he doesn't need explanations why. Two years olds run after sweets, even though nobody ever explained to them that sweets are tasty. They feel it for themselves.

When a man enjoys his learning, at the end of first seder, he feels good about himself. The Torah gave him life because he has a neshama within him, and the neshama gets its nourishment from toiling over Torah. He was zocheh to learn, to understand, to attach himself to the Torah in the depth of his soul, and he goes out with a very good feeling. As a direct result, when he goes out to the street, he quite naturally does not need to satisfy his eyes by looking at other things because he has chiyus inside.

A man who has what to live off of within himself is less likely to turn to the outside, but a man who does not have as much to live off of within himself naturally will look more to the outside for pleasure.

First Get Chiyus Before Your Work To Improve Yourself!

Throughout the year we need to handle many challenges, and everyone knows the difficulties that he must face.

Usually the solution does not involve making more kabalos. Certainly one needs also to make kabalos, but they are not the solution itself.

It's like a man who doesn't feel well. He goes to the doctor who examines him and prescribes three pills a day - morning noon and evening: take these pills and you will get well. The man goes back home and stops eating and drinking. What's wrong with that? Didn't the doctor tell him all he has to do is take three pills a day, so then - why should he need to eat and drink too?...

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His family urges him: If you carry on like this, in a few days you will die! “But I don't understand”, he complains, “didn't the doctor tell me just to take three pills every day?”

The answer is: “You need to eat properly, drink properly, and in order to cure the illness you need to take the three pills daily, but you can't survive on just three pills alone!”

We have problems, all kinds of illness and diseases, and we need our ‘pills’, prescriptions to heal body and soul; but before anything else, we need to eat the “bread” of Torah and “drink” its water and its wine. Once we have a source of chiyus internally from the Torah and its mitzvos - it's like we have a proper diet of food, and now when problems arise we can look for solutions like kabolos. But if we aren't going to eat a constant and proper diet of food next year, how can we fix what needs to be fixed?!

It's clear to me that everyone has good intentions and deep desire to be better than last year, but an earnest desire alone will not help.

For example, a man wants to be mezakeh es harabim, and he wants that every Jew throughout the world will say Tehillim. So he gets an idea: publish 6 million sifrei Tehillim, for the zechus of the rabim. The problem is that each sefer Tehillim costs 10 shekel, meaning that he needs 60 million shekel that he does not have.

His intention is very good, his desire is excellent, and he can pour out his heart before the Borei olam to be mezakeh him, but in the meantime he doesn't have 60 million shekel at his disposal, so he cannot just yet approach a publisher and order 6 million sifrei Tehillim.

We all desire to correct the coming year, but if we don't have a source of chiyus, how will we do anything?!

There are many problems, and people try to fix up all sorts of things: one works on tznius, another on internet issues, a third on shmiras haloshon. They are all right. All

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these really are aveiros and we need to correct them. But what is the root of these issues? Why is it that people actually reach the point of having these problems in the first place?

Sure it's easy to say: Look, it's the generation, it's the street, the yetzer hora today is so strong. . .

True and good, but where is the root of the problem? The root of the problem is that when a person does not have life internally, he has to look elsewhere. "Batallah (Boredom) leads to insanity."

What is meant by "batallah"? That a person doesn't have what to do? No. A person can sit in a beis midrash from morning till evening and learn, and not waste a moment, and nonetheless he is like someone who sits idle, as if he was asleep! His heart has no chiyus in his learning! The brain is working – sure; he understands the material very well, he even exerts himself, but his heart is disconnected from his learning. He is lacking chiyus, and he needs it, so what does he do? He goes outside to search for some kind of fulfillment. He looks at this, reads that, is drawn after whatever is available.

It is like what the Rambam writes: "A person only thinks a lot about immoral relations if his heart is empty of wisdom." If the heart is filled with wisdom of Torah, the Torah would be to him a Toras chaim, and then he would have satisfaction from his ruchniyus.

A person who has satisfaction is much less likely to look for things outside. For example, people who have problems in their home look for fulfillment outside of it. By contrast, a person who lives in a good home will naturally, quite naturally be less drawn toward things pulling him from outside.

Someone who has in his heart a source of chiyus from a day of toiling in Torah and keeping the mitzvos, davening, emuna and connection with the Borei olam - he comes out feeling truly alive. Such a person isn't going to be looking outside for chiyus,

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because he has something inside giving him life. A person looks outside only when inside he is empty, inside he is missing something, and if that's the situation, he doesn't have the self-control to handle the enticements that he sees. If he doesn't have chiyus inside - he will search for it outside and he is liable to be drawn there.

We should understand that before making any kabolos, and before any corrective action on all sorts of things that need to be corrected - in order that we be able to correct them, we need a source of chiyus within ourselves.

We do not mean to say a person shouldn't daven for his needs, but like we said before, first he should understand that what's lacking for him in life is chiyus from holiness. It could be that he has very many maasim that are holy, yet he has very little chiyus from the holiness.

So the first thing he has to daven for on Rosh Hashanah is "Zochraynu l'chaim," that we should have chiyus in the life that we have! How many people live without chiyus! How much chiyus is there within each one of us? We need to request and to plead, every one according to his where is at in life: "Ribono shel olam, Give me more chiyus in my life, allow me to feel internal chiyus within myself."

When one has chiyus inside, he can then ask for parnassah, health, and whatever he needs, but the preparation for Rosh Hashanah needs to begin with hisbonenus about how much chiyus he had in his life last year, and from where he derives it. When a person contemplates this, he will be astonished what he is really "living" off of.

Once it's clear to him what he's living from, he can come and pleads honestly before Hashem: "Zochraynu l'chaim" - but which kind of chaim? "L'maan'cha Elokim Chaim", the kind of chaim that my chiyus will be in serving the Creator. Chaim, that when I learn Torah in first seder, I will leave at the end with an inner feeling in my heart of someone who feels "alive". Chaim, that when I finish Shacharis, I will go out of shul with the inner feeling of chiyus that results from the connection with Hashem when I talk to Him.

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When tefillah is done with chiyus, and the Torah is learned with chiyus – then upon that, it's possible to correct all the rest of our actions too.

What's Left - Only Torah and Maasim Tovim

In Olam haba (the World to Come), there are no actions; "La-meisim chof-shi" – it is free of mitzvos. The dead do not do mitzvos. When the neshama goes up to Gan Eden - there are no mitzvos there to do. No tallis, no succah, and no shofar.

What then exactly is the life of Olam haba?

Life for us in the next world is made up of these points of chiyus that a person had here in olam hazeh! The chiyus that a person received from his learning Torah, the chiyus that he received from doing mitzvos, the chiyus that he received from tefillah, from emuna, from connection with the Borei olam - that is what remains for him on the day of death. "When a person is niftar, nothing accompanies him - not money and not gold and not precious stones, only Torah and maasim tovim."

What is meant by "Torah and maasim tovim"? Does it mean that if he published a sefer, they will put a copy of it together with him in his grave? No. What it means is that the very same chiyus that he got when he was learning Torah and doing mitzvos - that's what remains with him. The actual physical mitzvos will be long gone from the world. The succah that he used has already been disassembled; the esrog has. What remains from the mitzvos is the impression on his heart, the chiyus in his heart that he had from it.

The Torah is Toras chaim, and the mitzvos are mitzvos of chaim. What remains to a person after he has learned and after he has done the mitzvah?

True, with learning you might say: What is meant by Torah remaining with me? It means that I will remember what I learned! But with mitzvos you can't say that, nothing is left, the objects of the mitzvah are no longer in existence.

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And even with Torah, remembering is only the outer part of what remains for us from the Torah we learned. The internal part is the Toras chaim, the chiyus from holiness that is within the Torah.

A man goes through a day of learning Torah and doing mitzvos. At the end of the day he contemplates what he got from it. How much chiyus he had today - that's what remains.

A Huge Difference - Chiyus in Learning

The words of the Gemara are well-known: "Three seforim are opened on Rosh Hashanah, one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the beinonim (average). The righteous are written and sealed immediately for life, the wicked are written and sealed immediately for death, while the beinonim - are held in suspension from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they are zocheh, they are written for life, else - they are written for death.

Tosafos (Rosh Hashanah 16b) asks: Don't we see each year many wicked people who continue living, and many righteous people who die during the year? Tosafos answers that "What here is called death for the wicked and life for righteous refers to the life of Olam haba."

What is that supposed to mean? If it means olam haba - let them judge him in the future, when the Great Day of Judgment of the future comes, at which time they are going to judge every person whether he is zoche to olam haba. Why do they need to judge him now regarding olam haba?

The answer is: In olam haba there is no outer life, only inner life. "A person is judged regarding olam haba" doesn't mean that he is judged what will happen to him when olam haba comes, but how much chiyus - which is the stuff of olam haba - he will get now.

It could be that on Rosh Hashanah it's decreed on a man on the one hand that he will live 356 days, and it's also decreed that he will live 15 minutes. How can that be? He

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lives for an entire year, but only 15 minutes of chiyus will be contained within that year. He will have a few moments of hisromemus (elation) when he will feel some level of chiyus. Beyond that - until next Tishrei he's dead inside his chiyus for the year is over.

That is to say: if you see a man who gets through a year, it's not necessarily true that he "lived" the whole year!

Here we are before Rosh Hashanah of a new year. The first thing we need to ask for is that we should have chiyus in our lives.

People naturally are accustomed to focusing on requests for more quantity, and that certainly is a positive thing, but in parallel with asking for more in quantity, we need to ask for more in quality - inner quality in our nefesh, how much a person feels alive.

Herein lies the difference between the big tzadikim and regular people. They may both sit by the Gemara four hours without lifting their eyes from it even once, they may both invest their whole brain in understanding the sugya - and despite all that, the tzadik was "alive" for four hours, while the person next to him is alive from it maybe for a minute, maybe two or three.

Why?

Because on Heaven, it was decreed the tzadik would get four hours of chiyus, and the other person was decreed that he would get four hours of just learning, without chiyus.

This is a huge difference!

We ask to be zoche to learn Torah, to know Torah, but we need to ask to be zoche that the Torah will be "ki heim chayeynu" Torah, that we will learn it with a feeling of life, that we will get out of it a source of nourishment.

Who among us can say he's had a happy year? A person says: "How can I be happy? I had a medical problem with one of my children, hardly any parnassah, debts, etc."

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Everyone has his issues. But these issues are not the source of why people aren't happy! The reason why people aren't happy is that they are missing a source of chiyus. When a person has no chiyus in his life, all he has left with is just his various problems.

If a person has a source of chiyus the whole day long, life will look different. Not that he will have less problems; our problems are indeed disturbing, but they haven't got the power to uproot the chiyus one gets from the Torah and the mitzvos. When a person has chiyus from Torah and mitzvos, he "lives" in them, and from there he gets his nourishment. The problems he has will only be painful and unpleasant, but they will not sap the joy out of his life, when he has chiyus.

Knowing the Reality, Not Just an Idea

All we have said is not a "shmuez" of hisorerus, or mussar, or an idea. It's simply reality!

This past year is not a "concept" mentioned in a sefer. Each one of us lived it. We are not little children who relate to life lightly. As adults we know what it means to go through a year in olam hazeh, with all its attendant difficulties.

We understand also that next year is not just something that's written on a calendar. The coming year is an entire masechta that each one of us will go through, and no one knows what lies hidden in it for him in the days ahead.

This is reality. Now we have the choice which reality we will go through in the coming year.

It the nature of this world that no one is given everything. Even the Avos, if you contemplate their lives just a little we see that they lacked things, you can see that they did not have everything. Not on every one of them was the gzar din of Rosh Hashanah one of abundant health, plenty of parnassah, great shalom bayis, good well-raised children.

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Look at the life of Avraham Avinu. He had no children for 100 years. Each Rosh Hashanah, during that time he undoubtedly davened for a child - and was he was not answered for 100 years. Yitzchak and Rivkah could not have children. Did they succeed in altering their decree on the very first Rosh Hashanah? No. Yaakov too, he had nothing to eat. What did our Avos have? They had chiyus in the heart! Even though they were barren, even though there was a lack of parnassah, even when Yosef was lost to Yaakov - they had what to live off of.

Certainly it was hard for them. Yaakov Avinu was a father, his son disappeared for 22 years, and he mourned for him many years. But besides mourning, he still had a source of chiyus to provide him with life.

There are people today who have gone through the pain of losing a child. They often feel like there's nobody to talk to about their pain. This is really because all they have is a tragedy, without any source of chiyus in their life. They find it impossible to cope, but if they would have chiyus in their life, they would be to find the inner strength to be able to.

If a person has chiyus, even if chas v'shalom some tragedy comes upon him - it's difficult, it's very unpleasant, it needs strong emunah, but he will have what to live off of and where to draw strength from.

After all, we don't fool ourselves that really in the coming year no one will lack anything. From the day the world was created, ever since the sin of, people have always lacked some things. Only when Moshiach comes will there be abundance of everything for everybody.

What we can hope for, though, is that in this year we will derive chiyus throughout the year, that our neshama will be open and we'll feel alive inside, and then we will have the strength to deal with all the things that happen to each one of us in our lives. Hashem gives us that inner strength to face anything, but we need only to ask for it, that we should have a source of chiyus in our life.

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"Kosvaynu l'chaim". We are asking for another year of life, but what we really should be asking for when we say this is that we are asking of Hashem for a life that has within it chiyus.

May we all be zoche to recognize that true life is the nourishment of the neshamah, a life of feeling connected to the Creator of the world; and that we be zoche to uncover our inner strengths - through Hashem writing us in the "sefer hachaim, lmaan'cha Elokim, chaim."

[בלבבי – ימים נוראים. פרק ו. זכרנו לחיים - חיים שיש בהן חיות]

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