



IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Erev Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim, 5782

Dear Parents,

As we anticipate the arrival of the Yomim Noraim, mixed in with our optimism, sincerity and determination to make improvements in our spiritual endeavors, the age-old question is probably niggling in the back of our minds.

Since more likely than not, after all our tefillos and thoughts of teshuva we will, at some point not long after Yom Kippur, revert to our former ways and patterns, why do we expend so much effort on the days of Elul and the Yomim Noraim. It is seemingly fruitless if after all is said and done, we're back to where we started.

“Since ... we will ... revert to our former ways ... why ... so much effort on the days of ...the Yomim Noraim?”

A poignant answer to this comes from Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, (Sefer Aleinu L'Shabeiach) who quotes Rav Chaim Friedlander, zt'l. Rav Friedlander gives a moshol, a parable:

A wealthy man owned a yacht, and every few months he would sail out to sea with it. For most of the year, however, the boat remained moored in the port with a rope.

When the boat was anchored, water would seep into the rope and it would gradually corrode, and the owner would have to buy a new rope every few months.

Someone noticed that the owner of the boat had to replace the rope every few months and he asked, “Why do you bother buying a new rope, if you know that in a few months it will be ruined again?”

“What choice do I have?” the owner responded. “If I don't buy a new rope, the water will tear the rope completely and the boat will drift away from port and be lost at sea forever. The new rope I buy each time allows me to keep the boat anchored and in my possession.”

“The new rope ... allows me to keep the boat anchored and in my possession.”

During these special days, we have to anchor ourselves to Hashem and His Torah to ensure that we do not drift away spiritually. It is true that when these holy days pass, we typically revert to the same state we were in before, but the “new rope” – i.e., the new teshuva resolutions that we accepted upon ourselves protect us from being lost in the sea of spiritual confusion and iniquity.

In a similar vein, the efforts that we make to train our children to act properly, with kindness and sensitivity don't always seem to take root. We try so very hard, and at times it seems like we are butting our heads against the wall. The kids don't get it, they don't remember the things we tell them, they show no appreciation for all that we do for them. It's important to realize and remain cognizant of the fact that even if things appear to be fraying at the edges, our efforts are keeping our children anchored. Our consistency and unflagging determination to nurture menschen out of their raw material is helping them to connect on a very deep, spiritual level to what we hold dear.

“Hashem ... has come out of His palace to visit us during these days and to hear us and see what we need.”

Hashem has, so to say, come out of His palace to visit us during these days and to hear us and see what we need. While He is close, it is our opportunity to aim higher, to try to be our better selves. We set our sights higher and make some changes and pray on behalf of ourselves and our children. May this yearly opportunity to enjoy such a close connection to the Almighty be a recurring event, in our and our children's lives, until the closeness will be a year-round reality.

Best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos and a Kesiva V'Chasima Tova,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann