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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT KEYS THAT YOU MUST HAVE!

PARSHAS RE'EH

This week is *Shabbos Mevarchim Elul*. We announce that Rosh Chodesh Elul will begin this coming Sunday and Monday.

A sign had been posted in the main shul of Kovno that Rav Yisrael Salanter would be giving a drasha (Torah discourse) in the afternoon of Shabbos Mevarchim Elul. Rav Yisrael entered the shul and walked past the aron kodesh to speak. He called out, 'Rabbosai, we have already bentched Chodesh Elul.' At that moment that Rav Yisrael cried out the word "Elul", he fainted from the awesomeness of the month. It is the month that we examine and improve our actions even more than the other months. We prepare ourselves for Yom Hadin, the Day of Judgement, of Rosh Hashana. We hope and plan for a good new year.

There is so much that we need to do to improve to prepare for Rosh Hashana. **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz** zt"l gives two recommendations which can help us emerge meritorious in judgement (Sichas Mussar in the year 1972, shmuess # 38).

*"He will be
merciful toward
you..." (Devarim
13:18)*

The **Talmud** (Rosh Hashana 17A) quotes Rava who says that if one is *mevater*, if he ignores and forgoes injustices done to him, the Heavenly court in turn forgoes punishment for all his sins. The **Talmud** continues with a story. Rav Huna, son of Rav Yehoshua, became sick. Rav Pappa went to visit him. When he saw that Rav Huna was dying, Rav Pappa said to his attendants to prepare his shrouds (**Rashi**). Miraculously, Rav Huna recovered. Rav Pappa was embarrassed to see him, as it seemed as if he had decreed Rav Huna's death. Rav Huna's friends asked him, "What did you see when you were lying there suspended between life and death?" He replied that he was truly close to dying. **Rashi** says that he was supposed to have died. However, the Heavenly court determined that Rav Huna was a person who was *mevater*, he ignored insults and waived what was due to him. He was not exacting in judgement to others. Therefore, the Heavenly court was not exacting with

him in his judgment. Even after death was decreed and Rav Huna was near death, he was spared.

The **Talmud** quotes Rav Acha bar Chanina who qualifies this by saying that Hashem

forgives the sins of one who is *mevater* only if the reason that he is *mevater* is due to his humility.

Rav Chaim's second *segulah* and recommendation is learned from this week's Parsha. The Torah discusses an "עִיר הַנִּדְחָת", the Wayward city. That is a city where most of its inhabitants were persuaded to serve idols. The Torah says that the guilty parties are killed by the sword. The entire city with all its property is destroyed. It is eternally forbidden to rebuild that city (Devarim 13:13-19).

Or HaChaim explains that along with the mitzvah to kill the inhabitants of this Wayward city comes a major peril. This act would normally uproot the trait of mercy and cause cruelty in the hearts of those who killed the sinners. It normally would even create a desire to murder! In fact, the **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l was very concerned that the Jewish soldiers returning from battle in World War I would have a tendency towards killing.

In this situation of those who killed the inhabitants of the Wayward City, Hashem gives a special promise that He will give them mercy, preventing their actions from automatically causing them to become cruel (Devarim 13:18).

The Torah adds “וְרַחֲמֵהוּ”, “and He will be merciful,” to teach us that when we are cruel to others that is how Hashem act towards us [I assume that this means that Hashem will judge us justly but strictly, according to

our actions]. However, when we are merciful to others, then Hashem will also be merciful to us.

The **Talmud** spells this out (Shabbos 151B). Rabbi Gamliel, son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, quotes the pasuk, “And and He will be merciful toward you and He will show you mercy...” (Deuteronomy 13:18) This teaches us that anyone who has compassion for Hashem’s creatures will receive compassion from Heaven, and anyone who does not have compassion for Hashem’s creatures will not receive compassion from Heaven.

כָּל הַמְּרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת מְרַחֵם עָלָיו מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְכָל שֶׁאִינוֹ מְרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת אֵין מְרַחֵם עָלָיו מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם.

Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz zt”l gives us two keys to benefit us as we prepare for Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgement. One is to ignore and forgo injustices done to us.

The other is to show compassion to others.

These actions benefit us personally and will make the world a happier place as well!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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