



BADERECH

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Zeh Ba, It Is Approaching!

Emerging from the ashes of the Shoah, the Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Yisrael Alter, the 'Beis Yisroel', was a beacon of faith and strength who gathered the scattered remnants of Polish Jewry and rebuilt his Chasidic community in Yerushalayim, the Holy City. He was unyielding in his standards, inspiring discipline and unyielding *avodah*. With incredible dedication and love, he both presided over the Agudas Yisroel movement, and was intimately involved in the every detail of the lives of his chasidim. The tzadik's presence was intense and uncompromising and yet his heart was overflowing with warmth — restoring dignity to broken souls as he rebuilt Chassidus in Eretz Yisrael.

There was a simple Yid, a sign painter, who lived in an old apartment building not far from the new dormitory of the Gerrer Yeshiva, Sfas Emes in Yerushalayim. He earned his living with steady, careful hands, painting letters and words on wood and tin in the small courtyard outside his home.

From his perch, brush in hand, he would often notice the Beis Yisroel passing by the dormitory on his way to the yeshiva. Whenever the Rebbe entered, a group of panicking *bachurim* would suddenly begin rushing and scrambling out of the building, caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. The painter's heart went out to them. These were sincere,

good boys, and the sight of their panic pained him. The painter devised a little system:

Since he was usually outdoors, whenever he spotted the Rebbe turning down the street, before he approached the dormitory, the sign painter would lay down his brush, step out of the yard, and walk toward the boys. He would softly call out two simple words, a code to warn the bachurim that the Rebbe was heading their way: *Zeh ba*, "This is approaching."

The bachurim were grateful and the painter enjoyed the friendly 'service' he provided to the local kids. But one morning, deeply absorbed in his work, he failed to notice the Rebbe walking up the street. The Rebbe stopped right beside him, lingering for a moment to study the freshly painted letters on the sign. The painter suddenly felt the presence at his side, looked up, and nearly fainted. It was the Beis Yisroel.

The Rebbe bent down ever so slightly and whispered: *Zeh ba*.

The brush slipped from his trembling fingers, his heart sank in shame. What was he doing, meddling in the affairs of the Rebbe? Who was he to insert himself into this holy man's business? As the Rebbe walked on, the painter steadied himself against the wall, his face flushed with regret. But then, suddenly, the Rebbe turned back. His intense gaze turned soft and warm, his voice gentle:

“You meant it for the good of the *bachurim*... You meant it for the good of the *bachurim*. And you will have good children.” And with that blessing, the Rebbe continued on his way...

טוב וישר ה' על כן יורה חטאים בדרך

“Hashem is good and upright, therefore He instructs *chata'im*, people who have sinned, the way.” (*Tehillim*, 25:8)

זה ששלח נביאים להם מודיעים דרכי ה' ומחזירין אותן בתשובה. ועוד שנתן בהם כח ללמוד ולהבין. שמדה זו בכל אדם שכל זמן שהוא נמשך בדרך החכמה והצדק מתאווה להן ורודף אותם. והוא מה שאמרנו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה בא לטהר מסיעין אותו כלומר ימצא עצמו נעדר על הדבר.

“This pasuk is a reference to the prophets who were sent to make the ways of God known, and to turn the people to *teshuvah*. Moreover, He endowed them with a power to study and understand, as it is the tendency of every man to yearn after and pursue wisdom and righteousness. This is in harmony with what our Sages said: “He who comes to be cleansed receives aid,” as if to say, “*He will find himself aided in the matter for which he strives...*” (Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah*, 6:5)

Rav Shlomo Freifeld proclaimed that this teaching from the Rambam revolutionized the entire concept of what it means to be a human being and a Jew. God is good and upright, therefore He teaches חטאים the way — not framing *cheit* as unredeemable evil and sin — rather just “to miss the mark”. As God wants only “good”, and He is fair and ‘straight-up’, of course he acknowledges the difficulty and challenge of this world, and seeks to help us when we fail and fall short again and again. We are helped to step onto the path that we want to take.

“One will find himself aided in the matter

for which he strives;” Hashem Himself comes to our assistance in it. This is *halachah*, the Jewish understanding of the way we are invited to ‘walk’ with Hashem in this world: God is good!

This Motza’ei Shabbos, “*Zeh ba*” — the King is approaching His Palace to sit on the awesome Throne of Divine Judgment, and Ashkenazim rush and scramble to join the communal recitation of *Selichos*. This service is a formal invitation to stand before Hashem as a congregation and humbly place before Him our mistakes and *chata'im*, ways that we have missed the mark. It is also an invaluable opportunity to call out together and awaken Compassion, great Kindness and Patience upon us and our entire nation, for Hashem Himself is coming to our assistance in the matter for which we strive.

Zeh ba! A new year is coming, with infinite possibilities and opportunities for growth, *tikun*, good deeds, connection and redemption. Let us prepare ourselves to greet it *b’simcha u-v’tuv levav*, with joy and a heart overflowing with warmth. ■





SUNDAYS
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רפואה שלמה
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