



BADERECH

RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

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Chodesh Elul

Reb Tzvi Hersh HaKohen of Rimanov, zy’a, was a humble and unassuming tzadik, unique among Rebbes of his generation. He was orphaned as a young child and did not come from ‘*Rebbishe*’ lineage, but was chosen for the position. Later in life, Reb Hersch married off a child to the family of Rebbe Yisrael of Rizhin zy’a. The custom at Rizhiner weddings was for Rebbe Yisrael to declare the family *yichus* lineage which traced directly back to the great Reb Dov Ber, Maggid of Mezritch. When the Rizhiner was done, the attendees at the simcha waited pensively to see how Reb Tzvi Hersch would respond. It was no secret that he’d come from humble origins.

With clarity and confidence, Reb Hersch declared, “My father was a simple tailor and as he was *niftar* when I was a child, I sadly do not have many memories of him. One thing I do remember is that he taught me a fundamental rule of tailoring: It’s never too

late to fix what you’ve sewn. If you sew the wrong stitch, you can always take it out and start again.”

When the Rhizner heard the words of his new *mechutan*, he began to cry, “Gevalt is your *yichus* great!”.....

Our *sedra* lays out the mitzvot associated with anointing a king in Israel, and details the limitations placed on his personal life so that he will maintain perspective while ascending the royal throne. He is not to acquire too many horses, excessive gold and silver, nor a multitude of wives; he is commanded to write and carry with him a personal Sefer Torah, as a constant reminder “*l’vilti rum levavo m’echav* — so that his heart will not be haughty over his brothers” (17:15-20). Though specifically directed toward the King, this mitzvah is an important directive and reminder for all of us regarding a most basic and fundamental in our *avodas Hashem*: maintaining genuine humility, and cultivating a sincere, deep respect for one another.

This Shabbos marks the start of Chodesh Elul, our formal entry into the *Yemei HaTeshuva*, the auspicious days leading up to the New Year, when each of us in our own way is thinking about the ‘garments’ we need to fix.

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, a sign would hang at the entrance of the Beis Medrash in Kelm, Lithuania: *Achdus ha’avadim hi kiyum haMalchus* – “The Kingdom is upheld by the unity of the servants.” This important reminder comes at a time when personal introspection and our own individual growth is at the forefront of our minds. It directs our focus and intention

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toward one another. While reaffirming Hashem as the center of our existence, we recognize that the ultimate coronation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu as our King is only possible when we are all together: *Vayehi b'Yeshurun Melech, b'hitaseif rashei am, yachad shivtei Yisrael* — “Then He became King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the People assembled, the tribes of Israel together” (Devarim, 33:5).

Dovid HaMelech's prayer in Sefer Tehillim (119:63), *Chaver ani l'chol asher yorucha* — “I am a friend to all who fear You” is seemingly not just a self-description expressing his yearning to be a ‘friend’ of all those who strive to live with awareness of Hashem, but is also a directive and plea. He is instructing us in how we ought to see others, and also pleading with us to be open to others' different opinions and ways. We actually have much in common. Regardless of where we are from, where we are up to and how we got to where we are, we are united in our longing for a deeper connection to the Ribbono shel Olam. There is an essential friendship among all who seek to live with a conscious awareness of God.

May this month be one of new beginnings for us all in deepening our appreciation and respect for one another, and in serving Hashem together, from all our unique vantage points and perspectives. May Hashem's Kingdom be upheld by the unity of His servants,

now and in the coming year!

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*Excerpt from **Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah**, forthcoming (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■*

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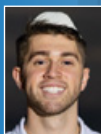
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