



Shiur from Maran HaRishon LeTzion
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shlit"a from Motzaei Rosh Hashanah
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English

Parashat Ha'azinu – Yom Kippur

Errors in the Prayers of the Ten Days of Repentance (Part 2)

Topics of the Shiur:

He Erred and Said HaE-I HaKadosh | He Remembered Toch Kedei Dibur | He Corrected After Kedei Dibur | Safek Berachot Lehakel Against Maran | Interrupting with Silence | A Shaliach Tzibbur Who Erred | In Doubt if He Said it Correctly | Saying HaMelech HaKadosh or HaMelech HaMishpat Ninety Times | The Haftarah of the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah | There is a Reward for Your Work | Justice and the Shame of Another

He Erred and Said HaE-I HaKadosh

Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* (582:2) writes: "If he said 'HaE-I HaKadosh', and *toch kedei dibur* (within the time of a short utterance) he remembered and said 'HaMelech HaKadosh', he does not need to return. And the same rule applies to 'HaMelech HaMishpat'." Thus, it is ruled as halachah in the *Shulchan Aruch* that if a person erred and said "HaE-I HaKadosh" instead of "HaMelech HaKadosh", he returns to the beginning of the prayer. According to the opinion of my father and teacher, Maran zt"l, this law applies specifically to an individual, but a *shaliach tzibbur*, since he said *Kedushah* - returns to "Atah Kadosh", but this is a separate topic, and will be explained below. But normally, one who said "HaE-I HaKadosh" instead of "HaMelech HaKadosh" must return.

In the previous shiur, I mentioned that this is also disputed among the *Rishonim*. There are *Rishonim* who hold that the Sages only established the recitation of "HaMelech HaKadosh" *lechatchilah* (initially), but *bedieved* (post-facto) he does not return. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* rules according to the majority of the *Rishonim*, that if he said "HaE-I HaKadosh", he is considered as one who alters the formula established by the Sages in prayer, and he is obligated to return.

He Remembered Toch Kedei Dibur

It is explained in the *Shulchan Aruch* that if he remembered *toch kedei dibur*, he can correct it, and his source is in *Teshuvot HaRashba* (1:35) in the name of the Geonim. The *Bet Yosef* (Siman 582) cites this. However, the *Rashba* himself brings in the name of *Rashi* (Berachot 12a) who held that it is impossible to correct it even *toch kedei dibur*. The *Rashba* justifies the approach of *Rashi*, but nevertheless, he does not wish to argue with the Geonim, and writes that if he corrected *toch kedei dibur* and said "HaMelech HaKadosh", he does not return. And thus ruled the *Shulchan Aruch*. "Toch kedei dibur" - this is within the time of saying the words "Shalom alecha rebbi" (Peace be upon you, my master). If we estimate this, it is approximately one second, perhaps a second and a half, no more.

He Corrected After Kedei Dibur

The *Kaf HaChayim* (582:9) introduces a novel ruling, that one must apply the principle of *safek berachot lehakel* (in a doubt concerning blessings, we are lenient) against the rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He relies on the fact that there are *Rishonim* who hold that if he said "HaE-I HaKadosh", he does not return. Consequently, when he said "HaE-I HaKadosh" and corrected it after *kedei dibur* - out of doubt he does not return. However, according to what I mentioned in the previous shiur, the rule of *safek berachot lehakel* does not apply within the prayer. The implication of the rule of *safek berachot lehakel* is that *shev ve'al ta'aseh* (sit

and do nothing) is preferable. When there is a doubt whether to recite a blessing or not - sit and do nothing, because the prohibition of a *berachah levatalah* (blessing in vain) is an extremely severe prohibition. There are *Rishonim* who hold that a *berachah levatalah* is a *de'orayta* prohibition, and the *Mishnah Berurah* (215:20) writes that even if we say that a *berachah levatalah* is *de'rabbanan*, we still say the rule of *safek berachot lehakel*, because *Chazal* (Berachot 35a) based it on the very severe negative commandment of "You shall not take the name of Hashem your God in vain"; *Chazal* say that the entire world trembled when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* stated this negative commandment of "You shall not take."

But all of this applies when I am in doubt about a specific blessing whether to recite it or not, and the moment I do not recite it, *shev ve'al ta'aseh* - I do not enter into a doubt. But in our case, nothing will help, the person is already stuck in deep trouble, "Woe is me from my evil inclination, woe is me from my Creator"; if he continues, he enters into a doubt of a *berachah levatalah*. And if he returns, he also enters into a doubt of a *berachah levatalah*. For there are *Rishonim* who hold that "HaE-I HaKadosh" is not indispensable. According to these *Rishonim*, he should continue his prayer as usual. And if he returns to the beginning, he is reciting the first three blessings in vain. On the other hand, according to the majority of the *Rishonim* who hold that he is obligated to return, consequently if now he does not return but rather continues to "Atah Chonen", it turns out that all the blessings he will say from here onwards will all be blessings in vain. Furthermore, he will not have fulfilled the obligation of prayer, because he needed to return, and he is altering the formula established by the Sages in prayer. He is in a situation of "Woe is me from my evil inclination, woe is me from my Creator."

Safek Berachot Lehakel Against Maran

In light of this, logic dictates that in such a matter we must follow the instructions of the *Shulchan Aruch*, that if he said "HaE-I HaKadosh" he must return. After all, the very rule of *safek berachot lehakel* in a situation of a doubt of a *berachah levatalah*, we follow it even against the opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch*. Indeed, this is also disputed among the *Acharonim*. There are *Acharonim* who hold that we have accepted the instructions of the *Shulchan Aruch* also in matters of doubtful blessings, just as we have accepted his instructions in matters of *eishet ish* (a married woman) and similar extremely severe matters, so why should we not say this regarding matters of doubtful blessings? Despite this, Maran HaChida writes in *Teshuvot Chaim Sha'al* (2:15), that although he agrees one must apply *safek berachot lehakel* against the *Shulchan Aruch*, nevertheless, one who acts according to the opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch*, we do not protest against him, for he has upon whom to rely. On the other hand, I once heard from my father and teacher, Maran zt"l, who told me that this is how the halachah was established: that we apply *safek berachot lehakel* even against the *Shulchan Aruch*. But if it were up to him, he would have ruled to follow the *Shulchan Aruch* even in matters of doubtful blessings. Only that he could not go against the great *Acharonim* who established *safek berachot lehakel* against Maran. In our topic, besides the ruling of Maran the *Shulchan Aruch*, there is altogether a doubt whether he can continue or not, therefore the solution is to return to the beginning of the prayer, and as I already explained at length in the

previous shiur.

The Proof of the Kaf HaChayim

We said that the *Kaf HaChayim* writes, that even if he corrected it after *kedei dibur* he does not return. And there he mentions what he wrote in *Siman 206*. The intention of the *Kaf HaChayim* in this, is that there is a dispute among the great *Rishonim*: if a person recited a blessing on a mitzvah or a *birkat hanehenin* (blessing over enjoyment), he must immediately perform the mitzvah. For example, regarding donning tefillin, it is written that for all mitzvot, one recites the blessing over them *over la'asiyatan* - meaning he blesses prior to their performance, immediately before. And if he were to bless "to don tefillin" and only afterwards insert the tefillin onto his arm, he is blessing too early. Therefore, he must place the tefillin right upon the arm in its place, and then immediately when he blesses, he tightens the knot and wraps the coils on his arm. And similarly, a person who blesses "to enwrap oneself in tzitzit", he cannot bless when the tzitzit is still inside the bag. He must prepare the tallit to enwrap himself in it, and only then - bless "to enwrap" and enwrap himself in the tzitzit. And so it is with every single mitzvah, everything must always be immediate.

The *Rishonim* debate, what would be the rule if a person blessed and did not perform the mitzvah immediately, and he interrupted in the middle. The *Bet Yosef* (*Siman 206*) brought the opinion of the *Shibolei HaLeket* (*Siman 166*) that he must return and bless. But the *Avudraham* (*Hilchot Berachot*) wrote that silence is not considered an interruption, and the *Magen Avraham* (206:4) cites this opinion, and thus concludes for halachah that he does not return and bless. Meaning, even though according to one opinion if he interrupted, for example he blessed "*Borei Peri Ha'Etz*" and then instead of eating immediately he waited, he interrupted, in such a situation it is a dispute. And for halachah, *safek berachot lehakel*. Even if he waited for more than *kedei dibur*. From this, the *Kaf HaChayim* inferred, that also in our case, if he said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" and corrected and said "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" after *kedei dibur*, *safek berachot lehakel* and he does not return.

Wondering at the Words of the Kaf HaChayim

But in truth, it is very astonishing to learn from this rule of adjoining the blessing to the mitzvah. Because there, it is speaking of a person who made an interruption; after the blessing he must immediately perform the mitzvah or eat the food - regarding *birchot hanehenin*, and the dispute is only regarding an interruption in silence, since if he says even one word he must return to bless, as the *Mishnah Berurah* (206:12) proves. And in the dispute regarding an interruption in silence, we apply *safek berachot lehakel*. But in our case, it is not that he waited in silence; here he erred, he ruined it, he said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" during the Ten Days of Repentance, when *Chazal* established to say "*HaMelech HaKadosh*". He must correct what he did. The correction can only come when he corrected *toch kedei dibur*. But if he waited more - the correction is no longer effective. These are two different topics!

Once He Has Testified, He Cannot Testify Again

What is this comparable to? A person who testified in a *Bet Din*. *Chazal* learn from the verse (*Vayikra 5:1*): "If he does not testify, he shall bear his iniquity - once he has testified, he cannot return and testify again" (*Ketuvot 18b*). And here a person comes and provides testimony in *Bet Din*, and afterwards his conscience bothers him, and he says to the *Bet Din*: "I retract, I lied" - it will not help, "once he has testified, he cannot return and testify again". Of course, at the time he delivered the testimony, the *Bet Din* must investigate and inquire and verify, and if his testimony was fine and afterwards he retracts, once he has testified he cannot testify again. However, if while he is delivering the testimony in the *Bet Din*, suddenly his conscience awakened and he said: "No, no, I retract, I lied" - in such a case, *toch kedei dibur*, he can correct what he did. After *kedei dibur*, it can no longer be corrected. Consequently, here too, the moment he said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" and more than *kedei dibur* elapsed, now it will no longer be effective to correct it. Therefore, for halachah, if a person said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" and remembered after *kedei dibur*, he must return to the beginning of the prayer.

A Shaliach Tzibbur Who Erred

As mentioned, we stated in the name of my father and teacher, *Maran zt"l*, that a *shaliach tzibbur* who erred and said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" returns to the blessing of "*Atah Kadosh*". There is a dispute on this topic between my father and teacher and *HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*. My father wrote his responsum regarding a *shaliach tzibbur* (*Yabia Omer 1:8*), and I remember that at the time, *HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach* called me and asked me to come to him, and he gave me a lengthy responsum on why, in his opinion, a *shaliach tzibbur* also returns to the beginning. My father reviewed his responsum and responded in another responsum (*Yechaveh Daat 6:38*) to all the claims of *HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*, who published his opinion in *Minchat Shlomo* (1:2).

Betiti Became Silent at the Ofanim

Whoever studies the topic sees that there are sides to this and that. But the great source of my father, which is very strong, is the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Berachot 3:3*). In their times, the *shaliach tzibbur* would *pores al shema* - meaning, he would arrive

after *Yishtabach*, and would say *Half Kaddish* and *Barchu*, and then he would say it out loud, and the congregation would listen and fulfill their obligation. This is called '*pores al shema*'. And it is written in the *Yerushalmi*, that there was one *shaliach tzibbur*, his name was 'Betiti', and he was the *shaliach tzibbur*, and he said "*Kadosh Kadosh*", and when he reached "*La'E-I baruch ne'imot yitenu*" - he became silent. "Betiti became silent at the Ofanim". The *Gemara* there says that someone came to replace him, as he could not continue. And the one who comes to replace him, behold, any blessing that a *shaliach tzibbur* errs in, the one who comes in his place to replace him must begin from the beginning of that blessing. The *Yerushalmi* states that in the case of Betiti, the second *shaliach tzibbur* does not need to begin from the beginning, but rather begins from "*La'E-I baruch ne'imot yitenu*", because the *Kedushah* interrupted. And the *Meiri* explicitly derives from here regarding the Ten Days of Repentance, that if a *shaliach tzibbur* said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*", he returns to the blessing of "*Atah Kadosh*". The question is, do we rule halachically according to the opinion of the *Yerushalmi* in this, because the *Rambam* omitted it, and we see that ostensibly we do not rule like the *Yerushalmi*. On the other hand, in the *Rambam* too it is not so clear. In *Yechaveh Daat* (ibid.), my father writes on this topic at length, and he also brings the words of *HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach* and addresses and refutes his words.

A Shaliach Tzibbur First Gets Startled

I remember that there was once such a case of a *shaliach tzibbur* - the son of *Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim* - who said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*", and everyone shouted, and what happens when a *shaliach tzibbur* errs and the entire congregation immediately roars: "Nu, *HaMelech HaKadosh*!" He first gets startled... And then he looked to the right and left, he does not understand what happened. And by the time he understood that he erred, he said "*HaMelech HaKadosh*". In such a situation, it was certainly after *kedei dibur*, and my father and teacher instructed him to return to "*Atah Kadosh*". This is a thing that unfortunately happens with a *shaliach tzibbur*. But the difference between an individual and a *shaliach tzibbur*, is that for an individual it is very likely that if he is praying from a siddur he will correct it immediately, *toch kedei dibur*. But a *shaliach tzibbur* first gets startled... and therefore it takes time.

I remember that at the time in *Ohr LeTzion* (vol. 1, O.C. *Siman 13*) *HaGaon Maran Rabbenu Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l* also ruled that a *shaliach tzibbur* returns to the beginning. And I went to his house at the time as an emissary of my father and spoke with him at length, and he agreed that what he wrote there is not how it should be, for he brings a proof from the *Bet Yosef* (*Siman 54*), and further in the words of the *Bet Yosef* it is written otherwise. I showed him the *Bet Yosef* and he told me explicitly orally that he agrees with my father, that even though in his responsum it is written that a *shaliach tzibbur* returns to the beginning, his opinion is that a *shaliach tzibbur* should return to "*Atah Kadosh*".

In Doubt if He Said it Correctly

What is the rule if, during the Ten Days of Repentance, a person is unsure whether he said "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" or the usual "*HaE-I HaKadosh*"? Similarly, what if he is unsure whether he said "*HaMelech HaMishpat*" or the usual "*Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat*"?

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Ta'anit*, chapter 1) addresses a similar question concerning the request for rain, *Tal U'matar*. It rules that if a person is unsure whether he included this request during the first thirty days after the change, we presume that he followed his previous habit. The underlying principle is that it takes thirty days to become accustomed to a change in the wording of the prayer. Until then, when a doubt arises, we assume that he recited the familiar wording and must go back.

Tosafot (*Berachot 12b*) and the *Rosh* (*Berachot 1:16*) apply this principle to "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" and "*HaMelech HaMishpat*." Since the Ten Days of Repentance last only ten days, the thirty-day period needed to establish the new wording as his habit never elapses. Thus, if he is unsure whether he used the correct wording, we presume that he said "*HaE-I HaKadosh*" or "*Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat*," as he does throughout the year. He must therefore go back, just as he would if he knew that he had said the wrong wording.

A Double Doubt

At first glance, this would seem to be a case of *safek sefeika*, a double doubt. Perhaps he did, in fact, say "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" or "*HaMelech HaMishpat*." Even if he did not, we noted earlier that some *Rishonim* maintain that these changes are required only *lechatchilah*: omitting them does not invalidate the prayer *bedieved*, nor is it considered a departure from the wording established by the Sages. Regarding "*HaMelech HaMishpat*," there is a further basis for leniency: according to the *Talmidei Rabbenu Yonah*, the usual wording already includes the word "*Melech*." However, this does not constitute a *safek sefeika*. A double doubt requires two grounds for uncertainty, whereas here, the first doubt—whether he recited the correct wording—is resolved by the presumption established in the *Yerushalmi*. Since he has not yet become accustomed to the change, we presume that he used the familiar wording. For halachic purposes, we therefore treat him as though he certainly omitted "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" or "*HaMelech HaMishpat*." This leaves

only one doubt: whether the omission invalidates his prayer. Since Maran rules in the *Shulchan Aruch* that he must go back, the same ruling applies when he is unsure which wording he used.

It is therefore especially important during these days to pray from a *siddur* and pay careful attention to each of the prescribed changes and additions. This will help us avoid mistakes and the doubts that follow.

Saying HaMelech HaKadosh or HaMelech HaMishpat Ninety Times

The *Acharonim* discuss a further question: can a person become accustomed to the new wording by repeating it ninety times in succession, rather than waiting thirty days?

Maran explains in the *Bet Yosef* (*siman* 114) that it takes thirty days to become accustomed to a change in the prayer. With three daily prayers, this amounts to approximately ninety repetitions of “*Mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*.” The request for rain, *Tal U'matar*, is recited fewer times, since it is omitted on Shabbat, and the poskim debate whether these omissions affect the calculation. Nevertheless, ninety repetitions serve as the measure under discussion.

The *Bet Yosef* cites differing opinions on whether these repetitions can be recited consecutively to establish the new habit. For example, a person might repeat “*Atah rav lehoshi'a, mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*” ninety times. An Ashkenazi, who replaces “*Veten berachah*” with “*Veten tal u'matar livrachah*,” could repeat the words leading into that phrase together with the new wording. A Sephardi, who replaces “*Barechenu*” with “*Barech alenu*,” could repeat “*Rofei cholei amo Yisrael, barech alenu*” ninety times. Would this establish the new wording as his habit?

In discussing this question, the *Bet Yosef* cites *Rabbenu Peretz* (*Hagahot Smak* 11:13), *Maharam* (*Tashbetz Katan, siman* 225), and other authorities. One argument draws on the laws of an ox that repeatedly gores. The Torah states, “But if the ox was accustomed to gore in the past” (*Shemot* 21:29). An ox that establishes a pattern of goading becomes a *shor mu'ad*, a forewarned ox. The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 23b) records a dispute between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah concerning an ox that gores repeatedly on the same day: can several incidents within a short period establish the same pattern as incidents spread over separate days? The authorities consider whether this principle can also apply to a person's speech, or whether a distinction must be drawn between human habits and an animal's behavior.

In practice, Maran rules in the *Shulchan Aruch* (114:9) that ninety consecutive repetitions are effective. When changing to the winter wording, a person can repeat “*Atah rav lehoshi'a, mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*.” When changing to the summer wording, he can repeat “*Mechayei metim atah rav lehoshi'a, morid hatal*.” He need not continue with “*Mechalkel chayim bechesed*”; repeating the words through “*Morid hatal*” is sufficient.

Baruch Atah Hashem

Based on this, the *Acharonim* discuss what would be the rule if during the Ten Days of Repentance a person comes who wants to accustom himself to say “*HaMelech HaKadosh*,” or “*HaMelech HaMishpat*”. And he says “*Baruch Atah Hashem*” - he cannot say the actual name of Hashem - so he says “*Hashem*”: “*Baruch Atah Hashem, HaMelech HaKadosh*,” “*Baruch Atah Hashem, HaMelech HaMishpat*” - ninety times. Is this effective or not?

The *Magen Avraham* (582:1) writes that this is not effective at all. Because since he said “*Hashem*”, when he reaches the prayer and then he will say the actual name of Hashem, his tongue has not become accustomed to this, because he previously said “*Hashem*”. Therefore it is not effective even if he said it ninety or nine hundred times... The tongue cannot become accustomed in something that is not exactly the same thing. The *Pri Chadash* (beginning of *Siman* 582) argues with the *Magen Avraham*, and writes, that there is no problem at all if he said “*Hashem*”, if he said it ninety times it is effective. Maran HaChida (*Birkei Yosef* 582:3) justifies the *Pri Chadash*, and writes that the words of the *Magen Avraham* are not compelling and in truth ninety times will be effective. But the Mahari Algazi in *Shalmei Chagigah* (p. 306) argues with the Chida, and justifies the words of the *Magen Avraham*, that the tongue cannot become accustomed. HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Palagi also does not agree with the words of the Chida. In his book *Mayim Chaim* (*Siman* 22) he writes, that the primary opinion is that ninety times is not effective in this case. So too the *Elyah Rabbah* (582:4) and *Mishnah Berurah* (582:3), HaGaon Rabbi Zalman author of the *Tanya* (*Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 582:3), *Chayei Adam* (24:10) and others, all rule that here ninety times will not be effective. At the time, in the journal ‘*Kol Sinai*’ in the year 5723 or 5724, my father, Maran zt”l, wrote on this topic, and justified the majority of the *Acharonim* who say that ninety times is not effective. Therefore no one should try to say ninety times because it will not help anyway. This is effective regarding the asking of *Tal U'matar* or regarding the mentioning of *Tal U'matar*, but it is not effective regarding the Ten Days of Repentance. Therefore when a person is in doubt, there is no doubt, in practice it is not a doubt - it is certain that he did not say what needs to be said and therefore he must return.

If it is in “*HaMelech HaKadosh*”, then when he is in doubt he must return to the beginning of the prayer. If it is in “*HaMelech HaMishpat*”, return to the blessing of “*Hashivah*”. And if he concluded the prayer and he is in doubt if he said “*HaMelech HaMishpat*”, he should return to the beginning of the prayer and make a condition

of a *nedavah* (freewill offering). Because here it is certain that he said “*Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat*”, and then he makes a condition of a *nedavah* that if the halachah is truly like those who hold that since he mentioned “*Melech*” he does not return, this prayer shall be a *nedavah* prayer.

The Haftarah of the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

Today was the second day of Rosh Hashanah, and we read the *Haftarah*: “Thus said Hashem, the people... found grace in the wilderness” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:1). On the first day we say the *Haftarah* about Chana being remembered; according to the words of *Chazal* (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a) this happened on Rosh Hashanah. There is significance in mentioning this also in the Torah reading: “And Hashem remembered Sarah” - Sarah was also remembered on Rosh Hashanah. But on the second day ostensibly we have here a *Haftarah* that is completely unrelated to Rosh Hashanah. The entire *Haftarah* is verses of consolation that speak of the redemption. Such a beautiful *Haftarah*, it could have perhaps even been set during the Seven of Consolation, the entire *Haftarah* speaks about how good it will be for *Am Yisrael* when Mashiach comes, how *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* redeems us, a very moving and very beautiful *Haftarah*. But what is the connection between this *Haftarah* and Rosh Hashanah. The Gemara, *Megillah* (31a) states that we read this *Haftarah* on Rosh Hashanah, and *Rashi* explains, that it is because at the end of the *Haftarah* there is the verse “I will surely remember him yet”. And the *Ran* writes, that since we must mention verses of *Zichronot* (Remembrances) on Rosh Hashanah, therefore because of the verses of *Zichronot* we mention this *Haftarah*, which concludes with the verse “I will surely remember him yet”. One must understand the significance that it is written “I will surely remember him”. For this matter we have *Malchuyot*, to crown *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, are we lacking verses of *Malchuyot*, *Shofarot*? There are so many! Why just because it is written here “I will surely remember him yet”, do we say this *Haftarah*?

Is Ephraim a Dear Son to Me?

But if we contemplate this verse “Is Ephraim a dear son to Me” which appears at the end of the *Haftarah* - today I noticed that there are many who make songs out of this verse, they apparently do not understand the meaning of this verse... - is Ephraim a dear son or not? The answer is unequivocal: Ephraim is not a dear son. And the words “Is Ephraim a dear son to Me” - this is a question that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* asks: Is Ephraim a dear son to Me?! If we look, behold the letter ‘hey’ of the word “*HaBen*” is vowelized with a *chataf patach*, and the ‘bet’ is without a *dagesh*: *Haben yakir li*, and this is an indication of an interrogative expression. Is Ephraim a dear son to Me?! This is like what we have in the Torah: “*Havo navo ani v'imcha v'achecha*?” (Shall I and your mother and your brothers come) - *Havo* - the ‘hey’ has a *chataf patach* and the ‘bet’ is without a *dagesh*, shall I and your mother and your brothers come? Or “*Hamaloch timloch aleinu*?” (Will you indeed reign over us?) - will you indeed reign over us? The ‘hey’ is also a *chataf patach* and the ‘mem’ is without a *dagesh*.

This is a very important rule in the rules of grammar. If the intention was “*HaBen*”, then the ‘hey’ should have been with a *patach*, for then it is the ‘hey’ of the definite article, and the ‘bet’ should have been with a *dagesh*. But since it is written “*Haben*” with a *chataf patach* and a ‘bet’ without a *dagesh*, behold it is an interrogative expression. And *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* asks: Is Ephraim a dear son to Me? Is he a darling child?

I Will Surely Remember Him

Our Rabbis the *Rishonim* write, that the interpretation of this verse is, that the tribe of Ephraim during the time of the Judges and during the time of the Kings, were the tribe that most angered *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, with idolatry and with all the bad things. Yeravam ben Nevat came from the tribe of Ephraim. So *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* takes Ephraim here as an example of *Am Yisrael* who sin, who commit iniquities. Ostensibly the question here intensifies: if we already want to say *Zichronot*, that our remembrance should ascend before Hashem, why did we specifically choose this verse?! There are after all other verses of *Zichronot* that we mention in the prayer: “Go and call in the ears of Yerushalayim”, “Thus said Hashem, I remember for you the kindness of your youth”, “And I will remember for you an everlasting covenant”. There are so many verses in the Torah, in the *Nevi'im*, and in *Ketuvim*, and specifically this verse that speaks of a sinful tribe, of the iniquities of *Am Yisrael*, of the peak of degradation that existed in the time of the Judges and in the time of the Kings - we say on Rosh Hashanah? And furthermore, solely because of it we say this *Haftarah*?

We Are Children Even When Hashem is Angry

But if we pay attention to the continuation of the verse: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* asks, is Ephraim a dear son to Me, is he a darling child? And then *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* continues and says: “For as often as I speak of him, I will surely remember him yet; therefore My inner parts yearn for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, says Hashem” - the exact opposite. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* comes and says: *Am Yisrael* are My children, I love them, therefore even though Ephraim is not a dear son, he

is not a darling child, nevertheless “My inner parts yearn for him” - I love them! Says *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: “I will surely have mercy upon him, says Hashem”. This verse comes to arouse the attribute of mercy in an indescribable way. A father loves his children, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* loves us. “And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious” - even though he is not worthy, “and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” - even though he is not worthy. As the prophet says: “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great mercies I will gather you. In a little wrath”, says *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, “I hid My face from you for a moment, and with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you”. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is angry with us, but even when He is angry, we are His children.

In the Midrash (*Midrash Tanchumah*, *Parashat Terumah*) it is told, that Turnus Rufus the wicked, the governor of the Romans, would debate with Rabbi Akiva whether *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* loves *Am Yisrael* or not. And it is brought in the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 36a), that Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes said that even at a time when *Am Yisrael* do not behave well, they are called children. This is also the reason why we say *Anenu Elaha d'Meir* - “Answer us, God of Meir” - why did we specifically take Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes? Why do we not say “God of Hillel the Elder”, “God of Rabbi Eliezer”? Why did we specifically seize upon Rabbi Meir? Because Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes would say that even at a time when they anger *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, they are called children. It is written in the verse: “A seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly” - they deal corruptly, but they are still called children. Therefore we mention this verse to arouse mercy, to say: Master of the Universe, even if we sinned, even if we are unworthy, but remember that You Yourself said: “Is Ephraim a dear son to Me”, “therefore My inner parts yearn for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, says Hashem”. Master of the Universe, have mercy upon us.

Rachel Weeping For Her Children

There is another important point in the *Haftarah* we read today. It is written: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:14). It is very important that each of us contemplates this story of Rachel. Today before the shofar blasts I spoke about this point here in the Bet Midrash ‘Yechaveh Daat’. It is very important for each of us regarding interpersonal relationships (*bein adam lachavero*).

Behold, Yaakov Avinu arrives in Charan and Lavan has two daughters. Now, *Chazal* say that the people would speak: Lavan has two daughters, Rivkah has two sons, the older for the older and the younger for the younger. And *Chazal* say that Leah would go around and ask, who is this older one that she is destined for? And everyone would tell her: Look, he is a mafioso, he is a gangster, he is a murderer, he is a terrible and awful person. And who is the younger? The righteous foundation of the world, the pillar of the Torah, the chosen of the Patriarchs. Because of this Leah would cry constantly over her bitter fate, “and the eyes of Leah were weak”. *Chazal* say that she wept greatly lest she fall, God forbid, into the lot of Esav.

Then Yaakov Avinu arrives, and he works seven years for Rachel: “And Yaakov loved Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her”. He was very happy that he was going to marry Rachel. But he knew that Lavan was capable of deceiving him. What did he do? He went and gave signs to Rachel. He taught her several things: the laws of *Niddah*, the laws of *Challah*, the laws of lighting the candle, important things that she should know. And he said to her: Look, under the chuppah the face is covered, I do not know who the bride is, so I will ask you several questions, if you knew - it is you, Rachel. But if the bride did not know - it is a sign they switched the bride on me... And all this was to ensure that Lavan would not succeed in deceiving him. We must also take into account, that at that time no one ever imagined that Yaakov would take both of them. He had to take either Rachel or Leah. One will go to Yaakov and the other will go to Esav. One for a good life and for peace, and one will go... like a *se'ir la'azazel*.

There is a Reward for Your Work

Behold, the wedding day arrives, and Rachel sees that they are dressing Leah in a wedding dress, Leah is going to be the bride. We must think what went through Rachel's mind at that moment. With all due respect to my sister, after all I am the destined one! It is very clear that I should be the bride. Yaakov is mine and he is not interested in Leah, he is interested in me! So what my sister is doing is an unfair act! Is she trying to steal my groom?! Not only that, if she marries Yaakov, then I will go to Esav, that is terrible and awful! I need to protect myself! I have full justification to stand up and protest, to go to Yaakov and tell him something. But in fact there is no need, it is better to remain silent, in the end I will be the bride, because Yaakov will ask her the questions, and she will not know, and then Yaakov will take me. But Rachel does the exact opposite. She sits and thinks: My poor sister, she is so happy, she is a bride, she is standing under the chuppah very soon. And if suddenly at the last moment they cast my sister away, poor sister, she will be put to shame! The shame of my sister is a terrible thing! A bride who at the last moment is cast away. So she went quickly to Leah and gave her all the things that Yaakov Avinu taught her. And under the chuppah, Yaakov asks and Leah answers properly, Yaakov knows nothing, he betroths her. It is written in the verse: “And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah”. Until the morning Yaakov did not even know that

they had switched the bride on him.

Rachel performed a very noble act, she was willing to give up on Yaakov, she was willing to give up on everything. Even though she was right, everything was so that her sister would not be put to shame. Regarding this the verse says: “For there is a reward for your work”. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* says to her: “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work”.

Rachel Did Not Pray, Rachel Came to Argue

What does the phrase “there is a reward for your work” mean? Our Sages tell us that when Menashe set up an idol in the Bet HaMikdash, Hashem wanted to destroy the Jewish people. Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moshe Rabbeinu all came and wept. Each one pleaded, saying: “Master of the Universe, remember that I walked before You.” Avraham said, “I sacrificed my son.” Yitzchak said, “I offered myself.” Yaakov said, “I studied much Torah.” Yet, despite all these powerful appeals, the Almighty did not yield—until Rachel arrived. The *pasuk* states: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are not.” *Chazal* explain that Rachel presented a bold argument before the Hashem: “Master of the Universe, I agreed to bring a rival into my house; look what I did for Leah!” In response, Hashem told her: “Refrain your voice from weeping.”

This exchange raises a fundamental question. With all due respect, Rachel's act was noble, but how does it surpass the supreme sacrifice of Avraham, who offered his own son—prompting the angel to declare, “For now I know that you fear God”? Why did Hashem specifically heed Rachel's prayer? The answer lies in understanding that Rachel did not merely pray; she came to argue and debate with the Almighty. Avraham prayed, Yitzchak prayed—everyone prays. But Rachel came with a compelling claim:

“Master of the Universe, You are angry with the Jewish people, and from the perspective of strict justice, You are entirely right to punish them. But look at my case: I had no obligation to share the secret signs with my sister Leah, yet I chose to spare her terrible shame. I established a profound halachah: when faced with public humiliation, strict justice must be set aside. Where there is human dignity at stake, pure justice is superseded. Therefore, You too—though completely justified—must not put Your children to shame!”

It is Better for a Person to Throw Himself into a Fiery Furnace

We see this very principle established by Rachel reflected in several places among our Sages. For instance, regarding the story of Tamar and Yehuda, *Chazal* teach that it is far better for a person to throw themselves into a fiery furnace than to publicly shame their fellow. When Tamar was brought forth to be burned, she did not openly expose Yehuda. Instead, she sent him the signet, cords, and staff with the subtle message: “*Discern, I pray you.*” She gave him the opportunity to admit the truth of his own accord, choosing to face the flames rather than create public disgrace. One might ask: why should she risk her life for someone who was technically responsible for the situation? Why not simply stand up and shout the truth? Because Tamar had learned from Rachel that in interpersonal matters, one must never prioritize personal vindication over another person's dignity. She was willing to endure the ultimate test rather than humiliate Yehuda.

In Interpersonal Matters, One Must Not Look at Justice

The Gemara relates that Mar Ukva and his wife were unparalleled masters of charity. Knowing a certain poor man would be deeply ashamed if he knew the source of their support, they devised a quiet method: they would slip money through his door and run away. Curious to know his anonymous benefactor, the poor man waited by the door one evening. The moment they dropped the coins, he threw the door open and rushed outside. Spotting him, Mar Ukva and his wife fled, ultimately jumping into a burning furnace to avoid being seen and saving the man from a moment of painful embarrassment. Here, too, one might wonder: should someone truly leap into a furnace just to spare a recipient the momentary awkwardness of discovering who gave them charity? If the recipient insists on being curious, that is his problem—why sacrifice oneself?

Yet again, we encounter this essential principle: in interpersonal relationships, we do not simply rely on strict justice. Even when we are entirely in the right, we must safeguard human dignity. Of course, there are times—such as when dealing with wicked individuals who openly undermine the Torah—where public denunciation is required. But among fellow Jews, when no higher necessity demands it, we must be meticulously careful not to cause shame or sorrow. This is the enduring lesson we learn from Rachel.

We read these moving verses of “A voice is heard in Ramah” in the *Haftarah* of the second day of Rosh Hashanah to awaken our hearts, reminding us to be exceptionally careful in our conduct between man and his fellow, just as between man and Hashem.

May it be His will that we merit a *gemar chatimah tovah*. I bless the entire congregation here, and all those listening via Radio Kol Berama, that we may all merit to be written and sealed in the book of good life, the book of the righteous and pious, the book of sustenance, livelihood, redemption, and salvation. Amen,