



MACCABI WORLD UNION

Department of Education

KFAR MACCABIAH RAMAT GAN 52105 ISRAEL
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ב' אלול תשע"ט

High Holy Days 5780 Message

Dear Friends,

A story for these days of Soul-Searching, Improvement and spiritual preparation:

Finally, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak accepted the rabbinical position in the town of Berditchev. To do so, the Rebbe established only one condition: he would not be called to attend meetings of the Community Committee, unless they discuss the imposition of new rules for the Community.

The Committee decided to enact a new resolution: the poor would no more walk the streets to be, but they should locate next to a synagogue and there receive any donation.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was summoned to the meeting where the new resolution would be issued. Appearing extremely upset, he asked to speak, and sternly, blurted out to the dignitaries present: "Gentlemen: You are not complying with the condition we agreed to on my appointment as rabbi of Berditchev. The resolution that you want to issue is not new."

Perplexed, the dignitaries of the Community Committee looked at each other without understanding the arguments presented by the Rebbe. The Chairman of the Committee, expressing the general feeling, asked his spiritual leader: "We are confused, Rabbi. Tell us: Why do you say that this is not a new resolution?"

The Rebbe, visibly disappointed, replied: "Of course this is not a new law. The law of which you speak can be traced back to ancient times, until the time of Avraham Avinu. This rule has been enacted ..." and, making a brief pause, the rabbi went on - "this resolution has already been implemented... in Sodom and Gomorrah."

We are close to **Yamim Noraim**, the Days of retrospection, of improvement and change, forgiveness and atonement, reconciliation and **Teshuvah**. Our souls are more willing to recognize our successes and failures, our virtues and miseries, our rise and fall, our actions and inactions, and our expressions and silences. The **Yamim Noraim**, the period between **Rosh Hashanah** – which celebrates the Divine creative act of love - and **Yom Kippur** – which brings the rigor of Judgment, help us rebuild our capacity of discernment, our ability to self-assessment and our sensitivity to our fellow human beings. Key components of our life that are relegated by the short-terms emergencies and the frenzy of contemporary rhythm.

We are social beings. Rabbi Yehuda Leib Lazarov said that "anyone who thinks he can live without the others is wrong." "Further" – he continued - "he who thinks that



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others can live without one is even more wrong." Stated that way or similarly, the fact is irrefutable: we need others and vice versa. We formed a chain of mutual dependence which is the richest part of our human experience. The most happy and fulfilled moments we experienced are always those connected to other human beings with whom we relate in love, consideration, and the construction of joint projects. We need the presence of our brothers and sisters and our fellows as a condition to constitute our being, our self and all that we are, and to help each other.

The Berditchev Rabbi's wrath is the very expression of this consciousness of interdependence. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak noted that the Community Committee leaders, instead of wanting to actually help the needy of their city, they only wanted "not to be bothered". The **aesthetic** criteria - "to look good" - had replaced the **ethical** one – while the ethical criteria should govern our lives especially in these Days of Owe, in the endless search for the welfare of own family, community and nation as the ultimate source of inspiration for our lives. It is the ideal that we will read during the Haftarah of Yom Kippur, when the Prophet Yeshayahu says, "*Umibesarchah lo tit'alam*" – "Do not be indifferent to your flesh." Do not turn a deaf ear to your flesh.

What does "*besarchah*", "your flesh" mean? "**Your flesh**" is, first, your family. Yamim Noraim, these Extraordinary Days, appear on our horizon and inquire of us: How is the connection with the members of your family? How much time do you spend with them? Is that a quality, meaningful, important time, filled with significant contents? When was the last time you gave an emotional hug to your spouse, your children, your parents, your brothers and sisters? Can you recall an important dialogs with them in the year which is now finishing? This "*flesh*" that is your blood, your genes, your likeness and continuity of much of your thinking is the one you need. Our families, who so often postponed, avoided and forgotten, are the ones who most suffer our absence. At the same time, our estrangement from them affects us viscerally, snatching the most beautiful of our being.

"**Your flesh**" is also your community and Maccabi. When we walk away from the destiny of the group we belong, we may lose our most basic direction, agreeing, in extreme cases, to laws of the past such as those which "existed in Sodom and Gomorrah", forgetting the values that made of our people the exceptional human group we are. If we alienate our responsibility for the development, strengthening and growth of our Jewish-Zionist identity, reflected in our Maccabi activism - our Maccabi institutions in the world, more than 400 clubs and community centers - we depart from that so uplifting, powerful and happy factor that makes us who we are: our paradigm of happy, positive Judaism and Zionism, based on a true *and humble* Jewish pride; a pride which is engaging and relevant to youth, adults and seniors - our reality as evidenced in our Maccabi present.



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"Your flesh" is, of course, "Israel", the multiple concept which embraces Medinat Israel - the State of Israel, Jewish people everywhere, and our way of life. To be a Zionist is to secure our creative future as a Nation, from the vast variety and complexity opportunities for our more inclusive being Jewish.

We should return our attention to *"besareinu"*, to "our flesh", especially in these days of Return, Reflection and Introspection. We must return to all that which is ours, full of incomparable value and unique: our family, our community, our Maccabi, our people, our National life, our Torah and its sources. We have to care and take care for each of the members of "our flesh" so as not to bleed, denatured, leave them in oblivion. **The indifference to our own is the agony of our souls.** Hiding the poor did not end the problem of poverty in Berditchev: it was only a makeup with the colors of hypocrisy and indifference.

May God grant that in 5780 that we will meet the expectations we create.

May God enlighten us to reach significantly closer to our spouses, children, parents, friends and families, strengthening our ties with those whom we love the most, and who need us so much.

May God grant that this New Year 5780 will be full of blessings for ourselves and for all Humankind.

And may God grant us the continued joy of seeing the development, growth and strengthening of everything that we hold dear and value, the State and the People of Israel, and our Maccabim all over the world.

With best wishes,

***LeShanah Tovah ticatevu vetechatemu!
May you and yours be inscribed for a Good Year!***

CHAZAK VE'EMATZ!

**RABBI CARLOS TAPIERO
Deputy Director-General & Director of Education
Maccabi World Union**