



## The Path To Follow

VAYEILECH

256

Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> 08

5 Tichri 5769

Publication

HEVRAT PINTO

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### GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

#### Ingratitude

We must be careful not to demonstrate ingratitude to the Creator of the universe, Who gave us a precious gift that sets us apart from the animals. If a person had the misfortune of losing his ability to speak, and after great effort he manages to find a doctor who cures him, would it ever enter his mind to use his newfound power of speech to disparage the doctor who cured him? Our situation is the same: The Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the precious gift of speech, which is what sets us above animals. He endowed us with a speaking soul so we could merit the World to Come through Torah and mitzvot. Therefore we must not use this marvelous gift against the will of the One Who gave it to us. It would be like repaying the Holy One, blessed be He, with evil for the precious gift that He has given us.

## GOOD INTENTIONS AT THE START OF THE NEW YEAR

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

**T**his week's parsha describes Moses' parting words before his death. He went to every Jew and said, "I am 120 years old today. I can no longer go out and come in" (Deuteronomy 31:2). In other words: I can no longer teach you laws and decrees, for the Sages say, "One masters nothing on the day of his death." The Sages have also said that the gates of wisdom were closed to Moses on that day, and he could no longer teach the Children of Israel (Sotah 13b).

Two things seem quite surprising, however, when we read these verses. First of all, in the preceding parsha it is written: "You are standing today, all of you, before the L-RD your G-d" (Deuteronomy 29:9), and Rashi cites the Sages as saying that this teaches us that Moses assembled everyone for the covenant and declared everything to them. That being the case, every Jew was standing before Moses when he spoke to them. Therefore why does the parsha state that "Moses went and spoke" (Deuteronomy 31:1)? Where did Moses have to go, since everyone was standing before him?

Next, why did Moses modify the Torah's words by saying, "I can no longer go out and come in," since the Torah states: "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out" (ibid. 28:6) – "come in" first and "go out" second? Moses should have said, "I can no longer come in and go out."

At that point Moses had just a few more days to live, a few more days before leaving this world. He said to the Children of Israel: I am going to the world that is entirely good. I am going to study in the Heavenly yeshiva, for here the gates of wisdom are closed to me. I will no longer be able go out from there, from the Heavenly yeshiva, to come and teach you. Yet even so, there is a way. True, I am leaving you, but the Sages have said: "Before the sun of one tzaddik sets, the sun of another tzaddik rises." This means that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not take a tzaddik from this world before having prepared another tzaddik to take his place. Therefore Joshua bin Nun, my distinguished disciple, will take my place after I die. He will continue to teach you laws and decrees, and you must obey him.

Such is the power of the tzaddik. He leaves this world, but he immediately has a replacement, a person to take his place, for the new tzaddik receives the power of the previous one. Hence the Torah states, "Moses went and spoke" – he didn't actually go somewhere with his legs, but his power went out and entered the heart of every Jew, so that everyone could elevate himself and do what is good and right in the eyes of Hashem, all by the power of Moses, the tzaddik of the generation. Hence it was not without reason that the Sages stated in the Zohar that we find the power and influence of Moses in every generation,

in the 600,000 souls of the Children of Israel, for his power accompanies every Jew.

These were Moses' last words to all the Children of Israel, a testament that we must infuse within our hearts. How can we do so, and how can we achieve this?

We learn an important principle from the final words of Moses, the teacher of all the Jewish people. He said to them, "I can no longer go out and come in. I can no longer go out and come in regarding words of Torah. The gates of wisdom have already been closed to me...but not to you! You are still at the beginning of the path, and you can continue on it! You can go out and come in regarding words of Torah. You can sit down to study, and Heaven can help you if you want, for "if one comes to purify himself, he is helped" (Shabbat 104a).

We learn another important principle from his words: The power of a tzaddik has an even greater influence after his death, for it does not suddenly disappear. Even when a new tzaddik takes the place of the previous one, he receives the previous tzaddik's power, as Elisha said when his teacher the prophet Elijah ascended to Heaven: "May twice as much of your spirit be mine" (II Kings 2:9). His power is doubled, a power that is found in the heart of every Jew.

We must infuse these teachings into our hearts. They are always relevant, especially in the present days, a time of teshuvah, the beginning of the year 5766, when we all want to come closer to Hashem. We all want to fully return to Him and experience blessings in everything we do.

During this time we should think of "going out and coming in" – going and coming – as the Sages said concerning the verse, "Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out" (Deuteronomy 28:6). Here they stated, "That your exit from the world shall be as your entry from it: Just as you entered it without sin, so may you leave it without [sin]" (Bava Metzia 107a). We must think about how we can rectify our deeds and completely repent of our sins, so that we can enter the new year without sin, and instead be crowned with mitzvot and good deeds.

There is more. We know that we receive the great power of the tzaddikim of the generation, which constantly spreads an abundance of blessings upon us, as well as success and all that is good. We need a great deal of merit and many defenders on our side at the beginning of the year, during the days of judgment and selichot. We can receive this merit by the tzaddikim of the generation, who stand as our advocates to speak on our behalf. If we truly reach this level, we will enter the new year without sin, possessing only mitzvot and good deeds. We will merit a good year that is filled with blessings. Amen, may it be so.

# MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

## Measure for Measure

*It is written, “The L-RD spoke to Moses, ‘Hen [Behold], your days are drawing near to die’ ” (Deuteronomy 31:14).*

The Midrash states, “Why was death decreed upon Moses with the expression hen? The rabbis say: It is as if a man, to pay honor to the king, brought him a sharp sword as a gift, and the king exclaimed: ‘Behead him with it,’ whereupon the man asked: ‘My lord king, will you behead me with the very object with which I honored you?’ So Moses said: ‘Master of the universe, I praised You with the expression hen, for Scripture says, “Hen, to the L-RD your G-d belongs the heaven, and the heaven of heavens,” and will You decree death upon me with the same expression hen?’ G-d replied: ‘A bad neighbor observes his neighbor’s earnings, not his expenses. ... Do you not remember that when I sent you to deliver them [Israel] from Egypt, you said to Me: “But hen, they will not believe me?”’ Hence He said, ‘Hen, your days are drawing near’ ” (Devarim Rabba 9:6).

In observing the ways of providence, we see that the Holy One, blessed be He, acts measure for measure with a person, as it is written: “In the measure with which a man measures, it is meted out to him” (Sotah 8b). This applies for better or for worse. When Moses prayed to be allowed to enter Eretz Israel, we read that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “Enough for you! Speak to Me no more of this matter” (Deuteronomy 3:26). This is because during Korach’s rebellion, Moses used the same expression: “Enough for you, O sons of Levi” (Numbers 16:7). We also find that because Joseph fulfilled the request of his father Jacob to bury him, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “You occupied yourself with burying your father Jacob, the greatest of the Patriarchs. By your life, Moses the leader of Israel will occupy himself with your burial.” By the merit of dealing with Joseph’s burial, Moses merited that the Holy One, blessed be He, personally saw to burying him. Such is the reward of one who demonstrates chesed to the dead, which is true chesed. Regarding the exodus from Egypt, Moses was afraid of upsetting his brother Aaron by that fact that he, not Aaron, was sent to deliver Israel. Thus when Moses mentioned this to Hashem, He said: Do not worry, for “when he sees you he will rejoice in his heart” [Exodus 4:14] – his joy will be on his face and within his heart, not like hypocrites who rejoice in the happiness of others superficially, not in their hearts. What was Aaron’s reward? He merited the placement of the Choshen, Urim and Thummim upon his heart. The heart that rejoices over the happiness of others merits for the Choshen to rest upon it. We find ourselves in the Yamim Noraim, the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when it will be decided what will happen to everyone in the coming year.

How can we emerge from this grave period of judgment exonerated? Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz said that there is a marvelous segula for this, which is to be merciful with others. In such a case, Heaven will deal with us in the same way, meaning that it will have mercy on. The Gemara describes the terrible suffering that came upon Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi because of a certain incident: “A calf was being taken to the slaughter. It broke away, hid his head under Rabbi’s garments, and lowed [in terror]. ‘Go,’ he said. ‘You were created for this.’ Thereupon they said [in Heaven], ‘Since he shows no mercy, let us bring suffering upon him’ ” (Bava Metzia 85a). This suffering did not come to him as a punishment, but as a measure-for-measure response. That is, no mercy is shown to a person who shows no mercy. How did his suffering leave him? The Gemara explains: “One day Rabbi’s maidservant was sweeping the house. Some young weasels were lying there, and she

tried to sweep them away. ‘Let them be,’ he said to her. ‘It is written, “His mercies are upon all His works” [Psalms 145:9].’ They said [in Heaven], ‘Since he is merciful, let us be merciful to him.’ ” We can clearly see that this is a proven segula. Let us therefore act with mercy, for whoever shows mercy will likewise be shown mercy by Heaven.

## Defeating the Evil Inclination

*It is written, “Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. He said to them, ‘I am 120 years old today. I can no longer go out and come in, for the L-RD said to me: “You shall not cross this Jordan’ ” (Deuteronomy 31:1-2).*

The Rebbe of Slonim left us with some advice on how to deal with the evil inclination by means of the te’amim (cantillation notes). There are four shalshelaot (a type of te’amim) found in the Torah: 1. In Parsha Vayeira, before Lot finally leaves Sodom, we read vayitmahmah (“and he hesitated”); 2. In Parsha Chayei Sarah, when Eliezer prayed by a well, we read vayomer (“and he said”); 3. With Joseph alone in the presence of Potiphar’s wife, we read va’yemaen (“and he refused”); 4. In Parsha Shemini, with the offerings of the eighth day of inauguration, we read vayishchat (“and he slaughtered”). The Rebbe of Slonim said that against the evil inclination, we must put the “he hesitated” into practice before all else. When the evil inclination arrives, everything is rushed. Hence we must say to it, “One minute here. Let’s not hurry.” Now since it is written that if Hashem were not to help us, it would be impossible to defeat the evil inclination, we must pray to Hashem. This is indicated by the expression, “and he said.” Therefore once we have hesitated and prayed, we can “refuse” – we can say no! If we repeat this process many times, we can succeed in “slaughtering” the evil inclination. Also regarding the subject of how to conquer the evil inclination, the Shem MiShemuel cites the Rebbe of Sochatchov on the verse: “Who can produce purity from impurity? Is it not the One?” (Job 14:4). Here the Midrash states, “For example, Abraham out of Terah. ... Was it not the world’s only One?” (Bamidbar Rabba 19:1). The Shem MiShemuel comments: How can we deal with the evil inclination? With one “no”! We must say “no” once and for all! We see another way in this week’s parsha: Rabbi Shalom of Kumarna said that the verse, “I am 120 years old today” constitutes a way of conquering the evil inclination. A person must feel that he is both 100 and 20 years old. Thus if the evil inclination comes and tells him to sin, he must say to it: “I don’t know when I will die. Perhaps I will die tomorrow morning? Perhaps I am like 100 years old today? Why should I complicate my life now with sins? Leave me alone.” Yet when a person comes to perform a mitzvah, let him imagine that he is 20 years old and full of energy.

## Unique

*It is written, “The L-RD spoke to Moses, ‘Hen [Behold], your days are drawing near to die. Summon Joshua...’ ” (Deuteronomy 31:14).*

The Sages have said, “This can be compared to a noble woman who brought the king an exceptionally beautiful garment, which the king took and put away. When the days of the lady approached their end, the king said: ‘Let her take the garment with which she honored me.’ Thus G-d said to Moses: ‘You praised Me with hen, and with hen I will decree your death’ ” (Devarim Rabba 9:7). What is the connection between the two? The Maggid of Dubno cites the Gemara in stating that the word for “one” in Greek is hen (Moed Katan 28a). The word hen also designates something unique. Hei is the only letter in the Hebrew alphabet that cannot be combined with another letter to form a word having a numerical value of ten. That is, the letters beit and chet combine to make ten, as do the letters vav and dalet. Only the

letter hei is unique in this regard. The same applies to the value of 100 and the letter nun: It cannot be combined with another letter to form a word with that value. These two letters – hei and nun – together form the word hen, representing something unique. Hence Moses said hen Hashem, meaning that Hashem is One. Hashem replied: You are also hen. The generation has been diminished, and you are the unique leader of this generation. You have nothing to learn from it. When Joshua was appointed as leader, the elders of the generation said, “Woe to us because of this shame,” for they realized that they were unworthy of a leader such as Moses.

### Whitened Due to Fear

*It is written, “The L-RD said to Moses, ‘Behold, you will lie with your fathers, and this people will rise up and stray’ (Deuteronomy 31:16).*

The Chatam Sofer said, “When a person is alive, he is described as “walking,” whereas angels are motionless. When a person is dead, he becomes motionless, for he can no longer perform mitzvot. However if his children or disciples perform mitzvot, they enable him to “walk.” Thus Hashem said to Moses: It is true that you will lie with your fathers, but you will be considered as “walking” because you left students here. However if this people commits idolatry – if it happens that “this people will rise up and stray after the gods of others” – you will become motionless.

The Chafetz Chaim cited a story described in newspapers about a yeshiva student who was seized by some Russians in the street. They wanted to shoot him on the spot, without any inquiries, and so they took out their guns and fired away. However a miracle happened, for their guns failed to work. They stayed there for about a quarter hour trying to fix them and shoot the student, until one of them realized that another power was preventing them. At that point they decided to bring him to the police, and he was finally set free. However for the fifteen minutes that he waited, his hair had turned white due to sheer terror. The Chafetz Chaim said that we will be reprimanded in this regard: Given that the fear of death is so real, why has our hair not turned white due to the terrible judgment that awaits us?

### Teshuvah, Tefillah, and Tzedakah Remove the Evil Decree

A wealthy man was called up to the Torah during the Yamim Noraim. Wanting to demonstrate his generosity, he promised during the misheberach to give ten times 18 to the poor. The Rav approached him and said, “Instead of giving 18 [chai] ten times, it would have been better for you to give 440 [met] once.”

A Jew once promised to give \$47 to tzedakah, a sum that he brought to the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum Zatzal. The Rebbe asked him, “Why just \$47? What is the significance of this?” The Jew replied, “It’s in honor of the Rebbe, whose name is Yoel” (the numerical value of which is 47). The Rebbe replied, “Here in America, people call me Yolish” (numerical value: 356).

### Overview of the Parsha

After the terms of the covenant are mentioned in Parsha Ki Tavo, and the covenant itself in Parsha Nitzavim, Parsha Vayeilech deals with the transmission of the Torah to the Children of Israel so that it would remain with them for all the generations. At the beginning of the parsha, Moses speaks to the Children of Israel regarding the transfer of power to Joshua bin Nun, who would lead them across the Jordan. We are also told that the Torah must be read at the end of the Shmita year. It is to be a song and a teaching for all time.

## REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

### Showing Respect for Sacred Texts

*It is written, “So now, write this song for yourselves” (Deuteronomy 31:19).*

The Rambam wrote in Hilchot Sefer Torah, “It is a positive mitzvah for every Jew to write a Sefer Torah for himself, as it is written: ‘So now, write this song for yourselves.’ In other words: Write for yourselves the Torah that contains this song, for the Torah is not partially written.” The Chafetz Chaim said that the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah is the last mitzvah in the Torah, and it follows the statement: “But I will surely have concealed My face on that day” (v.18). This teaches us that even in a time of hester panim (“hiding of the face”), meaning a time of darkness, the holy Torah is powerful enough to protect us and save us from all harm. This is particularly true in our generation, a time of endless hardship and suffering, in which threats reign outside and fear reigns inside. We must strengthen ourselves in the power of the Torah to the utmost of our abilities, thereby illuminating the darkness and obscurity resulting from an unprecedented period of hester panim. Furthermore, even if a person’s ancestors have left him a Sefer Torah, it is still a mitzvah for him to write his own. If he writes it himself, it is as if he had received it on Mount Sinai. If he doesn’t know how to write one, others can write it for him, and whoever writes a Sefer Torah, be it a single letter, is regarded to have written the entire Sefer. The Tur states that in our time, when a Sefer Torah is written for a synagogue so that it can be read in public, it is a positive mitzvah for every Jew having the financial means to write the five books of the Torah, the Mishnah, the Gemara, and their commentaries in order to be read by himself and his children. The goal of this mitzvah is for us to study Torah, as it is written: “Teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth” (Deuteronomy 31:19). The Me’am Loez states that we must act with extreme holiness and demonstrate great respect for a Sefer Torah, and that it is a mitzvah to procure a fine place for it. One who sees a Sefer Torah being moved should stand up before it, and he should not sit down until the Sefer Torah has reached its destination. He should do the same when he hears the sound of its small bells; he should stand up even if he has not yet seen the Sefer Torah. During the hakafot, care must be taken when asked to raise the Sefer Torah. A person must certainly not refuse this request.

When the ark is opened to commence prayer, we must try to stand, even if our legs are weak. We must show respect for a Sefer Torah that is worn out or has fallen into disrepair, and the same applies to other sacred texts, which are not needed if they are worn out. In that case they must be placed in a geniza. In this regard people must be cautioned not to be disrespectful to material in a geniza by leaving them in places of little honor, or in places where this material is liable to be viewed with contempt. We must treat them with respect and holiness, being careful not to treat them with shame. Furthermore, we must not place a book of lesser holiness on a book of greater holiness. Hence we place a Chumash on a Navi, not the other way around. We must also not use a holy book as a stand for another book, nor should we use a holy book as a bookmark in another book unless we are studying Torah out of both books. May we merit studying Torah in peace and harmony with all the Jewish people, so that “all your children will be students of the L-RD” (Isaiah 54:13).

## ESHET HAYIL

### Clothes Requiring Extra Attention

We must pay special attention to summer clothes, especially summer blouses that are, for the most part, transparent. We must also be careful to verify that all summer clothing, as well as every light or clear article of clothing, are not transparent. We must check knitted clothing with widely-spaced stitching that cannot be adjusted, for they may be transparent. We must realize that knitted clothes may seem opaque when first purchased, but can loosen over time as they are worn and washed. Hence they must be periodically checked to see if small holes have appeared that prevent them from being used. Clothes that adhere to the laws of modesty when purchased may become worn out over time. Every Jewish woman should therefore check her clothes from time to time to see if they are still suitable to wear.



## YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

### Rabbi Noach of Lechovitch

Rabbi Noach was the son of Rabbi Mordechai of Lechovitch, the disciple of Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin (who was murdered for the sanctification of the Divine Name and known as the Mashiach ben Yosef of his generation) and the first Rebbe of Stolin, Rabbi Asher. Rabbi Noach was known as a holy man and a miracle worker, and many were saved by his blessings and advice. After the passing of his father, the elders among the chassidim did not know who should succeed him as Rebbe. Hence they left the decision to his son Rabbi Noach and his main disciple, Rabbi Michael of Bykhov. Rabbi Noach said that Rabbi Mikhli was his father's premier disciple, and that the Torah begins with Bereshith. Rabbi Mikhli replied that in most Chumashim the first pages are worn out, and therefore we begin with Parsha Noach. Feeling obligated, Rabbi Noach agreed to take upon himself the leadership of the community.

Rabbi Noach inculcated the power of prayer in his chassidim, who were noted for the purity of their prayers. Rabbi Noach once heard one of his chassidim reciting the 13 ani ma'amin ("I believe"), yet each time he stopped and said, "I don't understand!" When Rabbi Noach asked him why he was saying this, he replied: "For two reasons: If I do believe, then when do I sin? Yet if I don't believe, then why do I lie by saying that I do believe?" Rabbi Noach replied, "Calm yourself. 'I believe' means that I want to believe." Encouraged by this, the chassid said: "It's true. I really want to believe!"

Rabbi Noach remained as Rebbe for 13 years, departing for the celestial academy on Tishri 8, 5593. He is buried in the town of Lechovitch. May his merit protect us all.

## A TRUE STORY

### Rabbi Amnon of Mayence

Rabbi Amnon was the author of the U'Netaneh Tokef prayer, which we read during Musaf of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He was the leading Torah figure in his generation, and he was wealthy and of fine appearance. The archbishop and nobles began to ask him to renounce his Judaism by converting, but he refused to listen to them. After the archbishop had begged him to convert for a long time, Rabbi Amnon said that he would think about it for three days, for he wanted them to stop pestering him. Once he left the archbishop, however, Rabbi Amnon regretted having expressed any doubt as to whether he would deny the living G-d, and he began to weep and bitterly regret his words. On the third day, he did not appear before the archbishop, who had him summoned by force. The archbishop asked him, "Why didn't you come before me to answer my question?" Rabbi Amnon replied, "I will decree my own sentence: May the tongue that spoke wrongly be cut from my mouth!" The archbishop said, "No, the tongue spoke correctly, but your legs did not come to me on time. Therefore they will be cut off, and I will cause your entire body to suffer." The digits of his hands and feet were cut off, and he was laid down, with his digits placed next to him. Come Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Amnon asked to be brought to synagogue with all his digits preserved in salt, and that he be placed near the Shaliach Tzibur. When it was time for Kedusha, Rabbi Amnon said: "Wait a little, for I want to sanctify the great Name," and he recited U'Netaneh Tokef. When he finished, he passed away and his body disappeared, for G-d had taken him. He later appeared to Rabbi Kalonymus and taught him the words of U'Netaneh Tokef.

## A QUESTION OF EDUCATION

### Different Kinds of Teshuvah

*It is written, "Return, O Israel, to the L-RD your G-d" (Hosea 14:2).*

Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once said of a person who was very diligent, yet did not succeed in his learning: "He is so diligent that he has no time to study." The same can be said about teshuvah: A person may be so occupied with the mitzvah of teshuvah that he has no time to repent.

It is common to think that teshuvah is but a sincere decision to change one's conduct. However there are many kinds of decisions. When a malignant tumor is surgically removed, this does not prevent another tumor from appearing, even if the malignancy does not recur for a certain time. Suppose that someone usually speaks to others in an insensitive and hurtful way, and during the ten days of teshuvah he sincerely decides to stop this behavior, for he realizes just how bad it is. He will not see the fruits of his decision until the initial cause for his ill behavior reemerges. If his decision was based only on a superficial notion that "people shouldn't act this way," it is not a decision that comes from the depths of his heart. Therefore his teshuvah will not ascend to the Throne of Glory. The root cause of his ill-behavior stems from a lack of consideration for others. Therefore why would a superficial decision – based on the notion that "people shouldn't act this way" because of a Torah order and what people say – be stronger than a deeper and older conviction in a person's heart, namely that people's honor is not worth consideration? The only way for a person's teshuvah to be complete, the only way to uproot evil at its core, is to deeply reflect and reach a clear realization that is stronger than before – the realization that we have been mistaken in how we view the world. In the above example, we must clearly realize that we have been mistaken about people. A person who habitually thinks and acts in a certain way will find it extremely difficult to change. Yet by exerting a mental effort to recognize his error, a person can change. In general, people do not deviate from the way in which they were raised, since they do not want to invest the necessary effort to achieve true teshuvah. This would mean not giving themselves rest without first having changed their erroneous views of the world.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

### Take Them Home

*It is written, "Return, O Israel, to the L-RD your G-d.... Take words with you and return to the L-RD" (Hosea 14:2-3).*

Shabbat of Parsha Vayeilech is Shabbat Shuvah, and the haftarah we read on it concerns the subject of teshuvah, so that people might be awakened to repentance before the arrival of Yom Kippur. In general, there are always some people who quickly perform mitzvot and rectify their deeds as soon as the month of Elul begins. They do not wait until the last day, Yom Kippur, in order to repent. Such is not the case for the rest of the people, who do not act quickly, which is why they must be awakened to repentance on this last Shabbat. During the month of Elul, we all try to strengthen ourselves in certain areas, as well as to listen to rabbis and great Torah figures regarding teshuvah. Yet we do not always take things to heart, and the words of encouragement that we hear sometimes remain in the Beit Midrash, without anyone claiming them. Hence the prophet Hosea says: "Return, O Israel, to the L-RD your G-d" – do not leave this one-time awakening at the Beit Midrash, for these words of encouragement – the very same words that you heard – are the ones that you must take home and fulfill. Only then will you be able to truly return to Hashem.