

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 50

פרשת וילך תשע"ו

Doing Teshuva

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The Essence of Teshuva

Teshuva is great, for it hastens the *geulah*. As the Navi Yeshayahu says, *Uva l'Tzion goel, ul'shavei pesha b'Yaakov* – "A redeemer will come to *Tzion*, and to those among *Yaakov* who return from sin."

Chazal underline the connection between those two statements: Why will the redeemer come? – Because the *Yidden* will do *teshuva*.

(ישע"י נ"ט, יומא פ"ו ע"ב)

The essence of *Teshuva* is simply; regret and the firm decision to leave one's negative ways. Other practices and *tikunim* are intended to uplift the person and improve his spiritual state.

(אגרת התשובה פ' א-ב)

A *Yid* once told the *tzaddik*, **Reb Yisroel of Ruzhin**, "Rebbe, I have committed *aveiros* and I want to do *teshuva*."

When the *tzaddik* asked him why he didn't do *teshuva*, the man responded that he didn't know how.

"Well, how did you know how to do the *aveira*?" asked the *tzaddik*.

"I just did it," the man replied.

"So do the same now. Just do *teshuva* and the accounting will follow," the *tzaddik* answered.

(סיפ"ח ז"ן מועדים ע' 77)

The holy brothers **Reb Elimelech** and **Reb Zusha** had a third brother, an innkeeper in a distant town. The *talmidim* of Reb Elimelech were curious: what kind of a man was this third brother? They decided to pay him a visit, and found him selling whiskey all day long to the local *goyim*. They noticed nothing special about him, except that from time to time he would take out a little notebook and write something in it.

Later, when everyone was asleep, they heard him crying bitterly. They looked inside and saw that he was reading from his little notebook and striking himself on the chest.

When they asked what he was doing, he replied simply that whenever he thought he had done an *aveira* or had even thought of an *aveira*, he marked it down, and did not go to sleep that night until he had done a complete *teshuva*. When his tears had completely erased the writing in the notebook, he knew that the *aveira* had been erased in Heaven above.

(סיפורי חסידים ז"ן מועדים ע' 53)

Sincere Regret

Reb Zushe of Anipoli would travel to faraway *Yiddishe* townships and villages, and indeed to any place where he sensed an impurity, whether caused by an *aveira* that had already been committed or by a misdeed that someone was about to do. On arrival, he would ask the wrongdoer if he could stay in his home overnight, and if necessary would even insist on receiving that favor.

At *chatzos*, Reb Zushe would wash his hands, get out of bed, light a candle, sit on the floor, and tearfully recite *Tikkun Chatzos*. With intense feelings of regret and *teshuva*, he would list in detail the *aveiros* the host had done, as if he himself had committed them. His host, overhearing this account of all the *aveiros* he had committed, would be shaken up with intense remorse. He would jump out of his bed and hurry to Reb Zushe: "Rebbe! Enough listing of my sins! I admit to my wrongdoing! I won't do it again! Ask Hashem to show me mercy and forgive me for all my *aveiros*!" Reb Zushe would not end his *vidui* however until the entire household was filled with such fear over of committing an *aveira*.

He was *poel* that their trembling would be more than they would have done in the presence of a king of flesh and blood. Anyone who was brought to *teshuva* through this approach of Reb Zushe would never commit that sin again.

(במעונות אריות)

The *chossid* **Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman** would caution his listeners that they should

not suffice with tears of *teshuva*, but also make sure to change their behavior. Just as a person who loses his money is certainly going to be more careful in the future, similarly, one who truly regrets his past *aveiros* must take heed not to return to his old ways.

(טללי תשובה ע' 422)

The elder *chossid* **Reb Shmuel Betzalel**, known as **Rashbatz**, taught *Tanya* in the *yeshiva* in Lubavitch. When he arrived at the words, "It is certain that he will ultimately repent, whether in this *gilgul* or another, for 'no one banished from Him will remain banished,'" he would break into tears.

"*Kinderlach!*" he would exclaim, "You must do *teshuva*. Eventually you will be forced to do so, so what are you waiting for?"

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 273)

Although *teshuva* is commonly translated as "repentance," they are not the same. Repentance mainly signifies regret (*charata*), whereas the real meaning of *teshuva* is not "regret," but "return." These two concepts are very different. "Regret" suggests something new: a person feels bad about his past and now wants to follow a new path of conduct. *Teshuva*, by contrast, emphasizes return. Although at times, for whatever reasons, a *Yid* may act improperly, his basic essence is good. Thus, to do *teshuva* is to return to his true self.

(תורת מנחם ח"ז ע' 17)

Consider This

Is *teshuva* an *avodah* of the heart or of actions?

What practical difference does it make if *teshuva* is translated as "repentance" or "return"?

Sparks of Greatness

ו' תשרי - The Shpoler Zaide

Reb Aryeh Leib of Shpoleh, known as the **Shpoler Zaide**, was born on *Chof Hey Kislev* to his father, Reb Boruch, and later became one of the great *talmidim* of the **Mezritcher Maggid**. He was known for the miracles he performed, mainly in his dealings with kings and ministers. He composed the famous "*Hop Kozzak*" *niggun*. He passed away on the *Vov Tishrei* תקע"ב (1811).

The Shpoleh Zeideh was a man of intense fervor, far more than any of the other *talmidim* of the *Maggid*. He once related: "When I was a child of three I saw the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal

Shem Tov placed his holy hand on my heart and ever since I have felt warm."

The Shpoleh Zaide once said to the **Baal HaTanya**: "You began writing a Book of *Tzaddikim* (before his *Tanya* which called '*Sefer shel Beinonim*'), but the world is incapable of taking it. Therefore, a decree has been aroused above, and it was decided that the *sefer* will be burned, and in that flame, I will ascend to *shamayim*."

So it was; at the time those manuscripts burned, the Shpoleh Zaide passed away.

Library Sparks

The *mitzva* of *teshuva*, returning to G-d in sincere repentance, is a commandment independent of a specific time or place. Whenever a Jew commits a sin, G-d forbid, he is immediately obligated to do *teshuva*.

In this light, a Jew who never sins is technically exempt from the *mitzva* of *teshuva*, for he has neither misdeeds to regret nor a need to repair his relationship with G-d.

According to this simple explanation of *teshuva*, the comments of Maimonides concerning *Yom Kippur* are problematic: "*Yom Kippur* is a time of *teshuva* for all," he writes, "both for the individual and collectively... everyone is obligated to do *teshuva* and confess his sins on *Yom Kippur*."

The question raised by Maimonides' words is therefore two-fold:

If a person is obligated to repent immediately after committing a sin, why repeat the process again on *Yom Kippur*?

Furthermore, why would a Jew who never sinned need to do *teshuva* at all?

Yet Maimonides maintains that "everyone," without exception, is obligated in *teshuva* on *Yom Kippur*.

The answer to these questions lies in the very essence of *Yom Kippur* and the uniqueness of the day itself.

The *teshuva* one does on *Yom Kippur* is of a different nature than the *teshuva* that is required as a result of one's transgressions, and is an obligation that falls equally on every single Jew, regardless of his spiritual standing.

Throughout the year, the *mitzva* of *teshuva* is dependent on the individual's personal circumstances.

If a Jew sins he must do *teshuva* in direct proportion to the severity of the transgression.

A person who never sins is logically exempt from this obligation.

On *Yom Kippur*, however, the obligation to return to G-d stems from the holiness of the day itself. On *Yom Kippur*, it doesn't matter whether a Jew transgressed, G-d forbid.

For those Jews who may have committed a sin and not properly repented during the year, *Yom Kippur* offers atonement simply by virtue of its holiness.

At the same time, those individuals who have already corrected their behavior can reach an even higher level of *teshuva* on the holiest day of the year.

Maimonides explains that every Jew must confess his sins on *Yom Kippur*, even those for which he has already done *teshuva*, as it states in Psalms, "For my sin is before me always."

This obligation applies even to *tzadikim* (the righteous), for "there is no righteous person in the world who does only good and does not sin." Every single Jew is obligated to thoroughly scrutinize his deeds on *Yom Kippur*, irrespective of his current level of observance.

The uniqueness of *Yom Kippur* -- a "time of *teshuva* for all" -- lies in the special bond between the Jew and G-d that is revealed on that day, a connection that transcends the limitations of the natural world.

Integral to this special relationship with G-d is the obligation to do *teshuva* in an ever-increasing and ascending manner, both for those who may not yet have done *teshuva* in the most basic sense and those who stand on a higher spiritual plane.

With true *teshuva*, every Jew can renew his commitment and attachment to G-d on *Yom Kippur*, and be blessed with a good inscription in the Book of Life for the coming year.

Halacha Sparks

Havdalah Candle after Yom Kippur

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

What conditions are required for the candle used for havdala on Motzoei Yom Kippur?

Unlike on *Motzoei Shabbos* when we recite the *bracha borei meorei hoeish* over a newly lit candle, on *Motzoei Yom Kippur* it must be recited over a flame that existed on *Yom Kippur* and did not involve a transgression (*ner sheshovas*). Practically this means that the flame must be kindled before *Yom Kippur*. Unlike *Motzoei Shabbos* when we are marking the creation of fire by *Odom Horishon* -whereby any candle suffices- on *Motzoei Yom Kippur* we're celebrating the fact that now we may benefit from fire to its fullest extent, after kindling and other uses of fire were prohibited on *Yom Kippur*. This point - that it was forbidden to use fire and now it is permissible - is only highlighted if the fire existed on *Yom Kippur* and no *melacha* was done with it.

One may only recite *borei meorei hoeish* on a flame which was lit to provide light.¹ A candle that was lit effect, a *yartzeit licht* for a *neshama*, or in a gas range; may not be used.² Optimally one should light a candle on *Erev Yom Kippur* for the specific purpose of using it for *havdalah* on *Motzoei Yom Kippur*.³

*Rishonim*⁴ discuss whether one may make a *bracha* on a new flame lit from the *ner sheshavas* or not. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*⁵ rules that ideally one should make the *bracha* on the original *ner sheshovas*, but one may also recite the *bracha* on the candle lit from it.

If one only has a *ner sheshavas* that was not lit to illuminate (e.g. a *yartzeit licht*) one should light another candle from it and recite the *bracha* on both candles. In this manner one has both advantages: a *ner sheshovas* and a candle that was lit for its light.⁶

1. שו"ע הרב סי' רצח סעי' טו-ח.

2. בכל זה ראה שו"ע הרב סי' תרכד סעי' ה-ח.

3. דרך החיים קסטו, הובא במ"ב סי' תרכד ס"ק יג.

4. ראה ב' הדעות ברמ"א שם סעי' ה. דעה א' מהרב המגיד פכ"ט מהל' שבת הלכה כז בשם הרמב"ן ואבודרהם עמ' רצ בשם ה"ר יונה ואור זרוע ח"ב סי' צה, הובאו בדרכי משה. ודעה ב' מהאגודה סוף יומא ומה"י ווייל סי' קצא.

5. שם סעי' ח כפי שהבינו במ"מ במהד' החדשה. ובזה מיושב מה שהקשה בא"ח ח"ד סי' קכב.

6. שם. ויש לעיין מדוע לא נהגו להקפיד על כך.

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