

# THE GATES OF REPENTANCE, GATE 1:29

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

Twentieth Principle of Teshuva: TURNING OTHERS AWAY FROM SIN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

We come now to the last principle of teshuva, and nearly to the end of the first of four gates. Significantly, this one focuses on the effects our having bettered ourselves could have on others. After all, if we would only have bettered \*ourselves\* and drawn \*ourselves\* closer to G-d through teshuva, how will we respond to the question of how we'd bettered the world once we leave it (as we'll surely have to)?

From one perspective we're reticent to help others for a particular reason. Because we have trouble divulging things about ourselves. And that's most especially so because we can't imagine anyone being interested in what we'd have to say. "What's to talk about?" we might say. "I get up, I go to work, I come home, I go to bed." Needless to say, though, that only touches upon our outer life.

In fact, though, were we to divulge our \*inner\* being we might very much say things like, "I wondered about my life this morning, I discovered I don't like my company's ethics at lunchtime, I was thrilled to resolve an old conflict after dinner, I regained hope before going to bed." For in truth those kinds of thoughts and feelings and the like float about in our consciousness the whole day long. But we don't divulge them.

Now, imagine you'd once been an inveterate liar. Imagine, too, that you'd somehow come to realize that about yourself in the course of time, that you'd grown to dislike that about yourself, that you'd then taken it upon yourself to return to G-d and rectify your ways by coming to teshuva, and that you'd succeeded.

You'd have bettered yourself, and the world would have improved as a consequence. You'd be happier for having faced your darker side, you'd come to admire yourself more, and others would find you more open and above-board. Your spiritual life would grow exponentially and would deepen, since you'd come to peace with G-d Almighty. And you'd finally come to be the kind of person you'd always wanted to be.

Imagine now, smack-dab in the middle of all this growth and maturation, that someone you knew at work asked you what was new-- someone you were close to, whom you'd socialized with, and with whom you'd spoken about matters of the heart. And all you said was, "Oh, I'm OK!"

Couldn't it be said in all fairness that you'd missed an opportunity to better that friend's life by not

divulging the sorts of things you were experiencing? Wouldn't you have drawn her closer both to yourself and to her own inner being by touching upon what was going on in yours?

That's what Rabbeinu Yonah is alluding to with this final principle of teshuva. His point is that it's incumbent upon us to share our inner victories if we're ever to truly settle into a life of spiritual excellence. And to let others know the sweet and subtle gladness that comes over us when we grow in our hearts and beings.

Needless to say, it wouldn't do us well to be rude and overbearing in our revelations. To force the issue, take it upon ourselves to point out others' faults on the spot and rectify them for "their own good". Simply because that sort of aggressive, too loud, and ultimately \*self-centered and self-serving\* sort of thing fails in the end. And it most often leads to the other person digging in his heels and falling further away from growth than before.

But the point is that someone who'd truly come to teshuva and to have bettered himself would prove it best by sharing that with others, and by gently helping them arrive at betterment as well.

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