

THE ROLE OF TESHUVAH

by Shlomo Katz

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz

Yom Kippur

Volume XIII, No. 49

10 Tishrei 5760

September 20, 1999

Today's Learning:
Ma'aser Sheni 3:2-3
Orach Chaim 167:10-12
Daf Yomi: Megillah 14
There is no Daf Yomi in the
Talmud Yerushalmi on Yom Kippur

Notice

Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to recite the following prayer which is printed in some machzorim:

"I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or monetarily, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any human sins between man and his neighbor - except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover by law, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me' - except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account.

"And just as I forgive everyone, so may You grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he will grant me complete forgiveness."

Rabbenu Yonah z"l writes: "Although we are commanded to repent at all times, on Yom Kippur there is an added mitzvah." If so, writes R' Dovid Kronglas z"l, if a person repents on Yom Kippur from his sins, he performs two positive commandments. Also, since a prerequisite to repentance is confession, he performs the additional, independent mitzvah of vidui/confession. Thus, he performs three mitzvot in all.

These three mitzvot are multiplied by each sin for which a person repents. For example, if a person repents from the sin of bittul Torah/failing to take advantage of the time he had available for Torah study, he is credited with performing three mitzvot. When he repents from speaking lashon hara, he acquires another three mitzvot.

Moreover, if a person spoke lashon hara multiple times or repeatedly failed to study as much Torah as he could have, each separate occasion for which he repents results in three additional mitzvot being added to his account. In this way, his merits quickly add up.

On the other hand, if a person fails to repent on Yom Kippur, he neglects those three separate mitzvot. That neglect is similarly multiplied in the heavenly books by the numbers of sins for which one does not repent, such that every sin becomes four sins (i.e., the original sin plus three). (Sichot Chochmah U'mussar Vol. I, p.220)

The Role of Teshuvah

Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah - one is the book of the completely wicked, one is the book of the completely righteous, and the third is the book of "benonim"/"in-between people." The fates of the wicked and the righteous are inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah, while the fate of the benonim hangs in the balance until Yom Kippur. If they merit, i.e., if they do teshuvah, they are inscribed for life; if not, they are inscribed for death. (Rosh Hashanah 16b, as explained by Rambam)

R' Yitzchak Blazer z"l ("R' Itzele Petersburger") asks: Rambam defines a "benoni" (singular of "benonim") as a person whose mitzvot and sins are perfectly balanced (qualitatively, not necessarily quantitatively). If so, why does a benoni have to repent in order to be inscribed for life? Let him simply do another mitzvah and thus tip the scales to the side of merit.

R' Blazer answers: The failure to do teshuvah is itself a grave sin, as Rabbenu Yonah z"l writes in his Sha'arei Teshuvah:

Know, that when a sinner delays in returning from his sin, his punishment weighs heavier on him

every day, for he knows that he has angered G-d and that he has an escape, i.e., teshuvah, yet he persists in his rebellion.

The midrash compares such a fool to a prisoner who finds a tunnel leading out of his jail cell, yet who does not escape. Is that not an insult to the king, for it shows the king that the prisoner does not fear being in his custody? So, too, a person who fails to repent when given the chance tells Hashem, "I do not fear Your judgment."

This is why it is imperative for the benoni to repent before Yom Kippur. Doing extra mitzvot, but not teshuvah, will not tip the scales towards merit. To the contrary, the failure to repent will tip the scales inexorably towards the opposite side. (Kochvei Ohr No. 5)

R' Aryeh Pomeranchik z"l offers a different answer to R' Blazer's question. He explains: The heavenly scales are taken out only once a year, on Rosh Hashanah. If a person fails to be judged a tzaddik on Rosh Hashanah, he cannot tip the scales by doing another mitzvah, because immediately after the scales are used, they are put away.

Not only that, a person who was not judged on Rosh Hashanah to be a tzaddik stands indicted before the heavenly court. The only way that such a person can be written in the book of life after Rosh Hashanah is to get that indictment dismissed. The way to achieve that is teshuvah. (Emek Berachah p.146)

Yet another answer may be provided by the observation of R' Dovid Kronglas z"l quoted on the front page of this issue. If a person fails to repent, his sins are multiplied by four. The likelihood of a person's performing enough mitzvot to tip the scales in his favor thus becomes very small. (The Editor)

An Astonishing Midrash

"You shall afflict your soul on the ninth of the month" (Vayikra 23:32) - Do we then fast on the ninth? We fast on the tenth! However, this teaches that one is rewarded for eating on the ninth to the same extent that he is rewarded for fasting on the tenth. This is why we light candles for Shabbat."

Why does one eat on Erev Yom Kippur? It is merely to prepare for fasting on Yom Kippur. Nevertheless, the reward for this preparation is equal to the reward for the fast itself. This knowledge, says the midrash, should enhance one's appreciation of the simple act of lighting candles in preparation for Shabbat.

Chazal say that one cannot achieve atonement unless he appeases those against whom he has

sinned. Some say that one cannot achieve atonement even for his sins against G-d unless he has properly atoned for his sins against man, and received forgiveness. (Kaf Hachaim 606:3)

Why? Because atoning only for some sins is like immersing part of one's body in a mikveh. Obviously, one does not attain purity by doing so. (Mussar Hamishnah)

An Open Letter from the Chafetz Chaim z"l entitled: "Why Are You Sleeping? An Awakening to Repentance" Erev Yom Kippur 5285/1924 With G-d's help!

A few weeks ago, I publicized an essay regarding the earthquake which occurred in our Holy Land in which I urged the Jewish people to repent. This earthquake, I wrote, was a warning to the world that it should repent from its evil ways and should believe in Hashem, from whose hand everything comes. It is not by coincidence that heard all of the horrible news of this past year has reached us.

Now, we have heard a new and terrible story - the earthquake which occurred in Russia, in which thousands of men, women, children and animals were killed, and in some cases, people's homes became their graves. Even in our land [Poland], we felt that earthquake slightly. Certainly, every thoughtful person should be gripped by fear and trembling, asking, "What is this that Hashem has done to us?" Is He not good, and does He not do good to all? Is not His mercy upon all of His creations such that He does not desire the death of anyone, even the wicked? Obviously, a thoughtful person will understand that He is urging us to repent and He is showing us that He is all-powerful. Since, today, we do not have prophets, He uses other messengers.

When Hashem dispatched Yonah to Nineveh, Yonah did not wish to go, since he knew that the repentance of the gentile Ninevehites would reflect badly on Jews who do not repent. Instead, he tried to flee to the diaspora, reasoning that Hashem does not speak to prophets outside of Eretz Yisrael and G-d would leave him alone. What happened? A powerful storm struck the ship that carried Yonah and the ship was close to sinking. The ship's captain called to Yonah, who was below deck, "Why are you sleeping? Get up, and call to your G-d!" This is no time for sleeping! We have no leg to stand on except prayer.

When we see that the attribute of justice is operating against the world, it is amazing to me - even though all the warnings of Netti'ah Tokef have come to pass - that no one pays attention. We must believe that this is a warning from Hashem to repent, for who knows what tomorrow will bring, especially if we do not repent! [At this point, the Chafetz Chaim listed major areas where he saw that improvement was needed, including the need to be more meticulous in observing Shabbat properly.]

The main point is that every person who has the ability to encourage the members of his household, his friends, and his acquaintances to repent is obligated to do so. Let him not delay, so that the merits of the public will be his. May Hashem show him how to repent fully and bless him with a year

of life and peace and redemption for us and for all of Yisrael.

Sponsored by Bert Anker, Judy Gabel and Harvey Anker on the yahrzeit of their father, Moe Anker a"h
Rochelle Dimont and family on the yahrzeit of husband and father, Rabbi Albert Dimont a"h

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