

VAYEILECH-SHABBOS SHUVAH

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

This week is Parshas Vayeilech and Shabbos Shuvah, so named because of the Haftorah we read where the prophet Hoshea exhorts the Jewish People to repent from their sins. What does repentance mean? The Rishonim enumerate the steps that are involved in the process of repentance. Among these steps are forsaking the sin, regretting the past and acceptance not to sin in the future. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:2) writes that the ultimate form of repentance is when one reaches the state of repentance where HaShem, Who knows all concealed matters, can testify on the person that he will not commit this sin again. One must wonder, however, how one can know when he has achieved this level of repentance? There are those who claim that after Yom Kippur, if one feels a true sense of relief, then he knows that he has gained atonement for his sins. Repentance certainly involves one's emotions. Nonetheless, the mitzvah of repentance is akin to shaking a lulav and blowing a shofar, where one must perform the action involved in the mitzvah and one should not be focused on whether HaShem has accepted his performance of the mitzvah. This being the case, why does the Rambam write that part of the process of repentance is that HaShem has to testify that he will never sin again? The Lechem Mishneh (Ibid) is bothered by another question. He asks how it can be that HaShem testifies that a person will never commit this sin again. Does this not contradict the idea that man has free choice? The Lechem Mishneh answers that when one repents he must take HaShem as a witness that he will never commit this sin again. It would seem from the words of the Lechem Mishneh that the Rambam is not saying that HaShem is actually testifying on behalf of the person. Rather, the repentant is taking HaShem as a witness, similar to Moshe taking the heavens and the earth as a witness that the Jewish People were warned what will occur if they do not heed HaShem's will. This is also the understanding of the Kesef Mishneh (Ibid). This explanation, however, is difficult, as the Rambam implies that HaShem will actually testify on behalf of the repentant. Furthermore, how does one take HaShem as a witness? Lastly, if one takes HaShem as a witness that he will never sin again, is it still possible to sin again? This matter requires further research, but perhaps we can explain the words of the Rambam in a different manner. The Rambam (Ibid 1:1) writes that the mitzvah from the Torah is that one confesses his sins, and part of the confession process is that he repents. One of the confessions that we recite on Yom Kippur is that we sinned before HaShem with Viduy Peh, insincere confession. While one can certainly confess his sins verbally, it is insufficient unless he has truly repented. How can one know if he has truly repented? Regarding this the Rambam writes that if HaShem testifies upon the person that he will not commit the sin again, then he will know that he has truly repented. This is the only way that one can sincerely confess his sins, as without true repentance, one cannot recite a true

confession. It is said (Yechezkel 33:11) emor aleihem chai ani nium HaShem Elokim im echpotz bimos harashah ki im bishuv rasha midarko vichaya shuvu shuvu midarcheichem haraim vilamah samusu bais Yisroel, say to them: âas I live - the word of the Lord HaShem/Elokim - [I swear] that I do not desire the death of the wicked one, but rather the wicked one's return from his way, that he may live. Repent, repent from your evil ways! Why should you die, O House of Israel?' Thus, we see that when one repents, he is now considered to be amongst the living. The definition of living is to be attached to HaShem and His will. One who repents is close to HaShem, as it is said (Hoshea 14:2) shuva Yisroel ad HaShem Elokecha, return, Israel, unto Hashem your G-d. The Gemara (Yoma 86a) derives from these words that repentance is so great that it ascends to the Heavenly Throne. In a similar vein, every week we experience a spiritual elevation on the Holy Shabbos. How does this come about? I was struck by the words from the Haftorah that we read on a fast day. It is said (Yeshaya 56:3-5) vial yomar ben haneichar hanilvah el HaShem leimor havdail yavdilani HaShem meial amo vial yomar hasaris hein ani eitz yaveish ki choh amar HaShem lasarisim asher yishmiru es Shabsosai uvacharu baasher chafatzti umachazikim bivrisi vinsati lahem biveisi uvichomosai yad vasheim tov mibanim umibanos sheim olam etein lo asher lo yikareis, let not the foreigner, who has joined himself to HaShem, speak, saying, âHaShem will utterly separate me from His people'; and let not the barren one say, âBehold I am a shriveled tree.' For thus said HaShem to the barren ones who observe My Shabbosos and choose what I desire, and grasp My covenant tightly: In My house and within my walls I will give them a place of honor and renown, which is better than sons and daughters; eternal renown will I give them, which will never be terminated. We can interpret these verses homiletically to mean as follows: and let not the barren one say, âBehold I am a shriveled tree, i.e. let a person not say that life is dry and without meaning. For thus said HaShem to the barren ones who observe My Shabbosos and choose what I desire, and grasp My covenant tightly, i.e. although during the week a person may feel that he is on the precipice of despair, he should know that one who observes the Shabbos and studies Torah will be more rejuvenated than one who bears children. The reason for this is because Shabbos is a semblance of the World to Come, which is eternal. One who experiences Shabbos has experienced true life. Hashem should grant us that this Shabbos the entire Jewish People observe the Shabbos properly, and then HaShem will grant us complete atonement on Yom Kippur, which will come upon us, for good.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Askinu Seudasa

Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Yehei raavah kamei disishrie al amei diyisanag lishmei bimsikin viduvshin, may it be His will that His Presence rest on His people and it take pleasure for His sake in delicacies and sweets. If we can understand this passage literally, it would seem that the intention is that through the manifestation of the Divine Presence, we are capable of indulging in physical delights. Perhaps this is similar to what the Ramban writes (Bereishis 25:34) that Yitzchak instructed Esav to bring him food so that he could bless him. The reason Yitzchak did this is because

he felt that the Divine Presence would rest on him through the indulgence of food. While this passage certainly contains a deep meaning, we can understand that by elevating the physical in this world, we merit a high spiritual level.

Shabbos in Tefillah

Oneg kara liyom HaShabbos, He declared the Shabbos day a delight. Why did HaShem have to call the Shabbos a delight? The Sefarim (see Shelah Maseches Shabbos Perek Ner Mitzvah Â§38) write that there is nothing higher than oneg and there is nothing lower than nega, a plague. Thus, we see that the highest spiritual reward is in a place called oneg, which is also an acrostic for the words Eden (Paradise) Nahar (River) and Gan (Garden). Hashem cherishes the Shabbos so much that He refers to it as the highest level of spiritual reward.

Shabbos Story

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: Lieutenant Meyer Birnbaum was one of the only Orthodox US army officers commissioned during World War II. Last year, he spoke at our yeshiva, and though I was enraptured by the harrowing tales of his war-time activities, one small incident that occurred to him as a young boy growing up in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn during the Depression did not escape me. In those days, few young men attended yeshiva or were committed to vigorous Torah observance. Meyer went to public school as well, but his parents wanted to raise him as an observant Jew. His friends would often make fun of his yarmulke, and few attended his bar-mitzvah. But that did not deter him. In fact, from the time he was old enough his mother would make sure that he attended the mincha service. Imagine the sight. A young boy coming to pray together with a group of elderly men who were hanging on to their tradition while their inheritors looked for newfound freedoms outside the decaying walls of the synagogue. Even the men who came to pray were only there to say Kaddish for a dearly departed. So when young Meyer entered the portals of the shul for the very first time their eyes widened in amazement. Their shock turned to pity as they assumed the young boy came to shul for the same reason that most of them came, and for the very reason that they prayed their children would one day come the sole purpose of saying Kaddish. The moment came when the Kaddish yasom, the mourner's Kaddish, was to be recited, and the congregation began in a cacophonous unison the hallowed words, "Yisgadal Viyiskadash." Meyer just stared up into space, waiting to answer the first responsive Amen. He was startled by the jab in the ribs by a crooked finger, which left his searing side and began pointing to the correct place in the prayer book. "Nu!" shouted the man, "They are saying Kaddish!" "I know that they are saying Kaddish!" answered Meyer. "So, what are you waiting for? Say along!" Meyer did not understand where the conversation was heading. But he had no time to think when another old man looked his way, motioning for him to join the mourners in the Kaddish recitation! "But I don't have to say Kaddish!" answered Meyer tearfully, "my parents are alive!" "Your parents are alive?" asked the old-timer incredulously. "Yes, thank G-d, they are both alive! Why do you think that they are dead and that I should say Kaddish?" They gathered around him as the final Amen was said and explained their

actions. "We could not imagine someone your age coming to shul for any other reason!" [Reprinted with permission from Torah.org]

Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 11

In this chapter we learn how Shaul and the Jewish people defeated the people of Amon in battle. Subsequent to this battle Shmuel summoned the Jewish People to Gilgal to renew the kingdom. At Gilgal they made Shaul the king and they offered sacrifices to HaShem. Shaul and the Jewish People then rejoiced exceedingly. Shabbos is a time when we rejoice in the kingship of HaShem. Despite the travails of the week, on Shabbos we refresh ourselves and, so to speak, renew HaShem's Kingship over us.

Shabbos in Agadah

The Gerrer Rebbe, the Bais Yisroel, writes that the Imrei Emes said that the sin of Adam HaRishon did not affect Shabbos, as the power of Shabbos is greater than the effects of his sin. The Bais Yisroel writes that Shabbos aids in the repentance process. The Sfas Ems writes that the Gemara states that had the Jewish People observed the "first" Shabbos, they would not have been assailed by any nation. The "first" Shabbos alludes to Shabbos Shuvah, the first Shabbos of the year.

Shabbos in Halacha

In summary, food that was removed from a flame or from the blech can be returned only 1) to a blech; 2) if the food is completely cooked; 3) while still warm; 4) if one keeps the pot in his hand; 5) if one did not intend to remove the pot permanently. Under such conditions it is also permitted to transfer food from one belch to another.

New: Shabbos Challenge Question

Last week we posed the question: We know that many customs that we perform on Shabbos are in pairs, corresponding to the mitzvah of shamor, safeguarding the Shabbos, and one corresponding to zachor, remembering the Shabbos. Examples of this idea are a woman lighting minimum two candles prior to the onset of Shabbos and reciting hamotzi over two loaves of bread by all three meals on Shabbos. One must wonder, however, why this is so, as the Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 27a) states that shamor and zachor were uttered by HaShem simultaneously. Furthermore, in the prayer of Kegavna recited by Nusach Sefard on Friday night, it is said that Shabbos is raza diechod, the Secret of Unity. These statements would indicate that although prior to Shabbos there was disparity and a lack of unity, on Shabbos everything becomes one. Why, then, do we emphasize on Shabbos the idea of two? Perhaps an answer to this question is that although Shabbos is ultimately the sign of Oneness and Unity, the demonstration for that unity is by performing acts that involve two. The purpose of a marriage between two people is to become like one. Similarly, Shabbos is deemed to be the mate of the Jewish People, and through this "marriage," we recognize the Oneness of HaShem.

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