

THE RIGHT FIT

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The Maggid of Jerusalem, Rav Shalom Schwadron Zt'l, said that it is not an oversight on the part of Rambam [Maimonides] that he did not mention the obligation to repent in the laws of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In fact he did not include it in the laws of Holy Days at all. The laws of Teshubah are strategically placed at the end of Sefer Mada --the Book of Knowledge. Rambam wanted to teach us that Teshubah is not a seasonal Misvah. It is one that is upon the person every day of the year -- as soon after committing a sin as is possible. The month of Elul, he explains, is the prompt to the human being to begin the Teshubah process. The day of Yom Kippur is the day to actually accept upon oneself the commitment to repent but the actual performance of the misvah is done during the rest of the year.

Many people are foolish enough to think that if they start to do a little more, pray a little better and work on their fear of heaven that they are on the road to successful repentance -- even if they don't leave their evil ways.

The Maggid MiDubno demonstrates their folly with a parable. There was once a peasant who visited the big city and spotted a beautiful silk suit in a shop window. The tailor with his expert eye picked the right size for his burly customer off the rack and handed it to him to try on. The unsophisticated peasant put the garment on top of his thick, bulky farm clothing and immediately began to complain. "What kind of store is this? How can you give a big man like me such a small suit to wear?"

"Not true, " said the merchant. "I gave you a perfect size but you are too foolish to take off your old garments before trying it on. Please take off what you are wearing first and then you will see how perfect the fit is!"

This is how it is with Teshubah --repentance. Sometimes a person begins to do more of the "right" things --even some of the stringencies usually observed only by the more pious amongst us -- yet one neglects to take off their "old clothing." In Tehillim we learn "Turn away from evil, and do good". Our Sages teach that first we must turn away from our bad habits and only then we will be able to good.

As we enter the isolation booth of intimacy with G-d called Yom Kippur -- each one should prepare them self with kabalot-- resolutions. Promises should be made to Hashem about how each of us is going to actualize the trend towards teshubah that we have all worked so hard to develop in the forty days since Rosh Hodesh Elul. But we must realize that to be successful we must not only

promise G-d that we are going to do misvot that we were unable to adhere to in the past, but we must also be prepared to give up all the things we do that are negative to the teachings of Torah. We must plan ways to avoid the temptations that could bring us back to our sinful ways. A reformed alcoholic should stay away from places and situations where liquors will be served. We should stand clear of all tempting situations that may cause us to fail in our road back to closeness to our Maker.

May we all have a successful fast and accept upon ourselves the things that will yield complete repentance and atonement. G'mar Hatima Toba

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