

Repent: A Survey of Al Hateshuva Atonement of The Individual vs. Atonement of the Community#1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In the times of the *Beit Hamikdash*, the *seir l'azazel* (the sacrificial goat which was sent off the cliff) atoned for all sins without the need for *teshuva* (repentance) with the exception of severe sins. Today when we no longer have the *Beit Hamikdash*, Yom Kippur only atones with *teshuva*.

The central blessing on Yom Kippur is, "V'solech l'avonoseinu v'lavonos amo beit Yisrael." Yom Kippur is both a day of *kaparat yachad* and *kaparat tzibur* (individual and communal atonement). Hashem forgives not

only our individual sins but also that of the Jewish people. Just as we got the *Torah k'ish echad* (as one united people), so too can we achieve *kaparah* as one. However this is contingent on the condition that the individual is a part of *kneset Yisrael*. If a Jew sins with the intent of severing himself from his people, he's punished with *kareit* (his soul is cut off) and he is excluded from the *kaparah* of the *korbon tzibbur*, the *seir l'azazel*.

Today, when we no longer have the *Beit Hamikdash*, the individual must achieve both

the *kaparah* of the *yachid* and the *tzibur*. When a Jew repents he has the ability to effect *kaparah* for all. We first say the confession in the quiet *shemeonei esrei* and then the *chazzan* repeats it in *chazarat hashatz*. This signifies that first we must do a *teshuvat yachid*. Then we can pass the obligation on to the *chazzan*. We as individuals can light the fire of *teshuva*. It is the strength of our yearning to return that will atone for all of *klal Yisrael*.

Elul: Restraint & Relationship

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Sefas Emes writes that the essence of our *avodah* (divine service) in Elul is found in the verse, "*Hu asanu v'lo anachnu*." The *ketav* (written form) of *v'lo* connotes, we are nothing. The *kri* (spoken form) infers, we belong to Hashem. The Sefas Emes explains that to the extent that we can nullify ourselves before our Creator, to that degree will we be able to achieve a lasting relationship with Him.

Rabbi Tatz explains that when Adam sinned with *eitz hada'at* he rationalized that it would be a greater sanctification of Hashem's name to lower himself in the midst of evil and then to overcome it. But he erred. If Hashem is the definition of existence then any action against him is an action out of existence. When man asserts his independence from Hashem, he's merely a small bundle of protoplasm asserting the scope of his smallness. But if he negates his ego, he melts into a greater reality and thereby achieves real existence. A true servant is not someone who lacks will. On the contrary, his will is powerful and unshakable, but it is directed towards fulfilling the wishes of Hashem, not his own. This is our challenge. We have to ask ourselves, is our life about how can we fulfill our own desires or that of our Creator?

The Sefas Emes points out that our main *teshuva* in Elul is to accept the yoke of

Hashem. Every time we sin it's our will over Hashem's. We have to repent. Let us begin by listing all the instances when we put our own ego first. We are held more responsible for sins that are easier to withstand. So let us try to correct all those misdeeds that we did because we were just lazy, or tired, or unthinking.

The second aspect of Elul is our relationship with Hashem. The Leket *v'halibuv* notes that the core of Judaism is not just the do's and don'ts, but how we bring Hashem into our lives. Rav Miller says that we do not find any *vidui* (confession) in the Rosh Hashana prayers because we have a greater *teshuva* to do. We must return to the fundamental purpose of our existence which is accepting Hashem as our king. This means not only connecting to Him in shul but even as we walk down the street. Every day for a minute, think about Hashem and how He's looking at us and thinking of us. Believing that Hashem cares about us creates incredible closeness and emotional bonding. The main judgment on Rosh Hashana is *rachmana liba bai*, Hashem wants our heart. We can do everything right but if we are missing that feeling of connection, we are like a body without a soul.

The Nesivos Sholom explains that the verse, "*Nachpasa deracheinu*" (Let us search our ways.) refers to *mitzvot*. In some ways, doing

teshuva for *aveirot* is easier, because there's natural guilt. But we have to examine the way we do *mitzvot* too. Rav Shach explains the verse, "*L'dovid Hashem ori...*" *Ori* (my light) refers to Rosh Hashana. The light is the light of examination. It's looking at ourselves and asking what are our intentions and motivations when we do *mitzvot*. How much of our ego is in the way? Is Hashem our focal aspect? Is our Shabbat table true to the spirit of the day? Is our *Shachrit* grabbed on the way to work? Do we mumble *brachot* just to be able to eat? Do we sense Hashem in our life? The first point of *teshuva* is taking stock of our lives. Are we moving towards our purpose?

Rav Yaakov Hillel notes that Elul is a time to work on *zehirut*- watchfulness. We have to take responsibility for who we are and for our actions. Are we careful to protect our souls or do we do with it what we want? Before we say or do something, do we question if it is appropriate? Do we follow our impulses instead of our intellect? A Jew is truly alive when he remembers the Creator and he is in some ways dead when he forgets. Our soul is incomplete unless we strive for a life that brings us connection. *Mitzvah* comes from the root word *zavta*-companionship. The ultimate purpose of *mitzvot* is to unite us with Hashem. When we do good deeds with love and joy, we connect to Hashem on the highest level.



The Meaning of Trust: Who Is The Provider-Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Raebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The second area in which a person must have faith is with *parnasah* (sustenance). *Parnasah* may come through a conduit, but it is ultimately from Hashem. Our sages say, financial blessing in a home depends on the woman. If she needs to be provided for, Hashem will enable her husband to do so. A woman cannot be critical or demanding of her husband if he's doing what he can. If what he gives her isn't what she wants, then her needs are not what she thinks they are. She has to learn to trust Hashem.

Sometimes Hashem will push people into having to work hard for their money because that is where their spirituality is meant to come forth. It may be an opportunity for them to maximize themselves or to sanctify Hashem's name or to become a giver. But if a person thinks *parnasah* is up to him and if he doesn't do this or that he won't have what he needs, he's thinking wrong. He could pass the test by affirming, "It's all part of Hashem's plan;" or he could fail by saying, "I'm in control, it's all on me." A person has to invest effort and then trust Hashem.

One who has *bitachon* (faith) will have a heart

that's at rest and a soul that's tranquil. He won't pursue money because he'll be content with what Hashem gives him. Tranquility is seeing things as they are as good. It doesn't mean sleeping through life. A person can look at his shabby couch and say, "It's comfortable I can sit on it. If I want beauty I could look at the sky or into a baby's eyes." The sages adjure us not to invest in things that are transient for how much pleasure will they give us in the end. Torah should be our central focus.

Materially we only get what Hashem meant us to have, but spiritually we get exactly what we want. It's easy to fall into the illusion that it is our labor that is sustaining us because we seem to see cause and effect. We have to do *hishtadlut* (basic effort), but ultimately all blessing comes from Hashem. We can sanctify our work by bringing Hashem with us into the marketplace. We can become a *ben olam habah* (earn reward in the world to come) not in spite of working, but because of it.

For most people their sense of what they need is developed by observing what other people have. The Rambam says there are two questions people have to ask before they buy something. The first is, "Why do I need it?"

Sometimes the answer will be, "It'll make my life easier, it'll make it possible for me to learn Torah." But other times the answer could be, "Everyone has one, it's on sale, it's nice," in which case a person has to reconsider. The second question to ask would be, "What am I paying for this? Am I sacrificing my *olam habah* to get this?" If yes, the answer then would be, "It's not worth it." You could have the same situation and get different answers. One person might say, "If I get this it may give me more time for other things." Or, "I'm not paying all that much for it and it will help me." In that case the answer would be to get it. If a person learns to ask himself these two questions he'll find that he's satisfied with less and has more time for contemplation. The compulsive need to have takes us away from *bitachon*.

Incline your heart towards Hashem. Get to know yourself by engaging in inner dialogue. Question who you are and what Hashem wants of you in the world. Make an accounting of your deeds and what Hashem has given you. Let yourself feel gratitude and ask Hashem for direction to guide you further on your path towards self-actualization.