

## Elul: Universal Teshuva – Lessons of Yonah Part 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Avishai David

The second chapter of Sefer Yonah describes how Yonah was swallowed by a large fish. While the first verse describes it as a *dag*, a male fish, the next verse describes it as a *dagah*, a female fish. In the beginning Yonah was swallowed by a male fish but he just sat inside its stomach and did not pray. Hashem then had the male fish spit him out and a female pregnant fish swallowed him instead. Now Yonah was uncomfortable and was compelled to seek out Hashem. He began to pray intensely as it says, “*Mimamakim keraticha Hashem.*” (From the depths I called out to you Hashem.)

Yonah said, I thought like Kayin of old that I would be divorced from the Almighty forever. But then I realized that Hashem had given me another chance to repent. Yonah underwent a gut-wrenching process of *teshuva*. In contrast, we find that the *teshuva* of the sailors who were with Yonah on the boat was based on fear and therefore was short-lived. One can see this in the text. When describing the sailors' prayers, the navi uses the word *vayizaku* (they cried out), while it says about Yonah, “*V'yitpallel Yonah.*” When the sailors finished screaming, they went on with their lives. Yonah, though, learned a method of prayer, and adopted a new tone of voice. Yonah's prayer rose up to Hashem and he

was given a new lease on life.

The Rambam describes the complete *baal teshuva* as one who finds himself in the exact circumstances that he confronted before sinning, yet now chooses correctly. The second time Hashem commanded Yonah to go to Ninveh, Yonah went at once. He told the people that they would be destroyed if they did not repent. Immediately, the people began to repent, donned sackcloth, fasted, and prayed. The navi tells us that Hashem saw their acts of *teshuva*. However, it was a reaction based on fear that led to them to repent, and therefore their *teshuva* did not last.

The idea of wearing sackcloth implies suffering and mourning. But here the navi says their entire bodies were covered with sackcloth. This prevented nursing mothers from feeding their babies. There was an element of cruelty and *chutzpah* (defiance) towards Hashem. They so to speak said, “If you don't have mercy on us we won't have mercy on our children.”

The sailors and the people of Ninveh only wanted to eliminate the harsh decree that threatened them. They were not interested in going through the wrenching process of *teshuva*. We find this in today as well. When

people are faced with difficulties they'll do a cosmetic *teshuva*. They won't wrestle with the wrenching internal issues necessary for complete *teshuva*. Therefore, they will not receive complete forgiveness and atonement. The captain of the ship told Yonah, “Maybe Hashem will have mercy on us.” First I will call out to my idols. If that doesn't work I'll try Hashem. Similarly, the people of Ninveh said, “Let's don sackcloth and ashes. Perhaps we will be able to cancel the decree.” But Yonah had no doubts. When he prayed to Hashem, he knew definitively that He was the only source to turn to.

Tosfot in Ketubot discusses the custom of eating fish on erev Yom Kippur. The Avnei Nezer explains that fish were created in water and remain in water throughout their life. When they are severed from their habitat they die. This is what Rabbi Akiva told Papus when he learned Torah with the Jewish people at the risk of his life. A Jew can only survive when he is bound to Hashem and Torah. Yom Kippur represents the day of *deveikut b'Hashem*. It's an opportunity both for man – even with his cosmetic *teshuva* – and particularly the Jew with *teshuva m'ahava* to come back to Hashem.

## Double Days- Rosh Hashana

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

Of all the holidays in the Jewish calendar, only Rosh Hashanah is a two day holiday both in and outside of Eretz Yisroel. Why is this so? Rabbi Dessler in Sanctuaries in Time explains that the onset of every holiday used to be calculated based on the sighting of the new moon. If the witnesses were delayed, there was little effect, for most holidays were further into the month. Hashem, however, commanded that Rosh Hashanah be the first day of the month. Therefore, based on their astronomical calculations, the Sages declared that the holiday be observed on the thirtieth day of Elul and the first of Tishrei. This would cover either day of an eye-witness account should there be a delay.

However, Rav Dessler raises a second

question. Rosh Hashanah is also the Day of Judgment. We now have fixed the Day of Judgment to actually be the first day of Rosh Hashanah. Why then do we repeat the basic liturgy including reciting that “God sits in judgment over all His creatures” and other such phrases on the second day? The Tal Chaim explains that if we indeed praying with the proper focus, we will find we need a second day to achieve the full emotional connection we want. The first day then becomes the building block for our repentance and Hashem's full coronation on the second day.

The Shvilei Pinchas quotes the Ari Hakadosh who notes that day one of Rosh Hashana is a day of strict judgment, while day two is a day

of judgment tempered with mercy. This two step process mirrors Hashem's formulation of the world in which he first thought to create it with judgment alone, but subsequently introduced mercy. In addition, we are not all judged at once. The righteous are judged on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, under the rubric of extreme justice, while most of us are judged on the second day, when our judgment is tempered with mercy. The Zohar says, if one suddenly begins crying on Rosh Hashanah, whether on the first or the second day, it is because his soul is being judged at that moment.

The first day's service leads to growth within the second day's service. We move Hashem from the macrocosm of being King over the

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world to the microcosm of being King of our personal world.

The Maayan Hamoed quotes the Koshnitzer Maggid that, although the two are not exclusionary, we can have a special focus on each day. On the first day we concentrate on our inner world, and ask for spiritual growth. On the second day we focus more on the outer, physical and material world. However, nowhere in the liturgy do we seem to find these kinds of requests. The Gra explains that the prayers emphasize God's grandeur and sovereignty. We allude to the physical in the liturgy only by requesting that Hashem remember us for life, for He is a King Who desires life.

The Kemetzesh Shalal Rav posits that the reason many have the tradition of having *simonim*, symbolic foods, on the Yom Tov table is to allude to requests that pertain to the physical world, such as leadership and fertility.

Nevertheless, writes Rav Walkin, Rosh Hashana is a time to also pray for oneself and

the sustenance of one's children. Anyone who focuses exclusively on God's grandeur without including personal prayers, his prayers are tainted with falsehood. As Rav Biderman points out, it carries a hint of apostasy, as if we are saying we can handle these areas on our own.

Rabbi Moshe Stern writes that our personal requests should not be for personal aggrandizement, but for the glory of the living God. Give us health, Hashem, so we can serve you, enough money so we can pay our children's tuition to learn Your Torah. And where can we add these prayers? After the last paragraph of the *Shemonah Esrei* before *Yehi ratzon*. And our requests should not be selfish, says Rabbi Jakobowitz, but should extend to others in a similar position. Hashem, my daughter needs a fitting *shidduch*. Please send all the other young singles their appropriate matches soon too.

Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon points to four phrases in the liturgy that encapsulate all our spiritual requests and all our material and

physical requests: *Kadsheinu bemitzvosecha* – sanctify us with your commandments, *Veten chelkeinu beTorahtecha* – and grand us our share in Your Torah study. *Sabeinu mituvecha* – satisfy us from Your goodness, *Vesamcheinu beyeshuasecha* – and gladden us with Your salvation.

The liturgy is not meant to be a rote recital, but rather a guide to our thoughts, writes Rav Eliezer Meislish. When we recite the section devoted to *Malchuyot* - Sovereignty, we are making a request that Hashem reveal Himself in my personal world, that He remove the distraction that have entered our lives through the influence of modern civilization. In *Zichronot* – Remembrances, we request that Hashem remember us on every path in our lives. And in *Shofrot* we ask Hashem to give us sustenance so we may serve Him in the best way possible.

Hashem saw that we would need two days to accomplish the work of Rosh Hashanah and in His benevolence gave us the opportunity to do just that.

## Rebbetzin's Perspective Q&A Class #3

Based on a Naaleh.com Q&A by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

### Question:

What is a good method to acquire a new habit? Is there one particular method or are there categories of habits that all share the same technique? Should I try to look for a common theme between all the habits I'm trying to change? I tend to leave things to the last minute and have trouble getting to bed on time. I don't know where to start or what to do.

### Answer:

The first thing you need to do, to paraphrase the Netivot Shalom, is to figure out the root. You list several things that bother you such as leaving things to the last minute and not getting to bed on time. They all come down to one thing, lack of attention to the significance of time. You have to learn time management. There are various techniques you can use. Here's one method: Make a list of what you

really want to achieve, not what you should achieve, but what you really see as your most important goals. An example might be your kids succeeding in school. Then think seriously, within the next five years, what are things you can do to bring your dreams to reality. Condense it down to a year and then to a month. Then make a weekly schedule of what has to be done to get to where you want to go.

You've got to be honest with yourself and that means doing what you truly want in the long run before doing what you want at the moment. This takes discipline. One method that could help you succeed is making a set of index cards. Color code the cards according to your yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily goals. Put your daily cards in a chronological order as to when these things have to get done during the day and don't do the next thing until the

previous task has been completed. This way you keep your priorities in order.

The spiritual side of disorganization is having priorities that continually shift and sometimes going for what's easier rather than going for what's harder even if that has to get done first. The name of this middah is *atzlut*. So you might say, "I'm not lazy, I'm doing a million things." The problem is you are not doing it in any set order and this is why important tasks are falling by the wayside. To avoid doing this, you have to ask Hashem for help. But you also have to make a plan. This could involve breaking down seemingly insurmountable goals into smaller tasks and keeping a list of priorities. Ask Hashem for *siyata d'shmaya*, get organized, follow your plan, and with persistence and help from Above you'll get there.