



## Maftir Yonah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

The Gra teaches that the prophet Yonah's journey is the journey of the soul which is called a dove. The nature of the dove is that it never mates with a different mate. So too the soul's attachment to Hashem can't be broken. When the dove is slaughtered, it holds its neck out. Similarly, the Jewish people willingly give up their lives for Hashem.

The story of Yonah took place in the period of the first *Bet Hamikdash*. Hashem instructed Yonah to go to Ninveh to arouse the nation to repent. Yonah didn't want to go as he felt it was a doomed mission. Either the people would listen and repent which would place the Jews in a bad light; or they would mock him and possibly kill him. He sought to escape Hashem by buying passage on a ship bound for *Tarshish*. Parallel to this, every soul has a prophetic spark that tells it what its mission is. The soul doesn't want to come down to this world where failure is possible. It's afraid to face up to its mission. Ninveh is referred to in the text as '*ir gedolah*'- a big city. The place where Hashem can be glorified. In *kedusha* we say, "*Ayeh mekom kevodo*-Where is the place where His glory can be found?" And

the answer is, it's everywhere, it fills the world. But we're afraid to face challenges, were afraid of failure, so we go towards where the money is, where we can drown all of our spiritual angst and our drive for spiritual accomplishment in the race for money.

Yonah's ship is caught in a storm and the sailors see that it's only affecting their ship. In life, we frequently encounter storms. The ship is our body and the sailors are our emotional capacities. You think you can hold it out and what do you need Hashem for? But in the end everyone's cornered to one degree or another. The soul wants to escape. It doesn't want to deal with the vicissitudes of life. *Teshuva* is too difficult. Yonah asks the sailors to throw him in the water and he's swallowed by a huge fish. Then he's swallowed by a smaller fish and the darkness and lack of space make him wish for death. Finally he has a moment of enlightenment. The Midrash says he was able to see through the eyes of the fish from one end of the world to the other and he could see he was on a journey. Yonah decides to repent and follow Hashem's command and the fish spits him out on the shores of Ninveh. Death takes away the soul from this earth but it's not the

final end. There's burial and the soul's disengagement from the body and the body's ultimate absorption by the earth, but in the end the soul's mission needs to be completed. Hashem gives the soul in *olam habah* the vision to recognize how it has the capacity to accomplish its mission and that there's a reason for it. The soul then lets itself be spit out again into the world for another try. This is the idea of reincarnation.

Yonah arrives in Ninveh and begins to preach to the people and they listen to him and repent. Yonah feels like a failure. Now the Jews will be seen in a bad light. He is standing at the edge of the city when a worm eats away at the *kikayon* he's standing under and he's exposed to the burning rays of the sun. He asks Hashem to take his life. Hashem then tells him, you felt bad about a worm destroying the *kikayon*. How should I not pity the thousands of people in Ninveh?

What Yonah thought was a tragedy was in fact part of a greater plan. The soul comes down to fulfill Hashem's will and ultimately all that happens is for the good.

## Basic Building Blocks to Being Brought Back Aseret Yemei Teshuvah

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

The language in two verses about *teshuva* mirror each other. The first is in *Parshat Nitzavim*- "*Veshavta ad Hashem Elokehecha...*" And you will return [up]to Hashem your God..." The second verse is in *Hoshea*- "*Shuvah Yisroel ad Hashem Elokehecha...*" Return Yisroel [up]to Hashem your God..." Both of these verses point to the great heights we can achieve. We can come so close to Hashem that we are in the presence of His Throne of Glory. *Teshuvah* is not achieved in one leap, but by a step by step process.

There are two interconnected results of sinning. First, the sinner has hurt himself and deserves punishment, and he has also angered Hashem and distanced himself from Him by acting against His wishes. The *teshuvah* process requires working on both these aspects as we say in *Shemoneh Esrei*:

"Bring us back, our Father, to Your *Torah*, and bring us near, our King, to your service." This results in, "And influence us to return in perfect/complete repentance before You."

Our Sages create an image of God's Throne of Glory, underneath which is a treasure chest filled with human souls. Each time a baby is born, Hashem takes a soul and implants it in the body. The *Sifsei Chaim* teaches that when we act in ways consistent with Hashem's commands, we are building a "throne" for Hashem's presence on earth. When we sin, we have distanced ourselves. And when we do *teshuvah*, we reorient ourselves to work on our mission to bring Hashem's presence down to the world.

Multiple times in striking the covenant with *Bnei Yisroel*, Hashem emphasizes the word

*hayom*/this day. While you continue to work toward your major life's calling, don't ignore the daily opportunities Hashem presents you. Man's purpose is both to do good and distance himself from evil. Do we notice the person struggling with packages or the sadness of a friend and do we offer to help? Conversely, when we find ourselves in confrontational situations, do we see a challenge to improve?

Rabbi Kluger points out that *chet*/sin is rooted in *chet*/missing the mark on a target. The target is returning to Hashem. When we sin, we are missing that target. To meet the mark, Hashem customizes my daily experiences and difficulties to be both challenging and doable so that I can grow and come closer to Him, adds Rabbi Elias. Every person has a yearning to serve Hashem. The *yetzer horo* takes that longing and diverts it from the

Continued on Page 2



## Basic Building Blocks to Being Brought Back

### Aseret Yemei Teshuvah

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

Continued from Page 1

spiritual aspect to the mundane, writes Rabbi Friedlander. We have to bring our soul back to its Source. When I focus on the spiritual delicacies of life, and the physical aspects remain peripheral necessities, I become closer to Hashem. When we confess, "...for the sins that I have sinned before You..." says the Sifsei Chaim, I have sinned because I was insensitive to Your presence. Our work is to

be mindful of Hashem's presence wherever we are.

The Mesillot Bilvovom quotes the verse in the *Haftarah*, "Return... for you have stumbled in your sin." Rabbi Eisenberg notes that sin is in the singular and this indicates that often there's one root cause. Find that cause and then take on one small resolution to begin

repairing it. Rabbi Dessler suggests establishing a minimum and a manageable maximum toward the resolution. Start with the minimum and work up to the maximum. Each positive step builds on the previous step.

May Hashem give us the wisdom, the heart and the strength to attain our spiritual goals.

## Haftorot of Repentance- Shachrit of Yom Kippur

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

In *Shachrit* of Yom Kippur we read the *Haftarah* of Yeshaya, Chapter 57. "For so said the Exalted One, Who dwells to eternity, and His name is Holy, 'With the lofty and the holy ones I dwell, and with the crushed and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed.'" Hashem who is transcendent dwells with those who are physically and emotionally broken, who are lowly and recognize their weaknesses. Hashem revives the *shafel* first and then the *nidka*. For the *shafel*'s own self recognition made him realize how low he had fallen. But the *nidka* is someone who was oppressed by suffering and didn't come back to Hashem on his own.

"For I will not quarrel forever, neither will I be rage to eternity, when a spirit from before Me humbles itself, and souls [which] I have made." Hashem says- These souls are mine and therefore I care about them and won't stay angry forever. Hashem believes in man's ability to rise above himself and control his inclinations. Rashi says suffering will subdue the soul and bring out its inherent goodness and potential and as a result Hashem will no longer be angry. *Redak* says the spirit of man is a part of Hashem and is essentially good and it will ultimately take over the body and overcome the *yetzer hara*.

"I smote him, I hid Myself and became angry,

for he went rebelliously in the way of his heart. I saw his ways and I will heal him, and I will lead him and comfort him." *Redak* notes, Hashem says - I've hidden my face too long and punishment isn't working. Just like beating an addict does no good. Love and healing can sometimes accomplish far more.

"Peace to the far and to the near," says Hashem, "and I will heal him." According to some commentators *rachuk* are those in exile and *karov* are those in Israel. According to *Redak*, he's speaking to *Am Yisrael* in exile where the dispersion hasn't helped us return to Hashem. Ultimately, He will bring us back even before we repent. According to other commentators, Hashem will give peace first to the *baalei teshuva* and then to those who grew up observant. The *baal teshuva* didn't have the education yet he withstood temptation and managed to overcome his tests and therefore is at a greater level.

"The wicked are like the stormy sea, it can't rest..." *Redak* says these are the reshaim who arrogant and refuse to be broken by suffering or by the futility of their own behavior. They are like the stormy waves that keep trying to swallow the land and get broken by the rocks. Still, they continue to rise. So too the wicked refuse to learn from the past and continue to self-destruct.

"Behold, for quarrel and strife you fast, and to strike with a fist of wickedness. While you're fasting you continue to fight with others and while you beat your chest you continue to beat other people with a cruel fist. "Is it to bend his head like a fishhook and spread out sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast?..."

Hashem says, I forgave you but you really want *kapara* which is different than *teshuva*. Hashem always accepts *teshuva* but *kapara* means He has to override *din*. *Kaparah* is when Hashem puts a barrier between our actions and the consequences.

"To let out the oppressed free, and all perverseness you shall eliminate... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and moaning poor... Remove the yoke you've put on other people. Set the broken people free and give food and clothing to the poor."

*Tzedaka* and *chesed* bring *kaparah*. "Then your light will burst through like the dawn." The Malbim explains that this refers to the light of the soul. What you can be can gradually rise up like the sun through the clouds. Remove the finger pointing and don't speak things you shouldn't speak. Don't just give the poor bread, give them your soul, comfort them with your humanity and empathy. Ultimately, *Yom Kippur* is not about asking Hashem for our needs but about thinking about what we can do to make this world a better place.