

Teshuva

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

One of the things you learn as you grow up is that if something happened, you can't undo it. The whole idea of teshuva seems a bit unreal. How could Hashem 'unhappen' something?

To answer this, let's explore teshuva, kapara and where it leaves you as a person. Teshuva means returning. But how can you return to where you never were? When Hashem created Adam, he formed the body first, gathering the dust of the entire world, and Rashi explains that He did this so that no matter where a person is buried he will be able to attain kapara-atonement. Then Hashem blew into Adam's nostrils His own breath, the spiritual soul of life. The body is meant to be passive and the soul the leader. But unfortunately, we live lives in which this doesn't happen. Good and evil are muddled. Sometimes the soul, which was corrupted after eitz hadaat, is forced to remain silent and the body, which has its own voice, leads us to places we never imagined going.

Our goal is to reverse that, to go back to the state of Adam before the sin. We want the part of us that's real and eternal to define who we are and do. And sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. There are different levels of damage. The Rambam quotes a Baraita that there are positive mitzvot, negative mitzvot, very serious aveirot, and Chilul Hashem. What happens if you neglect to do a positive mitzvah?

You can do teshuva. The first step is regret- I know I could have done better and I'm embarrassed. Maharal says busha is holy, it means you have expectations and aspirations. The next step is confession -saying, I want it to be better. Just going through formal confession creates some level of awareness but making it real is saying- Yes, I did this and I deceived myself. Confession is meant to take you to honesty and to throw yourself at Hashem's compassion. The problem we have is we don't really believe that he'll forgive us.

But we say in shemonei esrei –"Harotzeh b'teshuva- He wants teshuva. And, "Chanun hamarbeh l'seloach - He has grace and he forgives many times. Those who compiled the Shemona Esrei knew that this was true.

The Maharal tells a very famous parable. Imagine two people, one standing on each side. There's a rope binding them and they break it. When they tie it back, they're closer than they ever were before. So, the effect of doing the right thing is to draw you close, not just to Hashem in a broad sense, but to the godliness in you and the godliness in the world.

Teshuva is saying, I want to be like Hashem. I want to be in touch with His middos in me. How would I want Hashem to treat me if I made all of these mistakes? I would want Him to really see me and help me. So, when I repent, I'm different. If that's what happens, then Hashem on His side is willing to see the self you just created through teshuva. You can't change the external realities. But you could change the internal realities and create a different self. This applies to transgressions of positive mitzvot. What about failing to be what we could have been?

Doing the teshuva steps we described could reintroduce you to the person you want to be. What about the person you actually were and how can you heal the damage of an aveira?

For this, we need the kedusha of Yom Kippur, where Hashem brings down some of His sanctity that's really there in you and expands it making it real, and that's what heals. What if you do something serious, something for which the punishment is kares, where you don't just cut one thread of the rope, you cut the rope. Your relationship is gone, sometimes to the Jewish people, sometimes even to Hashem in olam habah. Imagine someone who converts to another religion, not because they actually believe in it but because it makes

their life easier. That's serious because the degree to which you identify as a Jew is the degree you will be found meritorious. If you have a bond to the Jewish people, you're still in the tent.

A survey showed that most murderers don't regret what they've done and it's because they don't see the godliness in the other person and because they don't know Hashem and are estranged. So, for these very serious kinds of sins, teshuva and kapara aren't enough. The Gra tells us that the source of every sin is gaavah, suffering is needed to knock the arrogance out.

There's a difference between atonement and teshuva. Teshuva works even if it's just doing the steps. But kaparah means actually changing the outcome. And that requires the steps and a process. The last and most severe sin is Chilul Hashem. The sinner could do teshuva but as long as they're alive, their very presence in the world defies G-d's presence and makes it harder for people to believe. Only death is an atonement.

Yom Kippur is really the best, most joyous day of the year because it's an opportunity to undo all the damage and get rid of the heaviness of sin. It's like taking yourself to the cleaners. The soul is meant to be the active defining part and the body is meant to passively follow. But it sometimes doesn't happen that way. So at least one day in the year when the kedusha can be palpably felt, we want to identify ourselves as only wanting that which isn't physical. The fasting itself raises you and this is why it's so important in halacha. Sukkot is synonymous with simcha, but Yom Kippur is what makes it possible.

Wishing all of you a meaningful joyous yom tov in which you can connect to the self that brings light with it, the self that you want to be, and may the power of Yom Kippur help you get there.

Days of Awe

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

Let's explore what the Days of Awe are meant to be. Awe isn't fear. Ordinary fear is the anticipation of something terrible happening and sometimes involves anger and a lot of

emotional pain. Awe is a response to something that's overwhelming in its power, the enormity of it causing you to tremble inside.

A third kind of trembling is when you can envision something bad happening. Imagine you're in a car, you've lost control and you're headed towards a cliff. But you know there's

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somebody from a distance controlling the car and He can see where you are and you know He cares about you. You're not going to fall off the cliff. But as the car accelerates, and you're almost there, of course there's fear. There's a gap between what you know and what you feel, based on the immediacy of what you're seeing. Although you know, there's somebody out there who's in control, it only helps to a certain degree.

When we talk about the yamim nora'im we have to take pachad out of it. That's not what it is. There's never a blank wall where the suffering is an end in itself. But there are two possible things, and they have to be joined if we're going to be honest with ourselves. One is Hashem is in complete control, and no matter what happens, it's always a step towards the ultimate good. Hashem knows and loves and cares for us far more than a human ever can. But the immediacy of what we go through in life doesn't always let this penetrate through us. This is what the yamim nora'im is meant to accomplish. The Sefardim began saying Selichot Rosh Chodesh Elul and it's sung with a joyous tune- "...The one who's glorious in that which is wondrous. The one who's ancient in the capacity to give comfort... We've sinned before you, have mercy on us.

We're celebrating that Hashem is the master of forgiveness, that even if your car is at the edge of the cliff, He could draw you back. It's a time of great simcha. The letters of Elul spell out- "Ani L'dodi v'dodi li- I'm for my beloved, my beloved is for me." Hashem is there all along but we have to develop the relationship. And it's hard because although we may know He's there, it's not so much in the heart.

The way you make a bond happen with anyone is by drawing on what you share in common. When it says, Adam knew his wife, Chava, it means intimate knowledge. We have the capacity for an intimate, knowledgeable bond with Hashem because our souls are something of Him. Hashem revealed His 13 attributes of mercy, which are actually different ways in which He expresses Himself. We must find these attributes in ourself and give them a voice to form a bond with Hashem.

Hashem, Hashem- This signifies-Yud, Kei, Vav, Kei which is an acronym for- is, was, will be. The Yud is above the line, a dot with a line pointing up and a line pointing down- it's Hashem revealing His wisdom, His interactions with us. The first hei is binah, Hashem understand us. When you look at the world and you see the ecosystems, you see the depth of Hashem's understanding of everything. The Vav is a hook, a connective letter. Hashem connects us through the Torah. And the second hei signifies there's an opening on the bottom. We could sink, but Hashem always leaves that opening so that we can come back. The first invocation of Hashem's name tells us one thing, as Rashi says- Hashem is there for you always, with wisdom, understanding and compassion. No matter what you do.

How can we emulate this? The default relationship one should have with any person is -although I don't know you, I want to be there for you. I want to relate to you on Hashem's terms. We're going to encounter people in life who've made terrible choices. You could still be the same person.

Here are two examples. My friend Ora was living in Geula. Her husband was away. She heard noises. She got up and saw someone climbed into her kitchen through the window. Her immediate response came from the gut. Why would someone do this? He's desperate. And she said to him, "Things happen. Here, drink a coffee." And she gave him 50 shekels. He drank the coffee and left.

The well-known tzaddik, Rav Yitzchak David Grossman went to live in Migdal Ha'emek years ago when it was the worst place to live in Israel. There was a gangster who lived in the town. Everybody was afraid of him. He decided to meet him. He came with a bottle of whiskey and said, "Let's make a lechaim." They drank. Rav Grossman asks him, "What do you want?" The gangster says, "I want a truck so I can start a business and make some money." Rav Grossman sold his apartment to buy him the truck. And the money came back. He didn't end up living under the stars. This isn't just about his love for the gangster. It's about who he is, the person who he chose to be. You could say, I'm not close to that level.

But you could choose who you want to be.

Kel - means power. In the Song of the Sea, we say, "Who is like you amongst the forces Hashem. Hashem's power doesn't give out. Of course, we can't imitate that directly because there's limits to what we could do. However, we should be strong enough not to say no when we can say yes. The basic rule is you can't solve every problem. But whatever you have, if you could give it, then give it. And if you can't give it, don't feel bad. You're not God and you don't have to pretend you are. So let's say there's a neighbor who doesn't have their life together, always borrowing things and asking for favors. And at some point, there are people who say no because it makes them feel drained. The goal is be strong enough not to be drained. You're allowed to say no. But if you could say yes, say it.

Rachum- Hashem is merciful, the root of this word is rechem, womb. Hashem is the womb of the world. When the unborn child is in the womb, all of its needs are provided, even though the child has no awareness or consciousness of it. We can't provide everything for everyone but we could be a safe place. If someone tells you something about themselves which makes them vulnerable, it stays with you and you don't judge them. If you could keep those two rules, you don't even have to help them. Either way, you've been a safe place. If a person doesn't have such a safe place, someone they could trust, then the worst things could happen. There are people living their whole lives afraid that others will find out who they really are. They have to put on a facade of being somebody else. And their dread of being discovered keeps them from sharing and confiding and sometimes drives them to a place of desperation.

Chanon- The word chanon means for free. Hashem gives for free with grace. As humans, when we give, we usually have a bill called kavod- appreciation, validation, acknowledgment. We had this nonreligious girl at Neve and she decided to stay for two days. She mentioned she never had a bat mitzvah and we made her one. She thanked everybody for coming and someone said, "Are you taking anything on?" She said, "I'm going to say

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Modeh Ani in the morning.” Her life could be changed by that. Our lives could be changed by that, because these are words of truth.

Erech Apayim-He's patient. Even though the word *erech apayim* is an idiom, neither word means patient. Literally it means of long noses. It says in the creation narrative that Hashem breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. So that means that Hashem gave us something of himself and because of that He'll have patience with us. The person who you are yesterday could be a different person today. People make radical changes in their lives. And Hashem sees things that if it wasn't for his overwhelming knowledge of everything, we would say this couldn't happen. Every so often I step back from reality. We see the unimaginable but we see it in hindsight. Hashem has this all in His picture. It's all there, and it's for free. We should learn that whatever you give isn't yours. You're giving what Hashem gave you. So, give it for free.

Rav chesed- Hashem does a lot of chesed. The human parallel to that is going beyond what you have to do. What motivates people to do more is when they like the other person. When you judge favorably, things turn around. You see the goodness in the other person, you bond with them. And once you're there, it's a logical extension of *erech hapayim*. You

want it to be good for them because they're an extension of you.

V'emet. - Hashem sees the truth. We tend to see only one side of the story. Then we soon forget the rest. So, somebody really did you harm in some way. But they have some virtues also. You can't erase what's good because of what's bad. You have to continue seeing the good. And that's very difficult because sometimes the bad is painful. You have to remember the good anyway. Hashem does this, no matter what you've done, he remembers your moments of enlightenment and kindness.

Noseh, avon, peshah, chata- Hashem lifts up your sins. There are two kinds of mitzvot, positive and negative. If you transgress a negative mitzvah, you create a blockage, but not to the soul, it remains pure. We could defile the garments that the soul wears, which are thought, speech and action and block that commonality with Hashem. It's up to us.

He doesn't change, but we change. So, suppose you have a blockage. You've done the wrong thing. So, what Hashem does in His mercy is carry it and get rid of it. There are also lost opportunities, mitzvos you could've done. How could you have atonement? Teshuva and the longing for closeness can get you to the same place. Hashem carries us.

There are three kinds of sin. Avon is a sin committed out of physical desire. Teshuva is such that Hashem could undo the damage it does. Peshah is a sin of rebellion. The source of rebellion is not believing or not being aware of Hashem as *chanon, rachom, rav tov*. It all got lost somehow in punishment and exactitude. It could also be *gaavah*. I don't understand it. I don't have to do it. It's all about me. A sin of rebellion isn't about your body, it's about your mind. If you change the way you think, Hashem will erase the damage that was done by your previous ways of thought. Chataah is a sin done out of negligence, not by accident. It means that emotionally you're not connected to the mitzvah. In modern Hebrew, *lachdom hatara* means to miss the target. Somehow, you're missing it. It's a problem of values. There are sins that are caused by the body, by the mind, or by the emotions. And Hashem will carry all of them.

V'nakeh-He cleanses you, relieving you of the burdens.

Notzer chesed la'alafim-Hashem forms chesed and gives it a life that lasts for thousands of years. If you do something positive, it's going to stay. Even when you're gone, your good deed will continue to have eternal impact on the world.

Blowing The Shofar on Motzai Yom Kippur #1 & #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

Rav Hai Gaon teaches that the custom to blow shofar at the end of Yom Kippur is based on the Torah obligation to blow shofar on the Yom Kippur of the *yovel* (the jubilee year). The Kol Bo says it is meant to confound the Satan. The Meiri concurs with this second reason but the *Shibolei Haleket*, the *Mordechai*, and the *Tur* mention the first reason. *Tosfot* in *Shabbat* offers a third explanation. The shofar blowing proclaims that night has fallen and that one is now permitted to prepare the festive meal of motzai Yom Kippur. Many *rishonim* suggest other reasons, among them that it is a sign of the Divine Presence ascending to the heavens.

Why do we blow shofar every year if the shofar of *yovel* was only blown once in fifty years? In addition, if the shofar was only blown in Eretz Yisrael during *yovel*, how does it connect to motzai Yom Kippur when the shofar is blown everywhere? Rav Hai Gaon explains that there is a doubt when *yovel* falls

out. Therefore, we blow shofar in every year. This still begs the fundamental question: What is the connection between *yovel* and Yom Kippur?

The *Meshech Chochma* discusses the sanctity of *yovel* and *shemitta* (the seventh year). While both relate to the land, *shemitta* is connected to *Shabbat* while *yovel* corresponds to *Yom Tov*. *Shemitta* and *Shabbat* both have inherent holiness, while *yovel* and *Yom tov* are dependent on the sanctification of the Jewish people. We say in *Kiddush* of *Yom Tov*, "*Mekadesh Yisrael v'hazmanim*." Likewise, *Yovel* is established through the proclamation of the Jewish court and its holiness is dependent on our actions.

Yovel signifies repentance and freedom. Property is returned to its original owner, slaves are set free, and liberty is proclaimed throughout the land. While *shemitta* focuses on the earth, *yovel* involves the individual.

Rashi says the term *yovel* refers to the blowing of the shofar. Rav Kook explains that *yovel* is a kind of social and economic revolution necessary for the equilibrium of society. Similarly, the purification of Yom Kippur is the ability to transcend the shackles of the evil inclination. It proclaims freedom from the desires of the *yetzer hara*. On Yom Kippur, we become like angels divested of physicality. Likewise, *yovel* has an element of the world to come where the Satan cannot rule. '*Hasatan*' is the numerical value of 364, which signifies the 364 days of the year when the Satan has permission to meddle in our lives. One day in the year, Yom Kippur, we return to our source and are set free of his overpowering influence.

The shofar blast at the end of Yom Kippur heralds the realization of the ideals of *yovel*. We once again enter the lofty realm of *alma d'teshuva* (the world of repentance) and *alma d'cherut* (the world of freedom).

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