



Torah Bytes

A weekly Dvar Torah on the Parsha by Rabbi Dovid Horwitz
and the Rabbanim of the Ra'anana Kollel
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The Rambam writes in Hilchot Teshuva that the act of Teshuva, repentance, is a good thing to do every day of the year, however, it is *obligatory* to do teshuva on Yom Kippur, for Yom Kippur is the one day of the year that Hashem has designated as a day of cleansing and purification. Anyone who does not take advantage of such an opportunity clearly demonstrates that he is not interested in having a true relationship and connection to Hashem. He has "removed" himself from the game, so to speak.

This idea is fortified later in the Rambam when he writes about the famous gemara of the three books that are opened on Rosh Hashana. The righteous are written and sealed in the book of life, immediately on Rosh Hashana. The wicked are written and sealed in the book of death on Rosh Hashana. The average Jew, who is in the middle of the righteous-wicked spectrum, is held in abeyance until Yom Kippur. If he does teshuva, he is sealed for life. If he does not do teshuva, he is sealed for death. Many ask why the Rambam requires him to do teshuva if he is in the middle of the spectrum. Why can't adding other mitzvot tip the scales in his favor?

The answer is based on the idea we began with. A person can perform extra mitzvot during these ten days, which as a matter of fact, the Rambam extols us to do. He writes that one should increase his chessed and mitzvah output to the best of his abilities. However, if he does all of this, but does not do teshuva, he is not written for life as he is missing the point altogether!

Imagine one gets into a serious argument with his wife and the husband is clearly at fault. Upon realizing this, he tries to appease her by buying her gifts such as flowers, jewelry or new clothing, but he hasn't done the first step that should come before the gifts. He did not say "I'm sorry"! What good are the gifts if he hasn't apologized for his behavior. His wife needs to hear that her husband recognizes what he did wrong. She needs to see that he feels a bit of remorse for having hurt her the way that he did. Only then will the gifts help to restore their relationship to what it was before the argument.

Similarly, we have offended, insulted, and acted inappropriately to Hashem throughout the course of this past year. No one is free of sin, no matter how great he is. If we use these ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur as a time to bring Hashem "flowers and chocolates" but we don't do teshuva, then why should Hashem accept our gifts? The essential ingredient to forgiveness is missing!

When we apologize to our spouse for hurting their feelings, they want

to hear from us that we know what we did wrong, that we feel remorse and that we won't do it again in the future.

What is teshuva? The Rambam describes it as these three very components! Vidui, we confess to Hashem that what we did was wrong. Charata, we are remorseful and regret having done the transgression, and kabbala, we will not repeat the behavior ever again!

Many people despair of doing teshuva because they think that it is too hard to do, but this can't be further from the truth! This is just a plot cooked up by our evil inclination to convince us that we cannot do it.

If we ever doubt ourselves as to whether teshuva is attainable, just think back to the last argument we may have had with a spouse, a friend or a family member. How many times have we said sorry to someone and we were able to achieve their forgiveness? No doubt, many times. If saying sorry works between two people, it will certainly work with Hashem, for Hashem is waiting with outstretched arms for us to do the tiniest teshuva. The tiniest "I'm sorry", *provided that it is sincere*, will be lovingly accepted by Hashem.

Why does even a tiny bit of teshuva work? It is because we don't only rely on the power of teshuva to cleanse us, we have the power of Yom Kippur to do so! And the power of atonement that Yom Kippur provides is stronger than any teshuva on its own can accomplish!

The gemara rules that Yom Kippur only atones if it accompanied by teshuva. This is seen clearly in the Rambam we cited above that states that if one, who is in the middle of the spectrum, does not do teshuva during these ten days, he will be sealed for death. Clearly Yom Kippur does not work without teshuva. But this holds true only if he does not do teshuva at all. One who does teshuva, even on the smallest level, will receive cleansing and atonement from the cleansing powers of Yom Kippur itself!

The gemara states that Yom Kippur and Tu B'av were the two happiest days of the year because both days represent the transition from death to life.

We should rejoice on Yom Kippur. Although we cannot eat, drink, or wear proper shoes, it is the greatest Yom Tov that we have. A day whose sole purpose is to bring us back into the loving arms of Hashem is a day that we cannot afford to waste! Let's take full advantage of this wonderful day by restoring our relationship with Hashem. By doing so, we should merit to see the end of this war, and we should merit to greet Mashiach and see the final redemption!

Feel free to join us at our neitz minyan
on Yom Kippur morning at 6:10am
198 Ahuza

G'mar Chatima Tovah

May you and your family have a blessed and meaningful Yom Kippur. Tzom Kal!