



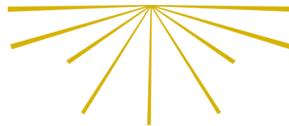
אור הצפון

Weekly



Parshas Vayeilech | 9/10-9/11 | Yom Kippur

Issue 8 | ה' תשרי | תשפ"ב



Candle Lighting 6:53 PM	Mincha/Maariv 5:40 & 7:00 PM	Shacharis 7:45 & 8:45 AM	Zman Shema 9:42 AM	Daf Yomi 6:25 PM	Maariv 8747 PM	Havdalah 7:53 PM
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The Rabbi's Drasha

Rabbi Lebowitz

There are three steps to teshuva, but one features way more prominently than the other two, both in the Rambam's formulation of Teshuvah and in the way we express ourselves in the Machzor – I am referring, of course, to Viduy. This is surprising because if we had to define the essence of “self-improvement” which is the most natural English translation of Teshuvah, we probably would not have even thought of Charatah. Viduy? Certainly! Kabbalah Al Ha'asid? Of course! But what is the great value of expressing it in words? Yet, at the very beginning of Hilchos Teshuvah, the Rambam says that Viydui is a non-negotiable element of Teshuvah.

Sometimes, in order to learn about a concept, it is helpful to look at the first time it ever appears in the Torah, or the first time it happened in history. When Kayin sinned, not the first sin, but the first one that resulted in Teshuvah – he was doubly punished. First, he was made into a nomad: Na V'nad T'heyeh B'erez, and second, he met a violent end: that animals won't be afraid of him. Why were there two punishments for a single sin?

Each Viduy starts with the word Ashamnu, which is interesting because it is not the first word we would have chosen to describe sin – Chatanu, Avinu, but why Ashamnu? What is an Asham? It is a type of Korban for an Aveirah, but then again, so is a Chatas?

Rav Lopiansky points out that Rav Yechezkel Levenstein noted how, up until modern times most people died from plagues or bacterial diseases – they were basically healthy and then something from outside of themselves attacked their system and killed them. In more modern times (largely due to our ability to protect ourselves from these diseases) most people die from something inside their own body – cholesterol clogging arteries or malignant cells crowding out the vital organs. Rav Chatzkel thought that this is reflected in our changing spiritual condition as well. We used to be mostly spiritually healthy people until a foreign idea or movement attacked – be it the reform, the Haskala, Shabbtai Tzvi, or other false messiahs. Nowadays, the problem comes from within, as we slowly spiritually fade and debilitate over many years, depriving our hearts of the oxygen it needs.

How does one avoid such a spiritual downward spiral? Most importantly, we need to be able to find and identify the sin. Instead of covering it up with some makeup or masking agent, we need to root out its cause. In order to do that, we first need to name the sin – forget all of our rationalizations for why we sinned, and how it wasn't so bad – “Everybody in my industry cuts these corners to make a living” “It's important to be worldly so I can allow every bit of

shmutz that the outside world has to offer, into my eyes, ears, mind, and heart.” “I provide for my family, so it’s okay if I am a bit short-tempered after an exhausting workday”. All of that has to go away. We have to be able to call a sin what it is.

The Pasuk in Yehoshua, (5:18) says that "we commit sins with nonsensical chords". The Malbim explains that we commit sins with rationalizations and excuses for them.

Rav Lopiansky explains that whereas every Aveira that requires a Chatas is the most severe Aveirah, those that we are Chayav Kares B'mezid, and the Olah is for failure to do a Mitzvas Aseh, there doesn't seem to be a common link to the Aveiros for which we bring an Ashem-Shifchah Charufah, Asham Talui, Asham Miilos (sleeping with a half freed slave woman, benefiting from Hekdesh, possible violations of Chatas type sins, and also perjury under oath in Dinei Mamonis.) What is the common theme? They all involve easy rationalizations. Maybe I didn't commit the Aveira, it was only "semi-adultery", the embezzlement was justified because the person owed me!

Kayin received two punishments. For the act itself he was killed – Midah Keneged Midah. But for the "Hashomer Achi Anochi?" – the rationalization, the excuse, the attempt to wash away the sin, he became Na V'nad – an unstable wanderer. He cannot find rest until he comes to grips with what he has done. Remarkably, the Midrash says that as soon as Kayin said Gadol Avolnei Mi'Naso the curse of Na V'nad was removed. Calling his sin for what it was enabled him to move on.

This is why Viduy is such a critical part of Teshuvah. We can't regret the sin or commit not to do it again if we fail to name it. Yes, I believe in God, but have I expressed that belief with careful recitation of Berachos? Yes, I daven, but have I focused properly? Yes, I keep Shabbos, but am I careful not to talk about business? We must always acknowledge our sins, and only then can we move on.

Story for the Ages Your Shuvu Hashem

Told over by Rabbi Ashar Klien

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the founding chief rabbi of Efrat, once reminisced about the first time that he had shemirah, guard duty, in the tiny upstart town of Efrat in 1970. He described how he was walking the perimeter of the town with a fellow who had made Aliyah from Holland. This fellow explained to Rabbi Riskin that he had not always been Torah observant; he had once been a practicing Catholic. As a Danish citizen, he was required by law to serve in the army. While in training, the army informed every soldier that they must have a session with a religious guide from the religion of their choice. Even though his parents were Catholic, he inexplicably requested to have a session with a rabbi. Over time, he developed a friendship with this rabbi who answered his many curious inquiries. When the Six-Day War occurred, he explained that he was so inspired by the resolve and character of Israel, that he joined a chiloni kibbutz to

come to help Israel grow and flourish. Very quickly though, he realized that there was a spiritual element within him that was yearning and searching, and he sought out advice from the local rabbi. Before long, he found himself in the conversion program, quickly approaching the time that he would be a full-fledged Jew in the Jewish homeland. A week before the conversion was to take place, he flew back to Holland to tell his parents in person about his monumental decision. When he finally mustered up the courage to tell his parents that he wanted to become Jewish, his mother turned white and promptly fainted. When she came back to herself, she told him that the reason she was so overtaken by his statement was that she was the daughter of the chazzan of her childhood town. A Jew through and through, she had run away from her heritage after the Holocaust. She had survived, but her entire extended family had been wiped out. She vowed to herself that she would protect future generations by running from her Jewish past and starting her life anew. She then told him that if he wants to return his Jewish soul to Judaism and Hashem then he may, but she had made her decision.

Inexplicably, this man had found his path back to the direction of his grandparents. As far away as his mother had tried to take him from his true connection to Hashem, Hashem's master plan orchestrated his full return.

The opportunity to return to Hashem is there for us all. For some, it is a struggle, while for others it seems almost orchestrated and unavoidable. For some, it is a sentence in a drasha, while for others it may be the tune that the chazan chooses for a meaningful tefilla. No matter which situations come our way through, the most we can do is keep our eyes open and be ready to act as soon as we can.

Guest Rav: Rabbi Lewis Wienerkur

We Can Be Great!

There's a machloket in Yoma 19B between the Tzedukim and the Perushim as to whether or not the Ketoret is prepared outside the Holy of Holies and brought inside or prepared inside the Holy of Holies. We are, of course, the spiritual descendants of the Perushim so, IYH, when the Beit Hamikdash is rebuilt, the ketoret will be placed on the coals inside the Holy of Holies. What is so special about inside as opposed to the outside that Chazal mandated that the ketoret must be offered only while inside?!

Rav Ari Kahn answers with the following profound observation: The Tzedukim saw Hashem as distant and unapproachable. Not so Chazal. We believe that Hashem is approachable, whether learning Torah or davening (we say so in Ashrei 3x daily). Rav Ari notes that this is

most glaring at Neilah when we shout out the Shemos declaring that He is Our King. At that point, we are cleansed of sin. (That is why most people follow the opinion to recite Kiddush Levana, rather than before Yom Kippur. Rav Soloveitchik famously quotes his father that they walked in the courtyard at dusk in Khaslovich and R Moshe Soloveitchik said that “this sunset is the most beautiful one of the year as it brings atonement”).

Yom Kippur works because, despite our smallness, we can stand before Hashem and be purged of sin. At man’s first sin, after eating the fruit, he “ran” from Hashem hid. When we are cleansed of sin, at Yom Kippur’s end, we stand loudly and proclaim our closeness with Hashem. Rav Soloveitchik asks, why is Vidui mentioned in the parsha of Vidui Maaser? Isn’t vidui reserved for sin? In that instance, we’re performing a mitzvah! The Rov explains that man’s ability to admit a sin must bring with it the ability to be great. Repentance is bold! Man can be great. Man can rise to the top! IYH, let that be our lot!

Welcome to new Editor in Chief, Ezra Yarmush!

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The Parsha Corner

Rabbi Balsam

1. How old is Moshe in the beginning of the Parsha: a) 119, b) exactly 120, c) exactly 118, d) almost 120.
2. The nations on the other side of the Yarden will meet the same fate as: a) Amalek, b) Mitzrayim, c) Amon and Moav, d) Sichon and Og.
3. When Moshe wrote the Torah he gave it to: a) the Kohanim, b) the Leviyim, c) Yehoshua, d) the entire B’nei Yisroel.
4. The Torah is to be read at Hakel: a) during Sukkos every year, b) on Rosh Hashana of the Shmittah year, c) on Rosh Hashana following the Shmittah year, d) on Sukkos following the Shmittah year.
5. Where is Moshe told to bring Yehoshua: a) the Ohel Moed, b) the edge of the camp, c) in front of the Kohanim, d) to the top of Har Gerizim.
6. Moshe is told that after he dies: a) Yehoshua will be a great leader, b) the B’nei Yisroel will sin but only among themselves, c) the B’nei Yisroel will forget the Torah, d) the B’nei Yisroel will follow the ways of the land.
7. Moshe is commanded to: a) write 13 Sifrei Torah, b) write down this Shirah and teach it to the Jews, c) testify before the B’nei Yisroel, d) read the entire Torah to the B’nei Yisroel.
8. The Shirah that Moshe writes will: a) serve as testimony before the people, b) keep the people from sinning, c) keep the people from forgetting Moshe, d) all of the above.
9. Moshe commands the B’nei Levi to: a) bless the B’nei Yisroel, b) place the Torah in a safe spot of their choosing, c) place the Torah next to the Ahron Kodesh, d) build a new Ahron Kodesh for the Torah.
10. Moshe tells the people that he knows that after he dies: a) they will forget his Torah, b) they stray from the path he put them on, c) they will follow Yehoshua faithfully, d) they will rebel against Yehoshua as their leader.

Answers: 1) b, 2) d, 3) a, 4) d, 5) a, 6) d, 7) b, 8) a, 9) c, 10) d