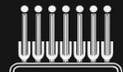




Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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Teshuvah Fallacies by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

This is the Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur which is known as either *Shabbos Teshuva* or *Shabbos Shuva*. In the calendar we are in the Ten Days of *Teshuva* but the Haftarah begins with the words *Shuva* Yisrael, *Return O Israel*. At any rate, it is a Shabbos dedicated to the theme of Teshuvah, repentance.

There are two popular misconceptions about Teshuvah and, ironically, they come from opposite sides of the spectrum. The first is *I'm too good*, i.e. repentance is for sinners and since I'm no sinner and am basically a good guy and a good Jew, this process is irrelevant to me. No need for it on my agenda.

If I'm ok, I'm exempt from Teshuvah. Right? Wrong! That's the first fallacy. No one is exempt. Even the righteous *klop al chet* (beat their chests in penitence). Either they must repent for their own failings, albeit on a more subtle level; or, for the members of their community whom they have not yet succeeded in transforming into better people and who they, therefore, bear some responsibility for.

Only those who are 100% perfect are exempt from Teshuvah. All others must get to work. So who is perfect? In fact, there is no one as imperfect as he who thinks he is perfect.

I remember many years ago, going to the Berea Shul in Johannesburg to hear a famous Chazan *daaven* on Shabbos Mevorchim

Elul. Indeed, the melodies and *nusach* were evocative of the high holy days. Afterwards, I bumped into a well-known *baaleboss*, a prominent Shul-going businessman. I said to him, "*Nu*, you really felt Elul during the *davening*, didn't you?" He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Elul is for sinners. I don't need Elul." How wrong he was. *Oy*, did he need it!

People with over-inflated egos can sometimes fool themselves into believing everything they think about themselves.

The other fallacy belongs to the overly-humble. The fellow who puts himself down so low that he really believes he is beyond salvation. *I'm too bad for Teshuvah. Too far gone, there's no hope, I'm a lost case. Give up on me Rabbi, I'm too old, too tired, too lazy, too sinful, or just too set in my ways.*

There are numerous true stories of some of the worst sinners in history who found G-d, Torah and themselves in an instant and returned with a full heart. The renowned Talmudic sage, Reish Lakish, was previously a robber chieftain. Eliezer ben Durdaya was infamous for his immorality (he once boasted that there wasn't a harlot he hadn't patronized) and yet in a moment of inspiration he returned and was accepted, gaining eternal life then and there. Some of modern Israel's most celebrated secular entertainers transformed their lives and have become observant Jews. And don't we all know people today in our own community who have turned around their lives in a most beautiful way.

This is the Shabbos of Teshuvah in the week of Teshuvah. It is our annual time of opportunity to

Calendar

Thank you **Errol Mindel** our Chazan for Friday night & **Chazan Yudi Cohen** on Shabbos morning.

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:45 am (one minyan)
- ◆ Ladies **Shmooze** with *Rebbetzin Estee Stern* 10-10:30 am in the Community Centre. Coffee, tea & refreshments.
- ◆ **Annual Shabbos Shuvah Shiur**
- ◆ Brocha across the road.
- ◆ Mincha: 5:20 pm
- ◆ Shabbos Ends: 6:32 pm

EREV YOM KIPPUR - Tues 18 Sep

- ◆ Kapparos
- ◆ Mikveh
- ◆ Mincha 2:30 pm
- ◆ Candles & Start of Fast: 5:44 pm (Blessings for Yom Hakippurim & Shehecheyanu)
- ◆ Kol Nidrei: 6:00 pm

Annual Shabbos Shuvah Shiur
"A Rebel with a Holy Heart"
Rabbi Yehuda Stern
Before the Brocha

Thank You
to all who responded to the
Rabbi's Yom Tov Appeal.
G-d bless you
with a Good and Sweet
New Year.

- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of Ideal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted. Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
- ◆ **Lisa Milner**, Rental Consultant 082 362 4870 e-mail: lisam@jawitz.co.za
- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org, aish.com
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

It is money put in your trust, to be disbursed for good things and for others when they will need it.

Change your attitude. Instead of doing what is nice, do what is right. Put the money where it belongs.

Live & Laugh

On a very windy day, a rabbi was walking along when a strong gust of wind blew his hat off his head. The rabbi ran after the hat, but the wind was too strong. It kept blowing his hat farther and farther away. A non-Jewish young man, seeing what had happened, ran after the hat, caught it and gave it back to the rabbi. The rabbi was so grateful that he gave the young man 20 dollars and blessed him.

The young man was so excited that he decided to go the race track and with the rabbi's blessing, he decided to check the program and place the entire 20 dollars on a horse. After the races he went home and recounted his very exciting day to his father. "I arrived at the fifth race and looked at the program. I saw this horse named 'Top Hat' was running. The odds on this horse were 100 to 1 but since I received the rabbi's blessing I bet the entire 20 dollars on 'Top Hat' and guess what? He won!"

"In the next race, there was a horse named 'Stetson' at 30 to 1 so I bet the entire amount of my winnings on him, and guess what ... I won again!" "So did you bring the money home?" asked his father. "No," said the son, "I lost it all on the last race. There was a horse named 'Chateau' that was a heavy favorite so I bet everything on him, and since 'Chateau' means 'hat' in French I figured he was a sure thing."

"You fool!" said the father. "Hat in French is 'chapeau' not 'chateau!'" Exasperated, his father then asked, "So who won the race?" "A real long shot," said the son. "Some Japanese horse named 'Yarmulke!'"

What's Nu @ Sydenham Shul?
If you don't know, you should subscribe to **Rabbi Yossy Goldman's weekly email.**
Call Shirley on 011 640 5021,
subscribe on ShulCloud,
or write to sydshul@sydshul.co.za

put ourselves right. In these days G-d is more easily found, and we can probably find ourselves, i.e. our true, pure, untainted, inner-most selves.

Please G-d, we will all embrace this mitzvah which applies to each and every one of us without exception, from the holiest to the most far removed. It is a great equalizer. May we all have the humility and/or confidence we need to do what must be done.

May our Return be sincere, genuine, and well-received up where it counts.

Parsha Pointers

*Vayelech: Artscroll Chumash pg 1086;
Living Torah pg 1018*

The Parshah of Vayelech (“and he went”) recounts the events of Moses’ last day of earthly life. “I am one hundred and twenty years old today,” he says to the people, “and I can no longer go forth and come in.” He transfers the leadership to Joshua, and writes (or concludes writing) the Torah in a scroll which he entrusts to the Levites for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant.

The mitzvah of *hak’hel* (“gather”) is given: every seven years, during the festival of Sukkot of the first year of the shemittah cycle, the entire people of Israel—men, women and children—should gather at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, where the king should read to them from the Torah.

Vayelech concludes with the prediction that the people of Israel will turn away from their covenant with G-d, causing Him to hide His face from them, but also with the promise that the words of the Torah “shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their descendants.”

Judging Jews

By Dr Yvette Alt Miller

This new year I’m giving up labels.

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Website: www.sydshul.co.za

www.facebook.com/sydenhamshul

No more classifying others. No more thinking I “know” someone based on their speech and dress. No more slotting people neatly into categories in my mind according to what “type” of person I think they are.

The labels we give ours represent what we’ve accomplished and signify how we want to present ourselves to the world. I’m a proud Jew; I love being a mom; I work hard at being a writer. These are all labels I want the world to see. But there’s a world of difference between the labels we give ourselves and those that are applied to us, often erroneously.

When it comes to being Jewish, labels can really get out of control. I still remember the woman I’d never seen before who visited my Orthodox synagogue and angrily told me she “knew” what “people like me” thought of her. (She walked away without a response; to this day I’m still completely mystified by what she meant.)

As an Orthodox Jew - sorry, there I go again with labels! - as a Jew who tries to follow the mitzvot, commandments, I’ve heard my share of abuse. I’ve been called a religious fanatic and also not religious enough. People have told me I’m “ultra-Orthodox”, whatever that means, and also told I’m not observant because I’m “Modern Orthodox”. Again, whatever that means. If someone has a problem with me I wish they’d just spell it out. (Actually, I’d sort of rather they didn’t. Can’t we all just live and let live?)

A friend of mine once joked that everything you need to know about the problems of Jewish labels is in the word “*frum*”, the Yiddish word meaning religiously observant. “U” are always in the middle, she explained: no matter where you are at, whatever you do, “U” seem normal. It’s the people on the other sides who seem far out and wrong. Tragically, when it comes to the Jewish community, there is no shortage of names to apply to others and the discord they encourage.

This splintering of our Jewish community flies in the face of Jewish tradition.

Our moment of greatest unity came when we all stood at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah: it was the high point of Jewish history. This isn’t just an abstraction: Jewish tradition teaches that in addition to the millions of Jews who’d left Egypt, the

souls of all future Jews were present too. We were all there, united as one people. The fighting and complaints that marked the Jewish people at other times was absent.

What if we were able to look at our fellow Jews and see what unites us, instead of what divides? What if we were to say: look, we all come from the same family?

Two thousand years ago Rabbi Akiva taught that a basic principle of the Torah is contained in Leviticus 19:18: “Love your fellow as yourself”. What would it look like if we could actually love our fellow Jews? That’s the experiment my resolution is all about.

We all know that labelling others is unfair, but a host of modern studies have shown just how pernicious it can be. One Princeton University study showed two groups of students a video of a girl playing. One group was told the girl was poor and another group was told she was upper class. When questioned afterwards, the group who’d labelled the girl upper class estimated she was smarter than those who’d labelled her poor. We have an unconscious desire to slot people into categories in order to make sense of the world. But labelling people this way prevents us from seeing them as who they really are.

I want to take the blinders off.

It’s only been a couple of weeks since I’ve started my no-labelling resolution, but I’ve already noticed a change in how I see people. I’ve been asking more questions and reminding myself that just because I know a few things about someone doesn’t mean I know their whole story. I’ve been taking more time to listen. Without the crutch of labels, I’m finding that I’m spending more time actually getting to know others.

Here are the three distinct steps to my Rosh Hashanah resolution.

1. Judging other people favorably.
This is a basic Jewish premise: assume that others are acting well. Instead of jumping to conclusions about how bad we think our fellow Jews are, I’m trying to jump to positive conclusions instead.
2. Reminding myself I don’t know the

whole story.

It’s so easy to assume that just because we know one thing about a person that we know everything. Instead, I’m working on getting to know people and steering clear of the lazy thinking that labelling people can lead to.

3. Listen.

Without the crutch of categorizing people in my mind, I find myself spending a lot more time asking questions and listening. What I hear is often surprising. It reminds me just how wrong it can be to assume we know all about people without putting in the effort to truly learn their thoughts and views.

No matter where we live, no matter who we are, we are all part of one Jewish people, the one people who stood together at Sinai. This year, let’s strive to keep the big picture in mind and drop all the labels, except one: my fellow Jew.

Unrepenting

By Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

Do not repent.

Repentance means to stop being bad and to become good.

But your essential being is always good. The bad is only on the outside.

So instead of repenting, return. Return to the essential self and to what is rightfully yours.

Unpraying

Do not pray.

Prayer means there are two entities, one entity petitioning a higher one.

Instead of praying, connect. Become one with your Maker, so that divine energy will come through you and into our world to heal the sick, to cause the rain to fall . . .

Uncharity

Do not give charity.

Giving charity means being nice and giving away your money. But who says it is your money to give with?