



ways.. and return to Hashem and achieve forgiveness”. Only once a person has accepted a new path in life, both in thought and in action, will he slowly regain the sensitivity to feel regret, at which point he will “return to Hashem and achieve forgiveness”. This process is a lengthy one, and the time allotted seems insufficient to achieve full Teshuva in all the areas we have neglected for such long periods of time. The situation seems even more dire when we take into consideration the words of the Rambam: We must even correct our דעות רעות and our מדות רעות, since these are the root of all ‘acts of sin’. In such areas it is extremely difficult to reach the Rambam’s standard of Teshuva “עד שיעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא” - ישוב לאותו חטא לעולם - Until the One who knows the hidden thoughts can testify that you will never return to this sin”. In truth, the correction of these faults is the work of a lifetime.

If Teshuva is not essentially different during this time, it is only more quickly accepted, the overall task remains daunting in its magnitude; how can we accomplish it in the given amount of time?

The **בית אלוקים** offers a novel insight in these areas “Teshuva always helps, **but in the time from Rosh HaShana to Yom Kippur it is of even greater value and is more easily accepted, as it doesn’t have to be as complete (perfect)**. He explains that even before Hashem created the world, He understood that we would not be able to survive without Teshuva, and therefore created the potential for Teshuva. Therefore on Rosh HaShana, the anniversary of creation, Hashem remembers to accept our Teshuva. However, since Rosh HaShana is a Day of Judgement, we do not want to mention our sins (in asking for forgiveness), so Hashem extended this period of forgiveness until Yom Kippur. With this we can understand the true meaning of the Rambam’s words “During these days, Teshuva is accepted immediately”.

The matter remains unclear. If one of the essential components of Teshuva is missing, e.g. regret, or the resolution to abandon the sin, it is not Teshuva. If all the necessary steps have been taken, then wouldn’t such Teshuva be accepted at any time of the year? **What are the parameters that define incomplete Teshuva that will be accepted only during this time period?**

An explanation can be based on the words of the **שערי תשובה**, as he clarifies the משנה “כל שחכמתו מרובה” - ממעשיו חכמתו מתקיימת - If your actions are greater than your wisdom, your wisdom will endure”. This can only be true if a person truly accepts upon himself to keep the mitzvos, and follow the dictates of the chachamim, from that time, he is rewarded as though he kept all the mitzvos. Since all actions stem from the will, and he is determined to do what is right, he is credited with mitzvos that he doesn’t even know to fulfill.

In a similar vein, the **חובת הלבבות** explains in order to serve Hashem, he must: 1. choose an action, 2. decide to act on his desire, and 3. complete the act with his body. In truth, we can only accomplish the first, the choice, and then must daven and trust in Hashem that He will help us to accomplish that which we chose. In fact, we know that even if a person is unsuccessful in accomplishing what he chose, he is still given credit for the action, if his determination to accomplish it was sincere.

If this concept is applied to the topic of Teshuva, we might think that even if a person doesn’t feel regret (as the sin seems permissible to him, a result of repetition), if an awareness of sin exists, he can make a sincere resolution to correct his ways and be considered to have achieved Teshuva. However, in regard to Teshuva, which is the work of the heart - “The matter is close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it” - לעשותו - we have not accomplished Teshuva until we have succeeded in completing all the steps of Teshuva. (רמב”ן)

Herein lies the distinction between these days and the rest of the year: During these days, Hashem accepts even incomplete Teshuva. If a person has made a decision that he wants to correct his middos and his actions, he is considered to have achieved teshuva. During these days, this incomplete teshuva

will be accepted, despite the lack of regret, and despite it falling short of the Rambam's standard – עד שייעיד עלי, and he will merit a גמר חתימה טובה.

The מדרש claims that the נבואה of הושע was fundamentally different than that of other נביאים. While all נביאים admonished us and told us to do teshuva, הושע told us how to appease Hashem - קחו עמכם דברים - ושובו אל ד'. R' Tzadok HaKohen explains that if a person feels that he has not yet reached 'תשובה שלימה', he might despair and feel that his teshuva is worthless. הושע teaches us that even this teshuva can be accepted – as long as we admit our sins דברים עמכם דברים and determine to correct our ways 'שובו אל ד'.

We can derive tremendous encouragement from these ideas, for we have learned that the essence of our work during this time is to figure out what we need to fix, and decide to do so, and we will be considered to have already done teshuva and thus merit a גמר חתימה טובה.