## **TESHUVA**

## Rav Zachariah Gelley

"מי כד' אלוקינו בכל קראנו . פסוקים אליו - Who is like Hashem, close whenever we call Him" and "דרשו ד' בהמצאו" - Seek Him when He can be found", which implies (according to Rashi), that there are times when He can't be found. The second, to that of an individual. The גמרא then questions, when can an individual find Hashem? רבה בר answers, during the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva writes, that even though teshuva and tefilla are always virtuous, in these days it is even more so, for it is accepted immediately. During this time, Hashem is easily accessed by individuals, and it is therefore easier to do teshuva.

The ערות דבש explains and clearly defines how these days are different from all other days of the year based on the following (מכרא (תענית). When Bnei Yisroel requested that הקב"ה be like rain, Hashem answered, "My daughter, you are asking for something that doesn't exist, I will (rather) answer you with something that does exist, as it says אהיה כטל לישראל' I will be like dew for Yisroel'." The rain cycle begins from moisture on the ground, which rises and later condenses and returns to the Earth, therefore places with no humidity, like the desert, don't experience rain. In contrast, dew is formed from drops of moisture suspended in the air far above the surface of the Earth. Since there is constantly moisture in the upper atmosphere, dew can fall everywhere, even in places where there is no humidity. Therein lies the parallel between rain, dew and the times of Teshuva. Every day of the year requires an אתערותא דלתתא, at least a minimal effort on our part, and then Hashem will respond and help us – as it says, "הבא לטהר מסעיין אותנ.", which is similar to the rain cycle. In contrast, during this period of time, הקב"ה, in His tremendous kindness, provides us with an אתערותא דלעילא, and inspires us to do Teshuva, even without effort on our part, as dew is entirely a gift from above. This is what is meant by "דרשו ד' בהמצאר", brings Himself close to us, even before we can begin to call to Him. This time is potentially so significant, that the אר"ג הקדוש taught that one should conduct himself during these days as though it was Chol HaMoed, only involving himself in business when necessary to avoid loss.

A surface glance seems to indicate that there isn't a significant difference in the essence of Teshuva, it is only easier to do Teshuva, due to the tremendous help from Above. And since it is easier to do Teshuva during this time, we have a greater obligation, and one who is negligent is more strictly accountable, as R' Yisroel Salanter notes in מנחנת הו גמרא As the מנחנת וו גמרא says "The punishment for white (strings of tzitzis) is greater than the punishment for the techailis (strings of tzitzis)" Since white strings of tzitzis are not difficult to procure, we are punished more strictly for neglecting them than we would be for neglecting the blue strings of tzitzis.

However, despite the אתערותא דלעילא, the tremendous help from Above available in these ten days, past experience has proven that it is very difficult for habitual sinners to properly do Teshuva. רבינו יונה (שערי clearly explains that someone who sins because he was overcome by desire, will begin the teshuva process with a tremendous sense of regret, as it says in Mishlei "מודה ועוזב ירוחם" - One who acknowledges their sin, and abandons it, is forgiven." This person recognizes and admits how evil his sin was, and therefore makes a wholehearted determination never to succumb again.

In contrast, someone who is weak in a particular area, and repeats his sin many times, comes to feel as though the act is permissible, which makes regretting the sin impossible. The נביא -ישעי' is referring to this scenario when he says ''יעזוב רשע דרכו ... וישוב אל ד' וירחמהו' A wicked person should abandon his

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 מדות רעות חטות and our מדות רעות חטות, 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 "שוב 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 "Teshvua 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 accepted only during this time period?

An explanation can be based on the words of the שערי תשובה, as he clarifies the כל שחכמתו מרובה" בשוכמתו 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 - "כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו" -The matter is close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it" 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 מר חתימה טובה., and he will merit a גמר חתימה טובה.

The מדרש claims that the נביאים of נביאים was fundamentally different than that of other נביאים. While all מדרש admonished us and told us to do teshuva, קחו עמכם דברים told us how to appease Hashem - קחו עמכם דברים 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. אושבו אל ד' teaches us that even this teshuva can be accepted – as long as we admit our sins קחו 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.