



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

Monkey Bars

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director

In Parshas Nitzavim, the Torah informs us regarding "*this mitzvah*" that "it is not concealed from you, nor is it far away... it is not in the heaven... nor is it across the sea... rather this matter is very close to you." (30:11-14) The commentaries debate as to which *mitzvah* or *mitzvos* (plural) the verse is referring. Some understand that it refers to *mitzvos* in general and teaches us that we each have the capacity to fulfill the *mitzvos*. The Ramban, however, explains that it is referring to the *mitzvah* of *teshuva* (repentance). Just a few verses earlier, the Torah tells us that we must and will do *teshuva* (30:1-2) and now the Torah assures us that we can.

At first glance, though, this reassurance is puzzling. Is *teshuva* really so close? Many find it quite difficult to make lasting change.

Perhaps the Torah is not just telling us that we *can* do *teshuva* but it is also telling us *how*. The process of *Teshuva* is similar to a child traversing a set of monkey bars. If the child reaches for a rung that is too far, they fall. But if they reach for a rung that is within their grasp, they will advance step by step with their momentum carrying them forward. Taking on *mitzvos* and modes of conduct that are too distant from a person will not endure. The key to *teshuva* is reaching for something that is close – that is within reach. It could be more care in performing a *mitzvah* or working on perfecting a character trait, but only by advancing rung by rung can a person succeed. Moreover, when a person sets out on a path of growth, with each accomplishment, they are propelled forward – inspired and empowered to grow more.

As we approach Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, let's seek small, realistic steps that are within our grasp. As our momentum carries us forward, we will look back and realize that meaningful *teshuva* was never all that far from us in the first place.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos and a Good Yom-tov! Kesiva V'Chasima Tova!

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

Our Father, our King, wipe away and remove our willful sins and errors from your sight. (Avinu Malkeinu)

The term "willful sin" is a more severe form of sin than error. Why is "willful sin" mentioned first; it should be mentioned after "our errors?" Therefore, the correct wording should be "wipe away our errors and remove willful sins." (Mishna Berura)

During the Yom Kippur Mussaf we say, "Wipe away and remove our willful sins and errors from before Your eyes, as it says, "I, and only I, am the One Who wipes away your willful sins for My sake and I shall not recall your errors." (Yeshaya 43, 25)

In Mussaf, it is clear that we first mention willful sins and then errors. Why doesn't the Mishna Berura edit the text in Mussaf just as he did in Avinu Malkeinu?

Parsha Riddle

Why do Chazal refer to a convert as a *ger shenisgayer* (a convert who converted) and not a non-Jew who converted?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

How can one fulfill the mitzvah of Bikkurim nowadays?

Answer: One who gives a gift to a Talmid Chacham, it is as if he brought bikkurim (Kesubos 105b).

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In parashas Nitzavim (30:1-10), the Torah thrice refers to the Jewish people's eventual return to Hashem after they have sinned and been punished:

And it will be, when all these things come upon you the blessing and the curse... and you will return to the Lord, your G-d... And you will return and listen to the voice of the Lord... And the Lord, your G-d, will make you abundant... For the Lord will once again rejoice over you for good... when you return to the Lord, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul.

While the Rambam (Teshuvah 7:5) understands this as a promise that "Israel will repent towards the end of her exile," the Ramban understands it as a commandment to repent (although he, too, concedes that the Torah's choice of language is alluding to a promise that such repentance will occur in the future). Even the Rambam agrees that there is a Biblical commandment to repent (or at least to confess one's sins in the context of repentance), which he derives from Bamidbar 5:6-7 (ibid. Epigraph and 1:1; Sefer ha-Mitzvos aseh 73)

While the classic definition of repentance is an internal, spiritual process (see, e.g., Teshuvah 2:2), the Chassidei Ashkenaz (German Pietists) taught the doctrine of a much more physical form of repentance, involving self-humiliation, self-deprivation, and self-mortification. R. Yehudah HaChassid and his disciple R. Eliezer of Worms cataloged various sins and directed their perpetrators to engage in numerous fasts – sometimes forty days of fasting, and for the grave sin of murder, three years of daily fasting; to abstain from meat and wine for specified periods; to sit in the snow or ice for "an hour once or twice per day" in the winter, or before flies, ants, or bees in the summer, and to undergo flagellation (Sefer Chasidim 167, Sefer Rokeach Hilchos Teshuvah).

While this doctrine held sway for centuries, it has been de-emphasized in the modern era; as R. Asher Weiss puts it:

Although centuries ago they were very strict about this, in our times we should be more lenient, for bodies have become weaker, and hearts have been diminished, and many gedolei Yisrael in recent generations – and particularly gedolei ha-Chassidus – have written that in these generations we should limit fasts and self-mortifications, and the key procedures of repentance are via the study of Torah and good deeds. (Minchas Asher, Corona [3rd Edition] #9)

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. My quiet contains 30 (for some).
2. My loud has 30 (for all).
3. King Remember Shofar
4. I'm an addition.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. 3
2. 30
3. 100
4. I make you quiet.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Curses (I am almost a hundred, I am quiet, I result from not listening, I am not wanted.)

#2 Selichos (I could be sorry, I wake you early, Fall on your face, I need a four day introduction)

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Greater Washington Community Kollel wishes all of its friends, supporters, participants, and the entire community, a good Yom Tov and a sweet new year!

May you and your family be blessed with health, happiness, and peace!