



## PERSONALIZED REPENTANCE

During the High Holidays we read the exhortations of repentance from the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Jonah. Are they all discussing the same repentance, or are there different types of repentance for different people?

An address about repentance and what type of repentance is right for me.

[TEACHER'S MANUAL](#)



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



YOM KIPPUR

Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy

*Dedicated by*  
**Marty & Kate Rifkin**  
**KMR Group Foundation**

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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In the haftarah readings of Shabbat Shuvah and Yom Kippur, we read three prophecies discussing the concept of repentance. On Shabbat Shuvah we read from the book of Hoshea, where he emphasizes the importance of intent and verbal confession when repenting, beyond the act of bringing sacrifices (Source 1). On Yom Kippur morning we read Isaiah, telling how love and empathy in society is more valuable than fasting coupled with conflict (Source 2). During the Minchah service on Yom Kippur we read how Jonah was sent to Ninveh to warn them of the punishment that awaits them. (Source 3).

## B. Is the mitzvah of repentance applicable to non-Jews?.....10

The Rebbe asks with regards to Ninveh, a non-Jewish city: Was the mitzvah of repentance indeed given to non-Jews? Furthermore, in the closing hours of Yom Kippur, the culmination of a forty-day period of repentance, couldn't our sages have found a more appropriate haftarah, that discusses repentance of the Jewish people? Why did they choose a haftarah that tells of the repentance of non-Jews?

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There are two elements in repentance: 1) Future-looking - The sinner will not be punished, and the transgression will be wiped from his record 2) Retroactive - the sinner returns to be loved and cherished by G-d as if he had never sinned.

The repentance of Ninveh was of the first level - future-looking. They only sought to avoid punishment. This level of repentance is applicable to all of mankind. It is the second level, the idea of rectifying the past, that was uniquely given to the Jewish people.

## D. Why Ninveh?.....18

During the holiest day of the year we must know, that even if we did not merit to repent to the fullest extent - the higher level, we still possess the ability to nullify decrees that have already been signed into law by repenting on the more basic level, as the people of Ninveh did.

# Introduction:

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On Yom Kippur and on the preceding Shabbat, we read haftarot that relate calls to repentance from three different prophets. In this lesson we will read these three prophecies and try to learn from them the method of repentance that is most suitable for us.

## השיעור ליום הכיפורים

משיחת חג פורים, ה'תשכ"ח, בלתי מוגה.  
תורת מנחם חלק נ"ב עמ' 123

[לחץ כאן לשמיעת השיחה](#)



# A. Three Prophecies of Repentance

## Hoshea - Return, O Israel

On Shabbat “Shuvah” - the Shabbat preceding Yom Kippur, we read in the haftarah of the prophecy of Hoshea and his call to the Jewish people to repent.

The prophet Hoshea the son of Be’eri, a member of the tribe of Reuven, lived during the final decades of the Kingdom of Israel, while the first temple still stood, shortly before its destruction.

Hoshea’s rebuke is aimed at the Jewish people. He refers to particular transgressions that stemmed from the rampant religious, moral, and social corruption that had reached unprecedented levels during that period.

“[False] swearing, dishonesty, murder, theft and adultery are rife; blood follows blood!” (4:2), “For they have forsaken G-d, to practice lechery, and wine and new wine destroy the mind. My people consult its stick (I.e., “its lust.”) and its stick directs it. For a lecherous impulse has made them go wrong, and they have strayed from submission to their G-d” (4:10-12).

G-d’s service mixed with idolatry is particularly offensive and shameful in the eyes of the prophet. He zealously uprooted the idols of Yeravam, the son of Nevat. Hoshea is furious with the rebels who say: “We have no king, for we do not fear G-d, and the king? what can he do to us?” (10:3).

One of Hoshea’s most well known prophecies is that of Shuvah Yisrael, “Return O Israel,” that concludes the book of Hoshea. This prophecy is read as the haftarah on Shabbat Shuvah.

### Source 1 Hoshea 14:2-4

Return, O Israel, to the L-rd your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity.

שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ כִּי  
כָשַׁלְתָּ בְעֲוֹנוֹתָ.

Take words with you and return to the L-rd. Say, “You shall forgive all iniquity and teach us the good way; Instead of bulls we will pay with the offering of our lips.

קַחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֵל ה',  
אָמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, כָּל תְּשׁוּאָה עֹוֹן וְקַח  
טוֹב, וְנִשְׁלָמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ.

Metzudat David

**Take words with you:** [G-d says,] I am not asking for sacrifices and offerings; rather take the words with you. With your confessions return to G-d.

קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים: אֵינִי שׂוֹאֵל  
מִכֶּם זְבָחִים וְעֹלוֹת אֲלֵא קָחוּ  
עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים שְׁתִּתְּנוּדוּ לְפָנָיו  
וּבְזֶה תָּשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי ה'.

**Instead of bulls...our lips:** Meaning, instead of the bulls brought for sacrifice, you should pay with your lips – confession.

וְנִשְׁלְמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ: רוּצָה  
לוֹמַר, בְּמִקּוֹם הַקֶּרְבָּנוֹת פְּרִים  
נִשְׁלַם בּוֹ וְדוּי שְׁפָתֵינוּ.

With this prophecy Hoshea tells the Jewish people: Don't think that you can get by with sacrificial offerings alone. "Take words with you" – the main objective is confessing, the intent and resolve to improve going forward.

## A STORY INTENTION IS WHAT COUNTS MOST

*A wealthy man was once on his way to the Holy Temple with a healthy ox that he intended to bring as a sacrifice.*

*Suddenly, the ox stopped in its tracks and refused to continue on the journey. No amount of pushing would help.*

*A poor man approached holding a few vegetables which he sought to offer as a sacrifice in the Holy Temple. The pauper offered the ox some vegetables and the ox ate them happily.*

*Once done, the ox suddenly sneezed and out came a needle that was stuck inside him and causing him great pain. The ox then agreed to continue on the journey, and it was indeed sacrificed at the altar.*

*That night, the wealthy man dreamt that "the pauper's sacrifice was greater than yours!" (Vayikra Rabah 3:5).*

*The relative difficulty for the pauper involved in obtaining those vegetables was indeed greater than the rich man's (self) sacrifice, and therefore worthy of more praise.*

## Isaiah - Is This A Fast?

On Yom Kippur, after the morning Torah reading, we read the haftarah “Solu Solu” in Isaiah.

Isaiah, from the tribe of Judah, is one of the most well known and effective prophets the Jewish people ever had. He lived during the time of the First Temple in the kingdom of Judea. He is known for his prophecy predicting the ultimate redemption, when “a wolf shall dwell with a lamb.”

In the prophecy that we read in this haftarah, Isaiah chastises his people who complain that their fasting is not producing the desired results. He tells them that fasting while in a state of hate and strife between them is indeed not considered fasting at all. Only those who are kind to each other and provide for the poor can expect salvation.

### Source 2 Isaiah 58:2-8

Yet they seek Me daily, eager to learn My ways.  
Like a nation that does what is right, that has not  
abandoned the laws of its G-d.

They ask Me for the right way, they are eager for  
the nearness of G-d:

“Why have we fasted, and You did not see; we have  
afflicted our soul and You do not know?” Behold,  
on the day of your fast you pursue business, and  
from all your debtors you exact payment.

Behold, for quarrel and strife you fast, and to  
strike with a fist of wickedness. Do not fast like  
this day, to make your voice heard on high.

Will such be the fast I will choose, a day of man's  
afflicting his soul? Is it to bend his head like a  
fishhook and lay in sackcloth and ashes? Will you  
call this a fast and a favorable day to the L-rd?

This is the fast I choose: To undo the fetters of  
wickedness, to untie the bands of perversity, and  
to let the oppressed free, and all perversity you  
shall eliminate.

וְאוֹתֵי יוֹם יוֹם יִדְרֹשׁוּן וְדַעַת דְּרָכַי  
יִחְפְּצוּן כְּגוֹי אֲשֶׁר־צִדְקָה עָשָׂה  
וּמִשְׁפָּט אֵלֶּיךָ לֹא עֹזֵב

יִשְׁאַלּוּנִי מִשְׁפָּטֵי־צִדְקָה קִרְבַּת  
אֱלֹקִים יִחְפְּצוּן.

לְמָה צָמְנוּ וְלֹא רָאִיתָ, עֲנִינוּ  
נִפְשָׁנוּ וְלֹא תִדְעַ? הֲיֵן בְּיוֹם צִמְמֶכֶם  
תִּמְצְאוּ־חֶפֶץ וְכָל־עַצְבֵיכֶם  
תִּנְגְּשׁוּ.

הֲיֵן לְרִיב וּמִצָּה תִצְמוּ וּלְהַכּוֹת  
בְּאֶגְרֵף רָשַׁע לֹא־תִצְמוּ כִּיּוֹם,  
לְהִשְׁמִיעַ בְּמָרוֹם קוֹלְכֶם.

הֲכִזָּה יִהְיֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ יוֹם  
עֲנוֹת אָדָם נִפְשׁוֹ, הֲלִכְף כְּאֶגְמוֹן  
רָאשׁוֹ וְשָׁק וְאָפֶר יִצִיעַ, הֲלִזָּה  
תִּקְרָא צוֹם וַיּוֹם רִצּוֹן לֵה'?

הֲלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ, פִּתְחַ  
חֲרָצְבוֹת רָשַׁע, הַתֵּר אֲגָדוֹת  
מוֹטָה, וְשַׁלַּח רִצּוֹצִים חֲפְשִׁים  
וְכָל־מוֹטָה תִּנְתְּקוּ.

It is to share your bread with the hungry, and the wretched poor you shall bring home; when you see a naked one, you shall clothe him, and from your own you shall not hide.

Then, your light shall break forth as the dawn, and your healing shall quickly sprout, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the L-rd shall rally you in.

הָלוֹא פָּרַס לְרַעֲב לַחֲמֵךְ, וְעֲנִיִּים  
מְרוּדִים תָּבִיא בֵּית. כִּי תִרְאֶה עֶרֶם  
וְכִסִּיתוֹ וּמִבְּשָׂרְךָ לֹא תִתְעַלֵּם.

אִזְ יִבְקַע כְּשַׁחַר אוֹרְךָ וְאַרְכָּתְךָ  
מִהֲרָה תִצְמַח, וְהִלֵּךְ לְפָנֶיךָ צִדְקָתְךָ,  
כְּבוֹד ה' יֵאֱסָפֶךָ.

Hoshea noted the flaw in the people's thought process, thinking that sacrificial offerings alone will set their path straight with G-d. He therefore clarified to them that a sacrifice without prayer and confession is not worth much.

Isaiah, on the other hand, pointed to a different and perhaps deeper fault. The Jewish nation gathers to cry and fast, and then complains when no salvation comes about. Isaiah tells them: Fasting while fighting is indeed not effective. It's a wasted effort. Love and compassion towards a fellow - that is what counts.

## Jonah - In 40 Days Ninveh Will Be Overturned

After the Torah reading of the Yom Kippur Minchah prayer we read the haftarah of Jonah. The story told is a thrilling one. In it, G-d sends Jonah on a mission to the people of Ninveh to tell them that they must repent. Jonah attempts to dodge the mission, and in the process gets himself thrown off a ship and swallowed by a large fish. What is unique about this story is that the prophecy was ultimately delivered to a non-Jewish population.

### Source 3 Jonah 3

And the word of G-d came to Jonah a second time, saying:

Arise, and go to Ninveh the great city, and proclaim upon it the proclamation that I speak to you.

And Jonah arose and went to Ninveh according to the word of G-d. Ninveh was an exceedingly large city, a walk of three days.

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֶל־יוֹנָה שְׁנִית לֵאמֹר.

קוּם לֶךְ אֶל־נִינְוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה  
וְקְרֵא אֵלֶיהָ אֶת הַקְּרִיאָה אֲשֶׁר  
אֲנִי דֹבֵר אֵלֶיךָ.

וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־נִינְוָה כְּדַבַּר ה'  
וַנִּינְוָה הִיְתָה עִיר גְּדוֹלָה לְאֱלֹקִים,  
מִהֵלֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים.



Jonah commenced to come into the city, one day's walk. He then proclaimed and said, "In another forty days Ninveh shall be overturned!"

And the people of Ninveh believed in G-d, and they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, great and small alike.

And the word reached the king of Ninveh, whereupon he rose from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes.

The king had it proclaimed and published throughout Ninveh: "By the counsel of the King and his nobles: Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep shall taste anything; they shall not graze, neither shall they drink water.

"They shall cover themselves with sackcloth, both man and beast, and they shall cry mightily to G-d, and everyone shall repent of his evil way and of the dishonest gain which is in their hands.

"Whoever knows shall repent, and G-d will relent, and He will return from His burning wrath, and we will not perish."

And G-d saw their deeds, that they had repented of their evil way, and He relented from the evil He had said to do to them, and He did not carry it out.

*This story shines a light on the power of repentance, and shows how change is always possible. Ninveh was a city of great corruption. Jonah did not believe that its people would have the capacity to so drastically change their way of life and repent. In reality, after a long and failed attempt at avoiding his mission, he reached Ninveh, delivered G-d's word, and witnessed, much to his great surprise, how the people of Ninveh took his words to heart and returned from their wicked ways. They all, their king included, fasted, cried, and prayed to G-d for forgiveness - and G-d indeed granted them forgiveness.*

There are two unique characteristics to this story:

- a) Ninveh was a non-Jewish city whose population repented upon hearing a prophecy from a Jew.
- b) The punishment had already been signed into decree, yet the collective prayer still prevented it.

וַיַּחַל יוֹנָה לְבוֹא בְעִיר מִהֶלֶךְ יוֹם  
אֶחָד וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אַרְבָּעִים  
יוֹם וַנִּינְוֶה נִהְפָּכֶת.

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ אַנְשֵׁי נִינְוֶה בְּאֱלֹקִים  
וַיִּקְרְאוּ צוֹם וַיִּלְבְּשׁוּ שָׂקִים  
מִגָּדוֹלָם וְעַד קִטְנָם.

וַיִּגַע הַדָּבָר אֶל מֶלֶךְ נִינְוֶה וַיִּקָּם  
מִכִּסְאוֹ וַיַּעֲבֵר אֶדְרֹתָיו מֵעָלָיו וַיִּכֶס  
שָׂק וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאֶפֶר.

וַיִּזְעַק וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנִינְוֶה מִטַּעַם הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַגְדָּלָיו לֵאמֹר הֲאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה  
הַבָּקָר וְהַצֹּאן אֵל יִטְעֲמוּ מֵאוֹמָה  
אֵל יִרְעוּ וּמִיָּם אֵל יִשְׁתּוּ.

וַיִּתְפַּסּוּ שָׂקִים הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה  
וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל אֱלֹקִים בְּחִזְקָה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ  
אִישׁ מִדְּרָכּוֹ הִרְעָה וּמִוִּיהֶחֱמָם  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכַפֵּיהֶם.

מִיִּיּוֹדָע יָשׁוּב וּנְחָם הָאֱלֹקִים וַיִּשָּׁב  
מִחֲרוֹן אָפוֹ וְלֹא נֹאבֵד.

וַיִּרְא הָאֱלֹקִים אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם  
כִּי שָׁבוּ מִדְּרָכָם הִרְעָה וַיִּנְחָם  
הָאֱלֹקִים עַל הִרְעָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר  
לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה.

## B. Do Non-Jews Also Have The Mitzvah of Repentance?

### >> The Rebbe

As we've learned in the past, non-Jews were given seven mitzvot in total, known as the seven Noahide laws. The Jewish people, however, were given 613 mitzvot. Halachic authorities discuss whether repentance is an individual mitzvah counted in the 613, or a general mitzvah that isn't counted.

The question arises, how do we know that non-Jews also have the mitzvah of repentance?

Regarding the repentance of the people of Ninveh (which was the purpose of their fasting and tearing of their clothes, etc.) there is a broader question that needs to be addressed: what is the relationship of non-Jews with the concept of repentance?

צריך להבין בנוגע לכללות ענין התשובה של אנשי נינווה (שזהו תוכן ענין התענית כו', וכמו שכתוב<sup>1</sup> וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם ושובו אל ה'") - מהי שייכותם של גויים לענין התשובה?<sup>2</sup>

### Repentance Is Higher Than Torah And Mitzvot

Repentance is higher than Torah and mitzvot, as is evident from the fact that "nothing can stand in the way of repentance." Repentance is able to atone for and rectify any transgressions of positive and negative commandments. Since rectification can only be accomplished by something that is greater and stronger than the damaged matter, it is clear that repentance has greater power than a regular positive or negative commandment.

ענין התשובה הוא למעלה מתורה ומצוות, שהרי "אין לך דבר שעומד בפני התשובה"<sup>3</sup>, והיינו, שהתשובה מועילה לכפר ולתקן את הפגם במצוות עשה או במצוות לא תעשה, וכיון שתיקון הדבר יכול להיות רק על ידי מי שהוא גדול וחזק יותר מהדבר שנתקלקל, הרי מוכח שבתשובה יש כוח ותוקף יותר מאשר בסתם מצוות עשה ומצוות לא תעשה.

(3) רמב"ם הל' תשובה ספ"ג.  
(4) תהלים קמז, יט.

(1) יואל ב, יג.  
(2) ראה גם ת"מ ח"ל 114. וש"נ.

## How Was Repentance Effective In Ninveh?

Regarding all of the mitzvot the Torah states, "G-d tells His words to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel." This means that they are given to the Jewish people only, as the verse continues, "He did not do so to any of the nations." Not only are Torah and mitzvot not beneficial for non-Jews, they are even cautioned against observing them. Seemingly, this should be all the more true regarding the mitzvah of repentance, which is even higher than the other mitzvot.

*The Rebbe questions the assumption that repentance is relevant to non-Jews with an a fortiori argument: If Torah study and the 613 mitzvot in general are intended for the Jewish people alone, certainly repentance, which is even higher than all of the mitzvot, is for the Jewish people only. If so, how are we to explain the story of Ninveh?*

Yet, nevertheless, the repentance of the people of Ninveh was so effective that it was even able to revoke a decree that had already been sealed. So much so, that in the time of Esther, when the Jewish people questioned whether repentance could still help them once the decree had already been sealed, they learned from the story of Ninveh that repentance is always effective.

והרי בנוגע למצוות עשה ומצוות לא תעשה נאמר<sup>4</sup> "מגיד דבריו ליעקב חוקיו ומשפטיו לישראל", אבל לא לאומות העולם, כהמשך הכתוב: "לא עשה כן לכל גוי", ועד כדי כך, שעובד כוכבים שלמד תורה אין זו תועלת עבורו... ועל אחת כמה וכמה בנוגע לענין התשובה, שהיא למעלה ממצוות עשה ומצוות לא תעשה.

ואף על פי כן, הועילה תשובת נינווה לא רק לבטל גזירה סתם, אלא גם לבטל גזירה שכבר נחתמה, ועד כדי כך, שכאשר נסתפקו בני ישראל בימי אסתר אם יש תקווה לאחרי שנחתמה הגזירה, למדו זאת מתשובת נינווה!

(4) תהלים קמז, יט.

## Why Do We Mention The Repentance Of Ninveh At The High Point Of The Yom Kippur Service?

What's most surprising is the association of the repentance of Ninveh with the Yom Kippur service.

Yom Kippur follows thirty days devoted to repentance in the month of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, the subsequent ten days of repentance, and then Yom Kippur eve. Over the course of this entire period we constantly ascend in our repentance work.

We then arrive at Yom Kippur itself, on which we pray five times, and each prayer represents a new level of repentance. Then, at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, when we need to read something from the prophets on the theme of repentance, we read specifically about the repentance of Ninveh.

The books of the Prophets and Writings, from which the haftarah must be selected, contain a number of chapters that discuss repentance in the context of Jews. Indeed, on the Shabbat preceding Yom Kippur the haftarah of "return, Israel" is read, and the haftarah of Yom Kippur morning also discusses repentance practiced by Jews.

Yet, when we reach the haftarah of the high point of the day, we mention specifically the repentance of Ninveh!

והדבר פלא הכי גדול הוא - השייכות של תשובת נינווה לעבודת יום הכיפורים:<sup>5</sup>

ובהקדמה - שיום הכיפורים בא לאחר הקדמת עבודת התשובה במשך שלושים יום של חודש אלול, ולאחרי זה בא ראש השנה, וכללות עשרת ימי תשובה, עד לערב יום הכיפורים - שבהם הולכים ומתעלים בענין התשובה באופן של "מעלין בקודש".

ואז מגיעים ליום הכיפורים עצמו, שהוא יום שנתחייב בחמש תפילות<sup>7</sup>, כך, שישנן חמש דרגות בתשובה של יום הכיפורים. ובסופו של יום הכיפורים, כשצריכים להזכיר בשייכות לקריאת התורה אודות ענין התשובה - מזכירים אודות תשובת נינווה!

והגע עצמך: בנביאים וכתובים - שמשם צריך לקחת את ההפטרה (לא מחמישה חומשי תורה) - ישנם כמה וכמה פרקים שמדברים אודות ענין התשובה של בני ישראל. ואכן, בשבת שלפני יום הכיפורים לוקחים מתנ"ך את ההפטרה "שובה ישראל"<sup>8</sup>, וכן ביום הכיפורים בשחרית מפטירים בפסוקי תנ"ך<sup>9</sup> שבהם מדובר אודות התשובה של בני ישראל.

ואילו כשבאים לדרגה הכי נעלית בהפטרה שבה צריך להזכיר אודות ענין התשובה - מזכירים דווקא תשובת נינווה!

(8) הושע יד, ב.  
(9) ישעיה נז, יד ואילך.

(5) ראה גם ת"מ חמ"א ע' 48. וש"נ.  
(6) ברכות כח, א. וש"נ.  
(7) ראה לקו"ת ס"פ פינחס.

*The Rebbe describes repentance as a power that is gradually dialed up, beginning with the month of Elul, continuing with Rosh Hashanah and the ten days of repentance, and culminating on Yom Kippur. Within Yom Kippur itself, repentance continues to be dialed up over the course of the day until it reaches its absolute peak. And specifically at the peak of repentance we relate a story about the repentance of non-Jews!?*

*As we learned in the first section of the class, there is no lack of discussions of repentance concerning the Jewish people. We read such accounts on Shabbat Shuvah, and Yom Kippur morning. Why, then, do we use an example from the repentance of the non-Jews of Ninveh at the climax of Yom Kippur?*

## C. Two Levels of Repentance

### >> The Rebbe

In order to understand this we need to distinguish between two elements of repentance: (a) Affecting the future, and (b) rectifying the past.

#### From Now On

There is one element of repentance that causes a person to be regarded, from the point of repentance on, as an upright—and even righteous—person. Although he has previously been classified as wicked, a status that has ramifications regarding his reliability as a witness and in other areas, since he has repented he is from now on trusted regarding all such matters.

#### Rectifying The Past

But there is also a higher level of repentance, in which “the sin is retroactively uprooted,” to the extent that the person is “pleasant and beloved in G-d’s eyes as if he never transgressed.” Such a penitent receives great reward, and “in the place where [he] stands, even completely righteous people cannot stand.” This shows that the person has no residual stain whatsoever.

ויש לומר הביאור בזה:

בתשובה ישנם שני ענינים: (א) מכאן ולהבא, (ב) תיקון העבר.

ישנו ענין של תשובה שפועל שמכאן ולהבא יתחשבו עמו כמו עם אדם כשר, ויתירה מזה: אדם צדיק, והיינו, שאף על פי שמקודם לכן היה “רשע”, שאינו נאמן בנוגע לעדות ולכמה עניינים, אף על פי כן, כיון ששב בתשובה, הנה מכאן ולהבא הרי הוא נאמן בנוגע לכל העניינים האלו.

אבל ישנה תשובה נעלית יותר - ש“נעקר עונו מתחלתו”<sup>10</sup> ועד ש“אהוב ונחמד הוא לפני הבורא, ועד ש“כאילו לא חטא מעולם, ולא עוד אלא ששכרו הרבה כו”<sup>11</sup>, ועד ש“מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין אין צדיקים גמורים יכולין לעמוד בו”<sup>12</sup>; ומזה מוכח שלא נשאר עליו שום כתם כו’.

(12) ברכות לד, ב. רמב”ם שם.

(10) פרשי ד”ה כאן מאהבה - יומא פו, סע”א.  
(11) רמב”ם הל’ תשובה פ”ז ה”ד.

Yom Kippur is on the tenth day of Tishrei because it is on this day that G-d forgave the Jewish people for the sin of the golden calf. On that day G-d said to Moses, "I have forgiven as per your request." Let us recap exactly what transpired there:

On the festival of Shavuot, the Ten Commandments were given to the Jewish people. Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and nights until he received the tablets. When he descended from the mountain, Moses learned that the Jewish people were worshiping a golden calf. He proceeded to break the tablets, and then ascended the mountain for an additional forty days to beseech G-d on the behalf of the Jewish people, that He not destroy them all. After that goal was accomplished, Moses once again ascended the mountain for a third set of forty days, to seek atonement for that grave sin. This last set of forty days ended on the tenth of Tishrei - Yom Kippur. It is since that time that Yom Kippur has become the day of atonement.

Why was that last set of forty days necessary after G-d had already nullified his intended punishment for the Jewish people after the middle set of forty days? What was Moses seeking to accomplish with that last set?

Moses was not content that G-d wouldn't destroy the Jewish nation. Moses wanted them to be beloved before G-d as before the sin. Indeed, Rashi teaches us that on Yom Kippur "G-d was happily and fully appeased with the Jewish people" (see Torat Menachem. vol. 50 p. 393).

In other words, using an example from our personal lives:

When someone upsets us, it is natural for us to develop feelings like anger, hate, and revenge towards them. With time, or after an apology, we gain the ability to control our emotions and suppress our anger. Yet we still cannot say that our love towards that person is as complete as it was before. In order for us to fully restore our previous love towards that individual, we must reach a higher level of forgiveness. This is the essence of repentance in its deeper sense. We seek to find favor before G-d as we were before we sinned.

This is also evident from the name the Torah gives to the mitzvah of repentance - teshuvah. The meaning of the word teshuvah is return, referring to something that has left its place and is now being returned there. This can only be said about the past, that the person strayed from G-d's path with regards to a particular matter and ended up in an unholy place, and the effect of repentance is to remove the person from there and return him to his place.

וענין זה מובן גם מהשם שבו נקראת המצווה על פי תורה - מצות התשובה, כי, תשובה פירושה השבה, כלשון הכתוב: "וּשְׁבַת"<sup>13</sup>, כך, שצריך להיות דבר שעזב את מקומו, וחוזרים ומשיבים אותו; ובכן: בנוגע לעתיד - הרי העתיד אינו במציאות עדיין, ועל כן צריך לומר שמדובר אודות ענין שהיה בעבר, שהיה אצלו באופן שיצא אל היפך צד הקדושה, כיון שחטא ופגם ועבר את הדרך, דרך מלכו של עולם, ועל זה פעולת התשובה - להוציאו משם ולהשיבו למקומו.



This higher level of repentance is alluded to in the Hebrew word for repentance itself "Teshuvah" (Return). We don't refer to it as forgiveness, but rather as "returning." One seeks to "return" to a previous state where he once stood - beloved as before. It is not easy to return to such a standing after burning all the bridges behind you. Destruction is easy, restoration is difficult.

Yet, it **is** attainable!

## The Repentance Of Ninveh - Level 1

This is the difference between the repentance of Ninveh and the power of repentance that was given specifically to the Jewish people. The repentance of Ninveh was only effective from that point on, meaning that despite the fact that there had been a sealed decree that the city would be destroyed in forty days, repentance was able to cancel the future decree. However, the higher level of repentance, rectifying the past, is reserved for the Jewish people only.

וזהו החילוק בין תשובת נינווה לעניין  
התשובה שניתן לבני ישראל דווקא  
- שתשובת נינווה מועילה רק מכאן  
ולהבא, והיינו, שלמרות שהייתה גזרה  
ש"עוד ארבעים יום ונינווה נהפכת",  
ולא עוד אלא שכבר נחתמה הגזירה,  
הועילה התשובה לבטל את הגזירה  
מכאן ולהבא; אבל העניין היותר נעלה  
שבתשובה, תיקון העבר - הרי זה שייך  
לבני ישראל דווקא.

Let us imagine a scenario wherein an individual, fined by a police officer, is convinced of his innocence. What would he do? He'd go to court in an attempt to prove it. During the proceedings, he may prove that the officer was mistaken, or claim that he was misunderstood and his intentions were well placed. He may request leniency due to his mental and/or emotional state, etc. If he is lucky, the judge will accept his claims and absolve him from his punishment.

We can imagine this individual leaving the courtroom in high spirits. But do we expect him to request the police officer to like him as before? Obviously not. He's not the officer's kin or friend. He only seeks to avoid punishment.

Now let's take another scenario. A couple where one of the spouses betrayed the other's trust, causing a deep rift between the two. The couple seeks out professional counseling, where they're helped to overcome their differences, and move on with a clean slate. True success, however, is when they are able to not only stop feelings of suspicion towards each other, but to restore the love from before things went awry. They are after all a married couple!



So too in our case. When Jonah warned the citizens of Ninveh that G-d is about to destroy them, all they wanted was to overturn this decree. To avoid punishment. Once accomplished, they were fully content. But did they care what G-d "felt" towards them? Not in the slightest.

On the other hand, a Jew's connection to G-d is compared to that of a married couple. Erasing a criminal record is not nearly enough. The Jew seeks to be loved as before, as if nothing ever went wrong in the first place. Therefore, it is not enough for a Jew to stay at this lower level of repentance. He continues to beseech G-d until reaching the deeper level of repentance - return to G-d as before, to the original pure love that was once in place.

## D. Why Ninveh?

*Our question is now even stronger: Why do we discuss the lower level of repentance of Ninveh, which only saves from punishment, at the conclusion and climax of Yom Kippur? Shouldn't we focus on the higher level of repentance?*

### >> The Rebbe

At the conclusion of Yom Kippur we wish to revoke all decrees, including those that have already been sealed. At this point it is most relevant to learn from Ninveh.

Even though the people of Ninveh were restricted by time and space and didn't have control over the past, they still had the ability to revoke a decree that had already been sealed.

We focus on Ninveh because we need to assist even those Jews who haven't reached the level that enables them to completely change the past, so that even for them the decree won't be implemented, even though it has already been sealed.

The lesson we can learn from this:

There are those that ask, since they aren't on such a high level spiritually, how can they be expected not to despair, and maintain hope and firm faith that all of their affairs will certainly turn out for the good? They know the truth about themselves, that they aren't on the level on which they can take control over the past and change it.

כאשר צריכים לבטל את כל הגזירות, אפילו הגזירות כשכבר נחתמו - שזהו המעמד ומצב שברגעים האחרונים של יום הכיפורים, אזי צריכים ללמוד מנינווה:

אף על פי שלא הגיעו לדרגה כזו שתהיה להם בעלות על העבר, אלא נשארו במדידות של זמן ומקום, אף על פי כן, היה להם כוח לבטל גזירה שכבר נחתמה.

מכיון שיש צורך לסייע גם לאותם יהודים שעדיין לא הגיעו למעמד ומצב שיכולים לשנות לגמרי את העבר, שגם עליהם לא תחול הגזירה אף על פי שכבר נחתמה.

וההוראה מזה:

יש כמה ששואלים וטוענים, שכיון שעדיין אינם עומדים במעמד ומצב נעלה בעבודה הרוחנית, כיצד יכולים לתבוע מהם שלא להתיאש, ושתהיה להם תקווה וביטחון חזק שבוודאי יהיו כל העניינים לטובה, בה בשעה שאדם יודע בנפשו שאינו במעמד ומצב שיכול להיות בעל הבית לבטל ולשנות את העבר!?

The story of Ninveh teaches us the response to this: If even the people of Ninveh could abolish a sealed decree, we can all certainly do so.

ועל זה אומרים לו: אם נינווה הייתה יכולה לבטל גזירה שנחתמה, הרי על אחת כמה וכמה שהוא יוכל לבטלה.

משיחת חג פורים, ה'תשכ"ח, בלתי מוגה.  
תורת מנחם חלק נ"ב עמ' 123

*Ultimately, after the extensive forty-day build up of repentance, we want to ensure that every Jew is at least excused from punishment. Even a Jew who did not reach the deeper level of repentance should still be granted a good year.*

*This is what we learn from Ninveh. Even a person who has not reached the higher level of repentance, and doesn't even fathom that he has the capacity to do so, he too is not left behind. His case is not lost. He too can nullify a decree that has been made against him and achieve a blessed year. And really, - what's more important than a peaceful year?*

*The blessing of "Gefen" is the acronym for the age-old Jewish blessing in Yiddish: Gezunt - health, Parnassah - wealth, and Nachas - happiness (or pride, especially from one's children). The basic "wish package" for all. After all, what can be more important than that?*

## **A Joke**

*A beggar would always bless those who helped him with "Gefen", but he had two versions of the blessing depending on the size of the donation:*

*One who gave him with a generous hand, he would bless: "May G-d grant you health, wealth and happiness from your children."*

*For those who were less generous than he had expected, he would change up the order and say: "May G-d grant you health, happiness, and wealth from your children..."*