



CAN SELF-REFLECTION BE A COMMUNAL EXERCISE?

The secret advantage of the synagogue,
and can others help us repent sincerely?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



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A. The Climate for Repentance.....1

The mitzvah of teshuvah, or repentance, is the decision to completely cease from transgressing (Source 1). The most opportune time for teshuvah is during the Ten Days of Teshuvah (Source 2). The Talmud teaches (Source 3) that the special power the community possesses throughout the year to nullify decrees is granted even to an individual during the Ten Days of Teshuvah.

The Rebbe clarifies that although the individual's power during the Ten Days of Repentance is equivalent to the power of the community during the rest of the year, the power of the community during these days is certainly even greater.

The Rebbe asks: In the process of teshuvah, a person is required to conduct a thorough self-reflection to understand what they have been lacking in their service of G-d. They must contemplate G-d's greatness and their own lowliness for having offended against Him. Seemingly, to accomplish these tasks, one would need to withdraw and reflect internally. So why do we say there is an advantage to doing this in the company of others?

B. Everyone Runs to the Synagogue.....6

A principle in Jewish law and tradition states that when observant Jews follow a certain practice, it serves to validate that it is the correct way to act (Source 4). Practically, we observe that on Yom Kippur, when all Jews are commanded to repent, everyone goes to the synagogue, even those who do not outwardly observe mitzvot throughout the year.

The explanation: When a person conducts a self-assessment of their spiritual state, it is likely that their ego will be generous to them, leading them to judge themselves subjectively and with bias. The solution is to conduct this introspection alongside another person who can provide an objective perspective. This is the meaning of the statement by the Mittlerer Rebbe that when two Jews meet, there are two G-dly souls battling only one animalistic soul. (Source 5)

However, even a good friend cannot advise a person in every area, as each individual has expertise only in a specific area. Therefore, it is optimal to repent as part of a community, for through consulting with an entire community, a person will receive the best advice and support for their teshuvah process.

At the same time, a person should not fall into despondency as a result of their self-examination. They must remember that sin is merely an external attachment that has clung to them—it is not an intrinsic part of their soul, and it can be removed through teshuvah.

Introduction

What is the best environment for repentance and self-reflection: tranquil blue waters surrounded by blooming trees and wildflowers, with birds chirping in the background—a setting inviting internal contemplation and clear thought? Or in the hustle of the synagogue, with its atmosphere of holiness and communal support?

השיעור לפרשת כי תבוא

משיחת ו' תשרי ה'תשמ"ב – הנחה בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם ה'תשמ"ב חלק א' ע' 46

A. The Climate for Repentance

When Is Repentance Best Accepted?

Source 1 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:2

How is teshuvah defined?

Student's What is teshuvah? Teshuvah means the transgressor should cease from transgressing and remove it from their mind, while firmly committing to never do it again. As the verse states, "The wicked shall abandon their ways" (Isaiah 55:7) ... They should also regret the past, as the verse states, "For after I returned I regretted" (Jeremiah 31:19). The Knower of Secrets will attest that they will not return to this ever again, as the verse states, "We will no longer say to the work of our hands: 'You are our gods' " (Hoshea 14:4). One must verbally confess and state the resolutions they have made in their heart.

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ומה היא התשובה? הוא שיעזב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד שנאמר "יעזב רשע דרכו" וגו'. וכן תנחם על שעבר שנאמר "כי אחרי שובי נחמתי". ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם שנאמר "ולא נאמר עוד אלקינו למעשה ידינו" וגו'. וצריך להתודות בשפתינו ולומר ענינות אלו שגמר בלבו.

Source 2 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:6

The ideal time for teshuvah

Student's Although teshuvah is always effective, the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the best time for it. When done at this time it is accepted immediately, as the verse states "Seek G-d while He is found" (Isaiah 55:6). This applies to an individual. As for a community, any time they collectively do teshuvah and cry out with a complete heart they are answered, as the verse states, " ... as G-d is whenever we call Him" (Deuteronomy 4:7).

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אף על פי שהתשובה והצעקה יפה לעולם. בעשרה הימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים היא יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד שנאמר "דרשו ה' בהמצאו". כמה דברים אמורים ביהיד אכל צבור כל זמן שעושים תשובה וצועקים בלב שלם הם נענין שנאמר "פה' אלהינו בכל קראנו אליו".

Source 3 Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 18a

Is G-d more “present” during the Ten Days of Repentance?

Student's
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Rabbi Shmuel bar Iniya said in the name of Rav: How do we know that a decree on the community is not signed?

Not signed? The verse says “Your iniquities are stained before Me” (Jeremiah 2:22)! Rather, despite being signed, the decree can be torn up, as the verse says: “ ... as G-d is whenever we call Him.”

Yet, another verse says that we must “Seek G-d while He is found and call Him when he is close,” meaning there are times G-d is not close and does not answer.

The answer is that one verse is stated regarding an individual, and the other regarding a community. G-d always answers a communal call.

When is the time that G-d is closest to an individual? Rabbah bar Avuha says: These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

אָמַר רַב שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַי אִינְיָא מִשְׁמוּ
שָׁל רַב: מַזְמִין לְגִזְרֵי דִין שְׁל צְבוּר
שְׁאִינוּ נְחָתָם?

וְשׂוֹאֲלִים: הָאֵם בְּאַמְתָּ אִינוּ
נְחָתָם?! וְהָרִי נֹאמֵר: "נְחָתָם עוֹנֵךְ
לְפָנַי" – שְׁמִשְׁמַע שְׁלַעֲוֹן הַצְּבוּר
אִין מְחִילָה וּמְחִיקָה!

אָלָא כִּי יֵשׁ לוֹמֵר: אִף עַל גַּב
שְׁנָחָתָם – נִקְרַע לְאַחַר מִכָּן
וּמִתְחַפֵּף לְטוֹבָה. שְׁנֹאמֵר: "כֹּה'
אֶלְקִינוּ כָּל קְרָאָנוּ אֵלָיו" – מִשְׁמַע
שְׁתַּמִּיד יֵשׁ דְּרָךְ לְהִתְקַרֵּב לֵה'.

וְשׂוֹאֲלִים: וְהָרִי נֹאמֵר: "דְּרָשׁוּ ה'
בְּהִמְצֵאוֹ קְרָאָהוּ בְּהִיוֹתוֹ קְרוֹב" –
מִשְׁמַע שְׁיֵשׁ זְמַן שְׁאִינוּ קְרוֹב וְאִינוּ
נִעֲנָה!

וּמְשִׁיבִים: שָׁם מְדַבֵּר בְּיַחֲדָא –
שְׁיֵשׁ זְמַנִּים מְיַחֲדִים שְׁה' קְרוֹב
אֵלָיו, וְאֵלּוּ כָּאֵן מְדַבֵּר בְּצְבוּר –
שְׁכָּל זְמַן שְׁיִקְרָאוּהוּ, הִרְיָהוּ קְרוֹב.

וְשׂוֹאֲלִים: בְּיַחֲדָא – אִימְתִי הַזְּמַן
שְׁה' קְרוֹב בּוֹ? אָמַר רַבָּה בְּרַ אֲבוּהָ:
אֵלּוּ עֲשָׂרָה יָמִים שְׁבִין רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה
לְיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים.

>> The Rebbe

The Community During The Days of Teshuvah

Student's
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During the Ten Days of Teshuvah every Jew as an individual has the same power that the community as a whole has year-round. We can deduce from this that the power of community during the Ten Days of Teshuvah is even greater. As a result, the

וְהִנֵּה, אִף עַל פִּי שְׁבַעֲשֶׁרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה
בְּכַחוֹ שֶׁל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל (בְּתוֹר
יַחֲדָא) לְפַעוּל בְּדוּגְמַת פַּעוּלַת הַצְּבוּר
בְּמִשְׁךְ כָּל הַשָּׁנָה - מוֹבֵן שְׁמַעְלַת הַצְּבוּר
בְּעֲשֶׁרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה גְּדוּלָה עוֹד יוֹתֵר,

Student's
pg. 2

usual distinctions between an individual and the community in terms of prayers and the like still hold during this period.

Student's
pg. 3

The power of the community during the Ten Days of Teshuvah must be far greater than that of the individual (who has the same degree of power at this time as the community does year-round).

The fact that throughout the year the community has power similar to that of the individual during the Ten Days of Teshuvah shows that the community has greater power. Therefore, during the Ten Days of Teshuvah, when the individual has increased power, it is clear that the community's power is even greater!

Personal Accounting

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There is a point here that requires clarification:

There are two general categories of mitzvot: mitzvot between man and G-d, and interpersonal mitzvot. The mitzvah of teshuvah is one of the man-G-d mitzvot.

Within the category of man-G-d mitzvot there are different levels of dissociation with worldly matters. It would seem that the mitzvah with the greatest degree of dissociation with worldly matters is teshuvah, because its essential definition is "the soul should return to the One who gave it."

It is therefore logical to suggest that the mitzvah of teshuvah is best done in private, rather than together with the community. When a person is alone they can focus better on their personal effort of "the soul should return to the One who gave it."

ולכן, גם בעשרת ימי תשובה ישנו חילוק בין יחיד לציבור בנוגע לדבר שבקדושה וכיוצא בזה.

ועל פי זה מובן גודל העילוי בענין הציבור שבעשרת ימי תשובה - ביתר שאת וביתר עוז לגבי מעלת היחיד בעשרת ימי תשובה (שמעלתו בדוגמת מעלת הציבור במשך כל השנה).

ולכאורה צריך להבין:

כללות המצוות מתחלקים לשני סוגים: מצוות שבין אדם למקום, ומצוות שבין אדם לחבירו. ומצוות התשובה שייכת לסוג המצוות שבין אדם למקום.

והנה, בסוג המצוות שבין אדם למקום גופא - ישנם חילוקי דרגות בנוגע להבדלתם מעניני העולם. ובהשקפה ראשונה, הרי המצוה שבה מודגש ביותר ההבדלה מעניני העולם, הרי זו מצוות התשובה, כי כל ענינה "והרוח תשוב אל האלקים אשר נתנה".

ועל פי זה - מסתבר לומר שקיום מצוות התשובה שייך בעיקר כאשר כל אחד ואחד נמצא ביחידות (היפך ענין הציבור) - כי דוקא בעמדו במעמד ומצב זה בנקל יותר להתמסר לעבודה שתוכנה - "והרוח תשוב אל האלקים אשר נתנה".

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In simple terms: In order to do teshuvah properly, a person needs to make a sincere personal accounting to know that his Divine service was lacking.

Meditating on G-d's greatness

Student's
pg. 4

For a proper accounting it isn't enough to know what we did. We need to consider our actions in relation to our Creator, the giver of the mitzvot. Meaning, we must meditate on the greatness of G-d, the Giver of the mitzvot.

Incomplete work on something we weren't instructed to do, but chose to do for our own personal reasons, is very different from incomplete work on a task we were commanded to do. Moreover, the degree of deficiency also depends on the degree of importance of the source of the instruction— if the instructor is an important person or it is G-d, the King of all kings.

In order to make a proper accounting we must do teshuvah, accompanied by meditation on G-d's greatness. This is similar to the law that before starting to pray we need to meditate on the greatness of G-d and the lowly nature of humans.

In order to make an honest accounting and understand what is lacking in our mitzvah observance and our obligations toward G-d, we must reflect on the greatness of G-d and the lowliness of man. Only then can we accurately assess where we stand.

When a random person asks you for something, you may or may not comply. However, when someone who has done endless favors for you, cared for you, and saved you in times of trouble asks for something, you feel obligated to fulfill their request.

Similarly, as a prelude to the process of teshuvah, one must contemplate the greatness of G-d

ובפשטות: כדי שעבודת התשובה תהיה באופן המתאים - צריך האדם לערוך "חשבון צדק" אמיתי, ולדעת מה החסיר בעבודתו לקונו.

ומובן שכדי שה"חשבון צדק" יהיה באופן המתאים - לא מספיק מה שיודע כיצד היתה אופן עבודתו כו', אלא הוא צריך גם להתבונן באופן עבודתו ביחס למצוה המצוה, היינו, התבוננות בגדלותו של הקב"ה שהוא מצוה המצוה.

כי אינו דומה חסרון בשלימות קיום ענין שלא נצטווה בו (אלא עושה זאת מצד חיוב שכלו וכיוצא בזה), לחסרון בשלימות עבודה שנצטווה בה. ועל דרך זה מובן שגודל החסרון בענין זה תלוי לפי ערך חשיבותו של המצוה - אם המצוה הוא אדם חשוב, אדם חשוב ביותר וכו', או שהמצוה הוא מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה!

ועל פי זה מובן, שכדי שה"חשבון צדק" יהיה באופן המתאים - צריכה להיות עבודת התשובה בד בבד עם התבוננות בגדולת הקב"ה. ועל דרך מה שכתוב בשולחן ערוך שקודם התפלה צריך האדם להתבונן בגדלות הא-ל ובשפלות האדם.

and the lowliness of man, the relationship between us, and all that G-d has done for us. Then we can properly appreciate the magnitude of the ingratitude involved when we neglect a mitzvah or commit a transgression. With this understanding, the process of teshuvah can begin.

Isn't it Better to Repent in Private?

Student's
pg. 4

Meditation requires privacy, and minimizing any distractions. This raises a question:

How can we say that for teshuvah—the central focus of the Ten Days of Teshuvah—being with the community gives an advantage over being alone? Based on the above, it would seem that teshuvah should be done in private, because being alone is more conducive to a proper teshuvah.

והנה, לתועלת ההתבוננות דרוש שהאדם יהיה ביחידות, ללא כל ענינים המבלבלים כו', ואז יכול הוא להתבונן כדבעי. ואם כן, אינו מובן:

כיצד אפשר לומר שבנוגע לענין התשובה (שזהו עיקר הענין של עשרת ימי תשובה) ישנו עילוי מיוחד בציבור לגבי היחיד - לכאורה, על פי האמור לעיל מסתבר יותר לומר שעבודת התשובה צריכה להיות ביחידות דוקא, כי דוקא אז יכולה להיות עבודת התשובה באופן המתאים!?

At first glance, the process of teshuvah seems to require internal reflection, which is best done alone. Why, then, is it said that teshuvah performed in a communal setting is considered superior?

B. Everyone Runs to the Synagogue

>> The Rebbe

Repenting Together

Student's To understand this, an introduction is
pg. 5 necessary.

There is a general rule regarding Jewish law that the best proof of the accuracy and validity of a certain form of conduct is actual examples of people conducting themselves so.

והביאור בזה - בהקדים:

ידוע הכלל בעניני הלכה, שכאשר רואים שהנהגה בפועל היא באופן מסוים, "מעשה רב" - הרי זו הראיה הטובה ביותר המאשרת את אמיתית הענין.

Source 4 Talmud, Pesachim 66a

Student's The sages taught: This law was forgotten by
pg. 5 the sons of Beteira, who were the leaders of the generation at that time. Once, the 14th of Nisan fell on Shabbat, and they forgot and did not know whether the Passover offering overrides Shabbat or not. They asked: "Is there anyone who knows whether the Passover offering overrides Shabbat or not?" They were told: "There is a man in Jerusalem who came up from Babylon, and his name is Hillel the Babylonian. He once served the two great leaders of the generation, Shmaya and Avtalyon, and surely he knows whether the Passover offering overrides Shabbat or not."

The sons of Beteira sent for him and asked: "Do you know whether the Passover offering overrides Shabbat or not?" He said to them: "Is there only one Passover in the year that overrides Shabbat? Do we not have more than two hundred offerings throughout the year that override Shabbat?"

שְׁנֵי חֲכָמִים: הִלְכָה זֶה נִתְעַלְמָה מִבְּנֵי בֵּתֵירָא שֶׁהָיוּ רֵאשֵׁי הַדּוֹר בְּאוֹתָם הַיָּמִים. פְּעַם אַחַת הָלַךְ אֲרֻבָּעָה עָשָׂר בְּנִיֶּסֶן לְהִיּוֹת בַּשַּׁבָּת, שָׁכְחוּ וְלֹא יָדְעוּ אִם פֶּסַח דּוֹחֶה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת אִם לֹא. אָמְרוּ: כְּלוּם יֵשׁ אָדָם שֶׁיִּדְעַע אִם פֶּסַח דּוֹחֶה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת אִם לֹא? אָמְרוּ לָהֶם: אָדָם אֶחָד יֵשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם שֶׁעָלָה מִבָּבֶל וְהִלֵּל הַבְּבֵלִי שְׁמוֹ, שֶׁשָּׁמַשׁ בַּשָּׁעֵתוֹ אֶת שְׁנֵי גְדוּלֵי הַדּוֹר שֶׁמְעִיָּה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן, וְיָדְעַע בְּנִדְאֵי אִם פֶּסַח דּוֹחֶה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת אִם לֹא.

שָׁלְחוּ בְּנֵי בֵּתֵירָא וְקָרְאוּ לוֹ, אָמְרוּ לוֹ: כְּלוּם אַתָּה יוֹדְעַע אִם הַפֶּסַח דּוֹחֶה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת אִם לֹא? אָמַר לָהֶם: וְכִי פֶסַח אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד יֵשׁ לָנוּ בַּשָּׁנָה שֶׁדּוֹחֶה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת? וְהִלֵּא הֵרֵבָה יוֹתֵר מִמֵּאֲתַיִם פְּסָחִים (קָרְבָּנוֹת) יֵשׁ לָנוּ בַּשָּׁנָה שֶׁדּוֹחִין אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת...

After Hillel brought these proofs, they immediately seated him at the head and appointed him as the Nasi (leader) over them, and he taught the laws of Passover the entire day. In the midst of his teaching, he began to rebuke them, saying: "What caused me to ascend from Babylon and become the Nasi over you? It was the laziness among you, as you did not serve the two great leaders of the generation in the land of Israel, Shmaya and Avtalyon."

They asked him: "Rabbi, if someone forgets to bring a knife on the eve of Shabbat, and cannot slaughter the Passover offering, what should he do? After all, since he could and should have brought it on the eve of Shabbat, he cannot bring it today."

Hillel answered: "I heard this law from my teachers, but I have forgotten. However, leave it to the People of Israel, for if they are not prophets, they are the descendants of prophets, and they will surely arrive at the correct solution on their own."

The next day, on Shabbat, the eve of Passover, those who had a lamb for their offering would take the knife and tuck it into the wool of the lamb, and those who had a goat, which has no wool, would tuck the knife between its horns. Hillel saw this and remembered the law, and he said: "Indeed, this is the tradition I received from Shmaya and Avtalyon, and this is the proper way to act."

פִּינּוֹן שֶׁהֵבִיא הֵלֵל רְאִיּוֹת
אֵלֶּה מִיַּד הוֹשִׁיבוּהוּ בְּרֹאשׁ
וּמְנוּהוּ נָשִׂיא עֲלֵיהֶן וְהָיָה
דוֹרֵשׁ כָּל הַיּוֹם כְּלוּ פְּהֻלְכוֹת
הַפֶּסַח. הִתְחִיל מִתְגַּרְה בָּהֶם
בְּדַבָּרִים. אָמַר לָהֶן: מִי גָרַם
לָכֶם שְׂאֵעֵלָה מִכָּבֶל וְאֶהְיֶה
נָשִׂיא עֲלֵיכֶם — עֲצָלוֹת
שֶׁהִיְתָה בְּכֶם שְׁלֵא שְׂמִשְׁתֶּם
שְׁנֵי גְדוּלֵי הַדּוֹר שֶׁהָיוּ בְּאַרְצָ
יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׂמֵעִיה וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן.

אָמְרוּ לוֹ: רַבִּי, שָׂכַח אָדָם וְלֹא
הֵבִיא סִפִּין מְעַרֵב שַׁבָּת, וְאֵינּוּ
יָכוֹל לְשַׁחֵט אֶת הַפֶּסַח, מַהוּ?
מָה יַעֲשֶׂה, וְהֵלֵא פִּינּוֹן שֶׁהָיָה
יָכוֹל וְצָרִיךְ לְהֵבִיאוֹ מְעַרֵב
שַׁבָּת, שׁוֹב אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל לְהֵבִיאוֹ
הַיּוֹם?

אָמַר לָהֶן: הֵלְכָה זֹו שְׂמֵעֵתִי
מִרְבוֹתַי וְשִׁכַּחְתִּי, אֵלֶּה
הִנֵּחַ לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אִם אֵין
נְבִיאִים הֵן שֶׁנִּגְלָה לָהֶם סוּד
ה' — בְּנֵי נְבִיאִים הֵן וּבְנוֹדֵאֵי
יִכְוֹנוּ מֵעֲצָמָם לְאַמֶּת.

לְמָחָר בְּשַׁבָּת בְּעֶרֶב הַפֶּסַח מִי
שֶׁהָיָה פֶּסַחוֹ טָלָה הָיָה לוֹקֵחַ
אֶת הַסִּפִּין וְתוֹחֵבוֹ בְּצִמְרוֹ,
וּמִי שֶׁהָיָה פֶּסַחוֹ גְּדִי שְׂאֵין
לוֹ צֶמֶר, תוֹחֵבוֹ בֵּין קַרְנָיו.
רָאָה הֵלֵל מַעֲשֵׂה שְׂעֵשׂוֹ
וְנִזְכַּר בְּהִלְכָה. וְאָמַר: כִּךָּ
בְּאַמֶּת מְקַבְּלֵנִי מִפִּי שְׂמֵעִיה
וְאַבְטָלְיוֹן שֶׁכֵּן רְאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת.

We see from this story that when Hillel forgot the halachic ruling for a particular question, he suggested waiting to see what the Jewish people would do, and that would serve as the indicator for the correct halachah. Indeed, the people tucked the knife into the wool of the animal, and then he remembered that he had indeed heard this from his teachers.

Since then, this practice has remained among the Jewish people. When observant Jewish people behave in a certain way, it confirms that this is the correct practice.

>> The Rebbe

Student's In our case, we see that running to
pg. 6 synagogue for Yom Kippur is part of Jewish nature.

Student's Every Jew is accorded a presumption
pg. 7 of righteousness. So since the Code of Jewish law says that we must run to mitzvah opportunities, and to synagogue in particular, it is clear that all Jews run to synagogue every day... Nevertheless, the way we run to synagogue on Yom Kippur is very different than the way we run all year-round.

Moreover, even those Jews who are ignorant of Judaism through no fault of their own, like a Jewish child raised in gentile captivity, feel a stirring of the soul on Yom Kippur. This stir extends to the feet as well, and their feet lead them to the synagogue.

Maimonides states (Laws of Teshuvah 2:7): "Yom Kippur is the time of Teshuvah for all, both individuals and the community at large. It is the apex of forgiveness and pardon for Israel. Accordingly, everyone is obligated to repent and confess on Yom Kippur."

We see this in actual practice: when the time of "teshuvah for all" arrives, everyone gathers in the synagogue. This is done together as a community, not each person alone in privacy working on their personal teshuvah. This fact proves that the community assists and contributes to the work of teshuvah.

ובנוגע לעניננו - רואים בפועל בטבע בני אדם, בני ישראל - "אתם קרויין אדם", על שם אַדְמָה לעליון, שביום הכיפורים "רצים" כולם לבית הכנסת.

כי הנה, כל יהודי הוא בחזקת כשרות, ולכן, היות שכתוב בשולחן ערוך שצריכים לרוץ לדבר מצוה, ובמיוחד - לבית הכנסת, מובן שכל אחד ואחד מישראל רץ לבית הכנסת בכל יום ויום... אבל אף על פי כן, אינה דומה הריצה לבית הכנסת שבכל ימות השנה לריצה לבית הכנסת ביום הכיפורים!

ויתירה מזו: אפילו אותם יהודים שנמצאים במעמד ומצב של תינוק שנשבה לבין הגויים שלא באשמתם, כי נלקחו "בשבי" קודם שהגיעו למעמד ומצב שתהיה להם דעה עצמית על הנהגתם - הנה בבוא יום הכיפורים נמצאים גם הם בתנועה של התעוררות נפשית, והתעוררות זו פועלת גם על רגליהם הגשמיות, היינו, שהרגליים מוליכות אותם לבית הכנסת.

והנה, מובא ברמב"ם¹ ש"יום הכפורים הוא זמן תשובה לכל, ליחיד ולרבים, והוא קץ מחילה וסליחה לישראל, לפיכך חייבים הכל לעשות תשובה ולהתוודות ביום הכפורים."

ועל פי זה - הרי רואים בפועל, "מעשה רב", שכאשר מגיע הזמן ש"חייבים הכל לעשות תשובה" (יום הכפורים) - מתאספים כולם בבית הכנסת, בציבור דוקא, ולא באופן שכל אחד ואחד מתעסק בעבודת התשובה ביחיד. ואם כן, מוכח מזה שכללות ענין הציבור מסייע ומוסיף בעבודת התשובה.

1. הל' תשובה פ"ב ה"ז.

The reality is that almost no one chooses to go to a deserted island on Yom Kippur to reflect inwardly and make a thorough personal reckoning of the past year. On the contrary, the vast majority of the Jewish people vote with their feet and gather in synagogues for Kol Nidrei, the confessional al chet prayer, and the Neilah prayer. Thus, it is clear that this is the right thing to do. The question is: what is the explanation for this?

Personal Bias

Student's To add some logical explanation:
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We explained above that teshuvah requires making a personal accounting of one's state. This raises the question: we all have a personal bias to see ourselves in the best light, so we shouldn't be capable of making an objective reckoning. How then can we be expected to make a sincere personal accounting?

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The solution to this problem can be learned from a saying of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the second rebbe of Chabad: "When two Jews meet there are two G-dly souls against one animalistic soul."

ביאור הדבר - בהסברה שכלית:

נתבאר לעיל שענין התשובה קשור עם עריכת "חשבון צדק" בנפשו. ואם כן נשאלת השאלה: מאחר שאדם קרוב אצל עצמו - אינו יכול לשפוט את עצמו בצורה אובייקטיבית, ואם כן, כיצד יכולים לצפות ממנו שיצליח לעשות "חשבון צדק" בנפשו?!

והעצה לזה - על פי פתגם אדמו"ר האמצעי, שכאשר שני יהודים נפגשים יחד, ישנן שתי נפש האלוקית כנגד נפש בהמית אחת.

Source 5 Torat Menachem 5744:1, p. 100

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The meaning of this saying is simple. The Talmud states a rule "people don't transgress unless there's something in it for them." Thus, the animalistic soul of our fellow has no interest in negatively influencing our own animalistic soul. Our G-dly soul, by contrast, wishes to fulfill its Divine charge of "love your fellow as yourself—this is a basic Torah principle." Every G-dly soul therefore works to influence the animalistic souls of all other Jews—just as it works to influence its own animalistic soul.

ההסברה לכך פשוטה: הגמרא אומרת "אין אדם חוטא ולא לו", כך שהנפש הבהמית של הזולת אינה מעוניינת להשפיע על הנפש הבהמית שלו. מה שאין כן הנפש האלקית רוצה לקיים את השליחות המוטלת עליה - "ואהבת לרעך כמוך זה כלל גדול בתורה", ולכן כל נפש אלקית פועלת להשפיע על הנפשות הבהמיות של כל ישראל ("כמוך" - כמו שהיא עוסקת עם הנפש הבהמית שלה).

The ego of one Jew does not want to inflate the ego of another Jew. However, the divine soul of one Jew wants to enhance the spirituality of another Jew. Therefore, when two Jews gather to consider how to address the animalistic soul of one of them, there are two divine souls wishing to help, with only one animalistic soul involved. This is because the animalistic soul of the friend has no interest in the matter at hand.

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 8
In simple words: When we work on teshuvah together with others, they are able to notice and point out to us if our accounting is indeed sincere, or if it is biased by our self-love, "love conceals all offenses."

ובפשטות: כאשר עבודת התשובה היא ביחד עם הזולת, יכול הזולת לראות ולבחון אם ה"חשבון" שעשה חבירו הוא אמנם "חשבון צדק", או שעשיית ה"חשבון" היתה באופן של "על כל פשעים תכסה אהבה" - אהבת עצמו.

When a person judges themselves, they will always find a way to justify their actions. However, when they sit with someone else, the other person can help them assess themselves more objectively.

Crowd-Sourced Wisdom

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There is an additional point for which we need the advantage of community.

We see that every person has their own natural talents. People may be identical in their physical traits, but they each have a special talent in a specific area, be it intellectual or practical—such as giving charity, properly advising others, or the like. Our sages speak of this phenomenon, asking about certain people "what was their area of excellence?"

When only two Jews get together, there are two different G-dly souls present, but each of them has their specific area of excellence. It is therefore possible that they will not be able to identify each other's

בנוסף לזה - זקוקים למעלת הציבור:

רואים במוחש בטבע בני אדם שלכל אחד יש חוש וכשרון מיוחד בענין מסויים. זאת אומרת: גם כאשר הוא אדם שלם, בכל אבריו וגידיו - יש לו כשרון מיוחד בענין מסויים; אם בענין שכלי, או בענין של מעשה - מעשה הצדקה, נתינת עצה טובה וכיוצא בזה. ובלשון חכמינו זכרונם לברכה - "במה הוא זהיר ביותר?"

ולכן, כאשר הוא נמצא רק עם יהודי נוסף אחד, הנה אף על פי שישנן שתי נפש האלוקית - הרי מאחר שאצל הזולת ישנו ענין מיוחד שבו "זהיר ביותר", יתכן שלא יוכל להבחין ולהורות לחבירו אודות החסרונות שלו בשאר הענינים שבהם אינו "זהיר ביותר".

shortcomings and offer advice in the areas that aren't their personal expertise.

Teshuvah done as part of a community therefore has an advantage. A community constitutes at least ten Jews, with the number ten representing the ten different general types of Jews.

Each person sees things differently, and each has their own unique talents. A community includes all types and talents. When a person is part of a community, they can figure out their path to complete teshuvah, teshuvah out of love for G-d. With the help of the entire community, each individual can make up for their personal deficiencies, in all of their details.

When you consult with one friend, they are usually an expert in only one area—relationships, education, and so on. They cannot provide advice on every aspect of life. Only when you consult with an entire community can you receive accurate advice across all fields.

What does this mean? On Yom Kippur, are we opening a circle of emotional support or revealing the secrets of our souls and asking others to give their opinions on the severity of our sins and ways to atone for them? Clearly not...

It can be said that, from a psychological perspective, when a person recites a confession with the entire community, it prompts them to think about it from a more objective standpoint. When we reflect on honoring our parents, we see dozens of friends, some of whom may have honored their parents more than us. As a result, we cannot forgive ourselves so easily when we see a neighbor who dedicates themselves to their parents in an admirable way. When discussing Torah study, we observe a classmate who takes their studies seriously, learns the weekly Torah portion deeply, and shares it with their family at Shabbat meals. This makes it harder for us to forgive ourselves for only listening to the rabbi's sermon once a month, and so on.

*

However, we must remember that even this beneficial process should be taken with caution. The negative inclination can use it manipulatively to undermine our motivation and spirit for self-improvement.

וזהו המעלה בעבודת התשובה הנעשית באופן של ציבור - כי מציאות ה"ציבור", עשרה מישראל, "עדה" קדושה, כוללת את כל עשרת הסוגים שבבני ישראל.

ומאחר ש"אין דיעותיהם שוות", ולאידך - אצל כל אחד ישנו חוש וכשרון בענין מיוחד, שבו "זהיר טפי" - מובן, שבתוך הציבור כולו ישנם את כל החושים והכשרונות וכו'. ולכן, כאשר האדם נמצא ביחד עם כל הציבור, ביכולתו לברר כיצד צריכה להיות עבודת התשובה בתכלית השלימות (תשובה מאהבה וכו'), ובסיוע הציבור כולו (המעלות שישנן בכל עשרת הסוגים שבבני ישראל) יוכל להשלים את כל מה שהחסיר בעבודתו, בכל הפרטים.

Don't Get Despondent

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When we work towards teshuvah, endeavoring to make up for everything we missed—doing so with the generous assistance of the community—we need to be careful not to grow despondent. Becoming aware of our deficiencies can cause us to feel badly about ourselves.

Our negative inclination can use these feelings to attempt to derail our teshuvah by highlighting our deficiencies and convincing us that we are in such a bad place that all hope is lost and we can never mend our ways. The negative inclination argues that in that case we might as well enjoy all the pleasures this world has to offer...

Comparing ourselves to others who are better than us is indeed meant to give us perspective and encourage us to improve in the future. However, sometimes the negative inclination uses this comparison to weaken our resolve, making us feel "already lost" and believing that we will never achieve the successes of our peers. As a result, it can lead to the attitude that "it's better to at least enjoy life," rather than striving for self-improvement.

Student's
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We need to be wary of this and not become despondent. We need to recognize that this is merely a tactic employed by the negative inclination to prevent us from doing teshuvah.

The Zohar comments on the verse "when a person sins" and says this should be read with wonder, as a question, "when a person sins?!"

We have no inherent relationship at all with sin. Even when we commit a transgression this doesn't cause an inherent deficiency in us personally, it is something external that

והנה, כאשר יהודי עוסק בעבודת התשובה, ומשתדל להשלים את כל מה שהחסיר בעבודתו - בסיוע הציבור כולו, בסבר פנים יפות וכו' - צריך להזהר שלא תהיה לו נפילת הרוח חס ושלום (מזה שרואה את החסרונות שהיו בעבודתו).

כי הנה, לפעמים היצר הרע מנסה לבלבל יהודי מעשיית התשובה - על ידי זה שמסביר לו את גודל חסרונותיו, ומסביר לו שבהיותו במעמד ומצב גרוע כזה הרי זה כבר מקרה אבוד, ולא יוכל להיטיב את דרכו כו', ולכן - מציע היצר הרע - כדאי לו לכל הפחות להנות מעניני עולם הזה!

ולכן, צריך להיזהר מעצת היצר - שלא ליפול ברוחו חס ושלום, ביודעו שזוהי תחבולת היצר לבלבלו מעבודת התשובה. והביאור בזה - על פי מה שכתוב בזהר "נפש כי תחטא, תוהא?" [= מלשון תמיהה ופליאה. כיצד יתכן שנפש של יהודי תיכשל בחטא]:

יהודי מצד עצמו אינו שייך לענין של חטא כלל, וגם באשר נכשל בענין של חטא חס ושלום - אין זה חסרון עצמו, אלא זהו דבר שמחוץ הימנו שנדבק אליו. זאת אומרת: היות שהוא נמצא בעולם הזה הגשמי והחומרי, ותפקידו למלא את

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attaches itself to us. We find ourselves in a material world, charged with the Divine mission of engaging with it to transform it into a G-dly place. When we engage with materialism some of it can rub off on us and attach itself to us. There is a deficiency, but it's not inherent, it's an external issue that comes from the world around us.

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שליחותו של הקב"ה באופן של "מילאו את הארץ וכבשוה", היינו, שצריך לעסוק ולפעול בעולם - הנה כאשר מתאבק עם מנוול - עולם הזה הגשמי והחומרי - יתכן שנדבק אצלו משהו מגשמיות וחומריות העולם. ולכן, אף על פי שזהו "חסרון", אין זה חסרון עצמו, כי חסרון זה אינו מצד עצמו, אלא מצד מציאות העולם שמסביבו.

The shortcomings we have are not inherent flaws or something that has penetrated us; rather, they are external issues that we need to learn to remove. However, this does not say anything about the essence of the person, G-d forbid.

Story (Teacher's Only)

In the early 1940s, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the previous Rebbe, asked Rabbi Shmuel Levitin to try to meet Mr. Yitzchak Lisner when he would be in Chicago. Mr. Lisner was a descendant of a Chasidic family from the time of the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya. His surname 'Lisner' was derived from the town of Liozna, the Alter Rebbe's city. The Rebbe asked Rabbi Levitin to awaken him to his roots and to try to influence him to return to the study of Torah and observance of mitzvot.

When Rabbi Levitin arrived in Chicago, he, along with Rabbi Yosef Weinberg, approached a local rabbi, Rabbi Perlstein, to inquire where they could find Mr. Yitzchak Lisner. Rabbi Perlstein said he knew which synagogue he should be in but wasn't sure if he would actually be there.

After some effort, they reached his office on the eve of Shabbat. When Mr. Lisner saw the two rabbis, he immediately asked which name to write on the check, assuming the purpose of the visit was to request a donation.

Rabbi Levitin explained that there is a custom in Jewish communities for the rabbi to check the condition of the Torah scrolls in the synagogue on Friday evenings. They had come to fix a letter in a Torah scroll. He continued to explain that 'Israel' is an acronym for "There are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah." Every Jew is like a letter in the Torah. Since there is a Jew whose letter in the Torah is apparently erased—meaning his connection to the Torah is hardly visible—they had come on behalf of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is like a scribe, to repair and complete the missing letter.

Mr. Lisner was greatly impressed and received them warmly. From then on, he began to rapidly move closer to a life of Torah and mitzvot, eventually becoming the chairman of the Friends of the Achei Temimim Lubavitch yeshiva in Chicago.

When Rabbi Levitin returned to the Rebbe and reported everything that had happened, including the explanation he had given to Mr. Lisner about repairing the erased letter, it was clear that the Rebbe did not agree with this concept as stated.

The Rebbe explained:

It is not possible for a Jewish letter to be erased from the Torah. The letters by which a Jew is connected to the Torah are “engraved letters.” Just as it is impossible to erase letters engraved in stone, it is impossible to disconnect or even harm, Heaven forbid, the powerful and eternal connection between a Jew and the Torah and G-d.

The only thing that can happen is that the letter might be covered with a layer of 'dust,' and what is needed is to remove the dust so that the connection to G-d and His Torah becomes more visible. The Rebbe's role is to remove and clean the dust that has adhered to the letter and to reveal and strengthen the powerful and eternal connection of the Jew with the Torah and G-d.

Therefore, one should not be disheartened, G-d forbid, knowing that the shortcoming is an external issue that has adhered to them. On the other hand, they should know that their task is to rectify this shortcoming through the work of teshuvah, until they become “loved and cherished... before G-d as if they have never sinned at all, and furthermore, their reward is much greater” (as mentioned in Maimonides' writings).

As is known from our Rebbes, "Just as one needs to be aware of their shortcomings, so too one needs to be aware of their own virtues." And there is a precise nuance here: When speaking about virtues, the term used is "their own virtues," whereas when speaking about shortcomings, the term used is simply "shortcomings," not "one's own shortcomings."

And as mentioned earlier, when teshuvah is done with the help of ten Jews, and all the more so when there are several groups of ten Jews, each one completes and assists in the teshuvah of their friend (with a pleasant demeanor, etc.), by presenting them with the truth and helping them to complete what they have lacked in their service, and to complete it to the utmost perfection.

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We do not grow despondent because we know that our deficiencies are external issues that have attached themselves to us. At the same time, we recognize that we must correct this blemish through teshuvah, by which we “make ourselves loved and cherished by G-d as if we never transgressed—and even receive great reward.”

The Chabad rebbes said: “Just like we need to be aware of deficiencies, so too must we be aware of our positive attributes.” This saying is worded precisely: the positive attributes are termed “our,” while the deficiencies are described passively as “deficiencies,” not directly attributed to us. . . .

As discussed earlier, when we work on teshuvah together with a community of ten Jews or more, we all assist and complement each other's teshuvah. We gently help each other reach an accurate picture of our state and help each other complete every deficiency, in the most perfect manner.

ולכן, אינו נופל ברוחו חס ושלום, ביודעו שהחסרון הוא דבר שמחוץ הימנו שנדבק בו. אבל לאידך - יודע הוא שתפקידו לתקן חסרון זה על ידי עבודת התשובה, ועד שנעשה “אהוב ונחמד... לפני הבורא כאילו לא חטא מעולם, ולא עוד אלא ששכרו הרבה כו” (כנ”ל מדברי הרמב”ם).

וכידוע פתגם רבותינו נשיאינו² “כשם שצריכים לידע את החסרונות, כמו כן צריכים לידע מעלות עצמו”. ובוזה ישנו דיוק נפלא: כאשר מדובר אודות המעלות - הלשון הוא “מעלות עצמו”, ואילו כאשר מדובר אודות החסרונות - הלשון הוא “חסרונות” סתם, ולא חסרונות עצמו!

וכאמור לעיל שכאשר עבודת התשובה נעשית בסיוע עשרה מישראל, ועל אחת וכמה וכמה כאשר ישנם כמה עשירות מישראל - הרי כל אחד משלים ומסייע בעבודת התשובה של חבירו (בסבר פנים יפות וכו'), על ידי זה שמעמידו על האמת, ומסייע לו להשלים את כל מה שהחסיר בעבודתו, ולהשלים זאת בתכלית השלימות.

משיחת ו' תשרי ה'תשמ"ב - בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם ה'תשמ"ב חלק א' ע' 46

Key Points:

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• The Ten Days of Teshuvah are the most suitable time for teshuvah, and during this period, an individual's power is equal to the public's power throughout the rest of the year.

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• It therefore follows that during the Ten Days of Teshuvah, the public's power is even greater.

• Teshuvah seems to require personal introspection and inner reflection; why then is it recommended to perform teshuvah in public?

• When many observant Jews traditionally act in a certain way, it is the best evidence that it is the correct way to act.

• The fact that everyone rushes to the synagogue on Yom Kippur proves that public gathering is beneficial for the process of teshuvah.

• When introspection is done with a friend, it helps one avoid subjective and biased self-judgment. The advantage of a public setting is that consulting with a community allows for diverse and comprehensive advice, as each person has unique talents in specific areas. Public introspection will assist in performing teshuvah in the best way possible.

• One should be cautious not to fall into despondency due to introspection. We should remember that sin is not an inherent flaw but an external issue that our circumstances have imposed, and it can be corrected through teshuvah.

Takeaway:

To advance spiritually, it is beneficial to seek help from good friends and share our personal state with them.