

אושר החיים

לע"נ ר' חיים יוסף ליב בן ר' שאול יצחק ז"ל

The Three Forms of Teshuvah

Chazal tell us (*Yuma* 86a) that there are three main forms of *teshuvah*. The highest form, is *teshuvah* that emanates from one's love for Hashem; *teshuvah mei'ahavah*. The second level is when the *teshuvah* comes as a result of one's awe of Hashem; *teshuvah mi'yirah*. The lowest level of *teshuvah*, is when the difficulties and adversity that one experiences in his life serve as the impetus for him to do *teshuvah*.

The *Maharal* (*Nesiv Hateshuvah perek 2*) says that these three *teshuvos* are founded in the *three midos* of the *Avos hakedoshim*. *Avraham* who stood for the *midah* of *Ahavah*, *Yitzchak* who represented the *midah* of *yirah*, and *Yaakov* who served Hashem through the life of *yissurim* which he lived. There are some who have asked, how can we attribute the lowest type of *teshuvah* as coming from the *midah* of *Yaakov avinu* - the *bechir ha'avos*, the most chosen one from the *avos*? As we will explain soon, this is not the case at all.

The *Midrash* (*Bereishis* 92:1) states, "Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says, any adversity that comes upon a person and brings his study of *Torah* to be abolished, it is a sign that it is *yissurim* of rebuke. But if adversity comes upon a person and he is able to study *Torah*, then it is a sign of *yissurim* that come from *ahavah*."

We may learn from this *midrash*, that while we do not ask for them, the difficulties of life are meant to be a tool that is immeasurably useful in one's *avodas Hashem*. However, depending upon one's orientation, these *yissurim* might serve one with different roles. This may be understood through the following parables.

A young businessman entered his car in order to go to the bank at the other end of town to deposit a \$10,000 check. From the outset, he filled up with gas and began his trip. After driving for a short while, he realized that his air conditioning suddenly stopped working. As uncomfortable as this was, he was undeterred, due to the joy of being able to deposit so much in his account. While on the way, he made business calls which landed him another few deals worth thousands of dollars more. Finally, he arrived at his destination as a very happy man.

There was another man, also in business and going to deposit a large sum of

ראש השנה
תשפ"ה

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money in the bank. Yet, after he began his trip, he realized that he ran out of gas! Being that he had valuables and cash in the car which he needed for the bank, he had no choice except to put his car in neutral and get out and push it! He kept thinking to himself, what an arduous trip this is turning out to be! Finally, he arrived at the bank and was able to deposit whatever he had.

We can explain that in the first *mashal*, the businessman was very wise to make sure that he began his trip with a full tank of gas. This is likened to one who begins his journey in life, while at a young age, working on his awareness of Hashem and his *ahavas Hashem*. If he “fills himself up” then he will be prepared for the entire journey, regardless of what it might bring. Even in an “uncomfortable car” he can continue to utilize his time becoming more and more productive in his *ruchnius*. *Yissurim* for this person, can be used productively to bring him back to Hashem in *teshuvah* while not causing him to detract from his overall service of Hashem.

Yet, in the second *mashal*, the businessman neglected to be busy early on, in the pursuit of “filling” himself with *ahavas* and *yiras Hashem*. Therefore, as soon as difficulties set in, it took over his entire “trip”. Yes, he might return to Hashem and become better. However, it came with a large price tag, as it was overwhelming for him since it took over his entire life. This was all due to his inability of having any sort of inner motivation from beforehand.

Thus, while *yissurim* are very useful in causing one to return to Hashem, it is also a gage which can let him know how dedicated is his life towards Hashem. If he has great *ahavah* for Hashem then he will not stop producing for Him. His *limud haTorah* will continue despite his difficulties. Yet, if he finds his learning to be greatly affected, then he knows that the *yissurim* are only being used to rebuke him, and bring him back on a path of *teshuvah* towards Hashem.

Although *Yaakov Avinu* had the *midah* of serving Hashem through *yissurim*, he also had a burning love for Hashem as well as an outstanding *yirah*. Thus, his difficulties most certainly served to show him how they brought him to come closer to Hashem, but not in a way which would detract from his overall service of Hashem.

We now understand, that it is true that *teshuvah* from *yissurim* in its own right, is not as great as the other forms of repenting. However, depending on the persons direction in life, this adversity is nevertheless a great means of displaying his true spiritual growth.

On the great day of *Rosh Hashana*, we most certainly ask Hashem for a year of success and devoid of any sorrow. Yet, most of our day is spent in glorifying the Name of Hashem and His Kingdom. We might explain that this akin to us “filling up the tank” with as much awe of Hashem and *ahavas Hashem* as we are able. In this way, we can be prepared for a year filled with spiritual success. Of course, we ask Hashem for a year of only good happenings. However, as we know, even the small, minor “difficulties” in life which everyone experiences, has some measure of “*yissurim*”, albeit in a very small way. Thus, we begin our year with a great measure of *ahavas* and *yiras Hashem*, so that even these “small” infringements, should not adversely affect our way of thinking and our *avodah* throughout the year.

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