

R' Srayah Deblitzki z"l (1926-2018; Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: *Teshuvah* requires more than thoughts. Just as a person who has not been observing *Mitzvot* and living a Torah lifestyle cannot be called a *Ba'al Teshuvah* / penitent unless he makes practical changes and begins observing *Mitzvot* consistently, so every person who has repented from something must examine whether he is living or acting differently than he was before. If he is not, R' Deblitzki writes, he is merely fooling himself.

R' Deblitzki continues: Many people yearn to return in *Teshuvah*, but when it comes time to take some practical action, a "cloud" comes over them that does not permit them to see anything in themselves that needs changing or improving. Having found nothing concrete to change, these well-meaning people satisfy themselves with vague resolutions such as, "Be more humble," or "Feel closer to G-d." This actually is a trick of the *Yetzer Ha'ra*, R' Deblitzki writes, for the average person's *Teshuvah* must be expressed by practical changes in behavior, not merely by changes in philosophy or outlook. (R' Deblitzki notes parenthetically that praying with greater concentration qualifies as an action, not just a thought.)

R' Deblitzki adds: *Teshuvah* must progress on two planes. First, one must make changes that are both dramatic and complete. After that, a person must work steadily on those things that could not be changed in the first fashion as well as on new challenges that arise daily. (*Ani L'Dodi* #77:1 & 4)

Sukkot

R' Chaim Elazar Shapira z"l (1868-1937; *Munkatcher Rebbe*; also a significant *Halachic* authority) writes: We read (*Eichah* 3:44), "*Sakota* / You wrapped Yourself in a cloud that no prayer can pierce." Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain; 1255-1340) explains in his Torah commentary (*Shmot* 17:16) that *Hashem's* "Throne" is surrounded by seven "clouds." (Both "Throne" and "clouds" are metaphors for spiritual concepts that we could not understand without the analogy to something familiar.) When we are not deserving of having our prayers accepted, these "clouds" form a circle like the letter "*Samech*" (ס) to keep out our prayers. On the other hand, when we are deserving, they open like the letter "*Kaf*" (כ) to allow our prayers in. (These two letters form the root of the word "*Sakota*" as well as the word "*Sukkah*.")

There is another type of cloud, however, and that is the *Ananei Ha'kavod* / Clouds of Glory that surrounded and protected *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, and which are commemorated by the *Sukkah*. Obviously, the *Ananei Ha'kavod* were not meant to distance *Bnei Yisrael* or their prayers from *Hashem*. To the contrary, they represented closeness to Him. This, writes the *Munkatcher Rebbe*, explains the *Halachic* requirement that *Schach* not be so thick that the stars will not be visible through it. This symbolizes that there is no blockage between us and *Hashem*.

(*Sha'ar Yissachar: Ma'amar Sukkat Shalom* #3)

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On the Importance of Appeasing Those We Have Hurt

Our Sages teach that one cannot achieve atonement unless he appeases those against whom he has sinned. Some say that one cannot achieve atonement even for his sins against G-d unless he has properly atoned for his sins against man and received forgiveness. (Kaf Ha'Chaim 606:3)

Why? Because atoning for only some sins is like immersing only part of one's body in a *Mikvah*. Obviously, one does not attain purity in that way.

(Mussar Ha'Mishnah)

R' Avraham Halevi Horowitz z"l (16th century; father of the *Shelah Hakadosh*) observes: The obligation to ask forgiveness from those we have offended does not mean doing what is commonly done, *i.e.*, that shortly before *Kol Nidrei*, one approaches his friends and asks their forgiveness. Inevitably, each friend responds, "You didn't do anything for which I have to forgive you." Then these friends "forgive" each other, something that was not necessary at all, since they were always dear to each other and would never wish each other harm.

In contrast, R' Horowitz continues, enemies tend not to ask forgiveness from one another. Rather, each one says, "If he were interested in peace, he would come to me." A wise man recognizes that the true sign of strength is humility, and he takes the initiative to appease his enemy, even if his enemy is in the wrong.

(Emek Berachah)

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l writes: Requesting general forgiveness for all sins that one has committed against another is effective only for minor offenses. [If one committed a more serious offense, he must specify it when he requests forgiveness.] (Quoted in *Halichot Shlomo: Mo'adim* p.44)

If one who has sinned against you does not come to you to seek forgiveness, you should make yourself available to him so that he might ask forgiveness.

(Mateh Ephraim)

Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to recite the following prayer (part of *Tefilah Zakkah*) which is printed in many *Machzorim*:

"I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or financially, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any sins between man and his neighbor--except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover in accordance with *Halachah*, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me'--except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account.

"And just as I forgive everyone, so may You (*Hashem*) grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he will grant me complete forgiveness."

"He said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea, and the sea will calm down for you, for I know that it is because of me that this terrible storm is upon you.' Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to the shore, but they could not, because the sea was growing stormier upon them." (Yonah 1:12-13)

R' Avraham Rivlin *shlita* (former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, Israel) writes: The book of *Yonah* is associated with *Teshuvah*, and therefore it was chosen to be read as the *Haftarah* in *Mincha* on the Day of Repentance--*Yom Kippur*. The most obvious connection between *Yonah* and *Teshuvah* is the repentance of the people of Nineveh. However, this connection is not so simple according to the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish recorded in *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Ta'anit* 2:1): "The *Teshuvah* of Nineveh was deceitful!" Why then is *Yonah* read on this day?

R' Rivlin answers: There is another act of *Teshuvah* in the book of *Yonah*--one that barely gets noticed--and that is the repentance of the sailors who start out as idolators and end up recognizing *Hashem's* control over everything. *Yonah* tells the sailors expressly, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea . . . for I know that it is because of me that this terrible storm is upon you." The sailors could, with a clear conscience, sacrifice *Yonah's* life to save their own. Yet, they are unwilling to do so, and instead they try to save him by trying to row back to shore. The prophet goes out of his way to describe the ferocity of the storm (1:4): "A mighty wind . . . a great tempest . . . and the ship threatened to be broken up." Later we are told (1:11), "The sea grows stormier," and later still (1:13), "The sea was growing stormier upon them." With their own lives on the line, these former idolators (1:5--"Each cried out to his own god") rise to the occasion and recognize *Hashem*, as we read (1:14), "Then they called out to *Hashem*, and said, 'Please, *Hashem*! Let us not now perish on account of this man's soul, and do not count it for us as innocent blood, for You, *Hashem*, as You wished so have You done'." That is an act of *Teshuvah* that makes *Yonah* worthy of being read on *Yom Kippur*.

R' Rivlin adds: There is a lesson here about how to study *Tanach*. Why do we not notice the sailors' repentance? It is because we know the story too well. We already know that *Yonah* will be thrown into the sea and the storm will subside, so we fail to appreciate each verse along the way as we would if we were seeing it for the first time. To take another example: *Yonah* says (2:3), "I called, in my distress, to *Hashem*, and He answered me; from the belly of the lower-world I cried out . . ." Do we feel when we read *Yonah's* story that he is in "distress," trapped in "the belly of the lower-world"? We do not, because we know that in just a moment he will be released from that predicament. But that is not the proper way to study *Tanach*, R' Rivlin writes. Rather, we must place ourselves in the story, "living" each verse as the protagonists did, not thinking about what comes next or how the story ends.

(*Ha'setarim B'Esther* p.18-19)