

YOM KIPPUR

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON
THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

HOLIDAYS: TISHREI

ספר זה נדפס ביוזמת וע"י
הרה"ת ר' משה אהרן צבי בן מרים
וזוגתו מרת **העניא רבקה רות בת צפורה**
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שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
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ימלא השי"ת כל משלותיהם לטובה ולברכה,
מתוך בריאות הנכונה והשלימה,
אריכות ימים ושנים טובות, והצלחה רבה ומופלגה
בכל אשר יפנו בגשמיות וברוחניות
ומתוך הרחבה אמיתית



ולזכות ילדיהם
שלום אליעזר, מנחם מענדל,
יונה מרדכי וזוגתו **בילא,**
חנה פערל ובעלה **שמואל יעקב** שיחיו

שיגדלו להיות חסידים יראי שמים ולמדנים
מקושרים לכ"ק אדמו"ר זי"ע
והולכים בדרכיו אשר הורגו נס"ו
מתוך בריאות הנכונה והשלימה,
ואריכות ימים ושנים טובות

דִּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהֵמָּצְאוֹ קְרָאֵהוּ בְּהִיטּוֹ קְרוֹב

Seek G-d when He is found, call Him when He is near.

ישעיהו נה, ו | Yeshayahu 55:6

Find and Go Seek

Commenting on the verse, “Seek G-d when He is found,” the Talmud declares that the time of year when “G-d is found,” which is therefore the best time to “seek Him,” is during the ten-day period from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur.¹ These days are particularly opportune for *teshuvah*—repenting and returning to G-d.

“Even though repentance and calling out [to G-d] are desirable at all times,” explains the Rambam, “in the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately, as is written: ‘Seek G-d when He is found.’”²

What is the significance of G-d being “found” in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and the unique service of “seeking” Him in *teshuvah*?

At the start of a new year, when a person takes an honest reckoning of the past 12 months, he is certain to discover that many areas in his spiritual life were far from admirable. Considering all his shortcomings, one may begin to question if he is indeed capable of being genuinely “close” to G-d.

In response to this, the prophet Yeshayahu assures us that there *is* a time when G-d is “found.” A “find” is something that

1. Rosh Hashanah 18a.

2. *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Teshuvah* 2:6.

comes unexpectedly—unlike that which you have earned and have come to expect. During the period from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, says the Talmud, G-d is *found*. Out of His love for His people, G-d makes Himself available and close even to those who have not previously made any effort to find Him, and who could therefore not expect to experience His closeness.

This unearned and undeserved accessibility to G-d that a Jew discovers in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the result of G-d's unconditional love for the Jewish people despite their shortcomings, inspires the individual not to merely chance upon G-d, but to actively "seek" Him: to aggressively pursue a more consistent relationship with G-d through regular Torah study and mitzvah observance. *Because* G-d is found, we begin to seek.

—*Likutei Sichos* vol. 34, pp. 200-203

וּמַל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְאֶת לִבְּךָ וְרַעְדָה לְאַהֲבָה אֶת
ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ

Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, for the sake of your life.

Dvorim 30:6 | דְּבָרִים ל"ו

A Hint of Love

The mystics and Sages have long observed that by combining the first letters of each of the four words אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְאֶת לִבְּךָ—“your heart and the hearts of” (from the phrase “Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring”), we form the word אֱלּוּל—Elul, the name of the month during which this verse is traditionally read.

The hint to the month of Elul in the context of “circumcising your heart” is interpreted by some as alluding to the prevalent theme of penitence that characterizes this month preceding the Days of Awe—Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

A simple reading of the verse, however, implies that the “circumcision of the heart” referred to here is not remorse and contrition. Rather, it is a Divine act enabling us to love G-d more genuinely and profoundly: “G-d will circumcise your heart... so that you will love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, for the sake of your life.” When our hearts will be cured of their natural inclination toward foreign temptation and desire, we will be able to truly love G-d with all our being. As such, the hint in this verse to

the month of Elul highlights another prevalent theme in this season: our loving relationship with G-d.

This parallels the other acrostic associated with the word Elul, drawn from the words in Shir Hashirim אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִּי—“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” In this verse, too, the emphasis is on our relationship with G-d as “our beloved,” and us as His.

Accordingly, the Alter Rebbe illustrates the spiritual potency of the month of Elul with the parable of a king who, prior to entering the capital, passes through the fields outside the city, where he graciously receives all who come to greet him, openly displaying his delight at encountering each of them. Just as the king’s radiant joy upon seeing his subjects undoubtedly inspires a reciprocal sense of love in all who come to greet him, G-d’s joyful acceptance of all who search for Him in the month of Elul arouses, in the heart of every Jew, profound feelings of love and attachment towards Him.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 29, pp. 170-171

בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה שֶׁאֵין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָיָם וְאֵין לָנוּ מִזְבֵּחַ
בִּפְרָה אֵין שָׁם אֱלֹא תְשׁוּבָה. הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְכַפֶּרֶת עַל כָּל
הַעֲבֵרוֹת... וְעֲצֻמוֹ שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר לְשָׁבִים.

At present, when the Temple is not established and we have no altar for atonement, there remains nothing else but repentance. Teshuvah atones for all sins ... And the very day of Yom Kippur atones for the repentant.

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Teshuvah

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הל' תשובה א, ג | 1:3

Pardoning People, Not Sins

The Rambam describes various services and sacrifices offered in the Beis Hamikdash that served to atone for a person's sins. In the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, says the Rambam, when we can no longer bring these sacrifices, the only means by which one can atone for his sins is through *teshuvah*—sincere repentance and commitment to return to G-d and His service. The Rambam concludes this law by adding that the very day of Yom Kippur atones for the penitents.

Why does the Rambam first state unequivocally that, “At present ... there remains *nothing else but* repentance,” only to say a few lines later that Yom Kippur also atones?

Evidently, the Rambam speaks here of two different types of atonement: one that can currently *only* be achieved through repentance, and the other that is the unique domain of Yom Kippur.

Teshuvah, sincere remorse and abandonment of one's past misdeeds, atones for one's *sins* by removing the negative energy that they created and undoing the harm they caused.

The atonement brought about by the very day of Yom Kippur, however, rather than annulling a person's sins, *extracts the individual* from the mire of sin. On Yom Kippur, the pristine core of the Jew's G-dly soul is revealed, allowing for the mistakes of the past to be overlooked and forgiven.

This distinction is highlighted by the precise words the Rambam uses to describe the effects of *teshuvah* in contrast with the effects of Yom Kippur. "Teshuvah," says the Rambam, "atones for all *sins*." "The very day of Yom Kippur," in contrast, brings atonement for "the repentant," the *individual*. Granted, one must allow Yom Kippur to be effective by identifying with the theme of the day and being "repentant." However, because the atonement brought about by Yom Kippur is not the annulment of specific sins but the elevation of the individual, even if a person has not completely repented and is merely a "repentant" person in attitude, that too is sufficient for "the very day of Yom Kippur" to reveal and restore his perfect original state.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 27, pp. 126-132

יום הכּפּוּרִים הוא זמן תשובה לכל

Yom Kippur is the time of teshuvah for all.

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הל' תשובה ב, ז | Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 2:7

The Time Machine

The prophet Yirmiyahu admonishes the Jewish people, “Return, O’ mischievous children.”³ If a person repents, the Talmud explains, G-d will regard his past sins as mere immaturity and foolish mischief, like the forgivable misdeeds of a mischievous child.⁴ Rashi observes that *teshuvah* evidently works retroactively: it not only protects the individual from impending punishment, it actually undoes his wrongful deeds of the past as though they were not sinful at all.

How can repenting *now* change not only the future, but also the facts of what has already transpired?

One explanation is that the logical rule that we can only affect the future and not the past applies only if we are attempting to inherently *change* the past reality. It is possible, however, to shed new light on what took place, retroactively exposing events of the past for what they truly were.

This explains how *teshuvah* has the power not only to effect forgiveness for our past misdeeds but also to transform them. The true and unchangeable identity of a Jew is his attachment to G-d and his devotion to goodness and holiness. During his momentary lapse, this inherent goodness was merely hidden. When his profound love for G-d motivates him to return in

³ Yirmiyahu 3:22.

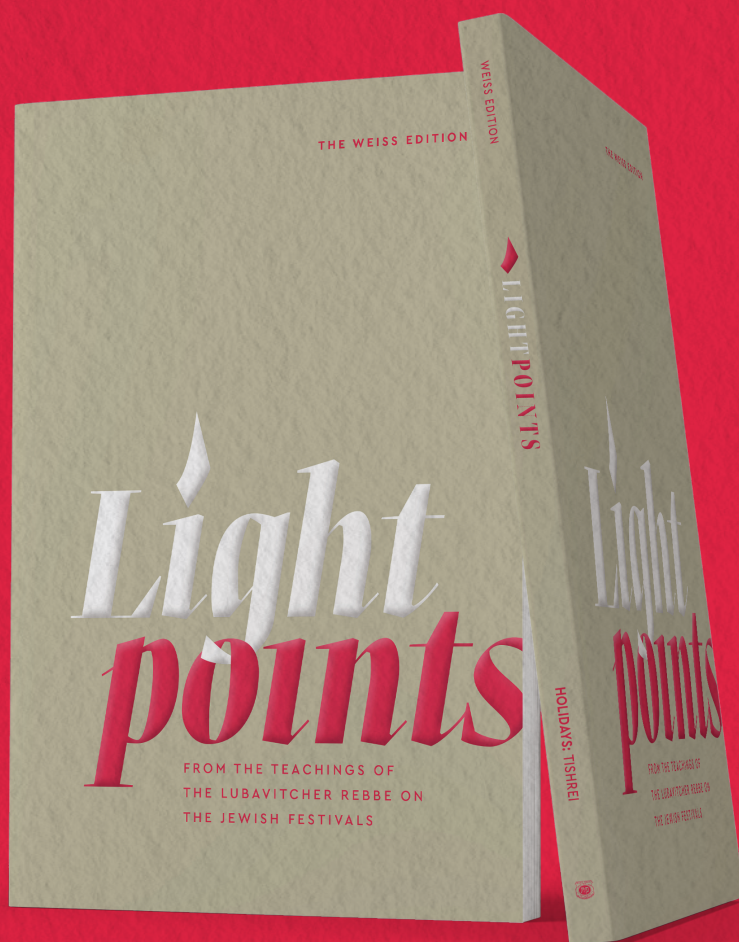
⁴ Yoma 86a.

teshuvah, giving expression to the good and pure soul that he was all along, he reveals that his past sins were merely momentary bouts of forgivable childishness.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 6, p. 54

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