

YOM KIPPUR, SHABBAT AND HYDROGEN BOMBS

Too often in life, we focus on the "what", and forget about the who, the when and the where. So many times in life, it is not about *what* you did, it is about who you are that did it, when and where you did it. This week, I was lucky enough to hear Harav Ganz speak about the upcoming Yom Kippur, which falls out on Shabbos. The Rav brought to light that this upcoming Yom Kippur, that falls out on Shabbat, is such a special day. It is a double powerhouse of kedusha.

R Ganz mentioned something from R Chazkel Abrahmski. R Chazkel brought the episode in the Talmud Yerushalmi in Chagigah, where R Meir saw his Rebbi, Elisha Ben Avuyah, who went astray and became Acher. R Meir saw his Rebbi riding a horse on Shabbat. So R Meir asked Acher why he does not consider doing Teshuvah. And Elisha answered that he can't do Teshuvah. Because once, when he was riding his horse on Shabbat that was Yom Kippur, near the place of the Kodesh Kedoshim, he heard a Heavenly Voice call out from within, שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹבְבִים הַרְץ מְאִלִּישׁ, שִׁידַע כּוֹחַ וּמוֹרֵד בִּי. Everyone, do Teshuva, except for Elisha Ben Avuyah, for he knew my strength and is rebelling against Me. (See Yerushalmi Chagigah).

This is strange. The Talmud Yerushalmi mentions how far Elisha fell. He was guilty of having committed the most serious transgressions possible. He had had engaged in forbidden relations; he had violated the Shabbat in what is prohibited from the Torah (uprooting) ; he was a Moser; he killed Rabbis with witchcraft... But all

that was not enough to bar Elisha from being able to do Teshuvah. Only because he was riding his horse on Shabbat Yom Kippur was he disqualified, an act that is a rabbinic prohibition, not something prohibited by the Torah!

The answer is that what caused Elisha to "lose" it wasn't what he did. It was Elisha's riding a horse on Shabbat that was Yom Kippur, next to the Temple Mount! Even though this was a rabbinic prohibition, the fact that it was done on Shabbat Yom Kippur and next to the Temple, it was a blatant expression of his lack of recognition of the double holiness of this day. He had no sensitivity to the double holiness of the day - no awe of the holiness of the Temple. These three things meant nothing to Elisha. He had lost that inner feeling for religion. He lost the power to do Teshuva!

One of the worst episodes of the Destruction of the First Temple was that in which Nevuzaraden killed 80, 000 young Kohanim, to calm the blood that was bubbling on the floor in the Temple. That blood belonged to the murdered prophet, Zechariah, who had actually prophesied the destruction. And the Pesikta explains why they deserved such a punishment, 'שבע עבירות עשו ישר' באותו היום. הרגו כהן, ונביא, ודיין, ושפכו דם נקי, וחיללו את השם, ושימאו את העזרה, ויום הכיפורים היה שחל להיות בשבת "They killed a Kohen, a Prophet, a Judge, they spilled innocent blood, the desecrated the Name of G-d, they defiled the Temple, and it was Yom Kippur that fell out on Shabbat." After the first five grave reasons, what could have been the

importance of the fact that the multiple desecration occurred on Shabbat Yom Kippur? How could the fact of being Yom Kippur and Shabbat make it any worse?

The answer seems to be that because Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year, where the body is disconnected from physicality, and the soul soars...and Shabbat is the day when we Jews are the testimony to G-d's creating the world, we are talking about a tremendous dosage of Kedusha in the world, at one time. To illustrate the tremendous power of this day, I'd remind you about the hydrogen bomb that is on the table of today's politics, that N. Korea is threatening D. Trump: What is the difference between an atom bomb and a hydrogen bomb? The atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki exploded with the yield of 15 kilotons and 20 kilotons of TNT, respectively, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists. In contrast, the first test of a thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb, in the United States in November, 1952, yielded an explosion on the order of 10,000 kilotons of TNT, an explosion that would

be capable of sinking America, G-d forbid. Yom Kippur that occurs on Shabbat is like a hydrogen bomb. It has enough power to change a continent. And if you look at history, you will notice something amazing: over the last 100 years, the years that had tremendous power in them, tremendous potential for Mashiach, were years that Yom Kippur fell out on Shabbat. 1912-1914 were two Yom Kippur- Shabbats in a row, and that was the First World War. According to the Malbim's explanation of the prophecy of Daniel, a time when Mashiah could have come (Daniel 27, 5). Then again, 1915-1917, two Yom Kippur-Shabbats in a row, continuation of WW1. Then again, 1939-1940, WWII. 1966-1967 Two Yom Kippur-Shabbats, the Six Day War. The Yom Kippur War in 1973 started on Yom Kippur and Shabbat.

This means that Yom Kippur that falls out on Shabbat is a HUGE day. It means that, no matter what you have done, make sure to take this day very seriously, because it has tremendous power. We are all about to experience the most powerful day possible. Make sure you don't blow it...

A BAAL TESHUVA FROM CHELM

The Masters of Mussar teach us that Teshuva does not mean to be better. It means to be different. The fellow who discovers that he got on the wrong train cannot just get up and sit in the opposite seat, facing the direction in which he wants to be going. He's got to get off the train. Find where he went wrong. And start on a new track. When people discover that they have gotten themselves into a habit that does them no good, the solution is never on the same plateau as the problem. Only uprooting and starting again can make the difference.

This we find in the words of Rabbeinu Yonah in his Iggeret Hateshuva. There is only one way to do Teshuva: It is by seeing yourself as a new person and starting afresh. Getting into the "now" and making sure that you do your best that any past mistake will not be

repeated. It is not to live in the past and in regret. Regret is an acutely painful feeling, and one that has its very specific time and place. Regret can be effective only AFTER a person has changed. Despite the fact that Teshuva is a combination of **קבלה** and **הרטה** and **על העתיד**, *Regret for the past* and *Accepting a new path for the future*, Teshuva does not start with regret. (This may be the reason why G-d made Rosh Hashana before Yom Kippur: to teach us that before we work on atonement, scrubbing the sins of the past by means of regret, we must initiate a new beginning.) And most people get so busy with regret that they just never do teshuva, no matter how much they try.

This is true about most things for which we would like to do teshuva. We usually attempt teshuva on things that we feel bad about. And

then, we get so busy feeling bad about them that we get sidetracked and end up not rectifying them. Regret, says R' Yonah, should be reserved for *after* change. When someone recognizes faulty behavior in himself, he should first figure out what new habits need to be adopted. He should put the new behavior into practice, and only then, after he has already effected a change, can he go through the hell of regret. Why in this order? R' Hutner writes that the Mitzvah of Teshuva is a Mitzvah Temidit, a constant mitzvah that can and should be done at any time, in any place. We learn this from the words of King David וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי נֹגְדֵי תַמִּיד. Even so, *this refers to the part of Teshuva that involves making changes for the future, not to regret.* Regret, in its deepest essence, has its root in anger, in not accepting one's past self or behaviors, and is a close cousin to rebuke. The word rebuke is usually understood by us as reprimanding others. R' Hutner points out *that regret is actually rebuking oneself.* And, says R' Hutner, just as rebuke is a mitzvah, so is regret. The problem is that just as rebuke is something that most people are not capable of doing properly, (especially nowadays) so, too, is having regret for sin. Although regret is necessary, it must be approached and felt in the proper way, with caution. It is very hard to rebuke others properly, and no less difficult to rebuke oneself. It's also hard to recognize one's personal strengths, while regretting actions that resulted from the opposite: from personal weakness. Therefore, says R' Hutner, regret cannot be a Mitzvah Temidit. This is ironic, because most people who want to do Teshuva for something in the past just cannot seem to get the regret out of their head, making it somewhat Temidi. That is the only part that should *not* be Temidi.

The town of Chelm decided to build a new synagogue. So, some strong, able-bodied men were sent to a mountaintop to chop down

trees for long beams to build the holy building. The men put the logs on their shoulders, four at a time, and trudged down the mountain to the town below. When they arrived, the town chief yelled, "Foolish men! You should have rolled the logs down the mountain!" The chief went up to the top of the mountain and kicked the last log. The log rolled down the hill very smoothly. The men agreed this was an excellent idea. So they trudged back up the mountain with the heavy logs still on their shoulders, and rolled them back down again.

Let the mistakes of the past be the lessons for the future, *but don't waste the future feeling bad about mistakes of the past.* We might even lose our creativity to change our behavior due to our feelings of inadequacy, due to our feelings of regret over slips and foolish mistakes that have been made. We need that creativity to find a new way, to plan a different path for the future. It is hard to plan a new direction, to figure out where you want to go, when you are looking out of your rear view mirror.

On a similar note, I have found the following to be very true while coaching people. When a person tries to break a negative habit, many times he finds himself in a losing battle. His conscious and rational decisions lose to habit and the subconscious. "Stop smoking! Stop eating unhealthy or fattening foods! Stop thinking negative or improper thoughts!" None of these commands seems to work. Neither does "Stop being afraid! Stop spacing out! Stop feeling down! Stop laughing! Stop crying!" When one tells himself what *not* to do, or, better yet, makes a negative command to the subconscious, it disobeys. Why? The subconscious accepts only suggestions of what *to do*: not commands of what to "stop" doing or "don't do". It simply deletes the "don't", and carries on with the rest....

There are two ways to do teshuva. Stop sinning!. Stop gossiping!. Stop! Or start doing something else. The subconscious knows how to get a person to continue doing something, even though he has made a rational decision to stop that behavior. So, instead of telling your body to stop a certain habit or obsession, thought process or emotion, tell yourself something to *do*, think or believe. The fellow who is on a diet, who is hungry, should not say to himself *stop desiring the caramel dream chocolate cream and peanut butter whatever*, rather *reach for a carrot* instead. The cigarette smoker should not tell himself smoking kills, you will die younger, or anything else that implies desisting and has not helped him stop smoking until now. Instead, he should *chew on a pencil*, or something else. The person who has a fear does not stop being afraid when he tells

himself to stop being afraid. (Eventually one starts to worry that he cannot control his worries.) But if he asks himself rational questions, "*What are the chances of this happening ? What are the advantages of having such a fear?*" then there is a better chance that he will deal more effectively with the fear. Why ? because the subconscious does not listen to commands so easily. But it will learn from a new way of behavior, answering an effective question, new body language (posture/physiology) or action. It will listen to a positive suggestion, where there is no resistance or habit.

If we stay in regret, if we stay at the stop sign, we will never change. If we want change, we must come up with new behaviors, new thoughts, new tactics and new beliefs .

SHABBAT SHALOM, YOSEF FARHI

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