

Vayelech/Shabbos Shuva 5777

October 7, 2016

A Taste of Torah

The Hidden Spark

By Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

This Shabbos is referred to as Shabbos Shuva - a Shabbos of repentance. Many of us hear the word repentance and let out a sigh. "This is not for me... I am too far gone... How can I, in my current, lowly state, do teshuva?" In reality, though, this could not be farther from the truth. *Teshuva* (repentance) is within the grasp of every one of us! Let us explore the concept of repentance and how it applies to us.

The word *teshuvah* means to repent. In truth, it also means to return. Whom are we returning to? The simple answer is that we are returning to G-d, like the verse says in Hoshea (14:2), "Return, O Israel, to Hashem your G-d."

The Sfias Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter, the Gerrer Rebbe; 1847-1905), however, understands differently; allow me to quote his words.

"Even though a man has sinned a great deal, he must believe that the primary, holy soul is still inside him, intact. This is what the verse means (when it says) to 'return to Hashem' - return to the G-dliness which is living inside you."

This means that we have a soul inside us which is still pristine and pure; the only problem is that we forgot about it and lost our connection to it. Our task is to reconnect to the holy Jewish spark that is sitting right inside us, which, in essence, means that we have to return to ourselves. We are far but, in reality, we are so incredibly close!

The Torah compares Man to a tree (Devarim 20:19). A tree does not

need to be replanted every year; one just needs to care for and tend to it so that it will produce its fruit. So, too, one does not need to plant new things within oneself. Everything is in place already, one just needs to connect to what's inside and provide the opportunity to produce fruits!

Let us take this idea further. The Torah commands us to love Hashem. The question has bothered many: How is it possible to command someone to love something or someone? Either one loves someone or one doesn't! Within the question, says the Sfias Emes, lies the answer. There is no need to create a love for Hashem; our soul inside us already loves Hashem! Our job is to connect to that love that is already there. All that's needed is to remove the barriers and cultivate and build the connection.

This concept provides a depth of understanding as to why it is called "Shabbos" Shuva, with a specific focus on Shabbos. On the elevated and holy day of Shabbos, it is so much easier to connect to the *neshama* inside us. On Shabbos, we have a natural, powerful desire to be our real selves; half the work is already done.

May we all merit to achieve complete repentance, being able to say that we have removed all barriers, and once again relight the hidden spark lying dormant inside ourselves. Let us use these powerful days, and especially this Shabbos, to turn this tiny spark into a raging fire, thus reconnecting and returning to our true selves.

Stories For The Soul

The First of Many

based on a story in Rav Gifter by Rabbi Yechiel Spiro, Mesorah Publications

Shortly after the end of World War II, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter was accompanying Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch, the Dean of the Telshe Yeshiva, on a fundraising trip to New York. Rabbi Bloch had escaped Europe and had opened the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland several years earlier.

While there, they stopped by a Jewish bookstore, and Rabbi Bloch asked the elderly storeowner if he could purchase a volume of *Ketzos Hachoshen*, a Torah work studied by advanced scholars. The elderly man climbed up a ladder and retrieved an old dusty copy of the sefer. It had obviously been there for quite some time.

Just as he was about to hand the sefer to Rabbi Bloch, the storeowner pulled it back and looked at him intensely. Then he said, "I will sell you this book on two conditions. Firstly, I understand that you have lost your entire family and yeshiva in the European inferno, and that you are trying to rebuild here. For your own sanity, give it up. There is only so much heartache a man can take, and you are setting yourself up for failure. There is no place for such a yeshiva in America."

Rabbi Bloch listened silently as the man continued. "Second, let's be honest. America will never have the Torah scholarship that was in Europe. What Hitler destroyed cannot be rebuilt. Treat the sefer you are holding as a relic, because it may very well be the last *Ketzos Hachoshen* that will ever be sold in America!"

Rabbi Bloch didn't respond. He purchased the sefer and walked out. After a few introspective moments, he turned to Rabbi Gifter and exclaimed, "He's right!"

Rabbi Gifter was stunned, but Rabbi

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Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL ANNUAL DONOR APPRECIATION EVENT THIS SUNDAY, OCT. 9TH

The Kollel will hold its annual Donor Appreciation Event this Sunday, October 9th, 6:45 pm at the offices of Altura Periodontics, 3690 S. Yosemite St., Denver, CO 80237. For more info or to reserve, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

MAINTAINING JUDICIAL IMPARTIALITY AT NOVEMBER 2ND T4T

Join The Honorable David Richman, Judge, Colorado Court of Appeals, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they find balance in judicial conflicts of interest. November 2nd, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What halacha applies to the *mincha* (afternoon prayers) of all fast days, with the exception of Yom Kippur?

A: According to the original practice, *Birchas Kohanim* (the priestly blessing) was performed every day at *shacharis*. This custom is still maintained by Sefardim, as well as most Ashkenazic communities in Eretz Yisroel. Although technically it should be recited at every daytime prayer, *mincha* was excluded due to the concern that the Kohanim may be inebriated (and unfit for this mitzvah). Only on public fast days, when there is no

such concern, is *Birchas Kohanim* recited at *mincha*. On Yom Kippur, however, it is recited at *ne'ila*, not *mincha*. (The reasoning for this is complex; see Ta'anis 26b. It should be noted that although *Birchas Kohanim* is not recited at *mincha*, the related version of the final blessing of *Shemone Esrei* according to *Nusach Ashkenaz*, *Sim Shalom*, is still recited. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 129:2)

This week's question: What is unique about the Torah-reading of Parshas Ha'azinu (besides the manner in which it's written in the Torah)?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Don Yitzchak Abarbanel Part IV

The final Jews of Spain left on August 2, 1492 - Tisha B'Av (the 9th of Av). The Abarbanel led the faithful Jews into exile, and headed for Naples, Italy. Initially, Ferdinand of Spain asked the ruler of Naples, King Ferrante I (the Italian version of Ferdinand) not to provide refuge to the Jews who had arrived there. Ferrante ignored the request, and Jews, including the Abarbanel, settled in Naples.

The Abarbanel had succeeded in exporting some of his wealth and much of his library from Spain before his departure. He hoped to devote himself completely to the uninterrupted study of Torah in his new location. It was not to be. Ferrante I, king of Naples, enlisted the Abarbanel as his treasurer. After Ferrante's death, his son, Alphonso, became king, and the Abarbanel served him faithfully.

In 1494, King Charles of France attacked Naples, and the Abarbanel's home was burned to the ground - including his irreplaceable library. King Alphonso fled to Sicily, and the Abarbanel accompanied him until Alphonso's death not long after.

The Abarbanel then wandered to Corfu, and returned to Naples in 1496. Upon his return, he completed his commentary to Tanach (an acronym for Torah, *Nevi'im* and *Kesuvim* - Torah, Books of the Prophets, and Writings). He also wrote a commentary on *Pirkei Avos* (Ethics of the Fathers) and another one on the *Pesach Haggadah*. His prolific pen produced a number of philosophic works, many of which focused on Messianic themes. Many of his writing were intended to strengthen his despondent Sephardic (Spanish) brethren who had suffered so much.

Stories for the Soul

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Bloch continued. "Logically, he is 100% correct, for logically, there is no chance that Torah scholarship and yeshivos can flourish in this country. And logically, this should indeed be the final *Ketzos* ever purchased in America.

"But Torah doesn't adhere to the laws of logic! The greatness of Torah is that it can inconceivably perpetuate itself and rebuild

despite all odds. You will see that Telshe will indeed be rebuilt here in America, and there will be more volumes of *Ketzos Hachoshen* reprinted in this country than ever before."

In this week's parsha, Moshe assures the Jewish People that Torah will never be forgotten, despite the many challenges they would need to overcome. Torah, like the Jewish People, is forever.