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Parshas Haazinu ✍️ Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

The Power of Teshuva

Every Jew should appreciate that the opportunity to do Teshuva is a tremendous gift. Considering the nature of a sinner's actions, the kindness of Hashem in allowing us to rectify our sins is mind-boggling. By audaciously ignoring his Benefactor's (Hashem's) wishes, the sinner demonstrates his ingratitude. Furthermore, while sinning he uses the time and strength he has been given to defy the will of the Giver.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner zt"l, however, reveals an even greater dimension of the consequences of our actions and the power of Teshuva. The Posuk states in Parshas Nitzavim, "Lo Bashamayim Hee... V'lo Me'ever Layam... Ki Karov Eilecha Hadavar Meod." "It is not in the Heavens or across the sea that it is so difficult to attain, rather it is extremely near to you." According to the Ramban's commentary, the subject of these verses is the mitzvah of Teshuva. If so, why would one think it imperative to rise to the heavens or cross the sea in order to repent?

To properly answer this obvious question, a deeper understanding of the destructive power of sin is essential. In the first chapter of Sefer Nefesh HaChaim, the author explains how Hashem entrusted man with the tremendous ability to bring forth goodness into our world or, Chas V'Sholom, to cause terrible calamities. When Adam was first created, the landscape was bleak and desolate, as all the vegetation had not yet come to the Earth's fore. Adam's prayers were the catalyst allowing the land to "come to life" and produce its bounty. We can better understand this phenomenon by envisioning Hashem "waiting" to pour down His goodness; man's proper actions must create the "plumbing" which permits our world to receive this goodness. Every mitzva one does strengthens "pipes" or creates new ones.

In contrast, when one sins, he cracks or even destroys those conduits of blessing, and the world's goodness is diminished accordingly. As the Gemora states, fruit has diminished in both size and quality of taste due to our sins (Sotah 49). Besides diminishing the good, a sin strengthens the power of retribution; great calamities can befall the whole world due to one person's

action. Not for naught does the Gemara say that one should view the world as exactly equal in terms of merits and faults; **your** single action can tilt the scale (Kiddushin 40b)!

On the one hand, this tremendous power allows us to accumulate much merit, as the whole universe is served via our good deeds. On the other hand, this is a formidable responsibility since every action, no matter how minor, can cause such ramifications. In fact, this power was withdrawn from the other nations due to their reckless behavior (some say after the incident of Migdal Bavel) and remains in the sole possession of Klal Yisroel.

We can now comprehend the degree to which one's sins can cause indescribable damage amidst the higher spheres, where Hashem wishes to channel His goodness. Natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes around the globe may be attributed to his actions as well. One might therefore assume that the only way to repair the havoc is to travel to the location of the damage, to climb to the Heavens or cross the sea.

However, Hashem in His Mercy gave us the unbelievable gift called Teshuva, which allows one to repair all the destruction from the comfort of his own home. Through sincere regret and changes in behavior, one can rectify all the ravages he inflicted on both the physical and spiritual planes.

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, Hashem is even more accessible than usual, and Teshuva can be done more easily. Let us take advantage of this opportunity to use the power of Teshuva to benefit ourselves and our world! May we all be zoche to a complete Teshuva and a Gemar Chasima Tova.

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Binding the Daled Minim

Rabbi Shlomo Francis

The Gemara (Succah 33b) quotes the opinion of R' Yehuda that the *daled minim* must be bound to each other (*egged*). The halacha, however, follows the opinion of the Rabbanan who do not require *egged*. The Gemara (ibid.) relates that according to the Rabbanan, although it is **not** a requirement, it **is** a mitzvah to perform *egged*, as it enhances the beauty of the mitzvah. Today the *daled minim* are usually bound together with a specially designed *lulav* holder and a large ring. It is important that the ring be adjusted properly; if the *lulav* slides freely through the holder, one has not fulfilled the mitzvah of *egged*.

The Rema cites the minhag to tie the leaves of the *lulav* with three knots. These knots help hold the leaves of the *lulav* together. The three knots also correspond to the three *avos* (patriarchs). According to the Taz and the most common custom, the large ring that binds the *lulav* to the other minim is included in these three knots. The Elyah Rabbah, however, writes that one should tie three knots aside from the ring that is used for *egged*.

To properly fulfill the mitzvah of *lulav*, the leaves should sway when one shakes the *lulav*. Therefore, writes the Taz, one should not place any rings on the top *tefach* (approximately 4 inches) of the *lulav*. The Shulchan Aruch Harav (651:11) writes that the top *tefach* is measured from the top of the *shedra* (the spine of the *lulav*).

According to some opinions, the *egged* should be done by one who is obligated in the mitzvah of *lulav*. Therefore, it is preferable that a male who has reached the age of bar mitzvah bind the *lulav*. If the *hadassim* and *aravos* are removed from the *egged* for storage, a male that is bar mitzvah should bind them together to the *lulav* (if a male will be fulfilling the mitzvah with these *minim*). The *hadassim* are placed to the right side of the *lulav*, and the *aravos* are placed to the left. The Mishna Berura (651:12) states that according to kabbalistic literature, the *hadassim* should rise slightly above the *aravos*. The *shedra* of the *lulav* must rise a full *tefach* (approximately 4 inches) beyond the *hadassim* and *aravos* (Mechaber 650:2). The Mishna Berura (651:13) writes that if one places his hand below the stems of the *aravos* and *hadassim* when holding the *lulav*, while not ideal, it is still considered as if he held all the *minim* together.

HOLDING THE DALED MINIM

The Gemara (Succah 37b) states that the *lulav* is taken in the right hand (or one's dominant hand) and the *esrog* in the left hand, because the *lulav* contains three *minim*, thereby containing three mitzvos whereas the *esrog* is only one mitzvah. It might seem that this Gemara is permitting one to take both the *lulav* and *esrog* in the right hand. However, the Gemara in Succah (34b) states that the *esrog* may not be bound together with the other *minim*. The Orchos Chaim writes that taking the *esrog* in the same hand as the other *minim* is also not allowed. The Taz, however, distinguishes between **binding** the *esrog* with the other *minim*, which the Gemara prohibits, and holding them together in one hand, which the Taz permits. The contemporary poskim conclude that one should certainly be *machmir* to perform the mitzvah with the *lulav* and *esrog* in different hands.

The Ben Ish Chai writes that people err when taking the *lulav* and *esrog* in the same hand during Hoshanos. Rather, throughout the Hoshanos, the *esrog* should be held in one hand and the *lulav* in the other. Other Acharonim are lenient if one finds it difficult to hold the siddur while both hands are grasping the *daled minim* (Even Yisroel, Orchos Rabbeinu). During *Hallel*, the poskim agree that the *daled minim* should be held in two separate hands.

CHATZITZA

There may not be a *chatzitza* (separation) between one's hand and the *lulav*. The *lulav* holder does not constitute a *chatzitza* because it is made of *lulav* leaves ("*min b'mino eino chotzet*"). Any item serving as an enhancement to the *lulav*, such as a ring or *lulav* holder, is not *chotzet*, even if it is made of other materials. However, stickers or rubber bands are considered *chatzitzos* if they are not being used to bind the *lulav*.

According to some opinions, even a small *chatzitza*, such as a ring or tefillin straps, constitutes a *chatzitza*. According to the Rema, an object is not considered a *chatzitza* if it does not cover the whole hand. The Mishnah Berurah quotes both opinions and concludes that one who takes the *lulav* with a *chatzitza* on his hand must take it a second time. However, a beracha should not be recited the second time. According to this opinion, women must also be careful with *chatzitza* so as to avoid a beracha levatala (Rabbi Felder). Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman states (Halichos Shlomo 11:n63) that even according to the stricter view, a small item such as a ring is not a *chatzitza*. Reportedly, he did not require that his household members remove their rings before taking the *daled minim*.

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