Assembly Notes
Yom Kippur 5785
Assembly Theme: What Teshuva can achieve

Teshuvah (return to Hashem) can change a person and their relationship with Hashem! How effective is Teshuvah in changing the **past**? The Gemara (Talmud) teaches that if one does Teshuvah their **deliberate** Avairos (sins) are changed into **unintentional** sins. Another Rabbi in the Gemara says that Teshuvah achieves much more: it actually transforms deliberate sins into **Mitzvos**!

Can both of these be true? If Teshuvah changes Avairos merely into accidental sins; how can it also turn sins into positive Mitzvos?! The Answer: It depends how one does Teshuvah. If it comes from **fear**, then Teshuvah can create a clean slate for the future. Yu are forgiven and it is as if you did not do the wrong thing on purpose.

But if the Teshuvah is out of a feeling of love, then the past itself becomes transformed: the sin of the past becomes a Mitzvah, because the sin caused this tremendous love to become expressed.

When we repent out of fear, we are thinking about ourselves. The fear can be on a high level, like not wanting to spoil our sense of connection with Hashem. But when you return to your beloved out of love, it is not about you; it's about the relationship, it's about the fact that deep down, we are one. It is deep, it is selfless, it's focused on Hashem. That's why it has the power to change even the past. All our mistakes are not merely overlooked or forgotten; they are transformed.

Reaching this level of Teshuvah out of love is not easy at the beginning. Therefore we should work on ourselves and do Teshuvah even on the lower level, and eventually (maybe years or decades later) we will also experience ((תשובה מאהבה

Teshuvah from intense love of Hashem. Then, everything is not just forgiven and forgotten, but also transformed into Kedusha (holiness).

Every Shul reads the story of Yona on Yom Kippur. in the Haftorah of Mincha. Yona was sent to the sinful city of Nineveh to warn the people to repent or the city would be destroyed by Hashem. They repented and were spared. But why do we read about the Teshuvah of Nineveh when we could be reading stories of Teshuvah of solid Jewish Tzadikim?!

The Rebbe explains that the reason is davka (purposely) because the heathens of Nineveh could not affect the past. They did a sincere Teshuvah, although not out of love, but it was potent to save the whole city, and they would be able to fulfill the will of Hashem in the future. In the same way, even if you can't (yet) do the highest level of Teshuvah, do the Teshuvah that you can, and it will make a difference in the world.

(Based on the Sicha of Purim 5738).

STORY OF THE REBBE

On Yom Kippur there is a break between the prayers of Musaf and Mincha. It should be at least about 45 minutes, and it is often two hours or more. It is an opportunity to refresh yourself or to do things that you can't while you are davening, like learn your Shiurim, say Tehillim, etc. What did the Rebbe do during the break?

Nobody was with the Rebbe during that time, but I heard the following from the Rebbe in a Sicha (public talk). The Rebbe said that he receives thousands of Panim (notes blessings) before Rosh Hashanah, where people ask the Rebbe to pray to Hashem for what they really need and want. The Rebbe said that he reads at least some of these during the break on this special, holiest day of the year, Yom Hakodosh, Yom Kippur.

One thing that we can learn from this is that even in the holiest and most inspired moments of our life, we should think of what we can do for others, because we are all one. Especially now, when the painful attacks on Jews in the past year have brought us all together in solidarity and Achdus.

Gemar Chassimah Tovah to you all and your families!

Good Yomtov

גוט שבת!