

## HaRav Azarya Berzon

## Teshuva

**A**mongst the numerous principles which the Rambam establishes in Hilchot Teshuva, is the one concerning "middot," i.e. character flaws and negative attitudes. The Rambam writes (Chapter 7, Halacha 3): אל תאמר שאין תשובה אלא מעברות שיש בהן מעשה, כגון: זנות וגזל וגנבה - אלא כשם שצריך אדם לשוב מאלו, כך הוא צריך לחפש בדעות רעות שיש לו האיבה, ומן הקנאה ומן ההתול, ולשוב מן הכעס ומן ומרדיפת הממון והכבוד, ומרדיפת המאכלות וכיוצא בהן - מן הכל צריך לחזר בתשובה.

The Rambam addresses himself to one who might think that Teshuva applies only to criminal *actions*; one must investigate the feelings of one's heart, uprooting anger, hatred, jealousy, love of money, etc. Just as there are sins of action, so, too, are there sins of the heart. Both require Teshuva. We could say that man exists in two worlds: עולם המעשה ועולם המחשבה. Sin and Teshuva apply to both. Conceptually it means that in addition to Teshuva for *כפרה*, which pertains to the *עולם המעשה*, there is Teshuva for *טהרה*, which applies to the subjective, inner world of the individual. Taharah is required whenever the individual has distanced himself from HaShem. He may not be culpable in a court of law; Bet Din only punishes for objective actions, not for thoughts and attitudes. Nevertheless, these negative thoughts and feelings pollute the sanctity of the pure soul, and require a process of Teshuva of *טהרה* to replace the purity of the soul.

Elsewhere the Rambam enumerates five categories of sinners who delude themselves into thinking that they have done no wrong. If we don't educate these sinners, there is hardly a chance that they will do Teshuva. The five categories listed (Chapter 4, ) are:

- האוכל מסעודה שאינה מספקת לבעליה
- המשתמש בעבוטו של עני
- המסתכל בעריות
- המתכבד בקלון חבירו
- החושד בכשרים

I would suggest that these sinners are guilty of *דעות רעות*, and their sin cannot be considered criminal violations which are punishable in a court of law. The first two categories of sinners are guilty of a gross lack of sensitivity to a fellow Jew, specifically to a poor person. There is no act of *גזילה*, since technically, the sinner has not stolen goods from his friend. These are situations in which people take advantage of others, usually of the weak. We could say that their sin requires a Teshuva of *טהרה*, to purify their souls of self-centered attitudes and a callous heart. The sinner must elevate his religious personality and heighten his sensitivity and feeling for a Jew.

The third category of sinners is again one whose actions are legal; his sin is a result of the desires of his heart, which pollute his soul and require a Taharah process to elevate and sanctify the spiritual personality.

In the fourth category, the sinner is guilty of a hateful attitude; he builds himself up by showing how much greater he is than his fellow. Although this can hardly be classified as a sin of action, it is a character flaw which will likely lead to other more severe violations, e.g. Lashon HaRah, insulting a fellow Jew, or even *שנאת חנם*. Such attitudes must be uprooted and require a process of personality purification: *Teshuva shel Taharah*.

And the last category is another example of an attitude towards a fellow Jew which expresses contempt rather than love. Like the previous four cases, the *חושד בכשרים* must undergo *טהרת הלב* in order to perfect his attitude and emotions and elevate his soul to levels of sanctity and purity.

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*Eretz Yisrael* they built *succot*, something which they had not done since the days of *Yehoshua bin Nun*. The *Gemara* in *Erchin* asks, is it really possible that they didn't build *succot* in the time of *David HaMelech*? Rather, what the *passuk* means is that the *b'nei hagolah* had protection from the *yetzer hara* of *avodah zarah*; Ezra, like none before him, requested the *bittul* (nullification) of this *yetzer hara*, which the *passuk* likens to the protection of a *succah*. This leads us to our second question: How does a *succah* represent the *bittul* of the *yetzer hara* of *avodah zarah*?

To discover the answers to these questions, as well as their application to us, *b'nei hayeshiva*, we will begin with a third question: The first time we find a *succah* in the Torah is in *Parashat Vayishlach*. After Yaakov and Eisav go their separate ways, Yaakov builds *succot* for his livestock, and subsequently names the area *Succot*. We find *succot* in the later in *Parashat Massei*, where the Torah tells us that *B'nei Yisrael* traveled from *Ra'amses* and made camp in *Succot*. The Torah is eternal, its words bearing infinite meaning for all the generations. This being the case, why is it so important that we be informed nowadays of Yaakov's, and later *B'nei Yisrael's*, encampment in *Succot*?

The *Gemara* in *Berachot* (4b) teaches that we must connect *geulah* and *tefillah*. How, then, can we interrupt between *geulah* and *tefillah* with the *beracha* of *Hashkiveinu* in *Maariv*? The *Gemara* answers that *Hashkiveinu* is a *geulah arichta*, an extension of *geulah*. The explanation is that every *geulah*, personal or communal, is destined to go to waste if the beneficiaries don't request *סיעתא דשמיא* to protect the *geulah*. No *geulah* can endure without *shemirah*. This, then, is what the *Gemara* means when it says that *Hashkiveinu* is a *geulah arichta* – the *shemirah* of *shomer amo yisrael* is essential for the preser-

vation of the *geulah* of *ga'al yisrael*. This *shemirah* is represented by the *succah*. The *succah* is a fragile structure made of cheap, flimsy wood, without a door, without a lock, without any alarm system. The *succah* makes a statement that we don't need any external protection. We are essentially in the shade of ה"ה. Thus, the *succah* represents Hashem's *shemirah* over us. Indeed, in the very *beracha* of *Hashkiveinu* we say *ופרוש עלינו סכת* ופרוש שלומך Taking this a step further, we can now explain the apparent contradiction in *Chazal* regarding the conclusion of the *y'mei hadin*. In reality, the *y'mei hadin* end on *motza'ei Yom Kippur*. This end, however, is only in the sense of *geulah*. The *geulah* of *motza'ei Yom Kippur* is reinforced by *Succot* and *Hoshana Rabbah*, when we spend more time in *tefillah* requesting *shemirah* of our positive judgment.

Yehoshua bin Nun's conquest of *Eretz Yisrael* was a giant *geulah*. However, he did not ask Hashem for *shemirah* of this *geulah*. (The *Gemara* in fact faults him for this.) When Ezra returned to *Eretz Yisrael* after seventy years of *galus*, he requested *shemirah* over this *geulah*, through a *bittul* of the *yetzer hara* of *avodah zarah*, which protected them like a *succah*.

Some of the *talmidei hayeshiva* have returned recently from *Eretz Yisrael*, and, without a doubt, the year or two spent in *Eretz Yisrael* was like a personal *geulah* for them. It was a year of growth in Torah and in *yiras shamayim*. The test now is to retain this growth. *Divrei torah* are acquired with difficulty like golden vessels and easily lost like glass vessels. It is equally easy in *galus* to lose appreciation for *Eretz Yisrael*. There are several ways to be *shomer* this *geulah*: 1) *ameilut* in Torah along with the college studies in which everyone is involved; and 2) *dibbuk chaverim* – helping each other, not just our friends, but even (and perhaps especially) people who we don't yet know.