



The day before Yom Kippur the air in the city of Lubavitch was already permeated with the holiness of the day. Reb Shmuel, a respected scholar and chasid, sat in a corner of the shul swaying in prayer when the door swung open and a peddler entered the room. He threw himself down on a bench and tossed his pack on the floor. Reb Shmuel inquired, "How are you, brother?"

"Oy," sighed the man. "The exile is dark and terrible. Just today I was walking past the mansion of Squire Lobomirsky. Everyone knows his evil reputation. Whenever I pass that place, I walk as fast as I can to get away from it. Suddenly, some one cried out, 'Hey, Jew!' My blood ran cold. Thank G-d, it was only the squire's servant, who wanted to buy a scarf from me. He told me about a Jewish family imprisoned in the squire's dungeon. They owe him rent, and if they don't pay by tomorrow, they'll all be killed. If only I had that money...what a terrible and dark exile."

By the time the man had finished his tale, Reb Shmuel had left the shul; soon he was knocking at the gates of the squire's mansion. "I must speak with His Excellency," he said to the guard. He was allowed to enter and he proceeded to the room where Lobomirsky sat. When the squire saw the Jew, he was infuriated: "How dare you enter my house! What do you want, Jew?"

"I want to know what is the debt of that poor, unfortunate family you have imprisoned."

The ruthless landowner's eyes lit up with the thought of lining his pockets with the money. "Let me think about it," he smiled slyly and began to calculate: "Well, there's the debt, then there's all the money I put out to feed the whole brood, then there's the penalty payment; there's also the money required to cancel their hanging -- it would have provided good entertainment." At the end of his "calculations," Reb Shmuel was faced with an exorbitant sum.

"Somehow G-d will help me raise that sum," Shmuel replied to the smirking Lobomirsky.

It was getting late. Reb Shmuel went from door to door, telling everyone about the plight of the imprisoned family, and although they were as generous as possible, they themselves were poor. When he had finished his rounds, Reb Shmuel had a pitifully small sum in his hands. "This will never do," he thought to himself. "I must do something else, and fast."

He was walking aimlessly, thinking of his next move, when he looked up and found himself in front of a tavern. The sound of loud, drunken voices emerged from within, and Shmuel was seized with the thought that just perhaps his money was waiting for him inside, if only he could figure out how to get it. As soon as he entered, he was sickened by the smell of liquor and stale smoke. A group of card players looked up, surprised to see a Chasidic Jew in their midst. "What do you want, Jew?" "I am here on a mission of mercy. The lives of an entire family hang in the balance. I must raise a large sum of money." One of the players replied, "Well, if you can down this beaker of vodka, I just might give you this money," and he pointed to a towering stack of gold coins. Reb Shmuel was never much of a drinker, but what choice did he have? He downed the vodka, and true to his word, the card player handed over the money. In quick succession, the other players offered their winnings if he would drink two more huge cups of vodka.

Reb Shmuel's eyes were beginning to cross, but the glimmering piles of coins steadied his resolve. An hour after he had entered the tavern, he staggered out with his pockets bulging and stumbled in the direction of the squire's mansion.

The squire couldn't believe his eyes, but he greedily accepted the gold and released the grateful family who had barely escaped death.

Reb Shmuel could barely put one foot in front of the other; his eyes no longer focused, but he still remembered the holy day. He managed to get to the shul, where he promptly collapsed in a heap. The worshippers were dressed in their white robes, looking so much like the ministering angels. They were startled to see Reb Shmuel snoring away, dressed in his weekday clothes which showed evidence of his tavern experience. "What could have come over him?" they wondered.

Reb Shmuel lay asleep throughout the evening of prayers which marked the beginning of

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the holiest day. His snoring provided a constant accompaniment to the heartfelt prayers rising from the congregation. The prayers ended, Psalms were recited, and the shul emptied out. Reb Shmuel slept on.

At the first morning light, the worshippers returned to the shul for the long day of prayers. Reb Shmuel was beginning to stir. They watched curiously as he opened his bleary eyes and stood up. Walking straight to the bima, Reb Shmuel banged on the wood with his fist, and in a booming voice, exclaimed: "Know that G-d, He is the L-rd; there is none other than Him."

The congregation fell into confusion. What was Reb Shmuel doing reciting the words of the Simchat Torah prayers?! Why, didn't he realize that today was Yom Kippur? Suddenly the rabbi rose and turned toward the congregation: "Leave Reb Shmuel alone. He has far outpaced us. With the great deed he has done, his atonement is complete, and he is waiting for us at Simchat Torah!"

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Teshuva - Repentance

All of the Prophets prescribed teshuva, and the Jewish people will be redeemed only through teshuva. The Torah has given assurance that Israel will do teshuva--at the end of its exile--and will be redeemed immediately, as it says (Deut. 30): "It will be when all these things have happened... you will return to G-d... and G-d will return your captivity and will gather you from among all the nations where He dispersed you." (Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuva)

The Sages have said of the virtues of teshuva: "Where those who do teshuva stand, perfect tzadikim cannot stand." (Talmud Brachot 39)

Great is teshuva for it transforms willful transgressions into meritorious acts. (Talmud Yoma 81)

Whoever does teshuva, is regarded as if he had gone up to Jerusalem, built the Sanctuary, built the altar, and offered upon it all the offerings prescribed in the Torah. (Vayikra Raba 7)

So great is the strength of teshuva that when a person reflects at heart to do teshuva, he rises immediately to the highest Heaven, to the very presence of the Throne of Glory. (Pesikta Rabati 44)

Rabbi Eliezer said, "Repent one day before your death." Whereupon his disciples asked Rabbi Eliezer, "Does a person know on what day he will die?" He said to them, "All the more so--let him repent today lest he die tomorrow, so that all his days might pass in teshuva." (Talmud Shabbat 153)

6:35 Candle Lighting Time

NY Metro Area
 7 Tishrei/Sept 22
 Torah Portion Ha'azinu
 Shabbat Shuva
 Shabbat ends 7:32 PM

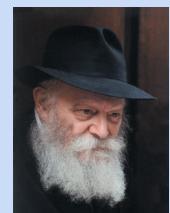


בס"ד
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 for Every Jewish Person
 נוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
 "May there be peace in your wall, tranquility in your palaces" (Psalm 122:6)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The Haftora we read on Yom Kippur afternoon is called Maftir Yonah. It is the longest of all Haftoras, it consists of the entire book of Yona and three verses from the book of Micha. It tells the story of our prophet Yona, who Hashem sent on a mission to Nineveh, to tell them to repent for their bad ways.

The Jewish people, at the time, were at odds with Yona, disrespecting him and calling him a false prophet. Thinking that Nineveh would listen to him and repent, and it would look poorly on the Jewish people, he chose to run away.

Everybody is familiar with the rest of the story. The ship he was running away on, was experiencing an abnormally rough sea, and at the same time, they were witnessing other ships passing by them in relative calm. They realized that it was from Hashem. They drew lots to see which of them were at fault. The lot pointed at Yona, who told them why this was happening, and they threw him off the boat. A fish swallowed him, and after three days he was spit out of the fish on the shore. He went to Nineveh, told them to repent and they did, and the city was saved.

Why is this Haftora read at mincha on Yom Kippur? First, like Yona, we can't run from Hashem, and from the mission he wants us to do. Second, it is a story about teshuva, and the power of teshuva, that even the wicked city of Nineveh, who were not Jewish, repented and were forgiven by Hashem. How much more so, if we do teshuva, He will grant us forgiveness. Also, we see that reading it or listening to it, evokes a wanting to do teshuva.

It is said by mincha, because mincha on Yom Kippur is a preparation for the holiest prayer of the day, Neila, and because our sages say about the greatness of the mincha prayer, that Eliyahu wasn't answered, but by the mincha prayer. Mincha time on Yom Kippur is also called "raava d'raavin," the time of the "ultimate good will" of Hashem, and when it comes to doing teshuva, it's the most opportune time.

It is our custom to call this Haftora Maftir Yonah. It begs the question: If it is all about teshuva, why don't we call it Haftoras teshuva?

The answer that is given for this, is in accordance with what the Zohar says, that Yona is symbolic of the descent of the neshama into the body. The Zohar goes on to explain the details of the story of Yona and how they mirror the journey of the neshama. When the neshama is in the body, it has to deal with things that it never had to deal with in the highest of heights. For the neshama to get the body to do what Hashem wants, it has to be like Yona, from the word onaa (trickery).

May Hashem accept our teshuva, and may our teshuva bring us to our desired destination, the ultimate redemption, when we will witness the greatest revelation of Hashem, greater than any prophecy. May it happen now.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

The Perfect Time To Choose A New Mitzva

Putting on your shoes. Opening a food package. Responding to an inquiry about one's health.

These, and many other day-to-day activities, are part of our Divine service.

In small, seemingly insignificant ways that we cannot possibly enumerate comprehensively, we bring the spiritual into the mundane, thereby creating a comfortable place for G-d in this world.

Whenever the Rabbi of Ternigrad visited the Chozeh of Lublin, the Chozeh would always make a point of personally attending to his guest's needs in some way, thus fulfilling the mitzva of waiting on a Torah scholar.

Once, after serving his guest coffee, the Chozeh washed out the cup and returned it to its place.

The rabbi asked why the Chozeh troubled himself with this detail.

The Chozeh replied:

"When the High Priest took out the empty incense spoon and the ash pan from the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, this too was part of the Divine service of the day."

G-d gives us the incredible opportunity to infuse the most mundane areas of our lives with spirituality.

When putting on shoes, Jewish law instructs us to first put on our right shoe, then our left. Then we are to tie our left shoe followed by our right. "How controlling," some might protest. "The Torah is trying to dictate our every action and move, each thought and emotion."

Nothing could be further from the truth than this reaction.

The Torah is giving us the chance to connect with the Divine even when performing a trite, unimportant act.

Incidentally, it has been explained

that the order to use when putting on and tying shoes teaches us not to show favoritism, not to select one side over another. Through our interaction with an inanimate object we become habituated to benevolence!

When you open a package of food on Shabbat or Yom Tov, don't tear through the letters, thereby "erasing" a word. Picayune, inane? No way! We are being sensitized. We are being taught how to bring holiness into every action, every breath, every thought.

When someone asks how you are, you can respond, "Thank G-d, I'm doing just fine." You have just shown gratitude to Your Creator. And, you have reminded yourself and the other person that there is a G-d in the world.

The Talmud states:

"The transgressors of Israel are as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate with seeds."

No wonder. It's so simple to do mitzvot.

We are infinitely lucky that G-d makes it so easy for us.

The fact is that opportunities to do mitzvot easily and painlessly, are endless: Greet people with a smile; say, "Have a good, sweet new year; drop a coin in a tzedaka box; give your seat to an elderly person; tie your shoes the "Torah" way; buy the ketchup with the kosher symbol instead of the one without a kosher symbol; check the egg for blood before you cook or bake with it. The list goes on.

When we realize how simple it is to do mitzvot, it entices us to want to do some that require a little spiritual elbow grease.

Though any day is auspicious, Yom Kippur is the perfect time to choose a new mitzva to undertake for the upcoming year.

