



קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart



נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א

The Greatness of Teshuvah



Shabbos Shuva · Aseres Yemei Teshuvah



נתיבות לבי

THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN SHLIT" A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — The Ways of My Heart is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.



נתנדב השבוע להצלחה בפרנסה

אהרן יהודה לייב בן מרים בידא
אהרן בן ציפורל

לרפואה שלמה

פייגא בת ויטא

אמונה לאה בת חנה

To sponsor a future edition — l'ilui nishmas, for a refuah sheleimah, l'hatzlachah, or in honor of a simcha — or to receive the maamar each week, be in touch:

thewaysofmyheartarticle@gmail.com · text (845) 459-5856

The Greatness of Teshuvah

Teshuvah is not asking mechilah — it is being made into a different person; and the hardest teshuvah is not for what we did, but for how we think

Let us talk about teshuvah, because these are the days of teshuvah.

And these are surely the best days we have for it.

Somebody told me a funny moshol... A man was complaining to Hashem. He has problems with parnassah, he has problems at home, the children are not great. So Hashem asks him: tell Me, do

you want to extend the contract, or do you want to cancel it? The contract is the contract of life — do you want to continue?

You want to continue? Then be careful and stop complaining.

These are the days to make sure Hashem understands that we want to continue.

..... The mistake almost everybody makes

So first we have to understand what teshuvah actually is. And the big mistake — is thinking that teshuvah is asking mechilah.

You know how it goes. Two friends had a fight. One comes to the other and asks mechilah, and depending what happened between them, the other forgives him with a full heart. And now they are reconnected. Fine. Great!

That is not teshuvah.

Chazal tell us: that cannot be teshuvah.

There is a famous Gemara: *the place where a baal teshuvah stands, tzadikim gemurim cannot stand*. Now think about that for one moment. If teshuvah were only asking mechilah — *Hashem, please forgive me for what I did* — what does that sentence even mean? Tzadikim gemurim cannot reach the madreigah of... saying sorry? It makes no sense.

And Chazal say more. That teshuvah is so great it brings a refuah to the world. That it brings the geulah. That if one person does teshuvah, Hashem forgives the entire world.

The entire world! From one person asking forgiveness?

It cannot be. It must be that teshuvah is something much, much greater than we thought.

..... **Being made into somebody else**

Here is what it is. Hashem created the world of teshuvah so that a person could be **created again**.

Not repaired. Not patched. Created completely again, from the beginning — and not back to where we were, but higher than we were. That is the whole point of it. Teshuvah is not only about fixing the aveirah we did. It is about bringing ourselves to a level of ruchnius closer to Hashem than the place we stood in before we fell.

And now you understand the Gemara completely. Of course a tzadik gamur cannot stand there — he was never recreated because of teshuvah.

Let me give you the mashal that makes this real.

Chas v'shalom a person loses a limb — a finger, a hand. Is there a tikkun for that? They can build him a metal piece that moves exactly the same way, and it will surely do everything a hand does. But this person is missing a part of his body. He is not the same person. He is a *baal mum* — something in the body itself is missing.

Now, all our mitzvos are bound up with the parts of the body — the *ramach evarim* and the *shasa gidim*, the two hundred and forty-eight and the three hundred and sixty-five. So in the spiritual world it is exactly the same. Something is missing, and no replacement part fixes it.

Except that Hashem gave us one thing that does. Teshuvah does not attach a metal hand. It makes a new person.

..... **The other one**

There was an elderly woman in Eretz Yisrael who had a stroke, and the doctors did not think she would survive. They went looking for a relative — it should not be, *chas v'shalom*, that she dies alone with nobody — and they found that she had a son, living very far away in America.

They let him know his mother was critical and that he should come and say goodbye. At first he made problems, he was not sure he had the time. The doctors were very firm with him. He came.

And she woke up.

He understood immediately what he had to do, and he began to ask her forgiveness. Because here is what had happened. They lived in a *frum* kibbutz, and for years and years they had no children. Finally they had a child — one child — and they brought him up the best way they knew how. And when he grew up he became close to a certain friend.

And that friend took him away. Eventually he simply ran away from his

parents, the only child they had, and they were destroyed. Years passed. The father was *niftar*. She left the kibbutz and lived by herself a long time.

And now she is lying here, and here is her son asking her for *mechilah*.

She said to him: *for what you did, I can forgive you. But there is one thing I cannot forgive.*

For stealing my only son.

Her son stole her son.

And this is the whole idea of *Acher* — of becoming somebody else. Because there are two ways a Yid becomes another person. He can become another person by doing *teshuvah*: a new creation, cut off from what he was before. Or he can become another person without *teshuvah* — drifting, taken, until he is not the one his mother had.

By the way, this is why we ask Hashem every single day, in the *yehi ratzon* after the morning brachos, to keep us far from a bad friend. And to keep our children far from one.

..... The neshamah is already holy

And there is something else here that we have to be clear about.

Every neshamah of a Yid is *kodesh*. It is holy already.

So our job is not to *become* holy, as though we start from nothing and manufacture it ourselves. As it's written in Nesivos Sholom: Our job is simply to *guard* the neshamah — to make sure it stays kodesh, exactly the way it was given to us.

And that changes completely what teshuvah feels like. We are not building something foreign to ourselves. We are clearing away what never belonged to the neshamah.

..... **The teshuvah nobody wants to do**

Now the Rambam, in Hilchos Teshuvah, says something that a person would rather not hear.

Most of us think teshuvah is for *actions*. For the thing we did — we took what was not ours, we went where we should not have gone, we said what we should not have said. Fine. We did an action, we do teshuvah on the action.

But we also have to look at the way we *see* and the way we *think*. The anger. The jealousy. The running after money, the running after kavod, the running af-

ter food. None of that is an action at all. It is all inside.

And that teshuvah is **much, much harder** than teshuvah on an aveirah. You can feel it yourself.

Why? Because an action is done and it is finished — we made a mistake, and we can put our hands around it. But the way we think is sitting deep inside us, running all the time, and it never finishes. It surely needs a much deeper teshuvah, and the *taharah* of the mind is a far higher madreigah than the taharah of the hands.

..... **What it looks like when it goes**

What happens when a person leaves this alone?

You start to feel lost in your ruchnius. Nothing is pulling you upward any more — there is no light in it, and no

taste. And because your mind is somewhere else, you lose the sweetness of the Torah completely; you do not feel any sweetness in it, because you are not truly looking for it.

And you can still be dressed like a Yid, with a yarmulke and everything in place. But if the mind is somewhere else, eventually all of it simply disappears.

I saw this happen. I watched the same person over years, and slowly, slowly, he was losing that look of a Yid — until he disappeared completely. And it is very frightening. All the feeling of Hashem is taken away from him. All the light that

once burned inside him, it goes dark, like a switch. Shabbos comes, Yom Tov comes, and he feels nothing. This happens when a Yid is not working on his inside thoughts to connect himself to Hashem Isborach. To connect to the pnimies of Torah and Avoida.

There is no Shabbos. There is no Yom Tov.

..... So let's begin again

And this is the bottom line...

The point of teshuvah is that a person can become like a new creation and start everything from scratch. Not improve. Not tidy up. **Start.**

The most difficult part, as it says about Reb Aharon Hagodol, who told one baal teshuvah, is to disconnect completely from what we were before and from now on... Become the new person — and do not look back at the old one. The moment we truly do that, Hashem carries on pulling us forward, closer and closer to Him.

So take one thing this week that is not an action at all — like something in the way you look at another Yid, or the way you think about what you do not have — and do teshuvah on that one thing only. Say it plainly: *Ribbono shel Olam, this is the part of me nobody sees. Help me to become a new person.*

May we all be written and sealed for a good year like new and great people for Hashem in sefer tzadikim, and may the Ribbono shel Olam take a whole nation and bring us home — **Yerushalaim Yir Hakoidesh bekorov beyomenu!**