

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

SHABBOS SHUVA

Teshuva Beyond Teshuva

This week the Haftora begins with the words *Shuva Yisrael*, therefore, we call this Shabbos, Shabbos Shuva. Some call it Shabbos Teshuva because it is in The Ten Days of Teshuva.

The Haftora begins, "Return Yisrael until *Havaya Elokecha*, (Hashem your God) for you have stumbled because of your sins. Take with you words and return to Hashem..."

Why are we reading this now after the teshuva of the month of Elul and after The Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah, on which we were certainly forgiven and granted a good year? And especially with the shofar blowing, which symbolizes Hashem's acceptance of us as He becomes our King for another year? What does it mean that we should return "until" Hashem your God, shouldn't it say "to" Hashem your God? Why is it that after the first

verse says, "return until Hashem," the second verse says, "Take with you words and return to Hashem," what is the second verse adding to the first?

Another question. The terms used in these verses seem off. Throughout the

books of the prophets, there are two names that are used to mean the Jewish people: Yaakov and Yisrael. Yaakov, the lower name, refers to the Jewish people when they are not so perfect. The name Yaakov is from the word *akaiv*, which means a heel, suggesting a lower

level. Yisrael, the higher name, refers to the Jewish people when they are righteous. The name Yisrael is made up of the words *li rosh*, which means I have a head. Head suggests a higher level. Here in our verse, the prophet Hoshea refers to us as Yisrael, the higher name, and tells us to return to Hashem. If we are Yisrael, we are already close to Hashem, so why do we need to return? And if we are Yisrael, how do the words, "for you have stumbled because of your sins," make sense, what kind of sins does righteous Yisrael have? On the other hand, if we do need to return, why does he call us Yisrael?

While there are many answers to these questions, I will try to answer them in the context of the time we are in, The Ten Days of Teshuva.

It is true when Shabbos Shuva comes around, we are already forgiven for our sins; we are at the level of Yisrael. However, here we are talking about a higher level of teshuva.

The most basic teshuva is to correct blemishes in our relationship with Hashem that were caused by committing sins, specifically, breaking one of the 365 negative Commandments. This is fixing the physical infractions, as mitzvahs are all done with the physical. This is what the teshuva of the month of Elul and Rosh Hashanah accomplishes.

A higher level of teshuva is on a spiritual and intellectual level. Once the faults have been corrected, we are at the level of Yisrael. However, Hashem wants us to come closer. A relationship that is just about not doing

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anything wrong is not much of a relationship. He wants us to know Him through the study of Torah and spiritually get closer through learning and meditating on the esoteric teachings of the Torah. This is the meaning of "until Hashem your God," until you see Havaya as Elokecha.

Every name of Hashem has a different meaning and purpose. The name *Havaya* is the life force of all existence, spiritual and physical. However, it is so holy that the physical world would cease to exist if exposed to its revelation. The name *Elokim* (which *Elokecha* is the same as) allows the physical world to exist by acting as a shield that filters the energy from the name *Havaya*, making the physical world possible, and it seems as if it is the strength and the life force of existence.

This is why the Torah starts with, "In the beginning, *Elokim* created the heavens and the earth." Because it is the name *Elokim* that makes creation possible.

To return until *Havaya Elokecha* is to get to such a spiritual closeness to Hashem that the creative energy of *Havaya* becomes revealed to you, and you begin to see *Havaya* as your life force. This revelation can only be attained through reaching a point where you cease to exist. In other words, it is all about Hashem.

This is why we proclaim at the closing of Yom Kippur, *Havaya hu ho'Elokim* (*Havaya* is *Elokim*). Because at that point, we attain the higher level of teshuva.

Now you can understand why it says, "for you have stumbled because of your sins." Because for someone who is at that high level of spirituality and doesn't reach for the deeper connection, where *Havaya* is *Elokecha*, it is akin to a sin.

During The High Holidays, we are inspired and attain this spiritual high. Once you reach this high level, it is easy to fall back once the inspiration is gone. This is what the second verse adds, "Take with you words and return to Hashem." It is not enough to reach the

high level, but you have to be able to retain it after the inspiration is gone. What this verse is asking of us, is to internalize the spiritual level attained so you can take it with you once the excitement is gone.

We see this idea later in the Haftora, "for the paths of Hashem are straight, the righteous will walk in them, and the wicked will stumble in them." A path is meant to take you to a place. The goal is the place, not the path. Inspiration and excitement are the path to the goal of being one with Hashem. When we use the inspiration to get close to Hashem, we remain close when the inspiration is gone. However, when we make the inspiration and excitement the goal, we stumble. Because naturally, inspiration and excitement dissipate, and when it does, the connection is lost.

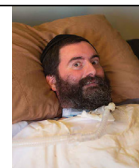
May we experience this high level of teshuva, and become one with Hashem. May we come to a time when seeing *Havaya* in *Elokim*, seeing *Havaya* in creation is the norm, which will happen with the coming of Moshiach. As the verse says about the time of Moshiach, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of *Havaya*, like the water covers the sea." May it happen soon.

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi, Shana Tova to you and your family. If eyes are the window to the soul, thank you for sharing your soul with us, for searching and finding meaning in adversity, and for living with such dignity and divine grace. May Hashem bless you and your family with all your prayers answered for good!"

- Rachel S, Toronto

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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