

# WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

## PARSHAT RE'EY

### You Have To Flee To Elul

This week's parsha, Re'ey, is always read on the Shabbos before the month of Elul, or on Rosh Chodesh Elul itself.

Our sages say that the word Elul is an acronym for, "Ina l'yado v'samti l'cha," which is from a verse that talks about one who killed inadvertently, Hashem "caused it to come to his hand, and I will give to you" a place to flee to.

The law is, that if a person kills someone inadvertently, he has to flee to the safety of a sanctuary city, lest he be killed by the "avenger of blood," which means a relative of the one who was killed. He goes there, first to await trial, and then if he is found to have killed inadvertently, he is exiled to the city of refuge until the Kohen Gadol passes away. The exile atones for his inadvertent killing, because "exile is an atonement."

The words in the verse that make the acronym Elul are not the part about inadvertently killing, but rather, the part of the verse that speaks of his merit, Hashem "caused it to come to his hand," and the part about his atonement, "And I will give you" a place to flee to.

These cities of refuge, were wherever the Jewish people were, in the desert (during the forty years they were there), in Israel, and across the Jordan, which was considered outside of Israel.

#### G-D KNOWS WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS, SO TESHUVA HELPS.

about his soul? How does his soul get atonement? The sin is a grave one, it's true that it was inadvertent, but he took a life, and the rule is, that one must atone for an inadvertent sin as well.

Why must one atone for an inadvertent sin? Because how does a Jew come to sin at all, when it goes against his nature? A Jew by the nature of his soul and even his body, wouldn't sin. Therefore, he would never put himself in a situation that he would come to sin, he would naturally run away from it just as a person

wouldn't jump into a fire by mistake, because it's totally against his nature. That is why, "No sin will be caused for the righteous," as Rashi explains, "No sin will chance before him inadvertently." Because it is totally against our nature.

Why then does he sin? It is only because his animal soul is overpowering him, blocking the G-dly soul and his natural instincts. The animal soul schleps him to do all kinds of things that the animal is attracted to. And since he allowed his animal soul to gain power over him, and perhaps he even feeds the beast with his bad habits, he is liable and needs atonement.

The atonement for both body and soul is through the city of refuge, which is exile, and "exile is an atonement."

The city of refuge also helps someone who murdered intentionally. As our sages say, "Both the inadvertent and the intentional (killer) first go to the city of refuge." The intentional murderer is protected from the "avenger of blood," until he is called to trial. And most likely, he will be found innocent, as it is known, that if they would sentence someone to death once in seven years, the Sanhedrin would be called, a murderous court.

However, until he would be taken to trial, he would have time to do teshuva.

When it comes to teshuva, there is an advantage now in the exile over the time of the Temple. In Temple times, even if a person would do teshuva, he would still get the punishment.

The Noda B'Yehuda explains, that teshuva is in the heart, however we can only judge according to what we can see. Being that there is no way to see what is in his heart, we are obligated to follow through with the punishment.

But that was then. However, since forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin stopped hearing capital cases. The only way for those cases to come to justice, is through divine judgment, meaning that he receives the punishment of death from above. And since Hashem knows what is in his heart, teshuva helps.



This acronym of Elul is telling us, that this month is a city of refuge in time, and we should use it well, through taking an account of the past and doing teshuva for all of our sins. In a sense, every sin is akin to spilling blood, because with every sin, one takes life away from his G-dly soul, from Hashem, and gives it to the animal soul, to the evil inclination.

The month of Elul is the city of refuge, one should flee there and exile himself there. Meaning, he should separate himself from his sinful ways, from his desires, his bad tendencies and his wrong conclusions, and flee to the month of Elul and live there, meaning, that he resolves to settle there and to live in the way of the month of Elul, taking an account of his life and doing teshuva. Then "exile is an atonement."

This will atone, not only for the inadvertent sins but also for the intentional ones.

And even if he is not yet able to do teshuva from love, which "turns sins into merits," at least he can do teshuva from fear. And it doesn't matter what inspires him to do teshuva, whether it's the month of Elul, the upcoming High Holidays or the broken relationship between him and Hashem. Every sin constitutes a blemish in that relationship, and if he will think about this, how his relationship with Hashem is broken, it will surely bring him to do teshuva from fear, which "turns intentional sins into (the category of) unintentional."

This doesn't mean that he has to suffer, by torturing himself or fasting, on the contrary, a person who has to be in a city of refuge, is not required to torture himself or fast, rather the exile itself is the atonement.

In the city of refuge, they provide for him everything that he was accustomed to having. As the verse says, "And he should live - we do things that give him life." This is why, "A student who is exiled, we exile his teacher with him," because, even though his teacher is far beyond him in knowledge and understanding, he nevertheless "gives him life," which means, that he will motivate him to do teshuva, and mend his relationship with Hashem, the source of life.

Fleeing to the city of refuge, Elul, saves him from the "avenger of blood." Who is the avenger of blood? It is the Satan, who is the evil inclination, who seduces the person to sin in the first place, he lodges the complaint, he is the prosecutor, and he is the angel of death.

What is the Satan's complaint? "So and so killed the soul, he killed the G-dly soul that is in him, he is spilling the blood of the Holy One and giving it to the empty one."

How can he save himself? He should flee to the city of refuge, and there he will be protected from the avenger of blood, until the day of judgment, Rosh Hashanah. And even if his sin was intentional, he has the ability to do teshuva before the day of judgment.

Hashem is saying to the Jewish people, "I Am giving you twenty-nine, thirty days if you will use this time to rid yourselves of your bad habits and tendencies, that you were doing until now, 'and flee there,' if you will flee into the ways and tendencies of Elul, in order to remain there. Then you will be able to repair everything that was not right, from the beginning until now, and you will automatically be saved from the avenger of blood and all who wish to press charges against you. And through doing teshuva, first teshuva out of fear, which turns them into unintentional (sins), and then teshuva out of love, which turns them into merits, you will be inscribed and sealed in the book of Tzadikim, for a good and sweet year."

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,

*I very recently discovered you on social media; and, immediately, I was deeply inspired with (and impressed by) the strength and quality of your character.*

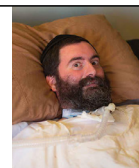
*I'm a widowed, Jewish woman living in Southern Oregon, and it makes my heart happy that you have (re) discovered your inherent, priceless worth, despite the obstacles and obvious limitations you must endure, as a result of your ALS diagnosis.*

*What a blessing you are and continue to be in the world!"*

- Joy F. Oregon

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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