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THE CHALLENGE AND POWER OF TESHUVAH
SHABBOS TESHUVAH - MAKE IT COUNT!



FROM THE SHIURIM OF

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CHINUCH FOR DOING TESHUVAH

We are now in the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. There's a very interesting thing about *teshuvah*. Most of us wouldn't mind doing *teshuvah*. So why don't people do it? What holds people back? You know what the problem is? They never received a proper *chinuch* on the topic of *teshuvah*. No one ever taught them as children how to do *teshuvah*. If you did something wrong as a kid, what did your parents tell you? Let's say a guy touched *muktzah* on Shabbos, they told him, "It's *asur*, it's prohibited. Today is Shabbos." If he didn't listen, so maybe they called him 'a *muktzah goy*.' If the guy still played around, maybe the father gave him a little discipline. The only thing that a child learned in this area is that a person could do an *aveirah* in this world, and an *aveirah* is a *davar asur*. But that's all.

There's only one area in life where I find even a little bit of *teshuvah*. In what area do we experience in childhood a little bit of *teshuvah*? If one kid hits another kid. So the father comes to complain and the father of the hitter takes his son and says, "Say you're sorry now. You're going to have to go to their house and say you're sorry." I know a kid who did that. He did something bad to another family, and then his father made him go to that family's house, knock on the door, and say, "I'm sorry." This is *teshuvah*. But when a kid does other types of *aveiros* they don't make him say, "I'm sorry," so a kid never knows that's the way to do *teshuvah*.

If a guy opens the *sefer Sha'arei Teshuvah*, he will discover so many principles of *teshuvah* that it becomes overwhelming. When Rabbeinu Yonah describes *charatah*, the first step of *teshuvah*, you'd think he's talking to Moshe Rabbeinu. You've got to be on such a level to feel what he explains as *charatah*. It's impossible. How do you do that?

Now, we all know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants us to do *teshuvah*. But you do *aveiros* and it builds up. And you never do *teshuvah* because you don't know *how* to do *teshuvah*. You come to the Aseres Yemei Hateshuvah and you don't know what to do.

BASICS: WHAT IS TESHUVAH?

I first want to explain that there are two parts to doing an *aveirah*. Firstly, it distances a person from Hashem. Secondly, it creates 'a debt.' But for every *aveirah* that you do, there is *teshuvah*. If you ask the average person, "What does *teshuvah* accomplish? Why would you want to do *teshuvah*?" - what do you think most people would say? Most people would say that they want to do *teshuvah* because they don't want to get the *onesh*. They don't want to get punished. They know they talked *lashon hara*. They know they had bad thoughts. They know they saw bad things. They know they did bad things. They don't want to get the *onesh*.

Teshuvah has nothing whatsoever to do with wiping away the sin. That's the first thing you have to know. There are some *aveiros* that are very hard to wipe out, but still you have a *mitzvah* to do *teshuvah* on them. You have a *chiyuv* to do *teshuvah* on them. If you do *teshuvah*, you're an absolute *tzaddik*. Even if you have a big 'credit card debt' with Hashem, that does not mean you're a *rasha*. You may have done millions of *aveiros*, but you could be a *tzaddik gamur* right now. That's a fundamental principle that many people fail to see. In one second, you could be a *tzaddik gamur*, even if you have a *cheshbon*. Could you imagine yourself being considered a *tzaddik gamur* like Yosef Hatzaddik? That thought is so far from you it's like you can't even figure out where to put it in your brain. But the truth is that it's very simple for a person to become a *tzaddik*. Being a *tzaddik* or a *rasha* has absolutely nothing to do with wiping away your sins and paying down your credit card debt. You know what it has to do with? Saying, "I'm sorry." That's it. If you say you're sorry, you don't have to do anything else.

THE POWER OF A THOUGHT OF REPENTANCE

There's a *gemara* in *Kiddushin*. Everybody should take a look at it. It's on *daf mem tes amud beis*. A guy who's a *rasha gamur* gets out of a car on Shabbos. He sees a *frum*, refined, regal-looking girl walking down the street, and he's blown away by her. He walks over to her, with his jeans and his t-shirt and his ponytail, his nose rings, his earrings up and down his ear. He has rings in his lips. She looks at him and says, "Are you from North Africa? Where are you from?" He says, "No, but I would love to marry you." You know what she says? "I might marry you if you were a *tzaddik*." So he turns to two *frum* Jews who were watching this, keeping an eye on things to make sure this bum, degenerate, *rasha* doesn't do anything extreme and the guy says, אתם עדי הרי את מקודשת לי על מנת שאני צדיק גמור, He's from Israel. He knows Hebrew. He says he's *mekadesh* her, על מנת שאני צדיק גמור, on condition that he is a *tzaddik gamur* You know what the *gemara* says? *Mekudeshes*. The Rambam says *safek mekudeshes*.

The *gemara* says why? שמא הרהר תשובה בדעתו. Maybe he did *teshuvah* in his mind. Does that make him a *tzaddik gamur*? Yes. The *gemara* says if a guy does *teshuvah* in his mind, that guy is a *tzaddik gamur*, even though he hasn't atoned or wiped away even one of his debts, any of his *aveiros*. That's all you have to do to do *teshuvah*!

So, now you have to ask yourself, "So what is *teshuvah*? What is the first step of *teshuvah*?" I'm teaching you gold now, rabbosai. Did you ever think of yourself being a *tzaddik gamur*? No. You could be a *tzaddik gamur* in one second! The *gemara* says "Maybe he was בליבו ומרהר תשובה בליבו." A *tzaddik gamur*! I could be sitting here ועמך כולם צדיקים. All *tzaddikim*! I find it amazing. What kind of *tzaddik* is this?

The answer is as follows. Every time a person transgresses the *ratzon* of Hashem, the will of Hashem, he's rebelling against Hashem. The direct result of that act of rebellion is that now the guy becomes distanced from Hashem. Hashem says: "I don't want to hear from you. I don't want to know from you." Hashem says: "I don't love you." The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 7:6) says more than that. You know what the Rambam says? When you rebel against Hashem, Hashem says: "I detest you." This mumbo-jumbo that Hashem loves every Jew - even the biggest *rasha* in the world - the Rambam says, that's a lie. The Rambam says, before you do *teshuvah* Hashem says: "You're revolting. You're disgusting. You're an abomination." If you do *mitzvos*, Hashem tears up your *mitzvos*. Your Torah is *gornisht*. It's unbelievable! It's frightening! Hashem says: "You threw Me under the bus. You distanced yourself from Me." When you do an act of rebellion against Hashem, you're consciously distancing yourself from Hashem.¹

The result is that now you have a 'credit card debt.' Now, you have to get *onshim*. But that's a separate thing completely. The first thing that happens is, "Bye-bye, Hashem."

CLOSENESS TO HASHEM COMES BEFORE DOING TESHUVAH

So the first step of *teshuvah* is, "I have a simple will, a *ratzon* - I want to get close to Hashem again." That's even before I correct my past, and before any type of *kapparah* is in place. That's the first thing we ask from Hashem in the *Shemoneh Esrei*. What do we say in the *Shemoneh Esrei*? לתורתך, we say: "Return

¹ גדולה תשובה שמקרבת את האדם לשכינה שנאמר (הושע יד ב) "שובה ישראל עד ה' אליה". ונאמר (עמוס ד) "ולא שבתם עדי נאם ה'". ונאמר (ירמיה ד א) "אם תשוב ישראל נאם ה' אלי תשוב". כלומר אם תחזר בתשובה בי תדבק. התשובה מקרבת את הרחוקים. אמש היה זה שנאוי לפני המקום משקץ ומרחק ותועבה. והיום הוא אלהו ונחמד קרוב וידיד. וכן אתה מוצא שבלשון שהקדוש ברוך הוא מרחיק החוטאים בה מקרב את השבים בין יחיד בין רבים. שנאמר (הושע ב א) "היה במקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם יאמר להם בני אל ח". ונאמר ביכניהו ברשעתו (כתב) [כתבו] (ירמיה כב ל) "את האיש הזה ערירי גבר לא יצלח בימיו", (ירמיה כב ד) "אם יהיה כניוהו בן יהויקים מלך יהודה חותם על די ימיני" וגו'. וכיון ששב בגלותו נאמר בזרבל בנו (חגי ב כג) "ביום ההוא נאם ה' צבאות אקרב זרבל בן שאלתיאל עבדי נאם ה' ושמתיך כחותם". (שמנה טורה, הלכות תשובה ז')

me, Hashem.” ההזיירו בתשובה, “I want to come back.” That’s *teshuvah*. Most people think I’m asking Hashem to help me do *teshuvah* and that’s something that takes place later on. No. *Teshuvah* is taking place right now, when I say, “I want to do *teshuvah*. I want to come close to You, Hashem.” After you take care of the *teshuvah*, you now ask Hashem, סלה לנו אבינו - you ask Him for *mehilah*, a *kapparah*. That’s something else entirely. The word *teshuvah* means, coming back. ואשובה אליכם Hashem says, Is that hard? No. It’s as simple as can be.

Now, you have to know, *teshuvah* is not even the first step. That’s the first step - and the last step. That’s all. That is what the *mitzvah* is. The gemara in Kiddushin says that this guy, this *rasha*, was *meharher beteshuvah* and he’s a *tzaddik gamur* now! He didn’t put one finger in the water. He didn’t stick a toe into the world to actively do something to wipe away his sins. He didn’t change his life a drop. But he expressed a *ratzon* to do *teshuvah*, so he’s a *tzaddik gamur*.

Now, on Rosh Hashanah, it says Hashem sits with the two *sefarim*. One *sefer* is for *tzaddikim gemurim* and one *sefer* is for *reshaim gemurim*. And I’m sure the *yetzer hara* got ahold of you, and told you, “You’re not getting into the *tzaddikim gemurim* book. Not you. Forget about it. Skip that book. Focus more on the *reshaim* book, where you’ll get your own page - a gold page, a silver page, or maybe a little mention in the back, regards from a small time *rasha*.” That’s what you’re thinking about? You’re wrong! It’s not *taloy*, it’s not dependent on *kapparas avonos*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says: Just say to Me, “I want to come back.”

THE STAGE OF DOING TESHUVAH

Now, once you come back, then you become a *tzaddik gamur*. Then you want to pay back and pay down your debts. But that’s step two. The first step - becoming a *tzaddik gamur* - is simple. And you should know that a person could do that *teshuvah* a hundred times a day. I do it a minimum of three times a day, once in the morning, once by *Minchah*, and once by *Ma’ariv*. And I think, “Shrek, Hashem, I hope You’re not tired of hearing me bellyaching the same thing over and over. Hashem, since *Shacharis* I may have done *aveiros* and right now I’m a *rasha*, but now Hashem, it’s *Minchah* time, and Hashem, I want to come back to You.” That’s *teshuvah*. Once a person says, “I’m sorry, Hashem. I want to come back to You,” so now he’s a *tzaddik*. They give him a ‘lapel pin.’ It’s called a *tzaddik* pin. When he becomes a *rasha*, they take it away from him and put on a black pin.

Now the question is, what stops a person from going on the path of *teshuvah* and sticking with it? What's the big problem that stops a person? The worst thing is that when you do an *aveirah*, it creates a *timtum halev*. It clogs your spiritual arteries. You know what the clogging of the arteries does? It doesn't enable you to connect with your *neshamah*. Teshuvah works like this: When you want to do *teshuvah*, it means you come to an awareness of, "I've got a *neshamah*. I want to come back to You, Hashem. I want to be close." But you have this *timtum halev* where your *guf* takes over and it creates a *mechitzah* and it bombards you. And it's so difficult when you have a *ruach hatumah* on your *guf* that's screaming to you and saying to you, this is what you want.

DAVEN TO REMOVE TIMTUM HALEV

So what do you have to do to make the *teshuvah* stick? First of all, you've got to get rid of the *timtum halev*. The *timtum halev* doesn't let a person care about his *aveiros*. The *timtum halev* doesn't let a person change and break his habits. You have to figure out how to get rid of that *timtum halev*. What would you suggest? How does a person get rid of his *timtum halev*?

There is a rule **הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו**, that if you're a *ba letaher* then Hashem helps you. Hashem promises you that He's going to come and cleanse you. He's going to change your 'diapers.' You just have to be a *ba letaher* and then **מקוה ישראל ה'**. Just like a *mikveh* is **מטהר את** **הטמאים**, so too Hakadosh Baruch Hu is **מטהר את ישראל**. All you've got to do is to try. You've got to make an attempt. That's all you've got to do. And it's not that hard either to make an attempt. Is it that hard to make an attempt? No.

And then it says in the *passuk*, if you do that, I, Hashem, will give you a *lev chadash*, a new heart (*Yechezkel* 36:26). You want to do a heart transplant? That's a pretty good deal. You don't have to have health insurance. You don't have to travel for this. It's the kind of surgery that you don't have to be out for days and weeks - what they call ambulatory surgery, in and out. Can you imagine you can get a new heart pumping inside your *kishkes*? That is unbelievable! Just open me up, **והסירתי**, Hashem says, I will remove, **את לב האבן**, the stone heart, **מבשרך**, from your flesh, and I will grant you a **לב בשר**. But you've got to make a start.

Now, the first way to start is by *davening*. *Tefillah*. Beseech Hashem to help you clean your arteries.

DO BIG MITZVOS

What's another way to start? Undertaking to do big *mitzvos*, which creates purity in your heart and cleanses you. That's what

you've got to do. What's a big *mitzvah*? What's the biggest *mitzvah* that could cleanse your heart? Torah. It's a *mitzvah* that's going to cleanse your heart and cleanse your arteries. You already said you're sorry to Hashem. You want to come close, but you've got *timtum halev*. You've got to have something to be *metaher* the *lev*. Learning Torah. That has an unbelievable *koach* to be *metaher* the *lev*.

CHANGE BAD HABITS

Now there's another problem besides *timtum halev*. You know what that is? Habits. Bad habits. Here is a guy who smokes. It's a habit. Besides the *timtum halev*, there is also the fact that we're habitual sinners. A guy talks *lashon hara*. A guy thinks negative thoughts about others. A guy does bad *ma'asim*. He has a very bad habit. It won't go away just by removing the *timtum halev*.

How do you change bad habits? The Chafetz Chaim says that changing yourself in one shot for everything you messed up is impossible. Even for a short while. There are a lot of people who say, "Oh, I'm going to do it." They try to do it. It doesn't work. They get burned out. But, the Chafetz Chaim writes, each one of us can begin gradually. Can't everybody change their *koach hadibur* a little bit? That's not hard. It means you counter the habit.

Here is a guy who smokes. You ask him, "How many do you smoke a day?" "Twenty cigarettes." "Okay. Go down to fifteen. Then after that, go down to ten." The Chafetz Chaim says, what's the big deal? Why can't the guy work on part of his *dibur*? Whether it's certain subjects he won't discuss, or whether it's certain times of the day when he will be conscious, "I'm not going to talk *lashon hara*." He's *mesaken* initially a little. And then he'll be *mesaken* his *machshavah*, his thoughts. Then he'll be *mesaken* his eyes, a little bit at a time. For instance, he'll decide that, when he goes into the street, for the first five minutes, he will be careful about what he sees. The Chofetz Chaim says, if a guy does this he will eventually succeed. Let's say a guy does *aveiros* seven days a week. Now he'll say, "On Shabbos Kodesh, I'm not going to do it." That's a beginning. That's called beginning to break his habits. All the things you see in the *sefarim* about changing, has to do with breaking the habits of the *guf*. You can't speak to the *guf* with the mind. You can't speak to the *guf* with your *neshamah*. All the *neshamah* can do is make a decision, help you make the right choice, to choose to do the *ratzon* of Hashem. But to actually impact it, make it manifest itself - for that, you're going to have to train yourself.

After a short while, says the Chafetz Chaim, a person could correct many areas of his life and Hakadosh Baruch Hu will be *mekabel* this and He will consider this that you did *teshuvah keraoy*.

This is an important thing, rabbosai. What I suggest you do is, don't wait until Yom Kippur. Start right now. From now until Yom Kippur, take certain areas of your life, and change a little bit. Don't take more than you can chew because you're going to get indigestion. Take a small area and in that area say, "I'm going to change. I'm going to watch my eyes for five minutes when I walk outside. Certain times of the day, I won't allow myself to run with any bad thoughts, negative thoughts against people. If the thought comes to me, I'll say, 'Forget about it. Not now. I'm off duty.'" Train your *guf*. Train your mouth. That's what you've got to do. You have to be in training, and if you'll do that, you'll discover that you are going to become freed from your bad habits, just like we see many people who have broken the habit of smoking.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us reach the most that we are able to. Yom Kippur is a *yom* of *kapparah*. *Kapparah* means Hashem gives you a freebie. If you do *teshuvah*, Hashem wipes away the *cheit*. He cancels the credit card debt. You don't have to call Angels of Debt to get your credit cards knocked out. You come to Yom Kippur with a little *teshuvah* in your hand, and Hashem wipes away the *chataim*. It's amazing! You don't have to go through all the major steps. But if you want it to stick, if you want to show Hashem you're serious about it, then you have to engage yourself in some kind of program to do *teshuvah*.

SHABBOS TESHUVAH - MAKE IT COUNT!

HOW TO GET ALL YOUR PRIOR CHILUL SHABBOS FORGIVEN

Chazal say that there is a *kesher* that binds Shabbos with *teshuvah*. The *sefer* *Yesod V'shoresh Haavodah* (R' Alexander Ziskind of Grondo, 1735-1794) writes that if a person observes Shabbos with all the *peratim* and all the *dikdukim* - *b'dibur*, *b'maaseh*, *u'b'machshavah* (speech, action, and thought), then the day of Shabbos becomes a day of redemption from sins.² That means to say as follows: Shabbos encompasses the areas of *dibbur*, *ma'aseh*, and *machshavah*. There is a concept of *Shabbosdik* speech, a concept of *Shabbosdik machshavah*, and a concept of *Shabbosdik ma'aseh*. And if a person is careful with all of these on Shabbos, he

² שבת תשובה. הנה יום גאולה מחטאינו ופשעינו יום שבת אם תשמרו בכל פרטים ודקדוקים בדבור ובמעשה ובמחשבה כי עיקר ושורש גדול ויסוד מוסד אל התשובה היא שמירת שבת כהלכתו גם בכל השנה כמרו"ל כל השומר שבת כהלכתו אפי' ע"ג ר"ל כדור אנוש מוחלין לו ולכן זה שמו אשר יקראו לו לשבת שבין כסא לעשור שבת תשובה כי שמירתו כהלכתו הוא יסוד ועיקר לתשובה לכן יזהר בו האדם מאוד ומאוד לשמור ולעשות אותו כהלכתו בכל פרטים ודקדוקים מלדבר בו שיחות חולין ח"ו וגם לטהר רעיוניו ומחשבותיו שלא יחשוב בעניני עה"ז כלל וכלל רק ביראת ה' כל היום ואז מוחלין לו על כל מה שחטא בכל שבתות השנה מיום הולדו ועד עתה כנ"ל בשם הארז"ל. ובודאי בני ישראל אף המון עם נזהרים בשבת זו לטהר עצמם במקוה בשחרית קודם התפלה אף שאינם עושים זאת בכל שבתות השנה. גם תיפק אחר סעודת שחרית חולכים לבה"כ לומר ס' תהלים עד תפלת המנחה (יסוד ושורש העבודה, יא; שער האיתון)

can be redeemed from the baggage of sin he has accumulated. But people take things lightly, they don't *chap*, and they miss out on a tremendous opportunity to become *geulim*, redeemed.

The gemara (Shabbos 118b) says - anyone who properly observes Shabbos, אפילו עובד עבודה זרה כדור אנוש מוחלין לו, even if they worship idols like the generation of Enosh, is forgiven. The Yesod V'shoresh Haavodah says that the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called Shabbos Teshuvah, because Shabbos Teshuva is a tremendous part of the *aseres yemei teshuvah*. In other words, you shouldn't think that it's ten days, so it just happens to be that one of those ten days is Shabbos. On the contrary, an essential part of the *teshuvah* process during these ten days is the *shemirah* of the Shabbos. And therefore, he says, a person should be exceedingly careful to be *shomer* this Shabbos, purify his thoughts, and ensure that his *maasim* indicate that it's Shabbos. He says from the Arizal that if a person does this, he's forgiven for all of his sins he has done on all the Shabbosos of the year from the day he was born until today! You hear what kind of Shabbos this is?!

Baruch Hashem, we are in a *makom Torah*, a yeshiva, a *Torahdik* environment, and we have the opportunity to observe and be *shomer* the *Shabbos k'hilchaso* on this Shabbos. We should make sure to be careful and not blow this tremendous opportunity. The Shelah also writes that Shabbos is one of the four unique *zmanim* of teshuvah.

Now, the Taz (או"ה סימן רמב) asks a question. What's the *pshtat* in the gemara that כהלכתו שבת כהלכתו - anyone who properly observes Shabbos, they're *mochel* him for his sins? If a person didn't do teshuvah, how does Shabbos help him? And if he did teshuvah, what does he need Shabbos for? Shouldn't teshuvah itself do the job?³ So the Taz tells us the gemara is talking about somebody who did teshuvah, but the teshuvah doesn't help that they should *mochel* him. Every teshuvah does something - as Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah 1:9) says: לכל תשובה תמצא סליחה, every *madreigah* of teshuvah does something.⁴ It alleviates, it takes off another peel, another edge. But in order to be *zocheh* to *mechilah*, to forgiveness, there is a given process. The gemara says for some *aveiros* you require Yom Kippur, for other *aveiros* you require to go through suffering - to alleviate all the layers of the *aveirah*, and for some you have to go through the process of death. So the beauty of Shabbos, the Taz says - listen to his powerful words - is

³ בטור הביא גמרא דכל כתיבי כל המשמר שבת כהלכתו אפי' ע"ז כאנוש מוחלין לו איכא למידק לא אי עשה תשובה שבת מאי מהני ואי עשה תשובה שבת ל". ונראה דמירי שעשה תשובה אלא דתשובה לא מהני שיהא מוחלין לו כדאיתא ב' יה"כ עבר על כריתות ומיתות ב"ד תשובה תולה ומיתה ממרקת קמ"ל כאן דאם בעשותו תשובה שומר שבת כהלכתו מהני תשובה שיהא נמחל לו (טורי זהב על שולחן ערוך אורח חיים רמ"ב)

⁴ ונהנה מדרגות רבות לתשובה, וז"ל המדרגות יתקרב האדם אל הקדוש ברוך הוא. ואמנם לכל תשובה תמצא סליחה, אך לא תסרה הנפש טהר שלם להיות העונות כלא היו, זולתי כאשר יטהר האדם את לבו ויכין את רוחו כאשר יתבאר. וכן כתוב (תהלים לב, ב): "אשרי אדם לא יחשב ה' לו עון ואין ברוחו רמיה", וכענין הבגד הצריך כפוס, כי המעט מן הכפוס יועיל בו להעביר הגעל ממנו, אך לפי רב הכפוס יתלבן. וכן כתוב (תהלים נא, ד): "הרב כבסני מעוני", ותקבץ הנפש מן העון כפי אשר תכבס את לבה, שצאמר (ירמיה ד, יד): "כבסי מרעה לבך ירושלים". ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (ע"ז יט, א) "אשרי איש ירא את ה'" (תהלים קיב, א) - בעודו איש, רצונם לומר, כי תשובת האדם המעלה בימי בחורותיו בעודו חנו עליו ויתגבר על יצרו. אכן כל תשובה מועילה, כמו שצאמר (תהלים צ, ג): "תשב אנוש עד דקא ותאמר שובו בני אדם", ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (ירושלמי חגיגה ב, א) עד דקדוכה של נפש. עתה נבאר עקרי התשובה.

was governed by *midas hadin*, that was Hashem's plan. And in the *sheishes yemei hamaaseh*, that is what transpired. It was only on Shabbos Bereishis that Hashem joined *rachamim* to *midas hadin* and the partnership was sealed. Because *al pi midas hadin*, teshuvah doesn't help. *Al pi midas hadin*, the gemara says, נפש החוטאת היא תמות (Yechezkel 18:4), a sinner should automatically die. But because of *middas harachamim*, teshuvah is accepted. And since teshuvah was *nischadesh* on Shabbos - that's when it came *b'po'el* into the world - therefore it has a very special *koach* on Shabbos.

DON'T LOSE THE SPECIAL KOACH FOR MECHILAH

Now, you have to realize that during these ten days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is closer and avails Himself to us in a way that doesn't happen the rest of the year. Hakadosh Boruch Hu is קרוב. On Shabbos Hashem is always קרוב. But this Shabbos corresponds to the first Shabbos in the history of the world, when Hashem brought in *midas harachamim* to the world. This Shabbos, this very Shabbos after Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of *beriyas ha'olam*, corresponds to that first Shabbos. And that's why this Shabbos has a special *koach* to be מכפר on *chilul Shabbos* מיום הולדו, from the day a person was born.

But we have to do two things: Number one, we have to be ש. What does ש mean? ש means one thing. ש doesn't mean being *frum*; ש means you have to be working on coming close to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. This Shabbos could go by without you relating to Hakadosh Boruch Hu, and trying to become closer to Him; you just try not to mess up, but you don't want to be pressured to think about Hakadosh Boruch Hu - that creates too much pressure for you. You have to want to come closer to Hashem. This is the bath, this is the refinery, this is the cleanout. This Shabbos is the Shabbos. This Shabbos, Hashem says, I want to get close to you, and Hashem is closer to you than the whole year. *Oy vavoy* if we miss this opportunity!!

So let each one of us, in some area, take one step towards that goal. Now, if you're *mekabel a taanis dibbur* now, it's probably a little too late and too hard for you. To say you are going to be *mamash Shabbosdik* a whole Shabbos is also too hard. But do you know what you can do? You can do some act to show that you want to relate to Hashem. And that could be accomplished by a person reminding himself during the *seudah* that he's eating a *Shabbos seudah* (or the host will remind the *olam*, that this is a *Shabbos seudah*); we are enjoying Hakadosh Boruch Hu, we are eating a *seudah* with Him, we are celebrating the fact that He created the world. That is called relating to Hashem. It's like when many people go to a *chasunah*, they don't want to think about the *chassan*, they

just want to know where there is more sushi. That's the big question they have at the *chasunah*. Could we get some extra food from somewhere? Is there better food being served elsewhere? Oh, the *chassan*? Forget about him. These people have no *shaychus* to the *chassan*. On Shabbos, our role is to relate to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. When you enjoy Shabbos, have you ever thought of Hashem, that Hashem created the world? If everybody would undertake, for example, to thank Hashem this Shabbos with the intention to come closer to Him, do you know what that would do? In *Shamayim* there'll be thunder and lightning from such a *zach*. Each one of us has to take something upon himself - that we are not going to cross the red line of the prohibited *dibbur* - we won't talk about business on this Shabbos. Let's take at least one step in order to be *miskareiv*. And, as the Ramchal writes, כפי אשר כבש - to the degree that a person controls himself and passes the test, in accordance with that, ישיגהו ותישמח בו - he will attain the Shabbos and will rejoice on this great and wonderful special day.

Tomorrow morning, rabbosai, every single one, without exception, should be here at 7:45. It's the first Shabbos of the year and the last Shabbos of the *zman*. Everybody has to have a *shtarke Shabbos*. Shabbos morning corresponds to *kabalas haTorah*. That's why the *tefillah* on Shabbos morning is *ישמח משה*, it's about *kabalas haTorah*. So start the day off right. And tomorrow in the afternoon, have *rachmanus* on your nefesh, have *rachmanus* on yourself. You'll sleep *motzoei Shabbos*, you can go to sleep early. Take a short nap. Why does it have to be three or four hours long?! Be *machazek* yourself, be strong. I know many people who take such naps. It seems to me they must be taking those naps to get "closer to Hashem" because they keep doing it and being *maarich* in it, so I can't imagine they're doing it for any other purpose than getting closer to Hashem! (joking) But, this Shabbos, try to show the closeness to Hashem in other fashions, in your *tefillos*, for example. *Daven* better than you do the rest of the year. And *im yirtzeh Hashem*, you'll have a wonderful Shabbos.

✧ IN SUMMARY ✧

It sometimes seems that doing teshuvah is too hard. It can seem to us that only the really great tzaddikim know how to do teshuvah. This may be because we did not have a good chinuch in doing teshuvah that enables us to see the truth: Doing teshuvah is easy, and now, in the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is a good time to learn how. The core of doing teshuvah is saying we are sorry for the aveiros we did and asking to come back and be close to Hashem. Once we come back, we are called tzaddikim gemurim. We need to then continue along the path of teshuvah. We can begin by getting rid of our timtum halev through tefillah and big mitzvos, such as limud Torah; we also need to change our bad habits. This week, I will (bli neder) make sure to look in the siddur at the brachah of teshuvah (Hashiveinu) and ask Hashem to let me come back and be close to Him. I will also pick one of my bad spiritual habits and commit to being extra careful for five minutes a day.

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