



פרשת נצבים-וילך

ALONE

"And you will return to Hashem your G-d ..." (Devarim 30:2)

At this time of year each one of us is especially committed to be inspired to do *teshuvah*. The Baal Shem Tov notes that when one lights a candle in the dark he no longer sees the blackness. Similarly, although the individual's soul may be sullied from sin, the process of *teshuvah* conceives a new creation that has no association with his past. At that point, the person can come even closer to Hashem.

Our sages often tell us that one should engage in Torah and *mitzvos* because he **must** do so in order to achieve a desired result, and he will eventually engage in Torah and *mitzvos* simply as an end in itself. The act of *teshuvah*, however, cannot be hypocritical; the inspiration for *teshuvah* must be deep-seated and come from the heart, otherwise it is not *teshuvah*. Although one can bless a *lulav* or light Shabbos candles merely going through the motions and still fulfill the *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* is different. Since the heart and soul are essential components of *teshuvah*, if the emotion is absent then there is no *teshuvah*.

Since the process of repentance is often a challenge, and even taking the first step can prove difficult, the Torah provides the rubric to make it easier: *Teshuvah* (returning), *tefillah* (prayer) and *tzedakah* (charity) avert the evil decree.

Teshuvah, returning to one's essence, begins with the process of studying the laws of *teshuvah* and how one goes about doing *teshuvah*. It also means understanding the significance and effectiveness of *teshuvah*.

With *tefillah* a person beseeches the Al-mighty to grant him the ability to change, and pleads with Hashem for forgiveness for his past deeds. One prays to the Al-mighty for Divine mercy and blessing in the future.

Tzedakah, charity, is one of the most potent weapons we can implement against evil, as it says (*Mishlei*, 10:2), "Charity saves from death."

Most children tend to look forward to the first day of the new school year. They put on their new school shoes, proudly grab their stylish new knapsacks filled with their brand new school supplies and eagerly set off to meet up with their old friends.

Two days after school started, though, I received a call from the fifth grade Rebbi in a well-known local yeshiva who asked for a few minutes of my time. He voiced concern about one of the boys on his class list who had not been there for the first two days and wanted to confirm the family's home phone number. He explained that although he had tried to call numerous times no one had answered the phone.

Curiously, though, he continued, the next night he had been walking down the block where the boy lived and he noticed the missing student standing by himself on the stoop of the apartment building. He

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser.com

Inspiring Books And Divrei Torah From The Rav



didn't want to make the child uncomfortable and decided to wait till the next day to speak to him. Perhaps, he reflected, the family had not made it home in time for the beginning of the school year.

The following day, however, the boy was still not in class. The Rebbi had no choice but to personally go to the student's home. The mother opened the door, and upon entering the dimly-lit apartment the Rebbi noted that the living quarters were sparsely furnished and rather shabby. The boy's mother was taken aback to hear that her son had not attended school. "I sent him out in the morning," she said. "You must be mistaken. Maybe he's in a different class."

"He is supposed to be in my class," the Rebbi explained. "There is no mistake. He has not been to yeshiva since school started."

Since the boy was not at home the situation could not be resolved for the moment, and the mother promised to call the Rebbi as soon as she learned what had happened.

Late that night the Rebbi received a call from the boy himself. "Hello, Rebbi, this is Avi. I sincerely apologize for not coming to class these last few days and I feel very badly, but there was a good reason. The last few months have been extremely difficult for our family financially. My father has been out of a job for a while, and my mother doesn't have any work either. Sometimes I overhear my parents late at night discussing our family's desperate plight. At this point they are afraid we will be thrown out of the apartment as they can no longer afford the rent. During the summer the yeshiva had sent home a mandatory list of supplies, *sefarim* and books that each student must have on the first day of school. I know that there is no money for these supplies, as we have already lost our phone service and we try to minimize the use of electricity with low-wattage bulbs. I was too ashamed to tell anybody about our financial difficulties and I didn't want to be publicly reprimanded or sent home from school. I had no long-term plan, but for the present I decided to lie low."

Each year I undertake to collect money, especially for *yom tov*, on behalf of destitute people. I have established a special Yom Tov Fund that I personally administer and distribute directly into the hands of those who are most in need.

I humbly beseech of all our loyal readers of the Jewish Press and friends of *Klal Yisroel* to feel the pain of our brethren and to take a part in this great *mitzvah*. Let us give *chizuk* to families, individuals, and children in need. In the *zechus* of your contribution, may you merit blessing and success, a year of good health, *nachas*, happiness and prosperity.

Please send your contribution to Khal Bnei Yitzchok Yom Tov Fund, c/o Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, 1336 E. 21 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210. If you would like any special *tefillos* to be offered for a *shidduch*, *shalom bayis*, *parnassah*, or a *refuah*, please include the person's name and the mother's name.