



TESHUVA PACKET

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אָקייטן מצוות בוראי אַעיאָזי נשמת אַיזאָנדה ח'ה בת מנטינה, וואָרפּואַח שלמה
אַרפּאַל דוד פייבל בן רבקה, יעקב בן רבקה, ובינה בת ברכה לאַה בתוך שאר
חולֵי ישראָל.

SIX REASONS WHY IT'S HARD TO DO TESHUVA

(and what to do about it):

1. We don't want to:

One time I asked Rabbi Green what I could do to improve in the area of making a cheshbon hanefesh (spiritual accounting). I shared with him that I felt I was doing it in a superficial manner or inconsistently. He explained that the reason this was happening was because I didn't want to do it.

What did he mean, I "didn't want to do it"?! Here I am inquiring about cheshbon hanefesh and he tells me, I don't want to do it. He was right, of course. The way I was approaching it indicated that I was resisting the process of daily self-examination.

So too, with the process of Teshuva. If you find yourself postponing it or doing it in any superficial manner, this is an indication that you're resisting it for one or more reasons.

What to do about it: Ask yourself why you are avoiding it. Maybe you're uncomfortable focusing on the failures or the negative. By examining what's getting in the way, you can remove these obstacles and actually move forward.

2. We don't have time to do Teshuva:

Although the Ramban advocates spending every day of one's life working on Teshuva (Igeres HaRamban), we certainly find it difficult to do during the rest of the year. Yet even now in Elul, with the Shofar blasting every day to remind us to do Teshuva and even right up to Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, we still find it hard to "squeeze in" the time for working on Teshuva.

What to do about it: Take a moment to identify even a five minute period of the day where you can sit even semi-quietly and focus on Teshuva. How about placing it into your Shemone Esrei (in the right place)? That's a time you're already committed to three times a day.

3. We're not worried enough about the consequences of not doing Teshuva:

If we weigh the level of non-spiritual effort we put into taking care of our needs, versus the energy we invest in Teshuva, Tzedaka and Tefilla, it seems we believe that it's our efforts in the physical world that determine our year, rather than what's happening between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

What to do about it: We all believe in the Torah, which tells us that our life-- in this world and the next-- is determined by our doing Teshuva in these times. (Rashi to Devarim (11, 12), Tosafos in Rosh Hashana (16b, S.V.VeNechtamin)) We just need to take it to heart. Try making a list of all the blessings and, even more importantly, all the difficulties and suffering that you, your family, friends and the Jewish people went through this past year. Title this list: What happened this year as a result of my Rosh HaShana through Yom Kippur of last year.

4. We don't believe it's possible to do Teshuva:

Our track record discourages us. Can we really change? We said we were going to abandon our averages last year, yet they continue to accompany us. The Rambam says that we need to do Teshuva with all our heart, to the degree where the One who knows all hidden things will testify that we won't return to this sin ever again. (Hilchos Teshuva, Chapter two, Halacha two). Is this really possible for us?

What to do about it: We should listen carefully to Hashem's words as spoken through the mouth of the Navi Yermiah (3:22): "Return, O wayward sons, and I will heal your waywardness." The Madregas HaAdam explains that this possuk is guaranteeing us that we can be completely healed spiritually – but only on condition that we "return". In other words, if the end of Elul is approaching and we again face the stark prospect that nothing has changed since last year, then we must conclude that we didn't pull our share of the load in the Teshuva process. If we exert ourselves to the degree we are capable, at that point Hashem will "heal our waywardness," providing us with the Heavenly assistance necessary to be purified of our sins.

5. We feel we're being dishonest about our commitment not to sin for the future:

When we approach the step in the Teshuva process of accepting upon ourselves not to repeat our sins, we worry that we are making a promise that we are unable to keep. Worse than that, we fear that we are making a false oath.

What to do about it: As Rabbi Green points out, there's no point in worrying about whether we can make and uphold such an oath, because we already made it, at Har Sinai. (Shavuos 27a) All the Jewish people, including you and me, already swore to Hashem that we would perform all of the commandments and not transgress any of the prohibitions.

As for our fear that two weeks, or maybe even two days or two hours, later we may repeat the sin, that should not prevent us from committing not to do it again. If we sincerely intend not to repeat the transgression, if it happens again, we need to pick ourselves up off the ground, dust off our clothes and do Teshuva again on the spot. This is an honest and do-able approach.

6. We don't appreciate what Teshuva is really about:

We don't like to focus on teshuva for many of the reasons mentioned above. Dwelling on our sins can feel uncomfortable and burdensome. This is because we isolate teshuva from our relationship with Hashem, making it a mechanical act that interferes with our lives.

What to do about it: The Malbim, in his explanation of the phrase "Let my soul bless Hashem..." (Tehillim 103:1), points out that our soul is capable of detecting Divine chesed. This includes Hashem's acceptance of Teshuva and forgiveness of sin. If we understand that we are returning to Someone with Whom we are intimately involved, what was once drudgery becomes a chance

to repair a rift in our most precious relationship. It is difficult for us to restore intimacy with people after they have violated our will and disregarded the relationship. Yet, restored intimacy is exactly what Hashem offers the soul that strayed from him. With this in mind, Teshuva never needs to be mechanical, since it arouses the deep expression of love that Hashem has for us.

Try writing a love letter to Hashem, thanking him for all of his kindness and love, and apologizing for what we've done to damage the relationship.

BS"D

Bli Neder, I will work on Teshuva from now until Yom Kippur for at least 5 minutes.....

TIME(S):

What happened to me, my family, friends, community and the Jewish people as a result of my Rosh Hashana through Yom Kippur – of last year.

Pleasant

Unpleasant (emphasize)

(compose a letter to someone you care about and need to apologize to,
expressing your appreciation of them and asking them for forgiveness.)



LOVE,

(This letter should include an expression of appreciation to Hashem,
thanking him for all His kindness and love,
and apologizing for what we have done to damage the relationship.)



LOVE,

The Teshuva Chart

Letting Go of the sin:	Regret:	Confess in detail:	Commit to not sin for the future:
Review your daily activities and read books such as the Sefer HsMitzvos of the Chofetz Chaim and the Vidui listed in your /machzor to identify the issues.	Consider the consequences of your sins for yourself, others, and the Jewish people; and to what extent these sins are disrespectful to Hashem.)		(Try to identify areas of resistance to lettin go of sins and strategies for change.)