1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

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# YOM KIPPUR – TESHUVAH FOR OUR GENERATION

**Rabbi Shlomo Caplan**

Rav Yisrael Salanter (1810-1883) writes that he remembers when the mere mention of the arrival of the month of Elul would cause people to tremble. This trembling inspired the onset of an earnest process of teshuvah. On the other hand, Rav Avraham Pam (1913–2001) observes that the arrival of Elul arouses painful feelings of sadness and morose in many people. They know that Hashem is calling on them to do teshuvah, but they feel there isn't much that they are truly capable of accomplishing. Delving into the Rambam's description of teshuvah also doesn't help to inspire them to rise to the occasion: "How does one confess? Behold, Hashem, I have sinned…before You and I have done such and such; I regret it and I will never repeat it again" (Hilchos Teshuvah 1:1). Quite a tall order – almost impossible! Even if they make some progress during this period, past experience has convinced them that this advancement won't last very long. Where does one who takes the call of this season seriously turn for hope and encouragement?

Rav Pam finds a wonderful approach to this dilemma in the Mishnah at the end of Maseches Yoma (85b) which quotes Rebbi Akiva: Fortunate are you Yisrael… Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as it says (Yechezkel 36:25), "I shall sprinkle pure waters upon you, and you will be cleansed" (Yechezkel 36:25). It [also] says (Yirmiyahu 17:13), "The 'mikvah' of Yisrael is Hashem" (Yirmiyahu 17:13). Just as a mikvah purifies those who are impure, so too Hashem purifies Yisrael.

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Spector (the Rav of Kovno) explains the two metaphors. The mikvah can only purify a person if he immerses himself entirely in the mikvah. If even one hair is out of the water, the immersion is invalid. This refers to a complete and perfect teshuvah where all sins are rectified – a total makeover. Something far beyond the reach of almost everyone alive in our times.

However, in the case of the purifying waters of the Parah Adumah, only one drop need touch any part of the body. Rebbi Akiva is teaching us that even if we are lacking the mikvah form of purification, there is still very much to be gained by even absorbing one drop of water. Even a tiny resolution of teshuvah can make a very major impact. Think of it, says Rav Pam, one drop of teshuvah not only allows us to reach the hand of Hashem which He extends to us, but it can also create the momentum to go even higher.

Rav Pam also cites a Medrash (Vayikra Rabbah 29:6) which interprets the pasuk, "Tik'u bachodesh shofar" (Tehillim 81:4) which literally means, "Blow the shofar at the moon's renewal." The Medrash notes homiletically that the word chodesh means to renew and the word shofar means to improve (leshaper). One level of teshuvah is to renew – a total makeover. The other is to improve on the Mitzvos that we are already doing. Every person has his Mitzvah in which he excels and which he enjoys doing. We should try to improve these Mitzvos even more, and thereby they will generate the motivation and energy to grow in other areas. "One Mitzvah pulls with it another Mitzvah" (Avos 4:2). Indeed, the Netziv asserts that the pasuk, "And follow the path of your heart" (Koheles 11:9), implies that any Mitzvah that a person is drawn to is the right Mitzvah for his personality.

For our generation, this provides a realistic and more secure path to teshuvah. Rav Pam has taught us that it is the little things that not only count, but actually work.

## HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

**Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments**

**QUESTION: May I put cold lava cake on top of a pot on שבת to heat it up?**

**ANSWER: No. There are three possible issues to discuss. 1- בישול. The cake and the chocolate inside are already baked and therefore poses no issue of בישול since we know אין בישול אחר בישול. Even though the chocolate melts and if it is a liquid, by liquids we say יש בישול אחר בישול, however, when you put it on the pot the chocolate was a solid so it is okay. 2- חזרה. On שבת one must follow the rules to be allowed to return a food to a fire source. Here in our case if the cake is only being put on top of a pot, then there is no חזרה issue as heating a food up on top of a pot is not a normal way to cook and is מותר for all solid foods. 3- מוליד. Creating something new. Melting foods on שבת is a problem of מוליד, unless it melts directly into another liquid. If when heating up the lava cake the chocolate inside goes from a solidified state to a liquid state, then it is אסור. One may not put a pan of chicken with congealed gravy on top of a pot to warm up, since the gravy will melt. If part of the gravy is liquid, then it is okay if the rest melts directly into it. If part of the chocolate inside the cake is liquid, then it would be okay to heat it up since it will melt directly into the existing liquid.**

עי' סימן שי"ח סעי' ט"ז ומ"ב ס"ק ק' וק"ה. בדיעבד שהשומן או השוקולוד נתמחה מותר לאכלם עי' שם במ"ב ס"ק ק"ז.

# THE CHAZZAN'S THOUSAND SONGS

## Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Eli dreamt to become a professional chazzan, not just for one particular type of shul. He wanted to master the different tunes and styles used for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Shabbos, and Rosh Chodesh in many different communities. Wherever he traveled, he could serve as chazzan and hopefully earn a living from his skill.

Eli approached a world-famous chazzan and asked if he would be willing to take him on as a student. The chazzan thought for a moment and told him, "I can teach you a thousand different songs and tunes, covering all kinds of communities and occasions." Eli's eyes lit up. That was exactly what he was looking for. Then the chazzan named his price. It was an astronomical amount of money. Nevertheless, Eli began calculating. If he really learned a thousand different tunes and became a skilled, versatile chazzan, he could eventually earn back the money, through the many opportunities that would become available to him. He agreed.

Week after week, for several months, Eli met with this chazzan. He practiced the different nuschaos and melodies, carefully recording and reviewing everything he learned. Finally, one day, the chazzan closed his music book and said, "That's it. I've taught you everything I know." Eli was surprised. "Everything?" He checked his records. "Wait a second," he said. "You promised to teach me a thousand songs. I counted them. You taught me only a little more than eight hundred!"

The chazzan smiled. "When I said 'a thousand,' I didn't mean exactly one thousand. People use numbers like that as a figure of speech. I meant that I would teach you a tremendous number of songs, close to a thousand. And that is exactly what I did."

Eli strongly disagreed. "I paid you an enormous amount of money because you specifically told me I would receive a thousand songs. If you only taught me about eight hundred, then either teach me the rest or return part of my money!"

What do you think? When the chazzan promised "a thousand songs," was that a binding promise of exactly 1,000? If so, must he teach Eli the missing songs, or refund the portion of the tuition corresponding to what Eli never received? Was "a thousand" simply a figure of speech meaning a very large number, in which case the chazzan fulfilled his agreement and owes Eli nothing? See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim, page 551.

Regarding the question whether one is obligated to bring his disabled neighbor down to the shelter during a rocket attack, Rav Zilberstein (C"C Nedarim 753) answered that this case is very different from the famous case of two people in the desert with only one bottle of water. In that case, both people are in equal danger. Here, however, the healthy person's risk of being struck by a rocket while helping his neighbor is less than one in a thousand. On the other hand, leaving the disabled neighbor alone during the attack would cause him enormous panic and terror, which itself could constitute a situation of pikuach nefesh. Therefore, Rav Zilberstein ruled that the healthy neighbor is obligated to help him reach the shelter. It would be forbidden to ignore his plight, and in this case we do not apply the principle of chayecha kodmin, that one's own life takes precedence.

# THE ROSENBAUMS' KABBALOS

Rav Simcha Yehudah Rosenbaum, a resident of Mattersdorf, Yerushalayim, is the rosh kollel of Kollel Mayim Chaim of Kiryat Sefer. One year, on Motzaei Yom Kippur, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his sons had returned from shul, after making Havdalah, sat down with the rest of the family to break their fast. Shortly thereafter, the Rosenbaum clan was set to head outside to place schach on their succah, as is customary. Each year, the children look forward to putting the finishing touches on their succah as the quasi-Yom Tov of Motzaei Yom Kippur gets underway.

But before the Rosenbaum kids could go outside, their father stopped them. He had an idea. "It's been a long day. We spent hours engaged in heartfelt tefillah. We have all undertaken numerous kabbalos. We've accepted upon ourselves to improve in various ways. Let us each sit down for five minutes and put into writing our kabbalos for the coming year. This will help us concretize our commitment and ensure that we follow through on our pledges." The children complied, sitting down at the table with pen and paper to write down their kabbalos as their father shepped nachas and did the same.

Not more than a couple of minutes had passed before they heard a loud crash outside their apartment. The noise had come from the direction of their succah. Running outside, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his children were shocked by what they saw. A retractable roof had landed squarely on their succah. They quickly surmised that one of their upstairs neighbors had been opening his retractable roof, a feature quite common in apartments in that area, to work on his succah, and the roof had become dislodged. The roof slid off its tracks and fell to the ground below.

At the very moment that the roof plummeted down, Rabbi Rosenbaum and his children could have been standing in their succah, putting up their schach. It was only because of Rabbi Rosenbaum's creative idea for them to write down their Yom Kippur kabbalos hat they were instead sitting inside. It was clear to Rabbi Rosenbaum and his family that those kabbalos wouldn't only earn them zechuyos during their year ahead. In fact, those kabbalos were apparently already paying dividends, protecting them from a potential tragedy. From Powerful Moments By Rabbi Yitzchok Hissiger. Published by Artscroll Mesorah. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.


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***Good Shabbos!***

***Wishing Everyone A Gmar Chasima Tova.***