

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Ki Teitzei	25 Aug. 2018	14 Elul 5778	Deut. 21:10-25:19	Isa. 54:1-10	Matt. 24:29-42

The month of Elul is in between August and September. It is the month of *teshuvah* (repentance). It is also a month of *tikkun* (return). As we have studied in the past, *teshuvah* means to recognize, confess our wrongs, and vow not to commit same sin again. Thus, we are to *tikkun* (return) to the purity we once had as a newborn baby.

Elul is the last of the month before entering Rosh Hashanah which is on September 10, 2018 for this year. The Rosh Hashanah is a start of new year. In Hebrew, it literally means the “head of the year” and it is the Jewish New Year. Unlike secular celebration of New Year, Rosh Hashanah is a time of inner renewal and divine atonement. On this is the day, all of us will stand in front of Hashem for judgment of the past year. Hashem is going to review our past sins and give us rewards/blessings accordingly for the following year.

One of the common practices of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of shofar. The sages teach we blow shofar to challenge haSatan who is searching every second to remind Hashem of our sins and demand justice. In today’s terminology, haSatan is a prosecutor who is presenting his case to the judge (Hashem), and asks for resolution of the case in his favor by producing evidence (sins). The defense attorney argues by showing that the person repented and did not commit same crime (sin) again.

The Kabbalah teaches that each second, minute, hour, day, and a month has different energy. For the month of Elul, it is the energy of change, or renewing the energy. Hashem has given us this month to repent of our sins for the past year. He gave us another 10 days just in case we forget! What is 10 days after Elul? Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

So, from the first day of Elul to Yom Kippur, the gate of repentance is opened wide to receive our prayers of repentance. Normally, it is difficult to admit our sins, confess our sins through prayers as not all prayers are reached in the *shamayim* (heaven). As such, Hashem opens the gate of repentance and sends His angels to open our heart to repent.

R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Yohanan, On Rosh Hashanah, three books are opened, one with the names of the righteous, one with the names of the wicked, and one with the names of neither righteous or wicked. The verdict of righteous is written with “life” and the book is sealed at once. The verdict of wicked is written “death” and the book is sealed at once. The verdict of neither righteous or wicked is “suspended” between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If they are deemed to deserve it [by resolving to repent], they are inscribed for life; if [they fail to repent] and are therefore deemed not to deserve life, they are inscribed for death.¹

In the physical world, many people go to a *Tashlich* service where they throw bread crumbs into a naturally running body of water as a means of casting away their sins. On the second night of Rosh Hashanah it is customary to eat a new fruit, a symbol of newness that Hashem has erased our sins and renewed our soul to do better for the next year.

This week’s Torah portion, Ki Teitzei means “go forth.” In the literal sense, the scriptures describe how Israel should conduct during the war. Rebbe Nachman said that going out to war means to war with his evil inclination which is “your enemy.” Again, being Merciful, He does not allow you to go out to the wilderness

¹ Sefer HaAggadah, p. 496

on your own. For He has already prepared you “for YHWH your Elohim has delivered them into your hands.” It means He has given us the will and the strength to overcome our evil inclination.

What is the evil inclination? It makes you believe that you are righteous who can ‘rule over Hashem’ through the prayer. In other words, many believe themselves by saying, “I prayed. Hashem forgave my sins. So, I can now commit same sin again and forgiven later as always through prayer.” Hashem forbid. This is not a true repentance, but a lip service which Hashem hates. (Amos 5:21-23; 1Sam 5:22; ...) For Hashem is Mercy as Yeshua said, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” (Matt. 9:13) So, a sin is, despite their denial, the belief that the person is better than Hashem. Hashem forbid.

Hashem, being Merciful already gave us a way to defend ourselves, and that is the Armor of Hashem. (Eph. 6:10-18) Thus is the meaning of “and you take some of them captive.” We can overpower the evil inclination by using that very thing with which it seeks to overpower us: arrogance. For Hashem cannot dwell in the same world.²

We know that a year generally contains 365 days without the leap year. Although Satan does not possess power independent of Hashem, he is a messenger of evil who can cause harm, entice, and ensnare us to evil. But his mission is limited by the numerical value of his name, HaSaTan. The *gematria* is 364 (ה = 5, ט = 300, ט = 9, נ = 50). On one day, Yom Kippur, Hashem designated for forgiveness and atonement as such Satan is not allowed to engage in his work when we are as angels of purity.

So “when you go out” into the secular world which is a battleground, we are to fight against our evil inclination from arrogance, lashon hara (evil tongue), gossips with humility and righteousness. We are to “war against” our enemies, the forces of evil that has trapped the fallen sparks of holiness. The Kabbalah teaches that our mission is to gather these fallen sparks and elevate them to their original level. “And YHWH your Elohim delivers them into your hands,” as hands represents faith, (Exod. 17:12) by “you take some of them captive” which is the Torah. We are to bind our inner thoughts to the Torah while in this world, so we can win the war.³

The Torah uses the word “see” in “You shall not see your brother's ox.” (Deut. 22:1) The sages explain “see” has an intention of returning the lost item. In this case, it is “your brother’s ox.” Since, you have an intention of returning “your brother’s ox”, Hashem’s attention (Shekinah) is drawn upon you. Whereas “hide yourself” means you have no intention of returning it to your brother, therefore the Shekinah departs from you.

“And if your brother is not near to you, or if you know him not, then you shall bring it to your own bayit, and it shall be with you until your brother seeks after it, and you shall restore it to him again.” (Deut. 22:2) The sages teach that when a baby in its mother’s womb, it studies the entire Torah and it is shown all that must be accomplished in this world. But when the baby is born, it forgets all that it had learned.⁴ Therefore, we are to seek tzaddik (righteous) to remember what has been forgotten. That being said, the tzaddik [in spiritual sense] will not return immediately. Rather, it will test you to see if you are sincere in your desires for holiness and closeness to Hashem.⁵

² BT, Sotah 5a

³ Likutey Moharan I, 280:2-3

⁴ BT, Niddah 30b

⁵ Likutey Moharan I, 188

So, we are to “return a lost object” which implies “returning a lost soul” to Hashem as long as the person has not given up desire of having a relationship with Hashem. Then they remain the property of their Owner, Hashem. But if they think they are too distant from Hashem and give up trying, then that person is “removed” from their Owner’s property.⁶ Yeshua said, “And he said unto them, In what place so ever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.” (Mark 6:10-11)

“The woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are an abomination to YHWH your Elohim.” (Deut. 22:5) Again, in literal sense, men are not to wear women’s clothing or vice versa. It is very easy to understand for doing so is “an abomination to” Hashem. The sages teach that each gender represents uniqueness of the soul:

Man	Woman
Torah	Prayer
Truth and Understanding	Faith and the Ability
Truth (Rashi)	Faith (Rashi)

When a man learns the Torah, he is to have gevurah (strength) by demanding his goal to be met. He should not “change garments” by not demanding in prayer, nor approach his studies in humbleness. Whereas, woman is to ask and request her needs, and not demand in prayer as her soul is gentle and kind.

We are not to “change garments” from a garment of truth into a garment of falsehood, false faith, or idolatry. We must take care not to trust on faith when something can be understood by means of seeking truth. Yet, we must also take care not to try to understand that which is beyond us by having faith.

Rashi⁷ says “exchanging garments leads to immorality” as man represents truth, and woman represents faith. The truth of Hashem manifested in Adam and Chava before eating from the Tree of Knowledge as they did not wear any “garments.” However, after eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the Other Side was able to grasp truth and faith, and use them deceptively. So, now we have to wear “garments” to filter truth and faith in order to recognize what is true and false. Our task is made harder since the Other Side draws its nourishment from these “garments” by “dressing things up” to make the false appear true.

Adam and Chava did not wear any “garments” because the truth (knowledge of Hashem) and faith in Hashem are actually one. Therefore, the prohibition of “not exchanging garments” signifies that we must never exchange true faith for false faiths. Rashi explains when we “exchange garments”, the Other Side entices us to exchange truth for falsehood with convincing arguments.⁸

The Zohar teaches that the bird’s nest (Deut. 22:6) refers to the exile of Divine. Because His Presence is hidden, the forces of evil appear to be in control. However, a concealed level of Kadosh continues to sustain everything in this world including the forces of evil.

So, when we “happens upon a bird’s nest”, meaning we feel coming upon the Divine Presence during the exile, acknowledges the revealed existence of Kadosh and returns to Hashem. Then we can “send away the

⁶ Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 41b-42a

⁷ Rebbe Nachman’s Torah, Parashat Ki Teitzei, p. 306-307

⁸ Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 470-474

mother bird,” which represents the concealed Presence of Hashem that permeates all of creation. We are acknowledging that His domain is everywhere and we are not without Hashem, even if we don’t openly experience Him. Once we recognize that Hashem is truly in control, we can then keep the “chicks” (lost souls) by elevating them for we have shown that the forces of evil have no real power.⁹

Another aspect: the “tree” refers to the Tree of Knowledge; the “chicks and eggs” to Torah and mitzvot. Even though, a person lives in this world without serving Hashem, has not clarified or purified his portion of da’at (awareness of Hashem). Nevertheless, the Torah and mitzvot are waiting for him, to help him attain his goal.

Another aspect: The “chicks and eggs” represent souls that are weak and far from Hashem due to their sins. A person who wishes to draw these souls close should “send away the mother bird” – i.e. chase away the intellects the led these souls onto an evil path. He must teach them to begin anew with a fresh approach, not as if their days are the “same old thing,” but as if each day is a new creation.¹⁰

⁹ Likutey Halakhot, V, p. 128a

¹⁰ ibid, IV, p. 99a