

“If that is the only reason,” his friend answered softly, “then He should have given the Torah on a plain or even in a valley. Hashem wanted to teach that growth in spirituality is not a smooth road. We must expect difficulties; there will always be mountains in the way.”

The modern world we live in is one of convenience. We yearn for things to be instant and simple. We have easy-open cans, cruise-control driving, and wireless voice-controlled dialing. Marketing specialists always tout the simplicity and ease-of-use of their clients’ products. They know all too well that everyone wants things to be uncomplicated and undemanding.

Yet people who train for sports will tell you that pushing beyond the limits of our capabilities is what raises the bar; what was difficult in the past becomes easier to achieve in the future. That is the way Hashem has planned our spiritual growth, as well. We must expect hurdles, and we must leap over them. There are no smooth roads and no easy rides over the path to success. Be prepared for difficulties, and you will be more suited to overcome them. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Care for My Children

In August, 1970, Rabbi Yosef Schwab and his family were vacationing in Highpoint State Park by the Delaware River. After hiking for a while, the family sat by the river to rest. R’ Schwab was glancing around, enjoying the view, when he noticed a young man climb out of the river and onto a nearby boulder. As the man sat down to rest, he suddenly fell forward in a faint, hit his head on a rock and fell into the river.

R’ Schwab and his wife ran into the river and grabbed the man. Fighting against the current, they managed to drag him out of the water and onto an embankment where R’ Schwab began to administer artificial respiration.

R’ Schwab’s wife ran for help and brought back some firemen, who took over from R’ Schwab. After a few minutes, the young man regained consciousness, but he was muttering incoherently and clearly needed medical help.

The Schwab family continued to take care of the young man, covering him with blankets and trying to make him comfortable, until the ambulance arrived one hour later. Even then, the Schwabs insisted on staying with him until they were sure he was safe. And they continued to stay in touch with him until his condition returned to normal.

A couple of months later, the Schwabs received a surprise visitor at their home in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The young man they had saved was standing at their door.

“Hi, I’m Pat Mackentire. Remember me?” He told the Schwabs he was from Perth Amboy, NJ, where his father, a physician, had his own medical practice. He presented them with a bottle of whiskey and returned the blankets they had lent him.

“I can’t thank you enough for what you did,” he said. “You both saved my life!”

A few years later, R’ Yosef Schwab met Rabbi Edelstein, a new *mohel* who had just moved to Elizabeth from Perth Amboy.

“You say you’re from Perth Amboy?” R’ Schwab asked with interest. “Have you ever heard of a Dr. Mackentire?”

“Oh, sure. Everyone knows Dr. Mackentire! For years he’s been treating all the Rabbis and anyone who’s affiliated with Torah, for free. He’s shown a tremendous amount of kindness to the Torah community.”

“Is that so?” R’ Schwab said in amazement. “Let me tell you an interesting story!”

R’ Schwab then went on to describe how he had saved Dr. Mackentire’s son’s life. To the Schwab’s, the message was clear. Hashem had sent him and his wife to care for a child whose father cared for Hashem’s children. (Visions of Greatness)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמַת לְאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

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SHABBAT NISABIM ✪ שַׁבַּת נִשְׁבִּים

Haftarah: Yishayahu 61:10 - 63:9.

SEPTEMBER 3-4, 2021 27 ELUL 5781

Early Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 5:38 pm	Shaharit: 5:27, 6:45, 7:30, 8:25, 9:15 am
Shir Hashirim/Minhah: 7:00 pm	Morning Shema by: 8:52 am
Candlelighting: 7:06 pm	Shabbat Class: 5:40 pm
Evening Shema after: 8:04 pm	Shabbat Minhah: 1:30 & 6:40 pm
	Shabbat Ends: 8:02 pm (R"Y 8:34 pm)
	Weekday Minhah: 6:45 & 7:10 pm

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Hatarah will be this Saturday night at 8:12 p.m. One should say “Baruch hamabdil ben kodesh l’hol - Blessed are You Who separates from Holy to mundane” before driving a car.

A Message from our Rabbi

As we approach Rosh Hashanah we all think about change. Change the way we do things, and change the way we think. Rabbi Moshe Kestenbaum discusses this subject.

“I used to wonder about Pharaoh and the Egyptians. How could they see all the plagues and still not run to send us out of Egypt? I used to wonder how the generation of the desert, after seeing all the miracles, could still complain and worry about their plight.

“No more do I wonder. I see firsthand how capable we are of not responding to the events around us. After all we went through with Covid before and after Pesah (last year), we would think that we would become different people. Our appreciation for each other, our appreciation for shul, our appreciation for Hashem’s infinite control of our lives. We just would never be the same.

“But we see clearly how hard it is for us to change. It is easier to cling to old habits and attitudes. As soon as life returns to normal somewhat, we are more than ready to slide into our old routine.

“Frankly, from observing my own resistance to change, it is no longer a wonder to me how Pharaoh and the Egyptians could calm down once a plague eased up. It is no longer a wonder to me that the generation of the desert complained when things got tough. This is human nature. We can quickly forget the events that happen to us, despite their magnitude. Once there is a break, we quickly fall into the state of mind that we would

prefer to live in.

“A student called me recently and said, ‘I want a Yeshivah where the Rabbis will change me.’ I told him, ‘Rabbis don’t change people; people need to change themselves. Rabbis can only inspire and assist.’

“It is the same way with miracles or other powerful experiences in our lives. They don’t change us. With effort, we can utilize them to change us.

“Rosh Hashanah is almost upon us. It is time to step up. It is time to heighten our prayers. It is time to improve our conduct in shul. It is time to recite the *berachah* of *Asher Yasar* out loud and with fervor. It cannot be, or rather, it should not be, that we take our health for granted after everything we have witnessed. We have merited seeing Hashem’s awesome control of the world. This must strengthen our *emunah* in His limitless power.

“While indeed we can remain unchanged after seeing miracles, we certainly do not want to remain unchanged. We must utilize the events of the past and present to catapult us to great heights.” Happy Holiday. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Counsel of My Heart

Our reading this week contains an extraordinary passage, one which is very relevant for the upcoming High Holy Days. Moshe gathers the Nation of Israel together, and describes to them a truly unforgivable sin. It is so terrible that “Hashem will not be willing to forgive him, but Hashem’s anger and jealousy will be kindled against him...” [29:19] What is this great crime? What could a person do that is so terrible and degraded that it is *certain* to arouse Divine anger, rather than forgiveness?

The answer describes something so simple that, at first glance, we may not understand why it is so wrong. G-d, through Moshe, makes a covenant with the Jews that they will not follow idols or the immoral practices of idolaters. But then the Torah describes an individual, family or tribe that is drawn to idolatry. “And when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying, ‘I will have peace, as I follow the counsel of my own heart,’ adding ‘the watered upon the dry.’”

What is it that arouses Divine anger? Simply that he lies back, instead of trying to improve. “I will have peace - I can continue misbehaving, and nothing bad will happen.”

We may not understand why that’s so horrible. Why is a person’s “lackadaisical attitude” more worthy of Divine wrath than serving idols?

To be drawn to idolatry, or any form of misbehavior, is to be overwhelmed by a desire. We are human. We want things that we’re not supposed to have, whether power, tempting foods, someone else’s money or a forbidden relationship. And, sadly, we sometimes give in to those temptations. G-d knows we are human, and can forgive us if we turn back, express sincere regret, and commit to doing better.

Not so the person who says, “I will have peace.” This is self-satisfaction with our own shortcomings. That’s what infuriates Hashem.

Rashi explains what the verse means by “adding the watered upon the dry.” When a person is indifferent to his own wrongdoing, there is no longer any distinction between inadvertent error and deliberate sin. Once he is willing to callously do the sin deliberately, the fact that today he did it by mistake no longer makes his behavior easier to forgive.

This thought applies to every person, no matter his or her spiritual level. We cannot be satisfied with where we are; we must look at our actions, and try to do better. And that is one of the key messages of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We must grab this special opportunity to turn away from our mistakes and our bad choices, and set ourselves upon a better path. Let us show Hashem that we are not indifferent to our wrong actions, but sincerely desire greater closeness to the Divine. (Rabbi Yaakov Menken)

Getting Accustomed

The Torah says, “For you know how you lived in the Land of Egypt and how you traversed the nations whose countries you have passed through. You have seen their abominations and their detestable idols (*et shikutzehem v’et gilulehem*) of wood and stone, of silver and gold that were with them.” The Torah refers to the pagan idols of the nations in a most derogatory fashion. The word “*sheketz*” means disgusting. The root of the word “*gilulehem*” is “*galal*,” the word describing human excrement.

The Brisker Rav points out that the above cited verses first refer to the idols in the most disrespectful of terms – *et shikutzehem v’et gilulehem*– but then describe them in terms of raw materials – wood and stone (*etz v’even*), silver and gold (*kesev v’zahav*). *Etz v’even* does not sound so bad. *Kesev v’zahav* even sound attractive. Which is it? Are the idols *sheketz* and *galal* or are they *kesev* and *zahav*?

The Brisker Rav explained that this *pasuk* is teaching that when a person first sees something disgusting, his immediate reaction is one of revulsion. But human tendency is that after a person sees it for a while and gets used to it, it does not seem as disgusting anymore. It is then perceived in quite neutral terms – like wood and stone. Ultimately, if a person continues to see it and becomes even more accustomed to it, that which was originally revolting and abominable will be like silver and gold.

This addresses one of the most basic of human traits that is both the bane of mankind and at the same time is also the salvation of mankind: We can become accustomed to anything. If we could not get accustomed to anything, we would not be able to survive. Sometimes, we see people who went through the concentration camps, where the conditions were unspeakable. How did they do it? The answer is that to some extent, they got used to it. That ability can be very useful. But on the other hand, this same ability can be very destructive. Unfortunately, we can become accustomed to anything. That which was once disgusting can become the norm.

This is indeed what the *Gemara* means when it says “This is the way of the evil inclination: Today it advises – do thus. Tomorrow it advises – do thus. Until eventually it advises – go worship idols.” The slippery slope proceeds. At each step, a person rationalizes that which had originally been “unthinkable”. It doesn’t bother us anymore and in fact becomes the next plateau from which a person sinks lower and lower until the person eventually goes on to worship idolatry.

We become spiritually deadened by what we see on billboards, by what we see as advertisements on buses or subways, and by what we hear on radio stations. It is mind-boggling! Ten years ago, this was “*shikutzehem v’gilulehem*”. It was disgusting! Then it became “*etz v’even*”. We became accustomed to it. Now it is even like “*kesev v’zahav asher imahem*”. We already expect it and look forward to hearing and reading it. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Uphill Battle

“I don’t know if I can take this much longer,” Elkanah complained. “It seems as if every time I try to attend a class, I have a conflicting appointment at work. If I plan to learn in the morning before I leave the synagogue, a buyer will call and request an early appointment. If I plan to attend an evening class, someone will undoubtedly request a late-day or evening meeting, and I’m forced to cancel my study plans.”

“You probably never considered why Hashem gave the Torah to His People on a mountain,” Zevulun replied.

“I certainly did!” Elkanah objected. “He chose Mount Sinai, a low mountain, to teach us that in order to learn His Holy Book, we must first acquire the trait of humility