

# THE RAV, HA-RAV, & THE REBBE: THREE APPROACHES TO TESHUVA

## PART III, THE REBBE

### I. Repentance in the *Tanya*

#### 1. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Iggeret ha-Teshuva*, Chapter 7

In the true and direct path to the lower *teshuvah*, ... there are two general elements. The first is to awaken supreme compassion from the source of mercy for his spirit (*neshama*) and divine soul (*nefesh*) that has fallen from a lofty peak, the true Life, into a deep pit, the chambers of defilement and *sitra achra*. ... How is the spirit of the *sitra achra* broken? When the heart is broken and crushed... And how is the heart to be broken and crushed? Only a minor part of this can be through mortifications and fasts in our generations. We cannot fast as did King David. Our sages remark on the verse, ‘My heart is a void within me’— he destroyed it with fasts. But the true humbling of the heart, that it be broken and crushed, and the removal of the spirit of impurity and *sitra achra*, is achieved through being a “master of accounting” with all the profundity of the mind. He must concentrate his intellect and understanding deeply for a period every day, or at night before *Tikun Chatzot*, to realise that through his sins he wrought the exile of the Shechinah, as noted above. He will also ponder that he [caused] the uprooting of his spirit and divine soul from the true Life, and demeaned it to a place of defilement and death, the chambers of the *sitra achra*. He must become deeply aware that his soul has become a vehicle for them, receiving from them vitality to endow his body, as noted above.

#### 2. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Likkutei Amarim*, Chapter 31

In truth, however, a contrite heart and the bitterness of the soul because of its remoteness from the light of the Divine countenance and its being clothed in the *sitra achra*—are not called *atzvut* (dejection) in the sacred tongue, for *atzvut* implies that the heart is dull like a stone and is devoid of vitality. But in the case of *merirut* (bitterness) and a broken heart, the contrary is surely true—there is vitality in the heart fermenting agitation and bitterness, except that this vitality stems from the attribute of the holy *gevurot* (severity), whereas joy comes from the attribute of *chasadim* (kindness), for the heart is comprised of them both.

## II. Repentance for the Rebbe

### 3. Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, Letter 768 (4 Tishrei 5711/16 September 1950)

The underlying theme of the above days is *teshuvah*, including both of its levels: a) the lower level of *teshuvah*, which is repentance for the sins, iniquities and transgressions that one performed; b) the higher level of *teshuvah*, in which the individual, in a spirit of self-effacement and self-sacrifice, returns his soul “to G-d Who bestowed it”—to its essential Root and Source, to the state which preceded its descent, and higher.

Hence, the lower level of *teshuvah* can also apply only to specific matters and only to some of the soul’s faculties—to those matters and faculties in which the individual’s sin caused a blemish.

The higher level of *teshuvah*, by contrast, is [the *avodah* of] *Shema Yisrael*—“Hear, O Israel!” Its task is to gather together all the soul’s scattered faculties, to elevate them aloft in a sheer expiry of the [entire] soul, and finally, to elicit and draw [spiritual energy] downward into all components of the soul.

Just as this *avodah* is the task of the individual, it is also the task of the “complete stature” of the entire Jewish people, at all its diverse levels: ...

### 4. Rabbi M. M. Schneerson, *Days of Awe, Days of Joy* (6 Tishrei 5733/14 September 1972)

Both Rabbi Moshe Cordovero and Rabbenu Yona compare the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to *Hol ha-Moed*. ... But if the purpose of these days is to focus on introspection, Torah study, prayer, etc., why compare them to *Hol ha-Moed*? ... Because these days are preceded by and concluded by a festival. ... On Rosh Hashanah there must be joy. Yes, the awesomeness of the day evokes great trepidation, but it also evokes great inner joy. But how can a Jew be expected to be joyful on Rosh Hashanah and leave all negative thoughts of sin behind? The *teshuva* achieved during Elul cleanses us of our sins, and we can thus rejoice in that.

### 5. Publisher’s Foreword, *Simchah: Breaking Through Barriers* (*Margela bePumei deRava*, 5746/1986)

As important as the Rebbe’s message is in the individual sphere, its relevance is even more pronounced when applied to our people as a whole. Rarely in our nation’s spiritual history are there watershed moments—periods, events, or factors that serve as lines of demarcation between what came before and what comes afterwards. It would be presumptuous for an ordinary individual to attempt to identify such a moment. When, however, a Rebbe distinguishes such a turning point, it is incumbent on us to take heed and alter our conduct accordingly. In that context, the *maamar* translated in the pages that follow, *Margela bePumei deRava*, delivered in the year 5746 (1986), serves as a manifesto for our generation.

### 6. Rabbi M. M. Schneerson, *Simchah: Breaking Through Barriers* (*Margela bePumei deRava*, 5746/1986)

Now the bitterness associated with *teshuva* is not relevant in our generation, the generation of *ikvesa demeshicha*, [the generation about to merit the Messiah] for in our generation, we do not have the strength [to bear] the bitterness of *teshuva*. On the contrary, we require extensive reinforcement and support. Therefore, in our generation, the service of *teshuva* should be expressed through joy. ... From all the above, it is clear that our Divine service must be characterized by joy. ... Moreover, it is explained in *Iggeres HaTeshuva* that *teshuva* which stems from bitterness is *teshuva tataah*, the lower rung of *teshuva*. In contrast, *teshuva* that is characterized by happiness is considered *teshuva ilaah*, the higher rung of *teshuva*.