

Teshuvah – It is the thought that counts

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The Hebrew text of Orot haTeshuvah may be found at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/31307>

1. Introduction to Orot haTeshuvah

Teshuvah occupies the greatest portion of Torah and life, and upon it all personal and communal hopes are founded.

2. Talmud, Kiddushin 49b

על מנת שאני צדיק אפילו רשע גמור מקודשת שמא הרהר תשובה בדעתו

If a man says, "Marry me on condition that I am a tzaddik," then even if he is fully wicked, she is married; perhaps he had thoughts of teshuvah in his mind.

3. Talmud, Rosh haShanah 16b

אין דנין את האדם אלא לפי מעשיו של אותה שעה שנאמר כי שמע אלקים אל קול הנער באשר הוא שם

A person is judged only based on his deeds of that moment, as it is written, 'Gd has heard the voice of the youth, as he is there.'

Teshuvah is about returning to, and revealing, the perfection

4. Talmud, Nedarim 39b

שבעה דברים נבראו קודם שנברא העולם אלו הן תורה ותשובה גן עדן וגיהנם כסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ושמו של משיח

Seven items were created before the universe: Torah, Teshuvah, Gan Eden, Gehennom, the Divine Throne, the Beit haMikdash and the name of Mashiach.

5. Orot haTeshuvah 11:4

The path of all existence is founded upon teshuvah. Entities come into existence as a descent from the Divine realm to worldly realms – a form of descent and of terrible "death" – to which no descent in this universe, from level to level, from great talent and acquisition to lesser talent and acquisition, can compare. This is engineered on the higher calculation of justice, which gauged the justice of existence before anything was created... But this descent has the foundation for greater ascent stored within... as it is written, "Before mountains were birthed and earth and foundation were formed, You have been Gd for all eternity. You laid man low, and declared, 'Return, sons of men!'"

6. Orot haTeshuvah 7:4

Thoughts of teshuvah reveal the depth of one's desire, and the strength of the soul is revealed in all its glory through those thoughts. The greater the thoughts of teshuvah, the greater its liberation.

7. Orot haTeshuvah 6:2

Teshuvah always resides in the heart; it is stored in the heart even during the sin itself.

Thoughts of teshuvah reveal that perfection

8. Orot haTeshuvah 7:3

Via thoughts of teshuvah, one hears the voice of Gd calling to him from within the Torah, from within his heart's emotions, from within the world, its fullness and all therein.

9. Orot haTeshuvah 12:6

The practical essence of teshuvah embraces, in just a single, minimal instance, multitudes upon multitudes of ideals, and broad philosophies, which enable its existence in this world and in life.

10. Orot haTeshuvah 14:14

Even regarding matters which require practical rather than intellectual repair, such as issues between people, the greatness of every thought of teshuvah is still beyond estimation. This is true even when the thought of teshuvah comes from simple fear, fear of punishment, for even the most minor of traits arouses the holiest and greatest traits in one's spirit and in the world...

11. Orot haTeshuvah 8:6

One who feels within himself the depth of regret of teshuvah, and the exasperated desire in his thoughts to mend his flaws – those he is already capable of mending and those he is not yet capable of mending but for which he anticipates Divine mercy – can already count himself among the righteous.

12. Orot haTeshuvah 14:23

If a person is so lowered, in his own mind, that he cannot raise his head to involve himself in Torah and mitzvot, in settling the world and in social conduct, in the rest and joy of a healthy soul, as a result of his bitterness over the ethical descent caused by his sins, then he should place into his heart that this lowering of the heart as a result of his sins renders him, without doubt, a complete *baal teshuvah*.

13. Orot haTeshuvah 9:1

The will to goodness is everything; all of the skills in the universe are only the means to completing it. The content of his will [to goodness] is imprinted upon his soul by the light that is affixed within, and as a result, the great flow of Divine inspiration is manifested upon him continually, and a will which is great in its holiness, beyond the trait embedded in other human beings, grows powerful within him...

Practical Steps

14. Orot haTeshuvah 13:9*

At first he should not make mending of the past such an essential element, for if he will immediately try to repair the past, he will find many obstacles.

15. Orot haTeshuvah 16:2

The *baal teshuvah* fears that his sins have already destroyed him and his hope is already lost, and he knows not that within his fear all of the light of his salvation is already stored. The earth was also afraid and it did not produce trees in their true form, their taste like that of the fruit. The moon feared the competition of two kings with one crown. Humanity fears the clear and lofty levels of its freedom...

You start, HaShem will help you finish

16. Orot haTeshuvah 7:5

Because one's thoughts are bound to holiness and to the desire for teshuvah, one should not fear at all. Certainly, HaShem will prepare all of the paths via which complete teshuvah – illuminating all of the dark spaces with the light of its life – is acquired.