



The Key To Teshuva

Dear Parents,

The ability of a person to embark successfully on the path to Teshuva is linked in large part to how that person views himself. Is he a good person who made some mistakes that need to be cleaned up, or is he not such a good person and the Aveiros he has committed just reinforce that notion. When a person forms a negative self-view, that could very well be the biggest impediment to his ability to improve and advance in life.

The Chofetz Chaim zy" a, writing in Sefer Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah (p.43, Maasei L.Melech) quotes the pasuk from Koheles (10:4) **אם רוח המושל תעלה עליך מקומך אל תנח כי מרפא יניח חטאים גדולים** "If the anger of a ruler flares up against you, do not leave your place, because (this form of) healing can prevent great sins."

The Chofetz Chaim explains the "ruler" is a reference to the Yetzer Hora, the evil inclination. If you are ensnared in the trap of enticement, strengthen yourself against it as much as possible. Fight against the allure of aveirah and Hashem will come to assist you. He explains with a parable: If a soldier, in the midst of battle is struck in his finger by the enemy's bullet, he has a choice. As the blood gushes forth he can give up but he will certainly be finished off by the enemy. **What he should do, is transfer his weapon to his other hand and keep fighting.** That is the only way to save himself.

So too in dealing with the Yetzer Hora. When he stumbles in his behavior, if he stops resisting and gives up and doesn't try to keep from being drawn in more and more to his passions, he surely will end up being captured by the enemy - the Yetzer Hora, and he will be 'finished off.' However, if when he first succumbs to his evil inclination he strengthens himself, shakes off the attacker and goes on the offensive by doing

Teshuva, Hashem will help him overcome the trials and tribulations.

The Chofetz Chaim is showing us the key to success in our efforts to achieve a proper Teshuva. Don't let your Aveiros overwhelm you or define you. You may sustain some wounds, but fight back and encourage yourself to stay true to the real you - a person of great value and closeness to Hashem and His Torah. Your behavior is not you - your essence is untouched and strong, even if the outside surface has been marred and dirtied at the moment.

This message is especially pertinent to children, whose self-esteem and self-view is very tenuous. We need to be constantly encouraging our children and reiterating how they have enormous value, even if they made some mistakes. **Misbehaving is something that a child does, it is not who he is.** We must criticize misbehavior while remembering to praise the child.

When a child, or an adult, messes up and confronts the misdeed, the thought process that occurs at that moment is critical. If the thinking is - **I am a good person of value, and wow, I made a real mistake**, their future is bright and will assuredly be one of success and fulfillment. If, however, they succumb to despair and feel they are no better than their behavior, they will be forever tripping up and most likely will be incapable of moving beyond their poor behavior.

Let us internalize the self-confidence in ourselves and our children that Hashem has in us and we will be successful in our Teshuva, effective in our child-rearing and be zoche to a **כהיבה וחהימה טובה** and a year of nachas and fulfillment.

Best wishes for a meaningful and joyfully inspiring Yom Tov,



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