

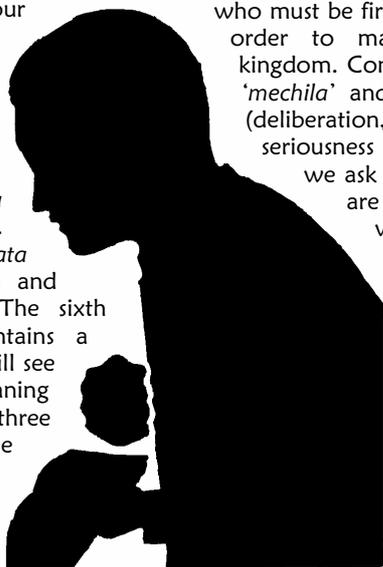
Kinder Torah

Parashas Chaye Sara

כ"ב

Heart Clops

“Abba, I have good news to report.”
“What is it, Avi? I am always ready to hear good news.”
“I am saying the fifth *bracha* of the *Amida*, “*hashevaynu*”, with my best *kavannah* (intention). Hashem must be answering my prayers, because I am receiving *siyata di’shmaya* (heavenly assistance) in my efforts to do *teshuva*. I have eradicated some *aveyros* (sins) completely and have made great progress on eliminating some other ones.”
“That is wonderful news, Avi! You give me such *nachas*! Are you now ready to move on to the next *bracha* in the *Amida* and complete the *teshuva* process?”
“Yes I am, Abba!”
“Okay. The Rambam¹ lists four steps to *teshuva*: abandoning the *aveyra* (which includes removing it from your thoughts), deciding in your heart never to repeat it, regretting having committed the *aveyra* in the past, and confessing it. Avi, you have received *siyata di’shmaya* on the first step and perhaps the second one. The sixth *bracha* of the *Amida* contains a confession – step four. We will see that this has very little meaning unless it is preceded by step three – regret for having done the *aveyros*.”
“What do you mean, Abba?”
“I will explain with a thought from the sefer *Yesod ViShoresh HoAvodah*. He urges us to intensely regret our sins by thinking about all of the blemishes that our ‘*chatoim*’ (unintentional errors) and ‘*pesheim*’ (deliberate transgressions) have put upon our hearts. We should make up our minds to abandon them, regret them completely, and never return to them! Without this, we are just paying lip service to the confession without moving our hearts to abandon and regret the sin. Such a brazen request will never be answered. On the other hand, the sefer *Olas Tomid* encourages us to consider the following. If we say “*selach lonu*” with the intention of regretting the past sins and resolving never to do them again in the future, we have fulfilled a positive mitzvah in the Torah!”
“I see that I have my work cut out for me, Abba. Can you please explain the meaning of the sixth *bracha* to me?”
“With great pleasure, Avi. The Tur² ex-



plains that the *bracha* of ‘*selicha*’ (forgiveness) follows *teshuva* because Hashem forgives those who repent, as the verse states, ‘Let him return to Hashem and He will show him mercy; to our G-d, for He is abundantly forgiving’.³ The first thing that we notice about this *bracha* is that it contains two confessions. We ask ‘*Avinu*’ (our Father in heaven) for ‘*selicha*’ (forgiveness) for our ‘*chatoim*’ (unintentional errors). We then ask ‘*Malkeinu*’ (our King) for ‘*mehila*’ (a pardon) for our ‘*pesheim*’ (deliberate transgressions). An unintentional ‘*chet*’ is less serious than a deliberate ‘*pesha*’. The Abudarham explains that a son’s intentional sins are considered accidental by his father, and are easy for him to forgive. He need only ask for ‘*selicha*’. A servant’s accidental sins are considered intentional by the king, who must be firm about punishment in order to maintain order in the kingdom. Consequently, he must ask ‘*mehila*’ and mention the ‘*peshia*’ (deliberation, which increases the seriousness of the sin). Therefore, we ask from both sides. ‘If we are like sons, forgive us for we have sinned accidentally. And if we are like servants, pardon our intentional sins.’ We also clop our chests on the left side over our hearts, when we say the words ‘*chotonu*’ and ‘*poshanu*’ as if to say, ‘You, my heart, caused me to sin.’”
“Abba, I once

heard that we should bring ourselves to the emotional level of ‘*charata*’ (regret) where the sin pains our heart even more than the clop.”
“Indeed, Avi. The sefer *Yaaros Devash*⁵ implores us to regret our sins with all of our hearts. We must recognize the righteousness of Hashem’s judgment of *yissurin* (suffering). No one escapes *yissurin*; however, some ascribe it to chance, not realizing that it is a punishment for sins. Hashem is just – He makes a person suffer in this world in order to cleanse him before he enters the next world. Subsequently, he will not suffer the eternal embarrassment of coming to the next world with sins, which is a far worse punishment than *yissurin*. Is any justice greater than this? Rav Yonason exhorts, ‘Have intense regret on your sins! If you sin only once or twice, you are still a son to your Father in Heaven. However if you continue to sin deliberately (*poshea*),

you become a *ben sorer umoreh* (rebellious son) whose punishment is death. Hashem mercifully lowers your status to a servant of the King, whose punishment is placement in chains (*yissurin*).’ This is the *kavannah* of ‘*selach lonu AVINU ki chotonu*,’ – we are still like a son to a Father and only need *selicha*. ‘*Mechal lonu MALKEINU ki poshonu*’ – we have gone down to the level of a servant to a King and need *mehila*. *Selicha* alone is enough to completely erase *chet*; however, *mehila* for *pesha* also needs *yissurin*. Therefore, we should cry rivers of tears to Hashem that He generously forgive and completely erase our transgressions without having to suffer *yissurin*. Besides their unpleasantness, they cause *bitul Torah* and *tefillah* (wasting of learning time and missing fixed prayers).”
“Oy va voy.”

“Yes, it is a matter of great concern, Avi. To finish the explanation, the literal meaning of *selicha* is eradication of the *aveyra* completely. Our souls are left as clean as if we never sinned. *Mehila* is a removal of the punishment. In the end of the blessing, we praise Hashem for being ‘*mochail vi’solaich*’ – He forgives *aveyros* completely, and not just the punishments.⁶ And so, with this regret and confession, we have the opportunity to complete the *teshuva* process, cleansing our souls of our sins!”
“May we all seize the opportunity and return in complete *teshuva*!”
“Amen.”

Kinderlach . . .

We all remember the intense *teshuva* that we did just six weeks ago on Yom Kippur. We corrected our ways during Elul and the Aseres Yimei Teshuva. We cried over our sins and confessed them on Yom Kippur. The shofar was blown and we were cleansed of those sins on which we had done proper *teshuva*. Now, in every weekday *Amidah* prayer, we have the opportunity to do *teshuva* on our *aveyros*. The formula is the same – abandoning the *aveyra*, deciding never to repeat it, regret, and confession. Kinderlach, use these two blessings to do *teshuva* three times a day. Be cleansed of all of your sins and avoid the punishment of *yissurin*. Purify your souls to serve Hashem in truth!

- 1 Hilchos Teshuva 2:2
- 2 Orach Chaim 115, based on the Gemora Megillah 17b
- 3 Yishaya 55:7
- 4 Mishna Brura 607:11
- 5 by Rav Yonason Eibushitz
- 6 Avodas HaTefillah