

Hole or Whole

There was a gadol who couldn't help but shed tears upon witnessing a fellow Jew committing a sin. His emotional reaction stemmed from his deep concern for the sinner's soul, knowing that it would face consequences (unless he would repent). Naturally, this gadol would make sincere efforts to guide the sinner back onto the righteous path.

This is analogous to someone noticing another person who injured himself and naturally rushing to that person's aid. Likewise, if a person sees another committing a sin by which he injures himself spiritually, he must have pity and come to the person's aid.

Now, let's discuss the name of this month – תשרי. The word תשרי is rooted in the term שרי, untie. This is because we release ourselves from the Yetzer Hara this month. The word שרוי is also related to תשרי. Specifically in this month the Shechina dwells, as we have Rosh Hashana, Aseres Yemei Teshuva, Yom Kippur, Succos and Shemini Atzeres.

The Midrash tells us פתחו לי פתח אחד... של תשובה כחודיה של מחט. Hashem says open up for me an opening of Teshuva, like the point of a needle and I will open for you openings that are so wide... (Shir Hashirim Rabba 5:2). The Alter of Navardok is bothered with the following question. During the Yomim Noraim, he says, everyone has some type of התעוררות, awakening. This may be on Rosh Hashana or during Neila or some other time. If this is the case, then how is it that soon after he reverts back to his old ways?

It says מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה... ושבו בנים לגבולם (Yirmiya 31:15-16). The Yismach Moshe explained these words in the following way: Stop crying from the Yomim Noraim because Hashem heard your Tefilos with tears. So why

don't we see that they are answered? Because ושבו בנים לגבולם, we go back to our old ways.

Along the same lines the Noda BiYehuda would interpret מכף רגל ועד מתם ראש אין בו מתם (Yeshaya 1:6). He explains from Shemini Atzeres (which is called רגל ועד עצמו בפני עצמו, a Yom Tov unto itself – Succa 47a) until the following ראש השנה מכף רגל ועד ראש (אין בו מתם). This is because we go back to our old ways.

At times, we may have an awakening yet we remain impervious. This is because we need to act upon the inspiration by making it tangible, as inspiration is only temporary. In this fashion the Ramban (Ramban in Ha'emuna V'habitachon, 19) interprets אם תעוררו את האהבה עד שתחפץ (Shir Hashirim 2:7, 3:5): if one has an awakening of אהבה, it is for naught until he makes it concrete (עד שתחפץ). The word תחפץ is rooted in the term חפץ, an object, that which is concrete. An example of this is one who is inspired not to speak Lashon Hara. Although he may decide to follow this, it won't remain unless he acts upon it with something tangible such as studying Shemiras Halashon daily. This idea is showcased in עקידת יצחק, where we see that one should bind himself when he has an inspiration for Avodas Hashem.

In this manner, the Satmar Rebbe interpreted כל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה: If a practical application doesn't accompany one's Torah, then it won't remain (Avos 2:2).

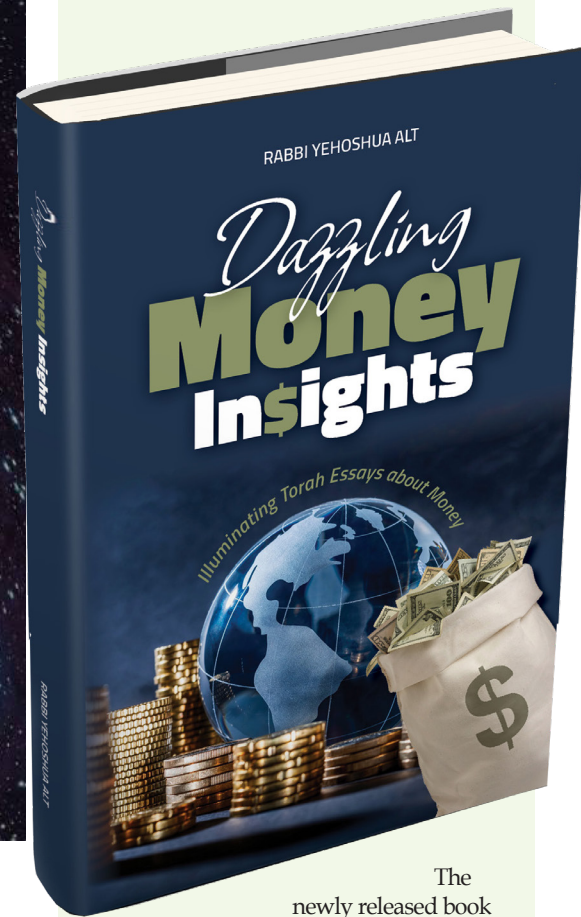
R' Yitzchak Yeruchem Burdianski, Mashgiach of Yeshiva Kol Torah in Yerushalayim, related the following story to his uncle, R' Shalom Shwadron who would repeat it in his speeches. R' Burdianski was once in a taxi when the

non-religious driver related a story that occurred when he was a teenager. He camped with friends in the desert, in the south of Eretz Yisrael. In the middle of the night, a snake wound itself around their friend's body. His cries awoke them. Although their guide had a gun, he oscillated about shooting the snake since if he missed, he may kill the boy. One of the boys who was religious told their friend to repeat Shema. When they said אחד ה', the snake suddenly released its grip and slithered away. The taxi driver told him that the boy became a Baal Teshuva and is now in Yeshiva. And what about you, asked R' Burdianski? Why didn't you become a Baal Teshuva? Because the snake wasn't around my body.

זאת חונכת המזבח ביום, this was the dedication of the Altar on the day it was anointed (Bamidbar 7:84). Soon after, it says זאת חונכת המזבח אחרי המשח אתו... after it was anointed (Bamidbar 7:88). This seems like a contradiction (See Rashi in 7:84). One answer is that when we have an inspiration (ביום), we need to make sure it continues afterwards (אחרי).

The aforementioned Midrash uses the terminology פתח של מחט, a needle. This is the immutable hole that is permanent, in contrast to the one that is temporary. People revert back to who they were because they make their opening like that of a piercing, that which is temporary as it closes up (See Michtav M'Eliyahu 3, p. 92 and Machsheves Mussar p. 131). One should accept a קבלה (resolution) upon himself when he is inspired as then the awakening can be permanent. To do this, the קבלה should be in small and attainable steps just as the hole of a needle is small, but lasting (See also Hamaor Hagadol, p. 221).

RABBI YEHOShUA ALT



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