



Shabbat Shuvah

Why Do I Say the Two Magic Words?

What is the correct title for this coming Shabbat, the Shabbat which takes place between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? Some people call it Shabbat Shuva, others call it Shabbat Teshuvah. Now actually both are fine, but which one is better?

If you are going to call the day Shabbat Shuvah, then it would be consistent with our rationale for Shabbat HaGadol, Shabbat Chazon, Shabbat Parah and Shabbat Nachamu – where the title of the Shabbat is taken from a key term in the special reading for that day. And seeing as our haftarah this coming Shabbat will commence with the prophetic words "shuvah Yisrael" - "return O Israel to the Lord your God", it would therefore be Shabbat Shuvah. On the other hand, the Shabbat takes place during the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah, the ten days of penitence, so therefore it would be correct to call it Shabbat Teshuvah.

Actually, it all depends on our motivation for engaging in Teshuvah, in repenting and improving our ways – similar to our motivation for the performance of all the mitzvot.

Why do I perform a mitzvah? Is it because God has commanded me to? Or is it because I want to? Ideally, it is best if it is for both reasons.

Our sages tell us, in many places in the Talmud, "gadol ha'metzuveh ve'oseh mi mi'she'eino metzuveh ve'oseh" - "somebody who performs a good deed, because God has commanded them to is greater than somebody who performs the deed of their own volition".

Now you might think it should be just the opposite. Surely, if somebody is performing a good deed with no connection to religion, what a pure heart has motivated that outstanding act! But, let us illustrate this with the example of charity – if I am giving money to charity, if I perform the deed because God has commanded me to, and I also feel charitable and it comes from my heart, then not only am I engaging a good deed, in addition I have the bonus of a spiritual connection with my creator who expects me to be a good person.

You know, when I say thank you because somebody does kind deed for me, why do I express gratitude? It is actually for two reasons. I say thank you because my parents insisted when I was a child that I had to. They were the two magic words which I could not get away without saying. I was obliged to say thank you. And I also say thank you because I am grateful, I am showing appreciation.

When the two come together, I am showing appreciation correctly and I also have a connection to my parents, *zichronam livracha*. And that therefore is the bonus of doing things because God has commanded us to.

Therefore, coming up to this Shabbat, let us have a combination of both. Let the entire Jewish people engage in shuvah. Let it be Shabbat Shuvah because God has commanded us to be better people and at the same time let it be an occasion of Teshuvah. Let it come naturally from our hearts because we know that that is truly what we want to do.

Shabbat Shalom.