

BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' IN ENGLISH

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The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 16b) states that on Rosh Hashana there are three Heavenly books that are open. One for the completely righteous, one for the completely wicked and one for the remainder of society who are in-between these two statuses. The completely righteous are immediately written and sealed 'for life'. The completely wicked are immediately written and sealed 'for death'. The rest of us who are 'Beinonim' have a suspended judgment from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur. If we are successful in our Teshuva then we are written 'for life', and if the opposite happens then we are written 'for death'.

Rashi explains that this Gemara is referring to Techiyas HaMasim and not whether a person will live another year in Olam HaZeh. Secondly, according to Rashi, even those who have a majority of Aveiros will not participate in Techiyas HaMasim, whereas the 'middle' group are those who are exactly in equilibrium, with exactly the same amount of merits and transgressions. Tosfos reinforces this by explaining that we see with our eyes throughout the year that Tzaddikim die, while the wicked are allowed to continue living, thus, it must be that this Gemara is talking about life in the World to Come. Tosfos also agrees that Tzaddikim are those with a majority of Mitzvos and Reshaim are those with a majority of sins.

It would seem that hardly anyone would be considered a Beinoni with exactly the same amount of Mitzvos as Aveiros, whose judgment is suspended from the period of Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur. Also, why should this Teshuva for the World to Come be specifically during the Ten Days of Repentance? It would seem a person should just need to add additional Mitzvos at any time to tip the scales to the side of a Tzaddik. This explanation of the Gemara should not Chas V'Shalom discourage people about the importance of the Aseres Yemai Teshuva.

One answer given by the Kochvai Ohr, written by R' Itzala Blazer zt"l explains that by not doing Teshuva during the Ten Days of Repentance would weigh down on the scale of transgression and outweigh the additional Mitzvos performed that would be placed on the scale of merit.

I would suggest an alternative approach based on the Gemara (Brachos 61b) that explains that Tzaddikim are those who are controlled by the Yetzer Tov, where Reshaim are controlled by their Yetzer Hara. Beinonim, who are in the middle, are controlled by both their Yetzer Tov and their Yetzer Hara. The great sage Rava, heard this statement by Rebbe Yossi HaGalili and remarked that he and his contemporaries were Beinonim. Abaye responded to Rava's remark by saying (see Rashi) that if Rava views himself as a Beinoni, then there would be no example of a Tzaddik Gamur in their times.

From here we can understand the previous Gemara differently. That on Rosh Hashana, only complete Tzaddikim, who have no transgressions are written and sealed 'for life' immediately, and this refers to life in This World. The reverse would be true about the completely wicked. The conclusion would seem to be the exact opposite, that the vast majority of people are Beinonim who are influenced by both their Yetzer HaTov and their Yetzer Hara. The Ten Days of Repentance are deemed essential for almost every single Jew, as there is practically no Tzaddik who has never sinned and no Rasha who has never performed a Mitzvah or has not been inspired to follow his good inclination.

Since only Hashem knows how to weigh our Mitzvos and Aveiros, based on a multitude of factors, before, during and after they have happened, we can never know exactly where we stand in regards to our range of being a Beinoni. Certainly, performing Mitzvos will help add weight to the side of merit. Even sincere mental and verbal commitments to take upon Mitzvos will add to the scale of merit. However, just as essential is to use the tool of Teshuva to lighten the scale of transgression, and specifically Teshuva out of love for HaKadosh Baruch Hu, which can shift the weight directly from the scale of Aveirah to the scale of Zechus.

It was Shlomo HaMelech, who said in Mishlei (7:20), "There is no man who is righteous in the land who has done good and not sinned". Therefore, it behooves us all to utilize the gift of Teshuva and the Ten Days of Repentance that we have been given to improve and enhance our judgment for the coming year. As R' Meir said (Yoma 86b), "Teshuva is great as one individual who performs Teshuva can even save the entire world" and as R' Yochanan said, "Teshuva is great as it has the power to bring the Geulah", as the Pasuk says, "A redeemer shall come to Tzion and to those of Yaakov who repent from willful sin" (Yeshayahu 59:20). May we all have a Gmar Chasima Tova and receive the redeemer speedily in our days.