

# AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

THIS WEEK'S NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED ANONYMOUSLY IN HONOR OF THE MANY *BAALEI SIMCHA* WHO HAVE CELEBRATED *SIMCHOS* DURING THE RECENT CHALLENGING PERIOD.

## SHABBOS SHUVAH

## SHORT PERIODS OF TIME

A Vort from Rav Pam by Rabbi Sholom Smith

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיה כי כשלת בעונך.

Return, Yisrael, to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity (Hoshea 14:2).

The Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called Shabbos Shuvah because of the special *haftarah* beginning with the words שובה ישראל, Return, Yisrael, the navi Hoshea's ringing call to his people to do *teshuvah* and return to Hashem.

This *haftarah* is unique in that, according to



Rav Nesanel Quinn



Rav Avrohom Pam

most Ashkenazic traditions, it is composed of readings from three different prophets, *Hoshea*, *Yoel*, and *Michah*, all of which are part of *Trei Asar*, the Twelve Prophets. *Trei Asar*, as its name implies, is a collection of prophecies of 12 great *nevi'im* whose lives, dedicated to chastising the Jewish nation, spanned a period of about three-and-a-half centuries. Most of these prophecies were relatively brief; *Ovadiah* has one chapter, *Chaggai* has two, and *Nachum*, *Chabakuk*, *Tzephaniah* and *Malachi* each have three. The *Gemara* (*Bava Basra* 14b) says that the sages decided to combine all 12 of them into one book "so that they not be lost due to their brevity."

One can extrapolate a practical lesson from this *Gemara* which is especially relevant during the period of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Small things tend to get lost and small periods of available time tend to

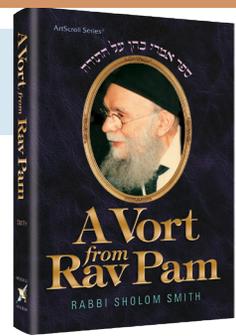
be wasted. Many people do not know how to properly utilize 10 or 15 minutes (or even longer). People come to *shul* a short while before the beginning of *davening* and merely pass the time until the *tefillah* begins. The same can occur when there is a short break between *Minchah* and *Maariv*. People think to themselves: *What can be accomplished in a few minutes?* This is an unfortunate error, because little pockets of time, besides being significant in themselves, eventually add up to large periods of time.

**ONE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO SEE HOW MUCH TIME GETS WASTED ON A DAILY BASIS WAITING FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE.**

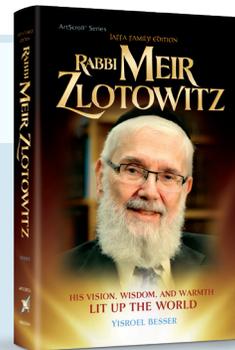
Rav Nesanel Quinn *zt"l*, the beloved *menahel* of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath for half a century and lifelong friend and colleague of Rav Pam, would often recount an incident from his younger years. He had a *chavrusah* (study partner) who, due to train schedules, would come 15 to 20 minutes late every day to the *yeshiva*. The young Nesanel started and eventually completed the entire *Maseches Beitzah* over the school year while waiting for his *chavrusah* to arrive. Those 15 minutes a day added up to almost 40 *blatt Gemara*!

While not everybody is able to do this, one can train himself to use small pockets of time. Even if all he has at hand is a *siddur*, a person with a few minutes available can easily do one or more of the following: Recite chapters of *Tehillim*, learn a few *Mishnayos* of *Pirkei Avos*,

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The Kopyzcynitzer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, lived on the Lower East Side, but as more and more young families were choosing to settle in Boro Park, the *rebbe's* son, Rav Moshe Mordechai, had opened a *shtiebel* there as well, on 55<sup>th</sup> Street between 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. At his son's urging, the *rebbe* would come to Boro Park for *Shabbos* and lead the *shtiebel*.

The *rebbe* had only one condition as to who could *daven* in the *shtiebel*: he wouldn't accept any member who was already a steady *mispallel* in another *shul*. That rule resulted in the *shul* attracting a young crowd, newcomers to the neighborhood — among them Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz zt"l, founder of ArtScroll. Kopyzcynitz took some getting used to for Reb Meir, who had grown up in his father's *shul*, which reflected the glory of Lita and its *yeshivos*. A *chassidishe shtiebel* was a new experience for him, but at the same time, he felt an instant bond with the *rebbe*. The fact that the *rebbe* had a close relationship with Reb Meir's *rebbe*, Rav Moshe Feinstein, made Reb Meir feel at home.

The Kopyzcynitzer Rebbe didn't often speak formally, but there was a *vort* he shared on *Rosh Hashanah* that the young *mispallelim* saw as a mission statement. The *rebbe* discussed the day's Torah reading — the *parashah* of *Akeidas Yitzchak* — and the merits accrued by Avraham Avinu for this act of supreme self-sacrifice.

"Wouldn't any intelligent human being heed a command that they hear directly from the Master of the Universe?" the *rebbe* wondered. "How come the *zechus* of the *Akeidah* gives us such merit that we still rely on it after all these years?"

The *rebbe* shared a memory. He recalled being led to Gestapo

headquarters to be tortured by the Nazis, *yemach shemam*. The *rebbe* accepted the will of Heaven, and painful as it was, he was serene and at peace, since this was the *Ribbono Shel Olam's* decree. But then, the *rebbe* continued, he heard the cries of other Jews who were being beaten, and that was too much to bear — so much harder than having en-



Kopytshnitzer Rebbe - Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel

dured a beating of his own.

"When the decree was on Avraham Avinu," said the *rebbe*, "of course he rose up to the situation and accepted the will of Heaven. At the *Akeidah*, however, he was asked to give over his son Yitzchak for slaughter, and then the pain was much more intense — because it was the pain of another!"

There were many memorable moments in the presence of the Kopyzcynitzer Rebbe, but one remark made by the *rebbe* would illuminate Rabbi Zlotowitz's own path and life's work. The *rebbe* introduced this group of young American *yeshivah* graduates to the joy in the performance of *mitzvos*, the experience of shaking *daled minim* or blowing the *shofar*. They would join him each year as he went to bake *matzos*, each of them assuming a specific task as part of the *rebbe's chaburah* and observing his sublime delight in the *mitzvah*. One year, after they finished baking *matzos*, the

*rebbe* circulated among the workers at the *matzah* bakery, thanking each one for their devoted work. The *rebbe* noticed a *chassidishe* young man who worked as a kneader. The *rebbe* handed him several bills, a tip in honor of the approaching *Yom Tov*. The worker gratefully accepted the money. A few days later, the *rebbe* announced

**"THE PAIN WAS MUCH MORE INTENSE — BECAUSE IT WAS THE PAIN OF ANOTHER!"**

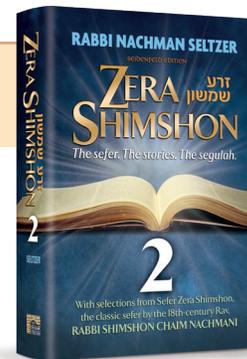
that he was going back to the *matzah* bakery to bake "*Erev Pesach matzos*" in accordance with his custom, and they joined him once again.

After they finished baking, the *rebbe* again sought out the young kneader and approached him with a wad of bills. "Here, *l'kavod Yom Tov*," the *rebbe* said.

This time, the gentleman protested. "*Der Rebbe hut shoin yotzeh geven*, the *rebbe* has already fulfilled his obligation," he said.

The Kopyzcynitzer Rebbe looked at him. "*Ich bin nisht gekommen oif di velt*, I didn't come down to this world," the *rebbe* said, "*yotzeh tzu zein*, just to fulfill my obligations."

The *rebbe* was *niftar* in 1967, just a few short years after establishing his little *shul*, but his words and message would reverberate throughout the years, the families he inspired going forward, each in their own way, to live lives of genuine accomplishment — never just "*yotzeh tzu zein*." 📖



שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך כי כשלת בעונך. קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה'.  
אמרו אליו כל תשא עון וקח טוב ונשלמה פרים שפתינו.

*Return, Yisrael, to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take words with you and return to Hashem. Say to Him, “May you forgive all iniquity and accept good [intentions] and let our lips substitute for bulls” (Hoshea 14:2-3).*

We read these *pesukim* in the *haftarah* of *Haazinu*, the *parashah* that is usually read around Yom Kippur, when we are focused on *teshuvah* and atonement of our sins. Why do these *pesukim* begin with the word *shuvah*, “return,” in the singular form, yet continue with the words *kechu imachem devarim*, “take words with you,” which are written in plural form?

Also, what are these “words” that *Klal Yisrael* has to take with them, and how exactly are they meant to take them?

Furthermore, why does the Torah say *עד ה' אלהיך*, “to Hashem, your G-d,” with the word *עד*, but goes on to use the words *אל ה'*, “to Hashem”?

Sometimes the word *עד* means “up to and including.” At other times, it is used to mean “until but not including” (see *Berachos* 26b).

Furthermore, the *Gemara* tells us that someone who repents out of fear is not as meritorious as someone who repents out of love. When a person repents out of fear, his intentional sins are turned into unintentional sins, but the sins of one who repents out of love are turned into merits (*Yoma* 86b).

Let’s apply these ideas to the *pasuk* from *Hoshea*. The beginning of the *pasuk* is speaking to the individual who is returning to Hashem on his own. When a person repents by himself and is unconcerned about whether the people around him are repenting, it’s a sign that he is doing *teshuvah* out of fear, which is why it is enough for him if he saves himself.

If, however, he were repenting out of love, there is no

question that he would do his best to help others repent as well. The reason for this is because if he’s repenting out of love, he’s doing it all for Hashem, and there is no question that Hashem wants as many people as possible to repent. The *pasuk* therefore states, “Return Yisrael, to Hashem, your G-d,” in the singular and using the word *עד*. Since you are only a single individual, and you are repenting out of fear, your repentance will only reach “until” Hashem, but not as far as it could have gone. Even if this is the case and you are repenting out of fear, you should still repent, because your intentional sins will be transformed into sins that were committed unintentionally.

**WE ARE ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT GROWING AND BECOMING BETTER PEOPLE.**

However, if you repent out of love and cause others to come along with you, “take with you words.” You will take them along on your journey through words of *mussar*, and then you will return to Hashem completely because all of your sins will be transformed into merits, which will cause you to reach “el Hashem”—all the way to Hashem.

*So much of a Jew’s life revolves around the idea of bettering himself. This is certainly a major focus come Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur time, but even during the rest of the year, we are always thinking about growing and becoming better people. Simply speaking, doing teshuvah is a hallmark of being a Jew.* 📖

**SHORT PERIODS OF TIME**  
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which is printed in every *siddur* after the *Shabbos Minchah*, or get a head start on reviewing the *parashah* with the weekday *laining* (included in all *siddurim*). One would be surprised to

see how much time gets wasted on a daily basis waiting for something or someone. By training oneself to use even short periods of time, a person will feel a sense of accomplishment, as well as earn himself much merit for the World to Come.

While this idea is relevant all year round, it is especially pertinent during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, as Jews search for extra *zechuyos* in preparation for *Yom Kippur*, the final day of judgment. May we all be blessed with a *g’mar chasimah tovah*. 📖

Hey, Dovid! I hear you're looking to switch yeshivos after Sukkos! Where are you planning to go?"

Dovid bristled. The last thing in the world he wanted was for his long-thought-out decision to leave his old yeshivah to become the latest subject of the rumor mill. Inevitably, that would lead to even more gratuitous questions, opinions and suggestions. It would cause him to have to constantly be explaining himself to people who were little more than casual acquaintances.

These things drove Dovid crazy. He had his reasons to keep his business private, but he also had trouble doing so without appearing rude or unfriendly.

"It's not up for public discussion," he coldly replied to his questioner, a boy named Yaakov.

"Well, okay, okay. I'm just asking," Yaakov said defensively.

"So don't ask, okay?" Dovid retorted as he turned to walk away.

"Whoa!" Yaakov muttered to himself. "What did I do, anyway?"

People's sense of privacy varies greatly. Some are open with much of their personal life and enjoy

bouncing their ideas, goals and problems off of others. On the other hand, some people feel intruded upon when others try to open a window into their personal lives. Each person has his boundary line, however, and it is a line that should be respected. However, one does not have to wage a verbal

## PEOPLE'S SENSE OF PRIVACY VARIES GREATLY.

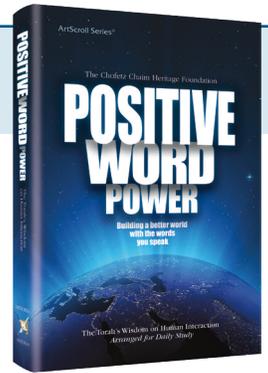
assault to protect his boundaries.

In most cases, the unwanted question is just curiosity or a conversation-filler. The questioner is not usually in a position to force the other person to disclose anything he does not wish to disclose. There is no harm done to the unwilling recipient of the question; he is simply annoyed at what he

perceives as an intrusion. Therefore, there is no need to strike back in an angry manner.

If a person knows himself to be protective of his privacy, he should preemptively think of a few firm but pleasant responses to unwanted questions so that he will not stumble into *ona'as devarim*. He could try humor: "Sorry, it's top secret." Or he could be simple and direct: "That's something I'd just rather keep to myself," or whatever type of comment fits his personality and suits the occasion.

To the person who feels his privacy is being invaded, it may be difficult to perceive that in some cases the questions stem from sincere care and interest. If a person gives others the benefit of the doubt on this count, he can actually come to feel a sense of warmth toward the other person. *He cares about my life*, a person can tell himself. With that thought in mind, he can deliver a response that is free of thorns. 📖



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