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The Function of Regret

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Year 5 | Issue 16

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פרשת ויחי

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Function of Regret

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Part I. Weeping in Reunion

Surviving the Famine

After Yaakov Avinu passed away, Yosef's brothers came to visit him and to reconcile with him over what had taken place between them; they begged him to pardon them for what they had done to him so many years before in Eretz Canaan. And when the *posuk* describes that scene we are told that Yosef broke down and cried: וַיִּבֶדּוּ יוֹסֵף בְּרִבְרָם אֵלָיו – Yosef wept when they spoke to him (Vayechi 50:17).

Now the question is, what's the occasion for this weeping? What was there to cry about? After all, Yosef himself had declared, "It was the Hand of Hashem!" אֱלֹהִים הַשְׁבֵּה לְטוֹבָה – "Hashem intended it for good," he told his brothers (ibid. 20).

Because otherwise when the famine came upon the land of Canaan, who else would have rescued the family? They were strangers in a strange

land, aliens who didn't possess any fields of their own. Even the local people who had fields and had stored away their grain for hard times were afraid they wouldn't survive. And the *bnei Yaakov*, they were strangers in the land who didn't own fields. They didn't live from agriculture; they pastured livestock. And the livestock themselves would die out when the grass withered and then they'd be left with nothing. Nobody would be crazy enough to sell them any grain during the famine time. It was certain death for the family if they had remained in Canaan. And so when Yosef looked back at the Hand of Hashem and he said, "It was all for the good," he wasn't just showing off – he said those words with the utmost sincerity.

Why Weep?

It's true he had suffered a great deal – that a young boy should be snatched out of the bosom of his family and be sold as a slave in a foreign country, that was no easy trial. And then he had tribulations in the house of his master; he was falsely accused by the wife of Potiphar and was cast into prison with iron chains on him. It was a great deal of suffering, no question about it. But now it was all over and upon looking back, Yosef said, "It wasn't you, my brothers. It was the Hand of Hashem saving the lives of our family." And so Yosef didn't hold anything against his brothers and therefore there should have been nothing but happiness – there should have been only happiness all around. What's there to weep about?

You know, a weakling might weep because even though he would say with his mouth, "It was all for the good," it still rankles in his breast, the memories of what he endured because of his brothers' deeds against him. A weakling might do that, but Yosef was a strong man and everything he did was with reason. When he said, "אֵלֵקִים הַשְּׁבָה לְטוֹבָה," he understood as clear as day, that's what it was. Yosef wasn't a maudlin sentimentalist; he didn't weep out of weakness.

And the truth is that it's not the first time we find Yosef weeping. You remember when he was first reunited with his brothers in the palace of Pharaoh? We take note of the fact that then too Yosef wept; he wept profusely. Even though he calmly declared to his brothers that, "כִּי לְמַחֲיָה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵקִים – Hashem sent me ahead to preserve the family;" it's all settled – we were just pawns in the Hand of the King, yet he broke down in tears.

Happy Reunions

Now, it could be that the question doesn't bother us too much because we sense there was a certain propriety in this weeping; we feel that had we been in that situation we also would have wept. Tears are occasioned by great emotion and there is such a thing as tears of happiness. Sometimes even when a joke is said, if it hits the right spot, people weep from laughter. They laugh, and the drops roll down their cheeks. A good joke teller can sometimes make people fall off their seats on the floor and they laugh and then they weep in hysteria.

So maybe you'll say that Yosef was overcome with happiness; he broke down in happiness the same way we would have. If you ever witnessed a reunion of brothers after a separation of many years – I saw that once; it wasn't even a Jewish family; a few Italian brothers were meeting each other after being separated for more than ten years and they were bawling; they were crying like little children.

It's true, sometimes when Italians have family reunions, they pull out stilettos on each other, but that's just part of resolving business disputes – they'll still cry on each other's shoulders when meeting after many years of separation; even grown men will cry.

Pick Your Own Shoe-Size

And so you might say that when Yosef was reunited with his brothers, and later when he reconciled with them, it was a time of great rejoicing and that's why there was weeping. However, that's putting ourselves in the wrong shoes. We are picturing that our emotions are the same as those of a great person, Yosef HaTzaddik.

We have to understand that by Yosef and his brothers it was much more than the raw emotions of long lost Italian brothers meeting up once again. It was even much more than Jewish brothers meeting up again. And when they reconciled again after Yaakov passed away, it was much more than the outburst of emotions of reconciliation. So what was it? What were those tears all about?

The End and The Beginning

Yosef was thinking about a great Torah teaching, something that Shlomo Hamelech said so many years later (Koheles 7:8): טוב אַהֲרִית דָּבָר – *A thing is good at its end when it starts right.* There's another *pshat*, but that's how our Sages (Rashi *ad loc.*) understood this *possuk*: טוב

אָהַרִית דָּבָר – Do you know when a thing ends well? מִרְאשִׁיתוֹ – If it was good from the beginning.

Yosef was weeping because at that moment it struck him, “It’s true, we’re together now. We are once more reunited, a harmonious family, brothers that love each other. But as great as it is, it’s only a patched-up relationship. How much better would it have been if that episode had never taken place.”

Look at all the years that had been lost. That’s what Yosef was thinking. Many years had passed by; years and years. Yosef was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery and he stood before Pharaoh when he was thirty years old. And then he reunited with his brothers nine years later. So how old was he then? He was 39 years old. All those years were lost years. Twenty-two years had gone lost, twenty-two years of mutual benefit.

And so Yosef was crying for those lost years. “How many forms of happiness we could have had together. How wonderful it would have been; how glorious it would have been! הָיְתָה מָה טוֹב וּמָה נְעִים שָׁבַת אֶחָיִם גַּם יָחַד – How good and how pleasant it would have been if we brothers had dwelled together.

How Good...

It says two different things there. Good and pleasant. “Good” means how much benefit accrues to all of them. Everybody knows that when you have a *chaburah* of good people who want to serve Hashem that every individual gains immeasurably much more, much more than even the best individual who goes off by himself.

Never make that error; don’t think, “I can live on my own resources spiritually.” Maybe you could, but you don’t realize what you’re missing. Each person is fortified and gains immeasurably from his fellow; it’s very important to be together with good people.

And besides for strengthening one another, each one with his peculiar nature contributes to the sum total of the perfection of the family. Every brother in a family is different and so when brothers and sisters live together peacefully, each one’s personality contributes to the greater whole. And that’s the *shleimus*, the perfection, of the family. That’s tov!

...And How Pleasant

וְנִמְחָה נְעִימָה – How pleasant it would have been too! Besides being good, being beneficial, how *pleasant* it would have been! The happiness of kin is one of the greatest forms of enjoyment in this world. The mere fact that the brothers come together and see each other, they're talking together, is a happiness – love among brothers is a very pleasant emotion.

Of course in America, it's overlooked. It's ignored today. Brothers move away from each other and members of the family sometimes have very tenuous connections. They'll call each other on the phone, they send cards before Rosh Hashana; it's a very weak connection. But fundamentally the plan of Hashem was that this should be one of the joys of life. Family is one of the pleasures of life!

The old time European families who came over to America used to spend time together. They didn't have the tendency to go to movies. The old timers didn't go to movies – even the irreligious ones. I remember as a child how the families used to come together frequently and they sat for three or four hours together. Grandfather, grandmother, the sons and the daughters, the grandchildren, little children crawling on the floor. The house was swarming with people and that was their fun.

Today it's boring. "Let's go someplace. Let's do something." People begin to exchange this form of happiness for imitation happiness that you have to pay money for; today you waste money on paid entertainers or traveling; things that are sold to you as forms of happiness instead of the original ways that families used to enjoy themselves.

What Could Have Been

And so now Yosef was weeping on the shoulders and the necks of his brothers and he was thinking "What we lost. How many happy occasions we could have shared together! How much *tov* and how much *na'im* it could have been!"

Suppose the brothers had not accused him. Suppose they had not plotted against him. Suppose they had all lived together amicably in peace like brothers should live. Hakodosh Boruch Hu could find ways and means of rescuing the family. There's no question that it wasn't necessary for the family to be separated for so long in order that he should be in Egypt and supply food for the family. Hakodosh Boruch Hu finds ways and means. הֲיִדְרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם תִּקְצָר?

And therefore, at the time of reunion and reconciliation, when Yosef again experienced the emotion of love for his brothers and sensed the warmth of their company and the greatness of their personalities, he looked back now with regret at how much they could have accomplished together and he broke down and wept. He wept bitterly for those past years. It's all lost now and it's lost forever.

And so even though everything was for good, Yosef wept because it could have been better. It would have been much greater, very much greater had he remained in the tent of his father in the company of his brothers. "Why was all this necessary? All these years we could have spent together! How much had been lost by these years of separation!" Yes, we're together again. Wonderful! טוב אַהרִית דְּבָר – *But how much better it would have been, how much more we could have achieved, מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ – had it been good from the beginning.* And that's what caused the weeping.

Part II. Weeping in Repentance

The Sinning Baal Teshuva

In Shaarei Teshuva from Rabbeinu Yonah (1:11), he talks about the *ikrei hateshuva*, the root principles of *teshuva*. Now although we don't have time for that entire subject which is very big, we'll have to discuss some of it in order to properly understand the weeping of Yosef Hatzadik and what we can learn from it.

One of the first steps of *teshuva* is of course *azivas hacheit* – to forsake the action of the sin, to stop sinning. However, it's not what you think it is. Because there are many people who are not sinning anymore, people who are walking the straight path of virtue, obeying the *halacha*, doing everything – but that's not yet *azivas hacheit*. They haven't really forsaken sin.

Don't we see cases of sinners who changed their ways and began to live virtuous lives and then some crisis takes place in their lives, some sudden disaster that upsets their balance, and now they're sinning? And even without any disaster, don't we know how many times people stop sinning and then fall back into their old ways as if *teshuva* never happened?

It means that this man never really fulfilled this principle of *azivas hacheit*; he never made a barricade, an iron wall, between him and the path of sin. It could be that he's in a better environment now and he

doesn't come face to face with opportunities to do those sins again; but he's not really fortified. He's not protected.

The Content Baal Teshuva

It's not enough that you don't repeat the same deeds; *azivas hachet* means you're finished with that kind of life; it means you make a firm resolve, "Never again!" And not merely that you make this resolution once when you do *teshuva* on Yom Kippur. No! You're saying it constantly to yourself. On Sukkos too. And after Sukkos. On Chanuka and Purim and on a regular Wednesday. All the time you're hammering it out on the anvil of *teshuva* until it's so firm in your mind as if you were never in such an environment of sin, as if you were born a *tzaddik* in the family of *tzaddikim*. That's what's required of a man; he must exert all of his powers to remain strong in his determination, "Never again!" That's the *azivas hachet*.

Now, let's say you heard this lecture tonight or better yet you learned the Shaarei Teshuva inside and you are fulfilling that fundamental principle of repentance, *azivas hacheit*. And you're holding firm; every day you remind yourself, "I'm never going back to that." And so you're happy with yourself. Very good! Why shouldn't you be happy? Many people who changed their way in life or who stopped doing certain wrong things are happy with themselves – and rightly so; it's not an easy thing to make that turnover in your life.

But the truth is that it's not enough. Not enough?! Why not? The answer is that *azivas hacheit* is only for the future. "From here on in, I'm a changed man." But what about the past?

It's not enough for a person just to mend his ways. Even if from now on you'll conduct yourself like a *tzadik gomur*, but if you don't look with disapproval on your past – or with sufficient disapproval – then in your mind it's just another way of life that you voluntarily chose. You're complimenting yourself that you became a *baal teshuva*, and the past you're willing to forget all about it.

The Unhappy Baal Teshuva

Oh no! You can't forget about it! An important principle of complete *teshuva* is *charata*, regret for what happened in the past. *Charata* means that you have to make a *break* with your past and look down on your past self and say, "That person I was, I despise! I'm so *happy* that I am no longer he!"

You know there are some people who still relish the memories, the pleasant memories of their past misdeeds, the good times they had. Even though they don't intend to repeat them, but they look back fondly on those good old days when they committed their youthful sins, their "indiscretions." They take out their albums and they look at the old photographs of the old days and they enjoy those memories. "Of course I wouldn't do that anymore," he says, "but in those happy days I didn't have any sense at all and therefore I did these things." Happy days?! Oh no! *Chas v'shalom*. They were unhappy days! They were the saddest days, the most dismal days.

You have to look back on those days as days of failure and ruination *because you'll have to pay for them*. Rabeinu Yonah says you should put to your mind that there is retribution, that there's payment for a sin. Like Hakodosh Boruch Hu said (Devarim 32:35), "לִי נִקְמָה וְשָׁלֹם – Mine is the vengeance and the retribution." It means that you should consider what trouble you have brought upon yourself by doing wrong. And you should be afraid of what might be in this world, or worse, in the next world. And you have to keep that in mind always, the *yiras ha'oinessh*. That's part of the *teshuva*.

The Forgetful Baal Teshuva

Now this may turn off someone who is contemplating *teshuva*, but this is not said for people who are newcomers to Yiddishkeit. Shaarei Teshuva is a *sefer* for scholarly people who want to understand the subject thoroughly. And so even though there are various functions of regret, he has to know that one of the most important ones is the fear of punishment, the regret for what trouble you've brought upon yourself.

How could it be any other way? Could it be that a man burns up part of his life and then calmly forgets about it? He turns over a new leaf and he imagines that the past is erased?! If someone signed many documents in the past obligating himself with big debts, then later in life he can't laugh it off. In this world maybe you can file bankruptcy; you can run off to another country and change your name. But there's no such thing with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. All those documents will come home to roost someday and you'll have to face them.

If a man once spoke against his fellowman, even one *loshon hara*, he has to know that he has signed a document, an IOU. And he can't forget about it! Because someday when he's crossing the street, he might make

a miscalculation about the time it will take him to get to the curb before the car comes – Hakodosh Boruch Hu can cause him to make an error because of what he once said against a fellow Jew. Everyone should consider that – it could be you're in debt over your head.

The Sorry Baal Teshuva

Now, how does a man dig himself out of this hole? Not by ignoring it. In order to minimize his debt, in order to gradually reduce it and finally to cancel it entirely, a person has to feel really sorry about the past; the more it hurts him, the more the past becomes wiped out. That's a consolation. The more he regrets what he once did, the more it will be canceled out. Again, it's not canceled out merely by changing his ways. It's not canceled out merely by failing to repeat those misdeeds. No, that's not enough. But it could be canceled out if he would have sufficient regret for it.

And therefore there are times where you have to turn on the faucet of *charata*, of regret. From time to time, a person has to look back at things that he *did* that he shouldn't have done and the things he *didn't do* that he should have done. He has to look at the way he lived in the past, and he should have a deep feeling of remorse. And that *charata* will gradually dim the clarity of the writing on those documents that he signed. Little by little, his tears wash away the words and his sighs blow away some of the lettering and eventually, nothing is left. It's a blank paper and he doesn't owe anything.

Now that's an important consideration – and therefore Rabbeinu Yonah considers that the first of all the considerations for a *baal teshuva*, to regret the past, to feel regret for what went before. That's part of the mending, to look back and understand how wrong you were before. If it doesn't hurt you what you did – or even if it does but it's insufficient – if you look with equanimity, with *kalus*, at the wrong things that you once did then you're not a *baal teshuva* yet.

The Wasted Years

But there's something even deeper than that, more than just regretting the past. And now we come back to what Yosef was weeping about.

The Shaarei Teshuva says that the third *ikar* of *teshuva*, after *charata* and *azivas hacheit*, is *yagon*. *Yagon* means sorrow. Now this is different from *charata*, regret for what happened. *Yagon* means to be sorry that it

had happened that way because how much better it would have been if I hadn't done the sin! How much I could have accomplished and how much success I could have experienced had I not made that error!

Let's say a boy was sitting in the yeshiva and he was wasting his time; he was fooling around with the other boys in the class instead of listening to his *rebbe*. And so the months pass, then years pass by, and finally he sees now that he has wasted his yeshiva career.

Of course, he can fulfill *azivas hacheit*; he can make a wall of "Never again," and forsake the path of sin. He can feel regret and worry about retribution so much that his tears are erasing the IOU's.

Preparing For The Future

But he shouldn't forget about *yagon*; part of *teshuva* is to spend time contemplating how much better it would have been had he sat and learned in the younger years. He might have been a great man by now. Who knows how great he could have become! Now, today, for him to become a great man in Torah scholarship is out of the question. He might be a very fine servant of Hashem. He might even be a *lamdan*. But what he could have been is now water under the bridge and is gone forever.

And therefore, among the ingredients of *teshuva* is the necessity to look back and say, "Why didn't I do this before? How lucky I would have been if I wouldn't have rebelled in my younger years, if I wouldn't have committed that sin or those misdeeds." And it hurts him because he lost a great deal. Some things can never be recovered; some things are lost beyond recall. He cannot bring back the years that are gone by that could have been spent in so much happiness and in so much profit. The one thing he can do however is feel sorrow and regret. And that's why Yosef was engaging in *yagon* over all those years that were lost – because sometimes sorrow over the past is the best preparation for the future.

Part III. Weeping For Ourselves

Using Sadness

Now the truth is that although it's worth understanding this story of Yosef and his brothers just for itself, we have to also apply it in practical terms. That's why this story is written in the Torah. Of course, it's in the Torah for many reasons, but one purpose is that we should learn the

great principle of having regret and sorrow; of looking back and seeing what could have been. It's not enough to say that "Everything turned out right in the end anyhow". You have to look back and see what could have been, that it could have turned out much better.

We are capable of a lot of sorrow; we have in us a great reservoir of sadness only that we have to use it with discretion; we're expected to use it for the right purposes. I once told you about a Hebrew poet. A Hebrew poet wanted to make a poem. So it was raining on the window and as the rain was hitting the window, he thought – this big *chochom* was thinking, "It's like tears of sadness falling on the window pane." And so he wrote a poem, **מאי קמשמע לן הגשם** – *What are the raindrops coming to teach us?* **טיפ על הלונותנו** – *The drip drop on our window panes*, **באיש בכבי ממרר** – *are like a man weeping bitterly*. That's what this *meshugener* saw in rain. He saw raindrops pattering on the window pane and it made him sad. "It's raining tears," he thought, "Rain is sadness."

Now if he would have listened to the real poet, the *shirei* Dovid Hamelech, he would have known that the rain teaches us the kindness of Hashem – the *tov u'maitiv!* **המכין לארץ מטר**, He prepares the rain for us, we *need* the rain. Every drop is a pearl! It's *chiyus!* It's life! Water is life! Rain is a *chesed!* All food is rain! And even you are rain! 80% of your body is rain! So what is there to weep about? It's only that foolish people make themselves sad about the wrong things.

Cry Over Spilt Milk

And so in most cases it's better to turn on the faucet of happiness. It's a subject that we discuss here frequently. We have a big reservoir of happiness in ourselves that we should draw forth from all the time; and our lives become full of joy. A regular day, a "boring" day, becomes a never ending spring of happiness.

But as happy as we'll be, regret for the past must be there too. A person must have compartments in his mind; all the emotions have a place, and *yagon*, sorrow about the things that it's worth to be sorrowful about, also serves an important purpose. You can be happy always, overflowing with happiness, but you have to feel regret for what went before; looking back at what was lost by the sin and sorrowing in what could have been.

Now, I know what the world says – that everything will turn out right in the end. "No use crying over spilt milk," they say. But the truth is

not so; the truth is what we're learning tonight from Yosef Hatzadik that sometimes it pays to cry over what happened and what could have been because that itself is a *tikkun*.

Get Rid Of Debt

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu looks into a man's mind and He sees genuine sorrow, He counts that; He counts those tears. And commensurate with that sorrow Hakodosh Boruch Hu forgives a person for what could have been. It's an important part of *teshuvah* and *kaparah* that a person can achieve while still in this world.

And that's so important because it's in *this* world that we want to feel that *yagon*; it's in this world that we want to feel that sorrow about our misdeeds because that cancels out a whole lot of the debt that has to be paid off in the next world. And so when a person can muster up that strength to generate a sorrow for the past, that's a great *tikkun* for his *neshama*.

Now, there's another important purpose to *yagon*; it's something that we can't go away from the subject without mentioning. The first one I'll say again, is that **הַשֵּׁם יִרְאֶה לְלִבְךָ** – Hashem sees into your heart of hearts; and if He sees that you genuinely wish it would have been different, that means something. And it will serve a man well in the next world.

Learn From Mistakes

But there's a second purpose that's just as important and that is that *yagon* can be the catalyst for change *while you're still here*. When the past is glossed over superficially so there's little incentive to make real changes; but when a person has regret for the past, when he's full of sorrow about the things he did or didn't do – that's the first step to achieving in the future. We must learn from the past, from our past and the past of others or what the Torah teaches us and make use of the emotion of regret and sorrow to make changes in our lives.

Here's a case, we'll call her Necha – that's not her name. Necha was an active woman. She did all the housework. She was a capable *balabuste* and she insisted on climbing ladders even in her old age to hang drapes. And one day she fell down and broke her hip.

Her hip never healed and she had to remain for years in a wheelchair. A colored woman did all the housework now and that changed everything in her life. This was to her a living Gehenom. Up till that fall she was a

balebuste who did everything alone. She never even dreamed of delegating any work to a servant. And now she was sitting in a wheelchair and she had plenty of time to think; plenty of time to feel pangs of regret: “What would have been if I had not climbed that ladder?”

Sorrowful Tragedies

And what about the lady who didn't watch her baby? Now what happened, I'm not going to tell you. I don't want to identify the story. It's stories, plural. Many stories. It's true she had other children subsequently and they had many happy occasions, but there is one empty place at the table. Just one tiny moment of negligence by the window. What happened? A small thing. For a moment, she relaxed her guard and she rued forever and ever and she'll rue it in the next world. “If only she had watched her little baby.”

And the elderly girl, she's now close to seventy. And she looks back with regret. At eighteen, she had an excellent marriage offer but she was too proud then and too ambitious. She wanted a career and she let it go.

And so we look back at these stories, of Yosef Hatzadik and *l'havdil* Necha and that girl who's still waiting for Prince Charming and we remind ourselves that we have to learn from other people's mistakes and feel regret about our own mistakes. And the sooner the better because we'll have more of a *tikkun*, more of a wiping away the IOU's and more opportunity to make changes going forward.

Changes You Can Make

But all that can only be accomplished while you're still here. Because this lady, now she's in the next world. I hope she's in the right department, but still you can be sure she's suffering the pangs of remorse. “If only... If only... If only I had done this or that my history would have been so much different.” That's what's stated, *וְשָׁעִים מְלֵאִים חַרְטוּת* – *the sinners are full of regret*. And that's part of Gehenom. In Gehenom people are going to suffer from regret at what might have been. And the best way to avoid that eternal regret is to be like Yosef and have the *yagon* in this world.

When we hear these stories and feel sorrow, we're expected to make changes. If you live on the second story or a higher floor, the windows must be secured at all times! And the Shabbos candles must be in a room where children have no access. And a girl shouldn't turn down any decent marriage offer in the hope that maybe a Prince Charming will

suddenly come along. Because you might still be waiting in the old age home. There are people who are sitting in the old age home and they're still waiting for him to come in on his white horse or his white car and sweep them off their feet.

A Good Start

So tomorrow morning, as you get up in the morning, make it your business to do that, to make a little time for regret. "Ah! Yesterday! How much more I could have accomplished had I put my mind to it." And a little bit of regret before you go to sleep the previous night won't hurt you at all. And then when you get up in the morning you're thinking, "I'm going to the *beis haknesses*. I'm going to *daven tefillah b'tzibur* today. And I'm going to put in effort to pray properly. And I'm going to try to live like a model Jew in everything in good character, in *yiras Hashem*."

You made mistakes yesterday? You ran through the *davening* and the whole time you were on a safari in Africa? You didn't open a *sefer* during those few extra minutes you had? You said something sharp to your spouse? So you have *charata* for that and you make every day a new beginning.

Every husband can wake up in the morning and feel regret for what he did the day before and for what he didn't do as well. That itself is a *tikkun*; it wipes away some of the IOU's. And then he makes up his mind to make today a better day. "Starting today I will try to live in complete harmony with my wife. I won't hurt her feelings, and I'll try always to honor her and make her happy."

A wife too; if she feels genuine regret about the past, she'll be sure to make today a much better day. She should think, "My regret for the past means a new start to my life. I'm going to try to make my husband happy and never say anything mean to him. I'm not going to ask him for too many things for myself or for my house. I'll try to limit myself to make it easier for him."

Imitate the Breslover

And when a person lives like that, his happiness only continues to increase because every day becomes a better day. The regret he feels becomes a constant dynamo for perfection and living successfully; it only adds to his happiness. Every time he falls down he gets up again and takes another step forward.

That's what's told about Reb Nachman Breslover *zichrono livracha*. Reb Nachman Breslover writes in the *hakdamah* to one of his works that he tried many times and he fell down. But he had one virtue, he said. Each time he fell down, he got up again and said, "Now I'm starting all over again." He says, "Sometimes it happened a hundred times a day!" In one day, a hundred times he slid back, but each time he said, "No. Now I'm starting it all over again!"

And that's important to us – to always try to make a new start, a better start. And it's regret for the past that will make that new start even better. And the more good starts you make, the better the end will turn out.

טוב אַהֲרִית דָּבָר – *Everything ends well*, מִרְאשִׁיתוֹ – *if it's good from the beginning*. And the more good starts you make, the better the ending will be. And that's all for tonight. It's time for *maariv* now and I'm already working overtime.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Living With Sorrow

The great men of the past were in full control of their emotions and when Yosef cried, he did it with a purpose. When used properly, Sorrow is a virtue. This week I will *bli neder* take some time to practice virtuous sorrow.

Every day I will spend one minute thinking back to something I did wrong yesterday or something I could have done better, and I will try to generate some sorrow in my heart. Then I'll prepare to make a better start today.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

104 - What Might Have Been | **566** - Had We Not Erred
608 - Gift of Teshuva | **E-116** - Wealth of Achievement by Thought

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

What can we say to a couple who are fighting all the time and are now talking about a divorce?

A:

And the answer is – *ach*, wouldn't it be good if you could give a simple answer to that? The answer is they should go *not* to a marriage counselor. I know a case of a woman who goes to a marriage counselor. So I asked, who is it? It's a she. Is she married? No. So what kind of marriage counselor is it? It's like taking driving lessons from somebody who never drove a car. And sometimes it's even a failure in marriage, a divorcee. And even if she's successful in her marriage, it's usually an ignoramus who studied some theories from books and has unrealistic approaches to life.

And so my advice is go to an older *talmid chacham*. That's not me – I'm not old and I'm not a *talmid chacham*. My telephone is already ringing all day long because of this. And I don't advertise. There are good people to go to. Not me. Choose an old *talmid chacham*. You should pay a generous fee. Some of them who won't take anything but you can give it to their charities, their *yeshivos*. And they will give you a little bit of time, a few minutes, and that's more precious than sitting for an hour at a silly marriage counselor.

And it can be pointed out to these people that no matter what, divorce is always going to turn out worse. It's only because the grass seems greener further on. After it's all over, they look back and regret. How many divorced women and divorced men have spoken on the telephone to me! And I ask them, "Will you reconsider the first one? Would you like to remarry the first one?" And they said, "I would like to but it's too late." And therefore the time to reconsider is before you do it.

TAPE # 204 (February 1978)

— This week's Q&A sponsor: —

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