



Imrey Noam

Shabbat Shuvah

Parashat Haazinu

19 September

8 Tishrei

5787

SHABBAT TIMES



City	Candle lighting 18 Sept.	Shabbat ends 19 Sept.
New York	6:41	7:39
Los Angeles	6:37	7:31
Chicago	6:36	7:34

Local time in each city · All times PM

Returning to Our Father

For Shabbat Shuvah
Rabbi Reuven Kuklin



"Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven!"

Rabbi Akiva, Mishnah Yoma 8:9

Shabbat Shuvah invites us to pause before Yom Kippur: what do I want to change? Yet we may wonder: can I put so many mistakes right and begin again?

Rabbi Akiva answers at the close of Mishnah Yoma: "Fortunate are you, Israel! Before whom do you purify yourselves, and who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven! As it is said: 'I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be purified'; and it says: 'The L-rd is the mikveh of Israel.' Just as a mikveh purifies the impure, so the Holy One, blessed be He, purifies Israel."

Why ask both "before whom" and "who purifies"? And why quote two verses rather than one?

The Torah describes different forms of purification. In the first, a person enters a mikveh, a ritual bath, and immerses. The second is required after contact with the dead: sprinkling with water containing red heifer ashes is also needed. Similarly, purification from sin involves both our effort and a cleansing we receive.

We must acknowledge the wrong, regret it, abandon the sin and seek forgiveness.



No one can choose change for us. Teshuvah begins with an honest decision to take a different path.

But we cannot undo the past or pretend we caused no harm. We must repair what we can and turn to G-d for forgiveness. Spiritual cleansing is His gift.

"Before whom" refers to our prayer and repentance; "who purifies" reminds us that our efforts alone are not enough. We return to our Father, and He purifies us. Entering the mikveh represents our step; sprinkling, the cleansing granted from Above.

This does not remove responsibility; it removes despair. We need not become perfect before turning to G-d. Our task is to return sincerely, knowing that our Father in Heaven desires our return and helps us.

WHAT IS REALLY HOLDING US BACK?

For over six months, a Jewish psychologist eagerly attended Torah classes. He became convinced of the Torah's truth, yet his life remained unchanged. Then he stopped coming. A week later he returned wearing a kippah and a tallit katan beneath his shirt.

"What happened?" He had taken time off to identify his obstacle: an expensive dinner service from Japan. The dishes were not kosher, but every new guest admired them. Deep down, he could not bear to lose that admiration.

"How often do new guests see these dishes? How long does their admiration last?" he asked himself. "Am I sacrificing the life I believe in for those few minutes?" According to the account, he smashed the dishes with a hammer. His barrier had fallen.

The lesson is not to break possessions, but to recognize our attachments and their cost. Pirkei Avot teaches us to weigh a mitzvah's cost against its reward, and a sin's gain against its loss. A small pleasure may conceal a far greater loss, even in this life.

Adapted from Rabbi Reuven Kuklin's articles at imrey.org. Mishnah Yoma 8:9; Pirkei Avot 2:1. English translation and adaptation.

You Won't Believe Who My Wife Found in the Laundry

Finding the way home
Rabbi Reuven Kuklin

However far we have wandered, the way back to G-d remains open.

The Ten Days of Repentance remind us that everyone can return to G-d. I recalled an unusual incident at home several years ago. Our reminder about returning arrived with wings, a beak and a remarkably independent personality.

My wife was sorting clean sheets brought in from the balcony when she discovered... a live parrot. Yes, a parrot! Usually, we search the laundry for a missing sock or another small item of clothing. This find was more interesting.

The large, beautiful bird offered no explanation. It climbed out of the washing, spread its wings and began inspecting the apartment.

The family gave chase. Operation Parrot had begun. It flew; everyone ran. It perched; everyone froze. Whenever someone tried to catch it, the bird made one thing clear: its beak was not just for cracking seeds.

I was not home, so I can claim one achievement: I did not get in anyone's way.

Eventually, our guest was caught. The children borrowed an empty cage from neighbors: temporary accommodation until its identity and home address could be established.

Its owners were soon found. It belonged to our neighbors and had escaped a whole month earlier. A month! They had given up hope. Meanwhile,



it had been wandering somewhere before turning up in our clean sheets.

The neighbors described their bird, the details matched, and the traveler went home. I cannot say whether it welcomed the end of its adventure, but its owners were delighted.

That evening my wife told me everything. I regretted missing such a performance. Then I thought: how fitting that this happened during the days when we reflect on returning.

The Way Home Is Still Open

Sometimes we sigh: "I have wandered too far, lived this way too long and neglected too much. Can I still return?"

Our parrot was missing for a month. Its owners had lost hope, yet it returned via someone else's

balcony, a pile of sheets and a family chase. It was a vivid reminder: a long separation does not make returning impossible.

We can drift away, grow used to distance and convince ourselves no one is waiting. But these days remind us each year: our Father in Heaven wants us back. However far we have strayed, we can turn to Him and choose a new path.

We need not put years of mistakes right in a day. We must stop saying "It is too late" and take a real step forward. However long the journey away, the first step home can begin today.

DON'T ASK FOR TOO LITTLE

Rabbi Galinsky asked: we pray fervently for health and livelihood, but do we pray as eagerly for the final Redemption? He illustrated this with a story.

The Russian tsar was reviewing his troops when a soldier swung his sword at him. Another deflected the blow and saved his life. The tsar later summoned his rescuer: "You saved my life. Ask for anything you wish!"

"My commander mistreats me," said the soldier. "He refuses me leave and punishes me for no reason. Please order him to stop!" The tsar agreed and dismissed him.

Then he turned to the commander: "Never mistreat him again. But never promote him, either." "Why, Your Majesty? He saved your life!"

"I do not want foolish officers," replied the tsar. "He could have asked me to make him an officer, and his troubles would have been resolved. Instead, he merely asked not to be bullied!"

Prayers for health, livelihood and peace matter. But we must also ask for closeness to G-d, Mashiach and Israel's Redemption: a world where the cause of our troubles disappears. These days invite us to consider not only what we want to escape, but where we want to go.

Parrot story: Rabbi Reuven Kuklin, imrey.org. Rabbi Galinsky's parable: adapted from Vehigadta. Translated from the supplied material.