

## "And you shall return to Hashem your G-d." (30:2)

The *Ramban* states that the *Torah* is describing the foundation and essence of "*teshuva*" (repentance) in this *pasuk*. Indeed, the entire chapter deals with this critical *mitzvah*.

*Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, explains the notion of "returning" to Hashem in the following manner: Man does not sin unless a foolish idea, which is antithetical to *Torah* philosophy, enters his mind. This idea festers within him, causing him to gradually separate himself from Hashem. A man who cogently reflects upon Hashem's constant proximity to him never consciously sins. He is capable of sinning only after a subconscious feeling of remoteness has permeated his being. At this time, he injudiciously believes he is not in the presence of Hashem. In order to effect proper *teshuva*, one must "return" himself to Hashem's proximity. This transpires when one realizes that he is always near to Hashem. The sense of returning home constitutes the foundation of *teshuva*.

The most important aspect of *teshuva* is "viduy," or confession of sins. The first step is the most essential and, simultaneously, the most difficult. *Horav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch Z"l* poignantly notes that confession is not merely the admission of one's sins to Hashem. Rather, it is also the admission to oneself that one has sinned. One must confront the reality of his mistakes. Hashem does not need an avowal from us, for He knows us thoroughly, undoubtedly much better than we know ourselves. We need this unreserved confession; without personally facing our own ego we can never truly improve. Confession is difficult, for within every individual an advocate exists who is constantly ready to blatantly deny every wrong-doing. It is capable of mitigating our most serious transgressions. In a fastidious manner, it succeeds in veiling our self-image, thereby effectively obstructing the path to self-improvement. Consequently, the first and most essential step in the *teshuva* process is our personal confrontation with the sin, reflected in the act of "*viduy*".