

And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d. (30:2)

“And you will return to Hashem.” Is this not obvious? If one has experienced a deficit in the spiritual sphere of his life, it would be understandable that his return be unto Hashem. I think the Torah is conveying a powerful message with regard to *teshuvah*. It is not unusual for one who is dealing with personal and familial issues to blame it on Hashem and renege his observance as a means of avoiding or assuaging his own painful burdens. In such a circumstance, returning to Hashem will be difficult, since “returning” means going back to one’s point of departure – which in this case is “himself” – not Hashem. Until he addresses his own emotional and psychological issues, going to a *shiur* and *davening* will only be a temporary panacea until his next outburst. The true penitent who returns to Hashem is one who, for all intents and purposes, has it all together, but finds himself lost in his spiritual observance. He finds it cumbersome, demanding, tedious with no opportunity for personal initiative and innovation – all excuses employed by those who have no clue what *Yiddishkeit* is all about, its tenets and values. Such a person’s *teshuvah* is unto Hashem. He turned his back on Hashem by eschewing the Torah and its *mitzvos*; he now must return to his point of departure. The penitent’s destination is to return to his point of departure: himself or Hashem.

Returning to our Source, i.e., Hashem, should be the motivating force of one who performs *teshuvah*. It is a grave mistake to think that the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* is a *mitzvah* that applies solely for the sinner. A *yeshivah* student once visited the *Gerrer Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* asked him, “Where are you learning?” The young man replied, “In Ohr Sameach; however, I am not a *baal teshuvah*” (Ohr Sameach was originally established as a *yeshivah* to reach out to young men who were unaffiliated with Torah observance.) The *Rebbe* countered, “Why not?” Indeed, he was implying that each one of us should be “returning”, in the literal sense of the word. Just because one is *frum* from birth does not preclude him from climbing the ladder of spirituality. Being *frum* does not mean that one has arrived – only that he is traveling in the right direction.

Horav Yaakov Meir Shechter, Shlita, explains, “The lesson is: As you go through life, you should always ask yourself, ‘What am I looking for?’ If you do not want to lose your way in this world, you must always carefully consider your present locus – where you are and what it is that you are trying to locate. Are you a *mevakeish Hashem*, seeking G-d, or is it something else which you are looking for (but are too ashamed or misguided to admit)?”

Rav Shechter concludes: “We must do everything within our power to remain attached to our Source. If we are continually searching for Hashem, we will live a life of *teshuvah*, which is the very purpose for which we came into this world.”