



Cincinnati Torah מסינסי

Vol. III, No. XLVI

Vayeilech—Yom Kippur

Rabbi Kruspedai says, in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Three books are open on Rosh Hashanah—one of complete evildoers, one of the completely righteous, and one for those who are in between (half righteous and half guilty). The completely righteous are immediately written in and sealed for life. The completely evil are immediately written in and sealed for death. And those who are 50/50 hang in the balance... till Yom Kippur. If they merit, they are inscribed for life. If they don't merit, they are inscribed for death. (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 16b)

Rambam (Maimonides), in his Laws of Repentance (3:3), paraphrases this Gemara like so: If those who are 50/50 repent, they are written into the Book of Life. If they don't, they are written into the Book of Death.

Why does the Rambam (and, presumably, the Gemara, at least in the Rambam's view) make this poor man's life dependent on repentance? If the problem is that, in balance, he is neither clearly righteous nor blatantly evil—and it's therefore not clearly delineated which book he deserves to be written into—then we ought to offer him a much better piece of advice: Do one mitzvah! That way, he will tip the scale toward the side of merit, and he will be considered a righteous person! He'll get an instant entry in the Book of Life! Why must we force him through the difficult process of repentance?

One Question, Many Answers

① RABBI ITZELE PETERBERGER

The Golden Opportunity

THE QUESTION IS FAMOUS: WHY ISN'T YOM Kippur before Rosh Hashanah? On Rosh Hashanah, we beg Hashem for a sweet new year based on... what, exactly? We are still sullied with sin! Why should Hashem grant us a sweet new year, if we appear before Him in such a disgraceful state? However, if Yom Kippur were before Rosh Hashanah... now, that would be a fine thing, indeed! First we would be cleansed from the filth of our sins.

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② SICHOS MUSSAR, 5732, NO. 1

The Noose Tightens...

THE WHOLE PREMISE THAT THIS QUESTION was based on is in error.

The language of the Gemara ("Those who are 50/50 hang in the balance...") uses the Hebrew expression *t'luym v'om'dim*, which literally means "they hang and remain." In other words, this person is not in a state of limbo, in which we don't know if he will be written in the Book of Life or the Book of Death. No! He is literally standing there with a

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EMEK B'RACHA

Wrong Marking Period

THIS IS AN OBVIOUS ANSWER, IF YOU THINK about the question for a bit.

Our advice to this man can't be anything other than to repent, since his account of merits vs. misdeeds was frozen at the beginning of the new year (Rosh Hashanah), and he is now starting a fresh, new annual balance. By the time we have determined that this 50/50 man is in neither the Book of Life nor the Book of Death, it's too late to do another mitzvah and add it to the old year's merits. The only advice we have for this man is to repent, so that his past misdeeds will disappear...

P'NEI Y'HOSHUA (ROSH HASHANAH 16B)

Tilting Towards Mercy

ONE OF THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF Mercy that we ascribe to Hashem is *Rav Chesed*—Hashem will tip the scale of someone who is equally guilty and

meritorious to his credit, in order to label him "righteous."

Now, how does that fit with the Gemara quoted at the top of the page?

How can the Gemara discuss a 50/50 person, if Hashem always tips the scales for such people? There should only be evil people (with more sins than merits), and righteous people (with more merits, including people for whom Hashem "nudged" the scales).

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At the Kollel

KEY: 🖐️ Beginners 🖐️🖐️ Intermediate 🖐️🖐️🖐️ Advanced 🧑🧑 for men and women

Looking for a chavrusa? See Coordinator Rabbi Chaim Heinemann!
Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

Sunday *Free brunch!*

🖐️🖐️ **America Runs on Torah**
(Jewish Law & Parasha)
Rabbis Dani Schon
and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM
Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

🧑🖐️ **Partners in Torah**
at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

🧑🖐️ **Torah Treasures for**
Seniors at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM

🧑🖐️ **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn**
at Strauss & Troy
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

🖐️🖐️ **Halacha** (based on the parasha)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM
Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim Daylight Time

Shacharis
Sunday8:15 AM
Monday–Friday7:20 AM
ShabbosN/A

Mincha
Sunday7:45 PM
Monday–Thursday5:45 PM
Shabbos6:30 PM

Ma'ariv
In the Beis Midrash:
Sunday–Wednesday9:45 PM
Thursday10 PM
ShabbosN/A

Every Day

🖐️ **“Dirshu” Gemara Shiur**
(Maseches B'choros)
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kollel Yisgaber K'ari**
(amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🖐️🖐️ **Kitzur Shuchan Aruch**
Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

🖐️ **Daf Yomi**
Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🖐️🖐️ **Nightly Halacha Chabura**
Rabbis Dani Schon
& Binyamin Teitelbaum
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning
(private & small groups).....times vary

Answer No. 1 CONTINUED

Then we could appear before Hashem, sparkling clean, and ask for His goodness. Of what benefit is it to us to have our sins forgiven *after* we beg Hashem for His grace?

The answer is almost as famous: We have been looking at this situation the wrong way. Hashem won't grant someone forgiveness, just like that. First one must approach Hashem and coronate Him as the King of the world, accept Hashem's rule upon himself. Then when he finds himself enveloped in Hashem's warm embrace, his thoughts of *t'shuva* (repentance) will be lovingly accepted by Hashem. This is a special gift that comes but once a year—*after* Rosh Hashanah, when we celebrate Hashem's role as Creator and King. At other times, our *t'shuva* is not so readily accepted.

Now we return to this man, who is completely 50/50 (and, obviously, he has

Tilting... CONTINUED

Rosh Hashanah is a day of strict judgement. An impartial judge considers only the facts that are before him; there is no room for unwarranted mercy in a courtroom. So Hashem applies His mercy *laterally*. If He deems someone undeserving of a favorable judgement on

many sins), stumbling through the Days of Awe, totally oblivious to the golden opportunity staring him right in the face. If he were to perform just one mitzvah, just to tip the balance to the side of merits, well, do we really think that one mitzvah would be worth much, in light of the opportunity he's missing? There's almost no greater sin than blowing this huge opportunity! Such a lapse would weigh down the “debit” side of the scale much more than the one paltry mitzvah to his credit... 🕊️

Rosh Hashanah, He delays issuing a verdict till Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is a day of mercy, a day when Hashem forgives our sins and wipes our slates clean. On that day, Hashem can tilt the scales for such people to the meritorious side. 🕊️

Answer No. 2 CONTINUED

noose around his neck, because Hashem determined on Rosh Hashanah that he is *a dead man*! Doing one mitzvah is not the answer; this crisis necessitates complete repentance! Only then will the noose be removed from his neck and he will be free to walk home, a new—righteous!—man, with a fresh chance at life. 🕊️