Repentance and security cameras

We have explained that according to Rabbi Isaac Abohab, in his book Menorat haMaor, there are seven levels of Teshuba. That is, different circumstances in which, or by which, a person repents of the wrong actions that he or she did. These levels are classified according to certain categories. For example: 1.” When” the individual realizes that he did something wrong and stops doing it. 2. The level of consciousness. 3. If one repents beforeor after suffering the consequences of his or her wrongdoing, etc.

The highest level of Teshuba is reached when one repents by himself, self-motivated, immediately, and without having suffered any negative consequences of his bad actions.

A lower level than the first, is when one does NOT immediately realize what he did wrong and repeats his bad behavior until it becomes a bad habit. Repentance is triggered by an external but positive stimulus, for example, the Selihot, the Viduy, the Shofar, studying or listening words of Tora, etc.

The third level, which we will see today, is when one regrets once he can no longer repeat his bad behavior.

Examples:

1. An employee with access to the merchandise, from time to time steals. He takes things from his workplace without anyone seeing him. Since he does not regret after stealing the first time (level 1), this behavior persists for a long time and becomes a habit (level 2), which the employee perfects to avoid being trapped. His conscience does not rebuke him. It is easy indeed to fool yourself when there is an interest in it. And he fabricates imaginary excuses: “The owners are very rich, it’s not going to affect them if I take something home.” ”The owners do not pay me enough.” “I’m working more than the other employees.” “My salary has been the same for a long time.” etc. But one day, he comes to his workplace as usual, and big surprise! The owners have installed security cameras! Circumstances now are different . He can no longer commit the same crime without being caught. His brain no longer creates justifications, and one day he realizes that

fro years he has done something very wrong .… Leaving now aside the issue of restitution, confession, etc., Rabbi Abohab indicates that although this individual's behavior changed because circumstances changed and because he no longer has the same opportunities to steal, his "repentance", though somehow questionable, is considered by the Torah to be valid. Let us remember that, this level of repentance is higher than, for example, repenting once one has been caught.

2. A businessman travels abroad by himself. And there, where nobody knows him, he is led by his temptation and proceeds in a wrong way. Then he returns home and regrets what he did. Of course, now he can not repeat his wrong behavior. Because the opportunity to commit a transgression is no longer there. Rabbi Abohab says explains, that although the opportunity to repeat his error does not existe anymore, the sincere repentance of this person is valid and accepted by the Tora. In other words, his Teshuba is valid, although it is not perfect.

3. For many years an individual is financially very well. Many people in need, approach him to ask for help, but this individual permanently says "NO". He refuses to help his friends and neighbors with Tsedaqa. Over time, he persists in his selfish behavior and does not realize (or does not want to realize) that he is acting badly. Each year during the month of Elul and the Yamim Noraim (Rosh haShana, Yom Kippur) he says Selihot, listens to the Shofar, and learns about the importance of giving Tsedaqa, but still does not repent, and persists in his refusal to assist the poor. After a few years, he loses his fortune. And although he is not poor, money is not abundant. And now, when he can no longer help others, he regrets not having helped the poor. This repentance, while not ideal, is still valid and accepted.

The Sages explain that we must always aspire to repent immediately of having acted wrongly. Since when we repent of our wrongdoings, while the opportunity to continue acting bad still exists, we reach the highest level of Teshuba.

But the Sages also said that the doors of the Teshuba are never closed. And that no matter how far we have gone from HaShem and His commandments, He will always be willing to accept our repentance, even if it is not a perfect Teshuba.