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Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz



[Rav Adin site hulya.jpg](#)

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Post

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How, then, can Teshuva be done on Shabbat? Teshuva is an entire world in itself. As can be seen in the words of our Sages and in the Shabbat songs, Teshuva preceded Creation – namely, it is one of the foundations of Creation. Therefore, regardless of the innumerable books and sermons written and said about it, it still has ever so many new faces – just as each and every human being has a different fact.

It can therefore be said that Shabbat Teshuva is a call for a different sort of Teshuva, a Teshuva of Shabbat. Because in addition to its being a day of ceasing from work and a day of pleasure, there is another side to Shabbat, which is mentioned in the Shabbat prayers and indeed in the Scripture itself. Shabbat itself is Teshuva, a return. Our Sages say that in creating the world God dealt, so to speak, with things mundane, material matters of the world, of human beings, whereas on Shabbat He "rested and was refreshed," *Shavat va-yinafash*, the soul, *nefesh*, returns to its place. And this can also teach us what to do. If the point of Teshuva is to go back, to return to the source, so on Shabbat Teshuva there is no room for dealing with sins and transgression; rather, it is a Teshuva in the sense of return.

Yom Kippur, although its prayers contain so many confessions, is not a day of Teshuva: it is a day of atonement. On Yom Kippur we count our sins so that the Almighty will dispose of them one by one; or, as the verse says (Hosea 14, 3): "forgive [literally: raise up] all our iniquities" – that the Almighty will take each and every one of our transgressions and raise it high up with His unlimited power. On Shabbat

Teshuva we do not have this power of atonement and forgiveness, but we do have another power: the power to return to the source, to all those things that belong to the side of holiness in us, in each and every one of us.

Some people can recall years in which they were in a different, higher level; others can recall such days; but there is not a single human being who does not have moments, or parts of his soul, in which he wants and feels the need to return to God. In such moments one says to the Almighty: My Father in Heaven, I want to return to You! I went out, wandered, travelled, on weekdays and on other days, I have strayed and led others astray. Now I want to return to You. Furthermore, Teshuva is the attempt to go back to what I ought to be. This is the Teshuva of Shabbat. In the Teshuva of Shabbat we focus not on our sins and crimes but rather on the question – how can I ascend, what can I improve. And thanks to this – not because we are waging a war on our sins, but because we are trying, also on the basis of past memories, to brace ourselves and return to God – God will wipe away our sins like clouds.

On Shabbat Teshuva we should devote our time and hearts to look into all the things of goodness, blessing and holiness that we have, and see also those things that we touched. I may not have touched them sufficiently, but I can do so even now, on this Shabbat, with greater strength and might. The essence of it all is to return to God, to return home, to the most prime origin, in the sense of "my God, the soul You placed within me is pure." I do not think about where I fell, where I failed, where I got soiled; I cast all of that away from me and tell God: I want to return to holiness and purity. So this is what we can do on Shabbat Teshuva, so that we will merit to see on that day the light of good will, of the desire to raise higher, and with its power, indeed to rise higher. This light, which is an essential component of both Shabbat and the Ten Days of Teshuva, is the main point of Shabbat Teshuva. On this Shabbat we ought to think not about where we are now but about where we wish to be, about what good and blessing do I want to do. This Shabbat, then, contains a kind of pleasure that is, perhaps, different from that of other Shabbat, but which, too, is a complete, perfect Oneg Shabbat, Shabbat pleasure.

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Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz

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Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz

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The very concept of "Shabbat Teshuva" contains an inner contradiction. The essence of Shabbat is the ceasing of work, of toil, and so it is also up high, in the very first origin of Shabbat; but in many other ways Shabbat is also a day of pleasure, a day in which one tries to increase pleasures and avoid, as much as possible, things that arouse sadness and the like, as it says in the prayer: "a rest of peace and serenity and tranquility and security." Teshuva, on the other hand, seems to have to do with our shortcomings and flaws, be it in transgressions between man and man, between man and God, or against oneself. Looking into these matters, besides having an aspect of trying to improve, contains also an aspect of regret, deep sorrow and pain of the heart. Although not everyone can say that "my sin is constantly before me," (Psalms 51, 5),

but recalling saddening matters that were one's share in the past year, and possibly also in past years, is sorrowful and painful, and surely does not increase one's feeling of serenity.

How, then, can Teshuva be done on Shabbat? Teshuva is an entire world in itself. As can be seen in the words of our Sages and in the Shabbat songs, Teshuva preceded Creation – namely, it is one of the foundations of Creation. Therefore, regardless of the innumerable books and sermons written and said about it, it still has ever so many new faces – just as each and every human being has a different fact.

It can therefore be said that Shabbat Teshuva is a call for a different sort of Teshuva, a Teshuva of Shabbat. Because in addition to its being a day of ceasing from work and a day of pleasure, there is another side to Shabbat, which is mentioned in the Shabbat prayers and indeed in the Scripture itself. Shabbat itself is Teshuva, a return. Our Sages say that in creating the world God dealt, so to speak, with things mundane, material matters of the world, of human beings, whereas on Shabbat He "rested and was refreshed," *Shavat va-yinafash*, the soul, *nefesh*, returns to its place. And this can also teach us what to do. If the point of Teshuva is to go back, to return to the source, so on Shabbat Teshuva there is no room for dealing with sins and transgression; rather, it is a Teshuva in the sense of return.

Yom Kippur, although its prayers contain so many confessions, is not a day of Teshuva: it is a day of atonement. On Yom Kippur we count our sins so that the Almighty will dispose of them one by one; or, as the verse says (Hosea 14, 3): "forgive [literally: raise up] all our iniquities" – that the Almighty will take each and every one of our transgressions and raise it high up with His unlimited power. On Shabbat Teshuva we do not have this power of atonement and forgiveness, but we do have another power: the power to return to the source, to all those things that belong to the side of holiness in us, in each and every one of us.

Some people can recall years in which they were in a different, higher level; others can recall such days; but there is not a single human being who does not have moments, or parts of his soul, in which he wants and feels the need to return to God. In such moments one says to the Almighty: My Father in Heaven, I want to return to You! I went out, wandered, travelled, on weekdays and on other days, I have strayed and led others astray. Now I want to return to You. Furthermore, Teshuva is the attempt to go back to what I ought to be. This is the Teshuva of Shabbat. In the Teshuva of Shabbat we focus not on our sins and crimes but rather on the question – how can I ascend, what can I improve. And thanks to this – not because we are waging a war on our sins, but because we are trying, also on the basis of past memories, to brace ourselves and return to God – God will wipe away our sins like clouds.

On Shabbat Teshuva we should devote our time and hearts to look into all the things of goodness, blessing and holiness that we have, and see also those things that we touched. I may not have touched them sufficiently, but I can do so even now, on this Shabbat, with greater strength and might. The essence of it all is to return to God, to return home, to the most prime origin, in the sense of "my God, the soul You placed within me is pure." I do not think about where I fell, where I failed, where I got soiled; I cast all of that away from me and tell God: I want to return to holiness and purity. So this is what we can do on Shabbat Teshuva, so that we will merit to see on that day the light of good will, of the desire to raise higher, and with its power, indeed to rise higher. This light, which is an essential component of both Shabbat and the Ten Days of Teshuva, is the main point of Shabbat Teshuva. On this Shabbat we ought to think not about where we are now but about where we wish to be, about what good and blessing do I want to do. This Shabbat, then, contains a kind of pleasure that is, perhaps, different from that of other Shabbat, but which, too, is a complete, perfect Oneg Shabbat, Shabbat pleasure.

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The very concept of "Shabbat Teshuva" contains an inner contradiction. The essence of Shabbat is the ceasing of work, of toil, and so it is also up high, in the very first origin of Shabbat; but in many other ways Shabbat is also a day of pleasure, a day in which one tries to increase pleasures and avoid, as much as possible, things that arouse sadness and the like, as it says in the prayer: "a rest of peace and serenity and tranquility and security." Teshuva, on the other hand, seems to have to do with our shortcomings and flaws, be it in transgressions between man and man, between man and God, or against oneself. Looking into these matters, besides having an aspect of trying to improve, contains also an aspect of regret, deep sorrow and pain of the heart. Although not everyone can say that "my sin is constantly before me," (Psalms 51, 5), but recalling saddening matters that were one's share in the past year, and possibly also in past years, is sorrowful and painful, and surely does not increase one's feeling of serenity.

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Date: 2015-08

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[Rav Adin site hulya.jpg](#)

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Some people can recall years in which they were in a different, higher level; others can recall such days; but there is not a single human being who does not have moments, or parts of his soul, in which he wants and feels the need to return to God. In such moments one says to the Almighty: My Father in Heaven, I want to return to You! I went out, wandered, travelled, on weekdays and on other days, I have strayed and led others astray. Now I want to return to You. Furthermore, Teshuva is the attempt to go back to what I ought to be. This is the Teshuva of Shabbat. In the Teshuva of Shabbat we focus not on our sins and crimes but rather on the question – how can I ascend, what can I improve. And thanks to this – not because we are waging a war on our

sins, but because we are trying, also on the basis of past memories, to brace ourselves and return to God – God will wipe away our sins like clouds.

On Shabbat Teshuva we should devote our time and hearts to look into all the things of goodness, blessing and holiness that we have, and see also those things that we touched. I may not have touched them sufficiently, but I can do so even now, on this Shabbat, with greater strength and might. The essence of it all is to return to God, to return home, to the most prime origin, in the sense of "my God, the soul You placed within me is pure." I do not think about where I fell, where I failed, where I got soiled; I cast all of that away from me and tell God: I want to return to holiness and purity. So this is what we can do on Shabbat Teshuva, so that we will merit to see on that day the light of good will, of the desire to raise higher, and with its power, indeed to rise higher. This light, which is an essential component of both Shabbat and the Ten Days of Teshuva, is the main point of Shabbat Teshuva. On this Shabbat we ought to think not about where we are now but about where we wish to be, about what good and blessing do I want to do. This Shabbat, then, contains a kind of pleasure that is, perhaps, different from that of other Shabbat, but which, too, is a complete, perfect Oneg Shabbat, Shabbat pleasure.

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Shabbat Teshuva 5776 - For all Congregations, instead of a spoken sermon

Date: 2015-08

Rabbi Adin Even Israel Steinsaltz

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Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz is a teacher, philosopher, social critic and prolific author

who has been hailed by Time magazine as a "once-in-a-millennium scholar." His lifelong work in Jewish education earned him the Israel Prize, his country's highest honor. Born in Jerusalem in 1937 to secular parents, Rabbi Steinsaltz studied physics and chemistry at the Hebrew University. He established several experimental schools and, at the age of 24, became Israel's youngest school principal. In 1965, he began his monumental Hebrew translation and commentary on the Talmud. To date, he has completed his monumental project and the last book was published in November, 2010. The Rabbi's classic work of Kabbalah, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, was first published in 1980 and now appears in eight languages. In all, Rabbi Steinsaltz has authored some 60 books and hundreds of articles on subjects ranging from zoology to theology to social commentary. Rabbi Steinsaltz lives in Jerusalem. He and his wife have three children and 15 grandchildren.

Post

The very concept of "Shabbat Teshuva" contains an inner contradiction. The essence of Shabbat is the ceasing of work, of toil, and so it is also up high, in the very first origin of Shabbat; but in many other ways Shabbat is also a day of pleasure, a day in which one tries to increase pleasures and avoid, as much as possible, things that arouse sadness and the like, as it says in the prayer: "a rest of peace and serenity and tranquility and security." Teshuva, on the other hand, seems to have to do with our shortcomings and flaws, be it in transgressions between man and man, between man and God, or against oneself. Looking into these matters, besides having an aspect of trying to improve, contains also an aspect of regret, deep sorrow and pain of the heart. Although not everyone can say that "my sin is constantly before me," (Psalms 51, 5), but recalling saddening matters that were one's share in the past year, and possibly also in past years, is sorrowful and painful, and surely does not increase one's feeling of serenity.

How, then, can Teshuva be done on Shabbat? Teshuva is an entire world in itself. As can be seen in the words of our Sages and in the Shabbat songs, Teshuva preceded Creation – namely, it is one of the foundations of Creation. Therefore, regardless of the innumerable books and sermons written and said about it, it still has ever so many new faces – just as each and every human being has a different fact.

It can therefore be said that Shabbat Teshuva is a call for a different sort of Teshuva, a Teshuva of Shabbat. Because in addition to its being a day of ceasing from work and a day of pleasure, there is another side to Shabbat, which is mentioned in the Shabbat

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