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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

## SMALL IS HUGE!

### ROSH HASHANA

With Rosh Hashana quickly approaching, there is a sense of unease in the air. What will our coming year be like? There are so many things we need from Hashem, our loving Father. How can we show Hashem that we deserve bountiful goodness?

When we do *teshuva*, repent from our sins, we are showing Hashem that we care. That we do want to improve ourselves and become closer to Him.

The basic parts of *teshuva* are to admit our sins, feel bad that we acted badly, and accept upon ourselves not to repeat those actions in the future.

All Hashem wants is to see that we are trying to improve. When we think about our actions and inactions, we will realize that we have much to improve.

If we try to do too much, our improvements won't last, and we will find ourselves back into our regular routine of sinning. The best approach in which we will have a better chance that it will be lasting, is to choose a small area that needs improvement. It may be to be more careful about saying *brachos* before or after eating, saying the first paragraph of *birchas hamzon* while looking inside a siddur, learning an extra minute of Torah, doing one extra act of kindness, showing more respect to a parent or friend, or.... The **Ramban** (Devarim 30:14) says that doing *teshuva* is doable. It is not difficult. May our attempts at improvement succeed. **May our prayers ascend the heavens. And may we all be granted a wonderful, sweet new year.**

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l has a beautiful *moshol*, parable, illustrating the significance of doing even one small, yet powerful improvement:

*The defendant was on trial for his life. The trial was not going well. It seemed as if a guilty verdict would soon be forthcoming. The defendant had one, slim*

*"For the matter is extremely close to you; in your mouth and in your mind to fulfill it."  
(Devarim 30:14)*

*chance. He had hired a new lawyer. The lawyer was brilliant and had never lost a case. If only the lawyer would make it to the trial on time, before the guilty verdict was sealed, then the defendant would have a chance. Suddenly, the courtroom doors opened. There was an excited buzz in the courtroom as the new lawyer walked in. The new lawyer presented the case brilliantly and the case started turning in favor of the defendant. The verdict was announced, and the defendant was declared not guilty! (Give Us Life by Mendel Weinbach*

Every action that we do creates an angel that will appear in the heavenly court on the day of judgement. **Pirkei Avos** (4:13) quotes Rabbi Eliezer son of Yaakov who says, "One who fulfills one mitzvah acquires for himself a single defending angel. One who commits one transgression acquires one accusing angel." Our sins create prosecuting angels and our mitzvos create defending angels. Often, our sins are done with energy and excitement, creating powerful prosecuting angels who eloquently present a case against us. Many of our mitzvos may be done, lacking feeling and concentration, creating defense angels who can

only present weak arguments on our behalf. When we are being judged, all may seem to be lost. We can still be rescued by the dramatic appearance of just one angel. “If there is one defending angel out of a thousand, to argue the righteousness of a man,

he may save him from punishment.” One prayer said with concentration and meaning, one evening of Torah study for which some favorite entertainment was sacrificed, one act of unusual generosity, ... can create that powerful defending angel who can rescue us from harsh judgement.

The **Meiri** (Pirkei Avos 13:4) says that a person should not belittle the significance of performing even the smallest mitzvah, for every good deed creates a defending angel. Every action that we do, makes a difference! Let’s make a commitment, NOW, to improve in one area, even a small one. That determination will jettison us into the category of “those who repent”. It will give us a better chance to have a wonderful, new year!

A shana tova to all! **לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם!**

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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