Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

ה' אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד נֹשֵׂא עָוֹן וָפָשַׁע.... (במדבר יד, יח)	Hashem is slow to anger and abundant in kindness; forgiving עבירות done on purpose and עבירות done out of rebellion.....
רש"י: ה' ארך אפים. לַצַּדִּיקִים וְלָרְשָׁעִים; כְּשֶׁעָלָה מֹשֶׁה לַמָּרוֹם מְצָאוֹ לְהַקָּבָ"ה שֶׁהָיָה יוֹשֵׁב וְכוֹתֵב ה' אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, אָמַר לוֹ, לַצַּדִּיקִים? אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּבָ"ה אַף לָרְשָׁעִים, אָמַר לוֹ רְשָׁעִים יֹאבֵדוּ, אָמַר לוֹ חַיֶּיךָ שֶׁתִּצְטָרֵךְ לַדָּבָר; כְּשֶׁחָטְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּעֵגֶל וּבַמְרַגְּלִים הִתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה לְפָנָיו בְּאֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּבָ"ה וַהֲלֹא אָמַרְתָּ לִי לַצַּדִּיקִים? אָמַר לוֹ וַהֲלֹא אָמַרְתָּ לִי אַף לָרְשָׁעִים, יִגְדַּל נָא כֹחַ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת דִּבּוּרְךָ (סנהדרין קי"א):	Hashem is slow to anger towards both the righteous and the wicked. When Moshe went up to שמים to receive the תורה, he found Hashem writing: "ה' ארך אפים" - Hashem is slow to anger. משה: "Surely only to the צדיקים?" Hashem: "To the wicked also!" משה: "The wicked — let them perish!" Hashem: "I swear by your life that you will eventually need My slowness to anger also to the wicked" When the כלל ישראל sinned by the עגל and by the מרגלים, Moshe asked Hashem for ארך אפים. Hashem: "Did you not say, "Surely only to the צדיקים!?"" Moshe: "But did You not tell me, 'To the wicked also'?" Let the strength of Hashem be great by fulfilling Your statement and not mine!

Instructions For Teaching This Lesson:

Present to your class the חסד and greatness of תשובה.

Step 1:

Teach to the students how how ה' is ארך אפים and desires the תשובה of both צדיקים and רשעים.

Step 2:

Explain to the students the great power of תשובה. Stress that it brings a person to the highest levels.

Step 3:

Clarify to the students that תשובה is a great חסד from Hashem and an expression of Hashem's great love for us.

Step 4:

Show or tell the story by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky titled A Yid Is Never Lost: The Girl Who Came Back Home https://torahanytime.com/lectures/369661

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Hashem is ארך אפים even to רשעים. Hashem had נח build the תיבה for 120 years to give the people of his generation time to do תשובה. Hashem opened the mouth of בלעם's donkey to give him a chance to do תשובה. If Hashem is so patient and gives these רשעים so much time and so many opportunities to do תשובה, we must believe that Hashem is just as patient and even more desirous for our תשובה.

ירבעם was one of the kings of בני ישראל. After he became king, he let the גאוה get to him and became a רשע. He fell so low that he set up golden calves that became עבודה זרה. He closed the roads to the בית המקדש. He made up his own holiday. The פסוק says about him (מלכים א' יד,טז) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וַאֲשֶׁר הֶחֱטִיא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל - who sinned and caused כלל ישראל to sin. This is considered the gravest of sins. Even so, Hashem came to him and offered him a chance to do תשובה!

<u>סנהדרין קב.</u>

אָמַר רַבִּי אַבָּא: אַחַר שֶׁתְּפָשׂוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְיָרָבְעָם בְּבִגְדוֹ, וְאָמַר לוֹ: חֲזוֹר בְּךָ, וַאֲנִי וְאַתָּה וּבֶן יִשַׁי נְטַיֵּיל בְּגַן עֵדֶן. אָמַר לוֹ: מִי בָּרֹאשׁ? בֶּן יִשַׁי בָּרֹאשׁ. אִי הָכִי, לָא בָּעֵינָא.

Hashem grabbed ירבעם by his shirt and pleaded with ירבעם, "Please do תשובה and Me, you, and Ben Yishai (דוד המלך) will stroll together in Gan Eden". ירבעם asked, "Who will be first, me or Ben Yishai?"

"Ben Yishai" Hashem replied.

"If so, I'm not interested", said ירבעם.

Foolish, wicked ירבעם gave up his עולם הבא because of his haughtiness.

From here we see an example of the extent in which Hashem waits for our תשובה and how much he desires it even from a רשע such as ירבעם. We also see how great תשובה is. Had ירבעם done תשובה, Hashem would have erased all of his terrible עבירות, and he would have gotten to stroll with Hashem and Dovid Hamelech in גן עדן!

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The בן איש חי points out that in Hashem's words ירבעם comes before דוד המלך. This implies that ירבעם was intended to be first. Although the בן איש חי has a different understanding of this story, we can ask a huge question here.
How could it be that the Rasha, ירבעם, would actually possibly be before דוד המלך in גן עדן? Maybe that's why ירבעם asked who would be first even after 'ה had said that it would be him. Even ירבעם himself couldn't imagine how he could get so high after all he had done.
To answer this, perhaps,we can apply the חזל:

<u>ברכות לד</u> מָקוֹם שֶׁבַּעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִין — צַדִּיקִים גְּמוּרִים אֵינָם עוֹמְדִין

In the place where בעלי תשובה stand, even the full-fledged righteous are not able to stand.
If ירבעם would have done תשובה, which would have been very difficult and embarrassing for him, he would have been a בעל תשובה and therefore, able to stand in a place where even צדיקים גמורים cannot stand.

גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד

<u>יומא פו:</u>

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן: גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמְּקָרֶבֶת אֶת הַגְּאוּלָה

תשובה is so great that it brings the גאולה closer.

<u>שמות רבה כה, יב</u>

אָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁנָּתַתִּי קִצְבָּה לַקֵּץ שֶׁיָּבוֹא בֵּין עוֹשִׂין תְּשׁוּבָה בֵּין שֶׁאֵין עוֹשִׂין בְּעוֹנָתָהּ הִיא בָּאָה, אִם עוֹשִׂין תְּשׁוּבָה אֲפִלּוּ יוֹם אֶחָד אֲנִי מֵבִיא אוֹתָהּ שֶׁלֹּא בְּעוֹנָתָהּ

Hashem said to כלל ישראל: 'Even though I set a limit for the end of the גלות - when משיח will come - regardless of whether you do תשובה or do not do תשובה. But if you do תשובה, even one day, I will bring משיח earlier than the appointed time.'

Hashem wants to bring משיח and end the גלות. He just is waiting for our תשובה so He can bring it as soon as possible.

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הושע יד, ב
שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹקיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בַּעֲוֹנֶךָ:
Return, כלל ישראל, to Hashem, For you have fallen because of your sin.
רד"ק
שובה ישראל, כי כשלת בעונך. כי אתה רואה שכשלת בעונך לפיכך יש לך לשוב אל ה' יתברך כי אין מקימך ממכשולך אלא תשובתך אליו ובאמרו עד כמו אל וכן ושבת עד ה' אלהיך שובו עדי ואמרו רז"ל גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד שנאמר עד ה' אלהיך:
Why does it say ה' אלקיך **<u>עד</u>** - 'until Hashem' and not ה' אלקיך **<u>אל</u>** - 'to Hashem'?
It is to show us how great תשובה is! It goes all the way up **<u>until</u>** the כסא הכבוד!

תנא דבי אליהו רבה
מעיד אני עלי שמים וארץ שהקב"ה יושב ומצפה להן לישראל יותר ממה שמצפה האב לבנו והאשה לבעלה שיעשו תשובה כדי שיגאל אותם ויבנה להם בית המקדש שלא יחרב לעולם
אליהו הנביא says, The Heavens and earth are my witnesses that Hashem sits and awaits longingly for כלל ישראל, more than a father waits for his son, and a wife for her husband. What is Hashem waiting for with so much longing?
He is waiting for בני ישראל to do Teshuva in order that He may redeem them and rebuild for them the בית המקדש which will never be destroyed.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

In שיר השירים, Klal Yisrael say to the other nations:

<u>שיר השירים א, ה</u>

שְׁחוֹרָה אֲנִי וְנָאוָה בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם כְּאָהֳלֵי קֵדָר כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה:

I am dirty from sins, but beautiful, Daughters of Yerushalayim— Like the tents of Kedar, like the curtain of שלמה.

<u>רש"י:</u>

אִם אֲנִי שְׁחוֹרָה כְּאָהֳלֵי קֵדָר הַמַּשְׁחִירִים מִפְּנֵי הַגְּשָׁמִים, שֶׁהֵם פְּרוּסִים תָּמִיד בַּמִּדְבָּרוֹת, קַלָּה אֲנִי לְהִתְכַּבֵּס לִהְיוֹת כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה. דֻּגְמָא הִיא זוּ: אוֹמֶרֶת כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לָאֻמּוֹת: "שְׁחוֹרָה אֲנִי בְמַעֲשַׂי וְנָאָה אֲנִי בְמַעֲשֵׂה אֲבוֹתַי.....

Though I am black, like the tents of Kedar—which are blackened because of the rains, for they are always spread out in the wilderness—I am easily cleansed to become like the tapestries of Shlomo. כלל ישראל says to the nations, “I am black in my deeds (i.e., sins), but I am beautiful by virtue of the deeds of my ancestors....”

בני ישראל understand that even though they got dirty from עבירות, they are still beautiful because of the צדיקים that they come from. This does not just mean that they have זכות אבות—the merit of their forefathers—which would mean that we are not worthy in our own right, but only in the זכות of our אבות. Rather, it is saying that in our genes, in our makeup—which we received from our אבות—we ourselves, in essence, are beautiful. The black/dirty is just on the surface and can easily be cleaned with תשובה.

It is like a child who plays in the dirt. He may look very dirty, but it is very clear that it is only on the surface, and he can easily be bathed. No one would ever think that he is not beautiful on the inside, even if they see him all dirty.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

When בלעם הרשע was hired to curse בני ישראל, he opened up his mouth to curse them, but Hashem made a beautiful ברכה come out instead. This is part of the ברכה:
במדבר כג, כא
לֹא־הִבִּיט אָוֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא־רָאָה עָמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקָיו עִמּוֹ וּתְרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ:
Hashem does not see transgressions in Yaakov, And He does not see the sin in בני ישראל. Hashem is with them, And the King's friendship is within them.

רש"י: לא הביט.
הַקָּבָ"ה אוֹן שֶׁבְּיַעֲקֹב — כְּשֶׁהֵן עוֹבְרִין עַל דְּבָרָיו אֵינוֹ מְדַקְדֵּק אַחֲרֵיהֶם לְהִתְבּוֹנֵן בְּאוֹנְיוֹת שֶׁלָּהֶם וַעֲמָלָן שֶׁהֵן עוֹבְרִין עַל דָּתוֹ:
Hashem does not see the און - the transgressions - which is in בני ישראל. When they do עבירות, He does not specifically look to see them and focus on those mistakes, but rather overlooks them.

רש"י: ה' אלקיו עמו.
אֲפִלּוּ מַכְעִיסִין וּמַמְרִים לְפָנָיו, אֵינוֹ זָז מִתּוֹכָן:
Even when they provoke Him to anger and act rebelliously before Him, He does not depart from their midst.
Hashem will always be with בני ישראל.

רש"י: ותרועת מלך בו.
לְשׁוֹן חִבָּה וְרֵעוּת, כְּמוֹ (שמואל ב ט"ו) "רֵעֶה דָּוִד" — אוֹהֵב דָּוִד...
תרועה is an expression for love and friendship. Hashem loves us even when we do עבירות.

נציב:
לא הביט און ביעקב. האון שישנו ביעקב אינו בעצם מושרש בלב יעקב.
The sins are not the real essence of בני ישראל. They are just an outer layer of dirt waiting for תשובה to remove them.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

After כלל ישראל sinned with the חטא העגל, Moshe broke the לוחות. Moshe davened for כלל ישראל that Hashem forgive them. When Moshe went up the mountain to receive the second לוחות, Hashem first showed him how to prevent the sort of national catastrophe that had nearly provoked Him to wipe out the nation. He showed Moshe the שלש עשרה מדות to invoke Hashem's mercy. It begins with:

<u>שמות לד, ו</u>

ה' ה' קל רחום וחנון ארך אפים וכו'

Hashem, Hashem, a G-d compassionate and gracious, slow to anger etc.

<u>תוספות ראש השנה יז:</u>

שלש עשרה מדות. אומר רבינו תם דשני שמות הראשונים הם שני מדות. כדאמרינן הכא אני ה' קודם שיחטא לרחם עליו ואני מרחם לאחר שיחטא אם ישוב ה' מדת רחמים הוא

רבינו תם says that the two names of Hashem at the start of the יג מדות are two different מדות of Hashem. The first is רחמים - mercy - before we do an עבירה. The second denotes that even after someone has sinned, Hashem mercifully accepts his תשובה. Without Divine mercy, a sin could not simply disappear from the scales of justice merely because the sinner has repented; just as an assailant cannot free himself from paying for damages merely because he regrets what he did. Rather, תשובה is a tremendous kindness and demonstration of His mercy.

When משה is begging Hashem to let him into ארץ ישראל, he says:

<u>דברים ג, כד</u>

ה' אלקים אַתָּה הַחִלּוֹתָ לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ אֶת־גָּדְלְךָ וְאֶת־יָדְךָ הַחֲזָקָה אֲשֶׁר מִי־קֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה כְמַעֲשֶׂיךָ וְכִגְבוּרֹתֶךָ:

Hashem, You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness and Your mighty hand, You whose powerful deeds no god in heaven or on earth can equal!

<u>גור אריה</u>

ומה שפירש "ואת ידך" 'זו ימינך שהיא פשוטה', דאם לא כן, מה שייך זה אל תפילתו של משה, אלא שמזכיר מדת טובו, וכן מזכיר שהיא פשוטה לקבל שבים, וכן יקבל תפלתו.

What is the 'mighty hand' of Hashem that משה is referring to?

The strength of Hashem that Moshe is referring to is that Hashem accepts תשובה.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

After Hashem did not accept קין's קרבן, he felt very bad and his face fell.

<u>בראשית ד, ו</u>

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־קָיִן לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָנֶיךָ:

And Hashem said to קין, "Why are you distressed, And why is your face fallen?"

<u>ספורנו:</u>

ולמה נפלו פניך. כי כשיש לקלקול איזו תקנה אין ראוי להצטער על מה שעבר אבל ראוי להשתדל להשיג תקון לעתיד:

It is pointless to brood over the past when the matter can be rectified.

Hashem was telling קין, 'You don't have to give up and feel helpless because you made a mistake. You can fix it with תשובה!'

תשובה is an amazing חסד from Hashem in which He allows us to fix what we did and to be positive again!

<u>Story:</u>

Once there was a woman who was driving right before שבת. As שבת came closer and closer, she realized that she would likely not make it in time. Panicked, the woman stopped looking at the clock and just drove as fast as she could to her destination. When she arrived, she realized that שקיעה had already passed and she had driven on שבת. The woman felt terrible about it. For years, she carried the guilt with her everywhere she went. She could not forgive herself for what she had done. Years later, she confided in a Rav about what she had done and how she felt. The Rav looked at her compassionately and said, "There is a very simple thing to do about this. The תורה teaches us how to do תשובה."

The Rav reviewed the laws of תשובה with her and the woman did heartfelt תשובה. She was finally able to move on with her life. Hashem had forgiven her and erased her sins. Now she could let it go as well.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

Elazar ben Durdaya, who lived over 1800 years ago, was famous for spending most of his life doing very big עבירות. He wouldn't stop himself from doing anything that he wanted to do. One day, someone told him that someone like him could never do תשובה and have it accepted. The strong words, and the strong way they were expressed, penetrated his נשמה and moved him. He realized that his life was being wasted and he felt an intent and desire to return to Hashem. He immediately fled into the wilderness and dramatically begged the nature around him to pray on his behalf. With deep anguish Elazar ben Durdaya called out, "Mountains and hills, ask mercy for me!"

"Ask mercy for you? We must ask mercy for ourselves!"

"Heaven and earth, ask mercy for me!"

"Ask mercy for you? We must ask mercy for ourselves!"

And so he went on to beseech the sun, moon, stars, and planets, all who responded the same way - "Ask mercy for you? We must ask mercy for ourselves!"

Elazar sat upon the ground and after a long and serious period of thought, he placed his head between his knees and cried and cried and cried. In a heartfelt moment of תשובה, Elazar wept with all of his heart and said "אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי - this matter is not dependent on anyone besides me. The responsibility is totally mine!"

As he breathed his last breaths of total anguish, his נשמה departed from his body and a voice emerged from above and declared, "רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן דּוּרְדְּיָא מְזֻמָּן לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא" - Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya is ready for עולם הבא!

After a life of tremendous sin, he passed away a completely righteous man.

<u>עבודה זרה יז.</u>

בָּכָה רַבִּי וְאָמַר: יֵשׁ קוֹנֶה עוֹלָמוֹ בְּכַמָּה שָׁנִים, וְיֵשׁ קוֹנֶה עוֹלָמוֹ בְּשָׁעָה אַחַת. וְאָמַר רַבִּי: לֹא דַּיָּין לְבַעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמְּקַבְּלִין אוֹתָן, אֶלָּא שֶׁקּוֹרִין אוֹתָן ״רַבִּי״.

When Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi heard this story of Elazar ben Durdaya, he wept and said: There is one who acquires his share in the World-to-Come only after many years of toil, and there is one who acquires his share in the World-to-Come in one moment. And Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi further says: Not only are בעלי תשובה accepted, but they are even called: Rabbi, as the בת קול referred to Elazar ben Durdaya as Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya.

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

Story:

A wealthy businessman, Jack, was traveling on a train to an important business meeting. As he awaited for the train to depart, he noticed a disheveled young man standing beside him. The young man looked very worried and nervous. Jack kindly offered the young man a seat and a listening ear. At first the boy, Jason, didn't want to speak, but eventually, seeing the older man's kind eyes, Jason broke down and told Jack his life story.

Jason had been a brilliant but isolated teen, who became a millionaire at 17 after inventing a successful electronic product. Fame followed, but so did distance from his parents. He ignored their advice to be cautious around new friends and to be careful with his money. Eventually, he cut them off, left home, and told then that he didn't want to speak with them ever again. He went on to pursue wealth and status. He married, had a child, and lived a lavish life—until a bad investment wiped out everything. It was all over for him. His wife got up, took the child, and left. He lost his beautiful home, and ended up homeless and alone. He was completely shattered. One night, lying on a park bench, feeling utterly hopeless, he met an old man. The man was kind and started talking to Jason. When he heard his story, he convinced him to try to reconnect with his parents. Jason was too embarrassed to contact them directly. After all, he had been a rebellious teen, who disregarded all his parents' advice. Why would they be interested in reconnecting? Eventually, he reached out to his parents through a friend. He let them know that he wanted to come home, yet he understood that they may not want to forgive him for all the trouble he caused. He informed them that he would be coming home on the train on such and such day, at such and such time.

He asked them to hang a white cloth on the big oak tree at the train station near their home if they wanted to see him. If he would see the white cloth hanging, he would get off the train and return home. If not, he would stay on the train and continue further. He concluded his story with tears in his eyes, telling Jack, "This is the train. We're almost at the stop and I am too afraid to look! Can I put my head down and you look for me? Tap me on the shoulder if you see a white cloth." Jack readily agreed and looked for him. A minute later, Jason felt a few hard taps on his shoulder and heard Jack say, "You can look!" Jason looked up and saw **the entire tree covered in white cloth**!

Jason stepped off the train ran into this loving parents' outstretched arms. They hugged him tightly and whispered, "Welcome home, son."

Hashem is our father! No matter what we do, He is always ready to accept us back!

Adapted from Rabbi Yechiel Spiro's Touched by a Story

Parshas Shlach - Teshuvah

When ישעי' הנביא is comforting כלל ישראל about the חרבן, he says:

<u>ישיעהו מט, יב</u>

הֲתִשְׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוּלָהּ מֵרַחֵם בֶּן־בִּטְנָהּ גַּם־אֵלֶּה תִּשְׁכַּחְנָה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא אֶשְׁכָּחֵךְ׃

Can a woman forget her baby, Or disown the child of her womb? Though it is rare, even that could happen and she could forget. Yet I, Hashem, could never forget you, My children.

In the ברכה of השיבנו in שמונה עשרה, we end with the words:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הָרוֹצֶה בִּתְשׁוּבָה׃

It says הרוצה בתשובה - who desires תשובה, as opposed to המקבל תשובה - who accepts תשובה.

Hashem really wants our תשובה!