

Rav Kook on Teshuvah in Elul

Rav Kook, of sainted and blessed memory, wrote these words for the journal "Hayesod" in Elul of 5693/1933. While the term *chofshi* is used much less nowadays to describe someone secular (the term *chiloni* is much preferred) his words ring as true today as they did when he wrote them over 80 years ago. The article is cited in Rav Neriah's (ZT"l) wonderful anthology of Rav Kook's Torah, "Moadei Hareiya". The translation here is by Rav Chanan Morrison.

May this Elul be meaningful for you and your loved ones, as we all work together to elevate our love for the Holy One, the Torah and Mitzvot, and the Jewish People.

Rabbi Joe Ozarowski

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As we stand before the beginning of a new year, it is incumbent upon us to draw near to the path of *teshuvah* (repentance), which brings redemption and healing to the world.

The Jewish people have become divided into two camps, through the categorization of Jews as *Charedi* (religious) and *Chofshi* (secular). These are new terms, which were not used in the past. Of course, not everyone is identical, especially in spiritual matters; but there was never a specific term to describe each faction and group. In this respect, we can certainly say that previous generations were superior to ours.

Emphasizing this categorization obstructs the way towards improvement for both camps. One who feels that he belongs to the *Charedi* camp looks down upon the secular camp. If he thinks about *teshuvah* and improvement, he immediately casts his eyes in the direction of the *Chofshi* camp, devoid of Torah and *mitzvot*. He is confident that full repentance is required by the irreligious, not by him.

The secular Jew, on the other hand, is convinced that any notion of penitence is a *Charedi* concept, completely irrelevant to him.

It would be better if each person would concentrate on discerning his own defects, and judge others generously. It could very well be that others have treasure-troves of merits, hidden from sight. We must recognize that there exists in all of the camps a latent force leading towards goodness. Each camp has much to improve upon, and is capable of learning much from the light and goodness of the other camp.

Let us be known to each other by one name - "*Klal Yisrael*". And let our prayer be fulfilled:

"May they all become one group, to perform Your Will whole- heartedly" [from the High Holiday prayers].