

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Yom Kippur*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

## Preparing for Yom Kippur

Regarding the kohen gadol's avodah on Yom Kippur, the Mishnah (Yoma 5:3) states, "The kohen gadol entered the place he entered and stood at the place that he stood." From these words, we can take a lesson that on Yom Kippur, a person goes to the place and to the level that he prepared for himself *before Yom Kippur*.

The closing statement of the final Mishnah of Yoma is: "מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ, מִדֵּם מִקְוֵה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמְאִים, אֵף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל" (Yirmiyahu 17) "Hashem is a mikvah for Yisrael. Just as a mikvah purifies the tamei, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael." The Yalkut Gershuni

quotes the Rambam (Hilchos Mikvaos, 1:9) which states, "הַקּוֹפֵץ לְתוֹךְ הַמִּקְוָה הֵרִי יָהּ מִגִּנְיָהּ, "He who jumps into the mikvah is disgraced."<sup>1</sup> Yom Kippur, we receive taharah like someone going to a mikvah, but we shouldn't jump in. We should prepare ourselves beforehand.

The final Mishnah of Mikvaos states, "לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהֲרִים, "Before Whom are you purifying yourself?" Binah l'Ittim (drush 11) tells us that this means we should prepare ourselves *before Yom Kippur* arrives.

## Belief in Tefillah

Orach LeChayim of Zlotchov zt'l teaches, "A person must believe in his tefillah,<sup>2</sup> and

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1. Following the simple pshat, the problem of jumping into a mikvah is that the person thinks he is going into the mikvah to cool down, and not for taharah. (Kesef Mishnah)

2. We heard a remarkable story from the baal ha'maaseh, a melamed in Ashdod. The story began around five or six years ago when his two-year-old daughter started having trouble seeing, r'l. She didn't always recognize people, and she would bump into things. At first, the doctors thought she had a lazy eye. But when the girl began to see poorly in the other eye, they sent her to Asaf Hospital in Ramla, to their ophthalmology department. After many tests, the doctors determined that she suffered from a disease that is generally found in older people, but when it affects younger children, it is worse and can lead to blindness, r'l.

The right eye wasn't as impacted, and the doctors succeeded in saving that eye. But they couldn't cure the left eye. They advised that the only option was a cornea transplant. That was the only way to return her eyesight to her left eye. Her name was placed on a list of people waiting for corneal transplants. "When we receive a cornea," the doctors told them, "and it is her turn, the hospital will contact you to come for an operation." However, the doctors cautioned that they should expect a long wait. They explained, "A child's eye is different than an adult's eye, so they would have to wait for a child's eye for the transplant, which is less common. Also, the law prohibits importing organs from other countries, unless it is a life-and-death situation. You will have to wait for the cornea of a child who lived in Eretz Yisrael."

Four years passed, her left eye worsened and was filled with mucus and pus, and she became entirely blind in that eye. The father's brother-in-law came from Tzefas to Ashdod to spend Pesach together. The brother-in-law had heard about his niece's problem, but when he saw it, he realized how severe it was and pitied her. He undertook to daven at the kever of the tana Reb Shimon bar Yochai in Miron, every day, that the girl should have a refuah sheleimah. Also, his oldest son said that he would arrange tefillos in his cheder for the refuah of his cousin.

Three weeks after they began their tefillos, the father received a phone call from the hospital. The call came when he was in cheder, at a recess break. "An eye for transplant, with a healthy cornea, has arrived for your daughter. The operation will be in three days from now, on Thursday" (which was Lag b'Omer). Will you come? Do you accept the appointment?"

The father was so emotional, he couldn't respond. The secretary kept asking, "Will you come? Will you

to know that it accomplishes in heaven... He must know that... he has the power to overturn the *midas hadin* to *midas harachamim*. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 32:20)

דור תהפוכות המה; It's a generation that can turn midas hadin to rachamim. The problem is, בנים לא אמון בהם, they don't believe they have this ability."<sup>3</sup>

come on Thursday for the operation?" Until he finally found his voice to say the one word, "yes," he would come with his daughter for the surgery.

The other melamdin were bewildered when they saw their friend crying like that on the phone. It took him some time to calm down and share the good news: they had a cornea for his daughter! The melamdin were extremely happy and congratulated him on the good news, and they gave brachos that the operation should be successful.

Thursday morning, the family came to the hospital. They were joyful and hopeful but apprehensive, hoping everything would go well. After two hours in the operating room, the doctors emerged and said the operation was successful. There was a bandage over her eye, so she still couldn't see for now, but Friday morning, they took off the bandage, and the girl shouted, "I can see with both eyes." The family's joy was very great. Now she could see like all people.

The doctor called the parents to his office to tell them how this transplant came about. A week earlier, a nine-year-old girl fell in a park in Ashdod and was sent to Asaf Hospital in Ramla. Her cornea was damaged. She needed a transplant, immediately. For her, it was a matter of life and death, and therefore, they were allowed to import a cornea from another country. A suitable one was found in a hospital in Canada.

The doctor continued, "I saw the file with the information about the upcoming transplant, and I recognized the name of the doctor from Canada. He was my professor. Almost everything I know about eye surgery, I learned from him. I immediately called him to thank him. And then I told him about your daughter, who has been waiting for four years for a transplant. I told him, 'Since you sent one cornea, you can probably send the other one, to help this girl, as well.'

"The doctor investigated and learned that it was allowed. Since one of the eyes sent was for a life-and-death situation, he had permission to send the second eye, and this is how the transplant happened!"

When we think about the details of this story, we are overwhelmed by the hashgachah pratis. (1) The girl who fell and needed a transplant arrived at Asaf Hospital. Had she gone to any other hospital, the doctors there wouldn't have known about the girl who had been waiting for a transplant for four years. (2) It was also hashgachah pratis that the doctor in Eretz Yisrael was a student of the Canadian doctor. That prompted him to call his teacher to thank him. During the conversation, he thought of asking about his other patient. All this occurred just a couple of weeks after the tefillos began.

The miracle began when the family from Tzfas began to daven for the girl. This story reveals the power of tefillah of every Yid to bring yeshuos.

3. It states in the beginning of parashas Ha'azinu (32:1) האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי "Listen heaven and I will speak. Listen, earth, to the words of my mouth." Chazal say that Moshe was telling the sun and the moon to be silent when he spoke. Shevet HaLevi (Drashos vol.1 Shaar 17) asks that Moshe was the humblest person on earth. How did he talk as though he ruled over the sun and earth? This isn't the way of the humble. The answer is that Moshe wanted to teach Klal Yisrael of all generations the strength they have this time of year. Even the simplest person can command the sun, moon, and heavenly hosts to be silent. A person's strength is very great this time of year.

On Yom Kippur, the kohen gadol came into the Kodesh Kadoshim with כף ומחתה, a large spoon and a shovel. The shovel contained coals from the mizbeach, and the spoon held the ketores. He put the coals on the ground, in the Kodesh Kadoshim, and poured the ketores over the coals. He then left the spoon and shovel in the Kodesh Kadoshim and went out to perform the rest of the avodah. At the end of the avodah, he returned to remove the spoon and shovel. Now, we understand why he initially left the מחתה,

Tefillah during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is incredibly potent. The Rambam (Teshuvah 2:6) writes, "Although teshuvah and shouting [out to Hashem]

are always good, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, teshuvah and tefillah are far better and are accepted immediately...."<sup>4</sup>

the shovel, in the Kodesh Kadoshim. He did so because the ketores was being offered on the coals. It was too early to take out the shovel. But why didn't he immediately remove the כַּף, the empty spoon? Why did he only take it out at the end of the avodah?

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l answers that after offering the ketores in the Kodesh Kadoshim, the kohen gadol said a short tefillah for Klal Yisrael, outside the Kodesh Kadoshim. It isn't proper to hold anything while davening. He, therefore, left the spoon behind.

We can add that one certainly shouldn't hold anything on his mind or heart when he is davening. His full kavanah should be on the tefillah.

**4.** The Krasna Rav Shlita related the following story: A child from Bnei Brak was gradually losing his eyesight r'l. The local doctors couldn't diagnose the problem, so they sent the child to specialists. The specialists were equally at a loss for how to treat the child. Eventually, medical askanim got involved, and they recommended a world-renowned doctor in Texas who specialized in operating on this condition. The date was scheduled five months ahead. It would have been much better to have the surgery done immediately, but nothing was available sooner.

Meanwhile, a group of sixty prestigious doctors from around the world was invited to Eretz Yisrael for a medical conference. This specialist from Texas was among this elite group. The meeting was scheduled to last for three days, but after a day and a half, the conference organizer had to leave for an emergency, so the conference ended early.

So, the doctors had some free time, a day and a half, without anything particular to do. So, someone arranged a tour of Bnei Brak for them. The first stop was the famous Ponevezh Yeshiva. Then they visited a large gmach. The tour organizer wanted to show the doctors the chesed Klal Yisrael does, that they lend out large sums of money interest-free.

The specialist from Texas was very impressed by the gmach and the concept of chesed, and he decided he also wanted to do some form of significant chesed. He reminded himself that he had scheduled an operation for a child from Bnei Brak in five months. Now that he was in Bnei Brak, he could do a great favor for this child and operate for free. He spoke with askanim, and they arranged an operating room at the Mayanei HaYeshua Medical Center.

The doctor contacted his secretary and asked for the address of his young patient. With the address in his hand, he went to this family's apartment and knocked on the door. The child, whom he would operate on, answered the door. "I am your doctor from Texas," the specialist said. "Tell your father that I am here."

"My father is sleeping," the child said.

"So, wake him up and tell him the doctor has come."

The child awoke the father, but the father said, like someone from his dreams, "What doctor? Which doctor? Let me sleep."

The son returned to the doctor and said his father wasn't waking up.

"Wake him up again", the doctor said. "Tell him your surgeon is at the door."

The child tried again, but the father wouldn't budge. The doctor sent the child a third time and a fourth time, but the father didn't believe him and didn't get up. The doctor thought, "I am going out of my way to help them. They clearly don't want my favors, so I will leave." And he left.

Some days afterward, the medical askan met the father and asked him how his son was recuperating after



Aruch L'Ner (Rosh Hashanah 18.) writes, "During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, even the tefillah of a person who davens alone (without a minyan) will certainly help, and his judgment will be ripped up entirely."

Shem MiShmuel (Yom Kippur 5672) writes, "The tefillos of the entire year are fixed and purified with the tefillos of erev Yom Kippur."

It states (Devarim 32:7) שאל אביך ויגדך. The Noam Elimelech explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, שאל, ask Me all your requests because behold I am אביך, your father, and I will answer your tefillos. The word ויגדך can mean drawing down (as in נגד אחית). With your tefillos, you will draw down all your desires.

### Counsels to Succeed in Teshuvah

On Yom Kippur, we want to do teshuvah sheleimah. Here are some guidelines to succeed in teshuvah:

1] It states (Hoshea 14:2) שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך, "Return Yisrael until Hashem your G-d..." Rebbe Reb Shmelke zt'l taught that a key word in this phrase is עד, "until". This hints at the idea that one should think "I only have to do עד, "until" a specific limit. That will make the task not seem overwhelming.

For example, when a person is walking down a road, carrying a heavy package, he

should think to himself, "I only have to walk until I reach the house that is a few feet ahead of me." And when he gets there, and he sees a stone a few feet further, he should tell himself, "I only have to reach that stone." This is hinted in the words שובה ישראל, Yisrael, do teshuvah, עד, only up to a certain degree. Divide the path of teshuvah into small parts, and you won't find it so hard.

This is as tzaddikim taught (Tehillim 95:7) היום אם בקולי תשמעו, that a person should think that he only must serve Hashem "today." That makes it easier. Tomorrow, he should think the same, so that he shouldn't feel overwhelmed and despaired. But if all that is being expected from him is to improve in small intervals, he can push himself along on the path of teshuvah.

This is also hinted in the piyut, לעדי עד, ימלוך מלך עליין, that the way to announce Hashem as King is עדי עד, to continually tell yourself, "Only until here," and then tell yourself again, "Only until here." With this method, you will succeed in making Hashem your king.

2] A second important counsel in teshuvah is to know that we do the most we can, and Hashem helps us with the final parts of teshuvah.

Tur (Orach Chaim 606) teaches that one must go to the mikvah on erev Yom Kippur. He

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the surgery. The father said, "What surgery?"

The askan told him that the doctor from Texas was ready to operate in Mayanei HaYeshua, and he went to call your son for the operation. The father discovered that it was true, and he missed out on a golden opportunity.

Had he gone to the door when the doctor was standing there, his child would have had the operation immediately, free of charge. Instead, he slept deeply. The operation did take place, but it was five months later, at a cost of half a million dollars, and it involved a huge tircha of traveling and staying in a faraway land.

This story reminds us that when Hashem is near and awaits our teshuvah and tefillah, we should listen to His call and come forward. A person shouldn't say, "True, I hear the call ברוי קרוב, that I should pray to Him this time of year, but I can't come forward now. I will call out to Hashem after the yomim tovim." Rashi (Rosh Hashanah 18:) writes that the ideal time to daven and to do teshuvah is before Yom Kippur, before the decree is established in heaven. You will gain much more if you daven well and do teshuvah during these days.

explains that although we are still *tamei meis*, and the taharah isn't complete (because we can't cleanse ourselves from *tumas meis* since we don't have a *parah adumah*), nevertheless, the *tevilah* will purify him to an extent. Tur also quotes Reb Saadya Gaon, who says that one should make a brachah on this *tevilah*. The Bach explains that although he didn't become entirely *tahor*, he should recite a brachah on partial purity.<sup>5</sup>

The halachah is that we don't say a brachah; nevertheless, there is an important lesson here. A person should purify himself as much as he can, even when he can't purify himself entirely. The same is true with the purity of the soul, with *teshuvah*. One should do *teshuvah* as much as he can, and it will be considered like he did *teshuvah sheleimah*. And when he does what he can, Hashem will help him complete the *teshuvah*.

Regarding Torah, it states (Devarim 30:12) לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא, it isn't in heaven. Rashi writes, "If it were in heaven, you would be obligated to go up, to learn it." But how is it possible

to climb to heaven? Is there a gigantic ladder from the earth to heaven that one can climb?

Chofetz Chaim zt'l explains that Rashi is teaching us a great lesson. A person should do as much as he can, and then Hashem will help him, as it states (Tehillim 57:3) לֹא-לִגְמוֹר עָלַי, we begin, and Hashem completes the deed. If the Torah were in heaven, a person would have to climb the tallest ladder... and heaven would help him reach the heavens.

We can use modern technology to help us understand this concept. In today's day and age, large heavy doors open without much effort. A person stands in front of a door, a sensor sees him, and the massive door slides open for him. He doesn't even have to turn the handle. However, he must do one thing: he must come to the door. This means that in our generation, a person has to do very little, and Hashem will help him from Above. But he must do something. He has to show up. He comes to do *teshuvah*, and Hashem will help him succeed.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Reb Issar Zalman Meltzer zt'l told a mashal of two people walking on a mountain. One was on the top, walking down. The other was at the bottom of the mountain, walking up. Right now, one seems higher than the other, but soon, the one on top will be at the bottom, and the one at the bottom will reach the top. Reb Issar Zalman explained that *teshuvah* isn't about being on top; instead, it is about changing course and heading in the right direction. Eventually, he will grow higher and higher.

6. Reb Sraya Deblitzky zt'l related a story that happened to him. "I had heard that the lights in the mikvah would remain on Rosh Hashanah night. Relying on that, I went to the mikvah at three in the morning but found the hallway pitch dark. I thought there would be light when I opened the door to the mikvah, but it wasn't so. I found the key in the dark, opened the door, and found that the mikvah was also dark. I decided to go inside anyway, hoping I would somehow manage in the dark. I found a bench in the dressing room, got undressed, and walked to the room where the mikvah was located. It was darker than the makah of choshech in Mitzrayim. Suddenly, I lost my sense of direction and didn't know which corner of the mikvah I was standing in, or where to go. I tapped along the walls, but I couldn't find the mikvah. I was wandering back and forth, without success. Suddenly, without warning, I slipped into the mikvah. That was also good – at least I found the mikvah.

"I went in, immersed, and got out, but try as I might, I couldn't find the dressing room. I edged along the walls but couldn't figure out where I was; I had lost my bearings. Finally, I found my clothing. I got dressed, I wanted to leave, but that's when I stopped. I was afraid that if I took another step, I would get lost again. I decided, bitterly, that I would wait on the bench until someone arrived... It bothered me that I would miss the *korbanos*, and perhaps part of *pesukei d'zimra*. In my heart, I davened for a *yeshuah*.

Less than a minute later, I heard footsteps coming towards the mikvah. I called out loudly, 'I don't know how to get out of here.' "

"Just a moment,' I hear the response. The man stretched out his hand to me and brought me to the stairs



Rabbeinu Yonah (beginning of Shaarei Teshuvah) writes, "Hashem helps those who want to do teshuvah, but aren't able to. Hashem gives them a new, pure spirit from Above, so they can attain His love." This means that when a person tries to do *teshuva*, Hashem helps him succeed with it.

Chazal (Psikta Shuvah Yisrael, ch.9) say: "A mashal of the son of a king who was distant from the king for one hundred days. His friends said, 'Return to your father.' The son said that he can't.

The father sent a message. 'Come as far as you can, and I will meet you midway,' The Psikta says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says *שובה אלי ואשובה אליכם*, "Return to Me, and then I will return to you." Hashem tells us to return as much as we can, and then Hashem will help us complete the teshuvah.

3] The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 17:) states, "If the *pasuk* hadn't said it, we wouldn't be permitted to say it. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wrapped Himself like a *shaliach tzibbur* (*chazan*) and showed Moshe [the thirteen attributes of mercy]. Hashem told Moshe, 'Whenever Yidden sin, say this before Me, and I will forgive them...'"

The Gemara says, *ברית כרותה ל"ג מדות של*, *רחמים שאינן חוזרות ריקם* Hashem made a *bris* (pact) with the *ל"ג מדות*, that they will always

be effective. They will always arouse Hashem's compassion, and Hashem will be willing to accept our repentance.

Rabbeinu B'Chayei (*Shemos* 34:6) writes, "Whoever knows the translation of the thirteen attributes, and says them with *kavanah*, his *tefillah* will be answered – unless he has *aveiros* that prevent it. Now that we are in *galus*, we don't have a *kohen gadol* to atone for our sins. We don't have a *mizbeach* to bring the *korbanos*. All we have are our *tefillos* and the thirteen attributes of mercy."

Shaarei Teshuvah (581:1) writes, "One must say *selichos* *בנחת ובמיתון ובכוונה*, pleasantly, without rushing, and with *kavanah*. It is forbidden to say the thirteen *middos* without *kavanah*."

The Rebbe of Gustenin *zt'l* said it is a *mitzvah* to review the *tosfos* (*Rosh Hashanah* 17, in the *agadata*), which explains the meaning of the thirteen attributes of *rachamim*.

*Tosfos* writes there, *חנון* means Hashem has mercy on those who are going through hard times. [Hashem says], 'I am compassionate and can't see them suffer. *חנון* also means *מתנת חנם*, an undeserved gift.' Hashem says, "I can't bear to see My children in pain," therefore, Hashem forgives us even when we don't deserve it.<sup>7</sup>

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leading out of the mikvah. I discovered that I was just centimeters away from the stairs, only I didn't realize it.

The lesson is that a person is very close to the path of teshuvah, perhaps just centimeters away, but he thinks he is in total darkness and loses hope. Suddenly, his *neshamah* hears Hashem's footsteps walking in Gan Eden. He just has to pour out his bitter heart and to say before Hashem, "I don't know the way out of the darkness!" "Just a moment," replies the voice. He stretches out His arm to me and takes me to a good place. We then discover that we were just centimeters away from the light, foolishly thinking we were lost. A person just has to begin the teshuvah, and then Hashem will help him succeed. As Chazal say, "Open up for me the size of a needle loop, and I will open for you an opening so wide that carriages and animals can drive through."

7. Before reciting the thirteen attributes, we say a *tefillah*. Most of the time, the *tefillah* is *א-ל מלך יושב על כסא* "G-d, King, sits on the throne of compassion..." However, each day of *selichos*, before the first time we say the thirteen attributes, we say a different *tefillah*. This *tefillah* begins with *א-ל א-ל א-ל*. This is because when we start the *selichos*, Hashem isn't yet sitting on the throne of compassion. That only occurs after we say the thirteen attributes of *rachamim*. Therefore, the first time we say the thirteen attributes, we begin with the *tefillah* *א-ל מלך יושב על כסא*, and we say the thirteen attributes. And now we can say *א-ל מלך יושב על כסא*

## Counsels for a Good Judgment

1] When asked what a person can do to merit a good judgment, Reb Avigdor Miller zt'l replied, "He should smile." Then he explained, "I know you think that I'm old and I don't know what I'm talking about, but this is good advice. If you smile at people, you will merit a good year."

He explained this with a *mashal*:

A storeowner was taking stock of the profits and losses at the end of the year, and concluded that he must cut costs. Some employees will have to go. His advisor said, "No matter what you do, don't fire Mr. So-and-so. He always has a smile on his face; the customers love him. Some customers come to your store just because he is there."

Reb Avigdor Miller explained that if you smile at others, Hashem will say, "You are needed in the world. People need you. They receive joy from you, so I will keep you alive."

Similarly, Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l taught that those who do *chesed* stand a better chance of receiving a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Even if they don't deserve to live by their merit, they will be granted life because people need them.

Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) say, תשובה תפילה וצדקה, מועבירין את רוע הגזירה, "Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah annul the harsh decrees."<sup>8</sup> If you don't have money to give tzedakah, you can do kindness to your fellow man. That is like a form of tzedakah, and it removes harsh decrees.

In ויכון בחסד כסאך, ונתנה תוקף we say, with deeds of *chesed*, one causes that Hashem should sit on the throne of *rachamim* during the judgment.

2] Another way to ensure a good judgment is to judge your fellow man favorably. We are constantly judging people. When we judge people favorably, Hashem will judge us favorably as well. On the *pasuk*, שופטים

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רחמים, that Hashem sits on His throne of compassion.

When we say selichos on *Yom Kippur*, we say א-ל מלך יושב על כסא רחמים also the first time. This is because on *Yom Kippur*, Hashem sits on His throne of compassion even before we say the thirteen attributes of compassion.

8. It states (*Devarim* 16:20), צדק צדק תרדוף למען תחיה וירשת. Rabbeinu Efraim translates it as follows: צדק צדק תרדוף, run after the mitzvah of צדקה. Why? למען תחיה, so that you will be written in the Book of Life. The word וירשת contains the same letters as וי תשרי. This implies that you should give tzedakah during the six days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah in Tishrei. (We can't give tzedakah on the two days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Shabbos Shuvah. This leaves us with six days when we can give tzedakah.)

There was a person who spoke a lot – a nudnik – and most people didn't have patience for him. One year, erev Yom Kippur in the afternoon, this man came to speak to Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt'l, and the rebbe listened to him patiently. When this person left the house, the family asked the rebbe how he had the patience to listen to him. The rebbe replied that the Igeres HaRamban writes that one should speak calmly and nicely לכל אדם ובכל עת, "to every person, and at all times". לכל אדם, means to all people, even a person who is bothersome. ובכל עת means at all times, even on erev Yom Kippur.

Hershel Kaminetzer was an older bachur, alone in the world. He never got married because he had health issues. Hershel told Rav Shach zt'l that he was once in Radin for Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur night, after the tefillos, all the bachurim and mispallelim left the beis medresh, and he was left alone in the beis medresh, feeling lonely and sorry for himself. Then the Chofetz Chaim zt'l came in, and the Chofetz Chaim conversed with him the entire night, until the morning. The Chofetz Chaim sensed that this bachur needed chizuk, and although time was always a precious commodity for the Chofetz Chaim, and certainly so on the night of Yom Kippur, he understood that at this time, the most important thing was to give chizuk to this broken and bitter bachur.

וְשׁוֹטְרִים תִּתֵּן לָךְ, the Kedushas Levi writes, "When we... judge every Yid favorably, Hashem will do the same. He will judge all Yidden favorably. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, שׁוֹפְטִים וְשׁוֹטְרִים תִּתֵּן לָךְ, you can arrange the judgment of heaven ... שִׁפְטוּ אֶת הָעָם מִשְׁפָּט, by judging your fellow man favorably. Because how a person acts toward others is how Heaven will act with him."

3] Another counsel for a good judgment is to be *mevater*. The Gemara (*Yoma* 23) says,

"Whoever is *maavir al midosov* [and is *mevater*] Hashem will forgive his *aveiros*."<sup>9</sup>

4] The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16:) states, "Three *sefarim* are opened on Rosh Hashanah... The *beinonim* wait from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit it, they will be written for life. Otherwise, they will be written for death." Therefore, people increase their merits during these days, and thereby they will be inscribed for life.<sup>10</sup>

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9. In a *beis midrash* three hundred years ago, the *gabbai* accidentally sold the same seat to two people for the Rosh Hashanah *tefillos*. When they both came to sit in the same seat, they realized there was a problem. They quickly went over to the *gabbai* to clarify the matter.

The *gabbai* checked his files and admitted that he had made a mistake. He sold the seat to two people.

One of them would need to be *mevater*, but neither wanted to. On Rosh Hashanah night, there weren't so many people in the *Beis Midrash*, and they each had a place to daven. But they (and everyone around them) knew there would be an argument over the seat the following morning.

That night, one of the two men had a dream. He saw beautiful caravans being led by *malachim*. "What's this all about?" he asked a *malach*.

"Today is Rosh Hashanah. These wagons are carrying your good deeds. They will be placed on a scale to determine what type of year you will have."

Soon, he saw very ugly caravans led by frightening-looking angels. "What's happening now?" he asked.

"These are your *aveiros*. They will be placed on the other side of the scale."

The man looked up at the enormous scale in the middle of the road and saw it tipping to the side of guilt, and he became terrified.

The *beis din* ruled that he would die that year because of his many sins.

Then a compassionate angel arrived and said, "This man suffered a lot of *yesurim* (pain and troubles) this year, and *yesurim* atone."

The angels began to remove from the scale several packages of sins. His *yesurim* wiped away some *aveiros*. The two sides of the scale were almost equal, but it was still slightly tipped to the side of guilt and sin.

The merciful angel spoke up again, "If this person was *mevater* (gave in to others to avoid *machlokes*), we could remove some more packages of sins because Chazal say that *vitur* removes *aveiros*. Let's check his deeds to see whether he is *mevater*."

Still sleeping, the man understood that he should be *mevater* his seat. That would save him. "I'm *mevater*!" he shouted. "I'm *mevater*!" and then he awoke.

In the morning, he quickly ran to the *gabbai* and told him that he gladly gave up his seat to the other person.

10. One year, on *erev Yom Kippur*, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* thought of a *shidduch* between two orphans and asked his daughter to be the *shadchan*. She replied, "I will take care of it right after Yom Kippur."

The Chasam Sofer asked her to take care of it immediately because he wanted this merit for Yom Kippur.



The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "From Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, Bnei Yisrael increase *tzedakah*, good deeds, and mitzvos even more than the rest of the year. Everyone awakens early during these ten days to daven in the beis knesses until daybreak." These good deeds can tilt the scales and help us attain a good year.

5] Shem MiShmuel (*Nitzavim* 5673) writes, "An important lesson for a G-d fearing Yid is that during the *yomim noraim*, he shouldn't be cold. Instead, he should perform all of the mitzvos of this seventh month with a lot of *hislahavus* and emotion. If he does so, he will succeed in the judgment. Each Yid will receive a good judgment in accordance with his *hislahavus*."<sup>11</sup>

### The Mitzvah to Eat on Erev Yom Kippur

*Shulchan Aruch* (604) states, מצוה לאכל בערב יום, הכפורים ולהרבות בסעודה, "There's a mitzvah to eat

on erev Yom Kippur and to make a large seudah..."<sup>12</sup> We will discuss several reasons for this mitzvah.

The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 604) writes, "The Torah is telling us to prepare on the ninth day [of Tishrei] for the fast that will be on the next day. Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael is evident here because we are obligated to fast not more than one day a year, and this fast is for our benefit, to atone for our aveiros. Hashem commanded us to eat and drink before the fast so that the fast wouldn't harm us. It is a mashal to a king who had an only son. He commanded him to fast one day, and he commanded him to be well fed before the fast, to be able to tolerate it."

The Tur is giving us a wonderful lesson. Due to our many aveiros, we may think it necessary to fast many days. But Hashem loves us, and He makes our teshuvah easy. He requires us to fast only one day a year

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Later that day, she returned to her father and said, "The orphan boy is reluctant because the girl doesn't have any money."

The Chasam Sofer replied, "Tell him he will have *parnassah* his entire life. Perhaps he won't be wealthy, but he will have *parnassah*."

The Chasam Sofer's daughter passed on the message, and the *shidduch* was finalized that day.

That year, the Chasam Sofer arrived at beis medresh for Kol Nidrei later than usual. The mitzvah of the *shidduch* took up some time, and he came late. The *gabei* pointed to the clock, hinting that it was late. The Chasam Sofer told him, "It isn't late. Heaven begins the judgment when I say *Kol Nidrei*."

Once, the Chasam Sofer's son-in-law saw a pillar of fire in the Chasam Sofer's home on erev Yom Kippur and fainted from fright. The Chasam Sofer told him that the pillar of fire was Eliyahu HaNavi. Despite the Chasam Sofer's greatness, he felt he needed one more mitzvah before the day of judgment.

We should do the same. We should ask ourselves, "What good deed can I do to merit a good year? What good kabbalah can I undertake that can tip the scales in my favor?"

**11.** Shem MiShmuel explains that even the very best of the goyim (חסידים אומות העולם), don't perform their good deeds with *hislahavus*. When a Yid serves Hashem with *hislahavus*, this demonstrates that we are far superior to even the best goy, and this helps us secure a favorable judgment on these days.

**12.** The source for this mitzvah is the pasuk (*Vayikra* 23:32), וענייתם את נפשותיכם בתשעה לחודש, "You shall fast on the ninth day of the month." The Gemara asks, "Do we fast on the ninth day? Behold, we fast on the tenth day!" The Gemara answers that the pasuk teaches us that if we eat on erev Yom Kippur, and fast on Yom Kippur, it will be considered as though we fasted on the ninth and the tenth day. This time, for the easy mitzvah of eating, we are rewarded as if we fasted.

The Beis Avraham cautioned that when one eats on erev Yom Kippur, he should imagine a lion is standing in front of him.

In other words, this joyous meal should be eaten with a lot of *yiras Shamayim*.

and to eat well before the fast so the fast won't harm us.<sup>13</sup>

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 4:8-9) writes three reasons for the meal on erev Yom Kippur:

1) To express our joy that our aveiros will be forgiven.

2) Since we can't make a seudah on Yom Kippur (as we do during every other yom tov), we make the seudah on erev Yom Kippur. The seudos on Shabbos and yom tov are important because when a mitzvah is performed with joy, the reward is far greater. We can't make a meal on Yom Kippur, so we make the meal on erev Yom Kippur.

3) "So that we will have strength and energy on Yom Kippur to pray and to seek ways to do teshuvah."<sup>14</sup>

The *Sfas Emes Hakadmon* (quoted in *Ein Yaakov*, Yoma, 81: *Anaf Yosef*) teaches that the purpose of the meals on erev Yom Kippur is to put people in a good mood so they will be willing to forgive their fellow man. He writes, "I think the atonement takes place more on the ninth day than on the tenth. Because on the ninth day, Yidden make peace with one another. Chazal say that if you sinned against your fellow man, you aren't forgiven before you receive his forgiveness. When one fasts, he can get short-tempered, and that can divide us. But when one eats and drinks, he has a happy heart, and all Yidden are united."<sup>15</sup>

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**13.** The Tur continues, "The Midrash tells a story of a mayor who sent his servant to buy him a fish. Only one fish was for sale in the market, and the servant offered to pay a gold coin for it. However, it was erev Yom Kippur, and a Jewish tailor was also there, and he offered an even higher price. The bidding continued and went higher as they each tried to secure the fish. Finally, the tailor bought it for five gold coins. The servant returned to the mayor and told him what had happened. The mayor summoned the tailor.

"What do you do for a living?" the mayor asked.

"I am a tailor".

"So why did you buy a fish worth one gold coin for five gold coins, and why did you out-bid my servant?"

The tailor replied, "I would even pay ten gold coins for this fish because Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to eat and drink and to trust that He will forgive our sins."

The mayor said, "You acted properly," and let him go free.

The Midrash concludes that the tailor opened the fish and found a diamond inside. He had *parnassah* from it for the rest of his life. (Tzaddikim taught from this episode that the meal of erev Yom Kippur is *mesugal* for *parnassah* and wealth.)

**14.** Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l gave another reason for this mitzvah:

Regarding a fast day, we say, יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא מיעוט חלבי ודמי שנתמעט היום כחלב מונח על גבי המזבח לפניך "...May it be Your will that my fats and my blood that became less today due to my fast, that they be considered like the fats and blood that went on the *mizbeach*." On Yom Kippur, we want to bring a korban from very special and holy fats and blood. Therefore, we have a mitzvah to eat on erev Yom Kippur. When we fast, the korban will be created from the fats and the blood of this mitzvah.

**15.** Rebbe Dovid'l Biderman zt'l of Yerushalayim was eating the seudah hamafsekes meal together with guests. The crown consisted of brokenhearted, lonely, poor, and ill people, etc. He spoke with them in a friendly manner, and kept the conversation light, wanting them to be happy and forget about their tzaros. Reb Shmuel Shenker zt'l (son-in-law of Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l) passed by Reb Dovid'l's home, and he was shocked by the light atmosphere. He came inside and asked, "Reb Dovid'l, is this the right time for such idle chatter? Yom Kippur is approaching!"

Reb Dovid'l replied that with a mashal: When an infant has a toothache, the mother will put aside all her

The Ramak (quoted by the Shlah HaKadosh) writes that on Yom Kippur, people are worried about their aveiros and they are sad, and therefore their teshuvah won't be accepted. Therefore, Hashem commanded us to be happy on the ninth day, and with the joy of this day, our teshuvah is accepted on Yom Kippur.

### Forgiving One Another

In the haftarah of Shabbos Shuvah, it states (Hosheia 14:2-3) שׁוּבוּהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בֵּין אָדָם לְאָדָם וּבֵין אָדָם לַחֲבֵירוֹ, קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל ה' "Return, Yisrael, to Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take words with yourselves and return to Hashem." We see the words שׁוּבוּהָ... וְשׁוּבוּ, to return to Hashem twice in the *pasuk*. The Chasam Sofer (Drashos Shabbos HaGadol year 5555, 17a) explains that this is because there are two types of aveiros, בין אדם למקום and בין אדם לחבירו, sins one commits against Hashem, and the sins one commits against one's fellow man. The Torah is telling us to do teshuvah for both forms of aveiros. The *pasuk* begins with aveiros that are *bein adam l'chaveiro*, as it states, שׁוּבוּהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ, and עד ולא עד בכלל means until Hashem, and before it reaches Hashem. This refers to aveiros ben adam l'chaveiro, between people (see there more). Afterwards, it states קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל ה', which refers to doing teshuvah for aveiros ben adam l'makom, which one transgressed against Hashem.

On Yom Kippur, we want to attain atonement for all sins, both בין אדם למקום and בין אדם לחבירו. However, to attain atonement for sins בין אדם לחבירו, for one's fellow man, one must first ask forgiveness. As Chazal (Yoma 85b) say, "Aveiros ben adam l'chaveiro, Yom Kippur doesn't atone for, before he asks forgiveness from his fellow man."

The source is from the *pasuk* (Vayikra 16:30) כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכָּפֵר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה', "For on this day He shall affect atonement for you to cleanse you. Before Hashem, you shall be cleansed from all your aveiros." The atonement is for לִפְנֵי ה', the aveiros he committed against Hashem. For the aveiros of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, he has to ask their forgiveness first.

Therefore, Shulchan Aruch (606:1) states, עֲבֵרוֹת שֶׁבֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ אֵין יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר עַד שֶׁיִּפְסְנוּ, "Aveiros ben adam l'chaveiro, Yom Kippur doesn't atone for them until he appeases his friend."

People say, "Why should I ask mechilah? He is the one who did something wrong to me. He should ask me for forgiveness, and not me from him." The Sfas Emes (Yoma 87b) reveals to us that it doesn't make a difference who is right and who is wrong. When there is a rift, a *machlokes*, each person should feel responsible to make peace, even if that means asking forgiveness for something he didn't do, and he is totally innocent.

The Sfas Emes supports this lesson from the following Gemara (Yoma 87b): Rav was learning Torah in front of Rebbe. Then Bar Kapara came into the beis medresh. He missed the beginning of the shiur, so they started from the beginning of the lesson, once again, to accommodate Bar Kapara. Then Reb Shimon b'Rebbe came in, and once again, they went back to the beginning of the lesson. Then Rav Chanina came in. Rav said, "How many times are we going to go back?" Rav Chanina was insulted. Rav asked for forgiveness. For thirteen years, Rav went to Rav Chanina on erev Yom Kippur to plead for forgiveness for what he did, but Rav Chanina wasn't *mochel*.<sup>16</sup>

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chores, and will dance and sing before the child, so the child should become happy and forget his pain. These Yidden are like Hashem's toothache (because Hashem has tzaar when they have tzaar). We must do whatever we can to make them happy, and that is how we do Hashem's will, with perfection."

16. Why didn't Rav Chanina forgive Rav? The Gemara explains that Rav Chanina was the rosh yeshiva,



The Sfas Emes writes that Rav didn't do anything wrong. He had a right to say that he didn't want to begin at the beginning again. Nevertheless, for thirteen years, he tried to make peace with Rav Chanina, and he asked him for forgiveness. This is because one should ask forgiveness from his fellow man, even if he didn't do anything wrong.<sup>17</sup>

The *Zohar* relates that Reb Abba once saw a man tired from his travels lie down on a mound of earth. A poisonous snake approached the man, but a moment before the snake struck, a heavy object fell and killed the snake. When the man awoke, he saw the dead snake and understood that a miracle had happened to him.

The man stood up, and the mound of earth he had laid on suddenly crumbled and fell down a cliff. He realized he was saved a second time. Had the mound crumbled a moment earlier, he would have toppled down the cliff together with it.

Reb Abba watched this from a distance and quickly came over and asked the man, "Please tell me your good deeds and the reason you merited these two miracles."

The man replied, "At night, before I go to sleep, I forgive everyone who wronged me, and I seek to do kindness with them."

Reb Abba cried, saying, "Your deeds are greater than Yosef HaTzaddik's. Yosef forgave his brothers, who were family members, and it is proper for family to forgive one another. But you forgive those who aren't your family, and this is a higher level. Therefore, you deserve that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should perform many miracles for you."

From here we see that forgiving one's fellow man is *mesugal* for Hashem to perform miracles for him.

Forgiving others is also *mesugal* for good children. Chassidim say that the *mekubal* Reb Yaakov *zt'l* merited to be the father of Rebbe Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zt'l* in the merit of forgiving others. There are two versions of the story.

One version is that before Yom Kippur, Reb Yaakov was handing out machzorim. A wealthy man had to wait a few moments, with his hand outstretched, until he got his *machzor* and was very insulted. He therefore smacked Reb Yaakov across his face.

According to a different version, Reb Yaakov was the chazan on Yom Kippur night and davened a very long *Shemoneh Esrei*. When he took three steps back, a wealthy person smacked him for davening so long.

Either way, the end of the story is the same according to both versions:

Reb Yaakov didn't harbor any hard feelings. He immediately forgave the wealthy man. Those present asked Reb Yaakov to forgive the wealthy man. "He was probably having a bad day," they said. "He certainly regrets what he did. Forgive him."

Reb Yaakov told them that he had already forgiven him. In that merit, a year later, his wife gave birth to Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zy'a*.

*Mishnah Berurah* (siman 606) teaches that when you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you. When you forgive your fellow man who harmed you intentionally, Hashem will forgive you for your aveiros that you

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and he saw in a dream that Rav would become the rosh yeshiva. Rav Chanina feared that this meant he would die, and Rav would replace him. Therefore, he didn't forgive Rav. He wanted Rav should leave Eretz Yisrael and go to Bavel. This is what occurred. Rav became the rosh yeshiva in Bavel, and thereby, Rav Chanina stayed alive and continued serving as rosh yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael.

17. *Shulchan Aruch* (606:1) writes, "Even if one only harmed his fellow man with words, he must appease him and ask forgiveness."

committed deliberately. "But if you don't forgive, Hashem won't forgive, either."

### A Day That Transcends Time

In the name of Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen, "We don't know who the malachim are, and we don't know the essence of the Kisei HaKavod (Hashem's throne) either, but we know that the malachim are around Hashem's Kisei Hakavod, and on Yom Kippur, Hashem brings down His Kisei Hakavod to us. So, on Yom Kippur, we are around Hashem, as it states (Vayikra 16:30) לפני ה' תטהרו, "Before Hashem, you will be purified." On this day, we become pure like the malachim in heaven.

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.2, 369) writes, "The fast of Yom Kippur isn't to afflict us, and to cause tzaar to Yisrael, chalilah. Instead, it is because of the kedushah we have on this day, similar to the malachim [who don't eat or drink]. It is like the forty days... that Moshe was on Har Sinai, לא אכל מים לא שתה, he didn't eat bread, he didn't drink water, because of his *deveikus* and the kedushah. This is our portion on Yom Kippur, when we become like the malachim, and we derive pleasure from the shine of the Shechinah.

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.1 p.16) proves that even people's bodies become holy on Yom Kippur. The Gemara (Yoma 82) states that if a pregnant woman smells food on Yom Kippur, and she feels that if she doesn't eat it, her life is in danger, you can give her to eat that food on Yom Kippur. However, first, someone should whisper into her ears that it is Yom Kippur. Perhaps this will enable her to overcome her temptation, and she won't need to eat. But if she doesn't calm down after this message, one can feed her on Yom Kippur, because it is a matter of life and death.

This halachah, that one should whisper to the woman the prohibition, is only said regarding the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur. Whereas, for example, if a pregnant woman smells and desires to eat non-kosher food, and she feels that her life is in danger

if she doesn't eat it, the halachah is that you give her to taste the food. No one whispers to her that the food is prohibited. The Chasam Sofer explains that a child in a woman's womb has a very great kedushah. Chazal say that the child learns Torah from a malach! The Chasam Sofer writes, "If he weren't within the impure human body of his mother, the child would be greater than the malachim." But the human body, in this world, is very low, and it draws people to temptations. The Chasam Sofer explains that throughout the year, it won't help to whisper to the woman that the food is forbidden. However, on Yom Kippur, the mother attains purity, her body becomes pure, and now it is possible that she will be able to overcome the temptation and refrain when she is reminded that it is Yom Kippur.

At every tefillah on Yom Kippur, we say kedushah כתר, and not נקדישך. Mateh Moshe (אות תתע"ב) explains that on Yom Kippur, the Kisei Hakavod goes up to such a high place that the malachim aren't able to reach it. Therefore, we say כתר, which states in it איה מקום כבודו, "Where is Hashem's honorable place?" The malachim ask, "Where is Hashem's place?" because they can't find it; it is so high. This is unlike the kedushah of נקדישך, where the malachim say, ממוקומך, "From Your place..." which implies that they know the place. This is the reason on Yom Kippur, we say Kedushah of Keser, and in it we say ממוקומו, "From His place," wherever it is.

Shir HaShirim (3:11) writes, בַּעֲטֶרֶת שֶׁעָטְרָהּ לוֹ, אָמַר, "upon the crown with which his mother crowned him." The Gemara (Taanis 26b, Rashi ד"ה שֶׁעָטְרָהּ לוֹ אָמַר זוֹ יוֹם הַכּוֹפְרִים) states (זה מתן תורה) this pasuk, discussing a crown, is referring to Yom Kippur.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (ד"ה ולקח הכהן Naso) explains a deep, amazing concept, based on this Chazal. He tells a mashal of a father who loves his child so, he lifts his child to his height. Sometimes, he will even raise the child above his head, and the child becomes like his crown. He does this because of his

love for his child. This is a mashal to the high level that Hashem raises Bnei Yisrael on Yom Kippur. Hashem loves us so much, keviyachol, He places us like a crown on His head. This is the meaning of שְׁעָטָרָה לֹא אִמּוֹ זֶה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים, that Hashem purifies us and raises up to this high level on Yom Kippur.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim also bases this lesson on a Midrash (Shir HaShiri 3:2), which tells about a king who loved his daughter so much that he would call her בְּתִי, "My daughter." He wasn't satisfied with this title; he wanted to express his love to her even more, so he began calling her אֲחוֹתִי, 'My sister.' He still wasn't satisfied. These titles weren't bringing out the love he had for his daughter. Then he began calling his daughter, אִמִּי, "My mother."<sup>18</sup> "My mother" is the highest expression of love, and this is the meaning of the pasuk שְׁעָטָרָה לֹא אִמּוֹ, that Hashem loves us so much, He calls us His mother, and Klal Yisrael are like a crown on His head. This significant level and expression of love occurs on Yom Kippur.

The Tur (606, quoting Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer) writes, "The Satan sees that there are no sins among the Jewish nation on Yom Kippur and says, 'Master of the world, You have a nation on earth that resembles the *malachim* in heaven. Just as *malachim* go barefoot, so do the Jewish people on Yom Kippur. *Malachim* do not have knees; similarly, the Jewish nation stands erect throughout the day. *Malachim* are pure from all transgressions, as is the Jewish nation on Yom Kippur. Among the angels, there is peace, and likewise, there is

peace among the Jewish nation, as they seek forgiveness from one another before this day."<sup>19</sup> Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepts the Satan's testimony and forgives their sins."

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:36) states that when Moshe was in heaven, he heard the *malachim* say בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, and Moshe taught these words to us, so we can also use them to praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Throughout the year, we say these words silently because these words were taken from the *malachim*. The Midrash explains, "It can be likened to someone who stole jewelry from the king's palace and gave it to his wife. He tells her, 'Don't wear jewelry in a public place, only at home.' But on Yom Kippur, when we resemble the *malachim*, we can boldly proclaim this praise aloud, and therefore, we say out-loud בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד."

About Yom Kippur it states (*Yoel* 2:11), כִּי גָדוֹל יוֹם ה' וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד, "For Hashem's day is great and very awesome." We don't eat and drink on Yom Kippur, and the Zohar explains that this is because Yom Kippur is a day that transcends this world. It is the day of Olam Haba.

The date of Yom Kippur (the tenth of Tishrei) is written in the Torah after several pesukim discussing the halachos of Yom Kippur (see *Vayikra* 16:29). Generally, the Torah first writes the date, and then it states the korbanos. But regarding Yom Kippur, it appears that the Torah almost doesn't want to mention the date. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Tishrei* 8) writes, "I

18. This lesson is also in the Zohar, quoting it from Reb Elazar ben Reb Yosi. After he said it, Reb Shimon bar Yochai kissed him on the head and said, "If I came here just to hear you say this explanation, it would be enough for me."

19. לְבוּשֵׁי בָדִים (Drush 20, year 5551) writes, "The main thing on Yom Kippur is that a person should remove from his heart hatred and jealousy, and there should be unity among Yidden, because then there are no kitrugim. As it states (*Esther* 4:1-2) וּמֹרְדֵכַי יָדַע אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וְנִקְרַע מִרְדָּבָיו אֶת בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבָּשׁ שָׂק וַיָּבֹא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לְבוּשׁ אֶל שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלָבוּשׁ שָׂק, Mordecai knew all that had transpired, and Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. He came up as far as the king's gate, for one may not enter the king's gate dressed in sackcloth." שָׂק, sackcloth, is *roshei teivos* for שְׂנְאָה קְנָאָה, hatred and jealousy. You can't come before the King with these traits. Yom Kippur night is called שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, "the King's gate," because the King sits on His chair of compassion. We mustn't come before Hashem with hatred and jealousy.



think this is to reveal to us the holiness of the day...that we should know that Yom Kippur is a concealed, divine day... It is Olam HaBa."

The Bnei Yissaschar adds that this is why many *ehrllicher* Yidden don't call the day "Yom Kippur." Instead, they call Yom Kippur "The holy day-Yom kadosh." This is because the day comes from a very high place, and we want to conceal it. Bnei Yissaschar writes, "Also, the masechta dedicated to the laws of Yom Kippur isn't called 'Yom Kippur' [unlike masechtos Shabbos, Rosh Hashanah, Succah, and Pesachim, that are named after the yom tov]. The masechta for Yom Kippur is called 'Yoma,' which means 'Day' [and it doesn't tell us which day]. Once again, this is because of the exaltedness of the day that we conceal it.

There is another wonderful source that Yom Kippur isn't part of the time in this world. It states (*Vayikra* 16:2) וְאֵל יֵאָבֵד בְּכָל עֵת אֵל הַקֹּדֶשׁ, "The [kohen gadol] should not come at all times into the Kodesh HaKodashim." He may only go there on Yom Kippur. The Kli Yakar explains the pasuk, וְאֵל יֵאָבֵד בְּכָל עֵת, he shouldn't enter the Kodesh HaKodashim on any date that is part of עֵת, time. He can only go to the Kodesh HaKodashim on a day above time, which is on Yom Kippur.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 129) teaches, "A person should sell the walls of his home to buy shoes." The mekubalim explain that the earth was cursed (due to Adam HaRishon's sin, see *Bereishis* 3:17); therefore, one should wear shoes to separate himself from the impurity of the earth. However, we don't wear shoes on Yom Kippur, and we don't wear shoes in the Beis HaMikdash. Mishnas Chassidim explains that it is beneficial for us to go barefoot on Yom Kippur and in the Beis HaMikdash because this enables us to acquire the holiness that's there.

The gabbai of the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l saw his Rebbe inhaling deeply on Yom Kippur. "Are you ok?" the gabbai asked. "Perhaps you need to eat?" The Sar Shalom

replied, "I'm fine. I just wanted to inhale the holy air of Yom Kippur."

### Kol Nidrei

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh wrote in a letter, "A wealthy person bought me the honor to take out the *sefer Torah* for Kol Nidrei. When I opened the *aron kodesh*, a bright light filled the beis knesses. It was like the gates of Gan Eden opened up."

Klal Yisrael says Kol Nidrei with awe and passion, but many wonder what is so special about Kol Nidrei that it touches people's hearts. Kol Nidrei is essentially *hataras nedarim*, annulling vows. We make *hataras nedarim* on *erev* Rosh Hashanah, too; it isn't recited with the awe of Kol Nidrei. What is its significance?

1) *Zohar* teaches that by saying Kol Nidrei, we annul Hashem's oaths. It is possible that Hashem decreed a harsh decree due to our sins, and He established it with an oath, a שבועה. Even if we do *teshuvah* and succeed in rousing Hashem's compassion, what do we do with the oath? Hashem's oath is annulled with the Kol Nidrei. We aren't only annulling *our* vows but also Hashem's vows so that He can give us a good year.

2) Reb Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas, Yom Kippur תקל"ז) says, "Before Kol Nidrei, malachim and neshamos come down from their place in heaven. Nothing can host malachim and neshamos more than tears that we shed before Hashem." Therefore, we begin Yom Kippur with thoughts of *teshuvah*, which enable us to daven together with the *malachim* and holy neshamos.

3) The Baal Shem Tov zy'a explains that Klal Yisrael knows (they feel it in their subconscious souls) that when they recite Kol Nidrei, the Satan is trying with all his might to prosecute against them. This is the reason Yidden are inspired to do *teshuvah* at this time.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, "השטן is *gematriya* 364, because the Satan has permission to prosecute 364 days a year. On

Yom Kippur, which is the 365<sup>th</sup> day, he must be silent." The Satan knows that moments before Yom Kippur is his last opportunity to prosecute against the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation feels the danger in their souls, and this is the reason they are inspired to teshuvah when they say *Kol Nidrei*.

### The Tune

*Shulchan Aruch* (619:1) states, "One should not change the custom of his city, not even with the *nigunim* or the *piyutim* they say." The *Mishnah Berurah* explains, *כי על ידי זה מתבלבל*, דעת הקהל, "This confuses the community."

Furthermore, the holy *sefarim* teach that the traditional tunes of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have the power to remove the harsh judgment. One of the translations of the word *זמירות* is to prune, the other translation is song. Accordingly (*Tehillim* 47) *זמרו לאלקים* means the harsh judgment is pruned away with song.

There was once a king whose young son had gone insane and was sent to a mental asylum. The asylum profited from hosting this royal patient because the king upgraded the services of the asylum so his son would receive the best care.

The prince's condition improved with time, but the institution's directors did not tell the king of his progress. They wanted to keep the prince in their facilities as long as possible.

The prince tried to escape and go home, but the doors were always locked. The prince wrote letters to his parents, explaining that he was healed and wanted to go home, but those letters were discarded and never sent.

Once, the king's son scribbled on a page and gave it to one of the directors, asking him to send it to his father. This time, the director was glad to comply and to send the letter because this letter proved that he still needed help. What normal child of his age would send a scribbled paper to his father? The directors didn't realize that the prince

concealed a hidden message within the illegible message. Concealed was a plea to his father, the king, to bring him home, because he was better.

When the king received the letter, at first, he was disappointed that his son had fallen to such a state. But then he studied the letter from all angles and picked up on the hidden message. He came to the asylum and brought his son home.

This parable explains why we use the specific tunes and melodies on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We say many tefillos to the King, our Father in heaven, but the angels intercept our tefillos and don't let the requests ascend to heaven. Therefore, we sing melodies. The *malachim* don't understand their importance, so they allow the songs to go up. Concealed within these tunes are our yearnings, repentances, and requests for the upcoming year. Hashem understands the hidden messages and grants us a good year.

### The Process of Teshuvah

The Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 7) tells the following mashal:

A band of thieves was in jail. One of them dug a hole so that he and all his friends could escape. Only one of them remained behind. When the person in charge saw the one who remained behind, he hit him. "The tunnel was dug, why didn't you escape?"

The Midrash says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says the same to the sinners. "You had the opportunity to do teshuvah; why didn't you utilize it?" Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:2) writes, "Know, when a sinner pushes off doing *teshuvah*, his punishment increases daily. He knows Hashem is angry with him, and he has a place to escape –to *teshuvah* – yet he remains with his sins. "

Rabbeinu Yonah (beginning of *Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:1) writes, "From the favors Hashem *yisbarach* performed with His creations is that he prepared a path for them to leave

their bad deeds, to escape from their sins, to save their souls from Gehinom, and to remove Hashem's wrath from them. He taught them and commanded them to do teshuvah when they sin to Him, for He knows their yetzer hara. As it states (Tehillim 25:8) טוב וישר ה' על כן יורה הטאים בדרך, 'Hashem is good and upright; therefore, He leads sinners on the road.' Even if they sinned a lot and they rebelled, Hashem didn't close the doors of teshuvah from them. As it states (Yeshayah 31:6) שובו לאשר העמיקו סרה, 'Return to Him, against Whom you have deeply turned away.' And it states (Yirmiyahu 3:14) שובו בנים, "Return rebellious children..."

How does teshuvah remove aveiros? There are several explanations and paths:

Chazal say that when one does *teshuvah*, he becomes like a newborn child (תינוק שנולד). The Bas Ayin explains that this is the root of his forgiveness. He isn't the same person who performed the aveirah.<sup>20</sup>

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l says that this is the reason we say שהחיינו on Yom Kippur night. We are saying it on our renewed selves, due to our teshuvah.

He explains that if the שהחיינו were solely for the yom tov of Yom Kippur, there would be reason *not* to say this brachah, due to the fear of judgment. But on Yom Kippur, we can certainly say שהחיינו, because each person became new, due to his teshuvah.

The following is another explanation of how teshuvah works. When one does teshuvah, his *aveiros* turn around and become mitzvos, as the Gemara (*Yoma* 86.) states, גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות, "Teshuvah is great because the *aveiros* become merits." There are various explanations on how this works; however, it remains a fact, when one does teshuvah with love of Hashem, his *aveiros* become merits.<sup>21</sup>

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov zt'l met someone worried about his *aveiros*. Reb

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**20.** Reb Baruch Ber zt'l (the *Birchas Shmuel*) excelled in the mitzvah of honoring his parents, and when his father was sick, Reb Boruch Ber stayed with him almost every night. One night, he couldn't be with his father, so he appointed someone to take care of his father in his stead. Unfortunately, that night, his father was *niftar*. Reb Baruch Ber was devastated. He thought repeatedly, "If I were there that night, perhaps he wouldn't have died. Why wasn't I more devoted to my father?"

The *shivah* passed, but Reb Baruch Ber couldn't return to *yeshivah* to give his *shiurim*. His spirits were down. He was afflicted by guilt.

He traveled to Radin to seek encouragement from the Chofetz Chaim zt'l. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "When one does *teshuvah*, he becomes a brand-new person. He isn't the same person who did the aveirah. This is how *teshuvah* atones. He is no longer the person who committed the *aveirah*." Reb Baruch Ber came out of the Chofetz Chaim's house singing and dancing. He shouted, "I'm a new Baruch Ber! I'm a new person!"

**21.** The Bardichover Rav zt'l once told a great sinner, "I am jealous of you because when you do *teshuvah*, you will have so many mitzvos." The man replied, "Just wait another year, and you will have even more reason to be jealous."

The Tiferes Shlomo (Radomsk) zt'l visited the renowned *baal teshuvah*, Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor zt'l, when Reb Chaim Dovid was on his deathbed. Reb Chaim Dovid moaned, and the Tiferes Shlomo assumed he was crying over the sins of his youth. The Tiferes Shlomo told him, הימים הראשונים יפלו, "The early days will fall away." As if to tell him, "Don't worry about the past. You did *teshuvah*, and you won't be punished. Those early days aren't part of your life."

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor replied, "Chas veshalom! I'm not *mevater* on a single day!" Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor didn't want to lose one day of his life, even the days when he was irreligious. Because he did *teshuvah* through love of Hashem, his previous days were now included among his merits.



Yitzchak Meir told him the following idea that he heard from his father, the Apter Rav *zt'l*:

The *Navi* (*Yirmiyahu* 50:20) discusses the era of Mashiach. ובעת ההיא נאום ה', יבוקש את עוון ישראל, ואיננו ואת חטאת יהודה ולא תמצאנה כי אסלח לאשר אשאיר, "In at that time, says Hashem, the sins of Yisrael will be sought, but they won't be there. And [they will search for] the sins of Yehudah, but they will not find, for I will forgive those I leave over." It seems from this *pasuk* that people will be searching for sins. Why?

The Apter Rav *zt'l* explained that every *aveirah* is a zero. When one repents with love, the teshuvah is a number placed before all the zeros, turning it into a vast, large number. In the future, people will look for sins because the aveiros will increase their merits and virtues."<sup>22</sup>

### **Teshuvah in a Moment**

How long does it take to do teshuvah?

Just a moment. Just a second before, he was a terrible rasha, and now he is a perfect tzaddik.

A primary proof is from the following Gemara (*Kiddushin* 49:). A total rasha gives a ring to a woman and tells her הרי את מקודשת לי, "You are married to me," and he adds על מנת שאני צדיק גמור, that the marriage is valid, solely if I am a perfect tzaddik. The Gemara says that they are married because, "Perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah." So, we see

that a great rasha has the potential to become a tzaddik in a moment.

Here are some other sources:

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 17.) tells the story of a grave sinner, Elazar ben Durdiya, who did teshuvah one day, and moments afterwards, he was niftar. The Gemara says that on the day he was inspired to do teshuvah, he sat between mountains and asked the mountains to daven for him. The mountains replied,<sup>23</sup> "Before we daven for you, we must daven for ourselves, as it states (*Yeshayah* 54:10) כי ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטינה, 'For the mountains shall tilt and the hills totter.'"

Elazar said, "Sun and moon, daven for me." The sun and moon also declined, saying, "Before we daven for you, we have to pray for ourselves, as it states (*Yeshayah* 24:23) וחפרה הלבנה ובושה החמה, 'The moon shall be ashamed, and the sun shall be abashed.'"

Elazar said, "Stars daven for me. Ask Hashem to have compassion on me!" The stars replied, "Before we daven for you, we need to daven for ourselves, as it states (*Yeshayah* 34:4) ונמקו כל צבא השמים, 'All the host of heaven shall melt.'"

Realizing he had no one to turn to, Elazar ben Durdiya said, אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי, "The matter is left for me alone." He placed his head between his knees and cried until his soul left him. A bas kol emerged and proclaimed, "Reb Elazar ben Durdiya has now been readied for the life of Olam HaBa."

<sup>22</sup> A *bachur* once stared at Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov *zt'l*, and Reb Yitzchak Meir asked him, "Why are you looking at me?"

The *bachur* replied, "It's brought down in *sefarim* that it is a great *inyan* to look at tzaddikim. It purifies the soul."

The Rebbe replied, "It is also written (*Yeshayah* 60:21), ועמד כולם צדיקים, all Yidden are tzaddikim. I think it would be more beneficial for you to look at yourself [to see where you can improve]."

<sup>23</sup> Tosfos explains that the mountains didn't actually speak, but Elazar ben Durdiya understood that if the mountains could speak, that is what they would say. Tosfos brings another explanation that it was the malach in charge of the mountains that spoke to him.

Rebbe said, "It is not only that baalei teshuvah are accepted, but they are even called by the title 'Rebbe.'" (The bas kol called him Reb Elazar ben Durdiya. He acquired the title Rebbe because he did teshuvah.)

We also learn from this story that one can do teshuvah in one moment. It takes just a second, and everything can be turned around. Elazar ben Durdiya was a grave sinner, but at a moment of inspiration, he did teshuvah, acquired Olam HaBa, and was even called Rebbe.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 40:) states, "If a person was a *rasha* his entire life and he did *teshuvah* at the end of his life, his past bad deeds won't be mentioned anymore."

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2) states, "What is *teshuvah*? It is to leave the sin, to remove it from his thoughts, and to be determined never to commit this sin again." Teshuvah is a decision never to sin again. This is the essence of teshuvah, and such a decision can be made in a moment.<sup>24</sup>

### The Difficulty of Change

Shevet HaLevi (vol.4 *siman* 55) writes:

"You asked about a *baal teshuvah* who is now married, has children, and learns in a *kollel* in Yerushalayim. He is cautious with all the mitzvos and toils in Torah. You asked me to arrange a plan for *teshuvah* for him because until he was eighteen, he didn't keep the mitzvos. His parents aren't religious, and he knew nothing about Torah and mitzvos. During those days, he ate non-kosher food, ate on Yom Kippur, and ate chametz on Pesach.

"You quoted the Noda b'Yehudah, who says that Torah scholars don't need to afflict

themselves so much for their atonement. Nevertheless, the Noda b'Yehudah concedes that some fasts and *sigufim* (afflictions) are certainly required so he can have a complete *teshuvah*, תשובת המשקל. Similarly, the Reishis Chachmah says, הוא בלא הא לא סגי, that just learning Torah or just afflictions alone isn't enough. It takes a combination of the two to attain complete atonement.

"The truth is that this is a difficult question. Who is the person during these times that can set a path for *teshuvah*? Who has fully rectified their own sins? Woe to us from the day of judgment! We live in a weak generation, spiritually and physically. When we read the *sefarim* of the early scholars on the topic of teshuvah, the hairs on our heads stand up. Therefore, we are better off being silent, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who accepts people who repent, will mercifully show them what to do for their *teshuvah*.

"Nevertheless, I found a diamond in the introduction to the sefer Yismach Moshe. He writes, 'Rosh Chodesh Av, 7545, I had a dream...'"

In this dream, heaven revealed to the Yismach Moshe that *change* itself is the greatest affliction. For example, a person who is lazy and isn't careful to spend his time studying Torah must change his lifestyle and become more diligent in Torah study. If he was accustomed to speaking whatever came to his mind, he must train himself to guard his tongue. Making these changes is very hard; they are like *sigufim* (afflictions). The Kotzker zt'l said, "Keeping the Torah is the greatest *siguf* of all." One doesn't need to fast or engage in other forms of affliction. The changes he makes on his road to improvement are sufficient because change is so difficult and painful.

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**24.** The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitz *zy'a* asked: Why do people buy fast horses? I understand the benefit of a fast horse when one is headed in the right direction because he will reach his destination quicker. But sometimes, the horse runs in the wrong direction, and a fast horse will get you to the wrong place quicker.

The answer is: A fast horse will also bring you back swiftly to your destination. Even if you stray very far, you can return quickly.

The Shevet HaLevi explains that the *sefarim* that discuss the many days one must fast to atone for one's sins refer to a person who sinned once or twice. He had a weak moment and now seeks to rectify that grave aveirah. But if one is accustomed to sin, he doesn't need anything other than to improve his ways. His effort to create lasting change is *yesurim* in its own right.

The Shevet HaLevi continues, "The person you describe was a תינוק שנשבה, born to irreligious parents, and didn't know anything about Torah, which is why he committed so many *aveiros*. Later, he did *teshuvah*, raised himself above the mire of sin, and merited to go from level to level, and today, he sits and toils in the tents of Torah. He built a holy Jewish family and is cautious with the mitzvos. This is a perfect *teshuvah*, תשובת המשקל based on the lesson from the Yismach

Moshe. We generally don't learn halachos from dreams, but this time, it seems logical and correct. I have much to add on this subject from many sources in Chazal. However, I decided to end the letter here because I became very afraid as we discussed rectifying sins. May Hashem see our broken hearts and enable us to do *teshuvah sheleimah*."<sup>25</sup>

### Happy with the Atonement

The Torah says (Bamidbar 10:10) וביום שמחתכם, "The day of your happiness", and Chazal say that this alludes to Yom Kippur. This is because Yom Kippur is a very happy day, the day our aveiros are removed from us.

The kohen gadol is alone in Ohel Moed when he does the avodah, as it states (Vayikra 16:17) וְכָל אָדָם לֹא יִהְיֶה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בָּבֹאוּ לְכַפֵּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ עַד

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25. There are unfortunately many people who are addicted to the internet, *r'l*. According to the Shevet HaLevi's ruling, it stands to reason that when they overcome this addiction, they won't require further affliction to attain purity from sin. The difficulty involved in breaking the habit is, in itself, a considerable affliction.

The Chasam Sofer forbade his students to study חכמות חיצוניות, foreign subjects, which could lead to heresy.

One student wrote that he was from the best *bachurim* in the yeshiva and obeyed the Chasam Sofer's directive. However, it happened that he once awoke in the middle of the night and was tempted to read one of those forbidden books. All the other *bachurim* were sleeping, and no one would know. He reached for the book but suddenly saw an image of a person with a drawn sword. Frightened, the *bachur* threw the book down, and the vision disappeared.

"It must have been my imagination," the *bachur* decided, and he picked up the book again. Once again, he saw the image of a man brandishing a sword. He put down the book again and went back to sleep.

The following day, when the Chasam Sofer finished his daily *shiur*, he added, "It's time to remind the *bachurim* of the prohibition against reading ספרי חיצוניות. We haven't spoken about it for a while, so this is a reminder that there is a חרם on those books, and they are strictly forbidden. חרם has the same letters as רמח (sword) because if one transgresses the חרם, he can be punished, *chalilah*, with a sword." Hundreds of *bachurim* heard the Chasam Sofer's words, but only one understood precisely what the Chasam Sofer was referring to.

A wealthy person once told the Divrei Chaim zt'l of Tzanz, "Many *bachurim* learn in your beis medresh, and they attend your shiurim. Why not turn this into a formal yeshiva? I will cover all the expenses."

"I'm afraid of the responsibility," the Divrei Chaim replied.

"But the Chasam Sofer ran a yeshiva," the man countered.

"We can't compare ourselves to the Chasam Sofer," the Divrei Chaim replied. "When the Chasam Sofer merely looked at a *bachur's* face, that *bachur* couldn't sin afterward." It is known that the Chasam Sofer's holy influence protected the *bachurim* of his yeshiva from *aveiros*. The story above is an example.



צאתו וְכָפַר בְּעַדוֹ וּבְעַד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעַד כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Any person shall not be in Ohel Moed when [Kohen Gadol] comes to provide atonement in the Midkash until his departure. He shall provide atonement for himself, for his household, and for the entire congregation of Yisrael." The roshei teivos of the words בָּלַב עֵצִיב, בָּבֹאוּ לְכַפֵּר בְּקֹדֶשׁ עַד צֵאתוֹ וְכָפַר בְּעַדוֹ, spells with a sad heart. The pasuk hints that we don't enter the holiness of Yom Kippur with sadness. We should be happy on this day.

Meor Einayim (Haazinu) writes that teshuvah is a *mitzvas asei*, and therefore, it should be performed with simchah.

The Zohar says that there are aveiros that one can't do teshuvah on. This is because these aveiros bring a person to *atzvut*, and it is impossible to do teshuvah with sadness. However, when one strengthens himself and he does teshuvah with simchah, even those severe aveiros will be forgiven.

The Beis Aharon (p.131b) writes (regarding Rosh Hashanah), "Only with teshuvah and with yishuv hadaas, because simcha purifies the mind, and the primary teshuvah is with a pure mind."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* asks, it is known that when we do teshuvah, Moshiach will come. But why should our teshuvah bring Moshiach? Hashem does everything, and even our teshuvah is from Him. Hashem places the desire to do teshuvah into our hearts and helps us in every step of the process. So, why do we deserve salvation? Why should we deserve Mashiach if we are not the ones who do the teshuvah?

The Chasam Sofer answers this question by saying that our part of the teshuvah process is that we are happy with the teshuvah.

Chazal revealed (end of *Taanis*) that Yom Kippur is one of the happiest days of the year because on Yom Kippur, we become cleansed from all our sins. We deserve credit for being happy with our atonement. One could theoretically be upset about doing *teshuvah* because *teshuvah* means obedience to halachah and being restricted by the Torah's rules. But we want to do *teshuvah* and are happy that we are improving our ways. And for that, we deserve a reward.

It states (*Tehillim* 14:7), מִי יֵתֵן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּשׁוּבָה ה' שְׁבוּת עִמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל. The Chasam Sofer explains that Dovid HaMelech asked מִי יֵתֵן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, why do we deserve *yeshuos*? Although we do *teshuvah*, behold, בְּשׁוּבָה ה' שְׁבוּת עִמּוֹ, it is Hashem who is guiding us on the path of *teshuvah*. We aren't doing anything!

The answer is יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל. We are happy that Hashem is leading us on the path of *teshuvah*. For that, we deserve *yeshuos* and the upcoming redemption.<sup>26</sup>

It states (*Tehillim* 139:16), יָמִים יָצַר וְלֹא אֶחָד בָּהֶם, "Hashem created days, and one of the days is Hashem's." *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (ch.1) writes that this refers to Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is "Hashem's day" because He is so happy that we are being cleansed of our aveiros.

The Tana d'Bei Eliyahu writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave this day to the Jewish nation with love and joy. It can be compared to

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**26.** It states (*Shir HaShirim* 6:3) אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The final letters of these words are four יו"ד's, which is gematria 40. Reb Chaim Vital (עין הדעת טוב, כי תצא) teaches that this alludes to the forty days of Elul until Yom Kippur. Also, the roshei teivos of (*Tehillim* 53:7) יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Yaakov will rejoice, Yisrael will be glad," are gematria 40. This hints that teshuvah of these days should be performed with simcha.

But how can one be happy if he is aware of his aveiros and knows how far he is from where he should be? The answer is that it states (*Tehillim* 105:3) יִשְׁמַח לֵב מְבַקְשֵׁי ה', "The heart of those who seek Hashem rejoice." It doesn't state יִשְׁמַח לֵב עוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹן ה', that the joy is for performing Hashem's will, rather, for desiring and striving to do Hashem's will. Everyone can reach that level.

servants who cleaned the king's palace, and when the king went outside and saw all the garbage that was discarded, he was pleased. This is what happens on Yom Kippur when Hashem forgives the sins of the Jewish nation. Hashem is pleased and says, 'Rejoice immensely because I am forgiving the sins of the Jewish people.'"

The Midrash (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, end of ch.4) states, "Moshe went up on Har Sinai for forty days. On the fortieth day [Yom Kippur], the Jewish nation declared a fast day. The fast began at night, and in the morning, they went towards Har Sinai. They were crying as they approached Moshe, and Moshe was crying as he approached them. Their cries went up before Hashem, and Hashem's compassion was aroused, and He accepted their *teshuvah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Bnei Yisrael! I swear by My name and throne that your tears will become tears of immense joy. This day will be a day for atonement for you, your children, your grandchildren, and for all generations.'"

## Viduy

Rebbe Yaakov Yechezkiyahu of Pupa *zt'l* taught that before saying *viduy*, one should imagine himself walking alone in a forest and being assaulted by a band of bandits. They are sharpening their knives; he knows his end is near. He asks the thieves to allow him a final wish. His last wish is to say *viduy*. Imagine this scenario, and then say the *viduy* of Yom Kippur.

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that when he was young, he heard from *magidim* that when one says *viduy*, he should think: There will yet be another time when I will say *viduy*. That will be after my demise when I stand before the *beis din* in heaven. I will be dressed in a tallis and *kittel*, I will say *viduy* like I'm saying it now, but then it won't help. Now I can still fix everything with my *viduy*."

The *viduy* must be said with sincere regret<sup>27</sup> and with a broken heart.<sup>28</sup> Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that the primary judgment on Rosh Hashanah is to see whether we regret our *aveiros*.

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27. There was a *misnaged* who believed that everything he did against the chasidim was l'shem shamayim and a great mitzvah. He caused a lot of trouble for the great tzaddik, Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuz *zy'a*, but he thought he was acting correctly. Before Yom Kippur, this *misnaged* approached Rebbe Boruch'l and said, "I don't really need to ask you forgiveness because everything I did was a mitzvah. However, since it is *erev Yom Kippur*, I thought it was nevertheless appropriate to seek forgiveness."

In response, Rebbe Boruch'l quoted the verse (Bamidbar 14:20), סְלַחְתִּי כְדַבְרֶיךָ, and explained, "I forgive, in the manner that you spoke. You say 'I'm sorry', but you don't really mean it, and I say 'I forgive you', and I don't really mean it. סְלַחְתִּי, I forgive you with the same sincerity, כְּדַבְרֶיךָ, as you asked for forgiveness."

But if we truly regret our *aveiros*, Hashem will accept our *teshuvah* and forgive us.

28. One year, on *erev Yom Kippur*, Rebbe Henech of Alexander *zt'l* made a *cheshbon hanefesh* and felt very broken by his sins. He was so embarrassed and broken that he couldn't show his face in public.

Throngs of chassidim were streaming to Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* on *erev Yom Kippur* to receive his *brachos* for a good year. Rebbe Henech didn't want to miss out on this opportunity, but he was too ashamed to show his face!

He decided to go to Rebbe Bunim together with a group of chassidim. He would stand on the side and receive the Rebbe's *brachah* without drawing attention to himself.

After receiving the Rebbe's *brachah*, Rebbe Henech tried to beat a hasty retreat, but Rebbe Bunim called him back.

At that moment, Rebbe Henech thought, "The Rebbe wants me. So, I'm not all that bad." As he approached the Rebbe, Rebbe Bunim told him to forget it and that he could go on his way.

Sometimes, it is very hard for a person to overcome his yetzer hara, and he performs an aveirah. But the question is, why didn't he regret what he did? He might be excused for the aveirah because the tests were great, etc., but he should at least regret what he did. What prevents him from regretting it?

We say, ...על חטא שחטאנו לפניך, "For the sin that we committed before You..." Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l explained that our main regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before

You. People regret their *aveiros* for several reasons (fear of punishment, embarrassment, a feeling of failure and incompetence, etc.). Still, the ideal regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before Hashem.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, since *viduy* is a mitzvah of the Torah,<sup>30</sup> we understand that one must perform this mitzvah with joy. This might be the reason we say אשמנו and על חטא on Yom Kippur with a tune. We are happy because we know that with this viduy, we become close to Hashem.<sup>31</sup>

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Rebbe Henoch understood: When he was humble and broken from his sins, he was on an exceptional level, and Rebbe Bunim wanted something from him. Perhaps he wanted his tefillos or something else. He had a lot of potential then. But when arrogance overtook him, he lost that level, and the Rebbe sent him away.

**29.** The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16:) states, "Three sefarim are opened [in heaven] on Rosh Hashanah. One sefer is of complete resha'im, one of complete tzaddikim, and one of beinanim (between tzaddikim and resha'im). The perfect tzaddikim are written and signed immediately for life. The complete resha'im are written and signed immediately for death. The beinonim wait from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit it, they will be written for life. Otherwise, they will be written for death."

Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Re'eh) explains that for this judgment, the key is to *want* to be a perfect tzaddik. The judgment isn't on the deeds, but where you want to be this year. If you want to be a perfect tzaddik, you will immediately be inscribed in the book of tzaddikim.

Reb Mordechai Chaim of Slonim zt'l repeated the following *mashal* each year at the *seudah hamafsekes*:

Someone owned a beautiful bird, and people would pay money to see it.

A thief stole the bird, but he didn't know how to take care of it. The bird became skinny and weak. It was no longer worth keeping, so he brought it to the town's *shochet*. At least he would get a meal out of it.

At the *shochet*'s place, he met the true owner of the bird.

"Give it back to me," the owner demanded. "It's my bird."

The thief replied, "Your bird was fat and beautiful, and this bird is scrawny and bony. How can you claim this is your bird?"

The *shochet* said, "I won't *shecht* the bird before the rav rules over the case and determines who is the owner of the bird."

Three people arrived at the rav's door: the *shochet*, the true owner, and the thief. The rav took the bird, untied the rope that bound its feet, and the bird ran to its true owner.

Reb Mordechai Chaim explained, "Throughout the year, the *yetzer hara* makes it hard for us to serve Hashem. On Yom Kippur, Hashem takes the *yetzer hara* away. Now, let's see where you run to. If you run to Hashem, that shows that you belong to Him."

**30.** Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1) writes, "If a person committed an aveirah, he must say *viduy* before Hashem, as it states וְהִתְוֹדוּ אֶת חַטֹּאתֵם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ, 'They should confess their sins.' This is a *mitzvas asei*."

**31.** The Maharal (*Nesivos Olam*) compares saying *viduy* to a man kneeling before his fellow man to beg forgiveness. The man he is speaking to bends down to hear what he is saying, and their faces are very close. This represents the very close connection between Hashem and the Yid when he says viduy and begs for forgiveness.



Once, after the *viduy* of Yom Kippur, the chazan of Zaslav said, "Ribono Shel Olam, if the Jewish nation hadn't sinned, where would you hear such a sweet *Ashamnu*?"

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli *zt'l* would say, "If the Jewish nation hadn't sinned, where would Hakadosh Baruch Hu get a *נסלה* such as the Jewish nation says on Yom Kippur night, with such a tune and outpouring of the soul?"

When you say *viduy* and ask for forgiveness, Hashem forgives you right away. The Baal HaTanya (*Igeres HaTeshuvah* 11) proves this from the *brachah* *לנו סלה* in *Shemonah Esrei*. Immediately after we request Hashem to forgive us, we thank Hashem for doing so, as we say, *ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח*. But behold, when one is in doubt about a *brachah*, he mustn't recite it, lest his *brachah* be in vain. How can we bless Hashem for forgiving us? Perhaps Hashem didn't accept our *teshuvah* and didn't forgive us? The answer is: We have no doubt. After one says *סלה לנו מחל לנו*, he is forgiven. And if we won't sin again, we will immediately be redeemed, as the following *brachah* states, *ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל*.<sup>32</sup>

The Noam Elimelech *zy'a* writes, "The Torah teaches us to say *viduy* with confidence in Hashem's compassion and belief that Hashem forgives our sins. One shouldn't say *viduy* with sadness and *yeush*, as that attracts *dinim*; rather, say *viduy* with *bitachon*. Trust that He will forgive you. As it states (*Mishlei* 28:13), *ומודה ועוזב ירוחם*, 'he who confesses and abandons [his sins] will obtain mercy.'<sup>32</sup>

The *Viduy* is organized in alphabetical order: *אשמונו בגדנו גזלנו* and so on. The Reishis Chachmah explains that our *aveiros* tainted

all the letters of the *alef beis*, which are the letters of Creation, and we correct them with the *viduy*.

However, notes the Reishis Chachmah, the first word of the *viduy* is *חטאנו*, as we say *אבל אנחנו ואבותינו חטאנו*... Why don't we begin with *אשמונו*?

The Reishis Chachmah answers that we begin *viduy* with *חטאנו* because this word removes the *mekatreg* (the Satan). If we were to start by saying our *aveiros*, the Satan could go up to heaven and say, "Listen to what he's saying. He agrees that he has sinned." But after we said *חטאנו*, the Satan is silenced. He can't speak out against us. And now we can say the detailed *viduy* in the order of the *alef beis*.

In the era of the Beis HaMikdash, there was a mitzvah called *viduy maasros*, to go to the Beis HaMikdash twice in seven years to proclaim that we observed all the halachos of *maasar*, *terumah*, and the like. Surprisingly, this mitzvah is called *viduy*. We know that *viduy* is about confessing one's sins; why is it now used to proclaim that "I kept the halachos"?

For example, by *viduy maasros*, one says, *לא עברתי ממצותיך ולא שכחתי*, "I didn't transgress your mitzvos, and I didn't forget" (*Devarim* 26:13). Why are these words called *viduy* (confessions)?

Rebbe Shalom Chaim of Koidenov *zt'l* answers that both Hashem and the person are speaking in these *pasukim*: The person says, *עברתי ממצותיך*, "I transgressed your mitzvos," and Hashem replies, *לא עברתי*, "you didn't transgress." The person says, *שכחתי*, "I forgot to keep the mitzvos," and Hashem responds, *לא שכחתי*, "You didn't forget." This

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**32.** Bilaam also said *viduy*. When he saw the *malach* standing before him, he said *חטאתי*, "I have sinned," and the Midrash writes, "Bilaam was a clever *rasha*. He knew that his only protection from punishment was *teshuvah*. And indeed, when he said *חטאתי*, he was spared."

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said it's a mitzvah to publicize this Midrash, particularly to *bachurim* (who often feel that Hashem won't forgive them). Even the *rasha* Bilaam attained forgiveness through *viduy* (even though his *teshuvah* was insincere).

is because the *viduy* wipes away sins entirely.<sup>33</sup>

*Bitul Torah* is from the severest *aveiros*; why isn't there an על חטא for this grave transgression?

Sfas Emes *zt'l* answers that we say, על חטא שחטאנו לפניך בבל ידעת, "For the sin we committed before You without knowledge." This refers to when one committed *aveiros* because he didn't know that the Torah forbade his deeds. Ultimately, this is *viduy* for not learning Torah. If he knew Torah, he would know that this is forbidden, and he wouldn't have committed those *aveiros*.

Furthermore, we say, על חטא שחטאנו לפניך, בפריקת עול, "For the sin that we committed before You by throwing off the yoke [of Heaven]." The Sfas Emes writes that when one doesn't study Torah, this can be called casting off the yoke of Heaven.

Rebbe Reb Bunim of Pshischah teaches: We say in the *zemiros* of Motzei Shabbos, על חטאי, for my sins, עביר תעבור, we invite the King of the world to visit us. We will earn

doubly: Hashem comes to us, and our sins are removed.

This occurs on Yom Kippur. Hashem comes to us, and therefore, we are cleansed from all our *aveiros*. This seems to be the intention of the Mishnah (end of *Yoma*), אמר ר' עקיבא אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרים ומי מטהר אתכם, אביכם שבשמים, "Yisrael, you are fortunate! Before Whom do you purify yourselves? Before your Father in heaven!"<sup>34</sup> On Yom Kippur, we stand before Hashem, and that is the root of our purity and atonement.

Rebbe Bunim explained it with a mashal:

Someone tried very hard to clean his home, but he never succeeded. It was simply too hard a job for him to do because there was so much filth and dirt in his home. He came up with an idea. He invited the king to visit him, and the king accepted the invitation. Obviously, the king must go to a clean home. The day before the visit, the king's servants came to his home to clean it. The man earned twice. His home was cleaned, and he hosted the king.

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**33.** Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* was traveling to his son's *chasunah* and stopped in the middle of the way to daven *shacharis*. It was a day that the Torah was read, but the local beis medresh didn't have a *sefer Torah*. Reb Chaim asked the Rav about that, and the Rav replied, "The closest *sefer Torah* is far from here. We aren't obligated to go there to hear the reading of the *Torah*."

Reb Chaim Volozhiner disagreed but remained silent. He didn't want to debate the issue with the Rav in front of his congregants.

When Reb Chaim returned home after the *chasunah*, he heard that his personal *sefer Torah* had been stolen. He understood that he was being punished for not demanding that the Torah be read that morning.

He began saying *viduy* for this transgression, and in the midst of his *viduy*, the police arrived with the stolen *sefer Torah*. They had found the thief. The *aveirah* has been rectified, so he got back his *sefer Torah*.

**34.** People dance with hislahavus to these words on Lag b'Omer, certainly we should rejoice with these words on Yom Kippur, for the primary meaning of these words refers to Yom Kippur.

One year, at the break between Minchah and Neilah, students heard Reb Yechezkel Levenstein *zt'l* repeat these words with deep concentration, because he felt the purity of the day.

The Shefa Chaim says that Reb Akiva is arguing with the beginning of the Mishnah, which states אדם ואשה חטאו ואין להם טהרה, that if a person says that he will repeatedly do *aveiros*, and then do teshuvah on them, his teshuvah isn't accepted. However, Reb Akiva disagrees. He explains that just like a mikvah, even if a person became tamei several times, each time he goes to the mikvah, he attains taharah. The same is with teshuvah, even if one sins repeatedly, each time he does teshuvah, his *aveiros* are forgiven.

This is what occurs on Yom Kippur. Hashem comes to us, and thereby, our aveiros are removed.

### The Fast

Rebbe Mendel of Rimanov zt'l taught that since the Torah told us to fast, this means

that the fast itself nourishes the person and feeds him. Therefore, he would say, it isn't necessary to be too lenient.<sup>35</sup> He also said that this fast is mesugal for arichus yamim (a long life) because it heals all limbs of his body.

Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah (ch.10)<sup>36</sup> writes, "it is obvious that there is a great reward for

**35.** However, when a reliable rav tells him that he must eat, he must undoubtedly do so, because there is an obligation of (Devarim 4:15) וּנְשַׁמְרֶתֶם מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם, to guard one's life and to put oneself into danger.

The Shem MiShmuel wrote the following letter to his son-in-law (printed at the end of Shem MiShmuel, Moadim):

"As Yom Kippur is approaching, I must warn you that you shouldn't be overly righteous regarding this fast. Do as the doctors tell you... The same Hashem Who commanded us to fast, He also commanded us to listen to the doctors and not fast... Even if the ill person claims that he can fast, and the doctors say he can't fast, we listen to the doctors' opinion (Yoma 83a). Even if the patient is an expert, and he knows the nature of fasts and health, his opinion isn't valid for his own health, and he must follow the view of the doctors.

"The same applies to the tefillos. Chazal say that the chazan is מוציא the people who are in the fields [and can't go to the beis kneses]. Even if the chazan is on the other side of the world, and not where you live, his tefillos are *motzi* you, as if you davened...

"Therefore (Koheles 9:7), וְשָׂתָה בְּלֵב טוֹב יֵינֶךָ כִּי כָּבֵד רָצָה הָאֱלֹקִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, 'Eat your bread with joy, drink wine with a happy heart, because Hashem desires your deeds.' And the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 17:2) says that this pasuk is what the bas kol announced on Yom Kippur, in the days of Shlomo HaMelech, when the nation ate on Yom Kippur, to celebrate the dedication of the Beis HaMikdash."

Someone told the Chazon Ish zt'l that he has tzaar that he must eat on Yom Kippur. The Chazon Ish replied, "I never heard someone say that he has tzaar that he has to make a bris milah on Shabbos." (Maaseh Ish 4, p.163)

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz wrote the following letter to Rebbe Mendel of Vizhnitz zt'l (5655):

"To my beloved *mechutan*, the holy tzaddik, the pride of the Jewish nation, Rebbe Mendel *shlita*: I write this letter because I was shocked to hear that your chassidim are worried that you might fast on the holy day, Yom Kippur. Who would believe a holy man like you would do such a thing? Hashem, Who told us to fast on Yom Kippur, also told us to guard our lives. I remember when my father, Rebbe Shalom of Belz, was ill, we feared that he might fast on Yom Kippur. But he was righteous. Immediately after Kol Nidrei, he asked that we bring him food. Before eating, he said, "*Hareinu muchan*... I am prepared to do the mitzvah of my Creator to preserve my life," and ate his food joyfully. Such joy we only witnessed when he ate matzah at the Seder and shook the *lulav*. Certainly, you will also be cautious with this mitzvah and follow the doctors' orders. Especially since you are a great person, and people watch what you do. If you are strict and don't eat, others will learn from you, which could be dangerous.

"Believe me, I didn't want to write this letter to advise you on how to act. I'm writing this letter against my will because I care for you so much. Hashem should bless your bread and water, remove your illness, and send you a complete and speedy refuah.

"These are the words of your *mechutan*, who truly loves you and hopes and trusts to hear good news about your good health."

Someone had to eat on Yom Kippur. He feared that this meant Hashem didn't want his service. He compared it to the Gemara (Succah 28b), which discusses when it rains on Succos. The Gemara says, "A mashal to a person who is pouring wine for his master, and his master pours it in his face." The Gemara says that the same is when it rains on Succos. Hashem is saying that He doesn't want our service. This



this mitzvah because he has physical pain to keep this mitzvah... My brother and friend, everyone should understand rationally that he should be extremely happy with every moment that he has tzaar from the refraining from food and drink and from wearing shoes... When someone truly loves Hashem, he will desire that the fast be twice as long, and even longer, so he can keep the mitzvah of the tzaar of the fast, which is a mitzvas asei of the Torah that Hashem commanded him."

### Neilah

Zera Kodesh (Erev Yom Kippur) writes that נעילה is from the words נעל י"ה, which can be translated as, "Locked with Hashem." This means during Neilah, each person is alone with Hashem. No one else is there, and at this intimate moment, we plead and pray before Hashem.<sup>37</sup>

The Ramchal (Kitzur Kavanos) writes that during Neilah, every person can reach the level of Adam HaRishon before his sin.

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "One should be very diligent with *Neilah* because the pinnacle of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is Yom Kippur, and the peak of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*. Everything follows the closing (הכל הולך (אחר החיתום)." *Neilah* is when Hashem signs the decrees for the coming year, and therefore, we should daven this tefillah with a lot of *kavanah*.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86) states that some aveiros are forgiven immediately. As soon as one does teshuvah, the aveirah is erased.<sup>38</sup> Some aveiros need teshuvah and Yom Kippur to attain atonement.<sup>39</sup> Some aveiros need teshuvah, Yom Kippur, and yesurim.<sup>40</sup> But for the aveirah of *chilul Hashem*, he doesn't have kaparah until he dies.

Nevertheless, the Meshech Chachmah explains that at *Neilah*, one can receive atonement for *chillul Hashem*, too.

The explanation is as follows:

The *Yerushalmi* explains that there is no forgiveness for *chillul Hashem* because no

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person feared that his needing to eat on Yom Kippur means Hashem doesn't want his mitzvah. The Aruch L'Ner (Binyan Tzion HaChadashos siman 25) explained to him that it isn't so. When it rains on Succos, he leaves the mitzvah of succah, and he doesn't have another mitzvah. But when one eats on Yom Kippur to preserve his health, he is performing the mitzvah of ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם, to be cautious with his life. Therefore, it isn't a negative sign at all. (The Aruch L'Ner added several other differences between eating on Yom Kippur and when it rains on Succos.)

**36.** It is a good idea to study this portion from the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah, because he reveals great concepts about this holy fast, and it arouses people to prepare for this holy mitzvah.

Once, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l instructed two of his close chasidim to publicize these words of the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah. It wasn't the Rebbe's way to do something like this, but this time he asked that the words be publicized, because he saw how much inspiration one can gain from studying this section.

**37.** Every year, the Satmer Rebbe zt'l would go to the kever of Rebbe Eizikel Kaliver on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar. He would always go to the kever at the last moments of the day, before nightfall. One year, he arrived in Kaliv already in the morning, but he nevertheless waited until nighttime to go to the kever. His gabbai asked him why he didn't go earlier to the kever. The Satmer Rebbe replied, "In a market, it is known that the best deals are had moments before the market closes." He meant that the greatest rachamim is at the last moments of the yahrtzeit, and the same applies to Yom Kippur.

**38.** When one doesn't perform a required mitzvas asei.

**39.** This is for the lavin, the לא תעשה.

**40.** This is for aveiros that are punished with kares or death in beis din.

*malach* dares speak in the defense of a person who created a chillul Hashem. To suggest that the aveirah isn't so severe would in itself be a disgrace to Hashem's name. Therefore, when a chillul Hashem charge is brought to the heavenly court, all malachim remain silent, and no one advocates on that person's behalf. This is why there is no atonement, as long as the person is alive.

However, at Neilah, Hashem alone judges us. The malachim aren't part of the process. When we plead before Him and beg forgiveness for the chillul Hashem we caused, He will forgive us.

The Ramchal writes that at *Neilah*, one can attain the level of Adam HaRishon before his sin. It is a time when we can become completely pure before Hashem. All sins can be removed. It is a time of immense compassion and forgiveness from Hashem.

The Rema (607:6) writes, quoting the Rambam, that Yom Kippur atones solely for those who believe in it.<sup>41</sup> The Kotzker said that if people knew how pure their neshamos became on Yom Kippur, they would be cautious never to blemish their neshamos again.

The Rokeiach (217) writes, "Towards the end of Yom Kippur, Hakadosh Baruch signs the decree. There are malachim before his

throne, some to the right side (saying that Hashem should sign for life), and some malachim are to the left (speaking against the Jewish nation), and all souls stand before His throne... Until the decree of the year is signed, each person can do teshuvah. If he breaks his heart with teshuvah, it will be accepted.

Trumas HaDeshen (278) writes, The judgment isn't completed until Klal Yisrael finish their tefillos of Neilah. Even if it is already nighttime... nevertheless, the Jewish nation is beloved before Hashem, and His beis din follows after the order of their tefillos." Therefore, as long as we are still saying the tefillah of Neilah, it is still Yom Kippur, and we can still storm the heavens with our prayers and with teshuvah, and they will be accepted.<sup>42</sup>

### G-t's Numen

The day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*, "Hashem's name." (ג-ט'ס נאמען). What is the reason for this title?

1) The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* explains that for ten days, we've been saying המלך הקדוש, and now we go back to saying הא"ל הקדוש in Shemonah Esrei. Therefore, this day is called *G-t's numen*, "Hashem's name."

2) Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* teaches:

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<sup>41</sup>. The Rambam (שננות ג') writes, "יום הכפורים אינו מכפר אלא על השבים המאמינים בכפרתו", "Yom Kippur only atones for those who do teshuvah and believe in its atonement."

Every moment of Yom Kippur can bring atonement for our aveiros (Krisus 7a). Therefore, Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* taught, a person shouldn't waste a moment of Yom Kippur. If a person wastes time on Yom Kippur, this means that he considers Yom Kippur to be the same as any other day, and that is a disgrace to Yom Kippur. Once, early Yom Kippur morning, Reb Shlomo Zalman awoke his grandson who slept in his room, and told him to recite Tehillim together with him. He said, "Each moment of Yom Kippur is more precious than gold."

<sup>42</sup>. A person was hunting in the forest, and before he knew it, it turned dark. He was terrified of the wild animals. Every sound sent panic into his heart, and he would shoot arrows in that direction, just in case it was a wild animal. Generally, it was just the rustling of the leaves or a small animal passing by. But then he saw a fierce lion approaching, and by now, he only had one arrow left. He knew that he must be careful and shoot the arrow accurately, on target, because there would be no second chance. This is how it is at the time of Neilah. We had the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah to improve our ways, but generally, we spent those days with unimportant deeds. Now is our last chance, and with a well-placed tefillah, we can be saved.

On Yom Kippur, the nation heard the *kohen gadol* say the *Shem Hameforash* (Hashem's name *הו"ה*, pronounced as it is written). The *Yerushalmi* (Yoma 3:7) teaches that the way to pronounce and read Hashem's name must remain a secret, revealed only to a select few (see *Kiddushin* 71.). Miraculously, immediately after Yom Kippur, the people forgot how to pronounce the name so that it would remain a secret. The morning after Yom Kippur, they were asking one another, "Do you remember how the *kohen gadol* pronounced Hashem's name?" Everyone was trying to remember, but they all forgot. Since everyone was speaking about *G-t's numen*, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*.

3) Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zy'a* heard a *melamed* tell a young child, "When you see two consecutive yuds in the Chumash, that is Hashem's name." Once, the *melamed* reached the end of a פסוק (which is called סוף פסוק), and it appeared like this “:

The student asked, "There are two *yuds* here; why don't you read it as Hashem's name?"

The *melamed* replied, "When two *yuds* are next to each other, it is Hashem's name. But when one *yud* is higher than the other, it's a *pasuk*, a separator between one *pasuk* and the next."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov said he learned from this that when two Yidden (two *yuds*) feel equal, with no one feeling superior to the other, Hashem is there. But when one feels higher than the other, it's a separator, and Hashem doesn't reside there.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* repeated this story and added: After Yom Kippur, everyone is cleansed from sin, so all Yidden are on the same level. That's two *yuds* side by side, and Hashem's name is there. Therefore, the day after Yom Kippur

is called *G-t's numen* because everyone feels equal, and Hashem's name is there.<sup>43</sup>

### Between Yom Kippur and Succos

The *kaparah* of Yom Kippur extends for another four days. This is one of the reasons we don't say *tachanun* during these intermediate days.

Magen Avraham (624:7) states that we don't say *tachanun* because Shlomo HaMelech celebrated the Chanukas Hamizbeach for the first Beis HaMikdash on these days (see *Malachim* 1, 8:65). But it is also because we celebrate the *kaparah* that extends from Yom Kippur into these days.

The Shlah HaKodesh (Succah, Torah Or, 2) explains that on these four days, people are occupied with mitzvos, to buy a lulav and esrog and to build a succah, and their preparations for the mitzvos, performed with a holy desire to serve Hashem, cleanse them from all aveiros.

We will bring some sources for our atonement on these four days. Prominent among the sources is the *pasuk* (Vayikra 23:40) ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון, "Take [lulav] on the first day." Why is it called the first day? Succos is on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month! The Midrash (Tanchuma Emor 22) explains that the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei is called יום הראשון because "It's the first day for reckoning *aveiros*..." Until Succos, we still have the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur.

Another source is from the Gemara (Yoma 20.), which says that השטן is gematria 364, one number less than the days of a solar year. השטן, which is gematria 364 implies that the Satan can prosecute on 364 days of a solar year, but on one day of the year, he must remain silent. He can't prosecute on Yom Kippur.

<sup>43</sup>. On the first day of Succos, we take an אתרוג, which tzaddikim say is *roshei teivos* for אל תביאני רגל גאווה, "don't bring me to arrogance." By taking the *esrog*, we are saying a prayer that we should remain equal with all Yidden and never feel superior to our fellow man.



But notice that the Gemara discusses השטן (which is gematria 364), but שטן, without the heh as its prefix, is gematria 359. Reb Yonason Eibshitz zt'l (Yaaras Dvash 2:10) writes that this indicates that there are six days a year that the Satan can't speak against us. These are Yom Kippur, the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, and the first day of Succos.

This hints at the purity from aveiros we merit during these days.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119) says, "The world exists in the merit of the Torah study of *cheder* children. Rav Pappa asked Abaya, 'And what about my Torah and yours? Isn't our Torah sufficient to give life to the world?'"

"Abaya replied, 'You can't compare the voice [of a child] who never tasted sin to the voice of someone who tasted sin.'" Young children have never experienced the taste of sin; therefore, their Torah is so precious to Hashem, and their Torah study sustains the world.

The Kozeglover Rav zt'l (*Eretz Zvi*) writes that during the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, even an adult's Torah study sustains the world because on these days, he is clean from sin. It is even a higher Torah than a child's Torah because an adult is a מצווה ועושה, obligated to study Torah, while a child isn't.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l was in an extremely happy mood between Yom Kippur and Succos because of the atonement, to the extent that he couldn't focus on studying Torah. So, on these days, he composed songs and poems to express his yearning and gratitude to Hashem (collected in *Sefer Shiras Moshe*).

We aren't on that level; we can study Torah after Yom Kippur, and we should! And our studies at this time sustain the world.

It states (*Yeshayah* 55) דרשו ה' בהמצאו, "Search for Hashem when He is near. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18) asks, "When is Hashem near? אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכיפורים, "These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." The Shlah HaKadosh (*Succah, Torah Or* 70) asks that there are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Why does the Gemara say there are ten days?

The Shlah answers that the Gemara hints at the ten days between Yom Kippur and Hashanah Rabba. These are the days that Hashem is nearby.

Yom Kippur is called Rosh Hashanah,<sup>44</sup> and Hashanah Rabba is called Yom Kippur, a day of atonement.<sup>45</sup> Between them, there are ten days – days to utilize to "Search for Hashem when He is near."

44. As it states, בראש השנה בעשר לחודש (*Yechezkel* 40).

45. This is because, on Hoshana Rabbah, we receive the חתימה טובה, a good seal for the new year.