



To: parsha@groups.io
 From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON HAAZINU Shabbos Shuva & YOM KIPPUR - 5787

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 32st year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@gmail.com

Regarding my note last week, I was able to arrange for new hosting and fixes to [Parsha.net](http://www.parsha.net). What I will do instead of getting partners for the website, is to increase the **sponsorship** from \$36 to **\$50 per weekly sponsorship** (hasn't gone up in 30 years!) and to ask sponsors to send any weekly sponsorships to me *Chaim Shulman*, 632 Norfolk Street, Teaneck, NJ 07666 with or without a dedication (or email me at cshulman@gmail.com). Once I recoup [Parsha.net](http://www.parsha.net) expenses each year, I will forward the balance to a worthy Tzedaka.

Separately, the Yom Tov Tzedakas are listed at tinyurl.com/yk83-tzedaka & tinyurl.com/yk85-tzedaka

Wishing everyone a Gmar Chasima Tova! Chaim

Table of Contents:

- Rav Soloveitchik on Yom Kippur Kapparah & Taharah
- Rav Yissocher Frand on Listen to the Music: Parshas Haazinu
- Rav YY Jacobson on A Small Step for Man A Giant Step for G-d
- Rav Chaim Friedlander on the Road Back to the Kisei HaKavod
- Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe by Rav Jonathan Sacks
- Peninei Halacha Rav Eliezer Melamed: The laws of Yom Kippur
- Rav E. Melamed: 6 Questions a Person Is Asked at Judgment

Summarized by CS from Chapter 1 & related sections of:
 על התשובה by Rav Soloveitchik,

Chapter 1. Yom Kippur: Kapparah and Taharah

Yom Kippur does two things for us. The Torah says כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם - *For on this day He will atone for you, to purify you from all your sins; before Hashem you shall be purified* (Vayikra 16:30). The two parts of the pasuk are not saying the same thing twice. Yom Kippur brings *kapparah*, forgiveness for the sin, and *taharah*, cleansing of the person who sinned. We need both.

Forgiveness and Cleansing

When a person sins, two things happen. First, the sin creates consequences. It leaves a debt, so to speak. *Kapparah* removes that debt. Rashi explains ונראה - *Every use of kapparah in connection with sin has the sense of wiping away and removing* (Rashi, Bereishis 32:21). Hashem can forgive what the sinner has brought upon himself.

But sin does something else as well. It changes the sinner. The Navi describes purification from sin in the language of water: וזרקתי עליכם מים - *I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will be purified from all your impurities* (Yechezkel 36:25). The next pasuk speaks of *a new heart and a new spirit* (Yechezkel 36:26). That is *taharah*. Sin can harden a person and dull his spiritual sensitivity. Purification means that the person himself is restored.

The distinction has a concrete halachic expression. Certain aveiros can make a person unfit to testify. That is not simply another punishment added to the first one. His status has changed. The person after the sin is not quite the person he was before it. True *teshuvah* therefore cannot end with having the punishment forgiven. It seeks to repair the person as well. At its highest level, it can even lift him higher than he stood before.

No One Can Become Pure for You

Here the Gemara records a machlokes. The Mishnah teaches מיתה ויום הכיפורים מכפרין עם התשובה - *death and Yom Kippur atone together with teshuvah*. Rebbe disagrees: על כל עבירות שבתורה בין עשה תשובה בין לא עשה - *for most Torah transgressions, whether or not a person did teshuvah, Yom Kippur atones* (Yoma 85b; with limited exceptions stated there). Rambam follows the first view: ועצמו של יום הכיפורים מכפר לשבים - *the essence of Yom Kippur atones for those who repent* (Hilchos Teshuvah 1:3).

This machlokes concerns *kapparah*, not *taharah*. Yom Kippur itself has a special power of atonement, but there are two dimensions to that *kapparah*. We say מלך מוחל וסולח לעוונותינו ולעוונות עמו בית ישראל - *a King Who pardons and forgives our sins and the sins of His people, the House of Israel*. The first refers to the individual; the second to Klal Yisrael as a whole.

According to Rebbe, one who has not done *teshuvah* cannot receive complete individual *kapparah*, but he can still share in the communal *kapparah* of Klal Yisrael, a מקצת כפרה - *measure of atonement*. The Chachamim, whose view Rambam follows, do not separate the two: without personal *teshuvah*, the individual does not receive the *kapparah* of Yom Kippur. This distinction is developed further later in *The Individual and the Community*.

But even Rebbe's broad view of עיצומו של יום - *the essence of the day* - concerns only *kapparah*. It does not cleanse or restore the personality changed by sin. No one can become pure through the *teshuvah* of the community or of another person. *Taharah* remains personal: אין שליח לטהרה - *there is no proxy for purification*.

There is also a difference in when the two dimensions of Yom Kippur come to the foreground. *Kapparah* is especially connected with the korbanos and the *avodah* of Yom Kippur, which take place during the day. *Taharah*, however, begins with the entrance of Yom Kippur itself, with the *kedushas hayom*. Purification begins when a Jew draws near and stands לפני ה' - *before Hashem*.

No one can go to the *mikveh* for someone else. In the same way, no one can appoint a *shaliach* to become pure in his place. There are therefore two kinds of *vidui* on Yom Kippur. There is the public *vidui* of *kapparah*, said together with the community, and there is the deeply personal *vidui* of *taharah*, in which each person stands alone before Hashem. The Kohen Gadol could

perform the *avodah* for Klal Yisrael, but when it came to purification the message was personal: *טהורו - purify yourselves*.

This gives special force to Rabbi Akiva's words: אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם - *Fortunate are you, Israel: before Whom do you purify yourselves, and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven* (Mishnah Yoma 8:9). He continues מה מקוה מטהר את הקב"ה מטהר את - *Just as a mikveh purifies the impure, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Israel*.

These words take on special force when read against the first Yom Kippur after the Churban. The people had lost the Beis Hamikdash, the Kohen Gadol, the ketores and the entire *avodah* of the day. It could have seemed that everything was lost. Rabbi Akiva taught otherwise. For *taharah*, you do not need a korban or a Kohen Gadol. You must enter לפני ה' - *before Hashem* - completely, the way a person enters a *mikveh* with no *chatzitzah* and nothing held back. The Beis Hamikdash was gone, but the possibility of becoming pure was not.

Leaving the Road That Leads to Sin

The same idea explains a difficult halachah in Sanhedrin 25b. Gamblers, lenders on interest and others who had become disqualified as witnesses were not restored merely by promising to stop the forbidden act. Chazal required *חזרה גמורה - a complete return*. The gambler had to break his gaming pieces; the lender on interest had to tear up his loan documents; they had to pull away even from similar conduct that might technically be permitted. Rambam records these rules in Hilchos Edus 12:5-8.

The placement of this halachah is itself significant. Rambam does not record these requirements in Hilchos Teshuvah, where regret and a commitment not to return to the sin are central. He records them in Hilchos Edus, because the issue there is not only forgiveness but restoring the person to his former standing as a trustworthy witness. That requires *taharah* and therefore *חזרה גמורה - a complete return*.

Why so much? Because *taharah* is not only leaving the sin. It is leaving the road that led there: the habits, atmosphere, excuses and pressures that made the sin possible. A sin rarely appears from nowhere. It grows in an environment.

That is why the Navi says יעזב רשע דרכו ואיש און מחשבותיו *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts* (Yeshaya 55:7). The issue is not only the act. It is the *derech*, the way of living and thinking that keeps bringing a person back to the same place. *Kapparah* can begin when a person leaves the sin. *Taharah* asks him to leave the road as well.

Chesed and Emes

This helps explain why *teshuvah* is connected both with *chesed* and with *emes*. The Yerushalmi presents the question dramatically. שאלו להכמה חוטא מה - *They asked Wisdom what should happen to the sinner, and Wisdom answered: evil pursues sinners*. שאלו לנבואה חוטא מה עונשו - *They asked Prophecy, and Prophecy answered: the sinful soul shall die*. Finally, שאלו להקב"ה אמר יעשה תשובה, *They asked Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and He said: let him do teshuvah* (Yerushalmi Makkos 2:6). Left to the ordinary logic of consequences, sin leads to its result. The possibility of *teshuvah* opens another path. That itself is an extraordinary *chesed*.

But the Thirteen Middos also say רב חסד ואמת - *abundant in kindness and truth* (Shemos 34:6). *Kapparah* is *chesed*: Hashem accepts the person who regrets his sin even though he may not yet have rebuilt every part of his life. *Taharah* is also *emes*: the old sin no longer defines him because he has truly become different. Rambam describes changing one's name as if to say אני *I am another person; I am not the man who did those deeds* (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:4).

Fear Can Wake a Person Up

Not every return begins with deep reflection. Sometimes a person is shaken awake. Naval was drunk and celebrating when Abigail came to him, but she waited until morning to tell him what had almost happened. ויהי בבקר בצאת *And it was in the morning, when the wine had left Naval* (Shmuel I 25:37). Only when the intoxication passed could he hear.

There is a spiritual intoxication too. A person can become so caught up in habit, appetite, ambition or comfort that he simply does not want to hear. Then something breaks through. The approach of Yom Kippur itself can do that. Fear of judgment may bring a person to shul, awaken regret and begin a real *teshuvah*. That awakening is not insignificant. It can bring *kapparah*. But if the old life is still carefully preserved for later, if the gaming pieces and loan documents are still sitting in the drawer, the person has not yet reached *taharah*.

Two Immersions: Water and Fire

How does a person move from *kapparah* to *taharah*? It requires *טבילה במים - an immersion in water and an immersion in fire*. Water is the plunge into הדעת *the waters of understanding*: serious self-examination, looking honestly at what the sin has done and what it says about one's life. Fire is *שבירת הרצון - breaking the will*: refusing to let desire continue to dictate the future.

The immersion in water changes the meaning of regret. Regret is not only fear of what may happen because of the sin. It is recognizing the sin itself as a failure. *שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעונך - Return, Israel, to Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your sin* (Hoshea 14:2). The pasuk does not merely say that the sin later caused the person to stumble. *כי כשלת בעונך* means that he stumbled in the sin itself. What looked like a route to pleasure, success or security was itself the failure. The word *chet* carries the idea of missing the target: the sin makes a person miss the very thing he thought he was reaching for. In that sense, *החטא הוא העונש - the sin itself is the punishment*. Real regret comes when a person sees not only the consequences of the sin, but what the sin itself did to his life.

The immersion in fire concerns the future. Understanding is not enough if the will remains unchanged. Kiddushin 81a tells how Rav Amram Chasida, facing a powerful temptation, cried out *נורה בי עמרם - Fire in the house of Amram*, bringing others running and making it impossible for him to hide what was happening. The *yetzer hara* burns like fire. At times it takes a stronger fire, a firm act that breaks the old pattern, to overcome it.

For I Have Redeemed You

The tefillos of Yom Kippur ask for both. We say *מחול לעוונותינו ביום הכיפורים - Forgive our sins on this Yom Kippur*. And we also say *מחה והעבר פשעינו - Erase and remove our transgressions and sins from before Your eyes*. One asks for *kapparah*. The other asks that the stain itself disappear.

Yeshaya gives the final image *מחיתי כעב פשעיך וכענן חטאותיך שובה אלי כי גאלתיך - I have erased your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to Me, for I have redeemed you* (Yeshaya 44:22). A cloud can hide the sun without destroying it. When a person reaches *taharah*, the cloud itself begins to lift and the light that had been hidden can shine again.

That is the fuller promise of Yom Kippur. We ask not only that the past be forgiven, but that we ourselves be changed. *Kapparah* deals with what the sin has brought upon us. *Taharah* deals with what the sin has done to us. Yom Kippur offers both forgiveness and the possibility of becoming clean and new.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/ravfrand-5755-haazinu/>

Listen to the Music! Parshas Haazinu

By Rav Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torahportion: Tape # 67, The Mitzvah of Writing a Sefer Torah. Good Shabbos!

Rav Herzog on the Comparison of Torah to a Song

The verse from which we derive the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah [Devorim 31:19] says "And now write for yourselves this song...". We see the Torah refers to itself as a "Song" (Shirah). Why is Torah called Shirah?

Rav Herzog once gave the following explanation: With virtually all fields of study in the world, one uninitiated in that discipline gets no

pleasure from hearing a theory or an insight concerning that field of study. For example — physics. If one tells over to a physicist a “chiddush” in his field of expertise, he will get great pleasure from it. If, however, one shares this same insight with someone who has never studied and never been interested in physics, he will be totally unmoved by it. The same applies to many, many other disciplines. However, this is not the case with music. When Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is played — regardless of whether one is a concert master or a plain simple person — there is something one will get out of it. Music is something that everyone on their own level can enjoy and have a relationship to.

Rav Herzog says, that’s why Torah is called “Shirah”. One can be a great Talmid Chochom and learn “Bereishis Barah Elokim...” and see great wisdom therein. On the other hand, one can be a five year old child, just beginning to read, and learn “Bereishis Barah Elokim...” and also gain something from it. Every person, on his own level can have an appreciation for Torah. Therefore Torah is aptly referred to in the verse when it says “And now, write for yourselves this ‘song’...” Menachem Tzion on “Binu Shnos Dor V’Dor”

The verse says in Parshas Ha’azinu [32:7] “Remember bygone days; understand the years of each generation; ask your father and he will tell you, your grandfather and he will say it over to you”. This pasuk, even on a very simple and basic level is telling us that a person has to have an appreciation for history.

A Jew, especially, has to have an appreciation of what was before him. If a person has an appreciation of what was, of tradition, of what has transpired over the years, then he is a person that can deal with the present even better. A person has an obligation to remember and to understand and to try to see the Hand of G-d (Hashgocha) in history.

Willaim Shirer used as an epigraph to his Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (1959) the quote from U.S. philosopher George Santayana: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This is a truth. One needs to remember past history (Zechor Yemos Olam).

On a simple level, Binu Shnos Dor V’Dor (Understand each and every generation) is redundant. It would appear to be a poetic restatement of the beginning of the verse. On a homiletic level however, the Menachem Zion offers a very nice interpretation of this expression.

Yes, one must understand history and take the lessons of history and apply it to our generation, but also Binu ‘Shnos’ dor v’dor. He homiletically says the word ‘Shnos’ is derived not from the word ‘Shana’ (year) but from the word ‘Shoneh’ (different). The meaning is that you must understand the changes from one generation to the next.

A person can not blindly apply the same rules that worked in the past to the present situation. If he tries, he will fall short. Each generation is different. A person can not glibly say “That’s the way it was; therefore that’s the way it has to be”. Binu Shnos Dor V’dor — take the lesson of history, but bear in mind the changes from generation to generation. Times change, people change, and circumstances change. Sometimes a person has to alter and redirect and not merely go with what was.

If someone today were to send a half million troops to the beaches of Normandy, he would rightly be called a “meshuganer”. While 50 years ago there was indeed a need to fight a battle on the beaches of Normandy, that battle is now over; that battle has already been

fought; and that battle has already been won. We cannot always continually fight the same battle over again.

Understand the changes (‘shnos’) in each generation. Understand that each generation has its own set of problems and own set of rules and own set of circumstances. We must remember the days gone by, but couple that remembrance with an understanding of the changes that take place in each generation.

In this connection, I have quoted in the past the ‘Chassideshe vort’ of Reb Levi Yitzchak that Eliyahu (rather than Moshe Rabbeinu or anyone else) was the one designated to resolve all of the Gemarah’s “Teykus”. The reason, the Berditchever says, is because Chaz”al say Eliyahu never died — he has been around in all generations. To pasken shaylos we need someone who has an understanding of each generation to pasken the Shaylah for that generation. Therefore only Eliyahu who was present during all generations will be qualified to resolve the “Teykus”.

Rav Gedaliah Schorr on Revealed and Hidden Manifestations of G-d The verse says [32:39] “See now that I myself (Ani, Ani) am the One, there is no other god with me; I will kill and I will resurrect. I will hit and I will also heal, there is no one to save from My Hand”. The commentaries are here bothered by the two “Ani”s. It should just say the word Ani once.

The Kli Yakar explains, that the verse is coming to contradict those schools of thought that believe there are two Supreme Forces in the world: The Force that Gives us Good and the Force that Gives us Evil. The verse comes and says this is incorrect. The same G-d that Kills is the G-d that Resurrects. The same G-d that gives illness is the G-d that heals. Ani Ani Hu. (I, myself, am the One). There are no two “Domains”.

Rav Gedaliah Schorr, zt”l says that the Kabalistic works discuss two ways in which G-d deals with the world — the Revealed Way (Gilui) and the Hidden Way (Hester). The Revealed Way is referred to in this literature as “Ani” — we can see clearly that it is “I – G-d” who is dealing with us. But when the Hidden Way is talked about it is referred to in Kabalistic terminology as “Hu” — the third person. As if it were not G-d acting, but another Force, as it were, — “Him” not “I”.

Using these terms, Rav Schorr offers a beautiful interpretation of the verse: “Ani, Ani, Hu” means that the attribute that deals with you as “Ani” is in fact identical to the attribute that deals with you as “Hu”. When G-d deals with us in a mysterious way such that we cannot understand His Ways, we must nevertheless believe that it is the same Force; the same Ribbono Shel Olam as the one Whose Presence is clearly evident to us.

A very short time ago, we beat our breasts with the confession for the “sins” we have committed against You with ‘Timhon levav’.

‘Timhon Levav’ means that we have ‘Temihos’ (questions) because we have not seen the Ribbono Shel Olam as the First Person (I), but as the Hidden Third Person (Hu); we have failed to believe with a complete belief that the Hidden and the Revealed manifestations are from one and the same Ribbono Shel Olam.

Personalities & Sources: Rav Yitzchak Herzog (1888-1959) — Chief Rabbi of Ireland and later Palestine – Israel. Menachem Tzion — Rabbi Menachem Ben-Zion Zachs. Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev – (1740-1810) – famous Hassidic Rebbe, disciple of Dov Baer of Mezritch. Rav Gedaliah Schorr (1910-1979) — Rosh Yeshiva, Mesifita Torah V’Daath; Brooklyn, N.Y. Kli Yakar — Bible commentary by R. Shlomo Ephraim Lunshitz (1550-1619); Prague.

Transcribed by David Twersky Assistance by Dovid Hoffman This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#67). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: #67 is: The Mitzvah of Writing a Sefer Torah. The other halachic portions for Parshas Ha'azinu from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are: Tape # 296 – Ha'azinu: Does Eating Mezonos Require a Succah? Shiurim can be ordered from:Yad Yechiel Institute <https://www.yadyechiel.org/>

Adapted by CS from

Reflections & Introspection

by Harav Moshe Shapiro

Yom Kippur: The Day of Truth

Two Judgments

We ordinarily think of Rosh Hashanah as the Day of Judgment and Yom Kippur as the day of *kapparah*. Yet Chazal describe a more complex structure.

שלושה ספרים נפתחין בראש השנה אחד של רשעים גמורין ואחד של צדיקים גמורין *Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah: one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for those in between* (Rosh Hashanah 16b).

The completely righteous are written and sealed immediately for life, the completely wicked for death, while the judgment of the *beinoni* remains suspended until Yom Kippur. On the surface, this suggests that Rosh Hashanah is the real Day of Judgment and Yom Kippur merely completes the unresolved cases. But the deeper structure is that there are two judgments, each addressing a different dimension of existence.

The Lunar Year and the Solar Year

The Torah gives Klal Yisrael authority over the calendar:

החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים - *This month shall be for you the first of the months* (Shemos 12:2).

The Jewish calendar is lunar, but it must remain aligned with the solar year. A lunar year of twelve months is roughly eleven days shorter than a solar year, so the two systems must periodically be reconciled. The months follow the moon, while the year remains connected to the solar cycle.

The ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur correspond approximately to that gap. Rosh Hashanah begins the new lunar year, while those same days can also be understood as completing the previous solar year. Yom Kippur therefore occupies an extraordinary position. From one perspective it is the tenth day of the new year; from another, it stands at the completion of the year that has passed.

This explains why Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can both be days of judgment. Rosh Hashanah judges existence as it enters a new cycle of time. Yom Kippur reaches the point at which the cycle itself is brought to completion and judged from its source.

Beyond the World Beneath the Sun

Koheles describes human existence as life *beneath the sun*. *What advantage does man have from all his labor that he performs beneath the sun* (Koheles 1:3).

The phrase *תחת השמש* is more than poetic language. The sun represents the fixed order of the created world, the regular structure of nature and time in which we live. The solar year encompasses that order. Yom Kippur stands at its boundary, at the point where the completed world is brought before its Source.

This is why Yom Kippur is not simply a second chance after Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah judges the world within time. Yom Kippur reaches toward the root from which time and the created order themselves receive existence.

The Day Torah Is Given Again

The first Yom Kippur was the day Moshe Rabbeinu descended with the second *Luchos*.

פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים כראשונים - *Carve for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones* (Shemos 34:1).

The first *Luchos* had been shattered after the sin of the Golden Calf. The second *Luchos* therefore represent far more than replacement. They reveal that Torah can be given again after sin. Yom Kippur becomes the day on which the bond between Hashem, Torah, and Klal Yisrael can be renewed. Torah is not merely one institution within the created world. It expresses the Divine will upon which the world itself rests. The day on which Torah is restored is therefore also the day on which the world can be restored to its proper relationship with Hashem. Judgment, *kapparah*, Torah, and Hashem's Kingship are not separate themes. They meet at the same point: the world returning to the will that gives it existence.

The Two Goats and the Nature of Sin

The *avodah* of Yom Kippur gives this idea a human form. At its center stand the two goats. The Mishnah requires that they resemble one another as closely as possible, equal in appearance, height, and value. Yet their destinies are utterly different. One is brought *לפני ה'* - *before Hashem*; the other is sent to *Azazel*.

ומאת עדת בני ישראל יקח שני שעירי עזים לחטאת - *From the congregation of the Children of Israel he shall take two he-goats for a sin offering* (Vayikra 16:5).

They begin as a pair and are only afterward separated. They therefore represent two possibilities within one person. A person can contain that which belongs *לפני ה'* and that which must ultimately be cast away. Sin can become deeply attached to a person. Habit can become identity, and repeated failure can make a person believe that this is simply who he is. But Yom Kippur teaches that the sin, however real, need not be the deepest truth of the person. It can be separated from him.

This is the meaning of *kapparah*. A stain can be wiped from a garment because the stain and the garment are not the same thing. So too, sin can be removed because it does not necessarily belong to the essential self.

Once Each Year

The Torah concludes the *avodah* of Yom Kippur with the words: והיתה זאת לכם לחקת עולם לכפר על בני ישראל מכל חטאתם אחת בשנה - *This shall be for you an eternal statute, to bring atonement upon the Children of Israel for all their sins, once each year* (Vayikra 16:34).

The phrase *אחת בשנה* - *once each year* can be heard as more than a statement of frequency. Yom Kippur is the point of *achdus* within the year. Throughout the year, life appears fragmented into days, events, choices, successes, and failures. On Yom Kippur, all of those fragments are brought back toward their single source.

The Day of Truth

This is the point toward which the entire structure leads. Yom Kippur is a day of *emes*, truth.

We ordinarily live among layers. What we have done becomes mixed with who we think we are. Habit begins to look like essence. Failure begins to seem permanent. A person may no longer know what belongs to his true self and what merely accumulated around it.

Yom Kippur separates the two. Falsehood can disappear; truth cannot. A person may know that he sinned and may have to confront years of repeated failure. But he need not grant those sins the status of *emes*. He need not say: this is what I am.

The sins remain real acts for which he must take responsibility, confess through *vidui*, regret, and change. But they need not become the final truth of his being. What is false can be cast away. What is true remains.

That is the deeper meaning of *kapparah*. It is not pretending that the past never happened. It is revealing that the past does not have the power to define the essence of a person forever.

And this is why judgment and *kapparah* ultimately coincide. The judgment of Yom Kippur is a judgment of truth. Once everything is brought before Hashem, what is secondary and accidental can fall away and what is essential can emerge. The person is judged, the world is judged, and both are returned to the point from which they derive their existence.

Hashem will be King over the entire earth; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name One (Zechariah 14:9).

This is not a new reality imposed upon the world. It is the revelation of the reality that was always there.

Yom Kippur gives us a glimpse of that revelation each year. The world *תחת* beneath the sun reaches its limit. Torah reconnects creation to its Source. Hashem's Kingship is revealed. Sin is separated from the person who has attached himself to it. What can be removed is removed, and what is true remains.

That is why Yom Kippur is both the Day of Judgment and the Day of *kapparah*. It is the Day of *Emes*.

Adapted by CS from

Shabbos u'Moed V3 by Rav Yitzchok Kossowsky

From Fasting to Inner Light and Joy: Standing Upright Before Hashem on Yom Kippur

Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart (Tehillim 97:11).

לא הכל לאורה ולא הכל לשמחה צדיקים לאורה וישרים לשמחה צדיקים לאורה - *Not everyone merits light, and not everyone merits joy. The righteous merit light, as it is written, Light is sown for the righteous; the upright merit joy, as it is written, And joy for the upright of heart* (Taanis 15a).

The Joy of Yom Kippur

The holiest hour of the year is the entrance of the holy day, Yom Kippur. The Torah calls it a *mikra kodesh* even as it commands *את נפשתיכם* - *you shall afflict your souls* (Vayikra 23:27), and requires the fast *עד מערב* - *from evening to evening* (Vayikra 23:32). Yet we enter the day with *Shehecheyanu*. The fasting body receives no physical pleasure from this joy. It is a joy of the soul, purified of material enjoyment and directed entirely to Hashem.

I praised joy (Koheles 8:15), which Chazal explain as *the joy of a mitzvah* (Shabbos 30b). The Rambam therefore writes, *השמחה שישמח אדם בעשיית המצוה ובאהבת האלקים שצוה בהן* - *The joy a person experiences in performing a mitzvah and in loving Hashem Who commanded it is a great form of divine service* (Hilchos Lulav 8:15).

אור זרוע לצדיק ולישרי - *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart* (Tehillim 97:11). External light brings the joy of physical life; inner light, the light of knowing Hashem, brings the joy of the soul. *מתוך האור וטוב לעינים* - *Light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun* (Koheles 11:7). So too, spiritual light opens the soul to joy.

the Shechinah does not rest upon a person through sadness, but through joy (Shabbos 30b).

But Chazal make a striking distinction: *לא הכל לאורה ולא הכל לשמחה צדיקים* - *Not everyone merits light and not everyone merits joy; the righteous merit light, while the upright merit joy* (Taanis 15a). The *tzaddik* receives light, but joy belongs especially to the *yesharei lev*. Rashi explains, *הישרים עדיפי מצדיקים* - *the upright are on a higher level than the righteous*. To understand the joy of Yom Kippur, we must therefore understand what it means to become *yashar*.

What It Means to Be "Yashar"

The pesukim repeatedly place the *yesharim* beyond the *tzaddikim*: *רננו צדיקים בה' לישרים נאווה תהלה* - *Rejoice, righteous ones, in Hashem; praise is fitting for the upright* (Tehillim 33:1), and *אך צדיקים יודו לשמך ישרים* - *The righteous will give thanks to Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence* (Tehillim 140:14).

Chazal tell us that *אברהם, יצחק ויעקב נקראו ישרים* - *Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were called yesharim* (Avodah Zarah 25a). Bilam himself longed,

Let my soul die the death of the upright (Bamidbar 23:10).

What is this special uprightness? Koheles says, *עשה האלקים את האדם ישר, והמה בקשו חשבנות רבים* - *Hashem made man upright, but they sought many calculations* (Koheles 7:29). This cannot mean that a person is created already righteous, for righteousness depends on human choice. Rather, Hashem created the human being with an upright form and an upright purpose.

Chazal describe man as sharing qualities with both the *malachei hashareis* and the animals (Chagigah 16a). Most significantly, *מלאכים בקומה זקופה* - *human beings walk upright like the ministering angels*. Unlike the animal whose head is bent toward the earth, man was created with his head raised toward heaven, able to fulfill *שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא* - *Lift your eyes on high and see Who created these* (Yeshayahu 40:26). The human body itself reflects this double existence. The lower part serves eating, digestion, and reproduction; the upper part contains the head, speech, and understanding. Man stands between earth and heaven. His task is to keep the heaven within him above the earth within him, *כימי השמים על הארץ* - *like the days of heaven over the earth* (Devarim 11:21).

When the higher rules the lower, the person stands straight. When bodily desire rules the spirit, the order is reversed. *I sinned and distorted what was upright* (Iyov 33:27). Sin bends the *yashar* within a person and turns the head that was created to look upward back toward the earth.

The Avos embodied the opposite possibility. Chazal teach that the *yetzer hara* did not rule over them and that Hashem gave them in this world a taste of *Olam Haba* (Bava Basra 17a). Their earthly lives were therefore genuinely *כימי השמים על הארץ* - *like the days of heaven over the earth*. They were called *yesharim* because they preserved the straight order of creation. And where that inner uprightness is complete, the result is the joy promised to *the upright of heart*.

Yom Kippur: Standing Upright Again

The deeds of the Avos have not, because of our sins, fully become the pattern of their children. The *yetzer hara* that did not rule over them rules powerfully over us. It draws us after our hearts and eyes and after the very needs in which we resemble the animals. Our upright stature bends beneath the burden of sin, and our head, meant to be raised toward heaven, is pulled toward the earth.

Out of His love and compassion, Hashem therefore gave us Yom Kippur. For one day there is no eating or drinking and no ordinary pursuit of bodily satisfaction. We are given a day of freedom from the body's constant claims. This is the meaning of *Loosen the bonds of wickedness and untie the straps of the yoke* (Yeshayahu 58:6). The purpose of the day is not suffering for its own sake. It is to loosen the bonds that keep us bent, to straighten our backs, raise our heads, and restore the heaven within us to its proper place above the earth.

The five *inuyim* of Yom Kippur help create that transformation. Chazal picture Israel on this day as resembling the *malachei hashareis*: *מה מלאכי השרת יחיפי רגל כך ישראל יחיפי רגל ביום הכפורים* - *מה מלאכי השרת אין להם קפיצים ועומדים כך ישראל עומדים ביום הכפורים* - *מה מלאכי השרת אין בפייהם אכילה ושתייה כך ישראל אין בפייהם אכילה ושתייה ביום הכפורים* - *Just as the ministering angels are barefoot, so Israel is barefoot on Yom Kippur; just as the angels stand, so Israel stands on Yom Kippur; and just as the angels have no eating or drinking, so Israel has no eating or drinking on Yom Kippur* (Yalkut Shimoni, remez 578; see Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, ch. 46).

The absence of eating is readily understood. But why is being barefoot part of the comparison?

The Dust of the Road

The answer begins with Avraham Avinu and the three angels. When he said, *יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם* - *Let a little water be brought and wash your feet* (Bereishis 18:4), Chazal say that the angels understood him to suspect them of worshipping the dust of their feet (Bava Metziah 86b).

The image becomes meaningful in light of the Torah's warning against saying *היה זהה* - *My strength and the power of my hand made me this wealth*, instead of remembering *לך כח לעשות* - *He is the One Who gives you strength to achieve* (Devarim 8:17-18).

A person who attributes success entirely to his own movement, skill, and exertion can come to worship, in effect, himself and the dust raised by his own feet.

Chazal connect this danger with a life absorbed in commerce and ceaseless movement: *It is not beyond the sea; Torah is not found among merchants and traders* (Eruvin 55a). In the setting described here, constant travel and business can fill a person's consciousness until he imagines that his own going and coming are what sustain him. The dust on the feet becomes the symbol of restless human striving.

Avraham's call was therefore *Wash your feet and rest beneath the tree* (Bereishis 18:4). Stop the rushing. Wash away the dust of self-reliance and remember the G-d of heaven and earth Who gives the power to accomplish.

The same idea appears at the entrance to the Mikdash: *לא יכנס להר הבית - A person may not enter the Temple Mount with his staff, his shoes, his money belt, or the dust upon his feet* (Berachos 54a). Before entering holiness, a person must leave the dust of ordinary striving outside.

Standing Before Hashem

We can now understand why the angels are described as *עומדים* - *those who stand*. The endless rushing of ordinary life can make a person forget his Maker. Standing still creates the possibility of *חשבון* - *an accounting of one's world*, a moment in which a person can ask what he is living for.

At the burning bush, Moshe was told, *Remove your shoes from your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground* (Shemos 3:5). Holiness becomes perceptible when the running stops and a person realizes where he is standing.

This is the unity of the angelic qualities we imitate on Yom Kippur. The angels do not eat or drink, they are barefoot, and they stand. They are not driven downward by physical need or outward by restless pursuit.

On Yom Kippur we too stop. For a day we step out of the ordinary race, put aside the demands of the body, remove the dust from our feet, and stand before Hashem. In that stillness a bent person can become upright again.

Light and Joy

This is why the *inuyim* of Yom Kippur need not lead to sadness. They can become a source of inner delight and joy, filling the soul with the light of *ורה* - *Light shines in the darkness for the upright* (Tehillim 112:4).

As the day begins, we straighten ourselves and remember what Hashem created us to be. We are not only fasting. We are becoming *yesharim* again, lifting the heaven within us above the earth, standing still before Hashem, and recovering the inner light from which true joy grows.

This, then, is the precious gift of Yom Kippur. Once each year Hashem frees us from the demands of the body and the endless movement of ordinary life, so that we may straighten our bent posture, lift our heads, and remember the purpose for which we were created. On this day we stand before Him like the *malachei hashareis*, no longer running after the things that pull us downward, but turning our eyes upward toward Heaven.

Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart (Tehillim 97:11). The fasting and *inuyim* of Yom Kippur are therefore not ends in themselves. They restore us to *yashrus*, to inner light, and from that light comes true *simchah*. We enter the day with awe, but also with gratitude and joy, for Hashem has given us one day each year in which we can stand upright again and return to Him.

From: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>

Thu, Sep 17, 2026 at 11:14 PM

A Small Step for Man; A Giant Step for G-d It's Never All or Nothing - Rabbi YY Jacobson Relativity

An Odessa Jew meets another one. "Have you heard, Einstein won the Nobel Prize?" "Oh, what for?" "He developed this Relativity theory." "Yeah, what's that?" "Well, you know, five hairs on your head is relatively few. Five hairs in your soup is relatively many." "And for that, he wins the Nobel Prize?!"

Today we will discuss this "theory of relativity" in Jewish spirituality. What may seem small on one plane is seen quite differently on another.

What's the Novelty?

Teshuvah, or repentance, one of the greatest gifts that Judaism and the Torah have given humanity, is the idea that G-d gives second chances. This is a fundamental part of the Jewish experience and is written in innumerable places in Torah, and it is the focus during this time of the year, as we welcome Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Which is why it comes as a surprise that Rabbi Akiva, the famed Jewish leader and Talmudic scholar living in the second century CE, some 1500 years after Sinai and the writing of the Torah, seems to have been surprised, inspired, and even astounded by the idea that G-d gives a second chance to the sinner who repents.

I refer to a statement Rabbi Akiva made which has since gained fame in Jewish songs, chants, and liturgy, and it is recorded in the Mishna.

(i) אמר רבי עקיבא, אשריכם ישראל! לפני מי אתם מטהרין ומי מטהר אתכם? אביכם שבשמים! שנאמר (יהזקאל לו) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם, ואומר (ירמיהו יז) מקוה ישראל ה'. מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים, אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל. Rabbi Akiva said: How lucky are you, O Israel! Before whom are you purifying yourself, and who purifies you? Our father in Heaven! As it is written (Ezekiel 36), "I will sprinkle upon you purifying waters, and you will become purified," and it is said (Jeremiah 17), "Hashem is the mikva of Israel," just as the Mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel. (ii)

What innovation, what revolutionary idea is Rabbi Akiva teaching that has not been taught for over a thousand years? That G-d purifies the impure, forgives the penitents, and absolves the sinner? This is an axiom of Jewish thought dating back to Abraham! This idea is fundamental to Judaism itself. It is as old as Moses and the Jews of the Golden Calf, as Joseph forgiving his brothers, as G-d giving Adam a second chance after eating from the tree of knowledge. The entire concept and institution of Yom Kippur, discussed at length in the Book of Leviticus, is that G-d cleanses the people of Israel! Comes Rabbi Akiva 1500 years after Yom Kippur was created, and declares a novelty! How fortunate are you Israel. Why? Because your father in heaven cleanses you from your blemishes. It seems that Rabbi Akiva has suddenly "discovered America," when in essence he is repeating an ancient axiom of all of Tanach!

The question is stronger: To support this thought, Rabbi Akiva quotes verses that were transcribed some [700] years earlier which clearly state this very truth! Yet even the verses he quotes are from Ezekiel and Jeremiah, rather than from the Five Books of Moses, which clearly state the same truth. (iii)

Even if you can find some reason why Rabbi Akiva repeated this ancient idea, why did the Mishna have to record it? The Mishna is a collection of original Jewish Law, and not the place to record inspirational sentiments that do not teach us anything new and innovative.

Two Extra Words

Many times, when studying Torah we will find, that if there are two questions on the same text, one question will be answered by resolving the other. Here too, there is another problem on the concluding words of Rabbi Akiva: מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה. מטוהר את ישראל. "Just as the Mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel."

Every word in Mishna is precise. There is not an extra word used, not even for aesthetic beauty. Every word of the Mishna was carefully edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince and is exact and necessary. Rabbi Judah chose from thousands of collected records of teachings and manuscripts and included in the Mishna only the best and most exact wordings.

In this statement of Rabbi Akiva, it seems, we have two superfluous words. It should have simply been written, "Just as a Mikvah purifies, so too does G-d purify Israel." Why add the extra words, "purify the impure"? We all know that a mikvah is designated to purify someone who is impure! Who else would be going to the Mikvah but someone who is impure? Why state the obvious?

Yet, in these seemingly superfluous two words lies a wondrous secret. But first, we have to understand a little about the functioning of a Mikvah.

Two Types of Impurity

There are different degrees of impurity, and there are different methods of purification from these various states of impurity. [These were mostly relevant in biblical times and during the days of the Temple, when people had to be very careful to maintain their ritual purity in order to enter the Temple, or eat the sacred food of sacrifices. Today, we don't pay much attention to these ritual patterns, which is why most Jews would not tour the Temple Mount, since you may not enter the space of the Temple if ritually impure.] For example, if one touches a dead rodent, he becomes impure for a day and can become pure simply by immersing in a mikva and waiting for nightfall. On the other hand, if he touches a human corpse he becomes impure for a week and needs a lengthy process of immersing in a mikvah, as well as being sprinkled with a mixture of water and ashes of the red heifer.

Now imagine if someone has become impure, on both accounts, he both touched a rodent, and a human corpse. He is inevitably impure due to the corpse for a week regardless of whether he goes to the mikva or not for the rodent-tumah. The mikvah, usually potent for purification from rodent-impurity, seems now meaningless and impotent due to the stricter corpse-impurity that remains inevitably for a week. Is there any benefit of him going to the mikvah? It would seem not. He will anyway remain impure because he has also touched a corpse.

However, that is not the case. And here we discover something fascinating. The law is that a mikvah will purify and remove the lesser impurity even if the stricter degree of impurity remains! (iv) This then is the profound innovation of Rabbi Akiva. "Just as a Mikvah will purify the impure person" who is destined to remain impure, even after going to the mikvah, so too does G-d purify the penitent who still remains, in some ways, distant and separate from G-d!

A person who is not prepared to repent and to return to G-d fully, he is not ready to take the plunge and surrender away all of his sins and pet peeves, this person might think that G-d accepts all or nothing. He might think: Either I truly repent for everything, or I do nothing.

Either I entirely change my life, or not bother at all. Since I know that I cannot make so many changes in my life, let me not even begin.

Imagine if someone, a borrower, an investor, a partner, owes you \$50,000, but really has neither the desire nor intention to pay you now. It's not that he denies that he borrowed the money, it's just that he cannot be bothered, and maybe does not have the money. Then one fine morning, perhaps the day before Yom Kippur, your dear ungrateful and audacious borrower or partner shows up at your door announcing proudly: "I want to pay you \$5,000!" "\$5,000?? What's that for? You owe me 50,000!!" "I know, but seriously, I only feel like paying you back 5,000. For now, let's forget about the rest. We will deal with that another time. Ok? Deal, or no deal?"

How would you react? Chances are you would throw this man out head first, with his measly \$5,000. And rightfully so. The sheer chutzpah! What is he thinking?

How Lucky!

This is what Rabbi Akiva is talking about. As Jews we turn to G-d each year, and all of us, to some degree or another, feel some sense of remorse or regret for one or two or three things in our life that need to be mended. Not that we are ready to turn over a new leaf, not that we are ready to make the serious changes in our life, not that we are ready for a complete transformation, but there is that one little aveira, that one little sin, that one little lie or cheat, that is nagging me. And I really want to get it off my chest.

I may have hurt someone in a dramatic way and it sits on me; I may have done something wrong that is really perturbing me; I may have insulted someone in a nasty way and I am upset at myself; I may have been involved in something that is eating up on my conscience. So I repent for just that one thing. I ask G-d, or whoever it was that I wronged, to forgive me for that one act. I don't have the energy for the rest of my issues, and I neither know nor care too much at the moment. I don't have time or energy to deal with all my sins. But this one thing I am ready to deal with.

Is this worth anything? Does G-d care for this type of repentance? Comes Rabbi Akiva and says: מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים. Just as a Mikvah purifies the impure, the one who will remain impure even after the mikvah, the one who either way has contracted a much more severe and serious impurity which he is not dealing with right now, yet, the mikva works and will purify him at that moment for the lesser impurity, exactly so does G-d purify Israel!

Why? Why doesn't G-d act as any normal person would, and throw our measly attempt at reconciliation back in our faces?

To this Rabbi Akiva tells us: מי מטהר אתכם? אביכם שבשמים. Because G-d is our "Father in heaven," father who is anxiously waiting for the merest sign of positive movement from us, his child. A good father will embrace and appreciate the tiniest effort his son makes to connect with him, regardless and oblivious to the fact that the son has done wrong in so many more areas.

Today, all psychologists and educators agree that the way to educate is by focusing and drawing attention to even the smallest positive successes of our children and building on them. Education through criticism has been debunked and proven to be futile at best, and destructive at worst.

But Rabbi Akiva said this almost 2000 years ago. G-d is the ultimate loving parent. When he sees that a Jew makes even the slightest movement of Teshuva, regardless of how much he has left to go, G-d immediately embraces this movement with the deepest love, and

purifies him just as the mikvah does. (v)

Fix One Thing

How many of us have not attempted something because we are afraid of failure? How many of us give up on our dreams because we know we will never fulfill them perfectly? How many of us remain paralyzed by perfectionism? How many of us look at things as all or nothing, and therefore do not begin jobs that we know we can never fully complete?

How many of us deprive ourselves of this gift of a mitzvah that is so dear to us, just because we are scared to become "completely religious?" We feel that if we do not get it all right, we will get nothing right, and it is not worth the effort?

Rabbi Akiva is telling us that a Jew must know, that G-d values and cherishes every single mitzvah a Jew does. G-d embraced and cherished every act of change. Even if I regret one mistake in my life and change that, G-d accepts it fully and purifies me. Whatever you manage to accomplish, any step you manage to take forward, towards a better more inspired, G-dly life, is infinitely treasured by G-d who can purify even the one who still remains impure. It may be one small step for man; but a giant step for G-d. (vi)

(i) Mishna end of Yuma. (ii) In the original verse, mikva means hope. G-d is the hope of Israel. Rabbi Akiva interprets it as a "mikvah," a gathering of natural water. (iii) He could have quoted for example the verse in Leviticus quoted earlier in this very Mishnah: For on this day He will forgive you, to cleanse you from all your sins... You can't get much clearer than this. (iv) See for example end of Ch. 3 of Mishna Berachos. משנה זב שראה קרי ונדה שפלטת שכתב זרע (v) This is an innovation revealed and espoused quite fittingly by Rabbi Akiva, the great lover of Jews, and a man who himself made a long and arduous journey from being an illiterate shepherd who actually hated Torah and Scholars, to becoming the pre-eminent Sage and leader of the Jewish people through one of the most difficult moments in their history. (vi) This novel interpretation in the Mishna was shared by the Lubavitcher Rebbe during a public address ("farbrengen"), as he concluded the study of Tractate Yuma on his mother's yartzeit, 6 Tishrei 5730, 1969. Part of it was published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 17 Parshas Acharei.

Adapted & summarized by CS from

by שפתי חיים **Rav Chaim Friedlander**

Teshuvah: The Road Back to the Kisei HaKavod

Moshe Rabbeinu had to cross the heavens to reach the *Kisei HaKavod*. A *baal teshuvah* can reach it by turning around.

When Moshe ascended to receive the Torah, Chazal describe him rising from one firmament to the next until he reached the *Kisei HaKavod*, the highest level of closeness to the Shechinah attainable by a human being. Each stage required another ascent. Yet Chazal say something astonishing about *teshuvah*: גדולה תשובה שמגיעת עד - *great is teshuvah, for it reaches all the way to the Throne of Glory*. The *baal teshuvah* need not climb the same ladder. *Teshuvah* itself can carry him there.

This is the depth of the Navi's words ושובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך - *Return, Yisrael, unto Hashem your G-d* (Hoshea 14:2). *Teshuvah* is not merely a way to erase a sin or repair the past. It is a return to Hashem, a return to the spiritual place from which the *neshamah* came.

When There Is No Road Back

Chazal say, במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדין - *in the place where baalei teshuvah stand, even complete tzaddikim do not stand* (Berachos 34b). How can someone who has fallen rise beyond the *tzaddik gamur* who never fell?

The *tzaddik* rises through his own avodah, step after step. The *baal teshuvah* may begin far below him, sometimes in a place from which he cannot possibly climb back by his own strength. But once he truly turns toward Hashem, another force enters his ascent: *siyata diShmaya*. Hashem helps him rise beyond what his own powers could accomplish. His fall does not become a virtue, but his return opens a path that ordinary spiritual ascent could never provide. Menashe is the most dramatic example. After a life of terrible sin, he finally cried out to Hashem. Chazal relate: באותה שעה אמר הקב"ה אם איני מקבלו בתשובה הרי אני נועל דלת בפני כל בעלי תשובה מה עשה - *At that moment Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: If I do not accept him in teshuvah, I am closing the door before all baalei teshuvah. What did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do? He made an opening for him beneath the Kisei HaKavod* (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin; Ruth Rabbah 5:6, as cited in the Hebrew article).

Menashe had reached a place from which, by the ordinary rules, there was no road back. So Hashem made one. That is one of the great gifts of *teshuvah*: when a person sincerely turns toward Hashem, his past need not determine how high he can still rise. The first movement matters. הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו - *one who comes to purify himself is given assistance* (Yoma 38b). A person must begin. He must turn away from the old direction and want to come back. Then Hashem helps him continue. As the Navi says, יעזב רשע - *let the wicked man abandon his way and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return to Hashem, Who will have mercy upon him* (Yeshaya 55:7). *What Are We Returning To?*

The word *teshuvah* itself means return. But return to what? The deepest answer is: return to ourselves, to the source of the *neshamah*. Chazal teach that before birth a person is charged, כל הנשמות גזורות מתחת כסא הכבוד - *all souls are hewn from beneath the Kisei HaKavod* (Zohar, Vayikra 29b). Sin distances the soul from that source. *Teshuvah* brings it home. This explains why *teshuvah* is not only for the sinner. Even a *tzaddik* must continually return toward the level for which his *neshamah* was created. Chazal teach that before birth a person is charged, תהי צדיק - *be a tzaddik and do not be a rasha* (Niddah 30b). Life itself is a journey of return, an effort to bring the soul closer to its true place.

Why the Soul Is Never Satisfied

This also explains something we experience constantly. A person wants something and imagines that once he has it he will be satisfied. He gets it, enjoys it, and soon wants something else. The desire changes, but the hunger remains.

Chazal give a *mashal*: משל לעירוני בן כפר שנשא בת מלך אם יביא לה - *It may be compared to a villager who married a king's daughter. Even if he brings her everything in the world, it is all insignificant to her, because she is a king's daughter* (Koheles Rabbah, ch. 6, as cited in the Hebrew article).

The *neshamah* is that princess. It comes from beneath the *Kisei HaKavod*, and therefore nothing merely material can finally satisfy it. Hashem implanted within the soul a *she'ifah*, an urge to reach

That is why *teshuvah* can reach so high. It is not carrying the soul to a foreign place. It is bringing it home.

Yet the soul did not descend into this world by mistake. Hashem placed it here because precisely within this world it can attain something higher. The goal is not to escape earthly existence, but to transcend the sense of independent self and reveal Hashem within it. This is the meaning of *יה ענני במרחב יה* - *From the narrow place I called to Hashem; Hashem answered me with expansiveness*. The *meitzar*, the narrow place, is not only sin. It is the limitation inherent in seeing ourselves as separate beings. When a Jew feels that confinement and calls out to Hashem, the very awareness of distance becomes the path to a deeper closeness.

Adapted from *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IX, pp. 204–214.

• **The Atonement of Yom Kippur** *Kapparah* conveys several related ideas: covering, cleansing, neutralizing, ransom, and appeasement. Yom Kippur is the unique day when the normal prosecution of sin is suspended and the underlying holiness of Israel is revealed. The entire day atones, but the

process reaches its culmination at the end of Yom Kippur, giving *Ne'ila* its special intensity.

- **Atonement on Yom Kippur and the Covenant with Israel.** Yom Kippur rests upon Hashem's eternal covenant with Israel, dramatically renewed when Moshe descended with the second *luchos* after the sin of the Golden Calf. That covenant cannot be destroyed by sin. Sin still has consequences and may require suffering and *teshuvah*, but Israel's underlying bond with Hashem remains. This also explains why Yom Kippur prayer and *vidui* are formulated primarily in the plural, as the atonement is first that of Klal Yisrael.
- **The Power of Yom Kippur to Atone for the Individual.** The individual draws his Yom Kippur purification from the collective holiness of Klal Yisrael. As that deeper identity becomes revealed, a person recognizes that his true desire is to be close to Hashem and live according to Torah. Connecting himself to Klal Yisrael therefore strengthens, rather than diminishes, his personal *teshuvah*. This also helps explain why the communal *vidui* is recited in the plural.
- **The Meaning of Fasting.** Fasting is not simply suffering. By temporarily withdrawing from bodily needs, the soul is freed from the material distractions that obscure its deeper aspirations. On Yom Kippur we become somewhat like the *malachim*, allowing the soul rather than the body to dominate. The diminished blood and fat of the fasting body are even compared to an offering brought before Hashem.
- **Sins for Which Yom Kippur Does Not Atone.** Yom Kippur does not eliminate every consequence of sin. Obligations such as *korbanos* or punishments imposed by *beit din* remain, and interpersonal sins are not fully atoned until the injured person has been appeased. Likewise, one who deliberately sins on the assumption that Yom Kippur will erase the offense undermines the very purpose of the day. Genuine *teshuvah*, however, can overcome even this obstacle.
- **The View of R. Yehuda Ha-Nasi.** Rebbe maintains that Yom Kippur provides a basic *kapparah* even without personal *teshuvah*, because the day reveals the eternal covenant between Hashem and Israel. Yet even on this view, sin can damage the soul, and that damage is not necessarily repaired without *teshuvah* or suffering. Yom Kippur can remove punishment demanded by strict justice without automatically restoring the sinner spiritually. Rebbe also excludes fundamental rejection of Hashem, Torah, or the covenant.
- **The View of the Sages.** The Chachamim disagree and maintain that Yom Kippur atones for the individual only together with *teshuvah*. The halakhah follows their view. Nevertheless, a person need not attain perfect *teshuvah*: observing the day, fasting, praying, and revealing a sincere wish to return to Hashem can itself constitute meaningful repentance.
- **Levels of Atonement.** Complete atonement depends on both the severity of the sin and the quality of the *teshuvah*. Some sins are repaired through *teshuvah* alone, while more serious sins may require Yom Kippur, suffering, or other forms of correction. *Teshuvah* from fear reduces the severity of sin; *teshuvah* from love reaches higher, transforming the person's life toward Torah, charity, kindness, *kiddush Hashem*, and service of Klal Yisrael.
- **The Jubilee, Repentance, and Freedom.** *Teshuvah* is liberation from slavery to desire, anger, jealousy, ego, and habit. This explains the connection between Yom Kippur and *Yovel*: on Yom Kippur of the Jubilee year slaves went free and ancestral lands returned to their owners. The *shofar* at the end of Yom Kippur similarly symbolizes the soul's release from the chains of sin and its return to its true self.
- **Matchmaking.** The Mishna records that Yom Kippur was once one of Israel's happiest days, when young women went out in borrowed white clothing and marriages were arranged. The practice reflected the holiness of marriage and its parallel to the bond between Hashem and Israel. Although such matchmaking is no longer appropriate on Yom Kippur, singles may especially pray for a proper match, while married couples can use the day to reflect on the holiness of their relationship.

Chapter 7: Laws of Yom Kippur

Full text at <https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/category/15/15-07/>

- **Honoring the Day.** Although there is no festive meal, Yom Kippur is a *mikra kodesh* and should be honored with dignified clothing, a clean home and synagogue, and other appropriate signs of respect. The physical honor normally expressed through food is redirected toward the sanctity of the day.
- **The Prohibition of *Melakha* and the Mitzva to Desist from Work**
The same thirty-nine categories of *melakha* prohibited on Shabbat are prohibited on Yom Kippur. There is also a positive obligation of *Shabbason*, to preserve the day's restful character and avoid burdensome weekday activity even when it does not technically constitute *melakha*.
- **The Mitzva of Confession (*Vidui*).** Yom Kippur carries a particular mitzva of *teshuvah* and verbal confession. *Vidui* gives concrete expression to regret and the resolution to change, completing the process of repentance. The minimum confession acknowledges having sinned, done wrong, and rebelled, though specifying sins may sometimes deepen *teshuvah*.
- **The Laws of *Vidui*.** The Kohen Gadol confessed on behalf of Klal Yisrael, and our *vidui* therefore remains communal and is recited in the plural. Even a person who did not commit every offense listed says *Ashamnu* and *Al Chet*, because all Jews share responsibility for one another. One stands during *vidui*, generally bows somewhat, and customarily strikes the chest.
- **The Times of *Vidui*.** *Vidui* is first recited at Mincha before the pre-fast meal and then throughout Yom Kippur at Ma'ariv, Shacharis, Musaf, Mincha, and *Ne'ila*. The repeated confessions reflect the fact that *teshuvah* is the mitzva of the entire day. The traditional synagogue service produces ten confessions, paralleling the Kohen Gadol's ten utterances of Hashem's explicit Name.
- **Specifying Sins in *Vidui*.** One can fulfill *vidui* without naming each sin. Specifying a sin privately can be valuable when it increases regret and strengthens *teshuvah*, but shame and modesty also have value. A person may confess again for sins from an earlier year when he senses that his previous *teshuvah* was incomplete or that, at a higher spiritual level, further purification is necessary.
- **Public *Vidui*.** Sins between a person and Hashem generally should not be unnecessarily publicized. A public sin that caused *chillul Hashem*, however, may require public repentance. Interpersonal wrongdoing may likewise require a public apology when that is necessary to restore the victim's honor, but not where publicity would cause additional harm or embarrassment.
- **The Beginning, End, and Other Relevant Times of Yom Kippur.** Yom Kippur begins before sunset and ends after nightfall, with a mitzva of *tosefes Yom Kippur*, adding some weekday time to the sacred day at both ends. Acceptance of the day should be verbalized; women commonly accept it through candle lighting and *Shehecheyanu*, while men ordinarily accept it in synagogue.
- **Accepting Yom Kippur: Candle Lighting.** Candles are lit to honor Yom Kippur and promote *shalom bayis*. The widespread custom is to light and recite the appropriate berakhah, followed by *Shehecheyanu*. A woman who needs to drive afterward should specifically intend not to accept the sanctity of the day with her lighting.
- **Accepting Yom Kippur: *Kol Nidrei*.** Communities differ as to whether *Kol Nidrei* is completed before or after sunset. In all cases, the sanctity of Yom Kippur must be accepted before sunset to fulfill *tosefes Yom Kippur*. Where *Shehecheyanu* will not be reached in time, the congregation should explicitly accept the day beforehand.
- **Ma'ariv.** Yom Kippur begins by welcoming every Jew, even habitual sinners, into the congregation, expressing the unity of Klal Yisrael. *Kol Nidrei*, verses of forgiveness, *Shehecheyanu*, the *talit*, and the evening prayers establish the themes of repentance and communal holiness. Torah study after Ma'ariv is also especially appropriate.
- **Barukh Shem Kevod Malkhuto.** Throughout the year *Barukh shem kevod malkhuto le-olam va-ed* is recited quietly. On Yom Kippur it is said aloud because, freed from bodily concerns, Israel resembles the *malachim*.

The practice expresses the day's revelation that even this physical world can be brought fully under Hashem's kingship.

- **Torah Reading and Pledges.** The morning reading describes the Yom Kippur *avodah*, while the *haftarah* from Yeshayahu emphasizes authentic *teshuvah*. At Minḥa the Torah reading addresses forbidden relationships and the *haftarah* is Sefer Yonah, with its message of Divine providence and repentance. Charity is traditionally pledged in memory of the departed, whose continuing influence through their descendants can add to their merit.
- **Bowing During Musaf.** During the *avodah* section of Musaf, most communities bow in remembrance of those in the Beis Hamikdash who prostrated themselves when the Kohen Gadol pronounced Hashem's Name. Because of the prohibition against prostrating on a stone floor outside the Temple, a barrier is placed between the face and the floor.
- **The Meaning of Bowing.** Prostration expresses surrender and attachment to Hashem. The body itself acknowledges that its life comes from Him. Although full prostration largely disappeared from ordinary prayer, Yom Kippur's intense holiness and *teshuvah* preserve the custom during the *avodah*.
- **Birkat Kohanim During Ne'ila.** *Birkat Kohanim* is recited at *Ne'ila*, when there is no concern that a kohen has consumed wine. It generally is not recited at Minḥa. The service should be timed so that *Birkat Kohanim* can preferably be completed before sunset.
- **Ne'ila.** *Ne'ila* is the final and climactic prayer of Yom Kippur, as the gates of the day begin to close and the judgment is sealed. One should gather whatever strength remains to pray with particular concentration and resolve. The language accordingly shifts from asking to be inscribed to asking to be sealed.
- **Declaring Faith and Blowing the Shofar.** The day concludes with a communal declaration of faith: *Shema Yisrael, Barukh Shem*, and seven repetitions of *Hashem Hu HaElokim*. The shofar then recalls the freedom of *Yovel* and symbolizes release from the chains of sin. The conclusion of Yom Kippur therefore carries not only solemnity but spiritual freedom and joy.
- **The End of the Fast, Ma'ariv, and Kiddush Levana.** The fast ends only after nightfall plus the additional time added to the sacred day. Many recite *Kiddush Levana* afterward, when the tension of judgment has given way to confidence and joy in Hashem's acceptance of our *teshuvah*.
- **Havdala.** Eating and drinking remain prohibited until *havdala*. Unlike ordinary Motzaei Shabbat, no spices are used. The *berakhah* over fire is normally made over a flame that burned throughout Yom Kippur, emphasizing that fire was present but forbidden for use during the sacred day. After *havdala*, it is customary to eat joyfully and then begin preparing the *sukkah*, proceeding immediately from one mitzva to another.

Chapter 8: The Laws of the Fast

Full text at <https://ph.yhb.org.il/en/category/15/15-08/>

- **The Mitzva to Fast.** Fasting on Yom Kippur is a Torah commandment. Eating or drinking even a tiny quantity is prohibited, although the punishable quantities are a *kotevet* of food or approximately a cheekful of liquid. The fast is the central form of *inui*, with the other forms of deprivation discussed separately.
- **The Sick Who Are Not at Risk.** According to the chapter, an illness that is painful but not life-threatening generally does not exempt a person from the fast. It is preferable to remain home and fast rather than eat or drink in order to attend synagogue. Necessary tasteless medication may generally be swallowed without food, subject to the details given there.
- **Someone Sick with a Life-Threatening Illness.** When fasting poses a genuine danger to life, eating and drinking become a mitzva, because *והי בהם חיי* - the mitzvot were given so that a person should live by them. One may not endanger himself by insisting on fasting. At the same time, remote or merely theoretical risks do not automatically eliminate the obligation to fast.
- **Who Determines Danger?** The chapter places significant weight on competent medical judgment while emphasizing that both the sanctity of Yom Kippur and the protection of life must be taken seriously. When genuine doubt about danger remains, *safek pikuach nefesh* is treated

stringently in favor of preserving life. A patient's own sense that he is in danger can also be halakhically significant.

- **Eating and Drinking Minimal Quantities (*Le-shi'urim*)** A dangerously ill person who does not need large quantities immediately should, when medically appropriate, eat or drink less than the halakhic *shiur* at intervals. If doing so might compromise his health or recovery, he should eat and drink normally. The source gives the relevant quantities and intervals, but the controlling concern remains the patient's safety.
- **The Psychological Aspect.** Severe anxiety or weakness during the fast must not be dismissed, since apparent fear may sometimes reflect real danger. Food or drink may initially be given in small quantities when appropriate, but if medical danger exists the person should eat as needed. Someone instructed to eat for health reasons should do so without guilt, since preserving life is itself the Torah's command.
- **Laws of Eating for Those Who Must Eat.** Those permitted or required to eat recite the normal *berakhah*. The chapter discusses *berakhah acharonah*, *netilat yadayim*, *Ya'aleh Ve-yavo*, and related details. The overriding rule is that *le-shi'urim* is preferred only when it can be done safely and practically; otherwise the patient eats and drinks normally.
- **Pregnant Women.** The source rules that a normal pregnancy does not by itself exempt a woman from fasting, while a high-risk pregnancy or a situation posing possible danger to mother or fetus requires individualized medical evaluation. If danger develops during the fast, she should eat or drink as necessary.
- **Childbirth and Postpartum.** From the beginning of active labor, a woman is treated as dangerously ill and should eat and drink as necessary. The source applies this automatically for the first seventy-two hours after birth. From seventy-two hours through seven days postpartum, the decision depends upon her condition; when danger remains uncertain, she does not fast.
- **Nursing Women.** The chapter's general rule is that nursing women fast, but it recognizes exceptions where a vulnerable infant has a particular medical need for the mother's milk and fasting may substantially impair the supply. It recommends preparing before the fast and, when necessary, obtaining appropriate medical and halakhic guidance.

Adapted from

Revivim by Rav Eliezer Melamed

The Six Questions a Person Is Asked at Judgment

As Rosh Hashanah approaches, it is fitting to consider the questions a person is asked when standing before the Heavenly Court. Torah, work, family, redemption, and wisdom, the six questions encompass the life and mission of a Jew in this world, provided that fear of God underlies them all. They also help explain why so much of the Rosh Hashanah prayers is devoted to praise of God.

As the Days of Judgment approach, it is fitting to return to the words of the Talmud (Shabbat 31a), which summarizes the six questions a person is asked when brought before the Heavenly Court:

Rava said: When a person is brought to judgment, they ask him: Did you conduct your business dealings faithfully? Did you set aside regular times for Torah study? Did you engage in procreation? Did you anticipate salvation? Did you engage in the wisdom of Torah? Did you understand one thing from another?

The Question About Work: Did You Conduct Your Business Dealings Faithfully?

Did you conduct your business dealings faithfully? That is, did you work diligently and honestly, and conduct your financial affairs with integrity? This is the first question because working to develop the world and provide for one's family is among a person's most basic responsibilities. From the beginning, when Hashem created the world, He left it incomplete, giving man, created in His image, the opportunity to become His partner in developing and perfecting it. Even in Gan Eden, before the sin, Adam was given work to do, as the Torah says: ויקח ה' אלהים את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה

Hashem God took the man and placed him in Gan Eden to work it and guard it (Bereishis 2:15).

Likewise, our Sages taught *אהוב את המלאכה - Love work* (Avos 1:10). Rabbeinu Bachya explains that a person should love productive work, whatever form it takes, because work removes the disgrace of idleness and is fundamental to a person's life and purpose in this world. But working is not enough. One must work faithfully. A person should not waste the time he has committed to his work, and should complete it on time and to the standard he undertook to provide. His financial life must likewise reflect integrity and generosity. A farmer must properly separate *terumos* and *maasros*, and one who earns money should give *maaser kesafim*. A person who lives this way can answer: Yes, I conducted my business dealings faithfully.

Did You Set Aside Regular Times for Torah Study?

The mitzvah of Torah study is equal to all the mitzvos (Peah 1:1; Yerushalmi ad loc.; Moed Katan 9b). This is true for two reasons. Without Torah study, a person cannot know how to fulfill the Torah's mitzvos or live according to its values. And Torah study is itself among the loftiest mitzvos, because it engages a person's highest faculty, the intellect.

A person must therefore establish regular times for Torah study each day and night. The Shulchan Aruch teaches that this time should be fixed, so that one does not cancel it even for the prospect of substantial financial gain (Orach Chaim 155:1).

Did You Engage in Procreation?

The third question is: Did you engage in procreation?

After securing his physical existence through work and his spiritual existence through regular Torah study, a person's mission is to add life to the world. Hashem commanded Adam and Chavah *וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּבְשִׁוּהָ - Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it* (Bereishis 1:28). Our Sages similarly taught that the world was created to be inhabited, citing *לא תהו בראה - He did not create it for emptiness; He formed it to be inhabited* (Gittin 41b).

By fulfilling this mitzvah, a person follows the ways of Hashem. Just as Hashem created and sustains the world, parents bring children into the world, care for them, and raise them. In doing so, they become partners with Hashem, as our Sages taught: *שלושה שותפין הן באדם הקדוש ברוך הוא ואביו ואמו - There are three partners in a person: the Holy One, blessed be He, his father, and his mother* (Niddah 31a).

The more deeply a person appreciates the life Hashem has given him, the more he wishes to add life to the world and fulfill the mitzvah of *pru urvu* in its fullest sense, with gratitude and joy for the children Hashem gives him.

Did You Anticipate Salvation?

The Jewish people were created to follow the ways of Hashem and help bring redemption to the world. Every Jew should therefore anticipate salvation, hope to see it in his lifetime, and act according to his ability to help bring it about.

As described in the Torah, the Neviim, and the teachings of our Sages, redemption begins with the ingathering of the exiles and the settlement of Eretz Yisrael. It continues through the building of a great educational system, care for those in need, the establishment of a just society, and ultimately the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and the extension of blessing to all humanity.

This aspiration to bring redemption and blessing to the world is rooted in Hashem's charge to Avraham: *Through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Bereishis 12:3).

For this reason, the central focus of Rosh Hashanah is not merely our personal health, livelihood, or family needs, but the revelation of Hashem's glory and kingship in the world. The Zohar describes Hashem saying of Israel: See My beloved children, who set aside their own suffering and concern themselves with My honor (Zohar III 22a).

When Israel turns its attention from its private troubles to Hashem's kingship and the redemption of the world, the accusations against it are silenced, and it merits another year in which to advance toward *tikkun* and redemption.

Anticipating salvation is also connected to procreation. Our Sages taught that just as Israel was redeemed from Egypt in the merit of being fruitful and multiplying, so too future redemption is connected to the continued growth of the Jewish people, as the verse states *כי ימין ושמאל תפרצי וזרעך גוים יירש - You shall spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants shall possess nations and settle desolate cities* (Eliyahu Zuta 14; Yesheyahu 54:3).

Did You Engage in the Wisdom of Torah?

Once a person has fulfilled his basic responsibilities to himself through work and regular Torah study, and has added blessing to the world through family and the pursuit of redemption, he must strive for a deeper level. The final two questions concern depth and wisdom in Torah study.

Did you engage in the wisdom of Torah?

In other words, did you strive to understand Torah deeply and clearly?

Depth, however, can deteriorate into convoluted or empty *pilpul*. The question is therefore not simply whether one analyzed Torah, but whether one did so with wisdom. As the Maharsha explains, the goal is not empty argumentation but *pilpul* guided by intellect, wisdom, and understanding.

Did You Understand One Thing from Another?

Once a person has understood Torah deeply, he can derive from it broader principles that illuminate the rest of life. As our Sages say in Avos, *וממנו צצה ותושיה בינה וגבורה - From it come counsel and sound wisdom, understanding and strength* (Avos 6:1).

This is how the anticipation of redemption can become practical. Through deep Torah study and the ability to draw further understanding from it, Torah can elevate the individual, the family, society, the Jewish people, and ultimately the entire world.

Establishing regular times for Torah study connects a person to Torah and guides him along its path. But to bring its blessing into the wider world, one must also understand Torah in depth and learn to derive one thing from another.

Fear of God Is a Prerequisite for Everything

Our Sages add that even if a person can answer all six questions affirmatively, his accomplishments endure only if *יראה ה' היא אוצרו - the fear of Hashem is his treasure*. Without *yiras Shamayim*, even great accomplishments may fail to endure.

The Gemara offers a parable. A person told his agent to bring wheat up to the attic. When the agent returned, he asked whether he had mixed in a *kav* of *chumton*, salty earth used to preserve the wheat from worms. When the agent answered no, the owner replied that it would have been better had he not brought the wheat at all (Shabbat 31a).

Fear of Heaven is the preservative. Without it, even good deeds and profound Torah learning can ultimately lose their value and direction. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa therefore taught: *כל שיראת חטאו קודמת להכמתו חכמתו - Anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom endures*. But if his wisdom precedes his fear of sin, it does not endure. He likewise taught that one whose deeds exceed his wisdom will retain his wisdom, while one whose wisdom exceeds his deeds will not (Avos 3:9). And our Sages taught *אם אין חכמה אין יראה אם אין יראה אין חכמה - If there is no wisdom, there is no fear; if there is no fear, there is no wisdom* (Avos 3:17). Torah scholars, like all Jews, should therefore devote part of their time for Torah study to *emunah* and *mussar*, so that their learning is accompanied by continuing growth in faith, fear of Heaven, and refinement of character.

I kept essentially all of the substance, but made it sound less like a literal translation, especially in the sections on work, redemption, and the final two questions. I also cut repeated formulations where the same point was being made twice without adding much.

From: Torahweb.org

[Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky](#)

The Name of Hashem, the Words of Torah

When I call the name of Hashem are the introductory words to Parshas Haazinu. Upon calling out the name of Hashem, Moshe instructs us, *הבו גדל לאלקינו - give greatness to our G-d*. Chazal derive from this *passuk*

that before learning Torah we must recite a beracha. Apparently, they understood that ה' שם - the name of Hashem is synonymous with the words of Torah.

Why should Torah study be compared to calling the name of Hashem? In Parshas Ki Sisa, Moshe asks Hashem to reveal His presence. Hashem responds that a human being cannot see Him directly, but grants Moshe a partial revelation: וראית את אחורי - you will see My back (Ki Sisa 33:23). We might expect the next passuk to describe an overwhelming revelation. Instead, Moshe is told to prepare the second luchos so that Hashem can inscribe the Aseres HaDibros upon them. What happened to seeing Hashem? The Torah is teaching us that in this world, we see Hashem through His Torah.

A name identifies and expresses something of the person who bears it. So too, the name of Hashem reveals, to the extent possible, His essence. Hashem reveals Himself to us through the words of Torah. When we engage in Talmud Torah, we connect to ה' שם - the name of Hashem, and we therefore begin by praising Him through Birchah HaTorah.

This connection between Torah and our relationship with Hashem applies throughout the year, but it takes on a special dimension during the Yamim Tovim. In the opening of the beracha recited in Shemoneh Esrei on Yom Tov, we describe our unique closeness to Hashem: אתה בחרתנו - You chose us, אהבת אותנו - You loved us, וקדשתנו במצותיך - You sanctified us with Your mitzvos. Yet there is no explicit mention of the giving of the Torah. That appears only in the final phrase: ושםך הגדול והקדוש עלינו קראת - Your great and holy name You have called upon us.

The ה' שם is the Torah. The culmination of our gratitude for all Hashem has given us is the recognition that His greatest gift is His name, revealed through Torah and bestowed upon His beloved people.

The first Yom Kippur culminated in Hashem forgiving Bnei Yisrael for the chet haegel and giving the second luchos. Yom Kippur therefore became, for all generations, a day of kabbalas haTorah. We invoke the ה' שם repeatedly throughout the day, from ויקרא בשם ה' - and he called in the name of Hashem in Selichos, to the Shem HaMeforash pronounced during the Avodah. As Yom Kippur concludes, the ה' שם of Torah is once again given to us.

Immediately afterward we celebrate the weeklong Yom Tov of Sukkos, culminating in Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. The deepest expression of our joy in Hashem's closeness is to commit ourselves to a life of ושםך הגדול והקדוש עלינו קראת - Your great and holy name You have called upon us. It is not enough simply to learn Torah. We must appreciate Torah as the name of Hashem bestowed upon us. That is the essence of Birchah HaTorah. Perhaps this also explains the custom that everyone receives an aliyah on Simchas Torah, giving each person another opportunity to recite the words of Birchah HaTorah.

As we celebrate our renewed connection to ה' שם - the name of Hashem, may we merit to recognize and cherish the greatest gift of ושםך הגדול והקדוש עלינו קראת - Your great and holy name You have called upon us.

Translated and summarized by CS from

Haazinu: Shirah and Rebuke by Rabbi Ezra Bick

<https://www.etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-devarim/parashat-haazinu/haazinu-shira>

Parshat Haazinu is a *shirah*. Unlike the Song at the Sea, it did not arise spontaneously from a miracle. Hashem commands Moshe to write it in advance and teach it to Bnei Yisrael. That raises the central question: why must this final warning take the form of song?

A Song as Witness

The Torah gives Haazinu a specific purpose: ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת וְלַמָּוֶדָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמְרָהּ בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל - Now write this song and teach it to Bnei Yisrael, place it in their mouths, so that this song may be a witness for Me (Devarim 31:19). When future troubles come, וְעָנְתָה הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי לַעֲד - this song will answer before them as a witness (Devarim 31:21). Even the opening, הָאֲזִינוּ שְׁמַיִם וָאֲדַבְּרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ - Give ear, heavens, and I will speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth (Devarim 32:1), summons heaven and earth as witnesses.

But what does the song add to the *tochachah* of Ki Tavo? The covenant had already stated the rule plainly: if Bnei Yisrael abandon Hashem, punishment and exile will follow. Haazinu does not add a new legal or theological proposition. It does something different.

Why Shirah?

A Midrash about Chizkiyahu provides the key. After Sancheriv's defeat, Chizkiyahu did not sing. His reasoning was that Hashem's miracles were already known. But that is precisely the point of *shirah*: it does not merely transmit information. Prose states a truth that is always true; song gives voice to the truth of this moment. The fall of Sancheriv may teach nothing new about Hashem's power, yet the moment itself demands a response. *Shirah* is truth experienced, not merely truth known.

Haazinu is therefore an extraordinary kind of song: a spontaneous response prepared centuries in advance. Bnei Yisrael are taught it now so that it will remain in their mouths until the day when its words become their own lived experience. Then the song will no longer be prophecy. It will become testimony.

From Knowledge to Experience

This explains the troubling words that precede the song. When disaster strikes, Bnei Yisrael will say, וְלֹא עָלַי אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם הִרְעוּת הָאֵלֶּה - Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have found me (Devarim 31:17). This need not be repentance. It may be accusation: our suffering proves that Hashem abandoned us. The song answers that charge. The true sequence was the reverse: Bnei Yisrael abandoned Hashem, and what followed was the consequence.

The distinction is not merely factual. It is the difference between knowing a covenant intellectually and recognizing its truth after living through it. That is why Haazinu says, וְזָכַר יָמֵינוּ עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דּוֹר וָדוֹר - Remember the days of old; understand the years of generation after generation (Devarim 32:7). Ki Tavo presents the covenant as doctrine; Haazinu turns history itself into the teacher. Only after the cycle of sin, abandonment, punishment, and survival has been lived can the people grasp emotionally what they had once accepted only intellectually.

The song therefore addresses the heart: הֲלֹהִי תִגְמְלוּ זֹאת עִם נֶפֶל וְלֹא חֶסֶד הָלוֹא הוּא - Is this how you repay Hashem, foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father who acquired you, who made you and established you (Devarim 32:6). Its aim is not simply to establish obligation, but to awaken the painful recognition of what has been squandered.

Hester Panim and the Shechinah

Yet Haazinu contains another truth. Bnei Yisrael may feel abandoned, and Hashem Himself describes *hester panim*, the hiding of His face. But hiding a face is not the same as absence. The very phrase implies that Hashem remains present, even when His presence is concealed.

That is why the end of the song moves almost imperceptibly from punishment to Hashem's vengeance against Israel's enemies and His identification with His people. There is no neat transition from punishment to repentance to redemption. Rather, from within the punishment itself, the relationship is revealed. Hashem's anger at Bnei Yisrael and His love for them are not separate stories. They are dimensions of one covenantal bond. The culmination is רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאֵינִי מְחַצֵּת - See now that I, I am He; I put to death and I give life, I struck and I will heal (Devarim 32:39). The Torah says see, not merely know, and now, after history has unfolded. The truth has become visible through experience.

Hashem, Moshe, and the Limits of Teaching

This also explains why the song belongs both to Hashem and to Moshe. Moshe's life has been devoted to teaching Torah, yet he knows that teaching alone cannot guarantee understanding. He warns that after his death the people will corrupt their ways. Haazinu becomes the final completion of his mission: where instruction reaches its limit, history will continue the lesson. Torah gives Bnei Yisrael the words in advance. Life will one day give those words their full meaning. The song is entrusted to heaven and earth until the moment when prophecy becomes memory, doctrine becomes experience, and the truth once learned finally becomes the truth seen.

Gmar Chatimah Tovah