



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON @YOM KIPPUR - HAAZINU - 5786

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Wishing you a **גמר חתימה טובה**
Chaim

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Sep 30, 2025, 11:03 AM

subject: Tidbits in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL- Yom Kippur 5786
Erev Yom Kippur -- An abridged version of Selichos is said • During Shacharis, Mizmor L'sodah, Avinu Malkein, Tachanun, and Lamenatzei'ach are omitted • The minhag of Kapparos should be performed with proper concentration and thoughts of teshuvah. Ma'aser funds should not be used • There is a mitzvah to immerse in a mikvah on Erev Yom Kippur. Some say to immerse oneself three times, while others say seven times. It is best to go to the mikvah no earlier than one hour prior to chatzos, but before one davens Mincha • One should daven Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur before the Seudah Hamafsek, so that Mincha's Viduy is recited prior to the Seudah Hamafsek. • A woman who will not be davening Mincha should still recite the Viduy (Ashamnu and Al Cheit) • There is a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur. Rabbeinu Yonah cites three reasons: 1) To display our simchah over our upcoming atonement. 2) A seudah on Erev Yom Kippur substitutes for the Seudas Yom Tov that we obviously cannot have on Yom Kippur. 3) To give one strength for the fast • Note, one who isn't thirsty and is drinking water solely for hydration does not make a berachah • The Seudah Hamafsek may be eaten any time after Mincha. There is no obligation to wash and eat bread at this seudah, but there is a custom to eat kreplach at this meal. Preferably, one should verbally state (or at least have in mind) before saying Bircas Hamazon that he does not intend to begin fasting at this point and will continue eating and drinking • The home should be prepared and cleaned for Yom Kippur as it would be for Shabbos, with a tablecloth set on the table • One should dress in Shabbos clothing, yet the attire should reflect the somber tone of the day. Some have the minhag to wear white garments and to not wear (yellow) gold jewelry • Parents should bless their children before setting out to Shul • A 24-hour candle is lit to be used for the Havdalah flame on Motzaei Yom Kippur. Many have the minhag to light a Ner Neshama, due to Yizkor. One should remember to fulfill his Tzedakah pledges from the Yizkor. Some have the minhag to have a lit candle in their bedroom as well ("gezunte lecht") • A

tallis is worn during all tefillos throughout Yom Kippur. One should don his tallis on Erev Yom Kippur prior to shekiya, as the berachah on the tallis may not be recited at night. Most wear a kittel as well • There is mitzvah d'oraysah (mentioned in Tefillas Zakkah) to add to the day of Yom Kippur by accepting the arrival of Yom Kippur upon oneself a bit earlier • The berachah on candle lighting is "l'hadlik ner shel Yom hakippurim".

Yom Kippur -- There are restrictions against the following activities: Eating and Drinking. Pregnant women, kimpeturin, the elderly etc. must seek the guidance of a competent halachic authority and not be lenient - neither with their health, nor with the laws of Yom Kippur. Children, when appropriate, should be trained to some degree in the mitzvah of fasting by not eating at night or even delaying breakfast in the morning, etc. Washing. One may wash until his knuckles upon awakening, after relieving himself, and after touching shoes or a covered part of the body. One need not be overly cautious to keep the water below the knuckles. If an area becomes soiled, one may wash off the area; however, regarding washing away perspiration, one should be stringent. A Kohen prior to Bircas Kohanim and those not fasting who are eating bread, should wash their hands entirely. Anointing. This includes any soap, oil, cream, cosmetics etc. Some include deodorant in this category. Leather Shoes. The minhag is to be stringent with children as well. Many poskim do not allow slippers without a back to be worn outside an Eruv. Marital Relations. Some add that one should practice Harchakos as well. No preparations may be done on Yom Kippur for after Yom Kippur, including food preparations. Viduy, confessing our sins in repentance, is a mitzvah d'oraysa. Teshuva is performed by regretting one's sins, confessing sins through Viduy, and resolving to avoid sinning in the future. One must seek forgiveness from anyone he may have wronged. There is a practice in many communities to express verbally that one forgives anyone who may have wronged him. This expression is included in many versions of Tefillas Zakkah. Baruch Sheim is said aloud instead of in an undertone. Rabbi Zlotowitz z"l would say that on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, the holy Kohen Kadosh would enter the holiest place on earth, the Kodosh Hakodoshim and recite a short tefillah that Klal Yisroel should have sufficient parnassah (Yoma 53b). While one may consider certain requests to be more mundane, in essence, every tefillah to Hashem is recognition that He is in control. By praying even for minor things, we acknowledge that we must beseech Him for everything, as He is the source of it all. To achieve the daily 100 berachos, some have the practice of reciting a berachah on besamim periodically. One should have in mind for this blessing to apply only to this occurrence of smelling besamim. One should wait at least a half hour before reciting another berachah. Alternatively, many include berachos made by the Aliyos to the Torah in the daily count (when one pays attention and answers amen to them).

Motzei Yom Kippur Most have the minhag to recite Kiddush Levana immediately after Maariv (the final opportunity is the first night of Succos, late Monday night, October 7th at 12:11AM ET) As always, one may not eat or drink before Havdalah, with the exception of water. One should recite "Baruch Hamavdil..." before drinking water or doing any other melachah. Generally, a woman should wait to hear Havdalah from a man, if possible. Havdalah includes Borei Me'orei Ha'eish, and must be recited over a "Ner She'shavas", a flame which was kindled before Yom Kippur (if this flame only has one wick then an additional candle should be adjoined to the flame as a second wick for Havdalah. Alternatively, the standard Havdalah candle can be lit from this flame). A berachah over besamim is not made. There is a praiseworthy minhag to begin building the sukkah immediately after Yom Kippur so as to go from one mitzvah to the next (one should be careful not to disturb neighbors while doing so). Some say that as an alternative one can learn the halachos of sukkah. Helping one's wife prepare for Yom Tov is, in fact, also a mitzvah. There is a custom to daven Shacharis a bit earlier in the morning following Yom Kippur. Tachanun is omitted in the days between Yom Kippur and Succos.

Krias Hatorah SHACHARIS: The leining (Vayikra 16) is divided into six aliyos and discusses the Yom Kippur Avodah as performed in the Beis Hamikdash. The Maftir (Bamidbar 29:7-11) reviews the Korban Mussaf

offerings brought on Yom Kippur. In the haftarah, Yeshayah Hanavi (57:14-58:14) encourages the nation to teshuvah, cautioning them that fasting and other afflictions are only effective when performed with a sincere heart seeking to repent. MINCHAH: The laws of forbidden relations are leined (Vayikra 18) in three aliyos. The gravity of these sins are recounted to encourage one to overcome the strong temptation in these areas (Rashi, Megillah 31a). The Maftir is Sefer Yonah. The story of Yonah teaches us the power of teshuvah. In addition, Yonah's inability to circumvent the divine plan demonstrates that no man can escape Hashem and His decrees. Many regard the aliyah of Maftir Yonah as a significant segulah. For the Erev Yom Kippur Table -- Unlike the rest of the year, on Yom Kippur we recite "Baruch Sheim Kevod Malchuso" aloud. The Yalkut Shimoni (Parashas Acharei Mos) explains that on Yom Kippur, Klal Yisrael are like angels as they go without shoes, without food and drink and practice other restrictions. However, once Maariv arrives on Motzaei Yom Kippur we resume saying Baruch Sheim in an undertone. One may question, wouldn't it be logical to continue reciting Baruch Sheim aloud at Maariv after Yom Kippur, once we have been thoroughly purified from the day? Rav Zalman Sorotzkin z"l, explains that immediately upon accepting Yom Kippur and all its practices, we achieve lofty heights which enable us immediately to recite Baruch Sheim aloud. On Motzaei Yom Kippur, however, when these obligations have already been relaxed, we are no longer committed to these levels, thus no longer are we on this high level. This power of a firm resolve and true commitment to change and improve is immediately effective, even before the desired spiritual goal is reached. Through recommitting ourselves to be better people to others and to Hashem may we merit to attain lofty levels and a G'mar Chasimah Tovah.

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By Shlomo Katz

Doing the Thirteen Attributes

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Sponsored by Rochelle Dimont and family on the yahrzeit of husband and father Rabbi Albert Dimont a"h

Throughout the weeks of Selichot, culminating with Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur, we invoke G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17b) teaches: Rabbi Yochanan said, "Were the following not stated in a Pasuk, we could never say such a thing. We read (Shmot 34:6), 'Hashem passed before him and proclaimed [the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy].' This teaches that God wrapped himself as a Shli'ach Tzibbur / prayer leader [wraps himself in a Tallit and "passes before" the congregation], and He told Moshe, 'Whenever Yisrael do this order [i.e., the Attributes of Mercy] before Me, I will forgive them.'" [Until here from the Gemara]

R' Eliyahu de Vidas (1518-1592; Eretz Yisrael) writes: This is difficult to comprehend, for our own experience is that we are not always answered when we recite the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy! The explanation for this, R' de Vidas writes, is that when Hashem said, "Do this order before Me," He did not mean: Wrap yourself in a Tallit and recite the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. Rather, He meant: Practice the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy—just as Hashem is Rachum / Compassionate, so we should be compassionate; just as Hashem is Chanun / Gracious, so we should be gracious; etc. (Reishit Chochmah: Sha'ar Ha'anavah ch.1)

R' Reuven Sasson shlita (rabbi in Ramat Ha'sharon, Israel) elaborates: Kabbalists teach that when we emulate Hashem, we become vehicles through which His Middot / Attributes are revealed in our world. A person can talk about compassion all day long, but if he does not practice compassion, he is not allowing Hashem's compassion to be revealed in this world. Conversely, if a person does practice the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, he allows those Attributes to be revealed in our world. That is why we will be answered if we "Do this order." (Talelei Chaim: Elul-Tishrei p. 60)

R' Gershon Edelstein z"l (1923-2023; Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) writes: Three times every day, we pray, "Hashiveinu" / "Bring us back, our Father . . .," i.e., we ask Hashem help us to repent. (We make many similar requests in the Yom Kippur prayers.) One must ask himself: How can I ask Hashem to help me return to Him if I am not doing everything in my power to return? First, one must engage in Teshuvah!

R' Edelstein continues: Doing Teshuvah requires learning Mussar works that help a person identify the sins for which he needs to repent. It is not enough for a person to say to himself: "I know I am not a Tzaddik, and I am sure that I have committed many sins; I regret them, although I don't know what sins they are." How can a person fix something if he doesn't know it is broken? Therefore, R' Edelstein writes, a person must study works such as the third section of Sha'arei Teshuvah by Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (1210-1263; Spain), where one can find a list and discussion of many common sins. (Sha'arei Teshuvah: Peninei Chizuk p.103)

In the Shabbat zemer "Ki Eshmerah" by R' Avraham ibn Ezra z"l (1089-1167), we say: "He inscribed in the law of G-d a decree for his priests that on it [Shabbat] they prepare the Lechem Ha'panim before Him. Therefore, it is forbidden to fast on it [Shabbat] by order of His understanding Sages, except for the day when my sin is atoned [Yom Kippur]."

It appears from this, writes R' Chaim Menachem Yaakovson shlita (Bnei Brak, Israel), that the prohibition to fast on Shabbat (except when it coincides with Yom Kippur) is rooted in Shabbat's being the day when the Kohanim removed the bread from the Shulchan / table in the Bet Hamikdash and ate it. Indeed, the Zohar teaches that a person should have a total of twelve loaves of bread on his Shabbat table, paralleling the twelve loaves of the Lechem Ha'panim. (Some say that this is accomplished by having two loaves at each meal—and total of six loaves for the three Shabbat meals—and cutting each in half.) Whether one observes this custom or does not, a person should try to elevate his eating on Shabbat to be a Divine service like the Kohanim's eating of the Lechem Ha'panim.

But on Yom Kippur, we do fast—even if it is Shabbat. This is because fasting on Yom Kippur is not just about depriving ourselves of food. Rather, it is itself a Divine service whose purpose is to make us angel-like.

There is an even higher level, R' Yaakovson notes. When King Shlomo dedicated the Bet Hamikdash, the week-long celebration included Yom Kippur; with special dispensation from the prophets of the day, no one fasted that Yom Kippur. Apparently, those festivities were an even greater Divine service than our fasting. (Mei Be'er: Nehora D'Shabta p.90)

On the Importance of Appeasing Those We Have Hurt Our Sages teach that one cannot achieve atonement unless he appeases those against whom he has sinned. Some say that one cannot achieve atonement even for his sins against G-d unless he has properly atoned for his sins against man and received forgiveness. (Kaf Ha'Chaim 606:3)

Why? Because atoning for only some sins is like immersing only part of one's body in a Mikvah. Obviously, one does not attain purity by doing so. (Mussar Ha'Mishnah)

R' Avraham Halevi Horowitz z"l (16th century; father of the Shelah Hakadosh) observes: The obligation to ask forgiveness from those we have offended does not mean doing what is commonly done, i.e., that shortly before Kol Nidrei, one approaches his friends and asks their forgiveness. Inevitably, the friend responds, "You didn't do anything for which I have to forgive you." Then, these two friends forgive each other, something that was not necessary at all, since they were always dear to each other and would never wish each other harm.

In contrast, R' Horowitz continues, enemies tend not to ask forgiveness from one another. Rather, each one says, "If he were interested in peace, he would come to me." A wise man recognizes that the true sign of strength is humility, and he takes the initiative to appease his enemy, even if his enemy is in the wrong. (Emek Berachah)

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l writes: Requesting general forgiveness for all sins that one has committed against another is effective only for minor

offenses. [If one committed a more serious offense, he must specify it when he requests forgiveness.] (Quoted in Halichot Shlomo: Mo'adim p.44)
 If one who has sinned against you does not come to you to seek forgiveness, you should make yourself available to him so that he might ask forgiveness. (Mateh Ephraim)
 Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to recite the following prayer (part of Tefilah Zakkah) which is printed in many Machzorim:
 "I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or financially, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any sins between man and his neighbor—except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover in accordance with Halachah, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me'—except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account.
 "And just as I forgive everyone, so may You (Hashem) grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he will grant me complete forgiveness."

After Yom Kippur . . .
 R' David Bliacher z"l Hy"d (Rosh Yeshiva of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Międzyrzec Podlaski, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: A person on the day after Yom Kippur may be likened to a merchant who has returned from the Yerid / regional fair—in modern terms, a trade show or auction. On market day, a merchant buys large quantities of various goods that he plans to resell. Then, when he gets home, he must sort his purchases, arrange them on the shelves in his store, and determine the price at which he will sell each type of merchandise, taking into account the quantities he has on hand and how much spoiled on his journey home. All of these steps lead to a single goal: making a profit.
 Similarly, R' Bliacher writes, a person makes various spiritual "acquisitions" on Yom Kippur—i.e., "Shleimut" / "wholesomeness" in various areas that he has attained through his efforts during the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating in Yom Kippur. Some are in the area of Torah study, some in the area of improved character traits, etc. After Yom Kippur, a person needs to take stock of his acquisitions and figure out how he will channel all of them toward a single goal—i.e., doing the Ratzon Hashem/ will of G-d. Whether it is prayer, studying Mussar / works on character improvement, one's Torah study, using one's power of speech more appropriately—all of these must be directed toward that goal. Why? Because the single biggest failing that a human being has is that he naturally does what he wants, thinks what he wants, etc., not what G-d wants.
 R' Bliacher adds: The foregoing is true not only of ordinary people. Even people who are constantly trying to raise their spiritual level usually are doing it for themselves—because they want to be better, more spiritual people—not because it is Hashem's will. Therefore, after a successful Yom Kippur, a person must take stock and redirect his "inventory of goods" to doing Hashem's will. (Divrei Binah U'mussar p.240)
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Haaros - **Hester Panim and Teshuva: Haazinu**

By Rabbi Yaakov Bernstein

Hester Panim and Teshuva

In Devorim, verse 32:20, Hashem again refers to the 'hiding of the countenance' that we call Hester Panim.

In Devorim 31:15 – 18, Hashem tells Moshe that after Moshe's passing, the people will return to idolatry and forsake Hashem and His covenant.

There it states, "I will hide my countenance from him." After suffering terribly, one will say, "Hashem is not in my midst, this is why all these troubles have come to me," but then Hashem seems to double down upon

him. Only now the verse states that Hashem will definitely conceal His countenance from him!

The Ramban explains that the initial thoughts of teshuva need to be worked out thoroughly. It's not so simple that one is sorry and suddenly all his problems vanish. Rather, the concealment (Hester Panim) becomes harsher until he performs a proper repentance. (1)
 Hashgacha Pratis

The Ramchal (Da'as T'vunah, p. 143) explains that it's not at all as it seems. It would appear that he's being punished even more severely, now that he's starting to do teshuva. We would think that he's lost the hashgacha pratis (Hashem's direct supervision). It's not so!

In reality, this is the greatest hashgacha pratis! The Hester Panim itself is the greatest hashgacha pratis... He thought that Hashem was not with him, but it's not so... Hashem's direct supervision is bringing about all that happens.

In other words, when we suffer, we must realize that our hardships are coming directly from Hashem, and contemplate deeply how we must change for the better.

Kabalos

Rav Menachem Malinowitz gives aitzos for making kabalos — commitments for the new year. One: they should be easy to keep. Two: they should be transformational. Three: they should be something you should have been doing anyway! His example is to say the brocha 'asher yatzar' once a day with proper intent. He explains how this example fits all three conditions.

Rav Malinowitz makes a great distinction between two parts of teshuva: To feel regret for our aveiros, and to make kabalos. We say vidui many times — this is meant, with contemplation, to have charata (remorse) for all our aveiros. However, a complete kabala on everything is not possible. So we must realize that regret for the past is not the same as a complete kabala for the future. (Shabbos for Life, 486)

1.This is reminiscent of Sefer Iyuv (Job). Iyuv was stricken with terrible yesurim until he came to an understanding of Hashem's ways. In the end, he returned to a pleasant life. Rav Moshe Eisemann writes that according to a Beraisa (Bava Basra 15b), this return to the pleasant life was actually a punishment; he did not accomplish a proper teshuva!
 Haaros © by Torah.org.

Good Old Days?!!

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Young Israel of Saint Louis = Yom Kippur 5782 (Kol Nidre)

Ah the Good Ol' Days!

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח חֲדָשׁ מִיָּמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם (איכה ה:כא)

Return us to you – O G_d, and we will return

Renew our days of old!!

Hubert Humphrey once said: The good old days were never that good, believe me. The good new days are today, and better days are coming tomorrow. Our greatest songs are still unsung.

אֵל תֹּאמַר מָה הָיָה שְׁהֵימָיִם הָרָשָׁנִים הָיוּ טוֹבִים מֵאֵלָּה כִּי לֹא מִקְדָּמָה שָׁאַלְתָּ עַל זֶה. (קהלת ז:י)
 Say not: 'How was it that the former days were better than these?' for that is not a wise question!

In other words, says Kohelet - do not yearn for the past – live for the future! Yet one of the most central verses in the ימים נוראים liturgy is כְּקֶדֶם יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם! But which GOOD OL' DAYS!?

• Pre-COVID – good old days? • Pre-economic crisis – good old days? • Pre-9/11 good old days?

Maybe we should go back further? • Pre-Intifada? • War of Lebanon? Yom Kippur War? • 6 Day War? • Pre-Israel? • WWII • WWI • Communist Revolution? • European Pogroms • Crusades and Inquisitions? • Roman enslavement? • 2nd Temple sectarian fighting? • Babylonian exile? • 1st Temple idolatry? • Split kingdom? • Tribal warfar? • Desert wandering? • Egyptian slavery? • Forefathers wandering from land to land? • Tower? Flood? Cain? Adam?

How far back do we want to go? - חדש ימינו קדמם

Even the phrase seems to be a bit of an oxymoron – חדש ימינו קדמם – “Renew our days of old”.

Perhaps this is why the Midrash Eichah Rabbah suggests a completely different interpretation of this verse: קדמם, says the midrash, refers here not to a TIME – but to a PLACE!! (It derives not from the word קדמון – old – but from the word קדם = east!!)

Time and place have a unique relationship in the Hebrew language:

- דור רביעי ישובו הנה כי לא שלם עוון האמורי עד הנה
- עולם = נצח, או תבל

חדש ימינו קדמם, כאדם הראשון, במה דאת אמר (בראשית ג, כד) ויגרש את האדם וישכן מקדמם לגן עדן [את הכרובים ואת להט החרב המתהפכת לשמר את דרך עץ החיים] [איכה רבה ה:כא]

Like Adam according to what was written: “He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden [the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.] (Eichah Rabbah 5:21)

In other words – קדמם refers to the place East of Eden to which Adam & Even were expelled! And East of Gan Eden G_D placed:

- the flaming sword - להט החרב המתהפכת
- Cherubim angels - כרובים

! לשמר את דרך עץ החיים

So that’s our prayer: RETURN US, G_D, to that place where we were of Gan Eden – where we settled when we were expelled from Paradise!!!

Creative, innovative – but do we really yearn to return to that moment?

The problem is more complex. If the Midrash wanted to suggest that look for the first reference to the word קדם as a place – the Midrash missed an earlier reference – only ONE CHAPTER EARLIER!

וישע יקנו אלהים גן בעדן מקדמם

וישע יקנו אלהים אֵשֶׁר יָצַר (בר' ב:ה)

Hashem, God, planted a garden in Eden, in the East, and He placed there the man whom He had formed.

If we are looking to return to placed known as קדם – shouldn’t we yearn to return to עדן גן itself, rather than the place to which we were exiled from עדן?

Here’s the remarkable answer: For us – PARADISE is not a realistic goal or dream!!

We yearn to return – to WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW – here – in this time and place!

אל תאמר מה הנה שהנמים הראשנים היו טובים מאלה

כי לא מחקמה שאלת על זה. (קהלת ז:י)

Our dream is not to return to an unsustainable utopian world – our dream is to LIVE OUTSIDE of Paradise – in the real world

• but there to be GUIDED by the כרובים = the angels that stand guard over the Torah

• the Tree of Life = עץ חיים היא למחזקים בה - עץ חיים the Torah itself!

• The Torah is not the blueprint for Paradise – it’s the blueprint for outside it – the blueprint for HEALING a FRACTURED world!

• The Torah does not seek PERFECTION – it seeks EFFORT!!

• The Torah OUTSIDE of עדן גן to elevate and transform the world we live in today!!

Think of the Avodah of the כה"ג. Once a year he enters the Holy of Holies - which essentially is a miniature recreation of עדן גן - a place in which the תורה = resides, where the כרובים stand guard, from where G_d’s voice emanates from - once a year the high priest RE-ENTERS עדן!! But he DOES NOT REMAIN THERE! He emerges and returns to us!

When he emerges – and only when he emerges - and returns to THIS WORLD – does he truly celebrate!

ויום טוב הנה עושה פהן גדול לכל אוהביו

קשנכנס בשלום ויצא בשלום בלי פגע

It is THIS WORLD that needs fixing – and it is in THIS WORLD that we yearn to REMAIN – but also to heal, and elevate, purify and sanctify:

השיבנו יקנו אלהים ונשובה

חדש ימינו קדמם

Empower us to renew and heal this world that sits

We come to Yom Kippur with no illusions – we know the challenges that face us: • terrorism • pandemics • politics and in-fighting – in Israel and in America • Family struggles • Raising healthy and wholesome children in a world of the Internet and social media • Community – continuity – temptations. • We know how isolated Israel still is in the world – and how much of the world still has to learn what blessing Israel truly is!

It’s ‘too easy’ to place all our aspirations on a vision of Messianism that return us to עדן גן. No - our dream for redemption does NOT include unrealistic dreams of miraculous transformations – our dream is to build our nation and our people – and take responsibility for the challenges of the world - here and now!

We don’t seek a miraculous life! We seek a meaningful one!

We don’t seek an immortal life - we seek an engaged and elevated one!

למנות ימינו כן הודע ונביא לבב חכמה

When the High Priest emerged from the Holy of Holies – his prayer was NOT about returning to the קה"ק! His prayer was about the blessings he wished for Israel – the people, the land, the families... today, now.

יהי רצון מלפניך יהנה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתהא השנה הזאת הטובה עלינו ועל כל עמך בית שנת גזרות טובות • שנת אסם. שנת ברכה • שנת אוצרך הטוב תפתח לנו: ישראל שנת נבוא לבית • שנת שלולה וגשומה אם שחונה • שנת ועוד בית מקדשך • מלפניך שנת שלום ושלנה • שנת פרי בטננו ופרי אדמתנו תברך • שנת שבע. שנת ענג • מקדשנו שנה שלא יצטרכו עמך בית • שנה שתוליכנו קוממיות לארצנו... תעלנו שמחים לארצנו • ישראל זה לנו ולא לעם אחר בתהך ברכה במעשה ידיהם

May it be Your Will Hashem, God of our fathers, that this year approaching us and all Your people Israel be a year – • in which Your good treasure will be opened for us • a year of plenty, a year of blessing, • a year of good decrees declared by You, • a year of Your Divine Presence in Your Temple, • a year of economic stability, a year of good life in Your presence • a year of dew, rain, and warmth... • a year of attending our Holy Temple, • a year of abundance, a year of delight, • a year in of blessing for the fruit of the land and the fruit of the womb, • a year of peace and tranquility, • a year in which You lead us upright to our land... bring us [all] joyfully to our land, • a year in which Your people Israel will not be in need of one another’s [help], nor the help of any other people, for You will bless the work of their hands...

That’s what we pine for – a life of caring for one another, providing for each other, helping, loving, financial success, good health, healthy relationships, kindness, peace, Israel at the center of civilization – leading the world in spiritual and national pursuits...

We seek G_dliness in the world around us – in everything we do and in every corner of THIS WORLD! – so that we can fill THIS WORLD – with a sense of ‘newness’ and renewed strength, vigor and sanctity – חדש ימינו קדמם!

Over the next 24 hours we will pray together, sing together, and dream together about how we can bring meaning and purpose into our lives and emerge a stronger and holier people because of it.

חדש ימינו קדמם

We do not seek to return to yesterday

We seek only to build a better tomorrow! _____

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On Teshuvah and Complete Teshuvah

Rabbi Michael Taubes

Two Types of Teshuvah

The very first halachah in the Rambam’s famed presentation of Hilchot Teshuvah has generated much debate, analysis and discussion, via both the printed word and through shiurim and derashot.

The Rambam writes: If a person has transgressed any of the commandments of the Torah, whether positive or negative, whether intentionally or unintentionally, when he does teshuvah and repents from his sin, he is obligated to confess before God, blessed is He, as it is stated (Numbers 5:6-

7): A man or a woman who commits [any sins]...they shall confess the sin that they committed - this refers to a verbal confession. [The requirement to verbalize] this confession is a positive commandment. How does one confess? He says, "I beg of You, Hashem, I have sinned, been iniquitous and willfully rebelled before You, and I have done such and such; and I regret and am ashamed of my deeds, and I will never repeat such a thing again." This is the fundamental form of confession, and one who elaborates on his confession and lengthens [his presentation of] this matter is indeed praiseworthy. Hilchot Teshuvah 1:1

כל מצות שבתורה בין עשה בין לא תעשה אם עבר אדם על אחת מהן בין בודון בין בשגגה כשיעשה תשובה וישוב מחטאו חייב להתודות לפני האל ברוך הוא שנאמר איש או אשה כי יעשו וגו' והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו זה וידוי דברים, וידוי זה מצות עשה, כיצד מתודין אומר אנה השם חטאתי עויתי פשעתי לפניך ועשיתי כך וכך והרי נחמתי ובושתני במעשי ולעולם איני חוזר לדבר זה, וזהו עיקרו של וידוי, וכל המרבה להתודות ומאריך בענין זה הרי זה משובח הלכות תשובה א:א

Rather than explaining what exactly is meant by "teshuvah," what its goals are and what Scriptural evidence there is that the notion even exists, which one might expect him to do in his opening comments, the Rambam here begins instead by outlining some of the technical requirements of the teshuvah process, stressing that a particular formula of vidui, generally understood as confession, is an absolute necessity from a procedural perspective.

According to his description, the individual reciting the vidui must express three primary feelings: recognition of the sin(s), remorse for past deeds, and a resolve to not repeat such acts in the future.

His reference to teshuvah in this passage, however, is limited to the words "תשובה כשיעשה," "when he does teshuvah," implying that teshuvah, the essence of which he does not define here, is in effect the backdrop, or perhaps the psychological and emotional underpinning, for the mitzvah of vidui, and it is to the specifics of that mitzvah that the Rambam devotes his attention in this section.

It is not until the second chapter of Hilchot Teshuvah that the Rambam gives us his precise definition of teshuvah. There he writes:

What is complete teshuvah? That is [what is attained by a person] when the very circumstance in which he [previously] sinned presents itself to him and he has the ability to commit the sin [again] but instead turns away and does not commit it because of teshuvah, and not because of fear or weakened capability. If, for example, a man had illicit relations with a woman and after some time was alone with her [again], still in love with her, still physically capable, and in the same place where he sinned with her previously, and instead he turned away and did not transgress again, such a person has attained complete teshuvah. This is in line with what [King] Solomon said (Ecclesiastes 12:1): So remember your Creator in the days of your youth. But if one did not repent until the days of his old age and until a time when it was not possible for him to do what he had done, even though this [kind of teshuvah] is not the preferred teshuvah, it still helps him and he has attained [a level of] Teshuvah. [Indeed,] even if one transgressed for all his days but he did teshuvah on the day of his death and he dies having done teshuvah, all his iniquities are forgiven, as it is stated (ibid. v. 2): Until the sun, the light, the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain. — which is [a reference to] the day of death. And what is teshuvah? It is [what is attained] when a sinner abandons his sin, removes it from his thoughts and concludes in his mind that he will not do it again, as it is stated (Isaiah 55:7), let the wicked one abandon his way, etc. And [the sinner] likewise should regret the fact that he transgressed, as it is stated Jeremiah

הלכה א: אי זו היא תשובה גמורה, זה שבא לידו דבר שעבר בו ואפשר בידו לעשותו ופירש ולא עשה מפני התשובה, לא מיראה ולא מכשולו כח, כיצד הרי שבא על אשה בעבירה ולאחר זמן נתייחד עמה והוא עומד באהבתו בה ובכח גופו ובמדינה שעבר בה ופירש ולא עבר זהו בעל תשובה גמורה, הוא ששלמה אמר וזכור את בוראריך בימי בחורותיך, ואם לא שב אלא בימי זקנותו ובעת שאי אפשר לו לעשות מה שהיה עושה אף על פי שאינה תשובה מעולה מועלת היא לו ובעל תשובה הוא, אפילו עבר כל ימיו ועשה תשובה ביום מיתתו ומת בתשובתו כל עונותיו נמחלין שנאמר עד אשר לא תחשך השמש והאור והירח והכוכבים ושבו העבים אחר הגשם שהוא יום המיתה, מכלל שאם זכר בוראו ושב קודם שימות נסלח לו. הלכה ב: ומה היא התשובה הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשה עוד שנאמר

עזוב רשע דרכו וגו', וכן יתנחם על שעבר

31:18): For after my returning, I regretted. Moreover, [his resolve should be such that] he should be able to call He Who knows all that is hidden as a witness that he will never return to this sin ever again, as it is written (Hosea 14:4): nor will we ever again call our handiwork 'our gods,' etc. And he must verbally confess and declare these matters that he has concluded in his mind. Hilchot Teshuvah 2:1-2

שנאמר כי אחרי שובי נחמתי, ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם שנאמר ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידינו וגו', וצריך להתודות שפתיו ולומר עניינות אלו שגמר בלבו. הלכות תשובה ב:א-ב An examination of these two halachot reveals that the Rambam is actually providing two different definitions of teshuvah, speaking in א of "complete" teshuvah, and in ב of "plain" teshuvah. At least two questions may be raised here. First, what is the essential difference between the two? And second, assuming that "complete" teshuvah is somehow a higher or more perfect level of teshuvah, why does the Rambam discuss that first? Wouldn't it have made more sense to first present the more basic or simpler level before detailing the greater or more exalted level?

Understanding Complete Teshuvah In discussing "plain" teshuvah here, the Rambam in effect restates the ideas mentioned at the beginning of פרק א, writing that the individual must acknowledge and regret his sin and commit to change his behavior in the future. One who has done this, and indeed succeeds in avoiding the repetition of his sin, has apparently done teshuvah on this level. In describing the individual who has attained complete teshuvah, however, the Rambam stresses that he has to confront the same situation in which he previously had sinned, having both the opportunity and the ability to repeat the transgression, and this time show the necessary restraint to resist doing the forbidden act again. It clearly cannot be, however, that the distinction between this greater level of teshuvah and the basic level is only a matter of circumstance, a function solely of whether or not the individual happened to have been "tested" with the chance to repeat his misdeed. There must be a substantial qualitative difference between the two types of teshuvah as well.

It would appear that "complete" teshuvah entails more than just making sure not to repeat one's past mistakes, significant an accomplishment though that undoubtedly is. One who finds himself tempted by sin should surely make every effort to avoid that temptation, just as one who knows that certain things are dangerous for his physical health should avoid those things. If that requires him to stay away from the conditions in which the particular temptation presents itself, then so be it. One who knows, for example, that when walking along a certain block he has been and still is strongly tempted to enter into a non-kosher food establishment there and partake of its delicacies would be well advised to seek out another suitable route where he will not be similarly tempted. And yet, while a person should certainly be admired for keeping himself away from that which tempts him to sin, and can be considered, if he has fulfilled other pre-requisites, to have indeed done teshuvah, he has not, by merely having avoided the circumstances in which he sinned in the past, achieved "complete" teshuvah according to the Rambam. Complete teshuvah requires something deeper. Complete teshuvah is attained only when a person has undergone a transformation of character to the point that he now no longer has to avoid a particular temptation because he has completely overcome his desire for that temptation. He has altered his way of thinking, reconsidered his motivations and goals, and shifted his path in life. He has developed the ability to control his behavior and is now in fact a totally different person. The fact that he has been confronted with the opportunity to repeat his sin and did not do so is proof of the fact that this major change, this transformation, has in fact taken place. Complete teshuvah is identified with newly mastered self-control, resulting in a change in one's very nature and personality.

In describing the person who has achieved this level of teshuvah, the Rambam writes later: Teshuvah brings close those who are far away; yesterday (i.e., before doing teshuvah), he was hated before the Omnipresent — disgusting, distant and abominable. But today (i.e., after having done teshuvah), he is loved, desirable, close — a friend.

Rambam Hilchot Teshuvah 7:6

התשובה מקרבת את הרחוקים, אמש היה זה שנאי לפני המקום משוקץ ומרוחק ותועבה, והיום הוא אהוב ונחמד קרוב וידיד רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ז:ו

How exalted are the benefits of teshuvah! Yesterday, this person was alienated from Hashem, the God of Israel, as it is stated (Isaiah 59:2): your iniquities have separated between you and your God; he would cry out and not be responded to, as it is stated (ibid. 1:15): even if you were to intensify your prayer, I will not listen; he would fulfill commandments and they would be thrown back in his face, as it is stated (ibid. v. 12): who sought this from your hand, to trample My courtyards, and (Malachi 1:10): If only there were someone among you who would shut the [Temple] doors, so that you could not kindle upon My Altar in vain! I have no desire for you, said Hashem, Master of Hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand, and (Jeremiah 7:21): Add your burnt-offerings to your peace offerings and eat [their] meat [yourselves]. But today, he is attached to the Divine Presence, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 4:4): But you who cling to Hashem, your God; he cries out and is responded to immediately, as it is stated (Isaiah 65:24): It will be that before they call I will answer; and he fulfills commandments and they are accepted with pleasure and joy, as it is written

(Ecclesiastes 9:7): for God has already approved your deeds, and not only that but there is a longing for them, as it is stated (Malachi 3:4): Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Hashem as in the days of old and in previous years. Hilchot Teshuvah 7:7

כמה מעולה מעלת התשובה, אמש היה זה מובדל מה' אלהי ישראל שנאמר עונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלהיכם, צועק ואינו נענה שנאמר כי תרבו תפלה וגו' ועושה מצות וטורפין אותן בפניו שנאמר מי בקש זאת מידכם רמוס חצרי, מי גם בכס ויסגר דלתיו וגו', והיום הוא מודבק בשכינה שנאמר ואתם הדבקים באלהיכם, צועק ונענה מיד שנאמר והיה טרם יקראו ואני אענה, ועושה מצות ומקבלין אותן בנחת ושמה שנאמר כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך, ולא עוד אלא שמתאווים להם שנאמר ועברה לה' YESHIVA מנחת יהודה וירושלם כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות. רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ז:ז UNIVERSITY • ROSH HASHANA TO-GO • TISHREI 5771

How can such a sharp distinction, such a dramatic turnabout, be explained? The answer is that the person who has done complete teshuvah has undergone a dramatic change. He is now no longer the same person as he was before. And his relationship with Hashem is thus also markedly different. This is the nature of complete teshuvah, and it is indeed significantly different qualitatively than the basic kind of teshuvah where the essence is developing the ability to avoid sin through the discipline that comes as a result of the three stages of recognition, remorse and resolve. Complete teshuvah involves making changes in one's very character and becoming a different person.

The Ultimate Goal and the Process of Teshuvah - The second question posed above as to why the Rambam began by describing complete teshuvah before defining the more basic elements of teshuvah, a seemingly out of order presentation, may perhaps be addressed by analyzing what teshuvah is really all about. It is possible to understand that what the Rambam defines as "complete" teshuvah is something beyond the fundamental requirement of teshuvah – a goal to be striven for, certainly, but essentially an "extra" – an option for one who wants to "go all out" and engage in doing "teshuvah-plus." If that is the case, then it is true that the Rambam should perhaps have begun with a discussion of the general obligation before moving on to the optional "extra." It is possible, however, to suggest that complete teshuvah is in fact the ultimate goal; it is that level which in truth defines the very obligation of teshuvah. All "lesser" forms of teshuvah, while significant, indeed quite significant, can be considered as means toward the end of complete teshuvah. Teshuvah, according to this approach, is a process, consisting of several steps, each of which, though important in its own right, is a prelude to another step, with the final purpose being the change in personality. If this is true, the Rambam's formulation makes good sense. He begins in by stating the goal of teshuvah, namely, transformation of character. Then, in ב הלכה, he discusses the key steps needed on the way to that goal. It is obvious that not everybody in every circumstance is able to redefine himself as part of the teshuvah process; in many cases, doing teshuvah by disciplining oneself to avoid the temptation of sin, accompanied by the requisite feelings of remorse, is the best one can hope to achieve. As even that accomplishment is often rather elusive, such teshuvah is nothing to be embarrassed about. But it still falls short of complete teshuvah. The person who attains this level of teshuvah has taken steps – big steps – but he has not reached the target. The Rambam thus chose to begin his definitions of teshuvah by setting the target.

With this approach, another answer may be offered to a famous question raised by the Minchat Chinuch (364:1) and others. The Gemara in Kiddushin (49b) teaches that if a man says to a woman, "Become betrothed to me on the condition that I am a righteous person," even if he (until now) was a completely wicked person, she is considered betrothed to him because it is possible that at that moment, he had made a mental commitment to do teshuvah. That thought in his mind suffices to categorize him as a righteous person because he has done teshuvah. The question is, if, as noted above, vidui, a verbal confession, is such an integral component of the teshuvah process, how can this mental commitment be enough to characterize this person as a righteous man – he cannot be viewed as having properly done teshuvah, because he made no confession. According to the aforementioned understanding of the Rambam, though, the answer is clear. Teshuvah, as explained, is a process, consisting of many steps. A mental commitment to mend one's evil ways is one of those steps – possibly the very first step. The vidui, consisting of the three components outlined above, is another, later step. But even that brings one to only one level of teshuvah; the ultimate teshuvah, "complete" teshuvah, is further yet down the road. The individual who mentally committed to change his behavior for the better has certainly not done complete teshuvah. He has not even done teshuvah on the basic level, as he did not recite vidui.

But he has taken a step; he is on the road. And concerning at least this particular law of betrothal, his being on the road is sufficient to qualify the person as righteous. It should be pointed out that this idea that teshuvah is in fact a process with a number of steps, and that a mental decision to do teshuvah is an early one of those steps, can be shown to emerge from the words of the Rambam himself. As alluded to above, the Rambam in א:א, when introducing the formula for the text of vidui, prefaces his presentation of the mitzvah of vidui with the words "חשובה כשיעשה", "when he does teshuvah." This implies that the decision in the person's mind to do teshuvah has

already happened; the first step has been taken. The notion is even more clearly evident in the words of the Rambam in describing the procedure followed when bringing certain sacrifices:

How does one confess? He says, "I have sinned, been iniquitous and willfully rebelled, and I have done such and such; but I have returned through teshuvah before You, and this [sacrifice] is my atonement." Hilchot Maaseh HaKorbanot 3:15

כיצד מתודה אומר חטאתי עויתי פשעתי ועשיתי כך וכך וחזרתי בתשובה לפניך וזו כפרתי ה' מעשה הקרבנות ג:טו

According to this, the individual, as an actual part of the text of his vidui, declares, "and I have returned through teshuvah." Note that this phrase is in the past tense; the person is thus stating when he recites his vidui that he has already done teshuvah, at least in some sense. Some form of teshuvah comes first, the formal, technical vidui comes a little later, and, if all goes well, "complete" teshuvah is attained later still.

It seems clear from all of the above that at least according to the Rambam, there are many steps which must be taken as part of the overall teshuvah process, and each one is important in its own right. It is conceivable that one may never fully achieve the total personality change identified with complete teshuvah, and the attainment of these other levels of teshuvah is thus to be encouraged and is commendable as well, as each step brings the individual closer to Hashem. At the same time, however, the ultimate goal of teshuvah remains the transformation of one's character, the metamorphosis into a person no longer even tempted by the sins which were previously violated, difficult though reaching that goal may be.

The Sin and the Sinner

Put in different words, the teshuvah process may be said to address two entities: the sin and the sinner. When one has sinned, he has committed an act that is in violation of Hashem's Will. This act has consequences, and depending upon the specific nature of the transgression, the person is subject to certain punishments; we thus find throughout the Torah that different punishments are associated with different sins. In addressing "sin," the goal of teshuvah is to expiate that misdeed, to remove it, as it were, from the person's ledger. What is needed for that to happen depends again upon the nature of the transgression. The Mishnah in Yoma states:

The chatas offering and the definite asham offering atone [for sin]. Death and Yom Kippur atone [along] with repentance. Repentance [alone] atones for lesser transgressions, whether [in violation of] either positive or negative commandments. And for severe [transgressions], it [i.e., repentance] suspends [punishment] until Yom Kippur comes and atones. Mishnah Yoma 85b

חטאת ואשם ודאי - מכפרין. מיתה ויום הכפורים - ממכפרין עם התשובה. תשובה מכפרת על עבירות קלות, על עשה ועל לא תעשה, ועל החמורות הוא תולה עד שיבא יום הכפורים ויכפר. מסכת יומא פה

A subsequent gemara at there elaborates: R' Masya ben Charash asked R' Elazar ben Azaryah: "Have you heard the four categories of atonement that R' Yishmael expounds?" He said [in response]: "There are three, and repentance [is needed] with each and every one. If one violated a positive commandment and repented, he does not [have to] move from there until he is forgiven [i.e., he is forgiven immediately], as it is stated (Jeremiah 3:22): Return O wayward children. If one violated a negative commandment and repented, repentance suspends [punishment] and Yom Kippur atones, as it is stated (Leviticus 16:30): For on this day He shall atone for you...from all your sins. If one violated [sins punishable by] premature death or death at the hands of a Beit Din and repented, repentance and Yom Kippur suspend [punishment] and suffering purges [the sin], as it is stated (Psalms 89:33): Then I will punish their willful rebellion with a rod and their iniquity with plagues. But [for] one who has [the sin of] desecration of the Name [of Hashem] in his hand, repentance does not have the capability to suspend [punishment], nor Yom Kippur to atone, nor suffering to purge. Rather, all of them [together] suspend [punishment] and death purges, as it is stated (Isaiah 22:14): And it was revealed in my ears by Hashem, Master of Hosts, "This sin will not be atoned for you until you die." Yoma 86a

שאל רבי מתיא בן חרש את רבי אלעזר בן עזריה ברומי: שמעת ארבעה חלוקי כפרה שהיה רבי שמעאל דורש? אמר: שלשה הן, התשובה עם כל אחד ואחד. עבר על עשה ושם - אינו זז משם עד שמוחלין לו, שנאמר (ירמיהו ג) שובו בני ישראל, שובו בני ישראל, שובו בני ישראל, ויום הכפורים מכפר שנאמר (ויקרא טז) כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם מכל חטאתיכם. עבר על כריתות ומיתות בית דין ועשה תשובה - תשובה ויום הכפורים תולין, ויסורין ממרקין, שנאמר (תהלים פט) ופקדתי בשבט פשעם ובנגעים עונם, אבל מי שיש חילול השם בידו - אין לו כח בתשובה לתלות, ולא ביום הכפורים לכפר, ולא ביסורין למרק. אלא כולן תולין, ומיתה ממרקת, שנאמר (ישעיהו כב) ונגלה באזני ה' צבאות אם יכפר העון הזה לכם עד תמותן. מסכת יומא פו

It is clear that repentance plays a significant role in purging or expunging sin, and that more may be needed if the sin is of a greater type. For this reason, Rabbeinu Yonah writes in his Shaarei Teshuvah (III:1-2) that one must examine the severity of his sins as part of the teshuvah process. But in addition to committing the technical act of a transgression, one who sins does something else as well. The person, the גברא, becomes a sinner. The sin becomes a stain on his personality, regardless of the punishment associated with it, and he suddenly has a different identity. The teshuvah process for this consequence is thus different. It is not enough to deal with the sin; the individual must do something to change his personal status as a sinner. It is to this

consequence which complete teshuvah addresses itself. While teshuvah responds to the sin, "complete" teshuvah responds to the sinner. Perhaps for this reason, each line of the long vidui recited on Yom Kippur includes the word Al Chet "For the sin," and "that we have sinned." We have sinned and we have become sinners. It is noteworthy that the Rambam, when defining complete teshuvah in פרק ב, mentions nothing about the different gradations of atonement; he refers to them only in his discussion of general teshuvah (ז-ג הלכה א פרק). This may be because when considering the sinner, as opposed to the sin, the severity of the transgression is less critical. The issue is the impact on the person's character and that can depend on numerous other factors. Regardless of the nature of one's misdeed, then, he has become a sinner, and he must do whatever he can to change that status; he must try to transform his personality. The Mishnah states:

Be as careful with a "minor" mitzvah as with a "major" one, for you do not know the [true] reward given for the mitzvot. Pirkei Avot 2:1

הי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה שאין אתה יודע מתן שכרן של מצות אבות ב:

The Rambam, both in his Peirush HaMishnayot to that Mishnah and in הל' תשובה' explains that we are incapable of evaluating the relative worth of mitzvot; only Hashem is capable of so doing. Despite the fact that we do know the severity of the punishment for many mitzvot, we are still incapable of properly assessing their true value and weight, as there are many other factors relating to mitzvot, including very subjective ones, which we are not able to take into account.

In light of our presentation here, it may perhaps be added that the Mishnah is teaching as well that nobody really knows the impact that an act can have on one's personality (whether positive or negative); the omission of even a seemingly minor mitzvah, or the commission of even a seemingly minor transgression can categorize someone as a sinner. "Complete" teshuvah is needed to address one's failure to have learned the lesson of this Mishnah, and to change the character of someone who is, in any other fashion, considered a sinner.

Redirecting One's Traits = Finally, it is worth pointing out that the "transformation of character" which defines complete teshuvah does not necessarily demand a total and sweeping alteration of all of one's inner tendencies and natural proclivities. On the contrary, sometimes those very same characteristics, if channeled in the right direction, can lead a person to greatness. Complete teshuvah is, in one sense, attained when one has learned to use for positive things the very abilities that in the past led him to sin. Indeed, the Yeitzer HaRa, the so-called "evil inclination," itself can be used and is actually needed for productive purposes, as demonstrated by the Gemara in Sanhedrin (64a).

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah (9:7) cites an opinion that the words "very good" found in the Torah regarding the creation of the universe (Genesis 1:31) actually refer to the Yeitzer HaRa! How can this be understood? The answer is that a person can use even his Yeitzer HaRa for very good purposes; the Gemara in Berachot (5a) thus directs one to use his Yeitzer Tov to combat his Yeitzer HaRa, to control it, to sublimate it – but not to eliminate it. This may be the true meaning of the line in the Yom Kippur vidui which states, "הרע ביצר לפניך שחטאת חטא ע", "For the sin that we have sinned before You with the Yeitzer HaRa." The subject here is perhaps not the temptations of the Yeitzer HaRa in general, for many individual transgressions are expressly listed; such a general statement is not needed. Rather, the confession here is for failing to use the Yeitzer HaRa in a positive and constructive fashion, the way it should be used.

With this idea, we can perhaps better understand the following fascinating passage in the Gemara in Yoma:

Reish Lakish said: Great is repentance, for [through repentance] intentional transgressions are considered as unintentional transgressions, as it is stated (Hosea 14:2): Return, O Israel, unto Hashem your God, for you have stumbled through your iniquity. Now an iniquity is an intentional transgression, yet [the verse] calls it "stumbling" [which implies something unintentional]. Is this so? But Reish Lakish [himself] said: Great is repentance for [through repentance] intentional transgressions are considered as merits [and not as unintentional transgressions], as it is stated (Ezekiel 33:19): And if the wicked man turns away from his wickedness and behaves with justice and righteousness, he shall live on account of them. This is not a question. Here [in the second statement, the reference is to teshuvah motivated] by love, there [in the first statement, the reference is to teshuvah motivated] by fear. Yoma 86b

אמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה, שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, שנאמר (הושע יד) שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך י כשלת בעונך. הא עון מזיד הוא, וקא קרי ליה מכשול. איני? והאמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות, שנאמר (יחזקאל לג) ובשוב רשע מרשעו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם (חיה) [הוא] יחייה! - לא קשיא: כאן - מאהבה, כאן - מיראה. מסכת יומא פו

Even aside from the details relating to teshuvah motivated by fear and teshuvah motivated by love, this passage requires some analysis. It is understandable that the power of proper repentance is such that it can "downgrade" intentional sins and allow them to be viewed as though they were actually committed unintentionally; teshuvah can release a person from liability for his misdeeds. But how does it make sense, even when motivated by the very best of motivations, for teshuvah to have the power to

transform sins into merits? Can it really be said that all of this person's previous transgressions are now accounted for him as positive actions?

The answer is that when a person changes his character and reforms his personality, such that he is now a different person, all of those very traits and all of those very experiences which previously enabled him and led him to become a sinner can now be used in a proper manner.

The same Yeitzer HaRa will now be used for good things, and this person's future good deeds will build on the foundation of his earlier misdeeds, leading to constructive results. The prior sins thus, in a way, now lead the person to great heights and are therefore viewed as merits.

Teshuvah is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional process. Change, as a rule, does not happen in a fleeting moment, but rather in stages. One who does teshuvah takes steps; steps to avoid sin, to improve his behavior and to become a new and better person.

"Complete" teshuvah is achieved when one has reached the final destination: when he has redefined his character to the extent that even his prior misdeeds now help motivate him to do what is right, where all aspects of his personality contribute to his service of Hashem. That is the ultimate, if difficult to attain, goal of teshuvah.

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www.torah.org/learning/drasha **Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** www.yoss.org A Yom Kippur Message - 5778 A Call to Arms Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Dean, Yeshiva of South Shore

Yom Kippur, the ultimate day of repentance, has the Jewish nation simultaneously praying, fasting and asking for forgiveness. It begins with the somber, quiet, and melodious intonation of Kol Nidrei and ends with the entire congregation shouting Hashem hu HaElokim! (G-d is the Al-Mighty) seven times in succession after various requests of forgiveness. It seems that at the time when our strength is waning our greatest and loudest pleas are spent. Shouldn't we begin the day with the strong requests for forgiveness and save the subdued prayers for when our bodies are weak from hunger and our lips parched from lack of water? Rav Yehoshua Heshel Eichenstein, the Ziditchover Rebbe, tells the following story: One Friday, a man entered the study of the Tchockover Rebbe with a request that was very common in those days. "My son was drafted into the army," the man began. "However, we have a way out. On Sunday, we are going to a doctor who will falsely declare him unfit for service. This way he will be spared certain misery, perhaps even death in that terrible army. Rebbe," he asked, "I need your blessing that he evade the draft." The Rebbe quietly told him that Shabbos was nearing and he could not concentrate on blessings. The man should return to him on Friday evening after his tisch (ceremonious chasidic table). The man did so. After most of the chasidim had left, the man repeated his request, almost verbatim. Again the Rebbe was non-committal. "Return to me after the morning service." Unperturbed, the man noted that he would really like to resolve this matter before Sunday morning. Shabbos morning, after services, the man approached the Rebbe again. Calmly he repeated the predicament. "Sunday morning I am going to a doctor who will falsely declare my son unfit for military service. Please pray that we will evade conscription." The Rebbe was not moved. Again, he deferred until the afternoon. At the third Shabbos meal, the scene repeated again, precisely the way it had the previous three times. "I understand that you are leaving Sunday morning. Come back to me late Saturday night," said the Rebbe. "By then I will have an answer for you." By this time, his Chasidim's curiosity was piqued. They had never seen their Rebbe so reluctant to mete a blessing, especially when it was one that would save a Jewish soul from the frightful Polish army. Saturday night a large crowd gathered as the man approached with his request. Frustrated and disgruntled, the man, once again, repeated his story, almost verbatim, for the fifth time. Immediately, the Rebbe sprung from his chair and began to shout. "What are you asking me? Why would one even try to evade the service of our wonderful country? How dare you ask me for a blessing of that sort? Your son would make a fine soldier for our country. I wish him the best of luck in the army!" The man quickly scurried from the room and left town. The Chasidim stood shocked and bewildered. Never had they heard such an uncharacteristic outcry from the Rebbe. "I will explain," said the Rebbe. "The man was a fraud. He had no son, and if he did, he wanted him in the army. He was sent by the government to test our loyalty. Thank G-d we passed the test." "But, Rebbe!"

cried the chasidim, "how did you know?" "Simple," explained the Rebbe. "I watched the level of intensity. From the moment he met me until tonight there was no increase in intensity nor feeling of desperation with each request. The moment I heard his request tonight and it contained no more passion or desperation than his first request on Friday night, I knew he was a fraud." We stand a whole entire day in prayer, and end with a ne'ilah prayer, after nearly 24 hours of pleading. The litmus test of our sincerity comes as the heavenly gates are being closed. As the sun begins to set, our pleas should intensify. That crescendo assures our sincerity. It also should assure us a Happy & Healthy Sweet New Year. Have an easy fast, a meaningful Yom Kippur and a Gmar Chasimah Tova. ©Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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subject: **Rabbi Reisman's Yom Kippur Shiurim- Previous Years'**

Rabbi Reisman – Shabbos Yom Kippur 5785

Rav Chaim Kanievsky's thought, on one line in Avinu Malkeinu

As we prepare for Shabbos Yom HaKippurim, the day of Shabbos, the day of extraordinary Kiddusha, where Shabbos and Yom Kippur come together and we rest not only from Melacha, but we rest from taking care of our bodies, Shvisas Asar the Rambam calls it. We rest on the tenth from worrying about our Gashmios, our physical needs, and we focus instead on our Ruchnios, on our spiritual needs. In preparation for the Yom Hadin, I'd like to first explain one line in Avinu Malkeinu, and then give an overall thought regarding Yom HaKippurim. Let me begin with a line in Avinu Malkeinu.

In Avinu Malkeinu, we say, (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ), erase, or diminish, (וְהָעֵבֶר), take away our sins, (מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ), from being in front of your eyes. The order, (פִּשְׁעֵינוּ), which is a Pesha, which is a Maizid Aveira, followed by (וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ), which is a Shogeig Aveira, bothers the Mishna Brura. The Mishna Brura asks, that the Girsra really should be Chataeynu V'pesha'einu. The rule in Davening is that Lo Zu, Af Zu, we go from a lower request to a higher request.

So first we should say, Hashem, get rid of the Shogeig Aveiros, and then only after the Maizid Aveiros. So it is out of order. That is the Mishna Brura's question. Rav Chaim Kanievsky, in Taima Dik'ra, on Yomim Noraim, says a tremendous insight, it's a brand new Pshat, really, in the order of (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ), and he suggests the following, which is a beautiful Kavana, if you're saying Avinu Malkeinu, to say it with the proper thought.

Of course, there are only two Avinu Malkeinu's left, if you Davened Mincha today, you have tomorrow by Shacharis, normally, Erev Yom Kippur, we don't say Avinu Malkeinu by Shacharis. However, when Shabbos is Yom Kippur, we do. So we're going to say Avinu Malkeinu tomorrow by Shacharis, and then again by Neilah. What does it mean, Avinu Malkeinu, (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ)? He says the following, Avinu Malkeinu, we're going to do Teshuva. Nu, our first Teshuva is the Teshuva M'yira, the Teshuva from fear. It's not the perfect Teshuva. So that Teshuva, (מָחָה), it erases. There's still a mark left, because when you do Teshuva, you're Zedonos Nasu Kish'gagos. The Aveiros you did deliberately become like accidental Aveiros. It's only (מָחָה). When you erase something, there's still a mark left. So, (מָחָה), erase. We're first with the Teshuva, that's the Teshuva M'yira. And then, Hashem, should be Mekabeil from us, a Teshuva M'ahava, (וְהָעֵבֶר), means to take it away entirely, to move it away, to take it away in Gantzin. So we're saying to HKB"H (מָחָה), that first the Aveira should become Kish'gagos and then later, (וְהָעֵבֶר), we should be Zoche to a higher level of Teshuva, the Teshuva M'ahava. So, of course we say (פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ). We're talking about the same Aveira. The Aveira starts out as a Pesha, as a terrible Aveira, a Maizid Aveira. (מָחָה), first you should be Zoche to knock it down and it should only be counted as a Shogeig Aveira. We do the lower level of Teshuva, Zedonos Nasu Kish'gagos, it goes down. And then, (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ), once it's like a D'rabbanan Aveira, HKB"H let's be Zoche to a Teshuva M'ahava, and we can get rid of it entirely.

Now, at first glance, it sounds like a forced Pshat into this Avinu Malkeinu, and maybe someone will argue with it. But I want to tell you that I saw this, and I say Avinu Malkeinu with this Kavana, (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ), it becomes meaningful. It gives a meaning to the whole idea of the different levels of Teshuva, and the idea that we'd like to be Zoche. So this is Rav Chaim's thought, on one line in Avinu Malkeinu, one line in Yom Noraim Davening, (מָחָה וְהָעֵבֶר פִּשְׁעֵינוּ וְהַטְּאִיתֵנוּ מִכָּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ). We should be Zoche Halevai.

An overall thought regarding Yom Kippur

There's a sense that Yom Kippur is a day of a scorecard. What do I mean? I mean that when you're in elementary school and you're a little boy, probably in high school too, you're taught the meaning of Yom Kippur as if it's all mathematics. In other words, they put Mitzvahs on one side of the scale, Aveiros on the other side, and it's a mathematical equation, which one is more and which one is less, and that's the entire

idea. It's almost as if to say, well, if Rosh Hashanah, you had more Mitzvahs than Aveiros, then you don't really need Yom Kippur, because you're already written in the Sefer Hatzadikim. So, like, we're doing Yom Kippur on a Safeik, we're playing it safe, we're doing Yom Kippur. K'ilu Chas V'shalom there are some Jews who don't eat on Yom Kippur. It's a very inaccurate idea. It's an idea that Yom Kippur, we're just trying to remove some Aveiros from one side of the scale, maybe add Mitzvos to the other, and it's a very elementary understanding. Can't say it's not true, but it's not really what a person who's a Bar Seichel, an intelligent person, that's not what you go into Yom Kippur with this thought.

There's something much more significant, much more important, and that is the idea that it's not really a scorecard, and I want to explain that. In life, let's say you have two people, and each one spent 80 years. Let's say after his Bar Mitzvah, he spent 80 years in this world, and each one spent 40 years doing straight Mitzvos, and 40 years doing straight Aveiros. Let's just say, theoretically, one of them spent the first 40 years doing Mitzvos, and the second 40 doing Aveiros. The other one, the first 40 doing Aveiros, and the second 40 doing Mitzvos. Well, if you look at it as a scorecard equation, so it's like a scoreboard in a baseball game L'havdil. If one team scored five runs in the first four innings, and the other team scored five runs in the second four innings, so right now they're tied five against five. If it's after nine innings, they go into extra innings. It's equal. Life is not that way. It's not equal.

Somebody who spent the first 40 years of his life doing Aveiros, and the second 40 years of his life doing Mitzvos, he is Muchan L'chayei Olam Habo, and the other fellow spent the first 40 years doing Mitzvos, and the second 40 years doing Aveiros, he's going to Gehenom. Why is it fair? Each one spent exactly the same thing, 40 years with the same Mitzvos, 40 years with the same Aveiros. Why is it that way? As a matter of fact, it's much worse. Even if he spent 80 years doing Mitzvos, he could be a Kohen Gadol, and then he does Aveiros at the end, so he's gone. He goes to Gehenom, and the other fellow could have spent 80 years doing Aveiros. The worst Aveiros. Never made it to minyan, didn't keep Shabbat, and then he's like, Reb Eliezer Ben Dordai (See Avodah Zorah 17a). At the end of his life, he does Teshuva, one good day, (יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת). What's going on? If Mitzvos and Aveiros is a scorecard, the way we understand, two sides of a scale, so this whole thing is something wrong. The basic idea with which you have to go to Yom Kippur, which you have to go to life, is that it's not a scorecard, it's not innings that we talk about. Yom Kippur is not to pile up one side of the scale and knock down the other side. Of course it is, but that's not the purpose of Yom Kippur. Even if Malach Eliyahu told you, you have more Mitzvos than Aveiros, you still have Yom Kippur. Nothing changed. The idea of Yom Kippur is to be a Ben Aliya. The whole idea of Olam Hazei, what is this world? It's to prepare. It's a Prozdor. It's a hallway leading to a great banquet of Olam Habo. It's to prepare. If you have two waiters, one waiter spent five hours setting tables for the wedding, and then five minutes he got angry, he turned over all the tables. Now he says, well, pay me for my five hours. You would throw him out. He says, what do you mean? There is the other waiter. He walked in upset, and the first five minutes he was screaming and ranting and throwing things on the floor, and then he calmed down. He spent five hours setting up. So you paid him. What's the difference? It's five hours and five minutes, five minutes and five hours? We tell them that's ridiculous. The whole purpose is to come out with a properly set wedding hall. Olam Hazei is the same thing. Olam Hazei is a place where you've got to come out as a Baal Madreiga. You have to come out as a Baal Aliya. You have to come out as someone who knows Kedusha. And that is what Yom Kippur is about. What I've told you about a lifetime, it's true each year about Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is to come out of the previous year, to come out of it as a Ben Aliya, somebody who has a She'ifa for Gadlus, somebody who has a She'ifa to move up in life, somebody who wants to do the right thing. One of the Shlosa Esrei Midos is Emes. We say Hashem Hashem Keil Rachum V'chanun. We understand Rachum, Chanun is Midas HaRachamim. We say Hashem Hashem Keil Rachum. Then we say Erch Apayim, Rav Chesed. We understand those are Midos of Rachamim. Then we say Emes. Emes is truth. Emes is Rachamim? Emes is truth. If you owe me money, pay me. If you don't owe me money, don't pay me. That's truth. It's not Rachamim. Rachamim is, if you owe me money, I'm Mochel you. But what's Emes? Emes is one of the Yud Gimel Midos of Rachamim?

The answer is yes, it is. Because if after a year of Aveiros, a year where a person is unworthy, or even a year with mostly Mitzvos, Ain Tzadik B'aretz She'yaaseh Tov V'lo Yechtah, there are some Aveiros. If at the end, a person is Makir Es HaEmes, he's Makir the truth, he's Makir the truth of where he's supposed to be headed, where he's supposed to be going, of the goals of life, he's Makir the Emes of Toraseinu Hakedosha. So the Midos Rachamim says, we'll throw it all out. Now you're a Ben Aliya. Now you're a Ben Aliya like Reb Eliezer Ben Dordai. That's the Midah of Emes. What's the Midas Ha'Emes? Midas Ha'Emes says he did Aveiros for 80 years and now you're Makir Emes? That's one of HaKadosh Baruch Hu's Midos. You can be Mahapach, everything that was until now. And so we go to Yom Kippur, of course, we want that the scale should be in our favor. But it's not a game of points. It's not a game of winning and losing. It's not a game of a score. After nine innings, after 12

months and 10 days, it's who you are, where you are, to be a Ben Aliya. You're dressed in white to be like a Malach. That means to have Teshukos for the Emes, a Torasainu Hakedosha. And that is the goal of Yom Kippur that's coming upon us. And so, I wish one and all a meaningful Yom Kippur, Yom Kippur of Aliya, Yom Kippur of connection to the Borei Olam, Yom Kippur of Amitos to Toraseinu HaKedosha, of a Hakara, of where we should be, where we should be heading. And of course, to try to make that meaningful, and to carry us into the future. And with that, I wish everybody an absolutely wonderful, meaningful Shabbas Kodesh and Shabbas Shabbason Kodesh that's coming up upon us. At the same time, I want to ask you all Mechila, if I was Matriach people especially when I was in Eretz Yisrael, people who got on the phone and heard nothing. Maybe you didn't hear nothing. You heard each other, which is fine, but you didn't hear me. I'm sorry. This happens, especially when I go to Eretz Yisrael and I'm swept away with the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, the Kiddusha of Eretz Yisrael and I forget time, I forget Zman.

And so, we go to Yom Kippur, we have a mind, Acheinu B'nei Yisrael, there are soldiers, there are soldiers in danger. There are soldiers in Lebanon and in Gaza, there are soldiers all over. They're protecting us, they're protecting Klal Yisrael. If an Arab was running after you to kill you, and a soldier stepped up and protected you, would you say, huh, Tzahal, would you have something negative to say about him? Of course not. I've got news for you. It's happening. There are plenty of our enemies who are ready to run after you. And who's standing between them and you? Who's standing, HKB"H protects, but he protects with? Megalilin Zechus Al Yedai Zakkai. People are willing to be Moser Nefesh, put their lives in danger on behalf of Klal Yisrael. Kulom Tzaddikim. They're all righteous people. They're taking their lives, putting it on the line, Leman Klal Yisrael. Let their Zechus stand for us. We should be Zoche to Daven for them, and it'll be Zechu for us, and a meaningful Yom Kippur, and may HKB"H bring Sholom Al Yisrael B'karov Mamesh. A Gut Gebentsht Yar and G'mar Chasimah Tovah to all!

from: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org> date: Sep 30, 2025, 9:51 PM Be'er Moshe **By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**
Parshas Haazinu Reaching For the Sky[1]

Listen carefully, O Heavens and I will speak. May the earth hear the words of my mouth.[2]

Did the earth get distracted? Why else instruct the Heavens to listen carefully (lit., to give ear), while the earth is just expected to somehow passively hear about the Shirah? In other words, the pasuk addresses the Heavens in the second person, but the earth in the more distant third? Additionally, the third person usage can only refer to the future, while the second person address speaks in the present, in the here and now. The natural way to address Heavens and earth would either be to speak to both of them directly, or to use the third person regarding both Heavens and earth.

Indeed, that is exactly what Yeshaya did at the beginning of his sefer:[3] "Hear, O Heavens, and listen carefully, O earth." He uses the second person for both. Why is that not the case in our parshah?

The Maggid of Kozhnitz[4] writes: "A tzadik wishes to return his generation to the proper way. He constantly speaks words of mussar to them, but his words do not enter their hearts, which have become hearts of stone because of their many aveiros. They have, rachmana litzlan, joined with the kelipah [the "shells" of tumah that try attaching themselves to kedushah, so that their content should be suppressed. What should he do?] He should speak to the shores of their neshamos, which the kelipah has no control over. This is what is meant by, 'Listen carefully, O Heavens,' meaning the place from which all neshamos emanate, which is called 'Heavens.' 'May the earth hear the words' then follows as a matter of course."

A rov in Ozherov as asked why he was accustomed to holding forth on deep topics in kabbalah, that so few in his audience understood. "I'm speaking to their neshamos – and they understand."

This unlocks the content of our pasuk. Heaven and earth refer here to neshama and guf. By speaking directly to the neshamah/Heavens (i.e. second person), the guf/earth eventually gets the lesson – "hears" the beautiful song of the Torah.

1 Adapted from Be'er Moshe, by the Ozherover Rebbe zt"l

2 Devarim 32:1

3 Yeshayahu 1:2

4 Avodas Yisrael, Haazinu

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from: RIETS Kollel Elyon from RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Substack <riets@substack.com>

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subject: **What If I Can't Forgive?**

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

Finding the strength to apologize for the mistreatment of another can be excruciatingly difficult. At the same time, being prepared to forgive for that same mistreatment can be just as challenging, if not harder. Nonetheless, Yom Kippur asks for both: for one who has offended another to seek that victim's forgiveness, and if the process has been appropriate, for that victim to grant it.

What does it mean to forgive? Maimonides' language (Hilkhos Teshuvah 2:10) requires it be b'levav shalem v'nefesh chafetzah, "with a complete heart and a willing spirit": quite a demanding standard.

One important question, taken up largely in the later generations, is that of one who is approached to forgive, but feels he cannot sincerely do so. The discussion is held on a number of levels: can the victim tell the offender he forgives if this does not reflect his actual emotional state? What about declarations in private, such as before retiring at night; would such a statement be deemed a falsehood?

These questions, which were presumed to be related, were addressed in sharply different ways by halakhic authorities and ethicists. (Extensive discussions about this can be found in L'Hoil L'Acharini, pp. 52-58; L'vavo Ne'eman, pp. 228-229; HaParshah B'Halakhah, p. 132; Torat HaAdam L'Adam, III, pp. 35-36.) Some asserted that forgiveness should be expressed anyway, and that the statement is its own accomplishment. It is reported that R. Yitzchak (Peterburger) Blazer would instruct his students to say to each other "I hereby forgive you all" prior to Yom Kippur, and that an announcement of that nature was made at Kol Nidrei services in the yeshiva at Ponevezh.

The halakhic standard is usually devarim she-ba'lev einam devarim (Kiddushin 49b); when two individuals are transacting, only that which is verbalized is valid, and an unspoken intention, even if contradictory, is not credited. As such, a statement of forgiveness is equivalent to forgiveness itself, even if one internally feels very differently. This position was taken by the great Talmudist R. Yosef Engel (Gilyonei HaShas to Kiddushin) and many later authors (This is the view favored by R. Chaim Kanievsky, cited in L'Dofkei B'Teshuvah, p. 113.).

R. Engel cites in support of his view a brief statement of the 14th century German scholar R. Menachem of Meresburg (Nimukei Choshen Mishpat, #52). However, it must be carefully considered whether or not this source is applicable. It is possible that the context is a monetary dispute, in which one party denies that the waiving of his rights necessary for a settlement was sincere. In that instance, the focus is purely on a monetary transaction, and the rule disregarding unspoken conditions must indeed dominate. However, if the subject is forgiveness of an interpersonal offense itself, apart from its monetary implications, there is a strong case to be made that devarim she-ba'lev, internal feelings, must indeed be acknowledged.

Many authorities took this position, asserting that this kind of forgiveness is distinct from the monetary kind, and resides completely within the emotional realm; as such, emotional realities are the only relevant metric.

This connects to the broader question of to what extent, if any, the forgiveness for an offense is comparable to that same concept and terminology (mechilah) as applied in the monetary realm. A strong parallel between them was displayed by the advice of R. Yisrael Salanter (Netivot Ohr (printed in Ohr Yisrael), pp. 58a-b) that one who is offended by another should immediately forgive. If he does so, he argued, he would then be bound by a prohibition to not maintain any grudge, just as one who forgives a monetary debt relinquishes any right to collect at a later date, even if he reconsiders.

Consistent with that understanding, many scholars in that tradition, such as R. Simchah Zissel of Kelm, took the position that verbalized mechilah is inherently effective, regardless of internal feelings. R. Reuven Grozofsky (In the memorial volume Even Tzion, p. 542-543), who cites his view, grapples

with the application: obligations of the heart – his essay focuses on the prohibition of accepting lashon hara – are determined by the heart, and this presumably is the case for forgiveness of offense. R. Yisrael's advice, he notes, was addressing a specific aspect of interpersonal conflict: "ta'arumet", or "grievance", is a privilege granted to some parties who have been wronged by others. Its exact nature is subject to debate, and it is clear that it is non-monetary; still, it is comparable to monetary rights in its function. This privilege, then, is waived irrevocably with a verbal declaration, regardless of sincerity. It does not, however, reflect on the entirety of the forgiveness necessary when an interpersonal offense has taken place. The Chazon Ish was reported (Ma'aseh Ish, I, p. 161) to have objected to the practices of R. Blazer and the Ponevezh Yeshiva noted above, asking "is resentment really removed in such a fashion"? Perhaps, he allowed, after some of the Yom Kippur rituals had had an opportunity to move the heart, there would be some truth to it; but a simple declaration had no meaning. As his nephew, R. Nissim Karelitz, noted (Chut Shani, Hilkhot Yom Kippur, p. 100), this was consistent with his understanding of the essence of mechilah, which is to remove antipathy from one's heart. (However, note the citation of another nephew, R. Chaim Kanievsky, in L'Dofkei B'Teshuvah, p. 113, in Sha'ar HaTziyun, n. 797.) However, he did allow for a distinction: if one is confronted with a request for forgiveness that he feels unprepared to grant, and nonetheless responds affirmatively out of embarrassment, there is some value to this. Even though he has not yet truly forgiven, he has chosen to begin the process, albeit for a side reason, and this commitment is meaningful.

A similar position is attributed to R. Elya Lopian, about whom it was said that he was once disgraced by an individual who later asked for forgiveness. He responded by asking his interlocutor to come back a few days later; he needed the time, he explained, to work on his character so that he could reach a state in which he would be ready to forgive. (See Shalmei Todah, Yamim Noraim, pp. 197-198. R. Aryeh Leib Steinman, Ayelet HaShachar, Gen. 50:17, cites this story as well in explaining why Joseph is not explicitly recorded in the Torah as forgiving his brothers. See the related point from R. Yechezkel Levenstein in Mofet HaDor, p. 26 and Ohr Yechezkel, II, p. 33.)

A number of authorities maintained that not only is an insincere statement of forgiveness ineffective, it is worse than nothing. R. Shlomo Wolbe (Aleí Shur, II, pp. 240-241) writes about this in harsh terms: it is an act of geneivat da'at (deception); it deprives the offender of his needed atonement; it impedes the act of appeasement mandated by Jewish law. Further, he writes, one who does this will himself need to repent prior to Yom Kippur. Similarly, R. Yitzchak Pinchas Goldwasser, in his Tapucheí Zahav (Bava Metzia 83a), worried that R. Yisrael's stratagem was dangerous: if one would, in fact, feel resentment after having released his claims, he would then be doing so without justification, and thus sinfully. As such, he posits, R. Yisrael must have only recommended this for close students who he trusted to have the spiritual fortitude to live up to its expectations. Similarly, some authorities, such as R. Abba Ben Tzion Shaul (Resp. Ohr L'Tziyon, II, p. 150, #13), prohibited one who maintained resentment against another from reciting the phrase "I hereby forgive all who have offended me" in the nightly bedtime shema, asserting do so would render one a dover shekarim (a speaker of falsehoods, see Ps. 101:7). The inadequacy of this formulation, when said insincerely, was addressed earlier by the Pele Yoetz (Erekh Teshuvah, s.v. v'im hi), who advised offenders against relying on their victims reciting it for this and other reasons. Notably, however, he did not forbid one from reciting the statement despite not experiencing full forgiveness. However, elsewhere in his writings (Orot Eilim, Megillah 28a), he does recommend against it in such a situation, indicating it is an attempt to deceive God, and urges one to wait until one can "commit in his mind and heart" to forgive.

Regarding this recitation, R. Yisrael Salanter's recommendation was again considered relevant, but in a negative way. If it is indeed the case that declaring forgiveness removes one's legitimate entitlement to grievance, it renders any continuing emotional connection to the issue sinful, an enormous

challenge for a typical human. Accordingly, R. Yitzchak Hutner declined to include this in his nighttime routine (see R. Yaakov Blumenthal, Chelko Shel Yaakov, Megillah, pp. 202-203).

Despite the linkage assumed by these authorities, it would seem that there may be room to distinguish between the offended insincerely telling the offender that he forgives, on the one hand, and the recitations in the context of prayer. In the latter instances, while the authorities expressed a concern that one is speaking falsely before God and perhaps exhibiting a deceitful façade, the truth is, of course, that it is impossible to deceive God. As such, the potential harm in such a statement cannot be compared to the actual negative effects of misleading a penitent and depriving him of his process of redemption. Instead, what is happening in this case can be seen as a sense of personal affirmation and commitment. Even if the offended party is not yet in a place where he is able to forgive with a full heart, he is declaring before God that that is where he wishes to be, and that statement is not only sincere in its own way, but an actual concrete step towards its own realization. In this vein, it should be noted that even when actually interacting with the other party, there are many nuances and levels within the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a difference between claiming that one is forgiving with total disregard for reality on one hand, and on the other hand, the tentative statement that comes from one who remains in emotional pain, but wishes it could be otherwise.

Relatedly, R. David Ariav (L'Reakha Kamokha, III, kuntres ha-biurim, 7) suggests a distinction within the concern. There are times when a victim sincerely offers his forgiveness, but still experiences some inner distress over the incident. This, he posits, should not be deemed an insincere mechilah; some pain, unfortunately, never goes away, as can be seen from physical injury, and nonetheless forgiveness is possible. Once the victim has fully gone through the process of releasing his grievance, the forgiveness is sincere, even if some hurt lingers.

It is wholly legitimate and necessary to acknowledge that forgiveness is a process and a spectrum. The offended party can express his appreciation for the efforts of the other and his desire to completely address his acts of mistreatment and take full note of his significant personal growth and movement to reconciliation. At the same time, his own journey may require additional distance. He may be prepared to credit the offender for his own progress and liberate him from his guilt while also allowing for his own travels to take a longer path.

This is especially consistent with Maimonides' formulation of the mandate for forgiveness. He includes this directive together with two Torah prohibitions: that of bearing a grudge and of taking revenge. It is noteworthy that he also finds those two to be linked to each other, understanding that one who allows himself to dwell on a grievance is at increased risk of acting aggressively in vengeance as a result, which in turn contributes to the erosion of harmonious society.

Placing the mandate of forgiveness in this context highlights the role it plays in one's own behavior and stability of character. It emphasizes that the victim too needs to chart an individualized path for himself to guarantee his own balanced conduct and productive contributions to society. Without a doubt, the progress of this journey is greatly impacted by the efforts the offender has made to repair their relationship. At the same time, it is still a completely personal one for the offended. These two individual journeys take place on parallel tracks, ultimately converging. It is not crucial that they travel at the same pace. What is vital is that the process be one that is genuine and honest, and that whatever that pace is, it is going in the right direction.

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**The Master of Mercy... and me
by Rabbi Yechiel Spero**

Kel Melech Yoshev Al Kisei Rachamim

G-d, King Who sits on the Throne of Mercy.

This introductory tefillah, which leads into the Yud Gimmel Middos, comes from the siddur of R' Amram Gaon. Like Keil Erech Apayim, it sets the stage for everything that follows.

Keil — This Name conveys two powerful truths. First, as a Melech, Hashem is the Baal HaKoach; there is nothing beyond His power — nothing we can conceive, and even that which we can't begin to imagine. But Keil also reflects His nature of pure Kindness. As Tomer Devorah (a most significant sefer on the Yud Gimmel Middos shel Rachamim) explains, He is a King of inexhaustible Chessed. His goodness extends to the farthest corners of the universe, touching even those who feel distant from Him. Yosheiv — He sits. Shelah HaKadosh explains that this word tells us that Hashem is always ready. Always waiting. Always poised to hear the cries of His people. Always prepared to turn toward us the moment we turn toward Him.

Al Kisei Rachamim — He sits on the Throne of Mercy. Ready to take Din, strict Judgment, and transfer it to a place of Compassion. He doesn't sit in Judgment with harshness. He sits with a desire to forgive, to heal, to draw close.

This is how we begin. With a Father Who conveys power and Kindness; Who is there for us; Who is ready to forgive us when we repent.

A Story: Why Didn't I?

Before the skies over Europe darkened with smoke and screams, there was a flicker of hope. A miracle called the Kinder transport. Ten thousand Jewish children, plucked from the jaws of Nazi Germany and Austria, were brought to safety in England. Away from danger, away from the gas that would fill the air soon after.

Years later, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) invited one of those survivors — a man now in his eighties — to share his story on the radio. He was twelve at the time of the transport. And though many years had passed, there was one moment, one memory that never left him.

When the children were first brought to England, they cried, clinging to memories of home and the arms of their mothers, now thousands of miles away. Some of them adjusted. Some even smiled again. But there was one boy who refused. It made no difference what they gave him — candy, toys, comfort — he never stopped crying. His pain could not be soothed.

Finally, the caretakers asked him, "What do you want?" "I want to speak to the king," the boy answered confidently. "The king of England?" "Yes, I want a private meeting with him." Instead of dismissing him, the caretakers acquiesced. "All right, but if you're going to meet the king, you must prepare. There is a way to walk. A way to speak. A way to behave before royalty."

For three weeks, the little boy practiced. He studied. He learned. And he believed.

King George VI had recently begun his reign. An unlikely king — born with a stutter, never meant for the throne — was now charged with holding together a nation at war. Still, in those first months, the king made it his mission to visit the people of his kingdom. The big day arrived. The boy was brought to the city square, where crowds waited behind barricades to catch a glimpse of the king's carriage. But as the crowd grew, the boy realized: He would not have a private meeting. He was just going to wave. No. That wasn't enough. So, as the royal carriage passed, he jumped the barricade. He ran with all his might, a twelve-year-old boy with tears in his eyes and hope in his heart. But the royal guards tackled him to the ground and placed him in handcuffs.

The crowd gasped in surprise. So did the king. Peering out of the carriage, King George saw the boy and ordered, "Let him go." He motioned to bring the boy into the carriage.

The boy stood up, shaken, his eyes wide. "Why did you run to me?" the king asked.

At first, the boy couldn't answer. But then, through his thick accent and halting English, he said, "I was brought to England. I left my parents behind. I miss them. I need them."

The king, himself a man who had once struggled to speak, understood. "And what do you want from me?" asked the king. "You're the king of England,"

the boy said. "Please... bring my parents to me." "We're at war with Germany. That's not something I can just do." "But you're the king! You can do anything!" The king's eyes softened. "Don't cry," he said. "I promise I will try. I will do everything I can. Just... don't cry." Two days later, a knock was heard at the orphanage door. It was the boy's parents. Somehow, they had been brought out of Germany. Reunited with their son. Saved. Back in the radio studio, decades later, the survivor finished telling his story. Then the tears came rushing back. "I will never forgive myself," he admitted. The host was puzzled. "Why? You were the one who asked. You were the one who was saved." "No," the man said. "You don't understand. It wasn't me. I wasn't the one who jumped the barricade. That boy, that hero, that child of courage — it wasn't me. I was there. I watched. I stood frozen. And I will never forgive myself."

"Why didn't I?"

As we prepare for the Days of Awe, we must know that the King is in the field. He is walking among us. Accessible. Listening. And we, too, are standing behind the barricade — unsure, timid, hesitant. But what if we were to jump? What if we were to dare cry out with sincerity, "Ribbono shel Olam — I need You! I miss You! I want to be close to You again!"

What if we were to dare ask for the seemingly impossible? What if we were to believe, really believe, that the King can do anything?