

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Shlita*

Yom Kippur



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

Preparing for Yom Kippur	4
<i>Teshuvah</i> in a Moment	5
Chesed	6
A Day Transcending Time	9
The Mitzvah to Eat on <i>Erev Yom Kippur</i>	11
Forgiving.....	12
Grab Merits in Aseres Yemei Teshuva	15
<i>Kol Nidrei</i>	16
The Tune	17
<i>Teshuvah</i>	17
<i>Kabbalos</i>	20
Regret.....	20
Happy with the Atonement	21
The Power of <i>Teshuvah</i>	22
<i>Viduy</i>	23
Immediate Atonement	24
<i>Neilah</i>	26
G-t's Numen	26
Between Yom Kippur and Succos.....	27

Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

Preparing for Yom Kippur

Shulchan Aruch (581:1) teaches, "For Selichos and the yomim nora'im, be cautious to select a shaliach tzibbur who is the most appropriate, the greatest scholar, and the most perfect in good deeds that you can find." This is because the chazan pleads for his community, and when the chazan is a tzaddik, there is a greater likelihood that the congregation will receive a good year. The *tzibbur* is dependent on the chazanim for a good year; therefore, it is crucial that they be righteous.

The poskim say that the chazanim should do teshuvah three days before Yom Kippur so they will be worthy to plead for their communities. *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* writes, "The shaliach tzibbur who will daven on the yomim noraim, for three days before the holiday...must study the meaning of the tefillos, according to his abilities, and he should study sifrei mussar that arouse the heart of man, and he should be afraid of the glory of Hashem's greatness when He comes to judge the world."

The Chasam Sofer teaches that in our generations, we no longer rely on the baalei tefillah as much as people relied on them in the past. Therefore, the Chasam Sofer recommends that each person consider himself like a chazan. He should prepare himself well and daven properly. We can't rely on anyone, and every person must do the best he can to plead for a good year.

The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zy'a* taught these ideas with a *mashal*:

The lion, known as the king of the jungle, was angry with the animals of his kingdom for some reason, and the animals gathered for an emergency meeting to find a solution to appease the king.

The wise fox spoke up. "I know three hundred *mashalim* (parables). I will tell them

to the king to explain our situation, our point of view, and our excuses. He will understand and forgive us. Come follow me."

The animals were relieved that the clever fox had a solution, and they hiked together to meet with the king.

After walking for some time, the fox told the animals, "I forgot one hundred of the parables. But don't worry, I still remember two hundred," and the animals walked on.

Sometime later, the fox said, "I forgot another hundred parables. But you need not worry as I still know one hundred parables. That is enough to appease the king."

As the animals stood before the great lion in awe, the fox told them, "I just forgot the last hundred parables. I can't help you anymore. Now it is up to you. Say whatever you can to appease the king."

They all pleaded before the king, who accepted their pleas and forgave them.

The Beis Yisrael explained that from the onset, the clever fox didn't have anything to tell the king, but he understood their only hope was to go to the lion and plead before him. Staying away certainly won't help them. So, the clever fox devised a plan to get the animals to the king. And now that they stood before the king, it was up to them to plead for their lives.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explained that this occurs when chassidim come to their Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They expect the Rebbe to daven for them and save them. The Rebbe tells them, "I also don't know what to say. I am unworthy and can't guarantee to help you. Therefore, you must plead before Hashem for a good year."

This lesson also applies to teshuvah. To do teshuvah, people often think they must have help from others. "How can I change my ways if the people around me stay the

same?" they say. "Is it possible for me to do teshuvah all by myself?" And they say, "I need someone to direct me how to do teshuvah. I don't know where to begin."

It is certainly helpful when others do teshuvah together with you and when you have a tzaddik directing you on the path of teshuvah, but when that isn't an option at the time, realize that teshuvah is within your reach – it is all up to you.

To bring out this point, we quote a Gemara:

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 17.) tells the story of a grave sinner, Elazar ben Durdiya, who did teshuvah and died that same day. The Gemara says that on the day he was inspired to do teshuvah, he sat between mountains and asked the mountains to daven for him. The mountains replied,¹ "Before we daven for you, we must daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 54:10) כִּי יִמוּשׁוּ וְהִגְבְּעוּת תְּמוֹטֶיהָ, 'For the mountains shall tilt and the hills totter.'"

Elazar said, "Sun and moon, daven for me."

The sun and moon also declined, saying, "Before we daven for you, we have to daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 24:23) וְחִפְּרָה הַלְּבָנָה וּבֹשָׁה הַחֶמֶד, 'The moon shall be ashamed, and the sun shall be abashed.'"

Elazar said, "Stars daven for me. Ask Hashem to have compassion on me!"

The stars replied, "Before we daven for you, we need to daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 34:4) וְנִמְקוּ כָּל צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, 'All the host of heaven shall melt.'"

Realizing he had no one to turn to, Elazar ben Durdiya said, אֵין הַדָּבָר תְּלוּי אֵלָּא בִּי, "The matter is left for me alone." He placed his head between his knees and cried until his

soul departed. A bas kol emerged and proclaimed, "Reb Elazar ben Durdiya has now been readied for the life of Olam HaBa."

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

Reb Elazar ben Durdiya sought assistance from the mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars in his quest for teshuvah. Alas, he discovered that when it comes to teshuvah and tefillah, אֵין הַדָּבָר תְּלוּי אֵלָּא בִּי, it is all up to me. I can daven for myself and do teshuvah by myself. I don't have to have a support group or a mentor. Of course, these elements help, but even in their absence, one can do teshuvah alone.

Teshuvah in a Moment

We wrote above that Reb Elazar ben Durdiya cried and did teshuvah, and a bas kol announced that he had earned Olam HaBa. The Gemara adds, "Rebbe cried and said, 'Some acquire Olam HaBa after years [of toil in avodas Hashem], and some acquire their portion in Olam HaBa in a moment.'"

This is a good opening for our next subject – the realization that one can do teshuvah in one moment. It takes just a second, and everything can be turned around. Elazar ben Durdiya was a grave sinner, but at a moment of inspiration, he did teshuvah, acquired Olam HaBa, and was called Rebbe.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2) states, "What is *teshuvah*? It is (1) to leave the sin, (2) to remove it from his thoughts, and (3) to be determined never to commit this sin again." So, teshuvah is a decision not to sin again. This is the essence of teshuvah, and such a decision can be made in a moment.

1. Tosfos explains that the mountains didn't actually speak, but Elazar ben Durdiya understood that if the mountains could speak, that is what they would say. Tosfos brings another explanation that it was the malach of the mountains who spoke with Elazar ben Durdiya.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 49:) says that if a total *rasha* (רשע גמור) betroths a woman and says על מנת שאני צדיק גמור, "The marriage is contingent on me being a perfect tzaddik," we consider them married (מספק), because he may have had a thought of *teshuvah* while giving her the ring. This is another source that *teshuvah* can be done in a moment. One thought of *teshuvah* turns the person around from being a total *rasha* (*rasha gamur*) to a perfect tzaddik (*tzaddik gamur*).

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

Chesed

Reb Avigdor Miller *zt'l* said that smiling is a *segulah* for attaining good judgment.

He added, "I know you think I'm old, and I don't know what I'm talking about, but this is good advice. If you smile at people, you will merit a good year."

He explained this with a *mashal*:

A storeowner was taking stock at the end of the year of the profits and losses of the store and concluded that he must cut costs. Some employees will have to go.

His advisor said, "No matter what you do, don't fire Mr. So-and-so. He always has a smile on his face, and customers love him. Some customers come to your store just because he is there."

Reb Avigdor Miller explained that if you smile to others, Heaven will say, "You are needed in the world. People need you. They

receive joy from you. So, I will keep you alive."

Furthermore, Hashem will provide all his needs so he can continue smiling because this service is so precious to Hashem.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* also taught a similar lesson. He explained that those who do *chesed* stand a better chance of receiving a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Even if they don't deserve to live by their own merit, they will be granted life because people need them.²

Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) say, תשובה תפילה, וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה, "*Teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* annul the harsh decrees." Some people don't have much money. How can they give *tzedakah*? How can they annul harsh decrees? They can give a small amount according to their abilities. Additionally, all forms of helping one's fellow man are included in the concept of *tzedakah*.

Someone asked the Chazon Ish *zt'l* why he spends so much of his time giving counsel to people. "Wouldn't your time be better spent learning Torah?"

The Chazon Ish replied, "If I had a lot of money, I would spend this time distributing money to the poor. Since I don't have much money, this is my way of helping others."

It *pasuk* writes (Vayikra 19) ולפני עור לא תתן מכשול, "You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person." Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:53-54) writes, "This *pasuk* teaches us the importance of giving good counsel when someone asks for advice and not causing them to stumble over improper advice..." We should also be proactive in thinking of ways to help others. This is one

2. Elef Hamagen (583:4) writes, "Be particular (when possible) to have poor people at your table, so the Satan won't accuse you of neglecting the poor. It is important to be mindful of this on every yom tov, as the Zohar HaKadosh emphasizes the grave sin of not having a guest for the holiday meal. Therefore, it is undoubtedly necessary to have a guest on Rosh Hashanah. The Imrei Kodesh encourages everyone to have a guest at every meal of Rosh Hashanah, and he teaches that if one has a guest at their meals, it will be considered as though they had in mind all the spiritual intentions of the Arizal in their prayers and blowing of the shofar. He elaborates on this lesson.

of the primary paths of gemilus chasadim, as it states (Mishlei 27:9) שמן וקמרת ישמח לב ומתק רעהו מעצת נפש, 'Oil and incense make the heart rejoice, and the sweet words of his friend's counsel are more valuable than one's own counsel.

Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah remove the harsh judgment. The Leket Yosher explains how tzedakah removes harsh judgment. Before quoting the Leket Yosher, I want to make a few introductions:

It states (Mishlei 19:17) מלוח ה' חונן דל, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to Hashem." The Maharal (Bava Basra 9:) explains, "Hashem created the world, and He must take care of it. He created the poor, so He must give them parnassah. Therefore, when someone helps a poor person, it is like he lends money to Hashem."

Another pasuk (Mishlei 22:7) states עבד לוח לאיש מלוח, that a borrower is like a slave to the lender. When we put together both concepts, we discover an astonishing phenomenon. As the Gemara (Bava Basra 10:) says, "If the pasuk wouldn't state it, we wouldn't be permitted to say it. Keviyachol, the borrower (Hashem), is a slave to the lender (the person who helped the poor)!"

After seeing these introductions, we are ready to read the Leket Yosher's (vol.1 p.122) lesson:

"I found in the writings of the chaver Reb Moshe Levi Mintz zt'l, quoting Reb [Yisrael] Iserlin zt'l, that on Shabbos teshuvah, after the Torah was read and was returned to its place, he spoke about teshuvah and tzedakah, and he taught several benefits that are gained from giving tzedakah. He quoted the pasuk (Mishlei 19:17) מלוח ה' חונן דל וגמולו ישרם לו, 'He who is gracious to a poor man lends to Hashem,

and He will repay him his reward.' This means that when one gives tzedakah to the poor, it is like he gave the money to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And since we are lending money to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, we are the lenders, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the borrower. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 31:) says that...when there is a din Torah, a borrower must go to the beis din of the lender's choice because עבד לוח לאיש מלוח, the borrower is like a slave to the lender. So, keviyachol, this is how it will be with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. When we help the poor, it is like we lent money to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and so, on the day of judgment, when Hashem wants to judge us, we can tell Hashem that we want to go to the great beis din of compassion." We can choose to be judged in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's beis din of compassion, and our requests must be fulfilled because we are the lenders, and we have a right to decide which court to go to. The Leket Yosher concludes, "And therefore, one should give tzedakah so that he will be the lender."³

A community near Radin asked a *bachur* from the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva to join them for Rosh Hashanah. They wanted him to give over *divrei Torah* and *mussar* on Rosh Hashanah to arouse them to *teshuvah*.

The *bachur* refused, wanting to be with the Chofetz Chaim on Rosh Hashanah.

The Chofetz Chaim found out and rebuked the *bachur*, "A *mentch leibt nisht far zich* — man doesn't live for himself." A person came down to this world to help others.

The *bachur* went to the neighboring town for Rosh Hashanah.

3. Perhaps the same is true with other types of kindness. Everyone is poor, in a way. Everyone lacks something, be it a smile, a kind word, some advice, etc. When we help those in need, Hashem feels indebted to us, and then we can ask to be judged in the court of compassion.

In נתנה תוקף we say, ויכון בחדס כסאך, with deeds of *chesed*, one has the right to decide that Hashem should sit on the throne of *rachamim* during the judgment.

Someone spent most of his Rosh Hashanah in the hospital helping a sick friend. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zy'a commented that this man is a "ben Olam HaBa." He didn't daven much on that day, but he will inherit Olam HaBah in the merit of the *chesed* he performed.

On the *pasuk*, שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, the Kedushas Levi writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, we must rouse Hashem's attributes of compassion so that Hashem will have compassion on us. When we act kindly to others and judge every Yid favorably, this will rouse Hashem to do the same, and He will judge all Yidden favorably. This is the translation of the *pasuk*, שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, you can arrange the judgment of heaven... שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, and by judging your fellow man favorably. Because the way a person acts to others is how Heaven will act with him."

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25) states, "Rebbe said to Reb Chiya 'Go to עין טוב (a city where there was a prominent *beis din*) and establish [Rosh Hashanah]."

עין טוב literally means "good eye."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that this Gemara indicates that we should have a good eye on Rosh Hashanah. A good eye means seeing the good in others, forgiving, helping others, etc. This will help us in our judgment.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 23) says, "Whoever is *maavir al midosov* [and is *mevater*] Hashem will forgive his *aveiros*."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man looked up at the enormous scale set in the middle of the road and saw that it was tipping to the side of fault. He was frightened.

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

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

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

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

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

In the morning, he quickly ran to the *gabbai* and told him that he gladly gave up his seat to the other person.⁴

A Day Transcending Time

The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 8) discusses the holiness of Yom Kippur. He points out that when the Torah discusses the *korbanos* of Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16), it doesn't write the date telling us when to bring these *korbanos*! It doesn't state that these *korbanos* are for Yom Kippur! "Rather, the *parashah* tells us the *avodah* of the day, without telling us which day it is referring to, and then [after several *pasukim*] it mentions the date as if it was an afterthought (see Vayikra 16:29). In contrast, when the Torah discusses all other *yomim tovim*, it first states the date, and then tells us the *avodah* of that day. But for Yom Kippur, it is the opposite! I think this is to reveal to us the holiness of the day...that we should know that Yom Kippur is a concealed, divine day... It is *Olam HaBa*. (We don't eat and drink on this day, and the *Zohar* tells us that this is because it is like *Olam HaBa*, where there is no eating or drinking)."

In other words, Yom Kippur is hardly mentioned because it is a day beyond time. It is a very exalted day, concealed entirely from this world.

The Bnei Yissaschar continues, "Also, the *masechta* that discusses Yom Kippur isn't called "Yom Kippur" (as there are other *masechtos* that tell the name of the holiday, such as *masechtos* Shabbos, Rosh Hashanah, and Succah). It is called 'Yoma,' day. This too reveals the holiness of the day, that it comes from a concealed place, and it is proper to conceal it.

"This is the reason for the custom of *anshei maaseh* [G-d fearing Jews] that they don't say 'Yom Kippur.' Instead, when they mention the day, they call it, 'The Holy Day.' Understand this."

It states (Vayikra 16:2) וְאֵל יֵבֵא בְּכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ, "The [Kohen Gadol] should not come at all times into the *Kodesh HaKedashim*." The *Kli Yakar* explains that he may not enter on any day connected to time - עֵת. He may only go there on Yom Kippur, a day above time.

On this spiritual day, the Jewish nation becomes like the *malachim*. The Tur (606, quoting *Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer*) writes, "The Satan sees that there are no sins among the Jewish nation on Yom Kippur and says, 'Master of the world, You have a nation on earth that resembles the *malachim* in heaven. Just as *malachim* go barefoot, so do the Jewish people on Yom Kippur. *Malachim* do not have knees, and similarly, the Jewish nation stands erect throughout the entire day. *Malachim* are pure from all transgressions, as is the Jewish nation on Yom Kippur. Among the angels, there is peace, and likewise, there is peace among the Jewish nation, as they seek forgiveness from one another before this day.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepts the Satan's testimony and forgives their sins."

On Yom Kippur, when the Jewish nation is pure like the *malachim*, they shout out in public, בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:36) states that when Moshe was in heaven, he heard the *malachim* praising Hakadosh Baruch Hu with these words. Throughout the year, we recite this praise silently. The Midrash expounds, 'It

4. Shame is also a form of *yesurim*, which removes many sins.

A person suffering from a *dibbuk* was brought to the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*. Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l*, who was present, repeated that this *dibbuk* avoided G-d fearing people and enjoyed being near sinful people.

There was a great sinner in the room, and the *dibbuk* hugged and kissed him and listed all the sins he did. After doing this, the *dibbuk* no longer wanted to have anything to do with this man. People in the room asked the *dibbuk* why he left this person who was a sinner. The *dibbuk* replied, "After I publicly revealed his sins, his embarrassment purified him. Now he's a *tzaddik*, so I don't want to have anything to do with him anymore."

can be likened to someone who stole jewelry from the king's palace and gave it to his wife. He instructs her, "Do not wear the jewelry publicly, only at home." But on Yom Kippur, when we resemble angels, we boldly proclaim this praise aloud.

The Gemara (Shabbos 129) teaches, "A person should sell the walls of his home to buy shoes." The mekubalim explain that the earth was cursed (due to Adam HaRishon's sin, see Bereishis 3:17); therefore, one should wear shoes to separate himself from the impurity of the earth. On Yom Kippur and in the Beis HaMikdash, however, the Yidden go barefoot. The Mishnas Chassidim explains that it is beneficial for us to go barefoot on Yom Kippur and in the Beis HaMikdash

because this enables us to acquire the holiness that's there.

The gabbai of the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l saw his Rebbe inhaling deeply on Yom Kippur. "Are you ok?" the gabbai asked. "Perhaps you need to eat?" The Sar Shalom replied, "I'm fine. I just wanted to inhale the holy air of Yom Kippur."⁵

About Yom Kippur it states (Yoel 2:11), כִּי גָדוֹל יוֹם ה' וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד, "For Hashem's day is great and very awesome." Indeed, we have seen that it is a very holy day. From this day, we can acquire holiness and closeness to Hashem that will be experienced and appreciated throughout the year.⁶

5. If Rebbe Shalom of Belz had been ill and needed to eat, he wouldn't hesitate. We know this from the following letter that his son, Rebbe Yehoshua, wrote to Rebbe Mendel of Vitznitz zt'l (5655):

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

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

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

6. Reb Mordechai Chaim of Slonim zt'l would repeat the following *mashal* each year at the *seudah hamafsekes*:

Someone owned a beautiful bird, and people would visit his home to see it.

A thief wanted the bird so he could charge money from the spectators.

He stole the bird but didn't know how to take care of it. Very soon, the bird became scrawny and ill. It wasn't worth keeping it anymore, so he brought it to the town's *shochet*. At least he will get a meal out of it.

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

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

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

The *shochet* didn't want to get involved, so he said, "I won't *shecht* the bird before the Rav rules who it

The Mitzvah to Eat on Erev Yom Kippur

Shulchan Aruch (604) states, מצוה לאכל בערב, "There's a mitzvah to eat on *erev Yom Kippur* and to make a large seudah..." The source for this mitzvah is from the pasuk (*Vayikra* 23:32), ועניתם את נפשותיכם, בתשעה לחודש, "You shall fast on the ninth day of the month." The Gemara asks, "Do we fast on the ninth day? Behold, we fast on the tenth day!" The Gemara answers that the pasuk is telling us to eat on *erev Yom Kippur*, and we will be rewarded as if we fasted. A reward is generally in accordance with the difficulty. This time, for the easy mitzvah of eating, we are rewarded as if we fasted.

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

The Tur is telling us a wonderful lesson. Due to our many aveiros, we may think it necessary to fast many days. But Hashem loves us, and He makes our teshuvah easy. He requires us to fast only one day a year and to eat well before the fast so the fast won't harm us. That is all that's needed, and our aveiros are removed.

The Tur continues, "The Midrash tells a story of a mayor who sent his servant to buy fish for him. There was only one fish in the market, and the servant offered to pay a gold coin for it. A Yiddishe tailor was in the market, and he raised the price. The bidding rose higher and higher as they fought to purchase the fish until the tailor bought it for five gold coins. The servant returned to the mayor and told him what happened, and the mayor summoned the tailor.

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

"I am a tailor" (a low-paying job).

"So why did you buy a fish worth one gold coin for five gold coins, and why did you take it away from my servant?"

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

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

The Midrash concludes that the tailor opened the fish, found a diamond inside, and he had *parnassah* from it for the rest of his life.⁷

So, we have another reason for the mitzvah to eat on *erev Yom Kippur*. It is because we have bitachon, and we are certain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will forgive our aveiros.

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

belongs to."

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

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

7. Tzaddikim taught from this episode that the meal of *erev Yom Kippur* is *mesugal* for *parnassah* and wealth.

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

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

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

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* expressed another reason for this mitzvah:

About a fast day, we say, יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא מיעוט חלב ודמי שנתמעט היום כחלב מונח על גבי המזבח לפניך, "...May it be Your will that my fats and my blood that became less today due to my fast be considered like the fats and blood that went on the *mizbeiach*."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz explains that we don't want to sacrifice regular blood and fats on Yom Kippur. We want to offer to Hashem the blood and fats we increased in ourselves from a mitzvah. We have a mitzvah to eat on *erev Yom Kippur*, which increases our fats and blood, and it is these fats and blood from a mitzvah that will be sacrificed with our fast on Yom Kippur.

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

and that divides people. But when one eats and drinks, he has a happy heart, and all Yidden unite."⁸

Forgiving

Shulchan Aruch (606:1) states, "Yom Kippur doesn't atone for aveiros ben adam l'chaveiro (that one committed against his fellow man) until he receives his fellow man's forgiveness. Even if he only harmed him with words, he must appease him and ask forgiveness. If your fellow man doesn't forgive you the first time you ask, go to him a second and third time."

Nevertheless, *Shulchan Aruch* adds that it is proper for one to forgive. "If someone asks you for forgiveness, don't be cruel..." You should forgive him.

The *Mishnah Berurah* adds that this is for your benefit because just as you forgive your fellow man, Hashem will forgive you. And when you forgive your fellow man who harmed you intentionally, Hashem will forgive you for the aveiros you knowingly committed. "But if you don't forgive, Hashem won't forgive, either."

The *Zohar* relates that Reb Abba once saw a man, tired from his travels, who lay down on a mound of earth. A poisonous snake approached the man, and a moment before the snake struck, a heavy object fell on the snake and killed it.

When the man awoke, he saw the dead snake and understood that a miracle had happened to him.

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

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

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

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

The man replied that it was because he forgives his fellow man. "At night, before I go to sleep, I forgive everyone who wronged me, and I seek to do kindness with them."

Reb Abba cried, saying, "Your deeds are greater than Yosef HaTzaddik's. Yosef forgave his brothers, and it is proper that family members should forgive one another. But you forgive even people who aren't your family, and that is a higher level. Therefore, you deserve that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should perform many miracles for you."⁹

9. On Chanukah, it is the custom of chasidim to go to their Rebbe to watch them light Chanukah *lecht*. One year, in a large chasidus in Yerushalayim, the Rebbe requested that the *bachurim* stand near him when he lights the Chanukah *lecht*.

The *gabai* arranged a rotation so that each *bachur* would get a chance to be near the Rebbe for at least one night of Chanukah.

The first night of Chanukah went well. But on the second night, one *bachur* whispered to his friends, "The *gabai* stands near the Rebbe every night; why can't we? Why do we have to take turns?"

Together, they pushed their way to the front of the room to be near the Rebbe when he *tzinds lecht*.

The *gabai* rebuked them, "You are taking away the privilege from the other *bachurim*. There is a rotation. Everyone deserves a turn."

The *bachur* responded, "When you go away from your place, we'll leave ours."

"Go back to your place," the *gabai* demanded, but the *bachur* didn't budge. The enraged *gabai* slapped the *bachur* just as the Rebbe entered the beis medresh. The *bachur* ran out of the beis medresh in shame.

The following day, the *gabai* asked forgiveness from the *bachur*. "I was right for trying to keep the order but wrong for hitting you, so I apologize."

The *bachur* replied, "You embarrassed me in public. I will never forgive you."

A few days later, the Rebbe called for the *bachur*. It was Thursday night, the fifth night of Chanukah. A *Chok l'Yisrael Chumash* was on the Rebbe's table, opened to that day's portion. The Rebbe asked the *bachur* to read the portion of *Zohar*. It told the story (stated above) of Reb Abba witnessing how someone's life was saved twice. A poisonous snake was killed before it could strike, and a mound of earth crumbled moments after the man got off it. These miracles occurred because he would forgive his fellow man.

The Rebbe said, "Do you understand what I am telling you? The way of the Torah is to forgive. When you forgive, miracles will happen to you."

The *bachur* accepted the Rebbe's rebuke. He went to a bakery, bought cake and *lechayim*, and carried it to the *gabai's* home. "Please forgive me for disrespecting you," the *bachur* said.

"I regret hitting you," the *gabai* replied.

They drank a *lechayim* together and made up. They forgave each other and placed the episode behind them.

That night, the *bachur* returned to the yeshiva dormitory.

He couldn't fall asleep, so he collected the *shamashim* from all the Chanukah menorahs and still lying in bed, studied Gemara by the light of the *shamashim*. He fell asleep, the Gemara fell on the candles, and his bed caught fire. He was fortunate to awaken in time. He was surrounded by fire. He jumped out of bed and quickly woke up the other *bachurim* in his room. They called the fire department.

The *bachur* realized that a miracle happened to him. If he hadn't woken up in time, his and his friends'

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

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

According to one version, Reb Yaakov stood in shul moments before Yom Kippur, handing out *machzorim*. Several people put out their hands to receive a *machzor*, and Reb Yaakov gave them *machzorim*.

One wealthy person waited a few moments with his hand outstretched until he got his *machzor*. This wealthy man, thinking he deserved to receive a *machzor* first, was insulted and smacked Reb Yaakov across his face.

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

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

Reb Yaakov didn't harbor any hard feelings. He immediately forgave the wealthy man.

The people present asked Reb Yaakov to forgive the wealthy man. "He was probably having a bad day," they said. "He certainly regrets what he did. Forgive him."

Reb Yaakov told them that he had already forgiven him.

In that merit, a year later, his wife gave birth to Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zy'a*.¹⁰

lives would be in danger.

It was three o'clock in the morning. The *bachur* knew that the Rebbe was in the beis medresh learning. The *bachur* ran over and told the Rebbe of the miracle that happened to him and his friends. "Exactly as the Rebbe said. I forgave, and miracles occurred."

The Rebbe replied, "Sometimes Heaven puts the right words into my mouth to help bring about salvation."

During the Six-Day War, many people took refuge in the bomb shelter basement of the Mirrer Yeshivah in Yerushalayim. After the war, *bachurim* went up to the roof of the yeshiva and found three bombs there. Miraculously, they hadn't detonated.

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* told the yeshiva students, "You probably think you were saved in the merit of your never-ending Torah and *tefillos* in the bomb shelter, but I know the real reason we merited this miracle. A mother and her five children joined us in the bomb shelter. Her husband abandoned her years ago, and she has struggled to support her family alone. As bombs fell in Yerushalayim, I heard her say, 'Hashem, You know that I have all the reasons in the world to be angry at my husband. Nevertheless, I forgive him. And just as I forgive him, You should forgive and save us.' Her *vitur* and forgivingness is what saved us."

10. Forgiving is also *mesugal* for *shidduchim*, as the following story demonstrates:

A divorcee used to eat Shabbos and yom tov seudos with a family in Bnei Brak. One day, the guest insulted the host, and the host answered back. The guest left in the middle of the meal and did not return for months.

Erev Yom Kippur, the wife of this household told her husband, "Maybe you should ask *mechilah* from our guest? He was so hurt."

"I should ask him for forgiveness?" he asked. "He started. He insulted me. He should ask me for forgiveness."

Grab Merits in Aseres Yemei Teshuva

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Everyone should consider himself as being 50% righteous (יָסֵא) and 50% guilty (חַיִּיב), and also he should think that the world is 50% righteous and 50% guilty. If he does an *aveirah*, he will tip his own scale and the scale of the entire world to the side of guilt, bringing destruction to the world. And if he does a mitzvah, he will tip himself and the entire world to the side of merit, bringing salvation to him and the entire world. Therefore, from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, Bnei Yisrael increase *tzedakah*, good deeds, and mitzvos even more than the rest of the year. Everyone awakens early during these ten days to daven in the beis knesses until daybreak."

As we wrote above, giving *tzedakah* is a *segulah* for a good judgment, and this is especially true when one increases giving *tzedakah* during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

Rabbeinu Efraim writes that this is hinted at in the words (*Devarim* 16:20), צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדּוּף לִמְעַן, תַּחֲיֶיהָ וִירֶשֶׁת, which can be translated as follows: צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדּוּף, run after the mitzvah of צֶדֶק. Why? לִמְעַן תַּחֲיֶיהָ, so that you will be written in the Book of Life. וִירֶשֶׁת implies that you should give *tzedakah* וְ תִשְׁרִי during six days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. (We can't give *tzedakah* on the two days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Shabbos Shuvah. This leaves us with six days when we can give *tzedakah*.)

There are many mitzvos we can perform, which will tip the scale in our favor.

One year, *erev Yom Kippur*, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* thought of a *shidduch* for an orphan boy with an orphan girl and asked his daughter to be the *shadchan*. She replied, "I will take care of it right after Yom Kippur."

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

"That's true, but I still think you should ask *mechilah*. Maybe in this merit, our older daughter will find her *shidduch*."

Their daughter was nearing thirty, and her parents were worried about her.

He promised her that he would ask for forgiveness.

Finding the guest's phone number took some time because he had moved to Boro Park. He got through to him moments before Kol Nidrei, and they had a friendly conversation.

"Do you remember when you were in my home?" the host asked. "I said some unkind words. Please forgive me. I ask *mechilah*."

"Don't worry about it. You did nothing wrong. It was my fault. I ask you for forgiveness."

Then, the guest added, "I will be in Bnei Brak Chol HaMoed Succos, and I'll come visit you."

After forgiveness was attained, the couple in Bnei Brak felt in their hearts that now their daughter would have her *yeshuah*.

And indeed, it was so. Motzei Yom Kippur, as they were eating their meal, a *shadchan* called and suggested a *shidduch* for their daughter. It was the first suggestion they had heard in months. Chol HaMoed Succos, they celebrated their daughter's *vort*.

The guest arrived on Chol HaMoed Succos, as he said he would. He came as they were celebrating the *vort*. The guest came in with a big smile and said, 'I'm coming from my own *vort*! I got engaged tonight.' They danced together with tears of joy.

By forgiving one another, they received Hashem's *brachos*. This is because all *brachos* come from peace and unity. Where there is forgiveness, the channels of *brachos* and salvation are wide open.

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

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

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

Arranging the *shidduch* took some time, and the Chasam Sofer arrived to beis medresh for Kol Nidrei later than usual. The *gabai* pointed to the clock, hinting that it was late. The Chasam Sofer told him, "It isn't late. Heaven begins the judgment when I say *Kol Nidrei*."

The end of this story grants us a glimpse of the greatness of the Chasam Sofer. Heaven began the judgment when the Chasam Sofer said *Kol Nidrei*. How many people can make such a statement?

It is also said that the Chasam Sofer's son-in-law saw a pillar of fire in the Chasam Sofer's home on *erev Yom Kippur* and fainted from fright. The Chasam Sofer told him that the pillar of fire was Eliyahu HaNavi.

It is almost unnecessary to elaborate on these matters as the greatness of the Chasam Sofer is well renowned.

Yet, despite the Chasam Sofer's greatness, he felt he needed one more mitzvah before the day of judgment.

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

Kol Nidrei

The Or HaChaim Hakadosh wrote in a letter, "A wealthy person bought me the honor to take out the *sefer Torah* for Kol Nidrei. When I opened the *aron kodesh*, a

bright light filled the beis knesses. It was like the gates of Gan Eden opened up."

Klal Yisrael says *Kol Nidrei* with awe and passion. They know that this is one of the high moments of Yom Kippur.

But many wonder: What is so special about *Kol Nidrei* that it profoundly touches people's hearts? *Kol Nidrei* is essentially *hataras nedarim*, annulling vows. We make *hataras nedarim* on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, too, but then it isn't recited with the awe of *Kol Nidrei*. What is its significance?

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

2) Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (Imrei Pinchas, Yom Kippur תקל"ז) says, "Before *Kol Nidrei*, *malachim* and *neshamos* come down from their place in heaven. There is no place in the world that can host the *malachim* and the *neshamos* other than within the tears we shed before Hashem." *Malachim* and *neshamos* don't want to be among sinners. Therefore, we begin Yom Kippur with thoughts of *teshuvah*, which enable us to daven together with the *malachim* and holy *neshamos*.

3) The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* offered another glimpse into Klal Yisrael's inspiration at *Kol Nidrei*. It is because Klal Yisrael knows (in their subconscious souls) that as they recite *Kol Nidrei*, the Satan is trying to cause them to sin so the Satan can testify against them. This is why everyone is inspired at this time. They do *teshuvah* to be protected from the Satan.

The explanation is as follows:

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, "השטן is *gematriya* 364, because the Satan has

permission to incite people to do *aveiros* and prosecute 364 days a year. On Yom Kippur, which is the 365th day, he must be silent." The Satan knows that he can't prosecute on Yom Kippur; therefore, when we say Kol Nidrei, moments before Yom Kippur arrives, it is Satan's last chance to slander the Jewish nation or cause them to sin. Klal Yisrael senses the danger, and they do *teshuvah*. This is why we are inspired to *teshuvah* when we say *Kol Nidrei*.

The Tune

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

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

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

The prince's condition improved with time, but the institution's directors, not wanting to lose the king's ongoing financial support, did not inform the king of his progress.

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

Once, the king's son scribbled on a page and gave it to one of the directors, asking him to send it to his father. The director was glad to comply because this letter proved that his son still needed help. What normal

child of his age sends a scribbled paper to his father?

The directors didn't realize that the prince concealed a hidden message within the illegible message. When the king received the letter, he was disappointed that his son had fallen to such a state, but then he studied it from all angles and picked up on the hidden message. He came to the asylum and brought his son home.

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

Teshuvah

These are the days designated for *teshuvah*. If we don't do *teshuvah* now, that alone is a terrible *aveirah*.

To explain, we quote a story from the Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 7).

"A band of robbers were sent to jail. One of them dug a tunnel, and all the thieves escaped. But one inmate stayed behind. He didn't escape with the others. When the ruler came, he hit him with a staff. 'You bad luck person! The tunnel is dug before you; why didn't you escape?' Hakadosh Baruch Hu says this to the sinners. 'You had the opportunity to do *teshuvah*, why didn't you do so?'"

This *mashal* describes our obligation to do *teshuvah*. We can escape from our sins and free ourselves from Hashem's wrath. Why don't we?

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:2) discusses this Midrash and writes, "Know,

when a sinner pushes off doing *teshuvah*, his punishment increases each day. He knows Hashem is angry with him, and he has a place where he can escape – and that place is *teshuvah* – but he remains rebellious. "

One of the discussions found in *teshuvah sefarim* is how to atone for severe aveiros. We become afraid when we study their instructions because those sefarim generally require many fasts, afflictions, and humiliations to attain atonement. The path for atonement they present is far beyond what anyone can endure today.

However, more recent *teshuvah sefarim* discuss these topics, and they offer far easier paths for attaining atonement.

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

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

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

"The truth is that this is a difficult question. Who is the person in these times who can set a path for *teshuvah*? Who has fully rectified their own sins? Woe to us from the day of judgment! We live in a weak generation, spiritually and physically. When we read the *sefarim* of the early scholars on the topic of *teshuvah*, the hair on our heads

stands up. Therefore, we are better off being silent, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who accepts people who repent, will mercifully show them what to do for their *teshuvah*.

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

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

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

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

"We generally don't learn halachos from dreams, but this time, it seems logical and

correct. I have a lot to add on this subject from many sources in Chazal, however, I decided to end the letter here because I

became very afraid as we discuss rectifying sins.¹¹ May Hashem see our broken heart and enable us to do *teshuvah sheleimah*.¹²

11. Change is hard to come by, and we don't always succeed, but we must try. The main thing is that we try to improve.

The Torah teaches us that Yaakov Avinu saw shepherds with their flocks gathered around a well and asked why they weren't giving water to their sheep. The shepherds explained that a heavy stone was on the well, and they couldn't lift it by themselves. "When all the shepherds arrive, we can roll off the stone."

The Imrei Emes of Ger zt'l asked: Yaakov saw the heavy stone on the well. He should have realized that they couldn't remove it on their own. So why did he ask?

Yaakov Avinu told them, "I understand that the stone is heavy, but why aren't you *trying* to remove it? Perhaps you will succeed."

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

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov *zy'a* (quoted in *Igra d'Pirka* 24) teaches that when one serves Hashem beyond his nature, Hashem performs miracles for him beyond nature.

I received a letter from a couple who was childless for many years. They sought to perform a mitzvah beyond their nature, so Hashem should perform a miracle for them and grant them children. They were both addicted to their iPhones and the internet, and they decided to throw away these devices. It was *mesirus nefesh* for them, and they prayed that their sacrifice should bring about a miracle beyond nature.

Ten months later, their first child was born.

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

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

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

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

In the Chasam Sofer's day ספרי חיצוניות was the pressing issue spurred by the Enlightenment movement. Today, it's the internet, and we must be careful. We should do everything to avoid falling into that mire. But if we fall and manage to pull ourselves out, miracles beyond nature will happen to us. And the struggle and affliction we endure to change our habits will completely erase all our sins.

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

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

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

Kabbalos

It is recommended to take on a kabbalah, an exact plan for improvement. It doesn't have to be a big undertaking, and in fact, it is better when the kabbalah is a relatively small and easy thing to do because then there is a greater probability that it will be kept throughout the year.

It states, שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך, "Do *teshuvah* up to Hashem, your G-d." Rebbe Shmelke of Nikelsburg *zt'l* explains, שובה ישראל, do *teshuvah*, עד, up to a certain point. Don't take on too much at once because you will fall from your resolve.

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

An alcoholic resolved never to drink alcohol again.

He made this *kabbalah* at night, and true to his word, he didn't have his usual late-night drink. In the morning, he craved a beer and began walking toward the put, but he stopped midway. "I can't do this," he told himself. "I'm a new person. I'm not an alcoholic anymore," and returned home.

In the afternoon, he walked all the way to the bar but caught himself in time and returned home.

By nighttime, he complimented himself. He said, "Today, I controlled myself all day. I had four or five difficult tests, but I was

strong like iron and kept my resolve. For this, I deserve a reward," and he went to the bar to celebrate.

Often, our *teshuvah* looks the same. We resolve to improve in some area, are successful sometimes, and then we pat ourselves on the shoulder, drop our guard, and promptly revert to our old ways. Instead, we need to make a firm decision, once and for all, and then we will succeed with our *teshuvah*.¹³

Regret

We aren't 100% guilty of our evil deeds. We have many excuses, and Hashem might accept them. Just think about the powerful *yetzer hara*, negative human tendencies, bad habits, negative influences around us, and more. However, Hashem asks, "I understand that you failed. I understand that you erred. After all, you are human, and the test is very great. But why don't you regret what you did? Why are you placid, feeling that all is well? You should at least regret your sins."

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* taught that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we are judged primarily to see whether we regret our *aveiros*.

The Midrash (*Naso* 13:3) writes, "It states (*Mishlei* 29:23), גאות אדם תשפילנו, 'Adam's downfall was his haughtiness.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him to do *teshuvah* after he ate from the *eitz hadaas*, and Adam replied, 'I don't want

"We can't compare ourselves to the Chasam Sofer," the Divrei Chaim replied. "When the Chasam Sofer merely looked at a *bachur's* face, that *bachur* couldn't sin afterward."

It is known that the Chasam Sofer's holy influence protected the *bachurim* of his yeshiva from *aveiros*. The story above is an example.

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

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

13. Rabbeinu Chananel says that עד ה' אלקיך means that even if your sins reach Hashem's throne and cause blemishes up there, you can still repent, and your *teshuvah* will be accepted.

to do *teshuvah*." It seems from this Midrash that Adam's primary aveirah was that he didn't want to repent.

Adam had excuses for his *aveirah*. He said, "The woman... gave me from the tree." But that claim didn't help him because he should have at least expressed regret that he committed the *aveirah*.

Think about before Whom you sinned, and you will regret your *aveiros*. As we say, ...על חטא שחטאנו לפניך, "For the sin that we committed before You..." Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* explained that our primary regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before *You*.

People regret their *aveiros* for several reasons (fear of punishment, embarrassment, a feeling of failure and incompetence, etc.). Still, the ideal regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before Hashem.¹⁴

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

Throngs of chassidim were steaming to Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l* on erev Yom Kippur to receive his brachos for a good year. Rebbe Henoch didn't want to miss out on

this opportunity to receive his rebbe's brachos, but he was too ashamed to show his face!

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

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

At that moment, Rebbe Henoch's humiliation and shame left him. He thought, "The Rebbe wants me. So, I'm not all that bad." As he approached the Rebbe, Rebbe Bunim told him that it wasn't necessary anymore and that he could go.

Rebbe Henoch understood: When he was humble and broken from his sins, he was on an exceptional level, and Rebbe Bunim wanted something from him. Perhaps he wanted his tefillos, his *brachos*; he had a lot of potential then. But when he felt arrogant, he lost that level, and the Rebbe sent him on his way.¹⁵

Happy with the Atonement

Moshiach will come when we do *teshuvah*. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* asks, how

14. The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* was very strict about engaging in idle talk in his beis medresh.

Once, two bachurim spoke during davening, and the Beis Yisrael told them not to return to the beis medresh for two weeks. One of them told the Beis Yisrael that he regrets what he did. The Beis Yisrael said, "Since you have regrets, you can return to the beis medresh right now."

The other said, "It wasn't my fault. The other bachur spoke to me. He caused me to speak." So the Beis Yisrael told him not to return for six weeks!

When you regret your deeds, there can be growth and improvement. But when you have no regret, you will never become better.

15. A girl from a good home committed severe *aveiros*, and her conscience didn't give her respite. She even had suicidal thoughts. The Chazon Ish sent her the following message: "Chazal say, הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה. This means thinking about the sins of your past is worse than doing them. You need to stop thinking about your *aveiros*..." She followed his counsel, recovered from her depression, and went on to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*.

So, remorse is important, but there are times when it is better to ignore the past and instead focus on improving the future.

can our teshuvah bring Moshiach? We think we do *teshuvah*, but to a large extent, Hashem does everything. Hashem puts the desire to do teshuvah into our hearts, and He helps us in the process. So, why do we deserve salvation? Why should we deserve Mashiah if we are not the ones who do the teshuvah?

The Chasam Sofer answers that our part is that we are happy with the teshuvah.

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

It states (*Tehillim* 14:7), *מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל, בשוב ה' שבות עמו יגל יעקב ישמח ישראל*. The Chasam Sofer explains that Dovid HaMelech asked *מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל*, why do we deserve *yeshuos*? Although we do *teshuvah*, behold, *בשוב ה' שבות עמו*, it is Hashem who is guiding us on the path of *teshuvah*. We aren't doing anything!

The answer is *יגל יעקב ישמח ישראל*. We are happy that Hashem is leading us on the path of *teshuvah*. For that, we deserve *yeshuos* and the upcoming redemption.

Hashem is also very happy on Yom Kippur because it is the day our aveiros are removed.

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

The *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave this day to the Jewish nation with love and joy. It can be compared to servants who cleaned the king's palace, and when the king went outside and saw all the garbage that was discarded, he was pleased.

This is what happens on Yom Kippur when Hashem forgives the sins of the Jewish nation. Hashem is very happy and says, 'Rejoice immensely because I am forgiving the sins of the Jewish people.'"

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

The Power of Teshuvah

Reb Baruch Ber *zt'l* (*Birchas Shmuel*) excelled in the mitzvah of honoring his parents, and when his father was ill, he stayed with his father almost every night. One night, Reb Baruch Ber couldn't be with his father, so he appointed someone to take care of his father. Unfortunately, his father was *niftar* that night. Reb Baruch Ber blamed himself for not being more devoted. "If I were with my father that night, perhaps he wouldn't have died."

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

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

Chazal say that when one does *teshuvah*, he is like a newborn child (תינוק שנולד). This is the root of his atonement. He isn't the same person as before. He isn't the person who performed the aveirah.

On the night of Yom Kippur, we say the *brachah* of "*shehechiyanu*." Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* asks that due to the awe and fear of the judgment, it doesn't seem to be the right time to say *shehechiyanu*.

He answers that we aren't saying *shehechiyanu* on the *yom tov*; we are saying *shehechiyanu* on *ourselves*. Because when we do *teshuvah*, we become brand-new people.

Another aspect of *teshuvah* is that it can turn an aveirah into a mitzvah. The Gemara (*Yoma* 86.) states, גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות, "*Teshuvah* is great because the *aveiros* become merits." There are different explanations for how this works, but that is the reality. When one does *teshuvah* through the love of Hashem, the aveirah turns into merits.

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

The Tiferes Shlomo (Radomsk) *zt'l* visited the renowned *baal teshuvah*, Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor *zt'l*, who was on his deathbed. Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor moaned, and the Tiferes Shlomo assumed he was crying over the sins of his youth. The Tiferes Shlomo told him, הימים הראשונים יפלו, "The early days will fall away." He was telling him, "Don't worry about the past. You did *teshuvah*, and

you won't be punished. Those early days aren't part of your life."

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

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov *zt'l* met someone very worried about his *aveiros*. Reb Yitzchak Meir told him the following idea that he heard from his father, the Apter Rav *zt'l*:

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

The Apter Rav *zt'l* explained that every *aveirah* is a zero. When one repents with love, the *teshuvah* is a number placed before the zeros and becomes a vast, significant number. In the future, people will look for sins because the *aveiros* will increase their merits and virtues.¹⁶

Viduy

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1) writes, "If a person committed an aveirah, he must say *viduy* before Hashem, as it states ויהתודו את

16. A *bachur* once stared at Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov *zt'l*, and Reb Yitzchak Meir asked him, "Why are you looking at me?"

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

The Rebbe replied, "It is also written (*Yeshayah* 60:21), ועמך כולם צדיקים, all Yidden are tzaddikim. I think it would be more beneficial for you to look at yourself." He encouraged him to look over his deeds and see where to improve. That accomplishes even more.

חטאתם אשר עשו, 'They should confess their sins.' This is a *mitzvas asei*."

A mitzvah must be performed with joy; therefore, *viduy* should also be said with joy. This could be the reason we say אשמונו and אל חטא on Yom Kippur with a tune. In addition to the joy of the mitzvah, we are also happy because we know that with this *viduy*, we are coming closer to Hashem.¹⁷

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

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

Rebbe Yaakov Yechezkiyahu of Pupa *zt'l* taught that when one is about to say *viduy* he should imagine crossing a forest alone and being assaulted by a band of thieves. They are sharpening their knives, and he knows his end is near. He asks the thieves to allow him a last wish, and they permit it. His last wish is to say *viduy*.

Imagine this scenario, and then say the *viduy* of Yom Kippur.

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

Immediate Atonement

When you ask for forgiveness, Hashem forgives you right away. You don't have to wait a week or a month, and you don't need *yesurim*, and you also don't need many *tefillos*. You ask Hashem for forgiveness, and He forgives. It is as simple as that.

The Baal HaTanya (*Igeres HaTeshuvah* 11) proves this from the brachah סלח לנו in *Shemonah Esrei*. Immediately after we request Hashem to forgive us, we thank Hashem for doing so, as we say, ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח.

The Baal HaTanya writes, "Every day in *Shemonah Esrei*, we ask Hashem to forgive us, as we say, סלח לנו. After that, we immediately say, ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח. But behold, when one is in doubt about a brachah, he mustn't make a brachah lest his brachah be in vain. How can we bless Hashem for forgiving us? Perhaps Hashem didn't accept our *teshuvah* and didn't forgive us? The answer is: We have no doubt. After one says סלח לנו מחל לנו, he is forgiven. And if we hadn't sinned again, we would immediately be redeemed, as the next brachah states, ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל."

The Noam Elimelech *zy'a* writes, "The Torah teaches us to say *viduy* with confidence in Hashem's compassion and belief that Hashem will forgive our sins. One shouldn't say *viduy* with sadness and *yeush*, as this brings on *dinim*; rather say *viduy* with *bitachon*. Trust that He will forgive you. As it states (*Mishlei* 28:13), ומוודה ועוֹבֵב יְרוּחַם, 'He who confesses and abandons [sin] will obtain mercy.'"

Bilaam also said *viduy*. When he saw the *malach* standing before him, he said חטאתי, "I sinned," and the Midrash writes, "Bilaam was a clever *rasha*. He knew that his only

17. The Maharal (*Nesivos Olam*) explains that we become very close to Hashem when we say *viduy*. He compares this to when one kneels before his fellow man to beg forgiveness. The man he is speaking to bends down to hear what he is saying, and their faces are very close. This represents the very close connection between Hashem and the Yid when he says *viduy* and asks for forgiveness.

protection from punishment was *teshuvah*. When he said *חטאתי* he was protected."

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

Viduy is written in alphabetical order: *אשמונו בגדנו גזלנו* and so on. The Reishis Chachmah explains that our *aveiros* tainted all the letters of the alef beis, which are the letters of Creation, and we correct them with the *viduy*.

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

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

In the era of the Beis HaMikdash there was a mitzvah called *viduy maasros*, to go to the *beis hamikdash* twice in seven years to proclaim that we observed all the halachos of *maasar*, *terumah*, and the like. Surprisingly, this mitzvah is called *viduy* since we announce that we *kept the halachos*, not confessing that we have sinned.

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

Rebbe Shalom Chaim of Koidenov *zt'l* answers that both Hashem and the person, are speaking in these *pesukim*: The person says, *עברתי ממצותיך*, "I transgressed your mitzvos," and Hashem replies, *לא עברתי* "you

didn't transgress." The person says, *שכחתי*, "I forgot to keep the mitzvos," and Hashem responds, *לא שכחתי*, "you didn't forget."

And this is because the *viduy* wipes away sins entirely.

This explains why it's called *viduy maasros*, a confession. Man confesses his errors, and Hashem responds that there is no longer any sin. Similarly, when we say *חטאתי*, Hashem replies, "You didn't sin," and the sin is totally removed.

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

Reb Chaim Volozhiner disagreed but remained silent. He didn't want to debate the issue with the Rav before the congregation.

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

While he said *viduy* for this transgression, the police arrived with the stolen *sefer Torah*. They had found the thief.

On Yom Kippur, we say *viduy* with *אשמונו* and we say *viduy* with the *על חטא*. But, surprisingly, we don't say *על חטא* for *bitul Torah*. *Bitul Torah* is from the severest *aveiros*; we would assume that it deserves its own *על חטא*.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* answers that we say, *על חטא שחטאתנו לפניך בבל ידיעת*, "For the sin that we committed before You without knowledge." This refers to when one committed *aveiros* because he didn't know that the Torah forbade his deeds. So, ultimately, this is *viduy* for not learning Torah. If he had known

Torah, he wouldn't have committed those aveiros.

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

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l told the following parable:

There was a home that was very dirty. The homeowner tried to clean it many times but was never successful. He finally came up with a plan that would help solve his problem. He invited the king to visit him at his home. The king won't enter a dirty house, so the king's servants came before the visit to clean up and prepare the house for the royal visit. The man gained doubly: He hosted the king, and his home got clean.

We say in the *zemiros* of Motzei Shabbos, על חטאי, for my sins, עבור תעבור, come visit me. We earn doubly: Hashem comes to us, and our sins are removed.

This occurs on Yom Kippur. Hashem comes to us; therefore, we are cleansed from all our aveiros. This seems to be the intention of the Mishnah (end of *Yoma*), אמר ר' עקיבא אשריכם, ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרים ומי מטהר אתכם אביכם שבשמים, "Yisrael, you are fortunate! Before Whom do you purify yourselves? Before your Father in heaven!"¹⁸ On Yom Kippur, we stand before Hashem, and that is the root of our atonement.

Neilah

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "One should be very diligent with *Neilah* because the goal of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is Yom Kippur, and the goal of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*. Everything depends on the close (הכל) (הולך אחר החיתום)." ¹⁸

Neilah is when Hashem signs the decrees for the coming year, and therefore, we should daven this tefillah with intense *kavanah*.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86) says that *chillul Hashem* isn't atoned for until the day one dies. Nevertheless, the Meshech Chachmah explains that at *Neilah* one can receive atonement for *chillul Hashem* too.

The explanation is as follows:

The *Yerushalmi* explains that there is no forgiveness for *chillul Hashem* because no malach dares speak in his defense to say that the sin he committed isn't so severe. If he disgraced Hashem's name, *chalilah*, which malach will be so brazen to say that the sin isn't so severe? Therefore, when a *chillul Hashem* charge is brought to the heavenly court, all malachim remain silent, and none advocate on that person's behalf.

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

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

G-t's Numen

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

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

¹⁸ One year before *Ne'ilah*, students heard Reb Yechezkel Levenstein repeat this Mishnah to himself many times because this Mishnah refers to the purity from aveiros that occurs on Yom Kippur.

2) Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* offered another explanation:

On Yom Kippur, the nation heard the *kohen gadol* utter the *shem hameforash* (Hashem's name *הוי"ה*, pronounced as it is written). The *Yerushalmi* (*Yoma* 3:7) teaches that since the pronunciation of Hashem's name must remain a secret, revealed only to a select few (see *Kiddushin* 71.), so it was miraculously forgotten immediately after Yom Kippur. The morning after Yom Kippur, people asked, "Do you remember how the *kohen gadol* pronounced Hashem's name?" but no one remembered. And since everyone was speaking about *G-t's numen*, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*.

3) Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zy'a* heard a *melamed* tell a young child, "When you see two yuds in the Chumash or the siddur, that is Hashem's name."

When the *melamed* reached the end of the *pasuk*, the student asked, "There are two yuds here (the colon (:)) that appears at the end of every *pasuk* in the Chumash). Why don't you read it as Hashem's name?"

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

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

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

there. Therefore, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen* because everyone feels equal, and Hashem's name is there.¹⁹

Between Yom Kippur and Succos

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

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

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

There are several sources that we are pure from aveiros during these four days. Prominent among them is the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 23:40) *ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון*, "Take [the lulav] on the first day." The Midrash (*Tanchuma Emor* 22) explains that the 15th of Tishrei is called *יום הראשון*, the first day, because "It's the first day for reckoning *aveiros*..." Until then, we still have the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur.

The Satan doesn't have permission to prosecute or to lead us to sin on Yom Kippur. This is the one day a year that he is powerless. The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says that this is hinted in the word *השטן*, which is *gematriya* 364, one day less than the solar year. The Gemara learns from this that the Satan can only prosecute 364 days a year but is silent on Yom Kippur.

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

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

These are hints to the purity from aveiros that we have on these days. These days are like an extension of Yom Kippur.

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

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

The Kozeglover Rav *zt'l* (*Eretz Zvi*) writes that when an adult studies Torah during the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, his Torah learning also sustains the world because on these days, he is clean from sin. It is even better than when a child studies Torah because an adult is a *מצווה ועושה*, obligated to study Torah (while a child isn't). The value of an obligatory mitzvah is greater than that of a mitzvah performed voluntarily.

We can earn this merit when we study Torah on these days.

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

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

It states (*Yeshayah* 55) *דרשו ה' בהמצאו*, "Search for Hashem when He is near. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18) asks, "When is Hashem nearby? *אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכיפורים*, "These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur."

The Shlah HaKadosh (*Succah, Torah Or* 70) asks there are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; why does the Gemara say there are ten days?

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

Yom Kippur is called Rosh Hashanah,²⁰ and Hoshanah Rabba is called Yom Kippur.²¹ Between them, there are ten days. Regarding those days, it states *דרשו ה' בהמצאו*, "Search Hashem when He is near."

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

21. This is because on Hoshanah Rabba, we receive the *חתימה טובה*, a good seal for the new year.