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Ha'azinu – Yom Kippur | The sweetness of Teshuvah



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

פרשת האזינו - יום כיפור | אנגלית

...❧ PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL ❧...

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Parashat Haazinu

The Mystery Man

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi zt”l had an only daughter who reached marriageable age. She was perfect in all aspects, yet she rejected every offer given to her. Her father, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, said, “Our holy sages have taught us:¹ When your daughter becomes of age – set your servant free and give him to her! Therefore, the first one who comes to this house’s gate shall be her groom, whether he is rich or poor, of distinguished lineage or of humble origin, wise or foolish!”

His wife heard what he had stated and trembled in fear. She placed her chair by the window overlooking the gate to keep away any leper. The Rabbi recited Keriyat Shema and went to bed. At midnight, he got up to engage in Torah study, as was his custom.

At midnight, his wife saw a shepherd wearing goatskin and holding a staff, seeking refuge under the awning of the gate. Afraid, she hurried to him, whispering, “What are you doing here? Take a piece of bread and be on your way!”

The shepherd replied, “I don’t need your piece of bread. I need a shelter from the pouring rain, and I found one at this gate.”

“There are no other gates...? Get up and find another shelter!” she said,

“What’s wrong with staying here?” the shepherd murmured, “Let me sleep a bit, and afterward, I’ll leave.”

She stepped back, closing the gate behind her. She hoped that



1. Pesachim 113a

the shepherd would disappear before her husband left...

In the morning, the Rabbi opened the gate and saw the shepherd lying on the ground, covered in his goatskin. He woke up at the sound of the hinges screeching.

“Who are you, my son?” the Rabbi asked.

“I am a poor Jew,” the shepherd replied.

“Why are you lying on the ground? Come in and I’ll offer you a bed!” the Rabbi invited.

“I don’t need your bed,” the shepherd answered, “I’m content with a corner on the stone floor of your home, as long as you don’t disturb me when opening the gate.”

“As you wish,” the Rabbi said, “But I request you wait for me until I return from prayer, and then, we’ll have a joint breakfast.”

The shepherd promised, entered the house, and lied himself down at the corner of the room. The Rabbi’s wife

anxiously watched and worried about the future turn of events.

Indeed, her fear was justified. Her husband came back from prayer with a *minyan*. The Rabbi called for his daughter and arranged an engagement ceremony, and they even prepared for the wedding, putting up the *chupah*. The Rabbi wanted to clothe the groom with new clothes, but he refused, “The goatskins warm my body!”

He asked to give him a haircut, but the groom said, “My hair warms my head.”

He asked to give him new shoes, but the groom refused, saying, “All my life, I’ve been accustomed to walking barefoot!”

The Rabbi said, “Hashem matches man and woman, and this is His matchmaking. And a person’s will is his honor. Thus, let us proceed to the *chupah*.”

The girl was sitting and crying.

The young shepherd said, “I heard once from a wise rabbi

that a person should not betroth a woman until he sees her. I want to see the girl !”

The Rabbi said, “Look, she’s sitting in the corner of the room, covering her face with her hands.”

“I wish to speak with her when there is nobody listening,” he said.

The Rabbi asked his wife to leave the room together with him. After a short while, the girl got up; her eyes were glittering. The Rabbi said, “It is as I said: This is Hashem’s matchmaking !” They finished with the ceremony under the *chupah*, and the groom returned to his work; going out to the pasture and tending to the cattle.”

On the eve of Yom Kippur, the Rabbi said to him, “My son, shave your head, trim your nails, take soap and go to the bathhouse. Remove the goatskin from your body and I will dress you in a white silk robe.”

The young man asked, “What day is it today ?”

The Rabbi replied, “Do you not know that tomorrow is Yom

Kippur, a holy day when Hashem forgives and pardons all our sins ?”

The young shepherd protested, “Those who have sinned must endure purification. I, however, have no sins. I am a faithful shepherd and have not harmed anyone. Keep your robe to yourself; I am content with my simplicity.”

The Rabbi’s wife sighed and said, “It’s all because of you ! See what disgrace you have brought upon us !”

The Rabbi said, “Matches are made in heaven; let him do as he wishes.”

The Rabbi went to immerse himself in a mikveh before the holy day, prayed mincha, and then enjoyed the last meal before the fast. He donned his festive attire and wrapped himself in a white tallit, heading to the synagogue for arvit. His son-in-law followed him wearing goatskin.

The Rabbi entered the synagogue but his son-in-law sat outside, rested his head between

his knees, and dozed off. Everyone looked at him in astonishment, feeling sorry about the Rabbi's unfortunate luck.

They finished praying arvit, and then began reciting selichot. Suddenly, a man entered the synagogue; his face radiated with divine splendor. He ascended the platform; everyone was captivated by his presence. He opened his mouth and started singing a beautiful *piyyut*, one that nobody had ever heard before.

"The soul is Yours, and the body is Your creation. O Rock, there is none like You, have mercy on Your formation.

Men, straighten your way, on this Yom Kippur day, and do not be of the ones who ate, it is forbidden on this date.

On a fast day, during the supplication, before the compassionate and gracious G-d of creation. Drinking is forbidden on this lofty day, and thus we refrain."

The stranger continued, singing and elaborating on the five afflictions of this holy day. He

concluded, "Rejoice, for on this day, your needs shall be met, with pure waters, you shall be cleansed, from the sins you regret."

After finishing the *piyyut*, he stepped down from the platform, his face shining like the sun, like a Kohen Gadol in his divine service. He retraced his steps and exited the synagogue. The Rabbi looked at him in wonder. Everyone marveled at his radiant appearance, and they were amazed by his beautiful voice, full of emotion, and from the depths of the new *piyyut*...

The onlookers were astounded by his unfamiliarity, and his appearance remained an enigma to them. However, the esteemed Rabbi (Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi), the greatest of poets in his generation and for generations to come, a magnificent genius both in the revealed and hidden realms, a wise interpreter of mysteries and a holy man of G-d, understood the intricacies of poetic composition, weighing each word and movement. He grasped all its allusions and depths, and his soul found no rest...

At the conclusion of the prayer, he encountered his sleeping son-in-law in the synagogue courtyard. He woke him up and walked with him to his home, but the enigma didn't leave him at all. The next day, the Rabbi woke up early and went to the synagogue. Suddenly, a whisper passed through the congregation...

The stranger walked through the praying crowd, dressed elegantly in his splendid robe, his face covered by his tallit. He ascended the platform, and the cantor respectfully made room for him. The stranger stood there and recited all the prayers without pause, in one continuous flow. The congregation followed the melodious and pleasant voice that captivated their souls and opened their hearts. A profound awakening occurred, and their souls poured out in prayer and supplication, seeking teshuva with sincere hearts, wrapped in awe and reverence, an experience they had never felt before.

Thus he stood and prayed shacharit, musaf, mincha, and neilah, and his voice grew

stronger, reaching its peak with the recitation of "*Hashem Hu HaElokim*" during the closing of the gates and the ascent of the Shechina. After arvit, everyone went out to recite *Birkat HaLevana*.

The Rabbi went out and encountered his son-in-law dozing in the courtyard. He said, "Arise. It's time for the meal!"

"Meal!" the shepherd jumped up, his eyes sparkling."

The Rabbi hesitated and thought, "If he only knew what he had missed out on!"

At the conclusion of *Birkat HaLevana*, the Rabbi looked for the stranger to invite him to join him for a meal, but he was nowhere to be found. The Rabbi went back to his home, while his son-in-law followed him closely. His daughter set the table, and the Rabbi sat deep in thought.

His daughter asked him, "Father, why won't you eat? After such prayers like the ones we had today, we are promised to be sealed for a life of peace!"

The Rabbi replied, "It's the enigmatic puzzle of the wondrous emissary. I will not find peace until I know who he is!"

The young shepherd, overhearing their conversation, said, "If you don't eat, I will start the meal."

The Rabbi looked at him compassionately and said, "Eat to your heart's content."

His daughter asked, "Father, you always say that a person's will is his honor. If the stranger chooses to remain anonymous, why insist on revealing his identity?"

The Rabbi calmly replied, "If you understood the *piyyut* he composed, the psalm he sang last night, you would know that he is one of the greatest poets of our generation! I must confess to him. I only know this much – his name is Avraham!"

"How do you know?" asked his daughter.

"The *piyyut* hints at it in the beginning of its verses: **אֲשֶׁרוּ דִּרְכְּכֶם - בְּתַעֲנִית הָיוּ - רַחֲמִים**

בְּקִשׁוֹ - הִתְדוּ עַל עוֹנֵיכֶם - מַעַל וְחֻטְאֵת עֲזְבוּ"

(Straighten your ways – during this fast – ask for mercy – confess your sins – forsake sin and transgression). He then repeated the *piyyut*, meticulously analyzing every word. His son-in-law grew bored, finished eating, and left.

Suddenly, knocking was heard at the door. The Rabbi's daughter went to open it and then retreated with great respect. She said to her father, "Here is the man you sought!"

The Rabbi got up excitedly and warmly welcomed the visitor. He invited him to join them for a meal that continued until morning. Throughout the night, they engaged in discussions of Torah, quoting from Tanach to Mishnah, from Talmud to Halakha, and from Aggadah to Kabbalah. With the break of dawn, the guest said, "Let me go, for the dawn has arrived."

The Rabbi replied, "I will not let you go. You are my honored guest, and I will rejoice in your company!"

But the guest insisted, “Leave me, and I will go on my way.”

The Rabbi’s distress was immense until his daughter stepped in and faced the stranger. She said, “Until when will you trouble my father?” She then said to her father, “Can’t you recognize my husband?”

The Rabbi was silent. Finally, he asked, “My son, why did you willingly subject yourself to shame in front of everyone?”

The young man replied, “As our sages said:² Anyone who derives pleasure from the words of Torah takes his life from this world, and the one who uses the crown of the king – he will pass away from the world of the living!”

The Rabbi answered, “I’m not pressuring you to use the crown of Torah and enjoy its honor. But I will give you a room in my home, and you will eat at my table!”

The guest agreed, and the radiance of his Torah and *piyutim* illuminated the world like the rays of the sun. He was the revered Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, may his memory be a blessing.³

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra attained utmost purity, and through it, he achieved a profound connection to Hashem, ascending to an exalted and sublime level, as is well known. We are obligated to attain such purity on Yom Kippur. About that in our discussion...

Shabbat Shabbaton

The phrase “שִׁבְתָּ שַׁבָּתוֹן” (*Shabbat Shabbaton*) is mentioned six times in the Torah, in three different contexts:

Three times it is written in the context of the Shabbat day.

Twice it is written in the context of Yom Kippur.



2. Pirkei Avot 4:5

3. Yosef Daat (Yom HaKippurim, p. 65)

Once it is written in the context of the commandment of Shemita (the Sabbatical Year).

Rabbi David Kimchi, the Radak zt”l, explains⁴ that in Hebrew, it is a common practice to add letters to a word to diminish, such as “שבת שבתון”. He says that “שבת” refers to the entire Shabbat day from evening to evening, and “שבתון” refers to the additional sanctity added to the holiness of Shabbat.

The Radak clarifies that “שבת” is greater than “שבתון” in its significance.

Before explaining the pair of words “שַׁבַּת שְׁבִיתוֹן” it is important to establish the following:

The Ten Sefirot, which are the ten emanations or attributes through which Hashem interacts with and sustains the world are: Keter, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchut.

These Ten Sefirot are concealed and hidden, beyond human comprehension, but it is known that Hashem enclothes Himself within them, and they are the roots of all aspects of creation in the lower worlds.

This is a fundamental concept in Kabbalah: that everything in the physical world (as well as in the spiritual worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Assiyah) has a spiritual root or source in the higher, spiritual worlds.

From those Ten Sefirot flow vitality and sustenance from above to sustain the world, and that vitality we call “light.”

The creations in the lower worlds, i.e., in the worlds of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Assiyah, are called vessels, and the light descends into and enlivens the vessel.

The light that emanates from above is a new light that descends through the Ten Sefirot, and the light that already exists within



4. Sefer HaShorashim (Shores “Ish”)

the vessels is a smaller and more constrained light (as is the case with the soul of a Jew, which is a light that constantly resides within their body).

Thus, "שבת" (Shabbat) represents the new light descending from above, and "שבתון" (Shabbaton) represents the awakening of the soul to draw closer to its Creator.

The Torah specifically uses the phrase "שַׁבַּת שְׁבֶתוֹן" in connection with Shabbat, Yom

Kippur, and the Shemita to teach us that during these times, there is a unique awakening from above at the source of the lights and a special awakening below within the Jewish soul. This results in profound holiness.⁵

This explanation suggests that during these times, there is a heightened spiritual connection between the higher and lower worlds, which leads to a deeper and more awe-inspiring level of sanctity.

Three of A Kind

Although there is a common denominator among the three, as all of them begin with the words "שַׁבַּת שְׁבֶתוֹן" (Shabbat Shabbaton), there is still a distinction between them in the conclusion of the verses.

The conclusion in the context of the Shabbat and the Shemita is the word "לה" (to Hashem). Concerning the Shabbat, it is written, "Six days shall you do

work, but the seventh day must be holy to you, it is a Shabbat Shabbaton to Hashem" (Shemot 35:2). In the context of the Shemita, it is said, "And in the seventh year shall be a Shabbat of rest for the land, a Shabbat to Hashem" (Vayikra 25:4).

However, in the case of Yom Kippur, the conclusion is the word "לכם" (to you), as it is written, "It shall be a Shabbat of solemn



5. Teshuvat HaShannah (p. 217)

rest **to you**, and you shall afflict your souls on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall rest, **on your day of rest**" (Vayikra 23:32).

The Torah wanted to teach us the way in which light is revealed in the world.

On Shabbat and during the Shemita, the light first manifests itself from above (from Hashem) and the lower creations elevate through its power. On Yom Kippur, the beginning of the light is revealed below, and from

it, there emerges a tremendous outpouring of light above.

Hence, regarding the Shabbat and Shemita, it is said, "שִׁבְתָּ שַׁבָּתוֹן לָהּ" (a Shabbat Shabbaton to Hashem), signifying that the light begins from above. On Yom Kippur, it says, "שִׁבְתָּ שַׁבָּתוֹן הוּא לָכֶם" (it shall be a Shabbat Shabbaton to you), indicating that the lights begin from below.

These matters require further elucidation, and we shall begin with the *avodah* of Shabbat...

Shabbat

Yechezkel HaNavi merited having Hashem reveal to him the form of the Third Temple, and he recorded it in his book, "Thus said Hashem Elokim: The gate of the inner courtyard that faces toward the east will be closed for the six days of the work but on the Shabbat day it will be opened, and on the day of the new moon it will be opened" (Yechezkel 46:1).

One of the interpretations of this verse is written in the Zohar:⁶

Who among us has not felt, at least once, the sweet taste of rest? No, we are not talking about a rest that follows the day-to-day functioning. We are talking about rest that follows a hard, exhausting effort.



6. Tikkuni Zohar (Tikkun 19, p. 38a)

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Parashat Haazinu - Shabbat

At the time of exertion, the soul of the person is concentrated in their organs (which work at the time of exertion). For example: a person who needs to write a pardon request to the president, at that time all the muscles of their brain (thinking) and the muscles of their hand (writing) are completely focused on the goal.

And after it is over and the person rests, they experience a unique, sweet taste of rest.

At that time there is a feeling that they are “coming back to themselves” and their power and organs (thinking and writing) come back and gather within them. This feeling gives birth to pure pleasure...

After this introduction, we will move on to Parshat Ki Tisa. There, we were commanded to observe the Shabbat, “And Bnei Israel kept the Shabbat... for in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day, He abstained from work and He rested” (Shemot 31:16-17).

For six days Hashem was busy with His work (the creation of

the world) - “His work that He did” (Bereshit 2:2) - and during the work the Ten Sefirot illuminated within His speech for the creation and sustenance of the worlds (so to speak, at the time of creation His light was concentrated within the Sefirot, the beginning of which is the Sefira of Wisdom).

Whereas on the Shabbat, rest was revealed, “He abstained from work and He rested,” and at the time of rest, as it were, the vitality returned to its origin in Himself (above the Sefirot) - and this is the aspect of “the will and pleasure of the Supreme.”

This is the magnitude of the Shabbat, that because of Hashem’s “rest” on Shabbat, Hashem’s will and pleasure are revealed in the world...

From the revelation of this pleasure, every Jew receives an additional elevated soul.

We’ll explain: Every Jew has a soul that sustains them, but on Shabbat, Am Israel receive another part of the soul, an “additional soul.”

As a result, the Jew has the merit of feeling calmness and inner peace on Shabbat, and a special pleasure in tefilot, Torah study, and meals.

For this we thank Hashem in shacharit, “And You, Hashem Elokenu, did not give it to the nations of the lands, nor did You give it as an inheritance, our King, to worshippers of idols, nor in its rest do the uncircumcised dwell. For only to Israel, Your people, did You give it in love, to the seed of Yaakov whom You chose.”

Here in this verse is explained everything we have learned:

On Shabbat, “the gate of the inner courtyard” is opened, and from it emerges an immense illumination to the world “that faces קְדִים (toward the east),” the revelation of קְדִמוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם (the Creator of the world).

“Kedem” - instructs about the essence of Hashem, and this is the meaning of the title “Kadmono shel olam” which instructs about Hashem as He is above His connection to the worlds and creatures, “whom

there is no example like Him... for He is One and has no second...”

And since on Shabbat the aspect of “Kadmono shel olam” is opened and revealed, there is a huge elevation throughout all of reality...

Through this elevation, an additional soul is revealed within every Jew. Something new is born within them, something that is not found during the weekdays, that is, the aspect of love and desire for Hashem that is above the intellect.

The reason for this renewal is because above, “on the Shabbat day it will be opened,” the aspect of “the will and pleasure of the Supreme” is opened and revealed, and this revelation from above that illuminates the souls of Am Israel also awakens the very soul of the Jew below, through which the aspect of “the desire of the Supreme” in the soul is revealed, which is the desire for Hashem above the intellect rooted in the essence of the soul...

Every Jew merits an additional soul due to the elevation of the worlds, and Hashem asks

only one thing: do not hinder the light from resting upon you !

Only one thing is asked of you ! Do not desecrate the

Shabbat, because through its desecration, the additional soul departs !

Let's move on to Shemita...

Shemita

Maran Rabbeinu HaRav Ovadia Yosef zt"l writes:⁷

It is said in the Torah, in Parashat Behar, "When you come into the Land that I give you, the Land shall be at rest, a Shabbat to Hashem. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, but in the seventh year, there shall be a Shabbat of solemn rest for the Land, a Shabbat to Hashem. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your untended vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the Land" (Vayikra 25:2-5).

The resting of the Land means that it will rest from agricultural work. Therefore,

Jews are forbidden to plant any kind of grain, crops, seeds, or vegetables during the seventh year, the Shemita year. Even seeds, flowers, and herbs that are planted for aesthetic purposes are not allowed...

Regarding the mitzvah of Shemita, it is said, "A Shabbat to Hashem." We do not rest the Land for physical benefit, to enhance its fertility, but rather for the sake of Hashem.

The Land upon which we stand during this time is aligned with the Sefira of Malchut (Kingship). During the Shemita year, it ascends higher to receive new abundance.

Since the Sefira of Malchut, which is aligned with the Land, ascends, we are prohibited from



7. Chazon Ovadia (Prozbul, p. 142)

Parashat Haazinu - Man In Our Likeness

working the Land (specifically in the Land of Israel) during this year, as our labor can impair it.

Naturally, as it receives abundance, it also flows downward to the lower worlds.

Rabbi David Abuchatzaira zt"l:⁸

This mitzvah of Shemita and all its details, etc., all exist to rectify the Kingdom of Heaven in the higher world, the world of Atzilut. All its forces, which are the worlds of Beriyah, Yetzirah, Assiyah, etc., from them and in them is revealed an abundant illumination every seventh year...

This blessing automatically extends to all of Am Israel who fulfill this mitzvah properly, etc., and brings them profit, salvation,

many blessings, abundance, and goodness, each person according to their need from Hashem...

During the Shemita, the Malchut ascends on its own, due to the illumination it receives from above. And from this ascent, a great abundance is drawn down upon Am Israel, the children of the Living G-d, to benefit all who need it.

This happens automatically, and the only thing Hashem asks is one thing: do not interfere with the illumination intended to rest upon you !

Only one thing is asked of you ! Do not work the Land, for through its desecration, the supernal Malchut is impaired !

Now, let's move on to Yom Kippur...

Man In Our Likeness

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes (Imrei Noam (Moadim – Yom Kippur, Maamar 3):

The holy day of Yom Kippur is a magnificent time of heavenly desire to merit forgiveness and atonement for all sins.



Yet, the Rambam writes,⁹ “Yom Kippur itself only atones for those who do teshuva.” That is, the segulah for atonement on Yom Kippur is specifically for those who do teshuva, but not for those who don’t do teshuva.

The Rambam also writes,¹⁰ “Yom Kippur is a time of teshuva for everyone, for the individual and for the public, and it is the last time for forgiveness and pardon for Am Israel. Therefore, all must do teshuva and confess on Yom Kippur.”

This is similar to a laundromat where dirty clothes are brought for washing. If a person brings their clothes to the laundromat but doesn’t put them into the washing machine, obviously they’ll remain dirty. In order for the clothes to be cleaned, it’s necessary to put them in the washing machine. The same is true of Yom Kippur. The purpose of this day is to clean the souls of Am Israel from the stains that they

acquired throughout the year, and to do so, we must enter the essence of Yom Kippur, teshuva.

When a person merits doing teshuva on Yom Kippur, they attain the level of “adam” (man)! We’ll explain...

The Ten Days of Repentance correspond to the Ten Utterances in which the world was created, and Yom Kippur corresponds to the Utterance, “Elokim said: Let us make adam (man) in our image, according to our likeness” (Bereshit 1:26).

This verse comes to hint to us that even someone who, during the year, committed the most severe sins, and fell spiritually to the lowest levels, can return and rise to the lofty spiritual level called “adam” if they properly utilize Yom Kippur and strive to return in complete teshuva.

Furthermore, what is said “Let us make adam” in the plural (and not “I will make man” in the



9. Mishneh Torah (Teshuvah 1:3)

10. Ibid. 2:7

singular) hints that if we really want to rise to the level of “adam,” we should not rely on Hashem to do the work for us. Instead, we must invest a lot of effort to attain it by striving to straighten our ways and correct our deeds, and only then will Hashem help us complete the final tikkun for our soul.

“Let us make adam” - Hashem is telling us that only together with our own efforts will He help us acquire the level of adam.

We must first put in our own efforts from below, and only then will Hashem put in his and help us from above. As cited in the Midrash,¹¹ “Hashem said to Am Israel: My children, open for me one opening of teshuva the size of a needlepoint, and I will open for you openings large enough for chariots to enter.”

For this reason, it’s written, “Moshe went up to Elokim, and Hashem called to him

from the mountain” (Shemot 19:3). The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that this verse comes to teach us that Hashem won’t call for someone who doesn’t first ascend on their own. Someone who waits for Hashem to raise them up without attempting first on their own will never succeed!

We must take the first step... But after we do, Hashem will raise us to new heights beyond measure.

Thus, Rabbi Akiva said,¹² “How fortunate are you, Israel. Before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven...”

At first, it’s up to us to purify ourselves before Hashem, and after we give it everything we have, from here on, Hashem will complete the work and purify us entirely.

We still have to clarify what the purity in question is...



11. Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:3

12. Yoma 85b

Teshuva

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi zt”l writes:¹³ “The concept of teshuva is to turn one’s face toward Him.”

The word “teshuva” is derived from the root “*shiva*,” which means to return. It signifies that a person needs to return and draw near to Hashem. It’s evident that closeness and distance concerning Hashem do not imply physical space, as He is present everywhere. Therefore, one is always in proximity to Hashem, and it is impossible to be far from Him in a spatial sense (i.e., that Hashem is distant from a person).

Instead, the concept of “distance” pertains to the soul. When a person sins against Hashem, the sin causes a concealment of Hashem’s presence from the person. Consequently, a profound spiritual distance emerges. This distance is referred

to as “back,” as in the verse “For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face” (Yirmiyahu 2:27).

At this point, the individual enters a cyclical pattern: Sin causes forgetfulness of Hashem, forgetfulness leads to further transgressions, and sin continues to intensify the darkness.

Since the person has turned their face away from Hashem, He, too (measure for measure), turns His face away from the person. This manifests as Hashem providing sustenance and life only as a matter of necessity (to enable continued existence) rather than out of delight and goodwill.

Thus, “teshuva” means to return to Him in order to merit an inner spiritual closeness.

To achieve teshuva, one requires the concept of purity, whose purpose is to illuminate the darkness.



Purification

The essence of the *avodah* of teshuva based on the inner aspects of the matter is to rectify the root of evil, which involves nullifying one's selfhood.

This is achieved through contemplation on how, in truth, "There is nothing besides Him" and that "Hashem is present, and His glory fills the entire earth, and He observes, examining the kidneys and the heart, to see if His servant is serving Him as is fitting."

When one recognizes how they have not paid attention to this truth, they become deeply remorseful out of shame. This leads them to cry out to Hashem, not an external cry with words alone but an internal cry that wells up from the depths of the heart.

This is a cry born out of a longing to draw near to Hashem. It's a cry that says, "Master of the Universe! Where are You hiding? Father, Merciful Father in Heaven! How long will You conceal Your face from me?"

These genuine cries that emanate from the depths of the heart, with longing and a desire to return and be enveloped in His shadow, cause a person to be "seated in the upper chambers."

Thus, the verse says, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Tehillim 91:1). When a person is troubled and faces adversity, it is human nature to seek someone who can help them. For example:

When a person doesn't feel well, their initial response is to pick up the phone and schedule an appointment with a family doctor. The doctor conducts blood tests and diagnoses some illness, providing medications for immediate relief.

If the medications don't help, the person starts searching for a specialist. After making an appointment, they might have to wait for another two months for their consultation.

During those two months, they hang their hopes on this specialist. When this specialist also cannot provide relief, they continue searching for yet another doctor, scheduling an appointment for another two months.

This pattern repeats itself, and the individual goes through extended periods of oscillation between hope and despair, anticipation and disappointment. And let's not forget the considerable financial costs incurred during this process.

Eventually, the person realizes that no one in the world can help them. Then, with a broken heart, deep humility, and from a place of profound humility, they approach Hashem, raising their hands, saying:

“Master of the Universe! Only You can help me. Even initially when I heard about the illness, I prayed to You, but back then, my heart was not completely attached to You. I prayed to You, but in my heart, I still held an image of the doctor. But now,

Master of the Universe, I stand before You with my whole heart, with nothing standing between us.”

This level is called in the verse, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High.” A Jew unites only with the Creator, with no intermediaries. And this unique union is referred to as “in the secret place of the Most High.”

When the Jew merits to feel the closeness of their G-d, they melt like water and prostrate themselves before Him, “Merciful Father, You were always with me. Why did You hide Your face from me?”

This weeping is the stage of cleansing and purity of the soul, which is called in the verse, known as expressed in the verse “תִּלְוֶנָּה” (abide) where a person recounts (in a manner akin to holy complaining (תְּלִינָה), as per the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov) all the sufferings that they have endured.

Then comes the stage of consolation when Hashem comforts them and speaks to their heart, as it

is written, “As a man whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you” (Yeshayahu 66:13).¹⁴

This is the essence of purification, and it all depends on us.

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

14. And it is always like this. We must make an effort, do what we can, but the outcome of our actions is ultimately in the hands of Hashem.

We must always remember that Hashem guides His world. In this regard, we find a wonderful story in the book *Nifleotav Livnei Adam* (Vol. 3, p. 233):

The following incident was recorded by the Rebbe Naftali Moskowitz zt”l, who heard it and was astonished by the details of the story from the source himself.

From the moment I was informed by the doctor that I had a heart problem, I became acutely aware of every sensation and pain. “With Hashem’s help, you can live with it,” the doctor told me, “but with caution, vigilance, and constant monitoring.” I was always careful not to exert myself excessively and to avoid anything that could strain my heart. “You shall greatly beware for your souls” (Devarim 4:15), the Torah commands. This too is a merit and a mitzvah: to do everything possible to preserve the spirit of life within us, as long as the soul is in our midst.

After I felt a strange and persistent pain in my right side, I rushed to see the doctor. I was directed to X-rays and various other medical tests.

Hashem has granted me the opportunity to always conduct myself with a heightened sense of purpose, with my heart turned heavenward, with the simple awareness that life is not mine, but a gift that I have been granted to live and utilize in fulfilling Hashem’s will.

“Afflictions are precious to one who regards them as emissaries of Divine mercy. They tighten the connection between the created and their Creator, elevating them to a world that is entirely light, transcending bodily constraints. This is the essence of every person, and fortunate is his portion.” Words from the *Iggrot HaChazon Ish* (Vol 1, p. 201).

I arrived at one of the final stations that determine the course of events: the office of Professor Tzochar, a renowned and senior cardiologist. In my hand, I held a bag containing X-rays and test results, with medical recommendations from cardiologists to gastroenterologists.

I waited patiently, my heart calm, knowing that my spirit was entrusted to capable hands. “I trust in a Hashem; I will not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?” (Tehillim 56:5). I continued to pray from the Book of Tehillim in my bag. Let’s say he says indeed that something is wrong with my body, and is that the

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end of the verse? Just as in His hands it is possible to transform a healthy person into a sick one, so too, He can reverse the process from sickness to health. Beyond that: whatever happens to me, it is for the good. “Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” (Tehillim 23:4)...

I reached one of the waiting rooms, where others were waiting with me – people who were weary from their suffering, despondent, and deprived of the light in their world, halted by an unknown ailment. Their eyes were fixed on the door, which opened and closed repeatedly as another person exited. What did his face look like? What did he hear inside? What am I about to hear?...

What do they always say? “The most important thing is health.” When a believing Jew is enveloped in *emuna* that helps them cope – and in close proximity to him are others in a similar situation, or in an even more difficult situation, struggling to the point of despair – then it becomes clear that health is not really the most important thing. There is something much more important in the world: *emuna*...

In moments when, by Divine decree, health deteriorates and is dependent on a question mark, a person may collapse without that “something much more important” that stands above health – only with it can they regain their footing...

“A man’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?”

(Mishlei 18:14). A person with a strong spirit can cope even with their illness; their body may be ill, but not their spirit. However, who can bear the crushed spirit, when their world is darkened and even *emuna* is not with them, not to mention Hashem? Their body is not with them, and their spirit is not with their...

He stared at the papers on the table, his wide forehead wrinkled with concern, scrutinizing the various medical findings before him, both surgical and cardiological, and the golden pen in his hand tapped impatiently on the table. The table was piled with documents, and the deliberation continued for a long time to ensure and finalize the decision. After a few more scratches and following them, he finally opened his mouth, the messenger: “...a growth in the intestines...”

Another moment of silence. “What is the greater risk?” I inquired, “Performing the surgery or not performing it?” Sometimes you ask questions, not necessarily to get answers but to ask more, to extract more details, to hear more extensively – but Professor Tzochar clung to the question and answered it precisely, “Fifty-fifty. It’s a toss-up. I don’t see one percent tipping the scale in either direction.”

Professor Tzochar began to summarize, “Listen, it’s your life. The decision is in your hands. If you want to undergo the surgery, despite the risk to your heart, you can sign here and proceed quickly and efficiently. If you decide to avoid the surgery, despite the risk of the growth,

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you go home from here and let the matter unfold without our intervention. In both cases, the responsibility is yours alone. Make the decision as soon as possible; the passing moments are not on your side.”

My heart froze within me, and I felt a sense of dread. How could I make such a decision? How could I decide between life and death? I burst into tears; I had no one to consult with, and I had no connection to any source from which I could seek guidance. It has been a while since I made *aliyah* to Israel, and how could I make a decision in a situation like this? I am just a teacher by profession, not a doctor or a professor. How could I determine in my distress (in solving a complex problem) what even the expert professor cannot decide?

“It’s your life... In your hands... The responsibility is yours...” These words rang in my ears like the bells of a church that had rung in my ears many times before I came to Israel, “Yours?” “In your hands?” “The responsibility is yours?...” Is it really so? Who am I to decide? How can I make a decision in a matter as weighty as life and death? A difficult question troubled me deeply: Should I undergo the surgery or not?

I placed my hands on my bag, feeling the weight of it, just like I felt the weight of the Book of Tehillim. I sighed and contemplated. Initially, I thought I should go back home and ponder the matter with myself until I return with a response. However, upon further thought, I realized that it would be futile and only tormenting. If it’s a matter of “fifty-fifty,”

waiting for my decision, what benefit would hours of contemplation bring? Do I have any insight into the matter?

“Do me a favor,” I prayed, “Although it seems like I need to decide immediately, I do need a few minutes of prayer before that. I would appreciate it if you would allow me to sit in a corner and pray before my decision is made for the next steps.”

A short silence followed. The doctor was momentarily taken aback by the unexpected request. “Please, but make it brief,” he replied kindly, his eyebrows raised. The fact that no one else waited after me eased the situation. Professor Tzochar turned to deal with the letters before him, and I walked over to the window, opened the Book of Tehillim, and began to pray for my life, seeking assistance in these difficult moments. Everything within me cried out for salvation, and my lips murmured David HaMelech’s Tehillim. The distress itself is a prayer, as is said in the Midrash in Parashat Va’etchanan (Devarim Rabbah 2:1).

I stood and praised Hashem with the songs of His servant David, which lay open before me. I read the Tehillim, with requests and words as written, savoring each moment thanks to the great privilege given to me to speak before the Hearer of prayers, “... When Bnei Israel come to Him in prayer, there is an awakening of His will, similar to a beloved son who comes before his father and stirs delight and desire within him...” (Sefat Emet – Va’etchanan, Year 5633).

Parashat Haazinu - Purification

I continued to pray, reading from the Tehillim with trembling emotions during these crucial moments, and Professor Tzochar's voice suddenly reached my ears, "You know what? Why should I hinder you? After some more contemplation, I came to a different conclusion..."

With the Tehillim in my hand, I walked back to his desk, and he was gazing at me with puzzled eyes. "The risk of a heart attack only occurs if the surgery lasts for more than four hours. A standard surgery to remove a growth usually doesn't take more than three hours, so I don't see any problem in approving the surgery... I would recommend it."

The sudden change surprised me. I heard him again and understood him. I went to the table, took a pen, and signed that I approved the surgery. I knew that if... and if... then everything was on me, and I had no complaints. What are we, what are our lives? A simple signature, a phone call, and an appointment for the operation were scheduled. I left him stunned and relieved, and I allowed Professor Tzochar to continue with his letters. I went home, and Hashem was before me, as always, at my side, and I shall not falter.

For by a mere swipe of a hand, destinies are shaped, from heaven. In an instant, things change from one end to another, and a feeble creature like me can only handle it if he knows who is the changer (the Decider and Determiner) and who is His messenger...

I awoke in weakness, numb and full of pain. I opened my eyes halfway,

identified the light shining through the window, and thanked Hashem for my heart this time, for the strength that remained to survive the surgery, and for the successful removal of the growth. The surgery took as long as it needed to, but the main thing is that Hashem strengthened my heart and the growth was gone. I went back to the depths of sleep. The long hospitalization was behind me, and ahead was recovery. Many days of recovery passed until I found myself sitting in the synagogue, returning to life.

In the following weeks, in the midst of the revelation of Hashem's grace upon me, a respected person entered my room and began to inquire about my well-being. He clarified my condition and tried to get to know what I had gone through, "How is your heart? How are your intestines? How did the surgery go? How is your recovery?" To my surprise, the person next to me was excited, and I don't remember ever meeting him... I wondered silently, who is he? After all, I am a lonely single member of my family living in Israel. In my personal life, I am lonely and studious. Only a few people even know me. If my memory has not failed me during the surgery – he is not one of them...

He continued the conversation, confirming that he had the strength to bear it, and then introduced himself as the brother-in-law of Professor Tzochar, his wife's brother. "I came to thank you," he said, nothing more and nothing less. A marvelous story began to unfold before me, one in which I was the central figure:

Parashat Haazinu - Purification

It has been years since my sister, Professor Tzochar's wife, came to a clear conclusion about her life. She wanted to make a significant change in her life. They have a lot of money, a lot. Wealth without happiness. Houses and cars, a prestigious social status that many envy, but to her, it felt like an artistic frame without the actual picture. She was entangled in it all, began to feel a tremendous lack of purpose, and eventually, a deep depression. There was no true meaning to her rainy life as it was. She saw the different life in my home, characterized by the observance of Torah and mitzvot, and understood that she desired something like that.

Her husband, Professor Tzochar, didn't argue with the perception itself, that there was something to add to life, but from there to dedicate time to discussions with the local rabbi - that was a long way off. Time did its thing, from time to time, she felt the emptiness, but the busy schedule didn't allow the spark of light to penetrate into her life. Until a few weeks ago, when the significant change began:

My brother-in-law, Professor Tzochar, came back from the clinic one day, shaken and excited by a scene that touched his heart: a patient in a critical condition pouring out his soul to Hashem from a prayer book, drawing strength to entrust his fate to the Creator. He had never seen anything like it. He was used to seeing various emotional outbursts and hesitant patients. That particular moment moved him and didn't allow him to rest.

His soul was not at ease, "I don't understand myself," he reacted when told about the success of the surgery, "I've never understood how I agreed to the surgery explicitly. Who assured me that the surgery wouldn't last more than four hours and endanger the patient's life? Who gave me such authoritative strength to make a decision for the better at that moment? It's a complete anomaly! It must be that his prayer softened me, it entered me and brought forth consent and approval from me to proceed with what was evident and known to the Prayer Listener - that it will be successfully accomplished. From Heaven, they desired that he be operated on, and I am the one who hesitated, and his prayer led me back on track - to recommend this step."

Conversations like these began to flow freely in his house. The professor, who had undergone a transformation, decided that the moment had come to approach the rabbi immediately. "It is clear to us that this is the way," he clarified in his mind, "we have no doubt that this is the direction; we have come only to ask what we should do to gain approval for those walking this path, the correct one..."

I was moved greatly. "Are you thanking me?" I asked. "Let us give thanks together, for it is good to give thanks and sing praises to His name." My heart throbbed, and my bowels trembled, "All my bones shall say, Hashem, who is like You?" A difficult moment accompanied by prayer, and all involved are granted recovery - the patient and the healer alike.

From the Depths

David HaMelech described this process of teshuva that leads to returning face to face with Hashem, saying, “From the depths I called out to You, Hashem” (Tehillim 130:1).

When a person inwardly reaches a level where they stand face to face before Hashem Himself without any external facade, and they know that there is nothing but Him, and only He can help them, they cry out from the depths of their heart in truth.

Through this deep cry, they call upon Hashem, and reveal His truth. This is explained in Chassidut, as follows:

The inner meaning of “From the depths I called out to You, Hashem” is that a person calls and reveals the name of Hashem, like a person calling their friend to come to them.

“From the depths” - refers to the “Supernal depth,” which is the light of the Ein Sof in its glory and essence, higher than the name of Hashem and its source.

In other words, through teshuva, one reaches the essence of the Ein Sof, and therefore, by the power of teshuva, they can reveal the name of Hashem from its source.

❧ Wellsprings of Wisdom ❧

They too arrived shortly after, the Tzochar couple, and it was wonderful to see that the veil had lifted from the Jewish face of the professor, revealing the pure serenity of a newborn. These were the first glimmers of light from the pristine tranquility that we know from the accuracy of our world. And when Mr. Tzochar returned - he returned wholeheartedly, with all the professorial strength, with self-assurance and the determination made

without fear. I saw it with my own eyes - after a few short months - with a kippah on his head and tzitzit on his body.

For by a mere swipe of a hand, destinies are shaped, from heaven. In an instant, things change from one end to another, and a feeble creature like me can only handle it if he knows who is the changer (the Decider and Determiner) and who is His messenger...

Parashat Haazinu - Shabbat Shalom !

Now, it's clear why on Yom Kippur, it is said, "Shabbat Shabbaton to you." Because the main flow of the revelation of the light of the Ein Sof depends specifically on the service

of the lower realms, through their humility, shame before Hashem, their true search for Him, and through their service, the divine influence is revealed in the higher worlds...

Shabbat Shalom !





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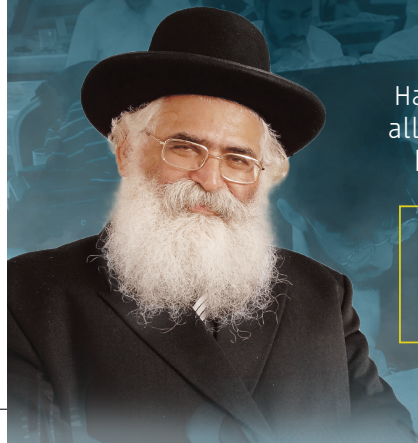
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Ha'azinu – Yom Kippur

8th of Tishrei, 5784

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:35 pm	7:32 pm	8:04 pm
Miami	6:59 pm	7:50 pm	8:29 pm
Los Angeles	6:32 pm	7:26 pm	8:01 pm
Montreal	6:34 pm	7:34 pm	8:03 pm
Toronto	6:57 pm	7:56 pm	8:26 pm
London	6:42 pm	7:47 pm	8:10 pm
Jerusalem	6:21 pm	7:09 pm	7:53 pm
Tel Aviv	6:18 pm	7:06 pm	7:49 pm
Haifa	6:17 pm	7:06 pm	7:48 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:18 pm	7:06 pm	7:49 pm

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Hashem is the "source of one's Nefesh HaElokit and the source of the souls of all of Israel", We must meditate upon the fact that G-d is our life source, and that all that we have is solely from Him.

"Praise G-d among the multitudes, Hashem, those who are from the fountain of Israel" (Tehillim 68:27). Hashem is the head and source of all blessings and all is his. One who has children must know that they are truly Hashem's, He placed them in his care, to attend to and educate in the proper path.



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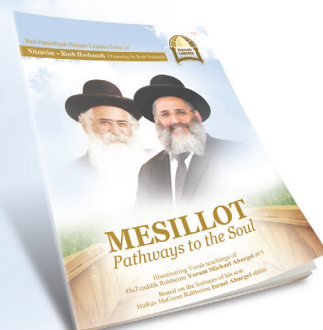
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