

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Yom Kippur



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Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

Believe in Your Tefillah

Orach LeChayim of Zlotchov zt'l teaches,

"A person must believe in his tefillah. ¹ He must believe that it accomplishes in heaven... He must know that he is a small world,

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

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

Four years passed, and the transplant hadn't arrived yet. In the meanwhile, her left eye worsened, became filled with mucus and pus, and she became entirely blind.

One year, for Pesach, the father's brother-in-law came from Tzefas to Ashdod, to spend Pesach together. The brother-in-law had heard about his niece's problem, but when he saw it, he realized how severe it was and pitied her. He said that he would daven in Meron every day, at the kever of the tana Reb Shimon bar Yochai, that the girl should have a refuah sheleimah. Also, his oldest son said that he would arrange tefillos in his cheder for the refuah of his cousin.

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

The father was so emotional, he couldn't respond. The secretary kept asking, "Will you come? Will you come on Thursday for the operation?" Until he finally found his voice to say the one word, "yes," he would come with his daughter for the operation.

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

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

The doctor called the parents to his office to tell them how this transplant came about. A week earlier, a nine-year-old girl fell in a park in Ashdod. She was sent to Asaf Hospital in Ramla. Her cornea was wounded. She needed a transplant, immediately. For her, it was a matter of life and death, and therefore,

encompassing all the upper worlds in him. And therefore... he has the power to overturn the *midas hadin* to *midas harachamim*. This is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 32:20) דור

תהפכות המה; It's a generation that can turn midas hadin to rachamim; however, בנים לא אמון במ, they don't believe in themselves - in their ability to do so."¹²

she could get a transplant from another country, as well. A suitable transplant was found in a hospital in Canada.

The parents listened spellbound, as the doctor told the story, filled with hashgachah pratis, which saved their daughter's eye. The doctor continued, "I saw the form with the information about the upcoming transplant, and I recognized the name of the doctor from Canada. He was my professor. Almost everything I learned about eye surgery, I learned from him. I immediately called him to thank him. And then I told him about your daughter, who has been waiting for four years for a transplant. I told him, 'If you can send one cornea, probably you can send the other eye, as well.'"

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

When we think about the details of this story, we are overwhelmed by the hashgachah pratis. (1) The girl who fell and needed a transplant was in the Asaf hospital. If she were in any other hospital, the doctors wouldn't know about the girl who had been waiting for a transplant for four years. (2) It was also hashgachah pratis that the doctor in Eretz Yisrael was a student of the Canadian doctor. That prompted him to call the doctor and thank him, and during the conversation, the need for another cornea came up. All this occurred just a couple of weeks after the tefillos began. The family is certain that the tefillos had saved their daughter's eye.

This story reveals the power of tefillah of every Yid to bring yeshuos.

2. Seder Hayom (Shavuot) writes, "Although a person is small in some ways, in other ways, he has amazing strengths. He can give life to all the celestial worlds, something even malachim can't accomplish. He can give strength, keviyachol, to Hashem, as it states (Devarim 33:26) רוכב שמים בעורך, that Hashem rides in the heaven with your help... Every person, even the smallest and most simple person, must know his important standing and be proud of himself in this regard. He should say, 'Maybe I will do and accomplish something that is Hashem's will'"

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

On Yom Kippur, the kohen gadol came into the Kodesh Kadoshim with כף ומחטה, a large spoon and a shovel. The shovel contained coals from the mizbeach, and the spoon held the ketores. He put the coals on the ground, in the Kodesh Kadoshim, and poured the ketores over the coals. He then left the spoon and shovel in the Kodesh Kadoshim and went out to perform the rest of the avodah. At the end of the avodah, he returned to remove the spoon and shovel. Now, we understand why he initially left the מחטה, the shovel, in the Kodesh Kadoshim. He did so because the ketores were being sacrificed on the coals. It was too early to take them out. But why didn't he immediately remove the כף, the empty spoon? Why did he only take it out at the end of the avodah?

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt'l answered that after sacrificing the ketores in the Kodesh Kadoshim, the kohen gadol said a short tefillah for Klal Yisrael, outside the Kodesh Kadoshim. It isn't proper to hold something in one's hands when davening. Therefore, he left the spoon behind.

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

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

during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, teshuvah and tefillah are far better and are accepted immediately...."³

3. The Krasna Rav Shlita tells a story of a child from Bnei Brak who was gradually losing his eyesight r'l. The local doctors couldn't diagnose the child, so they sent the child to specialists. The specialists were equally at a loss for how to treat the child. Eventually, medical askanim became involved, and they discovered a world-renowned doctor in Texas who specialized in operating on this condition. The date was scheduled for five months ahead. It was far better to have the operation performed immediately, but nothing was available sooner, so they accepted it.

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

Since the doctors had free time, a day-and-a-half, without anything particular to do, people arranged a tour of Bnei Brak for them. The first stop was Yeshivas Ponevezh. Then they went to a very large gmach. The tour organizers wanted to show the doctors the chesed Klal Yisrael does, that they lend out large amounts of money interest-free.

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

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

"My father is sleeping," the child said.

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

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

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

"Wake him up again", the doctor said. "Tell him that the doctor who will make the operation is at the door."

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

Some days afterward, the askan met with the father and asked him how his son was recuperating after the operation. The father said, "What operation?"

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

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

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

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

It states (Devarim 32:7) שאל אביך ויגדך. The Noam Elimelech explains that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, שאל, ask Me all your requests because behold I am אביך, your father, and I will answer your tefillos. The word ויגדך can mean drawing down (as in גוד אחית). With your tefillos, you will draw down all your desires.⁴

Hashem Helps Us Succeed in Our Teshuvah

Chazal (Psikta Shuvah Yisrael, ch.9) teach: "A mashal to the son of a king who was distant

from the king for one hundred days. His friends said, "Return to your father." He said that he can't.

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

Rabbeinu Yonah (beginning of Shaarei Teshuvah) writes, "The Torah tells us that Hashem will help those who return to Him, who, according to their nature, aren't able to complete their teshuvah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will grant them a new, pure spirit from Above, so they can attain His love." If man will do what he can, Hashem will help him succeed in his teshuvah.⁵

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

4. In the haftarah of Rosh Hashanah, we read the story of Chanah and her tefillah for children. She came to daven in the Mishkan Shilo. Eli HaKohen saw her lips moving without emitting any sounds, so he assumed she was drunk. Eli admonished her that it is improper to stand before Hashem in an inebriated state. She replied that she hadn't drunk; rather, she was pouring out her bitter heart to Hashem, praying for children. Eli told her "Your tefillos were answered." The Imrei Emes zt'l asked his father, the Sfas Emes zt'l, how Eli's opinion changed so quickly and drastically, from thinking Chanah was a drunk to saying that her tefillos were answered! Furthermore, how did he actually know that her tefillos had been answered?

The Sfas Emes replied that this question had been posed to the close students of Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa zt'l. They explained that Eli saw with Ruach HaKodesh that her tefillos weren't having any effect in heaven. He was surprised because the prayers of a Jew should shake the heavens. Even a krechtz from a Yid reaches the Kisei HaKavod. He figured that it must be drunk and just pretended to be davening. When she explained that she hadn't drunk and was davening with a bitter and broken heart, Eli understood that he didn't see her tefillah storming the heavens because her tefillah had already been accepted and her wish granted. There is no such thing that a Yid's tefilla shouldn't be felt in heaven!

5. Reb Issar Zalman Meltzer zt'l told a mashal of two people walking on a mountain. One was on the top but was walking downwards. The other was at the bottom of the mountain but headed upward. Right now, one seems higher than the other, but soon, the one on top will be at the bottom, and the one at the bottom will reach the top. Reb Issar Zalman explained that teshuvah isn't about being on top; instead, it is about changing course and heading in the right direction. Eventually, he will grow higher and higher. And as we explained, if he tries, Hashem will elevate him and bring him up to Him.

It states (Hoshea 14:2) שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד הָאֶלְקִיךָ, "Return Yisrael to..." Rebbe Reb Shmelke zt'l taught that when one is walking on the road, carrying a heavy package, he should think to himself, "I only have to walk until I reach that house a few feet ahead of me." And when he gets there, and he sees a stone a few feet further, he should tell himself, "I only have to reach that stone." This is hinted in the words שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל, Yisrael, do teshuvah, עַד, only up to this place. Divide the path of teshuvah into small parts, and you won't find it so hard.

This is as tzaddikim taught (Tehillim 95:7) הַיּוֹם אִם בְּקוֹלִי תִשְׁמָעוּ, that a person should think that he only must serve Hashem "today." And tomorrow, he should think the same. When one feels that teshuvah means always being perfect, he might feel overwhelmed and despair. But in small intervals, he can push himself along on the path of teshuvah.

This is also hinted in the piyut, לַעֲדֵי עַד יִמְלֹךְ מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵינוּ, that the way to announce Hashem as king is עַדֵי עַד, to continually tell yourself, "Only until here." And then again, "Only until here." With this method, you will always succeed in making Hashem your king.

Tur (Orach Chaim 606) teaches that one must go to mikvah on erev Yom Kippur. He explains that although we are still *tamei meis*, and the taharah isn't complete (because we can't cleanse ourselves from tumas meis without a *parah adumah*) nevertheless, the tevilah will purify him to an extent. It will purify him for the tumos that come out of the body.

Tur also quotes Reb Sadya Gaon that one should make a brachah on this tevilah. Bach explains that although he didn't become entirely pure, he should recite a brachah on partial purity.

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

Regarding the Torah, it states (Devarim 30:12) לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא, it isn't in heaven. Rashi writes, "If it were in heaven, you would be obligated to go up, to learn it." But how is it possible to climb to the heaven? Is there a gigantic ladder from the earth to heaven that one can climb?

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

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

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

"I went in, immersed, and got out, but try as I might, I couldn't find the dressing room. I edged along the walls but couldn't figure out where I was; I had lost my bearings. Finally, I found my clothing. I got dressed, I wanted to leave, but that's when I stopped. I was afraid that if I took another step, I would get

Selichos

Before saying the *selichos* of י"ג מדות (which is said a couple of days before Yom Kippur), the Beis Aharon said to his chassidim, "Don't say *selichos* as if it were a custom or routine." We are asking Hashem for forgiveness and a good year, and we should pour out our hearts with these words.

There was once a *misnaged* who had caused significant trouble for Reb Boruch of Mezhibuz zy'a. Before Yom Kippur, this *misnaged* approached Rebbe Boruch'l and said, "I don't really need to ask for your forgiveness because I believe everything I did was a mitzvah. [He believed that opposing chassidim was a mitzvah.] However, since it is *erev Yom Kippur*, I thought it appropriate to seek your forgiveness."

In response, Rebbe Boruch'l quoted the verse (Bamidbar 14:20), סלחתי כדבריך, "I have forgiven according to your word." The implication behind his response was, "I forgive you in the same manner that you are seeking forgiveness. You don't truly mean it when you say you're sorry; likewise, I don't really mean it when I say I forgive you."

The phrase "I'm sorry" can carry different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Sometimes, it expresses genuine remorse, but there are instances when the regret is minimal or non-existent. For

example, when you want to pass through a door and someone is blocking your way, you might say, "Sorry, can I pass?" Or when you approach someone and ask, "I'm sorry, do you have the time?" In these cases, "sorry" is used as a form of speech without genuine remorse.

During selichos, when we say "סלח לנו" (forgive us), we strive to have sincere regret. Otherwise, Hashem could respond, סלחתי כדבריך, "I forgive you in the same nonchalant and insincere manner that you asked for forgiveness."

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

The Gemara says, ברית כרותה ל"ג מדות של רחמים שאינן חוזרות ריקם, Hashem made a *bris* (pact) with the י"ג מדות, that they will always be effective. They will always arouse Hashem's compassion.

The Rabbeinu B'Chayei (*Shemos* 34:6) writes, "Whoever knows the translation of the thirteen attributes, and says them with *kavanah*, his *tefillah* will be answered - unless he has *aveiros* that prevent it. Now that we are in *galus*, we don't have a *kohen gadol* to

lost again. I decided, bitterly, that I would wait on the bench until someone arrived... It bothered me that I would miss the korbanos, and perhaps part of pesukei d'zimra. In my heart, I davened for a yeshuah.

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

"Just a moment,' I hear the response. The man stretched his hand to me and brought me to the stairs leading out of the mikvah. I discovered that I was just centimeters away from the stairs, only I didn't realize it.

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

atone for our sins. We don't have a *mizbeach* to bring the *korbanos*. All we have are our *tefillos* and the thirteen attributes of mercy."

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

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

Tosfos writes there, "הנון means that Hashem has mercy on those who are going through hard times. [Hashem says], 'I am compassionate and can't see them suffer. הנון also means מתנת חנם, an undeserved gift.' Hashem says, 'I can't bear to see My children in pain,' therefore, Hashem forgives us even when we don't deserve it."⁶

Counsels for a Good Judgment

In the merit of saying *selichos*, Hashem will grant us a good year. There are other counsels for attaining a good year.

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; the customers love him. Some customers come to your store just because he is there."

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

Similarly, Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* taught that those who do *chesed* stand a better chance of receiving a good judgment on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Even if they don't deserve to live by their merit, they will be granted life because people need them.⁷

Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) say, תשובה תפילה וצדקה, "Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah annul the harsh decrees." Everyone can do *teshuvah*, and everyone can daven.

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

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

7. Elef Hamagen (583:4) writes, "Be particular (when possible) to have poor people at your table [on *Rosh Hashanah*], so the Satan won't accuse you of neglecting the poor. It is important to be mindful of this 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 *kavanos* of the *Arizal* in their prayers and blowing of the *shofar*..."

But some people don't have much money. How can they give tzedakah? They can give a small amount of money to tzedakah, according to their abilities. Additionally, all forms of helping one's fellow man can be considered a form of tzedakah.⁸

It states (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 don't cause them to stumble due to improper advice. We should also think about how we can help others. Good counsel is one of the primary paths of gemilus chasadim, as it states (Mishlei 27:9) שמן וקטרת ישמה 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.'"

As we say in the tefillah, "Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah remove the harsh judgment." Leket Yosher explains how tzedakah removes harsh judgment. Before quoting the Leket Yosher, let us give an introduction:

It states (Mishlei 19:17) מלוה 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 לווה לאיש מלוה, 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)!"

Now we are ready for 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) מלוה ה' חונן דל וגמולו ישלם 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 לווה לאיש מלוה, 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."

Perhaps the same is true with other types of kindness. Everyone is poor in some way. Everyone lacks something, be it a smile, a

⁸. Someone asked the Chazon Ish zt'l why he spends so much of his time dispensing 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."

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 בחסד כסאך, with deeds of *chesed*, one has the right to decide that Hashem should sit on the throne of *rachamim* during the judgment.⁹

More Counsels for a Good Judgment

Another way to be *zoche* to good judgment is to judge everyone favorably. We are constantly judging people. We have opinions about everyone. When we judge people favorably, Hashem will judge us favorably as well. On the *pasuk*, שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, the Kedushas Levi writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, we must arouse 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 ... ושפטו את העם משפט צדק, by judging your fellow man favorably. Because how 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 טב (a city where there was a prominent *beis din*) and establish [Rosh Hashanah]."

The literal definition of עין טב is "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.

Another counsel is to be *mevater* and to let other people have their way. Because the Gemara (*Yoma* 23) says, "Whoever is *maavir al midosov* [and is *mevater*] Hashem will forgive his aveiros."¹⁰

9. A community near Radin asked a *bachur* from the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva to join them for Rosh Hashanah. They wanted him to deliver *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.

When the Chofetz Chaim found out, he 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.

Naturally, the *bachur* accepted his rebbe's rebuke and spent Rosh Hashanah in the neighboring town.

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.

10. In a *beis midrash* three hundred years ago, the *gabbai* accidentally sold the same seat to two people for the Rosh Hashanah *tefillos*. When they both came to sit 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 to two people.

One of them would need to be *mevater*, but neither wanted to. On Rosh Hashanah night, there weren't so many people in the *Beis Midrash*, and they 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. These wagons are carrying your good deeds. They will be placed on a scale to determine what type of year you will have."

A Day That Transcends Time

About Yom Kippur it states (Yael 2:11), **כִּי גָדוֹל יוֹם ה' וְנוֹרָא מְאֹד**, "For Hashem's day is great and very awesome."

We don't eat and drink on Yom Kippur, and the Zohar explains that this is because Yom Kippur isn't really a day that is part of this world. It is a day that transcends this world. It is a day of Olam Haba.

When the korbanos of Yom Kippur are discussed (see Vayikra 16:1-34), the korbanos are stated before the date is told. The date of Yom Kippur (the tenth of Tishrei) is written after several pesukim (see Vayikra 16:29, **וְהִיְתָה לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם, (בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ)**), which is unusual. Generally, the Torah first writes the date, and then it states the korbanos, but regarding Yom Kippur, it is the opposite. It seems like the

Torah almost doesn't want to mention the date. The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 8) writes, "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."

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

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

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

The man looked up at the enormous scale in the middle of the road and saw it tipping to the side of 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 suffered a lot of *yesurim* (pain and troubles) this year, and *yesurim* atone."

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

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

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

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 and shamed him, his embarrassment purified him. Now he's a *tzaddik*, so I don't want to have anything to do with him anymore."

tell us which day]. It is such a high day that we conceal it.

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

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

The gabbai of the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l saw his Rebbe inhaling deeply on Yom Kippur. "Are you ok?" the gabbai asked. "Perhaps you need to eat?" The Sar Shalom replied, "I'm fine. I just wanted to inhale the holy air of Yom Kippur."¹¹

Like Malachim

On this spiritual day, the Jewish nation resembles 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; similarly, the Jewish nation stands erect throughout the day. *Malachim* are pure from all transgressions, as is the Jewish nation on Yom Kippur. Among the angels, there is peace, and likewise, there is peace among the Jewish nation, as they seek forgiveness from one another before this day.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepts the Satan's testimony and forgives their sins."¹²

11. 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 Vizhnitz zt'l (5655):

"To my beloved *mechutan*, the holy tzaddik, 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. Such joy we only witnessed when he ate matzah at the Seder and shook the *lulav*. Certainly, you will also be cautious with this mitzvah and follow the doctors' orders. Especially since you are a great person, and people scrutinize you. 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."

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

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

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:36) states that when Moshe was in heaven, he heard the *malachim* say ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, and Moshe taught these words to us, so we can also use them to praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Throughout the year, we say these words silently because these words were "stolen" from the malachim. The Midrash explains, 'It can be likened to someone who stole jewelry from the king's palace and gave it to his wife. He instructs her, "Do not wear the jewelry publicly, only at home." But on Yom Kippur, when we resemble the malachim, we can boldly proclaim this praise aloud, and therefore, we say out-loud ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

The Mitzvah to Eat on Erev Yom Kippur

Shulchan Aruch (604) states, מצוה לאכל בערב יום, הכפורים ולהרבות בסעודה on *erev Yom Kippur* and to make a large seudah...¹³ We will discuss several reasons for this mitzvah.

The Tur (*Orach Chaim* 604) writes, "The Torah is telling us to prepare on the ninth day [of Tishrei] for the fast that will be on the next

day. Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael is evident here because we are obligated to fast not more than one day a year, and this fast is for our benefit, to atone for our aveiros. Hashem commanded us to eat and drink before the fast so that the fast 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 it."

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

The Tur continues, "The Midrash tells a story of a mayor who sent his servant to buy fish for him. Only one fish was for sale 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 continued and went higher as they tried to purchase the fish. Finally, the tailor bought it for five gold coins. The servant returned

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

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

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

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

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

The *shochet* said, "I won't *shecht* the bird before the rav rules over the case."

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 belong to Him."

13. The source for this mitzvah is 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.

to the mayor and told him what happened. 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 out-bid my servant?"

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

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

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

We learn another reason for the mitzvah to eat on *erev Yom Kippur* from this Midrash. We have bitachon and are confident that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will forgive our aveiros.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reb Yehoshua of Belz explains that we want to offer Hashem our blood and fat, which increased due to a mitzvah. These fats and blood from the mitzvah of eating on *erev Yom Kippur* 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."¹⁴

Forgiving

To attain the atonement of Yom Kippur, one must first receive the forgiveness of one's fellow man. *Shulchan Aruch* (606:1) adds, "Even if one only harmed his fellow man with words, he must appease him and ask forgiveness."

And when someone asks you for forgiveness, *Shulchan Aruch* teaches that

14. The Beis Avraham said that when one eats on *erev Yom Kippur*, he should imagine a lion before him.

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

you shouldn't be cruel; instead, you should forgive him.

The *Mishnah Berurah* teaches that when you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you. And when you forgive your fellow man who harmed you intentionally, Hashem will forgive you for your aveiros that you committed deliberately. "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 lay down on a mound of earth. A poisonous snake approached the man, but a moment before the snake struck, a heavy object fell on it and killed the snake.

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

The man stood up, and the mound of earth he had laid on suddenly crumbled and

fell down a cliff. He realized he was saved twice. Had the mound crumbled a moment earlier, he would have toppled down the cliff together with it.

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

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

Reb Abba cried, saying, "Your deeds are greater than Yosef HaTzaddik's. Yosef forgave his brothers, who were family members. But you forgive those who aren't your family, and this is a higher level. Therefore, you deserve that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should perform many miracles for you."¹⁵

15. One year, at a large chassidus 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 to the front of the room to be near the Rebbe when he *tzinds lecht*.

The *gabai* admonished 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 wrong for hitting you. I apologize."

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

The rebbe called for the *bachur* on Thursday, 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 Torah way is to forgive. When you forgive, miracles happen to you."

The *bachur* accepted the Rebbe's words. He went to a bakery, bought cake and *l'chayim*, and carried it to

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

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

One version of the story is that Reb Yaakov was handing out *machzorim* before Yom Kippur. One wealthy person waited a few moments with his hand outstretched until he got his *machzor*. This rich 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 *Shemoneh Esrei*. When he took three steps back, a wealthy person smacked him for davening so long.

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

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

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

Reb Yaakov told them that he had already forgiven him. In that merit, a year later, his wife gave birth to Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin *zy'a*.¹⁶

the *gabai's* home. "Please forgive me for disrespecting you," the *bachur* said.

"I also have to ask forgiveness, because I shouldn't have hit you," the *gabai* replied.

They drank a *l'chayim* together, 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, he studied Gemara by the light of the *shamashim*. With his Gemara still in his hands he drifted off. The Gemara slipped out of his hands, onto the burning candles. His bed caught fire. He was fortunate to wake up 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' lives would be in danger.

It was three o'clock in the morning, but the *bachur* knew that the rebbe was already in the beis medresh learning. The *bachur* ran over and told the rebbe of the miracle that happened to him and his friends. "It was 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 salvations."

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-ceasing 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 struggles 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, please forgive and save us.' Her *vitur* and forgivingness is what saved us."

16. A divorcee regularly ate the Shabbos and yom tov *seudos* with a family in Bnei Brak. One day, the

Seek to Increase Your Merits in Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Everyone should consider himself as being 50% righteous (צדיק) and 50% guilty (חייב), and also he should think that the world is 50% righteous and 50% guilty. If he does an *aveirah*, he will tip his 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 during 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), צדק צדק תרדוף למען, תחיה וירשת, which can be translated as follows: צדק צדק תרדוף, run after the mitzvah of וירשת. Why? למען תחיה, so that you will be written in the Book of Life. וירשת implies that you should give *tzedakah* ו' תשרי 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, on *erev Yom Kippur*, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l* thought of a *shidduch* between two

guest insulted the host, and the host replied with harsh words. The guest got up in the middle of the meal, left the house, and didn't return for months.

Erev Yom Kippur, the wife of the household asked 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!"

"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. He accepted his wife's words and promised to 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; I'll come to visit you."

After forgiveness was attained, the couple in Bnei Brak felt in their hearts that 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. On 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 became vessels worthy of receiving Hashem's *bracha*. This is because all *brachos* come from peace and unity. Where there is forgiveness, the channels of *bracha* and salvation open wide.

orphans and asked his daughter to be the *shadchan*. She replied, "I will take care of it right after Yom Kippur."

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

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 touches people's hearts. *Kol Nidrei* is essentially *hataras nedarim*, annulling vows. We make *hataras nedarim* on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, too, it isn't recited with the awe of *Kol Nidrei*. What is its significance?

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

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

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, "השטן is *gematriya* 364, because the Satan has permission to prosecute 364 days a year. On Yom Kippur, which is the 365th day, he must be silent." The Satan knows that moments

before Yom Kippur is his last opportunity to prosecute against the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation feels the danger in their souls, and this is the reason they are inspired to teshuvah when they say *Kol Nidrei*.

The Tune

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

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

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

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

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

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

The directors didn't realize that the prince concealed a hidden message within the illegible message. 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 the hidden messages and grants us a good year.

Teshuvah in a Moment

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 49:) says that if a total *rasha* (רשע גמור) betroths a woman and says *על מנת שאני צדיק גמור*, that it is only a marriage if he is a perfect tzaddik, we consider them married (בספק), 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. This source is often brought to show the power of *teshuvah*. A 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."

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 17.) tells the story of a grave sinner, Elazar ben Durdiya, who one day finally did teshuvah and died the very 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,¹⁷

17. Tosfos explains that the mountains didn't actually speak, but Elazar ben Durdiya understood that if

"Before we daven for you, we must daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 54:10) כי ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטינה, 'For the mountains shall tilt and the hills totter.'"

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

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

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

The stars replied, "Before we daven for you, we need to daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 34:4) ונמקו כל צבא השמים, 'All the host of heaven shall melt.'"

Realizing he had no one to turn to, Elazar ben Durdiya said, אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי, "The matter is left for me alone." He placed his head between his knees and cried until his soul 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, אין הדבר תלוי אלא בי, 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.

We also learn from this story that one can do teshuvah in one moment. It takes just a

second, and everything can be turned around. Elazar ben Durdiya was a grave sinner, but at a moment of inspiration, he did teshuvah, acquired Olam HaBa, and was even called Rebbe.

The 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." Teshuvah is a decision never to sin again. This is the essence of teshuvah, and such a decision can be made in a moment.

Teshuvah

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:2) writes, "Know, when a sinner pushes off doing *teshuvah*, his punishment increases daily. He knows Hashem is angry with him, he has a place to escape – *teshuvah* – but yet he remains rebellious."

He proves the severity of pushing off doing teshuvah from the following Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 7):

"A band of robbers were sent to jail. One of them dug a tunnel which allowed all the thieves to escape, except for one. He remained in the prison. When the ruler came, he hit him with a staff. He said, 'You bad-luck person! The tunnel was dug; why didn't you escape?'"

The Midrash says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says the same to the sinners. "You had the opportunity to do teshuvah; why didn't you do so?"

Teshuvah sefarim discuss how to do teshuvah and attain atonement for severe *aveiros*. We become afraid when we study their instructions because those sefarim generally recommend fasts, afflictions, and humiliations to achieve atonement. The path for atonement they present is far beyond what anyone can endure today.

the mountains could speak, that is what they would say. Tosfos brings another explanation that it was the malach of the mountains that spoke to Elazar ben Durdiya.

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

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

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

In this dream, heaven revealed to the Yismach Moshe that *change* itself is the

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

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

"We generally don't learn halachos from dreams, but this time, it seems logical and correct. I have much to add on this subject from many sources in Chazal. However, I decided to end the letter here because I became very afraid as we discussed rectifying sins.¹⁸ May Hashem see our broken hearts and enable us to do *teshuvah sheleimah*.¹⁹

18. Change is hard to come by; 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 gathered around a well with their flocks and asked them why they weren't giving their sheep to drink. The shepherds explained that a heavy stone was on the well and they couldn't lift it by themselves. "We will roll off the stone together when all the shepherds arrive."

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." The same is true with change and with teshuvah. We must try, and then Hashem will help us.

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

I received a letter from a couple who was childless for many years. They sought to perform a mitzvah beyond their natural comfort zone, as a segulah that Hashem should perform a miracle beyond nature for them and grant them children. As Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov *zy'a* (quoted in *Agra d'Pirka* 24) teaches, when one serves Hashem beyond his nature, Hashem performs miracles beyond nature for him.

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 היצוניים, foreign subjects, which could lead to heresy.

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

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

The following day, after the Chasam Sofer finished his daily *shiur*, he said, "It's time to remind the *bachurim* of the prohibition against reading ספרי היצוניים. 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 רמה (sword) because if one transgresses the חרם, he can be punished, *chalilah*, with a sword." Hundreds of *bachurim* heard the Chasam Sofer's words, but only one understood precisely what the Chasam Sofer was referring to.

In the Chasam Sofer's day ספרי היצוניים 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 its trap. But if we fall and manage to pull ourselves out, miracles beyond nature will occur 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.

"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

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' אלוקיך*, "Do *teshuvah* up to Hashem, your G-d." Reb 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 pub but stopped midway. "I can't do this," he told himself. "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, pat ourselves on the shoulder, drop our guard, and promptly return to our old ways. Instead, we need to make a firm decision, once and for all, and then we will succeed with our *teshuvah*. And that's why small kabbalos are often the ideal path. It is something we can keep without dropping, with Hashem's help.

Regret

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*.

We have many excuses for the *aveiros* we perform, and it is possible that Hashem will accept these excuses. There's the powerful *yetzer hara*, negative human tendencies, bad habits, negative influences around us, and more. However, Hashem will say, "But why didn't you regret what you did? I understand that you couldn't stand up to the test and failed and erred. After all, you are only a human, and the test was very great. But why don't you regret what you did? Why do you think all is well? You should at least regret what you did."²⁰

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.

20. The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* was very strict about not speaking during davening.

Once, two bachurim spoke during davening, and the Beis Yisrael instructed 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 regret what you did, you can return to the beis medresh right now."

The other said, "The other bachur spoke to me. I didn't want to speak. He caused me to speak." The Beis Yisrael told him not to return for six weeks!

When you regret your deeds, you can grow and improve. But when you have no regrets, you will never become better.

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 *etz hadaas*, and Adam replied, 'I don't want to do *teshuvah*.'" It seems from this Midrash that Adam's primary *aveirah* was that he didn't want to do *teshuvah*.

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*.

We say, ... על חטא שחטאנו לפניך, "For the sin that we committed before You..." Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* explained that our main regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before You. People regret their *aveiros* for several reasons (fear of punishment, embarrassment, a feeling of failure and incompetence, etc.). Still, the ideal regret is שחטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before Hashem.²¹

Happy with the Atonement

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

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

Chazal revealed (end of *Taanis*) that Yom Kippur is one of the happiest days of the year because on Yom Kippur, we become cleansed from all our sins. We deserve credit

21. One 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 couldn't show his face in public.

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. He wanted to receive his rebbe's brachos but 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 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 arrogance overtook, he lost that level, and the Rebbe sent him on his way.

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

for being happy with our atonement. One could theoretically be upset about doing *teshuvah* because *teshuvah* means obedience to halachah and being restricted by the Torah's rules. But we want to do *teshuvah* and are happy that we are improving our ways. And for that, we deserve a reward.

It states (*Tehillim* 14:7), 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.

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 pleased and says, 'Rejoice immensely because I am forgiving the sins of the Jewish people.'"

The Midrash (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, end of ch.4) states, "Moshe went up on Har Sinai for forty days. On the fortieth day [Yom Kippur], the Jewish nation declared a fast day. The fast began at night, and in the morning, they went towards Har Sinai. They were crying as they approached Moshe, and Moshe was crying as he approached them. Their cries went up before Hashem, and Hashem's compassion was aroused, and He accepted their *teshuvah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said,

'Bnei Yisrael! I swear by My name and throne that your tears will become tears of immense joy. This day will be a day for atonement for you, your children, your grandchildren, and for all generations.'"

The Power of Teshuvah

Reb Baruch Ber *zt'l* (the *Birchas Shmuel*) excelled in the mitzvah of honoring his parents, and when his father was ill, Reb Boruch Ber stayed with him almost every night. He couldn't be with his father one night, so he appointed someone to care for him. Unfortunately, that night, his father was *niftar*. Reb Baruch Ber blamed himself for not being more devoted. "If I were there 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 by guilt.

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

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.

On the night of Yom Kippur, we recite the *brachah* of "*shehechyanu*." 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 *shehechyanu*.

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

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86.) states, גדולה תשובה, שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות, "Teshuvah is great because the *aveiros* become merits." Different explanations exist for how this works, but that is the reality. When one does teshuvah with love of Hashem, his *aveiros* become merits.

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

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Radomsk*) *zt'l* visited the renowned *baal teshuvah*, Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor *zt'l*, 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, even when he was irreligious. Because since he did complete *teshuvah*, his previous days were counted and included with his merits.

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov *zt'l* met someone apprehensive 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 all the zeros, turning it into a vast, significant number. In the future, people will look for sins because the *aveiros* will increase their merits and virtues."²²

Viduy

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

Since *viduy* is a *mitzvah* of the Torah, we understand that one must perform this *mitzvah* with joy. This might be the reason we say *אשמנו* and אל הטא on Yom Kippur with a tune.

Furthermore, we are happy because we know that with this *viduy*, we become close to Hashem.²³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 bandits. They are sharpening their knives, and he knows his end is near. He asks the thieves to allow him a final wish, and they grant 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. 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; you don't need *yesurim*, and you also don't need many *tefillos*. You ask Hashem for forgiveness, and Hashem forgives. It is as simple as that.

The Baal HaTanya (*Igeres HaTeshuvah* 11) proves this from the *brachah* *סלה 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*. But behold, when one is in doubt about a *brachah*, he mustn't recite it, lest his *brachah* be in vain. How can we bless Hashem for forgiving us? Perhaps Hashem didn't accept our *teshuvah* and didn't forgive us? The

answer is: We have no doubt. After one says *סלה לנו מהל לנו*, he is forgiven. And if we won't sin again, we will immediately be redeemed, as the following *brachah* states, *ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל*."

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

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

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

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

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

in heaven!"²⁴ On Yom Kippur, we stand before Hashem, and that is the root of our purity and atonement.

Neilah

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "One should be very diligent with *Neilah* because the pinnacle of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is Yom Kippur, and the peak of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*. Everything follows the closing (הכל הולך אחר הדותום)." *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) states 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 the defense of a person who caused a *chillul Hashem*, to say that the sin isn't so severe. To suggest that, would in itself be a disgrace to Hashem's name. Therefore, when a *chillul Hashem* charge is brought to the heavenly court, all *malachim* remain silent, and no one advocates on that person's behalf. This is why there is no atonement, as long as the person is alive.

However, at *Neilah*, Hashem alone judges us. The *malachim* aren't part of the process. 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 forgiveness from Hashem.

G-t's Numen

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

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

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

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.), its pronunciation was miraculously forgotten immediately after Yom Kippur. The morning after Yom Kippur, people tried to remember it but couldn't. They asked one another, "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 written one after the other, that is Hashem's name." The student internalized this lesson, and whenever he saw two yuds, he knew to read it as Hashem's name.

Once, the *melamed* reached the end of a פסוק (which is called סוף פסוק), and it appears like this : (similar to a colon punctuation mark). The student asked, "There are two *yuds* here; why don't you read it as Hashem's name?"

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

²⁴ 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.

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 superior to the other, Hashem is there. But when one feels higher than the other, it's a separator, and Hashem doesn't reside there.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* repeated this story and added: After Yom Kippur, everyone is cleansed from sin, so all Yidden are on the same level. That's two *yuds* side by side, and Hashem's name is there. Therefore, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen* because everyone feels equal, and Hashem's name is there.²⁵

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 Hamizbeach for the first Beis HaMikdash on these days (see *Malachim* 1, 8:65). But it is also because we celebrate the *kaparah* that extends from Yom Kippur 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*.

We will bring some sources for our atonement on these four days. Prominent among the sources is the *pasuk* (Vayikra 23:40) וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, "Take [*lulav*] on the first day." Why is it called the first day? Succos is

on the 15th day of the month! The Midrash (Tanchuma Emor 22) explains that the 15th of Tishrei is called יוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן because "It's the first day for reckoning *aveiros*..." Until Succos, we still have the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur.

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

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

These are hints to the purity from *aveiros* we merit during these days.

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

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

The Kozeglover Rav *zt'l* (*Eretz Zvi*) writes that during the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, even an adult's Torah study sustains the world because on these days, he is clean from sin. It is even a higher Torah than a child's Torah because an adult

25. On the first day of Succos, we take an אַתְרוֹג, which *tzaddikim* say is *roshei teivos* for אַתְרוֹג רִגְלֵי גְאוּוֹה, "don't bring me to arrogance." By taking the *esrog*, we are saying that we should remain equal with all Yidden and never feel superior to our fellow man.

is a מצווה ועושה, obligated to study Torah, while a child isn't.

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

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

It states (*Yeshayah 55*) בְּרֵשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמְצְאוֹ, "Search for Hashem when He is near. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah 18*) asks, "When is Hashem near?"

אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכיפורים, "These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." The Shlah HaKadosh (*Succah, Torah Or 70*) asks that there are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Why does the Gemara say there are ten days?

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

Yom Kippur is called Rosh Hashanah,²⁶ and Hashanah Rabba is called Yom Kippur, a day of atonement.²⁷ Between them, there are ten days – days to utilize to "Search for Hashem when He is near."

26. As it states, בְּרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה בְּעֵשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ (*Yechezkel 40*).

27. This is because, on Hoshana Rabbah, we receive the חֶתִימָה טוֹבָה, a good seal for the new year.

בס"ד

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