

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Yom Kippur



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

Preparing for Yom Kippur

In the final Mishnah of Yoma it says מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל ד', מִהּ מִקְוֵה מִטְהַר אֶת הַטְּמְאִים, אֵף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא "Hashem is a mikvah for Yisrael. Just as a mikvah purifies those who are *tamei*, HaKadosh Baruch Hu purifies Yisrael." Yom Kippur acts like a mikvah, but we mustn't jump in suddenly. The Yalkut Gershuni which quotes the Rambam (Hilchos Mikvaos, 1:9) states הַקּוֹפֵץ לְתוֹךְ הַמִּקְוֵה הָרִי זֶה מְגַנָּה, it is disgraceful to jump into a mikvah.¹ We should prepare ourselves beforehand.

The Mishnah states, לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מִטְהָרִים, "Before Whom are you purifying yourself?" Binah l'Ittim (drush 11) tells us that this means we should prepare ourselves *before* (לפני) Yom Kippur arrives.

The Mishnah describes the avodah of Yom Kippur and says (Yoma 5:3), וְנָכַס לְמָקוֹם שֶׁנִּכְנָס, "The kohen gadol entered the place he entered and stood at the place that he stood." This hints to us that, to the extent that one prepares himself before Yom Kippur, that is where he will be on Yom Kippur.

How does one prepare himself before Yom Kippur?

Tzedakah and Chesed

The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4) writes, "From Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, Bnei Yisrael do a lot of *tzedakah* with good

deeds, and mitzvos. They perform these more than the rest of the year." This is because the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16:) states, שלשה ספרים נפתחין בר"ה אחד של רשעים גמורין ואחד של צדיקים גמורין ואחד של בינוניים צדיקים גמורין ונחתמין לאלתר לחיים רשעים גמורין נכתבין ונחתמין לאלתר למיתה בינוניים תלויין ועומדין מר"ה ועד יוה"כ וכו' נכתבין לחיים לא וכו' נכתבין למיתה, "Three sefarim are opened on Rosh Hashanah. One is of total *reshaim*, the second is of perfect *tzaddikim*, and the third sefer is of people who are in between (*beinonim*). The perfect *tzaddikim* are immediately signed and sealed for life. The total *resha'im* are instantly signed and sealed for death. Those who are in between (*beinonim*) their verdict remains hanging from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit it, they will be inscribed for life, and if they don't, they will be inscribed for death." Therefore, during the ten days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Klal Yisrael are occupied with teshuvah and good deeds. If they were deemed *beinonim* on Rosh Hashanah, they have these days to correct and improve their judgment.

Klal Yisroel places a great focus on performing deeds of *tzedakah* and *chesed* these days, to turn the judgment around in our favor. As Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 16:) say, תשובה תפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה, "Teshuvah, tefillah, and *tzedakah* annul the harsh decrees."² In ונתנה תוקף we say, with deeds of *chesed*, one causes that Hashem will sit on the throne of *rachamim* during the judgment.

1. Following the plain pshat, the problem with jumping into a mikvah is that it gives the impression that he is utilizing the mikvah to cool down, and not for taharah. (Kesef Mishnah)

2. It states (Devarim 16:20), צדק צדק תרדוף למען תחיה וירשת, צדק צדק תרדוף. Rabbeinu Efraim translates it as follows: — צדק צדק תרדוף — run after the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. Why? למען תחיה — so that you will be inscribed in the Book of Life.

The word וירש"ת contains the same letters as וי' תשרי, hinting that one should give *tzedakah* during the six days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah in Tishrei. (We cannot give *tzedakah* on the two days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Shabbos Shuvah. This leaves six days when we are able to give *tzedakah*.)

The Maharam Paparish zt"l (אור הישר עמוד גמ"ח) (פ"א) writes, "Whoever has compassion on others, Heaven will have compassion upon him. His tefillah will be accepted as it is, and the tefillah will be accepted with a shining countenance. When he is judged, he will have many malachim speaking in his favor in the court in Heaven."³

The Gemara (Kesubos 67b) tells that on every erev Yom Kippur, Mar Ukva would send four hundred *zuzim* to a poor person who

lived in his neighborhood. Mar Ukva would do so every year. The Maharsha writes, "He was cautious to give a large sum of money for tzedakah on erev Yom Kippur, so this merit יהא מכריע לטובה, will tip the scale in his favor."⁴ We see from this episode that even the holy Amoraim were cautious and concerned to increase their merits during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Certainly, we should do the same so we will be inscribed for a good year.⁵

3. The Maharsha writes, "In this world, we can לפייסו בדברים, appease Hashem with words. This is referring to tefillah. And we can שחדו בממון, give a bribe with money, and this is referring to tzedakah." That is like a bribe, which grants us immense benefits.

Years ago, in Lithuania, there was a draft, and Jewish bachurim were at risk of being taken into the army. A twenty year old bachur came to Reb Yitzchak Elchanan Spector zt"l. He explained that he came from a wealthy family, and now it was his turn to stand before the army officials. He said, "Until recently, wealthy families would bribe the officials with large sums of money, and in return they would receive a document exempting their sons from the draft. But things have changed. The officials still take the bribe; they promise to prepare an exemption, and then they draft the bachur anyway. My question is: what should we do now? Should we pay the bribe and hope they will arrange an exemption for me, or should we avoid wasting money on empty promises?"

Reb Yitzchak Elchanan thought for a few minutes and then said, "I know an askan, an activist, for whom no doors are closed. Give me the money, and I will give it to him. You don't have to worry — you will receive your exemption. You won't be drafted. The letter will arrive in the mail."

The bachur gave him the money.

A couple of weeks later, a mailman knocked on the door of the wealthy family and handed the bachur a document stating that he was exempt from the draft. It said he was not healthy enough to serve, and added that if he wished to serve, he had the right to appeal and attempt to overturn the army's decision.

Overjoyed, the bachur rushed to the home of the gaon, Reb Yitzchak Elchanan, to share the good news. He said, "I understand that the name of the activist must remain a secret, but it could help so many people who have children at risk of being drafted. Perhaps, for their sake — or at least for the wealthy families who can afford it — you can tell me who this activist is."

Reb Yitzchak Elchanan replied, "Listen well. This activist is good for all types of salvations, not only for being freed from the draft. He can help everyone, not only the wealthy. Let me explain. Two weeks ago, just before you came, a kallah and her mother were here. They poured out their hearts. The wedding date was approaching, and they had no money. They were worried and embarrassed that the shidduch might fall apart. When they left, you walked in with your question. I said to myself: HaKadosh Baruch Hu certainly helps those who give tzedakah. Tzedakah protects from all tzaros and yesurim. Therefore, I asked you for the money, and I gave it to them. In the merit of helping this kallah, Hashem blessed you, and your exemption letter arrived straight to your home."

(This story was repeated by the gaon, Reb Reuven Fine zt"l, who heard it from the bachur himself during the war years, when they were escaping Europe during the Holocaust on their way to Shanghai, Japan.)

4. The Maharsha offers a second explanation. He writes that on erev Yom Kippur people eat a meal, and therefore the poor person needed extra money on erev Yom Kippur to buy food for that meal. This, he explains, is why he would send him money specifically on erev Yom Kippur.

5. One year, on erev Yom Kippur, the Chasam Sofer zt"l thought of a shidduch idea for two orphans. He

Shulchan Aruch (582:1) states בְּעֶשְׂרֵת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה אֵלֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ, הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשַׁפֵּט, אוֹמֵר: הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ, הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשַׁפֵּט,

"During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah [in Shemonah Esrei] one should say הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ and הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשַׁפֵּט." We understand that the reason for this is to mention the concept of *malchus*, Hashem's kingship during this time.

But we need to understand why in the eleventh brachah of Shemonah Esrei, הַשִּׁיבָה מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט, שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ, the final words מִשְׁפָּט and צְדָקָה are exchanged for הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשַׁפֵּט? Why is this necessary if the brachah mentions Hashem's kingship by saying מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט, which means "The King Who loves tzedakah and justice?" Aren't these words even more appropriate for us? It means Hashem loves to perform tzedakah, even when he performs מִשְׁפָּט justice. This can help us during these days of judgment.

The Meil Tzedakah (540) answers the question. He writes that מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

means that HaKadosh Baruch Hu loves our tzedakah, our deeds of charity to the poor, when it is performed with מִשְׁפָּט, properly, according to halachah. During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we say הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמְּשַׁפֵּט, which means Hashem judges us on these days whether we gave tzedakah properly.

Tzedakah Saves from Death

It states (Mishlei 10:2) וְצְדָקָה תַּצִּיל מִמָּוֶת, "Tzedakah saves from death."

The Meshech Chachmah (אמור ד"ה במדרש) asks why Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the days of judgment, are in Tishrei, and not in Nisan. In Tishrei, people are busy working their fields, planting the new crop, and harvesting last year's crop. They don't have so much time to study Torah and to be occupied in good deeds. In comparison, Nisan comes after an entire winter season of studying Torah. If the judgment were in Nisan, the Jewish nation would have many merits. It would be obvious to all that the

asked his daughter to act as the shadchan. She replied, "I'll take care of it right after Yom Kippur."

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

Later that day, his daughter returned and said, "The orphan boy is unsure about the shidduch because the girl has no money." The Chasam Sofer told her, "Tell him he will have parnassah his entire life. He may not be wealthy, but he will always have parnassah."

She conveyed the message, and the shidduch was finalized that very day.

That year, the Chasam Sofer arrived at the beis medresh for Kol Nidrei later than usual. The mitzvah of arranging the shidduch had taken time, and therefore he came late to the tefillah. The gabai pointed to his watch, hinting that it was already late. The Chasam Sofer told him, "It isn't late. Heaven begins the judgment when I say Kol Nidrei."

We see from this episode that the holy Chasam Sofer sought merits for the Days of Judgment. He wanted another deed of chesed to accompany him into Yom Kippur. Let us learn from his ways and perform good deeds during these days, so our judgment will be favorable.

Once, the Chasam Sofer's son in law saw a pillar of fire in the Chasam Sofer's home on erev Yom Kippur. He fainted from fright. The Chasam Sofer told him that the pillar of fire was Eliyahu HaNavi. We recount this story to give us another glimpse into the Chasam Sofer's greatness: Eliyahu HaNavi appeared in his home as a pillar of fire on erev Yom Kippur, and, as mentioned above, the judgment in heaven did not begin until the Chasam Sofer said Kol Nidrei. Despite his greatness, he still sought to acquire another mitzvah, another act of chesed, 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 kabbalah can I take on that might tip the scales in my favor?"

Jewish nation is far better than the goyim, and Hashem will bless them with a good year.⁶

The Meshech Chachmah answers that there is one matter that we have in Tishrei, which we don't have so much in other months. In Tishrei, we perform the mitzvos related to tzedakah with the harvest. We give לקט שכחה ופאה, leaving some of the crops to the poor. This merit blesses the Jewish nation with a good year. Therefore, it is advantageous that the judgment is in Tishrei, at a time when we have these special benefits.

The Meshech Chachmah quotes the Gemara (Bava Basra 11a) which states, "People say about Binyamin HaTzaddik that he was appointed over the tzedakah *pushke*. Once, a woman came before him during a hunger year and asked for parnassah. Binyamin HaTzaddik told her, 'I swear to you, the tzedakah *pushke* is empty. I have nothing to give you.' She said, 'Rebbe, if you will not give me parnassah, me and my seven children will die.' Binyamin HaTzaddik gave her parnassah from his own money. Some years later, Binyamin HaTzaddik was ill and near death. The malachim said to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, 'Ribono Shel Olam, You say, כל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל כאלו קיים עולם מלא, Whoever gives life to one Jewish soul, it is like he gave existence to the entire world. Binyamin HaTzaddik gave life to a woman and her seven children. Should he die young?' Immediately, the decree was ripped, and he lived another twenty-two years."

The Meshech Chachmah writes, "It wasn't for nothing that he was called HaTzaddik. He had countless mitzvos and good deeds. Nevertheless, when he neared the end of his life (he had lived the number of years that was destined for him), he was granted more years, לפנים משורת הדין, beyond what was initially decreed, specifically in the merit of tzedakah and chesed. He earned a longer life because he gave from his own money to save a woman with her seven sons." This is an example of the greatness of tzedakah. It brings yeshuos.

The Meshech Chachmah writes, "Now the question is answered. Why wasn't the judgment set for Nisan, after the winter? Because if the judgment were only about parnassah and health, the merits of the Jewish nation at the end of the winter would be sufficient. They had studied Torah, while the goyim were occupied with their low temptations. But on Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is 'Who will live and who will die.' For this, they need the merit of tzedakah. There must be the merits of the harvest, the merits of לקט שכחה ופאה. This merit is greater than the *zechus* of giving *terumah* and *maasros*. One can give *terumah* and *maasar* to the kohanim they know, and they earn a benefit from it, טובת הנאה (that the kohen will owe them a favor back). But לקט שכחה ופאה is for everyone to take, even those people whom the farmer dislikes. For the merit of this form of tzedakah, he will be inscribed לחיים טובים ארוכים ולשלום, for a long, good, and peaceful life. He will be judged measure for measure (מדה כנגד מדה). Just like he didn't discern between who deserved his charity, he will also be granted life, even if he doesn't really deserve it."⁷

6. Shem MiShmuel explains that even the very best among the nations (חסידיו אומות העולם) do not perform their good deeds with hislahavus. When a Yid serves Hashem with genuine hislahavus, it shows that we are far superior even to the finest of the goyim, and this helps us merit a favorable judgment during these days.

Shem MiShmuel (Nitzavim 5673) writes: "An important lesson for a G d fearing Yid is that during the yomim noraim he should not be cold. Rather, he should perform all the mitzvos of this seventh month with great hislahavus and emotion. If he does so, he will succeed in the judgment. Each Yid will receive a good judgment in accordance with his hislahavus."

7. On the pasuk שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך, the Kedushas Levi writes that when we judge every Yid favorably, Hashem will do the same and judge all Yidden favorably. This is the deeper meaning of שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך.

Those who can't give much tzedakah can help their fellow man with deeds of kindness. The Meil Tzedakah calls kind deeds "Tzedakah that doesn't cost money."⁸

Forgiving One Another

Aveiros bein adam l'chaveiro refers to aveiros one commits against his fellow man, and aveiros bein adam l'Makom are those committed between man and Hashem. We must do teshuvah for both forms of aveiros. The Chasam Sofer (Drashos Shabbos HaGadol year 5555, 17a) explains that the word *שובה*, "do

teshuvah", is written twice in the following pasukim (Hosheia 14:2-3) *שובה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֵלֶיךָ כִּי קָחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל ה'*, "Do teshuvah, Yisrael, until Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take words with yourselves and return [in teshuvah] to Hashem." The pasuk begins with aveiros that are *bein adam l'chaveiro*, as it states, *שובה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֵלֶיךָ*, "Do teshuvah, Yisrael, until Hashem your G-d." *עד* means *עד בכלל*, until Hashem, before it reaches Hashem. This refers to aveiros bein adam l'chaveiro, between people (see there more). Afterward, it

- a person can, so to speak, arrange the judgment of Heaven through *משפט צדק*, by judging his fellow man favorably. Because the way a person acts toward others is exactly how Heaven will act with him.

The Chachmas Eliezer of Seret Viznitz zt"l explained the words from selichos, *מכניסי רחמים רחמינו לפני בעל, והשפטו את העם משפט צדק*, *הרחמים*, that the intention is that *רחמינו* - the compassion we show to others - should be brought before Hashem. And in that merit, Hashem will treat us in the very same manner.

8. Someone once asked Reb Avigdor Miller zt"l what he could do to earn a good judgment on Yom Kippur. Reb Avigdor Miller answered, "You should smile."

He explained, "I know you think I'm old and don't know what I'm talking about, but this is good advice. If you smile at people, you will merit a good year." When a person helps others with a smile, or in any other way, Hashem says, "This person is needed in the world. We must give him a good year so he can continue helping others."

Reb Avigdor Miller illustrated this with a mashal: A storeowner was reviewing his profits and losses at the end of the year and decided he needed to cut costs. Some employees would have to be laid off. His advisor told him, "No matter what you do, don't fire Mr. So and So. He always has a smile on his face, the customers love him, and some people come to your store just because he's there."

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

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 life by their own merit, they will be granted life because people need them.

One year, on erev Yom Kippur in the afternoon, Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt"l spent a long time listening patiently to someone who spoke a lot. After the man left, the family asked the rebbe how he had had the patience. The rebbe replied that the Igeres HaRamban instructs a person to speak calmly and pleasantly *לכל אדם ובכל עת* - "to every person, and at all times." *לכל אדם* means to all people, even someone who is bothersome. *ובכל עת* means at all times, even on erev Yom Kippur.

Rav Shach zt"l related that the Chofetz Chaim zt"l once spent the entire night of Yom Kippur speaking with an older bachur, Hershel Kaminetz, who had never married due to health issues. Hershel told Rav Shach that he was once in Radin for Yom Kippur. After the tefillos on Yom Kippur night, everyone left the beis medresh, and he remained alone, feeling lonely and dejected. Then the Chofetz Chaim entered and spoke with him until morning. The Chofetz Chaim sensed that this bachur needed chizuk, and although his time was always precious - and certainly on Yom Kippur night - he understood that at that moment, the most important thing was to give strength to a broken Yid.

states "קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה' "Take words with yourselves and return [in teshuvah] to Hashem", which refers to doing teshuvah for aveiros *bein adam l'makom*, which one transgressed against Hashem.

On Yom Kippur, we want to attain atonement for all sins, both *בין אדם למקום* and *בין אדם לחבירו*. However, to attain atonement for sins *בין אדם לחבירו*, for one's fellow man, one must first ask forgiveness. As Chazal (Yoma 85b) say, "Aveiros bein adam l'chaveiro, Yom Kippur doesn't atone before he asks forgiveness from his fellow man."

The source is from the pasuk (Vayikra 16:30) *כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכָּפֵר עֲלֵיכֶם לְמַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה'*, "For on this day He shall affect atonement for you to cleanse you. Before Hashem, you shall be cleansed from all your aveiros." The atonement is for *לִפְנֵי ה'*, the aveiros he committed against Hashem. For the aveiros of *bein adam l'chaveiro*, he must ask their forgiveness first.

Therefore, Shulchan Aruch (606:1) states, *עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ אֵין יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר עַד שְׂפִיטָנָו*, "Aveiros bein adam l'chaveiro, Yom Kippur doesn't atone for them until he appeases his friend."

The Sfas Emes (Yoma 87b) reveals to us that it doesn't make a difference who is right and who is wrong. When there is a rift, a *machlokes*, each person should feel responsible to make peace, even if that means asking forgiveness for something he didn't do, and he is totally innocent.

The Sfas Emes supports this lesson from the following Gemara (Yoma 87b): Rav was learning Torah in front of Rebbe. Bar Kapara came into the beis medresh. He missed the

beginning of the shiur, so they started again from the beginning of the lesson to accommodate Bar Kapara. Then Reb Shimon b'Rebbe came in, and once again, they went back to the beginning of the lesson. Then Rav Chanina came in. Rav said, "How many times are we going to go back?" Rav Chanina was insulted. Rav asked for forgiveness. For thirteen years, Rav went to Rav Chanina on erev Yom Kippur to plead for forgiveness for what he did, but Rav Chanina wasn't *mochel*.⁹

The Sfas Emes writes that Rav didn't do anything wrong. He had a right to say that he didn't want to begin again. Nevertheless, for thirteen years, he tried to make peace with Rav Chanina and ask forgiveness. This is because one should ask forgiveness from his fellow man, even if he didn't do anything wrong.¹⁰

Forgiving others is *mesugal* to have 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 is that moments before Yom Kippur, Reb Yaakov was handing out machzorim. A wealthy man had to wait a few moments, with his hand outstretched, until he got his *machzor* and was very insulted. He smacked Reb Yaakov on his face.

According to a second version, Reb Yaakov was the chazan on Yom Kippur night and davened a very long *Shemoneh Esrei*. When he took three steps back, a

9. Why didn't Rav Chanina forgive Rav? The Gemara explains that Rav Chanina was the rosh yeshiva, and he saw in a dream that Rav would one day become the rosh yeshiva. Rav Chanina feared this meant he would pass away and Rav would replace him. Therefore, he didn't forgive Rav — he wanted Rav to leave Eretz Yisrael and go to Bavel. And that is what happened. Rav became the rosh yeshiva in Bavel, and in this way Rav Chanina remained alive and continued serving as rosh yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael.@41

10. Shulchan Aruch (606:1) writes, "Even if one only harmed his fellow man with words, he must appease him and ask forgiveness."

wealthy person smacked him for his lengthy davening.

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

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 the merit of his forgiveness, a year later, his wife gave birth to Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin zy'a.

Forgiving others is also *mesugal* for miracles.

The *Zohar* relates that Reb Abba once saw a man tired from his travels lie down on a mound of earth. A poisonous snake approached him, but a moment before the snake struck, a heavy object fell 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 from this danger as well because if the mound had crumbled a moment earlier, he would have fallen off the cliff together with it.

Reb Abba watched this from a distance. He 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, but they were family members, and it is proper for family to forgive one another. 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."

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

And finally, forgiving others is *mesugal* for Hashem to forgive us. *Mishnah Berurah* (siman 606) teaches that when you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you. 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."¹¹

11. In a beis midrash three hundred years ago, the gabbai accidentally sold the same seat to two people for the Rosh Hashanah tefillos. Both men arrived and tried to sit in the same place, immediately realizing something was wrong. They went over to the gabbai to clarify the matter.

The gabbai checked his records and admitted that he had made a mistake — he had sold the seat to both of them.

One of them would need to be *mevater*... but neither wanted to give in. On Rosh Hashanah night, the beis midrash wasn't very full, so each had a place to daven. But they — and everyone around them — knew that the next morning there would be an argument over the seat.

That night, one of the two men had a dream. He saw beautiful caravans being led by malachim. "What is this?" he asked one of them.

"Today is Rosh Hashanah," the malach replied. "These wagons are carrying your good deeds. They will be placed on a scale to determine what kind of year you will have."

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

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

It states (Shmuel 2, 24:14) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל גָּד צַר לִי מְאֹד "Dovid said to Gad; 'I am greatly oppressed; let us fall now into the hand of Hashem; for His mercies are great; but into the hand of man let me not fall.'" Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l would repeat this pasuk in his drashah before Kol Nidrei, explaining that the pasuk is warning us against the most dangerous aveiros, bein adam l'chaveiro. Therefore, it states, וַיִּפֹּל נָא בְיַד ה' "Into the hand of man let me not fall." Whereas, when one falls into the hand of Hashem, with aveiros bein adam l'Makom, it states גִּי רַבִּים רַחֲמָיו "For His mercies are great." It is easier to attain atonement with aveiros that are before Hashem than with aveiros between people.¹²

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17b) states, "Beluria the giyores (convert) asked Raban Gamliel, 'It states in Your Torah (Devarim 10:17)

אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשָּׁח פָּנִים, that Hashem doesn't forgive people when they don't deserve it. But behold, it also states (Bamidbar 6:26) יִשָּׁח ה' פָּנָיו אֵלַי, that Hashem forgives us even when we don't deserve it.' Reb Yosi HaKohen entered the conversation and said, 'I will answer your question with a mashal. Someone promised to pay up his debt to his fellow man by a certain date and swore on the king's life that he would do so. He said this in front of the king himself. When the appointed time arrived and he didn't pay up the debt, he went to the king to ask forgiveness. The king replied, 'I forgive on my disgrace; now go and ask your fellow man for forgiveness.' The same can be said regarding aveiros that are to Hashem (בן אדם), contrasting to aveiros that are to one's fellow man (בן אדם לחבירו). Hashem says that I

The man looked up at the enormous scale in the middle of the road and saw it tipping toward the side of guilt, and he became terrified.

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

Then a compassionate angel appeared and said, "This man suffered many yesurim this year, and yesurim atone."

The angels began removing several packages of sins from the scale. His yesurim had wiped away some aveiros. The two sides were now almost equal - but still slightly tipped toward guilt.

The merciful angel spoke again: "If this person was mevater - if he gave in to others to avoid machlokes - we can remove more packages of sins, because Chazal say that vitur erases aveiros. Let us check his deeds to see whether he is mevater."

Still asleep, the man understood that giving up his seat would save him. "I'm mevater!" he cried out. "I'm mevater!" And with that, he awoke.

In the morning, he ran to the gabbai and told him that he gladly allowed the other man to have the seat.

12. At a chuppah, a rav was called up to say the ברכה אחריתא, the final berachah. He took the becher and even began the words ברוך אתה, when suddenly one of the mechutanim shouted to the other, "Why did you honor him with the final berachah? Someone from my family was supposed to get that honor!"

The rav heard the outburst and the sudden machlokes, and he wanted no part of it. He quietly put down the becher and returned to his place.

Four years passed after that chuppah, and the chassan and kallah were still childless. They wondered whether perhaps the rav had been insulted at their chuppah, and that this was the reason they had not been blessed with children. They went to the rav and asked him to forgive the mechutan who had embarrassed him. He replied, "It was nothing. I have no hard feelings."

"Nevertheless," they said, "please say *machul lach* - say explicitly that you forgive them." The rav did so, and a year later the couple had a son.

forgive my disgrace, but now ask your fellow man to forgive you for what you did."

Therefore, in one pasuk Hashem says He forgives, and in the other pasuk it says that Hashem doesn't forgive. Hashem forgives aveiros that were committed against Him (בן אדם לאדם), but for aveiros against one's fellow man (בן אדם לחבירו), forgiveness is up to his fellow man.¹³

לבושי בדים (Drush 20, a drashah he said year 5551) writes, "The main thing on Yom Kippur is that a person should cleanse his heart from all hatred and jealousy (שנאה וקנאה) and there should be unity among us. If we do so, there will be no *kitrug* upon us. For it states (Esther 4:2) וַיָּבֹא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לָבֹא אֶל שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, [Mordechai] came up as far as the

king's gate, for one may not enter the king's gate dressed in sackcloth.' שַׁק is roshei teivos for שנאה קנאה, hatred, jealousy. Yom Kippur night is called שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, 'the king's gate, because Hashem sits on His throne of mercy.' The pasuk is saying that one shouldn't come to שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, Yom Kippur, while wearing בְּלִבוֹשׁ שַׁק, hatred and jealousy (roshei teivos of שַׁק שנאה קנאה). We understand that one should cleanse his heart from hatred and jealousy before Yom Kippur, so he will come to the night of Yom Kippur dressed properly (and not in שַׁק, hatred and jealousy, שנאה קנאה).

Belief in Tefillah

Orach LeChayim of Zlotchov zt"l teaches, "A person must believe in his tefillah,¹⁴ and

13. The מהר"י חיות explains that when a person sins against Hashem, chalilah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the תובע - the one who calls the Yid to judgment, because the person acted against Him, keviyachol. Since Hashem is the One bringing the claim, He is able to forgive.

However, when a person sins bein adam lachaveiro, Hashem serves as the Judge between the two sides. And a judge cannot forgive. Only the בעלי דינים - the people involved in the dispute - can be מוהל one another.

14. We heard a remarkable story from the baal ha'maaseh, a melamed in Ashdod. The story began 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 her vision began to deteriorate in the other eye as well, they sent her to Asaf Hospital in Ramla, to the ophthalmology department.

After many tests, the doctors determined that she suffered from a disease usually found in older people. When it affects young children, it is more severe and can lead to blindness, r'l. The right eye was not as badly affected, and the doctors succeeded in saving that eye. But they could not cure the left eye. They explained that the only option was a cornea transplant. That was the only way to restore her eyesight in that eye.

Her name was placed on the waiting list for corneal transplants. The doctors told the parents, "When we receive a cornea, and it is her turn, the hospital will contact you for the operation." But they cautioned that the wait would likely be long. A child's eye is different from an adult's, and they would need a cornea from a child, which is far less common. In addition, the law prohibits importing organs from other countries unless it is a life and death situation. They would have to wait for the cornea of a child from Eretz Yisrael.

Four years passed. Her left eye worsened, became filled with mucus and pus, and she became completely blind in that eye.

That Pesach, the father's brother in law came from Tzefas to Ashdod to spend Yom Tov together. He had heard about his niece's condition, but when he saw it, he realized how severe it was and felt deep pity for her. He undertook to daven every day at the kever of the Tana Reb Shimon bar Yochai in Meron for her refuah. His oldest son also said he would arrange tefillos in his cheder for his cousin's recovery.

Three weeks after they began their tefillos, the father received a phone call from the hospital. The call came while he was in cheder during recess. The secretary said, "An eye for transplant, with a healthy cornea, has arrived for your daughter. The operation will be in three days, on Thursday" - which was Lag ba'Omer.

know that it accomplishes in heaven... He must know that... he has the power to overturn *midas hadin* to *midas harachamim* (to arouse Hashem's compassion and to turn around the harsh

judgment for our favor). This is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 32:20) דור תהפוכות המה; It's a generation that can turn *midas hadin* to *rachamim*. The problem is, בני לא אמוּן בם, they don't believe they have this ability."¹⁵

"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?" Finally, he found his voice and managed to say one word: yes.

The other melamdim were bewildered when they saw their friend crying on the phone. It took him time to calm down and share the news: they had a cornea for his daughter. The melamdim were overjoyed, congratulated him, and gave brachos that the operation should be successful.

On Thursday morning, the family arrived at the hospital. They were hopeful but anxious, praying everything would go well. After two hours in the operating room, the doctors came out and said the operation was successful. Her eye was bandaged, so she still couldn't see, but on Friday morning they removed the bandage, and the girl shouted, "I can see with both eyes!" The family's joy was indescribable. She could now see like everyone else.

The doctor called the parents to his office to explain how this transplant had come about. A week earlier, a nine year old girl had fallen in a park in Ashdod and was sent to Asaf Hospital. Her cornea was damaged, and she needed an immediate transplant. For her, it was a matter of life and death, so they were permitted to import a cornea from another country. A suitable one was found in a hospital in Canada.

The doctor continued, "I saw the file with the information about the upcoming transplant, and I recognized the name of the doctor from Canada. He was my professor. Almost everything I know 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 four years for a transplant. I said, 'Since you sent one cornea, perhaps you can send the other one as well, to help this girl.'"

The Canadian doctor investigated and learned that it was permitted. Since one of the eyes was sent for a life and death situation, he had permission to send the second eye. And that is how the transplant happened.

When we think about the details of this story, we are overwhelmed by the hashgachah pratis. It was hashgachah pratis that the doctor in Eretz Yisrael was a student of the Canadian doctor, prompting him to call. It was hashgachah pratis that during the conversation he thought to mention his other patient. It was hashgachah pratis that he even knew about the girl who needed the transplant — had she gone to a different hospital, he would not have known.

And the miracle began two weeks after the family from Tzefas started davening.

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

15. It states at the beginning of parashas Ha'azinu (32:1), האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי - "Listen, heavens, and I will speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth." Chazal say that Moshe Rabbeinu was telling the sun and the moon to be silent when he spoke.

The Shevet HaLevi (Drashos vol. 1, Shaar 17) asks: Moshe was the humblest person on earth. How could he speak as though he ruled over the sun and the earth? This is not the way of the humble.

The answer is that Moshe wanted to teach Klal Yisrael of all generations the strength they possess at this time of year. Even the simplest person can command the sun, the moon, and the heavenly hosts to be silent. A person's spiritual power is very great now.

On Yom Kippur, the kohen gadol entered the Kodesh HaKadoshim with the kaf and the machtah - a large spoon and a shovel. The shovel held coals from the mizbeach, and the spoon held the ketores. He placed the coals on the ground inside the Kodesh HaKadoshim and poured the ketores over them. He then left

Tefillos said on Yom Kippur and during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah are especially powerful. The Rambam (Teshuvah 2:6) writes, אף על פי שהתשובה והתעוקה יפה לעולם בעשרה הימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים היא יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד, שנאמר 'דרשו ה' בהמצאו'. במה דברים אמורים בייחוד, "Teshuvah and tefillah are always good, but

during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, teshuvah and tefillah are extra especial and are accepted immediately, as it states (Yeshayah 55:6) 'דרשו ה' בהמצאו', 'Seek Hashem when He is found'. This is referring to when one is alone¹⁶....

the spoon and shovel there and went out to perform the rest of the avodah. At the end of the avodah, he returned to remove them.

We understand why he initially left the machtah in the Kodesh HaKadoshim — the ketores was burning on the coals, and it was too early to remove the shovel. But why didn't he immediately take out the kaf, the empty spoon? Why did he wait until the end of the avodah?

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l explains that after offering the ketores, the kohen gadol said a short tefillah for Klal Yisrael. He said this tefillah outside the Kodesh HaKadoshim. It is not proper to hold anything while davening, so he left the spoon behind.

We can add that one certainly shouldn't hold anything on his mind or heart when he davens. His full kavanah should be on the tefillah alone.

16. The Krasna Rav shlita related the following story:

A child from Bnei Brak was gradually losing his eyesight, r'l. The local doctors couldn't diagnose the problem, so they sent him to specialists. The specialists were equally at a loss. Eventually, medical askanim became involved and recommended a world renowned doctor in Texas who specialized in operating on this condition. The surgery date was scheduled for five months later. It would have been far better to operate immediately, but nothing sooner was available.

Meanwhile, a group of sixty prestigious doctors from around the world was invited to Eretz Yisrael for a medical conference. The specialist from Texas was among them. The conference was supposed to last three days, but after a day and a half, the organizer had to leave for an emergency, and the conference ended early. Suddenly, the doctors had a day and a half of free time.

Someone arranged a tour of Bnei Brak for them. The first stop was the famous Ponevezh Yeshiva. Then they visited a large gmach. The organizer wanted to show the doctors the chesed of Klal Yisrael — that they lend out large sums of money interest free. The specialist from Texas was deeply impressed by the gmach and by the concept of chesed, and he decided he wanted to do a significant act of kindness as well.

He remembered that he had scheduled an operation for a child from Bnei Brak in five months. Now that he was actually in Bnei Brak, he could do a tremendous favor for this child and operate immediately, free of charge. He spoke with askanim, and they arranged an operating room at the Mayanei HaYeshua Medical Center. The doctor contacted his secretary for the child's address, and with the address in hand, he went to the family's apartment and knocked on the door.

The child answered. The doctor said, "I am your doctor from Texas. 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 woke his father, but the father, still half asleep, said, "What doctor? Which doctor? Let me sleep." The child returned to the doctor and said his father wasn't waking up.

"Wake him up again," the doctor said. "Tell him your surgeon is at the door."

The child tried again, but the father wouldn't budge. The doctor sent the child a third and a fourth time, but the father simply didn't believe him and refused to get up.

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 judgment will be ripped up entirely."¹⁷

Rabbeinu Yonah (שער ב' אותת י"ד) writes "During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, one can pour

out his tefillah and prayers before Hashem. It is an *eis ratzon* for his tefilos to be answered. As it states (Yeshayah 49:8) כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּעֵת רְצוֹן עֲנִיתִיךָ וּבַיּוֹם יִשְׁעָהּ יַעֲזָרְתִּיךָ, 'So says Hashem, 'In a time of favor (*eis ratzon*) I answered you, and on a day of salvation I helped you."¹⁸

The Gemara (Brachos 28b) tells:

The doctor thought, "I am going out of my way to help them. They clearly don't want my favor," and he left.

Some days later, a medical askan met the father and asked how his son was recuperating after the surgery. The father said, "What surgery?" The askan told him that the doctor from Texas had been ready to operate in Mayanei HaYeshua and had gone to call his son for the procedure. Only then did the father realize what he had missed. Had he gone to the door when the doctor was standing there, his child would have had the operation immediately and free of charge. Instead, he slept through the opportunity.

The operation eventually took place — five months later, at a cost of half a million dollars, along with the enormous tircha of traveling and staying in a distant country.

This story reminds us that when Hashem is near and awaits our teshuvah and tefillah, we must heed His call and come forward. A person shouldn't say, "True, I hear the call דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמְצָאוֹ קְרָאֵהוּ בְּהִיוּתוֹ קְרוֹב - that I should seek Hashem when He is close - but I can't come forward now. I'll call out to Hashem after the Yomim Tovim."

It is ideal to daven and do teshuvah before Yom Kippur, before the decree is sealed in heaven. One gains so much more by davening well and doing teshuvah during these days when Hashem is especially close.

17. The Eliyahu Rabba (581:6) writes that throughout the year, one cannot say the thirteen attributes of mercy, ה' ה' א"ל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן, etc. as a tefillah. However, during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah one may say it even *b'yechidus* (when he is alone). We don't *pasken* like this Eliyahu Rabba; nevertheless, we learn from it the extent of the specialness of these days. Even when one is alone, it is like he is with a minyan.

18. Chazal (Avodah Zarah 4a) tell us that Hashem judges the world every day during the first three hours of the morning. However, during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, the entire day is a time of judgment. Hashem sits on the Throne of Judgment and judges the world. As we have explained, these are auspicious days for tefillah.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt"l (Ya'aros Dvash, vol. 1, 6) asks: One would think that during a time of judgment, tefillos would be less likely to be accepted. Justice means that each person receives what he deserves. Why, then, should this be such a special time for tefillah?

The answer is that during a time of judgment, a judge needs to remain calm. No matter what he hears in the courtroom, a judge must not become angry. There are two reasons for this.

First, if a judge becomes angry, those being judged may become afraid to speak. They may hesitate to explain themselves or present their defense. The judge must remain calm so that the litigants feel comfortable expressing themselves fully. Only then can the judge reach the proper verdict after hearing both sides.

Second, anger clouds a person's clarity of thought. An angry judge may reach a harsh or incorrect conclusion simply because his mind is unsettled. Therefore, a judge must remain composed while sitting in judgment.

L'havdil thousands of times, Hashem also does not become angry during the days of judgment. Even when our sins are many, as numerous as the sand of the earth, Hashem does not become angry with us. Not at all — for that is the way of a judge.

This is precisely why the days of judgment are such a powerful time for tefillah. Although we stand before

וכשחלה רבי יוחנן בן זכאי נכנסו תלמידיו לבקרו כיון שראה אותם התחיל לבכות אמרו לו תלמידיו נר ישראל... מפני מה אתה בוכה אמר להם אילו לפני מלך בשר ודם היו מוליכין אותי... ואני יכול לפייסו בדברים ולשחדו בממון אעפ"כ הייתי בוכה ועכשיו שמוליכים אותי לפני ממ"ה הקב"ה שהוא חי וקיים לעולם ולעולמי עולמים... ואיני יכול לפייסו בדברים ולא לשחדו "When Reb Yochanan ben Zakai was ill, his students came to visit him. Reb Yochanan saw them and began to cry. The students said to him, 'The light of Yisrael... Why do you cry?' He replied, 'Even if they were bringing me [in judgment] before a human king of flesh of blood... and I can appease him with words and I can bribe him with money, nevertheless, I would cry. Now, they are bringing me before HaKadosh Baruch Hu Who lives eternally... and I cannot appease him with words or bribe him with money... shouldn't I cry?'"

The Maharsha writes that the Gemara means that in Heaven, it is impossible to bribe Hashem with money or to appease Him with words. But as long as one is alive, he can give tzedakah and bribe Hashem (keviyachol) so that He should judge him favorably. Also, he can appease Hashem with his tefillos. As long as one is alive, with

tefillah and with tzedakah, one can prepare for himself a good judgment.

Therefore, brothers of Bnei Yisrael, awaken and pray before Hashem during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Give a lot of tzedakah and say many tefillos so that the judgment will be recognizably good for you and for all Yisrael.¹⁹

The tefillos of erev Yom Kippur also have special importance. 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 I am אביך, your Father, and I will answer your tefillos. The word ויגדך means to draw down (as in גוד אחית). With your tefillos, you will draw down from heaven all your desires.

A Day That Transcends Time

The Tur (606, quoting Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer) writes, "The Satan sees that there are no sins among

Hashem in judgment, He is not angry with us, and He wants to hear our requests. Therefore, these days are uniquely auspicious for turning to Hashem in heartfelt tefillah.

19. Reb Meir Shapiro zt"l, rosh yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin, told the following story:

A rav instructed his wife that when someone came to their home for tzedakah, she should give him a גראש – a small, inexpensive coin. "To each person, give a גראש. But if you sense that the person deserves more, send him to me, and I will give him a zlotta," which was worth one hundred גראש.

Every evening, a certain poor man would come to the rebbetzin, and each time she gave him a גראש. One day, this poor man managed to meet the rav himself. The rav gave him a zlotta. The poor man then said, "Please give me more. My situation is very difficult..."

The rav asked, "Every day you come to my wife for tzedakah, and she gives you a גראש, and you never ask for more. Today you received far more than usual – a full zlotta. Why do you ask for more now?"

The poor man replied, "If I plead with the rebbetzin, she might give me another גראש. I don't feel it is worth pleading just to receive one more גראש. But when I plead before you, if I can arouse your compassion, I may receive another zlotta – and that is worth working for."

This is a powerful mashal for this time of year. Now, during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, our tefillos accomplish far more than they do the rest of the year. Therefore, we should not be satisfied with what we receive. We should ask for more and more, because everything we receive now is far greater than what we receive the entire year. It is worth pleading for.

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."²⁰

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 taken 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 tells her, 'Don't wear jewelry in a public place, only at home.' But on Yom Kippur, when we resemble the *malachim*, we can proclaim this praise aloud, and therefore, we say out-loud ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד."

Yom Kippur is called (Yael 2:11), כי גדול יום ה', "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 is a day that transcends this world. It is the day of Olam Haba.²¹

20. The Be'er Heitev (619:4) writes, "The popular custom is to put on a talis on erev Yom Kippur while it is still daytime and to make a brachah. If one puts on the talis when it is already nighttime, he does not say a brachah."

One reason we wear a talis on Yom Kippur night is that we resemble the *malachim* on this holy day, and the *malachim* are wrapped in white. As the Be'er Heitev (18:5) writes, לפי שדומין למלאכים מעוטפים לבנים - we are compared to *malachim* who are wrapped in white.

The Ramchal (*Kitzur Hakavanos*) gives another reason for wearing a talis on Yom Kippur night. He writes that at shekiyah, at the onset of Yom Kippur, HaKadosh Baruch Hu spreads His talis over Klal Yisrael. With His kindness, He conceals us under the shadow of His arm, beneath the wings of the Shechinah.

We wear a talis on Yom Kippur night because this is what Hashem does for Klal Yisrael at this time. He wraps us under His wings, protects us, and cares for us throughout this holy day.

21. Generally, the Torah first states the date and then lists the *korbanos* of the particular day. But regarding Yom Kippur, it is as though the Torah almost hesitates to mention the date. The date of Yom Kippur - the tenth of Tishrei - appears only after several *pasukim* discussing the *halachos* and *korbanos* of the day (see Vayikra 16:29).

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." He adds that this is why many ehrlicher Yidden do not call the day "Yom Kippur," but instead refer to it simply as "the holy day" - Yom HaKadosh. The day comes from a very exalted place, and we conceal it.

The Bnei Yissaschar continues: "Also, the *masechta* dedicated to the laws of Yom Kippur is not called 'Yom Kippur,' unlike *masechtos* Shabbos, Rosh Hashanah, Succah, and Pesachim, which are named after the Yom Tov. The *masechta* for Yom Kippur is called 'Yoma,' meaning 'The Day,' without specifying which day. Once again, because of the exaltedness of the day, we conceal it."

There is another beautiful source showing that Yom Kippur is not part of ordinary time. The Torah states (Vayikra 16:2), ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקודש - "The kohen gadol should not come at all times into the Kodosh HaKodashim." He may enter only on Yom Kippur. The Kli Yakar notes: ואל יבא בכל עת - he may not enter on any day that is part of עת, part of time. He may enter only on a day that is above time - Yom Kippur.

In the name of Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen, "We don't know who the malachim are, and we don't know the essence of the Kisei HaKavod (Hashem's throne), but we know that the malachim are around Hashem's Kisei Hakavod, and on Yom Kippur, Hashem brings down His Kisei Hakavod to us. So, on Yom Kippur, we are around Hashem, as it states (Vayikra 16:30) *לפני ה' תטהרו*, "Before Hashem, you will be purified."

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.2, 369) writes, "The purpose of the fast of Yom Kippur isn't to afflict us, and to cause tzaar to Yisrael, chalilah. Instead, it is because of the kedushah we have on this day, similar to the malachim [who don't eat or drink]. It is like the forty days... that Moshe was on Har Sinai, *לחם לא*, he didn't eat bread, he didn't drink water, because of his *deveikus* and the kedushah. This is our portion on Yom Kippur, when we become like the malachim, and we derive pleasure from the shine of the Shechinah.

The Gemara (Yoma 82) states that if a pregnant woman smells food on Yom Kippur and she feels that if she doesn't eat it, her life is in danger, you can give her to eat that food on Yom Kippur. However, first, someone should whisper in her ear that it is Yom Kippur. Perhaps this will enable her to overcome her temptation, and she won't need to eat. But if she doesn't calm down after this message, one can feed her on Yom Kippur, because it is a matter of life and death.

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.1 p.16) notes that this halachah, that one should whisper

to the woman the prohibition, is only said regarding the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur. Whereas, if a pregnant woman smells and desires to eat non-kosher food, and she feels that her life is in danger if she doesn't eat it, the halachah is that you give her to taste the food. No one is obligated to whisper into her ears that the food is prohibited. The Chasam Sofer explains that a child in a woman's womb has very great kedushah. Chazal say that the child learns Torah from a malach! The Chasam Sofer writes, "If he weren't within the impure human body of his mother, the child would be greater than the malachim." But the human body, in this world, is very low, and it draws people to temptations. The Chasam Sofer explains that throughout the year, it won't help to whisper to the woman that the food is forbidden. However, on Yom Kippur, the mother attains purity, her body becomes pure, and now it is possible that she will be able to overcome the temptation and refrain from the forbidden food. This is the reason the prohibition of eating is told to her on Yom Kippur, but not on any other day.

Yom Kippur, in the kedushah of Shacharis, Mussaf, and Minchah, we say *כתר*, and not the more standard kedushah of *נקדישך*. The translation of *כתר* is crown, and Midrashim tell us that on Yom Kippur, Hashem elevates Klal Yisrael and places them above His head, like a crown. Shir HaShirim (3:11) writes, *בְּצִטְרָה שִׁעְטָרָה לוֹ אִמּוֹ*, "upon the crown with which his mother crowned him." The Gemara (Taanis 26b, Rashi *זה מתן תורה*) states that this pasuk is referring to Yom Kippur, the day Hashem places us on His head like a crown.

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), and therefore one should wear shoes to separate himself from the impurity of the earth. But on Yom Kippur, and in the Beis HaMikdash, we go without shoes. The Mishnas Chassidim explains that this is so we can absorb the holiness of the Beis HaMikdash and of Yom Kippur. In this place - the Beis HaMikdash - and at this time - Yom Kippur - the earth is not cursed, and going barefoot allows us to receive the kedushah that is present.

The gabbai of the Sar Shalom of Belz zt"l once saw his Rebbe inhaling deeply on Yom Kippur. "Are you all right?" 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."

Be'er Mayim Chaim (ד"ה ולקח הכהן Naso) elaborates. He quotes the Midrash (Shir HaShiri 3:2) that tells about a king who loved his daughter very much. To express his love to his daughter, he would call her בתי, "My daughter." He wasn't satisfied with this title; he wanted to express his love to her even more, so he began calling her אחותי, 'My sister.' He still wasn't satisfied. These titles weren't bringing out the love he had for his daughter. So, he began calling his daughter אמי, "My mother."²² Hashem calls Klal Yisrael אמי, which is above Him, like a crown on His head. This love occurs on Yom Kippur. "My mother" is the highest expression of love, and this is the meaning of the pasuk שַׁעֲטָרָה לוֹ אִמּוֹ, that Hashem loves us so much, He calls us His mother, like a crown on his head. With this midrash, we understand the reason we repeatedly say the kedushah of כתר, crown, on Yom Kippur. On this day, we become like a crown for Hashem.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (ד"ה ולקח הכהן Naso) tells a mashal of a father who loves his child so, he lifts his child to his height. Sometimes, he will even raise the child above his head, and the child becomes like his crown. He does this because of his love for his child. On Yom Kippur, Hashem loves us so much, keviyachol, He places us like a crown on His head.

Match Moshe (אות תתע"ב) explains another reason we say the kedushah of כתר on Yom Kippur. It is because on this day, Hashem's holy throne, the Kisei Hakavod, goes up to a very high place, until the malachim aren't able to reach it. Therefore, we say כתר, because this kedushah has it in the words אִיִּה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ, "Where is Hashem's honorable place?" The malachim ask, "Where is Hashem's place?" because they can't find it; it went up so high. This is unlike the kedushah of נִקְדִּישֵׁךְ, where the malachim say, מִמְּקוֹמְךָ, "From Your place..." which implies

that they know the place. On Yom Kippur, we say the Kedushah of כתר, with the words אִיִּה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ, because Hashem's throne rises so high, they can't find it.

The Joy of Yom Kippur

It states (Bamidbar 10:10) וּבְיוֹם שִׂמְחַתְכֶם, "On the day of your happiness." The Midrash states that the day of happiness refers to Yom Kippur because the Yidden were told on this day that their aveiros were forgiven. We understand that Yom Kippur is a very happy day.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (Zuta end of chapter 4) writes, "The final forty days [that Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai, from rosh chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur], to bring down the Torah, Bnei Yisrael made a fast day. On the final day, at the end of the forty days, they decreed a fast day, and they slept while fasting, so the yetzer hara shouldn't rule over them. The next morning, they awoke early and went up Har Sinai. Yisrael were crying as they went to meet Moshe, and Moshe was crying as he approached them, until their tears went up to heaven. At that time, HaKadosh Baruch Hu's compassion was immense over Yisrael, and He accepted their teshuvah. A ruach hakodesh revealed to them good news and comforting words. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael, "My children, I swear in My great name and in My holy throne that these tears should turn around and be a great joy, and this day should be a day of forgiveness for you and for your children and for your grandchildren, for all generations."

The Bnei Yissaschar (in ברכות י"ב:) writes that although there are ten days of judgment, Yom Kippur isn't one of them. Yom Kippur is a day of compassion and forgiveness. He explains that erev Yom Kippur is considered like two days, as

22. This lesson is also found in the Zohar, quoted from Reb Elazar ben Reb Yosi. After he said it, Reb Shimon bar Yochai kissed him on the head and said, "If I had come here only to hear this explanation, it would have been enough for me."

Chazal say, "Whoever eats and drinks on erev Yom Kippur, it is like he fasted on the ninth and on the tenth of Tishrei." Erev Yom Kippur completes the ten days of judgment. Yom Kippur is a day solely of compassion.

It is known that when someone transgresses the Shabbos, chas v'shalom, the punishment is מיתת בית דין, death in beis din (sekilah). However, Yom Kippur doesn't have this severity. The punishment is *kares*, but there isn't death in beis din. The Shlah HaKadosh (יומא עמוד התשובה, סתרי יוה"כ) explains that this is because of the compassion that prevails on Yom Kippur. This compassion lessens the punishment from execution in beis din to *kares*. The extent of the compassion goes even to those who have purposely desecrated Yom Kippur.

Regarding the avodah of the kohen gadol on Yom Kippur, it states (Vayikra 16:17) **בָּבֹאוֹ לִזְכָּר**. **בְּקִנְיָשׁ עַד צֵאתוֹ וְקָפַר בְּעֵדוֹ**. The roshei teivos of these words spell בלב עצוב, with a sad heart. The pasuk hints that we don't enter the holiness of Yom Kippur with sadness. We should be happy on this day.

Meor Einayim (Haazinu) writes that teshuvah is a *mitzvas asei*, and therefore, it should be performed with simchah.

The Zohar says that there are severe aveiros for which one cannot do teshuva. The Meor Einayim explains that this is because these aveiros are associated with atzvus, sadness, and it is impossible to do teshuvah with sadness. However, when one strengthens himself and does teshuvah with

simchah, even those severe aveiros will be forgiven.

The Chasam Sofer *zt"l* teaches that Hashem arouses us to teshuvah. Our part in the process is to be happy with the teshuvah.

He explains that teshuvah brings Moshiach. One might ask, but what did the person do? Behold, Hashem aroused him to do teshuvah! But the answer is that he is happy with the teshuvah, and that is his portion in the teshuvah process. For his happiness, Moshiach will come.

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

It states (*Tehillim* 14:7), **מִי יֵתֵן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל**, **בְּשׁוּבָה ה' שְׁבוֹת עִמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The Chasam Sofer explains that Dovid HaMelech asked **מִי יֵתֵן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל**, why do we deserve *yeshuos*? Although we do *teshuvah*, behold, **בְּשׁוּבָה ה' שְׁבוֹת עִמּוֹ**, it is Hashem who is guiding us on the path of *teshuvah*. We aren't doing anything!

The answer is **יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל**. We are happy that Hashem is leading us on the path of *teshuvah*. For that, we deserve *yeshuos* and the upcoming redemption.²³

23. It states (*Shir HaShirim* 6:3) **אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי**, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The final letters of these words are four **י"ד**, which equal forty in gematria. Reb Chaim Vital (עין הדעת טוב, כי תצא) teaches that this alludes to the forty days from Elul until Yom Kippur.

Similarly, the roshei teivos of (*Tehillim* 53:7) **יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "Yaakov will rejoice, Yisrael will be glad," also equal forty. This hints that the teshuvah of these days should be performed through simchah.

But how can one feel joy when he is aware of his aveiros and knows how far he is from where he should be? The answer lies in the pasuk (*Tehillim* 105:3) **יִשְׂמַח לֵב מְבַקֵּשׁ ה'**, "The heart of those who seek Hashem rejoice." It does not say **יִשְׂמַח לֵב עוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹן ה'**, that the joy is reserved for those who already perform Hashem's will. Rather, it is for those who desire and strive to do His will. That level is within reach for everyone.

It states (*Tehillim* 139:16), **יָמִים יָצְרוּ וְלוֹ אֶחָד בָּהֶם**, "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 Mitzvah to Eat on Erev Yom Kippur

Shulchan Aruch (604) states, **מִצְוָה לֵאכֹל בְּעֶרֶב יוֹם**, **הַכְּפוּרִים וְלִהְרִיבוֹת בַּסְּעוּדָה**, "There's a mitzvah to eat on *erev Yom Kippur* and to make a large seudah..."²⁴

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 it won't harm us. It is a *mashal* to a king who had an only son. He commanded him to fast one day, and he commanded him to be well fed before the fast, to be able to tolerate it."

The Tur gives 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.²⁵

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.

24. The source for this mitzvah is the pasuk (*Vayikra* 23:32), **וַעֲנִיתֶם אֶת נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם בַּתְּשֻׁעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ**, "You shall afflict your souls 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 teaches that if one eats on *erev Yom Kippur* and then fasts on Yom Kippur itself, it is considered as though he fasted on both the ninth and the tenth.

Here, for the seemingly easy mitzvah of eating, we are rewarded as if we fasted.

The Beis Avraham cautioned that when one eats on *erev Yom Kippur*, he should imagine a lion standing before him. In other words, even this joyous meal should be eaten with a deep sense of *yiras Shamayim*.

25. The Tur continues: "The Midrash tells a story of a mayor who sent his servant to buy him a fish. Only one fish was available in the market, and the servant offered to pay a gold coin for it. However, it was *erev Yom Kippur*, and a Jewish tailor was also there, and he offered a higher price. The bidding escalated as each tried to secure the fish, until finally the tailor purchased it for five gold coins.

The servant returned to the mayor and reported what had happened. The mayor summoned the tailor and asked, 'What do you do for a living?' The tailor replied, 'I am a tailor.' The mayor then asked, 'So why did you buy a fish worth one gold coin for five gold coins, and why did you outbid my servant?' The tailor answered, '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 sins.'

The mayor said, 'You acted properly,' and sent him off in peace.

The Midrash concludes that when the tailor opened the fish, he 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.

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) "The mitzvah to eat is so that we will have strength and energy on Yom Kippur to pray and to seek ways to do teshuvah."²⁶

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 against your fellow man, you aren't forgiven before you receive his forgiveness. When one fasts, he can become short-tempered, and that can divide us. But when one eats and drinks, he has a happy heart, and all Yidden are united."²⁷

The Ramak (quoted by the Shlah HaKadosh) writes that on Yom Kippur, people are worried about their aveiros and they are sad, and therefore their teshuvah won't be accepted. Hashem commanded us to be happy on the ninth day, and with the joy of this day, our teshuvah is accepted on Yom Kippur.

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, but many wonder what is 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, but it isn't recited with the awe of *Kol Nidrei*. What is the significance of *Kol Nidrei*?

1) *Zohar* teaches that by saying *Kol Nidrei*, we annul Hashem's oaths. If Hashem decreed a harsh decree due to our sins, and He

26. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt"l offered another reason for this mitzvah:

Regarding 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, which became less today through my fast, be considered like the fats and blood placed upon the mizbeach."

On Yom Kippur, we want to bring a korban from the most elevated and sanctified fats and blood. Therefore, we are given the mitzvah to eat on erev Yom Kippur. Through that eating, the body gains strength and nourishment from a mitzvah itself. Then, when we fast on Yom Kippur, the "korban" created from our diminished fats and blood is drawn from the holiness of that mitzvah.

27. Rebbe Dovid'l Biderman zt"l of Yerushalayim was once eating the seudah hamafsekkes together with guests. The attendees included brokenhearted, lonely, poor, and unwell people. He spoke with them warmly and in a friendly manner, keeping the conversation light so they could be happy for a moment and forget their tzaros.

Reb Shmuel Shenker zt"l, the son in law of Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l, passed by Reb Dovid'l's home and was startled by the cheerful atmosphere. He entered and asked, "Reb Dovid'l, is this the right time for such idle chatter? Yom Kippur is approaching!"

Reb Dovid'l answered with a mashal: "When an infant has a toothache, the mother puts aside all her chores and dances and sings before the child, just to make him happy and help him forget his pain. These Yidden are like Hashem's toothache — for when they suffer, Hashem has tzaar. We must do whatever we can to bring them joy. That is how we fulfill Hashem's will, with perfection."

established the decree with an oath, a שבועה, we annul it with Kol Nidrei. *Teshuvah* won't suffice to annul the decree that was made with a *shevuah*, but *Kol Nidrei* can. This is its significance. We aren't only annulling *our* vows but also Hashem's vows so He can give us a good year.

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 more 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 know (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. To explain, we write the following:

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, "השטן is *gematria* 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 the moments before Yom Kippur are 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*.²⁸

28. Shulchan Aruch (619:1) states, "One should not change the custom of his city, not even 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 harsh judgment. One of the meanings of the word זמירות is "to prune," and another is "song." Therefore, (Tehillim 47) זמרו לאלקים means that the harsh judgment is pruned away through song.

There was once a king whose young son had gone insane and was sent to a psychiatric care facility. The institution profited from hosting this royal patient, because the king would periodically send large sums of money so his son would receive the best care. Over time, the prince's condition improved, but the directors did not inform the king. They wanted to keep him there as long as possible to continue receiving the king's support.

The prince tried to escape and return home, but the doors were always locked. He wrote letters to his parents, explaining that he was healed and wished to come home, but the administration discarded them.

Once, the prince scribbled on a page and handed it to one of the directors, asking him to send it to his father. This time, the director gladly complied, because the letter appeared to prove that the prince still needed help - what normal child would send a scribbled paper to his father?

But the directors did not realize that the prince had hidden a message within the illegible scribbles - a plea to his father, the king, to bring him home because he was already healed.

When the king received the letter, he was saddened to see his son's apparent condition. But then he studied the page from all angles and discovered the hidden message. He immediately went to the institution and took 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 sometimes the angels intercept our prayers and do not allow them to ascend. Therefore, we sing melodies. The malachim do not understand their significance, so they allow the songs to rise upward. Concealed within these tunes are our yearnings, our *teshuvah*, and our requests for the coming year.

Hashem understands the hidden messages - and He grants us a good year.

The Process of Teshuvah

Rabbeinu Yonah (beginning of Shaarei Teshuvah) writes, "Hashem helps those who want to do teshuvah, but aren't able to. Hashem gives them a new, pure spirit from Above, so they can attain His love." This means that when a person tries to do *teshuva*, Hashem helps him succeed with it.²⁹

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

from the king for one hundred days. His friends said, "Return to your father." The son 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 we can, and then Hashem will help us complete the teshuvah.³⁰

29. Reb Sraya Deblitzky zt"l related the following story:

"I heard that the lights in the mikvah would remain on Rosh Hashanah night. Relying on that, I went to the mikvah at three in the morning, but found the hallway pitch dark. I assumed there would be light once I opened the door to the mikvah, but it wasn't so. I felt around in the dark, found the key, opened the door, and discovered that the mikvah itself was also completely dark.

"I decided to go inside anyway, hoping I would somehow manage. In the dressing room I found a bench, undressed, and walked toward the mikvah room. It was darker than the makah of choshech in Mitzrayim. Suddenly I lost all sense of direction. I didn't know which corner I was in or where to go. I tapped along the walls, but I couldn't find the mikvah. I wandered back and forth, without success.

"Suddenly, without warning, I slipped straight into the mikvah. That was also good — at least I found it.

"I immersed and climbed out, but try as I might, I couldn't find the dressing room. I edged along the walls, but I had no idea where I was; I had completely lost my bearings. Finally, I found my clothing and got dressed. I wanted to leave, but then I froze. I was afraid that if I took another step, I would get lost again. Bitterly, I decided to wait on the bench until someone arrived.

"It bothered me that I would miss korbanos, and perhaps part of pesukei d'zimra. In my heart, I davened for a yeshuah. Less than a minute later, I heard footsteps approaching. I called out loudly, 'I don't know how to get out of here!'

"'Just a moment,' came the reply. The man took my arm and led me to the stairs. I discovered that I had been standing just centimeters away from them — only I didn't realize it."

Reb Sraya concluded:

"The lesson is that a person may be very close to the path of teshuvah, perhaps just centimeters away, yet he thinks he is in total darkness and loses hope. Suddenly, his neshamah hears Hashem's footsteps walking in Gan Eden. He only has to pour out his heart and say, 'I don't know the way out of the darkness.'

"'Just a moment,' replies the Voice. Hashem stretches out His arm and leads him to a good place. And then he discovers that he was only centimeters away from the light, foolishly thinking he was lost.

"A person only has to begin the teshuvah — and Hashem will help him succeed. As Chazal say: 'Open for Me an opening the size of a needle's eye, and I will open for you an opening wide enough for wagons and animals to pass through.'"

30. We can use modern technology to help us understand this concept. Today, large heavy doors open with almost no effort. A person stands in front of the door, a sensor detects him, and the massive door slides open. He doesn't even need to turn a handle.

But he must do one thing: he must step up to the door.

So it is in our generation. A person needs to do very little, and Hashem will help him from Above. But he

Hashem helps us do teshuvah, but we have to take the first steps. We have to do as much as we can, and Hashem helps us complete the teshuvah.

The Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 7) tells the following mashal:

A band of thieves in jail dug a hole to escape. Only one man from the group remained behind. The overseer in the jail hit the one who stayed behind. Why did he deserve to be hit? The person in charge of the jail said to him, "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 utilize it?" 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, and he has a place to escape - to *teshuvah* - yet he remains with his sins. "

Rabbeinu Yonah (beginning of *Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:1) writes, "From the favors Hashem Yisbarach performed with His creations is that he prepared a path for them to leave their bad deeds, to escape from their sins, to save their souls from Gehinom, and to remove Hashem's wrath from them. He

taught them and commanded them to do teshuvah when they sin to Him, for He knows their yetzer hara. As it states (*Tehillim* 25:8) טוב וישר ה' על כן יורה חטאים בדרך, 'Hashem is good and upright; therefore, He leads sinners on the road.' Even if they sinned a lot and they rebelled, Hashem didn't close the doors of teshuvah to them. As it states (*Yeshayah* 31:6) שובו לאשר העמיקו סרה, 'Return to Him, against Whom you have deeply turned away.' And it states (*Yirmiyahu* 3:14) שובו בנים שובבים ארפא, משובותיכם, "Return rebellious children..."

How does teshuvah remove aveiros? There are several explanations:

Chazal say that when one does *teshuvah*, he becomes like a newborn child (תינוק שנולד). The Bas Ayin explains that this is the root of his forgiveness. He isn't the same person who performed the aveirah. He is a new person, not the person who sinned, and therefore, his aveiros are forgiven.³¹

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt"l says that this is the reason we say שהחיינו on Yom Kippur night. He explains that if the שהחיינו were solely for the yom tov of Yom Kippur, there would be reason *not* to say this brachah, due to the fear of judgment. But on Yom Kippur, we can certainly say שהחיינו, because each person is a new one, due to his teshuvah.

must do something. He has to show up. He has to take a step toward teshuvah — and then Hashem will open the way for him and help him succeed.

31. Reb Baruch Ber zt"l (the Birchas Shmuel) excelled in the mitzvah of honoring his parents. When his father became ill, Reb Baruch Ber stayed with him almost every night. One night, he was unable to be there, so he arranged for someone else to care for his father in his place. Tragically, that was the night his father was niftar.

Reb Baruch Ber was devastated. He kept thinking, "If I had been there, perhaps he wouldn't have died. Why wasn't I more devoted to my father?" The shivah passed, but Reb Baruch Ber could not return to yeshivah to give his shiurim. His spirits were crushed; he was overwhelmed with guilt.

He traveled to Radin to seek chizuk from the Chofetz Chaim zt"l.

The Chofetz Chaim told him, "When a person does teshuvah, he becomes a brand new person. He is no longer the same person who committed the aveirah. That is how teshuvah atones — the one who sinned is gone, and a new person stands in his place."

Reb Baruch Ber left the Chofetz Chaim's home singing and dancing. He called out, "I'm a new Baruch Ber! I'm a new person!"

The following is another explanation of how teshuvah forgives aveiros. When one does teshuvah, his *aveiros* turn around and become mitzvos, as the Gemara (*Yoma* 86.) states, גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות, "Teshuvah is great because the *aveiros* become merits." There are various explanations for how this happens; however, it remains a fact. When one does teshuvah with love of Hashem, his *aveiros* become merits. Therefore, teshuvah atones and removes all *aveiros*. In fact, the *aveiros* become his mitzvos.³²

Teshuvah in a Moment

How long does it take to do teshuvah?

Just a second earlier, he was a terrible *rasha*, and now he is a perfect *tzaddik*.

A proof is from the following Gemara (*Kiddushin* 49:). A *rasha* gives a ring to a woman and tells her הרי את מקודשת לי, "You are married to me," and he adds על מנת שאני צדיק גמור, that the marriage is valid solely if I am a perfect *tzaddik*. The Gemara says that they are married because, "Perhaps he had a thought of teshuvah." So, we see that a great *rasha* has the potential to become a *tzaddik* in a moment.

Here are some other sources:

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 17.) tells the story of a grave sinner, Elazar ben Durdiya, who did teshuvah one day. Moments later, he was *niftar*. 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,³³

32. 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 of me."

The Tiferes Shlomo zt"l visited the renowned baal teshuvah, Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor zt"l, when he was very ill and lying on his deathbed. Reb Chaim Dovid moaned, and the Tiferes Shlomo assumed he was moaning over the sins of his youth. The Tiferes Shlomo told him, הימים הראשונים יפלו - "The early days will fall away," meaning: "Don't worry about the past. You did teshuvah, and you will not be punished for those *aveiros*."

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor replied, "Chas veshalom! I'm not mevater on a single day!" He did not want to lose even one day of his life — including the days when he had been irreligious - because through teshuvah out of love, those days had now become merits. His past had been transformed into *zechuyos*.

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov zt"l once met someone who was worried about his *aveiros*. Reb Yitzchak Meir told him a *pshat* he heard from his father, the Apter Rav zt"l. The Navi (*Yirmiyahu* 50:20) describes the era of Mashiach: ובעת ההיא נאום ה', יבוקש את עוון ישראל ואינו ואת חטאת יהודה ולא תמצאנה כי אסלח לאשר אשאר - "At that time, says Hashem, the sins of Yisrael will be sought, but they will not be found; and the sins of Yehudah will be searched for, but they will not be found, for I will forgive those who remain."

It seems from the pasuk that people will be searching for sins. Why would anyone search for sins?

The Apter Rav explained: Every *aveirah* is like a zero. When one repents with love, the teshuvah becomes a number placed before all the zeros — turning them into a vast, enormous number. In the future, people will look for their sins because those *aveiros*, transformed through teshuvah, will increase their merits and virtues.

A bachur once stared at Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov zt"l. Reb Yitzchak Meir asked him, "Why are you looking at me?" The bachur replied, "It says in the sefarim that it is a great inyan to look at *tzaddikim* — it purifies the soul."

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

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

"Before we daven for you, we must daven for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 54:10) **כי ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטנה**, '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 pray for ourselves, as it states (Yeshayah 24:23) **וחפרה 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 left him. A *bas kol* emerged and proclaimed, "Reb Elazar ben Durdiya is now ready for the life of Olam HaBa."

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

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

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2) states, "What is *teshuvah*? It is to leave the sin, to remove it from his thoughts, and to be determined never to commit this sin again." So, we see that teshuvah is a decision never to sin again. This is the essence of teshuvah, and such a decision can be made in a moment.³⁴

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 food, ate on Yom Kippur, and ate 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, **הא 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 during these

mountains could speak, that is what they would say. Tosfos brings another explanation that it was the malach in charge of the mountains who spoke to him.

34. The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitz zy'a asked: Why do people buy fast running horses? I understand the benefit of a fast horse when one is headed in the right direction — he will reach his destination more quickly. But sometimes the horse runs in the wrong direction, and then a fast horse will bring him to the wrong place even faster.

The answer is: a fast horse also brings him swiftly back to where he belongs. Even if a person has strayed very far, he can return quickly.

times that 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 very hard; 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 sin, he doesn't need anything other than to improve his ways. His effort to create lasting change in his entire lifestyle is *yesurim* in its own right.

The Shevet HaLevi continues, "The person you describe was a תינוק שנושה, 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*, תשובה המושקל, 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. May Hashem see our broken hearts and enable us to do *teshuvah sheleimah*."³⁵

35. There are, unfortunately, many people today who are addicted to the internet, r'l. According to the ruling of the Shevet HaLevi, it stands to reason that when they overcome this addiction, they do not require further affliction to attain purity from sin. The difficulty and inner struggle involved in breaking the habit is itself a significant affliction.

A wealthy man once told the Divrei Chaim zt"l of Tzanz, "Many bachurim learn in your beis medresh and attend your shiurim. Why not turn this into a formal yeshivah? I will cover all the expenses."

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

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

"We cannot compare ourselves to the Chasam Sofer," the Divrei Chaim answered. "When the Chasam Sofer merely looked at a bachur's face, that bachur could no longer sin."

It was known that the Chasam Sofer's holy influence protected the bachurim of his yeshivah from aveiros. The following story illustrates this:

The Chasam Sofer forbade his students from studying חכמות חיצוניות — foreign subjects that could lead to heresy. One student later wrote that he was among the finest bachurim in the yeshivah and always obeyed the Chasam Sofer's directive. However, one night he awoke and felt tempted to read one of those forbidden

The Fast

Rebbe Mendel of Rimanov zt"l taught that since the Torah told us to fast, this

means that the fast itself nourishes the person and feeds him. Therefore, he would say, it isn't necessary to be too lenient.³⁶ He also said that this fast is mesugal for arichus

books. All the other bachurim were asleep; no one would know.

He reached for the book - and suddenly saw the image of a man holding a drawn sword. Terrified, he dropped the book, and the vision disappeared.

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

The next day, after finishing his daily shiur, the Chasam Sofer added, "It is time to remind the bachurim of the prohibition against reading ספרי היצוים. We have not spoken about it for a while, so let this be a reminder that there is a cherem on those books, and they are strictly forbidden. Cherem has the same letters as רמה - sword - because one who violates the cherem can be punished, chalilah, with a sword."

Hundreds of bachurim heard the Chasam Sofer's words — but only one understood exactly what he was referring to.

36. However, when a reliable rav tells someone that he must eat, he must certainly eat, because there is an obligation of (Devarim 4:15) ושמרתם מאד לנפשתיכם - to guard one's life and not place oneself in danger.

The Shem MiShmuel wrote the following letter to his son in law (printed at the end of Shem MiShmuel, Moadim):

"As Yom Kippur is approaching, I must warn you not to be overly righteous regarding the fast. Do exactly as the doctors instruct you... The same Hashem Who commanded us to fast also commanded us to listen to the doctors and not fast... Even if the ill person claims he can fast, if the doctors say he cannot, we follow the doctors (Yoma 83a). Even if the patient is an expert and understands health and fasting, his opinion is not valid regarding his own condition; he must follow the doctors.

"The same applies to the tefillos. Chazal say that the chazan is motzi those who are in the fields and cannot come to the beis knesses. Even if the chazan is on the other side of the world, his tefillos are motzi you, as though you davened...

"Therefore, (Koheles 9:7) אכול בשמחה לחמך ושתה בלב טוב ייך כי כבר רצה האלקים מעשיך - 'Eat your bread with joy, drink your wine with a happy heart, because Hashem desires your deeds.' The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 17:2) says that this pasuk is what the bas kol announced on Yom Kippur in the days of Shlomo HaMelech, when the nation ate on Yom Kippur to celebrate the dedication of the Beis HaMikdash."

Someone once told the Chazon Ish zt"l that he felt tzaar that he had to eat on Yom Kippur. The Chazon Ish replied, "I never heard someone say he has tzaar that he must make a bris milah on Shabbos" (Maaseh Ish 4, p.163). So why should one feel tzaar that he must eat on Yom Kippur?

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt"l wrote the following letter to Rebbe Mendel of Vizhnitz zt"l (5655):

"To my beloved mechutan, the holy tzaddik, the pride of the Jewish nation, Rebbe Mendel shlita: I write because I was shocked to hear that your chassidim fear you might fast on the holy day, Yom Kippur. Who would believe that a holy man like you would do such a thing? Hashem, Who commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur, also commanded us to guard our lives.

"I remember when my father, Rebbe Shalom of Belz, was ill. We were afraid he might choose to fast on Yom Kippur. But he was righteous. Immediately after Kol Nidrei, he asked that food be brought to him. Before eating, he said, 'Hareinu muchan... I am prepared to fulfill the mitzvah of my Creator to preserve my life,' and he ate joyfully. Such joy we witnessed only when he ate matzah at the Seder or shook the lulav.

"Certainly you will also be cautious with this mitzvah and follow the doctors' orders. Especially since you

yamim (a long life). It heals all limbs of his body.

Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah (ch.10)³⁷ writes, "It is obvious that there is a great reward for this mitzvah because he has physical pain to keep this mitzvah... My brother and friend, everyone should understand rationally that he should be extremely happy with every moment that he has tzaar from refraining from food and drink and from wearing shoes... When someone truly loves Hashem, he will desire that the fast be twice as long, and even longer, so he can keep the mitzvah of the tzaar of the fast, which is a mitzvas aseil of the Torah that Hashem commanded him."

are a great person, and people watch what you do. If you are strict and do not eat, others may imitate you, which could be dangerous.

"Believe me, I did not want to write this letter to advise you how to act. I write against my will because I care for you so deeply. May Hashem bless your bread and water, remove your illness, and send you a complete refuah.

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

Someone once had to eat on Yom Kippur and feared this meant Hashem did not want his service. He compared it to the Gemara (Succah 28b), which says that when it rains on Succos, it is like a servant pouring wine for his master and the master splashes it back in his face — a sign that the master does not want his service.

The Aruch L'Ner (Binyan Tzion HaChadashos siman 25) explained that this comparison is incorrect. When it rains on Succos, one leaves the mitzvah of succah and has no replacement mitzvah. But when one eats on Yom Kippur to preserve his health, he is performing the mitzvah of *ונשמרתם מאד לנפשתיכם*. Therefore, it is not a negative sign at all. (The Aruch L'Ner added several other distinctions between eating on Yom Kippur and rain on Succos.)

37. It is a good idea to study this section of the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah, for he reveals profound concepts about the holiness of the fast and inspires a person to prepare properly for this exalted mitzvah.

Once, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt"l instructed two of his close chassidim to publicize this very portion of the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah. It was not the Rebbe's usual way to do this, but in this instance he asked that these words be spread, because he saw how much inspiration and awakening a person can gain from studying this section.

38. Every year, the Satmar Rebbe zt"l would travel to the kever of Rebbe Eizikel Kaliver for the yahrtzeit on the 7th of Adar. He would always go at the very last moments of the day, just before nightfall.

One year, he arrived in Kaliv early in the morning, yet he still waited until evening to go to the kever. His gabbai asked him why he didn't go earlier.

The Satmar Rebbe replied, "In a marketplace, it is known that the best deals are made moments before the market closes."

He meant that the greatest rachamim is found in the final moments of the yahrtzeit.

The same applies to the closing moments of Yom Kippur.

Neilah

Zera Kodesh (Erev Yom Kippur) writes that *נעילת* is from the words *נעל י"ה*, which can be translated as, "Locked with Hashem." This means during Neilah, each person is alone with Hashem. No one else is there, and at this intimate moment, we plead and pray before Hashem.³⁸

The Ramchal (Kitzur Kavanos) writes that during Neilah, every person can reach the level of Adam HaRishon before his sin.

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "One should be very diligent with *Neilah* because the peak of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is Yom Kippur,

and the peak of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*. Everything follows the closing (הכל הולך אחר החיתום).³⁹ At *Neilah*, Hashem signs the decrees for the coming year, and therefore, we should daven this tefillah with much *kavanah*.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 86) states that some aveiros are forgiven immediately. As soon as one does teshuvah, the aveirah is erased.³⁹ Some aveiros need teshuvah and Yom Kippur to attain atonement.⁴⁰ Some aveiros need three matters: (1) teshuvah, (2) Yom Kippur, and (3) yesurim.⁴¹ But for the aveirah of *chillul Hashem*, there is no atonement (*kaparah*) until he 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 created a *chillul Hashem*. To speak in the person's favor is to suggest that the aveirah to disgrace Hashem's name isn't so severe. Therefore, when a *chillul Hashem* charge is brought to the heavenly court, all malachim remain silent, and none of them advocates on the person's behalf. This is why there is no atonement, as long as the person is alive.

However, at *Neilah*, Hashem sits on His throne of justice alone, and He judges us. The malachim aren't part of the process. We don't need the malachim to plead for us. Therefore, when we plead before Him and beg forgiveness, even for the aveirah of *chillul Hashem* we caused, Hashem will forgive us.

The Rema (607:6) writes, quoting the Rambam, that Yom Kippur atones solely for those who believe in it.⁴²

The Kotzker said that if people knew how pure their neshamos had become on Yom Kippur, they would be cautious never to blemish their neshamos again.

The Rokeiach (217) writes, "Towards the end of Yom Kippur, HaKadosh Baruch signs the decree. There are malachim before His throne, some to the right side (saying that Hashem should sign for life), and some malachim are to the left (speaking against the Jewish nation), and all souls stand before His throne... Until the decree of the year is signed, each person can do teshuvah. If he breaks his heart with teshuvah, it will be accepted."

Trumas HaDeshen (278) writes, the judgment isn't completed until Klal Yisrael finish their tefillos of *Neilah*. Even if it is already nighttime... nevertheless, the Jewish nation is beloved before Hashem, and His *beis din* follows after the order of their tefillos." Therefore, as long as we are still

39. When one fails to perform a required mitzvas asei.

40. This is for the *lavin*, the *לא תעשה*.

41. This is for aveiros that are punished with *kares* or death by *beis din*.

42. The Rambam (שגות ג') writes: יום הכפורים אינו מכפר אלא על השבים המאמינים בכפרתו - "Yom Kippur atones only for those who do teshuvah and believe in its atonement."

Every moment of Yom Kippur has the power to bring atonement for our aveiros (*Krisus* 7a). Therefore, Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l taught that a person should not waste even a single moment of Yom Kippur. If someone wastes time on Yom Kippur, it shows that he considers the day no different from any other day – and that is a disgrace to its holiness.

Once, early on Yom Kippur morning, Reb Shlomo Zalman awoke his grandson, who was sleeping in his room, and asked him to say *Tehillim* together with him. He explained, "Each moment of Yom Kippur is more precious than gold."

saying the tefillah of Neilah, it is still Yom Kippur, and we can still storm the heavens

with our prayers and with teshuvah, and the tefillos will be accepted.⁴³

43. A person was once hunting in the forest when night suddenly fell. Darkness surrounded him, and he became terrified of the wild animals. Every sound sent panic through his heart, and he would shoot arrows toward the noise, just in case it was a dangerous creature. Usually, it was nothing more than rustling leaves or a small animal passing by.

But then he saw a fierce lion approaching — and by now he had only one arrow left. He knew he had to be careful and aim with absolute precision, because there would be no second chance.

This is how it is at the time of Neilah.

Throughout the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we had opportunities to improve, yet often those days slipped by with unimportant deeds. Now, in these final moments, we hold our last arrow. With one well placed tefillah, offered with sincerity and focus, we can be saved.