

ימים
הכיפורים

יום הכיפורים

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

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

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

After Yom Kippur . . .

R' David Bliacher *z"l Hy"d* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Międzyrzec Podlaski, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: A person on the day after *Yom Kippur* may be likened to a merchant who has returned from the *Yerid* / regional fair--in modern terms, a trade show or auction. On market day, a merchant buys large quantities of various goods that he plans to resell. Then, when he gets home, he must sort his purchases, arrange them on the shelves in his store, and determine the price at which he will sell each type of merchandise, taking into account the quantities he has on hand and how much spoiled on his journey home. All of these steps lead to a single goal: making a profit.

Similarly, R' Bliacher writes, a person makes various spiritual "acquisitions" on *Yom Kippur*--*i.e.*, "*Shleimut*" / "wholesomeness" in various areas that he has attained through his efforts during the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating in *Yom Kippur*. Some are in the area of Torah study, some in the area of improved character traits, etc. After *Yom Kippur*, a person needs to take stock of his acquisitions and figure out how he will channel all of them toward a single goal--*i.e.*, doing the *Ratzon Hashem* / will of G-d. Whether it is prayer, studying *Mussar* / works on character improvement, one's Torah study, using one's power of speech more appropriately--all of these must be directed toward that goal. Why? Because the single biggest failing that a human being has is that he naturally does what he wants, thinks what he wants, etc., not what G-d wants.

R' Bliacher adds: The foregoing is true not only of ordinary people. Even people who are constantly trying to raise their spiritual level usually are doing it for themselves--because they want to be better, more spiritual people--not because it is *Hashem's* will. Therefore, after a successful *Yom Kippur*, a person must take stock and redirect his "inventory of goods" to doing *Hashem's* will. (Divrei Binah U'mussar p.240)

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On the Importance of Appeasing Those We Have Hurt

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

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

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

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

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l writes: Requesting general forgiveness for all sins that one has committed against another is effective only for minor offenses. [If one committed a more serious offense, he must specify it when he requests forgiveness.] (Quoted in *Halichot Shlomo: Mo'adim* p.44)

If one who has sinned against you does not come to you to seek forgiveness, you should make yourself available to him so that he might ask forgiveness. (Mateh Ephraim)

Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to recite the following prayer (part of Tefilah Zakkah) which is printed in many Machzorim:

"I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or financially, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any sins between man and his neighbor--except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover in accordance with *Halachah*, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me'--except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account.

"And just as I forgive everyone, so may You (*Hashem*) grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he will grant me complete forgiveness."

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

R' Edelstein continues: Doing *Teshuvah* requires learning *Mussar* works that help a person identify the sins for which he needs to repent. It is not enough for a person to say to himself: "I know I am not a *Tzaddik*, and I am sure that I have committed many sins; I regret them, although I don't know what sins they are." How can a person fix something if he doesn't know it is broken?

Therefore, R' Edelstein writes, a person must study works such as the third section of *Sha'arei Teshuvah* by Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (1210-1263; Spain), where one can find a list and discussion of many common sins. (*Sha'arei Teshuvah: Peninei Chizuk* p.103)



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

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

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

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