



BS"D

Kippur do for me?" does not gain atonement on Yom Kippur (Rama, Orach Chaim 607:6).

Yom Kippur atones with teshuva; without teshuva it does not atone. Rebbe says it does atone without teshuva (Yoma 85b).

What is teshuva? The sinner must cease sinning, regret his sin, and resolve not to commit the sin again (Rambam, Hil. Teshuva 2:2).

At first glance, there is absolutely no atonement on Yom Kippur unless a person does teshuva; but, when accompanying teshuva, Yom Kippur completes atonement for the violation of mitvos lo-ta'asei - negative commandments (Yoma 86a, Rambam 1:4). The Rama, however, implies that as long as one believes in the effectiveness of Yom Kippur it atones, even in the absence of teshuva. The Rama's source is the Rambam (Hil. Shegagos 3:1, based on Krisus 7a), but the Rambam himself states that the essence of Yom Kippur atones for the repentant (shavim) (Hil. Teshuva 1:3)! The Kesef Mishna, in his explanation of the Rambam, cites the aforementioned dispute between Rebbe and the Rabanan. This citation implies a need for full teshuva according to the Rambam, not merely a belief in the effectiveness of Yom Kippur.

Perhaps the understanding of the Rama and Rambam is that only a full atonement of Yom Kippur requires a full teshuva. However, there is a partial atonement on Yom Kippur for anyone who believes in it. Such a person is in the class of shavim, even though he does not regret and cease his sin, and does not resolve not to repeat it.

The concept of a partial atonement on Yom Kippur is found according to Rebbe for one who is unrepentant and eats on Yom Kippur (Tosafos Yeshanim, Yoma 85b). Yom Kippur serves to avoid kares, but teshuva is needed to achieve full atonement.

A similar concept exists according to the Rabanan for one who is repentant. If he believes in the effectiveness of Yom Kippur, it provides partial atonement. Full atonement, however, requires teshuva.

## II

Yom Kippur is the day on which Am Yisrael was forgiven for the sin of the golden calf. For this reason it was established as a day of atonement (Rashi Devarim 9:18).

The origin of this sin was stiff-neckedness (am k'sh oref- Devarim 9:6). It was this attribute that triggered Hashem's threat to destroy us (Shemos 32:9,10). A stiff neck contains, metaphorically, a metal rod which makes a person unable to turn his neck. This prevents him from turning to face a rav whose compelling message deters sin. This trait eliminates any hope for teshuva (Sforno, Devarim 9:6-8).

The ideal teshuva, based on love of Hashem, returns a person all the way to (ad) Hashem and His throne (Hoshea 14:1, Yoma 86a). The next pasuk exhorts teshuva to (el) Hashem, which may refer to one who does not reach all the way to Hashem, but returns towards Hashem.

On Yom Kippur we need only turn around to face (lifnei) Hashem in order to gain a measure of atonement and purity. Belief in Yom Kippur's effectiveness is, in itself, such a gesture, which makes a person repentant.

Turning around is the opposite of stiff-neckedness. Since the origin of Yom Kippur is atonement for the stiff-neckedness of the cheit ha-egel, even a mere turning around towards Hashem achieves partial atonement.

At Ne'ila we proclaim that we, and our eyes, look to Hashem. Our ancestors faced East and worshipped the sun. In the Beis Hamikdash the kohanim turned around to the West, to the mikdash, and said we and our eyes look to Hashem (Sukkah 51b). Turning one's face to Hashem at Ne'ila confers a status of repentant and grants a measure of atonement. The full atonement of Yom Kippur requires teshuva - regret, sincere confession and acceptance not to sin in the future.

## III

All of the nation [has sinned] unintentionally (bishgaga - Bamidbar 15:26). The literal context of this pasuk atones for those who sin based on an error of the Beis Din. The recital of the pasuk three times after Ne'ila clearly applies it to all the sins of Am Yisrael. The reality of intentional sin makes this generalization quite problematic.

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig Atonement on Yom Kippur

### I

Yom Kippur atones only for the repentant (shavim) who believe in its atonement. But one who scoffs at it and thinks, "what does Yom

The expressions chatasi and avisi refer to unintentional and intentional sins, respectively (Yoma 36b). Yet the Rambam (Teshuva 1:1) seems to require both expressions in the confession of even a single sin.

Rav Soloveitchik zt"l explained that one can never be completely sure if a particular sin is unintentional. Perhaps he should have known better. Conversely, an intentional sin may be extenuated by a deficient education, a pervasive zeitgeist, difficult personal conditions or the negative influence of friends (see Al Hateshuva, p. 64).

While these mitigating factors may not technically qualify as shogeg, one cannot be certain and should therefore say chatasi even if he sinned intentionally. On Yom Kippur we invoke Hashem's mercy and characterize the sins of all Am Yisrael as sh'gaga worthy of at least partial atonement.

Indeed, Hashem forgave the sin of the golden calf on Yom Kippur based on Moshe's words (Rahis Devarim 9:18, although the pasuk's original context is the sin of the spies). The recital of this pasuk three times after Kol Nidrei (salachti k'd'varecha - Bamidbar 14:20) indicates that the key to the atonement of Yom Kippur lies in Moshe's defense of Am Yisrael's idolatry.

Moshe said before Hashem, "because of the silver and gold that you lavished upon Yisrael they made the golden calf. What should that son (who is placed in a vulnerable and tempting situation) do that he not sin?" Hashem concurred with Moshe, as it says (Hoshea 2:10) "and I lavished silver upon her, and they made [a statue of] gold to the Ba'al" (Berachos 32a). Although Moshe only advanced mitigating factors (Maharsha), Hashem forgave Am Yisrael based on his defense.

#### IV

As we prepare for Yom Kippur, the following lessons emerge from our analysis of the sources.

Every person must aim for a complete teshuva, regretting and confessing his sins and resolving not to repeat them. This teshuva, which is effective all year long, combines with Yom Kippur to atone completely for negative commandments.

One who is unable to achieve this level of teshuva should not despond. Hashem looks at extenuating circumstances, especially on Yom Kippur. Turning towards Hashem and believing in the effectiveness of Yom Kippur achieve partial atonement.

Finally, in judging others, these factors must be emphasized. The importance of this idea is the very essence of the pesukim we recite after Kol Nidrei. Indeed, the opening line of the machzor, permitting us to pray together with sinners, is the preface to all of tefillah on Yom Kippur.

Our charitable attitude towards sinners reflects the indispensability of their participation in our fast (Krisus 6b). Remarkably, even today many alienated Jews fast on Yom Kippur. We should encourage and appreciate this phenomenon, even as we hold ourselves to a higher standard. May we all be worthy of atonement on this Yom Kippur, and may all of Israel be blessed with a g'mar chasima tova.

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Philosophy in the Parsha  
BY RABBI DR. DAVID HOROWITZ

Transgressions between Man  
and Man and Yom Kippur

Every year, during the penultimate and final months of the Jewish calendar year and keriat ha-Torah cycle, we read about God's refusal to let Moshe Rabbeinu enter the land of Israel, due to the mysterious sin that he

committed at the waters of Meribah. The beginning of Parashat Va-Etchanan poignantly describes Moshe's unheeded plea. I pleaded with the L-rd at that time, saying, "O L-rd God, You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness and Your mighty hand, You whose powerful deeds no G-d in heaven and earth can equal! Let me, I pray, cross over and see the good land on the other side of the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon." But the L-rd was wrathful with me on your account and would not listen to me. The L-rd said to me, "Enough! Never speak to Me of this matter again!" (Deuteronomy 3:23-26). What was Moses' sin? In his early work Shemoneh Perakim, Rambam states that it was the vice of anger, as reflected in his remarks to the Israelites.<sup>1</sup> Moses and Aaron assembled the congregation in front of the rock; and he said to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10) According to the Maimonidean view, the words that Moses expressed in anger at Meribah revealed a deficiency in his character, a lack of requisite virtue. The perfect leader must never stray from a stance of inner equanimity. Rabbenu Nissim of Gerona (Ran, circa 1310-1375), in his Derashot, rejected Rambam's notion that Moses' sin consisted exclusively in anger, as expressed in Listen, you rebels.<sup>2</sup> Ran offered a different interpretation of Moses' primary sin, which stressed the theological repercussions of his striking of the rock.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, he asserted that Moses' words against the Israelites were the cause of God's refusal to heed his prayers.<sup>4</sup> I wish to dwell briefly on this aspect of Ran's Derashah, which apparently reveals that he understood the import of Listen you rebels differently than Rambam. Ran understood that because of Moses' remark of Listen, you rebels, he proceeded to commit another sin, the transgression of striking the rock, that sealed his fate. However, had it not been for his original sin against the Israelites reflected by the phrase Listen, you rebels, G-d would have forgiven His own honor and allowed Moses to enter Israel even though he struck the rock. In sum, Moses could not merit the privilege of living in Israel not because of any sin bein adam la-maqom, but because of a transgression bein adam la-havero. It appears that according to Ran, Moses' transgression in saying Listen, you rebels was not the revelation of a deficiency in inner virtue, as Rambam would have it. Rather, the utterance of these words constituted a sin against other human beings, in this case, the Israelites. In his view, when Moses exclaimed But the L-rd was wrathful with me on your account and would not listen to me. The L-rd said to me, "Enough! Never speak to Me of this matter again!" (Deuteronomy 3:26) he was saying, in effect, "Look what happened to me, because I was not as careful with your honor as I should have been!"<sup>5</sup> Ran's interpretation of this biblical episode serves as a powerful reminder of the deleterious impact that sins bein adam la-havero can have on one's standing with God. II The Mishnah in Yoma states: The transgressions of man toward G-d are forgiven him by the Day of Atonement; the transgressions against other people are not forgiven him by the Day of Atonement until he has appeased the other person. This was expounded by R. Eliezer ben Azariah: of all your sins; you shall be clean before the L-rd (Leviticus 16:30).<sup>6</sup> I.e., transgressions of man and G-d are forgiven him by the Day of Atonement, but transgressions against other people are not forgiven him by the Day of Atonement until he has appeased the other person. R. Akiba said: Happy are you Israel! Who is it before whom you become clean? And who is it that makes you clean? Your Father which is in heaven, as it is said, And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean (Ezekiel 36:25) The simplest way to understand R. Eliezer ben Azariah's derashah is to view it as a fortification of the previous clause in the Mishnah. This would assume that if one commits transgressions bein adam la-havero (between man and man), he cannot receive atonement unless his friend forgives him, but he nonetheless can receive atonement for sins bein adam la-maqom (between man and God). The two fields described by the Mishnah remain distinct.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, R. Josiah ben Joseph Pinto (1565-1648), a Talmudist and cabbalist who authored the commentary Me'or Einayim on R. Jacob ibn Habib's aggadic collection known as Ein Ya'aqov, advanced another interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

If one does not receive atonement for sins that he has committed *bein adam la-havero*, R. Pinto asserts, one will not receive atonement on Yom Kippur for those sins that he has committed against G-d either! In his view, the two fields are related, and only if one has been forgiven by his fellow man for transgressions *bein adam la-havero* can one be forgiven by G-d for sins against Him. R. Obadiah Yosef, *shlita*, in his work *Yehaveh Da'at*, discusses R. Pinto's opinion.<sup>9</sup> He points out that several other *aharonim* quote this view with approval. However, other authorities, such as R. Hayyim Yosef David Azulai (1724-1806, known by his acronym *Hida*), dismiss this position.<sup>10</sup> R. Obadiah Yosef concludes that R. Pinto himself had remarked that R. Akiva's homily on repentance that concludes the Mishnah disagrees with his interpretation of R. Eliezer ben Azariah's position. Hence, according to the rule (*Eruvin* 46b and elsewhere) that *halakhah ke-R. Akiva me-havero*, we need not assume R. Pinto's interpretation of R. Elazar ben Azariah *le-haklakhah*.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the very notion proves once again the overpowering importance of securing forgiveness for sins committed *bein adam la-havero* before Yom Kippur. III Rambam, in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:9, states the following: Repentance and the Day of Atonement only secure repentance against transgressions against God; as for example, when one has partaken of forbidden food or indulged in illicit intercourse, and so forth. But transgressions against one's fellow-men, as for instance, if one wounds, curses or robs his neighbor or commits similar wrongs, are never pardoned until the injured party has received the compensation due to him and has also been appeased.<sup>12</sup> What precisely did the Rambam mean to imply with the last phrase in this *halakhah*? R. Yosef Kohen, who compiled *Sefer Ha-Teshuvah*, a three volume "Shulhan Arukh" on *Hilkhot Teshuvah*, discusses this in the section concerning *'averot bein adam la-havero*.<sup>13</sup> He quotes the R. Yitzhak Blazer's deduction from the Maimonidean formulation as well as from narratives cited in the Gemara in *Yoma* regarding various *Amoraim*. R. Blazer claimed that one should not seek merely to technically obtain forgiveness from one fellow man for one's sins against him. If that were the case, one would not need to obtain a face-to-face encounter. Forgiveness can be *she-lo befanav* as well! But *Amoraim* did strive to appease those against whom they may have sinned with a face-to-face apology. Their actions expressed the concept of *piyyus*, appeasement, which may only be achieved with a face-to-face contrite plea for forgiveness. Rambam's formulation concerning appeasement of one's fellow man is also cited in the aforementioned responsum of R. Obadiah Yosef. In his discussion whether or not one must personally approach the person one has sinned against, he cites the biblical case of Joseph's brothers, who did not first approach Joseph directly with their request for forgiveness, but they sent a message to Joseph (*Genesis* 50:16).<sup>14</sup> R. Obadiah Yosef's conclusion is that *le-khathila*, one should personally approach the other party to ask forgiveness. On the other hand, much depends upon the particulars of each situation. If one party feels that the other party is not an easy person to appease, it might be better to send a third party to serve as an intercessor and to ameliorate the situation. In the course of his remarks, he cites the celebrated passage in *Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan* that details Aaron Ha-Kohen's mediation between disputants.<sup>15</sup> In certain circumstances, for reconciliation to work, face to face communication is not (at least, at first) the answer; one needs a concerned and committed third party to intervene.<sup>16</sup> IV The remarkable theological assumptions that underpin the Mishnah concerning transgressions *bein adam la-havero* were commented upon not only by *ba'alei halakhah*, but also by theologians and philosophers. An example of the latter case is the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. In an essay first published over forty years ago he highlighted the dramatic notions latent in the Mishnah and subsequent Gemara.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, the Mishnah asserts that one's faults towards G-d are forgiven without any dependence upon His good will! Apparently, one's standing with G-d depends only with oneself, that is, only with the willingness to repent. On the other hand, one's neighbor, who is infinitely less than God, the Absolute Other, controls the question of repentance regarding transgressions from

one human being to another. If I want to attain the forgiveness for my transgression against him, I must first succeed in appeasing him. Yet, Levinas reminds us not to conclude that it is any "easier" in an existential sense to obtain forgiveness for sins *bein adam la-maqom*. He writes: Perhaps the ills that must heal inside the Soul without the help of others are precisely the most profound ills, and that even where our social faults are concerned, once our neighbor has been appeased, the most difficult part remains to be done. The ritual transgression that I want to erase without resorting to the help of others would be precisely the one that demands all my personality; it is the work of *Teshuvah*, of Return, for which no one can take my place. *Teshuvah*, or Return, is simultaneously the relation with G-d and an absolutely internal event.<sup>18</sup> The Gemara (*Yoma* 87a) comments upon the Mishnah that distinguishes between sins *bein adam la-havero* and sins *bein adam la-maqom*: Rabbi Joseph ben Helbe put the following objection to Rabbi Abbahu: How can one hold that faults committed by a man against another are not forgiven by the Day of Atonement when it is written (*I Samuel* 2:25): "If a man offends another man, Elo-him will reconcile"? What does Elo-him mean? (It means) the (human) judge (that is, not God). If that is so, then read the end of the verse: "If it is G-d himself that he offends, who will intercede for him?" Here is how it should be understood: If a man commits a fault toward another man and appeases him, G-d will forgive; but if the fault concerns God, who will be able to intercede for him? Only repentance and good deeds (can serve as intercessors). The conclusion is clear: One must do the work of repentance all by oneself. May it be God's will that at this forthcoming Yom Kippur, our fellow human beings forgive us for the sins that we may have committed against them, and that we also accomplish "the work of return to God," thereby obtaining Divine forgiveness and a year of Life and Peace. 1 *Shemoneh Perakim*, chapter 4. See Mishnah 'im *Perush Ha-Rambam*, ed. Joseph Kafih (Jerusalem, 1964), *Seder Nezikin*, p. 386. 2 *Rabbenu Nissim ben Reuben, Derashot Ha-Ran Ha-Shalem*, ed. by A. L. Feldman (Jerusalem, 2003), *Ha-Derush Ha-Teshi'i*, pp. 332-71, esp. pp. 334-35. 3 In *Ha-Derush ha-Shemini*, Ran presents his view of Moses' sin. In his opinion, another verse, Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them (*Numbers* 20:12), expressed the sin of Moses. As the rock had already yielded water on a previous occasion, Moses only needed to bring the staff close to the rock, not to actually hit it. When he succeeded in drawing water from the rock, he allowed a misconception to arise, namely, that the rock emitted water because of Moses' ingenuity and not due to God's ability to transform and change the order of nature. In sum, Moses' sin consisted in (indirectly) allowing for the dissemination of incorrect theological notions regarding God, nature, and the mechanics of miracles. See *Derashot Ha-Ran Ha-Shalem, Ha-Derush Ha-Shemini*, p. 298 ff, esp. pp. 304-07. 4 In *Ha-Derush Ha-Teshi'i*, p. 334, Ran cites the *Yelamedenu* and the *Sifre* to this effect. *Be'erot Moshe* (a commentary to *Dersashot Ha-Ran* by R. Mordecai Leib Katzenellenbogen which forms part of the apparatus of Feldman's edition of *Derashot Ha-Ran Ha-Shalem*), ad loc., n. 16, cites *Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. by Solomon Buber (New York, 1946), addendum to *Parashat Va-Etchanan* from the Oxford manuscript, p. 7b (in this source the phrase listen you rebels is explicitly cited), *Yalqut Shm'oni*, sec. 820, in the name of *Yelamedenu* (where Moshe is criticized for saying *davar kal neged yisrael*), and *Sifre*, *Deuteronomy*, sec. 26 (ed. Finkelstein, [New York, 1969]), p. 45. 5 See *Derashot Ha-Ran, Ha-Derush Ha-Teshi'i*, commentary of *Be'erot Moshe*, p. 334, n. 26, who notes that Rambam in *Shemoneh Perakim* did not include the notion of demeaning the honor of the Israelites. 6 The full verse states, For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the L-rd. 7 According to this reading, *Leviticus* 16:30 is taken to mean the following: the Day of Atonement will procure you forgiveness *davka* of all your sins before the L-rd (i.e., *bein adam la-maqom*). It will not forgive sins that are committed before man, i.e., *bein adam la-havero*. 8 His

commentary is printed in standard editions of Ein Ya'aqov under the heading Ha-Rif, and can be found in his comments to Yoma 85a. p.42a, s.v. 'Averot. 9 R. Obadiah Yosef, She'elot U-Teshuvot Yehaveh Da'at, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1983), # 44, pp. 194-99. 10 Birkei Yosef, Orah Hayyim, section 606, para. 1. 11 She'elot U-Teshuvot Yehaveh Da'at, ibid., p. 195. 12 I used the translation found in Moses Hyamson, Mishneh Torah: The Book of Knowledge (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 83a-b. 13 R. Yosef Kohen, Sefer ha-Teshuvah, Vol. I-III (Jerusalem, 1989), Vol. I, p. 214, n. 98. I thank my friend and colleague R. Baruch Simon for bringing this book to my attention. 14 According to an opinion of Hazal, the message was delivered by the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, with whom Joseph had a friendly relationship as a youth (Genesis 37:2). 15 Abot de-Rabbi Nathan, chapter 12. See Solomon Schechter (ed.), Abot de Rabbi Nathan (New York, 1967), pp. 48-49 (corresponding to chapter 12 in nusha aleph), and pp. 49-50 (corresponding to chapter 24 in nusha bet). 16 She'elot U-Teshuvot Yehaveh Da'at, ibid, pp. 197-99. 17 Emanuel Levinas, "Toward the Other," in Emanuel Levinas, Nine Talmudic Readings (translated and with an introduction by Annette Aronowicz) (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990), p. 12-29. 18 Levinas, "Toward the Other," p. 17.

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from Shabbat Shalom: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Parsha List**  
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Efrat, Israel - Once, during the days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, known as the Ten Days of Repentance, a simple hassid (disciple) of the famous Rebbe Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (founder of the Hassidic movement) asked his master two questions. First: what is the most fitting request to make of the Almighty during this period when we are taught to "...seek out G-d when He is most available." Since the Bible promises that "on this day (of Yom Kippur) you shall be forgiven of all your sins... before G-d shall you be purified," it seems superfluous to ask for Divine forgiveness. So should we ask for another year of life, should we ask for a year of good health, for a job that will pay a good salary, or shall we ask for "nachas" from our children? After all, we don't want to bombard the Almighty with too many requests lest He see us as spoiled and demanding children who don't deserve anything at all.

And the hassid's second question was why Sukkot falls out only four days after Yom Kippur? Was it fair or reasonable that so soon after we get up exhausted from our fasting that we must immediately begin to build a substitute house and decorate it. Why doesn't G-d leave us a little breathing space between Yom Kippur and Sukkot?

The Holy Baal Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name") sent his hassid to the neighboring town of Yampol, to seek out Rav Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov. "Send him my regards, stay with him a short while, and you will receive the answer to your questions without even saying a word."

Arriving at Yampol, the disciple inquired as to the whereabouts of Rav Yehiel Mikhal, and was greeted with strange looks from everyone he approached. An elderly man offered the visiting hassid the following explanation: "Yehiel Mikhal - and we don't know him to be a rabbi -- is a very holy man, but also a very peculiar kind of Jew. He studies the Holy Zohar all day, never looking up from the sacred letters of the text except when he prays. He prays vehemently and even violently, hitting his head against the wall until blood starts flowing. But despite his prayers, he is very poor, to the extent that there is generally no food in his house and he never shops for himself. The door is always open, there is a chair set out for wayfarers who may stop by, and after sitting in the room for about an hour, Reb Yehiel Mikhal manages to scrape up a meal for the stranger. You are welcome to visit him, and it's even beneficial because when he feeds his guest, he also remembers to eat something himself..."

The perplexed hassid was directed to the hovel of Yehiel Mikhal, opened the door and found a chair as if he were expected. Just as the townspeople had warned him, after about an hour Reb Yehiel motioned for him to wait a little while longer. He removed a book from the bookcase, which seemed to be the only furniture in the room, and left. After a while he returned without the book. Apparently he had sold it, trading it for some herring and a loaf of bread, inviting his guest to eat, even taking a morsel of food for himself.

As the meager meal progressed, the hassid brought greetings from Rebbe Yisrael baal Shem Tov, but could not restrain himself from asking his host - whom he had seen engaged in fervent prayer as if he were physically confronting the wall -- why he didn't pray for such basics as food, for a real home instead of a hovel, for a family of his own. Before answering, Yehiel Mikhal smiled a faraway smile. "Such prayers are meaningless, even arrogant. Let me give you an analogy. You are invited to the wedding of the year, the wedding of the century; the King is about to marry his beloved bride, and the entire populace is celebrating. The fancy invitation even includes the menu, delectable course after delectable course.

"But alas, the young bride falls ill and tragically dies barely an hour before the ceremony was scheduled to take place. Most of the guests have already arrived at the Palace, and so they quietly and tearfully return to their homes. One individual remained, however. He went over to the royal chef, pointed to the invitation in his hand, and requested each of the courses he had been promised. Can you imagine how disappointed the King must be in that individual, even if he did instruct his chef to fulfill his culinary requests? In the wake of the cancelled wedding, how could the guest even think about the nuptial dinner menu?

"And so it is with us," concluded Yehiel Mikhal. "We are in exile, our King is in exile, the Sacred Marriage between G-d and Israel has been at best put off, postponed. Shall we request to partake of the wedding feast? We can only pray for the wedding to take place as soon as possible..."

When the disciple returned with his report to Rebbe Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, the Master added another principle to the words of the holy Rav Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov:

"On Rosh HaShanah we pray that G-d be proclaimed King over the entire world, that the Sacred Marriage, which will bring unity to the world, shall come about immediately. On Yom Kippur we are transported to the Holy Temple, the nuptial canopy; the High Priest proclaims everyone purified, we hear the triumphant trumpet-shofar of the Almighty, we cry out: "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our G-d, The Lord is One, Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom forever, the Lord (of Israel) he is G-d (of the world).

"But alas, this is all a dream, a glorious dream, but not yet a reality. And so immediately after we awaken from the dream, with the blast of the shofar, we must build our modest sukkah, symbol of the exile of the Divine Presence, move into that sukkah with our entire family, and pray that the 'Merciful One re-establish for us the fallen tabernacle of King David' and transform our small sukkah into the Eternal Temple; at that time all nations will flock to attend the Sacred Marriage of the Divine and the redemption of all humanity."

The hassid had received the answers to all his questions.

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from Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il>  
yhe-holiday@etzion.org.il date Tue, Oct 7, 2008 at 9:12 AM  
**"For the Sin that We Have Committed by Forgetfulness"**  
**Based on a sicha by**  
**Harav Aharon Lichtenstein shlit"ra**  
**Adapted by Rav Dov Karoll**

He made him ride on the high places of the earth, and he ate the produce of the fields; and he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of cows, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and you

did drink the wine of the pure blood of the grape. But Yeshurun became fat, and kicked; you have become fat, you have become thick, you are covered with fatness; then he forsook G-d who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed to powerless spirits, not to God; to gods whom they knew not; to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. You are unmindful of the Rock that fathered you, and have forgotten G-d who formed you. (Devarim 32:13-18)

These verses describe G-d providing the Jewish people with their physical needs, while the people of Israel forget G-d and worship idols.

The last of these verses states, "You are unmindful of the Rock that fathered you, and have forgotten the G-d Who formed you." These verses speak both of forgetting G-d and of turning to idolatry. The verse in Yirmiyahu considers this same twin violation as two separate infractions: "For My nation has doubly wronged Me; they have abandoned Me, the Source of the fresh, life-giving, waters, to dig themselves pits, broken pits, which cannot even retain water" (2:13). The prophet speaks of both the abandonment of G-d and of turning to idolatry. Presumably one will only turn to idol worship if one forgets God. If one is eminently aware of God's Presence, how could he possibly worship idols?

The Torah speaks here of the Jewish people sinning out of a sense of satiation and complacency, at which point they did not feel dependent on God. Against this backdrop, the Torah writes, "And they forgot G-d who fashioned them... They provoked His jealousy by worshipping others."

The Torah warns against forgetting G-d and turning to idolatry in several other contexts as well (see, for instance, Devarim 4:23, 6:12, 8:11-14, 18-19). Moshe reminds the people not to forget God, whether out of physical complacency leading to haughtiness, or due to other factors that may cause one to forget. In place of these, what is the formula for the appropriate mindset? "Shivviti Hashem le-negdi tamid – I envision myself constantly positioned before God" (Tehillim 16:8). What we need to do is to constantly recall God's Presence as being before us.

In the context of the opening verse of the Ten Commandments, "Anokhi Hashem Elokekha asher hotzeitikha mei-eretz Mitzrayim mi-beit avadim – I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage," both the Ibn Ezra and the Kuzari speak of why the Exodus from Egypt is singled out rather than the creation of the world. They answer that the Exodus signifies more than God's existence, but His Providence, His direct connection to, and involvement with, the people, and this is of greater significance at the Sinai revelation. Not only did G-d create the world, but He has a relationship of some sort with the people, and they are connected to Him.

The Ramban (Commentary on the Rambam's Sefer Ha-mitzvot, additional negative commandments, 2) counts the prohibition to forget, or the obligation to remember, the revelation at Sinai, as a negative commandment or prohibition. He asserts that we cannot allow the recollection of that revelation to leave our consciousness; rather, we should think about it all our days. He speaks not only of the factual recollection, but rather of the experiential, existential elements of the Sinai experience. Incorporating the lessons and experience of the revelation at Sinai into our lives, bearing that experience in mind, is central to recalling our connection to God.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (3:8) states that anyone who forgets anything he learns is "liable with his very soul." The Mishna then qualifies this by asking: does this apply even if his continuing studies were too much for him to recall? The Mishna answers that, in such a case, the aforementioned harsh statement does not apply; he is only "liable with his soul" if he consciously removed them [his studies] from his heart.

What is meant by "removing" one's studies from his heart? Does it mean that he literally acts to remove the memory from his consciousness? Perhaps it means that he does not make any effort to remember it.

Nonetheless, even if some active "removal" is required to reach the level of "being liable with his very soul," we must demand of ourselves a much greater conscientiousness of the word of G-d than simply not removing it from our hearts. On the contrary, we must make a conscious effort to assure that our Torah study remains with us.

When we speak of zikkaron, of remembering God, of fulfilling the charge, "And you shall remember the Lord your God" (Devarim 8:18), we are speaking of more than simply knowing the facts. An existential connection is implied as well.

On Rosh Ha-shana, we recite the prayer of Zikhronei, remembrances. The zikkaron spoken of there is certainly not merely factual recollection. We introduce God's remembrance of Noah as follows: "And You also remembered Noah lovingly, taking account of him..." This zekhira involves attention and care on the part of G-d toward Noah, for example. When we speak of zikkaron on our part toward God, what is required is much more than the knowledge that He exists, but rather an existential awareness of His Presence.

In the modern era, the problem of "your heart shall become haughty, and you shall forget the Lord your God" is an acute one. But the problem is not manifest so much, at least among people who consider themselves religious, in the following concern, expressed by the Torah in another context, which was a major concern in some earlier generations: "And he [the heathen] will call you [to join him], and you will partake of his [idolatrous] offering" (Shemot 34:16). Rather, the Achilles' heel of the modern religious person is this existential awareness of God's Presence in his daily life. We know the answers to the questions, and we know that He is there.

What level of awareness is demanded? The Rambam sets out a very ambitious level in his discussion of the criteria for appropriate love of G-d in *Hilkhot Teshuva* (10:3):

What is the proper level of love that one is to have toward God? It is a very powerful love, such that your soul is bound up in the love of God... as if you are lovesick, like one whose mind cannot be turned away from the love of a woman, for he is constantly engaged in thinking of her, whether sitting or standing, eating or drinking. Greater than that should be one's love for God....

If I were to compose an "al cheit," a confession to be recited in the Vidui service on Yom Ha-kippurim, for our era, it would be the following: "Al cheit she-chatanu lefanekha be-hese'ach ha-da'at – [We confess] for the sin that we have committed before You of neglect and lack of conscious attention."

We need, especially at this time of year, to work on this awareness and connection. On Shabbat Shuva we read in the Haftara, "Shuva Yisrael ad Hashem Elokekha – Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God" (Hoshea 14:2), indicating that the process of teshuva is a return to God. May it be His will that we merit the application of Moshe's statement, which we recite toward the end of the Musaf service on Rosh Ha-shana and Yom Ha-kippurim: "Ve-attem ha-devekim ba-Hashem Elokekhem, chayyim kullekhem ha-yom – You who cling to the Lord your G-d are alive today" (Devarim 4:4).

[This sicha was delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Ha'azinu-Shuva, 5763 (2002).

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**From: William Kolbrener <kolbrew@mail.biu.ac.il>  
Yom Kippur, Time and Creative Repentance**

Someone recently told me: there are two kinds of people in the world - neurotics who dwell obsessively on the past and those who have the good sense to ignore the past and move forward. Everyone, after all, has skeletons in their closet, and to dwell on past misdeeds and transgressions seems like a sour and pointless activity. For the philosopher Benedict Spinoza, the soul-searching required for repentance is not, he says, 'a virtue' - rather the irrational impulse of someone steeped in 'suffering' and

'sadness.' For Friedrich Nietzsche, someone who pursues repentance first suffers a 'fearful paralysis,' then an 'enduring depression' - and eventually a 'shattered nervous system.' 'Ask a psychologist!' says Nietzsche: he will tell you about the 'masochistic remorse' and 'convulsions' that repentance always brings with it. Many of us know the type - someone depressed and melancholic, wallowing in the transgressions of the past. To such a person we might say, 'get a life; the past is the past; don't dwell neurotically on things that you can't change!' If this the kind of remorse required during the ten days of repentance before Yom Kippur, then perhaps better to follow Spinoza and Nietzsche and give up repentance altogether!

There are models of repentance which, in taking account the enormity of human transgression, require an intermediary for the weight of sin to be lifted. In these models, man can only be passive in relationship to an irredeemably evil past. In many versions of Christian doctrine, this is in fact so: because of the perceived weight of transgression, hope is placed in a redeemer who satisfies

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement\\_%28satisfaction\\_view%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement_%28satisfaction_view%29)> the desire for justice of a 'wrathful' G-d - by whose miraculous grace alone, repentance is granted. In this model, all one can do is passively acknowledge one's irredeemably sinful past and rely upon G-d to grant forgiveness. Is this the model that Jews follow?

Rabbi Akiva says: 'how happy are the people of Israel! Before whom do you render yourself pure? Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven!' Rabbi Akiva cites a verse from Ezekiel as a proof for the principle: 'And I sprinkled upon you purifying waters, and you became pure.' He goes on to provide an additional verse from Jeremiah in which G-d is called 'Mikveh Yisrael' - the purifying waters of Israel. 'As a mikveh/ or ritual bath purifies the impure,' Rabbi Akiva explains, 'so the Holy One purifies Israel.' But why does Rabbi Akiva need to bring two verses? That he does suggests an unexpected complexity to /t'shuva/. When we implore G-d to sprinkle his purifying waters upon us, we are passive; but the metaphor of /mikveh Yisroel/ implies an activity. True, it is G-d who will purify us, but we have to jump into the /mikveh!/ G-d will do His part, but we must also do ours. In retrospect, the two verses allow us to look back at Rabbi Akiva's question: 'before whom do you render yourself pure?' G-d is certainly an actor in the process, but we are as well - making ourselves pure /in the presence of G-d/.

But what is /t'shuva/? 'Great is /t'shuva/,' says Reish Lakish, 'for deliberate transgressions are accounted meritorious deeds,' as the prophet says, 'when the wicked shall turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right - through them he shall live.' /T'shuva/ transforms my willful sins into meritorious deeds! That sounds like a good deal! What I had thought was at best a dead weight of past misdeeds becomes the source of life - 'through them he shall live!' But 'transgressions turned into merits? That does sound like a kind of hocus-pocus. Is there some kind of divine waving of the magic wand through which the alchemy of bad deeds into good takes place? And if Reish Lakish doesn't argue with Rabbi Akiva, and /t'shuva/ involves human action, then what am I possibly supposed to do enact such a change?

/T'shuva/ is made possible by a particular conception of time. One version of time is distilled by Shakespeare's Macbeth for whom the 'tomorrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow' of successive meaningless moments leads the 'way to dusty death.' But Macbeth's time is really just a sophisticated version of a popular contemporary notion of time, popularized on t-shirts as - I'll paraphrase it - 'stuff happens.' /T'shuva/ requires a notion of time which is different from that of Macbeth where past, present and future interact - as on Rosh Hoshana, when, in the moment of hearing the shofar, we become aware of the Creation, Mount Sinai, and the End of Days. The present is no longer part of a chain of separable and unrelated moments, but it is infused by a knowledge of a future when the Great Shofar announces the redemption of humanity. The future - our ideal image of it - enters the present and even the past. In the resonances of the shofar on

Rosh Hoshana we hear, as R. Joseph Soloveitchik says, 'the evanescent moment transformed into eternity.'

It is with this consciousness of time that we approach the days of awe and Yom Kippur. For not only do we as a nation have an ideal image of our future, but each person has his own ideal - cultivated and created through repentance and good deeds. Just as the ideal future - the End of Days - invests the present moment with meaning for the people of Israel, so a person's own ideal future connects up with the present, as well as the past. Through the image of my own ideal future, I not only mold my present - and here is the power of /t'shuva/ - I re-create my past. This is a long way from the past as an object of my neurotic obsessions weighing me down. Rather, through the retrospective glance of /t'shuva/ my past is transformed. Undoing the relation of cause and effect, it's not my past actions which cause future events, but rather my conception of an unrealized future which re-creates the past! Instead of A leading to B, B leads to A!

But I still might protest: 'I'm ashamed of my past! I did bad things! best for me to start with a clean slate! or even better - I need to seek absolution!' But such absolution only comes - remember Rabbi Akiva - through the creative act of repentance, the creative transformation of my past. It's true that I did bad things, but my motives - and even the actions themselves - were not all bad, not irredeemably bad. In fact, my retrospective glance reveals that willful transgressions - my stubbornness, waywardness and selfish desires - are not only consistent with, but they have actually propelled me towards (now I realize it!), my ideal future. The very actions I thought had most distanced me from G-d are in fact those that now bring me close. So willful transgression are turned into meritorious deeds! Refined by the image of my ideal self, my past misdeeds are seen to have shaped my present in a way that they now have the power to help me realize my ideal future. I'm not stuck with the depressing either/or of obsessing about my past or abandoning it. Nor need I despair about a past weighing on me - determining who I am now. Moving towards the future, the past re-cast in its light, my present is transformed. Through the power of /t'shuva/ - no hocus pocus here - sins become good deeds: they are actually the source of a new and transformed life - through them we will live!

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**By Daniel Apfel**  
**SHEMA KOLEINU**

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The Mishna in Masechet Taanis (26:) states that the two happiest days of the Jewish year are Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av. The Gemara (30b) states that while the reason we are so happy on Yom Kippur is because we are forgiven, the reason for our happiness on Tu B'Av is not clear at all. Indeed, six different reasons are given. I would like to focus on one particular answer, that of Rabbi Yochanan. He explains that Tu B'Av is the day on which the Dor Ha-Miraglim stopped dying.

The Midrash tells us that every year on Tisha B'Av for 40 years after Cheit Ha-Miraglim, all of the men of the Dor Ha-Miraglim would go to sleep in mass graves and anyone found dead by morning were left in the graves and buried. Year after year, 15,000 people died on Tisha B'Av. By the last year only 15,000 of the original 600,000 men were alive. When Tisha B'Av of the last year came, the remaining 15,000 went to sleep in their graves thinking that they would never wake up. When morning came, however, everyone was alive and well. Everyone thought that there must have been a mistake in calculating the date, and that coming night was really Tisha B'Av. The 15,000 remaining men slept in the graves, again they woke up and again they thought that there was a miscalculation of the date. This continued until Tu B'Av, when the full moon was visible, when

the people finally realized that Hashem had spared them. Because of this incident, Tu B'Av is considered one of the two happiest days of the year.

There are a number of questions that can be asked on this Gemara and Midrash. Granted, many Jews were spared an imminent death on Tu B'Av, but there have been many instances throughout Jewish history in which the Jews were saved from impending doom, some even on a much larger scale!

What differentiates the aforementioned incident from any other such incident? Also, why were the last 15,000 spared, anyway? Why did they merit life more than their predecessors? Lastly, the Mishna implies that there is some connection between Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av; what is this connection?

I heard a beautiful explanation from Rav Chaim Druck that will help us answer these difficulties. Many people are troubled that despite their Davening with concentration and fervor, Hashem never seems to answer their T'filos. Rav Druck explained that the majority of people make a critical mistake when making requests from Hashem. Most people who ask Hashem for help concentrate on how He should help them and their "back up plans." In order to have Hashem answer your T'filos, you have to feel as if you rely on Hashem and nothing else. If you feel completely dependent on Hashem, your Davening will be much more effective and powerful.

The story of Purim is an illustration of this concept. When Haman's plan was exposed to all of Klal Yisrael, Mordechai declared a fasting period of three days to beg Hashem for mercy. After this period Esther went to King Achashverosh, who offered to give her anything she wanted. Shockingly, instead of asking for the decree against the Jews to be repealed, she asked Achashverosh to come to a party with her and Haman. Why did she turn down the king's offer and lose an opportunity that she may never get again? The answer is that Esther knew that the Jews were relying on her to save them. While Klal Yisrael was fasting and Davening in shul for heavenly assistance, in the back of their minds they were thinking, "Everything will be fine; we have the queen on our side and she will surely intervene." Esther realized that the only way Hashem would answer their prayers was if she made Klal Yisrael believe that she was not going to do anything to assist them. They would then feel entirely dependent on Hashem, making their T'filos far more powerful.

Now we can understand the Midrash about Tu B'Av. We can imagine the terror that the men felt before Tisha B'Av. We can imagine the T'filos that they uttered. However, they also probably downplayed, as is human nature, the probability that they would be among the dead. This probably was the case even until the penultimate year. When the last year came, though, and only 15,000 men remained, there was no chance that any of them would survive. When these remnants went to Daven they knew that they were now fully dependent on Hashem's compassion. This is why they were the only ones whose T'filos were answered, and thus, the only to survive.

This explains why Tu B'Av is considered one of the happiest days of the year. It is on this day that Klal Yisrael learned the proper way to Daven to Hashem. This is certainly a reason for tremendous joy and celebration.

Now we can explain the connection between Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur. Tu B'Av is the day on which Klal Yisrael learned how to Daven effectively, while Yom Kippur is the day on which we use this knowledge to attain forgiveness from Hashem for our sins.

Hopefully, during these Yamim Noraim we will utilize our Koach Hatfilah to its fullest extent and B'ezras Hashem we will be granted another year of happiness and success.