

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Yom Kippur



A decorative frame with a light gray background and a white border. The frame has a scalloped, arched top and bottom, and straight sides with inward-curving corners.

©

Copyright 2020

for subscription and comments

Email: **Mail@TorahWellsprings.com**

Phone: 718.484.8136

Fax on Demand: 877.843.3049

Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Yom Kippur

A Day That Is Above The Constraints Of Time	4
Eating on Erev Yom Kippur	8
Asking for Forgiveness	11
Grab Merits	19
<i>Tzedakah</i>	21
<i>Kol Nidrei</i>	22
The Tune	24
Torah.....	25
The Great Battle.....	26
<i>Teshuvah</i>	28
<i>Kabbalos</i>	34
Do Teshuvah Right Away	35
The Turn-over	39
Be Happy with the Atonement.....	42
Hashem's Visit.....	44
<i>Viduy</i>	46
The Atonement that comes together with the Viduy.....	48
<i>Neilah</i>	52

Torah Wellsprings

Yom Kippur

A Day That Is Above The Constraints Of Time

Time is a creation. This is the reason time has limitations, such as before and after. There is one day a year that is above time: Yom Kippur. On this day, we don't eat or drink; we become like malachim, heavenly beings, beyond the boundaries of the physical world.¹

As it states (*Vayikra* 16:2) ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקודש. The Kli Yakar explains, the pasuk

is saying that the Kohen Gadol couldn't go to the Kodesh Kadoshim בכל עת, on any day of the year related to עת, time. He was only allowed to go there on the day of the year that is beyond time, which is Yom Kippur.

The Kodesh Kadoshim, itself, was beyond time and space. As Chazal (*Megillah* 10:) say, דבר זה מסורת בידינו מאבותינו, מקום ארון אינו מן המדה, "We received the tradition from our forefathers: The aron didn't take up any room."² The

1. The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 2:36) states, "When Moshe was in heaven, he heard the malachim say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד, and Moshe brought down these words and gave them to Bnei Yisrael. So why do they say it silently? Why don't they say it out-loud? It can be compared to someone who stole jewelry from the king's palace and gave it to his wife. He tells her, 'Don't wear the jewelry in public, only in the home.' But on Yom Kippur, when the Jewish nation becomes pure like the malachim, they say out-loud, in public, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד."

2. Rashi explains, "The aron was in the middle of the Kodesh Kadoshim. The distance between the aron and the walls was ten

Kohen Gadol went to this heavenly place on Yom Kippur because they are both beyond the boundaries of this world.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 54.) states שבעה דברים נבראו קודם שנברא העולם ואלו הן תורה ותשובה וגן עדן וגיהנם וכסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ושמו של משיח, "Seven things were created before the world was created. They are Torah, Teshuvah, Gan Eden, Gehinom, the Kisei HaKavod, the Beis HaMikdash, and the name of Moshiach." So, Teshuvah was created before creation. When one does Teshuvah, he enters a sphere that is beyond time.

Perhaps you've heard people call Yom Kippur, יום הקדוש, the holy day. They don't want to call it by its

name – Yom Kippur. The Bnei Yissaschar (*Tishrei* 8) notes that the Gemara that discusses Yom Kippur is called יומא, "day" and not "Yom Kippur." There are Gemaros named after the holidays, such as Shabbos, Succah, Rosh Hashanah, Pesachim. But the Gemara on Yom Kippur is called יומא, "day." It seems that we refrain from saying its name.

This tendency to refrain from saying "Yom Kippur" is also seen in the pesukim. In parashas Acharei Mos, which discusses the korbanos of Yom Kippur, it doesn't say that we are talking about Yom Kippur, and it doesn't even tell the date when these korbanos are brought, until towards the end of the discussion.³

amos to each side. The entire Kodosh Kadoshim was 20x20 amos. We see that the aron didn't take up any place."

3. When the Torah discusses the *yomim tovim*, it first tells the date, and then it tells the mitzvos of the holiday. For example, about Rosh Hashanah the Torah begins (Bamidbar 29:1) בחודש השביעי באחד לחודש, "The seventh month on the first day of the month..." and

Like the Torah, the Gemara, and people in their conversation don't want to utter the name Yom Kippur.

This is because Yom Kippur comes from a very concealed place, a place beyond time and space.

As the Bnei Yissaschar writes:

"Yom Kippur comes from a concealed place; therefore, it is proper to conceal it...We hide its name to show that it comes from a hidden world, beyond time."

During the week, it is essential to wear shoes. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 129) teaches, "A person should sell the walls of his home and buy shoes." The *mekubalim* explain that

since the earth was cursed (by Adam HaRishon's sin, see *Bereishis* 3:17), one should wear shoes to separate himself from the impurity of the earth. The exception is on Yom Kippur and in the Beis HaMikdash. The Mishnas Chassidim explains that it is beneficial for us to refrain from wearing shoes on Yom Kippur and in the Beis HaMikdash because this enables us to attain the holiness that's there.

The gabbai of the Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l saw his Rebbe inhaling deeply on Yom Kippur. "Are you ok?" the gabbai asked. "Perhaps you want to eat?"

The Sar Shalom replied, "I'm fine. I just wanted to

then it tells its halachos. The exception is Yom Kippur. The Torah (*Vayikra* 16:1-28) writes twenty-eight *pesukim* discussing the *korbanos* that are brought on Yom Kippur, but it doesn't say when these *korbanos* are brought. And then, it says (*Vayikra* 16:29-30), "In the seventh month, on the tenth day, you shall fast and not work... because on this day, you will be atoned ..."

inhale the holy atmosphere of Yom Kippur."⁴

We kiss our tefillin when we put them on and when we take them off to show that we love them,

and to increase our love for the tefillin. We dance with the Sefer Torah on Simchas Torah to show and to grow our love for the Torah. What can we do to increase our love and awe for Yom

4. If Rebbe Shalom of Belz was ill and needed to eat he wouldn't hesitate. We know this from the following letter that his son, Rebbe Yehoshua, wrote to Rebbe Mendel of Vitznitz, (5655): "To my beloved *mechutan*, the holy tzaddik, the pride of the Jewish nation, Rebbe Mendel *shlita*: The reason I'm writing this letter is because I was shocked when I heard that your chassidim are worried you may choose to fast on the holy day, Yom Kippur. But who can believe that a holy man like yourself would do such a thing? Hashem Who told us to fast on Yom Kippur also warned us to guard our lives. I remember that when my father, Rebbe Shalom of Belz, was ill, we were worried that he might want to fast on Yom Kippur. But he was righteous and immediately after Kol Nidrei, he asked us to bring him food. Before eating he said "*hareinu muchan*... I am prepared to do the mitzvah of my Creator to preserve my life" and he ate his food joyfully, with the same joy we generally only saw when he ate matzah at the Seder or when he shook the *lulav*... Certainly, you will also be cautious with this mitzvah and follow the doctors' counsel. Especially since you are a great person and many people watch what you do. If you will be stringent and not eat, others will learn from you, and this could be dangerous for them.

"Believe me; I didn't want to write this letter to advise you how to act. I am writing this letter against my will because I care for you so much. Hashem should bless your bread and water and remove your illness and send you a complete *refuah*, quickly.

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

Kippur? That's a good question. One answer is to put all our efforts into the tefillos of Yom Kippur. That demonstrates that this day is vital for you. The first step, however, is awareness, to know about the uniqueness of this day – a day beyond the rules of time and space.

About Yom Kippur, it states (*Yoel 2:11*), כי גדול יום ה' וגורא, "For Hashem's day is great and extremely awesome; who can sustain it?" It is a very special and holy day. Let us, therefore, take advantage of each moment.

Eating on Erev Yom Kippur

Some of the laws of Yom Kippur begin on Erev Yom Kippur. One example is the mitzvah of eating.

Shulchan Aruch (604) states, מצוה לאכל בערב יום הכפורים, "There's a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur and to eat large meals."

As it states (*Vayikra 23:32*), וענייתם את נפשותיכם בתשעה לחודש, "You shall fast on the ninth day of the month..." Yom Kippur is on the tenth day. Why does the pasuk say to fast on the ninth day? Chazal explain, if you eat on this day, you will be rewarded as if you fasted.

We asked above, how does one show his love and appreciation for Yom Kippur? One answer is through the meals we eat on Erev Yom Kippur. These meals demonstrate that we are happy about Yom Kippur.

As the Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah 4:9*) teaches, "By all other yomim tovim, we make seudos to rejoice in the mitzvos of the yom tov. Because the reward for being happy with the mitzvos is very great... But on Yom Kippur, we fast, and we can't eat meals. Therefore, the Torah commands us to eat a seudah on Erev Yom Kippur and to be happy about the mitzvos."

The Rabbeinu Yonah (ibid. 4:8) writes, "If one transgresses a *לא תעשה*, an aveirah, and he did Teshuvah, he should be worried about his aveirah and should yearn and wait for Yom Kippur, when [his sins will be removed and] he will be desired by Hashem... Therefore [we eat meals on Erev Yom Kippur], as this shows that we are happy that the time of our atonement arrived, and this affirms that we were worried and upset about our sins."

So far, the Rabbeinu Yonah told us two reasons for the meals on Erev Yom Kippur. To rejoice in the mitzvos of Yom Kippur, and to rejoice in the atonement.

The *Tur* tells the following story (its origin is a Midrash):

A mayor (*שוטר העיר*) sent his servant to buy fish. There was only one fish in the market, and the servant and a Jewish tailor were

bidding over it. The servant offered a gold coin for the fish, and the tailor raised the price. They bid higher and higher until it was sold to the tailor for five gold coins.

The mayor summoned for the tailor.

"What do you do?"

"I'm a tailor."

"Why did you buy a fish that's worth one gold coin for five gold coins? And why did you bid against my servant, who wanted to buy the fish for me?"

The tailor replied, "Hashem commanded us to eat and drink, and we are certain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will forgive all of our sins. How could I not buy it? I would pay even ten gold coins."

The mayor told him that he was correct, and he let him go.

The Midrash concludes that when the tailor opened the fish, he found a

diamond inside. "It provided him with *parnassah* for the rest of his life."⁵

The Rabbeinu Yonah writes a third reason why we have a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur: "It is, so we will have strength and energy on Yom Kippur to pray and to seek ways to do *teshuvah*."

During a fast, one loses some blood and some fats, and it is as though he was sacrificed on the *mizbeiach*. As we say on a fast day, *הי רצון מלפניך שיהא מעוֹט חלבי ודמי שנתמעט* "... היום כחלב מונה על גבי המזבח לפניך May it be Your will that the fats and blood of my body that became less today be considered like the fats and blood that go on the *mizbeiach*..."

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* said that due to the

specialness of the Yom Kippur fast, we have a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur. The Erev Yom Kippur meals increase the person's fats and blood. Those are the blood and fats - that came from a mitzvah - which we want to sacrifice to Hashem on Yom Kippur. We don't want to sacrifice standard blood and fats, instead blood and fats of a mitzvah. Therefore we have a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur.

The Beis Avraham said that when one eats on Erev Yom Kippur, he should imagine that a lion is in front of him. With that thought in mind, he will eat this meal in the proper spirit. It is a meal of joy, but with a lot of *Yiras Shamayim*.⁶

5. Tzaddikim taught that we learn from this episode that the meal of Erev Yom Kippur is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

6. Reb Mordechai Chaim of Slonim *zt'l* would tell the following *mashal* each year at his *seudah hamafsek*:

Asking for Forgiveness

Another mitzvah of Erev Yom Kippur is to ask forgiveness from those you harmed, financially, or even with just words. This enables us to become clean from sin on Yom Kippur.

The *Sfas Emes Hakadmon* (quoted in *Ein Yaakov, Yoma*, 81: *Anaf Yosef*) teaches that the

mitzvah of eating on Erev Yom Kippur is to put people in a good mood so that they will be ready to forgive their fellow men. He writes, "I think the atonement happens more on the ninth day than on the tenth. Because on the ninth day, the Jewish nation makes peace with each other. As Chazal say,

Someone owned a beautiful bird, many people came to his home to look at it, but someone stole it. The thief didn't know how to take care of the bird and soon the bird appeared scrawny and ill. It wasn't worth keeping it as a show bird anymore, so he brought it to the town's shochet. The original owner was also there, by the shochet.

"That's my bird," the owner said. "Give it back to me."

The thief replied, "It isn't your bird. Your bird was fat and beautiful, but this bird is thin and scrawny. It's my bird, and it has always been."

The shochet didn't know what to do, so he said, "I won't shecht it before the rav rules who is the owner of this bird."

The rav took the bird, untied the rope that was bound around its feet, and put the bird on the ground. The bird ran to its original owner. That proved it was his bird.

Reb Mordechai Chaim explained, "Throughout the year, we are afflicted by the yetzer hara, and it is hard for us to serve Hashem. Yom Kippur, Hashem takes the yetzer hara away. Now, let's see where you run to. If you run to Hashem, that means you are connected to Him."

if you caused harm to your fellow man, you aren't forgiven before you ask forgiveness. This is the reason we are commanded to eat and drink on Erev Yom Kippur... When one fasts, he is angry, and that divides people. But when one eats and drinks, he has a happy heart, which helps unite all Yidden in friendship..."

Asking forgiveness grants atonement to both the one who harmed his fellow man and is asking forgiveness and for the one who forgives (as we will explain below). Through this process, they will both be thoroughly cleansed from sin.

The Mishnah (Yoma 8:9) states, "Yom Kippur atones for the aveiros *למקום* *בין אדם*, that he sinned to Hashem. Sins committed against one's fellow man aren't atoned until he asks his friend's forgiveness."

The Mishnah Berurah (siman 606) explains that you

can ask forgiveness before Yom Kippur, too. You don't have to wait for the last moment. But if you didn't, make sure that you ask forgiveness on Erev Yom Kippur so that you can attain a complete atonement on Yom Kippur.

This process will also grant atonement for the one who forgives you. Because Shulchan Aruch (606:1) states, "When someone asks you forgiveness, forgive him. Don't be cruel." The Mishnah Berurah explains that the forgiver gains, because just as he forgives his fellow man, Hashem will forgive him.

In the Shaar HaTzion footnote, the Mishnah Berurah elaborates some more: "The explanation is, Heaven acts *midah kneged midah*, measure for measure. Therefore, if your fellow man rebelled against you and he purposely harmed you, you should forgive him, because then, the sins that you committed on

purpose and rebelliously will also be forgiven."

An even higher level is to forgive your fellow man, even before he asks you for *mechilah*. We do this every night, in the *kriyas Shma she'al HaMitah*. We say *הריני מורא*, and we proclaim that we forgive everyone who sinned against us. By doing so, you will merit miracles.⁷

The Zohar tells us that Reb Abba saw someone, tired from his travels, lie down on a mound of earth outside the city Lud. As he slept, a poisonous snake approached, and the life of the traveler was in danger. Suddenly, a heavy object fell on the snake and killed it.

When the man awoke, he saw the dead snake, and

7. Reb Dovid Nachman Kirshenbaum z'l was a student of the Chidushei HaRim zt'l. He had Torah documents from the Chidushei HaRim, which he studied every week, at the auspicious time of after the mikvah on erev Shabbos. One erev Shabbos, he looked for the documents, but they weren't where he left them. He asked his wife about that, and she said, "I made the home Pesachdig, and I threw them out." She spoke nonchalantly, like it was a small matter, but for him it was a devastating loss. At this time, he was living in Yerushalayim. He went to the beis medresh of Rebbe Eliezer Mendel of Lelov zy'a, as he did every Friday night, but this time his appearance was unsettled. It was obvious that he was angry and upset. Reb Eliezer Mendel asked him about that and Reb Dovid Nachman told him what happened.

"Forgive her" Reb Eliezer Mendel said. "Don't foster any bad feelings. Go to the *mikvah* again, and wipe off all anger from your heart. We will wait for you. We won't begin until you return."

Soon afterwards, Reb Dovid Nachman returned to the beis medresh in much happier spirits. Rebbe Eliezer Mendel said, "Now you're in a better mood. Now we can daven."

realized that a miracle happened to him.

Then the man got up from the mound of earth. Immediately after he left it, the mound crumbled and fell down a cliff. He was saved a second time!

Reb Abba asked him why Hashem performed two miracles for him. The man replied, "Before I go to sleep at night, I forgive everyone who wronged

me, and I seek to do kindness with them."

Reb Abba cried and said, "Your deeds are greater than Yosef HaTzaddik's. Yosef forgave his brothers, and it is proper that family should forgive family. But you forgive people who aren't your family, and that is an even greater level. It is appropriate that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should do many miracles for you."¹⁸

8. Chanukah was approaching, and a chasidic court was making their preparations for the holiday. Every night of chanukah, the rebbe would light the chanukah lecht in front of the chasidim, as this was the custom of this Chasidic court for generations. The rebbe said that this year, when he lights the chanukah lecht, he wants bachurim should be near him. There were many bachurim in the yeshiva, so the rebbe requested that each day, another set of bachurim should be by the first row, when he lights the chanukah lecht.

The *gabai* worked out a rotation schedule for the bachurim, and the first night of Chanukah went over well. But on the second night, one bachur said to his friends, "The gabbai stands near the rebbe every night, why can't we? Why do we have to take turns?"

He convinced his friends to push their way forward to the head of the room, and they stood near to the rebbe's menorah.

When the gabbai saw them, he was very upset. "You are taking away the rights from the other bachurim."

The bachurim ignored him and the leader of their group (the one who convinced the bachurim to stand there) said, with cold chutzpah, "When you go away from your place, we will leave our place."

There were only a few more minutes until the Rebbe would come in to light the Chanukah *lecht* and the *bachurim* were still there.

"Go back to your place," the *gabai* demanded, but it didn't help. The *gabbai* lost his patience, and hit the *bachur*, the ringleader, just as the rebbe entered the room. The bachur ran out of the beis medresh, very ashamed.

As it often is by a machlokes, both were at fault. The bachur was wrong for standing in the wrong place and for starting up with a *gabbai* who was many decades older than him. But the *gabbai* realized that he was also at fault for overreacting and for hitting the bachur and he wanted to make peace. The next morning, the *gabbai* called the bachur and asked forgiveness for hitting him. The bachur replied, "You embarrassed me in public. I will never forgive you."

The rebbe asked that the bachur come to him. It was Thursday night, the fifth night of Chanukah. A *Chok l'Yisrael Chumash* was on the rebbe's table, opened to that day's Zohar portion. The rebbe asked the *bachur* to read the *Zohar*. It told the story (stated above) that Reb Abba saw two miracles happening to a person who would forgive those who harmed him, every night before retiring for sleep.

The Rebbe said, "Do you understand? The way of the Torah is to forgive. There is no other way."

The *bachur* understood the Rebbe's brief, but powerful, message. He should forgive the *gabai*, because the way of the Torah is to forgive. He went to a bakery, bought some cake, then he went to a supermarket and bought something to make a *lechayim*. He brought these to the *gabai*'s home, and they drank a *lechayim* together, and they made up with each other. The *gabbai* apologized for hitting him and the *bachur* apologized for his chutzpah. They spoke some more, until the episode was like forgotten.

That night, the *bachur* returned to the yeshiva's dormitory. He

couldn't fall asleep, so he decided to learn some Gemara. The light in the dormitory was turned off, so he collected the *shamashim* from all the Chanukah menorahs, and he put them on a chair near his bed. Lying in bed he studied Gemara to the light of the shamashim, and then he fell asleep. The Gemara dropped on the candles and his bed caught fire. He awoke, and saw fire all around him. He jumped out of bed, quickly woke up the other *bachurim* in his room, and called the fire department. The *bachur* realized that a miracle happened to him, similar to the story of the Zohar, which he read earlier that day with the rebbe. In the merit of forgiving his fellow man, Hashem performed a miracle for him.

The *bachur* ran to the beis medresh to find the Rebbe. It was three o'clock in the morning, but he knew the Rebbe would be there studying Torah, as he would every morning. The *bachur* told him the miracle that occurred to him and to his friends in the merit that he forgave his fellow man. "The fire department also say that it was a miracle."

The Rebbe replied, "Sometimes heaven puts the right words into my mouth, to help bring about a salvation."

Bombs were falling in Yerushalayim, during the Six-Day-War, and many people took refuge in the bomb shelter basement of the Mirer yeshivah, Yerushalayim. Three bombs fell on the roof of the yeshiva, but, miraculously, they didn't detonate. The *bachurim* were ecstatic, as they saw that Hashem listened to their Tehillim and prayers, and He accepted their limud haTorah. Because throughout the frightening days of the war, they were davening and learning non-stop. The rosh yeshiva, Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l, told them, "In my opinion, there was another merit that saved us. A woman who lives in the neighborhood of the yeshiva took refuge in the yeshiva's bomb shelter. I know who she is. Her husband abandoned her and their children years ago, and since then, she has taken on the responsibility of taking care of her children by herself. have a different opinion of what saved said to the *bachurim* of the yeshiva, ", "You probably think you were saved in the merit of your Torah and *tefillos*, but I know the real reason for this miracle. A divorced mother with her five children was with us in the bomb shelter. Her husband abandoned her years ago, and since then she's struggling to support her family

Much good comes from forgiving your fellow man. We saw in the previous story that one merits life and miracles. One can also merit good children by forgiving his fellow man.

The mekubal and tzaddik Reb Yaakov zt'l merited to be the father of Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin zt'l because he forgave others. There are two versions of the story, and we will bring both.

According to one version, moments before Yom Kippur, Reb Yaakov was handing out *machzorim*. Several people put out their hands to receive a machzor, and Reb Yaakov gave them machzorim, without thinking about who should get the machzor first and who

should get the machzor next.

One wealthy person waited a few moments with his hand outstretched before he got his machzor; several poor people got a machzor before him. This wealthy man felt slighted, and he smacked Reb Yaakov across the face.

According to the other version, Reb Yaakov was the chazan on Yom Kippur for Maariv and davened a long Shemonah Esrei. When he took three steps back, a wealthy person smacked him.

Either way, he was hit by a wealthy person, and he immediately forgave him. Some people came to Reb Yaakov, asking that he forgive the wealthy person. "He was probably having a

all by herself. As we heard bombs falling in Yerushalayim, I heard her say, 'Hashem, You know that my husband left me, and I have all the reasons in the world to be angry with him. Nevertheless, I forgive him. And just as I forgive him, you should forgive us and save us.' I think her vitur and forgiveness is what saved us."

bad day," they said. He certainly regrets what he did. Forgive him."

Reb Yaakov told them that he doesn't know what

they want from him. "I forgave him right away."

In this merit, a year later, his wife gave birth to the holy child: Reb Aharon HaGadol of Karlin zy'a.⁹

9. We've seen that forgiving will grant you atonement (because just as you forgive others, Hashem will forgive you), and it grants you life, and it can grant you holy children. Forgiving is also mesugal for shidduchim, as the following story will demonstrate:

A divorcee used to eat his Shabbos and yom tov meals by a family in Bnei Brak. This was going on for quite some time, but then they got into a dispute. The guest insulted his host, the host answered back, and that was the last time the guest was seen in their home.

Erev Yom Kippur, the hostess said to her husband, "Maybe you should call our old guest, and make up with him?"

"I should ask him for forgiveness?" the host asked, incredulously. "He's the one who began the whole fiasco when he insulted me. He's the one who should ask forgiveness."

"Still I think you should ask forgiveness. Maybe in the merit of asking *mechilah* our older daughter will find her *shidduch*..."

By this time, the divorcee had already moved to Borough Park, and it took some time until the host managed to get his phone number. He called him moments before *Kol Nidrei*. They had a cordial conversation.

"Do you remember that time when you were in my home...? I said some unkind words ... I ask your *mechilah*."

"Don't worry about it. You did nothing wrong. It was my fault. I shouldn't have spoken to you that way. So I'm asking you for forgiveness."

Grab Merits

Another activity that one is advised to be occupied with on Erev Yom Kippur and during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is to seek mitzvos to increase his merits.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Throughout the year, everyone must see himself as if he is 50% virtuous (חַסִּיד) and 50% guilty (חַיִּיב), and he should think that also the

world is 50% virtuous and 50% guilty. If he sins, he tips his scale and the scale of the entire world to the side of guilt, and this will bring destruction to the world. If he does a mitzvah, he tips himself and the entire world to the side of merit, and this will bring salvation to the world. This is the reason all Bnei Yisrael are accustomed to increase *tzedakah*, good deeds, and to do mitzvos from Rosh Hashanah until Yom

The divorcee said, "I will be in Bnei Brak Chol HaMoed Succos. I'll come to visit you."

After this conversation, the host and the hostess from Bnei Brak felt relieved. They had a feeling that now that they asked mechilah, things would become better for them.

And it was indeed so, because Motzei Yom Kippur, as they were eating the Motzei Yom Kippur meal to celebrate the atonement of Yom Kippur, a shadchan called and offered a shidduch for their older daughter. This was the first shidduch offer in months. Chol HaMoed Succos they were celebrating their daughter's vort.

The divorcee said he would visit Chol HaMoed, and he came in as they were celebrating the *vort*. He said to the host, "I'm coming from my own engagement party! I'm also engaged for marriage..." They danced together with tears in their eyes. It seems that as soon as they forgave each other, the channel for their salvation opened up for both of them.

Kippur, more than the rest of the year..."

The Rambam says that throughout the year, and primarily during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, one should think that he is fifty percent virtuous and fifty percent guilty. If he does just one more good deed, he will tip the scale to his merit and earn a good year.

Erev Yom Kippur, the Chasam Sofer zt'l thought of a shidduch idea for an orphan boy with an orphan girl, and he told his daughter to be the shadchan. She replied, "I will take care of it immediately after Yom Kippur." The Chasam Sofer told her to take care of it immediately because he wants this merit for Yom Kippur.

Later that day, she told her father that the orphan boy is concerned about agreeing to this shidduch because the girl doesn't have money.

The Chasam Sofer replied, "Tell him that he doesn't have to worry about that, because he will have *parnassah* his entire life. Perhaps he won't be wealthy, but he will certainly always have *parnassah*."

The Chasam Sofer's daughter passed over the message, and the shidduch was finalized on Erev Yom Kippur.

Astonishingly, the Chasam Sofer was concerned that he doesn't have enough merits, and he needed another merit for Yom Kippur. But that is the way of tzaddikim: to always feel that they aren't doing enough, and to look for opportunities to do more, to tip their scale to the side of virtue.

The shidduch took up some time because the Chasam Sofer came to beis medresh for Kol Nidrei later than usual. The gabbai pointed to the clock, hinting that it was late. The Chasam

Sofer told him, "It isn't late. Heaven begins the judgment when I say *Kol Nidrei*."

The end of this story gives us a glimpse of the greatness of the Chasam Sofer. Heaven began the judgment when the Chasam Sofer said *Kol Nidrei*. Another story is told about the Chasam Sofer's son-in-law who saw a pillar of fire in the Chasam Sofer's home, Erev Yom Kippur, and he fainted from fright. The Chasam Sofer told him that this was Eliyahu HaNavi.

Yet, despite the Chasam Sofer's greatness and his many good deeds, he sought one more mitzvah before the day of judgment. We should do the same. We should ask ourselves, "What good deed can I do, to merit a good year."

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the following *mashal*: A poor woman was selling apples in a fair, but thieves came, turned over the

basket, and everyone around was grabbing the apples as if they were for free. She sat there, crying. Someone told her, "Why do you cry? Everyone is grabbing apples, and you should grab too." The *nimshal* is when you see that the *yetzer hara* is succeeding, and he is taking away from you many opportunities to serve Hashem - he isn't letting you learn Torah, he isn't letting you daven with *kavanah* - don't give up. Just as he is grabbing from you, you should also grab and do as many good deeds as possible. This is the message for *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, Erev Yom Kippur, and virtually every day of the year. Do just one more mitzvah, seek merits, because this can be the mitzvah that will tilt your scale and the scale of the world to the side of virtue.

Tzedakah

Another activity which we should be occupied

with during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah and primarily on Erev Yom Kippur is tzedakah.

A part of the judgment is how much tzedakah we gave during the year? Did we give tzedakah to the right places? Did we smile at the poor and make them feel welcome? Did we give tzedakah with a happy heart?

The Meil Tzedakah proves this using the brachah *מלך אהב צדקה ומשפט*, "the king who loves tzedakah..." During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah this brachah becomes *המלך המושפט*. This hints that the judgment is about tzedakah. The Meil Tzedakah writes, "so we should know that nothing is as beloved to Hashem as *tzedakah*."

Giving tzedakah, especially during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, is a segulah for receiving a good judgment on Yom Kippur. Rabbeinu Efraim writes that this is hinted to

in the words (*Devarim* 16:20) *צדק צדק תרדוף למען תחיה וירשה*. This can be translated as follows: *צדק צדק תרדוף*, run after the mitzvah of *צדקה*. Why? *למען תחיה*, so that you will be written in the book of life. *וירשה* implies that you should give tzedakah *וירשה*, during six days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah (excluding Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Shabbos Shuvah, the four days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah during which we can't give tzedakah).

Kol Nidrei

The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh writes in a letter, "A wealthy person once bought me the honor of taking 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 had opened up..."

Klal Yisrael knows that *Kol Nidrei* is a special time and talk about with awe and passion. But many

wonder: What is so special about the *Kol Nidrei* that it touches people's hearts so deeply? *Kol Nidrei* is essentially *hataras nedarim*, annulling vows. We also perform a *hataras nedarim* on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, but it isn't said with nearly the same awe as the *hataras nedarim* of *Kol Nidrei*. What's the difference?"

Here are a few explanations:

The *Zohar* teaches that by saying *Kol Nidrei* we annul Hashem's oaths. It is possible that due to our sins, Hashem made a harsh decree on the Jewish nation and sealed it with a vow. Even if we do Teshuvah and arouse Hashem's compassion, what do we do with the oath? It is annulled with the *Kol Nidrei*, combined with our Teshuvah. This is the reason people are aroused to Teshuvah at this time.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* says that the thoughts of Teshuvah that people

have when *Kol Nidrei* is said enable them to daven on Yom Kippur together with the *malachim*, because the *malachim* don't want to be among sinners.

The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* explains that Yidden know that at the time that they are saying *Kol Nidrei*, the Satan is testifying against them. They, therefore, do Teshuvah to protect themselves. The Satan persecutes at this time because he knows that he must be silent the entire Yom Kippur. This is his last time to get us to sin. We will explain:

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, "השטן is *gematriya* 364. This means the Satan has permission to persecute [and to incite people to do aveiros] 364 days a year. On Yom Kippur, the 365th day, he may not prosecute." The Satan knows that he will be silenced on Yom Kippur, so he tries to cause people to sin moments before Yom Kippur arrives, and then use those sins

against them in the court Above. The Baal Shem Tov zy'a explains that Klal Yisrael sense that they are in danger and that the Satan is prosecuting them – therefore, they do *Teshuvah* as they say *Kol Nidrei*.

The Tune

There are special tunes that we sing on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and we shouldn't change them. As the Shulchan Aruch (619:1) states, ואל ישנה אדם ממנהג העיר אפילו, "Don't change the custom of the city, even the nigunim or the piyutim that they say there." The Mishnah Berurah explains, כי על ידי זה, מתבלבל דעת הקהל, this confuses people.

But it is more than that. The holy sefarim teach that the traditional tunes of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are conducive for removing the harsh judgment.

One of the translations of זמירות (song) is to prune. It states (*Tehillim* 47) זמרו לאלקים, prune away the harsh judgment (represented by אלקים) with song.

We can explain this with a *mashal*.

A king's son became insane and was sent to an asylum. The king paid a lot of money to upgrade the services of the asylum so his son would receive better care. For example, he built them a swimming pool, an exercise room, and he hired the best psychologists to work there.

The son became better. He was healed. But the directors of the asylum didn't want to tell the king, because then they would lose out on the king's ongoing financial support. They told the king that his son was still ill, and he must remain in the asylum.

The prince tried to escape from the asylum

and go home because he knew that he was well, but the doors leading to his release were locked, both literally and figuratively. He wrote letters to his parents, but the letters were confiscated and never sent.

Once, the king's son scribbled on a page, and he gave it to one of the directors and asked him to send it to his father. The director was happy to do so. What normal child of his age would send a scribbled paper to his father? It would show that his son was genuinely sick.

But he was unaware that there was a hidden message concealed in this scribbled letter. When the father received the letter, he studied it from all angles, he picked up on the hints and messages, and understood that his son was pleading that he free him and bring him home.

We say many *tefillos* to our King, our Father in

Heaven, but the angels intercept our *tefillos* and not let them go up to Heaven. So we sing melodies. The *malachim* don't see the importance in them, and they allow those songs to go up to Heaven. Concealed within these tunes are all our yearnings to be with Hashem, our regret for our sins, and our requests for the upcoming year. Hashem understands our concealed message and grants us a good year.

Torah

We would assume that a big part of the judgment would also be on bitul Torah, because Torah plays such a pivotal role in our avodas Hashem. Therefore, it is surprising that there isn't an **אל חמא** for bitul Torah.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* answers that bitul Torah is stated in the **אל חמא**. It is mentioned twice:

One is, **אל חמא שחמאנו לפניך בבל**, דעת. This bemoans the aveiros we committed

because we didn't have Torah knowledge, and we didn't know the halachos. Many aveiros, including severe aveiros, that are committed due to lack of Torah knowledge and halachah.

Another אל חטא is אל חטא שחטאנו לפניך בפריקת עול, lamenting that we cast off the yoke of Heaven. The Sfas Emes says that this is referring to bitul Torah. Because a person must understand that he can't use his time as he wants. He must accept the yoke of Heaven and devote himself to acquiring Torah knowledge.

The Great Battle

Reb Yitzchak Hutner told the following tale:

Someone once put up his home for sale and said he would sell it to the highest bidder. One person said, "I am prepared to buy your home for \$500,000." Another person said, "I'll give you \$700,00." Many others came, and the price

of the home kept going up, but he didn't sell it to anyone. Someone asked him, "Are you planning on selling your home or not?"

He replied, "I don't want to sell my home. I only wanted to know how much it is worth."

Reb Yitzchak Hutner said: This man found a method to determine the value of his home. If a person wants to figure out what the value of his avodas Hashem is, how precious it is to Hashem, what can he do to measure it?

One way is to check how much effort the yetzer hara is investing to stop him. If he sees significant opposition, this is a sign that his avodas Hashem is very precious.

This lesson applies to all generations. If your generation is bombarded with many difficult tests, know that you live in an exceptional time. The

yetzer hara is afraid of what you can accomplish, so he throws all his poisonous arrows at you.¹⁰

The Mishnah (Avos 5:5) lists the ten miracles that happened in the Beis HaMikdash. One of them was that the kohen gadol never became tamei with tumas keri on the night of Yom Kippur.

This doesn't seem so miraculous. Especially since the kohanim made many precautions to ensure that the kohen gadol remain pure. (One example is that they didn't let him fall asleep that night.)

But the answer is, the yetzer hara knows that the night of Yom Kippur is an especially holy night for the *kohen gadol*, because the next morning, he will carry out the *avodah* in the Beis HaMikdash to atone for the Jewish nation. Therefore, the *yetzer hara* tries to make him *tamei*. If the kohen gadol passes this great battle, year after year, it is nothing less than a miracle.

As the Tosfos Yom Tov writes, "The *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer tov* fight like two sworn enemies. When one of them is about to be conquered, he becomes stronger... Many people

10. One of the difficult tests of our times is *shmiras einayim*, to guard the eyes. The fact that the yetzer hara places so many of such tests before us indicates how great accomplishment it is when one guards his eyes.

The kohen gadol said Hashem's name (יהוה - pronounced as it is written) ten times on Yom Kippur. The *gematriya* of Hashem's name is twenty-six. $10 \times 26 = 260$ (קס"ו). The *gematriya* of עין is 130. We have two eyes, which twice עין is *gematriya* 260. This implies that when one is careful with his eyes, he is likened to a *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur.

become strong, moments before their petirah, and they speak as though they were healthy [because when one sees he is about to be conquered, he becomes extremely strong.] Therefore, it was very likely for the kohen gadol to become tamei."

Teshuvah

The Shevet HaLevi (vol.4 siman 55) writes:

"You asked me about a baal teshuvah who did complete Teshuvah, and he is now married with children...and learns in a kollel in Yerushalayim. He is careful regarding all the mitzvos, and he toils in Torah. You asked me to arrange a plan for Teshuvah for him because until he was eighteen, he didn't keep any mitzvos. His parents aren't religious at all; he didn't know anything. He ate non-kosher, he ate on Yom Kippur, and he ate chametz on pesach. You quoted the

Noda b'Yehudah who says that Torah scholars don't have to afflict themselves so much for their atonement. Nevertheless, the Noda b'Yehudah adds that there must be at least some fasts and some sigufim (afflictions) for a complete teshuvah, תשובת המשקל. Similarly, the Reishis Chachmah says *הא בלא הוא לא כפי*, that just learning Torah or just afflictions aren't enough. It has to be a mixture of the two to attain atonement.

"The truth is, this is a difficult conversation. Who is the person these days who can set a path for Teshuvah? And who rectified their sins... Woe to us on the day of judgment. We are living in a weak generation, spiritually and physically. When we read the sefarim of the early scholars on these topics, the hair on our head stands up. Therefore, we are better off being silent, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who accepts the people who do

Teshuvah, will mercifully show them how to do Teshuvah.

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

In this dream, he was told that sometimes change itself is the greatest affliction. He doesn't need to fast, and he doesn't need any other form of *siguf*. The change itself is the *siguf*.

The holy *sefarim* discuss how many days one must fast to atone for his sins, but that is referring to when a person sinned just once or twice. He had a weak moment and fell, and now he wants to rectify that. But if one is accustomed to sinning, he doesn't need to do anything other than change himself, as the effort involved in effecting a lasting change is *yesurim* in its own right.

The Shevet HaLevi writes, "The Yismach

Moshe is speaking about someone sinning with one sin, but he committed it many times. But in the case that we are speaking about, that he was a תינוק שנושה, born to irreligious parents, and he didn't know anything about Torah, and due to that, he committed many aveiros... Afterward, he did Teshuvah, and he raised himself above the gutter of sin. He merited to go from level to level until today he sits and toils in Torah in the tents of Torah, and built up a holy Jewish family. He is careful with the mitzvos, this in itself is a perfect teshuvah, תשובה based on the lesson from the Yismach Moshe..." The many challenges and changes that he had to do to reach the level he is at now are sufficient to purify him, entirely.

"We generally don't learn halachos from dreams, but this time, it is logical and it seems correct. I have a lot to discuss on this subject, from many

sources in Chazal, however, I decided to end the letter here, because I became very afraid, as we discuss fixing sins.¹¹ ... May Hashem see our broken hearts, and enable us to do teshuvah sheleimah."

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zy'a* (quoted in *Igra d'Pirka* 24) teaches that when one extends himself beyond his nature to perform mitzvos, Hashem will perform miracles for him that are beyond nature. Each person has his limits, and it's very hard for a person to go beyond his limits. However, if one goes beyond his limits to do Hashem's will, he will receive reward and miracles that are above and beyond the laws of nature.

There was once a childless couple who decided to follow Rebbe

Michel Zlotchever's counsel. They were determined to go beyond their comfort zone to do a good deed.

They decided to throw away their iPhones. It wasn't easy for them to do something like that. They were addicted to it (as is common with iPhone users), and changes are always hard. However, they were willing to extend themselves beyond their comfort zone, in the hope that Hashem would perform a supernatural miracle for them.

Ten months later, they had their first child.

During the Chasam Sofer's lifetime, the *gedolim* warned people to keep away from the Enlightenment. The Chasam Sofer forbade his

11. I quote this sentence in the Shevet HaLevi's words:

וה' מקום אתי להאריך בענינים אלו מדברי ש"ס ורז"ל בכמה מקומות אך בכונה הריני מקצר כי אימה ופליצות אחזוני בדברי על תקונים על פוגמי עוונות

students to study חכמות חיצוניות, foreign subjects, and instead they put all their efforts into the Gemara, Rashi, and Tosfos.

One student writes that he was from the best *bachurim* in the yeshiva, and he obeyed the Chasam Sofer. However, once, he awoke in the middle of the night and was tempted to read one of those forbidden books. All the other *bachurim* were sleeping, so no one would know. He reached for the book, but suddenly he saw an image of a person with a drawn sword. Frightened, the *bachur* threw the book down. The image disappeared. "It must have been my imagination," the *bachur* decided, and once again he picked up the

book. Again, he saw a man brandishing a sword. He put the book down again, and went to sleep.

The next morning, after the Chasam Sofer finished his daily *shiur*, he said, "It's time to remind the *bachurim* of the prohibition against reading ספרי חיצוניות. We haven't spoken about it for a while, so this is a reminder that there is a חרם on them and they are strictly forbidden. חרם has the same letters as רמה (sword) because if one isn't careful and transgresses the חרם, he can be punished, *chalilah*, with a sword..." Hundreds of *bachurim* heard the Chasam Sofer's words, but only one understood exactly what the Chasam Sofer was referring to.¹²

12. It is known that the Chasam Sofer's holiness protected his students from sins.

There were many *bachurim* learning in Tzanz, who would attend the Divrei Chaim's *shiurim*, but it wasn't an organized yeshiva. A wealthy person asked the Divrei Chaim, "Since the *bachurim* are anyway learning here, why not open a yeshiva?" He was ready to

This is a reminder for us to be careful with the internet. In the Chasam Sofer's day ספרים חיצונים was the problem. Today, it is the internet, and we must be extremely vigilant. We should do everything to avoid falling into that mire. Someone who does stumble, but pulls himself out, will merit miracles, and the struggle he has to go through to change his habits will completely erase all his sins.

There was once a *baal agalah* (wagon driver) who served his town loyally for many years. But he was getting old and couldn't keep up with the demand, so the townspeople decided it was time to train a new

wagon driver to take his place.

A strong, young lad was chosen to become the new wagon driver. The old wagon driver was insulted. He worked for so many years as the town's wagon driver, and now a young man was taking his place. He said, "I will test the new wagon driver and see whether he is fitting for the job. If he passes the test, I will graciously hand the reins over to him. But if he can't answers my questions, he isn't fitting for the job and I will keep my post."

The old man asked the young man, "What will you do if your wagon gets stuck in the mud?"

pay for all the expenses.

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

"But the Chasam Sofer also opened a yeshiva," the man said.

"We can't compare ourselves with the Chasam Sofer," the Divrei Chaim said. "When the Chasam Sofer merely looked at a *bachur's* face, that *bachur* wasn't able to sin afterwards."

The lad replied, "I will get off the wagon and push the wagon until it gets out of the mud."

"What will you do if that doesn't help?"

"I will tell everyone to get off the wagon and help me push it out of the mud."

"And if that doesn't work, what will you do then?"

"I will unload the packages to make it easier for the horses, and we will try again."

"And if that doesn't work, what will you do?"

The lad thought for a moment and admitted that he didn't know.

"Then you are not worthy of the position."

The lad humbly accepted the rebuke but he still wanted to know the answer. "Please tell me; what should one do if the wagon is stuck in the mud and can't get out?"

The old wagon driver looked at him and replied, "An expert wagon driver stays out of the mud in the first place."

The lesson is that after one falls into sins, it is hard to get out. Therefore, one should take every precaution not to fall in the first place. But if he did fall into the quagmire of sins, and even if he has accustomed himself to sin, he should keep trying until he succeeds to do *teshuvah sheleimah*.¹³

13. The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz *zy'a* asked: Why do people pay more money for a fast horse? It's true that a fast horse will bring you to your destination quicker, but if you are on the wrong road, a fast horse will also get you lost quicker.

He answered; if they get lost, a quick horse will run back to the

Kabbalos

One of the paths of Teshuvah is to make a kabbalah, a good resolution, and to keep it throughout the year, without fail. Often it is recommended that it should be an easy mitzvah or good deed to keep because then there is a greater likelihood that he will succeed in sticking to it throughout the year. These "small" deeds significantly change and improve the person.

It states שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקך, "Do teshuvah up to Hashem, your G-d." What is the pasuk telling us?¹⁴

Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsberg zt'l explained it this way:

עד, שובה ישראל, do *Teshuvah*, up to a certain point. Don't take on yourself too much, because then you will never succeed. But with small steps, you can attain immense growth.

The Beis Avraham zt'l told the following *mashal*:

There was an alcoholic who decided that it was time to change. He resolved never to drink alcohol again.

He made this kabbalah at night, and true to his word, he didn't have his usual late-night drink. In the morning, he was craved a beer. He began walking towards the tavern but stopped himself midway. "I can't do this," he told himself and returned home.

right road quickly. Because even if you went far away, you can quickly come back.

14. The Gemara says עד ה' אלקך means *teshuvah* reaches up to Hashem's throne. The Rabbeinu Chananel says that עד ה' אלקך means that if one's sins reached Hashem's throne, and brought blemishes all the way up to there, he can still repent and his *teshuvah* will be accepted.

In the afternoon, he walked to the tavern. But then he caught himself and returned home.

By nighttime, he complimented himself. He said, "Today, I controlled myself from drinking all day long. I had four or five difficult tests, but I was strong like iron, and I kept my resolve. For this, I deserve a reward." He went off to the bar to celebrate.

Often our *Teshuvah* looks the same. We resolve to improve in some aspect, we are successful to a certain degree, and we pat ourselves on our shoulder and revert to our old ways. Therefore, it is recommended to make a *kabbalah* that you can always keep, without fail. It seems small, but one good deed leads to another until we will change completely.

Do Teshuvah Right Away

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 1:2) writes,

"Know, when a sinner pushes off doing *Teshuvah*, his punishment increases each day. This is because he knows that Hashem is angry with him and he has a place to escape to – and that place is *Teshuvah* – but he maintains his rebellious ways... The Midrash (*Koheles Rabba* 7:32) explains this point with a mashal: A band of thieves was caught, and the king put them in jail. The prisoners dug a tunnel from the floor of their cell to outside the jail. All prisoners escaped through that tunnel except for one prisoner, who remained in his cell. In the morning, the prison warden discovered the tunnel, and when he saw the prisoner who stayed behind, the warden hit him with a stick. The warden exclaimed, "Foolish man! You were able to escape. Here is a tunnel. Why didn't you take advantage of it?"

This mashal describes our obligation to take

advantage of the opportunity of Teshuvah. We have a route to escape our sins and to free ourselves from Hashem's wrath. Why don't we?

Even if we fail in our Teshuvah – because the yetzer hara is very strong, and it is hard to change old habits, Heaven will ask the person, "Why didn't you try to do Teshuvah. You should have at least tried."

Yaakov Avinu saw shepherds with their flock gathered around a well. He asked them why they aren't giving water to their animals. They told him that they have to wait until all the shepherds arrive and together remove the heavy rock covering the well.

One of the Gerer Rebbe's zt'l asked, why did Yaakov ask them why they weren't giving water to the sheep? He saw the heavy stone. He should have realized on his own that they

couldn't remove it on their own.

The answer is, Yaakov Avinu was telling them, "Why didn't you try." Because even when things seem impossible, that isn't an excuse for not trying. If it is important for you, try, and perhaps you will succeed.

Even if you won't succeed in the Teshuvah (because it is so hard to change one's ways, and you feel imprisoned to the yetzer hara) nevertheless, this isn't an excuse for not feeling remorse for your sins and trying to improve.

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zt'l taught that the primary judgment is about remorse. One isn't always guilty for his bad deeds. The yetzer hara, the influences around us, the tumah of the world, bad routines, and more, sometimes make sinning almost inevitable. However, there is no excuse for not feeling remorse. You should at

least feel bad for your sins.¹⁵

The Midrash (*Naso* 13:3) teaches, "It states (Mishlei 29:23) נְאוּת אָדָם תְּשׁוּבָתוֹ, 'The haughtiness of man is his downfall.' This pasuk is speaking about Adam HaRishon. When he ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted him to do Teshuvah

but he didn't do so... Adam said, 'I don't want to do teshuvah.'" It seems from this Midrash that a primary part of his sin was that he didn't want to repent. Adam had excuses for his sins. He said, "The woman... gave me from the tree..." The problem wasn't the sin, as much as he didn't regret what he did.¹⁶

15. The Beis Yisrael zt'l was very strict that no one should speak in his beis medresh. Once, two bachurim were speaking during davening, and the Beis Yisrael told them that they can't return to his beis medresh for two weeks. One of them told the Beis Yisrael that he regrets that he spoke. The Beis Yisrael said, "Since you regret, you can come back to the beis medresh right now."

The other said that it wasn't his fault for speaking. The other bachur spoke with him and caused him to speak. The Beis Yisrael told him that now he can't return to the beis medresh for six weeks!

Because when the main thing is to regret what you did wrong. When you regret, there can be growth and improvement. But when you don't regret what you did, you will never become better.

16. The Maharal (*Nesivos Olam*) states, when one sins against his fellow man, and he regrets what he did, he will often kneel before his fellow man as he appeases him and asks his forgiveness. When he does so, the man bends to hear what he is saying, and their faces are very close. This hints to the very close connection, between Hashem and the Yid, when he is saying viduy and asking forgiveness for his sins.

We say, אל חטא שהטאנו לפניך... "For the sin that we committed before You." Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l explained that our primary regret is, שהטאנו לפניך, that we sinned before You. People can regret their sins for several reasons (a common motive is fear of punishment) but the ideal regret is to feel bad שהטאנו לפניך, that we sinned to Hashem. One should think, "How could I sin to Hashem, whose greatness and kindness is boundless?"

How much remorse should we have for our sins? Let's read the following story:

Erev Yom Kippur, Rebbe Henoah of Alexander zt'l made a cheshbon hanefesh (he reviewed his deeds) and felt very broken by his sins. He was so embarrassed he didn't want to show his face.

Rebbe Henoah was a chassid of Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l. Erev Yom Kippur Rebbe Bunim

would bless his chasidim for a good year. Rebbe Henoah didn't want to miss out on getting this brachah. But he didn't want to face the Rebbe, either, because he was feeling so ashamed and humiliated. He decided that he wouldn't go to the Rebbe by himself. He would go to Rebbe Bunim with a group of chasidim who came to get his blessings, and he would stand on the side, and try as much as he could to make himself unnoticed. That way he would get the brachah.

After the brachah, Rebbe Henoah hurried out of the room, but Rebbe Bunim called him back. At that moment, Rebbe Henoah's humiliation and shame left him. He thought, "The Rebbe wants me. That means I'm not so bad." He came to the Rebbe, and Rebbe Bunim said that he doesn't need him anymore.

Rebbe Henoah understood: When he was

humble and broken from his sins, he was on a very special level and Rebbe Bunim wanted something from him. But when he got back his esteem and self-pride, he lost that level.

There were tzaddikim whose faces literally turned colors because they were so embarrassed before Hashem. Unfortunately, we aren't on these high levels. Nevertheless, with some thought on the severity of sin, and about before whom we sinned, we will understand the shame and remorse that we should have.

The Turn-over

People approach Yom Kippur with a heavy heart because it is hard for them to believe that Teshuvah can remove all their sins.

Let us become acquainted with the wonderful strength of Teshuvah. It is so amazingly powerful; it can turn aveiros into mitzvos. As

the Gemara (Yoma 86.) states, גדולה תשובה שזריגות נעשות לו כזכיות שנאמר ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם 'יהיה Teshuvah is great; the sins he committed intentionally become merits [his mitzvos]. As it states (Yechezkel 33:19) 'When a rasha does teshuvah...he will live from both [the aveiros and his mitzvos].'' Even his aveiros become a source of life for him because they become like mitzvos.

The Bardichever Rav zt'l said to a great sinner, "I am jealous of your future, 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..."

Chas veshalom, no one should do aveiros with the intention to do Teshuvah. However, we have already committed the aveiros. Therefore, let us recognize the potential: Teshuvah can remove the sins and

even turn them into mitzvos.

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor *zt'l* was on his deathbed, and the Tiferes Shlomo of Rodomsk *zt'l* came to visit him. The Tiferes Shlomo heard Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor moan. The Tiferes Shlomo figured that he was lamenting the sins he committed in his youth. Because Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor used to be irreligious and he became frum, and even a great tzaddik. The Tiferes Shlomo figured that he was bemoaning those early years.

So, the Tiferes Shlomo told him, *הימים הראשונים יפלו*, "The first days will fall away." He was telling him, "Don't worry about the past, because since you did Teshuvah, you won't be punished for those days. It will be like those days aren't part of your life."

Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor replied, "*Chas veshalom!* I'm not *mevater*

on even one day!" Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor didn't want to lose one day of his life, and not even the days when he was irreligious. Because since he did Teshuvah, those early days were also counted among his merits.

Rebbe Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov *zt'l* said the following to someone who was very worried about his aveiros:

"The Navi (*Yirmiyahu* 50:20) discusses the era of Moshiach and it states *ובעת ההיא נאום ה', יבוקש את עון ישראל ואיננו ואת חטאת יהודה ולא תמצאנה כי אסלה לאשר* *אשאר*, 'At that time...they will search for the sins of Bnei Yisrael and there aren't any. They will search for the sins of Yehudah, and they will not find, because I will forgive...' It seems from this *pasuk* that people will be searching for sins. Why? My father, the Apter Rav *zt'l*, answered that every sin is a zero, and when a zero is placed next to a number, it becomes a large number. As Chazal

say, when one does *Teshuvah* out of love to Hashem, the sins become virtues. This is the reason they will be looking for sins. Each aveirah turns around and becomes like a mitzvah. Therefore, don't be so broken over your past. When you will do *Teshuvah*, even your sins will become your virtues."¹⁷

This concept is very surprising, and therefore it is hard for people to accept it. But let's take it at face value, as Chazal tell it to us. With *Teshuvah* from love even the aveiros turn around and become virtues.

There was a girl, from a good home, who committed

severe aveiros when she served in the Israeli army some fifty years ago. Her conscious didn't give her respite, and she had suicidal thoughts. The Chazon Ish zt'l sent her this message: "Chazal say הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, 'Thinking about sin is worse than sin.' You have to stop thinking about your aveiros, because rehashing them in your mind is worse than the aveiros themselves." She followed this advice and was able to recover, get married, and build a bayis ne'aman b'Yisrael.

On the night of Yom Kippur, we recite the Beracha of Shehechiyanu.

17. A *bachur* was once staring at Reb Yitzchak Meir of Zinikov zt'l. "Why are you looking at me?" he asked.

"It's written in *sefarim* that it is a great *inyan* (concept) to look at tzaddikim. It purifies the soul."

The Rebbe replied, "It is also written (*Yeshayah* 60:21), ועמך בולם צדיקים, all Yidden are tzaddikim. I think that it will be better if you look at yourself than to look at me." He was hinting to him that he should look over his deeds, and see where he has to improve. That will accomplish even more...

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l asked that due to the awe and fear of the judgment, it doesn't seem to be the right time to say Shehechiyanu. He answered that we aren't saying Shehechiyanu on the yom tov, rather on ourselves, because when we do Teshuvah, we become like a brand-new person. That is the potential of Teshuvah.

Reb Baruch Ber zt'l (*Birchas Shmuel*) excelled in the mitzvah of honoring his parents. When his father was ill, Reb Baruch Ber stayed with his father every night. But one night, Reb Baruch Ber couldn't be with his father, and he appointed someone to take care of his father. His father was *niftar* that night. Reb Baruch Ber felt that had he been more devoted, he may have prevented his father's death. The *shivah* passed, but Reb Baruch Ber didn't return to his *yeshivah* to give his *shiurim*. His spirits were too low. He went to

Radin, he needed encouragement from the Chofetz Chaim zt'l. The Chofetz Chaim told him, "When one does *Teshuvah*, he becomes a brand-new person. He isn't the same person who committed the sin. This is the reason *Teshuvah* atones. He isn't the person who committed the *aveirah*..."

Reb Baruch Ber left the Chofetz Chaim's house and began to dance. He was shouting, "I'm a new Baruch Ber! I'm a new person!"

Be Happy with the Atonement

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that we don't do Teshuvah on our own. Hashem places in our hearts the desire to return to Him. Our part and our credit are that we are happy that we are doing Teshuvah. Teshuvah means changing routines, leaving forbidden pleasures, and it requires effort, and the human body

doesn't like to exert itself. Therefore, it is natural for a person not to be happy with his Teshuvah. But we are happy, because we know that we are becoming beloved to Hashem and our neshamos are being cleansed from the tar of sin that was smothering over it. And our joy is our part and merit in the teshuvah process.

With this thought in mind, the Chasam Sofer explains the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 14:7), 'מי יתן מציון ישועת ישראל בשוב ה', 'מי יתן מציון, שבות עמו יגל יעקב ישמח ישראל. Dovid HaMelech is asking, 'מי יתן מציון, why should we merit Moshiach? שבות עמו, the Teshuvah that the nation does is really 'בשוב ה', Hashem's Teshuvah, because Hashem puts into their heart a desire to repent. So why do we deserve Moshiach? The answer is, 'יגל יעקב ישמח ישראל, we are happy with the

Teshuvah, and for that we deserve to be redeemed.

Chazal tell us (end of Taanis) that Yom Kippur is one of the happiest days of the year, because on this day we are cleansed from all our sins.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 7:6) writes, "Yesterday Hashem hated him. He was disgusting, distant, an abomination. Today he is beloved, precious, close, a friend.¹⁸ Shouldn't we rejoice with all our might?

We say (in *tachanun*): הפותח: יד בתשובה לקבל פושעים וחטאים, Hashem wants our Teshuvah. The next words are נבהלה נפשנו מרוב עצבונינו. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l explained: Since Hashem wants our Teshuvah, how can we be sad? נהלה נפשנו, we are shocked and surprised with ourselves, מרוב עצבונינו, that we are so sad. We

18. We quote the Rambam's holy words: התשובה מקרבת את הרוחקים. אמש היה זה שנאו לפני המקום, משוקץ ומרוחק ותועבה, והיום הוא אהוב ונחמד קרוב וידד.

should be the happiest people in the world.

children and grandchildren, for all generations.”

Hashem forgave the Jewish nation for the egel on Yom Kippur, and since then, it is a day of atonement for all generations. The Midrash (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, end of ch.4) states, “Moshe went up on Har Sinai for forty days... On the fortieth day [Yom Kippur] the Jewish nation decreed a fast day; the fast began by night... In the morning, they went towards Har Sinai. They were crying as they came towards Moshe and Moshe was crying as he came towards them. Their cries went up before Hashem, and Hashem’s compassion was roused on Bnei Yisrael and He accepted their *Teshuvah*... Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, ‘Bnei Yisrael! I swear by My name and by My throne that your tears will become tears of immense joy. This day will be a day for atonement for you, your

Hashem's Visit

One of the great joys of Yom Kippur is that we become close to Hashem in a very unique way.

Consider the following: One of the greatest tzaddikim will be davening with you in your beis medresh on Yom Kippur. How happy everyone will be, and everyone will daven with a lots of kavanah. On Yom Kippur, Hashem Himself is with us. How joyous should we be! How much kavanah should we invest in our tefillos.!

Now, just as a king won't go to a place that's dirty, similarly, when Hashem comes to us, we must be cleansed from all our sins. Thus, we earn doubly. Hashem visits us, and we are cleansed from our sins.

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l explained this idea with a parable:

Someone's home was very dirty, and although he tried to clean it many times, he didn't succeed. He thought of a plan. He invited the king to visit his home. The king's servants came to clean his house, so it will be fitting for the king's visit. The man gained doubly: He hosted the king, plus his house was cleaned.

This is what happens on Yom Kippur. As we say in the *zemiros* of Motzei Shabbos, על המאי, for my sins, עבור תעבור, come over to visit me. We earn doubly: Hashem comes to us, and our sins are removed.

This seems to be the intention of the Mishnah (end of Yoma): אמר ר' עקיבא אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרים ומי מטהר אתכם "Fortunate are

you, Yisrael! Before Who do you purify yourself and Who is purifying you? It's your Father in Heaven!"¹⁹ On Yom Kippur we are before Hashem, and that is the root of our atonement.

And do you know who else is happy on Yom Kippur? It's Hashem, Himself. It states (*Tehillim* 139:16) ימים יצרו ולו אחד בהם, "Hashem created days, and one is Hashem's day." *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* (ch.1) writes that this is referring to Yom Kippur. It is Hashem's day, because He is so happy with the atonement. The *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave this day to the Jewish nation with love and joy. A *mashal* can be said of servants who were cleaning the king's palace. When the king went outside and saw all the garbage that was thrown out, he was extremely happy. This is

19. One year, before *Ne'ilah*, students heard Reb Yechezkel Levenstein repeating this Mishnah to himself many times.

how it is on Yom Kippur... When Hashem forgives the sins of the Jewish nation... He's extremely joyous... Hashem says, 'Rejoice immensely because I am forgiving the sins of the Jewish people.'"

Viduy

Saying viduy is a primary part of the mitzvah of Teshuvah. The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1) writes, "If a person committed an aveirah...he must say *viduy* before Hashem. As it states *והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו*, 'They should confess their sins...' This is a *mitzvas asei*."

Every mitzvah should be performed with joy, and therefore viduy should be said with joy. This explains why the viduy of *אשמנו* and *אל האם* are said with a tune.

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

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

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that when he was young, he heard from *magidim* that when one says *viduy* he should think: There will be another time when I will say *viduy*. That will be when I stand before the *beis din* in Heaven. I will be dressed in a tallis and *kitel*, I will say *viduy* like I'm saying it now, but it won't help me then. Now I can fix everything with my *viduy*..."

Rebbe Yaakov Yechezkiyahu of Pupa *zt'l* taught what one should imagine when he is about to say viduy: He is crossing a forest alone, when he is captured by a band of thieves. Their knives are sharpened, and he understands that his end is

near. He asks for a last wish, and they grant it to him. He wants to say viduy. Imagine this and then begin your viduy recital on Yom Kippur.

Obviously, a prerequisite for saying *viduy* is regret. If one says *viduy*, but he doesn't feel that he did something wrong, or if he doesn't care, the *viduy* doesn't have much value.

Sometimes, when one says "I'm sorry" but there's no regret at all. For example, if someone is in your way, you might say, "I'm sorry, can I pass?" Or during a meal, you might say to someone, "I'm sorry, please pass the plate..." There is no remorse here at all, it's just a form of speech.

Everyone says *Al Chet* on Yom Kippur, and they say that they are sorry, but being sorry has many meanings, depending on the context. According to the degree of remorse, that's how much atonement we will attain.

Someone caused a lot of distress for Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezibuzh zy'a. He thought he was acting *leshem shamayim*, and *chalilah*, that it was a *mitzvah* to fight with Reb Boruch'l. Erev Yom Kippur he said to Rebbe Boruch'l, "I really have nothing to ask *mechilah* for, because everything I did was needed and according to *halachah*. Nevertheless, I decided that since it's erev Yom Kippur, I should ask you to forgive me and that you shouldn't carry any hard feelings towards me."

Rebbe Boruch'l replied, פלחתי בדברך. His intention was that I forgive you with the same sincerity as your words. Just as you don't really mean it when you ask forgiveness, I also don't really mean it when I say that I forgive you. Hashem also tells us פלחתי בדברך, we get atonement according to the true regret that we experience.

The Atonement that comes together with the Viduy

And when you ask for forgiveness, your aveiros are removed. Viduy helps to remove sin.

We are so cautious not to make a brachah levatalah (a blessing in vain). Some opinions hold that saying a brachah in vain is a Torah violation, as it states לא תשא שם ה' אלקיך לשווא. Therefore, when we are in doubt whether we are obligated in a brachah or not, we generally don't say the brachah.

The Baal HaTanya (*Igeres HaTeshuvah* 11) asks, so how do we say פלה לנו in Shemonah Esrei, begging Hashem to forgive us, and immediately afterward we say ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח Hashem for forgiving us. Maybe Hashem didn't forgive us, and the blessing is in vain!

The answer is that when we ask for forgiveness,

there is forgiveness, and it is immediate. The brachah is not in vain.

We quote:

"One must have *emunah* and *bitachon*, without any doubt at all...that Hashem will forgive us immediately when we ask for forgiveness... Every day in *Shemonah Esrei* we ask Hashem to forgive us, as we say, פלה לנו. After that, we immediately say, ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח. But, behold, when one has a doubt, he mustn't make a *brachah* lest his *brachah* be said in vain. So how can we bless Hashem for forgiving us? Perhaps Hashem didn't accept our *Teshuvah*? Perhaps Hashem didn't forgive us? It must be that we have no doubt. After one says, פלה לנו מחל לנו, he is forgiven. If we wouldn't sin again, we would immediately be redeemed, as the next *brachah* states, ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל."

Therefore, when we say viduy, we should feel

confident that our sins are atoned. The Noam Elimelech zy'a writes, "The Torah teaches us to say *viduy*... with confidence in Hashem's compassion, believing He will have compassion on us and forgive our sins. One shouldn't say *viduy* with despair, as this brings on *dinim*. Rather say *viduy* with *bitachon*. Trust in Hashem that He will forgive you. As it states (*Mishlei* 28:13), ומורה ועוזב ירוחם,

'When one admits his sins and he leaves them, Hashem will have compassion on him.'²⁰

Bilaam said *viduy*. When he saw the malach standing before him, he said חטאתי, "I have sinned" and the Midrash writes that this helped him greatly. The Midrash writes, "Bilaam was a shrewd *rasha*. He knew that his only protection against punishment is *Teshuvah*,

20. There's a custom that people don't get married during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l (*Chachmas Shlomo* 602) explains that Hashem chose that our sins should be forgiven on Yom Kippur. If a person married during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and a chasunah also atones for all one's sins, it is like he is saying that he wants another date for the atonement. He writes, "With regards to the custom that people don't make *chasunos* until after Yom Kippur... The reason might be...because Chazal tell us that when one marries a woman, all his aveiros are forgiven. At the beginning of the year, one shouldn't make attempts to attain forgiveness until Yom Kippur, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu, together with the holiness of Yom Kippur, atones for all his sins. If a person will try to attain atonement before Yom Kippur, it would be like going against the king...This can be compared to the *Chazal* that teaches us that when one takes off his tefillin before a king, it is as though he is going against the king, because he is showing that the time to take off the tefillin has come, before the king takes off his..."

and when he said *המאני* he was protected."

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* said that it's a mitzvah to tell this Midrash to *bachurim* to encourage them. The aveiros can be rectified, with Teshuvah and viduy.

The *viduy* is written in alphabetical order: *א'שמנו ב'גדנו* and so on. The Reishis Chachmah explains that our aveiros tainted all the letters of the alef beis, which are the letters of creation, and we correct them with the viduy.

However, notes the Reishis Chachmah, the first word of the viduy isn't *אשמנו*, it is *המאנו*, as we say *אבל אשמנו*. *אנהנו ואבותינו המאנו אשמנו...* Why don't we begin with *אשמנו* with the 'א.

The *Reishis Chachmah* explains that it is important to begin the *viduy* with *המאני*, because this word removes the *mekatreg* (the Satan who proclaims our sins). If we were to begin telling our aveiros, the Satan could

go up to Heaven and say, "Listen to what he's saying. He himself says that he sinned." But after we said *המאנו*, the Satan is silenced. He can't speak out against us.

We've seen the power of *המאנו*, and it is the same with all the words of the viduy. They each have so many segulos to help us attain complete purity from all our sins.

In the era of the Beis HaMikdash there was a mitzvah called *viduy maasros*, to go to the *beis hamikdash* twice in seven years to confess and to state that you observed all the halachos of *maasar*, *terumah*, and the likes. It's surprising that this mitzvah is called *viduy maasros*, since he is proclaiming that he kept the halachos. He isn't saying that he sinned.

For example, by *viduy maasros* one says *לא עברתי ולא שכחתי*, "I didn't transgress your mitzvos and I didn't forget" (*Devarim*

26:13). Why are these words called *viduy*?

Rebbe Shalom Chaim of Koidenov *zt'l* answered that Hashem and the person are speaking in these *pesukim*: The person says עברתי ממצותך, "I transgressed your mitzvos," and Hashem replies לא עברתי "you didn't transgress." The person says שכחתי, "I forgot to keep the mitzvos," and Hashem replies, לא שכחתי, "you didn't forget." This explains why it's called *viduy*, a confession. Man confesses his errors and Hashem responds that there's no sin at all. This is because the *viduy* wipes away sins entirely. When we say חטאתי, Hashem replies, "You didn't sin," and the sin is totally gone.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* was traveling to his son's chasunah, which was quite a distance from Volozhin. One morning, in a beis medresh of a small town, there wasn't a sefer Torah. It was Monday or a Thursday, and he asked

the rav why there wasn't a sefer Torah. The rav replied, "The closest sefer Torah is far from here, and we aren't obligated to go there to listen to the sefer Torah."

Reb Chaim Volozhiner didn't agree, but he remained silent.

When he returned home, after celebrating his son's chasunah, he heard that his personal sefer Torah was stolen. He understood that this was his punishment for not demanding that the Torah be read that morning. He was saying *viduy* and the police came, carrying the sefer Torah. They told him that they found the thief.

Because there is a rule, אין יסורים בלי עון, all pain and trouble come from sin. But when one says *viduy*, the sins are removed. Therefore, the sefer Torah was returned.

Neilah

The climax of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*.²¹ As the Mishnah Berurah writes, "One should be very *zariz* with this *tefillah* because the purpose of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is Yom Kippur, and the purpose of Yom Kippur is *Neilah*, for everything is dependent on the closure (הכל הולך אחר החיתום)."

Neilah is when Hashem signs the decrees for the upcoming year, and we trust that Hashem will sign us for life, happiness, *nachas*, and wealth.

There is immense *rachamim* at this time, and all our sins are atoned.

Even the severe sin of *chilul Hashem* can be atoned by *Ne'ilah*. Although the Gemara (*Yoma* 86) teaches that *chilul Hashem* isn't atoned until one dies,

nevertheless, the Meshech Chachmah proves that during *Neilah* one can receive atonement for that grave sin too.

He bases this on the *Yerushalmi* that tells the reason why there is no atonement for *chilul Hashem*.

When a person sins with *chilul Hashem*, the *malachim* can't speak up in his merit. They can't exonerate him, and say his sin wasn't so severe, because that would be belittling the King. It would be likened to someone who rebelled against the king, and someone comes to court and says that his sin isn't all that severe. To belittle the crime is itself a rebellion, for it implies the king doesn't deserve absolute honor, and it isn't

21. The Ramchal writes that during *Neilah* one can attain the level of Adam HaRishon before his sin.

so severe when one goes against Hashem!

This is the reason *chilul Hashem* is generally not atoned, (only by death). The *malachim* can't speak up in his defense.

However, during *Neilah* Hashem Himself judges us. He determines what will

be, and He can forgive us, even when we *chas veshalom* committed the severe sin of *chilul Hashem*.

At *Neilah* one mustn't lose hope. This is our opportunity to be alone with Hashem, to request forgiveness and a good year. And our *tefilllos* will surely be answered.