

ask the child why he is going to school, he would say, "My daddy told me that there are fun games there, and all the kids get candies." The child has no idea how great the *mitzvah* of Torah learning is. He can't grasp that Torah learning enables a person to attain life in *Olam Haba*. How can he understand the real reason he is going to *cheder*? A child can't comprehend the concept of eternity.

Just as an animal can't understand why a person does what he does, so a person on a lower level cannot understand a level that is above him. If so, how could we understand *Hashem's* ways in the world?

Nevertheless, *Chazal* taught us:

The world was created through ten Divine utterances.¹

Why did *Hashem* need ten utterances to create the world? He could have just said, "Let there be a world," and the world would have come into being. He employed ten utterances because He wanted us to have some understanding of the world. This is why He taught us in the Torah all the utterances that created each aspect of the world.

Similarly, the whole Torah, from beginning to end, teaches us how *Hashem* made His world and how He runs it. והיה אם שמוע תשמעו אל מצותי וגו' – "If you will surely listen to My *mitzvos*... I will give the rain of your land in its time."² Someone who learns Torah knows that when it rains, it is because there is a *tzaddik* in the

world that prayed for the rain to come, or because a *yeshivah bachur* sat and learned Torah assiduously at night. And if there is a drought, we need to look for the reason in the passage of ויעצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר – "He will stop up the heavens and there will be no rain."³

And *Hashem* did not just grant us understanding of such matters. He gave over the matter itself into our hands. A person determines by means of his deeds what will happen in the world. He has the power to pray for rain, for *parnassah* and for health. There is nothing in the world that is not for the Jewish people. We can attain things by means of our spiritual deeds.

If a Jew does *mitzvos*, his reward will grant him success, and if he transgresses them, his punishment will sever his life.⁴

From a young age we were taught that in order to get a candy, we need to say a *berachah*. The awareness has been implanted in us that receiving goodness depends on our doing good deeds.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu tied the running of the world to the Jewish people. Everything goes according to our deeds, according to our understanding and according to our intelligence. So to speak, *Hashem's* existence is thus hidden from the world.

The ultimate truth that everything in the world comes solely from *Hashem* and depends solely on *Hashem* is a hidden truth. This is the hiding of *Hashem's* face. ●

1 *Avos* 5:1.

2 *Devarim* ch. 11.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ramban, Shemos* 13:16.



A Brand-New World

These words of Torah were written by Moreinu Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l himself, after Rosh Hashanah 5750

Teshuvah: What and How

These days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. This is the time to put special effort into the *mitzvah* of *Teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* is one of the 613 *mitzvos*. And, like the other *mitzvos*, it has *halachos* that define it and tell us how to fulfill it.

On one hand, doing *Teshuvah* and becoming a true *baal Teshuvah* is a high level that is hard to attain. It requires fundamentally changing our whole way of living. It means that from now on, we live according to Torah and *yiras Shamayim*.

On the other hand, it is not hard to fulfill the *mitzvah* according to its basic *Halachic* requirements. The Chofetz Chaim remarked that "*Teshuvah* is a *mitzvah* that is easy to fulfill." Its *halachos* are clear. It is thus a very good idea to review them at this time of year, as it says:

וְדַבֵּר בְּעֵתוֹ מֵה טוֹב – Something in its proper time is very good.¹

Here are the basic *halachos* pertaining to *Teshuvah*:

1. **חרטה – Regret.** The first thing is to understand and recognize that it is bad and bitter to rebel against *Hashem*. This is both because of the harsh punishments that eventually overtake sinners, and because it is totally unacceptable to reject the will of He Who gave you so much goodness and kindness since the day you were born. Life itself, every single breath, *parmassah*, family... every little and big thing we have is a gift of love from *Hashem*. How can we be so ungrateful, especially as He is a great and mighty King Who created everything and controls

everything?!

Sometimes a person does an *aveirah* and it seems to him that he gained thereby. For instance, he made a dishonest business deal and earned a nice profit. There are many other ways that bad deeds can yield benefits. We need to understand this properly. These gains will turn out in the end to be heavy and distressing losses. A person needs to truly regret having done that which was to his own detriment, and correct it as best he can.

2. **קבלה – Decision.** Make a true and well-considered decision that such things won't happen again. During *Yamim Nora'im* we tend to get worked up and make all sorts of good resolutions. But sometimes they are above our level, and we won't succeed in carrying through with them. This is why we need to make well-considered decisions, which we are capable of keeping up, rather than just getting carried away by momentary excitement. If we think our resolutions through, we may assume that a change will indeed take place.

3. **וידוי – Confession.** We need to verbalize the above, saying that we sinned by doing such and such, and that we regret it all, and sincerely resolve that it won't happen again.

4. If the sin involved behaving improperly toward another person, *bein adam l'chaveiro*, then we need to make amends. If we caused property damage to someone, or took something that belonged to them, we need to return whatever we owe, and also seek their forgiveness for the pain and trouble we caused them.

There are many levels to *Teshuvah*. We have focused here on the essential *halachos* pertaining to the *mitzvah* of *Teshuvah*. We need to feel pain over what happened in the past and pray to *Hashem* that He should accept us back and restore our relationship with Him.

If we fulfill this *mitzvah* even regarding just one matter, we merit a *mitzvah* that is above all others.

¹ Mishlei 15:23.

Hashem calls us “loved,” “desired,” “close” and “friend.” We are attached to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. We have come to an amazing place!

The Crane of Teshuvah

These wonderful and special days are called the Ten Days of Repentance. This raises a question: how can there be days specially designated for *Teshuvah*, when *Teshuvah* is a *mitzvah* that applies every day?

R. Eliezer says: Repent a day before you die.²

This means we should do *Teshuvah* every day, because no one knows the day he will die. If so, what is special and different about *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*?

Teshuvah has two parts. The first is *vidui* and *charatah*, confession and regret. The second part is changing how we behave and getting back on the right path. The first part, *vidui* and *charatah*, is not so hard. It is easy to look back and identify lackings in our past behavior and admit it. But resolving to change our behavior from now on, keeping to the right path, this is very difficult. The force of habit is very powerful. It makes improper ways, and even outright sins, into second nature. They become part of a person to the point that uprooting a negative trait or accustomed behavior feels like giving up a

² *Avos* 2:10.

part of himself. This takes a lot of strength and *siyata d'Shmaya*.

For this reason we were given *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. These days have a very special quality. They have great *siyata d'Shmaya* which makes it easier to do *Teshuvah*. The following metaphor illustrates the point.

When you go to a building site you sometimes see giant beams, each of which weighs tons. There is no way in the world a person could pick up one of them with his bare hands and put it in place. That's why they bring in a giant crane to raise the beam. Once it is suspended in the air, a worker standing on the wall can turn the beam this way and that way with his bare hands and direct it to its proper place. Once the crane picked it up, it's easy to move it around.

This is how it is with *Teshuvah*. It is indeed very hard to do proper *Teshuvah*. It takes tremendous strength. It is like lifting a very heavy object from the ground.

This is how it is during the rest of the year. But during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, after hearing the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, and with the special *kedushah* of these days, it is like *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* lifted up the whole world with a giant crane. We are up in the air. Now we have the ability to finish the job, to rectify our souls, to correct our behavior patterns, to do true, proper *Teshuvah*. This will cause our entire year to be blessed. ●

SPECIAL TOPIC

These words of Torah were written by Moreinu Harav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l himself, before Yom Kippur 5749

Show Your Merchandise

The big day is coming. Yom Kippur. It is called

The Radiance of Shofar

Shabbos Shabbason. It is the great and holy day on which the Jewish people are like angels. We wear white, we don't eat and drink, we have no envy and competition. We resemble heavenly beings.

The following allegory illustrates what is happening on these awesome days. A rich man had a

lavish palace that was magnificently furnished. One day the palace burnt down along with everything in it. The rich man built a splendid new building, and now he wants to buy new furniture and appliances for it.

He examines everything he wants to buy very well to see if it is sturdy and well-built and tasteful, and whether it fits in nicely with the new house.

Although he would not have thrown a table out of his old house just because of some imperfection that he could either repair or live with, it is different now that he is buying everything new. He is not going to bring in a table that is wobbly or scratched up. If it is not in perfect condition, he will not even consider it.

This is how it is on Rosh Hashanah. This is the day when *Hashem* created the world, and He recreates it every year anew on this same day. And He wants to populate this new world that He is creating. Since the world is brand-new, He examines each and every person to see if he is in tip-top shape and is fitting to the new world.

Last year, even if he did some things wrong and marred himself, it is likely that *Hashem* had mercy on him and didn't throw him out. But only proper and fitting people are going to be put into the new world that is being created now.

During these days we may be compared to merchants coming to show their wares. Like every merchant who wants his wares to be bought up, we need to show samples of what we have to offer.

This is how it is during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. We increase our *Teshuvah*, *Tefilah* and *Tzedakah*. We devote as much time as we can to Torah learning.

This is especially true on Yom Kippur, when we show ourselves as pure and holy like angels. These are the "samples" of our deeds that we show to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. We want to show that we have revamped ourselves and done real *Teshuvah*, and we are fitting to be part of the new world just now being created.

But there is a problem here. Let's say a merchant

shows fine, attractive samples of merchandise, but he doesn't have in stock the same quality of merchandise that he showed.

In such a case, he has misled his customer. The buyer wants what will be supplied to him from the warehouse; he didn't purchase mere samples.

So it is with us. We can't just show *Hashem* on Yom Kippur that we are full of *yiras Shamayim* and good deeds, and in fine spiritual shape, if we don't intend to behave that way all year long. What will we answer *Hashem* if He says that we showed Him false and misleading samples?

On these awesome days, we are showing to *Hashem*, and mainly to ourselves, that we can indeed live a life of Torah and *mitzvos*. We need to take proper advantage of this opportunity so it will serve as a good beginning for the coming year, and extend its blessed influence throughout the rest of the year.

Yud Gimel Midos

Our recitation of *Hashem's* Thirteen Traits of Mercy is a most wondrous thing.

עַל פְּנֵי וַיִּקְרָא – “*Hashem* passed before him and exclaimed...” R. Yochanan said: If the Torah would not have written this, we could not have said such a thing.

It teaches that *Hashem* wrapped Himself in a *tallis* like a *shaliach tzibbur* and showed Moshe an order of prayer. *Hashem* said to him, “Whenever the Jewish people sin, they should perform this order of prayer before Me [i.e., the *Yud Gimel Midos*,] and I will pardon them.”¹

Chazal thereby explain to us the tremendous, awesome power of this special prayer, of the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*.

We recite this prayer especially during *Aseres*

¹ Rosh Hashanah 17.

Yemei Teshuvah, and above all on Yom Kippur, which is the day most connected to these traits of Divine mercy.

The *chazan* stands before the *amud* and calls out: ...ה' ה' א-ל רחום וחנון... But who is the real *shaliach tzibbur* at that time? So to speak, it is *Hashem* Himself, declaring the *Yud Gimel Midos*, enwrapped in a white shawl of *rachamim*, as it says:

– וְעֵתִיק יוֹמִין יָתֵב לְבוּשָׁה כְּתֹלֵג חָוֵר –
“The Ancient of Days is sitting, and His garment is white as snow.”²

It makes a big difference who is the *chazan* in *shul*.

Eliyahu Hanavi would come regularly to the *yeshivah* of R. Yehudah Hanasi. Once, on *Rosh Chodesh*, he was late and did not come. R. Yehudah Hanasi asked him, “Why were you late?”

He answered, “I awoke *Avraham Avinu*, washed his hands, and then he prayed, and then I put him back to bed. And after that, Yitzchak, and after that, Yaakov. Because if I would get them all up and they would pray together, *Mashiach* would come before the time.”

R. Yehudah Hanasi asked him, “Is there anyone like the *Avos Hakedoshim* in today’s world?” He answered, “R. Chiya and his sons.”

Once, when there was no rain, R. Yehudah Hanasi declared a public fast, and sent R. Chiya and his sons to serve as the *chazanim*. R. Chiya said *Mashiv haruach*, and the wind blew. He said *Morid hageshem*, and the rain fell. When

they came to say *Mechayeh hameisim*, the entire world shook. *Eliyahu Hanavi* came in the form of a fiery lion and disturbed them, and they stopped praying.³

This story shows us the power of the *shaliach tzibbur* when he is wise and holy like R. Chiya and his sons. His prayer is accepted immediately, to the point that if they would have recited *Mechayeh hameisim*, the dead would have come back to life. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is called the *Tzaddik* of the world, and He is our *shaliach tzibbur*!

And when we recite the Thirteen Traits of Divine Mercy, it is as if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself is the *shaliach tzibbur*. Surely this opens the gates of *rachamim* above to bring atonement for the Jewish people.

However, it says in *Sefer Tomer Devorah*, authored by the saintly R. Moshe Cordovero, that the main point of reciting these traits of mercy is to bring us to practice them ourselves. It is for us to be merciful and compassionate, to refrain from anger, to bear offence and insult. It is not a mere recitation of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*'s compassionate traits and ways. As he writes there:

The Thirteen Traits, by which a person resembles his Maker, which are the traits of Divine mercy. Their special power is as follows: just as a person behaves down here on earth, so he will merit that the Heavenly trait will open for him above.

Just like he conducts himself, so will he receive the Heavenly influx from above, and thereby cause that trait to shine in the world.

May we all, the entire *Beis Yisrael*, merit a *gemar chasimah tovah, amen!* ●

² Daniel 7:9.

³ Bava Metzia 85.

Your Father in Heaven Purifies You

It's Uplifting to Cease Eating

The Jewish people had no *Yamim Tovim* like... Yom Kippur... because it entails forgiveness and pardon.¹

Yom Kippur is a day like none other. It is a day of *tefilah* and *teshuvah*, a day on which the Jewish people's sins are forgiven and atoned.

The very fast of Yom Kippur is different from all others. This is because other fasts are days of self-affliction and *teshuvah* in remembrance of tragic events that happened at that time. Whereas Yom Kippur is "*Shabbos shabbason*,"² a day of total cessation. It is a day on which we simply cease from eating and drinking.

The point of this cessation is not to cause ourselves discomfort. Just as cessation from work on *Shabbos* is not a discomfort – rather, on this day we involve ourselves in matters loftier than working in the field, and our cessation brings us a much more exalted happiness – so it is on Yom Kippur. A person ceases from eating and drinking, and is uplifted to a much higher spiritual level.

Yom Kippur is a Totally Different System

When we compare Yom Kippur to the rest of the year we encounter a puzzling point. On the one hand, we *daven* and learn all year long. Surely this has an effect. On the other hand, we are told that everything depends on Yom Kippur. How are we to understand this?

The truth is that *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, culminating in Yom Kippur, is totally different from the rest of the year. To borrow a metaphor from ancient astronomy, this may be compared to celestial systems. There is one system in which the sun and

moon and stars are considered together, such that they follow a certain orbit relative to the earth, as determined by a great celestial sphere. And there is another system in which the sun has its own sphere and the moon has its own sphere which determine their individual orbits. These two systems coexist.

Yom Kippur is like the first system. It is like the great sphere determining the orbit of everything. At the same time, each day has also its own individual "sphere," its own *avodah* and its own *tefilah*. Nonetheless, Yom Kippur makes it all go round. Everything depends on this day.

This idea is expressed in the *Siddur HaRashash*, in which are set forth all the *kavanos* of the Arizal for the *tefilos*. It says there that on *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and during *Sefiras HaOmer*, one should not have the regular *kavanos* of the rest of the year. Rather, there are special *kavanos* for these days. This is because on each ordinary day, the *shefa* that descends from Heaven is "like water that flows drop by drop," as it says in the *Rashash's Siddur*. Single drops of *shefa* descend from Above. But on these special days, "the windows of Heaven" open up and boundless *shefa* is bestowed upon us.

To appreciate the power of Yom Kippur, we should know that there are two forms of *avodas Hashem*. The first, which is the main *avodah* we engage in most of the time, is that a person builds himself up. He works on his *yiras Shamayim*, his *ahavas Hashem*, his *limud haTorah* and so forth. The second form of *avodah* is that a person serves *Hashem* and prays for the *siyata d'Shmaya* that *Hashem*, on His part, should bring about the change. *Hashem* should uplift him.

There are two ways to merit this *siyata d'Shmaya*. The first is to pray to *Hashem* and ask Him for His help. (I knew a certain *yeshivah* boy whose *davening* on Yom Kippur was being disrupted by inappropriate

¹ *Taanis* 30b.

² *Vayikra* 16:31.

thoughts that kept going through his head. When he saw that it was too much already, he said to *Hashem* in the middle of his *tefilah*, “*Ribono shel Olam*, I can’t stand it anymore. I’m not able to control my thoughts – please, You protect me!” Right away he saw how everything cleared up.)

The second way is as follows: even if a person doesn’t have the knowledge and intelligence it takes to turn to *Hashem* and ask for His help, he should simply “take shelter” in *Hashem*.

It is written:

טוֹב לְחַסוֹת בַּה' מִבְּטַח בְּאָדָם – It is better to take shelter in Hashem than to trust in man.³

The *Vilna Gaon* in his commentary on this *pasuk* explains that “taking shelter” means a person simply comes and seeks shelter although he has received no promise that he will receive protection. (The *pasuk* is thus saying that the unpromised shelter of *Hashem* is better than the promised help of man.) It is like someone sheltering himself under a tree. Even if he has slighted the tree and not treated it properly, when he places himself under the shade of the tree, the tree still protects him. So it is with a person who takes shelter in the shade of Hashem. He will receive *siyata d'Shamaya* even if he doesn’t pray for it and ask for it.

The Day Itself Does It

This idea can explain the difference between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

On Rosh Hashanah we are called upon to work and toil. We recite *Malchuyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofaros*. The *Malchuyos* declare *Hashem* as our King, the *Zichronos* raise our remembrance up to

³ *Mishlei* 14:26.

Hashem for the good, and the *Shofaros* are the means that accomplish this.⁴ We have a lot of work to do on Rosh Hashanah. But on Yom Kippur we do hardly anything ourselves. Everything comes from *Hashem*.

On Yom Kippur, the day itself effects the atonement, as the Rambam writes:

The very day of Yom Kippur atones.⁵

The holy day of Yom Kippur has this power because it is *Hashem's* day. *Hashem* alone atones for us and purifies us.

R. Yehudah HaNasi goes even farther and says that Yom Kippur atones also for someone who doesn’t do *teshuvah*.⁶ Indeed, the *Halachah* is not this way. We must do *teshuvah* along with the atonement in order for it to work. Nevertheless, we are taught that *teshuvah* is really no more than a necessary condition for the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur to go into effect. The essential atonement does not come from us and our deeds. It does not stem from the greatness of each one of us, as expressed on this day. Rather, it is written:

יָמִים יֵצְרוּ וְלוֹ אֶחָד בָּהֶם – Though many days will be fashioned, just one of them is His.⁷

Chazal say that this one day is Yom Kippur.⁸ *Hashem* alone purifies and cleanses us on Yom Kippur. It is “His” day. “Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven!”⁹ ●

⁴ *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.

⁵ *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:3.

⁶ *Yoma* 85b.

⁷ *Tehillim* 139:16; rendered according to *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabba* 1.

⁸ *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu* *ibid*.

⁹ *Yoma* 85b.