
YOM KIPPUR

The Day of Atonement

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter teaches that there is no greater day for the Jewish people than Yom Kippur, when we are granted the extraordinary opportunity to do *teshuvah* (repent) and atone for our transgressions. Yom Kippur is uniquely powerful – people who are earnest in their teshuvah transform themselves through hard work to perfect their character and reconcile their relationships with other individuals and with God. The Morasha shiur on Teshuvah is a recommended pre-requisite for this class.

This class will address the following questions:

- ~ What is the origin of Yom Kippur?
- ~ What are the observances and practices specific to Yom Kippur?
- ~ What is the special gift of Yom Kippur to the Jewish people?
- ~ How can we use Yom Kippur to change ourselves?

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SECTION I. WHAT IS YOM KIPPUR?

1. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:27, 31 – Yom Kippur is the eternal day of God's forgiveness and atonement for those who want to return to Him.**

On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be a holy gathering to you; and you shall afflict your souls, and offer a fire offering to God.

You shall do no kind of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

אך בעשור לחדש השביעי הזה יום הכפרים הוא מקרא קדש יהיה לכם וענייתם את נפשתיכם והקרבתם אשה לה':

כל מלאכה לא תעשו חקת עולם לדורותיכם בכל מושבותיכם:

2. **Sefer HaChinuch 185 – The continued existence of the world depends on the teshuvah of Yom Kippur.**

The basis of this mitzvah is that due to God's kindness towards the Jewish people He established one day a year upon which they can atone for their sins by the teshuvah they do. If their sins would accumulate each year, their limit would be reached within a few years and the world would have to be destroyed. Therefore, in order for the world to exist, God, in His wisdom, established one day a year to enable those who repent to receive atonement for their sins.

משרשי המצוה שהיה מחסדי הקל על בריותיו לקבוע להן יום אחד בשנה לכפרה על החטאים עם התשובה שישובו, שאילו יתקבצו עוונות הבריות שנה שנה תתמלא סאתם לסוף שנתיים או שלוש או יותר ויתחייב העולם כליה. על כן ראה בחכמתו ברוך הוא, לקיום העולם, לקבוע יום אחד בשנה לכפרת חטאים לשבים...

SECTION II. THE FIRST YOM KIPPUR IN JEWISH HISTORY IS FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS

As the following sources will illustrate, Yom Kippur was established as the Day of Atonement after Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses) descended from Mt. Sinai for the third time and the Jewish people became fully reconciled with God after the transgression of the Golden Calf.

1. **Shemot (Exodus) 32:15, 19 – On the seventeenth of Tammuz, after forty days on Mt. Sinai, Moshe broke the Tablets upon seeing the Golden Calf.**

And Moshe (Moses) turned, and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand; the tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

ויפן ויורד מושׁה מן ההר ושני לוחות העדות בידו לחות כתבים משני עבריהם מזה ומזה הם כתבים:

And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp, he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moshe became very angry, and he threw the tablets from his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְא אֶת הָעֵגֶל וּמַחֲלֵת וַיַּחַר
אֶף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת הַלְּחֹת וַיִּשְׁבֶּר אֹתָם תַּחַת
הַהָר:

2. **Shemot 32:30 – Moshe returned to Mt. Sinai for forty days on the eighteenth of Tammuz to seek atonement for the Jewish people.**

On the next day Moshe said to the nation, “You sinned greatly, and now I will ascend to [speak with God], perhaps I will be able to seek atonement for your transgression.”

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטֵאתֶם
חַטָּא גְדוֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֵעֲלֶה אֶל ה' אֹלֵי אֲכַפְרָה בְּעַד
חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם:

3. **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 9:18 – During those forty days Moshe did not drink or eat.**

I petitioned before God for the first time for forty days and forty nights. Bread I did not eat and water I did not drink on account of your entire transgression (of the Golden Calf)...

וַאֲנִי נִפְלַל לִפְנֵי ה' כְּרֵאשֹׁנָה אַרְבַּעַיִם יוֹם וְאַרְבַּעַיִם לַיְלָה
לֶחֶם לֹא אֲכַלְתִּי וּמַיִם לֹא שְׁתִּיתִי עַל כָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם...

4. **Shemot 34:1– After the forty days, on the twenty-ninth of Av, Moshe again descended from Mt. Sinai after God accepted his prayers on behalf of the Jewish people for the transgression of the Golden Calf.**

And God said to Moshe, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first; and I will write upon these tablets the words that were in the first tablets, which you broke.”

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה פְּסֹל לְךָ שְׁנֵי לְחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים
וְכַתְּבֵתִי עַל הַלְּחֹת אֶת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל הַלְּחֹת
הַרְאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ:

5. **Rashi, Devarim 9:18– The next day Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai for the third time on Rosh Chodesh Elul and descended forty days later on Yom Kippur, when the Jewish people and God became fully reconciled.**

... As it says, “And now I will go up to God maybe I will receive atonement” (Shemot 32:30). This [second ascent on Mt. Sinai] began on the eighteenth of Tammuz and [Moshe] remained there for forty days, which ended on the twenty-ninth day of Av. On that day, God was reconciled with the Jewish people and said to Moshe, “Hew for yourself two Tablets ...” [Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai a third time on Rosh Chodesh Elul] and remained an additional forty days which ended with his return on Yom Kippur.

On that day God and the Jewish people were fully reconciled in joy and God said to Moshe, “I have forgiven you according to your words,” and therefore Yom Kippur was established as a day of pardon and forgiveness.

שְׁנֵי אֲבָנִים וְעַתָּה אֵעֲלֶה אֶל ה' אֹלֵי אֲכַפְרָה בְּאוֹתָהּ עֲלֵי
נִתְעַכְבְּתִי אַרְבַּעַיִם יוֹם נִמְצְאוּ כָלִים בְּכ"ט בְּאָב שֶׁהוּא
עֵלָה בִּי"ח בְּתַמוּז בּו בְּיוֹם נִתְרַצָּה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲמַר לְמֹשֶׁה פְּסֹל לְךָ שְׁנֵי לְחֹת עֲשֵׂה עוֹד מ' יוֹם
נִמְצְאוּ כָלִים בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

בּו בְּיוֹם נִתְרַצָּה הַקָּב"ה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׂמְחָה וַאֲמַר לוֹ
לְמֹשֶׁה סְלַחְתִּי כְּדַבְּרְךָ לִכְךָ הוֹקְבֵעַ לְמַחֲלָה וּלְסִלְיָהּ.

6. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. II, p. 21 – Yom Kippur is a day imbued with an intrinsic spiritual energy of atonement and reconciliation.**

We have already explained that we do not have a token celebration of the festivals, rather we actually return to each festival's origin in time; the very same holiness of time that influences us today is the same as when the festivals were first commemorated. Rav Tzvi Hirsh Broide from Kelm said that time does not pass by a person; rather, a person travels through time.

For example, on the very first Shabbat there was a "station in time" that was established called Shabbat, and every week a person reaches that same station in time, with exactly the same influence of holiness as the first Shabbat. Similarly regarding the festivals: every year a person returns to the same stations in time of the respective festivals. For example, each year at Passover, a person reaches the "station" of redemption from Egypt, at which time it is possible for him to attain the spiritual energy of the revelation of freedom – for Passover is in actuality the time of our freedom.

כבר ביארנו שלא למזכרת אנו חוגגים את המועדים, אלא חוזרים אנו בהם לתוכנם המקורי – לאותה קדושת הזמן שנשפעת גם עכשיו כבעת ההיא. אמר מו"ר זצ"ל (הרב צבי הירש ברוידא זצ"ל מקלם) כי לא הזמן עובר על האדם, אלא האדם נוסע בתוך הזמן.

למשל: בשבת הראשונה כאילו נקבעה 'תחנה' ששמה שבת, ובכל שבוע ושבוע מגיע האדם לאותה 'תחנה' עצמה – ממש אותה השפעת קדושה עצמה של שבת בראשית. וכן במועדים: בכל שנה ושנה חוזר האדם ומגיע אל 'תחנת' גאולת מצרים, אשר בזמן ההוא אפשר להשיג השפעת הגילוי של חירות – זמן חירותנו ממש.

SECTION III. OBSERVANCES OF THE DAY

The restrictions of Yom Kippur remove us from materialism and enable us to focus on our spiritual essence and goals.

1. **Mishnah Yoma 8:1 – The restrictions.**

On Yom Kippur it is forbidden to eat, drink, wash, anoint, wear leather shoes and have marital relations. Rabbi Eliezer states that a king and a bride may wash their faces, and one who has given birth may wear leather shoes. The Sages forbid them.

יום הכפורים אסור באכילה ובשתיה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה והמלך והכלה ירחצו את פניהם והחיה תנעול את הסנדל דברי רבי אליעזר וחכמים אוסרין.

2. **Ibid, 8:5 – Qualifications to the restrictions.**

A pregnant woman [who both she and the fetus are endangered because of an uncontrollable desire to eat] after she smells [an aroma of a specific food], is fed until she is satisfied. A sick person is fed following the consultation of experts, and if there are no experts available he is fed until he says he has had enough.

עוברה שהריחה מאכילין אותה עד שתשיב נפשה חולה מאכילין אותו ע"פ בקיאים ואם אין שם בקיאים מאכילין אותו על פי עצמו עד שיאמר די.

In the following sources, we will delve into the deeper meaning behind fasting.

3. **Sefer HaChinuch 313 – Fasting helps remove the distractions of the physical world so that man can elevate himself spiritually and prepare himself for his judgment.**

The basis for the mitzvah [of Yom Kippur], is that as a result of God's kindness for His creations He established one day each year for them to atone for their sins through repentance ...

Therefore, we are commanded to fast on this day, since food and drink, as well as the other physical pleasures, awaken the materialistic side of man to pursue desire, and can lead one to sin and distract a person from seeking truth, which is serving God ...

It is not fitting for a person who will be judged by God to come to his judgment in a state distracted by the physical world and by food and drink. For a person is judged according to his actions at that very time. Therefore, it is beneficial for man to elevate his spirituality and reduce his connection to the physical world on that honorable day, in order that he should be worthy and able to receive forgiveness ...

משרשי המצוה, שהיה מחסדי השם על כל בריותיו לקבוע להם יום אחד בשנה לכפר על החטאים עם התשובה...

ולכן נצטוונו להתענות בו, לפי שהמאכל והמשתה ויתר הנאות חוש המישוש יעוררו החומר להמשך אחר התאוה והחטא, ויבטלו צורת הנפש החכמה מחפש אחר האמת שהוא עבודת האל...

ואין ראוי לעבד ביום בואו לדין לפני אדוניו לבוא בנפש חשוכה ומעורבת מתוך המאכל והמשתה, במחשבות החומר אשר היא בתוכו, שאין דינן את האדם אלא לפי מעשיו שבאותה שעה, על כן טוב לו להגביר נפשו החכמה ולהכניע החומר לפניו באותו היום הנכבד, למען תהיה ראויה ונכונה לקבל כפרתה...

4. **Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, Sefer HaKuzari III:5 – Rising above one's animal nature to become like an angel.**

Behold, the fast on this great day enables the diligent person to be similar to the angels in the respect that he passes the day in humility, by lowering his head, by standing and bowing down [in prayer], and by praising and glorifying God. And one nullifies all of his physical powers by being involved only in the spiritual realm, as if he had no animal nature at all.

וצימו ביום ההוא צום שהוא קרוב בו להתדמות במלאכים מפני שהוא גומרו בכניעה ובשפלות ובעמידה ובכריעות ותושבחות ותהלות וכל כחותיו הגופיים צמים מהעניינים הטבעיים ומתעסקים בתוריים כאילו אין בו טבע בהמי.

5. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. I, p. 267 – Fasting allows one to rise above the physical world and cleave to God.**

Through fasting and humbling oneself one merits to distance himself from his animalistic nature – the world of the physical, and to come close to connecting with God.

ע"י הצום והכניעה והשפלות זוכה להתרחק מטבע הבהמיות – עולם החומר, ולהתקרב ולהתדבק בהש"ת.

6. **Ramchal (Rabbi Chaim Moshe Luzzatto), Derech Hashem, (The Way of God) 4:8:4 – The life-giving power and spiritual light of this day is accessed by fasting and the other mitzvot of the day.**

The significance of Yom Kippur is that God has prepared for the Jewish people one day upon which repentance will be accepted more readily, and wrong-doings can be readily eradicated ... and to return those who repent to their former level of holiness and closeness to Him, from which they were distanced by their wrong-doings.

On this day a great spiritual light shines forth that helps to bring all of this about. However, in order to receive this light, one must observe the commandments of the day. This is especially so regarding the afflictions, for through them one disassociates himself from physicality to a great degree, and approaches, albeit slightly, the level of angels.

ענין יום הכפורים הוא, שהנה הכין האדון ב"ה לישראל יום אחד, שבו תהיה התשובה קלה להתקבל, והעונות קרובים לימחות... ולהשיב השבים אל מדריגת הקדושה והקורבה אליו ית', שנתרחקו ממנו על ידי חטאתיהם.

והנה ביום זה מאיר אור שבכחו נשלם כל זה הענין. ואמנם הוא אור שלקבל אותו צריך שישמרו ישראל מזה שנצטוו ליום זה, ובפרט ענין העינוי, שעליה מתנתקים מן הגופניות ניתוק גדול, ומתעלים במקצת אל בחינת המלאכים.

7. **Maharal, Drashah L'Shabbat Teshuvah – The five physical restrictions of the day were given to remove all physical limitations from the five levels of a person's soul.**

God commanded the five afflictions of Yom Kippur so that the soul will not be constricted by the body ... and since the soul has five names: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *yechidah* and *chayah*, this is an indication that there are five aspects to the soul ... Corresponding to this we have the five afflictions, to remove physicality [on all five levels].

וביום הכפורים צוה השם יתעלה למעט הגוף ולענות הנפש בחמשה ענויים, ואז אין הנפש מיושבת בגוף, והיא נבדלת לבדה לעצמה מסולקת מן הגופניות והוא כמו מלאך. ומפני כי יש לנפש חמשה שמות נפש רוח ונשמה יחידה חיה, נמצא שיש חמשה דברים בנפש... וכנגד זה חמשה ענויים למעט ולסלק הגופניות.

8. **Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 610:4 – Wearing white and the kittel (white robe).**

... There are those who are accustomed to wear clean white clothing on Yom Kippur, symbolic of the ministering angels. Similarly, it is customary to wear a clean white kittel, which is a garment worn by the deceased. This humbles and breaks the heart of a person.

... יש שנהגו ללבוש בגדים לבנים נקיים בי"כ דוגמת מלאכי השרת וכן נוהגין ללבוש הקיטל שהוא לבן ונקי גם הוא בגד מתים וע"י זה לב האדם נכנע ונשבר.

9. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Berachot 43b – Some smell aromatic spices and mixtures on Yom Kippur to sustain themselves during the fast.**

Rav said, "What is the Scriptural source that states that one should make a blessing on an aroma? It is stated, 'Every soul will praise God' (Tehillim/Psalms 150). Which thing does the soul derive enjoyment from, but the body does not? This is the sense of smell."

אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב מנין שמברכין על הריח שנאמר, כל שהנשמה תהלל י-ה (תהלים ק"נ) איזהו דבר שנהשמה נהנית ממנו ואין הגוף נהנה ממנו הוי אומר זה הריח.

SECTION IV. A DAY OF PRAYER

(For more on Tefillah please see Morasha class on Prayer).

PART A. OVERVIEW OF THE YOM KIPPUR SERVICES

1. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, *Sefer HaToda'ah (The Book of Our Heritage)*, p. 83 – Prayers of the day.

We pray five prayers on Yom Kippur:

Maariv, Shacharit and Minchah that were established for daily meditation.

Mussaf, which was instituted corresponding to the additional offerings that were brought in the Temple on Shabbat and the festivals.

The fifth prayer, called Neilah, is in honor of the holiness of this special day, and we only say this prayer on Yom Kippur. For at this time the gates of the inner sanctuary of the Temple were locked. In addition, the Gates of Mercy are about to be locked. Neilah was established in order to awaken mercy at the time of the locking of the gates.

חמש תפילות מתפללים ביום הכיפורים:

ערבית, שחרית ומנחה, הקבועות בכל יום:

מוסף, שנקבעה לכל שבת, חג ומועד, כנגד המוספים שהקריבו במקדש:

ותפילה חמושית – לכבוד קדושת היום המיוחד הזה, שאין מתפללין אותה בזמן הזה אלא ביום הכיפורים בלבד, ונקראת נעילה, לפי שבאותה שעה ננעלו שערי ההיכל בבית המקדש, וגם שערי רחמים עומדים להנעל, ונתקנה כדי לעורר רחמים בזמן נעילת שערים.

2. Rambam (Maimonides), *Hilchot Tefillah (Laws of Prayer)*, 8:1, based on *Berachot 8a* – Importance of praying with a congregation.

The prayer of the congregation is always heard, even if there are transgressors among them ... Therefore, a person should join the congregation and not pray by himself.

תפלת הציבור נשמעת תמיד ואפילו היו בהן חוטאים... לפיכך צריך אדם לשתף עצמו עם הציבור. ולא יתפלל ביחיד.

PART B. KOL NIDREI

Kol Nidrei, renouncing the vows we undertook during the year, is recited just before sunset and the ushering in of Yom Kippur.

1. *ArtScroll Machzor, Yom Kippur*, p.52 – Why do we recite Kol Nidrei immediately prior to Yom Kippur?

Kol Nidrei emphasizes for us the extreme gravity that the Torah attaches not only to formal vows and oaths, but to the general concept that one must keep his word... Consequently, when we preface the Yom Kippur prayers not with pleas for forgiveness, but with a declaration regarding vows, we are reminding ourselves of the importance of scrupulously honoring our commitments. Thus we begin Yom Kippur with the recognition that a Jew's word is sacred ... It is indicative of the gravity Judaism attaches to vows and promises that the Jew prefaces his Yom Kippur prayers for forgiveness and repentance with Kol Nidrei, we cannot make peace with God until we absolve ourselves from the grievous sin of violating our word.

2. Kol Nidrei Prayer, Yom Kippur Machzor: Translation from ArtScroll p. 59 – Text of Kol Nidrei.

All vows, prohibitions, oaths, consecrations, konam-vows, or equivalent terms that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves – [from the last Yom Kippur until this Yom Kippur, and] from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, may it come upon us for good – regarding them all, we regret them henceforth. They all will be permitted, abandoned, canceled, null and void, without power and without standing. Our vows shall not be valid vows; our prohibitions shall not be valid prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be valid oaths.

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְשִׁבוּעֵי וְחַרְמֵי וְקוֹנָמֵי וְקוֹנָסֵי וְכַנּוּיֵי
דְּאֵנְדְּרְנָא וְדְּאֵשְׁתַּבְּעָנָא וְדְּאֵחַרְיִמְנָא וְדְּאֵסְרְנָא עַל
נַפְשֵׁתָנָא:

מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה. עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה.
כְּכִלְהוֹן אֵיחַרְטָנָא בְּהוֹן. כְּלְהוֹן יְהוֹן שְׁרָן. שְׁבִיקוֹן.
שְׁבִיתוֹן. בְּטֵלִין וּמְבַטְלִין. לֹא שְׁרִירִין וְלֹא קִיּוּמִין:
נִדְרְנָא לֹא נִדְרֵי. וְאֶסְרְנָא לֹא אֶסְרֵי. וְשִׁבוּעֵתָנָא לֹא
שִׁבוּעוֹת:

PART C. TORAH READINGS ON YOM KIPPUR

In the following sources, we will cite sections of the day's Torah reading and then explain their significance and message as it relates to Yom Kippur.

1. Vayikra (Leviticus) 16:1 – By focusing on the premature death of two of Aaron's sons, we realize how precious life is and the tragedy of a lost opportunity.

And God spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aaron; they died when they approached God's presence ...

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם
לִפְנֵי ה' וַיָּמָתוּ.

2. Ibid, 16:7-10 – The lottery of the two goats.

And he (Aaron) shall take two goats and stand them before God at the Tent of Meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one is for God, one is for Azazel. And Aaron will present the goat upon which the lottery fell for God as a sin offering. And the goat upon which the lottery fell for Azazel shall be stood alive before God to make atonement upon him, to send him to Azazel in the desert.

וְלָקַח אֶת שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים וְהִעֲמִיד אֹתָם לִפְנֵי ה' פֶּתַח
אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד. וַנִּתֵּן אֶהֱרֹן עַל שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִים גִּרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל
אֶחָד לַה' וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאזֵל. וְהִקְרִיב אַהֲרֹן אֶת הַשְּׂעִיר
אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַה' וַעֲשָׂהוּ חַטָּאת. וְהַשְּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר
עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעִזָּאזֵל יַעֲמֵד חַי לִפְנֵי ה' לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו
לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזָּאזֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה.

3. Based on Rav Samson Rafael Hirsch, Vayikra 16:10 – Symbolism of the two goats: our life's destiny is determined by our choices.

We have here the representation of two creatures, originally completely identical, which proceed on two entirely contrasting paths. Both are placed together in a similar way before God at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The decision whether to go "towards God" or to go to "Azazel" hovers over both of them in exactly the same way. Their fate through lottery is decided based on what is fitting for them. The one designated to go "towards God" gets admitted to the Holy of Holies, where the ideal of a Jewish Torah life perfects itself as the bearer of Godliness on earth. The other, designated to go to Azazel, remains untouched, at the entrance of the Sanctuary, and is sent out of its precincts, away from the sphere of human habitation into the desert. Having turned its back on the Sanctuary, it ends the uncultivated living it had preserved for itself.

Each one of us is a “Seir.” Each of us has the power to resist the demands made on our will power. It is in the way we use this power that the worthiness or worthlessness of our moral existence depends. We can use it in attachment to God in resisting all internal and external temptation and considerations to become a Seir to God. Or we can use it in obstinate refusal of God and His holy laws of morality. This latter recourse is reflected in the etymology of the term לעיזול – using one’s strength for obstinacy (עז) for no meaningful future (אזל).

4. **Sefer HaChinuch 364 – Teshuvah (the process of sincere return to God by improving one’s character and actions) has replaced the Temple as the vehicle by which one finds closeness to God and release from the mistakes of the past.**

Our Sages said that the *Seir HaMishtaleach* brought atonement when one did teshuvah for all sins that were light or serious; purposeful or accidental; whether known or unknown ...

And now, because of our sins we do not have a Temple nor an Altar to atone for us, we only have teshuvah. Teshuvah atones for all sins; even if one is entirely evil his whole life, but completely repents at the end of it, his evil ways are no longer mentioned.

ואמרו זכרונם לברכה [מתני' ריש שבועות] ששעיר המשתלח היה מכפר כשעשה תשובה על כל עבירות שבתורה הקלות והחמורות בין שעבר עליהן בודון או בשגגה בין שהודע לו או לא הודע לו...

ועכשיו בעוונותינו שאין לנו מקדש ולא מזבח כפרה אין לנו אלא תשובה, והתשובה מכפרת על כל העבירות, אפילו רשע גמור כל ימיו ועשה תשובה שלמה באחרונה אין מזכירין לו שוב רשעו.

5. **Vayikra 18:7-16 – The Arayot (forbidden relationships).**

You shall not cohabit with your father’s wife, your mother ... your father’s wife [though not your mother] ... you shall not cohabit with your sister ... you shall not cohabit with your brother’s wife ...

ערות אביך וערות אמך לא תגלה... ערות אשת אביך לא תגלה... ערות אחותך... לא תגלה... ערות אשת אחיך לא תגלה...

6. **Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda’ah p. 67 – We read the Arayot on Yom Kippur to remind ourselves that despite our elevated moral and spiritual state, we should always guard ourselves against falling.**

From here [the reading of the *Arayot* on Yom Kippur] we see hinted that even if man elevates himself in holiness until the heavens, he should not trust that he has been saved from the swaying of the evil inclination and most coarse deeds. On this holy day when all Jews are purified and become like angels, the Reader reads before them the parshah of immoral acts and warns them not to act immorally.

מכאן רמז לאדם שאפילו יתעלה במעלות הקדושה עד לשמים, אל יבטח בעצמו שכבר ניצל מפיתוי היצר הרעים והגסים ביותר, שכן בסוף היום הקדוש שכל ישראל נודככו ונעשו כמלאכים, עומד הקורא וקורא לפנייהם בפרשת עריות ומזהיר אותם לבלתי עשות מחוקות התועבות.

PART D. SEFER YONAH

On Yom Kippur afternoon we read about the Prophet Yonah (Jonah), sent by God to admonish the non-Jewish people of Nineveh to do Teshuvah. He initially attempted to run away from this mission, for he reasoned that they would indeed repent, which would embarrass the Jewish people in Israel, whom Yonah feared would not do so.

1. **Vilna Gaon, Aderet Eliyahu Yonah 1:33 – This prophecy is a metaphor: this world is a sea, and our body is the ship by which the soul is transported to the dry land of the World to Come.**

“Yonah found a boat heading for Tarshish.” This world is compared to the ocean. The World to Come and the Garden of Eden are compared to the dry land. One who sets sail on the sea does not intend to sail forever; the goal is to transport goods to the dry land.

This world is compared to the ocean and the challenges we encounter are the waves. Our bodies are compared to the ship and through it we cross the ocean. So too, in this world our bodies contain our soul which we bring to the World to Come.

וימצא אניה: ועניינו כי העולם הזה דומה לים ועוה"ב
וג"ע דומה ליבשה שכל ענין יורדי הים אינם יורדים
להשתקע שם אלא להביא סחורה ליבשה.

וכן נמשל עוה"ז לים וצרות עוה"ז לגלים... וגוף דומה
לספינה שע"י יורדים לים כן הנשמה ע"י הגוף בעוה"ז
באה לעוה"ב.

2. **Ibid. – Yonah initially avoided his mission, which is something we may do when we are afraid of fulfilling our purpose in life.**

It is written in Sefer Yonah, “Yonah arose to run away.” As the Zohar relates: Yonah’s intention was to escape from God.

ויקם יונה לברוח: כמ"ש בזהר שדעתו לברוח מהשם.

3. **Ibid. 1:1 – Yonah’s experience teaches others that they too should pursue their purpose in life: to perfect their characters and the world around them.**

Everything God said to Yonah was then communicated to the Jewish nation so that each person would know why they were brought into this world: their purpose was to perfect themselves and the world at large.

כל מה שאמר לו ה' יאמר הכל לישראל שידעו למה
באו לעולם שיתקנו כ"א וא' א"ע וגם כל העולם.

4. **Yonah 1:6 – Waking up and finding our purpose in life.**

So the ship’s captain came to him, and said to him, “How can you sleep now? Arise! Call upon your God! Perhaps God will give a thought to us that we will not perish.”

ויקרב אליו רב החבל ויאמר לו מיה לך נרדם קום קרא
אל אלהיך אולי יתעשת האלהים לנו ולא נאבד:

5. **Ibid, 1:8-9 – The importance of identifying as Jews.**

Then they said to him, “Tell us, we beg you, for whose cause is this evil upon us? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And which nation are you from?” And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land.”

ויאמרו אליו הגידה נא לנו באשר למי הרעה הזאת לנו
מה מלאכתך ומאין תבוא מה ארצך ואי מזה עם אתה:
ויאמר אליהם עברי אנכי ואת ה' אלהי השמים אני ירא
אשר עשה את הים ואת היבשה:

PART E. NEILAH

Just as Yom Kippur is the climax of the Ten Days of Teshuvah that precede it, so Neilah (meaning “closing”, a reference to the closing of the gates of prayer at nightfall) is the dramatic climax of Yom Kippur.

1. Mishnah Brurah 623:3 – In the final hours of the day one should rouse himself in a final effort to return sincerely to God.

In the Neilah prayers we ask that God “seal” us instead of “inscribe” [us in the Book of Life]. For during Neilah the Heavenly judgment that was written for each person on Rosh HaShanah is sealed, whether for good or for bad.

One should make a great effort to motivate oneself during this prayer for it is the culmination of both the Ten Days of Teshuvah and of Yom Kippur, since one’s fate is decided by the sealing of the judgment. And if not now, when?

Therefore, even if one is weak from fasting, nevertheless he should strengthen himself to pray with pure and clear thoughts, and to take upon himself the commitment to do teshuvah sincerely and truthfully. For one who comes to purify himself is assisted [by Heaven] and will be sealed in the Book of Good Life.

וכן כשמגיע לכתוב יאמר וחתום וכן יאמר בספר חיים
וכו' נזכר ונחתם. כי בנעילה הוא חתימת הגז"ד שנכתב
בר"ה על בני אדם לטוב או לרע

ויזדרז מאד בתפלה זו כי תכלית כל העשי"ת הוא יוה"כ
ותכלית יוה"כ הוא תפלת נעילה שהכל הולך אחר
החיתום ואם לא עכשיו אימתי

ולכן אף אם חלש הוא מחמת התענית מ"מ יאזור
כגבור חלציו להתפלל במחשבה זכה וברורה ולקבל
ע"ע נדרי התשובה באמת והבא לטהר מסייעין אותו
ויחתם בספר חיים טובים.

2. Neilah Service, Yom Kippur Machzor – God welcomes back those who return, just as a king would welcome back his son, the prince, to the royal palace.

You give Your Hand to transgressors and Your Right [Hand] is extended to those who return. Teach us Lord, God to confess before You all of our transgressions in order to stop our swindling.

אתה נותן יד לפושעים וימונך פשוטה לקבל שבים.
ותלמדנו ה' אלהינו להתודות לפניך על כל עונותינו
למען נחדל מעשק ידינו.

3. Rabbi Yissocher Frand, In Print, ArtScroll, p. 30 –Everyone is born with a unique combination of strengths, into a particular time period, to fulfill the Divine plan in a way that no one else can.

Every Amidah of Yom Kippur ends with ... “My God before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed.”

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook interpreted this sentence as follows:

“Until I was born, it was not the time for me; my specific mission in life was for this period and no other. And now that I have come into this historic epoch, it is as if I was never born, for I have squandered the abilities that were given me in order to fulfill this mission.”

Not only is each one of us brought into this world with a unique combination of strengths, but each of us is brought into the world at a particular time when those powers are needed for the fulfillment of some part of the Divine plan.

Thus נחקה requires both introspection concerning ourselves and intense reflection concerning the situation of the Jewish people in the period in which we live.

SECTION V. A DAY OF TESHUVAH – INTROSPECTION AND COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

(The Morasha Class on Teshuvah is a prerequisite for this section)

PART A. MAKING A CONCRETE PLAN FOR TESHUVAH ON YOM KIPPUR

1. **Rosh HaShanah - Yom Kippur Survival Kit, Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf, Leviathan Press, p.105 – Before Yom Kippur, prepare a list of areas in which you can improve, and then use the day to do teshuvah in each area.**

1. Look at your life in terms of three spheres of relationships: one with yourself, one with God and one with other people. Then make a list of five mistakes you have made in each sphere and rank them from most to least serious.
2. Take your list with you to synagogue on Yom Kippur and plan a strategy for the day. For example: On Yom Kippur night you will take one of your top three mistakes through the four-step teshuvah process. (Regarding mistakes where you have hurt or wronged another person, it is most appropriate to ask that person for forgiveness before Yom Kippur.) During the morning service you will concentrate on the next two and so on. Pacing yourself will make this process easier. And if you don't make it through the list this year, there is always next year.
3. Keep your list of mistakes in a private place, but make sure you won't lose track of it. You should try to review this list for fifteen minutes once a month.
4. ...With regard to teshuvah, every effort you make and every step you take brings you close to where you want to be. No one can ever take away a step of progress, a step of growth or a step toward greatness.

2. **Talmud Bavli, Yoma 85b – Special assistance is granted to those who want to improve themselves and return to God.**

Rabbi Akiva said, “Happy are you, Israel! Before Whom do you become purified? And Who is it that makes you pure? Your Father in Heaven, as it is said: ‘And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean.’ And it further says, ‘The Mikveh of Israel is God’”

אמר רבי עקיבא: אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, מי מטהר אתכם - אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר (יחזקאל לו) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם ואומר (ירמיהו יז) מקוה ישראל (ה').

3. **Rabbi Yissocher Frand In Print, ArtScroll, p. 38 – Charting a strategy.**

This Mishnah is problematic. Why did Rabbi Akiva have to bring two separate verses in support of his statement? To answer this question Rabbi Hirsh Spector, the son of Rabbi Elchonon Spector, pointed

out that there are two types of halachic purifications in water. In one, the person is required to completely immerse himself in a mikveh; in the other, it is sufficient for the Kohen to sprinkle even a drop of specially prepared water upon the person to become ritually pure again.

Similarly, said Reb Hirsch, there are two types of teshuvah. One is a complete teshuvah which can be symbolized by complete immersion in a mikveh. But there is another level of teshuvah, which can be symbolized by the sprinkling of one drop of special water. The latter type of teshuvah is less complete, less dramatic; it builds up over the years, drop by drop, until a complete teshuvah is achieved.

PART B. VIDUY – CONFESSING, PRIVATELY TO GOD

As explained in the Morasha shiur on Teshuvah, *viduy*, confessing one's transgressions, is one of the four essential steps in the teshuvah process. As the next sources will show, the Yom Kippur services provide the opportunity for a complete viduy.

1. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah, 2:2 – The four steps of teshuvah.

What is teshuvah? It is when the transgressor leaves his sin and removes it from his thoughts and concludes in his heart that he will not do it further as it is stated (Yeshayahu 55:7), "The wicked will leave his ways." Similarly, he must regret [that which he did] in the past ... And He Who knows all that is hidden shall testify on his behalf that he will not return to this specific sin again ... And he needs to confess verbally and speak out those ideas that he concluded in his heart [that he would not continue].

ומה היא התשובה הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד שנאמר, יעזוב רשע דרכו (ישעיה נה:ז). וכן יתנחם על שעבר ... ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם... וצריך להתודות בשפתיו ולומר עניינות אלו שגמר בלבו.

2. Yom Kippur Machzor – The minimum prescribed Viduy.

Our God and God of our fathers, may our prayers come before You. Do not hide from our pleas. For we are not so insolent or obstinate to say before You, "Our God, and the God of our fathers, we are righteous and we have not transgressed," rather we and our ancestors have transgressed ...

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו תבא לפניך תפלתנו ואל תתעלם מתחנו שאין אנחנו עזי פנים וקשי ערף לומר לפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו צדיקים אנחנו ולא חטאנו אבל אנחנו ואבותינו חטאנו...

3. Machzor, Yom Kippur – Articulating our transgressions.

You know the mysteries of the world and the dark secrets of every creature. You search the chambers of man's inner being. There is nothing that is hidden from You, and there is nothing concealed from Your eyes.

Therefore, may it be Your will ... to forgive us for all our transgressions. For the sin we committed before You forcibly or willingly, by acting

אתה יודע רזי עולם ותעלומות סתרי כל חי. אתה חופש כל חדרי בטן... אין דבר נעלם ממך ואין נסתר מנגד עיניך.

ובכן יהי רצון מלפניך... שתמחל לנו על כל פשעינו... על חטא שחטאנו לפניך באנס וברצון... באמוץ הלב...

callously, unintentionally, through idle talk, by offensive speech, by oppressing a fellow man, by being disrespectful to parents and teachers, by violence, by lying, by slandering, by charging interest, by being haughty, by casting off responsibility, by selfishness, by tale bearing and by the baseless hatred of fellow man ...

בבלי דעת... בבטוי שפתים... בדבור פה... בהונאת רע... בזלזול הורים ומורים... בחזקת יד... בכחש ובכזב... בלשון הרע... בנשך... בנטית גרון... בפריקת עול... ברכילות... בשנאת חנם...

4. **Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah (The Laws of Returning to God) 2:3 – Confession is accompanied by a sincere resolution to change.**

One who confesses with words, but has not committed in his heart to leave the sin is compared to someone who immerses in a ritual bath with an impure creature in his hand– his immersion does not help until he throws the creature away. Along these lines it is said, “One who acknowledges and leaves sin will be treated mercifully,” and one is obligated to specify his sin ...

כל המתודה בדברים ולא גמר בלבו לעזוב הרי זה דומה לטובל ושרץ בידו שאין הטבילה מועלת לו עד שישליך השרץ וכן הוא אומר ומודה ועוזב ירחם וצריך לפרוט את החטא...

5. **Mishnah Yoma 8:9 – The atonement of Yom Kippur should remind us of how great we're meant to become, and not be exploited as a means to enable one to transgress.**

One who says, “I will transgress and then repent,” God does not enable this person to repent; “I will transgress and then Yom Kippur will atone,” Yom Kippur will not atone.

האומר אחטא ואשוב ואחטא ואשוב אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. אחטא ויזה"כ מכפר אין יזה"כ מכפר.

SECTION VI. THE GIFT OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

1. **Rabbi Yitzchok Blazer, Ohr Yisrael, Iggeret 7 – Appreciating and utilizing the gift of Yom Kippur.**

Yom Kippur is a very good thing; a day of forgiveness and atonement. There are no other Jewish festivals that can compare to Yom Kippur. There is nothing greater than it; it is a day that brings us much good if we would only make the proper preparations to improve our behavior. For Yom Kippur atones together with repentance, which means to leave one's sinful behavior, and therefore even the slightest improvement is great and cannot be estimated in earthly terms. On Yom Kippur one should make at least one resolution to improve oneself for the future.

יוהכ"פ דבר טוב למאוד, יום סליחה וכפרה, לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כיוהכ"פ, אין לנו דבר טוב ממנו – יום שמנחיל לנו הרבה טובה – אם היינו עושים ההכנה הראויה לתקון דרכינו, כי יוכ"פ מכפר עם התשובה היא עזיבת החטא, אכן גם המעט טוב מאוד, אין ערוך לה בעניני תבל, לכל הפחות שתהיה איזו קבלה על להבא ביוהכ"פ.

2. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. I, p.264 – On Yom Kippur, even someone who is not worthy is given assistance to improve himself.**

There is special Heavenly assistance which inspires a person to do teshuvah through the exceptional day of Yom Kippur itself; it is a day of Divine mercy.

This applies in a case in which someone is not worthy of assistance, and perhaps according to the letter of the law should not be assisted. Such is the power of the extraordinary opportunity of Yom Kippur – that Heaven assists a person to return in teshuvah.

יש סייעתא דשמיא מיוחדת של התעוררות תשובה
ע"י סגולת יום הכיפורים עצמו, שהוא יום של
רחמים...

אפילו שבעצם אין הוא ראוי לכך, ואף שלפי אמת הדין
אולי אך לא מגיע לו הסיוע, אולם זהו כח סגולת עיצומו
של יוהכ"פ שמן השמים מסייעים בידו לשוב בתשובה.

3. **Rabbi Shalom Brezovsky, Nesivos Shalom, Vol. II, p. 167 – The intrinsic essence of the day itself elevates a person spiritually, automatically atoning for his sins and bringing him close to God.**

The idea of “the essence of the day brings atonement” is as follows:

The essence of this great and holy day is that God elevates the Jewish person to a perspective higher than the low and petty world in which the wrongdoing was committed; therefore by default all of his sins are atoned for. By clinging to God on this holy day, God brings him close to Himself.

זוה ענין עיצומו של יום מכפר:

עיצומו של יום גדול וקדוש זה הוא, שהקב"ה מרים
בו את איש יהודי למעלה מהעולם השפל שבו חטא
ופגם, וממילא מתכפרין לו כל העוונות...ע"י שאתם
מתדבקים בהקב"ה ביום הקודש הזה הנכם מתרוממים
אליו ית"ש.

SECTION VII. SEEDS OF CHANGE

In summary, the purpose of Yom Kippur is that we change and improve ourselves:

1. **Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4 – Overcoming lethargy, routine and the misuse of time: the shofar says “Wake up, wake up!”**

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a Scriptural decree, it has a deeper meaning. Namely, “Wake up sleepers from your sleep and you drowsy ones from your slumber. And look into your actions and return in teshuvah and remember your Creator.” This refers to those individuals who have forgotten the truth through their meaningless use of time and pursuit of fruitless endeavors that will neither help nor save them. Therefore, they should look into their souls and improve their paths and actions.

אע"פ שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמז
יש בו כלומר עוררו ישינים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו
מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו
בוראכם. אלו השוכחים את האמת בהבלי הזמן ושוגים
כל שנתם בהבל וריק אשר לא יועיל ולא יציל הביטו
לנפשותיכם והטיבו דרכיכם.

Working to improve ourselves can be a daunting task. Starting with just one mitzvah can make an impact on all areas of our life ...

2. **Rambam, Hilchot Mezuzah 6:13 – Mezuzah helps us wake up and live constructively.**

A person is obligated to be careful in the mitzvah of mezuzah, since it is continually incumbent upon each person. Each time that one enters and leaves [his home] he should concentrate on the Oneness of the Name of the Holy One Blessed be He, and remember His love and be aroused from his sleep and his mistaken [involvement] in the meaningless use of time. And one must know that the only thing which lasts forever is knowledge of God.

חייב אדם להזהר במזוזה מפני שהיא חובת הכל תמיד. וכל זמן שיכנס ויצא יפגע ביחוד השם שמו של הקדוש ב"ה ויזכור אהבתו ויעור משנתו ושגיותיו בהבלי הזמן. וידע שאין דבר העומד לעולם ולעולמי עולמים אלא ידיעת צור העולם.

3. **Bereishit/Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6, 8-9 – We need to ask ourselves on Yom Kippur – “Have I fulfilled my potential – Where am I?”**

And God commanded Adam saying, “You may eat from any tree in the garden, but you may not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and bad ...” And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and it was appealing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable [as a means] to gain wisdom; and she took from its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband and he ate [from it] ... And they heard the voice of God traveling in the garden with the wind of the day, and the man and his wife hid from Him among the trees of the garden. And God called to the man and said to him, “*Eiyeka* – Where are you?”

ויצו ה' אלהים על האדם לאמר מכל עץ הגן אכל תאכל. ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו... ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה הוא לעיניים ונחמד העץ להשכיל ותקח מפריו ותאכל ותתן גם לאישה עמה ויאכל... וישמעו את קול ה' אלהים מתהלך בגן לרוח היום ויתחבא האדם ואשתו מפני ה' אלהים בתוך עץ הגן. ויקרא ה' אלהים אל האדם ויאמר לו איכה.