

**TEN**  
days  
of  
seeking

**HASHEM**

DURING THE  
TEN DAYS OF REPENTENCE

[BASED ON 099 IN THE TEFILLAH SERIES]

## *Ten Days of Seeking Hashem Himself*<sup>1</sup>

### ***“Melech HaMishpat” – The Time In Which Hashem Is Actually Judging***

During the rest of the year in *Shemoneh Esrei* we say מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט, “The King Who loves righteousness and justice”, but during the Ten Days of Repentance, we say המלך המשפט, “The King of Justice.” Although Hashem is Judge during the entire year, His actual judgment is during the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*.

This needs understanding; there are many explanations of this concept. The *Kol Bo* writes in the name of the *Raavad* is that we need to *daven* directly to Hashem, and not to His *middos* (This is based on the words of the *Sifrei*). Hashem has many *middos*, and one of His *middos* is that He has *mishpat*, that He judges. One of the ways Hashem runs the world is through *hanhagas hamishpat* (through means of justice).<sup>2</sup> *Chazal* state that “Hashem and His *middos* are one”; and “Hashem and His will are one”, and “*Hashem and His wisdom are one*”. Thus, during the Ten Days of Judgment, Hashem’s judgment is part of Hashem Himself, so to speak, and that is why Hashem is called מלך המשפט during these days.

These are the words of the *Raavad*. We will try to understand his words on a practical level, in a way that helps us understand how to approach *Aseres Y’mei Teshuvah*.

### ***How We Should Approach The 13 Middos of Hashem***

During these ten days of *Teshuvah*, Hashem is particularly close by; “*Seek Hashem where He is found.*” There are two ways how we can try to find Hashem during these days [either through seeking His *middos*, or through seeking Hashem Himself].

These are days of *tefillah*, in which we turn to Hashem, to His 13 *middos*. We are mainly turning to Hashem’s *middas harachamim* (attribute of mercy). We want a good year, we want to be written in the book of *tzaddikim* - we want to be written in the book of life and to get livelihood and blessing. So from all the *middos* of Hashem, we are mainly turning to His *middas harachamim*.

If so, it can happen that a person is entirely *davening* to Hashem’s *middas harachamim*, and not to Hashem Himself.

If a person only *davens* to Hashem’s *middos*, he has lost the purpose of all these days. Our *tefillas* are important, but, it’s very possible that a person is using all these days of *Yomim Noraim* as a way to get what he wants, to have a good year, and he never uses it to get closer to Hashem. During these days, Hashem’s *middos* are indeed more revealed, for these are days of *rachamim*.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-099-ten-days-seeking-hashem-himself>

<sup>2</sup> See the end of *sefer Daas Tevunos of the Ramchal* in which it is explained that the two ways how Hashem runs the world are either through *Hanhagas HaMishpat* (justice) and *Hanhagas HaRachamim* (compassion).

But if all a person is busy with is Hashem's *middos* and he never turns to Hashem Himself - he has lost the whole purpose of these days.

These days of doing *teshuvah*, which are days of *mishpat* (justice), are thus not just about *mishpat*. There is a King who is delivering the *mishpat*. We can turn to Hashem to save us, but that's only the lower aspect of how we relate to His *mishpat*. The higher aspect of it is to turn directly to the King, and not to His *middos* – in other words, that we seek Hashem Himself, and not to be concerned solely of how His *middos* will affect us.

It is written, “*Seek Hashem where He is found*”, and *Chazal* say this is referring to *Yomim Noraim*. The lower aspect of this is to turn to the 13 *middos* of Hashem, which are more revealed in *Yomim Noraim*. These days of *Yomim Noraim* can reveal the depth of His *middos*, where we can feel how Hashem has *rachamim*. While this has a gain to it, it is not the goal. Closeness to Hashem is not fully achieved by dwelling on His merciful *middos*. It is rather by seeking to reveal Hashem Himself, the King Himself, during these days.

During the rest of the year, Hashem is more hidden; He is called *Keil mistater*, “a hidden Almighty”. But during Elul He is more “found”, as the possuk says. So it's not about revealing His *middos* more, which is what I get out of Hashem. It is about finding Hashem Himself, which means that I can become close to Hashem during these days simply because I can want the King Himself.

During the rest of the year, Hashem is revealed through His *middos*, while Hashem Himself is hidden, so to speak. He hides himself, but He reveals Himself through his *middos*. That is during the rest of the year. But during *Yomim Noraim*, Hashem reveals Himself more, and He is no longer hidden. It is not just that He is close by. It is that it is easier for us to recognize Him as reality.

It is not simply days in which we can feel closer to Hashem, days in which we can feel Hashem's *rachamim* more, and days in which our tefillos are more readily heard, although this is certainly true. It is something deeper. It is about **revealing the Creator as a Creator**, and not just about what I get out of the Creator.

### ***Yom Kippur – Entering Hashem's Inner Chamber***

The 10 Days of *Teshuvah* took place in between the first and second Luchos, after the sin with the Golden Calf. We fell from the level of *Ain Od Milvado* which was revealed at Har Sinai. We were like *beinonim*, hanging in the balance in between *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* for a good judgment.

*Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement for sin, is when we are purified from sin; “*Before Hashem you shall be purified.*” On *Rosh HaShanah*, Hashem remembers everything since the beginning of Creation, which are hidden from us, because while we forget, Hashem doesn't forget. What doesn't Hashem forget? Hashem doesn't forget His promise to us, which is that even sins don't separate from Him. We think our sins separate us from Him, and thus we feel impure from our sins, but on *Yom Kippur*, we enter into such closeness with Hashem that we are in His inner

chamber, in which He remembers that we are entirely pure, and that sins cannot divide us from Him.

“*Before Hashem, you shall be purified.*” Chazal also say about *Yom Kippur*, “The essence of the day atones.” We enter into Hashem’s innermost chamber, like when the *Kohen Gadol* entered the *Kodesh HaKodashim*, and there, all was atoned. The atonement can only happen in that innermost chamber, because it is there that we enter into complete closeness with Hashem, where nothing divides us from Him, not even sin. We do not have the *Avodah* of the *Kohen Gadol* anymore, but we remain with the idea of it, which is that we can enter into the innermost chamber of Hashem on *Yom Kippur*, where we are forgiven.

But in order to enter this innermost chamber on *Yom Kippur*, it can only be done if we seek Hashem Himself, and not just to desire the mercy of His *middos*. We need to enter into the deepest possible chamber with Hashem, like the *Kodesh Kodashim*, which is not by dwelling on Hashem’s *middos* and what we get out of His mercy, but rather to instead be entirely focused on Hashem Himself.

This is the concept known as “*Retzonenu lir’os es Malkeinu*” – “It is our desire to see the King”.

Our innermost desire should be focused not on meriting Hashem’s compassion, not on meriting a good year, not on meriting a forgiveness from our sins – although all these things are truthful; the main intention we need to have during these days is to “*Return to Hashem, your G-d.*” We need to return to Hashem Himself; that is the main aspect of all our *Avodah* during these days.

We do not have the *Kohen Gadol*, the *Avodah*, or the *Beis HaMikdash*. But the *Avodah* remains in our own soul. In our own soul, we can enter into the innermost chamber, which is where we turn to Hashem Himself. May we merit from the Creator to search for the innermost point of everything.

We should seek a good year, a good year to both our physical and spiritual situation – but we must mainly seek the higher goal of all of this, which is to recognize Hashem’s reality. May we all merit to seek the purpose of Creation, that it become revealed, and this will be our ultimate *gmar chasima tovah* to all of *Klal Yisrael*.