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Yom Kippur - The Root of Teshuvah, and Beyond Teshuvah

The Ten Days of Repentance are a time of *teshuvah* for all, and it concludes with the tenth day, Yom Kippur, the holiest day of all of them – which is hinted to in the verse, “*And the tenth shall be holy*” – the root of all repentance.

But there is a rule that every concept contains its opposite as well. Therefore, if Yom Kippur is the root of *teshuvah*, it also includes the opposite aspect of *teshuvah*. According to the opinion of Rebbi, “Yom Kippur atones for those who repent, as well for those who do not repent.” Thus, Yom Kippur helps even for those who don’t do *teshuvah* – those who are at the point where there is no *teshuvah*.

The sage Rabbi Elisha ben Avuya, who became known as “Acher” (lit. “Other”, in reference to his evil ways), became a heretic. He heard a *bas kol* (heavenly voice) emanating from the Holy of Holies, which said, “Return, wayward sons – except for Elisha ben Avuya, who knows My strength and rebels against Me.”^[1] Acher was at the point where he could not do *teshuvah*.

In our own souls as well, there is this point which is like “those who do not repent” – there is a point in the soul which is like the situation of Acher, where we are being told that we cannot do *teshuvah*.

Thus, according to the opinion of Rebbi, that Yom Kippur atones even for those who do not repent, it is because Yom Kippur contains a point that is “above” the realm of *teshuvah*. Yom Kippur atones even for those who don’t repent because “the essence of the day atones”, and this point is “above” the point of *teshuvah*.

The verse “*The mikveh of Yisrael, is Hashem*”, which the Sages say refers to Yom Kippur, is the aspect of *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur. But the fact that “Yom Kippur atones for those who don’t repent” reveals a higher aspect in Yom Kippur, that there is a deeper point than *teshuvah*.

There is a “*teshuvah*” aspect in the Ten Days of Repentance, which is the strongest at its climax, Yom Kippur. On the other hand, Yom Kippur also contains an aspect that is totally unrelated to the nine days of repentance that preceded it: it atones even for those who don’t repent, even for those who are like Acher, who are beyond *teshuvah*. In that sense, Yom Kippur is totally unrelated to the Ten days of Repentance, which are in the realm of *teshuvah* [for Yom Kippur has an aspect that is above the realm of *teshuvah* entirely].

Movement\Teshuvah and Beyond Movement\No Need For Teshuvah

Creation is entirely movement. *Teshuvah* is part of the “movements” of Creation; with *teshuvah*, a person returns to his root, which is a kind of movement. When something has been returned to its root, it has undergone *teshuvah*. But there is a higher point, which is beyond movement [and hence, beyond the limits of Creation] – the point where there is no movement.

The second set of *Luchos* was given on Yom Kippur, and they were given discreetly. As opposed to the first giving of the Torah, where we all “received” the Torah from its Giver and we thereby had a “grasp” on the Torah, in the second set of *Luchos*, we had no “grasp” on it, for it was given privately, to Moshe. The second set of *Luchos* was about a higher, deeper point: to become integrated with the Creator.

This is the secret contained in Yom Kippur, which contains the point that is above the Ten days of Repentance – and “above” *teshuvah*.

This point also represents a whole different kind of connection to Hashem through the Torah. Through the first set of *Luchos*, there was a giving and receiving of the Torah to all of the Jewish people together; through the second of *Luchos*, we, the receivers, became integrated with our Giver. When a person reaches Torah through integrating his being with Hashem, through recognizing the wisdom of the Torah as being one with Hashem – he is connected to the Torah not through being a “receiver” of it, but because he is “integrating” himself with the Creator; and as a result, he becomes integrated with His wisdom, with His Torah.

The Sages said that Torah scholars are always in movement [and therefore they have no serenity on this world]. They are always encountering revelations of wisdom, and this is part of the sphere of *chochmah* (wisdom) that becomes revealed to them. The revelations there are unlimited. But there is a higher point: “No thought can grasp Him” – there is nowhere to go from there, and the only place to be is to stand with Hashem, as in the verse, “*And you, here, stand with Me.*”

Acher was told that he cannot do *teshuvah*. His mistake was that he thought he is forever destined never to enjoy the World To Come, as the Gemara explains; therefore, he felt he had no choice but to indulge in this world. He reached the point of no movement, where he felt that he had nowhere else to go – but he reached this in the side of evil. If he would have used this concept in the side of holiness, he would have revealed the point of standing only with Hashem, of “*And you here, stand with Me*”, with nowhere else to go other than being with Hashem. The *bas kol* was therefore really telling him that he should stay where he is, with Hashem, for there is nothing besides Hashem – *Ain Od Milvado*. From the perspective of “*Ain Od Milvado*” (“There is nothing else besides for Hashem”) there is nowhere else to go, other than Hashem.

Yom Kippur atones even “for those who don’t repent”, and the deeper meaning to this is that it reveals the state of *Ain Od Milvado*. “Those who don’t repent” refers to the point beyond *teshuvah*, where there is no movement – for there is only *Ain Od Milvado*, nothing besides for Hashem.

The Day of HaKadosh Baruch Hu

Yom Kippur is also called “Day of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.”^[2] It is the day where the perspective of the “*Yechidah*” part of the soul is revealed, which is: *Ain Od Milvado*, nothing else besides for Hashem. When there is *Ain Od Milvado*, there is no concept of *teshuvah*, because there, there is no need for it.

This is the innermost point contained in Yom Kippur: it is to reach the point where all the creations are attached with Hashem, integrated with Him, for there is simply nothing else besides for Hashem; and therefore, there is no *teshuvah* in this point.

[We each have a “limited” aspect as well as an “unlimited” aspect, and our *avodah* is to connect to

both of these points.] *Teshuvah* is within our “limited” aspect, [where we acknowledge our limitations and we take responsibility for them]. The point beyond *teshuvah*, where there is *Ain Od Milvado*, is our “unlimited” aspect.

They are both true, and they do not cancel each other out. The “*Ain Od Milvado*” aspect, the point beyond *teshuvah*, is not meant to nullify the idea of *teshuvah*, G-d forbid, which includes regret, confession, and resolve not to commit the sin again. Rather, a person needs to become connected to both points. On one hand, one needs to connect to our “limited” aspect, and to do *teshuvah* with all of its requirements. On the other hand, one must also connect to the “*Yechidah*”, the unlimited aspect, where there is no *teshuvah*.

Shame over sin only exists in the sphere of *chochmah* (wisdom), which is parallel to the “*Chayah*” level of the soul. But above the *chochmah*\Chayah, in the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul, there is no shame, and hence no *teshuvah* there, for there is nothing there but the *atzmiyus* (essence) of Hashem, where there is only attachment with Hashem (*d'veykus*) and integration (*hiskalelus*) in Him.

A Deeper Understanding of Ne'ilah

The day of Yom Kippur concludes with *Ne'ilah*. [The following gives us a deeper understanding into *Ne'ilah*.]

The wicked king Menashe, at the end of his life, began to do *teshuvah*. The angels sealed the heavens from him, so that his supplications should not be heard. They said to Hashem, “Master of the world, a man who erected an idol in the Sanctuary – shall You accept his repentance?” Hashem responded to them, “If I do not accept his repentance, I would be closing the entrance for all penitents.” Hashem dug a tunnel directly underneath His throne of glory, a place where no angel could control [so that Menashe’s prayers could reach Him].

The word “*Menashe*” is the word “*Moshe*” combined with the letter *nun*. This is a hint that the “*Shaar HaNun*”, the “Fiftieth Gate”, which even Moshe did not reach, was reached by Menashe, in the side of evil, that is – and therefore the gates of the heavens were sealed from him. Hashem dug a tunnel underneath His throne of glory, which symbolizes a point that is above *teshuvah*.

This is the secret of *Ne'ilah*. The time of *Ne'ilah* resembles the situation of Menashe, when all the gates of the heavens were closed to him, and it was not possible for him to do *teshuvah*. How could this be, if the climax of the atonement on Yom Kippur is at *Ne'ilah*? How can it be that by *Ne'ilah* there is no possibility of *teshuvah*? But this is the secret of Yom Kippur. When the gates of heaven are closed, and there is no possibility of *teshuvah*, it is precisely then that “*Ain Od Milvado*” is revealed – and then there is no need for *teshuvah*, for it is the point “above” *teshuvah*. It is the point of *Ain Od Milvado*, simply put – and no “movements” are possible, hence, there is no *teshuvah* there; there are no concepts of distance or closeness there. There is just the attachment and integration with Hashem.

The secret of *Ne'ilah* is that it is where everything is closed and sealed, and it is not possible to move there. When there is no movement, a person can stand with Hashem alone. There, there is nowhere to go, and there is no need to go anywhere. That is the point of total integration with Hashem.

Ain Od Milvado “closes off” everything, and doesn’t allow for any movements; it is the full realization where Hashem’s Presence fills everything, and there is nowhere else for a person to go from there; when a person is at that point where there is no movement, he understands that it is not possible to be distanced, nor come closer. That is the secret behind *Ne'ilah*.

During *Selichos*, we recite the 13 traits of *rachamim* (mercy). That is in the point where sin is possible. But when a person connects to the point of *Ain Od Milvado*, he is in a realm where there is no

teshuvah, of “those who do not repent” – to enter the world of Hashem, before sin existed, where there was nothing lacking in Creation. [One must do both, as will be explained soon].

When we understand that there is a point of “*You, here, stand with Me*”, which is integration with Hashem - there is no need to go anywhere else, because everything is complete there. This is the innermost point of *teshuvah*, which, as we have clarified here, is really a point beyond *teshuvah*.

Mashiach ben Yosef (Teshuvah) and Mashiach ben Dovid (Ain Od Milvado)

The two Messiahs, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid, are parallel to these two points. Mashiach ben Yosef is parallel to the concept of *teshuvah*. The Ten Martyrs were killed in order to rectify Yosef’s sin [according to the Sages, for accidentally spilling ten droplets of seed, as he was escaping the wife of Potiphar], and Mashiach ben Yosef’s work will be to bring the world to do *teshuvah*, and to hasten the redemption. Mashiach ben Dovid, though, will reveal the point beyond *teshuvah* [the perspective of *Ain Od Milvado*].

Chazal say of Dovid HaMelech, “Whoever says that Dovid sinned, is mistaken.”^[3] On the other hand, Chazal state that Dovid brought a *korbon* in order to do *teshuvah*.^[4] This is an apparent contradiction. If he did not sin, why did he do *teshuvah* for it? The answer to this is because that is exactly the secret that Dovid HaMelech revealed [as follows].

The concept of *teshuvah* was not introduced by Dovid HaMelech, but by Kayin; after Kayin did *teshuvah*, Adam HaRishon learned from this and also did *teshuvah*. Dovid HaMelech took 70 years of Adam’s life, and the inner meaning of this is that he actualized the potential of Adam, and he revealed to the world the concept of *teshuvah* which Adam had done – not the *teshuvah* which Adam learned from Kayin, but the *teshuvah* which Adam did even before Kayin.

“Whoever says that Dovid sinned, is mistaken” - how is this possible, if there are verses that state explicitly that Dovid sinned? It is because it refers to the point where there is no possibility of sin. When Dovid brought a *korbon* to do *teshuvah*, it was from the point of above *teshuvah*. The simple level of *teshuvah* is learned from Kayin, but the “higher” level of *teshuvah* was revealed to the world by Dovid HaMelech [and on a private level, with Adam HaRishon]. This is actually the root of the revelation of Mashiach ben Dovid.

When the points of “Mashiach ben Yosef” [*teshuvah*] and “Mashiach ben Dovid” [above *teshuvah*] become integrated with each other [in the future], the points of *teshuvah* and beyond *teshuvah* will become integrated, and this will reveal the secret that is *Ain Od Milvado*.

There is the point of movement, and the point of non-movement, which are parallel to *teshuvah* (movement) and non-movement (*Ain Od Milvado*, above *teshuvah*), and the complete level is when these two points become integrated together [when one does *teshuvah* for his sins, from the recognition that there is nothing besides for Hashem, *Ain Od Milvado*].

Thus, from a deep understanding, the entire possibility to return to Hashem after sinning, is only enabled when one is aware of the point where there is no sin. In other words, there is a [spiritual] light where there is no possibility of sin, which radiates even into our own dimension, where sin is possible; and that light is actually the root that enables a person to do *teshuvah* in our realm where there is sin.

Teshuvah For The Sin of Damaging The Holy Covenant

The *Zohar* states that there is no *teshuvah* for one who damages the Holy Covenant. Elsewhere, the *Zohar* states that *teshuvah* can rectify this sin. This apparent contradiction is resolved by the Sages, who explained that there are two levels of *teshuvah* - “lower *teshuvah*”, which is on the level of

chochmah (wisdom), and “higher *teshuvah*”, which is on the level of *binah* (“understanding”). It is explained that the words of the *Zohar* that *teshuvah* doesn’t help for this sin is only referring to “lower *teshuvah*”, but if one does “higher *teshuvah*” - on the level of *binah* - it can rectify the sin.^[5] Let us understand the depth to this.

Yosef’s sin was in damaging the Holy Covenant, of which it is said that there is no *teshuvah* for. Here we can see the point where “Mashiach ben Yosef” and “Mashiach ben Dovid” will integrate with each other: In the level of “Yosef” (and, by extension, Mashiach ben Yosef), there is *teshuvah* for all sins, except for the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant. But if there is no *teshuvah* for this sin, what is the higher *teshuvah* that can atone for this sin, as the *Zohar* mentions?

The “higher *teshuvah*” that helps for the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant is when the point beyond *teshuvah* is accessed. Within the realm of *teshuvah*, one who damages the Holy Covenant cannot rectify this sin, because he has created disparity, through separating his seed and causing it to become scattered throughout the world, and he cannot return all of the branches to their root. But when one reveals the point where disparity isn’t possible, where it is retroactively revealed that there was never a disparity at all - for there is nothing that exists other than the unity of Hashem - in this point, the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant can be rectified.

Within the “49 Gates of Understanding”, there is sin, and there is also *teshuvah* for sin. But in the “50th Gate”, there is no possibility of sin, and hence no need for *teshuvah*. The “49 gates of understanding” are parallel to Yosef, or Mashiach ben Yosef, who represents *chochmah*\wisdom, where there can be sin, and which requires *teshuvah* to fix.

But it is really impossible to do *teshuvah*, from the perspective of This World alone. For this reason, *teshuvah* had to precede Creation, for *teshuvah* is really a power that comes from above the limits of Creation. If *teshuvah* preceded the world, that means it is impossible within our world to reach *teshuvah*, for it is of a higher dimension entirely. So we must reveal the point where there is no necessity for *teshuvah*.

This is the meaning of how *teshuvah* “preceded” the world. As long as a person tries to reach complete *teshuvah* within this world, he will never reach it, because *teshuvah* is a point that is above this Creation, and hence unattainable as we are on this world. Therefore, how do reach *teshuvah*? Only through connecting to the point that precedes the Creation. When one is connected to there, where “No thought can grasp Him”, he can then understand that there is no necessity for *teshuvah*, because there is no sin there.

“*Teshuvah* preceded the world” - when a person progresses throughout *teshuvah*, he may finally reach the 49th gate, the final gate within the realm of *teshuvah*, and there he will find that he cannot rectify every sin, for the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant cannot be rectified. What, then, is *teshuvah*? It means to access the point that precedes the world, to connect oneself to this point - and that, itself, is *teshuvah*!!!

Thus, *teshuvah* does not mean simply to “return” [from sin], but to connect oneself to the point that precedes Creation, where there is no possibility of sin.

The Inner, Silencing Voice of the “Yechidah” In The Soul

This is the meaning of how Yom Kippur is the “day of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*”. It is one day of the year where it is revealed that there is a point where there is no necessity for *teshuvah*. This is the deeper understanding of why Yom Kippur atones for “those who do not repent” - Yom Kippur repents of course for those who do repent, and for this, we are given the ten days of repentance; but the deeper

point is the point where there is no need for *teshuvah* – “those who do not repent”.

In spite of this, a person must keep the entire Torah, because just as the unlimited point exists, so is our limited point existing and true. Within our “limited” point, we can become either closer or distant from Hashem. But in our “unlimited” aspect, where everything is unified [under the oneness of Hashem, where Hashem rules alone] because there it is entirely “*Ain Od Milvado*” – there is no “closeness” or “distance” from the Creator there. The “*Yechidah*” part of the soul is that point which is so connected to Hashem that no separation can occur there.

From the realm of *chochmah* (or “*Chayah*”) and below in the soul, there are varying levels; there is a need for intimacy, there are levels of closeness, and there, it is possible to either be closer or distant, from Hashem. But in the “*Yechidah*” point of the soul, one is integrated with Hashem – and this is true even in the worst person in the world, who sins in order to anger Hashem. The “*Yechidah*” cannot ever be distanced from Hashem; it cannot be destroyed.

It is the inner, silent voice in the soul, which silences all of the senses of the soul, and which gives a person the ability to hear the true perspective that calls out from deep inside him, which says: *Ain Od Milvado*.

This inner voice is being sound all the time, but when a person leaves his connection to Hashem, he will not hear this voice. But when a person attunes his thoughts to it - through the five areas of physical discomfort on Yom Kippur, which enable one to shut out the entire perspective of This World – he will then hear the perspective of the *Yechidah* in his soul, which listens attentively to the fact of *Ain Od Milvado*.

There is no way to express this; there are no words for it. But it is the grasp on *havayah* [the deeper, spiritual dimension of reality], the way to perceive Creation through the *Yechidah* in the soul, which sees that all is *Ain Od Milvado*. It is reached during the time of *Ne'ilah*, when everything becomes closed off, where there is no movement, for there is nowhere else to go then – it reveals the presence of Hashem, the state of *Ain Od Milvado*.

Of the fiftieth gate, it is said, “*All those who come to it, shall not return*” – there is no *teshuvah* there, there is no movement there, because it is nothing else other than being unified with Hashem. In the point above *teshuvah*, it is revealed the actual meaning of *Ain Od Milvado*.

A person’s *avodah* [in doing *teshuvah*] is thus to “return” himself from the realm of *teshuvah*, to the realm where there is no need for *teshuvah* – and when he becomes integrated into that realm, he reveals the actual meaning of *Ain Od Milvado*.

This is the secret of Creation: that there is nothing that separates a person, and anything in the creation, from Hashem. When the soul grasps this point, it becomes integrated with Hashem.

“*Praiseworthy is the man, who does not forget You!*”

[1] Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1

[2] Eliyahu Rabbah 1

[3] Shabbos 56a

[4] Moed Katan 16a

[5] Editor's Note: The *sefer Keser Rosh* (a student of the Vilna Gaon) explains that through learning in-depth Torah study, one does "*teshuvah* on the level of *binah*" and rectifies the sin of damaging the Holy Covenant.

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