

PURE

The deaths of Nadav and Avihu, which we read about on Yom Kippur, is to remind us that just as death of the *tzaddikim* is a *kapparah* (atonement) for us, so is Yom Kippur a *kapparah*. The *Ohr HaChaim* says that Nadav and Avihu died a very blissful kind of death that resembled the "death by the kiss" of Hashem, which only certain *tzaddikim* merit. They knew that in drawing close to Hashem in the *Kodesh Kodashim* that they would die in the process, but they were willing to die for this, because they wanted this high level of closeness with Hashem, out of their great love for Him. This is really the depth of Yom Kippur. It is the time where the purity of our soul can come forth.

During the rest of the year, although we say every day **אלוקי נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא**, "My G-d, a pure soul You gave to me", we do not always feel it. But through doing true *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur, one can reveal his pure existence. Once we reveal that purity, we will naturally be pulled after Hashem, and we will feel a pleasurable bliss in this newfound closeness with Hashem.

The desire to get closer to Hashem on Yom Kippur is the depth behind the matter of the four categories of *kapparah* (atonement), which are *teshuvah*, suffering, Yom Kippur, and death. *Chilul Hashem* can only be atoned through all four levels of atonement. Why is death the highest level of *kapparah*? The death of *tzaddikim* atones for the generation, but on an individual level, the death of any person atones for him, and it can also resemble the death of *tzaddikim*, such as the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, when they died amidst their

desire to achieve greater closeness with Hashem. Their deaths became a means for them to reach the greater closeness with Hashem, and this is the depth of how "death" atones. There is one day of the year - Yom Kippur - where each of us can be on this level, of being willing to die for Hashem.

If one can feel his inner purity on Yom Kippur, he can then begin the true inner *avodah* of Yom Kippur. The first step of the *avodah* is to truly do *teshuvah*, earnestly, from the depths of your heart, which only Hashem knows about. If one does true *teshuvah*, he will certainly feel a palpable closeness with Hashem as a result. If he doesn't feel the closeness, it is a sign that he hasn't done complete *teshuvah*.

After one feels closer to Hashem on Yom Kippur, the next step is to feel the pleasantness of this closeness. After that point, comes the true test, the point of *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice): Is one willing to give himself up for this? During the rest of the year, one may not be on the level of being willing to die for more closeness with Hashem. But on Yom Kippur, one can more easily reach this, the point that Nadav and Avihu desired, in which they were willing to die, for more closeness with Hashem. Through being willing to have *mesirus nefesh*, it is considered as if one died, and this "death" atones for even the most severe sin, *chilul Hashem*.

On Yom Kippur, we are at the deepest level of closeness with Hashem we can reach. It is reached only in the very innermost depths of our heart, where our true power of choice lays. At our external layer, we desire a *kapparah* so that we shouldn't suffer, or so that we should have more *Gan Eden* and *Olam*

HaBa, etc. But the depth of seeking *kapparah* which we need to reveal is that it should feel painful that there is a barrier between us and Hashem, which has been created from our *aveiros*. That pain can spur a person on to do true *teshuvah*, and that is where the true *kapparah* is. If a person seeks *emes*, if he wants to live a true kind of life, a life of closeness with Hashem, then his main concern throughout all the *Selichos* of Yom Kippur is to desire more closeness with Hashem.

One can feel how distant he is from Hashem and it is painful to him, worse than death, and this is what he can ask Hashem for: That the barriers between him and Hashem should be removed. If that it is one's entire concern on Yom Kippur, then he attains a certain level of closeness already, and even if it is not the complete level, it has great value. When one is mainly concerned with this in his requests on Yom Kippur as he continuously says the words **סלה לנו, כפר לנו, מחל לנו**, and if this is what he desires more than anything else in his life, he is closer to doing "complete *teshuvah*". He will feel greater closeness with Hashem on Yom Kippur, and then he can know with certainty that his *aveiros* have been forgiven.

Yom Kippur is the gateway that leads us to sensing a palpable closeness with Hashem, to reach a point in which we feel how much we want to be close to Hashem that we should feel that we are willing to die for it. Yom Kippur is the one day of the year where we can access this level, for it is the day of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. (שיחת השבוע_05_וילך.תשע"ו)

KODESH KODASHIM WITHIN "For on this day, you shall be atoned, before Hashem, you shall be purified." On Yom Kippur, there is a special *ohr*, a spiritual revela-

tion and light on this day, which allows us to attain a great level of *taharah* (purity).

When the *Beis HaMikdash* existed, Yom Kippur was the one time of the year where the *Kohen Gadol* would enter *lifnay v'lifnim*, “before Me, and inside”, into the *Kodesh Kodashim* and do the *avodah* there, where he would sprinkle the blood of the *korbonos*. Now that we do not have a *Beis HaMikdash* or the *korbonos* or the *avodah*, the main *avodah* of Yom Kippur which would purify and atone is missing. But within our own *nefesh* (our soul), we can enter the inner “*Kodesh Kodashim*” and we can do the *avodah* there on our own level, resembling the *avodah* of the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*. Everything in Creation is found on three planes – in the world, in time, and in the soul (*Sefer Yetzirah* 3:1). Just as there was a *Kodesh Kodashim* in the world, in the place that was the *Beis HaMikdash*, so does the *Kodesh Kodashim* exist in the dimension of our *nefesh* (our soul). The *sefer Nefesh HaChaim* explains that in the depths of our heart is our own personal *Kodesh Kodashim*.

THE PURITY WITHIN Rosh HaShanah is called “*Yom Teruah*” (day of the *teruah* sound of the *shofar*), and “*teruah*” is from the word *hisorerus*, “awakening”. We are awakened on Rosh HaShanah, through the blast of the *shofar*, which can inspire us to the point that we will want to enter into our heart. Rosh HaShanah is where we begin our purification process from all previous *tum'ah* (spiritual impurity or contamination) that has descended upon us from the rest of the year. Just as a dead body has the status of *tum'ah*, and just as a sleeping person has a degree of *tum'ah* (for sleep is a “sixtieth of death”) where he must wash his hands in order to remove the *tum'ah*, so too on Rosh HaShanah, we can come to purify ourselves from the all the *tum'ah* upon us, through being awakened by the blast of the *shofar*. The *shofar's* sound awakens us to enter our innermost self, which enables us to

begin purifying ourselves from all previous *tum'ah*.

That is all just the first day of *Aseres Y'mei Teshuvah* (the ten days of repentance, which begin with Rosh HaShanah), which is the beginning of the purification process. The final day of *Aseres Y'mei Teshuvah*, however, which is Yom Kippur, is a far deeper level than the awakening of Rosh HaShanah.

From a superficial perspective, Yom Kippur also seems to be like purification process from our previous impurities. After all, the *Kohen Gadol* had to keep immersing himself in the *mikveh* each time after changing his garments, and we also immerse ourselves in a *mikveh* in order to enter Yom Kippur. But this is just the external aspect of the purity of Yom Kippur. The inner aspect of our *avodah* on Yom Kippur is not just to awaken ourselves so that we can purify ourselves from all previous impurity. It is to enter inward into ourselves, into our very heart – to the place that is “*lifnay v'lifnim*”.

In that place of the heart, we reach our *neshamah tehorah* (pure soul) that Hashem has placed in us, which we speak of every morning in “*Elokai Neshamah*”. The *neshamah* is found in the deepest part of our heart, and it always remains pure, for it is a *cheilek Eloka mimaal*, it is from Above, and every day in *Elokai Neshamah* we say that the soul in us is pure.

On Yom Kippur, where we are purified before Hashem, the meaning of our *avodah* is not just to leave our previous state of *tum'ah* and to become *tahor* from this *tum'ah*. Rather, our *avodah* on Yom Kippur is to reach the inherent *taharah* that is deep within our heart – the “*neshamah tehorah*” in us, which always stays pure.

Yom Kippur contains two major aspects: *Kaparah* \atone-ment and *Taharah* (purity). The first part, *kaparah* (atone-ment) is the external part of the purification process, and it enables us to

be cleansed from any previous impurities. But the inner part of the process is *taharah*: לפני ה' תטהרו “*Before Hashem you shall be purified*”, where the depth of our pure soul is revealed – a part of ourselves that can never become impure in the first place, for it is always pure. It is from that place in our *nefesh* that we truly merit the *selichah* (forgiveness) from Hashem, that is, when we access it.

The beginning of our *avodah* on Yom Kippur is to first purify ourselves from any previous impurities, and then we need to attempt to reach the deeper point in the soul that is always pure to begin with.

NE'ILAH It is written, “*Go, my nation, into your rooms; close the doors behind you, until the wrath passes.*” We “close the doors” behind us from the rest of the world, at *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur. *Ne'ilah* is the “closing of the gates”, and on a deeper level, we close the gates to the rest of the world during *Ne'ilah*, where we can enter into the deepest place of ourselves. No one else can be with us there. It is closed off from the rest of the world, it is hidden, and there, each person can enter the place inside him where he is alone with only Hashem and His Torah. *Ne'ilah* is where we begin to enter our innermost point, where all is closed off from the rest of the world, where no one else can enter – no one but you. It is also called “*liba l'pumei lo galya*”, the “heart cannot be revealed by the mouth” – it cannot be expressed verbally, because it takes place entirely deep in the heart, where it will never be known or explained to others.

Each person on his own level can enter this place in himself and find the deepest possible recognition he can have towards Hashem, the sensing of the reality of Hashem that is in the heart. (It is that place in the soul which also reaches the deepest level of understanding of Torah.)

The beginning of one's *avodah* on Yom

Kippur, and especially at the beginning of *Ne'ilah*, is certainly a time where the higher-pitched voices of *davening* can inspire. But this is not the depth of our *avodah* during *Ne'ilah*. Our *avodah* by *Ne'ilah* is: **to speak to Hashem, from the depths of one's heart**, as deeply as possible. It is the time to reach the deepest place in ourselves - each on his own level. That deep place in the soul is the "*lifnay v'lifnim*" that each person can reach on his own individual level. It is really the *avodah* of our entire lifetime to reach this point. But on Yom Kippur, each person is able to reach it as much as he can, on his current level.

Throughout all of the generations, the world was always filled with *tum'ah* (spiritual impurity). But the *tzaddikim* in the *sefarim hakedoshim* revealed that in "*ikvesa d'meshicha*" (the "footsteps in Mashiach"), the world will be at the "50th gate of impurity", the most depraved spiritual state possible. The world has fallen to the worst level of *tum'ah* and it continues to descend further into it.

Chazal said that there are 49 ways to render something *tahor* (spiritually pure) as well as 49 ways to render it *tamei* (impure). On Yom Kippur, we can leave *tum'ah* and become *tahor* from all previous *tum'ah*, which include all 49 levels of *tum'ah*. But when we live in

the *ikvesa d'meshicha*, where the world is found in the "50th gate of impurity", in order for us to leave such a *tum'ah*, we will need a much deeper level of *taharah* on Yom Kippur.

We cannot just live our life as usual nowadays and suddenly change on Yom Kippur. If the world today is found beyond the 49th level of *tum'ah*, that means that in order to be purified before Hashem, we must leave the 49 levels of *tum'ah* that surround us from all sides. We cannot leave such a *tum'ah* just with the power of *Ne'ilah* alone - we will need to really "close the doors" by *Ne'ilah* and enter into our "*neshamah tehorah*" there, and only then can we be ensured spiritual survival today.

When the world is found in the "50th level of *tum'ah*", the only way we can escape it is through the light of the *neshamah tehorah* that is found in the deepest part of ourselves. Our *neshamah tehorah* can purify us even if we if we have become infected (and we definitely *have* become infected) by the "50th gate of *tum'ah*" that surrounds us.

We can keep returning to the pure place in ourselves that does not become susceptible to any *tum'ah*, in the same sense that words of Torah do not

become susceptible to *tum'ah*". There, we can go back to our closeness with Hashem, to the point that is deep inside us which can never become impure to begin with.

This connection to purity is what can protect us during the rest of the year, and the root of it begins on Yom Kippur. It is the point in ourselves which is closed off from the rest of the world, where one is in his "individual" point, utterly alone, where there is only Hashem and Torah. One is also connected in that place to the root of all souls of *Klal Yisrael*.

May Hashem give us the strength, through the special purity that comes down onto the world on Yom Kippur, that we not only become purified from all previous impurities that have come upon us, but that we return to the place in ourselves that was pure along, the deepest point in our soul which is forever pure, like the "words Torah which can never become susceptible to *tum'ah*". Through reaching our own point of purity in the soul, may it be revealed a world which is entirely pure, the greatest level of existence possible, where all will be pure, and all the people in the world, young and old, will clearly recognize, their Creator.
(יום כיפור_026_טהרה.תשע"ו)

Q&A – Yom Kippur & Beyond

QUESTION *How do we begin to do teshuvah? What should we focus on? How can we do it all during Aseres Ymei Teshuvah??*

ANSWER Everything in our Creation has a root to it as well as branches to it, and the branches are many. But there is always one root within each thing. Clarify deeply what the one underlying root of all your problems are, and then fix the problem at its root. When you fix the root, you are a lot closer to fixing the branches of your failings. This is the fundamental way of *tikkun* and especially during these days of *teshuvah*. Also, make sure to quickly stop doing anything that goes against *halachah*.

QUESTION *I was thinking recently about all the different instances in my life I can remember in which I did not treat*

others right. Who knows how many people's feelings I hurt! I can remember some instances in which I intentionally slighted another person, but there were many instances where I may have unintentionally hurt their feelings or mistreated them... I feel like making a list of each person I think I may have hurt and then calling them up to ask them for mechilah. Is that what I am supposed to do?

ANSWER There's no end to this. None of us are perfect. And many times, the one who got insulted was the one who brought about the insult upon him. Therefore, as long as one didn't openly insult someone and there wasn't recognizable 'damage' afterwards, you don't have to go looking for the one you may have insulted. Instead, when you bump into him, ask him for *mechilah*. Always *daven* that you shouldn't

insult others, and *daven* that whoever you insulted should forgive you with their full heart.

QUESTION *How do I forgive someone with a full heart? Many times I want to forgive and I don't want the other to get punished because of what he did to me, but in the end I still feel some resentment in my heart at him for what he did to me.*

ANSWER It is a long process of purifying our heart. It includes purifying ourselves by erasing the strong connection that we feel to this temporary world are on, as well as purifying ourselves from any traces of evil in our character, and to increase our *ahavas Yisrael*.

QUESTION *What are the kavanos (intentions) that a man should think about when immersing in the mikveh?*

ANSWER Do true *teshuvah* before immersing in the *mikveh*, and then again when you are under the water. Think that you are willing to die *al kiddush Hashem*. On your way out of the *mikveh*, become aware that you are becoming a new being. The *mikveh* is the secret of *teshuvah* [which makes you into a completely “new being”]. When one is under the water of the *mikveh*, he is compared to a dead person, where he is entirely in a world of entirely water, the second day of Creation, when there was only water and no dry land yet, with no place for a living being to survive. As a hint, the *gematria* of the words *mayim karim* (cold water, the cold water of a mikveh) is equal to the word *meis*, a dead person. Exiting the *mikveh* is therefore like being born again. When you are under the water it is “like being a fetus inside the mother”, and upon exiting the water of the *mikveh*, you are being born again, exiting the mother’s womb. Thus, coming out of the *mikveh* is a resemblance of becoming born again.

QUESTION *If I feel that I do more teshuvah when I say viduy, in my own words and not using the Nusach, when should I do teshuvah?*

ANSWER Either you can do *teshuvah* for all the aveiros represented by each letter of *viduy* as you say each letter, or after you finish the *nusach* of *viduy* you can then add on anything that’s on your heart.

QUESTION *How do we come to true regret over all aveiros from the whole year? Right after doing an aveirah it's easier to regret it, but after a long time a person don't feel pained that he did the aveirah, and certainly it's harder to feel pain and regret over so many aveiros at once which a person forgot about.*

ANSWER One has to think that whenever he is being prevented from growth in *ruchniyus* – whether he is being intellectually, emotionally or actively blocked from trying to make progress in his *ruchniyus*, all of this (at least to a large extent) is because of the effects of doing *aveiros*. So even if a person doesn't feel pain that he did an *aveirah*, he can at least feel pained over the effects that the *aveirah* is having on him.

Also, one can have pain over the very fact that he isn't on the level of doing the will of Hashem.

QUESTION *How can I feel that Hashem loves me?*

ANSWER Think of everything that He gives you regularly. That is the first thing to start thinking about. Later take this thinking further by thinking that you are Hashem's child, for “You are children to Hashem.”

QUESTION *How can I work on loving Hashem?*

ANSWER The more you feel that Hashem loves you, the more your own love for Hashem will be awakened.

QUESTION *Recently there were more bizarre tzaros in Klal Yisrael. Three bochurim killed in a plane crash on the way to Mezbizh for Shabbos. Last week a 19-year old bochur in America was killed in front of his yeshiva. Is this a special calling from Hashem? Or is it all part of the troubles of the End of Days which are to awaken Klal Yisrael to teshuvah?*

ANSWER Everything is calling to us, from all directions. It is screaming to us, that the world cannot continue the way it is now, and the world now is like a dying person whose soul is in the midst of leaving the body.

QUESTION *How can we detach ourselves from everything's that going on this world?*

ANSWER By recognizing that the world today is like a dying person whose soul is in the midst of leaving his body, and that we should no longer feel connected to this world anymore.

QUESTION *How can it be that the day after the holiest day of the year [Yom Kippur] when I experienced so much loftiness, I feel so indifferent the next day, and I feel like my learning and davening is so far from what it should be? And how can it be that I feel so uninspired like this even in the days between Yom Kippur and Succos, of which it is said that Hashem cherishes His relationship with His children even more now that we have all been purified from our sins on Yom Kippur??*

ANSWER There can be several reasons. 1) You feel a sense of “heaviness” inside your *nefesh* which is a result of physical and emotional exertion, causing you to feel drained, and this makes you feel like a child who wants to run away. 2) Another reason may be because it is difficult to return to the physical world again after you have just had a spiritual high. 3) Another reason for this may be because sometimes, during holy times [such as the *Yomim Noraim*], a person may be living a bit in his imagination, or he is mainly living in outer spiritual revelations (called *ohr makif*) that are normally not present, which are above his actual level, and then when he returns to his normal level, he finds the reality of his current *madreigah* (level) to be weighing down on him. (from the Bilvavi Q & A archive)