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## Yom Kippur - Disconnecting from Sin

### ***A Day of Soul With No Body***

It is written, “*For on this day you shall be forgiven and be purified.*” Yom Kippur is the time of purity, in which Hashem purifies the Jewish people. The words of Rabbi Akiva are well-known: “Praiseworthy are the Jewish people – before Whom are they purified, and Who purifies them? Just as a *mikveh* purifies those who are impure, so does Hashem purify the Jewish people.”

Let us think of how our purification process is compared to that of a *mikveh*. In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, it is brought that one should immerse in a cold *mikveh*, because the words “*mayim karim*” (cold water) has the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew letters) as the word “*meis*” – “corpse.” In other words, when a person immerses in a cold *mikveh*, he is considered to be like a dead person.

What is the gain in being considered like a dead person? Hashem doesn’t want us to die – He wants us to live. A dead person cannot serve Him and do *mitzvos*. So what is the gain in being considered like “dead” when one goes to a cold *mikveh*?

There are many meanings behind this concept, but we will focus on just one point, with the help of Hashem.

What, indeed, is death? When a person dies, does he stop existing? We all know: of course not. We are made up of a body and a soul; by death, the soul leaves the body, the body is buried and the soul rises to Heaven. So the whole concept of death is that the soul leaves the body.

If we think about it, this is what Yom Kippur is all about. We have a *mitzvah* on this day to fast, and our body is denied certain pleasures. We have to be like angels on this day – souls without a body. Only our body suffers from this, though – not our soul. The soul actually receives greater vitality on Yom Kippur (as the Arizal writes). Normally, we need to eat and drink physically in order to be alive, but on Yom Kippur, we receive vitality from above, and thus we do not need physical food or drink.

The Arizal would stay up all night on Yom Kippur. Simply speaking, this was because he didn’t want to take a chance of becoming impure at night (from nocturnal emissions). But the deeper reason behind his conduct was because Yom Kippur is a day in which we are angelic, and we don’t need sleep. Yom Kippur is a day of soul with no body.

On every Yom Tov, there is a *mitzvah* to eat. Although Yom Kippur is also a Yom Tov, we don’t eat, because it is a day of soul with no body. It is the only day of the year in which we live through our soul

and not through our body. The rest of the Yomim Tovim involve *mitzvos* that have to do with our body.

It is also the only day of the year in which we resemble the dead. We wear white, and there are two reasons for this: the inner reason is because we are resembling the angels, and the external reason is because we want to remind ourselves of death, who are clothed in white shrouds. The truth is that these are not two separate reasons – they are really one and the same: a dead person is a soul with no body, just like an angel.

Let us stress the fact that we do not mean to remind ourselves of death in order to scare ourselves. Although there is a concept of holy fear, that is not our mission on Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah is actually scarier than Yom Kippur, because it is the day of judgment. The point of reminding ourselves of death on Yom Kippur is, because Yom Kippur is a day in which one is a soul without a body – resembling an angel.

### ***The Purity Available Only On Yom Kippur***

That is the clear definition of Yom Kippur, and now we must think into what our actual *avodah* is on this day. We mentioned before the custom to immerse in a cold *mikveh* before Yom Kippur. It seems that this is because when we immerse in cold water, we are considered dead, and thus we are purified. But on a deeper note, the death which a person must accept when he immerses in the *mikveh* is so that he can realize that he is really a soul, without a body. Hashem purifies us on Yom Kippur – when we consider ourselves to be like a soul with no body.

Our purity does not happen on Rosh Hashanah or on Sukkos. It does not happen on Pesach or on any other Yom Tov. We are purified only on Yom Kippur – the time in which we are a soul without a body.

### ***The Lesson We Learn from Yom Kippur For The Rest of the Year***

The Gemara<sup>[1]</sup> brings that there are four categories of sin. Some sins require just *teshuvah*, while worse sins require *teshuvah* as well as Yom Kippur.

The *Kamarna Rebbe* asked: If someone sins the day after Yom Kippur, must he wait a whole year until the next Yom Kippur when the effects of his sin are removed? He answered that although Yom Kippur atones one's sins, it is still possible for a person to make for himself during the year a "mini" Yom Kippur. How? If we understand what the concept of Yom Kippur is, we can learn for the rest of the year how to use this point.

There are people who look at Yom Kippur as "a day on the calendar", and as soon as Yom Kippur ends, they run to "go build their *sukkah*" (and maybe even earlier than this)...What remains from this holy day? The beautiful singing, the holy atmosphere, the feelings of elation? We do not mean to detract from the importance of these things, but they are not the purpose of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is given to us so we can know how to use its power for the rest of the year.

When a person learns how to drive a car, he's not learning how to drive the car just for one day – he's learning how to drive for the rest of his life. The same has to go for Yom Kippur. How should we view Yom Kippur? What do we want to take out of it?

The simple way people view Yom Kippur is that we merit that our sins be forgiven. "*For on this day you shall be atoned from all your sins, before Hashem you shall be purified.*" This is the clear, simple concept of Yom Kippur. We cannot say this isn't true – but it is still not the inner point of Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is a time in which we take out a lesson for the rest of the year. It is a day in which we can come learn about how to live throughout the rest of the year without sin.

Maybe a person will counter: What does Yom Kippur have to do with the rest of the year? On Yom Kippur we are in *shul* all day, and it's almost impossible to sin. The day after Yom Kippur, we go back to routine, we're back on the street. How is it possible to live throughout the rest of the year without sinning?

However, Yom Kippur is not defined as a day in which it is impossible to sin. Although that is true, it is only the superficial layer of Yom Kippur. The essence of Yom Kippur is that our sins are forgiven, and that we are purified.

We don't just learn from Yom Kippur how we can avoid sin for the rest of the year. We learn from Yom Kippur *how to cleanse ourselves from a sin, after we fail*.

A person definitely has to protect himself as much as possible from a sin, but we have to be concerned as well that if we do fall to a sin, that we should know how to deal with the setback, to be able to uplift ourselves even though we have failed.

Compare this to someone who doesn't get himself car insurance. He's confident that he won't get into an accident, so it's not worth it for him to buy insurance for his car. Now, if this is because he has a high level of emunah, that's wonderful. But if he doesn't have a high level of emunah, then all is fine and well only until he gets into an accident. Then he has to pay a heavy sum to fix up his car.

So of course a person has to make sure that he won't come to sin during the coming year, and that it should be a year without sin, with the help of Hashem. But if *chas v'shalom* one does fail to a sin, how should he help himself? He shouldn't wait until next Yom Kippur. He can learn from Yom Kippur, now, how he can purify himself from sin throughout the rest of the year.

Thus, preparing for Yom Kippur is not just a preparation for one day alone. It is essentially how to prepare for the rest of the year - that if we *chas v'shalom* fall to a sin, we should know how to get up from it and purify ourselves.

However, we need to understand: That would be fine if we are totally a soul during the rest of the year without a body, but don't we have a body as well? How then can we learn from Yom Kippur as a lesson for the rest of the year, when on Yom Kippur we are totally a soul with no bodily drives, and during the rest of the year we have a body?

In order to answer this question, we need to know what the inner essence of this holy day is.

### ***Disconnecting Completely From Impurity***

It is written (Yechezkel 36:25), "*And I will sprinkle upon them pure waters.*" Hashem sprinkles upon us "water" that purifies us. From a superficial perspective, it seems that this resembles how a person's impurity from being contaminated to a corpse gets removed by having the *parah adumah* (red heifer) sprinkled upon him. But the inner depth to this purification process is as follows.

In order for one's sins to be forgiven by Hashem, it is well-known that he needs three conditions: regretting the sin, confessing the sin, and resolving not to commit the sin again. All of these make sense. Regret makes sense, because if a person doesn't feel bad that he sinned, why should he be forgiven? Confessing the sin is a little harder to understand why it is necessary; but it also makes sense; and resolving not to sin again is so that he shouldn't just go back to his old ways.

That is the superficial understanding, but there is greater depth to this.

We can learn from our first redemption, our redemption from Egypt, on how we can disconnect from impurity.

Sins are impurity. The first impurity which the Jewish people went through was in Egypt. When the time came to exit Egypt, they disconnected from the impurity there, and then they were fit to receive the Torah. That was the first cleansing process which the Jewish people went through – a cleansing from the 49 Gates of Impurity.

Hashem commanded the Jewish people that we have no more reason to fear Egypt's oppression on us, and that we will never see them bear upon us again (*Shemos 14:13*). What is the depth to this? Simply, it was to calm them, that they shouldn't fear Egypt. That is true, but the hidden inner point here is that when we left the impurity of Egypt, we gained an ability to totally disconnect from evil and impurity. Because we were promised by Hashem that we will never be oppressed by Egypt again, we were able to totally disconnect from impurity.

### ***Confessing Without Regretting Is Pointless***

Rav Dessler zt"l writes that even on Yom Kippur, when a person is saying *viduy* (confession of his sins), he might be really having a downfall all along, rather than growing from it.

How can this be? Isn't he fulfilling the *mitzvah* to say *viduy*?

The answer to this is that as he is saying *viduy*, he is remembering his sins and then experiencing them again; and he has some good memories...he hasn't yet disconnected from them, and he still gets a little nostalgic when he revisits those experiences in his mind. Such a person is ruining himself in the process of trying to fix himself!

Without truly regretting the past sin before one says *viduy*, the *viduy* becomes a person's downfall, and instead of growing spiritually, the person remembers his past sins. For example, if a person *rachmana litzlon* (May Hashem have mercy) saw an improper sight and he is trying to do teshuvah over it, he thinks about the improper sight again and stumbles again.

But if a person has true regrets over the sin, then every time he remembers the sin, he is filled with pain and remorse. He realizes what he lost by sinning, and it is no longer enjoyable to think about it. When a person loses \$100,000, the mere memory of such a loss is very painful. People love to remember their past positive experiences, but no healthy person likes to think about his past negative experiences.

A person committed an *aveirah*, and he enjoyed himself too while he was at it. If he truly regrets what he did, he will find that what was once joy to him has now turned into pain. It's like someone who stole a lot of money and ended up in jail. Every time he thinks about the money he stole, he groans in sadness, and he does not look at it as a sweet memory. He realizes that he didn't gain anything by stealing the money, and all he did was that he landed himself in prison.

Thus, if one confesses the sin before he regrets it, it's pointless, because he still remains with the pleasure he had from the sin and savors it. As he confesses it, he remembers those "good times", *rachmana litzlan*, from the sin. Sure, he has some pain from it too when he remembers it, but he remembers the enjoyment as well. He's confessing the sin, but while he's at it he's enjoying the memories.

In order for a person to have a true *viduy*, he has to first build up his regret over the sin. And what

indeed is that regret supposed to be?

To feel regretful over the sin, a person has to think about how much he lost out on by sinning. By sinning, he gave up eternal rewards. When a person thinks about this deeply, he can come to the recognition that the sin was truly a loss for him, and it pains him to think about it. *Now* he can confess the sin. Without coming to this feeling of regret, he resembles what is written, *"In his mouth and lips he honors Me, but his heart is far from Me."*<sup>[2]</sup> The possuk is referring to how a person confesses his sins, yet he's still connected to them.

### ***The Meaning of Regret: Giving Back The Evil Enjoyment***

We have thus learned that the depth of regretting a sin is to erase the pleasure that one had from it. When a person sins, on what he is doing *teshuvah* for? Simply, it is because of the act he committed. This is true, of course, but it is still only the lower aspect of *teshuvah*. The inner essence of *teshuvah*, though, is as follows.

In this physical world, nothing can be taken for free. If someone steals, at some point he will have to give it back. If someone took pleasure from this world that he wasn't supposed to take – it must be given back.

How can one return his wrongful pleasure he had? He has to come to the same amount of pain as the enjoyment he felt from the sin. Only by countering the evil pleasure with true remorse, equal in strength, can one uproot the evil pleasure which he partook from. Without experiencing pain equal to how much he enjoyed it, he has basically stolen pleasure from the Creator. It as Chazal<sup>[3]</sup> state, *"Anyone who enjoys this world without a blessing, it is as if he stole from Hakadosh Baruch Hu."* How much more so does this apply to one who commits a sin and enjoyed himself at it; he has stolen this wrongful pleasure which he was not supposed to have, and it is upon him to fix this up.

When someone steals, he has a *mitzvah* to return the stolen object; it won't be enough if he just feels bad that he stole, or that he confesses what he did and resolves never to do it again. He has to actually return what he stole! The same is true with one's sins toward Hashem. If a person took wrongful pleasure from a sin, it's not enough to feel bad about it – he has to return what he took. He can return it by feeling pain equal to the amount of enjoyment he had from it.

Hashem created such a thing as Gehinnom – a place where souls have to endure great suffering. Why did Hashem make Gehinnom? Doesn't He love us? Why does He have to pain us so much with Gehinnom? So that this will force people to regret and confess their sins and resolve never to do it again? Why must there be such thing as Gehinnom?

It is because a person took wrongful pleasure from this world, and he never felt pain at this. He remains with the pleasure he had from the sin, and now he must give it back. He has to feel pain equal to the amount of how much he enjoyed.

If two people sinned, and one of them enjoyed himself more than the other one did during the sin, the one who enjoyed himself will have a worse Gehinnom than the other one who didn't enjoy it as much. The more evil pleasure one had from this world, the more he needs to undergo *Gehinnom*.

We do not want to be in *Gehinnom*. We want to be forgiven. How can we be forgiven? There are no shortcuts. One has to give back to the Creator what he wrongfully took; the way one reaches this is through enduring physical suffering. The sin was pleasurable to the person, and suffering is the opposite of taking pleasure.

On Yom Kippur, there is a *mitzvah* to feel physical affliction. *"And you shall afflict your souls"*. Why?

Does Hashem want us to suffer? No. It is because we enjoyed the sin, and for one day of the year, we have the opportunity to give back that wrongful pleasure – by physically suffering on this day, the evil pleasure from sins throughout the rest of the year that seeped into our blood is drawn out, and this is how we are purified.

### ***A Day To Disconnect From Physical Pleasure***

Now we can understand why there is a concept to be as if we are “dead” on Yom Kippur, which we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

If a person on his deathbed is offered an ice cream or some other enticement, the average person would refuse it; even if he loves ice cream. He knows he’s about to die, and he realizes at this moment of truth how futile everything on this world is. A person about to die is disconnected from all physical pleasures, and he realizes with certainty that it’s all worthless.

The Vilna Gaon said that the greatest pain one has when he dies is that as he is being escorted to the Heavenly court, he sees all that he could have gained, and all that he has lost. He sees that he took pleasure from all the wrong places, and that he gave up the real pleasure he could have had.

A dead person can be defined as someone who doesn’t feel alive, someone who has no real enjoyment. “A dead person cannot feel anything.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Thus, if a person wants to prepare himself properly for Yom Kippur, he needs to be like someone who is dead – in other words, he needs to return all the wrongful pleasure he had during the year, especially forbidden pleasure. If he is on a higher level, he fulfills the words of Chazal: “Sanctify yourself with even what is permissible to you.” But the first thing one must do is to begin by returning the wrongful pleasure he had from his sins. If he spoke *lashon hora* and enjoyed himself while he was at it, if he ate something of a questionable *hechsher* and enjoyed it – he has to return that pleasure.

Someone who is level-headed builds for himself a way of life for the rest of the year in which he will be able to return all the wrongful pleasure.

“Praiseworthy is the man who is afflicted by Hashem, and who learns from Your Torah.”<sup>[5]</sup> Who is someone that “learns from Your Torah”? This is someone who sits and learns Torah, even though it’s hard for him (for example, when he’s tired); but he understands well that by enduring pain for the Torah, he purifies himself from the evil pleasure he had from sin, and in this way he returns the evil pleasure to Hashem.

Yom Kippur is a day in which a person has no physical enjoyment. Any pleasure one has on this day – for someone who does – is pleasure of the soul. The only physical pleasure one can have on this day is to smell spices, but even this is not really physical pleasure; it is well-known that smell is a sense of the soul, not of the body.

The concept of Yom Kippur is, firstly, to disconnect from all physical pleasure. What is left for us to do? We have to fix up what we did wrong this past year; for this we have a *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*, which is to regret the sin, to confess the sin and to resolve never to do the sin again. By regretting the sin, one can erase the evil pleasure which he had, since he now has pain over it.

### ***The Pain Must Equal the Pleasure***

Now we are able to understand how it can be that a person goes through Yom Kippur so many times in his life – expressing regret over their sins, confessing them, and resolving never to do the sin again...yet a person does not feel that his *teshuvah* amounted to anything. Why do people feel this

way?

It is because people “regret” their sins only superficially. They make a list of all their committed sins and then express regret over them...although this can go under the category of regret, a person still has to come to a situation in which the amount of pain he has over the sin is equal to the amount of pleasure he had from the sin.

There is a well-known statement of Rav Nachman of Bresslov: “With my *chassidim*, I have succeeded in at least taking away their pleasure from sinning. I can’t stop anyone from sinning, but at least I have helped them get rid of the pleasure they had from it.”

The truth is that Chazal state that ever since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, a person no longer enjoys committing a sin. Hashem desires that we be able to do *teshuvah* easily, so He made it easier for us by taking away a lot of pleasure from committing a sin.[\[6\]](#)

Thus, the inner point of *teshuvah* for us is to first understand that the problem is not the sin itself we committed, rather the connection that we still feel toward it. As Chazal[\[7\]](#) say, “He is attached to it like a dog.” Why does a person feel attached to his sins? It is because since he enjoyed it, he has become attached to it. He has to uproot this connection by regretting it. After that he can have a true *viduy*, because when he remembers his sins as he regrets them, instead of remembering how much he enjoyed it, he feels pain over it. And when he resolves never to commit the sin again, it will be a true commitment. Without true regrets, it is pointless for him to resolve never to do the sin again, and it will be like resolving that he will separate himself from his own foot – a decision that he will of course never carry out.

When a person is still connected to evil, it has become a part of him; if he resolves never to sin again, it will not be enough, since he still feels connected to the sin. What can he do to disconnect from the sin? Just deciding not to sin again will not help, unless he has disconnected from the pleasure of the sin. Only by disconnecting from the pleasure of the sin will it become easier for him to hold onto his resolutions.

If someone is in a place where he is in danger, the best solution is to get out of there! That was what Yosef Hatzaddik did when he was tempted to sin. He ran away from the place. If a person is still connected to evil, to the pleasure of a sin – either he has to run away from the evil, or he must chase out the evil from within him.

This is the deep difference between a righteous person and a wicked person. A righteous person may have committed many sins, but he has truly done *teshuvah* over them – he has separated from the evil enjoyment he had. He doesn’t want to return to that place or ever feel connected to it. But a wicked person is essentially someone who, although he has done *teshuvah*, he still has some “good old memories” from his past...

### ***Purifying Ourselves***

This is essentially what it means to become purified on Yom Kippur from the “pure waters” sprinkled upon us, which we mentioned in the beginning from the possuk.

When a person gets dirty and sweaty from a long day, he can take a shower that will remove all the dirt from him and make him clean. The same can be said of a person who wants to come and cleanse himself from sin. Although the evil deed has been committed a long time ago, the pleasure from it has remained, and the person is dirtied from it. Just like the body becomes dirtied, so does the soul become dirtied from the pleasure of a sin. By removing the pleasure one had from the sin, the soul becomes cleansed by “pure waters.”

We are taught by Chazal<sup>[8]</sup> that “A person who sins and [only] confesses and doesn’t return to it, to what is he compared to? To a person who immerses [in a *mikveh*] and is holding a *sheretz* (insect) in his hand; even if he immerses in all of the water in the world, his immersion does not count.” It’s possible that a person goes to the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur and immerses himself 310 times, but it can all be worthless! If he never disconnected from the pleasure of the sin, going to the *mikveh* will be ineffective. His soul is still connected to the sin.

This is the secret behind the custom to go to a cold *mikveh* on Erev Yom Kippur; to remind us that we need to be “dead” – to disconnect from evil pleasure. Yet even this is not enough. One has to feel personally in his soul that he is “dead”, so to speak. A dying person has no interest in this world’s pleasures, because he knows he is about to leave them eternally.

If a person would give up on this world’s pleasures, he would no longer be interested in them, and he can be confident that he won’t return to those pleasures. He is using the power to be “dead”, in a holy way – like the words of the Rambam, that one has to “kill himself in the tents of Torah.”

It’s possible that a person is sitting all day in the *beis midrash*, yet he’s really living outside of it: someone who only wants pleasures that come from the outside world. Someone who “kills himself in the tents of Torah” means someone who gives up his desires for externalities. This is a Torah that purifies him; this is the *mikveh* that purifies him – when a person erases from himself the pleasures of this world.

### ***Erasing the Connection To Evil***

If we understand these words, we are able to understand a lot better how a person can take Yom Kippur with him for the rest of the year. On the calendar, Yom Kippur is only once a year – but there is a way for a person to always have Yom Kippur. How?

Let’s say a person, *rachmana litzlan* (May G-d have mercy on him) falls to an *aveirah* (act of sin). What should he do now? The first thing he needs to know is that he is connected to the evil act, and that is the problem. His job is to uproot that connection, to uproot the desire to do something evil.

It is written, “*On my bed at nights, I sought that which my soul desired.*”<sup>[9]</sup> Sometimes a person isn’t aware of what he wants during the daytime, but at night, he can begin to see what exactly he likes...

One time the Chofetz Chaim had a dream in which he won the lottery and became very rich. When he woke up the next day, he fasted. When his students asked him why he is fasting, he replied that he had a bad dream, and he told them what he had dreamed about. The students asked him that it doesn’t say in the Gemara that you have to fast over such a dream. The Chofetz Chaim replied, “Either way, it’s a bad dream. If it really happens and I do win the lottery, being rich is a test that I don’t want to face. And even if the dream isn’t true and I never become rich, how did I ever come to such a dream in the first place? Why am I dreaming about becoming rich?!”

The Chofetz Chaim was scared that his soul is still connected material interests.

Let’s say a person lives in a modest apartment with only two and a half rooms, but he really wants to live in a mansion; his desires are to live in a mansion, and that is what his soul is connected to. The fact that he lives in a modest apartment doesn’t show his true level, because deep down he wishes to live in luxury; those are his true desires.

A person can be sitting in the *beis midrash*, but he’s thinking about Switzerland. His desires are to travel the world – and that is what he really wants in life...

It's possible that a person is sitting at the Shabbos table and giving *mussar* to his children, but deep down in his heart, he wishes that his wife would just serve the next course already...

In other words, a person can *feel* a certain way about something – but his *thoughts* and *words* are saying something else. He is living a life which, on the outside, seems to be quite alright; but if we check out his heart and what he really wants, he is like someone going to the *mikveh* holding a *sheretz*, which is a pointless immersion. When a person still has desires for the pleasures of this world, he won't be able to get purified from Yom Kippur.

### ***True Pleasure***

What we are saying is a clear concept. The inner point of life is to derive a vitality from living, to experience true pleasure. On Rosh HaShanah, we asked for life – for true life: to enjoy serving Hashem, to enjoy Torah, to enjoy *davening*, to enjoy the *mitzvos*, to enjoy having *emunah*. On Yom Kippur, we are now coming to purify ourselves from a false kind of life.

What do we mean by purifying ourselves from a false kind of life? We do not mean only that we must purify our actions. Our actions are only the external layer of what we need to accomplish; although the first thing we need to do is better our actions, this alone will not be enough. Even if a person is *zocheh* to sit and learn all day in the *beis midrash*, and he tries to do all the *mitzvos*, he might still be among those of whom it is said that “*their hearts are far from me.*”

There are people whose hearts are far from Hashem; what does this mean? It means that if we come to a person and ask him what he wants – money or wisdom (just like Hashem came to Shlomo Hamelech and asked him this question), and the person answers, “I want a lot of money, so like this I can sit and learn forever” – such an answer reflects a life of utter falsity.

There is a known story that the late wealthy donor Mr. Reichmann once asked Rav Shach zt”l “Who will have greater *Olam HaBa* – me, for supporting so many *yeshivos*, or the *Rosh Yeshivah?*”, to which Rav Shach replied with a smile, “I don't know which of us will have a greater share in *Olam HaBa* – I cannot tell you what will be there, because I was never there. But I can tell you that I am here on this world, and I have a better life on this world than you do. This is because Chazal say, “An increase of assets is an increase of worry.” A person who truly sits and learns Torah, however – he is someone who really enjoys life!”

Life is really a true pleasure which Hashem has given us. But just like water can't be added to a cup filled to the top with soda, so is it impossible for a person to receive the true pleasure when his heart is brimming with all kinds of negative pleasures. The pleasure of spirituality and Torah cannot enter one's heart when it is already filled with evil pleasure from sin.

Chazal state that “A person merits Torah if he vomits the milk he nursed from his mother.”<sup>[10]</sup> In other words, a person has to vomit his physical pleasures and in its place enter the spiritual pleasures; this is the *avodah* of Yom Kippur: to vomit all our physical pleasures! We need to erase both our pleasures from sin as well as our pleasures from even permitted desires<sup>[11]</sup>, which attach us to the materialism of this world.

### ***To Know What We Want To Take Out of Yom Kippur***

When it comes *Motzei Yom Kippur* and a person wants to know if he was purified or not from this Yom Kippur, he has to check himself inside. If he feels less of a pull towards worldly pleasures, this is a sign that he became purified on Yom Kippur. But if he still feels just as pulled toward materialism after Yom Kippur is over as he did before Yom Kippur, he is like someone who fell into the *mikveh* without having any intention to be purified by its waters.

The words here are clear and sharp. Before Yom Kippur, it is upon us to understand how we must enter it – and how we must leave it.

When a person goes to the supermarket, he goes in with an empty shopping cart and intends to exit the store with a full one. People want to come out with something from Yom Kippur, but do they know what indeed they want to take out of it?

If a person lives life in an unclear way, on Yom Kippur he will ask for things as well that are unclear. When the end of Yom Kippur comes, he will not be clear in what he came out with.

A person has to know before Yom Kippur what he truly wants. He shouldn't fool anyone; it is between him and his Creator – he has to know the truth, and to see if he is disconnecting from materialistic pleasures. Understandably, one's human efforts alone will not be enough, and one will need to daven to Hashem for help that his heart become purified.

Yet, there is a step that comes before this. In for the heart to become purified, we first need to expel the evil that lurks in it.

The second set of *Luchos* (tablets) was given on Yom Kippur, because of the purity inherent on this day. If not for the purity of this day, the *Luchos* wouldn't have been given.

The first thing a person needs to ask for on Yom Kippur (as well as the last thing) is that Hashem should purify his heart; in other words, that his connection to all materialistic and forbidden pleasures be erased from his heart, that Hashem should take them away from within him. After this, one is able to be purified with the “pure waters” – he can receive purity from Hashem to come upon him, in that his pleasures in life will come from true, inner pleasure.

One has to begin ascending the ladder of levels to be on, step by step.

### ***A True Desire for A Spiritual Life***

How does a person disconnect from evil? It is very possible that a person wants to disconnect, and he knows that he does bad things and recognizes evil, but he is still attached to the sin like a dog who laps up its own vomit. What can a person do?

Once there was a story with Baba Sali zt”l, who would often host guests in his house; there was a student who humbly said he cannot eat there, because he resolved never to eat anywhere outside his own house. Baba Sali said to the student that in his house, he is protected by Heaven that no forbidden food ever enters one's mouth there.

How did Baba Sali reach such a level? Of course, he was a *tzaddik* and a very holy person, but it can also be because it is brought in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that if someone truly resolves in his heart that he would rather die rather than eat something forbidden, he is assured that he will be protected by Heaven that he will never stumble.

What Baba Sali reached was an inner kind of protection. When a person is ready to sacrifice himself over the holy Torah and to keep it no matter what, he sanctifies himself a little – and he is sanctified above in Heaven.

Let us take from this the following point. If a person truly wants to disconnect from this world, there is no other way except to fulfill the words of the Sages, “The words of Torah do not exist except in one who kills himself over them.”[\[12\]](#)

The question is: Is a person ready to die for the Torah, or not? If Eliyahu HaNavi would come to a person and reveal to him that if he dies, he will receive the understanding of the whole Torah – what would a person say? If a person isn't ready to die for Torah, it shows that he values his own life more than Torah. If he is ready to die for the Torah, then it shows that Torah to him is more important than his life – because he considers the *Torah* to be life.

When a person realizes that life has no meaning if he is devoid of spirituality, he enters an inner world of purity. But if a person is simply looking for “tips” and “ideas” on how he can get by the *Yom HaDin* and merit a good judgment – then nothing can be done for him!

There is one test a person has to pass, and this says it all: Is one prepared to give up this materialistic lifestyle for a spiritual one? Or does he want to have the best of both worlds...?

We are living today in a world that is full of mixed up values. It used to be very clear to all the difference between a Torah home and a non-Torah based home. People in the past were either pursuing materialism, or spirituality; it was “either or”.

(There were a few *tzaddikim* who were wealthy too and lived like kings – not because they indulged, but because they resembled the wealth of Rebbi, who knew how to live in luxury yet be totally disconnected from it; we cannot learn from this practically, though).

But today, when we walk into a Jewish house, we cannot tell clearly if it is a *Kolel* man's house or a working man's house! We cannot tell if he is a wealthy philanthropist or a poverty-stricken individual. Everything looks basically the same. The Torah of today by many people isn't entirely Torah – it is a Torah mixed with other things....

If a person wants to merit that next year should be a true kind of life, he needs to come to a decision, in his soul, that he really wants to be a *ben Torah*; that he really wants to live a life of spirituality.

Of course one has to eat, drink and clothe himself as usual; but the question is, what does he really want in life? Let's say he wishes deep down that somebody would come and support him for life, and this way he can sit and learn forever, undisturbed; and that this is his true, innermost desire in life. Still, it doesn't show that he's prepared to sacrifice for a spiritual kind of life. If someone would come to him and say, “I will take care of all your physical needs on this world – you just live a life of total spirituality,” would he indeed accept this?

If the answer is “yes”, that's excellent; but if a person isn't ready to accept this, then he's obviously not prepared to disconnect from materialism.

It's very easy to say it, but it has to be a resolution that one makes *deep inside his soul*. Preparing for Yom Kippur is essentially a preparation of *how to live a life of a soul*, without a body. Don't we have a body, though? Yes, we do have a body, but what we mean is that we need to **resolve** in ourselves that we want a kind of life in which we live through our soul.

This will of course be an *avodah* for us. It is impossible to be perfect in what we are describing here, but it has to become our aspiration. We need to take these words and draw them close to our hearts – that we should understand the goal of life; to understand that our purity can only come from disconnecting from superficial pleasures, and that instead of superficial pleasure, we need inner pleasure to replace it.

May Hashem merit that all of us be signed and sealed for a good year – that our hearts should only yearn for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, to yearn for His Torah, and that we should yearn to serve Him.

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[1] Yoma 86a

[2] Yeshayahu 29: 13

[3] Berachos 35b

[4] Shabbos 13b

[5] Tehillim 94: 12

[6] In **Utilizing Your Daas #04 (Separating The Imagination)** it is explained that the pleasure in a sin stems from imagination and not from the act of sin itself.

[7] Sotah 3b

[8] Yalkut Shimeoni, Mishlei, 961

[9] Shir HaShirim 3:1

[10] Yalkut Shimeoni, Mishlei, 964

[11] The author is probably referring to extreme pleasures that are permitted; that although in essence they are permitted, when pursued in an extreme way, pleasures become unhealthy. In "Getting To Know Your Self", it is explained that while pleasure is a basic and necessary force in our soul, if pleasure is endlessly pursued with no self-restraint, it is clearly extreme and unhealthy.

[12] Yalkut Shimeoni, 762.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/yom-kippur-disconnecting-sin>