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## Yom Kippur - 026 Returning To Your Inner Purity

### **Entering The “Kodesh Kodashim” Within Our Own Soul**

“For on this day, you shall be atoned, before Hashem, you shall be purified.” On the holy day of Yom Kippur, there is a special spiritual light on this day that allows us to attain *taharah* – purity. The purity does not begin on Yom Kippur, but in the ten days of repentance that precede it.

When the *Beis HaMikdash*<sup>[1]</sup> 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*<sup>[2]</sup> and do the *avodah*<sup>[3]</sup> there, where he would sprinkle the blood of the *korbonos*<sup>[4]</sup>.

Now that we do not have a *Beis HaMikdash*, nor do we have the *korbonos* or the *Kohen Gadol* to do the *avodah*, the main *avodah* of Yom Kippur, which would purify and atone for us, is missing. But although we no longer have the *korbonos* and the *Kohen Gadol* to enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* to atone for us, we are taught that in our own soul, we can enter the “*Kodesh Kodashim*” that is within<sup>[5]</sup> and do *avodah* there, resembling the *Kohen Gadol’s avodah* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*.

This is because there is a rule that everything in Creation is found on three planes – in the world, in time, and in the soul.<sup>[6]</sup> Just as there was a *Kodesh Kodashim* in a place in the world – in the place that was the *Beis HaMikdash* – so does the *Kodesh Kodashim* exist in the dimension of our soul.

How, indeed, can a person enter “before Hashem”, *lifnay v’lifnim*, into his own personal *Kodesh Kodashim*?

### **Entering Our Heart**

The sefer *Nefesh HaChaim* explains that our **heart** is our own personal *Kodesh Kodashim*. Just as the *Kohen Gadol* was not allowed to entertain any improper thoughts when he stood in the *Kodesh Kodashim*, so is a person forbidden to have any forbidden thoughts, for his heart is the *Kodesh Kodashim*.

The heart is called the “*Beis Kodshei Kodashim*”, and entering the innermost point of our heart is essentially where we enter the “*Kodesh Kodashim*” that is within ourselves – where each man does his own personal “*avodah*”, which is a resemblance of the *Kohen Gadol’s avodah* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*.

Thus, the words “*Be purified, before Hashem*”, which is about Yom Kippur, is essentially referring to this concept of entering the innermost point of the heart; we are “purified before Hashem” when we

enter deep into our heart on Yom Kippur.

### ***The Difference Between Our Avodah on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur***

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 corpse has a 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 he *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 the blessing of “*Elokai Neshamah*”. The *neshamah* is found in the deepest part of our heart, and it always remains pure.

On Yom Kippur, where are purified before Hashem, the meaning of our *avodah* is not 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 - Returning To Our Soul’s Eternal Purity***

Our actual *avodah* to purify ourselves begins in the Ten Days of Repentance, where we leave *tum’ah* and enter into *taharah*, to be purified from the *tu’mah* on us. But this is just the beginning of our *avodah*. Our *avodah* ends on Yom Kippur, where we enter into our innermost depths, where all is pure.

Just as the *Kohen Gadol* enters the holiest and purest place on Yom Kippur, so does each person have the *avodah* to enter into the pure place, in himself on Yom Kippur.

The *Mishnah* in *Yoma* says that “Words of Torah are not susceptible to *tu’mah*.” Entering the deepest part of our soul means to enter a place in ourselves that resembles “words of Torah are not susceptible to *tu’mah*”; this is a deeper kind of purity than merely becoming *tahor* from previous *tum’ah*. It is to enter a point of purity in ourselves which can never become impure in the first place – and that is the meaning of the “*neshamah tehorah*” that is deep within us. The *avodah* we have on

Yom Kippur is to enter this place in ourselves, where we connect to Hashem in a place that is entirely pure.

This is the meaning of the statement, "Hashem is pure, and His servants are pure." Obviously Hashem is always pure, so what does this statement mean? It is referring the point of purity where our soul is connected with Hashem in complete purity, where it is attached to the Source that it was carved from. Of this, it is said "*Before Hashem, you shall be purified.*"

### ***The Depth of the Atonement and Purity On Yom Kippur***

The Torah writes of Yom Kippur: "*For on this day you shall be atoned, and before Hashem, you shall be purified.*" Yom Kippur thus has two aspects: *kaparah* (atonement) and *taharah* (purity.)

The first aspect, *kaparah*\atonement, is the external part of the purification process, and this is where we are purified from previous impurities. But the inner part of the purification is *taharah*: "*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 soul that we merit the *selichah* (forgiveness) from Hashem.

Thus, 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.

### ***Beyond Inspiration***

Initially, a person lives a "body" kind of life. As one matures, he gains inspiration in his life, where he can go beyond a "body" kind of existence. Inspiration is essentially the essence of Rosh HaShanah, and as we have explained, inspiration is not yet the end of our goal.

The "Yom Kippur" of most people today is being experienced on a level of Rosh HaShanah – it is being experienced as inspiration. But if a person can go beyond the inspiration he feels on Yom Kippur, he enters inward into his soul, into the deepest chamber in himself.

### ***The Pure Point In The Soul: The Point of "Alone"***

When the *Kohen Gadol* entered the *Kodesh Kodashim*, he was alone. There was no one else with him, except for Hashem, and the Torah [which was in the *Aron*]. No one else was allowed to be there; he was "alone" and separate from the world.

If the *Kohen Gadol* entered the *Kodesh Kodashim* and he was not purified enough, he died on the spot as soon as he entered there. This happened often in the era of the second *Beis HaMikdash*, where the *Kohen Gadol* was not always righteous, and he got the position due to his wealth and status. When he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim* on Yom Kippur, he was instantly killed.

On a deeper level, this can be understood as follows: since the *Kohen Gadol* did not reach *taharah* – or the level of "*neshamah tehorah*" in himself - the exact opposite of *taharah* was instead revealed there in the *Kodesh Kodashim*: death, which is the epitome of all *tu'mah* (spiritual contamination). But if a *Kohen Gadol* was indeed purified inwardly, he would enter the *Kodesh Kodashim* safely, and he was alone there with Hashem and His Torah.

The inner place of our soul, our *neshamah tehorah*, is the "individual" aspect of man, apart from the rest of the world, where one is completely "alone" with Hashem.

When a person is around others, it is possible for him to receive the *tum'ah* of this world. The *taharah* found deep in the soul, our *neshamah tehorah*, is only active when we are separate from others and we are alone with Hashem. The Sages said, "Therefore, man was created individual." Connecting to our deepest point of the soul, our "individual" point, is the only place where we can be apart from others' influences, and instead be completely alone with Hashem.

At first, we need to connect with others who serve Hashem; we have a *mitzvah* of *ahavas Yisrael* (love for the Jewish people) and eventually we must also reveal a love for all of Creation. But when we enter the deepest point in ourselves, we must be alone from others.

This does not mean that we become uncaring towards others when we are in that isolated part of ourselves; we see that the *Kohen Gadol* would *daven* for *Klal Yisrael* upon leaving the *Kodesh Kodashim*. But this was only upon leaving the *Kodesh Kodashim*. When he was actually inside the *Kodesh Kodashim*, he felt separate from others and he was utterly alone with Hashem.

As long as a person lives a "body" kind of life, he cannot go beyond the social aspect of his life; he has no place where he is ever "alone". Even if he gains inspiration from Rosh HaShanah, he remains with just the *teruah* of the shofar, the awakening of the shofar; the word *teruah* is also from the word *rei'us*, friendship – which hints to us that the level of "Yom Teruah" that is Rosh HaShanah cannot elevate a person beyond the level of inspiration and of friendship with others. It doesn't bring a person to the state of "alone" that he must ultimately acquire.

Only the level of Yom Kippur enables a person to enter the deep place in his soul, where he is alone from all others and where he is alone with Hashem.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* says that a *chassid* (pious individual) can be among people yet he is living alone from them. How is this possible? It is because a person can enter inward into his soul, into this place of "alone".

### **Our Avodah During Tefillas Ne'ilah: Entering The "Alone"**

It is written, "Go, my nation, into your rooms; close the doors behind you, until the wrath passes." We "close the doors" behind us by the prayer of *Ne'ilah* on Yom Kippur.

The word "*ne'ilah*" means to "close". It 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, alone from all others. 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 where he is alone with only Hashem and His Torah.

*Ne'ilah* is where we begin to enter our innermost point of our soul, 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 the "*sod*", the "secret", of the soul. 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.

One can penetrate into this deepest point of himself, where he is utterly alone from anyone else, and he cannot include anyone else in there, because it is the place of "*liba l'pumei lo galya*"; it cannot be expressed or revealed to anyone.

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 heart is described by our Sages as being a place that contains room within room, where one can keep entering more inward, deeper and deeper.

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 prayer can be of inspiration. 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; and from the deepest place in oneself that one reaches, he should speak to Hashem from there.

Don't just let out groans and screams then, which are superficial forms of inspiration, as if it is *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah. Instead, speak to Hashem, from the deepest place in yourself that you have come to recognize. Even if it is not the deepest possible place compared to what others may have reached, it is still considered to the deepest place in yourself, at the level that you are on currently.

That deep place in the soul is the "*lifnay v'lifnim*" that each person can reach on his own individual level, and 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.

One needs to speak to Hashem on Yom Kippur during all of the *tefillos*, but especially during the prayer of *Ne'ilah*. One must speak to Hashem then from the deepest part of himself that he recognizes. If one does not speak to Hashem from that place of himself, he has not touched upon the depth of our *avodah* of Yom Kippur.

### **Summary Of Our Avodah On Yom Kippur**

Yom Kippur is a special time granted to us where we can attempt to reach deeper into ourselves. We have explained that the first part of our *avodah* is to become inspired to the point that we are purified from any previous impurities, and that the deeper and more important part of our *avodah* is to get in touch with our inner point of purity that is unchanging; our *neshamah tehorah*.

The Gemara says that there were two groups of people who would sing [at the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*]: "Praiseworthy is the one who has never sinned. One who has sinned, should bring a *korbon*, do *teshuvah*, and he is atoned." [7] These two levels exist as well in our soul: there is the point of being purified from sin, and there is a more inner point, in which there is no sin at all, for it always remains pure. The outer layer of the soul represents those who have become purified from sin through doing *teshuvah*, and the inner layer of the soul is reminiscent of the *tzaddikim* who have never sinned in the first place.

In the deep point of our soul, there is no possibility of sin, and it is forever pure. This point can be reached especially on Yom Kippur.

### **Returning To Our Purity Throughout The Year**

In Kelm, they would practice self-introspection for every ten days following Yom Kippur. This was called "*Asiri Kodesh*". They would examine themselves and see if they were still keeping to their resolutions they had made on Yom Kippur. The *Sefer Chareidim* says to do this once a week; in Kelm it was every ten days. If we want our Yom Kippur to have a lasting effect on us, we will also need some kind of practice that resembles the *Asiri Kodesh* of Kelm.

Practically speaking, each person needs to set aside some time throughout the year, on a regular basis, for self-introspection, where he should see if he is still resembling his level on Yom Kippur or

not. Obviously, we cannot totally resemble the level that we were on Yom Kippur when it is during the rest of the year, but we can at least see if our lives are somewhat in resemblance of how we were on Yom Kippur.

One should try to do this for at least once every ten days, and take a few minutes to try to enter the deepest part of his soul, as much as he can; and he should then speak to Hashem from that deep place in himself that he reaches.

This deep place of our soul, also known as the innermost point of the heart, is essentially our source of vitality in life. This is the meaning of the verse, "*For with you there is the source of life, in Your light there can be seen light*" as well as the verse, "*From all that you guard, guard your heart, for from it flows all life.*" This deep point of the heart is where our entire spiritual vitality flows from and it makes us feel alive.

If one comes into Yom Kippur having been in touch with this place in himself during the rest of the year (such as by practicing this *hisbodedus* every ten days), he can then call out to Hashem from the very depths of himself when it comes Yom Kippur: "*From the depths, I call out to You, Hashem.*"

### ***Ne'ilah: The Time To Enter Into Our Purest Point***

Throughout all of the generations, the world was always filled with *tum'ah* (spiritual impurity). But we have been taught by our Sages that in "*ikvesa d'meshicha*" (the "footsteps in Mashiach"), the world will be at the "50<sup>th</sup> 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.

The Sages 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 "50<sup>th</sup> 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 today beyond the 49<sup>th</sup> 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 "50<sup>th</sup> 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 have become infected (and we definitely *have* become infected) by the "50<sup>th</sup> 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 go back to our closeness with Hashem, to the point in the soul 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 [with *Ne'ilah*]. 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. On a deeper note, one is connected in that place to the root of all souls of *Klal Yisrael* (and we emphasize the "root" here, but not the "branches", for the "branches" are currently found in the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of

impurity).

### ***In Conclusion***

May Hashem give us the strength, through the light of 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.[\[8\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Temple

[\[2\]](#) the holy of Holies; the innermost chamber in the Beis HaMikdash that contains the Ark, which contained G-d's direct presence; it was only allowed to be accessed by the Kohen Gadol, on Yom Kippur.

[\[3\]](#) Temple service

[\[4\]](#) offerings

[\[5\]](#) *Nefesh HaChaim, shaar aleph*

[\[6\]](#) *Sefer Yetzirah, III*

[\[7\]](#) Sukkah 53a

[\[8\]](#) See also ***Tefillah #086 - The Purity Within***

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