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“Te-sh-u-v-ah”: An Acronym for Five Different Spiritual Tasks

There is a teaching from our Rabbis^[2] that the word *teshuvah* (תשובה) stands for the following five fundamentals in our *avodah* (spiritual task):

אלוקיך עם ה' אלוקיך - “Be simple with Hashem, your G-d.”
שוייתי ה' לנגדי תמיד - “I place Hashem opposite me, always.”
ואהבת לרעך כמוך - “And you shall love your friend like yourself.”
בכל דרכיך דעהו - “In all your ways, know Him.”
הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך - “Walk modestly with Hashem your G-d.”

We will try here, with the help of Hashem, to reflect into these five aspects involved in doing *teshuvah*. These five concepts are not randomly placed together. Rather, they all bear a connection to *teshuvah*, which means to “return”, to one’s root, to his source, to his beginning. Thus, the five verses quoted above are essentially five ways of how one can return to his source.

We will try to explain here how one can practically work on each of these concepts. To work on all of these five steps, practically speaking, is obviously too difficult. Instead, each of us should pick of one these concepts to work on, which is certainly within our power of *bechirah* (free will) to do, in these days of *teshuvah*.

1. “Be Simple With Hashem Your G-d” - Returning To Our Childlike Purity

The first concept of *teshuvah* is: אלוקיך עם ה' אלוקיך, “Be simple with Hashem your G-d”.

Each of us, when we are born, is born with a quality called *temimus* (earnestness). As we grow older, naturally, this *temimus* gets covered over. We can see clearly that young children are pure and trusting, and as they grow older, they begin to know the world around them, and they see that they cannot trust the world that much as they used to. They get used to seeing a world that is far from *temimus*, and as a result, they learn to stifle their own *temimus*, so that they can fit into their surroundings.

A child will naturally do anything that others do, believing that everyone around them is pure and acting correctly. There is a deep place in the soul as well, our *temimus*, which is pure and trusting. But this *temimus* becomes hidden from use with the more we grow older and we want to mimic our surroundings. But the *temimus* that remains inside us, deep down, remains dormant in us, as a holy power, a power to be completely trusting of Hashem.

If we wouldn't be born with this power of *temimus*, it would be too difficult for us to acquire this power, because it wouldn't be in our resources. But Hashem, in His great mercy, imbued us with this natural ability, from birth, so that we can regain this nature whenever we need it. We don't need to acquire this quality of *temimus* from scratch. Rather, all we need to do is return to our original purity which we are born with. It has merely become covered over and hidden from our conscious awareness. But it is there, deep in our soul.

In this time of the year, when our *avodah* is to do seek atonement and do *teshuvah*, anyone with a Jewish soul that is a bit opened, will cry tears to Hashem.

Who usually cries, a child or an adult? Generally speaking, a child cries more than an adult. During this time of the year of *teshuvah*, each and every one of us can naturally return, on some degree, to a state of mind that resembles our pure, childlike state. That is why we can easily cry during these days, epitomizing the verse, "*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*"

These days are the time of which it says, "*Before Hashem, be purified*", where we return to a place of simplicity in ourselves, the inner child in ourselves, of trusting in Hashem. This *temimus* is still in us and it is especially apparent during these days of *teshuvah*, and it enables us to cry to Hashem, simply, and earnestly. Once a year, we have this opportunity to return to our childlike state. As Dovid HaMelech said, "*Like an infant on his mother's lap.*" We can return to this simple, earnest place in ourselves.

During the rest of the year, it is hard to be in this state of mind. But when we are in front of Hashem during these days, we can let this part of ourselves out from hiding, setting our inner childlike state free, and to let it run to Hashem and cry.

To access this power in ourselves, we may employ the use of our imagination, such as by imagining a child crying in his or her mother's lap, and to further imagine how the parent lovingly fulfills the child's request.

The blow of the *shofar* of Rosh HaShanah is considered to be a form of crying, the Gemara says. When a child is born, he cannot say a thing, and all he can do is cry to his parents. The sound of the *shofar* is like the child's cry, and it is a hint that one should be like a child, who can easily cry to his parents; to be able to naturally cry to Hashem.

This concludes with Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, there is also crying, but it is not a crying of sadness and mourning, which is the crying we have in the month of Av. Rather, it is a crying of longing for Hashem, like a child who cries for his parents when he sees his parents leaving the house and leaving him alone.

That is the first part of *teshuvah*: "Be simple, with Hashem your G-d." It is our *temimus*. Sit quietly with yourself, and return to a place in yourself which is childlike, pure and trusting, the purest place that exists deep inside you, which is always there. From there, from that place in yourself, turn to Hashem, and let your crying come forth, letting it flow from your innermost depths. Let us feel that this is the depth of the *avodah* during these days - "*Be wholesome with Hashem your G-d*" - and to live with this *temimus*.

2 - "I Place Hashem Opposite Me, Always" - Becoming Cognizant of Hashem's Presence

The second concept contained in *teshuvah* is: **שׁוֹיֵתִי ה' לִנְגַדִי תָמִיד**, "I place Hashem opposite me, always."

As is well-known, the *Rema* in the very beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* begins with these words: "*Shivisi*

Hashem L'negdi tamid" – "I place Hashem opposite me, always" – "This is the great rule in the praiseworthiness of the righteous, who walk before G-d. For the way a person sits and moves in his house does not compare to the way he sits and moves in the house of the king and when he is in front of the king."

The *Rema's* words here are speaking about the way a Jew should conduct himself during the entire year, but the especially auspicious time of the year to practically work on this concept is during these days of repentance. The Gemara says of the ten days of repentance that one should "Seek Hashem where He is found, call out to Him where he is close". Now is the time where a person should especially seek out closeness to Hashem, because Hashem is closer to us during this time of the year.

Therefore, even it is too high of a level to try to live with the state of "*Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*" – and indeed, it is a high level to always live in it – at least during the ten days of repentance, and certainly at least on Yom Kippur, we should try to attain the state of *Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*.

So on Yom Kippur, before we are about to recite *Kol Nidrei*, and before we are about to *daven* any of the five *tefillos* of Yom Kippur, we should first stop and think that we are about to stand before Hashem and speak with Him. Before beginning each *Shemoneh Esrei* on Yom Kippur, stop for a minute, or half a minute, and think about:

1. Whom you are about to stand in front of, and
2. Whom you are about to speak with, and
3. When you are speaking with Hashem, where are you actually found? Remember that "The entire land is filled with His glory."

When you speak with Him, it must be "as a man talks to his friend", as the *Mesillas Yesharim* explains. Hashem is found in front of us, here, and with Him we are speaking. Hashem has no corporeal body, but His existence is constantly in front of us, and with Him we are conversing.

If one can extend this awareness into the rest of the year as well, that is praiseworthy. But let us at least do it once a day, before we are about to *daven*. For once a day, before you are about to *daven*, think for just a few seconds about Whom you are about to speak with.

Even if you cannot be on this level during the rest of the year, at least on Yom Kippur, before each of the five *tefillos*, stand for a few moments and think that you are about to stand before Hashem and that you will be speaking with Him. You can also try to pause in middle of *Shemoneh Esrei* every so often and remind yourself that you are standing before Hashem.

Many times while people are *davening*, their thoughts are floating all over the place and they forget they are *davening*. Sometimes people are even so immersed in what they are *davening* for, that they forget that they are standing before Hashem, and with Whom they are speaking! They forget where they are.

Part of doing *teshuvah* is working upon this concept of "*Shivisi Hashem L'Negdi Tamid*". The *Rema* says that this is the entire praise of the *tzaddikim*, but even if we cannot be on this level, at least we can aspire for it. After all, "One is obligated to say: "When will my actions reach that of my forefathers?" Although we cannot reach the level of the *Avos*, we must aspire to reach their level, and indeed, we can certainly touch upon their level, even if we cannot reach it fully.

If someone merits the level that is "complete *teshuvah*", he can be in a state of *Shivisi* during the rest of the year as well. But at least during these days of *teshuvah*, any person can strive to touch upon this level, and to bring himself to the level of *Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*, for just a few moments, and throughout the day.

Even more so, when it is the time to *daven Ne'ilah*, at the end of Yom Kippur, what kind of thought do we end the day with? How do we spend the last moments of Yom Kippur? When we are saying those words, "*L'shanah Habaah B'Yerushalayim!!*" ("Next year in Jerusalem"), we can take a few seconds to think about the ultimate purpose of this day. Think that you are standing in front of Hashem, with nothing dividing between you and Hashem – there are no barriers of sin during these moments. For one moment, bring your soul to a state of being "near" Hashem, and be aware that you are speaking with Him.

How much will this awareness extend into the rest of the year as well? That is relative, and it will depend on the level of each person. But the final thought on Yom Kippur, for each person to think, when we are taking leave of the entire year, is a simple thought: We are standing in front of Hashem, and it is with Him that we speak with. If you merit, you will also have moments throughout the year when you can feel this.

If you go into Yom Kippur with this awareness, starting with the *tefillah* of *Maariv* on Yom Kippur and leaving the final moments of Yom Kippur with this simple thought, you will certainly have a more elevated year, with *siyata d'shmaya*. How elevated will it be? That is up to how you choose to spend the rest of the year. But if you go into Yom Kippur with this awareness and you also leave Yom Kippur like this, your soul will receive a deeper perspective, a more purified level of truth. Each person will certainly be positively affected, on varying levels, through this purification.

3. "And You Shall Love Your Friend Like Yourself": The Mutual Unity In The Jewish People

The third way to *teshuvah* is: **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעִי כָמוֹךָ**, "And you shall like your friend like yourself."

In the beginning of *Kol Nidrei*, we say that we are permitting ourselves to pray together with [intentional, rebellious] sinners. During the rest of the year, we may not pray together with [intentional] sinners. But on Yom Kippur, there is one day of the year where even those who have gone the most astray in the Jewish people come to *daven*, and it is permitted for us on this day to pray together with these who have intentionally sinned. This is not simply a day in which more people come to shul to daven. Rather, Yom Kippur contains a power that unifies everyone together. It is "And you shall love your friend like yourself" which connects every Jew together, which is especially apparent on Yom Kippur.

The day of Yom Kippur is the one day of the year which causes Jews from all walks of life to come and gather together. On Yom Kippur, even those who have gone astray and who are very far, will come to *shul*, with *siyata d'shmaya* (heavenly assistance). This is not merely an action they are doing. Rather, their hearts are active on this day, seeking atonement from Hashem. Not only are they coming to speak with Hashem, but they become united again with their brethren, the collective whole of the Jewish people. They are not gathered together in *shul* by coincidence. Rather, there is a light of truth that comes down onto the world on Yom Kippur. The unifying love between all of the Jewish people is this light.

Rabbi Akiva said that Hashem purifies the Jewish people on Yom Kippur, and the same Rabbi Akiva said, "This is the great rule of the Torah: "And you shall love your friend like yourself." These are not two separate statements of Rabbi Akiva – they are one and the same. The inner essence of Yom Kippur is a Jew's bond with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, to be purified before Hashem, to be cognizant of Hashem's presence, and it is also a day of connection with all of the Jewish people.

That is why Yom Kippur does not atone for sins unless one has sought forgiveness from others. Yom Kippur is atonement from sins against Hashem, and it is also a time to seek atonement for sins committed between man and his friend. There is a great light on Yom Kippur of love for all creations,

of “And you shall love your friend like yourself”, and therefore there must be seeking of forgiveness from others before Yom Kippur.

Everyone asks each other forgiveness, because, deep down, everyone feels the light of this love. A person may not be consciously aware of this, but “his *mazal* sees” – his inner soul can feel this truth, that Yom Kippur is a time of mutual connection between the entire Jewish people.

Here is an example of how one can improve on the aspect of *ahavas Yisrael* on Yom Kippur. In many *shuls* on Yom Kippur, there are people who are concerned that they should find the best possible place to sit in, worrying solely for themselves, without thinking of how to benefit others. On the holiest day of the year, while standing in front of Hashem, a person may just be entirely self-absorbed, concerned only for himself. But a person on Yom Kippur must think of a possible way to be concerned for others, and make sure that another person is comfortable.

One should look for ways to help someone around him. Another needs help finding seats for his children. Another person will need something else. We should want to *daven* of course, but we also need to be concerned for others, and fulfill “*And you shall love your friend like yourself.*”

Practically speaking, you should do something for someone else on Yom Kippur that will come at the expense of some physical comfort, and even if it deters your spiritual focus. I don’t mean that you should give up your entire spirituality on Yom Kippur in order to help someone. But at least in one area, be prepared to give up from yourself for another, whether it deters you physically or spiritually. Do so from a love for others. This should not be done with the agenda of gaining forgiveness from others, which is a self-serving motivation. Rather, do an act of concern for another simply out of a love for another Jew.

An additional point, related to this, is that when we recite *Tefillah Zakah* (which one should try to say, as stated in *Mishnah Berurah*), we state that we forgive anyone who has harmed us, whether in this lifetime or in a previous lifetime, except for certain injustices committed against us, which we are not allowed to forgive for, as the *Poskim* discuss. Besides for those isolated occurrences, we must strive to forgive any Jew who has wronged us, and to do so from the depths of the heart.

This should not be done with the agenda that if I forgive others, then Hashem will forgive me, even though that is true. Rather, the intention should be to forgive every Jew out of a love for all Jews, to desire that they should have it good. It is not about you. Before we go into Yom Kippur, we should awaken our *ahavas Yisrael* for all Jews, and we should ask ourselves: Do we really want that every Jew this year should have it good, to be sealed for a good year? Or are we each worried only for our own private lives, that only “I” should have it good and that only “I” should be sealed for a good year?

If we truly want that others should have it good, we should then realize that it is insensible to bear any resentment against anyone, even if another has truly insulted you and wronged you. If you really want others to have it good and not only yourself, you should try to forgive, with your whole heart, truthfully, any person in the Jewish people who has wronged you. (To actually reach a “complete heart” is a high level, but even if you are not at that level, you can still be able to forgive someone completely).

You need to reach a point where you truly want every Jew to have a good year this year; you should want even someone who has wronged to merit a good judgment. If you want to take this further, you can even *daven* for others that they should have a good year. An even higher level than this is to pray for the betterment of those who have wronged you – in spite of the fact that he did not treat you fairly.

One should inspect his heart well before doing this, to see if his heart is at peace with what he is doing. This part of *teshuvah* - "And you shall love your friend like yourself" - is of the fundamentals of this day of Yom Kippur. Not only should there be practical concern for others on this day, but mainly in your heart, you should feel a greater love for all Jews, on this day.

If you can do the following, try to take upon yourself not to go to sleep at night unless you have done a kindness for a Jew that day. Just do one nice thing a day for another Jew. A day that goes by without doing a kindness for another Jew is a pointless kind of life. The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that a person was only created to help others. Only rare individuals can be like Avraham Avinu and do chessed all day, but as for the rest of us, we should at least do one kindness every day for another Jew.

If you can help someone in the active sense, by all means, do so. If you can't, at least *daven* for another, or think of how you can help him tomorrow. But don't go to sleep unless you have done one kindness a day for another Jew. That is how you can extend the light of Yom Kippur into the rest of the year. Yom Kippur is not the only day of the year to love all Jews - we can try during the rest of the year as well to resemble the higher level of *ahavas Yisrael* that is more natural on Yom Kippur, by doing at least one kindness a day for another Jew.

4) "In All Your Ways, Know Him" - Sanctifying The Physical

The fourth way to *teshuvah* is: **בכל דרכיך דעהו**, "In all your ways, know Him."

There is an entire siman in *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim* (231) which explains the laws of this *mitzvah*. In simpler terms, there is so much we do each day. We each do hundreds of tasks each day - physical, and spiritual. We do spiritual acts each day, such as prayer, and there are much physical tasks we do each day. "In all your ways, know Him" means that even our physical acts should be with a spiritual intention.

It would be a very high level to turn all of our physical acts into spiritual acts. That would be the complete level of "In all your ways know Him", and we cannot try to grab high levels too fast. Instead, we should work on this gradually. Pick one physical act during the day and add a spiritual intention to it.

Here is a simple example, which is applicable to Yom Kippur. On Erev Yom Kippur, there is a *mitzvah* to eat. There are many different intentions explained in our holy sefarim of how a person should go about eating on Erev Yom Kippur. We all fulfill the *mitzvah* to eat on Erev Yom Kippur, regardless of our intention in it. But what are we thinking as we eat? By the *seudah mafsekes*, what are we thinking? Are we just thinking that we are eating, or are we thinking that it is a *mitzvah*? There are many things we can think about to elevate this act of eating, but here is one inner intention to have.

Each of us, almost without exception, is able to fast on Yom Kippur. In order to fast on Yom Kippur, it is possible to eat little on Erev Yom Kippur, but we would be very weak when fasting on Yom Kippur. If we really want to have concentration when we *daven* on Yom Kippur, we need energy. On Erev Yom Kippur, we should have the intention that we are eating in order to have the energy to fast on Yom Kippur.

Why do we need the energy to fast? So that we will be more comfortable? People before a fast have the habit to say to each other, "Have an easy fast." What does an 'easy' fast mean? Does it mean that they shouldn't suffer? Now there are pills people can take before a fast which makes the fast easier. For what reason should we make the fast easier...? If our intentions in wishing others well before a fast are true, it is not about having an easy fast. It is so that we can have the energy on Yom Kippur to *daven* properly.

So when eating the *seudah mafsekes*, what are we thinking? What our thoughts then? Let us think for a moment, before we begin to eat, why we are eating. We cannot eat entirely for the sake of Heaven – that is a high level. Rather, let us try to think that we are eating in order to have energy on Yom Kippur and to be able to *daven* properly.

If you can have this thought before you eat the *seudah*, and during the *seudah* as well, this is reaching a degree of “*In all your ways, know Him*”. Even more so, you can try to eat one food with the intention that you should have energy on Yom Kippur to *daven* better.

5) “Walk Modestly With Your G-d”: External and Internal Modesty

The final part of *teshuvah* is: **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**, “*Walk modestly with your G-d.*”

The task of *tzniyus* (modesty) is unique to women, but let’s understand the following fundamental point, which is subtle and deep.

Before a person is born, he/she is a fetus inside the mother, hidden from the rest of the world. Nobody sees him; he is covered completely and he is *tzanua* (hidden, modest). Thus, the very root of our birth begins in a state of *tzniyus*.

The Maharal says that nothing in Creation is coincidental, even the small things; surely, then, it is not a coincidence that the beginning of our birth is in a state of modesty. Why did Hashem make it this way, that before we emerge into the world, we are hidden for nine months? Before a baby is born, he lives an existence for nine months in which he is hidden from the rest of the world. Why did Hashem make it this way? It is to show us that our very beginning is *tzniyus*.

Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: A Time For Modesty

The beginning of the year, Rosh HaShanah, is certainly a time to strengthen our *tzniyus*. Rosh HaShanah is called “*HaYom Haras Olam*”, the “day of the conception of the world”. Our Sages said that the word “*haras*” is from the word “*herayon*”, conception. Rosh HaShanah is the day in which we are conceived, which serves as a root of *tzniyus* for the rest of the year.

Rosh HaShanah is also where we blow *shofar*, which “covers” over sin; as it is written, **תקעו בשופר בכסה ליום חגינו**, thus *shofar* is associated with **כסה**, with “covering.” The Sages expound this verse that said that Rosh HaShanah is a time where the moon is “covered”. The moon becomes more hidden and modest during Rosh HaShanah.^[3]

The ten days from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur, where the moon is more covered over, is thus a time for more modesty. On Yom Kippur, the modesty becomes even more apparent: Either we are praying in shul all day on Yom Kippur, or we are praying in the home, away from the rest of the world.

Of the rest of the year, when it is not Yom Kippur, we can apply the verse, **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה** - “*All of the honor of a princess, is inside*” – but only in the partial sense. The glory of a Jewish woman takes place on the “inside” - in the home, and not outside the home; but although the home is the main place for the Jewish woman who is a wife and mother, we know that in the end of the day, women are not found all day in their house; they go out of the home, and certainly in the times we live, this is the case.

But there is one day of the year where a large part of the Jewish people is not outside, and they are found inside, in the home. It is the one time of the year where we can truly apply this verse of **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה**. It is not a coincidence we have a day of the year in which we are not found in the outside world and that this day happens to be Yom Kippur. It is because the underlying essence of

Yom Kippur is **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**, “Walk secretly with your G-d” - to be in a place that is *tzniyus*.

But we must clearly know the following: *Tzniyus* is not just about covering the body. Being physically covered is certainly the main part of *tzniyus* in the *external* sense, but the *inner essence* (the *pnimiyus*) of *tzniyus* takes place inside us, in the depths of our heart. That is where our *tzniyus* is accessed.

There is a deep place in our heart which is covered and hidden from the rest of the world – and from ourselves. What is hidden from? It is hidden from our own selves, because it is so hidden. But when Yom Kippur comes, our hearts are opened, our *pnimiyus* is opened, and this inner place of *tzniyus* in our hearts becomes revealed to us.

During the rest of the year, we are experiencing the outer layers of our souls, and that is where we are seeing our life from. The inner place in our heart is hidden from us. But on Yom Kippur, the inner place in the heart can be revealed to us. Yom Kippur is a time where we are purified, where our hearts are purified to serve Hashem, and this purity of the heart means that the inner place in our heart is revealed to us. This means that on Yom Kippur, each person, on his\her own individual level, can reach the innermost place in himself\herself.

Teshuvah - Entering Deeper Into Ourselves

This is also the depth of doing *teshuvah*. When doing *teshuvah*, one needs to enter into deeper places in himself, in his\her heart. The normal feelings and emotions which we experience during the rest of the year are not our innermost feelings we reach when doing *teshuvah*.

Teshuvah is supposed to make us think and reflect, and to feel deeper places in ourselves, and from there, we come to feel true regret for any wrongdoings we have done and to make earnest resolutions to improve in the coming year and be better. The normal emotions which we have during the rest of the year are not the same emotions which enter us into *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur. The day of Yom Kippur reveals to us a more inner and hidden place in ourselves.

Preparing Ourselves On Erev Yom Kippur

It is recommended that on Erev Yom Kippur, one should sit with herself and prepare herself to enter into a deeper place of herself. If one makes this preparation, she will find it easier on Yom Kippur to reach this deeper place in herself; to reach deeper and truer feelings in herself. This is the deep place in ourselves where we can experience **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**.

Thus, **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**, the concept of *tzniyus*\modesty, includes both external and internal modesty. The external aspect of modesty is to be dressed appropriately, but even more so, it includes being modest about ourselves: not to praise ourselves to others, so that we keep a low profile. Yet even this is still within the *external* aspect of *tzniyus*; it is not yet the *inner essence* of *tzniyus*.

Tzniyus In The 21st Century

In our generation, we can see that the main emphasis of *tzniyus* today is being placed on the external aspects of *tzniyus*, such as how to dress appropriately, etc. Something is greatly missing from the *tzniyus* in today’s times, and it is because the essence behind *tzniyus* is usually missing.

We are often grappling with the external issues of *tzniyus* [appropriate dress and etc.], but these are just the *results* of a deeper issue. Sometimes we succeed in strengthening the external aspects of *tzniyus* and sometimes we are less successful. But what we really need is to build our power of *tzniyus* from its inner root that it is based on: “Walk secretly with your G-d.”

Finding The Essence of Tzniyus In Ourselves - On Yom Kippur

It is written, “*And I will dwell amongst them,*” and Chazal teach that this verse means that Hashem dwells in each person’s heart. That means that each and every Jew contains in the depths of his\her a hidden place which he can enter, where the *Shechinah* resides and he can feel a deep closeness with Hashem. That place in our heart is where we are meant to enter on Yom Kippur.

Practically speaking, as we *daven* to Hashem on Yom Kippur, we need to try to enter into a deeper place in ourselves. We should do so calmly and slowly, and not try to strain ourselves to get there. But we should try to get there and concentrate on this, slowly and calmly: to reach a deeper place in ourselves, to feel a clearer perception of truths, to reach truer and purer feelings there.

Through the *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur that enables us to be purified by Hashem, we can feel deeper feelings on Yom Kippur than the rest of the year, where we enter into the hidden place in ourselves of “*Walk secretly with your G-d.*” This hidden place in ourselves is where we can truly feel that we are “with” Hashem.

In Conclusion

So let us remember, that the external aspect of *tzniyus*, of how we must appear and dress, is but one part of our *avodah* in *tzniyus*. Along with it we must awaken in ourselves, for just a few moments, a truer and purer feeling for *tzniyus*. The time to work on this is especially Yom Kippur, where we have a special opportunity to awaken in ourselves to attain a slightly deeper and truer feeling, towards *tzniyus*.

We have seen, with *siyata d’shmaya*, briefly, the five parts of *teshuvah*.

As mentioned in the beginning, one cannot try to work on all of these ideas at once. That will be too difficult. One should instead choose to focus on one of these paths to *teshuvah*, and those who merit it can work on two of the paths. Choose one of these five paths, the one that you feel speaks to you, the one that is closest to your heart.

With some people, a certain path will feel close to home, and other paths will not. With others, a different path is the one that feels closer, and not the others. Each person is different when it comes to this, because not all souls are equal. Therefore, sometimes a person will hear a certain path and it will speak to him very much, whereas another person will connect with it less.

So, sit down after this and reflect: Which one of these five paths mentioned is the one that speaks to you the most? Which is the closest one for you to work on?

All of these paths are based on the words of our Sages. I emphasize that they are the words of the Sages, and they are not my own. This idea that the word “*teshuvah*” stands for these five verses is a concept mentioned in many of the words of our Sages. Choose at least one of these five paths to *teshuvah* to work on, at least during these last few days of *teshuvah* leading up to Yom Kippur. And surely on Yom Kippur itself, you should try to touch upon one of these paths of *teshuvah*.

These days of *teshuvah* are not just days to *daven* more. We need to aim to make some kind of small change for the better, to be able to live a bit more spiritually. This change, when worked upon, will have a positive effect on you for the rest of the year as well.

May Hashem let us merit together, with *siyata d’shmaya*, to become elevated, to grow, each person on his own level, according to his or her own soul. May we merit to grow more and more, to merit to improve, even a little bit more improved, in the coming year.

If one merits to become even more improved, that is wonderful, but even for those who don't, the least we can each aim for is to grow just a little bit more. This little bit of improvement can enable us to ask Hashem for another year of life, that it should at least be more elevated and more spiritual than the year before.

May we all merit, together, to be sealed in the *sefer* of the *tzaddikim*, all of *Klal Yisrael*, for a *gmar chasimah tovah*.

[1] יום כיפור 028 - ת-ש-ז-ב-ה

[2] This is said in the name of the Baal HaTanya (Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi) and Reb Zusha of Anipoli

[3] Editor's Note: It is well-known that the Jewish woman is compared to the moon, which experiences cycles of renewal. It seems that the Rav is drawing a correlation, that just as the moon is more modest on Rosh HaShanah by being covered over, so is the avodah of a Jewish woman to become more modest, with the beginning of Rosh HaShanah.

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/womans-world-27-t-e-s-h-u-v-h>