

יום כיפור

THE AVODAH OF YOM KIPPUR

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לימוד הדבר תורה ליכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE KEDUSHA OF THE DAY

One year, the mispalelim of the town Mezhibuzh decided to abolish all the tzeddaka collecting that customarily took place on Erev Yom Kippur, for it caused too much noise and disorder. When the Baal Shem Tov heard about this, he did not allow this regulation to be enforced. He related how one year on Erev Yom Kippur all the forces of kelipah gathered to form a blockage that would not allow the tefillos of the Yidden to ascend to shomayim. However, as soon as the Yidden below started shaking their pushkes, to ask for tzeddaka, and a great clatter was created from the coins thrown in by the mispallelim, the kelippos were torn apart by the noise.

(סיפורי חסידים מועדים זיון ע' 98)

The Torah commands us to eat on Erev Yom Kippur. Besides the benefit of gaining the necessary strength to fast, it is also a way of honoring Yom Kippur with food and drink. Many tzaddikim who would use only one hand when eating, would use both hands on Erev Yom Kippur. This was custom was practiced by of the Alter Rebbe and Reb Levi Yitzchak, the Rebbe's father.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' תרד, לקו"ש חכ"ט ע' 319)

The Medrash relates a story of an officer who asked his servant to buy him a fish. The servant, upon reaching the market, found only one fish on sale and agreed to pay one gold coin for it. However, a Yiddische tailor who was standing there approached the seller and offered a higher bid. Both the servant and the Yid tried to outbid each other, until the Yid won the fish for the sum of five gold coins. When the servant returned to his master and told him what had transpired, the officer, curious and upset, sent for the Yid and asked him why he had spent five coins on a fish and prevented his servant from buying it. The Yiddische tailor answered, "How could I have not bought it, even if it had cost ten gold coins?! I've bought it to eat on such a day that Hashem commanded us to eat and drink, when we are certain that Hashem will forgive our sins." The officer was impressed and praised him, sending him away in peace.

(טור או"ח סי' תרד)

On Erev Yom Kippur, תרמ"ט, the chossid Reb Zalman of Cherbina entered the Rebbe Rashab's room after Shachris and greeted him with a joyous "Gut Yom Tov!" The Rebbe Rashab, who was very serious and deeply engrossed in a sefer, responded, "Yes, it is Yom Tov, and Yom Tov is a time to be happy. But it is also Erev Yom Kippur, and one must be in a state of hisorerus teshuva (arousal to teshuva) from the depths of one's heart. Teshuva includes regret over the past and taking upon oneself a positive resolution for the future." Reb Zalman responded, "Rebbe, we are soldiers. Hashem told us that the first half of Erev Yom Kippur is a Yom Tov, so we need to be b'simcha. Only after chatzos must one daven mincha, say Al cheit, and do teshuva." Concluding / Reb Zalman concluded with a request, "Rebbe, give me lekach." The Rebbe Rashab, pleased with Reb Zalman's answer, lifted a piece of honey cake from the plate and

said, "[Just as] I am giving you a piece of lekach, may Hashem give you a sweet year."

(סה"ש קיין הש"ת ע' 10)

On Yom Kippur, in the year תרי"ח, the Tzemach Tzedek stood and davened the entire day. During N'eila, his deveikus was very great, and when he sang a niggun, all present cried bitterly. The Shaliach Tzibbur became confused with his own singing due to his great hisorerus from hearing the Tzemach Tzedek's davening.

(סה"ש תורת שלום ע' 210)

DOING TESHUVA

The Gemara cites a machlokes between Rabbi and the Chachomim, whether one must do teshuvah on Yom Kippur to obtain a kappara (forgiveness). According to the Chachomim, Yom Kippur only atones for those who do teshuva, while Rabbi holds that even if one does not do teshuva, the essence of the day of Yom Kippur atones (עיצומו). The Halacha is ruled according to the opinion of the Chachomim. The Rebbe explains that the Chachomim also agree that the essence of the day atones, but require one to do teshuva in order to reach that great kappara.

(שבועות ג' ע"ב, לקו"ש ח"ד ע' 1149)

The Rebbe explains that kappara is an expression of 'scrubbing', scrubbing off the dirt of aveiros. The day of Yom Kippur accomplishes both the cancellation of punishment and the removal of 'stains' and 'dirt', because on this day the bond between the essence of the neshama, which is unaffected by aveiros, and the essence of Hashem is revealed, so any external 'stains' are automatically nullified.

(לקוטי שיחות ח"ד ע' 1149)

One Erev Yom Kippur, while the holy tzaddik Reb Leib Sarah's was traveling, a great storm broke out, forcing him to stay in a small town for Yom Kippur. Only eight Yidden lived in the town, and they were expecting two Yidden from a nearby town to complete their minyan. Reb Leib arrived early in shul and prepared himself for Kol Nidrei. Time passed, and everyone waited for the two Yidden to arrive, but were soon notified that due to slandering, the Yidden had been imprisoned. Seeing that they were missing one to complete a Minyan, Reb Leib asked the townsmen, "Is there perhaps another Yid who lives near the village? Perhaps there is a Yid who is a meshumad (apostate)?" The men looked at him in wonder, and the tzaddik explained, "The doors of teshuva are never closed, even for a meshumad. I heard from my Rebbes that even when you dig in ashes, it is possible to find a spark of fire."

Hearing this, one of the villagers spoke up, "Our Poritz is a Yid, but has unfortunately been involved in aveiros for the past forty years.

When he was a young man, the daughter of the previous Poritz had wanted to marry him, and to sweeten the deal, her father had promised him to become the sole inheritor of the Poritz's wealth. Unfortunately, the Yid was unable to withstand the test." Reb Leib asked if the Yid has any children, and was told that he did not

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and that she had passed away a few years earlier.

The Tzaddik quickly removed his tallis, and after being given directions to the Poritz's mansion, he went on his way. Arriving at the mansion, the tzaddik knocked on the door and, without waiting for a response, entered, encountering the Poritz in person. The two stood there silently facing each other. The Poritz's first impulse was to command one of his servants to take this Yid and throw him into prison. However, the shining face and piercing eyes of Reb Leib softened his heart.

The Tzaddik spoke, "My name is Leib Sarah's, and I had the zechus of knowing Reb Yisroel Baal Shem Tov, who was highly respected by many Poritzim. I heard from his holy mouth that every Yid must daven the short tefillah of Dovid Hamelech, "הצילני מדמים אלקים" - Save me from considering money to be a g-d." My mother Sarah was a holy Yiddishe woman. When she was young, one of the princes laid his eyes upon her and wanted to marry her, promising her riches and honor. She made a kiddush Hashem by marrying an elderly Yid, a poor melamed, in order to save herself from the clutches of that Rasha. You did not have the zechus to withstand this test and you became an apostate for the sake of money. Nevertheless, you should know that there is nothing that stands in the way of teshuva. Now is the time; tonight is Yom Kippur, and the Yidden in your town need a tenth man for a minyan. Come with me and be the tenth, and as the possuk says, לה העשירי יהיה קדש לה - you will be holy to Hashem."

Meanwhile, the townsmen waited in shul, fearfully thinking of the trouble that Reb Leib may bring upon them. Suddenly the door opened, and the tzaddik rushed in with the Poritz trailing behind him. Reb Leib motioned that the Poritz be given a tallis, and then went to the Aron Kodesh, took out the two sifrei Torah, giving one to an older Yid and the other to the Poritz. Reb Leib stood between them and began with the paragraph declaring that allow the sinners to daven with us.

Throughout that entire Yom Kippur, the Poritz stood on his feet, crying brokenheartedly. From time to time, he would emit a deep sigh, breaking the hearts of all those present. At the end of N'eilah, when they reached the recitation of Shema Yisrael, the Poritz put his head inside the Aron Kodesh, hugged the sifrei Torah and, with a loud voice that shook all the mispalelim, cried out, "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה'". He then began calling out, "ה' הוא האלקים" with all his might, each time his voice becoming increasingly louder. As he called it out for the seventh time, his neshama departed from his body.

Although they no longer had a minyan, Reb Leib told them, "Since his neshama departed while saying the word אלקים, he is to be considered a Tzaddik, and is still considered 'alive' and should be included in the minyan." With that, Reb Leib led the minyan for mairiv. That night, the Yidden brought the Poritz to kever yisroel, and Reb Leib himself personally took part in the tahara and the kevara. From then on, Reb Leib would say Kaddish every Yom Kippur, l'ilui nishmas that baal teshuva.

(סיפורי חסידים זיין מועדים ע' 125)

THE CONCLUSION OF YOM KIPPUR

Before blowing the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur, it is customary to sing a march of simcha and victory. The niggun in Lubavitch was known as 'Napoleon's March.' During the march, the Rebbe would turn toward the crowd and with a shining face, he would encourage the singing and dance with tremendous joy. For many years the Rebbe would stand on his chair, and only in the later years, a small platform with steps was prepared for this occasion.

(אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' רמ"א)

One year, at the end of davening on Yom Kippur, the tzaddik Reb Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev announced: "It is known that when in doubt if a bracha is required, one refrains from reciting it. It therefore

understood that since we are commanded to recite the bracha saying that Hashem forgives the Yidden's aveiros, obviously this is so without the slightest doubt."

(אג"ק ח"ד ע' 34)

Motzoei Yom Kippur is a Yom Tov and we wish each other a "Good Yom Tov!" Therefore, it is a mitzvah to eat and rejoice at this time when a Bas-Kol announces to the Yidden to "go eat with joy." The Rebbeim were particular to wash for a full seudah, even though they were worn out after their avodah throughout Yom Kippur. During the seudah they would dip their challah in honey, sing niggunim and relate Divrei Torah.

(שו"ע אדה"ז תרכ"ג סי"ב, תרכ"ד ס"ט, התוועדויות תשמ"ו ח"א ע' 446)

On Motzoei Yom Kippur, the Tzemach Tzedek would call in the Rebbe Maharash to learn together for a few hours. For many years they would learn זוהר, then Medrash for a number of years and later on they switched to Gemara. One year, they sat learning for many hours even before breaking their fast.

The chossid Reb Mordechai Yoel Duchman was a talmid of the chossid Reb Aizil Homiler. One year his shver (father-in-law) stopped in Homil for Yom Kippur. On Erev Yom Kippur they met but did not speak, for they were rushing in their preparations for the holy day. During Yom Kippur, Reb Mordechi Yoel stood the entire day facing the wall, davening with much dveikus. On Motzoei Yom Kippur after breaking his fast, he turned to his shver and excused himself, quoting Reb Aizil, "After not learning a whole day, one must sit down to learn," and off he went to learn.

(אוצר מנהגי חב"ד ע' רנ"ד, לשמעע און ע' 205)

The Rebbe related: Once on the morning following Yom Kippur, the Yidden in a small town got up early to daven shachris and found a Polisher Chossid dancing around the amud, singing a niggun of אנעים ומירות, displaying his yearning to Hashem. They realized that he had been so lost in his singing and dancing that he had danced all night, completely forgetting that he was still fasting.

(תו"מ חל"ב ע' 112)

It is the minhag to begin preparations for the sukkah on Motzoei Yom Kippur, at least in conversation. The Rebbe explains that since this is the time when kelipos are being returned to power, one protects himself by engaging in matters of the sukkah, which are a protection like the 'ananei hakovod.'

(ס' המנהגים, שמוח"ת תשכ"ו)

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