

A HAPPY DAY

by Shlomo Katz

Yom Kippur

A Happy Day
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Sponsored by
Bert Anker and Judy Gabel
on the yahrzeit of their father, Moe Anker a"h

Rochelle Dimont and family
on the yahrzeit of husband and father
Rabbi Albert Dimont a"h

Today's Learning:
Bechorot 8:5-6
O.C. 204:11-13
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Gittin 90
Begin Masechet Kiddushin on Friday
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): None

Our Sages teach that the happiest days on the Jewish calendar are the Fifteenth of the month of Av and Yom Kippur. In what sense is Yom Kippur a happy day? To the contrary, Yom Kippur would seem to be a somber day, even a day of dread!

Over the course of Yom Kippur, the confession that begins with the word "Ashamnu" is recited ten times. In many congregations, the worshipers recited this confession in unison to an almost joyous tune. Why is such a tune appropriate?

R' Reuven Sasson shlita explains (based on the teachings of R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l):

Ashamnu is at once a confession, i.e., an acceptance of responsibility, and also a rebuke against oneself that comes from deep within one's soul. The soul, which by its very nature is connected to

G-d, always objects to sin. Ashamnu is a declaration, "I do not want this sin." Thus, Ashamnu is uplifting, even joyous. Its purpose is not so that one will wallow in his sins, but, to the contrary, to liberate oneself from them. So long as one has not confessed, the halachic principle of "shetikah k'hodaah" / "Silence is acquiescence" is operative, i.e., one is considered to be accepting of his sins.

Certainly, confession has its painful aspect, i.e., one's acceptance of responsibility for his own shortcomings and errors. But it also is joyous, for it expresses one's inner purity and liberates one from the heavy burden of sin. (Orot Ha'teshuvah Im Be'ur p. 367)

R' Avraham Zvi Margolis shlita (rabbi of Karmiel, Israel) writes in the name of R' Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak Danziger z"l (1853-1910; the Alexanderer Rebbe; known as the "Yismach Yisrael):

Man's recognition of his sin must include recognition of the pain that he caused G-d, so-to-speak [because G-d's purpose in creating the world is frustrated by our sins]. Even if one's repentance is not motivated by fear of punishment, but rather by a recognition that one has damaged his own soul as a result of his sins, that teshuvah is incomplete if it does not take into account the pain that was caused to the Shechinah.

Unfortunately, man in his present state is generally unable to appreciate the harm that his sin has caused. Therefore, part of a penitent's prayer should be that G-d enlighten and remove the curtains and veils that separate him from G-d. Only when one appreciates what his relationship with G-d could be can he appreciate what he loses when he sins. (Dvar Ha'teshuvah p.168)

A Prescription for Spiritual and Physical Health

The following "prescription" ("merkachat") is recommended by the prolific Torah and Talmud commentator and ethicist, R' Eliyahu Hakohen z"l (Izmir, Turkey; died 1729), in his work Shevet Mussar, chapter 6.

- a. Take six roots, i.e., make sure your behavior is rooted in (1) fear of Heaven, (2) self-effacement, (3) humility, (4) shyness, (5) compassion, and (6) acts of kindness.
- b. Add branches from the tree of Divine wisdom.
- c. Add many grasses, i.e., performance of the positive and negative commandments.
- d. Use stalks to make fences (to distance yourself from sin).
- e. Sprinkle in flowers of charity and kind words to the poor. [Ed. note: Our Sages teach that the words one says to console the poor are as important as, or more important than, the money one gives.]
- f. Add in the fruits of truth.

- g. Crush all the ingredients with the mortar and pestle of regret and confession.
- h. Boil in the waters of immersion in a mikvah.
- i. Stir in tears.
- j. Spice with extra precautions in the performance of mitzvot.
- k. Fry in the oil of a good name [paraphrasing Kohelet 7:1, "A good name is better than fine oil."]
- l. Pour the entire mixture on beds of teshuvah.

Attaining Forgiveness for Sins Against Our Fellows

Our Sages teach that one cannot achieve atonement unless he appeases those against whom he has sinned. Some say that one cannot achieve atonement even for his sins against G-d unless he has properly atoned for his sins against man, and received forgiveness. (Kaf Hachaim 606:3)

Why? Because atoning only for some sins is like immersing only part of one's body in a mikveh. Obviously, one does not attain purity by doing so. (Mussar Hamishnah)

R' Avraham Halevi Horowitz z"l (16th century; father of the Shelah Hakadosh) observes:

The obligation to ask forgiveness from those we have offended does not mean doing what is commonly done, i.e., that shortly before Kol Nidrei, one approaches his friends and asks their forgiveness. Inevitably, the friend responds, "You did not do anything for which I have to forgive you." Then, these two friends forgive each other, something that was not necessary at all, since they were always dear to each other and would never wish each other harm.

In contrast, R' Horowitz continues, enemies tend not to ask forgiveness from each other. Rather, each one says, "If he were interested in peace, he would come to me." A wise man, however, would recognize that the true sign of strength is humility, and he would take the initiative to appease his enemy, even if his enemy is in the wrong. (Emek Berachah)

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995; one of the most important halachic authorities of the 20th century) writes: Requesting general forgiveness for all sins that one has committed against another is effective only for minor offenses. [If committed a more serious offense, he must specify it when he requests forgiveness.] (Quoted in Halichot Shlomo: Moadim p.44)

If one who has sinned against you does not come to you to seek forgiveness, you should make yourself available to him so that he might ask forgiveness. (Mateh Ephraim)

Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to

recite the following prayer (part of Tefilah Zakkah) which is printed in many machzorim:

"I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or monetarily, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any human sins between man and his neighbor -- except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover in accordance with halachah, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me' -- except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account.

"And just as I forgive everyone, so may You grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he will grant me complete forgiveness."

From the Prayers . . .

"You are kadosh / holy and Your Name inspires fear, and there is no god other than You, as it is written: 'Hashem, Master of Legions, will be lofty in judgment, and the Holy G-d will be sanctified in tzedakah'. . . ." (From the conclusion to the third berachah of the Amidah)

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: What is the connection between the cited verse ("Hashem, Master of Legions, will be lofty in judgment, and the Holy G-d will be sanctified in tzedakah") and the phrase that precedes it ("there is no god other than You")?

He explains: When we say that G-d is kadosh / holy, we mean that He is set apart and beyond our comprehension. To the extent that we can grasp G-d at all, it is only through His actions. The various Names of G- d describe His different actions. For example, when we say in this paragraph, "Your Name inspires fear," we mean that G-d sometimes manifests Himself as inspiring fear. However, that is not G-d's true nature. We read of the time of the Giving of the Torah (Shmot 24:17), "The appearance of the glory of Hashem was like a consuming fire." A "consuming fire" was only His appearance; His true nature is to be kind and charitable.

With this introduction, we can understand the words of the prayers as follows: You G-d are kadosh. We know You only through Your Name - the way You appear - to us, which at times (especially on the High Holidays), "inspires fear." Nevertheless, we know that Your true nature - Your true kedushah - is tzedakah. How do we know this? Perhaps You act charitably to us only so that we will not abandon You in favor of another god? We know that is not so, for we know that there is no god other than You. Thus, You truly will be sanctified through Your tzedakah. (Kohelet Yaakov: Rosh Hashanah p. 4)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Torah.org](https://www.torah.org) start with

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