

COMPLETE TESHUVAH

by Shlomo Katz

Yom Kippur

Complete Teshuvah

Volume 25, No. 53

Sponsored by Bert and Beverly Anker on the yahrzeit of Bert's father, Moe Anker (Moshe ben Yakov Hakohen a"h)

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

Martin and Michelle Swartz in memory of Martin's mother Lotte H. Meers a"h (16 Tishrei)

Yom Kippur is the day on which Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai with the second set of luchot. R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; died 1986) writes:

The luchot symbolize the heart--perhaps this is why the luchot are often, though erroneously, portrayed with rounded tops like on the common heart symbol--while the writing on the luchot represents the Will of G-d, which man is supposed to "engrave" on his heart. A person who succeeds in binding his heart to the Will of G-d will no longer be a slave to himself and will be free from the mundane desires of his heart. This is why Pirkei Avot makes a play on the similarity between "charut" / "engraved" (see Shmot 32:16) and "cheirut" / "freedom," and states that man is not free until he studies Torah.

When the first luchot were given, Bnei Yisrael prepared themselves for three days beforehand and achieved the level of Adam Ha'rishon before his sin. They were able to receive luchot that were crafted by G-d because their hearts--which the luchot symbolize--were as pure as the first heart that G-d created, R' Friedlander explains.

After the sin of the golden calf, however, everything changed. There was no period of purification before the luchot were given, and the luchot themselves were man-made--only the writing was added by G-d. Like a ba'al teshuvah, Bnei Yisrael's task after the sin was to present their hearts

(luchot) so that the Torah (the writing) could elevate them. This is the way of repentance. (Siftei Chaim, Vol. 1 p.25 [1st ed.])

One year, on the night before Yom Kippur, R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995; Yerushalayim) commented to his family: It is amazing that so many people knock on my door with questions about the laws of fasting and the laws of praying, while no one seems to have questions about the laws of teshuvah, which is the primary mitzvah of the day. (Quoted in Minchat Avot p.110)

The Gemara (Yoma 86a) teaches that there are certain sins for which Yom Kippur does not provide atonement. Rather, one can obtain a reprieve as a result of teshuvah and Yom Kippur and then receive atonement for these sins through suffering. Regarding this, Rabbeinu Yonah z"l (Spain; died 1263) asks: How is this to be reconciled with the verse (Vayikra 16:3--part of the Yom Kippur Torah reading), "For on this day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you; from all your sins before Hashem you shall be cleansed"?

He explains: The latter part of this verse is not a promise; rather, it is a commandment. Specifically, we are commanded to search and examine our actions and return to Hashem on Yom Kippur. Rabbeinu Yonah adds: Even though there is a general mitzvah to do teshuvah, there is an additional mitzvah on Yom Kippur. (Sha'arei Teshuvah 4:17)

R' David Cohen shlita (rabbi and prolific author in Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: One can infer from Rabbeinu Yonah's words that the mitzvah of teshuvah on Yom Kippur is different from the general mitzvah of teshuvah which applies every day. Year round, there is nothing wrong with repenting for one sin at a time, but not so on Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, the mitzvah is, "from all your sins . . . you shall be cleansed." If one would repent for one sin but not regret another sin, he would receive complete atonement for the sin for which he repented, but he would have neglected to perform the mitzvah of the day, i.e., repenting for all of one's sins. (Birkat Ya'avetz I p.66)

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)

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 for only 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 writes: Requesting general forgiveness for all sins that one has committed against another is effective only for minor offenses. [If one 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 financially, 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."

Yom Kippur and Shabbat

R' Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein z"l (1890-1971; the Ozhorover Rebbe in New York and Bnei Brak) writes: There are many similarities between Yom Ha'kippurim and Shabbat. Both are days of atonement. [The connection between Yom Kippur and atonement is well-known.] Regarding Shabbat, the Gemara (Shabbat 119b) teaches: If one prays on Friday night and recites "Vy'chulu," the two angels who accompany a person place their hands on his head, and say (Yeshayah 6:7), "Your iniquity has gone away and your sin shall be atoned for." The Gemara (Shabbat 118b) also states: If one observes Shabbat according to its law, even if he is an idolator like the generation of Enosh, he is forgiven.

In the zemirot for motzai Shabbat we say, "He Who separates between holy and secular, may He forgive our sins." At first glance, it is difficult to see what connection this request has to Shabbat. [For this reason, some suggest that this zemer was intended to be sung on motzai Yom Kippur.] The Ozhorover Rebbe explains, however, that because Shabbat is a day of atonement, yet it is forbidden to mar the joy of the day by mentioning sin, therefore we make this request on motzai Shabbat.

Nevertheless, the Ozhorover Rebbe continues, there is a difference between Shabbat and Yom Ha'kippurim. The latter is a day on which we attain atonement through active teshuvah / repentance. On this day, we are required to deprive ourselves of food, drink and certain other pleasures. And, in the time of the Bet Hamikdash, the kohen gadol brought many special sacrifices. In contrast, the atonement that we obtain on Shabbat is incidental to the holiness of the day. We do not need to do anything special to obtain it other than to observe Shabbat properly. (Esh Dat Vol. VIII p.521)

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://torah.org) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. The low cost of sponsorship is \$36. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.