

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

by Shlomo Katz

Yom Kippur

True Friendship

R' Klonimus Kalman Halevi Epstein z"l (died 1827) writes: Teshuvah requires dedicating our hearts to loving our fellow Jews. Each person must focus on the ways in which each other person serves the Creator better than he, and never on the other person's faults. We must distance the troublemaker [i.e., yetzer hara] whose desire is to make divisions among us. Particularly in our times, this is the primary aim of the yetzer hara, and we must fight it with all of our capabilities. This is especially necessary during the High Holidays, when we are judged by Heaven and need mercy. Teshuvah requires being united with the common goal of serving Hashem. This is hinted at by the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18a) which teaches that each person is judged individually, but all are "looked upon as one," i.e., the degree to which we are one is looked at by Heaven. (Ma'or Va'shemesh [Yerushalayim 5746] II p.229)

R' Menachem Simcha Katz shlita (Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: The words of the Ma'or Va'shemesh find support in the midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer which says that, on Yom Kippur, the Jewish People are like angels. "Just as peace reigns among the angels, so peace reigns among the Jewish People." We must understand, however, that loving all Jews does not mean being apathetic about the existence of sinners among us. Rather, R' Moshe Sofer (the Chatam Sofer; 1762-1839) explains, we must pray for sinners to repent. Loving Hashem means loving all Jews, but we do not love them at Hashem's "expense." And, loving another Jew means wanting the best for him, and the best thing for a person is teshuvah. Thus, much of our High Holidays prayers ask that all of mankind come to recognize and accept Hashem. (Simcha L'ish p.409-410)

On the Importance of Appeasing Those We Have Hurt

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 didn't 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 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."

"Forgiveness is with You so that You will be feared." (Tehilim 130:4)

R' Avraham Zvi Kluger shlita (Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains: If there were no forgiveness for sins,

there would be no fear of G-d, and man would not refrain from sinning. Man would reason, "I have already sinned, so my soul is permanently stained; why not do as I please?" However, now that we know that G-d loves us and forgives our sins, we have fear of G-d and take care not to offend Him.

R' Kluger writes further: Ezra Ha'sofer gathered the generation that built the Second Temple and addressed them on Rosh Hashanah. He rebuked them for their sins, and they became heartbroken. "Don't cry!" he told them, "Today is a holy day; go eat and drink." (See Nechemiah ch.8.) Even so, despite Ezra's seemingly soft approach, the next chapter of Nechemiah relates that, a few weeks later, the Jewish People did gather for public prayer and repentance. Why did Ezra "go easy" on them at the first gathering? Because, R' Kluger explains, a broken heart can be effective only when it is preceded by a feeling of closeness to Hashem--an awareness of Hashem's love for the penitent despite his sins. (Yichud Ha'hitbodedut p.39)

Although we recite Aleinu at least three times every day of the year, we do not open the Aron Kodesh when doing so. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, we do open the Aron Kodesh when reciting Aleinu (during the chazzan's repetition of the Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei). R' Mordechai Yaffe z"l (Poland; 1530-1612) observes:

Opening the Aron Kodesh for prayer is reminiscent of the Kohen Gadol entering the Holy of Holies, something he did only once a year (on Yom Kippur) due to the sanctity of that place. Thus, opening the Aron Kodesh when reciting Aleinu highlights that prayer's importance. [It is one of our oldest prayers, having been authored by the prophet Yehoshua bin Nun.] The fact that we open the Aron Kodesh when reciting Aleinu on the High Holidays should inspire us to recite that prayer with greater concentration year round. (Levush Ha'techelet ch.133)

In his old age, R' David Moshe Friedman z"l (1827-1903; the Chortkover Rebbe) was very weak and nearly blind, so that two attendants had to lead him wherever he went. One Erev Yom Kippur, as the attendants led him toward his seat for Kol Nidrei, he suddenly stopped and sighed deeply. Then he said, "Where are you taking me? To be judged by the King of Kings? But I have not yet repented properly!" And he began to sob uncontrollably.

Soon, all the onlookers were crying uncontrollably as well, and everyone was moved to repent wholeheartedly. (Quoted in Otzrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim)

After Yom Kippur . . .

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (one of the foremost teachers of mussar in the second half of the 20th century; died 2005) writes: It is well known that the most dangerous part of a spacecraft's flight is reentry into the earth's atmosphere. If the craft does not enter the atmosphere at precisely the correct angle, it is very likely to burn up.

So, too, the most critical part of our Yom Kippur observance is our reentry into everyday life. Each of us becomes elevated on Yom Kippur to the best of his or her ability. Everyone comes closer to a life filled with spirituality. Hopefully, everyone thinks loftier thoughts on Yom Kippur than he thinks all year long. But Yom Kippur is not meant to be a day that stands in isolation! We are meant to take something from Yom Kippur that will positively affect our avodah / Divine service throughout the coming year. It may be that we strengthen our avodah, raise our avodah to a new level, or abandon some of our previous sins, but something of Yom Kippur must survive when the Holy Day ends. Therefore, when we reenter the atmosphere of the mundane world after Yom Kippur, we must approach that atmosphere at the correct angle. This means not running away from shul and from the Day itself as a child escapes from class the instant the recess bell rings, for if we do, then whatever we have gained on Yom Kippur will "burn up" on reentry.

This warning does not apply to Yom Kippur alone. The Gemara relates that pious men would prepare for one hour before praying and also would remain in shul for an hour after davening. Why? Because if we hurry to take off our tefilin and leave shul immediately after Shemoneh Esrei, we throw away some or all of the inspiration that we gained from praying. [Although we are not accustomed to remain in shul for a full hour after the weekday Shemoneh Esrei, calmly reciting the various prayers that precede the final kaddish serves the same purpose.] The same thing applies to how we leave Shabbat-- are we eager to throw it off, or do we allow the holiness of Shabbat to linger? (Ma'amarei Yemei Ratzon p.105)

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](https://torah.org/torah-portion/hamaayan) page.

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