

יום הכפורים

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my wife, Devorah.

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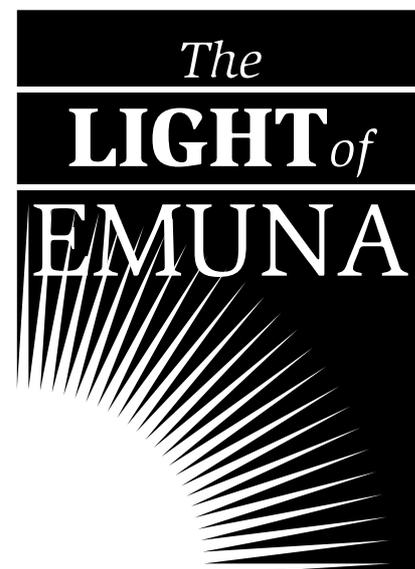
There are seven firmaments in Heaven – a specific matter is praised in each one – but, in the seventh firmament, *teshuvah* is lauded above all else because it suppresses all of the firmaments, breaks all of the barriers and consumes all of the prosecutors – it ascends all the way to the Throne of Glory, all the way to HKB”H.¹

”גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד” (יומא פד.)
“Teshuva is so great that it ascends to the Throne of Glory”

Is it comprehensible that each and every year we receive such an exalted and enormous gift from Hashem – His standing prepared to pardon and forgive all of our sins? Is there a rational explanation for His willingness to absolve us and repair all that we have destroyed and ruined? That He is willing to draw us close once again, after we have dissociated ourselves? A person does what he does, damaging as he proceeds – can we turn the clock back?

Rebbe Nachman reveals that the secret is hidden in the concealed portion, where no imperfection can touch – the point of everlasting love of HKB”H towards us. How can we reawaken this point after we have tarnished, failed to overcome our inclinations, after our entire year was consumed by our base urges? At a minimum, we must be ashamed; it must stab us in the heart. “Forgive me, Father, for all those mistakes that caused me to be so withdrawn from You during the year. Help me remedy the situation. Help me be exactly as You want me to be.”

¹ אורחות צדיקים שער התשובה



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

Hashem instructs us, “Do something, give Me a signal, show Me that you truly desire Me, that you sincerely want holiness, that you are truly sorry for the blemishes that you have caused, that you are truly embarrassed – if I see this, I will come to you.”

HKB”H is ready to return and inspire the love and forgive all – but only on the condition that we are distressed by what we have done, that we genuinely wish to correct course. “One who sins and is embarrassed about it - all of his sins are forgiven.”²

The central tenet of *teshuvah* is shame. Rebbe Nosson taught, “The more ashamed we are – the more Hashem pardons and forgives our transgressions.”³

A Jew who truly craves Hashem, who genuinely wishes to triumph over his urges and flee the triviality of the world – Hashem will not forsake him. “Open up an opening the size of the eye of a needle, and I will open for you an opening the size of an auditorium.”⁴ What is this opening that we wish to unstop? It is humiliation, it is the pain that we experience from the damage that we have done. “Master of the World, You are so

² כל העושה דבר עבירה ומתבייש בה – מוחלין לו על כל עוונותיו (ברכות יב:)

³ ליקו"ה נשיאת כפים ה, יח

⁴ פתחו לי פתח כחודו של מחט ואני אפתח לכם פתח כפתחו של אולם (שיר השירים רבה ה)

good to me, You perform so many kindnesses and so many miracles for me, nothing is within my own capabilities, nothing is due me based on my merit – and this is how I repay You? Help me, Father, to prevail over my urges, help me so that all of my vitality, all of my joy and all of my pleasure in life derive from You, from Your sanctity, from spiritual matters. At those amazing moments during which I experience that feeling, I understand that it is the truth – I am just not worthy of it yet.”

These types of thoughts and words are so precious to Hashem.

One Erev Yom Kippur, a certain Torah scholar asked the Chazon Ish zt”l, “Every year I contemplate *teshuva* but immediately after Yom Kippur everything returns to the way it was and I deviate once again?” The Chazon Ish responded, “Even the thoughts of *teshuva* are so very precious in Hashem’s eyes.”

Similarly, a certain *chasid* once approached the holy Slonimer Rebbe, the Nesivos Shalom, zy”a. This man was a refined and gentle soul with enormous longings - but, he endured disappointments in that he failed to fulfill his desires in ascending the ladder of Hashem. “I suspect,” said the *chasid* to his *Rebbe*, “that nothing will remain of all of my yearnings and desires and on my tombstone it will be inscribed, ‘here lays the master of yearning.’” The *Rebbe* answered him, with a genuine smile, “If I would know of such a tombstone, I would travel to pray at it – is it so easy to be a master of longing?!”

Yom Kippur is a Day of Joy

We receive a release from the requirements of eating, drinking and all of our other bodily needs and we sanctify the entire day for the soul. Is there a greater delight than that? “This day encompasses all others, it vitalizes all others and it subordinates the heart to connect all of its desires solely to Hashem. Via this, all forms of discord, both material and spiritual, are nullified

and we are rendered whole. Mirth and merriment ensue.”⁵ There are no confusions, no worries, no opposing forces pulling us in different directions – we are intact with ourselves, so connected – like those special moments in life in which we cling and are so connected to Hashem, in which we want nothing else – only Hashem.

“When a person is not happy, he cannot overcome his evil inclination. He is unable to suppress his urges. A person’s passions invigorate him. In order to forego a craving, he must have an alternative genuine life-force – experiencing joy in the performance of every *mitzvah*. He does not need the lust for eating or money – he requires none of it. He receives his vigor and delight from Hashem! When a Jew takes pleasure in Torah and *mitzvos*, he is filled with energy and he can perform *hisbodedus* day after day for the nullification of his proclivities. Torah and *mitzvos* are our life – how can we abandon them for even a moment? It is like abandoning life itself. The root of *teshuva* is joy – not self-persecution. *Teshuva* is connecting with Hashem, returning to Hashem. We must take comfort in our relationship with Hashem – no matter how paltry. It is worth living for 120 years for the merit of performing even one single *mitzvah* – even a slight connection to Hashem.

Every lust that a person experiences is a curse - every urge is a terrible punishment. Reward is being close to Hashem – punishment is distance. Our urges separate us from Hashem. We must plead: “Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! Help me HKB”H! Help that all of my vitality derive from Torah! From *mitzvos*! Help me manage to dance with joy over the fact that I wear a *yarmulke*, dance with joy for the fact that I washed my hands *al netilas yadayim* this morning. Nullify my lusts! Nullify my urge for eating. Help me eat to live rather than live to eat! Help me go through the day with gratitude and acknowledgment, dancing and elated over every *mitzvah* that I perform.”⁶

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ליקוטי עצות

המברך את עמו ישראל בשלום

Yom Kippur - Unity

We all come together on Yom Kippur - even simple people, who have not done very many *mitzvos*, join the congregation. The famous teaching of Chazal, "Even the sinners of Israel are filled with *mitzvos* like a pomegranate" includes even those Jews who do not keep *mitzvos* at all. If we stopped to think, we would recognize how many *mitzvos* every Jew performs - not just *bris milah*, *matzoh* and fasting on Yom Kippur - but, also, honoring parents, charity, *chesed*, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, etc.

On Yom Kippur, we are united. On Yom Kippur, we *daven* together with sinners⁷ - because Hashem wants everyone. That is the beauty of this holy day. The One who commands us to don *tefillin* and keep Shabbos is the same One who commands us to be forgiving, generous, benevolent and to smile at others. We must be good people as well as good Jews - it is impossible to be a good Jew without being a "*mensch*". Our primary mission is in the arena of interpersonal relationships. It is very difficult - but, to attain HKB"H's pardon on Yom Kippur we must first appease those whom we have hurt. Yom Kippur alone cannot atone for social transgressions. Our worst anguish stems from our inability to smile at others, being pedantic and inflexible. We know the truth - that we must be magnanimous, generous, illuminating, forbearing - but we cannot seem to manage it.

When we clash, when we are stubborn, insisting that we are right - everything is closed off to us. By contrast, the moment that we lower our heads and forego - the vessels of ego, which were previously filled with self-interest, are drained instantly. Suddenly, the person, who just a moment earlier seemed to be so evil, has positive attributes and he is capable of imparting heartfelt and uplifting words to him. When our receptacles of ego are emptied, Hashem fills them with His light.

There are 600,000 letters in the Torah,

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אין מתירין להתפלל עם העברנים

corresponding to the 600,000 root souls of the Jewish people. Each letter represents another soul. If there is no love amongst friends, if we do not love every Jew with all of our hearts and souls - the Torah cannot be received, for it is missing a letter or letters.

It is so praiseworthy to encourage, to speak nicely. A person can be sullen and gloomy and someone praises his child - he is immediately transformed into the happiest person in the world. If we radiate smiles at others - the entire world will smile at us.

What is the definition of love between friends? When they reject us, hurt us, insult us, G-d forbid - yet we judge them favorably, knowing that it is no more than a momentary lapse, a temporary evil spirit washed over them - and we maintain no grudge against them, only giving the benefit of the doubt.

One year, when the *chazzan* reached the words "and forgive the entire congregation of Israel and the convert that resides in their midst - because the entire nation acted inadvertently," the holy Rebbe R' Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov zy"א exclaimed for all to hear, "Is it really possible that everyone acted inadvertently and no one sinned intentionally?" Lifting his hands Heavenward he declared, "Master of the World, I testify that there is not one person here who has ever said לשם יהוד before committing a transgression (i.e. I am ready and willing to commit a sin - as is customary before performing a *mitzvah*). Therefore, it is possible to say that everyone acted unintentionally."

Every Jew contains a point of goodness, unique to him. One person excels at charity, another at prayer. When we love each other, we are inspired by the other's traits. Conversely, when we talk negatively about others - it becomes impossible to receive from them.

Moreinu Harav: There is no Jew who is not righteous at his core, in the depths of his soul - that does not have some spark of holiness. The Ben Ish Chai used to say that everyone has his

moment – even the worst *rasha* has thoughts of true *teshuva*.

The holy Zohar teaches: With regards to a person who returns through *teshuva* – no gates are sealed before him – all are opened and everything is granted him, including all of the treasures of the King. Hashem hugs him and enjoys him more than all of the *tzaddikim* because he returned through *teshuva*. Hashem presents him with all of the keys, opening all of the gates – revealing all of the secrets of the Torah to him.

We are obligated to bring people back with *teshuva*, as Yehuda said to Yoseph, “For how can I go up to my father if the youth is not with me.”⁸ Yehuda shouted, “How can I ascend to my Father in Heaven if the youth is not with me.” Who is

the youth? The entire Jewish people – all of the lost and unfortunate souls that are far from Hashem. How can we arrive in Heaven and say that we did not help them to return via *teshuva*?

When will Yom Kippur purify us of all of our sins? When we take action to purify ourselves – “Before Hashem you shall be purified”⁹ is explained by the Kli Yakar as meaning: before Hashem cleanses us, we must purify ourselves. How do we restore ourselves? By doing *teshuva*.

מזל טוב

Ushi & Cirri Shafran on the birth of a baby boy.
Mordi & Chany Blass on the birth of a baby boy.

לע"נ

מרת קרשה גיטל הארן בת מנחם מניס ע"ה
ר' יחיאל אברהם אביגדור זצ"ל ב"ר אליהו גלאזר נ"י

תפילה

Master of the World! Just as I felt on my way home last night from *shul* after *Maariv* – so I request to live my life. In those few short minutes, I felt such a pleasantness, such delight, such connection – I felt as if I did not want or need anything else in life, just You. Why does this occur so infrequently? Why can't this be more common, Father?

Master of the World! Grant me the ability to forego all else, because, inexplicably, I still pursue inanity and I still find vitality and joy in them - despite that in those rare moments of true attachment I recognize them as entirely false – and they cannot bring me to the genuine satisfaction that I so desperately seek.

Master of the World! On the eve of the holy day, I lift my head towards You and request forgiveness for all that I have done that detached me from You – help me be disposed towards foregoing all else, except for You.

I long to do everything together with You – proceed with You, to eat with You, to pray with You, to smile at people with You – to live with You, Father!

Master of the World! Help me not to lose my senses, not to become demoralized when something that is very important to me does not go well and no matter what I do or how much I plead – the gate remains sealed. Permit me to recall that You are there as well. Concealment itself is designed solely to draw me near to You – as we often see how after a period of darkness, light immediately shines – we resume experiencing You, often even more than before.

Master of the World! I want to be guided in this world continuously in Your embrace. Even when I extend my hand to retrieve a book from the shelf. With every gesture and motion – I want to feel Your Presence – that we are together.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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