The essence of Yom kippur

BY: RAV YAAKOV WEINBERG ZT"L

About Rav Weinberg Zt"l

HaRav Yaakov Weinberg, zt"l, was the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Ner Yisrael in Baltimore, Maryland from 1987 until his petira in 1999. For many decades he was a force for Torah in the Jewish world. He was the ultimate Rebbi, transforming the hearts and minds of thousands of talmidim with his unfaltering adherence to the truth of Torah and the words of Chazal. With his incisive analysis and penetrating insight, he developed generations of outstanding leaders. They follow his example in their understanding of Torah and in their responsibility for its transmission. His talmidim have been instrumental in creating communal organizations including shuls, schools and kiruv centers. Rav Weinberg was a sought-after advisor, involved in hundreds of private and public issues within the Jewish community. He often conducted the question and answer sessions at Torah Umesorah conventions where many benefited from his counsel. Rav Weinberg was married to Rebbetzin Shaina Chana Ruderman, the daughter of Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, zt"l, the founder of Ner Yisroel. He was the older brother and mentor of Rav Noach Weinberg, zt"l, the founder of Aish HaTorah.

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Moshe Bane l'iluy nishmas
Yehudis bas Nosson & Chaim ben Eliezer a"h

Dedicated by Dr. and Mrs. Michael Ring l'iluy nishmas
Sarah bas Yaakov HaKohen & Mitzie bas Yitzchak a"h

The following is an adaptation of a shiur that was delivered in Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem. Appreciation is due to Aaron Dayan of Aishaudio.com for authorizing the transcription and publication of this shiur.

The Rosh HaYeshiva had a distinctive and expressive style of speaking. The text has been edited extensively for readability. However, where necessary, the usual grammatical rules have been relaxed to retain the force and flavor of the Rosh HaYeshiva's delivery.

The Essence of Yom Kippur

The essence of *Yom Kippur* is atonement. It is therefore essential, if we are to deal with *Yom Kippur*, to deal with what atonement means and the fact that *Yom Kippur* gives it to us. The specialness of *Yom Kippur* is that we can achieve it through the day itself. The day gives us atonement.

"בזמן הזה שאין בית המקדש קיים ואין לנו מזבח כפרה אין שם אלא תשובה. התשובה מכפרת על כל העבירות. אפילו רשע כל ימיו ועשה תשובה באחרונה אין מזכירין לו שום דבר מרשעו שנאמר רשעת הרשע לא יכשל בה ביום שובו מרשעו. ועצמו של יום הכפורים מכפר לשבים שנאמר כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם." [רמב"ם, הלכות תשובה, פרק א, הלכה ג]

The concept of atonement is a concept that needs a great deal of elucidation. It means that the past affects my present. If I need to atone for that which I have done, it means that it isn't sufficient that I stop doing evil. It isn't enough that from now on I am a *tzaddik* and from now on I do only good and wonderful things. It is necessary that I atone for the past evil that has already been done. That's the meaning of atonement. Therefore, one has to recognize that *teshuva* or repentance is not dealing with my future. It is dealing with my past. Because *teshuva*, repentance, is the other method by which I achieve atonement. Like *Yom Kippur*, it is a means of atonement. By *Yom Kippur*, the day gives it to me, by *teshuva*, I have to achieve it. We'll have to discuss a little how the day gives it to me. Obviously, I need *teshuva* with *Yom Kippur*.

The concept of atonement means that the past affects my present. If I need to atone for that which I have done, it means that it isn't sufficient that I stop doing evil. It isn't enough that from now on I am a *tzaddik* and from now on I do only good and wonderful things. It is necessary that I atone for the past evil that has already been done. That's the meaning of atonement.

To do *teshuva*, to repent, does not mean simply that from now on I'm going to be good. From now on I'm going to be good is certainly absolutely necessary. Whether one does *teshuva* or whether one doesn't do *teshuva* he's going to have to be good from now on, because we're obligated to be good all the time. And therefore, every minute we ought to start being good as of this minute forward. The concept of *teshuva* isn't to be good from now on, the concept of *teshuva* is fix the past, be *mesaken*, correct, the past.

This is a fact in Jewish *halachah*, Jewish law, because I can be a *tzaddik* without having atoned for the past. I can be a *tzaddik* with a *hirur teshuva*. Just a *kabbalah* on myself, from now on I'm just going to be good, and mean it and I'm a *tzaddik*, from now on I'm only doing the right thing, but I remain with a burden of my past sins for which I have to seek atonement.

"על מנת שאני צדיק אפילו רשע גמור מקודשת שמא הרהר תשובה בדעתו." [קדושין, דף מט:]

The implication of this is that sinning is not simply a matter of behavior which once you've straightened out, you've straightened out. Who cares about the past? While it is true that a person may feel very, very badly about his past, *"I wish I hadn't hurt that person,"* with all the terrible things that were consequences of my bad behavior. But, essentially, the important thing is how I behave. And if from now on I'm behaving fine, I'm behaving fine. So what about the past?

In this regard it may well be in place to bring up the concept of guilt. By that I mean people do feel guilty about their past even though they have corrected it and from now on they're going to be good. "*But I feel so guilty about the terrible things that I've done in the past*." Well, number one, that's a contradiction. There's no way that a guilty person is going to do good from now on. Because a guilty person despairs. Guilt kills and destroys and prevents any rehabilitation. The sense of guilt is an obstacle in changing myself.

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But more than that, the sense of guilt is a non-Jewish feeling. It comes only from the non-Jews. Jews don't have such a concept as a sense of guilt. I'll point out to you what a sense of guilt is built from that will make it clear immediately that there is no room for it in Jewish conception at all, that it is by definition an evil.

The sense of guilt derives from a judgment of myself, not a judgment of my actions. That is to say, a guilty person who feels guilty is not interested in what he did or what happened, but in his success or failure. If what bothers me is the evil, correct it. What are you going around moping and feeling guilty about? Correct it! If he's feeling guilty it's because *I was terrible, I'm a failure, I'm no good, I am unworthy, I have no value… I, I, I.* It is a self-centered, a totally self-centered emotion. An emotion that is outward directed, an emotion that is measuring the impact is not going to be in terms of guilt or not guilt, because who cares whether I am good or bad? What matters is, are the things that I'm doing good or bad? Can I correct them? Can I fix it up? Can I do something about it? That's the thing that matters. This doesn't mean that I'm not sorry. I can be deeply sorry for the events of the past. Of course, I wish that I hadn't done these bad things. I'm sorry that I did it. But I'm not guilty because I don't feel a sense of self worthlessness, which is what a feeling of guilt means. I don't feel that I am a monster. That has nothing to do with it. The point isn't what I am or what I am not, the point is what is happening and taking place. Therefore, the minute one is not involved in self, the guilty feelings disappear. What comes in is regret, a desire to make up, a desire to correct, a desire to somehow or other find a way to mitigate the suffering that I may have caused. But it's not a question of this self-destructiveness that feelings of guilt create in a person. That will never happen because it's not me I'm measuring, it's the actions I'm measuring. People who suffer from feelings of guilt are measuring themselves and their total interest is about the self. That's destructive. But that's why a Jew can deal with atonement and *teshuva* and regret and in all of this not suffer the despair and the stifling emotion that a sense of guilt necessarily brings with it.

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The fact remains, however, that if we're talking about atonement we're saying that my past is still here. I have to do something about it. I have to atone or achieve atonement. This is a recognition, a realization, that my actions don't simply refer to the now, but they make an impact on reality. What I do affects the whole condition of existence, of all Mankind. This sounds like extraordinary self-delusion, doesn't it? But that's the fact. It is the way our *Chachamim* tell us, that a Man should

always see himself as half *chayuv* and half *patur*, half in his sins and good deeds, half of each so that one good deed will bring him to the total good. He should always see his country as half guilty, half *chesed*, so that his action can overweigh the whole world, the whole country into the good or the same for the whole world. *Kol haolum kulo machtzis chayiv machtzis zakai*. I make a difference to the world. What I do affects the world. And it does, that's the point. It isn't just a way of my being. It isn't just because you ought to be nice and proper. It is because what I do affects existence. It's a reality. It affects the well-being of myself immediately, of my family immediately, of my community maybe a little less forcefully, of my country a little less, but it adds up. What I do adds up. It does make a difference to me, the lifestyle of other citizens of my country. What they do affects the reality of my existence as well.

"ת"ר לעולם יראה אדם עצמו כאילו חציו חייב וחציו זכאי עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע עצמו לכף זכות עבר עבירה אחת אוי לו שהכריע את עצמו לכף חובה שנאמר (קהלת ט, יח) וחוטא אחד יאבד טובה הרבה בשביל חטא יחידי שחטא אובד ממנו טובות הרבה. ר' אלעזר בר' שמעון אומר לפי שהעולם נידון אחר רובו והיחיד נידון אחר רובו עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם לכף זכות עבר עבירה אחת אוי לו שהכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם לכף חובה שנאמר וחוטא אחד כו' בשביל חטא יחידי שעשה זה אבד ממנו ומכל העולם טובה הרבה." [קדושין, דף מ:]

And therefore, the Western liberal approach, by definition, is unacceptable to somebody who understands the concept of atonement. Because if atonement is a reality it means that my past actions are a reality. If they are a reality, they make an impact on sum total of existence. Therefore the actions of other people affect me just as my actions affect them. I have an interest in seeing that my society is a moral society. If my society is not a moral society it affects my lifestyle, it affects my mental set, it affects the way I live with myself and my family, it affects the way I relate with my Creator. All of these things are affected by the society in the midst of whom I live, just as all that I do affects them.

If atonement is a reality it means that my past actions are a reality. If they are a reality, they make an impact on sum total of existence. This being the case, the evil that I have done is an evil that exists. And because it's an evil that exists it attaches itself to me. And even though I now am seeking to do only doing good but being attached to this evil, it will interfere with my doing good. It will interfere with my assessment of right and wrong. It will interfere with my judgment. It will interfere with my perceptions. I cannot think with the same clarity and purity and confidence as I would have had I not done these evil things. I need atonement to wipe out, to take away the past evil. That's why I need *teshuva*, not to prepare me for the future, that you have to do even without *teshuva*, but to enable me to have a completely right future.

This being the case, the evil that I have done is an evil that exists. And because it's an evil that exists it attaches itself to me. And even though I now am seeking to do only doing good, but being attached to this evil, it will interfere with my doing good. It will interfere with my assessment of right and wrong. It will interfere with my judgment. It will interfere with my perceptions. Because this evil which I have done is a reality that exists in me and with me. Therefore I cannot think with the same clarity and purity and confidence as I would have had I not done these evil things. I need atonement to wipe out, to take away the past evil. That's why I need *teshuva*, not to prepare me for the future, that you have to do even without *teshuva*, but to enable me to have a completely right future. So that I can drop the hearthstones, the burdens of my past *aveiros*, which keep me from traveling easily as I should. The past is a reality which I have created and I have to live with. And unless there's some way that I can come to remove it, that evil stays there and will affect my present existence as well. It will affect my family life, my country life, my people's life, and all the rest because it remains a reality and actuality that is there.

Yom Kippur provides that atonement. This is an incredible, incredible *chesed* of *Hashem Yisborach*. He says, on this day, through this day, by accepting it, by being aware of it and wanting it, you achieve atonement. Instead of having to go through the depth and the totality of the process of self-cleansing that ordinarily would be required, I cleans you through this day. G-d Himself cleanses us and takes away the effects of yesterday's actions.

"...ונמצא לפי זה, כי בכל מצוות ישנם שני דברים: א) תועלת ותיקון הנעשה מהמצוה, אשר בשביל זה ציוה הקב"ה לעשותה, כי לכל מצוה יש טעם, כמ"ש הרמב"ן פ' תצא במצות שילח הקן (דברים, כ"ב, ו') וז"ל: "וזה הענין שגזר הרב (הרמב"ם) במצוות, שיש להן טעם, מבואר הוא מאוד, כי בכל אחד טעם ותועלת ותיקון לאדם, מלבד שכרן וכו' עיי"ש באורך, ובשביל זה ראוי לעשות המצוות אפילו לא נצטוינו עליהן, וע"כ קיימו האבות את התורה קודם שנצטוו עליה, מפני שהבינו התועלת והתיקון מזה, ב) אחרי שנצטוינו לקיים המצוות, הוא ענין בפני עצמו לקיים ציווי השי"ת, וכן בעבירה ישנן שני הענינים הנ"ל, היינו הטעם אשר בשבילו הוזהרנו שלא לעשות המעשה ההיא, ובשביל זה היה ראוי למנוע מלעשות המעשה אפילו בלא אזהרה, ועכשיו שנצטוינו צריך שלא לעבור על אזהרת הקב"ה." [קובץ מאמרים, חלק א, דף כב, על פי רמח"ל בדרך ה']

Now, it has to be understood that when a man does an *aveira*, when a man sins, there are normally two things that he is doing simultaneously and under certain circumstances only one. Let's say somebody eats ham and eggs. If he is aware that the Torah prohibited the eating of ham and eggs, he is doing himself the harm that ham and eggs does. Two, he is doing himself the harm of rejecting a law in the Torah. These are two harms. The same is when somebody does something good. If I do a *chesed* I do two things. One, I do the wonderful charitable or helpful act. Two, I am submitting myself to the orders of my Creator.

You find this thought brought out in its full depth right at the beginning of *Shemos* where the king ordered the *miyaldos*, the midwives, to kill the Jewish children. The *pasuk* tells us they refused to do it – *vatirenu hamiyaldos es HaElokim* – the *miyaldos* feared G-d and they did not carry out the commandments of *Pharaoh*. The Torah says first that G-d rewarded them for it and then it said G-d gave them *batim*, which means children, families, because of it. The Torah tells us two rewards for two reasons. One was for fearing G-d and the other was for saving Jewish lives.

"ויאמר מלך מצרים למילדת העברית אשר שם האחת שפרה ושם השנית פועה: ויאמר בילדכן את העבריות וראיתן על האבנים אם בן הוא והמתן אותו ואם בת היא וחיה: ותיראן המילדות את האלהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר אליהן מלך מצרים ותחיין את הילדים: ויקרא מלך מצרים למילדות ויאמר להן מדוע עשיתן הדבר הזה וחיין את הילדם: ותאמרן המילדת אל פרעה כי לא כנשים המצרית העברית כי חיות הנה בטרם תבוא עליהן המילדת וילדו: וייטב אלהים למילדת וירב העם ויעצמו מאוד: ויהי כי יראו המילדת את האלהים ויעש להם בתים." [שמות, פרק א, פסוק טו-כא]

They did two things. They saved Jewish lives and they fulfilled the will of their Creator. It is a twofold thing.

The same is true of an *aveira*. That means that eating ham isn't wrong simply because one has rebelled against the commands of G-d. It is wrong because G-d gave the command because He knows that eating ham brings about a terrible result. It isn't that it's wrong because of the command. The command is because it's wrong. The *Ribono Shel Olum*, the Almighty, is aware of the consequences of all kinds of physical acts. And He tells us that the consequence of eating a non-kosher product are such that you may not do it. It is because not only is this is My command and you do what I say. I give you this command because inherent in the doing of these prohibited acts lies an evil, lies an anti-Godly state of being. He knows why this is so because He knows what goes into the making of *chazir*. He knows what goes into establishing a road leading to a contact with G-d. We can't know. We don't know. We don't know what our souls are. We don't know what a pig is. We don't know what a road leading to G-d is. And therefore we don't see why this is an obstacle on the road to Godliness.

Better yet, the Torah tells us that it's not only an obstacle on the road to Godliness, it's an obstacle on the road to goodness. A person who eats ham is going to be an evil person. He's not going to be a kind person. He's going to be a good person. He's going to be a bad person. It doesn't matter that he doesn't know that it's *asur*. But, the fact that he's eating *chazir* has that effect, *nebach*. Just as if he eats a deadly mushroom, he was under the impression that this was a safe mushroom, he intended to eat a safe mushroom, he never wanted to eat a poisonous mushroom, he didn't intend to eat a poisonous mushroom, and he dies! Is that fair? He didn't know? If he did know he never would have done it, you're right, one hundred percent, but it happens to be that the mushroom is poisonous. And even if you eat it without knowing it, the poison is going to work. The poison doesn't care whether you know or not. Similarly, ham is going to hurt you. It's going to hurt you whether you know it or whether you don't know it. It's poison. It's a spiritual poison. It literally breaks down spiritual cells. So even though you didn't know it and we'll cry for you that you didn't know it, but the fact remains that it was poison that was taken into your system. It has an effect and therefore has to be driven out, has to be purified, cleansed.

מצות טמאת שמנה שרצים - להיות שמנה שרצים טמאים ומטמאין, שנאמר (ויקרא יא כט) וזה לכם הטמא בשרץ השרץ על הארץ החלד והעכבר והצב וגו'. משרשי המצוה....ועתה אחרי הקדמתנו זאת, שחכמת האל גדלה על כל חכמה וכי לא יצוה דבר רק לטובה לנו ולתועלת גדולה, אין לנו קשיא ולא שאלה בכל אסור המאכלות והרחקת הטמאה בכל אשר לא יהיה התועלת לנו ידועה ומשג בחקירה, כי ידענו באמת שהכל לטוב. ואל תתמה בני על עניני הטמאה אם הוא נעלם הרבה על כל בריה, כי אפשר שהטמאה תזיק אל הנפש ומחליאה קצת, וכן שמעתי הדבד מפי חכמים, וכעין מה שאמרו זכרונם לברכה (יומא לט א) ונטמאתם בם ונטמתם כתיב כלומר שמעינות השכל שהוא הנפש הקימת מתקלקלים קצת בענין הטמאה. ואל תתמה בהתקלקל השכל בעניינים הגשמיים אף על פי שאינו מינו, כי מפני שתופה של נפש עם הגוף יארע לה כן על כל פנים. ואם כן אנחנו בני איש בעניות דעתינו לא נדע הנפש ומהותה ואיך נלאה לדעת רפואתה או מחלתה מדרך החקירה הלא לרופאים אין תחבולה ברפואה עד הכירם עקר המחלה, ועל כן בכל הרחקות הטמאה שיבואו בתורה, אין לנו לחטט אחר שרשיהן, עד בואנו אל תכלית הידיעה בעניני הנפש לדעת מהותה מוצאה ומובאה והבן זה ודעהו, כי בו נמצא קצת תשובה על כל שרשי מצות הטמאה והטהרה עד אשר כמעט יהיה מסוה על פנינו בחדוש פרה אדמה שמטמא הטהור ומטהרת הטמא, וגם שם (מצוה קצז) נאריך בענין בעזדת השם לקבל שכר ביגיעה למצא דברי חפץ." [חינוך, מצוה קנט]

The way of purification, of cleansing, is by following the method of our Creator. This is a remarkable thing that he made this method, which is not rational according to our understanding. Nevertheless, if you follow this procedure the effects of the evil that you did are going to be removed.

"...ואם תאמר, אם כן, מדת הרחמים למה היא עומדת, כיון שעל כל פנים צריך לדקדק בדין על כל דבר? התשובה, ודאי, מדת הרחמים היא קיומו של עולם, שלא היה עומד זולתו כלל וכלל. ואף על פי כן אין מדת הדין לוקה, וזה, כי לפי שורת הדין ממש: היה ראוי שהחוטא יענש מיד תיכף לחטאו בלי המתנה כלל. וגם שהעונש עצמו יהיה בחרון אף, כראוי למי שממרה פי הבורא יתברך שמו. ושלא יהיה תיקון לחטא כלל. כי הנה באמת, איך יתקן האדם את אשר עיות והחטא כבר נעשה? הרי שרצח האדם את חברו, הרי שנאף, איך יוכל לתקן הדבר הזה? היוכל להסיר המעשה העשוי מן המציאות. אמנם, מדת הרחמים היא הנותנת הפך השלשה דברים שזכרנו: דהינו, שיתן זמן לחוטא ולא יכחד מן הארץ מיד כשחטא. ושהעונש עצמו לא יהיה עד לכלה. ושהתשובה תנתן לחוטאים בחסד גמור, שתחשב עקירת הרצון כעקירת המעשה." [מסילת ישרים, פרק ד]

The procedure is the process of *teshuvah*. The steps in that process are the procedure by which one reverses the effects of the evil that one has done. We can always undertake that and to the greater degree that we realize it, the more effective our *teshuva* is and the deeper the cleansing process. Of course, it is predicated firstly on a realization that an evil was done. Until that is recognized and accepted nothing can be done. As long as I'm under the impression of what did I do? I didn't do anything bad. It was this, it was that, it was the other. It may be true, I didn't know better, what could you have expected from me? The fact is, he's not aware that there is something to mend. And if you're not aware that there is something to mend, you're not going to mend it. If there is going to be an emending done there first has to be a realization, there's a tear, there's something that has to be

mended. Which means there has to be a recognition of an evil done, which means that I have to realize and recognize that the non-kosher food was harmful, that the practices and styles which I participated in were harmful. That has to be recognized and accepted.

Secondly, I regret it. I wish I had known, because I could have had so much more of a relationship with the Creator of the universe. I could have accomplished so much more deeply and greatly. I could've avoided so many pitfalls. If I were aware and did it, then, of course, I am deeply sorry that I allowed myself to fall into this terrible trap. There's got to be regret.

"מה היא התשובה הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד שנאמר יעזוב רשע דרכו וגו'. וכן יתנחם על שעבר שנאמר כי אחרי שובי נחמתי..." [רמב"ם, הלכות תשובה, פרק ב, הלכה ב]

Then there has to be *kabbalah al habah* – I won't do it anymore. Because if there isn't that, the rest is meaningless. What do you mean, you regret it? You don't regret it. If you regret it you won't do it anymore. So, *Kabbalah al habah* has to be there. It has to be there anyway. You're not allowed to do an evil again, whether you're doing *teshuva* whether you're not doing *teshuva*. But *kabbala al habah* as part of the *teshuva* is a manifestation of the reality of your regret. You regret it to the point where you're not going to do it again.

The question is asked if it's sufficient when you're not sure that you're prepared really to say with certainty you're not going to do it again. That's a tremendous question. Is it sufficient where you know that you're not strong enough to say that you're not going to do it again? Because you know very well that you are going to do it again. And anybody who's doing *teshuva* knows that that's a frequent occurrence He frequently has to do *teshuva* on things which he knows that he's not prepared to give up, that deep down he's aware he's going to continue doing it. How do you do *teshuva* then? You do *teshuva* then!

When *Rebbi Alexandri* says to the *Ribono Shel Olum*, *galoy v'yudua l'fanecha* - my G-d, it is known to You, You see the truth, that our desire is to do Your desire – *ritztonanu laasos ritzoncha* - we want truly, really to serve only You. *Ela sar sheb'esa* and *shibud malchios garma* – but, our own desires which we cannot control and the environment in which we live are handicaps that don't allow us to carry out our real desire to serve You fully. What are you saying? So what? [I.e., is this of any significance?] You see that he's telling you that this itself is already a proper *teshuva*. I want. I can't control myself yet, *Ribono Shel Olum*, I'm working on it. I'm looking for ways. I'm undertaking ways. I hope to achieve it soon. I really want to achieve it, even though I know that I am not yet at the point where I can say with any degree of confidence or even knowing that I'm going to fall again, but *Ribono Shel Olum*, if I'm going to fall it won't be because I want to, it won't be because I don't recognize it as evil. It will be because I will lose control. Then, that's enough to achieve *teshuva*. That is enough to achieve atonement.

"ורבי אלכסנדרי בתר דמצלי אמר הכי רבון העולמים גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוננו לעשות רצונך ומי מעכב שאור שבעיסה ושעבוד מלכיות יהי רצון מלפניך שתצילנו מידם ונשוב לעשות חוקי רצונך בלבב שלם." [ברכות, דף יז.]

And if you add it to *Yom Kippur*, that's what *Yom Kippur* does. *Yom Kippur* takes and amplifies your wish, your seeking, your wanting, and makes it into a reality. And gives you and enables you to achieve that atonement that you are sincerely are seeking. This atonement takes away the past effects of the sins that we have and enables us to come to G-d with a total different description of self. I can take the words of the *Rambam* to describe it. He says, the difference between before and after. Before, you were a spurner of G-d and now you are a beloved of G-d.

Before, you prayed and your prayer was aborted in your face and now you pray and your prayers reach G-d's ears straight. Your whole self is a different self. The self who is loaded down with the evil that was done is a self that doesn't know how to pray. The evil that I have done interferes with my being able to bring my thoughts and my emotions into the position of being able to go and talk to G-d. It's a handicap. I free myself of it, I cleanse myself of it, I can speak to G-d freely now and by speaking freely reach Him. My views of values and the world is different when I have cleansed myself of the effect.

"גדולה תשובה שמקרבת את האדם לשכינה שנאמר שובה ישראל עד ה'...אמש היה זה שנאוי לפני המקום משוקץ ומרוחק ותועבה והיום הוא אהוב ונחמד קרוב וידיד...כמה מעולה מעלת התשובה אמש היה זה מובדל מה' אלהי ישראל שנאמר עונותיכם היו מבדילים ביניכם לבין אלהיכם צועק ואינו נענה שנאמר כי תרבו תפלה וגו' ועושה מצות וטורפין אותן בפניו שנאמר מי בקש זאת מידכם רמוס חצרי מי גם בכם ויסגר דלתים וגו' והיום הוא מודבק בשכינה שנאמר ואתם הדבקים בה' אלהיכם צועק ונענה מיד שנאמר והיה טרם יקראו ואני אענה ועושה מצות ומקבלין אותן בנחת ושמחה שנאמר כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך ולא עוד אלא שמתאוים להם שנאמר וערבה לה' מנחת יהודה וירושלם כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות." [רמב"ם, הלכות תשובה, פרק ז, הלכה ו-ז]

This is an illustration that everybody will immediately recognize. A Jew who's never eaten *treif*, if G-d forbid, he eats *treif*, he's nauseated. Imagine the first time a man commits murder, realizes that he took a human life. Sick. A second time, he's not sick. He feels a little squeamish but he's not sick. The third time, maybe he won't enjoy it, but it certainly won't bother him anymore. You get a whole different feel about a thing. Atonement means it will be the first time again. Once you've killed, the second time is much easier. It takes an enormous will to kill that first time, to overcome the ingrained prejudice that human beings have against killing. I'm talking now not only from the point of view of Torah alone, though of course, from the point of view of Torah this is intensified. The first time, G-d forbid, a man contemplates being *mechalel Shabbos*, G-d forbid, he shakes and shivers and he expects the heavens to open up and lightening to come and strike him dead. He's shaking, he's worried, it's a trauma. The second time, that trauma isn't there. There's still a twinge, but the trauma isn't there. The third time, he's not even aware.

You know, we take a look and we see somebody actually getting into a car on *Shabbos*, there's a sense of puzzlement, a sense of amazement. I mean, how can you do it? You know, how can you get in a car and drive? It's *Shabbos*? Don't you feel funny? He doesn't feel funny. We feel funny. We really do…what are you doing? How? How do you go to do such a thing? He doesn't feel funny. It feels perfectly natural to him. But, G-d forbid, let a Jew be *mechalel Shabbos* twice, it won't feel funny to him either when he sees the other fellow driving on *Shabbos*. This is a fact. You do feel very peculiar to see a Jew actually eating *chazir*. You can't believe it. What are you doing? He's going into a McDonald's? You're amazed. It's just a thing that seems so strange. But a Man who's eaten a couple of McDonald hamburgers isn't going to find it strange at all. That's what the *gemara* says, that a man who did an *aveira* three times, *naseh lo k'heter* – from now on it's as though it were a permissible act. He doesn't feel the sense of doing a prohibited action anymore. He feels now perfectly comfortable with it.

"עולא אמר כדרב הונא דאמר רב הונא כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו הותרה לו סלקא דעתך אלא נעשית לו כהיתר." [קדושין, מ.]

And that goes for anything. There is no limitation to this. Murder, torture, there is no limitation to what a person can adjust himself to if he does it. The things that would disgust him the most, that would be unthinkable to him, if he's done it once or twice, for whatever reason, it's not unthinkable anymore.

I had a remarkable thing, a really remarkable episode. It's so extraordinarily revealing what my daughter once told me. My daughter went to a *Bais Yaakov*, a first rate school, and she came home and she was assigned a book called The Scarlet Letter. The book seems to be about a woman who committed adultery. My daughter said to me, before we read this book the thought of adultery was so disgusting, so nauseating, that it wasn't something to reject, it was just unthinkable. It was just a *davar* that…and the thought that there might be a woman who would do it made her such a disgusting person that you couldn't look at her. She said that after we finished the book, we all feel that, G-d forbid, of course, one would never do such a terrible thing, but you can understand the woman who did! It becomes understandable. You can see why she did it. It's a *din*, it's *asur*, we're not going to do it, G-d forbid, of course not, but it no longer has that disgust. It no longer has that nauseous feeling. You can see it now. This is the effect of reading about a sympathetic portrayal. Just imagine the effect of doing it. It is amazing how we are affected by what we do. And we ought to, therefore, find ways of erasing it.

Now, I don't think that she was prepared to understand the process of *teshuva* that would have been involved for her in this. But there really was. I didn't believe she would be able to relate to it yet. But the fact is, there is a process of *teshuva* to take away that affect. And we need it. And we ought to do it. The question is, what are the specifics within different situations? They will vary. But one thing for sure, using *Yom Kippur* will be very, very much a part of it.

Now, if the concept of judgment, which began on *Rosh Hashanah*, brought about an awareness that what I do matters, that what I do has affects, obviously, the process of *teshuva* completes that awareness and is built on that awareness, as *Yom Kippur* has to be built on *Rosh Hashanah*. You can come to the process of *teshuva* only after you know that what you did mattered and had an impact. Until you know that, you can't undertake to do *teshuvah*. Because *teshuva* is the purification and the correction of that which you have done. That can only be if you know that what you did mattered, that it made a difference.

Now, if the concept of judgment, which began on *Rosh Hashanah*, brought about an awareness that what I do matters, that what I do has affects, obviously, the process of *teshuva* completes that awareness and is built on that awareness, as *Yom Kippur* has to be built on *Rosh Hashanah*. Which is the reason that *Yom Kippur* follows *Rosh Hashanah* rather than proceeds it. Because everybody has to ask the question, if G-d is going to atone for our sins and give us forgiveness, shouldn't He do it before *Rosh Hashanah*, when He's going to judge us? Why does He first judge us and then forgive us?

Which is the reason that *Yom Kippur* follows *Rosh Hashanah* rather than proceeds it. Because everybody has to ask the question, if G-d is going to atone for our sins and give us forgiveness, shouldn't He do it before *Rosh Hashanah*, when He's going to judge us? Why does He first judge us and then forgive us? The answer is, without *Rosh Hashanah*, you can't achieve atonement. Without the realization and awareness that *Rosh Hashanah* gives of judgment being a reality, of what you're doing making a difference, that what you do counts and that what you do has had an impact in the real world…without that, you can't do *teshuva*. And therefore you can't get atonement. That's why *Rosh Hashanah* must precede and not follow *Yom Kippur*. It is from *Rosh Hashanah* we get the awareness and the understanding which enables us to go through the process of repentance and the achievement of atonement.

Yom Kippur, then, is a culmination of a process that begins with *Rosh Hashanah*. You can't have it on its own. It's a culmination, the culmination of the process that begins with judgment and the awareness of judgment, the sensing of the reality of what I did makes a difference. Out of that comes responsibility to do something about it, which is the doing of *teshuva*: the finding the ways to regret, the finding the ways to correct, the being involved in really wanting to erase the consequences and to find the method by which one can overcome where he stumbled and through *Yom Kippur* to achieve the atonement, the wiping out of that past, which we seek.

''כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם לפני יהוה תטהרו.'' [ויקרא, טז, ל]

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"אבל במה תהיה התשובה מהאדם אומר בזה כי תתכן לו אחר הקדמת ידיעתו בשבעה דברים. הראשון שידע גנות מעשהו ידיעה ברורה כי אם לא יתברר לו זה ויהיה מסתפק או שוגג בלתי מזיד לא תתכן החרטה ממנו עליו ובקשת המחילה בו כמו שכתוב (תהלים נא) כי פשעי אני אדע וחטאתי נגדי תמיד. והשני שידע בחיוב רוע מעשהו וגנותו כי אם לא יתברר אצלו כי מעשהו רע ומפעלו אינו טוב לא יתחרט עליו ולא יקבל תנאי התשובה ממנו ודינו בו כדין השוגג ואמתלאתו רחבה כמ"ש (שם יט) שגיאות מי יבין וגו'. והשלישי שידע בחיוב הגמול על מעשהו כי אם לא ידע זה אין צורך מביאו אל החרטה עליו וכשיתברר אצלו כי הוא ענוש עליו יתחרט אחר כך ויבקש המחילה כמו שכתוב (ירמיה לא) כי אחרי שובי נחמתי וגו' ואמר (תהלים קיט)סמר מפחדך בשרי וגו'. והרביעי שידע שהוא שמור עליו ונכתב בספר עונותיו ולא יעבור עליו העלם ולא שכחה ולא הנחה כמ"ש (דברים לב) הלא הוא כמס עמדי חתום באוצרותי ואמר (איוב לז) ביד כל אדם יחתום וגו', כי אם יחשוב כי הוא מופקר ואיננו שמור עליו לא יתחרט ולא יבקש המחילה בו מפני איחור עונשו עליו כמ"ש (קהלת ח) אשר אין נעשה פתגם מעשה הרעה מהרה על כן מלא לב בני האדם בהם לעשות רע. והחמישי שידע אמת כי התשובה אופן רפואת מדוהו והדרך אל הארוכה מרוע מעשהו וגנות מפעלו ושבה יתקן טעותו וישיב אבדתו כי אם לא יתברר אצלו זה יתיאש מכפרת הבורא יתברך ומרחמיו ולא יבקש ממנו המחילה על מה שקדם לו מרוע מפעלו כמ"ש (יחזקאל לג) אמרתם לאמר כי פשעינו וחטאתינו עלינו ובם אנחנו נמקים ואיך נחיה, והיתה התשובה על זה מהבורא על ידי נביאו חי אני נאם ה' אלהים אם אחפוץ במות הרשע וגו'. והששי שיחשוב עם נפשו במה שקדם לבורא עליו מן הטובות ומה שקדם לו מהמרותו תמורת ההודאה עליהן ושישקול עונשי העבירה עם ערבותה וערבות גמול הצדקה עם צערה בעוה"ז ובעוה"ב כמו שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל הוי מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה ושכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה. והשביעי חוזק סבלו להמנע מן הרע אשר הרגיל בו והסכמתו לסור ממנו בלבו ובמצפונו כמו שכתוב (יואל ב) וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם. ובהתקדם ברור אלו השבעה דברים בדעת החוטא תתכן ממנו התשובה מעונותיו:" [חובות הלבבות, שער התשובה, פרק ד]

גמר חתימה טובה!

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Email: moshew789@gmail.com Phone: (908) 910–3090

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