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RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

YOM KIPPUR

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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YOM KIPPUR

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONTENTS:

Number One Before Yom Kippur: Bein Adam Lachaveiro - 3 | How To Seek Forgiveness - 4
Fear and Vidui - 5 | Happy Days - 6 | The Cleaning of Kaparah - 7 | Believe in the Day - 9
Facets of Fasting - 11 | Fasting: Hashem Livado - 12 | The Sa'ir Hamishtaleiach - 13
The Motzaei Yom Kippur Seudah - 15 | Post Yom Kippur Chizuk - 15

Number One Before Yom Kippur: Bein Adam Lachaveiro

— Q: —

What should be the first thing that a person corrects before Yom Kippur?

— A: —

To be facetious, I'll say the first thing is to correct yourself. But of course you'll ask, "But in myself, what's the first thing?"

When you're standing before Yom Kippur the very first thing you must do is to make sure that all the wrongs that you committed against your fellow man are righted. Other things could perhaps be rectified during Yom Kippur – for many things you can do *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur – but if somebody has an outstanding complaint against you, then you have to realize nothing is

going to help until you get forgiveness from that person. **אִין יוֹם כְּפוּר מְכַפֵּר עַד** – *Yom Kippur doesn't achieve for you forgiveness unless you appeased already those whom you sinned against* (Yoma 85b). And you can't wait for Yom Kippur to come to realize that you have outstanding debts to take care of. You have to get busy dealing with it beforehand. And usually it's a small matter to get forgiveness because most people are willing to yield once they see you are contrite. Even calling up on the telephone is worthwhile.

Now, sometimes it's not so easy. I once called a man to forgive me and he banged down the telephone on me. It's not always easy but you have to do something about it. You have to get *mechila* because otherwise nothing will help; nothing will help! That's the *halacha* (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 606). It's not *lifnim meshuras hadin*; it's a *halacha pesukah*. You have to contact that person in some way to get forgiveness, otherwise it's terrible what is going to happen.

And therefore before Yom Kippur it should be done to as many people as possible with whom you had dealings with if there's the slightest suspicion that you wronged them in any way. That's the number one requirement before Yom Kippur.

TAPE # 568 (September 1985)

How To Seek Forgiveness

— Q: —

We're supposed to ask each other for forgiveness before Yom Kippur. Can you explain the procedure that one might use to seek people's forgiveness?

— A: —

When we wish to get someone to forgive us, I will suggest a diplomatic approach.

Go over to him and say, "You know it's coming close to Yom Kippur and the Jewish nation has a custom of asking forgiveness of each other. So maybe we'll say to each other that we forgive each other for what we know and what we don't know – it means for things you know that I did against you or what you don't know. Let's forgive each other for everything."

And if he agrees, if he does it, so it's done; it's valid. It's like a man who signs away his possessions. Once he signs it's already done; if he forgives you it's done.

Now, if you're going to approach him and say, "You know, I have something on my conscience that I did against you," so he'll get all heated up and he

might think twice about forgiving you. So you're better off using my system and get him to forgive you as a formality.

It's a beautiful thing among Orthodox Jew to use this formality; even in the home it's a beautiful *minhag*. You know, Reb Itzele Peterburger, *zichrono livrocha*, on *erev* Rosh Hashanah before he went out of his house to the shul, he turned back and said to his wife, "*Zeit mir moichel – Be mochel me please.*" And she was a smart woman; she said, "*Un zei du mir moichel.*"

Oooh that is wonderful. That's how the stains on your *neshama* are wiped clean. It is a tremendous thing. Ask your wife to be *mochel* you before you come to shul on Yom Kippur. If you don't do that there is a long list she has; she has a very long list against you! And so, whatever you do, you have to get forgiveness; you must get forgiveness or nothing will help.

This way everybody forgives the other one and so they start with a clean conscience.

TAPE # 281 (September 1979)

Fear and Vidui

— Q: —

Can you recommend some last minute *eitzah* as we get ready for Yom Kippur tomorrow night?

— A: —

I'll speak about an *eitzah* that's very important – it's important all year long but we should especially think about it before Yom Kippur. There is a statement in Mesichta Bava Kama (50a): כָּל הָאוֹמֵר הַקֶּב"ה וְתָרַן – *Anybody who says that Hashem is forgiving, that He disregards sin, יִתְרִי חַיִּי – that person is playing with his life.* It means that if a person thinks that Hashem will overlook a man's sins and not punish him, he's in for a big surprise. If a man did a wrong, then even though fifty years have passed by, and in between this man became a *tzaddik*; he became a big *rosh yeshiva* with a long white beard, still Hakadosh Baruch Hu won't forgive him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not *mevater* on anything

Now, a statement like that should make us tremble. "He won't be *mevater*!" It means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will face him in the Next World in a way that the person never imagined – a face that he didn't recognize in this world. Rav Yisroel Salanter says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has two faces – one face is in this world and one face in the Next World. In this world His face is the face of *chessed*; He's forgiving and kindly. He's *maarich af*; it means He waits for you to do *teshuvah*. But once a person dies, it's all over. In the

Next World, Hashem shows the stern face of a judge and it's too late for *selichah u'mechilah*. Of course, if you're still alive and you do *teshuva* and you ask Him forgiveness that's something else. But otherwise there's no forgiving! When a man dies with sins it's going to be very bad for him.

And therefore, what's the advice of the Torah? **וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ** – *And they shall confess their sins which they did* (Bamidbar 5:7) The Rambam says: **וְדַי זֶה הַצִּוּת עֲשֵׂה** – *It's a Torah mitzvah to say vidui*. If you sinned, even the smallest sin, you're commanded to speak up and declare your guilt. That's the only way you'll be forgiven.

Now, advice like that you ignore at your own risk because without *teshuva* no sin is small. Like the Chovos Halevavos says: “There is no *aveirah* that is small without *teshuvah*!” Every sin is a catastrophe if a person doesn't regret it. And because Hakodosh Boruch Hu doesn't like catastrophes He says, “Confess!”

If you speak up to Hashem you're already facing the direction of *teshuvah*. Of course, the best thing is to get busy repairing the harm that you did and to change your ways. But at least when a man knows that he is guilty and he has *charatah*; he is worried and so he declares his guilt to Hashem, that's already a form of *kaparah*. It's not a full *selicha u'mechilah*, but it is certainly important.

And don't say “But I'm far away from real *teshuva*.” Say I'm sorry anyway. Because when you confess with your mouth and you say, “Ribono Shel Olam, I'm guilty and I'm sorry. I regret what I did,” so you're fulfilling a *mitzvas asei d'Oraisah* and you're already digging yourself out of the hole. You're tipping the scales in your favor.

TAPE # E-160 (October 1998)

Happy Days

— Q: —

Why was Yom Kippur considered one of the happiest days of the year? I understand that it's the holiest, but the happiest?

— A: —

In the days of old – not so long ago; even 150 years ago – everybody understood the meaning of the words **כִּי בְיוֹם הַזֶּה יִכָּפֵר עֲלֵיכֶם** and they were so full of joy that Yom Kippur became established as one of the two most happy days of the year.

Today already not everybody understands the kindness that Yom Kippur is. You sit there and participate in the singing – you like the *niggunim* maybe;

a good chazan, a frum chazan singing niggunim: Ay yay yay yay yay. Everybody is happy with the good niggunim but they're watching the clock.

You should know every second of Yom Kippur is precious. If Yom Kippur would last a month, it would be the best thing in the world. Of course we would die of starvation but it would be the best thing that could be for us to extend Yom Kippur. Every second is a precious happiness. We should utilize every second. So think through the past year, go back through the past year. What did you say in the past year? What did you do?

That's the great happiness of the day. Because לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ – You're being purified before Hashem. Rabbi Akiva says אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל – how happy you are Yisroel, לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מִטְהָרִים – before Whom do you have to pass inspection? וּמִי מִטְהָר אֶתְכֶם – and Who is the One Who purifies you? Hashem!

Hashem is doing both jobs. On Yom Kippur He cleanses you – and He can do a good job, Hashem, better than anybody else. He's an expert laundryman for your neshamah – and then when He cleanses you and He inspects you and He's satisfied with you then you'll be a lucky man. אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל – When Hashem inspects you and you pass inspection, it means you're perfect.

TAPE # 933 (September 1993)

The Cleaning of Kaparah

— Q: —

Why is achieving kaparah such an important thing?

— A: —

And now we come to one of the most obvious of the achievements of Yom Kippur: כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם – On this day Hashem atones for you (Vayikra 16:30).

So when people hear that, they feel it means that Hashem will forgive us for the wrong things we did and He'll give us a good year. Now, a good year is a very good thing to have – everybody should have a good year – but that's not the purpose of yichaper.

So pay attention now: Yichaper means to wipe clean; it comes from the word kaf. Kaf means a palm and the reish is added. When you want to wipe a dish let's say, in the olden days when they didn't have much water they used to wipe it clean with the palm; sometimes a little spittle too but it was the palm that did the cleaning. So כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר means that on this day Hashem makes you clean.

Now, that cleanliness doesn't mean only that it's going to be a good year for you. There's something more important than that – it's cleansing your *neshamah*. And that's the most fundamental of all the things that happen on Yom Kippur. Because the *neshamah*, that's the only thing that we have. Our bodies are only loaned to us. We borrowed them for a short time; like a suit of clothing, it's not forever. The time will come when you have to take off that suit of flesh and bones. So who are you? You are the *neshamah*. That's all you are, and that's forever and ever and ever, until *techiyas hameisim* when you're clothed again.

Now this *neshamah*, when it's exposed from the body and it comes to the Next World, it's covered with spots. Rabeinu Yonah explains in the beginning of *Shaarei Teshuvah* that every sin is a spot of stain on your *neshamah* and it's a terrible shame for someone when the *neshamah* becomes exposed.

Suppose you walk into a *chasunah*, let's say, and you have a blotch of mud on your head or some dirt on your nose. Maybe other stains that are even more shameful. It's very embarrassing. So if you're in this world you might try to wipe it off – you can go into the lobby or the lavatory and clean up – but in the Next World you can't. It's too late.

All this is not *drashos*, not just what I invented in my own mind. It's from the Gemara; it's from the *Tanach*. Everywhere it states that. Yirmiyahu says, **כִּי אַם תִּכְבֹּסִי בַּנֵּתָר** – Even you wash yourself with nitrate; that's a certain kind of chemical, **וְתִרְבִּי לָךְ בְּרִית** – and even you'll have much soap, **נִכְתָּם עוֹנֶךָ לִפְנֵי** – your sin is still stained before me (Yirmiyahu 2:22). We see that our sins are stains.

And therefore the stains on the *neshamah*, that's the greatest problem in our lives. Because what happens? Imagine a *neshamah* went to the next world with stains on it, and now it applied to enter Gan Eden. But the *malach* with the *cherev hamishapeches* who is standing there says, “Nothing doing. You have stains on you. First go and cleanse yourself.”

So the *neshamah nebach* had to go to *Gehenom*. In order to get rid of the stain, Hashem sends us to purgatory, to the laundry, and the laundry is terrible. They use such lye, such detergents, such chemicals that burn and hurt. I don't want to describe what's happening in *Gehenom*. There's nothing that we have, no words that are sufficient to describe the suffering in *Gehenom*.

Of course, you must cooperate. You must help out. Let's say somebody wants to give you a good wash. You have dirt on you. So you have to offer your face, not turn your face away. If the other person is trying to put soap on your face, you have to offer your face. Hashem says, “Offer your face to Me. Cooperate. Repent. Think about what you did. Spend some time on Yom

Kippur doing teshuva.” Do that. Yom Kippur is the day! **בְּיֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם**, on this day Hashem cooperates with you.

That's why it pays while you're alive to get rid of the stains. If you're able to get *kaparah* in this life, you're saving yourself a great deal that you'll have to undergo in the laundry of Gehenom. And that's the great kindness of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is an opportunity to get rid of your stains in this life. **כִּי בְּיֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם** – On this day Hashem will wipe you clean. That's the happiness, the great achievement of Yom Kippur. And Yom Kippur is a glorious opportunity for us to get rid of some of these stains. Yom Kippur is the day when we get the stains out of our *neshamos*.

TAPE # 381 (September 1981)

Believe in the Day

— Q: —

Doesn't Yom Kippur work on its own; just the day itself grants us forgiveness?

— A: —

The *kaparah* of Yom Kippur requires something, a minimum. And the minimum is that you have to believe that Yom Kippur works. Yom Kippur is only effective if you *believe* that it can be effective and you *want* it to be effective. Otherwise it's nothing. And I'll explain that.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin) talks about a man who gives orders that he should not be buried; before he died he expressed his desire not to be buried. He says he doesn't want *kaparah* or he doesn't believe in the *kaparah* that burial is. As the body is lowered into the ground and also as it dissolves into the soil it's a *kaparah*, it's an atonement for him and this man is saying he's not interested in getting a *kaparah*.

Now, of course we are not going to listen to him anyhow; we're going to bury him because it's a mitzvah to bury him. But it matters what he said because the Gemara says that once he says he doesn't want to be buried because he doesn't want an atonement, he's not going to receive any atonement.

What do we see from the Gemara? Suppose this man deserves atonement and we buried him against his wishes and the body dissolves into the soil – he has *chibut hakever* and also he was a man who deserved to be forgiven – so why shouldn't he be forgiven?

But no, the Gemara says. If a man expresses his wish not to be forgiven, then he's not forgiven.

Now that's an important principle. Because we learn from this that forgiveness must be desired. That's important! Forgiveness only comes to those who desire it.

And so the same thing is Yom Kippur. If a person doesn't believe that Yom Kippur forgives sins or he's not interested then forgiveness won't be effective for him. And that means it's necessary to have *emunah* in the subject of *selichah* and *mechilah*; he has to have *emunah* in Yom Kippur.

So here's a person; he's a loyal Jew – when he was a boy he adopted the ways of the Torah or he was taught that way, and so he goes through the formalities – but how much he believes, it's not so sure. He doesn't think about it much but he does it anyway. He does it by rote. Why not? It doesn't cost any money to ask for forgiveness so he says “*Selach lanu*.”

But actually he's thinking, “First of all my sins are pretty big; probably a good many are unforgivable. Secondly, who says Hashem forgives sins?” In his heart of hearts he still has the New York Times editorials in his mind, and therefore it's difficult for him to comprehend that there is a Hashem and there's forgiveness.

Now, if you ask for forgiveness as a formality it's also a good thing because there's no such thing as a man doing something and being divorced entirely from his words and his actions. So if you act in this way as if you're asking for forgiveness, to a certain extent it's so.

But when a man is asking because he has learned to feel that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the One Who forgives sins, and he knows that all of his future depends on His forgiveness; **כִּי עִמָּךְ הַסְלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּירָא** – *With You is the power of forgiveness in order that man should fear You* (Tehillim 130:4). And you know that without that there's no hope in this world or the Next World – when a man asks for forgiveness with all his heart, that's when he really deserves it.

And therefore we learn the utmost importance of being a *rotzeh*. You have to desire it; you have to want to be forgiven, to earnestly yearn to be reconciled with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

And the forgiveness you achieve will depend to a very great extent on the degree of your desire. And therefore we learn how important it is to desire forgiveness with all your heart. That's why the *frum* Jew shouts when he asks for forgiveness. He cries “**סֵלַח לָנוּ, מַחֵל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר לָנוּ**”.

Now, sometimes he shouts more than he actually feels, but it's advisable anyhow because **הַחִיצוֹנִיּוּת מְעוֹרֶרֶת אֶת הַפְּנִימִיּוּת** – *the exteriority awakens the interiority*, and by shouting the words he begins to hear how important the subject is.

That's why I recommend *davening* in a shul where people mean it, where they yell and cry and weep. And even though you don't, if you're fortunate enough to *daven* among such Jews, you become impressed and you learn that it's an important subject and so you also begin to desire forgiveness. And that's very necessary on Yom Kippur – to desire forgiveness with all your heart.

TAPE # 524 (October 1984)

Facets of Fasting

— Q: —

What is the significance of fasting on Yom Kippur?

— A: —

The significance of fasting on Yom Kippur, like all the *mitzvos*, has manifold purposes. Some are revealed and open to us, and some accomplish their purpose without being known to us.

Among the open purposes, we can see that it's a form of dedication. We dedicate ourselves, we give ourselves over to Hakadosh Baruch Hu on this day because we seek to come close to Him, and to demonstrate that we give up everything, all the material comforts, in order to be only together with Him. It's a form of *kirvas Hashem*; we demonstrate that nothing matters to us except to come close, to be accepted once more, and to be restored to our favor in the eyes of Hashem.

Another element is that we are being *makriv* our *cheilev v'dam*. We offer up of the substance of our body as an atonement offering, as a gift to Hashem, to show Him that we understand that He is the Giver of our lives, and we give Him in return a small portion of our bodies, a small portion of our health. Actually fasting is good for the health; it's merely a symbol of sacrificing part of the health, part of the body. In order to demonstrate to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that we know that He is the Giver of life and therefore on this day when we wish to come close to Him and atone for any wrongs that we committed, we make this demonstration to declare our recognition of our debt to Him.

Another significance of fasting on Yom Kippur is that we should be at leisure. Because we need leisure to contemplate נְחִפְשָׁה דְּרַכֵּינוּ וְנַחֲקֶרְהָ. We must think into our past and we must spend time, pondering, meditating, on this great subject of becoming *nisratzeh*, accepted, and returning to Hashem closer and closer. And this cannot be done if we follow our usual activities.

And that's why we cannot work on Yom Kippur – that's one of the reasons – and that's why we abstain from all the other material activities; in order to

give us leisure. Leisure is of the utmost importance; we must have time. All year long we're too busy with our work and with our pleasures, and we don't have the peace of mind to meditate. And Yom Kippur is an opportunity to do that.

TAPE # 283 (September 1979)

Fasting: Hashem Livado

— Q: —

If utilizing good things in this world is the best way to come close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu then why do we do the opposite on Yom Kippur and afflict ourselves?

— A: —

Why do we fast on Yom Kippur instead of eating and appreciating His kindness?

Now I wouldn't be jocular, I wouldn't be facetious, if I would tell you that that's what it is. Because *motzaei Yom Kippur* is a glorious opportunity to appreciate food. Now, I'm not saying that's the reason but don't let that opportunity go. When you come home *motzaei Yom Kippur* and you sit down at the table practice appreciating how glorious is the experience of drinking a glass of water. Ah! A glass of water! Now you'll wait a long time before you have that chance again.

Practice the exhilaration of sinking your teeth into a piece of bread and thinking *נִתֵּן לָהֶם לֶכֶּל בָּשָׂר*, *פִּוֹתָהּ אֶת יָדְךָ וּמִשְׁבִּיעַ לְכֹל חַי רִצּוֹן*. Thinking these thoughts! You can accomplish a tremendous amount *motzaei Yom Kippur*. And you need twenty four hours of abstinence in order to feel what you're getting. It's very important! Now I said it sounds facetious but that's one of the byproduct of Yom Kippur.

But there's a bigger purpose. And the bigger purpose in fasting is that for one day you want to get every kind of sidetracking out of your mind and you'll have nothing in your head except *הָשֵׁם לְבָדוֹ*. You shouldn't have any thoughts of food, any thoughts of drink, any thoughts of work, you have nothing but Hashem in your heart for one day. You have to practice that up too.

Of course, if you'll take that with you to Sukkos, if on Yom Kippur you'll get an awareness – especially if you start out on our Rosh Hashanah – if on Yom Kippur you'll get an awareness that *וְנִשְׁגָּב ה' לְבָדוֹ*, that only Hashem Himself is important to us, and you're able for one day to drive out of your mind any thoughts, then when it will come the happy days of Sukkos, you'll be able to do what you want to do. But you must have a certain time to

practice only *Hashem livado*. That one day were like the *malachim* who stand in amazement at the glory of Hashem and sing His praises. And that's what we emulate on Yom Kippur; at least one day of the year.

TAPE # 282 (September 1979)

The Sa'ir Hamishtaleiach

— Q: —

The Rambam says that the sa'ir hamishtaleiach, the goat that is pushed off a cliff on Yom Kippur, is mechaper even without teshuva. How does that work?

— A: —

Rabbi Pikus is asking, how is it that the procedure of the sa'ir hamishtaleiach being thrown down a mountain and killed, should be able to effect a kaparah without people repenting?

And the answer is that we have to understand that the sa'ir hamishtaleiach is actually teaching a lesson and the people understood the lesson. And a lesson, even if it doesn't change your actions but it changes your mind; and changing the mind already is a teshuvah.

What is it that the sa'ir hamishtaleiach teaches? Everybody knows that the sa'ir is Eisav. Eisav is symbolized by the sa'ir; he was sa'ir, a hairy man, and the hairy he-goat, that is the symbol of Eisav. And on Yom Kippur they take the he-goat and throw it off a mountain and it is shattered, and that symbolizes the following.

The possuk says וְנִשָּׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָם אֶל אֶרֶץ גִּזְרָה – the he-goat will carry away their sins to a desert land (Vayikra 16:22). So Chazal say like this, a symbolism, a lesson: וְנִשָּׂא הַשְּׂעִיר – זֶה עָשׂוּ – 'And the sa'ir will carry away' means that 'Eisav will carry away, עוֹנוֹתָם – עוֹנוֹת תָּם – all the avonosam, all of their sins.' But instead of avonosam, their sins, we read avonos tam, the sins of the ish tam, that's Yaakov. If Eisav is cast off a mountain and he is shattered, then Yaakov's sins are forgiven and he becomes an אִישׁ תָּם, he becomes perfect again.

What does that mean? It means that we have to learn from this procedure – and they learned in those days; they understood it – that our greatest problem in this world is the influence of Eisav. If only we could divest ourselves, if we can rid ourselves of the influence of the nations of the world, that's number one! That's one of the most important methods of doing teshuvah.

Of course there is still *שָׂאֹר שֶׁבַּעֲסָה* – *the yeast in the dough*. I'll explain that. The Gemara says that *אָמַר כְּנִסֶּת יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא* – *the Jewish nation spoke to Hashem and said*, *רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם רְצוֹנֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ*, – “Hashem, we wish to do Your will! We're the Jewish nation; we like to fulfill the word of Hashem. *אֵלֶּא מִי מַעְכֵּב* – *Only what prevents us, what stops us?* Two things. *שָׂאֹר שֶׁבַּעֲסָה* – *The yeast in the dough*, *וְשַׁעֲבוֹר מַלְכוּיּוֹת* – *and the influence that the gentiles have over us.*” So besides for the subjugation to the gentile nations, the influence of Eisav, there's also the ‘yeast in the dough’ which means the intrinsic yetzer hara in each one of us.

But the influence of the gentiles, the ways of Eisav, that's our biggest problem. All the wicked Jews in America are only *talmidim* of Eisav. If you would study what they do, you would see that they all come from the examples given by the general gentile community. The wickedness of immorality, the wickedness of atheism and evolution, all of the *rishus* is not a Jewish product. Even the *avodah zarahs* that were worshiped by some Jews in ancient days were all imitations of the idols of the gentiles. And therefore, our first problem is to degentilize ourselves, to get rid of the influence of the outside world.

Of course the Jews who follow Eisav are all included in ‘the outside world;’ irreligious Jews are also Eisav. The ‘outside world’ includes Zionists too because Zionist atheists are certainly no better than the people in New York Times or the ACLU. They are all the same.

And so it's important for us to understand the great lesson of the *sa'ir la'azazel* is to get rid of outside influence. That understanding is already a form of *teshuvah*.

Of course, it's better if you act on that understanding. Because if you have a television in your house, you are staring in the face of Eisav and you are listening to Eisav's torah, and so what's the lesson worth? On *motzaei Yom Kippur* when you come home and put on the television, you are bringing the *sa'ir la'azazel* back to life again. So instead, you take the television up on the roof and throw it down; that is a *sa'ir la'azazel*. That's what it means to throw the he-goat of Eisav off the cliff.

But even if a person doesn't do anything; all the Jews who witnessed that, whether they did *teshuvah* or not, but they understood it. They understood the function of the *sa'ir la'azazel* and therefore they learned that great lesson. That itself is the fundamental method of repentance for everything and that is why it helps.

TAPE # 391 (December 1981)

The Motzaei Yom Kippur Seudah

— Q: —

What's the reason for the *minhag* to have a special *seudah* when we get home from shul after Yom Kippur?

— A: —

On *motzaei Yom Kippur* it's a custom of Jews that they make it a sort of Yom Tov – they go home, and they set a table and everybody is in a festive mood. So some think that it's a celebration – because I did such a great job on Yom Kippur and now I'm enjoying the fruits of my labor.

No, that's not it. You know what you're celebrating? You're loving Hashem! You're celebrating that you're restored to Hashem's favor and you're once more recognized as a loyal subject to the King. So as you are bowing your way out of Shemone Esrei, you're finishing Yom Kippur, don't congratulate yourself that you deserve a full pardon for whatever happened. Oh no, you're not bowing to yourself. Some people are like that; at Maariv, *motzaei Yom Kippur*, they're bowing down to themselves for doing such a great job.

After Yom Kippur you are full of gratitude that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave you this day to come back to Him, to be restored to His favor. And you made up your mind that all year round you want to maintain that. This gain that you achieved, that Hashem favors you and that the King has taken you back as a loyal subject, you're going to continue from now on all year and all your lives.

And therefore you're so happy with regaining that favor, regaining that status as a loyal subject, that you're celebrating it. That's what you should be thinking when you smack your lips and dive into the food.

TAPE # 933 (September 1993)

Post Yom Kippur Chizuk

— Q: —

What words of *chizuk* can you tell us today on the day after Yom Kippur?

— A: —

I recall the day after Yom Kippur in the Slabodka yeshiva, but first I'll tell you an anecdote as an introduction. I remember on *motzaei Yom Kippur* I went to my *stanzia* to eat with my *chavrusa*; we were sitting together at the table, two *chaveirim*. We didn't say one word the entire *seudah* we were eating together. The experience of Yom Kippur had made such a tremendous impression on us and no one was going to open their mouth and deflate that impression. We sat there eating in complete silence.

The next morning, after *tefillas Shacharis*, the Rosh Yeshiva, *zichrono livracha*, spoke to the *bnei yeshiva*. The *bnei yeshiva* were going to leave to their homes soon – some would remain for *yomtiv* but many were going home to their families – and so the Rosh Yeshiva spoke to us.

“You all labored on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur,” he said. “You put your hearts into your *tefillah* – you prayed with all your heart in the yeshiva and you were elevated and inspired. You accomplished a precious achievement because to pray in a good place these three days is equivalent to three months learning.

“But now you have to be on guard,” he said. “You have to be careful when you come home. When *yomtov* comes and then Simchas Torah, beware of *leitzanus*.” *Leitzanus* means lightheadedness, lack of thought, doing things that are silly.”

And he quoted to us the *Mesillas Yescharim*. It states in the *Mesillas Yescharim* that *לִיְצַנּוֹת אֶחָת רוֹחָה מְאֹה תוֹכָחוֹת* – *one leitzanus can overthrow a tower built up, a skyscraper, of over a hundred tochachos*. *Tochachos* means lessons, lessons in *daas*, lessons in *seichel*, lessons in *yiras Shomayim*. Now one *tochachah* is more valuable than a diamond but a hundred *tochachos* that means you're a very wealthy man! You have now a big skyscraper, a big skyscraper of *daas*. It can bring in a lot of income such a skyscraper! But one *leitzanus* can make the whole building topple and fall down. That's the *Mesillas Yescharim*.

“You labored very much on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur” the Rosh Yeshiva said, “and you gained a lot of *daas*. But it is important now to be on guard because soon will begin the *yomtov* of Sukkos and all the way through Simchas Torah it's going to be days of happiness. So it depends how you'll celebrate. If it will be a thoughtful celebration, *l'sheim Shomayim* – of course you'll dance, of course you'll sing on *yomtov*, of course you're happy. *קול רִנָּה וישועה בְּאֵהָלִי צִדִּיקִים*! Who should be happy if not those who learn and those who keep the Torah?! They're the ones in whose houses should always be the sound of song and there they should always be dancing. But if it deteriorates into wildness, into *hefkeirus* and frivolity then all the achievements of Yom Kippur go lost.

That's what we heard in the yeshiva the day after Yom Kippur. We were warned that what we gained on Yom Kippur, the mind we gained, is a very precious possession and we have to hold on to the effect of the day as long as possible.

TAPE # R-31 (September 1971)

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Hashem forgives⁸
sins done intentionally.⁸

יא • ופשיע

Sins done rebelliously,
to anger Hashem.⁹

יב • וחטאה

Sins done
unintentionally.⁹

יג • ונקה

With תשובה, Hashem
erases our sins as if
they never existed.⁵

כלל ישראל "WHENEVER
SIN, THEY SHOULD
PERFORM THIS
ARRANGEMENT
BEFORE ME AND I WILL
FORGIVE THEM." ²

More than simply reciting
these מדות, Hashem wants us
to emulate His ways and
perform them as well.¹⁰

מקורות: 1. רא"ש פרק א' דירה ס"ה' 2. ר"ה
י: 3. רש"י שמות לה' וגו' 4. ספוטני
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י"ג מידות

COMPANION

א · ד'

Before we sin, Hashem's
רחמנות is unaffected by
the knowledge that we are
destined to sin.¹

ב · ד'

After we sin, Hashem still
has רחמנות if we
do תשובה.²

ג · קל

Aside from satisfying our
basic needs, Hashem
provides an abundance of
טובות too.³

ד · רחום

Hashem eases the
punishments of the guilty
when they call out to
Him.⁴

ה · וחנן

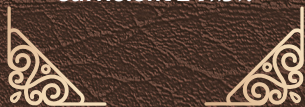
Hashem bestows good
upon those who ask, even
if they are unworthy.⁴

ו · ארך אפים

Hashem is slow
to punish sinners, hoping
they will do תשובה.⁵

ז · ורב חסד

Hashem tilts His
scales for those who lack
sufficient זכותים.⁵



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