

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



LONDON'S LEADING PLATFORM FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Tal wishes the community a sweet and happy New Year 5780!
Tizku leshanim rabot ne-imot vetovot.

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



YOU ONLY FAIL WHEN YOU STOP TRYING!

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holy of holies of Jewish time. It is that rarest of phenomena, a Jewish festival without food. Instead it is a day of fasting and prayer, introspection and self-judgment when, collectively and repeatedly, we confess our sins and pray to be written into God's Book of life.

While we should not allow the burdens of the past nor the anxieties of the future to exert a destructive effect on our living, the constructive lessons of the past and a responsible attitude towards the future can guide us to a proper and responsible life

Yet we find it hard. Last year we went through Yom Kippur and whilst we might have changed that specific day, we seemed to drift downwards thereafter.

Although we try hard, we sometimes find that after being on a spiritual high, we fall even lower than where we began.

I had a student named Dan, who, after years of over indulging had put on so much weight it was affecting his health.

The time came and he made a conscious effort to change his ways. He had been dieting for a few months, eating the right food, going to gym, exercising well and losing weight.

Out of nowhere, 10pm one regular weekday, he felt a little hungry. Fiddling about, he decided he would go to the kitchen fridge "just to have a look".

That day his grandparents came to visit. Of course you know what that meant?

Surely you don't think they came empty handed! They brought delicious pastries.

There he was late at night, peckish and staring into the fridge.

His mind went wild as he thought: "Surely one pastry is allowed. It's been a good few months, I have been on a diet, and I deserve it."

The battle within began and there was a fight back.

"Don't lose the momentum, keep your journey clear, your health matters!" was the response within.

Yet again he found himself justifying just one pastry.

"You are starving to death, I think in this circumstance it's quite healthy – you're only going to eat one."

"Fine, I will take one". He thought.

Thirty minutes later most of the box was finished. ►

TIMES

9th Tishrei 5780

YOM KIPPUR STARTS: 6:08PM
YOM KIPPUR ENDS: 7:07PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Don't let yesterday take up too much of today."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- 23RD OCT Student Cocktail Drinks
- 14TH NOV Challah Bake

For our upcoming events check our website www.torahactionlife.com



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Dan related that as soon as he finished eating the last pastry, guilt started to hit in.

"I could actually feel the fat forming around my waist. I woke up the next morning broken feeling all that hard work for what?"

He decided that given his new status he might as well enjoy himself and have a big breakfast that morning.

I looked at him, and he didn't seem to have put on much weight since I last saw him, if anything he had lost more!

Seeing my facial expression of bewilderment, he was quick to say, "But Rabbi, it then kicked in." "What did?" I queried.

Dan told how he remembered some good advice a Rabbi in school gave him years ago.

"I had been studying and trying to grow in Judaism. I had a bad night and was going through a low point. I thought to myself what does it matter anymore, who cares, I might as well sleep in tomorrow morning."

I came in late and the Rabbi noticed me.

"What's wrong", he asked.

"Nothing. All ok Rabbi" I answered.

The Rabbi with his caring look said "I missed you this morning".

I collapsed and told him "Well, I am not exactly the perfect Jew".

He looked at me and said, "There is only one thing worse than messing up.

Holding on to it afterwards! Everyone fails, the best just get up and turn the page.

They learn from the past and move on.

Welcome to humanity. You failed now get up, brush yourself off and keep on going."

Dan continued, "There I was at the kitchen table. I failed, I was bad. But I was not giving up on my whole diet. I had to regroup and not let that pastry box drag me down permanently."

We all have aspirations in life whether it's academic, health or relationships.

But guess what? We are human and can fail. We trip, stumble and fall.

How many times do we miss a deadline, drop the ball, do something selfish that will hurt the ones around us. While we are doing it we are so driven, but once it's done we realise it's wrong. That's when we chose to either allow our failures to drag us down further, by justifying our actions or blaming someone else. Or stop realise it was wrong, learn something productive and turn the page.

Shlomo Hamelech said "The righteous person falls seven times and gets up" (Mishlei 24:16).

He didn't say if a righteous person falls. He said a righteous person falls - he will fall. Why? Because everyone falls. Shlomo Hamelechs distinction isn't who makes mistakes, it's who gets up afterwards.

Once it's happened we can't change, but we can chose to take responsibility get up brush it off and turn the page.

This Yom Kippur let's remember that FAIL is the First Attempt In Learning. Don't be let down by not achieving your original goals. Use your inner strength and determination to fight back, introspect, and rise to become the new stronger you. ■

Shana Tova

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

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phonecity

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02087318887

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YOM KIPPUR: THE 13 ATTRIBUTES

Over time and even among Sephardim, the Jewish world has adopted practices that viewed objectively are hard to explain. But because they're mentioned in the Talmud or attributed to some of our great teachers, we accept them on the basis that our own understanding isn't deep enough to comprehend the secrets hidden beneath their ancient practice. This is the case with some of our Yom Kippur traditions.

Rabbi Yohanan in TB Rosh Hashana (17b) explains that after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Almighty promised Moshe that any time Bnei Yisrael calls out using the 13 Attributes of Compassion (Yud Gimmel Midot HaRahamim), G-d will forgive our sins and we will not go away empty handed. Perhaps for that reason, in the Sephardi prayers for Kippur, we will recite this verse from the Torah 26 times between Kol Nidrei and the end of Neilah.

There are numerous articles explaining each attribute and if we do nothing else before Kippur it would be a worthwhile investment to read at least one interpretation and perhaps keep one with us during Tefillah. A favourite of mine is Rabbi David Fohrman from Aleph Beta who addresses the question, 'What makes these words so effective? Are they some magical formula which causes our sins simply to evaporate?'

A deeper look at the words of the Talmudic piece reveals that it's not enough just to chant them (Yomeru Lefanai). We have to Ya'asu Lefanai (perform them before G-d). What is the difference between reciting and performing? Beyond merely reading the words we must strive to emulate G-d.

Another noteworthy observation is that of the 13 Attributes, the first 2 are a repetition of the 4-letter name of G-d. Some might argue that there are really only 11 attributes. The number 13 itself is curious as we know that in Gematria it equals both the words Ahavah (Love) and Ehad (Oneness), while the number 26 equals the 4-letter name of G-d. Effectively one could say these 13 Attributes are really the revelation of G-d's essence to Moshe in words - whereas the revelation of G-d's presence experienced on Sinai was initially through the sound of the Shofar.

But the Gemara goes on to explain that the double appearance of the Divine name associated with compassion (Rahamim) is to show us that the Almighty is unchanged both from before we've sinned and afterwards. Though we've sinned and harmed the purity of our relationship with the Almighty, G-d remains unaffected. Only we are the ones who've lost out.

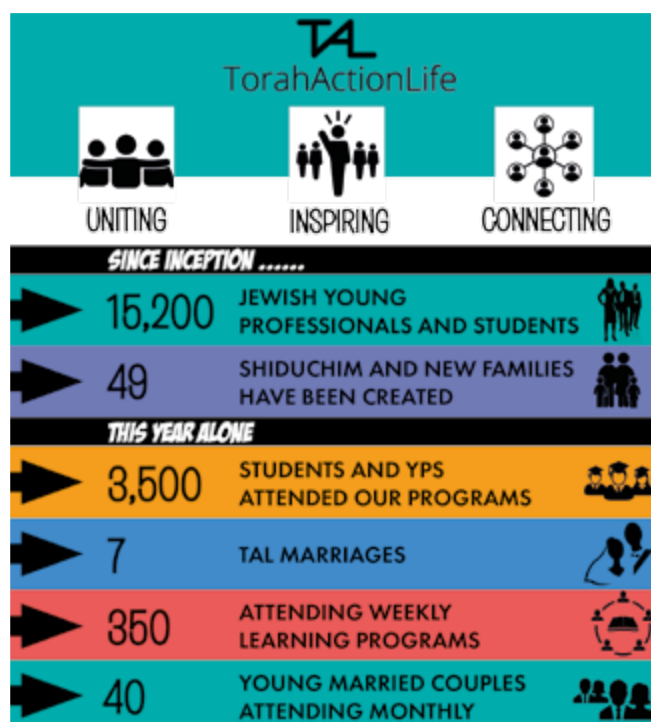
Restoring our relationship requires the 'performance' of the attributes - not just muttering them aloud. The power of the 13 Midot is in awakening within us a realisation of 'Who G-d Is' – a merciful Creator and Parent – and how much we've lost through the foolish behaviour which forced a separation between ourselves and the Divine.

Using this formula well, while fasting for 25 hours, enables us to reach a spiritual state of mind where we can once again stand before the Master of the Universe with awe and piety, realising that the true desire of our soul is to be reunited with its Heavenly Source. This awareness is followed by the Vidui (Confessional Prayers) where we sincerely apologise for our wrong-doings and hope to heal the rupture, rehabilitating ourselves before G-d.

On a separate more sobering note, Jewish Women's Aid runs regular training sessions for Rabbanim and Community Leaders. They've been working in the UK for 30 years to assist women victims of domestic abuse and violence. Their data shows that 1 in 4 women in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. It is easy to dismiss these figures and say that it doesn't happen in the Jewish community. But sadly it does.

As we prepare to stand privately before the Almighty during these Yamim Noraim (Days of Awe) to offer an account of how we spent our time this past year, let's also resolve that in the coming year we will end all forms of domestic abuse in our homes and in our communities. ■

Tizku LeShanim Rabot.



Tal wishes the community a Sweet and Happy New Year 5780
Tizku Leshanim Rabot Neimot Vetovot



FROM SUBLIMATION TO INTENSITY

Yom Kippur, the ultimate day of repentance, has the Jewish nation simultaneously praying, fasting and asking for forgiveness. It begins with the somber, quiet, and melodious intonation of Kol Nidrei and ends with the entire congregation shouting Hashem hu HaElokim (G-d is the Al-Mighty) seven times after various requests of forgiveness. It seems that at the time when our strength is waning our greatest and loudest pleas are spent. Shouldn't we begin the day with the strong requests for forgiveness and save the subdued prayers for when our bodies are weak from hunger and our lips parched from lack of water?

Rav Eichenstein, the Ziditchover Rebbe, tells the following story:

One Friday, a man entered the study of the Tchockover Rebbe with a request that was very common in those days.

"My son was drafted into the army," the man began. "However, we have a way out. On Sunday, we are going to a doctor who will falsely declare him unfit for service. This way he will be spared certain misery, perhaps even death in that terrible army. Rebbe," he asked, "I need your blessing that he evade the draft."

The Rebbe quietly told him that Shabbos was nearing and he could not concentrate on blessings. The man should return to him on Friday evening after his tisch (ceremonious chasidic table).

The man did so. After most of the chasidim had left, the man repeated his request, almost verbatim. Again the Rebbe was non-committal. "Return to me after the morning service."

Unperturbed, the man noted that he would really like to resolve this matter before Sunday morning.

Shabbos morning, after services, the man approached the Rebbe again. Calmly he repeated the predicament. "Sunday morning I am going to a doctor who will falsely declare my

son unfit for military service. Please pray that we will evade conscription." The Rebbe was not moved. Again, he deferred until the afternoon.

At the third Shabbos meal, the scene repeated again, precisely the way it had the previous three times. "I understand that you are leaving Sunday morning. Come back to me late Saturday night," said the Rebbe. "By then I will have an answer for you."

By this time, his Chasidim's curiosity was piqued. They had never seen their Rebbe so reluctant to mete a blessing, especially when it was one that would save a Jewish soul from the frightful Polish army.

Saturday night a large crowd gathered as the man approached with his request. Frustrated and disgruntled, the man, once again, repeated his story, almost verbatim, for the fifth time.

Immediately, the Rebbe sprung from his chair and began to shout. "What are you asking me? Why would one even try to evade the service of our wonderful country? How dare you ask me for a blessing of that sort? Your son would make a fine soldier for our country. I wish him the best of luck in the army!"

The man quickly scurried from the room and left town. The Chasidim stood shocked and bewildered. Never had they heard such an uncharacteristic outcry from the Rebbe.

"I will explain," said the Rebbe. "The man was a fraud. He had no son, and if he did, he wanted him in the army. He was sent by the government to test our loyalty. Thank G-d we passed the test."

"But, Rebbe!" cried the chasidim, "how did you know?"

"Simple," explained the Rebbe. "I watched the level of intensity. From the moment he met me until tonight there was no increase in intensity nor feeling of desperation with each request. The moment I heard his

request tonight and it contained no more passion or desperation than his first request on Friday night, I knew he was a fraud."

We stand a whole entire day in prayer, and end with a ne'ilah prayer, after nearly 24 hours of pleading. The litmus test of our sincerity comes as the heavenly gates are being closed. As the sun begins to set, our pleas should intensify. That crescendo assures our sincerity.

We believe with complete faith that all which will transpire during the coming year – both on a personal level and on a national level – is determined during the period of the Ten Days of Repentance. We are all familiar with the concept "Seek out G-d when He is to be found, call out to Him when he is near" [Yeshaya 55:6]. This is the time of year when the Master of the World is particularly close and therefore the normal obstacles that might exist to making our prayers effective are removed so that our sincere prayers to Him will certainly be heard.

I always tell myself – and everyone who listens to me – that we must take advantage of this time of year, like no other ten day period on the calendar. Particularly, regarding prayer and asking for all that we need, this is the time to do it. No matter what your practice is the rest of the year in terms of minyan attendance or in terms of focus (kavanah) during davening or in terms of how quick you daven, that should all be set aside this time of year where each Shacharit, Mincha, and Maariv is a unique opportunity for communication with Heaven in a way that is unique to this time of year.

We cannot waste these golden opportunities.

May our year ahead be filled with shefa, beracha and hatzlacha b'chol maaseh yadeinu, letova, Amen! ■



YOM KIPPUR INSIGHTS

We had a very special guest last week in our shul, Rabbi Gabriel Sasson, who recently in Brooklyn lost seven members of his family. He addressed us on the subject of emunah and he pointed out the difference between someone whose life is a spiritual one and one whose main focus is on material life. He himself felt a tremendous closeness to Hashem through his tragedy. I feel that on Yom Kippur a certain portion of the mussaf symbolises this concept of the contrast between one who lives a spiritual life and one who lives a more materialistic life.

The Avodah of the Two Goats

One of the most remarkable elements of Yom Kippur when the Bet Hamikdash stood was the ritual of “the two goats.” The first goat was sacrificed in the Bet Hamikdash; the second was taken to a cliff and thrown off, dying unceremoniously before it even reached the bottom.

What message can we find in this avodah that we can relate to?

There are two opposite ways to live life. Either one can focus his life on serving Hashem, with the knowledge that this is what is truly important, or focus on materialistic desires of pleasure and honour.

If one chooses to ignore the opportunity of life to serve Hashem, he might feel freedom of doing as he pleases and that he is making the most from life, but in reality such a life is meaningless and empty, it is truly death, and the neshamah feels this, which is why such people are constantly pursuing new pleasures to fill their emptiness. Only being close to Hashem can please the neshamah, and once one has this true enjoyment, he needs few physical pleasures to be completely happy.

We see this very clearly from the Torah. Immediately after the concise description of the creation of millions of galaxies, the focus of the Torah is limited to Adam and Chava, and after Avraham Avinu, to his descendants who took upon themselves the purpose of creation, the service of Hashem. Only one who serves Hashem is truly important.

However the world at large has the exact opposite philosophy. They believe that what we can perceive with our

physical senses is all there is. This worldview of focusing on superficiality affects us and makes us lose our appreciation of anything spiritual.

Maybe these two diametric worldviews are somehow reflected on Yom Kippur. The goat that becomes a sacrifice on the Mizbeach might symbolize dedication to serving Hashem. One who sets himself aside for Hashem merits serving and giving nachat ruach to Hashem in the holiest place. If so, maybe its partner, which finds its fate in a desolate cliff, alludes to someone who focused his life on materialism, so he ends up with the emptiness and spiritual death he lived with. The two goats looked identical. Every individual has the potential to be great. It all depends on one's focus in life.

The Se'ir la'azazel is described by the Torah as carrying away the sins of the people. The mefarshim wonder at this concept. The Rambam interprets it to mean that the people will be spurred by it to repent.

If the Se'ir la'azazel alludes to the mind set of materialism, this could explain the inspiration that can be derived from it. The fate of the two goats depicts how one who does not dedicate himself to serve Hashem only finds emptiness and desolation. The Gemara in effect said as much when it states that “A person does not sin unless a spirit of madness enters him”, meaning that he does not feel how what he desires is beneath him, and will devalue him.

Those who witnessed its death might well have been spurred by the thought to turn instead to consider the other goat, the one sacrificed in dedication to Hashem. They might then be able to commit themselves to re-embrace the true meaning of life.

We may lack this avodah today, but we can certainly try to absorb this eternally timely thought just the same. ■

Based on the work of Rabbi Avi Shafran

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YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur, Joy?

Yom Kippur, by far the scariest day of the year – yet the Mishnah (Ta'anis 26b) tells us that Yom Kippur was one of the 'happiest times for the Jewish People' (אמר רבן שמעון בן גמליאל לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כהמשה עשר באב וכיום הכיפורים.) The description of 'happiest times', doesn't seem to square with the severity of our Yom Kippur experience.

Purim and Yom Kippur?

Another interesting strange phenomenon is the (often mentioned over the purim period) etymological connection between the word for Purim, and Yom HaKippurim (the connection pointed out by the Arizal). Purim seems to be the antithesis of Yom Kippur. On Purim we get drunk, on Yom Kippur we fast. In what sense can we understand the connection between the two holidays?

Two Goats

A Central part of the Yom Kippur Avoda involves taking two identical goats - identical in every way, height, age, appearance etc – and placing them before The Kohen Gadol. The Kohen Gadol would then cast lots (Golden Lots, of course), and would pick out one bar that was engraved with the word "LaHashem", and one bar that was engraved with "LaAzazel". Ultimately, the Goat that was 'chosen' for "Hashem" would be brought and offered on the mizbeach – "lifnei Hashem", and the one marked "LeAzazel" would be sent to be thrown off a barren cliff – "hamidbara". What a strange practice. Absolutely unique in Judaism! What does it all mean? Where do we begin? From the terms (Azazel?) to the action (lottery? A cliff? Two identical goats?) – it all seems strangely detailed and irrelevant. Not at all strange, and not at all irrelevant.

Ya'acov and Esav

Twins.

Bereishis 25:23 - שְׁנֵי גִיִּים בְּבֶטֶן וְשְׁנֵי לְאָמִים מִמֶּעִיךְ יִפְרְדּוּ וְלֹאִם מִלֵּאִם יֵאָמֵץ וְרֵב - "Two nations are in your womb, and two regimes from your insides shall be separated. The might shall pass from one regime to the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

We all know the story. Ya'acov (=heel) born after Eisav – and they immediately grow up:- וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֲשׂוֹ אִישׁ יָדָע - "and the lads grew up and Eisav became a man who knows hunting, a man of the field, while Yacov was an "Ish tam" dwelling intents."

We notice an immediate trend:

- Yacov is always described by the inside (dweller of tents) and Eisav, always as a man of outside (ish sadeh – a man of the field.)
- Again when Eisav returns from the field, he only sees the "red stuff", not the implications (the birthright),
- ...and finally, when Yitzchak exclaims "HaKol Kol Ya'acov, VeHayedayim Yedei Eisav" – the voice (inner) is that of ya'acov, yet the hands (external) belong to Eisav. [Of all the senses, the Rambam (Moreh HaNevuchim II:36) points out, the most unrefined is the sense of touch "Chush HaMishush... Cherpah Hu Lanu".]

Two goats. Both identical. One goes "lifnei Hashem" – inside. One is sent away, "LeAzazel".

Purim is a battle of Good and Evil on a national Level – where we enter a new level of Hashgacha, inasamuch as all evil, ultimately turns out "gam zu letovah". Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai have the identical gematria. The forces of 'Tov' and the forces of 'Ra' both bring out Kiddush Hashem – Haman by being destroyed, Mordechai by being elevated.

Yom Kippur is the day of our personal struggle between "Good" and "Evil" – and it is a day when we can define and send away the "Sair LaAzazel", and our relationship is purely "Lifnei Hashem".

Our struggle is between our 'guf' (external) and 'neshama' (internal). Whoever emerges as 'leader' becomes our moral compass.

Yom Kippur is a day when we remove our [leather] shoes, echoing the shoe-removal of Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Chorev – "shal na'alecha me'al raglecha" ("remove your shoes from your feet") which the Shelah Hakadosh [Parshas Shemos] understands to mean "remove your bodily focus from your neshama".

Yom Kippur is a day when we don't need to eat, when we don't involve in bodily needs and pleasures, because the body is not in the driving seat.

יָגֵעַ יָלֹד בֶּן הַשָּׁטָן [Zecharia 3] - Hasatan is gematria 364, because there is one day per solar year [which always represents the control wielded by the Umos HaOlam], where the satan has no power – the "l'infai velifnim" – Yom Kippur.

Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik points out that in the Torah, Simcha is always expressed by being "lifnei Hashem". Yom Kippur, the day we can sense our neshama being drawn to "lifnei Hashem", the day we can sense the relationship with Hashem – is necessarily the day of the greatest Simcha. ■

אמר רבן שמעון בן גמליאל לא היו ימים

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שבשמים



OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI CHAI TAIEB LOMET

One of the great Tzaddikim of Tunis was Rabbi Hai Taieb, of blessed memory, who lived from 5504 to 5596 (1774 to 1836). He was a Gaon who knew both the revealed and the concealed matters of Torah, all while remaining humble, discreet, and modest about it.

Once, in the middle of winter, it no longer rained and so a draught ensued. The ground had cracked open with gaping fissures, and desolate fields appeared all fractured and split. The empty wells that had always quenched everyone's thirst remained dry. Each morning, people would raise their eyes to Heaven with great hope as they awaited a rain cloud rising in the western sky. It would bring water – life. The rabbis of the community remained praying, fervently reciting psalms. They concluded by proclaiming a fast in order to arouse Heavenly mercy.

In the home of Rabbi Hai Taieb, life was taking its normal course as he rose at dawn to serve his Creator. He was always quietly pondering Torah, and when the rabbis announced the fast, he was deep in his books, far removed from everything. His devoted wife also awoke at dawn, ready to serve him.

Rabbi Hai finished his ardent prayers to his Creator.

"Please prepare me a cup of coffee," he said to his wife.

Her eyes opened wide in astonishment and responded by telling her husband, "Didn't you hear the decision of the Rabbis? They proclaimed a fast so that it may rain."

"Really? I didn't know. All right then, prepare me a cup of coffee all the same. I'll be right back."

Rabbi Hai Taieb left his home, raises his eyes to Heaven and, as if he were a son addressing his father, he said to Him who holds the keys, "Master of the universe, Your children are in need of rain. I beg You, don't prevent rain from falling!"

At that moment, his non-Jewish neighbor found himself not far from Rabbi Hai Taieb's home when he suddenly heard him speaking to G-d!

He was still feeling surprised when suddenly the sky darkened and a torrential rain began to fall.

Frightened by the commotion caused by the rain and the thunder, the Rebbetzin said to her husband, "The world is liable to get destroyed by such a deluge!"

Rabbi Hai came back to the front door and implored, "G-d Alm-ghty, I beg you, send us rains of blessing."

The thunder immediately stopped and a gently pouring rain began filling the wells. The public fast was annulled and cries of joy resounded from all sides.

While Rabbi Hai Taieb was going back inside, his non-Jewish neighbor, who had just seen everything that had happened, ran in a panic to the owner of his house (the house that the neighbor was renting). Trembling with fear, he knocked at the door.

"What's happening?" the owner asked.

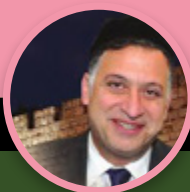
"I beg you, I immediately want to change houses! I can't live in the neighborhood of a man who performs such wonders! If you had heard how he had triggered all the rain with a few words! What will I do if this Jew, who is a Tzaddik, asks G-d to kill me? Have pity on me!"

The man quickly prepared his horse in order to travel to Rabbi Hai. He regretted having to separate from his extremely well paying tenant. Soon afterwards, both of them arrived at the Rav's.

"Rabbi, your neighbor says that a lion lives in your neighborhood. He's afraid that one day he'll be killed."

"G-d prevents me," Rabbi Hai replied, "from doing harm to anyone. But promise me as well that you will not wrong a Jew."

The non-Jew embraced the hand of the Tzaddik, and swore with great reverence to always respect the Jews. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

EREB YOM KIPPUR – IMMERSING IN A MIKVEH; WEARING GOLD JEWELRY; PREPARING THE HOME

It is customary for men to immerse in the Mikveh on Ereb Yom Kippur. This is especially important for the Hazanim who will be leading the prayer services on Yom Kippur, so they can represent the congregation in a state of purity. The work of responsa Min Ha'shamayim (Rabbi Yaakov of Marvege, France, 13th century) mentions that if all Hazanim ensured to immerse in a Mikveh before leading the congregation in Tefila, this would hasten the arrival of Mashiah.

No Beracha is recited over this immersion, as this practice is observed as a custom, and not as a strict Halachic requirement.

If one is unable to immerse in a Mikveh on Ereb Yom Kippur, he can observe this custom by having 9 Kabin – or 12.5 liters – of water poured on him. The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) writes that somebody else should pour the water over the person. This quantity of water should be placed into buckets, and just before each bucket is emptied over the person, the next bucket should begin to be poured. The Ben Ish Hai also mentions another option, which is to wash a special Netilat Yadayim forty times with special Kavanot (intentions). Nowadays, when we have showers in the homes, it suffices to stand under the shower until 12.5 liters of waters falls over the body, if one is unable to immerse in a Mikveh.

Strictly speaking, one is not required to remove Hasisot ("obstructions") from his body before this immersion, since, as mentioned, this practice is observed only as a custom, and not as an outright Halachic requirement. This is the ruling of Hacham Ovadia Yosef. Nevertheless, given the importance of entering Yom Kippur in a state of purity, it is proper to remove any rings or other objects from the body, and to cut one's fingernails, before immersing.

Some have the custom of reciting Vidui (confession) while in the Mikveh. Of course, one must ensure not to utter God's Name in the Mikveh, but it is permissible to make the Vidui declaration without mentioning God's Name while in the Mikveh.

The Kavanot that one should have while immersing in the Mikveh on Ereb Yom Kippur are the same as one should have before immersing on Ereb Rosh Hashanah. Namely, the first immersion serves to bring on general purity, and the second is to correct the negative trait of anger. (The Hebrew word "Ka'as" – "anger" – has the numerical value of 150, and when we add to that sum the word itself, we arrive at 151, which is the numerical value of the word "Mikveh.") The third time one immerses in the water, he should have in mind to "sweeten" the harsh judgments through the attribute of divine kindness, and the fourth immersion should be done for the purpose of removing the weekday "garments" from the soul. Finally, the fifth immersion serves to bring on the special spiritual light of Yom Kippur.

The Ben Ish Hai records the custom for women – both unmarried and married women – to immerse on Ereb Yom Kippur. Nowadays, however, it is strictly forbidden for women to go to the Mikveh on Ereb Yom Kippur.

It is proper to immerse on Ereb Yom Kippur even if one had immersed on Ereb Rosh Hashanah and had not become Tameh (ritually impure) in the interim.

One should wear fine garments on Yom Kippur. The Gemara (Shabbat 119) infers this requirement from the verse, "Li'kdosh Hashem Mechubad" ("[you should regard] the holy one of God with respect" – Yeshayahu 58:13). "Kedosh Hashem" refers to Yom Kippur, the day that is sacred before God, and we are enjoined to treat it with respect by wearing fine clothing.

The Be'sel Ha'hochma (Rav Betzalel Stern, 1911-1989) ruled that one should not wear on Yom Kippur a white garment with gold embroidery. White symbolizes purity of sin, and gold brings to mind the sin of the golden calf and thus represents sin. It is therefore inappropriate to wear them together. It is permissible to wear gold jewelry – such as rings and watches – on Yom Kippur. However, the Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) writes that one should wear on Yom Kippur only jewelry that one normally wears during the week, but not special jewelry that is generally reserved for Shabbat.

Even though no meals are eaten on Yom Kippur, one should place a nice, white tablecloth on his tables in preparation for Yom Kippur in honor of the Yom Tob, just as is normally done for Shabbat. The tablecloths should be left on the tables throughout Yom Kippur. The Ma'amar Mordechai writes that it is proper to adorn the tables in one's home for Yom Kippur by placing Torah books on them. This is mentioned by the Ben Ish Hai, as well, and Rav Haim Palachi (Turkey, 1788-1869) writes that this is a proper practice to observe.

One should clean the home for Yom Kippur just as one does for Shabbat, because Yom Kippur is called "Shabbat Shabbaton" and should thus be treated with honor just like Shabbat. ■

YOSSI, YOU KNOW HOW MY LITTLE SISTER HASN'T BEEN SPEAKING TO ME SINCE I SOAKED HER WITH A WATER BALLOON LAST WEEK? WELL, TODAY I TOLD HER I WAS SORRY.



WOW, PINNY, YOU MADE UP WITH YOUR SISTER?!!



THE CRAZY THING IS, YOS, I HAD MORE FUN MAKING UP THAN I HAD SOAKING HER. DOES THIS MEAN I'M GROWING UP? HUH, WHAT DO YOU THINK?



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