

# Mesifaf



כולל רבנים  
רבינו צבי אשכנזי

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## Making This Year's Teshuva Everlasting

Rabbi Alex Wolf

Every year on *Yom Kippur*, we gather together in *shul* and daven with concentration and meaning. We repent, we are pained by our actions that we have committed, and we regret them. We tell ourselves this coming year will be different, and we take on new resolutions about how we can become better people. But very often we fall short, and the change that we desire doesn't come to fruition.

So how can we change this? How can we keep our strength gained on *Yom Kippur* going throughout the year?

The first thing we must do is realize what is important in life and what is insignificant—to really understand that when we do עבירות we are causing immense קלקול and פגם to our נשמה, and the מצוות that we do are building and sanctifying our soul.

The great משגיח of Chevron, ר' לב חסמן, once gave over the following parable: There was a Polish peasant who, for the first time in his life, went to visit Warsaw, and he was intrigued by how advanced everything was in the city. He came across a stall selling flashlights, so he excitedly bought one. Then, he came across a theater, and he went inside and sat down. All of a sudden, he sees people and animals, trees and plants all coming out of the wall! So, he shines the flashlight on the 'wall' hoping to find the answer to his mystery. As he did so, the images disappeared. Instantly there was a response from the audience: 'Shut that light out! We can only see the images when we are in darkness.'

Said ר' לב חסמן, the darkness represents this world. On a daily basis, we are not thinking about what our purpose is in this world. We are in darkness, so what we see are fake images. We get caught up in all sorts of things such as grudges, jealousy, and earthly desires. But when we

shine the light and realize that life is precious, and that we are here for a reason, we realize that these things are non-existent. And so too, something which couldn't be seen because you were in the dark, such as the power and significance of מצוות, תורה, and דביקות בה', are literal diamonds that can only be seen when you turn on the light.

כל נדרי starts with יום כיפור. Many have asked, what is the connection between annulling one's vows and the great day of *Yom Kippur*, which is all about atoning for our תשובה שלמה? The answer may be that the key to עבירות is to value our actions! When we make a vow, we are creating איסורים, and violating them would be equal to speaking *lashon hara* or eating pork. That is the power we have with our actions—for good or evil.



Similarly, we can explain the minhag, especially true of the *yekishe kehillos*, to sing the על חטא's. Why are we singing? We should be crying! We are in deep pain, praying and begging for forgiveness for our sins. The answer is that as much as it is painful to admit and drag our sins from our souls, we also realize

that with every klap of על חטא and every single thought of remorse—of how I shouldn't have spoken *lashon hara* or how I should have kept my soul pure and didn't—we are actively bringing the light back into our *Neshama*.

Let us all take this message with us into the rest of the year and remind ourselves constantly that whatever we are doing—*davening*, learning *Torah*—we are being בוחר בחיים and are purifying ourselves and connecting to הקב"ה. May we all be זוכה to an everlasting תשובה שלמה and a חתימה טובה!

לעילוי נשמת ליטל ימימה בת לאה לילי עליה השלום



## The Consequences of Carelessness

Rabbi David Sztjenhauer

על חטא שחטאנו לפניך בידעים ובלא ידעים

Many of us, when we pray on *Yom Kippur*, strike our chest over our hearts and ask for forgiveness for our sins throughout the year, but often without paying full attention.

A rabbi once noticed a man doing this without focus and said, “Why work so hard? Use both hands, and you’ll finish faster!”

When we recite the *Vidui* on *Yom Kippur*, it is important to engage both our mind and heart. As the Chafetz Chaim teaches, it’s not the physical act of hitting your chest that brings forgiveness, but rather when your heart feels the weight of the sin. The key is to reflect on how we can truly change.

Typically, when we ask for forgiveness, we start with smaller sins and work our way to more serious ones. However, in the *Vidui*, we first confess intentional sins and only afterward unintentional sins. Why is that? The reason is that unintentional sins also carry serious consequences. We can’t simply say, “I didn’t know,” because if something truly mattered to us, we would be more careful.

This concept is illustrated in the *Talmud (Makot)*, where Moshe set up three cities of refuge in Israel for accidental killers, even though there were nine tribes living there, and three cities for the two-and-a-half tribes outside of Israel. Logically, more cities should have been placed where the population was greater. Abaye explains that in Gilead (outside Israel), there were more murderers. The sages teach that since people had become desensitized to murder in Gilead, they were less careful, leading also to more accidental killings.

This teaches us that unintentional sins aren’t as innocent as they seem. When we get used to sinning or living in a society where wrongdoing becomes “normal,” we start to sin without even realizing it, or we become careless. *Yom Kippur* is the time to reflect on this and break the cycle by becoming more mindful and careful in our actions, even regarding the sins we had thought were unintentional.

This should now clarify the reasoning behind the order of confessions in the *Vidui* and the deeper message about the danger of becoming desensitized to sin.

## The Power of Teshuva from Love

Rabbi Jonathan Sigal

As part of the *Yom Kippur* service the *Torah* instructs a very mysterious procedure. The *Kohen Gadol* takes two goats and makes a lottery to choose which will be sacrificed to *Hashem* and which will be sent to *Azazel* (thrown off a cliff to a barren waste land). Before the goat is sent to its death the *Kohen Gadol* confesses on behalf of the Jewish people all of their sins. The goats’ death would atone for the people - it was our scape goat (the origin for this expression).

The Chasam Sofer brings from Yuma 66b “The students of Rabbi Eliezer asked him, what happens if the goat does not die when it falls? Do we need to go down after it to finish off the job? He answered (strangely) ‘so should be the end of our enemies!!!’”

What is the meaning of R’ Eliezer’s response? The Chasam Sofer explains it using a teaching of his *Rebbe*, the Hafla’ah. He taught that the *Kohen Gadol* confessed on the head of the goat the collective sins of the Jewish people but not his own (and his families’) personal sins. His personal sins he would confess on the head of the bull which was offered in the *Mikdash*.

Why was this so? The Chasam Sofer explains that the *Kohen Gadol* was a *tzaddik* who did *teshuva* out of love. When a Jew does *teshuva* from love then, according to the *Gemorah*, his sins turn into merits, which allows them to stay in the *Mikdash* and be offered to Hashem. Amongst the collective Jewish people, however, we may assume that there many Jews who repented only from fear of punishment. Through their *teshuva*, their sins are transformed from being considered intentional to non-intentional but are still considered sins. They must be sent to the forces of evil. However, in a year where the whole nation of Israel actually does *teshuva* from love then the goat would not be attacked and would not die. This is what R’ Eliezer answered: ‘so may this happen to the enemies of Hashem’. When we do *teshuva* from love, our enemies (אויבים) turn into our lovers (אוהבים). The *Satan* can do nothing because our mitzvos turn into merits and he can no longer prosecute nor harm us.

We are today surrounded by sworn enemies that would like to tear us apart, and yes, we must do everything to defend ourselves. Logically the situation seems hopeless, no end to it. However, from what we wrote here we now know there is a solution - for the entire Nation of Israel to do *teshuva* from love! Then miraculously our enemies will turn into friends. The sheep will be able to live harmoniously with the serpent in a new messianic age. Amen!

This issue of Mesilah has been kindly dedicated in  
the memory of ל"ל בן יצחק ז"ל  
(Mr. Joop Lissauer) by his grandchildren.  
תנצב"ה