

Good Shabbos Everyone. Yom Kippur is also referred to as *Yom HaKipurim* - the day of atonements. (see Vayikra 23:27) If we look closely at the expression "Yom HaKipurim" we see that it contains the word "Purim." Purim is one of the most joyous of Jewish holidays, celebrating our miraculous victory over the Persians. It is therefore possible to translate Yom HaKipurim as - a day that is like Purim. We usually think of Yom Kippur as a somber day. In what way then is Yom Kippur like Purim?

Anyone who has ever been involved in a disagreement or an argument with a friend or family member, can attest to the uncomfortable feelings which follow. However, once the argument stops and the two forgive each other, then the love and happiness between the two people grows even stronger than it ever was before.

The relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people is one of great love. As the Mishnah teaches us "Beloved are the people Yisroel, for they are described as children of the Omnipresent. As it is said "You are children to Hashem Your G-d." (Avos 3:18 citing Deuteronomy 14:1) The love that Hashem has for the Jewish people is expressed allegorically in the Song of Songs. As the verse tells us "Even great waters cannot extinguish the love [between Hashem and His People Yisroel]." (Shir Hashirim 8:7) Therefore, when a Jew ignores or violates the mitzvahs, Hashem, as it were, feels insulted. After a Jew does wrong, the feeling in Heaven is one of: *"Is this the way loved ones treat each other?"*

On Yom Kippur each and every Jew can fix his relationship with Hashem. After a Jew returns to Hashem, the hurt and the pain dissolves and the love returns stronger than ever before. That is why Yom Kippur is Yom HaKipurim - a day with the happiness of Purim. Because, as we mentioned, there is no happiness like the happiness of reuniting with our loved ones. (heard from Rav A.C. Feuer)

To summarize so far: Hashem loves us very much. When we transgress the Torah, however, we upset our relationship with Hashem. When we do Teshuvah - return to G-d and apologize to Hashem and resolve to do better in the coming year, then we reunite with Hashem and the love between us is stronger than ever before. This week's Haftara speaks of teshuvah, as the verse states: *"Shuva (Return) O Israel to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled through your immorality."* (Hoshea 14:2) This Haftarah is a call to return to Hashem as is hinted to in the word Teshuva, which, when broken down is Tashoov (return), Heh (to Hashem). Hashem is full of mercy. If He sees that a person is genuinely sorry about his actions, Hashem will wipe the slate clean.

Besides the duty we have to repair our relationship with Hashem, we also have a duty to repair our relationships with others. If used wisely, Yom Kippur has a tremendous spiritual power to reconcile our relationships with Hashem. However, the Talmud tells us that Yom Kippur does not have the power to reconcile our relationships with others. (Yuma 85b) In other words, if we wronged someone, we cannot rely on Yom Kippur to wipe the slate clean. Rather, we must search out that person and beg for their forgiveness.

So, let us use these last hours before Yom Kippur to search out those we have wronged and repair our relationships with those individuals. Rabeinu Yonah of Gerona (1180-1263) was a famous Talmudic scholar who spent much of his life in self-examination and teshuva. A cousin of the eminent scholar Rambam, R' Yonah began to devote himself to writing and teaching about teshuva as the result of one of the worst tragedies in medieval Jewish life. In the city of Paris, the Catholic Church burned twenty-four wagon loads of the Talmud. At the time, the printing press had not yet been invented.

Thus, the loss of so many hand written copies of the Talmud was a catastrophe. R' Yonah saw the mass burning of the Talmud as a Divine punishment for the very sharp philosophical opposition to Rambam for writing Moreh Nevuchim (The Guide to the Perplexed), an opposition in which R' Yonah had been a leader. R' Yonah regretted his criticism of Rambam (1135-1205).

However, Rambam had long since passed away and was buried in Teveriah, in Northern Eretz Yisroel. Rabeinu Yonah therefore resolved to travel from Spain to Rambam's tomb in Teveriah to ask for his forgiveness.

On his way to Eretz Yisroel, R' Yonah was detained by communities who begged him to stay and teach. In many instances, R' Yonah agreed to stay and teach in Jewish communities, where he often quoted the Rambam with great respect. Before he could resume his journey to Eretz Yisroel, R' Yonah died suddenly in Toledo, Spain in 1263. (Machzor Zichron Moshe - Artscroll, p.8-11) One of R' Yonah's legacies to the Jewish nation is his insightful work The Foundation of Repentance. Many pious people have the custom of reading and studying this uplifting work before Yom Kippur, in order to be inspired to return to Hashem. R' Yonah teaches us that teshuva has a tremendous power to give us a fresh start in life.

No matter where our lives have taken us until today, we have teshuva as a means of starting over. As Rabeinu Yonah promises us in his Foundation of Repentance: *"On that day, let him cast off all the misdeeds he has committed and consider himself as though he were newly born on that very day..."*

In conclusion, Yom Kippur is quickly approaching. Yom Kippur is a day when Hashem waits for us to return to Him with open arms. In order to prepare for Yom Kippur, we must do Teshuva. Teshuva has the power to correct our relationships with Hashem. However, in order to fully repair our relationships with others, we must out those people whom we have wronged and beg forgiveness from them. If we have wronged others in financial dealings, we must repay them.

If we put our hearts and minds into our Yom Kippur prayers then the coming year will be a happy year full of sweetness and spiritual light and growth. We conclude with excerpts from the special additions to Amidah which are said between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur: *"Hashem, please inscribe us in the book of life, blessing, and peace, and good livelihood, good decrees, salvations and consolations; may we be remembered and inscribed before You -- we and Your entire people the Family of Yisroel for life and for peace."* And let us say: Amen! **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

Yom Kippur begins several minutes before sundown (depending on local custom) Sunday evening and ends at least 50 to 72 minutes (depending on the location and the custom) after sundown on Monday evening.

A Gmar Chasima Tova Everyone