**Kol simcha torah gazette**

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**Big People, Small Actions**

**By Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov**

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The concept of the Zodiac plays an important role In Torah Judaism. For example, the month of Nissan is Aries, which is the sheep and we know the role of the sheep in the Korban Pesach experience. The month of Sivan is represented by twins, which alludes to the idea that we got the Torah in a pair of two tablets, as well as the written and oral sections.

**A Time of Add Mitzvos to**

**Tip the Scales in Our Favor**

When it comes to Tishrei, the zodiac is libra, which are scales. There are scales in the Heavens on which our Mitzvos and sins are measured. Those in the know spend these days adding Mitzvos and often think that the quantity or the “nuclear-level” Mitzvos are what’s needed to tip the scales in our favor.

            However, it is not the stacking of grandiose Mitzvos that will seal us for a year of life; rather, it is the small, seemingly insignificant Mitzvos. What impresses Hashem all year round (Shemos Rabba 2.3; 2.2) and especially during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is how we invest in actions that can be overlooked by the masses and how we are sensitive to the feelings of others.

**Catapulted to Greatness Via Minor**

**Actions During Mundane Activities**

The Midrash     writes that the great Torah Sage and the great Jewish king, Moshe Rabbeinu and Dovid Hamelech, were catapulted to greatness in this world through minor actions stemming from mundane activities.

            We know Moshe was a shepherd and once a sheep of his escaped. Moshe followed the sheep and caught it drinking next to a river. Moshe could’ve just moved on with the rest of the flock, but the wellbeing of a sheep - which he personally carried back - was of paramount importance to him. At that moment, he noticed the miraculous sight of a thorn bush ablaze without being consumed and as he approached to investigate, Hashem spoke with him and sent him on a mission to free the Jews from Egyptian slavery. Hashem chose Moshe for this mission, telling him: “Since you have such compassion for even a scrawny sheep, you’re worthy to become the Jewish leader.”

**King David was Also**

**a Considerate Shepherd**

         The Midrash relates a similar incident about King David who was a considerate shepherd and made sure that each animal was well taken care of. He never allowed the strong sheep to push aside weaker ones in order to grab the tender grass for themselves. He helped the small, weak sheep get the softest grass. Then, he let out the old sheep to graze on stalks that were less soft. Finally, he let out the strong sheep that were able to chew on the tough sticks.

Hashem said, “A faithful shepherd like you will certainly be a good shepherd for my nation, Bnai Yisrael!”. Therefore, it is the small actions that we take for granted that can tilt - or reverse - our judgment toward a favorable outcome. As I am going to show you, great people involve themselves with small things and it is the small deeds that make them great.

           Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, ZT”L, the founder of the Mussar movement, once fainted at the Pesach Seder. When he came to, someone asked him what happened; he replied, “Elul is coming”. He had to prepare for the days of judgment six months beforehand mentally and spiritually! Six months later at the Yom Kippur meal, the seudas hamafsekes, as he was preparing to go to Kol Nidre, he busied himself with writing a letter of approval for a bachur (student) from Kovno, so that the bachur could go into the holiday with a peace of mind. Rabbi Salanter could have easily taken care of this matter after Yom Kippur, but calming the worries of another Jew superseded his preparations for the holiest day of the year.

**Rav Aharon Kotler Insisted on**

**Walking the Man to His Destination**

Even more recently, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Telz yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, ZT”L, bought flowers on Erev Yom Kippur to present to his wife in honor of their upcoming anniversary. Similarly, Rav Aharon Kotler, ZT”L, a man who wouldn't waste a second and utilized every moment to learn Torah, was once asked for directions, but he insisted on walking the man to his destination.

When his students asked why the Rabbi did not just simply give directions, the Rabbi explained it was because he noticed the man had a stutter, so he did not want to take a chance that the man might not fully understand the directions and would have to come to ask someone else for directions, putting himself in an uncomfortable situation where he would have to stutter again.

**Don’t Lose the Forest for the Trees**

           Practically speaking, let us offer two pieces of advice, one short-term and one long-term. In the short term, as we get ready for Yom Kippur, let us not “lose the forest for the trees”. As we do Teshuva and worry about our fate, let us remember to be polite, friendly, and greet others more graciously. It is the little things that are not so little. In the long term, let us try to take on small kabbalos (resolutions) such as taking upon ourselves a few minutes a day not to speak Lashon Hara, to try starting Shabbos a bit earlier, making a bracha a bit slower and with better Kavana (concentration) and take sincere steps to a new and improved us. Once Hashem sees us going towards the proper path, we will find ourselves in a better position to receive – or be switched to - a favorable gzar din (decree). May we walk into a year of blessing and prosperity and Be’ezras Hashem, reach our full potential!

*Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5784 email of Torah Sweets.*

**How Can a Jew**

**Achieve Repentance**

**on Yom Kippur”**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



There is a difference of opinion in the Talmud as to how atonement is achieved on Yom Kippur. Most Sages maintain that Yom Kippur atones for a person's sins only if he does teshuva (repents). Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, however, contends that repentance is unnecessary, and that the holiness of the day itself effects atonement.

The issue is not whether the sanctity of Yom Kippur atones for sins or not; about that, all are in agreement. According to both opinions, a person who does not repent cannot attain the same level of atonement as one who does. The controversy is only over how the atonement of Yom Kippur is affected.

**“The Essence of the Day”**

According to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, the G-dly revelation of the "essence of the day" automatically atones for transgressions. The other Sages maintain that in order to reach the higher level of atonement of the "essence of the day," a person must first do teshuva. Having already repented, he can then attain the loftier level that only Yom Kippur can bring about.

Atonement means that a person's misdeeds have been forgiven and he will not be punished. However, the true meaning of atonement is that the person's soul has been purified. When a person sins, his soul becomes defiled. Atonement removes all traces of the sin's impression. When a Jew does teshuva, even his deliberate misdeeds are considered as merits.

A Jew's attachment to G-d exists on many levels. The first level is achieved through mitzvot. When a Jew accepts the yoke of heaven, he forges a connection with G-d.

**Weakens a Jew’s Relationship with G-d**

Then there is the deeper level of connection that expresses itself in repentance. If a Jew transgresses G-d's command, it weakens his relationship with G-d. This disturbs him greatly and prompts him to repent.

The impetus for teshuva emanates from this deep-seated level of attachment. By doing teshuva, all taint of sin is removed, and the bond with G-d is strengthened. Yet even this level is limited in the absolute sense.

The loftiest level is that of the intrinsic connection between the soul and G-d's essence. Completely above all limitations, it transcends even the expression of repentance. A bond of this nature cannot be created through man's actions, nor can it be improved upon. It exists, purely and simply, solely by virtue of the Jewish soul, a "veritable part of G-d above."

**The Highest Degree of Connection with G-d**

Because it is so essential, this highest degree of connection with G-d cannot be weakened by anything, not even by sin. It is untouched by a Jew's repentance or lack thereof. Thus, as regards the supreme level of our relationship with G-d, the "essence of the day" of Yom Kippur achieves atonement.

The lower levels of our connection with G-d require that we actually repent, removing all hindrances to our relationship. But on the highest level that is completely untouched by sin, the atonement of Yom Kippur itself is sufficient.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayeleich 5762/2001 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Vol. of Likutei Sichot.*

**No Difference Between Once and a Thousand Times**

He forgives us our faults each and every year (from the Yom Kippur prayer book)

By human standard, if one person harms another and asks his forgiveness and is pardoned, and then repeats the misdeed, it becomes very difficult to grant pardon again, and certainly a third and fourth time. But by G-d's standard, there is no difference between once and a thousand times, as pardon is a manifestation of the attribute of mercy, and Divine attributes are not limited and finite but are infinite, as it states, "For His mercies have not ended."

(Tanya, Igeret HaTeshuva)

*Reprinted from the Parashat Vayeleich 5762/2001 edition of L’Chaim.*

**Yom Kippur Treasures**

The Dubno Maggid, zt”l, relates a Mashal. A poor tailor would wander from village to village and from city to city with his work tools in hand. Wherever he went, he would offer to mend any garments that needing minor repairs. One of his trips brought him to the house of a wealthy man, and he inquired whether he had any garments that needed mending.

The wealthy man brought the tailor into his room and opened his closet which was filled with many different types of clothing. He requested that the tailor inspect the clothing himself and find those that needed to be repaired. The tailor examined the various articles of clothing and saw that they were all in excellent condition. Not one needed any type of mending whatsoever.

In desperation, he took one of the man’s most elegant outfits and undid all of its stitches! When the wealthy man saw what the tailor had done, he wanted to call the police and have him arrested. But the tailor pleaded with him and said that he would quickly repair whatever he had damaged.

The wealthy man agreed, and the tailor worked with eagerness to fix that which he had ruined. When the tailor had finished, he presented the man with a mended garment that appeared just as it did before it had been destroyed.

Seeing that the repair had been completed, the compassionate, wealthy man removed some money from his pocket and handed it to the tailor. The reward that the tailor received was not compensation for his labor, as obviously, he did not deserve anything at all since he was the one who damaged the garment to begin with. Rather, it was Tzedakah and simple kindness, and it was a gift to help a needy man.

The Dubno Maggid explained that all of the reward a person receives for the Mitzvos that he performs, can be categorized as reward for a Mitzvah. But if an individual fasts on Yom Kippur in order to be forgiven for Aveiros and impurities of the heart, or he does Teshuvah, then technically, he is not deserving of any reward for this. After all, he is the one responsible for those flaws, and now he is merely correcting them.

The reward that he inevitably receives for those fasts, however, is an extreme act of Tzedakah and kindness from Hashem. Hashem Bentches us, even when we have to fix what we have damaged!

*Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.*

**More Yom Kippur Gems**

Yom Kippur would not begin until the end of the following day, but the journey to Mezhibuzh, the town where the Baal Shem Tov lived, was so long, that a certain Chasid decided to set out early. Just to be sure, he traveled all day and all night, and by daybreak on Erev Yom Kippur, he was only a few miles away from his destination.

He said to himself, “Now that I am so near the end of my journey, and my poor old horse must be exhausted after such a long stretch, this is a good time for me to take a break and Daven Shacharis. The horse can eat some grass and take it easy for a while.”

However, after he Davened, he realized how tired he was, and he thought, “Maybe I should take a nap here for an hour or two. The horse can rest too, and then we’ll still have plenty of time to get to town before midday.”

With that, he fell asleep in his wagon. He was overtaken by a deep slumber, and slept soundly until it was dark out. When he awoke, he realized that Yom Kippur had already started, and he was very upset. What a bitter disappointment! He had gone to such trouble and put in so much effort in order to make his exhausting journey so that he could spend this holy day in the presence of the Baal Shem Tov, and here he was, only a few miles out of Mezhibuzh, stranded out in the fields, alone, and he was also without a Minyan for Davening!

All that night and throughout the next day he cried, full of anguish. Night came, and Yom Kippur was over. He got his horse ready and quickly rode off to Mezhibuzh, where he was greeted by the Baal Shem Tov.

A smile lit up on the face of the Tzadik, and he said, “You should know, my good man, that with your Tefilos, you elevated up to Shamayim all the Tefilos of those people who had to Daven out in the fields, who throughout this day did not join any Minyan for Davening. That is why Divine Providence arranged things that you should spend Yom Kippur out in the fields!”

*Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.*

**Rav Aharon Kotler – Chesed or Ne’ilah**



Rav Yechiel Spero relates an episode of Chesed which teaches us a number of powerful lessons. The story is about an elderly, lonely Jew, a Holocaust survivor, who had lost everything. Through various events, he ended up making Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey, his home.

The Yeshivah provided him with a bed and meals, and the Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Aharon Kotler, zt”l, provided him with friendship. Rav Aharon was a world leader with the concern of world Jewry constantly on his mind. Yet, he found the time to give Chizuk and encouragement to a lonely Jew. His sympathetic ear was always listening for an opportunity to help this elderly Yid, as well as many others.

It was Yom Kippur, and the man, whose name was Leibel, approached Rav Aharon and said that he did not feel well. Rav Aharon placed his arm around Reb Leibel and told him to lie down. Rav Aharon continued with his intense Davening, and Reb Leibel went to the dormitory.

The rest of the day was uneventful. The Yeshivah Davened with its usual fervor, with Rav Aharon setting the tone for the intensity and Ruchniyus. The sun was setting, and Tefilas Minchah was coming to an end. Everybody was preparing for the concluding Tefilah of the day, Ne’ilah.

This was where everybody raised their hearts and souls to Hashem in a last appeal for a positive conclusion to the day. Suddenly, Rav Aharon left his seat and went over to an older student, and said, “I want you to go to the dormitory and Daven Ne’ilah in Reb Leibel’s room. If he is up to it, Daven with him. If not, just stay at his side and Daven on your own.”

The student replied, “But, Rebbe, we are about to Daven Ne’ilah. How can I miss the most important Tefilah of the year and Daven without a Minyan? What kind of Davening could that be?” Rav Aharon just stared back at the young man and said, “I am referring to a Chesed for an elderly Yid, and you are bringing up the issue of Ne’ilah?”

The student did not need any more encouragement. He understood what the Rosh Yeshivah was asking of him, and he quickly listened to Rav Aharon’s directive. Rav Aharon taught him that too often, we get wrapped up in ourselves and our own personal Ruchniyus, that we forget that there are people out there who need us. A smile and a good word can make a world of difference for another Jew. It takes so little, and it can accomplish so much!

*Reprinted from the Yom Kippur 5782 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg’s Torah U’ Tefilah.*

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| **A Message from the Kalever Rebbe - Yom Kippur 5774** **Why Do We Fast****On Yom Kippur?** |
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| Kalever Rebbe |

 At the end of Yom Kippur, we conclude with *Neilah* and we beg the Al-mighty with these words: “*Avinu, Malkeinu*—Our Father, our King—seal us in the Book of Good Life." This begs the question: what is good life? When I last visited the coastal city of Eilat, a place that tends to attract many content with wasting their days in idle pursuits, I attempted to speak to the hearts of the young men who asked for a blessing by suggesting they accept upon themselves the practice of a *mitzvah* on a regular basis. Most agreed immediately. But one boy said, "This is not why I live here. I came to Eilat to enjoy the good life." One of the oldest philosophies of the world is hedonism: the quest for contentment through material and physical pleasures. But even ancient Greek and Roman philosophers recognized that hedonism only nourished Man’s animal nature, the lowest aspect of a man’s being. Animal appetites are only temporarily satisfied—then they return with an even greater hunger. Physical satisfaction is temporary at best. While Hedonism lost its major proponents many centuries ago, it continues to crouch at the door. Indeed, we seem to live in a time when the pleasure principle is gaining momentum as a philosophy and goal. And what occurs in the world impacts our holy nation. Many of our brothers are fooled into believing that taking pleasure from the physical world is a key to happiness. They seek the goals of “free” time; they value “convenience.” But convenience is not a value. And free time is not free.**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND APES** Sadly, the Theory of Evolution as well as many of human psychology theories were invented and perpetuated to serve the goal of permissiveness. The reasons for these “movements” were not to advance authentic scientific pursuit, which serve to better our understand of G-d’s world; rather they served to further aid in casting off the yoke of man’s ethical responsibilities by removing boundaries. That is the prime directive of the *yetzer horah—*the evil inclination within man: to move the border of what’s right, inch by inch. Philosophies add an academic excuse to expiate guilt.  Once a prominent gentile philosopher rejected the teachings of Darwinism, which proposes that man evolved from apes. His approach was simple: He observed the habits of apes. In so doing, he noted that when apes have all material desires available, they play, they romp, and they live without worry. But human beings cannot live like apes. Man will usually experience some tragedy, *Rachmana Letzlan*, either in their lives, their communities, their inner or outer world… None of us can escape thoughts that creep in. If this is the case, the philosopher questions why apes would seek to destroy their sense of well-being by “evolving.” Why invite the headaches? Judaism teaches that Man was created separately from animals. Man’s unique aspect is his Soul. Consequently, man is filled with contradictions, beset by conflicts; man struggles with good and evil, wisdom and foolishness, materialism and spirituality… Character traits are at constant battle. Man is never allowed to rest.Our mission is to resolve these internal battles, and to lead intelligent lives where our G-d given talents and *tendencies* are made useful. Our goal is not to defeat each other, but ourselves. The Torah teaches the path to perfecting one's self. It maps our conduct in order to dispel conflict, both within and without. This, ultimately, is the key to happiness.**THE CULT OF TECHNOLOGY** If one considers how organized the universe is, it’s easier to recognize that G-d is the Grand Designer of the universe. It is the pressures of daily life and the streams of foreign thoughts that trouble us. The promise of pleasure though hedonistic pursuits. When human energy is expelled on physical pursuits, thoughts become twisted and simple ways of understanding are obscured. People tend to think in terms of “The Technological Age" and "Modern World" but these are euphemisms for the Cult of Materialism, which is the opposite of spirituality. Those who say that the House of Israel should be like all other nations are expressing their personal values. They are under the false impression that happiness comes from advanced in technology, comfort, the pursuit of wealth… and physical pleasures, both permissible and forbidden. While human beings need to eat and make a living, a Jew must understand that these are a means to a higher end, and not the end in and of itself.**THE MEANING OF FASTING ON YOM KIPPUR** Yom Kippur is a unique time that elevates our character. It is not enough to *want* to atone for sins—we must also perfect our character traits. Everyone must make an accounting of their souls on this most awesome day. Acceptance upon ourselves of the Torah and G-d’s mitzvos allows us to rectify our character traits. This is the main purpose behind fasting on Yom Kippur—to release oneself from the bonds of materialism and physicality, because when a person fasts, his body becomes weak; lusts and desires are weakened along with the desire for materialistic pursuits. In such a state, it is easier to raise our spiritual levels and make a reckoning of our souls. Once a year, we release ourselves from the bounds of materialism allowing us to internalize the truth and value of spirituality. In this time, we accept upon ourselves to raise our spiritual level in the coming year. This is what is meant by "a good life." In this merit, may we be worthy to a *Gmar Chasimah Tovah*, the seal for a good year, and to merit open and revealed blessings!Special Thanks to: Rabbi Yitzchak Kolakowski and Yehudah Leib Meth, for the Translation*Reprinted from the 5774 Yom Kippur message of the Kalever Rebbe.* |