

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam*

## YOM KIPPUR

### DVAR TORAH: WHY WAS YOM KIPPUR'S INCENSE GROUND TWICE?

The Mishnah (Yoma 4:4) tells us that even though the incense they burned every day on the incense altar was finely ground, Yom Kippur's incense was ground super fine. Before Yom Kippur they would return the incense to the mill and grind it once again until it was – dakah min hadakah – ground to a super fine consistency. Why was there a need to regrind the incense for Yom Kippur?

The Shem Mishmuel (The Rebbe of Sochotchov, Rav Shmuel Bornshtein zt"l) answers, working with the following approach to the incense: The word for incense, ketoret, is related to the Aramaic word for tying together. Ketoret takes eleven types of spices and ties them together. Ketoret also symbolizes, teaches us about, and is a vehicle to achieve the unity, the tying together of the people of Israel.

But only ten of those spices smelled beautiful. One, the chelbenah, had a bad odor. The ten sweet smelling spices hint at the ten groups of righteous Jews (mentioned in the beginning of Parshat Netzavim) and the bad smelling chelbenah – the evildoers of Israel. The ketoret with its foul-smelling chelbenah has special significance on Yom Kippur, when our goal is atonement for the entire people of Israel, sinners included. The Kol Nidrei service even begins with a joint declaration of the human and heavenly court permitting the sinners to join the prayers. Says the Shem Mishmuel: only when the ten types of different Jews are truly united can they then incorporate the chelbenah and achieve total unity. But if they are not truly unified the chelbenah will sow disunity among them.

How can the ten truly unite? Through humility. True unity is only possible between humble people, who are willing to make room for others and realize they need others and are only part of a greater whole. But how do we achieve humility? Answers the Shem Mishmuel – through crushing and grinding our arrogant selves. And, as the Zohar says, just as the chunks of wood in a bonfire that don't burn have to be crushed for the flames to take hold, so through crushing our haughtiness we allow the light of our neshamah, our soul, to shine through. When we emphasize our neshamot we are on the paths to unity, for our interconnectedness is based on the inner core of the Jewish people. Our bodies are separate but our souls are united. The spices of the incense, ground once again before Yom Kippur, send us a message – break down arrogance and you will become a connected people. May we all be sealed – as a tightly united Klal Yisrael and as individuals – for a good and sweet year, a gmar chatimah tovah.

## SOURCE GUIDE: THE DIVINE MIKVEH

Our Yom Kippur experience is summarized in Rabbi Akiva's beautiful declaration – How fortunate is Israel who purifies itself before God and is purified by God! A close look at this, the closing Mishnah of Tractate Yoma, based on the comments of the Maharsha (on Yoma 85b), reveals a new insight into the purification process of Yom Kippur.

<p><b>Mishnah Yoma 8:9</b>          Rabbi Akiva said: Fortunate are you Israel! Before whom do you purify yourselves and who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it says, "I will sprinkle upon you pure water and you will become pure" (Yechezkel 36:25). And it says, "The mikveh of Israel is Hashem" (Yirmiyah 17:13). Just like a mikveh purifies those who are impure, so the Holy One, blessed be He, purifies Israel.</p>	<p><b>משנה יומא ח:ט</b>          אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, אֲשַׁרְיִכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפָנַי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִין, וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם, אֲבִיכֶם שְׁבַשְׁמִים, שְׁנֹאָמַר, (יחזקאל לו) וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם. וְאוֹמֵר, (ירמיה יז) מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ, מִה מְקַנְה מְטַהֵר אֶת הַטְּמֵאִים, אִף הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְטַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>
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### The Maharsha's Observation:

#### Asks the Maharsha, why does Rabbi Akiva quote two different verses to prove his point?

When Chazal seem to be quoting more than one verse to prove the same point, the Gemara usually asks "Mai v'omer?" "What was the need to quote the second verse?" (See, for instance, the Gemara's comments at the beginning and end of Masechet Berachot - 2b and 63a). The Maharsha here observes that the two verses Rabbi Akiva quotes also seem to be different: the first involves sprinkling and the second immersion. Why both? The Maharsha suggests we take a look at the purification process for one who has come in contact with the dead – *tumat meit* – and we see the same two stages:

<p><b>Bamidbar 19:19</b>          The pure one should <b>sprinkle</b> (the water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer) on the third day and on the seventh day. And he should purify him on the seventh day, launder (immerse) his clothes and cleanse (<b>immerse</b>) himself in water and become pure in the evening.</p>	<p><b>במדבר יט:ט</b>          וְהִזָּה הַטָּהוֹר עַל הַטְּמֵא בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְחִטָּאוּ בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְכִבְּסוּ בַגְּדֵיהֶם וְנִחַסּוּ בַמַּיִם וְטָהַר בְּעָרֵב:</p>
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The two-step purification process God takes us through parallels the two-step purification process of the *temei meit*, one who became impure through contact with the dead.

Now, asks the Maharsha, why, of all the forms of impurity available, is the teshuvah process likened to purification from *tumat meit*?

He answers that the drive to do wrong, the *yetzer hara*, is attempting to kill us. The verse says, "The evil one looks to the righteous one and tries to kill him" (Tehillim 37:32). The Gemara (Sukkah 52b) and the Midrash (Midrash Rabbah Devarim 11:10) interpret the "evil one" here as referring to that drive to do evil and the angel connected with that force. Therefore one who has sinned has had an encounter with death.

The method of purification from encountering death is two-fold. There is a need for "the pure one" to take the hyssop branch and sprinkle the purifying waters over the one who is impure, and there is also a need for the impure one to immerse himself in a mikveh. One comes from without and the other from within. We cannot do it ourselves; we need God to purify us. He is the Pure One who sprinkles over the people of Israel pure waters. But we also need to totally immerse ourselves.

There are also two aspects of our selves that require purification; both our bodies and our souls have become contaminated and need cleansing. The mikveh purifies our bodies, and the sprinkling purifies our souls. This is what King David prays about in Tehillim:

<p><b>Tehillim 51:11-12</b>          11. Hide Your Face from my sin, and all of my iniquity erase.          12. Create for me a new heart, God, and renew a proper spirit within me.</p>	<p><b>תהילים נא:יא-יב</b>          (יא) הַסֵּתֶר פְּנֵיךָ מִחַטָּאֵי וְכָל          עֲוֹנֹתַי מְחָה:          (יב) לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא לִי אֱלֹהִים          וְרוּחַ נְכוֹן תַּדְּשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי:</p>
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The Maharsha interprets Verse 12 as referring to this two-fold purification: the new heart refers to the body and the renewed spirit to the soul.

**Hashem is our mikveh, teaches Rabbi Akiva. He is also the One who sprinkles on us pure waters. We must totally immerse ourselves in the Divine – enter the Divine Mikveh – “Before whom do you purify yourselves?” Then we will merit purification from the Divine source – “And who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven.”**

## FROM REPENTANCE TO CONFESSION, BY RABBI YAAKOV LYNN

The focal point of the Yom Kippur service – and the Selichos prayers leading up to it – is the vidui (confession). Confessing one’s wrongdoings is one of the 613 mitzvos, derived from Bamidbar 5:6-7:

(ו) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי יַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל חַטֹּאת הָאָדָם לְמַעַל מֵעַל בְּה' וְאִשְׁמָה הִנְפִישׁ הַהוּא  
 (ז) וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת חַטֹּאתֵם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ וְגו'

“Say to the children of Israel: a man or woman, when he or she will do one of all the sins which one does to rebel against Hashem, that soul will be guilty. And they should confess their sins which they did...”

Of course, during these Ten Days of Repentance, we also focus on the mitzvah of teshuvah. According to many Rishonim, including the Sefer HaChinuch, the mitzvah of teshuvah, also counted among the 613 mitzvos, is derived from several verses in the book of Devarim which use the word לשוב, to return.

However, the first halachah in the Rambam’s Hilchos Teshuvah seems to combine these two mitzvos:

כל מצות שבתורה בין עשה בין לא תעשה אם עבר אדם על אחת מהן בין בזדון בין בשגגה כשיעשה תשובה וישוב מחטאו חייב להתודות לפני האל ברוך הוא.

“All the Mitzvos in the Torah, whether positive or negative – if a person transgresses one of them – willfully or accidentally – when he does Teshuva and returns from his transgression, he is obligated to confess before Hashem, Blessed is He.”

The Minchas Chinuch, in his commentary on the Sefer HaChinuch, notes that the Rambam seems to hold that vidui is only part of the mitzvah of teshuvah, and not a mitzvah in its own right. This is in contrast to the view of the Sefer HaChinuch quoted above – that they are two independent mitzvos.

However, the Minchas Chinuch asks a question on the Rambam’s view: Our Sages rule in Kiddushin 49b that if a man performs the marriage ceremony but stipulates that the marriage is only valid on condition that he is a tzadik (a righteous person), the marriage is valid – even if that man is known to be a total rasha (evil person). The gemara explains that this is because a person can do teshuvah in his heart in one

moment; so it is certainly possible that this evil man did teshuvah and became a tzadik just before marrying this woman.

This is understandable according to the Sefer HaChinuch's approach, since teshuvah may mean a simple change in mindset and commitment to a more righteous future. However, according to the Rambam who says that vidui is an integral part of teshuvah, how could this man have said vidui on a lifetime of wrongdoings in a single moment? And, how can teshuvah ever be done in one's heart, since vidui must be said out loud?

Based on this, the Minchas Chinuch concludes that the Rambam holds there are two different types of teshuvah. The teshuvah one does in his heart is enough to change his standing in the eyes of Hashem – Hashem judges whether we are considered a tzadik or a rasha based on our commitments for the future, irrespective of our past.

The second type of teshuvah is designed to bring atonement for the past. This teshuvah can only be accomplished through regret and confession of one's past wrongdoings. (The Sefer HaChinuch agrees that these two types of teshuvah exist, but he holds the second one isn't called teshuvah, it is called vidui).

The first two days of the 10 days of teshuvah are Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, we don't say vidui – but we speak about being written in the "Book of Tzaddikim." It would appear that this is our involvement in the first type of teshuvah. The 10 days of Repentance conclude with a day dedicated to vidui – Yom Kippur. Having committed ourselves to doing better in the future, it is now time to rectify our past.

To illustrate, imagine an employee sitting with his boss for a year-end review. The boss looks at the profit-and-loss sheets in front of him, looks at the employee, and says, "Do you realize you cost this company a million dollars last year? How can I keep you on board here?"

The employee looks at his boss, tears in his eyes, and says, "I know. I had a terrible year last year. But, boss, I'm going to do better this year. I really, really mean it. I know why I failed last year and I'm committed – really, really committed – to doing better this year!"

The boss, moved by the employee's sincerity, decides he believes the employee, and decides to let him keep his job, and gives him the resources the employee needs to carry out his job for the next year.

When the employee hears the boss has granted him this, he jumps out of his seat and says, "Thank you! I won't let you down! And, not only am I going to do better this year, but let's look back at that million dollars I cost us last year. I'm sure there are steps I can take to rectify the problems I caused!"

We're confident that Hashem is in the process of writing and sealing each of us for a year full of health, prosperity and success because we committed on Rosh Hashanah to doing better this year. Now it's time to say, "What can I do about the problems I created in the past?" This is the Rambam's second category of teshuvah, including vidui, and, as Yom Kippur approaches, it is the call of the hour.

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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