

THE YESHIVA PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM PRESENTS:
THE ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 49

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The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson

49

The Custom of Prostrating during Aleinu

- a) A unique custom that we practice during *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is that we prostrate ourselves when the *Chazzan* recites *Aleinu* during *Chazoras Hashatz*.
- b) When the *Chazzan* recites the words *Va'anachnu Kor'im U'mishtachavim Lifnei Melech Malchei HaMelachim HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (And we kneel and prostrate ourselves before the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed be He), everyone including the *Chazzan* kneels and bows down all the way to the ground,
- c) This is just as the Jews would do during the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* when they heard G-d's ineffable Name uttered by the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom Kippur*.

The Prohibition of Prostrating on a Stone Floor

THE TORAH PROHIBITS US FROM PROSTRATING OURSELVES EVEN IN SUBMISSION TO HASHEM IF WE DO THIS OUTSIDE OF THE BEIS HAMIKDASH ON A STONE FLOOR OR A DIRT FLOOR.

Likewise,

IT APPLIES TO CERAMIC AND STONE TILE FLOORS.

Therefore in these cases,

ONE MUST BE CAREFUL TO SPREAD SOMETHING IN BETWEEN HIM AND THE FLOOR.

The *Mishna Berura*¹ writes,

EVEN ON A STONE FLOOR IF ONE DOESN'T PROSTRATE HIMSELF COMPLETELY OR IF ONE TILTS TO THE SIDE, ONE IS PERMITTED TO DO SO.

- 1) If the floor has a covering like a carpet or linoleum floor, the prohibition doesn't apply.
- 2) Nevertheless, the Rabbis require putting something down on the floor even then.
- 3) When there is
 - a) No stone floor and
 - b) One isn't prostrating oneself all the way to the ground,

Then there is no need to place anything between oneself and the floor.

The *Match Ephraim*² writes:

¹משנה ברורה סימן קלא: מ' - וכן אסור וכו' - אקדים הקדמה קצרה כדי שיתברר היטב והוא דהנה כתיב בתורה ואבן משיכית* לא תתנו בארצכם להשתחות עליה דהיינו אפי' כשמשתחוה לשמים על אבן משיכית או על רצפת אבנים דחדא מילתא היא וכתבו הפוסקים דאין אסור מן התורה כי אם כשיש תרתי לגריעותא דהיינו כשמשתחוה בפישוט ידים ורגלים וגם על רצפת אבנים דוקא אבל דרך קידה דהיינו שנופל על אפיו על הרצפה בלא פישוט ידים ורגלים או אם הוא בפישוט ידים ורגלים שלא על רצפת אבנים אסור רק מדברי סופרים דגזרו קידה אטו השתחויה ושלא על הרצפה (לח) אטו רצפה אבל אם היה תרתי למעליותא דהיינו דרך קידה בלא רצפת אבנים לא גזרו רבנן וכן אם היה נופל דרך קידה על רצפת אבנים אך שלא היה קידה גמורה דהיינו שנטה קצת על צדו או אם היה בפישוט ידים ורגלים ושלא על הרצפה ונטה קצת על צדו דלא הוי פישוט ממש ג"כ מותר ועתה נבוא לבאר דברי הג"ה. וכן אסור לכל אדם וכו' ר"ל כמו באדם חשוב הנ"ל אסור אפי' בלא אבן משיכית כן הכא אלא דשם אסור אפילו דרך קידה והכא אין אסור רק דוקא דרך פישוט ידים ורגלים:

(מא) אין שם אבן משיכית - או רצפת אבנים. ואם יש שם רצפת אבנים אפי' דרך קידה אסור [ודוקא כשפניו דבוקים בקרקע (לט) אבל אם שוחה בתפלה אפי' יש שם רצפה שרי] ודוקא נגד רצפת אבנים (מ) אבל רצפת לבנים אין אסורה דאבן כתיב ולבנה לאו אבן הוא כדכתיב ותהי להם הלבנה לאבן:

(מב) אם אין שם אבן משיכית - אבל כשיש אבן משיכית לא מהני הטיה על צדו כיון שהוא בפישוט ידים ורגלים:

(מג) כשנופל על פניהם - ר"ל כשהם נופלים (מא) דרך פישוט יו"ר שלא על הרצפה צריכים להטות על צדיהם (מב) וכן כשיש רצפה אפי' נופלים דרך קידה בעלמא צריכין להטות על צדיהם:

² ספר מטה אפרים - סימן תרכא: יד - כָּבֵר בְּאַרְנוֹ בְּסִימָן תר"ז שְׁשׁוּטְחִין עֲשָׂבִים, בֵּית הַפְּנִסֶת בְּעֶקֶב יוֹם פְּפוּר קָדָם תְּפִלָּה וְלִכְּוֹן צָרִיךְ לְשַׁטֵּחַ עֲשָׂבִים לְהַפְסִיק בֵּינָם לְרַצְפָּה לְפִי שְׁנוּפְלִים עַל פְּנֵיהֶם בְּעִבּוּדָה. וְאִפְלוּ אִין שֵׁם אָבֵן מְשִׁכִּית* רַק קָרְקַע עוֹלָם, צָרִיךְ הַפְּסֵק. וְנוֹתֵי יָם לְשַׁטֵּחַ עֲשָׂבִים בְּכָל בְּתֵי כְּנִסְיֹת וּבְתֵי מִדְרָשׁוֹת אִף שְׂאִין שֵׁם רַצְפַּת אֲבָנִים רַק שֶׁל לְבָנִים אוּ נְסָרִים. וְאִם לֹא הִצִּיעוּ עֲשָׂבִים, בֵּית הַפְּנִסֶת אוּ שֵׁשׁ עוֹמְדִים, מְקוֹם רִיקוֹן מְעֻשָׂבִים, יֵשׁ לָהֶם לְחוּץ וְלְהַפְסִיק בְּכַנְפֵי טְלִיתָם בֵּין פְּנֵיהֶם לְקָרְקַע. וְכָל זֶה בְּגִפְלֵת כּוֹרְעִים שְׁנוּפְלִים עַל פְּנֵיהֶם, אֲבָל בְּגִפְלֵת כּוֹרְעִים שְׁבָעֲלִינוּ, אִין צְרִיכִים עֲשָׂבִים וְלֹא לְחוּץ, טְלִיתוֹ. וְכִמוֹ שְׁכּוֹרְעִים בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, שְׂאִין צְרִיכִים כָּלֵל:

The custom was to spread grass over the wooden floors on *Erev Yom Kippur* of the custom to prostrate oneself when the *Chazzan* recites the order of the *Kohen Gadol's Yom Kippur* service.

However,

For the bowing during the *Aleinu* prayer of *Chazoras Hashatz*, both on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, it isn't necessary to spread anything between them and the floor because customarily one doesn't prostrate oneself completely during that prayer.

Many communities place something between them and the floor and prostrate themselves on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* by the *Aleinu* prayer as well.

Mincha: Remembering, Eliyahu HaNavi

After eating the Yom Tov meal, everyone returns to *Shul* (synagogue) for the afternoon *Mincha* prayer. This *Tefilla* is very significant according to our Sages as it is during *Tefillas Mincha* that *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the Prophet) was answered in his prayers to refute the idol-worshippers of *Bal*.

- 1) In this famous incident atop *Har HaCarmel*, *Eliyahu HaNavi* had gathered all the Jews who worshipped this idol and challenged them openly to show off the idol's powers.
- 2) He then went on to pray at *Mincha*-time that *Hashem* should make sure that they do not succeed in showing off any miraculous powers through sorcery or other means.
- 3) Then he went on to show off G-d's power by placing the meat of a sacrifice on top of an altar that he erected and flooded it with water.
- 4) A Heavenly fire came down upon the altar burning the sacrifice and drying up all the water and proving decisively that G-d is the One and Only power.
- 5) From this incident the *Gemara*³ proves that one should pray the *Mincha* prayer especially fervently as we see it was so for *Eliyahu HaNavi*.

³ *Berachos Daf 6b*

- 6) Furthermore, *Yitzchok Avinu* (the Patriarch, Isaac) originally instituted this prayer, and on this day we arouse his merit for allowing himself to be brought as a human sacrifice by *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the Binding of Isaac).

Mincha begins with the recitation of *Ashrei* and *U'vah Le'Tziyone Go'eil* which we recite on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. The *Chazzan* recites this using the regular *Shabbos* tune. *Chatzi-Kaddish* is recited after the *Amidah*.

When Rosh Hashanah occurs on Shabbos

When *Rosh Hashanah* is on *Shabbos*, the weekly portion of *Ha'azinu* is read from the Torah-scroll just as at a regular *Shabbos Mincha*.

Avinu Malkeinu

Avinu Malkeinu is recited after *Chazoras Hashatz* (the repetition of the *Amidah*) unless *Rosh Hashanah* is on *Shabbos*, according to those congregations that do not recite *Avinu Malkeinu* on *Shabbos*.⁴ Likewise, in those congregations they do not recite *Tzidkascha Tzedek*, which is usually recited right after *Chazoras Hashatz* of a regular *Mincha* of *Shabbos*.⁵

The Second Day Rosh Hashanah - The Differences

The prayers for the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* are basically the same as for the first day. There is however some minor differences, which we will point out.

- 1) *Maariv* of the second day *Rosh Hashanah* shouldn't begin before nightfall similar to the second-day *Yom Tov* practiced outside of Israel.
- 2) This is despite the fact that it is considered like a long one-day *Yom Tov* with regard to other *Halachos*.
- 3) Starting *Maariv* early on the second-day *Yom Tov* would signal a leniency to consider *Rosh Hashanah* as a long one-day *Yom Tov*;
- 4) Thereby people would be misled to allow cooking and other forms of *Yom Tov* food preparation from one day to the next which is generally forbidden on any other two-day *Yom Tov*.⁶

⁴ *Mateh Ephraim* 598:2

⁵ See *Orach Chaim Simon* 598, Tur and Shulchan Aruch for the opinions on this matter

⁶ *Mateh Ephraim* 598:8 and 599:2

Va'todi'enu – The Ending of Shabbos

In the event that the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* falls on *Shabbos*, then the prayer of *Va'todi'enu* is inserted into the middle *Brocha* of the *Amidah* of *Maariv*. Although in the standard *nusach* (version) of this prayer, which is also used on a *Yom Tov* that follows the *Shabbos*, it states the words *Va'Chagigas Regel* (the Festival Sacrifice) which doesn't apply to *Rosh Hashanah* which is not one of the *Shelosh Regalim* (Three Festivals - *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkos*), it is said anyway because it is considered a general declaration⁷.

An Halachic Discussion Regarding one who Forgot to recite Va'todi'enu

When Yom Tov falls on Motzo'ei Shabbos, we add in the Amidah prayer during Maariv the paragraph of "Va'todi'enu." This paragraph speaks of the distinction G-d draws "Bein Kodesh Le'kodesh" - between different degrees of sanctity. The occurrence of Yom Tov on Motzo'ei Shabbos highlights the difference between the sanctity of Shabbos and the sanctity of Yom Tov, and in "Va'todi'enu" we give praise to G-d for making this distinction. "Va'todi'enu" differs from the paragraph recited on a regular Motzo'ei Shabbos, "Atta Chonantanu," which speaks of the distinction G-d draws "Bein Kodesh Le'chol" - between the sacred day of Shabbos and the weekdays.

If on a regular Motzo'ei Shabbos a person forgot to recite "Atta Chonantanu" during Maariv, he does not, generally speaking, repeat the Amidah. If, however, one forgot to recite "Atta Chonantanu" and he ate something before reciting Havdallah (in violation of the Halacha that forbids eating before Havdalah), the Sages imposed a penalty requiring him to repeat the Amidah (Shulchan Aruch, 294). The question arises as to whether this applies as well to the "Va'todi'enu" paragraph when Motzo'ei Shabbos coincides with Yom Tov. Meaning, if a person forgot to recite "Va'todi'enu" during Maariv when Yom Tov falls on Motzo'ei Shabbos, and then he eats before reciting Havdallah (which we incorporate as part of the Yom Tov Kiddush), must he repeat the Amidah?

The Pri Megadim (Rabbi Yosef Te'omim, Poland-Germany, 1727-1792) rules that such a person must, in fact, repeat the Amidah, just as in the case of "Atta Chonantanu." However, Chacham Ben Tziyone Abba Shaul (Jerusalem, 1924-1998), in his work Or Le'tziyone (vol. 3, 18:5), disagreed, and distinguished in this regard between "Atta Chonantanu" and "Va'todi'enu." The paragraph of "Atta Chonantanu" was composed by the Anshei Knesset Hagedolah ("Men of the Great Assembly," who instituted and composed the daily prayer services), and thus its omission is looked upon with severity. "Va'todi'enu," by

⁷ The World of Prayer, Volume 2, page 215

contrast, was written later, during the times of the Talmud, by Rav and Shmuel, and hence it is of a lower Halachic stature. Therefore, one who forgets to recite "Va'todi'enu" does not face the same consequences as one who mistakenly omits "Atta Chonantanu," and thus even if he ate before reciting Havdalla, he does not repeat the Amidah. However, Chacham Ovadiah Yosef in Chazon Ovadiah Yamim Nora'im, rules that one indeed must repeat the Amidah⁸.

Summary: When Yom Tov falls on Motzo'ei Shabbos, one adds the paragraph of "Va'todi'enu" into the Maariv Amidah. One who forgets to add this paragraph does not repeat the Amidah according to the Poskim⁹. If one mistakenly ate before reciting Havdalla, it is necessary then to recite the Amidah with Vatodi'einu. The Halacha is the same on regular Motzo'ei Shabbos.

She'hechyanu

As for the propriety of reciting the blessing *She'hechyanu* on the second day for *Tekias Shofar*, there are various opinions amongst the *Poskim* on this matter, since the two days of *Rosh Hashanah* are considered as *one long day* as explained in an earlier lesson¹⁰.

- a) Others maintain that *She'hechyanu* is recited anyway.
- b) The custom in many synagogues is that the individual who recites the blessing of *She'hechyanu* should wear a new garment or have a new fruit nearby while having them also in mind for the *She'hechyanu*.¹¹
- c) If the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* was on *Shabbos*, then *She'hechyanu* is definitely required for *Tekias Shofar* since it is now being sounded for the first time this *Yom Tov* since it wasn't sounded on *Shabbos*.¹²

⁸ The Daily Halacha by Rabbi Eli Mansour

⁹ See also *Ishei Yisrael* (41:21 and footnote 45) that according to the *Mateh Ephraim*, once the paragraph of *Vatiten Lanu* was started after omitting *Va'todi'enu*, one doesn't return to *Va'todi'enu*. *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach* and the *Minchas Yitzchok* concur with this novel opinion.

¹⁰ Roadmap to Prayer Lesson 45, pages 696-697

¹¹ The fruit is only eaten later on at the *Yom Tov* meal, *Mishna Berura* 600:7

¹² *Ibid.* ס"ק 6

Tashlich – A Prayer to Rid us of Sins

After Tefillas Mincha (Afternoon Prayer) people go out of the city to a nearby river to recite the Tashlich prayer¹³.

If one is unable to recite *Tashlich* after *Mincha*, one may recite it beforehand.

- 1) Thus, if the body of water is situated outside of the city and access to there will be restricted towards nightfall, then one should recite *Tashlich* earlier in the day.
- 2) Likewise, if for any other reason one will be unable to go to *Tashlich* after *Mincha*, one should go there beforehand.

Mi Keil Kamocha - Who is like You, G-d!

The main part of this prayer consists of the *Pesukim* (verses) of *Mi Keil Kamocha* that correspond with the *Thirteen Attributes of Mercy* as explained in an earlier lesson¹⁴. These selected verses are repeated three times. Then, there are other sections of this prayer that talk about human fallacy and the need to repent and mend one's ways.

The Basic text of *Tashlich*

Who is like You, G-d, *Who removes iniquity and overlooks transgression of the remainder of His inheritance. He doesn't remain angry forever because He desires kindness. He will return and He will be merciful to us, and He will conquer our iniquities, and He will cast them into the depths of the seas.*

Give truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham like that you swore to our ancestors from long ago.

From the straits I called upon G-d, G-d answered me with expansiveness. G-d is with me, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me? G-d is with me to help me, and I will see my foes (annihilated). It is better to take refuge in G-d than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in G-d, that to rely on nobles.

Many people also read Psalms 33 and 130.

After reciting the prayer, the custom is to shake the corners of one's clothing invoking that *Hashem* should take all our sins and toss them away into the waters as the *Pasuk* (verse) states *Ve'Sashlich Be'metzulos Yam Kol Chatosam* (And You shall toss into the

depths of the sea all their sins). According to *Kabbalistic* interpretation, this refers to *Hashem* helping us remove the *Yetzer Hora* from within us. *Metzulos Yam*, which literally means the depths of the sea is not meant to be taken literally, rather it is a reference to a spiritual place to where the *Yetzer Hora* will be removed.

¹³ The reason for this is perhaps because of *Tashlich's* connection with the *Akeidah* and *Tefillas Mincha*; as explained further into the shiur

¹⁴ Roadmap to Prayer Lesson 42 page 649

The Symbolism of a River

What is the significance of the *Tashlich* prayer at a river? Also, it is brought that the river should have fish. What is the importance of fish?

In the *Siddur* (Prayer Book) *Otzar Hatefillos*, it explains that on *Rosh Hashanah*, we focus on accepting *Hashem's* sovereignty upon us by proclaiming Him as King and recognizing Him as the Supreme One. Therefore, we travel out to say this prayer at the river for this was the setting for anointing kings in Biblical times.

- & Kings used to be anointed and inducted officially into the position of the king, at a riverbank.
- & It was done primarily as a gesture that the king's reign should continue to flow uninterrupted like the river.
- & We too stand at the banks of a river reminding ourselves of *Hashem*, Whom we coronate as King of the universe.
- & It reminds us to repent and discard our sins and to dutifully follow *Hashem's* commandments.

A River with Fish

The reason for going to a river with fish is:

- 1) Because fish always have their eyes open. We too ask *Hashem* to keep a good watch over us to protect us from any harm.
- 2) Another concept we should think about is how fish get so easily trapped in nets without even realizing what they are getting into.
- 3) Just as fish are suddenly caught in nets, so too we are caught in the net of judgment for life or death. Such thoughts should arouse a person to repentance.
- 4) So too we must keep our guard against the evil cunningings of the Yetzer Hora (Evil Inclination) and avoid getting trapped into his net.
- 5) Koheles¹⁵ (Ecclesiastes) writes "Since also man does not know his time; like fish that get trapped in feeble traps."
- 6) It symbolizes our hope to be fruitful and multiply like fish.

¹⁵ 9:12

- 7) It also symbolizes that the Evil Eye (*Ayin Hora*) shall have no effect upon us, just as it cannot affect the fish that are hidden under the water.

If there is no body of water with fish, Tashlich may be recited by a wellspring or another body of water.

A Reminder of Akeidas Yitzchok

Another reason we go out to a river for this prayer is because the *Medrash* tells that when *Avraham Avinu* was on his way to *Akeidas Yitzchok* (the Binding of Isaac); *Satan* tried to impede *Avraham* and dissuade him from carrying out G-d's wish.

- 1) The Satan therefore placed a body of water into Avraham Avinu's path to make it difficult for him to cross.
- 2) Avraham Avinu didn't waver and went into the water until he was neck-deep into it. Seeing Avraham Avinu's perseverance, Hashem caused the water to disappear and Avraham continued on his way.
- 3) Since on Rosh Hashanah we emphasize the merit of Avraham Avinu and the Akeidah, we perform the Tashlich prayer in this manner to bring up Avraham Avinu's merit once again.
- 4) Another thought can be added, that we travel outside of the city to a river, commemorating *Avraham Avinu's* perseverance in his *Avodas Hashem* (service of G-d). From *Avraham Avinu's* example we learn what our level of commitment should be in *Avodas Hashem*.

Even when we find ourselves outside of the comfort of our city and even in the face of challenge, we will always abandon any thoughts of sinning, and follow Hashem with complete devotion.

Shaking the corner of our garments

THE REASON WE SHAKE THE CORNERS OF OUR GARMENT AFTER TASHLICH IS TO SYMBOLICALLY RID OURSELVES FROM THE BAD INFLUENCES OF OUR SINS.

- Although we repent for our sins, we are still affected by them both *spiritually* and *emotionally*.
- For example, if we were accustomed to habitually belittle others in the manner of our speech, we may still have a strong tendency to look down upon others, hindering our efforts in attaining a full *Teshuvah*.

- We must therefore focus on not only changing our actions, but also on changing our attitude and bad habits.
- At *Tashlich* we begin concretizing this concept by shaking the fringes of our garments and by spiritually removing the bad influences of our sins.

Tashlich on Shabbos

There is discussion amongst the *Poskim* (authorities on Jewish law) whether to recite *Tashlich* when the first day *Rosh Hashanah* is on *Shabbos*.

- 1) Some say that it should be recited on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* even on *Shabbos* as long as no prayer books are carried outside of the city and that it is not beyond the *Techum* (the amount one is allowed to travel outside of the city on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*).
- 2) Others maintain that specifically because of the issue of people carrying prayer books to *Tashlich* we refrain from reciting this prayer on *Shabbos*.

Throwing Bread out to the Fish

The *Maharil* writes,

ONE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM THROWING BREAD OUT TO THE FISH ON SHABBOS OR YOM TOV DURING TASHLICH.

- 1) The reason for this is because there is a Rabbinic law that on *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*, one must not feed animals that do not rely on you to feed them¹⁶.
- 2) Therefore, it would be incorrect to go to *Tashlich* to ask for *Hashem's* forgiveness and transgress this *Halacha*.
- 3) We also find that the Rabbis¹⁷ even preferred delaying *Tashlich* as late as *Hashanah Rabba* if necessary, when otherwise *Tashlich* would lead to the socializing of men and women together.

Reciting Tehillim

The rest of the day of *Rosh Hashanah* should be spent in *Shul* (synagogue) either learning or reciting *Tehillim*. Those who are able to learn should learn, and those who cannot, should spend the rest of the day reciting *Tehillim*.

¹⁶ *Orach Chaim* Simon 497

¹⁷ *Aruch Hashulchan* Simon 583

A Day in Court

A story is told that *Rav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik* (also known as the "*Brisker Rav*") *zt"l* would spend a lot of time on *Rosh Hashanah* reciting *Tehillim*, divergent from his usual diligence in *Gemara* study. When asked about his behavior in this matter he replied that:

- 1) It is imperative to pray for one's welfare on *Rosh Hashanah*.
- 2) How can one not recite *Tehillim* at such a time of need?!
- 3) Every Jew's natural instinct is to recite *Tehillim* when faced with danger.
- 4) The natural fear of being investigated and judged by *Hashem* Himself permeated the *Brisker Rav's* mind; to which he reacted naturally by reciting *Tehillim*.

Tzom Gedaliah: The Day After

The day that follows *Rosh Hashanah* is the fast day of *Tzom Gedaliah*.

- 1) Unlike a regular fast day where we recite *Selichos* after *Shemoneh Esrei*, today we recite *Selichos* first before *Shacharis* just like any other *Selichos* day.
- 2) On this fast day, the order of the *Morning Tefillos* (Prayers) follows the order of the *Tefillos* (Prayers) of other fast days.
- 3) The *Sefer Torah* is removed from the *Aron Kodesh* (the Holy Ark) after *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Tachanun*. For *Mincha*, the *Sefer Torah* is read again.
- 4) There is a custom to recite *Avinu Malkeinu* by *Shacharis* and again by *Mincha* during the weekday portion of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* (*Ten days of Repentance*). Some have the custom not to recite *Avinu Malkeinu* on *Shabbos* as well as on Friday afternoon at *Mincha*.
- 5) The custom in many congregations is to recite the *Thirteen Attributes of Mercy* each time the *Sefer Torah* is removed for the Torah Reading (*Krias HaTorah*) during the weekday portion of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

Tzom Gedaliah: Background

When *Nebuchadnezzar* the king of *Bavel* (Babylonia) conquered Jerusalem, he deported the poor inhabitants and left a righteous man, *Gedaliah, son of Achikam*, in charge of the new-*Babylonian* province. Many Jews who had previously fled to *Moab*,

Ammon, Edom, and other neighboring lands returned to the land of Judah. They spent time tending to the vineyards given to them by the king, and enjoyed their respite after suffering through the earlier oppression.

The King of *Ammon* who was hostile and envious of the Judean remnant - sent a Jew, *Yishmael Ben Netaniah*, to assassinate *Gedaliah*. In the seventh month on the Jewish calendar (*Tishrei*).

The verses in *Yirmiyahu* (40:13-16) relate how *Yochanan ben Kareach* informs *Gedaliah* that *Yishmael ben Netaniah* is on his way to kill him. *Gedaliah* refuses to accept the “*Lashon Hora*,” slander, concerning a *G-d fearing Jew*.

Yishmael came to *Gedaliah* in the town of *Mitzpah*, and was received cordially. *Yishmael, taking advantage of his cordial reception, assassinates Gedaliah on the Third of Tishrei. Together with a band of ten men, he murders a number of other Jews, along with the Chaldeans who have been left behind to keep their eyes on the Jews. The rest of the community fled to Egypt, fearing the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar for the assassination of his chosen ruler, Gedaliah. They fled out of fear, defying the prophetic warning of Yirmiyahu to remain in Israel despite the assassination.*

These events are recorded *II Melachim* (Kings) 25:25-26. It states the following:

But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Netaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldeans that were with him at Mitzpah.

The Rambam¹⁸ writes:

“... and with this act the last burning coal of Israel, was extinguished, sealing the fate of the Jews in Exile.”

The aforementioned assassination occurred on the third day of *Tishrei*. Some suggest that *Gedaliah* was slain on the first day of *Tishrei*, except that the fast was postponed until after *Rosh Hashanah*, since fasting is prohibited during a festival. Since the verse puts this fast day together with *Shivah Assar Be'Tammuz*, *Tisha B'Av* and *Assara Be'Teves*, the Rabbis explain that it is lumped together to teach us that the death of the righteous is likened to the burning of the house of G-d. Just as they ordained a fast upon the destruction of the Jewish Temple, likewise they ordained a fast upon the death of *Gedaliah*. Although we never commemorate other deaths of

¹⁸ *Hilchos Ta'anios* 5:2

Tzaddikim with a fast day, this particular death is commemorated since it is associated with another tragedy on a national scale. Since they defied *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* who prophesized that they were obligated to stay in the Land of Israel, this tragedy bears a resemblance to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* for just as the *Beis Hamikdash* protected its inhabitants so too the *Tzaddik* protected the inhabitants¹⁹.

Aseres Yemei Teshuvah – The Ten Days of Repentance

During the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* it is incumbent upon us to recite each of the daily prayers with full concentration. Our Sages teach that:

- a) Each day of the seven days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* corresponds to another day of the week.
- b) It is recorded in *Sefarim* that each day has within it the unique ability to atone for any of one's shortcomings for that day.
- c) Therefore, pouring one's heart out to *Hashem* during prayers of any of these days is beneficial in bringing rectification to all of one's errant *Tefillos*.
- d) Even those prayers that were not said with proper concentration and intent could become infused with new life through the rectification of the corresponding *Tefillos* of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

Erev Yom Kippur

Kapparos: The Custom of Redeeming one's Soul

There is an ancient custom of taking an item and swinging it over one's head while reciting the prayer *Zeh Chalifassi, Zeh Temurassi, Zeh ...*

Rashi brings from the *Ge'onim*,

There used to be a custom to plant seeds in a flower pot for every child in the family a few weeks before *Rosh Hashanah*. After a few weeks when the seeds started to sprout each child would swing the flower pot around their

¹⁹ See *Gemara Rosh Hashanah* 18b and *Maharsha*

heads saying *Zeh Tachas Zeh, Zeh Chalifassi, Zeh Temurassi* and then toss it into the river²⁰.

Nowadays, the custom is to do this on *Erev Yom Kippur*, or some time between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Many people have a custom to perform this ritual with a chicken, taking a rooster for males and a hen for females.

After swinging it over their heads and reciting *Zeh Tachas Zeh* (this in place of this), *Zeh Chalifassi* (this is my exchange), *Zeh Temurassi* (this is my substitute) *etc.*

- a) The chicken is *Shechted* (ritually slaughtered) and distributed to the poor.
- b) Others prefer to take the value of the chicken and distribute it to the poor and keep the chickens for themselves.
- c) This was done in order not to offend the poor people by sending them the chickens themselves that seemingly carry their sins²¹.
- d) However, if one knows that it would be more convenient for the poor person to receive the chicken itself and that he wouldn't be embarrassed by it, then it would be better to send him the chicken itself²².

The Same Lesson as a Sacrifice

Just as with a *Korban* in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, someone who would bring a sacrifice to atone for a sin would view everything done to the *Korban*; the slaughtering, sprinkling of the blood, and the burning of its fats and limbs as if it were being done to him, so too with the slaughtering of the chicken after reciting the reading of *Zeh Tachas Zeh, Zeh Chalifassi, Zeh Temurassi etc.*

There are a number of reasons for using Chickens:

- 1) A chicken was the most common and inexpensive animal available for this ritual.
- 2) The *Aramaic* term for rooster is *Gever*. *Gever* in Hebrew means man. Therefore, using a chicken for this ritual sends a message that what is happening to the chicken should really be happening to us.

²⁰ See *Rashi* in *Shabbos Daf* 81b

²¹ *Mishna Berura* 605:5 and other *Poskim*

²² *Ibid.*

- 3) This ritual is done as a commemoration for the *Sa'ir L'Azazel* (the goat that was sent off over a cliff during the *Yom Kippur* services in the time the *Beis Hamikdash* was standing). In this service, a goat was paired up with another identical one and one was brought as a sacrifice inside the *Beis Hamikdash* and the second one was shipped off *L'Azazel*, a mountainous region where the goat was thrown off the cliff and was instantaneously torn to pieces, carrying along with it the sins of *Bnei Yisrael*. Since there is a prohibition to bring sacrifices outside of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the custom was to use a chicken that was a type of a kosher bird that was never itself brought as an offering.

Money instead of Chickens:

Since there are so many chickens that need to be *Shechted* (ritually slaughtered) in such a relatively short amount of time, the Rabbis had great concern that the chickens may not be slaughtered properly. Therefore, it became customary to extend the time for Kapparos from Erev Yom Kippur to any day during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, giving the Shochtim (Rabbis trained in ritual slaughtering) who slaughter the chickens ample time to assure that the chickens are slaughtered properly according to strict Halachic requirements without compromise.

There are others who prefer to use money instead of chickens. After swinging the money around one's head and reciting *Zeh Tachas Zeh, Zeh Chalifassi, Zeh Temurassi etc.* it is then distributed to the poor.

The Text of the Order of Kapparos

The full text of the order of *Kapparos* begins with the stanza of *Bnei Adam*.

Children of Man, who sat in darkness and the shadow of death shackled in affliction and iron. He removed them from the darkness and the shadow of death and broke open their shackles. The fools - because of their sinful past and their iniquities they were afflicted. Their souls abhorred all food - and they reached the portals of death. They cried out to Hashem in their distress; from their woes He spared them. He dispatched His word and cured them and let them escape their destruction. Let them thank Hashem for His kindness and His wonders to mankind²³.

²³ Selected verses from *Psalms* chapter 107

*If there will be for someone but a single defending angel out of a thousand to declare a man's uprightness on his behalf then He will be gracious to him and say 'Redeem him from descending to the Pit; I have found atonement.'*²⁴

After these verses, the declaration of *Zeh Chalifassi* (this is my exchange), *Zeh Temurassi* (this is my substitute) *etc.* is recited as printed in *Siddurim* (prayer books) and *Machzorim* (festival prayer books).

The Deeper Meaning – Becoming Righteous

From the verses that were selected for this ritual, it is evident that they were chosen to depict the gravity of someone trapped in the web of sin and iniquity. As with *Korbanos* in general and with the *Sa'ir L'Azazel* in particular, the *Torah* finds it necessary for someone seeking to change his ways from being a sinner to becoming a righteous individual, that he must do something concrete to demonstrate the seriousness of sin and thereby find his way towards a life of following the path of *Torah*.

Change requires Doing

Without such a demonstration, it is very difficult for a human being to be moved in a meaningful manner to becoming a different person. The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Teshuvah* explains the way *Teshuvah* works. A person must change his essence and is now essentially a different person.

Shedding Complacency

The ritual of taking the life of a living creature and slaughtering it instead of ourselves has the unique ability to awaken us from our complacency and to become more concerned with our actions and deeds and how we conduct our lives. Let us imagine ourselves in the *shadow of death*; for sin is death and self destruction. Let us know that *Hashem* can save us from this abyss; all we have to do is cry out to Him.

Making that First Step

The verse from *Iyov* tells us that even if we only start our journey back with one accomplishment, even if that itself is not a perfect one, we will have *Hashem* seeking out that *one single defending angel out of a thousand* and take him graciously to redeem us from descending to the Pit; for we have found atonement.

²⁴ *Iyov* 33:23, 24

Act Now Before it is TOO LATE

However, it is imperative that we act on this now, before *Yom Kippur*, before the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* (the ten days of Repentance) has passed and it is too late. Let's seize this opportunity of performing this ritual to its fullest benefit so that indeed we will find true atonement.

Kapparos: A Lesson in Forgiving

It is common for people to say when something breaks or goes wrong *It should be for a Kapparah* (it should serve as atonement). This adage is truly one of the more meaningful sayings that Jews commonly exclaim unwittingly. Let us examine the following and learn to appreciate our own simple talk.

Rabbi Avraham Twersky in *Twersky on Prayer*²⁵ sees another lesson in this ritual of *Kapparos*. He does this through the following story:

One of the disciples of the holy Chassidic Master, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk once asked for the concealed meaning of the Kapparah ritual. What was the meaning of this exchange and substitution?

The Rebbe instructed his disciple to observe a specific innkeeper from whom he will learn the meaning of this exchange process.

The disciple set out to the town where this innkeeper lived and took up lodging in his inn. To his disappointment, the innkeeper seemed to be a very simple individual, who rushed through his prayers and spent the rest of the day serving his customers and engaging in petty talk. After spending some time observing this innkeeper, he grew quite impatient, for the holy day of Yom Kippur was quickly approaching and he still knew nothing more about the meaning of Kapparos. On the night before the eve of Yom Kippur the disciple noticed that after closing up for the night, the innkeeper took out two large ledgers. He started reading from the first ledger things that he had done wrong during the course of the year. Each time he mentioned some misdeed that he committed, he let out a huge sigh of remorse. After doing this for a couple of hours, he began reading from the second ledger. He read how on this day a hail storm tore off a large part of his roof causing much damage. On another day his horse died suddenly and how on another day his wife fell and broke her foot. Finally after reading this ledger for a long time he shut both books and said: "Master of the Universe! I know I have done many things wrong this year, but You have also done many things that have hurt me. Inasmuch as tomorrow night is Yom Kippur let us make an "exchange". You will forgive me for the things I have done wrong

²⁵ Mesorah Publications

and I will forgive You for those things You have done to me.” At this point the disciple returned to his Rebbe (teacher).

Rebbe Elimelech said to his disciple “A person must learn to forgive G-d. Many times people harbor resentment against G-d even though they may not express it or even be aware of it. We oftentimes question: ‘Why did G-d do this to me? What did I do to deserve this?’ In truth, this is actually a lack of faith in Divine justice. If we would only achieve true faith in Divine justice and in G-d’s absolute benevolence we will have learned the lesson of Kapparas, to “forgive” G-d for all that He has done to us, for ultimately His judgment is perfect.”

If we learn just this one lesson from *Kapparas*, that everything that comes our way, even if it’s not pleasant, is a result of G-d’s perfect Divine justice, it is a worthwhile ritual. Let us hope, as people say, that “it should be for a *Kapparah*” (it should serve as atonement).

Questions:

- 1) Why is *Selichos* shorter on Erev Yom Kippur in many communities?
- 2) What are the various customs regarding reciting *Tachanun* on *Erev Yom Kippur*?
- 3) What are the customs regarding reciting *Mizmor Le'Sodah* on *Erev Yom Kippur*?
- 4) What about reciting *Avinu Malkeinu* on *Erev Yom Kippur*? What about on *Erev Yom Kippur* that is on a Friday?
- 5) What do we add to the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Mincha* on *Erev Yom Kippur*? Why?
- 6) What verses are invoked equally for boys and for girls when blessing our children? Why are we permitted to utilize them?
- 7) About how long ago did *Kol Nidrei* become incorporated into the *Yom Kippur* liturgy?
- 8) Why do we make a point of including transgressors of Torah Law specifically on *Yom Kippur*?
- 9) Why do we perform the declaration of *Kol Nidrei* (annulment of vows) specifically before *Yom Kippur*?
- 10) What does *Kol Nidrei* symbolize according to *Kabbalah*?
- 11) List two laws regarding the manner in which we recite of *Kol Nidrei*.
- 12) What is the optimum time for reciting *Kol Nidrei*?
- 13) What is the reason for wearing a *Kittel* on *Yom Kippur*?

Answers:

- 1) We shorten the *Selichos* because *Erev Yom Kippur* is considered like a *Yom Tov*. We also shorten some of the standard text of *Selichos* since we will say *Selichos* at *Maariv*.
- 2) Sephardim recite *Tachanun* by *Selichos* as well as by *Shacharis* but not at *Mincha*. Ashkenaz and *Nusach Sefard* recite it at *Selichos* but not the rest of the day.
- 3) Sephardim recite *Mizmor Le'Sodah* on *Erev Yom Kippur*. Ashkenaz and *Nusach Sefard* do not.
- 4) Sephardim recite *Avinu Malkeinu* on *Erev Yom Kippur*. Ashkenaz and *Nusach Sefard* do not. When *erev Yom Kippur* is on Friday, everyone agrees to recite *Avinu Malkeinu* by *Shacharis*.
- 5) We add *Viduy* and *Al Cheit*. We do this because the Sages were concerned that one should at least recite *Viduy* once before *Yom Kippur* as a precaution if one would choke on his food at the meal before *Yom Kippur*.
- 6) We say the *Pesukim* (verses) used for *Birchos Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessings). We are permitted to say them because: We don't raise our hands in the manner that *Kohanim* do. It is not during *Tefilla*. We do not have intent to do this for the purpose of fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Birchos Kohanim*.
- 7) It goes back all the way to the 8th and 9th centuries and possibly even earlier than that.
- 8) Because the *Gemara* stresses the importance of including all Jews in the public fast even those who have strayed from Judaism. This is learned from the eleventh ingredient in the *Ketores*, which was *Chelbana*, a spice with a bad odor.
- 9) A reason for annulling our vows at *Kol Nidrei* is because any transgression related to a violation of our vows cannot be atoned through the sanctity of *Yom Kippur* alone.
- 10) It symbolizes an oath that *Hashem* made to send the Jews to exile without return.

- 11) We recite it quietly along with the *Chazzan* if we have not yet performed *Hatoras Nedarim* beforehand. The *Chazzan* recites it three times, saying it louder and louder each time.
- 12) We should preferably recite it before nightfall.
- 13) We wear it on *Yom Kippur* when we are fasting and similar to *Malachim*. Additionally it reminds us of the shrouds with which we dress the deceased, in order to remind us of death to move us to repent.