

GMAR CHATIMAH TOVAH. Today is 10 Tishrei, 5779, Yom Kippur.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 711 Birnbaum Machzor) (p. 452 Artscroll Machzor)  
[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus,  
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1. Why is this date, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, chosen for Yom Kippur? Our Rabbis tell us that the choice of this date was initiated in the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf. Moshe ascended Mount Sinai a total of three times. Once to learn Torah with Hashem and receive the Ten Commandments on the Tablets. When he descended Mount Sinai he was confronted with the people dancing and singing around the Golden Calf. He threw down the Divine Tablets, breaking them, and then ascended Mount Sinai again to pray to God. A third trip atop the mountain was to produce a second set of Tablets, and to beseech God for forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf. Moshe descended Mount Sinai after this third trip on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei with assurance from God that forgiveness was being granted to Bnei Yisrael for the sin of the Golden Calf. This inaugurated and dedicated the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei for God to forgive the Jewish people. The sin of the Golden Calf surfaces again in the Mussaf liturgy when we describe the Roman persecution and execution of the ten rabbinical leaders. This is part of our Selichot prayers of the Mussaf. When the rabbis needed to ascertain God's position on their impending death, it was felt that it was due to the sin of the sale of Yosef. In addition to this sin, we see the connection to the Golden Calf by virtue of the High Priest wearing white vestments instead of his normal gold ones. The rejection of the gold was because of its association with the sin of the Golden Calf. I mention both these sins because we are not involved in either one of them, and yet we seem to bear the brunt of past sins not performed by us.

In general we are required to correct the ills of our people. It is not necessarily understood that we committed those sins of the past. We did not. But we live in the same mindset that we could commit those sins ourselves, the ones that bring about the Golden Calf, bring about animosity among brothers, and bring about the loss of the Holy Temple. With that type of a situation we are clearly in need of a Yom Kippur, at least once a year.

2. Whenever Bnei Yisrael sinned, God instructed Moshe to don the Tallit and say the Thirteen Merciful Attributes of God, the Hashem, Hashem.... (Tractate Rosh Hashanah 11). These Thirteen Merciful Attributes of God define God's measure of compassion. We would prefer that God invoke these attributes when He sits in judgment of us, instead of a stricter legal format of judgment referred to as Midat HaDin. Rav Soloveitchik would formulate that the Thirteen Merciful Attributes of God are the component of the covenant of love that Hashem had with the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. This covenant of the Patriarchs would bring a God of compassion to His court. That is the God we require in order to get through Yom Kippur and receive a better judgment for this coming year. The number 13, by the way, is associated by the Chatam Sofer to the thirteen times that the word Brit/Covenant is mentioned in the end of Parshat Lech Lecha when Hashem commands Avraham to the mitzvah of Brit Milah.

3. On Yom Kippur all the prohibitions of Shabbat are binding, as well as five additional prohibitions of the Afflictions. These are: (1) no eating and drinking, (2) no wearing leather shoes, (3) no anointing with oils, (4) no bathing, and (5) no marital relations. Usually a fast is to inspire penitence, Teshuvah. The Rambam says that the purpose of the Afflictions of Yom Kippur is to transform us in our actions of today to be like angels. Angels have no Free Will; they do exactly what Hashem commands them. Today we choose to be angels demonstrating the ability of total commitment to Hashem's word. It is out of our free will that we pose as angels in front of Hashem on Yom Kippur. I have added to the Rambam's idea by introducing the Free Will concept because man and angels are very different. If we were likened to angels today, we would, in essence, lose the rewards for our deeds. It is only through the means of Free Will when we choose the right path of life that we can earn Hashem's blessings. On a day of atonement we are not only trying to earn forgiveness, but we try to earn greater rewards and benefits that will last the whole year. This is evidenced by the type of prayer that the Kohen Gadol said at the end of the ritual of the day when he exited the Holy Temple, which is recorded in the Mussaf liturgy.

4. The refrain that appears in laining and is used throughout the liturgy is verse 30 of the reading, "for on this day he shall atone for you to cleanse you; from all your sins before Hashem shall you be cleansed." The question involved is what is the subject of the initial verb "he shall atone"? According to the Midrash the subject is God, and it should be a capital H, "He shall atone..." I think this is the best approach to take, because it creates the major headline of the day. Hashem will grant atonement because it is the day of Yom Kippur, even if there is no ritual service and no Holy Temple. It is easy to see why this is the refrain for Yom Kippur. We do not have a Temple or the ritual service as described at great length. This ritual service is not only the laining, but it is the central part of the Mussaf. The Chazzan is our Kohen Gadol of the day. There is a lengthy detailed description of the events in the Temple read in the Torah, but in the liturgy it is not just the Torah, it is the Mishnaic interpretation with a greater understanding of what transpired on this holy day in Yerushalayim. The upshot of this comment is that Yom Kippur day is a potent message even when the ritual service is lacking, and we exist today as a vibrant Jewish community even without a Holy Temple in Yerushalayim. (RED)

5. Through most of the Torah reading we understand that it is the role of the High Priest to represent the people as we approach Hashem on the holiest day of the year. Yet in the narrative he is not referred to as the High Priest, but just by name, Aharon. The Oznaim LaTorah (Rabbi Sorotzkin, Yerushalayim, early 20<sup>th</sup> century) states that it would have been normal for the Kohen Gadol to feel proud of his position and his role in the service. He is elevated as the most religious individual in the entire nation. This is a unique service that he performs, and it is the only day of the year that he actually enters the Holy of Holies in the Sanctuary. We rely upon him; there is nobody to see and view, or to check what he is doing in there. We rely upon him to do it properly. Our future is literally in his hands. By referring to Aharon by name the Torah is telling us that he did not succumb to the temptation of being

proud and arrogant. He remained humble throughout his career, and this we see by the Torah referring to him not as Aharon, Kohen Gadol, but just Aharon. This is a compliment to Aharon but also a message and a directive to all the High Priests who will succeed him throughout our history. Some of those did not live up to their Yichus. They did not do their forefather Aharon proud. There were times in a lot of stages of the history of the Holy Temple that the position of High Priest was filled by a Sadducee who parted from the traditions that the Rabbis taught, and this could happen among religious leaders of today. It is very important that leaders in general, and religious leaders in particular, should maintain humility in their position.

6. Yom Kippur is referred to as a Shabbat Shabbaton, as a complete Shabbat, a complete day of rest, for *you*. Very frequently, when we refer to a Shabbat, it is referred to as a Shabbat LaShem. Yom Kippur is a Shabbat for you, because we are benefiting greatly by Yom Kippur, as we see and experience on a yearly basis. Calling it a Shabbat Shabbaton, a complete rest, also reflects upon how we use this day, not just in prayer, but a total immersion in self-analysis, with introspection that is necessary in order for us to examine our past and recommit ourselves for the future. If we use the day in that fashion then we will succeed in fulfilling what the Torah refers to as a Shabbat Shabbaton.

HAFTARAH

(p. 719 Birnbaum Machzor) (p. 462 Artscroll Machzor)

The Rav suggested an explanation for this choice of the Haftarah from Isaiah. When the Jew must “seek out Hashem when He is accessible,” the initiative for the search rests entirely with man. This quotation is from the Haftarah of a regular fast day. The next verse there in Isaiah (55:7) contains the phrase, “let him return to God”; the return is up to man. This path to God is not a highway but rather a narrow, winding, and challenging road, reflecting the nature of Teshuvah on the other public fast days and throughout the year.

In contrast, on Yom Kippur God comes forward to meet man. Hashem facilitates the way for Israel’s return; He takes us by the hand and shows us how to do Teshuvah. He removes all obstacles and transforms an otherwise tortuous road into a straight highway, as implied by the opening verse which speaks about clearing a path. In a spiritually desolate world, we can easily become disoriented, losing our sense of reality. We are remote from repentance both intellectually and emotionally. In this wilderness, Hashem appears in order to show us the road home. Suddenly, the normally arduous Teshuvah process presents no hardship at all.

1. What are the five Afflictions of Yom Kippur?
2. Why say the Vidui (the Confessional) on Minchah of Erev Yom Kippur?
3. Why do we start Kol Nidre before sunset?
4. Why do we say “Baruch Shem K’vod Malchuto V’Olam Va’ed” out loud on Yom Kippur in the Shema, when we normally say it in an undertone during the year? (Midrash in Va’Etchanan)
5. Over the total Yom Kippur period how many times do we say the Vidui, Confessional, and when?
6. What do we read from the Torah on Yom Kippur morning?
7. Why does the Kohen Gadol not wear his special gold vestments for the Yom Kippur Avodah ritual service in the Holy Temple?
8. How many times did the Kohen Gadol do the Confessional on Yom Kippur, and for whom?
9. Name the five Amidahs of Yom Kippur.
10. Why blow the shofar at the end of Yom Kippur?

Relationships

- a) Aharon – Moshe
- b) Aharon – Amram
- c) Aharon – Pinchas
- d) Aharon – Nachshon
- e) Aharon – Kehat

ANSWERS FOR YOM KIPPUR 5779

1. The five Afflictions are: (1) no eating and drinking, (2) no wearing leather shoes, (3) no marital relations, (4) no anointing with oils, (5) no washing.
2. We say the Vidui on Minchah of Erev Yom Kippur because we are required to repent, and lest something happen to us in the last moments right before Yom Kippur starts.
3. We do not do the annulment of vows on Shabbat or Yom Tov, except for something truly necessary for Shabbat or Yom Tov, hence we do Kol Nidre before sunset.
4. Moshe heard angels saying the Baruch Shem when he was atop Mount Sinai. He “borrowed” the line from the angels, hence we say it quietly during the year. On Yom Kippur we are likened to angels and hence we say it out loud.
5. Ten. Twice in Maariv, twice in Shacharit, twice in Mussaf, twice at Minchah – that’s 8. And then one time in Minchah of Erev Yom Kippur, and once in Neilah.
6. We read the Torah on Yom Kippur morning from the beginning of Acharei Mot which is the complete description of the Avodah ritual service on Yom Kippur in the Holy Temple.
7. Because Bnei Yisrael sinned with the *Golden Calf* and the gold therefore cannot be used to gain atonement.
8. Three times. The first time the Kohen Gadol does a Confessional for himself and his family. The second time it is for all the Kohanim, and the third time is for the entire nation of Israel.
9. Ma’ariv, Shacharit, Mussaf, Minchah, and Neilah.
10. The blowing of the Shofar at the end of Yom Kippur is a reminder of the Shofar blown at the Jubilee – Yovel year.

Relationships:

- a) Brothers
- b) Father Amram
- c) Grandfather Aharon
- d) Brothers-in-law
- e) Uncle Kehat