THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF KOL NIDREI

The holiest day of the year, the day which the Torah designates as a Day of Atonement for the sins of the Jewish people, begins with the little understood, but very emotional Kol Nidrei. For reasons which are not completely known to us, the compilers of the Yom Kippur Machzor chose Kol Nidrei, which is basically a halachic procedure for annulling certain vows and oaths. Obviously, there is more to Kol Nidrei than meets the eye.

It is known that Kol Nidrei dates back to ancient times as far back as the era of the Anshei Kenesses Hagedolah (the men of the great assembly) some 2400 years ago. The earliest written version is in the siddur of Rav Amrom Gaon who lived in the 9th century.

In earlier times, much more than today, people used to accept upon themselves different types of obligations and restrictions. In order to ensure that these would actually be kept, people would label their self-imposed obligation as either a neder (a vow) or a shevuah (an oath) thus giving it legal force. The binding status of vows and oaths, and the horrific and tragic consequences of violating them, are discussed in many places in the Torah and Rabbinic literature.
The Torah recognizes that sometimes these vows and oaths were undertaken without consideration of the consequences. More often than not the individual making the oath did not realize how difficult it would be to keep it. Sometimes an oath was declared in anger, out of spite, and eventually the individual regretted his words and wished to take them back. Therefore, the Torah provided a legal formula called Hataras Nedarim, allowing a petitioner to present his case before a Beis Din (Rabbinical court) in order to find a legal loophole to save this person from violating his vow. This process involves complex Jewish law.

Before beseeching G-d for atonement of sins on Yom Kippur, it is imperative that each person absolve himself of any vows or oaths that he may have made and violated. The severity of violating a vow or oath is such that it may block his or her entire atonement process. Therefore, one who is aware of any violations of oaths and vows is strongly urged to petition a Jewish court in order to find a way out of his self-imposed obligations.

But not everyone is familiar with the procedure of Hataras Nedarim (annulling vows) and not everyone who has violated a vow or oath realizes that they have done so. To solve this problem, Kol Nidrei was instituted. Kol Nidrei declares that in case an individual made a vow or an oath during the past year and somehow forgot it and violated his vow, in effect he tells the court on Kol Nidrei night, the “court” being the Chazan and congregational leaders—that had he realized the gravity of violating an oath he would never have said it in the first place. This is the accepted reason according to most authorities why Kol Nidrei is recited on Yom Kippur night.

**Yom Kippur • Teshuva**

YOM KIPPUR is one of the greatest gifts G-d granted to the Jewish nation. The mitzvah of Teshuva (repentance) provides a mechanism for erasing our transgressions. This is accomplished when we truly regret our past actions and resolve to improve the future. The basic components of Teshuva are a) abandoning our improper ways and actions; b) regretting our past actions; and c) resolving not to repeat our past improper actions.

The above components must be verbally expressed, which is what we call Viduy (confession). Thought and mental resolution are insufficient. Teshuva can only cleanse sins that are between G-d and man. However, Teshuva alone cannot help if one sins against his fellow man. For example, if one has stolen from someone, Teshuva can’t be effective unless one returns the stolen item and appeases the individual. Similarly, if one has embarrassed someone, Teshuva alone will not work until the transgressor appeases the victim.

To enhance our spiritual ability to relate to the holiness of the day, the Torah (in conjunction with certain additions instituted by our sages) has forbidden eating, drinking, washing, anointing (perfume, deodorant, creams, etc.), wearing leather shoes and marital intimacy on Yom Kippur. These restrictions begin before sunset on Yom Kippur eve. See: Halachic Discussions.

**FORGIVENESS A PRE-REQUISITE FOR ATONEMENT**

A well known principle in the Mishna says that Yom Kippur does not atone for sins between Adam L’Chaveiro (between man and man) unless one has first appeased and received forgiveness from the one they have wronged. The power of Yom Kippur to atone for sins cannot be activated unless one has assuaged any hurt feelings that he or she has caused.

One must ask to be forgiven for any type of act that may have harmed another person, whether it is physical, verbal or financial.

**Q: What if someone is upset at you for no reason at all? Do you have to appease them?**

**A: Yes, you do** —

a. Because you must clarify whether or not the individual has a legitimate claim against you or not.
b. Second, the Sefas Emes proves from the Talmud in Yuma 87B that even when someone is unjustifiably upset, that person must still be appeased. If, however, you clarify that you did absolutely nothing wrong, and the other person’s grievances are irrational, possibly because they are jealous, insecure or neurotic, then you have no obligation to appease that person.

Q: Can forgiveness be asked through a messenger, or must it be done in person?
A: It is preferable that it be done in person. If, however, this is difficult to do, or if there is a better chance of forgiveness being granted if a third party mediates, then it should be done through a third party or by phone or mail.

Q: How should one react when asked for forgiveness?
A: There are three basic reasons why one should forgive someone when they ask for forgiveness.
   a. As children of Abraham we are expected to learn from him and follow his lead when he graciously forgave Avimelech for kidnapping Sora. Anyone who conducts himself differently and doesn’t forgive is, in the words of the Rambam, cruel.
   b. Middah k’neged middah (measure for measure): G-d deals with us in the same way we deal with others. If we forgive others, then the Almighty will forgive us.
   c. One who allows hatred or dislike towards others to remain in his heart; his or her prayers are then blocked from reaching heaven. (Mateh Efraim 606:4).

Congregational Family and Shul News

Mazel Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Simeon Schreiber on the birth of a Great Granddaughter to Rabbi Schreiber’s grandchildren Jillian and Aryeh Katz living in Los Angeles CA.

Mazel Tov to Gloria Sterental on the engagement of her son Moises Sterental to Laura Betesh from Hollywood, Florida.

Refuah Sheleimah
We wish refuah sheleimah to: Allen Packer, Alexander ben Esther Raizel, Rabbi Simeon Schreiber, Shimon ben Blima, Dani Smith, Doniel ben Mindel.

Sukkos Club
We have a wonderful annual tradition in our Young Israel of having a Kiddush each day of Sukkos in our beautiful Sukkah. To support this Sukkos Kiddush Club tradition we look forward to having contributions from as many members and friends as possible, so that this is truly a community sponsorship. Toward this end, we are soliciting a $100 contribution per family, and names of sponsors will be inserted into the Shmooze News prior to Sukkos. If you are interested in being part of our Sukkos Kiddush Club, please contact the office or Stuart Harris. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sukkot Dinner
Please join us for Sukkot meals in our beautiful Sukkah on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night. Space is limited – please make reservations ASAP. Price per person per meal $100/adult, $50/child.

Since Kol Nidrei is 6:55 and candle lighting is 6:51, if a woman chooses to drive to Shul after lighting candles, she must make a verbal declaration that she is not accepting upon herself Shabbos Yom Kippur until she arrives at Shul.
If you are interested in sponsoring Kiddush or Seuda Shlishis, please contact Stuart Harris or Yakira at (305) 866-0203.

Please submit all insertions for the Shmooze News to yakira@yicbh.org by noon on Thursday.