



THE NEKUDA TOVA

TISHREI COMPANION

A Practical Guide to Diving Beneath the
Surface and Experiencing Joy and Connection On
Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos



לזכות
עלקא דבורה בת מרים רבקה חנה

לעילוי נשמות
בלה נחמה בת יצחק מאיר
מלכה בת קריינדל

 **Thank You!**

Thank You Hashem!

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Tishrei Companion

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The Unity of Tishrei

Harav Yussie Zakutinsky Shlita

Rav of K'hal Mevakshei Hashem, Lawrence NY

The month of *Tishrei* can be understood as consisting of three key parts: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. While each of these holidays contains a myriad of intricate details, one can conceptualize a unified theme that binds them together.

The general theme of *Tishrei* revolves around the creation of the world, the Divine act of bringing existence into being—*yesh me'ayin*, something from nothing. Before *Tishrei*, it is as if we are in a state that reflects the world before creation. Then comes *Tishrei*, when the *Ribono Shel Olam* declares, “Let there be light,” and more specifically, “Let us make man.” At this point, the world becomes a tangible reality. However, this newfound existence causes a degree of discomfort for the Jewish soul (*nishmas Yisrael*), which does not fully identify with this physical world. Unlike other creatures that only begin to exist with creation, *nishmas Yisrael* precedes creation. As such, it retains an innate connection to the pre-creation state, which was characterized by absolute oneness, simplicity, and G-dliness.

This pre-creation reality was infinitely pure and divine, an ideal state where the soul felt naturally at home. With creation, however, *nishmas Yisrael* is thrust into a world that is complex, chaotic, and far removed from that simplicity. This creates a sense of inner conflict. The soul, having experienced the sublime unity before creation, now finds itself in a fragmented, multifaceted world that doesn't seem to accommodate the Divine in the same way. The mission given to the soul is to transform this world into a place befitting Hashem's kingship, even though it may not fully understand how this is possible or why it's necessary.

Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of this reconciliation of the soul. The primary *avodah* (service) on Rosh Hashanah is *kabbalas ol Malchus Shamayim*—accepting the yoke of Hashem's Sovereignty. This acceptance must be done without intellectual understanding or emotional clarity. The world may appear chaotic and disconnected from its Divine source, yet we accept that this is where Hashem wants us to serve Him. We submit to the Will of Hashem, even when it feels distant from the oneness we instinctively yearn for. This acceptance evokes a sense of *din* (judgment), not only because it is the Day of Judgment, but also because creation itself, for *nishmas Yisrael*, feels like an act of *din*, a decree that doesn't fully resonate with our inner reality.

Yom Kippur then comes as a day of consolation for the soul after the intense service of Rosh Hashanah. As we enter into the purifying waters of Yom Kippur, the *neshamah* is reassured that, while it inhabits a post-creation world, the pre-creation reality still exists. The deeper layers of the soul remain connected to that original oneness, untouched by the chaos of the physical world. The purification of Yom Kippur restores the soul to its pre-creation state, reminding it that this deeper truth continues to exist behind the scenes. The *kapparah* (atonement) of Yom Kippur is the second step in this process of reconciliation.

Finally, the Yom Tov of Sukkos offers the ultimate *nechamah* (comfort) for the soul. While we may have initially thought that the presence of Hashem was more tangible in the pre-creation state, Sukkos reveals a profound truth: Hashem's essence is found most intimately in this lower world, in the very physicality and complexity that initially seemed so distant from the Divine. The *Baal HaTanya* writes that the transition from the spiritual realms to the physical world is so inconceivable that it must be directly connected to Hashem's very essence. This means that it is specifically through our *avodah*, through our work in this physical world, that we are closest to Hashem, even if we do not always feel that closeness.

This is the great joy of Sukkos. While the *neshamah* may long to feel the closeness to Hashem that existed before creation, it learns on Sukkos that true closeness to Hashem is found through serving Him in this world. The joy of the festival stems from this realization—that despite the challenges and complexity of the physical world, our *avodah* here brings us closer to Hashem's essence than any spiritual experience could. The soul is not begrudgingly part of this world, but happily so, having discovered that its true closeness to Hashem is achieved through the *avodah* in this lower world.

In this way, *Tishrei* presents a profound journey for the *neshamah*, from accepting the mission of Rosh Hashanah, to finding solace on Yom Kippur, and ultimately discovering the deep joy of Sukkos, when the soul realizes that its true connection to Hashem is found specifically in this world, in its service of Him through the challenges and complexities of physical existence.

May it be Hashem's Will, that throughout this entire process, we are open to receive messages of closeness, and that we ultimately see the completion of our soul's mission with the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdosh* speedily and in our days.

Introduction

Rachmana liba baei, Hashem desires our heart. Hashem gave us *mitzvos* and special times of the year to be a joyous duty of the heart, an experience of feeling the attachment of our *neshamah* to its Source. This Companion is intended to help you develop your inner connection to Hashem by providing practical and actionable ideas to help you connect with the *pnimius* (inner dimension), of the *mitzvos* of the month of Tishrei.

The goal of this guide is to offer practical Torah ideas and exercises to help you reveal Hashem's presence in your life today.

The Outer Action

This is a brief description of the *mitzvah* we are about to do.

The Inner Intention

This section contains Torah ideas rooted in *Chassidus* and *Kabbalah*, and is largely inspired by the *sefer*, *B'yam Darkecha*. *B'yam Darkecha* was written by a student of Rav Yitzchok Meir Morgenstern, and is an incredible work that takes deep ideas and presents them in a down-to-earth and practical way, paving a pathway to an inner world of depth and beauty that is accessible to anyone.

A Moment of Mindfulness

This section contains a practical exercise or meditation to guide you to incorporate the Torah concepts into the *mitzvah* you are about to do, so you can do it with intention and inner meaning.

The Hebrew phrase or quote on the very bottom of the page are generally lyrics to a song that can help you internalize the ideas found on that page, or that you can use as inspiration for any singing you do over Yom Tov. Besides these, most other Hebrew terms are defined whenever they are used, and there is a Glossary in the back to help with any Hebrew word or concept you may be unfamiliar with.

If you are new to this kind of inner work, it may feel uncomfortable to engage in it, but give it a shot and see where it takes you. These are experiential exercises, and the best way to use them to help you connect with Hashem is to simply try them out! Take these ideas and find your own way to connect to them in whichever environment you find yourself.

- Rabbi Menashe Uhr
& the TYH Family

Rosh Hashanah

The Essence of Rosh Hashanah

 Before Hashem created our physical world, the Infinite Light of Hashem (*Ohr Ein Sof*) filled the entirety of existence. In order to create a world where a finite human could exist, Hashem had to constrict and conceal His light (*tzimtzum*). This concealment created a new reality in which Hashem's Oneness was not only 'not obvious,' but was well concealed, to the point that it became easy to feel that our world maintains its own existence, with its own rules of nature. However, this *tzimtzum* of Hashem's light, which enables us to see a world based on "rules of nature" and "cause and effect," does not change the truth of reality an iota: Hashem, and only Hashem, gives every one of us our existence and life at every moment, and controls and guides everything that happens in our world (*ein od milvado*).

We have the free will to choose how much we live with this reality. Even a believing Jew who tries his or her best to follow the Torah and *mitzvos*, has a choice to live as a "Level 1" Yid or a "Level 2" Yid.

Level One Yid:

A Level One Yid feels that he maintains his own existence, even though he knows that Hashem created and guides the world. He sees Hashem as his "boss," and knows that the Torah is the blueprint to life, and therefore commits to follow the Torah and *mitzvos*.

Level Two Yid:

A Level Two Yid knows and feels that the concealment of Hashem, and the illusion called "nature," does not change the profound truth of *ein od milvado*. He knows that, at every moment, we exist only if Hashem 'wills us into existence', and therefore even our talents and abilities are only gifts that Hashem is loaning us to be used as a vessel to spread Hashem's light. A Level Two Yid lives a life of deep attachment (*dveikus*), authentic humility, and ego-nullification before Hashem (*bittul*).

cont. on next page

I want to live a life of closeness

Rosh Hashanah, the day of the creation of man, the day that Hashem's light was concealed in the first place, is the day we crown Hashem as King. We commit to push ourselves to follow the laws of the King; every Yid on their own level. We can't ask Hashem for a deep connection to Him if we aren't trying to live our life the way He instructed us to! The only way to reach Level 2, is to first achieve Level 1, by accepting the responsibility to follow the Torah (*kabalas ohl*).

Regardless of what level we felt we were on before Rosh Hashanah, on this great day every Yid is invited to upgrade their reality. Today we can choose to elevate ourselves to Level Two Yidden by telling Hashem that we don't want to live with any sense of detachment from Him anymore, that we want to live a life of deep closeness to His presence.

Hashem, I want an upgrade! I want to live and feel that You are everything, and I am nothing without You. I know that although the world looks like it maintains its own existence, this is a false illusion. I am choosing a life of truth, and because of my deep love for you, and desire to be close to You, I crown You as King over me, and pledge to see You and only You in every single thing that ever happens to me.



אֲזוּת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת ד' אֲזוּת אֶבְקֶשׁ
שְׁבֹתִי בְּבֵית ד' כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי
לְחַזוֹת בְּנֶעֱם ד' וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכְלוֹ

Simanim / Symbolic Foods

The Outer Action

Various symbolic foods are eaten at the festive meal on the night of Rosh Hashanah. Before eating the first one (the apple dipped in honey), all recite the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

We then recite a prayer before eating each food. Every prayer begins with the following words:

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

May it be Your will, Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers...

then recite the ending that is appropriate for each food:

Apple in Honey: **שִׂתְּנוּהוּ עֲלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וְבוֹתֵקָה**

...that You renew for us a good and sweet year.

Carrots: **שִׂיבְרֵנוּ וְכוֹוִיתֵנוּ**

...that our merits increase.

Leek / Cabbage: **שִׂיכְרְתוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ**

...that our enemies be decimated.

Beets: **שִׂיסְתַּלְכּוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ**

...that our adversaries be removed.

Dates: **שִׂיטְמוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ**

...that our enemies be consumed.

Gourd: **שִׂיקְרַע רֹעַ גִּזְרֵנוּ וְיִקְרָאוּ קִפְּיָה וְכוֹוִיתֵנוּ**

...that the decree of our sentence be torn asunder; and may our merits be proclaimed before You.

Pomegranate: **שִׂיבְרָה וְכוֹוִיתֵנוּ כְּרַמּוֹן**

...that our merits increase as (the seeds of) a pomegranate.

Fish: **שִׂנְפֵּרָה וְנִרְבָּה כְּדָגִים**

...that we be fruitful and multiply like fish.

Head of a sheep or fish: **שִׂנְהִיהַ כְּרֹאשׁ וְלֹא כְּזָנָב**

...that we be as the head and not as the tail.

The Inner Intention

While eating these symbolic foods, we are not merely expressing a hope and prayer for a good year; we are demonstrating complete *bitachon*, (reliance on Hashem), trusting that Hashem will definitely grant us a sweet year full of blessing! Yes, it is the day of judgment - but the judge is our loving father, and He will certainly have mercy and grant us a fantastic year. As Rebbi Nachman of Breslov said, "one should be wise and only think good thoughts on Rosh Hashanah and keep in mind that Hashem will be good to us."

Moment of Mindfulness

This is a powerful opportunity to internalize your *bitachon* that Hashem will grant you and your family a wonderful year. Take a moment to visualize in your mind all the incredible things that will happen this coming year. Take that a step further by sharing this vision with those around you.

בָּרוּךְ הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בָּשֵׁם

Shofar

We deepen our perception of Hashem's presence in our life by following His ways and doing *mitzvos* with inner meaning and intention. This is our way of expressing: *"Hashem, I know this is Your world, and I want to live a life of closeness to You and be Your faithful messenger to spread Your light. I know that only this will bring me the deep joy and meaning that I seek."* This builds on itself and in turn, Hashem gifts us with an even deeper relationship with Him, and we start to see Him and live with His presence even more, causing us to do more *mitzvos*, and the cycle builds on itself (*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*).

The opposite is true as well. Sin results from not experiencing Hashem's presence, as we give in to the enticing, but shallow, pleasures of the physical world. This gives credence to the external world of falsehood, the evil entities (*klipos*) that conceal Hashem's presence. The worst part of this is that when we give in to these *klipos*, we are inviting them to stay with us, and they cover our soul, creating a barrier between us and our Father in Heaven. This causes us to experience Hashem's presence even less, leading us to further sin (*aveirah goreres aveirah*).

This is the *pnimius*, the deeper inner world, of what's going on when we do a *mitzvah* or an *aveirah*, and it is this inner point that we address in the unique *teshuvah* that we do when we hear the Shofar.

👑 The Outer Action

We listen to the sound of the Shofar.

👑 The Inner Intention

Shofar - The Melody of the Jewish Soul

Shofar is the melody of yearning of our *neshamah*; the wordless sound of our soul calling out for what it really, really wants, regardless of how far we think we've strayed, or how much we followed the shallow and false pleasures the *klipos* have been serving us all year.



בן המצור קראתי קול ענני במרוחב קול

Even though it 'looked like' I was at times more interested in following my yetzer hara than in following my soul, that perception is absolutely false. It does not in any way represent or define who I am. **I am a pure, holy, and righteous soul, a chelek Elohai Memal mamash, a literal piece of Hashem.** My only true desire is the desire to come home to You, to live a life of deep attachment to You; to follow in Your ways, to bask in Your presence, to see You, and to live with You in every single area of my life.

When we take this step towards Hashem, He responds in kind and draws close to us. Our Father in Heaven looks down and says: "Look at my beloved children! No matter how far they may have strayed, they never give up, they never stop yearning for closeness to Me. They return to Me and trust in My mercy and love for them because they love Me from the depths of their hearts and souls."

When the shofar is blown it is like an x-ray of our souls. Do we yearn for closeness to Hashem right now?

A Moment of Mindfulness

As you listen to the shofar, close your eyes and think:

Hashem, even though I have been distant in the past, right now, in this moment, I want to return fully to You. Even when I've drifted astray, my deepest desire has always been for closeness with You, and I haven't given up on my spiritual ambitions. I want You Hashem, and I don't want to believe the lies of the yetzer hara anymore! In this moment, as I fulfill Your mitzvah to hear the shofar on the Day of Judgement, please look at only the real me; a righteous and pure soul that wants to cling to You.

Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

When we do a *mitzvah* again and again with inner intention, we instill the *pnimius* of the *mitzvah* into our soul. This is part of the reason we do some *mitzvos* repeatedly, such as hearing *shofar* many times over on Rosh Hashanah. Listening to the *shofar* with the inner intentions, as we discussed in the previous pages, is a powerful tool to bring us closer to Hashem, so we want to do it over and over to drive the point deep into our souls! The second day of Rosh Hashanah is not intended to be a simple repeat of the first day; rather it is supposed to provide us with the opportunity to internalize and absorb the essence of Rosh Hashanah in a profoundly deeper way than the first.

If we do a *Mitzvah* without inner intention, without connecting to it in a heartfelt way, it often doesn't really make us feel much closer to Hashem. When we discover the *pnimius* of the *mitzvah*, it completely transforms our relationship with the *mitzvah*, and we start to see it as an incredible opportunity to bring ourselves closer to Hashem! The natural outcome of discovering the *pnimius* of the *mitzvah* is that it excites our soul with a desire to come close to Hashem, which bursts forth with a passion to **go do the mitzvah now!** On this level we do the external action of the *mitzvah* with inner intention and passion. We don't do the *mitzvah* because we feel we have to, we do it because we really, really want to!

The goal of the second day of Rosh Hashanah is not to simply repeat the actions of the first day, but to upgrade them to Level Two *mitzvos*. Rosh Hashanah tends to start with a sense of grave responsibility. We feel the seriousness of the day, and we push ourselves to do the *mitzvos*, to *daven*, to hear the *shofar*, to eat the meals, with as much meaning as we can. As we internalize the *pnimius* of Rosh Hashanah, as we've explained in the previous pages, our perspective shifts. **כמה טוב השם!** Look how great Hashem is! Even though I've strayed, He knows what I really want, and He's giving me the incredible opportunity to realign myself with my innermost desire, to live a life of attachment to Him. He accepts my return with love and mercy. The natural outcome of the internalization of this *pnimius* is for it to burst out and express itself in **action**, encouraging one to do *mitzvos* with excitement, warmth, and passion.

What an incredible day this is! Give me more! Let me hear shofar another time, and experience an even deeper teshuvah moment of realigning me with what I really want! Give me another tefillah so I can pour out my heart to my Creator with love and passion! Let's eat another holy and festive meal with family or friends!

It's geshmak to be a Yid!

Davening For Physical Needs

The Outer Action

We daven for a year of health and wealth.

The Inner Intention

Many *tzaddikim* write that the focus of our prayers on Rosh Hashanah should be on the coronation of the King. The only thing we should 'worry about' is increasing the honor of the King, and *davening* for the day that "every creation will know that He is their Creator." We daven that we should serve Hashem with closeness, joy, and deep attachment.

It is very difficult for us to serve Hashem properly without having our physical needs taken care of, and therefore it is appropriate for us to ask Hashem to take care of our needs so that we can serve Him properly and bring honor to the King in this world. It isn't honorable for the King when His children appear to be lacking and needy! Hashem wants His children to have what they need, and feels pain when a Yid is lacking or going through a difficult time.

It's important to authentically express to Hashem that you are asking for your *gashmius* - physical needs - so that you can serve Him better and get closer to Him, and not merely to bask in the luxuries of the material world in a G-dless way.

A powerful way to show Hashem that our request for our physical needs is truly for the sake of the honor of the King, is to ask Hashem to provide the physical needs of other Yidden, be it your family, your friends, or ideally - all of Klal Yisroel. If we daven for others, and not just ourselves, it demonstrates to Hashem that it is truly the honor of the King that concerns us, and that the honor of the King is diminished if any of His children are lacking.

A Moment of Mindfulness

Hashem, please provide me with the ability to serve You properly. Please give me a year of good health so that I have the energy and ability to serve You. Please provide me with abundant parnassa so that I can buy food, clothing, and everything else that I need to be able to serve You. Give me and my family, and all of Your children, the means to perform all of Your mitzvos with honor and royalty, and to generously give charity to those in need. Do this for Your sake, Hashem, and not for mine.

למעןך אלקינו עשה ולא לנו

Tashlich

👑 The Outer Action

We go out and say the *tefillah* of Tashlich by pond or a river.

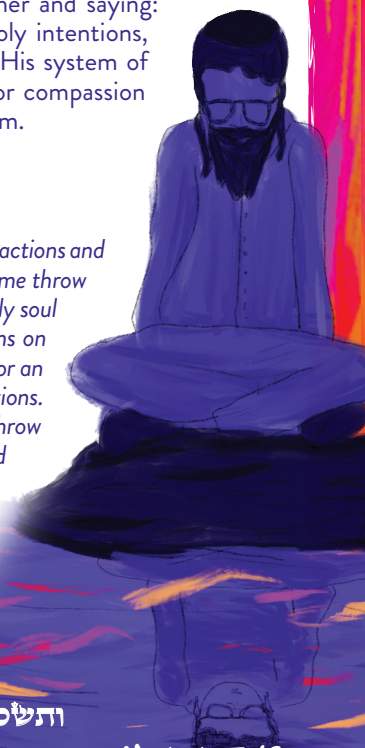
👑 The Inner Intention

After the deep work of realigning ourselves with Hashem during davening and shofar blowing, we want to get rid of our sins that have kept us distant from Hashem. So, with childlike simplicity, we go to the water to ask Hashem to “throw all of our sins into the depths of the sea.” Think about the *emunah* peshuta, the simplistic faith in Hashem, we demonstrate when we do this!

We throw our sophisticated self into the water, and start over again like a young child, with purity and simplicity. We beg Hashem to get rid of our aveiros. Even if we achieved high levels of attachment to Hashem during davening and shofar, we demonstrate humility and *bittul* by acknowledging our utter reliance on Hashem's mercy. We don't try to battle our way through the Day of Judgment through lofty levels of *dveikus*; instead, we seek favor with childlike simplicity and *emunah* peshuta. Then Hashem looks at us and sees a sweet young child looking at his father and saying: “Abba, please help me.” Hashem sees our pure, holy intentions, and understands that we aren't trying to outsmart His system of judgement, but rather we are simply asking Him for compassion because we love Him and want to come closer to Him.

👑 A Moment of Mindfulness

Hashem, I know I have all kinds of calculations to justify my actions and plans on how I'm going to do better. In this moment, help me throw away my sophisticated adult self and express only my G-dly soul that you breathed into me. Hashem, I have no fancy plans on how to merit a positive judgment for a great year ahead, nor an eloquent lawyer to advocate for me and justify all my actions. Abba, Father in Heaven, it says in your Torah “You will throw all of our sins into the depths of the sea.” Therefore I stand before a body of water, and I beg of you to throw my sins away, and help me return to You with love and mercy.



ותשלך במצולות ים כל חטאותם

You will throw all sins into the depths of the sea. – Michah 7:19

Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

There is a specific area to which we can bring a *tikkun* (rectification/atonement) on each of the 10 days of repentance. These correspond to the 10 *sefiros*, which are the ten attributes through which Hashem manifests Himself and interacts with our world. On each day of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, Hashem gives us a special spiritual energy that helps us work on that day's particular mission.

Any time of the day is a good time for *teshuvah* and spiritual work, but there are two specific times that are most ideal:

Zochreinu L'chaim

Remember us for life, King who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life - for Your sake, Living G-d

During these days, we add this extra line near the beginning of each *shmoneh esray*, asking Hashem to remember us for life. This is a powerful time to express to Hashem that the “life” we are asking for is a life “for Your sake,” a life of closeness to Hashem. Have in mind to receive the unique spiritual energy of the day, and resolve to use the abilities He gives you for the reasons He gives them to you: to serve Him with your heart and soul.

Holy Eating

The *tzaddikim* teach us that the greatest time of the year to work on eating with holiness and intent is during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. During these days, there is a special Heavenly assistance that helps us connect with the *avodah* of holy eating. Eating with holiness is the second powerful opportunity to work on the unique daily *teshuvah* of the day. Eating with holiness means to “eat with Hashem,” through the power of our thoughts. There isn't only one way to do this - everyone can find the intention and thoughts that bring them to this goal, as we will explain in the section on Holy Eating. Remember: holy eating isn't a complex Kabbalistic concept for great *tzaddikim*, it can be as simple as thinking about Hashem in any way while you eat. **While you are eating, have in mind to receive the unique spiritual energy of the day, and engage in the daily *avodah* as described below.**

Turn to page 20 to read more about Holy Eating.

יְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים מֶלֶךְ חַיָּים בְּחַיִּים וְכַתְּבוּנוּ
בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים לְמַעַן אֲכָלִים חַיִּים

The Unique Daily Teshuvah

Day One / 1 Tishrei / Sefirah of Kesser (Crown)

On the first day, which is the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we work on our *ratzon*, desire. On this day, there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for our mischanneled desires from this past year: all the times that we felt or expressed a desire for something that takes us away from our connection to Hashem. We reaffirm within ourselves that the only desire of our soul is to serve Hashem, and we commit to follow His ways. *We elaborated more on this idea in the section on Shofar, on page 7.*

Take a moment to identify, and bring to mind, a desire you had this past year for something that would distance you from your connection to Hashem.

Hashem, I know that the only true and lasting pleasure I can experience is the pleasure of feeling close to You. I regret the desire I had for _____. Please Hashem, help me have a year of seeking only the deep meaning and joy of my relationship with You.

Day Two / 2 Tishrei / Sefirah of Chochmah (Wisdom)

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we work on recognizing “*Yichud Hashem*” / “Hashem’s Oneness,” with a goal of experiencing *bittul*, ego nullification. (Read more about the primary focus of the second day of Rosh Hashanah on page 9.) On this day there, is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times we credited ourselves with our successes and failed to see Hashem’s guiding role in those experiences. We reaffirm our belief that Hashem guides and orchestrates every single thing that happens to us with love and care, and that nothing can happen against His will.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind a significant event of the past year where you credited your physical or spiritual accomplishments to your talents and left Hashem out of the picture.

Hashem, I know that was You. I regret that I didn't see You then, but I see You now. Please Hashem, help me have a year of seeing Your guiding hand in everything that happens to me.

Day Three / 3 Tishrei / Sefirah of Binah (Understanding)

If you want to do this work while eating, do it by the meal before the fast of Tzom Gedalya begins.

On the third day of *Aseres Yemai Teshuvah*, we work on *hisbonenus* (contemplation) and *hishtokekus* (yearning). On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do teshuvah for the times that we yearned for sin or used our Hashem-given talents to do something against His will. We reaffirm our desire to use the talents He gave us to serve Him with a fiery passion, and commit to contemplate His existence and guiding Hand in our life.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind a talent you have that you've underutilized in serving Hashem.

Hashem, I know that my talent to _____ is a gift from You. I regret the opportunities I missed to use this ability to serve You better. Please Hashem, allow me to channel this gift, and all the abilities You gave me, to do Mitzvos, help my fellow Jew, and come closer to You.

Day Four / 4 Tishrei / Sefirah of Daas (Knowledge)

On the fourth day we work on *daas*, which is the ability to internalize the knowledge we have to the extent that it converts our thoughts and belief in Hashem (in our mind) into actions and *mitzvos* (with our bodies). On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do teshuvah for the times that our beliefs were not reflected by our actions. We reaffirm within ourselves that complete *emunah*, faith in Hashem, is not *emunah* that remains as an intellectual knowledge of our minds (and is then sometimes contradicted by our actions!), but rather it is *emunah* so strong that it guides and dictates our actions.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind an area of your Judaism that remains 'stuck' in your mind as an idea you believe in, but has not yet been expressed through action (such as a *mitzvah* you know about and maybe appreciate but don't "do" properly).

Hashem, I know that You want me to act according to Your Will, and not just to think according to Your Will. I regret that when it comes to _____, I haven't been able to convert my good thoughts and intentions into actions. Please Hashem, help me repair the disconnect between my mind and my actions, so that I will always act in accordance with Your Will.

ותן בלבנו בינה להבין ולהשכיל לשמור ולעשות
וכליית את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך באהבה

Day Five / 5 Tishrei / Sefirah of Chessed (Kindness)

On the fifth day we work on *ahavah* / love. On this day, there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the love we had for any sin, habit, or belief that takes us away from our relationship with Hashem. We remind ourselves that the ultimate love is the love for Hashem, the love for the Torah, and the love for the Jewish people.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind a love that you have for something that brings you further from Hashem.

Hashem, You gave me the ability to love. I regret that I mischanneled this love by feeling and expressing a love for _____. Please Hashem, help me redirect my love and passion in the year ahead to love You, to love the Torah, and to love my fellow Jew.

Day Six / 6 Tishrei / Sefirah of Gevurah (Strength)

On the sixth day, we work on *yirah* / awe and fear. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for failing to feel awe of Hashem and fear of sin. We express our desire to be more bothered by (and frightened of) sin, because sins make us distant from Hashem.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind a sin that you do not feel very bothered by.

*Hashem, I know that actions of sin create a barrier between us, and I regret that I am not very bothered by the sin of _____. Please instill within me *yiras* hachet, fear of sin.*

Day Seven / 7 Tishrei / Sefirah of Tiferes (Beauty)

On the seventh day, we work on *dveikus* / attachment to Hashem. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times that we attached and committed ourselves to the temptations of the physical world. We reaffirm our belief that the deepest desire we have is to cling to Hashem with humility and authenticity, and we commit to work on developing this *dveikus*.

The primary pathways to develop *dveikus* are by learning Torah with purity and commitment, by getting ourselves comfortable with talking to Hashem in our own heartfelt words, and by thinking holy thoughts.

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind one of the pathways to *dveikus* that you struggle with, and ask Hashem for help.

*Hashem, I struggle with my *dveikus* when it comes to getting myself into the habit of speaking to You freely and openly in my own words (because _____). Please break down the barrier between us, and empower me to feel comfortable to share my thoughts, feelings, struggles, and joys with You at any time.*

דבך ליבנו במיטותיך
ויחזר לבבנו לאהבה וליראה את שמך

Day Eight / 8 Tishrei / Sefirah of Netzach (Victory)

On the eighth day, we work on *netzach* / victory, which is expressed through stubborn determination to win over the *yetzer hara* even when we don't feel the light and enjoyment of engaging in our Judaism. By remembering the times we experienced our love for Hashem and Hashem's love for us when we were on a spiritual high, we can push through a spiritual low (*katnus*) with strength, even when we aren't feeling the love. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times when we somewhat 'abandoned' our *avodah*, instead of pushing to properly navigate through the spiritual low point. We also do *teshuvah* for the "smaller" temptations we gave into that would have only taken a minor effort of self-control to overcome. The *teshuvah* is not for falling into a spiritual low - that is a normal part of the cycle of ups and downs in service of Hashem; rather, it is for failing to recalibrate ourselves to adapt to the unique *avodah* of navigating times of *katnus*. (See the essay on *Katnus* in the TYH Torah Pesach Companion to learn how to navigate times of *katnus*).

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind a time that you fell into a period of *katnus* (spiritual disconnect) that you struggled to navigate.

Hashem, I know that You are with me through the ups and downs, but I've found it so hard to see You when I go through a spiritual low. I wish I could have pushed myself more to serve You with stubborn determination even when I didn't "feel it." Please Hashem, help me learn the art of navigating katnus and give me the strength to see and hold onto You through the twists and turns and the highs and lows of my spiritual journey.

Day Nine / 9 Tishrei / Sefiros of Hod (Splendor), Yesod (Foundation), and Malchus (Kingship)

Yom Kippur itself has its own unique focus, and therefore we finish the work of the remaining *sefiros* on the 9th of *Tishrei*, which is Erev Yom Kippur. As the hours go by and we approach the holy day, we push ourselves to increase our *teshuvah* as much as we can, by engaging in *teshuvah* in multiple areas, as well as other customs of the day that will help us to spiritually prepare for Yom Kippur.

Please turn to page 21 for the unique *avodah* of Erev Yom Kippur.

אֵשׁ עֵינֵי אֵל הַהָרִים
מֵאֵין יִבּוֹא עֲזָרִי עֲזָרִי מֵעַם ד'

Holy Eating

The many festive holiday meals during the month of Tishrei are particularly powerful opportunities to engage in the special *avodah* of Holy Eating!

With a little bit of mindfulness, one can transform eating from a mundane physical activity to a profoundly spiritual one. Hashem created us with a need to eat, not only to sustain our bodies, but also to sustain our souls. Each time we are hungry, we have the opportunity to renew our connection to Hashem, the Source of our existence. Our job in this world is to reveal Hashem where He is hidden. The *yetzer hara* works hard to blind us from seeing Hashem while we eat.

The goal is to be “eating with Hashem” by experiencing His Presence while eating. This may seem overly lofty, but even trying this once a day or once a week is a very powerful way to connect to Hashem and bring more blessing into your life. The key to eating with holiness is in the power of your thoughts. Try thinking about one of these ideas before or during your meal, or while making a *brachah* on your food.

- **Thank you Hashem for this delicious food and the feeling of becoming satiated.**
- **My soul is hungry for connection with Hashem.**
- **I am ingesting the light of Hashem which is concealed in this food, renewing my soul with connection to its Source.**
- **I am eating in order to have the strength (and health) to serve Hashem.**
- **The pleasure I feel from the taste of this food and from becoming satiated is really an experience of receiving the pleasure of Hashem, consumed through physical forms.**
- **If one tiny spark of G-dliness within this food can bring me so much delicious satisfaction and joy, imagine the joy of connecting directly to the Source of all pleasure.**
- **I am pulling off the mask and revealing Hashem in this world. By finding holiness in this food, I am revealing the presence of Hashem precisely where He is most hidden.**

Tip: It can be easier to eat with holiness when you really enjoy and savor your food. Try this when you are truly hungry, with your favorite food, while exercising self-control by chewing slowly or by pausing and thinking before you eat or between bites.

Erev Yom Kippur

אֲשֶׁרֵיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל, לִפְנֵי מִי
אֲתֶם מְטַהֲרִין וּמִי מְטַהֵר
אֲתֶכֶם, אֲבִיכֶם שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם

Praiseworthy are the Jewish
people! Before whom do you
purify yourself and who purifies
you? Your Father in Heaven!

On erev Yom Kippur we focus on spiritual preparation for the holy day. It is also a day to rejoice in the great gift of *teshuvah* that Hashem gave us! This is one of the reasons there is a *mitzvah* to eat and drink on erev Yom Kippur. It gives us the ability to express our happiness at this great opportunity to return to Hashem, which we can't express in this way on Yom Kippur itself because we must fast. Let's approach the *mitzvos* of the day with *simchah shel mitzvah*, the joy of performing a *mitzvah*, and try to engage in *teshuvah* out of love for Hashem, and gratitude to Hashem for the great gift of Yom Kippur!

Thank You Hashem for Yom Kippur!

אשרינו מה טוב וזולקנו, ומה זעים גורלנו, ומה יפה ירושתנו

Erev Yom Kippur Teshuvah

Erev Yom Kippur is a time to increase in *teshuvah*. This is why we do *kaparos*, men go to the *mikva*, and we say *Vidui* (Confessions) during *Mincha*. We also engage in the unique daily *teshuvah* for the 9th day of the ten days of repentance, which corresponds to the *sefira* of *hod* / splendor. Since Yom Kippur has its own focus (as we'll see in the pages ahead), we engage in a *teshuvah* that corresponds to the final *sefira* of *yesod*/foundation and *malchus*/kingship on Erev Yom Kippur as well. This allows us to bring a *tikkun*, rectification, for all of the *sefiros* prior to entering Yom Kippur. Taking a few moments to work on these three areas is part of the *avodah* of Erev Yom Kippur.

As mentioned in the section on *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, there are two ideal opportunities to engage in the unique daily *teshuvah*. The first is while saying “*Zochreinu L'chaim*” in *Shmoneh Esray*, and the second is while eating with intention and holiness. **Holy Eating is a fundamental component of Erev Yom Kippur.** Since we cannot eat with holiness on Yom Kippur, we are given a *mitzvah* to eat extra on Erev Yom Kippur, so that we can engage in a double portion of Holy Eating.

Erev Yom Kippur / 9 Tishrei / Sefiros of Hod (Splendor) Yesod (Foundation), and Malchus (Kingship)

Sefirah of Hod: On the ninth day we work on *hoda'ah* / acknowledgment of the constant presence of Hashem, even when we aren't feeling awe before His presence. We do this through the power of memory - by recalling an earlier moment when we experienced His loving and guiding hand - we can hold back from sin now because we **know**, even though we don't **feel**, that Hashem is always here, and we simply don't want to do something against His Will. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times we attributed the good or bad things that happened to us to the people who “did them,” instead of to the guiding hand of Hashem, Who always only has our best interest in mind. We reaffirm our belief that nothing in this world can happen to us unless it is orchestrated by Hashem. We commit to always try to ‘bring Hashem into the picture.’

Take a moment to identify and bring to mind an incident where somebody did something to you, whether it was good or bad, and you failed to see Hashem's guiding hand.

Hashem, I know that nothing happens that is outside Your control, and I regret that I did not see Your guiding hand when _____ did _____ to me. I see now that

You were there then. Please Hashem, help me to always see Your loving presence as You orchestrate every event and interaction that I go through.

Sefirah of Yesod: On Erev Yom Kippur, we also work on our sense of *hiskashrus* / connection with Hashem, even when we aren't feeling a deep sense of attachment. Like with *hoda'ah/acknowledgment*, we do this through the power of memory - by recalling an earlier moment when we experienced a strong sense of closeness to Hashem - we can strengthen ourselves to maintain that connection even when we don't 'feel it.'

On this day, enter into a covenant (bris) with Hashem, to forge a connection only with Him, to seek pleasure only from your relationship with Him, and to distance yourself from the false and shallow pleasures of the world. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times we abandoned our covenant with Hashem and attached ourselves, or gave significance to, anything else in this world that takes us away from Hashem.

Identify and bring to mind an action that takes you away from Hashem with which you've formed a connection.

Hashem, I know that the only connection worth investing myself into is a connection with You. I regret that I forged a connection with _____. Please Hashem, help me break my connection with anything that takes me away from what I really, really want: a deep and meaningful connection with You.

Sefirah of Malchus: On erev Yom Kippur we also work on "kabbalas ohl malchus shamayim," accepting upon ourselves the responsibility of the Kingship of Hashem. On this day there is a special Heavenly assistance to do *teshuvah* for the times that we didn't see Hashem's sovereignty in every area of our lives. We reaffirm within ourselves that nothing is outside the jurisdiction of the King, and commit to try to reveal the G-dliness within every area of life. We beseech our King to give us the things we need from a place of pure and simple faith.

Identify and bring to mind a time that you experienced a challenge, but didn't turn to Hashem for help.

Hashem, I know that nothing happens that is outside the jurisdiction of Your sovereignty. I regret that I went through _____, and I didn't immediately turn to You to ask You for help. Please, Hashem, help me to always turn to You in prayer with emunah peshuta, simple and pure faith, whenever I go through a challenge.

כה אמר ד' זכרתי לך חסד זעוריק אהבת כלולתיך
לכתך אחורי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה

Kaparos

The Outer Action

We say the tefillah of Kaparos while revolving a chicken or money over our heads. The chicken is then slaughtered and given to the poor, or the money is given to charity.

The Inner Intention

The Arizal says that when we slaughter the chicken that we did *kaparos* on, we are forcing away the judgment that had been decreed for us. He says a chicken is called a “gever,” and we perform *kaparos* on Erev Yom Kippur, which is when we bring a *tikkun* for the *sefirah* of *yesod*. When the “gever” is slaughtered, the judgment submits to the *sefirah* of *yesod* and is thereby sweetened. What does this all mean?

Beneath and prior to any action, lays the *yesod* - the foundation from which the action is created - and that is the *desire* to do the action. *Yesod*, therefore, represents *teshuka*, or desire. It is from this place that we form our desires and ambitions. It is this inner point that we address during *kaparos*, by exchanging our own personal desires for the desire of Hashem. When we slaughter the chicken, we slaughter our personal desires and ambitions, **even our spiritual ambitions**, and submit ourselves completely to the Will of Hashem (*Bittul Yeshus*).

While saying the words *זה חליפתי, זה תמורתי, זה כפרתי*, “*This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement*,” have the intention to **exchange** and **substitute** your desires and ambitions for the Will of Hashem. This chicken or money will then be your **atonement**, as you transfer your sense of self (*yeshus*) out of you and onto the chicken - which will soon be slaughtered along with your *yeshus* - or onto the money, which you part ways from by giving it to charity.

A Moment of Mindfulness

Hashem, it never serves me well when I insist on my own goals and ambitions without yielding to Your Will. Sometimes I get stuck in my goals, and get frustrated and stressed when I cannot achieve them, failing to see Your guiding hand. Please help me to always recalculate and realign my goals in accordance with Your Will. Hashem, I don't want to get stuck in myself anymore. I'm done with that! I am now taking my personal desires and ambitions out of me and I am putting them into this chicken/money so I can part ways from them forever. Hashem, I'm all yours.

זה חליפתי, זה תמורתי, זה כפרתי, זה התגלגול שלך למיטתה (זה הכסף ינתן לצדקה), ואני אפגש ואכלה לחיים טובים ארוכים ושלום

Mikvah

The Outer Action

There is a widespread custom for men to immerse in the *mikvah* on Erev Yom Kippur. Many men also immerse prior to every Yom Tov / Shabbos, or even daily.

The Inner Intention

When you go into the *mikvah*, you are immersing yourself into the “*Olam Ha’Teshuvah*” – the “World of Returning” to Hashem. Once under the holy waters of the *mikvah*, you are like a baby in its mother’s womb, and return to an earlier state of pure desire to be close to Hashem. This is an opportunity to return to our pure essence, and to try to experience a moment of teshuva, regretting that we allowed the *yetzer hara* to hijack our holy desire and deceive us into seeking pleasures that take us farther away from Hashem.

Stay in that fully spiritual state for a moment under the water. The Baal Shem Tov suggests that when entering the water, one should picture himself encapsulated in Hashem completely from every side, and allow yourselves to become one with Hashem and His holy Name through this experience. Absorb the feeling of being enveloped with Hashem like a baby in a mother’s womb. For one moment, underwater, let go of your worries, and recognize that Hashem already has all the solutions worked out for you. Then emerge as a *briah chadasha* – a new creation, a new person - pure and clean like a convert or a baby who was just born, who has never sinned and who has never been impure in any way. Commit to try your best to maintain this purity.

It is a far more profound experience to renew and recommit yourself through mindful immersion in the *mikvah* than to just tell yourself: “I’ll try to be better from now on!” Anytime you feel weighed down by your thoughts or actions, or feel distant from Hashem for any reason is a good time to go to the *mikvah* and reset your relationship with Hashem.

A Moment of Mindfulness

Hashem, my deepest desire is, and has always been, just to be close to You. I regret the actions I did that took me away from You, and I’m ready to immerse myself into the World of Teshuvah, to return to Your loving embrace. Please allow a briah chadasha, a new me, to emerge from these waters, and allow me to reset and recommit to my relationship with You.

לב טהור ברא לי אלקים ורוח זכון וזדש בקרב

Yom Kippur

The Essence of Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the day that the spiritual dimension of the world is revealed. On Yom Kippur we are gifted with *pnimius* eyes; the ability to see the pure G-dliness within everything around us, to perceive the light of Hashem that gives all of creation its existence and abilities. We see the pure holiness embedded even within the places that seem the most distant, mundane, and physical. Even in places where we see sin, and in *neshamos* that seem to be so distant from Hashem, today we receive the eyes to see past the externals and find Hashem within. This is why we separate ourselves from physicality such as food and drink, because today we want to focus only on the *pnimius*.

The natural outcome of seeing the spiritual dimension of our world is a deep yearning for closeness to Hashem (*hishtokekus*). Yom Kippur brings to the surface the flaming desire of the holy *neshamos* of the Jewish people to come home to Hashem, to live a life of truth and meaning - to serve Hashem with body, heart and soul.

The natural outcome of this yearning is *teshuvah* (repentance) and by extension, *kapparah* (atonement). The damage of sin is that by following the *yetzer hara*, and acting against Hashem's Will, we distance ourselves from Him, making it seem as if we don't want Him, G-d forbid. On this day the Jewish soul fills with a deep yearning for Hashem. On this day the *pnimius* of the Yid is revealed - even if we are covered in sin, our essence is pure holiness and we never wanted to sin in the first place. Any sin we did was only a result of the *klipos* confusing us and deceiving us into thinking we could somehow fill our craving for closeness to Hashem by channeling it to sin. Now we return to Hashem with a commitment not to fall for those lies anymore.

Hashem sees that before Him stands His son or daughter, whose essence and core identity always craved only closeness to Him, who never wanted sin and just got confused and manipulated by the *yetzer hara*. Hashem sees His holy Yid doing *teshuvah*; articulating his sins, regretting them, and making a commitment to abandon them, and so Hashem immediately accepts this *teshuvah* with love and wipes away all sin.

צְמֵאָה לךְ נִפְשִׁי כִּמְהָ לֵךְ בְּשָׂרִי בִּאֲרֵץ צִיָּה וְעֵינֶיךָ כָּלִי מִיָּם
כִּן בְּקֹדֶשׁ חֲזִיתֶיךָ לִרְאוֹת עֹזְךָ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ

How To Do Teshuva

Based on Beyam Darkecha (Darkei Avodah L'maisa)

What Teshuvah Is Not

"Teshuvah is heavy. Teshuvah is hard. My commitments to improve fizzle out quickly. I don't always even remember what I committed to do! Every time I do teshuvah, I find myself doing teshuvah for the same things I did last time, and making the same exact commitments, clearly making no real progress. Teshuvah isn't getting me anywhere! I don't seem to be capable of real, authentic teshuvah."

In a perspective-changing essay on *teshuvah*, the *Beyam Darkecha* teaches us what *teshuvah* is really all about.

We'll discover that regret, confession, and commitment, are the three practical steps we take to do *teshuvah*, but the core essence of *teshuvah* is a change of mindset and a shift in direction; *teshuvah* is when we decide to return to live with Hashem.

What Teshuvah Is

When we sin, we distance ourselves from Hashem, which prompts Him to act towards us in accordance with the distance that we've created. In reality, however, Hashem never went anywhere! The entire time that we followed the deception of the *yetzer hara*, Hashem was right there alongside us. He loves every Yid like an only child, and never, ever abandons his children no matter how much it looks like we've abandoned Him. Hashem waits with outstretched arms like a parent would reach out to a young child, hoping the child will run into His waiting embrace. He cheers us on with endless patience, hoping we'll correct our behavior and return home.

Doing teshuvah, therefore, is so, so simple! All we need to do is run into Hashem's waiting outstretched arms.

Hashem, I made a mistake! I followed the lies and deception of my yetzer hara, but now I see that it was worthless and brought me nothing but bitterness. Hashem, I regret what I've done, and I'm coming home to You. From now on, I am with You, and I will follow Your ways.

This is the moment Hashem has been waiting for, and He immediately accepts our *teshuvah*, erases the past, and we start a crisp, clean, new page in our service of Hashem: a connection of joy and passion. We are welcomed back, and take our place of prominence as the son or daughter of the King in

אבא שלי הוא מלך העולם
אבא, אבא, אבא, מלך העולם מלך, מלך, מלך, אבא של כולם
שוב ושוב אתה סולח רק אליך עוד ברוח

the palace of the King. We discover that He's been waiting for us to return all this time, He never abandoned us, nor gave up hope in our return. He's been holding his arms out, waiting for us to run in for a hug. And the longer we've been away, the yummier that hug will be!

We've got some work to do. We'll need to articulate and regret our sins to clean off the *klipos* that have covered our soul. We don't want to hang around the palace wearing dirty clothes! We'll need to commit to improving our behavior because we desire to please our Father and King through our actions. We didn't return to the palace with the intention to rebel again!

Simcha

Teshuvah should come from a place of pure *simcha* (joy). If someone was reporting from the scene that day, would they report an energy of heaviness and sadness at this reunion? No way! There is no greater joy than the reunion between a Father and His lost child who has come home, and is received with a loving embrace! Yes, if that child has rebelled, he'll have to ask forgiveness and commit to being better - but is there any doubt that the dominant feeling will be an overwhelming joy? It's great to be back home!!

Commitment for the Future

The practical steps of *teshuvah* are pleasant and simple, and can be done properly by anyone. Hashem does not ask us to do things that are impossible for us to do. He doesn't ask us to be angels. He asks us to live the right way; to bring Him into the picture, to understand and remember that He, and only He is the source of all good and the giver of life. There is nothing to be found outside of His existence. Hashem asks us to push ourselves, each person on their own level - based on their own situation and environment - to live our life following His Will, to do what He instructed us to do in the Torah.

Hashem does not demand perfection of us, but rather that we push ourselves to see Him and come close to Him. If we can do this, even though we haven't perfected all of our actions, our *teshuvah* is complete. There is no such thing as perfection for human beings. Hashem, Who probes our heart and knows our innermost feelings and intentions, when He sees us do as much as we can, in accordance with our unique circumstance, He forgives us and draws us closer. Over time, with Hashem's help, we will correct and improve our actions more and more, but our *teshuvah* is complete and accepted now, even before that progress is actualized.

Perhaps you will ask, doesn't this sound like Hashem is just allowing our sins to pass? Isn't there a Judge and judgment, demanding accountability for every

מצוה גדולה להיות בשמחה תמיד
מצוה גדולה לעשות תשובה בשמחה

single action we do? Does Hashem just allow our sins to remain?! The answer is that Hashem is not allowing our sins to pass. He is not “going easy” on us by not holding us accountable for our sins. **Rather, *teshuvah* wipes away our aveiros, and therefore we have no sins. It is as simple and clear as that.**

Regret and Tears

Sincere regret and sorrow over the *aveiros* we’ve done is a required component of *teshuvah*, but it is not the core identity of what *teshuvah* is. Rather, part of the way that we express our return to Hashem in actionable steps, is that at a specific time, as we’re doing *teshuvah*, we need to feel and express deep regret and pain over the *aveiros* we’ve done. This demonstrates that we truly acknowledge our mistakes and are sincere about our return. This is done for a limited amount of time as part of the 3 step process of *teshuvah*, amongst the backdrop of the incredible joy of returning to Hashem, of turning a new page, and starting to live a life of closeness and attachment to Hashem!

Tears are a reflection of our innermost feelings, and if we can shed a tear of regret, it will demonstrate our sincerity even more. Even tears of regret, however, can be an outpouring of the inner joy of returning to Hashem. When that child, who has been away from his father for a long time, runs into his father’s outstretched arms, you can be sure he will shed tears of regret that he wandered off and left his father’s palace in the first place. But even those tears will be powered by the joy he has at returning home, to his father’s loving embrace.

Sadness = Klipos

עצבות היא קליפה ממש! Sadness is the epitome of the work of the *klipos*, and therefore it is impossible to suggest that it is a component of *teshuvah*. **There is no place for sadness in the process of *teshuvah*!** The *yetzer hara*, of course, does not agree with this statement. When a Yid is not successful in his service of Hashem, or sins, the *yetzer hara* enjoys his victory and then jumps at the opportunity for a double win. He goes in for the bonus round: *Make this Yid feel sadness and heaviness!* Now the Yid will have a hard time recovering from the fall and will lose his interest in getting back up again, as he is weighed down by sadness. Others will see him “on the floor” and lose their passion as well, as the heaviness and sadness spreads. For the *yetzer hara*, sadness is the gift that keeps on giving!

Teshuvah should come from a place of happiness and heartfelt delight! We are so incredibly privileged to be the Nation of Hashem - to have a Father in Heaven who accepts our return with love no matter how far we’ve strayed. Our Father stood by us all this time. He never abandoned us and was always just

השיבנו אבינו לתורתך וקרבנו מלכנו לעבודתך
והזכירנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך

waiting for us to come home, with the love of an only child. He never gave up, even if we did.

Fresh Start

The *yetzer hara* doesn't give up the fight when we do *teshuvah*. He tries to get us to hold onto the past. *"You've been here before! Let's see how long this teshuvah lasts! How can you cling to Hashem, after all that you've done? You aren't worthy of high levels of spirituality and attachment to Hashem after what you've done."*

The *yetzer hara* tries to dampen our enthusiasm to start a new leaf by holding us back today because of our actions of yesterday. We need to respond by telling him that yesterday's mistakes do not in any way prevent us from today's mission, as it says in the Torah **אשר אנכי מצווך היום**. *"As I have commanded you today"*: every day is a new mission, a new opportunity, and a fresh start.

Believe

It can be hard to forget about what we've done. This is why Hashem, with His great love and mercy, gave us the opportunity of *teshuvah*. We need to believe with complete belief in the power of *teshuvah*, that when Hashem said we can wash away our sins with *teshuvah*, He meant it! We need to internalize that when we do *teshuvah*, our *aveiros* are forgiven and they simply disappear. *Teshuvah* purifies us as if we had never sinned in our life. Even if a Yid, G-d forbid, violates every single prohibition in the Torah, through *teshuvah* he can become a *"tzaddik yesod olam"*, a holy and righteous tzaddik, by starting fresh from the moment of *teshuvah*.

Higher and Higher

Hashem does not demand perfection of us, but rather that we consistently elevate ourselves higher and higher. One of the challenges of *teshuvah* is that our patterns of growth have ups and they have downs. Every time we fall, we may find ourselves doing *teshuvah* for what seems like the same exact *aveirah*, again and again, constantly starting a new page. This can lead us to become disheartened with *teshuvah*. I have already returned to Hashem! Why do I find myself constantly returning, again and again?! We can begin to lose our faith in our ability to do *teshuvah*.

This thought process comes from mistakenly thinking that the purpose of *teshuvah* is to transform ourselves into perfect people who act exactly as we should in every area. The truth is that the essence of *teshuvah* is to return to live a life of attachment to Hashem, and to see and experience His presence and His oneness. There are an infinite number of levels in how deeply we can achieve this. If we sin and do *teshuvah* repeatedly, it's not as if we take a step down, then up, then down, then up, and now we are right where we started.

**Believe, brother, believe, in the power of Teshuva
Believe, brother, believe, it's so easy to return!**

Each time we do *teshuvah*, we elevate ourselves a bit higher, and we come closer to Hashem a little deeper than last time. Even though our actions aren't instantly corrected and perfected, every time we do *teshuvah* we truly attain a higher level of connection to Hashem, that we have never before achieved in our life, and it is not simply repeating a pattern that gets us nowhere.

In summary, the core essence of *teshuvah* is to return to live with Hashem. This return, when done properly as described above, is immediately successful; Hashem embraces our return with love, and we have truly turned over a new leaf. We can forget the past, and free ourselves from the baggage of the *yetzer hara*. An indicator that we've approached *teshuvah* from the proper perspective is if the process of *teshuvah* is done with a sense of patience and moderation, one step at a time, and with a feeling of joy and relief.

On the other hand, someone who takes on massive commitments to improve his actions, and attempts to perfect his actions immediately as part of his *teshuvah*, is demonstrating that he thinks that *teshuvah* is only about perfecting his actions, and that it is solely in man's hands to perfect himself. This type of "*teshuvah*" leaves Hashem entirely out of the picture! As our sages teach us: "*If not for Hashem helping, one would not be able to win the battle with the yetzer hara.*" Hashem will orchestrate that these commitments will not succeed, to prompt this holy Yid to seek the truth and discover what it really means to return to Hashem.

מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין
Higher and Higher, Closer and Closer!

Kol Nidrei

The Outer Action

We say “Kol Nidrei” as the sun sets and Yom Kippur begins.

The Inner Intention

Before beginning Kol Nidrei, we publicly declare our approval to pray together with those who have sinned. We acknowledge that we have all sinned, and try to awaken a moment of repentance.

In a deeper sense, however, there are no sinners in the room - not you, and not anyone else! We kick off Yom Kippur with an exercise in using our *pnimius* eyes. Look around and see a room full of holy and pure *neshamos*, whose only desire is closeness to Hashem. Peel off the *klipos*, and see the *pnimius*! It does not matter if it looked like a Yid was at times more interested in following the *yetzer hara* than in following his or her soul. That perception is absolutely false and does not in any way represent or define the essence of a Yid.

Every Yid is a pure, holy, and righteous soul, a *cheilek Elokal Memal mamash*, a literal piece of Hashem, whose only true desire is the desire to come home to Hashem and to live a life of deep attachment to Him.

We then annul any vows we may have made, but on a deeper level, we **have the inner intention of asking Hashem to annul any harsh decree that is on us or the Jewish people.** As the Zohar Hakadosh writes: “We release all those who have had a (Heavenly) harsh decree on them with a vow or oath, and therefore the decree is annulled.”

A Moment of Mindfulness

Hashem, just like You want us to use our *pnimius* eyes to see the holy *neshamah* in every Yid, we ask You to use Your *pnimius* eyes. Look at this room, full of your holy children, gathering to ask for Your favor and atonement! We aren’t going to pretend we’ve acted righteously all year, but we do ask that You see past our external actions and judge us for who we really are. All we’ve ever wanted was to grow closer to You and to follow in Your ways, even when we allowed the *yetzer hara* to confuse us. We may be easily distracted children, but we are Your children nonetheless. Please Hashem, annul Your vow or oath of harsh judgment.

חזק אלוך ממעל ממש

So holy, so pure, so precious, *neshamos* of Yidden!

Vidui

The Outer Action

We say *Vidui*, *confessions*, articulating the sins we've done, many times throughout the Yom Kippur prayers.

The Inner Intention

When we sin, it is as if we are saying that the *klipos* have some sort of power, as if there is 'good' to be found with them. Ironically, this actually empowers the *klipos*, giving them the ability to pull us in even more, and the sins they deceive us into doing get stronger and more enticing, at the expense of our service of Hashem, which gets less enticing and seems to lose its beauty. This is the cycle we need to break out of on Yom Kippur.

When we do *teshuvah* and express regret for our bad actions, we declare that the deceptive *yetzer hara* and *klipos* are false; there is no true good other than Hashem. This breaks the power of evil, which only receives its ability to trap us when we give it value and significance by following it. The lies of the *yetzer hara* vanish, and our *neshamah* is instantly freed from its shackles. The cycle is broken, and we return to our core self, a clean and holy *neshamah* that can now experience closeness to Hashem and the true pleasure of learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*.

Each time we articulate a sin we've done during *Vidui*, our inner intention should be to declare that that particular sin is deceiving and false. Even if it seemed sweet and enjoyable at first, it is like drinking salt water which would always leave us with a bitter aftertaste, only craving more, never truly quenching our thirst. One by one, we go through each sin, and declare each one to be a shallow, empty, and false pleasure. One *aveirah* at a time, the *yetzer hara* loses his grip on us, his deception is revealed, and the cycle is broken.

We do this again and again, and each time we do this, we internalize more and more how false and shallow these external pleasures are, and how badly we crave authentic joy and pleasure.

Each time we say *Vidui*, we will develop more and more disgust for, and hatred of, those stupid *klipos* which tricked us so badly. We express the craving we have for a meaningful relationship with Hashem. We resolve never to fall for these tricks again, and to quench our spiritual thirst with Torah and *mitzvos* only. No more salt water!

בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך מוליכין אותו
אני בדרך אליך!

Neilah

The Outer Action

As we approach the end of the fast, we pray the fifth and final prayer of Yom Kippur.

The Inner Intention

Neilah, the time that our judgment for the year is sealed, is the time that we seal ourselves with a final and firm commitment to preserve what we absorbed this Yom Kippur. We seal our commitment to avoid the false lure of sin and to seek the pleasure we crave only in our relationship with Hashem. We seal our covenant (*bris*) with Hashem and accept on ourselves to preserve and safeguard our holiness (*shmiras hakedusha*).

It is human nature to seek connection in places that give us pleasure. The goal is to fulfill our desires, yearnings, and pleasures **only** in “*ta’anug d’kedusha*,” holy and spiritual pleasures. We seek the deep meaning and joy of a close relationship with Hashem, the sweetness of learning Torah and doing Mitzvos, and the inner serenity of living a life of Emunah. This is the inner work of *shmiras hakedusha*. It is far easier to avoid the shallow, forbidden pleasures that take us away from Hashem once we’ve experienced the far greater, eternal, authentic, deep, beautiful pleasure of *ta’anug d’kedusha*. We also seek to access the only legitimate and authentic pleasure in every sin: the inner satisfaction we feel when we overcome it. This is “the spark of holiness” waiting to be elevated, which can only be accessed by overcoming the temptation and avoiding the sin.

In these final moments of Yom Kippur, when we are weak with hunger, having avoided all physical pleasure for 24 hours, we commit to using our *pnimius* eyes all year long. Hashem sees that these temptations have lost their appeal to us and that we know that true goodness and real pleasure is only found in a connection with Him. We expressed our regret for having drifted away from Hashem through sin. We broke free of the shackles of the *yetzer hara* through *Vidui*, and we committed to see through the *yetzer hara*’s lies and to seek the spiritual pleasure of clinging to Hashem and following His ways.

We return to Hashem with love and joy, and we awaken His favor through the 13 Attributes of Mercy. *Neilah* is the peak of Yom Kippur, and the end of *Neilah* is, in turn, its peak. We declare Hashem’s Oneness: that only Hashem is G-d (השם הוא האלקים). We ask Him to rebuild the *Beis Hamikdash* so we can enter the era of pure spirituality, where we can cling to Hashem without all the distractions of exile.

Sukkos

The Essence of Sukkos

When we sit in the *sukkah*, we start to realize that what we see around us is only the most external layer of reality. We receive the gift of “spiritual eyes,” the ability to live an elevated life of depth and beauty, where we constantly seek to live higher, to come closer, and to experience Hashem’s presence more and more. We internalize that Hashem alone is guiding every single aspect of our lives with love and compassion. We are living in a flimsy *sukkah*, but we are safe and secure because we are in good Hands. Hashem is right here with us, watching us and orchestrating only good for us, giving us everything we truly need.

We shake the *lulav* and *esrog* with joy and inner meaning, we eat and drink (with Holy Eating!) at festive meals, we talk to Hashem in prayer and we learn his Torah, we go to spiritual parties (*simchas beis hasho’aivos*), we dance and we dance some more. We rejoice in our relationship with Hashem: how privileged we are to have a direct and personal relationship with the Creator of the world, who loves every one of us like an only child!

This brings us the joy of trusting Hashem: the inner serenity that comes from letting go of our worries and feeling that we are in good Hands. This awakens great passion and happiness because we are giving our *neshamah* what it craves more than anything in the world: to recognize and connect with Hashem more and more. We access the greatest pleasure on planet earth, the spiritual pleasure of our *neshamah* clinging to its Source, our loving Father in Heaven.

This is the great joy of Sukkos!



עבדו את ה' בשמחה באו לפני ברננה

Sukkah

The Outer Action

We live in the Sukkah.

The Inner Intention

The spiritual light of this *mitzvah* is felt in the heart of everyone who sits in it. **There is a special power in this light.** It has the power to change how we view the world. We begin to view the world through the lens of *emunah*. This is the realization that Hashem alone runs the world. While on Yom Kippur we needed to exit the world of physicality (by abstaining from physical pleasures) to see this truth, on Sukkos we are able to see Hashem through our physical existence.

When we approach physicality through this lens, not only do our physical lives **not** distance us from Hashem, but we can even **use** our engagement with the physical world to connect to Hashem and feel His presence on an even deeper level. We can feel that Hashem is with us in **every** part of our lives, and not just in its openly ‘spiritual’ components.

Sitting in the Sukkah allows us to internalize the knowledge that Hashem is with us at all times. The Sukkah gives us an experience, if we are open to it, of being enveloped in Hashem’s light. When we allow ourselves to feel this, we are bringing the holy *Shechinah* (the Divine Presence) into our lives.

A Moment of Mindfulness

When you sit in the Sukkah, experience the holiness of Hashem’s presence emanating from the walls and roof (*schach*) of your Sukkah. *“I am sitting in the presence of Hashem. He is surrounding me with His light and love.”*

The following blessing is said before partaking in a meal in the Sukkah:

**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה.**

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us to dwell in the Sukkah.

I know You will protect me, I know You will watch over me,
I feel You right beside me, I feel You right here guiding me

Lulav and Esrog / The Four Species

The Outer Action

We shake the four species - Lulav, Haddasim, Aravos, and Esrog.

The Inner Intention

When we shake the lulav, we are acquiring emunah, internalizing more and more that there is no reality other than Hashem (Ein Od Milvado). We shake it in every direction as we demonstrate that this is true in every single occurrence in every place in the world and in every area of our lives.

We shake again and again, bringing our emunah to the level of daas, as we ask Hashem to bring our service of Him from a place of knowledge and intellect to a place of emotion and action.

A Moment of Mindfulness

As you prepare to do this holy mitzvah, take a moment to focus your mind and prepare your intent. You may find it easiest to do this in the Sukkah by yourself, without distractions. Take your time, hum a tune that is meaningful to you, or anything else that helps you get in the 'zone.' Set yourself up for success in making this mitzvah into a special and holy time with your Father in Heaven.

Hashem, please help me connect to the inner dimension of this mitzvah, and become closer to You as I fulfill Your will. Let this mitzvah connect my mind with my heart and body so that my connection to You is not only something I know about on an intellectual level, but is something I actually feel in my heart and express through my actions.

Continue with the blessings on the next page

*Hashem, please allow me to experience Your presence
in every area of my life!*

Lulav and Esrog cont.

Some recite the following prayer of intention before shaking the *lulav* and *esrog*:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ד' אֱלֹהֵי וְאֵלֶיךָ אֲבוֹתַי, בְּפָרִי עֵץ הָדָר
וּכְפַת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עֲבוֹת וְעֵרְבֵי נָזוֹל אוֹתִיּוֹת שְׁמֶךָ
הַמִּיּוּד תִּקְרַב אֲזוּד אֶל אֲזוּד וְהָיוּ לְאֲזוּדִים בְּיָדִי וְלִידֵעַ
אִיךָ שְׁמֶךָ נִקְרָא עָלַי וְיִירָאוּ מִנִּשְׁתָּ אֵלַי וּבִנְעֻנְוֵי אוֹתָם
תִּשְׁפִיעַ שְׁפַע בְּרָכוֹת מִדַּעַת עֲלֵיוֹן לְנוֹה אֶפְרַיִן לְמִכּוֹן בֵּית
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְתִהְיֶה זִשְׁוּבָה לְפָנֶיךָ מִצּוֹת אֲרֻבָּעָה מִיָּמִים אִלוֹ,
כֹּאֲלוֹ קִיּוּמִתִּיהָ בְּכָל פְּרִטּוּתֶיהָ וְשִׁרְשֶׁיהָ וְתִרְוָג מִצּוֹת הַתִּי-
כוּיִם בָּהּ. כִּי כִנְתִּי לִיּוּדָא שְׁמָא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשִׁי-
כִנְתִּיהָ בְּדוּזִילוֹ וְרוּזִימוֹ לִיּוּד שֵׁם י"ה בּו"ה בִּיּוּדָא שְׁלָמִים
בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמֵן: בְּרוּךְ ד' לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן:

May it be Your will, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers, that through the fruit of the esrog tree, date-palm branches, twigs of the myrtle tree, and brook willows, the letters of Your unified Name may become close to one another, that they may become united in my hand; and to make known that Your Name is called upon me, that [the evil forces] may be fearful of approaching me. And when I wave them, may an abundant outpouring of blessings flow from the wisdom of the Most High to the abode of the tabernacle, to the prepared place of the House of our G-d. And may the mitzvah of these Four Species be reckoned before You as if I had fulfilled it with all its particulars, roots, and the six hundred thirteen mitzvos dependent on it. For my intention is to unify the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, and His Presence, in awe and in love, to unify the Name Yud-Kei with Vav-Kei in perfect unity, in the name of all Israel; Amen. Blessed is Hashem forever, Amen and Amen.

cont. on next page



וְיִהְיֶה זֵעָם ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֲלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עֲלֵינוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה

The Four Species are taken every day of Sukkos through Hoshana Rabbah - except on the Sabbath. The lulav bundle is picked up with the right hand, then the esrog with the top side (pitom) facing down with the left hand, and the following blessing is recited:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל זְמִיכַת
לוּלָב

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us concerning the taking of the palm branch.

The **first time** during Sukkos that one makes a blessing on the lulav, one should also recite the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהוֹצֵינוּ וְקִיַּמָּנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ
כְּזֶמְן הַזֶּה

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Turn the *esrog* topside up, and put your hands together so the *lulav* bundle is touching the *esrog*. While shaking the *lulav* and *esrog*, extend your hands outwards until they are stretched out, then bring your hands back to you, **touching your heart**. Repeat this three times in each direction.

Some shake front-right-back-left-up-down

Some shake right-left-front-up-down-back

Each time you extend your lulav towards you, have in mind to receive this gift, acquiring in yourself a connection to Hashem that you FEEL and ACT ON.

זִמְזוּם הַבַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב... זִמְזוּם בְּרַדִּיעִיב...

Hoshana Rabbah

Part 1

👑 The Outer Action

We circle around the Torah with our four species seven times.

👑 The Inner Intention

An element of the final judgment of Yom Kippur is delayed until Hoshana Rabbah. The judgment that is sealed on Yom Kippur is called “*chasimas hayesod*” (“the seal of the foundation”), and the judgment that is sealed on Hoshana Rabbah is called “*chasimas hamalchus*” (“the seal of kingship”). **We are the ones who put the seal on our judgment by making up our minds to come back to Hashem.** Hashem responds by making our judgment match our teshuvah. On Yom Kippur we sealed our minds to stop getting pleasure from anything other than Hashem (*kedushah*). On Hoshana Rabbah **we seal ourselves in the areas of faith** (*emunah*) and prayer.

We seal our minds and hearts for a year full of *emunah*, where we see Hashem in all areas of our lives. We commit to turn to Hashem with *emunah* even When the going gets tough, and ask Him to help us see His presence at all times.

When a child needs help, they yell out: “Help me!” This is what we are doing when we circle around the Torah with our *lulav* saying the words Hoshana (“Save us”) hundreds of times. We are praying to Hashem in the most simple, child-like manner to help us find His presence in a world that seems to do everything it can to hide Him.

👑 A Moment of Mindfulness

As you encircle the Torah with your *lulav*, ask Hashem for help with seeing Him in everything (*emunah*). Ask Hashem with child-like simplicity, over and over again, in a prayer or meditation for help with this. Hoshana, Hashem, Hoshana!



אליך ד' אקרא ואכל ד' אתחזן, שמוע
ד' וחזני ד' הויה עוזר כל

Hoshana Rabbah

Part 2

The Outer Action

We bang a bundle of *aravos* on the ground.

The Inner Intention

This is a *minhag* (custom) that requires a *pnimius* explanation! The Arizal says that it has two components: First, we lift the bundle upwards towards the sky and second, we beat it on the ground. The first part is a "kiss" with G-d and the second part "sweetens the judgment." The intention of the first part, as we raise the bundle to the sky, is that "we are kissing Hashem, and we are receiving a kiss from Him."

The idea is that this is an expression of love and connection. We are receiving power from this love and connection with Hashem. Anyone who has a close relationship with a King has great power. This is what we have when we are close to Hashem. Mankind has the power to reveal Hashem in this world. As we become aware of this power, we need to watch out for our ego sneaking in. That is why we beat the *aravos* on the ground, to break the ego and remove it from our holy work in this world.

A Moment of Mindfulness

When you raise the *aravos* bundle, have in mind that you are receiving a kiss from Hashem and as a result, a huge amount of power to do good and bring G-dliness into the world. As you bend towards the floor, surrender yourself to Hashem, and bend to His will. When you hit the ground with it, have in mind, with strength and determination, to use this power only for Hashem, to follow His ways, and to become a vessel of light to spread G-dliness to the world around you.

בלבבי משכן אבנה להדר כבודו ובמשכן מזבח אקים לקרני הודו
ולדר תמיד אקח לי את אש העקידה ולקרבן אקריב לו את נפשי היחידה

Shemini Atzeres

The Outer Action

There is no unique Mitzvah of the day. We just spend the day with Hashem.

The Inner Intention

Shemini Atzeres is the final goal of all the work of the high holidays and Sukkos. On this day, we receive the highest level, the light of Kesser (crown). It is so lofty that it does not have a vessel (*kli*) to receive it in, in the form of any special *mitzvah*. It is pure light. This is the ultimate unification of everything. **On this day, we are able to see with the greatest clarity that there is nothing other than Hashem.** We can see that all that we perceive as reality, is really all Hashem. At this level, a person loses all doubt about Hashem's existence and providence in their life - it becomes obvious and natural. Normally, we walk around seeing nature as the cause of everything and we have to work hard to see Hashem behind the screen. But when Kesser is shining, then the light of truth is so bright that it is hard for us to see any other option - it is clear to us that Hashem is the only reality.

A Moment of Mindfulness

Take a moment during the day of Shemini Atzeres to feel how natural it is to believe in Hashem on this special day - to feel His presence around you and within you - and to believe without doubt in Hashem's providence over your life and to feel His love for you.

Hashem, I just want to spend some special time together today, feeling close without having to do anything.

ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטטנה וחסדִי מאתך לא ימוש

The mountains will crumble, and the hillsides will fade away, but My love for you will not end.

Simchas Torah

Dedicated in honor of the souls of our holy brothers and sisters in Israel, who were murdered *al kiddush Hashem* on and since October 7th.

The Outer Action

We spend the day rejoicing and dancing with the Torah.

The Inner Intention

Particularly this year, internalize how the following messages affect Klal Yisroel, the Jewish people as whole. We are strongest when we dance together, knowing that we are all parts of one big holy entity.

The Zohar says that the custom of dancing with the Torah on Simchas Torah is "very lofty because it draws down in a unique way the light of Kesser." **We dance with the Torah because the Torah is the guide for how we can be successful in living with Hashem in this world.**

The Torah shows us how to enter into a deep connection with Hashem (*dveikus*). The Torah teaches us that anything that tries to distract us from our relationship with Hashem is also part of *Ein Od Milvado*; it too can be used the right way to bring us closer to Hashem. The Torah teaches us that there are only two scenarios in life: there are circumstances and times when Hashem can be easily found, and there are other times when we need to look a bit harder to find Him. There is nowhere where He cannot be found!

Even on Simchas Torah itself, there are many distractions that can make it challenging to connect to Hashem in a deep way, whether it is the unique customs of the day, the people around you, the style or atmosphere of the dancing, and so on. But we love and are committed to Hashem, and we won't wait until the circumstances are perfect to cling to Him! Everything around us is a tool to reveal the light of Hashem and should be incorporated into our spiritual dance. We sing and dance with great desire for Hashem.

More than any other *mitzvah* of Tishrei, dancing involves the entirety of your body. We dance and we jump up and down, absorbing the Oneness of Hashem deep into our bones, allowing our body to experience what our soul has been experiencing over Yom Tov. We dance in a circle with our fellow Jews, because a circle is round and every point is equidistant from the center, showing that every Yid is the same - we are all a vessel for G-dliness.

cont. on next page

אתה הראת לדעת כי ד' הוא האלקים
אין עוד מלבדו

Simchas Torah cont.

👑 A Moment of Mindfulness

As you dance with the holy Torah, or around the Torah, think about and rejoice in how you have a guide in your life that teaches you how to get close to Hashem. Think about any Torah idea that educated you, inspired you, brought you closer to Hashem, or helped you through a tough time. Or even think about something that seems to really distract you from serving Hashem, where you struggle to find His presence. Dance with it! Thank Hashem for it! Bring this feeling down into your whole being - your mind and body - enjoying your connection with Hashem. As you dance, let your body feel: *"There is nothing other than Hashem, Ein Od Milvado!"*



ישמח לך במקשי ד'

GLOSSARY of Hebrew Terms and Concepts

Aravos	Willow branches
Aseres Yemei Teshuvah	Ten Days of Repentance
Aveirah, aveiros	Sin (sins in pl.)
Avodah	lit. work. The job / mission / task as it relates to service of Hashem.
Bittul	Self-nullification / ego nullification
Bris	Covenant
Chelek elokai memal mamash	A literal piece of Hashem
Daven / davening	Pray, praying
Dveikus	Attachment to Hashem
Ein od milvado	There is non other than Hashem
Emunah	Faith, relationship with Hashem
Esrog	Citron
Gadlus	Spiritual high
Gever	Hebrew term for chicken, also a Hebrew word for "man"
Hadassim	Myrtle branches
Hashem	God, creator of the world Who loves you like an only child.
Hishtokekus	Deep yearning to come close to Hashem
Kaparos	Special custom and prayer performed prior to Yom Kippur with either a chicken or money
Katnus	Spiritual low
Klal Yisroel	The Jewish people collectively
Klipa, klipos (pl.)	Li. shell or evil entity (entities in pl.)
Kol Nidrei	Special prayer said on the evening of Yom Kippur
Mitzvah, mitzvos	Commandment (commandments in pl.)
Neilah	Closing prayer of Yom Kippur
Nekuda tova	Good (innermost) point

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה, בביאת המשיח
ואף על פי שיתמהמה, עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבוא

Neshama / neshamos	Jewish soul (souls in pl.)
Pnimius	Inside; inner dimension, inner purpose, essence
Sefirah, sefiros (pl.)	Manifestation(s)
Shofar	Ram's horn blown on Rosh Hashana
Simcha	Joy
Sukkah	Special hut with a thatched roof that we build for Sukkos
Tashlich	Special prayer said on Rosh Hashanah over a body of water
Tefillah	Prayer
Teshuva	Repentance, lit. return, to return to Hashem
Tikkun	Rectification / atonement
Tishrei	Name of month on Hebrew calendar during which the High Holidays take place
Torah	Body of written and oral laws given by Hashem
Tzadik / tzaddikim	Righteous one (pl. ones), Refers to Torah Scholars and Rabbis (and all Yidden)
Tzimtzum	Constriction and concealment of Hashem's light
Tzom Gedalyia	Fast of Gedalyia, occurring the day after Rosh Hashanah
Vidui	Prayer of confession recited on Yom Kippur as part of repentance
Yeshus	Sense of self / Ego
Yesod	Foundation; One of the 10 sefiros
Yetzer Hara	Lit. Force of evil; drive within a person to sin
Yid, Yidden (pl.)	Jew, Jews
Zochreinu L'chaim	"Remember us for Life," an added prayer for the high holidays

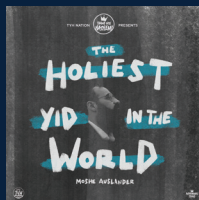
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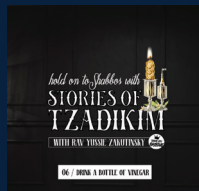
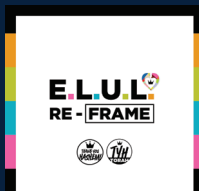
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