



THANK YOU HASHEM!



THE NEKUDA TOVA

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לזכות עלקא דבורה בת מרים רבקה חנה

Designed to Return



Rabbi Avraham Nissan

By now, we're all thinking of *teshuva*. And, maybe, we're overthinking

it, and might be getting in our own way, so to speak. We might be held up by a quiet, subtle voice of doubt, asking: Does *teshuva* really work? How can it? After all, I really botched things up. It seems I'm doomed forever after all the things I did.

Maybe we'll fight back against that voice, and re-affirm our belief in the power of *teshuva*. After all, there are many sources throughout the Torah that talk about it, and even whole *seforim* that talk about the greatness of the *ba'al teshuva*! But still, we may still view it as some type of loophole in the system. We may see it as a "*b'dieved*," as if we've somehow managed to sidestep the reality of the consequences of our actions.

This, my friends, is a plain out lie that the *yeitzer hara* has convinced us to be true. It's time the truth got out!

Teshuva is *l'chatchila*. It doesn't just "work." Rather, it is an inseparable part of the very makeup of creation. Without *teshuva*, Hashem would never have created the world or human beings in the first place. As the Gemara tells us (Pesachim 54a), *teshuva* was one of

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Hashem, please accept our teshuva so that Your Divine plan will be realized.

the seven things created before the world came into being. Let's try to understand what this means.

Hashem created the world for a purpose: so that the Yid will serve Him to the best of his capabilities, overcome temptation, learn Torah, and do mitzvos.

All of this is so that we may merit the ultimate pleasure in the World to Come — to bask in the light of Hashem for all eternity. This is the reason for creation, and this is man's mission on this earth. Hashem is the ultimate good, and His desire is to bestow good upon His creations. This is Hashem's Divine plan for all of mankind, with each individual having his unique mission to accomplish in this world and, through that, earning his share in that ultimate reward.

The *pasuk* tells us (Bamidbar 23:19), "*Hashem is not like a human who deceives, or like a man who retracts his plans.*" Meaning, if Hashem has a plan, it must ultimately come to fruition. When our plans fall through, that's because we have human shortcomings. But when Hashem plans, as it were, there's no stopping Him. That plan will come together, exactly as it was in the blueprint.

And Hashem doesn't just have a "grand" plan for creation. He has a plan for each person, for each Yid to reach his or her destined *tikkun*. And, if Hashem's plans always work out, then this plan **will** happen. Every Yid **will** get to that *tikkun*, and receive the ultimate reward.

Let's imagine there was no such thing as teshuva, no way to fix the past, no way to undo our mistakes. What's done is done. That would mean that Hashem would have created a person for a specific purpose, and then, by making a few irresponsible mistakes, that person would have successfully undermined Hashem's entire plan!

Clearly, that is unthinkable. Hashem's plan cannot be dependent on a human being's perfect cooperation. Therefore, Hashem implanted into the **very essence of the original plan** the ability to amend any wrong done along the journey.

Teshuva is not a loophole in the original system. **It is the original system!** It's *lechatchila*, not *bedieved*.

That is the meaning of what we say in *Selichos*: "*Haneshama lach vehaguf pa'alach, chusah al amalach*" — "*The soul is Yours and the body is Your creation; have mercy on Your handiwork.*"

We approach Hashem with the power of *teshuva* and say: You, Hashem, created us with a plan and for a purpose, and that plan must ultimately prevail. So, *chusah al amalach* — have mercy on Your handiwork. Accept our *teshuva* so that Your Divine plan will be realized despite our misdeeds and mistakes. 👑

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Dear
Yid

Chizuk from our Tzadikim

RABBI YITZCHAK MEIR ROTENBERG-ALTER
THE CHIDUSHEI HARIM

Don't Get Stuck in the Mud!

For some, the avodah of *vidui* can lead them to think deeply about the *aveiros* they've done, and lead them to terrible sadness. The Chidushei HaRim, in a pre-Yom Kippur shmooze, shared the following *chizuk* with his *talmidim*:

If one, G-d forbid, fell in a coarse *aveirah*, and he spends time focusing on the things he did wrong, he will find himself thinking about those *aveiros*, and the rule is that "you are where your thoughts are." Consequently, his entire *nefesh* will be immersed in these unclean areas, this thinking will contaminate his mind, and certainly it will not lead to proper teshuva, but rather it will just lead to sadness, G-d forbid.

**What does Heaven
gain from you
rolling around in
the mud!?**

Even if the *aveiros* he did were not so "shmutzy," and thinking about them will not lead to contaminating his mind, it is still nevertheless not worthwhile to have too much focus on the *sur me'rah* (i.e., the evil deeds one has done), because "you can dig and push mud this way or that way, at the end of the day you are still in the mud." What does Heaven gain from you rolling around in the mud!? In the time you spent pushing around the mud in your mind, you could have been gathering jewels, which would have truly accomplished something in Heaven!

This is why it says (Tehillim 34:15) "*sur merah*" — stay away from focusing on the bad things you did, and instead "*asei tov*," spend the time doing good things. This is what Chazal teach us, (Vayikra Rabbah 21:5) עשה כנגדן חבילות של מצות – אם עשית חבילות של עבירות, *if you did bundles of aveiros, respond to them by doing bundles of mitzvos.*

We should leave behind our *aveiros* from a place of *yishuv hadaas* and from the depth of our hearts. From that place, we should accept upon ourselves good commitments for the future and to do so with *simcha*, as the *passuk* in Tehillim says "*ivdu es Hashem b'simcha, serve Hashem with happiness.*" Rather than immersing yourself in the *shmutz* of *aveirah* by focusing on the *aveiros* in great detail, it is better to say the *vidui* quickly and then spend time focusing in great detail on the next part, לבדך ותמלוך אתה ד' *and You, Hashem, shall reign alone!*

Returning to Hashem

Why does my *teshuva* never seem to last? Why do I find myself working on the same things year after year — and does that mean my *teshuva* wasn't real? If I keep falling back, am I actually getting anywhere?

☉ Outer Action

The three step process to Teshuva is: 1) *Charata* – regret for having sinned 2) *Vidui* – confession (articulating the sins committed) and 3) *Kabbalah al ha'asid* – committing not to do the sin again.

🔥 Inner Intention

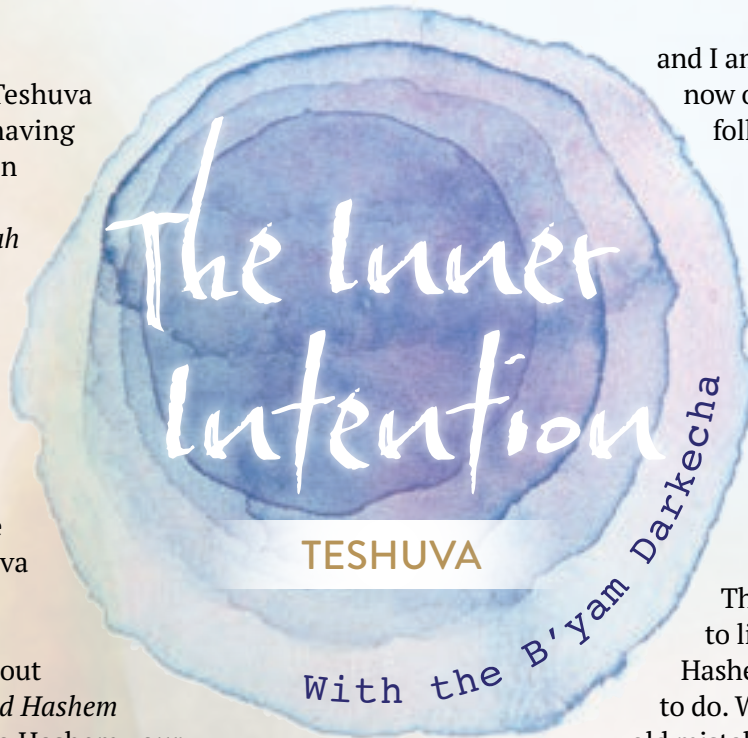
Although those are the three clear practical components of Teshuva it is crucial to understand the core essence of what Teshuva really is.

When the Torah teaches about Teshuva it says “*V’shavta ad Hashem Elokecha*, you shall return to Hashem your G-d.” When a Yid does an *aveirah*, he distances himself from Hashem. When a Yid does Teshuva, he is returning to Hashem to live a life of connection and closeness with Him. As the Rambam writes “When he sinned, he was distant, and when he returns he becomes beloved.”

Teshuva means to return to living with Hashem.

That sense of distance from him. But the moment a Yid decides to return to Hashem, he is immediately received with love!

Therefore, doing Teshuva is so, so, simple! All you need to do is come before Hashem and say “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 have done



and I am coming back to You. From now on I am with You, and I will follow Your ways.

This is the moment Hashem has been waiting for. The moment He hears this, He immediately accepts our Teshuva, erases the past, and we start a crisp, clean, new page in our service of Hashem, a connection of joy and passion.

This is Teshuva — returning to live a life of closeness to Hashem. We still have some work to do. We will need to correct our old mistakes because even if we have returned to live with Hashem, if we have some dirt on ourselves, we need to clean that off.

We also need to improve our future behaviors because if we have truly returned to live with Hashem, and are determined to please our Father in Heaven, we certainly need to be very careful to avoid rebelling against the way He instructs us to live.

This is why Teshuva should be done with true *simcha*. Teshuva means to return to our Father in Heaven. What greater joy is there than an estranged child coming back to their father's home, being received by their father's outstretched arms?

Yes, the child will need to ask their father's forgiveness and make sure to behave properly from now on. But there is no doubt that the dominant feeling in such a reunion will be pure joy! 👑

Adapted from B'yam Darkecha: Teshuva, available to print or order in English at TYH.org

UNDIVIDED ATTENTION



Danny Louis

A relative of mine, let's call him Yoni, recently put together a video for his father Shua's 70th birthday. He emailed a bunch of people asking for short clips wishing his father mazel tov and sharing memories. He reached out to people individually, not in some mass blast, which already tells you something about how much this mattered to him.

We sent in a clip of our kids singing some cute version of happy birthday, and I didn't think much more of it. A few days later Yoni sent out the finished video. About 20 minutes, all these little clips stitched together. I'm watching, there's a cousin, a mutual friend, and then a big tzaddik shows up. A known Rav, *posek*, *meshpia*, apparently a childhood friend of Shua's from around 55 years back. He spoke slowly. He'd clearly thought about it beforehand. He shared a memory, chose his words carefully, wished Shua a long and happy life, straight from the heart.

This is not a man with spare time. He's got a shul, a phone that doesn't stop, people lined up with real problems. But for a few minutes, an old friend from decades ago got to be the only person in the world.

That's the piece I keep coming back to. Not that he made time. Plenty of us make time. It's that he gave undivided time.

Another story won't hurt. A friend of mine once spoke with Rav Elyashiv ztz'l about something. It was a two minute meeting (it was literally a 2-minute slot, as scheduled by the Rav's *gabbai*). The part he remembered most about it was, for those two minutes, Rav Elyashiv focused entirely on him, and he felt that nothing else existed in the world.

I don't speak for anyone else, but I need to do better with this. I need to learn how to give people undivided attention. I need to learn how to give my *gemara* undivided attention. I need to learn how to give Hashem — at least during davening — undivided attention, rather than composing a mental to-do list with a tallis on.

Hashem gives us His undivided attention, let's give Him ours.

Yom Kippur is the right time to practice. After all, we're not eating, not drinking,

not doing much of anything except standing before Hashem and asking to be seen. We want His undivided attention, and we have a good shot to give Him that as well, for one full day, or for as much of it as we can.

It might seem like a small thing to work on. But maybe it's one of those big small things. 👑

Danny Louis is a copy/content writer and musician based in Beit Shemesh. Reach out to him at danny@dannywritescopy.com



CONNECTING WITH OUR TZADIKIM

Rav Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag “The Baal HaSulam”

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Rabbi Dr. Benji Levy

Rav Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag was born in Warsaw in 1885, moved to Israel in 1921, began writing his commentary on the Zohar in the early 1940s, and passed away on Yom Kippur in 1954. He became known as the Baal HaSulam, the “Master of the Ladder,” after his monumental Perush HaSulam on the Zohar HaKadosh.



Writing His Works

Rav Ashlag considered himself deeply bound to the soul of the Arizal. He saw his task as organizing and clarifying the writings transmitted by the Arizal’s main student, R’ Chaim Vital, which became the foundation of his own Kabbalistic works. His Perush HaSulam was also the first complete Hebrew translation and commentary of the Zohar’s Aramaic text.

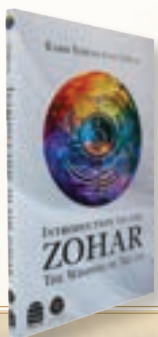
The Desire to Give

Rav Ashlag compared the Zohar to an attic filled with treasure. The treasure is there and accessible, but we need a ladder to reach it. His commentary was meant to provide that ladder.

Rav Ashlag sought to reveal a deeper understanding of the Zohar in what he described as a permitted way, through a process of “concealment for the sake of revelation.” He believed that the tragedies and spiritual darkness of his time demanded a greater revelation of the Torah’s inner light.

Rav Ashlag and his family lived in abject poverty. His students would bring food to his home so that his children could eat. He sometimes shortened explanations simply to conserve ink and paper. He frequently wrote for more than fifteen hours a day, at times until his hands became terribly swollen.

None of this deterred him, and his students eventually raised the money to print and disseminate his works.



Where to Begin

A wonderful entry point into Rav Ashlag’s thought is his Introduction to the Zohar. There he brings these ideas to life by confronting some of the most fundamental questions of human existence: Why do I exist? Why am I here? What is my role in this world?

The work is now available at [SHARE.Fund/Ashlag](https://share.fund/ashlag), where you can view it digitally, order the book through Koren, and access other powerful resources.

Inner Work

For Rav Ashlag, the study of Pniniyus HaTorah and the work of personal transformation were inseparable, as he saw his mission as a continuation of the students of the Baal Shem Tov, especially the Baal HaTanya.

While one approach he encountered when he arrived in Yerushalyim was rote recitation of Kabbalistic texts, he felt it was essential that the teachings had an impact on the avodah of each individual.

Rav Ashlag therefore articulated what might be called a new old path. Drawing on the Etz Chaim, he placed altruism, giving for its own sake, at the center of spiritual consciousness. Much of his writing centers on the human journey from being a receiver to becoming a giver, and the promise of spiritual pleasure for the sake of Heaven.

Like the great tzadikim of earlier generations, Rav Ashlag understood the nullification of ego as an essential part of our purpose in this world. He saw this transformation as integral to the process of geulah. He envisioned the Messianic future as a world in which humanity moves beyond self-absorption and lives for the sake of others, mirroring Hashem's light and compassion.

Rav Ashlag's Yartzeit

Rav Ashlag has not always received the recognition his extraordinary contribution deserves. In a certain sense, that itself is fitting for a tzadik whose teachings centered on giving without seeking anything in return. Part of the issue is that the Baal HaSulam used metaphors and different forms of language that sometimes contained a psychological focus to express the teachings of the Arizal. In truth, his teachings are a continuation and deepening of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon. According to Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern shlita, it is the unique task of our generation to reunite the "novel" language of the Baal HaSulam with the known pathways of Chassidus and avodah.

It is also striking that Rav Ashlag passed away on Yom Kippur, the day we step away from our physical needs and stand before Hashem stripped of ordinary material existence. How fitting that a teacher who devoted his life to transcending the self left this world on the very day devoted to that movement.



Rabbi Dr. Benji Levy is the CEO of SHARE.Fund, a community inspired by the Baal HaSulam and other tzaddikim, that works to bring Pniniyus HaTorah into the mainstream. To learn more of his Torah, visit RabbiBenji.com.

Four Essential Teachings of Rav Ashlag

1. Where There Is Darkness, Add Light

Living through the upheaval surrounding the two World Wars, Rav Ashlag believed that radical darkness demanded a radical revelation of light. The response to spiritual concealment was not retreat, but the uncovering of deeper dimensions of Torah.

2. Authentic Pniniyus Must Be Lived

The study of Kabbalah cannot remain an exercise in rote memorization or abstract knowledge. It is more about transformation than information, shaping how we live a more meaningful life. The teachings should continually ask what they demand of us and how they can be implemented in our daily lives.

3. Transforming the Desire to Receive

Rav Ashlag taught that human beings are created with a *ratzon lekabel*, a desire to receive rooted in a sense of deficiency. When receiving becomes purely self-serving, it creates distance from the Divine, whose defining relationship with creation is one of giving from a place of overflowing fullness.

The goal, however, is not simply to stop receiving. Rav Ashlag describes the transformation of our desire into *ratzon lehashpia*, a desire to give. Ultimately, a person can become *mekabel al menas lehashpia*, receiving in order to give.

4. You Do Not Have to Be Innovative to Have an Impact

Rav Ashlag did not see himself as coming to replace or add to Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, the Arizal, Ramchal, or the Baal Shem Tov. His greatness lay in organizing, clarifying, and transmitting their teachings in a form that could become accessible to another generation.

There is already extraordinary wisdom in the world. If we can learn it, live it, and become a channel for it to reach others, we have accomplished something profound.

As Hashem seals the books of life this Yom Kippur, Rav Ashlag's yartzeit gives us an opportunity to translate his teachings into something concrete. Perhaps somewhere between now and Ne'ilah, each of us can choose one person and one act of giving, done simply for that person's sake.

In doing so, we take one small step from receiving toward giving, and from darkness toward light. *Gmar Chasima Tova!* 👑



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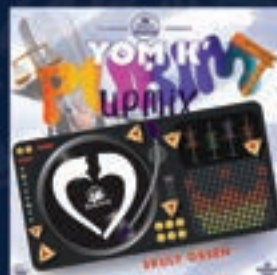
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Shabbos Shuva

Did you know?



CHEVRON

BARDICHOV

MERON

The Chasam Sofer writes that we should sing the *viddui* in a nice tune, since it is a *mitzvah*, and we have to do *mitzvos* with *simcha*.



When the Torah mentions Yom Kippur, it says *Yom HaKippurim* in the plural form. The Maharil says that this teaches us that it is a day of *kapparah* for all Yidden, even those who have already passed away.

The *heilige* Ruzhiner would mention the Bardichever every Yom Kippur night. He said that since the Bardichever was such a *meilitz yosher* for Yidden, it was a *segulah* for a good year to mention him.

His son, the Rebbe of Sadigura, would add that it was a *segulah* even just to mention the city of Bardichov. We see this in the Mishnah, where every day in the Beis Hamikdash, before starting the daily *korbanos*, the *kohanim* would ask, “*He’ir p’nei hamizrach ad sheb’Chevron?*” — is it light already all the way to Chevron? Rashi says that they would mention Chevron in order to bring up the *zechus avos*. From here we see that even mentioning the city where a *tzadik* is buried can bring a *zechus*.

STORY

The Baal Shem Tov once came to a town and asked the Yidden who was the *chazzan* on Yom Kippur. They told him that their *rov* was the *chazzan*. “Tell me if there is anything interesting that he does,” the Baal Shem Tov asked.

They told him that during *viddui*, he sings the entire thing with a happy tune. The Baal Shem Tov called the *rov* over and asked him why he sang a happy tune while saying *Al Cheit*.

The *rov* answered, “If I were a janitor in the king’s palace and I really loved the king, then even when I was cleaning out the sewer, I would be very happy, because I would be getting my beloved king’s palace clean.

“So too, during *viddui*. Every Yid is a dwelling place for Hashem, and through *viddui* we are cleaning Hashem’s palace!”

The Baal Shem Tov was very impressed by this answer.



Answers: Parsha Pix: For answer look in "1217" 7171 7171 7171 7171

A Touch of Pnimityus

Shabbos Teshuva

We say in the haftorah of Shabbos Teshuva, “*Shuvah Yisroel ad Hashem Elokecha, ki chashalta ba’avonecha*” — return, Yisroel, to Hashem, because you have stumbled through your *aveiros*.

The Avodas Yisroel says that we learn from this *passuk* that the *aveiros* Yidden sometimes fall into in *galus* happen because we are in *galus*, without proper *yishuv hadaas*, and therefore they are considered *b’shogeg*.

He goes on to explain that when someone does *teshuva* out of fear, his *aveiros* become like *shogeg*. But when someone does *teshuva* out of love for Hashem, his *aveiros*

turn into *mitzvos*. Since our *aveiros* are already considered *shogeg*, when we do *teshuva*, they can surely all turn into *mitzvos*!

This is what the *passuk* is telling us: It is worthwhile to do *teshuva*, because our *aveiros* are already *shogeg*, and through *teshuva* they can all turn into *mitzvos*!

Yom Kippur

The Sod Yesharim of Ishbitz writes an amazing idea. He says that the name Yom Kippur is connected to the word *pirur*, which means a crumb.

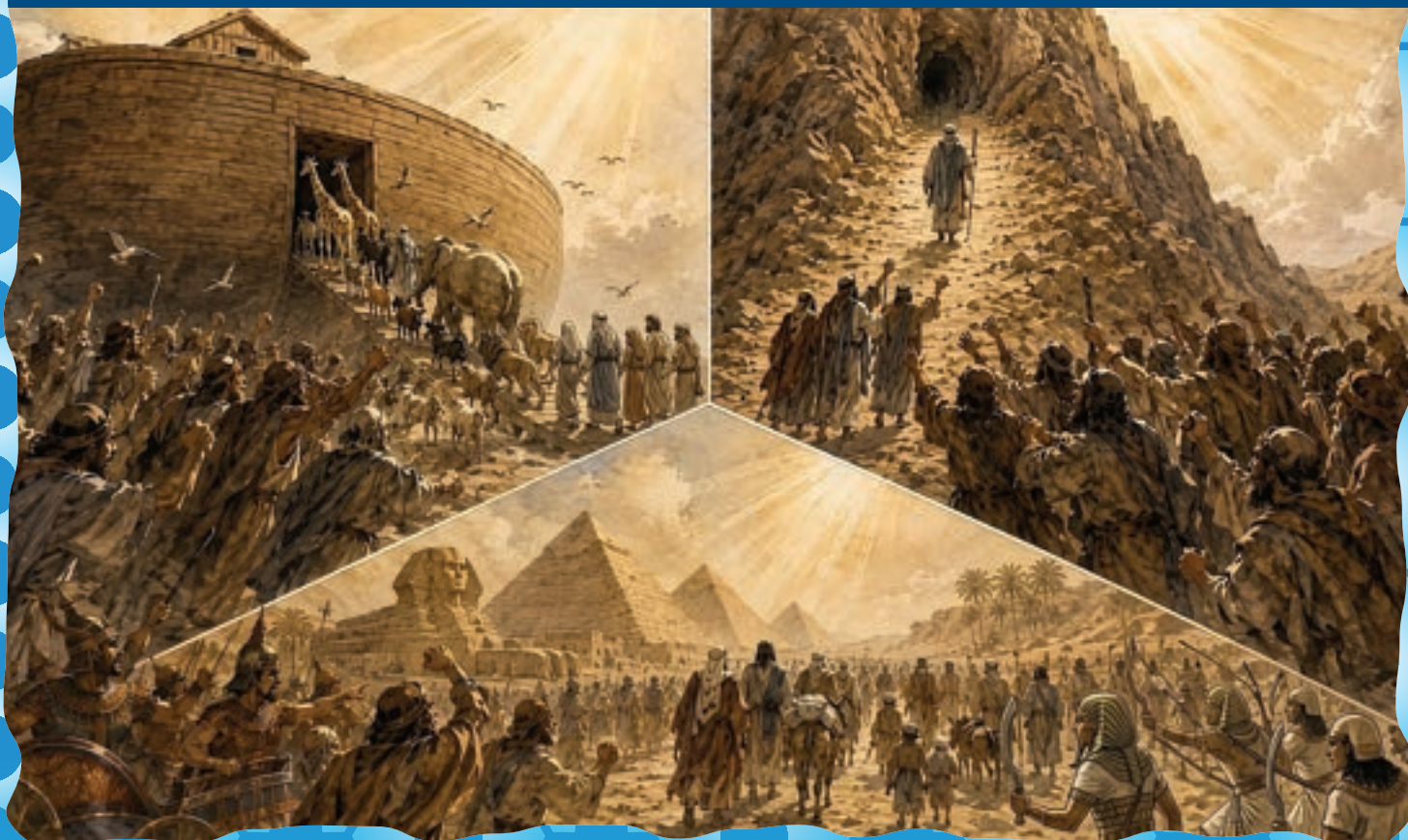
On Yom Kippur, Hashem takes all of our “crumbs” — the little *mitzvos* we did and the yearnings we had throughout the year — and gathers them together. They become a big amount, and Hashem sees how much love we really have for Him and gives us back His love.



By R' Eli Perlman

What does this picture have to do with the parsha?

answers on bottom of previous page



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It's geshmak
to be a kid!

Running Home

Daniel Shasha

Rav Chaim Berlin was once traveling and found himself in a remote village in Russia for Yom Kippur, where there was only one small shul. He went to daven on Yom Kippur night but was surprised to find that no one else was there. On Yom Kippur morning, the same thing happened. Finally, in the afternoon, a group of men walked into the shul looking disheveled and dirty, covered in mud.

Rav Chaim witnessed a tefillah filled with sincerity, emotion, and heartfelt connection that he had rarely seen before. These simple villagers poured out their hearts to Hashem, crying and pleading with incredible devotion.

After davening, Rav Chaim said Shalom Aleichem to the men, and they explained their unusual Yom Kippur schedule. "Yesterday afternoon, as we were preparing for Yom Tov, a group of Russian soldiers arrived. They forced us to leave our homes and perform all sorts of hard labor against our

will. We begged them to allow us to prepare for Yom Kippur, but they ignored our pleas and forced us to continue working. We spent the first half of Yom Kippur performing hard labor against our will. Only when they finally released us did we return as quickly as we could. We came straight here – to shul – because there was nowhere else we wanted to be."

Rav Chaim was blown away by what he heard. He then addressed the men and shared the following thought:

There was once a dispute between two people over the ownership of a chicken. They went to Beis Din, and the judges instructed them to untie the chicken's legs and see where it naturally walked. Once freed, the chicken walked toward one person's home, and Beis Din ruled that this revealed its true owner.

"Ribono Shel Olam," Rav Chaim cried out, "look at the incredible children You have! These Yidden's 'feet were tied,' and they had no choice but to work in the fields. But the moment they were free, where did they go? They didn't go home to rest or recover. They went straight 'home' – to You – to daven."

