

The Jewish Weekly

The Yom Kippur Mistake

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Rabbi Dovid of Nikolayev was bound for his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, for Yom Kippur. He had set forth several days before, and now it was already Mincha time on Erev Yom Kippur. He decided to stop at a tiny village several miles away from Mezibuz to pray before continuing on the last lap of the journey.

After he prayed, he was besieged by the handful of inhabitants. "Please remain here with us. You saw that you were the tenth. We are one man short; one of the regulars will be out of town. If you leave us we will not be able to pray in a minyan on the holiest of days."

Reb Dovid listened to the townspeople's pleas and was almost moved to remain with them. But on second thought he recalled the long journey he had traveled to be expressly with his Rebbe, so he refused the nine Jews.

Continuing on his way, he arrived in Mezibuz before Yom Kippur, as scheduled. He entered the synagogue, but the Baal Shem Tov did not even look his way. All during Yom Kippur, Reb Dovid felt he was being deliberately ostracized. After nightfall, the Baal Shem Tov greeted him weakly but did not address him for the remainder of his stay, including the entire week-long festival of Sukkot.

Reb Dovid was very perturbed and made a self-examination of his recent deeds to see if any particular transgression or omission was causing his cool reception. He was very distressed all throughout the holiday. On the night after Simchat Torah ended, the Baal Shem Tov finally called his disciple over to him.

"Reb Dovid, you caused the destruction of a soul by your refusal to remain in the village for Yom Kippur. This particular soul waited there seventy years for your redemption. It awaited you, Reb Dovid, for it stems from the same source as your own neshama. And by refusing to complete the minyan there, you let this chance slip between your fingers. You thereby caused your own destruction, Reb Dovid, because your own soul was doomed. The only remedy at this point is for you to take upon yourself the burden of exile."

Reb Dovid accepted the yoke of exile, asking only, "How long must I keep it up?"

"When your time is up you will know of your own accord." came the mysterious reply.

Reb Dovid set forth on his travels. He wandered from village to town, with no particular destination in mind. He posed as a simple small time lecturer, dressing accordingly, for the Baal Shem Tov had warned him not to reveal his identity, since Reb Dovid of Nikolayev was a well-known personage of the times.

Two years of wandering finally found Reb Dovid in Slonim for Shabbat. As was customary, he first presented himself to the head of the community to ask for permission to address the public. The man in turn asked to hear a sample of his speech, to which Reb Dovid complied with a well-delivered message that pleased his host very much.

I think you should address the congregation of the large shul on Shabbat," he urged.

"No, thank you," answered Reb Dovid, keeping his Rebbe's warning in mind. "I'll be happy enough speaking to the minyan in the beis medrash (study hall)."

As it turned out he did neither. For suddenly they heard the news that a famous lecturer had arrived in Slonim. The whole city went out to greet the renowned speaker and brought him to the house of the head of the community, where he would be lodged for Shabbat.

That Friday evening the famous lecturer noticed Reb Dovid at the table. "Who are you?" he inquired with a hint of condescension in his voice. Reb Dovid replied that he was merely a simple lecturer who was supposed to have addressed the people that Shabbat.

"But seeing that such a famous person has graced Slonim," he explained deferentially, "I shall stay over until next week and get my chance then."

"Indeed!" the lecturer seemed interested. "Let us hear some Dvar Torah, Reb Yid, since you too are a lecturer."

Reb Dovid declined politely but their host, who had been so impressed by him earlier that day, urged him to speak a few words. Reb Dovid could not refuse his host and half-heartedly delivered a Torah thought on the Parsha.

"Why this man is an ignoramus," exclaimed the famous lecturer. "He doesn't know a thing!" Turning towards the host, he asked, "This is what you called a lecturer?" and went on to ridicule Reb Dovid.

The incident passed and the guests and family resumed their eating and drinking until late that evening. Reb Dovid went to the room he shared with the other lecturer and settled himself on the floor to sleep. He had taken upon himself not to enjoy the comfort of a bed for the duration of his exile so as to feel his punishment more deeply.

In the middle of the night the famous lecturer awoke and found himself suddenly consumed with temptation. He approached the bed of the host's wife but she awoke in alarm to see a strange form beside her. She grabbed the man's yarmulke and began shouting in fright.

The lecturer escaped quickly to his room and snatched the sleeping Reb Dovid's hat, placing it upon his own head. He jumped into bed and feigned a deep sleep. Meanwhile the members of the household were wide awake and listened to the frightened woman's tale. Since she could not identify the strange figure, the host concluded that Reb Dovid was the guilty person since he was the man in bed without a head covering. The blameless man was attacked by the alarmed members of the household and put into chains upon orders of the head of the community.

That Shabbat the famous lecturer addressed the entire city with a message to strike fear in any sinner's heart. He called upon the townspeople to repent all their sins and to come after Shabbat concluded to witness the punishment of a man of evil design.

That night the lecturer had Reb Dovid brought before the congregation, which had assembled in the large shul to witness the proceedings. He berated him for his wicked intentions and demanded a public confession. Reb Dovid stood silent, neither admitting nor denying. His passiveness angered the lecturer, who demanded he be whipped in public until he confessed.

It Once Happened...

The constables readied their whips and were about to strike when suddenly there was a knocking on the window. "Is Reb Dovid of Nikolayev amongst you?" a voice inquired.

All rushed outside to see the source of this mysterious call, but no one was in sight.

Back inside, the lecturer signaled that the beating commence, but once again a knocking interrupted and again a voice was heard inquiring if Reb Dovid of Nikolayev was within.

Once again Reb Dovid was silent and once again people rushed outside only to return more mystified.

"This man is a sorcerer as well," shouted the famous lecturer. "See! He is trying to prevent our beating him. Well, he will not succeed. We will get a confession out of him yet."

But just as the constables were about to lay their whips upon Reb Dovid's back for the third time a voice cried out again. "Reb Dovid, why are you silent?"

Hearing himself thus addressed directly, Reb Dovid suddenly recalled the Baal Shem Tov's words, "You will know when your golus has been accepted for atonement." He now answered composedly, "I must atone for my sins".


At the mention of Reb Dovid's name and at the prisoner's reply, the townspeople gasped. Everyone had heard of the famous disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. They hurriedly sent a messenger to summon two of the city's personages who knew Reb Dovid personally to corroborate the accused stranger's identity. And sure enough, when they arrived, the two men confronted Reb Dovid with surprised recognition.

"What are you doing here, Master?" they asked.

Reb Dovid now took his place at the fore and explained everything. He told how the Baal Shem Tov had decreed he must suffer exile as an unknown person until his repentance had been accepted. "This lecturer here is the guilty man. It was he who snatched the yarmulke from my head while I slept a blameless sleep. Bring the yarmulke he is wearing and look under the lining. You will find a kemeya (amulet) there which I carry about with me."

The cap was brought and it was found to contain what Reb Dovid had said. The entire community begged his forgiveness and began to accord him proper respect. Reb Dovid heaved a sigh of relief for he was now able to return to Nikolayev, assured that his sins had been properly atoned for.

Reprinted from an email from KabbalaOnline.org.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Nitzavim

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:59	7:10	7:51
Tel Aviv	6:14	7:12	
Haifa	6:05	7:11	
Be'er Sheva	6:17	7:12	



The Wedding Presents that Descended to Reality

By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh

nobleman's mill. Another disciple arose and gave them the river, a third - his forest, and so forth. There was great laughter, and it was a joyous celebration.

Shortly after the wedding, the innkeeper suggested to the young couple that they should open their own inn in one of the villages. The innkeeper promised to help them with initial expenses, and this is what they did.

One night not long afterward, there was knocking on the door of the couple's home. The groom opened the door, and a non-Jew was standing there: "I am the servant of a wealthy nobleman," he said. I went hunting with the son of the nobleman and the young master fell with his horse and wagon into a ditch filled with snow. I cannot get him out of there. When I saw the light on in your home, I came to you. Can you help get the nobleman's son and the horse out of the ditch?"

The groom took a large lantern, shovels and additional tools and they managed to free the nobleman's son, the horse, and the wagon. The groom brought them to his home, gave him a hot drink, dry clothing, and a warm bed to sleep in.

The next morning, the nobleman's son and his servant went home to a large commotion. The nobleman was worried and had sent people to search for his son. When he came home, there was a great joy.

The nobleman summoned a doctor who said that the son would have to rest for a number of weeks. When he recuperated completely, the nobleman made a large feast and invited all his friends. He also invited the groom, who had saved his son. The noblemen drank and then began giving gifts to the groom who had saved the nobleman's son.

The nobleman said that for saving his son, he gifts him the entire village. Between the rest of the guests, who were also very wealthy, and enthusiastically followed their host's example, the young groom was gifted all that the Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples had promised on his wedding day. One guest gave him the river, the other a mill, a third a forest, and so on, and the groom became an extremely wealthy man.

This was the reward for the young couple, who had redeemed the captives with the money for their wedding. With his holy, illuminating eyes, the Ba'al Shem Tov saw all of this from the start and came to pay them their reward.

Reprinted from an email of Wonders.

In Parshat Ki Tavo, we are told how a farmer would bring his "ביכורים", his first fruits. As we approach Rosh Hashana, let us remember how Hashem created the world.

In Parshat Nitzavim the Torah tells us, "כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד" - בפיוך ובלבבך לעשותו - The word of Hashem is very close to you. It is in your mouth and your heart, to carry it out."

In the Gemara, Masechet Eruvin 54a, Rabbi Yitzchak asked, "אימתי קרוב אליך" - When is the word of Hashem very close to you?"

The answer that he gives is, "בזמן שפיוך ובלבבך לעשותו" - At a time when it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is to say, you are thinking about the carrying out of the precepts (mitzvot). Saying and thinking therefore are crucially important as conditions, to pave the way for the carrying out of the mitzvot of Hashem. I would like to suggest that here, Hashem is asking us to emulate the way in which He created the world.

You see, in Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers, we are taught, "בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם" - With ten sayings the world was created." On ten separate occasions Hashem made a Declaration: "Let there be light," "Let us make man," and so on. So before doing anything, Hashem made a statement.

In addition, He engaged in thought. The pinnacle of the whole process of creation was Shabbat. In Lecha Dodi, which we sing on Friday night, we say: "סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה" - Hashem had the conclusion of Creation (Shabbat) in mind, right from the very beginning.

So we see that Hashem engaged both in speech and in thought before He created this world. Similarly, before we do anything that is special or momentous, we should talk about what we're going to do. We should make verbal resolutions and in addition we should engage in careful forethought. Bearing in mind what we want the conclusion to be, "סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה" is a wonderful way to build a constructive strategy.

For example, when going into a meeting, I must plan in advance what I would like the conclusion of the meeting to be, and as a result, I will be able to engage in conversation leading to that hoped-for conclusion.

We should create visions for the future, build strategies and plan all our actions accordingly. And that certainly is how we need to approach the new year as we now move towards Rosh Hashanah.

Like HaKadosh Baruch Hu at the time of Creation, let's make our resolutions for the new year. In addition, let's think about where we would like to be in a year's time and what we want to have achieved and therefore plan all our actions accordingly. בפיוך ובלבבך לעשותו: let's never forget that in addition to what we say and what we think, 'לעשותו' - it's ultimately the action that will count most of all.

With our resolutions and with our positive and constructive planning may we indeed lead the way towards a new year of accomplishment, good health, happiness and peace.

Let's add to this and enhance as well by praying with all our hearts, for our soldiers, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, loving, sweet Shabbat, חתיבה והתימה, שנה טובה ומתוקה and טובה.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: None

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 40

NUMBER OF WORDS: 657

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 2575

HAFTORA:

Yeshayahu 61:10 - 63:9 (שוש אישי) (this is the last of the seven Haftorot, [the Seven Haftorot of Consolation] that precede Rosh Hashanah).

This week we study Chapter 5 and 6 of Pirkei Avot.

Rosh HaShana is Monday and Tuesday, Sept. 26 & 27.
Tzom Gedaliah is Wednesday, Sept. 28.

A Jewish innkeeper had two young orphans, a boy and a girl, work for him in his inn. When they came of age, he thought it would be good for them to marry. They agreed to marry but needed money to set up their household. The innkeeper was a good person, and he gave them the money that they needed.

The couple journeyed from the village to the nearby city to make their purchases. When they reached the city, they heard a commotion. They were told that there was a Jewish family that did not pay their rent to the local nobleman and that they were to be thrown into the pit, where they would slowly starve to death.

The future bride and groom felt great compassion for the family and gave them all their money, which was approximately the sum that the family owed the nobleman and freed them. They then returned to the innkeeper and told him that robbers had robbed them of all their money. The innkeeper gave them another sum of money, the wedding date was set, and the local Jews were invited to the celebration.

About an hour before the ceremony began, a wagon suddenly pulled up, and a group of Torah scholars with radiant faces disembarked. They were the Ba'al Shem Tov and his disciples.

When they arrived, the Ba'al Shem Tov said to the groom: "I am your uncle. I heard that your wedding is today, so I came to participate." Then one of the disciples said, "I am the uncle of the bride." Another disciple said, "I am the groom's cousin." And so all the disciples presented themselves as relatives of the couple, who had come to participate in their joy. And joyous it was.

When the master of ceremonies announced the gifts that the guests had brought, as was the accepted practice in those days, he asked the Ba'al Shem Tov what gift he had brought. The Ba'al Shem Tov answered: "I am giving them the village that belongs to the nobleman." Everybody burst out in laughter, thinking that he had nothing to give so he was joking about it to bring joy to the couple.

One of the disciples arose and told the master of ceremonies that he is giving the young couple the



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