

Part 3 — The Essence of Yisrael and Transgressions

Kaparah* depends on the Essence of *Yisrael

An essential element in understanding *kaparah* is the recognition of the lofty and pure essence within every member of *Yisrael*. As the *Maharal*¹ explains —

A person has a soul from the upper realm, and is, therefore, inherently close to Hashem.

The *Maharal*² discusses the classical source for this concept —

The verse³ tells us that the *korban olah*, which is necessary for a *kaparah* “must be offered with the will of the person before Hashem (*yakriv oso lirtzono lifnei Hashem*).” Rashi explains that “*yakriv oso* — it must be offered” teaches [a remarkable point] — “*kofin oso* — we can [actually] force the person” to bring the *korban*. How will this *korban* then be “*yakriv oso lirtzono* — offered with the *will* of the person”? Rashi answers — “*Kofin oto ad sh'yomar* — '*rotzeh ani*' — We force him until he says — 'I want'.”

The *Maharal* quotes the *Rambam* to explain why this isn't simply coercion —

We only say that someone was forced when he was compelled and pressured to do something which the Torah did not obligate him to do... But someone whose *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) pressed him to nullify a mitzvah or to violate a prohibition, and he was beaten until he did what he was supposed to do, or until he distanced himself from what was forbidden to do, this is not being forced. Rather, he was the one who had been forcing himself [until then] with his negative thoughts.

Therefore, a man who doesn't want to give a divorce, but he does want to be a part of *Yisrael*, and he wants to do all of the *mitzvot*, and to distance from the prohibitions, it is merely his *yetzer* which had grabbed him. Once he has been beaten, and his *yetzer* has been weakened until he says — “*rotzeh ani* — I want,” he will then be considered to have done the divorce as an expression of his own will.”⁴

In a similar vein, the *Gemara*⁵ tells us —

No person does a *chet* unless a *ruach shtus* (spirit of nonsense) entered into him.”

The *Maharal*⁶ explains this —

A person clings to Hashem, and therefore, it would be impossible for him to transgress, unless a *ruach shtus* (spirit of nonsense) had entered into him. This *shtus* is what separated him from Hashem, since the clinging to Hashem was through the *seichel* (intelligence).

Rav Soloveitchik⁷ points out —

¹ *Drushat Shabbat HaGadol* – 607

² *Gur Aryeh: Vayikra* 1:2

³ *Vayikra* 1:2

⁴ *Hilchos Gerushin* 2:20

⁵ *Sotah* 3a

⁶ *Chidushei Agadot* (note #238)

⁷ On Repentance – Pinchas H. Peli – Acquittal and Purification

The Hebrew verb, "*chatati*," does not [actually] mean — "I have transgressed." It means — "I stumbled, I missed my goal; *chet* has failed me; *chet* has brought me to despair and led me astray."

Rav Dessler⁸ elaborates on this —

The heart of every transgressor contains the spark of the recognition of truth which was never nullified. It was simply pushed away, and the light of Hashem was darkened through the power of the *tumah* (impurity)... With this deep and mysterious concept, we are fortunate to have the insights of the Maharal who explains many aspects of this in his *drusha* for *Shabbat Shuva*:

Since *Yisrael* has a *nefesh adam* (human soul), ...an *aveirah*... is not in terms of the essence of the *nefesh*...which is holy and pure...but only due to the influence of the *Satan*... The Torah, therefore, says to place the *aveirot* of *Yisrael* on the second goat and to send that goat to the desert... Since the *aveirot* are external...it is possible to also send them [away] from him.⁹

The *b'nei Yaakov* (Jewish people) have a *nefesh shleimah* (complete soul)... where *chet* can easily be removed. Yom Kippur, therefore, removes *aveirot*.¹⁰

"Rebbe Akiva said¹¹ — *Yisrael* is fortunate, before whom are you purified... Your Father in Heaven." In other words, *Yisrael* is purified on Yom Kippur because of the connection *Yisrael* has to Hashem...

Since *chet* is not relevant to Hashem, *chet* is also removed from whatever is connected to Him...

"Just as a *mikvah* purifies the impure, G-d also purifies *Yisrael*"...

And just like *chet* is not relevant to a *mikvah*, and when one is connected to it completely, with no *chatzitzah* (obstacle), one is removed from *chet*, similarly Hashem purifies *Yisrael*... They are connected to Him, with no *chatzitzah*; *Yisrael* is, therefore, pure through Hashem Himself.¹²

Rav Dessler continues —

We have already explained many times that every member of *Yisrael* has an inner essence which is clinging to Hashem. And our Sages have said that *Yisrael* never worshiped *avodah zara* (idolatry) with their inner will, but rather only to permit illicit relations... And for this reason, [even] when a Jew does a *mitzvah lo lishmah* (not for its own sake), he is still called fully righteous... Within the heart of every Jew there is a quality of *lishmah* (complete dedication) which the performance of the mitzvah is connected to... And this is the promise and commitment [which Hashem makes to *Yisrael*] in the verse — "*lo m'astim v'lo ga'altim l'olam* — I will never despise them nor exile them to obliterate them" since this inner sanctity within *Yisrael* can never end. And this is also the meaning of "*Kol Yisrael yeish lahem cheilik l'Olam Haba* — All of *Yisrael* have a portion towards the World to Come."

Since this concept doesn't depend on the merit or actions of any specific individual, it encompasses and connects all of the souls of *Yisrael* together. On the day of Yom Kippur, the elevated light of this concept is revealed within the souls of *Yisrael*... This means that every single individual, even before he does *teshuvah*, is connected to the essence of *Yisrael*, which is a pure reality, unencumbered by any negative forces. As a result of their connection to this holy essence, they are connected to Hashem with nothing blocking them. And this produces a light of righteousness and purity, as the Sages say — "Just as a *mikvah* purifies the impure, so G-d purifies Israel."

⁸ *Michtav M'Elياهو 2:96-101 – Yom HaKippurim*

⁹ *Daled*

¹⁰ *Vav*

¹¹ End of *Mishnayot Yuma*

¹² *Zion*

This explains how the essence of Yom Kippur can be *m'chapeir*. It shows and concretizes that the *aveirot* themselves cannot cling to *Yisrael*, whose essence remains pure. If so, where do their *aveirot* come from? It is exclusively external factors which cause them — the influence of the world around them, and the difficulties of the exile. *Yisrael* are, therefore, removed from the *aveirah* and merit to be saved from their negative consequences due to the *rachamim elyonah* (elevated mercy).

Chet is Extraneous and a Deviation

Chet is understood as an extraneous deviation within the context of the lofty and pure essence inside every member of *Yisrael*. This explains the logic of *kaparah*.

The Maharal¹³ writes¹⁴ —

Without a doubt, *aveirot* are extraneous to a person. They are a deviation within the person, since the person is going away from what is fitting for him to do.

And¹⁵ —

Since everything extraneous is viewed as *mikrah* (occasional), it is ready to be removed, just like *aveirot* of *Yisrael* are ready to be removed.

Chet is a lack, while Teshuva and Korban is a Return to Hashem

Based on "*Ish b'cheto yumat* — A man dies with his *chet*"¹⁶, the Maharal¹⁷ explains —

The term *chet* refers to a lack and absence, since the *chet* causes a separation from Hashem. It, therefore, limits his life.

The *mizbeiyach* (altar), on the other hand, lengthens one's life by removing *aveirot*, which shorten a person's days, and through bringing a person closer to Hashem.¹⁸

Rabeinu Yona writes¹⁹ about the critical importance of a person's relationship with Hashem

—
A *ba'al teshuva* needs to *daven* that Hashem should cover up his *aveirot*, that Hashem should desire him, that he should be pleasing to Hashem, and that Hashem should answer his requests as if he had never transgressed... It is possible to have *selichah* for an *aveirah*, to have been redeemed through *yissurim*, and from every decree, but Hashem could still not desire him, and not want to receive an offering from him. The greatest aspiration which the *tzadikim* desire is to gain G-d's favor and to be desired by Him... As our great Sages have said²⁰ — We have nothing but the radiance of Your face — i.e., being pleasing to Hashem... We also see this in the prayer of *Dovid HaMelech* at the time of his *teshuva*. After his request — "Cleanse me thoroughly and purify me from my *aveirot*," he continues and asks to be just as pleasing to Hashem as he was before he had transgressed.

¹³ *Gur Aryeh: Bamidbar* 21:30, note #146 in Rav Hartman translation

¹⁴ *Drusha of Shabbat Shuva*

¹⁵ *Netzach Yisrael*, chapter 40

¹⁶ *Devarim* 24:16

¹⁷ *Gur Aryeh: Shemot* 20:23, note #245

¹⁸ *Gur Aryeh: Vayikra* 1:2, note #264

¹⁹ *Sha'arei Teshuva* 1:15

²⁰ *Medrash Tehilim* 80

The Maharal²¹ asks —

Why did we need two different *kaparot* to be *m'chapeir* for the golden calf [first from Moshe outside the *Beit Hamikdash* and then from Aharon inside]? As an analogy, imagine that someone transgressed against a human king. Initially, he sends an agent to speak to the king about his *chet*. Although his agent may appease the king for him, there will still be no complete *kaparah* as long as he has not met the king face to face. Only once he himself has come to the king, admitted his *aveirah*, and the king has forgiven him, then his *kaparah* will be complete.

Removal vs. Appeasement Gift

The Maharal²² writes that “*kaparah*” is a term of removing and wiping away [in terms of Hashem], while it is an appeasement [in terms of people], as it says²³ — “*achaprah panav* — I will appease him.”

Rashi explains the verse “*achaprah panav* — I will appease him,” where Yaakov sent gifts to Aisav, as “*avateil rogzo* — I will nullify his anger.”

And the Radak explains²⁴ that the root of *kaparah* [with Hashem] is a term of removing.²⁵

The Maharal continues —

It appears to me that whenever the term “*kaparah*” is found with *aveirot*, or with *panim* (face or anger), they are always terms of *kinuach* (wiping off) and *ha'avarah* (removing). There are many examples, like — He wants to wipe his hands²⁶. And in the language of *Tanach*²⁷ — the sanctified basins in the *Beit HaMikdash* are called — “*k'forei zahav* — the golden vessels,” since the *Kohen* would wipe his hands on them at the rim of the basin.

There is no doubt with this explanation, since [*kaparah*] is not merely used for forgiveness of an *aveirah*, where one transgressed against Hashem. Rather this term [of *kaparah*] is a general one, for all *kinuach* (wiping away) and *siluk* (removal), as well as appeasement [specifically with people].

In addition, the term *chatat* is not primarily referring to one who transgressed against Hashem and violated His words. The term *chet* rather refers to *chisaron* (something lacking), as Yaakov says to Lavan²⁸ — “I took the loss (*achatena*); you required it from me, whether it was stolen by day or night.”

Rashi explains the term “*chet*” — “*yachati* — as missing [the target]”²⁹, and — “I and my son Shlomo shall be lacking (*chatayim*).”³⁰

Targum Onkelos also translates “*achatena*” as that which was missing or lacking. Therefore, when the verse speaks about bringing a *korban chatas*, the meaning is that this *korban* should be brought to rectify the loss from the *aveirah* which was done... The *korban* will remove this lack, like with all *chatas* offerings. They are called a *chatas* because they remove and are *m'chapeir* for the lack...

²¹ *Gur Aryeh: Shemot* 29:1

²² *Gur Aryeh: Bamidbar* 28:15

²³ *Bereshit* 32:21

²⁴ In *Sefer Shoreshim*

²⁵ Note #81 in the notes from Rav Hartman on the Maharal

²⁶ *Gitten* 56

²⁷ *Ezra* 1:10

²⁸ *Bereshit* 31:39

²⁹ *Shofetim* 20:16

³⁰ *Melachim Aleph* 1:21

We need to know that when a person brings a *chatas*, it is not like a person who transgressed to a physical king and then brings a gift to [merely try to] appease him. A *chatas* is called a *korban* (from the root of *karov* — close), since the person distanced himself from Hashem with his *chet*, and the *korban* brings him close to Hashem. It is [specifically through] the closeness to Hashem which comes from the *korban*, that the *korban* removes his *aveirah*. This is because one clinging to Hashem has no possibility to transgress. And as the verse says — “Their *aveirot* were what separated between them and G-d, and turned their faces away from listening.”³¹

The Ramban³² says similarly —

“*Achaprah panav*” — He appeased [Aisav] with a gift to nullify his anger. And similarly, “*v'chupar bris'chem*” — “your covenant should be annulled”³³, and “*lo suchli kaparah*” — “you will not be able to eliminate it”³⁴. It appears to me that whenever *kaparah* is used in terms of different *aveirot* and with anger, they are all terms of *kinuach* and *ha'avarah* — wiping away and elimination... Also, the language of the verse³⁵ — “*kipurei zahav* — bowls of gold,” since they would wipe their hands on the rim of the vessels...

The *Likutei Ameirim*³⁶ discusses the important implication of this understanding of *kaparah*

—
The concept of Yom Kippur is that there is a *kaparah* on this day, meaning a *kinuach* (wiping away), as Rashi explains, and to purify you from all filth. *Aveirot* of *Yisrael* are not an inherent flaw, but only like a stain which fell on a garment... The essential soul of *Yisrael* is like a myrtle branch with a nice scent... One simply needs to wipe it off and it will then remain clean.

Rav Hirsch³⁷ points out a related idea in terms of Yom Kippur —

Jewish thought is very far from that heathenish point of view, which sees an appeasement of a wrathful G-d by the physical mortification of transgressors, in the *innuy nefesh* (affliction of the soul) of Yom Kippur. It is accordingly not correct to view Yom Kippur as a day of appeasement towards an angry G-d. *Kapara* is, rather, always directed to the [rectification of the] transgressor and the transgression.

Rav Dessler³⁸ mentions a different implication —

I heard in the name of Rav Blazer that a person is able to know if he merited to *selicha* and *mechila* on Yom Kippur or, G-d forbid, that he did not merit. *Chaza*³⁹ tell us — “*Aveirah m'tam'temet libo shel adam* — A transgression defiles the heart of a person.” Therefore, if the *aveirah* is removed, the spiritual defilement from the *aveirah* is also necessarily removed. Accordingly, if a person sees that his heart is pure, with no corruption, that shows he has achieved *mechilah* for his *aveirot*. But if, G-d forbid, the situation with his heart is like beforehand, remaining in his spiritual impurity, it is clear that he has not achieved *mechilah* for his *aveirot*.

³¹ *Yeshaya* 59:2, and note #97 in the notes from Rav Hartman on the Maharal

³² *Bereshit* 32:21

³³ *Yeshaya* 28:18

³⁴ *Yeshaya* 47:11

³⁵ *Ezra* 1:10

³⁶ #14

³⁷ *Vayikra* 23:27

³⁸ *Michtav M'Eliyahu* 1:266

³⁹ *Yuma* 39a

The *Sefas Emmes*⁴⁰, based on his Rebbe, writes similarly that a sign one has received *mechilah* is that he is no longer afraid about *aveirot* he had previously done, but rather his heart has full trust in Hashem. This is because he drew close to Hashem once the *chet* was removed. [But the *Sefas Emmes* asks —] it would seem to be a positive quality to be afraid from the *aveirah*! He answers that one who has a proper fear would actually be unable to imagine doing the *aveirah* at all, even though he had previously violated it... This inability to even conceive of doing the *aveirah* is *teshuva shleimah* (complete *teshuva*), since he has now become a completely different person.

In summary, *kaparah* has one meaning when it is applied to our relationship with Hashem, and a very different one when it is used in terms of our relationship with people. When it comes to our relationship with Hashem, there is no concept of appeasing or trying to buy Him off. Rather, we need to do something to directly rectify the *aveirah* we have done. This will then necessarily fix our relationship with Hashem. With our relationship towards people, however, we may sometimes be able to give them a type of "appeasement." And even if this does not address the wrongdoing itself, the person may still be willing to reconcile with us.

The Purpose of Difficulties is Teshuva and Kaparah

The *Derech Hashem*⁴¹ discusses the purpose of *onshim* (not punishments, but negative consequences) for our *aveirot* —

They were only created to exist in the absence of *teshuva*. What Hashem truly desires is man not transgress in the first place, and if he does transgress, that he should do *teshuva*. If one does not do *teshuva*, however, he can still be purified through these *onshim*, and thus not be completely destroyed.

Yissurim, therefore, come to a person to motivate him to do *teshuva*. If that doesn't work, then he must also undergo further *yissurim* to cleanse him of his *aveirot*.

The *Mahara*⁴² says similarly —

Kaparah is exclusively a *bitul onesh* (nullification of the penalty), as **Rashi**⁴³ says — “*Kaparah* nullifies G-d's anger... All *kaparah* with *aveirot*... are a wiping away and a passing over.”

Furthermore, he says⁴⁴ —

The *onshim* of the Torah are exclusively for the purpose of *kaparah*. This is in contrast to the *reshayim* among the nations who are simply given what they deserve... [The point is that] the *yissurim* which come upon *Yisrael* are coming for their benefit.

Chet is a Lack, New and Complete is a Kaparah

Rashi⁴⁵ writes that Hashem is *mocheil* the *aveirot* of three people —

One who converts,

One who ascends to a position of greatness, and

A man who marries a woman.

⁴⁰ *Devram – Shofetim – #117*

⁴¹ 2:3:5

⁴² *Gur Aryeh: Shemot 25:2*, note #32

⁴³ *Bereshit 32:21*

⁴⁴ *Netzach Yisrael – chap. 14*

⁴⁵ Based on the *Aggadot Medrash Sefer Shmuel*

The Maharal⁴⁶ explains this —

The reason for all of these is *briah chadasha* (they became a new entity). They are no longer their initial existence, and, therefore, Hashem gives them *mechilah*... since they became more *shaleim* (complete or whole).

Furthermore⁴⁷ we see that —

All *aveirot* are terms for *chisaron* (lacking)... When a man marries a woman, who completes him, his *aveirot* become constrained, since they are removed from him... *Aveirot* are not so strongly attached to a person. One who is lacking is attached to *aveirot*, which are also lacking. But once a person has become complete, he leaves this lack, and the *aveirah* is removed... We should not object to this [by asking] that every man who is married should have no *aveirot*! That is not true. It is only when he marries a woman that his *aveirot* are removed, since he leaves the *aveirot* through this completion.⁴⁸

Less Physical Leads to Kaparah

Maharal⁴⁹ discusses the connection between physicality and *chet* —

An *aveirah* is removed when the element which caused the *aveirah* is eliminated, [namely] the physical body which was prone to transgress.

This idea that an *aveirah* emanates from the physical body of a person is a fundamental which is spread all throughout the writings of the Maharal. As he says⁵⁰

—
The cause of *chet* is the physical. If he wouldn't have physicality, man would be like an Angel, and he wouldn't have any *aveirot* at all."⁵¹

Based on this, it makes sense that⁵² —

The *yissurim shel ahavah* (afflictions of love) remove and cleanse the soul which is clinging to the body... These *yissurim*, which minimize the body, create a *kaparah*... And with this, one goes out to freedom, since one goes out of the limitation of *chet*.⁵³ This is even true with the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple in Jerusalem)⁵⁴ — It was separate in its sanctity from its physical location in the world, until it was holy of holies. And this is what was taught⁵⁵ — “Why was the *Beit HaMikdash* called “*Levanon*”? Since it cleansed (*malbin*) the *aveirot* of *Yisrael*... [In other words,] since this place was separated in sanctity from the place of the earth, which is extremely physical, therefore the *Beit HaMikdash* cleansed (*malbin*) the *aveirot* of *Yisrael*, which people transgressed by following after their physical desires.

He elaborates on this in his *Drushat Shabbat Shuva*⁵⁶: —

On Yom Kippur, Hashem commanded for us to minimize the body and to afflict the soul with five afflictions. The soul will then no longer be fully settled with the body, but rather separate and independent, removed from the physical, like an Angel... The five

⁴⁶ *Gur Aryeh: Bereshit* 36:3

⁴⁷ *Chidushei Aggadot – Yevamot* 1:139a

⁴⁸ Note #31 in Rav Hartman's commentary on the Maharal

⁴⁹ *Gur Aryeh: Bamidbar* 20:1

⁵⁰ *Pirke Avot* 4:11 – pg. 182 (in Rav Hartman's commentary on the Maharal)

⁵¹ Note #6 in Rav Hartman's commentary on the Maharal

⁵² *Netiv HaYissurim*, chapter one

⁵³ Note #9 in Rav Hartman's commentary on the Maharal

⁵⁴ *Maharal – Gur Aryeh: Devarim* 3:25

⁵⁵ *Yuma* 39b

⁵⁶ *Pey Aleph*

afflictions correspond to the five different aspects of the soul, to minimize and remove its physicality... until it is sanctified completely from the body. Everything about Yom Kippur is to minimize and remove the body.”⁵⁷

And, similarly⁵⁸ —

Among the secrets of the fast of Yom Kippur is the minimizing of the physical body. Because of this, there is *kaparah* and *selicha* which is separate from the *aveirah*. All minimizing is included within *kaparah* for a person, since even the *korban* which is *m'chapeir* involves a minimizing of money.⁵⁹

A Tzadik can be a Kaparah for his Generation

The *Derech Hashem*⁶⁰ teaches —

All people were originally bound to each other, as our Sages teach — “*Kol Yisrael areivim zeh l'zeh* — All of Yisrael are responsible for each other.”

As a result of this principle, *yissurim* and pain may be imposed on a *tzadik* as a *kaparah* for his entire generation. This *tzadik* must then accept these *yissurim* with love for the benefit of his generation, just as he accepts the *yissurim* imposed upon him for his own sake. In doing so, he benefits his generation by providing a *kaparah* for it, and at the same time is elevated himself to a very great degree. A *tzadik*, such as this, will be made into one of the leaders in the Community of the World to Come. All this involves a *tzadik* who is stricken because his generation is about to be destroyed, and would be if not for his *yissurim*. Through this *kaparah* for them with his *yissurim*, this *tzadik* saves them in this world and greatly benefits them in the World to Come.

Within this same category, however, there are *yissurim* that come to a *tzadik* who is even greater and more highly perfected. These *yissurim* come to bring about the chain of events leading to mankind's ultimate perfection.

G-d arranged matters so that select perfect individuals could rectify things for others... The attribute of Justice, therefore, relates to them rather than to the rest of the world.

Individuals such as these, however, are themselves perfect, and are therefore only worthy of good. The only reason they have these difficulties is because of others, and the attribute of Justice must therefore be as satisfied with a small amount of *yissurim* on their part as with a large amount on the part of those who actually transgressed. Beyond that, the merit and power of these *tzadikim* is also increased because of such *yissurim*, and this gives them even greater ability to rectify the damage of others. They can, therefore, not only rectify their own generation, but can also correct all of the spiritual damage done from the beginning, from the time of the very first transgressors.

It is obvious that individuals such as these will ultimately be the foremost leaders in the Perfected Community, and the ones who are the very closest to G-d.

Rashi⁶¹ writes that the verses describing Miriam's death are adjacent to the section describing the *parah adumah* (red heifer) to teach that just like *korbanot* (offerings) are *m'chapeir*, the death of the *tzadikim* are also *m'chapeir*.

⁵⁷ Note #17 in Rav Hartman's commentary on the Maharal

⁵⁸ Maharal – *Pesicha* to Yom Kippur

⁵⁹ *Nesivot Olam – Netiv HaAnavah – Beit*

⁶⁰ 2:3:8

⁶¹ *Bamidbar* 20:1

The Maharal⁶² explains —

The death of the *tzadikim* is fitting to be a *kaparah*. The removal of an *aveirah* requires that the entity which initially caused the *aveirah* be removed, [namely] the physical body which was prone to transgress. This then eliminates the *aveirah*... Therefore, all death is *m'chapeir* for a person, since it removes the body which was prone to transgress. The death of a *tzadik* is also a *kaparah* for the entire world. Since the *tzadik* is fundamental to reality, the removal of his body is considered to be a removal for the entire world. And because of this removal, *chet* is diminished. The death of Miriam was, therefore, juxtaposed to the *para adumah*, since it is really the same point...

Just like the *parah adumah* became its simple foundation, the ashes, [and is *m'chapeir*], also the *tzadik* became its simple foundation, the soul, [and is *m'chapeir*]. It returned to being spiritual, as it was initially, a pure soul. This removes *chet*...since *chet* is related to the physical...

Similarly, the death of *tzadikim* is placed next to the service of Yom Kippur... Just like Yom Kippur is *m'chapeir*, the death of *tzadikim* is also *m'chapeir*. It is all the same concept. Yom Kippur also involves a removal of physical matters, since eating, drinking, and physical pleasures are forbidden; these are the five afflictions. Because of this, it is fitting that there should be a *kaparah* in a place of physical limitation, since physicality is the main place of *chet*, as we explained.

Rav Dessler⁶³ discussed this in his *hesped* (eulogy) for the Chazon Ish —

Tzadikim nitpasim b'avon hador — the righteous are taken for the *chet* of the generation⁶⁴. If the generation transgresses, why would the *tzadik* be penalized for their sake?

A person creates a barrier between himself and his Creator with his bad actions, and this blocks the illumination of G-d's kindness from him. The *onesh* (negative consequences) comes to arouse him, to teach him, and to purify him from his *aveirot*. The goal of all *onshim* from *Shamayim* (Heaven) are to rectify this deviation, as the verse says — “Just like a parent chastises his child, G-d your L-rd chastises you.” However, sometimes a good parent or teacher will appear angry for the sake of the child and student to help them. This is the meaning of the verses — “Hashem was furious,” “Hashem is jealous and vengeful.” When the generation has descended to such a lowly state that they no longer understand the *onshim* are coming to wake them up from their slumber, and to recognize and straighten out their evil ways, one of the final possibilities to teach this lesson is to take a *tzadik* from the world. This is to arouse the generation and push them to do *teshuva*.

We must not minimize the seriousness of these matters. The removal of a *tzadik* needs to shake us to our core, and to change our entire path in life. This is not some special elevation, but an absolute obligation for us. If we don't use his passing away to become more elevated and inspired, who knows if, G-d forbid, this won't cause [more] trouble...

Rav Dessler continues, quoting the *Medrash*⁶⁵ —

“Losing *tzadikim* is more difficult than the *Churban Beit HaMikdash*.” It was our *aveirot* and actions which caused the *tzadik* to be taken. If so, we will certainly be held liable for this. Shouldn't we be afraid to be considered as if we had, G-d forbid, caused the *tzadik* to die?

“*Tzadik nitpas b'avon hador* — the righteous taken for the transgression of the generation” — so they should do *teshuva* and have a *kaparah* for their *aveirot*. In

⁶² *Gur Aryeh – Bamidbar 20:1*

⁶³ *Michtav M'Eliyahu 3:247 – Tzadikim nitpasim b'avon hador*

⁶⁴ *Shabbat 33b*

⁶⁵ *Eichah Rabba 1:39*

terms of himself, he could have lived longer. Hashem shortened the days of his service, which were entirely filled with spirituality, for the sake of the Jewish nation. In other words, he was a vehicle for the others...

If, however, G-d forbid, this removal of the *tzadik* doesn't arouse us to a complete *teshuva* and internal change, and our great *korban* was then wasted...we will then, G-d forbid, be held accountable on the removal itself of the *tzadik* for no purpose.

Facilitators for *Kaparah*

*Chazal*⁶⁶ list numerous ways to achieve *kaparah*:

1 *Divrei Torah* — *Chazal* compare the words of Torah to a *mikvah*. Just as a *mikvah* is designed to purify one who is defiled, so too, the words of Torah have the capacity to cleanse even the greatest transgressor. Hashem Himself has gone so far as to declare — “It would be preferable that the Jewish people abandon Me but engage in Torah study; for certainly the light of Torah would then return them to Me.”

2 Murder or Execution by evil government authorities gives even a very wicked person a *kaparah* for all of his *aveirot*, and even without *teshuva* and *viduy*, because of the anguish and terror of such a death. Therefore, even an apostate who meets such a death should be treated like the righteous.⁶⁷

3 Dwelling in *eretz Yisrael* is *m'chapeir*.⁶⁸

4 *Yissurim* are *m'chapeir*.⁶⁹

5 *Mizbeiyach* (altar) was *m'chapeir* when the *Beit HaMikdash* was existant, and now the *Shulchan* (table) of a person is *m'chapeir*.⁷⁰

6 *Kohanim* eating the meat of the offerings brought as a *kaparah* gave their owners a *kaparah*, but not before that.⁷¹

7 *Ketores* is *m'chaper* for *lashon hara* — this private *avodah* is *m'chapeir* for a private action.⁷²

8 Death of *Tzadikim* is *m'chapeir*.⁷³

9 *Machazit hashekel* was collected specifically as a *kaparah* for *Yisrael*. Our way to accomplish this is *tzedaka*.⁷⁴

10 *Galut* (exile) is *m'chapeir* for everything.⁷⁵

11 Death of the *Kohen Gadol* is *m'chapeir*.⁷⁶

12 *Bigdei Kehuna* (clothing of the *Kohanim*), written next to *korbanot* in the Torah, are *m'chapeir*.

Rav Hirsch gives many insights into this in his commentary on the Torah.⁷⁷

Ketones (quilted undercoat) are *m'chapeir* for spilling blood and *kilayim* in garments.

Mich'n'sayim (pants) are *m'chapeir* for illicit relations.

Mitznefes (a type of turban) is *m'chapeir* for arrogance.

Avneit (a sash) is *m'chapeir* for *hirkhurei leiv* (hidden thoughts) and burglars.

⁶⁶ *Aspaklaria – Kaparah*

⁶⁷ *Sifri – Ha'azinu 333*, Rav Aryeh Kaplan – Handbook of Jewish Thought – Vol. 2 – Atonement – 17:27

⁶⁸ *Sifri – Ha'azinu 333*, *Medrash Socher Tov – Mishlei 17*

⁶⁹ *Kal v'chomer* from *shein v'regel*, freeing an *eved* (*Brachot 5ab*)

⁷⁰ *Brachot 55a*, *Chagiga 27a*

⁷¹ *Pesachim 59b*, *Yevamot 40a*

⁷² *Yuma 44a*

⁷³ *Moed Katan 28a*, *Medrash Raba – Vayikra 20:7*

⁷⁴ *Medrash Tanchuma – Ki Tissa 1*, *Baba Metziah 9a*

⁷⁵ *Sanhedrin 37b*, *Medrash HaGadol – Bamidbar 35:28*, *Makkot 11b*

⁷⁶ *Makkot 11b*

⁷⁷ *Zevachim 88b*, *Medrash Raba – Vayikra 10:6*

- Choshen* (the breastplate) is *m'chapeir* for perversions of judgments.
Ephod (a type of apron or vest) is *m'chapeir* for idolatry.
Me'il (a robe) is *m'chapeir* for *lashon hara* and negligent homicide.
Tzitz (forehead plate) is *m'chapeir* for *chutzpah* (brazenness).
 13 Wife gives a *kaparah*⁷⁸,
 14 Answering *Kaddish* with excitement and *kavanah*.⁷⁹
 15 Keeping *Shabbos* with great care.⁸⁰
 16 Jubilantly praising G-d for his miracles and *Tefillah*.⁸¹
 17 *Gemilut chasadim* (Giving kindness) is *m'chapeir*, like the *Beit HaMikdash*.⁸²
 18 Changing one's station in life gives one a fresh start, and G-d then forgives all of his *aveirot*. Examples: Ordained or Appointed for leadership, *Chatan* and *Kallah* (bride and groom).
 19 *Korbanot*, Goat sent away on Yom Kippur, Penalties from *Beit Din*, but only with *teshuva*.⁸³
 21 Blood — There is no *kaparah* with the offerings without blood.⁸⁴

Blocks to *Kaparah*

Rav Aryeh Kaplan explains –

The first three times a person does an *aveirah*, his *teshuva* is readily accepted...

However, after doing it more than three times, he is considered a habitual transgressor. This greatly reinforces the spiritual damage of the *aveirah*, and makes both *teshuva* and *kaparah* more difficult.

When a person transgresses against G-d, G-d alone can forgive him. But when one also transgresses against a person, then he must make the necessary restitution, and gain forgiveness from the one he has wronged. Neither *teshuva*, nor Yom Kippur, nor death itself, can wipe out an *aveirah* until forgiveness has been earnestly sought from the one against whom it was committed.

When one is asked to forgive, a person should not be stubborn and refuse. We are taught that one who readily forgives will himself be forgiven, and have his prayers answered... It is an act of piety and a true Jewish trait, to forgive immediately, even before being asked. For this reason, it is customary to forgive any hurt or insult before going to sleep each night.

One may refuse to forgive, however, if it is for the other's own good; for example, to cause him to do a better *teshuva*, and never repeat the *aveirah*. Similarly, one may refuse to forgive if he fears that he will incur a personal loss by doing so. Even in these cases, however, one should [try to] forgive in his heart.

Even though one should always seek forgiveness as soon as possible, it is especially important to do so before Yom Kippur. We will thus begin the holy day cleansed of all *chet*, in a spirit of peace and reconciliation.

If one cannot find the person that he wronged, he should still do *teshuva* before G-d with all his might. In cases like these, G-d will help him to achieve *kaparah* for those *aveirot* which cannot otherwise be rectified.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ *Medrash Raba – Kohelet* 9:7

⁷⁹ *Medrash Socher Tov – Mishlei* 10

⁸⁰ *Medrash Socher Tov – Mishlei* 10

⁸¹ *Medrash Tanchuma – Valishlach* 9

⁸² *Yalkut Shimoni – Hoshea* 6:522

⁸³ *Zohar – Pinchas* 524, *Medrash HaGadol – Vayikra* 4:27

⁸⁴ *Sifra – Vayikra* 4

⁸⁵ *Handbook of Jewish Thought – Vol. 2 Atonement, Chap. 17: 28, 36, 52, 53, 60, 61)*

Kaparah for G-d with the Moon

The *Mahara*⁸⁶ addresses a very puzzling *Medrash* —

Many are astounded when they see the words of the Sages⁸⁷ —

“Hashem says — Bring a *kaparah* for Me because I minimized the moon.” We cannot, G-d forbid, say that Hashem needs a *kaparah* for His actions, that He did what He should not have done, or that He regrets this... Since Hashem is One, and there is nothing besides Him, these words are not possible...

I will respond to these people with the limitations of their minds, and without going to the depth of the words of the Sages...

When it says — “This goat should be a *kaparah* for Me,” it means that this goat should remove and wipe away the complaints which were made by the moon. It uses the term *chatas* because the complaints are a lack, and it is inappropriate for there to be any complaints here...

G-d forbid, that we should imagine there was anything wrong in G-d's actions when He made the moon smaller. It was actually impossible for it to be any other way, since, as the moon said — “Two kings cannot rule with the same crown”... Ultimately, no creation can have any complaints against Hashem, since they were all created from G-d's *chessed*...

But even so, Hashem removed the complaints with this goat, according to the words of the moon, since it complained about losing and being diminished...

I have explained the truth of this to you. But don't imagine that this was the complete explanation of the *Medrash*. To explain the entirety of the diminishing of the moon and the removal of its complaints to you, would be impossible without the depth of wondrous wisdom, and this is not its place. It was, however, fitting to address the complaints of those who are bothered by this with the understanding above...

Hashem should enlighten our eyes with the light of His Torah.

⁸⁶ *Gur Aryeh: Bamidbar 28:15*

⁸⁷ *Chulin 60b*