



A most joyous day, the Yom Kippur Perspective

The Yom Kippur Perspective is sponsored by the Pollak and Persin families. May they be signed and sealed in the books of life, health and prosperity.

The Yom Kippur Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Ruchma Leah Bas Sarah.

The Yom Kippur Perspective is in loving memory of Reuven Ben Yaakov, Leah Mintche Bas Yaakov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

We are about to begin the holiest time of the year, Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness. A day we abstain from physical enjoyment to feel the immense holiness that is obvious during this time. A day that its loftiness alone atones for our sins against G-d. A day that our most authentic self is glowing, the essence of our soul.

We will forgo most material pleasures for nearly twenty-six hours for a spiritual awakening. We spend most of our time in Shul praying to attain angel-like status, hoping for complete forgiveness and vindication. The seriousness of this day is reflected in synagogue attendance worldwide; those who do not regularly attend come in droves to seek forgiveness for the past year.

The Torah reading on Yom Kippur is from Parshas Acharei Mos, where Moshe Rabbeinu details the unique service of Yom Kippur in the Beis Hamikdash. The holiest person, the Kohen Gadol, would enter the most sacred place in the world — the Kodesh HaKodashim, the Holy of Holies.

Interestingly, the Talmud has a different impression of Yom Kippur that should give us some context as we enter this holy day. The great Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel in Taanis (30b) said that the happiest days in the Jewish calendar are the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur. The rationale for the 15th of Av is simple: it is the day that Jewish people came together following major internal strife. But why is Yom Kippur also considered one of our calendar's happiest days?

Furthermore, as we begin Yom Kippur, we say Kol Nidrei, a solemn legal ritual to absolve from all our vows and promises. This custom evolved from the persecution of Jews in medieval times, where they were given a choice: convert or be killed. Some Jews outwardly converted and seemingly abandoned their Jewishness but secretly kept their faith and observed as many Mitzvahs as possible.

Just prior, we recite two Pasukim from Tehillim chapter 97 (11-12): “אור זרע לצדיק” - **Light is sown for the righteous, happiness for those who are upright.** שמחו צדיקים בה' והודו לזכר קדשו - **May the righteous rejoice in G-d and acclaim His holy name!**” Why do we speak about happiness and joy as we seek atonement and forgiveness for the past year?

The Talmud answers these with a simple explanation. The immense happiness and joy are because we will be forgiven, and our slate will be wiped clean. The joy stems from the fact that we have a fresh start and can shed the weight of our past mistakes. **No matter how far we may have strayed from the right path, we are forgiven and provided the opportunity to connect with our Maker, our Father in Heaven.**

This profound happiness is embedded in the meaning behind Yom Kippur. G-d, in His great compassion, sets a day for us to become whole again. To revert to the oneness intrinsic to our existence, the unity of our bodies with our G-dly soul in service of G-d, the Master of the universe.

The great Rabbi Akiva writes in the last Mishna of Yoma (8:9), the Mesechta all about the service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur.

"Rabbi Akiva says: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it is stated: *"And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified."* And it says: *"The Mikvah of Jewish people is G-d."* So Rabbi Akiva concludes, **"Just as a Mikvah purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, purifies the Jewish nation."**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, instituted a custom to sing a song at the end of Neilah called Napoleon's March. An electrifying and galvanizing tune that signals victory and triumph because we are whole again!

May we be signed and sealed in the books of life, health, prosperity, and experience the ultimate redemption with the coming of Moshiach!

Have an easy fast and meaningful Yom Kippur,

G'mar Chasima Tova!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini