



נחמנו נחמנו...

The Ten Days of Repentance

Rabbi Chaim Vital, the primary disciple of the Ari Za”l, wrote (*Sha’ar Hakavanot Drushei Rosh Hashana Daf 73*): Rabbi Moshe Galanti said in the name of my teacher Za”l that if one fasts during the seven days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and repents completely for his sins, then each of the seven days will count to atone for the sins he committed on that same day during his entire life. For example, if the first day of the seven fell on Sunday, then his fasting and repentance on that day will atone for all the transgressions done on all the Sundays of his life. Fasting and repentance the entire week will thus cover his past life in its entirety.

Why should the seven days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur generalize the rest of the year in this way? Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai put the question and answered it convincingly (*Sefer Kadmut Ma’arechet Reish Ot 14*):

“Rabbi Moshe Cordovero Zatz”l asked why Rosh Hashana, the day of judgement, comes at the beginning of a new year, and not during the year for which we are judged. Would it not have made more sense for Rosh Hashana, the days of Repentance, and Yom Kippur to come at the end of the month of Elul? That way the sins of one year would be atoned for during the same year.

An answer is suggested by the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Pinchas*, at end):

The Rabbis said, “You give extra to a nation [HaShem, you give extra to a nation and become honored...]” (Yeshiya 26:15) – [By this we mean to say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu,] “The more festivals you add, the more sacrifices we add.” Rabbi Levy said,



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“Hakadosh Baruch Hu sought to give the Jewish People a festival on every month of the year. On Nissan He gave them Pesach, on Iyar He gave them Pesach Sheini, and on Sivan He gave them Atzeret. He had in mind to give them a major festival on Tamuz but they spoiled this plan when they made the golden calf. Av and Elul passed without a festival, but when Tishrei arrived, He paid off the debt, as it were, by giving them Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Succos. Said Hakadosh Baruch Hu, “Is it fair for one to pay others their due but not to take his own share?” The Torah thus says to give Him his own day, as it is written (Bamidbar 29:35) “On the eight day, an atzeret [moratorium] shall be unto you...”

We see from this Midrash that Rosh Hashana was scheduled to fall in Tamuz, and Yom Kippur, in Av. These were intended to be the dates of the days of judgement. The forefathers in fact kept Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur on these dates (see *Zera Baruch Halek 3 Seder Vayare p.17.*) [Rabbi Moshe Cordovero’s assumption that the days of judgement should fall during the occurrent year is therefore correct.] It was only on account of the sin of the golden calf that the festivals were delayed until [the beginning of the next year] in Tishrei.

In my sefer *Devarim Achadim* I wrote that the Ten Days of Repentance have the potential to atone for the sin’s of an entire lifetime because, as Rabbi Moshe Cordovero observed, they are rooted in the ten spheiros of *Bina*. [The higher Kabbalistic spheira of Bina, by contrast with the seven lower spheiros (Hessed, Gevurah, Tifferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchut) transcends time and the natural order.]”



נחיש נצטוו...

According to the cyclical time order of the calendar, each day is a self contained interval whose spiritual potential does not extend to other times. The Kabbalists call this principle of limited potential in time “The rule of Tifferet.” There is also a principle of unbounded potential which is above the restrictions of time; the Kabbalists call this higher principle “The rule of Bina.” It is possible to gain access to the rule of Bina and rise above the limitations of the moment at any time through other-directed repentance from love of G-d. In this way one may atone for one’s past sins anytime during the year. The Ten Days of Repentance are unique in that they inherently transcend the limitations of the normal time order. Repentance during the Ten Days automatically extends to a person’s entire past life, even if it be self-directed repentance from fear and not the ideal, other-directed repentance from love.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 18:a) applies the verse “Seek out HaShem when He is present; call out to Him when He is close by” (Yeshiya 55:6) to the Ten Days of Repentance. This is a period where HaShem, in His desire to bring us closer to Him, changed the nature of time itself.

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