

יום כיפור

כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאותיכם לפני ה' תטהרו [ויקרא ל, טז]

רבנו יונה writes in שערי תשובה (ד, יז) that from the words לפני ה' תטהרו, we learn there is a mitzvah of תשובה on יום כיפור. We know that throughout the whole year there is a mitzvah to do תשובה from any עבירות we might have done. What is this added mitzvah of יום כיפור תשובה? Why is it not sufficient with the regular obligation that we have to do תשובה the whole year?

The Alter of Kelm (חכמה ומוסר ח"ב קמא) asks, the פסוק seems to be out of order. First it says that Hashem will be מכפר and מטהר and afterwards mentions that we must do תשובה. Shouldn't the order be reversed? The Gemara tells us that יום כיפור is only מכפר with תשובה. First we must do תשובה and only then will Hashem be מטהר. He answers that Hashem created a person, ישראל, with a clear sense of choosing to do good. The Gemara says, עבירה מטמטמת לב אדם, sin closes a person's heart. When a person does sin, that clarity is lost and is now more inclined to continue to sin. Only after he has initiated the תשובה process does Hashem remove the blockage created by the עבירה. However on יום כיפור even before a person has actually done תשובה, there is a special סייעתא דשמיא that helps him along to do תשובה. This is the cleansing, the כפרה the פסוק is referring to. Once we have this כפרה, we can continue with the תשובה to bring complete טהרה, as it says לפני ה' תטהרו. Perhaps this why we have an added obligation on יום כיפור to do תשובה. During the year although we have a מצוה of תשובה, the עבירה itself prevents us from repenting. On יום כיפור, through the holiness and purity of יום כיפור, the clarity to do the רצון ה' is restored and thus the obligation to do תשובה is much greater.

The Gemara says: לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כיוה"כ, there is no other Yom Tov like Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is a day where we leave behind all our worldly desires by fasting and forgoing pleasure and enveloping ourselves in the holiness and sanctity of יום כיפור. The more we forget our usual distractions, the more meaningful the day will be for us and will remain with us even after יום כיפור. May we be צדיקים and written in the ספר and attain true כפרה and טהרה.

גמר חתימה טובה.

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