

פרשת שלח לך

It is twilight. The sun is almost set; it is just over the treetops. The Shul is rapidly filling up and the women's side is as full as the men's side. The usual bantering is not heard, just voices soft in prayer. The men are covered with white, wearing their *taleisim*. The women are dressed for a holiday, but yet, simply.

Of course, the above description is of the beginning of Yom HaKippurim, *Kol Nidrei* night.

The Chazzan begins with a short statement announcing that he is a representative of the community, in this world and on high:

בישיבה של מעלה ובישיבה של מטה

In the Heavenly Yeshiva and in the Earthly Yeshiva.

Kol Nidrei is then thrice-recited, with the ever-increasing voice of the Chazzan and the congregation chanting softly with him.

And then it is almost nightfall and the Yom Tov must be accepted. There is no Kiddush to be recited and Yom HaKippurim is ushered in with the Bracha of *She'he'cheyanu*, first by the congregation and then by the Chazzan and the congregation responds with a powerful *omein*.

What is recited between Kol Nidrei and Shehecheyanu? There are two P'sukim that the Chazzan says first three times and then the congregation repeats it three times as well and continues with a second Posuk said three times, followed by the Chazzan also reciting it three times and then *Bircas Shehecheyanu*.

What are those verses that are recited?

The first (B'midbar Perek 15/Posuk 26) reads:

וְנִסַּח לְכָל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָגַר הָגֵר בְּתוֹכְכֶם כִּי לְכָל הָעָם בְּשִׁגְגָה:

It will be forgiven for the entire congregation of B'nei Yisroel and for the stranger who lives among them because it was an unintentional sin for the entire people.

The second verse (B'midbar Perek 14/Posuk 20) reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרְךָ:

Hashem said, 'I have forgiven according to your word.'

By now, the reader may have realized why such a picturesque description of Kol Nidrei night finds itself in a D'var Torah for this week's Parshas Sh'lach. The two verses that are recited to usher in Yom HaKippurim are from our Parsha.

However, there is much to understand. If we would know these P'sukim from only the *Machzor*, we would think that they must be contiguous because that is how they are presented in the *davening*. And even if they are not exactly contiguous, they certainly must be part of the same subject.

But, in fact, not only are these verses not contiguous, they are taken from totally different contexts in our Parsha. Thus, there is much to be investigated.

The first verse, which appears later in the Parsha, is understood in its context when we read the introductory verse to that section (Posuk 22):

וְכִי תִשְׁגּוּ וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה:

When you err and do not do all of these Mitzvos that Hashem spoke to Moshe.

What are 'these Mitzvos'? Rashi explains:

וְכִי תִשְׁגּוּ וְגו' - בעבודה זרה הכתוב מדבר...תלמוד לומר את כל המצות האלה,
מצוה אחת שהיא ככל המצות...זו עבודה זרה:

When you err – the Posuk is discussing the sin of idolatry. It teaches us this when it writes 'all of these Mitzvos', one [violation of a] Mitzvah that is equivalent to [the violation of] all of the Mitzvos. That is idolatry.

The Torah continues to write (Posuk 24):

וְהָיָה אִם מֵעֵינֵי הָעֵדָה נַעֲשְׂתָה לְשִׁגְגָה וְעָשׂוּ כָּל הָעֵדָה פֶּר בֶּן בֶּקָר אֶחָד לְעֹלָה לְרִיחַ
נִיחֹחַ לַה' וּמִנְחָתוֹ וְנֹסְכּוֹ כַּמִּשְׁפָּט וּשְׂעִיר עֲזִים אֶחָד לְחַטָּת:

If from the eyes of the congregation it was done unintentionally, then the entire congregation shall offer one bullock from the cattle as a burnt-offering for a pleasant fragrance before Hashem, with a grain-offering and wine libation according to the standard and a goat as a sin-offering.

This is the context in which we read:

וְנֹסַח לְכָל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם כִּי לְכָל הָעָם בְּשִׁגְגָה:

It will be forgiven for the entire congregation of B'nei Yisroel and for the convert who lives among them because it was an unintentional sin for the entire people.

I understand why we begin with a call for forgiveness. But to do so with a subject that is related to one of the gravest sins, that of idolatry?

What is the context of the second verse?

The subject is the opening one of Parshas Sh'lach, an event that cast its shadow upon Israel for the following four decades, and beyond. We are familiar with the events of the *meraglim*, spies.

We remember Hashem's initial decree (Perek 14/Posuk 12):

אֶכְנֹה בַדְבָר וְאוֹרְשָׁנוּ וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אֹתְךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעַצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ:

I will smite the people with pestilence and I will drive them out and I will make you, Moshe, into a great nation, stronger than it.

Moshe Rabbenu responds (P'sukim 13-19)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי הִעֲלִיתָ בְּכַחַךְ אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקְרָבוֹ: וְאָמְרוּ אֶל
יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי אַתָּה ה' בְּקִרְבֵּי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִין בְּעֵין נִרְאָה אַתָּה ה'
וְעַנְנָךְ עֹמֵד עֲלֵהֶם וּבַעֲמֹד עִן אַתָּה הִלַּךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם וּבַעֲמֹד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה: וְהִמְתָּה

את העם הזה כאיש אחד ואמרו הגוים אשר שמעו את שמעך לאמר: מבולתי יכלת
ה' להביא את העם הזה אל הארץ אשר נשבע להם וישחטם במדבר: ועתה יגדל
נא כח א...ד...ג...י כאשר דברת לאמר: ה' ארך אפים ורב חסד נשא עון ופשע ונקה
לא ינקה פקד עון אבות על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים: סלח נא לעון העם הזה
כגדל חסדך וכאשר נשאתה לעם הזה ממצרים ועד הנה:

Moshe said to Hashem, 'Egypt will hear that You brought up this people from its midst with Your strength. They will say to the inhabitants of this land that have heard that You Hashem are in the midst of this people that clearly saw You Hashem and Your cloud stands upon them and with the pillar of cloud You go before them in the day and with a pillar of fire You go before them in the night. If You kill this people all at once like one person the nations that heard Your reputation will say: It is not within the ability of Hashem to bring this people to the land that He swore to them so He slaughtered them in the wilderness. Now, let please the strength of my Master be made great like You spoke saying – Hashem, slow to anger and with great kindness; bearing sin and iniquity and cleansing; He will not cleanse [completely] He visits the sin of the fathers on the sons three and four generations;

Forgive please the sin of this nation according to the greatness of Your kindness and like you bore this people from Egypt until now.

It is to this declaration that we read:

ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך:

Hashem said, 'I have forgiven according to your word.'

On the one hand, this verse seem a more favorable addition to our liturgy. In the earlier verse, the Torah discusses what will happen if Israel sins with idolatry. Why raise the issue of potential sin?

The present verse is the forgiving response to a sin, a grievous one, that was committed and to which Hashem did forgive.

On the other hand, if we attend to the exact wording that Hashem uses we may be less than satisfied.

סלחתי

I *forgave*.

Should it not read וסולח – I forgive or אסלח – I will forgive.

After all, the Posuk brought earlier begins ונסלח which means it *will* be forgiven.

סלחתי could mean that 'I have forgiven you now' or it could mean 'I have forgiven you in the past', but not necessarily now.

And how are we to understand

כדברך

According to your word.

In the Posuk brought before there is no modification to ונסלח, it will be forgiven. The promised forgiveness is stated without any additional words.

What does כדברך, 'according to your word', come to teach?

There are many commentaries on the two words of סלחתי כדברך and we will see how some of our *meforshim* understood their meaning and impact.

Rashbam writes:

סלחתי - סולח אני עכשיו. כמו (בראשית כג/ג) נתתי כסף השדה:

I have forgiven – [This means] I forgive now. [The usage of past tense here, meaning present tense is already found in the verse] I gave you the money for the field [which means 'I am giving it now'¹].

¹ Avraham Ovinu approaches Efron to purchase *Machpelah*. This Posuk is said at the initiation of the conversation and the money was not yet given. Even so, Avraham says 'I gave' and Rashbam says it means 'I am giving'.

The Posuk reads in its entirety:

כדברך - שלא אכנו בדבר בפעם אחת אלא אאריך להם עד ארבעים שנה:

According to your word – I Hashem will not smite them with pestilence all at one time; rather I will extend time for them for forty years.

Although Rashbam tells us not to read anything into the form of the word for forgiveness – סלחתי because its past-tense form does not imply ‘in the past but not now’, however כדברך – ‘according to your word’ has a very literal meaning.

This is as if to say, according to Rashbam, Hashem told Moshe, ‘You are pushing Me. I will ‘give in’ but I will take you literally. You approached me with My attribute of ארך אפים, slow to anger, that will be My agreement. I will spread out My anger over forty years.

Undoubtedly, if all that we could seek from G-d is a postponement of punishment that is what we would choose. And such may have been that which was appropriate at the time of *meraglim*. But, why would we want to have this as an introductory statement at the onset of the Day when we seek atonement?

When we read the words of Seforno, the meaning of the Posuk

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרְךָ:

Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven according to your word.’

becomes less troublesome as he explains.

He writes:

וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל עֶפְרוֹן בְּאָזְנוֹ עִם הָאָרֶץ לֵאמֹר אַךְ אִם אֲתָה לֹו שָׁמַעְנִי נָתַתִּי כֶּסֶף הַשָּׂדֶה קַח מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת מֵתִי שָׁמָּה:

Avraham spoke to Efron in the ears of the people of the land saying, ‘But if only you would listen to me; I gave the money for the field, take it from me and I will bury my dead one there.’

Although Rashbam there does not comment on this verse, when in Posuk 11 Efron says that he *gave* the field, when he had not yet done so, Rashbam writes:

השדה נתתי לך - נותן אני אותו עכשיו לך

I gave the field to you – I am giving it to you now

סלחתי כדברך. כשאמרתי אכנו בדבר כבר סלחתי בזה האופן שאתה אומר כי לא היתה הכונה שאמית את כולם יחדו אבל שאמית את כלם מעט מעט במדבר ולא יכנס איש מהם לארץ:

I have forgiven you according to your word – when I Hashem said, ‘I will smite them with pestilence’ I had already forgiven in the way that you are saying. I Hashem had no intent that I would kill all together [at once]. Rather [I intended] to kill a little at a time in the wilderness and that not one of them would enter Eretz Yisroel.

That is, in its context in our Parsha, סלחתי means ‘I have already forgiven’. When Hashem said to Moshe (Posuk 12), ‘I will smite them’, He was not making a suggestion. He was informing Moshe of His decision, a decision that was reached with finality. Included in that decision, with words that were not spoken, was that the punishment would be meted out gradually. Moshe Rabbenu did not understand that and thus his request of ארך אפים was superfluous².

² This commentary of Seforno has a precedent in Chumash Sh’mos in the dialogue between Hashem and Moshe Rabbenu. We read there (Perek 3/P’sukim 13-14):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים... לֵקִים הֲיֵה אֲנֹכִי בָּא אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אָ... לֵקִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ לִי מַה שְּׁמוֹ מָה אֲמַר אֲלֵהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר אָ... לֵקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם:

Moshe said to G-d, ‘Behold I come to B’nei Yisroel and I will say to them, ‘the G-d of your fathers sent me to you and they will say to me, ‘what is His Name?’- What shall I say to them?’ G-d said to Moshe, ‘I will be what I will be’ and He said, ‘This is what you shall say to B’nei Yisroel – *I will be* sent me to you.

Rashi writes:

אהיה אשר אהיה - אהיה עמם בצרה זו אשר אהיה עמם בשעבוד שאר מלכויות. אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם, מה אני מזכיר להם צרה אחרת דיים בצרה זו. אמר לו יפה אמרת, כה תאמר וגו':

I will be what I will be – I Hashem will be with them in this trouble and I will be with them in future subjugations to other reigns.

Moshe said before Him, ‘Master of the universe, why should I mention to them other troubles. This trouble is enough.’

Hashem said, ‘You spoke well. [This is what I told you, but] the following is what you should say to B’nei Yisroel.’

However, in the context of Yom HaKippurim it still seems problematic. Aren't we seeking unconditional forgiveness?

And, the way *Chizkuni* understands the word סלחתי, in its literal translation of 'I forgave', makes this verse totally improbable for recitation on Yom HaKippurim.

He writes:

סלחתי פעם אחת במעשה העגל ויתרתי להם אבל עכשיו לא אסלח להם אבל
אפרע מהם.

I forgave – One time [I forgave them]. At the event of the *Eigel HaZahav*, then I let them go. But now I will not forgive them, rather I will punish them.

Perhaps this explanation reads the words of this Posuk and the one that follows in which Hashem says that they will all die out in the wilderness in their simplest and most direct form. Hashem is saying that this time is different. In the case of the previous catastrophic sin, the Golden Calf, He retracted His words and relented. He did not destroy Israel as He said He would. However, here, all of Israel punished³.

We need not elaborate. This cannot be the meaning that is intended when this verse was instituted to usher in Yom HaKippurim.

In fact, in the commentary of *Daas Zekeinim Baalei Tosfos* we find that they related directly to our question. We read:

³ *Chizkuni* has a second *p'shat* which is partially different than this first one.

ויאמר ה'. על ששנינו שנתרצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל ביום הכפורים ואמר לו סלחתי כדבריך ולכך הוקבע אותו יום למחילה ולכפרה לדורות מקשים העולם היכן מצינו שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה סלחתי כדברך במעשה העגל אלא כאן במרגלים. ויש לומר דהאי קרא אדלעיל קאי והכי קאמר כאשר נשאת לעם הזה ממצרים ועד הנה אז אמרת סלחתי כדבריך וכן סלח נא לעמך ועוד יש לומר כדברך משמע כאשר בקשת ממני שאסלח להם עתה כמו שנשאתי להם ביציאת מצרים בעשיית העגל ואם כן גם שם אמר סלחתי:

Hashem said – We learned from Chazal that Hashem became appeased with Israel [following the sin of the *Eigel HaZahav*] on Yom HaKippurim⁴ and He said *then*

סלחתי כדברך

I have forgiven you according to your word.

And therefore, that day was established as a day of forgiveness and atonement for future generations.

But, everyone asks, 'where did we see that Hashem told Moshe:

סלחתי כדברך

I have forgiven you according to your word

at the event of the *Eigel*? He said it at the event of the Meraglim?

One can answer that the word סלחתי – I forgave is referring to the previous event and this is what the verse means:

⁴ Rashi writes (Sh'mos Perek 33/Posuk 13):

בשבעה עשר בתמוז ירד ושבר את הלוחות, ולמחר עלה בהשכמה ושהה שמונים יום וירד ביום הכיפורים

On the 17th of Tammuz, Moshe came down and broke the *Luchos*. He went up early the next time and was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and he came down on Yom HaKippurim.

[Moshe said to Hashem at the event of the *meraglim*] Just like you bore the people from Egypt until now and *then* You said, 'I forgive according to your word', so please forgive Your people [now].

One can answer additionally that 'like your word' implies [that Hashem said] like you [Moshe] requested from Me that I should forgive them now like I bore them at the Exodus with the making of the Eigel and if so, there, too, I Hashem said, 'I forgive'.

This explanation of *Ba'alei Tosfos* seems very far removed from that which the Torah writes explicitly. But, in fact, there is a Midrash which he evidently used as his source. We read in Midrash Sh'mos Rabba (Parshas Pekudei Parshata 51/4):

אחר ארבעים יום חטאו, אותה שעה אמרו העובדי כוכבים אינו מתרצה להם עוד, שנאמר (איכה ד/טו⁵) אמרו בגוים לא יוסיפו לגור, כיון שהלך משה לבקש רחמים עליהם מיד סלח להם הקדוש ברוך הוא שנאמר ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך, אלא הודיע לעיני כל האומות שאין בלבך עליהם, אמר ליה הקדוש ברוך הוא חייך הריני משרה שכינתי בתוכם שנאמר (שמות כה/ח⁶) ועשו לי מקדש ומכירין שמחלתי להם לכך נאמר (שמות לח/כא⁷) משכן העדות שעדות היא לישראל שמחל להם הקדוש ברוך הוא.

⁵ The previous verse wrote that Israel was dirtied with blood and thus the nations say to her:

סורו טמא קראו למו סורו סורו אל תגעו כי נצו גם נעו אמרו בגוים לא יוסיפו לגור:
'Turn away', they called to the nation, 'turn away, do not touch; because they are dirtied and sullied [with blood]'; the nations of the world said, 'We no longer have to fear them.'

⁶ The entire verse reads:

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם:
They shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I Hashem will dwell in their midst.

⁷ The entire verse, the first in Parshas Pekudei, reads in its entirety:

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות אשר פקד על פי משה עבדת הלויים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן:
These are the accountings of the *Mishkan*, the *Mishkan* of testimony that were accounted by the mouth of Moshe, the work of the Levi'im, the hand of Isomor the son of Aharon the Kohen

After forty days [from when they received the Torah] Israel sinned. At that time the idolaters said, “G-d is no longer pleased with Israel, as we read, ‘The nations said, ‘They will no longer have to fear Israel’.

When Moshe went to seek mercy for them, Hashem immediately forgave them as it says, ‘Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven them according to your word.’

Moshe said to Hashem, ‘Master of the Universe, [behold I am appeased because You forgave Israel]; but please inform the nations that You have nothing against Israel any longer. Hashem said to him, ‘By your life, I will cause My Shechinah to dwell in their midst as it says, ‘And they should make for Me a *Mikdosh* and I will dwell among them’ and then they [the nations of the world] will know that I forgave Israel, therefore it says, *Mishkon*, the *Mishkan* of testimony’ since it is testimony on behalf of Israel that Hashem forgave them [for the sin of the *Eigel HaZahav*].

Since this is the explanation of Ba’alei Tosfos, and it is based on this Midrash Chazal, we are not expected to critique it. And, evidently, the fact is that since this verse is recited on Yom HaKippurim there must be a logical explanation for its placement, and therefore Tosfos find this Midrash their most appropriate source to explain the *minhag*.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that if the words

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרֶךָ:

Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven according to your word’

were not Divine utterances at that moment, but were, rather, Moshe Rabbenu ‘reminding’ G-d what He said at the time of the *Eigel*, we would have expected Moshe Rabbenu to have phrased himself differently.

Our source for this expectation is what Moshe said at the time of the *Eigel*. We read in Parshas Ki Sisa (Sh’mos Perek 33/Posuk 12):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' רְאֵה אֶתְּהָ אָמַר אֵלַי הֶעֱלֵאתָ אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת
אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ יִדְעֶתִיךָ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם מָצָאתָ חֵן בְּעֵינָי:

Moshe said to Hashem, 'See, You said to me, "Take up this people" but You did not inform me who You will send with me; You said [to me], "I have made myself known to you with the Name of G-d" and that 'you have found favour in my eyes.'

In last week's Parshas B'ha'alosecha we read (B'midbar Perek 11/Posuk 21):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלְפֵי רַגְלֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ בְּשֵׁר אֶתְּנֵן
לָהֶם וְאָכְלוּ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:

Moshe said, '600,000 people is the nation that I am in their midst and You said, "I will give them meat and they will eat if for a month of days?"

Here, Moshe Rabbenu is referring to what Hashem told him and he responds, 'You said...'. He does not say 'Hashem said, "I will give them meat" which would be the equivalent of what the Baaleit Tosfos and the Midrash read into our Posuk.

Furthermore, although it was not Moshe Rabbenu speaking, we can learn from the words of Yaakov Ovinu to Hashem as he was preparing to return to Eretz Yisroel and have that fateful meeting with his brother Eisav. We read (B'reishis Perek 32/Posuk 13).

וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ הֵיטֵב אֵיטִיב עִמָּךְ וְשִׂמְתִּי אֶת זְרַעְךָ כְּחוֹל הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִסְפָּר מֵרֹב:

You Hashem said, 'I will surely treat you well and I will make your seed as the sand of the sea that cannot be counted because it is so much.

There is no room for confusion here. Yaakov tells us that he is referring to what Hashem told him in the past. The Torah does not have Yaakov quoting Hashem in such a way that the nature of G-d's Words can be misconstrued.

Similarly, we read how Yirmiyahu HaNovi spoke with Hashem as the moment of Churban was rapidly approaching. He said (Yirmiyahu Perek 32/Posuk 25):

וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ אֵלַי אֲ...ד...נ...י ה' קָנֵה לְךָ הַשָּׂדֶה בַּכֶּסֶף וְהָעֵד עֵדִים וְהַעִיר נִתְּנָה
בְּיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים:

You, my Master Hashem said to me, 'Acquire the field with silver and bring witnesses to witness' and the city is being given over to the hand of the Chaldeans?

Here, too, there is no way that G-d's Word can be misconstrued.

And if all of this is insufficient to emphasize our point, the very section that we are learning seems to make it almost incontrovertible. We read:

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כְחַ אֲ...ד...נ...י כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לְאֹמֵר:

Now, let please the strength of my Master be made great like You spoke saying.

When Moshe is referring to the past he said 'like You spoke'. He does not quote Hashem as if He is speaking those words now.

Thus, we see in four instances when the past Word of G-d is being referenced, the Tanach leaves no room for doubt about its meaning. So, it is most difficult to understand the Midrash which the Ba'alei Tosfos adopt to justify the inauguration of Yom HaKippurim with an apparently uncomplimentary verse.

The Chasam Sofer (Al HaTorah 5562 d.h. *vayomer*) will help us find an alternative solution to our question.

The emphasis that Chasam Sofer makes is based on a different statement of Moshe in the context of his prayer that Hashem should not destroy Israel because of the sin of the Meraglim.

We read above:

⁸ Though it is written with the Four-Letter Name of Hashem with the letters *Yud*, and *Heh* and *Yud* and *Heh*, its vocalization is א...ל'קים.

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כֹחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ...נ...כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לְאֹמֵר: ה' אֲרַךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חַסְדֵּךְ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְפָשַׁע וְנִקְיָה לֹא יִנְקֶה פֶקֶד עוֹן אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים עַל שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל רְבָעִים: סָלַח נָא לְעוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדְּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָתָה לְעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַנּוֹה:

Now, let please the strength of my Master be made great like You spoke saying – Hashem, slow to anger and with great kindness; bearing sin and iniquity and cleansing; He will not cleanse [completely] He visits the sin of the fathers on the sons three and four generations;

Forgive please the sin of this nation according to the greatness of Your kindness and like you bore this people from Egypt until now.

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל נָא כֹחַ אֱלֹהֵינוּ...נ...כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ

Now, let please the strength of my Master be made great like You spoke saying

Moshe Rabbenu speaks before HaKodosh Boruch Hu and says that the destruction of Israel will not be a *Kiddush Hashem*. The obliteration of G-d's people will not raise the respect that the nations of the world are to give to the Ribbono Shel Olom and will not elicit the requisite awe.

The opposite will be true, as Moshe said earlier.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי הִעֲלִיתָ בְּכַחַךְ אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקְרַבּוֹ: וְאָמְרוּ אֶל יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי אַתָּה ה' בְּקִרְבֵּי הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עֵין בְּעֵין נִרְאָה אַתָּה ה' וְעֹנֶנְךָ עִמָּד עֲלֵהֶם וּבְעִמָּד עִנְן אַתָּה הֵלַךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם וּבְעַמּוּד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה: וְהִמַּתָּה אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד וְאָמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ לְאֹמֵר: מִבְּלִתִּי יִכְלַת ה' לְהַבִּיא אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם וַיִּשְׁחָטֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר:

Moshe said to Hashem, 'Egypt will hear that You brought up this people from its midst with Your strength. They will say to the inhabitants of this land that have heard that You Hashem are in the midst of this people that clearly saw You Hashem and Your cloud stands upon them and with the pillar of cloud You go before them in the day and with a pillar of fire You go before them in the night. If You kill this people all at once like one person the nations that heard Your reputation will say: It is not within the ability of

Moshe is seeking will bring about a *Kiddush Hashem*. How will 'failure to act' make an impression?

Although he does not source it, there is no question that Chasam Sofer is referring to a Gemara in Masseches Yoma, one that is most challenging in its understanding.

But first, to better appreciate that Gemara in Masseches Yoma, it needs to be introduced with a Gemara in Masseches B'rachos together with the verse to which that Gemara refers.

We read in Sefer D'vorim (Perek 10/Posuk 17):

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ... לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד:
כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ... לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד:
כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ... לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד:

Because Hashem your G-d is the G-d of all of the mighty and the Master of all of the Masters, G-d Who is great and strong and awesome; He does not show favoritism and does not accept bribes.

This verse, in which Moshe Rabbenu uses three terms to praise Hashem:

הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא

He Who is great and strong and awesome

is the focus the Gemara in Masseches B'rachos (33 b) that reads:

הוא דנחית קמיה דרבי חנינא, אמר: הקל הגדול הגבור והנורא והאדיר והעזוז והיראוי החזק והאמיץ והודאי והנכבד. המתין לו עד דסיים, כי סיים אמר ליה: סיימתינהו לכולהו שבחי דמרך? למה לי כולי האי? אנן הני תלת דאמרינן - אי לאו דאמרינהו משה רבינו באורייתא, ואתו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ותקנינהו בתפלה - לא הוינן יכולין למימר להו, ואת אמרת כולי האי ואזלת! משל, למלך בשר ודם שהיו לו אלף אלפים דינרי זהב, והיו מקלסין אותו בשל כסף, והלא גנאי הוא לו!

A certain individual was the *Shliach Tzibbur* in the place of Rabi Chanina. [In his Amida] he said, 'G-d Who great, strong, awesome, mighty, courageous, fearsome, powerful and brave, and Who exists with certainty and is honored.

Rabi Chanina waited until the person finished the *Amida*. When he finished, He said to him, 'Did you finish saying all of the praises of your Master Hashem?

You obviously didn't. if so, why did you say so much?

We only say these three: Great, Strong and Awesome because they were said by Moshe Rabbenu in the Torah and [even so] if the *Anshei Knesses HaGedoloh*¹⁰ did not come and institute these words in the *Amida*, we still would not be able to say them.

And you added on all of these extra words and kept on going?

The parable is of a flesh and blood king who had a million golden coins and they praise him about his silver holdings. Isn't that disrespectful?

And now we come to the Gemara which we are certain that Chasam Sofer had in mind when he gave us his explanation of the words

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלִחְתִּי כְּדַבְּרְךָ:

¹⁰ The *Anshei Knesses HaGedoloh* was the 120-member Sanhedrin that was temporarily established at the time of *Shivas Tziyon*, the return to Eretz Yisroel after *Churban Bayis Rishon*, and instituted the enactments that are called *Divrei Sofrim*. Though those enactments are not *D'oraisa*, since the Torah was already given, they have a higher status than those laws which are *MiRabbanan*.

One aspect that demonstrates the higher status of *Divrei Sofrim* is that when there is a doubt whether the law of *Divrei Sofrim* was fulfilled, we require it to be done a second time:

ספק בדברי סופרים להחמיר

When there is doubt whether the law of *Divrei Sofrim* was fulfilled, once must be stringent.

On the other hand, we say

ספק דרבנן לקולא

When there is doubt whether the law of that which is *MidRabbanan* was fulfilled, once is lenient.

The original head of *Anshei Knesses HaGedoloh* was Ezra *HaSofer*.

Hashem said, 'I have forgiven according to your word'

We learn in Masseches Yoma (69 b):

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה - שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה. אתא משה אמר הקל הגדל הגבר והנורא, אתא ירמיה ואמר: נכרים מקרקרין בהיכלו, איה נוראותיו? לא אמר נורא. אתא דניאל, אמר: נכרים משתעבדים בבניו, איה גבורותיו? לא אמר גבור. אתו אינהו ואמרו: אדרבה, זו היא גבורת גבורתו שכובש את יצרו, שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים. ואלו הן נוראותיו - שאלמלא מוראו של הקדוש ברוך הוא היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות?

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said, 'Why was this group named *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah* – the Men of the *Great Assembly*? It is because they restore the glory to its original status. Moshe came and said 'The G-d Who is great, Who is strong and Who is awesome'. Yirmiyahu said, 'The non-Jews are cackling in the Beis HaMikdosh – where is His awesomeness?' Yirmiyahu omitted נורא, awesome, from the Amida. Doniyel came and said, 'The non-Jews are enslaving His children – where is His might?' He omitted 'הגבור-the Mighty One from the Amida.

Anshei Knesses HaGedolah came and they said, 'It is the opposite. *This* is His might in that He overcomes his pull to punish them and that he is patient to punish the wicked. And *these* are His expressions of awesomeness. Were it not for G-d's awesomeness, how could one nation survive among the other nations?

That is, it appears, the original format for the first of the B'rachos of the Amida was to have included the words:

הגדול הגבור והנורא

G-d is great, strong and awesome.

When Moshe Rabbenu said those words that was the signal to our Chachamim to include them as *the* descriptive praise of HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

When the time of *Churban Bayis Rishon* and *Golus* came, the Chachamim, led by Yirmiyahu and Doniyel, each in their respective generations, decided that the praise of *Gevurah* and *Nora*, strength and awesomeness were no longer appropriate because these descriptions were negated by their contemporary history.

Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh reinstated these descriptions that were understood in a different light at the time of *Shivas Tziyon*, the return to Eretz Yisroel after the *Churban* and in light of new era that was dawning upon Israel¹¹.

Thus, we are able to understand the approach of Chasam Sofer in the same vein as the approach of the *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh* and, at the same time, have a new approach to the content of the prayer of Moshe Rabbenu and the thinking of the *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh*.

We understood the approach of Moshe Rabbenu – and these were his words – that Hashem's destruction of Israel would cause a *Chilul HaShem*. The nations would say that the Omnipotent Ribbono Shel Olom has flaws and weaknesses and therefore His act of destruction would be tantamount to a confession of inability and lack of strength.

Thus, *not* destroying Israel would *not* create a *Chilul Hashem*.

On the other hand, not destroying Israel would seemingly not create a *Kiddush Hashem* either.

G-d's 'failure to act' would just let the situation continue as is, life goes on and inertia assumes leadership.

Was Moshe Rabbenu only trying to avoid a *Chilul Hashem*? It certainly seems not.

¹¹ See Pachad Yitzchak on Chanukah where this Gemara regarding the change in the *Amida* is a central theme in many of the *maamarim*.

See in particular Maamar 8 in which Rav Hutner ZT"l explains why the decisions of Yirmiyahu HaNovi Daniyel *Ish Chamudos* and *Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh* are not in opposition one to the other

When Moshe says

יגדל נא כח...

Let the strength of G-d increase

It certainly appears that Moshe is trying to create a situation of *Kiddush Hashem*. But, if that is so, would the nations of the world recognize that G-d's strength is uniquely visible by the fact that He is 'restraining' Himself? Will such a thought enter their mind?

The answer, thus, may be that there are two audiences who are paying attention to the actions of the Ribono Shel Olom. The first is the nations of the world and Moshe wishes to dissuade Hashem from doing that which will cause a *Chillul Hashem*.

The second audience is Israel and its Chachamim. They will know that Hashem 'restrained' His anger and thus note that 'such is His strength and such is His awesomeness'.

That was the message of the Anshei K'nesses HaGedoloh – they were able to perceive the appropriateness of

הגדול הגבור והנורא

G-d Who is great, strong and awesome

as the opening of the *Amida*. They understood the *Kiddush Hashem* just like centuries earlier Moshe Rabbenu sought to understand the *Kiddush Hashem*, not to avoid the *Chillul Hashem* alone.

And now we come to Yom HaKippurim night.

What are we to consider when we give expression to the words spoken at the time of the Meraglim? And what is the reason that G-d's forgiveness for idolatry is raised at that most auspicious moment?

The answer to the first question is that we are to contemplate that with these words Hashem increased our knowledge of His holiness; we are to give annual witness to that *Kiddush Hashem*.

When we begin Yom HaKippurim and are aware of our actions that are so lacking, so filled with sin, containing so much *Chilul Hashem*, we are to be inspired by that Divine act of *Kiddush Hashem* that He performed, sparing us of destruction and obliteration.

In fact, in response to the second question, we are reminded that we may have even stooped to idolatry. Of course, the idolatry to which the Posuk of

וְכִי תִשְׁגוּ וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה:

When you err and do not do all of these Mitzvos that Hashem spoke to Moshe

refers to actual forbidden worship. And ברוך ה' we are not idolaters in its formal sense!

However, in a broader sense, עבודה זרה refers to a service which is foreign; that is, a service which has its values and directions coming from a source other than HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

It is not only in the 21st Century that people often follow the standards and principles from non-Torah sources. It is not only in the 21st Century that when a value that is sourced somewhere other Torah is adopted without attending to whether it is compatible with Torah or not.

When and wherever we are exposed to other cultures, societies, philosophies and religions we are not inured against an awareness of their thinking and beliefs. There are times when we may feel attracted to a belief or value that is expressed and not realize or care that such a belief or value cannot be adopted before clarifying its compatibility with Torah beliefs, values and *Hashkafos*. If such

beliefs and values are compatible, then they are not inherently wrong¹². If they are incompatible then they are inherently wrong and must be rejected¹³.

Thus, when Yom HaKippurim is about to begin and we turn to G-d for forgiveness, we are required to make a prerequisite declaration: G-d is the source of truth. His Word is the source of all values and we pledge ourselves to turn to His Torah and to His Chachamim to learn what our beliefs and values should be.

But, even if the values and beliefs from source are outside of Torah are not wrong, if a person does not check their compatibility with Torah beliefs, that in and of itself is a type of עבודה זרה, service to a foreign 'god'.

¹² My Rebbe, Rav Aharon Soloveichik ZT"l, has said and written that non-Jewish sources could present appropriate ethical and moral values. Of course, their appropriateness is understood only after examining their compatibility with Torah values.

Whenever they are viewed as compatible, we can learn from them, even though their source is secular writing.

It should be noted that the Rosh HaYeshiva ZT"l was referring to philosophy and literature, but not to values derived from other religions. I am unable to say what he would say about ethical and moral values derived from other religions. I do not know if they could be acceptable or that since their source was from a עבודה זרה that they must be rejected immediately.

However, I understand the approach of the Chazon Ish ZT"l to be different. See what he writes in *Emunah UBitachon*, P'rakim 3-4.

¹³ It is no secret that Jews were leaders in many movements that espoused political and social values and that many of these various movements had diametrically opposed beliefs with each other in addition to not be based on Torah values.

For example, the presence of Jews in the Communist Party in Russia and in Israel is well-documented. Their 'orthodoxy' regarding those beliefs was so extreme at times that some of the adherents to the Communist Party and its beliefs defended Stalin Y'mach Sh'mo even as he and his regime were pursuing Jews, persecuting them and murdering them.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman ZT"l *Hashem Yikom Domo* famously wrote that any 'ism', representing a principle of belief, was automatically wrong because it ascribed a value system to something other than Torah.

We thus pledge our allegiance to G-d and to His Torah as that holiest of days is about to begin.

After we make that pledge we are then able to recite

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדַבְרְךָ:

Hashem said, 'I have forgiven according to your word'

We are to be inspired by G-d's act of Kiddush Hashem in which He spared us and are reminded to be deserving of that act of Divine 'sacrifice'.

How are we to express our gratitude for that Divine act of 'sacrifice'? We are to resolve to turn the tide of our personal behavior, of our inertia and to redirect our actions in such a way that it will be our actions of *Kiddush Hashem* which will mean that no longer will G-d have to 'restrain' Himself to preserve our lives and existence.

We pledge ourselves to be deserving of that ancient act in which He spared us and commit ourselves to perform our actions of *Kiddush Hashem*.

When we read Parshas Meraglim this Shabbos, we can be inspired by G-d's compassion for us, remember our responsibilities to Him and to His Torah and can come to the realization that we do not have to wait for Yom HaKippurim to make the change.

We can reject the עבודה זרה of our search for foreign values and turn to Him and search for new ways to imitate HaKodosh Boruch Hu and say:

Just as He made a Kiddush Hashem so may we show our gratitude by finding the strength to sanctify His Name even today.

And we can say to Him, as Moshe Rabbenu said after the Divine forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf:

הוֹדִיעַ לְעִינַי כָּל הָאוֹמוֹת שֶׁאֵין בְּלִבָּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם, אָמַר לִי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חַיִּךְ הַרִינִי
מִשֶּׁרָרָה שֶׁכִּינַתִּי בְּתוֹכָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְּדָשׁ וּמִכִּירִין שֶׁמִּחֲלַתִּי לָהֶם

Please inform the nations that You have nothing against Israel any longer. Hashem said to him, 'By your life, I will cause My Shechinah to dwell in their midst as it says, 'Make for Me a *Mikdosh* and I will dwell among them' and then they [the nations of the world] will know that I forgave Israel:

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock