

יום הכפורים

I was recently asked why I always write *Yom HaKippurim* when discussing this upcoming Yom Tov and never write *Yom Kippur*, the way that most of us express ourselves regarding the Day of Atonement in our conversations.

The first answer, which is the entire answer to some degree, is that the Torah refers to the tenth of Tishrei as *Yom HaKippurim*, not as *Yom Kippur*. And so we will read this Shabbos morning from the first of the two Sifrei Torah (Vayikro Perek 23/Posuk 27):

אך בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם וְעֲנִיתֶם אֶת
נַפְשֵׁיכֶם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אֶשָׁה לַיהוָה:

But on the tenth of this seventh month it is *Yom HaKippurim*, the Day of Atonements, it will be a holy convocation for you and you shall afflict your souls and offer a burnt-offering to G-d.

We read again in Sefer Vayikro (Perek 25/Posuk 9) regarding the Yovel year:

וְהִעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים תַּעֲבִירוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל
אֲרָצְכֶם:

You shall pass a Shofar of *teru'a* in the seventh month on the tenth of the month; on *Yom HaKippurim*, the Day of Atonements, you shall pass a shofar in your entire land.¹

It is evident that the translation that we wrote for *Yom HaKippurim* is accurate and awkward at the same time.

It is evident that *Kippurim* is a word in its plural form and thus it needs to be rendered as *Atonements* and it is awkward because no one every expresses the English translation that way. We all say the *Day of Atonement*, in the singular. And so it may seem that we have the odd phenomenon of a Torah term in *l'shon haKodesh* being translated into the vernacular and the vernacular is then translated to the Hebrew giving an inaccurate term, one not in consonance with the Torah's expression.

¹ See as well Sh'mos Perek 30/Posuk 10 and Rashi there.

However, that explanation as to how we got to the term Yom Kippur is not accurate.

It is true that *Yom Kippur* is not expressed in those terms in the Torah. A search of the Mishnayos and Gemoros in both Bavli and Yerushalmi reveals that the term 'Yom Kippur' does not appear in any of them.

Chazal were faithful to לִישׁנָא דְקָרָא, the terminology that the Torah employs.

However, we find in Rishonim and later authorities that *Yom Kippur* was used multiple times. I found one instance when *Yom Kippur* was used by the *Geonim* - in the ²אגרת רב שרירא גאון, which was written around the year 4700, where that term is used³.

Nonetheless, the term that is employed exclusively by the Torah and almost exclusively⁴ by Chazal is *Yom HaKippurim* which should be translated as Day of Atonements.

However, my correspondent is far from the first to raise the question of what is implied by the plural *Yom HaKippurim*.

² רבנן סבוראי (קז)

³ In my search I also found *Yom Kippur* used by Rabbenu Saadia Gaon in his *Emunos V'Deos, Maamar 5*.

Even though Rabbenu Saadia Gaon predated Rav Sherira Gaon by a number of decades, we did not list him as the one to first use the term *Yom Kippur*. The reason is that *Emunos V'Deos* was written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew and I do not have a source to determine the usage of the term in the original.

⁴ I have found three instances where Midrash Rabbah employs the term *Yom Kippur*: B'midbar Rabbah Parshata 18/21 (Parshas Korach) and two instances in Koheles Rabba Parshata 10.

It is not foolish to speculate, based on this sparse number, that these few instances may be attributable to scribal errors, especially since there are hundreds of mentions of *Yom HaKippurim* in those Midrashim.

I found no mention of the term *Yom Kippur* in Midrashei Halachah. There are dozens of the term *Yom HaKippurim*.

The Zohar HaKodosh itself presents the query⁵. We read there⁶ (Parshas Korach Vol. 3, 100 b):

אמר רבי אלעזר כתיב (תהלים פא/ד) תִּקְעוּ בַּחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר בְּכֶסֶה לַיּוֹם חֲגֹנוּ
דַּתְכִסִּיָּא בֵּיהּ סִיְהֵרָא וְהִיךְ אַתְכִסִּיָּא, אֵלֶּא כִּד קִיִּמָּא עִיבָא וּשְׁמַשָּׁא לֹא נִהִיר
כִּדִּין סִיְהֵרָא אַתְכִסִּיָּא וְלֹא נִהִיר וְעַל דָּא מִקְמִי עִיבָא שְׁמַשָּׁא לֹא נִהִיר כֹּל שִׁכְנָא
סִיְהֵרָא דַּאֲתְכִסִּיָּא וְלֹא נִהִירָא... וּבִמָּה נִהִיר כֹּלָּא בְּתִיּוּבְתָא וּבְקַל שׁוֹפְרָא דְכִתִּיב
(שם פט/טז) אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה יוֹדְעֵי תְרוּעָה ה' בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיךְ יִהְלְכוּ כִּדִּין ה' בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיךְ
יִהְלְכוּ,

Rabi Eliezer said, 'It is written, "Sound the Shofar at the new month, at the hidden time⁷ for our holiday". The moon is covered, meaning the Divine attribute of *Malchus*-Kingship, is prevented from being influenced by the Divine attribute of *Rachamim*-Mercy. What makes it covered?

When there are clouds, that imply the need for strict Din-Justice, below the sun, the sun representing Mercy cannot give its light. And the Moon cannot receive the influence of Mercy.

What enables the moon and the sun to give light? Repentance and the Sound of the Shofar that ascend on high. That is the meaning of the verse, 'Happy is the people who know how to make the true sound of the Shofar; Hashem, with the light of Your Face they will walk.

⁵ In many *machzorim*, we have relevant excerpts from the Zohar and *Ra'aya Mehemna* to be read prior to *teki'as Shofar*. The text that we will bring here is found there, at the very conclusion of the Zohar excerpt.

⁶ Our translation/explanation of the text will be based on the contemporary *Mosok MiD'vash*. We have omitted a few significant phrases which are inexplicable in the limited scope of our writing. Additionally, the two verses quoted in the Zohar are incomplete in the text, we have added the missing segments because they are most relative to the explanation of the Zohar and the text cannot be understood without them.

⁷ Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the month of Tishrei, which is the appearance of the new moon. At its appearance, the new moon is not visible.

תא חזי בהאי יומא אתכסייא סיהרא ולא נהיר עד בעשור לחדש דישראל תייבין כלהו
בתיבתא שלימתא ואימא עלאה תאבת ונהרת לה והאי יומא נהירו דאימא נטלא
ואשתכח חידו בכלא

Come and see, on that day of Rosh Hashanah when the Moon-representing *Malchus* is covered, it does not give light until the Tenth of the Month when all of Israel repent with complete *Teshuva*. On that day the moon -*Malchus* has a major *tikkun* and there is total happiness in all of the worlds because of that *tikkun*.

ועל דא כתיב יום הכפורים הוא, יום כפור מבעי ליה מאן יום הכפורים אלא בגין דתרי
נהורין נהרין בחד, בוצינא עלאה נהיר לבוצינא תתאה ובהאי יומא מנהורא עלאה
נהיר...ובגין כך בכסה ליום חגנו כתיב

It is because of this *Tikkun* of the Moon-*Malchus* that the day is called *Yom HaKippurim*, in the plural. It should say *Yom Kippur*, in the singular. Why is it called *Yom HaKippurim* in the plural?

Because there are two *atonements*. That is the two lights shed light together: the upper light of *Bina*-understanding, influences the lower light of *Malchus* which is influenced by Mercy and thus it was written that it was covered on Rosh Hashanah and it was covered *ליום חגנו*, until the day when we celebrate which is *Yom HaKippurim*.

The Zohar presents us with a revolutionary understanding of *Kippurim*. Far beyond the meaning of the plural 'atonements', it teaches us the underlying meaning of *kippurim*, which we tend to translate as atonement.

The double *Kippurim* that the Zohar explains is the shedding of unadulterated Divine light upon Israel. First, we have the light of the moon, the *Malchus* of HaKodosh Boruch Hu that is upon us. That *Malchus* is different than the reign of Rosh Hashanah. That reign was a *malchus* that was devoid of mercy – it made HaKodosh Boruch Hu, *kavayachol* a merciless King. On *Yom HaKippurim* the true nature of His *Malchus* that of *Melech Rachaman* was restored.

The second of the *Kippurim* is the overall radiance that comes from upon high and enables this change to take place. In the language of the *Zohar* which we omitted from the text, it is the *אימא*, the source of all understanding, reflecting the added

measure of *bina* that is given to women that makes this transition. And, while we do not pretend to truly understand the mechanisms involved here and how they work, they are there, they are involved and they do work.

But this is not what is revolutionary.

What is revolutionary is the underlying teaching of the Zohar as to the meaning of *kippur*, whether it be in the singular or the plural. *Kippur* means, says the Zohar, to clean away the obstructions that block the light from entering⁸.

This is not the same meaning as our standard understanding of atonement. We understand ‘atonement’ as being a more sophisticated expression of ‘forgiveness’, but meaning the same thing.

Yom HaKippurim, says the *Zohar*, removes the obstructions that block the light, that prevent G-d’s mercy from being part of His judgment and disallows the influence of the overwhelming *Bina* that casts all of our behavior in a different light.

In fact, even if our understanding is revolutionized, the *Zohar* is telling us a truth that was waiting to be discovered.

Rashi has already presented us with the ‘raw’ information. It is now appropriate to process it.

In Parshas Vayishlach (Perek 32/Posuk 21) we read of the efforts that Yaakov Ovinu expended in order to ward off Eisav’s attack. He told his messengers:

וְאָמַרְתֶּם גַּם הִנֵּה עֹבְדֵךָ יַעֲקֹב אַחֲרֵינוּ כִּי אָמַר אֲכַפְּרָה פָּנָיו בַּמִּנְחָה הַהִלְכֶת לִפְנֵי וְאַחֲרָי
כֵּן אֲרָאָה פָּנָיו אוּלַי יִשָּׂא פָנָי:

You shall say, ‘Also, behold, your servant Yaakov is following us because he said, “Perhaps I can atone before him with the gift that is going before me”; afterwards, I Yaakov will see Eisav’s, face, perhaps he will raise my face [in forgiveness].

Rashi writes:

⁸ We will continue to use the term ‘atonement’ as the rendition of *kippur* whenever it is contextually appropriate.

אכפרה פניו - אבטל רוגזו וכן (ישעיה כח/יח⁹) וכפר בריתכם את מות, (שם מז/יא¹⁰) לא תוכלו כפרה. ונראה בעיני שכל כפרה שאצל עון וחטא ואצל פנים כולן לשון קנוח והעברה הן, ולשון ארמי הוא הרבה בתלמוד (בבא מציעא כד א¹¹) וכפר ידיה, (גיטין נו א) בעי לכפורי ידיה בההוא גברא, וגם בלשון המקרא נקראים המזרקים של קדש (עזרא א/י¹²) כפורי זהב, על שם שהכהן מקנח ידיו בהן בשפת המזרק:

I will atone before him – [This means] I will void his anger as we see in the verses in Yeshaya, '[You think that] your covenant will atone for death' and 'You will be unable to have atonement.'

I think that every time the term *kapparah* is used in the context of transgression and sin and in conjunction with someone's 'face', they are all expressions of 'cleaning' and 'wiping away and removing'.

Its source is Aramaic and it is used often in the Gemara regarding an individual who wiped his hands on someone else's garment and [in another Gemara] regarding one who wanted to wipe of his hands on another person.

⁹ The entire verse reads:

וְכַפֵּר בְּרִיתְכֶם אֶת מוֹת וְחַזוֹתְכֶם אֶת שְׂאוֹל לֹא תִקוּם שׁוֹט שׁוֹטָף כִּי יַעֲבֹר וְהִיִּיתֶם לוֹ לְמַרְמָס
[You think that] your covenant will bring you atonement and your appearance will cause hell not to arise; there will be a constant whip that will pass over you and you will be trampled.

¹⁰ The entire verse reads:

וּבֹא עֲלֶיךָ רָעָה לֹא תִדְעִי שְׂחָרָה וְתִפֹּל עֲלֶיךָ הַזֶּה לֹא תוּכְלִי כְּפָרָה וְתִבֹּא עֲלֶיךָ פְתָאָם שׂוֹאָה לֹא תִדְעִי:
Evil will befall you and you will not know before whom to rise to avert it; it will fall upon you unexpectedly; you will not be able to have atonement; the disaster will come upon you suddenly and you will not know it

¹¹ In our Gemara, the word וכפר is not used there; rather the Gemara writes ומשי, meaning 'he washed'.

See the note 49 to this verse in Rav Chavel's edition of Rashi for a discussion of the proper text there.

¹² The entire verse, inventorying the vessels of the second Beis HaMikdash, reads:

כְּפוּרֵי זָהָב שְׁלֹשִׁים כְּפוּרֵי כֶסֶף מֵשֵׁנִים אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת וְעֶשְׂרֵה כְּלִים אַחֲרֵים אֲלֶיךָ:
Thirty golden blood-retrieval vessels, secondary silver blood-retrieval vessels number 410 and there were a thousand other types of vessels.

Additionally, in the language of Tanach the vessels used to throw the blood of *korbonos* are called *Kippurei Zahav* because the Kohen would wipe his hands from the blood on the edge of those vessels.

And if there is a doubt that which we call 'atonement' as the translation of *kippur* means cleaning and wiping off, we read the words of Moshe Rabbenu during the event of the *Eigel HaZahav* (Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 30):

וְיִהְיֶה מִמָּחֳרָת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטֵאתֶם חֲטָאָה גְדֹלָה וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה אֶל ה' אֲוִלִי אֶכַּפֵּר בְּעֵד חֲטָאתְכֶם:

It was on the morrow that Moshe said to the people, 'You have sinned a great sin and now I will ascend to Hashem, perhaps I will bring atonement for your sin.'

Rashi writes:

אכפרה בעד חטאתכם - אשים כופר וקנוח וסתימה לנגד חטאתכם, להבדיל ביניכם ובין החטא:

I will atone for your sin – I will place tar¹³ and cleaning and sealing against your sin, to separate between you and the sin.

Kippur means to establish a blocking mechanism, preventing the influence of one object upon another by removing that which obstructs or not allowing it to make its mark.

And when we carefully read a Rashi in Iyov, we will see that the point being made gathers extra strength.

We read there (Perek 1/Posuk 10) regarding the Soton's attempt to defame Iyov and the challenge he presents before HaKodosh Boruch Hu:

הֲלֹא אַתָּה שֹׁכֵת בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעֵד כָּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ מִסְבִּיב מֵעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בְּרַכָּת וּמִקְנֵהוּ פָּרֵץ בְּאָרְץ:

¹³ *Kofer* is also the word for tar, a sealing agent.

Thus we read regarding the ark of Noach (B'reishis Perek 6/Posuk 14):

עֲשֵׂה לָךְ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי גֹפֶר קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת הַתֵּבָה וְכִפַּרְתָּ אֹתָהּ מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ בַּכֹּפֶר:

Make for yourself an ark from *gofar* wood, make the ark with compartments; seal it on the outside and the inside with tar.

Is it not that You Hashem protected him and his household and all of his surroundings and his activities You blessed; and his possessions have spread out throughout the land.

Rashi writes to explain the word ¹⁴שכת and the preposition בעדו –for him, and through his explanation touches upon our subject:

¹⁴ שכת with the letter *sin* is like סכת with the letter *samech* coming from the same *shoresh* as *Sukkah* and *S'chach*. And so it means a type of [protective] covering. We find it used in connection with the revelation of the Thirteen Middos of Rachamim in Parshas Ki Siso. There (Sh'mos Perek 33/Posuk 22) we read Hashem's words to Moshe Rabbenu:

וְהָיָה בְעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרֹת הַצּוּר וְשִׁכְתִּי כְּפִי עָלֶיךָ עַד עֲבָרִי:
It will be when My Glory passes that I will put you in the crevice of the rock and I will cover you with My palm until My passing [is concluded].

שכת בעדו - הגנת בעדו כמחיצה זו כמו הסר משוכתו (ישעיה ה/ה¹⁵) מחיצתו וכל בעד האמור בלשון עברי אינו אלא לשון כנגדו ובפניו כמו וכפר בעדו (ויקרא טז/טז¹⁶) קנח העון כנגדך ובפניך להיות הכפרה מגן בעדך וכן ה' מגן בעדי (תהלים ג/ד¹⁷):

You protected him – You protected him like this protective wall as it says ‘remove the protective wall’, the division [between him and threats].

Whenever the word בעד is used in the Hebrew Language it means ‘opposite’ someone, ‘facing’ someone.

That is how it is used when Aharon is to bring his offering on Yom HaKippurim and “‘atone’ before him”. Wipe away the sin from opposite you, and facing you to be an atonement and to protect you as it says ‘Hashem you protect opposite, facing me.’

¹⁵ The entire verse reads:

וְעַתָּה אֹדִיעָה נָא אֶתְכֶם אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה לְכַרְמֵי הַסֵּר מְשֹׁכְתוֹ וְהָיָה לְבַעַר פֶּרֶץ גְּדֵרוֹ וְהָיָה לְמַרְמָס׃
Now I Hashem and telling you what I am doing to My vineyard: removing its protective wall to be devoured; breaking through its fence and it will be trampled upon.

Rashi explains why the synonymous words for wall are being described as being devoured and trampled, respectively:

הסר משוכתו - ...מסוכה הוא סייג קוצים, גדר הוא גדר אבנים:
Remove the protective wall – *Masucho* is a fence of thorns [and is therefore edible for animals]; *gader* is a fence of stones [and therefore can be trampled but not eaten.]

When the fence is of thorns, the animals will eat it and then devour the vineyard. When it is stone, after trampling it they will continue to destroy the vineyard in the same manner.

¹⁶ The entire verse reads:

וְהִקְרִיב אֶהָרֵן אֶת פֶּר הַחֲטָאת אֲשֶׁר לוֹ וְכָפַר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבְעֵד בֵּיתוֹ׃
Aharon will bring his bullock as a sin-offering and atone before himself and before his household.

¹⁷ The entire verse reads:

וְאַתָּה ה' מִגֵּן בְּעַדִּי כְבוֹדִי וּמְרִים רֹאשִׁי׃
You Hashem protect before me; You are my glory and You raise my head.

Kippur is a word connoting protection.

We can now go a step further in understanding *Yom HaKippurim*, the day of the two atonements, the cleansings and removals, by studying an essay of the *Shem MiShmuel* (Erev Yom HaKippurim 5673 d.h. *B'Dvorim Rabba*). And from an understanding of what *Shem MiShmuel* teaches we will have a new insight in the well-known Mishnah that concludes Masseches Yoma.

Before seeing *Shem MiShmuel* we must have an initial preface regarding the laws of Mikveh.

It is assumed that all of our readers know that the Torah tells us that a Mikvah can bring *tahara*-purity to many items that are impure, including people.

The Mikveh, in general, is only effective to bring purity that is eligible to be brought when the item to be purified is completely immersed in it. The water must come to all parts of the exposed item, whether it is a vessel or a person. If the tiniest bit of the immersed item is not encompassed by water, the immersion is valid and the item remains impure, just as it was prior to the immersion.

However, there is an exception to the above; an instance when the Mikvah waters purify by contact, not immersion.

The Halachah that describes this phenomenon is called השקה. *Hashaka* comes from the word *neshika*-kiss and *hashaka* means putting to items together so that they 'kiss', i.e. make minimal contact.

When does *hashaka* work? If one has water that has become impure and part of it 'kisses' the water of the Mikveh, all of the impure water becomes *tahor* – purified.

So we read in the Mishnah (Masseches Beitza 17 b):

משיקין את המים בכלי אבן לטהרן

One takes impure water in a stone vessel¹⁸ and let it touch the Mikveh waters to purify it.

¹⁸ Stone vessels do not contract *tum'a*.

Shem MiShmuel brings a Midrash (D'vorim Rabbah Parshata 2/12). The Midrash reads:

רבי חנינא בר פפא שאל לרבי שמואל בר נחמן מהו דכתיב (תהילים ט/ט/יד¹⁹) ואני תפלתי לך ה' עת רצון אמר לו: שערי תפלה פעמים פתוחים פעמים נעולים אבל שערי תשובה לעולם פתוחים אמר לו מנין דכתיב (שם סה/ו) נוראות בצדק תעננו א...ל'קי ישענו מבטח כל קצוי ארץ וים רחוקים מה המקוה הזה פעמים פתוח פעמים נעול אף שערי תפלה פעמים פתוחים פעמים נעולים אבל הים הזה לעולם פתוח כך ידו של הקדוש ברוך הוא לעולם פתוח לקבל שבים

Rabi Chanina bar Papa asked Rabi Shmuel bar Nachman, 'How are we to understand the verse, 'As for me, my prayer is to you Hashem at a time that You are willing to receive it'. [Are there times when Hashem is not willing to receive prayer?]

He said to him, 'The Gates of Prayer are sometimes open and sometimes closed but the Gates of Repentance are always open.'

He continued, 'From where do I know this? Because it is written, "With awe, answer us in righteousness, G-d of our salvation, the security of the ends of the world and of the distant seas." Just like a Mikveh²⁰ is sometimes open and sometimes locked, so are the Gates of Prayer sometimes open and sometimes locked. But this sea is always open and so is the Hand of G-d always open to accept penitents.

Shem MiShmuel explains the difference between the Gates of Prayer that are open only sometimes and the Gates of Repentance that are open all of the time by raising the subject of the Mikveh that is only effective when the object is immersed totally and when the Mikveh can bring out purity to impure waters when the latter only come into minimum contact with the Mikveh waters.

¹⁹ The entire verse reads:

ואני תפלתי לך ה' עת רצון א...ל'קים בָּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאֵמֶת יִשְׁעֶךָ:
As for me, my prayer is to you Hashem at a time that You are willing to receive it, G-d with Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of your salvation.

²⁰ The Midrash understands that since the verse discusses the sea, and not the Mikveh, it is telling us that the Mikveh does not provide perpetual purity.

This dichotomy is found when comparing *Shaarei Tefilah* with *Shaarei Teshuvah*.

תפילה means 'connection'²¹.

In order to be connected to the Ribbono Shel Olom, explains *Shem MiShmuel*, one has to be totally immersed in that relationship.

He writes:

...תפילה, לשון חיבור, שצריך שיהיו כל חושיו וכל...כחות נפשו דבקים בתפילה...ואם איננו דבק בכל חושיו וכל כחות נפשה הוא דומה לאדם שטבל במקוה וחלק ממנו חוץ למים, ומי הוא אשר ערב לבו שדבק בתפילה עם כל חושיו.

Tefilah is an expression of connection that means that all of one's senses and all the strength of one's soul are cleaving to Hashem in prayer.

And if one does not cleave with all of his senses and all of the strengths of his soul, he is like a person who immerses in a Mikveh and part of his body is

²¹ We read in Parshas Chukkas (B'midbar Perek 19/Posuk 15) regarding vessels to which a top is not attached:

וְכָל כֵּל פְּתוּחַ אֲשֶׁר אֵין צֶמֶד פְּתִיל עָלָיו טָמֵא הוּא:

Any open vessel that its top is not attached upon it is impure (if it is in a structure with a dead body).

The word פתיל is like the word *tefilah* (even though the letters *tov* and *peh* are reversed – see the Rashi brought from Parshas Vayetze later on).

Rashi writes:

פתיל - לשון מחובר בלשון עברי, וכן (בראשית ל"ח) נפתולי א...ל"קים נפתלתי, נתחברתי עם אחותי:

P'sil – is an expression of connection in the Hebrew Language. So we find that Rachel said at the birth of Naftoli – 'I have connected to my sister'.

That Posuk in Parshas Vayetze reads in its entirety:

וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל נִפְתּוּלִי אֵ...ל"קים נִפְתַּלְתִּי עִם אַחֹתִי גַם יְכַלְתִּי וְתִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ נִפְתָּלִי:

Rachel said, "Through G-d I have been surely connected with my sister and I have been enabled; she called his name *Naftoli*.

Rashi writes:

נפתלתי - נתקבלה תפילתי

I have been connected – My prayer has been accepted.

out of the water [and the immersion is invalid]. Who is able to guarantee that his heart cleaves to Hashem will all of his senses?!

Thus, such is the nature of *Shaarei Tefilah*. *Tefilah* requires חיבור, connection, and if the connection is faulty those gates do not open.

All of this is under normal conditions. But the Midrash that *Shem MiShmuel* is expanding upon talks about

וְאֲנִי תַפְלֵתִי לָךְ ה' עֵת רָצוֹן אַ... לִיקִים בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאֵמֶת יְשׁוּעָה:
As for me, my prayer is to you Hashem at a time that You are willing to receive it, G-d with Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of your salvation.

What happens when I turn to G-d in prayer at an *eis ratzon* – when there is special Divine compassion?

That is explained in the continuation of *Shem Mishmuel*:

אך באם היא עת רצון למעלה...ורצון הוא למעלה מכל החושים וכולל הכל. וזהו הפירוש שנמשל למקוה פעמים פתוח ופעמים נעול שאינו יכול לבוא ולטבול... אבל תשובה נמשלה למים שנאמר (איכה ב'יט²²) שפכי כמים לברך [נכח פני א...ד...ג...י]...ועל כן כמו מים שנטמאו כשמשיקן ואפילו בנגיעה לבד נטהרו, כן בתשובה נדבקת הנפש בשרשה וכאשר יש לה נגיעה בשרשה פורחת טומאתה, וזהו המשל לים שלעולם פתוח.

But, if it is a time of Divine compassion above and Divine Will is above human senses and it is all-encompassing [then it is different].

And this is the explanation that [prayer] is compared to the Mikveh which is sometimes open and sometimes locked, preventing a person from coming and immersing.

But *Teshuva* –repentance is compared to water as the verse says, ‘Pour out your heart like water before Hashem’. Therefore, like water that is impure

²² The entire verse reads:

קוּמִי רַבִּי בַלֵּיל בַּלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת שְׁפֹכִי כַמִּים לְבָרֵךְ נֶכַח פְּנֵי אֲ...ד...ג...י שְׂאֵי אֱלֹהֵי כַפִּיךָ עַל נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלֵיךָ הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל חוּצוֹת:

Arise, pray to me in the night, at the beginning of the night-watch; pour out your heart like water before Hashem; raise your hands to him [in prayer] about the souls of your children who are enveloped in hunger all throughout the city.

can be purified when *hashaka* is done, even by touching, so *Teshuva* is when the soul cleaves to Hashem at its very root and when its root even touches the Divine root, the impurity disappears from it.

And that is the parable of the sea because the sea is never closed.

Yom HaKippurim – a Day of Atonements. A day when there is more than one way to cleanse ourselves from our sins, to block them from dirtying us.

The source of that cleansing and blocking is one – the *Mikveh*, but the *Mikveh* works in two fashions.

In general, all the year around, the cleansing process requires total dedication and complete immersion, surrounding ourselves completely with the Divine Presence, at least in prayer. That is one type of *Kippur*, cleansing and blocking out the impurity.

But, no less a personage than the *Shem MiShmuel* has just told us how difficult such a task is.

But there is a special day of *Eis Ratzon* in which the *Mikveh* waters function in a very different way, so inviting, so much easier. At the time of *Eis Ratzon* the connection that we make with HaKodosh Boruch Hu, just by touching, just by extending ourselves to receive the Divine kiss, cleanses by the very contact that we have with Him Yisborach, even though our dedication-immersion is incomplete.

That *Eis Ratzon*²³ is *Yom HaKippurim* where, one day a year, we are afforded an additional means of cleansing and wiping the impurity and blocking it from affecting us. That is the additional *Kippur* that transforms this special day into *Yom HaKippurim*.

²³ Every Shabbos afternoon, immediately prior to opening the Aron HaKodesh to remove the Sefer Torah for its reading, we recite:

וְאֲנִי תִפְלֵתִי לְךָ ה' עֵת רְצוֹן אֶ... לִיקִים בְּרַב חֲסֵדְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאֶמֶת יְשׁוּעָה:

Shabbos afternoon is called in the language of the Zohar רְעוּה דְרַעוּיָן, a time when Hashem's special compassion is unique. That time, as well, is particularly auspicious to enjoy the kindness of the Ribbono Shel Olom.

This special day occurs 'one day a year', as we read in the concluding verse (Vayikro Perek 16/Posuk 34) of *Avodas Yom HaKippurim* in Parshas Acharei Mos that we read in the morning of Yom HaKippurim:

וְהִיְתָה זֹאת לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְכַפֵּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל חַטָּאתָם אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה וַיַּעַשׂ
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה:

This will be for you an eternal statute to atone for B'nei Yisroel from all of their sins, once a year; and Aharon did according to that which Hashem commanded Moshe.

And, the vehicle of this cleansing and blocking and protecting is the virtual Mikveh of Yom HaKippurim.

And this is what Rabi Akiva teaches us in the concluding Mishnah of Masseches Yoma (85 b):

אמר רבי עקיבא: אשריכם ישראל, לפני מי אתם מטהרין, מי מטהר אתכם - אביכם שבשמים, שנאמר (יחזקאל לו/כה²⁴) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם ואומר (ירמיהו יז/ג²⁵) מקוה ישראל ה' מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים - אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל.

Rabi Akiva said, 'Israel, be happy. Before Whom are you purified? Who purifies you? It is your Father in heaven as it says, 'I will cast pure water upon

²⁴ The entire verse reads:

וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵיִם טְהוֹרִים וְטָהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל גִּלְוֵי־לֵיכֶם אֶטְהַר אֶתְכֶם:
I will cast upon you pure waters and you will become purified from all of your impurities; from all of your filth I will purify you.

²⁵ The entire verse reads:

מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' כֹּל עֹזְבֵיךָ יִבְשׁוּ וְסוּרֵי בְּאֶרֶץ יִכְתְּבוּ כִּי עָזְבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים אֶת ה':
Hashem is the Mikveh of Israel; all who forsake You will dry up and those who turn away from you will be written into the earth [to be buried] because they have forsaken the source of living waters, G-d.

In this verse, the *p'shat* of *Mikveh* is 'hope', just like the word *Tikvah*. G-d is Israel's hope, no one else, nothing else.

The *drash* is that He is the cleansing Mikveh.

you and you will be purified' and it says, 'Hashem is the *Mikveh* of Israel'. Just like the Mikveh purifies those who are impure so Hashem purifies Israel.

If we contemplate this Mishnah, we will find it incongruous. The two verses cited are not in consonant one with the other; they are in opposition.

If we talk about a *Mikveh*, according to the second verse, then immersion is required. But the first verse talks about touching the pure waters for purification; it doesn't mention immersion at all?

Now that we have learned *Shem MiShmuel* we can apply what he says to the Mishnah of Rabi Akiva.

On Yom HaKippurim the Mikveh functions in two modes. It functions in the mode that it does all year around and happy are those who can bond completely with the Ribbono Shel Olom and immerse themselves in the Mikveh.

But, on Yom HaKippurim, HaKodosh Boruch Hu expands the power of the Mikveh and it allows it to purify by just coming in contact with its waters. Hashem casts His purifying waters upon us and when they touch us – if we accept them as His Divine kiss and love in that *eis ratzon*, we can be purified.

Yom HaKippurim. A Day of Atonements. A Day of many opportunities.

Ashreichem Yisroel. Let us be happy in HaKodosh Boruch Who seeks to purify us and thereby renew the closeness of our relationship between *Ovinu ShebaShamayim* and *K'nesses Yisroel*.

Gmar Chasima Tova

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock

