



5:00 PM Tishrei in a Day: Yom Kippur – The True Birthday of the World?

R' Mordechai Torczyner – torczyner@torontotorah.com



This event is dedicated in memory of Ben Lax z"l, דב בן מרדכי ז"ל, by Michael and Marsha Lax

This session is dedicated by Rabbi Charles and Lori Gryzman

l'ilui nishmat Lori's mother, Evelyn Goldstein z"l, Chava bat Mordechai u'Batya, on her shloshim

1. Anonymous, *Atah Konanta*, Koren Yom Kippur Machzor (Sephard)

You established the world at the very beginning;
You founded the universe, creating all, forming creatures within it.
Looking upon a world of formlessness and void, darkness upon the depths
You banished darkness and brought forth light.
From the earth, You formed the clay of man in Your own image
Commanding him about the Tree of Knowledge.
He forsook Your word and was banished from Eden,
Yet You did not destroy him, for he was Your handiwork.
You made him fruitful and blessed his seed.
In Your goodness, You allowed his descendants to multiply and let them dwell in tranquility.
But they threw off Your yoke and said to Gd: "Leave us be!"
At the moment You loosened Your grasp on them, they wilted like grass.
You recalled Your covenant with that faithful one of his generation (Noah).
In his merit, You allowed the world to exist.
For his sake, You set the covenant of the rainbow as a constant reminder.
You loved the pleasant scent of his offerings and blessed his children.
But in their prosperity, they erred and built a tower,
Saying: "Let us ascend and break open the very heavens to fight Him!"
The singular father of multitudes [Abraham] suddenly appeared like a star...

2. Rabbi Meshulam ben Klonymus (10th c. Italy), *Amitz Koach*, Koren Yom Kippur Machzor (Ashkenaz)

Unshakable of strength, almighty and powerful,
Gd whose mighty deeds could be done by none other,
Who built unshakable chambers over the cold waters,
and founded all the world upon nothingness.
When all the world was darkness, deep shadows and gloom,
You shone the morning light with the sweep of Your robe.
You split rebellious [waters] apart with the awesome sky, like ice in between,
and gathered the lower waters to the depths, never to engulf the earth.
You uncovered the face of the land, and the buds of harvest appeared.
You planted a garden in the east, to delight those who would praise You.
You placed great lights in Your mighty skies...
Food and drink You made, with none to eat it;
And then You formed a shape of clay in the imprint of Your seal.
From above, You breathed a pure spirit into its form;
Then he slept and from his own rib You destined him an ally.
You commanded him never to eat of the Tree of Knowledge,
But, tempted by the deception of a creeping beast, he broke Your word.
Man was punished with the sweat of toil to eat his share....
You set the seed of that couple's meeting, inside a yearning womb,
And the woman sowed and gave birth to a farmer and a shepherd.
They offered a sacrifice and tribute before You, together,
And You raged at the older, but accepted the younger brother's gift.

[Cain] destroyed his own compassion and slew his brother;
But he beseeched You, and You laid Your sign on him.
Three generations later, [men] began to call idols by Your name,
You called on an army of water to sweep them away and they were gone...
But [Noah] who was charged with building the gopher-wood ark, was saved as You closed him inside,
And You made his children fruitful, until they covered the face of dry land.
A people, united, counseled together to ascend as far as the sky –
But they were trapped and scattered in storm wind and tempest.
The beloved [Abraham] who came from beyond the river...

Do these poems matter?

3. Mishnah, Yoma 7:1

בא לו כהן גדול לקרות... חזן הכנסת נוטל ספר תורה ונותנו לראש הכנסת... וכהן גדול עומד ומקבל וקורא עומד. וקורא אחרי מות ואך בעשור...

The kohen gadol came to read [from the Torah]... The commissioner of the gathering took the Torah and gave it to the head of the gathering... And the kohen gadol stood and accepted and read while standing. And he read Leviticus 16 and Leviticus 23...

4. Talmud, Yoma 70a (from Tosefta Yoma 3:18)

ואחר כך כל אחד ואחד מביא ספר תורה מביתו וקורא בו כדי להראות חזותו לרבים
And then each one brought a Torah from his home and read from it, to display it for the masses.

5. Talmud, Yoma 56b

ההוא דנחית קמיה דרבא אמר "יצא והניחו על כן שני שבהיכל, נטל דם הפר והניח דם השעיר"..."
One who descended before Rava [leading services] said, "[The kohen gadol] emerged and put it down on the second base in the Heichal. He took the blood of the bull and put down the blood of the goat."...

6. The wisdom of Ben Sira, chapters 42-50 <https://benyehuda.org/read/25753#ch2022>

7. Three simple answers

- Korbanot make the world go around
- Demonstrating that we always sin, and so we need this Avodah
- Lobbying for forgiveness by demonstrating that Gd has done it before

A deeper approach

8. Talmud, Nedarim 39b

שבעה דברים נבראו קודם שנברא העולם אלו הן תורה ותשובה גן עדן וגיהנם כסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ושמו של משיח
Seven items were created before the universe: Torah, Teshuvah, Gan Eden, Gehennom, the Divine Throne, the Beit haMikdash and the name of Mashiach.

9. Midrash, Bereishit Rabbah 3:8

"ויהי ערב" אלו מעשיהן של רשעים, "ויהי בקר" אלו מעשיהן של צדיקים, "יום אחד", שנתן להם הקב"ה יום אחד ואיזה? זה יום הכפורים.
"And it was evening" – these are the deeds of the wicked. "And it was morning" – these are the deeds of the righteous.
"One day" – Gd gave them one day. Which? This is Yom Kippur.

10. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 11:4

מהלך כל היש הוא בנוי על יסוד התשובה. ההיות מתגלות בתור ירידה מאלקיות לעולמיות, שהוא כמו השפלה ו'מיתה' נוראה, אשר כל ירידות שבעולם, מדרגה לדרגה, מרבוי כשרון וקנין למעוט כשרון וקנין, לא ישוו לה. וכל זה נעשה על פי המשקל העליון של שפיטת הצדק, המשערת את משפט ההיות בטרם כל יציר נברא... אמנם ירידה זו הלא יסוד העליה כרוכה כבר בה... "בטרם הרים יולדו ותחולל ארץ ותבל, ומעולם ועד עולם אתה קל. ותשב אנוש עד דכא ותאמר שובו בני אדם!"

The path of all existence is founded upon teshuvah. Entities come into existence as a descent from the Divine realm to worldly realms – a form of descent and of terrible “death” – to which no descent in this universe, from level to level, from great talent and acquisition to lesser talent and acquisition, can compare. This is engineered on the higher calculation of justice, which gauged the justice of existence before anything was created... But this descent has the foundation for greater ascent stored within... as it is written, “Before mountains were birthed and earth and foundation were formed, You have been Gd for all eternity. You laid man low, and declared, ‘Return, sons of men!’”

11. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 5:6

אם האדם עלול תמיד למכשול, להיות פוגם בצדק ובמוסר, אין זה פוגם את שלמותו, מאחר שעיקר יסוד השלמות שלו היא העריגה והחפץ הקבוע אל השלמות.

Even if a person is disposed to stumble, to flaw his righteousness and ethical conduct, this does not flaw his perfection. The essence of his perfection is in his established longing and desire to achieve perfection.

12. Talmud, Yoma 86b

אמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות... איני, והאמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות!... לא קשיא - כאן מאהבה, כאן מיראה.

Reish Lakish said: Teshuvah is great, for intentional sin becomes like accidental sin... But didn't Reish Lakish say teshuvah is great for intentional sin becomes like merit?... One is teshuvah from love, the other is teshuvah from fear.

13. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 9:5

כשעוסקים בתשובה צריכים להגדיר ביותר את מהותם של הטוב והרע, כדי שהחרטה וזעזוע הרצון מחיוב לשלילה יפלו רק על הרע ולא על הטוב. ועוד יותר, שצריך לברר את הטוב הנמצא בעומק הרע ולחזק אותו - באותו הכח עצמו שבורחים מן הרע, כדי שתהיה התשובה כח פועל לטובה, המהפכת ממש את כל הזדונות לזכיות.

As part of the teshuvah process, one must define well the nature of good and bad, so that the regret and the stirring of his spirit from compulsion [to sin] toward resistance will affect only the bad, and not the good. Further, one must filter out the good that is found in the depths of bad, and strengthen the good via that energy with which he flees from the bad, so that teshuvah will function for the good, actually converting intentional sins into merits.

14. Midrash, Tanna d'vei Eliyahu Rabbah 1

דבר אחר "גַלְמֵי רָאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וְעַל סִפְרָהּ כָּלָם יִפְתְּבוּ] יָמִים יִצְרוּ וְלוֹ אֶחָד בָּהֶם (תהילים קלט:טז), " זה יום הכפורים לישראל, שהוא שמחה גדולה לפני מי שאמר והיה העולם, שנתנו באהבה רבה לישראל. משלו משל למה הדבר דומה, למלך בשר ודם שהיו עבדיו ובני ביתו מוציאים את הזבלים ומשליכים אותם כנגד פתח של מלך, וכשהמלך יוצא ורואה הזבלים הוא שמח שמחה גדולה, לכך נדמה יום הכיפורים, שנתנו הקב"ה באהבה רבה [ובשמחה]. ולא זו בלבד אלא בשעה שהוא מוחל לעונותיהן של ישראל אין מתעצב בלבבו אלא שמח שמחה גדולה, ואומר להם להרים ולגבעות לאפיקים ולגאיות, "בואו ושמחו עמי שמחה גדולה, שאני מוחל לעונותיהם של ישראל!" לפיכך יהא אדם זוכר מיום שבחר הקב"ה באברהם עד אותה שעה, וכל טובות וצדקות שעשה עם ישראל בכל שעה ושעה...

Alternatively: “[Your eyes saw my raw form, and in Your book all of them are recorded,] the day they would be formed, and for it/him there was one of them. (Psalms 139:16)” This [day] is Yom Kippur for Israel, which is a great joy before the One who spoke and the world came into existence, for He gave it to Israel with great love. To what may this be compared? To a flesh-and-blood king whose servants and household brought out their trash and threw it opposite the king’s door. When the king emerged and saw the trash, he rejoiced with great joy. To this is Yom Kippur compared, for Gd gave it with great love [and joy]. Not only that, but when He forgives the sins of Israel He is not upset, but He rejoices with great joy, and He tells the mountains and hills, springs and valleys, “Come rejoice a great joy with Me, for I am forgiving the sins of Israel!” Therefore, one should recall from the day when Hashem chose Avraham until that time, and all of the benefits and *tzedakot* He performs for Israel all of the time.