



## Class # 1 – Yom Kippur: Moving from Spectator to Player (*thank you Larry David!*)

Fellowship Program

Rabbi Pinny Rosenthal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCGOFKC7-uY>

1. What type of events does Larry David generally buy tickets for? Why?
2. Why has he never bought a ticket for the High Holidays? Why does he buy one this year for the very first time?
3. What ironic feature of “buying a ticket” to High Holiday services is brought out so well by the case of someone like Larry David ?
4. What *spectator* experience do people like Larry David *think* is going on in the Yom Kippur service?
5. How does it happen that entire Shuls throughout the USA are filled with spectators who have no idea what intense activity is *really* going on?
6. How can we move from being spectators to players this Yom Kippur ? What IS the activity of Tefillas Yom Kippur??

### Rambam, Laws of Tefilla Ch. 4:16

- What is meant by [proper] intention? Kavvanah  
One should clear his mind from all calculations (schemes) and envision himself as standing before the Divine Presence. Therefore, one must sit a short while before praying in order to focus his attention and then pray in a pleasant and supplicatory fashion.  
One should not pray as one carrying a burden who throws it off and walks away. Therefore, one must sit a short while after praying, and then withdraw.  
The pious ones of the previous generations would wait an hour before praying and an hour after praying. They would [also] extend their prayers for an hour.

7. In what sense can a person focus on being “before Hashem”? Why do we need to remove our own schemes to be “before Hashem”

What can we say before You, Who dwells on high, and what can we relate to You, Who abides in the highest heavens — for indeed, everything that is hidden and revealed You know.

You reach out a hand to willful sinners\* and Your right hand is extended to accept penitents. You taught us, HASHEM, our God, to confess before You\* regarding all our sins so that we

those who repent. God Himself cleanses man, He teaches him of the degradation of sin and the beauty of *teshuvah*. Fallen man finds an outstretched hand to help him. Hashem plays an active role and personally accompanies man to the gates of repentance.

*Teshuvah* and *Viduy* are effective all year round because Hashem “awaits the wicked.” Indeed, the objective of every public fast day is to inspire *teshuvah* throughout the year. Hashem is the “*Mikveh* of Israel” (see *Jeremiah* 17:13). Immersion in the *mikveh* is an act totally dependent on the one who wishes to be purified. It is a ritual that does not require anyone else’s involvement. Similarly, God waits patiently for us to do *teshuvah*; He does not actively involve Himself in our decision. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Mikvaos* 11:12) calls the *mikveh* waters *מי הדעת*, the waters of knowledge, because *teshuvah* requires recognition of sin. The other requisite steps of *teshuvah* — remorse and resolve not to continue sinning — both stem from this recognition, from this knowledge. The sinner understands that he has in a real sense lost his prestige, and this lost sense of self-worth is restored by immersion in the *mikveh*.

In contrast, on Yom Kippur itself, with the power of the very day available to effect purity, Hashem takes the sinner by the hand, as it were, and leads him to

אַתָּה נוֹתֵן יָד לְפוֹשְׁעִים, \*וְיִמִּינְךָ פְּשׁוּטָה לְקַבֵּל שׁוֹבִיִּם.  
וְתִלְמַדְנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהִתְוֹדוֹת לְפָנֶיךָ \* עַל כָּל

וידוי / Confession

Unlike the other *Shemoneh Esrei* prayers of the day, at *Ne'ilah* we recite only the short *Viduy* and not the long one. The short *Viduy* represents an absolute admission of guilt, invoking no excuses or extenuating circumstances; it includes no request for forgiveness, as we do not even have the temerity to ask for it. It is this *Viduy* that is recited on other public fast days as well.

The long *Viduy*, on the other hand, contains a list of sins, but does not condemn man for having sinned. This *Viduy* is unique to Yom Kippur, when we stand before Hashem. Since *Ne'ilah* is a prayer that reflects the public fast day aspect of Yom Kippur, that theme, focusing on the negative view of man, is emphasized; only the short *Viduy* is thus appropriate for *Ne'ilah* (*MiPeninei HaRav*, pp. 138-139).

אַתָּה נוֹתֵן יָד לְפוֹשְׁעִים — You reach out a hand to willful sinners. There are individuals who, through their own initiative, decide that they no longer wish to be sinners. These people engage in the type of *teshuvah* that is operative throughout the year, through Erev Yom Kippur. In the words of the liturgist, God “awaits the wicked and desires his vindication” (from the liturgical poem *וְקַל מֵאִמִּינִים*, p. 572). We likewise say to God, “Until the day of his death You await him; if he repents You will accept him immediately” (from *וְנִתְּנָה תְּקוּף*, p. 562).

But there is another type of *teshuvah*, in which Hashem Himself helps the person to repent. As stated here, Hashem offers a hand to sinners, and is ready to receive

can withdraw our hands from theft,\* and so that You will accept us with a perfect repentance before You, as if we were fiery offerings and satisfying aromas, for the sake of Your word that You uttered. There is no limit to the fiery offerings required for our sins,\* and no number to the satisfying aroma of our required guilt-offerings. You know that our ultimate end is maggot and worm — therefore You have given us abundant opportunity for pardon.

What are we? What is our life? What is our kindness? What is our righteousness? What is our salvation? What is our strength? What is our might? What can we say before You, HASHEM, our God and the God of our forefathers — are not all the heroes like nothing before You, the famous as if they had never existed, the wise as if devoid of wisdom, and the perceptive as if devoid of intelligence? For most of their deeds are desolate and the days of their lives are empty before You. The preeminence of man over beast is nonexistent, for all is vain.

[Nevertheless] You set man apart from the beginning and You considered him worthy to stand before You,\* for

man has violated his agreement with Him. Living a life of sin is an act of theft and extortion (*Nefesh HaRav*, p. 214; *Teshuvah Lecture, 1971*; *Boston Lecture, October 16, 1971*).

אין קץ לאשי חובותינו — *There is no limit to the fiery offerings required for our sins.* If one does not offer his fast as a form of sacrifice, then it is not a valid fast. Yom Kippur is considered one large sacrifice offered up to the Master of the universe by the entire people of Israel. Prayer takes the place of sacrifices (see *Berachos 26b*) because true prayer always involves deep spiritual torment. Through sincere prayer, especially when offered on Yom Kippur, a man undergoes the spiritual

עונותינו, למען נחַדל מעַשֵׂק יְדִינוּ,\* וְתִקְבְּלֵנוּ בְּתַשׁוּבָה  
שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאֲשֵׁים וּכְנִיחוּחִים, לְמַעַן דְּבָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר  
אָמַרְתָּ. אֵין קֵץ לְאֲשֵׁי חוּבוֹתֵינוּ,\* וְאֵין מִסְפָּר לְנִיחוּחֵי  
אֲשַׁמְתָּנוּ; וְאַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאֲחַרִּיתֵנוּ רִמָּה וְתוֹלֵעָה, לְפִיֶּךָ  
הַרְבִּיתְ סְלִיחָתֵנוּ. מָה אָנוּ, מָה חַיֵּינוּ, מָה חֲסָדֵנוּ, מָה  
צְדָקָנוּ, מָה יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ, מָה כְּחוֹנוֹ, מָה גְבוּרָתֵנוּ. מָה נֹאמֵר  
לְפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, הֲלֹא כָּל הַגְּבוּרִים  
כְּאֵין לְפָנֶיךָ, וְאֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם כְּלֹא הָיוּ, וְחַכְמַיִם כְּבָלֵי מִדְּעָה,  
וְנְבוֹנִים כְּבָלֵי הַשִּׁבְל, כִּי רַב מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם תָּהוּ, וַיְמִי חַיֵּיהֶם  
הֵבֵל לְפָנֶיךָ; וּמוֹתֵר הָאָדָם מִן הַפְּהֶמָה אֵין, כִּי הֵבֵל  
הֵבֵל.

אַתָּה הַבְּדַלְתָּ אָנוּשׁ מֵרֹאשׁ, וְתִכְיָרְהוּ לְעַמּוּד לְפָנֶיךָ.\* כִּי

Him. He tells the sinner, *I will sprinkle pure water on you that you be purified (Ezekiel 36:25)*. The sprinkling requires the direct involvement of a second party to perform the ritual. In this case, Hashem Himself takes the lead (*Before Hashem*, pp. 89-101).

The sinner must be approached and told that he is not as bad as he thinks. For if a Jew perceives that he is totally corrupt, he will mistakenly think that he is too far removed for repentance. Often, Jews wish to repent but believe that the road to return is blocked. In response, we must let them know that God "reaches out a hand to sinners." We let the sinner know that there is no reason for low self-esteem (*Derashot HaRav*, p. 101).

363 / SHACHARIS FOR YOM KIPPUR — AMIDAH

On the Sabbath add bracketed words. [If forgotten, see Laws §18-22.]

Our God and the God of our forefathers, pardon our iniquities on this [Sabbath day and this] Day of Atonement. Wipe away and remove our willful sins and errors from before Your eyes, as it is said: “I, only I, am the One Who wipes away your willful sins for My sake, and I shall not recall your errors.” And it is said: “I have wiped away your willful sins like a cloud and your errors like a mist — so return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” And it is said: “For through this day He will atone for you to purify you; from all your sins before HASHEM\* you will be purified.” [Our God and the God of our forefathers, may You be pleased with our rest.] Sanctify us with Your commandments and grant us our share in Your Torah; satisfy us from Your goodness and gladden us with Your salvation. [And grant us, O HASHEM, our God, with love and favor, Your holy Sabbath as a heritage, and may Israel, the sanctifiers of Your Name, rest on it.] And purify our heart to serve You sincerely. For You are the Forgiver of Israel and the Pardoner of the tribes of Jeshurun in every generation, and other than You we have no king who pardons and forgives — only You! Blessed are You, HASHEM, the King Who pardons and forgives our iniquities and the iniquities of His people, the Family of Israel, and removes our sins every single year, King over all the world, Who sanctifies [the Sabbath,] Israel and the Day of Atonement.