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פרשת אחרי מות קדושים / Parshas Acharei Mos-Kedoshim

“כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם לפני ד' תטהרו” ויקרא טז;

“For on this day I shall atone for you in order to purify you, from all of your sins before Hashem, you shall be purified.”

Vayikra 16:30

This pasuk is referring to Yom Kippur. The famous, apropos Mishnah at the end of Masechta Yoma highlights this pasuk. R' Elazar ben Azarya elucidates the pasuk “מכל חטאתיכם לפני ד' תטהרו” from all of your sins before Hashem, you shall be purified”. Sins between a man and his Creator are forgiven on Yom Kippur; however, sins that have been committed between a man and his fellow are not erased until the man beseeches the one whom he has wronged for forgiveness. The Mishnah continues with what has become a sort of mantra for some.

“אמר ר' עקיבא אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרין ומי מטהר אתכם אביכם שבשמים שנאמר...”

“Said Rabbi Akiva; praiseworthy is Yisrael, before whom are you purified and who purifies you? (Before) your Father in Heaven.” The Ikur Tosfos Yom Tov explains that R' Akiva is coming to fortify the way that R' Elazar ben Azarya learns the pasuk as referring exclusively to sins between man and Hashem, by bringing proof from pasukim in Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu.

Yom Kippur is a day for us to become clean from sins between us, and Hashem, as He purifies us and we become cleansed before Him. We may ask, if this is the Day of Atonement for the times that we may have strayed from the straight path and angered Hashem, why does it seem so simple to achieve this atonement? Furthermore, why does Hashem grant us this opportunity annually?

The Dubno Maggid in Ohel Yaakov explains, as is his wont, with a parable. When a surgeon operates on a patient, he generally does not focus on the pain that his patient may be experiencing over the course of the procedure, for the doctor is focused on the overall health of the patient and the success of the surgery. Pain endured during the process is immaterial in the eyes of the surgeon. But what if the patient turns out to be the son of the doctor? If this medical professional were to operate on his own son, he would most certainly formulate a plan to try and reduce the pain of the procedure and keep his child's discomfort to a bare minimum.

Hashem as our father is constantly searching out methods with which to atone for our sins without the side effects of pain and suffering. That is why Hashem has given us this holy day, Yom Kippur, on which we can atone for our wrongdoings. Seeing as Hashem is our father and we are purified before Him, He has therefore devised for us an easier and lighter path towards spiritual healing.

Hashem wants to minimize the trials and travails that we may experience along our path towards purity. As the Orach Chaim Hakadosh writes on the pasuk of "כמעשה ארץ מצרים אשר ישבתם בה לא תעשו", we must guard both our eyes from impure sights and our thoughts from illicit wanderings by reminding ourselves that "אני ד' אלוקיך", I am Hashem your G-d. This will aid us in our combat with the evil inclination. By constantly reminding ourselves and being aware that Hashem is our G-d and our Father, we will ingrain within ourselves the power to refrain from sin and be protected from suffering during our purification process.