



#182 • VAYEISHEV • 21 KISLEV, 5778 • 12/9/17

# DAF KESHER

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## DVAR TORAH ECHOES OF THE SALE OF YOSEF

The main text of the fourth blessing of the silent prayer on Yom Kippur ends with the words, “כי אתה סלחן – לישראל ומחלן לשבטי ישורון – For you are the One Who forgives Israel and pardons the tribes of Yeshurun.” The expression “tribes of Yeshurun” is uncommon in the prayers. Why do we use it on Yom Kippur?

The author of the Meshech Chochmah (Harav Meir Simchah of Dvinsk, דצ"ל, 1843–1926) explains this line in the prayers in light of a theme he sees behind three other unique details of the Yom Kippur service:

1. A key aspect of the Yom Kippur service, an incense offering, takes place in the Kodesh Kodashim, the Holy of Holies of the Beit Hamikdash. Yom Kippur is the only day of the year anyone enters the Kodesh Kodashim.
2. A rope was tied around the horns of the se'ir la'azazel, the goat that was taken out to the wilderness on Yom Kippur. The weight of that rope was to be two sela'im (about 29 grams).
3. The Kohen Gadol wore totally white garments when he entered the Kodesh Kodashim on Yom Kippur. The Gemara (Yoma 35a and 35b) tells us that his afternoon garments – for when he would enter the Kodesh Kodashim to remove the incense spoon and shovel – were of a lower quality than the ones he wore when he actually offered the incense in the morning. The Gemara and commentators seem to assume that this change only applies to the kuttonet, the cloak. The kuttonet seems to have a special status on Yom Kippur.

The author of the Meshech Chochmah makes an observation. Two of the Children of Israel's sins reverberated through the ages: the selling of Yosef and the sin of the Golden Calf. Just as we find that “no punishment comes upon Israel that does not include some punishment for the sin of the Golden Calf” (Rashi on Shemot 32:34), we also find the sin of the selling of Yosef as the cause behind the murder and torture of the ten martyrs (the עשרה הרוגי מלכות that included Rabbi Akiva and other Tannaim). These two core sins represent the two areas we need to heal and improve on – בין אדם לחבירו, interpersonal relations, and בין אדם למקום, our relationship with G-d.

Yom Kippur gives us the opportunity to atone for these two sins. Yom Kippur was, historically, the day when Hashem allowed Israel to repair the sin of the Golden Calf and gave Moshe the second tablets.

Yom Kippur is also the day to atone for the sin of the selling of Yosef. The atonement takes place in the Kodesh Kodashim, which was located in the area of the tribe of Binyamin, who was not at all involved in selling his older brother Yosef. The rope attached to the horns of the goat was two sela'im, the same weight of Yosef's coat (Shabbat 10b). Yosef's coat played a key role in the sin, and therefore special attention is paid to the cloak-kuttonet on Yom Kippur – it is the Kohen Gadol's key garment during the atonement process. When he entered the Kodesh Kodashim, the Kohen Gadol did not wear the Choshen, the breastplate upon whose stones the names of the tribes appear – for ten of them were in some way involved in the sin. Yom Kippur is also the one day of the year when Hashem “pardons the tribes of Yeshurun” for the sale of Yosef.

The Torah's account of the sale of Yosef exposes an interpersonal problem Israel carries through the generations but has within it the power to mend.

## SOURCE GUIDE: REUVEN'S TESHUVAH

Reuven is called by Chazal the pioneer of teshuvah (repentance), a role model for all generations. Several aggadic statements tie together Reuven's teshuvah for the Bilhah episode with his saving Yosef from being killed by his brothers. What is behind that connection and what was groundbreaking about Reuven's teshuvah? This source guide is built on an essay by Harav Chaim Goldvicht, זצ"ל (1924-1995, the late Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh) in Asufat Maarachot (Bereishit, pp. 178-188) about Reuven's teshuvah and the sale of Yosef.

### A. Reuven's Sin and Saving Yosef

Two aggadic passages connect Reuven's sin (see Shabbat 55b, where Rabbi Yonatan describes the sin of Bereishit 35:22 as Reuven moving Yaakov's bed from the tent of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, to that of Leah, Reuven's mother) with Reuven's saving Yosef: "Reuven heard and he saved him from their hands and said, 'Let us not kill him'" (Bereishit 37:21):

<p><b>1. Bereishit Rabbah 84:19</b>          "Reuven returned to the pit (where Yosef had been thrown)" (Bereishit 37:29) – Where was he (when Yosef was sold)? – ... Rabbi Eliezer says: He was involved with his sackcloth and fasting (repenting for the sin of Bilhah). When he was [later] unoccupied, he went and glanced in that pit, as the verse says, "Reuven returned to the pit." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: No one has ever sinned against me and done teshuvah; you were the first to open up with teshuvah. By your life, your son will be the one to stand up and first open with teshuvah. Who is this? This is Hoshea, as it says, "Repent, Israel, unto Hashem your G-d" (Hoshea 14:2).</p>	<p><b>בראשית רבה פד:יט</b>          "וישב ראובן אל הבור" (בראשית לז:כט) – והיכן היה? ... רבי אליעזר אומר בשקו ובתעניתו. כשנפנה הלך והציץ לאותו בור הה"ד "וישב ראובן אל הבור." אמר לו הקב"ה: מעולם לא חטא אדם לפני ועשה תשובה ואתה פתחת בתשובה תחלה. חייך שכן בנך עומד ופותח בתשובה תחלה. ואיזה זה? הושע, שנאמר, "שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך" (הושע יד:ב).</p>
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Another aggadta, uncovering the symbolism behind the sacrifices of the head of the tribe of Reuven at the dedication of the Mishkan, connects Reuven's teshuvah with his saving Yosef:

<p><b>2. Bamidbar Rabbah 13:17</b>          "On the fourth day the head of the tribe of Reuven ... His sacrifice was one silver bowl" (Bamidbar 7:30) – Do not read this as 'קערת' – bowl – but as 'עקרת' – you were the main, root one: This refers to Reuven who was the main savior. For he opened up first with saving, as it is written, "Reuven heard and he saved him from their hand" (Bereishit 37:21) ... "Full of incense" (Bamidbar 7:32) – For at that time Reuven was a baal teshuvah, a penitent, and he was wearing sackcloth and fasting and praying before the Holy One, blessed be He, that He should forgive him for the sin of the act with Bilhah. And prayer is likened to incense, as it says, "Make my prayer be as incense before you ..." (Tehillim 141:2).</p>	<p><b>במדבר רבה יג:יז</b>          "ביום הרביעי נשיא לבני ראובן ... קרבנו קערת כסף אחת" (במדבר ז:ל) – אל תקרי 'קערת' אלא 'עקרת': זה ראובן שהוא היה עיקר הצלה שהוא פתח בהצלה תחלה. הה"ד "וישמע ראובן ויצילהו מידם" (בראשית לז:כא) ... "מלאה קטרת" (במדבר ז:לב) – שבאותו זמן היה ראובן בעל תשובה ולובש שק ומתענה ומתפלל לפני הקב"ה שימחול לו על עון מעשה בלהה. והתפלה משולה לקטרת, כמה דתימא "תכון תפלתי קטרת לפניך וגו'" (תהלים קמא:ב).</p>
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That same Midrash reads both episodes into Moshe's blessing to the tribe of Reuven:

<p><b>3. Bamidbar Rabbah 13:17</b>          "Reuven will live" (Devarim 33:6) through bringing life to Yosef, "and he will not die" for the Bilhah act, because he repented.</p>	<p><b>במדבר רבה יג:יז</b>          "יחי ראובן" (דברים לג:ו) במה שהחיה יוסף, "ואל ימות" במעשה בלהה במה שעשה תשובה.</p>
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### B. Teshuvah of Fear and Teshuvah of Love

Reuven's teshuvah was groundbreaking, because, unlike previous penitents like Adam and Kayin, Reuven did teshuvah before receiving punishment; Adam and Kayin were first punished, then repented. But Reuven was not

only a pioneer baal teshuvah, he was also a role model for baalei teshuvah.

The Gemara (Yoma 86a) describes two types of teshuvah: teshuvah out of fear and teshuvah out of love:

<p><b>4. Yoma 86b</b> Reish Lakish said: Teshuvah is great for the penitent's willful sins become as ones done unknowingly, as it says, "Return, Israel, to Hashem your G-d for you have stumbled through your sin" (Hoshea 14:2) – the word עון refers to willful sins, yet it is referred to here as stumbling. Is this true?! Did Reish Lakish not say: Teshuvah is great for willful sins become as merits, as it says, "And when the evil one returns from his evil and does justice and righteousness, he shall live by them" (Yechezkel 33:19). This is not difficult. Here (the second statement of Reish Lakish, that sins are transformed into merits) refers to [when teshuvah was done] out of love, and the other (that willful sins are viewed as ones done unknowingly) refers to when teshuvah was done out of fear.</p>	<p><b>יומא פו :</b> אמר ריש לקיש : גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, שנאמר "שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעונך" (הושע יד: ב) – הא עון מזיד הוא וקא קרי ליה מכשול. איני ? ! והאמר ריש לקיש : גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות, שנאמר "ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם הוא יחיה" (יחזקאל לג: ט). לא קשיא. כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה.</p>
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Reuven's teshuvah went through two stages. At first he was preoccupied with sackcloth and fasting, exemplifying teshuvah out of fear.

Teshuvah out of fear involves distancing from sin. It focuses on inaction – refraining from problematic activity. The fear and worry that come as a reaction to sin can freeze the former sinner.

On the other hand, love is active. As the verse in Yechezkel says about teshuvah done out of love: "ועשה משפט וצדקה – he **does** justice and righteousness."

How and why does teshuvah done out of love transform the sins into merits? Rav Goldvicht explains: Sin arouses powers within the person. Those powers, granted, are directed towards evil, sin, lust, crime, and other negative goals, but they are active and dynamic. Goodness is not always done with the same energy that evil is.

Reuven's sin aroused his powers as the בכור, the firstborn son. As Leah's firstborn son, he was offended that after Rachel's death Yaakov's bed was in the tent of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, and not in Leah's tent. So Reuven took charge and moved Yaakov's bed. That was a firstborn-style sin, leadership overstepping its bounds into a realm reserved for his father Yaakov.

But as a penitent for that sin, in the midst of doing teshuvah out of fear – sackcloth and fasting – Reuven rose to the level of teshuvah out of love. He then used his newly aroused firstborn leadership qualities to save Yosef, guiding his brothers away from spilling Yosef's blood. He took charge, led, acted.

Reuven is therefore a role model for teshuvah: not to wait for punishment but to do a self-motivated teshuvah; and to not only refrain from sin, but to take the dynamic energy of sin and dedicate it to good.

## WISDOM: YAVAN AND YISRAEL BY RABBI MENDEL FARBER

The Maharal (Ner Mitzvah, pp. 11-12) tells us that the primary conflict between Yavan and Yisrael was in their חכמה, their wisdom – חכמת יון, the physical sciences, versus חכמת התורה, the wisdom of the Torah.

Both their חכמה and ours involves the study of the רצון ה', Hashem's desire. Nature and its laws are the desire of its Creator. He wants the world to function according to those desires formulated in the laws of nature.

He also had another desire, and that was that human life should function according to a certain pattern, the pattern of Torah.

Both the pattern of nature and the pattern of human life are His desires, and the attempt to understand those two patterns is to be involved in understanding the desire of the Creator.

This similarity between the two paths we follow – both of us studying and understanding רצון ה' – is the reason that the only foreign language a Sefer Torah may be written in is Greek (Megillah 9a).

However, there is a very fundamental difference between the two חכמות. The study of the natural world is the study of a system that functions as an imperative. The sun has no choice about whether to rise or set. Neither do any of the other natural functions of the universe have a choice in the roles they play. This, of course, is diametrically opposed to the Creator's desire for human life. Other than the natural functions of his body, everything Hashem wants materialized in a human life as prescribed in His Torah is completely optional and voluntary on the part of the human being.

Herein lies the conflict between the two systems. The Greek culture was formed by their intellectual endeavors. They studied the imperative and the concept of the imperative was the guiding principle. Only that which must be was real. Only that which can be proven in a laboratory had value. There were no dreams of human achievement beyond the limits and parameters of scientific measurement. There was no immeasurable goal for which this world was created to achieve.

The חכמי התורה, on the other hand, were involved in a חכמה without the imperative. Everything we learn in Torah depends totally on us to become a reality. We learn that everything worthwhile in our world is the exclusive product of human effort, and that human effort is not restricted or limited by what appears to be the boundaries of our physical dimensional environment.

The miracle of Chanukah was for eight days. We know the number seven represents the natural world and the number eight the transcendent levels of existence. The miracle of the menorah was not only a supernatural phenomenon; it expressed the victory of the eight over the seven, the victory of the eternal Divine ideal over the limited terminal existence of those mired exclusively in the physical and entrapped by its restrictive borders.

May the light of the Chanukah menorah illuminate and inspire our minds and our hearts to achieve the infinite human potential Hashem planted within us.

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The Daf Keshet, a project of Shapell's Darche Noam, is prepared by Rabbi  
Eliezer Kwass, edited by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon, and distributed by Emuna  
Diamond. To join the Shapell's Daf Keshet mailing list contact us at  
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The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:  
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, Hebrewbooks.org, and the Tanach section of  
Chabad.org.

**We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**