

Sacred Speech Yom Kippur

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

One of the central parts of the *Yom Kippur* liturgy is the viduy, the confession. Each of the transgressions mentioned are like a heading. Let us now discuss how we may have sinned with "*bituy sefosayim* the utterance of the lips." This includes not only *loshon horo*, but speaking harshly to others, shaming them, railing against God, and making promises in haste which we will not keep, talking in shul or saying *brachot* mindlessly. Rabbi Meislisch adds that when we speak improperly, we give the Satan an opening to speak accusatorily against us.

Rabbi Yossi Cohen observes that *bituy sefoteinu* is only the first of five expressions in viduy connected to speech. When we remember that speech elevates us over animals, we can understand why it's so central to Jewish observance. As the Maharal notes, speech reveals our hidden essence. It is the only sense that originates within ourselves, rather than as a result of external stimuli. Interestingly, notes, R. Moshe Shapiro z"l, our lips, unlike the rest of our skin, is the same red color as our mouths, a final caution to think before we speak.

Rabbi Cohen cites the *Sefas Emes* that on Sukkot we take two aravot which the *Medrash* likens to lips. Our lips must work on two

levels; knowing when to speak and when to remain silent. They represent Moshe and Aharon -- Moshe who constantly taught and spoke *Torah*, and Aharon who remained silent at the death of his sons. The greatness of a *talmid chacham*, writes Rabbi Wolbe, is that he understands that just as every harp string denotes a different note, so every word spoken reflects a different essence of the speaker.

Heorat Derech notes that a soft tone while rebuking allows the listener to accept and heal, rather than reject or become angry. One must be careful not to cause pain through words that embarrass, through sarcasm, lying, or other caustic comments. Rabbi Walters adds, asking prices when one has no intention of buying, recalling another's embarrassing past or blaming the ill for his suffering. It is important to build people up, not tear them down. Say something positive about another's purchase, don't make negative generalizations from someone's mistake. Don't label people. Vulgar speech corrupts the speaker's inner sanctity writes Rabbi Weissblum. As holy people, our every action and speech should be elevated.

Ba'al HaTanya notes that just as Hashem said *shamor/guard* and *zachor/remember* at the same time, we should assess our speech through both these lenses. Are the words

necessary? If it is necessary to deliver a negative message, can it be said less negatively. *Shir Hashirim* describes the lips as a red thread. Rabbi Meislisch connects this to *Yom Kippur*. The fate of the entire world rested on the thread turning white, signifying forgiveness. So, too do our lips have the responsibility of building the world, creating realities, and bringing down blessings or curses.

Speaking improperly may be even more severe than acting improperly, suggests Ohel Moshe. The Tolna Rebbe notes that we begin *Yom Kippur* with *Kol Nidrei*, to annul our vows and cleanse our mouths so that the words of our prayers will leave our lips in a purified. Rabbi Cohen cites the Chofetz Chaim. Every action we do, requires some intentional coordination of body parts. Yet speech, which involves no less than five body parts happens effortlessly. Hashem wants us to focus our brains on thinking about our words.

Hashem made mankind partners in creation. As He created the world through speech, so has He granted us, the ability to create through the power of speech. May Hashem give us the wisdom to use our lips appropriately.

Haftarot of Repentance IV The Book of Yonah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

The book of Yonah is perhaps one of the most enigmatic books of all the Prophets. The Gra held that it is really a parable. Yonah symbolizes a dove or the soul. Amitai comes from the root word *emet*-truth. Every soul is a part of Hashem and the ship is the body to which the soul is sent down here to this world with a mission which it sometimes tries to escape. Hashem commanded Yonah to go to *Tarshish* to warn the people about impending destruction and he tried to flee. How could a prophet imagine that he could defy Hashem's word? Many commentators explain that he chose to die rather than do Hashem's will. Others explain, Yonah was the son of Amitai, he

sought truth and therefore he fled because he disagreed with the notion of *teshuva* that comes out of *chesed*; that Hashem will accept someone's repentance not because they really changed but because He loves them. Moreover, repentance is not a substitute for punishment. Justice demands retribution. Many commentators say Yonah felt they repented out of fear, not out of recognition of what they had done, and it was therefore a temporary change.

Abarbanel argues that repentance for sins *bein adam l'chaveiro* is incomplete without returning to Hashem. The people of Ninveh were people

who once knew Hashem and then devolved into paganism. Paganism allows class society, for the powerful to rule over the lower class and for them to worship that which they can see and fashion. Yonah knew their repentance was lip service and wouldn't last and he didn't want to go on a mission of mockery. A second position says that Yonah didn't want to go on the mission to save the city that would ultimately destroy the 10 tribes and disperse them. He knew that Ninveh was being groomed to become the whip Hashem would use against the Jewish people. Our sages say that Yonah loved his people and was willing to fall on his sword to save them. Ninveh's

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immediate response cast a bad light on the Jews, for Yonah was a prophet in Israel and the people didn't listen to him. He tried to prevent the fall of the 10 tribes and failed and now he was being asked to save a nation that would destroy his people. Therefore, he attempted to escape.

Yonah saw how the people of Ninveh responded to his message and it bothered

him very much because he couldn't see the emet. In the end truth shines through. We look at reality as did Yonah, through a keyhole. We live in the present, we don't know the past or the future. So Hashem sent the *kikayon* to Yonah and then took it away. Then He came to him and showed him how he regretted to lose the thing that gave him comfort although he never worked for it. Will Hashem not have pity on the great city of Ninveh and its innocent

children? Hashem loves and cares about all of His creation. He is a *Kel rachum v'chanun*, He's not only vengeful but also loving.

We read Yonah on Yom Kippur because it's about *teshuva* in the moment. We know we may fall again but we are asking for another chance. We will try to go another step, to make it a little better this year than last year.

Standing in Judgment on Yom Kippur

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

We are now standing before *Yom Kippur* when our fate will be sealed for the year. If we think about it, we cannot help but feel trepidation. Who can say that he is perfect. Hashem knows all our deeds and nothing is forgotten. Chazal tell us that *Rosh Hashana* is *din* (judgement) while *Yom Kippur* is *rachamim* (mercy). Justice tells us that there are consequences to actions. Mercy is receiving what you don't deserve. How can we understand this?

The story of creation begins with *Bereishit bara Elokim. Elokim is din. Chazal* tell us that originally Hashem wanted to create the world with *din* but He saw the world wouldn't be able to exist so He added *rachamim*. Hashem wanted to give us an opportunity to earn reward so that we could come close to Him as a result of our own efforts. Therefore, he put us in this world so we could overcome physical temptation and earn *olam habah*. This is the concept of Hashem wanting to create this world with *din*. Hashem looks at our actions and responds. Why then did He add mercy? To understand this let us look at the story of the *asarah harugei malchut* that we read on *Yom Kippur*. When the angels saw how they were killed they cried, "This is *Torah* and this is its reward?" A heavenly voice called out, "If you will say one more thing I will turn the world back to what it was in the beginning." A similar story is told when Moshe went up to heaven. He saw Hashem sitting and tying crowns to the letters of the *Torah*.

and Hashem told him that there would be a great scholar Rabbi Akiva who would interpret great secrets of the *Torah* from these crowns. Moshe asked Hashem what will be his reward. Hashem showed him his torturous death. Moshe said, "This is *Torah* and its reward?" Hashem responded, "Be silent, this is what I had in mind." It seems as if He's intimating- You cannot understand from a human perspective.

The *asara harugei malchut* were judged purely with *din* and there's nobody who can stand in front of Hashem and be completely righteous. We are human and fallible. The 10 martyrs died to atone for something. They were on such a high level that Hashem could apply *din* as He originally intended the world. Yet very few people are at this level. Therefore, Hashem combined *din* with *rachamim*. This means Hashem doesn't demand from us what we can't handle. He does demand from us the desire to be more and if we work towards being deserving, then extending mercy is justified.

The Shulchun Aruch tells us that between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* we should undertake things beyond our usual level of observance, such as not eating *pas paltur*, even though we might not continue during the year. We give more *tzedakah* and say more *Tehillim* and try to do the best we can. We are telling Hashem that our will is to do more. Then Hashem can conduct Himself with us beyond natural law. This explains *din* turned to

rachamim.

The Midrash in *Bereishit* says on the verse where Yaakov told Rivka, "My brother Esav is hairy and my skin is smooth, "*Ki chelek Hashem amo* -The Jewish nation are a portion of Hashem. Rabbi Levi gives a parable of two people that were standing next to a field. Chaff flew and got tangled in the hair of the hairy person. Then it flew to the bald man who just brushed it away. The involvement of Eisav in the physical is such that he remains with sin. Yaakov, the Jewish people, although we might sin during the year, can brush it away on *Yom Kippur*. "*Ki b'yom hazeh yichaper aleichem...*" Eisav doesn't have anything to help him get rid of sin, but we have *Yom Kippur*, the day itself can atone for us.

In *Shir Hashirim* Hashem calls us a small sister. If a child does something inappropriate we overlook it because we know it's his age not his essence. Our sins are not indicative of who we really are. It's only external. Our inner spark remains eternally pure. We say about Avraham and David, Magen Avraham and Magen David. They grant us protection. Avraham gave us the belief in Hashem and David created the DNA for *teshuva*. On *Yom Kippur*, Hashem grants us a higher level of spirituality, an abundance of purity. It's relatively easy to connect to Hashem. We can look out ourselves honestly and say- "I don't want to be the person I was; I want to be better."