

Panther Post Article: Yom Kippur Dvar Torah

Chazal teaches us that Yom Kippur is not just a day of kapparah, a day of forgiveness, but a day of chiyyus, a day of life. The Torah says in Sefer Vayikra:

“כִּי־בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטָהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ” On this day Hashem purifies us, giving us the chance to start over. The Gemara teaches that a person who does complete teshuvah is considered like a newborn baby, “בְּיוֹם שְׁנוּלָד”. All of the aveiros are wiped away, and a brand-new neshamah emerges, as if reborn.

This idea of “new life” on Yom Kippur connects to the legacy of our grandfather, Dr. Nejat Kheradyar, מִלְשָׁה בֶּן, whose 30th yahrzeit falls the day after Yom Kippur. He dedicated his life to his job as an OB-GYN, bringing children into the world, providing physical life to countless families. On Yom Kippur, Hashem does something very similar for each one of us, not in the physical sense, but spiritually. We enter Yom Kippur carrying the weight of our mistakes, failures, and missed opportunities. Through Teshuvah, Tefillah, and Tzedakah, we end Yom Kippur like newborns, with a clean slate, ready to live with a new purpose.

Just as a doctor heals the body, so too Yom Kippur heals the neshama. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvah compares aveiros to a kind of sickness, and Teshuvah to the medicine. A person who does not correct his ways is like a patient who refuses treatment. But a person who opens his heart to Teshuvah allows Hashem, the Rofeh Hanefesh, to heal him completely.

Our grandfather’s work as a doctor also reminds us of what Chazal says in Masseches Berachos that doctors are considered “שְׁוֵתָפִים עִם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית” partners with Hashem in creation. Just like this, on Yom Kippur we become partners with Hashem in our own renewal. Hashem opens the gates of forgiveness, but we must step through those gates. The only way to do that is by doing genuine Teshuvah. This process is a partnership: Hashem gives us the opportunity, and we must take it.

Finally, there is one more connection. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodesh HaKodashim alone, representing the entire Jewish people. He prayed for atonement, life, forgiveness, and blessing. In a way, he was delivering the nation into a new stage of existence, bringing them out of sin and into purity. Our grandfather, who was also a Kohen, mirrored that by helping to bring each child from the hidden into the revealed world.

Just as our grandfather brought new life into the world, Yom Kippur offers us a spiritual rebirth, cleansing our neshamos and giving us a fresh start for the year ahead. May this Yom Kippur be a true day of life, and may the zechus of our growth serve as an aliyah for the neshamah of our grandfather, who dedicated his life to bringing life into this world.

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