**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**A River Flows from Eden:**

**The Garden of Eden**

**as the Inner Source of the Jewish Holidays**

**Rav Uriel Eitam**

**Shiur #09:**

**The Five Types of Affliction**

**Part II:**

**The Yom Kippur Service of All of Israel**

**III**

**The Affliction:**

**Being an Angel for a Day**

Thus far, we have dealt with affliction as atonement and as a repair of sin. We will now consider fasting as a means of shutting down the physical-material aspect of man and focusing on the spiritual aspect.

With the help of fasting, a person is released from those personal elements which lead to sin, returning one’s more spiritual aspects. The *Sefer Ha-chinnukh*, whose words were cited in the previous *shiur*, sees the shutting down of one's physical aspects as a means of standing before God with a morally and cognitively clearer spiritual awareness, in order to achieve atonement. In light of several *midrashim*, the meaning of shutting down one's material side can be more profoundly understood.[[1]](#footnote-1) Let us examine some of these *midrashim*.

According to the Midrash, God sends Samael (Satan) to examine the state of the people of Israel on Yom Kippur. The Midrash describes the result of this examination:

Samael saw that no sin was found in them on Yom Kippur.

He said before Him: Master of the universe, You have one nation who are like the ministering angels.

Just as the ministering angels do not eat or drink, so too [the people of] Israel do not eat or drink on Yom Kippur.

Just as the ministering angels go about barefoot, so too [the people of] Israel go about barefoot on Yom Kippur.

Just as the ministering angels have no joints, so too [the people] of Israel stand on their feet on Yom Kippur.

Just as with the ministering angels, peace prevails among them, so too with [the people of] Israel, peace prevails among them on Yom Kippur.

Just as the ministering angels are clear of all sin, so too [the people of Israel] are clear of all sin on Yom Kippur. (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 45)

According to the Midrash, the most suitable model for explaining the unique situation of the Jewish people on Yom Kippur is the angels. The discerning eye of Satan, which wants to find the faults of Israel, finds them standing on the level of angels, flawless. This view explains the deep meaning of abstaining from eating and drinking on this day — shutting down the physical aspect brings the people of Israel to the level of the angels, if only for one day.[[2]](#footnote-2)

It is not only the laws of fasting that express man's angelic aspect on this day. According to *Chazal*, this aspect also affects the laws of prayer on Yom Kippur. The sentence, "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever," which is ordinarily recited silently, is uttered aloud on Yom Kippur, on account of the angelic aspect of the people of Israel:

When Moshe ascended on high, he heard the ministering angels declare before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever," and he brought it down to Israel.

Why don't Israel recite it openly? Rabbi Assi said: This may be likened to a thief who stole a certain piece of jewelry from the king's palace. He gave it to his wife and said to her: Do not adorn yourself with it in public, but only in the house.

But on Yom Kippur, when they are as clean as the ministering angels, they recite it openly: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever."[[3]](#footnote-3) (*Devarim Rabba* 2, 36)

**The soul is distinct from the body**

In light of these *midrashim*, the Maharal analyzes the place of the angelic aspect in man. He explains that in its basic position, the soul belongs to the abstract, angelic, spiritual plane, and is distinct from the body; but the soul has been placed in the body, and it requires proper conditions in the body to dwell in such a construct. If these physical conditions are removed, the soul returns to its basic position as being distinct from the body. This situation is unique to Yom Kippur:

And similarly, all the *mitzvot* that God commanded on the great and holy day come to remove man's physicality to the point that one is entirely like an angel. He, therefore, commanded that one afflict oneself, all in order to remove and reduce the body to the point that the person may be as holy as an angel. Since the soul is situated in the body, and even though the soul is holy and pure it is situated in the body, therefore it is fitting that the body be indulged so that it will be fitting for the soul to be situated in it, and then the soul will be properly settled in the body. However, on Yom Kippur, God commanded to reduce the body and afflict it with five afflictions, so that the soul will not be settled in the body, but rather will be distinct from it, removed from physicality, and one becomes like an angel. (*Derush Le-Shabbat Teshuva*, p. 23)

On Yom Kippur, God commands the people of Israel to stand themselves in accordance with their spiritual stature by shutting down and cutting themselves off from their physical aspects, in order to be on the level of the ministering angels and expose the spiritual foundation found within them. The Divine command helps them uncover the angelic side within them, and set it at the center of their lives. Yom Kippur is the special day on which to uncover this special level, which is usually hidden because of the dominating presence of the physical aspect in their consciousness and lives.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**The affliction of Yom Kippur and Adam’s sin**

Adam is composed of two foundations: "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (*Bereishit* 2:7). Man is made up of a Divine soul that is found in a material body. The sins come from man's earthly aspect, and not from the breath of life within him. The temptation to follow one's earthly side come from the serpent whose food is dust, and who represents the possibility of being nourished by the low material reality and living a life disconnected from God.

At the same time, two levels of fruit trees stand before humanity in the Garden of Eden. Before Adam and Chava’s sin, humanity is supposed to receive Divine vitality from the Tree of Life, which parallels the breath of life in man and nourishes it. In contrast, the Tree of Knowledge to which the serpent entices them nourishes also the "dust of the ground" in humanity and strengthens also the impulsive forces within humankind.

Before Adam and Chava’s sin, it is possible for human beings to be at a perfect spiritual level even when engaged with the layers of physical life, such as eating. This is the eating of the Tree of Knowledge, which is meant for humanity from the outset. However, instead man directs the encounter between the soul and the body in such a way that the dust takes control of the soul. In the wake of the sin, it becomes necessary to shut the body down in order to fully live at the level of the soul found within humankind.

On Yom Kippur, the people of Israel are released from external eating and pleasure, which, since the sin, has strengthened the physical side within them together with all the base things that have joined it. This release allows them to live and express their original spiritual stature. At the level of the Tree of Knowledge, a person exists in a settled state in physical eating. However, on Yom Kippur, such eating, which settles the mind, imposes upon the eater the punishment of excision, for having violated the affliction of Yom Kippur.[[5]](#footnote-5) On this day, the people of Israel are freed from the consequences of the Tree of Knowledge, which enslaves man to the pleasure of physical eating.

It turns out that even the second story of the afflictions of Yom Kippur, which directs the people of Israel to the angelic aspect in man, is rooted in Adam, and its objective is to restore them to his level before the sin, as stated by the *Yalkut Reuveni*:

It was the intention of the Holy One, blessed be He, to create the created beings as angels,[[6]](#footnote-6) but after Adam sinned, His intention was not carried out, because "I said: You are godlike beings… nevertheless you shall die like men" (*Tehillim* 82:6-7).

However, the Holy One, blessed be He, decreed that one day a year they should be like angels without eating or drinking, and without doing work, and the entire day serving God like the angels.

With this the [original] intention will be fulfilled, because one day a year is considered like a year… (*Yalkut Reuveni* *al Ha-Torah*, *Parashat Emor*, no. 60)

**The affliction of fasting vis-à-vis the other afflictions**

The connection between Adam's sin and the afflictions of Yom Kippur may also explain the double structure of the afflictions of Yom Kippur, which are composed of a prohibition of eating, which carries the punishment of excision, and the other prohibitions, which carry lighter punishments.

What is the difference between the affliction of eating and the other afflictions? To answer this question, we will consider another statement of *Chazal* in which washing and anointing are mentioned as “things which benefit the body without being absorbed by it" (*Berakhot* 57b). We find afflictions of Yom Kippur mentioned here in an entirely different context, and they are not joined by eating and drinking. This statement indicates that the activities that are forbidden on Yom Kippur, all of which benefit the body, divide into two slightly different groups: eating e.g. benefits the body by way of food that enters into it, whereas washing and anointing e.g. benefit the body by interacting with its surface.

This distinction highlights what is common to the other afflictions. As opposed to eating which works on the body from the inside, the other pleasures work on man's outer shell, the skin. This distinction holds true also for an affliction that the Gemara in *Berakhot* does not mention, wearing shoes. Shoes are worn to ensure that the contact that one's skin makes with the ground is pleasant.[[7]](#footnote-7) The fact that washing and anointing involve pleasure derived from contact with the skin finds expression in another dimension of the prohibition of wearing shoes on Yom Kippur, which relates specifically to shoes made of leather. A shoe that is made of leather (*or* in Hebrew, spelled *ayin-vav-reish*), i.e., animal skin, expands a person’s skin, as it were, allowing one to maintain comfortable contact with the ground.

***Or* and *or***

Why is the expansion of affliction beyond eating directed specifically toward afflictions connected to the skin? It seems that the story of Adam and Chava might be helpful for this as well, as one of the direct consequences of the sin relates directly to the skin: "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them" (*Bereishit* 3:21).

This is the first mention of skin in the Torah, and it appears in man's world as a direct result of their sin. The simple explanation is that we are dealing with leather garments that one puts on one's body, but we find in the Midrash that the verse is referring to the skin of Adam and Chava itself, which changed in the wake of their sin: "The garments were skin which He formed on their flesh, which they did not have previously" (cited in *Torah Sheleima*, *Bereishit* 3, 186; see also the notes ad loc. where additional sources are cited).

This issue is related to a deeper aspect that appears in another *midrash* concerning these garments: "In Rabbi Meir's Torah scroll, they found it written 'garments of light' (*or* spelled *alef-vav-reish*)" (*Bereishit Rabba* 20, 12). This seems to be alluding to a gap between Adam's situation before and after his sin. Before the sin, Adam is at a spiritual level at which — in a sense beyond what is known to us — light shines from within him. After the sin, he goes down to a material level, the level of "garments of skin."[[8]](#footnote-8)

Skin stands in opposition to light. It constitutes a barrier that blocks the light and creates a gap between outside and inside. The letters *ayin-vav-reish* can also be read as *iver* (blind), one whom the light does not help.

Moreover, the skin is one of the most prominent features of the serpent which brings Adam and Chava to sin. Molting its skin expresses that what seems to be its true appearance is in fact something external. The skin that is shed is basically dead skin, and it is indicative of the expected death when the outside detaches itself from the inside. Therefore, materiality, whose vision arouses lust and brings Adam and Chava to sin, darkens the inner world and the light of truth. The skin is an expression of this new situation.

In the sources we find another skin born out of Adam's sin — the foreskin. A person is born with superfluous skin, the foreskin, which must be removed by way of circumcision, something which refines the passionate side of sexual relations. *Chazal* see a link between the foreskin and Adam's sin, and say about Adam: "Adam tried to disguise his circumcision" (*Sanhedrin* 38b). Various sages of Israel noted that the presence of a foreskin which increases the sexual drive is a result of Adam's sin.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Moshe on Yom Kippur:**

**“The skin of his face sent forth beams”**

The original level of garments of light is not, however, completely lost from the world. On the Yom Kippur after the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe atones for the sins of Israel and merits reaching new spiritual heights at the cleft of the rock. On this occasion, Moshe approaches the level of Adam before the sin. He has no need for earthly food or drink, and he returns to the Tree of Life, which is the Torah. For the first time since Adam's sin, the word *or* appears in the Torah. When Moshe comes down from the mountain a wondrous reality reveals itself in him. Moshe's skin is lit up, and this signals to the people of Israel the future level to which their eyes are directed. The Torah alludes to us that what we have here is a return to above the level of the Tree of Knowledge, when it says: "Moshe knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams" (*Shemot* 34:29).

The return to the original level of garments of light does not happen only on the Yom Kippur following the sin of the Golden Calf. Every year, on Yom Kippur, the Jewish people detach themselves from Adam's sin — the sin of eating, and from the result of that sin — the skin and its ramifications, and come into contact with the level of "garments of light."

According to this, we can understand that the difference in the force of the different afflictions, the prohibition of eating and the rest of the prohibitions, stems from the differences between them in the story of Adam. The sin itself is one of eating, the punishment for which is death, and therefore the most stringent affliction on Yom Kippur is that of eating, the punishment for which is excision. The consequence of the sin is the skin that takes form on humanity and blocks its inner illumination, and when humans turn into beings covered with skin, they need the afflictions of washing, anointing,[[10]](#footnote-10) wearing shoes[[11]](#footnote-11) and sexual relations. These afflictions are of lesser force, since they relate not to the sin, but to its consequences.

**IV**

**The Mitzva of Affliction and the Service of the Goats**

Let us go back to the Torah section dealing with Yom Kippur. This section opens with the service of the high priest, and closes with the obligation of affliction falling upon all of Israel. The Torah establishes a causal connection between the obligation of affliction falling upon all of Israel and the atonement of the day:

And it shall be a statute forever to you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourns among you. For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to purify you; from all your sins shall you be purified before the Lord. (*Vayikra* 16:29-30)

What is the meaning of making the obligation of affliction dependent on the atonement service involving the goats?

As we learned,[[12]](#footnote-12) the service in which the two goats are separated from each other separates between the people and their sins. The sins are sent away on the goat that is sent to Azazel, and the goat of the people that is sacrificed to God enters into the innermost chamber, expressing their absolute connection inwards. The process of separation that is performed in the Temple is comprehensive and total, but the high priest executes it without them. Do they reap its fruit without any participation on their part?

The connection that the Torah makes between the atonement service and the obligation of affliction teaches that the affliction of each individual and the service of the high priest are connected. It seems that the affliction of all of Israel is needed in order to allow the Divine "operation" in the framework of which the sin is removed from them and transferred to the goat.

Upon deeper analysis, we see that there is a parallel between the affliction of all of the people of Israel and the atonement service of the High Priest. There are two sides to the obligation of affliction, as we saw in this *shiur* and the previous one. The first is the aspect of treatment of the sin, and the second is shutting down materiality in order to concentrate on their spiritual identity. There are also two sides to the service of the goats: the goat that is taken out parallels the treatment of the sin, and that which is brought in parallels their spiritual identity. What does this correspondence reflect?

Let us begin with the first part of the correspondence. We already explained at length that the root of sin does not begin with the people but with the deficiencies inherent in reality, the root of which is the sin of Adam and Chava. In this respect, the people are required to release their grip on sin, in order to allow its removal from the people and its transfer to the goat that is sent to Azazel. Affliction's treatment of sin by way of sorrow over it or a cancelation of the pleasure that it has brought exposes the gap between the sinner and the sin, the readiness and the willingness to separate from it and from the life forces that have brought one to it, dissolving the connection between them.

Let us now move on to the second part of the correspondence. According to the second meaning of affliction, it shuts down the material side of man and brings one to concentrate on one’s spiritual stature. Like the goat that is brought into the innermost chamber when the sins are going out, so one enters a personal innermost chamber, by freeing oneself from occupation with earthly-physical needs. This innermost chamber is one’s point of connection with the Divine source.

**The goats, affliction and repair of the sin of Adam**

Let us go back to Adam. The basic form in which man is created is a foundation of dust of the earth into which is placed a soul of life. Fundamentally, the soul is designed to direct man and allow even the body eternal life. The sin of Adam and Chava mixes the two elements found in humanity, as each element vies for control.

On Yom Kippur, the people of Israel separate these two parts from each other, by shutting down the activities of the dust in order to give exclusive presence to the spiritual part. This separation in their midst, which is carried out by shutting down their physical side, parallels the separation that takes place in the service involving the goats between the inner and outer goats, which allows entry into the innermost chamber. The affliction is part of the people’s service which parallels the High Priest’s service that is carried out in God's house. This is the way that the people of Israel too are integrated into the day's service.

The main novelty of Yom Kippur — the fact that it achieves atonement for all levels of sin — seems to release the people of Israel from ordinary responsibility for their actions; however, it does not really release them from service, but merely changes its nature. On Yom Kippur, the Jewish people are bound to return to their deep identity, to believe that the connection between them and sin is weak, and to reveal their detachment from it. This is service that requires seriousness and genuineness; its focus is not on practical choice but on the processes of entering inward, into the innermost chambers of the soul, parallel to the entry into the place of the resting of the *Shekhina.*

On Yom Kippur God elevates the people of Israel to the level of the angels. He purifies them of their sins and of the sin of Adam and Chava, drawing them near the original level of man before the sin. He assigns the people of Israel once again to their original level, while cleaning them from all the stains that adhere to their garments. They merit returning on this special day to their original place.

Through observance of the affliction, each individual member of Israel joins the parallel process relating to all of Israel that takes place in the Temple, in the service of the high priest. One who does not include himself or herself in this is cut off from the people, whereas one who undergoes affliction is included in the process by way of which the nation as a whole returns to its roots and its deep inner identity on this great day.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. If the affliction is intended to shut down the physical aspect of man, why is the *mitzva* defined as: "You shall afflict your souls (*nafshoteichem*)" (*Vayikra* 16:29)? Why is the affliction associated with the soul, and not with the body? Generally, the term "*nefesh*" is used in the Torah to describe a person's life, which appears first and foremost in its physical aspect. The human body is not only matter, but also vitality. This vitality, at its basic level, is material vitality that human beings share with animals. Therefore the Torah asserts: "For the blood is the soul" (*Devarim* 12:23), and the expression *nefesh chaya* (living soul) is used in reference to both man and animals. Following one’s desires is defined in the Torah as belonging to the plane of the *nefesh*: "Because your soul desires to eat flesh" (*Devarim* 12:20). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also the interpretation of the *Derisha* (*Tur, OC* 606:1), who explains that being barefoot, i.e. not wearing shoes made of leather or other animal byproducts, represents reining in materiality and the human tendency to pursue one’s own desires. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Rosh notes that the previous *midrash* also has ramifications regarding the service of prayer: "And based on this *midrash*, many in Ashkenaz are accustomed to stand erect the entire day" (Rosh, *Yoma* 8, 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This notion of the fast can be sharpened, when contrasted with the fast of Tisha Be-Av. The laws governing the fast of Tisha Be-Av parallel those governinng Yom Kippur, but nevertheless we are dealing with days of opposite character. On Tisha Be-Av there is no reason to eat, because once the Temple is destroyed, there is, as it were, no reason for life, making the people of Israel like mourners and almost like the dead. In contrast, on Yom Kippur, the people of Israel do not need to eat, because they are like angels. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Mishna states: "If one eats the bulk of a large date — the like thereof, with its stone included — or drinks a mouthful, one is culpable" (*Yoma* 8:2). The Gemara explains: "Our Rabbis have established the fact that with such a quantity [a hungry person] becomes satisfied; but with less than that, one does not become satisfied" (*Yoma* 79a). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The reference, of course, is not to a bodiless angel — for, from the outset, every human being is born with a body — but rather to a person with a body who is at the level of an angel, that is to say, one who is exclusively guided by the spiritual side. Therefore, such a person is also deserving of eternal life. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Torah uses walking with shoes as an example of the lifestyle of a delicate woman: "The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil against the husband of her bosom, and against her son, and against her daughter" (*Devarim* 28:56). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Shela often deals with this issue. See, for example:

When man becomes more material and removes the light — the mystery of the garments of light with an *alef* — he is left only with garments of skin with an *ayin*, which alludes to blindness, and the Tree of Life is removed, causing death. So too the Torah became more material, “to work it and to keep it” — the material *mitzvot*. (*Toledot Adam, Beit Chokhma* II, 14) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See, for example: *Or Hashem*, 2, 2 (p. 172); Abravanel, *Bereishit* 17:9; *Keli Yakar*, *Vayikra* 12:2; *Chesed Le-Avraham*, 2, 51; *Or Ha-chayim*, *Vayikra* 12:3, 19:26); *Orot Ha-kodesh* 3, p. 301. One aspect of the sin of Adam and Chava touches upon the realm of forbidden relations, as is evident from a series of verses in the story that deal with sexual matters (see *Bereishit* 2:25-3:1; 3:7-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. One of the goals of anointing oneself with oil is the attempt to draw at least a little bit closer from a visual perspective to the original level at which the skin gives off light, as it is stated: "making the face brighter with oil" (*Tehilim* 104:15). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See *Mishnat Chasidim*: "It is only the wearing of leather shoes that is forbidden, leather alluding to the skin of the serpent, which has no hold on this day" (*Yoma* 1, 3). See also *Avnei Nezer*: "Well known is the reason given in the books of Kabbala, that a leather shoe alludes to the mystery of garments of skin, the skin of the serpent" (*CM* 161). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See our *shiurim* on the service involving the goats. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)