



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Acharei | Sichah 2

The Talmud:

Tractate Yoma, which discusses the day of Yom Kippur, concludes with the following passage:

The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: One who sees (an emission of) seed on Yom Kippur should be concerned for the entire whole year (that perhaps he was given a sign that he and his fast were rejected.) But if he survives the year, he can be assured that he has secured a share in the World-to-Come....

When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia he said: [Having an emission on Yom Kippur is a sign that] one will live a long life, grow, and raise others. (*Yoma* 88a)

The Question:

Why did the Talmud choose to end this tractate, the theme of which is repentance, with a discussion of a negative, albeit inadvertent occurrence? Even though the eventual outcome is positive, as Rashi explains — because he survived the year it is evidence that he must have many merits — still, this does not make the emission itself a positive occurrence.

A similar question can be asked regarding the concept of repentance. The *Talmud* says that when one repents out of love, his sins are transformed into merits. (*Yoma* 86b)

How can repentance out of love transform a negative act itself into a merit? Even if we explain that the sin spurred the person to passionate fulfillment

of many *mitzvos*, still, this does not make the sin itself positive; it is merely a catalyst for positive activity.

The Preface to the Explanation:

To understand this we will first examine the concluding *Mishnah* of the tractate:

Rabbi Akiva said: How fortunate are you, Israel; before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? It is your Father in Heaven, as it says: “And I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified” (*Yechezkel* 36:25). And it says: “The *mikvah* of Israel is G-d” (*Yirmiyahu* 17:13). Just as a *mikvah* purifies the impure, so too, the Holy One, blessed is He, purifies Israel. (*Yoma* 85b)

Rabbi Akiva refers to two forms of purification: the sprinkling of water, and the *mikvah*. When one sprinkles water on another, he must have the intention that his act will effect purification for the one being sprinkled. However, no intention required in the case of a *mikvah*; as long as a person enters the water, he is purified.

The same distinction applies to the two general forms of repentance discussed by the *Talmud* subsequent to this *Mishnah*: repentance out of fear and repentance out of love. Repentance out of fear is not a genuine desire to become close to G-d; it is a reaction to the prospect of punishment. It is like a *mikvah* — a purification that lacks intent. Repentance out of love, on the other hand, is a genuine feeling of longing to be close to G-d again after a period of estrangement.

Therefore, the *Talmud* says that when one repents out of love, his sins are not merely forgiven, they are transformed. There are distinctions, however, regarding the extent of this transformation. Either the sin is “uprooted from the outset,” or the effect — it is “transformed into a merit.” The extent of the transformation depends on the degree of the love expressed by the penitent.

When a person is consumed with a thirst for G-d as a result of his sins, those sins themselves become merits, for they were integral to his heightened thirst for G-d.

This can be compared to the halachic concept of *chinuch*/education. Educating a child to prepare them for a life of *mitzvos* is considered a *mitzvah* itself, even though it is merely a preparation. Similarly, repentance over past sins is a concentrated preparation for fulfilling *mitzvos*. Therefore, the elements of repentance, the sin included, are part of the *mitzvah*.

The Explanation:

This is the logic behind the sequence of the passages at the conclusion of *Yoma*. Rabbi Akiva introduces the distinction between repentance done with sincere intention and repentance done out of fear.

The *Talmud*, then, further distinguishes between different levels of repentance out of love.

And then at its conclusion, the *Talmud* imagines a scenario where one experiences a seminal emission on Yom Kippur. This is something quite improbable, considering the spiritual preoccupation of the day, that it must have been orchestrated by Heaven in order to inspire the person to further heights of introspection and intentional repentance.

When he does reach even deeper levels of love and longing for G-d, he will see an abundance of blessing in his life, as the *Talmud* concludes, “he will live a long life, grow, and raise others.”