

Understanding the Teshuva Process of the Yamim Noraim

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THE HAFTARAH OF SHABBAT SHUVAH: A TESHUVAH PRIMER

Rosh Chodesh Elul ushers in the teshuvah process. During the Yamim Noraim, starting with Rosh Hashanah, repentance intensifies and peaks on Yom Kippur. It is a time to renew our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu through teshuvah. The Shabbat during Aseret Yemei Teshuvah is an opportunity to accelerate this journey and deepen our commitment to teshuvah, introspection and avodat Hashem.

There are a few explicit *pesukim* in the Torah (Devarim 30:1-10) and numerous passages in Navi that can serve as a guidebook for the teshuvah process. In this essay, we will focus on the haftarah for Shabbat Shuvah,

from Trei Asar. This haftarah contains passages from Hoshea, (the minhag of Ashkenazim is to add additional *pesukim* from Yoel) and Mikhah.

The haftarah begins with Hoshea ben Be'eri's prophecy. Hoshea is the inaugural navi of Trei Asar and the first to promote teshuvah. According to the midrash, *Bereishit Rabbah* no. 84, the prophet Hoshea hails from Shevet Reuven, even though there is no textual mention of Hoshea's ancestry in the book of Hoshea. Hazal attribute the prophet Hoshea ben Be'eri to Be'erah the nasi of Reuven during the Assyrian exile in Divrei HaYamim I 5:6.

Why attribute his lineage to shevet Reuven? The midrash explains that because Reuven was the first of the shevatim to engage in teshuvah, his descendant Hoshea merited commencing Trei Asar. Reuven's teshuvah for the events involving Bilhah is not explicit in the peshat in Breishit, yet Hazal assign his prominent position among the shevatim in future surveys to his embrace of teshuvah. He loses the position of leadership to Yehudah and double portion in Eretz Yisrael to Yosef but retains much of his stature among the *shevatim*. Although Reuven initiates teshuvah, it is Yehudah who is the prime example of complete

teshuvah when he exclaims, “*tzadka mimeni* — she is more righteous than me” (Breishit 28:26) in his dealings with Tamar. It is no coincidence that Yehudah assumes the mantle of leadership among his brothers in the Yosef-Egypt episodes and beyond.

Why start Trei Asar with a prophet from Reuven who succeeded in his teshuvah, but not spectacularly? Perhaps this contains a message to all of us. There is always potential for spectacular teshuvah. Oftentimes, however, due to this very possibility, the expectations are so daunting. We set the bar so high and are reticent to even begin the repentance process. Hazal’s attribution of Hoshea to Reuven and the eventual choice of this haftarah for Shabbat Shuvah empowers us even on our imperfect quest to attain teshuvah.

The haftarah begins with the following:

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך כי כשלת בעונך.
Return, Israel until the Lord your God, for you have fallen because of your sin.
Hoshea 14:2

Hoshea beckons Israel to return all the way to Hashem, even though Israel is faltering and mired in sin. The beauty of the first words of the haftarah, *shuva Yisrael* — return Israel — is that they refer to Israel in the singular as one unit. Aseret Yemei Teshuvah culminate in Yom Kippur, a day that is set aside for all of Bnei Yisrael to do teshuvah and *viduy* as one community. This theme is articulated explicitly by the Rambam:

יום הכפורים הוא זמן תשובה לכל ליחיד ולרבים והוא קץ מחילה וסליחה לישראל, לפיכך חייבים הכל לעשות תשובה ולהתודות ביום הכפורים.

Yom Kippur is the time for repentance for each individual and for the

community. It is the close of the period of forgiveness and absolution for the Jewish people. Therefore, everyone is obligated to repent and confess on Yom Kippur.

Hilkhot Teshuva 2:7

Every time individuals commit sins, they must repent throughout the year (Rambam, *Hilkhot Teshuva* 2:6). Requests for repentance and forgiveness are included in the Amidah prayer three times daily. However, Yom Kippur is a unique occurrence once a year, when all of Klal Yisrael as one are obligated to repent and do teshuvah.

Hoshea formulates this process as follows:

קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה' אמרו אליו כל תשא עון וקח טוב ונשלמה פרים שפתינו.
Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him: "Forgive all guilt and accept what is good; Instead of bulls we will pay [The offering of] our lips."

Hoshea 14:3

How does one initiate the teshuvah process? It is achieved with words. This is the concept of *viduy* (*imru elav*). What words do we say? “*Kol tisa avon*,” Hashem, You should forgive us for all our *hata'im*, “*v'kah tov*,” just take the good deeds that we do, see the good that we do, “*u'neshalmah parim s'fateinu*,” and instead of bringing korbanot, we are offering words.

The Ramban cites the pesukim in Devarim 30:11-14 as the source for teshuvah generally and verbal *viduy*:

כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוה היום לא נפלאות הוא ממך ולא רחוקה הוא. לא בשמים הוא לאמר מי יעלה לנו השמימה ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשה. ולא מעבר לים הוא לאמר מי יעבר לנו אל עבר הים ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשה. כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו.

Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for

you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.

The Ramban understands these pesukim in a very uplifting way. *Viduy* and teshuvah are not in the heavens or beyond the sea. They are attainable with our mouths and hearts, any place and any time.

אבל “המצוה הזאת” על התשובה הנזכרת ... כי אין הדבר נפלא ורחוק ממך אבל קרוב אליך מאד לעשותו בכל עת ובכל מקום: וזה טעם בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו - שיתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותם בפה, וישובו בלבם אל ה'.
But “this commandment” refers to repentance ... Because this thing is not too esoteric or distant for you, but rather is very close to you to do it in every time and in every place. And this is the meaning of “in your mouth and in your heart to do it”: That they should confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors with their mouths and return in their hearts to God.

Ramban, Devarim 30:11

So too in Navi, Hoshea declares: “*k'hu imakhem devarim*” When you recite your *viduy*, the words must be meaningful and transformative. Words create reality. Hashem created the world with words. Words should reflect the true inner self and inspire action.

Radak comments:

שובה ישראל - כי כשלת בעונך כי אתה רואה שכשלת בעונך לפיכך יש לך לשוב אל ה' יתברך כי אין מקימן ממכשולך אלא תשובתך אליו ובאמרו עד כמו אל וכן ושבתי עד ה'

אלקיך שובו עדי ואמרו רז"ל גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד שנאמר עד ה' אלקיך. *Return Israel — for you have fallen because of your sin, you see that you have fallen because of your sin and therefore, you must return to Hashem because nothing is going to raise you from your lapse except your repentance. The word "ad" (until) is used in place of "el" (toward). We find similar language in the verse, "And you shall return until the Lord your God," and in "Return until Me." Our rabbis teach: Repentance is so great that it reaches to the Throne of Glory, as it states, "until the Lord your God."*

Radak could simply have stated: Return because you have sinned. Yet he adds the words *ki atah ro'eh shekhashalta b'avonekha* — because you see that you have fallen due to sin. With this subtle addition, Radak emphasizes the importance of one's self awareness of sin. Radak accentuates that teshuvah is initiated by reflection. This is *hakarot ha'et*. We have to acknowledge our sin in order to progress. The *pesukim* mentioned above in Devarim and these words in Hoshea correlate to the phases that the Rambam, in *Mishneh Torah*, and Ramban in his biblical commentary present as the proper steps toward teshuvah.

Radak ends with the inspiring rabbinic interpretation of the word *ad*, until (instead of *el*, to), which is that teshuvah allows us to reach the Divine seat of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This signifies that there's no limit to attaining a close bond with Hashem by means of the vehicle of teshuvah. Teshuvah opens the path to directly connect to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. There are no stumbling blocks except those that are self-imposed. We have direct access to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, if we take initiative and start with self-

realization and articulation.

On the following pasuk, the Radak comments:

קחו עמכם דברים - איני שואל מכם בתשובה לא כסף וזהב לא עולות אלא דברים טובים שתתודו בהם עוונתיכם ושובו אל ה' בכל לבבכם ולא בשפתים בלבד.

Take words with you — in requesting your return, I am not asking for gold or silver, or for sacrifices. Rather, just good words with which you will confess your sins and return to God with all of your hearts, not just lip service.

The Radak identifies a main component of teshuvah. Hashem does not demand from us any material goods. Wealth does not buy access to Hashem and teshuvah. Hashem wants meaningful words that convey our heartfelt true intentions. These words cannot be hollow or mere lip service. Why is verbalizing the *viduy* so critical? Perhaps, formulating sincere and genuine feelings into coherent and articulate sentences concretizes the originally amorphous thoughts and catalyzes the process. Uttering and expressing the words provide a framework for the actions that will follow. This is *viduy*. For the Rambam and Ramban, *viduy* is an indispensable component of teshuvah. This is why Hoshea begins the process with "*k'hu imakhem devarim imru eilav*," admitting your sin out loud, to yourself, to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* identifies the barrier that obstructs our relationship with Hashem.

The Radak continues:

ונשלמה פרים שפתינו - במקום פרים נשלמה לפניך וידוי שפתינו כי אתה רוצה בדברי תשובה יותר כי אין הקרבנות מועילות בלא וידוי העון כי בכלם נאמר והתודה אשר חטא ובשעיר המשתלח לא היה אלא וידוי דברים כי לא היה קרב ממנו דבר על גבי המזבח אלא הוידוי כמו שנאמר והתודה עליו את כל עונות

Instead of bulls we will pay [The offering of] our lips — instead of [offering] bulls before you, we will provide the confession of our lips because You prefer words of repentance, as offerings don't work without confessing the sin, as we find the Torah states regarding sin offerings, "he shall confess for his sin." Regarding the goat that was sent [on Yom Kippur], the only thing was a confessional because the goat was not sacrificed at all on the Altar, as it states, "He will confess on it all of the sins of the Jewish people."

Articulation is crucial. When Bnei Yisrael proffered *korbanot* they were accompanied by *viduy*, a declaration. If you sacrificed the *korban* without a meaningful *viduy*, the *korban* was lacking. The same standards apply to *tefillah*: It must be integrated with *kavanah*, real understanding and intent. Otherwise it, too, is deficient.

The Radak subsequently makes a fascinating point. On Yom Kippur, there were two goats — *se'irim*. One goat was sacrificed on the *mizbeah* and one was its counterpart, the *se'ir mishtalei'ah* that was sent down the cliff *l'Azazel*. The only thing that was done with that *se'ir* was *viduy*. The Kohen proclaimed the sins of Bnei Yisrael over the goat. That was effective because the power of *viduy*, especially on Yom Kippur, is so robust. The key to unlock the gates of teshuvah is verbalizing the words, comprehending the words, and internalizing their significance as a vehicle to altering actions.

Hoshea continues:

אֲשׁוּר לֹא יוֹשִׁיעֵנו עַל סוּס לֹא נִרְכָּב וְלֹא נֹאמֵר עוֹד אֶלְקֵינוּ לְמַעֲשֵׂה יְיָ אֲשֶׁר בְּדִ יְרַחֵם יְתוֹם. *Assyria shall not save us, No more will we ride on horses; Nor ever again will we call Our handiwork our god, Since in*

You alone orphans find pity.

Hoshea 14:4

The haftarah begins with the voice and perspective of the navi. He is speaking the word of Hashem to Bnei Yisrael. He is calling on them to repent and provides them with the method of *viduy* as teshuvah. In this pasuk, Bnei Yisrael internalized the message and are articulating *viduy* and teshuvah.

Radak uses the phrase *viduy*:

אשור לא יושיענו - והתודו לפניו ואמרו אשור שבטחנו בו עד עתה ידענו כי לא יושיענו כי אין בו כח להושיענו וזולתך כי לה' התשועה:
Assyria shall not save us — Confess before Him and say that Assyria, which we have trusted until now, we now know that they will not save because the only One who has the power to save us is Your [domain].

Radak, Hoshea 14:4

Radak explains that Bnei Yisrael are admitting that they sinned by relying on Assyria, and prostrating before graven images that they themselves fashioned. These vehicles could not save them. However, just like the orphan relies solely on Hashem because he is disenfranchised, dispossessed, and has no support system, so too Bnei Yisrael came to realize they were in a needy state and turned to Hashem to save them from their iniquity.

אשר בך ירוחם יתום - כי ידענו כי בך לבדך ירוחם היתום ומי שאין בו כח אתה תתן בו כח ותצילהו וכן תעשה לנו.

Since in You alone orphans find pity — For we know that the orphan finds pity in you alone and for those who don't have the strength, You give them strength and save them. You should do the same for us.

Radak, Hoshea 14:4

The message for us in our day is clear. We frequently seek a quick fix, a magic

bullet to solve our problems without taking the classical path. Sometimes there are no shortcuts. Teshuvah is an example of this. Hashem beckons to us to return to Him and we must resolve to turn to Hashem, with a simple heartfelt pronouncement of *viduy* — of expressing our core failures and a clear acknowledgement of our reliance on Hashem. It is actually the simplest, most straightforward, elegant solution.

The next pasuk states:

אֲרַפָּא מְשׁוּבָתְכֶם אֶהְבֶּם נִדְבָה כִּי שָׁב אִפִּי מִמֶּנּוּ.
I will heal their rebelliousness, (meshuvatam), Generously will I take them back in love; For My anger has turned away (shav) from them.

Hoshea 14:5

Now Hashem responds to Bnei Yisrael's *viduy*. He tells the navi and Bnei Yisrael: He heard their cry. He will lovingly take them back. He is no longer angry. The choice of *meshuvatam* and *shav* here are cleverly used by the navi as a play on words. [Rambam *Hilkhos Yesodei HaTorah* 7:3 notes that prophets receive visions and communications from Hashem but take initiative in formulating the message to the wider community]. The two words contain the same root letters as teshuvah, but *meshuvatam* denotes rebelliousness and turning away from Hashem. The same word root is utilized in both instances because distance from Hashem is often more apparent than real. We often feel incapable of traversing the abyss between us and the Divine. Yet once we turn around, we are headed in the right direction. Hashem will heal us and bring us close even in our rebelliousness, but we have to initiate the first step towards Hashem. Furthermore, "*ohaveim nedavah*," I will love Bnei Yisrael generously

and charitably. If you turn back to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Hashem is going to embrace you lovingly, generously and open heartedly.

The last pasuk from Hoshea in this haftarah states:

מִי חָכֵם וְיָבִין אֶלֶּה נְבוֹן וְיַדְעֵם פִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל דַּרְכֵי ה' וְצַדִּיקִים יִלְכוּ בָּם וּפְשָׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בָּם.
He who is wise will consider these words, He who is prudent will take note of them. For the paths of the Lord are straight; The righteous can walk on them, While sinners stumble on them.

Hoshea 14:10

The key to intelligently and wisely understanding these ideas is that Hashem's ways are trustworthy and just.

Radak offers the following explanation:

לא כאותם שאומרים לא יתכן דרך ה' כמו שאמר ביחזקאל כי אם תשובו בתשובה שלמה לא תזכרנה לכם תועבותיכם הראשונות.

Not like those who say "this can't be the way of God" as it states in Yehezkel. Rather, if you repent properly, your original sins will be forgotten.

Hashem has His ways and we should not question Hashem's justice based on our superficial assessment of our lives and other people's lives. We must cultivate *emunah* that Hashem rewards each person appropriately. This attitude should give us the confidence and incentive to lead a righteous life.

People are puzzled by the concept of teshuvah. Shouldn't sinners be punished? How can teshuvah erase the memory of past misconduct? This underscores the beautiful benevolence of teshuvah. Sincere teshuvah can turn your life around, Hashem will really forgive you. Even though it is not a rational concept, it is the way Hashem runs the world.

Hashem gives us a second chance. If we are alienated from Hashem and could never surmount it, we would be in a constant state of existential crisis. For this reason, teshuvah is such a foundational principle in Yahadut. There's always an opportunity for teshuvah, to heal the relationship between us and Hashem.

After we read Hoshea in the haftarah, there are varying practices. Many Ashkenazi communities read pesukim from Yoel (2:11-27) and then from Mikhah (7:18-20). Sefardim read the pesukim from Mikhah, but not from Yoel. We will elaborate on a few pesukim from Yoel and then conclude with the pesukim from Mikhah.

The message of Yoel is that sincere teshuvah is effective at all times and all places — even in the face of upcoming disaster. It specifically focuses on teshuvah as a public communal event.

Hashem tells us:

וְגַם עַתָּה נֹאֵם ה' שְׁבוּ עָדֵי בְּכֵל לְבַבְכֶם וּבְצוּם וּבִבְכֵי וּבְמִסְפָּה. וְקָרְעוּ לְבַבְכֶם וְאַל בְּגֵדֵיכֶם וְשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כִּי חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם הוּא אֲרָךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חֶסֶד וְנָחֵם עַל הָרָעָה.

“Yet even now” — says the Lord — “Turn back to Me with all your hearts, and with fasting, weeping, and lamenting.” Rend your hearts rather than your garments, and turn back to the Lord your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and renouncing punishment.

Yoel 2:12-13

Radak explains:

בכל לבבכם - שלא תהיה התשובה בלב ולב שתראו דרכי התשובה בנגלה ובנסתר לא תשובו והתשובה תהיה בנסתר כי היא העיקר: ובצום ובכי ובמספד - בנראה להכניע הלבבות ושיראו איש את חברו צם בוכה

וסופד ויכניע לבבו אם לא שב מעצמו:

With all your hearts — Your repentance shouldn't be with a double (insincere) heart, showing repentance in public, but not repenting in private. Repentance should be even in private because that is the main type of repentance. And with fasting, weeping, and lamenting — visibly, in order to humble the hearts and one should see one's friend fasting weeping and lamenting, and this will cause him to humble his heart if he hasn't repented on his own.

Radak, Yoel 2:12

Radak emphasizes the internal and personal aspect of teshuvah. The main effort of teshuvah should be performed privately, away from the public eye. The teshuvah process has to be genuine and not a hollow, showy event. However, the public fasting, crying, and prayer of Yom Kippur inspires others who need encouragement to start the process. Therefore, the public aspect of Yom Kippur is constructive and community building, even though teshuvah is primarily a personal act.

תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּצִיּוֹן קִדְּשׁוּ צוּם קְרָאוּ עֲצֵרָה.
Blow a horn in Zion, Solemnize a fast, Proclaim an assembly!

Yoel 2:15

אֲסַפּוּ עִם קִדְּשׁוּ קָהָל קִבְּצוּ זָקֵנִים אֲסַפּוּ עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקֵי שָׂדֵים יֵצֵא חֲתָן מִחֲדָרוֹ וְכֻלָּה מִחֲפָתָה.

Gather the people, Bid the congregation purify themselves. Bring together the old, gather the babes and the sucklings at the breast; Let the bridegroom come out of his chamber, the bride from her canopied couch.

Yoel 2:16

Teshuvah that is performed together by a unified *tzibbur* has a unique potency. This is an additional reason why teshuvah on Yom Kippur has this collective component. The Rambam

Tefillah Insights: The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy

Over the course of the High Holiday season we recite the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy many times. The source for doing so is a comment of the Gemara, *Rosh HaShanah* 17b:

ויעבור ה' על פניו ויקרא א"ר יוחנן אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומר מלמד שנתעטף הקב"ה כשליח צבור והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה אמר לו כל זמן שישראל חוטאין יעשו לפני כסדר הזה ואני מוחל להם.

[The verse states] “And God passed in front of [Moshe] and He called out.” R. Yochanan said, if not for it being written in the Torah, we could not say this. This verse teaches that the Holy One Blessed be He wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl like a prayer leader and showed Moshe the order of prayer. He said, “Whenever the Jewish people sin, they should do this order before Me and I will forgive them.”

R. Eliyahu Vidas (16th century), *Reishit Chochma, Sha'ar Ha'Anavah* no. 1, asks: Why does the Gemara say “do this order” and not “say this order”? Furthermore, why do we find that so many people recite this order many times and it doesn't seem to work? He answers that we don't just recite these attributes for the sake of reciting them. We recite them so that we will come to emulate God in these attributes. If we become merciful, compassionate, etc. and “do this order” in our actions, then we will be forgiven.

Torah To Go Editors

echoes this concept in *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:6:

אף על פי שהתשובה והצעקה יפה לעולם, בעשרה הימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים היא יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד שנאמר דרשו ה' בהמצאו, במה דברים אמורים ביחיד אבל צבור כל זמן שעושים תשובה וצועקים בלב שלם הם נענין שנאמר כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו.

Although it is always good to cry out and repent, but during the space of the ten days' time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is better, and is accepted immediately as it is said: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found" (Is. 55.6). This is not only regarding an individual, but a community; every time they repent and cry out sincerely they are answered, even as it is said: "As the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for" (Deut. 6.7).

The passage in Yoel describes communal repentance in the face of looming national tragedy. It was chosen by the Ashkenazim as part of the haftarah for *Shabbat Shuvah*, because it highlights the importance of communal fasting and gathering on Yom Kippur.

Whereas the message of Hoshea is teshuvah for Am Yisrael, but especially the power of the individual to initiate and realize complete teshuvah; in Yoel the message is that Am Yisrael joining together and executing teshuvah in a ceremonial congregational fashion surely has an effect. Today we don't have the Beit Hamikdash, we don't have the *se'ir l'azazel*, but we do have

the public communal aspect of Yom Kippur that echoes this powerful national dimension.

Finally, most communities conclude the haftarah with the three culminating *pesukim* of Mikhah:

מי א-ל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְעֵבֶר עַל פְּשַׁע לְשֹׁאֲרֵית נִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא הִחְזִיק לְעַד אָפוּ כִּי חָפַץ חֶסֶד הוּא. יְשׁוּב יִרְחַמְנוּ יִקְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצְלוֹת יָם כָּל חַטֹּאוֹתֵם. תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַעֲקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם מִימֵי קֶדֶם.

Who is a God like You, Forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; Who has not maintained His wrath forever Against the remnant of His own people, Because He loves graciousness! He will take us back in love; He will cover up our iniquities, You will hurl all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, Loyalty to Abraham, As You promised on oath to our fathers in days gone by.

Mikhah 7:18-20

The Mikhah verses are universally chosen as the conclusion of the haftarah and part of the Tashlikh ceremony, because the message of these last three *pesukim* is Hashem's unwavering forgiveness, love and loyalty to Bnei Yisrael. These phrases represent our confidence in the covenantal relationship with Hashem that originated with the Avot and continues to this day. It focuses on Hashem's forgiving, compassionate loyalty toward us. It does not even mention the teshuvah that Bnei Yisrael are obligated to undertake. After the elaborate discussions of Bnei

Yisrael's teshuvah process in Hoshea — and for Ashkenazim in Yoel — the haftarah concludes with our confidence in Hashem's forgiveness that flows from His compassion for His people and His promise to our forefathers.

Our goal on Yom Kippur is to renew and transform our relationship with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This renewal is achieved through teshuvah. The haftarah of *Shabbat Shuvah* in the midst of Aseret Yemei Teshuvah affords us this opportunity. The haftarah describes the public and private process of teshuvah and *viduy*, and concludes with an affirmation of Hashem's compassion for Am Yisrael because of our longstanding covenantal relationship with Him. It also emphasizes Hashem's interest in helping us come closer to him. If we pursue teshuvah sincerely, Hashem will generously enable us to reach his Throne of Glory:

גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד שנאמר עד ה' אלקיך.

Repentance is so great that it reaches to the Throne of Glory as it states "until the Lord your God."

Yoma 86a

May we all merit His compassion and be inscribed in the book of life, blessing, peace, good health and success.



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