



Yom Kippur

A Parent's Love

Why G-d's Forgiveness Doesn't Mean We Can Stay the Same

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year—the day on which we are closest to G-d and to the quintessence of our own souls. It is the Day of Atonement—“For on this day He will forgive you, to purify you, that you will be cleansed from all your sins before G-d” (Leviticus 16:30).

For nearly twenty-six hours—from several minutes before sunset on 9 Tishrei to after nightfall on 10 Tishrei—we “afflict our souls”: we abstain from food and drink, do not wash or anoint our bodies, do not wear leather footwear, and abstain from marital relations.

Before Yom Kippur, we perform the *kaparot* atonement service. We request and receive honey cake, in acknowledgment that we are all recipients in G-d’s world and in prayerful hope for a sweet and abundant year. We also eat a festive meal, immerse in a *mikveh*, and give extra charity. In the late afternoon, we eat the pre-fast meal, following which we bless our children, light a memorial candle as well as the holiday candles, and go to the synagogue for the Kol Nidrei service.

In the course of Yom Kippur, we hold five prayer services: Maariv, with its solemn Kol Nidrei service,

on the eve of Yom Kippur; Shacharit—the morning prayer, which includes a reading from Leviticus followed by the Yizkor memorial service; Musaf, which includes a detailed account of the Yom Kippur Temple service; Minchah, which includes the reading of the Book of Jonah; and Ne’ilah, the “closing of the gates” service at sunset. We say the *al chet* confession of sins eight times during Yom Kippur and recite Psalms during every available moment.

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Yom Kippur

The day is the most solemn of the year, yet an undertone of joy suffuses it: a joy that revels in the spirituality of the day and expresses the confidence that G-d will accept our repentance, forgive our sins, and seal our verdict for a year of life, health, and happiness. The closing Ne'ilah service climaxes with the resounding cries of "Hear O Israel . . . G-d is One." Then joy erupts in song and dance (a Chabad custom is to sing the lively "Napoleon's March"), followed by a single blast of the shofar, followed by the proclamation, "Next year in Jerusalem." We then partake of a festive after-

fast meal, making the evening after Yom Kippur a *yom tov* (festival) in its own right.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Did G-d design a broken system that provides no incentive for real change? How can we still feel a surge of inspiration every year during the High Holidays?

TEXT 1

Isaiah 55:6

דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ, קְרֹאֵהוּ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ
קְרוֹב.

Seek out G-d when He is found; call
upon Him when He is close.

QUESTION

Why does the verse repeat the same idea using different words, like “seek” and “call” and “found” and “close” and what is the difference between them?

TEXT 2A

Rabbi David
Altschuler, *Metzudat
David*, ad loc.

כָּפַל הַדָּבָר בְּמִלּוֹת שׁוֹנוֹת.

He repeats himself to articulate the same concept in different words.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

How would you explain the difference between being found and being close?

How would you explain the difference between seeking and calling?

TEXT 2B

Rabbi Meir Leibush
Wisser, ad loc.

"דִּרְשׁוּ": תְּחִלָּה יֵשׁ לָךְ לַזֵּהָר שְׁלֹא תַעֲזֹב
אֶת ה' לְצֵאת מִבֵּיתְךָ כָּלֵל. וְהוּא שְׁלֹא תִחָטֵּא
כָּלֵל. "דִּרְשׁוּ אֶת ה'", "בִּקְשׁוּ פָנָיו תָּמִיד"
(תְּהִלִּים קה, ד), כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהוּא נִמְצָא
אֶצְלֵיכֶם.

אוּלָם גַּם אִם חָטֵאתֶם עַד שֶׁיֵּצֵא מֵאִתְּכֶם עַל
יְדֵי חֲטָאתֵיכֶם, תִּשְׁתַּדְּלוּ לְקַרְאוֹ שִׁינֹּב
אֲלֵיכֶם בְּעוֹד הֵיוֹתוֹ קָרוֹב. כָּמִי שֶׁאוֹהֲבוֹ יֵצֵא
מֵאִתּוֹ בְּחָרִי אָף, שֶׁקּוֹרְאוֹ שִׁינֹּב אֵלָיו
תִּיכָף, וְאֵינוֹ מִמָּתִין עַד שֶׁיִּתְרַחֵק הָאוֹהֵב. כֵּן
אִם חָטֵאתָ, שׁוּב תִּיכָף בְּתִשׁוּבָה, וְלֹא תִמָּתִין
עַד יוֹם מָחָר.

אוּלָם גַּם אִם חָטֵאתָ, וְגַם אִם הִרְבִּיתָ לִפְשׁוֹעַ
עַד שֶׁנִּתְרַחֵק ה' מִמָּךְ מְרַחֵק רַב, מְכַל מְקוֹם.

"Seek": The first approach is to ensure that you never allow G-d to leave your home. [You can achieve this by avoiding sin altogether] by "seeking G-d" and "looking for Him constantly" (Psalms 105:4) so long as He is in your home.

Even if you sin so much that He departs your home on account of your sins, call on Him to return while He is still close. It is like a beloved friend who parts with you in anger: You call for them instantly and don't wait until they're distant. Similarly, if you have sinned, return and repent immediately; don't put it off for tomorrow.

However, even if you have sinned many times until G-d has distanced Himself from you, call Him back nevertheless.

The Repetition Calls Us on Two Levels

1. **Preventative:** Don't sin, because that keeps G-d present.
2. **Restorative:** Even if we sin, we can call to Him, and He will return.

QUESTION

Can we find an explanation that is both inspiring and fits the plain meaning of the text?

TEXT 3

Maimonides, *Mishneh
Torah*, Laws of
Repentance 2:6

אף על פי שְהִתְשׁוּבָה וְהִצְעָקָה יָפָה לְעוֹלָם, בְּעֶשְׂרָה
הַיָּמִים שְׁבִין רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה וְיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים הִיא יָפָה בְּיוֹתֵר,
וּמִתְקַבֵּלֶת הִיא מִיָּד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, "דַּרְשׁוּהָ" בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ
(יִשְׁעֶיהָ נֹה, ו.)

Repentance and prayer are always desirable to G-d. That said, they're even more desirable during the ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. During these days, they're accepted immediately, as Isaiah articulates, "Seek out G-d when He is found" (Isaiah 55:6).



Usually G-d steps away when we sin, but during the High Holidays, even sinners are close to Him.

TEXT 4

Rabbi Menachem
Mendel of Lubavitch,
Or HaTorah, Devarim,
p. 1551

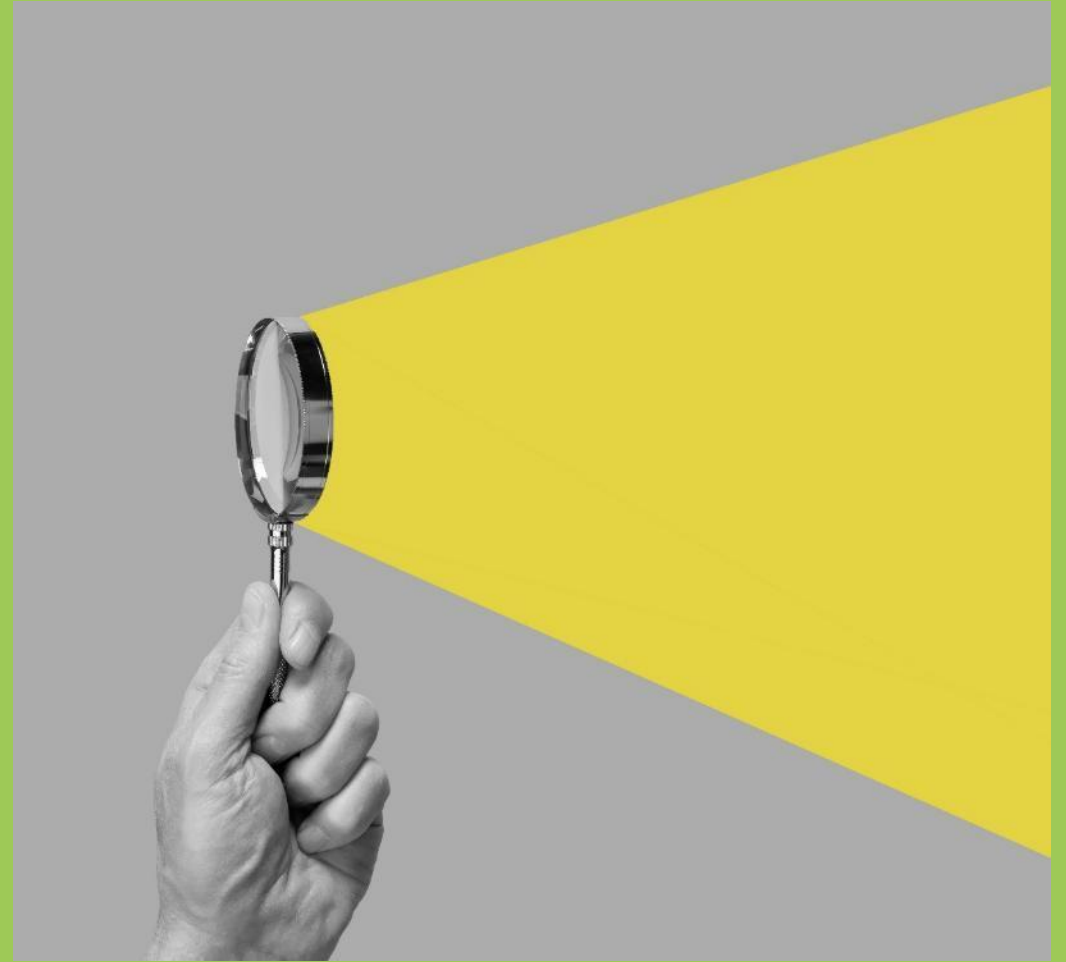
"יִמְצְאֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר". מְצִיָּאָה מְצָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

וּמִנָּשָׁם יֵשׁ לוֹמַר לְעֵנִין "דִּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהַמְצָאוֹ".

"He will find him in the desolate land" (Deuteronomy 32:10). It is a find; G-d found the Jew [in a land desolate of piety].

From this, we can surmise the meaning of "seek out G-d when He is found" (Isaiah 55:6).

Isaiah uses the word **found** to show our surprise of discovering G-d even after we sin, like unexpectedly finding a treasure in our own home.



TEXT 5A

Hosea 11:1

כִּי נֶעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְבֵּהוּ, וּמִמִּצְרַיִם
קָרָאתִי לְבִנִּי.

For Israel is young, and I love him; and
from Egypt I called to My son.

Even when we sin, G-d never stops loving us; He just doesn't approve of our behavior.





Our love for a child never changes. As infants, it's unconditional; as they grow, rules may make it feel different, but we must remember it's the same child and the same unconditional love.

TEXT 5B

Midrash, *Agadat
Bereshit*, ch. 5

בא וראה.

אֲפִילוּ הֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלֶף אֲלָפִים וָרִיבוּ רִיבּוֹן, אֵינָם חֲשׁוּבִים לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם אֲלָא כְּבֶן יָחִיד,
דְּכַתִּיב: "ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הִרְבָּה אֶתְכֶם וְגו'" (דְּבָרִים א, י). וּכְשֶׁהָיוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם מָה כְּתִיב?
"וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וְגו'" (שְׁמוֹת א, ז) . . .

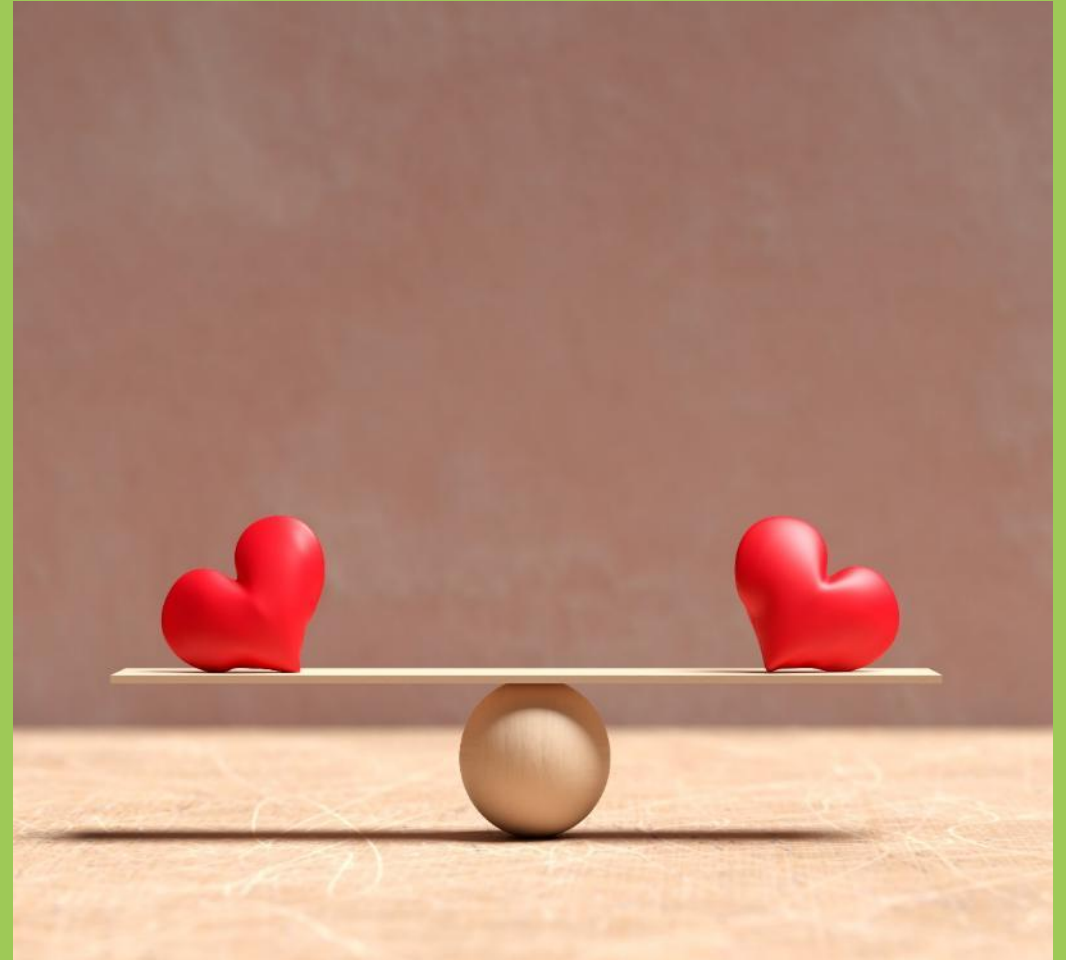
הָרִי כָּל אֱלוֹ וְלֹא הָיוּ לִפְנֵיו אֲלָא כְּאֶחָד יָחִידִי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "בְּנֵי בְכוֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (נִשְׁם ד, כב).

Come and see.

Even thousands upon thousands or hundreds of thousands upon hundreds of thousands of Jews are considered before G-d as an only child, as the passage states, "G-d, your G-d, increased you [. . . to be as numerous as the stars]" (Deuteronomy 1:10). And of the Jews in Egypt, it is written, "And the Children of Israel were fruitful and swarmed" (Exodus 1:7).

Though there are many, they are all to G-d like a single child, as it is written, "My child, my firstborn, Israel" (Exodus 4:22).

G-d has no favorites, loves us all equally, and when He thinks of us as His children, our behavior ceases to matter, as His love is unconditional.



TEXT 5C

Rabbi Yisrael Baal
Shem Tov, *Keter*
Shem Tov, addendum
#167

יְעֻדָּעַר אֵיד אִיז טײַעַר בֵּי דַעַם אוֹיְבֶּעַר־שְׂטֵן ווי
אַ בֶּן יָחִיד וְנָאָס אִיז גֶּעבֶּאָרן גֶּעוֹנָאָרן בֵּי
עֲלֻטָּעֵרן לַעֲת זְקֵנוּתָם. און נאך טײַעַרער.

Every Jew is precious to G-d like an only child born
to parents at an old age. And even more precious.

We are like an only child born to elderly parents after years of longing for a child.



TEXT 6

Midrash, *Agadat
Bereshit*, ch. 5

לְפִיכָךְ הוּא אוֹמֵר: "כִּי בֶן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי" (מִשְׁלֵי ד, ג). כְּנֶשֶׁם שָׁבְנוּ שֶׁל אָדָם כְּשֶׁהוּא
תִּינוּק קָטָן, אִם יִחָטֵא אִין אָבִיו מְסַלֵּק עָלָיו מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא קָטָן, אָבֵל אִם יִגְדֹּל
וַיַּעֲמֹד עַל אַקְמִי (פִּירוּשׁ נֶעֱת) שָׁלוּ, אִם יִחָטֵא הוּא מְסַלֵּק עָלָיו.

כֹּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲפִילוֹ חוֹטְאִין בְּשִׁגְגָה, מַעֲלָה עָלֵיהֶן שֶׁהֵן כְּתִינוּק קָטָן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כִּי
נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאוֹהֲבֵהוּ יְגֹ" (הוֹשֵׁעַ יא, א).

The Torah says, "I was a son to my father" (Proverbs 4:3). When our infant child sins, we don't abandon them, though when they are older and enter their own state of mind, we might expel them from our home if they fall into a pattern of crime.

The same applies to Israel. Even if we sin inadvertently, G-d treats us like a tiny infant, as the passage states, "For Israel is young, and I love him" (Hosea 11:1).

QUESTION

If we know G-d loves us so much, why is it surprising to “**find**” Him, why is it so startling that He doesn’t shut us out of His home?

ANSWER

As mature adults with obligations, we expect punishment for our sins, but G-d greets us with the same unconditional love He showed us as infants, making it a truly startling surprise.

TEXT 7

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson,
Likutei Sichot 34, p. 202

וְזֶהוּ מָה שֶׁמִּמְשִׁיךְ הַכָּתוּב וּמוֹסִיף, "קְרָאוּהוּ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ קָרוֹב" (יִשְׁעָיָה נה, ו).

נִשְׁנוּסָף עַל זֶה שֶׁהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצוּי לוֹ וְעוֹזֵרוֹ וּמְסִיעוֹ לָשׁוּב אֵלָיו,
הוּא "קָרוֹב" לְכָל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּלִי הִבָּט עַל מַעְמָדוֹ וּמַצָּבוֹ הָרוּחָנִי. בְּאוֹפֶן
שֶׁבִימִים אֵלֶּה מְרַגֵּשׁ בְּאוֹפֶן גָּלוּי אֶהְבָּתוֹ וְקִרְבָּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

The prophet thus adds the second clause, "Call upon Him when He is close" (Isaiah 55:6).

In addition to G-d being available to us, helping and assisting us in our efforts to return, He is also "close" to every Jew, notwithstanding their spiritual station. During these days, G-d ensures that we feel His love and closeness in a revealed way.



The words “**call upon Him when he is close**” show that G-d isn't just present, He actively draws us close with His love.

QUESTION

Why do we need to seek G-d when we already know where He is, or call to Him when He is close?

TEXT 8

Rabbi David Kimchi,
Isaiah 55:6

וְזוֹ הִיא דְּרִישָׁה בְּכָל לֵב.

This refers to seeking with all
our heart.

ANSWER

G-d's love awakens in us a natural desire to seek Him. Even though He is always near, we still feel an inner yearning to come closer to Him. So when we seek G-d, it's not because we don't know where He is, it's because we feel a deep inner pull to connect with Him.

TEXT 9

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, *Tanya, Likutei
Amarim*, ch. 46

"כַּמִּים הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים כֵּן לֵב הָאָדָם אֶל הָאָדָם" (מִשְׁלֵי כז, יט).

פֶּרוּשׁ, כָּמוֹ שֶׁכְּדָמוֹת וְצוּרַת הַפָּנִים שֶׁהָאָדָם מֵרְאֶה בַּמִּים כֵּן נִרְאֶה לוֹ שֵׁם
בַּמִּים אוֹתָהּ צוּרָה עֲצָמָהּ, כָּכָה מִמֶּשׁ לֵב הָאָדָם הַנֶּאֱמָן בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ לְאִישׁ
אַחֵר. הֵרִי הָאֲהָבָה זֶה מְעוֹרָרֶת אֲהָבָה בְּלֵב חֲבֵירוֹ אֵלָיו גַּם כֵּן לְהִיּוֹת
אוֹהָבִים נֶאֱמָנִים זֶה לָזֶה.

"As waters reflect the face that stares into them, so does the heart reflect the heart that loves it" (Proverbs 27:19).

Just like water reflects the face looking into it, it works the same way with people's hearts. When someone is loyal and loving toward a friend, it naturally stirs up the same loyalty and love in the other person's heart—and the two of them end up becoming devoted, loving friends.



It's human nature to respond to love with love. But G-d's love defies logic; He welcomes us with love even when we sin. In response, we naturally return that love to Him.

TEXT 10

Rabbi Yisroel Glick,
“Demystifying Yom
Kippur,”
www.chabad.org

In relationships between parents and children, as rocky as they may get, the innate bond will always remain intact, no matter how badly the relationship is in tatters. And when everything else falls away, they will be a parent and a child, and nothing else will matter.

What is not always so simple is working out how to get everything else to fall away.

Yom Kippur is a time when everything else falls away. For the most part, the deepest core of the soul doesn't play an active role in daily life; it stays behind the scenes. But Yom Kippur has a body and a soul, too. And the soul of Yom Kippur is a portal in time that awakens the core of every soul to shine, bringing each of us to a place where the damage we have caused, all those little chips, simply do not exist.

Bringing each of us to a place where we can start afresh and move forward joyfully and energetically.

ANSWER

We're moved that G-d still wants us and forgives us even when we haven't earned it. On the High Holidays, we reflect on our mistakes and experience His closeness, like someone lifting us up when we've fallen. That love inspires us to improve and draw closer to Him.



On Yom Kippur, the shofar and Ne'ilah remind us that G-d wants us back. Even a moment of feeling His love can inspire us, showing that we're seen and held despite our flaws.

TEXT 11

Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, *Tanya*,
Likutei Amarim, ch.
46

אם מלך גדול ורב מראה אהבתו
הגדולה והעצומה לאיש הדיוט ונבזה
ושפל אנשים ומגול המטל באשפה.
ויורד אליו ממקום כבודו עם כל שריו
יחדו, ומקימו ומרימו מאשפתו.
ומכניסו להיכלו היכל המלך חדר
לפנים מחדר, מקום שאין כל עבד ושר
נכנס לשם.

ומתיחד עמו שם ביחוד וקרוב אמת
וחבוק ונשוק, ואתדבקות ריחא בריחא
בכל לב ונפש. על אחת כמה וכמה
שתתעורר ממילא האהבה כפולה
ומכפלת בלב ההדיוט ושפל אנשים הנה
אל נפש המלך. בהתקשרות הנפש ממנו
מלב ונפש, מעמקא דלבא לאין קץ.

Imagine a powerful king who shows real love to someone completely ordinary—someone who's fallen so low he's lying in the dirt, humiliated and forgotten. And then the king himself comes down from his palace, with all his entourage, and lifts him up. He brings him into the royal palace, and not just into the outer halls. He takes him into the most private inner chamber, a place where no servant, no official, nobody is allowed to enter.

And there, the king bonds with him in total closeness: embraces, kisses—a connection of spirit to spirit, with his whole heart. You can imagine what that does to the other person. An intense love for the king would rise up in him on its own: a deep attachment, coming from the very bottom of his heart and soul.

Seek G-d:



like the feeling on **Yom Kippur** when we realize G-d still welcomes us despite our imperfections. This awakens **loyalty** and a desire to do better.

Call to G-d:



going deeper by **learning Torah** and building a **personal closeness** with Him.

TEXT 12

Rabbi Shneur Zalman
of Liadi, ibid., ch. 37

עֵסֶק הַתּוֹרָה, נִקְרָאת בְּלִשׁוֹן קְרִיָּאָה,
קוֹרָא בַּתּוֹרָה. פְּרוּשׁ, שְׁעַל יְדֵי עֵסֶק
הַתּוֹרָה, קוֹרָא לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבוֹא
אֵלָיו בְּכִכּוּל. כָּאֵדָם הַקּוֹרָא לְחֵבְרוֹ שְׂיָבֹא
אֵלָיו, וַיָּכֵן קָטָן הַקּוֹרָא לְאַבּוֹ לְבֹא אֵלָיו,
לְהִיטָע עִמּוֹ בְּצִוְתָא חֲדָא, וְלֹא לְפָרֵד מִמֶּנּוּ
וְלִשְׁאַר יְחִידֵי חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם.

וְזֶהוּ שְׁפָתוֹב "קְרוֹב ה'" לְכָל קוֹרְאָיו לְכָל
אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְּאַמֶּת". "וְאִין אֶמֶת אֵלָא
תּוֹרָה" (יְרוּשָׁלַּיִם, רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה ג, ח).
דְּהִינּוּ שְׁקוֹרָא לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל יְדֵי
הַתּוֹרָה.

לְאַפּוּקִי – מִי שְׁקוֹרָא אוֹתוֹ שְׁלֹא עַל יְדֵי
עֵסֶק הַתּוֹרָה, אֵלָא צוֹעֵק כָּךְ: אָבָא! אָבָא!

Torah study is called reading, which in Hebrew also means "calling." This is because when we study the Torah, we call G-d to come to us, as it were. It is like calling your friend to come to you or, more aptly, like a child calling for the parent to come to them: to join them and never part from them, leaving them alone, G-d forbid.

This is the meaning of the passage, "G-d is close to all who call Him, to all who call to Him in truth" (Psalms 145:18). "The only truth in this world is the Torah" (Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 3:8). This means that we call to G-d through the Torah.

This stands in contrast to someone who doesn't call to G-d through the Torah but merely laments, "Father! Father!"

The High Holidays aren't just about forgiveness, they renew our relationship with G-d. Being welcomed back reminds us He still wants us, which motivates us to improve and not disappoint Him.



KEY POINTS

1. Throughout the year, G-d treats us as adults whose behavior carries consequences. During the High Holidays, He treats us like His beloved children. Such love can't be weakened by our betrayals.
2. He welcomes us into His home on these holy days. Then He brings us into His innermost chambers and holds us in His loving embrace.
3. We respond to being welcomed into His home with a fierce loyalty to G-d, seeking to bond with Him with all our hearts.
4. We respond to His loving embrace with a surge of love toward Him because love is contagious.
5. Our long-term objective is to empower ourselves to make good choices throughout the year, not just during these holy days.

