

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

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Topics discussed

Yom Kippur

I

- Explaining the martyrdom and death of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon
- Why Rabbi Chanina didn't agree to hasten his own death but agreed to have a gentle do so?
- The executioner resolved a dilemma similar to the ram at "Akeidas Yitzchak"
- Proof from Chananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah
- Faith for the generations

II

- Yom Kippur that Falls on Shabbos
- Yom Kippur is like Shabbos of the Yomim Tovim
- When Yom Kippur falls

Yom Kippur

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I

Explaining the martyrdom and death of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon

One of the most moving parts of the services of Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av is the account of the cruel executions of the famous ten martyrs (on Yom Kippur in the *piyut*, "Eileh Ezkerah" and on Tisha B'Av in the *kinah*, "Arzei Halevanon"). One of these martyrs was Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon, whose "crime" was to teach Torah publicly. The Romans paid him back in kind by publicly burning him with the Torah scroll that he taught from.

The source of the story is in *Maseches Avodah Zarah* 18a:

[The Romans] found Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon, who was sitting and learning Torah and gathering public groups, with a Torah scroll in his lap.

They brought him [to be sentenced] and wrapped him in the Torah scroll and surrounded him with bundles of branches and set fire to them. They brought tufts of wool and soaked them in water and placed them on his heart so that his soul would not leave him quickly.

His daughter told him, "Father, must I see you like this?" He told her, "If I alone were being burned,

on Shabbos: A double Shabbos

- ▶ **What Shabbos and Yom Kippur have in common**
- ▶ **The connection Klal Yisrael has with Shabbos and its power**
- ▶ **Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos elevates all the Shabbosos of the year**
- ▶ **From Elul to Yom Kippur – ascending the “mountain of Hashem”**
- ▶ **Shabbos elevates us to the “mountain of Hashem”**
- ▶ **The contrasts between Yom Kippur and Shabbos complement each other**
- ▶ **Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos is Teshuvah out of love and joy**
- ▶ **Seize the opportunity**

the matter would have been difficult for me. But now that I am being burned together with a Torah scroll, He Who seeks [retribution for] the insult to the Torah scroll will seek [retribution] for the insult to me."

His students said to him, "Our Rabbi, what do you see?" He told them, "The parchment is burning, and the letters are flying." [They said to him,] "Open your mouth, and let the fire enter [you]." He told them, "Better that He Who gave it should take it and I not harm myself."

The executioner said to him, "My Rabbi, if I increase the flame and take the tufts of wool off your heart, will you promise me life in the world-to-come?" He told him, "Yes." [The executioner said to him,] "Swear to me!" He swore to him. Immediately, [the executioner] increased the flame and removed the tufts of wool on [Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon's] heart. His soul left quickly. [The executioner] leaped into the fire. A heavenly voice proclaimed, "Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon and the executioner are destined for the life of the world-to-come."

Rebbi [Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi] wept and said, "There is a person who acquires his world-[to-come] in [only] one hour and someone who acquires his world-[to-come only] after a number of years."

Why Rabbi Chanina didn't agree to hasten his own death but agreed to have a gentile do so?

Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon was prepared to suffer to sanctify Hashem's name, and to that end he refused to hasten his own death. Nevertheless, he agreed to allow a gentile to do so and, furthermore, promised that gentile the life of the world-to-come. *But why did he agree?*

One may say that when Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon said that he saw the parchment burning and the letters flying, he was referring not only to the Torah scroll but to himself as well: as his body was being burned, his soul, which is compared to the letters of the Torah, flew up to its Father in heaven, and he wanted his soul to rise with holiness and purity, like letters of the Torah, to eternal life.

However, Rabbi Chanina feared that as a result of the severe torments he was suffering, he would soon

question the justice of Hashem and regret having taught the people Torah. He would lose his merits and damage his soul. He feared his soul would no longer be comparable to the lights and letters of the Torah, and he would lose his share in the world-to-come. Thus, he found himself caught in a dilemma. To actively take his life was forbidden, but to continue suffering without a degradation of his spirituality, was no longer possible.

The executioner resolved a dilemma similar to the ram at "Akeidas Yitzchak"

One may say that Hashem opened the eyes and heart of the executioner to see Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon's holiness and greatness (see *Tosafos* ibid. s.v. *Mah Atah Roeh* on the executioner's exalted spiritual attainment) and in contrast the vanities of this world, and he yearned for truth and the life of the world-to-come. That insight is similar to Avraham gaining sight of the ram caught in the thicket, which made it possible for Avraham to consummate the *Akeidah*, thus sanctifying Hashem's Name completely and with all the necessary pure intentions. To that end, in order that he be spared casting any doubt on Hashem's justice or regretting his earlier good deeds, he was prepared to hasten his death via the agency of another person, and even at the cost of promising a gentile the world-to-come.

Proof from Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

When I related this idea to my teacher and dear friend, the gaon Rabbi Yochanan Bechhofer, author of *Even Shesiyah*, he agreed that this is certainly the straightforward meaning of this story. He added that this idea is consistent with the Sages' statement about Chanania, Mishael and Azariah, who willingly entered a fiery

furnace in sanctification of Hashem's name: "Had Chanania, Mishael, and Azariah been given lashes, they would have worshipped the graven image" (*Kesubos* 33b). In other words, severe torment is a greater test of faith than a martyr's death that only lasts an instant. Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon wanted to be spared that fate.

Faith for the generations

Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon defied the Romans by openly teaching Torah to his students, ignoring their edict prohibiting Torah study. The Romans arrested and then subjected Rabbi Chanina to a public, tortured, slow death, wishing to show the Jews the consequences for disobedience. In the end, the Romans did not break Rabbi Chanina's spirit. Instead, it was Rabbi Chanina in his martyrdom who prevailed. This Jewish hero, through his sacrifice and act of *Kiddush Hashem*, profoundly affected and inspired those around him and countless others in future generations. Remarkably, this Tzaddik's great spiritual presence even sparked a transformation in his Roman executioner who unexpectedly turned from his wicked acts and repented and suddenly desired to enter the world-to-come.

The placement of the *tefillah* of the Ten Martyrs immediately after the reenactment of the Kohen Gadol's *avodah* is fitting, for that *avodah* is among the holiest parts of the Yom Kippur service. The moving account of the martyrs also parallels *Akeidas Yitzchak*, the binding of Yitzchak by Avraham Avinu, a theme that likewise occupies a place in the Yom Kippur liturgy.

We will soon encounter the forefather who is most famous for forging the path of faith and *emunah* for the Jewish people. In *Sefer Bereishis*, Avraham's unwavering faith and *emunah* in Hashem and the ten tests of faith he achieved,

establish the foundation of faith and resilience for his children, the Jewish people.

The story of Rabbi Chanina and the other Ten Martyrs remains a testament to the unbreakable spirit and faith of the Jewish people. We are a nation of steadfast faith in Hashem which sustains us through trials and tribulations, persecutions, and attacks throughout the generations. This unbreakable faith is the bedrock of our resilience.



II

Yom Kippur that Falls on Shabbos

Yom Kippur is like Shabbos of the Yomim Tovim

The Torah refers to Yom Kippur as שבת שבתון (*Shabbos Shabboson*) (Vayikra 16:31, 23:32). There is a well-known interpretation by the *Maharsha* in *Chiddushei Aggados* at the beginning of *Maseches Yoma* where he explains that Yom Kippur is different from all other Yomim Tovim. Those Yomim Tovim are six days in total (Rosh Hashanah – one day, Succos – two days, Pesach – two days, and Shavuot – one day) and resemble in a certain sense the six days of creation, because work for food preparation is allowed. Yom Kippur, by contrast, is stricter since no melachah whatsoever is permitted. Yom Kippur is the Shabbos of the festivals. All Yomim Tovim are called שבתון (*Shabboson*) in the Torah, but Yom Kippur alone is identified as שבת שבתון (*Shabbos Shabboson*), meaning the Shabbos of the Yomim Tovim. This is also hinted at in *Maseches Yoma* starting with, "Seven days before Yom Kippur..." indicating that Yom Kippur is like the seventh day, akin to Shabbos, as explained by the *Maharsha* there.

When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos: A double Shabbos

When Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbos, we experience a special "Shabbos Shabboson." We experience the sanctity of both together, and their combination leads to a unique and uplifting experience.

At first glance, Shabbos and Yom Kippur seem different and even contradictory. On Shabbos, there is the commandment "and you shall call the Shabbos a delight" - the obligation of עונג שבת - "Shabbos delight," along with an obligation to rejoice, and a prohibition against being sad. Conversely, on Yom Kippur, there is a positive commandment to "afflict yourselves" and a negative commandment that "anyone that does not afflict himself shall be cut off..." The observance focuses on self-affliction, restrictions on bodily needs, especially fasting, seemingly the very opposite of delight and joy.

On Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos, there are changes in the prayers due to the sanctity of Shabbos. We do not say "*Avinu Malkeinu*" because requests might cause sadness and interfere with the joy of Shabbos, just as we do not say "*Tachanun*" or even request personal needs; "personal needs we do not ask on Shabbos." According to some opinions, we do not say "*Avinu Malkeinu*" on Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos, in order for us to notice the change from the regular Yom Kippur text and remain aware of the presence of Shabbos throughout the day (see *Aruch HaShulchan*).

What Shabbos and Yom Kippur have in common

The power of Shabbos is great in restoring levels of holiness and purity and erasing sin, much like *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur. Starting with *Kabolas Shabbos*, the Jewish people begin to receive a נשמה יתירה -

an additional soul. What is included in this additional soul? The return of the two spiritual crowns. With the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jewish people lost two spiritual crowns received at the giving of the Torah. Chazal teach us that Moshe guards these two crowns for us as collateral during the week, and on Shabbos, he returns them to us. On Shabbos, we have a temporary respite from the stain of the Golden Calf. Moreover, the Gemara teaches, "Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, anyone who keeps Shabbos properly, even if they worship idols like the generation of Enosh, they are forgiven" (Shabbos 118b).

The connection Klal Yisrael has with Shabbos and its power

By what merit did we receive "this good gift from the treasure house of Hashem," and how do we draw its power upon us? Shabbos is a covenant between Hashem and the people of Israel. "An eternal covenant... between Me and the Children of Israel." On Shabbos, we affirm our emunah in the Master of the world, the One Creator Who made the world in six days, and Who continues its existence. This complete faith is the antithesis of idolatry and nullifies the grave sin of idolatry, and certainly all other sins. Consider this: if we only keep Shabbos on this Yom Kippur, we are guaranteed forgiveness for all our sins just for this observance alone, beyond the power of Yom Kippur's forgiveness, atonement, and purification! When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, the day becomes a double "*Shabbos Shabboson*," and together they multiply the forces of teshuvah, forgiveness, atonement, and purification.

Yom Kippur that falls by on Shabbos rectifies all the *Shabbosos* of the year

When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, we all sit in shul praying, separated and

detached from worldly affairs. In this setting, we are able to fulfill the obligation to observe Shabbos with all the laws, in holiness and purity, without any distractions. In doing so, we also rectify all the *Shabbosos* of the past year that we might not have observed with such strict adherence to all aspects of *Hilchos Shabbos*. This Shabbos, elevated by Yom Kippur, thus uplifts all the *Shabbosos* of the year and opens a unique path to teshuvah and rectification.

From Elul to Yom Kippur – ascending the “mountain of Hashem”

Our annual spiritual ascent resembles the challenge, "Who may ascend the mountain of the Hashem...?" (*Tehillim* 24:3), as we seek to return to the level of Mount Sinai from which we fell. This process begins at the start of Elul, when Moshe was commanded to carve the stones that were to become the second *Luchos* and was told, "You shall ascend in the morning to Mount Sinai..." (*Shemos* 34:2). This is a process of forty days, climbing from one level to the next. We start adding the chapter of *Tehillim* of "*L'Dovid Hashem Ori*," blowing the shofar, and reciting *Selichos*. Then we ascend to the level of Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, we pray to be inscribed in the Book of Life. From there, though the *עשרת ימי תשובה* – the Ten Days of Teshuvah, we continue to elevate ourselves to Yom Kippur, which is like "the path to the top of the mountain," where closeness to Hashem brings forgiveness and atonement for all that has passed.

Shabbos elevates us to the "mountain of Hashem"

But through the "good gift" of the holy Shabbos, we are like a child living in a high place in the mountains because he was born there. Shabbos elevates us to a higher place on the "mountain of Hashem." By Divine providence, in a year when Yom

Kippur falls on Shabbos, there are two days of shofar blowing, which has the virtue of enhancing the awakening to teshuvah and increasing preparation for Yom Kippur, as explained by the *Rambam* (see *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah, 3:4, *Moreh Nevuchim*, 3:43). In this year when we reach the top of the "mountain of Hashem" through the power of Shabbos, the Divine assistance for this begins already at Rosh Hashanah. When the holy day arrives, we start Yom Kippur with *Kabbolas Shabbos*, already beginning from a higher place. From this higher starting point, our teshuvah can reach even greater heights.

The contrasts between Yom Kippur and Shabbos complement each other

We will quote the pleasant and delightful words of the Bnei Yissaschar in his comments on the Gemara in Shabbos 118b:

"Had [the people of] Israel kept **two Shabbosos**, they would have been redeemed immediately (Shabbos 118b), I saw in one holy sefer that this refers to when **two Shabbosos come together**, [it refers to] when Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos. It seems [to me] to explain that it is like 'And they beheld Hashem, and ate and drank,' which Onkelos translates, 'And they were as happy with their sacrifices which were accepted with favor **as if they ate and drank.**' Yom Kippur is a day without eating or drinking, so there is no 'delight of Shabbos' here, but when the Yom Kippur sacrifices are accepted favorably, there is pleasure like eating and drinking. Thus, there is the observance of both *Shabbosos*, the Shabbos of Yom Kippur with its affliction, and the Shabbos with its eating and drinking. And so in our exile, when our prayers are accepted in place of sacrifices, may Hashem answer and say, 'I have forgiven,' then the combination of both

Shabbosos, the affliction, and the pleasure, will lead to immediate redemption, may Hashem hasten it in our days."

To delve deeper into his holy words: The Gemara in *Maseches Berachos* (31b) discusses the relative merits of fasting on Shabbos. "Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Yosi ben Zevida that anyone who fasts on Shabbos tears up their [bad] decree for seventy years, yet they must still atone for not fulfilling the commandment of Shabbos delight." If one fasts on Shabbos, they achieve forgiveness and pardon up to the point of canceling a bad decree for seventy years, but then they must atone for not having kept the obligation of Shabbos delight. However, in our case, when Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, there is nothing to atone for since fasting is obligatory. But the obligation of affliction on Yom Kippur does not merely exempt one from the Shabbos delight; rather, the Bnei Yissaschar teaches us, that the joy in our belief that Hashem accepts our prayers on Yom Kippur becomes the fulfillment of Shabbos delight itself, and in this way, there is the full power of Shabbos combined with the power of Yom Kippur, enabling one to rise above all sin and deficiency, and towards complete redemption, may it come speedily in our days.

Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos is Teshuvah out of love and joy

When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, the combination of Yom Kippur and Shabbos allows us to perform teshuvah on a higher plane. As explained, the affliction of Yom Kippur is then tempered by the character of Shabbos; therefore, we do not say *Avinu Malkein* or cry out in the same manner. If Yom Kippur leans somewhat towards fear and awe, Shabbos is characterized by love and desire, as stated in the Shabbos prayers even when Yom

Kippur falls on it," - באהבה מקרא קודש - With **love**, the sacred assembly... והנחילנו ה' אלוֹקינו - and endow us, Hashem our L-rd, with **the love and desire** of Your holy Shabbos." Thus, Shabbos adds love that helps us achieve teshuvah me'ahavah (out of love). Beyond this, the inner delight and joy that belong to the essence of Shabbos remain present even on Yom Kippur, as explained above. Therefore, it is possible that the teshuvah on Yom Kippur that falls on Shabbos reaches a higher quality, stemming from a place of both love and joy.

For further clarification, let's quote the words of the *Sfas Emes* on Purim of the year 5636 (1876), "On Purim, it is a time for teshuvah, as it is said that Yom Kippur and Purim are related in terms of rectification... and now, **through joy, we can reach the same level of teshuvah** that we come to on Yom Kippur through the afflictions." There have always been different paths to teshuvah. There's the well-known way we do every Yom Kippur, teshuvah through

fasting and various afflictions. But, says the *Sfas Emes*, there is a higher way to do teshuvah; through love and joy, which is present on Purim. According to what we've explained, when Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, the power of Shabbos adds love and joy, thereby elevating the aspect of teshuvah on Yom Kippur to be like the teshuvah of Purim.

Seize the opportunity

When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, we are given significant advantages to reach higher spiritual peaks. From the onset of Shabbos, we climb from a higher spiritual point, and by observing Shabbos and focusing on the special qualities of delight and joy that stem from the essence of Shabbos, we elevate our tefillos to a higher level, bringing complete teshuvah and forgiveness for our sins. By joining these two kedushos of Yom Kippur and Shabbos, which are distinct and, in some ways, contrasting, we may also merit to hasten the redemption from our long exile. Amen! May it be Hashem's Will.



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