

ROSH HASHONNA 5774 The different types of sin.

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On Yom Kippur, we ask G-d to forgive us for our sins. In Judaism there are three types of sins. There is the sin that we do because we are careless and miss the mark. For example, we had no intention of taking that piece of fruit, but it looked so delicious. We had no intention of getting involved with that beautiful woman. In other words, we sinned spontaneously. We never premeditated doing such a thing. Then you have the sin which is Avon, the sin we did on purpose, but even though we premeditated it we had to cover up a sin or poor decision we did before, otherwise we would have lost our reputation. We had to steal a certain amount of money to cover up our losses, otherwise all our checks would bounce. Then there is the third type of sin, which is Peshah, which means to rebel. You did not gain anything personally from this type of sin. You just want to make a statement that G-d's laws do not have to be obeyed. It is like those Jews who purposefully would eat pig in front of the synagogue on Yom Kippur, who would, out of a spirit of rebellion, desecrate Jewish symbols and morals.

There are also three different words that we use on Yom Kippur for forgiveness. One is Kapair, which means to cover up our sin. "G-d, please cover up our sin we will not do it again. It was spontaneous. The other form of forgiveness is Mechila, which means, "G-d, not only forgive my sin but also please forego punishing me." Then there is the third form of forgiveness, which means, "G-d, make me feel pure." We can all see how the first term, to cover up, applies to Chait. It was something that was not premeditated. "Please G-d cover it up I am not going to do it again." The second type of sin was premeditated because I had to cover up some past sin or misjudgment. I ask G-d "Please forego punishment." "I was pushed into a corner." Then there is Selicha, which applies to those who have sinned out of rebellion. They do not feel pure about themselves. They acted so foolishly. They were not hurting G-d by not living a good and moral life; they were hurting themselves.

In our prayers we also note that there are sins that are on an individual level and sins that are on a community level. A person can be a wonderful human being, but he may sin grievously against the Jewish people by not supporting Jewish causes, by not identifying with the Jewish people. For both of these sins, individual and community, we explicitly say, "G-d, Who forgives our sins and the sins of His People, the House of Israel," but there is more. There are also the sins that we do when we fail to face the evils of the world, and the word that is used then is Asham, where we do not benefit materially in any way from our lack of doing anything, but we fail to be G-d's partner in making this a better world.

What we ask G-d is to both Timcha and Ma'Aveer our guilt. Timcha has six meanings. It can mean to destroy our guilt, but it also means that we should protest, write a check, we should dilute suffering when we see it, we should care about other people, and we should become learned people so we know how to handle the problems of the world. When we say the word Timcha, we are saying, "G-d, please teach us to protest, to write a check, to dilute the suffering of the world, how to care about other people, and how to learn how to be better people. Then we will be able to help You rid evil from the world, and then G-d, You will be wipe out our guilt because we have transformed our guilt into something positive."

On Rosh Hashonna, which was on the sixth day (Friday), man, as we know him today, was created. The rabbis say there were 974 generations of hominids before Adam. Adam sinned also on that Friday and G-d told him that after Shabbat he would have to leave and go into a different world. That's how we explain the fact that there is evil in the world. The very basis of the animal kingdom is killing. One animal kills another and not just for food. We are not animals, and we should not try to be like animals. That was the philosophy of the Nazis and the Amalekites before them. We should care for the weak and the helpless and create a just society.

This is what G-d demands of us besides being personally pure. He demands that we help Him be His partner in creation. Let us hope in the coming year each of us will learn how to be G-d's partner in creation so we will be able to wipe out moral evil by protesting, writing a check, helping to ameliorate the suffering of others, helping to care about others, and becoming learned people. May we all do so, so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.