SHABBOS SHUVA DROSHA
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We all know that in the main prayer of Yom Kippur, the Kedushas Hayom, we have the famous blessing, "Blessed are You, G-d, King, Who forgives and atones for our sins and for the sins of His people, the House of Israel, and removes our guilt every year, King over all the earth, Who sanctifies Israel and Yom Kippur." This is the main prayer which is the focal point of all the Amidahs, of all the silent prayers. We know that normally we have 19 benedictions in a weekday service. We have 3 in the beginning, which praise G-d and thank Him for giving us our forebearers, and then we have 13 in the middle, in which we ask for different things for our people and for the world, and then we have the final 3 in which we thank G-d for creating us and we pray for peace. The first 3 and the last 3 are the same in every one of the Amidahs, but on every holiday and on Shabbos there is a special one in the middle called Kedushas Hayom. There are no longer 19 benedictions; there are only 7 benedictions, and the one for Yom Kippur has this phrase, "Who forgives and atones our sins and the sins of His people, the House of Israel, and removes our guilt every year." What does this mean?

If we look at the Rambam we can see what this means. The Rambam talks about sins. He says all the mitzvahs in the Torah, whether they are positive commandments or negative commandments, if a person violates any one of them, whether on purpose or by accident, and when he does Teshuva he shall return from his sin. In other words, if a person does any sin whatsoever he should do Teshuva and repent of his sin. Then he tells us what the repentence is. In the very next paragraph the Rambam says something else. He says the goat that was sent out, the scapegoat that was part of the Temple ritual, since it is atoning for all Israel the Kohen Godol will confess upon it in the language of all Israel and ye shall say, "And he confesses upon it all the sins of the House of Israel and this scapegoat forgives all the sins of the Torah, the easy ones and the hard ones, whether someone did it on purpose or did it by accident." We say that when it comes to this goat if a person repents

it forgives all his sins, the hard one and easy ones, but if a person does not repent then the scapegoat does not forgive except on the easy sins. What are these easy sins and hard sins? The hard sins are sins that you would be liable for the death penalty by a court of law or excision by heaven. These are the ones that are considered hard, but if you break a negative or positive commandment that does not have excision, these are the easy sins. This seems very strange because the Rambam in the very first sentence of the first paragraph in his laws of repentence speaks about the fact that a person has to repent, whether it is a positive or negative commandment, whether done on purpose or by accident, and here he says that the goat forgives all the sins of a person who does Teshuva but if a person does not repent he forgives only the easy sins. What are these easy sins? Negative commandments, positive commandments that do not have excision. Excision is a punishment from heaven. What it is we are not exactly sure, but we do know, though, that you are cut off from the Jewish people. Of course, if people stop observing certain commandments like Pesach and Yom Kippur and start acting in a violent fashion they are going to cut themselves off from the Jewish people. Their children and grandchildren will no longer be Jews. Some people say excision means that your days are cut short, others say it means your children die in your lifetime, but whatever excision is we know that it causes a person to be cut off from the Jewish people.

It is also very hard to understand what the Rambam is talking about here when he says hard sins and easy sins because in every other place when he refers to hard sins it refers to any sin in which you would get stripes, which means if you violate willfully a negative commandment, and here he does not use that definition of hard sins. Hard sins are just those sins which have the death penalty attached to them by man or excision by heaven, so what is going on here?

If we look at it carefully we will see that he says, "And ye should confess upon it all the sins of the House of Israel." This is the same phrase we use in the

Kedushas Hayom, the special prayer of Yom Kippur, when it says "He shall forgive His people, the House of Israel." Each of us has two kedushas. We have a holiness as an individual and a holiness as a Jew. We Jews have always believed in the two covenant theory. All of a sudden now liberal theologians and now Catholic theologians have discovered the two covenant theology. Of course, they say that Jews now can reach G-d without going through their religion. It is a backward twisty road which is very hard to attain and it is better to use their way, which is a super highway. We Jews have always believed that every human being is under a relationship with G-d and has a covenant with G-d. That is the covenant of Noah and we are all descendants of Noah. We Jews are also under two other covenants, the covenant of Abraham in which the mission of the Jew was laid out, that we are to be G-d's model for perfecting the world. We are to serve as G-d's messengers in bringing the message of peace and harmony and love and compassion to the world by serving as role models. This was fleshed out in the second covenant given to us, which is actually our third covenant as a human being, at Mount Sinai, where we were told how we can implement this covenant of Abraham in which Abraham was told that the way we approach G-d is by being moral and decent and the way we approach G-d is not through human sacrifice and child sacrifice, etc. We were given a mission and this mission was fleshed out at Mount Sinai. Therefore, we Jews have a special Kedusha in addition to our Kedusha that every human being has. Therefore, we Jews can sin two ways. We can sin as a human being and we can sin as a Jew. How is it possible to sin as a Jew and still fulfill our requirements as a human being? For example, I, as a Jew, give a lot of charity but I choose to give it to only non-Jewish charities. How can I say that I am not a charitable man and that I am not fulfilling the mitzvah of charity because I am, but I am not fulfilling my mitzvah of being a good Jew because I am not giving any of my charity at all to Jewish causes. Of course, we are also supposed to support gentile causes but the bulk of our charity should to to Jewish causes because if we do not help ourselves, who is going to help us?

Of course, we are commanded to help the poor of all nations and to clothe them and to feed their hungry and bury their dead and visit the sick but we have to take care also of our own, so, therefore, we as Jews many times sin, although as human beings we can justify what we are doing. Therefore, this is what that prayer says: "Forgive us and atone for our sins as individuals," when we lie and cheat and also our sins as people of the House of Israel because many times we as Jewish people sin. We do not fulfill our responsibilities to our brethren. We do not fulfill our responsibilities to G-d of being that role model that we should be. We shirk our responsibilities. We try to hide the fact that we are Jewish. Many times we even turn against our own people, and many times we even adopt what other people consider an anti-Semitic pose. It says, "Remove our guilt every year." Why does it say only "remove our guilt" and the guilt of the House of Israel? Because G-d promised that the Jewish people would be eternal. The word Ashfoseinu also has the connotation of extra patience, of being wiped out. We can cause ourselves to be wiped out, either physically by acting in an incorrect way (for example, taking drugs and different things like this can destroy our health and our body) but we an also destroy ourselves from being part of the Jewish people by not keeping Pesach and Yom Kippur, by not associating with the Jewish people, by not giving charity, by not helping our people, by not being with our people.

That is why Ravi says that the very act of Yom Kippur atones. What does he mean the very act of Yom Kippur atones? It atones not for our sins as individuals but our sins as Jews. The very fact that Jews comes to shul on Rosh Hashonna and Yom Kippur shows they still want to be Jews in spite of everything, in spite of their failings, in spite of the fact that they have not lived up to this mitzvah or that mitzvah, they still want to be Jews and still want to continue to see that their children are Jews. They want to make sure their children have an education, that they have a bar mitzvah, that they understand the importance of Judaism. In this

way they atone for themselves as Jews because they reaffirm their commitment to Judaism. That is very important.

The rabbis also say that there are four other Kedushas besides the Kedusha of Israel. They say that when the Jewish people were formed (of course, we were chosen to be G-d's moral instrument in perfecting this world) but also among the Jewish people the Kohanim were chosen, the land of Israel was chosen, the Temple was chosen, and the House of David was chosen to be the leaders of the Jewish people, so the Jewish people have 5 other Kedushas. It is interesting to note that when Joshua went into the land of Israel the Kedusha that he gave that land was the Kedusha of conquest. It was a Kedusha which came because he conquered the land, but when the land later was captured and conquered by the Babylonians that Kedusha, that holiness lapsed. However, when Ezra came back into the land of Israel the Kedusha that he established, which was a different type of Kedusha, a Kedusha based upon settling the land and farming the land and being on the land, and he did not do it through conquest alone because he came under the aegis of the Persian Empire and everything that he touched stayed holy. All the land that was settled by Ezra's people maintained the Kedusha, maintained that holiness.

This was similar to the wanderings of the Tabernacle before it was situated in Jerusalem. Before that it did not grant holiness to the sites at which it was at, but when the Temple was built by Solomon that became the holy place of the Jewish people. In fact, we emphasize this over again, too, when it says, "O, G-d, we return with Stores, bring us back and have compassion upon us because it is written G-d will restore you and will have compassion upon you and He will turn and gather you from nations which He has scattered you there." In fact, what it means, restore us and have compassion upon us, can refer to us an individuals and also as a people because when Joshua came into the land of Israel they were really looking for a land. They were not so much looking for spirituality. They say the difference between Moshe

and Ben Gurion was that Moshe wanted to give the people a land but all he could give them was a Torah, was values, was a religion of the Jewish people. Ben Gurion, they say, when he came to Israel he wanted to give the people values and spirituality but all he could give them was a land. Of course, there is a difference. The difference is that when Joshua came into the land they were concerned not so much with building a Temple and being spiritual and all that business. They were interested in conquering the land, dividing the land, settling the land. It took an enormous amount of energy and it almost in itself became a spiritual endeavor. In fact, it was not until almost 500 years later that the Temple was built, that the center of Jewish spirituality was built. That was different from Ezra. When Ezra came to the land he was not just looking for a land for the Jewish people to live in security and harmony. What he was looking for was spirituality. He was looking for a place where the Jewish spirit could flower and be nourished and could grow. Therefore, he first chose Jerusalem. He first built up the walls of Jerusalem and then he spread out to other places.

That, of course, is something that is happening very similarly in our day, too. There are many Jews who went back to the land of Israel. They did not go back to the land of Israel looking for spirituality. They went back to the land of Israel because they were fleeing persecution. They were not actually looking for the renewal of the Jewish religion. Some were even looking to set model colonies of socialistic ideals and not even Jewish ideals. They were looking for a land where the Jewish people could live secure. They were more in the mode of Joshua, and what they created was not something which was a universal holiness which would last forever because when they felt secure or when other people uprooted them they no longer had bearings anymore. The land no longer had a Kedusha for them, but when other people came to the land they were looking to revive Judaism. They were looking to make a spiritual revival and to them the most important thing was that Judaism is under such pressure

by western culture and by the resurgence of other types of religions and of communism and Naziism that we needed a center in which the Jewish people's spirit could once again flourish. That's why even to this day half the people in Israel do not understand the other half of the people of Israel because they are really talking about two different things. One is talking about spirituality, about rekindling the Jewish spirit, about returning to the sources and making them live again while other people are just talking about a land where Jews can live in peace and be a normal nation. In fact, that is what Herzel actually propagated. Herzel originally was an assimilationist. In fact, in his diary he even wrote that the best thing that can happen to all the Jews is that they convert and stop being Jews. In fact, the truth of the matter is that half of the Jews in Germany by 1837 or thereabouts had already converted to Christianity and that it was only probably because the Christians would not accept them wholly that this movement stopped and Herzel saw in the Dreyfus trial that no matter how assimilated you were (Dreyfus was a very assimilated Jew) that you were still going to be called a Jew. Therefore, he realized that the Jews are not a normal people and could not be a normal people until they had their own land. Therefore, he wanted the Jewish people to have their own land, not so they could rekindle the Jewish spirit but so that they could be a normal people. They could not be normal individuals in other countries but if we would have our own country we would be like other peoples and they would treat us like other peoples because we will then be normal. This, of course, was an anathema to a great part of religious Jewry. That's why actually Agudas Yisroel broke away in 1912 from the Zionist movement because we do not want to be a normal people. We want to be G-d's model to the world. We want to be G-d's instrument in helping to bring redemption to the world.

That is why we mention here these two sentences: "And ye shall return and have mercy on us," and it says, "And G-d will return also your returning and have mercy upon you and He will return and He will gather from the nations that He has scattered you there." There are actually two parts here, that G-d will return us and have

mercy on us, like those people who returned to the land, and they did not return to the land in order to be better Jews. They returned to the land so they should be normal and be accepted by others but G-d will still have mercy upon us, and G-d also returned those who return and He will have mercy upon you the second time. Why does it mention it a second time, too? Because even those who came back to be normal people realize the importance of the Jewish ideal and Jewish spirituality and they, themselves, will be turned back to that Jewish spirituality. Therefore, on this day of Shabbos Shuva we are not talking only about personal redemption. We are also talking about redemption of the Jewish soul. We are talking also tha the Jewish people should not give up on their task. Yes, it is a hard task and many Jews do not like the fact that we are a hated people, that the more that we give to people, the more Nobel prize winners we get, the more musicians that we give, the more scientists we give, the more men of literature we give, it seems the more we are hated. The reason for that is that we also stand for certain principles, the principles that were given out at Sinai. In fact, the rabbis say that the word Sinai, itself, stands for sinu, which means hatred, and from the time of Sinai the Jews have been hated, but that we have to remember that this hatred will be dispersed. This hatred will not last forever but that by trying to be normal we are not going to find this hatred dissipated. People are just going to think it is a Jewish trick and they are trying this way to destroy us in another way. That is what Hitler said. He hated assimilated Jews more than traditional Jews because he said they were a virus that were getting into our bloodstream by intermarrying with us, etc., but Jews should feel proud of the fact that we still have a unique heritage to teach the world. That is what the Rambam is talking about. A Jew can violate mitzvahs, positive commandments and negative commandments and not observe everything they are supposed to observe but as long as he is still attached to the Jewish people, as long as he has not cut himself off from the Jewish people there is great hope that that Kedusha, that part of his soul which has to do with his Jewish holiness,

will flare up again and will cause him once again to assume his role of not being a normal individual but being a light unto the nations.

That, of course, is what we also pray for on the holiday of Yom Kippur. We do ot pray just for our own personal liberation from sin, not just our own forgiveness. We also pray that that part of our Jewish soul will be rekindled so we can once again be a light unto the nations. That is what we say at the end of this prayer, "And I will bring them to My holy mountain and I will cause them to rejoice in the house of My prayer and their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable in My altar because My house shall be a house of prayer and should be called for all the nations." We are Jews not just for ourselves so we can feel holy and good. We are Jews because Judaism is going to bring redemption to the world, that the world needs the ideas of Judaism in order to be redeemed. Therefore, it is important that we be different, not that we be normal, not that we be the same. We have to be different because only through our ideas, through the ideas of Judaism will the world eventually be redeemed. We have already seen this, how Jewish ideals have slowly filtered throughout the world, that different religions have sprung out of us and brought more Jewish ideas to the world. Eventually all the Jewish ideals will be brought to the world and this prayer will be fulfilled, this prayer which is actually a quote from Isaiah will be fulfilled, that "My house will be a house of prayer and it shall be called for all nations." All nations will realize the importance of worshipping G-d, each in his own way, but worshipping G-d in a way in which morality is always respected and in which the individual is always respected and there should be love and harmony and peace in all the world. Let us all hope and pray that G-d will forgive us as individuals and that G-d will also forgive us as Jews so that He will allow our Kedushas to spring forth so we can do ourjob to bring redemption so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.