

Spiritual Insight For The Week

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

Yom Kippur Should Be Uplifting, Not Boring



When I was growing up, my family attended synagogue and fasted on Yom Kippur. Although the day was holy, the all-day service was tedious and I did not feel spiritual.

As my relationship with God and Judaism grew, Yom Kippur became more spiritual and significant to me. I finally understood why it is the holiest day of the year.

We start our preparation for Yom Kippur ten days earlier, on Rosh Hashanah. On this day we proclaim,

Avinu Malkeinu, God is our Father and our King. Our sages compare Rosh Hashanah to the coronation of a king and the sounds of the shofar (Numbers 29:1) are reminiscent of the trumpets heralding the king's arrival. Furthermore, the sounds of the shofar recall the cries of a child seeking to be reunited with a parent.

This point is especially significant because the bond between a parent and child is so personal that it can never be severed; so too, our bond to our Father in heaven is eternal.

Having reaffirmed our intimate and spiritual relationship with God, we can now ask God for forgiveness on Yom Kippur. Although we can ask for forgiveness any day of the year, Yom Kippur is a particularly auspicious time, since God is a loving, kind, merciful, and compassionate father to his children. As the Torah states, "*Israel is My son, My firstborn*" (Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 14:1). Furthermore, Daniel said, "*We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteousness, but because of Your great mercy*" (Daniel 9:18).

Moreover, Yom Kippur demonstrates the power of heartfelt prayer to elicit God's forgiveness, as the verse says, "*I have forgiven them, according to your words*" (Numbers 14:20), and "*Offer your prayers in place of sacrifices*" (Hosea 14:3).

We conclude the holiest day of the year with one long shofar blast. This is a powerful reminder that no matter what mistakes we made during the year, a heartfelt cry is accepted by God, Who does not forsake his children. As the Torah says, "*God will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you*" (Deuteronomy 31:8)

May Yom Kippur provide you with an uplifting opportunity to connect spiritually to God and experience His love, compassion, and forgiveness, though repentance, prayer, and acts of charity.

I wish you a meaningful Yom Kippur,

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

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P.S. The satirical High Holiday illustration in this Insight was hand-painted by Julius Ciss, the director of Jews for Judaism Canada. To view more of his art, visit www.juliusciss.com.