



9 Tishrei 5781

Sunday, Erev Yom Kippur

27 September, 2020

One Who Eats on the Ninth

We are standing on the threshold of the holy and awesome day, Yom Kippur. It would seem appropriate that on the eve of this majestic and awesome day a person should prepare himself by repenting and accepting upon himself to improve his ways. Yet Chazal tell us that the mitzvah of the day is 'to eat and drink', as it says, *"and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth of the month"* (Vayikra 23:32). The Gemarah asks (Berachot 8b), *"Do we afflict ourselves on the ninth? To teach that if one eats and drinks on the ninth, the verse considers it as if he afflicted himself on both the ninth and the tenth."*

This seems difficult to understand. How can eating and drinking be a form of preparation for Yom Kippur, to the extent that the eating and drinking on this day is considered as if one fasted for two days?

The answer seems to be that there is no end to the power of the Yetzer Hara in wishing to lead a person astray and mislead him. Particularly in a place and time where there is an upsurge of holiness and purity, there he strengthens himself greatly in trying to cause us to stumble and disturb our holy service. The Yetzer Hara with his ruses tries to put us to sleep particularly during these most crucial moments. Indeed, it is astonishing how most of the arguments in the home take place on Friday just before the approach of Shabbat, for the Yetzer Hara is aware of the great virtue of Shabbat, therefore he does all that he can to plant argument and dissension in the home so that Shabbat should enter among anger and hostility. In this way, we lose the special spiritual gifts that Shabbat offers.

This is why we are commanded to eat and drink on the ninth of Tishrei so that through eating extra meals in preparation for the approaching fast day, our thoughts will be occupied with the essence of Yom Kippur. However, when the Yetzer Hara sees a person eating more than normal on the ninth, he assumes that his head is occupied with material matters and is not immersed at all in preparations for Yom Kippur. Therefore, he leaves a person alone and does not try to bother him and disturb him in his service in the approach of the holy day.

One who assumes that eating is a contradiction to preparations for the holy day, did not know my father zya"n, since all who knew him saw tangibly how it is possible, even through eating, to do Hashem's will. I remember that once we stayed in a someone's home and our hosts prepared a certain dish for us, mushrooms with meat that the Moroccans normally serve only on special occasions. When Abba zya"n received his portion, he tasted a morsel of the food and praised it greatly. Again he tasted the tiniest amount and then immediately removed his hand from the plate.

Witnessing this, I asked in amazement, "Abba, why do you not taste more of the dish? They went to the trouble of preparing it especially for you." But Abba zya"n answered with his winning words, "This dish is too tasty for me, I already ate more than enough from it." With these short words, he summarized one of his life's practices, not to enjoy the pleasures of This World more than is necessary.

May you all be blessed with a *gemar chatima tova*,

David Chananya Pinto



קול חיים - רעננה