

SPECIAL DAYS OF EIS RATZON: YOM KIPPUR

The Torah declares (Vayikra 16:30): *For through this day He will atone for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before Hashem you will be cleansed.* Yom Kippur is this day, set aside forever as an incomparable *eis ratzon* of mercy and forgiveness.

And so it has been since the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Less than six weeks after having received the Torah at mount Sinai, Israel committed idolatry with the Golden Calf. It took weeks of intense prayer and repentance until God forgave Israel. Moses ascended again to receive the second Tablets of the Torah. The day he came down from the mountain holding the Tablets, Israel knew they had been restored to their place as God's nation. That day was Yom Kippur. It would become the annual day, more than any other time of the year, when God would turn His "ear" attentively to supplications, remorse, and change of heart.

One Jewish sage explains: "In response to the closeness that HaShem has to us on Yom Kippur, it is incumbent on each individual to purify and cleanse himself to cleave to HaShem...Therefore, one must be very careful not to waste even one moment, Heaven forbid, from this (awesome) day." "every moment of Yom Kippur affords atonement."

POINTS TO PONDER

The potential for atonement has been inherent in the Tenth of Tishrei since Moses first obtained forgiveness for the repentant Israelites after the sin of the Golden Calf.

One purifies himself and prays on that day in order to come before HaShem. Who is extraordinarily close to us at that time.

Leviticus 23:27 Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to the LORD; ²⁸ you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the LORD your God. ²⁹ Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from his kin; ³⁰ and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people. ³¹ Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. ³² It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath. (TNK)