



My Dear Friends,

It is common during this time before Yom Kippur to take stock of our lives and to think about what is most precious and valuable to us. This year more than others we realize that what is most precious is not our wealth and possessions, nor is it our jobs and professional titles, but our relationships. Our relationships with our friends and neighbors, colleagues and co-workers, parents, children, and loved ones.

And our tradition directs us to use this time before Yom Kippur to work on all of these relationships through honesty, dialogue and conversations of forgiveness. Oftentimes, however, we avoid these very kinds of conversations as they can be difficult and risky. We are afraid to drag up the past, to rock the boat too much. Better to forgive and push it to the side, rather than cause too much of a stir. As such, we prevent ourselves from the existential comfort and healing effects inherent in deep personal moments of connection.

A real conversation, an earnest I-Thou interaction can be transformative. Think of your own life. When have you felt most loved and most in love? Was it not during a moment of revelation and exposure; when the risk of vulnerability was met with understanding and an embrace? To be released by the other, to be reconciled with the other, to understand the other, to be understood by the other, will alter the quality of your relationships even as it alters the quality of your life.

And what is true about our relationships with others is also true about our relationship with God. The recognition of our vulnerability, which has clearly been exposed this past year, can be a profound catalyst for connecting to our Creator. On Yom Kippur we stand before God, fully cognizant of the unpredictability of our future but reassured that ultimately our fate rests in His hands; and He loves us and only wants the best for us. Yom Kippur is not simply a day to spend hours ceremoniously repeating prayers by rote, but an opportunity to initiate a real healing conversation with God.

These are the days we can work on all of these relationships through honesty and dialogue: to initiate complicated and layered conversations; to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Yom Kippur presents us with the opportunity to make that call that we have been meaning to make and have that conversation that we have been meaning to have; to heal our relationships and unlock the power of relationships to heal.

My berachah to each of you is that you are blessed with a wonderful year ahead - a year of rebuilding relationships and of healing fractured selves, for in this way you will have laid a strong foundation for a lifetime of happiness, growth and purpose. May this year be filled with health and meaning, as we strengthen our connections to God and to the people we love.

G'mar chatima tova,

Ari Berman

Watch Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman's Teshuvah Lecture on  
The Secret of the Shofar for a Year Gone Awry



You are subscribed to emails from the Office of the President.

Office of the President, Yeshiva University  
2495 Amsterdam Avenue, Belfer Hall 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10033

[Unsubscribe](#)