

The Overture of Kol Nidre by Rabbi Benjamin J. Weinbach

כל נדרי is the overture of Yom Kippur. Its words and lyrics are rooted at the mouth of the liturgy and provide the motif of the services. The solemnity of the haunting melody and the mystery of its content magnetize and mesmerize a supplicant Jewry. There is a stunned atmosphere which is not completely comprehensible to the congregation. The steady escalation of sound emits an aura of expectancy, as if some momentous happening is about to be born. Unbeknownst to the huddled mass of petitioners is the cathartic effect of this nullification of vows which is at the core of כל נדרי. All the mechanisms and instruments of atonement built into Yom Kippur cannot function unless they are plugged into the socket of Kol Nidre. Perhaps, this year, we can focus our concentration on Kol Nidre and delve into the connection of vows with Yom Kippur and why their existence is not erased by repentance, prayer, charity and the "essence of the day", ציבור של יום, as are the weightiest sins.

The foundation of Yom Kippur is ציבור. Only the cohesive force of a congregation can penetrate the heavenly portals of atonement. People take vows out of hatred, jealousy, greed and honor. These undesirable traits drive a deep wedge between families, neighbors and friends and generate the most grievous sins. Revenge, bearing grudges, loving ones neighbor, sustaining a brother Jew are only some of the immediate violations of one taking a vow in a fit of passion. Thus we may have a packed a synagogue with people crowding one another physically, not being able to constitute a ציבור because of the iron separations erected by needless vows. Perhaps this is the reason Jews are so tense and uneasy during the chanting of Kol Nidre, because of the enmity and petty strife splitting them apart. This is why the tune is traditionally a sorrowful one, decrying the divisions that reduce masses of worshippers into individuals, who cannot go it

alone on Yom Kippur. With כל נדרי , the nullification of vows, there is an erasure of spite, malice and rancor, which creates a dynamic עבור and the sparkplug of atonement.

Our modern world prides itself on broadening the earth's horizon with its deep penetration into outer space. By charting and exploring far flung galaxies, plumbing the bosom of the solar system and decoding the mysterious language of the heavenly bodies, mankind seeks atonement for this worldly sins and imperfections. We stretch high and wide to embrace the creator and plead for "Yom Kippur" to forgive our mortal failings. However, as long as we have "vows" plaguing the inhabitants of the earth, widening the gulf between nations, races, colors and creeds in enmity, suspicion and mistrust, we are a hodgepodge of splintered individuals wallowing in our corrupt polluted and bankrupt world. Not until the human race has recited "Kol Nidre" removed all vows of disunity will it emerge as a עבור , a true brotherhood of men deserving of G-d's attention and forgiveness. "Yom Kippur without Kol Nidre" is impossible.

World peace is the prize goal of mankind. It is the purest vision of the prophets, the noblest aim of the nations of the world and the holiest prayer of decent men. In the last quarter of a century there has been a determined drive by way of detente, pacts and treaties of coexistence and summit conferences, to seek "Yom Kippur" atonement for the gruesome, bloody and diabolical wars of history. However, all efforts to generate this utopian dream will fail so long as "vows" separate the family of nations and fear jealousy and prejudice prevent the erection of a colossal עבור . Not until some gifted maestro will galvanize the inhabitants of the earth and orchestrate a masterful rendition of "Kol Nidre", will there be "Yom Kippur" atonement for centuries of bloodshed and a hope for peace in our time.

The study of Torah is the protective shield of the Jewish people. Its scholars hold the key to Jewish survival and its supporters shape the destiny of Judaism. In recent years, as a result of the influx of Chassidic Jews and their famous rebbes the physiognomy

of American Judaism and the posture of Jews have been rearranged and transformed into a admirable fortress of Torah. A truncated Judaism has now been reconnected to the traditional masoretic golden chain extending to Sinai. In the זכור of the intensified study of Torah American Judaism beseeches the creator for "Yom Kippur" forgiveness for the barren, desolate and unproductive years of the past when the Torah was cheapened and relegated to a dusty corner. However, so long as Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian, German and American Jews have "vows" of intolerance, haughtiness and enmity eating away at the threads that unite them, the potential עבור is sapped of its vitality. The Tzadikim, Gaonim and Torah greats of our time must institute strong curriculums of "Kol Nidre" to attain "Yom Kippur" expiation of benign neglect of Torah, on American shores. The true blessings of Torah, like Yom Kippur demand a powerful united עבור which can only be fashioned by "Kol Nidre".

The story goes that a Chassidik rebbe who feuded with the Misnagdim of the city once made a pilgrimage of peace to the yeshivah headed by the chief opponent to Chasidus. Accompanied by two loyal aides he reached the yeshiva area. To the surprise of his aids, the rebbe opened the door, beheld the multitude of Torah scholars immersed in profound study and immediately shut the door. He exclaimed "I cannot enter because the entire Bais Medrash is "full" with Torah". All the way back the aides pondered the meaning of the rebbe's statement. Why cannot the rebbe enter. Finally one bright Chosid grasped the meaning and cried out "yes the Bais Hamedrash is "full" with Torah because not a drop of Torah ascended to heaven. The words are stuck in the ceiling and the roof filling the hall to capacity with no room for Chasidim.

Yes, the rockets of Torah are grounded by a faulty, loose and fragmented עבור , estranged from each other by "vows" of insincerity, hypocrisy and betrayal. G-d can tolerate rebellion against himself but he will not suffer dissidence among his children. The Torah relates that twice G-d descended from his

heavenly throne to judge the world. He personally investigated the Tower of Babel לראות את העיר ואת המגדל וירד ה' וירד וwhen he found them united and considerate of each other, he spared them eternal damnation. G-d once again descended into Sodom ארדה נא וראא הכעקתה הבאה אלי, cheating, trickery and disunity within the citizenry itself. Sodom lost its final appeal for survival, as the heavens rained fire and brimstone, utterly destroying its inhabitants and consigning them to oblivion.

On Yom Kippur G-d descends to judge the Jewish people. He sees them fasting, praying, pledging, promising, regretting, resolving. The air waves are filled with sounds of repentance from the beginning to the great finale, but none are as vital as the special sounds of the "Overture of Kol Nidre".

A Resounding Barukh Shem by Rabbi Abraham B. Hecht

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Kol Nidre prayer is its conclusion with the blessing of the Shehehyanu (Shulhan Arukh 619; 1). Recited by the entire congregation and by the cantor, it expresses a united vote of thanks to the A-mighty for having granted all the assembled a year of life.

It voices a silent prayer and wish that G-d will grant another year of health to all who are in the congregation; this is indicated by the words Mi Yom Kippurim Zeh Ad Yom Kippurim Habah Aleinu L'tovah, "from this Day of Atonement to next year's Yom Kippur which should come to us in goodness, we hope to be together again, sustained by the L-rd in health and happiness."

From the halakhic point of view, the reason for uttering this blessing at this particular time is explained as follows: On almost all holidays of the year, when Jewish law requires us to recite the Kiddush on the eve of the holiday, we then utter the blessing Shehehyanu, for that is the official ushering in of Yom Tov. Yom Kippur is the only exception in that it is the sole holiday of the year when there is no Kiddush, because of course, we are fasting. The Shehehyanu is then properly pronounced in our prayers as we thank the L-rd for granting us a happy and healthy year.

And thus each and every year on Yom Kippur eve, as we solicit A-mighty for forgiveness, we pray for a year of health and happiness in the service of the L-rd.

A really outstanding feature of the holiday prayers is the time-hallowed custom of exclaiming the words "Barukh Shem K'vod Malkhuto L'olam Vaed"—"Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever," in a loud and clear voice. Although during the entire year these words, which follow the declaration of our faith, Shema Yisrael, are recited daily morning and evening in a low and hushed voice, on Yom Kippur the entire congregation proclaims these words in raised voices (Shulhan Arukh