

ויקרא אלקים לאור יום ולחשך קרא לילה ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד "And Elokim called the light day and the darkness He called night, and it was evening, and it was morning, day one (Yom Echad)". The Midrash Rabbah comments that the term יום אחד refers to יום כפור. What is the connection between יום אחד and יום כפור?

In Hebrew, the word אחד has 2 meanings: 1) the number one and 2) unique, singular or different. For example, שמע ישראל ד' אלקינו ד' אחד, Hear O Israel, the Lord our Gd, the Lord is One, Hashem Echad means that He is the one Gd as well as He is unique and beyond comparison with His creation. Similarly, יום כפור is one day yet it is a singular and unique day, different from all other days in the year.

Ramban (1:5) quotes Ibn Ezra that the beginning of the night is called ערב because all forms are mixed up and confused. Morning is called בקר because in daylight man can distinguish and discriminate between those same forms. ערב means confusion, an indistinguishable mixture that prevents man from discriminating between good and bad, אסור והיתר (as in הלכות תעריבות). Likewise, in the evening man has difficulty distinguishing between objects, as their shapes and identifying characteristics tend to blur. The morning, בקר, is when man uses his talents to discriminate and distinguish between similar objects, when he realizes אתה חונן לאדם דעת (You grace man with intelligence), as we recite in our daily prayers.

Why did Gd divide time into day and night? Why not leave man in a constant state of בקר, clarity? If man would remain in a constant state of clarity, Teshuva, repentance, would be impossible. The foundation of Repentance is the principle that man acts from a state of confusion. It is this confused state that explains why he acted as he did. הרהור תשובה, the contemplation of repentance, is the beginning of the long process towards becoming a בעל תשובה. Night, ערב, represents man's confusion, the shame and pain of sin, the weight of his actions on his mind.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 49b) says that one who betroths a woman on condition that he is a righteous person creates a valid קדושין (betrothal) even if he was a wicked person all his life. For perhaps he contemplated תשובה. This initial, internal stirring to repent is the first and most necessary step. At this point, he recognizes the mix of thought processes, good and evil. He is not yet able to fully sort them out, but he knows he must attempt to make sense of it. בקר represents the rest of the Repentance process, of recognition, וודוי (admission of sin) and the commitment to refrain from this sin in the future.

On **יום כפור**, man experiences both of these aspects. He undergoes **הרהורי תשובה**. With the clarity that comes with the arrival of the morning of Yom Kippur, the **בקר**, man can truly distinguish between good and evil, he can now embark on fulfilling the course of **תשובה**. These unique aspects of **יום כפור** and their relationship to **תשובה** are why **יום כפור** is referred to as **יום אחד**, truly the most unique day of the year.

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