

## Yom Kippur Speech

**T**he Kol Nidrei prayer is essentially an annulment of oaths and vows (Nedarim u'Shvuos etc), a shortened version of the Hatoras Nedarim performed after morning prayers on the eve of Rosh Hashana. Why is the most solemn day of the year ushered in with the concept of vows and oaths?

The Rambam implies that the primary aspect of repentance is "Vidui" - the verbalized confession of one's sins.<sup>1</sup> Why is verbalization such an important facet of the repentance process?

The Targum Onkelos explains the Posuk, "And He blew into his (Adam's) nostrils a living soul"<sup>2</sup>, by stating that G-d imbued Adam with the ability to speak, transferring as it were, His power of speech to man. Just as G-d created the world with words<sup>3</sup>, man has been endowed with the ability to create new realities.

This is the source of how a prohibition, a Neder, can take effect on something. Man can transform the reality of an object from being permitted to becoming prohibited; so too by repentance. Essential to the Teshuva process is the verbalization of the sincere confession together with the commitment to sin no more. Through speech alone, man transforms his reality from sinner to true penitent.

This is the message of Kol Nidrei. Through our speech we can effectuate our transformation. The concept of oaths and vows, then, defines the nature of Yom Kippur, the day when we beseech the Almighty to transform us through His forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> רמב"ם (הלכות תשובה א, א)

<sup>2</sup> בראשית ב, ז

<sup>3</sup> פרקי אבות ה, א, תהלים לג

