

## Message: Get Better Soon Yom Kippur 5786

Not going to lie. I have received a few variations of this from my wife over the years.

Frankly, she's not wrong. We have been together over 32 years, and I've been walking with the Lord for 46 years, and I still have a long way to go. I have always benefited from the patience and grace of others. My mom had a much cuter needlepoint version of this saying hanging on the wall when my brother and I were little.

With that all in mind, let's move on. Our verse for today is this:

*Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

**Matityahu [Matthew] 5:48 (TLV)**

That's a doozy. No big deal, right? Just be perfect.

Simple. Got it. Done. Be perfect...let's go.

**הֵיוּ שְׁלֵמִים, יֵאלֶלֶה:**

There's your modern Hebrew expression for the day: yalla, let's go.

**לְכֵן הֵיוּ שְׁלֵמִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאַבִּיכֶם שְׁבִשְׁמִים שָׁלֵם הוּא.**

**Matityahu [Matthew] 5:48 (HNT)**

This is an intense verse.

This isn't the verse that is quoted when someone is trying to tell you how much easier it is to follow Yeshua than to walk in Torah. The law is SO hard, but Yeshua is easy. Just be perfect.

This is not a light and easy weight to carry, but this is a command Yeshua gives his talmidim, his disciples.

Rav Sha'ul quoting from Tehillim 14 and 53 reminds us that nobody is fully righteous.

*There is no one righteous, not even one! No one understands, no one seeks God, all have turned away and at the same time become useless; there is no one who shows kindness, not a single one!*

**Romans 3:10-12 (CJB)**

So, please, all of us, be patient, God isn't finished with anyone yet.

How can we be expected to be perfect when we can't even be righteous?

I do not think perfection is a state of being we are intended to achieve. I think this is an ideal we are supposed to pursue.

So, let's unpack this a bit. Our verse read 'therefore be perfect'. I have been told that whenever you read the word 'therefore', you should go back before that verse to see what that verse is 'there... for'. Let's read some context.

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than anyone else? Even the pagans do that, don't they? Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

**Matityahu [Matthew] 5:43-48 (TLV)**

The context somehow makes this verse even heavier than before. This goes beyond 'little children, love each other'. Love your enemies... pray for your persecutors. Be perfect.

Clearly this passage is talking about how we treat others, and I think the key is this sentence in the middle.

*He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

**Matityahu [Matthew] 5:45 (TLV)**

In other words, all creation are in the care of Adonai. As sons and daughters of Adonai, we are expected to treat others, his creation, with the same love that he does.

## **The Pursuit of Perfection**

This verse is from Matityahu 5, the passage commonly referred to as the 'sermon on the mount'. Contrary to popular portrayal, this wasn't one of his messages delivered to an enormous crowd. Yeshua saw the crowds, went up the hill to get away, and his disciples came to him. Not the crowds. This was personal and nuanced instruction to his talmidim. These are the disciples who were closest to him. They had been walking in the footsteps of their rabbi, and he could dig deeper with them.

I think this matters because it demonstrates that there is a direct relationship between God's expectations of you and your exposure to His instruction. Anyone can love and be gracious to people who are loving and kind to them, but we are called to another level. We are held to a higher standard because we have the instruction of the living Word of God.

In another verse directed at His talmidim, Yeshua said:

*From everyone given much, much will be required; and from the one for whom more is provided, all the more they will ask of him.*

**Lukas [Luke] 12:48 (TLV)**

However, I think there is something innately difficult about this. Regardless of how much you know or how long you have known it, you are still a flawed human being. You are an unrighteous creature, but you are expected to rise above the limitations of your nature.

*Therefore you are to be holy, because I am holy.*

**Vayikra [Leviticus] 11:45 (CJB)**

## וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי:

We are expected to be holy and righteous and perfect because we are expected to pursue Adonai. It is not about us. It is about who we are following.

### Our Righteous King

I would like to revisit a scripture that I referenced on Rosh Hashanah.

*When the storm has passed, the wicked are gone; but the righteous are firmly established forever.*

**Mishlei [Proverbs] 10:25 (CJB)**

## וְצַדִּיק יְסֻד עוֹלָם

A righteous man is the foundation of the world. Yeshua is the foundation of the world. He is one who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.

*For while we were still helpless, at the right time, the Messiah died on behalf of ungodly people. Now it is a rare event when someone gives up his life even for the sake of somebody righteous, although possibly for a truly good person one might have the courage to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners.*

**Romans 5:6-8 (CJB)**

Yeshua lived out the teaching he gave his talmidim. Anyone can love someone who loves them, but Yeshua loved those who didn't even know Him. The life, death, and resurrection of Yeshua is testament to His Righteousness.

We are not perfect, but we follow the One who is. We are not righteous, but we follow the One who is. As we conform our lives to His example and His words, we are being refined.

May Adonai give you the strength to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly. On this day, may we be a people who come before the Lord having humbled ourselves before God and before our brothers and sisters.

## Why does Hashem call the broken?

Adonai asks us to be holy as He is holy, and Yeshua tells us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Nevertheless, time after time after time, Hashem calls the *broken* to minister and to lead. The Bible is full of stories of people who did right and did wrong. More often than not, the same people did both right and wrong. Were Avraham, Yitzkhak, and Ya'akov perfect? Was Moshe without fault? Was David Melekh righteous?

Were any of the disciples of Yeshua extraordinary in their righteousness or piety?

I can promise you one thing. As your rabbi, I will sometimes disappoint you. I will not be perfect, but being called does not equal being perfect. Responding to a call on your life from Adonai simply means that you are willing to walk the path He has asked you to walk. Answering a call is obedience, nothing more.

הִנְנִי

דְּבַר כִּי שָׁמַע עַבְדְּךָ

Here I am. Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.

The expectation is that we who are called will strive to walk in the ways of the Lord and, in our pursuit of Adonai, to be an example of how to walk. And when we fall, we are to be an example of how to repent, to turn from own ways, and to follow after Him again.

As Rav Sha'ul said:

*Not that I have already obtained this or been perfected, but I press on if only I might take hold of that for which Messiah Yeshua took hold of me.*

**Philipians 3:12 (TLV)**

We all have a past, and we all have battles that we are fighting in our lives. Having a past and having struggles in your life does not disqualify you from service. Not fighting those battles, not engaging in the struggle, is what disqualifies you from service. You have to be struggling to grow. You have to be striving to improve. Life is a struggle to be more and more like Yeshua, to walk more and more in His ways.

## **Yom Kippur יום כיפור**

Yom Kippur is one of the most important holidays of the Jewish year. As Judaism's most important holiday, Yom Kippur holds a high level of significance across all Jewish denominations and at all levels of religious observance. Many Jews who do not observe any other Jewish custom will refrain from work, fast and attend synagogue services. Yom Kippur occurs on the 10th day of Tishrei, which is today.

On Yom Kippur, it is customary to fast and thereby afflict our souls. Most of us wear white, which symbolizes purity and calls to mind the promise that our sins shall be made as white as snow.

*'...for the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but righteousness and shalom and joy in the Ruach ha-Kodesh.*

### **Romans 14:17 (CJB)**

Rav Sha'ul wasn't talking about Yom Kippur there, but these words apply.

Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and G-d, not for sins against another person. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible. I admonish you to pray for the strength to make things right with those in your life.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the days in between are referred to as the Days of Awe, Yomim Nora'im. During the Days of Awe, a Jew reflects on the year, goals, and past actions, how his or her behavior has possibly hurt others. We seek forgiveness for wrongs done against God and against other human beings.

Yom Kippur is a day of repentance. No matter how hard we try, every year we are in need of repentance. Setting aside a time to focus on personal, relational, communal, and spiritual repentance is a blessing to all of us who need to make t'shuvah.

Like David Melekh. He was not perfect, but he sought after the heart of God. He loved the Word of Lord, and he tried to walk in the ways of the Lord. However, the way he repented when he fell woefully short of the mark that the Torah sets for us is how he best demonstrated that he was a 'man' after God's own heart'. He cried out to God for mercy when he fell. His teshuva exemplifies what it is to be a man after God's own heart.

T'shuvah, like many Hebrew words, has nuanced meaning. It stands for repentance, return and an answer. It is the multi-stepped process of repairing the damage we have done in the world when we have walked in the ways that seem right to us and not in the ways of the Lord.

Speaking of ways that seem right to us that are not the way of the Lord. Right now, there is a lot of really bad teaching that is being spread in the greater community of faith, by greater community of faith I referred to both the church and the synagogue. That the theology is that somehow because you have been convinced that you do not like the government of the nation of Israel, that you have no obligation to support or defend Israel. You may even feel empowered to attack Israel.

This teaching is false. The covenants of God are with the people of Israel, and they apply to both the land and the people of Israel. The government of Israel is inconsequential. There have been many government s in Israel. None of those have anything to do with the Word of Adonai. As people of faith you are told that those who bless Israel are blessed and those who curse Israel are cursed. The only nation on earth that is defending both the land and the people of the covenant is the modern nation of Israel. We are obligated to fight for and uphold and defend Israel, both the land and the people.

Other ways may seem right to you, but they are not the way of the Lord. These ways only lead to death. This may a topic for another day, so I am moving on. However, if you have been speaking against your brothers

and sisters in faith or in the flesh, you need to make t'shuvah if you wish to be blessed by Adonai.

## **Atonement כִּפּוּר**

*"Come now," says Adonai, "let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool."*

**Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] 1: 18 (CJB)**

Kippur (כִּפּוּר) is an interesting word as well. In Biblical Hebrew this is the word for atonement, and in modern Hebrew it is a word for frost.

I think that paints a beautiful picture. Imagine frost covering the ground on a cold fall morning. Picture that in your mind. The green grass, the brown trees, the leaves, the brick; everything you see made white by the frost that covers every exposed thing.

*How blessed are those whose offense is forgiven, those whose sin is covered! How blessed those to whom Adonai imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no deceit!*

**Tehillim [Psalms] 32: 1-2 (CJB)**

That is atonement. Atonement is a covering that enables us to enter into the presence of Adonai, and it covers the debt that we owe for the lives we have led. The life and death and resurrection of Yeshua provides atonement for our sins.

However, is atonement salvation? Is forgiveness salvation? By making teshuvah do we earn our salvation? Absolutely not. We cannot earn salvation through our good works. We are saved by faith through grace, just as Avraham Avinu was saved.

*He believed in Adonai, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

**B'resheet [Genesis] 15: 6 (CJB)**

However, we are compelled as servants of the most high God to walk in his ways. This is not in order to further merit our salvation or to prevent us from losing our salvation. We do these things out of love because we



are saved. We walk in faith because we are saved. We make teshuvah because we are saved.

We walk in God's ways because he is our king, and we are his people. We seek atonement so that we can rest in the presence of the King.

So, my challenge for us on Yom Kippur 5786 is this, 'Get better soon'. Keep making the choice to follow His ways and not your own. Treat all God's creation as you would want to be treated. Love your neighbor as yourself.

## **Closing Remarks**

There is a prayer in the Makhzor Yom Kippur that I would like to read in summation. Please read along with me if you can:

*Hear our voice, Adonai, our God; spare us and have compassion on us, and accept our prayers mercifully and willingly. Lead us back to You, Adonai and we shall find the way back renew our days as of old. Give ear to our words, Adonai! Consider our meditations. May the words of our mouths be acceptable — and the thoughts of our hearts—before You, Adonai, our Rock, and our Redeemer.*

**The Lord is our Rock and our Redeemer.  
Adonai Tzurenu V'go'alenu**

**אֲדוֹנֵי צוּרֵנוּ וְגוֹאֲלֵנוּ**

*Cast us not away from Your Presence, and Your holy spirit take not from us. Do not cast us off in time of old age, when our strength fails, do not forsake us. Forsake us not, Adonai, our God, be not far removed from us. Give us a sign of Your goodness that our enemies may see it and be ashamed; for You, Adonai, have helped us and comforted us. For You, Adonai, do we wait, You will answer us, our Master, our God.*

I pray that the rest of your Yom Kippur is filled with righteousness, shalom, and joy in the Ruakh ha Kodesh.

**Tzom kal, khaverim, Shalom shalom.**

## References

- Complete Jewish Bible
- Tree of Life
- Makhzor Yom Kippur Ashkenaz
- Timelapse of Frost: <https://youtu.be/xzXBGPuN26c?si=vk-S7WgEoFPFQSO>