

"This shall be to you an eternal decree to bring atonement on Bnei Yisrael for all their sins once a year." (16:34)

Why does the *Torah* emphasize that the atonement of *Yom Kippur* occurs once a year? This should be obvious. *Horav Tzvi Hirsch Farber, z.l.*, cites *Horav Yaakov Charif, z.l.*, who compared this metaphorically to a sick man whose medical specialist is in a distant city. Whenever his illness becomes serious and life-threatening, they must take him to the big city to have medication administered to him by this doctor. At times, however, the illness becomes so severe that he can not wait until he reaches his own doctor. Consequently, at each station stop along the way, he seeks a doctor in that city who can provide him with some medical treatment until he arrives safely at the clinic of his doctor.

So, too, is *Bnei Yisrael's* relationship with sin and atonement. There is no man who is completely free of transgression. Each and every one of us needs that awesome day when Hashem listens to our brokenhearted pleas for forgiveness. Every year we hope to continue our endeavors until *Yom Kippur* when we receive our annual dosage of atonement which enables us to continue for yet another year. Sometimes however, people are simply too ill to "make it" until that holy day. Their illness may be too grave, or the community at large has not maintained the delicate balance of good deeds. In such a critical situation, Hashem provides intermittent stops during the year for the patients, which serve as a "mini" *Yom Kippur*. This avails them the opportunity for penance, enabling them to "make it" until the holiest day of the year -- *Yom Kippur*.

We must view the various trials and tribulations we confront during the year as true reflections of Hashem's benevolence. Hashem creates therapeutic opportunities to help us address an array of personal issues, whether they be problems of childrearing, earning a living, or maintaining good health status. At times, the greater Jewish community is struck with tragedy, i.e. the passing of a great *tzaddik*. *Chazal* teach us that *misas tzaddikim*, the death of the righteous, atones in the same manner as *Yom Kippur*. This is another of Hashem's ways of communicating a serious message to us: We are in need of yet another *Yom Kippur*.

In truth, we should shudder at how many "*Yom Kippurim*" have confronted us during the past year. Hashem has provided us with one single day of the year which expiates our sins, providing we repent. We must see to it that this is the only day necessary for our atonement.