

“For on this day he shall provide atonement for you.” (16:30)

In a drasha, lecture, during the month of Elul, the Klausenberger Rebbe, z.l., told the following story: The author of the Yeshuos Yaakov lived in the city of Yarislov for a number of years following his marriage. He davened in that city's main shul. He witnessed the following story. – One year, on Erev Yom Kippur shortly before Kol Nidrei, a man entered the shul and walked up to the amud to lead the service. This person gave the outward appearance of piety, virtue and dignity. He did not ask permission to daven; he just went up to lead the service. Something about this individual's appearance and his awe- inspiring davening prevented anyone from stopping him from “taking over,” even though there were regular chazzanim in the shul.

As soon as the visitor completed Kol Nidrei, he went on to lead Maariv. After Maariv, when everyone left to go home, he stayed in the shul to recite Tehillim all through the night. Certainly, his physical stamina was superhuman. In fact, people began to suspect that he might be a malach, Heavenly Angel. Morning came, and the visitor was standing by the podium prepared to lead the services. This continued on all day: Shacharis, Krias HaTorah, Mussaf and Minchah. As they prepared for the climax of the day, the Neilah service, everyone was sure that this person was not a human being. How could anyone stand on his feet all day without food and rest, praying in such a heart- rending and emotional manner, and not be superhuman? After Neilah, the visitor led the Maariv service and wished everyone a Gut Yom Tov, referring to the upcoming festival of Succos. One of the more distinguished members of the shul invited the “Heavenly” visitor to his house to make Havdalah and break the fast. The man accepted.

The Yeshuos Yaakov, who was privy to the entire drama of the day, felt that now they would know whether the visitor was a human or an angel based upon whether or not he would eat. When a plate of food was placed in front of the guest, he said he was not hungry; he needed, however, a Gemara Succah so that he could learn. He said that he felt weak, not having had the opportunity to learn all day. The visitor proceeded to learn all night without pausing to eat. When he completed the entire mesechta, tractate, he went to shul to daven Shacharis. After davening, the people discovered that the visitor was none other than the saintly Kedushas Levi, Horav Levi Yitzchok, zl, m'Berditchev.

There is a postscript to this story, which conveys the essence of this narrative's profound message. The Klausenberger Rebbe noted that after an entire day of tefillos, which surely pierced the heavens, after the emotional pleas of a heart so pure that he was like an angel, the Berditchever still felt “weak.” He needed his blatt Gemara, his Rashi and Tosfos to sustain himself. Torah is, after all, the soul's true sustenance.