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To my fellow Jews, here in Israel and around the world:

This year, Yom Kippur must be different from Yom Kippur of any other year.

Following the events of last Yom Kippur, where tragically we saw Jews pitting themselves against fellow Jews, and in light of the pain and loss we have been forced to experience on October 7th and over the past twelve months, this year we must proactively work even harder to build bridges and open the *tzohar* (window) to engage others.

From the very first words recited on Yom Kippur in *Kol Nidrei* – **על דעת** **המקום ועל דעת הקהל**, “With the approval of God, and with the approval of the congregation” – the message is clear that this is a day where we are beseeching the heavens as individuals, but with the very clear understanding that we need to be accepting of others – both those within our close community and those within the wider Jewish world.

The Midrash on Yoel (2:10) interprets the phrase **כי גדול יום ה' ונורא מאוד**, “for the day of the Lord is great,” as referring to Yom Kippur. This is a day which is great and wonderous in large part because our tradition teaches that all barriers that exist between us are removed and that we all stand before Hashem as His chosen people. This is a day when unity is our calling card. We are united not only in our common calls for repentance and a good year ahead, but in our very peoplehood. Regardless of who we are, our age, our financial status, what clothes we wear or how and where we pray or vote, we are part of this whole that is the Jewish people.

Yom Kippur must therefore be a day where we focus not only upon our relationship with God but fundamentally on our relationship with others.

Toward that end, this year we will be dedicating ourselves to significantly expanding our Tzohar Yom Kippur Tefillot program, which welcomes tens of thousands of people to hundreds of different *tefillot*. We are expanding our reach into many new areas of the country and working to enable even larger gatherings at our pre-existing *minyanim*.

To our dear sisters and brothers around the world, at this historic moment in our people's history, we are honored to invite you to join us in this global effort – a private *tefilla* to be recited before *Kol Nidrei* and a communal one before *Neila*.

Among the painful, yet critical, lessons of the past year is that wherever on earth Jews and themselves, we face a common destiny. Your voice, your presence, and your prayers must be a part of this collective call for Jewish unity. May these words of this unity *tefilla* inspire our prayers on this holy day and our actions in the year to come, to turn to our brothers and sisters to listen, forgive, communicate, and love as God surely expects of his children.

Rabbi David Stav
Founder and Chair, Tzohar
Tishrei 5784 (2024)

