



MIZRACHI

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PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT HA'AZINU / YOM KIPPUR 5787 • 2026



WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Last week we welcomed tens of Lone Bnot Sherut to the launch of our new weekly beit midrash program headed by Rabbanit Shani Taragin, Rosh Beit Midrash. The girls enjoyed light refreshments and a delicious dinner. We were honored to have Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Nasi of World Mizrachi, Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrachi, and Rabbi David Katz, Nefesh B'Nefesh Torani Coordinator, who spoke to the girls on beginning their year in Sherut Leumi. The beit midrash will be open every Monday evening for bnot sherut to be able to learn Torah while serving their country.

INSIDE

TORAT MIZRACHI

	Rabbi Doron Perez	2
	Rabbi Reuven Taragin	4
	Rabbanit Shani Taragin	6
	Sivan Rahav Meir	7
	Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon	8
	Rabbanit Sharon Rimon	9
	Rabbi Danny Mirvis	10
	Riddles: Reb Leor Broh	10

PARSHAT HASHAVUA

	Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein	11
	Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l	12
	Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a	14
	Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a	15
	Rabbi Shalom Rosner	16
	Michal Horowitz	17
	Rabbi Menachem Leibtag	18
	Rabbi Eli Mansour	19

INSPIRATION

	Rabbi Moshe Weinberger	20
	Rabbi YY Jacobson	21
	Rabbi Judah Mischel	22
	Mrs. Shira Smiles	23
	Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi	24

ISRAEL CONTENT

	Hebrew Language: David Curwin	25
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www.mizrachi.org
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000



NASI
Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

CO-PRESIDENT
Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Harvey Blitz

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN
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World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



EDITOR
Rabbi Reuven Taragin

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Esther Shafier

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Leah Rubin

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elan Finkelstein

PROOFREADER
Renee Rosenberg

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The Blame Game

On Yom Kippur, Atonement and Achieving Unity



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Who is to blame for October 7th? We all know that the events of three years ago on Simchat Torah was arguably the greatest failure of Israel in its 78-year history. Certainly, the events, as we all know, were the worst for *Am Yisrael*, both in quantity, in numbers, and in brutality, since the *Shoah*. The army, intelligence agencies, political leadership, and indeed all of Israel were caught by surprise.

Who is to blame?

Who is to blame for this terrible occurrence? Is it perhaps Israel's military intelligence? For sure they have significant responsibility. Is it perhaps the Shin Bet, Israel's internal spy agency? Surely too. Is it the heads of the army – the chief of staff and maybe even the whole general staff? There is responsibility here too. Is it also the political leadership? Perhaps the minister of defense, the prime minister, and maybe all of the cabinet? There is definitely some responsibility here too. Is it perhaps all the previous chiefs of staff who developed a military doctrine of having a small and smart army based on defense and technology and not a large and strong army based on strength and deterrence? Is it perhaps a shortcoming shared across Israeli society of a desire for peace and quiet and to kick the can down the road, as opposed to being prepared to face head on the viciousness of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran's intransigence? Perhaps we all bear some responsibility.

Is Hashem perhaps to blame? After all, is He not a just G-d and one of divine mercy,

Whose mercy we seek especially at this time? How does He allow such bad things to happen to such good people? How does He allow wicked to prosper in the words of Jeremiah?

The Power of Confession

We seem to be exceptional at pointing fingers at others, and not as comfortable to take personal responsibility. We all know that the *vidui* confession is that we pound our own heart as a physical sign of taking personal responsibility and an expression of heartfelt remorse and regret.

Our sages, through the power of confession, place the responsibility **first and foremost on ourselves**. We shouldn't be "pounding" other people's chests, blaming, externalizing and criticizing others. Rather we ought to be banging our own chest, looking inward, owning our part and taking personal responsibility to do better. It requires great humility to own our part. The essence of the days of teshuva in general, and Yom Kippur in particular, is the principle of absolute personal responsibility. During Elul and in the days of selichot leading up to the Days of Awe that is what we do. Its pinnacle, of course, is Yom Kippur where we spend major time and energy on confessing our misgivings.

In order for repentance to take place, there has to first and foremost be a deep internal look at oneself, an admission of guilt, an expression of remorse, and a desire to do things differently in the future.

All of us, on some level, bear some responsibility and we need to take a deep look

at ourselves. It is well-known – and this I heard from leaders of the security establishment – from documents found in Sinwar's house – that the reason he felt he would succeed in his attack on October 7th was the terrible internal division within Israel. He saw our society as weak, imploding within itself, and therefore judged it an opportune time to attack.

In my opinion, a significant part of this weakness has been the inability of each side to own its part in the issues roiling Israeli society. We are crystal clear on the roles and responsibilities of others and what they can do differently, and murky when it comes to examining our role. Criticism, disqualification, delegitimization, and demonizing are so common in our rhetoric that they often deafen our ability to look inward. Growth and healing cannot take place without each side looking inward and taking its own personal responsibility.

This is the foundational truth behind the famous story of Rabbi Elazar ben Dordaya, who was one of the most infamous sinners in Israel. When he decided to repent, the Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 17a) tells us how he appealed to anyone and everyone to intercede on his behalf, to the heavens, to the earth, to the seas, to everyone but himself. When he realized that none would do so, he finally reached the haunting conclusion: This issue depends fully on me. When he was able to take full personal responsibility, he was then able to find grace and favor before G-d. Indeed in his inimitable words: “אֵין הַדְּבָר תְּלוּי אֵלָּא בִּי”, This issue (of repentance) depends entirely on me.”

So simple, yet so profound.

Hashem Forgives Those Who Forgive

Our Jewish and Israeli society is in desperate need of leaders and citizens alike to look inward, spew less criticism, and take more responsibility. Indeed, these days of awe and judgment contain a foundational principle of how we are judged. Time and time again, our Sages call upon us to judge others favorably. To go out of our way to take personal responsibility for our lives and to judge others favorably

and mercifully. We seem to do it the other way round. We are forgiving to ourselves, absolving responsibility, and then harshly criticizing others without mercy.

This is exactly the opposite of spiritually sensitized living. So much so that our sages teach in many places a transformative teaching – we ourselves are judged by G-d in the same way we judge others.

The Talmudic sage Rava learns this from the 13 Attributes of Divine Mercy:

Rav says: “Anyone who forgoes his traits of exactitude (i.e., is forgiving to others), all of their sins are forgiven. As it is stated (*Micha* 7:18): ‘(Hashem) Who forgives iniquity and forgoes sin’ – To whom does G-d forgive iniquity? To the person who forgives the sins of others.” (*Rosh Hashanah* 17a)

This is a powerful insight and a critical lesson especially at the time of judgment.

The lesson is simple – if we want G-d to judge us favorably and forgive our mistakes, G-d has a clear litmus test for us – how do we judge others and do we forgive them?!

It seems to be rather disingenuous to request of G-d to be merciful to us and to see the mitigating circumstances, when we cannot do that for others.

We are indeed judged in the way we judge others.

Our society is in desperate need of each and every one of us, and especially all the leaders of every ideological group and political party, to judge others mercifully, forgivingly and favorably. To look inward piercingly and harshly, and to take responsibility for what each one of us personally and collectively can do for the future of Israel.

If we do not take personal responsibility for the part we played in the fraying of societal cohesion, then we cannot move forward.

The blame game causes a destructive downward spiral which can rot society to the core. Leadership can destroy a society or construct one. We are in desperate need today of a mode of leadership which

sees the internal cohesion of our people as arguably the number one national prerogative.

No doubt the maniacal threat of a nuclear Iran is our greatest external threat, however, undoubtedly our greatest internal threat is divisiveness and demonization which threaten our social fabric.

Sukkot, Hakhel, and Jewish leadership

Rav Soloveitchik points out that the main role of Jewish leader – first and foremost of the King of Israel – is to unify the nation. This can be seen specifically in the *mitzvah* of *Hakhel*.¹ Every seven years the king was called upon, together with all the people of Israel, for a display of national unity as broad as possible in the precincts of the *Beit HaMikdash* [Temple]. There he was to read from the Torah and remind us all about our collective destiny. Rav Soloveitchik wonders why it is the king reading from the Torah and playing the central role in *Hakhel* – should it not be a religious leader, perhaps the *Kohen*? Yet specifically the king is called upon to gather the nation.

Rav Soloveitchik says, based on his interpretation of the Rambam's definition of the role of Jewish leadership, that the leader's job is first and foremost to unite the people. It is for this reason, he explains that the unusual expression regarding the appointment of a king that he has to be “from the midst of his people” means not only that he has to be born Jewish so that his fate has always been inextricably linked with these people, but specifically that he is a person “of the people and for the people,” there to serve the people, to galvanize, and unify for the greater good.

In Israel, and indeed the world, today, we are in desperate need of this mode of leadership. The alternative is leading us to the abyss. Many countries like Israel are roiled by partisan, divisive politics with many drawn to extremes on both sides. Building a strong, broad, unifying national narrative is of critical importance. Contrast need not lead only to confrontation and conflict, but can and should be complementary. With some humility, differing

Continued on page 5

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How Yom Kippur Works



Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Yom Kippur is a transformative day. It is the one day a year when we are granted the opportunity to attain complete atonement and, consequently, purification.¹ While we achieve this partly through our *teshuvah* and *tefilot*, the fundamental aspect of the day is the obligation to fast and abstain from physical pleasure.

The central question is how these practices facilitate atonement and purification.

Purgatory

The Torah's initial reference to Yom Kippur observance is the *mitzvah* of *inui*, meaning "affliction" or "self-denial."² In contrast to Shabbat and other *Yamim Tovim*, which the Torah introduces with prohibition of work, Yom Kippur is presented through the concept of *inui*.

A straightforward interpretation is that Yom Kippur is grounded in physical self-denial. We attain atonement and purification by enduring a fast and abstaining from pleasure. This discomfort serves as a means of acknowledging the harm caused by our sins, and the suffering atones for sinful pleasures and cleanses us of their effects.

Tefilah Zakah, the prayer written by the Chayei Adam to be recited at the beginning of the Yom Kippur fast, expresses this understanding of Yom Kippur. After accepting the fast upon ourselves, the *tefilah* asks Hashem to accept our upcoming suffering as atonement for our sins:

And through the *inui* of [refraining from] eating and drinking, atone us of our sins related to prohibited eating and drinking;

And through the *inui* of [refraining from] bathing and lubrication, atone

us of how we sinned with the pleasures of this world...;

And through the *inui* of [refraining from] wearing shoes, atone us of how we sinned with our legs rushing towards evil...;

And through the *inui* of [refraining from] sexual relations, atone us of how we sinned and defiled our holy brit...³

The Maharit⁴ similarly regarded this suffering as central to Yom Kippur. His explanation for the imperative to eat and drink on the preceding day reflects this view. According to the Maharit, this practice is intended to intensify the discomfort experienced during Yom Kippur. Consuming more food on Erev Yom Kippur acclimates the body to a higher intake, thereby making the subsequent fast more challenging.

Not About Suffering

The Tur⁵ offers a contrasting perspective. He asserts that eating on Erev Yom Kippur is intended to facilitate the fast and prevent undue hardship. The Chatam Sofer further clarifies that "the fast of Yom Kippur is not intended to cause the Jewish people pain and suffering, *chas v'shalom*."⁶

For this reason, many *poskim*⁷ permit the use of delayed-release pills, such as Fastaid Kosher Delayed Release Caffeine Capsules or "Easy Fast" tablets, which gradually release ingredients like caffeine, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or electrolytes over ten to twelve hours. The fast is not meant to inflict pain.

The Rambam similarly minimizes the emphasis on pain by characterizing Yom Kippur as a day of restraint rather than suffering. He illustrates this through the title he assigns to the section addressing Yom Kippur laws: *Shevitat Ha'Asor* (the

cessations of the tenth). This designation highlights the cessation of regular activities rather than suffering.

The Rambam reinforces this perspective by beginning the laws with the prohibition against work on Yom Kippur and mentioning the requirement of *inui* only subsequently as an extension of that prohibition.⁸ Yom Kippur is inherently a day of cessation from physical activities, encompassing both work and pleasure. The Torah refers to it as "Shabbat Shabbaton" to emphasize this dual rest: on a regular Shabbat, we refrain only from work, whereas on Yom Kippur, we also abstain from physical pleasure.⁹

This interpretation brings us back to the initial question: In what way does our observance of Yom Kippur enable atonement? How does abstaining from physicality lead to purification?

Angelic Separation

Further insight can be found in another ruling of the Tur. His interpretation of the requirement to eat on Erev Yom Kippur is consistent with his broader perspective on Yom Kippur's spiritual significance.

In *Hilchot Yom Kippur*, the Tur explains that during the recitation of *Kriyat Shema* on Yom Kippur, we recite the words *Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed* aloud because, on this day, we are likened to angels.¹⁰ The *Midrash*,¹¹ which serves as the Tur's source, notes that these words constitute an angelic prayer and are, therefore, typically recited in a whisper. However, on Yom Kippur, we are considered "clean" like angels and may therefore recite them audibly.

Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer¹² adds that abstaining from the five pleasures on Yom Kippur enables us to attain this angelic status. By

refraining from typical human behaviors, Samael, the heavenly accuser, is compelled to acknowledge that the Jewish people resemble celestial angels. The Shulchan Aruch further notes that this is the rationale for wearing white garments and a *kittel* on Yom Kippur, as our objective is to emulate the purity associated with angels.¹³

The Chatam Sofer regards the emulation of angels not merely as an aspect of Yom Kippur but as its primary objective. The purpose of Yom Kippur is not to inflict pain or suffering but to facilitate the attainment of an angelic level of holiness and closeness to Hashem. Abstaining from physical pleasures and pursuits enables us to transcend the material and achieve a heightened spiritual state.

Physicality often leads to sin and distracts us from spiritual pursuits. By abstaining from physical indulgence on Yom Kippur, we not only avoid sin but also strengthen our spiritual dimension. This separation from the physical both purifies us from its effects and articulates our aspiration for spirituality and our desire to lead angelic, pure lives.

We acknowledge that Hashem intends for us to live as human beings, contending with natural drives and emotions. However, we also recognize that physicality can lead to sin and divert our attention from spiritual matters. On Yom Kippur,

we make a principled declaration: Our true essence is spiritual, and we commit to prioritizing it both on this sacred day and throughout the coming year. This aspiration grants us atonement, and our marked separation from physicality enables us to be purified from its negative influences.

Two Perspectives

The two interpretations of Yom Kippur are not mutually exclusive; rather, they offer complementary perspectives that enhance our appreciation of the day's significance. Yom Kippur should be viewed as both a day of contrition and a day of spiritual liberation.¹⁴

It is appropriate to experience remorse for our sins and to hope that the discomfort and physical weakening caused by the *inui'im* serve as atonement for past transgressions. However, Yom Kippur encompasses more than this; it is also a declaration of our values, identity, and guiding principles. Although we are not angels, we strive to emulate their purity for one day and aspire to integrate this ideal more fully in the year ahead.

May our deeper understanding of Yom Kippur's objectives enable us to observe the day meaningfully and inspire us to incorporate its lessons throughout the coming year.

Continued from page 3

opinions can even complete each other with space for both.

From Yom Kippur to Sukkot

The *sukkah* is a very broad tent which has room for many contrasting ideologies. Indeed King David's mode of leadership is called "the *sukkah* of David," as we say in Grace after Meals on Sukkot: "May the Merciful One rebuild the *sukkah* of David which has fallen." David's insistence on consensus amongst all the tribes created space for all parts of the nation. The road to the broad tent of Sukkot must pass through Yom Kippur – our Day of Atonement. The day is actually called in

the Torah – *Yom HaKippurim* – the Day of Atonements in the plural. It seems that much atonement is needed – atonement between us and G-d, and between each community and individual human interactions.²

Only when every individual and community is able to look inward with authentic humility and introspection; with forgiveness and forbearance; with a deep sense of collective fate, can relationships be healed and mutual trust restored. The path to genuine acceptance and unity is then opened.

May 5787 be the year of unifying leadership from all parts of our people and

1. *Vayikra* 16:30.
2. *Vayikra* 16:29 and 23:27, *Bamidbar* 29:7.
3. See *Zohar* (2:20b) for a source for the idea expressed by this *tefilah*.
4. *Shu"t Maharit* 2, O.C. 8.
5. *Tur*, O.C. 604. See also Rashi, *Rosh Hashanah* 9a, d.h. Kol.
6. *Derashot Chatam Sofer*, vol. 2, pg. 369.
7. *Chelkat Yaakov*, O.C. 2:58, *Tzitz Eliezer* 7:32, *Mishneh Halachot* 7:82.
8. *Hilchot Shevitat Ha'Asor* 1:1-4. The Rambam organizes the prohibitions this way in his introduction to *Hilchot Shevitat Ha'Asor* as well. Support for the Rambam's position can be found in *Gemarat* that derive the laws of the *inui'im* from the word *shabbaton* (*Yoma* 74a and 81a) and the laws pertaining to the prohibition against work (*Yoma* 74b and *Yerushalmi Yoma* 38b). See also Rashi, *Yoma* 74a, d.h. *Shabbaton* and 81b, d.h. *Hi*.
9. *Ibid*, 1:5 and *Aseh* 164. See also *Shu"t Avnei Neizer*, C.M. 161. Understandably, the Rambam (*Hilchot Eiruvim* 8:8, based on *Chullin* 101b) sees the *kedushah* of Yom Kippur as similar to that of Shabbat. See also *Shu"t Radvaz* 6:2:1209.
10. *Tur*, O.C. 519. See also *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 519:2 and *Mishnah Berurah* 519:8.
11. *Devarim Rabbah* 2:35.
12. *Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer* 45.
13. *Shulchan Aruch* 510:4 based upon *Mordechai*, *Yoma* 723.
14. The Torah itself may present these two perspectives in *Vayikra* 23. Compare 23:26-29 to *Vayikra* 23:30-32.

indeed across the world. May we judge each other mercifully and favorably. May Hashem judge us all individually and together for a year of mercy, kindness, and Divine compassion.

1. *Sefer Birkat Yitzchak* by Rabbi Menachem Genack, *Parashat Shoftim*; with thanks to Rabbi Josh Kahn for making me aware of this source.
2. Opinions of this plurality include between us and Hashem, as well as between each other. Some suggest that both the living and the deceased require atonement (see *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 621:6, *Rama* and *Mishnah Berurah* ad loc.). We are all clearly in need of atonement.

Ten Days In Tanach

Stubbornness, Suspense & Salvation



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Educational Director, Mizrahi Lapidot and Matan Eshkolot Programs for Educators

Rosh Beit Midrash of Mizrahi-Tzemach David Women's Learning Hub, Mizrahi Lapidot, and Yeshiva University in Israel Women's Torah Studies Program

Though there is no explicit mention of the significance of *Aseret Yemei Teshuva* in *Tanach*, Rabba bar Avuha expounds:

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him when He is near.” (*Yeshayahu* 55:6) During the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Hashem is particularly close and should be sought out by every individual.” (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a)

The *Gemara* further teaches that one may learn about the essence of these 10 days from the novel and delayed death of Naval the Carmelite (*I Shmuel* 25), who refused to adequately compensate David and his servants for assisting Naval's shepherds. Avigayil, his sensible wife, came to the rescue with lavish provisions and prevented David from slaughtering the house of Naval. After that, the *navi* described Naval as selfishly feasting without constraint “like the feast of a king; and Naval's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken.” Avigayil wisely waited until morning to speak of the gifts she offered David to save the household. Unexpectedly, upon hearing her words, Naval was deeply shaken, finally understanding the repercussions of his deplorable conduct. “And his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.”

“And it came to pass about 10 days after, that Hashem smote Naval, and he died” (*I Samuel* 25:38). Why was there a delay of 10 days before Naval died? “Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabba bar Avuha: These are the 10 days between

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur,” (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a) during which everyone is given one last opportunity to repent for the sins they committed over the course of the previous year.

Hashem provided Naval with 10 days to complete a process of regret and repair, and understood these days as paralleling the 10 days of repentance. Naval failed to internalize the lesson and opportunity to change his ways; when the initial shock wore off, Naval returned to his stubborn and habitual conduct. For this reason, after 10 days, G-d smote him and he died (*Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabba* 18:10).

Another hint to these cathartic 10 days in *Tanach* may be found in the prophetic narrative following the assassination of Gedalya ben Achikam on Rosh Hashanah after the destruction of the First Temple. Yochanan ben Kereach led the remainder of the farmers of Judea to Egypt, seeking asylum from Babylonian vengeance. As they rested near Bet Lechem on their way down to Egypt, they asked Yirmiyahu haNavi to appeal to Hashem on their behalf, convinced that G-d wished them to settle in exile until a future time to return (as he prophesied through Rachel's cries in ch. 31). “And after 10 days, the word of Hashem came to Yirmiyahu” (*Yirmiyahu* 42:7). The Abarbanel explains that Yirmiyahu appealed to Hashem throughout the 10 days from Rosh Hashanah – when Gedalya was murdered – to Yom Kippur.

Amidst his prayers and fasting during *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*, Hashem answered Yirmiyahu's supplications on behalf of the

people with words of consolation: “If you remain in this land, I will build you and not overthrow, I will plant you and not uproot; for I regret the punishment I have brought upon you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you fear; do not be afraid of him... for I [Hashem] am with you to save you and to rescue you from his hands. I will dispose him to be merciful to you: he shall show you mercy and bring you back to your own land.” The last remnant of the Judean settlement was assured that they would not have to seek refuge in Egypt; they would be safe and secure in the Land of Israel. They were given a chance to start over and rebuild a social and religious infrastructure in preparation for national return.

Unfortunately, like Naval, the people did not take advantage of the opportunity to return and rebuild, and instead accused the prophet of falsehood. They continued their descent to Egypt, running towards their doom and leaving the Land bereft of Jewish settlement.

The 10 days between the first and the tenth of Tishrei are not only days suffused with sanctity and a time of prayer, fasting and atonement; they are gifts from G-d as our individual and national futures are held in abeyance. These days offer us an auspicious opportunity for repentance, an opportunity to swing the pendulum of our behavior from stubbornness and arrogance to humility and change, from suspense of annihilation to survival and salvation.

כן יהי רצון!

What Israel Can Learn From Them



Sivan Rahav Meir

World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

Rabbi Kalman Topp and his wife, Jordana recently announced that they are making *Aliyah* to Israel. For the past 17 years, Rabbi Topp has led Beth Jacob Congregation in Beverly Hills, one of the area's largest and most influential Jewish communities. Now he is coming to Israel to establish a new community for olim in Jerusalem's Givat Hamatos neighborhood.

Once known for the temporary housing built there for Ethiopian immigrants, Givat Hamatos is now being developed as an upscale neighborhood, with growing numbers of Anglos moving in. It has already earned the nickname "Beit Shemesh in Jerusalem."

I still remember my first encounter with Rabbi Topp. Years ago, I was invited to speak at his synagogue. At the time, I knew almost nothing about how American Jewish communities function.

When I arrived, a man greeted me and introduced himself as "the synagogue president." I thought he was joking. Why does a synagogue need a president?

Then he began introducing the rest of the team – the rabbi, associate rabbi, youth director, and others. I quickly realized that in America, a synagogue is often the center of an entire Jewish community, with programs, classes, activities, and an extensive leadership structure.

In many American Jewish communities, the rabbi is expected to be far more than a religious authority. He is also a teacher, counselor, community builder, and often the person who helps people recognize the significance of moments they might otherwise overlook.

I remember one small moment that showed me exactly what that can mean. It was toward the end of a long Shabbat morning service. People had begun closing their *siddurim*, folding their *tallitot*, and preparing to leave. But there was still one

final *Kaddish* to be recited – the Mourner's *Kaddish*.

Before it began, Rabbi Topp stood up and said, "There are people here who have lost someone dear to them, and they are about to say *Kaddish* in their memory. Let's give them one more moment of our attention." Wow.

The room fell silent. Everyone listened, and then answered, "Amen."

Rabbi Topp had hardly said anything. He had simply drawn attention to what was about to happen. But sometimes that is all it takes: to remind us, to give a moment context, to connect us more deeply to what is happening around us.

There is much that Jewish communities abroad can bring with them to Israel – not only their families and talents, but a deeply rooted culture of community, responsibility, and belonging.

Welcome home.



The wave of renewed Jewish connection sweeping through the Jewish world is producing all kinds of interesting developments. Here's one that spoke to me.

Popular Israeli singer Yagel Oshri shared this story this week:

"Until recently, I didn't put on *tefillin* every morning, but after October 7, I decided I was going to make it a regular part of my day. In practice, though, I'd wake up in the morning and go straight to Instagram, TikTok, phone calls, work, meetings. Suddenly it would be six or seven in the evening, and I still hadn't gotten around to it. 'I created an app on my phone called: 'Tefillin First, Then the World.' It locks all my other apps, and whenever I try to open one of them, a single message appears on the screen: 'Put on *tefillin* yet, *tzaddik*'?"

I think this is a beautiful example of how we can "force" ourselves to do what our soul really wants – what we know is good for us, but don't always manage to make

happen. And the idea can be applied to so many other meaningful and sacred parts of life: Where else would we like to say, "This first, and then the world?"



Do you feel a different kind of energy in the air? Have you noticed how many conversations now end with "*Shana Tova*" or "*Gmar Chatima Tova*" – may you be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life?

It may be worth tuning out the background noise for a moment and listening to this frequency instead. We call it optimism. We call it a new year. We call it Tishrei and *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*.

Netanel Peretz, a teacher from Ashdod, describes it this way:

"Every year at this time, a small miracle happens. For a few days, all of us manage to believe that change is truly possible.

"Even those who feel most discouraged, stuck, or broken open a window and allow a little light into the darkness of their daily routine. Suddenly, millions of people begin to believe, sincerely, that this year really can be different and beautiful. That they can become better than they were before. That their hearts can open to receive the abundance of goodness that is constantly flowing from Above. That they can find the courage to move forward without fear, and the strength to repair what needs repairing.

"Something softens, and not just for a fleeting moment. So many people decide to let go, to open themselves up, and to give goodness and kindness a chance. I find myself thinking how extraordinary that is – this ability to keep believing in the power of goodness and kindness. How fitting, then, to give thanks for this miracle that returns each year with the beginning of Tishrei.

"May the new year, and all its blessings, begin."

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

A 15-year-old boy is required to take a pill every day. He cannot swallow it dry nor with water, as he has difficulty with pills, and usually takes it with a small amount of food and chews them together. Is this permitted on Yom Kippur? If he could take a chewable pill, would that be preferable? He is not in a situation of *sakana* (danger), but without the pills he will have pain to the point where he will have to lie in bed.

If there were a possibility for him to have food that is not tasty, meaning bitter or salty, and in a small amount (less than the size of a matchbox), that would be preferable. If not, then a chewable pill that is not tasty. If the pill is tasty, but people would not actually eat it because it is not truly tasty, then there is also reason to be *meikil* in this case.

What is the ruling regarding someone who is considered a *choleh sheyesh bo sakana* (a sick person whose life is possibly in danger) who is required to eat and drink as usual. Can he be a *shliach tzibbur* on Yom Kippur?

It is ruled *l'halacha* in the *Shulchan Aruch* that someone who does not fast should not be a *shaliach tzibbur* on a *ta'anit tzibbur*,¹ and should not receive an *aliyah* to the Torah.² It is explained by the *poskim* that these prohibitions apply on Yom Kippur as well.³ However, in a case where he eats and drinks *l'shiurin*, he is considered as though he is still fasting,⁴ and can therefore receive an *aliyah* and be a *shaliach tzibbur*.

Someone living in a ground floor apartment would like to build a *sukkah* adjacent to the wall of the building such that the window of his apartment will

open directly into the *sukkah* and he will be able to transfer food and other items from the apartment to the *sukkah* through the window. On Shabbat, is it permissible to transfer objects through the window when there is no *eruv chatzerot* in the courtyard?

Without arranging the *reshut* beforehand, it is *assur* to carry from the house to the *sukkah*. However, this can easily be resolved by means of a local *sechirut reshut* (temporary renting of the shared property.)

In principle, since the ground of the *sukkah* belongs to all the residents of the building, the airspace of the *sukkah* is considered part of the shared courtyard, which one is not allowed to carry in without an *eruv*, and one cannot rely on the fact that the *sukkah* is adjacent to the wall or that a window opens into it, as explained in the *Mishnah Berurah*.⁵

L'chatchila, one should make a *sechirut reshut* for the following reasons:

1. The *Mishnah Berurah* is discussing the issue of taking out through a *reshut harabim* or *karmelit*, where there is no possibility of permitting it through an *eruv chatzerot*. But when the *sukkah* is standing in a shared courtyard, it is possible that the *Mishnah Berurah* would not permit taking something out from an individual house into the area of the *chatzer* without an *eruv*, since this is precisely the case for which the sages instituted *eruv chatzerot*, as explained in the *Shulchan Aruch*.⁶
2. The area of the *sukkah* remains a *reshut* of partners. We can explain the *heter* based on the words of the *Shulchan Aruch*⁷ regarding partners who made a vow prohibiting *hana'ah* (benefit) from one another, where it is *mutar* for each one to use the *chatzer* because of the principle of "*yesh bereirah*," and

it becomes clear that this is his portion, as the Ran explains.⁸

3. Since non-Jews live in the building, the courtyard is *assur* for the Jews to carry in it, and *bitul reshut* (waiving of rights) cannot be used. Therefore, *sechirat reshut* is required, as is *paskened* in the *Shulchan Aruch*.⁹
4. The practical solution: *Sechirut reshut* of the place of the *sukkah* only: There is no need to rent the entire *chatzer*; it is sufficient to rent the area of ground upon which the *sukkah* stands for the days of the holiday. Once the area is rented to one person, it becomes his private *reshut*, and consequently it is permitted to carry between it and his house through the window. This *sechirut* can be done with the representative of the building committee, as explained in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Practical Conclusion

L'chatchila, one should not transfer objects through the window from the house to the *sukkah* in the shared courtyard when there is no *eruv chatzerot*. Before the beginning of the *chag*, one should approach the representative of the building committee and rent the specific area of ground upon which the *sukkah* is built for the duration of the *chag*. Once the area has been rented, the place of the *sukkah* becomes the private property of the homeowner, and therefore it is *mutar* to carry from the house to the *sukkah* and back through the window.

● *Compiled and Translated by Elan Finkelstein.*

1. או"ח תקס"ה.
2. שם, סעיף ו.
3. שו"ת ר' עקיבא איגר, מהדורא קמא, סומן כד.
4. ריב"ש סימן רפז.
5. משנה ברורה תרל"ד:.
6. או"ח שס"א.
7. יו"ד רכ"א.
8. נדריים מ"ו ע"ב, ד"ה אלא אמר ר' יוסף.
9. או"ח שפ"א.

בין דין האמת לחמלת הקיום: מסעו של יונה אל סוד התשובה

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



ספר יונה תופס מקום ייחודי ויוצא דופן בין ספרי הנבואה. בשונה ממרבית ספרי נביאים אחרונים, שעיקרם משאות ונאומי תוכחה, ספר יונה הוא סיפור עלילתי דרמטי. במרכז הסיפור עומד הנביא הבורח מלפני ה' מתוך ויכוח עם דרכי הנהגתו את העולם. הויכוח נוקב, עד כדי כך שהנביא מוכן למות.

העלילה נפתחת ללא ציון זמנו של הנביא או הקשרו המדויק, כך שיש הרגשה שהסיפור והמסר הנובע ממנו עומדים מחוץ למגבלות האירוע ההיסטורי המקומי, ובעלי ערך עצמי רחב.

יחד עם זאת, ניתן להבין שזהו אותו יונה בן אמת שחי בימי ירבעם השני וניבא על הרחבת גבולות ישראל מתוך חסד ורחמי שמים, חרף חטאיהם של העם ומלכם. קישור היסטורי זה מעצים את הדילמה הבווערת בלבו של יונה: שאלת הפער הבלתי נתפס בין מידת הדין למידת הרחמים, בהנהגת ה' את העולם.

הבריחה הגדולה

כבר בשמו של הנביא מקופל הקונפליקט המרכזי: "יונה" - סמל לשלום ולרחמים, ו"בן אמת" - איש האמת הטהורה והדין הבלתי מתפשר. כשה' מצווה עליו ללכת אל נינוה, בירת אויב, עובדת אלילים ומלאת רשע, ולהתיר על חורבנה, יונה אינו מתווכח מילולית כפי שעשה אברהם בסדום. הוא פשוט קם ובורח לכיוון ההפוך, ואפילו לא מסביר מדוע הוא בורח. רק בסוף הספר זה ייאמר במפורש.

בריחתו של יונה ימה מלווה בירידה מתמדת: הוא יורד ליפו, יורד לאנייה, ולבסוף יורד לירכתי הספינה ונרדם בעת סערה מטלטלת. שנתו אינה שלווה, אלא התאבדות פסיבית - הוא יודע שהסערה מתחוללת בגללו, ושה' היה רוצה שהוא יבין זאת ויחזור בו. אך הוא מעדיף למסור את נפשו למיתה ובלבד שלא לחזור בו מטענתו. לכן הוא יורד למקום הנמוך ביותר ושוכב בו כך שהוא יהיה הראשון שיטבע.

המפגש עם המלחים מציב בפני יונה מראה נוקבת: המלחים הפשוטים, עובדי עבודה זרה מפגינים מוסריות עילאית, מחפשים תיקון רוחני, נמנעים מלשפוך דם ובסופו של דבר מכירים בה' ופונים אליו. אך יונה מסרב ללמוד את הלקח שה' מנסה ללמדו באמצעות המפגש עם המלחים. הוא לא מוכן לחזור בו, לתקן, ולחזור למלא את שליחותו. שוב, הוא מעדיף למות מאשר לחזור בו, ומבקש שישליכו אותו לים.

יונה במעי הדג:

גם כשיונה מושלך לים ביוזמתו, וכביכול מתאבד, ה' אינו מוותר עליו, ואינו מחליפו באחר. באופן נסי' ה' מציל אותו ממוות על ידי הדג, אך יונה אינו שמח בהצלתו. ומבחינתו הדג מהווה סוג של בית סוהר. במשך שלושה ימים ושלושה לילות מתעקש יונה בשתיקתו, ואולי מקווה שה' יתייבש ממנו והוא ימות. רק כשאפסו כוחותיו, וכשהבין שה' לא יוותר לו, פורצת מגרונות תפילה.

באופן מפתיע, אין זו תפילת סליחה וחרטה אופיינית, אלא שיר הודיה שבו הוא מכיר בכך שבנקודת השפל הנמוכה ביותר, בעומק התהום, האדם זועק באופן ספונטני ואינו יכול להימלט מקרבת אלוקים.

יונה הרגיש על בשרו כיצד ה' רוצה בקיומו ולא מוותר עליו ועל שליחותו בעולם אפילו כאשר הוא חוטא, מורד, ומפנה עורף. כך נאלץ יונה בעל כרחו להודות בקיומו של מנגנון החיים והתיקון שתבע הבורא בעולם, והוא יוצא אל היבשה כדי למלא את צו ה' וללכת לנינוה.

נינוה ומשל התיקון: בין תשובה מיראה לאהבת החיים

בנינוה מתרחש הבלתי ייאמן: קריאה קצרה אחת מספיקה כדי להרעיד את העיר כולה. המלך, השרים ואפילו הבהמות עוטים שקים וצמים. ה' רואה את מעשיהם וניחם על הרעה.

אולם בעיני יונה, מחזה זה אינו הצלחה אלא אימות של טענתו.

כעת הוא מביע לראשונה את טענתו בצורה מילולית ברורה: "וַיֹּדַע אֵל יוֹנָה רֶעָה גְדוֹלָה וַיֵּחָר לוֹ: וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יִקְנָה הָלוֹא זֶה דְּבָרִי עַד הַיּוֹם עַל אֲדַמְתִּי עַל כֵּן קִדַּמְתִּי לְבָרֶךְ תְּרִשִּׁישָׁה כִּי יִדְעִתִּי כִּי אֲתָה אֵל חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אֶרְךָ אַפִּים וְרַב חֶסֶד וְנֶחֱם עַל הָרָעָה: וְעַתָּה יִקְנָה קֹחַ נָא אֶת נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶן כִּי טוֹב מוֹתִי מִחַיִּי" (ד', א-ג).

טענתו של יונה היא על כך שהקב"ה מנהיג את עולמו במידת הרחמים.

טענה זו נראית מוזרה לכאורה. הרי כולנו רוצים שה' ינהיג בנו במידת הרחמים.

אולם, יונה מצביע על נקודה נכונה - יש פער בין מידת האמת למידת הרחמים - תשובתם של אנשי נינוה לא היתה מספיק רצינית. היא היתה מהירה מדי, קלה מדי, אפילו מגוחכת, וכל מטרתה להימנע מעונש ולא תיקון אמת. לא היתה שם הפנמה מוסרית עמוקה.

יונה לא יכול לסבול זאת. מצד האמת, תשובה כזו איננה בעלת ערך רב, והיא לא תחזיק מעמד. סופה לחלוף ברגע שיוסר האיום. מעשי הרשע יחזרו, ואף יופנו בעתיד כלפי עם ישראל.

זה נפלא לתת הזדמנות לתיקון, אך התיקון צריך להיות אמתי. ולא יתכן שהזדמנות לתיקון תאפשר פגיעה באנשים אחרים. טענתו של יונה אמתית וחשובה ביותר.

על מנת לענות ליונה, מזמן ה' את משל התיקון, בעזרתו אמור יונה להרגיש עד כמה בריה קטנה (כמו תיקון או רוח או תולעת) יכולה להיות בעלת ערך בעולם; ומצד שני - הוא חווה את חולשתו כאדם - איך דבר קטן יכול להציל אותו ולשמח אותו, ואיך דבר קטן עלול "להפיל" אותו, לצער אותו ולהביא אותו עד מוות.

ומה הנמשל?

"אֲתָה חֶסֶת עַל הַקִּיקוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָמְלָתָּ בּוֹ וְלֹא גִדַּלְתָּ שָׁבֹן לִילָה וְהִנֵּה וְכֵן לִילָה אֲבָד: וְאֲנִי לֹא אֲחוּס עַל נִינּוּהָ הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ בָּהּ הֶרְבֵּה מִשְׁתִּים עֹשֶׂה רַבּוֹ אֲדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע בֵּין יָמִינוֹ לְשֹׁמְלוֹ וְכֹהֵמָה רַבָּה" יונה אמנם לא חס על התיקון אלא על עצמו,

אך כשם שלתיקון היה תפקיד בעולמו של יונה, כך לכל הברואים יש תפקיד בעולמו של הקב"ה.

גם ליונה הנביא יש תפקיד בעולמו של הקב"ה, וה' אינו מוותר עליו אפילו כאשר יונה בורח ומורד בו.

גם לקיומם של אנשי נינוה יש ערך, למרות רשעתם, וה' רוצה בתשובתם, אפילו כשהיא תשובה לא מספקת. עצם העובדה שהם שומעים לנביא ומנסים לתקן - מזכה אותם במחילה.

ספר יונה מסתיים באמירה שה' מעוניין בקיומו של העולם ושל האדם.

למרות הקטנות של בני האדם, ולמרות חולשתם, טעויותיהם וכישלונותיהם, ה' עדיין רוצה שיחיו ויפעלו בעולם. אמנם, יש ציפייה מתמדת שיתקנו את עצמם ושימלאו את שליחותם על הצד הטוב ביותר, אך גם כאשר הם אינם עושים זאת בשלמות, ה' מעוניין בקיומם. מתוך כך הוא נוהג בהם במידת הרחמים, ומאפשר להם לתקן כפי יכולתם.

יום הכיפורים הוא יום בו ה' מכפר ומוחל לעוונותינו, גם אם טעינו טעויות גדולות ורבות, וגם אם התשובה שעשינו איננה מושלמת, וגם אם לא נחזיק מעמד ונטעה שוב, בטעויות כאלה ואחרות,

ה' מעוניין בקיומנו ונותן לנו הזדמנות נוספת למלא את שליחותנו בעולם בצורה ראויה בשנה הבאה.

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation. Ask your father and he will inform you, your elders and they will tell you.” (*Devarim* 32:7)

At the beginning of this week's *parsha*, Moshe rebukes the nation for future sins, repaying Hashem's perfection, fairness and kindness with crookedness and perversion. This rebuke is immediately followed by a remedy for our rebellious behaviour. We should remember our history and turn to our elders who understand history in order to learn and appreciate Hashem's greatness and kindness to His people over many generations.

Our impaired historical vision is wont to trip us up. Modern man, with his focus on renewal, development and regeneration is too dismissive of that and those who came before him. Moshe declares the opposite message, “Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation. Ask your father...your elders...”. We must look up to our elders and back to our predecessors and previous generations to gain true perspective.

Parshat Ha'azinu is being read in the period between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur,

when those who are no longer with us are at the forefront of our minds. This is a common time to visit the graves of deceased relatives and Yizkor is recited on Yom Kippur. However, there's an amazing teaching of R' Chaim m'Volozhin that the deceased at this time are not only being remembered.

One of the most prominent images at this time of year is that from the *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (32b), “The King is sitting on his chair of judgment and the books of the living and the books of the dead are open before him.” We usually explain this *Gemara* to mean that the books of those who have been judged for life and death (*Chas veShalom*) are open before Hashem. R' Chaim m'Volozhin, however, explains that these books are in fact books of those who are alive and those who are dead, who are all being judged on Rosh Hashana.

The question we must ask is: Why are the dead judged every year? What can possibly change from year to year? The Pachad Yitzchak (Rav Yitzchak Lampranti) offers an incredible explanation. While our actions cease when we die, the consequences and implications of our actions continue long after our death. Often, we

sow seeds in this world which can take years or even generations before they begin to blossom.

If a wicked person creates a negative influence which continues beyond his death, he will still be judged for the continued impact of his ways. Conversely, those who left behind a legacy of righteousness and positive influence are judged anew each year in light of the waves of kindness and goodness they set in motion in their lifetime.

This concept provides us with a dual responsibility. On the one hand, we must recognise our responsibility to our predecessors and generations before us, who still benefit greatly when we perpetuate their memory with acts of righteousness and kindness. On the other hand, we must recognise the enormous potential impact of our own actions, both for better and for worse, for years and for generations to come.

This is a time to “Remember the days of yore” and “Understand the years of generation after generation.”

Shabbat Shalom!

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrahi Melbourne

In Ha'azinu I appear under two different names and also with no name. What am I?

See page 25 for the answer to the Parsha Riddle

Shabbat Shuva – How do we make the most of this time?



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

One of the great sages of the 18th century, Rabbi Yechezkel ben Yehuda Halevi Landau, known as the Noda B'Yehudah, says that the following famous *mishna* from *Pirkei Avot* has particular relevance to the Ten Days of Repentance: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” (*Avot*, 1:14)

According to some commentaries, this *mishna* refers specifically to the performance of *mitzvot*. Rashi explains that “if I am not for myself, who will be for me?” is telling us that we need to take personal responsibility for our *mitzvot*, because no one else can do them for us. The Maharal explains that a *mitzvah* is unlike material possessions that can be transferred and exchanged between people – with a *mitzvah*, we have to do it ourselves.

No one can do good deeds on our behalf. They're not something we can outsource, like a work assignment or a delivery. No one else can keep kosher or Shabbat or give *tzedakah* for us.

Indeed, the one thing that we truly own in this life are the *mitzvot* that we do. Ultimately, everything we accumulate during our lives – all of our achievements and titles and wealth – we leave behind. Nothing goes with us to the next world except the good that we did while we were in this world.

Rabbeinu Yona and the Rambam interpret the *mishna* to mean: “If I do not inspire myself, who will inspire me?” In other words, we have to look within ourselves for inspiration – because inspired living can only be sustainable if it's not dependent on external forces that are out of our control.

Although it is true that we can be inspired by our rabbis and teachers, Rabbeinu Yona teaches us that this kind of external inspiration is limited. We have to be self-motivated, because if we don't take responsibility for our own personal and spiritual growth, who will?

Others can assist us in our lifelong quest to fulfil our spiritual potential. Ultimately, though, we need to empower ourselves. Exploring new Torah learning opportunities, or putting more effort into our prayers – whatever it may be, however we go about it, the Ten Days of Repentance are about finding inspiration within ourselves.

On this idea of self-motivation, Rav Yisrael Salanter shares some interesting advice in one of his letters. He suggests making resolutions for the new year in the areas that are easiest for us. The conventional wisdom is that we should work on the areas in which we struggle. But Rav Salanter advises that if we work on our strengths, we are more likely to succeed when it comes to relatively easy, practical steps in *mitzvah* observance, and this success will generate momentum, pushing us forward in all areas of growth.

Furthermore, we are held more accountable for the easy changes we could have and should have made, because they are well within our reach. Following Rav Salanter's advice, let us start with the easy things. Let us think of simple, practical changes we can adopt, and move forward from there.

However, while we are responsible for our own actions, we also need Divine assistance. This is expressed in Hillel's second statement: “If I am only for myself, what am

I?” Although we have to take the initial steps towards self-improvement, we can't do the job on our own. In the *Midrash*, G-d says: “My children, open for me one opening of *teshuvah* [repentance] the size of a needle's point, and I will open for you doorways through which wagons and carriages can enter.” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:3)

Sometimes this journey feels so daunting – there is so much to do. But in reality, all we need to do is take the first few steps, show some initiative, and we will find the doors to spiritual greatness thrown wide open.

Hillel's third statement is: “And if not now, when?” Friends – life is short. There's an interesting Jewish law that a man who visits the cemetery should tuck in his tzitzit out of sensitivity to those who have left this world and no longer have the opportunity to perform *mitzvot*. (*Orach Chaim* 23:1) The next world is *Gan Eden*, a world of perfection, of spiritual bliss. It's the place where we finally get to enjoy the fruits of our labour – where we finally experience our eternal reward for the *mitzvot* we carried out while we were alive. But at the same time, there's a tremendous pain in not being able to achieve anything else; in no longer having the opportunity to do more *mitzvot* and accumulate more merit. The time to do it, urges Hillel, is right now. At this very moment. While we still have breath in our lungs and energy in our bodies.

Every moment of life is precious, because everything we do in life echoes through eternity. It is the *mitzvot* we do in this world that sustain us in the next. Rashi, in his commentary on this *mishna*, draws a powerful analogy: if you don't prepare and cook on Friday, you won't have anything

Continued on page 13

Let My Teaching Drop as Rain



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

In the glorious song with which Moses addresses the congregation, he invites the people to think of the Torah – their covenant with G-d – as if it were like the rain that waters the ground so that it brings forth its produce:

Let my teaching drop as rain,
Let my words fall like dew,
Like gentle rain on tender plants,
Like showers upon the grasses.

Deut. 32:2

G-d's word is like rain in a dry land. It brings life. It makes things grow. There is much we can do of our own accord: we can plough the earth and plant the seeds. But in the end our success depends on something beyond our control. If no rain falls, there will be no harvest, whatever preparations we make. So it is with Israel. It must never be tempted into the hubris of saying:

“My power, the strength of my own hand, has brought me this great wealth.”

Deut. 8:17

The Sages, however, sensed something more in the analogy. This is how Sifrei (a compendium of commentaries on Numbers and Deuteronomy dating back to the Mishnaic period) puts it:

Let my teaching drop as rain: Just as the rain is one thing, yet it falls on trees, enabling each to produce tasty fruit according to the kind of tree it is – the vine in its way, the olive tree in its way, and the date palm in its way – so the Torah is one, yet its words yield Scripture, Mishnah, laws, and lore. Like showers upon the grass: Just as showers fall upon plants and make them grow, some green, some red, some black, some white, so the words of Torah produce teachers, worthy

individuals, Sages, the righteous, and the pious.¹

There is only one Torah, yet it has multiple effects. It gives rise to different kinds of teaching, different sorts of virtue. Torah is sometimes seen by its critics as overly prescriptive, as if it sought to make everyone the same. The Midrash argues otherwise. The Torah is compared to rain precisely to emphasise that its most important effect is to make each of us grow into what we could become. We are *not* all the same, nor does Torah seek uniformity. As a famous Mishnah puts it:

“When a human being makes many coins from the same mint, they are all the same. G-d makes everyone in the same image – His image – yet none is the same as another.”

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

This emphasis on difference is a recurring theme in Judaism. For example, when Moses asks G-d to appoint his successor, he uses an unusual phrase: “May the Lord, G-d of the spirits of all humankind, appoint a man over the community” (Num. 27:16). On this, Rashi comments:

Why is this expression (“G-d of the spirits of all humankind”) used? [Moses] said to Him: Lord of the universe, You know each person's character, and that no two people are alike. Therefore, appoint a leader for them who will bear with each person according to his or her disposition.

One of the fundamental requirements of a leader in Judaism is that he or she is able to *respect the differences* between human beings. This is a point emphasised by Maimonides in *Guide for the Perplexed*:

Man is, as you know, the highest form

in creation, and he therefore includes the largest number of constituent elements. This is why the human race contains so great a variety of individuals that we cannot discover two persons exactly alike in any moral quality or in external appearance... This great variety and the necessity of social life are essential elements in man's nature. But the well-being of society demands that there should be a leader able to regulate the actions of man. He must complete every shortcoming, remove every excess, and prescribe for the conduct of all, so that the natural variety should be counterbalanced by the uniformity of legislation, so that social order may be well established.²

The political problem as Maimonides sees it is how to regulate the affairs of human beings in such a way as to respect their individuality while not creating chaos. A similar point emerges from a surprising rabbinic teaching:

“Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, one says: Blessed be He who discerns secrets – because the mind of each is different from that of another, just as the face of each is different from another.”

Brachot 58a

We would have expected a blessing over a crowd to emphasise its size, its mass: human beings in their collectivity.³ A crowd is a group large enough for the individuality of the faces to be lost. Yet the blessing stresses the opposite – that each member of a crowd is still an individual with distinctive thoughts, hopes, fears, and aspirations.

The same was true for the relationship between the Sages. A Mishnah states:

When Rabbi Meir died, the composers of fables ceased. When ben Azzai died, assiduous students ceased. When ben Zoma died, the expositors ceased... When Rabbi Akiva died, the honour of the Torah ceased. When Rabbi Chani-na ben Dosa died, men of deed ceased. When Rabbi Yose Ketanta died, the pious men ceased... When Rabban Yochanan bar Zakai died, the lustre of wisdom ceased.... When Rabban Gamliel the Elder died, humility, purity, and the fear of sin ceased.

Mishnah Sotah 9:15

There was no single template of the Sage. Each had his own distinctive merits, his unique contribution to the collective heritage. In this respect, the Sages were merely continuing the tradition of the Torah itself. There is no single role-model of the religious hero or heroine in Tanach. The patriarchs and matriarchs each had their own unmistakable character. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam each emerge as different personality types. Kings, priests, and prophets had different roles to play in Israelite society. Even among the prophets, “No two prophesy in the same style,” said the Sages (*Sanhedrin* 89a). Elijah was zealous, Elisha gentle. Hosea spoke of love, Amos spoke of justice. Isaiah’s visions were simpler and

less opaque than those of Ezekiel.

The same applies even to the Revelation at Sinai itself. Each individual heard, in the same words, a different inflection:

The voice of the Lord is with power (Ps. 29:4): that is, according to the power of each individual, the young, the old, and the very small ones, each according to their power [of understanding]. G-d said to Israel, “Do not believe that there are many gods in heaven because you heard many voices. Know that I alone am the Lord your G-d.”⁴

According to Maharsha, there are 600,000 interpretations of Torah. Each individual is theoretically capable of a unique insight into its meaning. The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas commented:

The Revelation has a particular way of producing meaning, which lies in its calling upon the unique within me. It is as if a multiplicity of persons... were the condition for the plenitude of “absolute truth,” as if each person, by virtue of his own uniqueness, were able to guarantee the revelation of one unique aspect of the truth, so that some of its facets would never have been revealed if certain people had

been absent from mankind.

Emmanuel Levinas, “Revelation in the Jewish Tradition,” in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), pp. 190–210.

Judaism, in short, emphasises the other side of the maxim *E pluribus unum* (“Out of the many, one”). For Judaism says: “Out of the One, many.”

The miracle of creation is that unity in heaven produces diversity on earth. Torah is the rain that feeds this diversity, allowing each of us to become what only we can be.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- How might Torah help different people develop in different ways rather than making everyone the same?
- “Out of the One, many.” What does this teach us about individuality?
- How can a community remain united while allowing people to be very different from one another?

1. Sifrei, *Ha'azinu* 306.

2. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, II:40.

3. See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)

4. Exodus Rabbah 29:1.

Continued from page 11

to eat on Shabbos. The next world is like Shabbos, Rashi says. You can't cook, you can't work, you can't create. Whatever you do on “*erev Shabbos*” – in this world – is what will sustain you in the next.

The *mishna* is teaching us that we should live our entire lives with the same level of intensity as a Friday, *erev Shabbos*. On Friday, we try and finish all our work and utilise every moment. Every second is precious as the clock ticks towards the cut-off time, and when Shabbos comes in, there is no more work to be done. Whatever we don't finish remains unfinished. Says the *mishna*, our lives should be lived

at the same pitch, with the same sense of urgency. Because whatever we don't get done while we are alive remains undone; we cannot finish it when we go to the next world.

Rabbeinu Yona points out that we can never really make up the time. Tomorrow's another day, but it's not today. Tomorrow we can do more *mitzvot*, but if we missed the *mitzvah* potential of today, it is lost forever.

At this incredibly powerful time of the year, we feel the urgency of the moment. During these 10 days, more than anything

else, we beg Hashem for life. We say: “Remember us for life [the] King who desires life, and write us in the Book of Life.” Life is so precious, because if G-d grants us another year, we can do so many *mitzvot* with that. We can build eternity.

Through these three statements, the *mishna* gives us a roadmap for the Ten Days of Repentance, and for the entire year. If I don't take responsibility and do my *mitzvot*, nobody else will do them for me. I don't have to worry about being alone; if I start the process, G-d will help me over the line. And I have to take advantage of the opportunities presented to me today.

We Can Rise Above



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

We know from both *mishnayos* and from the *piyutim* that we recite on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that this period of the year is when Hashem judges the world. After the Ramban succeeded in a debate with a Jewish *meshumad* he realized that he'd better leave Spain because his life would definitely be in danger. He ran away to Eretz Yisroel and gave a very long *drasha* that Rosh Hashanah covering all of the topics of the *yom tov*. A major issue that he brings up in that *drasha* is that this idea that the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* are the days of judgment never appears anywhere in *Tanach*, so how did Chazal know this is the case?

Rambam quotes *midrashim* which say that Adam *Ha'rishon* was created on the sixth day of *Bereishis*, instructed not to eat from the *eitz ha'daas*, violated the instruction, and was judged and punished, all on the same day, and was chased out of *Gan Eden*. At that time, Hashem told Adam *Ha'rishon* that just like He judged him on that day, so too, in all the future generations, all of his descendants will be judged on that day, Rosh Hashanah. The Ramban therefore suggests that *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* being the days of judgment was not a tradition that Moshe Rabbeinu received at *Har Sinai*, rather a tradition from Adam *Ha'rishon*.

The Torah tells us that Adam was created *b'tzelem Elokim*. The Meshech Chochma explains that having a *tzelem Elokim* implies that each of us has *bechira chofshis*. Many psychologists do not believe in *bechira chofshis*, but it is considered one of the most important principles of the Jewish religion.

Every morning we say to Hashem in our *tefillos* that the *neshema* that You implanted in my body was given to me in a pure state. We do not believe that because of the "original sin" all human being's souls are all tainted. We are born with a pure soul and if and when we sin, then we taint it. The commentaries on *Chumash* wonder what the significance was of recording the story of the *eitz ha'daas* in the Torah if it is not relevant to us. They explain that the Torah recorded this incident to teach us how a typical human being might fall into the trap of sinning.

The Ramban in his commentary on the first *perek* in *Chulin* quotes a very fascinating *medrash*. The prohibition against eating from the *eitz ha'daas* was only a *hora'as sha'ah*. Adam *Harishon* was told that Friday morning that if he will wait until *leil Shabbos* he will be permitted to eat those fruits; it was only for the duration of the few hours of erev Shabbos that it was prohibited to him. The *medrash* comments that we ought to dig up Adam *Harishon* from his grave, remove the sand from on his eyes, and show him how the Jewish people always exercise self-control. If a married woman has not gone to *mikvah*, the husband knows that he has to wait a week or two. When we *shecht* an animal, we do not eat from the meat right away, rather we wait until we check the lungs to see if it is *treif*. When we plant a tree, we know that for the first three years we may not eat any of the fruit because of the *mitzvah* of *orlah*. The Jewish people have learned the lesson of self-control.

The *Chumash* describes the *aseres ha'dibros* as being *charus* – engraved – on the *luchos*.

The *mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* comments that the *posuk* is implying that real *cheirus* (freedom) can only be found by those who learn Torah and live a life of Torah. Many people have caused themselves to lose part of their *bechira chofshis*. They are enslaved by their *yetzer harah* (desires) and have not at all trained themselves in self-control. By giving the Torah to the Jewish people, Hashem gave us the ability to free ourselves from this enslavement and be true *benei chorin* who exercise their *bechira chofshis*. The *posuk* in *Koheles* praises that country whose king is a "Ben Chorin" and woe unto the country whose king is a slave. The Zohar understands that the *posuk* is praising Eretz Yisroel, whose official king is Hashem, who is the one who gives freedom to human beings. He is the one who enables human beings to train themselves in self-control and to not be enslaved by their *yetzer harah*, and thereby be able to exercise their *bechira chofshis* in a more complete fashion.

During this season of the year, Hashem makes himself more readily accessible than all year long. The *navi* Yeshaya encourages us to search out Hashem specifically during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*. May we all seize that opportunity before the *yom ha'kodosh* to come closer to Hashem Who created the entire universe *yeish m'ayin*, and by coming closer to Him we will strengthen our *bechira chofshis* to make reasonable and balanced decisions in life by exercising our self-control.

We should all have a *g'mar chasima tovah*.

To Be An Adam And Not An Ish



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

There is a phrase that appears throughout *Shas*, one of them being in *Bava Metzia* (114B) where the Gemara teaches us “אתם קרוין” – *Am Yisrael* (unlike other nations) has been given the title of Adam. What is significant about this name that it is given exclusively to the Jewish people? Seemingly if all of man comes from *Adam HaRishon* it should be designated for everyone!

The Pardes Yosef (Rav Yosef Patzanovski, ZT”L) in his *peirush* on *Chumash* (*Vayikra* 1:2) explains that throughout the Torah there are names that are given to a human being, but the primary ones that are used are *Ish* and *Adam*. When man is described by the Torah as an *Ish*, he is being described as one who has superiority or is a master over others around him. For example, the *Pasuk* in *Mishlei* (22:7) which says “וְעֹבֵד לַיהוָה לֵאשׁוֹ מִלְּוֹה” – The borrower is a slave to the master, the lender. An *Adam*, on the other hand, is not described with an elevated status over others, but rather is one who stands on his own, who develops himself without anyone making decisions for him.

Adam HaRishon was, in the beginning, a single human creature. Already, when Chava was brought into the world, the Torah began to use the term *Ish* and *Isha* as they now had the ability to impact and influence the actions of one another as well as be able to have control over another being. An *Adam* has a certain level of independence in that he has consistent

control over his actions and beliefs. There is no superiority in the life of *Adam*, he serves as his own ruler with all that he does.

We find in our world constant physical desires and pleasures that Man seeks are dependent on them being provided by other people. These pleasures are all subjective and can never have any measure of superiority over that of another. Shlomo HaMelech expresses in *Koheles* (4:4) that all the labour man is involved in is purely just coming as a result of the envy he has towards others. If not from outright jealousy then perhaps it is a result of comparing one's wealth to their fellow. How are we measuring the wealth that we have? How much of what we have or desire comes as a result of our being described as an *Eved* to the *Ish* we are striving to be and, therefore, feeling pressure and influence from others? When we live in the world of Torah, *mitzvos*, and *tefillah* we are in the world of *Adam*. Our *davening* and our learning is something that is really ours without the impact of an *Ish* and our *Avodas Hashem* is unique to you and only you.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, ZT”L, (*Emes L'Yaakov*) asks a question of the *bracha* given in *Parshas Vayeichi* of “By you Yisrael will invoke Bracha saying ‘May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe’.” (*Breishis* 48:20) Rav Yaakov asks why is it that this is the *bracha* we give to our children every Shabbos? What is the meaning of being like the sons of Yosef?

He answers by explaining the uniqueness of Ephraim and Menashe is that they were the first members of *Am Yisrael* to be born and grow up separately from the rest of the Jewish people, yet they were not affected by the Egyptian culture and influence around them. They were people who were taught certain values and lived by them to the fullest. They stood on their own and owned who they were. Even in modern English, the phrase “be a man” implies the need of a person to be stronger and assert more dominance. That is what it means to be an *Ish*, the feeling that one must dominate his companions. An *Adam* focuses on ensuring that he continues on his own straight path without feeling pressure or a need to take over the path of others.

When used in the plural form, the word *Ish* turns into *Anashim*. Yet when the word *Adam* changes into the plural it remains the same, it cannot be changed. We must recognize the power of the individual Man and the ability he has to create an everlasting *derech*. May this Shabbos Shuva be a time where we affirm our place and what we truly believe in before we come before Hashem on Yom Kippur as individuals (כבני מרון) and show him the *Adam* that each one of us are and will continue to be.

Fulfilling One's Role in the World



Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev International program

The Talmud¹ enumerates the Torah readings and *haftarot* designated for Yom Kippur. With respect to Mincha, the *Gemara* states that we read “the section of illicit relationships (*arayot*), and the *haftarah* is from the Book of Yonah.”

Rashi and Tosafot explain the reason for reading the Torah portion concerning forbidden sexual relationships (*arayot*) at Mincha on Yom Kippur. However, they do not clarify the rationale behind the choice of the Book of Yonah as the *haftarah* for this time.

The Beit Yosef offers a succinct explanation: “לפי שיש בה גדול כוח התשובה” – “*Because it contains the great power of repentance.*”² However, it is not clear whether the Beit Yosef is referring to the repentance of Yonah, the people of Nineveh, or someone else within the narrative.

“And If You Do Not Redeem It – You Shall Break Its Neck”

The Torah commands that the firstborn of a donkey (known as *Peter Hamor*) must be redeemed with a lamb and that this lamb is to be given to a Kohen, as stated: “וְכָל פֶּטֶר חֲמֹר תַּפְדֶּה בִּשָּׂה – “*And every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a lamb.*”³ If the owner refuses to redeem the donkey, the Torah mandates a seemingly harsh consequence: “וְאִם לֹא תַפְדֶּה וְעִרְפָּתוֹ” – “*And if you do not redeem it – you shall break its neck.*”⁴

This raises a question: Although the donkey was not redeemed and thus did not fulfill its intended purpose, why should it be killed?

The Ha'emek Davar (R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin) explains:

“This teaches us that a firstborn which loses its potential and refuses to benefit those of higher status is not worthy of existence. This is a major principle: one who is fit for greatness but neglects their

calling is worse than one who was never fit to begin with.”⁵

In other words, there is no right to exist for one who does not fulfill their intended role in the world. The donkey's purpose was to enable a lamb to become one of the twenty-four priestly gifts. Since it did not facilitate this, it forfeited its right to continued existence.

Recognizing One's Strengths

It is said in the name of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter: “More important than recognizing one's flaws is recognizing one's **strengths**.” A person who fails to acknowledge their own strengths and capabilities will not know how to use them in the service of G-d. We are each granted tremendous potential. It is our responsibility to fulfill our unique purpose in the world and harness these strengths in the service of the Divine.

Reading the Book of Yonah

A deeper understanding of the Book of Yonah, especially through the lens of the Vilna Gaon's commentary, reveals that Yonah initially feared fulfilling his mission in the world. As a prophet, Yonah's role was to deliver G-d's message and call people to repentance. Yet he believed he was **unfit** for the task. He did not recognize his inner strength and shied away from his purpose. He sought to run away from fulfilling his responsibilities. Only after his dramatic experience inside the belly of the fish did Yonah come to a crucial realization: he **must** fulfill his task. He came to understand that he possessed immense potential and subsequently carried out his mission.

This is why we read the Book of Yonah on Yom Kippur – a day of return and self-reckoning. It is a day on which we recommit to fulfilling our own missions in the world and to bringing *nahat ruakh*—spiritual satisfaction—to our Creator.

The Purpose of Human Creation

The Yom Kippur prayer includes the striking declaration: “עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי” – “*Before I was created, I was unworthy...*”

Rav Kook, in his commentary on the *siddur* (*Olat Re'iyah*), offers a powerful interpretation of the following phrase from the *Yamim Nora'im tefillah*:

אלוקי – עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי, ועכשו שנוצרתי כאילו לא נוצרתי

“All that limitless span of time, from the beginning of existence until I was created, clearly did not require my presence. For if I had been necessary for some purpose or completion, I would have been created earlier. The fact that I was not created until now indicates that I was not worthy of being created before, nor was I needed. It is only now, at this very moment, that I have been created – because the time has come for me to fulfill a specific purpose that will contribute to the perfection of existence. If I now dedicate my actions to the purpose for which I was created, then I am indeed worthy.”⁶

This idea affirms a deeply empowering truth. Every individual is born at the precise time when they are needed to fulfill their unique mission. One is born in the twenty-first century because it is at this time that he or she is needed to fulfill a specific purpose. Previously, such an individual would have been irrelevant. At this juncture, he or she is critical.

Therefore, we are called upon to use our lives and our unique strengths to fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Yom Kippur is not only a day of repentance, it is a day of *rediscovery*. It calls upon each of us to reflect not only on our failures, but on our **potential**. Just as Yonah came to recognize the Divine mission embedded within him, so too are we summoned to ask: *What am I here for?*

Continued on page 18

Love & Longing for Eretz Yisrael



Michal Horowitz

Teacher, Lecturer & Author of "Able: Living With A Disability, A Torah View"

As we come to the conclusion of the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah*, and the end of Moshe Rabbeinu's life, there is a recurring theme in the final conversations between Moshe and Hashem. Beginning in *Parshas Pinchas* – which is the beginning of the end for Moshe – Hashem tells him that he will see the Land, but will not cross. Unlike Yosef, another "Egyptian Jew," whose remains merited burial in E"Y (*Yehoshua* 24:32), even this was denied of Moshe. All that was permitted was that he would gaze upon the Land.

At the end of *Parshas Haazinu*, Moshe is once again told: *Go up this Mount Avarim [to] Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moav, that is facing Yericho, and see the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel as a possession (Devarim 32:49).*

And then, the very last words of G-d to the greatest prophet and servant of Hashem to ever live: *This is the Land I swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, saying, 'I will give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but to there you shall not cross (V'zos HaBracha, Devarim 34:4).* Surely, as we read these words – told to Moshe repeatedly – we feel a great sense of pathos, emotion and melancholy. The gift so many of us have merited – to walk the streets of the Land, kiss the stones of the Land, and enjoy the holy air of the Land – was denied to our holiest and greatest leader to ever live.

R' Yissocher Frand shares a deep lesson that we learn from this, in the name of R' Uziel Milevsky, zt"l: The Jewish people have seven faithful "shepherds": Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid (The "Succos Ushpizin"). Each one of these shepherds corresponds to one of the Divine Attributes of the Sefirah-Count (*Chessed, Gevura, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malchus*). Moshe's attribute is *netzach* [eternity] – that which lasts forever. Everything that Moshe Rabbeinu did in his life, he infused with the attribute of

eternity (*nitzchius*). Everything he accomplished lasts forever. He was instrumental in the formation of *Klal Yisrael*, and our nation is *la'netzach*. Moshe Rabbeinu gave us the Torah, and Torah is *la'netzach*. So to speak, whatever he touched became "netzach."

The RS"O, with His exquisite Divine Providence, arranged things so that Moshe Rabbeinu could not himself bring the Jewish people into E"Y or build the BHM"K. However, the RS"O still wanted Moshe Rabbeinu to "touch" one facet of E"Y and He wanted it to be *la'netzach*. That eternal *middah* Moshe imbued into the nation was the capacity to *desire and longing for E"Y*. Moshe longed to see it, be part of it, and enter the Land. This longing is something that Hashem wanted Moshe to experience.

This is why to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual, we all possess a connection with and a sense of longing for E"Y. For many people, it is such a strong desire that it motivates them to permanently move to E"Y. Even for those of us who do not take that step, we really mean it when we daven "let our eyes see Your return to Zion with mercy." Where does this emotional connection come from? It comes from G-d asking Moshe to cast his eyes upon the beauty of E"Y and to bond with it, such that his soul would eternally long to be part of it. "Look at it. Want it. Desire it. Every single part of the Land of the Land" (cf. *Devarim* 34:1-3).

Hashem was building the spiritual DNA of *Klal Yisrael*. The spiritual DNA of *Klal Yisrael* has within it a longing and intense desire for E"Y. "And see the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel as a possession (*Devarim* 32:49). That now becomes a part of the eternal bond between E"Y and Am Yisrael, a bond that is truly *la'netzach*.

Eight years ago, during the *Aseres Yimei Teshuva*, on 7 Tishrei 5779, Sunday, Sept. 16, 2018, Ari Fuld, "The Lion of Zion," HY"D, 45 years old, was stabbed to death at the

Gush Etzion Junction shopping mall. Ari made *Aliyah* from NY in 1994. He was married and the father of 4 children. He was also the grandson of a Holocaust survivor; his grandmother a survivor of the death camps. He served in the IDF, and when, at age 40, he received his discharge papers from the reserves, he ripped them up and continued to serve. Before succumbing to his mortal stab wounds that day, he managed to chase (over a short distance and low wall) the 17 year old terrorist, *yemach shemo* – who was running after Hilla Peretz, the falafel shop owner (who had minutes before served him lunch!), with his knife drawn. *Tzitzit* flying, gun at the ready, blood pouring down the back of his white shirt, Ari ran, and downed the terrorist (who survived the shooting R"L), and thereby saved Hilla's life. Ari was passionate about *Eretz Yisrael*, *Medinat Yisrael*, *Am Yisrael* and *Torat Yisrael*, ultimately giving his life for the Land, the nation and the G-d he so loved. He was passionate about *tefillah*, specifically the prayer of *Shema Yisrael*, and passionate about the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit*.

About his brother Ari, HY"D, Hillel Fuld wrote three years ago: *Ari was a hero. But Ari was also my older brother. He was an uncle to so many nephews and nieces. He was a husband, a father, a son, a Torah scholar, a hardcore Zionist, a teacher, and a dedicated Jew. Ari was larger than life. It's been almost five years but on the one hand, it feels like yesterday, and on the other hand, it feels like it's fake, like it never happened. We miss Ari every day, but on this day that we express sadness, we remember Ari's life, we celebrate the man, and we remember that he gave his life for us to live safely in our home. Ari impacted countless lives through his work and millions more through his legacy. Ari was a giant of a man who taught us what one person can accomplish and that when something is so important, it's worth fighting for.*

בברכת שבת שלום וגמר חתימה טובה

Kapara – Looking Forward



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

Is the Day of Atonement a precise translation for Yom Kippur? In English, the word “atonement” implies amends for certain wrongdoing. In this sense, the Day of Atonement implies expiation for transgressions we may have committed over the course of the previous year. However, in *Chumash*, we find numerous instances in which the word *kippurim* is used in a very different context.

For example, in *Bereishit*, when G-d commands Noach to build the ark, we find the very first use of this *shoresh k.p.r.* (כפר), suggesting it implies a sort of protective covering: “you shall coat it from within in and out with ‘kofer’ – pitch.” In *Shemot* (16:4), the Torah employs this same root to describe the manna covering the ground like frost. Later in *Shemot* (25:17), the special lid for the Ark of the Covenant is named the “*kaporet*” – כַּפֹּתֶיךָ. While the typical Biblical word for a covering is מִכְשָׁל, this special name כַּפֹּתֶיךָ highlights its protective nature, for the *keruvim* on this *kaporet* are protecting the Ark (the symbol of our Covenant with G-d) – just as they protect the ‘path to the Tree of Life’ in Gan Eden (see *Bereishit* 3:24 and *Mishlei* 3:18).

Therefore, when *Vayikra* (23:27) informs us that the 10th day of the seventh month is *Yom HaKippurim*, there must be something ‘protective’ about that special day! This simplest understanding might be that this day protects us from punishment for our

sins of the previous year. However, one could suggest a different understanding, one that looks forward to the coming year as well, based on the first time we find the word *kippurim* in the details of the dedication ceremony of the *Mishkan* (*Shemot* 29).

Before the Priests could begin their daily service in the *Mishkan*, there was a need for a seven-day inaugural ceremony where the blood of a sacrificial ram was sprinkled upon them. In a similar manner, the blood of a sacrificial bull was sprinkled on the *mizbayach*. In the summary verses, this act of sprinkling the blood is referred to as *kippurim* (see 29:36).

This suggests that before the Priests can begin their service of G-d in the *Mishkan*, they require some sort of protection. Most likely, this “protection” is necessary as G-d’s *Shechinah* will dwell in the *Mishkan*. This encounter with G-d is quite dangerous, for a human who is not worthy of this encounter may deserve immediate death.

In fact, in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf, G-d warned Moshe that He can no longer dwell among this stiff-necked nation, due to their rebellious nature. Had Moshe Rabeinu not interceded on their behalf, the special covenant between G-d and *Am Yisrael* would have been broken forever. However, in light of Moshe Rabbeinu’s famous prayer (see *Shemot* 33:12-19), G-d establishes a new Covenant, this time including the option of Mercy and Forgiveness for wayward behavior, thus enabling G-d’s *Shechinah*

to dwell among His People even though they may be stiff-necked.

As Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, marks the anniversary of G-d’s declaration of His attributes of Mercy, and the re-establishment of the Covenant, it is only fitting that on this day we remind ourselves of this special privilege, that G-d continues to dwell in our midst, even though we may not always be perfect. Symbolically, the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies on this day reflects our desire to remain His loyal servants. However, to show G-d that we need “protection” – as we may not be worthy of this encounter – the High Priest must perform a symbolic act of *kapara* (see *Vayikra* 16:16).

As every Jew is a member of this Priestly nation, we serve G-d not only in His Temple but also in our daily lives by keeping His commandments. Therefore, at the beginning of every year, we must not only ask G-d for forgiveness for our transgressions of the previous year, but we must also prepare ourselves for the spiritual challenges that will face us in the year that now begins, showing our gratitude to G-d for His attributes of Mercy that enable our relationship to remain eternal. Hence, *Yom HaKippurim* serves as a very fitting name for this holiday, as our worthiness to remain His People begins with our humble recognition that we may not always be so worthy.

Continued from page 16

What strengths has G-d placed within me? The message of the day is clear: You were created because the world needs something only you can bring. The greatest tragedy is not failure, but abandoning your calling. And the greatest act of teshuvah is to rise – perhaps from doubt, fear, or inertia – and to choose to live with purpose. On

this most sacred day, we are reminded that the truest atonement begins when we stop running from who we are and begin walking toward who we were meant to become.

1. *Megillah* 31a

2. Beit Yosef, *Orakh Haim* 622
3. *Shemot* 13:13
4. *Ibid*
5. Ha'emek Davar *Shemot* 13:13
6. Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, *Olat Re'iyah*, Vol. 1, p. 330 (commentary on the Yom Kippur prayer)

Shabbat Shuva – Which is the Right Way to Do Teshuba?



Rabbi Eli Mansour

Edmond J. Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Teshuba (repentance) comes in different forms. One kind is what we might call “Humpty Dumpty Teshuba.” This means that a person breaks himself, destroys himself, dissects his character and his conduct throughout the past year to identify every flaw, and then rebuilds himself by correcting those flaws. This is the *teshuba* of the great *sadikim*. They rigorously introspect, leaving no stone unturned, and push themselves relentlessly to correct every spiritual defect.

This *teshuba* is not recommended for the vast majority of us. At some point during the first stage – of breaking ourselves down and finding every misdeed and every flaw – we would despair and never proceed to the second stage, of rebuilding ourselves. Ordinary people, like us, would feel so distraught and discouraged by what we reveal that we would simply lack the emotional fortitude to improve ourselves. We would just give up.

What, then, is the proper method of *teshuba* for people like us?

The Torah tells in the Book of *Bereshit* that Adam chose names for all the animals on earth. In his remarkable wisdom, he was able to identify the essence of every creature, and choose an appropriate name. His

name – Adam – which is the term forever used in reference to the human being, was chosen by G-d. What does this word mean? Oddly enough, it is derived from the word “*Adama*” – earth, or dirt.

Is this the essence of man – dirt? Could G-d not have come up with a more flattering word to use in reference to people, the crown jewel of creation? Was this the best He could do?

The answer is that yes, this is precisely the essence of man, the extraordinary quality that sets men and women apart from the animal kingdom.

Earth has the unparalleled ability to transform into something infinitely greater than what it is at the present. In its current state, it is valueless and even revolting, but with some work, it can turn into delicious, life-sustaining food. And this is the essence of man. Animals undergo physical changes as they get older, but essentially, they remain the same throughout their lives. The human being, however, is dynamic. He is capable of growing, changing, transforming, becoming something far, far greater than what he is now.

In short, dirt represents unlimited potential. And this is what every human being is – a walking mass of enormous potential.

This is where *teshuba* must begin for people on our level. When we recognize that this is what we are, we feel encouraged, not crushed; we feel empowered, not helpless. If we focus our attention on our flaws and failings, we will fall into deep depression and not bother to make any attempts to change. But once we internalize the message of “*Adam*,” once we understand that we are, by our very essence, capable of growing into something greater, then we will not despair. We will feel excited by the prospects for change, by what the future could hold. We will commit ourselves to making even a few small strides forward, understanding that they will gradually lead us to great accomplishments.

The most effective method of *teshuba* for us is to remember that we are full of potential. Regardless of a person’s current standing, he can become something great. People of any profession, of any background, of any stage of life and of any current level of observance can rise to greatness – just like a pot of malodorous dirt can turn into a magnificent, fragrant flower.

And believing in ourselves, in our potential, is the first and most critical step toward repentance.

Listening with the Inner Ear



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

The *parsha* begins (*Devarim* 32:1) “הָאָזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶדְבָּרָה,” “Give ear heavens, and I will speak.” The *pasuk* asks the heavens to listen using the word “הָאָזִינוּ,” whose root is “אָזַן,” meaning “ear.” Therefore, the opening teaching in the *Midrash* on the *parsha* (*Devarim Raba* 10) teaches the following: “What is the *halacha* if one has an earache, is it permissible to treat it on Shabbos? The sages taught, ‘one may violate Shabbos even for questionably life threatening situations,’ and in the case of an earache, if it is dangerous, one may treat it on Shabbos.” The commentaries point out that this *Midrash* seems not to teach anything novel. Every Jew knows that one may violate Shabbos even for a questionably life threatening situation. The *Midrash* also cannot mean that every earache is a life threatening illness because it says “if it is dangerous...”

The Avnei Nezer writes that one may not violate Shabbos to save just one limb. But if the danger to that one limb could endanger the person’s life, then one may violate Shabbos to save that limb. This is because Shabbos is called “כללא דאורייתא,” the central principle of the whole Torah. It may therefore not be violated for the sake of just one part of a person. But it may be violated for the sake of an illness that endangers the whole person.

The Avnei Nezer’s son, the Shem Mishmuel, based on his father’s teaching, offers a novel explanation of the *Midrash* quoted above. First, he points out that the ear has an external portion and an internal portion. He explains that the inner ear is connected deeply to the brain and that any sickness affecting the inner ear would certainly affect the whole essence of the person. The *Midrash* therefore teaches that if the sickness is dangerous, i.e., if it affects the inner ear, then it actually

affects the whole person and one may therefore violate Shabbos to treat it. But if the illness only affects the external part of the ear, then one may not violate Shabbos because it will not endanger his life.

The same principle applies in matters of *רוחניות*, the spirit. The Shem Mishmuel also quotes the *Mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* (3:7) which says “If one hears the echo [of the shofar], one does not fulfill the *mitzva*. So too, if one was passing behind a *shul* or he was in his house near the *shul* and hear the sound of the *shofar* or the sound of the *Megillah*, if he had intent, he fulfilled his obligation, and if he did not have intent, he did not fulfill his obligation.” One must hear the actual sound of the *shofar*, and not an echo, a secondary version of that sound. Similarly, there are two ways to listen to something. One may listen with intent so that the sound affects the essence of who he is, or he can listen superficially, in which case he will not fulfill the *mitzva*.

The same thing is true more generally in the Torah. We are familiar with the Ramban’s explanation of “קדושים תהיו,” “You shall be holy” (*Vayikra* 19:2), that it is possible to be a “גבל ברשות התורה,” a vile person, although he technically keeps the *mitzvos* and is officially orthodox. Such a person has not heard the essence of the Torah, the Torah itself. He has only heard some external, superficial aspect of the Torah, an echo of *Yiddishkeit* without truly hearing the inner will of Hashem.

The Shem Mishmuel makes a distinction between *שמיעה*, hearing and *האזנה*, paying attention or “giving ear.” Paying attention means listening to the essence of the message. The *pasuk* (*Shmos* 15:26) says “If you listen to the voice of Hashem your G-d and do what is just in His eyes, and give ear to his *mitzvos*...” We see here that after the *pasuk* teaches that one must listen (*שמיעה*)

to Hashem, it reemphasizes that he must also pay close attention (*האזנה*), indicating that there is a distinction between the two and that paying attention implies a closer form of listening.

A Jew must seek out the inner message of the *mitzvos* and listen to what they are really asking of him. When a Jew learns *Daf Yomi*, he should not just check it off of his *Yiddishkeit* checklist for that day. He should ask “What is this *Gemara* asking of me, what should I learn from this?” The *pasuk* in *Tehilim* (45:11) says “שִׁמְעִי-בַת, וְרָאִי וְהִטִּי אָזְנְךָ,” “Listen, daughter, see, and incline your ear.” After one listens and looks, he must listen with his inner ear to internalize the message so that the teaching permeates his being and affects who he is. That which a person hears should not merely affect him superficially, but he should also make it part of his whole self.

We can now understand the continuation of the *Midrash* quoted above, which says “The Rabanan say that one who wishes not to have an earache nor to have a sickness in any one of his limbs should incline his ear to the Torah. Then he will inherit life, as it says (*Yeshayahu* 55:3), ‘Incline your ears and come to me. Listen and your lives will be revived.’” The *Medrash* teaches that if one does not want to have an “earache,” he should pay attention so that he will truly listen to the words of the Torah.

If a person wants to have a full, deep, and real *Yiddishkeit*, he must not listen to the Torah and keep the *mitzvos* with his ear alone. Rather, he must incline his ear to hear what the Torah wants from him.

The Teshuvah You Thought Didn't Count



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

Teshuvah, one of the greatest gifts that Judaism and the Torah have given humanity, is the idea that G-d gives second chances. This is a fundamental part of the Jewish experience and is written in innumerable places in Torah (Moses and the Jews of the Golden Calf, Joseph forgiving his brothers, G-d forgiving Adam) – and it is the focus during this time of the year, as we welcome Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Which is why it comes as a surprise that Rabbi Akiva, writing some 1500 years after Sinai and the writing of the Torah, seems to have been surprised, inspired, and even astounded by the idea that G-d gives a second chance to the sinner who repents, as is recorded in the Mishna: *Rabbi Akiva said: How lucky are you, O Israel! Before whom are you purifying yourself, and who purifies you? Our father in Heaven! As it is written (Ezekiel 36), "I will sprinkle upon you purifying waters, and you will become purified," and it is said (Jeremiah 17), "Hashem is the mikva of Israel," just as the Mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel.*

What innovation, what revolutionary idea is Rabbi Akiva teaching that has not been taught for over a thousand years? The entire concept and institution of Yom Kippur – discussed at length in the Book of Leviticus – is that G-d cleanses the people of Israel!

Many times, when studying Torah we will find that if there are two questions on the same text, one question will be answered by resolving the other. Here too, there is another problem in the concluding words of Rabbi Akiva: "Just as the mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel."

Every word in Mishna is precise. It should have written simply, "Just as a mikvah purifies, so too does G-d purify Israel." Why add the extra words, "purify the impure"? We all know that a mikvah is designated to purify someone who is impure! Who else would be going to the mikvah but someone who is impure?

Yet, in these seemingly superfluous two words lies a wondrous secret. But first, we have to understand a little about the functioning of a mikvah.

Ritual impurity exists in different degrees. While some forms are removed simply by immersion in a mikvah, others – such as impurity from a human corpse – require a longer process.

If someone contracted both a lesser and a greater impurity, one might think there is no point immersing in the mikvah, since he will remain impure because of the more severe impurity.

However, that is not the case. And here we discover something fascinating. The law is that a mikvah will purify and remove the lesser impurity even if the stricter degree of impurity remains!

This then is the profound innovation of Rabbi Akiva. "Just as a mikvah will purify the impure person" who is destined to **remain impure**, even **after** going to the mikvah, so too does G-d purify the penitent who still remains, in some ways, distant and separate from G-d!

A person who is not prepared to repent and to return to G-d fully might think that G-d accepts all or nothing. He might think: Either I truly repent for everything, or I do nothing. Since I know that I cannot make so many changes in my life, let me not even begin.

Imagine if someone owes you \$50,000 but has neither the desire nor intention to pay you now, not denying the debt, but simply not bothered (and maybe without the money). Then, one fine morning, perhaps the day before Yom Kippur, he shows up at your door proudly announcing: "I want to pay you \$5,000!" Most people would react by throwing him out head first with his measly \$5,000, offended by the sheer chutzpah of offering such a token payment while the full \$50,000 remains unpaid.

This is Rabbi Akiva's message. Each year we come before G-d carrying many

shortcomings, yet often we are only ready to confront one or a few. We repent for that single aveira and ask forgiveness, while knowing we are not yet prepared to address the rest. Is such partial teshuvah worth anything?

Comes Rabbi Akiva and says: Just as a mikvah purifies the impure, the one who will remain impure even after the mikvah, the one who either way has contracted a much more severe and serious impurity which he is not dealing with right now, so the mikvah works and will purify him at that moment for the lesser impurity. Exactly so does G-d purify Israel!

Why? Why doesn't G-d act as any normal person would, and throw our measly attempt at reconciliation back in our faces? To this Rabbi Akiva tells us: *and who purifies you? Our father in Heaven!* A good father will embrace and appreciate the tiniest effort his son makes to connect with him, regardless and oblivious to the fact that the son has done wrong in so many more areas.

Today, all psychologists and educators agree that the way to educate is by focusing and drawing attention to even the smallest positive successes of our children and building on them. Education through criticism has been debunked and proven to be futile at best, and destructive at worst.

Rabbi Akiva said this almost 2000 years ago. G-d is the ultimate loving parent. When he sees that a Jew makes even the slightest movement of teshuva, regardless of how much he has left to go, G-d immediately embraces this movement with the deepest love, and purifies him just as the mikvah does.

● This novel interpretation in the Mishna was shared by the Lubavitcher Rebbe during a public address ("farbrengen"), as he concluded the study of Tractate Yuma on his mother's yartzeit, 6 Tishrei 5730, 1969. Part of it was published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 17 Parshas Acharei.

Yom Kippur : Once A Year



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Founder, Tzama Nafshi

Author of the *Baderech* series

Widely regarded as the *Poseik haDor*, haGaon Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt'l, was one of the great leaders of the last century, a definer of matters of Jewish law, as well as a source of inspiration and guidance for countless Jews around the world.

For more than sixty years, Rav Elyashiv was married to Rebbetzin Sheina Chaya, a daughter of the *Tzadik* of Yerushalayim, Rav Aryeh Levin, zt'l. During the *shivah* for Rebbitzin Elyashiv, a visitor standing in the back of the crowded room seemed visibly emotional, and a family member asked if he had a personal connection to the *niftes*. It turned out that he had arrived from Canada that morning to be *menachem avel* and pay condolences for the wife of the *gadol ha-dor*, but also to show *hakaras ha-tov*, appreciation for the Rav and Rebbetzin's efforts in helping his family through a painful and tragic ordeal. The Jew related a bit of his difficult, personal story:

After years of struggling to make a *parnasah*, the man had moved his family from *Eretz Yisrael* to Canada to search for a new beginning and greater success. The drastic change and adjustment was very challenging, and his oldest daughter veered away from Jewish practice, abandoning almost every vestige of Yiddishkeit and Jewish identity. She had even married a non-Jew and separated from her family, moving to far-away Switzerland. The *Yid* wept as he explained how he felt responsible for all of this, uprooting his family from *Eretz Yisrael*, and causing his daughter's descent from the path of Torah and *mitzvos*.

Some time after moving to Switzerland, in the beginning of *Chodesh Elul*, his daughter's marriage ended in divorce, and then, on the day following Yom Kippur, she suddenly died, all alone. As she had

intermarried, cut all ties with the Jewish community and lived as a non-Jew for years, the *Rabbanim* in Switzerland denied her a burial in the Jewish cemetery there.

"Broken-hearted, I called Rebbetzin Elyashiv," the man continued, wiping his tears. "I requested that she ask the Rav for a *p'sak*, a *halachic* position on the matter. When the Rav heard the situation, he asked what my daughter had done on Yom Kippur, the day before she passed away. I had heard from a member of the community in Switzerland that on that last Yom Kippur, right before she left the world, she had actually come to *shul* and spent a few minutes standing in the back of the *ezras nashim*. When Rav Elyashiv heard this, he was noticeably moved, and *paskened* with absolute clarity that she must be brought to a *kever Yisrael*, and buried as a Jewess.

"After receiving the *p'sak*, the Rebbetzin returned to the phone and shared words of *chizuk* and consolation, imploring me to forgive myself and to believe that my daughter had done *teshuvah*..."

■ ■ ■

"And he shall effect atonement upon the Holy of Holies, and he shall effect atonement upon the Tent of Meeting and upon the altar, and he shall effect atonement upon the *Kohanim* and upon all the people of the congregation. All this shall be as an eternal statute for you, to effect atonement upon the children of Israel, for all their sins, **once each year**." (*Vayikra*, 16:33-34)

Our experience on Yom Kippur parallels the entry of the *Kohen Gadol* into the *Kodesh haKodashim*. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that on Yom Kippur, the most exalted and holiest day of the year, part of your soul enters the holiest space in existence. We are granted access to the most hidden, sacred space, which is "off

limits" and hidden away from all but the most intimate of Hashem's beloved ones. In this way we enter *lifnai v'lifnim* the innermost Divine chamber *אחת בשנה* "once a year." This phrase hints that the *achas*, the "oneness" of Hashem that exists within every Jew, is revealed on this day, and full expression is given to this innermost dimension of the soul, our inner *kodesh kodashim*.

This most internal space is also referred to as *yechidah she-b'nefesh*, the hidden part of the soul. This core of the Jewish soul can never be penetrated by outside influences; no negativity can ever corrupt its purity. And direct perception of this level is beyond reach for most of us, most of the time.

Usually, our *yechidah she-b'nefesh* seems to be buried deep beneath layers of complex subconscious conditioning, and we are generally unaware of the root origin of our motivations and desires or what compels us to make choices in life. As a result, we are often unclear about what we really want and yearn after. We may wander, at least subtly, from our path and our People. Yom Kippur comes to waken the pintele *yid*, the small but indestructible Jewish spark of faith that lies at the core of who we really are and who we really want to be. On Yom Kippur, our *yechidah* shines outwardly, revealing our innermost will.

Rav Baruch Oberlander, *shlit'a*, Av Beis Din of Budapest and the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *shaliach* to Hungary, relates that a Jew once confided in the Rebbe that he felt like a hypocrite going to *shul* on Yom Kippur because he did not go to *shul* the rest of the year. The Rebbe responded that the most natural and appropriate place for a Jew to be on the High Holidays is in *shul*. "You're not a hypocrite when you go to *shul* on Yom Kippur," he said. "You're a 'hypocrite', perhaps, when you don't go to *shul* the rest of the year!"

Continued on page 24

Core Confession

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Aseret Yemei Teshuvah and Yom Kippur are the special times during the year designated for introspection and reflection. Often, when these days come around, we feel a frustration as we compare our current state to years before and think that we haven't made much progress or effected much improvement since the previous year. Upon reflection, we may notice that each year we attempt to do *teshuvah* for the same sins and often wonder why we haven't met with more success. What are we missing?

Rabbi Kluger in *My Sole Desire* notes that *teshuvah* is not simply about correcting a behavior or attitude; that is only an outer manifestation of the problem. True *teshuvah* is getting to the root of the issue. We can compare this to one who takes medication addressing the symptom of pain his body feels, heedless of the primary cause of the pain. In a *derashah* on the topic of *teshuvah*, the Meiri explains that one must examine his inner thoughts and explore the *middot* that lead him to sin. Yeshayahu Hanavi teaches, “*yazov rasha darko, ve'ish aven machshevotav* – The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his

thoughts.” (Yeshayahu 55:7) Indeed, most of our sins are symptoms of an underlying jealousy, desire, honor, emptiness or feeling unworthy.

Rav Eisenberger in *Mesilot Bilvavam* expounds that the Torah injunction to uproot *avodah zarah* provides a model for approaching *teshuvah* as well. When one analyzes the prevalent sins in his life, he will find repeating patterns of behavior and habit loops and thus, introspection enables a person to identify the triggers responsible for his actions and reactions. For example, one may notice that he constantly puts down the efforts of others and is critical of their decisions and choices. Upon further reflection he may discover a fragile self-esteem, and this is his way of boosting his feeling of value and importance. Instead of self-criticism and putting oneself down, we can find ways to address our limitations with humor and honesty, channeling our strengths with positivity and purpose.

Uprooting the “*zarah*,” the parts of us that are foreign and disconnected from our authentic core, will generate a domino-like effect on all our behaviors and

attitudes, effecting *teshuvah* that is real and lasting.

This idea is reflected in the *haftarah* that we read on Shabbat Shuvah. “*Shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha ki kashalta be'avonecha* – Return, O Israel, to Hashem, for you have stumbled in your iniquity.” (Hoshea 14:2) Rashi, always sensitive to the nuances of the text, addresses an obvious question. An “*avon*” is a sin one does deliberately, while stumbling implies falling over something that he didn't notice. How can these two exist simultaneously? Rashi answers, “Obstacles have come to you because of your iniquity.”

A person starts with a conscious sin which unwittingly spirals into many more sins. The key is in finding and addressing the fundamental challenge which will result in a broad change.

These ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the time to discover the root of our obstacles and pinpoint the barriers to growth. A small *kabbalah* taken on toward that end will lead us to connect with our most authentic selves, the pure Divine Will deep within every one of us.



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The Ballot Box and Us



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

The timing of the upcoming elections seems like a threat to our Yom Kippur: How can we beat our chests in repentance when a mega-event awaits us about a month after the great Day of Forgiveness? Is this the irony of fate?

And specifically Yom Kippur itself comes and tells us: Do not stand like people whose fate has already been determined. **Choose!** Your choices on Yom Kippur will determine not only the fate of the “elections,” but also whether we can become a united people, a people with a shared destiny.

The concept of fate appears again and again in connection with Yom Kippur: the fate determined between the two goats, the lots cast in the Temple courtyard, and the lot cast by the sailors for Jonah the prophet.

How consequential was the lot cast by the High Priest on Yom Kippur?

Apparently, not very.

According to the *Mishna*, the High Priest placed two slips of paper into a lottery box: one marked “For Hashem” and the other marked “For Azazel.” After mixing the slips in the box, he placed the lot that came up in his right hand on the goat to his right, and the other on the other goat. But how does this action change the fate of the Jewish people? In either case, one goat will be sent to Azazel to atone for the sins of the Children of Israel, while the other will be offered as a sin offering! What is the purpose of this lottery, and

what does it have to do with us and our fate?

It does. This is how Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains it in a remarkable commentary.

In the High Priest’s tightly packed סדר העבודה, he must devote time to this unique ritual:

“And he shall take the two goats and place them before Hashem at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting... And Aaron shall place lots upon the two goats... And Aaron shall bring forward the goat upon which the lot for Hashem has fallen, and make it a sin offering. And the goat upon which the lot for Azazel has fallen shall be left alive before Hashem... to send it away to Azazel, into the wilderness...” (Leviticus 16).

What is the purpose of all this?

The two lots mixed together in the lottery box will determine the fate of the goats: one for Hashem and one for Azazel. But in that same breath, they tell us: **You, human beings, can choose!** Or, more precisely, you **must** choose!

“Each one of us is in the position of a goat. He has been endowed with the power of resistance. He is capable of resisting with determination every demand imposed upon his will. It is in our hands to be like the ‘goat for Hashem,’ to resist all the inner and outer impulses that tempt us to turn away from Hashem; or it is in our hands to be the ‘goat for Azazel,’ to exercise the power of resistance by stubbornly refusing to heed the voice of Hashem, for Hashem has granted us this power

of resistance... The goats will fulfill the will of their Creator and therefore cannot stray from it. But the destiny of human beings is different and loftier.” (R. Hirsch, there)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch seeks to strengthen our awareness of our power to choose precisely when Yom Kippur arrives. Don’t spend the rest of the year crying that one ballot or another determined your fate for Azazel! **You are not goats!** You possess free choice, and that is your distinction from all other creatures!

“For the entire greatness of man depends upon his capacity to sin, and all human dignity lies in the ability granted to him to choose even against the will of Hashem. In the natural world, sin does not exist at all; but precisely for that reason, there are no moral virtues there. Human beings are capable of being the goat for Azazel, just as they are capable of being the goat for Hashem.”

No one is going to steal your country from you if you choose correctly, the High Priest tells the people of Israel on this most fateful day of the year.

“None of us has had his fate decided in advance. It does not depend on appearance, stature, possessions, or wealth. Whether honored or lowly, great or small, at any moment a person can be for Hashem or for Azazel.” (R. Hirsch, there)

The ballot box does not shuffle the cards. **One fate placed us here, in this land.** Let us not try to flee to foreign soil like Jonah the prophet. We could choose then, and we can choose now.

Continued from page 22

This Yom Kippur, as we enter deep within our inner holy of holies, may we believe, even if just for a few minutes, that we are experiencing the life-changing revelation of our truest self, the part of us that is

in complete unity with Hashem and our People. And may the recognition of this *achas b’shanah* encompass our whole year, our whole life – and all of the congregation of Israel.

■ ■ ■

*Excerpt from newly released
Baderech: Along the Path of the
Torah, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)*

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

balashon.com

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

In *Parashat Ha'azinu*, Moshe describes the collapse that will come to Israel's enemies: לִי נָקָם וְשָׁלֵם... כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם אֲיִדָם וְחָשׁ עֲתִידָת לָמוֹ

"To be My vengeance and recompense, at the time that their foot falters. For their day of disaster is near, and destiny rushes upon them." (*Devarim* 32:35)

The phrase יוֹם אֲיִדָם is rendered as "their day of disaster." In Biblical Hebrew, אִיד means calamity, distress, or misfortune – a sense preserved in the later expression שִׂמְחָה לְאִיד, joy at another's misfortune. Some scholars have proposed tracing it to a base אוד, meaning "to bend" or "to oppress," the idea being that disaster is what presses a person down.

The *Mishnah* (*Avodah Zarah* 1:1) uses a similar-sounding word for gentile festivals: לִפְנֵי אֲיִדֵיהֶן שָׁל גּוֹיִם שְׁלֶשָׁה יָמִים, "On the three days before the festivals of gentiles," business with them is restricted. The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 2a) records that Rav and Shmuel preserved two readings: one taught אֲיִדֵיהֶן with א, one taught אִידֵיהֶן with י, and neither is mistaken. The

spelling with א is supported by the verse in *Ha'azinu*; the spelling with י by a verse about witnesses, since the festivals can testify against idolaters.

Historically, the stronger etymology for the festival word is אִיד, not אֲיִד. Linguists derive אִיד from Aramaic אִידָא, "festival" – literally something that returns each year, from עוד, "to return" or "occur again." Arabic *eid* belongs to the same family. The *Mishnah's* אֲיִדֵיהֶן should not be read as if the biblical word for calamity simply became the word for festival. More likely, the existing festival term אִיד was reshaped as אֲיִד when applied to idolatrous celebrations, so that it echoed *Ha'azinu's* יוֹם אֲיִדָם.

This fits the oral background of the *Mishnah*. The spelling dispute may reflect oral transmission before the text was fixed in writing: in speech the two forms may have been close enough for both to survive, and once written, each carried a different sense – י connecting the word to recurrence and testimony, א connecting it to calamity. The shift to אֲיִד gave the term a derogatory edge, making the gentile holiday not only a festival but a

day bound up with Jewish trouble or the eventual downfall of idolatry. Rambam, in his commentary to *Mishnah Avodah Zarah* 1:1, treats it as a deliberate substitute for words like מוֹעֲדִים, which were associated with Jewish holidays.

A further suggestion connects the term with Latin *Idus* – the Ides, familiar from the Ides of March – a Roman calendar day associated with feasts and festivals. In the Roman environment the Jews lived in during Mishnaic times the sound may have reinforced the wordplay, though it does not replace the Semitic origin of אִיד.

In the verse in *Devarim*, יוֹם אֲיִדָם is the day of calamity; in the *Mishnah*, אֲיִדֵיהֶן means their festivals, colored by the biblical word for disaster and perhaps reinforced by a familiar Roman term.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle (from page 10)

Har Nevo is also referred to as Har HaAvarim and also just simply called the Har – the mountain.

The two names appear in 32:49 when Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbenu to ascend Har HaAvarim, Har Nevo and see the Land of Canaan which He is giving to Bnei Yisrael.

In the next verse, the mountain is simply referred to as "the mountain."

Rabbenu Bechaye comments that Har Nevo was also called Havarim (lit: Mountain of sides) because the mountain was open on one side to Kadesh and on the other side to Hor

Hahar (lit: the mountain on the mountain).

(See too the Oznayim LaTorah for further comments on why the Torah gives these names, and why particularly at this juncture.)



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