ב"ה

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1676

SEPT. 5TH 2026 - כ"ג אלול תשפ"ו

נצבים-וילך
NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH

AVOT 5-6



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ושבת עד־ה׳ אלקיך דברים ל׳:ב׳

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH ZMANIM

CANDLES **6:23 PM** • EARLY **5:40 PM** • HAVDALA **7:35 PM** • RABBEINU TAM **8:15 PM**

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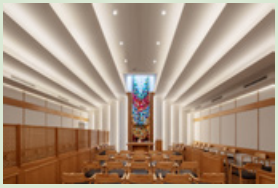
IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Ashkenaz custom is to begin reciting Slichot on Motzei Shabbat (September 5th).

Rosh Hashana is observed this coming Shabbat and Sunday.

Please see page 80-84 for an extensive review of the laws and customs of Rosh Hashana.

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The "Neharat Netifim" parochet, designed by Israeli textile artist Itamar Sagi, is a magnificent new Torah ark curtain created in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l for the Wohl Synagogue in the National Library of Israel. This vibrant and complex art piece not only serves a functional purpose, but also embodies deep emotional and spiritual significance.

CANDLE LIGHTING
AND HAVDALA TIMES



	NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH			RH #1 / FRI NIGHT
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	**6:23**	5:40	**7:35**	6:14
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	**6:41**	5:42	**7:38**	6:32
Beit Shemesh/RBS	**6:42**	5:41	**7:36**	6:33
Gush Etzion	**6:39**	5:40	**7:36**	6:30
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	**6:41**	5:42	**7:37**	6:32
Modiin/Chashmonaim	**6:40**	5:41	**7:36**	6:31
Netanya	**6:41**	5:42	**7:38**	6:32
Be'er Sheva	**6:40**	5:41	**7:37**	6:31
Rehovot	**6:41**	5:42	**7:34**	6:32
Petach Tikva	**6:23**	5:41	**7:37**	6:14
Ginot Shomron	**6:40**	5:41	**7:36**	6:31
Haifa / Zichron	**6:31**	5:42	**7:38**	6:21
Gush Shiloh	**6:39**	5:40	**7:35**	6:30
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	**6:41**	5:42	**7:38**	6:32
Givat Zeev	**6:43**	5:40	**7:36**	6:34
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	**6:39**	5:40	**7:36**	6:30
Ashkelon	**6:42**	5:43	**7:38**	6:33
Yad Binyamin	**6:41**	5:42	**7:37**	6:32
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	**6:33**	5:39	**7:36**	6:23
Golan	**6:38**	5:39	**7:35**	6:29
Nahariya/Maalot	**6:30**	5:41	**7:37**	6:20
Afula	**6:39**	5:40	**7:36**	6:30

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Nitzavim-Vayeilech - 8:15 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalyim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Chulin 128

OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM
Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Sept. 2 - 12 | 20 - 30 Elul

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	**5:23-5:30**
Sunrise	**6:15-6:21**
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	**9:26-9:28**
Magen Avraham	**8:49-8:51**
Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	**10:30**
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	**12:38-12:35**
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	**1:10-1:06**
Plag Mincha	**5:42-5:31**
Sunset (Including Elevation)	**7:06-6:53**

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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I was in fifth grade and living in Kedumim the first time my father took me to say *selichot* on *Motzei Shabbat*. I remember the *ba'al tefila* beginning, that familiar Ashkenazi melody for "*BeMotzaei Menucha kidamnucha techila* - As the day of rest departs, we come before You first." Unfortunately, I remember I wasn't that moved by it.

We had already been in Israel for a year, and when you live in Kedumim surrounded by people who do not speak English, you are forced to learn Hebrew very fast. But *selichot* Hebrew is another thing. I found it very challenging to understand. And even today, I'm not sure I understand everything in that complex poetry of *selichot*. Over the years, I've learned that slowing down helps me understand the words better and connect more deeply.

There is a new phenomena happening over the past decade across Israel regarding *selichot*, something that seems to be growing stronger every year. And that is that the general public is showing up for *selichot*. There are *selichot* tours running through Yerushalayim, through Tzfat, through Chevron, drawing hundreds of thousands of people. In recent years, more than two million people have come to the Kotel for *selichot* and the *tefillot* of the *Yamim Noraim* between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Yom Kippur.

I remember having a discussion with the chief Rabbi of Tzfat Rav Shmuel Eliyahu Shlita about this thirteen years ago. Back then, it was popular to come the night before Rosh Hashanah and the night before Yom Kippur, but an average night of *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*, and certainly an average night of Elul, those were not times when people were showing up en masse for *selichot*. But Rav Shmuel felt back then that Am Yisrael wanted more. Something has changed among the Jewish people. Undoubtedly, October 7th and the ensuing war has encouraged so many, young and old, to take the time out and talk to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, to take advantage of this month of Hashem being so close to us in order to have an honest conversation with Him about what we feel are the important things in life and how we want to change the trajectory of the coming year.

Two weeks ago, I was in Pirchei Edna, the flower shop in Givat Ze'ev where I go to buy

In memory of
משה מרדכי בן חנוך העניך הלוי
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Segal and Kaufman families

my wife flowers before Shabbat. I overheard a conversation between two fathers. Neither was wearing a *kippa*, but you could tell they were proudly Jewish. In this conversation, one father was saying to the other: "My daughter is going to *selichot* at the Kotel almost every week. She came home last night at three o'clock in the morning. "My daughter as well", the second man said. Obviously she is inspired, but maybe it's too much? Should we tell them not to go so many times?"





The fathers discussed this while I stood there super emotional. I thought, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*! Look at the younger generation. Look how much they seek You, how much they want to connect. Our youth are saying, "Enough with TikTok and Instagram. We want real substance, a real connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*! We realize that at the end of the day, our safety and security lies in Your hands, and we want to have a say in the matter. So we want to talk to You."

Something else that was so beautiful about that exchange between fathers is that I am so used to talking to people about the difficulties they face as parents. How difficult it can be to keep their children productive during the summer, away from phones and too much screentime, and away from bad influences. To hear that two fathers are complaining that their daughters are going to *selichot* at the Kotel too many times? That was really moving to me.

A big part of me wanted to tell them this. I wanted to say to them, "Listen to what you are saying! Appreciate what you have!" But I didn't. It was late on Friday morning, I was rushing to my radio show. So I paid for my flowers, mulling over the conversation on the drive home, and eventually turned the question on myself. These teenage girls, coming from less religious households, are going to the Kotel and speaking with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* every week during this time. What can I

May the Torah learnt
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be לע"נ our dear Mother and Bobba

Chana Ehrlich a"h
חנה בת משה ע"ה
on her 12th yahrzeit - כ"ח אלול

Sorely missed by
Ehrlich and Stodel families

do in order to show *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* I want to do more, connect more? Can I spend a little more time than usual on my *selichot* to understand them better? Can I show up a little bit earlier to put myself in the right mindset for *tefillah*?

These wonderful feelings were reinforced a week and a half ago when my dear friend Shai Alon, the mayor of Bet-El, invited me to an end-of-summer concert he was hosting for the residents and friends of Bet-El. I don't generally enjoy concerts, but this one was something else. The three singers lined up were Aviyad, Shulie Rand, and Ben Tzur. I don't know if all the Torah Tidbits readers are familiar with all three names, but I assure you that the thousands of people who came to the Bet-El Amphitheater on that beautiful summer night were well aware of who these three incredible singers are. I knew the vast majority of the songs, enjoyed the atmosphere, and loved meeting many friends. But what uplifted my spirits more than anything else was seeing thousands of teenagers screaming out to the Ribono Shel Olam through song and dance with passion, enthusiasm, and excitement, screaming, among many other tefilot, *Hashem Melech, Hashem Malach, Hashem yimloch lolam va'ed.*



In loving memory of my mother

Pearl Katz a"h

פעסה בת אפרים זאב ע"ה

Memphis, Tennessee

On her 25th Yahrtzeit - 18 Elul

Ronnie Katz

Dear readers, I give us all a blessing that our *tefillot* on Rosh Hashanah, and the *selichot* leading up to it, should carry this energy. This *Motzei Shabbat*, we Ashkenazim join the force of *selichot* sayers that our Sefardi brothers and sisters have been doing since the beginning of Elul. Now that we are joining them, may we all have more inspiration, more connection, more understanding.

And then, *b'ezrat Hashem*, may we see the fruits of our *tefillot* and have a year that brings a *refuah shelemah* to all our injured soldiers - those wounded in body, as well as in mind. A year of comfort for the families who for almost three years have given so much so that *Klal Yisrael* can be safe. And an election period that, *b'ezrat Hashem*, is going to be peaceful, in which our politicians speak about the good in themselves rather than the bad in others. May we all understand that we are all part of *Klal Yisrael*, and that we are all working to bring better days for the Jewish people.

When I look at the Kotel during this time and see so many different colors and so many different kinds of Jews, I want that *achdut*, that unity, to continue long past this season. I pray we can merit a year full of *achdut* for *Klal Yisrael*, with good health and a *refuah shelemah* for all who need one, and then we will all be able to stand here next year with even more Jews, please God in a rebuilt *Beit HaMikdash*, saying *selichot* and thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for the privilege of this relationship.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a meaningful *selichot*,



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Torah Tidbits: Behind the Pages

OU ISRAEL'S WEEKLY TORAH PUBLICATION

A publication of OU Israel, Torah Tidbits is the largest weekly English-language Torah publication in the country. Created by Phil Chernofsky in the spring of 1992, it began as a humble, black-and-white photocopied page and has since grown into a beautiful 80-page, full-color weekly booklet, edited by Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider.

Today, a dedicated army of volunteers, led by the wonderful work of Toni Chernofsky, distributes the publication to over 400 locations across Israel, from the Golan Heights to Sderot and everywhere in between. Many of these volunteers have been steadfastly devoted for years. Week after week, they make it their personal mission to distribute Torah Tidbits to every shul, local store, and restaurant. For them, it is a true labor of love to ensure that their friends, neighbors, and the entire community always have easy access.

Thanks to their tireless grassroots efforts, Torah Tidbits reaches an estimated 30,000 readers weekly, while also maintaining a strong global audience and expanding into digital formats like apps and audio summaries.

Despite this massive evolution over the last three decades, Torah Tidbits proudly maintains its warm, accessible, and community-oriented feel. We hope you continue to enjoy!

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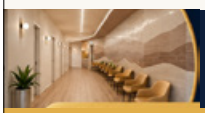
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

The Torah ends with 4 very short parshiot. The last parsha of the Torah is read on Simchat Torah. After our double parsha, we have only the short parsha of Ha'azinu. So, we are virtually at the end of the Torah.

Let's frame our parsha in the context of the book of Devarim. Moshe has delivered a long speech, knowing he will not be with the people in their entry to the Land. Moshe has taken us from past, to present, to future. He began with the immediate fears and concerns of the people; how will we be successful in conquering the Land? He reviews the past; lessons to be learned, errors to be avoided, successes to remember. You will be successful. He then paints a picture of the society of ethical monotheism to be created in the Land. And the national institutions of legislature, judiciary and executive. He has gone from past, to immediate present, to the imminent future.

Then last week he pivoted to the distant future; the exile that will result inevitably from disloyalty. Though not yet in the Land, Moshe gives a chilling description of exile from the Land.

There are 2 themes to the terrible description of exile from the Land. First, warning. Stay loyal and this won't happen. The keeping of or disloyalty to mitzvot is high stakes.

However, there is a second theme. Interpreting history. It is this theme that occupies our parsha. How are we to interpret exile? Is exile rejection? When we suffer so much, is that a rejection of the Jewish people by G-d? Can our covenant with Him lapse? Can we aggravate Him so much that He flings us from our Land, rejecting us forever? Can we be so bad that He Gives up on us? Can we look at history and say to ourselves, ok, looks like the covenant is over?

In addressing this theme, Moshe gazes way into the distant future. Before even entering the Land, Moshe is describing exile and in our parsha, return to the Land.

Although this double parsha has but 70 verses, the emotional impact is hard to match.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 29:9-28)

The Brit of Arvot Moav. All the people are gathered, men, women, children, water carriers and wood choppers to enter the covenant; that G-d will be our G-d and we will be His people. As was said to the Avot. This covenant is with you here today and those not here. Should there be amongst you those chasing idols, rationalizing that they are free to follow their hearts; the consequence of the special bond of this covenant is that your disloyalty, your chasing idol worship will be met with Divine wrath. The destruction of this Land because of your unfaithfulness will be so profound people will look at it and be shocked by its utter desolation. They will recognize that your disloyalty resulted in this desolation and in your being tossed out of this Land.

Moshe gathers all the people to enter the covenant.

Now, we have had covenants, brit, before.

A covenant was made with Avraham. And one made at Sinai. What then is being added here?

There are 2 parts to a covenant. What. And who. The what is clear; you are My people, I am your G-d. And hence, when you are disloyal, I respond even to the point of exile from the Land.

And the who? All of you; everyone is in. Not only you here today, but all future generations too.

And that is the implied point here. When you look at your fate, scattered around the globe and look at the desolation of the Land of Israel, the Land flowing with milk and honey and now desolate, you will think the worst. This is not just that our partner in the covenant is upset. Maybe the covenant is void. We are scattered out of the Land forever. The Land is desolate forever. You can violate the terms of a covenant so egregiously that the whole deal is off.

No, no. The covenant is with everyone, endures for eternity. There is no sunset clause. Do not, please, try to interpret your suffering as the end of the covenant.



2ND ALIYA (30:1-6)

When you are cast out of the Land to the 4 corners of the earth, you will take to heart your fate – and return to G-d. He will return to you, returning to you to gather you from the far-flung places. Even if you are at the ends of the earth, He will gather you and take you from there, to bring you back to this Land.

There is no sunset clause to the covenant; after the horrible suffering of exile, you will return.

This parshah, call Parshat HaTeshuva, is stunning. Moshe, on the banks of the Jordan, before entering the Land, describes exile from the Land in the distant future. And the return to it.

בס"ד

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The word "return" appears 7 times. We to Him. He to us. We take a step; He steps to us. But our first return is described as "we take it to heart". Return, teshuva begins modestly, quietly, heart murmurings. He knows our murmurings, as faint as they may be. Once He senses those murmurings, He empowers us, Gives us the strength, the will to build on our deepest pining. He is there, waiting for us to take the first step. Then He gives us more strength and more. Just allow the heart to murmur.



3RD ALIYA (30:7-14)

And He will implant in you love of Him. And you will return to Him. And He will be thrilled with you because your return is with sincerity, a full heart. For this Mitzvah is not sublime, as if needing one

to ascend the heavens or cross the ocean to retrieve it. Rather it is very close; on your lips and in your heart.

Moshe uses words of affection. Love, love of Hashem. Heart, all your heart. Moshe does not want to be only the teacher of halacha. He wants to be the teacher of our inner life as well. We need tutelage in not only *what to do*, but also in *how to feel*. Shake off your inhibitions. Let Him in, with love, with the deepest feelings of your heart, every day. The language is noticeably more emotive than the rest of the Torah. Moshe, as he is departing as leader, and departing from this world desperately wants to convey his deepest feelings and to reach our deepest emotions.



4TH ALIYA (30:15-31:6)

Life and good, death and evil lie before you. Life is a consequence of loyalty to the mitzvot. Destruction awaits lack of loyalty. Heaven and earth stand witness: life and death, blessing and curse lie before you. Choose life. Moshe goes. And speaks to the entire people. I am 120 years old. I will not bring you into the Land; G-d will lead you. And Yehoshua will lead you. G-d will do for you as He did with Sichon and Og. Be strong and firm, do not be afraid or worried; G-d will be with you. He will not let go of you or leave you.

These words are the last of Moshe's long speech. He will move on to speak of transition of leadership. But these last words are like a tincture, a dilution. After all is said and done, the stakes of this grand venture of mitzvot are nothing short of life and death. And with these words, Moshe prepares to take leave of the people. Nothing more to say. Choose life.



5TH ALIYA (31:7-13)

Moshe called Yehoshua, and in front of the entire people charged him: be strong and of good courage. For G-d will be with you; He will not abandon you, so be not afraid. And Moshe wrote the Torah and gave it to the bearers of the Aron. **Hakhel**: Every 7 years, during Sukkot, when all Israel gathers, read this Torah, so all will learn to have awe and observe the Torah.

The transition begins. Moshe encourages Yehoshua a lot – be chazak, strong, and amatz, mighty. Don't be afraid. Moshe is addressing the unspoken fears of both the people and Yehoshua. For although there is a promise to the Jewish people, who knows if I, Yehoshua, am deserving to be their leader. Maybe I am unworthy. That is the healthy humility that every leader should display. Who am I to lead this great nation?

Moshe conveys a crucial message. The covenant transcends any one person. Sure, I, Moshe implies, lived a unique life, speaking directly with G-d. But the covenant is greater than me. No one person is indispensable. You will be fine.



6TH ALIYA (31:14-19)

G-d calls Moshe and Yehoshua. A cloud appears. G-d says: this people will seek idols and abandon my covenant. I will leave them. I will hide my Face from them and they will feel I have abandoned them. I will surely Hide Myself from them. Write this song. Teach them this, so it shall be testimony for them.

This aliya turns rough. This is now not Moshe speaking, but G-d speaking to Moshe and Yehoshua. The Jews will rebel. And Hashem will withdraw, will leave the Jews subject to whatever calamities befall them. The greatest theological mystery is contained in this one verse: "I will hide My Face from you." Chilling. And it is repeated: I will surely hide My Face.

The greatest theological challenge, posed

in our time by the unfathomable tragedy of the Holocaust, must grapple with this Divine eclipse – Hiding His Face. When and why does He Hide His Face? The Torah states it but does not explain it.

And while Jewish history is replete with tragedies, moments of this Divine eclipse, at least in our time we are warmed by the opposite: we who have returned to His Land are warmed by the Shining of His Face upon us.



7TH ALIYA (31:20-30)

I will bring the people to the Land, but they will respond to their success with rebellion. Let this song be at the ready for when this occurs. Moshe wrote the song, teaching it to the people. He charged Yehoshua again to be strong.

Moshe commanded the Leviim to place the Torah on the side of the Aron, as a permanent testimony. For, I know this people and they are stubborn and cantankerous. Gather all the leaders so I can charge them, for I am sure that following my death, there will be disloyalty. And Moshe spoke the words of the song to the people.

This preamble to the song of Haazinu emphasizes again the inevitable rebelliousness of the people but it offers a remedy. A song. The song does not prevent the rebelliousness. It is to address the unspoken response to the suffering that results, the feeling of abandonment, the concern that the covenant is over, is broken.

For that we need poetry, the song of Haazinu. As the verse said at the beginning of the parsha, the hidden things are for Him. Our covenant is eternal. When we suffer, for how long, how to view our history – we will never be privy to knowing His Ways.

HAFTORAH
YESHAYAHU 61:10 - 63:9

This week's *haftorah* is the seventh and final installment of a series of seven *"Haftarot* of Consolation." The prophet begins on a high note, describing the great joy that we will experience with the Final Redemption, comparing it to the joy of a newly married couple.

Yeshayahu then declares his refusal to passively await the Redemption: "For Zion's sake I will not remain silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emerges like shining light..." He implores the stones of Yerushalayim not to be silent, day or night, until G-d restores Jerusalem and establishes it in glory.

The Haftorah then recounts Hashem's oath to eventually redeem Zion, when the Jews will praise G-d in Yerushalayim. The haftorah also contains a description of the punishment Hashem will mete out to Edom and the enemies of Israel.

Yeshayahu concludes with the famous statement:

"In all [Israel's] afflictions, He, too, is afflicted, and the angel of His presence redeemed them..."

Like a loving father who shares the pain of his child, G-d, too, shares the pain of His people, and awaits Redemption along with them. ■

May the Torah learned from this issue of Torah Tidbits be in loving memory of

רבקה בת יוסף ע"ה

Rifka Edelstein a"h

beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother on her 17th yahrzeit - 25 Elul

The Rosner, Edelstein, Sokoloff families

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

וילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה אל כל ישראל (לא:א)

"And Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel" (31:1)

Where did Moshe go? There is no reference to where Moshe spoke from. Even in Rashi's commentary, he quotes the words of the verse, but he neglects to include any commentary?

The Toldot Yitzchak (Rabbi Yitzchak Horovitz 1715-1767, Av Beit Din in Brody, Ukraine) explains that the verse teaches us that Moshe's destination was not the key issue. Moshe continually spoke the message of G-d wherever he went. Whatever Moshe was involved in and wherever he went, disseminated the word of G-d.

The Noam Megadim (Rabbi Eliezer Horovitz from Tarnogrod, Poland, 1806) emphasizes the last part of the Pasuk. Any individual can soar and accomplish much if his intentions are to help others and not just his own needs. Moshe was able to continue to go so long as his intentions were for the sake of all the Israelites as it says, "spoke these words to all of Israel."

Shabbat Shalom



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STATS

Nitzavim

51st of the 54 sedras; 8th of 11 in Devarim.
Written on 87 lines in a Torah (rank: 52).
4 Parshiyot; 1 open, 3 closed 40 pesukim - ranks 53 (10th in Devarim).
657 words - ranks 51 (8th in Devarim).
2575 letters - ranks 51 (8th in Devarim).

Vayeilech

52nd of the 54 sedras; 9th of 11 Devarim.
Written on 72 lines in a Torah (rank: 53).
3 Parshiyot; 2 open, 1 closed.
30 pesukim - ranks 54th (11th in Devarim).
553 words - ranks 53rd (10th in Devarim).
2123 letters - ranks 53rd (10th in Devarim).
Shortest sedra in number of pesukim; longest pesukim in the whole Torah.

MITZVOT

No mitzvot in Nitzavim.
Vayeilech has 2 positive mitzvot.

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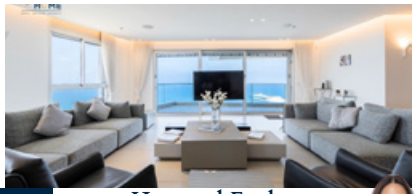
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"Reflections Upon the Year's End"

It is the last Sabbath of this year, and we will shortly usher in the New Year.

Without a doubt, there is quite a bit of sadness attached to this Sabbath, and indeed, to this time of year. Sure, we look forward to a new year with new blessings and new opportunities. But we cannot escape the fact that this year was marked with its frustrations, disappointments, and even, yes, tragedies.

It is in a state of physical and spiritual exhaustion that we find ourselves on this last Sabbath of the year. Our energies are spent, our vigor diminished. Amazingly, this mood is especially reflected in the opening verses of the second of this week's double Torah portion, *Nitzavim-Vayelech* (*Deuteronomy* 29:9-31:30).

"Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. He said to them: I am now 120 years old, I can no longer come and go. Moreover, the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not go across yonder Jordan.'" (*Deuteronomy* 31:1-2)

Who cannot hear resignation in the voice of Moses, and perhaps even a note of despair?

Rashi notes the words of our Sages, who are surely in tune with Moses' mood when they comment, "The traditions and the well-springs of wisdom were shutting down for him."

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, known because of his masterwork *Ohr HaChaim* as the "saintly" Ohr HaChaim, answers the question raised by the mystical Zohar: "Moses went...? Where did he go?" He suggests that the phrase "Moses went..." signifies that "he felt that his soul was leaving him, and that he was aware that his end was drawing near on that day."

And so, this year is waning, as is the life of Moses. A cloud of sadness envelops us, and though there is the glimmer of the New Year's light upon the horizon, it somehow feels that there is still a great distance between us and that light.

I once, in the grips of this mood of sadness during this same time of year, paid a visit to my parents' grave. This act of homage was consistent with the ancient Jewish custom of visiting the graves of one's ancestors during the month of Elul, just prior to Rosh Hashanah.

As I stood before my mother's grave, may she rest in peace, it was the fragrance of the sweet holiday meals which she prepared that rose to my nostrils, and the image of her

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kindling the holiday candles that appeared before my eyes.

As I stood before my father's grave, and he died quite a few years before my mother, I had a different experience entirely. My father was a prayer leader in the synagogue, a *baal tefilah*, literally a "master of prayer." I closed my eyes and remembered standing beside him as he positioned himself before the lectern at the front of the small synagogue in which he habitually prayed.

At that poignant moment, there emerged from the recesses of my memory a teaching of the sainted Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. Although I had not seen that teaching in print for many years, at that moment I could recall the text verbatim. It was a teaching on the very text which we are now considering: "And Moses went and spoke..."

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok pointed out that, when our Sages referred to the prayer leader, they sometimes said, "One goes down before the lectern;" but sometimes they said, "One passes before the lectern." Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, therefore, distinguishes between two modes of the experience of prayer.

In the first instance, the person feels spiritually inadequate, and turns to the words to lead him as he approaches God. Such a person "goes down before the lectern." This teaching becomes more impactful when one realizes that the Hebrew term for lectern, *teiva*, also means "word." He "goes down before the word, " relying upon the liturgy itself to compensate for his personal limitations.

In the second instance, on the other hand, we have the person who "passes before the lectern." This person "leads the words." He is, in a sense, spiritually independent of the text of the liturgy, so righteous is he. This, writes Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, was the level of Moses through most of his life.

"However, " concludes Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, "when Moses was at the end of his days and when the fountain of wisdom was no longer accessible to him, he regressed to the level in which 'words led him.' This is the meaning of 'And Moses went and spoke'—that he went to the word, which was above him."

As I stood before my father's grave, enchanted by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's profound insight into the experience of prayer, I realized that my father's unique talent was his ability to begin the services he led as one who "went down before the lectern". But then, with the sweetness of his melodic voice and with the passion of his unadulterated sincerity, he rose to a higher level, and not only "passed before the lectern" himself, but inspired others to ascend with him to that higher sphere.

As the current year ebbs away, we are overcome by remorse, and we regret our failures and shortcomings. We certainly feel spiritually inadequate. But we can take solace in the fact that we have access to "the words." In just a matter of days, we will be able to go "down before the lectern, " and allow the sacred words of the High Holiday liturgy to lead us to a higher and purer place.

Moreover, we can all be hopeful that we will be inspired, if only temporarily, to rise above the rank of those who "go down before the lectern, " and reach the spiritual heights of those who "pass before it."

Shana tova umetukah; a happy and sweet New Year. ■

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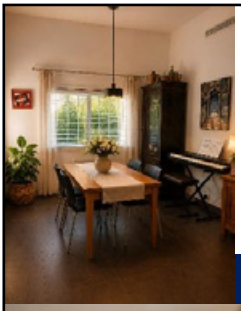
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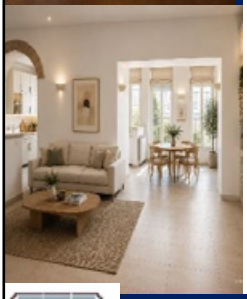
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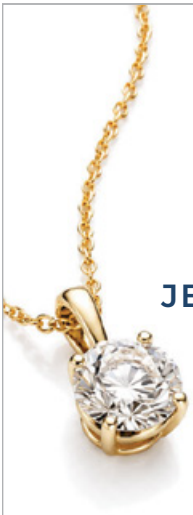
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Sounding, Hearing

No mitzva over the course of our calendar year is more impactful than the mitzva of *tekiat shofar*. And yet, like so much else surrounding the festival of Rosh Hashana, this mitzva is not commanded directly in the Torah text.

Instead, the obligation emerges obliquely out of the Torah's description of Rosh Hashana as a *Yom Terua*, a day of a broken (shofar) blast, and a *Zichron Terua*, a remembrance of a broken (shofar) blast.

The Torah's lack of clarity concerning the shofar's sounding creates ambiguity about the character of the mitzva itself. Specifically, the rabbis ask, are we each obligated *to sound the shofar* on Rosh Hashana, or are we each obligated to simply *hear the shofar blasts*?

Is tekiat shofar a mitzva of *sounding* or of *hearing*?

Mazal Tov to
Menachem Russek
& Deena Wasserman
on their marriage

Mazal Tov to Ita Rochel,
and the entire Wasserman,
Russek, Levine and Leff families

The answer to this question not only carries practical ramifications but shapes a centuries-old debate concerning the mitzva's philosophical underpinnings, as well.

Some authorities maintain that the Torah obligates each individual adult male *to actually blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana*

This approach, however, presents an obvious problem. Only select individuals are actually capable of properly sounding the shofar. How, then, can members of the general population fulfill their personal responsibility?

The solution to this problem, according to many authorities, lies in the application of the halachic principle of *shomeia k'oneh*, "one who hears is as one who recites."

Based on the concept of *areivut*, the deep interconnection between all Jews, the principle of *shomeia k'oneh* enables an individual to fulfill certain mitzvot through listening to another Jew's performance of those obligations. For this to happen, both the individual performing the mitzva and the listener must have their reciprocal relationship in mind.

Thus, if the *ba'al tokea*, the individual sounding the shofar, intends to do so on behalf of all those within earshot, and those listening aim to fulfill their mitzva through his shofar sounds, *the halacha regards each individual present as having personally sounded the shofar*.

Most other authorities, however, including the Rambam, adopt an entirely different approach to the mitzva of *tekiat shofar*. In their view, the mitzva does not require the

personal sounding of the shofar by each individual participant. On the contrary, these scholars maintain, the mitzva of *tekiat shofar* simply obligates one to *hear* the appropriate shofar blasts, even if those blasts are sounded by another.

The blessing adopted by most authorities over the years – and universally recited today in conjunction with the mitzva – mirrors this position:

Baruch ata Hashem, Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvosav, v'tzivanu lishmoa kol shofar.

Blessed are You, Hashem, our Lord, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us in His mitzvot and commanded us *to hear the sound of the shofar.*

Finally, yet other authorities raise specific halachic issues with each of the above classical approaches and offer compromise positions between the two. Whatever the upshot of this halachic debate, however, the question remains: Why isn't the Torah clearer in its exposition of the laws of *tekiat shofar*? Why leave the nature of this important mitzva shrouded in mystery?

One could argue that the textual ambiguity is deliberate. Perhaps the Torah wants us to recognize that there is a dual character to the mitzva of *tekiat shofar*. This mitzva may well be designed to remind us that there are times to "sound" and times to "hear."

The two dimensions of the mitzva will shift from moment to moment over the course of every Rosh Hashana.

At times, when words fail, the shofar blasts serve as prayers to be "sounded, " wordless pleas intended to pierce the heavenly vaults. In these moments, we transcend the limitations of speech, as through the sounding of the shofar we communicate to God the unspoken fears, concerns, hopes, and aspirations that lie deep within the recesses of our hearts.

Not everything can be put into words, we effectively declare. And we beseech God to accept the powerful emotions that remain unsaid.

The insertion and integration of the primary shofar sounds directly into the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amida underscores their role as wordless prayer.[1]

There are other times, however, when the shofar blasts are not meant to be "sounded, " but to be "heard." These are the moments when the demand upon us is *to stop talking and to listen*, to hear the myriad voices that should power our prayers.

In the shofar blasts we should hear the voices of our earliest progenitors, the patriarchs and matriarchs, whose search for God led them to establish the three daily prayer

1. Two traditions have risen concerning these shofar blasts, known as the *tekiot d'me'umad* (standing *tekiot*). Ashkenazim limit their sounding to chazan's repetition of the Amida, while Sephardim sound them during the congregation's silent recitation of the Amida, as well.
In each case, these shofar blasts are connected to the three major sections of the Rosh Hashana Musaph Amida: *Malchiot* (Kingship), *Zichronot* (Remembrances), and *Shofarot* (Shofar Blasts).

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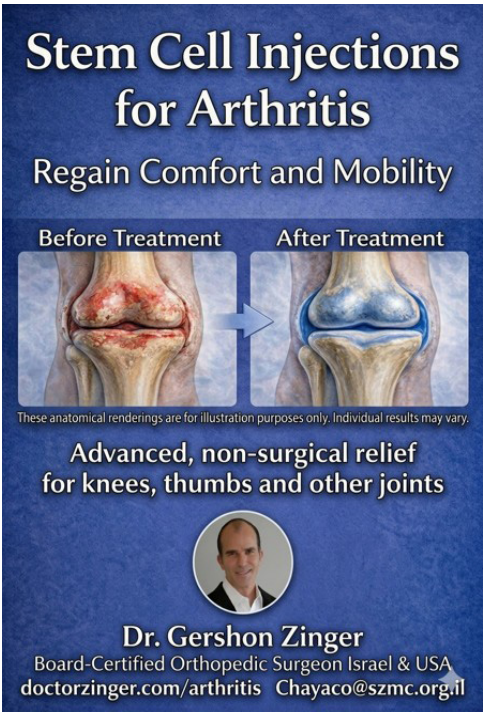
services; the voice of King David, whose psalms bring the myriad of human emotions into our tefilla each day; the voices of scholars over the ages who further shaped our prayers; the voices of Jews across time, whose unrealized dreams for the future are now dependent on us; and, above all, the voice of God, telling us of His dreams for our people, of the challenges of our time that must be met.

And, if we listen carefully enough, we will also hear in those shofar blasts the voices of our own hearts, reminding us of the true priorities that we know, deep down, should guide our lives. Heard from a place of open sincerity, the shofar blasts call us back to the truly important facets of our lives, so often lost in the daily grind.

On Rosh Hashana, the shofar must be both "sounded" and "heard." Whether this happens is entirely dependent upon us.

The mitzva of *tekiat shofar* demands that we be sensitive to the rhythm of the festival, to the shifting moments of the days. We must be ardent in our prayers, yet contemplative in our thoughts. Only if we both "sound" and "hear" the shofar will we achieve our Rosh Hashana goals. ■

Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU Press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."









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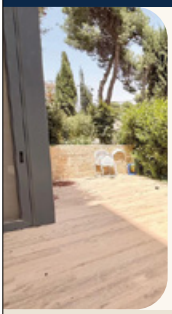
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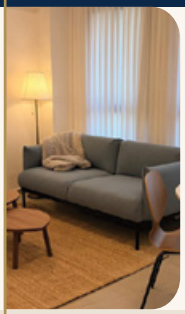
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May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Arieh zt"l

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To Renew our Days

The moment had come. Moses was about to die. He had seen his sister Miriam and brother Aaron pre-decease him. He had prayed to God – not to live forever, not even to live longer, but simply, 'Please let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon' (Deut. 3:25). His request was simple. Please let me complete the journey. Let me reach the destination. But God said no:

'It is enough!' the Lord said... 'Never speak to Me about this again!' *(Deut. 3:26)*

God, who had acceded to almost every other prayer Moses prayed, refused him this.[1]

What then did Moses do on these last days of his life? He told the people:

'At the end of every seventh year, the year of remission, of cancelling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place that He will choose, you shall read out this law in the presence of all Israel, for them to hear. Assemble the people - men, women, and children, including migrants living in your towns - so that they may listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully keep all the words of this Law, and so that their children, who do not know it, may listen and learn to be in awe of the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.' *(Deut. 31:10-13)*

There is no specific reference to this command in the later books of Tanach, but there are accounts of very similar gatherings, covenant renewal ceremonies, in which the king or his equivalent assembled the nation, reading from the Torah or reminding the people of their history, and calling on them to reaffirm the terms of their destiny as a people in covenant with God.

That, in fact, is what Moses had been doing for the last month of his life. The entire book of Deuteronomy is a restatement of the covenant, almost forty years and one generation after the original covenant at Mount Sinai. There is a similar occurrence in Tanach, after

1. There is an important lesson here: It is the prayers we pray for others, and others pray for us, that are answered; not always those we pray for ourselves. That is why when we pray for the healing of the sick or the comfort of the mourners we do so specifically "in the midst of others" who are ill or bereaved. As Judah Halevi pointed out in *The Kuzari*, the interests of individuals may conflict with one another, which is why we pray communally, seeking the collective good.

Joshua fulfils his mandate as Moses' successor, brings the people across the Jordan, leads them in their battles, and settles the land.[2] Another occurred many centuries later in the reign of King Josiah. His grandfather, Menasseh, who reigned for fifty-five years, was one of the worst of Judah's kings, introducing various forms of idolatry including child sacrifice. Josiah sought to return the nation to its faith, ordering (among other things) the cleansing and repair of the Temple. It was during this restoration that a copy of the Torah was discovered,[3] sealed in a hiding place to prevent it being destroyed during the many decades in which idolatry flourished and the Torah was almost forgotten. The king, deeply affected by this discovery, convened a *Hakhel*-type national assembly:

Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the Temple of the Lord with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets - all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord - to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes, and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the Covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the Covenant.' *(II Kings 23:1-3)*

The most famous *Hakhel*-type ceremony

2. See chapter 24 of the Book of Joshua.
3. This is Radak and Ralbag's understanding of the event. Abarbanel finds it difficult to believe that there were no other copies of the Torah preserved even during the idolatrous periods of the nation's history and suggests that what was discovered sealed in the Temple was Moses' own Torah, written by his hand.



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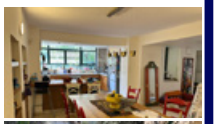
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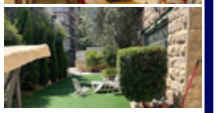
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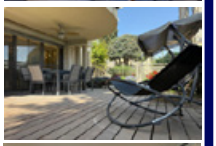
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was the national gathering convened by Ezra and Nehemiah after the second wave of returnees from Babylon (Neh. 8-10). Standing on a platform by one of the gates to the Temple, Ezra read out the Torah, after positioning Levites throughout the crowd so that they could explain to the people what was being said. The ceremony that began on Rosh Hashanah culminated after Succot when the people collectively "bound themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord" (Neh. 10:29).

The other command from our parsha – the last Moses gave the people – was contained in the words: 'Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites, ' understood by rabbinic tradition to be the command to write, or at least take part in writing, a Sefer Torah. Why specifically these two commands, at this time?

Something profound was being transacted here. Recall that God had seemed brusque in His dismissal of Moses' request to be allowed to cross the Jordan. 'Enough!... Never speak to Me about this again.' Is this the Torah, and this its reward? Is this how God repaid the greatest of the prophets? Surely not.

In these last two commands, God was teaching Moses - and through him, Jews throughout the ages - what immortality is, on earth, not just in heaven. We are mortal because we are physical, and no physical organism lives forever. We grow up, we grow old, we grow frail, we die. But we are not only physical. We are also spiritual. In these last two commands, we are taught what it is to be part of a spirit that has not died in four thousand years and will not die so long as there is a sun, moon, and stars.[4]

God showed Moses, and us, how to become part of a civilisation that never grows old. It stays young because it repeatedly renews itself. The last two commands of the Torah are about renewal: first collective, then individual.

Hakhel, the covenant renewal ceremony every seven years, ensured that the nation would regularly rededicate itself to its mission. I have often argued that there is one place in the world where this covenant renewal ceremony still takes place: the United States of America.

The concept of covenant played a decisive role in European politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, especially in Calvin's Geneva and in Scotland, Holland, and England. Its longest-lasting impact, though, was on America, where it was taken by the early Puritan settlers and remains part of its political culture even today. Almost every Presidential Inaugural Address – every four years since 1789 – has been explicitly or implicitly a covenant renewal ceremony, a contemporary form of *Hakhel*. In 1987, speaking at the bicentennial celebration of the American Constitution, President Ronald Reagan described the constitution as a kind

4. See Jeremiah 31.



of "covenant we've made not only with ourselves but with all of mankind… It's a human covenant; yes, and beyond that, a covenant with the Supreme Being to whom our founding fathers did constantly appeal for assistance." America's duty, he said, is "to constantly renew their covenant with humanity… to complete the work begun 200 years ago, that grand noble work that is America's particular calling – the triumph of human freedom, the triumph of human freedom under God."[5]

If *Hakhel* is national renewal, the command that we should each take part in the writing of a new Sefer Torah is personal renewal. It was Moses' way of saying to all future generations: It is not enough for you to say, I received the Torah from my parents (or grandparents or great-grandparents). You have to take it and make it new in every generation.

One of the most striking features of Jewish life is that from Israel to Palo Alto, Jews are among the world's most enthusiastic users of information technology and have contributed disproportionately to its development (Google, Facebook, Waze). But we still write the Torah exactly as it was done thousands of years ago – by hand, with a quill, on a parchment scroll. This is not a paradox; it is a profound truth. People who carry their past with them, can build the future without fear.

Renewal is one of the hardest of human undertakings. Some years ago, I sat with the man who was about to become Prime Minister of Britain. In the course of our conversation he said, "What I most pray for is that when we get there (he meant, 10 Downing Street), I never forget why I wanted to get there." I suspect he had in mind the famous words of Harold Macmillan, British Prime

5. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States,* Ronald Reagan, 1987, 1040-43.

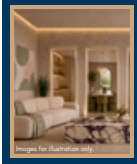
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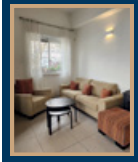
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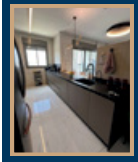
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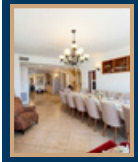
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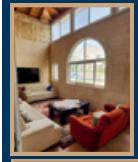
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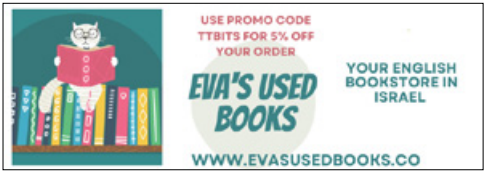
Minister between 1957 and 1963, who, when asked what he most feared in politics, replied, "Events, dear boy, events."

Things happen. We are blown by passing winds, caught up in problems not of our making, and we drift. When that happens, whether to individuals, institutions, or nations, we grow old. We forget who we are and why. Eventually we are overtaken by people (or organisations or cultures) that are younger, hungrier, or more driven than us.

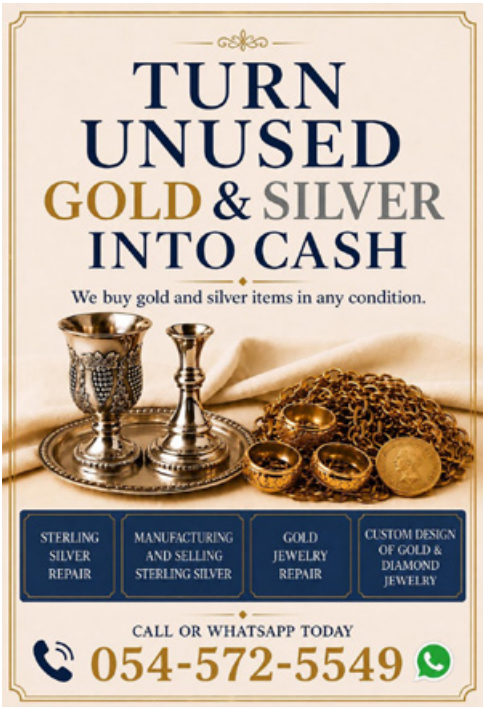
The only way to stay young, hungry, and driven is through periodic renewal, reminding ourselves of where we came from, where we are going, and why. To what ideals are we committed? What journey are we called on to continue? Of what story are we a part?

How precisely timed, therefore, and how beautiful, that at the very moment when the greatest of prophets faced his own mortality, that God should give him, and us, the secret of immortality – not just in heaven but down here on earth. For when we keep to the terms of the covenant, and making it new again in our lives, we live on in those who come after us, whether through our children or our disciples or those we have helped or influenced. We "renew our days as of old" (Lamentations 5:21). Moses died, but what he taught, and what he sought, lives on. ■

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PROBING THE PROPHETS

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As a Bride and Groom

This Shabbat's haftarah, the very last of the seven haftarot of comfort, opens with Yishayahu's joyful cry, "Sos Assis BaShem". Actually, the navi himself is not celebrating but, rather, he is quoting Israel's future ecstasy upon recognizing how Hashem's prophecies have, indeed, come to fruition. It is also quite moving to hear the navi compare the future joy and bliss of Israel to that of a bride and groom (in the very first pasuk). And, although we might think that this comparison is commonly used by our prophets, we would be surprised to find that it used but seven times in all of Sifrei N'vi'im: once in Sefer Yoel, four times in Sefer Yirmiyahu, and but twice in Sefer Yishayahu. And, while Yoel demands that "bride and groom" must leave the wedding canopy to join the nation-wide repentance, and Yirmiyahu uses the comparison (three out of the four times) as a warning that there would ***no longer*** be the joyous voice of "bride and groom" in Yerushalayim, Yishayahu, the prophet of nechama, uses the connection of "bride and groom" – both times that it is used - as expressions of deepest love and a blissful relationship of Israel and their Creator.



In commenting upon this prophetic relationship, Rav Soloveitchik quotes the Rambam's commentary on Mishna Avot [1:6] and then he describes Maimonides' three levels of friendships/relationships, Pragmatic Friendship, Empathetic Friendship and Value Friendship in the following way:

Pragmatic Friendship is seen as an association where two people need each other for practical benefits, as in a business partnership. When their mutual needs cease – the friendship lapses.

Empathetic Friendship involves a caring responsiveness and a sharing of innermost feelings. Life's burdens are lightened and its celebrations are heightened in a relationship of emotional rapport. Such friendships are firmly based and enduring.

Value Friendship allows for the deepest level of friendship to thrive for, aside from their mutual commitment, they share a dedication to a noble idea and lofty cause. Theirs is a unity of purpose and a joining of dreams. Their relationship transcends their personal concerns.

Rav Soloveitchik takes these "friendships" and applies them to "Bride and Groom" relationship. Human beings are subject to the same biological needs that are common to all animal life. However, as the Rav explains, they

also possess transcendental yearning that demands more than a drive for self-preservation or physical indulgence. As human beings, we possess a soul that transcends more than simple animal existence, and understanding this truth, is an essential ingredient in building a meaningful marriage. He writes: in his work "***Reflections***":

A meaningful marriage must, at the least, partake of the second level of friendship which reflects a depth of feeling for each other. But only with the addition of the third level does a marriage assume a sublimity of purpose: two individuals who are joined by a noble vision.

The lofty words of Rav Soloveichik should help inspire us to understand – more clearly - the expected relationship of Israel toward Hashem, as Yishayahu visions in his nevu'ah. True, we could never equate the bond between "Bride and Groom" to that of Man and the Divine. But the importance of enabling all of Hashem's nation to transcend the mere existence of animal life and develop a deeper relationship with their Creator is certainly a challenge we must strive to meet!

And, on this last Shabbat of 5786, I also believe that the message of "Bride and Groom" should inspire us to reflect upon our own relationships at home and to renew those deepest bonds of friendship and closeness that, over the years, may have weakened.■

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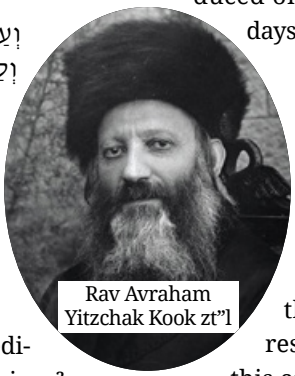
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Why Is the Torah Called a Song?

The final mitzvah in the Torah is the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah. The Torah commands:

וְעַתָּה כִּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמְּדָהּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׂימָהּ בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה־לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בִּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to Bnei Yisrael; place it in their mouths, so that this song shall be for Me a witness among Bnei Yisrael.[1]



Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook zt"l

Rashi explains that the immediate reference is to Shirat Ha'azinu.[2] Hazal, however, understand the *pasuk* more broadly as referring to the Torah itself and derive from it the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah.[2]

This raises two fundamental questions. First, why is the Torah called a *shira*, a song? Certainly, there is an element of melody in Torah learning, as Hazal emphasize the importance of learning Torah with proper cadence and tune. Yet the comparison seems to convey something much deeper. In what sense is Torah itself a song?

Second, why does this description appear only at the very end of the Torah? If the Torah is a song, that should be true from Bereshit onward. Why is this title introduced only in Moshe Rabbeinu's final days?

THE SONG OF A NATION

Rav Kook[3], addresses the second question. He notes that this section was delivered after the covenant of *Arvot Moav*, where a new dimension of Jewish responsibility emerged, the principle of *arvut*, mutual responsibility. Hazal derive from this covenant the foundational concept: **כל** ישראל ערבים זה לזה - *All Jews are responsible for one another.*[4]

This concept is possible because the Jewish people are considered, in a profound sense, a single organism. What affects one Jew affects all Jews. According to Rav Kook, it is only after this covenant of collective responsibility that the Torah can properly be called a *shirah*.

A song is not created by a single note. It emerges when many voices combine into a unified harmony. Similarly, the Torah

1. Devarim 31:19
2. Sanhedrin 21b

3. Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah, *Mo'adei HaRe'iyah*
4. Shavuot 39a; see also Rosh Hashana 29a

Mazal Tov to
Aytan & Rivki Himelstein and family
on the birth of their grandson

reaches its fullest expression when it is lived and upheld not merely by individuals, but by the entirety of *Klal Yisrael.*

Rav Kook develops this idea further by connecting it to Eretz Yisrael. Torah in exile often focuses upon the spiritual growth of the individual. Torah in Eretz Yisrael, however, reveals an additional dimension: the building of a nation and the expression of the collective soul of the Jewish people. In Eretz Yisrael, the Jew experiences himself not only as a private individual, but as part of the destiny, mission, and soul of the nation. Torah becomes a national song rather than merely a personal discipline.

THE SYMPHONY OF TORAH

A second dimension of Torah as song is offered by the *Torah Temima* in his Siddur commentary, *Baruch She'amar*. At the conclusion of several *messechtot* of Shas, and at the end of our Shabbat morning prayers, we recite:

תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם שנאמר: וכל בניך לימודי ה' ורב שלום בניך. אל תקרי בניך אלא בוניך.

The scholars increase peace in the world, as it is stated: 'All your children shall be taught by Hashem, and great shall be the peace of your children.' Read not banayich (your children), but bonayich (your builders).[5]

Why is this passage chosen specifically to conclude a massechet? This declaration encapsulates one of the deepest principles of Torah: אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים - multiple viewpoints within Torah can all be expressions of Divine truth.[6]

Throughout Shas we encounter countless disagreements: regarding ruling of permitted and prohibited; pure and impure; obligated and exempt; stringent and lenient and more. How can so many opposing opinions all be part of Torah?

Imagine an orchestra composed of violins, cellos, clarinets, trumpets, french horns, and percussion. If one listens to each instrument in isolation, the sounds may appear incomplete or even discordant. One instrument is deep and resonant; another is sharp and piercing; a third seems to move in an entirely different direction. Yet when the conductor brings them together, they form a magnificent symphony. So too with Torah. Each Rabbi contributes a unique voice. Each opinion adds a different note. Standing alone, one perspective may seem incomplete. Together, however, they create the breathtaking harmony of *Torah Shebe'al Peh*.

This, suggests the *Baruch She'amar,* is why Torah is called a *shira.* Its beauty emerges not from uniformity, but from harmony. The many voices of Torah combine into a single Divine composition.

That is also the reason that we conclude a massechet with the declaration that Torah scholars increase peace in the world. After encountering page after page of debate and disagreement, we affirm that these arguments are not fractures within Torah. They are the very notes that create its music.

THE FINAL LESSON OF THE TORAH

Perhaps this is why the Torah reserves the title *shira* for its closing chapters. At the beginning of the Torah, we encounter



5. Berakhot 64a; Yeshayahu 54:13.
6. Eruvin 13b.

individual stories, individual mitzvot, and individual journeys. By the end, however, we have discovered the larger picture. We have learned that Torah is not merely about personal growth. It is about joining a people, participating in a covenant, and contributing our unique voice to a collective mission. A song is beautiful not because every note is identical, but because every note knows how to join something greater than itself.

The final mitzvah of the Torah therefore reminds us that our task is not merely to learn Torah, but to become part of its song. Each Jew contributes a distinct melody. Each generation adds its own harmony. When the voices of *Klal Yisrael* unite, in responsibility, purpose and in devotion to Torah, the result is the greatest *shira* ever composed: the eternal song of Am Yisrael and Torat Hashem. ■

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Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy of Tosh zy'a, the exalted Tosher Rebbe, was an extraordinary holy man, a towering figure of *Avodas Hashem* and *Kedusha.* Beloved for his impeccable *midos tovos* and unconditional love for every Jew, the Rebbe founded "Kiryas Tosh", a Canadian shtetl in memory and in honor of the Hungarian city destroyed during the War.

One frigid Yom Kippur morning in the Beis Medrash of Kiryas Tosh, a simple, unlearned Jew, a plumber, who had joined davening for the High Holidays, left the room during Musaf, returning a few minutes later. His hands were streaked with oil and his shirt stained with grease, but he looked very pleased. "Now it won't be freezing here anymore, " he announced to the others sitting in his section. Proudly, he told them he'd gone to the boiler room to investigate why the heating wasn't working in the Beis Medrash, and found a problem with the old oil tank, which he then repaired, and it restarted. *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs, " he said.

Later that night at the Rebbe's tish following the fast, someone told the Tosher Rebbe the unfortunate story of this Jew, who was so unlearned that he was unaware that what he had done was completely forbidden according to Halacha.

The Rebbe looked pained, but just for a moment. His face then turned radiant, and with his signature sweetness told all of those assembled: "That he doesn't know is not his fault; he never learned! It's our obligation to help him, to teach him. But the depth of his words and his intentions, are a message for all of us: *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — 'If we live with warmth down here, if we are on fire with Torah, if our davening is 'warm', then we will create warmth in *Shamayim* as well!"

At the core of the Selichos liturgy, we return over and over again to the refrain of the *Yud Gimel Midos*, Hashem's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. Following the *cheit haMeraglim,* the sin of the spies, we experience Divine disappointment in our failure to believe in ourselves and Hashem's promise to deliver us into the Holy Land. Moshe pleads with Hashem to give the Jewish nation another chance: *Selach na l'avon ha'am hazeh k'godel chasdecha,* "Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this Nation according to Your great kindness." The Torah continues, *Vayomer Hashem, Salachti K'devarecha,* "And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven them in accordance with your word." (Bamidbar, 14:18-20)

A fundamental teaching of the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* interprets a pasuk in Tehillim, *Hashem Tzilcha*, "G-d is your protective shadow" (Tehillim 121:5), and sheds 'light' on our *Selichos* liturgy. David haMelech's phrase also

implies that Hashem's 'actions' in the world above are a reflection of our actions below. Physically, our shadow 'follows us' and moves whenever we move. Thus whatever we choose and do in this world, the *Ribbono Shel Olam,* our Shadow, 'chooses' and does as well.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l (*Alei Shur*, Vol. 2) suggests an explanation why a "shadow" acts as an apt metaphor for Hasem's protection of us. A shadow is unique in that it reflects whatever is held against the light. If our small finger is set before the light, the shadow created will be small. If our whole hand is held up, the shadow is greater. This is a way of framing Hashem's 'reaction' to us in the realm of faith. To the degree that we place our whole trust and reliance in Hashem, the more Hashem will provide what we need.

Vayomer Hashem, Salachti K'devarecha…. Rashi says this means *Bishvil mah she'amarta*, "because (as a result of) of what you said. Selichos helps us prepare us to stand before Hashem, with contrition and sincerity, formally addressing our missteps and shortcomings. We awaken the recognition that *Hashem Tzilecha* , "G-d is our Shadow, " and is waiting to and willing to forgive us *k'dvarecha*, 'according to our words of request', according to our own will to be forgiven.

As we approach the high Holidays, we can pause to consider: how much do we really believe that Hashem is hearing our words and forgiving us? How much significance and importance do we subscribe to our prayers, apology and supplications before Hashem? Are we actually willing to be forgiven and to start our lives anew?

For as the well intentioned plumber of Tosh said, *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben*, "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs." May we believe in Hashem's fiery love for us above, and in our ability to fix and restart ourselves below.

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

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.







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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Parshat Nitzavim contains what we often call *Parshat HaTeshuva* — the Torah's description of the process of returning to *Hashem*.

But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these pesukim is that they do not describe *teshuva* merely as a *mitzvah* or an aspiration, but as a **promise**.

"והיה כי יבאו עליך כל הדברים האלה... ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו... ושב ה' אלקיך את שבותך ורחמך."

There is a striking progression in these words.

"ושבת עד ה' אלקיך" — you will return toward *Hashem*.

And then:

"ושב ה' אלקיך את שבותך" — *Hashem* will return and restore you.

The *Torah* seems to be telling us that *teshuva* is not simply a journey that we undertake alone. There is a Divine promise embedded within the journey itself: when we turn toward *Hashem*, *Hashem* turns toward us.

This may help us understand the famous words that follow:

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"כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוך היום לא נפלאת היא ממך ולא רחוקה היא... כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו."

Rashi explains that the *Torah* is not hidden or inaccessible; it has been brought close to us.

Rabbeinu Bachaya similarly emphasizes the accessibility of this *mitzva*, expressed through **"בפיך ובלבבך."**

And the ***Ramban*** famously understands **"כי המצוה הזאת"** as referring to the *mitzva* of *teshuva*.

But if *teshuva* means genuine change, why does the *Torah* describe it as something so close?

Perhaps because the *Torah* is not promising that change will always be easy. It is promising that **return will always remain possible**.

A person can become distant. We can make mistakes, develop habits that are difficult to break, and sometimes feel that the distance between who we are and who we want to be has become too great.

The Torah's response is simple:

"לא בשמים היא... ולא מעבר לים היא."

Teshuva is never beyond our reach.

And then the *Torah* takes the promise one step further:

"ומל ה' אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך לאהבה את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך."

At the beginning of the process, **we return**.

At the end, ***Hashem* circumcises the heart**.

There is a dimension of *teshuva th*at we must initiate, but there is also a dimension that is ultimately the work of *Hashem*.

The ***Sefat Emet, the Gerrer Rebbe zy'a***, in

his discussion of these *pesukim*, emphasizes that the inner world of a Jew remains connected to *Hashem*, even when our perspective and understanding have become obscured. *Teshuva* is therefore not the creation of an entirely new self, but the return to an inner world, one's true self, that has never disappeared.

Rav Kook zy'a develops this idea in *Orot HaTeshuva* in a broader and deeply hopeful way. *Teshuva* is not simply a reaction to our mistakes, and result of the desire to shed ourselves of the guilt of our past misdeeds, rather *teshuva* is a fundamental movement within life itself—a return to one's true self, and ultimately to one's source, to *Hashem*.

Seen this way, *teshuva* is not only something we are commanded to do, rather something the *Torah* **promises will remain possible**.

Perhaps that is the significance of the repeated language of return in *Nitzavim*:

"ושבת"

"ושב"

"ומל ה' אלקיך את לבבך."

We turn toward *Hashem*, and *Hashem* turns toward us.

The promise of *teshuva* is therefore not that we will never fall, nor that change will always be easy. It is something more fundamental:

We are never beyond return.

As we approach *Rosh Hashana*, perhaps that is enough to hear in the words of our verse:

"כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד."

The way back remains close and the *Torah* promises that when we begin to take that first step, *Hashem* will meet us there, and help us to move forward.

Yehi Ratzon, may we indeed be blessed to experience this great promise of return.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

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Rambam: Letters and Introdu
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

11:25 am
P'shat in the Parsha | **Rabbi**

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Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 am
Building Character and Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

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OU KASHRUT PAGE

BY RABBI EZRA FRIEDMAN
Director, The Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education

Eating Out in Israel – Part 3

When addressing the issue of certifying food-service establishments in Israel, the obstacles are significant. Israel has an enormous number of restaurants, caterers, cafés, hotels, event halls, and other food-service establishments. In some cases, these establishments are very small and isolated, making them difficult and costly to certify properly. In other cases, establishments can be extremely large, with multiple kitchens, preparation areas, storage facilities, and hundreds of employees. These larger operations present an entirely different set of challenges for a kosher certification agency.

Another important factor is the population that many establishments are trying to serve. A significant portion of Israel's food-service industry is geared toward the general, non-religious population. As a result, there is often a preference for the least expensive and least demanding level of kosher certification. Higher standards generally require more supervision, more expensive ingredients, additional equipment, and stricter procedures, all of which increase operating costs.

It should be emphasized that the purpose of this series is not to disparage different kosher standards in Israel or to frighten consumers away from eating out. There are many restaurants, caterers, hotels, and event halls operating under excellent and highly reliable kosher supervision. Rather, the purpose of this series is to provide consumers with knowledge and guidance so that those who are looking for a higher level of kashrus can understand what questions to ask and what standards to look for.

LEAFY VEGETABLES

Over the last several decades, the issue of insect infestation in fruits and vegetables has become a major concern in the kosher food industry. Leafy vegetables and other produce can contain insects that are difficult to detect, particularly when they are hidden within folds and crevices of the vegetable.

Produce such as lettuce, herbs, basil, spinach, parsley, and similar leafy vegetables can present significant halachic concerns. The issue is not merely theoretical; visible insects can be found in produce that has not been properly inspected or grown under controlled conditions.

The Israeli kosher-supervision industry, particularly the Mehadrin certifications, has made significant advances in addressing this problem. One of the most important developments has been the use of controlled growing systems and specialized greenhouses designed to greatly reduce the likelihood of insect infestation. These systems are carefully monitored, and the produce is subsequently inspected according to the standards of the certifying agency.

This has dramatically changed the way many kosher establishments deal with leafy vegetables. Rather than relying exclusively

on the consumer or kitchen staff to discover insects after the produce has arrived at the restaurant, the goal is to prevent the problem at the source.

The Chief Rabbinate has made efforts to address this phenomenon and establish procedures for dealing with infested produce. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between the kosher status of produce sold in a supermarket and the standards expected of a certified food-service establishment. Supermarkets are generally permitted to sell fresh produce even when that produce may have a significant infestation risk. The responsibility for properly checking such produce rests with the consumer.

For a kosher restaurant, however, the situation is different. To create a viable system all leafy vegetables should only be from greenhouse grown supervised produce that prevents any type of infestation. Mashgichim should also routinely check the produce to make sure the non-infested standards are met.

TERUMOT AND MA'ASROT

Living in Eretz Yisrael comes with the tremendous privilege of observing the **mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz**—the agricultural mitzvot that apply specifically to produce grown in the Land of Israel. Among these are **terumah, ma'aser**, and the various laws associated with the agricultural cycles of the Land, including **Shemittah**.

For a food-service establishment in Israel, these mitzvot create another important area of responsibility.

Many organized restaurants purchase their produce from large distributors or centralized storage facilities. These facilities may have a mashgiach who ensures that the appropriate tithes are separated before the produce reaches the restaurant. The same type of system is often used by large supermarket chains.

However, not every restaurant operates this way.

Specialty restaurants, chef-driven establishments, and restaurants that pride themselves on using unique or locally sourced produce may purchase directly from individual farmers or specialty growers. In such cases, the usual centralized system may not be sufficient. The kosher supervisor must determine whether the produce has been properly tithed and, where necessary, ensure that the appropriate **terumot and ma'asrot** are taken.

This requires attention to detail. The mashgiach should verify that each shipment of produce comes from an approved source and that the necessary documentation accompanies the order. Where appropriate, the documentation should contain the relevant signature, stamp, or other confirmation that the produce has been properly handled according to halachic requirements.

WINE AND ALCOHOL

Historically, many alcoholic beverages were sometimes approved without the same level of scrutiny applied to other ingredients. Today, however, kosher agencies are much more aware of the potential kashrus concerns associated with alcoholic beverages.

Whisky, beer, tequila, liqueurs, flavored spirits, and other alcoholic products can contain a variety of ingredients and may undergo complicated production processes. These can include flavorings, colorants, additives, aging processes, and equipment shared with non-kosher products. Consequently, the assumption that an alcoholic beverage is automatically kosher simply because it contains alcohol is not sufficient.

Wine has an additional and particularly important set of halachic requirements.

The production of kosher wine or grape juice requires Jewish participation and supervision throughout the relevant stages of production. But the concerns do not end once the wine has been produced.

There is a separate halachic issue regarding the handling of **non-mevushal wine**. Under the relevant laws of *stam yayin*, wine that has not undergone the appropriate cooking process cannot be handled or poured by a non-Jew. Many authorities also extend the practical concern to wine being handled by a person who is not considered *Shomer Shabbat* for these purposes.

This creates a unique challenge in Israeli food service.

In much of the kosher food industry outside Israel, the overwhelming majority of wine and grape juice served in kosher establishments is **mevushal**. This allows the wine to be handled and poured by staff without creating the same concern.

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The Israeli market is different. There is a much larger market for quality non-mevushal wines, and many Israeli consumers prefer them because they are viewed as superior in taste and quality. Consequently, a restaurant may have perfectly kosher non-mevushal wine on its menu while employing staff who may not be permitted to handle it according to the standards of the certifying agency.

Therefore, consumers who are particular about this issue should ascertain what the establishment's policy is regarding non-mevushal wine. The same question applies to caterers, wedding halls, hotels, and other venues where wine may be opened and poured by numerous employees.

In certain establishments one of the mashgiach's responsibilities may be to ensure that non-mevushal wine is opened and poured only by an individual who meets the necessary halachic requirements. This scenario is not always ideal and isn't always recommended.

KASHERING INTERNAL ORGANS

Another issue that deserves particular attention in Israel is the preparation of internal organs.

It is quite common in Israel to find various organs served as part of a meat menu, including **liver, heart, spleen**, and other internal organs. These products are also readily available in many Israeli supermarkets and butcher shops.

Unlike ordinary cuts of meat, certain internal organs—most notably liver—require a special koshering process because of the large amount of blood contained within them. This process requires careful attention to detail. The liver must be prepared properly, the broiling must be performed correctly, and

the equipment and procedures must meet the requirements of halacha. A mistake in the process can create serious kashrus concerns.

Outside Israel, it is common for kosher meat distributors to sell these organs only after they have already undergone the necessary koshering process. This reduces the possibility of mistakes at the retail or food-service level. In Israel, however, it is much more common to encounter raw internal organs that still require proper koshering.

For this reason, kosher certifiers must pay particular attention to how these products enter the restaurant and who is responsible for preparing them.

Ideally, only properly trained personnel should be responsible for the koshering of internal organs. In a restaurant operating under a strict kosher program, this responsibility should preferably be placed under the direct supervision of the **mashgiach** or a properly trained **Ne'eman Kashrut**. The procedures should be clearly defined, and the supervisor should ensure that the process is performed consistently.

This is particularly important in restaurants that serve large quantities of liver or other internal organs. The greater the volume of production, the greater the need for a reliable system that does not depend simply on an employee's memory or personal knowledge.

BUILDING A PROPER KOSHER PROGRAM

As we can see, there are numerous issues surrounding food service in Israel. The examples discussed in this series represent only some of the many areas that a kosher certification agency must consider.

A proper program therefore requires **clear standards, reliable suppliers, well-trained staff, effective supervision, and constant attention to detail**. Most importantly, the program must be designed around the specific establishment. A small café, a large restaurant, a hotel, and a wedding hall may all require very different systems of supervision.

For the consumer, understanding these issues provides an important tool. The goal is not to create suspicion or to discourage people from eating out. Rather, it is to understand what stands behind a reliable kosher certification and why different certifications may establish different standards.

In the end, **kosher certification is only as strong as the system that stands behind it.** ■

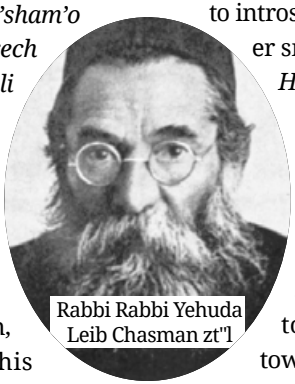
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Attuning Apathy

Moshe assembles *Am Yisrael* to renew their covenant with Hashem before entering the Land of Israel. Moshe says, *"Pen yesh bachem ish o' ishah... asher levavo poneh hayom mei'im Hashem...Ve'hayah be'sham'o et divrei ha'alah ha'zot ve'hitbarech be'levavo lemor shalom yehiyeh li ki be'shrirut libi elech...lo yoveh Hashem s'loach lo*—Perhaps there is among you a man or woman...whose heart strays this day from Hashem...And it will be, when he [such a person] hears the words of this oath, that he will bless himself in his heart, saying, "I will have peace, even if I follow my heart's desires" ... Hashem will not be willing to forgive him..." *Devarim* 29:17-18*)*


Rabbi Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman zt"l

How is it possible that one could hear the words of the covenant and think that if he breaks it and does what his heart desires, he will have peace?

Ibn Ezra *zt"l* understands it as having the following attitude. One may say that he will live his desired lifestyle yet believe that the merit of *tzadikim* and the community will protect him. Rav Gedalya Eisner *zt"l* explains that one must be aware that although the merit of great people is significant, it is only helpful when an individual engages in teshuvah and undertakes steps toward self-improvement. We say the heart stirring *piyut* of *U'netaneh Tokef* on Rosh Hashanah, emphasizing that Hashem counts and remembers each person; every individual is responsible for his own choices and decisions and undergoes his personal judgement. The month of Elul is the ideal time to connect with the energy of teshuvah and be stirred to introspect and make changes, however small, that will impact his *avodat Hashem* for the better.

Rav Leib Chasman *zt"l* describes the one who hears all of the terrible curses but says he will have peace even he does what his heart desires, as someone who will not be moved to make any significant shifts toward growth no matter what he knows to be true. The week of *Selichot* is a time to focus on Hashem's abundant kindnesses and how much gratitude we must show in return. It is a time to review and probe, to challenge ourselves to deepen our Torah learning and develop our middot further. Rav Chasman was known to hear people say, "Come, let us go to *Selichot*," and comment that it is more appropriate to say, "Come and let us ask for *selichot*, forgiveness." Let us be agents in becoming our best selves.

Indeed, notes the Ba'al Hatanya *zt"l* that the person described above very much reflects many of us. He explains that one

who says to himself, "this is my nature, this is who I am, and I can't change," is one whom Hashem is not willing to forgive. Self-development and refinement is our essence, we are charged with the mission to return to ourselves, to the pristine being that Hashem envisioned when He created each of us.

Here, the Torah warns us never to fall into a state of apathy and despair. As conduits of the Divine, we can access our "generative force," the force that created the world and with which we can each recreate ourselves. ■

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The Reach of Areivut

Parshat Nitzavim opens with the entire nation gathered before Moshe Rabeinu as he prepares them to enter yet another brit with Hashem. By this stage, we have already encountered numerous covenants, most recently in the *tochachah* of Ki Tavo, whose concluding pasuk explicitly describes it as a brit:

אֵלֶּה דִבְרֵי הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה לִכְרֹת אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב מִלְּבַד הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת אִתָּם בְּחֹרֵב.

"These are the words of the covenant that Hashem commanded Moshe to establish with the children of Israel in the land of Moav, in addition to the covenant He had made with them at Chorev."

Why, then, does Moshe introduce yet another brit in Parshat Nitzavim? What does this covenant add to those that preceded it?



BUILDING A SOCIETY OF AREIVUT

One important added feature of the brit of Nitzavim is *areivut*, mutual responsibility for other Jews. On the doorstep of Eretz Yisrael, Moshe emphasizes that religious responsibility can no longer remain purely individual. We are accountable not only for our own behavior but, in some sense, for one another. Chazal teach that this principle of *areivut* would become fully operative after we crossed the Jordan and accepted the covenant at Har Gerizim and Har Eival.

This shift was closely connected to the transition from desert existence to life in Eretz Yisrael. Under desert conditions, it was difficult to demand sustained communal responsibility. We did not yet live in permanent communities or inhabit a stable social structure. Our lives were transient, and even our most basic physical needs were supplied directly by Hashem. Food descended from Heaven, water was miraculously provided, and the protective clouds surrounded us. There was less need, and perhaps less opportunity, for us to build the structures of collective responsibility that ordinary national life requires. The desert did not yet require Jews to construct and sustain an enduring society together; Eretz Yisrael would.

Entering Eretz Yisrael changed the nature of Jewish life. We were no longer merely traveling together; we were now responsible for building a society together. We were about to become a settled society, divided into shevatim and communities, cultivating land, building cities, and constructing a

shared religious and social culture. Under these conditions, *areivut* became both possible and necessary.

An individual's religious responsibility now extended far beyond his own two feet. Everyone now bore some responsibility for the collective commons: what our society would look like, what values it would embody, and what kind of religious and moral atmosphere it would create.

A Jew cannot bury his head in the sand and concern himself only with his own private religious space. Living as part of a Jewish society means assuming responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of other Jews. The brit of Nitzavim prepares us for an enlarged religious identity: we serve Hashem not only as individuals, but as members of a people whose lives are bound to one another.

AREIVUT IN EXILE

And then we left Israel. Twice. We did not merely leave; we became scattered across the world. With the loss of sovereignty, *areivut* did not disappear, but its scope and expression changed. We continued to assume responsibility for fellow Jews, often with extraordinary devotion, but that responsibility was generally concentrated within the communities in which we lived. What largely disappeared was the broader national form of *areivut*: the ability to shape an entire Jewish public sphere, defend Jews through sovereign power, and assume responsibility for the collective Jewish future.

Halachically, *areivut* continued to demand that we assist others in the performance of mitzvot when they could not perform them themselves. We blow shofar for those who do not know how to blow on their own. Jewish communities also developed extensive systems of charity, education, and mutual assistance. Yet all of these operated within the constraints of exile. We could care for other Jews, but we could not exercise the full national *areivut* that becomes possible when the Jewish people live together as a sovereign society in their own land.

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RESTORING NATIONAL AREIVUT

Now we have returned to a sovereign Jewish state, and once again we are renewing the broader and more sweeping form of *areivut*. As a state, it is our responsibility to protect and defend the interests of every Jew. The State of Israel is not merely a state for its citizens. It carries responsibility for the welfare of Jews everywhere.

That responsibility can span years and even decades. Over the past few months, the IDF identified the burial sites of two soldiers who were killed in the War of Independence nearly 78 years ago. More recently, the remains of Yehuda Katz, a soldier killed fighting Syrian forces in Lebanon more than forty years ago, were recovered and brought to burial in Israel. These efforts reflect a refusal to abandon responsibility simply because time has passed. We share a sacred bond that obligates us to care for every Jew, in life and even in death, even when fulfilling that responsibility takes decades. This is the ethos of *areivut* upon which Jewish life is built and upon which the Jewish state must be built.

AREIVUT ACROSS GENERATIONS

Over the past few years, we have realized an even broader form of *areivut*. Not just *areivut* toward a fellow Jew in the shtetl, helping him perform a mitzvah or assisting him materially. Not just *areivut* toward every Jew wherever he may live, even decades after his death. We also carry an *areivut* toward Jewish history. We have been chosen to participate in the renewal of Jewish sovereignty, and we feel a historical responsibility to defend this country and advance the arc of Jewish history.

Historical responsibility also runs in the other direction. We feel a tremendous obligation to fight this intense and protracted war so that, hopefully, future generations will not have to endure events like October 7th. We are willing to sacrifice our own personal needs and comforts because we feel *areivut* toward generations we have never met and will never meet.

This is part of our Jewish calling: to live a life of *areivut* and responsibility. *Areivut* adds depth and resonance to life. Without responsibilities beyond the self, life shrinks into personal welfare and personal comfort. When we live for others, and even more so when we live for a larger historical calling, our lives acquire deeper and more panoramic meaning. We become part of something much larger than ourselves. To live as part of something larger is to live with *areivut*.

THE TENSION OF AREIVUT

Yet *areivut* in the modern Jewish state can also become complicated. If we feel responsible for the spiritual welfare of other Jews, we cannot simply regard their religious choices as none of our concern. *Areivut* naturally creates an impulse to persuade others of the values we believe in. It also pushes us, on a national level, to shape the public character of Israel according to those values. Both instincts are fundamentally healthy. They reflect genuine investment in other Jews and concern for the religious and moral character of Jewish society. An attitude of live and let live can easily slide into indifference. Yet that same sense of responsibility can also lead us to become aggressive in persuading others, dismissive of choices different from our own, or too forceful in imposing religious standards on parts of society that may not be interested in or ready for them. Sincere *areivut* can sometimes express itself in ways that undermine the very Jewish values it seeks to advance.

THE LIMITS OF AREIVUT

The Torah encodes the mitzvah of *areivut* in a very intriguing manner:

הַנִּסְתָּרֹת לַה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְהַנִּגְלֹת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת.

"The hidden matters belong to Hashem our God, while the revealed matters belong to us and to our children forever, to fulfill all the words of this Torah."

By exempting us from responsibility for the hidden lives of others, which Hashem alone sees and judges, the Torah implicitly charges us with responsibility for the public commons and for behavior that is visible to us.

But there is a deeper message. The phrase הנסתרות לה' אלוקינו suggests that every person possesses a private realm of *nistarot*, known fully only to Hashem. We can never completely understand that private world, and issuing snap judgments about other people's religious lives fails to respect its complexity. Even when we are convinced of certain religious values, *areivut* does not give us unlimited license to intrude into another person's private spiritual world. Some aspects of religious life remain between the individual and Hashem.

There is, however, a second and different

limitation, also implicit in the phrase הנסת־רות לה' אלוקינו. Even in areas where we legitimately seek to influence others or shape the public character of Jewish society, we must ask how certain we can be that our own *hashkafah* is the only correct one. The first limitation concerns the boundaries of another person's private religious life. This second limitation concerns the boundaries of our own certainty. If certain questions belong, at least partially, to the realm of *nistarot*, their very designation as "hidden" should temper our confidence that we fully understand them. Something as nuanced as *hashkafah* may demand conviction, but it should also leave room for humility about whether our approach is the only legitimate one.

IDEOLOGICAL HUMILITY

If Elul is a month of humility, that humility must include ideological humility. Each of us must find the approach to Judaism that best enables our *avodat Hashem* and we should hold our convictions seriously. But we should be extremely cautious before assuming that every question of *hashkafah* belongs to the realm of *niglot*, where our obligation of *areivut* authorizes us to impose our own convictions upon others. The deeper our sense of *areivut*, the more humility it demands. ■



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BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA SHMIDMAN
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Preparing the Path

YESHAYAHU 61:10-63:9

Elul invites us to think about where we want to go in the year ahead, but identifying the destination is often easier than reaching it. How do we create a path from the person we are today to the person we hope to become?

In our haftorah, Yeshayahu describes the journey home from exile through the image of an actual road — and the careful work required to make it passable: עִבְרוּ עִבְרוּ בַּשְּׁעָרִים, פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ הָעָם סֹלּוּ סֹלּוּ הַמְּסִלָּה, סַקְּלוּ מֵאֶבֶן *Pass through the gates; clear a path for the people. Pave the road; remove its stones.*

The Malbim explains that each phrase describes another stage in preparing the road. First, **פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ** — clear away the trees and other large obstructions. Next, **סֹלּוּ הַמְּסִלָּה** — raise and prepare the roadway. Only then, **סַקְּלוּ מֵאֶבֶן** — remove the individual stones that remain underfoot that could cause someone to stumble. The Malbim is describing the physical road upon which the Jewish people will return from exile. Yet the deliberate sequence he identifies offers a powerful model for the work of Elul. A path forward is not created all at once. It is cleared, strengthened, and made passable one stage at a time.

Sometimes we already know the direction in which we want to move. We want to daven with greater focus, speak with more care, make more time for Torah, or be more present for the people around us. The road is not hidden; it is obstructed. Something — a habit, distraction, resentment, or recurring pattern — repeatedly causes us to stumble.

This is part of the practical work of Elul: identifying the stone that stands in our way. What repeatedly prevents me from moving in the direction I genuinely want to go? Is it a particular habit? A distraction? A resentment I continue to carry? A commitment that remains too vague to become real?

Elul does not demand that we rebuild the entire road at once. It gives us the opportunity to clear what is blocking us, prepare the path, and make the next step possible. As the year draws to a close, we can borrow the haftorah's imagery and ask ourselves one focused and practical question:

What is one stone I can remove now to clear the way for the year ahead? ■

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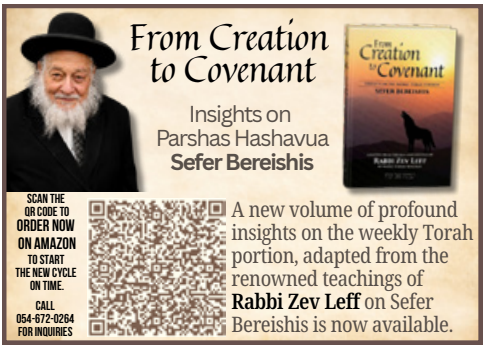
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Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (5:18): Wholly Concerned with the Community

"Whoever influences the masses to become more meritorious shall not be the cause of sin... Moshe was meritorious and influenced the masses to be meritorious." (Pirkei Avot 5:18)

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, in his commentary on *Pirkei Avot*, suggested that one way to understand this Mishnah is through a comment of Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk: "The reason a person should not sin is not because it is forbidden. Rather, he should be so occupied with doing mitzvot that he simply does not have the opportunity to sin." It is noteworthy that the literal translation of the above Mishnah is "that sin will not come to his hand" - that is, he will not have the opportunity to sin. (*Visions of the Fathers*, Twerski, p. 313)



When we think about ways to overcome sinful behavior, one practical path is to be proactively and consistently involved in mitzvot, engaged in communal work, and helping others. The good we do is itself energizing and uplifting. The more we are involved in helping others and filling our hours each day with positive activity that benefits the *klal*, the less time we leave for activities that are unproductive or even sinful.

THE GUEST'S BLESSING

The Talmud (*Berachot* 46b) gives a particular text of the blessing that a guest inserts in *Birkat Hamazon* for the host. The *Shulchan Aruch* codifies this practice (*Orach Chaim* 210) and offers the precise wording: "May it be God's will that this host not be shamed or humiliated in this world or in the World to Come. May he be successful in all his dealings. May his dealings be close to the city..."

Rav Kook, in commenting on this blessing, was struck by the phrase "May his dealings be close to the city." Perhaps this simply offers the blessing that the host not be inconvenienced by having to travel to distant places in order to make a living. Rav Kook offered another explanation: The guest who has been so kindly offered a meal is extending a

blessing that the host continues to be involved in communal affairs and assist those in need of help and sustenance. "May your dealings be close to the city" refers to engagement with the broader needs of the community. One might be inclined, says Rav Kook, to adopt a more sheltered and private way of life in order to pursue a more spiritual and inward-focused existence.

However, the prayer of the guest, composed by the Talmudic sages, gives precedence and the highest honor to one whose efforts and actions are geared toward the well-being of the greater community. Rav Kook concludes his comment by citing the Mishnah above: "The more one is engaged in helping the community, the more one is protected from transgression." (*Ain Aya*, Berachot 46b, piska #10)


Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski zt"l

BADERECH

Rabbi Shmuel Boruch Werner (1922–1993) served as the head of the Rabbinic Court in Tel Aviv and wrote a beautiful tribute to the life and saintly character of Rav Aryeh Levin after his passing. He titled the piece *Baderech* ("On the Way"). In the article, he describes Rav Aryeh as always being on a mission, always on his way to help people in need.

The following is an excerpt from the article:

"It is nearly impossible to meet up with Rav Aryeh Levin except if you catch him 'on the way.' He does not conduct himself in the ordinary way a person lives in a certain place or neighborhood. He was a person who lived life 'on the way' to doing an act of kindness for someone else… If you were to suddenly see him walking the streets of Jerusalem, he appeared like a soldier who was keenly focused on a mission. Indeed, he was a soldier. A soldier in the army of Hashem."

"When Rav Aryeh stepped out of the doorway of prison, he was *not* making his way back home. He would go directly to the parents of an incarcerated person to share a good word that their child was faring well. Often, he would bring parents a note from their child in prison, and he would receive a note from them to be delivered back to their children who were locked away. From those meetings, he would walk to his next destination - stopping to visit someone who was ill and in desperate need of a friendly face and some companionship. From there, he would make his way to the funeral of a little-known Jew who had passed away and sadly had no one else to offer words of eulogy…Indeed, Rav Aryeh was always *baderech*!" (*Derech Avot*, p. 290)

In this sense, Rav Aryeh, in his day-to-day life, exemplified the Kotzker Rebbe's interpretation of the Mishnah from *Avot* above: One who fills his life with so much good work, acts of kindness, and concern for others leaves barely a moment for anything else that would be unproductive or improper. "Sin will not come to his hand"—he simply will not have the opportunity to sin.

WHO IS COUNTED AMONG THE *LAMED-VAV TZADDIKIM*?

As a young child, Chaim Be'er grew up in the Geulah section of Jerusalem and later became a well-known and award-winning Israeli novelist. He recalls a particularly touching story about an encounter he had with Rav Aryeh Levin as a child. He tells of a time when he saw Rav Aryeh walking down the street and could not restrain himself. He ran over and asked him, "Is it true that you

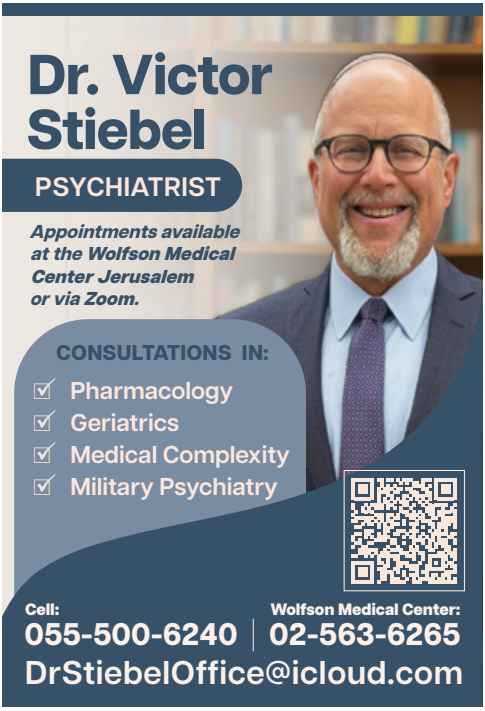
are one of the *Lamed-Vav Tzaddikim*?"

Indeed, according to tradition, the world exists in the merit of the Thirty-Six Tzaddikim who live in every generation. As a young boy, Be'er said, "He seemed to me to be surely one of them."

Rav Aryeh smiled and said one word: "Sometimes."

He then went on to explain that the *Lamed-Vav Tzaddikim* are always changing. It is not a lifetime position. "Every time you go out of your way for someone else, do something worthy, or perform an exceptionally good deed, you are considered to be one of them. And then you give your place to someone else who performs an act of exquisite righteousness." (Sivanrahavmeir.com, "Sometimes")

Rav Aryeh so beautifully and humbly taught, both by word and by example, that every Jew has the capacity to elevate his or her life and become a *tzaddik* or *tzadekes*. By becoming more attuned to the needs of others and taking action through acts of charity, kindness, and compassion, we can, in those moments, be counted among the Thirty-Six *tzaddikim* whose merit upholds the world.



GATHERING THE CAMPS

Rav Kook is well known for his remarkably inspiring and insightful perspective on the topic of *teshuva* (repentance). Arguably the most popular volume of all his writings is devoted to his teachings on *teshuva*: *Orot HaTeshuva* ("Lights of Repentance").

Whereas the major emphasis on *teshuva* has traditionally been on personal improvement and change, Rav Kook placed special emphasis on the *teshuva* of the *klal* (the community).

The sounds of the shofar—*tekiah*, *teruah*—the symbolic calls to *teshuva* that embody the essence of Rosh Hashanah, are mentioned in the Torah in the context of the horns being sounded to gather the nation together (*Bamidbar* 10:1–10).

With this background in mind, Rav Kook composed aphorisms for every month of the year that were published in the 1914 issue of the *Eretz Zvi* calendar in Jaffa. For the month of Elul of that year, he wrote: "The preparation for collective repentance is the sound of the shofar, which rallies together all of the camps." (*Megged Yerachim*, cited in *Celebration of the Soul*, p. 23)

It is striking that Rav Kook chose to highlight the aspect of the shofar and its blasts that serves to unite the nation. The ideal *teshuva* is one that focuses not only on personal improvement but also on strengthening the loving bonds between every Jew that unite us deeply as a community and as a people. This elevated idea of *teshuva* is especially poignant when considering the unique role Rav Kook

saw himself playing in guiding the people of Israel as they returned to the Land of their ancestors after a long and painful exile and worked to rebuild the nation.

THE EXPRESSIVE SHAPE OF THE SHOFAR

Does the shape of the shofar itself have any particular symbolism? The poetic and soaring soul of Rav Kook perceived exquisite meaning in the shape of the ram's horn used for the shofar.

He linked its shape to a progression from *prat* (the individual) to the *klal* (the collective). There are the narrow, private issues with which the individual grapples. And then there are the broad, general concerns of the community and the nation.*Teshuva* takes place on many levels. We all endeavor to correct our own personal faults and failings. The nation, too, does *teshuva* as it restores itself to its native Land and revives its true character as a Godly people.

The shofar, with its gradually widening shape, is a metaphor for these ever-widening circles of repentance and spiritual progress. The progression of *teshuva* takes on its most elevated form when it reaches the level of universal *teshuva*—a time when the entire world advances and learns to recognize God's moral rule and sovereignty.

From the narrow straits of personal *teshuva*, the Jew progresses to the wider expanse of communal *teshuva* and ultimately to the attainment of universal perfection. (*Moadei HaRe'iya*, p. 60; also cited in *Silver From the Land of Israel*, Morrison, pp. 45–46) ■

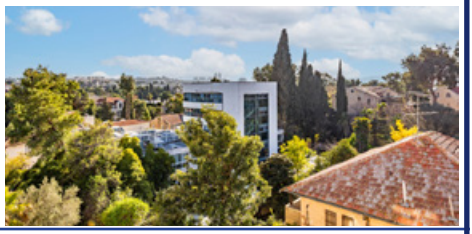


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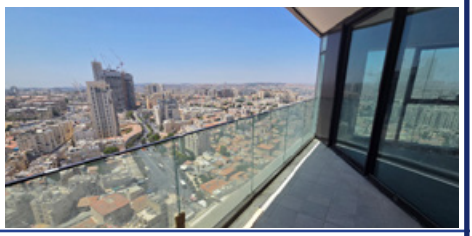
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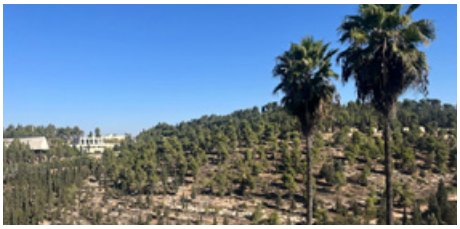
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Kaddish at *Ma'ariv* During *Elokai Netzor*

לעילוי נשמת
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: My *Shemoneh Esrei* is often slightly longer than the *tzibbur*'s. At *Shacharit* and *Mincha*, I can skip (part of) *Elokai Netzor* and be ready for *Kedusha*, but at *Ma'ariv* there is but a moment's warning. How do I act if I am in the middle of *Elokai Netzor* when *Kaddish* starts? Should I invest a few seconds to get to a "better place" for answering?

Answer: Let us review the rules of "better places," which are explicit in classical sources, and then broach your excellent question about investing a few seconds.

The *gemara* (Berachot 4a) presents "*Yeh'yu l'ratzon…*" as the end of *Shemoneh Esrei*. The Rashba (VII:405, accepted as *halacha* by the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 122:1) says due to this that if one finished *Shemoneh Esrei* but did not say *Yeh'yu L'ratzon*, he may not answer *Kaddish* and *Kedusha*. After *Yeh'yu L'ratzon*, it is possible to answer to these *devarim shebekedusha* and other *mitzva* responses (Mishna Berura 122:1), as one is considered basically finished with *Shemoneh Esrei*.

It is an old practice (see Berachot 17a) to recite various *tachanunim* after *Shemoneh Esrei* before stepping back, and the one that is now standard, although not required, is "*Elokai neztor …*". There are different *minhagim* on whether to recite *Yeh'yu L'ratzon* before or after *Elokai Netzor* (or both). For someone like you who sometimes needs to finish *Shemoneh Esrei* prematurely, there is more logic to do it before.

During *Elokai Netzor*, one can answer only selectively, like one who is in the midst of the *berachot* of *Kri'at Shema* (Shulchan Aruch ibid.). Specifically, one can answer only "*Amen Y'hei sh'mei rabba …*" and the *amen* to "*… da'amiran b'olma,* " and, in *Kedusha*, "*Kaddosh…*" and "*Baruch k'vod …*" (Mishna Berura 66:17). It is best to skip the rest of *Elokai Netzor* and take the steps back (Shulchan Aruch ibid.) or at least say *Yeh'yu l'ratzon* and be ready for the steps (Mishna Berura 122:6). Then you may do all the responses of *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* or actually any *amen* that arises (ibid. 4).

After seeing that post-*Shemoneh Esrei* allows *mitzva* responses, let us look at the "demands" of *Kaddish* to focus on it. May you continue finishing up *Shemoneh Esrei* during *Kaddish*? While the *chazan* is up to the parts to which you may answer, it makes sense that one **must** listen and then answer rather than continue *davening*, because Halacha gives more weight to these main parts of *Kaddish*

than to the *Shemoneh Esrei* additions. So rules Ishei Yisrael 19:(17) in the name of Rav Chaim Kanievsky. Following this logic, ostensibly the sections of *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* that cannot be responded to do not require stopping to listen to (Dirshu 66:11; Halichot Shlomo, Tefilla 8:38). Nevertheless, some say that even though one cannot answer the other parts, he must listen silently to them (Tefilla K'hilchata 12:(246) in the name of Rav Elyashiv). Dirshu (66:11) says they discussed an apparent contradiction in Rav Chaim Kanievsky's opinion on the matter, and he clarified his opinion – it is better to listen to all of *Kaddish* or *Kedusha*, but it is not required.

It is noteworthy to look at a case where you must not respond but should listen quietly to *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* – during *Shemoneh Esrei* itself (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 104:7). The Mishna Berura (104:27) instructs one to listen only to the important parts. Rav Kanievsky there too is cited (Ishei Yisrael 32:(53)) as saying one may stop for longer if he likes. There is room to distinguish between the cases, but that analysis is beyond our present scope.

Since the *halacha* regarding continuing *Elokai Netzor* during the less critical parts of *Kaddish* is inconclusive, I would suggest the following practical guideline. It is fine to continue the few words needed to get to a place (i.e., finishing a phrase of *Elokai Netzor* and saying *Yeh'yu L'ratzon*) where you can answer everything. If done wisely, it is not a *zilzul* in *Kaddish* but an effort to maximize participation in it. One can argue either way on taking steps backward. On the one hand, one may move about during *Kaddish*. On the other hand, it is not necessary.

Having a dispute?

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רפואה שלמה
Peleg Shabtai ben Chaviva Leah



THE ROSH HASHANAH GUIDE

RABBI ELYADA GOLDVICHT
FOUNDER SEMICHAS CHAVER | RAV KEHILLAT LEV RA'ANANA

INTRODUCTION

The following outline presents a guide to the laws and customs of the observance of Rosh Hashanah, including when the first day falls out on Shabbos, as it does this year. May Hashem bless עם ישראל with a year of health, happiness and success in both רוחניות and גשמיות and may it be the year we welcome משיח צדיקנו! Shana Tova!

EREV-RH AND BOTH NIGHTS OF RH

התרת נדרים

There is a custom based on the גמרא נדרים (כג:) to perform התרת נדרים – nullification of vows, on Erev-RH in order to enter the new year without violating the prohibition of transgressing vows[1]. Any three men above Bar-Mitzvah are qualified to form a *Beis-Din* and nullify vows of others even if they are relatives with one another and to the one who is nullifying his vows.[2] If you do not understand the Hebrew it is best to recite it in a language that you understand.[3] One can perform התרת נדרים over Zoom as long as the three members of the *Beis-Din* are sitting together and they see the person reciting the התרה (i.e. his camera is on).[4] With regard to women, some say that if she is married her husband should be her messenger for התרת נדרים and add the words "and this is also for my wife",[5] while others say that it is best for women to rely on the התרת נדרים of *kol nidrei* on Yom Kippur and when doing so, they should recite *kol nidrei* silently with the *chazan*.[6]

1. See שערי תשובה סק"ז based on של"ה (תחילת מס' יומא)



MIKVAH

The Rama writes that there is a custom for men to go to the Mikvah on *Erev*-RH.[7] If one is not able to go to the Mikvah he can take a shower instead.[8] The shower should be long enough for [16] liters to be poured on one's head.[9]

הדלקת נרות



Married women (as well as single men/women at home)[10] light candles for Shabbos and RH.[11] The *bracha* recited on the 1st night is "להדליק נר של שבת ויו"ט". Some women also

2. שו"ע סימן יו"ד רכח-ג
3. חיי אדם (כלל קלח-ח)
4. Rav Schachter פסקי קרונה #50 - אות ה
5. תשובות והנהגות (ח"א-שלח)
6. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-י)
7. תקפא-ד
8. משנ"ב סימן תקפ"א סקכ"ו
9. מתחת יצחק (ח"ד-כא)
10. שו"ע או"ח סימן רסג-ב
11. Ibid. סעיף ה'

have the custom to recite "שהחיינו" when lighting the candles while others do not and rely on the "שהחיינו" during *kiddush*. One can follow their family custom.[12] Ashkenazim first light the candle and then recite the *bracha*, while Sephardim first recite the *bracha* and then light the candles.[13] Being that the first day of RH is on Shabbos one must light before שקיעה. On the second night of RH, candles are also lit but only after צאת הכוכבים and only from a preexisting lit candle. Ideally, these candles should be prepared before YT, but if they were not, you may only move them after צאת הכוכבים. Before lighting the candles on the 2nd night, the woman should say "ברוך המבדיל בין קודש לקודש".[14] Additionally, when lighting the candles, the woman should have in mind that the candles will be used as the *havdallah* candle.[15] The *bracha* recited on the 2nd night is "להדליק נר של יו"ט" and both Ashkenazim and Sephardim recite the *bracha* before lighting the candles.[16] As on the first night, some women have the custom to recite a "שהחיינו", but ideally, they should only recite the *bracha* if they will be eating a new fruit that night or if they are wearing a new dress that night. When reciting the "שהחיינו" they should have in mind that the *bracha* should incorporate RH and the new fruit or the new dress.[17] (If they have a new fruit, they should wait for *kiddush* before eating the fruit). After lighting the candles, one is not allowed to blow out the match.[18] On the second night, you are only allowed to set the table and heat up the food after צאת הכוכבים.

קבלת שבת - במה מדליקין - כגוונא

There are various customs with regard to reciting קבלת שבת and "לכה דודי" on Shabbos that falls out on יו"ט. Most who *daven* נוסח אשכנז omit it and only say "מזמור שיר ליום השבת", while those who *daven* נוסח ספרד say "מזמור לדוד" and parts of "לכה דודי".[19] The recital of "במה מדליקין" is omitted,[20] and there is a מחלוקת whether to recite "כגוונא" on RH that falls out on Shabbos.[21] On the second night of RH "ותודיענו" is recited during the night *Amida*[22] and if you forgot to recite it you do not repeat the *Amidah*.[23]

ברכה מעין שבע

The congregation recites "ויכולו" out loud and standing after the *Amidah*.[24] When reciting "מגן אבות" in shul or in a permanent *minyan*, "המלך הקודש" is said instead of "הא-ל הקדוש".[25] If the חזן forgets to say "המלך הקדוש" he should only go back if he has not yet finished the *bracha*, but if he has finished the *bracha* he should not go back.[26]

GREETING A FRIEND

When greeting a friend on RH night and up until חצות on the 1st day of RH one should say "לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם" and to a woman one says "לשנה טובה תכתבי ותחתמי". After that time, one should only say "חג שמח" or "good Yom

12. שמירת שבת כהלכתה (מד-ד)
13. שו"ע או"ח סימן רסג-ה
14. משנ"ב סימן רצט סקל"ו
15. Rav Neventzal ביצחק יקרא (תקיד-יא) since Shabbos/YT candles today are lit לכבוד יו"ט and you can only recite מאורי האש on candles that were lit for light.
16. משנה ברורה (סימן רסג סקכ"ז)
17. שמירת שבת כהלכתה (מז-מד)
18. שו"ע סימן תקיד-א
19. שערי תשובה סימן ער סק"ב
20. רמ"א סימן ער-ב
21. See מטה אפרים (אלף למטה תרכה סס"ז and (תקפב-ב)
22. שו"ע תקצט
23. שש"כ (סב:י)
24. שו"ע סימן רסח-ז
25. שו"ע תקפב-ג
26. Ibid. רבי עקיבא איגר שם and חזו"ע יו"ט פח. פסח רכג

Tov".[27] Some have the custom to say "לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם" on the second night as well.[28] On Shabbos one should add "שבת שלום" or "Good Shabbos".[29]

KIDDUSH

The *bracha* of "שהחיינו" is recited on both nights of RH. On the second night of RH, one should wear a new garment or place new fruits on the table before *kiddush.* When reciting the "שהחיינו" one should have in mind that it goes on both RH and the new fruit.[30] This year, when the 2nd night is also *Motzaei*-Shabbos, *havdallah* is recited during *kiddush*[31] (see your *machzor*). When reciting the "בורא מאורי האש" it is best to place a match together with the YT candles[32] and after looking at your fingernails place the match down without extinguishing it[33] (allowing it to extinguish by itself). Some prefer not to add a match and recite the "בורא מאורי האש" on the YT candles[34] (ideally you should have in mind when lighting them that they will be used for *havdallah*, as mentioned above), but one should not recite the *bracha* on a יארצייט candle.[35] If you forgot to recite *havdallah* during *kiddush* you should stop the meal, fill up a glass of wine, recite the "בורא מאורי האש" and "המבדיל בין קודש לקודש". If you were planning to drink wine during the meal you do not need to repeat the "בורא פרי הגפן" at the beginning of *havdallah*, but if you were not planning on drinking wine during the meal you should recite a "בורא פרי הגפן" when beginning to recite *havdallah*.[36]

27. רמ"א סימן תקפב-ט ומשנ"ב שם
28. ט"ז (שם סק"ד)
29. משנ"ב סימן שז סק"ה
30. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-כ)
31. שו"ע סימן תעג-א
32. משנ"ב סימן רחצ סק"ו
33. See אגרו"מ (או"ח ח"ה כ:ל) that one may even combine two wax candles together.
34. שש"כ (סב:יח)

סימנים

There is a custom based on the גמרא כריתות (ו.) to eat specific fruits and vegetables on RH as a good omen and prayer for the upcoming year.[37] The סימנים are eaten after washing one's hands, reciting המוציא, and eating bread.[38] The ברכת העץ should be recited on a date (since it is from the שבעת המינים and closest to the word "ארץ" in the verse) and if one does not have a date then it should be recited on a pomegranate.[39] If one does not have either, the ברכת העץ should be recited on the apple. One should say the "יהי רצון" that pertain to each fruit/vegetable with Hashem's name (i.e., "יהי רצון מלפניך אדנ-י א-לוהינו וא-לוהי אבותינו וכו").[40] With regard to the ברכת האדמה, some *posskim* hold that today all the "האדמה" *simanim* are served as part of a meal and one should not recite a *bracha* before eating them.[41] Though, some write that the best thing to do is to recite האדמה on foods that are never eaten as part of the meal, such as a banana or

35. משנ"ב (סימן רחצ סק"ל)
36. שש"כ (סב:יט)
37. שו"ע סימן תקפג
38. הליכות שלמה פ"א סקכ"ד
39. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-יז)
40. משנ"ב סימן תקפג סק"ב
41. תשובות והנהגות (ח"ב-רסט)

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watermelon, and have in mind that it will cover all the other *simanim*.[42] After reciting the ברכת העץ and the ברכת האדמה on the first fruit/vegetable that you are eating, you should only recite the "יהי רצון" after tasting and swallowing the fruit/vegetable in order that there is no הפסק between the *bracha* and the eating.[43] When reciting the ברכת העץ/אדמה you should have in mind that it cover all the other fruits and vegetables of the סימנים.[44] Most have the custom to have סימנים on the second night of RH as well.[45]

ROSH HASHANA DAY

SHOFAR

This year, the 1st day of RH falls out on Shabbos when we do not blow שופר and one is forbidden from moving it at all.[46]

The Torah teaches us "יום תרועה יהיה לכם" and the גמרא ראש השנה (לג:) derives that the "תרועה" needs to be heard 3 times, with a תקיעה before and after it each time. Thus, מדאורייתא you only need to hear 9 shofar blasts. However, the Gemara is uncertain as to the exact sound that the word "תרועה" is referring to. It is either referring to what we call a תרועה today, what we call a שברים today, or what we call a שברים תרועה today. Therefore, in order to make sure that we are fulfilling our biblical requirement we blow a שברים (with a תקיעה before and after it) three times, a תרועה (with a תקיעה before and after it) three times and a שברים תרועה (with a תקיעה before and after it) three times.[47] All of these blasts together total 30 sounds (including the sounds of the תקיעות before and after each תרועה). 30 blasts are blown before the *Mussaf Amidah* and are called תקיעות דמיושב. Another 30 are blown during the *Amidah* and are called תקיעות דמעומד (some locations blow 30 blasts only during חזרת הש"ץ while some blow an additional 30 during the silent *Amidah* as well). There is a custom to blow another 40 (for those who did not blow 30 during the silent *Amidah*) in order to blow a total of 100 blasts on RH.[48]

The congregation and the Shofar blower should remain standing during the recital of the *bracha* and during the actual Shofar blasts.[49] The בעל תוקע recites two blessings before blowing the Shofar: "לשמוע קול שופר" and "שהחיינו". The בעל תוקע should have in mind to be מוציא the congregation, and they should have in mind to be יוצא.[50] The *gabbay* should announce that you are not allowed to speak until the end of the תקיעות.[51] If you are walking or sitting at home and hear the Shofar blasts from a shul nearby you fulfill your obligation if you had in mind to be יוצא because the בעל תוקע has in mind to be מוציא all that hear.[52]

If you are blowing the shofar for another and you already fulfilled your obligation, the person being יוצא should recite the ברכות if he/she can.[53] Sephardi women do not recite the *bracha*.[54] You can blow for someone who is in a different room as long as you are blowing close to the room.[55] If you are blowing the shofar ביחידות you should make sure not

42. Rav Elyashiv in קובץ שערי הוראה (ח"ח עמ' קז)
43. Ibid סק"ד
44. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-יח)
45. שערי תשובה (תקפג-א)
46. שו"ע תקפח-ה and הליכות שלמה (פ"ב-כב)
47. שו"ע סימן תק"צ (א-ב)
48. רמ"א סימן תקצו ומשנ"ב סק"ב
49. שו"ע סימן תקפה-א ומשנ"ב סק"א-ב
50. שו"ע תקפט ח-ט
51. אגרו"מ או"ח ח"ב-לו as is the הלכה in תקצב-ג
52. שו"ע תקפט-ט
53. רמ"א סימן תקפט-ו ומשנ"ב סימן תקפה סק"ה
54. שו"ע תקפט-ו
55. משנ"ב סימן תקפז סק"ז

to blow in the first three hours of the day.[56] Ideally, one who is *davening* ביחידות should blow the shofar before *davening Musaf*[57] and *Musaf* should not be *davened* within the first 3 hours (of שעות זמניות) from sunrise,[58] but no later than 7 hours[59] (בדיעבד, *Musaf* can be *davened* after the 7th hour). One who is *davening* ביחידות should time his *Amidah* to begin at the same time as his congregation.[60]

מנחה וסעודה שלישית

On the 1st day of RH this year Sephardim recite "צדקתך צדק" during *Mincha* and Ashkenazim do not.[61] One is obligated to eat סעודה שלישית on the first day of RH this year (just like on every Shabbos). The סעודה שלישית should ideally be eaten after *davening Mincha* and before the time of מנחה קטנה [62] (but may not be eaten before the time of *Mincha Gedolah*[63]). If one did not have time to eat before מנחה קטנה he/she should still eat סעודה שלשית but only a little bit of bread in order to leave an appetite for the Yom Tov meal at night.[64] Sephardim have the custom to deliberately eat סעודה שלישית after the time of מנחה קטנה even when Shabbos is *erev*-YT, but are careful not to eat a lot.[65]

תשליך

After *Mincha,* there is a custom of תשליך, where one goes to the river and recites verses pertaining to תשובה from ספר מיכה (ז:יט).[66] There are various reasons for this custom, including the fact that the מדרש teaches that the שטן tried drowning אברהם in a river on the way to the עקידה and we want to remind ourselves of אברהם אבינו's determination and devotion[67] (and learn from it). When the 1st day of RH falls out on Shabbos some have the custom to recite תשליך on the second day,[68] while some still say it on the first day (as long as there is an עירוב).[69] If there is no river nearby, or if one cannot leave the house he/she can recite it on water in a well[70] or even on a cup of water.[71]

56. משנ"ב סימן תקצא סקט"ו
57. רמ"א סימן תקצב-ב
58. שו"ע סימן תקצב-ח
59. משנ"ב סימן תקצה-סק"ג
60. משנ"ב סימן תקצא-סקי"ד
61. שו"ע ורמ"א סימן תקצח
62. רמ"א סימן תקכט-א
63. שו"ע סימן רצא-ב
64. רמ"א סימן תקכט-א
65. כף החיים תקכט-טז ע"פ הזוהר
66. רמ"א תקפג-ב
67. משנ"ב תקפג סק"ח
68. Ibid.
69. שערי תשובה סימן תקפג-ו
70. כף החיים סימן תקפג סק"ל
71. הליכות שלמה (פ"א ארחות הלכה הע' 71)

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Can I Live With What I Don't Like?

Rina asks:

Hi Aleeza,

I set up my candidate and she's been going out with someone for a few months. It started off really fun and positive, but now it seems like they're finding things in each other that they don't 100% like. I feel like that's normal, but it's really affecting the relationship. How can I help?

Aleeza answers:

They've reached the part of dating where they're actually getting to know each other beyond the good and they are going from the place of "Do I like everything?" to "Can I live with what I don't like?"

Distinguishing between an actual deal breaker and something that they don't like but can manage and simply needs to be explored more.

In the beginning, it's easy to focus on everything you like. As the relationship gets more real, you start seeing the whole person and the whole person will always include things you love, things you like, things you don't understand, and things you definitely wouldn't have ordered off the menu.

I've heard it said that if you can't find five things you don't like about someone, it might be lust, not love.

Why? Because love requires seeing a real person, not an idealized version of them. Noticing where you're aligned and accepting where you're not is how to know if this is the one or if you should be done.

Everyone has the good and the "other." The question isn't, "Is there anything about this person that bothers me?" Of course there is! The better questions are: Is there enough good? And can I handle the other?

This is where I would help your candidate separate a deal breaker from a potential deal breaker.

A deal breaker is something that fundamentally prevents the relationship from working. Maybe there's a serious values mismatch, a character issue, a life-direction conflict, or something that makes it impossible to build the kind of marriage she wants.

A potential deal breaker is something that bothers her enough that she needs to understand it better and to evaluate if she can live with it.

Maybe he's more reserved than she imagined. Maybe she doesn't love how he handles certain social situations. Maybe they communicate differently. Maybe there's a habit that annoys her.

Don't immediately dismiss those things. But don't immediately turn them into reasons to end the relationship either.

Instead, get curious.

Ask her: "What specifically is bothering you?" "When does it show up?" "Is this a character problem or a personality difference?" "Could you live with this if it never changed?" And my favorite: "Does this issue make the relationship unhealthy, or just imperfect?"

Those are two very different things.

After a few months, the goal is no longer to discover whether someone is perfect for you. It's to discover whether this very real, very human, wonderfully imperfect person is someone you can build a beautiful life with. And I expect them to perfectly imperfect for you.

And remember: she's noticing his "other, " but he's also discovering hers. And when they both accept one another that's intimacy. And it takes time to figure out.

May your candidate have the wisdom to know the difference between a potential deal breaker and a true one and may she make the right decision at the right time.

Blessings,

Aleeza ■

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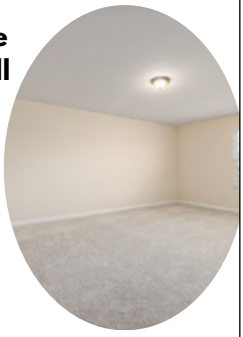
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"I AM 120 YEARS OL T'DAY..."
REALLY? YOU DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER 119...
"...AN' I CAN'T MOVE FORWARD NO MORE!"
WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
HE'S QUOTING MOSHE RABBEINU, I THINK. HIS FINAL SPEECH, ON THE LAST DAY OF HIS LIFE...
...WHEN HE SAYS THAT G-D HAS FORBIDDEN HIM FROM MOVING AHEAD TO CROSS THE JORDAN RIVER TO ISRAEL.
THAT'S RIGHT, MAN! BUT, DANG, HE AIN'T JUST TELLIN' MOSHE NOT TO MOVE FORWARD GEE-O-GRPAHICALLY!
RABBI NATAN O' BRESLOV EXPLAINS THAT MOSHE COULDN'T MOVE FORWARD SPIRITUALLY, NEITHER!
HE WAS ALL...
"I'VE REACHED THE TOP AND HAD TO STOP, AN' THAT'S WHAT'S A-BOTHERIN' ME!"
WELL, THERE YOU HAVE IT, THEN, SEE? EVEN THE ALMIGHTY PUTS UP "STOP" SIGNS! Q.E.D!
NO, NO, Y'GOT IT ALL WRONG, MAN!
MOSHE TELLS US ABOUT HIS "STOP" SIGN FROM THE ALMIGHTY, BECAUSE HE WAS THE ONLY ONE IN HISTORY TO GET ONE!
HE SAYS "DANG, I CAN'T PROGRESS NO MORE IN LIFE, THAT'S A SURE SIGN I'M GONNA KICK THE BUCKET ANY MOMENT..."
CUZ WHAT IS A JEW'S LIFE, IF NOT "MOVIN' FORWARD"? EVEN WHEN WE'RE SOMETIMES IN "REVERSE" GEAR, IT'S SO WE C'N TURN AROUND AN' KEEP GOIN'!
MOSHE TELLS US HE WAS THE EXCEPTION!! BECAUSE, DANG, HIS MESSAGE TO US WAS THE EXACT OPPOSITE, MAN!
A JEW NEVER STOPS MOVIN' FORWARD! SO LONG AS Y'GOT ONE LAST BREATH IN YOUR BODY, Y'CAN REBOOT EVERYTHIN'!
Y'CAN REPENT, Y'CAN FIX, Y'CAN SWERVE FROM THE ROAD TO TRANSGRESSION TO THE EXPRESS TRAIN TO HIGHEST HEAVEN! NEVER, EVER STOP, MAN! NEVER STOP!
OH. RIGHT. WELL... ISN'T THAT AN INSPIRED PRE-ROSH HASHANA PEP TALK...?
GOOD OLD MOSHE RABBEINU... OR... REBBE NATAN...
SO, SHERIFF, Y'ALL GONNA STOP TRYIN' TO STOP PEOPLE MOVIN' FORWARD?
I SUPPOSE SO...
SO... DOESN'T HE HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT ANYMORE?
WELL, HE CLEARLY DOESN'T HAVE THE ABILITY...
GOOD, CUZ I'M JUST ABOUT TO SING ♪ "STOP, HEY, WHAT'S THAT SOUND, ♫ EVERYBODY LOOK WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN..."
...IT'S A REAL SHOWSTOPPER!
I WISH...
IF ONLY...



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Torah & Psychology: Accepting Where We Are, Becoming Who We Can Be

WELCOME TO TORAH & PSYCHOLOGY

We're excited to invite you into a new series exploring one of the most important journeys we can undertake: understanding ourselves.

We spend our lives trying to understand people – why we think the way we do, why we react the way we do, and why changing even the things we know we should change can be so difficult. Understanding ourselves is more than an interesting pastime, it is essential to our growth, our avodat Hashem, and becoming the best versions of ourselves that Hashem created us to be.

The Torah has a remarkable amount to say about the complexities of human nature. Psychology can help us notice and understand some of those same dynamics in new ways. In this series, we'll begin with Torah sources and ideas, and draw on psychological concepts to help us explore them more deeply and translate them into a greater understanding of ourselves and our avodat Hashem.

Our hope is to explore questions that are not merely intellectually thought-provoking, but personally consequential–questions that can help us better understand ourselves, confront our challenges, and ultimately become better people. Our first article takes up one of the most fundamental challenges in that process: seeing ourselves clearly.

As we journey through Elul, we are called upon to examine our lives and embark on the process of teshuva. Yet, how can we honestly judge ourselves, when we are the ones doing the judging?

TOO CLOSE TO THE CASE

Elul asks us to do something that sounds simple but in reality can be extraordinarily difficult – judge ourselves honestly.

Hashem asks us to look back at our year, identify where we fell short, recognize our mistakes, and take responsibility for them. But can we really be objective when we are both the person being judged and the person doing the judging?

At first glance, Chazal (Mishna Negaim 2:5) seem to suggest that we cannot:

"כָּל הַנְּגָעִים אָדָם רוֹאֶה, חוּץ מִנִּגְעֵי עַצְמוֹ"

"A person can see everyone else's afflictions

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aside from his own."

On a simple level, the Mishna is teaching us that a Kohen is not permitted to evaluate his own "נגע" or "affliction" to determine whether it will be considered צרעת and correspondingly whether he will become impure. On a deeper level, Chazal explain that while one can easily identify "afflictions" or flaws in others, one is incapable of properly evaluating his own imperfections.



This begs the question, if so, how can Hashem expect us to properly identify our own flaws in the month of Elul? How can Hashem ask us to do what seems to be impossible?

More specifically, there are two primary challenges that the Gemara presents back to back regarding the issue of self-judgment.

Firstly, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 9b) establishes: אין אדם משים עצמו רשע — A person cannot legally render himself wicked by his own admission. This means that while we may believe a person's account of what happened, he cannot legally establish himself as a רשע through his own testimony and as a result he is unable to receive any form of punishment. Rav Elchanan Wasserman (Kobetz Ha'erot 22:1) explains that the reason a court cannot possibly believe this individual to incriminate himself is because, in the process, he labels himself as a רשע who is thereby disqualified from testimony. This Halacha is codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 34:24).

Secondly, אָדָם קָרוֹב אֵצֶל עַצְמוֹ, a person is inherently "close to himself." This means that just as one cannot testify about his relatives or family members, so too, he is not believed to testify about himself.

Similarly, the Gemara teaches us אין אדם רואה חובה לעצמו - a person cannot see his own liability or guilt (Shabbat 119a and Ketubot 105b). Rashi explains: אין דעתו מתקרב לצד החובה לחייב את עצמו ואפילו מתכוין לדין אמת - a person's mind simply cannot bring itself to find himself guilty, even when his intention is to judge truthfully. In the courtroom of self-evaluation, we are almost always our own most brilliant defense attorneys.

The problem isn't necessarily dishonesty. I may sincerely believe my own explanation. But when the case is about me, it is difficult to see the argument against me with the same clarity that I would see it in someone else.

Yet, this leaves us with a dilemma regarding the teshuva process: If the Torah does not permit me to self-incriminate AND if I am considered "close" to myself and therefore biased, how can Hashem expect me to objectively and accurately acknowledge my own shortcomings?

TESHUVA CHANGES THE EQUATION

Tosafot (Baba Metzia 3b) ask this exact question in a different context regarding witnesses obligating one to bring a קרבן חטאת after committing a sin:

וְהֵיאַךְ נֶאֱמָן לוֹמַר מֵזִיד הָיִיתִי, הָא אֵין אָדָם מֵשִׂים עַצְמוֹ רָשָׁע

The Torah only permits us to bring a קרבן

חטאת if the sin that one committed was committed בשוגג, by mistake. The Gemara there states that if witnesses come into court and testify that an individual sinned they are not able to force him to offer a קרבן because even if they could successfully testify that he committed a sin, they would not be able to prevent him from making a counter claim that he sinned on purpose. Tosafot ask, how could we believe him when he claims that he sinned purposefully, after all אין אדם משים עצמו רשע one is not permitted to self-incriminate?!

Tosafot provide a beautiful answer that helps us address our first difficulty with the teshuva process: וְיֵשׁ לוֹמַר דְּאֵין נֶאֱמָן לְפָסֵל עַצְמוֹ, אֲבָל הָכָא עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה - while he is not believed to disqualify himself, here, he is doing teshuva.

In other words, when I confess before Hashem, I am not engaged in an act of self-incrimination, rather, I am acknowledging: "I did something wrong, yet I want to change." Teshuva turns confession from self-condemnation into self-correction.

DON'T BECOME A RASHA IN YOUR OWN EYES

On a broader level, perhaps this is what we are taught in Pirkei Avot (2:13) וְאַל תְּהִי רָשָׁע בִּפְנֵי עַצְמֶךָ. "Do not be evil before yourself." Rabbeinu Yonah explains: שֶׁלֹּא יְהֵא רָשָׁע בְּעֵינֵי עַצְמוֹ שֶׁאֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לַחֲזוֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה... נִמְצָא זֶה מְיָאֵשׁ לְבוֹ מִן הַתְּשׁוּבָה.If a person sees himself as inherently wicked, he may conclude that he cannot change. He becomes discouraged and eventually gives up on the possibility of achieving teshuva.

Instead, Rabbeinu Yonah reminds us to see ourselves as balanced between guilt and merit: מַחֲצָה חַיָּב וּמַחֲצָה זַכַּאי. One mitzvah can tip the scale and, just as easily, so can one aveira. We have tremendous potential to make all the difference with every action we take. Teshuva requires brutal honesty about our actions, but tremendous care about what we conclude about ourselves. While the actions I committed may have been wrong, I cannot let them define me.

Sometimes two items that seem to contradict can both be true, and real growth requires us to hold on to both. I can honestly acknowledge that I need to change my actions, while also accepting myself as I am right now. I can take responsibility for what I have done without believing that my mistakes define me.

In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), we call this tension, this way of holding two opposite truths at the same time, a dialectic. One of DBT's central principles is the balance between acceptance and change: I can acknowledge reality exactly as it is, while still working to make things different. Without acceptance, we risk judging ourselves, seeing ourselves as bad and incapable of being different, and giving up on our ability to transform. Without change, we can remain stuck in unhelpful patterns and struggle to shift from where we are to where we want to be. This is the balance Rabbeinu Yonah is asking us to maintain. Teshuva requires us to accept the truth about our actions, acknowledging our mistakes, while simultaneously holding on to the belief that we can change.

THE SHEM MISHMUEL: DIVINELY ASSISTED OBJECTIVITY

While Tosafot's explanation and Rabbeinu Yona's reminder help us resolve the issue of self incrimination, the question remains since we are inherently biased towards ourselves, how can we possibly act as an objective judge over our own lives?

The Shem MiShmuel (Mishpatim 5:17) explains that Hashem gave a special gift to

B'nei Yisrael: מתנה טובה מהש"י לעמו ישראל שנתן להם כח ועוז להפשיט עצמם מכל מיני נגיעה ולהיות על עצמו כמו דיין הצופה מרחוק על כל הנעשה כאלו אין הדבר נוגע אליו כלל – a wonderful gift from Hashem... He gave them the strength and courage to strip away all personal bias and view themselves like a judge looking from afar at everything that occurred, as if the matter did not affect them at all. Through davening and introspection in Elul, Hashem grants us the ability to tap into this divine "courage" (oz) to look at our lives objectively.

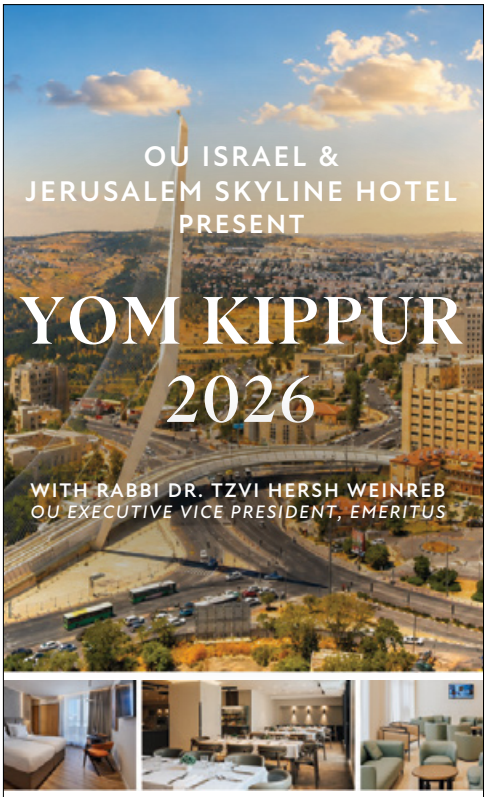
This dialectic of acceptance and change offers an interesting perspective on what this might look like in practice. To see ourselves as the Shem MiShmuel describes, we accept ourselves by stepping away from our interpretations and reactions and looking at ourselves with the same openness as we look at someone else. We can notice what happened, what we did, without allowing it to define ourselves. This is not approval of what happened, rather the courage to see reality as it is, clearly, without judgment.

THE ELUL CHALLENGE

Perhaps this is the greatest "gift" of Elul: the ability to hold these two truths at once. We can look honestly at ourselves as we are, without resigning ourselves to remain that way.

And when we are finally able to look at ourselves honestly, without excuses and without despair, we discover the extraordinary gift of teshuva: the ability to understand and accept where we are while still believing in our ability to grow into the people Hashem created us to be. ■

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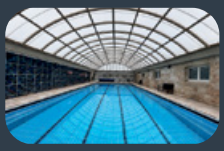


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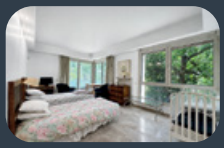
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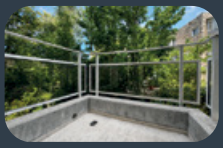
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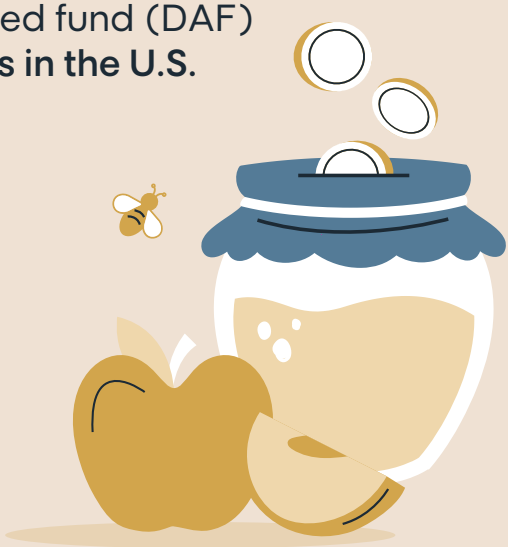
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