

Potomac Torah Study Center

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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Consider a High Holy Day donation to the Chabad of the University of Delaware, victim of arson by anti-Semites who burned the Chabad building in late August. UDFireRelief.com or 262 S College Ave, Newark, DE 19711.

What is the essence of Yom Kippur in the Torah? After 25 hours of fasting and davening, what is the essence of the experience? The insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his colleagues at AlephBeta.org have greatly influenced my concept of this central holy day for our people. This concept changes the focus from what one typically hears, but I believe that it fits in with an overall view of the Torah and includes the important points.

A good hint to the essence of a holy day is to look at the Torah reading(s) for the day. The morning Torah reading starts with Vayikra 16. After the death of Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu (for trying to approach God's presence on their own initiative), God tells Moshe a way in which Aharon may approach God's presence safely. This reading is at almost the center of the entire Torah – a key location, because the Torah frequently uses a chiastic structure, of the form A, B, C, D, C', B', A'. In a chiasm, A and A' have related themes, as do B and B', and C and C'. The chiasm points to the center, D, which is the most significant message in the grouping. This structure implies that the middle of the Torah should be very important – and that is where the Torah places the central discussion of Yom Kippur. As such, the Torah reading for Yom Kippur morning should discuss the central message of the day.

Some background helps us understand the significance. In Gan Eden, God and Adam communicated frequently and directly. Once Adam and Chava sinned, God expelled them from Gan Eden and set two cherubs to prevent them from re-entering the garden. Much of the Torah involves attempts by man to find a way to re-establish a closeness with God similar to what man had in Gan Eden. God provided a second opportunity at Har Sinai. However, most of the people found God's presence too frightening to endure, so they asked Moshe to listen to God and relay His message to them. God then provided the Jews in the Midbar with another way to relive the Sinai experience.

The Mishkan was a way to bring the Sinai experience into the camp. The cherubs that guarded the entrance to Gan Eden re-appear on the kaporet, or covering, of the Ark – this time welcoming Jews to God's presence above the Mishkan. Kippur has the same root as Kaporet – Yom Kippur is thus the day in which God's presence covers the Jewish people.

There is a limit to how close man can come to God's presence and live. The Torah describes God's world before creation – waters swirling around in darkness. Man could not survive in such a world. The morning of Yom Kippur, we read how man can come close to God's presence and survive. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (with special preparations, including fasting, using the mikvah several times, and wearing special clothing) may enter the Holy of Holies. The Kohen Gadol then presents his incense. The smoke from the incense rises and mingles with God's cloud. Since man could not live in God's world, this mixing of man's smoke with God's cloud is the closest that a man could come to God and live. A consequence of contact with God's cloud is kaporet – cleansing of sins for everyone who had confessed his sins (Vidui) and repented. This cleansing is a more refined version of the cleansing effect of contact with God's cloud of glory in the Midbar – the mechanism that cleaned the bodies and clothing of the Jews during those 40 years.

The Haftorah for Yom Kippur afternoon, Yonah, is also central to the meaning of Yom Kippur. God asks Yonah to warn the people of Nineveh to repent or He will destroy them. Yonah knows that the people will repent and that God will forgive them. He therefore tries to get out of delivering God's message. Nineveh is part of Assyria – and Yonah, as a prophet, knows that the Assyrians will invade and destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel a few decades in the future. Yonah believes that it is evil for God to forgive murderers and chronic sinners.

Yonah's full name is Yonah ben Amitai – Yonah, the son of the man of truth. Yonah recites God's 13 Divine Attributes, the words from Ki Tisa that we read every fast day and many times both in Selichot, Vidui, and especially on Yom Kippur. The difference, however, is that Yonah changes "God of Truth" to "God who changes His mind about doing evil." Yonah's God is one of compassion, who is willing to give up punishing sinners when they do teshuvah. By giving Yonah a plant to shade him from the hot sun and then having a worm kill the plant, God teaches Yonah that he would not want to live in a world without God's compassion. The message of Yonah, according to Rabbi Fohrman, is that teshuvah does not change the past, but it can change the future. Formerly evil people can become good – and thus deserve not to be punished. This message, from a careful reading of Yonah, fits in with the message of Yom Kippur providing an opportunity to earn God's forgiveness (wiping away our sins). We see this same message when Avraham bargains with God not to destroy Sodom if the city contains at least ten righteous men – because a core of virtuous men can influence others to perform teshuvah.

I received my copy of Rabbi Fohrman's new Parsha companion, volume one (Genesis), in time to enjoy reading it on Rosh Hashanah afternoon. It is brilliant and absorbing, even though I have read early versions of most of the material. Watch for the remaining volumes over the next couple of years. For each parsha, Rabbi Fohrman presents an essay on a key theme. This series will be a classic in Torah scholarship.

After seven months of isolation, we hope to drive to Dayton, OH for a week with our son and his family, starting Hol HaMoed Sukkot. I hope to send out an issue next week – perhaps a combined issue for two weeks (Sukkot and Bereishis).

Yom Kippur always reminds me of wonderful years with my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, with whom I spent many hours each Yom Kippur. On one of those occasions, my (then future) wife came in from a different shul and surprised me when I noticed her during Mincha. Something unusual seemed to make each Yom Kippur with Rabbi Cahan special – his Chasidic tales during Kol Nidre services, extended sermons on Yom Kippur, which wove together many different ideas but always made sense by the end, and unexpected events. For example, one Yom Kippur, some high school kids threw raw eggs at him. He discovered who the kids were and taught them a lesson. Yom Kippur comes with messages and memories. This year it comes with a new kind of experience – more time in isolation (even for those able to go to shul) and more time to reflect on new ways to find meaning in the experience. May we learn from Yom Kippur in isolation – and never need to go through another High Holiday period away from our friends and family.

G'mar Chatima Tovah!

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Nossan ben Pessel, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Milda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha,

Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Ramesh bat Heshmat, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Haazinu: Calculated Double Speak
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

Ha'azinu is the last song of the Torah. It details some wonderful attributes that paint a glorious picture of the relationship of G-d and His people. And it also admonishes the Jews for their lack of gratitude and wisdom in understanding their role in the creation.

Hashem discusses the folly of sin with the seeming redundant expression. "Is it to Hashem that you do this? Am naval, v'lo chacham! A nation unwise and vile! (Deuteronomy 32:6). It seems that there are two distinct problems with the rebellious people. They are called vile and foolish. Is the Torah waxing poetic, or can we garner more from the seeming repetitive words of admonishment?

The Dean of a prestigious Yeshiva gave his weekly shiur to a packed audience every Thursday. His words were calculated and the thoughts flowed in perfect succession with hundreds of students listening in concert. Hardly anyone dared to interrupt the lecture with a question or contradiction; rather they would wait until the class ended, when the Dean would answer each student with patience and clarity.

One morning, a new student entered the class and followed the brilliant dean's lecture until the crescendo of his analytical discourse. Then, as the final argument was about to be made, the student rudely interrupted with a point that made no sense whatsoever. The Rabbi, shaken from the interruption, motioned to the young man to hold his fire. The student refused, shouting as if he had discovered gold, while trying to knock the entire lecture off its foundation. All who were in attendance were upset by the totally irrelevant points that ruined the train of thought for the hundreds of students.

The other students who saw their Rabbi's frustration whispered to the neophyte that his question was frivolous and irrelevant as they tried to dissuade him from continuing his futile interruptions. But the young man did not stop. Finally the Rabbi himself left the lectern, smiled to the young man, then bent over and whispered something in his ear that quelled the burst of irrelevance.

After the lecture an older student took the new student aside and explained him that it was not right to interrupt the class and scores of serious scholars when he was not well versed in the topic. Then he showed him why he had no point and how his questions were an array of confusion. The young man realized his folly and was quite ashamed. "But I am not sure what the Rabbi meant when he whispered, 'You cannot pose a question like a shikerer (drunken) foreigner'. It sure quashed my rudeness, but I am baffled by the meaning of the comment."

A few moments passed and another student approached the neophyte. "The Rabbi would like to speak to you."

The young man entered the office and apologized for his brazen interruptions. But the Rabbi waved his hand. "I did not call you to chastise you. I just wanted to explain what I meant by a drunken foreigner. "When an American drunk says something in his stupor," the rabbi began, "we understand what he is saying, but he does not understand what he is saying. And when a sober foreigner makes a comment, he understands what he is saying, but we don't understand what he is saying.

"But when a drunken foreigner makes a comment, neither he understands what he is saying nor do we understand what he is saying!"

Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathanson commented on the aforementioned verse. "If the nation were wise and vile, perhaps we can reason with them. And if the nation were foolish but righteous, we could educate them. But when they are both unwise and vile, then it is almost a hopeless cause!"

When listening to the Torah's admonitions we must realize that Hashem is not berating us with an harangue of verbal put-downs. Rather, each invalidating adjective is carefully calculated, referring to a different aspect of our erroneous ways. As we approach the days of Yom Kippur and are about to verbalize our confessions for myriad sins, take the time to analyze the different expressions and phraseology, as they represent the complex indifference we often to display toward Hashem's carefully worded admonitions. With a little inflection and reflection, we will merit the antidote to those words of admonition.

Good Shabbos

A Plastic Hour in the Time of Coronavirus

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

Yom Kippur is almost upon us. It is a day that is classically spent in personal introspection and reflection, acknowledging and feeling remorse for our sins and misdeeds, and committing to try to do differently in the future. In previous years, I have shared my thoughts that I believe that this heavy emphasis on looking back can often be unproductive and unhelpful. It can weigh us down with guilt and self-blame and keep us mired in the past. The true goal of Yom Kippur, by contrast, is to repent, to leave the past and its limiting and constricting force behind, and to embrace the infinite possibilities of the future. We get no extra points for self-flagellation. What we get points for is accepting the gift that God has given us, the gift of forgiveness that allows us to start anew and to release the fullness of our human potential: "For on this day it shall be atoned for you to purify you. From all your sins, you shall be cleansed before the Lord." (Lev. 16:30).

I have usually directed these thoughts towards the individual – what it means for each person to accept atonement and to start the year with a clean slate. But this year, this message takes on added urgency for the community. Indeed, it was the entire community that was atoned for through the rites of the Kohen Gadol. And the cleansing that he achieved was not only, or even primarily, that of forgiveness of sins. It was rather the cleansing of the Sanctuary from the impurity created by those sins. The Torah believes that sin pollutes, it attaches to what is holy, and the process of atonement begins with the removal of that pollution and the restoring of the environment to a pristine state, to a holy place, a place where God can dwell in the midst of the community.

This year has been one of terrible disruption. It has shaken the very structures of the society which we have taken to be firm and immovable. Through the cracks and fissures that have resulted we have been able to see some of the deep problems that have been hidden from our view or that we allow ourselves to so easily to ignore. Issues such as accelerating climate change, the tenacity of deep systemic racism, inequitable distribution of health care, the lack of a safety net for major segments of society, and the politicization of science and of policies relating to public health. This is the pollution that has been clinging to the walls and getting into the floorboards of our society, a pollution caused by our sins of action and of inaction. As an individual, any one of us might bear only a small degree of responsibility for the current state of affairs, but as a local and national community, the responsibility lays squarely at our feet. The work of Yom Kippur is not to dwell on the sins of the past that have gotten us here, but to acknowledge them, and then to work together to fix what has gone wrong, to remove these injustices and corrosive forces from our house so that it can be a place that we can truly dwell and that the Divine can dwell with us.

In an unexpected way, this year might be exactly the time that we can start afresh and truly build something new, unhampered by much of the past. As the journalist George Packer recently wrote: "There are in history what you could call 'plastic hours,' the philosopher Gershom Scholem once said.... In such moments, an ossified social order suddenly turns pliable, prolonged stasis gives way to motion, and people dare to hope. Plastic hours are rare. They require the right alignment of public opinion, political power, and events—usually a crisis. They depend on social mobilization and leadership. They can come and go unnoticed or wasted. Nothing happens unless you move. Are we living in a plastic hour? It feels that way... the philosophical questions brought on by despair allow us to reimagine what kind of country we can be."

Let us see this Yom Kippur as granting us a 'plastic hour.' An opportunity to shape and build our personal lives unhampered by mistakes of or guilt from the past. And a communal opportunity, to identify those parts of our society that have been polluted, and to replace it with systems and structures that will ensure a society that is more equitable and caring, that fosters a sense of unity and community, and that is committed to the well-being of all its members and the planet on which we live. Let us all work together to make this happen.

To download a copy of the YCT High Holy Day companion, go to <https://www.yctorah.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MachzorCompanion2020-e3-1.pdf>
This file is too large for me to attach with my E-mail package.

Eat, Drink ... For Tomorrow

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2014 Teach 613

The day preceding Yom Kippur is an anomaly on the Jewish Calendar. Although Yom Kippur is a solemn day, the day before it is a day of semi-celebration. We do not recite tachanun; it is a mitzvah to eat and drink. What is the significance of this day before Yom Kippur?

Some people will answer that the eating and drinking is simply a health precaution, preparing for the long fast of Yom Kippur. But as with all observance I believe there is a deeper message.

Not long ago, in a large city called Humanville, USA there was a terrible crisis. The largest company in the region, the employer of thousands of workers, was about to be closed down. Apparently their business had been run with enormous carelessness. Record keeping was seriously flawed. In fact, during a recent audit it was discovered that even the computer programs were messed up. In many cases assets were showing up as debts, while many debts were not being reported at all. Shareholders who heard the news were ready to sue. The Feds were appalled and threatened to close the company down. For over a month there were rumors that everyone would be getting a pink slip within days.

Suddenly there was hope. A certain expert, we'll call him Mr. Fix It, called the CEO and offered to help. After checking Mr. Fix It's credentials, the CEO decided that it was really worth a try. The CEO hired Mr. Fix It for an amazing 25 hours. The goal: To assess the problems, and to revamp the company.

Come join us as we eavesdrop on the CEO as he dictates a memo to the staff regarding the visit of Mr. Fix It.

“...all files are to be made available... all computers are to be at his disposal... staff shall be totally focused on ensuring that the consultation with Mr. Fix It is a productive one... There will be no cover-ups...all problems shall be identified and a recovery plan shall be put into place...”

The hope for recovery spread quickly. Although the staff knew that the consultation day would be a grueling one, they began to look forward to it because it provided a chance for salvation. The day before was celebrated in the cafeteria like a holiday. Hope for the company's future, the city, and their jobs, had been rekindled.

The message of Yom Kippur is much the same. For a month now we were warned of a judgement day. Rosh Hashana came and we were judged. But we might not have fared as well as we had hoped. Perhaps our priorities were not found to be entirely in order. Sometimes we did mitzvos and then regretted them. Other times we considered our shortcomings as if they were assets. Our accounting books were a mess, and we feared that we might get closed down.

Suddenly a glimmer of hope appeared in the form of Yom Kippur. We are told that G-d Himself is willing to do a Fix It type of review of our holdings. Aware that we are human beings with human failings, He is willing to give us another chance. During the 25 hour review nothing will be withheld. Infractions will be identified and a recovery plan put in place. Through our beloved machzor prayer-book we are confident that a full point checkup will be administered effectively.

The day of the review will be a challenging day. First the problems will be identified, and we will think that all is lost. Then Mr. Fix It will insist that there is hope, and He will propose a solution. We may be comfortable with the solution, or we will counter-propose one of our own. But if we cooperate with the review, we know that within 25 hours our company will be well on the way to recovery.

So as the day of review nears, hope fills the air. The day before Yom Kippur is a day of hope, a day of happiness. Eat, drink, and be ready, for tomorrow we will live.

With best wishes for a meaningful fast, and a happy, healthy, and productive New Year with the opportunity to experience it well. May we be blessed with a wonderful, safe, happy, and healthy, new year.

Three Tendencies: Thoughts for Parashat Ha'azinu

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

In his essay, "The Messianic Idea in Judaism," Professor Gershom Scholem points to three tendencies within the spiritual life of the Jewish people.

The "conservative" element stresses the need to maintain things as they've always been. It is manifested in a deep commitment to Jewish law and custom; it focuses on detail and ritual. This tendency wants to ensure stability and continuity. It worries that any change in the system can lead to the unraveling of the entire structure.

The "restorative" element longs for the "good old days." It wants to renew our days as of old, to reestablish the kingdom of King David, to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Its underlying thought is that the greatest eras and personalities are in the past, and that our wish is to return to a past "Golden Age."

The "utopian" element longs for a messianic era. It is characterized by spiritual restlessness and idealistic fervor. It contains within it bubbling emotions, and can be creative, nerve-wracking, even painful. It calls on us to change our focus from the safety of the past to the uncertainty of the future.

Throughout Jewish history, these three elements have reflected themselves in our religious lives. In some eras, one element has predominated; in other eras, another element has predominated. But all three have always been with us to some degree.

The challenge is to balance the claims of all three tendencies, and to develop a Jewish life that draws on the strengths of each. The "conservative" element maintains the religious structure of our daily lives. Without adherence to halakha on a regular basis, Judaism is sapped of its influence on our lives. It becomes a nostalgic pastime to be experienced on special occasions. It becomes a matter of personal preference rather than a commitment to a divinely ordained way of life. Without the "conservative" element, Judaism becomes watered down to such a degree as to lose its real spiritual power.

The "restorative" element reminds us that we indeed did enjoy "golden ages" and we did indeed produce great personalities. While we in fact do not want to return to the past, yet we can derive tremendous inspiration from the great events and personalities of Jewish history. If we can restore the best elements of our past, this can be a boon to us and to the future of our people.

The "utopian" element reminds us to focus on the future. Without the idealism and hopefulness of utopianism, we risk becoming mired in the past. This tendency keeps us focused on developing new ideas, new ways of approaching an imperfect world, new aspirations for improving society.

In this week's Torah portion, we read: "Remember the days of old; think about the years of the past generations. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will explain to you." (Devarim 32:7). I believe this verse can be understood as providing us insight on maintaining a vibrant Judaism that maintains a keen balance among the conservative, restorative and utopian tendencies.

"Remember the days of old..." Tradition is vital to our wellbeing. By rooting ourselves in our traditions and teachings, we retain continuity with our past and we deepen our sense of rootedness and structure. This is the conservative tendency.

"Ask your father..." Rashi comments that "father" refers to our prophets. This is a nod to the restorative element. We lack prophecy today; yet we long for the "good old days" when we had divinely inspired prophets who could lead us, who could deliver direct messages from God. Lacking the presence of living prophets, we must depend on the words of the prophets as recorded in the Bible.

"Your elders..." Rashi comments that "elders" refers to our sages. The hallmark of a genuine sage is wisdom to apply ancient teachings to the needs of the current generation. Historically, our greatest sages have also been the most utopian i.e. the most tuned in to the coming generations of the Jewish people, the most concerned about a messianic future.

Judaism that is based primarily on the "conservative" tendency becomes dry and over-ritualized. Judaism that is based primarily on the "restorative" element becomes quixotic and irrelevant. Judaism that is based primarily on the "utopian" element becomes deracinated, flailing out in various directions while disconnecting itself from the wellsprings of Jewish tradition.

In truth, we need all three elements and we need to balance them wisely. This was true of the Jewish past. It is true for the Jewish present. It is the foundation of the Jewish future.

* Jewishideas.org. **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](https://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023.** Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

For a package of excellent short articles for the High Holy Days, through Sukkot, go to <https://www.jewishideas.org/article/holiday-reader-institute-jewish-ideas-and-ideals>.

Jews won't be your scapegoat any longer*

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

For centuries, Jews have been the world's scapegoat. No matter how absurd the charge, haters have attributed all sorts of evils to this one tiny group of humanity. The great Tunisian/French writer, Albert Memmi, described the predicament: "To be a Jew is first and foremost to find oneself called to account, to feel oneself continuously accused, explicitly or implicitly, clearly or obscurely...There is that constant hostility, that noxious haze in which the Jew is born, lives and dies."

The haters do not relate to Jews as fellow human beings, but as stereotypes. Their hatred is not aimed at this Jew or that Jew but at "the Jews." In their warped fantasies, "the Jews" are responsible for all sorts of terrible things; they accuse the entire group, they spread lies and slanders, and ultimately they too often resort to violence.

In a world of over 7 billion people, the Jewish population is less than 15 million — an infinitesimal fraction of humanity. Yet the haters somehow think that this very diverse group of Jews constitute a threat to the world's wellbeing. Conspiracy theories against Jews would be laughable if they weren't so dangerous. The haters will readily believe any and every malicious motive and action of "the Jews."

Jews, in all their diversity, share some common values: the importance of education; the centrality of family; the responsibility for social justice. Although they are such a tiny segment of humanity, Jews — as individuals and as a group — have contributed mightily to the advancement of humanity.

The haters have deep problems. They project their own evil intentions on their scapegoat victims. They think that they are stronger if they can oppress those who they perceive as being an easy target. They want to prove their own worth by tearing down others, rather than by actually raising themselves.

Jews have been the world's scapegoats for many centuries. We have suffered scorn, ghettoization, violence and murder. We want to notify the world: We resign, we no longer will serve as your scapegoat. From now on, please take your fears and feelings of inferiority to your mirror. Instead of projecting evil on Jews — or any other group — heal yourself. Instead of seeking a scapegoat to relieve your frustrations, think of how you can be the best person you can be.

The Hebrew prophets of the Bible foresaw a time when people will no longer devote their energies to war and destructive hatred. We are, unfortunately, not yet living in such an ideal world.

But each person can either bring us closer to the goal, or drag us further from it.

* New York Daily News, September 18, 2020.

Haazinu Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

[Rabbi Singer's Dvar Torah did not arrive before my deadline to send out my mailing. Watch for his Dvar next issue.]

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Yom Kippur Message: Teshuvah and Coronavirus

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

No this is not an email about how repenting can save us from COVID. I just don't have that type of brazenness to promise salvation if you pray a certain way. Here I intend to present a more ignored aspect of teshuvah that Covid has directed our attention to.

The Hebrew language is an interesting one because an individual word can have a few different meanings that seem to contradict each other. Take the word "Teshuva" for example. The two letter root of this word is Shin and Bet or "ShV." In the Torah this word is used to mean "return" which means we move to a place that we are not currently in. But the root "ShV" also means "to dwell," "sit," or even "to rest." Where do you think the word "Shabbos" comes from? "ShV" makes up this word that forms an integral part of the Jewish vocabulary. This second meaning seems to be the opposite of "return." If teshuvah means to dwell then presumably you're not picking yourself up and returning somewhere.

So which definition does the Jewish community tend to act on? In my experience, the prevailing attitude seems to be the first one. Teshuva is a return to God. We're not where we want to be so we must do lots of things like staying in shul all day, beating our chests, and saying many beautiful words of supplication. Such actions flow from the philosophy of Teshuva as "return."

But not this year. Services (and the rabbi's sermon) have been shortened. We don't say as many words, and we will not be amongst the throngs we usually have for Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah davening felt like a regular davening with a few extra songs and rituals. It was beautiful and I loved it but it was not the big show I'm used to every Rosh Hashanah. Yom Kippur for us and other shuls across the country will also not be as long. But we will have the longest Yom Kippur breaks of the last thousand years of Jewish history.

The teshuva of return this year has been supplanted with the teshuva of dwelling. This is the type of teshuva that doesn't require us to "do" it. Rather, we realize that connecting to God is the easiest, most natural thing in the world if only we got out of our own way. This idea of teshuva being natural is the main point of Rav Abraham Hakohen Kook's *Orot Hateshuva* (Lights of Repentance). Teshuva is like breathing. If you try to breathe, you'll probably hurt yourself. Thank God we don't need to try because the natural order does it for us.

Think about Shabbat. The Gemara says that if the Jews keep two Shabbats, we will be redeemed. Why? What teshuva did we do? Ironically the teshuva part of the Amidah is not in the Shabbat Amidah. The answer is we did teshuvah but without realizing it. Just keeping the Shabbat and entering a space where we do not do any halachically defined creative work puts us in the mindset of the teshuva of dwelling. (Personally, I can read triple the amount on Shabbos than I read during the week because of the calm environment.) You did teshuvah without realizing it.

This is exactly what the Gemara means when it says the day of Yom Kippur atones (even if you didn't actively do a lot).

Why? Is this just a cool magic trick God performs that are sins are washed away by the setting of the sun on Monday night? Nope. It's because we've done teshuva already. Just by refraining from what the Torah says we should refrain from on Yom Kippur leads naturally to a state of teshuvah.

To put it succinctly: Teshuva does you rather than you doing teshuvah. Yes, we "do" our mitzvot, our duties on Yom Kippur that helps us be in an ideal frame of mind to channel teshuva. But I don't "do teshuva." I also don't "do breathing." Breathing just happens and teshuva just happens.

At least that's the teshuva of dwelling. Of seeing teshuva as a natural part of who we are rather than something we need to do. But I don't want to discount the teshuva of return. Everybody has their own way of balancing the two and I can only present this so you can think about how it relates to you. But definitely during this year when we will "do" a lot less on Yom Kippur, we will be tapping into the teshuva of dwelling more than in previous years.

What will happen after Covid? How will our perspective on Yom Kippur shift? I don't know, but I'm confident that we'll find the right balance. After all, both definitions of Teshuva are encapsulated in the one word.

Gemar Chatimah Tovah and Shabbat Shalom!

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL

Rav Kook Torah Eating before Yom Kippur

The Ninth of Tishrei

While there are several rabbinically-ordained fasts throughout the year, only one day of fasting is mentioned in the Torah:

"It is a sabbath of sabbaths to you, when you must fast. You must observe this sabbath on the ninth of the month in the evening, from evening until [the next] evening." (Lev. 23:32)

This refers to the fast of Yom Kippur. The verse, however, appears to contain a rather blatant 'mistake': Yom Kippur falls out on the tenth of Tishrei, not the ninth!

The Talmud in Berachot 8b explains that the day before Yom Kippur is also part of the atonement process, even though there is no fasting: "This teaches that one who eats and drinks on the ninth is credited as if he fasted on both the ninth and tenth."

Still, we need to understand: Why is there a mitzvah to eat on the day before Yom Kippur? In what way does this eating count as a day of fasting?

Two Forms of Teshuvah

The theme of Yom Kippur is, of course, teshuvah — repentance, the soul's return to its natural purity. There are two major aspects to teshuvah. The first is the need to restore the spiritual sensitivity of the soul, dulled by over-indulgence in physical pleasures. This refinement is achieved by temporarily rejecting physical enjoyment, and substituting life's hectic pace with prayer and reflection. The Torah gave us one day a year, the fast of Yom Kippur, to concentrate exclusively on refining our spirits and redefining our goals.

However, the aim of Judaism is not asceticism. As Maimonides wrote (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Dei'ot 3:1):

"One might say, since jealousy, lust and arrogance are bad traits, driving a person out of the world, I shall go to the opposite extreme. I will not eat meat, drink wine, marry, live in a pleasant house, or wear nice clothing... like the idolatrous monks. This is wrong, and it is forbidden to do so. One who follows this path is called a sinner.... Therefore, the Sages instructed that we should only restrict ourselves from that which the Torah forbids.... It is improper to constantly fast."

The second aspect of teshuvah is more practical and down-to-earth. We need to become accustomed to acting properly and avoid the pitfalls of material desires that violate the Torah's teachings. This type of teshuvah is not attained by fasts and prayer, but by preserving our spiritual integrity while we are involved in worldly matters.

The true goal of Yom Kippur is achieved when we can remain faithful to our spiritual essence while remaining active participants in the physical world. When do we accomplish this aspect of teshuvah? When we eat on the ninth of Tishrei. Then we demonstrate that, despite our occupation with mundane activities, we can remain faithful to the Torah's values and ideals. Thus, our eating on the day before Yom Kippur is connected to our fasting on Yom Kippur itself. Together, these two days correspond to the two corrective aspects of the teshuvah process.

By preceding the fast with eating and drinking, we ensure that the reflection and spiritual refinement of Yom Kippur are not isolated to that one day, but have an influence on the entire year's involvement in worldly activities. The inner, meditative teshuvah of the tenth of Tishrei is thus complemented by the practical teshuvah of the ninth.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 210-212. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 42.)

The Spirituality of Song (Ha'azinu 5777) © 2016

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Former UK Chief Rabbi,*

With Ha'azinu we climb to one of the peaks of Jewish spirituality. For a month Moses had taught the people. He had told them their history and destiny, and the laws that would make theirs a unique society of people bound in covenant with one another and with God. He renewed the covenant and then handed the leadership on to his successor and disciple Joshua. His final act would be blessing the people, tribe by tribe. But before that, there was one more thing he had to do. He had to sum up his prophetic message in a way the people would always remember and be inspired by. He knew that the best way of doing so is by music. So the last thing Moses did before giving the people his deathbed blessing was to teach them a song.

There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation. There was the song of the Israelites in Egypt (see Is. 30:29), the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the song at the well (Num. 21), and Ha'azinu, Moses' song at the end of his life. Joshua sang a song (Josh. 10:12-13). So did Deborah (Jud. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and David (2 Sam. 22). There was the Song of Solomon, Shir ha-Shirim, about which Rabbi Akiva said, "All songs are holy but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies." [1] The tenth song has not yet been sung. It is the song of the Messiah. [2]

Many biblical texts speak of the power of music to restore the soul. When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called "the music of the spheres". This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music [3] carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world." Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftorah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah: Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and

what kind of text is being used. Jewish texts and times are not colour-coded but music-coded. The map of holy words is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of God on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they plead with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul.[4]

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words Neue Kraft fühlend, "Feeling new strength." That is what music expresses and evokes. It is the language of emotion unsicklied by the pale cast of thought. That is what King David meant when he sang to God the words: "You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the late Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) told the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, "It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment."

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, "Look, it's new." "It's the same chocolate," she said. "No," he replied, "Look. It's changed." He had no past at all.

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we "remember" a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, "Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being foreknown." Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than science.[5] Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is "an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone." [6] He quotes Rilke: "Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home." [7] The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs.

I once watched a teacher explaining to young children the difference between a physical possession and a spiritual one. He had them build a paper model of Jerusalem. Then (this was in the days of tape-recorders) he put on a tape with a song about Jerusalem that he taught to the class. At the end of the session he did something very dramatic. He tore up the model and shredded the tape. He asked the children, "Do we still have the model?" They replied, No. "Do we still have the song?" They replied, Yes.

We lose physical possessions, but not spiritual ones. We lost the physical Moses. But we still have the song.

Footnotes:

[1] Mishna, Yadayim 3:5.

[2] Tanhuma, Beshallach, 10; Midrash Zuta, Shir ha-Shirim, 1:1.

[3] Kavam, literally “their line”, possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument.

[4] Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work.

[5] I once said to the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, in the course of a radio conversation, “Richard, religion is music, and you are tone deaf.” He replied, “Yes, it’s true, I am tone deaf, but there is no music.”

[6] Roger Scruton, An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Philosophy, Duckworth, 1996, 151.

[7] Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, II, 10.

* <https://rabbisacks.org/spirituality-song-haazinu-5776/> Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

The Inspiring Story of Rabbi Avner, the Sinner

By Chana Weisberg*

I recently read a fascinating story that I’d like to share with you.

Moses ben Nachman, commonly known as Nachmanides, and also referred to by the acronym Ramban, was a leading medieval Jewish scholar in the 13th century, in Girona, Catalonia.

He had a disciple, Avner, who strayed from the path of observant Judaism, left his community and became an important government official.

One Yom Kippur, Avner sent guards to the synagogue, ordering the Ramban to appear before him. In his palace, before the eyes of his former teacher and master, Avner slaughtered a pig, roasted it and ate it on this holiest of fast days.

The Ramban couldn’t contain his anguish and cried, “What caused you to fall so low? What compelled you to abandon the holy teachings of your ancestors?”

“It was you, my master!” Avner roared derisively. “Your teachings completely disillusioned me and caused me to reject Judaism.”

“You were once teaching the Torah portion of Ha’azinu,” he explained. “You taught us that in this brief Torah portion of 52 verses, the Torah encodes all the details of the long history of the Jewish people until the coming of Moshiach. You claimed, too, that encoded in its verses are the names of every Jew to have ever lived.”

“This is obviously preposterous!” thundered Avner. “How could 4,000 years of history and millions of names be compressed into 614 words?”

“What I said is absolutely true,” declared the Ramban.

“If so, then I must be found there, too. Where is my name, and where is my fate?”

The Ramban’s expression grew serious. He prayed silently to G d to reveal this secret.

“Your name, Avner, can be found in verse 26. Tell me, what is the third letter in these words: AmaRti (reish) AfEihem (aleph) AshBita (beit) Me’eNosh (nun) ZichRom (reish)?”

The verse reads: “I [G d] said in my heart, that I would scatter them, causing their memory to cease from mankind.”

Here, G-d rebukes the Jewish people for turning away from the path of the Torah and becoming so evil that He wanted to destroy them.

Avner turned deathly white and began to wail bitterly.

"Is there any hope for me?" he begged. "Is there anything that I can do to rectify my terrible sins?"

The Ramban looked compassionately at his former student. "The verse itself has provided the rectification. It says that G-d will scatter them till their memory is erased. You must run away, never to be heard from again."

Avner boarded a ship and was never seen again.

Notice that the name encoded in the third letters of this verse is not Avner, but includes the prefix "R," which stands for Rabbi Avner. Even though up until this point Avner led a life that was the complete antithesis of what a rabbi stands for, the Torah calls him "Rabbi."

Avner had free choice to choose whether or not he would repent. But the Torah is confident that ultimately the holiness of his soul will shine through, and that through repentance he will have transformed himself not only into an Avner, but an illustrious Jew, a rabbi.

What a lesson in how we must view every Jew, even ourselves—with the confidence that even a great sinner like Avner can, and will, become a great rabbi.

* Author and editor of TheJewishWoman.org. © Chabad 2020.

Torah Thought

By Rabbi Nochum Mangel*

The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called "Aseret Yemei Teshuvah," often translated as "The 10 Days of Repentance," but the truth is that the Hebrew word "teshuvah" is better translated as "return" rather than "repentance."

While emphasis on repenting for our past misdeeds is indeed laudable, the primary focus must be on repairing our relationship with G-d. That's what "return" means. Throughout the year we may have strayed, our relationship with G-d may have taken a hit, but during these 10 days we have the opportunity to return to our true selves.

This is even more so on Yom Kippur itself, the day that the essence of our souls is revealed. More than mere repentance, and even more than returning, we discover that we never really left. Despite everything we may have done, the deepest part of us—our G-dly essence—was never affected; and we discover that on Yom Kippur.

May you and your family be sealed for a great year!

"Although a fire descended from heaven upon the Altar, it is a mitzvah to add to it a humanly produced fire" (Talmud, Eruvin 63a, as per Leviticus 6). This rule applies to all areas of life: the gifts of life are bestowed upon us from Above, yet it is G-d's desire that we add to them the product of our own initiative. — The Chassidic Masters

Good Shabbos!

* Rabbi, Chabad of Greater Dayton, OH

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Let My Teaching Drop as Rain

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

Let my teaching drop as rain,
My words descend like dew,
Like showers on new grass,
Like abundant rain on tender plants. (Deut. 32:2)

God's word is like rain in a dry land. It brings life. It makes things grow. There is much we can do of our own accord: we can plough the earth and plant the seeds. But in the end our success depends on something beyond our control. If no rain falls, there will be no harvest, whatever preparations we make. So it is with Israel. It must never be tempted into the hubris of saying: "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me" (Deut. 8:17).

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

Let my teaching drop as rain: Just as the rain is one thing, yet it falls on trees, enabling each to produce tasty fruit according to the kind of tree it is – the vine in its way, the olive tree in its way, and the date palm in its way – so the Torah is one, yet its words yield Scripture, Mishnah, laws, and lore. Like showers on new grass: Just as showers fall upon plants and make them grow, some green, some red, some black, some white, so the words of Torah produce teachers, worthy individuals, Sages, the righteous, and the pious.[1]

There is only one Torah, yet it has multiple effects. It gives rise to different kinds of teaching, different sorts of virtue. Torah is sometimes seen by its critics as overly prescriptive, as if it sought to make everyone the same. The Midrash argues otherwise. The Torah is compared to rain precisely to emphasise that its most important effect is to make each of us grow into what we could

By Dr. Israel & Rebecca Rivkin, Edison, NJ,
on the yahrzeit of Israel's father,
William Rivkin, a"h, (Refael Zeav ben Yisrael)
whose yahrzeit is on Yom Kippur

become. We are not all the same, nor does Torah seek uniformity. As a famous Mishnah puts it: "When a human being makes many coins from the same mint, they are all the same. God makes everyone in the same image – His image – yet none is the same as another" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5).

This emphasis on difference is a recurring theme in Judaism. For example, when Moses asks God to appoint his successor, he uses an unusual phrase: "May the Lord, God of the spirits of all humankind, appoint a man over the community" (Num. 27:16). On this, Rashi comments: Why is this expression ("God of the spirits of all humankind") used? [Moses] said to Him: Lord of the universe, You know each person's character, and that no two people are alike. Therefore, appoint a leader for them who will bear with each person according to his disposition.

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

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

The political problem as Maimonides sees it is how to regulate the affairs of human beings in such a way as to respect their individuality while not creating chaos. A similar point emerges from a surprising rabbinic teaching: "Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, one says: Blessed Be He who discerns secrets – because the mind of each is different from that of another, just as the face of each is different from another" (Brachot 58a).

We would have expected a blessing over a crowd to emphasise its size, its mass: human beings in their collectivity.[3] A crowd is a

Shabbat Shalom - Gmar Chatima Tova

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group large enough for the individuality of the faces to be lost. Yet the blessing stresses the opposite – that each member of a crowd is still an individual with distinctive thoughts, hopes, fears, and aspirations.

The same was true for the relationship between the Sages. A Mishnah states: When R. Meir died, the composers of fables ceased. When Ben Azzai died, assiduous students ceased. When Ben Zoma died, the expositors ceased. When R. Akiva died, the glory of the Torah ceased. When R. Chanina died, men of deed ceased. When R. Yose Ketanta died, the pious men ceased. When R. Yochanan b. Zakai died, the lustre of wisdom ceased.... When Rabbi died, humility and the fear of sin ceased. (Mishnah Sotah 9:15)

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

The same applies to even to the revelation at Sinai itself. Each individual heard, in the same words, a different inflection: The voice of the Lord is with power (Ps. 29:4): that is, according to the power of each individual, the young, the old, and the very small ones, each according to their power [of understanding]. God said to Israel, "Do not believe that there are many gods in heaven because you heard many voices. Know that I alone am the Lord your God." [4]

According to Maharsha, there are 600,000 interpretations of Torah. Each individual is theoretically capable of a unique insight into its meaning. The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas commented: The Revelation has a particular way of producing meaning, which lies in its calling upon the

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unique within me. It is as if a multiplicity of persons...were the condition for the plenitude of "absolute truth," as if each person, by virtue of his own uniqueness, were able to guarantee the revelation of one unique aspect of the truth, so that some of its facets would never have been revealed if certain people had been absent from mankind.[5]

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

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

[1] *Sifrei, Ha'azinu* 306.

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

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

[4] *Exodus Rabbah* 29:1.

[5] Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), 190–210.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Repression of the Sublime

It was advertised as one symposium at a major psychology conference. It was to be a discussion about memory and forgetfulness. But it turned out to be one of the most intense and instructive days that I have ever witnessed.

The first speaker began by insisting that the fact that we remember things is obvious. What requires explanation, he argued, is why we forget. We are hardwired to recall every event that occurs in our lives. The mechanisms of forgetfulness are a mystery and call for a program of scientific research.

The second speaker took a position diametrically opposed to the first. He believed that it is only natural that we forget. It is one of nature's wonders, he maintained, that we remember anything at all.

The third speaker took a middle of the road position. For him, the major challenge to the science of the psychology of memory was not why we remember. Or why we forget. Rather, it was why we remember certain things and forget others. And why we distort even those matters which we do remember, so that our memories are grossly inaccurate and unreliable.

It is the position of this third speaker that has kept my interest over the many years since that conference. Some have memories which are as accurate and as clear as the "flashbulb memories" that psychologists have studied as far back as World War II. For others, the memories have been partially, and sometimes substantially, repressed and can no longer be recalled. Their powerful and poignant emotional reactions have wrought havoc with

the ability to accurately remember the events of that day.

Remembering and forgetting are major themes in our Jewish religious tradition. We are commanded, for example, to remember the Sabbath, to remember the lessons to be drawn from the life of Miriam, and not to forget the enmity of Amalek. In this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Ha'azinu*, there are at least two verses which relate to these themes. One reads, "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation." (Deuteronomy 32:7) and the other states, "You ignored the Rock who gave birth to you, and forgot God who brought you forth." (Ibid. 32:18)

I have always been intrigued by the notion of forgetting God. Earlier in the book of Deuteronomy, we were admonished to be careful, lest "our hearts become haughty, and we forget the Lord our God." (Deuteronomy 8:14) I can understand agnostic disbelief, and I can empathize with those who have lost their faith, but I have always found it puzzling to contemplate forgetting God. Either one believes, or one does not believe, but how are we to understand forgetting Him?

Many years ago, I came across the writings of a psychologist named Robert Desoille, and it was in those writings that I've discovered a concept that helped me come to grips with the notion of forgetting God.

Desoille coined the phrase "the repression of the sublime." He argued that we have long been familiar with the idea that we repress urges and memories that are uncomfortable or unpleasant. We repress memories of tragedy, we repress impulses which are shameful, or forbidden. It can even be argued that this power of repression is a beneficial one to individuals and society. If individuals would not be able to forget tragedy and loss, they could potentially be forever emotionally paralyzed and unable to move on with their lives. A society whose members act on every hostile impulse, rather than repressing them would be a society which could not endure for very long.

It was Desoille's insight that just as we repress negative memories, we also repress positive aspirations. We are afraid to excel. There is a pernicious aspect to us that fears superiority and avoids the full expression of our potential. This is especially true in the area of religion and spirituality, where we dare not express the full force of our faith and, in the process, limit our altruistic tendencies. Perhaps it is the dread of coming too close to the divine. Perhaps it is a false humility that prevents us from asserting our inner spirit. Or perhaps it is simply that we do not wish to appear "holier than thou" to our fellows.

However one understands the reasons for this phenomenon, for me, the concept of

Likutei Divrei Torah

"repression of the sublime" explains the notion of forgetting God. It is as if we have faith in Him but do not have sufficient faith in ourselves to express our faith in Him, in our relationships, and life circumstances. We repress our sublime potential.

There are many impediments to thorough personal change and self-improvement. Desoille demands that we consider an impediment that never before occurred to us: we are afraid to actualize the inner spiritual potential that we all possess. We are naturally complacent, satisfied with a limited expression of our religious urges. We repress the sublime within us.

As we now have concluded the High Holidays and its truly sublime liturgy, we have allowed our spiritual emotions full range. We have dared to express the religious feelings which welled up within us during the moments of inspiration that we all surely experienced during this sacred season.

Now is the season during which our faith demands that we loosen the bonds of the repression which limits us, take the risks of more fully expressing our religious convictions, and thereby no longer be guilty of "forgetting the God who brought us forth."

May we be successful in our efforts to free the sublime within us, to act courageously upon our religious convictions, and thereby merit the blessings of the Almighty for a happy and sweet new year.

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What's the longest word in the Torah? There is only one ten letter word in the Torah, *uv misharotecha* meaning 'and in your kneading troughs'. It's a description in the book of *Shemot* of the extent to which the plague of frogs affected the Egyptian nation, coming into all parts of their existence.

Now, what is the shortest word in the Torah? You might say 'come on... there are many two letter words: 'al', 'el', 'kol'. But actually there is one single letter word. It's in *Devarim*, chapter 32, verse 6. at the beginning of *parshat Ha'azinu*. Moshe, who is about to pass away, wants to give us a critically important message for our lives and he says: "Ha Lashem tigmal zot" – "Is this how you're repaying Hashem your God?" "Am naval vlo chacham" – "a vile nation that is not wise".

Usually, we would say 'HaLashem', as one word, but if you have a look in the Torah – it is in bold and it is a separate word. And indeed the masoretic note in every *Chumash* indicates that this is a single lettered word. So why do we have this extraordinary phenomenon?

The theme is a most important one: how do we repay Hashem's kindness? He has created us.

He has created this word. He gives us of his chesed continuously – as a nation, as individuals and as families and keeps us going against the odds. And if we behave in a vile manner then it is ‘lo chacham’ – we are simply not being clever. I find this to be very special because the Torah could have said ‘you’re being foolish’ – but actually ‘lo chacham’ really means something important to us because as a people, we strive to be ‘chachamim’, we try our best to be wise. We study. We educate others. We utilise the information that we learn in order to enhance our lives and our environment. And here Moshe is telling us we’re not wise when we don’t respect the existence of Hashem and we don’t repay his kindness in an appropriate way.

Moshe Rabbeinu wants us to know that there may be many paths to an appreciation of the existence and the greatness of the almighty. Of course we feel his presence emotionally, through great moments of spirituality, we feel his presence in our hearts. But ultimately, one must achieve an appreciation of the almighty through ‘chachma’ – ‘wisdom’. Some of the greatest minds, some of the most brilliant people in this world, know about the truth of the concept of a creator and the existence of Hashem and the truth of every single word, indeed every letter, in our Torah.

Three times a day in the amidah prayer, we declare ‘ata chonein ladam da’at’ – ‘thank you God for giving us knowledge’. It is with that knowledge that we must thank Hashem for what he has done, is doing and will always do for us. And all of this we learn from the shortest word in the Torah.

OTS Dvar Torah

“Great is this Song”

Yael Tawil

On Rosh Hashana, we want Hashem’s heavenly kingship to be revealed in our world, and on Yom Kippur, to elevate our world toward heaven. Thoughts on the connection between Shirat Haazinu and the High Holy Days

“Great is this song, which contains that of the present, the past, and the future, and contains both that of this world and the World to Come” (Sifri commentary on Haazinu, chapter 43)

Shirat Haazinu is a testament to the eternal covenant between the nation and its Creator, and to the individual and his or her Maker. The song contains a description of all that befell the Jewish people in the past, and a description of the punishment of expulsion from the Land of Israel, the long diaspora, and finally, the promise of complete redemption. Moshe calls on the heavens and the Earth to be witnesses to the tochecha, the rebuke, and to the challenges and the vision of redemption.

We read the verses of Shirat Haazinu at the beginning of a new year, following a month of prayer and repentance. It is a time when each of us strives to return to ourselves and to our

God, when we wish to make amends and act more righteously so that together, we can tread down a new and better path.

“Give ear, O heavens, let me speak; Let the earth hear the words I utter!” (Deuteronomy 32:1)

When we received the Torah on Mount Sinai, we learned the divergent approaches to speech and how the words of the Torah are to be conveyed.

“Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel.” (Numbers 19:3)

There are 70 faces to the Torah, and it needs to have different access routes so that its voice can be heard. There are different types of people in the world, and different facets to each of us. We are Children of Israel as well as Children of Jacob. There is heaven, Earth, and everything in between, and the Torah speaks to all of these. One must be spoken to sternly, and another must be approached more delicately.

Our sages offered various commentaries on the differences between hearing and listening. One of the commentaries relates to the different types of people that appear in this verse. The Baal Hasulam explains that listening, which implies a physical and philosophical proximity, is more suitable to anshei hashamayim, the “people of heaven”, who naturally deal with more spiritual matters, while hearing, which occurs when there is some distance between the two sides, is more appropriate for anshei haaretz, or those who deal with more mundane affairs.

According to the translators Onkelos and Yonatan ben Uziel, presumably, listening means complying, while hearing means understanding. As our sages tell us, “Hear – in any language that you can hear”.

Rabbi Nahman of Breslev explained that these were to approaches to the worship of Hashem. The first is the approach of the servant, a person who is required to obey his master’s orders, and the second is the approach of the son, one with privilege and proximity that gives him access to his father, so that he can understand the motives and rationales behind the orders he was given.

“Whether as children... or as servants, our eyes are fixed on You.”

Parashat Haazinu is usually read immediately before Yom Kippur. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin suggests an idea that analyzes the connection between the opening verse of shirat haazinu and the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Which of the holidays is heaven, and which is Earth?

In one sense, Rosh Hashana is heaven, and Yom Kippur is Earth. Most of the prayers

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during Rosh Hashana are about the kingship of heaven, about crowning Hashem in the malchuyot (kingships), zichronot (remembrances) and shofrot (shofars) sections of the Musaf amida. No confession service occurs, and sins are not mentioned. Yet during Yom Kippur, we deal with more mundane matters, and in the ten confessions we make, we mention anything that is prohibited, any confessions our mouths can pronounce.

In another sense, Yom Kippur is heaven, and Rosh Hashana is the Earth. On Yom Kippur, we are like the angels engaged in prayer before the Creator of the World. We don’t eat or drink, or attend to our other bodily needs. On Rosh Hashana, however, we are commanded as follows: “Go, eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks... for the day is holy to Hashem” (Nehemiah 8:10)

Rabbi Zevin sheds some light on the matter, explaining that both versions are correct. Both on Rosh Hashana and on Yom Kippur, we have haazina hashamayim (“hear, O heaven”) and vatishma haaretz (and the land shall hear). On Rosh Hashana, we bring heaven down to Earth, asking for the kingship of heaven to be revealed in our world: “rule over the entire world, with Your glory”. On Yom Kippur, we elevate our world to heaven and through our acts of repentance, “intentional sins are counted as merits” (Tractate Yoma, 86:2)

This view has a personal dimension as well. The heaven and Earth reside within each and every one of us. Thoughts and logic are associated with heaven, while the acts we perform with our bodies are associated with the Earth. The connection between thought and deed must occur on two levels: from heaven to Earth (Rosh Hashana), and from the Earth to heaven (Yom Kippur). We mustn’t suffice with just good thoughts and profound intentions, if they don’t lead to any concrete action, and we mustn’t simply rejoice and strive to take action without any forethought.

During this month, we are quite naturally engaged in ongoing introspection, and we desire and hope for change. Quite often, people tend to occupy themselves with matters that are close to heart – the things that keep us up at night. Naturally, people tend to be less attentive to things that far removed from them, both physically and historically. Here, Moses teaches us that in every generation, we must hear and heed the words of this song. Only through the covenant of fate, one connected to the events of the past, can we truly ensure a covenant of purpose and our redemption.

Shirat Haazinu may also be alluding to the challenge of finding the right balance, on different levels: a balance between what will be heard and what will be said, a balance and connection between thoughts and actions, and a balance between the spiritual and the material, and heaven and Earth.

At the outset of this New Year, let us pray that it will be Hashem's will that we will be able to connect heaven and Earth – to connect the spiritual and the material, the distant and the proximal, and our thoughts and heart-felt emotions with the deeds we perform.

"May the year and its curses end; and may the new year begin, along with its blessings."

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

Unity Through Individuality

"Hashem's portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His inheritance - Yaakov chevel nachalaso (Ha'azinu 32:9)." Why does the Torah use the word chevel to describe how the Jewish people are Hashem's special portion? And why is the name Yaakov chosen to identify Klal Yisrael in this context?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov, Bamidbar 1:1) points out that each shevet in Klal Yisrael had a unique mission in avodas Hashem. This was symbolized by the fact that each shevet had its own stone on the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol and its own flag. Once the Mishkan was built and all of Klal Yisrael had one central location to focus its spiritual energies, there was no longer a concern that the individuality of each of the shevatim would lead to divisiveness and confusion. To the contrary, by uniting under the banner of Torah and mitzvos, the different shevatim would be able to use their individual strengths and unique spiritual talents to serve Hashem, and this multi-colored, variegated avodas Hashem would actually add to and enhance k'vod Shamayim.

A similar idea is alluded to in a statement of Chazal. The Gemara (Sukka 53a) says that when Hillel would rejoice at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva in the Beis HaMikdash, he would say, "If I (ani) am here, then all is here, and if I am not here, then who is here?" Why would Hillel make a statement that sounds arrogant? Rashi explains that when using the word ani, Hillel was actually speaking on behalf of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. What he meant to say is that it's as if Hashem is constantly telling us, "If you do not sin, My presence will rest on the Beis HaMikdash and everyone will come here; but if you do not behave properly then I will leave the Beis HaMikdash, and no one will come here."

Tosafos quotes a different interpretation in the name of the Yerushalmi, that Hillel's ani did not refer to Hakadosh Boruch Hu, but rather to Klal Yisrael. Hillel meant to underscore the value of Klal Yisrael, that when Klal Yisrael is serving Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash, all is there. But if Klal Yisrael is not there, then there is no value to whomever is there.

What is the deeper message of Hillel's statement? Why did he specifically use the word ani to refer to Klal Yisrael? Perhaps what Hillel meant to say is, "If I am realizing my

full spiritual potential, then everything (my real essence) is here; but if I am not focusing my energies on becoming the person that I am meant to be, then who is here?" Hillel was hinting to the fact that every member of Klal Yisrael has a special spiritual mission that no one else can fulfill. As he says elsewhere (Avos 1:14), "If I will not be for myself, then who will be for me?" If I will not accomplish my purpose in life, no one else can do it for me. Every Jew has a unique role to play in this world, and the ultimate shleimus of Klal Yisrael is reached only when each individual Jew lives up to his full potential, his ani. This produces the greatest k'vod Shamayim - when Hashem rests His Presence on the Beis HaMikdash in the fullest sense and "all is here".

But this idea goes even further. The halacha is that although one is not obligated to bind the lulav with the hadassim and aravos, nevertheless, in order to beautify the mitzvah, it is appropriate to do so (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 651:1). What's more, when shaking the four species, one is obligated to hold the esrog close to the other three species (ibid 651:11). The Biur HaGra explains that the source of this halacha is the Midrash Rabbah (Emor 30:11) that Klal Yisrael is composed of four types of people: those who are involved in Torah and ma'asim tovim, those who have only Torah, those who have only ma'asim tovim, and those who have neither. Hakadosh Boruch Hu says, "Join them together, and they will atone for each other, and...I will be elevated."

The Beis Yosef (ibid) cites a different source for this custom in the name of Rav Menachem Rikanti. Apparently, one time, on the first night of Sukkos, the Rikanti had a guest. In the middle of the night, the Rikanti saw in a dream that the guest was writing Hashem's name, but he was separating the last letter from the first three. The Rikanti criticized his guest in the dream, and he fixed Hashem's name so that all the letters were close together. But he could not understand the deeper meaning of the dream. The next day he saw that his guest shook the lulav, hadassim and aravos without the esrog. And then he realized that the four species symbolize Hashem's name, as it says in the Midrash Rabbah (Emor 30:9), so if one does not join all the species together while shaking them, it is like he is separating between the letters of Hashem's name.

There seems to be a contradiction in the words of the Midrash. Do the four species correspond to the four groups of Jews or to the four letters of Hashem's name? The answer is that they correspond to both, because it is through Klal Yisrael that Hashem's name and the values of the Torah are promoted throughout the world. The shaking of the four species teaches the importance of uniting together with other Jews - with those who have Torah or ma'asim tovim, and even with those who have neither Torah nor ma'asim tovim. When we appreciate the

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value of all types of Jews, and we show concern even for those who are spiritually lost, we connect the letters of Hashem's name and we bring honor to the Torah and its ideals.

Perhaps this is why the Torah describes the Jewish people as "Yaakov chevel nachalaso". Unlike Avraham and Yitzchak who transmitted their Torah tradition to only one of their children, Yaakov Avinu had twelve shevatim, and one of the lessons he taught them is that each shevet in Klal Yisrael has a unique role to play in avodas Hashem, and Hashem values the individual contributions of each shevet and each member of Klal Yisrael. A chevel, a rope, is braided from different strands. When all of the strands are joined together, the rope becomes stronger and it is able to withstand even powerful external forces that are exerted upon it. Similarly, when Klal Yisrael is united under the banner of Torah and mitzvos, the special avodas Hashem of each individual Jew - whether in Talmud Torah, or tefillah or chessed - makes Klal Yisrael as a whole even stronger, and serves to increase k'vod Shamayim in the world.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

How Yom Kippur Changes Us - To those who fully open themselves to it, Yom Kippur is a life-transforming experience. It tells us that God, who created the universe in love and forgiveness, reaches out to us in love and forgiveness, asking us to love and forgive others. God never asked us not to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, grow through them and make amends where we can. No religion has held such a high view of human possibility. The God who created us in His image gave us freedom. We are not tainted by original sin, destined to fail, caught in the grip of an evil only Divine grace can defeat. To the contrary, we have within us the power to choose life. Together we have the power to change the world.

The following five concepts, all central to Yom Kippur, contain core Jewish values and ideas that mould us as Jews and human beings.

Shame and guilt Judaism is the world's greatest example of a guilt-and-repentance culture as opposed to the shame-and-honour culture of the ancient Greeks.

In a shame culture such as that of Greek tragedy, evil attaches to the person. It is a kind of indelible stain. There is no way back for one who has done a shameful deed. They become a pariah and the best they can hope for is to die in a noble cause. Conversely, in a guilt culture like that of Judaism, evil is an attribute of the act, not the agent. Even one who has done wrong has a sacred self that remains intact. They may have to undergo punishment. They certainly have to make amends. But there remains a core of worth that can never be lost. A guilt culture hates the sin, not the sinner. Repentance, rehabilitation and return are always possible.

A guilt culture is a culture of responsibility. We do not blame anyone else for the wrong we do. It is always tempting to blame others – it wasn't me, it was my parents, my upbringing, my friends, my genes, my social class, the media, the system, "them." That was what the first two humans did in the Garden of Eden. When challenged by God for eating the forbidden fruit, the man blamed the woman.

By Dr. Israel & Rebecca Rivkin, Edison, NJ,
on the yahrzeit of Israel's father,
William Rivkin, a"h, (Refael Zeav ben Yisrael)
whose yahrzeit is on Yom Kippur

The woman blamed the serpent. The result was paradise lost.

Blaming others for our failings is as old as humanity, but it is disastrous. It means that we define ourselves as victims. A culture of victimhood wins the compassion of others but at too high a cost. It incubates feelings of resentment, humiliation, grievance and grudge. It leads people to rage against the world instead of taking steps to mend it. Jews have suffered much, but Yom Kippur prevents us from ever defining ourselves as victims. As we confess our sins, we blame no one and take full responsibility for our actions. Knowing God will forgive us allows us to be completely honest with ourselves.

2. The growth mindset Yom Kippur also allows us to grow. We owe a debt to cognitive behavioural therapy for reminding us of a classic element of Jewish faith: that when we change the way we think, we change the way we feel. And when we feel differently, we live differently. What we believe shapes what we become.

At the heart of teshuvah is the belief that we can change. We are not destined to be forever what we were. In the Torah we see Yehudah grow, from an envious brother prepared to sell Yosef as a slave, to a man with the conscience and courage to offer himself as a slave so that his brother Binyamin can go free. We know that some people relish a challenge and take risks, while others, no less gifted, play it safe and ultimately underachieve. Psychologists tell us that the crucial difference lies in whether you think of your ability as fixed or as something developed through effort and experience.

Teshuvah is essentially about effort and experience. It assumes we can grow. Teshuvah means I can take risks, knowing that I may fail but knowing that failure is not final. It means that if I get things wrong and make mistakes, God does not lose faith in me even though I may lose faith in myself. God believes in us, even if we do not. That alone is a life-changing fact if we fully open ourselves to its implications.

Teshuvah means that the past is not irredeemable. It means that from every mistake, I grow. There is no failure I experience that does not make me a deeper human being; no challenge I accept, however much I fall short, that does not develop in me strengths I would not otherwise have had. That

is the first transformation of Yom Kippur: a renewed relationship with myself.

3. Our relationships with others The second transformation is a renewed relationship with others. We know that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between us and God, but that does not mean that these are the only sins for which we need to seek atonement. To the contrary: many, even most, of the sins we confess on Yom Kippur are about our relationships with other people. Throughout the prophetic and rabbinic literature, it is assumed that as we act to others, so God acts to us. Those who forgive are forgiven. Those who condemn are condemned.

The Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are a time when we try to mend relationships that have broken. It takes one kind of moral courage to apologise, another to forgive, but both may be necessary. Failure to heal relationships can split families, destroy marriages, ruin friendships and divide communities. That is not where God wants us to be. We are taught that after Sarah died, Avraham took back Hagar and Yishmael into his family, mending the rift that had occurred many years before.

Aharon, according to tradition, was loved by all the people because he was able to mend fractured friendships. Without a designated day, would we ever get around to mending our broken relationships? Often we do not tell people how they have hurt us because we do not want to look vulnerable and small-minded. In the opposite direction, sometimes we are reluctant to apologise because we feel so guilty that we do not want to expose our guilt.

4. Coming home The third transformation is a renewed relationship with God. On Yom Kippur, God is close. Jewish life is full of signals of transcendence, intimations of eternity. We encounter God in three ways: through creation, revelation and redemption. Through creation: the more we understand of cosmology, the more we realise how improbable the universe is. The universe is too finely tuned for the emergence of stars, planets and life to have come into existence by chance. The more we understand of the sheer improbability of the existence of the universe, the emergence of life from inanimate matter, and the equally mysterious appearance of Homo sapiens, the only life-form capable of asking the question "Why?", the more the line

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from Tehillim rings true: "How numerous are Your works, Lord; You made them all in wisdom" (Tehillim 104:24).

Through revelation: the words of God as recorded in the Torah. There is nothing in history to compare to the fact that Jews spent a thousand years (from Moshe to the last of the Prophets) compiling a commentary to the Torah in the form of the prophetic, historical and wisdom books of Tanach, then another thousand years (from Malachi to the Talmud Bavli) compiling a commentary to the commentary in the form of the vast literature of the Oral Torah (Midrash, Mishnah and Gemara), then another thousand years (from the Geonim to the Achronim, the later authorities) writing commentaries to the commentary to the commentary.

And through history: many great thinkers, including Blaise Pascal and Leo Tolstoy, believed that Jewish history was the most compelling evidence of the existence of God. Sometimes God comes to us not as the conclusion of a line of reasoning but as a feeling, an intuition, a sensed presence, as we stand in the synagogue on this holy day – listening to our people's melodies, saying the words Jews have said from Barcelona to Bergen-Belsen to Bnei Brak, from Toledo to Treblinka to Tel Aviv – knowing that we are part of an immense story that has played itself out through the centuries and continents, the tempestuous yet ultimately hope-inspiring love story of a people in search of God, and God in search of a people. There has never been a drama remotely like this in its ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies, its songs of praise and lamentation, and we are part of it. For most of us it is not something we chose but a fate we were born into.

5. What chapter will we write in the Book of Life? On this day of days we are brutally candid: "Before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed it is as if I had not been formed. I am dust while alive, how much more so when I am dead." Yet the same faith that inspired those words also declared that we should see ourselves and the world as if equally poised between merit and guilt, and that our next act could tilt the balance, for my life and for the world (Rambam, Laws of Repentance 3:4). Judaism lives in this dialect between our smallness and our potential greatness. We may be dust, but within us are immortal longings.

Yom Kippur invites us to become better than we were, in the knowledge that we can be better than we are. That knowledge comes from God. If we are only self-made, we live within the prison of our own limitations. The truly great human beings are those who have opened themselves to the inspiration of something greater than themselves.

Yom Kippur is about the humility that leads to greatness: our ability to say, over and over

again, "Al cheit shechatanu", "We have sinned", and yet know that this is not said in self-pity, but rather, the prelude to greater achievement in the future, the way a champion in any sport, a maestro in any field, reviews his or her past mistakes as part of the preparation for the next challenge, the next rung to climb.

The power of Yom Kippur is that it brings us face to face with these truths. Through its words, music and devotions, through the way it focuses energies by depriving us of all the physical pleasures we normally associate with a Jewish festival, through the sheer driving passion of the liturgy with its hundred ways of saying sorry, it confronts us with the ultimate question: How will we live? Will we live a life that fully explores the capacity of the human mind to reach out to that which lies beyond it? Will we grow emotionally? Will we learn the arts of loyalty and love? Will we train our inner ear to hear the cry of the lonely and the poor? Will we live a life that makes a difference, bringing the world-that-is a little closer to the world-that-ought-to-be? Will we open our hearts and minds to God?

The most demanding day of the Jewish year, a day without food and drink, a day of prayer and penitence, confession and pleading, in which we accuse ourselves of every conceivable sin, still calls to Jews, touching us at the deepest level of our being. It is a day in which we run toward the open arms of God, weeping because we may have disappointed Him, or because sometimes we feel He has disappointed us, yet knowing that we need one another, for though God can create a universe, He cannot live within the human heart unless we let Him in.

It is a day not just of confession and forgiveness but of a profound liberation. Atonement means that we can begin again. We are not held captive by the past or by our failures. The Book of Life is open and God invites us – His hand guiding us the way a scribe guides the hand of those who write a letter in a Torah scroll – to write a new chapter in the story of our people, a chapter uniquely our own yet one that we cannot write on our own without being open to some-thing vaster than we will ever fully understand. It is a day on which God invites us to greatness.

Adapted from the introduction to the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor with commentary and translation by Rabbi Sacks

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

The climax of Yom Kippurim is its closing Ne'ilah prayer when the sun is beginning to set, when the day is beginning to wane and when we are nearing our last chance for the opportunity to receive God's loving forgiveness for the year. The excitement of these last moments is palpable within the synagogue. The prayers are at a much higher pitch and the voices are filled with intensity. During the periods of our national sovereignty, with the closing of the day, the holy Temple

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doors would close as well. Post Temple, with the setting sun, the very heavens, the pathway to the Divine Throne, and the gateway to God seems to be closing. "Don't lock me out" says the Jew during Ne'ilah. Don't close the doors or the gates in my face as long as there is still time, let me come in.

But there is another way of looking at this, a very opposite way. "Don't lock me in!" cries the Jew during Ne'ilah. Yes, I've been in the Temple, or I've been in the synagogue almost the entire day. I've truly felt God's presence and I've truly been warmed by His loving embrace. I feel God's divine and gracious acceptance and His total forgiveness. I've spent an entire twenty-five hours in His house, in which I've seen the sweetness of the Lord and visited in His tent.

But now, as the doors to His house are closing, I don't want to be locked in. After all, I began this penitential period with Rosh HaShanah, the day of God's kingship. The prayers on Rosh HaShanah taught me that God did not choose Israel to live with Him in splendid and glorious isolation; He chose Israel to be a "kingdom of priest-teachers and a holy nation" to bring the message of compassionate righteousness and moral justice as a blessing for all the families of the earth. We are meant to be a light unto the nations, a banner for all peoples.

It goes without saying that we need our moments of quiet contemplation, of anguished repentance and of personal outpouring to the God who gave us life and Torah. But the ultimate purpose of this day of divine fellowship is for us to be recharged to bring God's message to the world, a world crying out for God's Word of love, morality and peace. We must leave the ivory tower of Yom Kippur and descend into the madding and maddening crowd in the world all around us.

And so, just four days after Yom Kippur we go out into the Sukkah; indeed, walking home from the synagogue, one will be able to hear many people already beginning to build their family Sukkah. And the Sukkah is the next best thing to living within the bosom of nature, feeling at one with the world around you. The walls are usually flimsy and even see-through, and the vegetation- roof must enable you to see through the greens up above to the sky. We pray together with the four species- the citron, the palm branch, the myrtle and the willow which all grow near the refreshing waters of the earth- and we pray during this week not only for ourselves or for Israel, but for all seventy nations of the world. Indeed, we are Biblically mandated in Temple times to bring seventy bullocks during the week of Sukkot on behalf of all the nations of the world.

The Sukkah teaches us one more lesson, perhaps the most important of all. The major place for us to feel God and His divine presence – after the heavy dose of Yom Kippur

– is not in a Temple or a synagogue, but is rather in our familial homes. In order to go out into the world, we must first go out into our family.

The homes we build need not be that large, that spacious, or that fancy. You don't need chandeliers in the bathroom in order to feel the warmth of your home. It can be an exceedingly simple dwelling place but it must have two critical ingredients. First and foremost it must be suffused with love, love of God, love of family and love of Torah. The meals must be permeated with gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who gave us food, with words of Torah and with the realization that it is ultimately not the walls of the home which provide our protection, but it is rather the grace of the God who gives us life. And the major guests in our home are not to be Hollywood idols or sports heroes. We should invite into our home the special Ushpizin guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Devorah and Rut (as you can see, in my Sukkah we add Ushpizot!).

And you will remember that the Biblical reading for Rosh HaShanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world was not the story of the Creation; it was rather the story of the first Hebrew family, the family of Abraham. Yes, we have a mandate to teach and perfect the world. But at the same time, we must remember that the first and most real world for each of us is our own individual family. We must begin the new year of reaching out to the world with a renewed reaching out to our life's partners, our children and grandchildren- and then to our neighbors and larger community and then to include the other and the stranger as well.

Dvar Torah Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What is more important? Our lives or the performance of mitzvot? The answer, according to our sages, comes in the Torah reading from the afternoon of Yom Hakippurim. It comes from parshat Achreinot, in the book of Vayikra, where the Torah tells us "asher Ya'aseh otam hadam, v'chai bahem – you must perform mitzvot in order to live through them." So chazal tell us that if, through the performance of a mitzvah, you might (God forbid) lose your life – life is sacred and must come first – with the exception of the three cardinal sins.

So here the Torah underlines for us the critical value of life and that is why, when it comes to considerations such as Shabbat, Yom Tov and Kashrut – life must always come first.

In the targum Unkulus, the Aramaic translation of the Torah, Unkulus translates the words "V'chai bahem" – to be "v'yachai b'achon chayei alma" – "in order that you will live, through them, an eternal existence" Unkulus

tells us that by performing mitzvot we will merit to live forever – the soul will continue to live well beyond our physical lives here on earth. Therefore "v'chai bahem," according to Unkulus, is a statement which refers not to this world but rather to the world to come. And as a result, we learn that by committing ourselves to torah and mitzvot, with a healthy relationship between ourselves and our creator; and between ourselves and our fellow human beings we will be investing in eternal life.

The Chiddushei Harim comes up with a great peirush, something very different. He says "v'chai bahem" means: 'get a life through them'. Through the performance of mitzvot, have an exciting, exhilarating and marvellous life. Mitzvot are not given to us in order to dampen our spirit, to make life difficult – sure enough they are challenging and not always easy – but ultimately, they enhance the experience. They give us meaning. They give us a sense of fulfilment. They add simcha, true joy, to our very existence.

Over Yom Hakippurim we will be praying to God, "Zochreinu L'chaim" – "remember us for life". So let us bear in mind these three peirushim.

First, when it comes to the fast of Yom Kippur we need to look after our lives. If there is even the tiniest hint that by fasting we could be endangering ourselves, we must eat.

Second, let's remember the peirush of Unkulus, calling upon us to be committed to the performance of mitzvot, in order please God, to invest in 'chayei alma' – 'everlasting life'.

And third, let's not forget that beautiful peirush of the Chiddushei Harim, whereby, through the performance of mitzvot, we will be investing in a life of great excitement, of novelty, of wonderful meaning and fulfilment.

V'chai bahem – thanks to the torah and mitzvot we can have the best of lives in this world,

May Hashem indeed answer all of our prayers and bless us with a wonderful, new, happy and fulfilling year ahead.

I wish you all a chatima tova.

Ohr Torah Stone Dar Torah

The Reciprocity of Teshuva

by Dr. Erica Brown

As a proud graduate of the first post-high school cohort of Midreshet Lindenbaum – then Michlelet Bruria – I am joined in this dvar Torah by other family members who are also alum: my sister-in-law Leah, my daughters Tali and Ayelet, and my daughter-in-law, Alison. Together, we share reflections of the season bound by the continuity of Talmud Torah we learned at Lindenbaum across the generations and in memory of Harvey Brown,

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beloved father and grandfather, who died this Elul and was himself a great practitioner and teacher of Torah.

In Elul, we find ourselves in the midst of Sefer Devarim with an inducement to change and an invitation to intimacy: "Then the Lord, your God, will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you" (30:3). Any period of estrangement will be followed by a sweeping embrace of affection and solidarity. God will take us back in love. In this verse, it sounds like God is doing all the work of change. But much later in our prophetic literature, it is we who must do the heavy lifting first.

In one of the most beautiful biblical expressions of repentance, Zechariah is told by Hashem to say the following: "Thus said the Lord of Hosts: Turn back to me—says the Lord of Hosts—and I will turn back to you—said the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 1:3). It's a teshuva of reciprocity, an invitation to begin a complex and non-linear process of change. But God does not offer to take the first step. He asks that of us, as Alison observes, "We must be proactive in this relationship." When we turn ourselves to learning, we can also get others to learn. When we expand our first steps to include those of "family and community, God turns back to us as a collective."

This reading echoes the comment of R. Dovid Altschuler, the Metzudat Dovid, who explains that if we turn to God first then the Shechina, the Divine Presence, will dwell among us. Leah relates the mutual act of turning in Zechariah to the impact Talmud Torah had on her father, who in his teenage years, turned his enormous capacity for knowledge to the Jewish arena as he became more religiously observant: "He loved studying and memorizing all Jewish texts, and it seems that Hashem rewarded his efforts with the gift of giving over his thoughts and understandings to others. He drew close to Hashem, and Hashem drew close to him."

Ayelet observes that Hashem's name is repeated three times in this verse. "As Ibn Ezra notes, we must turn to Hashem multiple times and He will then turn to us." This serves as a model for other interactions. "Relationships take effort. Forming friendships takes time. One may need to beg or sometimes try harder when relationships are not working out. This is what Hashem is telling us. Try, and if it is not working, make more of an effort and push harder for those relationships you truly care about."

The 19th century commentator, Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (the Malbim), points out that Zechariah marks the end of the prophetic period. There will be no future prophets to recommend that Jews turn away from wrongdoing and turn to their Maker. This is why they will have to take their

own first steps: "From this point forward, they will have to try on their own to achieve repentance." Because the only thing we can control is our own behavior, we have to decide if we are going to turn towards someone in forgiveness and contrition or turn away. As the Malbim points out to us in a prophet-less generation, that is our challenging work.

Zechariah, it seems, is asking a great deal of us: to initiate, swallow our pride, say sorry and make commitments to change. Only then will Hashem gather us up in love, as the promise of Devarim suggests. But when you consider that turning is a slight physical gesture, a modification of where we stand and what we look at, teshuva seems easier. We start the deep inner work of the season by making a small but meaningful adjustment, leaning into our relationship with Hashem, with others and with ourselves. "Deepening relationships," Tali says, "requires vulnerability from both parties. Often it is hard to feel like the bigger person and be the one to reach out, to initiate a conversation, a phone call, or an apology. This pasuk reminds us of the gift we give ourselves when we take the first step. During this season of reflection on our relationship with God, family, and friends, may we be strong enough to be vulnerable."

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

Reading Yona with the Rambam, the Rav, and R. Lichtenstein

Prof. Alan Jotkowitz

The earliest commentators maintained, based on Chazal, that Sefer Yona was written in order to teach us the power of teshuva and the almost infinite mercy of God. For example, the Radak writes: One may ask: Why was this sefer included among the holy books? After all, it is all about Nineveh, which is a gentile nation, and it does not discuss Yisrael at all, and there is no other story in the Nevi'im like it. One can suggest that it was written to give mussar to Yisrael, because a gentile nation immediately repented after the first time it was rebuked, as opposed to Yisrael, who were rebuked many times but did not repent... And also to teach that God has mercy on all those who repent, Jew and gentile, and He forgives all, especially if they are many.

For this reason, Sefer Yona was the obvious choice to be read on the one day of the year devoted exclusively to repentance and forgiveness – Yom Kippur. However obvious this assertion seems to us, though, a close reading of the text can deepen our understanding of the teshuva process in all its manifestations. In particular, through a theological approach to the sefer, based on the accumulated wisdom of our greatest rabbinical thinkers throughout the generations, we can come to a deeper and more profound understanding of the sefer and of the nature of teshuva itself.

The structure of the book is highly instructive. For example, the first and third chapters are connected, as are the second and fourth. The first chapter describes how Yona

refused God's mission, as well as the teshuva of the sailors; in the third chapter, Yona fulfills God's wishes, and we read of the teshuva of Nineveh. The second chapter is about Yona, alone with God and nature, praying for God to save his life and his return to God; in the fourth chapter, Yona prays to die, and he is again alone with God and nature. The repetitive nature of the sefer highlights the reparative nature of teshuva and the opportunity that God, in His mercy, gives man to atone for his past misdeeds.

First Chapter: The Tempest at Sea - The book begins with God commanding Yona to go to Nineveh, presumably to warn them of their imminent destruction and exhort them to repent. For reasons that will become clearer in the third chapter, Yona decides to flee to Tarshish, an ancient city that is described in Tanakh as a place where the people do not know God. The book emphasizes that Yona chooses to flee from "before God." The rest of the chapter then describes Yona's actions as a metaphor for his descent and wallowing in sin, emphasizing his extreme passivity in the face of mortal danger. For example:

Yona went to flee to Tarshish from before God's presence. He went down to Yaffo and found a Tarshish bound vessel; he paid its fare and went down into the ship to travel with them to Tarshish away from God. (Yona 1:3)

But Yona went down to one of the ship's holds and had lain down and fallen asleep. (ibid. 1:5)

These literary allusions echo R. Soloveitchik's description of the death of the *se'ir hamishtalei'ach*, the sacrificial scapegoat: The mishna in Yoma describes the ultimate fate of the scapegoat in the ritual: "It went backward, and it rolled and descended until it was halfway down the mountain, where it became dismembered into many parts." Can there be a more accurate description of what sin itself does to a person? Even before his total descent, he is broken apart, an object victim of gravity. Sin transforms a person into someone who is acted upon or influenced... Regarding sin, an analogy is made to sleep. Sleep is an absolute passive state, in which man is a pure object. The insistent demands of the shofar, according to the Rambam, is the imperative to awaken oneself.

The call of the ship captain to Yona to wake up – "How can you sleep so soundly?! Arise, call to your God. Perhaps God will pay us mind and we will not perish" (ibid. 1:6) – can be seen as analogous to the sound of the shofar of Rosh Hashana, the purpose of which is to awaken us from our sinful stupor. As the Rambam writes: Even though the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana is a divine decree, a hint of its purpose was given to us: to awaken the sleeping from their slumber and the comatose from their stupor in order to search their actions and return with teshuva. (Hilkhot Teshuva 3:4)

The first chapter also deals with the response of the sailors to the terrible storm that threatened their ship and lives. The story repeatedly describes the fear of the sailors and

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their prayers and entreaties to God: The sailors became frightened and cried out each to his own God. (Yona 1:5)

The men were seized with great fear. (ibid. 1:10)

Then the men feared God greatly. (ibid. 1:16)

The chapter ends with the sailors "offering a sacrifice to God and taking vows." They appear to exemplify the process of teshuva *mei-yira*, repentance from fear, whose impetus is crisis but is nevertheless acceptable and even praiseworthy in the eyes of God.

A careful reading notices a transition of the fear of the sailors, from fearing many Gods to fearing the one true God, Hashem. The Midrash picks up on this and cites a tradition that the "sailors threw their false Gods into the sea [with Yona], returned to Yaffo, went up to Jerusalem, and were circumcised."

This kind of teshuva seems particularly appropriate for Rosh Hashana, the day of year where the Jewish People in a sense crown God as the King of the world and accept his dominion, as beautifully expressed in the *Malkhiyot* prayers of Musaf. Rosh Hashana has a universal aspect to it as well, as the kingship of God applies to all the nations of the world. It was this kingship that the sailors recognized and paid homage to with their prayers, sacrifices, and repentance.

In the first chapter, Yona identifies himself: "I am an Ivri, and God, the God of the Heavens do I fear" (Yona 1:9). This description echoes how the Torah describes Avraham Avinu, the first person who was called an Ivri (Bereishit 14:13), who was distinguished by his fear of God, which he famously demonstrated at the akeida. But in contradistinction to Avraham, who immediately left everything that was familiar to him to heed God's call of "lekh-lekha," Yona ran away from his charge and destiny to place "where they did not know God."

In the midst of their distress, the sailors decided on lots to determine which of the passengers was the guilty party. A society that relies on lots is one that feels that fate is what decides destiny; humans have no ability to control their own fate. This easily leads to reliance on false gods and mystical beliefs. This perspective does not recognize the controlling hand of God in history, which was Avraham's great lesson to humanity.

The "casting of lots" is also an allusion to the lottery that occurred in the Temple on Yom Kippur to select the *se'ir ha-mishtalei'ach*. In fact, after Yona was chosen, "they picked up Yona and heaved him into the sea" – remarkably parallel to the fate of the scapegoat. Like the scapegoat, Yona was chosen to be cast off from God's presence, and like the vessels that were cast off the ship to lighten the load, Yona was reduced to a passive object.

This literary device also marks a transition from the universal themes of Rosh Hashana found in the chapter to motifs of Yom Kippur, a day dedicated to the relationship between God and the Jewish People.

Second Chapter: Alone in the Depths -

Yona, the doomed scapegoat, was miraculously saved, and after three days and nights of contemplation, he offered a prayer to God. There is some textual ambiguity regarding when exactly this prayer was said – before or after he reached safe harbor. The simple reading of the text is that it was before he was deposited on dry land, but that approach immediately raises the question of how he managed to pray for salvation if he wasn't completely out of danger. In addition, many commentators are perplexed by the combination of both lament and thanksgiving elements in Yona's prayer.

I think the text is purposely ambiguous, and this gets to the heart of the nature of Yona's repentance. As opposed to the sailors, his repentance was a teshuva *mei-ahava* (love), not *mei-yira* (fear). The main thrust of his prayer is his desire to be once again in the presence of God. In the first chapter, Yona runs from God; in the second chapter, he returns to God. The desire to have a relationship with God is the hallmark of teshuva *mei-ahava*, as the Rambam so beautifully describes in the seventh chapter of *Hilkhot Teshuva*:

How exalted is the level of teshuva! Only yesterday this sinner was separated from God, the Lord of Israel... He would call out [to God] without being answered... He would perform mitzvot, only to have them thrown back in his face... Today [after having repented], he clings to the Divine Presence... He calls out [to God] and is answered immediately.

This clinging to God of the *ba'al teshuva* described by the Rambam here culminates in the loving Man-God relationship described in the tenth chapter of *Hilkhot Teshuva*: And how can we describe the great love that one should have for God? That his soul should be bound up with the love of God and infatuated with Him like a person who is lovesick for a certain woman and cannot stop thinking about her, whether he is standing or sitting, eating or drinking – greater than this should be one's love of God.

As opposed to teshuva *mei-yira*, teshuva *mei-ahava* is not crisis-driven; the relationship desired with God exists independent of crisis. One should walk with God before and after a traumatic life episode.

This is beautifully described in Yona's prayer: "I called in my distress, to God" (Yona 2:3) and later in the prayer, "But as for me, with a voice of gratitude will I bring offerings to You" (ibid. 2:10). Yona prays to God both in distress and in gratitude. The prayer ends with the verse, "What I have vowed I will fulfill" (ibid.), as opposed to the first chapter, which ends simply with "and they offered sacrifice to God and took vows." In times of crisis, people sometimes make vows that they do not fulfill. Yona's teshuva emphasizes his promise not only to make vows but to fulfill them as well, which becomes readily apparent in the next chapter.

Some scholars have asserted that the prayer is a later addition into the text of the story, but I

think that approach is untenable. Twice Yona repeats in the prayer his desire to meet God once again in the Holy Temple. This is his expression of his desire to repair his relationship, which was fractured when Yona ran to a city "where they do not know God." In addition, prayer is the ultimate expression of teshuva *mei-ahava* as a spiritual expression of "standing before God." Through the miracle of teshuva and God's compassion, Yona was transformed from the scapegoat to the *seir la-Hashem* (the identical animal in the lottery), which was brought to the Holy Temple before God.

The Malbim, based on the Ibn Ezra, makes the point that Yona ran *mi-lifnei Hashem* and not *mipnei Hashem*: *Mipnei Hashem* is from the knowledge and providence of God, which is impossible to run from, but *lifnei Hashem* is running from God's presence and the desire to cling to God, from which one can run.

The theme of the second chapter is Yona's desire to once again be *lifnei Hashem* in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, and the prayer is Yona's verbal expression of this wish.

In a recently printed collection of teshuva *derashot*, R. Lichtenstein differentiates between moral and religious teshuva: The moral aspect of teshuva focuses on the sinful act as an incarnate, evil reality. In this sense, sin's impact is multiple. There is, first, the specific wrong in its naked isolation. Second, it has a contaminating effect upon the world... Third, the sin has a contaminating effect upon the sinner's soul... the religious impact of sin, with reference not to the act but to our relationship with the Almighty... Sin establishes a divisive barrier that interposes between the sinner and the Almighty.

The essence of Yona's teshuva, to use the terminology of R. Lichtenstein, was religious in nature. The chapter begins with God "designating" a fish to save Yona. This is the opposite of living in a world controlled by fate, as the sailors originally believed. Life choices are not arbitrary, like the flipping of a coin, but are controlled by God, who "designates" at the appropriate time messengers to do His will. We will meet other "designees" of God in the fourth chapter as well.

Third Chapter: Turmoil in Nineveh - The third chapter begins one again with God's call to go to Nineveh, and, as we expect Yona the *ba'al teshuva* immediately rectifies his ways and fulfills God's command. The Rambam explains that this is the true mark of complete repentance:

What is complete teshuva? If one has the possibility to do the sin again but does not because of teshuva, and not because of fear or weakness. For example, if one had forbidden relations with a woman and once again one is alone with the woman in the same place, and he still loves and desires her, but he does not sin, that is complete teshuva. (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 2:1)

Somewhat surprisingly, the people and leadership of Nineveh immediately accept Yona's prophecy and repent from their evil ways. One would have thought that the story

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should have ended here with a happy ending, a great city saved by a heroic prophet. In fact, the mishna in *Ta'anit* (2:1) uses the repentance of Nineveh as the archetype of great and sincere communal teshuva. Themes of *neila* (which is also recited on a communal fast day) seem prominent in this chapter. The chapter underscores the spiritual and moral equivalence and worthlessness of man and beast in terms of both their sinning and their repentance. This is a prominent motif in *neila*, where we cry out, "The preeminence of man over beast is nonexistent, for all is vain."

Fourth Chapter: Alone Again - But the fourth chapter begins unexpectedly with the verse, "This displeased Yona greatly and it grieved him" (Yona 4:1). Why Yona was so angry about the saving of Nineveh? Yona himself answers the question:

Please, God, was this not my contention when I was still on my own soil?! I therefore had hastened to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, and merciful in punishment. So now, God, please take my life from me, for better is my death than my life. (Yona 4:2-3)

What's missing from this reformulation of the thirteen attributes of God is the attribute of "truth." Yona ben Amitai, Yona the "son of truth," could not tolerate falsehood. He could not accept a world that was not built on truth, and for some reason, he did not feel that the teshuva of Nineveh was authentic and sincere.

There is some textual support for this contention. If one reads the third chapter closely, there are some subtle anomalies. For example, the king commands both man and animal to fast and wear sackcloth (Yona 3:7). What is the purpose of the animals fasting and wearing mourning clothes? One gets the impression that the people of Nineveh are simply putting on a show to avoid their destruction, without any real introspection and sincerity. R. Yochanan, commenting on the verse, "Each person is to turn back from evil and from the stolen goods which are in their hands" (ibid. 3:8), maintained that they only gave back the stolen goods that were in their hands – not those that were in their storerooms. In fact, Reish Lakish (a *ba'al teshuva* himself) called the repentance of Nineveh "false teshuva."

This reality is what shook Yona, the man of truth, to his core. How could a God of truth accept false teshuva? This is what God tried to answer him with the lesson of the *kikayon*. Yona was upset when God was not merciful towards him when he destroyed his shade; how can he be upset with God for being merciful on the great city of Nineveh? The world cannot be solely ruled by truth. In order for man to survive, mercy must be predominant. In this chapter, Yona is contrasted with Moshe, who first prayed using the thirteen attributes of God, but was willing to pray for God's mercy even before Israel repented.

A variation of this approach is offered by the Malbim, who comments that Yona maintained that "the edict to destroy Nineveh should not

be lifted until Nineveh repents from their false theology as well as their evil actions, and they only repented from their evil ways." In the terminology of R. Lichtenstein, they only performed moral teshuva, not religious teshuva.

On a deeper level, I think the metaphor of the kikayon has something more profound to teach us. The word kikayon sounds a little like Yona. Stretching one's imagination a little, one can see in the word a combination of va-yeki and Yona – and Yona was indeed expunged, va-yeki, from the great fish. This might appear to be a silly word game, but a close reading of the text tells us that what happened to the kikayon exactly parallels what happens to Yona: Then God designated a worm at the dawn of the morrow, and it attacked the kikayon so that it withered. (Yona 4:7)

God designated a stifling east wind, the sun beat upon Yona's head and he became faint. (ibid. 4:8)

Just like Yona was compared to the se'ir ha-mish talei'ach in the first chapter and the se'ir la-Hashem in the second chapter, in the fourth chapter he becomes the kikayon, to teach us that just like the kikayon's existence is totally dependent on God's mercy, so is Yona's existence. Yona himself cannot survive in a world of truth. He also is dependent on God's mercy.

There is also a similarity to the second chapter, an element of ambiguity in the exact timing of when Yona left the city and built his sukka. Was it before or after God forgave the people of Nineveh? This ambiguity is also reflected in the metaphor of the kikayon. The kikayon is first introduced as follows: God designated a kikayon which rose up above Yona to form a shade over his head to save him from his discomfort and Yona rejoiced greatly over the kikayon. (ibid. 4:6)

When one first reads this verse, one immediately thinks back to the great fish, which God also designated to save Yona and which covered him completely. The Malbim comments that when Yona was expelled from the fish, it was like he was reborn. The ambiguity is therefore compounded. Was the kikayon summoned by God to save Yona or to serve as a metaphor for his death?

I think the ambiguity and the subsequent silence of the text on the ultimate outcome of Yona is intended to teach a crucial lesson in teshuva. If in the first chapter Yona's destiny was decided by fate, as demonstrated by the lots, and in the second chapter through the actions of God in summoning a fish to save Yona, in the fourth chapter the choice is left up to Yona. Does the kikayon herald his salvation or his demise? This might be reason that the sefer ends with a question:

And should I not take mercy upon the great city of Nineveh in which there are more than one hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their left from their right and a great number of animals as well? (ibid. 4:11)

The question is directed at Yona and underscores the point that just like the question is his to answer, so too is his final disposition

dependent on his actions as well. This recalls the famous exclamation of R. Elazar ben Durdia, "It [i.e. attaining forgiveness] is entirely dependent upon me" (Avoda Zara 17a).

Theological Implications - So who is right – God or Yona, the Sages of the Mishna of Taanit or the repentant thief, Reish Lakish? Should we accept half-hearted or false repentance?

I think the answer depends on whose perspective we are looking at the question from. From our perspective, we should demand of ourselves sincere and authentic teshuva, which entails hard work, sacrifice and complete honesty regarding who we are and where we stand. R. Lichtenstein writes that even if we cannot guarantee perfect results to God in our quest for atonement:

The teshuva sheleima, complete repentance for which we pray in the Amida and in Aveinu Malkanu, is defined fundamentally by spiritual input, and not solely or primarily by the level of results. When a beinoni, a mediocre person, engages in teshuva, the objective result will inevitably be mediocre as well, as it proceeds from a mediocre mind and a mediocre soul... but this kind of mediocrity is much less critical in defining complete teshuva. Where there is mediocrity in attainment and achievement but no mediocrity in exertion and intent, that is indeed teshuva sheleima. There are three tests that can be used to ascertain whether teshuva sheleima has been achieved: the question of initiative, the question of concomitant attitude, and the question of aspiration.

In order to achieve teshuva sheleima, even if we cannot guarantee results, God demands of us maximum effort in initiative, attitude, and aspiration – which I fear is a high bar for many of us beinonim! It is this commitment that Yona, the man of truth, demands of Nineveh and of us.

Sometimes on Yom Kippur we do not stand before God as potential penitents, but rather on some level assume the role of Judge. I am referring to the famous halakha in the Rambam in which he discusses how one obtains absolution when one has wronged his or her fellow man:

It is forbidden to be vengeful and spiteful, but rather one should be easily pacified and slow to anger, and when the sinner asks for forgiveness, he should forgive wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. And even if he caused you great pain and sinned against you, one should not take revenge or bear a grudge. (Hilkhot Teshuva 2:10)

When it comes to accepting the teshuva of others, the Rambam is teaching us that one should not demand complete teshuva, but should be satisfied with the teshuva of the people of Nineveh, which is sometimes the best that imperfect people can attain. We have all witnessed situations in which almost imperceptible slights have torn families or friendships apart, with the aggrieved party unable to accept the sinner's imperfect efforts at reconciliation. While this may appear to be a homiletic interpretation of the sefer, we should

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remember that the main lesson that the sefer is trying to teach relates more to the nature of forgiveness, as opposed to repentance, and for Man this message is most relevant when he or she is placed in the position of a forgiver.

Our Father in Heaven - But even if we rule like God and the Sages of the Mishna, the question still needs to be answered. How can God accept half-hearted or false teshuva? Is that all he expects of us in order for us to receive His forgiveness? I think the story of Yona is teaching us a universal truth about how repentance works. For most of us, it is a difficult and drawn-out process filled with many peaks and valleys; very few of us immediately undergo the complete change of personality needed to be a complete baal teshuva. God is teaching us the power of partial teshuva, as expressed beautifully by R. Lichtenstein:

Nevertheless, existentiality, the demand for totality and comprehensiveness is simply awesome, even overwhelming... Will our normal, stumbling selves, willing of spirit but weak and incontinent of flesh, plugging a hole here and leaving another there, be barred at the door? If few of us ever get beyond selective and fragmentary teshuva, will that teshuva be dismissed peremptorily as inadequate? We only hope and pray that the answer is no... But of course the hope and the aspiration, and the test of purity on a lifelong basis, is the fact that we strive to grow incrementally over the years. We strive for a purity that applies not only "where we are," but that enables us to approach and strive for the ultimate purity.

The Rambam teaches us that in addition to complete teshuva, there is an incomplete teshuva that is also accepted. In continuation of the halakha quoted above, the Rambam writes: If one only returns when one is old, when one is unable to sin, even though it is not exceptional teshuva, it works for him and he is a baal teshuva. Even if he sinned all his life but did teshuva on the day of his death, all his sins are forgiven. (Hilkhot Teshuva 2:10)

What is the difference between the two cases the Rambam cites? I think the first case is dealing with someone who, in the words of R. Lichtenstein, "strives to grow incrementally over the years" and only in his old age succeeds fully to be called a baal teshuva; the struggle is a lifelong one. This is as opposed to the person who only decides to return on the day of his death. Even though his sins are forgiven, he does not merit to be called a baal teshuva.

Why, then, does partial teshuva work? To answer that question, we have to better understand the relationship between a person and his or her Creator. In the first chapter of Yona, the sailors related to God as the Master of the Universe, and that is the basis for teshuva mei-yira. In the second chapter, Yona related to God as a lover, and that is the basis for teshuva mei-ahava. But Yona forgot that there is another way to relate to God, and that is as a parent. A king may forgive his errant subject once but not twice; a scorned lover might never forgive the adulterous partner. But

a loving parent will always forgive – and that is the ultimate message of Yona and partial teshuva.

R. Akiva's famous homily at the end of Yoma makes the same point: Happy are you, O Israel, before whom you are purified and who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven.

As R. Soloveitchik explains, our best hope is to reach out not to our King in Heaven, but our Father in Heaven to attain purity and atonement on Yom Kippur.

Yona in the Sukka: Neila - Neila does not end with man being equated with the animal, but with the following prayer:

Nevertheless, you set man apart from the beginning and You considered him worthy to stand before You, for who can tell You what to do and if he is righteous what can he give you? Now you gave us, Hashem, our God, with love this Day of Atonement for redemption, pardon, and forgiveness for all our iniquities, so that we may withdraw our hands from theft and return to You, to carry out the decrees of Your will wholeheartedly. And may You, in Your abundant mercy, have mercy on us, because You do not desire the world's destruction.

Man is different than beast. Even if complete teshuva is inaccessible to many of us, God in His infinite mercy will accept our partial and imperfect teshuva. That is the lesson of the story of Yona.

The story could have had another ending if Yona had accepted the gift of partial teshuva. Yona built himself a real sukka: "Yona left the city and sat in the eastern side and made himself a sukka and sat under it in the shade until he would see what would occur in the city" (Yona 4:5). Instead, he could have built the sukka of R. Eliezer, which does not represent shelter from physical forces, but rather the "clouds of glory" that covered the Jewish People during their travels in the desert (see Sukka 11b). This sukka is a physical manifestation of being in the presence of God, and it would have brought Yona full circle from running from God's presence to basking in his glory and love.

As we transition from Yom Kippur to Sukkot, we pray that God accepts our imperfect human teshuva and gives us the sacred opportunity to live in His Presence.

Weekly Parsha Ha'azinu
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Moshe appeals to Heaven and earth to somehow hear his words and bear testimony to the accuracy of his prophecies. Nature does not have a will of its own, but, rather, is bound by the original directions and system created by God when the universe came into being. Unlike human beings who possess free will and can make choices even when those choices are against their own self-interest, nature is unchanging in its acceptance of the will and pattern of its creator.

As a matter of eternal persistence and unending discipline, Moshe calls Heaven and earth – nature itself – to be the witnesses to the covenant between God and Israel, a covenant that will span and survive all centuries of human existence. As nature is unchanging, albeit unpredictable, so too is this covenant between God and Israel: a covenant that is unchanging and unending, even though it has always been unpredictable in its execution and historical perspective.

Though the Jewish people live and survive as an eternal people, in every generation, indeed even every decade, the Jewish nation must chart its own course and make its own decisions regarding its contribution to the perpetuation of the eternal covenant with God.

There is no set formula or procedure guaranteed to achieve this end, except for loyalty to the covenant and that implies the rule of Torah and the implementation of traditional Jewish values in the life and society of every generation.

Moshe, who is the master prophet of all time, sees and realizes the tortuous road that lies ahead for the Jewish people through the millennia. He is sensitive to the fact that there will be times and generations when the people will make a wrong choice and take a painful detour away from the main highway that the Lord has ordained for them. He cautions that we should not be disheartened nor discouraged by mistakes, negligence or even malfeasance.

Such is the nature of human beings, and we are not in any way exempt from general human nature and behavioral patterns. But Moshe points out that there will always be the realization amongst the people of Israel that despite taking a wrong direction, we are completely capable of returning to the path that will lead us to the goal of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Additionally, in all the events that have occurred, past and present, we can recognize where we have gone wrong and where we can restore ourselves to a correct path and a brighter future. Thus, when Moshe asks Heaven and earth to listen, so to speak, to his words, he is really asking us to pay attention to what he said thousands of years ago. For these are words that are wise and relevant, important and necessary for our times as well. It is no accident that this Torah portion is read and heard on the Sabbath of repentance preceding the holy day of Yom Kippur.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Arc of the Moral Universe (Ha'azinu 5781)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In majestic language, Moses breaks into song, investing his final testament to the Israelites with all the power and passion at his command. He begins dramatically but gently, calling heaven and earth to witness what he is about to say, words which are almost echoed in Portia's speech in The Merchant of Venice, "The quality of mercy is not strained".

Listen, you heavens, and I will speak;
 Hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.
 Let my teaching fall like rain
 And my words descend like dew,
 Like showers on new grass,

Like abundant rain on tender plants. ((Deut. 32:1-2)

But this is a mere prelude to the core message Moses wants to convey. It is the idea known as *tzidduk ha-din*, vindicating God's justice. The way Moses puts it is this:

He is the Rock, His works are perfect,
 And all His ways are just.

A faithful God who does no wrong,
 Upright and just is He. ((Deut. 32:4)

This is a doctrine fundamental to Judaism and its understanding of evil and suffering in the world – a difficult but necessary doctrine. God is just. Why, then, do bad things happen?

Is He corrupt? No – the defect is in His children,
 A crooked and perverse generation. (Deut. 32:5)

God requires good with good, evil with evil. When bad things happen to us, it is because we have been guilty of doing bad things ourselves. The fault lies not in our stars but within ourselves.

Moving into the prophetic mode, Moses foresees what he has already predicted, even before they have crossed the Jordan and entered the land. Throughout the book of Devarim he has been warning of the danger that in their land, once the hardships of the desert and the struggles of battle have been forgotten, the people will become comfortable and complacent. They will attribute their achievements to themselves and they will drift from their faith. When this happens, they will bring disaster on themselves:

Yeshurun grew fat and kicked –
 You became fat, thick, gross –

They abandoned the God who made them
 And scorned the Rock their Saviour ...

You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;

And you forgot the God who gave you life. (Deut. 32:15-18)

This, the first use of the word *Yeshurun* in the Torah – from the root *Yashar*, upright – is deliberately ironic. Israel once knew what it was to be upright, but it will be led astray by a combination of affluence, security and assimilation to the ways of its neighbours. It will betray the terms of the covenant, and when that happens it will find that God is no longer with it. It will discover that history is a ravening wolf. Separated from the source of its strength, it will be overpowered by its enemies. All that the nation once enjoyed will be lost. This is a stark and terrifying message.

Yet Moses is bringing the Torah to a close with a theme that has been present from the beginning. God, Creator of the universe, made a world that is fundamentally good: the word that echoes seven times in the first chapter of Bereishit. It is humans, granted freewill as God's image and likeness, who introduce evil into the world, and then suffer its consequences. Hence Moses' insistence that when trouble and tragedy appear, we should search for the cause within ourselves, and not blame God. God is upright and just. The shortcomings are ours, His children's, shortcomings.

This is perhaps the most difficult idea in the whole of Judaism. It is open to the simplest of objections, one that has sounded in almost every generation. If God is just, why do bad things happen to good people?

This is the question asked not by sceptics, doubters, but by the very heroes of faith. We hear it in Abraham's plea, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" We hear it in Moses' challenge, "Why have You done evil to this people?" It sounds again in Jeremiah: "Lord, You are always right when I dispute with You. Yet I must plead my case before You: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy?" (Jer. 12:1).

It is an argument that never ceased. It continued through the rabbinic literature. It was heard again in the *kinot*, the laments, prompted by the persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages. It sounds in the literature produced in the wake of the Spanish expulsion, and its echoes continue to reverberate in memories of the Holocaust.

The Talmud says that of all the questions Moses asked God, this was the only one to which God did not give an answer.[1] The simplest, deepest interpretation is given in Psalm 92, "The song of the Sabbath day." Though "the wicked spring up like grass", they will eventually be destroyed. The righteous, by contrast, "flourish like a palm tree and grow tall like a cedar in Lebanon." Evil wins in the short term but never in the long. The wicked are like grass, whereas the righteous are more like trees. Grass grows overnight but it takes years for a tree to reach its full height. In the long run, tyrannies are defeated. Empires decline and fall. Goodness and rightness win the final battle. As Martin Luther King said in the spirit of the Psalm: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

It is a difficult belief, this commitment to seeing justice in history under the sovereignty of God. Yet consider the alternatives. There are three: The first is to say that there is no meaning in history whatsoever. *Homo hominis lupus est*, "Man is wolf to man". As Thucydides said in the name of the Athenians: "The strong do as they want, the weak suffer what they must." History is a Darwinian struggle to survive, and justice is no more than the name given to the will of the stronger party.

The second, about which I write in *Not In God's Name*, is dualism, the idea that evil comes not from God but from an independent force: Satan, the Devil, the Antichrist, Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness, and the many other names given to the force that is not God but is opposed to Him and those who worship Him. This idea, which has surfaced in sectarian forms in each of the Abrahamic monotheisms, as well as in modern, secular totalitarianisms, is one of the most dangerous in all of history. It divides humanity into the unshakeably good and the irredeemably evil, giving rise to a long history of bloodshed and barbarism of the kind we see being enacted today in many parts of the world in the name of holy war against the greater and lesser Satan. This is dualism, not monotheism, and the Sages, who called it *shtei reshuyot*, "two powers or domains"[2], were right to reject it utterly.

The third alternative, debated extensively in the rabbinic literature, is to say that justice ultimately exists in the World to Come, in life after death. Although this is an essential element of Judaism, it is striking how relatively little Judaism had recourse to it, recognising that the central thrust of Tanach is on this world, and life before death. For it is here that we must work for justice, fairness, compassion, decency, the alleviation of poverty, and the perfection, as far as lies within our power, of society and our individual lives. Tanach almost never takes this option. God does not say to Jeremiah or Job that the answer to their question exists in heaven and they will see it as soon as they end their stay on earth. The passion for justice, so characteristic of Judaism, would dissipate entirely were this the only answer.

Difficult though Jewish faith is, it has had the effect through history of leading us to say: if bad things have happened, let us blame no one but ourselves, and let us labour to make them better. I believe it was this that led Jews, time and again, to emerge from tragedy, shaken, scarred, limping like Jacob after his encounter with the angel, yet resolved to begin again, to rededicate ourselves to our mission and faith, to ascribe our achievements to God and our defeats to ourselves.

I believe that out of such humility, a momentous strength is born.

Shabbat Shalom

reward, in the end He makes His words trustworthy." Rashi continues, "And for the wicked as well, He pays the reward for their righteousness in this world." Meaning, Hashem is trustworthy to pay everyone what they are owed for their good deeds; the righteous receive it in the World to Come and the wicked receive their full payment in this world.

This is difficult to understand. The Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) quotes Rava as saying, "The reward (for fulfilling mitzvos) is not given in this world." The reason for this is based on the understanding that man's ultimate purpose in this world is to earn a relationship with Hashem, which is the ultimate good that Hashem intended to bestow on mankind. Man can create a relationship with Hashem by doing mitzvos, thereby enabling himself to connect to the infinite.

But we live in a finite world with a finite existence. Any reward earned for an infinite act by definition cannot be paid in this finite world because it would be woefully inadequate. This is similar to trying to pay your mortgage with Monopoly money. For this reason, the true reward for mitzvos is only available in the World to Come.

Imagine for a moment that a person who knows nothing about precious stones goes to a jeweler to buy a diamond. The jeweler sizes him up immediately and realizes that if he gives this customer a big sparkly cubic zirconia "diamond" he will be just as happy, never knowing the difference. Does this mean that the jeweler can deceive this customer? Of course not. Just because the customer would be satisfied doesn't entitle the jeweler to cheat him by taking full price for a diamond but only delivering a cubic zirconia.

Similarly, how can Hashem, who is the ultimate judge and creator of the ultimate system of justice, cheat wicked people by giving them a finite reward for an infinite act? It seems grossly unjust. To answer that Hashem rewards individuals based on what they perceive as valuable seems as wrong as the jeweler delivering a cubic zirconia instead of a real diamond.

What's the difference between a person who is a millionaire and one who isn't? Ultimately, it may be only one penny; if a person has \$999,999.99 he simply isn't a millionaire. Likewise, Rambam teaches us that the difference between a wicked person and a righteous one may be that one single mitzvah or aveirah that puts one over the edge.

We see from here that more often than not a label isn't the complete picture of what something is. Most designations are generally an amalgamation of different forces. One of the great kindnesses of Hashem is that a person who has slightly more mitzvos than aveiros is considered a "tzaddik." Whereas a 51% score on a test in school is a failing grade, Hashem nevertheless still credits this effort as having "passed." This "tzaddik" designation means that Hashem, in His boundless mercy, considers good deeds eternal acts if they simply outnumber a person's aveiros.

People have conflicting forces within their psyche. Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 9:1) explains that wicked people are motivated by lust for physical pleasures, while righteous ones are motivated to act for the sake of heaven. While the vast majority of mitzvos can be physically and/or emotionally satisfying, we must never lose sight of the fact that the reason we do them is because Hashem requires it and doing those mitzvos draws us nearer to Him.

The reason that wicked people are paid for their righteous acts in this finite world is because their motivation for doing mitzvos isn't to be drawn nearer to Hashem; this is evidenced by the fact that the majority of their acts are aveiros. Thus, even when they do mitzvos they are not infinite acts, as their motivation isn't a relationship with Hashem but rather they are driven by personal desires. They may deserve reward because they acted properly, but when the majority of their actions are aveiros they do not deserve an infinite reward. Hashem therefore pays them in this world - a finite reward for a finite action.

For Me or For You?

Like an eagle arousing his nest hovering over his young, he spreads his wings and takes it and carries it on his pinions (32:11).

In this week's parsha the Torah describes the kindness and mercy of Hashem by likening it to an eagle. Rashi (ad loc) explains: An eagle is merciful toward his children in that he doesn't enter the nest suddenly

and startle his sleeping young; rather he flaps his wings and goes around them from branch to branch to gently rouse his young and not overwhelm them. In addition, he gently touches them and then withdraws and touches them again, without ever putting the full force of his weight on them.

Rashi goes on to explain a second attribute: An eagle carries its young on its wings because it is unafraid of winged predators for it flies higher than any other birds. The only danger that it fears is man's arrows, and the eagle's rationale is, "Better that the arrow should enter me and not strike my children."

So too, Rashi explains, when Bnei Yisroel left Egypt they were being pursued by the Egyptians who caught up to them and proceeded to shoot arrows and catapult stones at them. However, an angel of Hashem came and acted as a shield between the Egyptians and Bnei Yisroel, absorbing the full force of the assault. Then, when giving Bnei Yisroel the Torah, Hashem was careful not to overwhelm them.

While we can clearly see the analogy, this verse still requires further explanation. The end of the verse demonstrates that an eagle is willing to suffer pain and even sacrifice itself for the sake of its young, as it is willing to take the blow of an arrow to protect them. This is understandably an incredible commitment on the part of the eagle. But how are we to understand the greatness of the virtue that it gently wakes up its young? If an eagle is willing to sacrifice itself for its children, what does the fact that it gently wakes its young add?

The Torah is teaching us an incredible life lesson here, one that will surely be appreciated by anyone who ever had to rouse children in the morning. Usually, when parents come into their children's room to wake them up in the morning, they speak loudly to get them up. In addition, when the children are slow to get out of bed, parents tend to raise the volume of their voices. Pretty soon they start yelling at them to hurry up, get dressed, etc.

Why do we yell at our children in the morning? Is it because the parent really cares if their children get to school on time or is it that if the children are late and miss their bus or car pool then the parent has to drive them? Alternatively, the parent takes their children to school on the way to work, and when the children are late the parent is also now late, which creates other pressure. Almost always, the stressful morning experience isn't for the children's sake, it's about the parent's frustration at being inconvenienced by their children's dawdling.

What many parents don't realize is that a child always knows when a parent is acting in the interest of the child or in the self-interest of the parent. The Rosh HaYeshiva illustrates this with the following story.

About midnight on a Motzei Shabbos the Rosh HaYeshiva gets a call from a member of the community who is very distressed. The man explains that for the last four hours he has been in a yelling match with his teenage son and he is beside himself.

"What happened?" asked the Rosh HaYeshiva. The man explains that he and his son were in shul davening Ma'ariv and his son left early to go home. One of the other congregants in shul turned to him and asked him where his son was. The man then noticed that his son was no longer in shul and when he got home he confronted his son about leaving shul early. That led to huge argument and much yelling and screaming that lasted for hours. So the father was now calling the Rosh HaYeshiva for advice about what to do.

The Rosh HaYeshiva said, "Let me ask you a question. On Sunday night do you take your son to shul?" The man replied that he does not. "Do you know if he even davens Ma'ariv?" The man once again replied that he does not.

The Rosh HaYeshiva explained to him that the reason he was upset wasn't because his son left shul early and missed part of davening, inasmuch for the rest of the week he doesn't even know if his son davens. He was upset because his friend embarrassed him by asking him where his son was. The reason he was yelling at his son wasn't about educating him on davening, it was because he himself was embarrassed and he was venting frustration for being embarrassed. The reason this led to a huge fight is because children are very perceptive, they know when a parent is criticizing them for their own good and when they are

not. This is perhaps the major point of conflict between parents and children.

That is what the Torah is teaching us. Of course the eagle does everything it can to protect its young. But is it protecting its young because that is the eagle's own continuity and it is preserving its species? Or is its devotion and commitment because it cares for the young itself and what's in its best interest? The verse therefore tells us that an eagle gently wakes up its young; that concern for the "psyche" of its young teaches us that an eagle's protection of its young is motivated by what's good for the offspring, not in the self-interest of the eagle itself.

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights

For the week ending 26 September 2020 / 8 Tishri 5781

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonofthemoon.com

Parshat Haazinu

Granny's Tales

"Yeshurun became fat and kicked." (32:15)

Last week I mentioned that one of the great things about having been part of Ohr Somayach for around three decades is that I have met some people who are clearly living on a different level than the rest of us. One of these holy souls distilled the essence of one's relationship with one's fellow into three principles. His first principle: "I was created to serve others, and no one was created to serve me." The second principle: "I wouldn't do it to you. But if you do it to me — it's okay." I said that this doesn't mean that a person should be a doormat and invite the world to trample on him, but, post facto, if you did something to me that I could really take you to court for and get back at you for, and I give up on that — I get forgiven for all of my sins. And his third principle: "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve."

In Yiddish there's an expression called "bubbe maisos" — literally "Granny's tales." Sometimes, bubbe maisos are just that — stories and ideas without foundation. But sometimes they reflect a wisdom that comes from our Sages. In this particular case, the Rabbi of whom I speak heard the statement "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve" from his grandmother (Gittel bas Yitzchok Dov HaLevi, a"h). It just so happens that virtually the same idea is found in Mesechet Derech Eretz Zuta, perek beit, for there it says, "If you did much good, let it be in your eyes as a little. And if they did you a little good, let it be in your eyes as a lot."

"Yeshurun became fat and kicked."

This verse is preceded by the most beautiful and poetic description of how Hashem cared for and guarded the Jewish People in the desert. When a person feels he deserves something, whatever he gets will seem but little in his eyes and he will end up denying his benefactor. Even Yeshurun, which means "the straight one," will be turned aside and start to "kick" if his appreciation is not greater than his appetite.

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Parshas Ha'azinu: Two Songs, Two Singers

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

How does the poet get started on the process of writing a poem, or the songwriter as he sets about composing a song? Does he or she look at the environment, at what is going on in the world and seek inspiration from things external? Or does the creative artist look within, using introspection as a tool to uncover emotions out of which the poem or song can be fashioned? These questions can be asked about all creative processes, not just writing. They can be asked of the graphic artist, of the composer of music, of the sculptor.

My wife's grandfather was the renowned Hasidic Rebbe, Rabbi Shaul Taub, who composed hundreds of liturgical melodies. When he was asked about his creative process, he would say that he fashioned his

music out of the feelings which “overflowed from his heart.” As a Holocaust survivor, his heart overflowed with the full range of human emotions, from hope to dread and despair and back to hope again. And one can detect the full range of these feelings in his music.

This week's Torah portion, Ha'azinu, is read on the Shabbat immediately following the two days of Rosh Hashanah. It consists almost entirely of a shira, a song, of words spoken by Moses “into the ears of the entire congregation of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 31:30) What are the emotions which inspires those words?

To answer this question, it helps to remember that just two days before we will read Ha'azinu, we will have read another shira, and a very different one at that. I refer to the “Song of Hannah” (Samuel I, 2:1-10), which is the haftarah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah.

Hannah's emotions are apparent. She is joyous, exhilarated, exultant. Her desperate prayers have been answered and she has experienced God's wondrous powers. Her song is a triumphant one.

Let us contrast this with the song of Moses. Like Hannah, he is confident of God's omnipotence. She sings, “The Lord deals death and gives life.” (Samuel I, 2:6) He sings, “There is no God beside me, I deal death and give life.” Deuteronomy 32:39

But the song that Moses sings is of a very different nature. Moses has a clear if pessimistic vision of what lies ahead for the Jewish people. He foresees the consequences of their disobedience and rebelliousness. He anticipates the wrath of God.

He places the blame for that wrath on the people themselves, not upon God. God is justified in all that He does. “The Rock, His work is perfect... just and right is He. Is corruption His? No! His children's is the blemish...” (Deuteronomy 32:4-5)

Moses' emotions as he utters the song of Ha'azinu are complex indeed. For one thing, he feels a sense of dread of what lies ahead for these people whom he knows to be weak and sinful. He is certain that great suffering is in store for his people. That suffering pains him.

But he also finds it necessary to express a deeper emotion, one of confidence and trust in God in the face of suffering. He thus expresses, arguably for the first time in the Bible, the Jewish reaction of Tzidduk HaDin, of proclaiming God's justice even in the depths of tragedy.

The poem of Ha'azinu calls to mind a mélange of graphic images: excessive sensuality, sin, faithlessness, and, in reaction to all this, “a fire kindled in God's nostrils which burns into the depths of the netherworld.” These are powerful images which ring true to the experience of every Jew who is even minimally aware of our history. But Moses sets the tone for all of us with his opening declaration: God is righteous, God is just, God is fair. Tzidduk HaDin. This is the Jewish reaction to every manner of suffering.

How apt are the words of Rabbi Soloveitchik, who would stress the centrality to our faith of the concept of Tzidduk HaDin, justifying God. He saw in this concept our assertion of “dignity in defeat”: “If man knows how to take defeat... as the halacha tries to teach us, then he may preserve his dignity even when he faces adversity and disaster.”

At this time of year, during these days of judgment and introspection, we prepare ourselves for a future year of difficulties and challenges and worse. We ready ourselves for the dreaded possibility of the need to express Tzidduk HaDin. But does this cause us to despair? No. For this solemnity is our best way to prepare for a different set of alternatives entirely.

Anxiety over Divine judgment, Aimat HaDin, propels us to repent, to commit to be better persons, better Jews.

This “fear of judgment” becomes the ground out of which sprouts optimism and hope; optimism that God will shine His countenance upon us, and hope that we will merit His favor and be blessed with a sweet and happy New Year.

We learn the lessons of the song of Ha'azinu so that we can merit the triumphs of the “Song of Hannah.”

Shana Tova U'Metuka!

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Haazinu

When the Maps of Countries Are Being Redrawn — Hold Your Breath!

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

The Torah states, “Remember the days of old, understand the years of generation and generation. Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you.” [Devorim 32:7]. Rashi does not explain this pasuk (verse) according to the simple reading. Rather, Rashi explains the pasuk as a warning: “Look at what happened to other people who came before you, when they angered Me.” “Understand the years of generation after generation” refers to the era of Enosh, upon whom HaShem (G-d) poured forth the waters of the Ocean, and to the era of the (people of the) Flood, whom HaShem washed away.

The next pasuk continues, “When the Supreme One distributed to nations their portions, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of nations according to the number of the Children of Israel.” [32:8]. Rashi similarly interprets this pasuk: “When He separated the children of man” refers to the Dor Haflaga (Generation of the Dispersion). This is what happens to those who anger HaShem.

However, we have a long-standing tradition that “Scriptural verses (pesukim) do not leave their simple interpretation” [Shabbos 63a; Yevamos 11b; 24a]. Rashi himself says in a number of places that even though at times he is providing a Midrashic interpretation, the simple interpretation of the pasuk remains. The simple interpretation of these pesukim is an admonition to us to understand history and learn its lessons.

The traditional Jewish belief is that HaShem is not only the Creator of Heaven and Earth, but that He is the G-d of history. The historical events that we witness are the means by which HaShem is continuously directing His world. Simply stated, these pesukim are teaching us that when HaShem establishes the boundaries of the world, it is ultimately because of the Children of Israel. The different wars and conflicts that take place in the world and the different border changes that occur—according to the simple reading of our pesukim—all occur because of their ultimate impact on the Jewish nation.

There is a quote from the writings of Rav Elchanon Wasserman (who himself was killed by the Nazis at the beginning of World War II): The Torah gave us a great key to understand the hinge upon which all historical events revolve—Devorim 32:8 (the previously quoted pasuk). HaShem sets the borders of nations and causes nations to inherit for the sake of the Jews. History revolves around the Jews. “For Hashem's share is His people; Yaakov is the portion of His possession” [32:9].

Rav Elchanon continued (regarding the Peace Treaty ending World War I), “when the map of Europe was drawn up in Versailles, the borders were already set in Heaven”. Sometimes it takes us years, decades, or centuries to put the pieces together. Sometimes, in the interval, the activities seem to have nothing to do with the Jewish people. But the great lesson of history that we are taught in the opening pesukim of this week's parsha is that when HaShem sets up the borders of nations, it is for the sake of the Children of Israel.

I recently read (1993) that the people in MacMillan and Company—the mapmakers—are having a very hard time these days. We think that we have hard jobs! Imagine the job of mapmakers! It has been a very difficult couple of years for them. They had just finished their latest edition of the Atlas, in which they printed East Germany and West Germany. Bonn and Berlin were the respective capitals. All of a sudden, they had to reprint the map. OK, done. Now they think that they are set. Then, all of a sudden, Yugoslavia divides—Serbia, Croatia, we cannot even pronounce all these names! When we are talking maps or when we discuss borders—ultimately, we are talking Klal Yisroel.

One does not need to be a politically astute individual to realize the momentousness of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The mapmakers do not know from day to day whether they should draw 15 republics or 12 republics. We ask ourselves what difference does it make if Azerbaijan decides to become independent or not. What is the meaning of all these changes?

This is the lesson of history that we should never forget. These events—the placement of national boundaries—have an impact on Klal Yisroel.

Regarding the authority to enact these new mitzvot, the Torah says, “Remember the days of old, reflect upon the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you; question your elders, and they will respond.” Israel’s past was elevated and holy, and is the source of our future success.

(Adapted from *Ein Eyah on Shabbat 23a*, vol. III, p. 73)

Shema Yisrael Torah Network Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Ha'azinu

פרק חמש' טהראין ואמונה ואמון עלי

G-d of faith without iniquity. (32:4)

Rashi explains that Hashem’s judgment is exact and fair. Everyone receives his due reward – the righteous might wait a bit, but it will arrive in due time; the wicked who have acted moritoriously will also be rewarded in kind. Life is a harmonious whole, which we, as mere mortals with limited perception, are unable to perceive. Nonetheless, we believe that it all comes together: good fortune with failure; joy, in contrast to sadness, celebrating milestones, both joyous and tragic. A human being cannot fathom how the pieces of the human puzzle of life fit together, but they do. Shortly before his taking leave of this world, the saintly *Horav Tzvi Hirsch*, zl, m’Rimanov, lay on his deathbed and remarked that the *ikar*, primary principle, of the Torah is the acute awareness and penetrating knowledge that *Keil emunah v’ein avel*, Hashem is the G-d of faith without iniquity. He makes no mistakes. He controls everything – even that which we do not understand, and question. This is what Torah is all about. If this is so, why then do we need the Torah? It would have sufficed to have Hashem declare on *Har Sinai*, *Keil emumah v’ein avel*. Why do we need the *mitzvos* and the learning? Let us focus on this one maxim, and we will have fulfilled our purpose.

The *Rebbe* explains that unless one studies Torah and observes its *mitzvos*, the concept of faith that everything Hashem does is perfect, true and without iniquity, eludes him. He is unable to fathom its meaning, its depth, because he lacks the inner dimensions of Torah and of himself. Without the Torah consciousness that he acquires through total immersion in Torah, he will not have a cogent appreciation of Hashem’s actions. In order to better appreciate this idea, I cite various remarks from *Horav Shlomo Wolbe*, zl, quoted in his *Alei Shur*.

In the *mavo*, preface, the *Mashgiach* asserts that it is insufficient to simply learn Torah, becoming erudite, purely on a book-knowledge level, without penetrating its inner dimensions and thus allowing it to penetrate his inner self to the point that he develops a sense of Torah consciousness. In other words, one may be a brilliant scholar, a Torah-observant Jew, an activist of the highest order, a zealous Jew who is meticulous in his *mitzvah* performance; but if he does not seek perfection (which is the result of an association with true *gedolim*, refined Torah giants), he will have succeeded only in emulating, parroting, what he has seen and learned, but he will not have ingested Torah into his entire being.

For example, *Rav Wolbe* points out, “One must learn: to approach a statement of *Chazal*; to study its profundities and to experience it until the hidden light of *Chazal*’s statement illuminates you.” He means that, after mulling *Chazal*’s statement over and over, we suddenly realize a deeper and truer meaning to the words that we had until now simply read and translated. At this point, *Chazal*’s statement illuminates us as we begin to absorb it. *Chazal*’s statements and Torah should not be treated as an isolated and abstract body of knowledge.

Indeed, *Rav Wolbe* (thus) defines a *yeshivah*, not simply as a place where one learns (to amass knowledge), but where one learns how to live. One who learns Torah, but does not expunge his negative character traits, is not considered having learned Torah. *Rav Wolbe* observed that while many people observe *mitzvos*, they do so purely out of habit. They grow up as *frum*, observant Jews, having attended the right schools, having received a good education, and they continue to live as they were raised and educated. If they were to be asked, “Why do

you observe *mitzvos*?” the answer will probably be, “Because this is how I was raised.” Sadly, such a response does not do much or speak well of this person’s affinity to Jewish observance. It is like saying, “I eat, because that is how I was educated.” One eats three times a day. What one should say is, “I eat because I am hungry.” Likewise, one should be hungry for Torah and *mitzvos*. He should want to observe – not do so because this is the role he must “play” on the stage of life. It has very little meaning to him, because it has not become part of his consciousness.

Returning to what the *Rebbe* posited: One must learn the Torah in order to understand (and believe) *Keil emunah v’ein avel*; this means that only one whose life is imbued with Torah – his consciousness defined by Torah, his *daas*, comprehension, guided by the Torah – is able to understand that what Hashem does is perfect, true and (certainly) without iniquity.

עם נבל ולא חכם

O’ base and unwise people. (32:6)

The Torah is criticizing *Klal Yisrael* for being an *am naval*, base people, and *v’lo chacham*, unwise. *Ramban* quotes *Rashi* who comments that they forgot the good that Hashem had done for them. They were unwise in realizing the good and bad, the consequences of their ingratitude. He then quotes *Targum Onkeles* who renders the phrase (critique) in a manner which begs elucidation. *Naval* – *ama d’kablu Oraisa*, “A nation that received the Torah.” *Ramban* explains that *Onkeles* translates *naval* as being related to *navol tibul*, “You will surely become weary” (*Shemos* 18:18). Thus, the Torah is intimating that *Klal Yisrael* is a nation that wearied itself in intense fulfillment of the *mitzvos* of the Torah. (They observed the Torah, but they considered it a burden.) They are unwise in not realizing that Torah observance is good and for their own benefit.

We are to derive from *Onkeles*, as explained by *Ramban*, that Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s stark foreshadowing of what lay in store for the nation, their egregious behavior in angering Hashem, their overt transgressions, are all the result of a weariness with the Torah. How are we to understand this? *Horav Henach Leibowitz*, zl, explains that, indeed, there is no grey area with regard to Torah appreciation. One either values the Torah, acknowledges its worth and, thus, studies it with intensity, fiery passion, love and joy – or he becomes weary of it. One who begins to indicate a weariness in his relationship with Torah is on the path to infamy: idol worship; and a baseness of self that reflects itself in his total demeanor. *Limud haTorah*, Torah study, must be an endeavor that one enjoys, about which he is excited and passionate. One who does not demonstrate such an attitude indicates by his disconnect that Torah has little value to him. Sadly, his weariness from Torah will drive a wedge between him and Hashem. The Torah is what connects us. Without it, we just drift away.

שאל אביך ויגדך קנייך ויאמר לו

Ask your father and he will relate it to you, and your elders and they will tell you. (32:7)

Issues arise; questions abound; to whom do we turn for sage advice, intelligent counsel? The Torah enjoins us to turn to “your father,” whom *Rashi* interprets as the *Navi*, prophet, Torah leader of the generation, and “your elders,” who are the *chachamim*, Torah scholars. After a lifetime of Torah study and devotion, these Torah scholars have honed their minds through the *daas*, wisdom, of the Torah which they have cultivated. *Horav Avraham Yaakov Teitelbaum*, zl, quotes a novel homiletic exposition of this *pasuk* rendered by his *Rebbe*, the venerable *Horav Meir Arik*, zl, which is practical and timeless in its applicability to every generation. A *manhig Yisrael*, Torah leader who shepherds Hashem’s people, is compared to a father. He is responsible for their spiritual inculcation and adherence to the Torah and *mitzvos*. Elisha referred to his *Rebbe*, *Eliyahu HaNavi*, as *Avi, avi rechev Yisrael*, “My father! My father! Yisrael’s chariot and horsemen!” (*Melachim* II 2:12). Thus, when confronted with a serious question which requires spiritual guidance, we turn to our “fathers,” the Torah giants.

One criterion that determines their qualification to answer: *Zekeinecha v'yomru lach*. When you seek their counsel, if the response is: “This is how your grandfather acted; this is how we as Jews have acted in the past” – then listen to his advice. He is a *manhig* that is connected to a previous generation. He respects his predecessors and seeks to emulate them. If he says, however, “My grandfather acted in this manner; I, however, have a different opinion. Times have changed, and what was good for my grandfather does not necessarily apply to me,” if he distances himself from the past, he is not someone whom we should consult for advice.

We are a nation whose past plays a vital role in shaping our vision for the future. We understand that history as we see it is the interplay of *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence, and *bechirah chafshis*, freedom of choice/will. We choose – Hashem acts. The goal of Creation is the fusion of G-d and man, the idea that man choose correctly, thus eliciting Hashem’s positive response. History examines the world and how its events have affected the union between man and G-d. Torah, which is the core of our belief, is also our historical primer, which guides and inspires us concerning how to choose, how to live.

Memories are critical to us. Indeed, they are our only legacy, and, thus, our only bequest. Judaism preserves and incorporates them into our present lives, seeing to it that they are the foundation of what we transmit to – and build upon – for the future. Judaism is a rendezvous between what we have taken from the past and what we bequeath to the future. We believe because we remember. Those who were there, who experienced, transmitted what they saw and experienced to the next generation. This is our sense of history. The secular streams sought to have us break with the past. When we have no memories, we can have no faith.

Zachor, remember, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, our exodus from Egypt. We remember by reliving it the way our parents and their parents did before them, all the way back to the Exodus. We believe, because we remember; we remember, because we live it. Our *Yomim Tovim*, Festivals, are not merely perpetuations of what once was, but rather opportunities for us to foster an identity with what we are remembering. Thus, when we sit in the *sukkah*, we sense that we are in the *Midbar*, Wilderness. This is how a Jew lives.

Z’chor yemos olam, “Remember the days of yore” (*Devarim* 32:7): How does one do this? *U’lemaan tesaper b’aznei bincha u’ben bincha eis ashe Hisalalti b’Mitzrayim*; “And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt” (*Shemos* 10:2). We remember by relating our memories from generation to generation. *Zachor*, remember, is active memory. *Zikaron* is passive remembrance. We believe in active, living memory, because, in this manner, the experience remains alive within us, imbuing us with *emunah*, faith, in the Almighty. By making the events of the past an active part of the present, they no longer remain simply a “memory.” They become our experience.

Everything that we do is focused on building for the future. We have no idea how much impact our endeavors in the present can have on the future. *Horav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg*, zl (*Lifrakim*), applies this concept to a statement of *Chazal* (*Berachos* 4b), *Eizehu ben Olam Habba, zeh ha’someich geulah l’tefillah*, “Who is assured of a place in the World to Come? It is one who juxtaposes redemption (recited after *Shema*) into the evening (*Shemoneh Esrai*) prayer.” A number of commentaries have been written to this *Chazal*. *Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that one who engages in prayer immediately after mentioning the redemption indicates his recognition of the fact that the purpose of the redemption – and, by extension, all of the kindnesses that Hashem bestows upon us – is to enable us to serve Him. A person who has internalized this verity is certainly worthy of *Olam Habba*.

Rav Weinberg explains *geulah*, redemption, and *tefillah* in terms of their metaphorical symbolism. *Geulah* alludes to remembering the past, the redemption which Hashem wrought for us. *Tefillah* connotes the future, our aspirations, longings and objectives for the Final Redemption, when we will return to our home in *Yerushalayim* to serve the Almighty in the newly-rebuilt *Bais Hamikdash*. These hopes and

ambitions, personal and collective, are expressed in the various blessings we recite in the *Shemoneh Esrai*. We acknowledge that our future is a worthwhile reality only if it is concretized and anchored in the bedrock of the past. Otherwise, our prayer is a *tefillah yesomah*, orphaned prayer, without roots or stability. Those who reject the past, who only think about tomorrow – and want nothing at all to do with yesterday – lack this bulwark which offers foundation and provides security. They have no model, no exemplar to emulate, no one from whom to learn. They have no blueprint on which to pattern the future. They lack the basic understanding of the meaning of *geulah*. A redemption is not for the purpose of physical advancement. Redemption precurses the opportunity for the Jew to live as a free Jew in order to better serve Hashem. Unless one acknowledges this, he is not free; his redemption is left lacking.

As mentioned, one never knows what he can learn from the past, from individuals who are gone, whom he never knew. In some instances, a message is conveyed under extraordinary circumstances, unanticipated by the receiver and unintended by the sender. The following vignette provides a timely message (quoted in “Stories that Warm the Heart”, Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky). A teenager went to Poland for his high school graduation trip, in which the students visited, among the surviving spiritual and physical edifices that bustled in Pre-World War II Europe, the dreaded Auschwitz concentration camp. While the market places and synagogues which were once filled with Jews produced a feeling of nostalgia concerning a bygone era, Auschwitz evoked feelings of dread, fear and animus. He had heard tales of the Holocaust from his grandparents, but, until he passed beneath the infamous gates with the deliberately cruel sign, “*Arbeit macht frei*, Labor makes you free,” he did not feel the perverse irony of this sham entrance into one of the most heinous structures in history, a place synonymous with brutal torture, degradation and death.

Suddenly, all of the stories of the Holocaust took on a new reality, a profound meaning to which – upon seeing the buildings, their function and what they represented to him as a Jew – he could now relate. He thought about his brothers and sisters, torn from their homes, housed like animals for days in cattle cars, and then, those few who managed to survive the ordeal, arrived at this “campground” – *Arbeit macht frei*, to discover that survival for many led up to pain, depravation and brutal death.

He moved on to the gas chambers, the infamous room which was the last place many Jews entered alive. It was the end of their line. He imagined them suffering through the throes of death, begging for another chance, an opportunity to live, raise a family, the promises they must have mouthed, pleading just to live. Sadly, for so many the answer was, “No”. They were destined to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*, to glorify the Almighty, to live again in a better world. All of this coursed through his mind when he saw “it,” the handprint on the wall.

At first it was not noticeable. Time does that. It was undoubtedly the remnants of the fingerprints of a human hand. It did not take a powerful imagination to conjure up the penetrating meaning of the handprint. This room was the holding room where the prisoners waited before going into the next room, the dreaded gas chamber. This room represented the final moments before the final abyss – death. This was the room where they prayed their last, where they offered their final heartfelt plea, begging, promising – anything – just as long as they could live a little bit longer. This room represented the significance of life, and the handprint pressed into the wall reflected how hard someone had fought to live!

It was at that moment that a happy go lucky, no-care-in-the-world teenager, confronted the reality of life. He had his whole life ahead of him. He was standing in a room in which the fragility of life could not be understated. He was having a grand time on a school trip, when he stopped to think about another Jew who, fifty years earlier, had been dragged to his death, a Jew who wanted so much to live that he pressed his hand firmly against the wall – so hard that, a half century later, one could see the imprint! He was brought to realize the relevance of each moment of life, how precious it was and how dear it should be.

At that moment, he vowed to alter his life's trajectory. From then on, he would utilize every G-d-given moment in the most meaningful manner.

Great story, but it is the addendum, *Horav Shimon Pincus'* comment, that is the game changer: "The man who grasped at that wall did more than gain a few more seconds of life – he changed another person's life completely, fifty years later! He accomplished more than he could have dreamed. It only goes to show that every moment of life is truly priceless."

Connecting with the past can change our future. One never realizes what "seizing the moment" can do for him in the present and for others in the future.

אמ שנותי ברק חרב ותאחו במישפט ידי

That I shall sharpen the shine of My sword and My hand shall grasp judgment. (32:41)

"My hand shall grasp judgment." *Chazal* (quoted by *Rashi*) derive from the language of this *pasuk* (concerning the concept of "grasping" judgment), "Not like the attributes of flesh and blood (mortals) is the attribute of Hashem. Once a human being shoots an arrow, once he releases the bow, he is unable to take it back. Hashem, however, shoots His arrows and has the power to retrieve them (before they hit their intended target). It is as if He holds them in His hand (*ochazom b'yado*)."*Rashi* is teaching us that no restrictions limit Hashem's power. He is not restricted in any way. This homiletic rendering of the *pasuk* imparts an ethical lesson: i.e., Hashem's power supersedes that of a doctor's diagnosis, it is never too late; we can, and should, hope for a reversal of a diagnosis. Prayer has awesome power. When we petition Hashem, we attest to this verity: "Hashem, I know that at any time You can retract the 'arrow.' I plead with You to do so. Allow my prayer, accompanied by remorse and repentance, to be the medium for achieving atonement." With Hashem, we always have hope.

We can also derive a *halachic* ramification from this *pasuk*. The *Talmud* (*Taanis* 29a) teaches that the conflagration of the *Bais Hamikdash* occurred – not on the ninth of *Av* – but rather, on the following day. This prompts Rabbi Yochanan to declare that had he been alive when the fast was established, he would have argued for it to be held on the tenth of *Av*. The *Kotzker Rebbe*, zl, makes a cogent observation based upon the passage in the *Talmud Bava Kamma* 22a, which states that *isho mishum chitzo*, "his fire is like his arrow," which means that when one starts a fire, it is like releasing an arrow from the bow: whatever the fire consumes is included in the original lighting of the flame. Similar to releasing an arrow, the deed is considered done, even though a short time has elapsed between the release of the arrow and its striking the target. Therefore, even though the *Bais Hamikdash* burned on the tenth of *Av*, the fire was started on the ninth. Since everything goes according to the beginning of the action that initiated the fire, how could Rabbi Yochanan contend that he would have

established the fast day for the tenth of *Av*? [This *halachic sevara*, logic, is consistent with the opinion of the *Nemuhei Yosef*, who explains why one is allowed to light candles *Erev Shabbos*, which continue to burn on *Shabbos*. Since we hold *isho meshum chitzo*, the burning on *Shabbos* is considered to have all been completed with the initial lighting prior to *Shabbos*.]

Horav Baruch Shimon Shneerson, zl, quotes *Horav Moshe*, zl, *m'Boyan*, who employs the above *Rashi* to answer the *Kotzker's* question. *Isho mishum chitzo* applies to human action, because, once a person releases the arrow, it is unstoppable. He cannot prevent it from hitting its mark. Thus, the entire action is complete in his release of the arrow. Not so, Hashem, Who has control over everything, and, at any time, can stop the arrow's flight. Therefore, when the fire was lit on the ninth of *Av*, Hashem could have prevented it from burning on the next day. The fact that He did not is reason, according to Rabbi Yochanan, to declare the fast on that day.

Va'ani Tefillah

מֵצָלָם קַוִּינוּ לְךָ – Mei'olam kivinu Lach. (As long as we can remember) we have always hoped for You.

The *Chasam Sofer* (in his commentary to *Bava Basra* 73a) explains that life is like a raging sea, with the storm winds impelling the waves to come crashing down on us. What keeps us going? Hope in Hashem. Our hope that the Almighty will not abandon us and that He will come to our salvation has comforted and encouraged us to confront the worst situations resolutely, strong and committed in our belief and trust in Him. He says the *roshei teivos*, initials, of *mei'olam kivinu Lach*. *Mem – kuf, lamed* = *makeil*, stick. We just swipe at, wave away, the challenges. Perhaps we might add a homiletic rendering of Yaakov Avinu's plea to Hashem (as he was about to confront Eisav), *Ki b'makli avarti es ha'Yarden*; "For with my staff, I crossed the Jordan." Simply, this means "I came here with just about nothing – my staff – yet today I have grown to become *shnei machanos*, two camps." With the above understanding that *makeil/makli* represents *mei'olam kivinu Lach*, we suggest that Yaakov was saying (and, by inference, teaching us), *Ki b'makli avarti es ha'Yarden*, "I had nothing but *makli*, my hope in Hashem. This is how I confronted challenge. This is how I survived, to the point that today I have become two camps – all because of my hope."

זכר נשות
הה לאה בת ר' מה ע"ה
פרידא בת ר' מה ע"ה
שרה אסורה בת ר' מה ע"ה
נסטו במחנות הנטיג בשנותיו הצעיר ג'תש"ג

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

לע"נ
שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
בילא בת (אריה) ליב ע"ה

An insight on Yom Kippur by the Rebbe*

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shabbos Kodesh
Sedra: "You are standing firmly
this day, all of you,"
Shabbos Selichos, 5745
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
Our People Israel, Everywhere,
G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

The innermost aspect of Yom Kippur is that this day has been designated as The Holy Day and the "One Day," of the Year. This means that this day is the holiest day of the days of the year, including the festivals and Shabbos. For this reason, Yom Kippur is called in the Torah . . . the "Supreme Shabbos." On this day Jews attain the highest level of spirituality, so that they are likened to angels.

Yet, having attained this sublime spiritual level, the Jew is instructed, immediately on Motzoei (termination of) Yom Kippur, to make a "sumptuous meal," and "A Heavenly voice issues and proclaims, 'Go and eat with joy!'"

Similarly, on Yom Kippur itself, when the service is connected with the very essence of the soul, the Yechida she'bnefesh, and, to quote a familiar expression, "It is the time of Teshuva for all," etc., and, "The highpoint of Divine forgiveness and pardon for the Jewish people"--one would have expected that concentration on the prayers with the fullest inspiration of all the soul's forces, etc., would take precedence of all other imperatives of Yom Kippur. Actually, however, the rule of the Halochos is that if the said concentration creates a doubt, G-d forbid, as to the ability to fast, the fasting takes precedence over the concentration on the prayers. To put it more explicitly: Notwithstanding the highest spiritual content of Yom Kippur, the emphasis, in practice, is on a seemingly corporeal matter (the not eating and not drinking) even though this would detract from the fullest concentration ability to attain the highest degree of introspection, dvekus (soulful attachment), inspiration, and overpowering devoutness during prayer on Yom Kippur.

...

The explanation . . .

The true holy nature of a Jew--of everyone who belongs to the "Holy Nation," is in being attached to the holiness of HaShem, in accordance with the Divine commandment: "You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I (HaShem) am holy."

To "sanctify oneself and be holy" means to conduct one's daily life in accordance with the holy precepts of HaShem ("Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us"). Thereby the physical body, together with all its physical aspects (eating, drinking, etc.) is elevated and sanctified. At the same time, all other sectors of the physical world (inanimate, vegetable and animal) that serve the Jew's needs, are elevated with him.

The said sublimation, to the point of the highest and fullest degree, on the holy day of Yom Kippur, the "One Day of the Year," is achieved through the worship of the Yechida she'bnefesh, the sublimest part of

the soul present in every Jew by virtue of belonging to the people whom G-d has chosen and designated to be a Holy Nation which partakes of His holiness.

For this reason, the matter of not eating and not drinking on Yom Kippur is particularly accentuated, inasmuch as eating and drinking is the most conspicuous characteristic of every living thing on earth; hence, the denial of eating and drinking on Yom Kippur is the expression of the preponderance of spirituality over corporeality, of the soul over the body --since only in this way can the material be elevated to, and even transformed into, the realm of spirituality.

...

May HaShem grant that every one of us, man and woman, in the midst of all our people, should complete the preparation for Rosh Hashono and Yom Kippur in fullness and perfection in every respect. In the words of the Baal Shem Tov: "Be tomim (complete) in serving HaShem,"

...

With esteem and blessing for a
Kesivo vaChasimo Tovo, for a good
and sweet year, materially and spiritually,
in the good that is revealed and evident,
/Signed: Menachem Schneerson/

* From: To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere: Letters by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on the Jewish Festivals.

May we all be blessed with a sweet new year.

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

YOM KIPPUR – The Biblical Meaning of “Kippurim”

Is the 'Day of ATONEMENT' a precise translation for YOM KIPPUR? In English, the word 'atonement' implies amends for a certain wrongdoing. In this sense, the 'Day of Atonement' implies expiation for transgressions that may have been committed over the course of the previous year. However, in Chumash we find numerous instances in which the word "kippurim" is used in a very different context.

In the following shiur, we examine the Torah's use of the word "kapara" in various contexts, in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of its meaning in relation to Yom Kippur.

THE SHORESH K.P.R. --- A PROTECTIVE COATING!

We begin our shiur by examining the Torah's very first use of the shoresh k.p.r. [chaf peyh reish] - as found in Parshat Noach:

"And God said to Noach: Make an ARK out of gopher wood... -V'CHAFARTA alav - and you shall COAT IT from within in and from without with - KOFER - pitch (a PROTECTIVE COATING)." (see Breishit 6:14)

To protect ark from the mighty waters of the flood, Noach is commanded to coat the gopher wood with a protective covering. To describe this 'coating procedure', the Torah uses the verb "v'chafarta" and the noun "kofer"! Note how both words stem from the same "shoresh" [root] of "k.p.r."

Hence, the very first usage of "k.p.r." already indicates that this shoresh relates to some sort of a 'protective covering'.

*** A PROTECTION GIFT**

Later on in Sefer Breishit (in Parshat Va'yishlach), when Yaakov Avinu sends a gift to appease his brother Esav, the Torah uses this same shoresh ["k.p.r."] to describe yet another form of protection. Review Breishit 32:20-21, noting how Yaakov explains the reason for sending this gift:

"Maybe, - A'CHA'PRA pa'nav - I can APPEASE him - with this gift that I am sending..." (Br. 32:21)

In this narrative, Yaakov is not asking Esav for forgiveness; rather he hopes that this gift will deter Esav from attacking him. One could suggest that this gift is intended to PROTECT Yaakov from Esav's anger.

*** A COVERING OF THE GROUND**

In Sefer Shmot, the Torah employs the shoresh "k.p.r." to describe the manner in which the 'manna' covered the ground:

"And behold it was on the face of the wilderness thin and flaky - k'KFOR - like 'frost' on the land." (Shmot 16:14)

Even though the precise Biblical meaning of "kfor" is not quite clear, it undoubtedly relates to some type of covering, such as the frost which covers the ground. [See also Tehilim 147:16 - "kfor k'efer y'fazer" (from daily davening).]

*** PROTECTION MONEY**

In Parshat Mishpatim (see Shmot 21:30), the word "kofer" is used to describe a payment which can be made in lieu of punishment. This payment can be understood as PROTECTION from the actual punishment that is due.

Similarly, in Bamidbar 35:31 we find the prohibition of accepting "kofer nefesh" - payment in lieu of capital punishment. In essence, this 'ransom money' [if accepted] would have served as 'protection' from the death penalty.

SHORESH K.P.R. AND THE MISHKAN

Later on in Sefer Shmot (in Parshiot Trumah/Tzaveh), in relation to the vessels of the Mishkan and its dedication ceremony; we find several additional words that stem from this same shoresh - "k.p.r." .

We begin our study with the word "kaporet", for this vessel is not only located in the "kodesh kedoshim" [holy of holies], but it also later becomes the focal point of the Yom Kippur "avoda" ritual. [See Vayikra 16:13-16!]

*** THE KA'PORET**

Recall that the "aron" (the holy ark) was an open, gold-plated wooden box that contained the LUCHOT (see Shmot 25:10-11 & 25:21). To cover this "aron" [and as we will suggest - to 'protect' it], Moshe is commanded to make a KAPORET (see 25:17-22). But this KAPORET (again note shoresh k.p.r.) was not merely a lid - rather it was an elaborate golden cover with two "keruvim" [cherubs] standing upon it.

If the purpose of this "kaporet" was simply to cover the "aron" - then it should have been called a "michseh" - as the Torah uses that word to describe the cover of Noah's ark in Breishit 8:13 and the cover for the Mishkan in Shmot 26:14. The very fact that the Torah refers to this cover as a KAPORET (shoresh k.p.r.) already suggests that there may be something 'protective' about it.

However, the placement specifically of "keruvim" on the kaporet - provides us with an excellent proof as to the 'protective' nature of this covering. To understand why, recall that first (and only other) time that we find "keruvim" in Chumash was in regard to the "keruvim" whose purpose was to PROTECT the path to Gan Eden (see Breishit 3:24). Just as those "keruvim" protect the path to the "etz ha'chayim", the "keruvim" on the kaporet serve to protect the "luchot".

[See Mishlei 3:18! Recall as well our shiur on Parshat Nitzavim where we used this parallel to explain how the Mishkan, and possibly the entire land of Israel become a 'Gan Eden' type environment, where God's Presence becomes more intense.]

Hence we conclude that its very name - the "kaporet" - relates to the fact that it serves as a protective cover for the "aron"!

[Note also that the PA'ROCHET (a related shoresh p.r.k) - the curtain which protects the "kodesh ha'kadoshim" - is also embroidered with "keruvim" (see Shmot 26:31). Symbolically, they also stand guard, protecting the "kodesh kedoshim".]

KIPPURIM & THE SEVEN DAY MILUIM CEREMONY

The first use of the actual word "kippurim" itself is found in the commandment to perform a seven day dedication ceremony for the Mishkan (better known as the MILUIM).

On each of those seven days, God instructs Moshe to offer a special korban "chatat", whose blood was sprinkled on the "mizbeyach" (see Shmot 29:1,12) - yet the purpose for this offering remains unclear. Note however, the concluding verses of that commandment, paying attention to how the Torah summarizes this daily offering, while referring to this entire procedure as "kippurim" :

"And each day [of the MILUIM] you shall bring a PAR CHATAT for the KIPPURIM... (Shmot 29:36)

In that same description, we find that the "kohanim" also required KAPARA during this seven day ceremony - for the Torah uses the word "kapara" to describe the process of sprinkling the blood of the "ayil" offering on their earlobes, thumbs, and toes (see Shmot 29:1,19-21). Note how the Torah refers to this procedure is referred to as KAPARA:

"This [meat of the korban] shall be eaten only by [the kohanim] - asher KUPAR bahen - who had KAPARA from them [from the blood of this animal]..." (see Shmot 29:33)

[See also parallel account in Vayikra 8:1-36, noting 8:34]

Thus we find that the primary purpose of the seven day MILUIM ceremony was to perform KAPARA on the MIZBAYACH

and on the KOHANIM.

But what was the purpose of this "kapara"? Was it necessary for the atonement of any specific sin?

Some commentators suggest that the kohanim require "kapara" as atonement for "chet ha'egel" (the sin of the Golden Calf/ see Rashi 29:1). However, that interpretation would force us to accept the opinion that the commandment to build the Mishkan (in Teruma/Tezave) was given after the events of "chet ha'egel" (and hence not in chronological order). Yet that very topic is a major controversy among commentators.

Furthermore, even if we do accept that opinion, surely the "mizbeyach" did nothing wrong. Why then would it require a KIPPURIM procedure?

Based on our understanding of the shoresh k.p.r. above, one could suggest an alternate reason for this "kapara" procedure - possibly, both the "mizbeyach" and the kohanim require some sort of special 'protection'!

But what would they need protection from?

PROTECTION FROM THE SHCHINA

Recall from our shiurim on Sefer Shmot that the primary purpose of the Mishkan was to create a site where the SHCHINA [God's Divine Presence] could dwell:

"And they shall make for Me a sanctuary - v'SHACHANTI b'tocham" - that I may dwell among them." (Shmot 25:8)

[See also Shmot 29:45-46]

Furthermore, the MISHKAN was supposed to create an environment similar to MA'AMAD HAR SINAI (see Ramban on Shmot 25:2) - and hence perpetuate that event.

However, as was the case at Har Sinai, the presence of the SHCHINA carried its consequences. As we saw in our study of the 'Ten Commandments' - the very presence of God's SHCHINA creates an environment where we find immediate and severe punishment for any transgression.

[For example, on the very next day, Nadav and Avihu made one small mistake and they received immediate punishment! See also earlier shiur in regard to the 13 midot ha'rachamim.]

One could suggest that it is specifically because the Mishkan will be the site of God's SHCHINA, both the "kohanim" and the "mizbayach" will require PROTECTION - and hence "kapara". The "kohanim" - for they will need to officiate in the Mishkan; and the "mizbayach" - for it is designated to become the site where God's "korbanot" will be consumed (see Vayikra 9:24).

Thus, this entire KIPPURIM ceremony could be understood as symbolic, for it reflects the nature of the Divine encounter which takes place in the Mishkan. Performing this procedure teaches Bnei Yisrael that encountering the SHCHINA requires not only preparation and readiness, but also protection from its consequences.

To support this interpretation, let's examine yet another vessel in the Mishkan that requires yearly "kapara" - the "mizbach ha'ketoret"!

THE MIZBACH KETORET

The word KIPPURIM is mentioned once again at the end of Parshat Tzaveh, when the MIZBACH KETORET [the incense alter] is first introduced (see Shmot 30:1-10). Here, to our surprise, we find the first reference in Chumash to the day of YOM KIPPUR itself:

"v'CH'PER Aharon al kar'no'tav - Aharon must KAPARA [sprinkle blood] on its corners ONCE A YEAR from the blood of the CHATAT HA'KIPURIM. Once a year y'CHA'PER a'lav - he must do KAPARA on it..." (Shmot 30:10)

Even though the Torah (here) only tells us that this special procedure must be performed once a year, later on, in Parshat Acharei Mot (see Vayikra 16:1-34) we find the complete details of this CHATAT HA'KIPURIM, including the precise date when this

procedure must be performed - i.e. the tenth day of the SEVENTH month. [See also Bamidbar 29:11.]

In our study of Parshiot Trumah/Tzaveh, we noted two aspects are unique to this MIZBACH KETORET:

1) It is the only vessel which requires this special CHATAT KIPPURIM.

[Note: In Acharei Mot we see that also the PAROCHET and KAPORET need to be sprinkled with the blood of the CHATAT HA'KIPURIM, however it is not mentioned in Sefer Shmot.]

2) It is LEFT OUT of the primary presentation of the Mishkan and its vessels.

[Scan Shmot chapters 25->29/ note that 25:8 and 29:44 form 'bookends' which include almost all the vessels of the Mishkan, except for the mizbach ktoret which is left out until the very end (30:1-10/ note that this ends the "dibur" which began in 25:1). See previous shiur on Parshat Tzaveh.]

Once again, the meaning of the shoresh k.p.r. as protection can help us understand why. The ANAN KTORET (cloud of smoke created when burning the ktoret) in the Ohel Moed acts as a BUFFER between the SHCHINA in the Kodesh Kdoshim and the MIZBAYACH in the AZARA (courtyard), thus protecting Bnei Yisrael. [Note parallel to the ANAN on Har Sinai. Note "vayered Hashem b'ANAN..." (see Shmot 34:5)]

Because the MIZBACH KETORET protects Bnei Yisrael each day when the ktoret is offered, it requires a yearly CHATAT HA'KIPURIM!

YOM HA'SHMINI - THE 8th Day DEDICATION CEREMONY

An additional link between Yom Kippur and our interpretation of "kapara" can be found by examining the korbanot of the YOM HA'SHMINI ceremony (the eighth day/ read Vayikra 9:1-24), the first day in which the MISHKAN began to function.

Once again, special korbanot are offered for the purpose of "kapara". From the psukim describing these korbanot, one could suggest that this KAPARA is necessary to protect Bnei Yisrael from the SHCHINA which is to appear on this day:

"This is the procedure which you must do, and God's glory (KVOD HASHEM) will appear unto you... Go near the mizbayach and offer you chatat and olah - v'CHA'PER - on your behalf and on the behalf of the people..." (9:6-7)

It should come as no surprise that the korbanot offered at that inauguration ceremony are almost identical to the korbanot offered yearly on YOM KIPPUR. In each ceremony, there is a special chatat & olah offered both by AHARON and by the PEOPLE. The following table summarizes this parallel between Vayikra 9:1-3 and 16:1-5:

YOM HA'SHMINI YOM KIPPUR NOTE

AHARON

Chatat	Egel*	Par	[An EGEL is a baby PAR]
Olah	Ayil	Ayil	

AM YISRAEL

Chatat	Seir	Seir	
Olah	Egel + Keves	Ayil	[A Keves is baby Ayil]

In each case Aharon offers a PAR CHATAT and AYIL OLAH (an EGEL is simply a baby PAR/ this change most probably relates to chet ha'egel). Likewise, Am Yisrael offers a SEIR CHATAT and AYIL OLAH (a keves is a baby ayil). Despite these minor differences, they are basically the same type of korban.

[See article by Rav Yoel Bin Nun in Megadim Vol. #8]

YOM KIPPUR - A YEARLY "YOM HA'SHMINI"

The above parallel indicates that Yom Kippur can be considered as a 'yearly repetition of the korbanot of the Mishkan's

inauguration ceremony on YOM HA'SHMINI.

This parallel underscores the very nature of YOM KIPPUR. It suggests that the primary purpose of the "avodat Kohen Gadol" is to PREPARE the Mikdash for the FORTHCOMING year, just as the korbanot of YOM HA'SHMINI prepared the Mishkan for its original use.

Likewise, the "kapara" can be understood in a similar fashion. Once a year, it is necessary to perform a procedure that will PROTECT Am Yisrael from the consequences of HITGALUT SHCHINA. This KAPARA process, which enables Bnei Yisrael's encounter with the SHCHINA in the MISHKAN, must be 'renewed' once a year.

In fact, Parshat Acharei Mot may allude to this very concept in the pasuk which completes the commandment to sprinkle the blood on the KAPORET:

"v'CHI'PER - And he [the kohen] shall do KAPARA [sprinkling the blood] on the KODESH, from the uncleanness of Bnei Yisrael... and thus he must do to the Ohel Moed - ha'SHOCHEN iy'tam - He who dwells among them, EVEN WHILE THEY ARE 'TAMEY' [spiritually unclean]..." (Vayikra 16:16)

EVEN THOUGH Am Yisrael may become TAMEY (due to their sins), the SHCHINAH can remain in their midst! However, Bnei Yisrael still require KAPARA - to PROTECT them from the SHCHINA and its consequences.

[Note: See Vayikra 18:24-27 in regard to the relationship between TUMAH & sin.]

ATONEMENT or PROTECTION

In Sefer Shmot we find an additional use of the shoresh k.p.r. when Moshe ascends Har Sinai to ask God to forgive Bnei Yisrael for their sin at chet ha'egel:

"And Moshe told the people, you have committed a terrible sin, and now I will go up to God, possibly - A'CHAPRA [I can achieve KAPARA] - for your sins." (Shmot 32:30)

When reading this pasuk, we usually understand A'CHAPRA as asking for forgiveness. However, one could understand that Moshe is asking God to PROTECT Bnei Yisrael from the punishment which they deserve. Undoubtedly, this protection from punishment leads to ultimate forgiveness. This explains why later in Chumash, the word "chapara" may actually imply forgiveness.

The classic example is found in Parshat Vayikra in relation to the korban CHATAT & ASHAM (4:1-5:26). Note that each type of korban concludes with the phrase:

"v'CHI'PER alav ha'Kohen, v'NIS'LACH lo..."
(see Vayikra 4:20,26,31,35; 5:10,13,18,26)

Based on our understanding of k.p.r. one could suggest that the sprinkling of the blood (the technical "kapara") by the kohen PROTECTS the owner of the korban from his due punishment for his transgression (the conceptual "kapara"). Then - v'NIS'LACH lo - God forgives him for that sin. Thus, the KAPARA 'process' enables the SLICHA 'effect'.

WHY ON THE 10th of TISHREI

Although we have explained the necessity of offering a yearly CHATAT KIPPURIM in the Mishkan, we have not explained why it must be performed on the tenth of Tishrei. In fact, based on the parallel to YOM HA'SHMINI, the first of Nisan would seem to be a more logical date!

Most probably this date was chosen for a historical reason. On the tenth of Tishrei, Bnei Yisrael received the SECOND LUCHOT and were thus forgiven for chet ha'egel. Due to God's attributes of Mercy - the 13 MIDOT HA'RACHAMIM, God agreed to allow His SHCHINA to remain with Am Yisrael, EVEN THOUGH they may not be worthy. [See Shmot 34:9, and shiur on the 13 MIDOT.]

On the anniversary of this event, the day on which Bnei Yisrael received the Torah at the level which they can maintain,

we re-enact Ma'amad Har Sinai for it is a day of HITGALUT SHCHINA. Just like Moshe Rabeinu, we can neither eat nor drink (Dvarim 9:9), nor wear shoes (see Shmot 3:5). In this manner, we also prepare ourselves for this awesome day (See Yoma 2a).

However, specifically BECAUSE this is a day of HITGALUT, Bnei Yisrael require PROTECTION from the SHCHINA.

Therefore, the CHATAT HA'KIPPURIM must be offered, for we are privy to a relationship which we may not deserve. It is this HITGALUT which enables the forgiveness of our sins on this day, just as it enabled the forgiveness of chet ha'egel several thousand years ago.

YOM KIPPUR

True atonement is accomplished only by teshuva. However, YOM KIPPUR allows for the special relationship between God and Am Yisrael to continue. By understanding the protective nature of the AVODAT YOM KIPPUR by the Kohen Gadol, we can better appreciate God's CHESED (kindness) in allowing us this special relationship, even though we may not deserve it. That understanding should encourage us not only to take advantage of the opportunity for atonement on this special day, but also to grasp any opportunity for spiritual growth during the course of the year to come.

"Yhi ratzon" that God should enact His MIDOT HA'RACHAMIM on this Yom Kippur, and enable us to meet the many challenges that face our Nation this coming year.

gemar chatima tova,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Note that the parsha describing YOM KIPPUR in Chumash is presented in relation to the death of Nadav an Avihu which took place during that inauguration ceremony on YOM HA'SHMINI/ See 10:1-4, and relate to 16:1.

1. Based on the above shiur, why do you think Nadav and Avihu thought it necessary to offer specifically ktoret, and specifically when they saw HITGALUT?
2. Were they wrong? If not, why were they punished?
3. Is there any other case in Chumash where ktoret is offered to protect Bnei Yisrael from punishment?

B. Note that on Yom HaShmini, also a Korban Shlamim was offered (see Vayikra 9:3-4)

1. Why is this korban not offered on Yom Kippur?
2. Can you relate this question to why the tzibur brings a korban shlamim davka, and only, on Shavuot (see shtei ha'lechem in Parshat Emor /see also previous shiur on Shavuot!)

C. Based on our shiur on Rosh Hashana, one could suggest an additional reason why this procedure is necessary in the SEVENTH month. After we request that God show His Providence over us on Rosh Hashana. If we ask for His special HASHGACHA on the land and the rainfall, we must be ready for its consequences.

1. Relate this to last week's shiur on Rosh Hashana and the nature of all CHAGEI TISHREI.

D. Sefer Shmot never states the specific day in which the SECOND LUCHOT were given. Read Devarim 9:8-10:11 to understand how Chazal reach the conclusion that it took place on 10 Tishrei.

GOD'S THIRTEEN MIDDOT HA-RACHAMIM
for SELICHOT, ROSH HA'SHANA & YOM KIPPUR

[For slides: www.tanach.org/special/13mid.ppt]

Our recitation of the thirteen 'middot ha-rachamim' [God's thirteen attributes of mercy] is certainly the focal point of the 'selichot' prayers and the highlight of 'ne'ilah' on Yom Kippur. But how are we to understand this recitation? Is it a 'hokus pokus' type magic formula through which one can achieve automatic atonement?

In the following shiur, we attempt to prove quite the opposite. By undertaking a comprehensive analysis of when and why God first declared these middot (in the aftermath of 'chet ha-eigel'), we will show how their recitation relates to the very essence of 'tefilla' [prayer] and our special relationship with God.

Our conclusions will also help us appreciate the transition from Rosh Ha'shana to Yom Kippur; as the focus of our prayers shifts from 'din' [judgement] to 'rachamim' [mercy].

INTRODUCTION - FROM CREATION TO COVENANT

When we speak of 'attributes' [middot] in relation to people, we usually find that they are not absolute. For example, the same person can be a loving, kind, and merciful father, while at work he can be a strict, demanding, and uncompromising boss over his employees. The reason why is quite simple - attributes are often a function of a relationship. So too, we posit in relationship to God. Should we find that God exhibits different attributes - it may stem from the very nature of His relationship with man.

In our daily lives, we are all familiar with the complexity of relationships, no less so is the nature of our relationship with God. In fact, from a certain perspective, we could consider Chumash as the story of the development of the special relationship that forges between God and the people of Israel.

Therefore, we begin our shiur by tracing that relationship from its very inception, while paying careful attention to how the concept of covenant evolves from Sefer Breishit to Sefer Shmot.

BRITOT IN SEFER BREISHIT

Recall from our study of Sefer Breishit how Gan Eden reflected an ideal (intense) relationship between man and God. However, due to man's sin, that relationship became tainted and Adam and Eve were banished from that garden.

Despite this banishment, God continued His relationship with mankind, but at a more distant level. Therefore, when Adam's offspring developed into a totally corrupt society, God found it necessary to destroy that society with a Flood [i.e. the **mabul**], saving only Noach and his family.

After the **mabul**, God's relationship with mankind entered a new stage, reflected by God's covenant with Noach ('brit ha-keshet' / see 9:8-16). Note that for the first time, we find a **brit** between God and mankind, a concept that will be found later as well in God's relationship with Am Yisrael.

God's hopes for the generation of Noach's offspring were shattered by the events at Migdal Bavel (see 11:1-9). In the aftermath of these various 'failures' of mankind, Sefer Breishit shifted its focus to the story of how God chose Avraham Avinu to become the forefather of His special nation, whose goal would be to steer mankind back in the proper direction (see 12:1-8, 15:1-20, 17:7-8, 18:17-19 etc.).

As those events unfold, we find once again, how this evolving relationship is defined by various **britot** [covenants] between God and Avraham; the classic examples being: - brit bein ha-btarim (see 15:18) and brit mila (see 17:7-8) - or what is commonly referred to as '**brit avot**'.

[For a more complete explanation, see Seforim in his introduction to Sefer Breishit, see also TSC shiurim on Parshiot Noach & Lech Lecha. See also the introductory

section of the piyut 'Amitz koach', which describes the avodat kohen gadol (that 'nusach ashkenaz' uses for Mussaf on Yom Kippur). It is not by chance that its author begins that piyut with the story of Creation from a similar perspective.]

FROM BRIT AVOT TO BRIT SINAI

Sefer Shmot begins as God redeems Bnei Yisrael from their bondage in Egypt, as He promised Avraham Avinu in **brit bein ha-btarim**. But according to that covenant, Bnei Yisrael were also destined to inherit the Land of Israel (after their redemption), thus fulfilling brit avot.

However, to enhance the very purpose of brit avot, God convenes an additional covenant with Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, before they enter the land. According to this covenant [often referred to as '**brit Sinai**'], not only will Bnei Yisrael become a 'great' nation (see Breishit 12:1-3), they are to become a **holy** nation - a 'goy kadosh' (see Shmot 19:6).

To appreciate this 'upgrade', let's take a closer look at God's proposal to Bnei Yisrael, upon their arrival at Har Sinai:

"[God summons Moshe and proposes:] 'You have seen what I did to Egypt... and now I have brought you to Me.'

* Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My **brit**, and you will be My **segula**...

* Then you shall become for Me a kingdom of priests and a **goy kadosh** [holy nation], speak these words to Bnei Yisrael" (see Shmot 19:4-6).

Note how this proposal describes a '**two sided**' deal; hence a covenant - a brit. By accepting and keeping God's special commandments, Am Yisrael becomes a goy kadosh - a holy nation - and hence a 'kingdom of priests', thus representing God as His special nation.

[Just as within Am Yisrael the kohen serves as the representative of God for the twelve tribes - on a universal level, the nation of Israel serves as God's representative, by acting as a model nation for other nations to follow. (See Ramban on Devarim 32:26!)]

Upon their acceptance of this proposal (see 19:7-8), the next step will be to receive the laws [mitzvot] that will make them a goy kadosh. Hence, Bnei Yisrael are instructed to prepare themselves for this special occasion (see 19:9-25), better known as Ma'amad Har Sinai, where they will receive the first set of laws, better known as the 'Ten Commandments' (see 20:1-15).

THE FIRST COVENANT - BRIT MA'AMAD HAR SINAI

This backdrop can help us appreciate why the Torah refers to the Ten Commandments (and the mitzvot which follow) as a **covenant** (between God and Bnei Yisrael). For example, recall the opening statement of Moshe Rabbeinu's main speech of Sefer Devarim (that begins with the Ten Commandments):

"The Lord our God made a **covenant** with us at Chorev.

Not [only] with our forefathers did God make this covenant, but rather with us..." (see Devarim 5:2-6)

This also explains the need for the covenantal ceremony that takes place at Ma'amad Har Sinai, as described in the closing section of Parshat Mishpatim (see 24:3-11), where Bnei Yisrael declare their acceptance of these laws. Note as well how the Torah refers to these laws as 'sefer ha-brit':

"And Moshe took the **sefer ha-brit** and read it to the people, whereupon they declared: All that God has commanded we will do and listen [na'aseh ve-nishma]. Then Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying: Behold this is the blood of the **covenant** ['dam ha-brit'] between you and God concerning these laws..." (Shmot 24:7-8, note context from 24:3-7).

Therefore, as a testimony of this covenant, Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the 'luchot' (see 24:12-13); later referred to as 'luchot ha-eidut' (see Shmot 31:18) and 'luchot ha-brit' (see Devarim 9:9-11).

With this background, we can begin our shiur.

'COMMANDMENTS' or 'STATEMENTS'

Thus far, we have shown how **brit Sinai** is more than just a 'list of laws'. Rather, it reflects a special **relationship** between God and His people. Furthermore, a covenant by its very nature is a two-sided deal. Therefore, it includes not only laws and conditions, but also the **consequences** should one side break these laws. [Ask your lawyer, it's in every legal contract!]

And this is precisely what we find in the Ten Commandments. To your surprise, in addition to the laws, the Ten Commandments also describe **how** God will reward (or punish) those who obey (or disobey) His commandments.

[Note that the popular translation of the 'aseret ha-dibrot' as the Ten **commandments** can be misleading. Dibrot means 'statements' - and these statements includes both laws **and** their consequences!]

GOD's MIDDOT IN THE FIRST LUCHOT

With this in mind, let's take a closer look at the opening section of the Ten Commandments, to see **how** God threatens to react, should one break this covenant. In our selective quote, we will take note (in CAPS) of any phrase that indicates a specific divine attribute [MIDDA]:

"I am the Lord your God...

You shall have no other gods besides Me...

Do not bow down to them or worship them, for I the Lord am a KEL KANA - a ZEALOUS God

POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM –

REMEMBERING THE SIN of parents upon their children...

[LE-SON'AI] - for those who reject Me, but OSEH CHESED - SHOWING KINDNESS...

for those who love me and follow my laws - [LE-OHAVAI u-leshomrei mitzvotai]"

(See 20:2-6).

Note how the second Commandment includes three attributes concerning our relationship with God:

1) KEL KANA - a zealous God

2) POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM - LE-SON'AI HARSH punishment for those who reject God

3) O'SEH CHESED LA-ALAFIM - LE-OHAVAI Kindness & reward for those follow God.

Similarly, in the third Commandment, we find yet another MIDDA [divine attribute]:

"Do not say in vain the NAME of God - ki LO YENAKEH HASHEM - for God will NOT FORGIVE he who says his Name in vain." (20:7)

Let's add this fourth attribute to the above list:

4) LO YENAKEH HASHEM - He will not forgive

How should we consider these four attributes? At first glance, most of them seem to be quite harsh!

Even the MIDDA of - OSEH CHESED - Divine kindness, does not necessarily imply MERCY. Carefully note in 20:6 that God promises this kindness **only** for those who **follow** Him, and hence not for any others.

Most definitely, all four of these attributes are quite the opposite of mercy; they are: **middot ha-din** - attributes of exacting retribution.

Although these **middot** do have their 'down side', for they threaten immediate punishment for those who transgress ('le-son'a'), they also have their 'up side', for they assure immediate reward for those who obey (le-ohavai).

In other words, these **middot** describe a very intense relationship, quite similar [and not by chance] to God's relationship with man in Gan Eden (see Breishit 2:16-17).

MORE MIDDOT HA-DIN

Yet another example of this intense relationship, and yet

another attribute, is found at the conclusion of the unit of laws in Parshat Mishpatim. Recall that immediately after the Ten Commandments, Moshe was summoned to Har Sinai to receive a special set commandment to relay to Bnei Yisrael (see Shmot 20:15-19). At the conclusion of those laws, God makes the following promise:

"Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and help bring you into the Promised Land.

Be **careful** of him and **obey** him, Do not defy him -

ki lo yisa le-fish'eichem

for he shall not pardon your sins -

since My Name is with him...

[On the other hand...]

"...should you obey Him and do all that I say - **I will help you defeat your enemies...**" (see Shmot 23:20-24).

Once again, we find that God will exact punishment should Bnei Yisrael not follow His mitzvot and reward (i.e. assistance in conquering the Land) should they obey Him.

This **midda** of '**lo yisa le-fish'eichem**' is first presented as that of the **mal'ach** [angel?] of God. However; based on the context of these psukim, it seems rather clear that God's intention is for this **mal'ach** to be Moshe Rabbeinu - for He will speak to the people on behalf of God and lead them to the Land, and God's Name is with him. Hence we can consider it an attribute of God, by which Moshe - as God's emissary - must relate to the people.

A final example of this **harsh** nature of brit Sinai is found in the Torah's account of the aftermath of Bnei Yisrael's sin with the golden calf [chet ha-egel]. Because the people had agreed to these harsh terms of brit Sinai, we find how God intends to punish them precisely according to these attributes of **middat ha-din**:

"And God told Moshe, go down from the mountain for your people has sinned... they made a golden image... and now allow Me, and **I will kindle my anger** against them that I may destroy them **-ve-yichar api bahem...**" (see Shmot 32:7-10; see also Shmot 22:23!).

[Note also that the story of chet ha-egel is a direct continuation of the narrative which ended in Parshat Mishpatim when Moshe went up to receive the **luchot**. Note how 24:12-16 flows directly to 32:1 in Parshat Ki Tisa!]

Here we find yet another divine attribute - CHARON AF HASHEM - God's instant anger.

Before we continue, let's summarize these six attributes that we have found thus far. Later, this list will be very helpful when we compare these **middot** to God's **middot** in the second **luchot**.

- 1) KEL KANA
- 2) POKED AVON... LE-SON'AI
- 3) OSEH CHESED... LE-OHAVAI
- 4) LO YENAKEH
- 5) LO YISAH LE-FISH'EICHEM...
- 6) CHARON AF

CHET HA-EGEL / THE COVENANT IS BROKEN

According to these terms of the covenant at **matan Torah**, now symbolized by the **first luchot** (and as we just read in 32:7-10), Bnei Yisrael should have been punished immediately and harshly for the sin of chet ha-egel (32:8). However, Moshe Rabbeinu intervenes. In his famous prayer (see 32:11-14), he reminds God of the potential 'chillul Hashem' as well as **brit avot** - which God promised Avraham Avinu would never be broken.

God accepted Moshe's prayer (which forestalled their immediate punishment), but according to the terms of the 'contract' of **brit Sinai** - those who sinned at chet ha-egel still required some sort of punishment.

How could they be saved? At first it seemed as though there was only one answer: **brit Sinai** had to be annulled!

THE LUCHOT ARE BROKEN

This need to annul brit Sinai - in order to save Bnei Yisrael from punishment - may explain Moshe's decision to break the **luchot**, as they constituted the symbol of that covenant. In other words, when Moshe Rabbeinu descended from the mountain and saw the people dancing around the Golden Calf, he realized that to save Bnei Yisrael from immediate punishment he would need to break the **luchot**, and hence the terms of that covenant (see 32:15-20).

[See also Masechet Shabbat 87a –"asher shibarta..." (34:1)- yishar koach asher shibarta", where the Midrash praises Moshe for breaking the luchot.]

To prove that **brit Sinai** has been broken, we must follow the story that ensues.

After the 3000 'troublemakers' are punished (see 32:24-29), Moshe begs that God **forgive** Bnei Yisrael for their sin

"Then Moshe told the people: You have committed a terrible sin, and now I will approach God - possibly He will forgive you for your sin..." (see 32:30-32).

However, God seems to have rejected Moshe's eloquent request for forgiveness (see 32:33). Instead, God informs Moshe that the nation will be punished, but not immediately - rather only after Moshe will lead them to the Promised Land:

"And now - go lead the people [to the Land of Israel]... **u-beyom pokdi u-pakadti...** - and on the day that I choose to punish - I will punish them for their sins" (see 32:34!).

God's 'negative' response to Moshe's request leaves us with the impression that indeed He will fulfill brit avot - thus assuring that the nation will enter the Land of Israel; however, sooner or later they will be punished for their sins.

In the next set of psukim, God explains more explicitly how brit avot will be fulfilled, but also hints to the inevitable conclusion that brit Sinai has been broken:

"And God said to Moshe - Set out from here, you and the people that you have brought out of Egypt to the Land that I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov (brit avot)...

but I **will not go in your midst** for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I destroy you on the journey" (see 33:1-3).

In contrast to God's original promise that He will send a **mal'ach** with **His name** in their midst ['shmi be-kirbo' / see 23:20-23], now God states emphatically that **He** will no longer be with them - 'ki **lo a'aleh be-kirbecha**' (see 33:3). Due to the events of chet ha-egel, Bnei Yisrael had proven themselves unworthy of the special intense relationship of **brit Sinai**. Hence, by bringing them to the Promised Land, God will fulfill His promise in brit avot for Am Yisrael to become a '**goy gadol**' (see Breishit 12:3) - however, His aspiration (from brit Sinai) for Am Yisrael to become a **goy kadosh** - has been shattered!

Proof that brit Sinai has been broken is found in God's next commandment that Bnei Yisrael must remove 'their jewelry' that they received on Har Sinai, undoubtedly the symbol of the high level they reached at **matan Torah** (see 33:5-6). Similarly, God's instruction that Moshe must now move his own tent **away** from the camp - so that God can remain in contact with him, also reflects the fact that God has taken away His Shchina from their midst.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

If you carefully follow this narrative in Chumash, a very strange predicament has arisen (that often goes unnoticed). Even though Bnei Yisrael will not be destroyed (thanks to **brit avot**), God instructs Moshe to continue on to Eretz Canaan **without** brit Sinai.

As unthinkable as this may sound, God's decision is very logical. Considering His conclusion that Bnei Yisrael are an 'am ksheh oref' - a stiff necked people (see 32:9, 33:5 and TSC shiur on Parshat Ki Tisa), and hence will not change their ways, there

appears to be no other solution. After all, should He keep His **Shchina** in their midst, Bnei Yisrael would not be able to survive (see Shmot 33:5!).

Fortunately for Am Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu is not willing to accept God's decision. As we will see, his argument will set the stage for God's declaration of His **midot ha-rachamim**.

A GOOD LAWYER

At this point, Moshe Rabbeinu intervenes. Let's take a careful look at his petition; noting how he demands that God keep His Presence [**Shchina**] with them, threatening a 'sit down strike' should God refuse:

"And Moshe beseeched God: 'Look, you have instructed me to lead this people... but recognize that this nation is **Your** people!'

God answered: I will lead [only] you. But Moshe insisted: 'Im ein panecha holchim al ta'aleinu mi-zeh' - Unless **Your presence will go with us** do not make us leave this place. For how should it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You **go with us...**" (33:12-16).

[These psukim are quite difficult to translate, I recommend that you read the entire section inside.]

Moshe's refusal leaves God ['kivyachol'] in a most difficult predicament. On the one hand, He cannot allow His Shchina to return - for according to the terms of **brit Sinai** - an am ksheh oref (Am Yisrael's level) could not survive His anger, and would eventually be killed.

On the other hand, He cannot leave them in the desert (as Moshe now threatens), for **brit avot** must be fulfilled!

But, He cannot take them to the land, for Moshe is not willing to lead them **unless** He returns His **Shchina**.

Something has to budge! But what will it be?

It is precisely here, in the resolution of this dilemma, where God's 13 **midot ha-rachamim** enter into the picture.

A NEW COVENANT

Let's take a closer look now at God's response to Moshe's request. Note that here is the first time in Chumash where God introduces the concept of divine mercy:

"And God said to Moshe, 'I will also do this thing that you request... [to return His **Shchina** / Moshe then asked that God show His Glory -] then God answered: 'I will pass all my goodness before you, and I will proclaim **My Name** before you, and I **will pardon** he whom I will pardon and I **will have mercy** on he to whom I give mercy (ve-chanoti et asher achon, ve-richamti et asher arachem)..." (see 33:17-22).

The possibility of 'divine pardon' will now allow God's **Shchina** to return. God now agrees to allow Bnei Yisrael a 'second chance' even should they sin. With this promise, the stage is set for the forging of a **new** covenant though which **brit Sinai** can be re-established, but according to these new terms.

Hence, God instructs Moshe to ascend Har Sinai one more time, in a manner quite parallel to his first ascent to Har Sinai [but with significant minor differences], to receive the **second luchot** (see 34:1-5 and its parallel in Shmot 19:20-24).

As we should expect, the laws should and do remain the same. However, their **terms** must now be amended with God's attributes of mercy. Hence, when Moshe now ascends Har Sinai, it is not necessary for God to repeat the laws of the Ten Commandment, for they remain the same. Instead, this time when God descends upon Har Sinai, the **new** luchot will be presented together with His proclamation of an important **amendment** to brit Sinai - i.e. His attributes of mercy.

Just as God had promised Moshe (see 33:19!), a new covenant, reflecting this enhanced relationship, is now forged:

"And God came down in a cloud...& passed before him and proclaimed: ' Hashem, Hashem Kel rachum ve-chanun, erach apayim ve-rav chesed ve-emet, notzer chesed la-alafim..." (see 34:5-8).

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE ATTRIBUTES

With this background, we can now better appreciate the Torah's choice of words that describe these middot ha-rachamim.

Recall the six phrases that reflected **middat ha-din** that we found in our study of **brit Sinai** (in the beginning of our shiur). Now, as we compare them, we will notice that each **new** attribute relates directly to one of these original attributes of **din** from the first covenant.

The following table (study it carefully), followed by a more detailed explanation, explains this rather amazing parallel:

FIRST LUCHOT	SECOND LUCHOT
=====	=====
1) Kel KANA	Kei RACHUM VE-CHANUN
2) POKED AVON..le-sonai	POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM..
3) OSEH chesed la-alafim ... LE-OHAVAI	RAV chesed ve-emet NOTZER chesed l'alafim...
4) LO YENAKEH	VE-NAKEH, lo yenakeh
5) LO YISA le-fish'eichem	NOSEI AVON VA-FESHA...
6) CHARON AF	ERECH APAYIM

Note how each attribute from the original covenant switches from **middat ha-din** to **middat ha-rachamim**. [To appreciate this parallel, it is important to follow these psukim in the original Hebrew.] Let's take now a closer look:

A. HASHEM KEL RACHUM VE-CHANUN

--> (1) HASHEM KEL KANA

 rachum ve-chanun based on 33:19 (see above)
 a **merciful** God in contrast to a **zealous** God

B. ERECH APAYIM --> (6) CHARON AF

 slow to anger in contrast to **instant** anger

C. RAV CHESED VE-EMET --> (3) OSEH CHESED... LE-OHAVAI

abounding kindness for all, potentially even for the wicked
 [This may allow the possibility of 'rasha ve-tov lo']
 in contrast to **exacting** kindness, and hence, limited
 exclusively to those who obey Him.

 [Note that the mida of 'emet' is now required, for this
 abounding kindness for all must be complemented by the
 attribute of truth to assure ultimate justice.]

D. NOTZER CHESED LA-ALAFIM

--> (3) OSEH CHESED LA-ALAFIM... LE-OHAVAI

 He **stores** His kindness, so that even if it is not rewarded
 immediately, it is stored to be given at a later time.

 [This may allow the possibility of 'tzaddik ve-ra lo']
 in contrast to **immediate** kindness and reward for those
 who follow Him.

E. NOSEI AVON VA-FESHA... --> (5) LO YISA LE-FISH'EICHEM

 forgiving sin in contrast to **not forgiving** sin.

F. VE-NAKEH, LO YENAKEH --> (4) LO YENAKEH

sometimes He will forgive, sometimes He may not.

 [See Rashi, forgives those who perform teshuva.]
 in contrast to **never** forgiving.

G. POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM...

--> (2) POKED AVON le-son'ai

 He **withholds** punishment for up to four generations
 [in anticipation of teshuva / see Rashi]

 in contrast to **extending** punishment for up to four generations.
 [Even though these two phrases are almost identical,
 their context forces us to interpret each pasuk differently.
 In the first luchot, all four generations are punished, in
 the second luchot, God may **hold back** punishment for
 four generations, allowing a chance for teshuva. See
 Rashi.]

These striking parallels demonstrate that each of the new middot lies in direct contrast to God's middot in His original covenant at Har Sinai.

Now we can return to Chumash to see how Moshe's immediate reaction to this proclamation reflects his original request that God keep His **Shchina** with the people

"And Moshe hastened to bow down and said: 'If I have indeed gained favor in Your eyes - **let Hashem go in our midst** - 'ki' = **even though** they are an **am ksheh oref** - a stiff necked people, and you shall pardon our sin..." (34:8-9).

Note how Moshe's request that God return His **Shchina** to the people **even though** they are an **am ksheh oref** is in direct contrast to God's original threat that "He will not go up with them **because** they are a stiff necked people, less He smite them on their journey..." (see 33:3 / compare with 34:9)!

Once these new terms are established, allowing God's **Shchina** to remain even though Bnei Yisrael may sin, Moshe begs that God indeed return to be with His nation (as he requested in 33:12-16).

These Divine attributes of mercy now allow the **Shchina** to dwell within Yisrael even though they may not be worthy.

From a certain perspective, this entire sequence is quite understandable. For on the one hand, to be worthy of God's presence, man must behave perfectly. However, man is still human. Although he may strive to perfection, he may often error or at times even sin. How, then, can man ever come close to God? Hence, to allow mortal man the potential to continue a relationship with God, a new set of rules is necessary - one that includes **middot ha-rachamim**.

The original terms of **brit Sinai**, although ideal, are not practical. Therefore, God's middot ha-rachamim are necessary to allow **brit Sinai** to become achievable.

In this manner, middot ha-rachamim can be understood as God's kindness that allows man to approach Him and develop a closer relationship without the necessity of immediate punishment for any transgression.

SELICHOT

This explanation adds extra meaning to our comprehension and appreciation of our recitation of the Selichot. Reciting the 13 **middot** comprises more than just a mystical formula. It is a constant reminder of the **conditions** of the covenant of the **second luchot**.

God's attributes of mercy, as we have shown, do not guarantee automatic forgiveness, rather, they **enable the possibility** of forgiveness. As the pasuk stated, God will forgive only he whom He chooses ('et asher achon... ve-et asher arachem' / 33:19). To be worthy of that mercy, the individual must prove his sincerity to God, while accepting upon himself not to repeat his bad ways.

Thus, our recitation of the 13 middot serves as a double reminder:

- 1) Not to 'give up' in our strive towards holiness, for indeed middot ha-rachamim allow us to come close.
Yet, at the same time:
- 2) To recognize that Divine mercy is **not** automatic.

This recognition should inspire one who understands the terms of this covenant to act in manner by which God will find him worthy of Divine mercy. After we have been judged on Rosh Hashana, we ask on Yom Kippur, on the very same day on which Bnei Yisrael first received the second luchot - that God act according to His attributes of Mercy. We pray that our recitation of the 13 middot during **Ne'ilah** should not only wipe out sins of the year which has passed, but also set us in the proper path of teshuva for the new year which is now beginning.

gmar chatima tova
menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN - shiur on the 13 midot

A. Immediately after God announces His willingness to use His attributes of Mercy in 33:19, we find a very interesting divine statement that follows:

"But, He said, you can not see my face ... Station yourself on the Rock as My Presence passes by ... you will see my back, but My face must not be seen. [lo tuchal lir'ot **panai** - ki lo yir'ani ha-adam ve-chai -... ve-Ra'ita et **achorai** - u-**panai** lo yira'u.]" (see 33:20-23).

As the new covenant allows for mercy, the perception of God now becomes less clear. While the first covenant boasted a clear relationship of 'panim el panim' (face to face/ see 33:11), this new covenant, even to Moshe, is represented by a 'face to back' relationship:

This new level has a clear advantage - middat ha-rachamim - however there is still a price to pay - the unclarity of Hashem's Hashgacha. No longer is punishment immediate; however, reward may also suffer from delay. Hashem's Hashgacha becomes more complex and now allows apparent situations of tzaddik ve-ra lo- rasha ve-tov lo.

1. See Chazal's explanation of 'hodi'eni na et drachecha' (33:12) How does this relate to this explanation?

2. As communication is clearer when talking face to face with someone as opposed to talking to someone with his back turned, attempt to explain the symbolism of the above psukim.

3. Why must Moshe Rabbeinu also go down a level in his nevu'a?

B. The second luchot are carved by man, and not by God. Attempt to relate this requirement based on the nature of the 13 **midot**.

Relate this to the mitzva for Bnei Yisrael to build the mishkan which follows in Parshat Vayakhel.

Compare this to the mitzva to begin building a **sukka** immediately after Yom Kippur, and in general, why the holiday of **Sukkot** follows Yom Kippur.

C. After God declares His 13 middot of rachamim (34:6-9), He makes a promise (34:10), and then adds some commandments (34:11-26).

Are these commandments new, or are they a 'repeat' of mitzvot which were given earlier in Parshat Mishpatim?

[Relate especially to Shmot 23:9-33.]

If so, can you explain why they are being repeated?

[Hint: Which type of mitzvot from Parshat Mishpatim are not repeated?]

Relate your answer to the events of chet ha-egel.

D. In the story of chet ha-egel, we find a classic example of a 'mila mancha', i.e. use of the verb 'lir'ot' - to see [r.a.h.].

Review chapters 32-34 in this week's Parsha while paying attention to this word. 'See' for yourself if it points to a theme. As you read, pay careful attention to: 32:1, 32:5, 32:9, 32:19, 32:25, 33:10, 33:12-13!, 33:20-23, 34:10, 34:23-24!, 34:30, and 34:35. What does it mean when God 'sees'..., when man 'sees'..., and when man 'sees' (or is seen by) God?

Relate also to the use of this verb (r.a.h.) at Ma'amat Har Sinai, especially 20:15, 20:19. See also 19:21, 24:10, & Devarim 5:21!

Could you say that 'seeing is believing'?

If you had fun with that one, you can also try an easier one: the use of the word 'ra'a' [evil / reish.ayin.hey.] in 32:12-14. Relate to 32:17, 32:22, 32:25?, 33:4. Relate to Shmot 10:10; see Rashi, Ramban, Chizkuni, Rashbam.

E. Chazal explain that God's original intention was to create the world with His attribute of 'din' [judgment], but after realizing that it could not survive, He included (in His creation) the attribute of 'rachamim' [mercy] as well.

[See Rashi Breishit 1:1 - 'bara Elokim...']

Relate this to the above shiur. Would you say that this Midrash reflects Sefer Shmot as well as Sefer Breishit.

F. Note 'kol tuvi' in 33:19. Relate this to 'va-yar Elokim ki **tov**' mentioned after each stage of **creation** in Breishit chapter 1.

Can you relate this to the above question and above shiur? See also Rambam Moreh Nevuchim I:54 / second paragraph. [page 84 in Kapach edition Mossad Harav Kook]

G. Even though it appears as though Bnei Yisrael had the choice to either accept or reject this proposal, Chazal explain in the famous Midrash 'kafa aleihem har ke-gigit' that had Bnei Yisrael said **no**, all creation would have returned to 'tohu va-vohu'!

Can you relate this to the above shiur as well?

H. Note 34:10 'hinei anochi koret brit...' & 34:29-30. Relate this to why we refer to middot ha-rachamim in selichot as 'brit shlosh esrei' .

OH RNET

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HOPING THAT “TOMORROW” NEVER COMES

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Right at the very end of *Neilah* — the very last service on Yom Kippur — we shout out the words, “*Hashem Hu haElokim* — Hashem is G-d!” We don’t just shout it out once. Rather, we shout it out *seven* times, repeating the words over and over again. It is one of the most moving moments during Yom Kippur. Not because we have come to the end of the Fast, but because, in a way, it is the climax of everything that the whole period that led up to Rosh Hashana and ended with Yom Kippur stands for. On Rosh Hashana we begin the process of crowning G-d as our King, and in the very last remaining moments of Yom Kippur we coronate Him.

“*Hashem Hu haElokim* — Hashem is G-d” are truly poignant words. As we leave the holiest day of the year, we do so on a spiritual high of having wholeheartedly embraced G-d. Where do these words come from? They are actually part of a verse from the Book of Kings. Achav, one of the wickedest kings in Jewish history, had turned his back on G-d, and he and the vast majority of the Jewish people worshipped the idol Baal. Eliyahu, the faithful and dedicated prophet of G-d, challenges the priests of Baal to a spiritual battle to see who is the true G-d. Without going into the details of the riveting story (you can read it yourself in Kings 1 chapter 18), I will spoil the end for you. The final outcome is unequivocal. Eliyahu triumphs. The priests of Baal are put to death. And the Jewish People proclaim as one, “*Hashem Hu haElokim!* *Hashem Hu haElokim!*”

When Izevel, Achav’s evil and sinful wife, hears what Eliyahu has done, she sends him a message warning him not to get too comfortable because, “at this time tomorrow I shall make your soul like the soul of one of them.” Izevel is telling Eliyahu that she will have him

put to death just as the priests of Baal were put to death. And Eliyahu is forced to flee for his life.

Izevel is a monumentally powerful woman who seemingly can do as she wishes. So, why didn’t she just have Eliyahu murdered immediately? Why did she tell him that it would happen “tomorrow”? There are several explanations that are offered by the commentaries, but there is one particular observation that is extremely distressing. Izevel is telling Eliyahu that right now the people are in such a spiritual thrall that there is no way she could get away with having G-d’s true prophet murdered. But “tomorrow” (i.e. in the near future), the thrall will have worn off and the people will have lost their passion for serving G-d. And then she will be able to have him killed without any repercussions.

And, terrifyingly enough, she was right. Not very long afterward, the people went back to their idolatrous ways and Eliyahu had to stay in hiding.

Perhaps that is the final message of *Neilah*. Perhaps that is the final message of the whole of Yom Kippur. Rabbi Yehuda Segal, the late Rosh Yeshiva in Manchester, was accustomed to say that one way to measure the success of Yom Kippur is not according to the fervor of your prayers on Yom Kippur, but, rather, according to how you pray *Ma’ariv* (the nighttime service) immediately *after* Yom Kippur!

In effect, it is not enough *just* to declare “*Hashem Hu haElokim* — Hashem is G-d!” Because, if that is all we do, then the passion and the fire that was ignited on Yom Kippur might soon be extinguished. Instead, what we must do is to take that passion with us into the year — and live it every single day, anew.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Granny's Tales

"*Yeshurun became fat and kicked.*" (32:15)

Last week I mentioned that one of the great things about having been part of Ohr Somayach for around three decades is that I have met some people who are clearly living on a different level than the rest of us. One of these holy souls distilled the essence of one's relationship with one's fellow into three principles. His first principle: "I was created to serve others, and no one was created to serve me." The second principle: "I wouldn't do it to you. But if you do it to me – it's okay." I said that this doesn't mean that a person should be a doormat and invite the world to trample on him, but, post facto, if you did something to me that I could really take you to court for and get back at you for, and I give up on that – I get forgiven for all of my sins. And his third principle: "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve."

In Yiddish there's an expression called "*bubbe maisos*" – literally "Granny's tales." Sometimes, *bubbe maisos* are just that – stories and ideas without foundation. But sometimes they reflect a wisdom that comes from

our Sages. In this particular case, the Rabbi of whom I speak heard the statement "Whatever I do for you is never enough; whatever you do for me is more than I deserve" from his grandmother (Gittel bas Yitzchok Dov HaLevi, *a"h*). It just so happens that virtually the same idea is found in *Mesechet Derech Eretz Zuta*, *perek beit*, for there it says, "If you did much good, let it be in your eyes as a little. And if they did you a little good, let it be in your eyes as a lot."

"*Yeshurun became fat and kicked.*"

This verse is preceded by the most beautiful and poetic description of how Hashem cared for and guarded the Jewish People in the desert. When a person feels he deserves something, whatever he gets will seem but little in his eyes and he will end up denying his benefactor. Even *Yeshurun*, which means "the straight one," will be turned aside and start to "kick" if his appreciation is not greater than his appetite.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

The Best of Both Worlds (*Eruvin 44b*)

“Give him another 400 years of life and also grant him and his entire generation a place in the World to Come.”

This is what Hashem told the angels to announce to Rabbi Preida to reward this Torah scholar for his great love for the Torah and for others, and for his great patience and humility. What did Rabbi Preida do to merit this reward?

He had a student whom he needed to teach a new part of the Torah 400 times until the student understood it. One day Rabbi Preida told the student that he was called to do a mitzvah and might need to leave earlier than usual. Nevertheless, Rabbi Preida succeeded in teaching the day's portion 400 times, but the student did not understand it that day!

When Rabbi Preida asked his student what was different about that day, he received the following reply: “Ever since you told me you might be leaving early, the thought was in my mind that you might leave at any moment, which distracted me and I couldn't concentrate on today's Torah studies.”

Rabbi Preida asked the student to try harder to concentrate and that he would teach him the same Torah section another 400 times.

Then a *bat kol* (“voice from Heaven”) offered Rabbi Preida his choice of reward. “What do you prefer as a reward? An additional 400 years of life or a guarantee of a place in the World to Come for you and your entire generation?”

Rabbi Preida replied that he would prefer that he and his generation merit the World to Come, thereby showing his willingness to forgo a personal reward of extreme longevity in this world.

Hashem commanded His angels, saying, “Give him another 400 years of life and also grant a place in

the World to Come for him and his entire generation.”

A beautiful and inspiring story indeed! But what is its message? Commentaries ask what Rabbi Preida did, exactly, that made him worthy of receiving such extraordinary rewards from Above.

At the end, of course, he showed great humility, in placing the reward for others before his own personal gain, choosing a place in the World to Come over an additional 400 years for himself in this world. His humility resulted in his being granted both this-worldly and next-worldly rewards. But what did he do in the first place to be deserving of any special reward from Hashem?

I once saw an answer offered by a certain educator, explaining that it was Rabbi Preida's display of “superhuman” patience — his “beyond the call of duty” — that was so praiseworthy and earned a very special reward.

This is certainly an important principle that should guide any teacher. Recognizing that not all students are alike and that some comprehend and “grow” in their Torah knowledge at a rate that is faster than others. A “kosher” educator will know how to teach and relate to each and every student, according to the student's need.

However, with sincere respect for this commentary's claim that it was Rabbi Preida's patience in teaching and re-teaching his student what seems to be the same material — 400 times normally, and even 800 times on this occasion — it seems that this interpretation of our *sugya* is not quite correct.

If great patience was his virtue, then why wasn't he granted the reward for his daily show of

extraordinary patience? Day after day, Rabbi Preida taught this student the “Torah portion of the day,” repeating it 400 times daily until the student finally “got it.” (Please note that what seems to be a large number of attempts at explaining the subject to the student does not mean that the student was weak or slow in his ability to learn. The material may have been particularly complex and/or Rabbi Preida may not have been content with anything less than his student understanding it with the depth of understanding that would not only help him internalize and remember it, but also enable him to teach it to other students as well.)

Another challenge to this explanation is that teaching Torah is a mitzvah that has no limit. According to many authorities, every single word of Torah study is a fulfillment of an additional mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Therefore, why is the *number of times* that Rabbi Preida taught his student particularly significant? If he needed to teach the student again and again, that is precisely the mitzvah of teaching Torah. It is not a special mitzvah. In fact, the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is to be “involved in Torah study,” as we say in the morning blessings. The reward received for Torah study is for “toiling” in the study of Hashem’s Torah, as we say at the conclusion of studying a Tractate of the Talmud: “We toil (in Torah study) and receive reward (for our toil in pursuit of Torah study).”

Rather, Rabbi Preida’s special trait as a true Torah scholar who transmitted the Torah from one generation to the next was that he looked carefully, with love, into the heart of his students to understand their potential for probing the depths of the Torah. And accordingly, he taught his students according to each student’s needs. When he saw that his student, who normally understood after 400 times, one time did not succeed in understanding, Rabbi Preida did not judge him or be inclined to suggest that the student learn from a different Rabbi (what is sometimes nowadays called “promoting a student horizontally”).

Rabbi Preida sincerely wanted to know why this day was different and more challenging for the student. When his student told him that he had difficulty concentrating, thinking that the Rabbi might be called away at any moment for a different mitzvah, Rabbi Preida then understood the problem and knew the solution. Since he was a teacher of Torah to the heart and the soul of his student, he knew that if he clearly instructed his student to concentrate, the Rabbi would continue to teach him and the student would successfully learn as he did on every other day. And so it was.

• *Eruvin 54b*

*We wish all of Ohrnet Magazine’s
readers and friends Gmar Chatima
Tova — May you be sealed in the
book of life and have a good and
sweet new year!*

HAAZINU Q & A

Questions

1. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
2. How is the Torah like rain?
3. How is G-d "faithful without injustice"?
4. Why is G-d called "tzaddik"?
5. How many major floods did G-d bring upon the world?
6. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
7. Why did G-d separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
8. Why is the merit of the Jewish People's ancestry called a "rope"?
9. How is G-d's behavior toward the Jewish People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
10. Regarding the Jewish People's punishment, G-d says, "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
11. How does the idea of "chillul Hashem" prevent the nations from destroying the Jewish People?
12. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Jewish People?
13. When G-d overthrows a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
14. When G-d punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
15. How will G-d's punishment change the way the nations view the Jewish People?
16. On what day was *Ha'azinu* taught to the Jewish People?
17. Verse 32:44 calls Yehoshua "Hoshea." Why?
18. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
19. Why did G-d tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
20. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 32:1 - They endure forever.
2. 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.
3. 32:4 - He is "faithful" by rewarding the righteous, and "without injustice" by rewarding even the wicked for any good deeds.
4. 32:4 - All will agree that His judgments are righteous.
5. 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach.
6. 32:7 - The Prophets. Elisha called the Prophet Eliyahu "My Father." (*Melachim II* 2:12).
7. 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 *Bnei Yisrael* who entered Egypt.
8. 32:9 - Their merit is "woven from" the merits of the *Avot*.
9. 32:12 - He mercifully wakes them gently, hovering over them, and carrying them on His "wings".
10. 32:23 - "The arrows will be spent" implies that the afflictions will cease but the Jewish People will not.
11. 32:27 - The nations would attribute their success to their might and the might of their gods. G-d would not let His name be desecrated like this.
12. 32:35 - They will eventually be punished.
13. 32:41 - His attribute of Justice.
14. 32:42 - For their sins and the sins of their ancestors.
15. 32:43 - They will view the Jewish People as praiseworthy for cleaving to G-d.
16. 32:44 - The Shabbat upon which Moshe died.
17. 32:44 - To indicate that although he was the Jewish People's leader, he still maintained a humble bearing.
18. 32:47 - That you will receive reward for studying Torah and that there is nothing meaningless in the Torah.
19. 32:50 - Because Moshe wanted this.
20. 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys G-d's commands, all the more so should they.

YOM KIPPUR Q & A

Questions

1. Passover commemorates the going out of Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?
2. For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur not atone?
3. What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?
4. Why is the Vidui confession included during the *mincha* prayer the afternoon before Yom Kippur?
5. On Yom Kippur we refrain from: Working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?
6. In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?
7. Who wrote the prayer "*Unesaneh Tokef*" said during the chazan's repetition of *musaf*?
8. Why do we read the book of Yonah on Yom Kippur?
9. In what two ways does havdala after Yom Kippur differ from havdala after Shabbat?
10. Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.
2. Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone's feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself. (*Orach Chaim 606:1*)
3. He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness. (*Orach Chaim 606:1*)
4. Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night. (*Mishneh Berura 607:1*)
5. Eating, drinking, working. (*Mishna, Kritot 1:6*)
6. (i) Although any amount is forbidden, eating on Yom Kippur is not punishable by a Sanhedrin until one has eaten food equal in volume to the size of a date. Eating pork, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even an olive-sized piece, which is smaller than a date. (*Mishneh Berura 612:1*) (ii) Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of *karet* - spiritual excision - whereas eating pork does not.
7. "*Unesaneh Tokef*" was written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany, about 1000 years ago.
8. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree. (*Shelah Hakadosh*)
9. After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from havdala. Also, the source of the flame used for havdala after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled before Yom Kippur. (*Orach Chaim 624:3,4*)
10. Building the succah. (*Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5*)

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ohr.edu/holidays/rosh_hashana_and_yom_kippur*

WHAT'S IN A WORD

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

The Power to Hold Back

The Book of Kings refers to the seventh month of the Jewish calendar – what we colloquially call *Tishrei* – as the “Month of the *Eitanim*” (I Kings 8:2). The Talmud (*Rosh Hashana* 11a) explains that this is due to the fact that the patriarchs of the Jewish People, who are called *Eitanim* (“powerful ones”), were born in this month. This leads the Talmud elsewhere to identifying the character Eitan the Ezrachite in Psalms 89:1 with the patriarch Abraham, the “powerful” hero who stemmed the tide of polytheism (see *Maharsha* to *Bava Basra* 15a). In this essay we will examine five Hebrew words which all refer to “power”: *eitan*, *koach*, *gevurah*, *adir*, and *kabir*. We will see how these various words are not true synonyms, but that each word carries nuances not expressed by the others.

The Torah requires performing the *Eglah Arufah* ceremony at a place described as *Nachal Eitan* (Deut. 21:4). Rashi understands that *nachal* means “valley/wadi” and *eitan* means “strong/hard.” According to Rashi, the Torah refers to a rocky locale as the place of this ceremony. However, Maimonides (*Laws of Murder* 9:2) understands that *nachal* means “river” and *eitan* means “strong-flowing.” Without referencing these two sages, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828) reconciles their opposing views by explaining that *eitan* literally refers to the “river bank” because it appears to be holding back the waters from passing beyond its threshold. As Rabbi Edel explains it, this act of restraint takes much strength, and so *eitan* came to be synonymous with strength and power.

It is thus no wonder that the word *eitan* appears in the Torah when describing Joseph’s unshakeable righteous prowess (Gen. 49:24) and the rocky habitat of Jethro’s descendants (Num. 24:21). Like Abraham, Joseph and Jethro exhibited strong discipline and self-control in their lifelong pursuit of righteousness. Indeed, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ex. 14:27) adds that *eitan* refers to something strong and durable that has lasted a long time – like bedrock.

In light of this understanding of the word *eitan*, we can better grasp its connection to the month of *Tishrei*. In the aforementioned discussion about the month of *Tishrei*, the Talmud asserts that even if the patriarchs were not

born in that month, it is still called “powerful” because it is especially blessed with more timely commandments than other months. *Meutzudat David* (to I Kings 8:2) explains that *Tishrei* is called the “Month of the *Eitanim*” because it is an especially powerful month in that it includes so many different holidays that one can use towards self-perfection. In other words, *Tishrei* is the time of year that can transform a person into a firm, strongly-anchored stalwart. Just as the rock and/or hard place cannot be easily budged, likewise, the strong believer cannot be easily swayed from his devotion to G-d.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) admits that he is unsure of exactly how to break down the word *eitan*. In *Yerios Shlomo*, he suggests that the root of *eitan* is TAV-NUN, which means “give.” This core meaning relates to *eitan* because *eitan* denotes a concentration of strength and power that can clearly only be “given” to a person as a Divine gift. No one can mistake this amount of strength as something naturally-occurring. In *Cheshek Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim connects the word *eitan* to the biliteral root ALEPH-TAV, which he further reduces to the monoliteral root TAV. He explains that this root refers to “connections” and “linking.” For example, the word *et* serves a grammatical function in “connecting” a verb to the object of that verb, and sometimes even means “with.” Similarly, *oht* (“sign”), another word derived from this root, forges a semiotic “connection” between the sign and the signified. In the same way, the word *eitan* refers to the concentration of power as resulting from the extreme compression of multiple components “connected” together (like in the case of rocks, mentioned above).

We previously mentioned the notion that self-restraint requires much strength. This idea is famously taught in the Mishna (Avos 4:1) which asks, “Who is a *gibbor* (strongman)?” before answering, “He who conquers his Evil Inclination.” This classical teaching suggests that *gevurah* (“strength/power”) is also related to self-control, just like *eitan* is.

Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), in his famous essay *Catharsis*, echoes this sentiment when discussing the difference between *gevurah* and *koach*. He notes that in the daily morning prayers we thank G-d twice for the power He has given us: In one blessing we bless “... He who girds

Israel with *gevurah*,” and afterwards we bless “... He who gives *koach* to the tired.” Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that these two blessings recall different aspects of man’s powers. The word *koach* in the Bible and Torah sources generally refers to “physical strength.” As such, it is not something unique or exclusive to man. Both man and beast alike possess physical strength, so both can be said to have been bestowed with *koach*. On the other hand, *gevurah* is something given exclusively to man. It denotes his ability to transcend the brute instinct of survival that he shares with the citizens of the animal kingdom.

As Rabbi Soloveitchik explains it, *gevurah* can be best translated as “heroism.” This counterintuitive strength gives a human being the courage to enter a situation that might not be ideal for his physical survival. Accordingly, *gibbor* (“warrior”) in the Hebrew language does not always refer to the “victor,” but it always refers to somebody who enters the battle and fights with all his might. Ultimately, when a person dares to continue a fight and stand up for what he believes in, he generally emerges the victor – even if he does not win the immediate battle. Rabbi Pappenheim offers a similar explication of the word *gevurah*, but acknowledges that the Bible also borrows this term to refer to elements of nature that do not have free will, like water (e.g., Gen. 7:18-19).

If *gevurah* entails holding oneself back, then G-d is the immaculate *Gibbor*, because He holds back His anger and gives the wicked time before punishing them (see *Yoma* 69b). For this reason, G-d is often described as a *Gibbor* (see *Jer. 32:18* and the daily liturgy).

Rabbi Pappenheim offers an extensive study mapping out the relationships between different Hebrew words for “strength” or “power.” He begins by noting that *koach* is the most general of those terms, as it simply means the plain ability to do or withstand something. In his estimation, the word *chozek* denotes extra-strength *koach*, i.e. a non-standard “ability” by which one person might stand out above the rest for his extra dose of strength.

Rabbi Pappenheim then differentiates between qualitative strength and quantitative strength. He explains that *eitan* refers to inherent qualitative strength, i.e. something strong because it itself is strong (even if made up of smaller components compressed into one unit, like a rock). In contrast, *kabir* refers to quantitative strength, i.e. something strong because it is comprised of multiple units banded together (see Rashi to *Berachos* 8a who associates the word *kabir* with the power of communal prayer). Rabbi Pappenheim further distinguishes between two types of quantitative strength in terms of how the individual components that comprise the unit in question

contribute to the unit’s overall strength. In doing so he clarifies that *otzem* applies when each sub-unit within the union does not necessarily contribute an equal amount of force, while *kabir* connotes a union comprised of equally-powerful components.

Finally, Rabbi Pappenheim explores the relationship between *koach* and *gevurah*, arguing that *gevurah* denotes an act by which one actualizes one’s potential *koach*. *Gevurah* is thus an excurrent show of strength. In a similarly way, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) explains that *koach* refers to the power of maintaining/preserving a given state, a feat that necessitates withstanding the mitigating forces that try to break that status quo. *Gevurah*, on the other hand, is a more proactive use of *koach* that tries not to just withstand what opposes it, but to defeat such opposition entirely.

Alternatively, Rabbi Mecklenburg explains that *koach* refers to mental fortitude and concentration. With this in mind he explains why the Targum (to Deut. 8:18) translates the term *koach* as *eitzah*, which typically means “advice.” This is because, in that context, *koach* refers to the mental strength of being able to think through a problem and decide on a course of action. Rabbi Mecklenburg also points to the Talmudic discussions of the superlative reward for “whoever answers ‘Amen yehei shmei rabbah’ with all his *koach*” (*Shabbos* 119b). This does not refer to declaring the greatness of G-d’s name with all of one’s physical strength (i.e. screaming the words as loud as possible), but to doing so with all of one’s mental focus (see Rashi there, *pace Tosafos*).

This leads into our closing discussion of another synonym for “power/strength” in Hebrew: *adir*. Rabbi Pappenheim explains that labeling someone as *chazak* means that he is more powerful than somebody else, but describing somebody as *adir* means he is the *most powerful* out of a whole group. It is thus quite apropos that G-d be described as the most *adir* of all existence (see Ex. 15:6, Ps. 8:2; 93:4); He is indeed the strongest and most powerful entity that exists. Rabbi Pappenheim traces *adir* to the two-letter root DALET-REISH, which refers to “freedom of motion” without limitations or constrictions. Certainly, G-d is “free” from being subject to any other force, because He created everything and obviously overpowers them. Rabbi Edel adds that *adir* is related to *adar/hadar* (“beauty/glory”) because G-d’s “acts of strength” bring Him more honor and glory, as they demonstrate to man His omnipotence. May we too merit becoming vehicles for the furtherance of G-d’s glory.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BLESSING FOURTEEN: THE PRICE OF GREATNESS IS RESPONSIBILITY (WINSTON CHURCHILL)

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who gives strength to the weary.”

The source for the fourteenth blessing is found in the words of the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah proclaims in 40:29, “He gives strength to the weary and grants abundant might to the powerless.” Our blessing is a Divine promise that despite our exhaustion from this seemingly never-ending exile, the Jewish Nation will always persevere. G-d will grant us the strength to tolerate the intolerable, and to overcome the suffering and the persecution that is an inescapable feature of the Jewish landscape.

This is why this blessing appears here, just before the end of the Morning Blessings. In our ascent up the “Stairway to Heaven,” we have reached the moment when we now radiate a sense of holiness. We have come so far, we have climbed so high, in order to be connected to G-d in the most effective way possible. Our relationship with G-d is no longer defined by theoretical concepts, but it is in fact real and tangible. Not just to ourselves but to others as well. And that begs the question: Who is the real beneficiary of this extraordinary journey that the Morning Blessings have taken us on?

There is no doubt that the grammatical structure of the blessing refers to G-d giving us the strength to continue until the dawn of the Messianic Era. But there is something deeper here as well, something truly wondrous. Our Sages teach that our task in this world is to try to emulate G-d to the best of our abilities. We are not G-d, and there is no way that we, as human beings, can emulate the *infinity* that is G-d. But we can strive to replicate the way that G-d *gives* to others. This means to look out for the next person; to worry about your neighbor; to truly care about all those around you. It means to search out the weary and to give them from your own strength.

Judaism teaches us that true greatness is not only measured in how brilliant a person is but also by how

compassionate they are. How caring and how thoughtful they are. There is a famous maxim that says, “Important people take care of the little things. Little people may ignore even the important things.”

As a rule, in the secular world, the more successful a person becomes, the more inaccessible they become. As they move up the ladder of success, the number of secretaries and personal assistants they have grows exponentially because they are status symbols. Symbols of triumphs and accomplishments.

But in the Jewish world this is not the case. Paradoxically, the greater someone becomes — renowned for their piety and their erudition and their leadership qualities — *the more accessible they need to be*. They are now beholden to provide for all those who need their help. It is an extraordinary sight that repeats itself night after night. We find long lines of people, from all different backgrounds, stretching out from the doorways of the homes of our spiritual leaders. All are patiently waiting for their turn to be able to speak with the venerated Rabbi and gain his insight into what is troubling them. It often requires great patience. Not because there is a gamut of assistants to get through before you are granted an audience, but simply because there are so many other people waiting in line in front of you.

This is true greatness — to unstintingly give to others without limits. But it requires a huge reservoir of strength. Whether it is for personal advice, a ruling in Jewish Law or a debate in Talmudic minutiae, they have to be available (often at any hour) to help all who call out for their assistance. And when they do so, they are truly giving strength to the weary.

In his generation, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) was the acknowledged authority in Jewish Law. He was a spiritual titan, revered for his encyclopedic

knowledge, his piety and — perhaps most of all — for his gentleness, sincerity and empathy for anyone in need. Slight in build, he carried the spiritual needs of the Jewish world on his shoulders. He assuredly ruled on every facet of Jewish Law, while never failing to show incredible personal warmth and concern for each and every individual who approached him. He was blessed with spiritual strength truly beyond our comprehension, but he cloaked it all in an aura of simplicity and humbleness. And G-d blessed him and re-blessed him with extraordinary faculties to be able to listen to the Jewish People's sorrows, pain and anguish, and to offer everyone advice, succor and assistance. The greater he became, the more strength he was granted from Above. And the more strength he was given from Above, the greater he became. The strength to

lead, the strength to advise, the strength to rule on all aspects of Jewish Law, is a blessing given to the individual by G-d. And when that person has fulfilled their task here in this world, that phenomenal strength is removed from them. Tellingly, the very last words that Rabbi Feinstein said before his passing were in Yiddish, “*Ich hob mehr nisht ken koach* — I have no more strength.”

As we arrive at the penultimate blessing in the Morning Blessings, we, too, have reached the moment where we are now worthy to “lead.” Not, perhaps, as Rabbi Feinstein did, but each of us in our own “small” way. We become the recipients of Divine strength by helping and assisting those who are “weaker” than we are. And the more we help others, the greater the blessing of our strength will be.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

From Glory to Demons: The Path of Defection

In the Song of Ha'azinu, the Torah foretells Israel's defection: The prophetic rebuke describes the haunted road upon which those travelling away from G-d must go.

Once Israel became “fat” — indulgent in material abundance and pleasure — it paid no heed to G-d, Who had made it what it was. When one is in need, and has no other support, then it is useful to seek support from on High. But after one is back on one's own feet, having attained freedom and happiness, trust in G-d and faithfulness to His Torah quickly withers. This withering brings a second and third withering in its wake — the moral unraveling of the people, and the ultimate withering of their own serenity.

Whenever [Israel] became fat...he forsook the G-d Who had made him, and regarded as worthless the Rock of his salvation. They impaired His rights with aliens, angering Him with abominations. They made offerings to demons

that were non-gods, deities of whom they knew nothing, new ones that came up late, whom your fathers never dreaded. (Devarim 32:15-17)

In the words of the Torah, their departure impaired G-d's rightful exclusive claim upon them to “others” — who are completely alien to them, to whom they owe nothing and from whom they can expect nothing. They made offerings to these “demons” — invisible forces which even in the deluded imagination of the early pagan nations are not invested with the power of gods.

Rav Hirsch's contrast between the secure serenity of he who trusts in G-d and the fear of he who turns to these “demons” is too exquisite to paraphrase:

“One certainty alone — the certainty that there is one sole G-d, Who maintains a covenant of intimate closeness with those who do Him homage — sustains man and

uplifts him above all the other forces between heaven and earth. This conviction alone frees him from all fear and from all degrading trembling which undermines morality; it alone removes from his heart the fear of real or imaginary forces that threaten man's prosperity. But once he leaves the service of the one and only G-d, man loses all stay and support; he imagines that he is free, and yet is anxious about and afraid of all the forces of nature and fate — which are truly more powerful than a man who relies only on himself...

"In the light of truth emanating from the one and only G-d, man sees the whole world illumined in the clear light of wisdom and goodness. In this world, all creatures have a good end; and even if, on their way, they pass through darkness and death, pain and ruin, ultimately they are led to a higher state of existence and life, strength and joy, immortality and eternity. In this world, man is a child of his heavenly Father and is given

the task of living in His presence a life of duty. Hence, man is close to his Creator even in his lifetime. Clinging to the Hand of the one G-d, he can pass, even through darkness and death, in untroubled serenity toward light and life.

"But if man closes his eyes to this light... His world descends into a dark night filled with demons, real and imaginary. In that case he has only the miner's lamp of human experience to guide him through the darkness in which he must wrestle with hostile demons for his life and happiness. Then every delight and joy ends for him in disgust and disappointment... In such a life, man is the unhappiest of all creatures because he has the awareness that he is the unhappiest... From the bliss of a world full of G-d's glory to the pessimism of a world full of demons — that has always been the dismal road taken by Israel's defection..."

● Sources: Commentary, Devarim 32: 15-16

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Most of the portion of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons heaven and earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin. He reminds the people to examine world history and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem "pulls the strings" of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as Hashem's messengers.

Hashem's kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance, and for defeating their enemies. But, this physical bounty leads the people to become self-satisfied and over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt their morals. They will worship empty idols and indulge in depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, the purpose of these nations is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will.

The purpose of the Jewish People is to make mankind aware of the Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

A Letter to Rav Schiller – It's Great to Be Back!

Here's a letter from Rabbi Yitzchak Greenblatt to Rav Nota Schiller, Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Somayach. Enjoy!

It's fantastic to have returned to Eretz Yisrael and to be back working at Ohr Somayach. It's a credit to the efforts of all the staff, and especially the recruitment staff, that the yeshiva is packed to the rafters during the current situation. Obviously, it has been, and continues to be, a tremendous challenge to teach and run Ohr Somayach with the restrictions, but at every turn the yeshiva has come up with creative, flexible solutions. Rebbeim teaching from behind plastic mechitzahs, open-air classes, food in prepackaged containers, portable plexiglass partitions...

In the mornings I'm teaching an *iyun* shiur in Center, and it's just phenomenal to see how motivated the students are to learn. For many, it seems a pandemic brings out the best...

In the afternoons I'm involved with various internship programs – J101, JPro, etc. This is much more "front-line," in-the-trenches *kiruv*, and my experience in the US over the last four years is extremely helpful. I'm also teaching the guys from an innovative program – JTerm. These are guys whose college programs in the US are online. They come and learn in the yeshiva, and take their college courses online when necessary. This cohort of students is much less advanced in their *yiddishkeit*, and so they need much more *tippul* (attention), meaning the job is as much pastoral as it is educational.

The Beis Midrash also seems to be going strong, as does the Kollel, Ohr Lagolah, and the other programs. Mechina is packed, Derech too. All in all, the energy in the yeshiva is wonderful. It seems that the new building could not be coming at a better time – we need the space!

May Hashem give you and your family, and the yeshiva, continued *hatzlacha* in everything in 5781. May it be a year of *bracha* and health, and of helping even more of Hashem's children come back to Him.

On a personal note, thank you for all the support over the last few years and for helping us come back home to Ohr Somayach. It's an honor and a privilege.

Rabbi Yitzchak Greenblatt, was born in Cape Town, South Africa and moved to England as a child. He earned a Ph.D. from Cambridge University in Linguistics. While at Cambridge, he was a member of their varsity rugby team. After teaching at Cambridge, he joined the staff at Ohr Somayach. He then spent four years "in the field," working with young professionals in Boston, MA, and has recently returned to Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem where he teaches in the Center programs and the various internship programs. For a fuller profile of Rabbi Greenblatt, see <https://ohr.edu/6334>