בס"ד

# שמע קולנו

יתגבר כארי לעמוד
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**SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA**

# TISHREI 5786

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HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS
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# Table of Contents

# TISHREI 5786

## *Introduction*


4 **Finding *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* on the *Yomim Noraim***
Rabbi Michael Taubes, ‘76


## *Lesson From Our Leadership*


6 **Lasting Change - The Power and the Danger of Habit**
Rabbi Shimon Schenker

7 **Throwing the Aravos On Top of the Aron Kodesh**
Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz


## *Rosh Hashanah*


8 **Preparing for the Yamim Noraim: Finding Growth in Everyday Mitzvos**
Yehuda Tannenbaum, ‘26

9 **How Far Are You Willing to Go?**
Yoni Tandhasetti, ‘26

11 **The Sound of Sacrifice and the Coming of Redemption**
Reuven Shapiro, ‘27

13 **The New World; Rosh Hashanah and the Recreated Man**
Rabbi Mordechai Brownstein

16 **Not Just a Prop**
Azriel Avraham, ‘26


## *Yom Kippur*


18 **חננו ועננו כי אין בנו מעשים**
Shragi Lermer, ‘27

19 **Like Clay in Your Hands**
Mr. Murray Sragow

20 **The Aliyah of Restraint**
Tani Schnall, ‘27

21 **The Objective Reality of Yiras Elokim**
Dr. Shmuel Rosenbaum, ‘06


## *Sukkos*


23 **The Lesson of the Esrog**
Rabbi Yonatan Sonnenshine

24 **Who Needs Sukkos**
Elisha Price, ‘23

25 **The Chiyuv of Sitting in the Sukka on the First Night of Sukkos**
Rabbi Yehuda Balsam

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Introduction

# *Finding* HaKadosh Baruch *Hu on the* Yomim Noraim


## Rabbi Michael Taubes ('76)
### Rosh Yeshiva, YUHSB and RIETS


The word "Moed" – or its plural form "Moadim" – is usually understood to refer to a festival or a holiday (or in the plural, more than one festival or holiday). In truth, however, this word, which appears in numerous places unrelated to any festival (see, for example, Bereishis 21:2, in a pasuk read on the first day of Rosh HaShanah), means an appointed time, or a specific occasion. It is often used in the Torah in connection with a specific time at which Moshe Rabbeinu has an encounter with HaKadosh Baruch Hu (see Shemos 25:22 with Rashi, d"h ve-noadeti); indeed, the place where this encounter takes place is referred to many times as the "Ohel Moed" (see, for example, Vayikra 1:1).

The more popular use of the word emerges from the fact that our holidays are indeed special, appointed times, and they are times when we are all invited to "meet" and have an interaction of sorts with HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself. It is thus no coincidence that the second section of the Shishah Sidrei Mishnah is called "Seder Moed," as the Massechtos contained therein detail the laws of the various special occasions observed during the course of the Jewish calendar year. In the Torah, there are six such occasions, described in Perek 23 of Vayikra, a chapter often known as the Parshas HaMoados (using another plural form of the word). The first one listed there is Shabbos, the most frequent, followed by Pesach, Shavuos , Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos (including Shemini Atzeres) and many more, though not all of the relevant mitzvos of these holidays are presented. One important mitzvah pertaining to the Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos) not found there is the mitzvah of aliyah le-regel, requiring us to go to the Beis HaMikdash on these particular festivals (see Devarim 16:16); this requirement is not mandated on Shabbos, Rosh HaShanah, or Yom Kippur.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt'l, noted (Shiurim Le-Zeicher Abba Mari, Volume 1, pp. 81-83) that on the Shalosh Regalim, we are obligated to go "visit" HaKadosh Baruch Hu in His place, to enter into the palace of the King. We are, as it were, His guests and He welcomes us in. And even in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, the feeling that we are supposed to have on these Yomim Tovim is that we are in the presence of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and we are to rejoice in that unique opportunity wherever we may be physically. On Shabbos, however, the situation is different. On Shabbos, we do not go to visit HaKadosh Hu in His place; rather, He comes and visits us in our homes.

> **"Are we visiting HaKadosh Baruch Hu in His place or is He visiting us in ours?"**

It is perhaps for this reason that the widespread (though comparatively recent) practice throughout the Jewish world is to begin each Shabbos by reciting what we call "Kabbalas Shabbos", through which we greet not only the "Shabbos Queen" (Bava Kamma 32b), but HaKadosh Baruch Hu Himself, as we welcome Him in.

In light of the above, though, one may ask where Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur fit into this picture. Are we visiting HaKadosh Baruch Hu in His place or is He visiting us in ours? As mentioned above, there is no mitzvah of aliyah le-regel on these days, which would seem to indicate

# Introduction

Rabbi Michael Taubes, Rosh Yeshiva

that we are not in fact going to His place. At the same time, we do not, on these days, do anything comparable to the recitation of Kabbalas Shabbos to welcome Him into our homes. Perhaps we may suggest, then, that on these days,referred to as the Yomim Noraim, both themes are present, and thus neither is dominant.

On the one hand, we should certainly try to feel as though we have entered into the presence of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (26a) indicates that the mitzvah of Shofar is likened to mitzvos performed in the heart of the Beis HaMikdash. On Yom Kippur the elaborate service in the Beis HaMikdash, which we read about during Kerias HaTorah and then recount in detail during Tefillas Mussaf, was the focal point of the day. The forgiveness and purification which we strive for on Yom Kippur is described as being granted when we are "lifnei Hashem" - in His presence (Vayikra 16:30). In this sense, on these days too we seem to be required to go to
HaKadosh Baruch Hu's place.

On the other hand, though, we are taught that on the days from Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur, HaKadosh Baruch Hu makes Himself available to us; He comes close to where we are so that we can easily find Him (see the Gemara in Rosh
HaShanah 18a, explaining Yeshayah 55:6). In this sense, then, He comes to us on these days. Perhaps this is precisely what makes the Yomim Noraim days so unique, as we consider both of these important themes. We are enjoined to make every effort to rise ever higher, to strive through our behavior, which we always seek to improve, but especially on these special days, to be considered worthy of entering into the palace of HaKadosh Baruch Hu to "visit" Him there (le-vakeir be-heichalo, as we say when reciting Tehillim 27).

> **"From Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur, HaKadosh Baruch Hu makes Himself available to us; He comes close to where we are so that we can easily find Him"**

Out of His abundant love for us, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, during this time of year, makes that goal something which we can, in fact, attain by coming to "visit" us and thereby make Himself closer and more accessible to us. May we all be privileged to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity and be blessed with a
Kesivah VaChasimah Tovah!

# Lessons From Our Leadership:

## Tishrei Insights from the Hanhalah of MTA/YU

Rabbi Shimon Schenker

**Menahel, YUHSB**

### Lasting Change - The Power and the Danger of Habit

Before Musaf on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, the chazan turns to Hashem and asks that his prayers be accepted as though he were a zaken v'ragil. The term zaken, an elder with wisdom and perspective, is straightforward. But what does ragil mean? It implies one who is practiced, fluent, and consistent. Someone for whom prayer is second nature.

Consistency is a powerful force. Building healthy habits, whether in sleep, exercise, learning, or relationships creates a framework for success. Davening three times a day, dedicating time for daily study, making space for genuine conversations with our family, these routines shape character and strengthen our spiritual and emotional core. This is what our sages admired in Sarah Imeinu: "All her days were equally good." Rav Chaim Shmuelvitz in his Sichas Mussar explains that while Sarah Imanu certainly had a challenging life, her greatness was in her ability to rise up and achieve greatness every day, to make all of her days, "equally good".

Yet there is also a danger. Consistency can turn into hergel, habit in its negative sense. Actions performed out of rote, without intention or awareness, can become empty. Worse, habit can dull our sensitivities and desensitize us to what should shock, move, or inspire us.

This danger is vividly illustrated in the story of Noach. Hashem commanded him to build the teivah 120 years before the flood, so that people would ask questions and have time to repent. Over the years they saw the ark being built, heard Noach's repeated warnings, even witnessed animals lining up in pairs. Still, they did not change.

Why not? Perhaps, at the beginning, some truly intended to improve. But they reassured themselves: "There is time. I will change later." By the time the flood arrived, they were firmly entrenched in their ways. Habit had become stronger than conscience.

The same dynamic plays out in our lives. We all ask ourselves why we do not daven with more focus, learn more diligently, or devote more time to our health and relationships. Often, the answer is simply hergel, we are stuck in patterns that feel unchangeable.

The pasuk in Shema commands us to "serve Hashem with all your heart." The Gemara in Taanis interprets this as a reference to prayer. The Rambam rules that prayer is a Torah obligation, while the Ramban holds that it is rabbinic, except in times of crisis. Regardless, the verse teaches a broader message: serving Hashem requires thoughtfulness and inner focus. The Ramchal identifies this mindful attentiveness as the foundation of zehirus, living with awareness and care. Breaking free from negative habits is only possible through deliberate, actionable change.

The Mabit, in Beis Elokim, cites the Gemara in Sotah: "Whoever sees a sotah in her degradation should become a nazir." Inspiration alone is not enough. Real change requires action, sometimes even drastic action. At the same time, balance is necessary: the nazir brings a korban chatas for having denied himself permitted pleasures. The message is that growth must be expressed concretely, but always with proportion and perspective.

A more dangerous effect of habit is not stagnation but erosion, the slow dulling of our sensitivities. At first, certain experiences shock us. With repetition, they become ordinary. Over time, they may even come to seem valuable or attractive.

The Brisker Rav explains this progression through a verse in Devarim that describes the idols of Egypt in several ways: as abominations, as wood and stone, and as gold and silver. At first, idol worship appeared repulsive. time, it became meaningless—just sticks and stones. Eventually, it became accepted and even esteemed, like precious metals.

Modern culture provides many examples. Studies on parental reactions to explicit content in movies reveal that initial standards quickly erode with repeated exposure. What was once unthinkable soon becomes tolerable, then normalized.

This same process appears in the Torah. Yitzchak was horrified by the idolatry practiced by Eisav's wives, having grown up sheltered from such influences, it was shocking to him. Rivka, who was raised in a home steeped in idolatry, was less affected. Exposure had dulled her sense of outrage.

The Gemara Sukkah teaches that in the future Hashem will destroy the *yetzer hara*. To the righteous it will appear as a towering mountain, and they will weep in awe of the struggle they overcame. To the wicked it will appear as a thin strand of hair, and they will weep in regret over how little stood in their way.

Rav Shalom Schwadron explains: tzadikim succeed because they play the long game. They resist fleeting temptations and keep climbing, knowing the journey is a mountain of many steps. The wicked fall because they dismiss each moment as insignificant: "It is only one drink, one word, one indulgence." But small habits accumulate, and the erosion they cause is real.

The prayer of the *chazan*, to be accepted as a *zaken v'ragil* is a model for us all. To be a zaken, drawing on wisdom and perspective; and to be ragil, consistent and steady in devotion. But the challenge is to ensure that routine does not devolve into rote.

The task of avodas Hashem is to live with awareness: to transform habit into holiness, to commit to action when inspired, and to resist the erosion that comes from complacency. With vigilance and mindfulness, our routines can elevate us rather than diminish us.

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz

**Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS**

There is a common practice that when people finish their hoshanos on Hoshanah Rabbah, they throw them on top of the aron kodesh and leave them there. What is the basis of this minhag? Is it proper to take one's items - even those that were used for a mitzvah - and to place them on top of an aron kodesh?

**Tashmishei Mitzvah and Tashmishei Kedusha:** The Mishnah in Megilah (26b) teaches that tishmishei mitzvah - items that were once used for a mitzvah that are no longer useful - can be thrown away, while tashimshei kedushah - those items that directly service sifrei Torah, tefillin, and mezuzos - should be placed in genizah. The Shulchan Aruch (21:1) points out that although one can dispose of tashmishei mitzvah, one should do so in a respectful manner, andnot simply throw them in the

garbage with rotting food and the like. One's hoshanos would fall under the category of tshmishei mitzvah, while the aron kodesh is considered tashmishei kedushah. The Shulchan Aruch (154:3) rules that although the aron doesn't come in direct contact with the words of the Torah it still has this lofty status. The Mishnah Berurah (9) explains that this is because it exists solely to honor the sefer Torah. The Chasam Sofer (VI:10) suggests that it is because sometimes when the Torah is being returned, the parchment will inadvertently come in contact with the aron. Based on the above, the Sefer Ginzei haKodesh (18:28) wonders how it is permissible to take one's hoshanos, which are tashmishei mitzvah, and to place them on top of the aron kodesh, which is tashmishei kedushah.

**A Possible Solution:** The Ginzei haKodesh offers an interesting suggestion. Perhaps the aron kodesh only has a din of tashmishei kedushah for that which is inside of it, since the entire basis of its status is that it services the sifrei Torah. Maybe the outside and the top of the aron has no special status at all, and one is permitted to put anything he wants on it.

This answer is difficult to accept, as we don't find this distinction made with other tashimshei kedushah, and we consider the entire item to be holy.

**Other Minhagim:**There are four other minhagim that are recorded in the poskim as to what one should do with his daled minim after Sukkos. 1. The Chayei Adam (153:3) records that after one completes beating the aravos five times on theground, one should not leave them there, since they are tashmishei mitzvah. Rather one should burn them.2. The Elya Rabbah (664:13) cites the Tanya Rabbasi (86) who writes that one should place the aravos at the head of his bed to show chavivus for the mitzvah.

3. The Mateh Ephraim (Elef l'Magen 660:7) writes that one should keep his daled minim in a special place and it serves as a shmirah. Other sefarim record various segulos that one can do with one's hoshanos (or pieces of them) that help in different areas of life.

4. The Beis Yosef (664) cites the Yirei'im who recommends saving one's daled minim to help burn one's chametz, and the Darkei Moshe (6) quotes the Mahari Veil (191) who says that pious individuals had the practice to use it as fuel for baking matzah. The Rema (664:9) records that which he wrote in the Darkei Moshe in the Shulchan Aruch, stating that the practice is to save one's hosha'anos for baking matzah, so that it can be used for an additional mitzvah.

**Origins of the Practice to Place Them on the Aron:** The minhag to throw the hosha'anos on top of the aron is mentioned by the Maharsham (IV:53) who writes that it is first recorded by the Tosfos Yom Tov (Malbushei Yom Tov 664:1). However, the actual practice he speaks of is that people would throw their hosha'anos on the ledges of the shul - not on the aron kodesh. Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Moadim uzmanim II:131 note 4) suggests that the reason people place them on the aron is that the Shulchan Aruch forbids throwing them on the floor since they are tashmishei mitzvah. Since the goal is to ensure that they are not trampled or disgraced, we place them in the one location that we can guarantee people will not step on them. Alternatively, he suggests that since the practice in the Beis haMikdash was to surround the mizbe'ach with large standing aravos, we place our aravos atop the aron kodesh which in some way represents the mizbe'ach. Perhaps the origin of the practice is that the minhag developed to buy a separate bundle of hosha'anos for everyone in the family, they didn't want people taking them home for use by their wife and children, and therefore placed them on the aron. Therefore one doesn't place the daled minim on top of the aron, since everyone agrees that one can bring it home for others to use.

**Treating the Daled Minim Properly**: The Shulchan Aruch (664:8) writes that even though one is permitted to throw out his daled minim after he finishes using them, he should not step on them, and the Mishnah Berurah (28) adds that the same applies to the hosha'anos.

In the next s'if (9) the Mechaber cites those opinions who hold that the hosha'anos are asur b'hana'ah for the remainder of the day. As mentioned above, perhaps this is why they were left in shul, so that they would not be misused or thrown out immediately by those leaving shul. Or, perhaps it is because each shul had its own chaburah for baking matzah, they wanted to have the aravos around to use for that mitzvah.ustifying the Minhag: Perhaps the reason it is permitted to place the aravos of the hosha'anah on top of the aron kodesh is that they serve as a decoration for the aron. Although one cannot generally place tashmishei mitzvah atop tashmishei kedushah, here the tashmishei mitzvah are used to beautify the aron, and are servicing it, not merely resting upon it. Rav Moshe Wolfson has explained that specifically the aravos are placed on top of the aron kodesh because they are the one min that has neither taste nor smell, and they represent the sinners of klal Yisrael. We specifically take this item and place it above the aron so that it can be in the holiest place and be elevated by it.

# *B'rosh Hashanah Yikaseivun:*
## Insights Into The Yom Ha'din

Yehuda Tannenabum, '26

## Preparing for the Yamim Noraim: Finding Growth in Everyday Mitzvos

Throughout the month of Elul, we focus on improving ourselves in preparation for Rosh Hashanah, culminating in the spiritual high of Yom Kippur, where we are described as being on the level of malachim. Many people choose to improve themselves through focusing on improving their middos bein adam lachaveiro and bein adam lamakom. Some people have tremendous kavanah during davening; there are many different ways that people prepare themselves for the yomei din.

What if I were to tell you that the best way to prepare yourself can be done every day and is done every day by everyone? What if I were to tell you that all it takes is a simple change in perspective of many actions you do every day?

The Ramban in Parshas Ki Seitzei, when discussing the mitzvah of shiluach hakahn, has a fascinating argument with the Rambam regarding the reasons for mitzvos. The Ramban asks, What is the reason for this mitzvah of sending away the mother bird before taking the eggs? He explains that the reason for this mitzvah is so that we as a people should not become dispassionate and cruel, or so that we should not make the species extinct by taking both the eggs and the mother at the same time.

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim, when discussing the *mitzvah* of *shiluach hakahn*, asks the same simple question. What is the reason for the *mitzvah* of *shiluach hakahn*?

He explains that the reason Hashem commanded us to send away the mother bird is so that she should not feel distressed. (He then explains using philosophical terms to prove that animals do, in fact, feel compassion for their young). If this is indeed the case, says the Rambam, that the *mitzvah's* sole reason is to prevent the suffering of the mother bird, then simply kill the mother and then take the eggs, thus avoiding the issue of the mother suffering. Asks the Rambam, this seems to be an extraordinary precaution for an easily avoidable situation, so surely there must be some other reason as well! He then explains that the *mitzvah* is for us- to arouse our compassion and to reduce the suffering of the mother bird- thus providing an opportunity for us to work on our *middos*. The Rambam then preemptively answers questioners by explaining that הָאוֹמֵר עַל קַן צִפּוֹר יְגִיעוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ

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"One who says that Your mercy extends to the birdsnest" (Brachos 33b) only applies when viewing mitzvos through the lens of having no other reason than being the will of Hashem, a position the Rambam strongly disagrees with. There is, however, a difficulty with this explanation. Earlier in Moreh Nevuchim, the Rambam quotes a medresh from Berashis Rabbah, discussing why it makes a difference to Hashem whether you shecht an animal from the front or back of the neck to which he concludes that the entire point is because that is what Hashem demanded, and that it is a test of obedience. Seemingly, we have a stirah in the Rambam! How could the Rambam say by the mitzvah of shiluach hakahn that every mitzvah has a purpose, but later, by the mitzvah of shechitah, say there is no purpose and that it is simply the will of Hashem? The Ramban, later on in the same piece from earlier, explains this apparent contradiction within the Rambam by comparing Hashem to a silversmith and us to silver. Just as a silversmith attempts to remove impurities from the silver he is working with through certain actions, so too Hashem set up mitzvos so that by performing them, we remove the impurities from ourselves. The Sefer HaChinuch in mitzvah tes zayin also emphasizes this point. He addresses his son and says

וְעַתָּה בְּנִי, אִם בִּינָה שִׁמְעָה זֹּאת, וְהַטֵּה אָזְנְךָ וּשְׁמַע (משלי כב יז), אֲלַמֶּדְךָ לְהוֹעִיל בַּתּוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת

And now, my son, "If you have understanding," "incline your ear and hear," and I will teach you to benefit from Torah and the commandments:

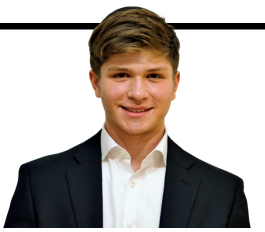
הָאָדָם נִפְעָל כְּפִי פְּעֻלּוֹתָיו, וְלִבּוֹ וְכָל מַחְשְׁבֹתָיו תָּמִיד אַחַר מַעֲשָׂיו שֶׁהוּא עוֹסֵק בָּהֶם אִם טוֹב וְאִם רָע

וַאֲפִלּוּ רָשָׁע גָּמוּר בִּלְבָבוֹ וְכָל יֵצֶר מַחְשֶׁבֶת לִבּוֹ רַק רַע כָּל הַיּוֹם, אִם יַעֲרֶה רוּחוֹ וְיָשִׂים הִשְׁתַּדְּלוּתוֹ וְעִסְקוֹ בְּהַתְמָדָה בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַמִּצְוֹת, וַאֲפִלּוּ שֶׁלֹּא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, מִיָּד יִנָּטֶה אֶל הַטּוֹב, וּמִתּוֹךְ שֶׁלֹּא לִשְׁמָהּ בָּא לִשְׁמָהּ

"A man is acted upon according to his actions, and his heart and all his thoughts always follow after the actions that he does, whether good or bad. And even he who in his heart is a complete sinner and all the desires of his heart are only for evil; if his spirit shall be enlightened and he will put his efforts and actions to persist in Torah and commandments — even if not for the sake of Heaven — he shall immediately incline towards the good."

For this reason says the Sefer HaChinuch did Hashem give us mitzvos רָצָה הקב"ה לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפִיכָךְ הִרְבָּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת says the gemara in Makkos (23b). Hashem gave us mitzvos so that by performing them we purify and elevate ourselves in order to achieve kirvas Elokim.

By reframing every mitzvah as an opportunity to become closer to Hashem and to purify ourselves of any spiritual blemish, we can understand how this is the best way to prepare for the Yamim Noraim. May we all be zocheh to having our teffilos fulfilled and have a kesivah vichasimah tovah and a gutt gabenched yur!



Yoni Tandhasetti 26'

# How Far Are You Willing To Go?

One of the more famous symbolic reasons as to why we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is the fact that it awakens in us the responsibility to examine ourselves and search our actions to find ways that we can improve in the coming year. This concept is derived primarily from the Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva (1:1), which states that teshuva requires one to recognize their sins, and in turn look for ways to improve upon themselves. However, if we are truthful, most people tend to be able to figure out their own weaknesses and areas that need improvement pretty quickly upon inspection. Therefore, if we already know which parts of ourselves we need to ask forgiveness for, why does the Rambam include this as an aspect to the shofar blowing and one of the actions needed for the process of teshuva?

To better understand why this question is being asked and what the answer may be, it is important to know what we are davening to Hashem for on Rosh Hashanah and, maybe more importantly, what we in turn have to do ourselves in order for our prayers to be successful. In Parshas Ki Seitzei (Devarim 22:4) the pasuk says הָקֵם תָּקִים עִמּוֹ - *You must surely lift it up with him*. The basic explanation of this pasuk is that a person is obligated to help the donkey's owner reload his animal, as it says "with him". However, there is no obligation if the animal's owner moves to the side and says, "Since you have a mitzvah to reload him, you do it".

The Chofetz Chaim in his Sefer on the torah (Parshas Ki Seitzei) explains that the reason the Torah specifies "with him" is to show that this is true even regarding our relationship with Hashem – if a person purifies himself on this world below, the world above will help contribute further purification.For example, at the end of the Shemoneh Esrei we pray for Hashem to help "Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies". Indeed, only if he

himself makes the effort in this regard to refrain from speaking badly will his request help him. However, if he ignores his prayer and goes on without attempting to better himself, how can he possibly ask *Hakadosh baruch Hu* for his help in the matter. So too, during davening when we ask Hashem to enlighten us with his Torah, one can only expect his prayer to be realized if he sits down to learn Torah subsequently following davening.

The Chofetz Chaim further explains this concept as similar to a request for a loan from a neighbor who agrees to the request. The willing lender tells the hopeful borrower to show up at his house at a certain time to pick up the loan that he requested. If the borrower becomes lazy and does not take the effort to go to the lender's house, he certainly cannot have a complaint against the lender for not receiving the money. So too regarding the matter of davening. If after davening one leaves shul to attend to business matters without remembering his request and not making the slightest effort to learn Torah, there is no hope that his request will be realized. In fact, his davening was fruitless, since his mind was somewhere else during his davening.

Rav Shmuel Greineman zt"l, one of the Chofetz Chaim's most trusted talmidim, writes that the Chofetz Chaim would explain this through the mishnah in Avos (4:12), where Rabbi Meir says "Minimize your involvement with business, and involve yourself with Torah…for if you have neglected Torah, you will have much more neglect facing you; but if you have toiled in Torah, He has much reward to give you." When reading this, one may wonder what the words "much reward" mean, since while the reward for learning Torah is certainly great, surely one would not get more reward than he deserves.

The explanation starts with the fact that man comes into this world primarily to learn Torah. Time spent away from learning is a "necessary evil" since he has no choice and is forced to make a living. Therefore, he is not punished for disregarding learning during this time – but this is only if he uses his free time wisely to not neglect Torah during the time he is not making a living, i.e., making an effort to accomplish his goal.
Yet, the "much reward" that one gets is if he has toiled in Torah and makes time for it despite needing to make a living, where he is rewarded even during the time that he is away from learning. To answer our question at hand, simply taking account of one's weaknesses and needed areas of improvement, and davening for forgiveness and being given the ability to improve is not enough to actualize the goal that the shofar is meant to convey. Without the subsequent action of seeking to put in the effort to achieve what they have prayed for, one can't possibly have a complaint of it not coming to fruition. On the other hand, there is a considerable payoff for taking the time to pursue one's self goals and applying themselves to working on it. We should all have the ability and the strength to pursue our goals and actualize our prayers in the coming year, and have a healthy, happy, and successful one ahead.

Kesivah Vechasimah Tovah!

Reuven Shapiro 27'

# The Sound of Sacrifice and the Coming of Redemption

As this school year began, I found myself eagerly anticipating Rabbi Mendelson's שיעור. I arrived with high expectations, eager to immerse myself in learning from the very first day. Or at least, that's what I thought. Because on the very first day of שיעור, without a single word of introduction, Rebbe handed out a packet of מקורות and immediately launched into a סוגיא: blowing the שופר when ראש השנה falls on שבת. Source after source flowed, שולחן ערוך, רמב"ם, ריטב"א—until, by the end of two full periods, Rebbe had woven together a dazzling halachic commentary. I walked out in awe —and with quite a headache. Of the twenty or so מקורות, there was one idea that especially stood out to me, and I'd like to offer another understanding that Rebbe didn't cover.
We know that when ראש השנה coincides with שבת, we do not blow the שופר. Why not? The גמרא explains: someone might wish to learn from a בקי, an expert, how to blow properly. On his way to the expert, he could end up carrying in רשות הרבים a ארבע אמות, violating שבת. To prevent this, the חכמים decreed that the שופר should not be blown when ראש השנה coincides with שבת. The משנה in ראש השנה discusses this concept: when ראש השנה fell on שבת in the בית המקדש, the שופר was blown.
How is this possible, considering the issues of ארבע אמות which we just discussed? רש"י explains—אין שבות במקדש, that Rabbinic restrictions do not apply in the מקדש, because the כהנים were

meticulous in their service and safeguarded the law with utmost care. Therefore, there is no issue.

After the חורבן הבית, however, רבן יוחנן בן זכאי made a seemingly problematic decree: the שופר could be blown not only in the מקדש, but in any בית דין. Now here is the question: how could he do this? A בית דין is not the בית המקדש, and therefore the law permitting the blowing of the שופר does not apply there. Shouldn't we still be concerned that someone might carry a שופר on שבת?

The answer lies in an earlier Gemara on (ראש השנה ט"ז ע"א). There, רב אבהו asks: Why is it that the ideal שופר must be the horn of a ram? After all, many horns are technically כשר. The answer: because it recalls the ram of the עקידת יצחק. Just as יצחק placed himself on the altar, ready to give his very life to ה', so too, when we blow the ram's horn, we proclaim that we are ready to give ourselves over to ה'. He was spared, but only because he had already surrendered himself completely. And in that merit, his life was renewed as a gift from ה'. In the same way, when we blow the שופר, we acknowledge that this new year we are given is not something we take for granted—it is a gift from ה', given on condition that we dedicate it to His service.

It was precisely because of this idea that רבן יוחנן בן זכאי instituted this תקנה. Despite the rabbinic concern about carrying, the spiritual power of שופר—its ability to embody the מסירות נפש of יצחק and the covenant of the עקידה—is so great that it warranted a special enactment.And there is more. In פרקי אבות, specifically (ה:ח), the משנה teaches that the ram of the עקידה was created by ה' on the first ערב שבת of Creation, just before nightfall. From the very beginning of time, this ram was destined to be part of Hashem's plan for the world. The מדרש tells us that its ashes serve as כפרה for the sins of כלל ישראל. Its sinews were used as the strings of דוד המלך's harp. Most significantly, its two horns were set aside for times of גאולה: one sounded at הר סיני, and the other reserved to alert the coming of משיח.

Think about that. The ashes—the כפרה during ראש השנה. The harp—the מלכות of דוד. The horns—the גאולה. All aspects of משיח embodied in this one ram. The atoning we will do to bring the גאולה, the משיח himself, who is a descendant of דוד, and the moment when the whole world is informed of the completion of our mission as a people.

So when we stand on ראש השנה, and the שופר sounds, it is not just a cry of the past, echoing יצחק and his sacrifice. It is a cry that anticipates the שופר of משיח. It is a cry that says: "ה', our lives are Yours. This year, we return to You". Let us merit to be granted the gift of another year, to dedicate that year to serving ה' like יצחק at the עקידה, and ultimately, to hear the great שופר of משיח.
Gut Yuntif.

Rabbi Mordechai Brownstein
**College Guidance and Instructor of English**

# The New World; Rosh Hashanah and the Recreated Man

המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית

"Every day forms a new beginning of the creation...creation was not a one-time occurrence but rather an every-time recurrence, a never-ending process...Here lies he enormous difference between the work of man and the work of t God. After man has finished a given work the work does not need any preservation by its maker; the object can exist without any further contact with the maker. However, all things created by God need his constant preservation, or else they cease to exist... The [human] maker only shaped matter into a particular form; the fundamental substance existed independently of him...But God created the world out of nothing, hence its existence must be constantly preserved and maintained by His power, force, and momentum. And this is done by virtue of His goodness. המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית [Hermann Cohen's philosophy of Judaism by Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Melber, chapter two, Jonathan David Publishers, 1968] Consequently, creation was not merely a historical, theological, and scientific phenomenon, but an ethical one as well. Creation and preservation are tokens of God's goodness, His expression of love to what He created. Emergence out of a void necessitates God's preservation in order to continue to exist corresponding to God's focus on the condition of mortal man. The human also needs God's constant care hence, Rosh Hashanah to determine whether the human deserves to advance forward. The need for God's constant concern merge in man and nature.

Creation ex nihilo, יש מאין , excites and challenges the imagination, but for a non-philosophical approach to the emergence of the material world from a void one should redefine creation and reduce it to a more understandable level. A relatable description of the process of emergence from non-being into being would be reduction of the infinite to the finite or constriction of the timeless and spaceless to a materiality limited by time and space. Thus, the opening pasuk of the Torah: In the beginning

God created the Heaven and the Earth. This pasuk speaks of a world, as defined above, which possesses the dimensions of space and time.

Heaven and earth are spatial, and the 'beginning' speaks of the creation of time. "In the beginning. [This means] at the beginning of time, the very first moment which could not be a part of time, since time did not exist prior to it" Rabbi Pelcovitz's translation of the Sforno adding in his notes: As mentioned above, time itself was created, and did not exist before.t is to this that the Sforno alludes when he states that בראשית means at the beginning of time, the first instant, not a point in time separate from what previously existed".

God created the world without pre-existing material, out of nothing. "The term 'world' can be applied solely to that which possesses the dimensions of space and time; 'space referring to east, west, north, and south upward and downward, and 'time' , to past, present and future....He, may He be blessed, is King, above, without end and below, without limit...Now, although He is supra-spatial and supra-temporal, nevertheless He is also found below in space and time." [Shaar Hayichud Chapter 7]

As we say: אדון עולם אשר מלך בטרם בל יציר נברא, "He is the eternal Lord who reigned, before any being was created." [Philip Birnbaum Translation] When God created the world there was nothing else – only God alone. The world entered into reality with natural limitations imposed on it as home to man who is conversely not limited in range of thought, ambition, and passion.

The process of creation from a void into physical reality has indeed moral significance. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch elaborated on this point: "The contrary belief, that matter always existed...is not only a metaphysical lie which has robbed the theories of mankind as to the origin of the world and of the truth...but it is the much farther-reaching pernicious denial of all freedom of will in God and man, which undermines all morality.

the material that was there, [before creation] was given to the world framer He could only make the best possible world out of that material but not the absolute best world. All physical and moral evil would then unavoidably lie in the imperfection of the material...Freedom would be absent from the world. Blind pitiless necessity would rule the world together with its God and its men...בראשית ברא אלקים . Hereby all that follows stands or falls. Everything, all material, all forms, everything existing has sprung from the completely free, all-mighty creative Will of God. Man created by God at בראשית, has, with all his moral imperfections, the ability to be adequate, in the highest degree of moral perfection, to the moral ideal set before him by his Creator. The possibility of his failing to do so, itself is part of his moral completion, more, it is the fundamental condition for his moral freedom of will."

The limitation of time and space are concepts fundamental to the physical reality of our world; however, the ethical choices and decisions of the individual are free and unconditional. Nature does not possess free will, it cannot sin. Man possesses free will; he must beg pardon for his errors.

"Though repentance and tefilla are always appropriate, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it is most appropriate and immediately accepted as it says דרשו ה' בהמצאו. "[Rambam Teshuva 2:6]

It is customary to rise early to say Slichos and supplications from Rosh Chodesh Ellul until Yom Kippur" [Shulchan Aruch 561:1]

"Custom among Ashkenazim is different. Rosh Chodesh, they begin sounding the Shofar after Shacharis, some also after Maariv. They rise early to say Slichos on Sunday before Rosh Hashanah, [however] when Rosh Hashanah falls out on Monday or Tuesday, Slichos begins two Sundays before Rosh Hashanah." [Rama] From the Shulchan Aruch we go to find the source in the Gemara. "One may query: Why would one be judged specifically on Rosh Hashanah more than other days? ... Answer: We can learn this from the Pesikta [23] It was said in the name of Rebbi Eliezer. Based on the pasuk דרשו ה' בהמצאו it was taught the world was created on the 25th of Ellul. Contradicting what was taught in the Gemara that Rebbi Eliezer said the world was created in Tishre [not Ellul]. They [in the Gemara] were speaking about its completion [completion of creation which in Rebbi Eliezer's opinion was on Tishre 1 though the process began on Ellul 25]. Adam HaRishon, whose creation was the climax was created on the sixth day of creation which was Tishre 1." [Rabbenu Nissim Rosh Hashanah 3a] That is the explanation. Though the process of creation began on Ellul 25, since, however it was completed on Tishre 1 with the creation of Adam HaRishon, Rebbi Eliezer maintains that the world was created in Tishre. Even so, Adam sinned on the day he was created!

The custom of Slichos in Ashkenaz, as recorded by the Rama, seems to have been extrapolated from Rabbenu Nissim.

Two points are thus clarified from what Rabbenu Nissim writes: 1]

Creation began on Ellul 25, making it the first Sunday ever, and 2] it was completed when the first human emerged on Tishre 1, ate from the forbidden fruit, was judged, the verdict was a suspended sentence of one thousand years. These two points define the custom of Slichos. Slichos always begins on Sunday and extends until Rosh Hashanah, the conclusion of creation, the creation of man, and the sin and judgement of the first humans. Man recreates himself through teshuvah every year on the anniversary of his creation.

In summary: The Sunday or Motzei Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah marks the birth of a new world but also the recreation of a new man – a new man whose fate is determined by his own tefilla and teshuvah.In an essay titled "Surrendering Our Minds To God", Rav Soloveitchik declared, "The religious Jew accepts the entire Torah as a חוק , both in regard to its immutability and also its unintelligibility. At the conclusion of the daily morning service, we find the affirmation: 'I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed and that there will be no other Torah given by the Creator, blessed be His Name' [Maimonides, Principles of Faith]. The laws of the Torah are thus above place or time.

Moreover, the observant Jew never asks "why?" in regard to mitzvah obligations. He may ask "how is it performed?" or "what lessons are to be derived therefrom?" but not "why?" ...To be a loyal Jew is to be heroic, and heroes commit themselves without intellectual reservations. Only one who lacks the courage of commitment will belabor the "why?". [Reflections of the Rav, by Rabbi Abraham Besdin, WZO, Jerusalem, 1981]On another occasion when experience of the world and man merge, the Rav made the following comment: "I remember how once, on Yom Kippur, I went outside into the synagogue courtyard with my father [רב משה] just before נעילה . It had been a fresh day, one of the fine, almost delicate days of summer's end, filled with sunshine and light. Evening was fast approaching, and an exquisite autumn sun was sinking in the west...into a sea of purple and gold. My father, a halachic man par excellence, turned to me and said, "This sunset differs from ordinary sunsets for with it forgiveness is bestowed upon us for our sins". Yom Kippur and the forgiveness of sins merged and blended here with the splendor and beauty of the world and with the hidden lawfulness of the order of creation and the whole was transformed into one living, holy, cosmic phenomenon." [Halachic Man, translated by Lawrence Kaplan, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1983]

Azriel Avraham 26'

# Not Just A Prop

There are many "props" used over the holiday of Rosh Hashana. Apple with honey, new fruit, and even a head of fish. In Parshas Pinchas, the Torah calls Rosh Hashanah יום תרועה. Why does the Torah name Rosh Hashanah after one of the props used on the holiday? For example; Sukkos isn't called Yom Lulav! Why is Rosh Hashana given this name, and why is the mitzvah of Shofar chosen to be the lucky prop?

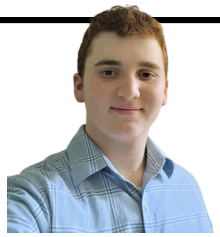
The רמב"ם shares a beautiful idea. Even though the *Shofar* is a *Mitzvah* in the *Torah*, it is not explicitly stated to blow *Shofar*. It is a *Remez*, a hint found in the Torah, and therefore a specific lesson can be learnt. The *Shofar* isn't just a collection of sounds, It is a wake up call for the *Yidden* who are still *Shlofing*. A reminder to strengthen their relationship with 'ה in their lives, to do Teshuva, and to spend their time wisely on what's really important in the month of *Elul* and the coming year.

Rav Druck in the Aish Tamid raises a question. From where does the רמב"ם get this idea? What is his source? The רמב"ם gets this insight from the question we asked previously; Why is Rosh Hashana called יום תרועה? The רמב"ם says: The Shofar isn't just the Mitzvah of the day on Rosh Hashana, it defines what the entire holiday is about. The deep inner parts of a person, the P'nimiyus, yearning out to 'ה to do Teshuva' is expressed through the Shofar. . Rosh Hashana being called יום תרועה is a hint or a sign to tap into the idea of the Shofar, and to wake up from our slumbers. The צל"ח raises a very interesting point. The Pasuk in Pinchas reads; יום תרועה יהיה לכם, however when discussing Yovel, the Torah uses a diffrent לשון saying שופר תעבירו. Why does does the Torah use two different לשונות when discussing the Shofar?
The צל"ח give fascinating answer: The reason why the Torah uses the word תרועה to describe Rosh Hashanah is because it defines the day. Unlike the Lulav where we shake and then we are done with it. The Entire theme on Rosh Hashana is to get closer to 'ה which the Shofar reminds us to do.

So this year in Shul when we hear the Shofar – don't just stand there and count how long the blast is, rather we should look to internalize the message of the Shofar. It defines our entire day, entire year, and entire life, helping us grow closer to our King and Father.

# *Kosveinu B'sefer Ha'chaim:*

## Insights Into The Aseres Yemei Teshuva



Shragi Lermer, '27

### חננו וענינו כי אין בנו מעשים

Every yom kippur the Kohen Gadol goes into the kodesh hakidashim and offers ketores and davens for am yisrael. When analyzing the teffilah that he says, an interesting question arises. Throughout the whole teffilah the kohen gadol only mentions the sins of the nation, and not a single zechus or merit that we have. We see the exact same thing in the Mishnah in yomah that describes what the kohen gadol says when he says viduy on the goat that will be sent off to be killed in the desert. However, that's not the only thing happening.

The Kohen gadol does in fact act as our defense attorney when he goes into the Kodesh Kodashim. The gemara in rosh hashanah describes that the Kohen gadol would not wear the golden garments so that Hashem is not reminded of the egel hazahav. With all this in mind, how is it that on the holiest day of the year, when we are begging Hashem for forgiveness, the only thing that the kohen gadol says is that we sinned?

Rav Dovid Hofstetter answers this question with the analysis of Yaakov Avinu's teffilah before he encounters esav. Yaakov stands before Hashem, and says "קָטֹנְתִּי מִכֹּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל־הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־עַבְדֶּךָ ... הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי־יָרֵא אָנֹכִי אֹתוֹ (Bereshis 32:11-12). Yaakov tells Hashem that he is small and nothing before Hashem and asks that He save him solely because he fears his brother. Rashi on the Pasuk explains what Yaakov was saying by filling in the gaps.

Yaakov was telling Hashem that he has few merits in comparison to all of the good that Hashem has done for him, and as a result of this he is afraid because when he when he was on his way to Lavan's house, he made a promise to Hashem that he would stay on the path of torah and not sin, but maybe he did, and maybe that sin will cause him to be handed over to Esav. All of this makes little sense to us. On the one hand it makes sense to do teshuva when you will be asking for something from Hashem, but on the other hand, why did Yaakov incriminate himself by saying so many bad things that he could have done?

The answer to this question lies in a fundamental principle that we need to understand when it comes to davening to Hashem, korbanos, and teshuvah. Yaakov is acknowledging that he deserves to get absolutely nothing from Hashem, and it is only a result of the pure acts of chesed that Hashem does for him that he has anything.

Yaakov himself says in the very same *pasuk* from before "כִּי בְמַקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הָיִיתִי לִשְׁנֵי מַחֲנוֹת:", he started out with nothing but a staff and now because of the chesed Hashem did for him he has two camps. We learn from Yaakov that even though we sin, Hashem is still willing to do amazing things for us as long as we acknowledge that it is only a result of the pure chesed that we have anything, and not because of our own merits. It is only by totally committing and giving yourself over to Hashem that we can ask for anything from Him.

This is exactly why the Kohen Gadol only mentions our sins when he davens for us on yom kippur. The only way for the Kohen Gadol to ask for us to be saved on yom kippur is for him to acknowledge that we are nothing before Hashem and that He owes us nothing. No merit that we have can even come close to earning that chesed that Hashem does for us every single day. The same applies when we say avinu malkeinu in davening. Before we can ask for anything we must start off by saying "חטאנו לפניך", and acknowledge that Hashem is in control of everything and that is only out of kindness that we have anything, and are able to ask for anything.

Mr. Murray Sragow
**College Guidance and Instructor of History**

## Like Clay In Your Hands

My Bubbie's favorite of the piyyutim of Kol Nidrei, perhaps her favorite of all of Yom Kippur, was the last of the selichot that we say on Yom Kippur night. Beginning with "כִּי הִנֵּה כַּחֹמֶר בְּיַד הַיּוֹצֵר", it is a series of similes–each one comparing us to the object of a craftsman's work. Clay to a potter, stone to a mason, an axehead to a blacksmith, and so on. In each case the craftsman is improving the object by working on it.

This piyyut expands on a theme first found in Yirmiyahu perek 18. There Hashem instructs Yirmiyahu to visit a potter's shop, and observe goings on there, where Hashem will grant him a nevuah. Hashem comes to him in the potter's shop, and says the exact words with which the paytan begins: "הִנֵּה כַחֹמֶר בְּיַד הַיּוֹצֵר כֵּן אַתֶּם בְּיָדִי". Just as a potter, noticing a flaw in the pot he's making out of clay, has the choice to work on it and repair it or crush it and start over, so too Hashem must decide whether to repair our flaws or cast us aside as not being worth the trouble. Indeed, Hashem elaborates on this message. He says that if Beit Yisrael does teshuva and demonstrates its worthiness, then Hashem will build us up. But if, chas v'shalom, we persist in our sinful ways, then Hashem will destroy us.

The anonymous paytan seems to know which way Hashem is leaning. He knows that if the matter is left to the calculus Hashem lays out to Yirmiyahu, we don't stand a chance. Teshuva would be great, but the paytan does not want to put all his eggs in that basket. So he does not appeal to teshuva. Instead, the paytan ends each stanza with the words "לַבְּרִית הַבֵּט וְאַל תֵּפֶן לַיֵּצֶר". Look at the brit, he begs Hashem, and don't pay attention to the accuser. In other words, Hashem should not cast us aside, but NOT because of the reason that we are worth repairing, rather out of His love for us as the children of the Avot, and in His memory of them and the brit He made with them.

Why was this simile so meaningful to my Bubbie, and perhaps to many other Jews as well? It might be the simplicity. We all have tried artwork or craftsmanship on some level, and had to decide whether to put more and more effort into a flawed object or cut our losses and start over. But I think it goes further than that. On Yom Kippur we feel helpless, without a way to justify being sealed in the book of life for the coming year. There's nothing we can do. Our sins are far more than we can bear. We have no more agency than a lump of clay in the hands of the potter. Our fate is out of our hands. Hashem must decide. Therefore, all we can do is daven, plead that Hashem should be far kinder to us than we deserve.

I think that it was this message that spoke to my Bubbie. She probably was not familiar with Yirmiyahu perek 18, but she didn't need to be. A Jew knows in his or her gut that all the effort in the world is not a guarantee of success. Far from it. We are far closer, in the scheme of things, to the lump of clay. Our fate is in Hashem's hands. But it is our great fortune that we are the children of His beloved Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. As long as Hashem hears our prayers and chooses to look at the brit with the avot, we'll be okay, despite our many flaws.

Tani Schnall, '28

## The Aliyah of Restraint

# TRIVIA CHALLENGE!

**1**

**During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah we add "HaMelech HaKadosh" in the Amidah. According to the Shulchan Aruch, what is the halachic consequence if one mistakenly says "HaKel HaKadosh" instead?**

**2**

**In a non-leap year, Tishrei is always 30 days. In a leap year, how does the fixed Hebrew calendar ensure that Rosh Hashanah can never fall on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday? (Name the principle that enforces this.)**

**3**

**On Rosh Hashanah, one of the symbolic foods is a fish head. According to Rema (Orach Chaim 583:2), what specific passuk is cited as the reason for eating it?**

**4**

**During the Avodah in the Beis HaMikdash on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol recited the Shem HaMeforash a total of how many times, and at which key moments was it pronounced aloud?**

Every year, come Yom Kippur time, we read from parshas Vayikra. We hear of the Kohen Gadol casting lots on two goats at the entrance of the Ohel Moed. One being for Hashem and one for Azazel. Rabeinu Bachya wonders as to what the significance of this event is. What is the purpose of Azazel? What does it represent?

In his quest to define their implications, he connects these two eizim, or goats, to the two goats Rivka instructed Yaakov to bring in preparation for his receiving of the blessing from Yitzchak. The first goat, says Rabeinu Bachya, represents Yaakov's willingness to obey his mother, despite its actions entailing the deception of his father. The second goat represents Yaakov's restraint in taking pleasure for his plot to receive the bracha instead of his brother. While the latter goat's representation might seem to be the simpler, less complex, of the two, Rabeinu Bachya states that the reason for the second goat, Yaakov's action of not doing something, was far more profound. Oftentimes it is what one chooses to refrain from doing that is more defining of one's character than what he or she does do.

In a similar vein, Rabbi Label Lam tells a story he heard firsthand from Rav Shimshon Pincus on this very topic. Rav Pincus tells a story of a man who merited to marry into a prestigious family. He asked the father for a backstory that might be able to explain a reason as to how they merited such a son. The father replied that he and his wife were barren of children for twenty-three years. After all those years, the father was desperate. He heard of a Chassidic shul in Yerushalayim with a unique promise.

Anyone who received Maftir Yonah on Yom Kippur would have their tefilla answered. On the afternoon before Yom Kippur, he arrived early and paid a handsome price for the honor of Maftir Yonah, in the hopes that this would be his chance to finally bear a child.

That night, as he was preparing to receive the coveted aliyah, a young tearful man approached, clearly intending to ask for the aliyah. The father in this story asked the young man why he was so tearful.

The young man responded that he and his wife were waiting for three years now without children. The older man said nothing. He allowed the younger man the aliyah without hesitation. That same year, after twenty-three years, he had a son. This man did not receive the aliyah of Maftir Yonah. He received the aliyah of restraint.

Rabeinu Bachya's message and Rav Pincus' story allude to the same theme. Forgiveness does not always come from showing Hashem what we do act upon. The goat of Azazel, the goat of restraint, teaches us that sometimes, teshuva can come from something far more powerful. It can come from us showing Hashem the restraint that we are able to have in moments requiring not doing something .Not from action, but from holding back. It can come from showing Hashem the restraint we are capable of in moments when we choose not to act.

# Al Cheit Shechatanu:
## Insights Into Yom Kippur

Dr. Shmuel Rosenbaum, 06'

## The Objective Reality of Yiras Elokim

I had the zechus of being in Rabbi Mendelson's 10th-grade shiur in 2003–2004, and I distinctly remember that on the first day of school, when Rabbi Mendelson handed out the daily schedule, I noticed that 15 minutes were allotted to shmoozim every morning. I was so excited — a rebbi who gave his students 15 minutes to just shmooze every day! How novel and exciting. Very quickly, however, I learned that shmoozim were in fact the very unique and special divrei mussar that only Rabbi Mendelson was able to give.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, I think of Rabbi Mendelson's shmooze on the Akeida. After the malach held back Avraham's hand from sacrificing his son, the pasuk states:

עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹקִים אָתָּה
*Now I know that you fear Hashem.*

Rabbi Mendelson asked: What changed from before the *Akeida* to now, that enabled the *malach* to declare, "Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing individual"?

He explained that the test of the *Akeida* was unique in that it forced Avraham to go against his natural inclinations. He was required to constrict his own will and desires to enable Hashem's will to dictate his actions. A person with true *Yiras Hashem* develops an objective outlook on reality, as defined by Hashem's will.

A similar lashon appears later, when Avimelech confronts Avraham for lying about Sarah being his sister. Avraham states:

כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אֵין־יִרְאַת אֱלֹקִים בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהָרָגוּנִי עַל־דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי
*I thought, surely there is no fear of G-d in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.*

Previously, when Sarah was kidnapped in Mitzrayim, Pharaoh only realized he had done something wrong once he was punished. Avimelech, on the other hand, was a great person who even received nevuah — Hashem informed him directly in a dream that Sarah was Avraham's wife. And yet, Avraham still noticed that even if Avimelech was moral, his will was not tied to an ultimate objective Source. Without Yiras Hashem, his moral code could change on a whim.

Although Rabbi Mendelson ended his shmooze here, there are many other places where Yiras Elokim is linked to a person's moral compass.

For example, during Yosef's first interaction with his brothers in Mitzrayim, he tells them:

זֹאת עֲשׂוּ וִחְיוּ אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים אֲנִי יָרֵא׃
*Do this and live, for I fear G-d.*

Why would Yosef's brothers trust the viceroy of a foreign empire, a man they believed might be their enemy, just because he claimed to be a *Yorei Elokim*? Remarkably, they accepted his words because they understood that even if someone appears to be an enemy, if his outlook is shaped by an objective reality rooted in Hashem's will, he can be trusted not to break his word.

I recall another time, when I was on an off-Shabbos in Kerem B'Yavneh, and a cousin shared a dvar Torah with me. He explained that Pharaoh changed the names of Shifra and Puah because he believed that as long as the Jews retained their unique language, clothing, and names, they would preserve their national identity. Pharaoh thought that if he could break one of these three, the Jews would lose their identity and agree to harm their own people.

When my cousin finished, I asked: "But why was Pharaoh wrong? Why didn't it work?" To answer my own question, I pointed out the pasuk:

וַתִּירֶאן הַמְיַלְּדֹת אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים וְלֹא עָשׂוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶן מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַתְּחַיֶּיןָ אֶת־הַיְלָדִים
*The midwives, fearing G-d, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.*

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The midwives, fearing G-d, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.

Here we see Yiras Shamayim creating an objective reality that protected them from sin.

Parallel to these pesukim is the language of *Birchas HaChodesh*. *Yiras Shamayim* is mentioned twice. When a person is young, his *Yiras Shamayim* expresses itself as *yiras chet* — fear of sin, because he does not yet fully know Hashem's will. Later, with maturity and *ahavas Torah*, he develops a deeper *Yiras Shamayim* — the ability to live life objectively, true in the eyes of Hashem.

*Each of us is given a different path in life. Some of my friends became scientists, some doctors, some rabbanim. Yet we are all called upon to live as Yirei Hashem.*

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# V'samachta B'chagecha:

## Insights Into the Yamim Tovim of Sukkos and Shemini Atzeres

Rabbi Yonatan Sonnenschein
**Rebbi**

### The Lesson of the Esrog

There is a story told about a father who approached his son with a gift. "Son, I want to give you a watch. A watch that your grandfather gave to me. But before I give it to you, I want you to take it to a jewelry store and see how much it is worth." The son returned and reported: "The jeweler said it is in pretty good condition and still works. It's worth about $150." The father then said, "Now go take it to the pawnshop and see how much they will give you." The son came back again and said, "The pawnshop said for this old piece, which has been used, they would only give me $10."

Finally, the father told him to bring it to the museum. The son returned in amazement: "The curator said this was a very rare watch, hundreds of years old, and offered me $500,000!" The father then explained, "Son, before I gave you this watch, I wanted you to understand its true worth. I am not giving you something worth $10. Its real value comes from its history. That is something people truly appreciate."

This idea is echoed at the beginning of Parshas Ha'azinu. The Torah stresses the importance of knowing and valuing history. In **פרק לב פסוק ז** it says:

זְכֹר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם — *remember the days of old,*

בִּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דֹּר־וָדֹר — *understand the years of each generation,*

שְׁאַל אָבִיךָ וְיַגֶּדְךָ, זְקֵנֶיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ לָךְ — *ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will say it over to you.*

On a simple level, the Torah is telling us that history matters. Remembering the past helps guide us in the present. But this is only if we are willing to see it as something of value, not as something outdated or irrelevant.

Yet the pasuk seems repetitive. Why say both זכור ימות עולם — remember the days of old — and also בינו שנות דור ודור — understand the years of each generation? Is this simply poetic repetition?

Rav Menachem Ben Tzion Zaks, in his sefer מנחם ציון, explains that the Torah's language carries a deeper meaning. The word שנות usually means "years," but it can also mean different (from the word שונה/משונה). The pasuk is teaching us that we must recognize how each generation is different. Every generation has its unique struggles, challenges, and circumstances. We cannot just say, "This is how it has always been."

Instead, we must have the awareness and flexibility to adapt, to understand how to relate to people in the time we live in.

This balance between tradition and adaptability is beautifully illustrated in the mitzvah of the esrog. On Sukkos we have the מצווה of taking the lulav and esrog. The esrog is made up of two critical parts: the עוקץ (the stem) at the bottom, and the פיטם (the blossom tip) at the top. For an esrog to be kosher, the Shulchan Aruch tells us that it must have both. If it lacks the עוקץ, it is considered חסר, incomplete, missing an essential element. If it lacks the פיטם, it may still be kosher, but it is not beautiful, not מהודר.

Rabbi Norman Lamm זצ"ל explained the symbolism: Theעוקץ represents the root, the connection to history and the past. Theפיטם looks like a blossom, pointing forward, representing growth, renewal, and the future. To lack the עוקץ means to be cut off from one's roots — to be incomplete. To lack theפיטם means to lack beauty — to fail to live life with vibrancy, relevance, and meaning. A truly whole and beautiful life requires both: deep roots in the past and the ability to blossom into the future.

The Rav once shared a story that highlights this balance. When he was living in Boston, he asked one of the local baalei batim to explain the rules of baseball. The man described the basics: first base, second base, three strikes you're out, four balls is a walk. Then he asked, "Rebbe, why do you care about baseball?" The Rav explained, "My grandchildren are coming to Boston. Of course, I care about teaching them Torah. But first I want to be able to relate to them where they are holding."

The Rav valued Torah above all, yet he understood the importance of connection. We must be deeply rooted in our rich history, cherishing it and sharing it. At the same time, we need the sensitivity and adaptability to connect with the world and the people around us.

This is the message Hashem gives us immediately after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as we begin a fresh new year. To succeed, both as individuals and as a community, we must hold onto both parts of the pasuk:
זכור ימות עולם — study the past, know our history, learn from the ways of our ancestors.
בינו שנות דור ודור — recognize the uniqueness of the present, adapt to its challenges, and connect meaningfully to those around us.

To live a truly full and beautiful life, we must carry both the עוקץ and the פיטם.

Elisha Price, '23

# Who Needs Sukkos?

*Sukkos* is a tremendously important *Yom Tov*. It is one of the *shalosh regalim* and is one of only two holidays to have a few days of *chol hamoed* in its midst (the other, of course, being *Pesach*). It is the longest *Yom Tov* of the year, and in the *Mishnah* it is considered to be the epitome of a holiday, thus referred to by the name "*chag*" over and over again in *mishnayos* (for example: *Taanit* 1:1-2, *Sukkah* 2:6, 3:13, 4:4, 5:2, *Sotah* 7:8, and *Megillah* 3:5).

However, there are some very critical aspects of *Sukkos* which are either missing or very ambiguous in the *Torah*. For example, the *Torah* never really clarifies why *Sukkos* is where it is on the Jewish calendar. For the purposes of this article, we will discuss a different key element of the *Yom Tov*, which, when addressed in the *Torah*, seems to raise at least as many questions as it answers.

The *passuk* (*Vayikra* 23:43) says as follows:
למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את־בני ישראל בהוציאי אותם מארץ מצרים אני ה' אלקיכם:
*In order that future generations may know that I made Bnei Yisrael live in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt—I, Hashem, your G-d.*

Two very striking questions emerge from this *passuk*: (1) Why is that enough to merit one of the three *regalim* along with *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Kabalas HaTorah*? And (2) When exactly did Hashem make us live in huts?

Rabbi Eliezer (*Sukkah* 11b; Rashi and Ramban (23:43:1)) defines these *sukkos* not as actual huts or tents that Hashem made us reside in, but as the *ananei hakavod* (the pillars of cloud) that Hashem provided us in the wilderness to protect us from external harm. If so, what the *passuk* appears to be saying is that the *Yom Tov* is to commemorate the miracle Hashem performed for us with the *ananei hakavod*, not the physical residence within them.

On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva (ibid., Ramban and Ibn Ezra (23:43:1)) translates the *passuk* literally: apparently *Bnei Yisrael* made huts in the desert after crossing the *Yam Suf*, and again at *Har Sinai*. Ramban adds (quoting from the *Sifra* (*Emor* 17:11)) that if so, the holiday is not commemorating something unique but is something

of a combination of Pesach and Shavuos in that it encompasses both of their remembrances.

Rabbi Eliezer's opinion is very logical. However, the opinion of Rabbi Akiva is troubling: According to Rabbi Akiva without Ramban's addition, why do I care that they sat in tents? And with Ramban's explanation, why do I need Sukkos at all? I already have Pesach and Shavuos! In fact, when the Aruch Hashulchan (O.C. 625:2) quotes and explains both opinions, he describes the greatness of the miracle of the ananei hakavod at great length, but leaves Rabbi Akiva's opinion as a question. In short, we have not managed to answer question (1) according to Rabbi Akiva's understanding, with or without Ramban's elucidation.

Rav Ezra Bick, in his twelfth installment to his set of shiurim on Sukkos, gives a beautiful answer that helps us not only understand the lomdus of the machlokes between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva but also to appreciate the holiday itself. He writes that Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva are really saying the same thing. Really, there are two aspects to Bnei Yisrael's life in the midbar: (1) they lived in harsh natural conditions, and (2) they were taken care of through amazing supernatural events. Rabbi Eliezer understood the zechirah mentioned in the passuk to be referring to the latter aspect, the miracles, consistent with the other regalim. But Rabbi Akiva believed that the zechirah of Sukkos is the natural conditions in which we would have lived had Hashem not created the ananei hakavod for us.

Commemorating nissim can be done in many different ways. It can be done by celebrating the glory of the neis (as Rabbi Eliezer explains). But miracles can also be commemorated by acknowledging the need we had for that miracle. Meaning that what we do on Sukkos, according to Rabbi Akiva, is sit in a temporary structure and say that this (at best!) is what our ancestors would have lived in in the midbar had You, Hashem, not sent them the ananei hakavod. They would have been unable to survive in the harsh conditions of the desert. And through this method, we gain an appreciation for the benefit we derived from the miracle, perhaps more so than by praising the glory and splendor of the supernatural event itself.

[At this point, it may be helpful (or possibly even necessary) to rethink how we translate the passuk. Instead of "I made Bnei Yisrael live in sukkos," Rabbi Akiva reads the passuk as "In the sukkos, I made Bnei Yisrael live."]

Keeping all this in mind, we can now understand the significance of Ramban's additions (that Sukkos is something of a compound zikaron of the miracles of Pesach and Shavuos). The zikaron of sukkos serves a different function than that of the other regalim. On Pesach, what we are chayav to discuss at the seder table are the nisim vinifla'os: the wondrous miracles that Hashem performed for us at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim. On Shavuos, there is a mitzvah to remember the fire and lightning of Har Sinai (at least according to Ramban; Rambam disagrees) and (according to everyone) there is value in immortalizingg the revelation of Hashem's glory to all of Bnei Yisrael in our minds and in our culture. And according to Rabbi Eliezer, Sukkos fits this pattern, commemorating the great neis that Hashem performed when He provided the ananei hakavod for our benefit. But according to Rabbi Akiva (as elucidated by Ramban), Sukkos deviates from the pattern. It commemorates not the glory of the miracle, but the understanding that without these miracles, we could not have survived the midbar. And according to Ramban, this message is so powerful it needed to be applied to all three regalim.

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Rabbi Yehuda Balsam

## The chiyuv of sitting in the Succah on the first night of Succos

Although the Mitzvah of Yeshivah B'Succah spans the entire length of the chag, the requirement of the first night of Sukkos is of a slightly different nature. This leads to a few practical differences between how we conduct ourselves on the first night of Succos and the other nights. The Mishna in Sukkah (27a) has a machlokes between Rebbi Eliezer and the Chachamim whether one is obligated to eat a set number of meals in the Sukkah. R' Eliezer maintains that one must eat 14 meals over the course of Yom Tov and the Chachamim maintain that one can eat at his leisure and need not keep to a specific schedule. The Gemara explains that the both base their opinions on the Halachah of Teishvu K'ein Taduru, that one is obligated to live in the Sukkah the same way that he dwells in his own home

According to R' Eliezer, this obligates one to eat 2 meals a day during Yom Tov and the Chachamim maintain that this teaches us that just as we choose how often we eat in our own homes, so too over Yom Tov we can decide whether or not we wish to eat.

However, on the first night of Sukkos, even the Chachamim agree that one is obligated to eat in the Sukkah. The Gemarah explains that this is derived from a G'zeirah Shaveh (Chamishah Asar Chamishah Asar) from the Mitzvah of Achilas Matzah. Just as on the first night of Pesach we are obligated to eat a K'zayis of Matzah, we are similarly obligated in the Mitzvah of Sukkah on the first night of Sukkos. The Gemarah is slightly ambiguous concerning the nature of the obligation of the first night of Sukkos. How exactly does the Chiyuv of eating a K'zayis of Matzah translate to the Mitzvah of eating in the Sukkah? Tosfos (s.v. Iy Ba'iy) explains that although on all the nights of Yom Tov one is prohibited to fast, because of the Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov, he can eat only meat and wine and does not need to wash and have a bread meal. However, on the first night of Succos, one must eat a bread meal just as he must eat a K'zayis of Matzah the first night of Pesach.

Tosfos uses this idea to explain a contradiction between this Gemarah that implies that one need not eat at all on Yom Tov if he so chooses, and the Gemarah in Brachos (49b) that says that on Yom Tov one must eat. Therefore Tosfos resolves that one is prohibited from fasting on Yom Tov, but he need not eat bread. However, Tosfos in Brachos (ibid s.v. Iy Ba'iy) gives a different explanation. Tosfos says that the Gemarah in Succah that implies that one need not eat on Succos is talking from the perspective of the Mitzvah of Yeshivah B'succah, but the Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov obligates one to wash and eat a bread meal. Tosfos explains that the Nafka Minah between whether one is Chayav to eat because of Succah as opposed to Yom Tov, is that if it's raining in the Succah, and one is permitted to go into his house, he is still obligated to eat a meal because of the Mizvah of Simchas Yom Tov. However, once one has fulfilled this obligation, even if the rain stops, he need not return to his Succah and eat another meal. However, on the first night of Succos, when one has an obligation to eat in the Succah because of the Gzeirah Shaveh with Matzah, one must return to his Succah after the rain ceases and eat another meal, because on the first night, the obligation stems from the Mitzvah of Succah itself. We see from this Tosfos, that normally, the obligation to eat bread in the Succah is a by-product of the the Mitzvah of simchas Yom Tov. This is because one must eat two bread meals every day of Yom Tov, and any bread meal must be eaten in the Succah. However, on the first night, the obligation stems from the Succah itself, and is an active Chiyuv.

The Rosh (Brachos siman 23) gives the same explanation as Tosfos, but assumes the obligation of eating a k'zayis of bread in the Succah on the first night applies even if it is raining. Apparently, the Rosh understands that not only is the Mitzvah of eating in the Succah on the first night an active obligation, it also differs from the general rule of Mitzta'er Patur Min Ha'succah, that one for whom the Succah causes pain or great bother is not obligated to remain in the Succah. (for further explanation of the Rosh's opinion, see Aruch Hashulchan Siman 639, sif 17.) The Rosh's opinion I quoted by his son the Tur (siman 639) and by the Rema (ibid sif 5) in Shulchan Aruch.

The Rema writes that even if it is raining in the Succcah, one should say Kiddush and eat a K'zayis of bread in the Succah. The Mishnah Brurah (sif kattan 35) points out, that even though the Rema holds like the Rosh, other Rishonim including the Rashba and the Raavad disagree. Therefore, the Pri Megadim, Tzlach, Aruch Hashulchan and other Achronim assume that one should not say the Brachah of Leisheiv Ba'succah because it's unclear whether he is truly obligated to eat in the rain; and as a result, we should apply the Din of Safek Brachos L'hakel. The Mishnah Brurah also quotes from Achronim who hold that one should postpone his meal until Chatzos in order to see if the rain will stop. However, others disagree because this will negate the Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov.

Another issue that arises on the first night is what intentions one should have when sitting in the Succah. The Gemarah (Succah 11b) quotes a Mchlokes between Rebbi Akiva and Rebbi Eliezer concerning what the Succah commemorates. R' Akiva maintains that our sitting in the Succah is in honor of the actual Succos (Succos Mamash) that the Bnei Yisrael sat in during their sojourn in the dessert, and R' Eliezer claims that it is memory of the Ananei Hakavod that Hashem used to protect the Bnei Yirael from the elements. In Shulchan Aruch, the Mechaber writes (siman 625, sif 1) that we sit in Succos in honor of the Ananei Hakavod. (For an explanation of why we Pasken like R' Eliezer over R' Akiva, see the Bach (ibid).)

The Achronim (see Bach, Taz Magen Avraham) ask, why do we care what the Succah is supposed to represent? We sit in the Succah because the Torah tells us to. They explain that the Mechaber is telling us what Kavanah we should have in mind when we fulfill this Mitzvah. The Torah tells us that the Mitzvah of Succah is L'maan Yeid'u Doroseichem, 'so that your generations will know. The Pasuk is telling us that we must have specific intentions when we fulfill this mitzvah, above and beyond the normal law of Mitzvos Tzricos Kavanah (See Brachos 13a, Shulchan Aruch Siman 60, sif 4).

Normally, this Din only requires us to have in mind that we are fulfilling a Mitzvah that Hashem commanded us, but here (as well as by the Mitzvos of Tzitzis and Tefilin, see Mishnah Brurah) we must remember exactly what the mitzvah commemorates. The Pri Megadim (Eishel Avraham 625, 1) writes that one should be Machmir and keep both opinions in mind when eating in the Succah. Normally, even if one maintains that if we wouldn't have this special Kavanah, we wouldn't be Yotzeh the Mitzvah, it wouldn't be considered as if we ate outside the Succah. It would just mean that we weren't Mikayeim the Mitzvah (see Minchas Chinuch Mitzvah 325). However, on the first night, when we have an active obligation to eat in the Succah, it's possible that one would be duty-bound to return to the Succah and eat another K'zayis of Bread in the Succah. The Bikurei Yaakov (s.k. 3) Paskens that if one didn't keep the reason for this Mitzvah in mind as he ate, he should repeat the Mitzvah and eat another K'zayis in the Succah. However, the Mishnah Brurah quotes the Pri Megadim that this whole Mitzvah is only L'chatchilah, but B'dieved, if he already ate in the Succah, and simply had in mind to fulfill his obligation, he need not eat again. (This opinion may or may not be based on the Mishnah Brurah's general view (biur Halachah (siman 60 s.v. v'yesh omrim) following the Ran in Rosh Hashanah and the Kesef Mishneh in Hilchos Chametz U'matzah) that we don't say Mitzvos Tzrichos Kavanah (b'dieved) by Mitzvos that are fulfilled though eating. It is futher questionable whether we assume that Succah falls into this category (see Shiurim l'zecher Abba Mari)). In all of these cases one should consult a competent Posek should a Safek arise. It is futher questionable whether we assume that Succah falls into this category (see Shiurim l'zecher Abba Mari)). In all of these cases one should consult a competent Posek should a Safek arise.

# TRIVIA ANSWERS

1
If during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah one mistakenly says "HaKel HaKadosh" instead of "HaMelech HaKadosh" in the Amidah, they must repeat the entire Amidah (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 582:1).

2
The fixed Hebrew calendar uses the rule called "Lo ADU Rosh" (וראש ראשה לא אד"ו) which means Rosh Hashanah never falls on A = Sunday, D = Wednesday, or U = Friday.

3
The passuk cited is "וְנְשַׁלְּמָה פָרִים שְׂפָתֵינוּ" — "May we be as the head and not the tail" (Devarim 28:13).

4
According to the Mishnah (Yoma 6:2), the Kohen Gadol pronounced the Shem HaMeforash ten times on Yom Kippur:
Three times during each of the confessions (his own, the Kohanim's, and Israel's – total of 9),
And once when casting the lots for the two goats.
The people would bow and respond "Baruch Shem Kevod..." after each utterance.

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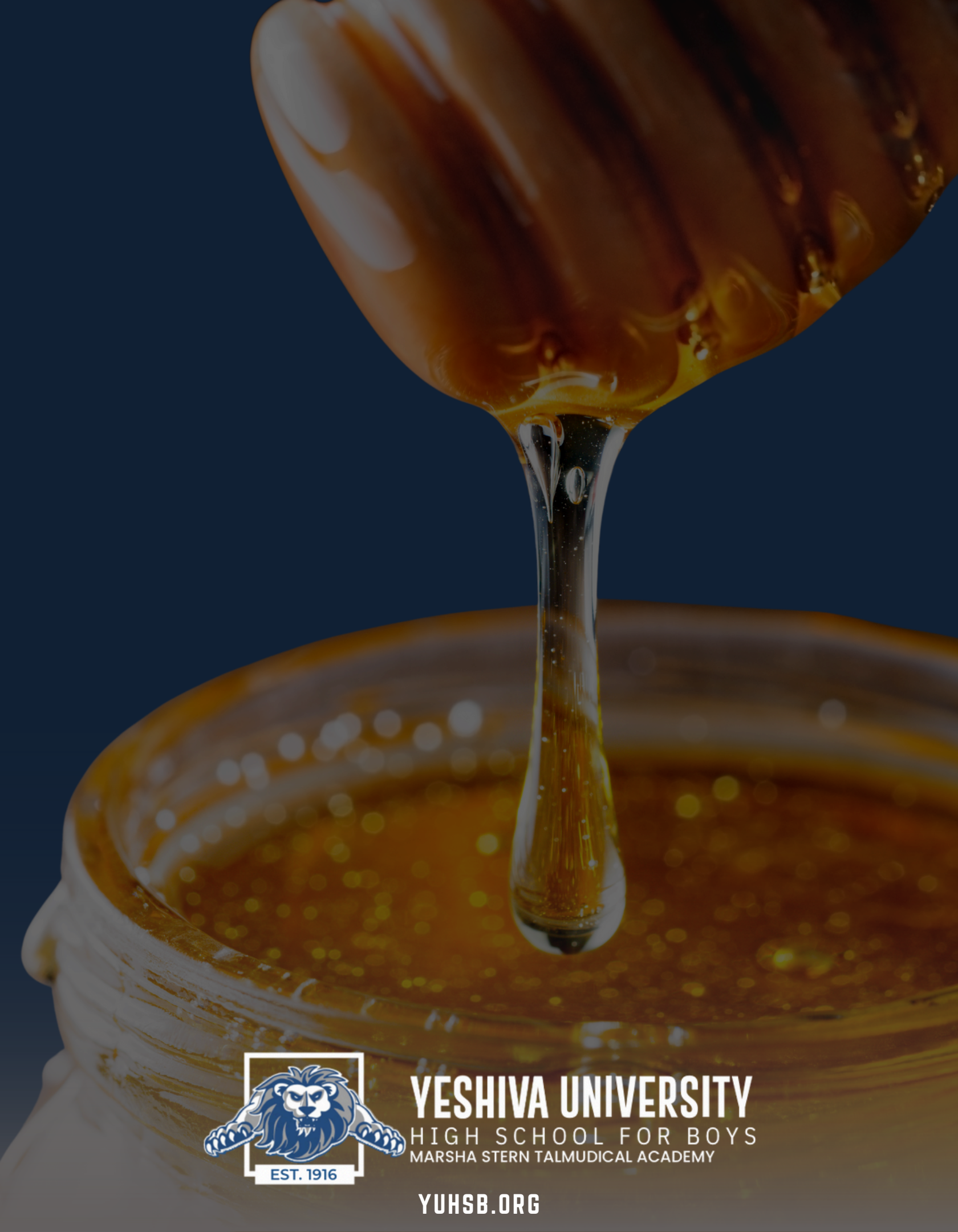
# כתיבה וחתימה טובה



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