

קולנו



שמע

SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI OF MTA

TISHREI 5787



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS
MARSHA STERN TALMUDICAL ACADEMY

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SHEMA KOLEINU STAFF

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

SHRAGI LERMER, '27
EZRA MARKOWITZ, '27

FORMATTING AND DESIGN

SHRAGI LERMER, '27

RABBINIC SUPERVISOR

RABBI BARUCH PESACH MENDELSON
DONNY BOOK, '22

WRITING RECRUITMENT

AVI BEER, '27

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

HILLEL LEFF, '27

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EDITORS

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MOSHE TOKAYER, '27
MIKEY FRIED, '28

The Call of the Shofar to the “Lost” and the “Cast Away”

Rabbi Michael Taubes ('76)
Rosh Yeshiva, YUHSB

One of the famous pesukim quoted in the Shofaros section of the Shemoneh Esrei for Mussaf on Rosh HaShanah comes from Sefer Yeshayah (27:13) and speaks about a great day in the future (a reference to the era of the *Moshiach*) on which Hashem Himself will sound a great *Shofar* heralding the return from exile of all the Jews who will come to bow before Him in *Yerushalayim*. In that *pasuk*, two different words are used to describe those Jews, “*ovdim*” – those who are “lost” – and “*nidachim*” – those who have been “cast away.” The former is identified with the exile to the land of *Ashur* (Assyria, to which the Jews of the ten northern tribes in *Eretz Yisrael* were taken approximately 150 years before the destruction of the first *Beis HaMikdash*) and the second with the exile to the land of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt, where the Jews were of course enslaved at the dawn of our national history). The *Navi* promises that both exiles will eventually return.

To explain why the *Navi* uses two different terms – *ovdim* (lost) and *nidachim* (cast away) – when identifying these two groups of exiled Jews, Maran HaRav Yosef

Dov Soloveitchik, *zt'l*, suggested the following approach. There are times in history when Jews in exile have existed like *nidachim*, castaways, meaning people who are scorned, looked down upon, and mistreated, and who therefore suffer physical and material hardships. Such was the experience of our ancestors in Egypt. They were downtrodden slaves who were beaten, forced to do back-breaking labor, and to have their children tossed into the river. Theirs was a life of physical and emotional oppression and persecution, and that condition unfortunately describes what many Jews throughout history had to live with on numerous occasions in various countries to which we were dispersed.

At other times in history, however, Jews in exile have been *ovdim*, lost, meaning people who are disconnected from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, from the Torah and its *mitzvos*, and from any Jewish religious values. This was the experience of the Jews from the tribes who were exiled to Assyria. As far as we know, they did not suffer there. They were economically and financially comfortable, they seem to have enjoyed various political and civil

rights and freedoms in their new land, and they showed no signs of ever wanting or needing to return to *Eretz Yisrael*. They were, however, completely lost from a spiritual perspective; they very rapidly assimilated, both religiously and culturally, into their surrounding society, quickly abandoning their previous lives. Indeed, they have been “lost” to the Jewish people ever since and are still in fact referred to as “the lost tribes.” That experience unfortunately describes what many other Jews throughout history have gone through in certain countries to which we were dispersed.

The two different words used in the *pasuk* thus describe two different realities of exile, and Yeshayah declares that the *Shofar* will announce the return of those in both categories.

Rav Soloveitchik then added that while the above is certainly true on the national level, it is also true of each of us on an individual level. There are times in our lives when we feel like *nidachim*, castaways, as we struggle through day-to-day life. We all sometimes go through health issues, monetary problems, family pressures, and other challenges, and we may

thus have the sense then that we are downtrodden, even if not to the extent of our ancestors in Egypt. And there are other times when we feel like *ovdim*, lost souls, who while materially and physically fortunate, socially successful, and personally accomplished, lack a connection to something higher beyond ourselves, to a feeling of fulfillment, and to a deeper meaning of life. We may thus sense that we are in some ways spiritually lost, even if not to the extent of the Jews exiled to Assyria.

In the exile of today, we may arguably be compared more to the *ovdim* in Assyria, though with a twist, in that we don't necessarily realize it. Despite the recent world-wide rise in anti-Semitism, which is certainly of serious concern, the fact remains for the moment that most of us lead lives that the majority of our ancestors could never dream of in terms of affluence, modern day conveniences, and general safety and security (with some notable exceptions). And even in the religious realm, the wonderful opportunities for Torah learning, for chessed, and for tzedakah, the easy accessibility of places for spiritual growth, and the amenities of a flourishing community make us think that all is well, but from time to time – and the Yomim Noraim season is one of those times – we need to ask ourselves if we are not in fact “lost” in some ways because we fail to take full advantage of all that is currently available, and what we must do to improve the situation. Rav Soloveitchik pointed to a fascinating Gemara in Bava Basra (73b) which tells the story of Rabbah bar Bar Chanah who was once in a boat that was lost at sea and was unable to find land

for many days. Eventually, they spotted what looked like a beautiful and alluring patch of dry land, got off the boat and started to set up camp there. As it turned out, however, this was not a patch of dry land at all; it was rather part of the back of a huge sea creature which looked like land when it jugged out of the water. As soon as the creature moved, they all tumbled into the water, and Rabbah bar Bar Chanah reported that had they not been close to the boat they would have drowned there.

**“
We must
constantly work
and continually
strive, and
never simply
rest on our
laurels thinking
that ‘everything
seems OK.’**

Rav Soloveitchik explained that the message of this story is that people often think that they have “arrived” on dry land, as it were, and that all is now perfect for them just where they are; there is nothing left for them to do but enjoy their surroundings. But quite often, this is not true; their “apple cart” can easily be overturned at any time



leading to the realization that their entire premise was mistaken and they are actually still “lost” and in a precarious position. As *ovdim* still in exile, we must understand that we cannot grow complacent despite certain undeniable and important achievements, and that we must stay “close to the boat” – that is, close to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and His Torah – because we may otherwise “drown.” To do so we must constantly work and continually strive, and never simply rest on our laurels thinking that “everything seems OK.” Throughout the history of our long exile, many Jews, like those in Assyria, made the mistake of moving far away from the boat, with most unfortunate results.

While the *Navi* tells us that even these *ovdim*, like the *nidachim*, will ultimately return, we would do well not to allow ourselves to become such *ovdim* in the first place, and heed the call of the Shofar on *Rosh HaShanah*, before that great day in the future, which summons us back to the boat right now.



Shrugi Lerner, '27
Ezra Markowitz, '27

Letter From the Editors: Insights in Elul

As we approach the *Yamim Noraim* and *Succos*, we enter one of the most meaningful periods of the year. With this edition, our goal was to bring together a collection of *Torah* thoughts, articles, and perspectives that can accompany us throughout these weeks and give us something to think about as we move from one Yom Tov to the next.

From Rosh Chodesh Elul until Shmini Atzeres, we add L'David (Tehillim 27) after the Yom and Barchi Nafshi (on Rosh Chodesh). Rav Yerucham Olshin in his sefer *Yarach L'Moadim* explains why L'David comes last, only after the Yom and Barchi Nafshi. Rav Olshin quotes the Mateh Efrayim, who explains that since we say the Yom every day, it is therefore Tadir; similarly, by Barchi Nafshi, since we say it every Rosh Chodesh, it is also Tadir. What does Tadir mean? The Gemara in Zevachim 89a explains “תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם,” when you have something that occurs more often and something that occurs less often, the one that occurs more often takes precedence. Therefore, first we say the Yom, then Barchi Nafshi, and finally L'David. However, Rav Olshin asks how the Yom and Barchi Nafshi can be considered more Tadir than L'David. We say a different perek of Tehillim each day, meaning that any particular Yom is said only about fifty times a year. Eleven times a year, on Rosh Chodesh, we say Barchi Nafshi. However, L'David is said eighty times over the course of Elul and Tishrei. Therefore, how could we say that the Yom and Barchi Nafshi are more Tadir than L'David?

Rav Olshin quotes the Minchas Chinuch who, in short, explains that Tadir is not determined by how often we happen to read a particular parsha or say a particular perek of Tehillim, but rather by how often we are chayav in the category to which it belongs. What does this mean? The Tur explains the following. Whenever you are chayav in something, we count the amount of times we are chayav when determining what is Tadir and what is not. For example, we lein every parsha once a year. When Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbos, we also lein the leining for Rosh Chodesh. Since we lein the Rosh Chodesh leining more times in a year than we do the weekly parshios, should we not lein the Rosh Chodesh before the weekly leining? Using what the Tur explained, we can understand why we lein the weekly leining before the Rosh Chodesh leining. Since we have a chiyuv to lein the weekly parsha every Shabbos, it is more Tadir than the

the chiyuv to lein the Rosh Chodesh leining only once or twice a year.

With this in mind, we can understand why *L'David* was placed where it is. Rav Olshin explains that since we say the Yom every single day, its level of *Tadir* is much stronger than *L'David's Tadir*. By *Barchi Nafshi*, the explanation is similar. The Yom was sung by the Levi'im every day when the *korban tamid* was brought. Every *Rosh Chodesh*, when the *korban mussaf* was being offered, the Levi'im sang *Barchi Nafshi*. Since *Barchi Nafshi* is the *Shir Shel Yom* designated for *Rosh Chodesh*, it falls into the same category as the daily Yom, which is the *Shir Shel Yom* designated for each day of the week. Therefore, it falls into the same category as the regular Yom and comes before *L'David*.

This idea also gives us a fitting perspective as we look at the making of this publication. The value of an edition is not measured simply by the number of pages it contains, but by the time, effort, and thought invested in bringing it together. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to this edition, whether by writing an article, editing and reviewing, or helping in any other way. Just as the *Tur* teaches us to look beyond the frequency of a particular *leining* and recognize the underlying *chiyuv* that gives it its status of *Tadir*, we should also recognize the thought and effort behind each contribution to this publication. We are truly grateful to everyone who took the time to help make this edition possible, and we hope that the Torah and ideas within these pages make all of that effort worthwhile.

We hope that this edition will add meaning to our *Elul* and *Tishrei*, giving each of us something to think about and carry with us throughout the *Yamim Noraim* and beyond. May we all be זוכה to a year of growth, הצלחה, and ברכה, and may we be inscribed for a חתיבה וחתימה טובה.

Lessons From Our Leadership:

Lessons from the Hanhalah of MTA



Hischadshus: A Fresh Start for a New School Year

There is something special about the beginning of a new school year. The hallways are once again filled with energy, classrooms come alive, and *Talmidim* return with new schedules, new teachers, new responsibilities—and, hopefully, a renewed sense of possibility.

In many ways, the beginning of the school year is a reflection of the season of *Tishrei* itself. *Rosh Hashanah* reminds us that we are never locked into who we were

yesterday. We have the ability to begin again. This idea of *hischadshus*—renewal and rejuvenation—is at the heart of both the *Yamim Noraim* and the educational journey.

We often think of *hischadshus* as making a dramatic change. We make resolutions, set ambitious goals, and imagine the person we want to become. But perhaps true *hischadshus* is something more subtle. It is not necessarily about becoming an entirely different person. It is about returning to the person we know we can be, with greater clarity, focus, and purpose.

For *Talmidim* (and *Rebbeim*), a new school year offers precisely that opportunity.

Perhaps last year was a year of tremendous growth and accomplishment. Perhaps it was more challenging. Maybe there were moments when a *Talmid* felt particularly successful, and other moments when he struggled

academically, socially, or personally. Whatever the previous year looked like, the new year gives every *Talmid* an opportunity to move forward without being defined by the past.

That is one of the beautiful messages of *Tishrei*: the past matters, but it does not have to determine the future.

A *Talmid* who struggled in a particular subject can approach this year with a different mindset. A *Talmid* who found it difficult to manage his time can develop new habits. A *Talmid* who may not have always been as engaged in *davening*, learning, or school life can decide that this year will be different. And a *Talmid* who had a wonderful year can ask an equally important question: How can I build on that success rather than simply repeat it?

This is also a powerful message for parents and educators.

Our *Talmidim* are constantly

changing. They are discovering new interests, developing new strengths, and learning how to navigate challenges. The ninth grader walking through the doors in September is not simply the eighth grader we met during the admissions process. He is a little older, a little more mature, and capable of becoming something he was not yet ready to become last year. And truthfully, much of the same is true for upperclassmen as well.

Hischadshus means giving him the space to do exactly that.

There is another dimension to renewal that is particularly important in a school setting. We should not only ask, "What do I want to accomplish this year?" We should also ask, "Who do I want to become?"

A *Talmid* can set a goal to improve his grades, make the team, join a club, or master a difficult *sugya*. These are worthwhile goals. But the deeper goals might be to become more patient, more responsible, more thoughtful, more connected to *Torah*, or more willing to help others.

The beginning of the year is an opportunity to choose those goals intentionally.

And perhaps that is why *Tishrei* and the beginning of the school year fit together so naturally. Both ask us to pause from the momentum of everyday life and take stock. Where am I? Where am I going? What needs to change? What can become better?

The challenge is not simply to feel inspired on *Rosh Hashanah*

and then return to our old routines. The challenge is to translate that inspiration into small, consistent changes.

One more minute of focused learning. One more effort to listen carefully in shiur. One more attempt to include someone who is sitting alone. One more tefillah said with greater attention. One more decision to put away the phone and be fully present. These may seem like small things, but meaningful growth is almost always built from small decisions repeated over time.

As we begin a new school year and enter the new year of *Tishrei*, we should embrace the opportunity for *hischadshus*—not because everything from the past needs to be discarded, but because every new beginning reminds us that there is always more potential waiting to be realized.

A new school year is more than a new schedule. It is an invitation.

An invitation to learn differently. To think differently. To connect more deeply. To grow.

And most importantly, to recognize that we are never finished becoming the people we are capable of becoming.

May this year be a year of true *hischadshus* for our *Talmidim*, our families, and our entire yeshiva. May we be blessed with a collective year of renewed energy, meaningful growth, and the realization of the tremendous potential within each and every one of us.

Wishing the entire MTA community a *kesiva v'chasima tova*!



Choosing to See: Free Will as a Paradigm of Teshuvah

Free will, the ability to choose, is one of the most powerful tools Hashem has given us for growth and teshuvah. As we enter the Yamim Noraim, the opening pesukim of Parshas Re'eh offer a profound framework for understanding both the nature of our choices and the way those choices can transform our lives.

רֵאֵה אֲנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה. אֶת הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֵל מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם... וְהַקְלָלָה אִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ...

"See, I place before you today blessing and curse: the blessing, if you heed the commandments of Hashem your God... and the curse, if you do not heed..." (Devarim 11:26–28)

These pesukim are among the most familiar in Sefer Devarim, yet upon closer examination, they are surprisingly enigmatic. Several fundamental questions immediately arise.

First, why is this *posuk* necessary at all? Moshe Rabbeinu has spent the entirety of *Sefer Devarim* and much of *Parshas Eikev* delivering one of the Torah's most passionate demands for faithfulness, as we can see from the second perek of Shema.

Klal Yisrael has already been reminded repeatedly that obedience to Hashem brings blessing while disobedience brings tragedy. Every young child knows the *mitzvos* are good and *aveiros* are bad. What does this brief introduction add?

Second, why does the Torah begin with the command "Re'eh"—"See"? Throughout *Sefer Devarim*, Moshe repeatedly implores the nation to *hear*: "Shema Yisrael." Why, here, is seeing emphasized instead of hearing?

Finally, what exactly are we being asked to see? The blessing and curse themselves are not visible objects. What is the Torah directing our vision toward?

These questions reveal that these opening verses are introducing something far deeper than another review of reward and punishment. They invite us to reconsider what blessing and curse truly mean. More importantly, they force us to confront how we can make better choices to have a fulfilling and meaningful Yamim Noraim.

There Are No More Stickers

One remarkable approach is offered by Rav David of Lelov, who understands these verses not merely as a discussion of consequences, but as a description of spiritual maturity and about how we make decisions.

Children require incentives. Chazal themselves teach that education often begins שלא לשמה, as the Gemara in

Pesachim tells that "They said about Rabbi Akiva that he would distribute roasted grain and nuts to children on Erev Pesach so that they would remain awake and ask questions." In *Hilchos Teshuvah* 10:5, the Rambam writes, "We teach children... to serve Hashem out of fear and in order to receive reward, until their understanding matures..."

We reward children for good behavior so that they develop positive habits and eventually learn to value goodness for its own sake. External rewards serve an important educational purpose. Since their power of *bechira* is not formed and their ability to make choices that are best for them is limited, we need to provide them external incentives to encourage them toward the path that is best for them. It is interesting to note that when the Rambam formulated this most fundamental principle in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (at the beginning of chapter 5), instead of referring to freedom of will as *bechira chofshis*, as it is commonly referred to, he calls it "*reshus*."

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ה הלכה ג:

ודבר זה עיקר גדול הוא והוא עמוד התורה והמצוה שנאמר ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים, וכתוב ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום, כלומר שהרשות בידכם וכל שיחפץ האדם לעשות ממעשה בני האדם עושה בין טובים בין רעים, ומפני זה הענין נאמר מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם, כלומר שאין הבורא כופה בני האדם ולא גוזר עליהן לעשות טובה או רעה אלא הכל מסור להם.

Moreinu Rav Herschel Schachter

shlit"a explained that in one of his *drashos* for *aseres yemei teshuvah*, Rav Soloveitchik suggested that perhaps the Rambam meant to bring out the following idea: in modern Hebrew, we refer to the elections as "*bechira*". At election time, we are presented with a fixed set of candidates (or parties), and we choose from among them. Man, however, not only has "*bechira chofshis*" to choose from among the various options which are presented to him, but he even has "*reshus*", i.e. the ability to choose a path in life which was never even presented to him as an option.

Moshe Rabbeinu, however, is speaking not to children but to a nation that has witnessed the greatest revelations in history. They saw the splitting of the Yam Suf, they ate the mann every morning, they drank from Miriam's miraculous well. They stood at Har Sinai and heard the voice of Hashem.

After forty years of unparalleled Divine providence, Moshe tells them, in effect: "*There are no more stickers for being a good boy.*" You have reached adulthood; now you must make hard choices about choosing *Bracha* or *Klalah*.

Moshe is telling them, the issue is no longer merely whether *mitzvos* produce reward. The issue is whether you are prepared to do what is right because it is true, because it is Hashem's will, even when the reward is distant or invisible.

This insight has profound implications as Elul approaches.

There is an idea attributed to Rav Volbe and other Baalei Mussar that a person should not ignore the physical self, that healthy spiritual growth includes acknowledging the needs of the body and, at times, even rewarding it for spiritual accomplishment. Even spiritual rewards are important but not the focus, as Chazal write in *Pirkei Avos*, "Do not be like servants who serve their master for the sake of a reward; rather, be like servants who serve without condition of reward, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you." Those rewards remain secondary. Mature *avodas Hashem* ultimately means doing what is right because it is right.

Every person knows the areas of life where this challenge appears. Sometimes it is a *mitzvah* between man and Hashem, sometimes it is between man and his fellow man. Sometimes it means having a difficult conversation that we continue postponing, sometimes it means apologizing, sometimes it means confronting a painful weakness. Sometimes, that difficult conversation is with Hashem Himself.

For example: Mr. Gustavo Razzetti writes of "conversation debt", the emotional burden created when necessary conversations are continually delayed. The longer they are postponed, the heavier they become. Relationships slowly deteriorate not because of one dramatic event but because unresolved issues are allowed to fester.

The same phenomenon exists spiritually. We know there are areas where we need to return, repair, and reconnect. Yet because the first step is uncomfortable, we delay it until the distance grows larger.

Moshe's message is that maturity means choosing *Bracha*, not because someone is offering a reward, but because closeness to Hashem is itself the greatest reward.

Why "See"?

The second question concerns the Torah's unusual opening word. Why does Moshe say "See" rather than "Hear"? The Chasam Sofer, drawing upon the Gemara in Kiddushin, offers a profound explanation.

The Gemara teaches:

לעולם יראה אדם עצמו כאילו חציו חייב וחציו זכאי... עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות.

A person should always view himself and indeed the entire world as perfectly balanced between merit and guilt. One additional *mitzvah* can tip not only himself but all of creation toward merit.

According to the Chasam Sofer, this explains why the *parashah* begins with the singular "Re'eh." Before Moshe speaks to the nation collectively, he addresses each individual personally. See that your choices matter, that your actions are never insignificant,

and that every *mitzvah* has cosmic consequences.

This perspective fundamentally changes how one lives. Many people never achieve greatness, not because they lack talent but because they underestimate the significance of their own actions. They convince themselves that someone else will solve the problem.

History repeatedly demonstrates otherwise. Every transformative institution begins with one individual who believes that one person's actions matter. That is Moshe's challenge to Klal Yisrael, Re'eh. See yourself as someone capable of changing the world and make the decisions that will get you there.

Learning to See Blessing

A second interpretation of "Re'eh" emerges from the writings of Rav Menachem Ben Zion Zacks. He suggests that the Torah is teaching us not merely to choose blessing but first to recognize it. How a person sees the world profoundly shapes how he lives within it. A person who views life exclusively through the lens of disappointment eventually loses hope.

A person who trains himself to recognize Hashem's blessings even amidst genuine hardship develops resilience, gratitude, and spiritual confidence. This does not mean denying suffering. Judaism has never demanded emotional dishonesty. On Tishah B'Av we mourn with complete sincerity.

We cry over destruction that has not yet been repaired. Yet even mourning contains hope.

The Gemara in *Taanis* teaches: **כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה** - Whoever truly mourns Jerusalem will merit **seeing** its future joy.

Rabbi Akiva could laugh when others cried because he understood that the fulfillment of one prophecy guaranteed the fulfillment of the next. The foxes wandering through the ruins were not evidence that redemption would never come; they were evidence that history remained under Divine direction.

This perspective also echoes through our *tefillos* on Yom Tov:

...ובכן צדיקים יראו וישמחו. The righteous "see" and therefore rejoice. Their joy is not naïve optimism. It is the result of disciplined vision. They have learned to recognize Hashem's hand even when His purposes remain partially hidden.

Writing in 1977, Rav Menachem Ben Zion Sacks argued that one could not honestly observe the rebirth of Eretz Yisrael with its extraordinary agricultural flourishing, national revival, and miraculous survival through repeated wars without recognizing unmistakable expressions of Divine blessing. The ability to notice blessings is itself a spiritual achievement. As Elul approaches, perhaps one of the most transformative exercises is simply learning to identify the countless blessings already present in our lives.

What Is *Berachah*?

Having explored why Moshe commands us to "see," we can now ask a more fundamental question. What exactly is the blessing that Hashem places before us?

The answer depends upon how we define one of the Torah's most familiar words. The Rishonim debate the precise meaning of the word **ברוך**. Among the most influential explanations is that of Rav Chaim of Volozhin in *Nefesh HaChaim*, who connects the word *berachah* to the word *bereichah*, a reservoir or flowing pool of water.

When we "bless" Hashem, we are certainly not adding anything to Him. Rather, we are expressing our desire that His Divine goodness continue to flow into creation without interruption. Accordingly, *berachah* is not simply material success. It is a continued connection to Hashem, the source from whom all blessing flows. If this is true, then the opposite also becomes clear.

The Gemara, *Sotah*, writes, "From the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed... every day, curses (*klalah*) increase more than the previous day." The Ramban explains that these are the curses found in the "Tochacha," the rebuke found in *Parashas Ki Savo*. Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l explained that the Ramban means to say that these curses affect every aspect of our physical day

and are pervasive in our life. It will only end when Moshiach comes and ends the current exile. Rav Shapiro writes: "[In exile] our lives are antithetical to what they should be in every aspect.

Kelalah is not merely punishment. It is distance, alienation, disconnection from the Source of life itself. The greatest blessing is closeness to Hashem. The greatest curse is living disconnected from Him.

This understanding transforms the opening verses of *Parshas Re'eh*. Moshe is not simply describing rewards and punishments. He is describing two fundamentally different ways of living. One life is oriented toward connection. The other toward separation. Every choice either deepens or weakens that relationship.



Trapping Bees in the Succah

Part of the experience of dwelling in the sukkah, especially when Sukkos falls out earlier in the year, is dealing with bees that enter into the sukkah. For those with a bee allergy, the presence of bees is a serious problem, while for most others it is an inconvenience that makes the experience less enjoyable.

One possible solution to this problem is to trap the bees using one's cups or other eating utensils. Is this permissible to do on Yom Tov, and is there any difference between Shabbos and Yom Tov as to how one can deal with these uninvited guests?

Trapping on Shabbos and Yom Tov

Trapping a living creature is one of the 39 *melachos* of Shabbos known as *tzeidah* (or *tzad*). It was performed in the *Mishkan* since they utilized skins of rams and similar animals that had to be trapped. In order to violate this *melacha* on a Torah level the animal had to be free beforehand, and it is the type of animal that people are generally interested in trapping, because they want to have it. On top of this, there is a second issue of *melacha she'ein tzrichah l'gufah*. This refers to a scenario in which one performs a *melacha* normally, but for a different purpose than it was done in the *Mishkan* (or that it is normally done). The purpose of the *melacha* of *tzeidah* is to procure the animal that he been trapped, but in this case one has no interest in the bee that he placed underneath the cup, thus making this a *melacha she'ein tzrichah l'gufah*. The halacha for such a *melacha* is generally understood to be *patur min haTorah* and *assur mi'd'rabbanan*. Additionally, the *Shulchan Aruch* (316:2) rules that certain very slow animals such as a snail or a tortoise are not subject to *tzeidah* since they are considered captured

on their own, as they can simply be taken at any time.¹

Based on these fundamentals, it would seem that trapping bees should be *assur mi'd'rabbanan* on Shabbos and Yom Tov, since they are not normally trapped, but require effort in order to do so. Trapping them would also be considered a *melacha she'ein tzrichah l'gufah*, which is still forbidden.

Increasing the Confinement

The gemara in Shabbos (106b) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (316:1) explain that if one has an animal that is already trapped in a larger area, but is not immediately accessible in one lunge, and one traps it into a smaller area, he has violated *tzeidah*. For example, if a bird flies into a room, and one subsequently traps it in a cage, even though it would already stuck in the room one has violated the *melacha* on a Torah level, since he could not have grabbed it in a single lunge prior to its increased confinement. This would certainly seem to apply to bees, which makes it seem that they may not be trapped on Shabbos or Yom Tov.

Why Might it be Permitted?

Despite everything mentioned until this point, there is room to suggest that one would be permitted to trap bees in one's sukkah on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The gemara in Shabbos (107b) teaches that if one traps a mosquito on Shabbos he is *patur*.

Tosfos (s.v. *hatzad*) explains that it is still *assur mi'd'rabbanan*, but if the mosquito is about to bite, one is permitted to remove it because of the *tza'ar* involved. This is despite the fact that when one picks up the mosquito he has fully trapped it.

The Rosh offers a different reason why one is permitted to remove the mosquito. He considers one who removes the mosquito to be on the level of *misaseik* regarding the *melacha* of *tzeidah*. Since one's entire intention is to get the mosquito off of him, his *kavanah* to trap it is considered below even the level of *melacha she'ein tzrichah l'gufah*, and it is fully permitted. The *Shulchan Aruch* (116:9) rules that one may only remove a mosquito if it is on his skin and is biting him, implying that he accepts the opinion of Tosfos. The *Biur Halacha* (s.v. *nechashim*) wonders why the gemara and the *Shulchan Aruch* distinguish between trapping a (non venomous) snake, which is permitted even if it is not about to bite, and a mosquito, which is only permitted if it is about to bite. He explains that a snake is likely to cause a great deal of pain if it bites someone, and one is therefore permitted to trap it in order to avoid being harmed by it. However a mosquito bite causes only mild discomfort and one is therefore not permitted to trap it to avoid being bitten.

Applying this to a Bee

It seems that the question of whether one is permitted to trap a bee on Shabbos depends on whether one compares it to a

mosquito – which is considered a nuisance capable of causing minor discomfort, or a snake – which causes significant pain. Although one can certainly understand that being bitten by a snake is more painful than being stung by a bee, the two experiences can be deemed similar, and are both permitted to trap. Indeed Rav Dovid Ribiat (39 Melachos p. 874) and Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen (The Shabbos Home II:351) both permit trapping bees that are bothering him in the sukkah, for this reason.²

Rav Avi Lebowitz argues that bees should be considered on a similar level to mosquitoes and are not permitted to be trapped. However, he recommends that on Yom Tov that is not Shabbos one should kill them rather than trap them. This is because the melacha of shechitah is permitted on Yom Tov, which includes killing anything for the sake of improving one's Yom Tov. However, one can argue that recommending that one kill the bees instead of trapping them can lead to people mistakenly thinking that one is permitted to kill them on Shabbos as well, which is certainly not the case. Rather the better advice is to trap them, since those who permit doing so permit it on Shabbos as well.

1 - There are other issues such a muktzah that must be taken into account when catching such animals.

2 - Although Rav Ribiat suggests setting up bee traps outside the sukkah before Yom Tov to avoid getting involved in this question. He further recommends releasing the bee when one is finished using the sukkah to avoid suffocating it. This would only be a problem on Shabbos, as is explained above.



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Yaakov Weinstock, '22

Trust the Process: What the Philadelphia 76ers Taught Me About Yamim Noraim

In 2013, one of the most profound sayings came from the most unlikely place. In 2013, the Philadelphia 76ers took on a task that no one else wanted to do. Sam Hinkie, the General Manager of the 76ers at the time, came to the decision that it was time for the Sixers to undergo a rebuild. Hinkie's understanding was that in order for the team to become its best, it would require the complete destruction of the team they had and the development and acquisition of new young talent through high draft picks. This led Philadelphia to some of its worst years in history, as they went three seasons straight with under 20 wins in each season.

However, through this terrible time for Sixers fans, a phrase became popular. It was a phrase that provided hope for Sixers fans everywhere, and that phrase was: **"Trust the Process."** While things seem tremendously terrible now and the team is not where anyone wants them to be, realize that there is a process ahead of improvement and constant building. While it seems unlikely that this was the intention of anyone in the Sixers organization, they uncovered and made popular a deep truth within Judaism that is fundamental to how we approach our *Avodah* of the *Yamim Noraim* as a whole.

I would like to start by presenting a tension I personally have with these days. Some might agree with the validity of this tension, while others might argue against it. The *Yamim Noraim*, starting from *Rosh Hashanah*, through the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and through *Yom Kippur*, are a time of tremendous growth and spiritual elevation. The halachos of these days facilitate our becoming the best version of ourselves. This includes the halachos found in the Shulchan Aruch and the Rama, where even

those who are generally less stringent regarding the laws of *Pas Akum* are mandated to act more stringently. On *Yom Kippur*, it is clear that one of the goals of everything we do is to reach the level of angels and to reach such a high level of closeness with Hashem. It is an amazing process and a privilege that we get to experience every single year.

However, the tension that I experience is that after *Yom Kippur*, we go back to normal life. We eat, drink, and wear leather shoes. Some of us shed the stringencies that we practiced during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Was it all fake? Was the growth that we thought we made all just a facade? How can we simply go back to normal? What is the purpose of reaching such a high level through the Torah's own process of the *Yamim Noraim* if it is a level that for us is not sustainable? What is the point of such an *Avodah*?

To perhaps answer this question, we might have to dig deep into a different halacha. The Gemara teaches in *Maseches Kerisus* (7b), and it is assumed also in halacha in the Rambam (*Hilchos Shegagos*

3:10), that if one is in need of atonement, either from bringing a *Korban Chatas* for those *aveiros* that qualify or from the atonement provided by *Yom Kippur*, the atonement is only gained if one believes in the atonement that each *kapparah* respectively accomplishes.

However, Rav Soloveitchik (Shiurei HaGRI"D, *Maseches Kerisus* 7a, p. 122) points out that the Rambam only writes this halacha—that atonement is only achieved on *Yom Kippur* if one believes in *Yom Kippur's* ability to provide that atonement—in *Hilchos Shegagos*. But in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, the Rambam only mentions that *Yom Kippur* does not provide atonement for someone who does not do *teshuvah*, but makes no mention anywhere in *Hilchos Teshuvah* about needing to believe in *teshuvah*. Why doesn't he bring it in *Hilchos Teshuvah* as he does in *Hilchos Shegagos*?

Rav Soloveitchik suggests that the Rambam understands that the requirement to believe in the effect of *Yom Kippur* and the atonement it can provide is not an obligation within the broad mitzvah of *teshuvah*, but rather it is an independent halacha that one must believe in *Yom Kippur's* ability to achieve *kapparah* in order for *Yom Kippur* to be effective.

I would like to perhaps extend Rav Soloveitchik's idea one step further with one more question. What exactly is this *halacha*? How do we explain this independent requirement of belief in the *kapparah* in order for the *kapparah* to work? If *Yom Kippur* has the ability to atone through *teshuvah*, why do my beliefs about it matter if belief in the *kapparah* is not integral to the *teshuvah* process itself?

The Mishnah tells us in the eighth *perek* of *Maseches Yoma* that different *aveiros* warrant different

processes to achieve *kapparah*. In the Mishnah, the atonement of *Yom Kippur* is viewed and presented as part of the process of *kapparah*, along with its other aspects, such as *teshuvah* and other forms of punishment. What is clear from the Mishnah is that the belief in the *kapparah* of *Yom Kippur* means that while I don't see how the day itself can change me, I can understand that there is a process to achieving *kapparah*, and *Yom Kippur* is part of that process to fix and uplift my relationship with Hashem.

The requirement to believe in the effectiveness of the atonement, in my humble opinion, is a demonstration of our endorsement of the idea that spiritual growth is a process. Sometimes I might not see it, and I might not notice it, but each step is just as valuable. Therefore, perhaps the reason why this *halacha* is separate from *Hilchos Teshuvah* is because internalizing the idea that spiritual growth is a process isn't part of *teshuvah*; rather, it is a prerequisite to a person embarking on the journey of *teshuvah*, of repairing and improving one's relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam. It cannot be part of the *teshuvah* process because a real *teshuvah* process isn't sustainable without this idea.

This can also give us insight into the broader *Avodah* of the *Yamim Noraim*. As we explained above, during the days of the *Yamim Noraim*, all of us are at our spiritual best; we reach the level of angels. However, the goal of the *Yamim Noraim* and *Yom Kippur* is for us to have a small glimpse into what we can achieve and the spiritual heights that are within us. However, it is not sustainable during that small period of time, and it isn't supposed to be.

Even though after *Yom Kippur* we are no longer angels and we go forward with our regular lives, we must not feel that it was fake. It is real, but we must trust the process in our growth. Real growth is not completely sustainable in short amounts of time, like ten days. To reach our potential, we must realize that it is a lifelong process, and if the day of *Yom Kippur* can teach us anything, it is that a prerequisite to embarking on this lifelong process of growth and closeness to Hashem is to simply believe in the process and understand that growth takes time.

Yom Kippur gives us a glimpse of who we can become, and our job is to embark on that growth through the process of Torah and mitzvos. However, it only begins if we trust the process.

We should all experience a tremendous spiritual upliftment from these days of the *Yamim Noraim*, and we should all be zoche to internalize the lesson of the Philadelphia 76ers and, in our own journeys, to "Trust the Process."



The prayer of נעילה

At the end of every *Yom Kippur*, we say the special tefillah of *Ne'ilah*—the last desperate cry for forgiveness to Hashem before He closes the gates of Heaven. However, the exact nature of the tefillah of *Ne'ilah* is a subject of debate between two completely different understandings.

The Gemara in *Yoma* 87b brings a machlokes between

Rav and Shmuel regarding what the *tefillah* of *Ne'ilah* actually entails. According to Rav, the added *tefillah* actually requires an *Amidah*—*Shemoneh Esrei*. However, Shmuel argues and says that the added *tefillah* only needs an extra set of *Vidui*. This *machlokes* can be explained as follows: Do we view it as a completely new and independent *tefillah*, or merely as an add-on to the original and routine prayer schedule? Based on this, Shmuel holds that *Ne'ilah* is an expansion of the regular services, and Rav holds that the prayer of *Ne'ilah* mandates an entirely new and independent prayer, and therefore a new *Amidah* must be recited.

R' Moshe Taragin expands this discussion by looking at the Gemara in *Megillah* 22a. When discussing the amount of *aliyos* read each Torah-reading day, the Rabbanan set a principle of three *aliyos*, and certain days get extra, with *Shabbos* having the most at seven. The Gemara contemplates the amount of *aliyos* on a *ta'anis tzibbur* (which in Talmudic times, just like *Yom Kippur*, had its own *tefillas Ne'ilah*). Since there was no *Korban Mussaf* brought on a regular fast day (which was the standard prerequisite for adding an *aliyah*, as seen on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*), the Gemara says there is little reason to add an *aliyah*. However, the Gemara also says that since there was a "*Tefillas Mussaf*," which many Rishonim say refers to the added *Ne'ilah*, this can be enough to add extra *aliyos* to the *Yom Kippur* reading of the Torah.

This discussion can apply to our question in the following way. If *Ne'ilah* is just an add-on to our regular *tefillas hayom*, then there is no reason to add extra *aliyos* to the leining. But if you hold that it's an entirely new prayer in itself, then you can consider it a "*Tefillas Mussaf*," and there would be a motive to add extra *aliyos*.

We now have a technical question about *Ne'ilah*: What time of day should it be said? The Gemara Yerushalmi in *Brachos* says that according to Rav Yochanan, you *daven* it when the gates to the *Beis Hamikdash* close. According to Rav, you say it during sunset, when the gates to Heaven are closing, which makes it so that much of *Ne'ilah* is actually said after the fast ends! This works if you hold that *Ne'ilah* is merely an extension of the *tefillas hayom*, then it would be completely fine to continue saying it even after the fast has ended. However, if *Ne'ilah* is truly its own independent *tefillah* that is special to *Yom Kippur*, then how would we be able to say it after *Yom Kippur* actually ends?!

Several answers are suggested to answer this contradiction. The Rambam and Shulchan Aruch rule that *Ne'ilah* be finished before sunset, so based on this, the problem never arises. The She'eilas Ya'avetz holds that just as the *avodah* of the day may be completed at night, *Ne'ilah* finishing at night still counts as a *tefillah* of the day. Alternatively, a *tefillah* may be defined by when it begins, just as a meal started on *Shabbos* still has *Retzei* said in *Bircas Hamazon*; *Ne'ilah* is a *tefillah* of *Yom Kippur* because it started on *Yom Kippur*.

Perhaps Rav is teaching us the deepest lesson of *Ne'ilah*. According to Rav, *Ne'ilah* can stand as its own *tefillah* and can even stretch past the end of *Yom Kippur* itself. This shows that the *avodah* of *Yom Kippur* doesn't shut off the moment the fast ends. The gates of Heaven may be closing, but the work of *teshuvah* stays with us. *Ne'ilah* reminds us that we always have one more chance to knock on the gates and reach Hashem before they close. *Gemar chatimah tovah*.



Chanan Seltzer, '27

Yom Teruah to Rosh Hashanah: A Glimpse Into the Ever Growing Yom Tov

A holiday on the first of Tishrei only appears twice in the Torah. It is introduced only as *Yom Teruah*, a day of blowing, and is described as a day of rest (*Vayikra* 23:24–25). Additionally, a set of offerings is listed for the first of the seventh month (*Bamidbar* 29:1–6). *Yom Teruah* is never listed in the Torah as having importance to the calendar; it was only later on that this name was adopted. In fact, there are multiple important dates for the calendar year in *Tanach* that are not the first of the seventh month. For example, when Hashem gave Moshe *Rosh Chodesh*, Nissan was listed as the head of the year (*Shemos* 12:2). Additionally, *Sukkos* is listed as being around the turn of the year, which the Ibn Ezra explains is based on an agricultural calendar that falls around the 10th of Tishrei (*Shemos* 34:22 and Ibn Ezra there). The only time the word *Rosh Hashanah* is used in *Tanach* is in *Yechezkel*, where he gets a prophecy on the Tenth of the Month in *Rosh Hashanah*, and Rashi, along with others, explain that this refers to *Yom Kippur* and takes place on the *Rosh Hashanah* for *Yovel* (*Yechezkel* 40:1 and Rashi *Birosh Hashanah*). So, in Torah and Navi, the only things mentioned about the first of the seventh are blowing, rest, and bringing special sacrifices.

The first source for a *seudah* on the first of the seventh takes place all the way in *Nechemiah* during the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In *Nechemiah*, they read

the Torah on this day, and afterwards, Nechemiah announces to have a feast because of the holiness of the day (*Nechemiah* 8:2–12). Now, whether the feast is for *Yom Teruah* or *Rosh Chodesh* is unclear, and even so, we still have no mention of Rosh Hashanah. The only other time a *seudah* around this time of year is mentioned is in the story of Gedaliah, but all we know about that is that it happened in Tishrei; no date is mentioned, and more importantly, no definitive reason is mentioned (*Yirmiyah* 41:1). To put it shortly, *Tanach* rarely mentions the first of the seventh, and while blowing *shofar* and resting like a *Yom Tov* is straightforward, the existence of a *seudah* is questionable, and there is little to no evidence that it was ever considered the Rosh Hashanah it's known as today.

Fast forward 500 years straight to the Mishnah, the next reliable Jewish source, and suddenly you see a different story. The Mishnah goes into extensive detail on the halachos of Rosh Hashanah. Here there is one key detail: the Mishnah refers to this date as Rosh Hashanah, not *Yom Teruah* or any other name (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:3). Not only is Rosh Hashanah part of the list of names you can call it, like how *Tu Bishvat* is also called Rosh Hashanah, but Rosh Hashanah has become the main title for the *Yom Tov*. Not only is Rosh Hashanah a name of *Yom Teruah*, Rosh Hashanah has become the main identity of the day. This trend continues through the Gemara and onward all the way to the present day.

All this begs the question: What happened during those 500 years that caused this holiday to change so drastically? Now, despite the research put into this paper, the truth is that this article has barely touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of these 500 years, and so far, the research has yielded a couple

of resolutions, none of which are fully disprovable and none of which are fully satisfactory. To my knowledge, there are three main solutions suggested. The first suggestion is that really, it was always Rosh Hashanah and the *Tanach* hid it because it resembles calendars from other societies at the time, for example, Babylon, and might be confused with pagan ideas. The problems with this theory are that the Babylonian calendar started in the spring, and there is little to no evidence for this connection between the calendars.

Another suggestion is to look at the writings of that time. There are a handful of sources that do cover that time period, and they do shed light on the opinions at the time. For instance, the Book of Jubilees states that Rosh Hashanah is the date that Avraham began thinking about Hashem; this is the first source that Rosh Hashanah connects back with the forefathers. Additionally, Philo, a Jewish philosopher in Alexandria, writes about how this was a day of trumpets and feasts. The Dead Sea Scrolls record a Rosh Hashanah prayer from the time. Last but not



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10TH - 12TH GRADE SHABBATON
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least, the first source to mention us being judged and this day being the first of the year is found in the Biblical Antiquities. There are two main issues with these sources. The first issue is that these aren't considered *halachically* accurate sources and shouldn't be used to draw conclusions. The second and more important problem with these sources is that they never actually answer the question: we can see how it developed, but the why remains unanswered.

The third and final solution comes from Rabbi Abraham Zacuto in his book, *Sefer Hayuhasin*; he dates it to Alexander the Great. When Alexander conquered the known world, a couple of things ended up happening. Since the entire world had been conquered, the calendar based on Alexander the Great's rule became a universal calendar. The Rambam even discusses using this calendar for documents (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Gerushin* 1). Alexander, a non-Jewish king, starts his year on the first of the seventh, and his calendar becomes the universal calendar, causing that date to be considered Rosh Hashanah to everyone. Now, this theory is loaded with issues and controversy but is one of the few solutions given.

Now, you've seen the question, you read my answers, what do you think the solution is?



Kaleb Lerner, '28

The Power of Prayer

Every year, during Unesaneh Tokef, we say, "B'Rosh Hashanah yichasevu, u'v'Yom Tzom Kippur yichasemu." This line can be translated as, "On Rosh Hashanah he will write them, and on the fast day of Yom Kippur he will seal them." This line is in

reference to our *din*, or judgment, as to how our year should turn out. Every stroke of good luck, every misfortune, and anything else that will happen to us is seemingly sealed with finality at this time.

Isru Chag Yom Kippur, however, comes, and we start exhibiting a seemingly strange behavior. We start making dozens of new *bakashos* in our *tefillah*. Many of these, we ask to be fulfilled soon, or even almost immediately. This is seemingly nonsensical behavior. We already put in our *teshuvah*, *tefillos*, and *tzedakah* during the *Yamim Noraim*, and now our

“
**We are able to
bring a claim to
Hakadosh Baruch
Hu that although
this decree was
made, it was
made for a
different version
of us.**

gezeiros have been set in stone. Why should we expect what has already been “sealed” to be affected in any way simply because we want it to happen and ask it of Hashem?

In *Sefer Halkkarim, Ma'amar Daled*: Yud Ches, Rav Yosef Albo wrote that, “*V'zeh she'haym omrim, she'lo yimalet ha'davar machlokah. Im she'nigzar me'Hashem tov mah al ish mah, oh lo nigzar. V'im nigzar ein tzarich tefilah, v'im lo nigzar*

each to'il ha'tfilah l'shanos ratzon Hashem...” Here he explains that one who doubts the power of prayer might have this exact train of thought, where seemingly prayer is futile, as things have simply been decreed for you or have not, and it is impossible for us to change the will of Hashem.

The answer he gives as to the nature of *tefilah* is explained through the following *mashal*. If a king were to declare a reward or punishment for all the uncircumcised, and a man who had been uncircumcised gives himself a circumcision before the time at which the decree takes effect, the decree will have no hold over him.

He explains how this same concept can be seen by both the descendants of Eli, as well as Achav. Upon the former, there was a decree that they would die young, and upon the latter, there was some other “evil” decree. The descendants of Eli were convinced to begin Torah study by Rava, as it would have the ability to override the decree. Achav decided to humble himself before Hashem, and he was also spared. Both of them made a change that allowed their decrees to have no effect over them.

Similarly, although everyone gets a decree during the *Yamim Noraim*, through prayer and good acts, we become changed people. At that point, we are able to bring a claim to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that although this decree was made, it was made for a different version of us. A version of us that was deserving of that decree, while now, we are deserving of something better. While this would seemingly contradict Hashem's infallibility in His decrees, Rav Albo explains that in fact, the Divine will was for the person's decree to only persist if he did not change, as prayer's purpose is to change a person, and through that, change said person's divine decree.



Tvi Harman, '28

The Difference Between Holidays

On the surface *Succos* doesn't fit into the theme of the other holidays in *Tishrei*. *Rosh Hashanah* is a really serious and important holiday. One of the main reasons is that Hashem gets crowned king and with that the judgement process starts. Hashem opens the book of life and reviews each person's actions and what they did during that year. This tension continues past *Rosh Hashana* into the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* which climaxes with *Yom Kippur*. During this time many people are much more careful and add many *chumros*. For example some people will only eat *pas yisrael* when during the rest of the year they are more lenient.

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year. We reach great spiritual heights, to the point we become like *malachim*, with no need to eat. We spend all the entire day pleading with Hashem to forgive our *aveiros*.

On the other hand, *Succos* is a happy holiday. Constantly when the *Torah* references *Succos* it pairs it with the phrase happiness. The mood and behaviors are not that of awestruck subjects honoring their king, or terrified people begging for forgiveness, but rather normal people celebrating a harvest.

The answer involves challenging the face value of the mood. Should we be scared on *Rosh Hashanah* because Hashem is deciding what will happen to you for this year or should we be *b'simcha* that a new year is a new beginning, on top of the fact that it is a *Yom Tov*. This question shows itself in the two iconic parts of the day: blowing shofar and dipping the apple in honey. Blowing shofar

is a call to *teshuva* and therefore a reminder that Hashem is now the king and about to begin judgement. On the other hand, dipping the apples in honey is a form of celebration and showing that the upcoming year will be a great year.

This duality is in clear contrast to the other holidays. *Yom Kippur* is clearly a day full of intensity, with *minhagim* to spend the entire day in shul, davening. While there is certainly some happiness since there is forgiveness, it is certainly not the main focus we have on that day. Conversely, *Succos* is a holiday filled with joy, being referenced in the tefillah as *z'man simchateinu*. Though *Sukkot* does contain *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which has an intensity of being when the book of judgement is closed, once again that isn't the main focus.

The answer to the seeming contradiction by *Rosh Hashanah* is that there is no contradiction. *Simcha* and *yirah* aren't incompatible opposites, if they were you couldn't serve Hashem *b'simcha* and also have *yiras shamayim*. Instead they both stem from the same source. True happiness, joy, fulfillment, or contentment which *simcha* implies would all be meaningless therefore in a world where there is no G-d, because life would have no value. That means that the happiness stems from Hashem being omnipotent and omnipresent. Similarly *yiras shamayim* also stems from that very same fact.

In the end, it is clear that both are necessary, but the order is telling as to what the correct balance is. We start with an equal balance of both *yirah* and *simcha*. Then we shift to a heavy focus on *yirah* and then we have a heavy focus on *simcha*. While certainly *yiras shamayim* is

critical to serving Hashem in the correct way, in the day to day *simcha* is more important. This idea is further seen in the *Tochachah*, which again shows that *yirah* and *simcha* come from the same source, where all of the horrible curses come from not having served Hashem *b'simcha*.

Kesivah v'chasimah tova.



Mikey Fried, '28

True Transformation: Comparing Rosh Hashana to New Year's Day

Since the adoption of the Gregorian calendar by the British government in 1752, Americans have been accustomed to celebrating New Year's at the conclusion of every 365-day cycle. Nowadays, Americans partake in extravagant gatherings and indulge in various delicacies as they count down the seconds until the ball is ritually dropped in Times Square. Our minds envision beautiful images of fireworks celebrating the numerous achievements we have accomplished during the previous year. Simultaneously, we recognize that there are areas of our lives that need improvement and, consequently, are required to perform a careful analysis of the previous year and resolve to change a specific area of our lives for the upcoming months. Unfortunately, these resolutions tend to flee from our minds by the onset of the following morning, traditionally known as the "Quitter's Day" phenomenon. An estimated 88% of Americans experience a depletion of motivation to commit to their

unrealistic goals and are promptly burnt out by slow results. As a result, Americans are prone to finding themselves celebrating an identical New Year's the following year.

When comparing the essence of Rosh Hashanah to the ideals of American New Year's celebrations, it becomes evident that the Jewish holiday does not simply conclude the previous year. As the name connotes, Rosh Hashanah is, in reality, the beginning of a fresh year in which we affirm that we will filter out our faulty values and replace them with modified ones that are carefully customized to our potential. We are required to change our mindset and perspective through the lens of a willing servant of Hashem, even if this requires us to sift out our traits throughout the duration of the entire year, as opposed to simply entering the first day of the new year as a new person by default. In other words, Rosh Hashanah is not only about automatically entering the new year as a different person, but also about using the entirety of the year to change and further develop ourselves. Regardless of the number of resolutions we decide to create, we have a responsibility to cleanse all areas of our soul. One way to achieve this would be to focus on certain aspects of our lives before others. For example, we are given an entire month of opportunities to analyze our performance of Hashem's will, during which we have the ability to shift our attention to different dimensions of our relationships with others, ourselves, and the Master of the World. As mentioned previously, we truly have the entire year to perform such analyses.

It is crucial to properly understand the essence of *teshuvah* and how it contrasts with American resolutions. The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2 seemingly explains that effective repentance is primarily fulfilled by

projecting into the future and designing a program that won't include our previous evil ways. Building upon this idea, Ezra Landa, an avid learner of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University, offers substantive advice on executing successful change. Transformation can be accomplished by implementing a short window of introspection, during which one pledges to direct his actions for a limited amount of time toward his true purpose in life. While this may seemingly contradict the idea that one must perfect his performance throughout the entire day and not

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only during this short period of time, Ezra expounds that after this window of change concludes, one cannot deliberately choose to abandon the resolutions to which he committed. Instead, we are expected to aspire to live an authentic lifestyle throughout the entire day, but must understand that due to our imperfect desires to pursue futile earthly matters, we will very likely err at other points throughout the day. It is therefore incumbent upon us to dedicate a period of time to truly experience the real meaning of change and self-perfection.

To conclude, I will compare the sounds of Rosh Hashanah and New Year's by relaying the teachings of a tour guide at the Biblical Museum in Israel. Traditionally, Jews have been accustomed to using a ram's curved horn to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. However, according to the letter of the law, we are permitted to use various other species of animals whose horns grow straight up. But as many explain, we opt for the curved horns of a ram because it serves as a symbol of Akeidas Yitzchak, where the ram was sacrificed instead of Avraham's son. Furthermore, as many explain, the ram's horn produces the sound of bitter wails, similar to the crying of Sisera's mother when she hopelessly awaited the return of her son. Therefore, the tour guide explained, using straight horns, which tend to produce rather pleasant noises, would be inappropriate for Rosh Hashanah and would undermine the *shofar's* purpose as a wake-up call for the Jewish people. By contrast, Americans explode fireworks and light up the sky to celebrate their New Year. While fireworks celebrate the arrival of a new year, the *shofar* calls upon us to transform ourselves within it. It is our responsibility to never forget the true purpose and opportunity of Rosh Hashanah and to continue to yearn for a stronger connection with our Creator.

May we all be blessed with the strength to fight against our natural desires and instead direct our actions toward serving Hashem wholeheartedly. *Shanah Tovah!*



Avi Lerner, '02

From יראת שמים to אהבת השם

The arrival of the month of אלול brings with it many heartfelt emotions. If we are to look at ourselves during this time of introspection with a critical eye and take an honest accounting as the ימי הדין demand, a sense of fear, angst, and worry begins to weigh on our minds. Indeed, the גמרא in meseches Rosh Hashana (32b) teaches that we do not recite ראש השנה on הלל because the sifrei chaim and sifrei mesim are open. The Rambam, in his perush hamishnayos (4:6), adds further:

”לפי שהם ימי עבודה והכנעה ופחד ומורא מהשם ייראה ממנו”

The *yamim noraim*, as the title suggests, are a time of submission and fear. Rosh Hashana is also a day of *malchus*, of declaring that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is our king. But this, too, connotes a sense of trepidation, as the *gemara* in *Maseches Kesubos* (17a) *darshans* the *pasuk* in *Parshas Shoftim*:

”שום תשים עליך מלך, שתהא אימתו עליך”

The stature of a king and the regal nature of the throne dictate that there be an aura of fear as well. Certainly, what is true of a *melech basar v'dam* is true of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, the King of all kings!

But is fear of G-d really supposed to be the main driver of our *teshuvah*? Are we not also taught that Hashem is *Avinu* as well as *Malkeinu*? That Hashem is “*malei rachamim*?” While we approach the *yemei hadin* with fear, we also know that one is supposed to eat on Rosh Hashana and that the fear of the *Yom HaDin* should not overtake us and cause us to fast. On the contrary, we eat because we are confident that we will be victorious in our court case with G-d! What, then, is the place of *yiras shomayim*? What does it mean?

The *Gemara* in *Menachos* (43b) has a *drasha* on the *pasuk* – יְעַתֶּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהָאֵל – יְיָ שָׁמַל מִעֲמָךְ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָה אֶת־הָאֵל-יְיָ (Parshas Eikev 10:12) and explains that from here we learn that one should say 100 *berachos* a day. Chazal understand that the word “*ma*” sounds like the word “*meah*,” which means 100. In the words of Chazal, אל תקרי מה אלא מאה כלומר שחייב, ק'. Rav Avrohom Schorr cites the Shelah Hakadosh, who explained that whenever Chazal make a *derasha* like this, where they read the *pasuk* differently than its simple meaning (*Al tikri... ella...*), it is because they had difficulty with that simple meaning. What was troubling to Chazal here that made them look for an added level of interpretation to this *pasuk*? Rav Schorr explains (*Halekach v'Halibuv*, page 41) that Chazal were puzzled by the use of the term “*ma*” to describe our obligation to reach the spiritual heights of *yiras shomayim*. How can such a lofty concept be described in such a simple way? As if the *pasuk* is saying, “*Yiras shomayim* is easy to achieve, **WHAT'S** the big deal? This is really the only thing Hashem asks of you; that's it, just have *yiras shomayim*!” In fact, the *gemara* in *Megilla* (25a) notes, מְכַלֵּל דִּירְאָה מִלֵּתָא, “זוֹתֶרְתִּי הִיא.” The implication of this *pasuk* is that *yiras shomayim* is a minor matter. It is here that Chazal saw a *derasha* and understood that the *pasuk* that commands us to have fear of Hashem is also teaching us to constantly recite *berachos*. In other words, there is a connection between the concept of *berachos* and our *yiras Hashem*.

Rav Schorr explains that we are all familiar with the Rema's opening lines of the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 1:1): שׁוּיִתִּי ה' לנגדי תמיד הוא כלל גדול בתורה. A person is supposed to live his life knowing that at every moment he is before G-d. But, of course, this is no simple task, as we live in a world full of distractions. A world that wants to turn our attention in every direction, as long as we don't turn towards Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Rav Schorr points out that the very first topic discussed in Shas is the mitzvah of k'rias Sh'ma. The first masechta in our Torah Sheba'al Peh begins with the mitzvah of kabalas ol malchus shamayim, and that masechta is none other than Maseches Berachos! Perhaps this is a *remez* to the idea that one of the pathways toward *kabalas ol*

malchus shamayim is through the *berachos* that we make every day.

I have learned from my Rabbeim over the years that *yiras shamayim* is not necessarily “fear of heaven,” but instead connotes the “unknowability” of G-d. In human terms, fear can often come about from the unknown or from that which leaves us uncertain. Think about a child's fear of the dark, or a person's fear of change. When it comes to fear of heaven, perhaps we are trying to remind ourselves that we can never fully understand or know Hashem. How will the human mind ever grasp the full strength, power, or ubiquitous nature of Hashem? This is what *yiras shomayim* is. It is the acknowledgement of the greatness of G-d, an awareness that He is involved in every aspect of our lives and in every corner of this universe. This is something that we will never fully comprehend, and this places distance between us and the *Ribono Shel Olam*. Making *berachos* allows us to keep Hashem before us, keep Him close to us, while also acknowledging the distance between us and Him. We can avoid distraction and keep ourselves focused by constantly reminding ourselves of the *niflaos* of Hashem. We do this by making *berachos*. The *berachos* that are in the context of our *tefillah*, and the *berachos* that we recite before and after we eat. The *berachos* we make on our bodily functions and the *berachos* we make on the moon, on thunder, and on the passage of time. Hashem is there, in all parts of our lives, and to attempt to contemplate the true extent of Hashem's reach should leave us in awe. This may leave us with a sense of distance from Hashem, but perhaps it is here that we also find *ahavas Hashem*. Maybe in the *yirah* we also recognize that Hashem is watching over us and taking care of us. He created this world and this food and this planet for us. Perhaps we contemplate His power but also His compassion. Perhaps we reflect on His strength but also on His kindness. In this way, the constant reminders that *berachos* bring of *yiras Hashem* in fact lead us to *ahavas Hashem*. This is the continuum of אלול and the *yamim noraim*, the conclusion of which is Sukkos, a time when we feel the loving embrace of Hashem as we surround ourselves with the walls of the *sukkah*!



HIGH HOLIDAY HUMOR

1

Why did the shofar join a band?
Because it wanted to blow
everyone away!

2

Why did the sukkah get invited
to every party?
Because it was always a
great place to hang out!

3

Why did the lulav get a promotion?
Because it always knew how
to branch out!

4

Why did the honey get invited
to Rosh Hashanah dinner?
Because it was such a
sweet guest!



כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם

Insights and Reflections on Forgiveness and Atonement



Rabbi Shimon Kerner, '77

Elul – “Moving on”

The date was August 21, 2017. The LA Dodgers were playing the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Rich Hill, who was a mediocre pitcher who had been bounced around the majors between a few teams, took the mound for the Dodgers. He was pitching a masterpiece, not only going 8 scoreless innings, but also having a perfect game going into the ninth. Unfortunately for him, his teammates didn't muster up much offense of their own and hadn't scored any runs either. Hill's third baseman made an error in the 9th and ended his perfect game. The 1st batter Hill faced in the bottom of the 10th was someone named Harrison. He hit a walk-off HR to left field, ending the no-hitter and ending the game 1-0. Hill said 2 things after the loss. First: "It falls on me, this one. One bad pitch, late

in the game like that, you need to make better pitches." Second: "Right now, I'm just looking forward to tomorrow. I know it sounds a little boring, but that's it. I'm looking forward to tomorrow, getting back in the gym and getting ready for my next outing."

What Hill did was take responsibility for the loss; he didn't play the blame game. He didn't complain about his teammates' poor offensive output. It's on ME. But perhaps **more importantly**, he didn't wallow in frustration, didn't get stuck in lamenting the no-hitter that could have been. He was able to move on.

We read in Parshas Shoftim of those who are exempt from going out to war. One who betrothed a wife but didn't marry yet, planted a vineyard, or bought a house but didn't have a chance to enjoy them. Then the Torah adds on: "He who is fearful and faint-hearted should return lest he melt the hearts of his brothers." Rashi cites a dispute over whether to take the words "faint-hearted" literally (R. Akiva) or whether it refers to someone who is fearful of his sins (R. Yossi HaGlili).

According to R. Yosi HaGlili, he's

worried about Divine retribution. The Gemara gives examples of the type of sins the *possuk* means, one of which is one who speaks between *tefillin* of the hand and head. The Kotzker Rebbe asks: Really? If so, we will have no soldiers! Everyone has some minor sin he knows he committed!

The Kotzker Rebbe answers: We are referring to someone who is afraid of עברות **שבידו** – he holds on to his sins – can't get past, can't move on. That's not healthy. It will discourage others. What a beautiful Elul message Rich Hill taught us unwittingly, and the Kotzker Rebbe fit into the *possuk*!

I would suggest that perhaps this is another meaning of the requirement in *Hilchos Teshuvah* of עזיבת החטא (abandoning the sin). It refers not only to resolving not to repeat the sin, but to being able to put it behind us and move on. I may have done bad, but I am not bad! The main barrier to teshuvah often stems from hopelessness. "It's too late for me to change. I've been stuck in the mud for too long; climbing out of the quicksand is impossible."

Yeshaya Hanavi says – יעזב רשע דרכו – abandon that misguided path; it's never too late for a Jew to return!

We must always remember Hashem's love for us is unconditional. Yes, there are rules and conditions which might make it appear that if you keep the laws, you're good; don't keep them, and you're in trouble. What type of unconditional love is that? The answer is obvious. Demands and unconditional love are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they go hand in hand. Hashem demands of us because He loves us. He expects because He cares. He wants to see us become the best person we can be. Mitzvos and rules help us to become that best person.

Unconditional love means the relationship is unbreakable. It doesn't mean our behavior is inconsequential. G-d's commandments are not conditions to earn G-d's love. They are **expressions** of that love. As the Midrash says, the *mitzvos* were given to refine people. Our loving Parent wants to see us thrive.

And if we don't, He still loves us. The way back is always open. That's why every year we have the High Holidays, days of repentance and renewal. We can fix what went wrong and start over.

Elul is such a special month. It's time for the 180, for the transformation. We need to take advantage of the month of – אני לדודי ודודי לי – the month about which Rav Shmelke of Nikolsberg said: "I don't want to leave this world because there's no Elul in Olam Haba, and what is life without Elul!?"

The Bnei Yissaschar (Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov) elaborates: There are 40 days from Rosh Chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur. That totals 960 hours. A *mikvah* has a minimum of 40 *saah* of water,

which totals 960 log. Just as the mikvah has the capacity to purify someone who is tamei, so too the 40 days of Elul can be transformative and uplifting, no matter where a person finds himself on the spiritual ladder. At the same time, just as if the mikvah is missing even 1 log, it is invalidated, so too we must not allow ourselves to squander the time of Elul. The Maharal explains why, unlike a regular Shabbos or Yom Tov, when we are permitted to accept the day early, we don't do this on Rosh Hashanah because then we would be denying ourselves some of the 960 hours of these 40 days.

Rav Dessler writes: "כל עבודת אלול היא להתלהב ולהרבות במעשי חיזוק, מקצה הרפיון שהיינו בו מקודם אל הקצה השני של התחזקות." The goal of the month of Elul is to transform from despair to hope, depression to optimism, weakness to strength. The result will be להצילך ולתת אויבך לפניך – the acrostic of Elul.

Bezrat Hashem, with the knowledge that Hashem is נותן יד לפושעים וימין פשוטה לקבל שבים, we will be encouraged to עזיבת החטא and do the 180 that Rav Dessler spoke of, and go from the התחזקות רפיון to the התחזקות. May we all be zoche to a כתיבה טובה, a year of *bracha v'hatzlocho*, shalom for all of BY, and *yeshua* and *geula*.



A Story of Teshuvah

During these days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, it is important that we work on our growth Bein Adam

LaMakom and *Bein Adam LeChaveiro*. I want to share a powerful story that can help us achieve this.

More than 1,000 years ago, there lived the great Rabbi Saadia Gaon. The Gaon had many hundreds of *talmidim*, and all of them had a great thirst to learn. Even a casual movement or word from their revered *Rebbi* provided them with a lesson for life.

One winter morning, two of his *talmidim* happened to be walking in the mountains when they heard a strange sound on the other side of a hill. When they approached the summit, they saw, to their great surprise, their *Rebbi* sitting on the snow-covered ground, weeping, praying, and engaging in other acts of *teshuvah*. What could a *tzaddik* such as their *Rebbi* possibly need to do *teshuvah* for? Could he have committed some *aveirah*, *Chas v'Shalom*? They hurriedly departed from that place. But later that day, they could no longer restrain themselves and asked their *Rebbi* what the scene they had witnessed had been about.

"I do that every day," he said to them. "Every day I do *teshuvah* and plead with Hashem to forgive my shortcomings and failings in my service of Him."

"Your failings?" they asked. "Of what failings does the Gaon speak?"

"Let me tell you a story," said Rabbi Saadia. "Something that happened to me a while ago."

"At one point in my life, I decided that all the honor and attention I was receiving from everyone around me was interfering with my service of the Creator. Hashem must be served with joy, and without complete humility, joy is impossible. So I decided that I would spend several months in a place where no

one recognized me.”

“I dressed in simple garments and began my self-imposed exile, wandering from town to town. One night, I was in a small inn run by an old Jew. He was a very kind and simple man, and we spoke for a while before I went to sleep. Early the next morning, after I had prayed *shacharis*, I bade him farewell and was again on my way.”

“What I didn’t know was that several of my *talmidim* had been searching for me, and several hours after I left the inn, they appeared, hot on my trail. ‘Did you see Rabbi Saadiah Gaon?’ they asked him. ‘We have reason to believe that he was here.’”

“‘Saadiah Gaon?’ replied the bewildered old Jew. ‘What would the great Rav Saadiah be doing in a place like mine? Rav Saadiah Gaon in my inn? No . . . I’m sure that you are very mistaken! There was no Rav Saadiah Gaon here!’”

“But when the young men described me to him and explained about my exile and ‘disguise,’ the old Jew grabbed his head and cried: ‘Oy! Rav Saadiah! Rav Saadiah was here! You are right! Oy, Oy!’ And he ran outside, jumped into his wagon, and began urging his horse to go as fast as possible in the direction I had taken.”

“After a short time, he caught up to me, jumped from his carriage, and fell at my feet, weeping: ‘Please forgive me, Rav Saadiah. Please forgive me. I didn’t know that it was you!’”

“I made him stand up and brush himself off, and then said to him: ‘But my dear friend, you treated me very well; you were very kind and hospitable. Why are you so sorry? You have nothing to apologize for.’”

“‘No, no, Rabbi,’ he replied. ‘If I would have known who you are, I would

have served you *completely differently!*’”

“Suddenly, I realized that this man was teaching me a very important lesson in the service of Hashem and in the way I treat others, and that the purpose of my exile had been fulfilled. I thanked and blessed him, and returned home.”

“Since then, every evening when I say the prayer before sleeping, I go over in my mind how I served Hashem and my fellow man that day. Then I think of that old innkeeper, and say to myself: ‘Oy! If I had known about Hashem in the beginning of the day what I know now, and if I had only remembered that that person I spoke to today was created in the image of Hashem, I would have served Him *completely differently!*’”

“And that is what I was repenting for this morning.”

Over these ten days, let’s work together to remember that all Jews are created in the image of Hashem, and we need to treat them accordingly. We should also realize that Hashem is always right in front of us, and may we strive to constantly serve Him to the best of our abilities.



Binyamin Mandelbaum, ‘27

It’s Not Too Late!

The Gemara in Megillah on 31a tells us that Ezra instituted that the *Tochacha* of Devarim should be read right before Rosh Hashanah, in order to conclude the year and its curses. However, Tosafos on that Gemara tells us that really,

the *Tochacha* should be read two weeks before *Rosh Hashanah*, with *Parshas Nitzavim* as a separation, in order not to have curses so close to *Rosh Hashanah*. What could be the reason for this separation? I’d like to suggest that it relates to the concept of *teshuvah*.

In Mishlei (14:27), Shlomo HaMelech tells us that “יראת ה' מקור חיים לסור” – fear of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the source of life, and turns one away from the snare of death. The Mikshai Maves can be interpreted as the yetzer hara, as it says in Tehillim (37:32) the words “צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו” – the wicked lies in wait for the righteous, and wants to kill him. The Ramchal in Perek Beis of the Mesillas Yesharim tells us that this is referring to the yetzer hara. The Ramchal in Perek Daled also tells us of three levels of contemplation to acquire *zehirus*, colloquially known as vigilance against the yetzer hara.

One is for the *Shalmei Daas*, the complete in perspective. They acquire *zehirus* by merely reflecting that fulfilling *mitzvos* connects them to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, while committing *aveiros* distances them. The second level is for those who are not quite at *Shalmei Daas* yet (called *pachosim mehem*). The Ramchal says that these people will be motivated by the concept of *kavod*. They will need to remember that *sechar* is only given in *Olam Haba* based on a person’s actions in *Olam Haze*. The third and final level is for *kol ha’amon*, the general populace. Their motivation lies in the concepts of *sechar v’onesh*, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will reward them for their *maasim tovim*, good deeds, no matter how big or small, but He will also punish them for their *aveiros*, no matter how big or small, in accordance with His *Midas HaDin*.

When the *Tochacha* is read two weeks before *Rosh Hashanah*, in *Parshas Ki Savo* (incidentally, the

Parshas HaShavua as of the writing of this article), it serves as a wake-up call to each of these people. To the *Shalmei Daas*, it reminds them to connect to Hakadosh Baruch Hu by doing *maasim tovim*, and not to distance themselves from Him through *aveiros*. To the *pachosim mehem*, they are reminded that they should raise themselves by fulfilling *mitzvos*, and not lower themselves by committing *aveiros* and lose out on eternal *kavod*. Finally, to the general population, it will remind them about the punishments of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

However, for some, the *Tochacha* will serve as a call to action. People who have only now had their bubble burst by the *Tochacha* will realize they still have the time to rectify their mistakes and do *teshuvah*! Ezra instituted a two-week notice of *Rosh Hashanah*: go immerse yourself in *teshuvah* and don't waste this precious time! You should take the warning of the *Tochacha* seriously and immediately begin your repentance.

The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (1:1) defines *teshuvah* as admitting your sin, feeling deep and genuine remorse, and resolving to never do it again. This is what you should've been doing all year! One may think that he has no time now, that it is too late for him to do *teshuvah*, but the *Gemara* in *Brachos* on 10a tells us that even if a sword is to your neck, you should never stop davening for *rachamim*. How much more so by the *Tochacha*, where we still have two weeks to make an effort towards *teshuvah*! Take advantage of that extra time!

However, this *Gemara* in *Brachos* teaches us a vital point about the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Even if we have missed the dire warnings of *Ki Savo* and allowed ourselves to reach these days of judgment without *teshuvah*, we can still repent and be

forgiven! The Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (2:6) tells us that during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, *teshuvah* is more readily accepted, as the *possuk* in *Yeshayah* says "דרשו ה' בהמצאו" – seek Hakadosh Baruch Hu where He is found, which refers to the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

We see from here that one should never give up hope, give up on davening, or give up on *teshuvah*, even at *Ne'ilah* on *Yom Kippur*. This is the attitude you should go into *Rosh Hashanah* with! It's never too late to ask for *mechilah* from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, never too late to ask *mechilah* from your friend, never too late to accept upon yourself a method in which you'll distance yourself from an *aveirah*, never too late to do *teshuvah*. If Hakadosh Baruch Hu is keeping that Gate of Heaven open for *teshuvah*, who are you to not accept His offer?

May we all be *zoche* to be written and sealed in the Book of Life and for a *Gut Yohr*.



Shared Bread, Dead Plants and Boils; An Important Yom Kippur Reflection

As soon as the *teshuvah* season rolls around, people remember that they should probably think more about the state of their relationship with God and how to improve it "or else." My impression has been that, broadly speaking, there are certain types of *aveiros* that people focus on and some

that are in people's blind spots. In the lead-up to and during the *Yamim Noraim*, you hear references to "classic" *aveiros* like *lashon hara*, *tefillah* without *kavanah*, and the infamous "*bein adam l'chavero*." Somehow, certain broader issues don't make it to the forefront. Luckily, even when those broader issues are ignored, the *Kriyas HaTorah* and the *tefillos* of *Yom Kippur* give us a tap on the shoulder, or a smack in the face, and remind us of what we have been missing. It is one of those broader issues, about which I don't think I have ever heard a *derashah* on *Yom Kippur*, that I'd like to address.

In the *Haftarah* of *Yom Kippur* morning, we hear the Jews desperately wondering, "We look for closeness to Hashem through *tefillah*, *Torah*, and fasting. Why does it seem as if Hashem ignores us?!" Hashem instructs Yeshayahu to rebuke the people for missing the whole point: On the days they fast, they pressure destitute people to settle the debts they can't quite pay yet. When coming to those *tefillos*, they quarrel with each other, verbally and physically. In an unforgettable fashion, we then hear Yeshayahu call out, "Is the fast day Hashem wants from us one where we merely pain ourselves?!" "No, this is the fast I desire: To unlock shackles of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke (on the pauper's neck), to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to ignore your own kin." (*Yeshayahu* 58:6-7)

Yeshayahu is telling us to go back to the basics. The *Neviim Acharonim* teach us that "*daas Hashem*," knowing God, is reflected in acting justly and kindly. (See, for example, *Yirmiyahu* 9:23 and 22:16 and Radak there.) If you do not know God, there is absolutely no way to come close

What is Your Favorite Tishrei Song?

Rabbi Konigsberg



Principal

Ata Zocher by
Ishay Ribo
and MBD

Rabbi Taubes



Rosh Yeshiva

Simcha L'Artzecha

Rabbi Schenker



Menahel

L'maancha

Rabbi Axelrod



Maggid Shiur, 9th Grade

Meloch Al Kol
Haolam Kulo

Rabbi Danto



Maggid Shiur, 9th Grade

Any Song From The
Naftali Kempa or Baruch
Levine Elul Album

Rabbi Balsam



Rosh Beis Medrash, Maggid Shiur

כל פעם מחדש

Rabbi Cohen



Maggid Shiur, BMK, 12th Grade

Ochila

Rabbi Kerner



Maggid Shiur, 10th Grade

Shlomo Carlebach's
מלור על כל העולם

Rabbi Mendelson



Maggid Shiur, 11th Grade

The song I
wrote: "בית השם"

to Him, as the people so desired (*Yeshayahu* 58:2). If we do not keep the parts of the Torah that are also naturally understood values of humanity, our broader *avodas Hashem* is flawed (see *Kuzari* 2:48).

The scope of this lesson is expanded when we get to the *Haftarah* in the afternoon, *Sefer Yonah*. In order to rebuke Yonah for not properly being concerned for the lives of the people of *Nineveh*, Hashem brought the *kikayon*, a leafy plant, to shield Yonah from the sun. The next morning, a worm came and caused the *kikayon* to wither, leaving Yonah exposed to the beating sun, which caused him to faint. Once again, in an unforgettable fashion, we hear Hashem's potent rebuke. "Then GOD said: 'You cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. Shouldn't I care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many animals as well!'" (*Yonah* 4:10-11) The Malbim explains that "people who do not yet know their right hand from their left" refers to people who did not know any better; they only sinned due to lack of knowledge. Hashem expresses what we hear from Him in *Yechezkel*: "For it is not My desire that anyone shall die—declares the Lord GOD. Repent, therefore, and live!" (18:32) The great lesson taught to Yonah is that we must not limit our mercy and kindness to our fellow Jew, as one might have discerned from "your own kin" in *Yeshayahu*, but also to all humans and even animals, provided that their intentions aren't wicked. Along these lines, Rambam (*Hilchos Avodah Zarah* 10:5, *Hilchos Melachim* 10:12) teaches us that one should do kindness with gentiles, a value we learn from God's mercy on all His creations (*Tehillim* 145:9).

This all explains a puzzling *Rashi* in the first *perek* of *Yeshayahu*. After telling the Jews how Hashem has no interest in their *korbanos* and *tefillos* if they act cruelly, *Yeshayahu* gives them instructions on how to improve. "**Wash** yourselves, **clean** yourselves; **remove** your evil doings away from My sight, **cease** to do evil; **learn** to do good, **seek** justice; **strengthen** the wronged. **Uphold** the rights of the orphan; **defend** the cause of the widow. '**Come**, let us reach an understanding'—says GOD—'be your sins like crimson, they can turn snow-white; be they red as dyed wool, they can become like fleece.'" (1:16-18) Following the lead of the *Yerushalmi* (*Rosh Hashanah* 4:7), *Rashi* explains, "Ten exhortations (אזהרות) using language of repentance are [listed] here, corresponding to the Ten Days of Repentance." *Rashi* is not supposing that there's some unique connection between each action and each day of the ten days of *teshuvah*. Rather, he's using the number as a tool to express to us, homilectically, "This is the *teshuvah* that we cannot miss during these days!"

To cement this idea and its connection to our *teshuvah* in this time of year, let's turn our attention to a bizarre story told on *Kiddushin* 81a. The *Tanna* *Peleimo* had the habit of saying, "An arrow in the eye of Satan" every day, mocking the temptations of the *yetzer hara*. On *Erev Yom Kippur*, the Satan appeared to him as a pauper who came and called him to the door. *Peleimo* brought out bread to him. Satan said to him: On a day like today, everyone is inside eating, and I must remain outside? *Peleimo* brought him inside and gave him bread. He said to him: On a day like today, everyone is sitting at the table, and I must sit by myself?

They brought him and sat him at the table. He was sitting and had covered himself with boils and pus, and he was doing repulsive things at the table. *Peleimo* said to the pauper: Sit properly and do not act in a revolting manner. Satan then said to him: Give me a cup. They gave him a cup. He coughed up his phlegm and spat it into the cup. They berated him for acting this way, at which point Satan pretended to sink down and die. They heard people around them saying: *Peleimo* killed a man! *Peleimo* killed a man! *Peleimo* fled and hid himself in the bathroom. Satan followed him and fell before him. Upon seeing that *Peleimo* was suffering, he revealed himself to him. Satan said to him: What is the reason that you spoke this way, provoking me by saying "An arrow in the eye of Satan"? He replied: What then should I say? Satan said to him: "Let the Merciful One rebuke the Satan."

My *Rebbi*, Rav Aharon Friedman, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Kerem B'Yavneh*, in his *kuntreis* "Navoah Shaarecha" (pp. 14-20), explains that the standard association people have with Satan and the *Yetzer Hara*, who are one and the same (*Bava Basra* 16a), is the inclination for *arayos* (illicit relationships). See, for example, the way this inclination is just called "sin" on *Yoma* 69b. One can also learn that this was *Peleimo's* association from the fact that he said "the eye of," which is connected to *arayos*, as *Chazal* teach in *Sifrei* (*Bamidbar* 115). The message *Peleimo* was conveying to Satan was that he'd conquered that area of sin, which he associated with all sins. Satan comes to teach *Peleimo* where he really stands and tests him in a completely different area, a very unpleasant case of feeding the poor.

Imagine the unique aura that comes along with Erev Yom Kippur. I don't even need to go into detail—you understand. Now comes a pauper who is not just unshowered, but also covered in boils and picking at them, and the list of unhygienic activities goes on and on. "Are you really so confident now, Peleimo?" says Satan. Without getting further into the symbolism of the story, Satan's message is the same as that of Yeshaya. Without serious sensitivity toward others and their needs, even if it requires us to sacrifice certain pleasures, even if it makes us feel less "holy," our service of God is lacking.

Finally, to take this from an abstract value to something that can lead to attainable growth, I wanted to pose a few thought questions that will make this more tangible and practical.

- What is our reaction when we see homeless people asking for money or sleeping on a bench? Are we comfortable just walking by, or do we try to feel their pain and think how we can aid them, even in a small way?
- When we see someone we know getting mistreated, do we comfortably slip away or even join in, or do we take the unpopular but correct approach to protect them and build their sense of self-worth and belonging?
- When someone comes to shul on a Sunday afternoon and announces, most likely with great embarrassment, that his life is in shambles and he needs our help to move forward in life, do we think of ways to excuse ourselves and come up with reasons why we're not responsible, or do we

give him the time of day, imagine how he feels, and then help him in some capacity?

- This summer alone, we have heard of thousands dead and injured in devastating earthquakes across Colombia and Venezuela. We're even more aware of the thousands of Israelis who have died and the many more who were injured in recent years, among many other world tragedies. (I'd, perhaps, even add the deaths of the children of our enemies "who do not yet know their right hand from their left.") Are we callous people who scroll by headlines, or do we really stop to reflect on the pain all these people and their families suffer? Are we to ignore Hashem's lesson to Yonah to be concerned for His innocent creations?

Rambam teaches (Hilchos Teshuvah 7:3) that teshuvah for poor character traits is not only necessary but also more difficult than teshuvah for actions, because it's more difficult for someone to separate themselves from a character trait than an action. This Yom Kippur, we should all merit to move further away from callousness and the mistreatment of others, and experience Yom Kippur as it's described in Mussaf: "a day for restoring love and brotherhood, a day of abandoning envy and strife."



Davening Like Rebbe Akiva

During the Aseret Y'mei Teshuvah, we are desperate to connect with Hashem. We increase the length and intensity of our davening, hoping that our appeals for a K'tiva v'Chatima Tova will be heard and granted. One of the most famous and beloved additions to the davening is "Avinu Malkeinu," a series of requests from Hashem that each begins with the same two words, "Avinu Malkeinu." A look at this piyyut can be helpful in understanding how one can more effectively daven during these Yamim Noraim.

The *Gemara* on *Ta'anit* 25b records a story in which there was a drought in Israel, and the rabbis were called upon to daven for rain. The *Gemara* says that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, one of the greatest of the *Tannaim*, recited the special long *Shemoneh Esrei* for fast days, but his prayers were ineffective. Then his *talmid*, Rebbe Akiva, stepped to the *amud* and recited a short and simple prayer: "אבינו מלכנו אין לנו מלך," and the rain began to fall. Since, in Rebbe Akiva's text, each of the two lines begins with "Avinu Malkeinu," the composers of our *piyyut* saw an effective pattern and copied it.

This methodology, copying the text of effective prayers, is not uncommon. For example, in the beginning of *Shemoneh Esrei* we refer to Hashem as "הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבּוֹר," which is copied from a prayer of Moshe Rabbeinu recorded

in *Devarim* 10:17. The motivation is obvious. Perhaps Rebbe Akiva or Moshe Rabbeinu discovered a magic formula. If it worked for them, maybe it will work for us.

So we recite “*Avinu Malkeinu*” over and over again during this time, after every *Shacharit* and *Mincha*. The problem is that we forget the end of that *Gemara* in *Ta’anit*. The *Gemara* continues the story, saying that after the rain fell, people started making fun of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. Apparently, they argued, Rebbe Akiva, his *talmid*, was greater than him if he could make it rain when his *rebbe* could not. So a *bat kol* responded, saying that the prayers were answered not because one was a greater scholar than the other, but because “*שה מעביר על מידותיו, וזה אינו מעביר על מדותיו*.” Loosely translated,

it means that one (Rabbi Eliezer) stood on ceremony, and the other (Rebbe Akiva) did not. So now we have two questions: First, what is it about standing on ceremony that relates to having your prayers answered, and second, what do we need to do in order to daven like Rebbe Akiva? The first answer is pretty easy. Rebbe Akiva forgave people for disrespecting him. And that enabled him to turn to Hashem and say: “I know we don’t deserve rain! We have committed the aveirot that deserve punishment. But look at me! I am ‘mochel on my kavod!’ I forgive those who fail to properly honor me. Can’t You do likewise?” And Hashem responds, saying, “Yes, I can forgive those who fail to honor Me by observing the Torah.” And that’s why it rained. The second answer, however, is much harder. It’s nowhere near enough to simply copy Rebbe

Akiva’s text. If anything, Hashem will respond to us by saying that it’s very nice that we learned Rebbe Akiva’s words, but they are worthless unless we also learn to **ACT** like Rebbe Akiva. As the *Navi* says in *Yonah* 3:10, Hashem saved the city of Nineveh not because of their declarations of *teshuvah*, but because of their actions. Actions speak louder than words. So if we hope to successfully daven like Rebbe Akiva, we first need to act like him. We need to forgive those who disrespect us, not because they deserve it, but because we love them. **THEN** we can turn to Hashem, like Rebbe Akiva did, and say “*Avinu Malkeinu*.” Yes, You are our Father and King. Yes, You doubly deserve our honor. And yes, we have nonetheless disrespected You. But since we were willing to forgive those who disrespected us, as hard as that can be, can’t You do the same for us?



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Sukkos Thoughts from the Beis Midrash



Rabbi Chaim Axelrod

Four Words About Sukkos

On the Shabbos of Chol Hamoed of both Pesach and Sukkos, tradition assigns us the same Torah reading, Parshas Ki Sisa. We read of the giving of the second set of Luchos following the Sin of the Golden Calf. After warning us to stay far from idolatry, the Torah charges us to observe the three main festivals of Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos. It is presumably this mention of the three *regalim* that connects the *parsha* to the season.

What is striking, though, is how little space Sukkos receives. Of the more than thirty *pesukim* in this section, only four words are devoted to our own holiday. Immediately after the command to observe Shavuos, the Torah states, וְחַג הָאֶסִּיף תִּקְוֹפֶת הַשָּׁנָה, "and the festival of the harvest shall be at the turn of the year."

That is all. Why would the Torah's Divine Author choose to say so little about Sukkos in this particular passage? What are we meant to glean from these four words?

To begin answering this, it is worth turning to a comment of the Midrash that, at first glance, seems rather strange. Before Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, the Torah tells us that Hashem had blessed Avraham "bakol," with everything. The Midrash explains that this blessing of "everything" is a reference to the *mitzvah* of Sukkah. Both halves of this teaching require explanation. What does it even mean, literally, to bless someone with everything? Is that possible? And why would the Midrash choose specifically the holiday of Sukkos as the symbol of that blessing?

On its face, to bless someone with everything seems impossible. Koheles tells us that one who has a hundred will want two hundred, and that a person leaves this world without having fulfilled even half of his desires. The early sages compared the pursuit of materialism to drinking salt water. To the thirsty person, salt water

appears as though it will quench his thirst, but the more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes. Given this, how could Hashem have blessed Avraham with everything?

Rabbeinu Bachya offers an answer rooted in the Torah's description of Avraham's passing. The Torah tells us that Avraham died "zakein v'save'a," old and content. Rabbeinu Bachya explains that this phrase is a divine eulogy, a statement about Avraham's fundamental character. He was content when he died because he had been content throughout his life. For Avraham Avinu, everything in the material world was simply a tool, an instrument to help him advance toward Olam Haba, the World to Come. This is the idea we recite in Birkas Hamazon, "ki ein machsor lirei'av," those who fear Hashem lack nothing. Hashem was able to bless Avraham with everything precisely because Avraham related to the material world with contentment, using it only as a means toward spiritual achievement.

This explains what it meant for Avraham to be blessed with everything, but it does not yet

explain why that blessing is symbolized by the gift of Sukkos. The *mitzvah* of building and dwelling in a Sukkah is meant to teach us the lesson of "diras arai," the temporary dwelling. The Sukkah itself is a *diras arai*, and by extension, this world too is a *diras arai*. It is specifically at the time of the harvest, when a person has gathered the fruits of a full year's labor and feels most at home in the material world, that the Torah instructs, "kol ha'eizrach b'Yisrael yeishvu basukkos," all citizens of Israel shall dwell in booths. The word "eizrach," the settled citizen who feels rooted and permanent in this world, is precisely the one who most needs to leave his home and relearn the lesson of the Sukkah.

This lesson, however, is not meant to last only seven days. The Michtav MeEliyahu, citing the Sfas Emes, notes that in Vayikra, when the Torah concludes its discussion of the *mitzvah* of Sukkah, it states, "v'chagosem oso chag laHashem shivas yamim bashana," you shall celebrate it as a festival to Hashem for seven days in the year. The word "bashana," in the year, is seemingly unnecessary. From its inclusion, we learn that the message of the Sukkah is meant to accompany us throughout the entire year, not only during the days of the festival itself.

Perhaps this is the deeper meaning behind the four words in our own *parsha*. "V'chag ha'asif tekufas hashana," the festival of the harvest at the turn of the year, may be hinting at this very idea, the lesson of "hashana," of carrying Sukkos with us for the rest of the year.

With this idea in mind, a rather technical *halacha* of Sukkah takes on new meaning. For *schach* to be kosher, it may no longer be attached to the ground. The underlying message is that Sukkos is about detaching from the material world.

A Sukkah cannot be kosher while still connected to the earth, because the entire point of the *mitzvah* is to teach us to loosen our grip on the physical and reorient ourselves toward the eternal.

It is fitting, too, that Sukkos arrives specifically as "tekufas hashana," at the turning point of the year, coming as it does immediately after we have had the opportunity to internalize the lessons of a proper Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Perhaps this is also the connection between this Torah reading and the recitation of Megilas Koheles on Sukkos, whose overarching message is a rejection of the pursuit of materialism in favor of what truly matters. Having spent the Yamim Noraim recommitting ourselves to Hashem, we are given the Sukkah as the vehicle to carry that clarity with us, not just for seven days, but throughout the entire year.



Keeping Your Chumra in Someone Else's House

The Machlokes Over Sukkah Decorations

The Gemara records a *machlokes Amora'im* about *sukkah* decorations when those decorations hang more than four *tefachim* below the *s'chach*. The question is whether

such decorations constitute a *hefsek* between the person sitting in the sukkah and the *s'chach* above them, or whether they are considered *batel*, nullified, to the *s'chach* despite the distance.¹

Rav Nachman rules leniently: even decorations hanging more than four *tefachim* below the *s'chach* do not invalidate the sukkah. Rav Chisda and Rabba bar Rav Huna disagree. In their view, such a sukkah is *pasul*, since decorations separated by that much space genuinely interpose between the person and the *s'chach*, and one may not sit beneath them.

A Test at the Reish Galusa's House

The Gemara records the following incident:

רב חסדא ורבה בר רב הונא איקלעו לבי ריש גלותא. אגביניהו רב נחמן בסוכה שנוניה מופלגין ממנה ארבעה טפחים, אשתיקו ולא אמרו ליה ולא מידי. אמר להו: הדור בהו רבנן משמעתיהו? אמרו ליה: אכן שלוחי מצוה אנו, ופטורין מן הסוכה.

Rav Chisda and Rabba bar Rav Huna traveled to visit the Reish Galusa, the head of the Babylonian Jewish community. Rav Nachman, apparently anticipating their visit, arranged for them to be housed in a sukkah whose decorations hung more than four *tefachim* from the *s'chach* – a sukkah that was, according to Rav Chisda and Rabba bar Rav Huna's own opinion, *pasul*. They were silent, and said nothing to him about it. He said to them: "Have you, the Rabbis, retracted from your ruling?" They answered him: "We are agents on a mission of *mitzvah*, and one who is a *shaliach mitzvah* is exempt from the *mitzvah* of sukkah."

Rav Chisda and Rabba bar Rav Huna, in other words, did not back down from their halachic position.

They explained that they were exempt from the mitzvah altogether, because they were engaged in the mitzvah of traveling to greet their rebbe. Whether framed as *kavod haTorah*, or as the general obligation of *chayav adam le-hakbil p'nei rabbo biregel*, the duty to greet one's teacher on *yom tov*, and one who is occupied with a mitzvah, is exempt from *yeshiva b'sukkah* along the way.

It is a striking episode. On one hand, Rav Nachman seems to respect that his colleagues were entitled to their own halachic position and even to test it. On the other hand, he clearly set up the test deliberately, curious to see whether their stated stringency would hold up when they were guests rather than hosts.

The story raises an obvious and enduring question: how are we meant to treat people whose halachic practice differs from our own, especially when they are guests in our home, or we in theirs?

The Chazon Ish and Ma'amid

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein in Chashukei Chemed (Sukkah 10b), discusses a practical modern-day application of this shailah, built around the shittah of the Chazon Ish regarding ma'amid.

Ma'amid refers to the structural elements that hold up the *s'chach*. The halacha forbids using materials that are *mekabel tum'ah* such as metal to directly support the *s'chach*. According to most Rishonim, this is only a *chumra mi'di'rabbanan*. If one nonetheless allows the *s'chach* to rest on metal, the sukkah remains *kasher bi'di'eved*, even though it should not be done *li'chatchila*.

The common workaround is to lay wooden boards or two-by-fours across a metal frame, so that the *s'chach* rests on wood rather than directly on the metal.

The Chazon Ish (143:2) takes a far stricter view, forbidding what is popularly called *ma'amid di'ma'amid*. In his opinion, it is not enough that the *s'chach* rests directly on wood, but the wood itself may not, in turn, be supported by metal. For him, the entire chain of support beneath the *s'chach* must be free of materials that can become *tamei*. This is a demanding standard, and it is said to be widely followed in Bnei Brak, where the Chazon Ish served as the local halachic authority. Most sukkos elsewhere, including in America and even in Yerushalayim, do not build to this standard. They follow the ordinary halacha of ma'amid as codified in the Shulchan Aruch and upheld by the Magen Avraham, the Vilna Gaon, and the majority of *poskim*.

The practical question follows naturally: if a guest who personally holds like the Chazon Ish comes to eat in a sukkah built according to the standard, more lenient construction, is the host obligated to tell him, or can the host simply assume that his guest is relying on the fact that he is eating in a home that follows the general standards that the halacha requires?

The Rema and the Shach

Rav Zilberstein frames the question through a *machlokes* between the Rema and the Shach.

The Rema (YD 119:7) rules that a person who follows a particular stringency, whether because he believes it is the actual halacha or simply because he has

personally chosen to be strict, may eat together with others who follow the lenient practice, on the assumption that they surely would not feed him something he considers forbidden. In this view, the guest may rely on his hosts' awareness of his practice; he need not personally verify every detail.

The Shach (20) disagrees, at least in cases where the difference is not visible. In his formulation, a person who follows a particular stringency may eat at the home of someone who is lenient only if the leniency is visibly apparent, something he can recognize with his own eyes. If it is not visible, he may not rely on assumption alone and should not eat there.²

Rav Zilberstein's Resolution

Applying this to the sukkah case, Rav Zilberstein rules that the outcome depends on visibility. If a metal frame supporting the *s'chach* is plainly visible, even to someone with no expertise in sukkah construction, then the guest can see for himself that this is not a "Chazon Ish sukkah," and he can make an informed decision about whether to eat there. No special disclosure is required, because the relevant fact is apparent to anyone who looks.

But if the construction is difficult to discern, (e.g., the frame is covered by cloth or wood paneling, the lighting is dim, or the table setting draws attention away from the structure itself), then the guest cannot simply assume the sukkah meets his standard. According to the Rema, if the guest has made his hosts aware that he personally follows the Chazon Ish's stringency and will only eat in a sukkah built to that shittah, he may then rely on the assumption that they

will not seat him in a sukkah that fails his standard. The Shach, however, holds that this reliance is only appropriate when the difference is visible; where it is not, the host must inform the guest verbally of the actual construction, so that the guest can make his decision with full knowledge of the facts.

Conclusion

Obviously, this discussion should be purely academic – להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה. Basic *bein adam la'chaveiro* dictates that both the host and the guest should make efforts to ensure that they are comfortable in each other's homes and sukkos. If one knows in advance that he keeps certain *chumros* for which others are generally not *makpid*, he should arrange to get together with his friend at a different time where there will be no tension between their observances, or should invite his friend into his own sukkah in advance. Similarly, if one is aware that his friend keeps certain *chumros* for which he himself is not *makpid*, he should not create a situation where his friend must choose between their friendship and his standards. These situations are easily avoidable with a small amount of planning and effort.

1 - Generally, four tefachim is considered the size of a makom chashuv in halacha. It is also (therefore) the amount of s'chach pasul that invalidates a sukkah.

2 - A simple application of this is someone who is makpid to only consume cholov Yisroel eating in the home of one who partakes in cholov stam. Assuming the host is aware that his guest keeps this particular practice, the Rema would not require the guest to ensure that everything is up to his standard, while the Shach would only permit him to do so if the container of milk (or cheese etc.) was available for him to see before partaking in it.



Rabbi Shua Pariser, '20

Sukkos: Coming All the Way Back

This is based on a piece from Rav Baruch Simon shlita's sefer Imrei Baruch on Sukkos.

During the *Yamim Noraim*, we focus intensely on the process of teshuvah. Through teshuvah, we can be forgiven for our sins and no longer be held accountable for what we have done. However, forgiveness does not necessarily mean that everything is exactly as it was before. When a person damages a relationship, even after he is forgiven, there may still be distance that needs to be repaired.

Perhaps, then, there are two stages of teshuvah. The first is receiving forgiveness and removing the consequences of the aveirah. The second is something even greater: repairing the relationship and returning to the closeness that existed before the aveirah was committed.

The *Mabit*, in *Beis Elokim*, explains the *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashanah* regarding the *Yud-Gimmel Middos HaRachamim*. The *Gemara* explains the repetition of "Hashem, Hashem" to teach that Hashem relates to a person after he does teshuvah as He related to him before he sinned. This teaches us something remarkable. Teshuvah is not merely about erasing the aveirah; it is about restoring the relationship that was damaged by it.

Rabbeinu Yonah, in *Shaarei Teshuvah*, adds another dimension to this idea. A person must daven as part of the process of teshuvah. We do not simply ask Hashem to forgive us for what we have done; we ask Him to help us repair the closeness and relationship that may have been damaged.

Perhaps this gives us a deeper understanding of the progression of the *Yamim Tovim*. In our *Yom Tov* davening, we say, "Ata Vechartanu mikol ha'amim, ahavta osanu, v'ratzisa banu." The *Siach Yitzchak* explains these phrases as referring to the three *Shalosh Regalim*. "Ata Vechartanu mikol ha'amim" refers to Pesach, when Hashem chose us and took us out of Mitzrayim. "Ahavta osanu" refers to Shavuot, when Hashem gave us the Torah. Finally, "V'ratzisa banu" – "You desired us" – refers to Sukkos, the *Yom Tov* of appeasement and reconciliation.

Sukkos, therefore, represents more than forgiveness. It represents the restoration of *ratzon* – the rebuilding of the closeness between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. After the process of the *Yamim Noraim*, Sukkos is the time when we can return to the place we were before the aveirah created distance between us and Hashem.

This idea is reflected in one of the central themes of Sukkos: the *Ananei HaKavod*. The Gra famously explains that we do not celebrate merely the fact that Klal Yisrael once had the *Ananei HaKavod*. Rather, following the *Chet HaEgel*, the *Ananim* departed, and we celebrate their return. On Sukkos, Klal Yisrael was restored, to some extent, to the level of closeness that existed before the *Chet*.

The *Chasam Sofer* presents a slightly different understanding. According to him, the *Ananei HaKavod* themselves never left;

rather, those who sinned were expelled from them. Nevertheless, the message is strikingly similar. On Sukkos, Klal Yisrael was once again brought back into the *Ananei HaKavod* and restored to the relationship and closeness that had existed before the *Chet*.

Perhaps this is the journey of the *Yamim Noraim* and Sukkos. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we seek forgiveness. We ask Hashem to erase our sins and release us from accountability. But Sukkos teaches us that *teshuvah*

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**He gave his
'temporary'
possessions a
temporary
shelter, while he
established a
permanent place
for Torah.**

can go even further. We do not merely want to be forgiven; we want to come home. We want to repair the distance, rebuild the relationship, and once again stand beneath the protection of the *Ananei HaKavod*.

That is the uniqueness of Sukkos. After spending the *Yamim Noraim* asking Hashem to forgive us for what we have done, we leave our permanent homes and enter His home. We sit beneath the *s'chach*, surrounded by the memory of the *Ananei HaKavod*, and recognize that Hashem is not only willing to forgive us — He wants us back.

the *aveirah* is erased. Its greatest accomplishment is when the distance created by the *aveirah* disappears as well, and we are able to return to the relationship we once had — and perhaps build an even deeper one.

On Yom Kippur, we ask Hashem to forgive us. On Sukkos, we celebrate that He has taken us back.



Living in Yaakov's Succah: Temporary Possessions, Permanent Priorities

The Tur Shulchan Aruch writes that the Shalosh Regalim correspond to the three Avos, and that Succos corresponds to Yaakov. What is the connection between Yaakov Avinu and Succos?

Leading up to Yaakov's iconic encounter with *Esav*, after running away from him years earlier, the Torah tells us, ויעקב נסע סכתו ויבן לו, "בית ולמקנהו עשה סכת." The fact that Yaakov built a *Succah* for his possessions seems to create an obvious connection between Yaakov and the *Yom Tov* of Succos.

However, there must be a deeper connection between Succos and Yaakov Avinu beyond the simple appearance of the word "סכת."

Rabbi Yehuda Prero explains that Yaakov was on a mission when he encountered the *malach* of *Esav*. In *Maseches Chullin* (91a), the *Gemara*

famously teaches that Yaakov was alone when he encountered the *malach* because he had returned to retrieve some small jars that he had left behind. The *Gemara* derives from this that "צדיקים חביב עליהם ממוןם," because they do not stretch out their hands to robbery.

Yaakov returned for what seemed to be insignificant possessions because he valued everything that he had. This raises an obvious question: Why would *Rebbe Eliezer* teach us that *tzaddikim* treasure their possessions? Wouldn't we expect a righteous person to value only the spiritual?

To understand this, we need to look at the end of *Rebbe Eliezer's* statement: "because they do not stretch out their hands to robbery."

There is a story of a poor man who was extremely careful in his observance of *mitzvos*. Because of his poverty, however, he did not even have a proper cup and basin with which to wash his hands. One night, he dreamt that Hashem saw his poverty and lack of these basic items. When he awoke, he found the exact cup and basin from his dream lying beside him. He understood that they were a gift from Hashem and treasured them greatly.

Years later, the man became wealthy and renovated his home. During his final inspection, he noticed that the same cup and basin were missing. He ordered his workers to search for them. When they finally found the old, dented, inexpensive utensils, they were confused as to why their employer cared so much about them. When they asked him, he replied, "If God Himself had given you something, wouldn't that be your most prized possession?" The cup and basin were valuable in themselves because their value came from the fact that they were recognized as gifts from Hashem.

Rav Chaim Vital explains that *Yaakov* and all *tzaddikim* view their possessions in the same way. They appreciate everything they have because they understand that it was given to them by *Hashem* for a purpose: to enable them to serve Him. A *tzaddik* does not take what *Hashem* has not given him. He recognizes that whatever he does have is a gift from *Hashem*, and therefore treats it with appreciation and responsibility.

This explains why *Yaakov* went back for his small vessels. He did not value them because of their material worth. He valued them because he understood that they were part of what *Hashem* had entrusted to him.

This idea connects directly to Succos. Succos is a time when we leave our permanent homes and move into a temporary space. The Succah reminds us that our lives

in this world are temporary. At the same time, it reminds us that just as *Hashem* provided for *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, He continues to provide for us today.

The Torah tells us that *Yaakov* made *succos* for his possessions, while for himself he built a *bayis*. The *Targum Yonasan* interprets this *bayis* not as a literal house, but as a *Beis Midrash*. *Yaakov* had his priorities straight. He appreciated his possessions because he understood that they were gifts from *Hashem*, but when it came to what he invested in permanently, he invested in *Torah*.

He gave his "temporary" possessions a temporary shelter, while he established a permanent place for *Torah*.

Perhaps this is the deeper connection between *Yaakov* and Succos. Succos teaches us to recognize that everything we have

comes from *Hashem*, while also reminding us not to confuse what is temporary with what is truly permanent.

We must appreciate our possessions, but we must also understand why we have them. We must make sure that we have our priorities straight and that the things *Hashem* gives us help us achieve our ultimate purpose.

When we sit in our Succah and surround ourselves with this lesson, we are reminded to appreciate what *Hashem* has given us without losing sight of what truly matters. May we merit to live with these priorities and ultimately bring *Moshiach bimheirah b'yameinu*.



Joey Friemark, '28

Trivia Challenge!

What word appears only once in the Rosh Hashana davening, but many times in the Yom Kippur Davening?

What was the first sukkah built in the Torah?

What minhag/ chumra do people keep for the Aseres Yimei Teshuva, and ONLY for the Aseres Yimei Teshuva?

What Halacha is repeated in the Shulchan Aruch, both at the end of hilchos Yom Kippur, and at the beginning of hilchos sukkah?

The Spiritual U-Turn

When it comes to the *halachos* of *Arba'ah Minim*, we spend time analyzing the physical *shiurim* or making sure there is no *pasul* on the *pitum*. But in looking at the actual *ma'aseh hamitzvah*, the moment we pick them up on Succos morning, there is a well-known *halachah* about how we hold the *esrog* that is a bit confusing at first glance.

The Torah instructs us regarding Succos: "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a majestic tree (*peri etz hadar*), palm branches (*kapos temarim*), boughs of leafy trees (*anaff etz avos*), and willows of the brook (*arvei nachal*), and you shall rejoice before *Hashem* your God for seven days" (Vayikra 23:40). From the Gemara (Sukkah 45b), we learn a critical rule about how one must

hold all four species: they must be held *derech gdeilasan*, in the direction that they grow out of the ground.

For a *lulav*, *hadasim*, or *arovos*, this is fairly straightforward. The stems point down, the leaves up. But with the *esrog*, things become more interesting. The *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 651:2) rules that to fulfill the *mitzvah*, one must hold the *esrog* with the *uktzatz* (stem end) down and the *pitum* (tip) up. However, additionally, the *Shulchan Aruch* brings down a standard *minhag* that everyone does: when one first picks up the species to make the *brachah*, one is supposed to grab the *esrog* upside down. The *pitum* points down toward the floor. You say the *brachah* of *al netilas lulav*, and only after finishing the *brachah* do you flip the *esrog* right-side-up.

What's the technical flipping act for? Why not just pick it up normally from the start?

To understand this *yesod*, we have to look at an important halachic rule in *Pesachim* (7b). The *Gemara* establishes that for almost every *mitzvah*, *kol hamitzvos mevarach aleihen over le'asiasan*—the *brachah* must be recited before one actually does the action of the *mitzvah*. Had one done the action first, they would have missed their window to make the *brachah*.

Here is the *chiddush*: with *Arba'ah Minim*, the moment one picks up all four valid species in their normal, *derech gdeilasan* orientation, they've fulfilled the *d'oraisa* requirement of *ulikachtem*! Unlike *shofar*, in which one needs a separate act of blowing, or *tefillin*, in which one needs to tie them, the simple lifting of the *minim* in their natural

direction is the *ma'aseh hamitzvah*. If one picks up the *esrog* right-side-up, they've already finished the *mitzvah* the second it leaves the table. If they try to make the *brachah* after that, it's considered a *brachah achar asiyasan*, which won't work.

The *halachah* provides a clever solution. By picking up the *esrog* upside down, one holds the *esrog*, but because it's not upright, one hasn't technically fulfilled the *mitzvah* yet. This gives room to say the *brachah* with total *over le'asiasan*. Once the *brachah* is said, turning the *esrog* right-side-up completes the *kiyum* at that exact instant.

This gives us an insight into how the *halachah* views our *avodah*. The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 30:14) famously compares the *esrog*, which has both a good taste and a good smell, to a Jew who has both Torah learning and *ma'asim tovim*. Holding the *esrog* inverted for those few seconds right before the *brachah* is like a quick moment of self-reflection. Before we stand fully ready in front of Hashem with a complete *mitzvah*, we acknowledge that we're still works in progress. The flip of the *esrog* represents that process of turning ourselves around and elevating a simple physical act into pure *avodas Hashem*.

Trivia Challenge Answers:

The word “סוכה” appears only once in the Rosh Hashana Davening, but is said many times on Yom Kippur

Yaakov Avinu built the first “sukkos” when he went to sukkos

Pas Yisrael

The halacha to build your sukkah appears by both hilchos Yom Kippur and Hilchos Sukkos

Wishing Everyone a



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