

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1630

SEPT. 20TH 2025 • כ"ז אלול תשפ"ה

NITZAVIM - נצבים AVOT 5 & 6

ROSH HASHANA - ראש השנה

VAYEILECH - ילך SHABBAT SHUVA



OU Israel
wishes you
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TOVA!

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YERUSHALAYIM ZMANIM

NITZAVIM: CANDLES 6:03PM • EARLY 5:23PM • HAVDALA 7:15PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:55PM

ROSH HASHANA DAY 1: CANDLES 5:59PM

ROSH HASHANA DAY 2: CANDLES AFTER 7:11PM • HAVDALA 7:10PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:49PM

VAYEILECH: CANDLES 5:54PM • HAVDALA 7:06PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:46PM



United We Stand



תשפ"ו The Rosh Hashana Guide
Rabbi Elyada Goldvicht
Page 72



Right Place, Right Time: Living
Rosh Hashana with Emunah
Jen Airley Page 98



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Table of Contents

04	Dear Torah Tidbits Family Rabbi Avi Berman <u>Nitzavim</u>	60	Rosh Hashana: Malchut Revealed Rabbi Moshe Taragin
08	Davening with Hashem Rabbi Moshe Hauer	64	Shana Tova OU Israel
14	Aliya-by-Aliya Summary - Nitzavim Rabbi Reuven Tradburks	72	The Rosh Hashana Guide תשפ"ו Rabbi Elyada Goldvicht
18	"Sos Asis BaShem" Rabbi Nachman Winkler	76	Candle Lighting, Kiddush, Tashlich, Rosh Hashana Seder, Tashlich
24	Why Be Jewish? Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l	86	Avraham's Ahava at the Akeida Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
28	Torah 4 Teens by Teens Jo Maimon / Yair Samad <u>Rosh Hashana</u>	92	Shehecheyanu on a New Shofar for Rosh Hashana Rabbi Daniel Mann
34	Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary Rosh Hashana Rabbi Reuven Tradburks	98	Right Place, Right Time: Living Rosh Hashana with Emunah Jen Airley
38	Willing to Change Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Weinreb	102	Shining Like Pomegranates Shoshana Judelman <u>Vayeilech / Shabbat Shuva</u>
44	Three Tears on Rosh HaShana: Denial, Despair, and Defiant Hope Rabbi Shalom Rosner	108	Two Paths, One Return Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman
46	Inner Illumination Rebbetzin Shira Smiles	110	Certified Kosher Ingredients Rabbi Ezra Friedman
52	The Missing Horse Rabbi Judah Mischel	118	Elul - A Season of Renewal and Hope Aleeza Ben Shalom - Shagririm Balev
54	Simchat Shmuel Rabbi Sam Shor	122	The Y Files Comic Netanel Epstein

To read the Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary for Parshat Vayeilech
by Rabbi Reuven Tradburks see: www.TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles



We continue to pray for the safe return of all of the hostages.

DAY 712

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 The custom is not to recite Mevarchim Hachodesh the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana.

 Reminder to light a 48 hour candle before Rosh Hashana to provide a flame for the second night lighting. On the second night we light from a pre-existing flame only and the match of the helper candle should be put down (in a safe place) to go out on its own.



Tzom Gedalia zmanim in Jerusalem: begins - 5:17am, ends - 6:49pm.



For the Laws of Rosh Hashana see pages 76-81.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Sept 17 - 27 / 24 Elul - 5 Tishrei**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:33-5:40
Sunrise	6:24-6:30
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:28-9:30
Magen Avraham	8:52-8:54
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:33-12:29
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:04-12:59
Plag Mincha	5:25-5:14
Sunset (Including Elevation)	6:46-6:33



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	NITZAVIM			ROSH HASHANA			VAYEILECH	
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Night 1	Night 2 after:	Havdala **	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:03	5:23	7:15	5:59	7:11	7:10	5:54	7:06
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:22	5:26	7:17	6:18	7:13	7:12	6:12	7:08
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:22	5:24	7:16	6:18	7:12	7:11	6:13	7:07
Gush Etzion	6:19	5:23	7:15	6:16	7:11	7:10	6:10	7:06
Raanana/Tel Mond /Herzliya/K.Saba	6:21	5:25	7:17	6:17	7:13	7:11	6:11	7:07
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:20	5:24	7:16	6:16	7:12	7:11	6:11	7:07
Netanya	6:21	5:25	7:17	6:17	7:13	7:11	6:11	7:07
Be'er Sheva	6:21	5:25	7:16	6:17	7:12	7:11	6:12	7:07
Rehovot	6:21	5:25	7:17	6:17	7:13	7:11	6:12	7:07
Petach Tikva	6:03	5:25	7:16	5:59	7:12	7:11	5:54	7:07
Ginot Shomron	6:20	5:24	7:16	6:16	7:12	7:10	6:10	7:06
Haifa / Zichron	6:10	5:24	7:17	6:06	7:12	7:11	6:01	7:07
Gush Shiloh	6:19	5:23	7:15	6:15	7:11	7:09	6:10	7:05
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:21	5:25	7:17	6:17	7:13	7:12	6:12	7:08
Givat Zeev	6:23	5:23	7:15	6:19	7:11	7:10	6:14	7:06
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:20	5:24	7:15	6:16	7:11	7:10	6:10	7:06
Ashkelon	6:22	5:26	7:18	6:18	7:14	7:12	6:13	7:08
Yad Binyamin	6:21	5:25	7:17	6:17	7:13	7:11	6:12	7:07
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:12	5:22	7:15	6:08	7:10	7:09	6:03	7:05
Golan	6:18	5:22	7:14	6:14	7:10	7:08	6:08	7:04
Nahariya/Maalot	6:19	5:24	7:16	6:15	7:12	7:11	6:10	7:07
Afula	6:19	5:23	7:15	6:15	7:11	7:10	6:10	7:06

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Nitzavim 7:55PM • RH Day#2 7:49PM • Vayeilech 7:46PM

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

* Light candles from a pre-existing flame after; ** Without candle or besamim

Daf Yomi: Nitzavim - Zevachim 6 | Vayeilech - Zevachim 13



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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This past week I was in the United States and had the distinguished pleasure to once again spend a couple of days with my colleagues at the OU Senior Staff Retreat. The beauty of having everyone in leadership positions in one location from OU Kosher, JLIC, Yachad, OU Advocacy, Synagogue Initiatives, Community Initiatives, OU Research, Jewish Action Magazine, Israel Free Spirit, Daf Yomi, Impact Accelerator, OU Torah, Women's Initiative, The SPIRIT Initiative, Teach Coalition, NCSY, OU Press, the executive arm, IT, Fiscal, HR – every single division that makes up the OU, gathering together to learn and to share – was, *be'emet*, a true honor.

In just two days, I could see the incredible impact that the OU is having on the Jewish world. Not only in providing kosher food, but also in how the profits from *kashrut*, together with the generous donations of Jews from around the world, are being put to good use serving *Klal Yisrael*. New programs are being

created, new techniques are being developed, from maintaining *eruvim* in North America to building life-saving programs for teens in Israel. The length and breadth of the OU's work is truly remarkable.

At one of the sessions on the second day OU Israel was asked to present the Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center. The Zula runs in the late hours of the night in Yerushalayim, opening its doors to teens at risk. While I have taken many guests to see the Zula first-hand, it is impossible to bring everyone. So this time we brought the Zula to America. Our Zula director, Oren Asulin, together with other members of the team, created a Zula experience at the retreat. It was powerful to watch leaders from across the OU sit together, listening to *divrei Torah* and the music, the singing, the guitar – the same atmosphere that normally fills the Zula in Yerushalayim – now filling a room in Parsippany, New Jersey. Rav Kook writes that when a person travels to *chutz la'aretz* with the goal of disseminating the Torah of *Eretz Yisrael*, he should carry a spiritual string with him from the Land in order to *linok*, to “nurse,” from its holiness even while abroad. I was able to see those words come alive before my eyes as we extended the spirit of Yerushalayim to our colleagues in America.

As I sat in the retreat, I could not help but think: it is not just about the programs themselves. It is mainly about the people behind them – the individuals working so hard with endless *mesirut nefesh* to ensure that the OU is providing the very best. And not only the staff, but their spouses, their children, their

לעילוי נשמת

הרב טוביה בן הרב אלעזר
ראובן ורוזה ציפה ז"ל

Dedicated in loving memory of
our dear husband, father,
grandfather & great-grandfather

Tuvia Muskin ז"ל
On his 3rd Yahrzeit - תשרי ה'תש"פ

*Muskin, Chamudot
and Wilk families*

families, all giving of themselves so that the Torah, the *hashkafa*, and the spirit of the OU can reach as many Jews as possible. This is not only about teens at risk, not only about English-speaking *olim* in Israel, not only about North America. It is about the entire spectrum of *Klal Yisrael*.

One thing that I found interesting during my time in America was that many people approached me with the same request - whether it was at the retreat, Shabbat lunch, or while out *davening*: “Rabbi Berman, how can we bring *Torah Tidbits* to North America?” To that I answer, listen North America is gigantic! Whether it is the different locations and different *zmanim*, distribution, how do we get Torah Tidbits from New York to Los Angeles - are we printing in each community or are we printing in one location and shipping nationwide? Even if we look at just the Tri-State Area, the geography when it comes to distribution is complex, and we haven't even begun to discuss the cost of printing in North America, which is higher than ever and approximately double what the printing costs are in Israel. *Bikitzur*, it is complex to say the least. I explained, however, that when I have a scheduled trip planned to speak in shuls and communities and my flight leaves after Wednesday, the day Torah Tidbits arrives from the printing house, I take 50+ copies with me, and without fail they disappear within minutes. Whether in shul or at a Shabbat table, people are eager to grab them because, *baruch Hashem*, Torah Tidbits is loved by all. There is no question that the Torah within *Torah Tidbits* is wanted beyond Israel and I am convinced that if we were able to find a way to make Torah Tidbits accessible in North America, people would take it in seconds.

As we talk about the complexity of printing in North America, I am reminded that



even in Israel, it is no small thing to bring *Torah Tidbits* to your hands for free each week. There is a team of writers and editors, a graphic designer who ensures accuracy, people checking ads and *zmanim*, another team overseeing printing, and a remarkable group of volunteers such as Toni Chernofsky and many more, who show up every Wednesday to package and distribute to communities across our beloved homeland. It is a tremendous amount of effort every

**May the Torah learned
from this TT be
in loving memory and לע"נ**

**Miriam Braver Lifshutz ע"ה
כ"ה אלול
on her 7th Yahrzeit**

**Greatly missed
by her children and grandchildren**

***Martin & Rhonda Lifshutz
and Family***

single week that has taken 32+ years to get to such a place where we can master such a task here in Israel. *Im ein kemach, ein Torah*. The Torah does not stand alone. Just as flour makes it possible to sustain life, so too the support, resources, and hard work of so many make it possible for *Torah Tidbits* to reach you each Shabbat for free. Something that always comes to my mind are comments from Torah Tidbits readers such as Ari Benchimol who I met in Los Angeles last Shabbat, who told me that he reads *Torah Tidbits* every single week, including my article to which I tested him on and he passed with flying colors and knowing the topic of each week. He said that the comfort of being able to walk into shul and pick up *Torah Tidbits*, printed, stapled, in color, ready for Shabbat, is something that North America simply does not have – and that we must find a way to bring it there. His words reminded me once again that what seems so simple to us in Israel is actually an extraordinary blessing that should never be taken for granted. And so we continue to publish faithfully here in Israel, and *b'ezrat Hashem* one day abroad as well, if *chas v'shalom* Mashiach has not already come.

So as Rosh Hashana approaches, I ask two things. First, if you know the person who

brings *Torah Tidbits* to your community, please take a moment to call or send a message and thank them. They deserve it. Second, I ask for your partnership in helping us carry the growing costs of producing this publication, so that the Torah that uplifts us every week can continue to reach every Jewish home in Israel and, *b'ezrat Hashem*, one day in North America. We are in the midst of an active campaign for *Torah Tidbits*, and there is truly no better time than the *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*, the Ten Days of Repentance, to take part in strengthening Torah. At this time of year when we all turn inward and ask Hashem for blessing, what greater *zechut* can there be than ensuring that Torah continues to be spread and shared with tens of thousands of Jews each Shabbat?

There is no better moment than now to express gratitude — to Hashem for the Torah that elevates us, and to the many people who work tirelessly to make sure it reaches us.

And so I bless each and every one of our readers, and all of *Klal Yisrael*, that this year we will hear only *besorot tovo*. May we merit to see our soldiers return safely after defeating the Jewish people's enemies, our hostages come home, our wounded soldiers and civilians a *refuah shleima*, and those who lost their homes see them rebuilt. May families be reunited with their loved ones. And may we be *zocheh* to welcome *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*, the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the final redemption *bimheira beyameinu*.

Wishing you all an inspiring and uplifting Shabbat and a *gmara chatima tova*.



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

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

רבקה בת יוסף ע"ה

Rifka Edelstein a"h

**beloved wife, mother, grandmother
and great grandmother
on her 16th yearzeit - 25 Elul**

***The Rosner, Edelstein,
Sokoloff families***



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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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Davening with Hashem

Prayer is hard.

How do I address an invisible abstraction? How can I get into my davening if I am reading the same script over and over again, day after day, multiple times a day? And then there are those nagging doubts about whether this G-d we are talking to really cares.

This is the time for us to deal with those issues. It is prayer season. Beginning with Seli-chot, through Rosh Hashana next week, and then finally Yom Kippur, we will invest a lot of our time and energy into prayer, “dwelling in the house of Hashem all of the(se) days of our lives.”

But how do we deal with those core issues with our davening?

The good news is that the first two will be significantly taken care of for us. For this

season, our prayer environment will be adapted in ways that make our encounter with Hashem more tangible, including changing the drapes and table covers in shuls to a heavenly pure white, opening the *aron kodesh* (holy ark) frequently, and bowing completely to the ground. The seasonal prayers are anything but routine, as we say different words from a different book and accompany our prayers with a generous measure of inspiring song. These changes make the *Yamim Noraim* prayer experience more tangible and fresh.

But what about those nagging doubts about whether the G-d we are talking to really cares?

A single word in our Parsha – *v’shav* – gives us two valuable insights that can help.

And it will be, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, you will consider in your heart among all the nations where Hashem your G-d has banished you. You will then return to Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul, and you will listen to His voice according to all that I am commanding you this day, you and your children. V’shav, Then Hashem your G-d will return (with) your exiles and He will have mercy upon you. He will once again gather you from all the nations where Hashem your G-d, had dispersed you. (Devarim 30:3)

Rashi notes that the Torah does not write the word *v’heishiv*, which would mean that G-d will bring us back, but *v’shav*, describing G-d Himself returning from exile. “Our sages learned from here that it is as if G-d experiences the difficulties of Klal Yisrael’s exile along with them to the extent that it is as

**May the Torah learned
from this issue be לעילוי נשמת
our beloved husband, father,
grandfather, and great-grandfather**

אליקים גצל בן ר' יוסף לידר ז"ל
GERRY LIEDER ז"ל

on his 6th yarhrzeit - תשרי

**Lieder, Schecter, Taragin,
and Kaufman families**

if He Himself is redeemed when Klal Yisrael returns home.”

This comment teaches us two critical perspectives for anyone engaged in prayer.

First – the G-d we are speaking to really does care.

There is a cynical *Yiddish* expression, *a mentsch tracht un Gott lacht*, “man plans and G-d laughs.” That statement portrays G-d as playing games with us, watching us lay hope-filled plans only to delight in then pulling the rug out from under us. That perspective is antithetical to our belief system. We describe Hashem in the beginning of every prayer as the *gomeil chassadim tovim*, the One who grants perfect kindness, Who created the world as an act of kindness, *olam chessed yibaneh* (Tehillim 89:3). Yes, it is true that man plans and G-d decides, *rabot machashavos b’lev ish va’atzat Hashem hi takum* (Mishlei 19:21). But when G-d for one reason or another decides in His wisdom and kindness that things should not go as we had planned, He does not laugh at us. He cries with us. *B’chol tzaratam lo tzar* (Yeshayahu 63:9). All our difficulties are His difficulties. G-d tends to His people like the shepherd for his sheep, *k’vakarat ro’eh edro*.

Second – we are not just asking G-d for what we need. He *k’vayachol* needs it too.

G-d also had plans and dreams. He created a delightful world with the hope that it would reflect its Creator, that the people He created in His image and placed within it would walk in His ways and recognize His being and presence, filling the world with faith and truth, morality and kindness. Every year on the anniversary of that creation – on Rosh Hashana - G-d revisits His plan and sees how it is progressing. We can only imagine how He feels. *Gott tracht un mentsch lacht*, G-d

had plans and we did not take them seriously. Recognizing this, we realize that the sad and troubled state of the unredeemed world in which we live, that source of so much human pain, is not just our problem; it is His too. In the words of the mystics, *Shechinta b’galuta*, the Divine Presence itself is in exile. We want to come back; He wants to come back. *V’shav*.

On Rosh Hashana and in every prayer of the year we say precious little about ourselves. The bulk of our prayers focus on our hopes for a better world, one that is filled with the knowledge of G-d, the restoration of justice, the strengthening of the forces of good and the weakening of the evil, the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, and the sounding of the Shofar associated with that moment at Sinai when the delicious words of the Torah first brought us together and filled the world. These are things that we care enough about to pray for constantly. And these are the things that G-d really cares about.

V’shav. G-d goes with us and returns with us. He feels our needs, pains, and disappointments, and we feel His. We pray to Him and we pray with Him. *Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha v’nashuva*. G-d, restore our closeness to You and then we can return home to Yerushalayim together. ■

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

Chana Ehrlich א"ח
חנה בת משה ע"ה
on her 11th Yahrzeit - ב"ה אלול

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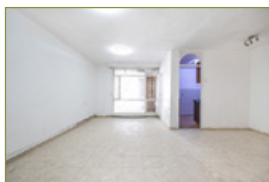
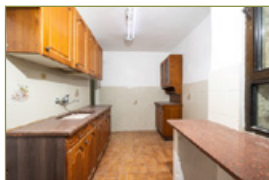
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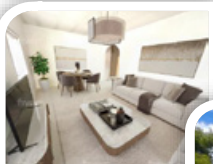
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PARSHAT NITZAVIM

Parshat Nitzavim is the first of 4 very short parshiot that conclude the Torah. The last parsha of the Torah is read on Simchat Torah. Our parsha and the following 2 have a total of 122 verses – the size of an average parsha. So, we are virtually at the end of the Torah.

Last week in Parshat Ki Tavo, Moshe spoke of the distant future. Though not yet in the Land, Moshe gave a chilling description of exile from the Land.

And in our parsha, he looks into the even more distant future; the end of the exile and the return to the Land.

Our parsha is hopeful. Optimistic. We will return to G-d and He will return us to our Land.

The Talmud (Megilla 31b) says Ezra made a decree to read Ki Tavo the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. Tosafot points out that we don't do that. We read Nitzavim before Rosh Hashana, Ki Tavo 2 weeks before Rosh Hashana.

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Because we prefer the reassurance of Nitzavim as a prelude to Rosh Hashana. That we have the power of teshuva in us. We prefer entering Rosh Hashana with optimism rather than with dread. Nitzavim, not Ki Tavo.

Although this parsha has but 40 verses, the emotional impact is profound.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 29:9-11)

The Brit of Arvot Moav. All the people are gathered, men, women, children, water carriers and wood choppers to enter the covenant.

We have had covenants before in the Torah. A covenant was made with Avraham; another at Sinai. Striking in this covenant is 2 things: specific people and the word Hayom that appears 4 times in 6 verses.

The previous covenants were made with the people as a whole. A deal or covenant made with a nation could allow us to hide: it doesn't apply to me personally, but to the nation. You all take care of it. Moshe says, there is no hiding: you are all included, men, women, common folk. And this is not ancient, old news. It is today. As if Moshe is saying, "I am not making this covenant on my today – but for you, readers, this covenant is being made on your today." All of you are in; present and future generations. No hiding.



2ND ALIYA (29:12-14)

To enter the covenant; that G-d will be our G-d and we will be His people. As was said to the Avot. This covenant is with you here today and those not here.

The sealing of the covenant here is on the cusp of entering the Land. This is not the first

covenant. The first brit was the promise: I will give you the Land of Israel. And now, I am doing it. Entering the Land is G-d delivering on his promise in the covenant to Avraham.

Promises are easy. Keeping them is the trick.

Maybe this covenant is different, coming on the cusp of seeing promises fulfilled. And this covenant is personal. You. And me. You, G-d will be my G-d. And we will be Your people.



3RD ALIYA (29:15-28)

Should there be amongst you those chasing idols, rationalizing that they are free to follow their hearts; the consequence of the special bond of this covenant is that your disloyalty, your chasing idol worship will be met with Divine wrath. The destruction of this Land because of your unfaithfulness will be so profound people will look at it and be shocked by its utter desolation. They will recognize that your disloyalty resulted in this desolation and in your being tossed out of this Land.

The Land of Israel is described repeatedly as a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet here, in the wake of disloyalty, all that milk and honey bounty will be replaced by desolation.

We, the privileged who live in this Land are familiar with this desolation. The rocky, grassless, treeless topography of Israel is jarring to the eye, certainly to us who hail from countries of lush meadows and trees. Something bad happened to this Land of milk and honey.

Moshe tells us: the Land is a reflection of the intimacy or the distance of our bond with G-d, and He with us. The desolation isn't good news. The Ramban maintains that the Land is not permanently sentenced to being barren and desolate; as long as it is in non-Jewish hands, the topography will remain rough. Once returned to Jewish hands, the green returns.

Oh, how fortunate are the eyes, our eyes, who

have seen the green return, the green that is the result of the Divine wink.



4TH ALIYA (30:1-6)

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

This is the most beautiful paragraph in the entire Torah. It is so good it is split in the middle, to savor it. It is called Parshat HaTeshuva, the section of Return. The word “return” appears 7 times. We to Him. He to us. We take a step; He steps to us. But our first return is described as “we take it to heart”. Heart murmurings are the beginning of teshuva. And He is our cardiologist, He knows our murmurings, as faint as they may be. Once He senses those murmurings, He empowers us, Gives us strength, the will to build on our deepest pining. He waits for us to take the first step. Then He gives us more strength and more. Just take that step.



5TH ALIYA (30:7-10)

And He will implant in you love of Him. And you will return to Him. And He will be thrilled with you because your return is with sincerity, a full heart.

He plants in us love of Him. And we return with a full heart.

Moshe chooses words in Sefer Devarim that

לעילוי נשמת

Dr. David M. Feigenbaum z"l

On the occasion of his 8th yearzeit

ט' תשרי

Renee Rabinowitz and Family

are words of affection. There is lots of love, love of Hashem, lots of heart, all your heart. Words like life, good, cleave to Hashem, today.

Moshe does not want to be only the teacher of halacha. He wants to be the teacher of our inner life as well. We need tutelage in not only *what to do*, but also in *how to feel*. Our feelings: let Him in, with love, with the deepest feelings of your heart, every day. The language is noticeably more emotive than the rest of the Torah. Moshe, as he is departing as leader, and departing from this world desperately wants to convey depth, to convey emotion, to convey to us that loyalty must be more than mere actions. It has to be love.



6TH ALIYA (30:11-14)

For this mitzvah is not sublime, as if needing one to ascend the heavens or cross the ocean to retrieve it. Rather it is very close; on your lips and in your heart.

This short paragraph is striking in its beauty. It may be understood to be referring to the entire Torah. As if to say, "I know the Torah looks daunting; but it is not, it is the real you."

Or it could be referring to Teshuva. As if to say, "Change looks daunting; but it is not change, it is the real you."

Moshe is expressing his faith in us. That deep down, everyone has a connection to G-d and to the Jewish people. That is exactly what this verse says; we don't need to adjust, to adapt to a belief in G-d. We need to be sensitive to, to plumb our real selves, to dig deep and discover ourselves. It is close: on our lips and in our heart.



7TH ALIYA (30:15-20)

Life and good, death and evil lie before you. Life is a consequence of loyalty to the mitzvot. Destruction awaits lack of loyalty. Heaven and earth stand witness: life and death, blessing and curse lie before you.

Choose life.

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



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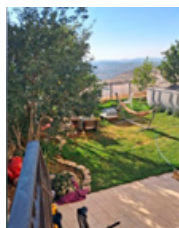
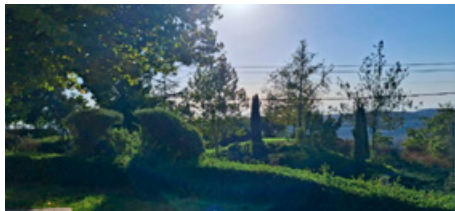
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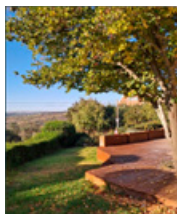
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BY RABBI CHANOK YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

העדתי בכך היום את השמים ואת הארץ החיים והמות נתתי לפניך הברכה והקללה ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה וזרעך (ל:ט)

"I call to witness against you this day the heaven and the earth, that the life and death I have set before you, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose life, that you may live, you and your offspring." (30:19)

The question that has been raised is why do we need the verse to give us a reason for choosing good? Once stated in the pasuk that choosing evil means "death", why need the latter part of the pasuk that states the reason to choose good, "that you and your children may live"?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) in his work Drash Moshe offers an answer that perhaps the pasuk is telling us what kind of "good" we are to choose. We need to choose "good" that is strong enough to have a positive impact on our children that will cause them to want to choose "good" also. The Torah emphasizes that even though some people themselves keep the Torah, they perform in such a way that it turns off their children and discourages others from following in their footsteps. For example, if one gives the impression that he does mitzvot because he is required to; G-d created the universe, and one must follow the Torah without any pleasure, only with struggles, he sends a clear message to his children that the Torah is a heavy burden and acts accordingly. This is obviously not the ideal.

Instead, when we project that G-d wants us to study and follow the Torah through joy and enthusiasm this shows our children that it is very worthy that true eternal life can be attained only through Torah. This, therefore, is the true meaning of the Pasuk, "Choose life!" - choose a life of Torah and mitzvot with such motivation and enthusiasm that our children and those who watch us will want to use us as an example of how to live.

- Shabbat Shalom



PROBING THE PROPHETS

NITZAVIM

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

“Sos Asis BaShem”

This Shabbat we read the closing nevuah of the seven haftarot of consolation, a prophecy taken from perek 61 of Sefer Yeshayahu. However, although the reading begins with the glorious cry “Sos Asis BaShem” (“I shall rejoice in G-d”), that exuberant opening is actually found at the very end of the chapter – the final two p’sukim of perek 61. As a result, we fail to understand **who** exactly are “rejoicing” and **why** exactly they are rejoicing.

Upon glancing at the opening words of the chapter we reveal that Yishayahu discloses his very mission to the nation, as Hashem had told him. And, essential to carrying out G-d’s mission, the navi was charged to include these tasks:

“...to proclaim freedom to the captives”

“...to comfort the mourners”

“...to bring splendor in place of ashes to the

mourners of Tziyon”

“...and ‘oil of **joy**’ instead of mourning”

Yishayahu concludes his prophecy by telling Israel of the approaching Geulah AND by describing their life after their redemption. Given that prophetic message, is it not obvious **why** the nation (“Knesset Yisrael”) **who** heard the prophet’s message, would be those to now burst out and sing: “Sos Asis BaShem!”? Especially at this time, when hearing the comforting and promising message of Hashem, they would surely “rejoice in G-d”!

Fittingly, it is this cry of ecstasy that opens the haftarah that closes the weeks of comforting prophecies. But the haftarah reading has more to say for this final Shabbat of the year.

After the nation’s cries of joy, the haftarah continues with the 62nd perek that include Yishayahu’s comforting words, as he declares: “Lma’an Tziyon lo echeshch, ul’ma’an Yerushalayim lo eshкот”. The navi is telling his people that, despite their past faults and, perhaps, even their future lapses, he, as the agent of G-d Himself, would continue to speak out in support and defense of Tziyon and Yerushalayim. This is certainly a powerful and comforting message with which to introduce his consoling prophecy that follows.

And yet, I see in these opening words of the navi more than eloquent and reassuring prophetic promises. I would contend that Yishayahu is leaving an essential message to all of Israel for all of time, especially, I believe, on this Shabbat before Rosh HaShanah.

Yishayahu’s words are not only meant to teach his generation that he would continue



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to support them, but also to tell Jews of future generations that, even when we may fall short of Hashem's expectations, when, at times, we might feel frustrated and disappointed by our own brethren, we must **never** fail to recognize the extraordinary – and even remarkable – nation that we are. Indeed, did not this same prophet declare in the very last perek (60), a mere eleven p'sukim before the beginning of our haftarah, "V'ahmech kulam tzadikim" – that your nation, as a whole, is a righteous one!!!

And, if so, would we be so bold as to turn away from our righteous people or abstain our devotion to *klal Yisra'el*? More powerfully, Yishayahu was warning us **never** to speak in harmful or negative language about our *Am Kadosh*! On the contrary, "Lma'an Tziyon lo echesh" – we must never remain silent when our enemies (or even 'supposed' friends) disgrace, discredit and demean the eternal people who have survived over a millennium of misanthropes and hate-mongers.

No, perhaps we may not always be as faultless as G-d would hope us to be, but "Ul'ma'an Yerushalayim lo eshkot" – we will, nonetheless, continue to speak up with pride about our people, until the time that, as Yishayahu says in conclusion to this promise, "Yetzeh kanogah tzidk'ah", "her [Israel's] righteousness will shine like a bright light!!" ■

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Tanna DeBei Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 5

How I found the blessing in poverty.

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To this day, I cannot sleep at night knowing Jewish children are going to bed hungry. Statistics say it all, one out of three children in Israel lives below the poverty line. But these are not just numbers to me. I know the children. I know their families. I know the sharp ache in their stomach, the cucumber that must last for lunch, the apple divided so every sibling gets a piece.

I remember the little girl who came to our Children's Center for a hot meal. She kept asking for a plastic bag. When we finally asked her why, she answered: *"I need to take half my lunch home to my sister who couldn't come today."*

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The Torah commands us to care for the poor in "our city." Many explain that "our city" means *Jerusalem*, no matter where we live. (See Chida, Aruch HaShulchan).

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

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לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטער ע"ה

Why Be Jewish?

In the last days of his life, Moses renews the covenant between God and Israel. The entire book of Devarim has been an account of the covenant – how it came about, what its terms and conditions are, why it is the core of Israel's identity as an *am kadosh* (a holy people) and so on. Now comes the moment of renewal itself, a national rededication to the terms of its existence as a holy people under the sovereignty of God Himself.

Moses, however, is careful not to limit his words to those who are actually present. About to die, he wants to ensure that no future

generation can say, "Moses made a covenant with our ancestors but not with us. We didn't give our consent. We are not bound." To preclude this, he says these words:

"It is *not with you alone* that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and *with whoever is not here* with us today." (*Deut. 29:13-14*)

As the commentators point out, the phrase "whoever is not here" cannot refer to Israelites alive at the time who happened to be somewhere else. That condition would not have been necessary since the entire nation was assembled there. Moses can only mean "generations not yet born." The covenant bound all Jews from that day to this. As the Talmud says: we are all *mushba ve-omed meHar Sinai*, "foresworn from Sinai" (Yoma 73b, Nedarim 8a). By agreeing to be God's people, subject to God's laws, our ancestors obligated us all.

Hence one of the most fundamental facts about Judaism. Converts excepted, we do not choose to be Jews. We are born as Jews. We become legal adults, subject to the commands and responsible for our actions, at the age of twelve for girls, thirteen for boys. But we are part of the covenant from birth. A bat or bar mitzvah is not a "confirmation." It involves no voluntary acceptance of Jewish identity. That

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choice took place more than three thousand years ago when Moses said, "It is *not with you alone* that I am making this sworn covenant, but with ... *whoever is not here* with us today," meaning all future generations, including us.

But how can this be so? Surely a fundamental principle of Judaism is that *there is no obligation without consent*. How can we be bound by an agreement to which we were not parties? How can we be subject to a covenant on the basis of a decision taken long ago and far away by our distant ancestors?

The Sages, after all, raised a similar question about the Wilderness Generation in the days of Moses who were actually there and did give their assent. The Talmud suggests that they were not entirely free to say 'No.'

"The Holy One, blessed be He, suspended the mountain over them like a barrel and said: If you say 'Yes,' all will be well, but if you say 'No,' this will be your burial-place." (*Shabbat 88b*)

On this, R. Acha bar Yaakov said: "This constitutes a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of the covenant." The Talmud replies that even though the agreement may not have been entirely free at the time, Jews asserted their consent voluntarily in the days of Ahasuerus, as suggested by the Book of Esther.

This is not the place to discuss this particular passage, but the essential point is clear. The Sages believed with great force that an agreement must be made freely in order to be binding. Yet we did not agree to be Jews. We were, most of us, born Jews. We were not there in Moses' day when the agreement was made. We did not yet exist. How then can we be bound by the covenant?

This is not a small question. It is the question on which all others turn. How can Jewish identity be passed on from parent to child? If Jewish identity were merely racial or ethnic, we



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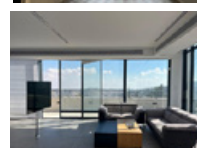
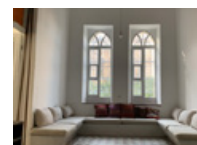
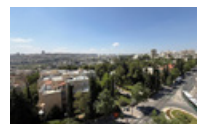
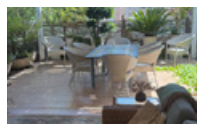
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could understand it. We inherit many things from our parents – most obviously our genes. But being Jewish is not a genetic condition, it is a set of religious obligations. There is a halachic principle: *zachin le-adam shelo be-fanav*, “You can confer a *benefit* on someone else without their knowledge or consent” Ketubot 11a). And though it is doubtless a benefit to be a Jew, it is also in some sense a liability, a restriction on our range of legitimate choices, with grave consequences if we transgress. Had we not been Jewish, we could have worked on Shabbat, eaten non-kosher food, and so on. You can confer a benefit upon someone without their consent, *but not a liability*.

In short, this is the question of questions of Jewish identity. How can we be bound by Jewish law, without our choice, merely because our ancestors agreed on our behalf?

In my book *Radical Then, Radical Now*¹ I pointed out how fascinating it is to trace exactly when and where this question was asked. Despite the fact that everything else depends on it, it was not asked often. For the most part, Jews did not ask the question, “Why be Jewish?” The answer was obvious.

1. Jonathan Sacks, *Radical Then, Radical Now*, London: HarperCollins, 2000, (published in North America as *A Letter in the Scroll*, New York: Free Press, 2000).

My parents are Jewish. My grandparents were Jewish. So I am Jewish. Identity is something most people in most ages take for granted.

It did, however, become an issue during the Babylonian exile. The prophet Ezekiel says, “What is in your mind shall never happen - the thought, ‘Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone’” (Ez. 20:32). This is the first reference to Jews actively seeking to abandon their identity.

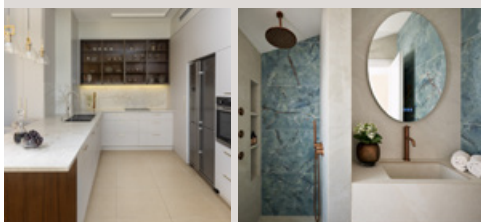
It happened again in rabbinic times. We know that in the second century BCE there were Jews who Hellenised, seeking to become Greek rather than Jewish. There were others who, under Roman rule, sought to become Roman. Some even underwent an operation known as *epispasm* to reverse the effects of circumcision (in Hebrew they were known as *meshuchim*) to hide the fact that they were Jews.²

The third time was in Spain in the fifteenth century. That is where we find two Bible commentators, Rabbi Isaac Arama and Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel, raising precisely the question we have raised about how the covenant can bind Jews today. The reason they ask it while earlier commentators did not was that in their time – between 1391 and 1492 – there was immense pressure on Spanish Jews to convert to Christianity, and as many as a third may have done so (they were known in Hebrew as the *anusim*, in Spanish as the *conversos*, and derogatively as *marranos*, “swine”). The question “Why stay Jewish?” was real.

The answers given were different at different times. Ezekiel’s answer was blunt: “As I live, declares the Lord, God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and

2. This is what R. Elazar of Modiin means in Mishnah Avot 3:15 when he refers to one who “nullifies the covenant of our father Abraham.”

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with wrath poured out I will be King over you” (Ezek. 20:33). In other words, Jews might try to escape their destiny but they would fail. Even if it were against their will, they would always be known as Jews. That, tragically, is what happened during the two great ages of assimilation, fifteenth century Spain and in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both cases, racial antisemitism persisted, and Jews continued to be persecuted.

The Sages answered the question mystically. They said that even the souls of Jews not-yet-born were present at Sinai and ratified the covenant (Exodus Rabbah 28:6). Every Jew, in other words, *did* give their consent in the days of Moses even though they had not yet been born. Demystifying this, perhaps the Sages meant that in their innermost hearts, even the most assimilated Jew knew that they were Jewish. That seems to have been the case with public figures like Heinrich Heine and Benjamin Disraeli, who lived as Christians but often wrote and thought as Jews.

The fifteenth-century Spanish commentators found this answer problematic. As Arama said, we are each of us both body and soul. How then is it sufficient to say that our soul was present at Sinai? How can the soul obligate the body? Of course the *soul* agrees to the covenant. Spiritually, to be a Jew is a privilege, and you can confer a privilege on someone without their consent. But for the body, the covenant is a burden. It involves all sorts of restrictions on physical pleasures. Therefore if the souls of future generations were present but not their bodies, this would not constitute consent.

Radical Then, Radical Now is my answer to this question. But perhaps there is a simpler one. Not every obligation that binds us is one to which we have freely given our assent. There are obligations that come with birth.

The classic example is a crown prince or princess. To be the heir to a throne involves a set of duties and a life of service to others. It is possible to neglect these duties. In extreme circumstances it is even possible for a monarch to abdicate. But no one can choose to become heir to a throne. That is a fate, a destiny, that comes with birth.

The people of whom God Himself said, “My child, My firstborn, Israel” (Ex. 4:22) knows itself to be royalty. That may be a privilege. It may be a burden. It is almost certainly both. It is a peculiar post-Enlightenment delusion to think that the only significant things about us are those we choose. For the truth is that we do not choose some of the most important facts about ourselves. We did not choose to be born. We did not choose our parents. We did not choose the time and place of our birth. Yet each of these affects who we are and what we are called on to do.

We are part of a story that began long before we were born and will continue long after we are no longer here, and the question for all of us is: Will we continue the story? The hopes of a hundred generations of our ancestors rest on our willingness to do so. Deep in our collective memory the words of Moses continue to resonate. “It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with ... *whoever is not here with us today.*” **We are each a key player in this story. We can live it. We can abandon it. But it is a choice we cannot avoid, and it has immense consequences. The future of the covenant rests with us.** ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.



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אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם...
(דברים כט, ט)

"You stand this day, all of you, before your God..."

What does it mean to stand before Hashem? The Ramban helps us understand what Moshe is saying to Bnei Yisrael:

"You are standing and ready before G-d to be initiated into His covenant. For, in order to accept the Torah with its interpretation, they had gathered before him [Moses]."

טעם אתם נצבים היום לפני ה' אלקיכם, שא אתם עומדים ומזמנים לפני השם כדי לעמוד בבחינתו, כי לקבל התורה בבאורה נאספו אליו. (רמב"ן - דברים כט, ט)

Bnei Yisrael are standing on the border of Eretz Yisrael, ready to enter. Almost forty years have passed since they were given the Torah, and now they are gathered once again to stand before Hashem, to be initiated into the *brit*

(covenant), and to accept the Torah with its interpretation.

This moment teaches us two eternal truths about the Jewish experience:

First, it signifies an unending and everlasting commitment — a deep understanding of what we are a part of and what our lives are about.

Second, with this commitment comes constant renewal. The Torah's interpretations — *Torah She'be'al Peh* — make the Torah relevant in every generation. Bringing the Torah to life every day is our ongoing expression of commitment and renewal.

Rosh Hashanah embodies these two ideas — commitment and renewal. Each year we start fresh, seeking growth and closeness to Hashem.



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The shofar is meant to awaken us to *teshuvah*. When we hear its sound, it should remind us who we are, why we are here, and what our purpose is.

The Rambam famously writes that the shofar carries a message to the Jewish people: *"Wake up, you who are asleep... reflect on your deeds, return in teshuvah, and remember your Creator."*

Why does the Rambam compare sinning

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to being “asleep”? Because when we do something wrong, it is not our truest, most conscious self acting. It’s as though we were on autopilot, not fully awake to what we were doing. Our sins do not define us — they happen when we forget who we really are.

That is why the shofar is the perfect tool for *teshuvah*. It is a wake-up call. Its piercing cry shakes us and reminds us: *You are better than your mistakes*. All we need to do is “wake up” — recognize the wrong, stop doing it, and return to Hashem.

So when we hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, it’s not just a mitzvah of listening to a sound. It’s Hashem personally calling out to each of us: *Remember who you are. Wake up. Come back.*

May the cry of the shofar inspire us to a true awakening, *teshuvah*, and a year filled with blessing. ■

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ROSH HASHANA - DAY 1.

The Torah reading for the first day is Genesis, Chapter 21, v. 1-34. This chapter describes the birth of Yitzchak, the insistence of Sarah to send Yishmael away, and Hagar and Yishmael's near death in the desert before being saved. It concludes with a pact made between Avraham and Avimelech in Beer Sheva.



ALIYA 1.

The promise made to Avraham and Sarah is granted and Yitzchak is born.

In describing the birth, the phrase "as He said" appears 3 times in the first 2 verses. That is the reason this is read on Rosh Hashana. The theme of Zichronot is not that G-d remembers – obviously He does. But that His promises are realized on His schedule. They take time; sometimes a very long time. Zichronot means

that He does what He promises, acts on what He says. He granted to Sarah the child that He promised.



ALIYA 2.

Sarah says "all who hear of this birth will laugh". Hence Yitzchak. Sarah demands that Hagar and Yishmael be sent off, for Yitzchak alone is our future. While Avraham does not like this, Hashem tells him that Sarah is correct, for Yitzchak is the Jewish future.

There could be no better description of Jewish history than the laugh that is incredulous. A laugh expressing how incredulous this birth is. Sarah knew not how incredulous our history would truly be.



ALIYA 3.

Avraham awakens early to send Hagar and Yishmael away. They go to Beersheva. She cannot bear to see the death of her son. An angel calls to her that her son is saved as G-d heard the voice of the child; he too will be a great nation. She opens her eyes and sees water and they drink. He grows and becomes an archer.

This is a parallel story to the Akeida we will read tomorrow. In fact, the parallels are striking: Early in the morning, journey off, with a son, near death, the angel calls, her eyes are opened.

The blatant juxtaposition of Yishmael's near death with his mother to Yitzchak's near death with his father demands attention. Parallel stories in the Torah are not only to show similarities but to note the differences.

And while there are striking similarities,

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the difference is dramatic: Divine command. Hagar and Yishmael are sent away by Sarah. Avraham and Yitzchak are submitting to the Divine Command. One story is earthly, the other heavenly.

Yishmael's near death on earth, saved by an angel, teaches us G-d's love for all – but lacking any reach for G-d by man. G-d reaches for man, but there is no reach by man for G-d.

Yitzchak's near death, at the behest of G-d, is the reach of G-d for man and man's reach in return for G-d. It is an encounter, a story of faith, of struggle of man with G-d.

Rosh Hashana has a universal theme, the day of creation of all mankind. But the parallel to the story of Yitzchak and the Akeida is to highlight the difference. There are many great nations, all G-d's children. But some are rooted in this world; Yishmael becomes a great warrior archer. And some elevate above this world, engaging their Creator, bound by a covenant. There is only one Jewish people.



ALIYA 4.

Avimelech makes a pact with Avraham because "G-d is with you in all you do".

This too is a promise fulfilled. Avraham was promised he would have a great name. His fame has come to be. G-d promises and fulfills those promises.



ALIYA 5.

They call the name of the location Beersheva from the word oath, or pact.

Theirs is an earthly pact, ours a Divine one.

ROSH HASHANA - DAY 2.

The Torah reading is the 24 verses of Genesis, Chapter 22. This story, Akeidat Yitzchak, the binding of Isaac is the most dramatic

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expression of how far man is willing to go in his allegiance to G-d. While it is a complex story of conflicted commands, the narrative is beautiful in its simplicity. Amidst the simplicity of the story, the deep and unswerving commitment of Avraham is majestic. The story concludes with the ram, caught in the thicket by its horn; the shofar we use for Rosh Hashana.



ALIYA 1.

G-d tests Avraham: Take your beloved son and offer him as an offering. Avraham awakens early, gets up and goes with his assistants, with Yitzchak and with the wood.

The drama of the story is belied by the strikingly simple wording: Hineni, here I am, he woke up early, got up and went to do what G-d requested. The absence of any dialogue, of any questions, of challenge to G-d, of discussion with Sarah, of explanation to Yitzchak is noticeable.

This simplicity of language drives the message of the simplicity of Avraham's loyalty to G-d. For this terribly complex story is at its root quite simple. This simplicity is a Rosh Hashana theme. We live in a terribly complicated world; we have many unanswered questions, theological questions, many challenges and confusion.

But at some very deep and profound level we are simple in our devotion. Like the shofar – no words, just a simple call from way deep

in our souls.



ALIYA 2.

They arrive at the place. The assistants stay back. Avraham and Yitzchak walk, together. Yitzchak inquires as to where the offering is. Avraham responds that G-d will provide the offering. And they walk together.

They walk together. This togetherness is ironic – for Avraham knows he is to sacrifice Yitzchak, while Yitzchak does not. Or perhaps he does. Maybe he really is together with Avraham, perhaps he too is being tested. Yitzchak's test is his willingness to be sacrificed. And as the father of the Jewish people, he expresses the image of the Jew as a survivor; nearly destroyed, but surviving.



ALIYA 3.

Avraham builds the altar, arranges the wood, places Yitzchak on the altar and takes the knife to slaughter his son. The angel interrupts; instructing him not to slaughter his son, or do a thing, for now we know you would not withhold even your son from Me. Avraham sees the ram and offers it in place of his son. He calls the place "G-d will see, yireh" and it is called the mountain in which G-d is seen (Har Hamoriah).

What more can be said of this powerful and dramatic moment. The mountain is named.

He sees. And He is seen. The story told Him a lot about Avraham. He saw Avraham not just profess faith, but be faithful.

And the story tells us a lot about Him. What we see in Him is the mystery – why did He do this, and how little we know of His ways. But while his ways are inscrutable, His mercy and His faithfulness to us was clear to see. He saved Yitzchak and He saved Avraham from a treacherous moment.



ALIYA 4.

The angel calls to Avraham a second time. He is told that G-d swore that if Avraham did not withhold his child, that he and his children would be blessed, would be a blessing and would be a great people.

This too is a Rosh Hashana theme. Rosh Hashana is the birthday of the creation of mankind; made in the image of G-d. Majestic, creative, a partner to the Divine.

And the expression of blessing to the Jewish people is a further expression of the majesty of the Jewish people. Rosh Hashana is not only the majesty of G-d but the majesty of man. We are partners with the King. He reaches to us, creates us, chooses us, instructs us, blesses us. What a majestic mandate – the partners, the intimate partner of the King.



ALIYA 5.

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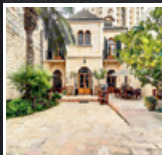
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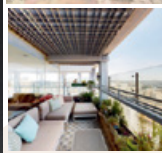
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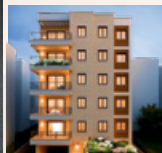
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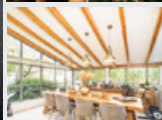
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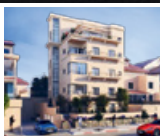
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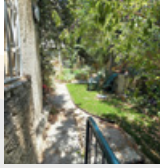
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ROSH HASHANA



Willing to Change

Sometimes even the corniest of old jokes has a profound lesson to teach us.

“How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?”

In case you haven't already heard the answer to this example of tired “light bulb” humor, it goes like this:

“Just one. But it has to be willing to change!”

This witticism, if it deserves that name, recognizes an important limitation of the profession of psychotherapy. It can only be effective to the extent that patients or clients are motivated to cooperate with the process. Only if they are committed to doing the hard work of personal change can psychotherapists look forward to success.

Willingness to change is a rare trait among humans. People are frightened of anything new

and adhere to the status quo even when it has brought them little benefit.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of the land of Israel, wrote a precious little book entitled *The Lights of Return*. In it he insists that the “human tendency to cling desperately to old ways and ancient habits is the sign of a spiritual malaise”.

Rav Kook wrote this book early in his life. In his later years, he not only recommended it to others, but he studied it himself, especially at the time of year in which we now find ourselves.

For we are now in the waning days of the month of *Elul* with the High Holidays imminent. The theme of this period of the Jewish calendar is *teshuvah*, which, although usually translated as “repentance”, is better translated as “return”, or still better as “change”.

A fundamental teaching of Judaism is the following verse from Ecclesiastes: “For no man is perfect in this world, doing only good and never sinning.” We all need to improve, we all need to change. This is the central message of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the Jew.

The fundamental difference between optimists and pessimists is that the former believe that change is possible, whereas the latter believe that attempts to change are futile.

“You can't change human nature.” “The leopard cannot change his spots.” “Once a fool always a fool.” These are the mottos of the pessimists, and the assumptions they make are the very stuff of the entrenched resistance to genuine change in our behaviors and attitudes.

Books have been written and countless

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sermons sounded with all sorts of advice as to how to go about change. Some believe that it is a slow, gradual, step by step process. Others insist that change requires a dramatic leap of faith and can be done in a transformational moment.

Some believe that change happens because of external circumstances, or social pressures imposed by other people. Others maintain that, on the contrary, change can be intentional and purposefully initiated by every person himself or herself.

Jewish texts recognize that there are two types of change; one indeed, a slow, painstaking path, and the other, a rapid and sudden personality shift. Jewish tradition recognizes that others influence and mold our paths, but that the ultimate responsibility for spiritual change lies with each of us ourselves.

I would like to share with you all one fascinating example of two individuals working together in a purposeful but deliberately incremental change process. It is to be found in the writings of a man known as the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. His name was Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro, and his career as an outstanding pedagogue and teacher of adolescent boys was tragically cut off by the horrors of the Holocaust.

Rabbi Shapiro wrote a book aimed at his young protégés, giving them the following piece of advice to be initiated at the beginning of the school semester. He asks the student to imagine, if his name, for example, is Reuven, what "Reuven" might look like a month from now, six months from now, a year from now.

Once the young man has some sort of image of what his future self might be he can consciously begin to take steps to approximate this image. He can set specific goals and objectives to come closer to his self ideal,

step by tentative step.

And every so often, he can monitor his progress, accelerating the process, modifying it if necessary, or slowing it down if things are going too quickly. The Rebbe encourages the young man to collaborate with a friend or a mentor as he goes through this process of self change and self-development.

At this time of the Jewish New Year, as many do around the time of the secular New Year, we all tend to make resolutions. Rabbi Shapiro's technique is but one of the numerous methods which can assist us in formulating such resolutions and in successfully executing them.

The sanctity of this season inspires us, like the light bulb, to be willing to change. We must turn to the wise and the experienced among us, be they living friends, mentors, and spiritual guides, or past scholars, rabbis, and teachers, for suggestions of specific techniques as to how to really change.

Judaism always insists upon the utility and the importance of textual study. At this time of year study is no less important than prayer. Especially if our study focuses upon finding ways to achieve desired change, and to maintain that change in the face of challenge and ever shifting circumstances.

Every time we wish each other a Happy and Sweet New Year, we are really saying, "I hope that you are successful in your attempts to change yourself and improve yourself in the coming year." It is in that spirit that I wish each of you, dear readers, a Happy and Sweet New Year! ■

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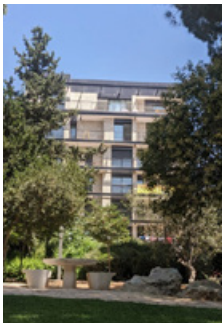
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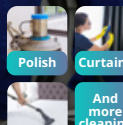
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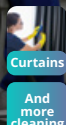
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ROSH HASHANA



Three Tears on Rosh HaShana: Denial, Despair, and Defiant Hope

During our Rosh HaShana services, we reflect on the voices of three biblical women whose cries echo through the sacred days of judgment and renewal: the mother of Sisera, Hagar, and Rachel Imenu. Each cry, as Rabbi Norman Lamm¹ profoundly noted, reflects a distinct spiritual posture in the face of suffering. Their tears are not merely emotional outbursts, rather they are windows into the soul's confrontation with reality.

SISERA'S MOTHER – THE CRY OF DENIAL

On the first day of Rosh HaShana, the haftara recounts the story of Sisera's mother, who waits anxiously at the window for her son's return from battle. She peers into the distance, hoping for a glimpse of his chariot.² As time passes and he fails to appear, her friends offer hollow reassurances: "He is delayed because he is collecting the spoils." But deep down, the truth dawns—he is never coming back.

The Talmud Yerushalmi³ teaches that she cried one hundred cries upon realizing this bitter truth—one for each of the shofar

blasts we blow. Yet her tears stem not from a courageous engagement with reality, but from her refusal to accept it. She lived in a fantasy, an "immoral optimism," as Rabbi Lamm termed it—an arrogant illusion that the world will always remain as it was. When one builds their life upon denial, the shock of reality becomes devastating.

This is the first type of cry: a tear that resists truth. It is the refusal to see, to acknowledge, to engage. Such tears do not lead to growth, only to paralysis.

HAGAR – THE CRY OF DESPAIR

The Torah reading of the first day of Rosh HaShana introduces us to a second kind of cry—that of Hagar. Cast out from Avraham's home, Hagar wanders the desert with her son, Yishmael, until they are both at the brink of death. Recognizing her son's imminent demise, she distances herself, saying, "Let me not see the death of the child,"⁴ and breaks down weeping.

Unlike Sisera's mother, Hagar sees reality clearly. She does not hide from it. But she is crushed by it. Her tears are those of despair—resignation to fate, surrender to suffering. She weeps not in denial, but in hopelessness. She

1. Rabbi Norman Lamm, *Festivals of Faith* (New York: OU Press, 2011), 26.

2. Shoftim 5:28–30

3. Talmud Yerushalmi, Rosh HaShana 4:8

4. Bereishit 21:14–16

believes there is nothing more to be done, no possibility of change.

This is the second cry: a tear that surrenders. Though more honest than denial, despair too is spiritually disabling. It strips us of agency and suffocates faith.

RACHEL IMENU – THE CRY OF DEFIANT HOPE

Then we reach the cry of Rachel Imenu. Her life was marked by profound sorrow: she forfeited her beloved to her sister, struggled for years with infertility, and died young on the road, far from home. Yet even after death, her tears endure. In the haftara of the second day of Rosh HaShana, we are told: **“Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be comforted.”** רַחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל בְּנֶיהָ.⁵ She watches as her descendants are led into exile—and she *refuses* to remain silent.

Rachel does not deny the pain, nor does she succumb to it. She confronts reality with open eyes—and yet, she demands more. She turns to God and insists on redemption. Her tears are not the end, but the beginning. As Rabbi Lamm states: “The Jewish soul beholds reality in all of its ugliness but sets out to transform it.”

Rachel’s cry is a model of courageous, faith-filled defiance. It is the cry of protest, of prayer, of possibility.

CONCLUSION: CHOOSING OUR CRY

Each of us will cry in life. Pain is inevitable. But the *nature* of our tears—what they say about us and where they lead us—is our choice.

Will we cry like Sisera’s mother, lost in denial and illusions? Will we cry like Hagar, paralyzed by despair and surrender? Or will we cry like Rachel Imenu—eyes open, heart broken, but with a soul burning with fierce hope?

On Rosh HaShana, we are called to respond like Rachel. To see the world’s brokenness

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— our personal struggles, our collective wounds — and yet to believe. To believe that transformation is possible. That exile is not the end. That our cries reach Heaven and awaken compassion.

Rachel’s cry did not fall on deaf ears. Hashem responds: *“Restrain your voice from weeping... there is hope for your future.”*⁶

So too with us. When we cry with faith, with *Emunah and Bitahon*, we do not weep in vain. Our tears become the seeds of redemption.

Let us choose to cry not in denial or despair, but in courageous hope—like Rachel Imenu. And may our heartfelt cries be answered with healing, return, and a future filled with light. With the proper tears we are told: הַזֵּרוּעִים יִקְצְרוּ. “Those who sow in tears will reap in joy.”⁷ ■

6. Ibid

7. Tehillim 126:5

5. Yirmiyahu 31:14–16



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ROSH HASHANA

Inner Illumination

Tekiat Shofar, blowing the shofar, is a central part of the Rosh Hashanah service. In designing the structure of each section, Chazal meticulously chose seven verses to be recited responsively before shofar blowing, and three verses following the blasts. These verses direct our minds and hearts to focus on the objective of the mitzvah to blow shofar and indeed the objective of the *Yamim Nora'im*, the High Holy Days.

After blowing the first thirty shofar blasts, the chazzan calls out, "*Ashrei ha'am yod'ei teruah, Hashem be'or panecha yehaleichun* – Praiseworthy is the people that knows the shofar's cry; O Hashem, they will walk by the illumination of your countenance!" The latter part of the verse affords us a glimpse into the theme of the day and the power of the shofar.

Rav Elya Roth zt"l in *Sichat Eliyahu* quotes the famous idea that the moments during which

the shofar is blown is akin to the moments the Kohen Gadol stands in the Holy of Holies to do the exclusive Yom Kippur service. When listening to the shofar blasts, each of us metaphorically enters "*lifnai ve'lifnim*," into the innermost chamber of Hashem's presence. We are judged on Rosh Hashanah "*k'venei maron*" as an individual. This is a unique experience as people are generally social creatures, we like to interact with others and often define ourselves in terms of our relationship with others. In contrast, on Rosh Hashanah we stand completely alone before Hashem. Rav Roth notes that this is one of the reasons that the word '*emet*,' truth, is repeated often throughout the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. We are given the opportunity to face who we are without pretenses, to confront our core self. In the innermost chamber, we encounter who we really are.

Rav Yehudah Leib Chasman zt"l shares a powerful parable to illustrate the dynamic of these moments. Imagine a simple villager who hears about a cinema. He is intrigued by the idea and saves up money to buy an entrance ticket to see a film. He enters the darkened theater and is entranced by the images he sees on the screen. One thing, however, bothers him terribly. Everyone is sitting in the dark! He imagines how much more they would enjoy themselves if they could see better and instinctively turns on the light. The people in the theater yell at him, "Fool! Don't you know that the visuals only appear in the dark!"

On Rosh Hashanah, we are privy to the "*ohr panecha*," the Divine illumination that allows us to see the fantasies we live and the misdirected

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goals that we chase.

In his sefer on teshuvah, Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein explains that all year we deceive ourselves into believing that we are the owner of the house, the business, **we** are the center of the universe. Indeed, we sometimes have the attitude that we 'invite Hashem into our lives,' but only at our own convenience. Rosh Hashanah is the time when we are gifted with the light of clarity; it is Hashem's world, and we must adjust ourselves to realign our values and mindsets with His. The theme of this section is that of restoring our vision; to walk and live in the 'light of Hashem' - with His truth, His word, His command.

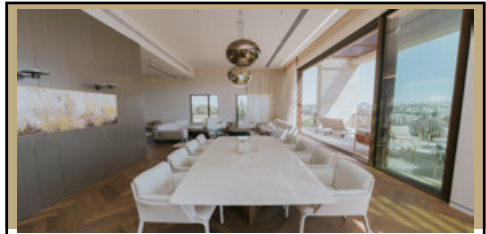
The shofar turns on the light, shining it into the inner recesses of our soul. It enables us to see our crafted illusions for what they are and only then can we live sincerely with the Divine truths that Hashem has set for us. ■



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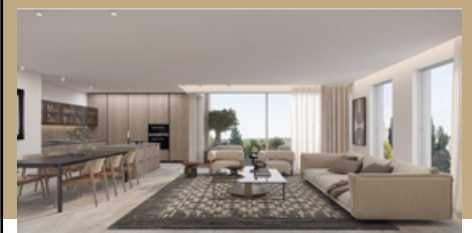
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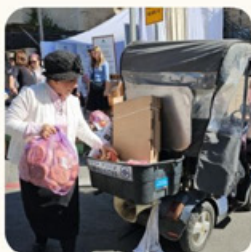
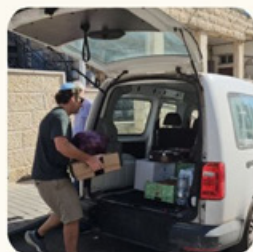


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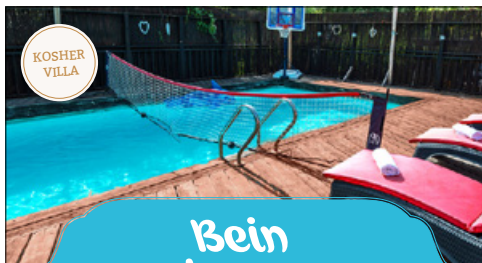
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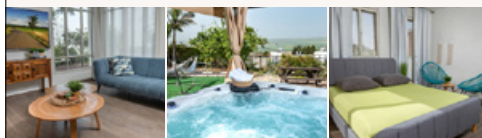
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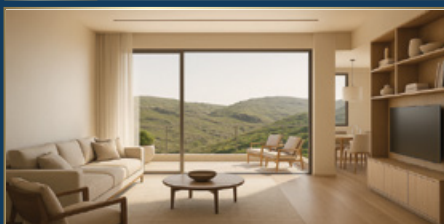
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The Missing Horse

The revolutionary Chasidic master Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa was known for his unique emphasis on the importance of one's individual relationship with Hashem, placing self-honesty and authenticity at the center of *avodah*. Reb Bunim encouraged his followers to focus on self-development and a search for truth, insisting that closeness with the *Ribono Shel Olam* depends on excavating one's own inner world and cultivating *pnimiyus*, one's internal spiritual resources. Before assuming the mantle of community leadership, Reb Bunim spent many years as a businessman and pharmacist, and eschewed much of the external trappings of Chasidic courts dynasties.

Reb Bunim would relate a *ma'aseh*, about which he said would be the message leading us to *Geulah*:

A wealthy man in Poland once longed for

the most magnificent horse in all of Europe. He spared no expense in searching for the perfect specimen: purebred, strong, flawless. Excited to have achieved his life-long dream, the *g'vir* had already built the finest stable in the land, a grand structure befitting his prize possession. Concerned that his investment be secure, he fitted the grand stable with the best lock and hired armed guards at the gate around the clock.

The first night that the horse arrived, his mind was racing; the man could not sleep. What if the guard had dozed off? What would be with the horse? Slipping out of bed, he checked, and sure enough, the guard was awake. Curious, he asked how the *shomer* managed to keep alert. The guard smiled and said, "I've been pondering all night on a difficult problem: when a nail is hammered into wood, where does the displaced wood go?" Amused and his fears now allayed, the *g'vir* told the guard to keep on thinking.

A few hours later, still restless, he got out of bed, put on his robe and went down to the stable. Relieved, he found the guard to still be wide awake. "And what are you pondering now?" "About bagels," answered the guard. "When they bake the hole in the center, where does the dough from the hole disappear to? Where does that part go?"

At this point, the *g'vir* chuckled at these philosophical quandaries. Surely, with questions like these, the guard would never fall asleep.

Assured that everything was under control, the *g'vir* drifted off to sleep. However he soon awoke in a panic; perhaps the guard had found

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clarity on all that he had been pondering, and fallen asleep himself. Racing outside, he saw the guard by his position at the gate, looking perplexed. Relieved, “Nu, please tell me: what question are you wondering about this time that has kept you awake?”

The guard answered quizzically: “So... I’ve been thinking. You bought the most beautiful and special horse in the world. For that horse, you built the finest stable. For that stable, you installed the strongest lock and even hired me to guard it night and day. Now I’m wondering, with all of this... how is it that the horse has gone missing?”

.....

“Rebbi Dostai ben R’ Yannai said in the name of Rebbi Meir: כָּל הַשּׂוֹכֵחַ דְּבַר אֶחָד מִמִּשְׁנֵתוֹ...כָּאֵלּוּ, “Whoever forgets *davar echad m’limudo* one word (literally ‘one thing’) of his study, is considered as if liable to death” (Avos, 3:8). Thus does the Mishnah warn us to be careful to retain our learning, to safeguard it, take it to heart and live with it.

The *Meor Einayim*, Rebbe Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, zt”l (on *Parshas Kedoshim*), brings the above *mishnah*: “Whoever forgets *Davar Echad*, ‘the One Thing’ — Hashem — from his learning, it is as if he has forfeited his life.” The focus of Jewish learning and the goal of Torah is to attune us to Hashem’s Presence in our lives and bind us with ‘the One’, the *Ribbono shel Olam*. If our *limud haTorah* is simply a cognitive, intellectual exercise, or even a subtle form of ego gratification, it is a sign that we have forgotten the ‘*Davar Echad*’, and our learning is disconnected from its Divine Source. Our obligation is to keep the *ikar*, ‘the main thing’, the main thing.

Jewish life and continuity depends so much on fidelity to *halacha*, commitment to an often complex structure of laws. Torah and mitzvah

observance thrives in community and within institutions, which too depend on complex structures. From *mosdos*, educational centers, shuls, kosher establishments and a plethora of chesed organizations, all are critical for our survival and our collective religious, social and cultural preservation and success. For this reason, inestimable resources, time, effort are poured into infrastructure. This can consume so much time and resources that we can miss the point and get caught up in external trappings of Yidishkeit. We can lose sight of our ultimate purpose, lost in the details and measurements of religious practice. Without an intentional focus on the inner heart and essence of our observance, we may come to trade soul for structure. We may place all our energy into guarding, protecting, surrounding ourselves with layers of locks and walls, meanwhile, there is a perplexing emptiness in the center of it all.

A new year invites us to ponder what it really is which drives us to invest in the grand stable, the locks, and guards of our religion. For sometimes, while surrounded by all the commotion of building infrastructure to preserve our past and to protect our investment, we lose sight of the very essence — and forget the ‘One Thing’, the ‘horse’ itself!

This week is Rosh Hashanah, also called *Yom HaZikaron*, ‘the Day of Remembrance’. May we remember the ‘One Thing’ and enter the new year keeping the main thing the main thing.

Achat sha’alti me’eis Hashem...

“Just One Thing do I ask of Hashem...”
(*Tehillim*, 27) ■

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BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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ROSH HASHANA

The moments when the *Shofar* is sounded on *Rosh Hashana* are perhaps the most emotionally charged and spiritually significant islands in time of the entire *Yamim Noraim* period. The *Shofar* carries many profound messages; its most familiar, of course, is to remind us of the *Akeidat Yitzchak*—the binding of Isaac—and the ram that took his place as a sacrificial offering. Yet within the *Shofar*'s sounds lie many other layers of meaning as well.

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah zt"l, one of the close students of **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook zy"a**, edited a beautiful work called *Moadei HaReiah*—a collection of essays, stories, and reflections from the life and teachings of Rav Kook, arranged around the Jewish holidays. In it, he records a particularly powerful story that occurred one *Rosh Hashana* in the late 1920s, a story that captures the multi-tiered inspiration contained within the *Shofar*'s call.

On the eve of *Rosh Hashana*, Rav Kook learned that a particular construction project was nearing completion, and that the builders intended to continue working even on the holy day itself. Saddened by this news, Rav Kook carefully considered how best to respond.

The next morning, he sent one of his *gabbaim* (assistants) to the construction site, carrying a *Shofar*. Rav Kook instructed him not to utter a single harsh word, but simply to stand among the workers and sound the *Shofar*.

The moment those familiar cries rang out, the laborers stopped their work. Many quickly changed their clothes and made their way to the synagogues. Later, the *gabbai* returned and

asked Rav Kook why he had not gone himself—surely the presence of the Chief Rabbi would have carried even more weight. Rav Kook's response, however, revealed the heart of the matter:

Had he gone personally, he explained, he might have caused the workers great embarrassment or shame. As deeply as he was pained by the public desecration of the day, **what pained him even more was the thought that Jews might live through an entire *Rosh Hashana* without hearing the sweet, piercing sound of the *Shofar*.**

Each day in our *Amida*, we pray:

"Sound the great Shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather in our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the Earth..."

Rav Gedalia Schorr zt"l, explained this tefila in connection with the very *Shofar* we sound on *Rosh Hashana*. In his *Ohr Gedalyahu*, he writes:

"It is through the experience of the Shofar on Rosh Hashana that every person awakens to the pure spark within their heart. This spark brings us to true freedom—freedom from all that clouds our vision in the here and now. And it is this clarity that will ultimately help usher in the era of perfect freedom, peace, and harmony, heralded by the sounding of the Great Shofar of Mashiach."

Reb Tzadok HaCohen MiLublin zy"a adds that the sounding of the *Shofar* serves as a spiritual bridge—joining the *Shofar* of the past, when we stood together at Sinai, with the Great *Shofar* of the future, when we will greet *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.

The words of Rav Kook, Rav Gedalia Schorr, and Reb Tzadok HaCohen feel especially profound as we prepare to commemorate *Rosh Hashana* 5786. If these giants understood so deeply how the *Shofar's* sounds could stir the soul, move even the most distant Jew to tears, and bind together our sacred past with the promise of our future—how much more vividly does this message resonate in our own times.

And yet, it is Rav Kook's example that must guide us most: to always build bridges with our brothers and sisters. The *Shofar's* sweet cry reminds us of the beauty of a life of *Torah*—the enrichment, fulfillment, and contentment it brings. It reaches into our hearts and ignites the pure spark within each of us, gently calling us to see beyond the confusion that clouds our vision: of ourselves, of the world, and of each other.

When we hear the *Shofar* this *Rosh Hashana*, may it inspire within us a new yearning for

true freedom—the freedom to leave behind the struggles and challenges of the past year, and the freedom to release whatever grudges or preconceptions we may carry toward family, friends, and neighbors.

And may the *Shofar* we hear this *Rosh Hashana* soon be joined by the Great *Shofar* of our redemption.

***Shana Tova U'Metuka*—warmest wishes for a happy, sweet New Year. ■**

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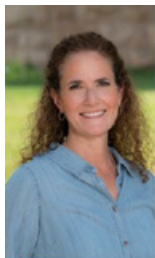
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ROSH HASHANA

Rosh Hashana: Malchut Revealed

The Yomim Noraim summon us into a courtroom not of this world. Every human being appears before the Kisei Hakavod—Heavenly Throne—like sheep passing in a single file. Each person is measured by the choices he has made. The fate of individuals and the course of nations are weighed and determined. It is a day of solemnity, heavy with destiny.

On these days of awe and radiance, we gather before God, pleading for mercy while also evoking the sweet echoes of Jewish history. Our prayers and imagination carry us back to the mountain of the Akeidah, where Avraham stood ready to offer his beloved son upon the altar of love for Hashem. Beyond the Akeidah, we recall the heroism of Jews across the centuries, who gave their lives to uphold faith and the presence of Hashem. These are days of power and of glory.

ROSH HASHANAH UNSEENS

And yet the Torah conceals this drama. It records a chag on the first day of Tishrei but does not reveal the full weight or backstory of the day. The only hint of fate and judgment is the word *Zikaron*—a day of memory, of Hashem recalling our deeds and performance, and of our turning to Him, asking Him to remember our loyalty and sacrifices. The identity of Rosh Hashanah is hidden.

Chazal sensed that Rosh Hashana hides from

view. The pasuk in Tehillim (81:4-5), which serves as the anthem of Rosh Hashana, hints at concealment:

תקעו בחדש שופר בכסה ליום חגנו כי חק לישראל
הוא משפט לאלקי יעקב

“Blow the horn at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festival day; for this is a statute for Israel, a judgment of the God of Ya’akov.”

This pasuk, centered on the call of the shofar, designates the day as *keseh*. The unusual term suggests layered interpretation. Chazal uncover one dimension of its meaning: it alludes to concealment, hinting that some essential aspect of this day remains hidden—*mechuseh* (מכוסה).

As the Gemara explains:

איזה חג שהחדש מתכסה בו הוי אמר זה ראש
השנה (Rosh Hashanah 16a)

“What is the festival during which the new moon is covered? This is Rosh Hashana.”

According to the Gemara, the term *keseh*—“covered”—points to the hidden nature of this day. Specifically, the Gemara addresses the concealment of Rosh Chodesh by Rosh Hashana. Though the first of Tishrei is Rosh Chodesh, like the other eleven months, its character is eclipsed by Rosh Hashana. The Rosh Chodesh korbanot are not offered, and Hallel is not recited. Calendarically, it is the first day of the month, yet Rosh Chodesh is overshadowed.

This particular concealment of Rosh Chodesh



Rabbi Adi Isaacs



Moshe Knecht

Directors of Jewish Life at Hebrew University

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The tremendous sense of excitement, along with the weight of responsibility is a small depiction of the lofty day of Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana is the day we shake and shiver as we pray in the Beit Knesset, hear the Shofar and present to Hashem our personal development plan for the year.

Yet, we walk home in our finest Yom Tov garb, sit down to a beautiful and joyous meal with our family, and celebrate with full confidence that Hashem will grant us a year of life to fulfill our destiny. This is the beautiful balance of Rosh Hashana, the *אבינו מלכנו*, where we know, just as a father pushes his child to work hard and develop, he will also be there to ensure success!



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hints at the deeper “hidden” dimensions of the day. The “astronomical” dynamic—whereby the Rosh Chodesh elements are veiled by Rosh Hashana—reflects larger “concealments.”

CONCEALED ORIGINS

Rosh Hashana is a veil. The Torah withholds its identity as Yom Hadin, and in turn, Rosh Hashana shrouds Rosh Chodesh. Even part of its own history remains concealed. This day is more than judgment—it commemorates the creation of the world, culminating on the sixth day with the creation of Man.

The entire process of Ma’aseh Bereishit remains beyond human comprehension. We possess no details of how Hashem brought the world into being; Sefer Bereshit conceals far more than it discloses. The Torah offers only a rough outline of the six days of creation, which reached their culmination on Rosh Hashana.

By contrast, the events that followed

creation—human history—are described with striking clarity. The Chagim commemorate decisive moments of Hashem’s intervention in the world. We know precisely what transpired in Mitzrayim, when we were freed from bondage. We recall in detail the desert journey, guided mercifully by Hashem across scorching sands. We remember how He revealed the Torah atop a mountain billowing in smoke.

Historical events marked by the Chagim are carefully recorded and transparent. Yet the story of Rosh Hashana, the creation of the universe, remains beyond human grasp—concealed in its full, awe-inspiring majesty. Rosh Hashana is wholly a day of *keseh*, of hiddenness. Its very identity is concealed within the Torah. The details of creation, culminating on Rosh Hashana, elude human understanding. Even the experience of Rosh Chodesh passes almost unnoticed. In every sense, Rosh Hashana

is a day of concealment—hidden, obscured, and in no way obvious (for development of this theme see *Pachad Yitzchak* to Rosh Hashana, chapter 1).

THE VEIL LIFTED

Rosh Hashana is centered upon the ultimate hiddenness—Hashem’s authority. Throughout the year, His sovereignty remains concealed; Rosh Hashana seeks to make that hidden Malchut visible. On this day, every person and nation, whether knowingly or unknowingly, submits to Malchut Shamayim. Judgment does more than reveal Hashem’s hidden authority—it renders it concrete, unmistakable, and inescapable.

During the rest of the year, human beings may choose to defy His will and reject His sovereignty. On Rosh Hashana, however, Hashem’s authority, usually concealed, becomes palpable. Involuntarily, every person submits to Malchut Shamayim. Through judgment, each individual implicitly affirms Divine rule. Rosh Hashana takes what is ordinarily hidden and makes it unmistakably present.

This hiddenness did not exist at the dawn of creation; then, Hashem’s authority was clear, absolute, and radiated through the world. During the first Rosh Hashana in history, His authority was uncontested. The world was pure and immaculate, in its original state, and Man

had yet to disobey. The world radiated with Malchut Hashem. On that Rosh Hashana, we recall these original moments by reciting several pesukim that evoke this primordial reality, when Divine sovereignty was absolute and unchallenged.

Since then, Hashem’s Malchut has become concealed. Humanity disobeys Him, strays from His will, and obscures His sovereignty. Yet in the future, when history reaches its end, Divine authority will once again be overt and unmistakable. We yearn for that ultimate redemption, when, as in the beginning, His rule will shine clearly and uncontested:

“הופע בהדר גאון עזך על כל יושבי תבל ארצך”

Rosh Hashana is the singular day in the year when Hashem’s Malchut shines forth. On this day, we yearn for the unchallenged sovereignty of Hashem—a sovereignty that blazed with clarity at the very first Rosh Hashana of creation and is destined to blaze once again when the world is restored. On Rosh Hashana, we yearn for “disclosure,” for what is hidden to emerge and shine in plain sight. ■



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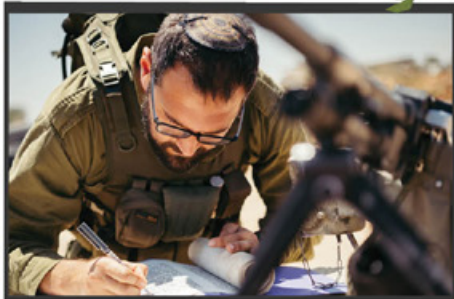
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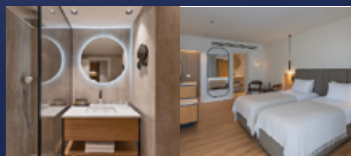
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Rosh HaShana

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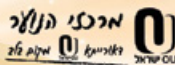
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The Rosh Hashana תשפ"ו Guide

INTRODUCTION

Dear OU TT readers, the following outline presents a guide to the laws and customs of the observance of Rosh Hashana. May Hashem bless you, your family, and all of ישראל with a year of health, happiness, and success in both רוחניות and גשמיות and may it be the year that we welcome משיח צדקנו! Shana Tova!

A. EREV-ROSH HASHANA

התרת נדרים

There is a widespread custom based on the (כג): התרת נדרים – nullification of vows, on Erev-RH in order to enter the new year without violating the prohibition of transgressing vows.¹ Any three men above Bar-Mitzvah are qualified to form a *Beis-Din* and nullify vows of others even if they are relatives with one another or with the one who is nullifying his vows.² If you do not understand the Hebrew, it is best to recite it in a language that you understand.³ One can perform the התרת נדרים over Zoom as long as the three members of the *Beis-Din* are sitting together and they see the person reciting the התרה (i.e. his camera is on).⁴ With regard to women, some say that if

1. See (ש"ה) (תחילת מס' יומא based on שערי תשובה סק"ז)
2. שו"ע, י"ד סימן רכח-ג.
3. חיי אדם (כלל קלח-ח)

4. Rav Schachter פסקי קרונה, #50, אות ה

she is married, her husband should serve as her messenger for התרת נדרים and add the words "and this is also for my wife,"⁵ while others say that it is best for women to rely on the התרת נדרים of *Kol Nidrei* on Yom Kippur, and when doing so, they should recite *Kol Nidrei* silently with the *chazan*.⁶

MIKVAH

The Rama writes that there is a custom for men to go to the Mikvah on Erev-RH.⁷ If one is not able to go to the Mikvah, he can take a shower instead.⁸ The shower should be long enough for 9 *kav* of water to be poured on one's head (12 or 16 liters).⁹

CANDLE LIGHTING



Married women (as well as single men/women at home)¹⁰ light candles for RH.¹¹ The *bracha* recited on the first night of RH is "להדליק" נר של יו"ט. Some women also have the custom to recite "שהחיינו" when lighting the candles, while others do not and rely on the "שהחיינו" recited during *kiddush*. One can follow one's family custom.¹² Both Ashkenazim and Sephardim first recite the *bracha* and then light

5. שו"ת תשובות והנהגות (ח"א-שלח)

6. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-י)

7. תקפא-ד

8. משנ"ב סימן תקפ"א סק"ו

9. שו"ת מנחת יצחק (ח"ד-כא)

10. שו"ע אורח סימן רסג-ב

11. Ibid., סעיף ה'

12. שמירת שבת כהלכתה (מד-ד) ומשנ"ב רסג סק"ג

the candles (a minority of *Ashkenazim* maintain the same order as on Shabbos).¹³

On the second night of RH, candles are also lit, but only after צאת הכוכבים and only from a preexisting lit candle. Ideally, these candles should be prepared before YT, but if they were not, they may be moved only after צאת הכוכבים. The *bracha* recited on the 2nd night is also "להדליק נר של יו"ט" and both *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim* recite the *bracha* before lighting the candles.¹⁴ As on the first night, some women have the custom to recite "שהחיינו", but ideally, they should only recite the *bracha* if they will be eating a new fruit that night or if they are wearing a new dress that night. When reciting the "שהחיינו", they should have in mind that the *bracha* should incorporate RH and the new fruit or the new dress.¹⁵ (If they have a new fruit, they should wait for *kiddush* before eating the fruit). After lighting the candles, one is not allowed to blow out the match.¹⁶ On the second night, setting the table and heating up the food is allowed only after צאת הכוכבים.

B. BOTH NIGHTS OF RH

GREETING A FRIEND

When greeting a friend on RH night and up until חצות on the 1st day of RH, one should say "לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם" to a man, and to a woman one says "לשנה טובה תכתבי ותחתמי". After that time, one should only say "חג שמח" or "good Yom Tov".¹⁷ Some have the custom to say "לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם" on the second night as well.¹⁸

KIDDUSH

14. Ibid.

13. שו"ע או"ח סימן רסג-ה ומשנ"ב סק"ז

15. שמירת שבת כהלכתה (מז-מד)

16. שו"ע סימן תקיד-א

17. רמ"א סימן תקפג-ט ומשנ"ב שם

18. ט"ז (שם סק"ד)

The *bracha* of "שהחיינו" is recited on both nights of RH. On the second night of RH, one should wear a new garment or place a new fruit on the table before *kiddush*. When reciting the "שהחיינו", one should have in mind that it goes on both RH and the new fruit.¹⁹ One who does not have a new fruit or new garment still recites "שהחיינו" on the second night.²⁰

סימנים

There is a custom based on the גמרא כריתות (ו.) to eat specific fruits and vegetables on RH as an auspicious omen and prayer for the upcoming year.²¹ The סימנים are eaten after washing one's hands, reciting המוציא, and eating bread.²² The ברכת העץ should be recited on a date (since it is from the שבועת המינים and closest to the word "ארץ" in the verse), and if one does not have a date, then it should be recited on a pomegranate.²³ If one does not have either, the ברכת העץ should be recited on the apple. One should say the "יהי רצון" that pertain to each fruit/vegetable with Hashem's name (i.e., "יהי רצון מלפניך אדני-א-לוהינו וא-לוהי אבותינו" ברכת האדמה).²⁴ With regard to reciting the ברכת האדמה, some *poskim* hold that today all the *simanim* are served as part of a meal and one should not recite a *bracha* before eating them.²⁵ Others write that it is best to recite the ברכת האדמה on foods that are never eaten as part of the meal, such as a banana or watermelon, and have in mind that it will cover all the other *simanim*.²⁶ After reciting the ברכת העץ and the ברכת האדמה on the first fruit/vegetable that are eaten, one should first swallow a bit and only then recite the "יהי רצון" so that there is no הפסק between

19. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-כ)

20. שו"ע תר-ב

21. שו"ע סימן תקפג

22. הליכות שלמה פ"א סק"ד

23. הליכות שלמה (פ"א-יז)

24. משנ"ב סימן תקפג סק"ב

25. תשובות והנהגות (ח"ב-רסט)

26. Rav Elyashiv in קו (ח"ח עמ' קז)

the *bracha* and the eating.²⁷ When reciting the *bracha*, one should have in mind that they cover all the other fruits and vegetables of the *סימנים*.²⁸ Most have the custom to have *סימנים* on the second night of RH as well.²⁹

C. ROSH HASHANA DAY



The Torah teaches us “יום תרועה יהיה לכם”, and the *Gemara* derives that the “תרועה” needs to be heard 3 times, with a *תקיעה* before and after it each time. Thus, *מדאורייתא*, one only needs to hear 9 shofar blasts. However, the *Gemara* is uncertain as to the exact sound that the word “תרועה” is referring to. It is either referring to what we call a *תרועה* today, what we call a *שברים* today, or what we call a *שברים* today. Therefore, in order to make sure that we are fulfilling our biblical requirement, we blow a *שברים* (with a *תקיעה* before and after it) three times, a *תרועה* (with a *תקיעה* before and after it) three times, and a *שברים* (with a *תקיעה* before and after it) three times.³⁰ All of these blasts together total 30 sounds (including the sounds of the *תקיעות* before and after each “תרועה”). These 30 blasts are blown before the *Mussaf Amidah* and are called *דמייתא*. Another 30 are blown during the *Amidah* and are called *תקיעות דמעומד* (some locations blow 30 blasts only during *חזרת הש”ץ* while some blow an additional 30 during the silent *Amidah* as well). There is a custom to blow another 40 (for those who did not blow 30 during the silent *Amidah*) in order to blow a total of 100 blasts on RH.³¹

The congregation and the Shofar blower

should remain standing during the recital of the *bracha* and during all of the actual Shofar blasts.³² The *gabbai* recites two blessings before blowing the Shofar: “לשמוע קול שופר” and “שהחיינו”. The *gabbai* should have in mind to be *מוציא* the congregation, and they should have in mind to be *יוצא*.³³ The congregation should not answer “ברוך וברוך שמו” to the *bracha* of the *gabbai*.³⁴ The *gabbai* should announce that no speaking is allowed until the end of the *תקיעות*.³⁵ If you are walking or sitting at home and hear the Shofar blasts from a shul nearby, you fulfill your obligation if you had in mind to be *יוצא* because the *gabbai* has in mind to be *מוציא* all that hear.³⁶

If one blows shofar for another individual and one has already fulfilled his obligation, the person being *יוצא* should recite the *ברכות* if he/she can.³⁷ Sephardi women do not recite the *bracha*.³⁸ One can blow for someone who is in a different room as long as one blows close to that room.³⁹ If you blows the shofar *ביחידות*, one should make sure not to blow during the first three hours of the day.⁴⁰ Ideally, one who is *davening* *ביחידות*, such as soldiers on duty, should blow the shofar before *davening Mussaf* and *Mussaf* should not be *davened* within the first 3 hours (of *זמניות*) from sunrise,⁴¹ but no later than 7 hours⁴² (*Mussaf* can be *davened* after the 7th hour). One who is *davening* *ביחידות* should time his *Amidah* to begin at the same time as his congregation.⁴³

32. שו”ע סימן תקפה-א ומשנ”ב סק”א-ב

33. שו”ע תקפ”ח-ט

34. משנ”ב סימן קכד סק”א

35. שו”ע, תקצב-ג as per אגרו”מ או”ח ח”ב-לו.

36. שו”ע תקפ”ט-ט

37. רמ”א סימן תקפ”ט-ו ומשנ”ב סימן תקפה סק”ה

38. שו”ע תקפ”ט-ו

39. משנ”ב סימן תקפ”ט סק”ז

40. משנ”ב סימן תקצא סק”ו

41. רמ”א סימן תקצב-ב

42. שו”ע סימן תקצא-ח

43. משנ”ב סימן תקצה-סק”ג

44. משנ”ב סימן תקצא-סק”ד

27. משנ”ב סימן תקפ”ט סק”ד

28. הליכות שלמה (פ”א-יח)

29. שו”ע תשובה (תקפ”א)

30. שו”ע סימן תק”צ (א-ב)

31. רמ”א סימן תקצו ומשנ”ב סק”ב

On the second day of RH, *Ashkenazim* recite a “שהחיינו” before blowing shofar, but it is best for the shofar blower to wear a new garment. *Sephardim* do not recite a “שהחיינו”.⁴⁵



On the first day of RH after *Mincha* and before *sh'kiya*, there is a custom of performing תשליך, where one goes to a river or other local source of water and recites verses pertaining to תשובה from (זיט) ספר מיכה.⁴⁶ There are various reasons for this custom, including the fact that the מדרש teaches that the שטן tried drowning אברהם in a river on the way to the עקידה and we want to remind ourselves of אבינו's determination and devotion⁴⁷ (and learn from it). If there is no river nearby, or if one cannot leave the house for whatever reason, he/she can recite it on water in a well⁴⁸ or even on a cup of water.⁴⁹ ■

45. שו"ע ורמ"א תר-ג ומשנ"ב סק"ז

46. רמ"א תקפג-ב ומשנ"ב סק"ח

47. משנ"ב תקפג סק"ח

48. כף החיים סימן תקפג סק"ל

49. הליכות שלמה (פ"א ארחות הלכה הע' 17)

רפואה שלמה
הדסה בת חיה



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הדלקת נרות לראש השנה Candle Lighting for RH

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו
להדליק נר של יום טוב.



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן
הזה

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי, שתחיוננו אותי ואת בעלי (ואת בני ואת אבי ואת
אמי) ואת כל קרובי, ותתן לנו ולכל ישראל חיים טובים וארכים, ותזכרנו בזכרון טובה
וברכה, ותפקדנו בפקדת ישועה ורחמים, ותשפין שכונתך בתוכנו, וזכנו לגדל בנים
ובני בנים חכמים ונבונים, אוהבי ה', יראי אלקים, אנשי אמת זרע קדש, בה' דבקים,
ומאירים את העולם בתורה ובמעשים טובים, ובכל מלאכת עבודת הבורא. אנא שמע
את תחנוני, בזכות שרה ורבקה ורחל ולאה אמותינו, והאר נרנו שלא יכבה לעולם ועד
והאר פניך ונושעה, אמן.

Greetings exchanged on the first night of RH, after Maariv

to one male:

לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום

to one female:

לשנה טובה תכתבי ותחתמי לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום

to males or mixed group (and commonly used for female plural too):

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום

"traditional" (but possibly obsolete?) for females (plural)

לשנה טובה תכתבנה ותחתמנה לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום

From the first morning of Rosh HaShana through Yom Kippur,
the traditional greeting is day

גמר חתימה טובה

Kiddush for Rosh Hashana Night

סְבִרִי מֶרְנָן וְרַבָּנָן וְרַבּוּתִי

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עָם וְרוֹמְמָנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וְתַתֵּן לָנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת יוֹם הַזְכָּרוֹן הַזֶּה, יוֹם תְּרוּעָה
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ, זֵכֶר לִיציאת מצרים. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחִרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים
וַיְדַבֵּר אֱמֶת וְקִים לְעַד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ, מְקַדֵּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיוֹם הַזְכָּרוֹן:

Both Nights

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Kiddush for Rosh Hashana Day

(אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ, אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם)
וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מַעֲדֵי ה', אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. תִּקְעוּ בַּחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר
בַּכֶּסֶה לַיוֹם חֲגִינוּ כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לְאַלְקֵי יַעֲקֹב.

סְבִרִי מֶרְנָן וְרַבָּנָן וְרַבּוּתִי

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.



The Rosh HaShana 'Seder' סדר ראש השנה

Customs for the night of Rosh HaShana vary from community to community and from family to family. This page is provided as a set of suggestions for those who do not have a fixed custom in their home. Nothing mentioned here is the final word on anything. If you are in doubt about anything, check with your Rav.

After KIDDUSH, wash for HaMotzi and eat from the LECHEM MISHNEH. Some use honey on the challa rather than salt. Some use salt for the HaMotzi and then take another piece of challa with honey. After challa with honey, say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שתתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה

It is appropriate to respond to Y'HI RATZON statements of others with AMEIN, as they are bracha-like.

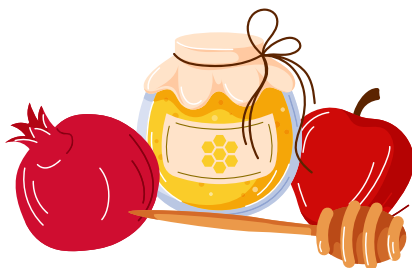
Since the fruits and vegetables to be eaten as part of the SEDER LEIL ROSH HASHANA are not "normal" components of a meal, they are not covered by the HaMotzi, and need their own brachot, which should be said in accordance with the "rules of brachot" - as follows...

Among the fruits of trees, one should say the bracha on the fruit with the highest priority: [1] Olive, [2] Date, [3] Grape, [4] Fig, [5] Pomegranate, [6] your favorite among fruits not of SHIV'AT HAMINIM, [7] a whole fruit, rather than a piece, [8] larger piece. This list does not imply that all these fruits [1]-[5] are part of your Leil Rosh HaShana Minhag; the full list of priorities is provided to cover any situation.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.

Among vegetables, make the bracha on what you like best. Between HaEitz and HaAdama, HaEitz will usually be said first, unless you have a HaAdama that you like better than any of the fruits, in which case, HaAdama will precede HaEitz (even over 7-Minim).

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי האדמה.





For RUBIYA (black-eyed peas):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שירבו זכויותינו



For KARTI (leek):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שייכרתו שונאינו



For SILKA (beets or mangold):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שישתלקו אויבינו



For DATES:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שייתמו שונאינו



For KARA (type of squash, pale green):

some say this for carrots - play on words גזר

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שיקרע גזר דיננו, ויקראו לפניך זכויותינו



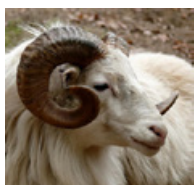
For POMEGRANATE:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שנרבה זכויותינו כרימון



If one eats FISH on Leil Rosh HaShana, say the following:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שנפרה ונרבה כדגים ושלא תהא עין הרע שולטת בנו כדגים הללו שאין עין הרע שולטת בהם



Some place the HEAD of a ram or fish on the table and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב

If one eats the meat of a sheep (preferably a ram), he says:

יהי רצון שתזכר לנו אילו של יצחק

Tashlich

After mincha, there is a custom of תשליך, where one goes to the river and recites verses pertaining to תשובה from ספר מיכה (ז:ז).¹ There are various reasons for this custom including the fact that the מדרש teaches that the שטן tried drowning אברהם in a river on the way to the עקידה and we want to remind ourselves of אברהם's determination and devotion² (and learn from it). If there is no river nearby, you can recite it on water in a well³ or even on a cup of water⁴.

מי קל כמודד נושא עון ועובר על פשע לשארית נחלתו לא החזיק לעד אפוא כי חפץ חסד הוא: ישוב ירחמנו יכבד עונותינו ותשליך במצלות ים כל חטאתם: תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם אשר נשבעת לאבותינו מימי קדם:

מן המצר קראתי קה ענני במרחב קה ה' לי לא אירא מה יעשה לי אדם ה' לי בעוזי ואני אראה בשנאי טוב לחסות בה' מבטח באדם טוב לחסות בה' מבטח בנדיבים:

רננו צדיקים בה' לישירים נאנה תהלה: הודו לה' בכנור בנגב עשור זמרו-לו: שירו-לו שיר חדש היטיבו נגן בתרועה: כי-ישיר דבר-יהוה וכל-מעשהו באמונה: אהב צדקה ומשפט חסד ה' מלאה הארץ: בדבר ה' שמים נעשו וברוח פיו כל-צבאם: כנס בנד מי הים נתן באצרות תהומות: ייראן מה' כל-הארץ ממנו יגורו כל-ישבי תבל: כי הוא אמר ויהי הוא-צוה ויעמוד: ה' הפיר עצת-גוים הניא מחשבות עמים: עצת ה' לעולם תעמד מחשבות לבו לדר ודר: אשרי הגוי אשר-ה' אלקיו העם | בחר לנחלה לו: משמים הביט ה' ראה את-כל-בני האדם: ממכון-שבתי השגיח אל כל-ישבי הארץ: היצר יחד לבם המבין אל-כל-מעשיהם: אין-המלך נושע ברב-חיל גבור לא-ינצל ברב-כח: שקר הסוס לתשועה וברב חילו לא ימלט: הנה עין ה' אל-יראיו למיחלים לחסדו: להציל ממנות נפשים ולחיותם ברעב: נפשנו חפנה לה' עזרנו ומגננו הוא: כי-בו ישמח לבנו כי בשם קדשו בטחנו: יהי-חסדך ה' עלינו כפאשר יחלנו לך:

לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי, כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים:

לדוד מזמור לה' הארץ ומלואה תבל וישבי בה: כי-הוא על-ימים יסדה ועל-נהרות יכוננה: מי-יעלה בהר-ה' ומי-יקום במקום קדשו: נקי כפים ובר-ל לב אשר | לא-נשא לשוא (נפשו) נפשי ולא נשבע

1 רמ"א תקפג ב

2 משנ"ב תקפג סק"ח

3 כף החיים סימן תקפג סק"ל

4 הליכות שלמה (פ"א ארחות הלכה הע' 17)

למרממה: ישא ברכה מאת ה' וצדקה מאלקי ישעו: זה דור (דרשו) דרשיו מבקשי פניך יעקב סלה: שאו שערים | ראשיכם והנשאו פתחי עולם ויבוא מלך הכבוד: מי זה מלך הכבוד ה' עוז וגבור ה' גבור מלחמה: שאו שערים | ראשיכם ונשאו פתחי עולם ויבא מלך הכבוד: מי הוא זה מלך הכבוד ה' צבאות הוא מלך הכבוד סלה:

אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו מלך רחמן רחם עלינו, טוב ומטיב הדרש לנו, שובה אלינו בהמון רחמיך בגלל אבות שעשו רצונך, בנה ביתך בבתיחלה וכוונן בית מקדשך על מכוננו, והראנו בבנינו ושמחנו בתקונו, והשב שכינתך לתוכו, והשב כהנים לעבודתם ולוויים לשירם ולזמרים, והשב ישראל לנויהם, ומלאה הארץ דעה את ה' ליראה ולאהבה את שמך הגדול הגבור והנורא אמן כן יהי רצון

כל בלי יוצר עליך לא יצלח, וכל לשון תקום אתך למשפט תרשיעי, זאת נחלת עבדי ה' וצדקתם מאתו נאם ה':

לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי, כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' בפמים לים מכסים:

שיר המעלות ממעמקים קראתיד ה': ה' שמעה בקולי תהיינה אזניך קשבות לקול תחנוני: אם עונות תשמר קה ה' מי יעמוד: כי עמד הסליחה למען תורא: קויתי ה' קוטה נפשי ולדברו הוהלתי: נפשי לה' משמרים לבקר שמרים לבקר: יחל ישראל אל יה' כי עם ה' החסד והרבה עמו פדות: והוא יפדה את ישראל מכל עונותיו:

שיר למעלות אשא עיני אל-ההרים מאין יבא עזרי: עזרי מעם ה' עשה שמים וארץ: אל-יתן למוט רגלך אל-ינזם שמך: הנה לא-ינזם ולא יישן שומר ישראל: ה' שמך ה' צלך על-יד ימינך: יומם השמש לא-יכבה וירח בלילה: ה' שמך מכל-רע ישמר את-נפשך: ה' ישמר-צאתך ובואך מעתה ועד-עולם:

Say this pasuk 7 times

לעולם ה' דברך נצב בשמים:

יהי רצון מלפניך על ידי הארת תיקונים עתיקא קדישא דעתיקין שבארץ דזעיר יכבשו רחמיך את כעסך, ויגלו רחמיך על מדותיך, ותתנהג עמנו במדת הרחמים, ותתן לנו חיים ארוכים וטובים בעסקי תורתך וקיום מצותיך לעשות רצונך, אמן וכן יהי רצון:

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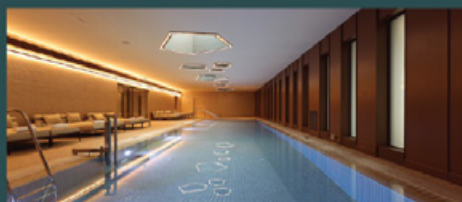
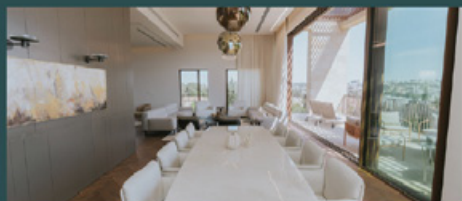
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ROSH HASHANA

Avraham's Ahava at the Akeida

Rav Kook, elucidating the *mida* (trait) of *Ahava* (love) in *Midot Hara'aya* devotes two passages to the love of God. He wrote the following in the fourth piece:

“The flame of the holy fire of the love of God is always burning in the soul. It is this that warms the spirit and illuminates life; the delights it yields are endless, there is no measure by which to assess it. And how cruel is man toward himself, that he allows himself to be sunk in the dark abyss of life, troubles himself with petty considerations, while he erases from his mind this that spells true life, that is the basis for all that gives meaning to life...” (*Midot Hara'aya, Ahava* #4)

The obligation for a Jew to develop a love of God is perhaps most famously and prominently expressed in the Torah in the recitation of the *Shema*: “And you shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your possessions.” (Devarim 6:5). Rav Kook, in describing love of God, emphasizes the natural or free flowing love that is organic to man in

his relationship with his Creator. According to Rav Kook, an exquisite example of such a love can be seen in Avraham's relationship with God and is revealed most powerfully in the episode of *Akeidat Yitzchak*.

What was Avraham's state of mind when he faced the challenge of the *Akeida*? Rav Kook argued that every act of Avraham reveals his passion and love for his Master. A few examples from Rav Kook's pen on Bereshit 22:3: “Avraham rose early in the morning” because he slept soundly the night before, secure in the knowledge that he was submitting to God's will. “He saddled his donkey,” taking meticulous care of every detail before setting out, in order that he could carry out his task promptly and

efficiently. “He split the wood,” leaving nothing to chance by having the wood ready for immediate use when the time would come. (*Siddur Olat Re'iyah*, 1:86)

In Rav Kook's mind the classic episode of the *Akeida* takes on a central

place in Jewish life because it is paradigmatic of authentic *Ahavat Hashem* where a Jew is driven by his love of God to fulfill any and all of His instructions.

THE RAMBAM'S PASSION

The unbridled and effusive love of God which we find in the writings of Rav Kook has its source in much earlier authorities. Although we often think of the Rambam's outlook emphasizing the rational and logical



Rav Asher Weiss shlit'a

approach, it is noteworthy to see the language that the Rambam employs to describe the ideal attainment of *Ahavat Hashem*:

“What is the proper degree of love? That a person should love God with a very great and exceeding love until his soul is bound up in the love for God. Thus, he will always be obsessed with this love as if he is lovesick.” (*Hilchot Teshuva* 10:3)

The Rambam elaborates on this halacha and notes that this lofty level is not easily achieved, but it should remain the bar that we seek to attain, even if we only inch a bit closer to this degree of closeness and attachment to God.

RAV KOOK'S SINGULAR AHAVAT HASHEM

Rabbi Charlop, the dear friend and close confidant of Rav Kook, recalled the following incident, which epitomizes Rav Kook extraordinary love of God:

“In the summer of 5681 (1921), Rav Kook went to Har Tuv for a few days of rest and respite. One day I visited him there, and we discussed lofty matters until late at night. The next morning I noticed that the Rav was late for his prayers. More unusual though; before we began to pray I saw him approach the innkeeper and engage in a conversation about gardening, discussing which fruit trees grow best in the region. This was quite uncharacteristic of the Rav, for he never engaged in other activities before praying.

His tardiness and the conversation left me baffled, so I conjured up the nerve to ask him for an explanation. This was his answer: “This morning, my heart was ablaze with a burning thirst for the Living God. So much so that I was afraid my soul would expire when I prayed. I was, therefore, compelled to lower the flames of my sacred fervor by diverting my thoughts to tangible, practical matters (An Angel Among Men, Raz, p.289).



A TEST OF YOUR LOVE

How does one gauge the requisite amount of love for God that one must strive to attain? After all, it is something quite difficult to measure. When the Torah commands that a Jew love God in the opening passage of the Shema, it says that the love should be "with all your heart, with all soul, and with all your *me'odecha*. The term *me'odecha* is a difficult word to translate. We commonly translate it to mean possessions, based on Rashi's comment that one should be willing to place their money towards the service of God. (Rashi, *Devarim* 6:5)

Rashi, however, offers a second explanation of the word *me'odecha* and he relates the word to mida (a measure): "with each and every measure that He measures out to you, be it with a measure of goodness, or be it with a measure of punishment..." (Ibid). In other words, in times of joy do we feel the joy of God's benevolence and blessing? And conversely, in times of pain and suffering, are we able to maintain a bond and dependence and feel that God is our anchor, even in the midst of suffering?

YOUR FAVORITE PASUK

Rabbi Shay Schachter, a well-respected rabbinic leader in New York, related that he once escorted the eminent *posek*, Rav Asher Weiss, to a talk he was giving to high school students (at the D.R.S. Yeshiva). Rav Asher Weiss opened the floor to questions and a young man asked

him, “What is your favorite *pasuk* in *Tanach*? He answered that it comes from the book of Tehillim: “*Tzamah nafshi le’lokim l’kel chai...*” My soul thirsts for God, the living God...” (Tehillim 42).

It is highly significant to consider that an individual renowned for mastering virtually all of Torah learning, and who is one of the world's foremost decisors of *halacha* chose this distinct verse, of every verse in the sacred writings, expressing a deep and abiding love of God.

LOVING HASHEM AND YOU

How should every individual assess their own growth in the area of Ahavat Hashem (loving God)? Perhaps the first step is to recognize that one's experience of love will vary from person to person. There is no single measuring stick that applies to every person equally.

The Chafetz Chaim suggested the following sagacious advice in this regard based on the verse in the Shema about loving Hashem:

“Hashem is not overbearing with his creations. He demands of each one to serve Him with his ability. And just as we have poor people and wealthy people, strong people and weak people, so too, people have different personalities. There are those who can serve Hashem and achieve a very high *madreigah*, and there are those who cannot achieve such a high *madreigah*. And that is why it says in the Torah, “you shall love Hashem with all **your** heart, and all **your** soul.” It doesn't say with “heart and soul,” but rather “with **your**

heart and **your** soul.” This means that as much as you can achieve, that's how much you are obligated to serve Hashem, each person based on his ability and personality.” (Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah - Va'etchanan, translated in Pathway of Aliyah, Lopiansky, p. 208)

In a word, the Chafetz Chaim teaches that to a large degree the mitzvah of Ahavat Hashem is subjective and personal to every individual. There is no absolute measure in fulfilling this obligation. Each person strives to attain heights in this precious endeavor but we must recognize that every person is different and each individual will experience it according to their capability, life experiences, and temperament.

ENHANCING OUR AHAVAT HASHEM

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter was once walking through the streets of a European city when he began to feel extremely thirsty. He walked into a restaurant and ordered a cup of water. When he finished his drink, he walked over to the counter to pay, and was shocked at the astronomical bill they handed him.

“All I drank was a cup of water,” he said.

“True,” replied the manager, “a cup of water doesn't cost much. But when you drink it in this restaurant you are paying not only for the water. You are also paying for the ambiance.”

Rav Yisrael later told his student that this story provided him with an answer to a long-standing question he had. When we drink water, we recite the blessing, “*Shehakol nihiyeh bid'varo* - Everything was created through his utterance. Why do we make such a broad statement when thanking Hashem for some water? Shouldn't such an impressive *beracha* be reserved for something more significant?

“The restaurant manager answered my question,” said Rav Yisrael. “We are not thanking Hashem only for the water. We are thanking him for the ambiance.” (The 6 Constant Mitzvot,

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Heimowitz, p182).

Rav Yisrael Salanter teaches us that we can maintain our love for Hashem on a more constant basis by speaking about Hashem and expressing gratitude for the multitude of blessings that surround us. Reciting a *beracha* is an opportunity to think about Hashem and the favor he grants us. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the Talmud instituted that a Jew recite one hundred *berachot* each day. The more focus we place on our reliance on Hashem and the continual goodness that He provides, the more love we will feel for Him.

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

- Look for God in the world. Open your eyes to discover the Creator through His creations.
- Concentrate on the words “God of Avraham” in the *Shemoneh Esrei*. Think about how Avraham came to perceive God and

how he exquisitely led his remarkable life manifesting irrepressible love of God.

- Take a nature walk today and admire God’s world. ■

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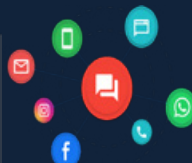
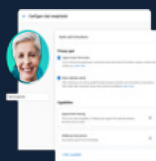
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ROSH HASHANA



Shehecheyanu on a New Shofar for Rosh Hashana

לעילוי נשמת

יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I hope to buy a new shofar for Rosh Hashana. Can I make *Shehecheyanu* on it? If so, as the *ba'al tokeiah*, can that count for the *Shehecheyanu* of blowing the shofar on the second day of Rosh Hashana? Is this affected by whether I use it on the first day or to practice before Rosh Hashana?

Answer: Among the times we recite *Shehecheyanu* are for performing a *mitzva* that comes up cyclically (including shofar) and for acquiring a significant object that makes one happy (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 223:4; Mishna Berura 223:13). It is a *machloket* whether to make *Shehecheyanu* on an object whose importance is only because of the *mitzva*, as *mitzvot* are not considered to have worldly benefit (ibid.). The Shulchan Aruch (OC 22:1) says that one makes *Shehecheyanu* on the garment of *tzitzit* because it is clothes with importance, but not on *tefillin*. One can ask whether we look at a shofar as a musical instrument, which is important to a buyer like you (albeit because of the *mitzva*), like *tzitzit*, or whether we view it only as an article of *mitzva*, like *tefillin*, in which case there is a *machloket* and one would refrain out of doubt. Another factor is that many (see Piskei Teshuvot 223:6),

especially Sephardim (see Yalkut Yosef, OC 223:3), have the *minhag* not to make *Shehecheyanu* on objects other than fruit and clothes. In cases of *safek*, *poskim* often recommend reciting *Shehecheyanu* by connecting first use of the object in question to *Shehecheyanu* on something that definitely requires it (Be'ur Halacha 22:1). This likely applies to *shofar*, and for you, when blowing on the first day could be a great time (see below).

Regarding reciting *Shehecheyanu* specifically on the second day, the situation differs for Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Sephardim do not recite *Shehecheyanu* on the second day if it was recited on the first (Shulchan Aruch, OC 600:3), and there is no *minhag* to “create” a need for it.

Ashkenazim always recite *Shehecheyanu* on the second day's blowing (Rama ad loc.) even without help from a new object. However, some *Acharonim* (see Mishna Berura 600:7) express a preference for the *ba'al tokeiah* to wear new clothing on the second day to strengthen the *beracha's* justification, like is done at *Kiddush*. If you were not going to be *machmir*, the good chance that the new shofar warrants *Shehecheyanu* only helps. However, if you use the shofar instead of the new clothes you would have worn, then there is a chance you are weakening the case for *Shehecheyanu*. However, concern for that is somewhat extreme, considering the

Rama's ruling and the good chance that your excitement over a new shofar (specifically if you do not often buy new ones) warrants *Shehecheyanu*.

The final question is your point about the shofar being used before. The Rama regarding *Shehecheyanu* on a *tallit* (22:1) says that if it is not recited when attaching the *tzitzit*, it should be recited during the first wearing. While some *Acharonim* claim that it does not have to be the first wearing (see Be'ur Halacha ad loc.), contemporary *poskim* generally agree that one can make *Shehecheyanu* on a new garment as long as he has not removed it, but he cannot do so for a second wearing (see Mishneh Halachot VI:42; V'zot Haberacha p. 167). By extension, if you use it on the first day, it is no longer new enough for *Shehecheyanu* on the second day. (One could also ask about the propriety of using it on the first day, when *Shehecheyanu* is said due to the *mitzva*, and having in mind that it should not also go on the shofar.) If you will not use the new shofar on the first day but use it for practice during Elul, it is logical to distinguish between the type of practice usage.

Just practicing at home a few times to check the alignment of the shofar and the lips is like trying on a garment for size or alterations, which does not preclude *Shehecheyanu* for the first real wearing (V'zot Haberacha *ibid.*). However, using the shofar in *shul* at the end of *Shacharit* or for extensive practice, should preclude *Shehecheyanu* thereafter. ■

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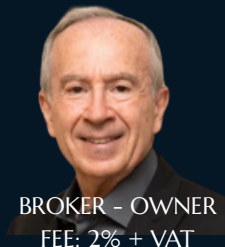
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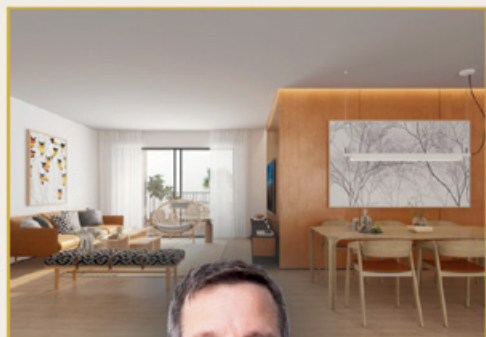
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ROSH HASHANA

Right Place, Right Time: Living Rosh Hashana with Emunah

Emunah is the belief that Hashem has us in the exact right place, at the exact right time, for us. Not for anyone else, not by accident, not as a mistake of scheduling or circumstance. Where you are right now—that is where you are meant to be for your benefit.

Sometimes, that realization is pleasant. Things fall into place, our plans unfold smoothly, and we feel aligned with the life we imagined. Other times, it feels exactly the opposite. We end up in situations we never asked for, places that are uncomfortable, circumstances that seem to block us rather than help us. Those are the moments when frustration, disappointment, and even anger threaten to take over.

But emunah whispers otherwise. It tells us: this too is designed, tailor-made for you. Right

here is the greatest opportunity to live your avodat Hashem.

EVERYDAY TRAINING IN EMUNAH

On an ordinary day, this might look like getting stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic when you were “supposed” to be at work. Or the dinner you planned lovingly for your family burns in the oven, and you have to start over from scratch. The cashier’s register malfunctions, the line in the supermarket doesn’t move, and your patience is tested. A flat tire, a sick child at home, a meeting canceled at the last minute—the list goes on.

These are not just inconveniences. They are invitations. Hashem is quietly asking:

ועתה ישראל, מה ה' אלוךך שואל מעמך?

And now Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you? (Devarim 10:12)

What does Hashem want from you in this moment, here and now?

Maybe the unexpected traffic means more time to call a loved one, to listen to a shiur, or simply to breathe. Maybe the burned dinner becomes a chance to laugh together as a family and make do creatively. Maybe the slow line at the supermarket becomes a test in patience, say a chapter of Tehillim, or even an opportunity to smile at someone else who is also waiting.

It is not about where you wanted to be. It is

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about where Hashem has placed you. That is the avodah of the moment.

ROSH HASHANA ON GUARD DUTY

This lesson became vivid for us the Rosh HaShanah right before the war broke out. My son, Binyamin, was assigned guard duty on an army base near the Egyptian border. Instead of being in yeshiva or at home with his family, he was standing watch with just a few other soldiers.

Guard duty meant something else too: no minyan. No chazzan leading the tefillot, no shofar blasts surrounded by hundreds of voices rising together. Just him and Hashem.

Binyamin could have tried to switch shifts. But his response to us was: it's Rosh HaShanah for everyone, and this is where Hashem placed me. So, he stood guard during his assigned hours. And when he finally sat down to daven alone, it became one of the most powerful prayers of his life.

Hours spent in private tefillah, uninterrupted, him and the Ribbono Shel Olam. He later told us it was one of the most spiritual experiences he had ever known. He had not only accepted his circumstances—he had maximized them. He won that moment, elevating it higher than he might have if everything had gone “according to plan.”

THE BIGGER PICTURE

These last few years have given us all a crash course in this lesson.

Covid closed the shuls, and suddenly dining rooms, porches, and backyards became sanctuaries. We discovered that Hashem can be found just as much in a whispered Amidah beside our children as in the grandeur of a full synagogue. Recently during war, sirens and rockets have interrupted prayers and meals, pushing families into safe rooms. Yet there, crammed together in anxiety and hope, voices of tefillah

rose from the depths of the heart.

But this is nothing new for parents with younger children. Mothers (and fathers) have stayed home from shul to care for children, feeling they were “missing out” and not in the “right atmosphere” for Yamim Noraim. As a new mother, I recall my friend Beth comforting me by saying “you take care of your children, and Hashem will take care of His”. In truth, home is exactly where Hashem wanted them, serving Him in the holiest of ways.

Each time, we thought we knew where we belonged. Each time, Hashem reminded us: “I am placing you exactly where you need to be.”

HASHEM'S PLAN, NOT OURS

We often measure our lives by what has “always been”:

I've always davened with a/that minyan on Rosh HaShana. I've always hosted this meal, served these foods. I've always sat in this seat, followed this routine, kept this tradition, prepared like this, been with these people, etc.

But Hashem doesn't operate by our statistics. He doesn't calculate according to our “always.” His plan is infinitely deeper and wiser. Sometimes, His opportunities for us lie outside our comfort zones, outside our expectations, and outside our control.

That does not make them less holy. In fact, that often makes them more holy. Because it

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is in those moments—when our plans unravel and we stand face to face with His plan—that true emunah is born and true greatness is unleashed.

THIS ROSH HASHANA

As we approach Rosh HaShanah, the Day of Judgment, it's upon us to not only ask "Where do I want to go this year? Who do I want to become? What do I want to accomplish and achieve?"

But perhaps the deeper question is this:

Wherever Hashem places me, will I recognize it as the right place?

This Rosh HaShana, our avodah is not only to crown Hashem as King of the universe, but to accept Him as King over our personal moments. To believe that each detour, each frustration, each unplanned circumstance is not an obstacle, but an opening.

Hashem is asking of us: "What will you do with this moment I have given you?"

When we answer with grace, with patience, with creativity, with kindness, with tefillah, with faith—we transform the moment into eternity.

May we be written and sealed for a year of life, health, joy, clarity, kedusha, and unshakable faith in Hashem's plan- a year of witnessing with our very eyes בְּשׂוֹב ה' צִיּוֹן, with the Geulah Shelayma. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org

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 many people, that she touched!
 She was like Aron, who loved
 peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having
 the opportunity of having Tziporah in
 his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
 happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
 Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
 in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
 shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
 tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a
 crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR



ROSH HASHANA

Shining Like Pomegranates

The thought of being judged on Rosh Hashana is triggering.

I've been judging myself all year. Now Hashem is going to as well?

How can I show up to daven on Rosh Hashana from that space of fear and unworthiness?

The pomegranate, the רמון, is inextricably linked to Rosh Hashana. It is a strong custom to eat it on Yom Tov as one of the *simanim*, foods that help us symbolically connect to deeper tefillos. The pomegranate holds the key to viewing Hashem's judgment through a healthy lens.

In Brachos (57a), we learn that every Jew is filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate is filled with seeds, even those who (feel like they) are empty of merit.

In Chagigah (15b), we see a different mention

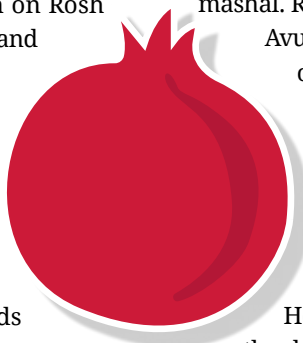
of the pomegranate, "Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate, ate the inside, and discarded the shell."

R' Avraham Twersky, the Trisker Maggid, explains that the Gemara in Chagigah is a mashal. Rabbi Meir's teacher, Elisha ben Avuyah, had strayed far off the path of Judaism and Chazal were unsure if what he had given over to his students should still be valued. Rabbi Meir, in his wisdom, was able to take the good he had learned from his master and leave behind the negative. He "ate the inside and discarded the shell," the kelipah.

The name "Meir," means to enlighten. The Trisker Maggid points out that Hashem can also be called "Meir," because He fills the world, and us, with His light. And, therefore, the Gemara in Chagigah is also a mashal for Hashem's relationship with us.

Hashem knows what is happening inside each one of us. But He too, "eats the inside and discards the shell," differentiating between the internal and the superficial.

He knows the face we show to the world, and He knows the one buried deep inside. He knows how often we mess up, but He also knows how hard we try. He sees how desperately we yearn for clarity and connection, to have healthy relationships, to raise our children with dignity, compassion, and



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love, and to use all the talents that He gave us in positive ways.

He sees that we fall. But He also sees how hard we work at getting back up.

We are quick to berate ourselves for the failures. When we imagine the Heavenly scales weighing our deeds, it feels inevitable that the failures outweigh the successes. Because, really, where am I? Aren't I still working on those same flaws I worked on last year?

In Chassidus, *kelipah*, is a reference to anything that hides G-dliness. Anything that separates us from Hashem. Including our own egos.

We think we are only successful if the outcome is a certain way. But Hashem defines success differently. Hashem values our efforts. Hashem counts every turn towards Him as a success. Every moment of readiness and desire to get closer to Him.

He sees that. And it matters to Him.

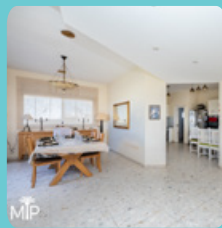
May we be blessed to realize that Hashem, "המאיר את העולם," the One who illuminates the world, is shining His Infinite and Compassionate Light on and into each one of us.

Through His lens of "eating the inside and discarding the shell," may we have the courage to be vulnerable and break through our emotional armor. To know that when we pass in front of Him this Rosh Hashana "כבני מרון," like sheep, we are also (using the same letters) passing in front of Him "כבני רמון," as people filled, like pomegranates, with juicy seeds of goodness and potential.

Shana Tova U'Metukah. ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.

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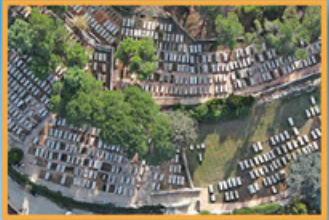
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Monday, September 29th



8:00pm



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Rav Moshe Taragin [YHE '83] has been a Ram at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Gush Etzion since 1994. He also currently teaches at the Stella K. Abraham Beit Midrash for Women of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion. He has Semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, a BA in Computer Science from Yeshiva College, and an MA in English Literature from City University. Rabbi Taragin previously taught Talmud at Columbia University, lectured in Talmud and Bible at Yeshiva University, and served as Assistant Rabbi at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue. Rabbi Taragin has authored a Yom Ha'atzmaut Prayer book, authors a weekly column for the Orthodox Union about Jewish history and redemption, and has authored several books including "Reclaiming Redemption: Deciphering the Maze of Jewish History".

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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

VAYEILECH

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA

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Two Paths, One Return

The haftorah of Shabbos Shuva calls us into the heart of repentance. Hoshea opens with the stirring words, שׁוּבוּהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ, *Return, O Israel, to Hashem your G-d*. At first glance, this echoes Yeshayahu's cry from *Tzom Gedaliah* - דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהֵמָצְאוֹ קְרָאֵהוּ בְּהִיטָו - *Seek Hashem when He is found, call Him when He is near*. Why do two prophets of the same era deliver what sounds like the same message?

A closer look reveals that each teaches us a different pathway into teshuva.

YESHAYAHU'S TESHUVA:

TRANSFORMATION IN A MOMENT

Yeshayahu speaks to the leadership of his time. His call is for *radical transformation*: abandon your ways, seize the closeness of Hashem while He is “still near,” and turn completely. The Malbim compares this to catching a beloved before they storm out—grabbing hold of the relationship before it slips away. Yeshayahu's model is dramatic, the teshuva of a sudden pivot, the power to turn darkness into light.

Hashem's response is described in jubilant imagery: the mountains and hills singing, the trees clapping their hands. It is the joy of a nation renewed in an instant.

HOSHEA'S TESHUVA: THE PATIENT PROCESS

Hoshea, by contrast, speaks to the people. His message is *gradual return*. As the Ibn Ezra notes, “*mi'at, mi'at*”—little by little. Hoshea guides us to take words with us—confession

and prayer—and to substitute the sacrifices of the Temple with the offerings of our lips. Teshuva here is a steady movement forward, one step at a time. Even missteps are not failures, for the very act of turning toward Hashem transforms the past into merit.

Hoshea's images are gentle: the dew that nourishes, the rose that blossoms, the cedar that takes root. His is the voice of endurance, growth that is deep and lasting.

TWO MODELS, ONE MESSAGE

Yeshayahu and Hoshea speak in different registers—one to rulers who can change history with a decree, the other to individuals who change life step by step. Together they remind us that teshuva takes many forms. Sometimes we leap, sometimes we inch forward. Both are precious to Hashem.

On Shabbos Shuva, the call is simple and urgent: return. Whether in the thunder of Yeshayahu or the quiet persistence of Hoshea, each of us is invited to take our step back to Hashem. May this season of teshuva draw us close, and may the mountains themselves rejoice at our return. ■

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Certified Kosher Ingredients

In past articles, we discussed the ingredient panel used by OU Kosher, which categorizes ingredients into six groups, numbered 1 through 6. The lower the number, the less sensitive the ingredient is in terms of kosher certification. Group 3 represents the majority of kosher ingredients used in the certified industry.

There are products that may be 100% kosher without requiring supervision. However, because they can be derived from non-kosher sources or processed in non-kosher ways, OU Kosher requires supervision for many such ingredients. It's important to note that Group 3 ingredients can vary — in some cases, certain types of products almost never contain problematic ingredients, while in others, non-kosher

sources are quite common.

For example, enzymes, which are derived from living cells, can come from animal sources, yet are more commonly produced from plant-based or microbial sources. Although the latter is more typical, to ensure certainty, OU Kosher requires supervision and a kosher program for the use of enzymes.

There are also ingredients that are very rarely derived from non-kosher sources — grapes, for example, which require tight kosher supervision due to halachic reasons. Although the chance of a kosher concern may seem far-fetched, OU still classifies such ingredients as Group 1, meaning the ingredient is considered innocuous and does not require additional certification for use in kosher products.

There is no universal rule for determining how commonly ingredients are sourced from kosher or non-kosher origins. These realities fluctuate and evolve for a variety of reasons. OU Kosher's Ingredients Department constantly reviews ingredient sources and updates each item's category accordingly.

GROUP THREE OVERVIEW

There are ingredients that are always kosher, regardless of source or processing. Conversely, some ingredients are always problematic. Group 3 focuses on ingredients that require some level of supervision to be considered kosher.

Sometimes, the ingredients themselves may be inherently kosher, but the processes they undergo or the substances they are mixed with may necessitate kosher supervision. Group 3 ingredients can be divided into several key

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categories. While this article won't cover every Group 3 ingredient used in food manufacturing, it will help readers recognize that even simple-looking ingredients may still require kosher certification.

COMMON GROUP THREE INGREDIENTS

- **Acids:**
Acids are typically added to foods to enhance flavor, preserve freshness, or balance the product. They are rarely the main ingredient but have a significant impact on taste and shelf life. For example, acids are essential in soft drinks. Although many acids are not inherently kosher-sensitive, due to their sources and fermentation processes, many acids used as additives are classified as Group 3.
- **Dairy Products:**
Regardless of halachic debates about the modern-day status of milk, many dairy products are by-products of cheese, which has complex kosher concerns. As a result, many (but not all) dairy items and their derivatives are considered Group 3.
- **Thickening Agents and Preservatives:**
These are common in industrial food

production. Examples include oleoresins and glycerides. Because these ingredients may be derived from animal sources, they are also placed in Group 3.

- **Flavors, Flavor Additives, and Colors:**
Flavorings are highly complex in the food industry. Due to the vast number of ingredients and potential animal sources, any flavor, flavor additive, or coloring is automatically categorized as Group 3. ■

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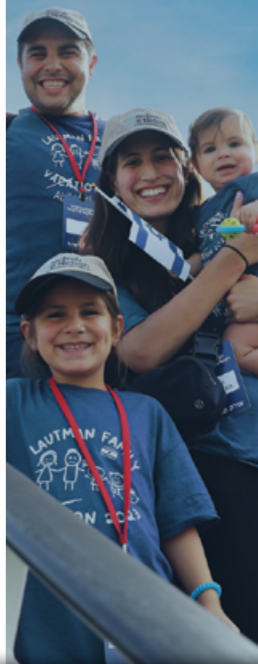


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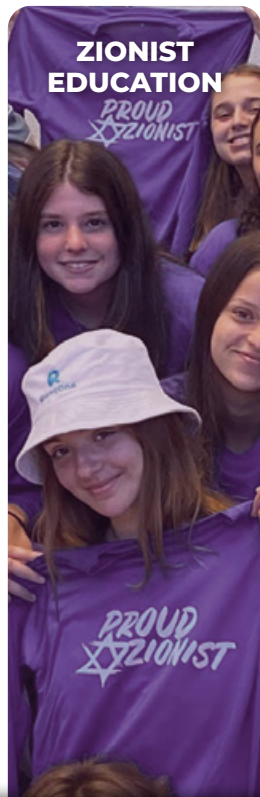
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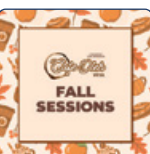


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Elul- A Season of Renewal and Hope

Eli asks: We are entering the days of Elul, a time of renewal and the beginning of a new year. How can I help my single friends that I'm trying to guide, feel this sense of renewal? How can I encourage them to believe that this year can be different that this year they could get married and see wonderful things happen for them?

Aleeza answers: What a beautiful and heartfelt question. Elul is such a precious time, the King is in the field, Hashem is close to us, and the gates of renewal are open wide. It's natural for singles to feel a mix of hope and heaviness now. Another year is beginning, and sometimes it feels like nothing has changed. But in truth, everything can change in a moment.

This is how Hashem created the world, with cycles of endings and beginnings, with seasons for healing and seasons for growth. Just as we ask forgiveness and start fresh in our relationship with Hashem, so too we can start fresh in our relationships with ourselves and with others.

For someone who is single, the message

of Elul is: *You are not behind. You are exactly where you need to be.* Hashem has not forgotten you. The next chapter simply hasn't opened yet. And just as quickly as one door can close, another can open in the blink of an eye.

How can you help them feel this? Flip the script. In addition to them praying for themselves, suggest they pray for their soulmate to be ready to meet their soulmate. Remind them to say yes to one new opportunity, even if it feels difficult. Every act of courage softens the heart and invites blessing. And Elul is a good time to renew not just hope, but also effort. So yes, encourage them to dream big, to pray deeply, and to believe that this year can be different because every year is different. May Hashem bless them with courage, and the sweetest surprises of all—a loving partner and a home filled with light.

Aleeza ■

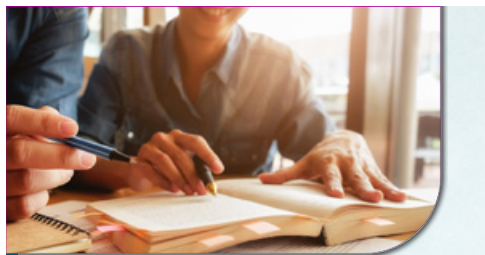
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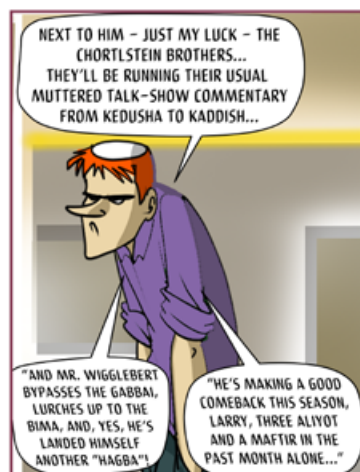
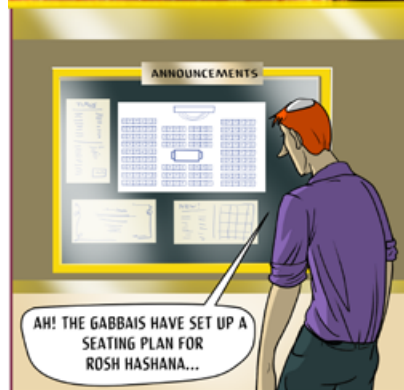
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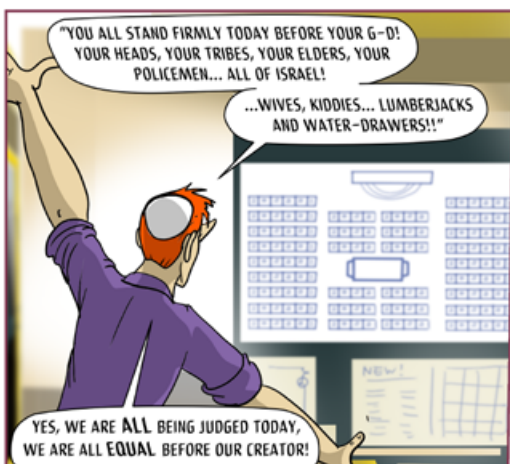
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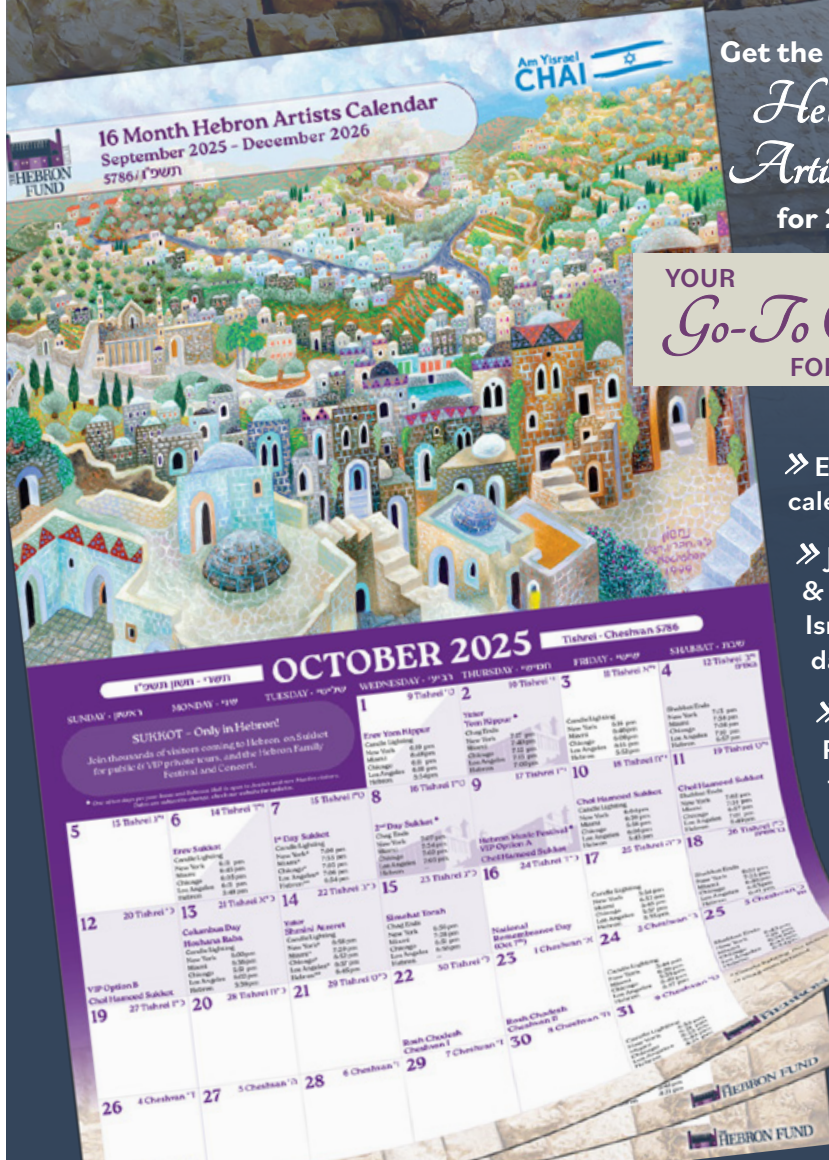
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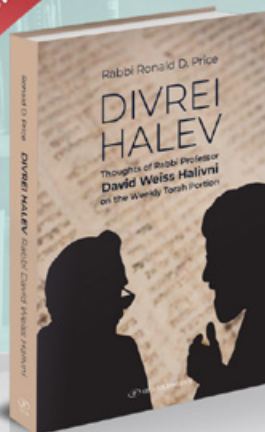
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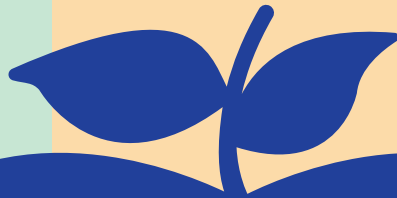
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