\*\*\*Torah Tidbits - Yom Kippur, Ha'azinu, Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah, Bereshit - Issue 1631\*\*\*

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Yerushalayim Zmanim

Yom Kippur:

Candles 5:48pm

Havdala 6:59pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:39pm

Ha'azinu:

Candles 5:45pm

Havdala 6:57pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:37pm

Sukkot:

Candles 5:41pm

Havdala 6:53pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:33pm

Shabbat Chol Hamoed:

Candles 5:36pm

Havdala 6:48pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:28pm

Shmini Atzeret:

Candles 5:33pm

Havdala 6:45pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:25pm

Bereshit:

Candles 5:28pm

Havdala 6:40pm

Rabbeinu Tam 7:20pm

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\*\*\*Dear Torah Tidbits Family\*\*\*

Rabbi Avi Berman

There is a large part of the Torah Tidbits readership who can remember aerograms. These were international letters which folded into their own envelope shape to save on weight. When I moved to Israel in 1985, we would send letters like these to our grandparents in America. It would take about three weeks’ to get to them, after which they would read it, write us a letter, and then it would take another three weeks to get to us. We knew and expected this long delay, and so our letters would be much more substantive than, “Hi Bubby and Zaidy, how are you?”, since the answer to such a question would likely be out of date by the time it got to us several weeks later.

Times have really changed. Fast forward forty years, and now when we send a text, a WhatsApp, or an email, and the person on the other side doesn’t answer within a couple minutes, we wonder if they’re ok! It’s a generation of instant replies, quick answers, and not a whole lot of patience. This has created a real challenge, especially in the realm of our religious life. For example, there is no doubt that davening requires patience. Not just in saying the words and answering the chazan, but also because the results of our davening are not always seen immediately.

It took almost 2,000 years of our forefathers and fathers saying “teka beshofar gadol lecherutein, vesa neis lekabetz geluyoteinu,” “sound the great shofar for our liberty, and raise a banner to gather our exiles,” before their children’s children were able to see the results of those hopes and prayers with the ingathering of the exiles slowly but surely taking place now. Many generations prayed for a day for the sick to be healed in “Refaeinu Hashem,” and while of course there are still sick people, the strides made in the field of medicine have been tremendous. The Jewish people for thousands of years have asked for economic success in “Barech Aleinu,” and the Start-Up Nation is thriving in so many ways today, and our agriculture sector is booming. They asked for the return of Yerushalayim in “Veliyerushalayim,” and we see the city continually growing before our eyes.

But as the technological world we live in today continues to progress and reach into almost every aspect of our lives, it becomes that much more difficult to teach the value to the next generation of slow davening, in taking the time to connect to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and to allow there to be space between the request and the response.

That is what makes Yom Kippur in particular such a powerful challenge today. Because Yom Kippur is not quick, and it’s not easy. We spend basically all day in shul. The answers to our prayers are not always immediately apparent to us. And yet, the connection and inspiration that happens because of Yom Kippur is so, so important. How do we accomplish it ourselves and teach it to others?

Firstly, music is a powerful tool to connect generations. The melodies of Yom Kippur have a real koach to them, and when we can prepare the youth to open themselves up to these songs and niggunim, it can be so uplifting and take them so high. The music of Yom Kippur has the power to remind us of earlier times, knowing that these melodies are what our parents, our grandparents, and our great-grandparents sung in their shuls on Yom Kippur, making us feel so connected with our history.

While I grew up davening Nusach Ashkenaz, I have noticed a dramatic difference in this regard between Ashkenazi Selichot and Sefardi Slichot. Ashkenazi Selichot can sound mournful and sad, making many people feel as if they are standing in front of HaKadosh Baruch Hu to say sorry for every single thing that they did wrong. Whereas Sefardi Selichot is full of singing with a lively and happy melody.

I enjoy the Ashkenazi tunes for what they are. But many today connect to the Sefardi tunes. And I believe that is why so many of the Selichot at the Kotel use the Sefardi melodies. And let me tell you, the Kotel is packed every night of Selichot not just by Sefardim, but by Jews of all stripes and backgrounds - tens of thousands every single night. And it’s because people know that this is such a powerful way to connect to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, to feel part of the Klal, to absorb the avira of Yerushalayim, in order to appreciate the greatness that we have here in Yerushalayim.

This is another way to help the youths of the generation connect to davening - giving them the ability to show up, to join the community, and to see firsthand the passion and prayer of those who want to get closer to Hashem.

It is therefore such a beautiful thing that every year we run the David & Lil Shafran Selichot event, where we take hundreds of teenagers from across the country - from 18 different cities - to the Kotel for Selichot. This year, thank God, we had 600 teenagers at the event, coming from up north in Kiryat Shmona and Nehariya, to down south in Kiryat Malachi and Kiryat Gat, and even Dimona, to the OU Teen Center’s annual Selichot in loving memory of David and Lil Shafran z"l.

After we all gathered together in Yerushalayim, we gave them a lovely OU Israel break-the-fast dinner. At the Great Synagogue, they heard from Sara Shafran, a granddaughter of David and Lil Shafran. Sara told their story, who they were. She talked about her grandfather David, who was a Holocaust survivor and had become successful in business after the Shoah. When he was already very weak and sick, he made an important decision to bring his family to Israel from Vancouver, Canada, in order to make sure they would love and connect to the Land of Israel. This happened shortly before he passed away. Sara told the story about how when he was very sick, there were children making loud noises outside his room. When his daughter, Anita - Sara’s mother - asked him how she can make his rest more comfortable, he answered her that there is nothing more beautiful to him than the sounds of those children playing. How he remembered that during the Holocaust, the children had to be quiet to prevent the Nazis from finding them, and that hearing Jewish children playing and making noise without fear, was the most wonderful thing to him. So, Sara said to our large group of teenagers, her grandfather would be overjoyed to hear their noise and their singing at the Kotel.

David’s story was a powerful message of what the human spirit is really capable of. This undoubtedly had such a big impact on those teenagers to hear that message, when so many of them came from low socioeconomic communities. Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, Chief Rabbi of Tzfat, came and uplifted the crowd with inspiring words, and got them all up and dancing! They also heard from Chaim Pelzner, the director of our teen centers, as well as myself.

Then, all of the teens walked together to the Kotel, joining something like 70,000 Jews from all over the world on the night of motzei Tzom Gedaliah to say Selichot. What an amazing night.

So when I think about how to take these Selichot and davening and bring it to the next generation, the answer becomes obvious. First, by taking the tunes and melodies of past generations into the present and future. Second, by joining together with others, by feeling part of something greater. It’s the rush to the Kotel and the excitement in your heart and mind of, “Wow! I can’t believe I am part of this!”

I know that the tefillot that we did with the over 600 teenagers from across the country, who came all the way to Yerushalayim to the Kotel to daven for a better year for themselves and the Jewish people, were heard by HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and that we will see their effect very soon. May their inspiration and their passion give us all a year full of besorot tovot, a year full of goodness, success, and of understanding. May the neshamot of David and Lil Shafran z"l have an aliyah, and may these teenagers that are coming every single week to our teen centers continue to make us proud. May they draw from the uplifting experience they had in the city of Yerushalayim, for their entire lives. May they bring endless happiness to all the staff and advisors that have been involved in bringing these teenagers to Yerushalayim.

Wishing you all a gmar chatima tova and an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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\*\*\*Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - Yom Kippur\*\*\*

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

The Torah reading for Yom Kippur is the description in Chapter 16 of Vayikra of the entire service in the Mikdash for Yom Kippur. The Kohen Gadol himself read this exact Torah reading as part of the service. We are reading what he read.

\*\*\*1st Aliya (Vayikra 16:1-6)\*\*\*

One may enter the Holy of Holies with the following elaborate procedure. For I, G-d, appear there in a cloud. Aharon is to bring a bull for a sin offering, along with a ram. The Jewish people bring 2 goats for sin offerings and a ram. Aharon wears 4 unique white garments for this service.

The Holy of Holies is where the Aron is housed, with the ten commandments. No one is ever to enter there. And the Torah adds “For I, G-d, appear there in a cloud”.

Where else have we seen a cloud, the appearance of G-d, an area where no man may approach and the ten commandments?

Mt. Sinai. A thick cloud over the mountain. G-d descends. No man may approach the mountain. He utters the ten commandments.

The Holy of Holies is a miniature re-enactment of Mt. Sinai. There, He descended to us. With a thick cloud. To tell us the ten commandments

Here, the ten commandments are housed. But here, unlike Sinai, where He approached us, on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol approaches Him. And unlike Sinai where the cloud descended on the mountain, here the Kohen Gadol comes with incense to create the cloud.

And at Sinai the people said “we can’t hear your voice or we will die”. Man cannot withstand G-d’s Presence. So too here, G-d says, no man may enter the Holy of Holies, for he cannot withstand My presence.

But once a year, on Yom Kippur, I make an exception and allow, with an elaborate ceremony, only one man to enter that place. And that man shall make a cloud.

Yom Kippur is the intimate encounter of man with the Divine Presence in the Holy of Holies. As if He Says: The pinnacle moment of Yom Kippur is just you and Me, in My most private place, the Holy of Holies. You, Aharon, as the representative of My people. And Me, in the cloud.

And this re-enactment of Sinai comes one week after Rosh Hashana, the day of the shofar. For at Sinai, besides the cloud and besides man not being allowed to approach, there was the sound of the shofar. At Sinai, He sounded the shofar. On Rosh Hashana, we sound the shofar.

The Sinai moment is the closest, most intimate encounter of man and G-d on this earth. The Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur re-enactment is man’s desire to renew that intimate encounter, but on our initiative. Shofar. And Holy of Holies.

\*\*\*2nd Aliya (16:7-11)\*\*\*

Take the 2 goats of the people. Through lots, identify one as an offering and the other to send to the desert for atonement. Aharon offers the offering for himself and his household.

In this moment of intimate contact of the Divine and us, we achieve atonement through pageantry. The pageantry of the 2 goats is rich; identical in appearance, their roles achieved through lots, their fate radically different. One will be an offering to G-d. The other will be sent to the barren desert.

\*\*\*3rd Aliya (16:12-17)\*\*\*

Aharon is to take a pan of coals and of incense into the Holy of Holies, with the smoke of the incense enveloping the covering of the Aron. Aharon takes the blood of his sin offering and sprinkles it 1 + 7 times in the Holy of Holies and 1 + 7 times in front of the curtain, outside of the Holy of Holies. He repeats this with the blood of the people’s sin offering, the goat.

Aharon brings incense into the Holy of Holies to create smoke. But the Torah does not say that the smoke from the incense fills the Holy of Holies. It says it covers the Aron.

The emphasis on the Aron is to be reminiscent of Mt. Sinai, where the thick cloud covered the mountain when G-d spoke these ten commandments, housed in the Aron.

And perhaps the smoke and the cloud as accompanying this intimate encounter is deliberate. For the closer the encounter with the Divine, the more hidden, obscure, mysterious, enigmatic. Cloudy. Obscured. Intimacy and mystery.

\*\*\*4th Aliya (16:18-24)\*\*\*

He then takes the blood of his bull and the goat of the people and both places it on the incense altar and sprinkles it 1 + 7 times, purifying it. He thus completes the atonement of the holiest places. Aharon then places his hands upon the head of the other goat of the people, confessing all their sins, placing them on the head of the goat. The goat, bearing the sins of the people, is led out to the desert. Aharon now changes from the special white garments to his regular ones and offers the more conventional offerings for himself and the people.

Two goats. One offered. One taken to the desert after the sins are confessed upon it.

Rav Soloveitchik captured this drama as a metaphor. This goat in the desert is pushed over a cliff, falling to its death.

The fall, the pull of gravity is a metaphor for the push and pull of our nature, but with no exercise of will. Man can choose to assert his will. Or choose to be subject to the whims and forces of his nature, like the goat unable to break his fall. In a word, when man allows himself to be pulled down by his nature, failing to assert his will, gravity pulls him down to his demise. Such is the sinful one, allowing forces to dominate, failing to assert his will.

\*\*\*5th Aliya (16:25-30)\*\*\*

The one who led the goat to the desert need be purified upon his return as do the ones who burn the sin offerings of Aharon and the people outside of the camp. All of this is to be done every year on Yom Kippur accompanied by fasting. For on this day, He provides you with atonement and purity; you become purified before G-d.

While the drama of this day was punctured by the destruction of the Temple, the atonement persists through the day of Yom Kippur itself. The Talmud took the verse literally. On this day you achieve atonement. The day itself, even without the elaborate Temple service, but the day itself, the power of Yom Kippur atones.

\*\*\*6th Aliya (16:31-34)\*\*\*

This procedure atoning for the Holy of Holies, the outer area, the altar, the Kohanim and the people shall be done once a year.

This atonement and purification are humbling, overwhelming, ennobling. For the Holy One reaches for mankind, descends in a cloud as it were to the Holy of Holies, granting atonement. It is His reach for man; His kindness, generosity, and love.

Yom Kippur is a gift, an affirmation of man, a chance to begin anew, a smile from the Holy One, appreciating our desire and passion, even if we err. Yom Kippur is the faith of the Holy One in us, giving us a yearly clean slate. That is a gift.

\*\*\*Maftir (Bamidbar 29:7-11)\*\*\*

The maftir describes the extra mussaf that is brought in addition to the unique Yom Kippur offerings.

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\*\*\*Midei Chodesh B'Chodesh\*\*\*

\*\*\*Prolonged Prayer\*\*\*

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

As the end of Yom Kippur draws near, an extraordinary event occurs.

We add an additional prayer service to our liturgy ; a prayer service that, for centuries, has been recited at no other time of the year. [Footnote#1]

Known as Ne’ila (Closing), this prayer service draws its title, according to the Talmud, from two possible sources.

The closing of the Temple gates as night approaches.

The closing of the “Heavenly Gates” as Yom Kippur nears its end.

Absent the Temple, the first of these two sources remains rooted in memories of past glory and in the hope of future redemption.

For the present, Ne’ila is the prayer service that ends the holiest day of the year; the vehicle through which we set forth our final petitions before the closing of the “Heavenly Gates.”

In the Talmud Yerushalmi, Rabbi Levi derives the unique character of Ne’ila from an unexpected source, a harsh rebuke uttered by the prophet Yeshayahu:

“And when you spread your hands [in prayer], I will hide my eyes from you; even if you were to prolong your prayer, I will not listen; your hands are replete with blood.

Rabbi Levi maintains that Yeshayahu’s severe words convey a secondary message: Under normal circumstances, “All who prolong their prayers will be answered.”

Ne’ila thus represents a prolongation of our tefillot on the holiest of our days.

The Rambam codifies this approach in his halachic work, the Mishneh Torah, by explaining that the Rabbis “instituted a prayer after the Mincha prayer, close to the setting of the sun, on fast days only, its purpose being to increase supplication and pleading because of the fast. This is called the Ne’ila prayer, as if to say the Gates of Heaven are closing and concealed behind the sun.”

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, centuries later, takes things a step further. He posits that Ne’ila’s unique character as “a prolongation of prayer” sets it apart from all other tefillot. Ne’ila, the Rav maintains, is an extension of existing prayer. Specifically, Ne’ila is an extension of the Yom Kippur tefillot that precede it; dedicated to the request that all previous tefillot of Yom Kippur be accepted by G-d.

The Rav continues by suggesting that the addition of Ne’ila to the Yom Kippur service transforms Yom Kippur into a “Yom Tefillah”, “a day of prayer”. In this way, prayer on Yom Kippur becomes fundamentally and qualitatively different from prayer recited during the rest of the year.

Based on this idea, Rabbi Soloveichik arrives at a dramatic halachic conclusion…

“If an individual slept through the entire day of Yom Kippur; failed to recite Shacharit, Musaf, and Mincha; and then came to synagogue at the time of Ne’ila’s recitation, he would be precluded from reciting Ne’ila.”

Participation in the Ne’ila Service, the Rav maintains, is dependent upon involvement in the preceding prayers. Absent those tefillot, Ne’ila has no place.

Going one step further, despite his own father’s uncertainty concerning this point, the Rav argues that if an individual misses the recitation of even one of the three preceding prayer services, he is precluded from reciting Ne’ila.

While, on a practical level, the Rav’s position concerning the Ne’ila prayer is disputed by many other authorities, the idea he raises can be very instructive.

Drawing on the Rav’s insights, we may suggest an answer to a puzzling Yom Kippur question, arriving at a compelling conclusion about the day as a whole.

The Torah concludes its commandment concerning Yom Kippur observance with the enigmatic statement, “from evening to evening, you shall observe your Shabbat.”

Why must the Torah delineate Yom Kippur’s day-long flow? After all, every day on the Jewish calendar begins in the evening and ends in the evening!

Armed with our new understanding of the Neila prayer, we can offer an answer to this question.

It is absolutely fitting that the final prayer service of this holiest of days might be dependent upon the prayers that precede it.

Yom Kippur must be experienced “from evening to evening,” in its totality. There can be no halfway measures when it comes to this holiest of our days. Each of us must be in “for the long haul.” Only by participating in the entirety of the day – - “from evening to evening-” – do we earn the right to stand before God as the Gates of Heaven begin to close.

And, if this is the case, the closing moments of our calendar’s holiest day inform Jewish experience in its entirety.…

Judaism does not believe in “quick fixes.” The quest for spirituality is hard work.

Only those who are willing to put in the effort, day after day; only those who rise up to pray, even when the spirit does not move them; only those who perform the everyday mitzvot of our tradition, day in and day out; will ultimately merit the encounter with the Divine that Jewish tradition can uniquely offer.

Footnote#1. The Talmud Bavli ([Yoma 87b)] notes that Nei’la was originally recited on two occasions in addition to Yom Kippur: on public fast days and at Ma’amadot (town gatherings of Israelites connected to the twenty-four watches of Kohanim and Leviim who in turn served in performing the Temple service). Beginning with the Geonic period, however, following the close of the Talmudic Era, the recitation became limited to Yom Kippur, alone.

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\*\*\*Halachot From Yom Kippur\*\*\*

Rabbi Elyada Goldvicht

\*\*\*EREV YOM KIPPUR\*\*\*

\*\*\*I. Tefillah\*\*\*

תחנון and למנצח are omitted at Shacharis of Erev-Yom Kippur (YK). Ashkenazim also omit מזמור לתודה and אבינו מלכנו, while Sephardim recite both.

\*\*\*II. Teshuva\*\*\*

״כִּי בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה יְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ“ – “For on this day, He shall effect atonement for you to purify you; from all your sins, before Hashem, you shall be purified.” Although Yom Kippur is the day of forgiveness, it only atones for sins between a person and Hashem, but not for interpersonal sins, until the wrongdoer seeks forgiveness from the person he wronged. Therefore, it is customary to ask forgiveness from one another on Erev-YK. If the offender asks and is not forgiven, he must return at least three times, each time with three others accompanying him. If forgiveness is still withheld, he is no longer obligated to ask, unless the wronged party is his rebbe, in which case he must continue seeking forgiveness. If the person who was wronged has passed away, the offender must go to the grave with a minyan of ten people and ask forgiveness there.

The wronged should be compassionate and forgive the individual asking for forgiveness, for those who forgive others are forgiven by Hashem.

One must be especially careful to repay all debts, including tzedakah commitments, and return anything not rightfully his, for the sin of theft blocks the pathway to teshuvah.

\*\*\*III. Mincha and Viduy\*\*\*

There is a biblical obligation for both men and women to verbally confess (viduy) their sins, as the Torah teaches: ”אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי יַעֲשׂוּ … וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת חַטָּאתָם“. While confession is required whenever one performs teshuvah, Yom Kippur is a particularly auspicious time for both individuals and the community to repent, such that everyone is obligated to confess on this day.

One is also obligated to recite the viduy at Mincha on erev-YK, lest he choke or become inebriated at the seudah ha’mafsekes, preventing him from properly confessing. Some posskim rule that one is obligated to recite viduy again after the se’udah before nightfall. Many fulfill this opinion by reciting Tefillah Zakah before Kol Nidrei since it contains an element of viduy in it. However, the חיי אדם and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach passkin that it should be said after Kol Nidrei.

Viduy must be recited while standing, without leaning on anything that would cause one to fall if it were removed. When reciting viduy, it is best to bend forward slightly, similar to the posture taken during Modim. When reciting the word “shechatanu,” lightly strike the heart with the right fist. Older or weaker individuals who have trouble standing alone may lean on a table or shtender if necessary.

\*\*\*IV. Kaparos\*\*\*

There is a custom among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim to perform kaparos with a white rooster or chicken on erev YK. Men use a rooster and women use a chicken. One raises and rotates the chicken above his head three times while saying ״זה חלפתי, זה תמורתי, זה כפרתי, וכו'“ , which has the rashei teivos of חת״ך, the name of the angel responsible for life. The chicken is then shechted and given to the needy. The point of kaporos is to arouse the individual to perform teshuva when he sees the chicken shechted and imagines that it is taking his place. Furthermore, the chicken is given to tzedakah since tzedakah atones.

One may also use money as kaparos. The amount of money used should equal the price of a chicken. Some say that one kaparos may be performed on behalf of many individuals, while others say that it is best to perform separate kaparos for every living member in the house, even fetuses. All agree that if a chicken or money was already used on one individual, it should not be used on another.

\*\*\*V. Eating and Drinking on Erev YK\*\*\*

There is a mitzvah to eat, drink, and have larger meals than usual during the daytime of erev YK so that it will be easier to fast the following day. Nevertheless, even a sick individual who is not fasting is obligated to eat and have a larger meal on erev YK. Some have the custom to use Lechem Mishneh in the seudah ha’mafsekes and to dip the challah in honey. Although there is no obligation to eat meat, many customarily eat chicken. There is also a custom to eat kreplach (meat covered with dough) because erev YK is considered a Yom Tov, on which many hold one should ideally eat meat. However, since melacha is still permitted, it is not considered a full-fledged Yom Tov, which we express by covering the meat with dough. (For this reason, there is a custom to eat kreplach on Hoshana Rabbah and Purim as well.)

Ideally, if one intends to continue eating after the seudah ha’mafsekes, he may do so, though it is preferable to verbalize this intention before bentching.

There is a biblical requirement to accept upon oneself the sanctity of Yom Kippur slightly earlier than sunset. It is preferable to make this acceptance verbally, and some posskim hold that doing so even two minutes before Yom Kippur is sufficient.

\*\*\*VI. Other Customs\*\*\*

Some have a custom to daven at the cemetery and to increase tzedakah giving.

There is a custom to go to the mikvah on erev-YK, and even some women have the minhag to go, but single women should not go. The commonly accepted custom today is that even married women do not go. One should try to make sure there is no chatzitzah on the body and that fingernails and toe nails are properly cut. If one cannot go to the mikvah, he may take a shower instead. The shower should be long enough for 9 kav of water to be poured on one’s head (12 or 16 liters, or 4-5 minutes).

There is a custom to receive malkos on erev YK to arouse one to do teshuva. The one giving the malkos softly hits the other’s back using a leather strap while saying ״והוא רחום וכו'“ three times. The recipient crouches down with his head facing north and recites ״אשמנו בגדנו וכו'“ three times. However, there are many who do not have the custom to receive malkos.

\*\*\*VII. Candle Lighting\*\*\*

It is customary for married women (as well as single men/women when living alone) to light candles for Yom Kippur similar to Shabbos and Yom Tov and recite the bracha of ״להדליק נר של יום הכיפורים“. Sephardim do not accept the sanctity of Yom Kippur at the time of lighting candles, but only afterward. Therefore, they should first recite the bracha and then light, and they should not recite ״שהחיינו“ (through which they accept the sanctity of YK) until after completing the candle lighting, reciting the bracha, and removing leather shoes. Alternatively, if they plan to be in shul, they can recite it there with the tzibur. Ashkenazi women accept the sanctity and laws of Yom Kippur when lighting candles. Therefore, they should first light the candles and then recite the bracha. Those Ashkenazim who have the custom to recite ״שהחיינו“ should do so after finishing to light the candles (because reciting the bracha before lighting causes them to accept the sanctity of the day), but they should not repeat it again during davening.

In pressing situations, such as if she needs to drive to shul afterward for Kol Nidrei and it is too far to walk both ways, if an Ashkenazi woman does not want to accept the sanctity of YK when lighting, she may stipulate so before lighting and she should make sure not to recite ״שהחיינו“. However, she should make sure to accept Yom Kippur at least a few minutes before sunset to fulfill the mitzvah of adding to Yom Kippur, as discussed above, and she should recite ״שהחיינו“ in shul with the congregation.

Candles should also be lit in the bedroom with enough wax to burn throughout the night to prevent intercourse on Yom Kippur, as cohabitation in lit rooms is always forbidden. Today, one may also keep on an electric light (even a small one) in the bedroom. Some posskim hold that the custom is no longer to leave a candle or light in the bedroom, especially if it will prevent falling asleep easily.

A candle should remain lit throughout Yom Kippur, to be used after YK for lighting the Havdalah candle. Many also light a yahrtzeit candle for departed relatives for which they recite yizkor, and some also light a neri bari for every living married male member of the household. Married women may also light a ner bari should they choose.

\*\*\*VIII. Setting the Table and Proper Attire for YK\*\*\*

Since Yom Kippur is referred to in the Torah as ״שבת שבתון“, a clean, festive tablecloth should remain spread on the table throughout the entire day and the beds should be made.

There is a custom to wear white on Yom Kippur for two reasons: first, to symbolize that on this day we resemble angels, and second, to remind us of the shrouds in which the deceased are buried, inspiring us to do teshuva. Married men have a custom to wear a kittel (some do not wear it during their shana rishona, first year of marriage). Since the kittel is a garment that is designated for davening, it may not be taken into the restroom.

Women should not wear jewelry normally worn on Shabbos or Yom Tov on Yom Kippur, but jewelry worn during the week, such as a regular bracelet or necklace, is permitted. It is customary for both men and women to refrain from wearing gold.

Men who normally wear a tallis daily should don a tallis before sunset and recite the bracha. If donned after sunset, the bracha is not recited.

\*\*\*YOM KIPPUR NIGHT AND DAY\*\*\*

The Torah teaches ״בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בֶּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ תְּעַנּוּ אֶת נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם״ - “In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourself.” The Gemara explains that this “affliction” refers to abstaining from food and drink. Additionally, the Gemara infers from other verses that four other pleasures are prohibited on Yom Kippur: washing, anointing, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations. Furthermore, all activities that are prohibited on Shabbat are also forbidden on YK.

\*\*\*I. Prohibition to Eat and Drink\*\*\*

Eating or drinking even a small amount of food is biblically prohibited on YK. However, the punishment of כרת for eating applies only if one eats the size of a date (about 2/3 of an egg( within the time it takes to eat a פרס (4 eggs), which is normally determined to be between 4-7 minutes, but most posskim are stringent for YK to follow the opinion of 9 minutes. Similarly, the punishment of כרת for drinking applies only if one drinks a cheekful within the time it takes to drink a revi’is (a few seconds), which equals about 3 kezeisim (86 ml). Some posskim are more stringent and hold that one is liable even if it is consumed within the time it takes to eat a פרס (9 minutes, as above), and this is the opinion that is followed.

In a life-threatening situation, one should eat or drink immediately. A sick person, a woman who is pregnant, or a nursing mother should consult a Rav and a doctor to determine whether they can fast safely, and if the fast must be broken, to clarify how much may be consumed. Those who are ill and permitted to eat small quantities may consume up to 30cc of food (the size of a date) and up to their own cheekful of beverages once every 9 minutes. Eating such small amounts over an extended period of time is still considered “afflicting” oneself. When eating less than a kezayis or drinking less than a revi’is, one recites a bracha rishona but not a bracha acharona. If one continues eating after the time of achilas pras, a new bracha is not required, provided one had in mind to continue eating.

Children and sick individuals who are allowed to eat full meals on YK do not recite kiddush and do not require Lechem Mishneh, but they should wash their hands up to their wrist before eating bread. When bentching, they should add יעלה ויבוא, though if they forgot, they do not need to repeat bentching. If they ate mezonos or fruit from the shivas ha’minim, they should also mention Yom Kippur when reciting the bracha m’ein shalosh.

\*\*\*II. Prohibition to Wash\*\*\*

It is forbidden to wash any part of the body for pleasure, even a single finger, whether with hot or cold water. However, washing to remove dirt is permitted, though one should have in mind not to benefit from the washing and take caution to only wash the dirty areas.

In the morning when waking up and any time after using the bathroom, one may wash one’s hands up to the knuckles. Those who wash each hand three or four times in the morning may do so on Yom Kippur as well (up to the knuckles), provided they intend not to benefit from the washing. One may wash the crust from one’s eyes but should be careful not to wet any other part of the eye.

Kohanim who are going up to duchen wash their hands up to the wrist, since this washing is not for benefit. Similarly, a sick individual or a child who is washing for bread should wash up to the wrist, while intending not to benefit from the washing. Some Sephardi kohanim only wash until their knuckles, though Rav Ovadya passkins to wash to the wrist.

It is forbidden to brush teeth or use mouthwash on YK.

It is forbidden for both men and women to go to the mikvah on YK.

\*\*\*III. Prohibition to Anoint\*\*\*

It is forbidden to anoint any part of the body, even if your intention is to remove dirt. Applying makeup, lipstick, or perfume is included in the prohibition of anointing on Yom Kippur. Medicated creams are not subject to the prohibition of anointing, though they still may be forbidden due to Shabbos restrictions. Stick or spray deodorant should not be applied on Yom Kippur.

\*\*\*IV. Prohibition to Wear Leather Shoes\*\*\*

It is forbidden to wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur. It is best to avoid wearing non-leather sneakers or other shoes that one would wear year-round, but non-leather slippers or Crocs are allowed.

Moskt posskim require one to recite the bracha of ״שעשה לי כל צרכי“ on YK.

\*\*\*V. Marital Relations\*\*\*

Marital relations are prohibited on Yom Kippur, and married women have the halachic status of a niddah on this day. Therefore, one may not touch his wife, sleep in the same bed, sit on the same couch, or engage in any other restrictions that apply to a niddah.

\*\*\*MOTZAEI YOM KIPPUR\*\*\*

One should extend YK for a couple of minutes after tzeis. Maariv is recited with ״אתה חוננתנו“ and without the additions for עשרת ימי תשובה. If one forgot to recite אתה חוננתנו or accidentally recited ״המלך הקודש״ or ״המלך המשפט״, one does not repeat the Amida.

Havdalah is recited over a cup of wine or grape juice without besamim, using a candle that was lit from a fire burning from before Yom Kippur.

Motzaei YK is considered a minor Yom Tov, on which there is a mitzvah to eat and drink. For this reason, Kiddush Levana is recited on Motzaei YK, as it should be said in a joyous mood. According to most opinions, it may be recited even before Havdalah and even while wearing YK shoes.

Ideally, one should begin building the sukkah on Motzaei YK and complete it the following day.

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\*\*\*The Five Inuyim of Yom Kippur \*\*\*

Rabbi Shalom Rosner

\*\*\*Inuyim\*\*\*

On Yom Kippur there are five particular items that are restricted, known as inuyim or afflictions. The Torah dictates: [Footnote#1]

אַךְ בֶּעָשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה יוֹם הַכִּפֻּרִים הוּא מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְעִנִּיתֶם אֶת־נַפְשׁתֵיכֶם…

But you must celebrate the tenth of this seventh month as a Day of Atonement, a holy occasion. You must afflict yourselves…

On Yom Kippur in addition to a prohibition on work (issur melakha) we are instructed to “afflict ourselves”. How is this to be defined? Hazal extrapolate that there are five major activities that are prohibited: eating, drinking, wearing leather shoes, washing and having relations. Let us explore the purpose of these prohibitions. We will offer three perspectives.

\*\*\*Reboot to Purify Ourselves\*\*\*

There is a tragic Gemara in Mesehet Taanit (21), which we will review with a positive spin on it. The story is told about Nahum Ish Gamzu. He was the Rebbi of Rabbi Akiva.

Nahum ish gamzu was a Tzadik. He became blind in both eyes, his two arms were amputated, he was totally mutilated and was full of boils. His talmidim inquired as to why he suffered so much. He explained that he brought this tragic state upon himself. He once hesitated when helping a poor man. He told him to wait until he got off his donkey to give him some food. The poor individual died before Nahum could provide him with food. Nahum was so distraught that he did not provide assistance sooner to this individual in need. Nahum requested that the eyes that didn’t have proper mercy should be blinded. The legs that did not act quick enough should be amputated. He articulates various limbs and body parts that did not act with proper sympathy.

Perhaps we can derive an important lesson from this Gemara. Not in terms of punishment but in terms of purpose. Every part of our body, every limb, every talent that we were gifted by Hakadosh Baruch Hu we should use properly. On Yom Kippur we need to cleanse each one of our senses, to purge them and then to channel them for avodat Hashem.

In the prayer we recite immediately prior to the Kol Nidre service, Tefillat Zakah, we address specifically that. Through not eating, we should correct all the inappropriate eating we have engaged in throughout the year. Eating without a brakha, without washing or benching. The legs that took me to inappropriate venues. The eyes that may have viewed inappropriate scenes. We refer to our limbs, the manner in which they impacted our lives and seek to cleanse them, so that they all can be directed to enable us to properly serve our Creator.

To use a modern term, Yom Kippur is about rebooting our lives. Sometimes we get frozen. When our computer freezes, the only way to get it to work is to restart it. Yom Kippur is our restart button. We focus on every area of our life. Eating, drinking, walking, working and we go to the other extreme in order to in a sense turn off and restart.

\*\*\*Discomfort Leads to Teshuva\*\*\*

The Gemara in Yoma (79) teaches us that the amount to be consumed in order to violate the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur is different from the typical quantity required for other purposes. Usually the shiur is a k’zayit (size of an olive). With respect to the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur it is a larger shiur, the size of a date. Why is there a larger quantity that is required in order to violate the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur? The Torah does not state “do not eat.” It states: “afflict yourselves.” Hazal determined that if one consumes less than a date, they are still in a state of affliction.

On Yom Kippur, we cannot eat or wash. We feel agitated, uncomfortable, out of sorts, we don’t feel like ourselves. That is the purpose! To feel our humanness. To recognize we do not have everything we need. Experiencing physical deficiencies leads us to contemplate our spiritual inadequacies as well. When we are relaxed and comfortable it is more difficult to focus on introspection. When we are uncomfortable, we recognize our vulnerability, that we are finite and consider our purpose on this earth. The first step towards meaningful repentance is being shaken up. To be out of our comfort zone. [Footnote#2]

\*\*\*Angelic – Escaping Worldly Pleasures\*\*\*

The third idea is the opposite of the second idea. There are many commentaries that suggest that being uncomfortable on Yom Kippur is not the goal. The Gemara tells us in Yoma (78) that there were some Amoraim that tried to find ways of keeping cool on Yom Kippur in place of a shower. They did not require one to suffer from the heat.

The Gemara states as follows: אמר רב יהודה מותר להצטנן בפירות you could take cold fruits and rub it on yourself on Yom Kippur in order to cool off. Nowadays there is a new fad to place a cold ice pack around one’s neck. There is nothing wrong with it. The prohibition is to wash. Other forms of cooling off would be permitted. One is not required to suffer.

One of the reasons given for eating on the ninth of Tishre is so that it is easier to fast on the tenth (Yom Kippur). [Footnote#3] The Rosh [Footnote#4] is even more expansive and states: הכינו עצמכם – prepare yourselves for fasting. Hashem only requires one day of fasting. The only weekday of the year that it is a mitzvah d’oraita to eat is on erev Yom Kippur. Strengthen yourself to eat and drink, so that you will be able to fast tomorrow and make it a meaningful experience.

The Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvot does not list the mitzvot in the order they appear as the Sefer HaHinukh does. Rather, he has clusters of mitzvot. The mitzvah preceding the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur [Footnote#5] is the prohibition of being a ben sorer umoreh (a glutton). The prohibition of focusing too much on food is followed by the mitzva to fast on Yom Kippur.

What is the connection between ben sorer umoreh and Yom Kippur? The ben sorer umoreh priorities gashmiyut (luxuries). He seeks the pleasures of this world and steals to satisfy his desires. Perhaps on Yom Kippur we escape the physical world so we can focus on our spirituality. To be angelic, removed from physical pleasures.

Rav Mirsky, in the third volume of Hegyonei Halakha, [Footnote#6] notes that the word ne’ilah is usually interpreted as the gates of heaven are closing. Perhaps there is an alternative interpretation. It is not just the gates closing upstairs, but we have to lock that feeling in our hearts and take it with us. When we declare ה׳ הוא האלוקים

- Hashem is our master! We change the nusah to hatmeinu חתמינו– it is to be sealed above and sealed on our hearts. We have to take this spiritually uplifting day with us throughout the rest of the year.

\*\*\*Conclusion\*\*\*

To summarize, what is the purpose of the five afflictions for us?

Number one, they are meant to cleanse, so we could reboot every aspect in our lives. Our eating, our drinking, our seeing, our work. Number two, to feel uncomfortable. To feel not like ourselves. To feel dependent, to feel lacking. To recognize our dependence on Hakadosh Barukh Hu. Number three, to be angelic. To recognize that we are in a different world on Yom Kippur.

As Yom Kippur approaches, may we be able to incorporate all three aspects and contemplate before Whom we are standing. To know we have the ability to restart- as a new person, who will not succumb to desires. To be able to focus on our spirituality and to “lock it inside us” and carry it with us so that this year’s Yom Kippur experience is truly meaningful and life-changing.

1. Vayikra 23:27

2. Rashi tells us in Parashat Eikav, ein adam morid b’Hakadosh Barukh Hu elah mitoh sviah. We rebel against Hashem when we feel satiated.

3. Rashi Devarim 11: 16

4. Piske HaRosh Yoma 8:22

5. Mitzva 195

6. Rav Mirsky, Hegyonei Halakha volume 3 page 63

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\*\*\*Core Confession\*\*\*

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Aseret Yemei Teshuvah and Yom Kippur are the special times during the year designated for introspection and reflection. Often, when these days come around, we feel a frustration as we compare our current state to years before and think that we haven’t made much progress or effected much improvement since the previous year. Upon reflection, we may notice that each year we attempt to do teshuvah for the same sins and often wonder why we haven’t met with more success. What are we missing?

Rabbi Kluger in My Sole Desire notes that teshuvah is not simply about correcting a behavior or attitude, that is only an outer manifestation of the problem. True teshuvah is getting to the root of the issue. We can compare this to one who takes medication addressing the symptom of pain his body feels, heedless of the primary cause of the pain. In a derashah on the topic of teshuvah, the Meiri explains that one must examine his inner thoughts and explore the middot that lead him to sin. Yeshayahu Hanavi teaches, “yazov rasha darko, ve’ish aven machshevotav - The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts.” (Yeshayahu 55:7) Indeed, most of our sins are symptoms of an underlying jealousy, desire, honor, emptiness or feeling unworthy.

Rav Eisenberger in Mesilot Bilvavam expounds that the Torah injunction to uproot avodah zarah provides a model for approaching teshuvah as well. When one analyzes the prevalent sins in his life, he will find repeating patterns of behavior and habit loops and thus, introspection enables a person to identify the triggers responsible for his actions and reactions. For example, one may notice that he constantly puts down the efforts of others and is critical of their decisions and choices. Upon further reflection he may discover a fragile self-esteem, and this is his way of boosting his feeling of value and importance. Instead of self-criticism and putting oneself down, we can find ways to address our limitations with humor and honesty, channeling our strengths with positivity and purpose.

Uprooting the ‘zarah,’ the parts of us that are foreign and disconnected from our authentic core will generate a domino-like effect on all our behaviors and attitudes, effecting teshuvah that is real and lasting.

This idea is reflected in the haftarah that we read on Shabbat Shuvah. “Shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha ki kashalta be’avonecha - Return, O Israel, to Hashem, for you have stumbled in your iniquity.” (Hoshea 14:2) Rashi, always sensitive to the nuances of the text, addresses an obvious question. An ‘avon’ is a sin one does deliberately, stumbling implies falling over something that he didn’t notice. How can these two exist simultaneously? Rashi answers, “Obstacles have come to you because of your iniquity.”

A person starts with a conscious sin which unwittingly spirals into many more sins. The key is in finding and addressing the fundamental challenge which will result in a broad change.

These ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the time to discover the root of our obstacles and pinpoint the barriers to growth. A small kabbalah taken on toward that end will lead us to connect with our most authentic selves, the pure Divine Will deep within every one of us.

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\*\*\*How Great We Can Be\*\*\*

Rabbi Judah Mischel

Gilad grew up in a warm, Torah home in Bnei Brak but drifted from observance as he got older. He left behind the familiarity of ritual and mitzvos, left behind his family, and moved in with a non-observant relative. Gilad continued to distance himself from tradition, his life spiraling further from his upbringing, until he became engaged to a non-Jewish woman.

Even the non-observant relative was shaken. While unable to dissuade Gilad from the engagement, he did convince him to go home for one Shabbos to speak openly and honestly with his parents. Gilad agreed on the condition that the visit would be on his terms; for instance, he would smoke on Shabbos, openly, in front of his family. He wanted them to see him for who ‘he really was’. With broken hearts, his parents agreed to the meeting, since more than anything they wanted their son to know: ‘You are always ours, and this is always your home; you are always welcome.’

Each Shabbos afternoon, Gilad’s father would go to a shiur given by Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman. On the Shabbos of Gilad’s visit, as his father was heading out the door, he casually and without any expectation invited Gilad to join him. He was shocked when his son agreed, put on a kipah and headed out the door together with him. After the shiur, they both approached the Rosh Yeshivah. With pain in his voice, the father confided, “My son is not shomer Shabbos; he is far from the Yidishkeit of his youth.”

Rav Shteinman turned to Gilad. “How long have you not kept Shabbos?”

“Two years,” Gilad answered flatly.

“And in that time, did you ever have a hirhur teshuvah, a passing thought of return to Yidishkeit?” “Yes,” Gilad said after a pause. “Maybe something like four times.”

“Four times? And how long did each thought of change last?”

“About ten minutes.”

Reb Aharon Leib’s face lit up, and excitedly exclaimed, “So for forty minutes over the past two years, you had the status of מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים — צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדים ‘In a place where those who repent stand perfectly righteous people cannot stand!’ (Berachos 34b). You are counted among the baalei teshuvah, a place so high that even perfect tzaddikim cannot stand there. For that, I am jealous of you! Gut Shabbos.”

The words struck deep. Gilad left the shiur, but Rav Shteinman’s blessing did not leave him. After much introspection and inner struggle, he broke off his engagement and began to turn his life around.

Later, when asked what moved him to accept his father’s invitation that Shabbos, Gilad shared a memory. Back in fourth grade, his class in cheder had gone for a farher, to take a test with Rav Aharon Leib. At the rebbi’s request, the Rosh Yeshivah asked very simple questions. When it was Gilad’s turn, he couldn’t answer. Rav Aharon Leib asked an easier question. Again, Gilad didn’t know. A third, even easier — still, no response was forthcoming.

When the farher was through, each boy lined up to receive a candy from the Rosh Yeshiva. As Gilad approached, Rav Shteinman paused. With his typical warmth, he told the young boy:

“In Yiddishkeit, we reward effort, not results. The other boys exerted effort to answer one question, so I gave them each one candy. You worked hard on three questions - so you deserve three candies.” With a smile, Rav Shteinman handed him three treats.

“The kindness, sensitivity and encouragement of the Rosh Yeshiva that day never left me. That’s why I agreed to meet him again. And at my lowest point, he showed me that Hashem cherishes any small step that I can manage at that moment. That’s when I knew I could come back.”

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ועיקר התשובה הוא בהרהור הלב בלבד, שהרי נקרא בכך צדיק גמור אפילו היה מקודם רשע גמור

“The main aspect of teshuvah is the thought in the heart. Through it, a person is now called a complete tzadik, even if he was previously a complete rasha.” (Rebbe Tzadok haKohen of Lublin, Takanas haShavin)

We never know when we will experience a transformative thought, interaction or desire for goodness: “Through hirhurei teshuvah, we hear Hashem calling out to us. From the Torah, from the feelings in one’s heart, and from the entire world and all that it contains. חשק הטוב, the desire for goodness grows steadily within him, and his very flesh that caused him to sin in the first place, becomes more refined, until אור התשובה, the light of teshuvah penetrates.” (Rav Kook, Oros haTeshuvah, 22)

Hirhurei teshuvah can arrive in infinite modalities. Hopefully they come in the form of sweet and wonderful moments: when we meet up with a good friend and catch a glimpse of our highest selves, when we look at our children and remember how great we can be, when we hear a certain story or nigun and recognize how deeply we desire to be close to Hashem, when we are inspired by someone and we yearn to make a difference in the world and live on a higher level. The emotional heights of our birthday or anniversary, the spirit of a Yom Tov, an uplifting shi’ur or inspiring meeting with a tzadik can trigger a cascade of joy and insight into our life — all can produce a pure hirhur of teshuvah.

The truth be told, I don’t love (or honestly even relate to) ‘religious’ vs. ‘baal teshuva’ stories which have a predictable ‘happy ending’, perfectly wrapped with a bow at the end. An authentic life is lived baderech, as a continuous process, a journey through the ups and downs and ebb and flow of avodas Hashem - irrespective of a ‘bottom line outcome’.

Yom Kippur presents a renewed opportunity for us to appreciate how meaningful our efforts and intentions are to Hashem. May we be blessed to embrace our holy thoughts and intentions when they arrive, and enjoy the sweetness of these great days!

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\*\*\*Geulas Yisrael\*\*\*

\*\*\*Yom Kippur: White as Snow, Clean as Wool\*\*\*

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Teshuvah is a complex, multi-layered process. For this reason, the Nevi’im offer a rich array of metaphors to illuminate it. Teshuvah is likened to medical healing, to purifying waters, to a journey back home, and to the re-fertilization of dried and desiccated land. Each metaphor reveals a distinct aspect of the path of return, highlighting the many dimensions of teshuvah.

Yeshayahu, however, speaks of teshuvah in colors. To him, red represents the vivid color of sin, associated with stain. Sin leaves its mark upon the human soul. For Yeshayahu, teshuvah consists of removing that red stain and restoring the whiteness of our relationship with Hashem.

אִם־יִהְיוּ חַטּוֹתֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים כַּשֶּׁלֶג יַלְבִּינוּ, אִם־יָאֲדִימוּ כַּתּוֹלַע כַּצֶּמֶר יִהְיוּ

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

\*\*\*DOUBLE WHITE\*\*\*

When Yeshayahu portrays teshuvah through the image of whitening, he presents a double vision: sin is rendered white like snow, and it is whitened like freshly laundered wool. Why summon both metaphors? What distinguishes the natural brilliance of snow from the purified whiteness of cleansed garments? What separate dimensions of teshuvah are embodied in each image?

\*\*\*SCRUBBING THE SOUL\*\*\*

By portraying teshuvah as laundering clothing, Yeshayahu highlights the human effort and hard work that teshuvah demands. Snow falls gracefully from the heavens, blanketing the earth in white without human involvement. Authentic teshuvah, though, ranks among the most emotionally demanding of all religious experiences.

The image of laundering captures the multi-staged, difficult process of teshuvah. When laundering, first, we must detect where the wool is stained; blemishes and stains are often subtle and hidden. Only then can the labor of cleansing begin, scrubbing to restore the cleanliness of the fabric.

Teshuvah is also multi-staged. First, we must locate our sins. This requires breaking down the false narratives we tell ourselves to soften the truth, confronting our inner selves in their raw and unadorned state. We must shatter the funhouse mirrors that reflect the image we wish to project, rather than the person we truly are.

After we identify our flaws, we must summon the courage to confront them fully. True change demands facing the darker parts of ourselves and requires faith—the faith that we are not beyond repair, the faith that renewal remains within reach.

At this stage, the work of teshuvah begins: the patient labor of embedding transformation and safeguarding ourselves from slipping back into old, familiar patterns. By casting teshuvah in the language of laundering, Yeshayahu underscores how demanding the journey of repentance can be. It is not a passive snowfall that whitens effortlessly from above, but a human struggle—deliberate, and fraught with both pain and possibility.

\*\*\*CLEANSING OVER TIME\*\*\*

Beyond the effort required in a single act of teshuvah, Yeshayahu also draws our attention to its cumulative effect over time. Snow may fall in abundance, but it quickly melts and disappears, leaving little trace behind. A later snowfall bears no connection to the first; each arrives and departs independently, without shaping or easing the next.

Laundering, however, works differently. We wash our garments not merely to cleanse them in the moment, but also to protect the fabric from lasting damage. Left untreated, stains would sink too deeply to be removed. By laundering consistently, we prevent such buildup, making each subsequent cleaning easier and more effective.

So too with teshuvah: though we may become stained by sin again in the future, the work of repentance we undertake today lays the groundwork for tomorrow.

Sadly, many of the changes we pledge to make fade with time. We slip back into old habits, and our lofty commitments often go unmet. This can weigh heavily—are we not deceiving ourselves, promising resolutions we suspect we will break?

One way to understand this struggle is through Yeshayahu’s metaphor of laundering. A garment may become soiled again, yet it is easier to wash the second time because it has already been cleansed once before. Each act of teshuvah lays the groundwork for deeper, more lasting transformation. Even if we return to the same sins we confronted in a previous year, the earlier effort leaves its mark. By having identified our flaws and begun the demanding work of self-confrontation, the path of future teshuvah becomes smoother and more attainable.

Thus, the metaphor of laundering captures not only the effort and care required in teshuvah but also its enduring, lifelong nature. Each act of repentance is both a confrontation with the present and an investment in the future, preparing the soul for deeper renewal and making the path of ongoing transformation more attainable with each successive effort.

\*\*\*TESHUVAH IN TURMOIL\*\*\*

Snow generally falls as part of irregular weather patterns, while laundering is a routine act, carried out under ordinary conditions. Teshuvah, too, should not be confined to the intensity of Elul or the religious fervor of Yom Kippur. Rather, it must be practiced regularly and at frequent intervals, becoming an ongoing rhythm in our spiritual lives.

Yet teshuvah must also be stormy and intense—especially during Elul and Tishrei. Snow falls in storms and irregular weather, when the air is cold and gusts disrupt daily life. Snowy teshuvah is neither routine nor clinical, but raw and unsettling. It is a dark descent into the night of the soul, a demanding journey into the hidden chambers of our identity, where we confront pain, sadness, and regret. It is a mourning for lost potential, often irretrievable.

By evoking snow, Yeshayahu warns us not to domesticate teshuvah, or reduce it to a calm, polite assessment of strengths and weaknesses, followed by neatly written pledges for the future. Teshuvah must rage. It must be stormy, unsettling, and raw. Only then does it have the power to shatter illusions and remake the self.

\*\*\*TESHUVAH FROM ABOVE\*\*\*

Yet teshuvah is not only our stormy labor; there is also a dimension beyond human effort, a help that descends from above. Laundering is entirely a human endeavor, demanding effort, patience, and skill. Snow, by contrast, descends without human involvement, blanketing the world in a soft, celestial sheen.

By comparing teshuvah to snow, Yeshayahu reminds us that cleansing our sins is not achieved by human strength alone. We must turn our eyes upward, seeking siyata d’shmaya for teshuvah.

We often imagine teshuvah as an entirely human endeavor, the work of the heart and the exercise of free will. Hashem granted us autonomy, leaving our choices to us alone. Within this framework, teshuvah appears to be a solitary journey: if, by our own strength, we repent and repair, we draw ourselves back into His presence. Teshuvah is our bridge back to Hashem, and we must build it alone. Yet Yeshayahu insists that Hashem is part of the teshuvah process, just as snow descends from above.

The Torah commands us: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם (“circumcise the foreskin of your heart,” Devarim 10:16), generally understood as softening stubbornness, breaking through obstinacy, and becoming more open to faith and spirituality. This is one of the gateways to authentic teshuvah.

And yet, in Parashat Nitzavim, Moshe assures us: ומל ה’ אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך (“the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children,” Devarim 30:6).

Although the work of the heart seems to belong exclusively to human volition, we are invited to allow God into that inner chamber, to let Him participate in our teshuvah. We must ask God to grant us clarity to identify the flaws we so stubbornly conceal, honesty to face ourselves without illusion, and courage to pursue real transformation rather than cosmetic adjustments.

By asking Hashem to “rain down the snow of teshuvah,” we ask Him to assist the renewal or the whitening we cannot achieve on our own.

\*\*\*COVERING OUR DARKNESS\*\*\*

Finally, the image of snow reminds us that at times there is an option other than full teshuvah. Sometimes we cannot perform the teshuvah we long for. Sometimes we fear our sins are too severe to be atoned for. In those moments, we turn to the image of snow.

Laundering actually removes stains and whitens soiled wool, restoring what was sullied. Snow, however, does not alter the colors beneath it. It simply blankets the earth with a pure white veil, concealing the green, the brown, or the gray below.

When we feel we have reached the limits of our capacity for teshuvah, we turn to Hashem and pray: even if You do not erase our sins, cover them. Cover them with the snow of Your love. For love itself has the power to overlook: ועל כל פשעים תכסה אהבה (“Love covers all transgressions,” Mishlei 10:12). With that love, You can look beyond our failings, cloak our darkness in whiteness, and shield our brokenness with compassion.

This year, more than ever, we plead with Hashem to cover our darkness with His love. We bear countless reasons to merit that love. For two years, we have endured trials; for two years, we have carried pain; for two years, we have stoutly defended our Land—His Land—the nation He entrusted to us. Through it all, we have shown our profound love for Him and for His historic mission. Let that love now descend upon us, shielding our flaws.

May His love cover our transgressions. May He rain down snow upon us and make us pure.

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\*\*\*The Symbolism of the Scapegoat\*\*\*

Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

The strangest element of the Yom Kippur service, as set forth at the beginning of Parashat Acharei Mot, is the ritual of the scapegoat. Two identical goats are chosen, and lots are drawn—one is to be offered as a sacrifice, and the other one is sent “to Azazel” in the wilderness. It was led over a cliff where it, together with the sins of the Jewish people, was torn to pieces as it tumbled down.

The Talmud provides a list of mitzvot that Satan belittles and tries to get the Jewish people to cease observing or abandon altogether. These consist of those mitzvot whose rationales are not immediately evident or belong to the plane of Kabbalah: the negative commandments about eating pork and wearing wool and linen together, and the positive ones of chalitzah (removing the shoe to reject levirate marriage) and the scapegoat. Affirming that one must observe these without knowing the divine calculations behind them, God declares: “I have decreed it and you have no right to question it.” [Footnote#1]

The fact that these mitzvot belong to the set called chukim, whose reasoning is opaque, has not deterred great minds from trying to pierce the veil. In the case of the scapegoat, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was determined to find meaning in this centerpiece of the holiest day of the year. Even though the actual ritual is no longer performed, we continue to recite a poetic version of the sacrificial rite in the Mussaf prayer, so its relevance must endure. The Rav unpacked the meaning of three essential aspects of the ritual.

\*\*\*Fate Makes All the Difference\*\*\*

While physically indistinguishable on the basis of size or age, the two male goats could not have had more different fates. Pure chance alone, completely out of the animal’s control, decided which would be “for God” and which “for Azazel” (Leviticus 16:8). This, the Rav argued, is how the penitent can petition for forgiveness and claim that he or she is not guilty. Like the goats, one can claim that they have been compelled to sin by outside forces rather than out of their own free will.

In truth, so much of our life seems the product of chance, of actors and circumstances beyond our control. We do not choose our parents, siblings, or children. The formative culture in whose orbit we are raised is inescapable. Character traits are the clear expression of genes passed down to us. Hormonal imbalances can give rise to certain states of mind and drive us to act uncharacteristically. In this way, much of life is like a lottery, and sometimes we draw losing numbers.

The penitent therefore draws God’s attention to the blurring between what is within the realm of free choice and what should be chalked up to mitigating circumstances. God alone can evaluate the degree of our culpability. In this way, the rite of the scapegoat is “a psychodramatic representation of the penitent’s state of mind and his emotional need.” [Footnote#2]

While the Rav’s approach does not excuse a sinner from his transgressions, it does offer hope for understanding and forgiveness, on the one hand, and the opportunity to improve, on the other.

\*\*\*From Satan to God\*\*\*

The Torah instructs us to cast one lot “for Azazel” and then send the goat “to Azazel” in the wilderness. Who or what is Azazel? According to the Ramban, “Azazel” is what the Midrash and Kabbalah refer to as “Samael,” roughly the equivalent of Satan. “And we give Samael a bribe on the Day of Atonement” is how the Ramban phrases it. But how does a sacrifice to Azazel not fall afoul of idol worship?

The Rav laid the emphasis on the fact that it is God’s will that we do so: “it was not intended that the scapegoat offering be sacrificed by us to Satan, God forbid, but that when making it, our intention is nothing else but to carry out our Creator’s will as He commanded us.” [Footnote#3] The Torah never instructs us to bring Satan a sacrifice per se. Both sacrifices are sanctified for God and God alone. It is God who tells us what to do with both of them.

Still, why does God direct a sacrifice to the realm of Satan, and why is it integral to the effecting of atonement?

“Go and see the feelings of sorrow, of disappointment, of frustration and of distress that man endures... for the sake of petty human cupidity, financial covetousness and the craving for honors. […]

This terrible feeling of alienation and loneliness usually overcomes man due to an excessive pursuit of futile vanities.” [Footnote#4]

The Rav writes that in our transgressive pursuits we endure a great deal of self-inflicted suffering. It is the bitter fruit of our sinful intent and iniquitous action. On Yom Kippur, God accepts these painful emotions as though they were suffered out of devotion to God: “It is seen as offering to the Almighty and not, as it was in truth, an offering to Satan.” [Footnote#5] Through this ritual, then, “the Almighty revealed the great mystery of the quality of mercy which is operative on the Day of Atonement.” [Footnote#6]

To summarize: “The scapegoat symbolizes man who suffers because of his own failures. If he feels remorse and has second thoughts of repentance because of them, these failures are then regarded as a sacrifice offered up to God.” [Footnote#7]

\*\*\*An Uncontrollable Descent\*\*\*

The underlying principle behind teshuvah (repentance) is that the human being has been granted free will. In his laws on repentance, the Rambam formulated this notion beautifully: “Free will is granted to every man. If he wishes to incline himself to the path of good and be righteous the choice is his; and if he wishes to incline himself to the path of evil and be wicked the choice is his.” [Footnote#8]

Inanimate things are by definition passive objects, acted upon by outside forces and obeying precise physical laws. Roll a ball off a table and witness the laws of motion and gravity in action. Free will, however, allows man to be a subject, an actor. Sin occurs, said the Rav, when man becomes an object. [Footnote#9]

The simplest verbs which denote the dichotomy between a subject and an object are those of ascent and descent, respectively. Ascent involves an act of overcoming the force of gravity, while descent involves succumbing to this force. If a person loses his dynamic, subjective existence and cannot counteract various forces which tend to pull him downward, he is acting as a simple object.

The Rav suggested that this is the symbol of the scapegoat. The Mishnah describes graphically the scapegoat ritual: “He pushed it backward and it rolled down. It was dismembered before reaching halfway down the mountain.” [Footnote#10] This is an accurate description of what sin can do to a person: “Even before his total descent he is broken apart, an abject victim of gravity.” [Footnote#11]

1. Yoma 67b.

2. Besdin, Reflections of the Rav, 46–47.

3. Soloveitchik, On Repentance, 294–295.

4. Ibid., 298–299.

5. Ibid., 299.

6. Ibid., 298.

7. Ibid., 300–301.

8. Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah, 5:1.

9. Soloveitchik, Before Hashem, 31–32.

10. Mishnah, Yoma, 6:6.

11. Soloveitchik, Before Hashem, 32.

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בס”ד

\*\*\*Love and Repentance\*\*\*

Mrs. Leah Feinberg

On Tzom Gedaliah, we concluded our study of Sefer Iyov and began our study of Shir HaShirim as we ushered in Shabbat Shuvah. Shir HaShirim is a poetic rendering of the immutable love between Hashem and the Jewish people, represented by the metaphorical love between a man and woman.

Rav Kook, in his introduction to Shir HaShirim, cites the teaching of the Kuzari that Shabbat cleanses us of the accumulated stresses and distractions that cloud the pure relationship between the Neshama and its Creator, just as the weekly sacrifices offered by Iyov attempted to exonerate his sons from any sins they may have committed while feasting. Since Shabbat signifies the intimate relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people, we experience an arousal to repentance as Shabbat approaches, both individually and nationally; thus many people embrace the custom of reciting Shir HaShirim at the onset of Shabbat, expressing the longing we feel for the restoration of our intimate relationship with Hashem

Rabbi Akiva taught that the world was never as worthy as the day upon which Shir HaShirim was given to Israel; all the writings (of Tanach) are holy, but Shir HaShirim is the holy of holies. [Footnote#1]

There is no sufficient imagery to express the love between Hashem and the Jewish nation other than the love between man and woman, and no language to express the magnitude of that love other than that of the Beit HaMikdash. According to the Zohar, Shir HaShirim was composed by Shlomo HaMelech upon the completion of the building of the Temple, when the upper and lower spheres were united. On that day, there was no greater joy before the Holy One blessed be He, since the day of Creation. [Footnote#2]

Rav Aviner teaches that in Shir HaShirim we apprehend that which the Jewish nation saw upon their pilgrimage to the Beit HaMikdash, when the doors to the Holy of Holies were opened and we witnessed the Keruvim atop the Aron HaKodesh. If the Keruvim, which had male and female likenesses, were facing one another in an embrace, then we knew with certainty that the loving relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people was in good standing; if, Heaven forbid, they were turned away from one another, we knew that the relationship was in trouble. This image of love is expressed in Shir HaShirim, which according to Rashi expresses the entire history of the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish nation. [Footnote#3]

Rav Kook further teaches that it is highly significant that it was precisely Rabbi Akiva who likened Shir HaShirim to the Holy of Holies. Whereas a base and materialistic soul might erroneously view Shir HaShirim as a literal expression of sensual love between man and woman, Rabbi Akiva, who experienced a most loving relationship with his wife, was able to translate that ephemeral love into an exalted expression of eternal love, ultimately sacrificing his very life for the sanctification of G-d. Rabbi Akiva’s sublime soul enabled him to experience the embrace of Hashem even while being tortured by the Romans. Who better than him to reveal the true holiness of this sacred text?

It is fortuitous that our study of Shir HaShirim coincides with the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah. In the concluding chapter of Hilchot Teshuvah, the Rambam discusses the allegory of Shir HaShirim, explaining that our goal is to serve Hashem with the kind of love-sickness that Shlomo HaMelech describes in Shir HaShirim. We aspire to perform Mitzvot out of pure love for Hashem, not out of a desire for reward or fear of consequences should we fall short. We should feel intimately connected with Hashem, so much so that we can’t separate our thoughts from Him for even an instant. The way to attain such love is through knowledge and understanding of His ways; the more we study and apprehend Hashem, the more our love for Him will increase, until like Rabbi Akiva, we merit to fulfill the dictum of loving Hashem with all our heart and soul. [Footnote#4]

May this season of Teshuvah be enhanced through our study, and may we merit to once again experience the revelation of the Holy of Holies upon Aliyah laRegel in the newly rebuilt Beit HaMikdash, במהרה בימינו.

1. משנה ידים ג:ה

2. זוהר פרשת תרומה

3. הרב שלמה אבינר, פירוש לשיר השירים א

4. רמב”ם, הלכות תשובה פרק י הלכות א,ג,ו

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\*\*\*NCSY - Torah 4 Teens by Teens\*\*\*

\*\*\*Message from NCSY Israel's Leadership\*\*\*

This year marks a remarkable milestone: the 10th anniversary of NCSY Israel.

Ten years ago, we set out with a mission to create a space where English-speaking teens in Israel could thrive-spiritually, socially, and emotionally rooted in Torah, Zionism, and personal growth. Over the past decade, we have grown from a handful of programs in a few neighborhoods to a national movement reaching over 600 teens this past year alone across five chapters, impacting lives, families, and communities. We look back with immense gratitude, for the lives touched, the leadership cultivated, and the deep connection to Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, and Torat Yisrael that we have seen flourish.

As we reflect on this milestone year, it is fitting to invoke the legacy of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt”l, whose 90th yahrzeit we commemorate this year. Rav Kook envisioned a Jewish people united not by uniformity, but by shared purpose and divine mission, and in the Land of Israel. A vision that NCSY Israel strives to bring to life each day. Our teens come from diverse backgrounds, each with their own story and journey. But through our programming, relationships, and learning, they come together around shared values, discovering their personal connection to Torah and Israel while feeling part of a greater whole.

Rav Kook famously taught, “The old shall be renewed, and the new shall be sanctified.” This message could not be more relevant as we mark a decade of achievement. We renew our original purpose with fresh strength and sanctify new ideas, new teens, and new opportunities for the future. Just as the Menorah in the Beit HaMikdash had to be kindled daily, our mission requires constant light, consistency, and renewal. This year alone saw the launch of our Chai single-gender programming, the expansion of our YAIR Torah learning seminar, record-breaking participation on Regional Shabbatonim, and a Giving Day campaign that surpassed all expectations. Even amidst the challenges facing our country and our people, we saw growth-not just in numbers, but in depth, heart, and impact.

Looking ahead to our second decade, we remain driven by the belief that the teens of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Our work is not just about events or numbers. It’s about nurturing emunah, building resilience, and creating a home where each teen is seen, supported, and inspired to build a life of meaning rooted in Torah and responsibility to the Jewish people in their homeland.

To all who have been part of this journey-our teens and their families, our staff and madrichim, our generous supporters, our partners, and our Board, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your belief in this mission makes it possible.

With Hashem’s help, may the next decade bring even greater unity, inspiration, and redemption -בְּאַחְדוּת נִזְכֶּה לִגְאֻלָּה - as Rav Kook dreamed and as our teens are helping to build each day.

Thank You,

Rabbi Michael Kahn

Executive Director, NCSY Israel

Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg

Regional Director, NCSY Israel

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Dear Friends,

“If you build it, they will come.”

That famous line from Field of Dreams (1989) has always inspired me. In the movie, a farmer risks everything to build a baseball field, trusting that paying fans will show up. The deeper message is clear: when you have the courage to dream and take bold steps, Hashem opens doors you never imagined.

5785 was a year of remarkable growth for NCSY Israel—growth that began with just such a dream.

I will never forget a breakfast meeting in the Ramot Mall with Mitch Aeder, now President of the OU. I asked him how he hoped his new administration would be remembered. He tapped the table and said a single word: “Israel.” He explained that the writing was on the wall—the future of the Jewish People is here—and the OU must prepare for it. In later conversations, Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, the OU’s COO, echoed that same vision. That moment became the spark for something new: a different kind of NCSY, for a different kind of generation. Together with our founders, Rabbi Michael Kahn and Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg, we began to design what NCSY Israel could—and must—become.

With the OU’s substantial investment, NCSY Israel launched Chai, our separate-gender program, which has grown beyond anything we imagined. This past year our reach and attendance doubled, and demand has spread to new regions and communities. With full-time staff now serving all five regions, we’ve professionalized in powerful ways—introducing data, analytics, marketing, programming, and operational excellence.

But the story doesn’t end here. The need is only growing. Jewish teens and their families are seeking inspiration, guidance, and belonging. And when families make Aliyah, we must ensure that their move strengthens—not weakens—their spiritual growth. That is our sacred responsibility.

If we build the right institutions, they will come. And when our children look around one day and ask, “Are we in heaven?” we will smile and answer: “No… this is Israel.”

Wishing you a Ketiva VaChatima Tova—a year of health, peace, joy, and redemption.

With gratitude,

Yigal M. Marcus

Board Chair, NCSY Israel

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\*\*\*Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - Parshat Ha'azinu\*\*\*

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

Ha’azinu is the second to last Parsha in the Torah. It is one chapter of 52 verses, making it one of the shortest in the Torah.

All but 8 verses consist of the song of Ha’azinu. The song is written in the Torah in the form of a poem with 2 parallel columns. The Torah itself calls it Hashira Hazot, this song; 5 times in last week’s parsha and one time again this week.

The poem of Ha’azinu was the song the Leviim sang in the Beit Hamikdash during the Mussaf offering on Shabbat. We know the Leviim sang a psalm from Tehilim as the Shir Shel Yom – the daily song, sang accompanying the morning daily offering. They also sang a song during Mussaf of Shabbat and that song is Ha’azinu.

But they did not sing the entire song each week. Ha’azinu was divided into 6 sections – exactly the way we divide the aliyot. One section was read per week, the entire song in 6 weeks. Perhaps it was spread out over 6 weeks to express its theme, Jewish history. Jewish history spans millennia, hence it is sung over 6 weeks in the Temple.

\*\*\*1st Aliya (Devarim 32:1-6)\*\*\*

Listen heavens, listen earth. G-d is Just, Faithful. I will call in the name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d.

The song is a rhythmic poem of couplets, or at least begins that way. These 6 verses are the introduction. What we are saying in this song is cosmic – give ear, heavens and earth. He is Great and Just. We, his children, are twisted.

\*\*\*2nd Aliya (32:7-12)\*\*\*

Remember those days. While nations were arranged, you, Jewish people became His lot. He found you, the apple of His eye. Spread His wings over you. He Himself cares for us.

These 6 verses introduce the dawn of Jewish history. These are tender, wistful remembrances. This capsule of Jewish history and how G-d relates to us must begin with tenderness. This aliya is a smile, a description of those carefree days of faithfulness.

\*\*\*3rd Aliya (32:13-18)\*\*\*

He placed you in the heart of the Land, fed you honey, olive oil, butter, with livestock aplenty and wine. Yeshurun got fat and kicked. Left Him and sought others – demons, new powers and forgot Him.

The song is written in the Torah in 2 parallel columns. All the verses in the song are couplets; either one line of one couplet or 2 lines of 2 couplets. One couplet is in one column, the second in the second column. Hence every verse so far has ended at the end of the column. Except this verse. The verse of Yeshurun getting fat, verse 14. It has 5 phrases. Too many. It ends not at the end of the column but now in the middle of the column.

Things start to go awry. The verses no longer end symmetrically, at the end of the second column. Now they begin to end in the first column, in the middle of the line, off balance. The song is off kilter now. The plenty in the land turned us fat. And rebellious. And off kilter. It is beautiful poetry – the fat of the land is a verse of 5 phrases (the only verse not of 2 or 4 phrases), too many phrases, too much consumption, too much good.

Leave Him. Forget Him. Look to demons and other powers. This is not your forefather’s beliefs.

\*\*\*4th Aliya (32:19-28)\*\*\*

I will hide My Face from them and see what happens then. They angered Me. I will send aggressors to anger them. My anger burns. I will take it out on the Land. I will scatter them, with no trace of their memory. They won’t even understand that I am behind this, for they lack all insight.

This is no longer a 6 verse aliya like the first 3, but 9. The verses no longer end symmetrically, at the end of the second column. Now they end in the first column – off balance. As if to say, the world is not working the way it ought to, off kilter; things gone awry.

The song switches now from Moshe’s voice to G-d’s voice. Moshe no longer describes Him – G-d speaks now in the first person. Moshe can’t describe this for once G-d hides his Face, no man can understand His ways; G-d needs to describe the hiding of His Face Himself.

The Ramban comments that this is actually a prediction of the exile of the 10 tribes, the Kingdom of Israel. Their memory is gone. A full 10 tribes of the Jewish people have been lost forever. With no happy ending. While the history of the Jewish people will have many tragedies, the loss of 10 tribes of our people, with no trace is a tragedy of, well, Biblical proportion.

\*\*\*5th Aliya (32:29-39)\*\*\*

Oh, would the people understand the consequences. One could not pursue 1000 nor 2 pursue 10000 were it not for our G-d. The oppressors drink the bitter vintages of Sodom and Gemorrah. G-d will eventually relent of this abandonment of His people, while the nations have none to their rescue. I am the One who gives life and takes it; none escapes My hand.

The song turns back to Moshe’s voice. The plain meaning of some of the verses in this aliya is apparent, others quite obscure. The last verse, with the return of G-d’s voice, also returns to ending in the second column. Structure has returned, order is back. This aliya is striking in referring both to the Jewish people and to the others, what we have been referring to as oppressors. While we have been disappointing, we have an end of reconciliation. But when it comes to the other nations and their evil and rebelliousness, Moshe cedes the floor back to G-d. It is not for us to speak of the justice due others. That is His work not ours.

\*\*\*6th Aliya (32:40-43)\*\*\*

Arrows of blood, a flesh consuming sword, the payment of the enemy. Sing nations of His people, for in the end there is retribution and the Land atones for His people.

3 verses are in the first person with G-d speaking of ultimate justice, vengeance against My enemies, those that hate Me. This aliya is not for the faint of heart. We squirm at the notion of a vengeful G-d. As we squirm at “Shfoch chamatcha”, pour out Your wrath on the nations, the verses we say when we open the door at the seder.

But Moshe insisted that we recite this song, seeming to feel this song will guide us in history. Divine justice, reward and yes, punishment is part of the order of the world. We repeat it at the seder when we look to the culmination of history and we repeat it in Akdamot that we say on Shavuot in looking to the future. We don’t delight in His meting out justice. Though we acknowledge that justice, Divine justice is to be part of the end of days. But the song does not end with the retribution. It ends with all peoples singing – a universal end of days.

\*\*\*7th Aliya (32:44-52)\*\*\*

Moshe brings this song, together with Yehoshua to the people. He instructs them to take it to heart and to command it to their children. It is not empty words but rather it is your life. Then Moshe is told to ascend Har Navo where he is to die.

The verse states that Hashem spoke to Moshe of his impending death “b’etzem hayom hazeh”, on that very day. The simple meaning is that on the very day that this song was complete, Moshe’s life too had served its time and was too to be completed.

But Rashi quotes the Midrash that prefers to translate this as meaning “in broad daylight”. Moshe’s ascension to the mountain and his death is to be public, in full view. As if to avoid the objections of the people. As much as the people would want to prevent this – Moshe’s death is inevitable. As devastating as the loss of Moshe’s leadership is, it is a part of life. The covenant is with our people, transcending any one leader.

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\*\*\*From the Desk of Rabbi Moshe Hauer\*\*\*

\*\*\*Between Heaven and Earth\*\*\*

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

There are times when we occupy a more elevated plane, when our thoughts and our efforts are focused on bigger and loftier matters and we try to avoid being mired in pettiness. Yom Kippur is the most notable example of that, as we prepare for Yom Kippur by granting each other forgiveness and then spend the day exclusively engaged in matters of the spirit such that our Sages described our state of being on Yom Kippur as angelic (Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer Ch. 46).

This general concept is highlighted at the outset of our Parsha (Devarim 32:1) when Moshe declares “ha’azinu hashamayim vo’adabeira, addressing – so to speak – the heavens and the earth, and using two different terms for listening, the Hebrew equivalent of “listen” – shimu, and “hear” – haazinu. Just as the word “hear” in English includes the word “ear”, the Hebrew haazinu includes the word ozen, the Hebrew word for ear. Our Sages (in the Sifrei in our Parsha) understood that this term for “hearing” implies speaking from up close, right into the ear, and therefore noted a fascinating contrast. Moshe, who was the most elevated of men, to the point that he will be described at the outset of next week’s Parsha (Devarim 33:1) as an ish ha’Elokim, a man of G-d, here in our Parsha speaks to the heavens from up close, haazinu hashamayim, “Hear, O heavens,” and to the earth from a distance, v’tishma ha’arezt, “listen, O earth.” Whereas Yeshayahu, a prophet on a different level than Moshe, began his book of prophesy with the opposite phraseology, shimu shamayim v’haazinu ha’aretz, addressing the earth from up close and the heavens from afar. Different people and different times can have us centered in different spheres.

This has particular application for us as we move into the Yom Tov of Succot. The Succah structure is meant to recall our state of existence in the desert, when we literally lived “in the clouds”, surrounded by the ananei hakavod, the clouds that represented Hashem (see TB Succah 11b). The desert is not a part of the settled earth, and we were living for that protracted period closer to heaven than earth, sustained by the lechem abirim, the Manna that is described (TB Yoma 75b) as the sustenance of angels. The Succah thus maintains the elevated plane we experienced on Yom Kippur, removing us from our usual context to be able to see the world we usually occupy from 30,000 feet. Indeed, while the Halacha encourages us to do everything within the confines of the Succah, including conversations on whatever subject we need to discuss, the Poskim (see Ba’eir Heitev and Mishna Berura to OC 639:1) cite the Shelah who encouraged us to aspire to limit our discussions in the Sukkah to elevated matters. Additionally, part of being angelic is being peaceful, as we always invoke the peace amongst the angels as the model we aspire to, Oseh shalom bimraomav, Hu ya’aseh shalom aleinu (see Avot d’Rabbi Nathan 12:6), and as such we are similarly guided that our Succah is to be an anger-free zone, reflecting the true value of Succat Shalom.

Life is complicated and we inevitably must deal with boatloads of mundane and practical realities. This festive period is built to enable to us to step out of that for a bit and to experience the incomparable benefits of elevating ourselves, our thoughts, and our discussions to a different plane, one that is a bit closer to heaven than to earth, to maintain to some extent the “cruising altitude” of Yom Kippur.

Enjoy the flight.

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\*\*\*Covenant & Conversation\*\*\*

\*\*\*Moses the Man\*\*\*

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

That very day the Lord spoke to Moses, “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, opposite Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel for a possession. And die on the mountain which you go up, and be gathered to your people …For you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.”

With these words there draws to a close the life of the greatest hero the Jewish people has ever known: Moses, the leader, the liberator, the lawgiver, the man who brought a group of slaves to freedom, turned a fractious collection of individuals into a nation, and so transformed them that they became the people of eternity.

It was Moses who mediated with God, performed signs and wonders, gave the people its laws, fought with them when they sinned, fought for them when praying for Divine forgiveness, gave his life to them, and had his heart broken by them when they repeatedly failed to live up to his great expectations.

Each age has had its own image of Moses. For the more mystically inclined sages, Moses was the man who ascended to Heaven at the time of the giving of the Torah, where he had to contend with the Angels who opposed the idea that this precious gift be given to mere mortals. God told Moses to answer them, which he did decisively. “Do angels work that they need a day of rest? Do they have parents that they need to be commanded to honour them? Do they have an evil inclination that they need to be told, ‘Do not commit adultery?’” (Shabbat 88a). Moses the Man out-argues the Angels.

Other sages were more radical still. For them Moses was Rabbeinu, “our rabbi” – not a king, a political or military leader, but a scholar and master of the law, a role which they invested with astonishing authority. They went so far as to say that when Moses prayed for God to forgive the people for the Golden Calf, God replied, “I cannot, for I have already vowed, “One who sacrifices to any God shall be destroyed” (Ex. 22:19), and I cannot revoke My vow.” Moses replied, “Master of the Universe, have You not taught me the laws of annulling vows? One may not annul his own vow, but a sage may do so.” Moses thereupon annulled God’s vow (Shemot Rabbah 43:4).

For Philo, the 1st century Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, Moses was a philosopher-king of the type depicted in Plato’s Republic. He governs the nation, organises its laws, institutes its rites and conducts himself with dignity and honour; he is wise, stoical and self-controlled. This is, as it were, a Greek Moses, looking not unlike Michelangelo’s famous sculpture.

For Maimonides, Moses was radically different from all other prophets in four ways. First, others received their prophecies in dreams or visions, while Moses received his when awake. Second, to the others God spoke in parables obliquely, but to Moses He spoke directly and lucidly. Third, the other prophets were terrified when God appeared to them but of Moses it says, “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11).

Fourth, other prophets needed to undergo lengthy preparations to hear the Divine word; Moses spoke to God whenever he wanted or needed to. He was “always prepared, like one of the ministering angels” (Laws of the Foundations of Torah 7:6).

Yet what is so moving about the portrayal of Moses in the Torah is that he appears before us as quintessentially human. No religion has more deeply and systemically insisted on the absolute otherness of God and Man, Heaven and Earth, the infinite and the finite. Other cultures have blurred the boundary, making some human beings seem godlike, perfect, infallible. There is such a tendency – marginal to be sure, but never entirely absent – within Jewish life itself: to see sages as saints, and great scholars as angels, to gloss over their doubts and shortcomings and turn them into superhuman emblems of perfection. Tanach, however, is greater than that. It tells us that God, who is never less than God, never asks us to be more than simply human.

Moses is a human being. We see him despair and want to die. We see him lose his temper. We see him on the brink of losing his faith in the people he has been called on to lead. We see him beg to be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the land he has spent his life as a leader travelling toward. Moses is the hero of those who wrestle with the world as it is and with people as they are, knowing that “It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it.”

The Torah insists that “to this day no one knows where his grave is” (Deut. 34:6), to avoid his grave being made a place of pilgrimage or worship. It is all too easy to turn human beings, after their death, into saints and demigods. That is precisely what the Torah opposes. “Every human being” writes Maimonides in his Laws of Repentance (5:2), “can be as righteous as Moses or as wicked as Jeroboam.”

Moses does not exist in Judaism as an object of worship but as a role-model for each of us to aspire to. He is the eternal symbol of a human being made great by what he strove for, not by what he actually achieved. The titles conferred by him in the Torah, “the man Moses”, “God’s servant”, “a man of God”, are all the more impressive for their modesty. Moses continues to inspire.

On 3 April 1968, Martin Luther King delivered a sermon in a church in Memphis, Tennessee. At the end of his address, he turned to the last day of Moses’ life, when the man who had led his people to freedom was taken by God to a mountain-top from which he could see in the distance the land he was not destined to enter. That, said King, was how he felt that night:

I just want to do God’s will. And He has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land.

That night was the last of his life. The next day he was assassinated. At the end, the still young Christian preacher – he was not yet forty – who had led the civil rights movement in the United States, identified not with a Christian figure but with Moses.

In the end, the power of Moses’ story is precisely that it affirms our mortality. There are many explanations of why Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. I have argued that it was simply because “each generation has its leaders” (Avodah Zarah 5a) and the person who has the ability to lead a people out of slavery is not necessarily the one who has the requisite skills to lead the next generation into its own and very different challenges. There is no one ideal form of leadership that is right for all times and situations.

Franz Kafka gave voice to a different and no less compelling truth:

He is on the track of Canaan all his life; it is incredible that he should see the land only when on the verge of death. This dying vision of it can only be intended to illustrate how incomplete a moment is human life; incomplete because a life like this could last forever and still be nothing but a moment. Moses fails to enter Canaan not because his life was too short but because it is a human life. [Footnote #1]

What then does the story of Moses tell us? That it is right to fight for justice even against regimes that seem indestructible. That God is with us when we take our stand against oppression. That we must have faith in those we lead, and when we cease to have faith in them we can no longer lead them. That change, though slow, is real, and that people are transformed by high ideals even though it may take centuries.

In one of its most powerful statements about Moses, the Torah states that he was “one hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his strength unabated” (Deut. 34:8). I used to think that these were merely two sequential phrases, until I realised that the first was the explanation for the second. Why was Moses’ strength unabated? Because his eyes were undimmed – because he never lost the ideals of his youth. Though he sometimes lost faith in himself and his ability to lead, he never lost faith in the cause: in God, service, freedom, the right, the good, and the holy. His words at the end of his life were as impassioned as they had been at the beginning.

That is Moses, the man who refused to “go gently into that dark night”, the eternal symbol of how a human being, without ever ceasing to be human, can become a giant of moral life. That is the greatness and the humility of aspiring to be “a servant of God.”

1. Franz Kafka, Diaries 1914 – 1923, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg and Hannah Arendt, New York, Schocken, 1965, 195-96.

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\*\*\*Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - Sukkot - Vayikra 22:26-23:44\*\*\*

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

\*\*\*1st Aliya (Vayikra 22:26-23:3)\*\*\*

An offering may not be brought in the first 7 days of the animal’s life. An animal and her offspring may not be killed on the same day. A thanksgiving offering must be eaten within one day. Do not profane My Holy Name, rather sanctify My Name, the One who brought you out of Egypt.

The Torah reading for the first day of Sukkot is the whole of Chapter 23 in Vayikra, which lists the entire yearly cycle of holidays. Curiously, we begin 8 verses before that chapter with a paragraph describing various rules concerning offerings.

But it is the last line that is the connection to Yom Tov. Sanctify My Name because it is for that reason that I brought you out of Egypt. The observance of the holidays has historical meaning to be sure. But the history is not the story; the story is the relationship. I brought you out to be the sanctifiers of My Name. You are My reflection in this world. And as such, the tone is set for the description of the holidays, peering beyond their historical meaning to the overarching meaning; His reflection in this world.

\*\*\*2nd Aliya (23:4-14)\*\*\*

Pesach is on the 14th of the 1st month. For seven days consume matzah. Day 1 and Day 7 are holy, no work is to be done. On the day after the Yom Tov, bring a measure of the first harvest of barley as an Omer offering, accompanied by a sacrifice. The new grain may not be consumed until this Omer is offered.

The description of the Omer offering seems out of place. Though each holiday has an offering, the emphasis of this section is not offerings but holidays, chagim. The day the Omer is brought is not a yom tov. But, similar to the holidays, it has a specific calendar date. Hence this section would be accurately called, not a list of chagim, or holidays, but a list of calendric events.

\*\*\*3rd Aliya (23:15-22)\*\*\*

Count 7 full weeks from this offering and on the next day, the 50th bring 2 baked breads of chametz accompanied by sacrifices. The Kohen shall wave these 2 bikkurim breads. That day is a yom tov, no work is to be done. When harvesting your fields leave the corners and gleanings for the poor and foreigner.

The 2 breads brought on Shavuot are the bookends of the Omer. The Omer was barley, brought the 2nd day of Pesach. The 2 breads are wheat, chometz, bread, the first wheat offering of the new crop brought on Shavuot. The Omer offering allowed consumers to now be able to use the newly harvested grains. But in the Temple, the new grain cannot be used until 7 weeks later, with the offerings of the 2 breads on Shavuot.

The contrast of the matzah that we eat on Pesach and the chametz of this bread offering on Shavuot invites our curiosity. Perhaps it expresses 2 differing qualities. Pesach is the holiday of history. In history you need to move, move fast. Don’t let the dough rise. Seize the moment; don’t miss it. Speed.

But on Shavuot, the topic is holy offerings, not history. In the context of holy offerings, patience is king. Wait. 7 weeks. Patience. Let the dough rise, become chometz. Wait. While history demands speed, holiness inheres in restraint.

\*\*\*4th Aliya (23:23-32)\*\*\*

The first day of the 7th month is a day of Teruah, a yom tov. But the 10th day of the month is Yom Hakippurim. Afflict yourself for it is a day of atonements. It is a holy day; no work may be done. Afflict yourself from the 9th in the evening, evening to evening.

The Torah refers to Yom Kippur as Yom Hakippurim, plural atonements. Perhaps this is to infer that there are gradations of atonement. Each holiday has a sin offering, a chatat. If we gain atonement monthly, what is the need for a unique day of atonement?

Perhaps because not all atonement is created equal. There is atonement of a certain level achieved monthly. But profound atonement, a complete cleansing, a thorough and deep forgiveness is achieved on Yom Kippur. Atonement accompanied by cleansing. Hence, Kippurim – double kappara, double atonement.

\*\*\*5th Aliya (23:33-44)\*\*\*

The 15th of the 7th month is Sukkot for 7 days. The first day is a yom tov as is the 8th day. Take a lulav and etrog and rejoice for 7 days before G-d. Dwell in Sukkot for 7 days so you will know that G-d had your ancestors dwell in Sukkot when leaving Egypt.

Sukkot rounds out the year of chagim. It is the end. As such, it is a celebration not only of itself but a celebration of the completion of the chagim of the year. The lulav is the expression of appreciation for the rich life we enjoy, a life punctuated by rendezvous with the Divine. Our greatest joy is that we stand before the King, rejoicing before G-d. That is true inner joy.

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\*\*\*Probing the Prophets\*\*\*

\*\*\*A Celebration for Foreign Nations\*\*\*

Rabbi Nachman Winkler

The haftarah selection for the first day of Sukkot is taken from the final chapter of Sefer Zecharya and describes the navi’s final vision of the last battle against Gog and Magog, a battle that would herald in the Messianic era. The choice of this reading is mentioned in the Mishna itself (Megilla 31a) for the very logical reason (as pointed out by Rashi) that it mentions the celebration of the future Chag Sukkot. Indeed, we will find that the future observance of this holiday is mentioned not once or twice-but three times in this haftarah.

Our Rabbis’ view that Sukkot is a holiday for the foreign nations is based not solely on the 70 bulls (representing the 70 gentile nations) that were sacrificed on this holiday but perhaps more importantly, on the words of Zecharya in this haftarah that any nation who failed to observe Sukkot in Yerushalayim will suffer drought that year.

When we consider the idea of the non-Jewish world bringing sacrifices to the Bet HaMikdash and observing the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, we rightfully are perplexed. As Rav Yehuda Shaviv points out, the sukkot in which the Israelites dwelled during their sojourn in the desert, refers to the protective cloud cover (“ananei hakavod”) that surrounded Israel in their journey through the wilderness. As Chazal understand it, these clouds protected Israel not only from the surrounding dangers of nature such as the desert sun and the frequent windstorms, but from the attacks of surrounding desert tribes and foreign nations. Given that the very symbol of the holiday was known as a divine tool to keep the foreign nations out of the camp of Israel, the requirement of these same nations to enter Israel in the future to celebrate the holiday is certainly puzzling. Additionally, this concept stands in direct contradiction to the celebration of Pesach where we read “kol ben neichar lo yochal bo”, that no alien, non-Israelite, may partake of the Korban Pesach. What message, therefore, can we derive from this curious phenomenon?

I believe that there is, indeed, an important message that Chazal leave for us. Our perception of the Messianic era includes the punishment of those nations who persecuted Israel. As a people who have suffered so long, it is only natural that we focus upon this aspect and see this as one of the goals of Mashiach. But in reality the true goal is to bring the entire world to the recognition of G-d’s mastery over the universe and have them humble themselves before Him. We see this in King Shlomo’s supplication upon the completion of Bet HaMikdash (Sefer M’lachim A: 8:43), the story of Yonah and the declaration of Yishayahu (56;7) that “My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations”.

The holiday of Sukkot, the time when the first Beit HaMikdash was consecrated, will eventually become the time when this universal recognition of Hashem will be celebrated. It will be the time of ULTIMATE joy, when G-d’s expectations will be fulfilled. It is not punishment or revenge that we are to seek from the Mashiach, but, rather, a time of peace, reconciliation and, as Yishayahu prophesied [11: 9], a time when the world is filled with understanding and the worship of G-d “kammayim layyam m’chassim”.

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\*\*\*Haftorah Insights\*\*\*

\*\*\*Unifying the Divine: Hashem’s Timeless Name\*\*\*

Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

וְהָיָה ה’ לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה’ אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד׃

And the L-RD shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one L-RD with one name. (Zechariah 14:9)

The pasuk in our Haftorah is one that is both beloved and well-said. We recited it as part of the Yamim Noraim davening as well as multiple times daily at the end of Aleinu prayer. וְהָיָה ה’ לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה’ אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד׃, And the L-RD shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one L-RD with one name. The Gemara (Pesachim 50a) asks, what is the meaning of the word “one” in this context? Are we suggesting that currently Hashem’s name is not one? Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak offers an answer to the question. In this world, G-d’s name that is written with the letters yod and heh is read as Ad-nai, which begins with the letters alef and dalet. G-d’s name is not pronounced in the same way as it is written. However, in the World-to-Come it will all be one, as G-d’s name will be both read with the letters yod and heh and written with the letters yod and heh.

Today we don’t articulate the name of Hashem in the way it is written but rather with the name of Adonut. We recognize Hashem’s rulership, as servants who relate to a master. Our comprehension of this world is limited and we must have faith in our Master of the world. The navi Zecharia speaks of a future time when Hashem’s greatness and reach will be manifest. We along with the nations of the world will embrace the totality of Hashem’s reign, of His overarching timelessness. We pray for a world where we can openly articulate the holy name that connotes Hashem’s presence in the past, present and future.

During challenging times, people may find themselves asking where is G-d’s presence. We ask ourselves how we can make Hashem’s name of timelessness manifest - how can we make the Divine Name more palpable in our world. Every act of chessed we do, every word of Torah we study makes a difference. These actions allow us to create a G-dly past, a Divine present and a spiritually oriented future thus capturing Hashem’s timeless name. Let us commit ourselves to increasing our Torah and chessed as a way of making Hashem’s name more known in the world.

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\*\*\*Simchat Shmuel\*\*\*

\*\*\*Sukkot Perceptions\*\*\*

Rabbi Baruch Taub

Professor Mathew E. May, in the best of his six books, “In Pursuit of Elegance,” argues for the need for simplicity. He points to a fascinating study:

“When psychologists at the University of Illinois showed a picture of an elephant in a jungle to a study group consisting of people from all ages from the United States and Canada, the image triggered different brain activity as shown by functioning magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Basically, for all Americans, the part of the brain that recognizes objects was lit up. Not so for the Asians. In other words, Asians saw a jungle that happened to have an elephant in it. But the Americans saw an elephant without taking much notice of the jungle.” (In Pursuit of Elegance: 2010, Broadway Books. Page 11)

Seeing the bigger picture and focusing on the general versus the specific is at the heart of Sukkot. First we enter Elul and force ourselves to discover our dead weight that we may have been carrying; following this period of self-reflection and loneliness we enter into a relationship with Hashem on Rosh Hashana, i.e. Malchiyot; our mission is completed on Yom Kippur, when, after discovering our negative baggage we can finally dispense of it. We leave Yom Kippur as a new person, likened to a man with no possessions, just his devotion to HaShem.

On Sukkot it is time to re-enter society, to return to our homes. But our homes shall be all alike: general, nondescript, and non-specific. Built of the most basic materials and for the most basic needs. The Sfas Emet explains the verse “V’Hayitah Ach Sameach” (Devarim 16:15) and in particular the exclusionary term “Ach” as to eliminate specificity as a means to be happy. Indeed Rashi states that this verse is not a command rather a promise. As the Sfat Emet explains; if we can embrace simplicity and look at the big picture we will be happy.

The Talmud (Sukkah 11b) teaches us of a famous debate between Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Eliezer as to what this holiday is commemorating. According to Rebbe Eliezer we sit in Sukkot so as to remember the Clouds of Glory that Hashem surrounded us with during the sojourn in the wilderness. Rebbe Akiva however takes a simple approach: Sukkot is to remember the actual Sukkot built in the desert, “…..Succot Mamash”

In the journal Moriah (Kovetz HaMoadim p299), in an article by Rav Y. Tzadka, the writer points out something extraordinary: in all other places in the Talmud where Rebbe Eliezer and Rebbe Akiva debate the interpretations of verses their opinions are in the reverse: Rebbe Akiva is the one to have an esoteric understanding based on exegesis and tradition, whereas Rebbe Eliezer always takes the literal approach, sometimes even utilizing similar phrasing found in the above Talmud in the name of Rebbe Akiva: “Rebbe Eliezer says Aviah Mamash; Rebbe Akiva says ….” (Yevamot 48a)

In the above article, the author suggests that the Talmud that we have today in tractate Sukkah contains a printing error thus radically changing the way this Talmud has been read for well over a millennia.

Perhaps a less drastic, although homiletic, understanding can be offered. Rebbe Akiva does indeed always take the sophisticated approach, after all the Torah is the most sophisticated text. Sukkot however,as explained above, represents minimalism, the ideal of embracing the basic and simple. It is by Sukkah, and Sukkah alone, that Rebbe Akiva felt that the Torah wanted this theme translated into interpretive ethos of the day as well. Thus, Sukkot Mamash.

This is the Sukkah and this is the holiday of Sukkot. Let us embrace that which is simple and our happiness will be exhilarating and lasting.

Chag Sameach

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\*\*\*Eretz Hemdah - As the Rabbi Service\*\*\*

\*\*\*Having a Non-Jew Build a Sukka and Assemble Arba’a Minim\*\*\*

Rabbi Daniel Mann

Question: My neighbor has muscle atrophy and can no longer put up his sukka or assemble his arba’a minim. I offered to do them for him, but he does not like receiving favors and prefers teaching his non-Jewish worker to do them for him. May a non-Jew do these things? Should I take “no” as an answer?

Answer: Regarding sukka, it seems to be an explicit gemara (Sukka 8b; see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 635:1) that a non-Jew can make a kosher sukka as long as he did so to provide shade. The Rama (OC 649:1) confirms that the same is true for tying up the hadasim and aravot with the lulav. However, it is somewhat more complicated. The Magen Avraham (649:3) infers from the Rama’s wording that such a sukka or lulav is only kosher after the fact, but that, l’chatchila, a non-Jew should not do it.

The Magen Avraham traces stringency to the halacha for tefillin and tzitzit. The gemara (Gittin 45b) derives from the proximity of “you shall tie” and “you shall write” (Devarim 6, regarding tefillin and mezuza, respectively) that only those who are connected to the mitzva of tefillin can write sacred scrolls. Tosafot (ad loc.) cites Rabbeinu Tam as using this source to disallow a woman tying on tzitzit or assembling arba’a minim because they are exempt from these mitzvot. The Magen Avraham accepts Rabbeinu Tam, but only partially. Rabbeinu Tam seems to disqualify people even b’dieved, whereas the Magen Avraham, working within the Rama, who fundamentally accepts non-Jews for sukka and lulav, recommends avoiding them l’chatchila.

Tosafot, for their part, reject Rabbeinu Tam’s extension of the disqualification to women, as even non-Jews are disqualified even for tzitzit only due to a pasuk, as well as his extension to other mitzvot, based on the gemara that allows a sukka made by a non-Jew. Almost all poskim (see Be’ur Halacha to 14:1; Chochmat Shlomo (Kluger) ad loc.) fundamentally reject Rabbeinu Tam/Magen Avraham. However, due to the weight of these great authorities, many poskim recommend avoiding using a non-Jew for sukka/arba’a minim (ibid.; Mishna Berura 649:14).

If the disqualification from writing holy texts does not extend to other mitzvot, then why does the Rama (14:1; the Shulchan Aruch ad loc. is lenient) cite two opinions regarding women’s ability to tie tzitzit and prefer avoiding it? Acharonim distinguish between the mitzvot. The Be’ur Halacha (to 14:1) mentions those who disqualify women from tzitzit based on a pasuk. The Chatam Sofer (Shut, Yoreh Deah 271) distinguishes that the fact the Torah describes tying tzitzit as its own positive mitzva explains requiring someone to whom the mitzva of tzitzit is incumbent. In contrast, building a sukka is just a hechsher (preparation for a) mitzva, and thus anyone can do it. Chochmat Shlomo’s (ibid.) distinction is that tzitzit must be tied on lishma (for the purpose of the mitzva), but since sukka does not require it (just that it be done for shade), it does not need to be done by one who is obligated in the mitzva.

The indications regarding lulav are similar to those for sukka (see Rama OC 649:1 and Mishna Berura 649:14(, with two notable differences. On one hand, there is no gemara saying arba’a minim assembled by a non-Jew is kosher. On the other hand, the whole need for the binding together of the lulav, hadasim, and aravot is of a low or possibly technical level (see Sukka 33a; Shulchan Aruch, OC 651:1; development of this point is beyond our scope).

Now for our recommendations. If your neighbor would ask us, we might tell him that since the only part of the sukka that there is a question about is the s’chach, he could have his worker build the frame and walls and let you happily put up the s’chach (or even just lift it up – see Shulchan Aruch, OC 626:2). Similarly, he could let you assemble the arba’a minim without needing to teach you. However, since it sounds (it may be worth checking better) like he does not want you to do it and the case for chumra is quite tenuous and only l’chatchila, we recommend to leave things as they are.

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\*\*\*Shagririm Balev - Everyone Can Make A Match\*\*\*

\*\*\* Finding Your Place at the Holiday Table\*\*\*

Aleeza Ben Shalom

Daniel asks: I have a single friend who, every year before the holidays, falls into a kind of sadness. Instead of feeling excited for the new year, she dreads all the holiday meals surrounded by her married siblings and their children. She feels like the “black sheep” at the table, like she doesn’t belong. How can I encourage her, help her shift her mindset, and bring her some comfort during this time?

Aleeza answers: I can hear how much you care about your friend, and I also feel the heaviness of what she’s going through. Holidays are meant to be joyful, but for many singles they are some of the hardest days of the year. Sitting at a table where everyone else seems to “have it together” can make a person feel left out and unseen.

Every soul has its unique journey, and every chapter unfolds in Hashem’s perfect time. Her story isn’t behind, it’s simply unfolding differently.

While no two journeys are the same, knowing that doesn’t make it any easier for someone to handle. Some marry young, some later, some build their families quickly, and some wait with patience and faith for children. The test of waiting is painful. How can you help her? Sometimes it’s not about giving speeches, but about being a safe place. Sit with her, listen, validate her pain, and remind her gently that she is exactly where she needs to be today. And as we know her situation can change at any moment. You can also encourage her to set an intention for the holidays: instead of focusing only on what’s missing, she can ask, “What do I want to give this year? How do I want to show up?” Shifting from comparison to contribution can open the heart.

May she enter the holidays with an open heart, may she feel her own worth and beauty, and may this year be the one when her deepest prayers are answered with joy.

Aleeza

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\*\*\*Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah\*\*\*

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

We read the parsha of V’zot Habracha, a short parsha of 41 verses. And the beginning of Breishit which itself is 34 verses.

Moshe blesses the tribes of the Jewish people, pointing out the qualities that a variegated society will need. Leadership, consistency, legislature, judges, business, agriculture, warriors, minerals. In this Moshe speaks mostly to G-d, not to the people, illustrating to Him the greatness of the people he is to take leave of.

\*\*\*1st Aliya (Dvarim 33:1-7)\*\*\*

Moshe blesses the people before his death. G-d approached us at Sinai, although He has all nations; we were the ones who received His utterances. He is the King over Israel. Reuven endures as does his progeny. Yehuda, G-d hear his voice, he is powerful, and be his help.

Moshe does not bless the tribes in a way that we think of blessing. A blessing would be: may you have success or may you have peace. Rather, Moshe describes the unique quality of each of the tribes. Perhaps the blessing is: be as you are, continue as you are.

Reuven is the consistent one. Enduring. Always at the ready. Yehuda is power and leadership, the eventual monarch.

\*\*\*2nd Aliya (33:8-12)\*\*\*

Levi, He is Your pious one, withstanding trials by listening to Your covenant. They will teach Your Torah and serve You. Bless him and gird him in the face of adversaries. Binyamin, the beloved of G-d, He protects him, while he dwells on His chest.

The Jewish people need religious leaders and that is Levi. Binyamin is the seat of the Mikdash, the physical partner to Levi’s religious service.

\*\*\*3rd Aliya (33:13-17)\*\*\*

Yosef, his land is blessed, from the sweet of the Land, mountains and hills. He has power through both Ephraim and Menashe.

Yosef is agricultural bounty, strength in economy and strength in numbers.

\*\*\*4th Aliya (33:18-21)\*\*\*

Zevulun is pleasing in his journeys, Yissachar in his dwellings. People gather at the mountain, enjoying the bounty of the sea and of the earth. Gad is blessed, dwelling as a lion. His portion is legislation, leadership, righteousness and justice.

Zevulun is the merchant marine, Yissachar the philosopher prince. Gad is the backbone of national institutions, of justice and the rule of law.

\*\*\*5th Aliya (33:21-29)\*\*\*

Dan is a lion cub, enjoying the Bashan. Naftali, satisfied, full of blessing, the sea and the south. Asher, blessed more than children, beloved by brothers, feet of oil, shoes of iron and copper. None is like G-d, riding the heavens in your aid, splendorous.

Dan protects the northern border, while Naftali the west and the south. Asher is the peace maker, with “soft oiled feet but shoes of iron”, a metaphor for stepping softly but with principles when needed. The peace maker.

\*\*\*Chatan Torah (34:1-12)\*\*\*

G-d of ages surveys, under Him strength, repelling enemies. The Jewish people dwell safely, wheat and wine, oil like dew. Fortunate are you Israel to have such a Protector. Moshe ascended Har Navo, looking out over the Land. G-d told him, this is the Land I promised to you, though you will not enter it. Moshe died, buried, though his burial spot is not known. His strength was with him to the end. The people mourned 30 days. Yehoshua was filled with Divine spirit, though none will ever be as Moshe, knowing G-d, face to face, performing all the wonders which he did in front of all Israel.

Moshe’s life comes to an end. Perhaps a tinge of tragedy, failing to enter the Land he worked toward his whole life. But, in mentioning Yehoshua, and in following his poetic description of the spectrum of talent the Jewish people display, he leaves the world satisfied. His goal was not to enter the Land; his goal was to successfully lead his people to enter the Land. He leaves the world satisfied that all that is needed for success is right there in front of them. His life’s mission was accomplished.

\*\*\*Chatan Torah - Breishit (1:1-2:3)\*\*\*

So as to continue the lifelong learning of our Torah, following the conclusion of the Torah we jump right in and continue with the beginning of the Torah, reading the story of Creation from day 1 through Shabbat.

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\*\*\*A Short Vort\*\*\*

Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

ויתמו ימי בכי אבל משה (לד:ח)

"And the time of weeping and mourning was over." (34:8)

By the case of Moshe Rabbeinu's demise, we are told that the days of weeping and mourning "came to an end".

The Oznayim LaTorah (Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin 1881-1966 Lithuania-Jerusalem) asks why by the death of Yaakov Avinu there is no mention of when the weeping came to an end?

Rabbi Sorotzkin answers that when Moshe passed away, even though the people were full of anguish and sadness, nevertheless they were encouraged by the forthcoming embarking into the Land of Eretz Yisrael. This jubilant occasion was able to galvanize their feelings. However, with the death of Yaakov was the impending danger of enslavement and exile. For this reason, the Torah omits any reference to weeping or mourning "coming to an end."

Shabbat Shalom

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\*\*\*Simchat Shmuel\*\*\*

Rabbi Sam Shor

Upon the conclusion of the festival of Sukkot, we celebrate the yom tov of Shemini Atzeret. The yom tov of Shemini Atzeret is of course known by another familiar name-Simchat Torah. On Shemini Atzeret we move from the simcha of sitting in the Sukka and rejoicing with the arba minim to the joy of dancing together with the Sifrei Torah. Over these past two years, the yom tov of Simchat Torah, has taken on even deeper meaning - a time to celebrate the spiritual fortitude to face life’s challenges and to acknowledge that indeed the Jewish people are eternal, even as our enemies continue to harm us, we continue to rejoice, to project light and happiness to outshadow the darkness projected by our enemies.

The Chasidic Masters suggest numerous messages which are represented by the hakafot and dancing of Simchat Torah.

The Baal HaTanya zy’a, noted that a Sefer Torah contains 600,000 letters representing the 600,000 souls who stood together to receive the Torah at Sinai. The Sefer Torah represents the unity of Klal Yisrael, and the value and importance of every single member of the Jewish people - if one letter in a Sefer Torah becomes erased or damaged, then the entire Sefer Torah is considered pasul. On Simchat Torah, we all come together to dance with the sifrei Torah to remind us of the value of unity and sanctity of each and every Jew.

Reb Yisrael Friedman, the Rizhiner Rebbe zy’a, points to a well known Maamar Chazal to explain this yom tov of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. The gemara in Masechet Shabbat 31a records the familiar story of the prospective convert who comes before the Sage Hillel and asks him to teach him the entire Torah, al regel achat-while standing on one foot.

Hillel of course famously replied “that which is hateful to you, do not do unto others...”

The Rebbe explained that what the prospective convert was really asking was - tell me all the Torah there is to know about the Yom Tov of Shemini Atzeret-al regel achat-about the yom tov which is one day long-the holiday that seemingly has no particular mitzva associated with it. The Rebbe explained that we therefore sing and dance and celebrate together, to remind us on this yom tov of Simchat Torah-this regel achat- of Hillel’s eternal message of unity and mutual respect.

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira h’yd, the Rebbe of Piascezna zy’a, offers another beautiful explanation as to why we call this Yom Tov of Shemini Atzeret by the additional name of Simchat Torah.

In Derech HaMelech, the collection of the Rebbe’s pre-war sermons and teachings, the Rebbe writes:

“After the entire period of the Yomim Noraim and Sukkot, when the Jewish people has expressed both renewed commitment and unity to one another, as well as displayed an invigorated sense of commitment to Hashem and his Torah, we come together and dance with the Sefer Torah, not solely are we b’simcha and rejoicing, but the Torah itself is so to speak b’simcha, the Torah is the proverbial baal simcha that is rejoicing with the Jewish People, and we are basking in the Torah’s joy....”

May each of us merit to experience and recognize the unity, the sacred value of one another, and to bask in the Torah’s joy as we come together on the regel achat, the Yom Tov of Simchat Torah.

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\*\*\*Towards Meaningful Shabbos\*\*\*

\*\*\*Connecting to Hashem Through Song\*\*\*

Mrs. Sara Zimbalist

The holiday of Simchat Torah has arrived and it is time to stop and reflect. We have just had a very busy Elul and Tishrei, saying Selichot, lots of davening, thinking about and asking Hashem for Teshuva, and the more mundane but yet important tasks of preparing and eating meals pre-fast and post-fast and Yom Tov ones, purchasing Daled Minim, building a Succah, and planning Chol Hamoed get togethers and day trips with the family.

We finally get to the last Yom Tov of Simchat Torah and how does one feel? The answer I am thinking of is B”H we have another Yom Tov, another way and time to connect to Hashem. Yes we have just had many days of Yom Tov, but this chag of Simchat Torah is a different kind of chag. It is a chag of endings and also of beginnings.

We finish reading the last parsha in the Torah, V'zot Habracha and say חזק חזק ונתחזק but we also begin reading the Torah again with Parshat Bereishit. Simchat Torah teaches us a special yesod of Judaism. We never stop, we never give up. Something may be finished but there is a tomorrow and we start again and keep going. This is the Torah way of life. Every aspect of our lives can be learned from something in the Torah, that is the special way Hashem created it for us. It is a guide book to help us figure out how to do the right things, and this holiday that we get to celebrate now, the last of the season, teaches us this important point.

We can draw the strength to celebrate Simchat Torah even when this day, just 2 years ago, has forever been changed for Am Yisrael. We will never forget what happened and our hearts are with those who have suffered the loss of family members and friends, and we fervently daven for the hostages taken that very day, to be released right away and to stay strong. We daven for the safety of our soldiers who are fighting against evil. It may not always feel right to be singing and dancing when so many are unable to; like the hostages, the soldiers on the front lines, and the injured, but I feel that the Torah and specifically this Yom Tov teaches us that we have to and it shows us how.

We keep going with our heads held high, as hard and as challenging as that may be. We do it for ourselves and for the future generations. Resilience is one of our greatest weapons, along with achdut, unity. When we dance with the Torah together, we are all united. We always need to be united. That doesn’t mean everyone needs to agree but we all need to tolerate, respect, love and appreciate one another.

On Simchat Torah, we spend a lot of the night and day davening in shul, but a lot of the time is singing and dancing with the Torah. This year when you are singing, I want you to really think about what kinds of songs we are singing. Listen to the words, think about the kinds of songs we sing, and the themes of the songs we sing. Singing these songs connect us to Hashem. We sing about the Torah, the Beit Hamikdash, Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem protecting us and watching over us, not feeling fear, doing mitzvot with happiness and the list goes on and on. Not all tefillot are through words that we read and say in our Siddur or Machzor, rather on this special holiday we can connect and daven to Hashem through song. Hashem wants that connection with us.

Everyone, men, women and children when you dance and sing this year, do it with joy and happiness and concentrate on each word in order to allow you to get closer and connect with Hashem. May we focus on that connection especially when we get to the last song of the Hakafot, sing it like a tefillah, with so much kavana and a fervent hope for the coming of Moshiach.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה, אמן.

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\*\*\*Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - Bereshit\*\*\*

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks

The first 2 parshiot of the Torah, Bereshit and Noach span 2,000 years. They can be viewed as the dawn of mankind. But in the narrative of the Torah, they must be seen differently.

The Torah has 54 parshiot. The first 2 describe universal man. And 52 describe the Jewish people’s covenant with G-d. Clearly, the first 2 parshiot are a prelude, the back story to the story of the Jewish people. But not the Jewish people. The unique covenant between G-d and a people. That is the story of the Torah.

The story of the Torah is the covenant established by G-d with the Jewish people; who is in, how it develops, what are the mutual demands, how is it expressed. The first 2 parshiot must address the most basic question; why was a covenant made with a single people? While Parshat Bereshit is rich in myriad lessons as to the nature of man, it is primarily this back story to the covenant with the Jewish people that is the narrative of our parsha.

\*\*\*1st Aliya (Genesis 1:1-2:3)\*\*\*

In the beginning was chaos; the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters. Day 1, light was created. Day 2, the waters were split up and down, with heavens emerging between. Day 3, the water below was split, with dry land emerging, with vegetation. Day 4, the heavens above were filled with the sun, moon and stars. Day 5, the seas were filled with fish, the skies with birds, blessed to be fruitful. Day 6, animals were created on the land. And finally, man is created in the image of G-d. Man is blessed to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the world and to rule over the animals. The world was completed; with no creation on the 7th day, it was endowed with blessing and holiness.

The Creation of the world is depicted as evolving from less sophisticated to the most sophisticated. It begins with inanimate earth, water, heavens, which then are filled with vegetation, then living beings of fish and birds, then land animals. And finally, man.

It is clear that it is not the creation of man that is the pinnacle of this story, but rather the radical being that he is; the image of G-d. While we are quite familiar with the description that man is created in the image of G-d, it is, as Rabbi Sacks coined, “Radical Then, Radical Now”.

Man created in the image of G-d? That is a shocking depiction of man. As if to say, G-d is Creating a partner, a shadow of Himself. Man is not a fancy ape, a well-developed baboon. While man shares characteristics with animals, a chasm divides; that chasm is the image of G-d.

The rest of this parsha is the development of this unique and radical relationship; G-d and His shadow creation, man. How much is man like G-d? In what ways? And more crucially, in what ways not?

\*\*\*2nd Aliya (2:4-20)\*\*\*

A more detailed account of the Creation of Man: G-d creates man from dust of the earth and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. He is placed in the Garden of Eden, full of beautiful trees, to work it, surrounded by rivers. G-d commands man to not eat of the tree of knowledge. And declares that it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a partner.

The language of chapter 2 is in striking contrast to chapter 1. Chapter 1 placed man as the pinnacle of created beings. Chapter 2 describes personality, morality, humility, emotion. Chapter 1 is the creation of mankind – chapter 2 is the creation of a person.

Man gets the name Adam as he is created from the adama, the earth, a rather humble beginning. Yet the description of his activities are all echoes of G-d the Creator. Man is created alone. The garden will not grow without him. He is to work and preserve the garden. He is given a command punishable by death. It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a partner. The animals are brought to Adam to name.

This description of man is defining the image of G-d. Man, as G-d’s image is charged with being His partner, sharing with Him many characteristics. But he is not G-d Himself. He is to rule the world, as G-d Rules. He is to name the animals, as G-d named the day, night, heavens and seas. As He is a Creator, man is to be a creator – a creator of life through children, a creator of vegetation through the garden.

On the other hand, it is not good that he is alone – for there is only One who is Alone. Man is to be G-d like, to be creative, to name things as G-d named things in the Creation, to take his place as the guardian of the world. But while being G-d like, man needs to realize the limits of that, so as to prevent his thinking: I am not just G-d like but perhaps G-d Himself. Distinctions need be made.

\*\*\*3rd Aliya (2:20-3:21)\*\*\*

Woman is created. The serpent convinces Eve that were she to eat of the forbidden fruit, she would be as G-d, knowing good and evil. She and Adam eat of the fruit and their eyes are opened and they cover themselves with fig leaves. They hide from G-d, Who challenges their disobedience. All are punished – the serpent will slither, the woman will birth children with pain, and man’s cultivation of the earth will be with sweat.

A richer story of symbolism in Tanach is hard to find. A speaking serpent, the enticement of beauty, hubris, failure, hiding from G-d, blame, consequences. Many and varied are the lessons to be culled from this story.

Man, created in the image of G-d, must aspire to his lofty calling, while remembering he is but the image of, not G-d Himself. Man being alone may mislead him in thinking he is the One and Only. Hence, he needs a partner. The serpent convinced Eve, and then she Adam, that man need not keep the command, for you are in His Image. The serpent convinced them: as G-d cedes to man leadership in this world, He likewise cedes to man the role as legislator of good and evil. If you don’t like His rule to not eat, make up your own rule.

In that they err. While G-d, like you, must defer in the ways I Require. G-d responds by walking them back a bit specifically in their most creative activities, as if to say that while you are creators, I remain the Creator. Eve, when you create and bear children, the quintessential creative moment of humanity, it will be with labor, a reminder of your earthly origins. And man, when you create from the earth, it will be with sweat.

There is only One who Creates with the uttering of a word, with ease. He is the Creator; you, a creator. And He is the Commander of what is good and evil, while you are the commanded.

\*\*\*4th Aliya (3:22 – 4:18)\*\*\*

Man is exiled from the Garden of Eden. Cain and Abel are born. They bring offerings to G-d – Abel’s accepted, Cain’s not. Cain kills Abel. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain is consigned to wander the earth.

Cain kills his brother. And in so doing, violates another boundary between the one created in His Image and the Creator himself. While man will be a creator of life, he will not be a taker of life. That he must cede to the Creator.

Sin is met with exile. Adam’s sin brings exile from the Garden of Eden. Cain’s sin brings wandering, homelessness. The Torah explains the meaning of exile: Cain left from being before G-d.

This introduces a pillar concept of man and G-d. Divine disfavor with man results in distance. Adam was sent away from the Garden. Cain sent away from being before G-d. Later, the tower of Babel will bring dispersion. Only Avraham will reverse this and journey not away but toward a specific place.

\*\*\*5th Aliya (4:19 – 4:22)\*\*\*

Lemech and his wives Ada and Tzila bear children. One is the initiator of animal husbandry, one of the music of strings and wind instruments, and one of the fashioning of copper and iron.

A curiously short aliya. Mankind advances marvelously in creatively mastering the world: the mastery of animals, creative artistic expression of music and advanced productivity of copper and iron. Man was commanded in creation to master the world. He is doing a good job.

But, while man is masterful in his creative conquest of the world, the brevity of mention is perhaps to highlight that of much greater importance is his mastery of himself. The Torah is far more interested in man’s ethical behavior and his relationship with G-d than with his mastery of iron and the creative expression of his music. He is mighty good at mastery of the world. Let’s see how good at mastering himself.

\*\*\*6th Aliya (4:23 – 5:24)\*\*\*

The generations from Adam through Noah.

Enosh is described as beginning to profane the name of G-d. Rashi explains that people and things were ascribed Divine qualities. The beginning of idolatry. It is erroneous to call Avraham the first monotheist. G-d spoke to Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel brought offerings and He spoke to Cain, and Noah will be instructed by G-d.

Rather, man moved away from G-d, failed in his behavior and became distanced. Avraham is not the first monotheist; he is the first to be embraced and to be pulled closer by G-d.

The creation of man in the image of G-d, to be His partner is suffering. Man overstepped his place in failing to listen to the command, in murder, and now in failing to maintain G-d’s unique being. Early mankind is moving away; Avraham will eventually be brought near.

\*\*\*7th Aliya (5:25 – 6:8)\*\*\*

Noah is introduced. G-d is disappointed in man; his lifespan is reduced to 120 years. G-d plans to destroy man, animals, birds. Noah finds favor in His eyes.

In the man/G-d balance, longevity induces in man a feeling of eternal life, blurring again the crucial differences between man and G-d. In calibrating the correct balance for the man/G-d relationship, longevity is counter-productive. Mortality is better. Man will not live forever – only One lives eternally. A shorter lifespan is in fact a gift from G-d, an act of love and generosity. Reducing man’s lifespan helps man to more clearly see that while man is created in G-d’s Image, he is not G-d Himself. Only One is eternal.

And so, the pillars of man in His Image are presented. Only He is One; man has a partner. Only He Commands; man obeys. Only He Takes life; while man creates life, he does not take it. Only He is Eternal, man but 120 years.

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\*\*\*Stats\*\*\*

1st of the 54 sedras; 1st of 12 in Bereshit.

Written on 241 lines in a Torah, rank 9th.

23 Parshiyot; 10 open, 13 closed, rank: 6.

146 pesukim - rank: 8th (5th in Bereshit), same as Mikeitz; but Miketz is longer in lines, words, letters.

1931 words - ranks 8 (5th in Bereshit).

7235 letters - ranks 11 (5th in Bereshit).

\*\*\*Mitzvot\*\*\*

One positive mitzvah: Pru U’rvu - Be Fruitful and Multiply.

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Shabbat Shalom!