

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1677

SEPT. 12TH 2026
א' תשרי תשפ"ז

ראש השנה
ROSH HASHANAH

Dear Torah Tidbits Family
Rabbi Avi Berman
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What If We Knew?
Jen Airley
Page 96



שנה טובה ומתוקה!



YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT ZMANIM

ROSH HASHANAH DAY 1/SHABBAT: CANDLES 6:14 PM

ROSH HASHANA DAY 2: CANDLES AFTER 7:26 PM • HAVDALA 7:25 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:04 PM



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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

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

 Tzom Gedalia is on Monday September 14th. Fast ends in Jerusalem at 7:04 pm.

 See last week's edition for the extensive halachot guide for Rosh Hashanah.

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CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	RH / Shabbat Candles	RH #2		Ha'azinu	
		Candles After	Havdallah**	Candles	Havdallah
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:14	7:26	7:25	6:05	7:17
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:32	7:28	7:27	6:23	7:19
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:33	7:27	7:26	6:24	7:18
Gush Etzion	6:30	7:26	7:25	6:21	7:17
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:32	7:28	7:26	6:22	7:18
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:31	7:27	7:26	6:22	7:18
Netanya	6:32	7:28	7:27	6:22	7:18
Be'er Sheva	6:31	7:27	7:26	6:22	7:18
Rehovot	6:32	7:28	7:26	6:22	7:18
Petach Tikva	6:14	7:28	7:26	6:05	7:18
Ginot Shomron	6:31	7:27	7:26	6:21	7:17
Haifa / Zichron	6:21	7:28	7:27	6:12	7:18
Gush Shiloh	6:30	7:26	7:25	6:21	7:16
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:32	7:28	7:27	6:23	7:19
Givat Zeev	6:34	7:26	7:25	6:25	7:17
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:30	7:26	7:25	6:21	7:17
Ashkelon	6:33	7:29	7:27	6:23	7:19
Yad Binyamin	6:32	7:28	7:26	6:22	7:18
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:23	7:26	7:25	6:24	7:16
Golan	6:29	7:25	7:24	6:19	7:16
Nahariya/Maalot	6:20	7:28	7:26	6:11	7:18
Afula	6:30	7:27	7:25	6:21	7:17
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): RH Day #1 - 8:06 PM RH Day #2 - 8:04 PM Haazinu - 7:57 PM					

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

*Light from a preexisting candle

** Without candle and besamim

RH Day#1 Daf Yomi: Chulin 135

JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Sept. 9 - 19 | 27 Elul - 8 Tishrei

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:26-5:33
Sunrise	6:18-6:24
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:27-9:28
Magen Avraham	8:49-8:51
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30-10:29
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:35-12:32
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:07-1:03
Plag Mincha	5:34-5:23
Sunset (Including Elevation)	6:53-6:39



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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Two weeks ago, I had the tremendous privilege of *davening* at Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion in Baltimore, the *shul* of Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l, who served as the Executive Vice President of the OU. *Baruch Hashem*, I have become close with the current rabbi of the *shul*, Rabbi Daniel Rose, as well as with many members of the congregation, and being among them was truly special. It was special because I sat in the seat next to where Rabbi Hauer zt"l used to sit, because I was able to see Rebbetzin Hauer and so many community members who miss him dearly, and because I witnessed the incredible impact he and his Rebbetzin had on Baltimore for so many years.

During *Musaf*, the young *chazzan*, Avi Wolman, sang *Kedushah* to the melody of *Ochilah La'Kel*, which many of us know from the High Holy Day prayers. I stood there singing every word, transported to the uplifted feeling of *shul* at the highest points of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I was not the only one who felt it - many people approached him

after *davening* to thank him for creating that atmosphere.

It reminded me of the many melodies we look forward to hearing on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, melodies that evoke different times in our lives and our experiences of the High Holy Days, and sometimes remind us of specific *chazzanim*. These melodies touch a place deep inside us.

I was once talking to someone who cares deeply about *nusach hatefillah*, the distinct modes and melodic motifs used in *tefillah* for each holiday. He was upset because while *davening* on Sukkot, the person saying *Kaddish* mistakenly used the melody of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I asked him why this mattered so much to him, wasn't it just a melody?

He then shared an insight that has stuck with me ever since. He said that the beauty of *nusach hatefillah*, and of having unique melodies for each holiday, is that the moment you walk into a *shul*, you should immediately know what holiday and time of year it is based on the melody. Using the *nusach* of Yom Kippur on Sukkot simply doesn't fit. I joked that I hoped the *chazzan* hadn't been fasting for Yom Kippur that day as well.

In recent years, however, there has been a significant shift. COVID and the war forced many of us into *minyanim* outside our usual routines. Ashkenazim *davened* alongside Sefardim, Yemenite Jews, and Jews of all backgrounds. As a result, a new generation has emerged that approaches Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur ready to embrace different melodies and styles of *davening* than the ones

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they grew up with. This trend is especially striking in *yeshivot*. In Hesder *yeshivot* and *yeshivot gevohot*, where students include both Ashkenazim and Sefardim, many divide up the *tefillot* so everyone feels welcome. In some places, for instance, they might *daven Nusach Sefard* on Yom Tov night, *Nusach Ashkenaz* in the morning, and yet another *nusach* for Mincha.

This is very different from when I was growing up. When I learned at Ohr Etzion, even though most of the students were Sefardi, the yeshiva *davened Nusach Ashkenaz* together with Rav Chaim Druckman *zt"l*. That was the set *nusach hatefillah*; Ashkenazim stayed in yeshiva, while Sefardic students had the option of returning home to their own *minyanim* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. That was the norm.

Today, we see something new. In *yeshivot* throughout Israel, Ashkenazi students are learning Sefardi tunes and Sefardi students are learning Ashkenazi tunes, fostering a deeper sense of unity across *Klal Yisrael*. Just this past Motzei Shabbat, a neighbor asked me to *daven* with them on Rosh Hashanah. In addition to giving a *drashah*, they asked me to serve as *chazzan* in their Sefardic *minyan* to lead the prayer of *Unetanneh Tokef* composed by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz.

One beautiful *piyut* I was exposed to only about six years ago during COVID, and I am embarrassed to admit I did not know it before then, is the Sefardic *piyut* known by its refrain, *Okeid VeHaNe'ekad*. The words are profoundly moving and meaningful, describing *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac), which we read on Rosh Hashanah. It features a deeply beautiful melody. In our *shul* and in



many *yeshivot*, it has become a cherished part of the service since COVID.

I ask myself which is more precious to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: Is it that Sefardim and Ashkenazim are discovering unfamiliar melodies, connecting to them, learning them by heart, and singing them with tears? Or is it seeing His children, coming from different traditions and backgrounds, sitting together and sharing each other's songs to build genuine unity within *Klal Yisrael*?

We are in desperate need of unity today. To see it expressed through song and uplifted hearts on Rosh Hashanah of all days is truly inspiring. We are no longer a nation locked away in separate *shuls* with isolated *nusachim*. We are one complete nation that understands, loves, and connects with one another. Together, we ask *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to grant us a year in which we all recognize

לעילוי נשמת

ר' חיים צבי בן אליהו ז"ל
Dr. Henry C. Romberg

Beloved husband, father,
grandfather and great-grandfather.
Dearest Doctor, Mohel and friend.

We miss you!

נלב"ע כ"ט אלול תשס"ה



him as King of Kings, bringing healing, hope, success, redemption, and endless miracles for Klal Yisrael.

If you have not yet experienced *davening* in a *minyán* with a different *nusach*, I highly recommend trying it for at least one of the *tefillot* during Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur.

May we utilize these melodies to connect to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* on a deeper level, and may all our *tefillot* be accepted.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, and year,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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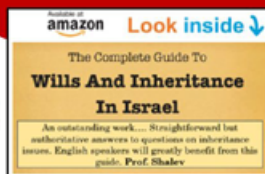
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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ROSH HASHANAH DAY 1

This being Shabbat the Torah reading has 7 aliyot in place of the usual 5 for Yom Tov.

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

This Torah reading reflects the essential themes of Rosh Hashanah; G-d as King, as remembering us and revelation.

But said in a different way: on Rosh Hashanah we renew our pledge of allegiance to G-d. But the full notion of G-d. The Universal G-d, of all mankind. The G-d Who has a unique covenant with us. And Who communicates with us.

The emphasis in our Torah reading is the covenant. The covenant between G-d and the Jewish people is a radical notion. That we, little us, have an ongoing engagement with the

Creator. And more importantly, He with us.

He made a covenant with the Jewish people, promising children to Sarah. Even those words are fanciful; are you telling me that the Master of the Universe engages with us? *He Reaches for us? He Promises to us?* And remembers, takes note of those promises and makes them come true?

That is the essential theme of Rosh Hashanah; that we have a glorious connection with the Creator, on His initiative. The first chapter of that glorious connection is the promise to Sarah of a child. And most crucially; the moment He keeps His promise.



1ST ALIYA (GENESIS 21:1-4)

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

G-d did "as He said". He promised; then made good on His promise.

The phrase "as He said" appears 3 times in the first 2 verses. He promises; He does. This is the theme of Zichronot. Zichronot does not mean that G-d Remembers. Of course He does. Rather, that He Remembers His promises – and makes them happen. He does what He promises, acts on what He says.

He granted to Sarah the child that He promised.



2ND ALIYA (21:5-8)

Sarah says "all who hear of this birth will laugh". Hence Yitzchak.

There are 2 laughs: the laugh that says you are a laughing stock. And the incredulous laugh. The laugh of wow.

Sarah is not worried that people will make

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

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

on his 7th yarhrzeit - ז' תשרי

*Jackie Lieder, Schechter, Taragin,
Lieder and Kaufman families*

fun of her, embarrassed by the birth of a child at such an advanced age. Rather, she remarks that all who hear of this birth will laugh the incredulous laugh. A laugh expressing how incredulous life can be.

Sarah, by naming the next of the patriarchs Yitzchak expresses that our history will be truly incredulous; a history that can be explained only as a walk with the Divine.



3RD ALIYA (21:9-12)

Sarah demands that Hagar and Yishmael be sent off, for Yitzchak alone is our future.

The covenant between G-d and the Jewish people is an exclusive one; no other people will be so privileged. Even a son of Avraham. While all people are created in His Image, Jewish destiny is different; our people are different and our covenant with G-d is different. We are a people of unique destiny.



4TH ALIYA (21:13-17)

Avraham awakens early to send Hagar and Yishmael away. They go to Beersheva. Hagar cannot bear to see the death of her son. An angel calls to her that her son is saved as G-d heard the voice of the child.

The story of Hagar journeying with her son is a parallel story to the Akeida, the binding of Isaac that we will read tomorrow. Here, Hagar arises early in the morning, journeys off with her son, he has a near death experience, the angel calls, her eyes are open.

There is a universal theme of Rosh Hashanah, of all of G-d's creation. There are great nations. Like Yishmael. But the parallel to the story of Yitzchak and the Akeida is to highlight not the similarity but the difference.

There *are* many great nations. Yishmael becomes a great warrior archer. As great as he is, he is but a great nation amongst nations. The greatness of the Jewish people is our

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uniqueness; a covenant with G-d. Yitzchak will carry on this covenant, not Yishmael.



5TH ALIYA (21:18-21)

Yishmael too will be a great nation. She opens her eyes and sees water and they drink. He grows and becomes an archer.

Hagar sees water and she drinks. Avraham at the Akeida sees a ram and offers an offering. One is temporal life; water to drink. Avraham is the rarefied life of Divine connection; the ram to offer.



6TH ALIYA (21:22-27)

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

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



7TH ALIYA (21:29-34)

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

The theme of covenant, of special pacts animates this Torah reading. But this covenant is to create a contrast. There are human pacts of friendship and peace. And Divine covenants of majesty and grandeur.

MAFTIR BAMIDBAR 29: 1-6

ROSH HASHANAH DAY 2

The Torah reading is the 24 verses of Genesis, Chapter 22. This story, Akeidat Yitzchak, the binding of Isaac, is the most dramatic story of the Torah. It expresses how far man is willing to go in his allegiance to G-d. While it is a complex story of conflicted commands, the narrative is beautiful in its simplicity. Amidst the simplicity of the story, the deep and unswerving commitment of Avraham is majestic. The story concludes with the ram, caught in the thicket by its horn; the shofar we use for Rosh Hashanah.

**May the learning
in this Torah Tidbits
be a merit for**

**our beloved father
Benyamin Ben Yisrael
Zev haLevi z"l
on his 14th Yartzheit, 28 Elul**

**and our uncle
Tzvi Hirsh Ben Yisrael
Zev haLevi z"l
on his 16th Yartzheit, 25 Elul**

*beloved by so many.
Shelley Hirshberg and Helen Sher*



1ST ALIYA (22:1-3)

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

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

This simplicity drives the message of the simplicity of Avraham's loyalty to G-d; simple language, simple faith. For this terribly complex story is at its root quite simple.

This simplicity is a Rosh Hashanah theme. We live in a terribly complicated world; we have many unanswered questions, theological questions, many challenges and confusion. But at some very deep and profound level we are simple in our devotion. Like the shofar – no words, just a simple call from way deep in our souls.



2ND ALIYA (22:4-8)

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

They walk together. This togetherness is ironic – for Avraham knows he is to sacrifice Yitzchak, while Yitzchak does not know this.

Or perhaps he does. Does Yitzchak figure out what is going on? Did he wonder for these 3 days why everything for the offering was brought – except the offering itself? Perhaps he has figured it out; he really is together with Avraham.

While Avraham is tested, Yitzchak is too. Yitzchak's role as the willing offering is dramatic. And as the father of the Jewish people,

he expresses the image of the Jew as nearly destroyed, but surviving.



3RD ALIYA (22:9-14)

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

What more can be said of this powerful and dramatic moment? The mountain is named. He sees. And He is seen.

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

And the story tells us a lot about Him. What we see in Him is the mystery – why did He command this, and how little we know of His ways. While at the same time His mercy and His faithfulness to us was clear to see. He saved Yitzchak and He saved Avraham from a treacherous moment.



4TH ALIYA (22:15-19)

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

This too is a Rosh Hashanah theme. The

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



5TH ALIYA (22:20-24)

Avraham is told that his brother has a full family of descendants including Rivka.

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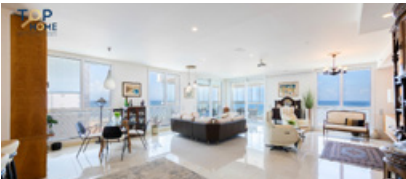
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“Reflections on Divine Kingship”

We now enter a period of the year that demands two kinds of spiritual commitment. The first is *charatah*, regret: an honest inner search of our past year’s behavior, especially conduct that was sinful, immoral, inconsiderate, evil, or cruel.

A sobering, if frightening, experience, for sure. Besides feeling regretful, we must commit to abandon such practices from this day forward. That is *teshuvah*, repentance.

As I grow older, however, I have become aware of a different type of regret. It is not regret for missed behavior. It is regret for

missed opportunities.

Chief among them was my failure to draw closer to the great rabbinic figures of my youth, particularly Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, both of blessed memory. I was never a direct student of the former, although I did attend quite a few of his public lectures. Of the latter, I had even less exposure, even though, in the early years of my marriage, I resided within walking distance of his home and synagogue headquarters.

As readers of my weekly columns, you may have noticed that I have tried to rectify my missed opportunity by studying their works, reading their biographies, and befriending some of



Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff

their most prominent students.

Both giants stressed another aspect of the upcoming days, beginning with Rosh Hashanah. It is the concept of *Malchut Shamayim*, the Kingship of the Almighty. This concept is aptly explained in Rabbi Dr. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff’s two-volume biography of Rav Soloveitchik, entitled *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*.

“Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, doyen of Jewish thinkers in the 20th century, used to explain this by telling the story of his first Hebrew teacher, a Chabad Chasid who made an indelible impression on him as a child by telling him that Rosh Hashanah was God’s

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coronation. ‘And who puts the crown on His head? We do.’ He spoke about his memories of praying as a child among the Chasidim on the first night of Rosh Hashanah:

“I can feel the unique atmosphere which enveloped these Chasidim as they recited the prayers by which they proclaimed Him their King. The older Chasidim termed this night the “Coronation Night”... These poor and downtrodden Jews... were able to experience the enthroning of the Almighty and the true meaning of the Kingship prayers of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy.’

“The Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is our way of participating in God’s coronation.”

As one born and bred in the United States of America, and one who was taught the values of democracy from kindergarten, I have always found it difficult to accept Kingship as a metaphor for the *Ribbono shel Olam*, the Master of the Universe. The kings that I read about in world history were rarely models of competence, let alone morality and beneficence. Similarly, the presidents of the United States, with perhaps a very few exceptions, were hardly exemplary individuals. Even the current USA President, who occasionally asserts royal powers, is met by masses who cry out, “No Kings!”

Rabbi Schneerson, henceforth referred to as the Lubavitcher Rebbe or the Rebbe, and who had a long and deep connection with Rabbi Soloveitchik, developed a conception of Kingship much more appropriate to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. For one version of his approach, I will introduce you to his profound mystical/spiritual/Chassidish definition of divine Kingship.

It is to be found in his commentary on *Pirkei Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*) chapter 3, paragraph 2. It reads:

“Rabbi Chanina, the deputy High Priest, said: Pray for the welfare (*shalom*) of the government (*malchut*, or Kingship), for were it not for fear of it, people would swallow one another alive.”

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is troubled (as are numerous other commentators, including the Maharal of Prague) by the phrase “would swallow one another alive”. Why not simply, “would kill each other”?

The Rebbe is also troubled by the fact that the theme of *Ethics of the Fathers* is ethics, piety, and religious service. Why is Rabbi Chanina preaching political strategy?

He explains that “swallow one another alive” does not describe a physical act. Rather, it captures the dynamic between an arrogant, powerful person and someone he sees as inferior—someone he feels entitled to demean at will. A king need not kill his subject; he can simply reduce him to fodder.

The Rebbe chooses to adopt a completely different interpretation of Rabbi Chanina’s teaching. It is the interpretation of the medieval rabbinic sage, Ritva, as quoted in the compilation known as *Midrash Shmuel*.

Ritva explains that “pray for the welfare, or *shalom*, of the government—*malchut*, or king” means praying for the *shalom* of the heavenly

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attribute of divine Kingship. It is a call to ask the Almighty to intervene in worldly matters of war and peace.

The “inner” meaning, insists the Rebbe, is incorporated in this verse in *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) chapter 5, verse 7: “If you see in a province oppression of the poor and suppression of right and justice, don’t wonder at the fact; for one high official is protected by a higher one, and both of them by a still higher one.”

The “kings” whom we tend to fear are ultimately subject to a Higher Authority, to the Master of the Universe, the *Ribbono shel Olam*. Only He can thwart the schemes of those who would “swallow us alive.”

Lord Acton knew that if power corrupts, then absolute power corrupts absolutely. Ritva, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and surely Rav Soloveitchik as well, knew that the

“absolutely” powerful are subject to the One with Absolute Power, the King whom we coronate on Rosh Hashanah.

Oseh shalom bimromav, May He who makes peace in His high places,

Hu berachamav ya’aseh shalom aleinu, in His compassion make peace for us and all Israel —

V'imru amen, and say: Amen. ■

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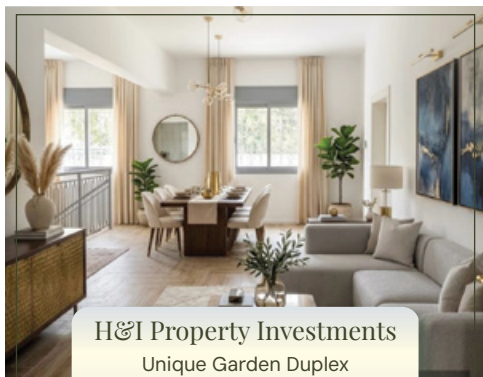
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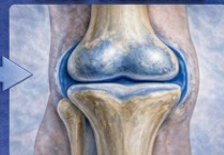
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The Challenge of Jewish Repentance

The Ten Days of Repentance are the holy of holies of Jewish time. They begin Friday evening with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and culminate 10 days later with Yom Kippur, our Day of Atonement. At no other time do I feel so close to God, and I suspect the same is true for most Jews.

These days constitute a courtroom drama like no other. The Judge is God Himself, and we are on trial for our lives. It begins on Rosh Hashanah, with the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, announcing that the court is in session. The Book of Life, in which our fate will be inscribed, now lies open. As we say in prayer, "On Rosh Hashanah it is written,

and on Yom Kippur it is sealed, who will live and who will die." At home, we eat an apple dipped in honey as a symbol of our hope for a sweet new year.

On Yom Kippur, the atmosphere reaches a peak of intensity in a day of fasting and prayer. Repeatedly we confess our sins, whole alphabetical litanies of them, including ones we probably had neither the time nor the imagination to commit. We throw ourselves on the mercy of the court, which is to say, on God Himself. Write us, we say, in the Book of Life.

And at the end of a long and wrenching day, we finish as we began 10 days earlier, with the sound of the ram's horn - this time not with tears and fears but with cautious yet confident hope. We have admitted the worst about ourselves and survived.

Beneath the surface of this long religious ritual lies one of the more transformative stories of the human spirit. The sociologist Philip Rieff pointed out that the movement from paganism to monotheism was a transition from fate to faith. By this he meant that in the world of myth, people were pitted against

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powerful, capricious forces personified as gods who were at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to humankind. All you could do was try to propitiate, battle or outwit them. This was a culture of character and fate, and its noblest expression was the literature of Greek tragedy.

Jews came to see the world in a completely different way. The book of Bereishit opens with God making humans “in His image and likeness.” This phrase has become so familiar to us that we forget how paradoxical it is, since for the Hebrew Bible, God has no image and likeness. As the narrative quickly makes clear, what humans have in common with God is freedom and moral responsibility.

The Jewish drama is less about character and fate than about will and choice. To the monotheistic mind, the real battles are not “out there,” against external forces of darkness, but “in here,” between the bad and better angels of our nature. As the religion writer Jack Miles once pointed out, you can see the difference in the contrast between Sophocles and Shakespeare. For Sophocles, Oedipus must battle against blind, inexorable fate. For Shakespeare, writing in a monotheistic age, the drama of “Hamlet” lies within, between “the native hue of resolution” and “the pale cast of thought.”

The trouble is, of course, that faced with choice, we often make the wrong one. Given a second chance, Adam and Eve would probably pass on the fruit. Cain might work a little harder on his anger management. And there is a straight line from these biblical episodes to the destruction left by Homo sapiens: war, murder, human devastation and environmental destruction.

That is still our world today. The key fact about us, according to the Bible, is that



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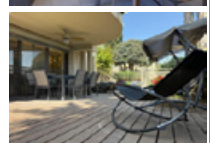
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uniquely in an otherwise law-governed universe, *we are capable of breaking the law* - a power that we too often relish exercising.

This raises an acute theological dilemma. How are we to reconcile God's high hopes for humanity with our shabby and threadbare moral record? The short answer is forgiveness.

God wrote forgiveness into the script. He always gives us a second chance, and more. All we have to do is to acknowledge our wrongs, apologise, make amends, and resolve to behave better - and God forgives. It allows us to hold simultaneously to the highest moral aspirations while admitting honestly our deepest moral failings. That is the drama of the Jewish High Holy Days.

At the heart of this vision is what the post-Holocaust writer Viktor Frankl called our "search for meaning." The great institutions

of modernity were not constructed to provide meaning. Science tells us how the world came to be but not why. Technology gives us power but cannot tell us how to use it. The market gives us choices but no guidance as to which choices to make. Modern democracies give us a maximum of personal freedom but a minimum of shared morality. You can acknowledge the beauty of all these institutions, yet most of us seek something more.

Meaning comes not from systems of thought but from stories, and the Jewish story is among the most unusual of all. It tells us that God sought to make us His partners in the work of creation, but we repeatedly disappointed Him. Yet He never gives up. He forgives us time and again. The real religious mystery for Judaism is not our faith in God but God's faith in us.

This is not, as atheists and skeptics sometimes claim, a comforting fiction but quite the opposite. Judaism is God's call to human responsibility, to create a world that is a worthy home for His Presence. That is why Jews are so often to be found as doctors fighting disease, economists fighting poverty, lawyers fighting injustice, teachers fighting ignorance and therapists fighting depression and despair.

Judaism is a supremely activist faith for which the greatest religious challenge is to heal some of the wounds of our deeply fractured world. As Frankl put it: The real question is not 'what do we want from life?' but 'what does life want from us?'

That is the question we are asked on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. As we ask God to write us in the Book of Life, He asks us: what have you done with your life thus far? Have you thought about others or only about yourself? Have you brought healing to a place

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of human pain or hope where you found despair? You may have been a success, but have you also been a blessing? Have you written other people in the Book of Life?

To ask these questions once a year in the company of others publicly willing to confess their faults, lifted by the words and music of ancient prayers, knowing that God forgives every failure we acknowledge as a failure, and that He has faith in us even when we lose faith in ourselves, can be a life-changing experience. That is when we discover that, even in a secular age, God is still there, open to us whenever we are willing to open ourselves to Him. ■

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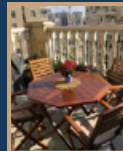
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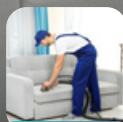


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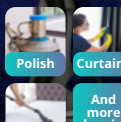
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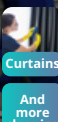
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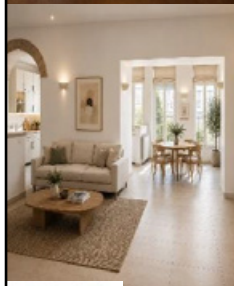
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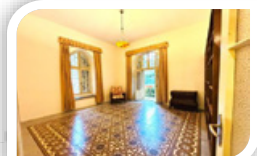
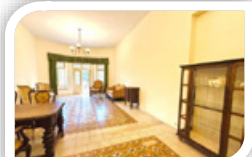
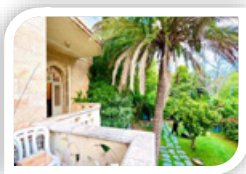
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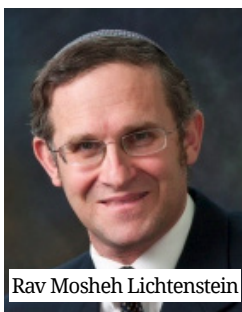
BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

Two Haftarot for A “One-Day” Holiday: Rosh HaShanah

As we begin the new year, we expect to find that this year’s lu’ach will not be identical with last year’s – or the next one – for, as our calendar follows both the lunar and solar cycles, no year is identical to the last or the following one. One year might include a solar leap day, while another might have a lunar leap month. When we include the fact that the Hebrew months can vary from 29 to 30 days, we fully understand why succeeding calendars are never identical.

So what? Simply put, this reality explains why our haftarot are not *always* repetitive, as the same parshot might require a different prophetic selection than what was read on the past year. The days

of Rosh Hashanah are, however, somewhat unique. Although both days are, primarily, identical – in fact, in contrast to the additional day of Yom Tov in the Diaspora [יום טוב שני של גלויות], the second day of Rosh HaShanah



Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein

is not a rabbinic “addition”, as are other holidays, but is considered to be part and parcel of the first day, a **יומא אריכתא**, regarding Rosh HaShanah to be a one-day holiday! And, while the two Torah readings on the two days are but a continuation one to the other, we might wonder why Chazal chose two **different** haftarot **from two**

different nevi'im (Shmuel and Yirmiyahu), to be read on this, supposedly, **יומא אריכתא**!?

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein takes an interesting approach in explaining the necessity for including two different haftarot for this ‘one-day’ holiday, by first clarifying that the themes of both readings are clearly different. He reminds us that the haftarah of the first day of Rosh HaShanah, taken from the opening perek of Sefer Shmuel A, relates the story of an **individual**, Channah, the barren wife of Elkana, and the miraculous birth of Shmuel. Rav Lichtenstein emphasizes that this story is



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one of the **past**, detailing the events of a saintly woman, her painful years of bareness and her heartfelt pleas to G-d. Channah's years of belief in Hashem's mercies, her depth of sincere prayer and the sacrifice of her long-awaited son to be a servant to G-d, is more than appropriate reading for Rosh Hashanah. Clearly, Rav Lichtenstein states, the overriding theme of this story of sacrifice and surrender to the Almighty, it is most fitting for the **יום הדין**.

The second-day haftarah, however, focuses on the **future** of a **nation**. Yirmiyahu's directed his prophecy to his generation of the churban, people whom he had cautioned numerous times of the approaching destruction and inevitable exile. Likewise, earlier prophets had also cautioned the previous generations of the coming downfall - but they too turned a deaf ear to Hashem's warnings and threats. Surprisingly, this second day haftarah of Rosh HaShanah contains neither visions of devastation nor promises of punishments. Yirmiyahu, the "prophet of doom" does not speak of destruction or ruin in this message! Instead, he shares a vision of redemption and freedom with Israel, a nevu'ah of when Hashem would see Israel, as a **עם שרידי חרב**, 'a nation who has survived the sword', the navi's opening words!

And those words are extremely important, for it brings an essential message for all of us on this new year day, and, for that reason, it taught a different message than does the first haftarah.

And, I would like to expand upon the approach of Rav Lichtenstein:

The opening haftarah challenges the **individual** to strive and reach the elevated level of the remarkable Channah. "Can I pray to the Almighty with the proper intent and feeling as she did?" "Could I build such belief and faith

in G-d as Channah had?" "Would I be able to accept the disappointments and tribulations placed upon me, as did she?"

Certainly, all fitting and crucial questions for us to ponder on such a day!

The second haftarah is directed to the **nation** – to the **עם שרידי חרב**, the nation who survived the sword of the Crusaders, the exile of the Romans, the torture of the inquisitionists, the banishment from England, France, Spain, Portugal, Vienna, Cologne, Nuremberg, Sicily, Sardinia, Naples, the pogroms, the ghettos, the concentration camps. We are the **עם שרידי חרב** who wonder on Rosh Hashanah what we need to do to return to Hashem's graces!! So Yirmiyahu tells us "You need not worry!!" Read the haftarah carefully, this **יום הדין**, read how the navi opens his message by promising **הַלֹּךְ לְהַרְגִיעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל** – G-d will lead you to tranquility.

The message of the prophet is not one of glorious redemption, of natural miracles or of atonement of sins. He promises...calmness, serenity, calmness. Simple things, but things denied to Israel. This is the hope for us at the beginning of the year.

So, I urge you, this year don't worry about the passage of time, don't read all the commentaries and don't rest your eyes. This year, use your haftarah time to read and understand the text well. Study it, ponder over it, be inspired from it.

Certainly, I hope to do so too! ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive:
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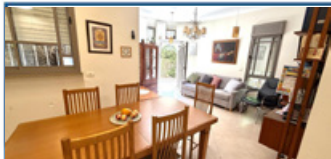
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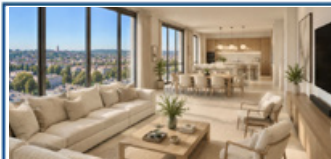
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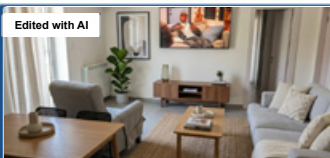
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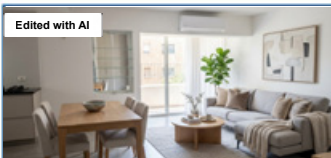
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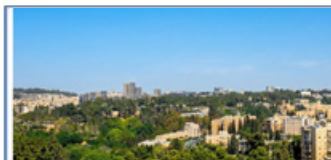
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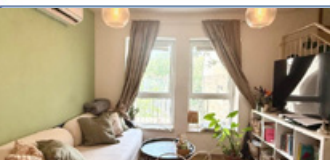
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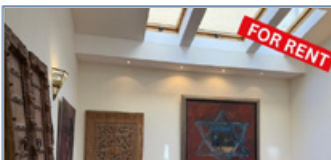
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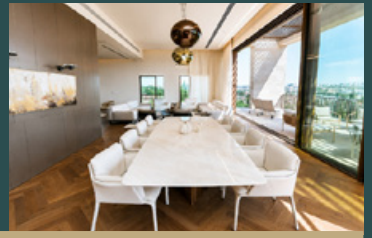
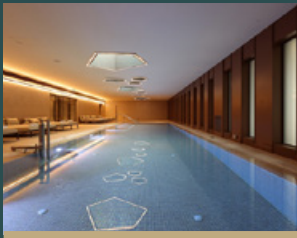
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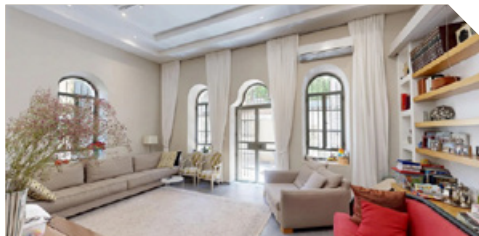
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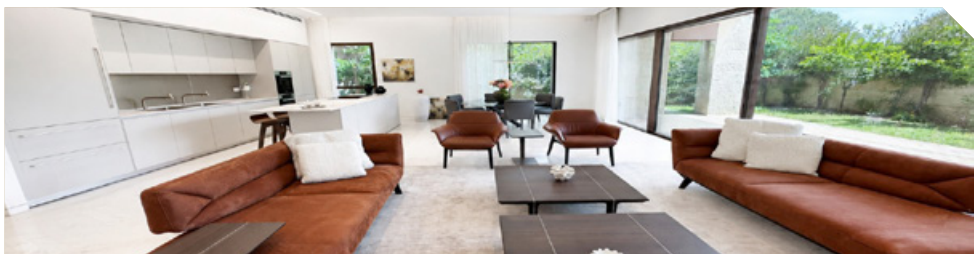
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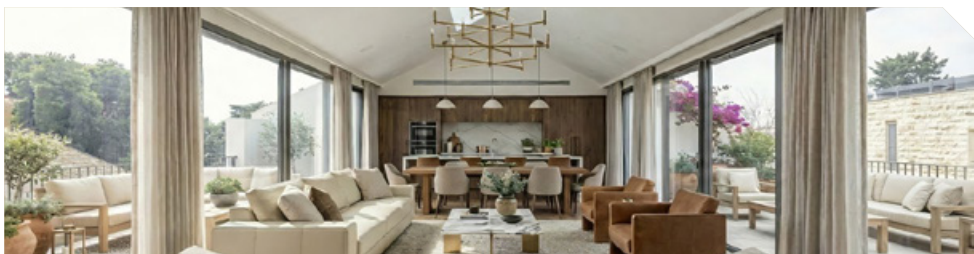
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עֲדָרוֹ, מֵעֶבֶר צֹאֲנוֹ תַּחַת שִׁבְטוֹ...”

All human beings pass before You keVnei Maron — like sheep under the shepherd's staff, as he counts his flock one by one...

This phrase is drawn from the Mishnah¹:

בְּאַרְבַּעַת פְּרָקִים הָעוֹלָם נִדּוֹן... בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כָּל בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם עוֹבְרִין לְפָנָיו כְּבָנֵי מְרוֹן...

At four junctures the world is judged, ... on Rosh Hashanah all human beings pass before you like sheep....

The Gemara² records three explanations of this phrase, presented below in accordance with Rashi's interpretation:

1. **Like sheep** (*keVnei imrana*) - as when sheep are counted one by one for tithing

1. Rosh Hashanah 16a

2. ibid. 18a

(*ma'aser behemah*) by passing through a narrow passage.

2. **Like the ascent to Beit Maron** - a narrow mountain path, with a deep ravine on either side, where only one person can pass at a time.
3. **Like the soldiers of King David** - as they were counted individually when gathering for war.

Each of these three metaphors expresses a different dimension of our relationship with Hashem and the meaning of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

1. LIKE SHEEP - SUBMISSION TO THE KING

The sheep is a symbol of submission and obedience, following its shepherd wherever he directs it. Likewise, when we describe ourselves as sheep before Hashem, we affirm our absolute submission to His kingship.

On Rosh Hashanah we pray: מְלוֹךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם – “Reign over the entire world in Your glory.” The Taz³ notes the double expression “*kol ha'olam kulo*” – “the entire world, all of it.” At times the word *kol* (“all”) is used to mean “most,” but here we stress that we ask Hashem to reign not only over the world as a whole, but over every part of it and every part of us.

The Yeshuot Yaakov⁴ explains further: A human king can impose taxes, imprison or

3. Taz, Orakh Haim 582:3.

4. Yeshuot Yaakov, ad loc.

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even execute, but he cannot govern people's thoughts and inner life. Hashem, however, is sovereign over body and soul, over our lives in this world and the next, over every thought, feeling, and action. Thus, when we accept His kingship, we declare Him King over *kol ha'ol-am kulo* - over all existence, and every part of ourselves.

To see ourselves as sheep, then, is to accept this complete submission to Hashem. By doing so, we guard ourselves from arrogance and anger. Hazal⁵ teach: כָּל הַכּוֹעִים כָּל מִינֵי גִּיהֲנוֹם שׁוֹלְטִין בוֹ - *"Whoever becomes angry, all kinds of Gehinnom rule over him"*. The Rambam⁶ similarly writes: כָּל הַכּוֹעִים כְּאִלּוּ עוֹבֵד עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה - *whoever exhibits anger, it is as if he engages in idolatry*. Why is anger viewed so severely? Because anger stems from placing the self at the center, forgetting that everything comes from Hashem. To live with humility, like the sheep who follows its shepherd, is to recognize Hashem as the true source of all.

2. LIKE THE ASCENT OF BEIT MARON - STRIVING UPWARD

The second explanation likens us to travelers ascending the steep, narrow path of Beit Maron. This is the image of constant ascent — the Jew is always called to grow, to climb higher.

This is the meaning of the Torah's description of Yehoshua bin Nun⁷:

וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון יָעַר לֹא יָמִישׁ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל.

"His attendant, Yehoshua son of Nun, a lad, never left the Tent."

At that time, Yehoshua was already fifty-six years old.⁸ Why, then, is he called a

5. Nedarim 22a

6. Rambam, Hilkhot Deot 2:3

7. Shemot 33:11

8. See Ibn Ezra and Ramban to *Shemot* 33:11, who calculate Yehoshua's age at that time.

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na'ar, a lad? Rav Yisrael Salanter explained that "youth" and "old age" are not merely measures of years, but states of mind. The old man looks backward, reflecting on what he has already accomplished. Youth look forward, are filled with plans, dreams, and aspirations. Yehoshua, though advanced in years, remained forever young, always looking upward, striving to grow.

This is what the prophet Hoshea⁹ means when he declares: כִּי יָעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְיֶה:

For Israel is a youth, and I loved him. Hashem loves Am Yisrael for their youthful quality, their constant striving to advance and their refusal to become stagnant.

3. LIKE THE SOLDIERS OF DAVID - DISCIPLINE AND PRECISION

The third explanation compares us to the soldiers of King David, counted as they went

9. Hoshea 11:1

out to battle. This imagery highlights discipline and precision. A soldier does not live for himself, but according to the command of his commander.

So too, a Jew is a soldier in Hashem's army. He must rise on time for prayer, fulfill mitzvot at their appointed times, and live with discipline in both *bein adam laMakom* and *bein adam laHavero*. To be counted like soldiers means to live life not casually or haphazardly, but with loyalty and precision in the service of Hashem.

CONCLUSION

These three images: sheep, climbers, and soldiers, offer us a map for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and indeed for Jewish life. As sheep, we learn humility and submission to Hashem's kingship. As climbers on the ascent of Beit Maron, we commit ourselves to constant growth, never content with what we have achieved. As soldiers of King David, we

embrace discipline and faithfulness, serving with exactness and devotion.

When we stand before Hashem on the Yamim Noraim, each of us passes individually, one by one, like *keVnei Maron*. It is a moment of profound intimacy, where Hashem looks not at the masses, but at the singular soul standing before Him.

May we merit to approach these days as humble sheep, aspiring youths, and devoted soldiers and in doing so, may we be inscribed for a year of blessing, growth, and closeness to the King of Kings - *Melekh Malkehei HaMelakheim*. ■

 **Mazal Tov to** 
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on the birth of their
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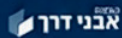
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Life

It is generally accepted that we may not ask for personal requests within the first three brachot of the *Shemoneh Esrei* since they are dedicated to praising Hashem. How then can we ask, “*Zachreinu le’chaim*—Remember us for life,” in our tefillah during the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, the ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur? Asking for life seems quite personal!

The Vilna Gaon *zt”l* explains that since we ask for “*chaim*—life” and not “*chaim tovim*—good life,” we can say that the request refers to life in the next world, because by definition the next world is all good. This is a spiritual request, thus it is permitted to be added within the first three brachot.

The *Ramchal* *zt”l* in *Ma’amar Hachochmah* also teaches that this a spiritual request; the intention is the desire to be written in the Book of the Righteous, who are considered perpetually alive even after they leave this physical world. Yet, how can we ask to be written in this lofty book? Wouldn’t that depend on whether we deserve such exaltedness?

We can apply the following approach based on a *Midrash* in *Shir Hashirim*. Hashem invites us to initiate the teshuvah process with the smallest symbol, something as small as the eye of a needle, and Hashem will expand that opening greatly with a heightened Divine arousal to turn heavenward. A heartfelt request to be written in the book of *tzadikim* is such an opening, prompting Hashem, so to speak, to increase our momentum toward full teshuvah. However, we must appeal to Hashem earnestly, with a genuine desire reflected in true action that aligns us with His will.

This theme is echoed in the Rosh Hashanah tefillah, “*U’vechen ten pachdecha*—Instill



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your awe.” We pray for *yirat shamayim*, a ‘small opening,’ an expression of true desire to achieve closeness, and a request for Hashem’s help to succeed.

To be sure, one’s deepest aspirations characterize his spiritual caliber. Rabbeinu Yonah *zt”l* notes that one who truly wants to learn from others, even if his knowledge is limited, is called a *chacham*, a wise one. Merely appreciating and desiring wisdom indicates the presence of true wisdom. Similarly, the direction a chamber in the Beit Hamikdash faced determined its status of *kedushah*. If a chamber faced the *Kodesh*, the Holy Chamber where the service took place, it had the status of *kedushah*, even if it was situated in an area of lesser holiness, while a chamber whose opening faced towards the area of lesser holiness, did not have the same status of *kedushah* even if it was in the *Kodesh*.

“*Zachreinu le’chaim*” is a request not for physical life nor for a spiritual life filled with habitual mitzvot. Rather, it is an earnest plea for a life devoted to “*Melech chafeitz bachaim*.” The intensity of one’s spiritual yearnings on Rosh Hashanah will be mirrored in the *siyata dishmaya* that he will receive over the course of the year to reach these heights.

May we merit such sincerity, worthy of Hashem’s bountiful blessings and indeed be written in the book of the *tzadikim*. ■

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Rebbe Pinchas Menachem Alter, zy'a, the Pnei Menachem of Ger (d. 1996) was widely respected as a wise and unassuming *tzadik*, and was a beloved Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Sefas Emes. One year, in advance of the Yam-im Noraim, the Pnei Menachem was learning with his student and chavrusa, Reb Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg, *shlit'a*, (the current Tolna Rebbe of Jerusalem), when the latter shared the following *vort* from the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander:

"In the Musaf davening of Yom Kippur, we describe how the Kohen Gadol "rejoiced" when mixing the blood of his personal offering together with the blood offered as part of the communal sacrifice on behalf of Klal Yisrael. Until that point, the Kohen Gadol, in his exalted and singular role, was separate from the rest of the community. More than a technical, procedural aspect of the *avoda*, the mixing of the blood together united him with the rest of the *tzibur* — and this was a cause for rejoicing."

The Pnei Menachem took great pleasure in this teaching.

Soon thereafter, following the passing of his half brother, the Pnei Menachem inherited the role of Gerrar Rebbe, and accepted leadership and responsibility of the movement. As a Rebbe to thousands of *chasidim*, Reb Pinchas Menachem assumed a very public role. On the first Rosh Hashanah of his reign, he confided in his student, who by then had become the Tolna Rebbe, that the trappings of leadership and the perceived distance from the *chasidim* that came along with his new status were a challenge: "*Der vort badert mir zayer*, The vort you shared with me (regarding the mixing of sacrificial blood) is bothering me greatly."

The Pnei Menachem was experiencing the same sense of isolation that the Kohen Gadol felt prior to performing the *avodah* of mixing the different bloods of the *Korbanos*. Seeking comfort, after Yom Tov, he asked his old *chevrusa* and *talmid* to accompany him on a late night journey to *Kever Rachel*.

As they approached the Kever, Reb Pinchas Menachem was lost in thought and prayer and did not notice signage indicating that the regular entrance was closed off due to renovations. Suddenly, he was accosted by a security guard, shouting, "*Mah atah chosheiv?* What are you thinking? That you're different than others here? *Atah kemo kulam!* You're like everyone else! Go around to the other entrance around the back, like every other visitor!"

The Rebbe was taken aback, apologized for his oversight, and thanked the guard with a

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smile. “Yes, it is true — *ani k'mo kulam* — I am just like everyone else,” he said, and joyfully entered Kever Rachel through the back entrance together with the rest of the *tzibur*.

Sefer Melachim describes in great detail the kindness performed by the *Isha Shunamis*, the Shunamite Woman, in hosting and providing for Elisha haNavi and his student, Gehazi. Wanting to express his appreciation, Elisha inquires if there is anything he can do for her: *Hayeish l'daber lach el haMelech?* “Can we speak on your behalf to the king?” Declining the offer, their hostess answers cryptically: *B'soch ami ani yoshevet*, “I dwell among my people.” (Melachim 2, 4:13)

The Zohar haKadosh provides context for the interaction: *Hahu yoma, Yom Tov d'Rosh Hashanah hava*, “That day was the holiday of Rosh Hashanah” (Zohar, 2:44:1). Elisha was not simply asking if the *Isha Shunamit* needed some *protektzia*, or wanted him to pull some strings with the authorities on her behalf. Being the start of a new year, Elisha haNavi was offering to intercede and daven on her behalf before Hashem, The King of Kings, who is crowned each year on Rosh Hashanah.

B'soch ami ani yoshevet, “I dwell among my people....”

The answer of the *Isha Shunamit* reveals a fundamental insight into the nature of Rosh

Hashanah, and is an important reminder for this auspicious day. Each and every one of us has the privilege and opportunity to address the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, to approach the “King” directly, and to engage Him with our own words. On Rosh Hashanah we are on level ground with all of humanity, “dwelling among our people”. We stand before God empowered by our connection to the greater *tzibur* and the community to which we belong.

This Rosh Hashanah may we strengthen our commitment to one another and awaken a deeper sense of mutual responsibility and connectivity. May we strengthen our dedication to improving the welfare of our brothers and sisters, for indeed, we are all in this together; *anachnu k'mo kulam*.

Excerpt from the newly released Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the “Baderech” series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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There is an interesting teaching about the essence of *Rosh Hashanah* from the **Sefat Emet**, Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, zt'l, the **Gerrer Rebbe zy'a**. The Rebbe wrote:

"The essence of Rosh Hashanah is tefila. There are four mitzvot which form our daily routine; the recitation of the Shema, the wearing of tefilin, the donning of tzitzit, and tefila. It is written in many holy works that these four mitzvot correspond to the four letter Divine name. Also, the various holidays each parallel one of these four mitzvot. Pesach is representative of the tefilin which we bind to our arm, recalling the "outstretched arm" that redeemed us from Egypt; Shavuot is linked to the recitation of the Shema, which includes the passage: 'I have instructed you on this day' (recalling the giving of the Torah at Sinai); Sukkot recalls the mitzva of tzitzit, as the Sukka, much like the tzitzit garment, represents being enveloped by Divine protection. The days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are in essence all about tefila..."

The Sefat Emet suggests that there are four common daily rituals that are each symbolically paralleled by the essence and nature of one of our four Biblical Holiday periods. One might

infer that the Rebbe is suggesting that the extra spiritual fervor, inspiration and joy that are often easier for us to experience during each of our festivals, should somehow inspire us and help us to experience its parallel daily ritual, and really all of our daily conduct, in a more meaningful, and spiritually conscious way.

Given that we are on the eve of *Rosh Hashanah*, let us explore further the parallel daily mitzva of tefila, which the Sefat Emet viewed as the essence of the entire ten day period between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Let's begin to clarify just how much transformative potential exists within the experience of tefila in its purest form.

HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook, zy'a spoke the following words in a public discourse on prayer (As cited in the work *Mishnat HaRav*, pg 72...):

"The difference between an individual who prays and one who does not pray, is not that one sets aside time each day to pray and the second does not set aside time for this purpose. Rather, there is a profound fundamental difference. The quality of life of each of these two is completely different! That time set aside for prayer, makes a profound impact on the entire day."

According to Rav Kook zy'a, tefila, is much more than taking time out of our day to recite some Hebrew words as quickly as we possibly can, and tefila is much more than an opportunity to make requests, or plead our case before *Hakodosh Baruch Hu*, as so many people envision as the prime objective of our high holiday prayer, and prayer in general. According to Rav Kook, the experience of tefila

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somehow has the capacity to transform our entire outlook, our entire daily routine, our entire quality of life.

Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik *zt'l* wrote that many perceive prayer as a conversation, a dialogue with the Divine. Rabbi Soloveitchik suggests that *tefila* is much more than a conversation, or a dialogue between acquaintances. *Tefila*, said Rabbi Soloveitchik should be experienced as though we have come so close to the Divine within each of us that we feel the collision, of colliding with G-d's presence. *Tefila* is not a random discussion between two distant acquaintances, rather the most intimate of conversations between man and Hashem.

How are we to understand the words of Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik within the context of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*? If the goal of *tefila* is not to petition or make any requests, rather to enter into a pure, loving, intimate discourse with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*; and as the *Sefat Emet* suggests the very essence of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is *tefila*, how are we to make sense of the many liturgical references to forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and judgment? It seems quite clear from much of the traditional liturgy, that indeed we have gathered to make many, many pleas, both personal and communal.

There is a well known verse from Psalm 118 (verse 5), that is recited as part of the *Hallel* which we recite on *Rosh Chodesh* (beginning of each month) and Festivals, which is also one of the many verses recited immediately before the *Shofar* is sounded on *Rosh Hashanah*.



Piaseczno Rebbe zt'l

"From the depths I called out to G-d, with Divine relief he answered me..."

Rabbi Klonymous Kalmish Shapira Hy"d, the Rebbe of Piaseczna zy'a, in his incredibly moving collection of sermons on the *Torah* and Holidays - *Aish Kodesh* wrote the following words regarding this verse:

"For people like us, especially in such terrible, bitter anguish, it is impossible not to cry out and pray to G-d, even on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, about our pain and suffering. This in itself is a source of distress, and our

soul cries out bitterly that even during such holy days as these we are reduced to praying 'Give us life! Give us food!' instead of loftier, altruistic prayers for the needs and sake of heaven...

...This is the meaning of the verse 'From the depths I called out to Hashem, with Divine relief he answered me.' At present, I am calling from the depths of my pain, but please Hashem, respond with divine relief, so

that I am able to pray from comfort and plenitude, so that I can pray properly, unselfishly, for the sake of expressing our closeness to the Ribono Shel Olam."

The Rebbe, from the depths of the Warsaw Ghetto, where he ministered to so many

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amidst the devastation, is teaching us a very profound idea regarding the experience of *Tefila*. *Tefila*, as it is most often experienced by man in our human frailty, is often very self centered-either out of a sense of obligation, or as an outgrowth and response to a personal need or challenging circumstance. But *tefila*, prayer in its purest form, says the Rebbe, and echoed by the words of Rav Soloveitchik, is the experience of calling out to *Hashem*, not from the depths of despair and pain, but rather from a space of comfort, utter *bitachon/trust*, heightened spiritual consciousness and love.

Similarly, the **Noam Elimelech, Reb Elimelech MiLijensk zy'a** offers a beautiful understanding of *tefila* as an act of connection, the very means through which we bind ourselves to *Hashem*. On *Rosh Hashanah*, then, our many hours of *tefila* are not only an opportunity to ask *Hashem* for what we need, but to experience anew that closeness at the heart of this sacred day.

Perhaps, now we can better understand the words of the *Sefat Emet*, “*the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are in essence all about tefila...*”

May we indeed be blessed to *daven* this *Rosh Hashanah* not solely from that place of pain and concern that has become all too familiar to each of us, but rather may we finally merit to once again not feel that need to plead for salvation, but rather have the ability to offer *tefilot* of *hakarat hatov*, *nechama*, *bitachon* and love.

Shana Tova Umetuka, Ketiva Vchatima Tova. ■

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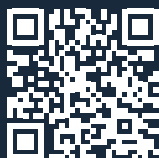
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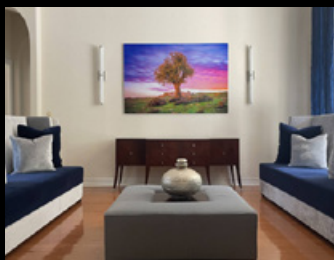


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Shana Tova Umetuka



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TUESDAY, SEPT 15TH

9:20 am Understanding Tefillah **Rabbi Yossi Goldin**

10:10 am Rambam: Letters and Introductions **Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz** **Community Beit Midrash Program**
Kehilat Nitzanim, 3 Asher St., Bakaa

11:25 am P'shat in the Parsha **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

12:20 PM Unlocking the Messages of Chazal **Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

WOMEN'S DIVISION

9:15 am Torah Tapestries **Shira Smiles** Beit Knesset Hanassi, Ussishkin 24



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TUESDAY, SEPT 16TH

**10:00 am -
2:00 pm**

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1:00 pm

Shiur followed by
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9:15 am

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 am

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa

Rabbi Anthony Manning

Community Beit Midrash Program

Beit Knesset

HaNassi,

24 Ussishkin St.,
Rechav

11:25 am

Building Character and
Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei
Avot

**Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider**

12:30 pm

The Turbulent Nineteenth
Century of European Jewish
History

Dr. Deborah Polster

THURSDAY, SEPT 18TH

9:15 am

Parshat HaShavua

Rabbi Ari Kahn

Community Beit Midrash Program

Bet Knesset Shai

Agnon,

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Yaffe and Siegfried
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10:20 am

Modern Masters

Rabbi Sam Shor

11:25 am

Trailblazing the Text of
Tanach

Rabbi Neil Winkler

8:00 pm

Halachic Controversies (the
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Rabbi Aschi Dick

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- Yerushalayim (Ramat- Ramatayim Tzofim) - Tuesday, Sept. 15
- Carmei Gat - Carmei Tzion- Tuesday, Sept. 15
- Yerushalayim (Baka Matnas) -Wednesday, Sept. 16
- Kiryat Moshe (Matnas, 27 Nijara St) - Wednesday, Sept. 16
- Efrat (Makom Litzmoach) -Thursday, Sept. 17, 7:15 PM
- Chashmonaim (Rimon Shul) -Tuesday, Sept. 22
- Modi'in (Kehillat Darchei Tzion) - Tuesday, Sept. 22
- Beit Shemesh (Menorat Hamaor) -Wednesday, Sept. 23
- Netanya (Hartum 30) - Wednesday, Sept. 23
- Rechovot (Beit Chatam)- Wednesday, Sept. 23
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to males or mixed group (and commonly used for female plural too):

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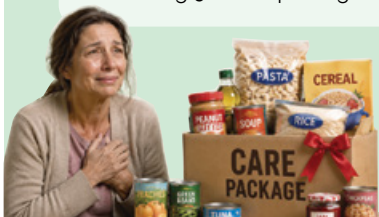
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The Rosh HaShana 'Seder' סדר ראש השנה

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

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

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

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

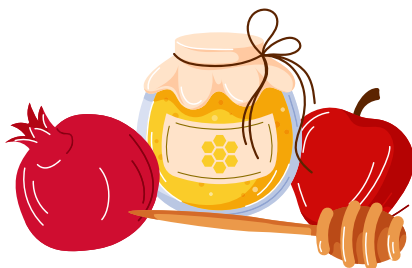
Since the fruits and vegetables to be eaten as part of the SEDER LEIL ROSH HASHANA are not "normal" components of a meal, they are not covered by the HaMotzi, and need their own brachot, which should be said in accordance with the "rules of brachot" - as follows...

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

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

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

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





For RUBIYA (black-eyed peas):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שירבו זכויותינו



For KARTI (leek):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שייכרתו שונאינו



For SILKA (beets or mangold):

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שישתלקו אויבינו



For DATES:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שייתמו שונאינו



For KARA (type of squash, pale green):

some say this for carrots - play on words גזר

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



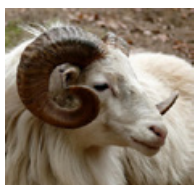
For POMEGRANATE:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו שנרבה זכויותינו כרימון



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

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



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

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

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

יהי רצון שתזכר לנו אילו של יצחק

Tashlich

After *Mincha*, there is a custom of תשל"ך, where one goes to the river and recites verses pertaining to תשובה from (ז:יט) ספר מיכה¹. There are various reasons for this custom, including the fact that the מדרש teaches that the שטן tried drowning אברהם in a river on the way to the עקידה and we want to remind ourselves of אברהם's determination and devotion² (and learn from it). When the 1st day of RH falls out on Shabbos some have the custom to recite תשל"ך on the second day,³ while some still say it on the first day (as long as there is an עירוב)⁴. If there is no river nearby, or if one cannot leave the house he/she can recite it on water in a well⁵ or even on a cup of water.⁶

מי קל כְּמוֹד נושא עֹון וְעוֹבֵר עַל פֶּשַׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ לֹא הִחְזִיק לַעַד אָפּוּ כִּי חִפֵּץ חֶסֶד הוּא: יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ וְיִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלַיֵךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל חַטָּאוֹתָם: תִּתֵּן אֲמֶת לִיעֶקֶב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעַתְּ לְאַבְרָהָם מִיְּמֵי קֶדֶם:

מִן הַמִּצַּר קִרְאֵתִי קָה עֲנֵנִי בַּמִּרְחֵב קָה ה' לִי לֹא אֵירָא מִה יַעֲשֶׂה לִי אֲדָם ה' לִי בַּעֲזָרִי וְאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְּשִׁנְאִי טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בָּהּ מִבֶּטֶחַ בְּאֲדָם טוֹב לַחֲסוֹת בָּהּ מִבֶּטֶחַ בְּנִדְבִים:

רִנְנִי צְדִיקִים בָּהּ לִישָׁרִים נֶאֱמָה תְהִלָּה: הוֹדֵנוּ לָהּ בְּכָנּוֹר בְּנִבֵּל עֲשׂוֹר זָמְרוּ-לוֹ: שִׁירוּ-לוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ הִיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתוֹרָעָה: כִּי-יִשָּׁר דְּבַר-יְהוָה וְכָל-מַעֲשָׂהּ בְּאֱמוּנָה: אֲהַב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט חֶסֶד ה' מְלָאָה הָאָרֶץ: בְּדָבָר ה' שְׁמִים נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל-צָבָאָם: כִּנֹּס כְּנֹד מִי הַיָּם נִתָּן בְּאַצְרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת: יִירָאוּ מִה' כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מִמֶּנּוּ יִגְוִרוּ כָל-יִשְׁבֵּי תֵבֵל: כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי הוּא-צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד: ה' הִפִּיר עֲצַת-גּוֹיִם הִנִּיא מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים: עֲצַת ה' לַעֲלוֹלָם תַּעֲמֵד מַחֲשָׁבוֹת לִבּוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר: אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר-ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ הָעַם | בְּחָר לְנִחְלָה לּוֹ: מִשְׁמִים הֵבִיט ה' רָאָה אֶת-כָּל-בְּנֵי הָאָדָם: מִמִּכּוֹן-שִׁבְתּוֹ הִשְׁגִּיחַ אֶל כָּל-יִשְׁבֵּי הָאָרֶץ: הִיָּצַר יָחִיד לִבָּם הִמְבִּיֵּן אֶל-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם: אֵין-הִמְלִיךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרַב-חֵיל גִּבּוֹר לֹא-יִנָּצַל בְּרַב-כֹּחַ: שֶׁקֶר הִסּוֹס לַתְּשׁוּעָה וּבְרַב חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט: הִנֵּה עֵין ה' אֶל-יִרְאִיו לְמִיחָלִים לְחִסְדּוֹ: לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרַעֲב: וּבְשָׁנוֹ חֲקָתָהּ לָהּ עֲזָרְנוּ וּמִגִּנָּנוּ הוּא: כִּי-בֹו יִשְׁמַח לִבָּנוּ כִּי בָשָׂם קִדְשׁוֹ בְּטַחֲנוּ: יְהִי-חֶסֶדְךָ ה' עֲלֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר יִחַלְנוּ לָךְ:

לֹא יִרְעוּ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל הַר קִדְשִׁי, כִּי מְלָאָה הָאָרֶץ דְּעָה אֶת ה' כְּמִים לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר לָהּ ה' הָאָרֶץ וּמִלּוּאָה תִבֵּל וְיִשְׁבֵּי בָהּ: כִּי-הוּא עַל-יָמִים יִסְדָּה וְעַל-נְהָלוֹת יִכּוֹנְנָה: מִי-יַעֲלֶה בְּהֶרֶה-ה' וּמִי-יָקוּם בְּמִקּוֹם קִדְשׁוֹ: נָקִי כַפִּים וּבֶרֶךְ לִכְבֹּד אֲשֶׁר | לֹא-נִשְׂא לְשׁוֹא (נִפְשׁוּ) נִפְשִׁי וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע

1. רמ"א תקפג ב

2. משנ"ב תקפג סק"ח

3. Ibid.

4. שערי תשובה סימן תקפג ו

5. כף החיים סימן תקפג סק"ח

6. הליכות שלמה (פ"א ארוחות הלכה הע' 71)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Say this pasuk 7 times

לעולם ה' דברך נצב בשמים:

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

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OU Israel Kosher Food Service Standards

Over the past several weeks, we have discussed many of the challenges involved in maintaining reliable kashrut standards in restaurants, caterers, hotels, and other food-service establishments in Israel. To conclude this series, we would like to present the practical standards that OU Israel has established for the food-service establishments under its supervision.

Certifying a restaurant is very different from certifying a packaged product. A restaurant is a constantly changing environment. Ingredients arrive daily, employees come and go, menus change, deliveries are received throughout the day, and food is continuously being prepared and served. Effective kosher supervision therefore requires more than simply approving the ingredients and equipment. It requires a comprehensive system that maintains control from the moment an ingredient enters the establishment until the finished dish reaches the customer.

The following are some of the principal standards that form the basis of the OU Israel food-service program.

1. RECEIVING AND APPROVING RAW MATERIALS

To guarantee that the consumer receives a proper kosher meal, we must first be certain that every ingredient entering the final product is acceptable.

For this reason, only our *mashgichim* are authorized to approve products when they arrive at an OU-supervised food-service establishment. Deliveries may not simply be brought into storage rooms or food preparation areas. Before an ingredient enters the kitchen or storage area, the *mashgiach* must verify its kosher status and confirm that it is approved for use.

This creates an essential point of control at the entrance to the establishment. Even a well-supervised kitchen cannot maintain its kosher integrity if unapproved ingredients are allowed to enter freely.

2. MEAT AND FISH

Once an ingredient has been approved by the *mashgiach*, most products can be stored without significant additional concerns. Meat and fish, however, require greater precautions.

Chazal instituted special safeguards regarding meat and certain other foods because of the possibility of substitution or exchange. Consequently, OU Israel requires meat restaurants under its supervision to have full-time kosher supervision throughout their operating hours.

Areas containing unsealed meat or fish must remain under the control of the *mashgiach*. Before leaving the premises, the



mashgiach must ensure that these areas are properly locked, with the keys remaining under the control of authorized kosher personnel.

Alternatively, products may be secured with appropriate tamper-evident seals or *plumbas*—special kosher seals or clamps designed to demonstrate that the product has not been opened or substituted. Different sealing systems are used depending upon the type of product and container.

3. INSECT INSPECTION: VEGETABLES, RICE AND LEGUMES

The prohibition against consuming insects presents one of the most challenging areas of kosher food service. Leafy vegetables can contain insects that are extremely difficult to detect, even after ordinary washing.

Lettuce and other leafy greens must therefore come from approved *mehadrin* growers considered reliable for insect-controlled produce. Nevertheless, OU Israel policy does not rely upon the source alone. Greens must also undergo the prescribed washing, rinsing and inspection procedures under the supervision of our *mashgichim*.

Rice and legumes must similarly be inspected before use. Our *mashgichim* check them using a light box and screen to make the inspection as effective as possible. After inspection, the grains and legumes are stored in cold storage until they are required for use.

Certain varieties of leafy vegetables present such persistent infestation problems that they are not permitted for use in OU-supervised establishments when we cannot be

sufficiently confident that they can be properly cleaned and inspected.

4. MEAT AND POULTRY STANDARDS

All chicken served in OU Israel establishments must originate from OU-certified slaughterhouses or from slaughterhouses that have been reviewed and specifically approved by OU Kosher personnel.

All beef and lamb used in our establishments must meet **Chalak Beit Yosef** standards, thereby accommodating the requirements accepted by both Sephardic and Ashkenazic consumers.

In accordance with OU Kosher policy and the standards commonly maintained by major kosher certifications internationally, OU-certified food-service establishments do not serve meat from the hindquarters.

Internal organs and other meats requiring additional *kashering* procedures must be prepared under the direct responsibility of an OU *mashgiach* or a specifically designated *Ne'eman Kashrut*. This ensures that the special requirements associated with these products are properly carried out before they enter normal kitchen production.

5. BISHUL YISRAEL

Although we are privileged to live in *Eretz Yisrael*, many restaurants and commercial kitchens employ non-Jewish workers. This creates a practical challenge regarding *Bishul Yisrael*.

OU Israel's food-service standards are designed to satisfy not only the Ashkenazic approach to *Bishul Yisrael*, but also the strict standard associated with the *Beit Yosef* and

accepted by Sephardic communities.

Accordingly, non-Jewish employees are not permitted to perform cooking functions in the designated cooking areas. They may work in other designated areas and perform permitted stages of food preparation, but the actual cooking process remains under Jewish control.

As a result, OU-supervised restaurants and caterers are operated as *Bishul Yisrael* establishments according to both Ashkenazic and Sephardic standards.

6. MITZVOT HATELUYOT BA'ARETZ

Food service in Israel presents an additional area of responsibility that does not generally exist in kosher establishments outside the country: the *mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz*, the agricultural mitzvot unique to produce grown in the Land of Israel.

Agricultural produce must therefore originate from properly certified suppliers operating according to the required *mehadrin* standards.

Produce may only be accepted after the *mashgiach* verifies that the products delivered correspond to those listed on the delivery documentation and that the documentation bears the appropriate stamp and signature of the *mehadrin mashgiach*.

This system allows the restaurant's *mashgiach* to maintain a chain of kosher accountability from the produce supplier until the

ingredient enters the kitchen.

7. WINE AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Wine and alcoholic beverages require particular attention in a kosher food-service environment.

All alcoholic beverages served in OU establishments must be reviewed and approved by senior OU Kosher personnel. This includes products such as rum, beer, bourbon, tequila and other spirits. OU policy prohibits whiskies aged in sherry or other wine casks for use in its supervised establishments.

Wine presents an additional concern because of the special *halachot* governing *stam yeinam*. As a general food-service policy, OU Kosher approves **only mevushal wine**, thereby avoiding many of the complications that can arise when wine is handled in a restaurant environment.

In Israel, however, non-*mevushal* wine is considerably more common, and there are situations in which an establishment strongly wishes to serve it. When an exception is approved, strict controls are required: only the *mashgiach* may handle and pour the non-*mevushal* wine for customers.

8. VERIFYING MASHGIACH ATTENDANCE

A kosher program is only as effective as its implementation. Establishing standards on paper is insufficient if there is no reliable method of confirming that the required supervision is present.

To ensure that our *mashgichim* are on site during the required hours, they must clock in and out through a monitored attendance system. The OU Israel Kashrut office can compare the *mashgiach's* recorded hours with the establishment's operating and employee hours.

This provides an additional layer of accountability and allows us to verify that



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whenever kitchen activity requiring kosher supervision is taking place, the required *mashgiach* is present.

9. UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS AND ONGOING OVERSIGHT

Even a restaurant with an experienced *mashgiach* requires outside oversight. Familiarity and routine can sometimes cause procedures to become less precise over time.

OU Israel therefore employs dedicated kashrut supervisory personnel who conduct **unannounced inspections** of OU-certified restaurants and food-service establishments, generally approximately once a week. These visits allow us to observe the establishment under normal operating conditions and verify that the required procedures are being followed.

In addition, rabbinic personnel from the OU Israel Kashrut offices regularly visit supervised establishments. This creates multiple layers of oversight: the on-site *mashgiach*, the visiting supervisor, and the senior rabbinic staff responsible for the overall kosher program.

A FINAL WORD

We certainly recommend and stand behind the establishments operating under OU Israel supervision. At the same time, we recognize that questions surrounding restaurant kashrut can be sensitive, particularly when they arise in connection with family *simchas*, communal events, or gatherings involving people who follow different kosher standards.

It is important to emphasize that there are other kosher certifications in Israel that maintain strong and responsible standards as well. Differences between certifications do not necessarily mean that one establishment is "kosher" and another is "not kosher." Often, they reflect different halachic policies, levels of supervision, or standards adopted for

particular communities.

When differences in practice or personal standards have the potential to create tension within a family or community, the proper approach is to consult a trusted Rav who understands both the halachic issues and the circumstances involved.

The purpose of this series has therefore not been to create suspicion regarding eating out in Israel. Quite the opposite. Our goal has been to give consumers a better understanding of what takes place behind the scenes and why reliable food establishment supervision requires such an extensive system.

Consumer awareness itself can have a tremendous positive effect on kosher standards. When customers ask informed questions, look for reliable supervision, and demonstrate that kashrut genuinely matters to them, restaurant owners and food-service operators take notice.

Ultimately, better education creates better expectations, and better expectations encourage higher standards. We hope that greater knowledge and awareness will continue to strengthen the quality of kosher food service throughout *Eretz Yisrael* ■

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Rosh Hashanah: Hidden... But Not For Long

The resonance and gravitas of Rosh Hashanah are enormous. It is the day of judgment, when individuals and nations pass before Hashem, awaiting His judgment over the year ahead. Our world needs so much divine intervention, and on Rosh Hashanah we pray not only for ourselves and our families, but for our people and for the world we all inhabit.

Rosh Hashanah is described in Tehillim (81) in an enigmatic fashion: *Bakeseh l'yom chageinu* — “at the concealed time of our festival.” Phonetically, *keseh* echoes *kisei*, a throne, hinting at Hashem’s sovereignty and heavenly throne. Etymologically, however, *keseh* is closer to *kisui*, something covered or concealed. It is striking that a day of such enormous resonance should be described as a day of concealment.

THE HIDDEN DAY

The concealment of Rosh Hashanah runs much deeper than the term *keseh*. The Torah itself offers almost no indication of Rosh Hashanah’s magnitude. It appears simply as one festival among others, without any mention of judgment, malchut, or the fate of the world. The Torah itself leaves the day’s deeper meaning largely unspoken.

Not only are the judgment and majesty of the day concealed, but even its central mitzvah is hidden. The Torah describes Rosh Hashanah as *יום תרועה* and, alternatively, as

זכרון תרועה, without explicitly mentioning the blowing of a shofar. The Torah explicitly commands the sounding of a shofar on Yom Kippur of the Yovel. By comparing that passage with Rosh Hashanah, Chazal derive that the *teruah* of Rosh Hashanah is also produced by a shofar.

Even the mitzvah that gives Rosh Hashanah its most recognizable sound is only indirectly revealed.

Rosh Hashanah seems determined to hide its own significance. The heavenly drama that will shape our future is never explicitly described, and even the central mitzvah of the day is only alluded to, its meaning uncovered through a *derashah*. The Torah withholds not only the magnitude of the day, but even the identity of its central mitzvah.

Why is Rosh Hashanah such a concealed day?

WE KNOW

Rosh Hashanah is concealed because it celebrates Hashem’s *malchut*. His sovereignty preceded creation and will outlast history. It



Rav Yehuda
Amital ztvl”l

permeates the entire cosmos. Yet in our world it remains hidden. Until the day when His presence is openly recognized, His sovereignty remains largely concealed.

Most of humanity is entirely unaware of the magnitude of the day and of the sovereignty of the One before Whom they stand in judgment.

Except for one people.

אֲשֶׁר הָעָם יִדְעֵי תְרוּעָה ה' בְּאוֹר פְּנִיךָ יִהְיֶה.

We do know the majesty of this day. We know that it is *Yom HaDin*, and we understand the larger story of *malchut* that Rosh Hashanah represents. The day looks back to a world in which Hashem's authority was uncontested and forward to a future when His sovereignty will once again be acknowledged by all humanity.

תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר בְּכֶסֶה לְיוֹם חֲגֻנּוּ.

For the rest of the world, it remains a day of *keseh*, hidden and concealed. For us, it is *chageinu* — the day on which we recognize and celebrate the *malchut* they cannot yet see.

That awareness allows us, for one day each year, to see beyond the world as it currently appears. We remember a world in which Hashem's sovereignty was clear, and we look ahead to a future when humanity will once again recognize His presence.

REFLECTING HIS PRESENCE

We do not merely recognize His *malchut*; we reflect it. We represent Hashem in this world, and the way we are perceived shapes, in some measure, the way His presence is perceived. When the Jewish people are elevated, His presence becomes more visible. When we are degraded or despised, that presence becomes more obscured. Humanity encounters Hashem through His chosen people, and when that people is diminished, His presence in the world is diminished as well.

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On the eve of Rosh Hashanah 5787, we live in a fallen world in which Hashem's presence, as reflected through His people, has been badly obscured. The world struggles to accept one of the central truths of our history: Hashem gave this land to His people and brought us back to live under His eye. After centuries of exile, we have finally returned. Yet much of the world still cannot accept our presence here.

That rejection has hardened into anger and, increasingly, hatred. False accusations are hurled at us, and Israel is caricatured through the darkest categories of the modern era: apartheid, genocide, and colonialism. Our return to the land Hashem gave us should make His presence more visible in history. Instead, the hostility it has provoked has, for now, driven that presence even deeper into concealment.

DIMINISHED KAVOD

My Rebbe, Rav Amital, once described a Rosh Hashanah davening during the Holocaust. They gathered in a darkened room, and when they reached the words *ובכן תן כבוד* and when they reached the words *ה' לעמך*, they began to laugh bitterly and pity themselves. What honor could the Jewish people possibly receive while they were being annihilated across Europe?

In the decades that followed, a measure of that honor was restored. We returned to Eretz Yisrael, rebuilt Jewish sovereignty, and

witnessed a renaissance of Jewish life that would have been unimaginable without the State of Israel. Our *kavod* rose with it.

And now our *kavod* is once again under assault. In many ways, this is an old story, one that has followed us throughout the two thousand years since we left Yerushalayim. We were repeatedly mocked, maligned, and portrayed as the source of society's deepest ills. The *kavod* of Hashem's people was diminished, and with it His presence became even more concealed. Today, as in the past, we are once again being assailed, caricatured, and verbally attacked across the world.

Yet there is something paradoxical about the assault on our *kavod* at this stage of history. Much of the hostility directed at Jews today is bound up with our return to Eretz Yisrael and our effort to rebuild Jewish life in the land Hashem gave us. That return should make His presence more visible in history. Yet precisely because of it, our people are vilified and our *kavod* is diminished. The process through which Hashem is becoming more visible has, for now, provoked hostility that obscures Him even further.

Zionism and Judaism have therefore become increasingly intertwined in the eyes of the world. Hatred of Israel spills into hatred of Jews, while hostility toward Jews often expresses itself through hostility toward Israel. The attempt to deny our return to Eretz Yisrael becomes part of the older attempt to diminish the Jewish people themselves. We live inside that painful paradox of *keseh*: our return begins to uncover Hashem's presence, while the reaction to that return diminishes our *kavod* and pushes Him further into concealment.

On Rosh Hashanah, for one day, we try to break through it: to recognize the King who remains hidden and to pray for the day when

His presence will finally be visible to all.

FROM KESEH TO GILUI

It will not always be this way. Before blowing the shofar, we recite seven times the perek of Tehillim (47) that imagines the end of history, when *keseh* finally gives way to *gilui Shechinah*. The nations themselves gather to celebrate Hashem's sovereignty:

כָּל הָעַמִּים תִּקְעוּ כִּף הָרִיעוּ לְאֱלֹקִים בְּקוֹל רִנָּה.

Hashem's revelation is heralded by the sound of the shofar:

עֲלֵה אֱלֹקִים בְּתִרְעָה ה' בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר.

And our return to Eretz Yisrael is part of that revelation:

יִבְחַר לָנוּ אֶת נַחֲלָתָנוּ אֶת גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב סֵלָה.

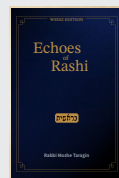
The world that once resisted our return will eventually recognize what that return represents. The restoration of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael and the revelation of Hashem's presence will finally be understood as parts of the same story.

That is the world we pray for on Rosh Hashanah:

הוֹפֵעַ בְּהִדָּר גְּאוֹן אֶזְרָךְ עַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל אֲרָצֶךָ.

A world in which concealment finally ends:
וַיֵּדַע כָּל פְּעוּל כִּי אַתָּה פְּעַלְתָּ, וַיִּבֶן כָּל יָצוֹר כִּי אַתָּה יִצְרְתָּ, וַיֹּאמֶר כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמָה בָּאֵפוֹ: ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֶלֶךְ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל מִשְׁלָה.

For now, Rosh Hashanah remains *bakeseh*. We await the day when the King we already know will be known by all. ■



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A Teshuva Brimming With Confidence

“Rabbi Eliezer says: ...repent one day before your death...” (Pirkei Avot 2:10)

This statement in the Mishnah is explained by the question Rabbi Eliezer’s students asked: “How is one to know the day one will die?” Rabbi Eliezer responded, in essence, “That is exactly what I meant. Since one is never certain that one will not die the next day, one should do teshuva every day” (Shabbat 153a).

Rav Kook raises a fascinating question regarding Rabbi Eliezer’s teaching: Why did the great sage specifically say that one should repent “one day before one’s death” rather than simply say that one should repent every day because one might suddenly pass from this world?



Title page from Rav Kook’s ‘Orot HaTeshuva’

Rav Kook answers that the phrase “one day before” represents a profound lesson about the ideal way to engage in teshuva. Had Rabbi Eliezer simply said that one should do teshuva every day because one might die at any moment, this teshuva would likely be characterized primarily by fear and remorse. One would focus on *charatah al ha’avar*, remorse for past sins - a last-minute effort centered on guilt and regret. Such teshuva, however, would be sorely lacking in *kabbalah al ha’atid*: a commitment to the future, an optimistic vision for a more noble life.

It is for this reason, says Rav Kook, that Rabbi Eliezer carefully chose his words: “Repent one day before your death.” “One day” means that there is a day to plan for and to live fully. Teshuva is not meant to lead to morbidity or depression. One of Rav Kook’s most lasting and inspiring messages is that teshuva should be invigorating and uplifting, inspiring a Jew to live his or her best life (Midbar Shor, Drush #10, cited in *Nelcha Ad HaRo’eh, Iyun B’Pirkei Avot*, Slav, p. 82).

EATING AND FASTING

In a similar vein, Rav Kook applies this



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idea to the obligation to eat on *erev Yom Kippur*. Based on the Torah's verse concerning Yom Kippur, "And you shall afflict your soul on the ninth of the month in the evening," the Talmud derives that one must eat and drink on the day leading into Yom Kippur.

It is surprising that the Torah identifies Yom Kippur with the ninth day of Tishrei when the day of its observance is the tenth. Apparently, the Torah chose to place emphasis on the ninth day as well. Why?

Rav Kook explains that Yom Kippur, with all its solemnity and emphasis on restraint and restriction, represents one dimension of teshuva: limiting our interaction with the physical world and entering a kind of angelic state. Yet this is only one facet of teshuva. Teshuva is also beautifully reflected in one's ability to live life with energy - to eat and drink, to engage with the physical world, and to transform those experiences into an expression of *kabbalat ol malchut shamayim*, acceptance of God's heavenly kingship.

The Talmud says that "one who eats on *erev Yom Kippur* is tantamount to fasting on the day of Yom Kippur" (Berachot 8b). In what way can eating and drinking possibly be compared to the solemnity of the twenty-four-hour fast of Yom Kippur?

Rav Kook suggests that this is precisely the point. The Yom Kippur fast represents only half the story of what true teshuva entails. It is a day of asceticism and *inuy*, affliction, designed to inspire introspection and self-evaluation.

The other dimension of teshuva, epitomized by the eating and drinking of the day before Yom Kippur, is a teshuva of action and engagement with life - a teshuva in which one propels oneself toward growth and self-actualization. Both aspects of teshuva are

necessary to achieve the fullness and nobility of repentance (*Ein Ayah*, Berachot, chapter 1, piska #103).

"ONE DAY"

Rav Kook adds another beautiful insight regarding the Mishnah in Avot and Rabbi Eliezer's emphasis on doing teshuva "one day" before death. From a psychological perspective, when engaging in teshuva, a person can easily feel overwhelmed by the thought that it will be nearly impossible to maintain a change in behavior over the long term. The weight of that burden can become so great that a person chooses not to embark on the journey at all.

It is for this reason that Rabbi Eliezer suggests "one day." There is no need to overthink how long a new commitment must be maintained or to become discouraged by imagining the years ahead. Simply choose to do it for today. Focus on the immediate future.

A person can more easily commit to improved behavior or a particular practice knowing that he or she only needs to maintain it for a short time. Perhaps, without the pressure of thinking about the distant future, that newly adopted behavior continues into a second and third day. Eventually, almost unexpectedly, one discovers that the change has become part of one's life and that one has reached a new plateau in spiritual growth (Midbar Shor, Drush #10).



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Rav Kook was known to have had a close affinity for the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. It is noteworthy that Rebbe Nachman expresses a similar idea: often, the key to making a lasting change is simply to focus on today rather than looking too far into the future. He quotes the verse, “On this day, if you hear His voice” (Tehillim 95:7). When a person feels that the burden is too great, he may simply refuse to carry it. But when the task is manageable, a person is willing to give it his best effort (*Likutei Moharan*, I, 272).

FORGING AHEAD

One of the most exhilarating themes Rav Kook conveys in *Orot HaTeshuva* is the notion that the process of teshuva should be accompanied by optimism and that a person should feel energized and revived through the experience. We should avoid a form of teshuva that is emotionally exhausting or paralyzing. When the process becomes overly weighty and we lose our sense of joy, we need to find a path of teshuva that is refreshing and invigorating.

Rav Kook expresses this idea beautifully:

“At times it is best to avoid thoughts of holiness and teshuva when they come in the spirit of melancholy. The joy that flows from the depth of holiness is greater than other expressions of holiness and teshuva. When thoughts of fear and teshuva occur to a person in a

spirit of melancholy, let him distract his mind from them until his mind becomes more settled” (*Orot HaTeshuva*, 14:11).

Rav Kook strongly advises that joy and optimism be essential components of the pursuit of change and self-improvement. If anxious or depressing thoughts related to teshuva begin to surface, it may be best to step back until more encouraging and invigorating thoughts become predominant.

Rav Kook also teaches us to recognize the positivity that emerges from the decision to change itself. Even before embarking on the process, and even before knowing exactly how one will proceed, the moment a person decides that it is time to improve or change can itself be energizing and uplifting:

“Although at the time he may be perplexed how to extricate himself from the mire of sin, although he may still be unsure how to mend all his past and his course is not yet clearly marked out to him, with many stumbling blocks yet facing him, the will to be good—this is a wind from the Garden of Eden blowing on the soul and filling it with contentment, to a point that even the hellish fires of remorse are turned into a source of delight” (*Orot HaTeshuva*, 16:4).

There is something profoundly satisfying about tapping into one’s will to do good and beginning the journey of growth.

Rav Kook offers one final teaching that captures this entire approach in a single sentence: “The focus of teshuva must always be directed toward improving the future” (*Orot HaTeshuva*, 13:11).

Although one of the essential aspects of teshuva is *charatah al ha’avar*, remorse for past wrongdoing, Rav Kook urges us not to dwell endlessly on our history or harp on our missteps. The past must be acknowledged,

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but the purpose of teshuva is ultimately to propel us forward. We are meant to look with optimism and confidence toward the future and envision a brighter and better life.

A TESHUVA OF CONFIDENCE

Perhaps this is the deepest message of Rav Kook's vision of teshuva. Teshuva is not fundamentally a story of looking backward with shame; it is a story of looking forward with hope. The past may teach us where we have fallen short, but it does not have to determine where we are going. Every day offers the possibility of beginning again, and even a single day can become the starting point for lasting transformation.

That is why Rabbi Eliezer tells us to repent "one day before your death." We are not being asked to carry the burden of an entire lifetime at once. We are being asked to live today differently, to make one meaningful decision, take one step forward, and allow that step to lead to another. The teshuva of Rav Kook is therefore not a teshuva of despair, but a teshuva brimming with confidence: confidence in the power of the human spirit, confidence in the possibility of change, and above all, confidence that the future can be better than the past.

Rav Kook teaches that we should certainly reflect on where we have been, but we should not remain there. We should ask ourselves not only, "What must I regret?" but also, and perhaps more importantly, "What kind of person can I become?" The answer begins not tomorrow, and not sometime in the distant future, but with the one day that is in front of us today. ■



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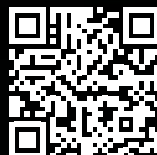
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Eating Before Musaf on Rosh Hashanah/Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: In our relatively new *minyan*, we have finished Musaf of Rosh Hashanah at around 1:00, and have not made *Kiddush* before *tekiot*. Someone suggested that this year's first day being Shabbat changes the equation. What does Halacha say about this?

Answer: One should not fast in the morning until *chatzot* on Shabbat (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 288:1) and *Yom Tov* (Mishna Berura 288:2). Considering that one generally must not eat before *davening* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 89:3) and the long *davening* of Rosh Hashanah (=RH), this raises a challenge.

One solution is the claim that the need to eat by *chatzot* does not apply to RH (see Mishna Berura 597:1), because of its different nature compared to the three *regalim*. First, there

are opinions (see Rama, OC 597:3) that there is value in fasting on RH, the Day of Judgment. Although we do not accept that approach, it may justify at least not eating until *chatzot* (Mateh Ephrayim 597:2). Another reason to be lenient on late eating is that since it is appropriate to say many prayers, late eating is a justifiable price (see Magen Avraham 584:4; Yam Shel Shlomo, Beitza 2:4).

There are, though, opinions that one should eat before *chatzot* even on RH. One solution is to rely on drinking water or tea (permitted before *davening* – Shulchan Aruch, OC 89:3) before *davening* to forestall the fast (Eleph Hamagen 597:2; see opinions in Dirshu 597:7 on whether this is enough), for at least six hours from the drinking. As you know, some shuls solve the problem by having a *Kiddush* after *Shacharit*. It is debated whether it is permitted to eat a snack before a special daytime *mitzva* (see Magen Avraham 652:4 regarding before *lulav*; Mikraei Kodesh (Frank), RH 29 regarding *shofar*). We will not go further into that debate, with its legitimate *minhagim*, and will focus on your question – RH on Shabbat.

On Shabbat, the scales lean more toward allowing and/or encouraging *Kiddush* before *Musaf*. For one thing, on Shabbat there is no *shofar* blowing to avoid preceding. Admittedly, many say not to eat too much before

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any Shabbat *Musaf* (see development in this column, Shelach 5783). The Shulchan Aruch (OC 286:3) allows "tasting," which in a parallel context (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 639:2) means up to a *k'beitza* (size of an egg) of bread and any amount of "fruit." *Poskim* posit that a *k'beitza* is the limit for *pat haba'ah b'kisnin* (baked grain-based foods, e.g., cake). There is less certainty regarding limits on grain-based cooked foods (e.g., *cholent*) (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 52:(52); Ishei Yisrael 36:76). There is no limit on non-alcoholic beverages (ibid.). The grounds we mentioned for the possibility of being more lenient apply here as well. Thus, with good cause, a *shul* could provide a light *Kiddush* menu and not be overly concerned if people eat more than ideal. Do realize that there is also a minimum for how much to eat, for the *Kiddush* to count (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 273:5)

The major point is that while the "leniency" for partial fasting is plausible on RH, it is forbidden on Shabbat. Therefore, some *poskim* are insistent that one eat before *chatzot* when RH falls on Shabbat (Yam Shel Shlomo ibid.; Mishna Berura 584:5). So why do many shuls not make *Kiddush* before RH/Shabbat *Musaf*? Rav M. Willig (Am Mordechai, Moadim 3) explains and supports the practice of not having this *Kiddush* as follows. The Maharil, accepted by the Rama (584:1) allows davening past *chatzot* without eating because the long *davening* is a *mitzva* that applies even if RH is on Shabbat. The Mishna Berura followed the Yam Shel Shlomo who justified late eating on RH because eating is not crucial on RH, and therefore requires pre-*chatzot*

eating when it falls on Shabbat. Therefore, an early *Kiddush* makes more sense on RH/Shabbat, but is not clearly required. Considering that RH *Musaf* is shorter on Shabbat, you might finish before *chatzot*.

A major factor to consider is the *Kiddush*'s impact on your *minyán*, which can be positive (e.g., gives strength for *Musaf* with *kavana*) or negative (e.g., hard to be intense in *Musaf* after socializing). ■

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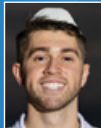
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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

This Year Let's Be Onions

This year, I am working on being an onion. Because that is the way of hope.

Allow me to explain.

In the early years of Chassidus, before telephones, the internet, or any form of mass communication, chassidim who traveled to the Rebbe were expected to share the Torah they had learned when they returned home. In this way, those who could not travel themselves could still connect to the Rebbe and grow in Chassidus.

The Mittlerer Rebbe of Chabad, R' DovBer Schneuri, was particularly insistent on this practice. One chassid who travelled frequently developed a gift for teaching. His explanations were clear and engaging, and people along his journey would thank him and compliment his delivery. Over time, he noticed that he was beginning to enjoy, and perhaps even crave, the praise.

He went to the Mittlerer Rebbe and asked to be excused from his responsibility. He was afraid that continuing to teach was feeding his ego.

The Rebbe's response became famous: "An onion should become of you," he cried, "but teach others what you must teach them!"

What did he mean? How would becoming an onion solve the problem of ego?

The answer is 'bittul'. I have struggled for years to understand and internalize this concept.

Bittul is often translated as self-nullification, but it does not mean becoming nothing. It means using our talents while recognizing that they are not ultimately ours. They flow through us from the Source of All Things, Hashem.

How can we practice this?

In Parshas Kedoshim, we are warned:

אַל־תִּפְּנוּ אֶל־הָאֱלִילִים וְאֶל־קִי מַסֵּכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם
אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

"Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves: I am Hashem, your God."

The Ishbitzer, R' Mordechai Yosef Leiner, teaches that we can make a 'maseichah', an idol, out of almost anything. Anything can become 'avodah zarah' when we become attached to the thing itself rather than the Divine purpose within it.

Even Torah and Tefillah.

We can become so invested in how we daven, how we teach, how we perform, or how spiritual we feel, that the activity itself becomes the object of our attention, rather than the One we are meant to be serving.

The Ishbitzer asks us to check in: Am I davening to serve Hashem, or to feed my ego? Am I teaching Torah to bring Hashem's light into the world, or because I enjoy being the one who teaches it?

What happens if the answer is uncomfortable? Should we stop? Chas v'shalom.

We don't throw away the gift because it can feed our ego. We peel away the layer that is



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getting in the way.

The Ishbitzer and other holy tzaddikim teach a beautiful understanding of קְדוּשָׁתִי תְהִי: “You shall be holy” not as a command, but as a promise. At our deepest level, each of us is a *chelek Eloka mima’al*, a piece of the Divine above. The work is to access that inner reality.

“Be an onion,” is the path forward.

Just like an onion, each of us has a core surrounded by many layers. The core is our G-dliness. The layers are everything we have accumulated around it: ego, fear, habits, expectations, insecurities.

The work of bittul is not to destroy ourselves. It is to peel.

To keep using the gifts Hashem has given us while continually asking: Is this revealing my inner self, or blocking it? And when we discover a layer that is no longer serving the Divine purpose, we gently let it go.

That is the path of hope.

Peeling is not an act of self-erasure. It is an act of revelation.

May Hashem give us the courage this year to recognize when a layer needs to be removed, the koach to peel it away, and the emunah to trust that beneath every layer is a soul that has never stopped being connected to Him.

Shana Tova U’Metuka! ■

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

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JEN AIRLEY

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What If We Knew?

There is something almost auspicious about the way the calendar falls this year.

It is almost exactly as it was three years ago.

Rosh Hashanah on Shabbat.

Yom Kippur on Monday.

Simchat Torah on Shabbat.

Three years ago, we had no idea what was coming.

Today, we do.

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, the בעל ערוך לנר, makes a fascinating observation in his commentary *Minchat Ani* on Parshat Ha'azinu. He asks whether a year in which Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat is a good sign. His answer is striking: historically, these were not ordinary years. Some were among the worst years in Jewish history, while others were among the greatest.

The destruction of both Batei Mikdash occurred in the years in which Rosh

Hashanah fell on Shabbat. But so too did the forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf, the establishment of the Mishkan, and the year in which Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael.

In other words, a year beginning with Rosh Hashanah on Shabbat can be a year of extraordinary consequence. It can be a year of painful destruction—or a year of extraordinary glory.

And here we are, three years later, staring at almost the exact same calendar.

It is impossible not to wonder: What will this year bring?

But perhaps that is not the question we should be asking.

Perhaps the more important question is: **What will we bring to this year?**

Because we have something this time that we did not have three years ago.

Hindsight.

If we had known then what was waiting for us on Simchat Torah 5784, how differently would we have experienced Elul? How much more urgently would we have davened? How much more intensely would we have cried out to Hashem on Rosh Hashanah?

We would have been shaken into taking every word of our tefillot seriously.

And perhaps that is precisely the opportunity we have been given now.

The Rambam, in Hilchot Teshuvah (2:1), defines complete teshuvah in a remarkable way:

”אי זו היא תשובה גמורה? זה שבא לידו דבר שעבר בו ואפשר בידו לעשותו ופירש ולא עשה מפני התשובה, לא מיראה ולא מכשולן כח.”



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True teshuvah is when a person finds himself in the same situation in which he previously sinned—he has the same ability to do it again—and nevertheless chooses differently.

We are approaching Rosh Hashanah, and in some extraordinary way, we have been brought back to the same place.

The calendar is repeating itself.

But we are not the same people.

We have lived through October 7th. We have lived through war, loss, uncertainty and extraordinary miracles. We have seen what happens when a nation is fractured. We have also seen what happens when Jews come together with extraordinary courage and love.

And now, as the media fills our screens with elections, politics, arguments and competing narratives, we are once again watching division play out before our eyes.

Perhaps those divisions do not represent the entirety of who we are. But they are certainly what is being amplified.

And perhaps the question of teshuvah this year is not simply, *What do I need to change?*

Perhaps it is: **What have I learned?**

Have we forgotten what disunity can cost?

Is October 6th already becoming a distant memory?

Have we forgotten how desperately we cried to Hashem on Yom Kippur 5784?

And what can we possibly do now?

Yes, we can create achdut projects.

We can strengthen relationships.

We can choose shalom over conflict.

But can we solve everything?

The problems are simply too big.

So what happens when the problem is bigger than us?

We turn to the One who is not limited by it.

We daven.

Perhaps this year, our tefillot need to be bigger than our own personal requests.

“Hashem, open their eyes to see clearly.”

“Hashem, open their ears to hear truth.”

“Hashem, give our leaders wisdom.”

“Hashem, give our nation clarity.”

“Hashem, remove the fog.”

Yeshayahu describes a future era in which **מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת אֶת ה' כְּמִים לַיָּם מְכֻסִּים** — the world will be filled with knowledge of Hashem as the waters cover the sea.

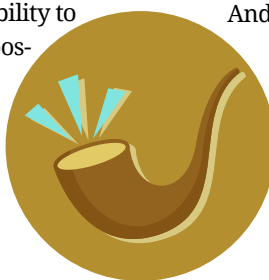
Perhaps we are not there yet.

So we pray for it.

We pray that those days come quickly.

But there is another way we can use the extraordinary power of tefillah this Rosh Hashanah.

Pray for someone else.



Before Rosh Hashanah, make a list.

Who needs a refuah? A shidduch? Success? Salvation? Insight and clarity? Who needs to find their way back?

While the main point of Rosh Hashanah is re-inaugurating Hashem as king over my life and the world, we also tend to come to Rosh Hashanah with a spiritual “shopping list” knowing only He can provide my needs.

But what if we come before Hashem not asking for our personal needs but rather asking for the needs of other people.

Because there is something extraordinarily powerful about standing before Hashem, knowing that we have His attention, knowing that we can ask Him for almost anything—and choosing to say:

“Hashem, I want this for myself. But please give it to them.”

What parent wouldn’t experience enormous nachas from hearing a child ask for a sibling’s needs before their own?

Perhaps this is a form of **mesirut nefesh**.

Not only because praying for someone else strengthens our bond with that person. Not only because it is an expression of **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**. But because there is holiness in surrendering our own desire and asking Hashem to give to another Jew first.

I want health—but please give it to him.

I want happiness—but please give it to her.

I want salvation—but please save them..

Perhaps this is our opportunity for teshuvah this year.

The calendar has brought us back to the same place.

But we know something now that we didn’t know then.

We know that everything can change overnight.

We know that we cannot control the future.

We know that Torah, mitzvot, achdut and tefillah are not abstract ideals. They are the very things that connect us to the One who runs the world.

So perhaps this year, instead of allowing the turbulence around us to pull us into anger, fear or despair, we can turn it into tefillah.

We can take every frustration and send it heavenward.

Every disagreement can become a prayer for clarity.

Every worry can become a request for protection.

Every person we disagree with can become someone we daven for.

Rabbi Ettlinger reminds us that a year with this calendar can go in radically different directions—toward destruction or toward glory.

With our hindsight vision, with our turning to Hashem, with our willingness to put others ahead of ourselves, and with our giving and doing for one another from the bottom of our hearts, may we be *zoche* to turn this year toward glory rather than destruction, toward unity rather than division, toward redemption rather than fear — and toward a year of **pure undeniable sweetness**.

■ **כתיבה וחתימה טובה.**

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

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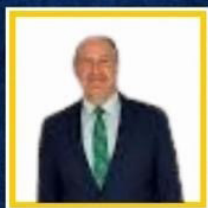
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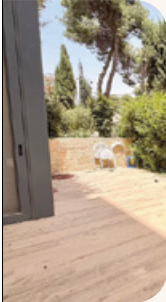
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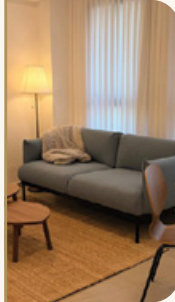
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מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

You May Be Part of Their Story

There is something both humbling and hopeful about Rosh Hashanah.

We stand before Hashem knowing that He is writing the story of the year ahead. We don't know what will happen, whom we will meet, which doors will open, or which seemingly small moment will change the direction of our lives.

And somewhere, in all of those stories being written, are people who will meet their match this year.

The Gemara teaches that forty days before a child is formed, a Heavenly voice declares who that person will marry (Sotah 2a). The match may be made in Heaven, but down here,

someone still has to make the introduction.

That's where we come in.

We don't control the outcome. We don't know which suggestion will lead somewhere and which won't. But we have an obligation to make an effort, to do our 'hishtadlut', because you never know when Hashem might be asking you to play a small part in someone else's very big story.

Last year, just a few days before Rosh Hashanah, a couple I had the privilege of matching got married.

When I first suggested the match, I knew it probably wouldn't knock her socks off.

I told her, "This is going to be a slow grow."

Or, as I like to call it, a slow spark.

I didn't expect fireworks on date one. I expected something quieter. A good person. A good conversation. Enough compatibility to go out again. And then enough to go out again after that.

My description did not disappoint, but neither did the relationship.

Slowly, something beautiful began to grow.

And that reminded me that matchmaking isn't only about setting people up. Sometimes our job is to walk people through the match to help them gain clarity when their emotions haven't caught up yet. To help them distinguish between "this isn't right" and "this isn't obvious yet."

Thank G-d, their slow spark continued to grow. They married just before Rosh Hashanah last year, and now they are celebrating their first anniversary together.

Think about that as we enter a new year.



There may be two people whose names have already been connected Above, while down here they are still waiting for someone to think of them.

Maybe that someone is you.

Make the call. Send the name. Revisit the idea you may have dismissed too quickly. And if you're single, make an effort too. Say yes when there is enough to explore. And if someone isn't right for you, pass them on and try to make a match with someone you know.

Hashem writes the story.

Our job is to be willing to pick up the pen when He puts it in our hands.

This Rosh Hashanah, may Hashem bless you with the wisdom to see possibilities others overlook, the courage to make the suggestion, and the patience to nurture a slow spark.

Shana Tova U'Metuka.

Aleeza ■

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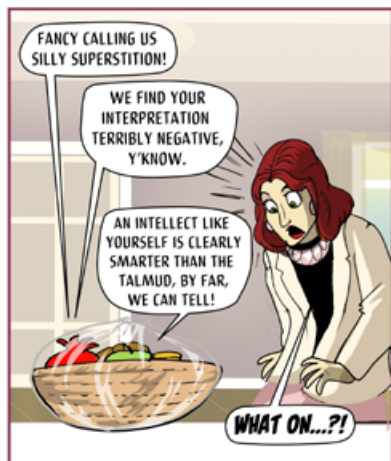
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WHAT ROLE WILL I PLAY?

Rosh Hashanah is known as the יום הדין - the Day of Judgment. The משנה teaches that on Rosh Hashanah, כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו, כבני מרון — every person passes individually before Hashem, kivnei maron, like sheep being counted one by one (משנה ראש השנה א:ב).

But if Rosh Hashanah is our day of judgment, something seems strange: Why don't we spend the day listing everything we did wrong? Because Rosh Hashanah begins with something bigger. The Gemara teaches that on Rosh Hashanah we recite מלכיות — verses of Hashem's Kingship — כדי שתמליכוני עליכם, so that we crown Hashem as King over us (ראש השנה טז ע"א). Imagine standing at the coronation of a king among thousands of people, proudly declaring, "Long live the King!" Then the King turns toward you and asks: "You are part of my kingdom. What are you contributing to it?" That may be one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves this Rosh Hashanah. Sometimes, as teenagers, it is easy to think that our real opportunity to make a difference begins later,

When I am older. **Someday**, I'll change."

But the shofar calls us to wake up now. The Rambam famously explains its message: עוררנו משנתכם ישנים — wake up from your sleep, examine your actions, and remember your Creator (רמב"ם, הלכות תשובה ג:ד). Hashem needs something from each of us right now. Our Torah, kindness, leadership, friendships, and everyday choices can make our nation stronger and Hashem's world better. So perhaps the question of Rosh Hashanah isn't only, "How did I do last year?" It is also: **"Who can I become this year — and what role will I play in Hashem's kingdom?"** This Rosh Hashanah, let's not wait for "someday." Our opportunity begins **now**.



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DIPPING INTO A NEW YEAR

Why do we eat the סימנים if we know they don't actually change the outcome of the year?

On Rosh Hashanah, we eat special foods, and we say יהי רצון asking Hashem for a good year. But why do we need the food? Hashem doesn't need a piece of apple to know what we want!

One answer can be that the סימנים are a way of turning our hopes into actions. Instead of just saying, "I want to have a good year," we stop and think about what kind of year we actually want.

For example, when we eat an apple with honey and ask for a שנה טובה ומתוקה, we aren't

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just asking Hashem for nice things. We're reminding ourselves to look for the sweetness that already exists in our lives and to create more sweetness for other people.

The pomegranate is another example. We ask that our כויות should be as numerous as its seeds. A pomegranate has so many seeds that when you look at it from the outside, you can't even see what's inside. Sometimes people are like that, too. Someone might look like they have everything together, but inside, they're struggling. Rosh Hashanah reminds us to judge people favorably and remember that there's always more going on inside than we can see.

And maybe that's the biggest message of the ס'ימים. Rosh Hashanah isn't only about asking Hashem to change our year; it's about asking ourselves what we can change. We can't control everything that happens this year, but we can control some things: how we speak to people, whether we make someone feel included, whether we notice someone who's having a hard day, and how we make an effort to become better.

So when we sit around the table on Rosh Hashanah and say all the ה'י רצון, we shouldn't just think, "I hope Hashem gives me a good year." We can also think, "What can I do to help make this a good year?" Because the ס'ימים aren't magic; they're reminders. They remind us what we're asking for, what kind of person we want to be, and what kind of year we want to create with Hashem's help.

■ שנה טובה ומתוקה!

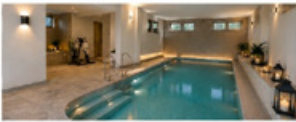


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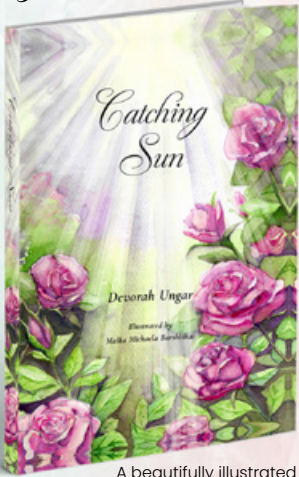
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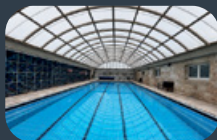
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Garage Space



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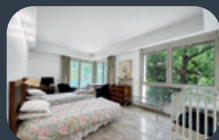
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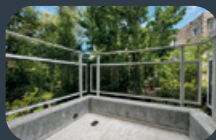
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