

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET  
ON ROSH HASHANAH - 5757

B'S'D'

the statement in the Talmud (Rosh Hashonah 34b):

"Mephorash Amru Holchin Lemakom Shetokin Vayn Holchin Lemakom Shemevarchim. Peshita! Ha Deoraysa Ha Rabanan! Lo Tzericha, Daf Al Gav Dha Vadav Vha Safek".

If one has a choice to attend one of two services, one where he may hear Tekias Shofar or where he definitely will be able to hear the Berachos of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros, he is obligated to attend the former. We see from this that the obligation to hear the Shofar itself takes precedence over the obligation to hear Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros. Had they both been biblical obligations there would have been no reason to prefer one over the other.

The Rav quoted the Haamek Sheelah who defended Rashi saying that Rashi agreed with the Geonim Kadmonim that Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros is a biblical obligation, however only when combined with Tekias Shofar. Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros without Tekias Shofar they are Drabbanan. The Gemara says that is it preferable to go to the place where they may blow shofar, and even recite the Brachos of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros, rather than to go to a place where they only say the Brachos of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros without the context of Tekias Shofar, in which case it is only a Drabbanan.

So according to the Ramban the term Zichron Teruah means Zichron through Teruah while according to Rashi it means Zichron of Teruah, i.e. through the recitation of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros.

The Ramban asks how do we know that the word Teruah means blowing this sound through a Shofar? Perhaps we must use a trumpet (Chatzotzros) to fulfill this obligation? The Ramban says that Chatzotzros are not mentioned explicitly in the Parsha of Rosh Hashonah, but are introduced in Sefer Bamidbar, so we can assume that they were not intended. Also Teruah implies Shofar, as seen from the Passuk (Vayikra 25:9) Vhaavarta Shofar Teruah.

The Ramban continues: the Torah did not explain the reason behind this Mitzvah: why the Teruah and why must there be Zichron before HKBH on this day as opposed to any other day in the year? The Torah mentions no historical event that coincides with Rosh Hashonah. The Rav mentioned that there is a well known disagreement between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua in what month the world was created. Was it Nissan or Tishrei? Because of this dispute many communities did not include such statements in the Amidah of Rosh Hashonah. Zeh Hayom Techilas Maasecha. Yet even in those communities, they still blew Shofar and celebrated Rosh Hashonah, so apparently creation of the universe was not the event that singles out Rosh Hashonah.

The Ramban states that although he can not pinpoint a unique event that occurred on Rosh Hashonah, he knows that 9 days after Rosh Hashonah, we celebrate Yom Kippur, the day of atonement and forgiveness. Hence the holiday of Rosh Hashonah is related in some way to Yom Kippur. This is what the Ramban means when he says:

"Aval Mpnay Shehu Bchodsho Shel Yom Kippur Brosh Chodesh Nireh Shebo Yihyeh Din Lefanav Yisbarech Ki Haschem Yadin Amim B'Rosh Hashonah Yashev Lkesei Shofet Tzedek Vacharei Ken Baseres Hayamim Yisa Lfasha Avadav Nirmaz Bacasuv".

The fact that Rosh Hashonah is connected with Yom Kippur in the same month, in and of itself indicates that Rosh Hashonah is an exceptional Yom Tov.

The Rav says that perhaps the Ramban was motivated by the Rambam, who (Hilchos Chovel Umazik, 1) formulates the notion that there are certain laws that we have accepted based on the unbroken tradition that has been handed down to us through the ages, beginning with Moshe and having been witnessed by all subsequent generations and Batei Din. There is a tradition that originated with Moshe Rabbeinu and continued by all the Chachmei Yisrael throughout the generations that all of them singled Rosh Hashonah as a unique and exceptional day.

The Ramban now explains in detail the meaning of Zichron Teruah. The Rav expounded on this, extracting from the Ramban the essence of the Kedushas Hayom of Rosh Hashonah. Indeed this deep insight into Rosh

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Shiur HaRav Y.D. Soloveichik ZTL on Shofar

At the the Yarchei Kallah, delivered in Boston in 5742 (Aug. 1977), the Rav explained the Ramban on Zichron Teruah and extracted the essence of Shofar and how it reflects the Kedushas Hayom of Rosh Hashonah (Vayikra 25:24).

The Ramban interprets the term Zichron Teruah as "this is the day in which we are remembered by HKBH through Teruah". Rashi interprets Zichron Teruah as Zichron Pesukei Zichronos U'Psukei Shofros. In other words we must recite Malchios Zichronos and Shofros on Rosh Hashonah. The Ramban suspects that Rashi is of the opinion that Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros are Doraysa obligations. That the obligation on Rosh Hashonah is not only to blow the Shofar and produce the sound, but Zichron Teruah requires us to speak about it as well through the recitation of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros.

There is no doubt that the institution of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros is based on Zichron Teruah. Yet we do not find a similar obligation of Zichron, to recite verses in conjunction with other Mitzvos, such as Lulav, Matzah. This manifests a double Kiyum for Zichron Teruah: blowing shofar per se as well as doing it in the framework of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros.

The Ramban asks why did Rashi omit Malchios from his interpretation of Zichron Teruah? Why only mention Zichronos and Shofros? The Ramban answered this question saying that though Zichron Teruah is specific to Zichronos and Shofros, the obligation to recite Malchios is derived from a Binyan Av (Masechet Rosh Hashonah 32a). Rashi only mentions that which is specifically derived from the Zichron Teruah. But of course Rashi agrees that the same obligation exists regarding Malchios as well.

The Ramban's opinion is that the recitation of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros in the framework of Tekias Shofar as derived from Zichron Teruah is only an Asmachta and is Rabbinic in nature. The Ramban derives this from

Hashonah expressed by the Ramban can be seen in all aspects of the Machzor that we have for Rosh Hashonah. The Ramban paraphrases the words of the Haggadah when he says:

"Val Derech Haemes Teruah Hi Sheamdah Laavosaynu Vlanu..."

Rosh Hashonah is the day of judgement, Din. This is described (Erchin 10b): the Angels asked HKBH why don't Bnay Yisrael recite Hallel on Rosh Hashonah? HKBH answered is it possible that when the King is sitting on the throne of Din and the books of the living and dead are open before Him, is it possible that Bnay Yisrael should be able to recite Hallel? We see from this that the characteristic of Rosh Hashonah is Din. This is Melech Yoshev Al Kisai din. Malchus of Hashem is expressed through the characteristic of Din that is manifest on Rosh Hashonah.

Malchus is Din. It is a medium through which HKBH reveals Himself to mankind, and especially to Bnay Yisrael. Malchus relates the presence of HKBH and His omnipotence to the rest of creation, the entire universe. The same laws, be they physical or metaphysical, apply to all creation, be they in the furthest nebulae or within the closest proximity to man. This form of Din is what is referred to as Ratzon Hakadmon, which HKBH implanted in every flower and spring so that they may extol the glory of Hashem. This Ratzon Hakadmon completely controls the dynamics of the universe, including the human being. This is the ultimate manifestation of Din. As Chazal say (Sifri Haazinu):

"Haraisa Chama Shokaas Bamizrach?"

Has one ever seen the sun set in east? This inviolability of nature is Din. It is impossible to speak of different laws that govern the speed with which different light beams travel. If one accepts the opinion that on Rosh Hashonah the world was created, then Rosh Hashonah is truly the ultimate Yom Din, as the universe which is based on Din, on the inviolate laws of nature. The concept of Selicha Umechila would have no place in such a universe built on Din. The perfect description is Malchuso Btoch Olamo, that kingship of HKBH, Din, is at the center of the universe and creation.

How do we know that Malchus is Din? We have the concept of Teruas Milchama, the sounding of the Shofar in times of war. Teruah in Hebrew means not only a certain unique sound. It also connotes to break, as the prophet Isaiah says Roah Hisroah Haaretz (24:19), after the earth quaked, something broke to pieces. Teruah is associated with breakage and damage, for example we find the people of Sdom threatened to do damage to Lot for not turning over his guests to them.

Rosh Hashonah, as mentioned above, is a day of absolute Din. It is the day when all creation pass before Hashem in judgement, with no exceptions. It is a day exclusively of Din, there is no room for Selicha Umechila during this day. As we recite in the Nesane Tokef, even the angels are frightened of the power of Din on Rosh Hashonah. The Teruah of Milchama indicates that Hashem should be seen this day as Hashem Ish Milchama. Rosh Hashonah is a day of destruction, for if Hashem were to exact true Din with all creation on Rosh Hashonah as the day demands, no one would be found righteous before Him on this day that implies doom and complete destruction. This is why the Zohar as well as later Chassidic works describe Rosh Hashonah, particularly the first part of the day prior to the sounding of the Shofar, as Takifa Dina, the time when unswerving Din rules. The second day of Rosh Hashonah is described as Chulsha Dina, the period when the attribute of Din is lessened. (The Rav mentioned that on the first night of Rosh Hashonah through the following morning, it was impossible to talk to Reb Yosef Dov, the Bais Halevi, as he was in a depressed mood and incapable of communicating because of the fear of the attribute of Din that characterized Rosh Hashonah till the sounding of the Shofar. The Aymas Hadin of Rosh Hashonah reached even to the Misnagdim!)

On the other hand, Malchus HKBH on Rosh Hashonah is not reflected only by nature but also by Knesses Yisrael. Knesses Yisrael reflects the sphere of Malchus. The Ramban notes this in his famous comment in Parshas Chayey Sara on the verse of:

"VHashem Bayrach Es Avraham Bakol"

That Knesses Yisrael reflects the divine glory of HKBH, the Malchus of HKBH. HKBH can reveal Himself through nature. He also can reveal His

Malchus through His chosen people, Knesses Yisrael, as Malchuso Bkhal Adaso. This is what HKBH promised Avraham Avinu, that Avraham would command his succeeding generations to keep the ways of Hashem. By keeping the Mitzvos Hashem, Knesses Yisrael reflects the Sefira Shel Malchus Bkhal Adaso.

HKBH reveals Himself to the world through 2 different media:

1) through Malchuso Btoch Olamo, the universe itself and its exacting laws, through the unswerving aspect of Din. Such a universe does not tolerate deviation, there is no Selicha Umechila;

2) through the aspect of Malchuso Bkhal Adaso (see Birnbaum Machzor for Shacharis of Yom Kippur, pg. 595), through the special relationship between HKBH and Bnay Yisrael that is apparent to the other nations of the world when Bnay Yisrael do the Ratzon Hashem. Selicha Umechila, makes sense in this medium, because of the special unique relationship that Bnay Yisrael enjoy with HKBH.

In order that Rosh Hashonah should be a day when transgressions are overlooked, the attribute of Hashem Ish Milchama, of Teruas Milchama, that symbolizes complete Din and Malchus Haolam Shel HKBH at the beginning of Rosh Hashonah, must be transformed by Bnay Yisrael into Malchuso Bkhal Adaso. On Rosh Hashonah, each Jew should say that from now on he will amend his ways and improve his actions to such an extent that he will command the respect of others and the Malchus Shamayim will be reflected by his actions and behavior. In fact the Ramban includes this as the core of Teshuva, when he describes the Shofar as representing Teshuva.

The concept of Malchuso Bkhal Adaso allows Bnay Yisrael to transform the Teruah from a destructive sound of war into a sound that shows the friendship and love between HKBH and Knesses Yisrael, the root Reah, means friend as Elokim Haroeh Osi Mayodi (Breishis 48:15, see Ramban). This indeed is the Teruah of Uteruas Melech Bo (Bamidbar 23:21) mentioned in Malchios, which connotes a closeness of HKBH to Bnay Yisrael. That we are privileged to have HKBH as a friend. This is not Din, but rather Rachamim, mercy.

Rosh Hashonah starts as a Yom Din. On Rosh Hashonah night when we say Yom Teruah in Kiddush we are describing the characteristic of the ultimate judgement day, a day of doom and destruction. However in Kiddush on the second night of Rosh Hashonah, Yom Teruah takes on a different meaning, that of Teruas Melech Bo, the close friendship between the King and His subjects..

We find in the Piyut of Lkel Orech Din, the description of the utter fear that true Din inspires in creation. At this point Teruah connotes destruction. The job of the Shofar is to change the semantics of Teruah from destruction to friendship of Haelokim Haroeh Osi Mayodi. The verses of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofros also describe this relationship. For example, in Malchios we recite the verse of Uteruas Melech Bo. The Shofar when used as an instrument of proclamation can announce both destruction as well as redemption as it will be used to announce the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate redemption of Bnay Yisrael. The Shofar must change the Teruah from Lhayra, to destroy, to Lhisroa, to befriend.

When the Ramban says that it is the Teruah that has sustained our forefathers throughout the generations, he means that Teruah reflects the ability of Bnay Yisrael to take the Teruah of Malchuso Btoch Olamo that can not reconcile with Salachti, and turns it into the Malchuso Bkhal Adaso that is consistent with Salachti. As the Ramban points out the Passuk we recite after Tekias Shofar, Ashrei Haam Yoday Teruah (Tehillim 89), with the emphasis on the Yoday Teruah: those that love Your name with the Sefira of Malchus as Malchuso Bkhal Adaso, the Jewish People. The Ramban interprets the word Yoday as meaning loving, similar to Vayeda Adam Es Chava Ishto. The term Yoday Shemecha Vlomday Torasecha: this connotes those that love Your name rather than those that know Your name.

The Midrash asks on the verse Ashrei Ahaam Yoday Teruah, do not the other nations of the world know how to sound the Teruah? Why are Bnay Yisrael considered unique in this respect? The Midrash is focusing on the unique ability of Bnay Yisrael to identify with the special Sefira of Malchus and to reflect the glory of Hashem and His love for all creation. The

obligation of the Jew is to keep the Torah and Mitzvos and by doing so identify with the Teruah of Yom Teruah Yihye Lachem, you shall transform the day from cosmic Malchus that brooks no forgiveness into a day of Malchuso Bkhal Adasi, a day of friendship and love between Hashem and His people. Forgiveness on this day is fully consistent between those that love each other.

The Ramban continues saying that Zichron Teruah Mikra Kodesh means that the Zichron should take place through Teruah. The Ramban does not interpret Zichron as remembering. Instead he explains it in terms of being fond of:

"Habayn Yakir Li Efraim... Ki Miday Dabri Bo Zachor Ezkerenu...".

HKBH is saying that whenever He speaks of Efraim He immediately becomes fond of him, I love him. In this context, Zichron Teruah means this is a day in which Knesses Yisrael should manifest love for Hashem by proclaiming His Malchus throughout the world. The face of each Jew should radiate and reflect the majesty of Hashem and His love for His people.

The Ramban states that this is why Rosh Hashonah is a Yom Tov. Even though Rosh Hashonah does not commemorate a specific event in Jewish History, it is a metaphysical event that allows Knesses Yisrael to identify with Hashem through the revelation of Teruah. HKBH wants that His revelation to the world as King should occur through the Jew instead of coming through the general universe. In other words Shofar changes the revelation of Hashem from Malchuso Btoch Olamo into Malchuso Bkhal Adaso.

The philosophy of the Ramban is pointedly reflected by Rabbi Eliezer Hakalir in the Piyut Shacharis of Rosh Hashonah:

"Naaleh Badin Alos B'truah... Gaye Am Doreha Lro'a'oh, B'shofar Afatenu Ubeberech Kriah B'maginas Rayim B'gano Esroah". (He ascends the throne of judgement amid the sounds of the Teruah, causing the earth and its inhabitants to tremble. Through the shofar blasts and the bending of the knee I seek to reconcile him, together with friends in His garden I will enjoy His friendship.)

The tune used by the Shaliach Tzibbur on the first half of this verse is one of complete fear as he mentions the nature of Malchuso Bolamo, where absolute Din rules. (Note that the different semantics of Teruah/Shofar are used within the Piyut.) However the Chazan concludes the stanza with a tune of joy and confidence reflecting the ability of the Shofar to transform the destruction of Lro'a'ah into Maginas Rayim, the protection of a close group of friends. The beginning of Rosh Hashonah is characterized by the pending destruction feared by those that are alone and dwell in the unprotected valley. The initial Teruah that is mentioned connotes impending destruction. The Shofar provides the key that allows me to persuade Hashem to forgive me and protect me, just as friends protect and comfort each other.

(Paranetically, the Rav noted that the Nussach of Yamim Nora'im interprets the prayers. Simply singing the words cannot convey their true meaning.)

The Ramban continues saying that the character of Yom Hadin, when accompanied with the Shofar, changes from the destruction of war, Teruas Milchama, to mercy. This is accomplished by surrounding the Teruah, (destruction), and surrounding it with two companions, the Tekiah before it and the Tekiah after it. The Tekiah sound connotes mercy, as the Torah says that when the people are to assemble the Tekiah should be sounded, not the Teruah. The Teruah sound connotes war and a sense of fear. On Rosh Hashonah, we take the Teruah prisoner by surrounding it with the attributes of mercy, the Tekiah before and after it. According to the Zohar this same idea applies to Akaydas Yitzchak. Yitzchak is characterized through the attribute of Gevurah, i.e. Midas HaDin (Vayishava Yaakov Bphachad Yitzchak Aviv). Avraham is the attribute of Chesed, while Yaakov is the attribute of Tiferes. These 2 attributes bind the Midas HaDin (represented by Yitzchak) with attributes of mercy (similar to the binding of Avraham with Yitzchak at the Akayda). That is why the Passuk says Ashrei Haam Yoday Teruah. We are the only people that are capable of taking the Malchuso Bolamo, with all the fear and destruction it represents and surround it on all sides with the attributes of Chesed and Tiferes and turn it into Malchuso Bkhal Adaso, of friendship and love between Hashem and His people. Rosh

Hashonah which begins with a sense of fear and trembling is transformed by the Shofar into a day of friendship and mercy. Yom Kippur on the other hand begins as a day characterized by complete mercy from Hashem. It is said that Gedolei Yisroel were depressed and withdrawn on Rosh Hashonah, the day characterized by Midas Din, while they were in a joyous mood on Yom Kippur, the day characterized by Midas Rachamim.

Some Gedolei Yisrael were of the opinion that the recitation of Piyutim in Shacharis on Rosh Hashonah should be kept to a minimum in order to get to Tekias Shofar as quickly as possible and affect the associated changeover in the character of Rosh Hashonah, i.e. from Din to Rachamim.

This is the entire philosophy of Rosh Hashonah according to the Ramban, as explained by the Rav. Rosh Hashonah and Din represent Malchus Hashem. Knesses Yisrael has the ability to identify with the majesty of Hashem and reflect His greatness and glory through their Torah and Mitzvos. They can take the Teruah and transform it from the context of Leharu, to destroy, to one of love and friendship and the Selicha that is part of such a friendship.

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HALACHA FOR 5756                      COPYRIGHT 1996  
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO ROSH HASHANA

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Everyone is obligated in Tekias Shofar on Rosh Hashana... (Rambam Hilchos Shofar 2:1)

#### TKIAS SHOFAR FOR WOMEN

QUESTION: What should a woman do if it is difficult for her to go to Shul to listen to Tekias Shofar on Rosh Hashana?

DISCUSSION: According to the basic Halacha, women are exempt from listening to the blowing of the Shofar(1). The Mitzvah of blowing Shofar is a Mitzvah which is restricted to a certain time of the year and day. Generally, women are exempt from that type of Mitzvah.

There are Poskim who hold that although women are exempt from listening to Shofar, they have nevertheless accepted this Mitzvah upon themselves as an obligation(2). Based on this view, it has become customary all over the world for women to either go to Shul to listen to the Shofar, or to hear the Shofar blown in their homes by a qualified B'aal Tokeh.

Not all Poskim, however, agree that women have accepted upon themselves an obligation from which they are clearly exempt(3). Some Poskim rule, therefore, that women are not obligated to listen to Tekias Shofar(4). As stated earlier, though, the custom has followed the first view and most women observe this Mitzvah stringently.

If it is difficult, however, for a woman to come to Shul because her children would disturb the silence that must be maintained for the congregation to properly hear the Shofar blowing, and it is also difficult to arrange for a B'aal Tokeh to blow the Shofar privately for her, a woman may rely on the Poskim who hold that women are exempt from listening to the blowing of the Shofar(5).

Since most women have made it their annual custom to hear the blowing of the Shofar, if a woman finds it too difficult and wants to change her custom and not listen to the Shofar any longer, she must go to a Beis Din to receive their permission to do so. Her custom is considered a "vow" in Halacha, and in order to discount a vow it must be annulled by Beis Din(6).

If, however, she plans to listen to the Shofar in future years, but finds it difficult to do so this year due to her small children, minor illness, etc., many Poskim rule that she does not need to annul her vow(7). A temporary lapse in

observing a correct custom for a good reason X is not considered as if one intends to break a vow. Since not all Poskim agree to this leniency(8), it is preferable that the husband mention the change in his wife's custom to the Beis Din at the time that he annuls his own vows on Erev Rosh Hashana(9). If he fails to do so, the woman can still rely on the Poskim who do not require an annulment in this case(10).

A woman who can attend Shul for only part of the time, should preferably come to the Tekios which are blown before Mussaf, since then she can hear the Bracha as well. For her to fulfill the Mitzvah properly, she must make sure that she is standing (not leaning) throughout the thirty Tekios that she is obligated to hear(11).

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1 OC 589:6.

2 M'ahril (Hilchos Shofar). See also Magen Avraham (OC 489:1, concerning Sefiras Haomer) who says that women have accepted time-restricted Mitzvos as an obligation. He does not, however, single out Shofar more than any other time-restricted Mitzva. Chayei Adam (141:7) says that women have accepted Shofar as an obligation.

3 See Minchas Chinuch 306 who questions the Magen Avraham quoted above. In his opinion, an acceptance could only apply in a situation of a dispute, such as the one concerning Maariv, but not concerning an issue in which they are clearly exempt. See also Nezirus Shimshon (quoted in Sdei Chemed Maareches Mem 136) and Shu"t Sharei De'ah 2:237.

4 Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld in Shalmas Chaim 1:88. Note also that neither the Mate Efraim, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Mishnah Berurah or Aruch Hashulchan quote the opinion that women have accepted Shofar as an obligation.

5 Mate Efraim 589:4.

6 Harav Shlomo Kluger in Shu"t Uvocharta Bachayim 51; Ben Ish Chai (1 Nitzavim 17); Kaf Hachayim 589:34.

7 Magen Avraham OC 581 according to the explanation of the Dagul Mervava (YD 214) quoted by the Shaar Hatzion 581:33.

8 See Shach YD 214 quoted in the Mishna Berurah 581:19. Ben Ish Chai and Kaf Hachayim quoted above also require Hatoras Nedorim for a woman who cannot listen to the Shofar even once.

9 The wife must make her husband her Shaliach (messenger) to do so in Beis Din - see Halacha Discussion, Nitzavim 5755.

10 Shu"t Yavia Omer 2:30 and Yechave Daas 2:70.

11 Mate Efraim 581:5.

There was a proctor who earned extra income by administering final exams in schools that needed extra manpower. He had earned a reputation as an extremely strict monitor who would not let a student exceed the allotted testing-time even by a minute.

The proctor once had the occasion to administer a ninth-grade test. Amongst the students sat Chaim, a quick-witted youngster, who had a reputation for requesting extra time on tests. The proctor had heard of this boy's pleas and tactics but resolved not to give him a minute extra. The test began with the perfunctory warnings, "you have exactly one hour and thirty minutes to complete this exam. If you are even one minute late I will not accept your paper."

Sure enough, at the end of the allotted time the proctor collected all the tests and Chaim was still writing. "Please," he pleaded. "I need only two more minutes."

True to his reputation the proctor refused, but Chaim kept on writing. Exactly ninety seconds passed. Chaim approached the desk, test in hand. All the other test papers were neatly stacked in front of a stern-faced instructor who refused to accept Chaim's papers. Chaim was aghast. This meant he would fail the test! Quickly he barked at the unfamiliar instructor.

"You must take my paper! Do you know who I am?"

The instructor shook his head as if he truly did not care. Once again Chaim repeated the question. This time, however, his voice was raised a few more decibels. "Do you know who I am? Do you know who my father is?"

This time the proctor retorted angrily. "I don't know who you are. I don't know who your father is. And to tell you the truth -- I really don't care!"

"Really?" questioned Chaim with a look of triumph on his face. "Great!"

With that, Chaim grabbed the stack of test papers, shoved his own exam smack in the center of all of them and smiled proudly. "Have a nice day!"

Rosh Hashana is the day of judgment. Last year is over and now it is time to hand in our papers. Of course our Proctor allows us an extra ten days until Yom Kippur. But eventually he may declare, "time is up."

When we join together in prayer, in charity, and in true repentance our papers are all put together. Of course, we are responsible for our individual actions and they will be examined. But it is surely much easier to have our deeds judged favorably when they are presented together with an entire shtetl! On behalf of myself and my entire family I want to wish all our readers a K'siva V'Chasima Tova for a year filled with health, happiness, and Peace for all Israel.

Dedicated in memory of Abe Butler on the first Yahrzeit of his passing.  
Mordechai Kamenetzky - Yeshiva of South Shore rmk@yoss.org  
<http://www.yoss.org>

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<http://www.yoss.org/>

Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org 3600 Crondall Lane, Ste. 106 <http://www.torah.org/> Owings Mills, MD 21117

Dear Drasha Reader: On behalf of my entire family, I would like to extend my best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year. I want to take this opportunity to personally thank all those who have supported Drasha through your support of Project Genesis. You become partners in the growth of Torah learning throughout the world. I would also like to extend my warmest blessings to all those who have written letters of support and encouragement. Your comments, questions and additional insights continue to be, as always, very helpful. I am grateful that I was able to reply to almost everyone who sent a comment or critique. I look forward to continuing to answer every query. And last, I would like to add that it is a true privilege to be able to share Torah with thousands of readers and I want to thank Rabbi Yaakov Menken for giving me that wonderful opportunity.

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life filled with health and happiness for all your loved ones. With warmest New Year greetings, I remain  
Sincerely yours, Mordechai Kamenetzky

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Drasha by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky -- Rosh Hashana 5757  
"IT TAKES A SHTETL"

During the course of the High Holy Day season the word "I" is hardly mentioned. The spirit of community triumphs over individuality. All of our many prayers, requests, confessions and proclamations take on one specific identification -- the plural -- we or us. "Remember \*us\* for life." "Inscribe \*us\* in the book of life." "\*We\* are like sheep."

There is hardly any individual prayer form -- it is mostly collective. Why should it be that way? Aren't the High Holy days a time of personal reflection? Why is there reference to the individual?

Obviously the power of a community impacts our individual prayer. Prayers and requests that arrive en masse seem to be more powerful, more effective. The Talmud tells us that it is almost impossible to disregard the will of a collective community. Yet how does the Almighty consider the needs of the individual when they are only brought forward as part of a communal bundle?

Rosh Hashanah 5757 - "A sweet New Year"

The Weekly Internet

P A R A S H A - P A G E

by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@jer1.co.il)

The Rosh Hashanah Parasha-Page has been dedicated by Rabbi Shlomo Shapiro of Kew Gardens Hills, in honor of the Bar-Mitzvah of his grandson, Yitzchak Becker of Telz-Stone, Israel. Please contact me if you would like to dedicate a Parasha-Page. Spread Torah through the farthest reaching medium in all of history!

Rosh Hashanah 5757

DIPPING FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR

The custom of dipping an apple into honey on Rosh Hashanah has become an emblem of the Day of Judgment. The custom is first cited by the Tur (Orach Chayim #583), who tells us, "In Germany it is customary to start the Rosh Hashanah meal by dipping a sweet apple into honey, asking Hashem to bless us with a sweet new year." Presumably we dip an apple, as opposed to any other fruit, because the apple's natural sweetness reinforces the theme of sweetness. The Maharil (c. 1400) isn't satisfied with this reasoning. As he writes in Hilchot Rosh Hashanah, "Are there no sweeter fruits than the apple? It is obvious that the reason for dipping an apple is related to the apple orchard's Kabbalistic connotations, which are alluded to in Bereishit 27:27."

The verse the Maharil refers to is describing Yitzchak's impression of Yakov when Yakov came to him to be blessed:

[Yakov] came close [to Yitzchak] and kissed him, and Yitzchak smelled the scent of Yakov's garments. He blessed him saying, "See that the scent of my son is like that of the orchard with which Hashem has blessed him!"

(Bereishit 27:27).

Yitzchak was referring to an apple orchard.

(Targum Yonatan ad loc.; Ta'anit 29b)

Although the Kabbalistic implications of an apple orchard are beyond the scope of our essay, we may gain a better understanding of the overt implications of Yakov's "apple orchard" upon considering the following two sources:

(1) The Vilna Gaon (Orach Chayim 583:1) contends that "it is well known" that Yakov was blessed by father on Rosh Hashanah. (The Midrashim we commonly refer to maintain that the story took place on the eve of Passover -- see Rashi Bereishit 27:7. The Gaon's source is the Rayah Mehemna, Parashat Emor [p. 99b] -- a Kabbalistic Midrash.) (2) The Gemara (Sanhedrin 37a) tells us that instead of translating the verse, "Yitzchak smelled the scent of Yakov's \*garments\* (B'gadav)," we should read, "Yitzchak smelled the scent of Yakov's \*rebellious children\* (Bog'dav)." Even the rebellious children of Yakov let off a scent as sweet as that of the apple orchard. The context of this teaching is one of repentance. Although he may have sinned terribly, a Jew's repentance is always imminent. [-- See also Bereishit Rabba to our verse].

When Yitzchak smelled the scent of an apple orchard, he realized that Yakov's children were truly worthy of blessing. He saw in the sweet scent of apples an omen that even when Yakov's children become entrenched in sin, they have the ability to swiftly extract themselves from their plight. Love of Hashem was so much a part of Yakov that he passed that love along to his children as an almost hereditary trait. This ability to love Hashem and return to Him from any distance is represented by the scent of an apple orchard.

Similarly, we remind ourselves by dipping an \*apple\* on Rosh Hashanah eve, that no matter how much we sin, we have the "scent of the apple orchard" about us. We can quickly redeem ourselves if we but wake up our inner longing for Hashem. Then we will be worthy of the blessings of Hashem!

II

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The custom is, as stated, to dip the apple into \*honey\*. Other customs of dipping have been recorded. The Hagahot Ashiri (in the beginning of Massechet Rosh Hashanah) used to dip the head of a ram into honey. We are accustomed to dipping Challa into honey. The common denominator between the various customs is that the dipping is always in honey. Aside from the obvious connection between sweetness and honey, the Maharil (Hilchot Rosh Hashanah) brings an abundance of sources from Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim, for eating honey on Rosh Hashanah. We may suggest yet another source for this custom.

The Midrash HaZohar (Parashat Pinchas, p.231) tells us that where the term "Vayehi Hayom" (It was that day) is used in Tanach, it is discussing Rosh Hashanah. In Shmuel I (14:1), that term is used to describe the day that Yonatan, the son of King Sha'ul, miraculously saved the Jews from the hands of the invading P'lishti (Philistine) forces. On that fateful day, Sha'ul had the entire army of the Bnai Yisroel take an oath not to eat until the evening, after the war would be over (Ibid 14:24). We are told:

Yonatan didn't hear his father make the people take an oath. He stretched out the end of the stick that was in his hand, dipped it into the canes of honey [that were to be found along the road] and brought it to his mouth. His eyes [which had until now been blinded by starvation -- see Yoma 83b] lit up. (Ibid 14:27)

When Sha'ul realized that someone had betraying the oath he cast lots, saying, "Hashem, Hava Tamim -- make this lot reveal the truth! (-- see Zohar Shmot 18:1 -- "Hava: always is an invitation to do \*justice\*... as in "Hava Tamim"). When it was discovered that Yonatan, his own son, was the one who had eaten, Sha'ul pronounced a death sentence upon him. Only after the people pleaded with him to reconsider did Sha'ul rescind his decree and allow Yonatan to live (Ibid 14:45).

The verses describing the repeal of Yonatan's sentence are recited as an omen of peace and well-being (Berachot 55b). By dipping an apple in honey, we appeal to Hashem to pardon us and grant us life, just as Yonatan, was granted life after the death sentence was already pronounced upon him, on that Rosh Hashanah of years past!

Kesiva Vachasima Tova! Mordecai Kornfeld

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Mordecai Kornfeld |Email: kornfeld@jer1.co.il| Tel:(02) 6522633  
6/12 Katzenelenbogen St. | kornfeld@virtual.co.il| Fax:(02) 6522633  
Har Nof, Jerusalem,ISRAEL| kornfeld@shemayisrael.co.il|  
US:(718)520-0210

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Congregation House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel Calgary, AB

Dvar Torah: Rosh Hashana  
Rabbi Moshe Shulman

#### THE GREAT SHOFAR

It was Rosh Hashana 1933, just after Hitler's rise to power. Rav Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook, first Chief Rabbi of Israel, and spiritual leader of the religious Zionist movement, decided to give his Rosh Hashana sermon that year in the Old City of Jerusalem, in the magnificent Synagogue known as the Churva. That year, in 1933, Rav Kook said the following. We pray for Redemption, by asking for the blast of the Great Shofar: "And on that day the Great Shofar shall sound, and the lost ones shall emerge from the land of Ashur, and the oppressed from the land of Egypt, to bow to G-d on the Holy mountain - Jerusalem." Throughout our prayers we ask: Teka beshofar gadol lecheiruteinu "Sound the Great Shofar of our Redemption." What is this Shofar of Mashiach? Why does he even have to blow a shofar? Does this have anything to do with the Shofar we ourselves blow on Rosh Hashana? And why the "great shofar"? We blow the Shofar to awaken us to repentance, to the declaration that G'd is our King, our call to duty. Uru yesheinim me'shinatchem "Wake up from your slumber", "Can a Shofar be sounded in the city," asks the prophet

Yechezkel, "and the people not tremble?"

But the Shofar of Redemption? Explains Rav Kook, the Shofar of Meshiach is not the Shofar that the Mashiach blows. It is the Shofar that each and every one of us blows inside. It is the "impetus", the drive, the yearning of the Jewish people for a new life, a better future, a more meaningful world. It is that drive within us that makes the Redemption unfold!

The Shofar of Rosh Hashana - awakens us. The Shofar of Redemption - is our response!

But why the "great shofar"? Explained Rav Kook: In fact, the Halacha defines 3 types of Shofars.

1. Ideal Shofar, is the Ram's horn.
2. However, any horn of a kosher animal will suffice, although not ideal.
3. If no kosher animal shofar is available, then a horn of a non-kosher animal, or animal used for idolatry may be used - although no blessing may be recited.

These are the "small", "medium", and "great" Shofars of Rosh Hashana. In the response of the Jewish People, the Shofar of Redemption, there are also three "Shofars", three motivating forces in our return to Israel. There are those who yearn for the Shofar of the Rams horn, the cry of the Akeidah of Isaac, the Sanctity of the Temple, the Commandments in the Torah, the desire to heed the word of G'd, and to build the Land of Israel as He has commanded. This is the "Great Shofar".

Then there are those who don't necessarily understand or are aware of all the Commandments, who don't fully comprehend the significance of the binding of Isaac, or the Commandments. But they are proud of their Judaism, they love their people, and want to dedicate their lives to building a home for the Jewish people. This too, is a Kosher Shofar.

Then there is the third Shofar - that of a non-Kosher animal, over which no blessing may be said. This is not the internal call of the Jewish people to return home. This is the blast blown not by Jews, but by the non-Jewish tyrants of history who have persecuted and oppressed us, and in so doing have forced us out of hiding, and back to Israel. These are the Haman's of history, who, says the Talmud, may also lead or force us back towards Redemption, but certainly not in way over which we can recite a blessing! This, then is the request: Blow the Great Shofar of Redemption, and pray that the Jews return to Israel out of love for the land, for the people, the Torah, love and reverence for G'd, and a deep commitment to the Torah.

There is a beautiful story of the Zionist leader Shmaryahu Levin, who tried desperately, as a child, to learn how to blow the Shofar. Just before the High Holidays, he was so anxious, he had spent hours practicing, when in walked a Polish peasant, listened to the boy's feeble attempts, took the Shofar, and blew a mighty sound. The boy ran to his teacher, in tears: "How come I, as a Jew, practice and struggle and can barely produce a whimper, and this Gentile peasant, without any preparation, produces a mighty sound?" The teacher put his arms around the boy and said: "My son, the trick is not to blow the Shofar; the trick is to listen to it!"

The Shofar of Rosh Hashana must awaken us to respond, but we must first ask the question "which Shofar do we hear?", and "with which Shofar do we respond?"

Today, there are many Jews who are Jews BY DEFAULT! They hear only the sound of the "small Shofar", the Shofar blown by a hostile anti-Semitic world. They hear the sound of the Shofar of war, oppression in the former Soviet Union, or Islamic fundamentalism, terrorist attacks, and they declare "I am Jewish". But it's an identity of escape, not of pride!

How many Jews in pre-war Germany, in the 1910's and 1920's, tried to hide their identity, "Be a Jew in your home a human being outside", only to discover quota's and limitations wherever they went? They did not point to themselves as Jews. They had other people doing it for them. Someone else was blowing the Shofar.

A Judaism of fear, of persecution, of pogroms and blood-libels - we have certainly known much of that. That's part of our history, our make-up. But that's only the beginning of the picture. Those who hear only the "small Shofar" are Jews by default, certainly not a Judaism or a heritage of which to be proud!

There are those, however, whose Jewish identity is accompanied with a deep sense of pride. Those are people who hear of Israel's victories, and walk around with a smile, and hear of Israel's defeats, and are saddened. These are the Jews, all over University campuses across North America, who join Hillel houses and Jewish action groups - to be with other Jews.

These are Jews who hear the "medium Shofar", who feel a connection to the nation and people of Israel, a connection to history, a sense of belonging and purpose. They want to raise Jewish children, G'd forbid their children should marry out, but whose commitment to Jewish LIVING is weak.

This is the shofar of those who cry out for Jewish continuity, but struggle to identify what that means! Perhaps it means belonging to Jewish community organisations, or involvement in Israel; donations to Jewish causes. These are people who support Hebrew education, because we need to know our history, and how to speak Hebrew, since that's important to Jewish continuity! But who lack an understanding of and commitment to the Sanctity and laws of the Torah. There is a sense of belonging, but not necessarily of understanding! The prayer, the hope, the dream of Rosh Hashana - is that we hear the third Shofar - that through our prayers, our study, our teshuva, we all become those whose dreams and aspirations are expressed in the Rosh Hashana prayer of Aleinu: "To perfect the world under the Kingdom and Yoke of Heaven". The hope is that we live our lives according to the laws of the Torah, beautiful laws, that have the ability to transform an entire society into one predicated upon Sanctity, and spirituality.

Shabbat, which can imbue every week with purpose.

Kashrut, which can transform our homes in Sanctuaries.

Family purity, which can build strong families, and beautiful marriages.

The study of Torah, which can fill our lives with understanding, wisdom, and insight.

This is the vision of the Great Shofar of Redemption - the Ram's horn, the Shofar of the Akeidah - the willingness to sacrifice for Judaism, in death, as well as in life, to dedicate our lives to the Will of the Almighty, and to declare Him as King, our King, and we, His loyal subjects.

That's the prayer of Rosh Hashana, that we all be united through the Great Shofar of Redemption, when "All living creatures shall declare the Lord G'd of Israel as King, when his Kingdom shall rule over all."

We pray: "Blow the GREAT Shofar of Redemption," The choice is up to us. Which Shofar do we hear?

For more information about Congregation House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel or any of the programs or services of the Synagogue, please contact Rabbi Moshe Shulman (ShulmanM@Cadvision.com)

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"ml@etzion.org.il" "yhe-parsha@jer1...."

NOTE: I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of the parsha list a SHANA TOVA and KTIVA V'CHATIMA TOVA.

ROSH HASHANA  
by Menachem Leibtag

To our surprise, Chumash appears to have left out the two primary aspects of the holiday which we call Rosh Hashana:

- \* that it marks the beginning of the NEW YEAR, and
- \* that it is a Day of Judgement.

This week's shiur attempts to uncover them.

INTRODUCTION

Chumash contains only two brief and ambiguous references to Rosh Hashana:

- 1) In Parshat Emor:

"On the SEVENTH month, on the first day of that month, you shall have a day of rest - ZICHRON TRU'AH..."

(Vayikra 23:23-25)

- 2) In Parshat Pinchas:

"On the SEVENTH month ... You shall have a YOM TRU'AH..."

(Bamidbar 29:1-6)

In both of these Parshiot, the Torah commands us to observe a holiday on the first day of the SEVENTH month without even hinting as to why this day or month is special. Furthermore, the Torah tells us to observe this day as a ZICHRON TRU'AH, or YOM TRU'AH, without explaining precisely what these phrases mean!

How does the SEVENTH month ('MID-year') become the NEW year?

How does YOM TRU'AH become a day of judgement?

To answer these questions, we must first explain the biblical concept of a 'year'.

#### THE BIBLICAL YEAR

Although it is commonly assumed that Rosh Hashana marks the anniversary of God's creation of the world, this specific issue is a controversy in the Talmud between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua (see Mesechet Rosh Hashana 10b-11a). According to R' Yehoshua, who claims that the world was created in Nissan (the first month), is there nothing special about the first of Tishrei (the seventh month)? And even according to R' Eliezer, who claims that the world was created in Tishrei, why should the anniversary of the Creation provoke a yearly 'Day of Judgement'?

In Chumash itself, we find TWO yearly cycles. The cycle which begins in Nissan is best known, for the Torah explicitly commands us to count all of the months from Nissan ("parshat ha'chodesh"/ see Shmot 12:1-2). However, the cycle which begins in Tishrei is less well known, for it is only implicit. Nonetheless, a quick analysis of several mitzvot and psukim can show how obvious it really is.

The most obvious proof is from the mitzvah of "shmita": "Six YEARS you shall plant your fields... and gather your produce, but on the seventh YEAR the land shall have complete rest... (Vayikra 25:3-5)

Although the Torah does not specify the precise time of year when this cycle begins, it can be inferred from the law of the "yovel" (jubilee) year which follows:

"You shall count seven cycles of seven years... then you shall blow the shofar on the SEVENTH MONTH, on the tenth day of the month... (Vayikra 25:8-9)

If the Yovel year begins on the SEVENTH MONTH, then obviously the entire shmita cycle must begin in the SEVENTH month.

In addition to this textual proof, there is a very logical reason why the shmita cycle should begin in the SEVENTH month. As we know, the mitzvah of shmita relates to planting and harvesting one's field. Since the fall season (i.e. Tishrei) marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the next year's planting season, it makes sense that the shmita cycle begin in Tishrei.

In other words, in addition to the yearly cycle which begins in Nissan, and relates to the Exodus and our national redemption, another yearly cycle exists which begins in Tishrei and relates to the natural cycle of the agricultural year.

Proof of this 'agricultural cycle' is found in the Torah's presentation of the "shalosh regalim":

"Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me: Observe chag ha'matzot... in the spring... chag ha'katzir, when you first reap your grain harvest, and chag ha'asif - AT THE END OF THE YEAR - when you GATHER YOUR PRODUCE (fruit harvest) from the fields..." (Shmot 23:14-16)

Here, the Torah specifically states that the harvest holiday, better known as Succot, is the END OF THE YEAR. [Parshat Emor states specifically that this holiday is to be celebrated in the SEVENTH month. (See Vayikra 23:39!)] If the previous year ends in Tishrei, the new year must also begin in Tishrei.

Our final proof is found in the Torah's presentation of the mitzvah of HAKHEL, which connects both the shmita cycle and Succot

to the END OF THE YEAR:

"At the END of every seven years, at the turn of the SHMITA cycle, on CHAG HA'SUCCOT... you shall read this Torah..." (Dvarim 31:10-11)

Once again we find that the Torah considers the time of year of Succot as the end of the agricultural year.

Thus far, we have proven that the SEVENTH month is indeed the beginning of the NEW YEAR, i.e. the agricultural new year. Based on this understanding, we can now explain why it becomes a day of judgement.

#### RAIN - AND THE NEW YEAR

Before we continue, we must review the different stages of the agricultural year in the Land of Israel:

- \* The planting season begins during the autumn months of Cheshvan & Kislev, continuing into the winter. [Recall, that in the Land of Israel, it only rains between Succot and Pesach.]
- \* The grain harvest begins in the spring with the barley harvest in Nissan and the wheat harvest in Iyar and Sivan.
- \* The fruit harvest begins in the summer months of Tamuz and Av, and continues until Tishrei.

With this in mind, we can proceed.

Due to the nature of this cycle, the ultimate success of the agricultural year hinges on the amount of RAIN that falls in the months of Cheshvan and Kislev (late autumn and early winter). This early rainy season is so critical that the first three chapters of Mesechet Taanit describe in detail the public fasts which are declared should the first rain be only a few weeks late! Should more than a month go by without rain, more severe public fasts are declared, SIX brachot are added to "shmonah esray" - including ZICHRONOT AND SHOFROT, similar to the brachot added on Rosh Hashana!

[I recommend that you scan through the mishnayot of Mesechet Taanit in order to appreciate this point.]

It is not coincidental that on these fast days we daven as on Rosh Hashana. As mentioned above, the month of Tishrei marks the beginning of the new agricultural year, and thus the forthcoming rainy season. It is precisely this rainy season which DETERMINES THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE YEAR. Insufficient rain in the autumn leads to thirst, drought, famine, and disease in the spring and summer. Thus, from nature's perspective, it is the early rainy season which determines 'who will live and who will die, who by thirst and who by famine, who by war and who by disease...'

Due to the importance of this early rain, man will do everything in his power to make sure that indeed it will fall. In ancient Canaan, people believed that worshiping a pantheon of rain and fertility gods such as Baal and Asheya would secure adequate rain. Modern man, on the other hand, believes that rainfall is simply determined by chance, according to the whims of nature.

Chumash tells us exactly the opposite - the rain that falls in the land of Israel is a DIRECT function of God's "hashgacha" (providence).

"For the land which you are about to enter is NOT like the land of Egypt [which receives a constant water supply from the Nile] ... the land which you are about to possess [Eretz Yisrael] contains hills and valleys, [there] you will drink water from the RAIN FROM HEAVEN (matar ha'shamayim)..." (Dvarim 11:10-11) After stating the land's DEPENDENCE on RAIN FROM HEAVEN for its water supply, the Torah informs us that God Himself oversees this rainfall:

"It is a land which the Lord your God LOOKS AFTER [doresh ota], always He keeps HIS EYE on it, from - REISHIT Hashana - the year's beginning to the year's end." (Dvarim 11:12)

[See previous shiur on Parshat Ekev.]

Interestingly enough, this is the only time in Chumash where

we find the name ROSH HASHANA (=REISHIT HASHANA); precisely in the

context of the rainy season, at the start of the agricultural year!

This theme develops in the next parsha - "v'haya im shmoa" (the second parsha of daily kriyat shma!):

"Should you listen to my mitzvot... then I will grant the RAIN for you IN SEASON (lit. at the proper time) -'YOREH u'MALKOSH' - the early rain and the late rain..."

BEWARE, should you go astray... then God will shut the heavens so that there WILL BE NO RAIN..." (Dvarim 11:13-16)

Yet again, we find that the amount of rain which falls, especially during the critical season, is a DIRECT function of God's "hashgacha", and thus, a direct result of our religious behavior.

Based on this interpretation, the biblical importance of celebrating a holiday on the first day of Tishrei now becomes clear. As we anticipate the forthcoming agricultural year and its critical rainy season, we dedicate a special day in which we abstain from work ("shabbaton"/ Vayikra 23:23) in order to gather together ("mikra kodesh") and proclaim God's DOMINION over the entire Creation. Based on our deeds, and our willingness to serve Him, He will determine the fate of the forthcoming year. Our fate lies in HIS hands, NOT in the hands of nature or any other god.

[We therefore dedicate the month of Elul to repentance, in preparation for this day, in order to prove to God that we are indeed worthy of a good judgement (according to the guidelines of parshat "v'haya im shmoa").]

Up until this point, we have uncovered the biblical reason why the SEVENTH month is considered the beginning of a NEW year and a time of judgement. In anticipation of the rainy season and its influence on the fate of the agricultural year, the Torah commands Bnei Yisrael to set aside a special day in which we must recognize that the fate of the forthcoming year will be determined by God.

With this background, we can better appreciate the significance of the special mitzvah which the Torah commands us to keep on this day: 1) ZICHRON TRU'AH (in Parshat Emor)

2) YOM TRU'AH (in Parshat Pinchas)

Why does the Torah command us to sound a TRU'AH specifically on this day?

"YOM TRU'AH" IN THE BIBLE

Today, a shofar is considered a 'religious artifact', usually purchased at the local "sforim" store or Judaica shop. Back in the time of the Bible, things were a little different. Then, a shofar would have been sold by the local 'arms dealer', for it was used as the primary communications tool in war. Military commanders and officers used the shofar to communicate important signals to their troops (e.g. Gidon and his 300 men / Shoftim 7:16-20). Similarly, civil defense personnel used the shofar to warn civilians of possible attack and to mobilize reserves (see Amos 3:6).

Therefore, in a manner similar to one's gut reaction to the sound of a siren today, the sound of a tru'ah in biblical times meant immediate danger. Hearing that sound was associated with going to battle or being under attack, i.e. a situation where one's life is on the line.

For example, the prophet Tzania uses the phrase YOM SHOFAR U'TRU'AH to describe a situation of war and terrible destruction.

"At that time [on the YOM HASHEM], I will search Yerushalayim with candles and I will punish the men... who say to themselves 'GOD DOES NOT REWARD NOR DOES HE PUNISH' [i.e. no hashgacha!]"

The great day of the Lord is approaching... it is bitter, there a warrior shrieks.

That day shall be a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress ("tzarah u'mtzuka"),

a day of calamity and desolation....,

YOM SHOFAR U'TRU'AH ..." (Tzania 1:12-16)

According to this pasuk, "yom tru'ah" and "yom shofar" clearly imply a day of imminent danger and war.

The prophet Amos also refers to the shofar in a similar context:

"Should a shofar be sounded in the town, would its people not be frightened (ye'cheradu)?

Could misfortune come to a town if God had not caused it?" (see Amos 3:6 and its context)

[See also Yoel 2:1-3, 11-14 & 2:15-17, & Yirmiyahu 4:3-8.]

Therefore, the Torah instructs us to make a "yom tru'ah" on the first day of the seventh month in order to create an atmosphere which simulates the tension and fear of war. We are supposed to feel on this day, just as we would on a day of war - that our lives are truly in danger.

This explains "yom tru'ah". What is the meaning of "zichron tru'ah"?

ZICHRON TRU'AH

Luckily, there is a pasuk in Parshat Bha'alotcha which ties together these two words:

"Should war take place in your land... v'HA'RAY'O'TEM - you must sound a TRU'AH with the trumpet (b'chatzotzrot), v'NIZ'KAR'TEM - and you will be REMEMBERED by the Lord your God, and He will save you from your enemies." (Bamidbar 10:9)

Should war break out, God commands us to sound a TRU'AH in prayer to God - in anticipation of that war. In doing so, we are recognizing God's hashgacha over the outcome of the forthcoming battle, and thus show Him that we deserve His special providence.

This parallels the situation on the first of Tishrei. In anticipation of the forthcoming rainy season, we must sound a TRU'AH in order to remind ourselves that God will determine the fate of the year and ask for His special providence.

Therefore, this day is not only a YOM TRU'AH - a day of AWE on which our lives are judged, but also a ZICHRON TRU'AH - a day on which we must sound the shofar in order that God will REMEMBER US. SHOFAR SHEL AYIL

Even though Rosh Hashana is commonly referred to as the JEWISH New Year, it is actually the NEW YEAR for ALL mankind. Nonetheless, Am Yisrael is first to declare God's kingdom on this day, for it is our national duty to proclaim His Name. As we begin the year by sounding the TRU'AH, we specifically use a shofar from an "ayil" (a ram) - the symbol of "akeidat Yitzchak", a testimony of our total devotion to God. In doing so, we remind the Almighty of His choice of Avraham Avinu and His special relationship with his children, in order that He NOT judge us like any other nation; but rather as His own special Nation.

shabbat shalom & shana tova,  
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. In Chodesh Tishrei, the 'seventh' month, we find many "chagim" which relate to nature, especially the 'seven' days of Succot marking the culmination of harvest season of the previous year. We also find three days of 'Judgement', Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kipur, and Shmini Atzeret.

1. Compare the korban musaf of each of these three chagim. (one par, on ayil, seven kvasim and one seir l'chatat).

2. In what way are these chagim connected?

Note the use of the word "zeh" and "ach" in Vayikra 23:23-40.

3. According to Chazal, when are we judged for water?

How does this relate to the above shiur?

4. Relate this to the tfila of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kipur!

(It's in you machzor at the end of the seder avodah.)

B. Why does God need Am Yisrael to proclaim him king? The one thing Hashem, k'vyachol, can NOT do is make himself king. A

kingdom is meaningless if there are no subjects. A king becomes king when and because he is accepted by his subjects. Similarly, only when God is accepted and recognized by man does He become Melech.

1. Relate this to our davening on Rosh Hashana.
2. Explain changing "E-l HaKadosh" - to "Melech Hakadosh" according to this concept.

C. The Jewish New Year, the New Year special and unique to Am Yisrael is actually Nissan - "HaChodesh Hazeh lechem Rosh Chodashim Rishon hu lachem lchodshei Hashana" (Shmot 12:1-2). Yitziat Mitzraim (which took place in Nissan) marks the birth of the Jewish Nation.

1. What aspects of Pesach and Chag HaMatzot emphasize that we are a special nation, different than other nations.
2. What aspect of the chagim in Tishrei, relate to all mankind.

(Note 70 parim on Succot etc. - see also Zecharya chap 14)

#### D. TKI'AH / TRU'AH - AC/DC

A short explanation concerning the biblical difference between TKI'AH and TRU'AH.

TKI'AH implies a straight note (like DC current), while TRU'AH implies an oscillating - up & down - note (like AC current). A TKI'AH usually indicates a public rejoicing or an 'all clear signal', while a TRU'AH usually indicates a warning of some sort. [Those of you who were in Israel during the Gulf War know what I am referring to.]

This distinction is found in Parshat Bha'alotcha in connection to the mitzvah of "chatzotzrot" (trumpets).

1. Read Bamidbar 10:1-10.

Note that according to that parsha, the "tkiah" was used as a signal for gathering the camp and happy occasions (10:3-4,7,10), while the "tru'ah" was used as a signal to prepare for travel in military formation and war (10:5-6,9).

Relate this to the above shiur, see Ramban & Ibn Ezra.

E. It seems strange that the Yovel year should begin on Yom Kippur (see Vayikra 25:8-10). It should begin on the first of Tishrei - Rosh Ha'shana.

1. Relate the laws of Yovel to the laws of Yom Kippur to find a thematic connection between them. Could this be the reason why Yom Kippur was chosen to proclaim the Yovel?
2. Why do you think that Chazal learn many halachot of shofar and Rosh Hashana from the laws of Yovel?
3. See Mesechet Rosh Hashana 33b-34a. Relate this Gemara to the above shiur.

prompted by different causes. The aspiration to remember the past in general, as opposed to remembering discrete details, is the lot of the historian, and it plays its part in the desire to somehow control the passage of time. The effort to grasp the past and describe it springs from the wish to create some type of framework which will facilitate an understanding of the past and the present simultaneously. By means of his selective memory, an observer of history tries to impose some measure of order on the chaos of information - personalities, events - which once was and is no more. He is not interested in recalling every detail. He wishes to recall those points which serve as an outline, the framework which will allow him to understand the atmosphere of the past and its dynamics. Memory is the instrument of historical research - the recounting of the story - used in approaching the historical reality - the facts and events themselves.

On the other hand, it may be that the person remembering does not wish to analyze and organize the past, but rather to maintain it in its frozen state. The attempt to remember what was may stem from a nostalgic wish to return to a familiar period and to replay it in one's mind. A person who feels disorientated and carried away by life's tide of events and changes seeks anchorage in the past which, even if unspectacular at the time, at least represents in his mind a clear and steady moment. In the face of the passage of the years, the creative consciousness is able to build a refuge from responsibility and concerns. And sometimes the creative imagination makes no effort to remember the past as it actually was, but rather attempts to remember a touched-up, purified version of it. In this regard we may note William Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry: "emotion recalled in tranquillity."

The treasures of the past are tremendously significant in their own right. The ability to look backwards and forwards characterizes the human being and represents part of the great divide between him and the world of nature.

But this does not constitute the full meaning of memory and remembrance. There is also a type of memory which is aimed at the present, and even at the future. When the Torah tells us that "The Lord remembered Rachel and the Lord heard her, and He opened her womb," are we to understand that until this point Rachel had, in the intellectual sense, been forgotten? Does the verse, "And the Lord remembered Noah and all the animals and all the beasts which were with him in the ark" mean to indicate, Heaven forbid, that God was for any period of time unaware of the situation?

In these cases memory refers to a spiritual connection; not a purely mental knowledge but rather an emotional reaction, as it were. Such a connection may be very different. In general, as in the case of the above verses, or in Nehemia's request: "Remember it for my good, O Lord, all that I have done for this nation" (Nehemia 5:19), the memory in question is positive and supportive. But sometimes it can be negative. The mishna in Rosh Ha-shana (32a) speaks about remembrance of punishment. There is even an obligation of hostile remembrance in halakha. The commandment to remember Amalek, according to the Rambam, requires not only the acquisition or repetition of the historical facts, but also an awakening as a result of them: "This [commandment] means that we are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us, in rushing out to harm us, and that we should recite this at frequent intervals and [thereby] arouse the souls by this recitation to fight against him, and encourage the nation to hate him, such that the commandment will not be forgotten and the hatred will not weaken amongst the people over time. And therefore it says, 'Remember what Amalek did to you'" (Sefer Ha-mitzvot, positive commandment no. 189). But what should be particularly emphasized is the spiritual and emotional character of remembrance in this sense, differentiating between it and knowledge and connecting it - or even identifying it - with either loathing or longing. "From whence do we know that we make a remembrance of the Temple?" asks the gemara in Sukka (41a), and answers, "Rabbi Yochanan says: As it is written (Yirmiyahu 30:17), 'For I shall restore your health to you and I shall heal you of your wounds, says the Lord, for they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, for whom no one seeks.' For whom no one seeks' - from here we see that it should be sought after."

From this comparison between remembrance and caring we see the other

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#### THE SPECIAL ROSH HA-SHANA PACKAGE

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#### THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

based on a speech by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein

If we were to define the word "zikkaron" (remembrance) and its connotations, I believe that almost every one of us would arrive at a concept somehow connoting the sphere of the past. To remember, or so we are accustomed to believing, means to guard in our consciousness - especially in the intellectual sense - some fact or experience which we have acquired through our intellect or our senses. A person with a good memory is someone who succeeds in storing in his mind a fresh impression of what he has heard, seen and learned in the past. We attribute the most sophisticated memory to the computer, which is able to ingest the vast quantity of information which it is fed and then regurgitate it on demand in a second, in all its detail. In short, according to this view, we view memory as one giant archive.

This memory varies in its character and its behavior; it can be passive or active. Some events are kept in the store-house of our thoughts, ready and waiting to be drawn out when needed; others are remembered in the present and they occupy space in our current consciousness. Memories are also

aspect of memory in its full force.

These thoughts are directly related to Rosh Ha-shana. In the Rosh Ha-shana prayers, the Anshei Knesset Ha-gedola (Men of the Great Assembly) defined it as Yom Ha-Zikkaron (the Day of Remembrance), and we are obligated to understand what it is that we are to remember, and how. I believe that the holiness of the day is bound up with remembrance in two senses. Undoubtedly, the first aspect is the reservoir of the past. There is amassing of facts, reviewing of information, as it were. It finds expression principally in the opening of the section of Zikhronot (the middle section of the three special additions to the Mussaf service on Rosh Ha-shana), where the character of Rosh Ha-shana as a day of judgment is spelled out. "You remember the deeds of yore, and account for the primal creations. Before you all the wonders are revealed and many hidden things from since creation, for there is no forgetfulness before the seat of Your glory, and nothing is hidden from before You. You remember all that is done, and nothing in creation is concealed from You..."

At the same time, there is clearly a second aspect. This, too, is reflected in the section of Zikhronot. And I believe that if we assume that the closing berakha summarizes the contents of the section, then the second aspect is the central one. Within a few sentences after the beginning of the berakha, we encounter a turning-point. Initially, we say in our prayer, "For the remembrance of all of creation comes before You: man's every action, thought, plan, and desire...." In the wake of this fact a terrible threat seems to face man, who is exposed in his nakedness and his guile. Suddenly a new sound reaches his ears: "For the remembrance of all deeds comes before You, and You investigate the deeds of all; Noah, too, You remembered in love and You recalled him with regard to salvation and mercy...;" and from then onwards this theme becomes increasingly stronger. It is, of course, dominant in the verses quoted in this section of prayer, and therefore halakha determines that "We do not mention [in the Mussaf Amidah of Rosh Ha-shana] memories of punishment" (Rosh Ha-shana 32a). But it also stands at the center of the request at the end of the berakha. The fact that "For You remember all the forgotten things forever, and there is no forgetfulness before the seat of Your glory" is repeated, but for a completely different purpose. That which is remembered is principally the covenant between God and Knesset Yisrael, and the selflessness of our forefathers - and their descendants - as its source and for its sake. If so, then the character of the remembering here is not one of bare factual knowledge, but rather of spiritual connection. On this level, the very fact of a connection with God is a positive phenomenon. Nothing can be worse for us than to be distanced from Him, exposed to a cold, an uncaring cosmos, cut off from the source of life and "forgotten" by Him. "Let God be angry at us, but then save us" (Rosh Ha-shana 32b). However, it is clear that the remembrance for which we strive is completely positive - "a good remembrance (zikkaron tov)," a remembrance of compassion and love, a remembrance of happiness and comforting. In light of the Ramban's statement that "Rosh Ha-shana is a day of judgment-in-mercy" (Commentary on the Torah, Vayikra 23:24), we may say that we open with praise of the King of Judgment, and in the midst thereof we describe the memory which gathers and knows, and also accuses.

But we close with a request to our God and the God of our fathers - and thereby appeal to the supportive and redemptive memory, to the source of "the remembrance of salvation and mercy from the highest Heavens." Hence both aspects of Yom Ha-zikkaron find expression. Until now we have dealt with Yom Ha-zikkaron as it appears in the prayer service and in the thinking of Chazal as a day of remembering on the part of God. But this day, which opens the ten-day period of repentance (asseret yemei teshuva), also calls for remembrance on the part of man. This remembering, too, is a double-sided one. The commandment of teshuva requires, on the one hand, remembering and reviewing the past. It requires that we do not rely merely on what we happen to remember at the moment, but rather that we delve deep into our memory, examine our conscience, and actively recall. There is no possibility of teshuva without knowledge of the past. Firstly, we have to remember the actual sins: "For my sins I know, and my iniquities are before me always." Here, obviously, the gathering aspect

of memory comes into play, the archive of our thoughts.

But we are also required to remember in a different sense completely. "And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before those days of sorrow come and those years arrive of which you will say, 'I have no desire of them'" (Kohelet 12:1). Here we are discussing remembrance of God, not remembrance of the sins of the past. This remembering is parallel to God's remembrance of the covenant - full of longing, yearning, and an overpowering sense of the need to grasp Him and cleave unto Him. But this remembrance, deeply rooted as it may be in the human spirit and representing an inseparable part of him, still requires activating. Man, like God, must create a day of dual remembrance. (Translated by Kaeren Fish. This speech was originally delivered on Rosh Ha-shana 5734, and appeared in Alon Shevut 5:27 and Daf Keshet 146.)

100016.1167@CompuServe.COM" Some thoughts on Yamim Noraim

#### ON LIVING AND SINNING

by Rabbi Dr. Zalman Kossowsky

The concept of "Sin" ?in Hebrew 'chet' X is in the forefront of our prayers and meditations during these days of preparation and repentance. I have found it worthwhile this year to reflect upon a number of lessons that I derive from the structure and shape of the Hebrew word itself as well as the letters involved.

First of all - I find it very significant that the numerical value ?gematriaX of the two major terms of this season -- 'sin' - chet - and 'living' - chai - is the same, vis. "18". At first glance this may suggest that to live is also to sin. This, however, is a difficult axiom to propose given that such an idea runs counter to the whole Jewish Weltanschauung. Possibly the solution lies in the fact the word in Hebrew is vocalized in such a way that the last letter, the 'aleph', is silent. The "Sefer Taamei Haminhagim" cites an explanation for this silent 'aleph' which suggests that chet can occur only when the sinner loses sight of the ALEPH of the 'ANOCHI', i.e. the existence of the Creator. Thus we can resolve the seeming paradox if we accept that chet with a value of "18" is the potential of 'sin', while 'sin' as a human activity only occurs when the ONE is removed - which leaves us with a value a bit less than that of chai, namely, the value "17". ≡ Why this relates to the value of 'tov' is a different subject, but one that has Biblical origins, and will be the subject of another sermon, p.G. Δ

I find a second message in the shape of the Hebrew letter which carries a name which has a similar pronunciation - namely, the letter 'chet'. If we follow the image suggested by the Ladder in Yaakov's dream, we find that life is played out on a stage where the foot of ladder stands on the aretz and the head reaches the shamayim. We can then also visualize the letters as if they, too, are standing on the ground ? aretz X. In such a case, the chet can be seen as having blocked itself off from the influences of the shamayim while remaining open to receiving the influences that come from below, ?that which we call "gashmiyut" X. It is quite understandable that such a situation will create the conditions where chet as 'sin' can flourish.

In following this idea further we now visualize the sinner as one who stands with both feet firmly planted on the ground and blocking all influences that may come from above, from the shamayim. The opposite of this sinner would be a person who also stands with both feet on the aretz but still remains open to the influences that come down from above. This in fact is the letter 'heh' which is similar in structure to the chet except that it has made a window high up in one of its walls so that it can see and feel the heavens. Small wonder therefore that it is this letter heh which is also used as a sign of G-d's Presence and acts as a mundane symbol of the Divine Name.

A further development of this imagery can be found when we study the 4 Hebrew letters that form the ineffable Name of G-d that we do not pronounce, namely the yud, the heh, the vav and the final heh. Here I find a continuum - on the one side is the heh as we have already described it, similar to the chet but reaching out to the heavens. On the other side, the yud - an entity that does not touch the aretz at all. In between - the vav - an

entity, which while standing firmly on the aretz, does not allow for blocking that which comes from above, and therefore, like the yud, has almost no horizontal lines in its form.

An even further message can be found in the fact that this Name, which is also the symbol of the Attribute of Mercy ? midat harachamim X, is comprised of two heh s, a vav and a yud. The proportions suggested by this image allows us to visualize rachamim as an entity that is 75% drawing from the aretz and even 50% akin to the chet except for the critical redeeming feature of the window reaching to heavens.

Let us come back to the term for 'sin' - chet, which is made up of the three Hebrew letters - chet, tet and aleph. In the preceding analysis we have postulated that the very shape of the Hebrew letter contains an additional message regarding the nature of the action that the word represents. In examining the three letters that make the word chet ?sinX, we find that the aleph is silent and therefore, in this context, does not count. The 'sin' of the letter chet we have already described. The question, however, remains as to the 'sin' of the letter tet. It is after all very different from the letter chet in that it is totally closed on the bottom, allowing for almost no direct influence from below - and it is open on top, allowing the influences from above to enter. How then can it be a 'partner' to 'sin'? I would like to suggest that answer indeed lies in its very shape. True, it is seemingly the opposite of the chet, but its opening on top is deceiving, for it is not fully open. On the upper right side it has a downward diagonal arm which in essence creates a little 'pocket' that enables it to 'shield' part of itself from receiving the direct influences that flow down from above. For me this is the visual representation of the person who says: "I will fulfill all of G-d's Word, except for Mitzvah "X". Chazal vehemently reject such an approach and it is therefore in this context that the tet joins the chet in providing an arena where 'sin' can flourish.

A final thought relates to the value of term chet when we DO vocalize the aleph. Now we are back to the gematria of "18" and we thus equal the value of the term chai - 'living'. This latter term comprises the two letters - chet and yud. In the imagery which we are using they are seeming opposites. Chet - totally closed to the shamayim but totally open to the aretz, while the yud has no contact with the aretz at all.

This configuration suggests a number of possible interpretations, but for me the message is clear. Chai - to live as G-d wills us to live, cannot be limited to the shamayim alone, cannot consist of only the yud. That which the letter chet represents must also be drawn in; must also be integrated. Thus we find the Nazir, upon the successful completion of his vow to dedicate himself to Holiness by abstaining from the pleasures of the aretz as they express themselves in the grape - is commanded to bring a korban chatat - a sin offering.

Why ?? Wherein did he sin ??

"He sinned," so say the Rabbis, "because in his search to come closer to the yud he denied himself that which legitimately comes from the aretz." Therefore his very Mitzvah, commendable and praiseworthy as it may be - requires kapara atonement.

Chai therefore as 'living' reflects the legitimate elements that lie within the chet. Our prayer that we be inscribed in the Sefer Hachayim reflects our hope that we will always remember the ALEPH of our Creator which in turn will inspire us to find the necessary balance between the chet s and the yud s of our lives.

Halevai. LeShana Tova.

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## ROSCH HASCHANA -- CHOICE, NOT CHANCE

by Rabbi Dr. Zalman Kossowsky

Perhaps the most important thing to remember at this time of the year is that G-d has given us the gift of Free Will. We can, if we so wish, make ourselves better or we can permit ourselves to backslide.

This awareness is critical because current thinking is very influenced by the modern psychological debate as to whether a person is the product of one's environment or of one's heredity. It is almost as if the human being is seen as a pot standing on the fire passively receiving the ingredients of

heredity and/or the salts of environment. That, however, is not the truth! Man can mold himself as well as be molded. Man can choose whether to be considerate or inconsiderate, kind or cruel, generous or parsimonious, holy or unholy.

This is THE CENTRAL idea of Judaism and it is in this spirit that our greatest Teacher, Moses, on the final day of his life dramatically declares: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your children." (Deuteronomy 30;19).

The reason for Creation and thus the very goal of human existence is to exercise this choice. For people to confront themselves, to wrestle with their various desires, lusts and weaknesses and to overcome them.

It is also in this context that we understand the central Commandment of the Schema - ve'ahavta et Hashem Elokecha - that one love G-d. We love G-d when we make His Creation worthwhile and we achieve that only when we make ourselves and the world around us a better place.

This is also what is meant by Holiness when we talk about people being "Holy". When one wishes to be "Holy" then one not only gives charity to help the poor, but one also tries to contribute to alleviating the causes of hunger and need. If one is to become holy, one will not only give to help the crippled but one will try to help remove the causes of such injuries. One will want to observe G-d's commands of kindness toward one's fellow men in the spirit as well as in the letter of the law.

Assuming that you wish to love G-d, that you really want to make yourself better, you may be wondering what is the path one must follow? What are the training rules?

Having undoubtedly followed the media coverage on the Olympics, you now know how vital it is that an athlete work hard at developing the body and the skills necessary for the sport. You have also seen how critical it is to have the correct attitude and mindset, how important concentration is. The same must hold true for spiritual strengths. There must also be a form of spiritual training. What is this spiritual training?

If you want to be a better person, then surely you would have to practice such commandments as: "Bear no grudge against your fellow man." "Do not gossip." "Assist the poor and needy, and respect your fellow man." Then perhaps you will begin to arrive at the level where you can fulfill G-d's wish that you "Love your neighbor as yourself."

In fact, it is exactly these commandments that follow in the Torah after the commandment calling upon Man to be G-d-like and holy. There we are told "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your G-d am holy." What holiness means is then spelled out in a series of laws. Some of these are: "You shall revere every man, his mother and father. You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger. You shall not steal; neither shall you deal falsely nor lie one to another. You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go up and down as a talebearer; neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor. You shall not hate your brother in your heart." (Leviticus 19)

The Torah also includes some laws, in the category of laws leading to holiness, however, that are not exactly logical. One example is the dietary laws. One of the closing passages on the chapter in which the dietary laws are discussed, reads "For I am the Lord your G-d; sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy; for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:44)

No doubt many of you are surprised to hear that the dietary laws are considered by the Torah in the same classification as the so-called moral laws. Some of you may have thought that Kashruth laws are really laws for the sake of health. This is not so.

Don Isaac Abarbanel, a Spanish Jewish nobleman of the fifteenth century and one of the most brilliant commentators on the Bible, deals with the question of whether the dietary laws are mere hygienic laws. It appears that the hygienic reason for Kashrut had already been advanced in his time. The following is a paraphrase of what he wrote: G-d forbid that I should believe that the divine book of the Torah is in the category of a medical hand-book. This is not the purpose of G-d's Torah. We see that other peoples eat all kinds

of food and they are healthy, strong and enjoy longevity. Yes, the Bible omitted many foods that may sometimes be physically harmful to man, but that is not the main reason. The foods that are forbidden contribute to driving away the spirit of purity and holiness. This is why the Torah says about the violation of the dietary laws: "You shall not make yourselves detestable".

We see therefore that while it is true that the dietary laws may also be sound hygienic laws, this was not their main purpose. Rather these laws may be compared to a child attending school. One might say that the reason one's parents sent one to school was as a baby-sitter. There is truth in that, ask any working parent what happens when for some unexpected reason a child is sent home from school during the workday. But the real reason a child attends school is, of course, to receive an education. Likewise there are many reasons that can be advanced for the dietary laws but the Torah's reason is to educate us towards holiness.

These then are the training rules of Judaism. The Torah urges us to improve ourselves through the practice of all the Mitzvot. The adventure of Jewish living is much like a Romance. A person who has never fallen in love is unaware of the joy that comes with being in love. An engaged couple feel that they are very much in love and a deeper love is impossible. But one who has been successfully married for some time knows that love grows and increases as a husband and wife go through life together.

Appreciation for Torah is quite similar. At first one understands the role of the moral laws like caring for the poor and needy. As Judaism is practiced, as study and thought deepens one's understanding, more of the commandments of the Torah become meaningful. Finally our mind's eye sees that all the commandments of the Torah form one chain that has the power to pull us up to a better way of living.

There is a famous Chassidic parable about a diamond that illustrates my central point. A man once owned a great diamond of the purest color. He was very proud of it but one day it accidentally received a deep scratch. The man consulted with all the diamond cutters in his city who were artists in their profession. They told him that even if they were to polish the stone they would not be able to remove the imperfection. It was suggested to him that he take the stone to a specialist who lived in the capital. This person accepted the challenge and even promised to make the diamond look even more beautiful than it had been before the accident. With the greatest art he engraved a delicate rosebud around the imperfection and out of the deep scratch he made the stem. When the other diamond cutters saw what this man had created with so much ingenuity, they were filled with admiration.

You, my friends are like that diamond cutter in the capital city. You can transform a serious shortcoming into the finest virtue. You can make yourself into the world's finest gem. You can become the Jew who is so good that he is better than good, he is holy!

The sounds of the Shofar remind us of the great gift of free will that G-d gave us. Let them serve as a challenge to make ourselves better people in the coming year. Let them serve as a reminder that the road to better living is through the practice of the Commandments.

Let us therefore choose and not leave our lives just to chance.

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Before Ne'ilah - 5757

We are again at that very special moment - the minutes before G-d closes the doors on this Day of Repentance. It is our last chance to use this special day so that our record of wrongdoings will be cleaned up, namely -- to do Teshuva. What is the main feeling that we should have at this time? According to our Sages one of the most important elements in this process is to be truly sorry about those things that we did that were wrong. But how sorry should we feel? Can we measure this sorrow? Let me tell you a story that may help you measure how much regret you should be feeling.

In the old country there was a merchant named Jankel who traveled from shtetel to shtetel selling flour. Unfortunately for him, he was not the only merchant with this commodity and it was often hard to sell all of the flour on his wagon. It happened one day that he came to a town that was situated on

the top of a steep hill. He had traveled through the night so that he could arrive at the market place very early, in the hope that he would at least get some of the early customers. During that night a heavy rain began to fall and all the other merchants who ordinarily came to that market were unable to get their heavy wagons up the steep hill. Jankel was the only source of flour in the shtetel. Imagine - all the townsfolk had to buy from him. He was no fool and knowing that he was the only source of flour in the shtetel, he raised his prices and even then was not too anxious to sell, hoping that if the rain persisted he would raise the price even higher the next day. And so it continued for a number of days. The rain kept coming and Jankel still did not sell but kept hiking the price. Suddenly, during the third night, the rain stopped falling and a warm southerly wind began to blow, drying up the mud so that when morning came the market place was full with other merchants who had managed to drag their wagons up the hill. They were desperate to sell their flour before it spoiled and were offering it for a fraction of the price that Jankel was now asking, in fact for even less than his original starting price.

How do you think Jankel felt that 4th morning?? How did he feel about his decision not to sell out the previous day?

That is being "truly sorry" !! It is with that level of emotion that we should regret our own mistakes.

I wish you success in achieving such a level.

Enayim L'Torah

Rosh Hashana

Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

Who are we?

by Rabbi Yaakov Blau

What are we worth? Many of the teffilot on Rosh Hashana would seem to answer that question with a resounding nothing!. The end of Unetaneh Tokef traces mans existence as starting from dirt and ending as dirt. It goes on to depict man as a broken piece of pottery and a passing shadow. In contrast, G-ds grandeur is presented as ultimately beyond our comprehension. This disparity is repeated in La'adei ad yimloch when the refrain of melech elyon paints a glowing picture of G-d's attributes in contrast to the lowly melech evyon.

Yet, the heart of the Rosh Hashana liturgy suggests a rather different perspective. Every amida starts with G-d exalting us from all other nations and sanctifying us with His mitzvot. Continuing to mussaf, malchiyot ends with G-d, the king of the world, who sanctifies Israel. Likewise, zichronot climaxes with G-d hearing the calls of His people.

This contrast of worthless, insignificant man and man with so much potential to strive for holiness is a tension that we feel the whole year, but which is magnified on Rosh Hashana. This is the day when we most feel G-ds greatness and should accordingly recognize how puny we are in comparison. Nevertheless, it is precisely because we may be overwhelmed by such feelings that we are reminded of just how much we can, and must, make of ourselves. G-d does not desire for us to go through life feeling lowly and inconsequential. On the contrary, He desires for us to strive for ever higher levels of spiritual attainment.

...

Quotable Quotes

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 3:4

Even though the commandment of blowing the shofar is a divine decree, there is a message in it. It says, Awake you who sleep, from your sleep and from your slumber, examine your deeds, return in repentance, and remember your creator. This message refers to those who abandon the truth by wasting time and learning emptiness and nothingness which will not help and will not save them: search your souls and mend your ways and abandon your evil tendencies and improper thoughts. Therefore every person should see himself the whole year as if his merits and sins and the entire world's merits and sins are exactly equal. If he commits a sin, he condemns himself and the entire world to destruction. If he performs a mitzvah he merits salvation for himself and for the entire world. As it says, And a tzaddik is the foundation of the world. This person who performed a mitzvah saved the entire world.  
ness@aecom.yu.edu

"bircas@netvision.net.il"

Rosh HaShona

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

The Sfias Emes teaches:

Our Sages taught: "HaKadosh Boruch Hu said: Say Malchios (the psukim which relate the Kingly attribute of HaShem) before me in order that you may crown Me as King over you; Zichronos (the psukim which relate the remembering of HaShem of Yisroel) in order that your remembrance may rise up before Me for (your) good." (Rosh HaShona 16a).

(This is) because through embracing His Kingship, may His Name be blessed,

the Children of Yisroel are redeemed, as it says: "HaShem redeems the soul of His servants" (Tehillim 34,23). ("His servants") refers to the Children of Yisroel, who embrace His Kingship willingly.

The truth is that "the souls of His servants" refers to the inner desire to serve Him truly, (which is) in the heart of (every) man of Yisroel. For it is written regarding the Children of Yisroel "they are My servants" (VaYikra 25,55). However this desire is obscured by (their) physical suffering.

(But) on Rosh HaShona, HaKadosh Boruch Hu redeems this soul and (this) yearning. This is what (the possuk) refers to: "It (Rosh HaShona) will be a day of Truah - sounding of the shofar - for you." (BaMidbar 29,1). "Truah" is (this) desire, (as it says) "The Truah - Rash'i: fondness and closeness - of their King is in their midst." (BaMidbar 23,21). (The Sfias Emes is relating the meanings of the two forms of "truah" - 'sounding of the shofar' and 'fondness and closeness' DR).

He reveals Himself in a tangible way on this day.

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The Midrash Shochar Tov expounds the possuk "Tiku bachodesh shofar - Sound the shofar at the (beginning of) the month" (Tehillim 81,4) (which refers to Rosh HaShona DR) - Renew your deeds and improve your deeds. (The Midrash is emphasizing the parallel between 'chodesh' - (new) month and 'chadesh' - renew, and between 'shofar' and 'shapper' - improve. Both these pairs of words differ in the Hebrew only in their vowel form, but the letters are the same DR).

The Meshech Chochma (on BaMidbar 29,1) explains this Midrash. For who can survive such a judgment? (of Rosh HaShona DR). For this reason, (our Sages) said that they should make certain to renew their deeds. This refers to transmitting to their children, the new generation, the (necessity of) preserving their religion and their righteous beliefs. With regard to this (our Sages) said: "Any person who teaches Torah to his son's son, is as if he (himself) received it from mount Sinai." (Kidushin 30a). For it is

necessary that the religion of the children should be as fresh, and their appreciation of HaShem Yisborach should be as strong, as if they had received it themselves.

This is termed "renew your deeds," and through this (is achieved) "improve your deeds." For we see that a person whose children stray away from serving HaShem Yisborach and from believing in Him, the parents imitate like monkeys the actions of their children, (in the hope that) they will not become too distanced from them. For this reason it says renew your deeds (transmit the tradition to your children) and through this means, (you will) improve your deeds.

(The Midrash continues) Rabbi Brachia said: "Improve your deeds and renew your deeds," for if the father is careful (always) to check his deeds (to ensure that he does not sin,) then (his) son will also follow the Torah, and his heart will be devoted to his G-d. (But) if the son sees that his father is not fastidious with the less severe mitzvos, then the son will be lax (even) with the most severe mitzvos. And this is (the meaning of) "improve your deeds" and as a result (you will) "renew your deeds" - (transmit the tradition to your children), and the next generation will be faithful to their G-d.

For this reason (Rabbi Brachia) continues: "Just as we find with the shofar that he blows here - at the end which he puts to his mouth - and puts out a note there - at the far end, so all the accusers in the creation indict (you) before Me, and I hear here and put it out there (disregard it). The meaning of this is that through the next generation, who continue in the knowledge of HaShem Yisborach and His Torah through (the endeavor of) this

individual, which is an everlasting merit, this acts to remove from him all the evil of which he stands accused in the context of the present time. This is why the possuk continues "on the appointed day, the day of our festival." (Tehillim 81,4) . . . For the time will come in the future when the new generation (follows), who have attained a knowledge of the ways of the Torah through the efforts of their fathers (who) raised them in (the practice of) the Torah.

#### THE SPECIAL ROSH HA-SHANA PACKAGE

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#### ROSH HA-SHANA AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE MONTHS by Rav Yehuda Shaviv

A. The sanctification of the new month (kiddush ha-chodesh) and the declaration of the start of the month - according to the testimony of two witnesses who had personally witnessed the new moon - is a very profound and lofty subject; profound both from the point of view of its content as well as in qualitative terms. However, Chazal did not see fit to set aside a separate masekhet (tractate) specifically to discuss this subject, but rather included their treatment of it within masekhet Rosh Ha-shana. Moreover, even a cursory review of the masekhet reveals that the subject of kiddush ha-chodesh is not an appendix added on to the main theme, but rather represents a considerable portion of the masekhet itself. Even its location is not at some remote place near the end, but rather in the opening chapters. Hence, a person who seeks to learn about Rosh Ha-shana and takes out that masekhet to study will find... a discussion of kiddush ha-chodesh!

In other words, this is a sort of introduction to the day of Rosh Ha-shana. Could this be the key to it? It certainly is the key, literally; for so long as the beginning of the month cannot be determined, we cannot tell when the first day of the seventh month falls, and we cannot celebrate Rosh Ha-shana. But it seems that this key holds greater qualitative significance.

B. We have already stated that the discussion pertaining to kiddush ha-chodesh is a lofty one, and this subject should be included in the Torah's injunction to "Blow the shofar on the day of the new month, on the concealed day of our celebration" (Tehillim 81:4) - it is concealed and hidden.

This is interesting, for the above verse is usually explained as referring to a contraction of the light of Rosh Chodesh when that day is superimposed on

a festival - i.e., Rosh Ha-shana. "Which festival is it in which Rosh Chodesh is concealed? It is Rosh Ha-shana" (Rosh Ha-shana 8), and Tosafot (ibid. 8b) record the words of Rabbi Meshulam in his debate with Rabbi Tam, stating that the Mussaf (additional prayer) of Rosh Chodesh is not to be mentioned in the course of the Rosh Ha-shana prayers. (The same law is brought in the Arukh, s.v. Chodesh.) This topic requires a separate discussion.

All this pertains to the day of Rosh Ha-shana, but in the night - when we neither blow the shofar nor recite Mussaf - it may well be that the Rosh Chodesh theme features in a central role.

We learn that many Jews used to go out on the night which by their calculation was supposed to be Rosh Ha-shana; they would walk outside in the dark looking for the new moon in order to be able to give testimony. Even if this doesn't describe an actual mitzva (commandment) which was to be fulfilled on Rosh Ha-shana, it certainly describes a procedure which was followed on that festival. From this point of view the mishna follows the order of events on Rosh Ha-shana in chronological order: first what they did at night (looking for signs of the new moon), and thereafter what they did in the day (blessing of the new moon, shofar and mussaf) - just as is the case in other tractates (Pesachim, etc.).

C. However, this connection is made clearer as regards kiddush ha-chodesh (sanctification of the new month), since this was subject to the control of man and not God.

Our sages were certainly aware of when the moon was due to appear, and by their calculations they knew when the new moon would be. "And they would calculate the passage of the moon every month, and they knew whether or not it would be seen, according to what their exact calculations revealed" (Rambam, Commentary on the Mishna, Rosh Ha-shana 2:7). It is a well-known fact that for many hundreds of years the dates of every Rosh Chodesh have been known with great accuracy. However, at the same time, when it was possible to determine Rosh Chodesh according to the testimony of two Jewish eye-witnesses, they still did this. Not only that, but when the Beit Din received testimony and declared the date of Rosh Chodesh, even if they had made a mistake, their declaration remained valid and the new month was duly sanctified and counted.

This demonstrates the principle that everything here depends on the determination made by Israel - mortal beings.

D. Even if we are able to accept this idea as regards all the other months - albeit with some degree of trepidation - when it comes to the month of Tishrei we are awestruck. Can it be possible that the King of Kings is sitting on His throne of glory, and the masses of His armies are meant to be coronating Him, as it were, and everything is ready for the coronation ceremony and the call to judgement, and everything is waiting for... not for a sign from the King of the universe, but rather for the arrival of two Jews to come and testify that they have witnessed the new moon!? And so long as they have not yet arrived and Israel have not yet been able to sanctify the new month, there is - as it were - no Kingship and no judgement, and the whole world has to wait, even if it means until the next day!

E. Indeed, there can be no kingship without our coronation of God from down below. Only the sighting of the new moon here on earth serves as a sign and symbol to the beholders - and to all of Israel - that there exists the possibility of renewal, that there can be light that comes after complete darkness. Only then can we coronate the King of Kings and present ourselves for judgement, for we know that He has put an end to the darkness, and that that which was is not necessarily that which will be, and change - even a complete turnabout - is possible. The path to teshuva exists.

F. Only when we discover the path of teshuva is the Kingship of God complete, for so long as there are sins and sinners, they represent a diminishing - as it were - of the scope of God's glory and the perfection of His Kingship. "By means of teshuva everything returns to Godliness" (Rav Kook, Orot Ha-teshuva 4:2). The person who repents even brings back with him the dark days of sin, days which were devoid of Godliness, and he returns them and offers them to the King of the universe. He grasps his iniquities and changes them into merit. The purity of his soul at that moment

turns towards the past and shines on his past deeds and desires, cleansing and purifying them.

G. The renewal of the moon contains a message - the message of renewal: renewal of the individual; renewal of the community, "For they are destined to renew themselves like the moon;" the renewal of the kingship of Israel; and the renewal of the Kingship of heaven, which is crux of Rosh Ha-shana. (Translated by Kaeren Fish. Originally appeared in Daf Keshet #198.)

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## TEKIYA AL SEDER HA-BERAKHOT:

### On the Relationship between Shofar and Prayer

by Rav Yair Kahn

#### I. Introduction

According to the mishna in Rosh Ha-shana (33b), the mitzva of shofar demands blowing three units of teru'a. Each unit is comprised of one teru'a sandwiched by two tekiyot. However, the exact sound of the teru'a is a subject of disagreement among the Tannaim. According to one source, the proper sound is reminiscent of sobbing; we refer to this sound as shevarim. Another source demands what we refer to as a teru'a, which sounds more like weeping. R. Abbahu raised the possibility teru'a is a complex sound beginning with sobbing then developing into uncontrolled weeping. This sound is, of course, the shevarim-teru'a (ibid. 34a).

In order to cover the various possibilities, each version of the teru'a must be sandwiched by tekiyot, and repeated three times. This is exactly what we do before the Mussaf service in order to be certain that we fulfill the basic mitzva. This set of tekiyot is known as tekiyot de-meyushav (the tekiyot performed prior to the Mussaf prayer, when one can still sit).

Although the mitzva of shofar has already been fulfilled, we continue with tekiyot de-me'umad (tekiyot performed during the tefilla when one is standing). It is necessary to repeat the tekiyot, because optimally the shofar must be blown together with the three blessings recited within the Mussaf service on Rosh Ha-shana, i.e., Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot. Merging the shofar with these berakhot is known as "tekiyot al seder ha-berakhot," and will be the subject of this shiur. We will begin with a discussion regarding the source for reciting these berakhot.

#### II. Malkhuyot, Zikhronot, and Shofarot

The gemara (Rosh Ha-shana 32a) cites a biblical source for these three berakhot. Similarly, the gemara (ibid. 16a) states: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said 'Recite Malkhuyot Zikhronot and Shofarot in my presence ...'" From these sources it appears that the three berakhot are required by Torah law. In fact, Rashi in his commentary on the Torah (Lev. 23:24) interprets a biblical verse as referring to the berakhot of Zikhronot and Shofarot. The Ramban (ibid.) attacks Rashi's position because of the following passage: "The mitzva of blowing the shofar is greater than the mitzva of the berakhot.

In what situation? Where there are two towns, one in which they blow the shofar, the other in which they recite the berakhot, one must go to where they blow and not to where they bless. This is obvious, after all this (shofar) is from the Torah, while this (the berakhot) is rabbinic" (Rosh Ha-shana 34b).

Based on this explicit source, the Ramban concludes that the obligation to recite the berakhot is only rabbinic. Consequently, he claims that the gemara which derives these berakhot from biblical verses, is what is known as an *asmakhta* (artificially using the Torah to support rabbinic law). In his commentary on the Sefer Ha-mitzvot (first shoresh), the Ramban claims that gemarot which quote Hashem are not necessarily to be taken literally. He proves this from the sugya (mentioned above) which quotes Hashem as demanding the three berakhot, which are actually only of rabbinic origin. Before attempting to explain how Rashi might respond to the Ramban's attack, let us take a closer look at tekiya al seder ha-berakhot (merging the shofar with the berakhot).

#### III. Tekiyot De-me'umad

As previously noted, tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is fulfilled by the tekiyot de-me'umad, where we accompany the three berakhot with the shofar. There is an extensive discussion in the Rishonim relating to the exact performance

of these tekiyot. According to the original custom, the berakha of Malkhuyot was accompanied by a unit of shevarim- teru'a (tekiya, shevarim-teru'a, tekiya). Nevertheless, the berakha of Zikhronot was accompanied by a unit of shevarim, while the berakha of Shofarot was accompanied by a unit of teru'a. At first glance this is quite strange, since there is no consistency regarding the teru'a. The three different versions of teru'a are used alternately in the three berakhot. This seems to lead to a situation whereby the shofar is blown correctly in only one of the three berakhot. The Rishonim were troubled by the apparent contradiction inherent in this practice.

There are various solutions to this problem. Rav Hai Gaon and the Ba'al Ha-ma'or claim that the various opinions regarding the sound of the teru'a are not mutually exclusive. Although the exact sound of the teru'a is preferable, any version of the teru'a is acceptable. The Rif and Rambam argue that accuracy of the teru'a is indispensable. Nevertheless, they explain, that accuracy during the tekiyot de-me'umad is not required, since the mitzva at the Torah level has already been fulfilled. Rabbeinu Tam, on the other hand, claimed that all the options are included within a shevarim-teru'a. He therefore altered the custom such that a shevarim-teru'a would accompany all three berakhot. Our custom, based on the Arukh, includes all three versions of the teru'a in each of the three berakhot.

Most of the solutions offered accept the basic assumption that a proper teru'a is essential for tekiyot de-me'umad. The Ramban boldly swept aside the entire problem. He claimed that a basic difference exists between the obligation of shofar on Rosh Ha-shana, and the obligation to accompany the berakhot with the shofar. This difference stems from two independent sources. In Parashat Emor (Lev. 23:24), we are commanded to blow the shofar on Rosh Ha-shana. This obligation focuses on the shofar, thereby demanding a precise rendition of the required sounds (tekiya-teru'a-tekiya, three times). In Parashat Beha'alotkha (Num. 10:9), we are commanded to sound trumpets whenever the Jewish people face danger. According to both the Rambam (Hilkhot Ta'anuyot 1:1) and the Ramban (see commentary on Sefer Ha-mitzvot, Positive Commandment #5), this is essentially an obligation of prayer which is accompanied by and expressed through the trumpet. Therefore, the Ramban claimed that precision of the trumpet sound is not essential. The Ramban proceeded to identify the halakha of tekiya al seder ha-berakhot on Rosh Ha-shana with the obligation to sound the trumpets in times of danger, since Rosh Ha-shana (being the day of judgment) poses a degree of danger.

According to the Ramban, when we blow the shofar before Mussaf (tekiyot de-meyushav), the obligation of shofar specific to Rosh Ha-shana is successfully completed. The additional obligation to accompany the berakhot with the shofar (tekiyot de-me'umad) is rooted in the general halakha of prayer in times of danger. Therefore, although precision is essential during the tekiyot de-meyushav, it is unnecessary during the tekiyot de-me'umad.

Those Rishonim who did not accept the Ramban's solution may argue with the Ramban's assertion that precision is unnecessary regarding the obligation to sound trumpets at times of danger. On the other hand, they may totally reject the entire thesis presented by the Ramban. These Rishonim may argue that tekiyot de-me'umad is not a separate obligation. The halakha to sound the shofar during the berakhot is a fuller more complete fulfillment of the mitzva of shofar specific to Rosh Ha-shana. This assumes, however, that the mitzva of shofar on Rosh Ha-shana is more than merely listening to the sounds of the shofar. The shofar is a form of prayer, an unutterable cry to Hashem which cannot be expressed verbally (see Tosafot Pesachim 115a s.v. Matkif). Nevertheless, when accompanied by the three berakhot, the prayer of the shofar is enhanced by the content of the berakhot. Therefore, although the basic mitzva was completed through the tekiyot de-meyushav, a fuller fulfillment is attained by sounding the shofar within the context of Malkhuyot, Shofarot and Zikhronot. According to this understanding, it is reasonable that the criteria which govern the tekiyot de-meyushav will be applicable to tekiyot de-me'umad as well.

#### IV. Ramifications

The Rambam in Hilkhot Shofar (3:11) rules: "The person who blows the shofar when the congregation is sitting, is the one who should blow al seder ha-berakhot when they are standing, and he should not talk between the tekiyot de-meyushav and the tekiyot de-me'umad." It is possible to view this halakha as specific to the person blowing the shofar, because the berakha that he makes prior to blowing the shofar the first time should also relate to the subsequent tekiyot. However, there are opinions which extend this halakha to everyone (see Maggid Mishneh ibid.). If we view the tekiyot de-me'umad as a fulfillment of the mitzva of shofar, then it is reasonable to demand a degree of continuity between the beginning of the mitzva and its ultimate completion. If, on the other hand, the halakha of tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is independent, a break separating the two tekiyot is acceptable.

The berakha we recite before a mitzva is known as a birkat ha-mitzva. There are some berakhot which use the term "al" (on), e.g. al nitilat yadayim, while others use the prefix "le-" (to), e.g. le-hadlik ner shel Shabbat. The gemara in Pesachim (7b) searches for some pattern or principle in order to explain these two different versions. However, the gemara's unclear conclusion generated a heated debate among the Rishonim. Rabbeinu Tam claimed that the term "al" applies to mitzvot which are fulfilled through a defined and limited act. However, "le-" is used regarding a mitzva whose fulfillment continues beyond the initial act (e.g. talmud Torah or hanachat tefillin).

The Ramban argues with Rabbeinu Tam, citing a number of berakhot inconsistent with his thesis. One of the questions involves the berakha of shofar, which is worded with a "le." The Ramban claims that shofar should be a classic case of a mitzva which is fulfilled through a clearly defined act.

After all, one merely has to hear the three units of teru'a. The Rosh defends Rabbeinu Tam's position, claiming that shofar is not fulfilled through a defined act, since one must also hear the tekiya al seder ha-berakhot. The Ramban, who maintained that tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is independent of the basic mitzva of shofar, would certainly not have been convinced by this argument. The Rosh, on the other hand, explicitly supports the alternate approach which perceived the berakhot as enhancing and completing the mitzva of shofar. The categorization of shofar as a mitzva whose fulfillment is not clearly defined, may not be only because of the time lapse between tekiyot de-meyushav and tekiyot de-me'umad. The perception of shofar as a form of prayer (which is therefore enhanced by the berakhot) is by definition not clearly defined. According to this understanding, even if the berakha were made immediately preceding tekiyot de-me'umad, the prefix "le" and not "al" would be appropriate. The Ramban, however, viewed shofar not as prayer but rather as hearing or sounding certain sounds. Therefore, according to the Ramban, the mitzva of shofar is clearly defined.

#### V. Rashi

The gemara (34b) says that the berakhot and tekiyot of Rosh Ha-shana are dependent on each other. Rashi interprets this to mean that the mitzva of the three berakhot cannot be fulfilled without sounding the shofar, and the mitzva of shofar cannot be fulfilled without reciting the berakhot. Tosafot (33b) reject this explanation. According to Tosafot, each one of the three berakhot is dependent on other two. Similarly, the three units of teru'a are interdependent. However, the berakhot and tekiyot are independent of each other.

If, like the Ramban, we maintain that shofar and berakhot are independent, then there is no reason to assume that the fulfillment of one should be connected with the other. If, on the other hand, we view berakhot as enhancing the shofar and filling it with content, then the idea of dependency can be entertained.

Tosafot reject Rashi's interpretation based on the gemara (quoted above) which ruled that one should prefer shofar without berakhot over berakhot without shofar, since shofar is required by Torah law, while berakhot is a rabbinic obligation. If, as Rashi claims, shofar is dependent upon the berakhot, what is gained by hearing the shofar without the berakhot?

Perhaps, we can solve this problem according to Rashi by interpreting the gemara in a slightly different manner. We suggested that Rashi maintains that the berakhot enhance the mitzva of shofar. Although Rashi must admit

that the basic mitzva of shofar is fulfilled without the berakhot, nevertheless, in order to achieve a complete fulfillment of shofar, the berakhot are indispensable.

What happens in the opposite case, when the berakhot are recited without the shofar? The Ramban maintained that tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is not rooted in the mitzva of shofar, but rather the obligation to pray in times of danger. Accordingly, the berakhot are of primary importance, while the shofar is a helpful but not critical addition. It follows that lack of the shofar would not invalidate the berakhot. However, according to Rashi, the berakhot do not play an independent role. They merely enhance the mitzva of the shofar. Therefore, in the absence of a shofar, the berakhot lose their basic meaning.

The Ramban proved that the three berakhot are of rabbinic origin from the gemara which preferred shofar without berakhot over berakhot without shofar. The gemara explained that the Torah obligates shofar, while only the Rabbis demand the berakhot. According to the Ramban's opinion that tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is basically an obligation to pray, the proof is very convincing. After all, the gemara explicitly regards the prayer as rabbinic. Rashi, however, understood the berakhot to be an enhancement of the mitzva of shofar. Therefore, when the berakhot are recited in the absence of the shofar, they lose their basic meaning. In such a situation the obligation is only rabbinic. However, when the berakhot accompany the shofar, then it is possible that the obligation is rooted in the Torah, as the optimal method of fulfilling the mitzva of shofar.

Summary:

Tekiya al seder ha-berakhot is comprised of two components: shofar and tefilla. We presented two basic understandings of this combination.

1. The Ramban understood the basic halakha as one of tefilla. According to him, shofar is secondary, merely accompanying the tefilla, analogous to the trumpets in times of danger. 2. The Rosh took the opposite approach, considering tekiyot de-me'umad to be a fulfillment of shofar. The mitzva of shofar, which itself is a non-expressible form of tefilla, is enhanced by the berakhot of Malkhuyot, Zikronot and Shofarot.

By subscribing to the Rosh's approach, we solved the difficulties inherent in Rashi's commentary on the Torah. We further noted this as being consistent with the way Rashi interprets the gemara in Rosh Ha-shana.

Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Rosh Hashanah 5757

Shabbat-B'Shabbato and Zomet Institute would like to take this opportunity to wish a healthy and successful year to our readers and to all of Israel. From SHABBAT-B'SHABBATO, a weekly bulletin distributed free of charge in hundreds of synagogues in Israel.

## FREE CHOICE AND SPECIAL TIMES

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgement, as is written: "The world is judged four times during the year ... On Rosh Hashanah all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him as sheep" [Rosh Hashanah 1:2]. For the entire year, every individual can do as he pleases, good or bad. But now, as the day of judgement arrives, each one is judged on all that he has done. On this day, there is no longer individual choice, but all is in the hands of the Almighty. The trial is completely just, and it depends on the balance of deeds that each one has performed. "Every year, the sins of each and every one are weighed against the good deeds, on the day of Rosh Hashanah. Whoever is found to be righteous, is sealed for life; whoever is found to be evil, is fated for death." [Rambam, Teshuvah 3:4].

However, there are some who still have control of their fate. "The one who is in balance is left until Yom Kippur. If he repents, he is judged for life, but if not, his fate is sealed for death" [ibid]. Those who hang in the balance can repent and return to life. However, isn't repentance a right of everybody? We are told that during these ten days teshuvah is accepted on the spot: "Even though repentance and contrition are always proper, the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are most suitable and they are accepted

immediately, as is written [Yeshayahu 58:6]: 'Seek G-d when he is available' [Rambam, Teshuvah 2:6]. It would seem that the possibility of repentance is always available, and one always has the ability to invoke teshuvah to reshape all that he has done in the past. As is written, when one repents from love his sins are turned into credits (Yoma 86b).

Free choice is explicitly mentioned in last week's Torah portion, "Life and death are before you, blessing and curse; choose life, that you shall live" [Devarim 30:19]. When is it that one stands before the choice between life and death? The answer is the day of judgement, Rosh Hashanah. It is a nearby passage which explains what to do in order to choose life: "Return to the Lord your G-d ... with all your heart and all your soul" [Devarim 30:14]. This is not a farfetched possibility: "This is close to you, it is in your mouth and your heart to accomplish it" [Devarim 30:14]. "In your mouth and your heart -- To admit their sins and the sins of their fathers by word of mouth and to repent in the heart, and in this way they will accept the Torah" [Ramban]. There is another choice that the individual must make on Rosh Hashanah. He is required to choose the king of the world. After a year of experience with earthly rulers and governments, he returns to "the king of the world, who ruled before any creature was created," to request: "rule the whole world with your honor, and be raised above the entire land in honor, and appear in all your glory before all the inhabitants of the universe."

EXPLAIN A MIDRASH: Judgement Day Then and Now  
by Rabbi Eliezer Gur-Arieh

The Psikta of Rabbi Kahana opens its sermon for Rosh Hashanah with a passage from Tehillim: "G-d, your word is permanent in the heavens" [119:89]. It then continues: "Rabbi Ila'i taught: the world was created on 25 Elul. And Rabbi Kahana brought in the name of Rabbi Ila'i, who learned from Rav: This is the first day, in memory of the first day, as is written, 'This is a law for Yisrael, a judgement for the G-d of Yaacov' [Tehillim 81:5]. The nations will be judged on this day, which ones for the sword and which for peace, which for hunger and which will be fed, which ones for death and which for life. And the creatures will be remembered for life or for death. Thus, Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah. During the first hour the idea of his creation was conceived ... in the third hour his dust was gathered ... in the seventh his soul entered into him, in the eighth he entered the Garden of Eden, in the ninth he was commanded, in the tenth he sinned, in the eleventh he was judged, and in the twelfth hour he was released by the Almighty. G-d said to him, let this be a sign for your children. Just as you entered judgement this day and were set free, so will your descendants come before me to be judged this day and to obtain their release. When will this happen? On the first day of the seventh month (Tishrei)."

The fact that Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgement is rooted in the trial of Adam on the day that he was created. Just as this occurred on 1 Tishrei (the sixth day after 25 Elul), so will this date always be a day of judgement for the creatures of the world. The word of G-d is permanent and everlasting. Just as the first judgement was for Adam, who then constituted the entire population of the world, so the annual judgement encompasses all the creatures, as individuals and as groups. This includes the fate of entire nations, for life or for death.

Thus, the innovation that took place on that first day is repeated each and every year. And, just as this is true of the events at the end of the day, judgement and trial, so is it true of what took place earlier in the day, the successive stages of the creation of man. The beginning of the above passage, "Your word is permanent," has been taken to refer to the word of G-d in creation: "He spoke and it became, he commanded and it came to be" [Tehillim 33:9]. The occurrence of "Let us make a man" [Bereishit 1:26] returns each year on this date. But the key is in the hands of man himself. If he will repent and renew his actions, G-d will form him into a new creature.

Ohr Somayach Ask The Rabbi 14 September 1996 Issue #119  
This Issue Contains: 1. Shofar Scents 2. Anonymous Kneeling  
We wish all of our readers a Ketiva v'Chatima Tova.

Michael R. Leavitt <Mleavitt@his.com> wrote:

>Dear Rabbi, >>I just got a beautiful shofar from a friend returning from Israel. It >sounds great, but it has one problem. It smells. But really bad. There >were probably some marrow pieces left inside. My question is simple: >"How do you clean a shofar?"  
\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Michael R. Leavitt

To answer your question, my wife spoke to Mrs. Sarah Glaser, author of Life Saver! -- The Jewish Homemaker's Survival Kit (Targum/Feldheim). She recommends vinegar or baking soda for removing odors. Pour synthetic vinegar into the shofar. Or dissolve baking soda in water, and pour into the shofar. Rinse and repeat. If necessary, let sit overnight in the vinegar/baking soda solution. Eliminating a strong odor is important, because such an odor might lessen the honor of the mitzvah, violating the principle that "mitzvot should not be contemptible in your eyes." And if the odor is as bad as you say, it's forbidden to say a blessing in its presence. But remember, the inside of the shofar needn't compete with perfumes such as Eau d'Elegance or Chanel. Most shofars retain a slight, lingering reminiscence of their humble origin, the ram. When Isaac blessed Jacob, Isaac said, 'My son's fragrance is like the fragrance of the field blessed by Hashem.' Of course, Jacob was wearing animal skins on his hands and neck. Perhaps the power of Jacob's mitzvah turned a bad smell into a good one. May Hashem accept our mitzvah of shofar this year, and may all our deeds be sweet-smelling!

Sources: o Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 79:8-9 o Mishna Berurah 79:29,31 and 586:90 o Bereishit 27:27, Rashi

Sarah Leah wrote via the InterNet:

>Dear Rabbi, >>I need a reference in Talmud. Is there a place where it says that one may >kneel if one has a paper between the knee and the floor? >>The issue of kneeling has become a source of conflict for some of us in >the 12 Step Programs-AA, etc.). Kneeling is not required for any reason >in the 12-Step Program, but it's sort of a tradition to kneel during the >3rd step which says "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives >over to the care of God, as we understand Him..." >>Thank you so much for this service.

Dear Sarah Leah, The Torah forbids prostrating yourself flat out on a stone floor, as was the way of the ancient idol worshippers. Our Sages extended this prohibition to include kneeling. The Shulchan Aruch says that if you put an intervening substance between your knees and the stone floor, then it's permitted to kneel. On Yom Kippur, we get on our knees and bow down with our faces to the floor. Many synagogues, especially in Israel, have stone or tile floors, so people bring small towels to bow down upon. I was once in a synagogue where they passed out used computer paper to kneel on!

Sources: o Leviticus 26:1 o Maimonides, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 6:6-8 o Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 131:8

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The National Council of Young Israel wishes all of you and your families a K'Tiva V'Chatimah Tova !!  
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Rosh HaShanah 1-2 Tishrei 5757 Saturday-Sunday, September 14-15, 1996  
Guest Rabbi:  
Rabbi Dr. Gershon Gewirtz  
Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts

This past year of 5756 was filled with so much turmoil, change and unresolved conflict, here in America, in Israel and around the world, it is most difficult to focus on what we would like to see in 5757.

Within the Jewish world, we have yet to learn how to engage in civil debate. There is little common language, let alone common interest; the issues that divide us have come to define us. On the global scene, the ravages of war abound, terrorism continues to strengthen its grip upon daily life everywhere and there is little relief in sight. Aside from a general cry of "HELP" to the Al-Mighty during these days of yamim nora'im, what can we do? Do we have any responsibility for our world or are we to simply throw up our hands in despair and resign ourselves to a fate as yet unknown? As G-d fearing Jews, we certainly believe that our futures ultimately reside with the Al-Mighty. Nevertheless, there is much over which we may exercise control, indeed, are expected to exercise control. During the final days in the life of Moshe Rabbeinu, we find that he focused on both Israel's then recent past as well as upon their future. At one point he begins the beautiful poem of Ha'azinu. Near the beginning of this presentation to Klal Yisrael, he offers a special prayer:

Ki Shem HaShem Ekra Havu Godel Lalokainu  
when I proclaim G-d's name, praise G-d for His greatness  
The Talmud in Tractate B'rachos (21a) cites a statement by Rabbi Yehuda; minayim l'birchas hatorah l'fanaha min hatora?  
Shene'emar, Ki Shem HaShem Ekra Havu Godel Lalokainu "from what Torah source do we understand that there is a Biblical obligation to recite a blessing prior to studying Torah?

As is stated in the Torah: when I proclaim G-d's name, praise G-d for His greatness." Rashi, citing chazal explains that Moshe opened with an explanation: ani avarech t'chila, v'atem anu acharai, amen "I will first recite the blessing and you respond with amen"

While it is clear that halacha demands that we recite a blessing prior to studying Torah, it is not at all clear why Moshe did not fulfill this dictum long before the final days of his life. He had, in fact, taught Torah for the previous forty years. Why was no blessing required during all that time? A most insightful answer to this question is offered by Rav Avraham of Sochatshav. He teaches "Ki l'fi chazal haysa haShechina m'daberes mitoch g'rono shel moshe, m'maila haya patur m'b'racha; aval shiras ha'azinu amar Moshe b'atzmo lif'nai moshe, v'haya tzarich l'varech aleha" -- "our Sages teach that throughout Moshe's life, the "presence of the Al-Mighty: expressed itself through Moshe's voice. Therefore, no blessing was required. With the song of ha'azinu, however, Moshe speaks for himself, teaching on his own, thus requiring a blessing".

In addition to clarifying the nature of blessing as it relates to Torah study, Rav Avraham of Sochatshav also teaches an important lesson regarding our entire approach to life. While we continuously confront challenges and problems, some perhaps of our own making, others seemingly thrust upon us by forces beyond our control, we have a responsibility to choose the nature of our response. At the time he authored ha'azinu, Moshe knew that he was soon to die. Although his final request to enter the land of Israel had been denied, his life was not yet over. How would he utilize his remaining time?

Would he simply bemoan his fate, over which he had no control? Moshe's response was powerful and forthright. He sings to the future of Israel and utilizes the opportunity to achieve something never before possible for him. He teaches the halacha of birchat haTorah. While the halacha may appear to be a matter of less-than-cosmic significance, Moshe teaches us that he is still Moshe Rabbeinu. He accepts what he must and forges ahead. He is courageous and inspiring.

And this is how we must approach yamim nora'im. There are many things in today's world that are cause for great concern. Our responsibility, however, is to emulate Moshe Rabbeinu. He taught that even at one's darkest of moments, there is an opportunity to create b'racha.

May we always have the z'chut to see opportunities for b'racha and may the Al-Mighty always deem us worthy.  
May we all be zoche to a k'tiva v'chatima tova!

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B"H

Torah Studies

Adaptation of Likutei Sichos

by

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

Rosh Hashana and 10 Days of Teshuva

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The Ten Days of Teshuvah

The following Sicha is about the difficulties of translation itself. The act of translation assumes that for every word in one language, equivalents can be found in another. But this may be untrue, especially when we are dealing with ideas that are central and unique to Judaism. We may then fall into the error of equating a Jewish idea with one drawn from another culture when the two are in fact dissimilar, even opposite. This is the case with the three words constantly on our minds during the Ten Days of Teshuvah. In English they are repentance, prayer and charity. How far these differ from their Jewish counterparts - teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah - the Rebbe emphatically explains.

#### THE SERVICE OF THE TEN DAYS

We express the hope that on Rosh Hashanah G-d blessed us with a "good and sweet year" to come, a year made fruitful by children, health and sustenance.

But there is no limit to goodness and blessing. Thus, during the Ten Days of Teshuvah we have the opportunity through our service, to cause G-d to grant us yet greater benefits from His "full and expansive hand."

What is this service? It is, as we say in our prayers, "repentance, prayer and charity" which avert evil and bring the good. But the words "repentance, prayer and charity" are misleading. By thus translating the Hebrew terms teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah we are led into a false comparison of these three elements of the religious life as they exist in Judaism and outside it. In fact, there are crucial differences. Teshuvah is not repentance. Tefillah is not prayer. And tzedakah is not charity.

#### TESHUVAH AND REPENTANCE

"Repentance" in Hebrew is not teshuvah but charatah. Not only are these two terms not synonymous. They are opposites. Charatah implies remorse or a feeling of guilt about the past and an intention to behave in a completely new way in the future. The person decides to become "a new man." But teshuvah means "returning" to the old, to one's original nature. Underlying the concept of teshuvah is the fact that the Jew is, in essence, good. Desires or temptations may deflect him temporarily from being himself, being true to his essence.

But the bad that he does is not part of, nor does it affect, his real nature. Teshuvah is a return to the self. While repentance involves dismissing the past and starting anew, teshuvah means going back to one's roots in G-d and exposing them as one's true character. For this reason, while the righteous have no need to repent, and the wicked may be unable to, both may do teshuvah. The righteous, though they have never sinned, have constantly to strive to return to their innermost. And the wicked, however distant they are from G-d, can always return, for teshuvah does not involve creating anything new, only rediscovering the good that was always within them.

#### TEFILLAH AND PRAYER

"Prayer" in Hebrew is not tefillah but bakashah. And again these terms are opposites. Bakashah means to pray, request, beseech. But tefillah means, to

attach oneself. In bakashah the person asks G-d to provide him, from above, with what he lacks. Therefore when he is not in need of anything, or feels no desire for a gift from above, bakashah becomes redundant. But in tefillah the person seeks to attach himself to G-d. It is a movement from below, from man, reaching towards G-d. And this is something appropriate to everyone and at every time. The Jewish soul has a bond with G-d. But it also inhabits a body, whose preoccupation with the material world may attenuate that bond. So it has constantly to be strengthened and renewed. This is the function of tefillah. And it is necessary for every Jew. For while there may be those who do not lack anything and thus have nothing to request of G-d, there is no-one who does not need to attach himself to the source of all life.

#### TZEDAKAH AND CHARITY

The Hebrew for "charity" is not tzedakah but chessed. And again these two words have opposite meanings. Chessed, charity, implies that the recipient has no right to the gift and that the donor is under no obligation to give it. He gives it gratuitously, from the goodness of his heart. His act is a virtue rather than a duty. On the other hand tzedakah means righteousness or justice. The implication is that the donor gives because it is his duty. For, firstly, everything in the world belongs ultimately to G-d. A man's possessions are not his by right. Rather, they are entrusted to him by G-d, and one of the conditions of that trust is that he should give to those who are in need. Secondly, a man has a duty to act towards others as he asks G-d to act towards him. And as we ask G-d for His blessings though He owes us nothing and is under no obligation, so we are bound in justice to give to those who ask us, even though we are in no way in their debt. In this way we are rewarded: Measure for measure. Because we give freely, G-d gives freely to us. This applies in particular to the tzedakah which is given to support the institutions of Torah learning. For everyone who is educated in these institutions is a future foundation of a house in Israel, and a future guide to the coming generation. This will be the product of his tzedakah - and his act is the measure of his reward.

#### THREE PATHS

These are the three paths which lead to a year "written and sealed" for good. By returning to one's innermost self (teshuvah), by attaching oneself to G-d (tefillah) and by distributing one's possessions with righteousness (tzedakah), one turns the promise of Rosh Hashanah into the abundant fulfillment of Yom Kippur: A year of sweetness and plenty.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. II, pp. 409-411.)

"dgreen@ucs.net" To: [dvartorah@torah.org](mailto:dvartorah@torah.org)

The book Sifsei Chaim, the writings of Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, of blessed memory, discusses the following issue. In "Midrash Rabbah" Rabbi Yoshiah quotes the passage "Fortunate is the nation who knows the teruah (the sound of the Shofar)." He asks "don't the nations of the world also know how to blow a shofar?" Rather (it means), the nation who knows the "teruah" recognizes the way to appease their Creator with the sound of the Shofar. And (at the time of sounding the Shofar) He (G-d) stands up from His throne of (strict) justice, and sits on His throne of mercy."

In contrast it is brought down in a work called the "Ya'aros Devash" that the actual judgement of the day of Rosh HaShanah is done at the time of sounding the Shofar. The idea that the shofar awakens judgement is also supported by the "Nesaneh Tokef" in the liturgy for Rosh HaShanah. The poet writes "And The Great Shofar will be sounded...behold it is the day of judgement." Seemingly, there is a discrepancy between the two ideas. Either the Shofar awakens judgement, or it mitigates judgement. The Ya'aros Devash notes the seeming contradiction, and resolves it saying that the act of OUR awakening the judgement is itself what mitigates the strictness of the judgement. In order to understand the mechanism of this, one needs to appreciate the purpose of judgement in general.

Each year when we are judged on Rosh HaShanah (translated as beginning of the year) adjustments are made in the "prescription" for every person. New decrees are made for the world in general, and for individuals in particular. The purpose of these prescriptions are to give us all the tools to

bring out our potential, and thereby realize the purpose of creation. For some, continued good health and/or prosperity will be the decree. For others, the opposite. In every case, the reason is to create circumstances by which we can accomplish the very unique and individual task which we came to this world to accomplish.

An awareness of this important idea gives the person the wherewithal to want to be judged. Through judgement (or perhaps a better word would be evaluation) of what we have done over the past year, and in the context of the ultimate purpose of creation, G-d focuses on what needs improvement. G-d then prescribes what is necessary, and we are brought closer to realizing the greatness we can all accomplish. We can understand how blowing the shofar, and awakening judgement mitigates the strictness of the judgement by way of an analogy. In dealing with children we find they are sometimes more reasonable, and sometimes less so. When they are overcome by the desire to act in a particular way, reasoning with them can be futile. Sometimes, a natural consequence can shake them up, and restore reason more effectively than our reasoning with them. We don't encourage such a thing, but a child who burns his finger on a hot pan, usually doesn't repeat that mistake. At the same time, the same child in another instance will come to understand the inappropriateness of something they've done on an internal level, and that recognition is enough to change his/her behavior. For that child, "getting burned" is unnecessary.

When we recognize the need for evaluation, and reevaluation, with a sincere goal to make improvements, drastic measures are not needed to cause change. This is the secret of "sweetening the judgement" of Rosh HaShanah. When we blow the Shofar to awaken the judgement, or divine evaluation, aspiring to bring about our own personal growth, G-d stands up, so to speak, from His throne of judgement, and sits on the throne of mercy. This is because we have come around to the recognition ourselves that we must constantly be growing and improving. It must be sincere, but with such an approach we awaken mercy upon ourselves and the world as a whole. May we all be written and sealed for a good and sweet year!

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Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network 3600 Crondall Lane, Ste. 106  
[http://www.torah.org/Owings Mills, MD 21117 \(410\) 654-1799](http://www.torah.org/Owings Mills, MD 21117 (410) 654-1799)

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DaPr@aol.com "yomtov@torah.org"  
Week of Rosh HaShana  
Topic: Tashlich: A Time to Remember and Be Inspired

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There are a number of customs whose performance is unique to Rosh HaShana.  
(See I:38 for some examples.) One of these customs is Tashlich. Tashlich is traditionally performed by going to a body of water (usually) on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh HaShana, and by saying the accompanying liturgy.  
The custom of Tashlich has its basis in a Medrash (Tanchuma Vayeira 25): "When our forefather Abraham went to bind his son Isaac (in preparation for his offering of his son), Satan led him through a river until the water came up to his neck. Abraham said ' Help, Hashem, for water threatens our lives!' Then, he (Abraham) was saved."  
Abraham was given a test - a command to sacrifice his only son, Yitzchok. The Satan did all that he could to prevent Abraham from passing the test. He placed obstacles in front of Abraham so that perhaps Abraham would find an excuse not to perform the act of ultimate sacrifice. One of these obstacles was an impassable river. Abraham was not deterred by the fact that there was a formidable challenge in the form of a river in front of him. He walked into the water, and did all that he could: He prayed to G-d for assistance. The assistance came. The river vanished. Abraham was able to continue on his travel and he ultimately passed this most difficult test.

Our prayers at a body of water on Rosh HaShana are meant to recall this incident. We remind Hashem of the great determination of our forefather, how great his desire was to fulfill His word, to perform this act of sacrifice. We are the children of Abraham, who save some kernel of the devotion and will of our grandfather within us. We also remind ourselves on the day on which we are written for a good year of how we are to dedicate ourselves to Hashem. We are to remind ourselves when we look at the body of water that no matter how great an obstacle seems, when it comes to the service of G-d, we can overcome it. If the situation is so difficult we fear that we can not handle it, we can do what Abraham did: pray.  
This year, because the first day of Rosh HaShana is on Shabbos, many have the custom to perform Tashlich on the second day of Rosh HaShana. No matter what day we perform Tashlich, may it serve to inspire us, to increase our devotion and dedication to G-d for the upcoming year, and may the merit of Abraham's devotion assist us as well in this critical time of judgment.

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Together with the entire Prero family, I would like to wish all of you a K'siva V'Chasima Tova - May you inscribed and sealed for a good year!  
The location for last years issues are:  
Elul and Rosh HaShana -  
<http://www.torah.org/learning/yomtov/roshshn.htm>  
Yom Kippur - <http://www.torah.org/learning/yomtov/yomkppur.htm>  
---Rabbi Yehudah Prero

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Teshuvah, Tefillah and Tzedakah -  
THE CHIEF RABBI, Dr JONATHAN SACKS

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From the dark world of medieval religious persecution there emerged one of the great prayers of the High Holy Days, Unetaneh tokef. Tradition ascribes its authorship to Rabbi Amnon of Mainz who was tortured because of his refusal to convert to Christianity. As he was dying he asked to be carried into the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, and there he spoke the words which have since become part of the Jewish imagination. In it he described the great scene of judgement, as all creatures pass before G-d and receive their verdict for the coming year. But he ended on a note of hope, with the famous words, "Teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah have the power to avert the evil decree." What do these three words mean? Usually they are translated as penitence, prayer and charity. But these translations fail to do justice to the unique character of Jewish spirituality. In fact each word means something quite different to its standard English rendition. The word teshuvah is usually translated as penitence, meaning remorse and regret for the wrong we have done. But the Hebrew word for penitence is charatah. Teshuvah is something else. Penitence is a negative emotion. Teshuvah is a positive one. It means returning, coming home. The Torah has a very concrete way of understanding abstract concepts like

good and evil, right and wrong. There is a place where I belong, where I am at home, where I am at peace. That is the world of mitzvah. But that place has boundaries, just as a country has borders or a home has walls. The idea of averah 'transgression', is that when I sin I move outside those boundaries into a world where I am no longer at home. Every transgression places me in conflict with tradition, the community, and the voice of G-d. That is why the ultimate Divine punishment is exile. When I am exiled, physically or spirituality, I am surrounded by strangers. Though I may spend a life pursuing wealth, power, success or fame, I am not at peace. At times I may be haunted by the question, "What am I doing here?" That is when teshuvah calls, summoning us home.

Some of the most moving moments in Jewish history have occurred this century, as wave after wave of aliyah brought Jews to Israel, from Iran, the Yemen, Ethiopia, Russia, Syria. Who, among those who witnessed the scenes of

arrival, will ever forget the expression on the faces of the olim? They were setting foot on a land where they had never been before, yet they knew they were coming home. That is what teshuvah feels like: coming home to a people, to a way of life, to G-d.

The Hebrew word for prayer - a request addressed to G-d - is not tefillah but bakashah. Tefillah is something quite different. The verb 'lehitpallel' means 'to judge oneself'. It means that, standing in the presence of G-d, we allow ourselves to be judged by His standards, His ideals. In bakashah I pray for what I want. In tefillah I pray in order to learn what to want. Someone once wrote to me with the following question: How can it be that in prayer we seek to change G-d? How can a finite creature change the Infinite? Besides, if what we want is good, G-d will grant it even if we do not pray. If what we want is bad He will not grant it even if we do pray. So why pray?

I answered as follows. In tefillah we do not seek to change G-d. We ask G-d to change us. Tefillah aligns us to the good and to the will of G-d. Even more than that it is an act of speaking, true prayer is an act of listening. When we pray we open our hearts to the ideals to which a hundred generations

of our ancestors dedicated their lives. We join their chorus and learn to make their words our own. A bakashah is what we ask of G-d. A tefillah is what G-d asks of us. When we really pray it is not G-d who is changed but we who are changed. And when we are changed, G-d changes the world through us.

Tzedakah is usually translated as charity. But the Hebrew word for charity - giving what we are not obliged to give, handing over what belongs to us to someone else - is chesed. Tzedakah means, not charity, but justice. It is hard to imagine an idea more radical, or more deeply expressive of the Jewish spirit. We give not because we can but because we must. The reason is that what we have, we do not own. All that we possess remains in the ultimate ownership of G-d. It is a loan, not a gift. It has been handed into our safekeeping. But one of the conditions of that loan is that we share part of what we have with others.

In the last days of his life, Moses addressed the Jewish people. Those speeches - they constitute the book of Devarim - are among the most prophetic ever uttered. Speaking to the new generation he said an utterly unexpected thing. Don't believe, he said, that the long journey through the wilderness was your greatest trial, and that now you are entering a land of milk and honey your problems will be over. The truth is the opposite. It is easier to worship G-d in poverty than affluence. It is easier to remember your destination when you are wandering than when you arrive. The

great danger is that the more comfortable you are, the more you will forget G-d. Your values will falter. Society will begin to disintegrate. You will have higher living standards but less delight in life. There are, he said, only three antidotes: to serve G-d in joy, to remember where you came from, and to share your affluence with others. Do so not as chesed but as tzedakah; not just out of kindness but out of absolute obligation. For what you have you hold as the trustee of G-d's estate, and it is not for your

enjoyment alone.

These three ideas are the keys of Jewish spirituality. They unlock the narrow room of self-preoccupation, allowing us to emerge into the fresh air of a life lived in and with others, those around us, those who came before us, and those who will follow us into the future. Tefillah joins us to G-d. Teshuvah joins us to our deepest self. Tzedakah joins us to one another. Together they invite us into a vast landscape of fellowship and meaning we could never find, or make alone.

Rabbi Chaim of Sens used to say, "when I was young I wanted to change the world. I tried, but the world didn't change. Then I tried to change my town but my town didn't change. Then I tried to change the members of my family but they didn't change. Then I realised that first I must change myself."

That is the call of teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah. They change who we are, and when G-d lives in and through us, He and we become partners in perfecting the world.

Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks