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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON ROSH HASHANA - 5763

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From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] Sent: September 05, 2002 To: Parsha English Subject: Rosh Hashana
Rosh Hashana The Festival of Rosh Hashana Rosh Hayeshiva RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG shlita

The Mishna (Rosh Hashana 4:1) uses a unique expression for the name of this holiday: "The yom tov (festival) of Rosh Hashana." We do not find a parallel expression regarding the other holidays, such as "yom tov of Pesach," or "yom tov of Succot."

The Pachad Yitzchak infers from the language of the Maharal that this day of Rosh Hashana is composed of two qualities. It is a day of judgment, and also a day of remembrance. However, the aspect of judgment is not mentioned in the Torah. Apparently, the mikra kodesh (holy convocation) of this day is rooted only in the fact that it is a day of remembrance, whereas the aspect of judgment does not cause the title, mikra kodesh. This first day becomes mikra kodesh because G-d remembers us on this day, and "remembrance" implies for good. This is why the Mishna refers to it as "yom tov of Rosh Hashana." This indicates that there is an additional concept on this day, that of judgment, while we are relating to the holiday aspect of the day. The term, "yom tov of Rosh Hashana," excludes the additional aspect of this day, since that additional aspect of judgment does not contribute to the status of Yom Tov.

The Ramban alludes to this in Parshat Emor (Vayikra 23:24):

The Torah did not explain the reason for this mitzvah, why blow shofar blasts, and why we require remembrance before Hashem on this day more than on other days ... However, because it is in the month of Yom Kippur, at the beginning of the month, it appears that on [this day] there is judgment before G-d ... On Rosh Hashana He sits on the Throne judging justly, and afterwards, in the ten days he forgives the sins of his servants. The Torah hints to this matter, as is known amongst Israel from the prophets and the holy ancestors. He is saying that the notion of Rosh Hashana as the day of judgment was known orally, whereas the Torah did not relate to this, but instead began with the festive aspect of the day.

This approach can be deduced from the precise language of the Torah. Regarding all the other festivals, the phrase mikra kodesh precedes the mitzvah of the day, indicating that the sanctity of the day and its events cause the mitzvot of the day:

· On Pesach: "On the first day there shall be a mikra kodesh for you; you shall do no laborious work." (Vayikra 23:7)

· On Yom Kippur: "On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a mikra kodesh for you and you shall afflict yourselves; you shall not do any work." (Bamidbar 29:7)

However, on Rosh Hashana it says, "In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a mikra kodesh." (Vayikra 23:24) The mitzvah of the day, the shofar blasts, precedes the title, mikra kodesh. This is because the Torah omitted the central event of the day, the judgment, and relied on the tradition of the ancestors to inform us of this. The status of the day as mikra kodesh is only because it is a day of remembrance, which is for good. Therefore, the Torah first mentions the notion of "a remembrance of shofar blasts," and only afterwards indicates mikra kodesh.

This is also the meaning of the ambiguous prayer in the section of zichronot: "From the beginning You informed this, and beforehand you revealed it." Before we talk about the day of remembrance, we need to mention that there is a prior element, the day of judgment, on which G-d remembers all the creatures, which He informed of from the beginning and which stands in the background. Afterwards we conclude, "Who remembers the covenant," which is the essence of the day of remembrance – that G-d remembers us for good, since all "remembrance" is for good.

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List
[parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] To: Shabbat_Shalom@

ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Rosh Hashana by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: ROSH HASHANA BY SHLOMO RISKIN

Efrat, Israel - This year the majority of the first day of Rosh Hashana is turned into a mystical mystery with the silence of shofar, the absence of the expected blasts of the ram's horn - a phenomenon which is difficult to understand. Despite the fact that the Bible describes Rosh Hashana as "a day of a truah (broken, staccato shofar sounds) shall it be for you" (Numbers 29) - indeed, the only Biblically ordained positive commandment of the New Year's festival is the sounding of the shofar - when Rosh Hashana falls out on the Sabbath day, the shofar falls silent. In the words of the Mishnah: "When the Festival of Rosh Hashana falls out on the Sabbath, the Shofar is to be blown in the Holy Temple, but not anywhere else in the country." (Mishnah, Rosh Hashana 4,1). How can we understand such a strange mandate - especially since there is one Talmudic opinion on this silence is a Biblical decree, stemming from the verse, "A Sabbath of remembering the truah sound" (Leviticus 23) - when Rosh Hashana falls out on the Sabbath, you only remember what the shofar blasts sounded like (B.T. Rosh Hashana 29b).

Perhaps we can understand this idea if we delve more deeply into the significance of the shofar sounds in general. There are fundamentally two different blasts which are blown from the ram's horn: the firm, exulting and exalting t'kiah sound (taka means straight and the staccato, searing, sighing, sobbing t'ruah sound (ra'uah means broken).

The sages of the Talmud even debate as to whether the truah is three sharp sighing sounds (which we know as shvarim) or nine gasping, sobbing sounds (which we know as thrua). Our conclusion is to sound all of the possible permutations, with the broken sound of despair always preceded and succeeded by a straight sound (t'kiah) of faith and hope (B.T. Rosh Hashana 33b).

What do these blasts have to do with the fundamental significance of Rosh Hashana? Rosh Hashana is our anniversary of the creation of the world - and our declaration of faith that the Almighty guarantees an eventual world of perfection and peace, a haven of harmony. This is clearly expressed in the Additional Prayer (Mussaf Amidah) liturgy of malkhiyot - "we have faith in You that we shall soon see the glory of Your power...when all the wicked will be turned to You and the world will be perfected in the Kingship of G-d." And the exalted, exulted t'kiah sound expresses this optimistic faith.

But Rosh Hashana is Biblically referred to as "Yom Truah", the day of the staccato, sighing-sobbing sound! I believe that the reason is tragically clear: unfortunately the world in which we live is a far cry from the perfected world of nations vowing fealty to a G-d of justice, compassion and peace. Our world is a place of corruption, wars and suicide bombers, a veritable vale of tears! Hence we cry out to G-d in pain on Rosh Hashana, entreating our Parent-in-Heaven to take note of our suffering and effectuate our redemption. This is the truah, the sigh-sob cry of G-d's suffering servants in a world of untimely deaths and innocent victims of drive-by shootings and suicidal homicide bombs.

When Rosh Hashana comes out on the Sabbath, another motif enters the equation. The Sabbath is a fore-taste of the world-to-come, a day of peace and harmony which allows us a glimpse in the here-and-now of what will eventually occur in the days of redemption. Rosh Hashana is redemption promised - whereas Sabbath is redemption realized.

But redemption is not being realized at all; our history is blood-soaked and tear-stained with Jewish sacrifices - and the intensity of the pain is only being exacerbated during this last period of our war against the terrorism of Islamic fundamentalism. For a nation which has willingly risked privation and poverty in order to celebrate the Sabbath, the confluence of Perfection Promised and Perfection Realized which takes place when Rosh Hashana falls out on the Sabbath can seem like a delusion and a mockery in the backdrop of parents burying their children in the Jewish State day after day.

And when the disparity is too great, when the ideal and the actual are so far apart - the only way to maintain the relationship as well as the faith is to remain silent! In the Elah Ezkerah martyr ology which we

recite on Yom Kippur, the liturgical elegist pictures Moses watching the great Rabbi Akiba being tortured to death by his Roman captors, and crying out to G-d: "This is Torah, and such is its reward?" The Almighty responds: "Be silent- or I'll turn the world back into the primordial water." When the disparity between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be become too great, the only possible response - if you want to keep the faith - is silence!

This is the higher meaning between Aaron's silence when his two righteous sons were struck by Divine fire on the day of the consecration of the Sanctuary (Vayidom Aharon). And I had the privilege of being present at the first Sabbath circumcision celebrated by the Kloizemberger Hassidim in the Beth Moses hospital - a building the surviving remnants took over after the holocaust, when they settled in Brooklyn. The Rebbe himself lost his wife and eleven children - and refused to leave the inferno before trying to save as many of his adherents as possible on the occasion of that Sabbath circumcision, the Rebbe explained:

"At every circumcision, we recite the verse from Ezekiel, usually translated: 'I see that you are rooted in your blood (dam), by your blood shall you live, by your blood shall you live (beamayich hayii).' "But 'dam' also means silence, as in Vayidom Aharon. At this time in our history, on this Sabbath, if we were to continue to plant in the vineyard of Torah despite the unspeakable horror of the holocaust we have experienced, I would translate the verse, 'I see that you are rooted in your silence (dom); By your silence do you live, by your silence do you live.'" And so, on Rosh Hashana which falls on the Sabbath, the shofar is silent; the people of Israel swallow their cries of tragic dismay in order to keep on working for and believing in the perfection of the world in the Kingship of G-d.

Shabbat Shalom and Shanah Tova!

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EATING BEFORE SHOFAR BLOWING

BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

From Rosh Hashana Vol.10 No.4

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Introduction The standard practice for many decades is that Yeshiva students partake of a light snack before Tekiat Shofar during the services conducted at Yeshivot. The motivation for this practice is the fact that Tefillah on Rosh Hashana in Yeshivot usually lasts until late in the afternoon. After the Tekiot have commenced, one may not engage in any Hefsek, such as conversation, until after the one hundred blasts of the Shofar have been sounded (Shulchan Aruch 592:3). Thus, the last opportunity to eat before the conclusion of the services is before Tekiat Shofar.

Many Halachic authorities (e.g. Rav Zvi Pesach Frank, Mikra'ei Kodesh Yamim Noraim 29 and Teshuvot Minchat Yitzchak 5:111) have sanctioned this practice and have endeavored to demonstrate its Halachic basis. However, some leading Rabbis have opposed this practice. For instance, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein does not partake of the snack before Tekiat Shofar in Yeshivat Har Etzion. Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin vociferously opposed this practice in his writings and communications with leading Rabbis. His grandson, Rav Yehuda Henkin, continues his grandfather's practice of vigorously opposing this practice (Teshuvot Bnei Banim 1:14-15). We will try to present both sides of this argument regarding the practice of Yeshivot.

Eating Before Performing Mitzvot The Mishna that appears on Sukkah 38a records the Halacha that if one began to eat on Sukkot before performing the Mitzva of Lulav, he must interrupt his meal and take the Lulav. The obvious implication of this rule is that one may not eat until he has taken the Lulav. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 652:2) codifies this rule.

This rule seems to apply to all Mitzvot due to concern that if one eats before performing the Mitzva he may forget to perform that Mitzva. For example, one may not eat a meal before he has recited Mincha (see Shabbat 9b and Shulchan Aruch O.C. 232:2-3). The Rama (O.C. 692:4) cites the Terumat Hadeshen (109) that one may not eat before the recitation of the Megilla even if he finds fasting difficult. In fact, Rav Hershel Schachter has suggested that this is the basis of the Ashkenazic practice for a couple not to eat on the day they marry. Thus, Rav Henkin argues that the practice of the Yeshivot is incorrect. The Defense of the Teshuvot Hitorerut Teshuva Nevertheless, Poskim have endeavored to defend this practice. Rav Shimon Sofer (son of the Ktav Sofer) presents a defense in his Teshuvot Hitorerut Teshuva, responsum 225. He notes that the Mishna, Gemara, and Shulchan Aruch never explicitly record a prohibition to eat before hearing Tekiat Shofar. He suggests that there is no prohibition to eat before Tekiat Shofar because the concern that one may forget to blow the Shofar is not relevant. This is because the fear of Hashem's judgment pervades the mood on Rosh Hashana, and we will certainly not forget to blow Shofar. We say in the Piyut, ????? ?????, we seek to "entice" Hashem to judge us mercifully by blowing the Shofar. We will certainly not forget to use our most potent "defense mechanism" on the day that Hashem judges us.

A precedent for this approach is the ruling that one may read a Machzor by candlelight on Yom Kippur night. Reading by candlelight is forbidden every other Shabbat and Yom Tov lest one come to adjust the light. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 275:8) records the accepted practice that this rabbinical prohibition does not apply on Yom Kippur night because, "the fear of Yom Kippur is upon them."

Those who criticize the practice of the Yeshivot point out an ancient source that appears to forbid eating before Shofar blowing. The Tosefta (Shabbat 1:4) states that one must interrupt to hear Shofar blowing. The Magen Avraham (O.C.692:7) and the Mishna Berura (692:15) both understand the Tosefta to be speaking about the obligation to interrupt eating if he has yet to hear Tekiat Shofar. However, Rav Yehuda Amital (in a lecture in which he defended the practice of the Yeshivot - including Yeshivat Har Etzion - summarized in Daf Keshet 1:416-418) endeavors to demonstrate that the Tosefta is speaking about the obligation for even the most devout and committed Torah scholars to interrupt their studies to hear Shofar blowing. Teshuvot Hitorerut Teshuva presents another reason why Chazal did not forbid eating before Tekiat Shofar. He notes that the Mishna and Gemara (Rosh Hashana 30b) indicate that during the era when the Sanhedrin established the calendar based on witnesses' sightings of the moon, they would not blow Shofar until witnesses came to testify that they sighted the "new moon." The witnesses most often would not appear until the latter part of the day. The Hitorerut Teshuva argues that Chazal did not impose a prohibition to eat until Tekiat Shofar because it would constitute too great a burden to require everyone to wait until the end of the day to eat. Rav Amital notes that although this argument is quite creative, it does appear to be somewhat far-fetched. Snacking Before Performing a Mitzva The Mishna Berura writes both in the context of the prohibition to eat before taking the Lulav (652:7) and reading the Megila (692:16) that in case of great need one may snack before performing these Mitzvot. Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Moadim U'zmanim 1:4) argues that there is a great need for every Yeshiva student to eat before Shofar blowing. Rav Shternbuch points out that there is an obligation to rejoice somewhat on Rosh Hashana (see Rambam Hilchot Chanuka 3:6 and Mishna Berura 597:1). In fact, the Shulchan Aruch (O.C.597:1) writes that "we eat, drink, rejoice, and do not fast on Rosh Hashana." Rav Shternbuch argues that one can hardly rejoice on Rosh Hashana if he does not eat anything until the late afternoon. Moreover, there is a prohibition to fast past Chatzot (midday) on Shabbat and Yom Tov (Shulchan Aruch 288:1 and Mishna Berura 529:1). Thus, he argues that there exists a great need to partake of a light snack before Tekiat Shofar to avoid violating this prohibition.

One should note that the Halacha rigorously defines snacking. The Shulchan Aruch (232:3) writes that snacking is considered consuming bread less than "the size of an egg." The Mishna Berura (232:34-35)

adds that consuming pasta or cake less than the size of four eggs is also considered snacking (see Mishna Berura 168:24). The Mishna Berura adds that an unlimited amount of fruit and non-alcoholic beverage is still considered just "a snack."

Rav Yehuda Henkin's Responses Rav Yehuda Henkin responds that the Mishna Berura (597:2) rules that there is no prohibition to fast on Rosh Hashana until Chatzot, unlike Shabbat and Yom Tov. Rav Henkin also argues that partaking of a snack is permitted only for individuals who have a unique need to eat before Tekiat Shofar, not an entire Yeshiva population. He cites the Teshuvot Chatam Sofer (Yoreh Deah 7) who permitted an epileptic to partake of a snack before Shofar blowing because doctors advised him that not eating for a prolonged period may cause him to have a seizure. This responsum indicates that only in an extraordinary situation does Halacha sanction snacking before Tekiat Shofar. Moreover, Rav Shternbuch notes that some prominent Acharonim forbid snacking before performing a Mitzva. These include Rav Akiva Eiger, the Bait Meir, and the Mateh Efraim. Rav Henkin goes as far as to say that if it is necessary for one to eat before the conclusion of services on Rosh Hashana he should eat after the first group of Shofar blasts (the Tekiot D'meyushav, in which the individual fulfills his basic obligation to hear Tekiat Shofar). He reasons that even though the Shulchan Aruch rules that one may not talk from the beginning of Tekiat Shofar until all one hundred blasts have been sounded, this is only forbidden by a Gaonic ruling. Rav Henkin argues that it is preferable to violate a Gaonic ruling than to violate a rule that appears in the Gemara. In addition, Rav Henkin marshals many Rishonim who do not subscribe to the Gaonic ruling. Conclusion We see that there is a Halachic basis for the practice of Yeshiva students to eat before Tekiat Shofar. However, we also see that the arguments defending the practice are debatable, and we can appreciate the position of those who do not snack before Tekiat Shofar.

From: rbwein@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Wein - Rosh Hashana
ROSH HASHANA
by RABBI BEREL WEIN

The advent of the Jewish New Year is marked by the holiday of Rosh Hashana. This holiday, multi-faceted and complex, is a combination of solemnity and pleasant confidence, new clothes, sumptuous meals and holiday enjoyment. In reconciling these completely different emotions and aspects of the holiday, the rabbis relied on the sophistication and maturity of thought of the Jewish people. For all of Jewish history and life is really the ability to deal with somber events and a realistically uncertain future with aplomb, hope and a resilient spirit of optimism and confidence. As such, Rosh Hashana not only symbolizes the beginning of a new year on the Jewish calendar, but it also represents the beginning idea of Judaism and its tradition - the ability to reconcile opposite emotions and events and to remain faithful and upbeat about life and its possibilities. For it is Judaism that preaches, above all else, the sense of service to G-d and humankind that allows such an emotion of forward-looking confidence and serenity.

Rosh Hashana is seen as a day of judgment. It is this aspect of the holiday that lends it its somber tone. In the description of the Mishna, all human beings, individually and alone, file by the Heavenly Throne for judgment on the day of Rosh Hashana. Thus the somber mood of the prayers of the day and the magisterial quality of the melodies used by the leader of the services in reciting the special prayers of the day. The most exalted set of prayers recited in the Musaf (additional) service of Rosh Hashana consists of a trilogy of sections of Musaf. These are called Malchiyot (relating to the majesty of G-d), Zichronot (relating to the role of memory and history in positively influencing the ultimate decision and judgment in our heavenly trial) and Shofrot (relating to the sounding of the shofar, which is the unique ritual mitzva - commandment - of Rosh Hashana.) The text of the prayers used today in most synagogues in the world was composed by the great second century Babylonian Talmudic scholar and leader, Rabbi Abba Aricha, more commonly known in the Talmud as Rav - the

rabbi/teacher. These prayers have withstood the test of time – over nineteen centuries and the shedding of millions of Jewish tears.. They are unmatched for linguistic beauty, clarity of thought and nobility of soul. Even in translation to other languages from the original Hebrew, their holiness and shimmering light is readily detected. The most dramatic moment of the holiday is the sounding of the shofar. The shofar is usually made of a ram's horn, though that of an ibyx or similar animal may also be used. There are three basic notes that are sounded from the shofar. One is a straight, flat note called tekiah. The second note consists of three wailing blasts (called shevarim) and the third note is a staccato sound of nine short blasts (called teruah). The wailing and staccato sounds are always preceded by the straight, flat sound. The flat sound indicates our mortality and limited life, much as a heart monitor does when it goes flat marking the end of life. The wailing and staccato sounds mark the turbulence of our lives, our strivings, ambitions and goals, while we are alive. The flat sound therefore precedes and succeeds the wailing and staccato sounds, for they symbolize our state of existence before our birth and after our passing. The Biblical injunction of sounding the shofar is discharged by sounding thirty blasts from the shofar. However it is ancient Jewish custom to sound one hundred blasts from the shofar. The shofar - ram's horn - is inextricably bound to the story of Isaac being bound by his father Abraham on G-d's altar and to the ram that was sacrificed in his stead. Jewish legend metaphorically stated that one of the horns of that ram was sounded on Sinai when Israel received G-d's Torah and that the second horn of that ram will be sounded to introduce the Messianic Era. So, again, we see Rosh Hashana as encompassing past, present and future, in both solemnity and joy. Shabat Shalom and Shana Tova Berel Wein RabbiWein, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Berel Wein and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site www.torah.org/ Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/moadim/ryud_roshHashana.html
TorahWeb.org [from last year]
RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN
ON THE EDGE

Blowing the shofar, which is the primary mitzvah of Rosh HaShana, is a form of prayer. It is interesting to note that often the setting of a particular mitzvah contributes to its fulfillment, thus the ideal synagogue structure places the chazan in a low position, thereby actualizing "mimaamakim", "From the depths I have called You." (Psalms 130:1). Similarly, the Rosh in Gemara Rosh HaShana (3:4) cites the Yerushalmi that teaches that we are to blow the shofar from the narrower end as we are taught in Psalms, "Min hamatzer", "From the straits I called G-d," (118:5). The shofar itself is to reflect the urgent need and total dependence of man on Hashem. Moreover, the Talmud in Rosh HaShana (26b) concerns itself with the shape of the shofar. R' Yehudah is of the opinion that a bent shofar is to be used, as "On Rosh Hashana the more a person bows his mind," reflecting an attitude of submission and humility, the better it is. We dare not overlook the obvious. No one would entertain the idea of eating matzah in the Shemoneh Esrei. Nor would we even consider it proper to hold our lulav during Shemoneh Esrei. Yet, the natural home of the shofar is the Shemoneh Esrei. This is seen with great clarity from the Baal Hamoer (R.H. Chapter 4) that originally the shofar was only blown in conjunction with the Shemoneh Esrei, and the blessings of the Shemoneh Esrei served as the blessings for the mitzvah of the shofar as well. However, in time, responding to the needs of the elderly, sick, and those who could not stay for the entire service, the Rabbis instituted a set of shofar sounds prior to the Shemoneh Esrei. Shofar is naturally home in the Shemoneh Esrei as it is a form of prayer. That shofar is prayer may be seen from the concluding blessing of the shofros section of the mussaf shmoneh esrei, "blessed are you who hears the shofar sound of his people with mercy". If shofar is a mitzvah

like mezuzah or lulav, the request that our blowing be received with mercy is most incomprehensible. However, as we are accustomed to ask thrice daily for Hashem to accept our prayers with mercy, it is understandable that we do likewise in regard to shofar. The Bais Halevi (Drush 15) notes a startling understanding of shofar as prayer. A prayer is as effective as the source from which it emanates. Indeed, the spoken word is the distinctive mark of man. The Torah (Braishis 2:7) states that Hashem blew into man's nostrils the soul of life, which the Targum translates as "ruach mi-mal'lah" (a spirit of intelligent speech). However, over the course of time, man sullies and misuses his divine gift of speech. Lashon Harah, r'chilus, and nivul peh are not only forbidden forms of speech, but they limit the effectiveness and proficiency of the mouth. And thus the quality of the spoken prayer is often significantly diminished. Therefore, Hashem in His kindness allows us to communicate with a region that is deeper than the spoken words, namely the ruach – the spirit of man. When Hashem blew of His existence into man, it meant that part of the divine is present in man. It is from this holy and pure source that the sounds of the shofar emanate. As this part of man is more holy, the prayer that issues forth is holier, and thus the concluding blessing asking G-d to accept the shofar sound of His people Israel with mercy is most understandable. Blowing from the narrow edge of the shofar is not only for the practical convenience of the baal tokeyah (the one blowing the shofar), but is to communicate the profound urgency of the moment. I blow the shofar because I recognize that I am in dire difficult straits, and have no other place to turn for help. In Devarim (31:17) the Torah teaches that a time will come that the Jewish people will abrogate their covenant with Hashem and turn to other deities. At that time many troubles and afflictions will befall them, and Israel will say on that day, "is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these ills have befallen me". Surprisingly the next verse teaches that Hashem will respond, "I shall utterly hide my face in that day". The Sforno explains that when the troubles befell the people, instead of realizing that they were sent as a punishment from Hashem, they attempted to solve their crises by turning to other venues and addresses, not realizing that they were to turn to Hashem in prayer and repentance. The shofar itself, which is blown from the narrow, reminds the Jew how precarious life is and how dependent he is on Hashem. Finally, an incredible Medrash (Devarim Rabbah – Zos Habrachah 11:10): R. Yochanan taught in no less than ten places the Torah speaks of Moshe's pending passing. Initially, this was "kal b'evin shel Moshe", Moshe was not immediately overwhelmed, as he reasoned, if the Jewish people sinned major sins, yet upon my praying on their behalf Hashem forgave them, I who did not sin from my youth, certainly when I will pray on my own behalf He will forgive me. When Hashem saw Moshe's complacent attitude and his failure to burst forth in immediate prayer, at that time Hashem swore that Moshe would not enter the promised land. Moshe failed to see the urgency and immediacy of the crisis. This past year has been a most difficult one for Am Yisrael. Too often one trouble after another has the effect of de-sensitizing us to the urgency of the moment. May we learn from Moshe Rabbeinu, and truly seize the moment of shofar to realize the narrow and difficult straits we find ourselves, both individually and collectively, and thus realize that "ein lanu l'hishaein elah al Avinu Shebashamayim".

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] To: yeholiday@etzion.org.il Subject: Special Rosh Hashana Package Changing Paths, not Just Deeds
Based on a sicha by HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN
Translated by Kaeren Fish

QUESTION: From the beginning of Elul until Yom Kippur, when teshuva (repentance) "is most becoming and is accepted immediately" (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 2:6), every individual is required to examine his actions and to repent for any sins that he may have committed. In listing the laws of teshuva, the Rambam divides the teshuva process into four parts: abandonment of the sin, confession, regret, and a resolution for the future (2:2).

But as we examine our ways and seek to return to our Maker, doubt and despair start to overcome us: Was it not exactly a year ago, as we examined our deeds at the end of last year, that we confessed exactly the same sins, resolving not to repeat them? And now only a year has passed, we discover that we have transgressed in the same areas, and we have to accept upon ourselves not to transgress again in the future. During this period, as our mouth promises – and with full intention! – that we will not repeat those sins that we have just abandoned, we know in the depths of our hearts that in a year's time we will stand again brokenhearted before the Master of the Universe, and confess precisely the same sins once again.

Does this not somehow fall into the category of "One who tells lies shall not stand before My eyes" (Tehillim 101:7)? Are we not, heaven forbid, similar to one who says, "I will sin and then I will perform teshuva," who never performs a true teshuva (Yoma 85b)?

ANSWER: In listing the stages of the process of teshuva, the Rambam describes the stage of resolution for the future as follows: "And He Who knows all secrets can testify concerning him that he will never again repeat THIS SIN" (2:2). What is the meaning of the expression, "this sin"? Is the Rambam referring to the sin that the person committed – in which case the person will be considered as having performed teshuva even if he continues in all his evil ways, but abandons that one specific sin that he has confessed? I learned from Rav Soloveitchik zt"l that this is not the case. The key to understanding this is an understanding of the two aspects of the process of teshuva.

The Rambam's Hilchot Teshuva is divided into two parts: in chapters 1-6 he discusses a person who recognizes the sin that he has committed, and decides to perform teshuva. From chapter 7 onwards, the Rambam deals with a different type of teshuva: a person recognizes that his WAYS are evil, not just his deeds, and he seeks to change himself.

The first type of teshuva has a clear aim, and if a person does not transgress that sin again then he has attained his goal. By contrast, the second type of teshuva is a life-long mission. It has no endpoint; it guides a person's path throughout his life, "until he dies as a penitent and merits life in the World-to-Come" (7:1).

The "way of the sinner" means the direction of his life, the road that he treads, and it is this path that has brought him to commit his many sins. The comprehensive teshuva that the Rambam presents is more meaningful and more difficult than the specific teshuva that he addressed at first. The "path of the wicked" is less well defined than "wicked deeds;" it is more difficult to recognize with a view to changing it. On the other hand, the path is what leads to the deeds, and a change in the former will bring a change in the latter.

At the beginning of chapter 7, the Rambam summarizes his teaching concerning free will: "Since every person is given free will, as we have explained, a person should TRY to perform teshuva..." At first glance, this formulation is most surprising: surely teshuva is a mitzva, a commandment, and not merely a recommendation? Some people have indeed tried to claim that in the Rambam's view, teshuva is not a mitzva, but such a view is unacceptable to any worthy religious philosophy.

The correct understanding is that, in using this formulation, the Rambam is referring to the second type of teshuva – a comprehensive endeavor to improve one's attributes, and not the focused repentance for specific deeds. This teshuva has no objective which, once attained, will allow the person to rest on his laurels. It involves unceasing effort: "A person should always view himself as though he is about to die, and since he may die at that time and still be associated with his sin – therefore he should repent his sin immediately" (7:2).

This type of teshuva is also addressed by the prophet Yeshayahu, when he declares, "Let the wicked one abandon his way, and the iniquitous person his thoughts" (55:7). The "way" of the wicked is the thread that runs through all of his various deeds, guiding his future on the basis of the past and the present. When repenting, the wicked person is required not only to abandon his deeds, but to change the direction of his life and to forsake the path that has led

him to all of his transgressions: "Return, return from your evil ways; why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Yehezkel 33:11).

It is this type of teshuva – repairing character flaws and changing the course of one's life – that the Rambam refers to when he uses the term "try," for in the spiritual world the effort is critical, and a person's efforts have an independent status and value. The focus of teshuva is not the result – that he may "die as a penitent" – but rather the path, the aspiration, the effort. "A person should try to perform teshuva" – and then automatically he will die as a penitent, and merit life in the World-to-Come.

Here we must keep in mind an important point. While teshuva – a "returning" from a sinful path – indeed represents a revolution in one's personality, it is not usually accompanied by a corresponding revolution in one's deeds. Sometimes we encounter "ba'alei teshuva" who have changed their path and their lifestyle in a dramatic manner. Generally, however, the visible changes that accompany a teshuva are far less spectacular: if a person has until now given in to his inclination concerning a certain level of some stimulus, from now on he will overcome his inclination, yielding to it only at a higher level of stimulus. This change finds its practical expression only when the person encounters a stimulus of the strength that used to cause him to sin. As opposed to his way prior to his teshuva, he will no longer speak "lashon ha-ra" every time that he feels the desire to do so; it now takes a stronger desire to cause him to speak "lashon ha-ra."

This is the deeper meaning of the Rambam's words, "to the point where the Knower of all secrets can testify concerning him that he will never return to THIS SIN." Rambam writes: "What is complete teshuva? When a person encounters something that once caused him to sin, and he has the ability to repeat it, but nevertheless removes himself and does not act thus because of his teshuva" (2:1). There is no one in the world so righteous that he does only good and never sins; it is the way of the world that people stumble. Resolution for the future, which is an integral part of the teshuva process, means gradual progress, continuing throughout a person's life.

A person who stands in fear and trembling before his Maker and returns to Him in complete teshuva knows that during the past year he has not committed the same sins that he repented for the previous year, for he has managed to overcome his inclination in the situations that brought him to sin a year ago. This person remembers his sins from the year that has gone by, regrets and confesses them, and resolves not to give in to his inclination, to overcome it in those situations where he has sinned until now. In this way, a person sanctifies himself year by year, following the path that leads to G-d's house, correcting his ways and improving his deeds, such that "he will die as a penitent and will merit life in the World-to-Come."

How great is the status of teshuva! Previously this person was separated from the G-d of Israel, as it is written, "Your sins have separated between you and your G-d," he would cry out and was not answered... But now he cleaves to the Shekhina, as it is written, "But you who cleave to G-d your G-d..." – he cries out and is answered immediately, as it is written, "And it will be that even before they call out, I will answer them." He performs mitzvot and they are accepted with Divine pleasure and joy, as it is written, "For G-d already desires your actions." In fact, He even longs for them, as it is written, "May the offering of Yehuda and Yerushalayim be sweet to G-d as in days of old, as in the ancient years gone by." (Rambam 7:7)

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] To: yeholiday@etzion.org.il Subject: Special Rosh Hashana Package
The Simple Sound of Truth

Based on a sicha by HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL
Adapted by Aviad Hacoheh Translated by Kaeren Fish

The nature of Rosh Ha-shana in the Torah is somewhat mysterious. In one place (Bamidbar 29:1) it is referred to as "a day of sounding the shofar," while elsewhere (Vayikra 23:24) it is called "a

remembrance of sounding the shofar," but the essence of this remembrance remains unclear.

What is this "remembrance"? Is it the remembrance of Israel before the Holy One, as suggested by the verse (Bamidbar 10:9), "And you shall be remembered before the Lord your G-d," or is it the remembrance of the Holy One before Israel, as arises from the words of the prophet (Amos 5:60), "Seek out G-d and live"?

A hint at the answer to this puzzle is provided by the prophet Yechezkel (40:1):

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile ON ROSH HA-SHANA, ON THE TENTH of the month...

Clearly, the prophet connects Rosh Ha-shana to Yom Kippur. This indicates a dual nature to Rosh Ha-shana. Let us examine another verse (Tehillim 81:4):

Sound the shofar at the beginning of the month, in the covering of our festive day (ba-keseh le-yom chageinu).

One interpretation of this verse would yield an exact parallel between its two parts: the "covering" refers to the time the moon is covered, i.e., the new moon or beginning of the month. However, Ibn Ezra claims that the two parts of the verse are not equivalent, again indicating duality.

"In the covering of our festive day" - not only is the nature of Rosh Ha-shana hidden, but the sounding of the shofar on this day is also mysterious. According to the literal reading of the Tanakh, the "great sounding of the shofar" will take place only "on that day" - at the end of days, when "G-d will be One and His Name One." However, the startling innovation of the "U-netaneh Tokef" prayer is that the "great shofar" that will be sounded refers not only to the future, to the days of the Mashiach, but also to the present.

Moreover, a study of the "shofarot" section of the mussaf prayer reveals something interesting: the verses that we quote from the Torah and from the books of the prophets speak of the sounding of the shofar on the part of G-d, not on the part of man.

You appeared to them in the sound of the shofar, as it is written in Your Torah, "And it was on the third day when it was the morning, that there was thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud upon the mountain, and the sound of the shofar was very loud."

It is only in the verses from the Ketuvim that we mention the sounding of the shofar by man: "The Lord is elevated in the blast (terua); G-d in the sound of the shofar." Likewise, we read: "Sound (hari'u) the trumpets and the shofar before the King G-d."

According to this, we can understand why the verses from Ketuvim are recited prior to those from Nevi'im - i.e., not in the order of Tanakh. One of the laws pertaining to the shofar is that "a simple blast (tekia) is sounded before it (the terua), and a simple blast follows it:" the terua is sandwiched in the middle of two tekiot. And just like the order of the blasts, so we find in the order of our prayers: the sounds of G-d's shofar are heard before and after, with man's terua sounded in between.

Man, with his broken and downtrodden heart, with his inhibitions and frustrations, is unable to sound a "simple" blast. A person's beginning and end are simple. The moment he is born, he cries from the bottom of his heart. Likewise at the time of death, his true voice is revealed, devoid of any mortal considerations or calculations. But the situation during majority of his lifetime is quite different. Chazal interpret the verse (Shir ha-Shirim 4:9), "You captured my heart, my sister-bride; you captured my heart with ONE of your eyes," as hinting at the giving of the Torah: even at that great and elevated hour, G-d discerned that only "one of the eyes" of Israel was really concentrating on the glorious declaration, "We shall do and we shall hear." The other eye was glancing outwards, at the voice emanating from beyond Mt. Sinai - the sin of the golden calf.

The Maharal explains, in the Gur Aryeh, why the words, "Stop your voice from crying" were said specifically to Rachel. She had a very strong claim against G-d, saying to Him, as it were: "Why do You come complaining to Your nation Israel that they brought idolatry into their houses? Did You Yourself not create a world of duality, did You not bring my rival Leah into my house?" Ultimately, there is no harmony in this world; it is a world of strife and division.

We may understand in a similar way the controversy among the Sages concerning the "oven of Akhnai" (Bava Metzia 59a). This oven was constructed from many pieces:

They cut it into segments and placed sand between them; R. Eliezer declared it pure, while the Sages declared it impure.

To R. Eliezer's view, an oven that is not all a single unit is not to be considered a vessel at all, and therefore cannot contract impurity. Even though sand was placed between the segments in order to join them, this was insufficient to change its status into a single vessel, a whole entity. R. Eliezer lived in an utopian world, in which wholeness is absolute.

Not so the Sages, who maintain that if the oven is joined together in any manner - even by means of segments connected by layers of sand - then the oven may be considered a "vessel" that is capable of receiving impurity. They admitted that we live in a world of complexity and imperfection.

A person tends to become entangled in complexities - by choice, not by force of circumstance. "G-d made man straight, but they have sought many calculations" (Kohelet 7:29). "The foolishness of man perverts his path, and his heart complains against G-d" (Mishlei 19:3).

Truth is different. "The higher the truth of something," wrote Rav Kook, "the more simple it is, and the more vital to all." He adds:

Man's narrow-heartedness attempts to analyze the truth into parts, to diminish it. He is afraid of truth's greatness, and thinks that by diminishing it, it will be more popular, more acceptable to all. But actually by doing so he makes it more difficult, and holds back from everyone what is most vital for them... After his great efforts to analyze the truth, to curtain it in order to diminish it, and to make it suitable for the masses, he must return to its greatness and its purity. [As we pray on Rosh Ha-shana,] "And every individual will know that You are its Mover, and every creature will understand that You are its Creator, and every person with breath in his nostrils will declare: 'The Lord, G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kingship extends over all.'" (Orot ha-Kodesh, part I, p. 4).

"Every individual will know" - this is the great purpose of Rosh Ha-shana. To return to a natural weeping, the cry of an infant, before man becomes involved in the intricacies of life.

As "bnei Torah," we hold onto the "elixir of life" - life for the whole world. Despite this, we fail to arouse the faith and confidence of others. It is specifically the infant, with his clear and simple voice, who is able to arouse salvation. The Midrash teaches that at the time of the parting of the Red Sea, infants dropped their mothers' breasts and declared, "G-d will reign for ever and ever!"

The same idea is brought in another midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Va-etchanan): "'With all your heart' - that your heart should not be divided before G-d." When a person is praying, he must have only one simple, upright heart, not "two hearts," full of complexity and duality.

"The Lord is elevated in the blast (terua); G-d in the sound of the shofar." The shofar blasts have two dimensions: judgment and mercy, signified by the two names of G-d in the verse (E-lokim and Hashem). The Holy One responds to us to the extent that we reach out to Him. If we hold out our finger towards Him, He will hold out His finger, as it were, towards us. But if we extend a whole hand, He will stretch out His whole "hand" towards us.

If we are not worthy, then G-d will be "elevated in the terua" - through an undulating sound, a sound of sobbing and sighing. May we merit, through the simple shofar blast, to turn the attribute of judgment into the attribute of mercy: "G-d - in the sound of the shofar." And then His great and holy Name will be elevated, made great and sanctified through the attribute of mercy.

(This sicha was delivered on Rosh Ha-shana 5746 [1985].)
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MessageFrom: Eretz Hemdah [eretzhem@netvision.net.il] Subject: Hemdat Yamim Rosh Hashana
Hemdat Yamim Rosh Hashana 1 Tishrei 5763

This edition of Hemdat Yamim is dedicated to the memory of R' Meir ben Yechezkel Shraga Brachfeld o.b.m.

Thoughts on Being "Religious" / RABBI MACY GORDON

There are any number of anecdotes that center on a fine and respected member of the community who was justifiably proud of the many virtues attributed to him, but proudest of all of his claim to humility. The humor, of course, lies in the fact that once one becomes aware of his humility, one is no longer humble. The person who knows he is humble betrays pride. In a certain sense, the same can be said for many "religious" people. The one who claims by word or implication that he is "religious" indicates thereby an absence of the spirit and the attributes of the truly religious person. What is implied by the claim that one is "religious"? One is saying, in effect, that one is not only different from, but somehow elevated over others that are not thus oriented. It is a suggestion that one is invested with a special virtue. This very suggestion is often the antithesis of genuine religious feeling. The Days of Penitence, ushered in by Rosh Hashana and culminating in Yom Kippur, should motivate us to probe deeply into what being "religious" means. To be religious means to live with an ever-present disquietude about the adequacy of our attainments. It is to refrain from judging others with the severity and rancor that spring from pride and self-aggrandizement.

To be religious is to be committed. It is to fulfill obligations both towards G-d and towards others without the faintest consciousness that we are doing more than our share. It is to sense an intensity of kinship with all Jews and concern for all human beings. It is to be restless in the quest for a fuller life, for deeper understanding, and for greater service. It is to be impressed with one's limitations and mindful of the fact that the best among us can easily suffer a lapse of virtue or utter a callous but irretrievable remark. Long ago, the Sages warned in Pirkei Avot, "Do not believe in yourself to the very day of your death."

For a Jew, being religious means to act as well as to feel, to bring Torah ideas into every facet of our lives; to speak as a Jew should, to eat what a Jew may, to live as a Jew ought. It means maximum efforts for Torah study, for oneself and one's children, through personal endeavor and supportive resources.

To be religious is to remain alert to duties unfulfilled rather than to feel smug about goals achieved. It is to know that he serves G-d best who comes before Him with clean hands and a contrite heart. Those aren't my words but those of King David in Tehillim 24, which we say on the evening that we usher in Rosh Hashana. To be a religious Jew is to be both physically and emotionally involved in the welfare of Eretz Yisrael, both its physical security and its spiritual sanctity; to pray for the welfare of the State and those who guard and protect it; to support its poor and disadvantaged; and seek to elevate the moral values that a Jewish State should represent.

To be religious is to be demanding of oneself and gentle with others. It is never to seek special consideration, or feel one has earned special commendation because one tries to live by G-d's Word. It is to live out of great humility and love before G-d and our fellow human beings. It is to accept with sadness and anguish the realization that evil exists, that we have enemies, and that we must deal with their threat from within a Torah framework. To be religious is to realize that we may, and probably have fallen far short of our goals and the expectations that we set for ourselves. But it is also to know that there is forgiveness, a chance for renewal, and renewed opportunities with each challenge. May the New Year open our hearts to G-d, that we may return to Him and He to us. We wish our readers a happy, fulfilling year of security and internal peace, for the individual, the family, and, foremost, for all of Klal Yisrael.

Moreshet Shaul (from the works of HAGAON HARAV SHAUL YISRAELI zt"l)

We Blow Tekiot and Teruot (from D'rashot Layamim Hanoraim- pg. 25)
The shofar blowing has three elements, which correspond to three historical periods. The opening tekia recalls the glorious events of akeidat Yitzchak and the giving of the Torah, where Hashem's presence was revealed. The second tekia hints to the future redemption, when the shofar

will again be blown to announce the coming of Mashiach. In the middle, there is the interrupted sound of the teruah, which resembles the sound of crying. This corresponds to the period of galut, which, historically, falls between them. The first and last are straight sounds; the middle is a broken, torn sound of wailing or sobbing. We can suggest the following explanation of R. Yitzchak's statement (Rosh Hashana 16a): "Why do they sound tekiet and teruot when they sit and sound tekiet and teruot when they stand? It is in order to confuse the Satan." The sitting refers to when Bnei Yisrael is sitting in their Land, and all is proceeding straight and smoothly. Even then we need to resort to blowing the broken teruah, despite the apparent lack of a need to cry. When, in contrast, we are standing, in the temporary, unnatural situation of exile, we still blow the tekia, despite the feeling that only crying is in place. All of this serves to confuse the Satan. When we are at rest, we must remember the possibility of crying and realize that our tranquility is not to be taken for granted as natural. Rather, tranquility is a hidden miracle, and by properly thanking Hashem for it, we avoid the danger of "Yeshurun (Bnei Yisrael) became fat and kicked" (Devarim 32:15). On the other hand, when the world turns into a living hell, when a multitude of sighs join up into one deafening groan, and when the trumpets of war sound, it is still possible to confuse the Satan. We can still blow the tekia, reminding us of the straight, triumphant call of the past and the future, when the Divine Presence was and will be clear. We remind ourselves that the intermediate period is a transitional period and that the teruah is an introductory note to the tekia of the future. This is the significance of what we say immediately after shofar blowing: "Fortunate is the nation of those who know the teruah. Hashem, in the light of Your Face they walk. In Your Name they rejoice all day" (Tehillim 89:16-17). Only Bnei Yisrael know how to put teruah in the proper perspective. Even in difficult times, when the attribute of justice (not mercy) rules, such as on Rosh Hashana, we say, "Hashem is my light." We understand, "in Your Name they rejoice all the day" along the lines of, "like the day which brings both darkness and light" (Sanhedrin 110b). Throughout the day we rejoice, even if it is "rejoice in trembling." May this attribute merit us with Hashem's salvation.

Ask the Rabbi

Question: IS IT PERMITTED TO SLEEP ON ROSH HASHANA AFTERNOON?

Answer: It is tricky to try to balance the various aspects of Rosh Hashana. It is, at once, a day of fear and of festivity (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 597:1; see Nechemia 8). The minhag you refer to stems from the fear of judgment, and many take it very seriously. We will review the sources and suggest to the individual to choose his practice based on his custom, his strength, and his circumstances. The Rama (OC 583:1) brings and praises the minhag not to sleep on Rosh Hashana. The source given is a Yerushalmi that he who sleeps on Rosh Hashana, his mazal sleeps, implying that his judgment may not go as well as it could. (Acharonim point out that our editions of the Yerushalmi are missing this quote). Certainly we have precedent in Tanach that it is considered foolish to sleep when one's fate hangs in the balance (see Yonah 1:6). The Mishnah Berura (583:9) and others quote the Ari z"l that after chatzot (midday), the Heavenly situation is such that one can sleep. As few people finish davening and eating by chatzot, this minhag seems to have little impact on most of us. However, not all agree with the Ari on this matter. (Our mentor, Harav Yisraeli z.t.l. was lenient on this matter). The Bach (OC 597) cites the Ram who was totally lenient on the matter of sleep on Rosh Hashana (possibly because he didn't feel the minhag should affect the ability to enjoy the yom tov on a physical level). It is of note that, according to the logical opinion of some, many "miss the boat" in regard to this minhag. The source doesn't say, "not to go to sleep" during the day of Rosh Hashana but "not to sleep." According to some, this means that one should wake up before the day begins, which may be as early as alot hashachar, more than an hour before sunrise (Kaf Hachayim 583:39; Ben Ish Chai, cited *ibid.*). (The simple implication of Aruch Hashulchan (597:2) and perhaps Chayei Adam (139:8) is not that way.) There is room for leniency until sunrise (Piskei Teshuvot 583:(65)) even according to this approach. Leniency becomes more appropriate if waking up so early will affect one's concentration during tefilla. However, there are strong grounds to say that if one is capable of getting up early, it is counterproductive to sleep longer in order to stay up in the afternoon (Ben Ish Chai, *ibid.*). The impact of refraining from sleep is cited as a factor elsewhere. The Mishna Berura (*ibid.*) says that not sleeping is not the goal in and of itself. Rather, the time should be spent on spiritually worthwhile activities such as learning Torah and saying

Tehillim (ibid.; Chayei Adam 139:11). If a little sleep will facilitate learning, then it is a worthwhile tradeoff (ibid.). The Mishna Berura goes on to say that wasting one's time is equivalent to sleeping. As the first day is the main day of Rosh Hashana and its judgment, there is even more room for leniency on the second day of Rosh Hashana (Piskei Teshuvot 583:10).

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From: Aish.com [newsletterServer@aish.com] Sent: Thursday, September 05, 2002 11:05 AM Subject: High Holidays - ABC's of Rosh Hashana

ABC's of Rosh Hashana

By: Research from Rabbi Moshe Lazerus

PRE-ROSH HASHANA

A key component of Rosh Hashana preparation is to ask for forgiveness from anyone one may have wronged during the previous year. To whatever extent possible, we want to begin the year with a clean slate -- and without anyone harboring a grudge against us. One should also be quick to forgive those who have wronged him. Many people have the custom to go to the mikveh before Rosh Hashana after midday. A mikveh, which has the power to purify from certain types of spiritual impurities, can be an important part of the teshuva process.

Some have the custom of visiting a cemetery on the morning of Rosh Hashana and praying at the graves of the righteous. Of course, we do not pray "to" the righteous, but only to G-d who hears our prayers in the merit of the righteous.

The morning before Rosh Hashana, we perform "Hatarat Nedarim" -- annulling all vows. In Torah terms, saying something as simple as "I refuse to eat any more candy" can be considered a legal vow. Therefore, before Rosh Hashana, we annul any vows, whether they were made intentionally or not. This is done by standing in front of three adult males (or 10 if available), and asking to be released from the vows that were made. The full text can be found in a Siddur or Rosh Hashana Machzor.

THE FESTIVE MEAL

During the High Holidays, a round challah is used -- symbolizing fullness and completion. After making the "Hamotzi" blessing, it is customary to dip the bread into honey -- symbolizing our prayer for a sweet new year.

Then, after most of your slice of bread has been eaten, take an apple and dip it in honey. Make a blessing on the apple (since "Hamotzi" did not cover the apple) and eat a little bit of the apple. Then say, "May it be Your will, G-d, to renew us for a good and sweet new year." (OC 583)

Why do we ask for both a "good" AND "sweet" year? Doesn't the word "good" automatically include "sweet"?

Judaism teaches that everything happens for the good. It is all part of the divine will. Even things that may look "bad" in our eyes, are actually "good." So when we ask G-d that the year should be "sweet" (in addition to good), it is because we know that everything will be for the good. But we also ask that it be a "revealed" good-- i.e. one that tastes "sweet" to us.

On Rosh Hashana, we add the paragraph Ya'aleh V'yavo in Grace After Meals.

SYMBOLIC FOODS

On Rosh Hashana, we eat foods that symbolize good things we hope for in the coming year. We contemplate what these foods symbolize, and connect with the Source of all good things.

The symbolic foods are based on a word game which connects the name of a certain food, to a particular hope we have for the new year. Here is a list from the Talmud of symbolic foods customarily eaten on Rosh Hashana. (The food and its related meaning are written in capital letters.)

After eating LEEK or CABBAGE, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that our enemies be CUT OFF."

After eating BEETS, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that our adversaries be REMOVED."

After eating DATES, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that our enemies be FINISHED."

After eating GOURD, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that the decree of our sentence should be TORN apart, and may our merits be PROCLAIMED before You."

After eating POMEGRANATE, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that our merits increase as the seeds of a POMEGRANATE."

After eating the HEAD of a sheep or fish, say: "May it be Your will, G-d, that we be as the HEAD and not as the tail.

You can also use other foods and make up your own "May it be Your will..." For example, you could eat a raisin and celery, and ask G-d in the coming year for a "raise in salary" (raisin celery)!

ROSH HASHANA PRAYERS

Since there are so many unique prayers on Rosh Hashana, we use a special prayer book called a "Machzor."

In the "Amidah" and "Kiddush" for Rosh Hashana, we say the phrase Yom Teruah.

However, if Rosh Hashana falls on Shabbat, we say Zichron Teruah instead. (If one inadvertently said the wrong phrase, he needn't repeat the prayer.)

The supplication "Avinu Malkeinu" should be said on Rosh Hashana, except when Rosh Hashana and Shabbat coincide, since supplications are not said on Shabbat. If Rosh Hashana falls on a Friday, "Avinu Malkeinu" is not said at Mincha.

During the High Holidays, the curtain on the ark is changed into a white one, to symbolize that our "mistakes will be whitened like snow."

The chazan (cantor) for the High Holidays should not be chosen for his vocal talents alone. Ideally, the chazan should be over 30 years old, G-d fearing, learned in Torah, humble, and married. A learned man under 30 with the other qualifications is acceptable. Though it is preferable to allow an unfit chazan to lead services, rather than cause strife over the issue in the community.

Since it is a question as to whether the She'hechianu blessing should be said on the second day of Rosh Hashana, we are accustomed to eat a new fruit or wear a new garment and say She'hechianu upon it. When saying the She'hechianu, one should also have in mind the mitzvot of lighting candles, "Kiddush" and hearing the shofar.

THE SHOFAR

The essential mitzvah of Rosh Hashana is to hear the sounding of the shofar. The shofar blasts after the Torah Reading are called "Tekiot M'yushav."

The minimum Torah obligation is to hear nine blasts. However, there is a doubt whether the sound of the shofar should be a groaning type of cry (Shevarim), or a sobbing weep (Teruah), or a combination (Shevarim-Teruah). Therefore, we perform all three sounds, each preceded and followed by an unbroken blast, Tekiah. Three of each set results in 30 blasts total, which are necessary to remove all doubt that the Torah precept has been fulfilled.

It is customary to blow shofar in the same place that the Torah is read, so that the merit of the Torah will support us. The shofar should be blown during the daytime. In ancient times, when the Romans persecuted the Jews, the rabbis instituted blowing the shofar before Musaf, since the Romans had guards in the synagogues during the early morning.

The person who blows the shofar must stand. He should be instructed immediately before blowing to have intention to fulfill the obligation for all those listening. Similarly, all those listening should be reminded to have intention that their obligation is being fulfilled.

Before blowing, two blessings are recited: "to hear the sound of the shofar," and She'hechianu. Once the blessings have been made, one may not speak until the end of the shofar blowing.

Women may sound the shofar and say the blessing to accomplish the mitzvah. A child who is old enough to be educated regarding mitzvot is required to hear the shofar. The shofar is not blown when Rosh Hashana falls on Shabbat.

The shofar used on Rosh Hashana should be a curved ram's horn, and longer than four inches. It is permitted to use the shofar of an animal not ritually slaughtered. After the fact, any shofar is acceptable except the horn of a cow, ox or an unkosher species of animal.

In the "Amidah" prayer of Musaf, there are three special blessings: Malchiot (praises to G-d the King), Zichronot (asking G-d to remember the merits of our Ancestors), and Shofrot (the significance of the shofar). During the chazan's repetition, we blow an additional 30 blasts in the various combinations.

It is the custom to blow 40 extra blasts at the end of services, bringing the total to 100. It is customary to prolong the final blast, which is called a Tekiah Gedolah.

OTHER CUSTOMS

It is customary to greet others as follows: "L'shana Tova -- Ketivah vi-chatima Tova." This means: "For a good year -- You should be written and sealed in the good (Book of Life)."

One should try not to sleep or go for idle walks on the day of Rosh Hashana. (The Arizal permits a nap in the afternoon.)

It is advisable to avoid marital relations, except if Rosh Hashana falls on the night of the wife's immersion.

If a Bris Milah falls on Rosh Hashana, it should be performed between the Torah reading and the shofar blowing.

TASHLICH

The "Tashlich" prayer is said on the first afternoon of Rosh Hashana by a pool of water that preferably has fish in it. These prayers are symbolic of the casting away of our mistakes. Of course, it is foolish to think you can rid sins by shaking out your pockets. Rather, the Jewish approach is deep introspection and commitment to change.

Indeed, the whole idea of "Tashlich" is partly to commemorate the Midrash that says when Abraham went to the Akeida (binding of Isaac), he had to cross through water up to his neck

If Rosh Hashana falls out on Shabbat, "Tashlich" is pushed off until the second day. If "Tashlich" was not said on Rosh Hashana itself, it may be said anytime during the Ten Days of Repentance.

Both the body of water and the fish are symbolic. In Talmudic literature Torah is represented as water. Just as fish can't live without water, so too a Jew can't live without Torah!

Also, the fact that fish's eyes never close serve to remind us that, so too, G-d's eyes (so to speak) never close; He knows of our every move.

This is the text of "Tashlich:"

Who is like You, G-d, who removes iniquity and overlooks transgression of the remainder of His inheritance. He doesn't remain angry forever because He desires kindness. He will return and He will be merciful to us, and He will conquer our iniquities, and He will cast them into the depths of the seas.

Give truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham like that you swore to our ancestors from long ago.

From the straits I called upon G-d, G-d answered me with expansiveness. G-d is with me, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me? G-d is with me to help me, and I will see my foes (annihilated). It is better to take refuge in G-d than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in G-d, than to rely on nobles.
Many people also read Psalms 33 and 130.
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From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY [podolsky@hakotel.edu] To: Shiur List
Subject: Rosh HaShana 5763
Rosh HaShana 5763 Reverse 9/11
One would have expected Yom Kippur to precede Rosh HaShana. After all, before entering the Day of Judgement it would be nice to first cleanse ourselves of iniquity. One does not appear before the Judge in soiled garments! Why does Rosh HaShana come first?

There is one overwhelmingly important prerequisite one must fulfill before one can hope to keep the mitzvos properly: Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim -- The Acceptance of the Kingship of Hashem. Observing mitzvos without the knowledge of Who we are serving is an act of emptiness. Only after we realize the unfathomable infinitude and absolute authority of our Creator can we begin to truly worship Him and follow His directives.

My rebbe, HaGaon, Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl shlit"a, gives the following analogy. A condemned building was slated for demolition. The contractor who was hired to carry out the project devised two methods of razing the building. The first, simpler method, required only a small, metal spoon. He would use the spoon to chisel into the building's foundation, slowly but surely whittling away the brick and mortar. It would take months, perhaps years, but eventually the building would fall. Owing to the incessant pressure of the city inspectors, however, a speedier method had to be found.

The other, more expeditious technique, demanded more sophisticated means. He would strategically position sticks of dynamite around the foundation. With the push of a button, an electric current would set off a detonation that would cause the entire building to implode. Afterward, he would just have to go in and clean up the leftover bricks that had failed to fall.

Rosh HaShana is dynamite. Once we accept upon ourselves Hashem's Kingship, the subsequent fulfillment of His mitzvos is virtually elementary. What else would we do? Had Yom Kippur been placed first, we would have had to chip away, ever so slowly. As such, we may never have gotten anywhere.

Similarly, we read the first paragraph of the Sh'ma before the second. Why? "Said Rabi Yehoshua ben Korcha... So that [a Jew] will first accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterward accept upon himself the yoke of mitzvos (Brachos 13a)."

Witness the extent of the destructive impact nineteen terrorists brought upon the entire world. Since 9/11, nothing, absolutely nothing has been the same. If a few individuals can wreak such unprecedented devastation, how much more should the combined energies of all the loyal subjects of Hashem be capable of bringing tikkun (rectification) to the world. Especially since Hashem is on our side.

Is it coincidence that 9/11 occurred right before Rosh HaShana? Is it coincidence that so did the current war with the Palestinians? On Rosh HaShana we will be planting the seeds for the upcoming year, programming the spiritual DNA, so to speak. Next year's nature depends entirely upon us. What we need is a reverse 9/11. By destroying the barrier that separates between us and our Creator, we effectively rebuild millennia of destruction, murder, hatred, evil and falsehood. Towers of Torah and mitzvos will wondrously rise to the sky. A new dawning will encompass the world. Rosh HaShana is the day on which to lay the foundations. May we merit a year in which all evil is totally eradicated and the Divine Presence is revealed in all its Glory. Amen!

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Bava Basra 168

HAVING AN "AM HA'ARETZ" LOOK AT ONE'S PROSPECTIVE WIFE QUESTIONS: Abaye rules that even though it is not the manner of a Talmid Chacham to look at a woman, if a Talmid Chacham testifies about the identity of a certain woman and says that he clearly recognizes her (as in the case of Rav Yirmeyah bar Aba), he is believed. The Gemara records another statement of Abaye in this regard. Abaye says that when a Talmid Chacham wants to be Mekadesh a woman, he should bring an Am ha'Aretz with him in order for the Am ha'Aretz to look at the woman and make sure that she is the one whom the Talmid Chacham intends to marry.

(a) How can the Talmid Chacham marry a woman without looking at her himself? The Gemara in Kidushin (41a) clearly states that it is Asur for a man to be Mekadesh a woman without first looking at her, lest he later see something unattractive about her and become disgusted with her and thereby transgress the Mitzvah of "v'Ahavta l'Rei'acha Kamocha!"

On the other hand, if it is improper to look at a woman, and that is why the Talmid Chacham himself does not look, then how can the Talmid Chacham ask another Jew to do it for him? A person is not allowed to ask another person to do an Aveirah for him (see Eruvin 32b, Shabbos 4a, and Tosfos there!) Indeed, the Gemara in Avodah Zarah (20a) says that it is prohibited to look at a woman since doing so might lead to sin, as is derived from the verse, "v'Nishmarta mi'Kol Davar Ra" (Devarim 23:10!)

(b) Why does the RAMBAM not mention this Halachah at all? (HASAGOS HA'RA'AVAD, Hilchos Isurei Bi'ah 21:3)

ANSWERS: (a) The Acharonim suggest that the prohibition against looking at a woman applies only to "gazing" at a woman's beauty in order to derive pleasure. It is not prohibited to glance at a woman without gazing at her beauty. Moreover, it is "proper" to look at a woman before marrying her to ensure that she has no uncomely features, as the Gemara in Kidushin teaches, as long as one does not gaze at her in order to derive pleasure. However, Talmidei Chachamim are stringent to avoid even glancing at, or seeing, a woman. Consequently, it will not help for a Talmid Chacham to look at his prospective bride to determine whether she has any unattractive features, because a Talmid Chacham is unaccustomed to the appearance of a woman and thus he does not know the difference between an attractive woman and an unattractive one. Similarly, he will not be able to tell the difference if the woman's family decides to switch her for a different woman. An Am ha'Aretz, in contrast, is not stringent upon himself, and he knows the difference between the way different women look. (MAGID MISHNAH Hilchos Isurei Bi'ah 21:3; see IGROS MOSHE OC 1:26, 2:4)

(b) The Acharonim give various answers to explain the Rambam's omission of this Halachah.

1. The MIGDAL OZ explains that the Rambam makes no mention of this Halachah because he is discussing ordinary men when he writes that it is proper for one to look at his prospective wife. He is not referring to Talmidei Chachamim who have the practice never to look at a woman. However, the Migdal Oz differentiates between looking at a woman to whom one is already engaged ("Meshudach") and is about to be Mekadesh, and looking at a woman to whom one is not yet engaged in order to check her to see if he should become engaged to her. The Rambam here (in Hilchos Isurei Bi'ah 21:3) is not referring to the requirement to look at a woman, to whom one is already engaged and committed, before marrying her (he mentions that Halachah in Hilchos Ishus 3:19), but rather he is referring to looking at a woman to check to see if she is fit to become engaged to in the first place, and thus it is obvious that a Talmid Chacham should not look at her but rather should have an Am ha'Aretz look at her. In contrast, even a Talmid Chacham should look at his Kalah after he is engaged in order to decide whether she is fit to become engaged to (this is in contrast to the view of the Magid Mishnah mentioned above).

2. The MIRKEVES HA'MISHNAH explains that the Halachah that the Rambam is discussing here is the same one as he discussed in Hilchos Ishus. The Rambam maintains that even a Talmid Chacham is supposed to look at his prospective wife before marrying her in order to make sure she has no blemishes, and to make sure that the woman's family did not switch her for a different woman. The Rambam understands that our Gemara is "not" saying that a Talmid Chacham should "not" look at his prospective wife, but rather "in addition" to looking at her, he should bring with him an Am ha'Aretz to check her appearance to make sure that her family does not switch her for another woman. To make sure that this woman is not unattractive to him, the Talmid Chacham should look, but to be able to distinguish between two similar-looking women is the expertise of the Am ha'Aretz and not the Talmid Chacham. This is why the Gemara says that the Talmid Chacham should "bring an Am ha'Aretz with him," instead of saying that he should "send an Am ha'Aretz" to check the woman. This is also why the Gemara adds the reason "so that they not switch her" -- this is the purview of the Am ha'Aretz and his purpose in coming with the Talmid Chacham.

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