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from: torahweb@torahweb.org
to: weeklydt@torahweb.org
date: Sep 16, 2020, 3:49 PM
subject: Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky - Rosh Hashana and Sinai
[Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky](#)
[Rosh Hashana and Sinai](#)

Klal Yisroel's existence crystalized with the revelation at Sinai, and indeed two *yomim tovim* speak of Sinai. Shavuot, the holiday that focuses on the giving of the Torah, places the events at Sinai as its focal point. But Rosh Hashana also carries an extraordinary focus on Sinai, and that is rather puzzling.

In the *Mussaf shemoneh esrei* of Rosh Hashana we introduce the *Shofros* - undoubtedly the central feature of Rosh Hashana - via the shofar of Sinai. This is quite surprising. For although there was the sound of a shofar at Sinai, the shofar seemed to play but a minor role in the Sinai revelation. [The *Kaf Hachaim* also says that that is the reason we blow at the *bimah* - to mirror Sinai.] If one were looking for an event to elaborate on in *Shofros*, one could have chosen the *akeidah*, where the ram and its horn, as well as the *zechus* of the *akeidah*, seem to play a major role.

The phrasing of that section of *Shofros* is that Hashem, "revealed Himself at Sinai to teach us Torah and *mitzvos*, and You let them hear the majesty of Your 'kol', and Your sacred words". There seem to be two communications here: the *dibbur* - sacred words - and the *kol*. One would venture to guess that these are two aspects of the revelation which express themselves in these two *yomim tovim*. But what are these aspects?

Let us first examine closely the concept of *Malchiyos*. At first glance Hashem's *malchus* is but a mere conceptual prerequisite, i.e. it is only because Hashem is boss that we are obligated to fulfill His dictates. Therefore, we first establish that Hashem is king, and as king He commands and judges us as to how well we have obeyed. But if we look at the bulk of the *Malchiyos* prayer, *malchus* is not a mere prerequisite; rather the prayer is all about establishing Hashem's *malchus* and realizing its fulfillment entirely. One is therefore led to understand a much bigger picture of Hashem's *malchus* and His expectations of us. While there are detailed commands of what to do and what not to do, there is, more significantly, the sweeping vision of what it is that Hashem wants of the world. All the details of the various *mitzvos* come together to form a picture that integrates every element in creation. And that is *malchus*. *Malchus* is not so much the mere acknowledgement that Hashem is king; but more so that the world is His kingdom and it's meant to reflect in its entirety that vision that Hashem had for it when He created it. We, therefore, on the day of creation, start by expressing our yearning for the day that *malchus* will become totally revealed.

This grand vision was revealed to us at Sinai; for alongside the revelation of the particulars of Torah, Hashem revealed to us the big picture as well. When a person speaks, his *dibbur*-words define the specifics, but his voice-*kol* gives me the general sense of his emotions, etc. Hashem revealed to us at Sinai both the *dibbur* and the *kol*. The *dibbur* is the subject of Shavuot, and the *kol* is the focus of Rosh Hashana.

This adds another dimension to our *cheshbon hanefesh* on Rosh Hashana. It is not enough to merely ponder which details of the Torah am I following, and in which is my observance lacking. Perhaps, this is the point of Yom-Kippur, with its meticulously detailed *vidui*, based on the *aleph-beis*. And indeed, the *passuk* urges us, "*k'chu imachem devarim v'shuvu el Hashem-bring your words with you and come back to Hashem.*"

But on Rosh Hashana we ask ourselves, is our vision of our life in consonance with Hashem's vision? Is our life's yearning to be *btzelem Elokim*; Adam as he was meant to be? Is our vision of the world, a world of "*l'saken olam b'malchus Shakkai*"?

Let us first make sure that our "*kol*" is the "*kol* of Yaakov", and only then can we pay attention to each and every *dibbur*.

from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>
reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org
to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Sep 17, 2020, 8:01 PM
subject: Rav Frand - Thoughts for Erev Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

This Dvar Torah was adapted from remarks made by Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Erev Rosh Hashana many years ago. K'siva V'chasima Tova!

Thoughts for Erev Rosh Hashana

In Tractate Brochos (29a), the Talmud says that on Rosh Hashana, we daven a Shmoneh Esrei (referring to the “standing prayer”) of nine blessings (the standard opening three blessings, the standard closing three blessings, and the middle three special blessings of Malchiyos, Zichronos, & Shofros — the middle portions of the Rosh Hashana Musaf service dealing respectively with Kingship, Remembrances, and Shofar Blasts). The Gemara says that the source for the number of these blessings, nine, comes from the nine Azkoros — the nine times that G-d’s Name is mentioned in the prayer of Chana [Samuel 2:1-10].

The story of Chana [Samuel 1:1-2:10] is the Haftarah on the first day of Rosh Hashana. Chana was barren. She came to the Mishkan (Tabernacle) every year to cry her heart out. (The Mishkan was originally built during the years in the Wilderness, and was located up in Shilo during the time of the story of Chana. It eventually gave way to the Beis HaMikdash.) Chana suffered the humiliation of her husband having a second wife who was blessed with children, and who taunted Chana over her inability to have children, though for a noble reason (because she wanted to inspire Chana to pray more). Chana’s prayers were finally answered on Rosh Hashana. She eventually gave birth to a son who grew up to become the great prophet Samuel.

The story of Chana contains a lesson that is so vital and central to the message of Rosh Hashana that not only do we read this Haftarah on the first day of Rosh Hashana, but the whole Tefillas Musaf (Additional Prayer) on Rosh Hashana was structured around the nine mentions of G-d’s name in Chana’s prayer. What is so important about this episode that causes us to base the central prayer of Rosh Hashana on the prayer of Chana?

An analysis of Chana’s prayer reveals that it emphasizes that life is full of changing fortunes. Chana says “...while the barren woman has born seven, she that had many children has been bereaved (2:5)”.

Chana describes the fact that in the past she was barren and her co-wife, Penina had many children. But now Chana has 7 children and when each baby was born to Chana, Penina lost a child.

G-d makes some people poor and he makes some people rich. He makes the haughty low and the humble high. Fortunes keep changing.

Chana cautions and says (2:3) “Al Tarbu t’rabru gevoha gevoha...” (You mighty ones — don’t speak with haughtiness) “...Keshes Giborim chatim, v’nichsalim ozru chayil” (because you may fall and the weak will be girded with strength) (2:4).

This is Chana’s message to the Jewish People on Rosh Hashana: Life is so fickle. Fortunes are so fragile. Rosh Hashana is an unbelievably scary day! Emotionally, Rosh Hashana is one of the most difficult days of the year. We can deal with Yom Kippur. We do not eat. It is a day of Mercy. We separate ourselves from the rest of the world and we pour our hearts out. But what are we supposed to do on Rosh Hashana? Rosh Hashana is the Yom HaDin (Day of Judgment). Everything is riding on this day. And yet there is an obligation to observe this day as a Festival — looking and acting and eating like a Yom Tov. How do we cope with this dichotomy?

Rav Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900; Chassidic Sage and thinker; one of leading Torah scholars in the 19th century; author of Pri Tzadik) points out that the Shevarim and Teruahs, which are the broken sounds of the shofar (representing the crying out of a broken spirit), must always be sandwiched between two Tekiah. The firm, unbroken, Tekiah sound represents Simcha

(joy). This, Rav Tzadok says, captures the theme of the day.

On the exterior, we must act and feel like it is a Yom Tov. But on the interior — between the Tekios — we must have a terrible, terrible, fear: a fear that anything can happen.

If anyone doubts this for a minute, they just need to think back about these past few years. Think back on what happened in the world, what happened to individuals, what happened to communities. It is nothing less than frightening!

This is what Chana is trying to tell us. For some people, this year will bring the greatest sorrow... and for some people this year will be one of “the barren woman turning into a mother of seven”.

Chazal say that the 100 Shofar blasts which we blow on Rosh Hashana correspond to the 100 cries that Sisro’s mother cried on the day of battle (Shoftim 5:28-30, based on Medrash). Rav Schwab asked, what is the significance of associating our Shofar blasts to the wailings of Sisro’s mother? Rav Schwab explained that the wailings of Sisro’s mother represented the uncertainty of the future. If Sisro would come back victorious, this would represent the greatest triumph of his military career. On the other hand, he might come back in a coffin. Sisro’s mother did not know which scenario would occur, so she wailed out of uncertainty and fear. Life and Death. Success and Failure. On Rosh Hashana, everything lies in the balance of Judgment — nothing less than totally changing out fates. And yet, we as Jews, have to surround these emotions with the Tekiah — the firm blast of confidence.

We cannot wear our emotions on our sleeve. But we must realize that what will be determined on this day is nothing less than the fate of our lives, of our family’s lives, of our community’s lives, and indeed the life of the entire world. Anything can happen. This is the message of Chana. There are no givens, there are no “Chazakas” (presumptions based on historical precedent), nothing can be taken for granted.

May it be G-d’s will that we as a community, together with the entire House of Israel, be written for a good, lengthy, and peaceful life.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

dhoffman@torah.org Rav Frand © 2020 by Torah.org. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

From: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>
Fri, Sep 18, 2020 at 12:53 AM

Rabbi Reisman - Yomim Noraim 5780

1 - Topic - A thought regarding the Shmoneh Esrei.

On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur the Beracha Ata Kadosh becomes very long. We add L'dor Vador Namlicha Lakeil and we begin with the following words. Uv'chein Yiskadeish Shimcha Hashem Elokeinu Al Yisrael Amecha, V'al Yerushalayim I'recha, V'al Tzion Mishkan Kevodecha, V'hamalchus Beis Dovid Mishi'checha, V'al Mechonach V'heichalach. We ask that the Kedushas Hashem should go on five things; 1) Yisrael, 2) Yerushalayim, 3) Tzion, 4) Malchus Beis Dovid and then 5) Mechonach V'heichalach, your Makom Hamikdash.

To anybody who reads this on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur the order seems to be a little out of order. Yisrael, Yerushalayim, Tzion seems redundant. Bais Dovid and then back to Mechonach V'heichalach is back to Tzion. What are these five things? In my Davening, I came to the following thought. Let me share the thought with you and tell you where it may come from.

On Tisha B'av it says that we weep for five terrible things that happened to Klal Yisrael. 1) The original Cheit on Tisha B'av in the Midbar, 2) the Churban Bayis Rishon, 3) the Churban Bayis Sheini, 4) the destruction of Beitar and 5) the plowing over of the Makom Hamikdash in the times well

after the Churban Bayis Sheini when the Makom Hamikdash was plowed and there was no remnant that was left. Those are the five tragedies.

I once heard from Rav Moshe Shapiro Zeicher Tzaddik Livracha, who's Shiur I was Zoche to go to during the three weeks, and he said regarding Bentshing, in Racheim we mention five things. 1) Al Yisrael Amecha, 2) Al Yerushalayim Irecha, 3) Al Tzion Mishkan Kevodech, 4) V'al Malchus Beis Dovid Mishichecha and 5) V'al Habayis Hakadol V'hakadosh. He said that those five are in the order of the five tragedies.

1. Hashem Racheim (על ישראל עמך) Klal Yisrael sinned on the original Tisha B'av night 2. (ועל ירושלים עירך), the glorious Yerushalayim which was in the Bayis Rishon, so this is for the Churban Bayis Rishon. 3. (ועל ציון משכן כבודך) which is the less glorious Yerushalayim the one that was at the Churban Bayis Sheini. 4. (ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך) which is K'negged Beitar which was the destruction of the fall of Bar Kochva who could have been the Moshiach. He was the remnant of Bais Dovid. 5. (ועל הבית הגדול והקדוש) the remnant of the Bayis Gadol was the plowing over of the Har Habayis.

So we Daven Racheim Na for those five things. That is what I heard from Rav Moshe Shapiro and it is easy to see that it is the same five items that we say when we start our Rosh Hashana Davening when we ask HKB"H Yiskadeish Shimcha. Let the Kedusha come back for these five things. To 1. (על ישראל עמך) Klal Yisrael who fell by weeping on the night the Meraglim came back with their unfortunate news, 2. (ועל ירושלים עירך), the Churban Bayis Rishon. 3. (ועל ציון משכן כבודך) the Churban Bayis Sheini. 4. (ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך) which is the Churban of Beitar. 5. V'al Mechonach V'heichalach, what the little bit that remained from HKB"H's Binyan was plowed over and destroyed and no remnant remained. That was a terrible Churban. This is because as long as there were ruins of the Binyan, there was hope that it would be rebuilt. As soon as it started to look like any other mountain the Churban was complete.

And so, as we start our very special Tefillos on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we have here an understanding of the depth of the Divrei Chazal when we ask Yiskadeish Shimcha. We say Racheim Na. there is a depth to what we are asking for. We are asking for Rachmanus. HKB"H should have Rachmanus on us for what we lost on those five Churbanos that took place on Tisha B'av a very long time ago.

2 - Topic - A thought regarding V'chol Maminim.

V'chol Maminim is one of the most beautiful Piyutim that we say on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and it is structured in the order of the Aleph Bais but it has two sentences for each of the Aleph Bais. For example, we always make a smaller statement and then we make a larger statement. We say that HKB"H is He'hagui B'eke Asher Eke, V'chol Maminim She'hu Haya, Ho'veh V'yi'yeh. We mention a fact about HKB"H and then a Davar Klali about HKB"H.

We say that Hashem is Dan Yechidi L'vaei Olam and that He is Dayan Emes. So we mention smaller things and bigger things. They go together each in the order of the Aleph Bais is that way. We mention a smaller praise and then V'chol Maminim the more general praise.

The problem is that when we say it we seem to Tzi'drai the whole thing. The Chazzan says for example He'hagui B'eke Asher Eke, he mentions the smaller Hei then we say V'chol Maminim She'hu Haya, Ho'veh V'yi'yeh and then we go on to Vav and start mentioning the beginning of Vav. We say V'chol Maminim She'hu V'ain Bilito, we mention the V'chol Maminim of Vav and then we go on to Zoche Ha'bris the smaller one. We Drei, we do a Vav and Zayin, a Zayin and a Ches. The whole thing seems to be out of order.

Last year Davening Yomim Noraim I came to the following possible understanding which gives us maybe a depth into a lot of the style of our Davening. Our Davening style is always a statement and a response. This is because everything we do in Shul is modeled after the Bais Hamikdash. The building is modeled after the Bais Hamikdash. The Aron is called an Aron because it is named after the Bais Hamikdash. The Shulchan is called a Shulchan. We have a Ner Tamid etc.

In the Bais Hamikdash all of the Tefillos that were said by the people were said in response. A statement and a response. That is the style of all of the praises in the Shiras Hayam according to a Man D'omar in the Gemara that it was said that way. That is the way we Daven.

By Hallel the Chazzan says to us all (הודו ליהודי כפי טוב: כי לעולם תסדו) and then (הודו ליהודי כפי טוב) (יאמר-נא ישראל: כי לעולם תסדו). We respond (הודו ליהודי כפי טוב). The Chazzan shakes the Lulav and Esrog by Hodu and then we do it. We don't all do it together as one. We do it as a response. The Chazzan says (אנא יהודי, הושיעה נא) and then we say (אנא יהודי, הושיעה נא). That is the style of our Davening.

By Kedusha we do the same thing. The Chazzan says a thought which is a preparation, and then we respond. The Chazzan says (נקדישך ונעריךך כנעם שיה) (סוד שרפי קדש וקרא זה אל זה) let us praise Hashem the way the Serafim do. (אמר). Then we respond (קדוש. קדוש. קדוש) because that is the praise of the Serafim in the Nevua of Yeshayahu Hanavi (in 6:2 and 6:3). After that we say (קדוש. קדוש. קדוש) קדוש ד' צבאות. מלא כל הארץ כבודו) Then we say Kevodo Malei Olam Meshor'sav Sho'alim Zeh Lazeh Ayei Mekom Kevodo L'ha'aritzo L'umasam Meshab'chim V'om'rim. Baruch K'vod Hashem Mim'komo.

The whole thing we say after Kadosh Kadosh is a preparation for Baruch K'vod Hashem Mim'komo. Exactly as we do in V'chol Maminim. We say the big praise Kadosh and then we say the introductory praise Ayei Mekom Kevodo. That is an introduction to Baruch K'vod Hashem Mim'komo which is a separate praise. That is the praise of the Chayos Ofanei Hakodesh in the Nevua of Yechezkel (3:12).

So to understand Kedusha, first we introduce the praise of the Serafim in the Nevua of Yeshaya and we say Kadosh Kadosh which is Melo Kol Ha'aretz Kevodo. Hashem's Kavod is everywhere. Then we introduce the praise of the Chayos Ofanei Hakodesh which are different Angels who praise Hashem with Baruch K'vod Hashem Mim'komo which is a different praise regarding Hashem's Makom. So that everything we do is first the major praise and then we start to prepare for the next praise.

That is the way you should understand the V'chol Maminim. The smaller praise is an introduction to V'chol Maminim. So that when the Chazzan says He'hagui B'eke Asher Eke, that is an introduction to the V'chol Maminim that we respond She'hu Haya, Ho'veh V'yi'yeh. It is all an introduction to what we say and then we say the smaller praise as an introduction for what follows. It gives you a little insight into the style and the understanding of our Davening.

Rav Hershel Schachter's Piskei Halacha on COVID-19 Shaylas

<http://www.torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-51-Sept-17-2020.pdf>

This Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, there will be many minyanim convening outside of the Beis Haknesses due to numerous government regulations. Those who daven outside of a Beis Haknesses, would not be obligated to bow to the ground when reciting the Seder Ha'avodah on Yom Kippur, as there was never a custom to do so. However, when reciting Aleinu L'shabeich on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, perhaps the standard minhag to kneel would apply even when davening outside of the Beis Haknesses. Rabbi Hershel Schachter

<http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-49-Aug-28-2020.pdf>

1. Shuls that must abridge Davening due to Covid-19 may suffice with the primary requirement to blow only 60 shofar blasts and not the final 40 at the end of Mussaf. La'Menatzeach can be said once before shofar and all Piyutim in Chazaras HaShatz on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur may be omitted; Viduy and the Avoda on Yom Kippur may not be omitted. Hineni may be said by the chazan quietly.

2. Without a Minyan, shofar is not blown at all during one's private Shemona Esrei. When possible, it is preferable for Shofar to be blown before beginning Musaf, rather than afterwards.

3. One who cannot attend Selichos with a Minyan may recite the 13 Midos Rachamim with a Minyan via Zoom.

4. Due to Covid-19 and a potential overcrowding, the minhag for men to use the mikvah before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur may also be fulfilled by taking a shower at home (this leniency would not apply to women who have to use the mikvah).

5. Hataras Nedarim may be done via Zoom, as long as the three members of the Beis Din who are matir neder are in the same location. The Beis Din members should be able to see who is requesting hatara, or at least be aware of how many people have approached them and are on Zoom requesting Hatara before they begin.

6. In a pressing situation (such as due to Covid-19), a minyan may be convened on Shabbos afternoon to Daven Mincha immediately before Plag HaMincha and Maariv immediately after Plag, although Melacha is still forbidden until the actual conclusion of Shabbos regardless. This can be done if it will be difficult for a Maariv Minyan to be convened outside in the dark. The local rabbi must determine if this is an appropriate practice for his community as it may mislead participants to believe that Shabbos has already concluded and melacha is permitted. Rabbi Hershel Schachter <http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-47-Aug-10-2020.pdf>

This year presents a unique problem for many communities, as there will be many more minyanim on the Yamim Noraim than usual, due to the need for social distancing. This presents a challenge in finding enough baalei tefillah to service the minyanim. A melodious Chazan who is uniquely qualified to represent the tzibur may serve in this role for multiple minyanim in one day. Even though he has already served as a chazan at a prior minyan, he may represent the tzibur for an additional chazaras hashatz at a later minyan as well. In such a situation, the Chazan would not repeat the silent shemoneh esrei a second time. Should the Chazan be needed for multiple Shachris minyanim, he would not repeat the Birchos Kriyas Shema or recite the silent shemoneh esrei. Rabbi Hershel Schachter

from: Naaleh Torah Online <contact@naaleh.com>

date: Sep 17, 2020, 12:05 PM

subject: Rosh Hashana Edition

Rosh Hashana in Time of Covid

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by **Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller**

We're about to experience Rosh Hashana as it was last year and as it will be next year, but were at a different point in the cycle of years.

The word gezeira is related to the word gizra which means a pattern. A gezeira fits our needs spiritually like a glove fits a hand. Everything that happens is part of a bigger picture. When Hashem created the world he designed it so that each day would parallel a thousand years of history. Mashiah must come by the last millennium. We are getting closer to the end. Certain things must happen to move us forward. And everything that we are experiencing is part of a greater plan.

The root word for nisayon (test) is nes which means a flag. A flag lets us know the identity of a nation. So too, a challenge puts us in contact with our identity. Hashem wanted us to encounter ourselves and this is why we were challenged this year. We need to ask- What did we do with the opportunities Hashem sent us? How did we respond?

Let's focus on the prayers of Rosh Hashana. What we ask for should be what we want on a deep level.

The first blessing of shemoneh esrei ends with Magen Avraham and awakens the chesed within us. Avraham brought an awareness of Hashem's presence into the world which is the ultimate chesed. Hashem remembers that and remembers that this is what we want to be. We praise Hashem that He's only good and that wherever he's taking us is chesed. The second blessing is about the revival of the dead. Our spiritual choices can take us towards death or life. The Baal Haleshem says teshuva is techiat hemeisim. You can take every negative choice that leads to death and let it lead you to life through teshuva. The third blessing of Ata Kadosh speaks about Hashem's transcendent power. We have some of Hashem's holiness within us and he's

our king leading us where we ultimately want to be.

The next of several brachot start with U'vechen and tell us what Rosh Hashana is about and how we can interpret the year. "And therefore let your name be sanctified..." Kedusha means separation from everything that is limited. It's elevating the spiritual possibilities that are hidden in the physical world. This is unique to man. We ask Hashem to let us see holiness within ourselves and within every Jew, to see the spiritual excellence in Yerushalayim and in Eretz Yisrael. We ask Hashem to bring something of His holiness into the world and to give us the ability to be more. We ask Him to help us choose life, to see spiritual reality, to see clearly how to bring His attributes into the world, to know how to respond well to nisyanot. In the second request we ask for fear. The rule is greater fear extinguishes lesser fear. Ideally, we should recognize that there are many challenges in life but the only one that deserves our real inner trembling is Hashem. When the Lubavicher Rebbe was imprisoned, he told his interrogator, "The difference between you and me is that you have no Hashem and one world, so you're afraid of everything. I have one Hashem and two worlds so nothing can scare me."

The Likutei Mahran says the true sign of giving honor to Hashem is when you hear yourself being humiliated and remain silent. You don't need people to honor you, you only want honor from Hashem. We ask Hashem to put His fear upon us so that we are no longer afraid of each other. We will then be one group serving Hashem. Everything we encounter is meant to bring forth something that we want brought forth. Let us not be afraid of life.

In the third request we ask for kavod. Kavod means having a sense of your own significance. If you're able to feel significant by doing the right thing that's kavod. We have a unique mission to bring Hashem's presence into the world. We are meant to spread moral reality and higher consciousness.

Yitzchak's sense of significance came from his surrender to Hashem's will. Another way to develop our relationship with Hashem is through giving over our soul to Hashem. It could be small like holding back from eating a non-Kosher candy bar or huge like people who sacrificed their life in the Holocaust. We ask Hashem to open people's eyes so that they see what really deserves respect. Being a yarei shamayim is about being in a state of simcha with Hashem for having created us and given us the Torah.

The most important thing that Covid was meant to teach us is not just surrendering control to Hashem but discovering our own kavod.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

date: Sep 17, 2020, 10:35 PM

Q. What is the minimum amount of shofar blowing that one is required to hear?

In three different places the Torah commands us to blow shofar in the month of Tishrei: Twice in relation to Rosh Hashana, and once in reference to Yom Kippur (Yovel – Jubilee). The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 34a) connects the three verses and derives that each time the shofar is blown, it must be blown three times. The Gemara also proves that every blowing of the shofar actually consists of three parts: A Tekiah (a long blow), followed by a Teruah (a broken blow), followed by a Tekiah. This makes for a total of nine blows. The mitzvah is to blow the shofar nine times following this pattern.

Tekiah – Teruah – Tekiah

Tekiah – Teruah – Tekiah

Tekiah – Teruah – Tekiah

However, because the Gemara records a disagreement as to the sound of the Teruah, we blow three variations. This amounts to 30 blows.

3X – Tekiah – Shevarim Teruah – Tekiah=(12)

3X – Tekiah – Shevarim– Tekiah=(9)

3X – Tekiah – Teruah – Tekiah=(9)

This is the minimum amount of shofar blows that one should hear to fulfill their obligation. If even this is too much, at the very least one should make sure to hear at least ten blasts. (See Mishnah Berurah 586:22 & 600:7).

Tekiah – Shevarim Teruah – Tekiah=(4)
Tekiah – Shevarim – Tekiah=(3)
Tekiah – Teruah – Tekiah=(3)

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sendingservice.net

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by **R. Gidon Rothstein**

Rabbenu Yonah's Six Spurs To Repentance:

Spurs One and Two

Almost anything can become rote, even repentance. Observant Jews' habituation to the High Holiday season—the tunes of the first night of selihot, the first Barkhua of Rosh HaShanah, U-netaneh Tokef, Kol Nidrei, and so on, might impede sincere repentance, make it rote rather than real. Rabbenu Yonah was already alert to the challenge of stimulating ourselves to the thoroughgoing spiritual inventory we all need; the second section of his Sha'arei Teshuvah lists six ways to hear the call to change, a list I find

UnProvoked Repentance

For all he is about to share marker moments, life events to jumpstart our awareness of the need to recalibrate, Rabbenu Yonah reminds us each depends on our insight or discernment. No stimulus will drag us to or repent for us, we will always have to be ready to recognize who we are and where our life path differs from what Gd wants.

More, we would do better by building a life where repentance becomes unnecessary. If we think of Gd daily, incorporate our understanding of His Will in our ordinary lives, make fear/awe and love of Gd a regular feature of our personalities, feel shame for our poor choices, and cultivate vigilant awareness of thoughts that would lead us astray, we will do well even in the absence of some big repentance event.

As most of us do not succeed at that, we need repentance events; Rabbenu Yonah reminds us to be open to them when they come, to avoid becoming overly certain of our righteousness (because if we're sure we're good, no calls from Gd will penetrate.)

Troubles Aren't Random

His first avenue or opportunity to hear the call is when tzarot, troubles, happen. Suffering can be physical, financial, personal, or whatever. Rabbenu Yonah wants us to say: this is because of my sins, and—as last week's parsha told us-- if we recognize our troubles as a function of sin, and repent, Gd will welcome us back.

It's a kindness of Gd's, he points out; if one person apologized to another only because it would help rid him/her of troubles, the recipient might reasonably reject the apology as insincere. Gd accepts such inferior repentance, be-ratzon, with good Will, as if the person did well by his/her return (perhaps because many people don't return to Gd even then, sadly). Rabbenu Yonah quotes many verses for the idea, among them one he brings up a few times, Mishlei 3:12, for whom the Lord loves He rebukes, as a father the son he favors. The suffering many of us find upsetting and some of us reject as objectionable can be a sign of love, Mishlei and Rabbenu Yonah tell us, the tough love of a parent, dragging us where we need to go.

Spurning the Gentler Call

The framework he offered explains the Torah's treatment of those who adhere to their usual way of acting in the face of travails. Vayikra 26, the tokhaha, has Gd threaten to add worse suffering to those not disciplined by the early examples. Should Jews dismiss their sufferings as happenstance or a matter of the way of the world (a worry particularly apt in this year of tzarah), later verses say Gd will add seven times to the suffering, Gd will (Gd

forbid) repay our walking be-keri, by going with us be-keri or even ba-hamat keru, a wrath of keru. Rabbenu Yonah agrees with Rambam, keru here means happenstance, not sent by Gd.

Rambam makes his very similar point at the beginning of Laws of Fasts: suffering comes because of sin, and we must recognize it as such. Rambam only says it as a certainty about communal troubles, where Rabbenu Yonah includes individual ones. It's a claim that depends on one's view of Providence, how and when Gd steps in to guide individual lives, as well as how and when Gd rewards and punishes. A Jew might then disagree with Rabbenu Yonah, claim certain individual troubles are not a summons to repentance. I think Rabbenu Yonah disagreed about the nature of individual Providence, but also would say it's not the way to bet, most of us have more than enough sins to assume our suffering is related to them.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Rabbenu Yonah himself imagines another way the troubles will not lead to repentance: the person suffering misses the sins the troubles address, does not notice where s/he is going wrong. He tells such people to look harder. Otherwise, the person might not change, and then the sufferings really will have been futile, because the value lay in the atonement earned by repentance and change.

For those who blessedly make good choices, the sufferings will have been an overall boon, a source of joy, a reason to thank Gd for having been granted a cause of atonement and self-improvement. As Sifrei Va-Ethanan cites R.

Eliezer b. Ya'akov, smooth lives do not give atonement. Bettering ourselves takes hard work; Rabbenu Yonah is claiming sometimes Gd sends the hard work our way, and if we put in the effort, we will see the fruit.

Call Number Two: Old Age

The second way we can hear the call of return to Gd is when life approaches its end, our physical faculties diminish, our appetites reduce. Less swept up in satisfying our hungers, we can remember the approaching end of life and return to Gd.

Sadly, some people instead cling to their physicality, invest in recovering what age has taken away. Pesachim 113b includes a zaken mena'ef, an old man chasing sexual encounters, licit and not, among the three Gd hates. It's head-shaking, to Rabbenu Yonah, how people can reach the mid-point of their lives—and more—see their physical strength diminishing, and not remember the relentless march towards death, not take the time to improve and prepare themselves for meeting their Maker.

How We "Protect" Ourselves

One reason people miss the message is their blindness to their own failings, their certainty they have not sinned (not seriously, in any case). They do not realize how far they are from what Gd wants, or they have heard and put it out of their minds, like a person who is ill but does not feel his/her symptoms.

(The example is Rabbenu Yonah's, but rings particularly true in our times, when no one is sure how many people have had Covid-19, because the majority, maybe as high as eighty percent, never have noticeable symptoms. I have also read articles about people who have serious effects on their blood oxidation levels, and do not feel it until very late in the game.)

I remember hearing R. Soloveitchik, zt"l, was fortunate to have been a bit hypochondriacal, because he caught and became aware of his stomach cancer sooner than most people would, allowing doctors to remove it safely, in the 1960s. We can be ill, physically and/or spiritually, and not catch it early enough.)

Spiritually as well, the more aware we are, the more likely we will spot our illnesses—Rabbenu Yonah himself calls sin a sickness of the soul—and rectify them.

For those unable to find their own flaws, spending time with Torah scholars can help. Rabbenu Yonah does not explain why, perhaps because that will be call to repentance number three, as we will see next time.

Threading the Needle on Awareness

Righteous people always know where they've gone wrong, are upset about

their failings, not reaching where they could have in the service of Gd. Yerushalmi Hagigah 1;6 says Gd was willing, in some sense, to forego serious sins but not bittul Torah, neglect of Torah study, because those people are insisting on focusing on their bodily needs and wants, on the parts of the world with fleeting value, rather than putting their time and effort to Torah and its involvements. Such people are truly at the bottom level, says Rabbenu Yonah.

Instead, starting with the age of sixty (which Avot 5;21 defines as old age; the number might have shifted a bit in our times), we should begin to withdraw from the physical world, because it shouldn't matter as much anymore. As we reach seivah, gevurah, seventy and eighty, we should focus more and more on matters of ultimate value, the service of Gd. The Mishnah says ninety is the age la-suah, a word Rabbenu Yonah takes to mean prayer (as when Yitzhak went out to the field la-suah, to pray Minha, as the Gemara says).

The righteous use their old age, with its slowly receding faculties, to build and improve on the good base they set in their lives, as Shabbat 152a says, Torah scholars increase their wisdom the older they get, an idea Rabbenu Yonah is reading to mean they fortify their connection to what's really valuable, lessening their connection to what is not.

A good start, two ways to let ourselves hear the call to improvement, sufferings we might mistake as a cause of resentment when they actually help us, if we take them the right way, and old age, a reminder long before death that our time is limited and to use it wisely.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

www.ou.org

Willing to Change - Rosh Hashanah

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

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

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

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

"Just one. But it has to be willing to change!"

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

Willingness to change is a rare trait among humans. People are frightened of anything new and adhere to the status quo even when it has brought them little benefit.

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

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

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

A fundamental teaching of Judaism is the following verse from Ecclesiastes: "For no man is perfect in this world, doing only good and never sinning."

We all need to improve, we all need to change. This is the central message of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the Jew.

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

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

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

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

Jewish texts recognize that there are two types of change; one indeed, a slow, painstaking path, and the other, a rapid and sudden personality shift. Jewish tradition recognizes that others influence and mold our paths, but that the ultimate responsibility for spiritual change lies with each of us ourselves. I would like to share with you all one fascinating example of two individuals working together in a purposeful but deliberately incremental change process. It is to be found in the writings of a man known as the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. His name was Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro, and his career as an outstanding pedagogue and teacher of adolescent boys was tragically cut off by the horrors of the Holocaust.

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

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

And every so often, he can monitor his progress, accelerating the process, modifying it if necessary, or slowing it down if things are going too quickly. The Rebbe encourages the young man to collaborate with a friend or a mentor as he goes through this process of self-change and self-development. At this time of the Jewish New Year, as many do around the time of the secular New Year, we all tend to make resolutions. Rabbi Shapiro's technique is but one of the numerous methods which can assist us in formulating such resolutions and in successfully executing them.

The sanctity of this season inspires us, like the light bulb, to be willing to change. We must turn to the wise and the experienced among us, be they living friends, mentors, and spiritual guides, or past scholars, rabbis, and teachers, for suggestions of specific techniques as to how to really change. Judaism always insists upon the utility and the importance of textual study. At this time of year study is no less important than prayer. Especially if our study focuses upon finding ways to achieve desired change, and to maintain that change in the face of challenge and ever shifting circumstances. Every time we wish each other a Happy and Sweet New Year, we are really saying, "I hope that you are successful in your attempts to change yourself and improve yourself in the coming year." It is in that spirit that I wish each of you, dear readers, a Happy and Sweet New Year!

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

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Festivals of Faith: Rosh HaShana – Three Who Cried

Excerpted from **Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Festivals of Faith: Reflections on the Jewish Holidays**

Three Who Cried*

Ours is an age which has forgotten how to cry. Whether at Rosh Hashanah

services or Tish'ah be-Av kinot, whether at a funeral or a theater, tears are conspicuous by their absence. Once upon a time, the mahzor was stained with tears; today, it is so white and clean—and cold. Not, unfortunately, that there is nothing to cry about. A generation which saw the finest of its sons and daughters destroyed in the most terrible massacre in recorded history; a generation which, the more it probes the heavens, the more it ignores the heart—a generation of this sort has much to cry about. How many people here today do not have their private woes, their secret sorrows?

It is rather that we have embarrassed ourselves into silence. It has become a style of the times to restrain our tears on the theory that maybe that way the pain will go away, that by refusing to display genuine emotion, the agonizing facts of our lives will be altered. But we are, nevertheless, human beings. And so the unwept tears and unexpressed emotions and unarticulated cries well up within us and seek release. What insight the Kotzker Rebbe had when he said that when a man needs to cry and wants to cry but cannot cry, that is the most heart-rending cry of all.

Granted that crying is an experience we ought not to deny ourselves. But is there not a difference in how and why people cry? Is there not a vast difference between the various types of weeping and what motivates them? I believe there is. And Rosh Hashanah suggests three separate causes for tears, two that are vain and unfortunate, and a third that is heroic and constructive.

The three types are symbolized by three biblical characters, all women, whose tears are recalled on this holiday. They are the mother of Sisera, Hagar, and Rachel.

Sisera was a Canaanite general, leader of an army that was, so to speak, highly mechanized compared to the peasant people of Israel which it attacked. This arrogant pagan warlord was defeated by the Israelites, who were led by Deborah. In Deborah's song of triumph, she paints the picture of Sisera's mother, usually overconfident, this time anxiously awaiting the return of her son (Judg. 5:28): Be-ad ha-halon nishkafah—she peers intently out the window, a nagging question burning within her; maddua boshesh rikhbo lavo—why is his chariot so late in coming, why do the wheels of his chariot tarry? She answers, soothing herself: My son and his soldiers are busy dividing the spoils of their great victory; they are splitting up the dyed cloths, the embroidered garments, the damsels of conquered Israel. But the delusion cannot last forever. The truth must emerge. Her son is dead. Va-teyabbev—the mother of Sisera breaks out into uncontrolled sobbing. There were one hundred sobs, tradition declares (Tosafot Rosh ha-Shanah 33b, citing the Arukh), and for this reason, we Jews on Rosh Hashanah sound a total of one hundred notes on the shofar.

A beautiful, compassionate story. A shining example of historical generosity and forgiveness—we relive the pain and anguish of the mother of our enemy. But were there no Jewish mothers who were bereaved of their sons in the same war? Was no Jewish blood spilt in our long history, no Jewish tears shed by grieving mothers?

What the Rabbis intended, I believe, was a moral of great significance: The mother of Sisera lived in a dream world. She refused to face reality and contemplate its bitter side. And when you live in a dream world, you must expect nightmares. She had imagined that her exalted position as mother of a successful conqueror inured her to pain and tragedy—that was reserved only for the contemptible enemy, Israel. She was guilty of an immoral optimism, the kind of outlook that characterizes the unthinking and arrogant of all ages. Hers was a strutting and pompous dream which collapsed under the weight of its own illusions. And this indeed is what the shofar and Rosh Hashanah remind us of: there is a Yom ha-Din, a day of judgment and accounting. Al titya'esh min hapur' anut (Avot 1:7)—do not go through life, says one interpretation, blithely ignoring consequences which you dread. He who sits on top of the world has no assurance that his world will not collapse under him. Absolute security is a myth. Life is not as certain, as guaranteed, as the haughty, unreflective mentality of the mother of Sisera lead her to believe. Beware of such vain and dangerous illusions.

Do we not know in our own lives the kind of mentality that discovers its smugness and self-confidence punctured only when it is too late? We see it in international affairs, as when our government naively assumed that Communism could never gain a foothold on this continent, so we neglected the masses of Cuba, we supported tyranny, we ignored the oppressed population—and now we have Castro and his Russian allies ninety miles off our coast. Va-teyabbev. . .

The couple who neglect to seek advice for their serious problems, the man who ignores medical symptoms he inwardly fears, the mother who notices her children going off on the wrong path and says and does nothing—all of them lull themselves with false balm, assuring themselves that all is really well and nothing will be wrong. Va-teyabbev—how pitiful the tears that are so futilely shed when, later, there is divorce, and incurable illness, and a child gone astray. Broken homes, broken bodies, broken hearts—all in the inglorious tradition of Sisera's mother. Rosh Hashanah reminds us of this, tells us that nothing in life is guaranteed, that by ignoring danger, you invite it, and that better face reality now than cry vainly later.

Hagar was the second of the three who cried. We read about her in today's Torah portion. You recall that she was the servant of Sarah whom Abraham, at Sarah's behest, banished from his home. She took her child, Ishmael, into the desert, and when the water in her jug gave out, she cast the child away, pathetically saying she did not want to see him die. And va-tissa et kolah va-tevk (Gen. 21:16), "she raised her voice and cried." No attempt to save the child, no looking for an oasis—which factually was there, before her eyes—no real effort at changing her dangerous situation. She merely raises her voice and cries; it is the cry of desperation, a morbid, fatalistic pessimism. Hers is a "realism" that leads to resignation. Unlike Sisera's mother, she sees the "facts" only too clearly. Hagar beholds the great desert of life—and submits to it.

Rosh Hashanah reminds us of this weeping too. Just as it discourages us from harboring the dangerous illusion of total security, so it warns us off from the equally dangerous fatalism of a Hagar, the hopelessness that paralyzes all will and initiative. By recalling these tears, we learn to avoid living so that we too will be forced to shed them.

And how important that advice is. Take the matter of the danger to the future of humanity from nuclear war. Most of us are under the impression that the majority of people are indifferent to its ghastly possibility, that they never consider such horrors as real.

I believe, however, that the reverse is true. Contemporary man's attitude to the H-bomb is not that of the em Sisera but of Hagar. If they do not discuss it, it is because inwardly, psychologically, they have already given up and accepted it. They have surrendered and have the feeling that they are living in the end of time.

The results, morally speaking, are disastrous. If there is no future, then the present loses all value. If there is nothing to build for, there is nothing to live for. If death is certain and universal, then, like Esau, let us sell our birthright to fill our stomachs. If, as the cynics quoted by Isaiah said, mahar namut, "tomorrow we die" (Is. 22:13), then indeed, "let us eat and drink and be merry"—and forgo any serious purpose in life.

This, then, is the result of the Hagar mentality in its fatalism, its absolute hopelessness in the face of adversity. It is the type of mind which, seeing before it the midbar, is so overwhelmed by it that it stretches out and prepares to die with a whimper. And in that interval between despair and death, is it worth being temperate or sober or chaste or law-abiding or pure? The tears of Hagar and her whole frame of mind suggest a despair of which is born delinquency.

Both these approaches are dangerously wrong. A society, like an individual, which alternates between the moods of exhilaration and depression, em Sisera and Hagar, shows symptoms of moral mania and spiritual psychosis. Neither the one weeping nor the other is for us. Rather, it is the tears of a Jewish mother which inspire us this day.

The third woman who cried is Rachel. We read of her in tomorrow's

haftarah, in what is one of the most moving passages and most stirring images in all literature. Jeremiah describes Mother Rachel crying from her grave over her children who are banished from their homes into exile: “Thus saith the Lord, kol be-Ramah nishma, nehi, bekhi tamrurim, a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel mevakkah al banehah, it is Rachel weeping for her children; me’anah le-hinnahem, she refuses to be comforted” (Jer. 31:14). Here is a woman whose tears have moved history. Unlike Sisera’s mother, they do not come from living an easy life and deluding herself into imagining that a day of reckoning will never come. Rachel lived a hard life and a brief one; she knew trouble and anguish. She sees her children going into exile and recognizes the bitterness of reality. But unlike Hagar, she refuses to bow to these realities. Me’anah le-hinnahem, she refuses to submit, she refuses to adjust, she refuses to accept exile and destruction as the last word. Her cry, her tears, and her protest to God are the characteristic of the Jew throughout all time. The Jewish soul beholds reality in all its ugliness but sets out to transform it. The tears of Rachel are the tears of a gallant soul who will not yield to the world but makes the world, though it take centuries, yield to it. They are not the tears of vain sentiment and self-pity, but of powerful protest; they are a sign not of weakness, but of strength; not of resignation or frustration, but of determination. The tears of an em Sisera or a Hagar are the end of their story; for Rachel, it is a beginning. To Rachel’s cry there comes an answer: Koh amar Hashem, “thus saith the Lord,” min’i kolekh mi-bekhi ve-einayikh mi-dim’ah, “refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and thy children shall come back from the land of the enemy; and there is hope for thy future, saith the Lord, and ve-shavu banim li-gevulam, thy children shall return home” (Jer. 31:15–16). The Jewish attitude, symbolized by Rachel’s crying, is one which steers clear of the extremes of ignoring facts and of surrendering to them. Judaism teaches, in the language of the Kabbalah, that the it’aruta di-le-Eila, the impulse from Above, or divine assistance, can only come in response to the it’aruta di-le-tatta, or human initiative. For God helps those who help themselves—and God help those who don’t.

Has not this Rachel mentality distinguished the authentic Jew throughout the ages? Are not her heroic tears our saving grace even today? We did not rely on Britain or the United States or the League of Nations or the U.N. to take care of us, assuming with naive and idolatrous optimism that all would be well with us. We knew the harsh realities of creating an old people anew on a renewed land—with ancient enemies waiting to devour us. But Jews fought. They went into battle inspired by the tears of a Rachel who me’anah le-hinnahem, refusing to accept defeat, refusing to acknowledge surrender, refusing to submit to overwhelming odds. That is why ve-shavu banim li-gevulam; that is why there is an Israel today.

Fourteen or fifteen years ago, the great question was Palestine or the State of Israel. Today, two other central questions present themselves to us Jews, questions equally as significant as that of Israel.

The first is Russian Jewry. There is, at present, not too much we can do about it. We must recognize the brutal facts, the wily and cunning enemy we are dealing with, and the incalculably tragic results of a generation of Russian Jews denied any and all Jewish education. But we must vow never to give up hope. Me’anah le-hinnahem. We must apply pressure. We must talk of them and inquire about them. We must never despair, but rather prepare for their eventual release and return to the House of Israel.

But the second is one we can do much about—and that is the most momentous issue in the Jewish life of this generation—the future of American Jewry. Here the attitude we take can determine whether we shall survive and thrive or, Heaven forbid, eventually vanish without a trace.

If we adopt the genuinely Jewish approach of a Rachel, then there is hope for us. We dare not consider the complacent ideas of those who foolishly tell us that all is well and there is no cause for worry—those who, imbued with the same opiate that dulled the mind of Sisera’s mother, are blind to the densely negative features of American-Jewish life: intermarriage, vast ignorance of the most elementary aspects of Judaism, a desire to mimic the non-Jews, and a growing vacuum in the lives of our children.

Yet, at the same time, we dare not take a Hagar-like attitude and assume that things are so far gone that nothing will avail. The pessimists are blind to the resurgence and growing independence of Orthodoxy; the spreading Jewish Day School movement; the growing and developing Yeshiva University; the flourishing Hebrew book industry. Either attitude—ignoring the problems and ignoring the promises, thoughtless optimism and hopeless pessimism—paralyzes all initiative and must result in national mourning.

Ours must be the tears of Rachel. Knowing reality, let us proceed to transform it to a better reality. Let everyone here decide to come to shul at least once a week instead of making a perfunctory three-day-a-year visit. Let every parent send his or her children to a yeshiva or day school or at least Hebrew school. Let every thinking adult leave this synagogue today determined to learn more about Judaism, about the Jewish people—about yourselves. Tears of determination, of me’anah le-hinnahem—the tears of Rachel—these shall save us.

Ha-zore'im be-dim'ah be-rinnah yiktzoru (Ps. 126:5). Those to whom tears are not the distillation of vain illusions or morbid resignation, but the dewdrops of creative moral heroism, they shall sow the seeds of hope with these tears—and reap a harvest of joy, of happiness, of nahas and unending blessing.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org>

subject: Weekly Torah Message From Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

rabbibuchwald.njop.org

Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message - Rosh Hashana 5781-2020

“A Message for the High Holy Days: ‘Export, Export!’”

(updated and revised from Rosh Hashana 5763-2002)

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

Beginning this Friday evening, September 18th, and continuing through Saturday and Sunday, September 19th and 20th, we will celebrate the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashana 5781. Because it is Rosh Hashana, the normal weekly Torah parasha will not be read. Instead, on Shabbat, Genesis 21:1-34 will be read, in which G-d remembers the barren Sarah and the miraculous birth of Isaac takes place. On Sunday, Genesis 22:1-24 will be read, a portion that is known as the Akeida or the binding of Isaac. So here we are, Erev Rosh Hashana, marking the joyous new year, and l’havdil (to make a distinction), in the midst of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and the profound racial unrest in America.

Given the reality, how can we compose a somewhat upbeat Rosh Hashana message?

As the Hebrew poet, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, wrote in the 12th century when recalling the destroyed Temples in Jerusalem: “How can food and drink taste pleasant to me, when I witness the dogs dragging away our brave youth?” It’s been a bitter year for the Jewish people as anti-Semitism continues to raise its nasty head, and a pretty miserable year for the world, as well. We really need a new start. Hopefully, this time of renewal in the Jewish calendar will prove to be a propitious time for optimism—and the “pick-us-up” that we collectively require.

Rosh Hashana marks the beginning of the period known as the “Ten Days of Penitence,” the ten days in which the Jewish people are individually judged, preparing for their fate to be determined on Yom Kippur. It is a time when the Al-mighty calls His people to teshuva, to repent, so that He can forgive their sins and inscribe them all in the Book of Life. It is a time for us to prove to the Al-mighty that we are really worthy of being inscribed for Life. We do this by making extra-special efforts during these ten days to perform meritorious acts, deeds of kindness and generosity, and avoid negative behaviors, such as gossip and hurting others.

The sainted Chofetz Chaim, offered the following meaningful parable regarding the proper way to conduct our lives.

A young man survived a terrible shipwreck. After drifting in the rough seas for several days by hanging on to pieces of the shattered vessel, he managed

to paddle his way to an island. Arriving on the shore dazed, his clothing ripped to shreds, he unexpectedly heard the shrill cries of men running toward him. Certain that the savage natives of the island would rip him apart limb by limb, he began to pray. Instead, the natives gently lifted him, wrapped him in a beautiful long velvet robe, placed a crown on his head, and called out, "Long live the King."

The islanders brought the survivor to a magnificent palace, and began to treat him as if he were truly the king of the island. To help him recover from his ordeal, they fed him dainty foods, and bathed him in spices and oils. Once restored to health, the servants prepared sumptuous meals for him, and gave him a most beautiful wife.

Thus the survivor spent his days and nights, luxuriating, as is expected of true kings and regents

After a month of living in this royal manner, the would-be king gathered enough courage to ask one of his trusted chamberlains to explain what was going on, and what would be his fate. The wise servant informed him that almost every year a shipwrecked survivor lands on the island. It was the islanders' custom to appoint this unfortunate soul to serve as king of the island for exactly one year. After the year, the survivor is taken, stripped of everything in his possession, placed on a raft, and cast back into the sea, naked as the day he came.

The poor fellow began to cry, "What will become of me? How can I save myself?" The chamberlain told the young survivor to heed his advice well, and began repeating the words: "Export, export." The poor fellow could not understand, and the chamberlain explained. "Over the period of the next year, you must prepare for the future. Every day, without the islanders' knowledge, you must send a small vessel from the island containing some of your royal possessions. Not far from here is another island. There, your servants will set up an alternative home for you. As the year draws to a conclusion, send your wife, and any children that you may have, over to the island. And so, when the year is up, and the natives take you and cast you back into the ocean, you will be able to paddle over to the island and begin to live your life again."

The Chofetz Chaim explains that the story of the shipwreck, the survivor and the islanders, is really a metaphor for life. Every one of us arrives in this world, and is greeted at birth by a chorus of admirers, parents, and family members who shout: "Long live the King. Long live the Queen." Every child is hailed as royalty. For much of our lives, we humans are treated to the luxuries of this world, often to excess. But, when our lifetimes reach their conclusion, we all leave this world naked as the day we came, except for those good deeds and acts of kindness that we have accumulated and exported during our mortal years. Only they, accompany us during the next stage of our journey.

It is during this period of The Ten Days of Penitence, that we particularly need to make our lives more meaningful by "exporting." We are fortunate, because there is really no better time to start exporting, than the propitious period of the High Holy Days, and those days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when the Al-mighty longs for our noble and good deeds. Now is the perfect time to make a special effort to "export" abundant amounts of good deeds and acts of kindness, and to perform mitzvot in excess. Now is the perfect time to pray with special intensity for a year of peace and security, for us, for our families, for the Jewish people, and for the world. And so, as we stand before the Al-mighty in judgment and passionately offer our positive deeds and our fervent prayers, remember the words of the wise chamberlain, "Export, export." These "exports" are the only "valuables" that will prove meaningful to us on our ultimate journey.

Shanah tovah u'metukah. May we all be inscribed for a healthy, happy, good, sweet and peaceful year.

May you be blessed.

Rosh Hashana 5781 is observed this year on Friday evening and all day Saturday and Sunday, September 18th, 19th and 20th, 2020.

The Fast of Gedaliah will be observed next Monday, September 21st from dawn until nightfall. May you be blessed.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Haazinu

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Knock, Knock!

The repetitive nature of everything associated with Rosh Hashanah is noteworthy. During the entire month of Elul, we blow the shofar at the end of shacharis (morning prayer). Unlike Matzo, where many have a custom to abstain during the month of Nissan – 15 days before the festival of Passover – and others will not eat Matzo for a month in joyous anticipation of the spiritual crunch, anticipating Rosh Hashanah seems different. Instead of creating excitement by not blowing the shofar, we diminish the level by becoming accustomed to it. Of course, we must prepare ourselves. There is a lot at stake on Judgement Day, but wouldn't an extemporaneous and unrehearsed blast of the shofar send more of a shiver down the spine and more forcefully a call for repentance, rather than a shofar-sounding ritual performed for 30 days prior that may by now feel quite rote?

The Selichos services are also a lead-up to the great day. Sefardic Jews have the custom to recite the pre-dawn prayers for the entire month of Elul. Moreover, Ashkenazic Jews can recite the selichos for more than a week before Rosh Hashanah. Would there not be a consideration that many Jews would get prayed-out from the pre-holiday supplications? Isn't there a chance that they would get blown-away by the repetitive nature of the month-long shofar exercise?

In the Selichos service, we beseech the Almighty as if we were destitute. "Like beggars and paupers we knock on Your door. On Your door, we knock, Merciful and Compassionate One" (from the first Selichos prayer L'cha Hashem hatzedaka). Again, we knock – not once, but twice! Isn't once enough? Surely G-d is not in the kitchen. He can hear us the first time!

My brother-in-law, Rabbi Simcha Lefkowitz, Rabbi of Congregation Toras Chaim in Hewlett tells the following story:

A meshulach (a man who raises funds for charity) came one sunny Sunday morning to a large home in the Five Towns of Long Island. Eagerly he rang the bell, and simultaneously knocked on the door. A woman, quite displeased, swung open the ornate portal to her home and, knowing the man's intent, she began to shout.

"What do you want? I never met you in my life! How do you expect me to give charity to someone I have never seen? I'm sorry, but this is my policy and I just can't give you!"

The meshulach was not perturbed. Slowly, he walked around the block and fifteen minutes later he was back at the same door. Again he rang the bell, and again the woman came out shouting. "I told you I never met you in my life! How do you expect me to give charity to someone I have never seen! Didn't I clearly explain my policy to you?"

The meshulach just smiled as he replied. "You are absolutely correct. However, you forgot one small thing. You know me already! After all, we met ten minutes ago!"

The weeks before Rosh Hashanah we must be wary that we may have to knock a few times to get into the big door. Of course, Hashem knows who and what we are, but we may be a little foreign to him. The daily shofar blasts, the recital of chapter 27 of Tehillim, L'Dovid Hashem Ori, twice daily in our prayers and the recital of daily selichos are all summarized in the words we recite, "like beggars we knock... we knock on Your door, Merciful One."

We realize that we must reacquaint ourselves with the commitments and the great resolutions that we accepted upon ourselves one year ago. But if we knock once and knock again, ultimately we, too, can smile at the One standing at the door and ask for all our desires. After all, we were just there. And He knows us already!

Shana Tova U'Msukah Happy and Healthy Sweet New Year

Good Shabbos!

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<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1199>

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

chiefrabbi.org

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah: Rosh Hashana

Our Covid-19 responsibility this Rosh Hashana

Rosh Hashana is an anniversary. But of what?

According to our tradition it was on this day that God created Adam. It was the sixth day of creation. No wonder therefore that our liturgy takes us back to the dawn of all time. And it is in this context, at the beginning of the book

of Genesis in Chapter 3, that we read the very first question on record. It was a question posed by God to Adam. God said to him, “אֵינְךָ” – “Where are you?”

Adam had just eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree. Of course, Hashem knows everything, so what He implied with “אֵינְךָ” – “Where are you?” was, “Where are you standing? What is your מדרגה, your spiritual level? How responsible are you being to yourself and to your future?”

This was followed up by another question one chapter later in Chapter 4. This time God posed a question to Cain who had just killed his brother Abel. God’s question was,

“אֵי הֲבֵל אָחִיךָ” – “Where is Abel, your brother?”

It was as if to say, “How responsible have you been towards another?” And Cain’s answer was,

“לֹא יָדַעְתִּי” – “I don’t know.”

“הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אֶנְכִּי” – “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

I believe that these questions are as pertinent and relevant to us today as they were to those original dwellers on earth – particularly during Covid-19 times. Hashem is saying to each and every one of us “אֵינְךָ” – “Where are you?” Literally, physically, are you too close to other people at a time when you should be socially distancing? Are you standing at events and in places where the law is being flouted? How responsible are you being to yourself? In addition Hashem is saying to us “אֵי הֲבֵל אָחִיךָ” – How responsible are we being towards others? Because if we’re neglecting our health we could be posing a danger to the lives of others.

Over the High Holy Days we ask God for forgiveness for our sins, our trespasses, and our transgressions during the past year. According to our tradition, for sins between ourselves and the Almighty, we go straight to God but if we have sinned against others, we must first appease them before God will hearken to our prayers.

If this is the case with regard to regular situations, in which we’re hurting the feelings of others, offending others, disappointing them, how much more so does it apply to situations in which we might be presenting a threat to their very lives?

As we enter into the forthcoming High Holy Days, sadly here in the UK, as is the case in many other places around the globe, cases of Covid-19 are on the rise and this is primarily due to irresponsibility – the responsibility that people have towards themselves and towards others. We pray that Hashem will bless us all with a שנה טובה – a good, happy, peaceful, fulfilling and most of all a healthy new year. But this can only happen if none of us ever again gives the shameful reply of Cain:

“Are we our fellows’ keepers?”

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>

reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com

to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com>

date: Sep 15, 2020, 10:12 AM

subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Rosh Hashanah: Personal Judgment

Rosh Hashanah: Personal Judgment

Nine Blessings

The longest prayer of the year is the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah. The Talmud in Berachot 29a teaches that this prayer is connected to Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel:

“Why are there nine blessings in the Rosh Hashanah prayer? Because Hannah mentioned God’s Name nine times in her prayers for a son. For it was taught: The prayers of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were answered on Rosh Hashanah.”rav

Rosh Hashanah, at the start of the new year, is a time when all creatures are judged by God. The Sages used the imagery of a shepherd who inspects his sheep as they pass, one by one, under his staff. Such is God’s judgment on

Rosh Hashanah; the Divine inspection is not only on the level of nations and species, but also for each individual

What is the significance of the number nine? If we analyze numbers, we find that ten indicates a unit that is also a group of smaller units. The number nine, on the other hand, emphasizes the individuality of each unit, without being combined into a larger group. Nine is therefore an excellent choice for a number emphasizing the aspect of Rosh Hashanah as a time of personal judgment for each individual.

Hannah’s Prayer

Is there a deeper connection between Hannah and our Rosh Hashanah prayer?

Hannah was naturally barren. Medically, she was incapable of bearing a child. Yet she pleaded for a child by virtue of her personal merits and intense yearnings. She beseeched God for special assistance, beyond that which was decreed on a general, natural basis. Hannah’s prayers truly exemplify the aspect of Divine providence for the individual, to the extent that Divine intervention was necessary in order to fulfill her request.

Especially on Rosh Hashanah, we need to impress upon ourselves how God judges each individual. When we are able to truly internalize this concept, we are motivated to correct our deeds and actions. And the moral elevation of each individual will bring about the overall repair of society and the entire world.

from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

date: Sep 16, 2020, 2:57 PM

subject: Liturgical Curiosities

Liturgical Curiosities

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Selichos is upon us, providing an opportunity to present some background to the role of liturgical poetry that impacts immensely on our selichos and yomim nora'im prayers.

Question #1:

I find that many of the selichos that we recite before Rosh Hashanah are very difficult, if not impossible, to understand. Is this to teach us how difficult it is to do teshuvah?

Question #2:

"I once heard a rav give a running commentary to the kinos of Tisha B'Av, and he mentioned that the first kinah is a continuation of the piyut recited during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei. But I never saw anyone recite piyutim during the repetition of Tisha B'Av shemoneh esrei and do not even know where to look for them."

Question #3:

"As a child, I remember that all the shullen recited piyutim during Maariv on Yomim Tovim and during Kedushah on special Shabbosos. Now I see piyutim recited only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. What has changed?"

Although these questions seem unrelated, they all focus on a central subject: the additions of piyutim, kinos and other special passages in our davening. Let us first understand the background to the piyutim.

What are Piyutim?

During the period of the Rishonim, the Geonim, and even earlier, great Torah scholars wrote prayers and other liturgical works that were inserted into many different places in the davening, particularly during the birkos keris shema (between borchu and shemoneh esrei) and during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei. Standard shul practice, particularly among Ashkenazic Jewry, was to recite these piyutim on special occasions, including Yomim Tovim, fast days, and special Shabbosos (see Rama, Orach Chayim 68:1; 112:2). These piyutim express the mood and the theme of the day, often recall the history of the day, and sometimes even provide the halachic background for the day's observance. Studying these piyutim not only gives us tremendous appreciation for these days, but sometimes provides us with certain aspects of mystery, as I will explain.

There is also a humbling side to the study of piyutim. The piyutim predate the printing press and return us to the era when written works had to be painstakingly handcopied. Most communities could not afford handwritten manuscripts of all the piyutim, and therefore the job of every chazzan included committing the piyutim to memory. My father told me many times that he knew blind chazzanim who recited the entire yomim nora'im davening by heart!

Selichos

We are all aware of the selichos recited on fast days and during Elul and Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, which are a type of piyutim. Another famous part of davening that qualifies

as piyut is Akdamus, recited prior to kerī'as hatorah on Shavuos. This introduction to the kerī'as haTorah for Shavuos was written by Rabbeinu Meir ben Yitzchak of Worms, Germany, who was one of the great leaders of Ashkenazic Jewry before Rashi. Other examples of piyutim that are commonly recited include Tefillas Tal and Tefillas Geshem. The poem Dvei Haseir – recited before benschung at a Sheva Berachos, authored by Dunash ibn Labrat, an early poet and grammarian who is cited by Rashi in several places – and Nodeh Leshimcha, which takes the same slot at a bris milah are other examples of piyut.

Double Duty

Some piyutim are used in two different contexts. For example, the song frequently chanted at a bris, Shirah Chadashah, originated as a piyut recited immediately before the close of the berachah of Ga'al Yisrael in birchas kerī'as shema on the Seventh Day of Pesach. This piyut, written by Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, refers both to the splitting of the Yam Suf and to bris milah, and is therefore appropriate on both occasions.

Teaching Torah through Piyutim

Many times, the rabbis used poetry as a means of teaching Torah. For example, a very extensive literature of piyutim lists and explains the 613 mitzvos. Most of these pieces date back to the times of the Geonim; indeed, the famous count of mitzvos by Rav Saadia Gaon is actually a poem. The Rambam, in his introduction to the Sefer Hamitzvos refers to many such poems. He quotes them disparagingly, because most followed the count of the 613 mitzvos according to the Baal Halachos Gedolos, with which the Rambam disagreed.

Other examples include piyutim that instruct about special observances of the Jewish calendar. Among the most famous is the Seder Avodah of Yom Kippur, which is already referred to in the Gemara, although the text they used is long lost. Dozens of different piyutim were written in the period of the Geonim and Rishonim describing the Seder Avodah in detail. The Rishonim devote much halachic discussion about the technical accuracy of several of the versions they received from earlier generations, often taking issue and making rectifications. Even as late a halachic authority as the Chayei Odom made many corrections to our Seder Avodah of Yom Kippur to correct its accuracy.

U'neshalma Parim Sefaseinu

Reciting the Seder Avodah also fulfills the concept of 'U'neshalma Parim Sefaseinu,' 'And let our lips replace the (sacrificial) bulls' (Hoshea 14:3). The Midrash teaches that when we are unable to offer korbanos, Hashem accepts our recital of the procedure as a replacement for the korbanos (Midrash Rabbah, Shir HaShirim 4:3). This implies that we can achieve kapparah (atonement) by reciting these piyutim with kavanah.

Therefore, a person who recites the viduy of the Seder Avodah and truly regrets his sins can accomplish atonement similar to that achieved through the viduy recited by the Kohen Gadol.

Other "Replacement" Prayers

The same idea of U'neshalma Parim Sefaseinu is followed when we recite piyutim that describe other korbanos, such as, for example, the korban omer, the water libation (nisuch hamayim) of Sukkos, or the korban Pesach. We can achieve the drawing close to Hashem that korbanos achieve by discussing them and by longing for their return. This expands the rationale for reciting piyutim.

Educate to Observe Mitzvos

Some piyutim serve not only to teach Torah, but also to educate people how to observe mitzvos correctly. For example, the piyut, Elokei HaRuchos, recited on Shabbos Hagadol, contains a lengthy halachic description of all the preparations for Pesach, including detailed instructions for kashering and preparing the house. This halachic-liturgical classic was authored by Rav Yosef Tuv-Elem, the rabbinic leader of French Jewry prior to Rashi. Tosafos and other Rishonim devote much debate to the halachic positions taken by Rav Yosef Tuv-Elem in this poem, and Rabbeinu Tam and others revised Elokei HaRuchos to reflect their opinion of the correct halachah. Since the goal of this piyut was to teach the correct way to observe the laws of Pesach, the Rishonim felt it vital that the it halachically accurate. Obviously, this piyut was meant to be read, studied, and understood.

Who Authored them?

You might ask, how do we know who wrote the different piyutim, particularly when many are over a thousand years old!

In general, most piyutim follow an alef beis acrostic in order to facilitate recall.

(Remember -- the assumption was that the chazzan would recite them from memory!)

Many times, the author completed the work by weaving his name into the acrostic pattern he used for the particular piyut. Thus, Elokei HaRuchos begins with the alef beis but closes by spelling Yosef Hakatan bar Shmuel Chazak, which is the way Rav Yosef Tuv-Elem chose to "sign" this piyut.

An Old Controversy

Early controversy surrounded the practice of interrupting the berachos of kerī'as shema or the repetition of the shemoneh esrei to recite the yotzaros, the word frequently used

as a generic word for all piyutim inserted into the regular davening. (The word "yotzaros" originally referred only to those piyutim inserted after Borchu, shortly after the words "yotzeir ohr uborei choshech..." .) However, in standard use the word refers to all piyutim inserted into the berachos of kerī'as shema or the repetition of the shemoneh esrei.) The Shulchan Aruch rules: "There are communities that interrupt the birkos kerī'as shema to recite piyutim, but it is correct not to say them for they constitute an interruption" (Orach Chayim 68:1). On this point, the Rama, reflecting early Ashkenazic practice, adds: "Others say that this is not prohibited and the practice in all communities is to recite them." Each country and city had its own special customs concerning what was said and when; this was usually recorded in a community ledger. Mesod Chachamim Unevonim

To acknowledge that these piyutim interrupt the regular repetition of the shemoneh esrei, the chazzan introduces the piyutim with the words, Mesod chachamim unevonim (Based on the tradition of the wise and understanding). These words mention that early great Torah leaders permitted and encouraged the introduction of these praises.

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary to Shulchan Aruch (ibid.), explains both the position of those who recommended the recital of yotzaros and those who discouraged them. For the most part, the Lithuanian yeshivos followed the personal practice of the Gra not to recite piyutim during the birkos kerī'as shema, and did not recite yotzaros during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei (Maasei Rav #57). (The Yeshivos recite yotzaros during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.) With the tremendous spreading of shullen that follow the practices of the yeshivos, rather than what was previously followed by the Ashkenazic communities, it is increasingly difficult to find a shul catering to yeshivah alumni that recites the piyutim other than during the repetition of the shemoneh esrei on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This answers the question asked above: "As a child, I remember reciting piyutim during Maariv on Yomim Tovim and during Kedushah on special Shabbosos. Now I see piyutim recited only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. What has changed?"

Unfortunately, due to this change in custom, this vast treasured literature of the Jewish people is quickly becoming forgotten.

Who was the First Paytan?

The title of being the earliest prominent paytan presumably belongs to Rabbi Elazar HaKalir, often referred to as the Rosh HaPaytanim, who authored Tefillas Tal and Tefillas Geshem, the piyutim for the four special Shabbosos (Shekalim, Zachor, Parah and HaChodesh), for Purim, the lion's share of the kinos that Ashkenazim recite on Tisha B'Av and as piyutim on Yom Tov. We know virtually nothing about him personally — we cannot even date when he lived with any accuracy. Indeed, some Rishonim place him in the era of the Tanna'im shortly after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, identifying him either as Rabbi Elazar ben Arach (Shu"t Rashba 1:469), a disciple of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, or as Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai's son Elazar, who hid in the cave with his father (Tosafos, Chagigah 13a s.v. Veraglei; Rosh, Berachos 5:21). Others date Rav Elazar HaKalir much later.

Many assume that Rav Elazar HaKalir lived in Eretz Yisrael, based on the fact that we have no piyutim written by him for the second day of Yom Tov (Tosafos, Chagigah 13a s.v. Veraglei; Rosh, Berachos 5:21). Moreover, Tosafos there uses this evidence to prove that Kalir lived at the time when the Beis Din determined Rosh Chodesh on the basis of visual evidence. However, the yotzaros recited immediately following Borchu on the second day of Sukkos clearly include his signature and follow his style. So perhaps he indeed lived in chutz la'aretz, and indeed there are those who assume he lived in Italy, which was the location of many of the very early Ashkenazi paytanim. Could it be that Diaspora Jews moved yotzaros he wrote for the first day of Yom Tov to the second day?

If this approach is true, it creates another question: Since the yotzaros recited on the first day of Yom Tov were also written by him, would he have written two sets of yotzaros for Shacharis on Sukkos? There are other indications that, indeed, he did sometimes write more than one set of piyutim for the same day.

Kalirian Curiosities

We do not know for certain what the name "Kalir" means. Since there are several places where he uses the acronym "Elazar berabi Kalir," it seems that his father's name was Kalir. However, the Aruch explains that "kalir" means a type of cookie, and that he was called hakalir because he ate a cookie upon which had been written a special formula that blessed him with tremendous erudition (Aruch, eirech Kalar III).

Kalirian Controversies

The antiquity of Rabbi Elazar's writing did not save him from controversy. No less a gadol than the ibn Ezra stridently opposes using Rav Kalir's works, arguing that prayers and piyutim should be written very clearly and be readily understood (Commentary to Koheles 5:1). Ibn Ezra recommends reciting piyutim written by Rav Saadia Geon that are easy to understand, rather than those of Kalir.

Rav Kalir's piyutim in general, and his kinos in particular, are written in an extremely difficult poetic Hebrew. Often his ideas are left in allusions, and the story or midrash to which he alludes is unclear or obscure. They certainly cannot be understood without careful preparation. Someone who takes the trouble to do this will be awed by the beauty of the thoughts and allusions. The Shiblei HaLeket records that when Rabbi Elazar wrote his piyutim the angels surrounded him with fire (quoted by the Magen Avraham at the beginning of Orach Chayim 68.) The Arizal recited all of the Kalir's piyutim, because he perceived their deep kabbalistic allusions (ibid.).

Why is Es Tzemach David Ignored?

There is another mysterious practice in some of his writings. The piyutim he wrote for the weekday shemoneh esrei (such as for Purim) include a paragraph for every berachah of shemoneh esrei except one, the berachah Es tzemach David that precedes Shema koleinu.

Why would Rav Kalir omit this berachah? Perhaps the answer to this mystery can help us understand more about when he lived.

Answering the Mystery

Our use of the title "shemoneh esrei" to identify the focal part of our daily prayer is actually a misnomer, dating back to when this tefillah included only eighteen berachos. In the times of the Mishnah, a nineteenth berachah, Velamalshinin, was added, and the Talmud Bavli notes that this increases the berachos of the "shemoneh esrei" to nineteen. However, there is evidence that even after Velamalshinin was added, not everyone recited nineteen berachos. A Tosefta implies that they still recited eighteen berachos in the shemoneh esrei. This was accomplished by combining together two of the berachos, Uveni Yerushalayim and Es tzemach David. This would explain why someone would not write a piyut for the berachah Es tzemach David, since it was no longer an independent berachah. Thus, if we can identify a place and time when these two berachos were combined, we might more closely identify when Rav Elazar HaKalir lived. It would seem that this would be sometime between the introduction of the berachah Velamalshinin and the time the Talmud Bavli's practice of a nineteen-berachah "shemoneh esrei" became accepted.

Rabbi Elazar Hakalir's piyutim and kinos require studying rather than reading. They are often extremely difficult pieces to read, relying on allusions to midrashim and historical events. Many commentators elucidated his works, attempting to illuminate the depths of his words. Also, sometimes he employed extremely complicated acrostics. This is cited as proof that he lived later, when such writing was stylish; of course, this does not prove his lack of antiquity.

The Kinos

As I mentioned above, most of the kinos we recite on Tisha B'Av are authored by Rabbi Elazar HaKalir. In his typical style, many of these can be understood only by preparing them in advance or to hear them explained by someone who understands them.

Furthermore, they must be read slowly so that one can understand what the author meant. This may entail someone reciting only a few kinos for the entire morning of Tisha B'Av, but he will understand and experience what he read.

Conclusion

We see that liturgical poems enhance our appreciation of our special days, and that it is very worthwhile to prepare them in advance so that we can truly appreciate them while we recite them.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Ohr Torah Stone <ohrtorahstone@otsny.org>

reply-to: yishai@ots.org.il

subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – What is the essence of our faith, the purpose for which the Jewish people have been placed in the world? Fascinatingly enough, the answer is to be found within the central prayer of our Rosh Hashana liturgy: the three blessings, uniquely found within the Additional (Musaf) prayer of Rosh Hashana, of Malchuyot (kingship), Zichronot (remembrances) and Shofarot. These blessings are each punctuated by the sounds of the shofar and, according to the 14th century theologian Rabbi Yosef Albo as well as the 19th-century Franz Rosenzweig, contain the essence of our faith.

The first of these blessings, Malchuyot, begins with the more familiar Alenu prayer.

This prayer teaches that the God whom we now accept as the one Lord of the Universe, the God of love, morality and peace, will eventually be accepted by the entire world.

This axiom of our religion, this prophecy of the ultimate endgame, is especially comforting in the face of the dangerous global village in which we live, a global village in which the specter of nuclear proliferation looms.

This blessing affirms that it is the God of compassionate, righteousness and moral justice who will eventually emerge supreme over the totalitarian trinity of Nazi fascism, Stalinist Communism and Islamic fundamentalism. Our broken world will eventually be

perfected under the Kingship of the God of righteousness; through the teachings of Abraham "all the families of the Earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3) with a world of peace.

The second blessing, Zichronot, which is a Hebrew term for history, opens with: "You remember the activities from the beginning of the world, and you are mindful of the deeds [or the potential functions, from the Hebrew tafkid] of every creature from earliest times."

Here is a ringing declaration of faith in the process of history; the clear sense that historical time is on the side of humanity, and that individuals and nations have a unique role to play in the cumulative march of history toward redemption. Israel alone of the nations of the world enjoys a special relationship with God, a covenant which ensures its eternity and defines its mission as the messenger of ethical monotheism to all of humanity.

This blessing guarantees that there is an overarching purpose to history, which is not a cyclical, repetitive cycle leading nowhere, but rather a linear pathway leading to peace. Redemption will come about in the fullness of historic time as a result of the cumulative merits of all preceding generations.

How will we carry out our covenantal task of imparting our message to the world? This is told to us by the third blessing, Shofarot, which reminds us of the revelation at Sinai, the 613 commandments which God presented to Israel and the seven commandments of morality, centering around "Thou shalt not murder," which God presented to the world. Maimonides, the great codifier of Jewish law, insists that just as God commanded Moses to bequeath 613 commandments to Israel, "similarly did He command Moses to coerce the nations of the world to accept the seven laws of morality" (Laws of Kings 8:10).

This is an immensely significant message, especially in our postmodern, relativistic, "everything goes" society, which denies any absolute concept of morality.

"Situation ethics" dominates our conventional wisdom, and the most heinous crime can become transformed into a sacred act "when seen from the perpetrator's point of view." (Hence a suicide bomber who murders innocent children is called a "freedom fighter.") Shofarot tells us that the Seven Laws of Morality which must be accepted by the nations are not options, but absolutes, since – especially in our global village – the lives of all humanity hang in the balance of their acceptance.

Hence the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amida teaches that the nation of Israel must and will teach fundamental morality, or ethical monotheism, to all the nations of the world. Only when this message is accepted, when "this Torah comes forth from Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem," only then will "nation not lift up sword against nation and humanity not learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4) and "everyone will sit under his vineyard and fig tree and no one will have reason to fear" (Micah 4:4).

Each of these blessings is punctuated by the shofar sounding. After God's kingship we sound the shofar, the means by which the king in the ancient world was crowned. Take note: It is we, the Jewish people, who must bring God down into this world and crown Him.

After Zichronot, we sound the shofar as a reminder of the aborted sacrifice of Isaac in favor of the ram whose horns were caught in the thicket. Isaac, the future of the Jewish people, was slated for slaughter, but was set free.

The shofar sound after Zichronot reminds us that the Jews will continue to live despite exile and persecution.

We must live so that we may remain God's witnesses and "a light unto the nations of the world" (Isaiah 42:6).

Finally, we sound the shofar after Shofarot since the method by which we must reach out to the world is by teaching our Torah – a teaching revealed at Sinai amid the sounds of the shofar.

And it will ultimately be that when the Almighty Himself will sound the shofar that all of the dispersed will return to Israel, the Temple will be rebuilt and the nations will come to learn from us to beat their swords into plowshares and to live together in peace. Shabbat Shalom!