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from Matzav Editor <webmaster@matzav.com> date Wed, Sep 8, 2010 at 9:56 AM subject [Matzav.com - The Online Voice of Torah Jewry]

G-d Does Not Expect Us To Get It Right All the Time

By Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Guilt is out of fashion these days, like sports jackets, courtesy, humility and handkerchiefs. It has a sepia-tinted

Victorian air about it. It belongs, so it seems, to that foreign country, the past. They do things differently there. For us, when things go wrong, it was someone else's fault: the boss, the colleague, the system, the government,

the media, our parents, the way we were brought up, society, bad luck or our genes.

Feeling guilty, they say, is bad for us. It lowers self esteem. Who does it any more? We have finally reached the age Shelley dreamed of in his poem Prometheus Unbound. We are "free from guilt or pain."

All of which makes it difficult to understand - except as some relic of the past - what Jews throughout the world are now doing, getting ready for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement, what we call "the Days of Awe." Yom Kippur could almost be defined as a festival of guilt. We repent and confess our sins repeatedly in long alphabetical lists. "We have been guilty, we have betrayed, we have robbed, we have spoken slander." "For the sin we committed through hardness of heart, for the sin we committed through utterance of the lips," and so on throughout the day.

Yom Kippur itself is the culmination of a process that begins forty days before with the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, our moral early warning system. Then come Selichot, the special penitential prayers said for a week before the New Year, then the New Year itself with its symbolism of the world as a courtroom in session, with our lives on trial. It's hard to think of anything less in keeping with the zeitgeist, the mood of now.

I think, though, that Judaism gets it right and the zeitgeist gets it spectacularly, dangerously wrong. Consider: guilt enters the world hand in hand with the spirit of forgiveness. G-d forgives: that is the message emblazoned all over Yom Kippur. G-d doesn't expect us to get it right all the time. The greatest of the great, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, had their faults and failings, defeats and doubts. There is only one person in the Hebrew Bible who is said to have committed no sin: Job. And look what happened to him.

So, because G-d forgives, we can be honest with Him and therefore with ourselves. Unlike a shame culture, a guilt culture separates agent from act, the person from the deed. What I did may be wrong, but I am still intact, still loved by G-d, still His child. In a guilt culture, acknowledging our mistakes is doable, and that makes all the difference.

Today's secular environment is a shame culture. It involves trial by the media, or public opinion, or the courts, or economic necessity, all of which are unforgiving. When shame is involved, it's us, not just our actions, that are found wanting. That's why in a shame culture you don't hear people saying, "I was wrong. It was my fault. I'm sorry. Forgive me." Instead, people try to brazen it out. The only way to survive in a shame culture is to be shameless. Some people manage this quite well, but deep down we know that there's something rotten in a system where no one is willing to accept responsibility.

Ultimately, guilt cultures produce strong individuals precisely because they force us to accept responsibility. When things go wrong we don't waste time blaming others. We don't luxuriate in the most addictive, destructive drug known to humankind, namely victimhood. We say, honestly and seriously, "I'm sorry. Forgive me. Now let me do what I can to put it right." That way we and the people we offend can move on. Through our mistakes we discover the strength to heal, learn and grow.

Shame cultures produce people who conform. Guilt cultures produces people with the courage to be free. The Talmud says that the Day of Atonement was one of the happiest days of the year. That's an odd thing to say about a day of fasting and confession. But the rabbis were right.

In place of a low dishonest culture where everyone blames someone else and no one admits responsibility, Yom Kippur offers a world of honesty and responsibility where guilt melts in the flames of G-d's forgiveness and we are made new in the fire of His unconditional love.

from Matzav Editor <webmaster@matzav.com> date Wed, Sep 8, 2010 at 9:59 AM subject [Matzav.com - The Online Voice of Torah Jewry]

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira - Is Rosh Hashanah a Day of Teshuva?

Wednesday September 8, 2010 6:35 AM

We all know that Rosh HaShana is not a day where we bombard Hashem with our wish list for the upcoming year. But is it a day of Tshuva? On one hand we don't say Slichos and avoid all mention of any reference to aveiros on this day, but on the other hand we blow the Shofar which is very much tied to tshuva. We also know that there are Aseres Yimei Tshuva of which Rosh HaShana is part of. So is it a day of tshuva or is it just a day to coronate our King and kick off our new year? Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro says that indeed it is a day of Tshuva but a special kind of Tshuva. On Yom Kippur we do tshuva for each and every one of our aveiros. Not so on Rosh HaShana. The Rambam says that the blast of the Shofar is to awaken us from our slumber and remind us to do tshuva. What kind of tshuva? The Rambam continues that we must remember our creator and stop sleeping through life indulging in all the silly pleasures of this world. We need to peer deeply into our hearts and change our outlook.

Rav Moshe Shmuel says that on Yom Kippur we do tshuva for all the actual aveiros that we did. On Rosh HaShana we repair our character and our outlook on life. We need to repent for our anger, hatred, jealousy, lust after money and food, and so on, says the Rambam (Tshuva 7:3). Rosh HaShana is a day to reflect on the year that was and to chart a course for the new year. Once we've made that change over the next ten days we then look at the details. We assess the actual damage and make repairs.

On Rosh Hashana we don't need viduy and all the outward manifestations of Tshuva. We need deep and honest contemplation. We need to recognize who is the boss, who created the world on this day, and what our job is. This we do on the first day of the year and we start by crowning our King and pointing our eyes and thoughts towards him.

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Weekly Parsha

HAAZINU – SHUVAH

Rabbi Berel Wein

Friday, September 10, 2010

Moshe calls upon heaven and earth to hear his message of the eternity of the covenant between God and Israel, a covenant that has influenced all of human history for over three millennia. But with all due respect, it is not only the heavens and earth that need to listen and pay attention to Moshe's message. Rather, it is for us, the people of Israel that needs to listen and hearken to the words of Moshe.

All of Jewish history is contained within this week's parsha. The parsha grants us a sense of perspective regarding current events and has the ability to vitalize us in our attempts to achieve physical and spiritual successes. But the prerequisite for all of this is the ability to listen, to recognize, and to learn from the words of Moshe. In Tehilim we read that the Lord, so to speak, bemoans the inability or unwillingness of Israel to listen and to hear the Godly message. The verse says: "If my people would only listen to Me...and walk in My paths...then I would destroy their enemies and My hand would smite their enemies." Apparently we could be spared all of the terror and doubtful peacemaking that currently characterizes our minds and emotions. The prophet Yeshayahu bitterly complains that the Lord has told him: "Stop up the ears of this people so they can hear no longer...lest they begin to understand and return [to Me] and be healed." One of the great keys to life is the ability to hear other opinions, to listen to valid criticisms, to be a true listener and not just a constant talker. The covenant between God and Israel requires "pay attention" listening. Moshe previously in the book of Dvarim uses the word "haskeit" meaning "pay attention" to introduce subjects that he wants Israel to hear and listen to. The covenant is not merely background music to our lives and to current events. It is the single supreme factor that guides our lives and forms the events in the lives of Jews individually and the Jewish people nationally. It was not for naught that Jewish children throughout the ages were

required to memorize this parsha of Haazinu. This song is our constitution, our history and our destiny all rolled into a, relatively speaking, minimum amount of verses. The failure to realize this, to really pay attention to its words and prophecies, has exacted a terrible toll on our nation over these past many centuries, but especially so in the last century of Jewish experience. We hear the covenant every day in our media and news reports but rarely do we put any of this in proper perspective – into the demands and consequences of the covenant's enforcement by Heaven upon us. As we near the completion of our annual reading of the Torah we also hope that we are nearing the end of the enforcement of the negative parts of the covenant upon us. Great things are promised as part of this covenant to us and God's promises certainly may be relied upon. Shabat shalom. Gmar chatima tova. Rabbi Berel Wein

A Rosh Hashana Sermon Elul 5766 [from 4 years ago]

By **Rabbi Dr. Zalman Kossowsky** Zurich, Switzerland
[rabbi@kossowsky.net]

Dear Zelva landsleit & friends the world over,

It is indeed a pleasure to stand here before you on this, my fifteenth Yamim Noraim season here in Zurich.

On Rosh Hashanah, in particular, we are sensitive to what we call "simanim" or signs. This expresses itself clearly in the apples that we dip in honey as well as all the other special foodstuffs that we enjoy and on which we recite special prayers and blessings. For me personally this year has an additional message. The number 15 has a very special significance in the Jewish weltanschauung. There were, in the Temples in Jerusalem, 15 steps between the open public courtyard and the inner sanctuary. There are, in the Book of Psalms, 15 "Shir Hamaalot" psalms that today we recite every winter Shabbat afternoon. 15 is also the gematria (the numeric value) of the smallest of the names which we use for G'd, namely – yud he.

I have a sense, therefore, that this Rosh Hashanah is calling for something special from me and I have been nibbling at this question for weeks now. I keep coming to the notion that Rosh Hashanah is, as we say in the blessing recited immediately after each of the sets of the Shofar tones:

Hayom harat olam, hayom ya'amid ba'mishpat kol yetzarei olamin – today is the birthday of the world, today He will judge all the creatures of the world.

I feel almost overwhelmed by this sense of "being judged". Indeed, we call this day in Hebrew - yom hadin the Day of Judgment. And it is my thoughts and feelings about being judged that I would like to share with you today.

If I am being judged, then it is very important to know – in what areas am I being judged? Obviously all of my life and all of my activities during the past year are being reviewed. Obviously I am responsible for all those Mitzvot of the 613 that still apply to me here in the Diaspora today. But that is a huge number, just under 300. I understand that I am liable for all of them, but in truth that is just too big a number for me to come to grips with. So my question becomes: - is there any way to distill these 300 Mitzvot into a smaller number?

A possible answer occurred to me. Today is the birthday of the world. Does there exist a teaching which specifies the basic principles upon which the world was created? Would not such a teaching help me find the elements upon which I must focus more narrowly?

And I found such a teaching. In fact I found two such teachings. I also found that there are differences between the two teachings and these differences are possibly the greatest teaching of all.

All through the summer, every Shabbat afternoon after Mincha, we learn Pirke Avot – the Ethics of our Fathers. The first Mishna that is attributed to an individual Rabbi is the teaching of Shimon haZadik who declares:

"al shelosha devarim ha'olam omed – al haTora v'al haAvoda v'al Gemilut Chasadim –

which I would translate as on three things the World is based (or stands) – on G'd's Word, on our acting out (or fulfilling) that Word, and on our relationship with G'd's other children.

Shimon haZadik lived and taught at the time that the Second Temple was built and consecrated. Three centuries later another Teacher, also named Shimon, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel – who undoubtedly knew and understood the teachings of his namesake, formulated another great statement of this Truth, but from a different perspective. The Editors of the Mishna so valued these two teachings that they made them into the “bookends” of the first chapter. Shimon haZadik at the beginning and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel at the end.

I believe that Rabban Shimon was possibly confronting the same question that challenges me, namely, yes, we know the basic principles upon which the World is created and based. But how do we make it work for us? How do we consolidate these hundreds of elements into something that can stand in front of us and guide as well as challenge us?

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel's teaching is the following: -

Al shelosha devarim ha'olam ka'yam – al haEmet v'al haDin v'al haShalom –

Which I would translate as three things sustain the existence of the World – Truth, Justice and Peace.

Had the Mishna ended here, I would have found this Teaching profoundly insightful. However Rabban Shimon adds an element that does not exist in any of the other Mishnayot of the First Chapter. Namely, he cites a Biblical verse from the Prophet Zecharia as a support. More so, the verse that he cites only superficially supports his teaching. On closer inspection it reveals a different message of its own that in my opinion is even more vital for us today.

The Mishna continues: -

... she'ne'emar Emet uMishpat Shalom shiftu b'sha'a'reichem which usually translates as - Truth and the Justice of Peace shall you adjudicate within your gates.

This verse and its inclusion by Rabban Shimon generates a great deal of discussion in the Talmud. The Sages clearly understand that Rabban Shimon in his teachings identifies three separate and independent values that help the World to continue to exist, namely Truth, Justice and Peace. The Prophet, on the other hand, admonishes us to administer two things – Truth (Emet) and the Justice of Peace (Mishpat Shalom – which in the Hebrew is in Genitive form). The Talmud recognizes that Truth and Justice as absolute values, when imposed on a community, can often generate further conflict rather than bring peace. The Prophet is therefore seen as proposing a modified form of Justice, namely – pesharah – compromise as THE necessary value to be adjudicated so as to bring Peace.

I would like to interpret this verse somewhat differently. After all these years as a community Rabbi, I am very aware that Emet – Truth can often be a brutal thing, resulting in much pain and suffering. In many languages there is in fact an expression – the brutal Truth. I believe that of the three values that Rabban Shimon identifies as necessary for the continued existence of the World - gadol haShalom – Shalom takes priority. In my view the Prophet is not saying (Emet) and (Mishpat Shalom) – (Truth) and (Justice of Peace). Rather what he is proposing that we adjudicate within our gates so as to promote the continued existence of our communities and of the World is – (Emet uMishpat) of (Shalom) – (Truth and Justice) of (Peace). In Hebrew this would be a legitimate construction (Auslegung) of the sentence. And in this sense what the Prophet is calling us to do is not only Mishpat Shalom but also Emet shel Shalom - Truth that contributes to Peace.

My friends, as I already indicated, the Talmud promotes the use of pesharah – compromise as a methodology which promotes both Justice and Peace. But what is Emet shel Shalom - Truth that contributes to Peace? For this answer we have to go to the first Book of the Torah, Bereshit (Genesis) which is the recorded moral history of the Jewish People. In the narratives of the life of Avraham Avinu, our ancestor Abraham – there are

indicators of what it takes to create Emet shel Shalom - Truth that contributes to Peace.

The primary indicator is in Chapter 18, verses 12 and 13 in the narrative between Sarah, Hashem and Avraham after the Angels come to tell them that in a year Sarah will give birth. The Hebrew term zaken is the critical point. The Talmud in Bava Metzta 87a sums it up as follows: -

In the School of Rabbi Yishmael it was taught, gadol haShalom – great is Peace and even the Almighty adjusted His words . . . (so that Avraham should not blame Sarah and Sarah should not blame him, lest they come to quarrel and fight [Torah Temimah op.cit.]

A second possible indicator can be found in the narrative when Eliezer goes to Avraham's homeland to find a wife for Yitzchak. The verse tells us that when the siman the sign that Eliezer specified is fulfilled, he gives the maiden jewelry and asks her for her name (Chapter 24, verses 20 through 24). However this is not the sequence that Eliezer tells the family in verse 47.

In our own daily reality it is not a simple matter to find such correct formulations, but for the wellbeing of our families and community it is CRITICAL that we learn how to do speak Truths that contribute to Peace.

So to come back to my initial question – in what areas am I being judged today on this Yom Hadin – this Day of Judgement?

The answer, so I believe, lies in the Prophetic verse with which Rabban Shimon ends the last Mishna of the first chapter of Pirke Avot.

Have I – to the extent that it lies in my power to do so - adjudicated Emet shel Shalom - Truth that contributes to Peace and Mishpat Shalom the Justice of Peace.

My friends, what is very important to remember and what makes it even harder for us is that it is not only Judges and Rabbis that adjudicate. Each one of us, within our own circles, continuously sits in judgment on others. And we know clearly, we are judged midah k'neged midah - as we do to others, so is it done to us.

... Hayom harat olam, hayom ya'amid ba'mishpat kol yeztarei olamin –today is the birthday of the world, today He will judge all the creatures of the world.

I wish each and every one of us – first of all - that today we will be judged fit to be inscribed in the Book of Ge'phe'n – the Book of Gesund (health), Parnoseh (sustenance) and Nachas.

But more importantly, I wish you that you so live this coming year that next Yom Hadin may you be similarly inscribed.

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org> reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org To weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah **by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** (dneustadt@cordetroit.com) Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit Weekly Halachah Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com) Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

A Basic Understanding of the Tekios

One of the most important mitzvos of Rosh Hashanah is the Biblical command to blow the shofar. Although the significance of this mitzvah has been expounded at length – Rav Sa'adiah Gaon enumerates ten different reasons for blowing shofar1 – still many people are unfamiliar with the basic procedures involved: how many blasts are sounded, how long or short must they be, etc. While the tokea (the one who blows the shofar) and the makri (the individual who instructs the tokea which blast to sound) must be thoroughly versed in these intricate laws2 – since it is they who determine if a particular blast was invalid and must be repeated – still it is important for the entire congregation to have some degree of familiarity with the general laws governing this mitzvah. The basic mitzvah The Biblical command is to blow three sets of blasts on Rosh Hashanah. A set of blasts means one teruah sound preceded and followed by a tekiah sound. Thus, the sum total of blasts which one is required to hear on Rosh Hashanah is nine – six tekiah sounds and three teruah sounds. The tekiah sound was always well

defined and agreed upon by all authorities – a long, straight (without a break or pause) blast. The teruah sound, however, was not well understood and the Rabbis were unsure of how, exactly, it was supposed to sound.³ The Talmud⁴ describes three possibilities: 1. Three short, straight blasts – what we commonly refer to as shevarim; 2. Nine⁵ very short, staccato blasts – what we commonly refer to as teruah; 3. A combination of both of the above sounds – a shevarim-teruah compound. To satisfy all of the above opinions, the Rabbis established that the three sets of tekios be blown in three different ways, alternating the teruah sound in each set. Thus we blow tekiah shevarim-teruah tekiah (TaSHRaT) three times; tekiah shevarim tekiah (TaSHaT) three times; and tekiah teruah tekiah (TaRaT) three times. All together that adds up to thirty different blasts: eighteen tekios, three shevarim-teruahs, three shevarim and three teruahs. This is the minimum number of blasts that every adult male is required to hear on Rosh Hashanah. These are called tekios d'myushav, since the congregation is permitted to sit while they are being blown. In practice, however, it is almost universally accepted to stand during these tekios.⁶ [A person who is in dire circumstances (a patient in the hospital, for example) and is unable to hear (or blow) thirty blasts, should try to hear (or blow) ten sounds: one TaSHRaT, one TaSHaT and one TaRaT.⁷ No blessing, however, is recited over these blasts.] In addition to these Biblically required blasts, we blow seventy more. Thirty more are blown during Musaf, ten each after the Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofaros divisions of Shemoneh Esrei. Every adult male is Rabbinically obligated to blow or hear these blasts in their designated places during the Musaf service. They are called tekios d'meumad, since one is required to stand while they are being blown.⁸ Finally, it is customary to blow forty more blasts for a sum total of one hundred blasts. While this custom is based on several early sources⁹ and has been almost universally adopted, there are various practices regarding when, exactly, they are blown. Generally, these blasts are blown towards the end of as well as after the Musaf service, and one should refrain from speaking¹⁰ until after all one hundred blasts have been blown.¹¹ How long should each blast be? The length of a tekiah, both before and after the shevarim or teruah, must be at least as long as the shevarim or teruah which it accompanies.¹² Thus, since it takes about two to three seconds to blow a shevarim or a teruah, the tekiah before and after must be at least two to three seconds long. Since it takes longer than that to blow the combination shevarim-teruah sound, the tekiah which precedes and follows these sounds must be longer as well. Most congregations allot about four or five seconds for each of these tekios. The makri is responsible to keep time. [It is important to remember that each tekiah must be heard in its entirety no matter how long it takes. If, for example, a tekiah is blown for seven seconds, which is much longer than required, the entire seven seconds' worth must be heard by the congregation. Care must be taken not to begin reciting the Yehi ratzon until after the blast is concluded.¹³] A teruah is at least nine short blasts (beeps), although in practice, many more beeps are sounded when the teruah is blown. No breath may be taken between the short beeps; they must be blown consecutively. Each shever should be about three teruah-beeps long. B'diavad the shever is valid even if it is only two beeps long, provided that all three shevarim are of that length.¹⁴ No breath may be taken between each shever; they must be blown consecutively.¹⁵ Shevarim-teruah – how is it blown? There are two views of how to blow the shevarim-teruah combination. Some opinions hold that no breath may be taken between them and even b'diavad, a breath between them invalidates the blast. Others hold that a breath should be taken between the shevarim and the teruah [provided that it takes no longer than the split second that it takes to draw a breath]. The custom in most congregations is to do it both ways; the tekios before Musaf are blown with no breath taken between the shevarim-teruah, while the tekios during and after Musaf are blown with a break for drawing a breath between the shevarim-teruah.¹⁶ Mistakes while blowing There are basically two types of mistakes that the tokea can make while blowing shofar. The most common is that the tokea tries

but fails to produce the proper sound. The general rule is that the tokea ignores the failed try, takes a breath, and tries again.¹⁷ The other type of mistake is that the tokea blows the blast properly, but loses track and blows the wrong blast, e.g., instead of shevarim he thinks that a tekiah is in order, or instead of teruah he thinks that a shevarim is due. In that case, it is not sufficient to merely ignore the wrong blast; rather, the tokea must repeat the tekiah that begins this set of tekios.¹⁸ When a tekiah needs to be repeated, it is proper that the makri notify the congregation (by banging on the bimah, etc.), so that the listeners do not lose track of which blasts are being blown. Additional hiddurim As there are different views and/or stringencies pertaining to various aspects of tekias ha-shofar, one who wishes to be extremely particular in this mitzvah may blow (or hear) additional blasts after Musaf is over in order to satisfy all opinions. These include the following hiddurim: * There are several ways of blowing the shevarim sound; while some blow short, straight blasts, others make a slight undulation (tu-u-tu). * Some opinions maintain that l'chatchilah, each shever should be no longer than the length of two beeps.¹⁹ * Some opinions hold that when the shevarim-teruah sound is blown, there may not be any break at all between them (even if no breath is taken); the last shever must lead directly into the teruah.²⁰ * Some authorities insist that the tekiah sound be straight and clear from beginning to end, with no fluctuation of pitch throughout the entire blast.²¹ Notes - 1 The most fundamental reason to perform this mitzvah, however, is simply that Hashem commanded us to do so. 2 Match Efrayim 585:2. 3 While the basic definition of a teruah is a "crying" sound, it was unclear if that resembled short "wailing" sounds or longer "groaning" sounds. 4 Rosh Hashanah 33b. 5 There are Rishonim who hold that a teruah is three short beeps. B'diavad, we may rely on that view to fulfill our obligation (Mishnah Berurah 590:12). 6 Mishnah Berurah 585:2. A weak or elderly person may lean on a chair or a table during these sets of tekios (Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 585:2). 7 Based on Mishnah Berurah 586:22 and 620:7. See also Match Efrayim 586:7 and Ktzei ha-Mateh 590:1. See, however, Match Efrayim 593:3, who seems to rule in this case that three TaSHRaTs should be blown. 8 Mishnah Berurah 592:2. B'diavad, one fulfills his obligation if he sat during these tekios; ibid. 9 See Mishnah Berurah 592:4. 10 Asher yatzar, however, may be recited; Minchas Yitzchak 3:44; 4:47. 11 Chayei Adam 141:9. 12 This is based on the minimum length of time required for the teruah, not on the actual time it took to blow a particular teruah. 13 Mishnah Berurah 587:16; Ha-tekios k'Halachah u'Behiddur 1, quoting several sources. 14 Shulchan Aruch Rav 590:7. 15 O.C. 590:4. 16 Mishnah Berurah 590:20 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 18. The makri, too, should take a breath between the announcement of shevarim-teruah, so that the tokea will follow his lead (Elef ha-Magen 22). 17 Based on Mishnah Berurah 590:34, Aruch ha-Shulchan 590:20, and Da'as Torah 590:8. 18 Another example is when the tokea mistakenly blows [or begins to blow] two sets of shevarim or teruos in a row. The original tekiah must be repeated. 19 See O.C. 590:3. 20 Avnei Nezer 443; Chazon Ish, O.C. 136:1. This is difficult to perform properly. 21 Rav Y.L. Diskin, based on Rishonim; see Moadim u'Zemanim 1:5. Chazon Ish, however, was not particular about this; Orchos Rabbeinu 2:183.

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Ohel Avraham September 2010 Volume 3 Congregation Beth Abraham
Bergenfield, NJ

The Procedure for Tekias Shofar According to the Minhag of Congregation Beth Abraham **Dr. Barry Finkelstein**

There are many opinions regarding the kolos of shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The practice in our shull is ideally to blow "bent"shevarim during the first 60 kolos and "straight"shevarim during the final 40 kolos. Shevarimteruah during the tekios demeyushav are blown with one breath, while shevarimteruah during the tekios demeumad are blown with two breaths. During the final 40 kolos, the first set of shevarimteruah are blown with one breath and the final set of shevarimteruah are blown with two breaths.

Explanation:

A. ShevarimTeruah There is a machlokes in the Rishonim whether the shevarimteruah should be blown with one breath or two breaths. Rabbenu Tam and the Rambam maintain that it need not be blown with

one breath; while the Ritz Geus, Rosh and Ramban maintain that it must be blown with one breath.² The basis for the dispute is our doubt about the meaning of the word “teruah” in the Torah. The pasuk³ instructs us “yom teruah yihyeh lachem.” The gemarah⁴ explains that we are not sure whether “teruah” means “genuchi” (longer moans that we call “shevarim”) or “yeluli” (shorter sobs that we call “teruah”) or both. Therefore, we blow “shevarim,” “teruah” and “shevarimteruah.”⁵ All agree that people generally do not moan and then sob without breathing in between and the position of Rabbeinu Tam and the Rambam is, therefore, understood. However, the Ritz Geus, Rosh and Ramban maintain that the “teruah” must be performed with one breath even if it involves two different types of sounds.⁶ Even according to the first opinion, if one blew the shevarimteruah with one breath, he fulfills the mitzvah,⁷ dieved.⁸ The Shulchan Aruch⁸ writes that a yerei shamayim should conduct himself according to both opinions and should blow shevarimteruah with one breath during the tekios demeyushav and should blow the shevarimteruah with two breaths during the tekios demeumad.⁹ This is the basis for our practice to blow the shevarimteruah with one breath in the tekios demeyushav and with two breaths in the tekios demeumad.

B. Shevarim There are various minhagim regarding the shevarim. Many Russian and Lithuanian communities have the tradition to blow “bent” shevarim (TuUTu). Polish and Hungarian communities have the tradition to blow “straight” shevarim.¹⁰ Many German communities also have the tradition to blow “bent” shevarim. This is the basis for our practice to blow “bent” shevarim for the tekios demeyushav and for the tekiyos demeumad and to blow “straight” shevarim for the final 40 kolos.

C. The Number of kolos According to Torah law, one must hear 9 kolos to fulfill the mitzvah of hearing shofar on Rosh Hashana, i.e. three “Teruah” sounds, preceded and followed each time by a Tekiah.¹¹ As explained above, there are three possible explanations for the word “Teruah” referred to in the Torah, i.e. what we colloquially refer to as shevarim, teruah or shevarimteruah. We, therefore, blow each one three times, preceded and followed by a Tekiah¹², for a total of 30 kolos. This procedure fulfills the requirement for sounding the shofar during malchios, zichronos and shofros of the mussaf shmoneh esreh¹³; however, the gemara teaches us that this procedure should be duplicated earlier in davening as well¹⁴ for a total of sixty kolos.¹⁵ The minhag is to blow 100 kolos.¹⁶ The final forty kolos are blown at the end of davening.

Summary As explained earlier, the core obligation on Rosh Hashana is to hear 30 kolos. According to the practice in our shul, most opinions are satisfied. The first set of 30 kolos is blown with shevarimteruah done in one breath, while the second set of 30 kolos is blown with shevarimteruah in two breaths. All 60 kolos in these first two sets are blown with “bent” shevarim and, thus, bent shevarim are blown for shevarimteruah with one breath and for shevarimteruah with two breaths. During the final 40 kolos, we blow “straight” shevarim. The first 30 of these kolos are blown with shevarimteruah in one breath. As explained earlier, even according to the dissenting opinion, one fulfills his mitzvah if the shevarimteruah was blown with one breath. Therefore, the mitzvah is likewise satisfied according to the opinion that “straight” shevarim is the proper form. The final 10 kolos are blown with “straight” shevarim with shevarimteruah blown in two breaths.

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5 Reason Why We Dip Apples In Honey Wednesday September 8, 2010 6:49 AM

The minhag to eat special fruits in Rosh HaShanah is from the Gemara in Horiyos 12a. While the gemara gives a list of recommended fruits dipping apples in honey is not mentioned. The earliest source for the apple in honey is from the Abudraham as quoted by the Rema (OC 583:1). What is the significance of this famous minhag? The Moadim L'Simcha brings a number of reasons.

1. The Maharil says that Yitzchok smelled an apple orchard when he commented on the beautiful smell as Yaakov came in to him to receive the Brachos. The Vilna Gaon in the Biur HaGra says that this happened on Rosh HaShanah.

2. The Ben Ish Chai says that apples give three pleasures Smell, Appearance and Taste which correspond to three Brachos we'd like to receive for the next year Bini (Children and Nachas from Children), Chayai (Life/Health) and Mezoni (Wealth).

3. The Zohar says that wine symbolizes Din or judgment. Apples are eaten after strong wine in order not to be harmed by the strength of the wine. Therefore since Rosh HaShanah is a time of Din we eat apples in order to sweeten the judgment.

4. Rosh HaShanah we want Hashem to remember the ashes of Akeidas Yitzchok. The ashes that accumulated on the mizbei'ach from all the korbonos are called Tapuach or apple.

5. “Tapuach” has the same gematria as “Piru V'Rivu” and “Dvash” has the same gematria as “Isha”. Rosh HaShanah is a special time for barren women to be remembered by Hashem and blessed with children. We therefore eat Tapuach B'Dvash.

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Rav Moshe Shternbuch - Crying On Rosh Hashanah: Is it Permitted?

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It is written in the Maaseh Rav that the Vilna Gaon said that one is not permitted to cry on Rosh Hashanah. His mekor is the posuk in Nechemia which states, “Al tisablu ve'al tivku...lechu lichlu Masmanim - Do not mourn and do not cry... go eat good food.” Rosh Hashanah is a day of happiness and celebration.

The Arizal, on the other hand, says that every person with a good neshama must cry on Rosh Hashanah. Are they arguing? Rav Moshe Shternbuch in his teshuvos (2:268) says that they do not argue. The Vilna Gaon is talking about crying from the fear of Yom Hadin and having the overall mindset that Rosh Hashanah is a day of gloom and doom. However, if the tears come automatically from inspiration and longing for Hashem during tefillah, then not only is it permissible, it is praiseworthy. Outside of tefillah, the mood of the day must be happiness and celebration of the Yom Tov.

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To Forgive is Divine, and Human: The Bilateral Obligation of Forgiveness

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman Faculty, Stone Beit Midrash Program The Obligation to Ask Forgiveness It is abundantly clear that the halakhic view places great import on influencing the individual's interaction with others in society. The relationship of man to his fellow stands as a formidable component of any Jew's spiritual record, an irreplaceable element of one's overall standing. It is thus not surprising that any reckoning of one's religious status is considered incomplete if lacking a thorough analysis of this interaction, along with whatever methods are necessary to rectify any aberrations or disturbances that may arise within this context. The Talmud introduces this concept clearly in the course of a discussion of the laws of Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement effects forgiveness for all transgressions, under the appropriate circumstances and accompanying devices. Nonetheless, we are told: “Sins that are between man and God, Yom Kippur atones for them; Sins that are between man and his fellow, Yom Kippur will not atone until he appeases his fellow.”⁴ This notion, the imperative to attain mechilah, forgiveness, from an aggrieved party, is more innovative than it may initially seem.⁵ While impositions upon the rights of others constitute a significant portion

of prohibited behaviors, the necessity to beg the pardon of the victim is by no means obvious. It might equally have been assumed that just as God issued commands as to the behavior of one individual toward another, He, too, serves as the aggrieved party Who must forgive when these commands are trod upon. The very fact that this role is placed in the hands of the human being reflects profoundly upon the halakhic recognition of the individual as an independent entity, presiding over the circumstances of his standing with others and of theirs with him. Through this reality the oppressor becomes subject to the mercy of his victim, the expiation of his sins contingent upon the good graces of those who have suffered at his hands. The Pri Chaim 3 Excerpted from "The Right and the Good: Halakhah and Human Relations" (Yashar Books, 2009) 4 Yoma 85b; see Mishneh Torah 2:9 and Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 606:1. 5 Although some did consider this idea self-evident; see Shlom Yerushalayim, cited in R. Nachum Kahana's Orchot Chaim 606:1. Megadim6 explains that the control of the offended party extends beyond the damage incurred to him personally. The Talmud's statement that interpersonal violations are not atoned for without mechilah is absolute; even to the extent that these same actions are to be considered for whatever reason an affront against God, He, too, will not grant His pardon prior to the attainment of that of the aggrieved person.7 R. Shmuel Germaizin8 puts forward a more extended version of this position; as suggested earlier, every transgression against man by definition contains an aspect of rebellion against God.9 Attaining the forgiveness of man is a prerequisite to being excused for the offense against God present in every sin. This formulation goes further in dealing not only with multileveled transgressions, as does the Pri Megadim, but also by identifying two elements automatically in every interpersonal wrongdoing.10 Moreover, the Vilna Gaon11 and others claim that no transgressions at all are forgiven until forgiveness is asked of offended people.12 Thus, the acquisition of mechilah fulfills a vital goal, the securing of a pardon from the party empowered to grant it. However, it seems that the actual role of the request for forgiveness encompasses more than this. While the consent of the aggrieved individual is indispensable for spiritual housekeeping, indications exist that additional elements are present in the necessity of appeasing the offended. The Problem of Unrequested Forgiveness Were a waiver of claims the only goal of the process, it would follow that if the victim would forgive of his own initiative, without waiting for his oppressor to seek his pardon, the latter gesture would become redundant. Nonetheless, many authorities who concern themselves with this issue indicate that a request for forgiveness is necessary even if the other party has already excused the offense. R. Binyamin Yehoshua Zilber, (Responsa Az Nidbaru 2:65) among others, maintains that the obligation to seek mechilah is operative regardless. However, R. Yehoshua Ehrenberg (Responsa D'var Yehoshua 5:20) is inclined to believe that unrequested forgiveness is enough. A story related by the Talmud (Yoma 87a) is cited by those who agree with R. Zilber as support for their position. Rav had been offended by a certain butcher, and, following the passage of some time, they had still not reconciled. As Yom Kippur was approaching, Rav took pains to make himself available to the butcher so that the latter may apologize. R. Yitzchak Blazer13 6 Mishbitzot Zahav, Orach Chaim 606. 7 See also K'tzaih HaMateh to Mateh Ephraim 606, citing Birkei Yosef. 8 Quoted in Pri Chadash, ibid. Note Rashi, Vayikra 5:21; see also Kerem Shlomo in Orchot Chaim. 9 See also Pri Megadim in Eishel Avraham, Orach Chaim 156; Sefer Me'irat Einayim, Choshen Mishpat 272:10; R. Moshe Schick, Maharam Schick Al Sefer HaMitzvot 272; Torat Chaim, Bava Kama 90a; R. Yosef Babad, Minchat Chinnukh 364; R. Elchanan Wasserman, Kovetz Ha'arot, Biurei Aggadot 7:7; R. Moshe Yechiel Epstein, Be'er Moshe to Bereishit, p. 39; R. David Cohen, V'Im Tomar 2:503; and R. Gedalya Felder, Yesodei Yeshurun, Avot 4:1. 10 See R. Yessed Shaul Nathanson's Responsa Shoel U'Meishiv, Mahadurah Revia 3:64, for support for this position. See also Peirush HaRif to Ein Ya'akov, Binyan Ariel, and R. Chaim Pilagi's Birkat Moadekha L'Chaim, Teshuvah Drush 15, all cited in R. Shlomo Wahrman's Orot Yemei HaRachamim 37. 11 See Siddur HaGra; see also R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai, Birkei Yosef, and R. Ya'akov Chaim Sofer, Kaf HaChaim, Orach Chaim 606. 12 See R. S. T. Shapira, Meishiv Nefesh to Hilkhot Teshuvah 2:31. Note, overall, his discussions in 30:43. 13 Kokhvei Ohr 5. observes that in doing so, Rav was engaging in a form of imitatio Dei, as God also brings Himself closer to facilitate repentance during the Ten Days of Penitence between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.14 That aside, the very necessity of accessibility on the part of Rav is troubling; as he is clearly prepared to forgive and forget, there should be no need for the butcher to ask. It seems, then, that the act of apologizing is integral to the forgiveness granted on Yom Kippur.15 Similarly, R. Eliezer Ginsberg (V'Atah B'Rachamekha HaRabim, Hilkhot Teshuvah 2:9) writes that the mechilah would be ineffectual, lacking genuine penitence on the part of the sinner. This element is relevant to another issue of concern among authorities. Yom Kippur, mentioned as a motivation to seek mechilah, is seemingly superfluous; if an offense has been committed, forgiveness must be sought irrespective of the time of year. R. Ephraim Zalman Margoliyos, in his classic collection of the laws relevant to the High Holy Day period, Matteh Ephraim, 606, writes that this is, of course,

the case; however, Yom Kippur is noted as the final deadline for this obligation. R. Pinchas A. Z. Goldenberger (Responsa Minchat Asher 3:32) suggests an approach in line with this. If an interpersonal violation is committed, pardon must be sought immediately; nonetheless, if the victim bears no grudge, then this action is of less necessity. However, the impending arrival of Yom Kippur imposes an additional requirement of obtaining mechilah that is not suspended in the event of unsolicited forgiveness.16 This added element may explain the reluctance of many authorities to allow reliance on the prayer composed by R. Avraham Danzig, the Chayyei Adam, known as tefillah zakkah.17 In this invocation, recited by many immediately before the onset of Yom Kippur, all nonmonetary grievances are forgiven. As such, the widespread adoption of this prayer should render the requests for mechilah obsolete. Nonetheless, this has not been the view of many decisors. As R. Meir Isaacson (Responsa Mevasser Tov 2:55) observes, while the prayer plays a valuable role in strengthening the resolve to genuinely forgive others, the latter's obligation to actually apologize is not at all diminished. Along similar lines, R. Zilber (Responsa Az Nidbaru 7:65) advises against depending on the nightly recitation found in the Talmud (Megilah 28a) in the name of Mar Zutra, "I forgive all who have anguished me" (noting further that it is usually pronounced without much thought). However, in another responsum (8:68) he does acknowledge the tefillah zakkah as a last resort, but only in an instance where the aggrieved party cannot be reached. The Focus on the Process Thus, it seems that the appeal for forgiveness accomplishes a goal above and beyond the absolution of the victim. R. Zilber provides a technical spin in his formulation, writing that the obligation is the request itself, and the aim of attaining the pardon of the offended party is only a method of measuring what degree of apology is necessary. Many rabbinic scholars felt that the operative element is the embarrassment experienced by the aggressor who comes, hat in hand, 14 Yeshayahu, ch. 58, as per Ye'vamot 49a. 15 See also R. Shlomo Zalman of Volozhin's Toldot Adam. 16 See the similar interpretation in R. Moshe Shternbuch, Responsa Teshuvot V'Hanhagot 2:285. 17 See Chayyei Adam, Klal 144. to beg forgiveness; it is this act itself that effects atonement.18 The Talmud (Berakhot 12b) states as much: "Whoever commits a sin, and is embarrassed of it, he is forgiven all of his transgressions."19 R. Shlomo Wahrman (Orot Yemei HaRachamim 37) suggests that it is contrary to the nature of the hardhearted sinner to admit wrongdoing to his victim; in conquering his nature, he earns his pardon.20 Interestingly, while forgiveness without the formality of the request is apparently insufficient, a case for the reverse circumstance is found in the writings of R. Shlomo Luria (Yam Shel Shlomo, Bava Kama 8:49). His discussion centers on a traditional procedure of appeasement, which involved the guilty individual standing before the congregation and declaring, "I have sinned against God and against this man." The confession for the offenses against God, preceding that for the crime against man, seems premature; it has already been established that Heavenly forgiveness comes only after human forgiveness. R. Luria suggests that once the offender has shown his willingness to beg the absolution of his victim and commenced the process, even though he has not actually received the pardon of the wronged individual, God's reprieve is forthcoming. More so, even if the attempt at forgiveness is not successful, some authorities feel that the effort is sufficient.21 The Pri Chadash explains in this manner the fact that the offender is not obligated to make his application more than three times.22 The existence of an exemption after a certain point indicates that the process is more the concern than the result. The element of subordination in the seeking of forgiveness comes into play as well in considering the issue of the effectiveness of a request for mechilah carried out by a third party. R. Baruch Rakovsky (Birkat Avot, 62) notes that the lack of confrontation results in a limited sense of submission, and to that effect cites the Derekh HaMelekh (Hilkhot Teshuvah 2:9) as discouraging such a practice; although the Yefei Mareh allows it, cited approvingly by the Matteh Moshe and skeptically by the Pri Chadash. The Pele Yo'etz, however, does warn against letting the stigma of embarrassment deter one from seeking mechilah.23 Another concept drawing relevance from this idea is that cited by the Gaon of Vilna (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 606) in the name of the Midrash Tanchuma: "If he has gone to appease him, and the latter has not accepted, what should he do? R. Shmuel says, Let him bring ten individuals, and form a line, and say to them, there was a quarrel between me and my friend, and I tried to appease him, and he did not accept... and God will see that he lowered himself, and he will have compassion." Here, too, the embarrassment experienced by this public confession is 18 See R. Yosef Cohen, Be'eri BaSadeh to Hilkhot Teshuvah; and R. Mordechai Carlebach, Chavatzet HaSharon al haTorah, (Bereishit pp. 722-5). 19 See also Hasagot HaRa'avad, Hilkhot Teshuvah. 20 See also Moadim U'Zmanim 1:54, at length. 21 See R. Yitzchak Sorotzkin, Gevurat Yitzchak to Hilkhot Teshuvah. 22 As to whether this is an exemption or a prohibition, compare Bayit Chadash and Pri Chadash; see also Sefat Emet, Yoma 87. Many of the commentaries to Shulchan Arukh maintain there is no prohibition as long as no "disgrace to the Torah" is involved; see R. Dovid Ariav, L'Reakha Kamokha (vol. 3, sec. 3, ch. 4, Nir L'David, 575), and R. Mordechai Eliyahu, in his Bein Adam L'Chaveiro (p. 38). 23 See also R.

Mordechai Eliyahu in his *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* (p. 39). integral to the atonement.²⁴ To this end, R. Yosef Chaim ben Eliyahu (*Responsa Rav Pe'alim* 63) questions whether it is necessary that the ten be men, as is required for communal prayer, or perhaps women are equally effective. He analyzes whether the publicity will be diminished, and whether equal embarrassment is felt in front of different social groups, in deciding the issue. R. Yechiel Michel Epstein, (*Arukh HaShulchan, Orach Chaim* 606:4) however, understands the role of the minyan differently; the purpose is to evoke the Divine presence, and thus to encourage forgiveness.²⁵ This notion of personal redemption through the process of apology may also explain a difficult phrase in the Rama. After recording the admonition to an offended individual not to cruelly refuse forgiveness, the Rama adds that mechilah “may be withheld if it is for the good of the sinner.”²⁶ The meaning behind this is suggested by R. Yisrael Meir Kagan (*Mishnah Berurah* 606:9): the more the oppressor finds it necessary to appeal for absolution, the greater his sense of submission and thus, his atonement. R. Epstein, however, notes that such an attitude is more theoretically noted than practically recommended.²⁷ The Ultimate Goal In any case, it might be suggested that an additional function is contained within the imperative of seeking mechilah, beyond the sense of submission that accompanies the ordeal. Even after an individual who has suffered at the hands of another forgives his oppressor, the scars of the offense remain. It is comparable to one who has incurred physical injury and pardons his attacker; although the assailant receives his absolution, the painful effects of his violence are left in full force. The imperative of seeking mechilah is as much the appeasement as the forgiveness.²⁸ It is possible for the latter to exist without the former; the emphasis on process as well as result is to ensure that both are obtained.²⁹ Thus, the Shulchan Arukh rules that an unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation must be followed by a second, and then a third; and, as the commentators on the Shulchan Arukh observe, each time employing a different method of self-ingratiation, earnestly attempting to find the one that succeeds. Apparently, this too is a prerequisite for achieving atonement on Yom Kippur, that harmonious relationships among men must resume, that strife and discord be eliminated. This idea is explicit²⁴ See also commentary of the Mordechai, *Yoma* 8:723. R. Mordechai Eliyahu, in his *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* (p. 38), also mentions the submission as the operative factor in effecting the atonement, but implies the motivation for this particular ritual is to avoid “suspicion” among the public that the offender had not attempted to obtain forgiveness. ²⁵ See also the analysis of both possibilities in R. Shamai Kehat Gross, *Responsa Shevet HaKehati* (5:104). ²⁶ OC 606:1; see *Nezirut Shimshon* in *Orchot Chaim*, and R. Ya'akov Yichizkiyah Fish, *Titten Emet L'Ya'akov*, p. 195. The source for the Rama's ruling is discussed in detail by R. Natan Note Kahana, *Responsa Divrei R'nanah*, 2. ²⁷ *Arukh Hashulchan, Orach Chaim* 606:2. See also the comments of his son, R. Baruch Epstein, *Torah Temimah, Bereishit* 20:17, and R. Yosef Cohen, *Ikvei HaSadeh* in *Hilkhot Teshuvah*. R. Mordechai Eliyahu in his *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* (p. 40) recommends that even in such an instance, the offended party should forgive the offender in his heart, only maintaining an outward appearance of rigidity. ²⁸ For an interesting discussion of certain aspects of this concept, see R. Yedidiah Monsonigo, *Responsa D'var Emet* 18. ²⁹ Interestingly, R. Mordechai Carlebach (*Chavatzet HaSharon al haTorah, Bereishit*, pp. 645-6) recognizes this distinction, but assumes that appeasement generally precedes a waiver of claims (and he then proceeds to analyze this waiver). See also R. David Cohen, *Birkat Ya'avetz* (Vol. 1, pp. 57-9). ¹⁷ YESHIVA UNIVERSITY • ROSH HASHANA TO-GO • TISHREI 5771 in the *Pirkei D'Rav Eliezer* (ch. 15), where it is stated that at the time of Yom Kippur, Samael argues for the defense of Israel, noting their similarity to the ministering angels. Among the comparisons is “What is true of angels? There is peace between them, so too Israel.” This argument is so compelling that God forgives the Jewish people their sins. R. Yechiel Michel Epstein identifies this idea as being behind the practice of asking mechilah, the conduit to peace. The Midrash states similarly: “Great is peace, for at a time when the Jewish people are united, even if they have worshipped idols, God forgives them.” ³⁰ In this spirit, Rashi (*Responsa Rashi* 245) notes that a show of reconciliation is as valuable as expressing the forgiveness: “If he hugged him and kissed him, there is no mechilah greater than this.”³¹ However, absent some such display, some verbal forgiveness must be expressed.³² This notion is similarly manifest in a homiletic observation of R. Moshe Sofer.³³ Addressing his followers between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he commented, “In the time when the Beit HaMikdash stood, we do not find that there was an obligation for every Jew to seek mechilah from his friend on the eve of Yom Kippur. For the nature of the sacrifices is to bring closer the hearts of men, and to make peace among them on their own.”³⁴ R. Baruch Leizerofsky (*Responsa Ta'am Baruch* 21) notes the difference of expression in various talmudic sources; in one, (*Bava Kama* 92a) the process of attaining mechilah is called a “request”; in another (*Yoma* 85b) it is “appeasement.” These two descriptions appear to address specifically the twin goals of the process: the seeking of absolution and the bringing about of reconciliation. If the goal of asking mechilah is more reconciliation than a technical release of claims,

it may follow that in determining the need for a request, the focus is more on the disturbance of interpersonal equilibrium than on the act of transgression itself. The Rambam, in discussing the imperative of mechilah, includes theft among the offenses necessitating such action.³⁵ However, elsewhere in his code (*Hilkhot Choveil U'Mazik* 5:9), he comments about such a person who has damaged the property of another: “Once he has paid the damages, he is forgiven.” The implication is that no request is necessary. R. Avraham De Boton, the *Lechem Mishneh*, suggests that the distinction is due to the fact that theft benefits the perpetrator, while damaging property does not; thus, the former offense is more of a deliberate affront; while the latter, technically a crime, is less likely an intentional impingement.³⁶ Thus, it is assumed that theft causes a greater ³⁰ *Tanchuma, Parshat Tzav* 7, and *Bereishit Rabbah* 38:6; see *Bamidbar Rabbah* 11:7; *Derekh Eretz Zuta*, ch. 9; *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* 8; *Sefer Charedim*, ch. 7; *Peirush HaGra* to *Mishlei* 26:20 and 29:22; and *Torah Temimah* 19:6. See *Birkat Ya'avetz* (*ibid.*, pp. 59-60) for a different formulation of this idea. ³¹ See also an analysis of this position in R. Carlebach's *Chavatzet HaSharon al haTorah*, (*ibid.*, pp. 644-6 and p. 718). ³² See *Responsa Mishpetei Shmuel*, # 119. and R. David Binyamin Brezacher, in the journal *Kol Torah*, vol. 20, pp. 68-69. ³³ *Derashot Chatam Sofer, Shabbat Shuvah*. ³⁴ See also R. Fishel Avraham Mael, *Shivtei Yisrael*, pp. 484-487. ³⁵ *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:9. Compare *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 1:44 and 4:18. ³⁶ R. Brezacher, *Kol Torah, ibid.*, pp. 66-67, offers support for this suggestion; see, however, the maftach of R. Shabtai Frankel to *Mishneh Torah*, citing *Ma'aseh Roekach*; *Darkhei David, Bava Kama* 92a; *Tosafot Yom HaKippurim, Yoma* 85b, s.v. aveiro; and *Responsa Shnei HaLechem* 15, who disagree. See also R. Y. M. Charlap, *Beit Zvul, Bava Kama* 5; R. Zalman Uri, in the journal *HaPardes*, vol. 35, no. 5:21-22 (45); and R. Zevulun Zaks, in the journal *Moriah*, vol. 24, no. 3-4, p 114-8. On asking forgiveness for theft, see R. Alon Avigdor, *Responsa Adnei Paz* 28. rift between men and is therefore more subject to requiring mechilah. For this reason, the Butchacher Rav³⁷ wrote that although ordinarily forgiveness should be sought immediately at any time of the year, one valid reason does exist for intentionally delaying it until just before Yom Kippur. If the passage of time preceding the request will contribute to the healing, if the more deliberate scheduling will lend greater permanency to the reconciliation, then it justifies a postponed appeasement.³⁸ Along similar lines, R. Yechezkel Levenstein³⁹ cautioned against issuing perfunctory, less than sincere pardons.⁴⁰ Counterproductive Apologies In this light, one must also take into consideration those circumstances in which a request for mechilah would do more harm than good. R. Yoel Sirkes, *Bayit Chadash*, writes that in apologizing, one is required to specify the offenses of which one is aware, rather than mouthing a general confession lacking any recognition of the particular manner in which harm has been done to the other. In this vein, R. Yisrael Meir Kagan, in his classic work on the laws of lashon hara (malicious gossip), (*Chafetz Chaim*, part 1, *Klal* 4:12) rules that one who has spread damaging information about another must seek his forgiveness, basing his comments on those of Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sha'arei Teshuvah, Sha'ar* 3:207). R. Yisrael Lipkin (Salanter), revered founder of the modern Mussar movement, disagreed, noting that this would require informing the victim, who was until now blissfully ignorant. In inflicting emotional pain, such a gesture would be manifestly counterproductive.⁴¹ R. Binyamin Yehoshua Zilber (*Responsa Az Nidbaru* 8:68)42 was of the opinion that R. Kagan would certainly agree that the victim should not be informed of negative talk against him that he is unaware of;43 it is only when he knows of the gossip but not the source that he would advocate confession.⁴⁴ Similarly, R. Shlomo Aviner (*Am K'Lavi* 1:181) writes that lashon hara that has “succeeded” in having a negative effect must be owned up to, but that which has not is better left alone.⁴⁵ R. Yochanan Segal Vosner⁴⁶ proposes that R. Kagan was referring to a situation in which the offense would have eventually become known to the victim, and thus it is better heard from the antagonist than from anyone else. R. David Binyamin Brezacher (*Kol Torah, ibid.*, pp. 67-68) suggests that anguish to the victim is sufficient reason to dispense with asking mechilah, but that the embarrassment of the offender is not. When seeking mechilah and specifying the offense is indeed contraindicated, options still exist. The first is to ask for a general forgiveness, without identifying a particular wrongdoing. This ³⁷ *Eishel Avraham*; see *Orchot Chaim* 606:2. ³⁸ See R. Chaim David Weiss' *Responsa VaYa'an David* 1:26. ³⁹ Cited in R. Avraham Tobolsky's *Hizharu B'Khvod Chaveirkhem*, p. 99. ⁴⁰ See also R. Shammai Ginzberg, *Imrei Shammai*, pp. 90-91. ⁴¹ It is said that R. Lipkin withheld his approbation of R. Kagan's work out of concern for this issue. See R. Eliyahu Lopian, *Lev Eliyahu*, vol. 1, p. 108, and *Meorot HaGedolim* 141. ⁴² A similar suggestion is made by R. Yisrael Isser Hertzog in the journal *HaDarom* 52:62-67. ⁴³ See also *Sh'eilat Shmuel*, in *Orchot Chaim*. ⁴⁴ Earlier authorities did make exception for situations that would be embarrassing to the victim; see *Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* 606:1, and *Machatzit HaShekel*; note also *Elyah Rabbah*. ⁴⁵ See also R. Yitzchak Ben Shoshan, *Responsa Toldot Yitzchak* 1:29. ⁴⁶ *Responsa Chayei HaLevi* 3:100. Note, in *Chafetz Chaim, Be'er Mayim Chaim* 48. does tend to arouse suspicion,

and in this vein R. Wahrman offers another approach to explain the relationship between requesting mechilah and Yom Kippur. Ordinarily, it is difficult to ask forgiveness without naming a crime; however, on the eve of Yom Kippur, when everyone is asking mechilah of everyone else, it is expected and raises no questions. This approach is found also in the writings of R. Moshe Shternbuch,⁴⁷ and to some extent in those of R. Avraham Erlanger,⁴⁸ who also suggests that this may be one situation in which it is preferable to rely on the zakkah prayer. R. Ahron Soloveichik (Parach Mateh Aharon, mada, pp. 186-189) suggests that in the instance of lashon hara, in place of begging absolution, it is appropriate to disperse information that will counteract the negative effects of the gossip; in this case, such action is more consistent with increasing harmony than seeking the victim's pardon.

The Obligation of the Victim Further, it is with this perspective that some motive can be offered for the victim to initiate the process that is the responsibility of the aggressor. R. Aviner (Noam, vol. 25, pp. 202-213) considers the case of a man whose acquaintance burst into his home and behaved in an offensive manner. After being removed from the premises, the intruder developed a grudge that remained powerful for months afterward, avoiding all interaction with this man, even as Yom Kippur loomed closer. R. Aviner advised the man that even though the blame lies with the aggressive individual, it is still recommended that he take the initiative in asking mechilah, as that is the only way reconciliation will be forthcoming. Thus, while forgiveness flows primarily from the victim to the oppressor, appeasement may go in either direction when indicated.⁴⁹ Therefore, we find, not surprisingly, that mechilah is formulated as an obligation not only for the offender to seek but also for the aggrieved party to bestow. The Mishnah (Bava Kama 92a) warns that one who refuses to forgive is called akhzeri, "cruel." The Meiri explains that he is apparently unconcerned about the punishment that will befall the now-penitent individual who wronged him. Such callousness is not befitting a descendant of Avraham, cited by the Talmud as the model of forgiveness. The text of the Mishnah as found in the Talmud Yerushalmi states the halakhah as a prohibition, noting the source for the halakhah that "one may not be cruel and refuse to forgive."⁵⁰ The necessity for harmonization demands that the imperative of mechilah be bilateral; granting forgiveness is as mandatory as requesting it.⁵¹ In this light, some authorities discuss the status of those who swear in anger never to forgive. It is possible that this is considered an oath in violation of the Torah and is thus null and void.⁵² Rabbeinu Asher, the Rosh (Responsa HaRosh, Klal 15:5), rules that a father who forbids his son to forgive a penitent adversary is commanding a violation of the Torah and thus forfeits his parental right to honor. ⁴⁷ Moadim U'Zmanim 1:54. See also the discussion of this in R. Mordechai Babad, Minchat Machvat (2:132). ⁴⁸ Ma'or HaSha'ar to Sha'arei Teshuvah. ⁴⁹ See also Sefat Emet, Yoma 87b, s.v. ikpid; Piskei Teshuvot, Orach Chaim 606:1; R. Mordechai Eliyahu, Bein Adam L'Chaveiro (p. 38) ⁵⁰ See also Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:9, and V'Atah B'Rachamekha HaRabbim. ⁵¹ Although there are specialized instances in which it is permissible to maintain some type of grudge; an analysis of these cases can be found in the journal Torat HaAdam L'Adam, vol 4, (pp. 283-91). ⁵² R. Yoel Sirkes, Responsa HaBach HaChadashot 46, considers this possibility and rejects it on technical grounds. See also Responsa Rashi 245, Responsa Geonei Batrai 40, and R. Yosef Engel, Gilyonei HaShas, Pesachim 4a, and Yoma 87a. Concerning the perspective of the victim, R. David Ariav⁵³ (referencing the writings of R. Joseph Epstein) relates an analytical theory of the nature of forgiveness that parallels the above theories concerning asking for mechilah. This theory builds on a difference in wording between the commentaries of Rashi and the Meiri in interpreting a Talmudic passage discussing forgiveness (Bava Kama 92a). In Rashi's understanding, the forgiveness is needed because the victim "worries" (present tense) about his suffering; while in the Meiri's rendering, the issue is that the victim "worried" (past tense) over his suffering. While apparently a narrow distinction, this theory builds upon the difference to create two models of forgiveness. One is an emotional reality, the dissipation of bad feeling; this goal is indicated by Rashi, who looks for forgiveness to undo a current state of "worrying". Such an interpretation is consistent with the aforementioned position of Rashi in his responsa that any show of reconciliation is sufficient. The second, that of the Meiri, refers to a past situation, which may not have any current presence; thus, it is best compared to a monetary claim, that forgiveness removes as a "waiver". R. Ariav notes that examining whether mechilah is to be viewed as an emotional reconciliation or as a release of debt is helpful for considering a number of hypothetical queries. Among them: Does one need apologize for anguish that has been forgotten? Is forgiveness effective if the victim expresses absolution, but does not genuinely feel it? Is there a formal language for granting mechilah? What if a victim forgives quickly for a semi-forgotten offense, and then later regrets, after recalling the acute pain that was felt? What if forgiveness was granted under false pretenses, for example to one who claims an intentional slight was unintended? What if the victim grants a perfunctory, general mechilah, in response to an unspecific request (as is common on the eve of Yom Kippur), not realizing that the perpetrator actually committed a genuine offense, for which significant appeasement would be needed (as with the

above discussion concerning lashon hara)? Further, some of his hypotheticals build upon the notion of the rules of monetary law governing the mechilah process, if such an inference can be drawn from the Meiri. Can mechilah be revoked? If a victim forgives mentally, but does not express it, can he deny forgiveness later, when asked? Can a child (who is not empowered to release monetary debts) fully express mechilah, or must the offender wait until the victim attains maturity? R. Ariav's essay weighs all of these questions, and concludes⁵⁴ that it is evidently crucial for the victim to take into account the necessity of both approaches, and to clearly express forgiveness, while at the same time doing his utmost to create an inner reality that is consistent with that expression. The relationship between men serves as a barometer of their standing before Heaven. As the Mishnah (Avot 2:1) states, "What is the right course that a man should choose for himself? One which is an honor to the one doing it, and honorable to him from men." Any time the social equilibrium is disrupted, repairing the rift becomes a spiritual necessity of utmost urgency. ⁵³ L'Reakha Kamokha, vol. 3, Kuntres haBiurim, 7. ⁵⁴ In the following essay, #8.

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Outlooks & Insights on the Weekly Torah Portions HaRav Zev Leff Parshas Nitzavim-Valelech

Parshas Nitzavim Do Not Separate Yourself from the Community Today you are all standing before Hashem your G-d (Devarim 29:-9). After the ninety-eight curses that Bnei Yisrael heard at the end of Ki Savo, they were devastated and questioned whether they could possibly withstand such terrible punishments. Moshe Rabbeinu encouraged them with the opening words of this week's parashah: — "Today you are all standing." Although you have sinned many times, all of you still stand today before Hashem. Was Moshe trying to minimize the severity of the Divine reproof or imply that it was only a threat that would not be carried out? Furthermore, how could Moshe say that all were alive and well despite their sins, when in fact tens of thousands had perished in the Desert? Rather Moshe's intention was to assure the Jewish people that the purpose of the curses was not to wreak vengeance on them for their sins, but to insure their survival as a nation. And, therefore he told them collectively — kulchem — you still stand today. After all the sins and all the punishments, the tzibbur (community) is eternal. The concept of death does not exist with respect to the community. Those who perished died not as individuals, but as a part of Knesses Yisrael, which is eternal, and therefore they still survive. Conversely, one who separates himself from the community and says, — "I will do as I see fit," will not be forgiven and will be utterly destroyed. Our relationship to Hashem is only through the tzibbur. The Torah was not given to individuals; nor were the covenants made with individuals. Our relationship to Hashem is as members of Knesses Yisrael. Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:24) classifies an apikores (heretic) as one who keeps all the mitzvos but separates himself from the Jewish people. Without a link to Klal Yisrael, there can be no link to Hashem and Torah. Hillel taught (Pirkei Avos 2:5): "Do not separate yourself from the community." The Mishnah then continues with what seems on the surface to be additional, unrelated teachings of Hillel. However, a surface to be additional, unrelated teachings of Hillel. However, a deeper study of the Mishnah reveals that they are in fact the rebuttal of various arguments for cutting oneself off from the community. "Do not believe in yourself until the day you die." Do not think that you are strong enough spiritually to function on your own without the supportive community of Torah observers. Do not rely on your apparent spiritual security, for it is never guaranteed. "Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place." In your criticism of the other members of the community, don't convince yourself that you would be better off separated from them. Rather judge them favorably and understand the circumstances that generate those actions which offend you. See their good points. Avoid what is negative without separating yourself entirely. "Do not make a statement that cannot be easily understood on the ground that it will be understood eventually." People are sometimes frustrated that their views and opinions are not accepted by the tzibbur, but one must realize that the fault may lie in his views and not in the tzibbur. Perhaps his opinions are not fit to be heard and accepted. And finally, "Do not say, 'when I have time I will learn,' for perhaps you will never have time." There are those who feel that the community responsibilities infringe too greatly on their time and potential for personal development. They therefore conclude that disassociating themselves from communal involvement will give them more time to learn. Never reckon that time can be generated by avoiding a mitzvah. That time might never materialize. Hashem will not permit one to benefit by neglecting his communal responsibilities. One of the benefits of being part of the klal is that as part of a united entity one's individual failings may be overlooked. Knesses Yisrael is eternal, pure, and holy, and one benefits by strengthening his connection to it. But he cannot reap the benefits from the tzibbur without accepting the concomitant responsibilities. Do not delude yourself that "Lema'an sfos harava es hatzeme'a" — that two adjacent fields are of necessity irrigated together, even though

only one of them deserves the water. That is a fantasy. Although each individual must be concerned with his personal judgment on Rosh Hashanah, as a tziibbur we dress up and eat as a sign of confidence that Hashem will exonerate us as members of the klal. The Ten Days of Repentance are days for intensifying our link to the tziibbur. For that reason, every individual during that period has the same assurance that his entreaties to Hashem will be heard that the tziibbur does year round. During those days the individual and the tziibbur become one. Thus, the shaliach tziibbur on Rosh Hashanah is granted a special power to represent every individual, even those who are proficient in prayer, and therefore not included in the shaliach tziibbur's prayers the rest of the year. Elisha offered to pray for the childless Shunamite woman on Rosh Hashanah. But she responded, "I dwell amongst my nation." Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz explains her response: "Don't single me out, for the power of the tziibbur is greater even than the prayer of G-d's chosen prophet."

Parshas Vayelech Yom Kippur - Confession and Redemption Beset by many evils and troubles, the will say, "It is because Hashem is no longer with me that these evil things have befallen me." On that day I will utterly hide My face because of all the evil that they have done...(Devarim 31:17-18). Rambam says that this admission of guilt and regret is still not a full confession, and therefore Hashem continues to hide His face. But the hiding is different: no longer is it a hiding of Hashem's mercy, allowing evil to befall them, but rather a hiding of the ultimate redemption. That change in Hashem's relationship contains a hint to their ultimate redemption when their repentance is complete. To better understand this Rambam, we must first understand the function of verbal confession in the teshuvah process. Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 363) offers two explanations of the benefit of verbal confession. First, verbalizing one's repentance creates the feeling of conversing with a second party, which, in turn, sensitizes a person to the reality of Hashem's presence, Hashem's awareness of his every deed, and the need to render an account before Hashem. The greater a person's awareness that his sin was one in Hashem's presence, with His full knowledge, the greater His shame and regret. Secondly, verbal expression intensifies the process and leaves a more lasting effect. In addition to regret over the past, teshuvah also requires a commitment not to repeat the sin again. That commitment must be so decisive, resolute, and firm that Hashem Himself can testify that at the moment of confession, the sinner does not contemplate ever committing that sin again. Just as a vow to do or not to do something in the future requires verbal expression, so, too, does the commitment not to repeat past sins. Sefer Yereim specifies another dimension to verbal confession -- supplication for atonement. There must be a clear recognition of the seriousness of the damage caused by the sin, both in terms of the damage to one's soul and one's relationship to Hashem, and in terms of the effect on the world by closing the conduits of blessing. For this, one must entreat G-d to forgive, heal and repair the damage. Just as prayer and supplication must be verbalized to establish a feeling of communication, so, too must one's entreaty for atonement. There is yet another aspect of confession that relates to the nature of sin itself. Sin, says the Maharal, is one neshamah of the Jew. It cannot blemish the neshamah itself. Rather it superimposes layers of impurity that separate one from his essence. Since the Jew's connection to Hashem is through that untainted essence, when he becomes distant from his essence, he also becomes estranged from Hashem. Teshuvah, then, is the return of the Jew to his essence and the breakdown of the barriers that separate him from Hashem. Hashem does not leave the Jew when he sins; rather the Jew loses contact with Hashem, Who still resides within the essence of his soul. As Chazal say on the verse, "I am asleep, but my heart is awake" (Shir HaShirim 5:2), my heart refers to Hashem. Though the Jew sleeps and loses consciousness of Hashem, Hashem still occupies his heart. By articulating his sin in vidui, the Jew makes it something external to himself. Then he is able to detach those layers of sin that have accreted on his neshamah. Vidui itself becomes an act of purification. Thus, Targum Yonasan translates the word "purify" in the verse "Before Hashem should you purify yourself" (Vayikra 16:30), as "confess." The confession is itself the act of purification. It is this last aspect of full vidui which is lacking in the confession, "Because G-d is not with me, all these misfortunes have befallen me." Although this statement expresses regret, recognition of the devastation resulting from sin, and even hints to a commitment to avoid this state in the future, it is still lacking. There is no recognition that it is not G-d Who has deserted us, but we who have become detached from ourselves and therefore from Hashem. When a Jew feels Hashem has abandoned him, says Sforno, he gives up hope, since he thinks that it is G-d Who must first return. But in truth it is man who has strayed from his essence, and he can find G-d where he originally left Him. Teshuvah is thus literally redemption: "Return to Me for I have redeemed you" (Yeshayahu 44:22). One redeems his untainted essence from the layers of sin and impurity that encrust it. As long as we fail to comprehend this aspect of redemption, G-d continues to hide the face of redemption from us. When we appreciate all the aspects of vidui, including that recognition that Hashem remains where He always was, waiting for us to strip away the barriers, we can look forward to both personal and national redemption. Reprinted with permission from Artscroll