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Rav Joseph Soloveitchik on Shabbos Yom Kippur, Acher, and the hidden Elisha ben Avuya

By Rabbi Basil Herring on September 10, 2013

<http://torahmusings.com/2013/09/the-rav-on-shabbos-yom-kippur-and-acher/>

The following is a summary of the concluding section of a Yiddish lecture by R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, given in November 1961 at a convention of Mizrahi-Hapoel Hamizrachi held in Atlantic City, NJ. It bears particular relevance to Yom Kippur that occurs on a Shabbos, as it does this year. I express my gratitude to Professor Barry Landy of Cambridge, U.K.

The Rambam (Hil. Teshuvah 7:5) states "the Torah has promised us that at the conclusion of the exile, the Jewish people will repent, and then immediately be redeemed." We believe that no matter how deeply a Jew may be sunken in sin, and living a purely physical existence, there remains burning within him a ner Elokim nishmat ha-adam ("a spirit of man that is the lamp of God"-Proverbs 20:27). Therefore, one should never discount the possibility of his repentance. The Sages recount that when Acher rode a horse on Shabbos, his student R. Meir pleaded with him, saying "even you should repent." According to the Talmud Bavli (Chagigah 15a), Acher responded, "I have heard it proclaimed from behind the partition 'return O backsliding children (Jeremiah 3:14), except for Acher.'" As opposed to the Bavli, the Yerushalmi (Chagigah 2:1) quotes Acher as saying, "I once was riding a horse on Shabbos Yom Kippur past the Holy of Holies, and I heard a heavenly voice (bas kol) coming from the Holy of Holies declare, 'return O backsliding children, except for Elisha ben Avuya.'"

Do you think that Acher heard the heavenly voice well – and understood it correctly? God forbid! After all, how can a heavenly voice make a determination that contradicts a foundation of the Jewish faith that "even if one is a heretic all his life, if he repents in the end, he is forgiven, as it says, 'tashuv enosh ad daka' ('You return man to contrition'-Psalms 90:3) i.e., even (as the Yerushalmi puts it, at dichduchah (the moment when life is crushed)." How is it possible that the heavenly voice could deprive the great Tanna of this opportunity? True, he "caught a glimpse and was diminished," but even then he obviously was still capable of hearing the heavenly voice, as he reported to his beloved student R. Meir. Acher certainly would not have told him a lie. What then did the heavenly voice want from Acher, who was such a profoundly and tragically alienated scholar?

There is something else we must ask. If the heavenly voice did not want Acher to repent, it should not have connected with him in the first place. And even then, why did it begin with the demanding words "return O backsliding children" – and then conclude with the awful damnation of "except Acher?"

I believe that we can find the true intent of the heavenly voice by examining the differing versions of this story as found in the Bavli and the Yerushalmi. And so we can ask: how in fact did the heavenly voice address this sinner? Did it call out to him using his real name, Elisha ben Avuya, or did it use his pseudonym Acher? The answer is very simple. The endearing words "return O backsliding children" were surely addressed to Elisha ben Avuya himself; it was he whom the heavenly voice pleaded with, and sought to draw near, like a mother who always finds something positive in her child. However the concluding phrase, "except for Acher," was addressed to Acher. In this, the Talmud Bavli records the correct version of the words of the heavenly voice, by which the Shechinah sought to bring Elisha closer to herself while Rav Joseph Soloveitchik on Shabbos Yom Kippur, Acher, and the hidden Elisha ben Avuya

repulsing Acher. Why? Because the real Tanna, who was a Sage of Israel whom Rebbe (R. Yehuda Ha-Nasi) even quotes in Pirkei Avos (Avos 4:24), never sinned, never betrayed Knesset Yisrael, never identified with the

Romans, and never sought to tear Jewish children away from Torah and the fear of Heaven. It was another person, Acher, who was the traitor.

Moreover, upon careful examination it becomes clear that the betrayal occurred in a remarkable way. One morning an alien soul insinuated itself into Elisha, convincing him that he was not really a student of the Sages of the mesorah, that Knesset Yisrael was not his mother, and that its future was not his future. Suddenly Elisha the Tanna was displaced by Acher, and it was Acher who deserted the beis midrash, produced heretical works, desecrated the Shabbos, and rejected everything holy and precious. All the while, the real Elisha remained hidden in the depths of his personality, an Elisha who never betrayed God or the Jewish people, but was a hostage of the pseudo-personality that was Acher.

And so it came to pass that on a certain Yom Kippur that coincided with Shabbos, Acher became deranged and publicly mounted a horse and rode it on the pathways of the villages, towns and cities of the land of Israel, as Jews looked out the windows of their synagogues in disbelief. "Who is this boor who has the audacity to violate the holy aura of Shabbos Shabbason?" they asked each other, stunned and confused. Then suddenly something remarkable happened. Inside that tragically misguided personality, the long dormant soul which had been lethargically sleeping in the depths of his being awoke, and in a moment pushed Acher's hand to lead the horse in the direction of the Holy of Holies.

After all, why would Acher suddenly ride by the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, while publicly violating the day? Acher must himself have wondered what drew him to the Holy of Holies on the very day that was so powerfully connected to that place. Suddenly, the hidden soul, captive daughter of the King, demanded that she be heard, saying, "Elisha, you are not Acher! The dark soul who has enthralled you is not your friend, but your worst enemy! Elisha, identify rather with me, with your past, with your teachers and your colleagues! Come to me, push Acher away, he is not you, he is the very devil! Do you not see that you are drawn to the Holy of Holies like a magnet? It is Yom Kippur today, and God is waiting for all of us to come back to him. Elisha, do you not hear the heavenly voice that calls out to you to repent? As you pass by the Holy of Holies, do you not remember how the rebbe would speak of the avodah (Temple service) of the Kohen Gadol on this day? Elisha, assert yourself, listen to the heavenly voice, return O backsliding children!"

And thus did Elisha ben Avuya hear the heavenly voice that called on him to disassociate from the Acher who was his pseudo-personality, his false identity. But tragically, fate decreed that Elisha would make a terrible mistake. Instead of accurately hearing the words "except for Acher" (that were the actual words of the heavenly voice, as recorded in the Bavli), he erroneously heard "except for Elisha ben Avuya," as the Yerushalmi records him hearing it. How did it happen? He had come to believe that he and Acher were one, and that he could thus not separate from Acher. What he heard was shaped by what was in his mind. And so he turned the horse away, and in that tragic moment the pure soul of the great Tanna disappeared, never to be heard from again.

The Yerushalmi concludes the story with the words, "he knew My power, but rebelled against Me." Do you know why Elisha rebelled against the Creator, in spite of his greatness in Torah? Because he did not appreciate his own strength, and thus betrayed God. It is as if to say, Elisha knew God's power, but he did not know his own power to overcome his outer Acher, and thus he turned away from God. His own weak self-awareness and his failure to "know himself" were the real cause of his tragic sin.

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Indeed, Rabbosai, we have for many years worked with the non-religious, with sinners, because in each one we have recognized an Acher-like tragedy.

We have believed that in every non-religious Jew there can be found an Elisha ben Avuya, who might from time to time arise, protest, and run toward the Holy of Holies, even if he is riding a horse on Shabbos Yom Kippur. Were it not for the hidden Elisha ben Avuya within them, they would not sacrifice for Eretz Yisrael and its people as they do. Many times, we engage in a bitter fight with the Achers. We struggle bitterly with their stubbornness, even as they do much damage. But even in the thick of such battles, we have never forgotten that deep inside all the Achers, there dwell Elisha ben Avuyas who are trying to purify them. True, many times they avoid the Holy of Holies so as not to hear or understand a heavenly voice. They prefer to not identify with holiness and the mesorah. Sometimes they feel that their way back to God is blocked, with no way through, so convinced are they by Acher, who is after all a master debater and dialectician.

But the day will yet come, when the heavenly call to return will be heard clearly, and the inner Elisha ben Avuya will arise from within the depths of their personalities. Then the great miracle will occur when "all of your children will be taught of Hashem, and great will be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

More than fifty years after these ideas were articulated, their echoes reverberate with undiminished force. Many are the lessons and conclusions that a Jew, any Jew, can take from them. Here are but a few thoughts – I'm sure others can find their own.

1. On the most significant level, the personal one, the Rav challenges us to connect with our "inner Elisha," the authentic spiritual personality dormant and hibernating in the recesses of our being, covered by layers of Acher-like pseudo-personality, overpowered by superficialities and accretions born of upbringing, habit, environment, social influences, spiritual lethargy, weak self-esteem, or diminished self-knowledge. As the Rav said on another occasion, "mi-ma'amakim karati kah" ("Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord," Psalms 130:1) should be understood as proclaiming "I call out to God from deep down inside me, i.e., expressing my real, if hidden, spiritual self." The challenge we all face is to recognize our strength and potential, to fan the dormant embers of our "ner Elokim" so that they can overcome the debilitating distractions that stand in the way of our fullest spiritual development.

2. This is particularly true when Shabbos occurs on Yom Kippur, in the confluence of the day replete with contradictions, i.e. of both oneg (pleasure) and innui nefesh (deprivation), when we are exquisitely conscious of the constant challenge to properly apportion the needs of our bodies with the longings of our souls, thereby to harmonize our inner and outer selves so as to live as wholesome and integrated beings in both essential dimensions of our lives.

3. When we see the incisive truth hidden in the two conflicting Talmudic passages at the basis of this story, and marvel at how the Rav harmonized them not only with each other but with penetrating psychological insights, who cannot be enthralled by the profound wisdom hidden deep inside the prism that is Torah she'be'al Peh, as uncovered and taught by the brilliance of a true Gadol in Torah? How can one not be inspired to engage in Torah study, to plumb the depths of these inspired texts?

4. And then we learn the lesson that we are never to give up on any Jew, no matter how distant, no matter how alienated from his spiritual home, or her halachic hearth. We must appreciate that each Jew is a precious, unique, component of our glorious people, possessed of untold potential spiritual growth and accomplishment that could be realized if only we ourselves would reach out to them with love and sensitivity, as R. Meir reached out to his fallen

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mentor and rebbe. Only religious misconceptions, misunderstandings of divine intent, stand in the way.

5. So too we are reminded that whether it is in the State of Israel, or anywhere else, a Jew who acts with devotion, financial sacrifice, or military bravery, intending to strengthen the Jewish people or the Jewish state, must be recognized – whether or not he or she knows it – as motivated by the force of their Jewish neshamah, their pintele Yid. And therefore, even when we stand on opposite sides of the aisle, engaging with them in vigorous and principled argument on behalf of the Torah and truth, we must act toward them at all times with ahavas Yisrael, and heightened areivus (a profound sense of mutual co-responsibility.)

6. As was the case with Acher no Jew, no communal leader or rabbi, no matter how accomplished or respected by peers and colleagues, is beyond acting in ways that – good intentions notwithstanding – can profoundly harm our people and our faith. Indeed Elisha ben Avuya himself is a powerful lesson of this fact. The Rav explains elsewhere that he, being particularly aware of the power of Torah, was the one who convinced the Romans that the way to defeat the Jews was to uproot their Torah, not merely to defeat them militarily or politically. And thus the Romans turned to the religious persecution of the Jews, as recorded in the asarah harugei malchus (the ten martyrs killed by the Roman rulers of Judea) litany found in the Yom Kippur Mussaf. Clearly, the more prominent the person, the greater his potential to cause damage and injury to the Jewish soul as well as its body-politic.

7. When the zeitgeist (or spirit) of the times diverge from that of the Torah, and many are inclined to question the age-old verities and values that have sustained our people and our faith, we dare not seek to bring them back to the fold by changing or diluting our standards or our principles. Despite his logical and theological critiques, the Sages did not think for a moment to entice Acher to return by amending Judaism or diluting the mesorah. Indeed, the history of contemporary Jewish denominational life confirms that they were right – that such an approach does not bring prodigal children back to their Father in Heaven. It only weakens the institutions and groups that embrace such reforming strategies. What is called for instead is a redoubled insistence on fealty to a life replete with Torah, mitzvos and mesorah, accompanied by ever more outreach to our brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters, no matter how far they may have wandered from the Holy of Holies and God Himself.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org
date: Thu, Oct 2, 2014 at 8:49 PM **Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

The Torah of Chessed and the Day of Chessed

The mishna at the end of Maseches Taanis records that one of the two jolliest days of the year was Yom Kippur. The Gemorah there gives two reasons for this special joyous atmosphere. One of the reasons is that on Yom Kippur we celebrate the anniversary of our receiving the second set of Luchos. Every Shavuos we celebrate the anniversary of Ma'amid Har Sinai and refer to that day as Zman Matan To'raseinu. Why do we need two yomim celebrating our receiving of the Torah?

The Beis Halevi explains that according to the original plan there was not going to be any Torah Sheb'al Peh, rather everything would have been included in Torah sheb'ksav. Only after the chet ha'eigel, when Hakadosh Boruch Hu decided to punish Bnei Yisroel and allow other nations to rule over them was it necessary to give us a Torah Sheb'al Peh. Theumos ha'olam dominating over the Jewish people would be able to claim that we lost our status as am hanivchar and that they took over that special role. The Midrash comments on a posuk (Hoshea 8:12) that if the entire Torah would have been written down the Jewish people would become like "outsiders" and "strangers". Therefore Hashem gave us the Torah Sheb'al Peh which was not

supposed to be shared at all with other nations. Through the transmission of the Torah Sheb'al Peh, from generation to generation, we preserved (even in the eyes of the world) our unique status as an am hanivchar. We alone had this vast section of Torah which was never shared with anyone else. On Shavuos we celebrate the receiving of the Torah sheb'ksav while on Yom Kippur we really celebrate the receiving of the Torah Sheb'al Peh.

In sifrei chasidus an idea is developed, based on a passage in the Zohar, that the Torah sheb'ksav was generally given b'middas hadin while the Torah Sheb'al Peh represent middas hachessed. An obvious example of this would be the way the Chumash describes the punishment for one who maims another person. The simple reading of the text of the Torah sheb'ksav would leave one to believe that we actually maim the assailant, as the possuk reads, "ayin tachas ayin." The Torah Sheb'al Peh teaches us that we should not take that literally; perhaps that is the punishment that the person deserves b'midas hadin, but the middas ha'chessed dictates that instead of maiming him we have him make a cash payment.

The other reason the Gemorah gave why Yom Kippur was a day of such unusually joyous celebration is that Yom Kippur is the day on which Hashem forgives all of our sins. The forgiving of the sins is certainly b'middas hachessed. When we refer to Yom Kippur in the piyutim as a yom hadin ("I'keil orech din, b'yom din") we don't mean din in the sense of strict judgment but rather describe the day as a yom hadin in the sense of a day of calculations (like din v'cheshbon). Yom Kippur is a yom hachessed and not a yom hadin. It certainly fits in that the Torah Sheb'al Peh was given on Yom Kippur since it is the day of chessed and the Torah Sheb'al Peh represents middas hachessed.

Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that according to the simple reading of the pessukim in parshas Acharei Mos, the korbonos on Yom Kippur were brought in three units: first there was avodah done by the kohain gadol wearing his golden uniform, then avodah done by kohain gadol wearing his special white uniform, and finally, the third unit of avodas hakorbonos was performed by the kohain gadol wearing the golden uniform. The Torah Sheb'al Peh teaches us that we should not follow the simple reading of the pessukim, and the avodah must be divided into five units and not three. Yom Kippur is the day on which we celebrate our receiving of the Torah Sheb'al Peh so perhaps this is the reason why the text of the chumash is so vague on this point and we are required to follow the tradition of the Torah Sheb'al Peh to know the correct way of doing the avodah.

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whY I Matter

Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld yedidye@att.net

September 2013 **Yom Kippur**

Young Israel of Midwood YIMidwood.Org

Because Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases his neighbor, one should be certain to recite the following prayer which is printed in some machzorim: "I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has sinned against me, whether physically or monetarily, or who has gossiped about me or even slandered me; so, too, anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially, and for any human sins between man and his neighbor - except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover by law, and except for someone who sins against me and says, 'I will sin against him and he will forgive me' - except for these, I grant complete forgiveness, and may no person be punished on my account. "And just as I forgive everyone, so may You grant me favor in every person's eyes so that he grant me complete forgiveness."

Rabbenu Yonah z"l writes: "Although we are commanded to repent at all times, on Yom Kippur there is an added mitzvah." If so, writes R' Dovid

Kronglas z"l, if a person repents on Yom Kippur from his sins, he performs two positive commandments. Also, since a prerequisite to repentance is confession, he performs the additional, independent mitzvah of vidui/confession. Thus, he performs three mitzvot in all. These three mitzvot are multiplied by each sin for which a person repents. For example, if a person repents from the sin of bittul Torah/failing to take advantage of the time he had available for Torah study, he is credited with performing three mitzvot. When he repents from speaking lashon hara, he acquires another three mitzvot. Moreover, if a person spoke lashon hara multiple times or repeatedly failed to study as much Torah as he could have, each separate occasion for which he repents results in three additional mitzvot being added to his account. In this way, his merits quickly add up. On the other hand, if a person fails to repent on Yom Kippur, he neglects those three separate mitzvot. That neglect is similarly multiplied in the heavenly books by the numbers of sins for which one does not repent, such that every sin becomes four sins (i.e., the original sin plus three). (Sichot Chochmah U'mussar) The Role of Teshuvah Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah - one is the book of the completely wicked, one is the book of the completely righteous, and the third is the book of "benonim" P'in-between people." The fates of the wicked and the righteous are inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah, while the fate of the benonim hangs in the balance until Yom Kippur. If they merit, i.e., if they do teshuvah, they are inscribed for life; if not, they are inscribed for death. (Rosh Hashanah 16b, as explained by Rambam) Yitzchak Blazer z"l ("R' Itzele Petersburger") asks: Rambam defines a "benoni" (singular of "benonim") as a person whose mitzvot and sins are perfectly balanced (qualitatively, not necessarily quantitatively). If so, why does a benoni have to repent in order to be inscribed for life? Let him simply do another mitzvah and thus tip the scales to the side of merit. R' Blazer answers: The failure to do teshuvah is itself a grave sin, as Rabbenu Yonah z"l writes in his Sha'arei Teshuvah: Know, that when a sinner delays in returning from his sin, his punishment weighs heavier on him every day, for he knows that he has angered G-d and that he has an escape, i.e., teshuvah, yet he persists in his rebellion. The midrash compares such a fool to a prisoner who finds a tunnel leading out of his jail cell, yet who does not escape. Is that not an insult to the king, for it shows the king that the prisoner does not fear being in his custody? So, too, a person who fails to repent when given the chance tells Hashem, "I do not fear Your judgment." This is why it is imperative for the benoni to repent before Yom Kippur. Doing extra mitzvot, but not teshuvah, will not tip the scales towards merit. To the contrary, the failure to repent will tip the scales inexorably towards the opposite side. (Kochvei Ohr No. 5) R' Aryeh Pomeranchik z"l offers a different answer to R' Blazer's question. He explains: The heavenly scales are taken out only once a year, on Rosh Hashanah. If a person fails to be judged a tzaddik on Rosh Hashanah, he cannot tip the scales by doing another mitzvah, because immediately after the scales are used, they are put away. Not only that, a person who was not judged on Rosh Hashanah to be a tzaddik stands indicted before the heavenly court. The only way that such a person can be written in the book of life after Rosh Hashanah is to get that indictment dismissed. The way to achieve that is teshuvah. (Emek Berachah p.146) Yet another answer may be provided by the observation of R' Dovid Kronglas z"l quoted on the front page of this issue. If a person fails to repent, his sins are multiplied by four. The likelihood of a person's performing enough mitzvot to tip the scales in his favor thus becomes very small. (Hamaayan)

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Yom Kippur – An Overview

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

One should look at Yom Kippur as an opportunity to become ever closer to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The fact that we do not wear shoes and do not eat makes us similar to malachim. We must take advantage of this similarity and emulate malachim —entities that are entirely spiritual—during this day, in order to further our bond to Hashem and to develop our dveikus to Him.

It is important, as mentioned elsewhere, to perform our teshuvah out of an intense love of Hashem. Doing so allows our aveiros to turn into zechuyos (meritorious actions).

It is a Torah mitzvah to add on to the day of Yom Kippur, both before it and after it. Women are also obligated in this mitzvah.

During the Minchah Shemoneh Esreh of Erev Yom Kippur there is a mitzvah of Vidui — confessing one's sins. The custom is to daven Minchah prior to the eating of the Seudah HaMafsekes, the final seudah before Yom Kippur begins. Women should also daven Minchah before this meal and should recite the Vidui at Minchah.

The opinion of the Ramban is that another Vidui should be recited after the meal as well and before Yom Kippur. The Mishnah Berurah advises that we be stringent and follow this view. Men say the Tefillah Zakah, while women could recite Ashamnu before Yom Kippur.

The table should be covered with a tablecloth, as on Shabbos and on Yom Tov.

Yom Tov candles are lit for Yom Kippur just as for other Yamim Tovim. In addition to this, every family should light a candle called the "Ner HaBari." This candle should be long enough to last the entire Yom Kippur. It will be used for Havdalah on Motzaei Yom Kippur, because a ner she'shavas is required — a flame that lasted over Yom Kippur.

In addition, yahrtzeit candles are lit for family members who have passed on.

It is a minhag in Klal Yisrael for parents to bless their children, old and young, before leaving for shul on Erev Yom Kippur. This minhag dates back to the times of the Avos.

Yom Kippur, in regard to all melachah, is like Shabbos and not like Yom Tov. Aside from this, however, there are five inuyim (hardships) that we also undergo on Yom Kippur. We do not eat or drink. This hardship is not only Biblically forbidden, but if one violates it, one incurs a chiyuv kareis (being cut off from the nation). There are four other inuyim that (according to most poskim) are also d'Oraisa. These are prohibitions against bathing, anointing with oil, wearing shoes, and marital relations. Carrying is also forbidden on Yom Kippur, just as on Shabbos.

What quantity of food does the Torah forbid to be eaten on Yom Kippur? There is a principle in Halachah called "Chatzi shiur assur min HaTorah – even a minimal amount is forbidden from the Torah. Even though in order to be chayav kareis one must eat the amount of a large date (which is slightly smaller than an egg), this principle tells us that it is forbidden to eat or drink any amount. One may swallow one's saliva, according to the Mishnah Berurah, although there were some opinions that suggested not doing so.

KOL NIDREI

Prior to the recitation of Kol Nidrei, the sifrei Torah are taken out of the aron kodesh and taken around the shul. People hug and kiss the Torah then. The Mateh Ephraim explains that people ask forgiveness from the Torah for impinging on its honor in some manner or form throughout the year.

The services for Yom Kippur continue with the recitation of Kol Nidrei. The reason for it is because when we stand before Hashem we wish to be free of any stain in order to fulfill the verse in Vayikra (16:30) that discusses Yom Kippur: "Lifnei Hashem tit'haru — before Hashem you shall be pure." Three people stand before the teivah during this time. The Levush explains that

when Klal Yisrael fought Amalek, both Aharon and Chur stood next to Moshe Rabbeinu because it was a fast. Another reason is because Hataras Nedarim requires three people.

WHAT IS A NEDER

Nedarim can be divided into two categories: nidrei issur and nidrei mitzvah. The first category involves the Torah notion that a human being can create a prohibition upon himself when one verbalizes with the language of neder or vow that he will not do ____ or eat _____. If it was done without the use of the term then there is no neder whatsoever. It must also be verbalized – if it is just thought or even if it is written, it does not count as a neder.

The second category is when verbalizes an intention to perform a Mitzvah or otherwise good deed, such as a chessed. With nidrei mitzvah even if one does not use the terminology of neder or vow it is still effective. By Rabbinic law, however, even doing a Mitzvah or good deed three times is considered a neder – even if one did not say anything. Indeed, even doing something once with the intention of continuing to do it constitutes a neder by Rabbinic law. Since both of these are rather common, we see why it is so necessary to recite the Kol Nidrei.

After the Kol Nidrei, the chazzan recites the blessing of Shehecheyanu. The members of the congregation recite it along with him silently. They finish before the chazzan so that they may answer Amen to his blessing. Every Yom Tov requires a Shehecheyanu. Women who lit the candles for Yom Kippur should make sure that they do not recite the Shehecheyanu again.

Between Kol Nidrei and Maariv, the Rabbi often speaks words of mussar.

The custom is to stand up straight during the Selichos and tefillos of Yom Kippur whenever it is indicated in the machzor. In explanation for this, the Raavya cites the Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer, chapter 46, which says that the Satan says before Hashem, “On this day Klal Yisrael are like angels, standing tall and straight, without food or water, and without shoes.”

When the Shema is recited, the words “Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso l’olam va’ed” are recited out loud. The Tur explains that Moshe Rabbeinu saw the angels praise Hashem with this expression when he arose to Shamayim to receive the Torah. Since we are like angels on Yom Kippur, we, too, recite it aloud.

We daven Shacharis and lein from the Torah. The Torah reading is from Vayikra, Chapter 16:1–34, where the instructions are given to Moshe and Aharon concerning the exact procedure for the Kohanim’s service on Yom Kippur, which would enable them to achieve atonement for Bnei Yisrael. The portion then details the laws of Yom Kippur. Six people are called to the Torah on Yom Kippur, and a maftir. Generally a Yom Tov has five aliyos, while Rosh Chodesh has four. During the week there are three people called to the Torah, and on Shabbos there are seven.

For the Mussaf Shemoneh Esreh we go through the Avodah of Yom Kippur in the Beis HaMikdash. There are parts in the Mussaf Shemoneh Esreh where it is the custom to bow or prostrate oneself completely on the floor. However, it is forbidden for Jews to bow on the floor of a building unless it is in the Beis HaMikdash itself. Therefore, the custom is to have a towel or paper towel upon which to rest one’s knees.

During Minchah, we read the parashah of the arayos (Vayikra 18:1-30) and we read Maftir Yonah for the haftarah. We read the section of the arayos whenever there is separation from arayos, there is holiness. We read from Yonah because of the very powerful lesson of Teshuvah in that Sefer.

Ne’ilah is a special prayer that we add on Yom Kippur as the gates of Heaven are being locked. At the end of Ne’ilah the chazzan says the passuk of Shema Yisrael once. Baruch Sheim Kvod Malchuso l’olam va’ed is recited three times, and Hashem Hu HaElokim is recited seven times. We blast the shofar with a Tekiah Gedolah — even if it is still bein ha’shemashos, and we do so on Shabbos (Saturday near evening) as well. The shofar blast indicates that the period of judgment has ended and that the

Shechinah has arisen upward. Then we recite “L’shanah habaah b’Yerushalayim.”

For Havdalah we recite the berachah Borei Me’orei HaAish — something we do not do for other Yamim Tovim unless they fall on Motzaei Shabbos. This is because fire was created on Motzaei Shabbos. Why, then, do we recite the blessing on Yom Kippur? We do so because it was forbidden to use fire all of Yom Kippur, unlike Yom Tov when we are able to cook. This is why we need to use a ner she’shavas (a flame that was burning all day). Most authorities hold that when Yom Kippur falls during the week a blessing is not recited on the fire if the flame it was received from was not burning all day. If Yom Kippur falls on Motzaei Shabbos, however, if such a flame is not available, a blessing is still recited.

MOTZAEI YOM KIPPUR

On Motzaei Yom Kippur we should be joyous and feel confident and assured that our tefillos were answered positively. The Midrash tells us that a bas kol, a Heavenly voice, emanates on Yom Kippur and says the passuk in Koheles (9:7): “Go out and eat your bread in joy, as Hashem has found your deeds to be favorable.” It is the custom to immediately jump into more mitzvos. We begin constructing the sukkah on that night.

One should arise early to do one’s avodas Hashem on the day after Yom Kippur. The first Beis HaMikdash was dedicated in the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Wed, Oct 1, 2014 at 7:05 PM subject: Rabbi Frand on Yom Kippur

I Want To Come Home, But I Don't Know If Dad Will Let Me In
I would like to share a thought about Yom Kippur. As Rav Dovid Kronglass used to say, this is the most important week of the year. We have a tremendous task in front of us and that is the work of repenting. We should always bear in mind one very important fact: how desperately the Ribono shel Olam wants us back.

Every day in Shmoneh Esrei, we recite a blessing about Teshuva. The blessing begins with the words "Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before You." The blessing ends with the words "Blessed are You, Hashem, WHO DESIRES REPENTANCE (haRotzeh b'Tshuva)."

We recite these words so many times during the year that perhaps they lose their impact. However, haRotzeh b'Tshuva does not merely mean that the Almighty will accept our repentance. It means He WANTS our repentance. His desire for us to come back is so enormous that as long as we make even a minimal effort, He will be waiting there to take us back.

I recently read a short story from a Gentile author. The story is fictional but I believe it is very powerful and has a beautiful message that is directly related to the idea I just mentioned. The story encapsulates what it means when we say the Ribono shel Olam is a Rotzeh b'Tshuva.

In the story, there was a boy who finished high school and, as is quite typical of youth that age, he told his parents he wanted to discover and see the world. His father told him, "No, I want you to start college." The boy would not accept his father's advice: "I need to spread my wings a little and see what the rest of the world is like. I want to travel and see the rest of America."

The father told his son "If you leave, do not bother ever coming back. You can start college now or you can leave this house and keep on going because you will never be welcome in my house again." The boy decided to leave anyway.

He left his home in Maryland and began hitchhiking across America. He picked grapes in California and he did odd jobs here and odd jobs there just

to keep himself going. As is often the case, after some time, the boy became home sick. He missed his parents. He missed home. He missed having a permanent roof over his head. He missed knowing where his next meal would come from. He started hitchhiking back to the east coast, which was his point of departure.

He got as far as Iowa, sat down on a curb somewhere and wrote a letter home: Dear Mom, I'm tired. I'm hungry. I'm lonely. I want to come home. But I don't know if Dad will let me home. Mom, you know the train track crosses our farm and near the farm is an apple tree. If Dad will let me in, I want you to tie a white towel around a branch of that tree. I will get on the train and I will look for the apple tree and check to see if there is a white towel wrapped around one of its branches. If dad still feels the same way he did the day I left when he told me not to ever come home again, I understand that there will be no white towel there and I will know that I can't come home.

The boy made it back to the east coast, near Maryland, boarded a passenger train, and started heading towards home. As the train approached the farm, he became terribly nervous. Would there be a towel there or would there not be a towel? As the train came closer and closer, he turned to the fellow sitting next to him on the train and said, "I want you to do me a favor. We are going to pass a farm with an apple tree right near the tracks. I am going to close my eyes. Just tell me if there is a white towel wrapped around a branch on that tree. I am too nervous to look myself." He was so scared that the towel would not be there, he was afraid to even look directly at the tree!

He sat on the train with his eyes tightly shut and the train passed the farm and passed the tree. The boy said to the man sitting next to him, "What happened?" He said, "Son, there is a white towel around every branch on that tree." This said, in effect, that the father could not wait for the son to come home.

This, I'havdil (distinguishing between a trivial story and a weighty spiritual lesson), is a parable of what it means "HE DESIRES REPENTANCE". The Ribono shel Olam wants us back, passionately. Just like any father who may have had disagreements with his son, at the end of the day, "as a father has mercy on his children," how much more so in the case of the Mercy of our Father in Heaven, which knows no bounds. He certainly wants us back as much as any flesh and blood father would ever want his son back.

May we all merit to do a complete repentance and be sealed for a long good life of shalom, a year of redemption and salvation, and peace upon Israel.

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-**Artificial Feeding on Yom HaKippurim**, from Volume 10 Number 5: Haazinu-Yom HaKippurim

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Artificial Feeding on Yom HaKippurim by Rabbi Howard Jachter

Introduction One of the most difficult decisions a Rabbi must make is whether a sick individual may eat on Yom HaKippurim due to medical concerns. Nevertheless, Rabbis do not recommend intravenous feeding or any other form of artificial feeding to sick people to avoid the necessity to eat on Yom HaKippurim. In this essay, we will explore why Rabbis do not

make such a recommendation. The essay will be based on a discussion of this issue by Rav J. David Bleich that appears in his work Contemporary Halachic Problems 3:129-140.

The Suggestion Many have questioned great Rabbinical authorities whether one must attach an IV to a sick individual to avoid the need to eat on Yom HaKippurim. They argue that although a sick person is excused from fasting, it is Halachically desirable to put him into the position of being obligated to perform Mitzvot (see Tosafot Pesachim 113b s.v. V'ein). The Gemara explains that Moshe Rabbeinu craved to enter Eretz Yisrael, in order to obligate himself to observe the Mitzvot Hateluyot Baaretz (Mitzvot that are performed only in the Land of Israel). Men wear a four-cornered garment in order to obligate themselves to wear Tzitzit. Similarly, one might think that a sick individual should attach himself to an IV to enable himself to fast on Yom HaKippurim.

Moreover, one should try to make advance preparations to avoid having to violate the Torah in order to preserve life. For example, the Mishna Berura (330:1) cites the Sefer Chassidim, which says that a woman in her ninth month of pregnancy should prepare on Friday whatever might be necessary for her in the event that she begins labor on Shabbat. The Rama (Orach Chaim 328:12) rules that, if possible (i.e. it will cause no delay and danger), one should ask a non-Jew to do the work necessary for a dangerously ill person or perform the action in an unusual way. For example, if one must call for emergency services on Shabbat, one should do so in an unusual manner.

Artificial Feeding on Yom HaKippurim - Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski's Ruling An individual suggested to Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (Teshuvot Achiezer 3:61) that even artificial feeding on Yom HaKippurim should be forbidden because it satisfies the patient's hunger. The questioner noted that the volume of food and drink necessary to incur punishment on Yom HaKippurim is determined by the amount of food that satiates an individual and not by what otherwise constitutes a formal "act of eating" by Halachic standards (Yoma 79a). The questioner thus concluded that the prohibition on Yom HaKippurim essentially is to satisfy one's hunger or thirst.

Rav Chaim Ozer responded that nonetheless Halacha defines only oral ingestion as eating. He cites the Gemara's discussion (Yoma 74b) of the source of the assumption that when the Torah commands us to "afflict ourselves on Yom HaKippurim" it refers to refraining from food and drink. The Gemara refers to the verse (Devarim 8:3) that states that first Hashem afflicted us and then he fed us the manna. We see that the term "affliction" as used in the Torah refers to not eating or drinking. Rav Chaim Ozer argues that since the Torah records that Hashem fed us the manna to satisfy our hunger, we see that only oral ingestion of food satisfies hunger. Thus, Halacha defines one as afflicting himself if he does not ingest food or drink orally. Indeed, people do not find artificial feeding particularly satisfying.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch's Approach Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Moadim U'zmanim 1:60) writes that Halacha does not require one to engage in extraordinary means to enable oneself to fast on Yom HaKippurim. He notes that the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch make no mention of a requirement for a sick individual who must eat on Yom HaKippurim to eat very bitter food instead of regular food. Although eating very bitter food on Yom HaKippurim is only rabbinically forbidden, Chazal apparently felt that eating bitter food instead of conventional food is an extraordinary step that is not required to avoid the necessity to eat on Yom HaKippurim.

Support for Rav Shternbuch's Approach Although Teshuvot Binyan Tzion (35) recommends that a very sick person eat very bitter food instead of regular food on Yom HaKippurim, Rav Shternbuch's approach appears to be accepted among rabbinical authorities. We will cite a number of rulings of various rabbinical authorities in a variety of areas to demonstrate this point.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:74) writes that one is not obligated to induce labor early in the week in order to avoid

giving birth on Shabbat. Rav Moshe writes a general statement "that one is not obligated to utilize Tachbulot (extraordinary means) in order to have to avoid violation of Shabbat." Parenthetically, Rav Moshe strongly opposes inducing labor except in the case of an emergency. The consensus agrees with Rav Feinstein about this point (see Nishmat Avraham 2:105).

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Nishmat Avraham 4:187) rules that if a man is diagnosed with cancer he is not obligated to bank his sperm so that he can have children after chemotherapy treatment. Rabbis debate whether he is permitted to do so if he wants to, but Rav Auerbach feels that he certainly is not obligated to do so, even if he is married. For further discussion of this issue see Rav Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, Teshuvot Binyan Av 2:60.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:7) also rules that one is not obligated to engage in heroic measures to avoid working on Shabbat to save lives. He presents numerous examples of this principle. One is not required to wake his neighbor in the middle of the night in order to avoid the need to turn on a light for a dangerously ill individual. One is not required to summon a neighbor to drive a dangerously ill individual to a hospital to avoid having to telephone for an ambulance. Rav Shlomo Zalman cites as a precedent the ruling of the Rama (Yoreh Deah 374:2) that a Kohen is not required to hire someone to bury a Meit Mitzva (a dead person who has no one to bury him) instead of the Kohen burying him.

Accordingly, Halachic authorities do not require a dangerously ill person to take heroic measures to avoid eating on Yom HaKippurim.

Rav Moshe Feinstein's Approach Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe 3:90) presents an intriguing approach to this issue. He suggests that it may be forbidden for one to attach himself to an IV to avoid having to eat on Yom HaKippurim. He notes that the Gemara (Bava Kama 85a) states that Hashem sanctioned doctors to heal. We see that employing medical procedures is not a human right; rather, it is permitted only because of Hashem's permission. Rav Moshe argues that it is possible that the Divine sanction is limited to resolving medical problems and does not extend to utilizing medical procedures to enable people to fast.

Other rabbinical authorities that address this issue do not mention this concern. Indeed, we commonly engage in medical procedures for Halachic purposes, such as drawing blood to take a bilirubin count to determine if a Brit Mila can be performed. Indeed, Rav Soloveitchik did not agree with Rav Moshe's suggestion, as Rav Soloveitchik was fed by IV on Yom HaKippurim when he was an elderly man. Rav Soloveitchik explained to his student-assistants that one is not required to attach himself to an IV if he must eat on Yom HaKippurim. However, The Rav found it profoundly traumatizing to eat on Yom HaKippurim, and artificial feeding was the only viable option for him.

Conclusion Virtually all Rabbinical authorities agree that one is not required to attach himself to an IV to avoid having to eat on Yom HaKippurim. For further discussion of this interesting issue, see the many sources cited in Rav J. David Bleich's aforementioned essay.

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To Become Like Angels by Rabbi Eytan Feiner

Emphasizing the contrast between the titles of the oft-adjointing Torah portions of "Nitzavim" and "Vayeilech," Rabbi Yaakov Katina remarks that the Jewish people are regarded as "nitzavim," standing in one place and stagnant, while Moses is described as "va'yeilech," walking, moving along -- an allusion to his perpetual movement and continuous growth. Moses was constantly on a path of endless striving to attain yet loftier spiritual heights, while the people he was leading were, at times, blithely indifferent to altering

their status quo. It was their indifference to change that the Torah wants to now highlight as it contrasts their attitude with that of Moses.

We must inculcate that all-important lesson of continuous spiritual ascent from Moses, our teacher. If we become overly smug and satisfied with our current levels of spiritual attainment -- albeit praiseworthy accomplishments in their own right -- then we have lost an essential component of our innate Jewish nature. We have stopped craving endlessly to get yet closer to God who beckons us to always keep striding upwards on the crucial ladder of spirituality -- to become ever holier as life progresses. God instructs us "Kedoshim ti'hiyu - you shall become holy" (Lev. 19:2), using the future tense to teach that we must always yearn to become more holy.

What happens if we reach a high plateau and simply opt to coast along status quo? Even a Moses must endlessly strive just in order to avoid an otherwise inevitable descent. Once we slack off in our upward climb, then, automatically, we will begin falling because of the ubiquitous presence of the evil inclination hovering around us. There is simply no such thing as "just staying put," no concept at all of being content with merely maintaining the status quo.

The Never-ending Tests of Abraham

Years before Moses stepped up to the stage, Abraham already taught us this monumental lesson in life. Let's rewind to the narrative of the binding of Isaac on the altar. Abraham's final test has arrived, the apex of a challenging spiritual career, and God's angels are all lined up to see if mortal man is truly capable of surmounting this grueling hurdle. Indeed he is, and Abraham passes with flying colors. As we sit back anticipating his surely magnificent reward, we wait out the week before turning the page to the next Torah portion. The page is finally turned to reveal -- WHAT?! "And Sarah's lifetime was one hundred..." (Genesis, 23:1). This is his just reward? The saintly prophetess, his beloved wife of so many years, meets her demise as a result of Abraham's final test?

And the story is not yet done. Quick on the heels of Sarah's death, Abraham undergoes another ordeal -- one that also included parting with an exorbitant sum of money -- just to secure for his wife the appropriate burial ground. Has he not just passed all of his ten quite difficult tests? We surely thought so. This is all definitely not what we were expecting...

The answer, of course, is that his tests are indeed not yet over. They never will be. Life is not about passing a designated number of trials to thereby earn a retirement spent in tranquility. God was showing the world, through Abraham, that life is one constant struggle, one never-ending roller coaster of ups and downs, to test the individual and manifest the many strengths that lay dormant within his soul. Abraham never questioned God. He certainly did not sit back after passing his ten tests, after reaching such a lofty plateau, and expect to just maintain status quo for the duration of his life. The real test, he knew deep inside, was how he was going to react after the crucial series of ten came to a close.

Abraham knew that passing the ultimate test of life meant continuous uphill climbing just to ensure that he never stumble ever so slightly from the pinnacle he worked so hard to reach. This test, too -- the most difficult of them all -- he passes with flying colors, as he assures his place as the illustrious father of the Jewish nation. Living at ease in this world, wrapped warmly in an all-embracing blanket of equanimity, is simply not the course for the Jewish people.

The Inner Message of Salt

Unfortunately, one of Abraham's relatives was unable to abandon a life of no upward spiritual growth and it cost her dearly. Sodom was deserving of complete destruction because of the depraved and utterly corrupt lifestyles of its inhabitants. There was no hope for a possible turnaround since the people of Sodom had no interest whatsoever in altering the status quo. In the merit of their righteous relative, however, Lot and his family are miraculously saved before the city crumbles in the engulfing flames. But Lot's wife errs

egregiously. She simply cannot restrain herself and glances back upon the city against the explicit command of her saviors. Her punishment? She is transformed into a pillar of salt.

Why specifically salt and why a pillar and not a "salt shaker," are two questions Rabbi Moshe Eisemann (of Yeshivat Ner Yisroel) attempts to resolve.

Salt is a preservative, administered into food to preserve the freshness while simultaneously preventing bacteria and the like from entering. In other words, salt serves to maintain the status quo of the food. A pillar symbolizes the stagnant lifestyle, the desire to remain permanently idle, again echoing the same idea of preserving the status quo.

Lot's wife could not tear herself away from the abhorrent lifestyle of Sodom. A lifestyle with no spiritual demands whatsoever, with no incentives for even a smidgen of personal growth, was a lifestyle that had caught her irrevocably in its strangling snare. Even with her life now on the line, she was simply unable to separate herself from her past. What more befitting a punishment, therefore, than being transformed into a motionless pillar, and specifically a pillar consisting totally of salt -- a double emphasis on her desire to preserve things just the way they were.

The completely destroyed city of Sodom itself, we might add, would forever be replaced by abundant salt, serving perhaps as an apt reminder to the very essence of what that corrupt city was all about. And just as its inhabitants were never interested in growing, the ground of their now infertile city would never again be capable of growth as well.

The Forever Stagnant Angels

We have thus observed that among the myriad sins of the inhabitants of Sodom -- of which Lot's wife and family were a part -- was their "nitzavim"-like way of life - staying stagnant. The malachim, God's heavenly angels, seem to epitomize this very idea. The celestial angels are described as being "nitzavim" and "omdim," standing forever still (Zecharia, 3:7), because they can never really change nor grow -- they can never alter their status quo in any sense. There is no room for either upward or downward movement, no waxing and waning on the spiritual seesaw of life. Angels have no ability to exercise free will; they are merely robots in the service of carrying out God's will. How interesting, then, that the Hebrew word for salt - melach -- and the Hebrew word for an angel -- mal'ach -- sound so similar. They seem to share an essential aspect of their respective natures: the notion of status quo preservation.

The angels are thus described as possessing a single straight leg: "Vi'ragleihem regel yishara - and their legs are one straight leg" (Ezekiel 1:7). They do not move with their "legs" as do mortal men. They are classified as "nitzavim," "standing, while the righteous are regarded as "holchim," always on the move forward, always progressing onward towards perfection.

An angel of Esau is sent to harm Jacob, our Sages tell us, and, although vanquished, he still manages to inflict damage in one -- and only one -- unique area: Jacob's leg. The notorious angel of Esau was perhaps well aware that the advantage of Jacob lay in his being a perennial "holeich," mover, and to defeat him in battle meant dealing a blow specifically to his opponent's leg. Such an infirmity would symbolically demonstrate that he could lower Jacob temporarily to a status of a "nitzav," thereby casting aside Jacob's inherent advantage over angels. Transforming his opponent from a "holeich" to a "nitzav," from a mover and shaker to a stagnant individual, would thus bring Jacob down to the same playing field, leaving the angel his only chance for possible victory.

Journeying from "Holeich" to "Nitzav"

Although we strive to always be "holchim" and not "nitzavim," the commentary of the Malbim notes that when finally attaining a sense of spiritual completion, we too are then labeled as "omdim" and "nitzavim." After arduous work in striving constantly to yet greater heights, we will then,

ultimately, reach a degree of completion that entitles us to be branded as a "nitzav." Only then could we be regarded as standing directly in front of God.

But now the term is suddenly a complimentary one? The difference is clear: Only when we get close enough to God as a result of our endless striving as "holchim," as continuous climbers up the mountain towards spiritual perfection, will we then be able to borrow the term used solely by His celestial court. This new title serves to highlight that we, too, can indeed attain such proximity that was previously thought possible only concerning the angels.

Standing Angel-like in Prayer

Even now, though, we can achieve a semblance of this level. Every single time we stand before God in prayer, we attempt to return to those feelings we captured when the Torah was given, a time when we felt incredibly close to our Creator, blending our own free will with His. The Talmud informs us that we must keep our feet together, in imitation of the "one straight foot" of the angels who cannot veer from the path God set for them, when standing before God in prayer (Brachot 10b).

In his work of collected insights on the prayer book, Rabbi Shimon Schwab quotes Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch who points out the following: When putting our feet together as one while standing in the silent Amidah service, we are expressing the thought that we are relinquishing our free will like the angels, and are thus offering ourselves as a sacrifice before God. In so doing, we have performed the single greatest act of our free choice -- that of voluntarily relinquishing that choice to our God above.

Yes, indeed, we can attain the highest of levels. But our journey along the path to spiritual perfection must begin with constantly being "holchim," continuously moving upward. After diligent work and tireless efforts in pursuit of endless striving towards personal spiritual completion, we can hopefully return permanently to those peaks we had reached at the most momentous time in our history. We can one day be standing once again before God, in precious proximity to His divine presence. And never again fall from that wondrous precipice.

This is what we aim for annually, as the holy day of Yom Kippur arrives on the calendar soon after our Day of Judgment. In the course of our Amidah service, we can tap ever so slightly into this ecstasy of blending our own free will with that of God's on a daily basis. But we can actually try to live it fully for a day. For just one day a year, on the holy Day of Atonement. It is on Yom Kippur that we attempt to raise ourselves to the level of God's celestial court, to become like the subservient angels above. We abstain from the worldly pleasures that surround us -- on such a day who even wants to eat? -- as Yom Kippur sees us in denial of food and drink and other physical comforts and pleasures. We adorn ourselves in white and stand before God in holy prayer. All day long.

This is the monumental day when God assists us in achieving full atonement for our sins, in beginning a clean slate and starting anew in our quest for choosing correctly in life. We yearn for re-achieving purity and are given the opportunity to become like angels, to relinquish our innate ability to choose as we attempt to blend our own will with that of God's. Yes, we've got free will. But now is the time to will freely to subjugate our desires to those that God wishes for us. It's a tough day and we're awfully thirsty throughout. But this golden opportunity arrives but once a year. Let's maximize this sacred day and choose correctly -- and let's become like angels, let's become "nitzavim" before God.

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May one wear Crocs on Yom Kippur?

by R. Shlomo Brody,

excerpted from his new book, *A Guide to the Complex: Contemporary Halakhic Debates*

The permissibility of wearing comfortable, non-leather shoes on Yom Kippur has been much talked about over the last several years, following proclamations by rabbis Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Yaakov Ariel, among others, which strongly discouraged the wearing of Crocs on Yom Kippur. Despite the brouhaha, this debate is actually a continuation of a millennia-old discussion regarding the prohibitions of Yom Kippur.

The Torah never specifies which actions are forbidden on Yom Kippur. Rather, five times the Bible states that a person should afflict (innui) himself, in addition to refraining from the work that is forbidden on Shabbat (Lev. 16, 23; Num. 29). Unlike the medieval Karaites, for whom affliction included wearing sackcloth and ashes, abstaining from sleep, and other deprivations, the sages limited this term to five areas of self-denial: bathing, anointment, sexual relations, donning shoes, and nourishment (eating and drinking), with the latter seen as the most severe prohibition, whose violation was punishable by spiritual banishment, karet (Yoma 73-74).

Some scholars believed that despite this affliction, an element of festive joy is also mandated, as on other holidays (mikra'ei kodesh) mentioned in the Torah (Lev. 23:27). In addition to dressing nicely (Shabbat 119a), we recite the sheheheyanu blessing, which commemorates special occasions.

Mourners even halt their seven-day (shiva) bereavement practices so as to accord some measure of festivity to the day (Rabbi Yonatan of Lunel, Eiruvin 40a). Indeed, some understood the requirement to eat before Yom Kippur as fulfilling the obligation to feast on festivals (BY OH 604). The Talmud further states that Yom Kippur was deemed a happy occasion because of the atonement afforded by the day (Taanit 30b).

Nonetheless, most scholars understood the day to be uniquely lacking in holiday festivities

(Hizkuni, Rabbi Ovadia Seforno, Lev. 23:27). We refrain from reciting the joyful Hallel

Prayer or engaging in excessive happiness (MT Laws of Reading the Megilla and of Hanukka

3:6), both deemed inappropriate for a day of judgment (Arakhin 10b). Ultimately, the Torah aims to achieve a day of respite (shabbaton) from physical pleasure along with a feeling of affliction (Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh 164).

This goal, however, might afford certain leniencies with respect to activities that are clearly not intended for pleasure. The Talmud, for example, allows people to rinse dirt from their body and wash their hands after using the bathroom or before performing ritual activities (OH 613). These dispensations led some to assert that the activities prohibited on Yom Kippur for the sake of affliction - with the exception of nutrition - originated as rabbinic edicts (Rosh, Yoma 8:1). Others, however, believed that the Torah prohibited only acts of pleasure, leaving room for leniency in other circumstances (Yere'im 420). By nature, however, anointment and nutrition entail enjoyment; therefore they remain prohibited, except in cases of medical necessity (OH 614:1, 618).

An interesting debate exists regarding actions that alleviate discomfort. Many decisors permitted the use of snuff (AH OH 612:6), for example, which some considered an appropriate way to mark the festivity of the day (Gan HaMelekh 145). Other scholars allowed people to swallow slow-release pills before the fast to prevent headaches (Tzitz Eliezer 7:32).

Contrary to popular belief, the Talmud never explicitly limits the ban on footwear to leather shoes. The Mishna states a blanket prohibition (Yoma 73b), with a parallel tannaitic text further forbidding socks (Tosefta Yoma 4:1). The only explicit exceptions are for cases of illness, inclement weather, or walking in hazardous areas. However, some sages covered their feet in reeds or rags (Yoma 78b). Some understood that these rabbis limited the prohibition to formal "shoes," rendering all other protective devices

permissible. Others, however, allowed such footwear only if one's foot still felt discomfort from the ground; anything providing greater protection was disqualified (Nahmanides, Shabbat 66a).

This dispute continued into the medieval era, with Maimonides (MT Laws of Yom Kippur 3:7) and others requiring one's foot to feel the ground, while others, followed by Rabbi Joseph Karo, forbade only footwear made of leather or wood (OH 614:2). Despite the latter, normative ruling, many prominent figures, including rabbis Yisrael Meir Kagan (MB 614:5) and Yehiel Michel Epstein (AH OH 614:4), deemed it meritorious to wear slippers or soft-soled shoes in which one feels the ground. While Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik also discouraged padded sneakers (Nefesh HaRav, p. 210), Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch further suggested that any regularly worn, comfortable shoes should not be donned on Yom Kippur (Moadim U'Zemanim 6:28). Despite these sentiments, the widespread practice - as noted by Israel's chief rabbi during the recent Crocs controversy - is to wear any type of non-leather shoe

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Yonah ben Amitai

Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli zt"l

(based on Siach Shaul, Yamim Noraim p. 314-6)

The choice of Sefer Yonah to be read towards the end of the holy day of Yom Kippur is, on the simple level, due to the great success of the teshuva of Ninveh. However, the fact that the entire book is read hints at another idea, which is perhaps actually the main one. Yonah ben Amitai was given a mission by Hashem, and he naively tried to avoid it. Hashem sent a more obedient messenger, the wind, and it instilled fear in the passengers of the boat. The Yalkut Shimoni says that there were members of each of the 70 nations on that boat. Each one prayed in his own way to his god for the same thing - to live rather than die. Only one person from one nation was apathetic, sleeping in the bottom of the boat without praying. Yonah knew the truth and tried to ignore it, until his counterparts exhorted him to join in prayer. Yonah told them there was a simpler solution - simply throw him overboard. It is not hard to come to the conclusion that although Yonah was a real person, the whole story is a parable in its essence. Bnei Yisrael are compared to a yonah (dove) (Berachot 53b). Yonah was the son of Amitai, reminiscent of the father of Bnei Yisrael, Hashem, whose seal is that of emet (truth). Like Yonah, we are sent to fix the world so that it will accept the kingdom of Hashem, and we avoid the task. There are great storms around us, and while the nations are not all proficient at it, they pray. It is possible that when the nations opened their session in silence, there was real prayer, because even those who possess nuclear weapons want to live. [Perhaps this is a reference to the Windscale nuclear disaster in England, which took place in 1957, although a few days after Yom Kippur.] In difficult situations, there is one nation that tries to avoid the spotlights but does not succeed to avoid them. "Lots are cast" and Israel comes up being singled out. The world looks around and points to the Middle East, and then within the Middle East they point to us, to Israel. "Contemplate the years of every generation" (Devarim 32:7). This country and this region has been sleeping for many centuries. This point, at the edge of the desert, suddenly arose as if from the dead. Sheiks woke up and decided that this is indeed a desirable place, in a strategic location. What caused the storm that awoke people? Israel. What prodded Egypt to seek so many weapons? What unites all the wild nations? Who riles everyone up? It is Israel. And when they cast lots, who do they find is guilty? Israel. Indeed it is true that disaster befalls the world because of Israel (Yevamot 63b). Are we able to understand what the nature of the disaster is? Should we wait to see if they will throw us into the sea? Sometimes we think that we are not able to do anything. Our arms do not extend far enough, and we do not determine what our nation does. The

Rambam (Teshuva 3:4) teaches us that we can view the world as being at a standstill, and the actions of one person – indeed, our own – could possibly determine the future of the world. If Israel is in the middle of what happens in the world, it is every individual who, in his own way, is in the center. * From "Chemdat Yamim" Parsha Sheet www.eretzhemdah.org

from: Office of Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com date: Wed, Oct 1, 2014 at 2:19 PM subject: Erev Yom Kippur 5774 - Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog **YOM KIPPUR**

The holiest day of the year is upon us. The time of atonement and forgiveness, of introspection and self-analysis has again arrived. The unique quality of the day of Yom Kippur is that it is a day of cleansing. Just as our refraining from food and drink on that day helps cleanse us physically, so too does our participation in prayer, serious thought, recognition of personal faults and a new commitment to do better in the future cleanse our souls.

We are all well aware that the buildup of plaque in one's arteries is dangerous to health, and that surgical and medicinal intervention is often necessary. Unfortunately, during the year a great deal of plaque has built up in the mental, emotional and spiritual arteries of our being. Yom Kippur is an opportunity to remove or reduce that plaque buildup and to focus our attention on staying healthy both physically and spiritually. There is no easy way or shortcut to accomplish this goal. The Talmud records for us opinion, in the name of the great Rabi Meir, that merely passing through the day of Yom Kippur itself can accomplish this end without our active participation. However, Jewish law and tradition does not accept Rabi Meir's opinion as binding. Instead, human repentance is required in order for the cleansing process of Yom Kippur to be effective. Yom Kippur is not to be viewed as a passive day of restraint and refraining but rather as a day of active participation in the process of cleansing our souls and purifying our emotions. Because of this required conscious and active effort of repentance, Yom Kippur is transferred from being purely a day of rest into a day of wrenching emotional and spiritual activity. It is possible to sleep away the entire day and technically not violate any of the prohibitions. But it is unimaginable that if one does so that one has really experienced Yom Kippur. The most difficult part of the day is not, in my opinion, hunger, thirst or physical fatigue - it is the necessity to honestly confront ourselves and face up to our weaknesses. We are required to focus on those areas in our life and in our relations to others that need attention and improvement.

We are all born with the gift of denial. Original man in the Garden of Eden, when confronted by God with the enormity of his sin, does not readily admit fault at all. He casts about to put the blame on others, and the others in turn lay their guilt upon still others. The ability to admit error is one of the most difficult psychological and emotional traits encountered in life. Yet, without that ability and by remaining in constant denial of one's shortcomings, there is little hope for improvement and for achieving a more balanced and productive life. Yom Kippur can cleanse us and create us anew. But it cannot do so unless we are willing to face our own failings. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem and the High Priest of Israel performed the public rituals of Yom Kippur, forgiveness, cleansing and personal improvement were somehow meant to be easier to obtain. However, even then under such optimal circumstances, the Jewish people did not truly exploit the opportunity of repentance. The result was that both Temples were destroyed. In a strange way, Yom Kippur, over the almost two millennia since the destruction of the Second Temple, has become even more of a spiritual and emotional day. Since we can no longer rely on the Temple services or on the intercession of the High Priest on our behalf, we have become well aware that much depends upon us - and only upon us. The removal of denial is the first step towards becoming a better person, building

a stronger family, creating a more just and righteous community and strengthening our nascent state here in the Land of Israel. We should make a great effort not to allow Yom Kippur to slip away from us merely as a day of rest and restraint. The gift of Yom Kippur is that for at least one day in the year we can be honest with ourselves and truly unite with our inner self and soul. Whether we do so or not is completely dependent upon each and every one of us - solely upon our attitude, thoughts, behavior and commitment on this holiest day of the year. Shabbat shalom Gmar chatima tova Rabbi Berel Wein

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <y mkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Mon, Sep 29, 2014 at 2:12 PM subject: What is the Bracha Magen Avos and should we recite it on Yom Kippur?

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There is also an article explaining the Seder Avodah that we recite on Yom Kippur, which is available at RabbiKaganoff.com

What is the Bracha Magen Avos and should we recite it on Yom Kippur? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Where? Where is the bracha of Magen Avos first mentioned?

Question #2: What? What is the bracha Mei'ein Sheva?

Question #3: When? On what occasions do we omit reciting the bracha Mei'ein Sheva?

Answer: What is the Bracha Mei'ein Sheva? The bracha Mei'ein Sheva is recited by the chazzan after we conclude the Friday night Shemoneh Esrei, immediately after the congregation recites together the pesukim of Vayechulu. (Although the term Shemoneh Esrei is technically an inaccurate description of the Shabbos davening since it has only seven, and not eighteen, brachos, I will refer to it as Shemoneh Esrei, since that is what it is usually called.) This bracha is called Mei'ein Sheva, literally, an abbreviation of the seven brachos, because it is a synopsis of the seven brachos that comprise the Shabbos tefillah. Some people refer to the bracha as Magen Avos; since this phrase appears at its beginning, it is a common colloquial way of referring to this bracha.

Why did Chazal institute the Bracha Mei'ein Sheva? In ancient times, the shullen were often located outside the towns in which people lived, and walking home from shul alone at night was dangerous. Chazal therefore instituted this bracha after Shemoneh Esrei, thereby delaying the end of davening so that someone who arrived late would be able to complete his davening and return with everyone else and not be left to walk home alone (Rashi, Shabbos 24b; Mordechai, Shabbos #407; Ran; Meiri).

According to an alternative approach, the bracha Mei'ein Sheva is a form of repetition of the prayer. The individual who arrived late could listen to the chazzan's recital of this bracha and thereby fulfill his responsibility, even though the chazzan recited only one bracha and the regular Shabbos tefillah is seven (Rav Natrunai Gaon, as explained by Gra, Orach Chayim 269:13).

Although our shullen are no longer located outside the cities, once Chazal established the recital of bracha Mei'ein Sheva, we continue with this practice. Even in the time of the Gemara, it was practiced in places where the shullen were located inside the cities, notwithstanding that there was no danger to walk home from shul alone (Meiri, Pesachim 100b; Ran [on Rif, Pesachim 20a]; Or Zarua, Hilchos Erev Shabbos #20; Kolbo #11, 35).

Mei'ein Sheva instead of Kiddush Yet another reason is presented why Chazal introduced Mei'ein Sheva. In ancient times, there were occasions when it was difficult to obtain wine for Kiddush Friday night, and Mei'ein Sheva was instituted as a substitute for reciting Kiddush (Yerushalmi,

Brachos 8:1 and Pesachim 10:2. This passage of Talmud Yerushalmi is quoted by Tosafos, Pesachim 106b s.v. Mekadeish).

Why do we not recite Mei'ein Sheva on weekdays? If the reason for reciting Mei'ein Sheva was out of concern that someone delayed might be placed in danger because he would need to return home by himself, why did Chazal not introduce a similar prayer after weeknight maariv, in order to make sure that this delayed individual would not be placed in danger?

The Rishonim raise this question, explaining that in the era when Mei'ein Sheva was established, someone who realized that he was delayed would not have gone outside the city to the shul on a weekday, but would have come home directly and davened at home. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, however, he would not have wanted to miss the davening in shul.

Do we recite Mei'ein Sheva on Yom Tov? The Gemara rules that the prayer Mei'ein Sheva was instituted only on Friday evening, and not on Yom Tov evenings that did not fall on Fridays (Shabbos 24b). Why was Mei'ein Sheva not said on Yom Tov? Was there no concern of someone arriving late to shul on Yom Tov eve?

In the writings of the Rishonim, I found several answers to this question. One approach is that, although the concern that someone may be left behind may have equally existed on Yom Tov, since the more common situation was on Shabbos, Chazal did not include Yom Tov in the takkanah (see Meiri, Shabbos 24b).

Another approach is that, on Yom Tov eve, people were careful to arrive on time for davening, and there was no concern about individuals arriving late for shul and remaining alone (Mordechai, Pesachim #611).

Yet a third approach is that there are kabbalistic reasons why this danger was a concern only on Shabbos, even when it falls on Yom Tov, but not on a weekday Yom Tov (Kolbo #35).

Based on a statement of the Talmud Yerushalmi that the reason for Mei'ein Sheva was not because of the dangers of walking home alone, but because wine was not always available, some later commentaries present yet a fourth reason why the takkanah was established only for Shabbos and not for Yom Tov. Since most authorities hold that Kiddush on Yom Tov is not required min haTorah (Maggid Mishnah, Hilchos Shabbos 29:18), Chazal did not create a takkanah whose only reason would be to make sure that one fulfills a mitzvah that is midrabbanan (Marei Kohen, Pesachim 117b). Reciting Mei'ein Sheva when Yom Tov falls on Friday Do we recite the bracha Mei'ein Sheva when Yom Tov falls on Friday? The reason for reciting Mei'ein Sheva on a regular Shabbos was because people would work late on Friday afternoon, and therefore arrive late to shul Friday evening. However, when Friday was Yom Tov, there would be no reason for someone to be delayed. Nevertheless, the poskim rule that we should recite Mei'ein Sheva even when Yom Tov falls on Friday, notwithstanding the fact that the reason for the takkanah does not apply (Kolbo #52).

Thirteenth century zeal Actually, the question regarding recital of Mei'ein Sheva when Yom Tov falls on Friday resulted in a very heated dispute during the era of the Rishonim. In the time of the Rivash, Rabbi Amram ben Meroam, a frequent correspondent of the Rivash, sent him the following shaylah:

Reuven was the chazzan for the Friday night davening on a Shabbos that immediately followed Yom Tov. He began reciting Mei'ein Sheva, when Shimon reprimanded him, contending that one should not recite this bracha when Shabbos follows Yom Tov; since no one was working on Friday, the reason for the takkanah did not apply. Levi then got involved, saying that it is accepted that one does recite Mei'ein Sheva on Friday night following a Yom Tov. The shul then burst into a cacophony of voices, with Shimon's and Reuven's backers screaming at one another. Finally, Shimon shouted that Reuven was desecrating Hashem's holy Name since he was willing to recite a bracha in vain, and that if he did, Shimon would declare him to be in cherem, excommunicated! Reuven did recite the bracha Mei'ein Sheva and a

day later opened his door to find Shimon and twenty of his backers there to notify him that he had been excommunicated! The Rivash was asked to rule on whether Reuven was indeed in cherem because of Shimon's declaration that he had recited a bracha in vain, or, perhaps, Shimon should be placed in cherem for excommunicating someone without proper cause.

The Rivash ruled that Shimon was mistaken and that one should recite Mei'ein Sheva when Shabbos follows Yom Tov. Therefore, he concluded that Reuven, who followed the correct halachah, could completely ignore the cherem placed on him. However, he also concluded that since Shimon thought he was acting correctly, it is inappropriate to excommunicate him for his actions (Shu't HaRivash #34).

Yom Tov falls on Shabbos When Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, do we mention Yom Tov in the bracha Mei'ein Sheva?

The Gemara rules that when Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, the chazzan makes no mention of Yom Tov since on Yom Tov we do not recite this bracha (Shabbos 24b).

Reciting Mei'ein Sheva on Shabbos Yom Kippur Do we recite Mei'ein Sheva when Shabbos falls on Yom Kippur? Logically, there is a strong reason that we should not, since no one arrives that late to shul on Kol Nidrei night. Furthermore, the many piyutim recited allow ample time for someone to finish davening and not be left behind. Nevertheless, the poskim rule that we recite Mei'ein Sheva when Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos (Kolbo #70).

Conclusion The entire law of the bracha Magen Avos teaches a lesson of paramount importance in the powers of our traditions and the respect we show Chazal. The establishment of this bracha takes us back to a period of time thousands of years ago, and a set of circumstances when shullen were all located outside a town's boundaries. Yet, we continue to observe this mitzvah every Friday night, notwithstanding the fact that the reason for its establishment no longer exists and especially in a world where change has become a constant phenomenon, and opinions become obsolete almost more quickly than they come into style. Chazal's wisdom is timeless and eternal, giving the Jewish people a stability that the nations, as a whole, and every individual crave. One way of fulfilling our mission to be "a light unto the nations" is through following the words of Chazal, knowing that they are relevant in all times and all places.