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BS"D

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON YOM KIPUR - 5781

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**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

There is an old story that I find incredibly powerful, particularly as we approach Yom Kippur in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (which has been included in my Yom Kippur family educational resource -> <http://rabbisacks.info/2E0XMhR>).

One Yom Kippur, the Baal Shem Tov was praying together with his students, and he had a worrying sense that the prayers were not getting through, and the harsh heavenly decree against the Jewish people was not being overturned. As Ne'ila approached, and with it the final opportunity for the Jewish people to avert this harsh judgement, he and his students increased their fervour and passion in their prayers, but to no avail.

As the chazzan began the Ne'ila service a simple shepherd boy wandered into shul to pray. But he could barely read the letters of the Aleph-Beit, let alone say all the words in the machzor. Feeling helpless, he opened the first page of his machzor and recited: aleph, beit, veit, gimmel, daled. He said to God in his heart: "This is all I can do. God, You know how the prayers should be pronounced. Please, arrange the letters in the proper way."

Louder and louder, with more and more intensity he recited the letters. Hey, vav, zayin, chet... the people around him began to mutter, complaining he was disturbing their prayers. But the Baal Shem Tov immediately silenced them, and declared for everyone to hear that "because of this boy's prayers the gates to heaven are wedged open for the last few minutes of Yom Kippur, allowing our prayers in."

So it was on that Yom Kippur, that the simple, genuine prayers of a young shepherd boy who couldn't read, resounded powerfully within the Heavenly court, and saved the Jewish people.

This Yom Kippur, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Jews will not be able to pray in shul with a community. But don't think for one moment that because you can't be with a community, or because you can't read all the prayers, that your prayers don't count, or God doesn't want to hear them. They do, and He does. So, wherever you are, and however much you are able to pray, even if it is just the recitation of the Aleph-Beit, make it heartfelt and make it count.

Elaine and I wish you a G'mar chatima tova. May we, and the world, be sealed in the Book of Life for a year of blessing, peace and health. Amen.

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**In My Opinion Yom Kippur  
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

Yom Kippur is the quintessential and unique Jewish holy day of the year. All the other holidays that our God has given to us as a faith and as a people have their parallels in non-Jewish society. All societies have days of national independence, harvest festivals of Thanksgiving, celebrations of victories and historic moments of salvation and national preservation. Naturally, our holy days of this genre are far different than others, in that they are accompanied by specific biblical commandments as to how the day is to be commemorated and what holy rituals, special foods and unique prayer services are to be attached to and are an integral part of the commemoration of that day.

We can see that the concept behind these days such as Pesach, Shavuot, Succot, Chanuka and Purim have characteristics that are universal, that can be said to apply to other nations in the world. This is even true of Rosh Hashana. since every culture has some sort of day to begin the new year, whether it be on the solar or lunar calendar.

But Yom Kippur is different in every way and has no equal anywhere in human civilization or history. There is no other day on the calendar that commands the attention of Jews to the relationship between the God of Israel and the people of Israel, as does the day of Yom Kippur. The day of Yom

Kippur is a gift from God to the people of Israel, and in all the millennia of its existence it has remained an exclusively Jewish concept and holiday. The very concept of forgiveness per se is itself a novel and even surprising one. After all, whatever a person has done has a finality to it, and there always are consequences that are derived and emanate from human behavior. It is almost illogical to think that, somehow, the past can be undone, that wrongs can be righted, foolishness and sin are erased as though they never happened. These consequences are true in human terms.

Humans have the power to forgive, but never the power to retract or correct what was done before. But heaven is operating in a manner that is far beyond our understanding or our ability to judge. The unlimited power of the Almighty seems to include the retroactive ability to erase what happened before, and, the capacity to change the consequences that previous behavior may have ordained and were deemed to be immutable.

This idea is the expression of the will and mercy of heaven, extended to us as put forth in the words of the great prophet Yechezkel: "The Lord does not wish for the death of human beings due to their sins, but rather wishes that they repent of their evil ways and thereby live." The Lord is the master of second chances. This is a rare and uniquely Jewish idea. It opens the way for regrets and rehabilitation, restoration, and accomplishment. Without such ideas, and without such an understanding of the Creator, we would truly be bereft of hope and confidence in our future and in our very lives.

But this great gift must be earned. The Torah does not offer us a free lunch under any circumstances. Yom Kippur comes with a list of requirements, not just for the day, such as abstaining from food and drink etc., but it also requires a complete change of heart and attitude, and true regret on our part for the missteps of our past, and certainly of the past year.

We have all been sorely tested in this past year, with unexpected plagues and tragedies, and a complete change in our societal lives and even our economic fortunes. The events of the past year should certainly have humbled us and made us think twice before we again boast of our abilities and achievements. It, hopefully, has made us less arrogant and dampened our egos. And that should be viewed as a good thing, for the beginning of repentance is always the feeling of humility and a certain degree of helplessness. We are, after all, but flesh and blood, mortal and frightened, alone and powerless before forces over whom we exert no influence or power.

We can only ask the Lord that mercy and patience should be extended to us, and that we will try in this coming year to live up to the great challenges and demands that Jewish life imposes upon us. Additionally, that we will view these challenges and demands as opportunities, and not as negative trials.

Shabbat shalom

An easy fast to everyone

Berel Wein

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**Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message - Yom Kippur 5781-2020**

**"The Thrill of Coming Home"**

*(updated and revised from Yom Kippur 5761-2000)*

**Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

There are certain times in the Jewish calendar that are regarded as propitious times—שעות־כשר.

The month of Nissan, (which marks the Exodus from Egypt), is considered a propitious time for liberation and salvation. The month of Av, is a time to be wary and circumspect, since the two Temples were destroyed in that month.

Candle lighting time on Friday evening is looked upon as a particularly propitious time, especially to pray for one's family members and children. The heavens are believed to be especially receptive to the prayers of those who light Shabbat candles. Another particularly propitious time is under the chuppah, when G-d is considered to be extremely attentive to the prayers of the bride and groom. And, according to rabbinic tradition, the heavens open up on Shavuot night, exactly at Jewish midnight, and G-d listens to the prayers of petitioners with particular attentiveness. And, of course, the month of Elul and the early days of Tishrei are universally regarded as propitious times for Teshuvah, for repentance and return.

This year, on Sunday night, September 27th and Monday, September 28th we will mark the observance of Yom Kippur, the propitious time for forgiveness. There is a well-known dictum found in the Talmud in tractate Brachot 34b: מְקוֹם שֶׁבָּעָלֵי תְשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִין צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִין אֵינָם עוֹמְדִין. This statement is often translated as: In the place where penitents stand, even the most righteous, the greatest tzadikim, cannot stand. The sages labor over this perplexing statement, explaining that since a penitent is a person who has been tempted and has succumbed to sinfulness, the temptation for the penitent to commit the sin again is much greater than the tzadik who has never succumbed, and consequently has no such temptation.

There is a beautiful alternate explanation that is based on the following metaphor. Every human is connected or tied to G-d by a tether, or a divine "umbilical cord." When people sin grievously, this connection is severed, and they are left bereft, unattached from the Creator. However, when they repent sincerely, the connection is re-established, like a rope that is tied together again. However, now because of the knot, the connection is shorter. Consequently, when the rabbis declare that the penitent is closer to G-d than the person who never sinned, it is because after repentance their connection is closer.

Although one of the major themes of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is the coronation of G-d as our King—a very remote and, at times, intimidating concept, we still refer to G-d in our High Holy day prayers as Aveinu Malkainu, not only our king, but Our Father, Our King.

There is a n enchanting song entitled "The Arrogant Prince", that is found on the record Wayward Ram, composed by Chaim Salenger. The song, based on a story taken from Rabbi Isaac Blazer's classic book "Kochav Ohr," is used to demonstrate the meaning of the phrase, "Our father, our King, hear our voice, pity and be compassionate to us," found in the Aveinu Malkenu prayer recited on both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

There once was a King  
And the King had a son  
And the son was a clever but  
arrogant prince.  
And the prince would often act in open disdain.  
And the King wanted hard to ignore it,  
But in vain was the burden he bore,  
So they banished the prince from the palace,  
Though still what he wore  
Were his royal robes.

Well, the prince went in search  
Of somewhere to begin,  
And he came to a town,  
But he felt out of place,  
For the men were all miners,  
And he a noble man.  
With his long royal robes  
and his soft royal face.  
And they made him  
an honorary miner,  
Digging down in some forsaken hole,  
But the robes that  
were once much finer,  
Turned black as the coal  
And badly tattered.  
So then, thought the prince,  
"I am far too elite,  
I must dress and behave  
Like the common folk do."  
So he let grow his hair  
And he drank and he cursed,  
And became like the others,  
though possibly worse.  
But the King had a  
change of heart one day,  
And he longed for his wandering son.  
So somehow they finally found him,  
But strangely enough,  
He'd forgotten who he was.  
Well there stood the prince  
In his black tattered robes,  
Waiting out in the  
cold saying, "Please let me in."  
And the guard took one look  
At this strange

ragged man, And said, "I know the prince, And buddy, you are not him." But the King heard the noise in the palace, And the pleading and the cries of someone, And he called to the guard, "Let him in, Let him in, let him in; That's the voice of my son."

Aveinu Malkenu Our Father our King, Please hear our voice, Please let us in. And though we are ragged, And though we are wrong all along, We know it is true, Aveinu Malkenu.

Aveinu Malkenu, Our Father our King, Please hear our voice, Please let us in. And though we are strangers, Deep in our voice is the cry Of your wandering son. Aveinu Malkenu, Our Father our King.

The the Kotzker Rebbe was once asked, "Where do you find G-d?" He answered: "Vu m'lust ehm arein," Where you let Him in! Let us allow G-d to enter our hearts and penetrate our very being, so that we may truly deserve G-d's forgiveness, so that we may truly be worthy of having peace prevail in the land of Israel and in our own lives. May we all merit, this year-5781, to be inscribed for a wonderful year, and be blessed with peace and with long, happy and healthy lives. May you be blessed.

*Please note: Yom Kippur will be observed this year on Sunday evening, September 27th through nightfall on Monday, September 28, 2020. Have a most meaningful fast. May we all be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life, and may all our prayers be answered favorably.*

*The first days of Sukkot will be observed this year on Friday evening and all day Saturday and Sunday, October 2, 3 and 4, 2020. The intermediary days [Chol HaMoed] are observed through Friday, October 9th. On Friday evening, the festival of Shemini Atzeret commences, and is celebrated on Saturday, October 10th. The final day of the festival, Simchat Torah, begins on Saturday evening, October 10th and continues through Sunday, October 11th. May you be blessed.*

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from: Esplanade Capital jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com  
date: Sep 25, 2020, 12:55 AM  
subject: Rabbi Reisman's Yom Kippur Shiurim

### **Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Ha'azinu - Yom Kippur 5781**

#### **1 - Topic - A thought on Al Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha B'oneis U'biratzon.**

As we prepare for Shabbos Shuva - Parshas Ha'azinu in a very trying and challenging year. We are going to say Al Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha B'oneis U'biratzon. I would like to suggest a Pshat in this Al Cheit which is particularly relevant for this year.

Many have asked why we say Al Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha B'oneis. After all, if somebody is an Oneis there is no punishment. Un'sa K'man Lo Avid. When there is somebody who is Over an Aveira B'oneis it is like he didn't do any Aveira. Why do we need to ask for Kappara on a Cheit that we did B'oneis?

In the Yeshiva this year we are learning Maseches Kesubos. On the top Tosafos on Gimmel Amud Aleph the Hafla says a Klal. I would add that this Klal is mentioned in the Beis Halevi on Parshas Shemos as well. The Klal that the Hafla says has to do with somebody who is an Oneis. Somebody who is guiltless in something that takes place. The Hafla says that the excuse of Oneis is only good if absent the Oneis the person would not have done what happened.

In the particular case in the Gemara as many of you will recall, a person gave a Get on a condition that if he returns within 30 days it is not a Get. The Gemara tells a story of a man who came back at the end of 30 days and he was stuck on the other side of the river. The normal ferry that took him across was not available and he was screaming (bottom of 2b) (זו דאתא יזו) look I am coming. I am coming. So the Gemara says that he is an Oneis, that it is as if he came. His not coming doesn't count. After all, he is an Oneis.

Says the Hafla, that the Gemara is telling us that he is screaming (זו דאתא יזו) look I am trying to come, for a reason. Had he decided in the morning that he is not coming and subsequently found out that the ferry sunk and he couldn't come anyway and then he would want to come later and say look I didn't come yesterday it wasn't my fault. I was an Oneis, I couldn't come. That would not be an excuse. The rule is you can't use the excuse of Oneis in a case where you didn't want to come anyway, where you didn't want to do it anyway. This is the Klal of the Hafla.

The Beis Halevi says it about a Mechaleil Shabbos. He talks about somebody who is always Mechaleil Shabbos. He says even if one Shabbos he did Melacha to save someone's life, he will be punished for that Melacha. He can't say I was an Oneis because it was Pikuach Nefashos. This is because he would have done it even if it were not Pikuach Nefashos.

Rav Pam used to mention this in regard to someone who is let us say going to work and he only has a few hours a day to Learn. If he learns those hours so he can have an excuse for the other hours that he is an Oneis because he has got to go to work to support his family as he doesn't have money. But if even the other hours he doesn't go, then he has no excuse of Oneis.

Al Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha B'oneis U'biratzon. The Aveiros that we do B'oneis because we couldn't help it. But it was B'oneis Biratzon. It was an Oneis but even had it not been an Oneis we would be guilty B'ratzon for having done that anyway. There is no excuse of Oneis if absent the Oneis you wouldn't care.

This year during the Corona lockdown, many of us were Anusim. We weren't at Minyan. There were other Mitzvos, learning in our house is not the same as learning in the Shul. There were many excuses that would seem to be very valid excuses. But those excuses are only good excuses to the extent that when the excuse goes away we embrace the Mitzvos that we missed. We embrace the Beis Hamedrash that we missed. We come back, we head back enthusiastically. Only in that case does a person have an excuse that he is an Oneis. Al Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha B'oneis U'biratzon. There were some Onsim that were Ratzon. We were missing that which we could have had. For that we need to be able to do Teshuva.

#### **2 - Topic - A thought on how we end Yom Kippur - Hashem Hu Ha'elokim**

I would like to move on to a second very relevant Vort. By relevant I mean not only as a Vort but also as a Halacha L'mayseh. We end Yom Kippur with Hashem Hu Ha'elokim, Hashem Hu Ha'elokim. We end with the cry Hashem Hu Ha'elokim. What happened?

At Har Hacarmel Eliyahu miraculously brought down fire from heaven and the people were moved and said as is found in Melachim I 18:39 (וַיִּרְדּוּ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּאמְרוּ אֵלֵיהֶם לָמָּה תִּפְשׁוּ אֶת-נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה הַאֲלֹהִים הַזֵּה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים). The Posuk says 18:40 (וַיִּזְרְדוּ אֵלֵיהֶם אֵל-גִּהֹן קִישׁוֹן, וַיִּשְׁחָטוּם שָׁם (הַבְּעֵל, אִישׁ אֶל-יְמִלְט מֵהֶם--וַיִּתְּפְשׂוּם; וַיִּזְרְדוּ אֵלֵיהֶם אֵל-גִּהֹן קִישׁוֹן, וַיִּשְׁחָטוּם שָׁם) and they took the priests of the Bal (of the Avoda Zora) and they killed them. Why do we end with this?

The Hamon Am, the general populous understands of course we end with it. The people did Teshuva. It was an incredible moment of Teshuva. They were

Ovdei HaBal and they saw clearly that G-d exists and they said Hashem Hu Ha'elokim and this is all wonderful.

However, as always with Divrei Chazal there is something much more significant. Because if you learn the story of Eliyahu Hanavi, if you learn at the end of Melachim Aleph. What happened to him? Within 10 Pesukim of Har Hacarmel Eliyahu is running for his life. Ezevel is after him. The Jewish people are not protecting him at all. 19:3 (וַיָּבֵא, בָּאֵר שֶׁבַע אֲשֶׁר לַיהוָה). The Posuk says he ran to Be'er Sheva. Do you know where Be'er Sheva is? Be'er Sheva is not only not in the 10 Shevatim, he ran through Yehuda down to the desert of the Negev to get away from Ezevel. One person accompanied him. Chad Nar. He was all alone. The Teshuva of Har Hacarmel did not last.

The Rambam in the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> Perek of Yesodei Hatorah says (שהמאמין על פי האותות דפי) somebody who believes because of miracles (יש בלבו) it is not an Emunah that stays. Eliyahu did a miracle. There was a momentary inspiration. It didn't last.

The Rambam cites Moshe Rabbeinu by the Sneh in Shemos 4:1 (וְהָן לֹא-יֵאֱמִינוּ) Moshe Rabbeinu showed them miracles. He turned a stick into a snake, he turned his hand into Tzaras, turned water into blood. (וְהָן לֹא-יֵאֱמִינוּ לֵי). V'kach Hava, Moshe Rabbeinu comes and they believe him at the moment and by the time he gets to Pharoh they all (like Rashi says at the end of Shemos), they all fell away. So what does Hashem say? Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu in Shemos 3:12 (וְזָה-לְךָ הָאוֹת, כִּי אֶנֶכִּי שֶׁלְהַתִּיד: בְּהוֹצִיאֶךָ אֶת-הַעָם, ) (מִמִּצְרַיִם, תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים, עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה know when they will believe? When they are Mekabeil the Torah, when they see the Torah, when they understand the Torah, when they are Machshiv Torah, that is when they will come to believe. Not through the Osos and the Mofsim. So that Har Hacarmel didn't last.

Now hold on a minute you are going to tell me. What is going on? If Har Hacarmel didn't last why are we saying Hashem Hu Ha'elokim reminiscent of Har Hacarmel? The answer is very important. It is the message with which we leave Yom Hakippurim. Har Hacarmel they were sincere, they really meant to do Teshuva. They meant it sincerely. But it didn't last. It was an inspiration and nothing was taken from that. So we get up and we say Hashem Hu Ha'elokim, we are sincere. But we remember our mistake of the past. We remember that in the past it didn't stick. The assumption was Har Hacarmel it will stick by itself. No! It is what you make of it. It is what you do with it. It is where you go with it. You have to go someplace with it and make it real, make it stick, make it germane.

A much deeper lesson of Hashem Hu Ha'elokim. A much more challenging and demanding way to step out of Yom Hakippurim. Hashem Hu Ha'elokim, Hashem Hu Ha'elokim. Now you are challenged. Make something of it. Like that one Nar who accompanied Eliyahu Hanavi. I don't know who he was but Zechoro Harbei Me'od.

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Transforming Our Sins

We have a very old minhag which dates back at least to the days of the Geonim to begin our observance of Yom Kippur with the reciting of Kol Nidrei. The older text of Kol Nidrei was based on the assumption that the chazzan, together with the two people standing at his sides, constitutes a beis din to be matir the nedarim which we all took over the course of the past year (from last Yom Kippur to this Yom Kippur.)

What is the special connection between hatoras nedarim and Yom Kippur?

Several explanations have been given, the most famous of which is as follows: when a husband or a father is maifer the nedarim of his wife or

daughter, the neder was in effect up until the time that he declares the ha'forah, and only from that moment and on is the neder is no longer in force (Nazir 21b.) Beis din can be matir a neder, and the Gemorah (Kesubos 74b) asks how are they the baalei batim over my neder to declare it as null and void? The answer is that the beis din paskens that the neder was taken in error (b'ta'us) and therefore was never binding in the first place. The reason for this retroactive uprooting is that the individual never would have made the neder to begin with had he realized how difficult life would be or how uncomfortable things would be because of it, and therefore the beis din has the right to declare the neder to be a neder b'tous - a neder made in error. The definition of ta'us with respect to nedarim is not the same as the definition of ta'us with respect to a purchase or a marriage. If a couple gets married and after many years realize that they are not for each other, they cannot declare their marriage to have been a kiddushei ta'us. Similarly, if one buys shares in a corporation and the value of the shares goes down, he cannot declare that as a mekach ta'us (see Making a Farce of the Halacha.) Everyone knows that marriages and businesses have their ups and downs. Only with respect to nedarim does the Chumash tell us that we have a different definition of ta'us. The Torah uses the expression "l'chol asher yi'vatei ha'adom b'shvua" which the Gemorah (Shavuos 26a) understands to imply, "h'adom b'shvua, prat l'anus - to the exclusion of a shevuah or a neder made in error. Regarding neder we work with a different definition of ta'us.

This retroactive uprooting is the connection to Yom Kippur. The Gemorah (Yoma 86b) tells us that a person who does teshuva mai'yirah can accomplish that the aveiros that he violated b'meidid should be considered as if they were only violated b'shogeig, while one who does teshuva mai'ahava will accomplish that the aveiros that he violated b'meidid will be considered as if they were mitzvos. Just like regarding heter nedarim the beis din has the ability to undo the neder such that it is considered as if it was never binding in the first place, teshuva also has the ability to undo aveiros even though the aveiros were done many years before.

How is this possible? Rav Yosef Engel (Otzros Yosef, drush #3) suggests the following explanation: The navi, both in the words of this week's haftorah as well as in other pesukim, tells us, "shuva Yisroel ad Hashem Elokecha", i.e. that one who does teshuva has the ability to come closer to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Time itself is part of creation so by definition Hashem is above time since he is not part of creation but rather He is The Creator. Once an individual achieves closeness to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, he too, in a certain sense, is above time and therefore can he undo the aveirah today that he violated years ago; he is no longer limited by time! His teshuva makes it as if that at the time that he did the aveira b'meidid it was really b'shogeig or a mitzva.

The Gemorah (Shabbos 118b) tells us also that one who will be careful to observe Shabbos properly stands a better chance of having his aveiros forgiven if he does teshuva. This idea is conveyed in the Shabbos zemiros when we say "kol shomer Shabbos kados mei'chalilu", where the word mei'chalilo has the connotation of mochul lo, that his sins will be forgiven. What is special about Shabbos that it has the ability to bring about mechilas avonos? Rav Yosef Engel quotes kaballah sources to explain that from the very outset of sheishes yemei bereishis Hashem created the concept of time, but at the conclusion of the six days of creation Hashem instituted his Shabbos which gives us the ability to come closer to Hashem and return to the pre-creation status of lema'alah min ha'zeman. It is that ability to be lemaalah min hazman that enables B'nei Yisroel to undo the aveiros ex post facto. The umos ha'olam also have the ability to do teshuva, as is evidenced from sefer Yonah, but this concept of being okeir aveiros l'mafreiah, which is

similar to the beis din's ability to be matir nedarim l'mafreiah, is reserved only for Benei Yisroel.

<http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-52-Sept-22-2020.pdf>

It is customary that one who need not recite Yizkor exit the room while others are reciting this Tefi llah. If the Rabbi is concerned of overcrowding in the hallwalls and a lack of social distancing, everyone may remain in the shul for Yizkor. However, those who will not be reciting Yizkor must be respectful of those who are, and they must make sure to use the time either to recite additional Tefi llos or to recite Yizkor for the many martyrs of recent Jewish history.

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

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

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

1. Shuls that must abridge Davening due to Covid-19 ... all Piyutim in Chazaras HaShatz on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur may be omitted; Viduy and the Avoda on Yom Kippur may not be omitted. Hineni may be said by the chazan quietly.

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

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

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

### ***Drasha - Call to Arms***

#### ***Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky***

*Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya*

Yom Kippur, the ultimate day of repentance, has the Jewish nation simultaneously praying, fasting and asking for forgiveness. It begins with the somber, quiet, and melodious intonation of Kol Nidrei and ends with the entire congregation shouting Hashem hu HaElokim (G-d is the Al-Mighty) seven times after various requests of forgiveness. It seems that at the time when our strength is waning our greatest and loudest pleas are spent. Shouldn't we begin the day with the strong requests for forgiveness and save the subdued prayers for when our bodies are weak from hunger and our lips parched from lack of water?

Rav Eichenstein, the Ziditchover Rebbe, tells the following story:

One Friday, a man entered the study of the Tchoortkover Rebbe with a request that was very common in those days.

"My son was drafted into the army," the man began. "However, we have a way out. On Sunday, we are going to a doctor who will falsely declare him unfit for service. This way he will be spared certain misery, perhaps even

death in that terrible army. Rebbe," he asked, "I need your blessing that he evade the draft."

The Rebbe quietly told him that Shabbos was nearing and he could not concentrate on blessings. The man should return to him on Friday evening after his tisch (ceremonious chasidic table).

The man did so. After most of the chasidim had left, the man repeated his request, almost verbatim. Again the Rebbe was non-committal. "Return to me after the morning service."

Unperturbed, the man noted that he would really like to resolve this matter before Sunday morning.

Shabbos morning, after services, the man approached the Rebbe again. Calmly he repeated the predicament. "Sunday morning I am going to a doctor who will falsely declare my son unfit for military service. Please pray that we will evade conscription." The Rebbe was not moved. Again, he deferred until the afternoon.

At the third Shabbos meal, the scene repeated again, precisely the way it had the previous three times. "I understand that you are leaving Sunday morning. Come back to me late Saturday night," said the Rebbe. "By then I will have an answer for you."

By this time, his Chasidim's curiosity was piqued. They had never seen their Rebbe so reluctant to mete a blessing, especially when it was one that would save a Jewish soul from the frightful Polish army.

Saturday night a large crowd gathered as the man approached with his request. Frustrated and disgruntled, the man, once again, repeated his story, almost verbatim, for the fifth time.

Immediately, the Rebbe sprung from his chair and began to shout. "What are you asking me? Why would one even try to evade the service of our wonderful country? How dare you ask me for a blessing of that sort? Your son would make a fine soldier for our country. I wish him the best of luck in the army!"

The man quickly scurried from the room and left town. The Chasidim stood shocked and bewildered. Never had they heard such an uncharacteristic outcry from the Rebbe.

"I will explain," said the Rebbe. "The man was a fraud. He had no son, and if he did, he wanted him in the army. He was sent by the government to test our loyalty. Thank G-d we passed the test."

"But, Rebbe!" cried the chasidim, "how did you know?"

"Simple," explained the Rebbe. "I watched the level of intensity. From the moment he met me until tonight there was no increase in intensity nor feeling of desperation with each request. The moment I heard his request tonight and it contained no more passion or desperation than his first request on Friday night, I knew he was a fraud."

We stand a whole entire day in prayer, and end with a ne'ilah prayer, after nearly 24 hours of pleading. The litmus test of our sincerity comes as the heavenly gates are being closed. As the sun begins to set, our pleas should intensify. That crescendo assures our sincerity. It also should assure us a Happy & Healthy Sweet New Year.

*Dedicated by Larry Atlas in honor of his engagement to Marcia Taitelman  
Good Shabbos!*

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*Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky: is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.  
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Teshuva: Another Day is Not Promised

Rabbi Judah Kerbel

Queens Jewish Center

Teshuva: Another Day is Not Promised Yom Kippur – Yizkor 5781 Jerry Givens was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1952. He remained a Virginian his whole life. Much of his career was spent in a line of work that one does not encounter on a daily basis: he worked for the Virginia State Penitentiary as a guard and became the chief executioner of the state. Yes, he personally carried out the death penalty. A total of sixty - two times, Givens killed state prisoners condemned to death. Thirty - seven of those instances were by pushing the button of an electric chair, and twenty - five of those instances were through lethal injection. However, at the end of his seventeen - year career in this role, Givens had a change of heart. He nearly presided over the execution of a person who was found to be innocent, thankfully before the punishment was carried out. As a result, he became a strong activist, lobbying lawmakers to oppose the death penalty. Givens, in fact, became known as one of the United States' fiercest critics of capital punishment. Another Day is Not Promised is the title of the book Givens wrote professing his philosophy of life and death. He is a man of faith. Every day, when he woke up, he would touch his Bible and thank God for another day. God is our employer, Givens wrote. In Pirkei Avot, we learn that "time is short, the work is great, the workers are lazy, and the employer chastises." Indeed, Givens has his own conception of being an 'עבד ה', a servant of God. Givens learned the importance of life that God grants us every day – we are given a series of twenty - four - hour days, and each of these days includes "death." We therefore have to thank God when we wake up every morning because another day is not promised. This concept is apparent in many brachot we say – Elokai Neshama each morning, and Modim in every Shemoneh Esrei. Our souls are deposits with God and are returned to us each day we are alive. What particularly reminded Givens the importance of gratitude for life is that he began to realize how each individual executed lost their chance for repentance. Each day is an opportunity to repent, and we must take that opportunity because another day is not promised. He himself spent time in prison after his career as an executioner, and his time in jail empowered him even more to take advantage of every moment to be one of repentance. Rabbi Eliezer teaches us in Pirkei Avot (2:10): שוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך – repent one day before your death. According to the Avot D'Rabbi Natan, his students immediately objected – how can one know when one is going to pass away? The answer, Rabbi Eliezer said, is obvious: we must do teshuva every single day. Of course, we do not know when we will die. However, if we live with the possibility that tomorrow may be our last day, we will be sure to do teshuva while we still have the opportunity, as teshuva can only be done in this world. This is a difficult concept to live by. It is one thing to remind a person who perhaps is coming closer to encountering death to work on teshuva. But if a person lives 120 years, are they really going to be focused on teshuva every single day? It is hard to do this if we do not feel an imminent threat. Tiferet Yisrael, a commentary on Pirkei Avot, points out that the reason why the Mishnah did not say "repent today, for you might die," is because if we feel fine today, we have no reason to suspect that we will die tomorrow. But the same thing is true here – if we feel fine today, we assume we will be fine tomorrow! And yet, this is the reminder that another day is not promised. While admittedly, full engagement with teshuva on a daily basis is a great challenge. But at the same time, we must not forget that there is night that stands between today and tomorrow, and our souls are loaned to us by God each day. Moreover, if we think all is indefinitely open - ended, we will never remember not to take life for granted. The tradition of Rabbi Eliezer's teaching at least allows us to give pause to the idea, if we do not fully embed it into our consciousness, that we can only go so long taking it for granted that we can live life correctly and fix our mistakes. If we procrastinate and let it go too long, we will overestimate how much time we have. God will wait for us, as we say in Unetaneh Tokef – עד יום מותו תחכה לו, אם ישוב מיד תקבלו. God will wait for our teshuva – God wants our teshuva, God is הרוצה בתשובה. But if another day is not necessarily promised, we ought to not wait until it is too late! The mandate to be engaged in teshuva every day and to live meaningfully every day goes against the popular phrase "YOLO" – you only live once – as used by youth. "YOLO" is often an excuse to engage in unseemly activities because you will only get one opportunity to do "crazy" things. Instead, Yom Kippur and the mandate for daily teshuva remind us that living every day is a gift, not a given. We must see each day as our only opportunity to live, so we should do it right, walking in God's path. YOLO – it is time for teshuva, every single day. What was the ultimate fate of Jerry Givens? He passed away due to COVID - 19 on April 13, during the peak of the crisis in the United States. The irony of his philosophy of life is that he succumbed to an illness that came and killed swiftly. So many people like him were alive and well just weeks beforehand, only to

lose their life unexpectedly to a lethal disease. An important lesson of this pandemic is that in fact, another day is not promised. As is described in Unetaneh Tokef, we do not know who will be struck by plague in the weeks and months to come. We never know when a novel but deadly force of nature will come at us. But Givens would not want us to despair at this thought. Instead, he would beg us to strengthen ourselves all the more so to value life and appreciate the chance of every day. To remember what our values are and to live by them. To use every moment available to serve God. To see each and every day as a prospect for becoming better people. To live with an attitude of gratitude. In thinking about it, it is quite strange that we say Shehechyanu on Yom Kippur. Are we full of joy that our fate is on the line? But Givens has reminded us the true meaning of this bracha: We are ever grateful to God for yet another Yom Kippur in which we are able to complete the process of teshuva. We are grateful that a year has passed and that we still have another chance at life. When we are aware that another year is not promised, we have greater appreciation for that gift. We made it through a frightening six months, and we are here to give gratitude for the life that we can still improve and enhance. As we recite Yizkor, we pay tribute and respect to those we love who are no longer with us. Especially this Yom Kippur, the first time we are saying Yizkor in person since the pandemic began, we remember those who did not receive the opportunity to live to this moment. So many different stories have been published about those who the world has lost since March. What were their contributions to life? What can we learn from them in order to make each of our days count? Take time between now and the Yizkor we will recite on Shemini Atzeret to research the stories of Jews and non - Jews alike who passed away before their time. What would they have done for an extra day? We, who have been given that extra day, must not let it pass. While we do not know what our last day is – and may it not be soon – we have this moment that we are in right now to gain a new opportunity for teshuva and coming closer to God. Another day is not promised – what will we do to make that day count? As we remember our loved ones, we reflect on their strengths and contributions and incorporate them into our way of life. We remind ourselves to live up to their legacy – to perform acts that would make them proud. Their memories serve as guideposts for how we can make sure that we live every day purposefully, learning from their triumphs and trials. The lessons we learn from them can help us make today the best day we can have. As we remember our loved ones who have passed on, we also remember the importance of nurturing the relationships we have with our loved ones who are still here. There is not enough time in life to put off our most important relationships. We must not allow ourselves to create the potential for regret that we did not spend more time or do more to help the people most important to us. Another day is not promised – it is not too early to reach out and call. What we can learn from Jerry Givens and Rabbi Eliezer is that when we wake up and say Modeh Ani, what is the one thing I will do today to have made today worthwhile? What mitzvah, whether between God and me or between another person and me, will I do today to have made myself more complete than I was yesterday? What opportunity for teshuva is attainable for me today? May we have the wisdom and strength to work to make each and every moment count. May God accept our teshuva with love on this Yom Kippur and at every moment in which we live the opportunity of today.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/287913>

### Rabbi Baruch Efrati

#### Preparing for Yom Kippur:

It is a positive commandment from the Torah to do Teshuva to Hashem via confession (viduy) of the things we have done wrong and express regret. We should also take upon ourselves never to commit the sin again (דברים ל', (רמב"ם הל' תשובה).

How does one do teshuva? First comes the realization that one has sinned, then one confesses in words to Hashem, abandons the sin and does not repeat it in the present time, regrets it cognitively, is shamed by it emotionally, and resolves not to repeat it in the future.

For Mitzvot that are Ben Adam LeMakom, you have to confess to Hashem and not to detail your wrongdoings to other people (יומא פ). For Mitzvot that are Ben Adam LeChavero, you must confess and apologize to the person you have wronged as well as confess and apologize to Hashem.



If you have hurt your friend and your friend is unaware of it, for example, you spoke Lashon Hara about him, if the friend will not be hurt any further by knowing of the sin, you should apologize to him. If you think that your friend will be insulted and hurt by knowing about what you have done, do not ask for forgiveness (ממשמעות המג"א תר"ו, וכסברת ר' ישראל סלנט).

It is best to be stringent when it comes to Kashrut during Aseret Yemei Teshuva, for example, you should refrain from eating לחם של נכרי and נכרי (bread baked by non-Jews and milk not supervised by Jews). This also goes for those who are more lenient about this on all other days of the year (ראבי"ה בשם ירושלמי שבת פ"ג).

Preparing the synagogue in light of the pandemic

If it is permissible/possible to turn the women's section of the synagogue into a capsule for men, that should not be done and the women's section should be for women (Rabbi Dov Lior shlita). There are those who say women should be told to pray at home so that their prayer section can be used for a mens capsule because men must pray in a minyan and women do not have to do so (Rabbi Neventsals shlita).

In any case, it is important to prevent arguments and bad feelings that could result from disagreement over this issue.

It is against halakha to turn on, broadcast or view zoom during Yom Kippur.

It is forbidden to use a microphone of any kind in shul. One should not turn off the mobile phone if there is any chance that he has been exposed to the corona virus and is liable to receive a call concerning the need to go into isolation (Rabbi Lior and Neventsals).

Halakha mandates obeying all the Health Ministry rules concerning the lockdown.

Erev Yom Kippur:

'Kapparot' – Many of the big poskim have decided that it is best not to engage in the practice of Kapparot as there might be some suggestion of idolatry (רמב"ן ורשב"א בשו"ת ח"א שצה, וכן בשו"ע תרה). Although, it is our custom to do Kapparot on a chicken or on money. (It was Rashi's custom to do Kapparot on a vegetable but we should not do it any differently from what we have customarily done. (רמ"א ומג"א תרה). One can use a credit card for Kapparot after making a donation with it, by circling it overhead as with money.

If one does kapparot with a credit card say "ze haschum yelec litzdaka" – this is the amount that will be donated to charity.

Immersing in the Mikve (רא"ש יומא פ"ה כד בשם רס"ג) - We do not recite a Bracha on the immersion (רא"ש שם, שלא כרס"ג).

Ritual immersion is dependent on what is allowed by the Health Ministry. If immersion is not allowed, a long shower of 9 kabin (4 minutes of a medium water flow) is a substitute. This does not apply to women whose ritual immersion is for the purposes of family purity and who must go to a kosher mikva which functions according to Health Ministry instructions.

It is a positive commandment from the Torah to eat as much as you can on this day, especially delicacies (יומא פא, רא"ש שם, שו"ע תרד ומשנ"ב סק"א, ולא) (כרמב"ם). There are those who explain that the Torah is trying to make the fast easier for us with food (ב"ה תר"ד). And there are those who say that Torah is trying to make this day a little harder (ערוה"ש תר"ד).

Mincha is davened early, before the Seudat Mafseket. During Mincha, Viduy, confession of sins, is said during the silent prayer, but not during its repetition, Chazarat Hashatz. We do not say Avinu Malkeinu. (The Sephardi minhag is to say it)

A person praying on his own does not say the 13 attributes in slichot, although he is allowed to read them with cantillation as if reading the Torah (Rabbi Lior and Neventsals).

We light candles with a Bracha (...shel Yom HaKippurim) and we say Shehechyanu, as is written in the Machzor. In addition, one should light a yahrtzeit candle, so that Havdala is recited on a candle that has been lit all day.

The father (and there are some whose custom it is also for the mother) blesses the sons and daughters, as is written in the Machzor. The children are supposed to kiss the parents' hands following the Bracha (כתבי האר"י). Men should wrap themselves in their Tallit before sundown with a Bracha. There is a custom to wear a kittel so that we appear as the angels do and to remind us of the seriousness of this day (יום המיתה) and encourage us to do Teshuva.

Tefillat Zaka is said before Kol Nidrei by Ashkenazim.

If davening takes place in an open area, and a person is afraid that he might have to break his fast because he might find himself in danger healthwise, he should stay at home to daven without the outdoor minyan. If someone feels the heat outside prevents him from concentrating on his davening properly, he should pray at home by himself. (Rav Lior and Rav Neventsals)

Someone davening alone at home should arrange to say the amida (the silent prayer, shmoneh esrey) at the time he thinks it will be said in the shul he davens in regularly (Rabbi Lior and Neventsals) and it is considered as if he were davening with a minyan.

Halakhot of the Fast:

The fast starts at night (ויקרא כ"ג).

On Yom Kippur, refrain from 5 things: eating and drinking, washing, anointing, wearing leather and marital relations between husband and wife (גמ' יומא, פ"א ה"ד). According to the רא"ש they are all Rabbinical prohibitions, aside from eating and drinking, but according to the Rambam they are all prohibitions from the Torah.

You are prohibited from doing any creative work (Melacha) on Yom Kippur (including lighting a flame from another flame, normally allowed on a holiday)

Women who have given birth, are pregnant, are weak or who have difficulty standing, are permitted to wash as they normally do – not for pleasure but for health and cleanliness reasons only (רמב"ם פ"ג ק"ב ערוה"ש תריג"ט).

For those who have a hard time fasting, you are permitted to chew flavorless gum on Yom Kippur (ממשמעות מג"א תקס"ז, וכה"ח החמיר שם אפילו בבליעת רוק). A person who has been diagnosed with corona may wash his entire body if necessary (Rabbi Lior and Neventsals).

Avoid bathing and washing for pleasure (שו"ע תריג) but washing for cleanliness purposes is permitted (ראשוני, מג"א שם סק"א).

Washing for cleanliness which is also pleasurable (for example, washing one's dirty face with warm water) is prohibited (רמב"ם שם ס"ד).

Washing one's hands with antibacterial substances such as alcogel is allowed and is not in the category of forbidden anointing or washing (Rabbi Lior and Neventsals)

It is best not to put on deodorant on Yom Kippur. But, if it will disturb you or others greatly if you do not put on deodorant, you can use spray, but not a solid or cream deodorant.

There are those who are stringent and say that it is best not to wear Crocs or Shores sandals because of their comfort level (ע"פ שער"ת תקנד סק"א, ומשנ"ב) (שם סק"ה), however, according to the law, it is permissible and that is what the custom has become (ערוך השולחן שם ס"ה).

One should avoid touching one's spouse at night, but it is permissible during the daytime. (ט"ז תרטו סק"א, ערוה"ש תרטו ס"א, ושלא כמג"א ומשנ"ב שהחמירו).

If it is necessary, you can bathe your children on Yom Kippur, in tepid water. Take care not to use warmer water. (ב"ה ומג"א תרטו סק"א ומשנ"ב שם).

Children who have not yet reached Bar or Bat Mitzvah age do not have to fast, but it is customary to have them fast a little for educational purposes (boys from the age of 12, and girls from the age of 11 fast) (ב"ה ומג"א) (ססק"ב).

Those who are exempt from fasting:

A woman who is pregnant, no matter what stage of pregnancy she is in, who experiences severe headaches, is permitted to drink water in 'shiurim', and if that is not enough for her, she may drink a large amount.

A pregnant woman who experiences repeated contractions or whose water has broken, can drink without 'shiurim', even if she does not have a headache.

A woman who has given birth 3 days prior to Yom Kippur, is prohibited from fasting (שו"ע תריו ס"ד)

A woman who has given birth seven days prior to Yom Kippur, if she or her doctor feel she must eat, is permitted to eat in 'shiurim'. If that is not enough, she is permitted to eat as she chooses. (בת קכט. ושו"ע תריו ס"ד)

A woman who is nursing and who is worried that she will have less milk for the baby because of the fast, is permitted to drink in 'shiurim' (תורת היולדת) (בשם הזו"א, עדות הגר"א נבנצל בשם הגר"ש"ז שו"ת או נדברו ח"ט) (Machmir (stringent) if the child is willing to drink formula (ט).

Medical staff in the corona wards, who wear protective masks that cause them to perspire – and feel they are not working up to par because of the fast, or feel weak or less professionally able, drink "shiurim" (Rabbis Lior and Neventsahl)

A sick person who is in danger (חולה בסכנה) can eat and drink immediately, as well as someone whose classification of sick and in danger is doubted.

This person does not have to go around searching for a Rav to ask whether or not he is permitted to eat. He should eat right away. (ויקרא יה, יומא פב, שו"ע) (תריה ס"ה)

A sick person who is not in danger but feels that because of the fast, he might become in danger, is permitted to eat in 'shiurim'. (שו"ע תריה ס"א) Whoever eats and drinks in "shiurim" should eat the volume of a matchbox every seven minutes (שו"ע תריה ס"ה), and should drink the amount of less than the water held in one cheek. (שו"ע תריה ס"ז)

For the average person, this is about a fifth of a plastic cup or 40 cc every 7 minutes (Rav Lior) . it is preferable to drink nourishing liquid. (Shulkhan Aruch) and some say every 5 minutes (Rabbi Lior)

It is preferable to eat foods that are sweet and healthy. In a case where eating /drinking in shiurim every 7 minutes is not enough (שעת הדחק) one can do so every 4 minutes. If there is a need to drink more (drink only) one can drink in shiurim in 1 minute intervals this is still better than drinking as usual.

(כשיטת הרמב"ם שביה"ע פ"ב, וב"י תרי"ב- כרביעית הלוג)

A sick person who is not in danger is permitted to take medication (pills) without water (אג"מ אר"ה ח"ג צ"א)

A sick person who is not in danger must fast normally. This includes people who experience regular headaches, general weakness, and other such symptoms. If in doubt, ask one of the doctors in the neighborhood.

A person in isolation fasts regularly (Rabbis Lior and Neventsahl)

A person in isolation who is beginning to develop symptoms of the coronavirus must drink shiurim (Rabbi Neventsahl) and some say that if he feels well he should call his doctor or medical center on Yom Kippur and drink only if they instruct him to do so (Rabbi Lior)

A person who had the virus and was moderately to very ill, but recovered, eats and drinks shiurim if Yom Kippur is within 3 months from the day he recovered. (Rav Lior)

Someone who is permitted to eat on Yom Kippur does not make Kiddush , but he should add Yaale VeYavo during grace after meals (שו"ע תריה ס"י). One who eats on Yom Kippur for medical reasons is permitted to receive Aliyot LaTorah except for Maftir and Mincha (שו"ת רעק"א סכ"ד)

Yom Kippur

In the morning, wash Negelvasser (the morning hand washing with a cup) up to the knuckles (ת"ס יומא עז)

Cohanim wash normally during Shacharit. If they have stayed clean, they do not have to wash hands again for Mussaf (ע"פ ערוה"ש תריג ס"ד בשם רמב"ם).. But, during Neila, Cohanim must wash their hands again as there was a break.

We have been promised by Hashem that Yom Kippur atones for all those who have done Teshuva and that is why it is important to gather your strength and do Teshuva on Yom Kippur, even if it is difficult.

One who feels that the fast is difficult for him and feels that he cannot continue to daven, should lie down and not break his fast, even if it means that he will not daven with a minyan or will not daven at all.

If a woman sees that the fast is extremely difficult for her, her husband is exempt from davening with a Minyan and he must assist her so that she will lie down, fast, and not exert too much energy. The same goes for men who find it difficult to fast.

A husband or father or person obligated to daven with a minyan in ordinary times who is caring for household members who are in quarantine, may leave the davening in order to help them, but should stay in shul for the Amida (silent prayer, Shmoneh Esray), Torah reading (Rav Lior). Some opinions are that he should stay at home for all the davening ( Rav Neventsahl)

End of the Fast

During Arvit following the fast, say "Ata Chonantanu".

Havdala is done using the flame from a candle that has been lit the entire holiday, with wine, without besamim

Kiddush Levana should be said even though you haven't yet eaten, as we are joyous that we have been forgiven for our sins. (אהרונים)

After the holiday is over, it is customary to do an action that is connected to constructing the Sukka, even if it is only a symbolic gesture (ערוה"ש, גר"א) and to eat with joy. (רמ"א תרכד ס"ה)

Shacharit on the following day begins a few minutes earlier than usual.

(משנ"ב תרכד ס"ד)

Gmar Chatima Tova and blessings for a healthy year for all of Am Yisrael and the entire world.

Rabbi Baruch Efrati studied in Merkaz HaRav yeshiva in Jerusalem and serves as a rabbi in Efrat. He is a prolific and much-read writer on Torah issues and heads the "Derech Emunah" (Way of Torah) movement of young Israeli Orthodox rabbis.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

**Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

**Decisions and Tears before the New Year**

Yom Kippur comes ten days after the beginning of the year. This the day when G-d atones (in Hebrew, the root is K.P.R.) for the sins of humans. "For on this day He shall effect atonement for you to cleanse you. Before the Lord, you shall be cleansed from all your sins" (Leviticus 16, 30). This special day is the most sacred day of the year for the Jewish nation. Even those whose Judaism is not reflected in their daily lives, come on Yom Kippur to a synagogue and participate in the special prayers of the day.



In the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur is not the first day of the year. It is the tenth day of the month of Tishrei, with the first day being Rosh Hashana. The days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are called "Aseret Yemei Teshuva" (the Ten Days of Teshuva). On these days, we are called upon to examine our past year and give thought to our plans for the coming year. We all want to be better people and live our lives more correctly. This desire can be fulfilled if we focus on it and make better decisions as the new year begins.

Actually, our sages described these days as a special opportunity with a dual purpose. One aspect of these days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur can be defined as a "chance for appeal." On Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment for all people, our fate is decreed for the coming year. During the following ten days until Yom Kippur, we are given the opportunity to decide on changes we want to make in our lives which could bring about a subsequent positive change to the decree on Yom Kippur. Introspection affects not only our deeds, but also what G-d bequeaths.

Another aspect of these days is expressed by the eternal words of the prophet Isaiah: *"Seek the Lord when He is found, call Him when He is near. The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and he shall return to the Lord, Who shall have mercy upon him, and to our G-d, for He will freely pardon."* (Isaiah 55, 6-7)

These verses allude to the fact that there are specific times when G-d is closer to people, days when G-d is more "present." When are these days? The answer is in the Babylonian Talmud: "These are the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur" (Tractate Rosh Hashana, 18). If so, Aseret Yemei Teshuva are not only a "chance for appeal", but are days meant fundamentally for closeness to G-d. The climax of these days is Yom Kippur on which G-d calls upon us to atone before Him and embark on the new year cleansed of sins.

Toward the end of Yom Kippur, we get a sense of deep purity unlike any other. The last prayer on Yom Kippur, Ne'ilah, is one in which we plea: "Open the [Heavenly] gate for us at this time when the gate closes, for the day is fading away." This is seemingly the last opportunity to "take advantage" of Yom Kippur and leave it purified for the new year.

During the Ne'ila prayer, we say the following from the slichot liturgy:

*"May it be Your will, You who hears the sound of weeping,  
That You place our tears in Your flask permanently,  
And that You rescue us from all cruel decrees,  
For on You alone are our eyes fixed."*

This prayer is based on the words of the Talmud: "From the day the Temple was destroyed the gates of prayer were locked, but even though the gates of prayer were locked, the gates of tears were not locked" (Tractate Baba Metziya, 59).

Tears have power that words do not. Tears are hewn from the depths of our hearts, from that place of truth that gets covered by so many layers. Words can be said without really meaning them, out of habit or without paying attention. Tears are not shed with intent, so G-d "hears the sound of weeping."

Together with all the members of the Jewish people, and all of humanity, we cry from the depths of our hearts: May this new year be one of health, joy, and serenity – "for on You alone are our eyes fixed!"

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

**Shabbat Shalom - Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

**Parshat Haazinu (Deuteronomy 32:1-52) - Yom Kippur**

Efrat, Israel – The climax of Yom Kippurim is its closing Ne'ilah prayer when the sun is beginning to set, when the day is beginning to wane and when we are nearing our last chance for the opportunity to receive God's loving forgiveness for the year. The excitement of these last moments is palpable within the synagogue. The prayers are at a much higher pitch and the voices are filled with intensity. During the periods of our national sovereignty, with the closing of the day, the holy Temple doors would close as well. Post Temple, with the setting sun, the very heavens, the pathway to the Divine Throne, and the gateway to God seems to be closing. "Don't lock me out" says the Jew during Ne'ilah. Don't close the doors or the gates in my face as long as there is still time, let me come in.

But there is another way of looking at this, a very opposite way. "Don't lock me in!" cries the Jew during Ne'ilah. Yes, I've been in the Temple, or I've been in the synagogue almost the entire day. I've truly felt God's presence and I've truly been warmed by His loving embrace. I feel God's divine and gracious acceptance and His total forgiveness. I've spent an entire twenty-five hours in His house, in which I've seen the sweetness of the Lord and visited in His tent.

But now, as the doors to His house are closing, I don't want to be locked in. After all, I began this penitential period with Rosh HaShanah, the day of God's kingship. The prayers on Rosh HaShanah taught me that God did not choose Israel to live with Him in splendid and glorious isolation; He chose Israel to be a "kingdom of priest-teachers and a holy nation" to bring the message of compassionate righteousness and moral justice as a blessing for all the families of the earth. We are meant to be a light unto the nations, a banner for all peoples.

It goes without saying that we need our moments of quiet contemplation, of anguished repentance and of personal outpouring to the God who gave us life and Torah. But the ultimate purpose of this day of divine fellowship is for us to be recharged to bring God's message to the world, a world crying out for God's Word of love, morality and peace. We must leave the ivory tower of Yom Kippur and descend into the maddening and maddening crowd in the world all around us.

And so, just four days after Yom Kippur we go out into the Sukkah; indeed, walking home from the synagogue, one will be able to hear many people already beginning to build their family Sukkah. And the Sukkah is the next best thing to living within the bosom of nature, feeling at one with the world around you. The walls are usually flimsy and even see-through, and the vegetation- roof must enable you to see through the greens up above to the sky. We pray together with the four species- the citron, the palm branch, the myrtle and the willow which all grow near the refreshing waters of the earth- and we pray during this week not only for ourselves or for Israel, but for all seventy nations of the world. Indeed, we are Biblically mandated in Temple times to bring seventy bullocks during the week of Sukkot on behalf of all the nations of the world.

The Sukkah teaches us one more lesson, perhaps the most important of all. The major place for us to feel God and His divine presence – after the heavy dose of Yom Kippur – is not in a Temple or a synagogue, but is rather in our familial homes. In order to go out into the world, we must first go out into our family.

The homes we build need not be that large, that spacious, or that fancy. You don't need chandeliers in the bathroom in order to feel the warmth of your home. It can be an exceedingly simple dwelling place but it must have two critical ingredients. First and foremost it must be suffused with love, love of God, love of family and love of Torah. The meals must be permeated with gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who gave us food, with words of Torah and with the realization that it is ultimately not the walls of the home which provide our protection, but it is rather the grace of the God who gives us life. And the major guests in our home are not to be Hollywood idols or sports heroes. We should invite into our home the special Ushpizin guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Devorah and Rut (as you can see, in my Sukkah we add Ushpizot!).

And you will remember that the Biblical reading for Rosh HaShanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world was not the story of the Creation; it was rather the story of the first Hebrew family, the family of Abraham. Yes, we have a mandate to teach and perfect the world. But at the same time, we must remember that the first and most real world for each of us is our own individual family. We must begin the new year of reaching out to the world with a renewed reaching out to our life's partners, our children and grandchildren- and then to our neighbors and larger community and then to include the other and the stranger as well.