

**Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet**  
**Nitzavim 5768**

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, September 26, 2008**  
**ELECTIONS :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Both here in Israel and in the United States we are preoccupied with the upcoming elections, be they national or local. Elections per se, as we are accustomed to them in democratic countries, are a relatively modern phenomenon.

Not until the idea of the Divine Right of Kings was eradicated from Europe and the founding of the United States in the eighteenth century, did the idea of elections truly take hold in Western civilization. In the Torah we find no mention of elections per se.

In the biblical period, the rule of kings was prevalent, though in the period of the Judges of Israel, that preceded the reigns of Saul and David, leaders arose spontaneously or were called to public service by popular demand.

Yet the idea of the necessity for public approval of the policies and personalities of leaders was always engrained within the Jewish psyche. We see this in the rebellions against David and Shlomo, in the words of opposition of the prophets to wrongheaded governmental policies and to corrupt social and national behavior and attitudes.

Jewish society, if not exactly a democratic parliamentary society in our current sense of the system, was nevertheless always a society in which the leaders were subject to recall and responsibility by the people.

Dictators and tyrants were always abhorred in Jewish life, and everyone - the kings, the priests, and the scholars, were all subject to some sort of popular judgment.

This was true in Second Temple times as well, when the Hasmonean dynasty was constantly subjected to popular unrest and even rebellion.

In the world of the Torah scholars, a meritocracy and democracy prevailed. All matters of halacha were decided by majority vote in the Sanhedrin. When the Sanhedrin was unable to meet to decide on important issues because of the heavy hand of Rome on the country, important issues remained unsolved and unanswered.

Hillel and Shamai disagreed on three issues. When the Sanhedrin no longer met regularly, the disagreements of the students of the Houses of Hillel and Shamai - from the next few generations - grew to three hundred twelve in number. . Again, the matters were eventually decided democratically by the majority votes of the House of Hillel (this majority opinion was confirmed so to speak by a voice from Heaven itself.)

Throughout the system of halacha we see that this basic rule of majority prevailing guides Jewish practice and Torah behavior. There is always a reckoning and remembrance of minority and dissenting opinions (and in later times, when circumstances change, the minority opinion sometimes becomes the new majority opinion) but the principle that the Torah itself enunciated, to always follow the majority opinion, has always remained paramount.

Throughout the long generations of halachic discourse this principle has remained the guiding rule in arriving at halachic decisions. There is always room for halachic innovation and individual opinions but the weight of history almost invariably takes into account the majority precedents in these matters.

This may not be an example of democratic parliamentary behavior but it certainly is an example of the democratic spirit that pervades Judaism and Jewish life.

Jewish life, at least in Eastern Europe, also operated on the basis of democratic principles. In most cases the choice of the leaders of the community and of its rabbi was subject to public approval.

Because of this perhaps overly democratic process, the society of Eastern European Jewry was continually racked with bitter disputes and disagreements. Since there was really no way to settle all of these disputes, they festered under the surface of Jewish life there.

There was a sort of autonomous Jewish parliament that operated for a number of centuries in Eastern Europe called The Council of the Four Lands (Congress Poland, Galicia, Lithuania, Volhinya). However the delegates to this council were not elected by popular vote but rather represented the then current elite leadership of Jewish society.

In the twentieth century Jewish political parties appeared in Eastern Europe - and these were subject to the popular vote and to official elections. Choices for rabbis, and later, here in Israel, for the Chief Rabbinate became subject to the mechanism of elections, at least of voters from representative bodies of the general public.

The issue of the vote for women, originally opposed by Rav Kook and others, was eventually favored. Women's suffrage became the norm in all Western countries in the twentieth century. Winston Churchill once remarked that democracy and elections are an awful way to run a country. But it still remains the best way that man has yet devised to do so. Jewish practice over the centuries agrees with this political diagnosis

Shabat shalom,  
Shana tova.

---

**Weekly Parsha :: NITZAVIM**  
**Friday, September 26, 2008 :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

One of the shortest and smallest prashiyot of the Torah is this week's parsha of Nitzavim. Nevertheless the parsha is one of the most important in terms of eternal messages to the people of Israel.

In it is the final oration and words of Moshe to his people after more than forty years of leadership. These words are not only meant to be heard by the actual listeners at that time but by all later generations of Jews as well.

Moshe reminds all that there is an eternal covenant between God and Israel. The Lord will not allow the Jewish people to wriggle out of that commitment. Many strange things will happen to the people of Israel over its many centuries of existence. There will be events that are beyond human understanding or comprehension.

God's mind and actions, so to speak, remain inscrutable and beyond our judgment, let alone our rationalism. Moshe warns us that "the hidden things are the matter of the Lord but what is clear and revealed to us is that we are to remain faithful to this covenant [of Sinai and of Moshe.]"

No matter how the Jewish people twist and turn to avoid their end of the covenant, they are always ensnared by its consequences and results. Moshe warns them that eventually the price for their abandonment of the covenant would be exacted from the Jewish people.

He cautions them not to be too clever regarding the matter. Times change, technology improves and there are new discoveries in God's world but the covenant of God with Israel remains as it was.

Understanding and accepting this truth is the only way to deal with Jewish history and with all of the issues of Jewish life - past, present and future.

The word "nitzavim" itself is important in conveying the above message to us in clarity and perspective. The word means not only present and accounted for but it also means erect and formidable.

Moshe fears that the Jewish people will somehow feel unworthy and not strong enough for the rigors of the covenant. He reminds them of their true strength and capabilities. Moshe knows that a lack of self-confidence will automatically defeat the intent and goal of the covenant.

If someone says that: "I cannot do it," then that certainly becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure. Moshe reminds the Jewish people that they are "nitzavim" - strong, capable, resilient and can stand up to all crises and problems. Moshe appeals to their self-image and inner strength.

This attitude is certainly necessary and correct in this period of time before the High Holy days. One cannot appeal to God so to speak on the basis of

personal incompetence and weakness of will and vision. It is like requesting further cash flow from lenders into an obviously failing venture. When we pass before our Creator, with the Days of Judgment just ahead, we should do so with bent backs and strong hearts. We can and should say "Continue to invest in me and my family and generations. We will not desert the covenant nor shall we fail You."

Shabat shalom.

Shana tova.

---

## TORAH WEEKLY - Parshat Netzavim

For the week ending 27 September 2008 / 27 Elul 5768

from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)

### OVERVIEW

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers together all the people, both young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship, because in spite of having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will be a result of the failure to heed G-d's mitzvos. Both their descendants and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all - the Jewish People have forsaken the One who protects them, in favor of idols which can do nothing. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. However assimilated they will have become among the nations, eventually G-d will bring them back to Eretz Yisrael. Moshe tells the people to remember that the Torah is not a remote impossibility; rather its fulfillment is within the grasp of every Jew. The Parsha concludes with a dramatic choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

### INSIGHTS

#### The Country Club

**"And it will be that when he hears the words of this curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying, 'Peace will be with me...' (29:18)**

On hearing that the country club to which he belonged discriminated against Jews, Groucho Marx sent the following letter of resignation, "Dear Sir, I do not wish to belong to any club that will have me as a member."

In last week's Torah portion we read 98 terrifying curses that result from neglecting the Torah and failing to serve G-d with joy and goodness of heart.

How, after this terrifying litany, could anyone think that they could just turn their back on G-d and get away with it?

If you look at the curses in Ki Tavo you'll notice that they are in the singular. When the Torah uses the singular it means that it is talking to the Jewish People as a klal, as a group. So, someone hearing those curses might think, "Those curses are only for the group. I'll resign from the group and I'll be fine."

Thus Moshe, on the day of his departure from this world, brings the Jewish People into a separate covenant that defines the two previous covenants (at Sinai and 40 years later at Arvat Moav). That covenant teaches we are all both jointly and separately responsible for keeping the mitzvot of the Torah. A person cannot voluntarily decide to opt out from keeping the Torah.

The Jewish People is not a country club from which one can resign.

Source: Aderet Eliyahu

#### The Same Boat

**"You are standing, today, all of you..."(29:9)**

Quietly, he entered his cabin and closed the door behind him. Down here in the bowels of the ship you could hear the massive turbines droning and the ocean slipping under the keel inches beneath the steel floor.

Opening a small closet he removed an anonymous-looking briefcase, laid it on the bed and moved the combination to its correct position. The latches

of the case sprung open. He lifted the lid. There it was. The smallest and most powerful laser blowtorch that you could buy anywhere in the Far East. He removed it from its velveteen bed and held it lovingly in his arms. Then he pushed aside the bed and took up the rug to reveal the dull steel of the hull. He flicked the switch and the laser sprang to life. As the beam met the metal floor the ship gave out a banshee wail like a smitten beast.

Within a minute, there were loud knocks on the door. "What are you doing?" "Open the door!" "Open this door!" "What's going on in there?"

"I'm cutting a hole in the floor. Go away."

"Are you crazy, you'll kill us all!"

"Mind your own business. What's it to do with you? I'm only cutting a hole in my own cabin..."

In the first of this week's Torah portion of Nitzavim Moshe assembles every member of the Jewish People on the last day of his life. From the youngest to the oldest, from the least to the most exalted, Moshe initiates them into a new covenant. Why did they need a new covenant?

Hadn't they already entered a covenant with G-d at Sinai, and again Arvat Moav

What was different about this covenant was that it created a mutual responsibility between all Jews. Not just responsible in the sense that we have to look after each other, feed and clothe the sick and the poor, but I am responsible for everything you do, like a big brother. This idea is hinted to by the very first words of the parsha, "You are standing, today, all of you..." meaning, "You are all standing over each other."

'Religious coercion! Big Brother is watching you!' All too often we hear these words screaming from newspaper headlines. And what a tragic mistaken idea it represents. When a Jew cries out 'Shabbos!' to someone driving past his home on Shabbat, he's crying in pain. He feels the responsibility that we all accepted for each other.

The Jewish People are but sparks of one soul. A mystical connection exists between us all. What each of us does affects all the rest of us. A Jew cannot say: "Look if you guys want to keep Shabbat that's fine, but why should I be coerced into doing things that I don't believe in? It's my life. I'm my own person."

With utmost respect - it's not your life. You were given it. And you're not just your own person. Every action we do ripples across the physical and the spiritual world. There is no action without re-action. No man is an island entire to himself. And no man has a cabin in which he can cut a hole in the floor. We are all in the same boat.

Source: Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

---

## Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### PARSHAS NITZAVIM

**If your dispersed will be at the ends of heaven, from there Hashem, your G-d, will gather you in and from there He will take you. (30:4)**

This is a very moving and inspirational pasuk. Hashem never gives up on us. Once Klal Yisrael repents, Hashem's mercy has no limits. No matter where we are, regardless of how ensconced we are among our host nations, He will bring us back to Eretz Yisrael. Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, renders this pasuk homiletically. Even if a person were to sink into the moral decay of this temporary world; even if he were to fall prey to a life of unbridled passion and unrestrained desire, becoming alienated from a Torah way of life - as long as a spark remains, a tiny spiritual ember that has not yet completely been extinguished, Hashem will take him back. If that spark of Judaism has not been completely cooled off, it can still be stoked back to life. If the spark is present, b'ktzei ha'Shomayim, at the ends of the heaven; if there is still a bit of "heaven" left in him, Hashem will take him back - even from the pits of iniquity, the nadir of sin.

We have all seen this phenomenon. Young men and women, who have been estranged from the religion of their ancestors torn from the past, living in a present filled with the filth that characterizes and has become the trademark of contemporary society, and relegated to a future of abandon, to a destiny of hopelessness have returned to the fold. They have become contributing members of a vibrant Jewish religious renaissance.

They retained that small spark which was sufficient to bring them back. Hashem welcomed them, embracing them as a loving Father.

It does not take much - one spark. Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, relates the story of a young man whom he met at a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. He apparently looked like someone who was new to the observant yeshivish way of life, so Rav Simcha asked him how he came to be at the yeshiva. The student explained that he had come to Eretz Yisrael to work on a kibbutz sponsored by the leftist Hashomer Hatzair movement. This is a neo-communist program whose members are virulently anti-religion. During his stay, he had occasion to take a taxi. He noticed on the seat a magazine called "Shema Yisrael," published by one of the outreach yeshivos. It is a very sincere, meaningful and state-of-the-art-publication. He questioned the driver about it. The driver said that probably some chareidi, observant Jew, had left it on the seat. The young man began to read and was impressed. He jotted down the address of the yeshiva, and the next day he went to visit. He has not returned to the kibbutz and is today an observant Torah Jew, all because of a spark that ignited in his soul. Hashem was waiting for him.

At times, this spark remains embedded, concealed for centuries, waiting patiently to be extracted. As long as it is present, there is hope. The Torah observant person who was the dean of the bacteriology department at an Ivy League university in California had a Mezuzah on his office door. One day, he was walking with a non-Jewish colleague who noticed the Mezuzah and inquired about it. As he was about to explain, he was called to the phone. Meanwhile, a non-Jewish female student who had noticed the interchange went over and explained everything about the Mezuzah as if she were reading from the Shulchan Aruch and Sefer HaChinuch.

When the Jewish professor returned and heard her explanation, he inquired how she knew so much about Judaism. He knew that she hailed from a devout Catholic family in Mexico. She replied that for the previous two years she had taken an interest in Judaism for no apparent reason and had been studying everything about the religion.

When the professor shared this story with his rebbe, Rav Simchah, the Rosh Yeshiva instructed him to tell the girl to research her ancestry, since he was certain that somewhere she must have had a trace of Marrano blood in her family's history. She followed his instructions and discovered that Rav Simchah had been correct. He explained that the Navi Yechezkel prophesized that one day Hashem would bring back all of those who have been lost among the nations. Her gravitational pull towards Judaism indicated that Jewish blood coursed through her veins. Hashem was bringing back a lost soul.

I think this last story puts it all into perspective. Horav Yissachar Frand relates the story of a troubled young man who was so conflicted about the direction his life should take. During the day he spent his time engrossed in Torah study, just like the many other students of his yeshiva. At night, however, he was a drummer in a rock band, playing gigs in nightclubs throughout New York City. He was a great drummer as was evidenced one night when a man approached him after a show and offered him an audition. Apparently, he was a producer for some of New York's premier bands, and he felt that this yeshiva bochur's skills were sensational. The student auditioned and immediately was offered a job as the backup drummer for one of the most famous rock bands in the country.

It was a once in a lifetime opportunity, something that he had been dreaming of from the very first day that he began to beat on a drum! His excitement was overwhelming and mounted as the producer presented a contract and proceeded to fill in the blanks. However, when the young drummer noticed the date of the first gig, he almost passed out. It was Friday night! While he might have lived a "double life," and at times gone to places and done things that were inappropriate for a yeshiva bochur, he had never desecrated Shabbos. This was one line that he had never crossed. Was he prepared to deviate from the past and destroy his future?

He decided to speak with his rabbi with whom he had developed a close and trusting relationship over the years. "Rebbe," the young man said, "I want this real bad. This is what I have been longing for my whole life. Now is the moment of truth. What do I do?"

The rabbi replied, "Go home and make a list. On one side of the paper jot down all of the benefits of taking this position. On the other side, write

down all of its disadvantages. Then, evaluate the pluses and minuses and make an intelligent decision. I am here to help."

A few days passed until the young drummer appeared at the rabbi's home with the paper in his hand. He placed it on the desk and began to cry. The rabbi read the long list of advantages: some were appropriate; others lacked substance, while yet others were unmentionable. On the right side there was listed one word: ETERNITY! The young man had finally realized the value of the spirit and the critical importance of knowing one's priorities. This might give us all something to think about on the last Shabbos of the year, as we search for merits to insure us continued life.

**Hashem, your G-d, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, to love Hashem, your G-d. (30:6)**

Ibn Ezra explains, that Hashem will remove the spiritual impediment that stands in the way of total repentance. Parashas Nitzavim occurs at the end of the month of Elul, as we prepare for a new year. This is by design. The Seforim cite this pasuk - U'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha v'es l'vav zarecha, as an allusion, with the first letter of each of the words, "es levavcha v'es levav," aleph, lamed, vov, lamed, serving as a mnemonic for the word Elul. This pasuk focuses on the heart as the source which impedes teshuvah. Hashem will circumcise the evil inclination that thwarts our ability to return to Him.

There is another way of viewing the "heart." Shlomo HaMelech says in Shir HaShirim 5:2, "I sleep but my heart is awake," which is interpreted as: I allow my devotion to slumber, but the G-d of my heart was awake. He continues: "The sound of my Beloved knocking!" which is interpreted thus: Throughout all my slumbering, my Beloved, the Shechinah, has been knocking, sending messages to awaken me. In his inimitable manner, Horav Shabsi Yudelevitz, zl, explains the metaphors of this pasuk. Klal Yisrael tells Hashem: "Yes, we might appear to be sleeping, but it is only a fa'ade. At a cursory glance, we give the impression of being out cold. We show no signs of life. Veritably, however, libi er - "my heart is wide awake." Deep inside our hearts, in the recesses of our Jewish souls, we are awake and seeking a closer relationship with the Almighty." With no signs of life manifest by a person, distinct possibilities are presented. Either the person is gone, he has expired; or he is out cold, but very much alive. There is one way to ascertain if he is alive: listen to his heart. If his heart is beating, he is asleep, but, very much alive. If his heart is still, he has regrettably expired. A similar idea applies to Klal Yisrael. While some of us may appear to be spiritually inert, almost lifeless, this is only an external perspective. In reality, their Jewish hearts are still beating. They are alive. Hashem, however, is not satisfied with simply a Jewish heart. He knocks! He does not want us to sleep. He wants to see outward signs of life. This is the meaning of Kol Dodi dofeik, "The sound of my Beloved knocking."

Rav Shabsi relates that he once met such a "Jew at heart." To all external signs, this man was out cold, but he claimed that his Jewish heart was beating loud and clear. He was on a plane flying from Eretz Yisrael to America. Sitting next to him was a world famous cardiologist on staff at Hadassah Hospital. The physician's lack of observance was obvious when he did not order a kosher meal for the flight. Rav Shabsi had his specially wrapped kosher meal, while the physician was enjoying a non-kosher dinner. Rav Shabsi had a difficult time "swallowing" the scene of this Jewish doctor biting into his non-kosher meal. He could not keep his disdain to himself, as he said to the doctor, "Excuse me, does it not bother you to eat that non-kosher portion? You are a Jew! Are you not ashamed?" The physician looked at Rav Shabsi without any show of emotion and said, "One does not die from eating non-kosher. It is not the end of the world." Rav Shabsi was not rebuffed that easily, as he countered, "You claim to be a Jew; yet, you eat to your heart's content, regardless of the food's kashrus. In what area does your Jewishness manifest itself?"

"Rabbi, let me explain to you. One does not die from eating a ham sandwich. You question my Jewishness. I have a Jewish heart. I support the State of Israel, and I contribute generously to the Jewish National Fund."

A number of hours elapsed, and it was time to daven Minchah. Rav Shabsi was about to join a group of Jews who were making a minyan. He politely asked the doctor, "Perhaps you would like to join in a minyan to daven Minchah." The doctor answered, "No. I do not do Minchah or any other

prayer for that matter. Rabbi, in case you did not understand, I believe I am a good Jew at heart. I do not, however, perform any mitzvos. It just is not my thing. I see no reason to carry out something in which I do not believe.”

Hearing this, Rav Shabsi decided to try another approach: “I understand you are a world renowned cardiologist. Perhaps you can tell me some of the contributing factors to a heart attack.”

“Surely,” the doctor answered, happy to have the subject changed from religious observance to medicine. “Eating too much fat will clog the arteries. The blockages in the arteries can erupt, and the blood will be unable to flow to the heart causing it to stop.” He went on to elaborate this and other causes of heart failure. After all, it was his area of expertise.

“Incredible!” exclaimed Rav Shabsi. “Now I understand exactly the mechanism of the heart and how it can be impeded. You really gave me food for thought. Thank you very much. Oh, and perhaps I can ask you one more question.”

“No problem,” the doctor replied. He was happy to talk about anything other than religion.

“You tell me,” began Rav Shabsi, “that you are a Jew at heart. You place your entire Jewish observance in your heart. Your davening; your kashrus; your Shabbos - everything. This might create an overload. The Torah gave us 613 mitzvos to be distributed throughout the entire body. You have placed all of them just on your heart. Do you not think this is too much? If you place your whole Yiddishkeit on your heart, you might cause a heart attack! Are you not afraid?”

It goes without saying that the doctor did not alter his lifestyle. He remained a Jew at heart—and for all outward appearances—a lifeless human being. This is why Hashem is not satisfied with libi er, “my heart is awake.” He continues to knock, to send messages, so that we wake up before the heart becomes mortally wounded.

**For this commandment...is not too wondrous for you, nor is it far beyond you...But, the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it. (30:11,14)**

There is a difference of opinion concerning “this mitzvah”: whether it refers to the Torah in general, or if it is a reference to the mitzvah of teshuvah, repentance. While teshuvah is translated here as repentance, its actual definition is return. One returns to his Source, his true home, his Father in Heaven, but, it does not seem to be as “easy” as the Torah presents it. Otherwise, we would all be baalei teshuvah. Many people refuse to take the plunge, to return to Hashem, because they are afraid of being unsuccessful. How often do we meet someone who tells us, “I would love to try, but it is so difficult! There is so much to know, so much to do, so many commandments to observe, so many challenges to overcome. I will not even try.” Many of us are reluctant to try something that we fear will not meet with success. Our lack of self-confidence pulls us down and does not permit us to go forward.

This is what Moshe Rabbeinu is telling us: This commandment is not as difficult as it seems. In fact, it is quite simple to achieve. All you must do is try. Make the attempt. Hashem will help you go all the way. If you do not make an attempt, however, He will not help you. It is easier than you think. The hardest part is making the decision to go forward.

**“And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today” (ibid. 30:2).**

In his Shaarei Teshuvah, Rabbeinu Yonah writes, “It is explained in the Torah that Hashem helps those who return, as they are not, by nature, able to achieve this alone. He will renew within them a spirit of purity that they may be able to attain the benefit of a love for Him.” Hashem wants us to come to the “door” and ask, make a statement articulating our desire to return, our regrets for the past and a desire to initiate change. That is all!

Horav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, cites a parable from the Maggid, zl, m'Dubno that elucidates this point. The wealthiest man in the small town was seeking a husband for his daughter. She was not only wealthy; she was a young lady endowed with excellent character traits, refined, educated and attractive. All of these wonderful attributes created a difficulty for most young men to make it onto her “short list.” There was one young man in the city who fit the bill. He was learned, a diligent student, whose love for Torah was matched only by his overwhelming love

for his fellow man. He had one “failing,” however: he was poor. The girl’s father was not concerned. After all, he had plenty of money. The match was made, and the young people met. Each one was pleased. A date for the marriage was discussed, and the girl’s father agreed to everything. He did make one stipulation. Since he was undertaking all financial responsibility, it was only right that the boy’s father contribute “something,” to the dowry. He did not ask for much, but for the poor man, anything was too much. Nonetheless, he promised to raise the necessary money in time for the wedding.

The poor man’s idea of raising money was to go door to door and beg. He proceeded to undertake to raise the necessary funds to comply with his future mechutan’s demand. It was not easy, as he went from house to house asking for whatever help people could afford. After a few weeks of trudging and begging, he counted up his contributions and discovered that he was dismally short of the necessary total. He would have to keep on begging, but the prospects of success were becoming dimmer.

It dawned on him that there was one more person he could approach: the wealthiest man in the city. The next day he presented himself at the front door of his future mechutan and waited to be admitted. “Welcome! How good to see you,” the wealthy man exclaimed. “I am sure you have fulfilled your end of the bargain, and we can proceed with the wedding plans.”

“No,” the poor man answered. “I have tried to raise the necessary funds, but, alas, I have fallen short of the goal. That is not why I am here, however. I am here as a poor man seeking funds to marry off my son. I have not come to you as your future mechutan. I have come as a beggar asking for charity. As the wealthiest man in the city, one who is known for his many acts of charity, I am turning to you for assistance.”

The parallel to this story applies to us when we prepare to repent, to return home to Hashem. We have sinned. We recognize our failings and are remorseful over them and we hope that Hashem will forgive us. All He asks of us is that we come to the door and knock. Open up our hearts so that He can help us. We do not come with the finished product, because we are unable to do it alone. We ask for help. Hashem responds to our plea. We have to make the first move, however, to ask, to open up our hearts, to knock at Heaven’s door. He will do the rest.

We say it everyday in Shemoneh Esrai, Hashiveinu Avinu l’Torasecha...Korveinu Malkeinu l’avodasecha, v’hachazireinu b’teshuvah sheleimah lefanecha... “Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah...and bring us close, our King, to Your Service...Bring us back with a perfect teshuvah before You.”

What are all of these requests? It is up to us to repent, to return, to come closer. Why are we asking Hashem to do it for us? Rav Ezrachi explains that even concerning the minimum which is our part of the bargain, Hashem is willing to help. We only have to realize that He is willing to offer His siyata di’Shmaya, Divine Assistance. We have to ask, Hashiveinu, korveinu, hachazireinu.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, suggests an insightful parable to elucidate this point. There was a son who had embezzled a huge sum of money from his father and then disappeared. After many years of not communicating with his father, during which time the son had squandered away all of his ill-gotten money, he tearfully phoned his father begging for forgiveness, asking to be reinstated at home. The father was a “father,” so that—with great compassion—he accepted his son’s apology and invited him to return home. The son said, “Thank you Dad, but there is one problem. Unfortunately, I am penniless. Could you send me money to purchase a ticket, so that I could come home?”

Ironic, but that is what we are asking Hashem. We want to “come back” home, but we do not have the means to do it alone. Hashem, please help us. Our hope and prayer on this last Shabbos of the year is, may it be Hashem’s will that our return to Him will be accepted and that we will maintain a relationship with Him in which we will never leave home again.

**See - I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil...and you shall choose life. (30:15,19)**

There is no gray area concerning our choice of Torah. One either chooses Torah, or he invites death by selecting a life antithetical to Torah. If one seeks life, he must choose a Torah way; otherwise, the alternative is death.

These are powerful words. Interestingly, in the beginning of Parashas Re'eh (ibid.11:27) the Torah mentions blessing and curse as the result of making the wrong choice. Why does the Torah now mention death as being the consequence of a poor choice? The Meshech Chochmah cites the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna's interpretation of din, judgment, and cheshbon, accounting. Din is the punishment we receive for committing the actual sin, while cheshbon is an accounting of the mitzvos that could have been performed during the time that was wasted committing a sin.

Parashas Re'eh takes place prior to the giving of the mitzvah of teshuvah, repentance. Now, in Parashas Nitzavim, after teshuvah has been presented as part of the Torah's framework for life, to choose a life of sin is much more egregious. Now that one could have repented and has chosen not to, he has committed an unfathomable sin, one whose consequence is death. This is why the Torah concludes with U'bocharta ba'chaim, "And you shall choose life." For now that we have the mitzvah of teshuvah, to ignore this mitzvah and continue along our merry way, living a life filled with transgression, is tantamount to ignoring the opportunity to live.

#### **Va'ani Tefillah**

**L'hodia livnei ha'adam gevurosav u'kavod hadar malchuso.**

**To make known to the sons of man His might; and the Glory of the splendor of His kingdom.**

In the previous pasuk, the categories of glory and might are presented for introspection and study. It is not sufficient, however, for men to occupy themselves with study for the purpose of self-enlightenment. They are also obligated to teach and enlighten others, to make known these awesome qualities, to promulgate them so that others can also be inspired. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, notes that in this pasuk, in contrast to the previous one, the "might" precedes the "glory." He explains that this is by design, since "might" which refers to the upheavals, indicates miraculous occurrences that Hashem wrought. They are more easily transmitted and taught to others. Students are more readily impressed by miracles than by the regular marvels of nature, which require greater study and longer training. Thus, their minds can be freed from the shackles of complacency and from the darkness that blinds them from seeing the truth. It takes great perseverance and deep thinking to see through the cloud of ambiguity that veils the everyday occurrences which we refer to as "nature." Furthermore, people want to trust in miracles, since it gives them hope, allowing them to believe that the impossible is attainable.

l'zechar nishmas avinu moreinu R' Avrohom Aharon ben Yekusiel Yehuda z"l she'holech l'o'lamo b'erev Rosh Hashana 5753 Mishpachas Mayer - Rabbi & Mrs. Harry Mayer and Family Queens, New York

---

#### **Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger**

##### **The TorahWeb Foundation**

##### **Becoming Bound To Each Other and To Hashem**

At the outset of every shemona esrei of the yomim noraim, at a moment when we would want to focus on our dreams and our worries, our minds are quickly directed to pray for a time when Hashem's presence will dominate the plans and proceedings of all people. It is then that we ask that Hashem instill awe throughout His creation, establishing a time that will fully realize the phrase: "v'yeiasu kulam agudah echos la'asos retsoncha b'levav shaleim - that [all people] will become bound as one to do Your will with complete hearts".

I have often wondered why our sages chose to conjoin two seemingly disparate prayers into one sentence. Why did they not continue the style of the forgoing sentences, and in one brief phrase ask for a peaceful time when we will all live comfortably together, and subsequently in a separate sentence beg for the purity and sincerity of "complete hearts"? Further, why did Chazal phrase this one request differently than the rest, putting it in the passive form, "that we become bound" rather than scripting for us a request for the strength and tolerance that it takes to proactively bind ourselves together?

Perhaps these two passions, to serve Hashem genuinely and to extend and enjoy loving and respectful relationships, stem from the same environment and culture. It may be that the roads to both begin at the same point and

end at each other's doorstep. No doubt both will demand ridding oneself of the pettiness that so often overtakes our minds and decisions.

The naturalness and thrill of competition certainly shape within us a predisposition which is unfriendly to according respect and appreciation to the strengths of others. Yet investing in acquiring a positive and open frame of mind is truly an "avodah" - requiring dedicated and persistent applications to greater nobility. If we are really going to earn our membership in an agudah echos - a unified group of Kelal Yisrael - it will no doubt require great introspection and soulful thinking; being on guard against harboring ill feelings towards other individuals and other groups, challenging ourselves to prioritize, and focus on that which is genuinely precious.

In sum, aspiring to live in true harmony requires putting much ahead of private concerns and as a result nurtures a purity of heart and deed in the direct service of Hashem as well. Chazal further intimate that once we have achieved comfort and closeness with our peers, we will feel as if we have "become bound" - as if it happened naturally and was always meant to be.

Of course it is important to keep in mind that our most powerful prayers may be our actions moving ourselves in the direction of our wishes.

May we all be blessed to come into the Yamim Noraim with the potent prayers of improved relations with family and friends and may we all be blessed with peace, health, spiritual growth prosperity and happiness.

Copyright © 2008 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

#### **h a a r e t z**

##### **Portion of the Week / Trial or parade?**

##### **By Benjamin Lau**

In the biblical era, most of the inhabitants of this land were farmers and this period of the year was harvest time. Today, we are industrialized and digitalized. The hands of the clock are LED numbers, crazily dancing every second. Our concept of time as a constant flow has been replaced by one in which it passes at a dizzying pace. Yet, the sea squill, the Mediterranean flower of the lily family that blossoms in the autumn along the Trans-Israel Highway, is a reminder of how we should really measure the passage of time: as the gentle transition from season to season that truly characterizes our lives.

In the Bible, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is called yom trua (a day of blowing the trumpets; Numbers 29:1). Although trumpets are generally sounded on joyous occasions, here the trumpet or, more specifically, the shofar (ram's horn) signifies a solemn holiday, when we are all put on trial, we all stand before the supreme judge, God. This trial continues for 10 days, until Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

On Rosh Hashanah, according to the Mishnah (Tractate Rosh Hashanah), "all inhabitants of the earth pass before him [God] like sheep (kivnei maron)." Our heavenly shepherd, God, counts each and every one of us, determining what our fate will be in the coming year. This statement is the basis of the well-known piyyut (sacred poem), "Unetaneh tokef," which is recited in synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and includes the moving words, "Who will live and who will die, who will rest and who will continually wander."

Obviously, Rosh Hashanah is not a joyous holiday: How can we rejoice if we are passing under the staff of our shepherd and do not know what the future holds? We are fearful and tense; thus, on this holiday, the Talmud (Tractate Rosh Hashanah) informs us, we do not recite the Hallel - the song of praise that is part of the liturgy on Jewish festivals: "The ministering angels said to God, 'Master of the Universe, why does Israel not sing a song of praise on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?' 'While a king sits on his throne with the Book of Life and the Book of Death open before him,' God replied, 'can Israel sing a song of praise?'"

##### **Crowning God anew**

However, if we take a look at the different versions of the Mishnah, we can suggest that perhaps the text should read not kivnei maron, but rather kivinumeron - like battalions parading before the king.

This interpretation changes the meaning immediately and dramatically. According to it, we are not on trial, but rather we are participating in a military parade to celebrate a joyous occasion - namely, the coronation of God as king of the entire universe. Thus, we can say that Rosh Hashanah is actually concerned primarily with crowning God anew as our heavenly king, and that we must sound the trumpets in joy to honor his coronation. We must stand proudly before God as soldiers, and declare with utmost solemnity the fact of his dominion.

The above interpretation explains certain customs associated with this holiday. On the two days of the Jewish New Year, we are forbidden to weep and do not recite Selihot - the penitential prayers we recite before Rosh Hashanah and through Yom Kippur, in which we ask God to forgive our sins. In light of the above, we can see that Rosh Hashanah has two very different, seemingly contrary, aspects: On the one hand, we fear the shepherd's judgment and, on the other hand, we stand tall before him as soldiers in his heavenly and regal army.

These two elements may seem to be contradictory, but together they give Rosh Hashanah its unique character. During its two days, we are both fearful and proud. We find this combination in our sages' commentary on the initial verse of this week's Torah portion: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel" (Deuteronomy 29:10). In his commentary, Rashi cites a midrash aggadah that connects the beginning of this week's Torah reading with the end of last week's portion.

In the latter is a blood-chilling description of our fate should we disobey God: disease, devastation, banishment, a life of constant fear. The next chapter, the beginning of this week's reading, opens: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God." The midrash Rashi cites states: "When Israel heard all these 98 curses, their faces were pale as chalk as they asked Moses, 'How will we be able to go on living, now that we have such knowledge of what might befall us?' Moses comforted them, saying, 'Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God - although you have angered God in the past, you have survived to this day. Take heart.'"

Each year we look back on the previous 12 months and fear the consequences of our past actions - not only at the personal level, but at the national level as well. Our "bank balance" of good deeds and bad is frightening. Corrupt leaders are a reflection of a sick society. The blowing of the shofar is unnerving. Yet, our anxiety is countered by the knowledge that we have survived for hundreds of years as a nation.

Rashi ends his interpretation of the above verse with an emphasis on the word hayom (this day): "The Torah says, 'Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God.' Just as day never ends, but constantly passes from darkness to light and back again, similarly, God has shone his light upon you in the past and will continue to do so in the future. The curses and the suffering enumerated here help maintain you and they cause you to stand erect and proud before him."

I will end with the traditional phrase: "May this year and its curses end and may the new year with its blessings now begin."

---

## Rav Kook List

### Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

#### Rosh Hashanah: The Music of Teshuvah

What is the meaning of the various blasts of the shofar?

The shofar is a wake-up call. It should stir us to mend our ways and do teshuvah. As Maimonides explained in the Mishneh Torah, the shofar calls out: "Wake up sleepers from your slumber! Examine your ways and repent and remember your Creator" [Laws of Repentance 3:4].

Thus we should look for an explanation of the shofar blasts that relates to the theme of spiritual awakening.

#### Three Levels

The initial blast of the shofar is a long clear sound called a tekiyah. This simple call relates to the soul's inner source of holiness, our innate closeness to God. This inner essence is rooted in a sublime realm that is

'infinitely good and infinitely long' and is thus musically represented by the long, clear tekiyah blast.

However, this lofty resource of holiness is not meant to remain secreted within the soul. Spiritual awakening means that this inner holiness should find an external expression through our character traits and actions. Therefore the long tekiyah blast is followed by a series of shorter blasts called shevarim. The fragmented sounds of the shevarim correspond to the process of the inner soul expressing itself in individual personality traits. Unlike the broad strokes of abstract concepts, the enlightened spirit's glimpses of Divine ideals, character traits are more defined and specific - kindness and generosity, integrity and moral fortitude, and so on. Thus the shevarim consist of a series of broken blasts, shorter than the clear tekiyah. Yet we are not content with only refining our character traits. Our spiritual awakening should also elevate our actions and deeds. Therefore the shevarim are followed by even shorter blasts, the staccato beat sounds called teruah. Since actions are even more detailed - specific behaviors that express the traits of kindness, integrity, etc. - they are audially represented by the rapid trill of the teruah.

In summary: the inner essence of the soul - the tekiyah - refines the character traits - the shevarim - which in turn guide and sanctify the actions - the teruah.

#### The Final Tekiyah

Each set of shofar-blasts concludes with a final tekiyah blast. Like the first tekiyah, this tekiyah represents the core holiness of the soul. But while the first long blast signifies this inner essence as a potential force, the final tekiyah indicates the actualization of its influence on our traits and deeds.

#### Partial Teshuvah

This is a full, complete set of shofar blasts - tekiyah-shevarim-teruah-tekiyah. However we also blow two partial sets of shofar blasts, with only shevarim or teruah in the middle. What do these sets of blasts represent?

Ideally, both our character traits and our actions should be guided by the soul's inner resources. But there are also situations of incomplete spiritual awakening. Some individuals may have proper actions, but fail to uplift and refine their character. This situation is represented by the set of tekiyah-teruah-tekiyah, since only the teruah blasts (i.e., the actions) are influenced by the innate holiness of the tekiyah.

In other cases, there may be internal or external obstacles that prevent the inner soul from expressing itself in deed and action. Nonetheless, there may still be a refinement of the character. This situation is represented by the order of tekiyah-shevarim-tekiyah, as only the shevarim (the traits) are influenced by the tekiyah.

Clearly the optimal situation is when the divine knowledge is able to penetrate all levels, encompassing both shevarim and teruah, character traits and deeds. This preferable state is expressed in the verse:

"Fortunate are the people who know the teruah-blast; O God, they will go in the light of Your countenance" [Psal 89:16].

[Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. II pp. 326-327]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: [RavKookList@gmail.com](mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com)

---

## Rabbi Zweig (torah.org)

### Elul / Rosh Hashanah

#### Rosh Hashana Special

#### Say It With Chumros

The forty days from the beginning of Elul through Yom Kippur correspond with the forty days during which Moshe beseeched Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisroel for the sin of the Golden Calf. Since Moshe was answered favorably, descending from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur with the new set of Tablets, this time period is known as the "Y'mei Ratzon", a time when it is possible to rekindle our relationship with the Almighty. 1

Consequently, Chazal record that during this time a person should accept upon himself greater "chumros" - "stringencies" in his observance. Most perplexing however, is the fact that we do not find any requirement to continue with these observances after the Yomim Nora'im. Performing

these stringent acts during this time period only, appears hypocritical. What message are we relaying to the Almighty?

Our Rabbis tell us that the word “Elul” is an acronym for the phrase “Ani l’dodi v’dodi li” - “I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me”. These days are designated for focusing upon our relationship with Hashem. If a man were to bring his wife flowers daily, doing the same on their anniversary would not express his love for her. At times which are designated for expressing our true feelings for our loved ones, a form of expression different than that used year-round is required. Similarly, when expressing to Hashem our love and commitment to Him, we must go beyond our regular observance in order to effectively convey our true feelings. Therefore, additional commitments are required only at this time of the year.

1. Kitsur Shulchan Aruch #128:1

### **A Friendly Check-Up**

“...it shall be a day of shofar-sounding for you” (Bamidbar:29:1) In Parshas Pinchas the Torah describes Rosh Hashana as “Yom Teruah” - “a day of sounding the Shofar”.<sup>1</sup> The Rambam states that the sound of the Shofar is a wake-up call for repentance.<sup>2</sup> The Ramban describes the Teruah as a battle-cry, instilling fear in all who hear its sound.<sup>3</sup> Clearly the sound of the Shofar symbolizes the nature of the day; a day of awe and trepidation. Most perplexing however, is the verse found in the blessings of Balaam: “lo hibit aven b’Yaakov v’lo ra’ah amal b’Yisrael Hashem Elokav imo u’teruas melech bo” - “He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no perversity in Yisroel. Hashem his G-d is with him, and the friendship of the King is in him.”<sup>4</sup> The commentators translate “teruas melech” as “the friendship of the King”, “teruas” being from the word “rayus” - “friendship”.<sup>5</sup>

The aforementioned verse is included in the section of the Rosh Hashana liturgy known as “Shofros”. How does “teruah” being defined as a sound which instills fear coalesce with “teruah” defined as friendship? Rashi explains the verse in Parshas Balak as Balaam expressing the futility of any attempt to curse Bnei Yisroel since Hashem does not scrutinize their iniquity nor criticize them for their shortcomings, even when they provoke Him by maliciously violating His word.<sup>6</sup>

Why would not criticizing a person for his wrongdoing be an expression of friendship? On the contrary, a true friend is not afraid to criticize, for that is the manner in which he expresses his concern for his friend’s well-being. Additionally, how can Rashi comment that Hashem is not critical of Bnei Yisroel for their violations? Does not the fact that a Day of Judgement exists dispel this notion?

It is difficult to accept criticism graciously, especially when the source of the criticism is an injured party. The reason for this is that we convince ourselves that the criticism is not being levied because the person cares for us, rather because he is an injured party. However, if the criticism is given by a person who we know to have our best interests at heart, we can accept that the rebuke is meant to prevent us from harmful behavior. Therefore, Rashi’s interpretation of the verse is the following: It is due to our “rayus” - “friendship” with Hashem, that He does not criticize us for what we have done to Him. Hashem is willing to overlook the hurt that we cause Him. It is only for the damage which we cause ourselves that Hashem rebukes and punishes us, for Hashem’s only agenda is our best interests.

Rashi in Parshas Acharei Mos likens the relationship enjoyed by Bnei Yisroel with Hashem to that of a doctor-patient relationship. Much the same way as a patient enters into an examination with fear but is comforted by the knowledge that his physician is a friend who has his best interests in mind, we too are subjected to an examination but find solace in the knowledge that the scrutiny to which we are being subjected is borne out of Hashem’s love for us and His desire to prevent the spread of any spiritual malignancies which we may possess. Therefore, the call of the Shofar instills fear but it is, nonetheless, a call of friendship.

1 .29:1

2 Yad Hilchos Teshuva

3 :4 3.29:1

4 23:21

5 See Rashi ibid see however Ibn Ezra ibid.

6 Ibid.

Rabbi Zweig In 1974 founded the highly successful Talmudic University in Miami Beach, Florida, and continues to serve as the dean today. Ordained at Ner Israel Rabbinical College, he was a devoted student of Rabbi Yaacov Yitzchak Ruderman, z”l and Rabbi Yaacov Weinberg z”l. While in Maryland, he also attended John Hopkins University and studied law at University of Maryland.

---

## ***YateUSA Rosh Hashanah Edition 29 Elul 5768***

**Kortz un Sharf**

**Rosh Hashanah Vertlach**

**by Shaya Gottlieb**

Little Itzik saved the Day...

Rav Dovid Lelover adopted a young orphaned child, named Itzikel, (later to be known as Rav Yitzchok Vorker.) On Erev Rosh Hashanah, when the chasidim of the Lubliner rented a wagon to take them to the Rebbe, Rav Dovid bid Itzikel goodbye, and said, “You cannot come with me, because there will be many chasidim at the Rebbe’s court, and there will be lots of pushing and shoving. In addition, I will have to be busy taking care of you, and I won’t be able to daven properly.”

Young Itzikel did not reply. However, when the chasidim joined Rav Dovid on the wagon, the resourceful child held onto a plank that jutted out of the wagon and rode along. Some hours later, when they stopped to rest, the chasidim noticed that the child had come along, and were forced to take him to Lublin.

When they arrived at the Chozeh’s court, Rav Dovid told little Itzikel to hold onto his gartel, and follow him everywhere, because it was very crowded and he was afraid the child would get lost.

On the morning of Rosh Hashanah, the Chozeh went out of the Bais Medrash before the tekiyas, and did not return. The chasidim waited impatiently, and after a while, they sent Rav Dovid Lelover, a prominent chosid, to find out the reason for the delay. Along with Rav Dovid came his young adopted son, who held onto his gartel.

When they entered the Chozeh’s study, the Lubliner asked the child his name, and what he was learning in cheder. Itzikel replied that he was learning the sugya of a posul eidus. “And why is a korov, (relative) invalid as an eidus?”

To which the child cleverly replied, “Because a relative is always trying to do a favor for his relative, and thus he is suspected of having his own negiyos.”

“Do you have a kushya on this sugya?” the Chozeh asked.

“I do,” said the child. “I wonder why the relative is posul, both for zechus or for chov, (to speak negatively of his relative.) When he speaks negatively, he should not be suspected of ulterior motives!”

“And did you think of an answer?” pressed the Chozeh.

The clever Itzikel replied, “A relative who bears witness that his own flesh and blood sinned, is not a mensch. And the possuk says, ‘vomdu shnei anoshim’ and two menschin have to give eidus!”

When the Chozeh heard these words, he was filled with hislahavus. “Who is as close to the Borei Olam as we are? Thus, Hakodosh Boruch Hu will not speak evil of His children.”

And he entered the Bais Medrash with a joyous heart to begin tekiyas shofar.

‘Befriending’ the Soton

Rav Mendel of Rimanov was once by the holy Chozeh, and as they parted, he revealed what had occurred to him during the past Rosh Hashanah.

“When I was in the Heavenly Realms, I saw the Soton shlepping heavy bags filled with aveiros that Klal Yisroel committed the entire year. When I realized there was virtually no chance for Klal Yisroel to be zakkai badin, I decided to ‘befriend’ the soton and make believe I was also looking for aveiros that Klal Yisroel committed. The soton trusted me, and gave me the wagons filled with sins.

“As soon as the soton left, I took the sacks of sins and threw them into the ‘tehom’ from which they will never return. When the soton returned and saw his aveiros missing, there was a hue and a cry. ‘Who stole the sins?’ But no one replied.

Seeing that he was getting nowhere, the soton invited me to a din Torah. The Bais Din Shel Maaloh heard his argument, and paskened that I must repay the baal dovor with wagons filled with mitzvos and maasim tovim that the Yidden did.

“But I don’t have enough mitzvos to repay the balance,” I argued.

“If so, you must be sold as a servant,” came the reply.

Hearing this, Dovid Hamelech called out, “Let him be a servant to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and let Am Yisroel come out Zakai Badin!”

Rav Mendel concluded, “And that is how I teitched the tefillah ‘l’koneh avodov badin.’ Why does Hashem acquire His servants? ‘L’rachem amo b’yom din.’ In order that Klal Yisroel should be inscribed in the Sefer Hachaim.”

#### A Flowing Stream of Taharah

Why do we go on Rosh Hashanah to say Tashlich at a stream?

Said the Satmar Rebbe, “One of the conditions of teshuvah is to tear ourselves away from tumah and go to a place of taharah, from which we will be helped to do a proper teshuvah. Since water is a place of taharah, we go to the river to confess our aveiros and do a proper teshuvah.”

#### We don’t ‘Carry’ on Shabbos

Why don’t we go to Tashlich on Shabbos?

Said the Vorker Rebbe, “Because when we go to tashlich, we take along our aveiros to throw into the river. However, on Shabbos we cannot ‘carry’ our aveiros.”

#### Yom Teruah ‘Lochem’

The Chidushei Harim interpreted the possuk “Yom Teruah Lochem,” to mean that one should break the ‘lochem’, our essence of gashmiyus.

That is our task on Rosh Hashanah, the Yom Teruah. By blowing the shofar, we break our physical ‘chomer’.

However, on Shabbos we don’t blow shofar, because the Torah says regarding Shabbos, “Kodesh Yehiye Lochem,” on Shabbos, the ‘lochem’ is also holy, and thus we don’t blow the shofar which breaks our ‘lochem,’ our sense of self.

#### Remember us for Life!

Rav Yisroel Salanter would spend a lot of time during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah on the tefillah of Zochreinu L’chaim. He would say that one who mumbles these tefillos and does not pay attention is like a rotzeach, a murderer, because his life, and the life of his entire family, lie in the power of these words. How can one daven this tefilla without heart?

#### Learning with “Harchovah”

The Baal Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk once said, “Why do we ask ‘Write us in the sefer of good life, Write us in the sefer of parnossa?’” It would be enough to say “Write us down for parnossa.”

“However,” explained the Radomsker, “We ask that when we will be zocheh to have a ‘chayim tovim’ and parnosa v’chalkoloh, we should be able to have a good life to be able to learn with ‘harchovah’ from a sefer...”

#### Saying Tehillim with Tears

The Mader Rav, Reb Mordechai Leib Winkler, baal Levush Mordechai, took the gaon Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, later to become Yerushalayimer Rav, as a son-in-law.

When asked why he chose a choson who was not the son of a Rav, the Mader Rav replied, “Because I once saw that when Rav Yosef Tzvi did not understand a tosfos, he began to say Kapitel kuf yud tes with bitter tears. Such an eidim belongs in my family!”

#### Why did you Insult Me?

The Rav of Tiktin once said a droshoh before Kol Nidrei in the main shul of the city. Among the audience was the renowned Rav Meir Tikliner, who cried bitterly upon hearing the divrei mussar. After the drasha, Rav Meir went over to the Rav and cried, saying, “Why did you humiliate me in public?”

The Rav replied, frightened, “What are you talking about? I gave mussar to the entire kehilla, and did not have you in mind at all.”

The tzaddik sobbed as he said, “All the other Yidden were tzaddikim; who, then, did you have in mind, if not a sinner like me?”

#### Shidduchim for his Daughters

The Berditchever Rav searched for an appropriate baal tokeah before Rosh Hashanah, to blow the tekiyas in his Bais Medrash. Several baalei tokeah who had blown in the Bais Medrash before presented themselves to the Rebbe. Each of them showed the Rebbe their proficiency in lofty kavanos, but they did not appeal to the Rebbe.

One day, a simple baal tokeah presented himself to the Rebbe. The Berditchever asked him what he has in mind during blowing the shofar.

“Rebbe, I am a simple Jew who does not understand the hidden secrets of the shofar,” the Yid replied. “I have four daughters of marriageable age, and all of them need shidduchim. So this is what I have in mind during the tekiyas. ‘Ribono Shel Olam, I am doing Your will, and blowing the shofar. I beg of you, please do my will and marry off my daughters.’”

“You will blow the shofar in my Bais Medrash,” said the Rebbe with emotion. And so it was.

#### To Confuse the Soton

When Rav Hershel of Krakow was a young child, he ate before tekiyas shofar.

“Why did you eat before the tekiyas?” his father asked him sternly.

“I did it with a reason,” the young iluy explained. “On Rosh Hashanah, we are looking for ways to confuse the soton. We don’t bless the moon on the Shabbos before Tishrei, etc. Therefore, I ate something so that the soton should become confused and think we blew the shofar already, so he won’t be mekatrig on Klal Yisroel...”

#### Hanging in Midair

Rav Yitzchok Blaser, the great baal musar, explained the true meaning of the beinonim, the people in the middle, who are ‘T’luyim v’omdim’ until Yom Kippur, as follows:

When a person is brought to be hung, he is stood up on a high stool, and the rope is tied around his neck. Then, the stool is taken away from him, and the weight of his body causes the rope to tighten around his neck, choking him.

That is the situation with a man who is neither a tzaddik, nor a rasha on Rosh Hashanah. He is compared to one who is standing on the stool, with the rope around his neck. He is a ‘tolui,’ with the rope around his neck, yet he is still standing on solid ground. That is our matzav during the Ten days of Teshuvah.

Will the stool be taken away, or will the rope be removed? It depends on whether we do teshuvah on time.

Rav Elya Mishkovski added, “If the beinoni does teshuvah, then not only will he be saved from death, but he will be on a higher level than before, because he will be standing on a tall stool. Not only will teshuvah save him, but it will bring him to spiritual heights. In the place that baalei teshuvah stand, even true tzaddikim cannot stand.”

#### The Baal Dovor Spreads a Rumor

Reb Mottel of Slonim wrote that he heard from his Rebbe Rav Dovid Lubliner, the following insight:

When the bitter gezeriah of the Cantonists was decreed, Klal Yisroel tore through the heavens with their tefillos. Shortly thereafter, there was a rumor that the gezeriah was invalidated, and Klal Yisroel stopped davening for mercy.

Sadly, a short time later, the decree was reinforced with more brutality than before. Said Rav Dovid, “the rumor was spread by the baal dovor in order to weaken Jewish tefillos, because if Klal Yisroel had continued storming the heavens, the gezeriah would not have been reinstated.”

#### The Sinking Ship

Rav Elazar Rokeach of Amsterdam moved to Eretz Yisroel in his old age. In the midst of the journey, which took several weeks, Rosh Hashanah



arrived. On the first night of Rosh Hashanah there was a vicious storm, and the ship sprung a hole. Soon the hold became filled with water. All the ship's passengers frantically began bailing water out of the ship in order to save their lives.

However, Rav Elazar remained in his room, absorbed in his lofty thoughts. When the danger increased, and it seemed that the ship would sink, the Rav's two companions burst into the room, crying, "Rebbe! We are in grave danger! Soon the ship will sink."

To which the Rav replied, with d'veikus, "If so, then prepare yourselves, and stand near me. As soon as the new morning dawns, we will blow the shofar, and fulfill the mitzvah of tekiyas shofar."

The two attendants followed the Rav's advice. While the ship swayed precariously, close to sinking, they stood near the Rebbe to hear tekiyas shofar. Suddenly, as the shofar's blasts were heard, the ship righted itself, and the danger passed. All the passengers rejoiced and celebrated: their lives had been spared.

The tzaddik Rav Bunim of P'shischa later commented on this story, "Don't think that Rav Elazar wanted the mitzvah of tekiyas shofar to save them. He did not even think along those lines. Rather, when the Rebbe heard that the ship was in danger of sinking, he wanted to fulfill the precious mitzvah of tekiyas shofar one last time. And this mitzvah, done b'shelimus, saved the entire ship from death."

Saying "Hamelech" from Afar

A Chosid of Rav Mordechai of Lechovitch, by the name of Reb Meir, would often travel to his Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah. One year, his business contacts took him to Leipzig, and he was forced to remain there for Rosh Hashanah. When he arrived in shul, Reb Meir remembered the lofty and elevated atmosphere by his Rebbe, and a wave of sadness overtook him. His dejection was so great, that he could not begin to daven, and remained standing in his place like a mute.

Suddenly, he heard a loud voice in his ears. This was the voice of his Rebbe, far away, who was saying "Hamelech." Suddenly, he was overtaken by a new spirit of hischadshus, his heart and mind opened, and he began to daven with hislahavus and simcha, as if he would have been in his Rebbe's court.

After Yom Tov when Reb Meir came to Lechovitch, his Rebbe said, "V'nishma pishgom Hamelech. When a Yid says Hamelech, the voice is heard until Leipzig."

To be Yotzei the Mitzvah

The Chasam Sofer was very displeased with the baalei tekios who, while blowing the shofar, were delving into divrei kabbalah.

Once, a baal tokeah asked the Chasam Sofer, "So what should I have in mind while blowing the shofar?"

"You should have in mind to be yotzei the entire tzibur with the mitzvah of tekiyas shofar," the Chasam Sofer replied.

Learning from Yishmael

Why did Chazal teach us to read the story of Hagar and Yishmael on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, when the books of life and death are open before us?

There is a hint in the possuk, "Vayishma Hashem es kol hanaar b'asher hu shom," and Hashem heard the voice of the youth, (Yishmael), as he was at that time. Hakodosh Boruch Hu had mercy upon Yishmael, even though the malachim were mekatrig, "Why should you save a person who will later kill your children?"

Despite the objections of the malachim, Hakodosh Boruch Hu decided to save Yishmael, by creating a well, because his mother Hagar submitted to Hashgochas Hashem by throwing him under a tree.

This is what we daven for on Rosh Hashanah: "Tatteh in Heaven, if you had rachmonus on Yishmael, whose mother delivered him into Your hands, how much more should you have mercy upon us, whose only salvation comes from You. We are the children of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov!"

—Likutei Amarim

When the Whistle is heard...

One year, on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, shortly before Kiddush, the Divrei Chaim felt a tremendous exhaustion spread through his body, and he began to krechztz, nearly fainting from weakness.

The chasidim were concerned, but reasoned that the tzaddik had put forth a tremendous avodah during Selichos, and the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah, putting a strain on his kochos.

After several moments, the tzaddik said in a whispered voice, "You all know that during a war, when a soldier is on the front and battles without stop, when he finally has a few moments, a lull in the battle, he falls down in his place to rest, his kochos depleted. However, as soon as he hears the whistle, signaling that the battle has begun, he jumps up with fresh kochos, his exhaustion dissipates."

As he said these words, the holy Sanzer jumped up from his chair, and began to say Kiddush with a bren. The dutiful soldier was preparing to do the will of his Creator!

Shabbos and Rosh Hashanah: a Double Zechus

It was Friday, Erev Rosh Hashanah. Rav Mendele was lying in bed, racked in agony. His Rebbe came to be mevaker choleh, and solicitously asked, "How are you feeling, Mendel?"

"Oy, Rebbe," sighed the desperately ill man. "Be mispalel for me. The yisurim are very painful, but I could muster the energy to tolerate them. However, what bothers me most of all is that I cannot fulfill any mitzvos. It is already the third day that I have not put on tefillin. How can I survive the agony?"

"What are you talking about, Mendel?" asked his Rebbe. "A choleh mesukan is potur from all the mitzvos!"

"Please be mispalel for my health," begged Mendel in a feeble voice. "I don't want to be potur from the mitzvos."

"Listen to me, Mendel!" said the Rebbe. "The p'shat of the Chazal is as follows. Not only is the choleh potur, but 'Rachmanah patray,' Hakodosh Boruch Hu, kaviyochol, who is mekayem the entire Torah, puts on tefillin instead of the choleh. How great and holy is the mitzvah!"

"Is that so, Rebbe?" asked Mendel hopefully, his face shining with joy. He sat up in bed and began to clap his hands. But that exertion was too much for him, and he fell back into bed, exhausted.

"Yet, the dead cannot praise G-d," said Mendel. "I want to live and serve my Creator. Please daven for me, Rebbe, on the Yom Hadin!"

The Rebbe sat, deep in thought, and then spoke. "This year, the first day of Rosh Hashanah is on Shabbos. The Mishna says, 'yom tov shel Rosh Hashanah...b'Shabbos...' When Rosh Hashanah is on Shabbos, Klal Yisroel will have a Yom Tov, a good day.

Why? Because min haTorah, we are obligated to blow shofar, yet our chachomim have forbidden us. Thus, we cannot blow, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu blows for us."

Said the Rebbe, "These powerful tekiyos can destroy all the evil decrees, and bring you a refuah sheleimah."

Indeed, the Rebbe's words proved prophetic. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Mendel was already sitting in his place in shul, davening with kavonoh.

No Need for a Complicated Reckoning

The Dubna Maggid said, "Gedolei Yisroel would make a cheshbon hanefesh when the Yomim Noraim approached, and shiver in fear, saying 'who will emerge victorious from the din?' However, due to our lowly status, it does not even occur to us to make a cheshbon hanefesh."

He explained this concept with a moshol: A retail merchant usually stocks up on merchandise from a wholesaler. While some merchants buy merchandise with cash, most purchase their merchandise on credit, and pay it back slowly. By the time the merchant has to restock his supply, he has usually paid up his old balance.

However, sometimes a small balance remains, which the merchant must clear with his supplier before he orders more merchandise. When does he make these calculations? When his store is empty and he must restock the shelves, the merchant sits down and calculates how much he owes. That is the meaning of a cheshbon hanefesh.

The nimshol? Last year we stood before Hakodosh Boruch Hu to restock our shelves, so to speak, and daven for a year of good tidings. We paid part of our balance with ‘cash’, with Torah and mitzvot, that we brought along, and the rest on credit, with promises to improve in our avodas Hashem. At the end of the year, as we prepare to ‘restock’ with blessings for the coming year, it is time to make a cheshbon hanefesh and see how much we owe our supplier.

There are merchants who ask their supplier for a large amount of merchandise on credit. All year, as the merchant sells the merchandise, and earns a profit, he knows that at the end of the year he must pay his debt. However, until that day arrives he does not need to visit his supplier. Yet when the year comes to an end, he must make an accurate reckoning, total up all his profits, and give the full amount that he owes to his supplier.

Woe to the merchant who does not put money aside to pay his bill! Not only will he lose all his profits, because the supplier will seize his assets, but he will lose his source of merchandise as well.

Many tzaddikim are compared to the first type of merchant, who pays for most of his merchandise with cash, with Torah and mitzvot, or part with cash and part on credit. At the end of the year, they must make a cheshbon to figure out how much they owe.

Yet the average merchant, who accepted all the merchandise on credit, does not need to make a complicated reckoning. He knows quite clearly that all the merchandise, brocha, hatzolocho, health and happiness, was given to him on loan, and now he must repay the debt with mitzvot and maasim tovim. Only by correcting his deeds can he be assured of a “shana tovah.”

#### The Power of a Pure Tefillah

The Rebbe of Rachmistrivke, who lived in Yerushalayim, related the following tale about a simple shoemaker from Polnoah, who merited to be buried near great tzaddikim.

As the shoemaker advanced in years, he purchased two burial plots in the bais olam, one for himself, and one for his wife. The chevra kadisha sold him the plots and inscribed his name in their record books.

From that day onward, the shoemaker would go to the bais olam every afternoon, and sit near his open grave, reciting the entire Sefer Tehillim. When he completed the tehillim, he measured his grave, surrounded it with coins, and gave away the coins for tzedakah.

At that time, the Rav of Polnoah was Rav Leib Mocheach, a talmid of the Baal Shem Tov. When Rav Leib was no longer young, he approached the chevra kadisha, wanting to buy a burial plot for himself. Rav Leib went to the bais olam to select a grave, and walked among the kevorim. When he reached the kever of the shoemaker, he felt a strong aura of kedushah, and begged the chevra kadisha to sell him the plot. The chevra kadisha explained that it belonged to the shoemaker, and thus could not be sold.

The Rav was surprised, and wanted to know what made the grave so holy. After making inquiries, Rav Leib discovered the secret of the shoemaker’s kedushah, the daily recital of tehillim and the giving of tzedakah. Impressed at the simple man’s purity, Rav Leib summoned the shoemaker and begged to buy one of the plots for himself.

After a few moments of hesitation, the shoemaker agreed, with one provision: He wanted Rav Leib to write a note saying that if he would pass away after the Rav, he would be buried there. Otherwise, the shoemaker was afraid that the chevra kadisha would not bury him next to the Rav. Rav Leib agreed, and wrote the note.

Several years later, Rav Leib was niftar, and was laid to rest in the spot he had purchased. A new Rav, the Toldos Yaakov Yosef, one of the beloved talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov, was invited to Polnoah. One day, the Toldos went to the bais olam, and visited the ohel of the Rav. The Toldos immediately felt the aura of kedushah in the empty grave, just as Rav Leib had. He went to the chevra kadisha and asked to purchase it. They replied that it was owned by a simple shoemaker.

The Toldos summoned the shoemaker, and asked him to sell the grave, because he wanted to be buried near his chaver Rav Leib. To which the shoemaker replied, with humility, “It was originally my plot, and I agreed to sell one grave to Rav Leib. If I sell you the other, where will I be laid to rest?”

The Toldos assured him that when the time came, there would be place in the ohel for two graves. The shoemaker was satisfied, and sold the Rav the plot.

Several years later, the Toldos was niftar, and was buried in that holy plot, next to Rav Leib. There was no longer any place in the ohel for a third grave, yet the shoemaker did not worry. A promise was a promise. The son-in-law of the Toldos, Rav Avrohom Dov Auerbach, became the new Rav of the city.

A short while later, the shoemaker left this world, and the chevra kadisha prepared his body for burial. To their shock and surprise, they were unable to lift his body. After repeated tries, they went to the Rav, who suggested that they check the records belonging to the shoemaker, in order to clarify the mystery.

The chevra kadisha were astounded to learn that the shoemaker had originally bought the plots where the two great tzaddikim were buried! They then searched among the shoemaker’s possessions, and found two notes, one from Rav Leib, and one from Rav Yaakov Yosef, promising that he would be buried next to them.

Now the chevra kadisha had a dilemma. There was simply no room in the ohel for a third grave. Upon the advice of the Rav, they prepared the niftar and held the levaya. Then, they lifted the aron and placed it inside the ohel. The Rav then placed one note on the kever of the Toldos, and one note on the kever of Rav Leib, saying “the shoemaker was niftar; here are the notes that were written on his behalf. Please make room for him.”

The entire olam then left the ohel and closed the door. When they returned a short while later, a miracle had occurred! The wall of the ohel moved outward, making room for another kever. Thus, the shoemaker was buried near the two great tzaddikim.

The townspeople of Polnoah marveled at the power of tehillim and tzedakah given with a pure heart. For many years, those who visited the grave reported that they had seen the walls of the ohel bending outward, to make room for the additional grave. May the memory of the tzaddikim be a blessing.

---

#### *YateUSA Rosh Hashanah Edition 29 Elul 5768*

#### **Halacha Talk**

**by Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal**

#### **Kaparos**

Erev Yom Kippur. The day preceding the holiest day of the year. People are tense, looking for something, anything that can help them attain atonement and be inscribed in the Sefer Hachaim. Tefillah, teshuvah u’tzedakah, ma’avirin es ro’a hagzeirah – Prayer, repentance, and charity remove the evil decree! One of the ancient minhagim associated with Erev Yom Kippur is the custom of kaparos. At first glance, it seems strange. Take a chicken, swing it over your head and – voilà! – you are cleansed from your sins! How does this work? Let us examine this ritual and try to shed light on some of its mysteries.

#### **MINHAG HAGEONIM**

The first mention of the minhag is not in Shas, but rather in the Geonim, the great leaders who lived after the sealing of the Talmud. The responsum of the Geonim, cited by the Mordechai at the beginning of Masseches Yuma, states as follows: That we slaughter as many chickens on Erev Yom Kippur as there are members of the household is an approved practice. This is also the custom of all the sages of Israel. The householders purchase chickens on Erev Yom Kippur... and they swing it while still alive over the head of each person in the house, and say: “This is in place of so-and-so, and this is instead of so-and-so. He will go to life and it will go to death.” They then slaughter the chicken and distribute it to the poor, orphans, and widows as atonement. There are some who do this on Erev Rosh Hashanah as well. Additionally, there are exceedingly wealthy individuals who slaughter rams, sheep and goats and distribute them to the poor.

In another responsum of the same period, the question is addressed why the minhag is to use specifically chickens. The respondent writes that it is

not accurate that only chickens are used, as very rich individuals use other animals as well. However, the predominant custom is to use chickens because chickens were more commonly available, and because in Talmudic parlance, the word for chicken is “gever,” which is the same word in Lashon Hakodesh for “man” (see Yuma 20b). Therefore it is very apropos to have a “gever,” i.e., a chicken, be the atonement for a “gever,” a man (Teshuvos HaGeonim, Sha’arei Teshuvah #299).

Another reason why chickens are preferred over other animals is provided by the Acharonim. In order to understand this reason, however, a brief introduction is required. One of the requirements of certain korbanos offered in the Beis Hamikdash was semicha. It was necessary for the owner of the korban to place his hands on the head of the animal and lean on it with all of his strength. The idea behind this was that the person bringing the korban had to feel that because of his sins it was he who should be killed. Being allowed to substitute a korban instead is a chesed from Hashem. By leaning on the animal, he symbolizes to himself that the animal is being offered in his stead (Ramban, Vayikra 1:9). Now, let us return to kaparos.

It had been the custom during the times of the Geonim to place one’s hands on the chicken or animal after kaparos and before slaughtering. This “semicha,” like with korbanos, was to symbolize to the person the fact that the slaughtering of the kaparos animal should have technically been done to him, due to his aveiros. However, the practice of semicha on the kaparos animal could be misleading. Since semicha was being done, one might mistakenly think that the kaparos animal was actually a korban and that the one performing kaparos was actually slaughtering a korban outside the Beis Hamikdash, which is a very serious violation. Therefore, the chicken is preferred for kaparos, as the chicken is not a species that can be offered on the mizbayach. Thus, no one would think that it was a korban (Magen Avrohom 605:3; Mateh Ephraim 604:4).

Some Rishonim mention that the custom was to plant legumes in a pot a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah for each household member. This pot was then used for kaparos and thrown into the river (see Rashi, Shabbos 81a, s.v. hei parpisa). The Acharonim contend that this method was chosen in order to avoid the mistaken idea that the kaparos animal was a designated korban (Machatzis Hashekel 605:3).

Not only is the actual kaparos ceremony described in the teshuvos of the Geonim, but even the pesukim that we recite prior to kaparos are detailed in their writings (Teshuvos HaGeonim, Sha’arei Teshuvah #299).

#### NOT UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED

Although the minhag of kaparos is cited in the writings of the Geonic period, it was not originally universally accepted. Several Rishonim opposed the minhag on the grounds that it is “darchei ha’emori,” which literally means “the ways of the Emorites.” The Emorites were one of the seven original nations who lived in Eretz Yisroel and whom the Bnei Yisroel were commanded to destroy. Since they practiced idol worship, anything that was remotely reminiscent of that sin is referred to as “darchei ha’emori.” These Rishonim felt that this practice of atoning for one’s sins by placing them on an animal and then killing the animal smacked of avodah zarah and is forbidden. Even though these Rishonim knew that the Geonim permitted this practice, they opposed it (KolBo, Hilchos Erev Yom Kippur, citing the Ramban and Shu”t HaRashba).

Although the Shulchan Aruch (605) paskens that one should not practice this minhag, and those of Sephardic descent generally follow its rulings, it has become universally accepted even among the Sephardim to perform kaparos. In all likelihood, this is probably due to the influence of the Arizal and his students who held that this custom has its sources in the Kabbalah.

#### FOUR TYPES OF DEATH

As we mentioned, the idea behind kaparos is that the person should realize that whatever is happening to the chicken should in actuality be done to him, and this thought should bring him to teshuvah. The Rishonim point out that upon closer consideration, the process of slaughtering the chicken should remind a person about the four types of death, with which the Sanhedrin was ordained to kill a transgressor. These four types of death are: sekilah (stoning), sereifah (burning), hereg (beheading) and chenek (strangulation).

When the shochet prepares the chicken for slaughter, he holds on to the trachea and esophagus. This is reminiscent of strangulation. The actual slaughtering reminds one of hereg. After the slaughtering, the chicken is thrown to the ground. This is similar to stoning because the capital punishment called stoning is actually accomplished by pushing the condemned off a building onto the ground. And finally, in order to facilitate the removal of the feathers, they are often singed, which represents burning (Shu”t Mahariv #191; Levush 605).

Another reason for the minhag of kaparos is that it is similar to the concept of the sa’ir hamishtalei’ach, the goat that was thrown off a cliff as part of the Yom Kippur service in the Beis Hamikdash. In that case, the Kohein Gadol recited viduy on behalf of all of Klal Yisroel on that goat, while resting his weight on the goat’s head, thereby placing all of their sins on it. The goat was then dispatched and thrown off a rocky precipice, thus “destroying” all of their sins. Similarly, one places his sins on the kaparos animal and once it is slaughtered, it is as if all the aveiros have been destroyed (Machzor Vitri).

#### THE CORRECT DAY

Although the generally accepted day for kaparos is Erev Yom Kippur, as is stated in the writings of most of the Geonim and cited as halacha by the Rama (605), this was not universally accepted. One of the Geonim held that it should be done on Rosh Hashanah itself, while many Rishonim maintain that one should do it on Erev Rosh Hashanah. Some of these Rishonim juxtaposed the practice of kaparos before Rosh Hashanah with the minhag of eating various types of food on Leil Rosh Hashanah. Just as the foods are eaten “lesimana tovah,” a good omen, similarly, we perform kaparos on Erev Rosh Hashanah in order that it should be a good portent for the coming year (Teshuvos Rav Notrai Gaon 4:179; Shibalei Haleket #283; Tanya Rabasi #72; Rikanti 67:2).

Even some of the Rishonim who hold that kaparos are performed on Erev Yom Kippur maintain that the underlying reason behind them is for simana tovah. Although generally, the concept of simana tovah only applies to Rosh Hashanah, as one performs certain acts at the “beginning” of the year, thereby making a good omen for the rest of the year, some maintain that the entire aseres yemay teshuvah are also the “beginning” of the year and simana tovah is effective (Meiri, Chibur HaTeshuvah pg. 398; Terumas HaDeshen, cited by Leket Yosher, Orach Chaim #129).

Some sources who cite the minhagim of the Egyptian Jewish communities mention the minhag of performing kaparos on Hoshana Rabbah. The reason why they did it then is because Hoshana Rabbah has the status of a miniature Yom Kippur and it is when the completion of the chasimah takes place (Nahar Mitzrayim, Hilchos Yom Kippur #2; Keser Shem Tov, vol. VI, pg. 224). Additionally, it is reported that when the Chasam Sofer became ill on Hoshana Rabbah during the last year of his life, he asked that they perform kaparos for him then, even though he had already done it prior to Yom Kippur (Minhagei Chasam Sofer 7:15).

#### THE CORRECT TIME

There is a difference of opinion among the Acharonim as to the preferred time of day for kaparos. Some maintain that kaparos should be performed at the end of the night before alos hashachar. This is because Hashem’s compassion intensifies at that time (Sha’ar Hakavanos pg. 100; Mateh Ephraim 605:3). However, others contend that the best time is after the sky has started to light up. There are two reasons for this: 1) This was the time that korbanos were slaughtered in the Beis Hamikdash and 2) according to the Arizal and the mekubalim, Hashem’s compassion only intensifies when the light of day appears, as that is a sign of chesed. This is alluded to in the posuk, “During the day, Hashem commands His chesed” (Sefer Nezirus Shimshon, quoted in Elef Hamagen 605:5).

Practically speaking, there are various minhagim as to when to perform kaparos. Some recite slichos at chatzos and perform kaparos immediately afterwards (Darchei Chaim v’Shalom #742). There are those that do so before alos hashachar and some who wait until the sky begins to brighten, as mentioned above (Otzar Hachaim pg. 282, #239; Minhagei Chasam Sofer 7:15). Others maintain that one should not perform any mitzvah before davening, and therefore they wait until after shacharis (Leket Yosher; Elya Rabbah 605:1).

#### AVOID THE RUSH

Some Acharonim maintain that due to the over-abundance of kaparos chickens requiring shechitah, and out of concern that the shoctim will be under pressure to shecht quickly, it is preferable not to wait until Erev Yom Kippur for kaparos, but to move it up a day or two. They write that because of this pressure, the shoctim are often too tired to shecht properly and they do not check the shechitah knife sufficiently, thereby possibly invalidating the shechitah and causing the chicken to become treif. There is nothing wrong with performing kaparos earlier, as the entire aseres yemay teshuvah is considered the time for kaparos (Pri Megadim 605, Eishel Avrohom; Mishnah Berurah 605:5; Minhagei Chasam Sofer 7:15).

Many Acharonim warn about the pitfalls of overburdening the shoctim on Erev Yom Kippur and how it is not appropriate to come before Hashem on Yom Hadin after causing people to eat non-kosher meat on Erev Yom Kippur. Even those who generally follow the teachings of the Arizal and maintain that according to Kabbalah, one must shecht the kaparos on Erev Yom Kippur, contend that it is preferable to do it earlier in order to avoid the possibility of causing the meat to become non-kosher. Indeed, in many communities the rav or beis din instituted that the slaughtering of kaparos should begin several days prior to Erev Yom Kippur (ibid; Moaid l'Kol Chai 15:47; Sdei Chemed, Ma'areches Yom Kippur 1:2; Shu"t Yeshu'os Yaakov, Yoreh Deah #18).

It is interesting to note that two gedolei haposkim use very fascinating expressions when discussing this problem. The Aruch Hashulchan (605) writes that many have tried to dissuade people from overburdening the shoctim on Erev Yom Kippur, but they were unsuccessful because the masses "have clung to this," i.e., kaparos, "like to the mitzvah of esrog, and even more so." The Chayei Adom writes similarly, if not more sharply (144:4): "Even though this minhag only appears in the writings of the Geonim, nevertheless it has become entrenched in the hearts of the masses that the entire atonement of Yom Kippur depends on this (kapos). It can almost be said that kaparos and eating matzah are considered to be mitzvos of equal stature and they believe that their entire atonement on Yom Kippur will come about because of a chicken."

#### KAPAROS ALTERNATIVES

We have seen earlier that there are several reasons why a person should use a chicken for kaparos. Chickens are preferable to other animals as they are more commonly found in the home and because a chicken is called "gever," it can atone for a person, who is also called "gever." Additionally, there are reasons according to Kabbalah why one should use a chicken (Moadim L'Simcha, vol. I, pg. 246, quoting Rav Chaim Vital in Sha'ar Hakavanos and HaMelech Bimsibo, vol. II, pg. 23 #4).

There are various opinions among the Acharonim about what to do if one does not have chickens. Some maintain that it is preferable to use geese as opposed to turtledoves, as geese cannot be offered on the mizbayach and there is no concern that one will suspect him of setting aside korbanos (Mateh Ephraim 604:4; Magen Avrohom 605:3). Others hold that when chickens are unavailable, one should use fish (Levush). Some even contend that fish are preferable to chickens, as there is no issue of problems associated with shechitah (Elef Hamagen).

The Chayei Adom (144:4), after writing at length of the problems inherent in using chickens for kaparos due to the overworked shoctim, goes on to say that it is preferable to use money instead. He reasons that it is not essential to use a living creature for kaparos, as we find in the Rishonim the custom of using potted plants, which was also preferred due to shechitah issues. He says that money is certainly acceptable because in any event the kaparos are given to the poor, and one can give the money for tzedakah distribution. He concludes by mentioning that one should modify the text in the siddur when using money, and should instead say, "This money will go to tzedakah."

Some conjecture that there is another reason for using money as opposed to chickens. We mentioned earlier that several Rishonim maintain that the minhag of kaparos is forbidden because of darchei ha'emori, and that the Shulchan Aruch follows this opinion. Although the Rama paskens like the Geonim who upheld the practice and the minhag among most, if not all, Jews is to perform kaparos, nevertheless, by using money one avoids the entire issue. This is because the entire concern of the Rishonim who maintain that it is darchei ha'emori is because slaughtering animals in

order to rid oneself of his sins is an idolatrous practice. However, there is nothing wrong with giving tzedakah as atonement for one's aveiros (Hilchos Chag b'Chag, Yomim Nora'im, pg. 276, s.v. gam).

Some poskim write that if one uses money as opposed to chickens, he should use the amount of money equal to the value of a chicken (Magen Avraham 605:5; Shulchan Aruch HaRav 605:5; Mateh Ephraim 605:10). Additionally there is a prevalent minhag to use an amount of money equivalent to eighteen, the numerical value of chai, or a multiple of this number.

As an interesting aside, the word for money in Lashon Hakodesh is "kesef." Kesef is spelled, kaf-samach-pei. If one wishes to spell out these letters, kaf is kaf-pei, samech is samech-mem-kaf, and pei is pei-hey. The gematria of the spelled out letters of kesef is 305, the same as kaparah, atonement (Orchos Chaim, in the name of Yafeh Lev).

#### SHARING KAPAROS

There is a disagreement among the Acharonim whether one is allowed to use one chicken for two or more people. Some compare performing kaparos to the bringing of a nedavah, a voluntary korban to the Beis Hamikdash. For example, if a person chooses to bring a shelamim, a non-obligatory korban, the halacha is that one may do so in partnership with someone else (Menachos 104b; Rambam, Hilchos Ma'ase Hakorbanos 3:1). Since kaparos are not obligatory and only a minhag, it is similar to the concept of offering a non-obligatory korban (Magen Avrohom 605:2 and Machatzis Hashekel ad loc.).

However, others contend that kaparos cannot be compared to a non-obligatory korban, but rather to a compulsory korban, such as a chatas, brought when one inadvertently transgresses certain negative commandments. Although, kaparos is only a minhag, perhaps it is considered binding since it is practiced by most people. With regards to compulsory korbanos, the halacha is that each person must bring his own korban and it cannot be brought in partnership (Biar HaGra ad loc.).

The above discussion revolves around a statement of the Rama. The Rama writes (605), "The custom is to use a rooster for a man and a hen for a woman. And for an expectant mother, we take two, as perhaps she will give birth to a boy." The Magen Avrohom explains that the Rama's intent is that a woman who is expecting uses both a rooster and a hen. That way, if the fetus is a boy, his kaparos will be "covered" by the rooster and if it is a girl, the mother and fetus can share the same hen. This is based on what we explained that two people can share a non-obligatory korban.

The Vilna Gaon disagrees and maintains that one cannot share kaparos with anyone else. However, he explains that an expectant mother is an exception. The reason why she may use a single hen to "cover" her and the female fetus is a concept called "ubar yerech imo hu," a fetus is a limb of its mother. In other words, since the fetus is part of its mother, they are considered to be one entity and they can share the same hen for kaparos.

There is an obvious question here to the Vilna Gaon's approach. The very fact that the Rama requires more than one chicken for an expectant mother indicates that "ubar lav yerech imo hu," a fetus is not considered as part of its mother, but rather its own entity. For if the Rama would indeed maintain that the two are one entity, why bring two kaparos? Unfortunately, the resolution of this question is beyond the scope of this article and the reader is directed to Moadim u'Zmanim, vol. I, #52 for further research.

Many Acharonim maintain that just as one takes individual chickens for each family member, an expectant mother should use three chickens, a rooster and two hens. One hen for herself; a rooster, for perhaps the fetus is a boy; and a second hen, in case the fetus is a girl (Sha'ar Hakavanos, pg. 100a; Arizal, cited by Magen Avrohom 605:2; Mateh Moshe #838). The Mishnah Berurah (605:3) cites both opinions, i.e., that an expectant mother should take either two or three chickens, and does not write a conclusive ruling.

#### GOING TO THE TZADDIK

It is interesting to note that there was an old custom for one to take his chicken to a tzaddik or elderly person in order to perform kaparos. The tzaddik would take the chicken and swing it over the head of its owner and recite the appropriate pesukim (Kol Bo; Orchos Chaim). Another source maintains that there was a person appointed by the community, the

“shaliach tzibbur,” who would perform kaparos for everyone. Each person would bring his chicken to the designated individual who would take the chicken, place his hand on the person’s head and recite the pesukim (Teshuvos HaGeonim Hachadashos; Tur 605).

In some communities it is customary for the head of the house to perform kaparos for the other members of the family. Even if one of the children is not present, the father performs kaparos on his or her behalf (Keser Shem Tov).

#### SEND THE CHICKEN OR THE MONEY

Part of the atonement process effected by kaparos is that the poor should benefit from the kaparos. This is based on the well-known adage, “tzedakah tatzil mimaves,” charity saves from death. By giving the kaparos to the poor, one is saved from a Divine decree of death. Originally, the custom had been that after performing kaparos, the chicken was slaughtered, and the chickens themselves were distributed to orphans, widows and other needy individuals (Rosh and Mordechai, beginning of Yuma; Ra’avyah #547; Shibolei Haleket #253).

At a later stage, it became the practice to redeem the slaughtered chicken, give its value to the poor and the owner of the chicken would eat it himself. This was because the poor were embarrassed to take the kaparos chickens, with the claim, “after one places his sins on the chicken, he sends it to me?” (Agudah, end of Yuma; Maharil).

Although the Rama writes (605) that one can give either the chickens or their value to the poor, the Magen Avrohom (605:4) maintains that because of the above mentioned reason, it is preferable to give their value. The Mateh Ephraim points out, however, that if one knows that the poor person will not be embarrassed to take the chicken, it is preferable to give him the chicken, because it saves him the trouble of having to buy the chicken himself.

Wishing all of our readers and all of Klal Yisroel a gmar chasimah tova!

---

*YateUSA Rosh Hashanah Edition 29 Elul 5768*

#### Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

#### Eating before Tekias Shofar

There are conflicting customs regarding eating before tekias shofar. Some communities not only permit but encourage the congregants to eat by serving a kiddush, while others forbid eating altogether and object to it strongly.<sup>1</sup> These customs are based on divergent views among the poskim. Basically, the poskim fall into three groups:<sup>2</sup> Some are very strict and prohibit eating altogether,<sup>3</sup> others are lenient and allow anyone to eat before tekias shofar,<sup>4</sup> and a third group allows eating only for the weak, elderly or ill.<sup>5</sup> This third group stipulates, however, that the infirm individual should eat in private so that the prohibition will not be taken lightly by others.

Since all three customs have valid sources in the poskim, each community should follow its own custom as directed by their rabbi.<sup>6</sup> However, the poskim agree that it is forbidden to be koveia seudah (partake of a meal) before tekias shofar. [It is similarly forbidden to be koveia seudah before shaking a lulav or reading the megillah.<sup>7</sup>] It is also the general consensus that eating more than a k’beitzah of bread<sup>8</sup> or cake<sup>9</sup> is considered kevius seudah. A k’beitzah is usually defined as approximately 2 oz., although according to the measurements of the Chazon Ish, a k’beitzah is 3.5 oz.<sup>10</sup> It is proper,<sup>11</sup> therefore, not to eat more than a k’beitzah of cake when eating before tekias shofar.<sup>12</sup>

Eating fruit (raw or cooked), cheese, potato kugel, rice cereals, etc., is not considered kevius seudah even when a large amount is consumed.<sup>13</sup> [Consequently, when estimating the amount of cake that may be eaten before tekias shofar, only the amount of flour in the cake is included. Fruit, cheese, or any other ingredient baked along with the dough is not counted towards the amount for kevius seudah.<sup>14</sup>]

Almost all the poskim agree that drinking tea, coffee, juice or soft drinks is permitted before tekias shofar, but they disagree as to whether one should

recite Kiddush first. Many poskim advise that the beverage should be drunk without Kiddush,<sup>15</sup> and some communities follow this custom. Since not all poskim agree, however,<sup>16</sup> the preferred option is to hear Kiddush from a weak, elderly or ill person who is permitted to eat,<sup>17</sup> as stated above.

#### Women

The restriction on eating before tekias shofar is more lenient in regard to women, because they are generally exempt from “time-bound” mitzvos such as listening to the shofar, which is restricted to a certain time of the year and day.<sup>18</sup> There are, however, poskim who hold that although women are technically exempt from hearing the shofar, they have, nevertheless, accepted this mitzvah upon themselves as an obligation.<sup>19</sup> Based on this view, it has become customary all over the world for women to go to shul to listen to the shofar, or else to hear it blown in their homes by a qualified tokea.

Not all poskim, however, agree that women have accepted upon themselves an obligation from which they are clearly exempt.<sup>20</sup> Some poskim rule, therefore, that women are not obligated to listen to tekias shofar.<sup>21</sup> As stated earlier, though, the custom has generally followed the first view and most women observe this mitzvah stringently. Still, a woman who must eat before tekias shofar may do so,<sup>22</sup> even if the amount of food she requires is considered a kevius seudah.

#### Shabbos

When the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos and tekias shofar is canceled, all poskim agree that it is permitted to recite Kiddush and eat before Musaf, provided that the amount eaten is less than a kevius seudah.<sup>23</sup> One who is weak and needs to eat more than that amount may eat as much as he needs.<sup>24</sup>

One who did not drink before davening and realizes that Musaf will end after chatzos (midday), should drink or eat something before Musaf, since on Shabbos it is prohibited to fast past chatzos.<sup>25</sup>

#### During the break

During the break before tekias shofar, care should be taken that at least a minyan remains in shul, since Shulchan Aruch<sup>26</sup> rules decisively that it is prohibited for the congregation to leave the shul before the Sifrei Torah are returned to the aron. If this cannot be arranged, several poskim suggest returning the Sifrei Torah to the aron before the break.<sup>27</sup> In most shuls, however, the Sifrei Torah are covered with a tallis and somebody is appointed to watch over them.<sup>28</sup>

In many shuls, the break before tekias shofar, whether food is served or not, is a short one. Consequently, even if one removes his tallis, no blessing is recited when it is put back on. [This is also the halachah if one used the bathroom while his tallis was off.] If, however, there is a long break (a break of two to three hours is considered a long break<sup>29</sup>), then a new blessing is recited over the tallis when it is put back on.<sup>30</sup>

#### Footnotes

1 See remarks by Harav Y.E. Henkin, ha-Pardes, Tishrei 5730.

2 Note that Shulchan Aruch does not discuss this prohibition concerning tekias shofar, although he does mention it concerning netilas lulav (O.C. 652:2) and the reading of Megillas Esther (O.C. 692:4). The source of this halachah, however, which is a Tosefta in the first chapter of Tractate Shabbos, lists tekias shofar among those other mitzvos.

3 Beis Yitzchak Y.D. 2:18; Maharsham 1:1 quoting Besamim Rosh. See also Sdei Chemed (Dalet Minim 3:22). Harav S.Z. Auerbach advised that one who needs to eat should do so after the first set of tekios is completed; see Halichos Shlomo 17:12 for a complete review of his opinion.

4 Mikraei Kodosh 29; Tzitz Eliezer 6:7; 7:32; 8:21; Moadim u’Zemanim 1:4; Az Nidberu 1:10 This has become the accepted custom in many yeshivos due to the length of the davening there.

5 Chasam Sofer Y.D. 7; Mateh Efrayim 588:2; Sha’arei Teshuvah 584:3; Minchas Yitzchak 5:11; Shevet ha-Levi 4:54. This seems to be the view of the Mishnah Berurah (see 652:7 and Sha’ar ha-Tziyun concerning lulav) as well. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Nishmas Avraham 585:1) maintains that the Mishnah Berurah’s opinion is more stringent concerning shofar because eating on Rosh Hashanah necessitates Kiddush.

6 If at all possible, those who eat before tekias shofar should do so on the shul premises where they will be summoned in time for the tekios.

7 The Rabbis forbade partaking of a meal before performing a mitzvah since one could easily become distracted and forget to perform the mitzvah in question. It

follows, therefore, that if one appoints a shomer – another individual who is not eating who will remind him to perform the mitzvah – he may eat before performing the mitzvah (Mishnah Berurah 235:18, concerning Kerias Shema).

8 Mishnah Berurah 692:14. [See, however, Chayei Adam 119:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 431:26, who allow only a k'zayis of bread.]

9 Pri Megadim O.C. 431:4. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 286:7 and Mishnah Berurah 639:15.

10 One who generally follows the Chazon Ish's ruling regarding shiurim can surely rely on him concerning this halachah as well. It is questionable, however, if it is proper to rely on the Chazon Ish's measurement in regard to this halachah only.

11 But many people are not careful about this, relying instead on the poskim who hold that when there is a set time for davening to begin, this prohibition is lifted; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Tikunim u'Miluim 52:52) based on Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 235:19. See also Mishnah Berurah 232:26.

12 Mezonos cereals whose raw batter rises like bread dough, e.g., Cheerios, Grape Nuts, Wheat Chex, are also considered like cake.

13 O.C. 286:3 and 639:2.

14 Based on Igros Moshe O.C. 1:71 and Divrei Yoel 13.

15 See Elef ha-Magen 585:2 and Ktzei ha-Mateh, ibid.

16 See Divrei Yoel 1:29.

17 See Sdei Chemed (Rosh Hashanah 2:31) and Mikraei Kodesh 28. It is important that Kiddush be repeated before the meal, since some maintain that the Kiddush is not valid.

18 O.C. 589:6.

19 Maharil (Hilchos Shofar). See also Magen Avraham (O.C. 489:1, concerning Sefiras ha-Omer), who says that women have accepted [certain] time-restricted mitzvos as obligations. He does not, however, single out shofar more than any other time-restricted mitzvah. Chayei Adam (141:7), Rav Akiva Eiger (Teshuvos 1, addendum), and Ben Ish Chai (Nitzavim 1:17) also state that women have accepted shofar as an obligation.

20 See Minchas Chinuch 306, who questions the Magen Avraham quoted above. In his opinion, women can only accept a mitzvah whose obligation is questionable, such as davening Ma'ariv. A mitzvah from which they are clearly exempt, such as listening to the shofar, cannot be "accepted." See also Nezirus Shimshon (quoted in Sdei Chemed, Ma'areches Mem, 136), Teshuvos Sha'arei De'ah 2:237 and Yechaveh Da'as 2:70.

21 Harav Y. C. Sonnenfeld in Shalmas Chayim 1:88. Note also that neither the Mateh Efrayim, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Mishnah Berurah nor Aruch ha-Shulchan quote the opinion that women have accepted tekias shofar as an obligation.

22 Chayei Adam 141:7; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:19.

23 O.C. 286:3.

24 Mishnah Berurah 286:9.

25 Mishnah Berurah 584:5; Elef ha-Magen 597:2.

26 O.C. 149:1.

27 Ktzei ha-Mateh 590; Orchos Rabbeinu 2:181, relating the custom by the Chazon Ish and the Steipler Gaon; Nitei Gavriel, pg. 84; Kitzur Hilchos Moadim, pg. 45.

28 Luach D'var Yom b'Yomo.

29 Shulchan Aruch Harav 8:23; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 8:7; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Siach Halachah 8:63); Kitzur Hilchos Moadim, pg. 45.

30 See Mishnah Berurah 8:37.

then, says the gemara, he can do so during the following weekdays. In determining how late in the following week havdala can be made, reference is made to our gemara; according to the text we have, havdala can be made for the first three days after Shabbat.

Other commentaries had a different text which concluded that havdala can only be made the first day of the week. Both opinions are cited by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 299:6) but Rema rules that it can be done for three days. In regard to havdala after Yom Tov, however, Mishna Berura (ibid. 16) points out that this concept is inapplicable, and havdala can be done only the first day following the holiday.

(There is a puzzle why Rashbam, in his commentary on Pesachim, gives a different example of the condition made regarding the divorce than the one cited in our gemara, even though the reference there is to our gemara. Readers are invited to offer their solutions.)

This idea of the six weekdays being divided between before and after Shabbat is a dramatic refutation of the characterization of Shabbat as the "weekend." Shabbat is not the end but the heart of the week around which all the other days revolve.

### UNWORTHY KINGDOM - Gittin 80a

In Talmudic times the date written into the get document was in accordance with the year of the reign of the king in whose country it was written. This was instituted by our Sages as a way of maintaining good relations with the local government, which would certainly resent any other dating system. (Today, Tosefot points out this is no longer the dating system of nations, so we write the year from creation.)

Should someone in Babylon write the date according to the years of the ruler of the "unworthy kingdom," says the mishna, the get is considered invalid because it is in violation of this rabbinical decree. The "unworthy kingdom" is identified by the gemara as the Roman Empire, so characterized because "it lacks its own script and language." Rashi explains that this is a reference to the eclectic nature of its national tongue.

Tosefot (Mesechta Avoda Zara 10a) challenges this explanation based on the existence of nations such as the children of Yishmael and Ketura, the Ammonites and the Moabites. These nations came into being after Hashem introduced pluralistic language to the world as a means of dispersing the people who sought to rebel against Heaven by building the Tower of Babel. Since they were not around when the multiplicity of languages began, we must conclude that they, too, borrowed their languages from other nations. Why, then, is Rome singled out as "unworthy" for not having its own language?

Tosefot therefore concludes that not having its own language is not the issue. What Rome was lacking was a special language which was reserved for royal use, such as we find "Greek wisdom" as a name for such an aristocratic form of expression. This, Tosefot points out, is what is meant in Mesechta Megilla (10b) when the prophet says that Hashem will punish the Babylonians for destroying the Beit Hamikdash by cutting off their language. Even though their language is Aramaic and they long continued to speak that tongue, they did lose the royal language they once used.

© 2008 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

---

### THE WEEKLY DAF - Gittin 75 - 81

For the week ending 27 September 2008 / 27 Elul 5768

from Ohr Somayach | [www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

### WEEK HEART OF WEEK END - Gittin 77a

If a man divorces his wife with a get on the condition that he will be away until after Shabbat, when is it considered that this condition has been fulfilled?

This question was pondered by the sages against the background of a beraita. The beraita states that a condition to be away "until after shemita" (the seven-year agricultural cycle) is considered fulfilled only if he is still away for one entire year after shemita; that a condition to be away until "after a year" is fulfilled by being away for one month after the year; and being away until "after a month" means a week after the month. The resolution of this question is that the first three days of the week are called "after Shabbat," while the second set of three days are called "before (the next) Shabbat."

This ruling in regard to the fulfillment of a time-oriented condition in divorce is applied by the gemara (Mesechta Pesachim 106a) to the law of havdala made at the conclusion of Shabbat. If one failed to make havdala

---

Please address all comments and requests to  
[HAMELAKET@hotmail.com](mailto:HAMELAKET@hotmail.com)

---