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Fri, Sep 26, 2008 at 9:28 AM
Rabbi Frand on Rosh HaShana

On Rosh HaShana We Call Out To Our Father, Our King
Parshas HaAzinu (which is the Shabbos after Yom Kippur this year) contains the famous pasuk [verse]: "He was like an eagle arousing its nest, hovering over its young, spreading its wings and taking them, carrying them on its pinions." [Devorim 32:11].

The Song of HaAzinu, written on the last day of Moshe Rabbeinu's life, describes, among other things, the relationship of the Jewish people to the Almighty. Rashi, on the above-cited pasuk, elaborates on the metaphor. The eagle is an enormous bird. Seen up close, it looks more like an animal than a bird, due to its size and power. The wingspread of an eagle is awesome! When an eagle returns to its nest and hovers over the little eaglets, it takes great care not to frighten the still young, immature, and fragile little birds. Out of compassion for these little birds, the eagle does not suddenly swoop down onto its nest. Rather, she bangs her wings against the tree branches so that the little birds know the mother is about to come, the mother is about to land. The little eaglets are forewarned. They can brace themselves and prepare themselves so that the eagle's landing will not damage them.

This is how the Almighty treats us. Ultimately, He is our father. There is an implicit paradox in the day of Rosh HaShanah, which is articulated in the words Avinu Malkeinu – He is our Father, our King. Our relationship with the Almighty on Rosh HaShana is expressed in these two almost paradoxical terms. He is both Avinu and Malkeinu.

"Our King" is a very scary concept. A King expects things from his servants. A King does not always tolerate infractions by his servants. That which will happen to us over the course of the next year will be determined over the course of the 10 days between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur.

The Satmar Rebbe, zt"l, once made the following insightful comment on the pasuk: "Blow the shofar, at the moon's renewal, at the time (the moon is) hidden (ba'keseh), appointed for our festive holiday" [Tehillim 81:4] Rosh HaShana is the only Yom Tov on which the new moon is not yet visible. Since Rosh HaShana falls out on the first of Tishrei, the holiday is observed when the moon is hidden. The Satmar Rebbe gave a deeper meaning to the "hidden" aspect of Rosh HaShana. Namely, the fact that we will not learn what type of Rosh HaShana it was until the end of the year.

During the Ten Days of Repentance, people ask me, "Nu, how was Rosh HaShana?" My standard answer is "We'll see how Rosh HaShana was – much later in the year." On Erev Rosh HaShana, I try to comment to my wife, Thank G-d we made it! But we don't know ahead of time how our year is going to turn out. It is a very frightening thing. Not until right before sunset on Rosh HaShana can one know how the previous year turned out. Until then, it is "ba'keseh" [hidden]. This is the Malkeinu [Our King] aspect of Rosh HaShana.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz once said that we may see an older person with a weakened immune system catch a cold in the middle of the winter and that cold develops into pneumonia that eventually kills the person. People attribute the cause of his death to an event which started on "Rosh Chodesh Shvat" and worsened on the 15th of Shvat until it eventually took its toll and killed him by the end of the month. Such calculations are incorrect. Rather, the older person caught the cold on Rosh HaShana. That is when it was determined what was going to happen later that winter. This is the awesomeness of the day of Rosh HaShana. This is the "Malkeinu" [Our King] – the justice the Almighty metes out as King.

But we must never forget that the Almighty is also Avinu [Our Father]. As Rashi says, He is like the eagle that has compassion and mercy upon its young. He is the father that loves us. There is no father in the world that loves his child more than the Almighty loves us. We tend to forget this.

I recently heard the following true story: A father had a son who (as is all too often the case) was having problems during his teenage years. The son was not acting as he should and he gave his father much grief. In hope of putting the son on the right path, the father sent him to Eretz Yisrael with the hope that somehow in the Holy Land, the boy would straighten out. In Israel, the son visited a psychologist who had some success with the lad. The father visited the son that year and decided to go speak to the psychologist himself to hear first hand how his son was doing. The psychologist explained to the father that the problem he was having with his son could be traced back to unresolved issues that he (the father) was having with his own father.

The person heard what the psychologist said and understood it. But when he came back to America, he really did not act upon it. Several months later, however, a friend of the boy's father lost his own father and was sitting shiva. The father went to visit his friend who was mourning the loss. The mourner made the following comment: "I lost the person in the world who loved me the most. No one loved me like my father."

When the father with the problem son heard this comment, it stuck with him. He deeply wished that he could make a statement like that about his own father. He wished that he could feel he had a father who loved him. He decided that the next time the Israeli psychologist came to America, he would make an appointment to see him together with his own father so that the two of them could try to work out their issues. And so it was. The psychologist came to America. The father went to his own father – a European Jew, a holocaust survivor – and said "I want to go with you to a psychologist." He explained, "Our relationship has suffered for years. Maybe we can do something to improve it."

Much to his surprise, the father agreed and thus the "grandfather" and the "father" went to the psychologist and had a session. At that session, when the "grandfather" began telling over his life story – the events that happened before, during, and after the holocaust – how he was instrumental in saving members of his own family from death and so on – the "father" suddenly had an amazing epiphany. He turned to his father and said "I never knew this about you! You are a hero! I never knew this. The only thing I knew about you was that I was afraid of you."

The "grandfather" turned to his son and said, "I love you more than anything else in the world." Those words that the son (now a middle aged man) was longing to hear his whole life, he now heard from his own father. This "father" then had an even greater epiphany and an even greater awakening: "If my father who is flesh and blood loves me that much, then how much more so does the Ribono shel Olam [Master of the Universe] love me!" This awakening changed the person's entire relationship not only with his own father, but with his Father in Heaven.

As we approach the scariest days of the year, when everything that happens to us during the coming year is on the line, as much as we should be in a mental state of awe and fear, let us not forget that He is not only Our King, but He is also Our Father. He is a Father that loves us and wants to take us back. He opens up His hands to us, just waiting for us to make the move. Seek out the L-rd when he may be found, call out to him when he is near to be called.

Like any father, He wants to take us back. He is just waiting for the son to say, "Dad, I want things to be better between us. I am sorry for the fact that I have not lived up to your expectations." Which father would not take his son back under those circumstances? The Almighty is a more compassionate and more merciful father than any father any of us ever knew. Let us not squander this opportunity to return to our Father in Heaven. He will have mercy on us, "like a father has mercy on his children."

May we all be written and sealed for a year of good family relationships, a year of prosperity, a year of health, and a year of peace upon Israel, and a year which marks the coming of the Righteous Redeemer to Zion. Amen.

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #694, Personal Tefilos on Rosh HaShana. Good Shabbos! Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

This article is courtesy of Yeshivat HaMivtar Orot - Lev. Visit their website at <http://www.yhol.org.il/>! The clarion call of the shofar is heard these days throughout Jewish neighborhoods. The Sfardim are blasting away before dawn during their slichot, Ashkenazim end shacharit with a volley, and numerous baalei tkiah are annoying their friends and family with their seasonal preparations. Rav Saadyeh Gaon informs us that shofar notes are especially penetrating sounds (he claims that they are the only sounds that a baby cannot ignore, but of course he didn't know about car alarms). So, with this noise reverberating in our heads the annual question arises: What are we being called upon to do? What should our response to this summons be?

To begin this inquiry I turn to a familiar source. The Rambam in Hilchot Tshuva III:4 says: Even though the sounding of shofar is a Divine decree, there lies within a spiritual hint. As if it is announcing: Awake sleepers from our sleep and unconscious ones end your slumber! The Rambam is clearly stating that the shofar is a wake up call. But we are twice beckoned. What are the two kinds of sleep? What two ideas is the Rambam alluding to? (The Midrash [Vayikra Raba, Emor] says the call is a pun on the word shofar. Were told to improve {lshaper} our actions.)

The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah 26b records an argument that I believe is revealing. The Mishneh states that the shofar to be used on Rosh Hashanah should be of a yael (probably an ibex) and should be straight. The Gemara states: Rav Levi says that the mitzva of Rosh Hashanah is fulfilled with a bent-over shofar. The Gemara then brings a braita in the name of Rav Yehuda who says that on Rosh Hashanah we use a bent rams horn and on Yom Kippur (for the Jubilee) we use a straight horn. After stating that the halacha is like Rav Yehuda, the Gemara explains that the more bent over we are, the more effective is our Rosh Hashanah, while the straighter we are on Yom Kippur the better. Rashi explains that being bent over is the correct posture for the prayers of Yom HaDin. (Rashi: In his prayer it is preferable that ones face should be downcast.)

The problem is not really a halachic one. Tosafot state on the spot that both types are acceptable. So, we have to look for a spiritual meaning, a hint in this argument. The Netivot Shalom (Rav Shalom Noach Barzovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe) points out that shofar-blowing contains a few dualities. Perhaps the most famous is the fact that there are both happy (tkiah) and sad (truah) notes. We use the instrument to mourn and to exult. But for our purposes the Rebbe points out a more important dichotomy. The shofar blast pierces all barriers and arrives intact before the Rebono Shel Olam. No power can divert or dilute its thrust. On the other hand this note that cannot be ignored penetrates into our minds and hearts. It finds the sanctity residing in the depths of every Jew. The Shofar opens the gates of heaven and my heart. I believe the straight shofar represents the piercing of Hashems Halls, the bent the penetrating of my innermost sanctuary.

These two ideas may explain the famous rabbinic statement that we blow shofar before Musaf to confuse the (apparently not so clever) Satan. The power of the shofar to reach Hashem is the given of the mitzva, but its power to change me is the cause to which the Satan has no response. The Shofar as a part of prayer is the norm, but when we add a blowing to prepare ourselves for our rendezvous with Hashem, something very powerful is created.

Before I conclude I'd like to share a thought from Rav Zadok HaCohen MLublin. Rav Zadok alludes to the famous idea that the ram sacrificed by Avraham Avinu at the Akeida had two unequal horns. The smaller horn was blown at Har Sinai, and the larger will be used to usher in the moshiach and the final redemption. What is the significance of the larger horn? Rav Zadok says the larger horn symbolizes the power to permeate (hitpashtut). Redemption is the message of the shofar permeating completely. The complete redemption comes when the universe is filled with the sound, and personal redemption when I am immersed in it.

Now we can go back to the Rambam. There is superficial sleep (shena) and profound sleep (tardema). Superficial sleep is what confronts the observer. Either a person is awake and active or asleep and immobile. That's

<http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/jeisholidays/rosh/art5.htm>

The Wake Up Call

BY RABBI DAVID WALK

what we see; we don't know if one's rain is active or if he's in a coma. All we know is that right now he's not interacting with the world. Profound sleep is that sleep that is experienced by the sleeper, during which the world doesn't intrude.

The superficial sleep is represented by the straight shofar, the sleeper awakening to a confrontation with the world. The bent shofar is the metaphor for profound sleep. The deep sleeper becomes aware of himself. Both activities must happen for a successful Yom Hadin. We must improve our interface with the world, but more importantly the tshuva process must include a new awareness of who we are. This is why our sages prefer a bent shofar. We can only have a meaningful meeting with the greater world if we have confronted and developed our true selves.

Let us pray for and work towards a Yom Hadin and a new year in which the shofar brings us in touch with both the farthest spiritual reaches and deepest inner recesses

Courtesy of the Yeshivat HaMivtar Orot - Lev!

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The Concept of Teshuva by

RABBI MICHOEL SCHOEN

Courtesy of Ohr Somayach! Check out their Rosh Hashana site at

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The concept of teshuvah, repentance, seems to be an illogical one. True, a sinner must change his ways: One who wishes to avoid incurring further punishment must clearly cease his sinning. Yet by what logic can a previous sin be forgiven? If one changes for the better, should he not still receive the punishment he deserves for the bad that he has done, as well as the reward he deserves for the good he is currently doing?

One might answer that since Hashem is all-merciful, in His mercy He wipes away our sins even though logically He has no reason to do so. Whoever regrets the mitzvot he has fulfilled and wonders at his meritorious deeds, and says to himself: "What did I get out of doing them? Would that I had not done them," loses all of them, and no merit is remembered in his favor, as it says: The righteousness of the righteous shall not save him on the day of his wickedness -- this is if he regrets his original [good deeds]... (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 3:3)

This insight of the Rambam proves that Hashem's "forgetting" our past is not merely a question of His mercy, for the concept can work against a man as well -- one who regrets his past righteousness loses his accumulated reward. Surely, this is not an example of G-d's mercy. When G-d judges an individual, He does not simply weigh his sins and mitzvot on a scale, with a rasha being one whose sins are "heavier."

Rather, Hashem makes His judgment on the individual himself. What is he? What does he represent? Is he the embodiment of good or of evil? True, a person's essential being will depend upon the mitzvot and sins that he has done, but he is actually judged for the gestalt of his being, the whole and not the parts.

When a person truly regrets his past actions, he is stating that this period in his life does not embody him. When being judged for what he represents, those sins or those mitzvot that he regrets are not factors in judgment, since they do not represent him anymore. This understanding of how G-d judges an individual is apparent in the Rambam: When a person's sins and merits are weighed, the first sin that he sinned is not counted, nor the second, but the third and on [are counted]. If it is found that his sins -- from the third and on -- are greater than his merits, the [first] two sins are included and he is judged on them all. But if his merits stand against his sins, each of his sins is canceled one by one. The third is considered as the first, for the first two were forgiven. And thus the fourth becomes the first, for after all the third has been forgiven, and so on to the end... (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 3:5)

According to the Rambam, when calculating our sins against our mitzvot, Hashem does not count the first two times we sin. Bearing our explanation

of teshuvah in mind, the reason for this is quite clear. The Gemara considers that an action must occur three times to establish a status quo (a chazakah). The first two times a person sins he had not indicated that he is a person who embodies that particular transgression. He simply is one who gave in to his evil inclination. Only after he transgresses three times can one say that he represents the sin itself, and as such can be judged for his embodiment of the evil, not for one particular sin. Some of the ways of repentance are for the penitent to constantly shout before Hashem, with tears and pleas; to give as much charity as in his power; to distance himself from the object of his sin; and to change his name, as if to say: I am another, and am not the same person who did those deeds. He changes his actions entirely for the better, onto the straight path, and exiles himself from his former place of residence... (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 2:4)

How can the Rambam write that one should change his name and say he is someone else? According to our explanation this is exactly the point of teshuvah. One must declare that the periods and moments of one's life spent in sin do not represent him. He is a different person, represented by mitzvot, not by sins.

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Thu, Sep 25, 2008 at 8:39 PM

subject It is not Groundhog Day - Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Rosh Hashanah Reflections: Benefiting Our Great Nation By Drawing On Our Faith

By RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

We are approaching the start of a new year, during which America will elect a new leader. As we use this time to reflect on our lives and how we lead them, I feel it would also be most appropriate to reflect on religion in general -- and Judaism in particular -- and how we lead our lives as Jews in this great American nation.

Last month, I had the privilege of addressing a session of the Democratic National Convention, entitled "Faith in Action." Along with three clergypersons of other faith-traditions, I was asked to deliver a keynote address. Mine was entitled "Our Sacred Responsibility to Our Neighbor."

By including such a session in the program, the convention planners were clearly affirming a role for religion in the American political arena. Many disagree about the legitimacy of that role from a constitutional perspective, but others disagree because of a historic misconception about the nature of mature religion, which needs to be rectified.

Under this misconception, religion is seen as an "opiate" for the masses or as an "illusion" for the naive. It is seen as absolutist, rigid, infantile, and simplistic. This is not the religion I know; this is not core Judaism.

Let me clarify: At its very core, Judaism calls for lifelong study, for an engagement with traditional texts and their application to the complex and changing realities of life. Far from being simplistic, rigid, or naive, Judaism enlivens the critical function. It struggles mightily with subtlety and conflict. It combines firm commitment with pragmatic flexibility. It dignifies mature reflection and embraces complexity.

When we contemplate the role of faith-traditions in a democratic society, it is of such a subtle complex creativity and mature religion of which we speak. The voice of such an institution is essential for a polity which wishes to engage, freshly and effectively, the ethical challenges with which our times confront us.

The faith-tradition for which I speak is proud to endorse scientific research, including stem cell research, while not compromising the value of the beginnings of human life.

The faith-tradition for which I speak is neither pro-life nor pro-choice, but recognizes that abortion, while generally prohibited, is sometimes permitted, and sometimes mandated.

The faith-tradition for which I speak values the individual, and his autonomy, but recognizes that the needs of the collective sometimes require the suspension of individual rights.

The faith-tradition for which I speak believes in the truth of its message and in the uniqueness of its adherents. But it also respects other people of faith and people of no faith as being created in the image of God.

Judaism has taught its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, of the vital importance of peace. But it also knows of the importance of a just war and the need to struggle actively against evil.

Because of our painful and often tragic history, we appreciate, perhaps more than any other minority, the freedom afforded us by this great nation, and especially of the principle of separation of church and state. At the same time we are convinced that there are undeniably legitimate ways for the government to assist parents who choose to educate their children in parochial schools, so that these children will share the benefits of a general education with all other American children, while also gaining access to the treasures of their faith-traditions.

Thus, we believe in our conception of a proper way of life, at the same time as we embrace the benefit of a pluralistic and open society.

In short, we do not believe that faith is necessarily primitive, monolithic, or blind to the ambiguity and internal contradictions of our era. We believe that faith can be a model for struggling with complexity and nuance in a creative, relevant, intelligent, and efficacious manner. And we therefore assert that there is a place, nay a necessity, for religion in a democratic society as it struggles mightily to retain morality and decency in the face of the formidable, but not insuperable, challenges of the 21st century.

We enter into the Jewish New Year encouraged that both political parties have now opened themselves to the resources of religious thought. As Jews, we are committed to contributing to the advancement of this great nation by drawing from the wellsprings of our timeless faith.

Ketivah va-chatimah tova. A happy and peaceful New Year to all!
Rabbi Weinreb is Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ou.org> Date Thu, Sep 25, 2008 at 8:39 PM subject It is not Groundhog Day - Shabbat Shalom from the OU

http://www.ou.org/shabbat_shalom/article/you_do_have_a_prayer/
You DO Have a Prayer
ANDREW J. NEFF

As we get ready for Yom Kippur, I have a question: What is Kol Nidre all about? Why do we say Kol Nidre on Yom Kippur? Or, more importantly, why is Kol Nidre – which means “All vows” – the last thing we say before the start of Yom Kippur, the holiest of holy days, the Shabbos of Shabboses? What is the big deal about vows?

There is a simple answer that is a bit complex – and then there is a complex answer that is really simple. And, then, seven rules that I find helpful for enhancing my prayers.

The simple answer is that in Kol Nidre, we renounce all vows we made during the year and – according to most authorities – the vows that we may make during the coming year as well. But that simple answer doesn't really explain anything. It is much more complex. Why are vows so important? What is the big deal about vows – not only in Kol Nidre but throughout the Torah and Talmud? If a judge asked a man on trial for a capital crime if he has anything to say for himself before sentencing, would he say, “Well, I forgot to pay my Mastercard bill even though I promised I would”?

The complex answer highlights the essence of prayer. It is actually quite simple. We say Kol Nidre because it highlights our direct connection to G-d and G-d's direct connection to us.

Let me give some perspective.

The essence of a vow is that it is a contract between G-d and me. Okay. So? I make agreements all the time. I usually feel bad if I don't live up to them, but it's not the end of the world. And I may sometimes make a

promise to G-d that I will/won't do something. I try my best but sometimes I don't live up to that vow either.

So here's the big deal: the incredible thing about a vow to G-d is what it actually is. A vow is a contract between the Almighty and me. Think about that. It is an outright real enforceable contract. I can make a deal with G-d. It is a direct connection like renting a car or an apartment or any other promise or contract. But think about it – G-d is infinite, ever-expanding, runs the world, feeds the animals, gets the sun to rise and makes the stars. I can make a contract directly with G-d.

So a vow gets to the essence of my relationship with G-d. It is one-on-one. I have a personal relationship even to the extent that I can cut a deal with G-d. G-d is in the heavens but I have a one-on-one relationship with the Almighty.

Now, let's get to Kol Nidre. This is no ordinary deal. If I don't pay some bill or my rent, it's not the end of the world. But the relationship with G-d is special. It is not to be taken lightly. With a vow to G-d, if I violate an oath, it is a big deal because we treat a vow as a real contract.

But there is more: Kol Nidre gives me an incredible opportunity, i.e., to start the year fresh without any outstanding obligations. But I will come back to that in a moment.

Next: my seven rules for prayer.

1. You don't have to finish praying but you do have to start
2. Pray early and often
3. Having a “good prayer” day
4. Know before whom you stand
5. Finding a parking spot in NYC
6. Real men do prayer.
7. Choose your weapons

1. Prayer: You don't have to finish, but you have to start If you go to a typical mainstream Orthodox prayer service, it can be hard to keep up. They go so fast.

You don't have to. And you don't have to finish all the prayers. Quality matters over quantity. Looked at another way, we are all influenced by the business world in which the only thing that counts is results. In prayer, you get full credit for the effort. There are certain ones (e.g., Shema, the Amidah) that are more central, but our Sages tell us that you have to understand what you are saying.

In the SATs – you get more credit for the right answers. Similarly, in prayer, you get points for knowing what you are saying and not just for rushing through so you finish.

2. Pray early and often One of the nice things about Jewish prayer is that the morning and evening prayers bracket your day. You start your day with prayers and you finish your day with prayers. So everything in the middle is in the “prayer parentheses.” It helps to put perspective on the world if you start and end your day with prayers. It gives your day more meaning. Everything you do during the course of your day fits inside the brackets that starts with G-d and ends with G-d – with a booster shot in the middle of the day with mincha (mid-day) prayers.

As someone wrote to me recently, it helps you understand that “you are the bowl, not the grapes.”

3. Having a “good prayer” day I have a friend who made a joke that when Houston was conducting a contest for a “city motto,” her suggestion was: “Houston: where every day is a bad hair day.”

I have good “prayer days” and bad “prayer days.” There are some days when prayer comes more naturally. You have something bothering you. And there are those days when it doesn't because you are distracted. That's normal. So don't let that get you down or discourage you. Tomorrow can be better. A great baseball player can go 0 for four and then hit a grand slam!

4. Know before whom you stand Prayer does require the right perspective. If I really believe that I am praying to the King of Kings, Who controls the world, I will have a different mindset than if I don't have any particular perspective in mind. Before I walk into my (secular) boss' office, I intuitively know who I am about to address and will act accordingly. It is the same with prayer: you need to think for a moment before you approach your Bosses of all Bosses.

What about talking during praying? I used to get very annoyed when other people were talking while I was praying. Where is their sense of dignity, I would huff to myself. Some times I would think about telling them to be quiet. But now I look at things differently. Every action, I realize, consists of two parts: what it means for me and what it means for the other person. I don't know why that person is talking, but that is his issue. For me, I believe that G-d is giving me a test, testing me with the temptation for me to talk (since everyone is doing it). But G-d gives us tests to strengthen us, and this is just one more of those tests.

5. Finding a parking spot in NYC What should you pray for? What are legitimate grounds for prayer? The answer: I pray for everything. I pray for the big things and I pray for what seem like small things.

But first a joke: A man is running very late for the most important meeting of his career. He has to be somewhere to sign some documents in midtown Manhattan. And he needs a parking space right in front of the midtown NYC building. "Oh Lord," he pleads, "if you find me a parking spot in front of that building, I will observe your laws – I will keep the Shabbos – I will keep kosher – I will... oh, never mind – I found a spot.

It is legitimate to pray for a parking space. It is okay to pray for anything, for everything. It's a great habit to get into. Because it helps us remember Who is in charge of everything. G-d splits seas, brings the weather, brings the dew in the morning – and helps me find a parking spot.

6. Real men pray. I think there seems sometimes to be a level of elitism in the religious world that prayer is for girls or for the weak and "real men do gemara." But look at the gemara or look at the Torah: real men – such as Avraham, Isaac and Jacob – prayed. Prayer is not just for seminary girls. It is for all of us. At a more contemporary level, great rabbis focus on prayer. I have been told that Rav Moshe Feinstein said tehillim (Psalms) every day and that his son, Rav Dovid Feinstein says the whole book of tehillim three times a week. From another perspective, it's like conditioning for a great athlete. They didn't get to the top of their sport without constant practice of the basics.

7. Choose your weapons. When it comes to prayer books – siddurim – there are a lot of choices. There is Hebrew/English, transliterated, interlinear, Hebrew only. There's large print, small and portable. There are also some great books on prayer. I find that I like having multiple prayer books because some days I want a different pace or different commentary.

Finally, prayer is personal. While I have a terrific partner – my wife, Nancy – in my spiritual growth, prayer remains an individual activity. Like dieting or exercise, no one can make me pray. It has to come from me. And that is why I started out by trying to put prayer in context – I am praying to a G-d with whom I have a one-on-one relationship.

So, one last thing on Kol Nidre. Not only do we have a direct relationship with G-d, but He will let us out of all of our vows so we can start the year fresh. It is essential to understand that this is a real relationship. When we make a vow to G-d as a very serious thing, then we can look at our prayers as having real meaning – as being a real conversation where we ask for all the things we need – and are thankful for all the things we have.

Kol Nidre, then, highlights – first – that we have a real tangible one-on-one connection with G-d to the extent that I can enter into an enforceable contract with G-d. Second, that G-d – and this is where he differs with Mastercard or your lender – will forgive us for hasty things we say and start each year fresh and new.

Andrew Neff, who was on Wall Street for 25 years, recently wrote an article From Bear Stearns to Bava Metzia. He now spends mornings in a yeshiva in Teaneck, New Jersey.

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of Elul. Dedicated by his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren
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So that Their Memory be Invoked before Me

Based on a sicha by HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL
Adapted by AVIAD HACHOHEN
Translated by Rav Elli Fischer

In numerous places, both in biblical verses and in sayings of Chazal, it is implied that there is a special merit in the very invocation of our memory before God.

This is difficult to understand: Does God, the Master of the world, need to be "reminded" about the nation of Israel? Does he not "remember the covenant," "remember all deeds ever done and recall all past creatures"? Do we not say that "there is nothing forgotten before His Throne of Glory, and nothing hidden from His eyes"?

Furthermore, we recite the following in our prayers:

For the memory of all creatures comes before you, human acts and purpose, and the contrivances of man's travails; a person's calculations and strategies, and the motivations of man's schemes; for the memory of all actions comes before You, and You seek out all their deeds. (From the berakha of Zikhronot in mussaf of Rosh Ha-shana)

To understand this, we must recall that the primary foundation of akeidat Yitzchak was Avraham's response, "Here I am":

And the angel of G-d called to him from the heavens, saying "Avraham, Avraham;" and he said: "Here I am." (Bereishit 22:11)

Avraham responded when G-d called him by name.

As with the akeida, so it was in Gan Eden. After the world's first transgression, on the very first Rosh Ha-shana, G-d called Adam:

And G-d called out to Adam and said, "Where are you?" (Bereishit 3:9)

The first man was hiding from his God, so God, as it were, had to search him out.

This question - "Where are you?" - is addressed to everyone at all times and in all places. Sometimes it carries a special power; the Day of Judgment is one of those times. The essence of the judgment that takes place on Rosh Ha-shana is that very same question: "Where are you?"

Together with that, there is something even more awful which constitutes the source of our terror: forgetting.

According to one source, it can happen that a person forgets his name on the Day of Judgment. The Reishit Chokhma (Sha'ar Ha-yira, end of chapter 12) cites the following in the name of Chazal:

They asked Rabbi Eliezer: "What is the judgment of the grave?" [He responded:] "When a person passes away, the Angel of Death arrives, hits his grave with his hand, and says 'Tell me your name!' He replies: 'It is revealed and known to the One who Spoke and Created the World that I do not know my name.'"

Esoteric works recommend that a person read, on a daily basis, eighteen verses that mention his name. The holy Shelah adds (Kitzur Shelah 101b) that this provides protection against forgetting one's name on the day of final judgment.

The meaning of this is that every person must find his unique place within the Torah. "Give us our portion in Your Torah." As long as one has not done so, has not discovered his "special letter" in the Torah, one remains in exile, in a sense.

This idea also finds expression in the blowing of the shofar. The shofar expresses the depths of the heart, the most inward, profound, and unique place in the heart of every man.

The gemara in Rosh Ha-shana (27b) states the law regarding a "shofar within a shofar:"

If one placed a shofar within a shofar: if he hears the inner one, he has fulfilled his obligation; if he hears the outer one, he has not fulfilled his obligation.

"If he heard the inner one" - G-d longs to hear our inner voice.

This is the true sound that we must make heard on Rosh Ha-shana. This is implied by a different halakha that appears there:

If one coated [a shofar] with gold on the inside – it is disqualified. On the outside, if its sound changed from what it was – it is disqualified; if not – it is kosher.

We learn of something similar in the laws pertaining to the Temple (Arakhin 10b):

Our sages taught: There was an oboe in the Temple that was smooth, thin, made of reed, and from the times of Moshe Rabbeinu. The king commanded that it be coated with gold, but then its sound was no longer sweet. They removed its coating, and its sound was as sweet as ever.

On the Day of Judgment, G-d wants to hear our real voices, not a "coated," counterfeit voice whose natural sound has been altered.

Would that we knew how to reveal our real voices! If only we could bring it forth from the depths of our hearts, in its pristine state, we would fulfill our obligation.

(This sicha was delivered on the second day of Rosh Ha-shana, 5737 [1976].)

"For I am a Father to Israel, and Efrayim is My Firstborn:"

The Haftara of the Second Day of Rosh Ha-Shana

BY RAV MOSHEH LICHTENSTEIN

TRANSLATED BY DAVID STRAUSS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO HAFTAROT

The haftara for the second day of Rosh Ha-shana (Yirmiyahu 31:1-19) is entirely different than the haftara for the first day. First, the haftara of the first day, regarding Chana's prayer for a child, is a narrative, at the heart of which stands an individual and her own personal story, whereas the haftara of "Matza chen ba-midbar" is a prophecy about the future that relates to the nation as a whole. More importantly, however, the two haftarot reflect different spiritual worlds.

In the story of Chana, we read about a woman of amazing spiritual strength, whose prayer is answered and whose aspirations are realized by virtue of her actions. G-d remembers

her in the wake of the self-sacrifice that she demonstrates and the powerful prayer that she offers. It is not by chance that Chana's prayer serves as the foundation for the laws of prayer for all generations. The ode of praise that breaks forth from Chana's lips at the end of the haftara also testifies to the religious profundity that lies deep in her soul. In short, Chana is inscribed for life and receives her reward, because she emerges victorious in judgment.

REDEMPTION OUT OF WRETCHEDNESS

In the haftara read on the second day, on the other hand, we encounter the opposite situation. Yirmiyahu prophesies during the time of the destruction, about which he and other prophets had harshly rebuked the nation for the longest time. He does not explain the redemption as following from Israel's merits, but from their wretchedness. It is very possible that by right they are culpable, but they will merit redemption because they are remnants of the sword in need of rest. The description of the redeemed is merely a description of the survivors, and it reflects their situation accordingly:

For thus says the Lord: Sing with gladness for Yaakov, and shout on the hilltops of the nations; announce, praise, and say, O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, in which they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Efrayim is My firstborn. (Yirmiyahu 31:6-8)

The redeemed are the remnants of the people who return to Israel with weeping and with supplications, and the goal of redemption is to bring them rest. Accordingly, what is emphasized in the continuation is the relief and pleasures that will be granted them:

Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow to the bounty of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be like a watered garden; and they shall not languish in sorrow any more. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning to joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord. (31:11-13)

The goal of redemption lies in satisfying their needs, and the wheat, wine, oil and the young of the herd and the flock are the means to bring about that satisfaction. Everything is directed at bringing their soul to be like a watered garden, satiated with all goodness and knowing no further pain or sorrow.

The redemption described here does not follow from good deeds nor does it come in the wake of repentance. Rather, it is God's will to help those miserable souls, who have known so much grief and affliction, and to show them benevolence. Yirmiyahu teaches us that bestowing rest upon the remnants of the sword, in and of itself, has religious significance. Not only redemption accompanied by repentance and the love of God, but even the ingathering of miserable and wretched exiles and bringing them back to the land of Israel, has religious importance.

The reason for this is two-fold. First of all, G-d is abundant in His lovingkindness, merciful and gracious, and He acts charitably towards His creatures. As the Gemara states in Sota:

As He clothes the naked, for it is written: "And the Lord G-d made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them" (Bereishit 3:21), so do you also clothe the naked. The Holy One, blessed be He, visited the sick, for it is written: "And the Lord appeared unto him by the oaks of Mamre" (Bereishit 18:1), so do you also visit the sick. The Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners, for it is written: "And it came to pass after the death of Avraham, that G-d blessed Yitzchak his son" (Bereishit 25:11), so do you also comfort mourners. The Holy one, blessed be He, buried the dead, for it is written: "And He buried him in the valley" (Devarim 34:6), so do you also bury the dead. (Sota 14a)

A FATHER'S CONCERN FOR HIS SON

This is one reason, but there is also another reason, which is emphasized by the prophet:

For I am a father to Israel, and Efrayim is My firstborn.

The concern about the remnant of Israel and their suffering reflects God's relationship to His people as that of a parent to his children. This finds two-fold expression in the words of the prophet. First, G-d remembers the past as does a parent. As opposed to a slave who does wrong and is quickly sold and gotten rid of, a son who does wrong remains a son and his parent remains faithful to him as his child. The parent lovingly remembers the wonderful past and clings to it, and he tries to alleviate his child's suffering and to benefit him in the present. Remembrance of the past, yearning for those wonderful times, and hoping that they will return in the future comprise the famous conclusion of the haftara:

Is Efrayim my dear son? Is he a darling child? For whenever I speak of him, I earnestly remember him still: therefore my inward parts are moved for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord. (31:19)

The beneficence in the present because G-d is Israel's heavenly Father from time immemorial, who always cares and worries about them, is the prophet's starting point, when he says: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" and therefore "I have remained true to you" (31:2).

Second, this aspect of the haftara is the reason that it includes the prophecy of "A voice is heard in Rama" (31:14), for that prophecy deals with the suffering of Israel and the worry of a parent for a child who is

absent. Rachel's weeping does not only stir up the merits of the Patriarchs; it emphasizes Israel's suffering in exile, and how difficult that exile is for the parent. These are the critical points because of which G-d will bring redemption to Israel, and therefore they are mentioned here in this manner.

The redemption that is promised to Rachel is not only by virtue of the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs, but because those same factors that bring Rachel to weeping, are taken into consideration by G-d as well, He being Israel's father who worries about them.

REPENTANCE IN THE WAKE OF REDEMPTION The final section of the haftara speaks about the beginning of a process of repentance. This takes place, however, not before the redemption, but after it; repentance does not bring about the redemption, but rather it results from it. When the people of Israel return to their land as the remnant of the sword and when they are brought to the height of Zion in order to satisfy their soul, they feel the intimacy and concern of God, and this stirs them to repentance. When He deals with them with a father's mercy and a parent's compassion, feelings befitting a son are stirred up in Israel and they regret their actions. They turn to G-d with the call of "Turn me back and I shall be turned" (31:17); they are incapable of returning on their own, but they ask G-d to return them to Him. This finds expression in the words, "After I had returned (= to God), I repented" (31:18). In other words, first they return to G-d and feel His fatherly closeness, and only afterwards can they improve their ways. As stated, repentance is the result of man's closeness to God, and not its cause.

This prophecy has an important message for our generation, in light of the Holocaust. Yirmiyahu teaches that God's providing of rest to the remnant of Israel, a people who were the survivors of the sword, has religious significance. From this perspective, the State of Israel has religious importance, even without taking into consideration additional, more exalted factors that assign the state additional religious meaning. Therefore, even those who deny the thesis that sees the state as embodying an advanced state of redemption, can still attribute to it religious meaning inasmuch as it realizes the words of Yirmiyahu regarding rest and satisfaction. In this context, I will allow myself to cite what I once wrote on this topic:[1]

We learn from Yirmiyahu's prophecy that had the State of Israel only come into being in order to give rest to survivors of the Holocaust – that would be enough. Had they only come to Israel in fulfillment of the verse, "I will turn their mourning to joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Yirmiyahu 31:12), that would suffice to justify its existence from a religious perspective and to see in it a meaningful event and a fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the prophet of exile and destruction.[2] Just as Chazal joined this prophecy to the story of the Akeida as the haftara for the second day of Rosh ha-Shana, so too we must connect the consolation that it offers to the Akeidot of our generation.

INSCRIPTION FOR LIFE IN ANY EVENT Let us conclude this shiur by returning to the point with which we opened. On the first day of Rosh Ha-shana we read a haftara that speaks of inscription for good life by virtue of man's righteousness and actions. This is, of course, the desired model that we must aim for. However, not everyone merits this, Chana's level being exceedingly high. We, therefore, read on the second day of Rosh Ha-shana a haftara that emphasizes the very opposite, namely, inscription for a good and peaceful life even if a person is unworthy. Yirmiyahu's prophecy regarding redemption that stems from the fact that we are the children of G-d who longingly remembers us and shows us mercy, allows us to hope that our Father and King will deal charitably and kindly with us even though we have no merits. This is the great message of the haftara for the second day. The haftara for the first day teaches us what is meritorious conduct; the haftara for the second day offers us the consolation that even if we lack that conduct, G-d will treat us graciously and with compassion.

http://www.aish.com/hhrosh/hhroshdefault/Judgment_Day_on_Wall_Street1.asp

Judgment Day on Wall Street

WALL STREET SENDING US A ROSH HASHANA MESSAGE?

BY RABBI BENJAMIN BLECH

Even as we face divine judgment on the high holy days, it's hard not to think about the worldwide monetary melt-down and the carnage of corporations that we thought were invincible. After all, it's not just our lives that stand in the balance when G-d makes his decisions about our future. As the deeply moving prayer of Rabbi Amnon, Unetane Tokef, puts it, these are the days when both our fate and our fortune for the coming year are sealed: "Who will live and who will die, who will become impoverished and who will become wealthy."

The Hebrew word "Damim," the rabbis tell us, means not only blood, but also money. A strange combination at first sight, but one filled with profound insight. Judaism does not denigrate the importance of money. It is not the root of all evil; it is morally neutral. Just as it can be misused for improper purposes it can also serve to ennoble our lives and the lives of others. We are permitted to pray for wealth, just as our forefathers did. The Kohanim, the priests who are commanded to bless the Jewish people, are told to keep financial security in mind as they lift their hands for their benediction. Money is the fruit of our efforts, earned with the aid of our blood and our toil. And it is as much the concern of divine Providence as our lifespan.

So if G-d is involved with our portfolio, we have to wonder why He has allowed us to suffer so much this past year?

If only we could have had a window into the future we would have been spared the incredible turnabouts of the stock market. Even the most wizened professionals say they have never seen anything like it. In January of this year Barron's magazine advised its readers to concentrate purchases from its list of most secure and risk-free companies. At the very top of their suggestions for best performers for the coming year were Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae and AIG. But of course neither Barron's nor Fortune nor Forbes had any idea that these pillars of capitalism, these bastions of financial strength, would soon collapse into bankruptcy or federal takeover. So today many of last year's billionaires have to sadly confront the fact that they are now only millionaires -- and the rest of us have to deal with the reality of rapidly sinking retirement funds, plunging real estate values and panicking margin calls.

Strangely enough we have very conflicting views about God's role in all of this. The Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler pointedly observed, "We know of some very religious people who came to doubt G-d when a great misfortune befell them, even when they themselves were to blame for it; but we have never yet seen anyone who lost his faith because an undeserved fortune fell to his lot." We attribute success to our own efforts. We call catastrophes acts of God. When we "make it," we thank ourselves. When we lose it, we blame an unjust Heavenly Ruler.

People of faith, however, have to acknowledge that both good and bad fortune in the final analysis simply represent the will of God. Good times are blessings from a Higher Power. Tough times are divine decrees with a message and meaning all of their own. And that is what we should be thinking about as we contemplate our diminishing bank accounts.

Let's take a cue from a remarkable observation by James Dale Davidson and Sir William Rees-Mogg, financial advisers and authors of *Blood in the Streets*, who were intrigued by an aspect of timing apparent in economic cycles:

"Even more mysterious is the strange tendency for major crashes to occur in the autumn, especially in October. For example, September 18, 1873; October 29, 1929; October 6, 1932; October 18, 1937; October 19, 1987; and October 13, 1989. Each of these dramatic results, among the largest drops ever recorded, occurred in the fall. The old view would be to argue that this is only coincidence, which of course is possible. Most likely some

factor we do not now understand increases the vulnerability to selloffs in the fall."

To which of course we might add the events of this September which are so reminiscent of another doomsday scenario.

Dare I perhaps suggest that this mysterious phenomenon is due in no small measure to the fact that this time period invariably coincides with the days when mankind is weighed on the scale of Heavenly Judgment? It is not coincidence that rules our fate but divine fiat, the result of a process finalized not "in the fall" but more accurately in the awesome days leading up to Rosh Hashana and the Day of Atonement.

It is during this time that G-d has to impress upon us the need to clearly define our values. In Jewish tradition there is a saying that during our lifetimes we have three main friends -- and when we die they leave us in exactly the reverse order in which we treated them. No sooner does our soul leave our body than all of our wealth flees with it as well. Families are more faithful. They walk with us after our passing to the cemetery, our final resting place. Then, they too leave us to go on with their lives. It is only our name, the good deeds we performed for others, and the influence we may have had upon them, that outlive us and offer us a share of immortality.

Strange then, isn't it, that we spend most of our lives chasing after money, spending far less of our time than we should with our families, and spending so little of our efforts to accomplish those things by which will be remembered.

Maybe, after all, making a fortune isn't all that it's cracked up to be. Maybe we can even identify with the profound words of Emile Zola: "I was part of that strange race of people aptly described as spending their lives doing things they detest to make money they don't want to buy things they don't need to impress people they dislike."

It is an insight that needs to be constantly repeated. No wonder then that G-d incorporated it into the Bible by way of a fascinating law regulating the ancient agrarian economy. Six years farmers were permitted to work their fields, to gather in their crops, and to add to their wealth. Every seventh year however was known as the year of Shmittah. Land could not be tilled. Everyone could equally and freely share in its produce. The economic rat race was suspended and all people were urged to spend a year as a sabbatical -- studying and pursuing their spiritual growth even as for six years they emphasized the material. And most important of all they were to acknowledge that no man could really own the land. As mortal residents on earth we are all only temporary managers of God's gifts, recipients of His financial blessings and always aware of the true source of everything that we have been privileged to accumulate.

What a powerful and needed lesson the Torah meant every seventh year to be! Would it surprise you to learn that economists have noticed a symmetry between this biblical seven-year lesson and the almost perfect seven-year boom to bust cycles? In 1999, Warren Buffett, a financial genius widely considered to be America's greatest investor, took the liberty of linking Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams with the movements of the Dow Jones at the close of the 20th century. Fat cow are swallowed up by lean cows, years of plenty invariably have famine follow in their wake. Bubbles of any kind are unsustainable and burst -- be they prime rate mortgages, million-dollar condos or "risk free" investment house stocks.

Without these corrections we would never be forced to recognize the realities of our lives. Greed would transform us from servants of G-d to slaves of our possessions. We would perhaps never re-orient ourselves to the proper balance between the spiritual and the material in the conduct of our lives.

It shouldn't surprise you then that the technology and Internet bubble burst in 2001 just happened to be a Shmittah year. And as we bid farewell to yet another tumultuous financial year, it's important to remember that 5768-2007/8 was yet again a Shmittah year. That's why we almost assuredly have to understand these trying times as God's voice attempting to again teach us the lessons of the biblical sabbatical in contemporary terms.

And finally let us find comfort in knowing that G-d will surely heap His abundant blessings upon us if we only learn to use them with dignity, with morality and with spiritual sensitivity

fromKol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org> Thu, Sep 25, 2008 at 10:27 PM

Inviting a Non-Observant Jew for a Shabbat or Yom Tov Meal --

BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

Introduction Many families face the dilemma as to whether to invite non-observant friends or relatives to a Yom Tov meal. On the one hand, the potential for positive spiritual impact is enormous, as outreach (Kiruv) professionals agree that seeing a joyous family experience a peak Torah event such as a Yom Tov meal has motivated many to increase their level of commitment to Torah observance. On the other hand, extending an invitation to a non-observant join a Yom Tov meal involves the guest driving to the meal by car (unless he or she is a neighbor). This question is even thornier for those who have become religious and have had family gathering in their home for a Yom Tov meal every year. If one does not continue inviting his relatives due to concern for their driving, he risks alienating his extended family. Similarly, if one does not invite relatives to a Shabbat or Yom Tov Bar Mitzvah one risks the relative becoming very insulted and upset. The Poskim (Halachic authorities) of the twentieth century grappled with this quandary and have presented a variety of approaches. We shall present three approaches -- that of Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Moshe Shternbuch and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and conclude with some practical suggestions.

Rav Moshe Feinstein Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe O.C. 1:99) was asked in 1953 by a Rav in Detroit as to whether it is permissible for him to encourage people to come to shul when he knows that those individuals live far from the synagogue and will drive to shul on Shabbat. Rav Moshe strongly rejects doing so. He argues that extending such an invitation constitutes a violation of the prohibition of Lifnei Iveir Lo Titein Michshol (Vayikra 19:14), placing a stumbling block before the blind. Chazal (Avodah Zarah 6b) understand this prohibition to include facilitating others (analogous to the blind, as they are blinded by their passions) to sin (the stumbling block). Extending the invitation to Shul facilitates their sinful behavior of driving on Shabbat, a serious violation of Torah law, as each time one presses the accelerator he violates the prohibition of burning on Shabbat (for an explanation why it is also forbidden to drive on Yom Tov, see Teshuvot Yechave Da'at 3:36). Rav Moshe goes even further and asserts that by extending such an invitation not only violates Lifnei Iveir, but also constitutes violating a severe prohibition, namely Meisit, convincing someone to sin (Devarim 13:7-12), which in certain circumstances constitutes a capital crime! Rav Moshe proves that Meisit applies not only to the situation discussed in Devarim chapter 13 of influencing someone to worship Avodah Zarah (idolatry), from the Gemara (Sanhedrin 29a) that classifies the snake of BeReishit chapter three as a Meisit (the snake, of course, convinced Chavah to violate Hashem's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge). Rav Moshe notes that even though convincing someone to violate a prohibition other than Avodah Zarah does not constitute a capital crime it nevertheless is a severe prohibition to the extent that the heavenly court will not muster a defense for such action on one's Day of Judgment (just as Hashem did not suggest a defense for the snake of the Garden of Eden, as noted in the aforementioned Gemara). Some have noted that this ruling of Rav Moshe appears to be inconsistent with a ruling (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe O.C. 4:79) in which he permits observant doctors to exchange shifts in the hospital with non-observant Jews. Rav Moshe reasons that since the non-observant would have in any event been violating Shabbat, better that they spend Shabbat in the hospital where they will work on Shabbat for the sake of saving lives than violating Shabbat outside the hospital (for further discussion see Gray Matter 2:6-7). It would seem that one could similarly argue that better that the non-observant spend Shabbat morning in Shul where they will not violate Shabbat rather than other venues where they would violate Shabbat the entire morning.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch Rav Moshe Shternbuch includes in the first volume of his responsa entitled Teshuvot Vehanhagot a series of Teshuvot addressing Halachic challenges faced by newly observant Jews (Ba'alei Teshuvah). In one case he was asked by Baalei Teshuvah if they were permitted to invite their parents to Shabbat evening dinner even though they will drive home after the meal. Rav Shternbuch permits the invitation, especially since the child told his parents that he is upset with their driving on Shabbat. Rav Shternbuch makes a bold assertion regarding the prohibition of Lifnei Iveir. He argues that this restriction applies only if one seeks to harm. However, he does not violate Lifnei Iveir if his intention is to help. Rav Shternbuch asserts that Lifnei Iveir is analogous to the prohibition to wound (Chavalah) in this regard, as it is permitted to "wound" for therapeutic purposes, such as a surgeon performing a needed operation. Similarly, since one intends to help his parents by inviting them to Shabbat meal and thereby bring them closer to Torah

observance and not spiritually harm them, he does not violate Lifnei Iveir. Rav Shternbuch notes that in the case he is addressing the parents were positively disposed to being drawn closer to Torah life and therefore the Shabbat meal invitations were indeed part of the process of supporting the parents returning to religious observance. Although Rav Shternbuch does not cite support for his view, perhaps we can draw support for his approach from a suggestion made by Rav Akiva Eiger (commentary to Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 181:6). Some background information is needed to understand the ruling. A man is forbidden to shave his face with a razor (Makif) and is forbidden to be shaved by a razor (Nikaf), see Makkot 20b. A woman is not included in this prohibition (Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7), but violates Lifnei Iveir if she shaves a man's face with a razor (Shulchan Aruch ad. loc.).

Rav Akiva Eiger suggests, though, that if a woman should shave a man with a razor if he was determined to shave with a razor and could not be persuaded to refrain from such activity (hospital nurses might be faced with this issue). He reasons that had the man shaved himself, he would violate two prohibitions, shaving and being shaved. If the woman shaves him, he violates only one prohibition, the prohibition to be shaved. Perhaps Rav Akiva Eiger's suggestion supports Rav Shternbuch's approach that one is not considered to be causing another to stumble if in the bigger picture he is helping that person. We should note, though, that some Poskim do not accept Rav Akiva Eiger's approach (see Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 15:19) and that one can distinguish between Rav Shternbuch's case and Rav Akiva Eiger's case. Nonetheless, some support to Rav Shternbuch can be marshaled from this ruling as the rulings do share a similar attitude and approach.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach We should note that Chazal already grappled with issues of relationships between fully observant and less observant Jews. Although Jews in the time of Chazal, generally speaking, were observant of most Torah laws, there were some Jews who were lax in their observance of some exceedingly challenging laws, such as Shmittah observance (refraining from working the land in the seventh year). The Mishnah (Shevi'it 5:6) teaches that one can sell certain agricultural implements to such a semi-observant Jew during Shemittah, but certain implements are forbidden to be sold. Plowing implements, for example, are forbidden to be sold to such Jews during the seventh year as these items will clearly be used for violation of Torah law, as all plowing is forbidden during Shemittah. Harvesting equipment, on the other hand, is permitted to be sold since certain harvesting is permitted during the Shemittah year (see the article on this topic archived at www.koltorah.org). The principle is that if the item is expected to be used only for forbidden activity then selling it violates Lifnei Iveir, but if the item is expected to be used for either forbidden or permitted activity one does not violate Lifnei Iveir, as one is not facilitating the violation of a sin in such a case since the item will not necessarily be used for a forbidden use. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach applies this principle in a letter addressed to Yeshivat Ohr Sameach, a well-known outreach Yeshiva, regarding extending Shabbat and Yom Tov invitations to homes and beginner services in Shuls. Rav Auerbach rules that one may invite a non-observant Jew on Shabbat or Yom Tov if he offers him a place to sleep over. In such a case, one does not violate Lifnei Iveir since the invitation does not necessarily facilitate the violation of Shabbat or Yom Tov. By framing the invitation in this manner the situation is analogous to the Mishnah's case of selling harvesting equipment to a semi-observant Jew. Rav Yehudah Amital (personal communication) rules in accordance with Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach and Rav Yosef Adler reports that Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik also espoused this approach. For further discussion of Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling and our entire issue, see Rav J. David Bleich (Contemporary Halachic Problems 4:92-104).

Conclusion Our Poskim grapple with this dilemma as do many families. Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach is adopted in practice by many families, outreach organizations and shuls. However, one must consider the impact of non-observant relatives driving to or from one's home on Shabbat and/or Yom Tov on his children. Children must be explained that although they love the relative who visits, we are deeply troubled and saddened by their violation of Shabbat and/or Yom Tov. Some families have dealt with this quandary by limiting their invitations to their non-observant relatives to Chanukah, Purim or Chol Hamoed to eat in the Sukkah. Others will extend the invitation only if the driving will occur on Yom Tov but not Shabbat, since violation of Shabbat is a capital sin and violation of Yom Tov is not. Others will extend the invitation if the guest will violate Shabbat or Yom Tov in only one of his trips (i.e. the guest either arrives before Shabbat and/or Yom Tov or leaves after Shabbat and/or Yom Tov ends). In any event one must carefully weigh one's options and seek the guidance of one's Rav in resolving this difficult challenge.

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הקדמות 4 Preface:

a) שתי נשימות. There are הלכות about how בע"ת should breathe? Why? I would think breath is just way to get שופר to emit sound, the main thing is the sound.

Apparently: the נשימה is part of essence of תקיעה – essentially a נשימה, which שופר converts into sound.

b) פסול is שופר של פרה. Says the Gemara, because לא אקרי קרן – Explains the Ramban, it's not called a שופר because it's not hollow. A שופר has to be naturally hollow.

c) \ לכתחילה של איל – למה תוקעים בשופר של איל כדי להזכיר עקידת יצחק

d) Finally, last הקדמה, from kabbalah: How does creation begin? What is created first? The first act of creation is צמצום, the creation of חלל ריק, empty space. The first thing to be created is the fabric of empty space, which is arena in which creation takes place.

Take these 4 ideas together – נשימה, has to be hollow, עקידת יצחק, first בריאה is חלל ריק – and something amazing emerges:

RH is moment of בריאה. Each year I explain that on ה"ה creation takes place again. And in particular – בריאה of man, culmination of creation, who was created on that first ה"ה when באפיו נשמת חיים.

That בריאה is mirrored in שופר – the שופר is also a חלל ריק – be definition, as the Ramban says – into which the breath of life is breathed. And therefore should be שופר של איל, because אדם was created at מקום המזבח, and our connection to מקום המזבח is through עקידת יצחק.

The basic elements of בריאה – from the first חלל ריק, to the culminating באפיו נשמת חיים, are contained in the שופר.

Take that further. What was the שם שם that was employed in ויאמר אלקים גו. That is the שם of בריאה.

Said the אריז"ל – the גימטריא of אלקים is 86 - פו. The גימטריא of מילוי חו אלקים is 300 - ש. And the גימטריא of ריבוע חו אלקים is 200 - ר. So ש-ופ-ר consists of aspects of this שם which is the שם of בריאה.

That is the power of תקיע"ש, the reason it fills us with such awe. The whole majesty of creation – is in that sound. When we hear it – we hear – we are allowed to hear the process of בריאה being renewed all around us.

the whole world is being created anew and we are vouchsafed the privilege of hearing the sound. And that is given to us for a reason – so that it can summon us to participate in that renewal by creating ourselves anew, as well.

We allow ourselves through the year to get caught up in the many petty concerns of day to day existence, and to forget the deep meaning and truth that lies like a subterranean ocean beneath our feet. In the press of daily life we forget that life is a precious gift, that it is painfully short, that it is given to us for a purpose, and that purpose challenges us.

The sound of the שופר brings us up short, it brings us face to face with the stark truth that we are created beings – that the בורא עולם has given us a finite time here on earth,, and that we will one day have to return that gift and give an accounting of how we used it.

With every תקיעה שברים תקיעה we should feel that existence is being given to us, that life is being breathed into us for another year – we hope for a full year, and we should realize that next ה"ה we shall have to give an accounting of how we used it.

As we listen to the שופר, as we hear reverberating in it the echo of בריאה itself, as we receive that breath of life, let us resolve to use that breath of life well, to fill the life we are receiving with מצוות and תורה, with אהבת ישראל and חסד, with תפילה and עבודה, to the best of our ability. Let us resolve to use that life for the greater glory of the One Who gives it, and to walk in His light the sound of Whose might creation reverberates around us – as it says:

אשרי העם יודעי תרועה ה' באור פניך יהלכון

The Music of the Yamim Noraim

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The liturgical music, or *nusach hatefillah*, of the Yamim Noraim is the most profound of the entire year and contains some of the oldest musical elements in our tradition. It requires an expert *Baal Tefilla* who intimately knows the sanctified melodies of these *tefillot*, and it is therefore inappropriate for any synagogue to choose a chazzan who is improperly trained in the intricacies of the musical *nusach*. Needless to say, this pertains all year-around, for every *tefillah*. However, the lack of competence in a *Shliach Tzibbur* is more acutely felt on the Days of Awe in every shul and shtible in every corner of the world, and is emphasized in the words of our *gedolim* throughout the millenia.

It is the intent of this article to give a “crash course” in guidelines concerning this field of musical expertise. While it is impossible to illustrate the actual music of the *tefillot* in a written article, I will try to describe to you the musical history and halachic guidelines for the sacred musical themes that have been heard in shuls in every corner of the Ashkenazic world for the last millennium.

The Maharil

To put this topic into the proper perspective, it is necessary to open to the Shulchan Aruch and the glosses of the Rama.

One may not change the custom of a community, even as to its customary prayer-melodies. (“Maharil”)

Rama 619:1

ואל ישנה אדם ממנהג העיר, אפילו בניגונים
או בפיוטים שאומרים שם (מהרי"ל).
רמ"א תריט:א

The Maharil, Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Möllin, (b. Mainz, 1356, d. Worms, 1427), the first to bear the title of “*Moreinu*,” was the Chief Rabbi of the Rhineland during the years after the Nine Crusades (1096-1272), and during the period of the Black Death which began in the 1340’s. As a result of the crusades and the Black Death, Jews from all over Europe fled to the cities of the Rhineland to join their fellow co-religionists in the largest Jewish cities in Europe for protection and consolation. These cities were Shpeyer, Worms, and Mainz, known as the “*Arei ShWM*,”

where resonated the century-old tradition of Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg whom the Maharil followed as his spiritual guide.

Rabbi Adin Steinzaltz writes²⁵ that, “also being one of the great prayer leaders of his time, he (Maharil) traveled from one community to another, reestablishing the traditional prayer melodies. By virtue of his great authority, the Maharil succeeded in laying the foundations for the prayer rite accepted by all Ashkenazic communities.”

The Maharil also served as a Chazzan, which was often the custom of rabbinical leaders since the time of Rabbi Yehudai Gaon of Sura in the 8th century. The Maharil was distressed by the incursion of many “foreign” melodies into the musical liturgy of the synagogues of his time. Over a period of many years he was able to hear *Baalei Tefilla* from all over Europe as he traveled from city to city in the Rhineland, and he thereby determined which melodies were the authentic traditions for each community. He then sanctified those melodies with the title “*Missinai*,” to emphasize their ancient and immutable quality.²⁶ In his *Sefer HaMaharil*, compiled by his student Eliezer Ben Yaakov, he declares categorically that one may not change the traditional melodies (*nusach*) of a community. Most poskim have opined that this declaration applies all through the calendar year.²⁷ For this article, we will confine ourselves to the High Holidays.

The Intention of the Maharil

The intention of the Maharil was two-fold. He may well have been aware that the melodies he had gathered were the only connection that we had to the music of the Bais Hamikdosh. More important, however, was his sense that the *kavannah* of the congregants depended on being enveloped in the musical atmosphere of the holy melodies they always heard in shul, and that if these melodies were changed, their *kavannah* would be affected.²⁸ Imagine coming to shul on Yom Kippur Night as the Chazzan ascends the bima to sing the Kol Nidre. It is a moment you have anticipated for many days before Yom Kippur. However, instead of singing the beloved traditional melody that has always uplifted the congregation for as long as you can remember, the Chazzan puts these sublime words to the tune of one of the latest “pop” melodies! Your *kavannah* would be ruined; the atmosphere of this holy evening would be severely compromised, perhaps totally destroyed, by your upset and consternation at this breach of tradition! The melody of Kol Nidre is no less important than any other of the sanctified *Niggunei Maharil* that we have all grown up with.

²⁵ A Guide to Jewish Prayer, Schocken, 2000

²⁶ This appellation (*Missinai*) was first coined by Rabbi Yehuda Hachasid (1150-1217) in his *Sefer Hachassidim*. It was originally used as a description of the Taamei Hamikra – the melody of the Torah.

²⁷ Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz writes (*Journal of Jewish Music & Liturgy* Volume 8, Belz School of Jewish Music), where there is no ‘prevailing ignorance’ and therefore no ‘bilbul daas hakahal’ “the words of the Maharil and the Mogein Avrohom (“ain L’shanos”) would apply to all services and not necessarily for the Yomim Noroim (only).”. The Mogen Avrohom (O.C.68:1), Chasam Sofer (O.C.16, 17), and Hagaot Maimuniot, say similarly that one may not change any one of the essential minhagim in prayer that is traditional with the congregation. In tandem with Ramah O.C. 619, this would include the musical nusach. Rabbi Hershel Schachter has also voiced this opinion.

²⁸ See Mishnah Brura there, “Ki al y’dai zeh misbalbel daas hakohol”- changing these melodies will confuse the congregation and severely affect their *kavannah*.

Many melodies are less well known than the Kol Nidre, but all are equally sacred and important to the atmosphere of our *tefillos* throughout the Yomim Noroim (Days of Awe) period.

The Missinai Melodies

There are approximately fifty-two *Missinai* melodies that can be identified. Many are “motifs,” musical phrases which are repeated in different texts, but almost all of which are traceable to the time of the Maharil or the Maharam of Rothenberg before him. They were often referred to by the past generations of Baalei Tefilla as “Scarbova,” from the Slavic word “skarb,” which means “(from the) treasure,” “official,” or a corruption of the Latin word “sacra,” “sacred”. Most of these melodies are for the Yomim Noroim and some are sanctified in the tefillot of the rest of the year. Until the early eighteenth century these melodies were an exclusively oral tradition because Chazzanim were not trained in the art of writing music, with rare exceptions (such as Solomon Rossi, 1587-1628 CE, who wrote his music in the tradition of the Sfardim). These melodies were a closely guarded treasure, and each Baal Tefilla carefully handed down the tradition he had learned from generation to generation with relative accuracy. Having originally gathered in *Ashkenaz* (Germany), the German Jewish population moved eastward because of persecution and pogroms. Hence, their melodies were transmitted to the East European community and became the hallmark of the *tefilla* of the entire European Jewish community.

American Jews are the inheritors of the European minhag, and we are therefore required to follow that tradition in our davening. This is our “Minhag HaMakom.”²⁹ Our Baalei Tefilla should be well-versed in the *Missinai* melodies that nurtured the souls of our fathers’ generation, our grandfathers’ generation, and the generations before them. No one has the right to discard even one of these sacred melodies of our *tefilla*.

This applies to our Shabbat and Yom Tov *tefillot* as well, although most of these *tefillot* only have rules for the musical style, or mode of each paragraph (major, minor, phreigish, etc.), rather than an actual melody. The restriction of rules to mode allows talented chazzanim to insert congregational melodies that fit into the given mode, although such additions should only be made with careful forethought. There are various *tefillot* outside of the Yomim Noroim that have fixed melodies, primarily the Kaddishim and some major *tefillot*, such as Tal/Geshem and the “concluding phrases” of many of the tefillot. The requirement to keep the traditional *nusach* applies throughout the year, for every prayer, at every service!³⁰

²⁹ This refers to the communities that descend from Eastern Europe, which includes a great majority of American Jewry. Of course, each community is obligated to follow their specific custom and practices.

³⁰ In the writings of the halachic authorities of past centuries, we often see references to the importance of davening within the traditional guidelines. One example is from the *Mateh Ephraim*, by Rabbi Ephraim Margolioth of Brody, Ukraine (1760-1828) who writes, “if he (the chazzan) thinks that his own melodies are more pleasant than the traditional melodies, he will be punished by Heaven for this!” Rabbi Gedalia Schwartz, now Av Bes Din of the Chicago Rabbinical Council, writes: “Congregations should seek the combination of piety and a mastering of traditional musical *nusach* which is part of the spiritual fabric of *tefillah*, particularly on the *Yomim Noroim*. The absence of these hallowed *niggunim* during the davening would be unthinkable to any worshipper...” There is no question that our rabbinical leaders were concerned about maintaining the hallowed musical tradition of our davening. It was unthinkable that anyone would want to change these melodies, and as an absolute, immutable,

The Kol Nidre

The Music of the *Kol Nidre* is one of the most profoundly emotional melodies of our entire liturgy. No other synagogue prayer has such an impact on the listener - arousing, uplifting, and inspiring passions that well up from the innermost depths of emotion for the entire congregation. What makes this prayer so important to the average congregant, who is drawn to the synagogue (on time!) with anticipation, trepidation, and awe?

To the superficial examiner the words of the text are quite common. It is simply *Hatarat Nedarim*, a time-accepted formula of absolution from personal vows and oaths between man and G-d, written in Aramaic. It is based on the statement in the Talmud (Nedarim 23b) that one who desires to annul his vows should publicly stand up at the “beginning of the year” and declare them null and void. Rabbeinu Tam (1100-1170) changed the standard wording to vows of the future only. (In some shuls they use the formulation of the Vilna Gaon as taught by Rav Soloveitchik, incorporating both past and future vows). *Kol Nidre* probably existed in its present form in the eighth or ninth centuries, in the Geonic period. The text is recited three times to emphasize the “solemnity of the declaration” (SeMaG), or to enable the congregation to hear it, in case they missed the first two recitations. (Bach, O.C. 619)

It is primarily the haunting music of this tefillah and the mystique of its history that augment the urgency, weight, and seriousness of the day and draw attendance. Unwilling to miss the stirring words of this declaration, and – I believe, very significantly – the undisputable impact of the music, the average Jew is drawn to come on time to shul. His father did so, and his father before him, all for the same reasons. This is the strength and impact of our *Missinai* melodies, which have carried on from generation to generation.

The Music of Kol Nidre

The melody as heard today in the Ashkenazic Synagogue did not exist in its present form until the middle of the 15th or 16th century. (Sephardic Jews recite *Kol Nidre* to a completely different tune.) It is the very last *Missinai* melody incorporated into the list of the sacred *Niggunei Maharil*, even though it was finalized many years after the period of the *Maharil*³¹. We do know that the singing of this “declaration” was instituted by R. Yehudai Gaon in the 8th Century, to be sung to a (non-specific) melody by his Chazzan in the academy of Sura, Babylonia. According to the 11th Century *Machzor Vitry* of R. Simcha ben-Samuel, it was to be chanted three times: first, in a low and soft voice, then gradually increasing with each repetition to full voice. This represents the entrance of a subject into the King’s palace with trepidation and his eventual standing before his king with confidence. In the *Sefer Maharil*, the *Maharil* is described as singing the text with “various tunes”

irrevocable rule of *tefillah*, it was considered unnecessary to discuss! It was, therefore, rarely voiced as a concern in most halachic works.

³¹ Although the word “*Missinai*” initially referred only to the *niggunei HaMaharil*, it was later used in reference to other melodies that became *minhag* such as the *Kol Nidre*, which was created from *Missinai* motifs, and all the various *Yomim Noroim Kaddishim* that, over 300 years, gradually evolved from the one ancient *Tal/Geshem Missinai* melody.

over and over again until nightfall: “*yaarich bo b’niggunim*,” indicative of the fact that no fully set tune was as yet established in the Maharil’s time. The first mention of an established melody for Kol Nidre is found in the *Levush* of Rabbi Mordechai Jaffe of Prague (1530-1612), who writes of “a widely accepted tune” known to the chazzanim of his time. The earliest notation of this melody is from 1765, written down by Cantor Aaron Beer of Berlin (1738-1821).

The Component Parts of the Kol Nidre

Upon analysis, Kol Nidre appears to have been formulated from an amalgam of other *Missinai niggunim* and *Taamei HaMikra* (*Trope*) of the Torah and Haftarah. It is clear that the Jews of France and the Rhineland in the 15th century adapted the concluding phrase of the “Great Aleinu” (see below) for the *Kol Nidre*, (as well as for the first paragraph of the Yomim Noroim *Avot*). This phrase has a triumphant character, which is appropriate for “*Haboh Aleinu L’Tova*,” “May it come upon us for good,” and for use as a typical end-of-sentence motif.

The opening musical phrase of the *Kol Nidre* was likely taken from the *HaMelech* of Shacharis – one of the great *Missinai/Scarbova* melodies discussed above. It can also be heard in the melody of the opening phrase of the Kaddish before Musaf of the Yomim Noroim. Professor Abraham Z. Idelsohn (1882-1938) – our first and foremost Jewish Ethnomusicologist³² – has written that it was a chazzan in 15th/16th century Southwest Germany who “voiced the sentiments of the terror-stricken Marranos, as they recited the *Kol Nidre* in a touching tune which expresses the fear, terror, fervent pleading and stern hope for ultimate salvation.”³³ Throughout the world, the profound melody of this lofty prayer is recognized as one of Judaism’s most signature contributions to song and prayer.

As we are about to endure the fast of *Yom Kippur*, the average Jew is acutely aware that his prayers may well have an impact on the coming year in pleas for health, prosperity, peace, and tranquility. It is with trepidation and a prayerful hope for the future that the Jew is drawn to this solemn melodic declaration at the onset of the holiest day of the year.

The Yomim Noroim Maariv Borchu

It is Ma'ariv, the first night of Rosh Hashana. The Chazzan begins to sing the familiar, beloved melody of the Yomim Noroim Bor'chu": “Ah...♪ ...♪...♪ ...♪...♪” The melody permeates the atmosphere of the shul and uplifts the hearts of all present. Where did this melody come from, and how old is it? How many generations of Jews began their New Year with this profound introduction to the liturgy of the High Holidays? There are few melodies that immerse us in an aura of holiness and sacred prayer, and which, simply by being heard, grant the listener palpable, visceral recognition

³² Professor Idelsohn (Latvia/S.Africa/Jerusalem/Cincinnati, 1882-1938) PhD in Music, Leipzig University, Chazzan and professor of Music, was the very first Jewish ethnomusicologist, who dedicated his life to collecting, identifying and analyzing the great corpus of musical minhag of every community that he was able to reach in his lifetime. He collected these and published them in his monumental 10 volume “Thesaurus of Hebrew Melodies”. He published many other books on Jewish music, including the ground-breaking, “Jewish Music in its historical development”, a history of Jewish Music from Biblical times to the present.

³³ A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development*, Henry Holt, 1929

that we are no longer in the mundane cycle of our year, but that we have now entered the lofty heights of the holiest days of the year - the beginning of the “Days of Awe.”

Charlemagne and the Source of the Melody

We know for certain that the Borchu melody is more than eleven centuries old, having first appeared in the 8th and 9th century in the Europe of Emperor Charlemagne (742-814). Charlemagne imported the rabbinic leaders of Italy and Babylon, R. Kalonymos and R. Machir who composed prayers and set melodies to them based on their ancient traditions that eventually were sanctified by the Maharil³⁴. One of these sanctified melodies is that of the Maariv Yomim Noroim Bor’chu. Its oldest written source is in the music collection of Charlemagne’s court musician, Paulus Diaconus (720-799 AD). This unusual source provides us with an actual date, and makes this Borchu one of the few ancient Jewish melodies whose age we can actually determine.

We can be reasonably certain that the Maariv Yomim Noroim Borchu has truly come from the Jewish community, even though its earliest written source is a book of Christian song. Until the 18th century Jews generally did not know how to write music, since writing music was exclusively reserved for the Christian clergy. Therefore, when this majestic, sacred melody of the High Holidays is sung in shul, you can sing along with confidence that not only has it been sanctified by Jewish tradition, but that it is very likely an authentic, ancient Jewish melody that is well over 1200 years old!

The grand majestic manner of this prayer causes us to wonder why we usher in the serious, serene High Holy Days with a melody of praise and exultation. After all, these are the Days of Awe, when G-d sits in judgment. How can we approach Him with a tune whose style is so uplifting and lofty? This is the essence of the question asked by my teacher, Cantor Macy Nulman.

Cantor Nulman answers that Rabbi Eliezer ben Meshullam of Mainz (12th century) initiated the general rule throughout the year of singing of Bor’chu to an extended melody, “which gives worshippers ample time to gather for the service.”³⁵ He writes that early Chassidim called the

³⁴ Desirous of fostering commerce with the nations of the Middle East, and convinced that the Jews would be the conduit to Middle East commerce with Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, etc., Charlemagne decided to encourage the growth of the small Jewish population in Rhineland bordering France and Germany. In order to attract Jewish settlers, Charlemagne imported world-renowned rabbinic leaders and their families whom, he correctly surmised, would attract Jews who would move to this new community. He first chose the Kalonymos family of Italy, led by the foremost Italian Rabbinic scholar Rabbi Kalonymos and his son Meshullam, as well as Rabbi Machir of Babylon. He settled the Kalonymos family in Mainz, Germany, and the Machirs in Narbonne, Southern France. Each brought in their wake numerous Talmudists, poets, and theologians. Their leadership elevated and preserved the Rhineland Kehillah, which gradually became the largest in early medieval Europe, and established its customs. These rabbis were also chazzanim and poets (*paytanim*), composing poems and melodies based on the ancient traditions they had brought with them. As we mentioned before, many of these melodies were preserved as our *Missinai* melodies (primarily of the High Holidays and festivals) guided by the dictum of the Maharil, and formed the basis of our *Minhag Ashkenaz* to this day.

³⁵ Concepts of Jewish Music and Prayer, Cantorial Council of America, Yeshiva University

first night of Rosh Hashanah “Coronation Night”. “It proclaims that the kingdom of G-d is one of the major themes of the Rosh Hashanah service. It is no wonder that Ashkenazic Jewry throughout the world joins together with the Chazzan in this exultant theme. It is also possible that this musical theme *lessens* our fear as we approach the Yom Hadin (Day of Judgment) and gives us hope and courage to continue (praying) for a new year.”

The History of the “Great” Aleinu

The text of Aleinu was originally composed for Musaf of Yomim Noroim in the third century C.E., in Babylonia³⁶. The hauntingly powerful musical setting of the text was already known during the years of the third Crusade (1187-1192 C.E.) led by King Richard the Lionheart, having developed in the centuries prior to that. During the period of the nine Crusades (1096-1272 C.E.), many of the communities of the Rhineland were attacked by the marauding Christian army and forced to convert to Christianity. Those Jews who refused were murdered or burnt at the stake. In *Emek Habacha*, Yosef HaKohen (1496-1528) quotes a letter to the last of the *Gaonim*, Rabbi Jacob of Orleans (d. 1189), where an eyewitness describes a mass murder in the town of Blois, France in 1171 C.E. As the Christians began to burn many of the town’s Jewish population at the stake, the Christian knights listened in awe as the dying martyrs sang a “mysterious song.” When asked, the remaining Jews told them that this was the song of their “Aleinu.” The knight executors and their French collaborators were so impressed, that they incorporated this melody into the melodies of their own religion³⁷, which can be heard to this very day. This disturbing historical fact verifies the ancientness of this melody.

The “electric” power of this sanctified melody, one of the oldest of our *Missinai* tunes, introduces and prepares the listener for the most important and sublime prayer of the Amida, the central paragraphs of the *Kedushas Hayom* section. Its impact is so great that this theme is heard again and again throughout the Yomim Noroim in tefillot such as the *Kol Nidre*, the first section of the repetition of the *Amida (Avot and Gevurot)*, and elsewhere throughout the Machzor. The sublime magnetism of this ancient *tefillah* stands in stark contrast to the simplistic opening and closing phrases of the contemporary tune for Aleinu sung in our shuls every Shabbat. No example better illustrates the chasm separating our *Missinai* tradition from the corpus of mundane melodies chosen by many of today’s congregations.

A Sampling of Other Missinai Melodies

Hamelech: The melody of Hamelech was first set by Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (1215-1293) and finalized by the Maharil.

Avot: This melody was also established by R’Meir, and it contains many *Missinai* elements and motifs.

³⁶ According to a mesorah, found in Shaarei Teshuva, 43 and Kol Bo, 16, some hold that Aleinu may have been originally written by Yehoshua after the battle of Jericho.

³⁷ Eric Werner, “A Voice Still Heard”, Penn.StateU.Press, 1978

Musaf Yomim Noraim Kaddish: The Mussaf Kaddish was originally similar to *Tal/Geshem* prayer, as were most of the Kaddish *tefillot* of the Yomim Noraim at the time of the Maharam of Rothenberg. By the 16/17th century, this Kaddish melody had become differentiated to provide a specialized musical theme for each service of the High Holiday *Machzor*. They each have elements of the original and are considered *Missinai* as well.

V'Hakohanim: This melody is intended to replicate the service in the Holy Temple. It is heard again in the Musaf Kedusha (*Kvodo, etc.*) and in various other settings.

Motifs: “*Hashem Melech*” somewhat similar to Neilah; “*S'lach lanu,*” also heard at “*Sh'vikin Sh'visin,*” and others.

The Krovos mode: The Krovos mode is heard in *Ochilo LoKeil; Asisi; Misod; Yoreisi: Eimecho Nososi,* and elsewhere.

Missinai melodies are also used in piyyutim such as *Aapid: Eder Vohod; Esa Dei;* ancient texts such as *Ato Hu Elokeinu* and *L'Keil Orech Din;* Yotzros; the Avodah of Yomim Noraim; Selichos; V'nislach; Vidui, and many others

There are few melodies anywhere in the world that can compare with the lofty serenity and holiness of these sanctified, time-honored *Missinai* themes. The soul of the Jew responds to them, and the melodies, in turn, enter the hearts of their listeners and have a profound effect upon them. It is that very impact that the Maharil recognized and endeavored so mightily to preserve, so that each year and throughout the year the Jew could be brought closer to the ideals of Teshuva, Tefilla, and Tzedaka, the formula that can overturn the negative decree and grant us all a good and blessed New Year. V'chein Y'hi Ratson!

The Teshuvah Beyond Teshuvah

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The Challenge of Teshuvah

Man's constant struggle for self-transformation, his never-ending battle for spiritual growth, takes him down a road which is at times as unsatisfying as it is ennobling. He grasps at the rungs of the ladder of moral elevation, striving to lift himself to a higher plateau of existence, guiding his travels by maps that chart the process of teshuvah, repentance. But even the most assiduous adherence leaves him plagued with self-doubts, with a gnawing dissatisfaction with his own endeavor. While his recognition and profound regret of his past misdeeds are manifest, and his commitment to circumvent the paths that had previously corrupted him is resolute, the exhaustiveness of his efforts does not grant him confidence as he approaches Yom Kippur. While the steps of teshuvah have been dutifully executed, the actual fulfillment of this mitzvah remains in question. Can one ever proclaim with security and surety in his accomplishment, that he has repented?

Perhaps it was these unsettling doubts that Rav Kook referred to when he included in the introduction to his *Orot HaTeshuvah* a description of teshuvah as “a divine commandment that is, on the one hand, the easiest to carry out, since a stirring of the heart toward penitence is a valid expression of penitence, and on the other hand, it is the most difficult to perform, since it has not yet been effectuated fully in the world and in life.”³ Unlike other commandments which take the form of a physical action or verbal recitation, the eyes and ears can bear no testimony to this mitzvah's fulfillment. In fact, it is precisely this intangible nature of teshuvah to which Rav Soloveitchik had attributed the Rambam's reluctance to list teshuvah as a mitzvah, choosing instead its verbally performable correlate, viduy, confession.⁴

The Promise of Teshuva MeAhavah

With such a crucial essential of Judaism existing on a level imperceptible to our concretized perceptions, it is little wonder that the aspirant to spiritual heights is often tortured by an

³ Introduction to *Orot HaTeshuvah*, Translation by B. Bokser in *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, etc.*, Paulist Press, New York, 1978, p. 41.

⁴ See *Al HaTeshuvah*, chapter one.

uncomfortable insecurity. It is thus with this mindset that he approaches the tantalizing promise recorded in the Talmud⁵, a description of a concept possessed of both wondrous potential and esoteric elusiveness. There is a teshuvah beyond teshuvah, the Talmud tells us, a teshuvah capable of scaling heights light-years beyond our previous conceptions. While the potential for atonement in itself had sufficed to provide us with a grateful appreciation of G-d's mercy, we are now informed that an even greater acquisition lies within our grasp. There is a teshuvah which not only cleans away, but transforms, which not merely expiates but even effects a miraculous retroactive conversion.

We need not be satisfied with merely having our z'donot, intentional transgressions, graciously commuted in the eyes of Heaven to the status of sh'gagot, unwitting transgressions. We now know of a teshuvah with the capacity to turn our intentional misdeeds into zechuyot, merits. While previously we knew only of teshuvah miYirah, repentance motivated by fear, we are now introduced to the miraculous teshuvah meAhavah, repentance motivated by love.

The penitent understandably views this concept with ambivalence, at once exhilarated by its possibilities while simultaneously tortured by its distance. Where teshuvah in a complete sense was until now elusive, this glorious new variety seems to be unattainable. Teshuvah miYirah was, at the very least, described in procedure by the poskim and ba'alei musar; its basic components were to some extent known. Of teshuvah meAhavah, however, we know only the two words which comprise its name; not only security in its complete accomplishment, but even the basic instructions seem cloaked in mystery, our only concrete acquisition being an elegant phrase whose glorious promise is matched by its enigmatic cloak of conceptual secrecy.

The Minchat Chinuch⁶ further whets our appetite by postulating additional qualities of teshuvah meAhavah. The Talmud (Yoma 85b) tells us that while we can always aspire to atonement, such an accomplishment is understandably not always automatic with the performance of the steps of teshuvah; rather, there is a concept known as the arba'ah chillukei kaparah, the four divisions of atonement. This concept mandates that while atonement is always possible and sometimes is effected by teshuvah alone, in the instances of more severe misdeeds teshuvah may require the assistance of Yom Kippur, of afflictions (yisurin), or even of death, to make the expiation complete. However, the Minchat Chinuch suggests that there is a shortcut; there is a greater teshuvah, a teshuvah that has the power to grant its adherents immediate atonement, circumventing the arba'ah chillukei kaparah. The identity of this higher teshuvah is, of course, teshuvah meAhavah.

The Minchat Chinuch proves this from a fascinating passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi.⁷ The passage describes the concept of Prophecy being asked to identify the fate of the sinner. Prophecy responds that the sinner must die for his misdeeds. When G-d is asked, however, He answers that the sinner shall repent and he will be forgiven. It should be noted that while Prophecy prescribed death, apparently indicating that the transgression was of capital severity, G-d nonetheless stated that repentance would achieve atonement. As such a situation is

⁵ Yoma 86b.

⁶ #364. See similarly, introduction of R. Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor to *Nachal Yitzchak*.

⁷ *Masekhet Makkot*. 2:6. .

seemingly in contradiction to the arba'ah chillukei kaparah, which require more than simply repentance for a crime on the capital level, it must be that the teshuvah referred to is a qualitatively different teshuvah, one that can supersede the arba'ah chillukei kaparah, and that can only be teshuvah meAhavah.

Sealing our interest and fueling our ambition for an understanding of this concept is a comment by Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, the Netziv, in his commentary to Chumash.⁸ Repentance that is motivated by a fear of punishment is in essence self-based, for it is propelled merely by a desire to save oneself the agonies of divine retribution. In contrast, when love serves as the impetus for teshuvah, the focus of attention is not the individual but rather G-d. This distinction imparts a towering advantage to the latter form of teshuvah.

Teshuvah miYirah, in its man-based structure, is by definition prey to the eternal doubts and skepticisms that cloud the human psyche and thus plague the confidence of the aspirant to this psychologically oriented mitzvah. Alternatively, teshuvah meAhavah, finding its foundations in connection to the Almighty, can offer its adherents something teshuvah miYirah never could: the confidence and security of a penitence that is lasting, that will endure beyond the incessant apprehensions of human intellect to transport the penitent to new heights of spiritual stature, armed with the conviction of concretized moral development.

With this final stroke our attention has been captured in totality by the yearning to apprehend this wondrous ideal. The fascinating potential of a capacity to transform transgressions into virtues, the inspiring promise of a teshuvah that can bypass the arba'ah chillukei kaparah, and lastly the mere possibility of that long-awaited confidence of spiritual acquisition have fused to create an irresistible ambition that now occupies the center of our interest. Of utmost concern, now, is some type of direction in the understanding of this glorious concept.

Talmud Torah as Teshuvah

The challenge of some acharonim to a comment of the Ramban may prove relevant to our quest. "For this mitzvah", the Torah tells us⁹, 'is not too wondrous for you, nor is it far away..."

Commentators differ as to the identity of the "mitzvah" described in this verse. Many, primarily Rashi, see here a generic statement, encompassing the whole of Torah and mitzvot. Other commentators take a different approach, finding significance in the juxtaposition of this verse to a preceding verse which makes reference to an eventual repentance. This led the Ramban, joined by the Abravenel and the S'forno, to interpret this verse in a much more specific sense, its focus being not the corpus of Torah and mitzvot, but rather the mitzvah of teshuvah.

Many scholars, including notably R. Aharon Kotler, immediately sensed the difficulty with this explanation. Chazal (Eiruvim 55a) have already provided the meaning of this verse, maintaining that the intended mitzvah actually refers to the study of Torah. How, then, do the Ramban, Abravenel, and S'forno allow themselves a position contradictory to the opinion of Chazal?

⁸ *HaAmeik Davar* to *Devarim* 30:10

⁹ *Devarim* 30:11.

The Netziv, differing slightly from the Ramban and the others, wrote in his HaAmek Davar that the verse applies both to Talmud Torah and to Teshuvah. R. Aharon Kotler, however, along with other contemporary authorities, offered the following suggestion to allow the harmonious reconciliation of the Ramban's view with that of the Talmud: there are times when Talmud Torah and teshuvah can be one and the same action.

This concept sheds light on many earlier comments of the Mishnah, the Gemara, and the Medrash, as Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman points out in his She'arit Yosef.¹⁰ For example, the Sifre to Parshat Ha'azinu, commenting on the phrase, "My 'lekach' shall drop as rain"¹¹, explains that lekach can only mean the study of Torah, a significance it continues to carry in the book of Hoshea (14:3), where the verse advises "take (k'chu) with yourselves words and return to G-d," with "words" similarly being a reference to talmud Torah. This midrashic comment is on the surface surprising, as the intent of the "taking of words" in the verse in Hoshea would seem to also deal with teshuvah¹² rather than with talmud Torah. However, with the illumination of the principle advanced above, the surprise falls away, and the flow of the verse in Hoshea, following the Midrash's comments, is easily understood.

<p><i>As valleys stretched out, as gardens by the river-side; as tents planted of the LORD, as cedars beside the waters</i></p> <p>Bamidbar 24:6</p>	<p>כנחלים נטיו כגנת עלי נהר כאהלים נטע ה' כארזים עלי מים: במדבר כד:ו</p>
<p><i>Just as rivers elevate a person from impurity to purity, so do tents elevate a person from a guilty status to one of merit.</i></p> <p>Brachot 16a</p>	<p>מה נחלים מעלין את האדם מטומאה לטהרה אף אהלים מעלין את האדם מכף חובה לכף זכות. ברכות טז.</p>

Rashi explains that the term "tents" in this usage refers to the batei midrashot, to the study halls, which serve "as a mikveh to purify Israel from all of their impurities." Once again, this text receives resounding clarity when taken with our principle of above.

Accepting talmud Torah as an instrument of teshuvah now leaves us with the task of defining its exact role within the teshuvah process. Certainly it stands apart from such well known components of teshuvah as recognition of sin, regretting the sin, and resolutions for the future. Perhaps, as Rabbi Wahrman and others, such as R. Yaakov Betzalel Zolty¹³, suggest, we have finally discovered the secret of our mysterious and glorious teshuvah meAhavah.

Again, there is ample precedent for this idea in earlier literature. The Midrash¹⁴ identifies one who spends his time immersed in the study of the oral Torah, with all of its intricacies, difficulties and details, as one who is displaying a tremendous love of G-d. Rabbi Wahrman quotes Rabbi Nachman David Londinsky as making a relevant observation. The Rambam, in

¹⁰ Vol. 4 #26.

¹¹ *Devarim* 32:2.

¹² An image concurred to by Rabbeinu Yonah, who defines "words" here as representing words of *vidui*, of confession.

¹³ *Mishnat Ya'avetz*, O.C. 54.

¹⁴ *Tanchuma, Parshat Noach*, 3.

Hilkhot Teshuvah (10:5), takes the time to expand briefly on the concept of Torah study for its own sake as opposed to study for alternative reasons, defining study for its own sake as a study driven by “a love of the Master of the world who commanded [study]”, and concludes with a statement of the importance of all types of study, in the hopes that the eventual result will be study for its own sake. It is odd that the Rambam, with his legendary precision of order and organization, would expand on this concept in Hilkhot Teshuvah, while in its apparently more appropriate home, Hilkhot Talmud Torah (3:5), he refers to it in a much terser manner.

Perhaps the depths of the Rambam’s intentions are now clear. In Hilkhot Talmud Torah, where the concern is merely the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Torah study, the Rambam felt no need to expand on the distinction between Torah for its own sake and other motivations for study because both effect a realization of the commandment of Torah study. However, the utilization of talmud Torah for the purposes of teshuvah requires more than mere fulfillment of the technical talmud Torah; it requires a study motivated by pure love. Therefore the Rambam deals with the distinction in Hilkhot Teshuvah, because it is there that the differentiation is crucial.

However, merely classifying teshuvah meAhavah as being realized through talmud Torah does not complete our investigation into the issue. A true understanding begs that we perceive the precise underpinnings of the procedure by which talmud Torah effects teshuvah. True and effective application mandates a deeper comprehension.

It would seem that the realms and scopes of teshuvah and talmud Torah intersect on two levels. The first stems from mutual goals, from the shared aspirations of the penitent and the scholar, of the hopeful climber of the spiritual ladder and the searcher of eternal truths.

Sin degrades and demeans, diminishes and stifles. Its perpetrator confronts his evil inclination and emerges a lesser being. This is true on a level not only moral and psychological, but metaphysical. The sinner has created a distance between himself and his Creator. His desire to transgress unhindered, without annoying pangs of conscience, was so great that he told himself G-d wasn’t watching and after a while he came to believe it. In reality, the sinner creates a void; the connection between man and G-d is indeed affected by sin.

But eventually the sinner comes to confront himself and he realizes the ugliness, the distaste of what he had created, and he awakens from his self-imposed slumber. He no longer desires the distance from G-d; he wants to elevate himself from the depths to which he had fallen. To paraphrase the midrash, he glimpses the light because of his darkness; his position from the bottom of the abyss propels his desire to scale the greatest heights. There is nothing he craves more than to bridge the gap he once welcomed.

He therefore extends his hand to grab the rung of the ladder; he plunges himself wholeheartedly into the methods of penitence, bitterly regretting his past, firmly committing to a brighter future. All the while his ultimate goal remains in sight: to approach the Heavenly Father he once spurned.

The goals of the scholar overlap substantially with those of the penitent. He, too, searches for proximity to G-d. He differs only in method. His travels take him not through the depths of a formerly misdirected soul but rather through the secrets of the universe as contained in the

revealed word of G-d known as the Torah. His focus is not his own errant past but rather the past of his people, revolving around the day his forebears stood at Mount Sinai. His path may differ substantially from that of the penitent, but his hopeful destination is very much the same.

As the penitent reaches out for G-d, the scholar joins him, and logically their paths converge. The penitent whose impetus to teshuvah is sincere love for G-d becomes the scholar, and talmud Torah becomes the most effective path to teshuvah. With the destruction of the Temple, the last vestige of the sacrificial order became the concept of “n’shalmah parim s’fateinu - our lips shall substitute for the bulls”¹⁵ With the actual offering of sacrifices impossible, our learning about them would have to suffice. This laid the foundation for our current practice (a practice at least one Rishon considered a biblical obligation¹⁶) to recite the biblical and mishnaic passages related to sacrificial offerings daily. Indeed, the Talmud relates that this was advice that G-d himself had given to Abraham, who upon being told that the Jewish people would always be assured the Land of Israel as long as they offered sacrifices, questioned what would be after the destruction of the Temple.

This unique arrangement led to much rabbinical speculation as to possible applications in other areas. If one were trapped on a desert island, for example, and thus had no access to a shofar when Rosh Hashanah came around, could he discharge his obligation with learning the laws of shofar? If such is an effective substitution for the sacrificial order, why not for other commandments as well? Such speculation continued throughout the generations following the destruction of the Temple, into our own century when the Chofetz Chaim, writing in the introduction to his *Likutei Halakhot* on the laws of sacrifices, insisted that the concept was only applicable to sacrifices, with others disagreeing.¹⁷

Indeed, it does beg an explanation; why should a distinction exist between the sacrificial order and other commandments? If learning about a sacrifice is an effective substitute, then why not in all areas? One is inclined to suggest that perhaps the truth is as follows. In reality, learning about a commandment is no substitute for its actual performance. However, the sacrifices were not ordinary commandments; they were the means of worship, the primary method of establishing an interaction between man and G-d. In later generations, only talmud Torah could approximate such a connection; it provided an alternate method not of fulfilling the commandment but of initiating the communication between man and his Creator that the Temple’s destruction had interrupted. This, then, is the nature of Torah study, the approaching of G-d through the intellect. It is this nature that makes it so gloriously compatible with teshuvah meAhavah.

There is, as mentioned above, a second level where Torah and teshuvah intersect, a more subtle, gradual level. The aspirant to penitence seeks to transform his character, to evolve his consciousness to a level of higher development. The penitent who is truly motivated by love is not interested merely in clearing his name but in effecting a true escalation of his being.

¹⁵ See *Menachot* 110a.

¹⁶ See Rabbeinu Yonah to *Berakhot*, *Sa b’dapei haRif*, s.v. *lo hifsid*.

¹⁷ A recent example being R. Ephraim Greenblatt in his *Resp. Riv’vot Ephraim* #613.

When one immerses himself in the study of Torah for its own sake, his constant contact with the holy cannot leave him untouched. The rigors of his intellect will surely refine the contours of his moral understanding, and the direction of his thinking will fine-tune the deeper elements of his personality. The quality of his religious understanding cannot help but hone the sensitivities of his spiritual perception. Again, the devotion to Torah study and the aspiration to refined character will necessarily coalesce.

Teshuvah as Transformation

As described above, teshuvah miYirah has the ability to convert intentional misdeeds to the status of inadvertent transgressions. Teshuvah meAhavah supercedes that, possessing the power to transform intentional misdeeds into actual merits. Rav Soloveitchik has been quoted as explaining the distinction in the following manner: When one wishes to repent, to correct the errors of his past, there are two disparate approaches from which he may choose. He may possibly view the first part of his life as a mistake, as an unfortunate error he wishes to erase from the annals of human memory. He wishes to start anew from this point on; what happened until now shall never be mentioned again, and all focus should be on the future. This, explained the Rav, is teshuvah miYirah; I fear the ramifications of my past and I beg a separation from it. The wish is granted, the slate is cleaned; all of the past will be considered one big mistake, a sh'gagah, and there will be no accountability.

But there is another attitude also. There is an attitude which does not want to completely disregard the past, an attitude that recognizes the value of lessons learnt from past mistakes. There is an attitude grounded in ahavah, in love for G-d, that propels one with a desire not merely to avoid punishment but to do something positive with his life. He looks not merely for a clean slate, but for the opportunity to use his past misdeeds as a guiding light for the future. This penitent's past transgressions are not merely wiped clean, they even work in his benefit¹⁸.

This second attitude, the teshuvah meAhavah, cannot work on a purely emotional instinctive basis. It requires careful deliberation, mature insight into one's situation and a highly developed consciousness which are the products of intensive Torah study. For one to reach the level of sensitivity necessary to guide one's life along the principles of teshuvah meAhavah, Torah study is the only route.

And Kayin left from G-d... he left happy... he met Adam Harishon, who asked him, "what was your judgment?" Kayin responded "I did teshuva and it was resolved". Adam hit his head, and said "such is the power of teshuva, and I did not know". Immediately he

ויצא קין מלפני ה' ... רבי חמא בשם רבי חנינא בר רבי יצחק אמר יצא שמח ... פגע בו אדם הראשון א"ל מה נעשה בדינך, א"ל עשיתי תשובה ונתפשרתי, התחיל אדם הראשון מטפה על פניו, אמר כך היא כחה של תשובה ואני לא הייתי יודע מיד עמד אדה"ר ואמר (תהלים צב)

¹⁸ R. Chaim Soloveichik (quoted by R. Boruch Ber Leibowitz, cited in *Chavatzelet HaSharon al haTorah, Bereishit*, p. 26) put a more technical spin on the ability of teshuvah to turn misdeed into merit: as teshuvah is a mitzvah, when it is fulfilled, the sin that necessitated it becomes *hekhsheh mitzvah*, and combines with the mitzvah itself. However, this logic would appear to apply to both types of teshuvah.

The meaning of this midrash is enigmatic: what is the connection between Shabbat and teshuvah? An intriguing explanation was offered by the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht¹⁹. An earlier comment of the Midrash dealt with the perplexing language of one of the verses describing the creation of the world. At the very end of the process of creation, we are informed that G-d finished his work "on the seventh day," although we know that G-d also rested on that day. The Midrash offers a parable to explain: Imagine a carpenter slamming a hammer into a board, lifting his hammer and dropping it, lifting and dropping, over and over again. G-d's work before the seventh day is comparable to the lifting of the hammer, an active, purposeful movement; and his creation for the seventh day itself is compared to the passive, almost reflexive action of dropping the hammer.

The Beit HaLevi explains the relevance of this parable. On every day of the first six days, there was a totally new, publicly visible creation, comparable to the purposeful lifting of the hammer, the initiation of a new phase of movement. At the same time, however, there was another, less perceptible level of creation, the constant renewal of the previous day's creation; an accomplishment no less miraculous in essence but nonetheless one that goes unnoticed, similar to the carpenter's almost automatic dropping of the hammer. Thus, the relevance to Shabbat; on Shabbat, too, creation continued, but merely the renewal of creation, the subtle, imperceptible form.

Rav Goldvicht explained that this is the connection between Shabbat and teshuvah. Shabbat represents the subtle and imperceptible, the beneath the surface. Teshuvah is, in essence, a complete transformation of the soul; while externally, the body remains the same, and to the observer, there is no change, inwardly, a completely new human being is created. This total restructuring of the essence of a person is only attainable through the steady inculcation of spiritual values that comes with extended contact with Torah study.

The Talmud²⁰ states that Chilul Hashem, desecration of G-d's Name, is a crime so heinous that there can be no atonement for it in this world. Rabbenu Yonah, in his Sha'arei Teshuvah,²¹ offers one hope: extended involvement in Torah study. R. Yitzchak Hutner²² explains that when one desecrates G-d's Name, he lessens the severity with which he views his obligation in this world. Such a skewing of perspective can only be corrected by realigning one's sensitivities to the patterns of the Torah.

True ahavah, love, is limited by the mishnah in Pirkei Avot to an "ahavah she'ainah teluyah badavar", a love that is not connected to any factor. While this sounds beautiful, its logic is perplexing; one would think that every love is grounded in some quality or combination of qualities. The Yachin commentary explains that the love described in Pirkei Avot is an almost

¹⁹ See *Assufat Ma'arakhot, Bereishit*.1, pp. 55-59.

²⁰ *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

²¹ *Sha'ar* 4, #16.

²² *Pachad Yitzchak to Rosh HaShanah*, 30.

purely instinctual love, one that cannot be explained at all; it is similar to the love one would feel for a concept, or for an area of study.

To relate to Torah with such an ahavah is a truly laudable accomplishment. The Sochatchover Rebbe, the Avnei Nezer, in the famous introduction to his sefer Eglei Tal, wrote of those people who feel guilty when they feel joy in their Torah study, for they feel this detracts from the quality of the study for its own sake. The Avnei Nezer reassures these people that by no means should they feel guilty, for when one experiences true joy in his learning he has in actuality reached the highest level of “learning for its own sake.”

The aspiration, then, is to a sensitivity refined to the point where one feels an automatic identification, an instinctive love, with the values he encounters in his Torah study. The hope, then, is that teshuvah and talmud Torah will walk hand in hand, each enhancing the other and nourishing the other’s growth, providing the security of spiritual accomplishment as the impetus for a glorious future of ascendants on the ladder of spiritual and moral greatness.