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The Ten Days of Repentance by Rav Yair Kahn

Although the mitzva of teshuva (repentance) is of a universal nature, and therefore not limited to any specific time period, the ten days from Rosh Ha-shana until Yom Kippur are singled out as "days of repentance." In what way are these days unique with respect to teshuva?

The Rambam in Hilkhos Teshuva focuses his discussion on the general mitzva of repentance. Nevertheless, he relates to Asseret Yemei Teshuva in two separate contexts. In chapter 2 (halakha 6), the Rambam writes:

"Although teshuva and pleading are always effective, during the ten days from Rosh Ha-shana till Yom Kippur they are especially potent and are immediately accepted, as it says, 'Search for Hashem when He is present.'"

In chapter 3 (halakha 4) the Rambam states:

"Although blowing the shofar on Rosh Ha-shana is a divine decree, it contains a hidden message, namely: 'Slumberers, awake from your sleep ... inspect your actions and repent' ... For this reason it is the custom of the House of Israel to increase the amount and level of charity and good deeds and involvement in mitzvot from Rosh Ha-shana until Yom Kippur, beyond that of the rest of the year. And it is customary to arise at night during these ten days to pray in synagogues ... until daybreak."

These halakhot in the Rambam are perplexing insofar as he separated these two halakhot. Why did the Rambam not simply proceed after stating that teshuva is especially effective during Asseret Yemei Teshuva (ch. 2), and continue that the shofar contains a hidden message which relates specifically to this time frame (ch. 3)? After noting the unique quality of these ten days, in which Hashem is present and our teshuva is immediately accepted (ch. 2), there is an almost natural progression to the custom to increase the amount of good deeds and to recite selichot (ch. 3). From the order of these halakhot, one gets the clear impression that the Rambam intentionally separated these two accounts of "Aseret Yemei Teshuva." According to him, the two are unrelated, and refer to independent aspects of the connection between the ten days and repentance.

The answer, I believe, is related to the two independent obligations of teshuva delineated by Rav Soloveitchik zt"l. The first is the requirement to repent from a specific sin. In this case, it is the awareness of sin which generates the obligation of teshuva. This mitzva is described by the Rambam in the heading of Hilkhot Teshuva:

"The laws of teshuva [contain] one positive commandment, that a sinner should return from his iniquity to the presence of Hashem and confess."

This mitzva is derived from the verse in Bemidbar (5:6-7), "A man or woman who shall commit any sin ... they shall then confess the sin which they have committed ..."

There is, however, an additional mitzva of teshuva, which applies even in situations where one is unaware of having committed a sin. Despite the absence of awareness, an obligation of teshuva can be generated by suffering. This mitzva is derived from an independent source: "And if you go to war in your land against an enemy who oppresses you, then you shall blow an alarm with your trumpets" (Bemidbar 10:9). This verse is discussed by the Rambam in the heading of Hilkhot Ta'aniyot, where he describes the mitzva as one of petitioning to Hashem in times of distress and not merely sounding the trumpets: "The laws of fasts [contain] one positive biblical commandment, [namely,] to cry before Hashem in times of great communal distress ... and this is a method of teshuva ..." Fasting is merely a rabbinic expression of this biblical obligation (see 1:4). Furthermore, the Rambam notes that this relates not only to the community as a whole, but to individuals in times of adversity as well (1:9).

While with regard to the first type of teshuva, the specific sin is acknowledged, with regard to the second it is unknown. Therefore, the teshuva generated by calamity demands not confession but soul-searching. First the offense must be discovered, and only then is repentance possible. (See Rav Soloveitchik's essay "Kol Dodi Dofek," footnote 3.)

Let us now take a closer look at the context of the two halakhot we started with. The halakha which relates to the unique quality ensuring immediate acceptance of teshuva during Asseret Yemei Teshuva is found in the second chapter. This chapter begins with a description of complete teshuva, as opposed to teshuva which is wanting. The distinction revolves around the ability of the "ba'al teshuva" to control his desire and overcome his inclination to sin. The entire discussion clearly relates to a person acutely aware of a specific transgression. This individual finds himself in a state of conflict, struggling to conquer his unholy passion which led him to sin. Hence, the second chapter continues the theme of the first, and discusses teshuva which is generated by a specific sin. Within this context, the Rambam introduces Asseret Yemei Teshuva as containing a unique quality which helps to ensure victory in this monumental contest. "Dirshu Hashem be-himatz'o" - seek out Hashem when He is present. During these ten days Hashem is present, as it were, assisting man in his struggle.

In the third chapter, the Rambam abandons the discussion of man confronting a specific transgression, and begins a discourse on the assessment of man's overall standing. Who is a "tzaddik," a "rasha," a "beinoni" (righteous, evil, and middling person)? He then proceeds to apply similar criteria with respect to states, and indeed to the entire world. In the third halakha, the Rambam writes: "Just as man's deeds and sins are assessed when he dies, so too on every year they are weighed on Rosh Ha-shana. Whoever is found to be a 'tzaddik' is sealed for life. Whoever is discovered to be a 'rasha' is sealed for death. The 'beinoni' waits until Yom Kippur. If he repents, he is sealed for life, and if not, he is sealed for death."

Within this context, the Rambam notes the hidden message of the shofar: "Slumberers, awake from your sleep ... inspect your actions and repent ..." And at this point, he introduces once again the Asseret Yemei Teshuva: "For this reason it is the custom of the House of Israel to increase the amount and level of charity and good deeds and involvement in mitzvot from Rosh Ha-shana until Yom Kippur, beyond that of the rest of the year. And it is customary to arise at night during these ten days to pray in synagogues ... until daybreak."

By now it should be clear that the message of the shofar is inapplicable to the second chapter. The shofar is not sounded to aid the sinner in his epic struggle against a specific transgression. Rather, it sounds the alarm to awaken the slumberers who are not even aware of the negative turn that they have taken in life. It comes to warn everyone that the day of judgment has arrived, in which man must account for his actions; his deeds are being weighed and his life assessed. The shofar here plays a similar role to the trumpets sounded in times of crisis, urging man to search his soul and inspect his life. The focus here is not on the first type of teshuva, where man is

acutely aware of his sin. Rather, the reference is to the second type of teshuva, in which man is called upon to probe his innermost self. The obligation of teshuva is generated not by an awareness of a specific sin, but by Rosh Ha-shana as the "Day of Judgment."

From this perspective, the Asseret Yemei Teshuva are days on which we are called upon to awake and mend the entire direction of our lives. Accordingly, the custom developed to increase the amount and level and good deeds during this period. We wake up at night and recite selichot and petition to Hashem, similar to fast days. And the ten day period is spent in soul-searching, "cheshbon ha-nefesh."

Thus, we enter Yom Kippur, which is the culmination of Asseret Yemei Teshuva. Optimally, we have fulfilled both obligations connected with teshuva - the one generated by the judgment, as well as that generated by sin. We have been awakened in order to improve the direction of our lives, and we have been afforded the opportunity of overcoming our passions and lusts, which hold us prisoner during the course of the year. May we all be blessed with a "gemar chatima tova."

TABC Kol Torah
Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Chanah the Revolutionary and Our New Year by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Volume 25, Halachah (2013/5774)

The Haftarah for the first day of Rosh HaShanah describes the birth of Shmuel to Elkanah and his wife Chanah, who had been childless for many years (Shmuel I Perek 1). This parallels the story discussed in the day's Torah reading, about Sarah giving birth to Yitzchak after many years of childlessness. Chazal (Megillah 31a) teach that these readings are chosen since both Sarah and Chanah (as well as Rachel) conceived on Rosh HaShanah (Rosh HaShanah 11a).

During one of her annual pilgrimages to Shiloh, the site of the Mishkan, Chanah tearfully and quietly davened to Hashem to bless her with a son, promising to dedicate him to His service. Eli the Kohein Gadol saw her whispering, and berated her, thinking that she was a drunkard. After hearing Chanah's explanation, that she had been whispering in prayer, Eli blessed her that Hashem should grant her request.

Chana conceived and gave birth to a son whom she called Shmuel. Once the child was weaned, she brought him to Shiloh and entrusted him to the care of Eli.

The Haftarah ends with Chanah's prayer, wherein she thanks Hashem for granting her wish, extols His greatness, exhorts the people not to be haughty or arrogant, and prophesies regarding the Messianic redemption (the beginning of Shmuel I Perek 2).

Chanah the Revolutionary

Most regard this story as a pleasant story about a pleasant woman who achieved her lifelong aspiration through heartfelt

prayer, making it appropriate reading for Rosh HaShanah when we pour out our hearts to Hashem in Tefilah. However, I suggest that Chanah should be viewed as a revolutionary figure who, with subtlety, transforms not only her life but the life of her nation with her Tefilah and vision. I seek to uncover eight manners in which the mild-mannered and modest Chanah acts as nothing less than a revolutionary. I acknowledge the debt owed to the Da'at Mikra commentary to Sefer Shmuel, my congregants at Congregation Sha'arei Orah (the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck), and my students at Torah Academy of Bergen County, who shared their insights that help me formulate this essay.

At the outset of the story we find Chanah dissatisfied with the status quo of infertility, unlike her husband who attempts to convince her to be content with life as is (Pesukim 7-8). Chanah's dissatisfaction with her own less than ideal life reflects her discontent with the current situation of the Jewish People. The Jewish People live in Eretz Yisrael but must bow to the rule of the powerful Pelishtim, the Mishkan is managed by the two corrupt sons of Eli, Chofni and Pinchas, and the Jewish People have no central leader to prod the Jewish People to attempt to improve their lot. Elkanah's passive acceptance of the less than satisfactory personal situation reflects his and most of nation's complacency with and unwillingness to confront the serious problems facing them.

New Religious Models for Tefillah, Nezirut and Challenging the Kohein Gadol

Before Chanah we find instances of people in Tanach either praying to Hashem in times of difficulty or uttering Nedarim to Hashem promising improved behavior should Hashem rescue them from their predicament. Chanah is the first to combine the two by praying and making an oath to dedicate the child to Hashem. Nedarim and Tefilah each have spiritual advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, when making a Neder, one does offer something to Hashem; however, one treats Hashem as an "equal" in a certain sense, since one may be seen as striking a "deal" with God. Tefilah, by contrast, does not offer Hashem anything but does express our recognition of Hashem as our superior. Recognizing this reality, Chanah introduces a combination of Neder-Tefilah so as to marshal the advantages of both.

This revolution in Tefilah stands in addition to the well-known change of Chanah introducing silent Tefilah[1]. Additionally, Chanah did not cower under Eli's misguided criticism. Instead, she respectfully but firmly rejected his suspicions (and may have offered some implicit criticism of Eli as well (see Berachot 31b)).

Similarly, conventional Nezirut involves the Nazir refraining from grape products, contact with dead bodies, and cutting of hair. Chanah, however, promises that she will be given a child, the child will be dedicated to Hashem, and his hair will not be

cut (Pasuk 11). Chazal conclude (Nazir 9:5) that Shmuel was a Nazir; however, he was classified a unique Nazir, one whose restrictions apply only to haircutting. This is typical behavior for Chanah – out of the box, unconventional, and breaking new ground.

The Implementation of Chanah's Promise

Pesukim 21-23 present a conflict between Chanah and Elkanah regarding the implementation of the Neder after Hashem granted Chanah her greatest wish. Elkanah thought the baby should be brought to the Mishkan immediately as he interpreted Chanah's promise to dedicate the child for his entire life in a narrow and literal manner. Chanah, of course, was willing to think out of the box and interpret the promise in a more flexible and reasonable manner, to apply only after the child has been weaned.

After Shmuel's birth, (Pesukim 25-28) Chanah again had to politely but firmly insist on Shmuel's place in the Mishkan, over Eli's objections (the objection may have possibly stemmed from the fact that Shmuel was not a Kohein).

Chanah's Thank You Tefillah

Chanah's revolutionary side finds its greatest expression in her thank you Tefilah of Perek 2. She speaks of kings of Israel and she speaks of the defeat of enemy armies. Many are bothered: How are an anointed king and a victorious army at all relevant in a Tefilah that appears to serve simply as a thank you to Hashem for granting Chanah a child?

One answer given is that in addition to praising Hashem, Chanah posits a new vision for the Jewish people. Chanah couples her personal redemption with the redemption of the Jews of her time. She articulates a vision of an anointed one (2:10), asking at a time when the Jews had been without a king for more than 300 years. This vision was realized, as her son anointed two kings of Israel, Shaul HaMelech and David HaMelech.

The vision of military victories is also part of Chanah's vision for the future. She foresees the Jews freeing themselves from Pelishti rule, a persistent problem during the events described later in Sefer Shmuel I. Indeed, Shmuel initiated the movement to free us from the Pelishtim in Perek 7 and the two kings he anointed placed removing the Pelishtim as a high priority (see Shmuel I 14:52 and Shmuel II Perakim 5 and 6). Shmuel and his two kings brought about the transition from the Mishkan to the Beit HaMikdash and the introduction of successful kingdoms in Israel. However, Shmuel and his two protégés were merely implementing the vision articulated by Chanah, Shmuel's mother.

While others were content with the status quo, Chanah saw that things could be better for herself and for her people. With that, we can conclude, as does the Da'at Mikra to Sefer Shmuel, that Chanah drafts and presents the blueprint for all that occurs Sefer Shmuel already in the first chapter (and

somewhat in the beginning of the second chapter as well). While Shmuel, David, and even Shaul deserve great accolades for their accomplishments, it all began with Chanah's vision.

Implications for Rosh HaShanah

Viewed from this perspective, Chanah serves as a role model for the type of introspection that is appropriate for Rosh HaShanah. We should not be satisfied with that which is less than ideal in our individual and communal lives. We should identify that which needs improvement and formulate a plan as to how we will go about planning how we are to improve in the coming year.

Our improved lives over the next year must begin with a vision. That vision should be developed on Rosh HaShanah in the same manner in which Chanah developed a vision for the Jewish People's future at the beginning of Sefer Shmuel. New paradigms should be willing to be considered as we begin to reinvent ourselves on Rosh HaShanah in the same manner as Chanah reinvented the Jewish People with her willingness to break free from the status quo.

Conclusion

It is most interesting that while men brought about the great changes of Sefer Shmuel, the move from Shofetim to kings, Mishkan to the beginning of the Mikdash, and corrupt rule to righteous leadership, a modest woman was the mastermind of this entire enterprise. Chanah, in her subtle, motherly, and feminine manner was the true revolutionary that freed us from the self-imposed shackles imposed by people with limited vision for their families and the Jewish People. May we all merit to be freed from the shackles and barriers that prevent our spiritual growth.

[1] Chanah was, observe Chazal (Berachot 31b), the first to address Hashem as Tzevakot (see Pasuks 11).

Kol Torah Articles

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah - Is Rosh Hashanah on the wrong day?

\21 September 2022

Do we celebrate Rosh Hashanah on the right day?

In our davening on the New Year we proclaim, "HaYom harat olam!" – "This is the day on which Hashem created the world!"

Similarly in our davening we say,

"Zeh hayom techilat maasecha." – "This is the day on which You commenced Your creativity Hashem,"

"Zikaron leyom rishon." – "The anniversary of day one."

But is that correct? Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the creation of the first human being which was day six of Creation. It all actually started on the 25th of Elul!

One of the privileges that I have as Chief Rabbi is to officiate at significant anniversary events. There have been so many occasions on which I've celebrated the anniversary of a shul building with communities. I've never so far officiated at the anniversary of the laying of a foundation or the completion or even the furnishing of an edifice. It's always been the anniversary of the first occasion on which the building was used for a purpose.

Surely this is exactly what we celebrate on Rosh Hashanah! It is the anniversary of the first occasion on which human beings used what Hashem had created in this world in a constructive and productive way.

Rosh Hashanah is therefore most certainly celebrated on the right date, recognising what humankind has achieved from the moment we were given the opportunity to do so.

In similar fashion, over these high Holy Days, let us reflect on the past year. To what degree have we utilised the opportunities that Hashem has given us? In what respects have we allowed missed opportunities to occur? This should inspire us to guarantee that during the forthcoming year 5783, we will take advantage of everything that Hashem has created in this world, so that we as individuals, families, communities and a nation will ensure that we make the very best of this year for all of humankind.

I wish you all a shana tova – a happy and wonderful new year. Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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Rosh Hashana Insights

Rabbi Etan Schnall

Rebbe, Stone Beit Midrash Program

ARE WE JUDGED TWICE? NEW FRUITS, NEW SUITS AND AN INTRODUCTION TO MASECHET BEITZA

Dating back to yetzias Mitzraim, the Jewish people relied on kiddush hachodesh al pi hare'iah (establishing a new month based on testimony) to determine the beginning of each lunar month and the start of holidays observed in that month.

Individuals would come before beis din to testify that a new moon appeared. If their testimonies were verified, Rosh Chodesh would be declared. This declaration established that the previous month extended for 29 days, and that the day of the testimony, the thirtieth day, would be the first of the new month. Occasionally, if the new moon was not visible or testimony could not be entered in time, this thirtieth day would remain the final day of the previous month, and day 31 served as day one of the following month.¹

In this instance, a holiday occurring in the new month began one day later than otherwise. When the Jews settled Eretz

Yisrael and the population decentralized, word of the new month had to be shared with distant communities through various means. Ultimately, messengers were employed to announce the dates of Rosh Chodesh and holidays.² However, messengers could not always arrive in time for an upcoming holiday. Therefore, certain distant populations observed two days of Yom Tov: the first day, in case Rosh Chodesh was declared on day 30, and the second day in case Rosh Chodesh was declared on day 31. As a result, remote communities would not inadvertently violate any prohibited activity such as performance of melacha on Yom Tov or consumption of chametz on Pesach. This system remained in use through the days of Abayei and Rava,³ several hundred years into the Common Era, when our long-term calendar was fixed by Hillel.⁴ At that point, Rosh Chodesh and holidays were no longer subject to doubt, and distant localities had no need to rely on messengers. Nonetheless, the sages foresaw that the challenges and persecutions of Diaspora could result in communities losing track of the Jewish calendar. Thus, they instructed the Jews outside of Eretz Yisrael,⁵ the predominant dependents on the messengers, to always observe two days of Yom Tov as a precaution.⁶

Indeed, history has shown that during certain times of persecution, some Jews had but the moon (or less) to rely upon to keep track of the calendar.⁷

Most parts of Eretz Yisrael observed only one day of Yom Tov, and so Chazal instructed Jews in these areas to continue that practice. The obvious exception to the above is Rosh Hashana, which is observed universally for two days.

Rosh Hashana coincides with Rosh Chodesh Tishrei, and so as soon as Tishrei is declared, Rosh Hashana begins. When kiddush hachodesh was based on witnesses, even cities in Eretz Yisrael could not immediately know that Rosh Hashana began for some time until messengers arrived. Perhaps this explains why cities distant from the Sanhedrin observed two days of Rosh Hashana — but why is it that even in Yerushalayim, the seat of the beis din, Rosh Hashana is observed for two days even now? In Yerushalayim, there could never be a doubt as to the date of Rosh Hashana. As discussed, witnesses would come to testify that they saw the new moon on the evening before, the evening of the thirtieth day. In the case of Tishrei, this meant that retroactively, Rosh Hashana had begun the night before. As a result, even in Yerushalayim, because of this possibility, no melacha would be done from the previous evening, in case it would be declared Rosh Hashana. Kiddush hachodesh was also critical to assign the appropriate service performed in the Beis HaMikdash in the event that it was a holiday. At some point, if witnesses arrived late and the weekday service was performed, it could not be reversed. Therefore, a deadline was imposed at which point testimony was no longer accepted, automatically making the following day the first of Tishrei. Because most of

the day had already been treated as a possible Yom Tov, it was completed as such. Essentially, the result was 48 hours of Rosh Hashana, even though the primary observance was technically only the final 24 hours. Because even at the Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim, Rosh Hashana could be observed as two days, and certainly elsewhere, it remains celebrated today in the same fashion.⁸

Why Are These Two Days Different Than All Other Two Days?

“Shehechyanu,” the bracha of “zman,” is recited on each Yom Tov to recognize the arrival of a unique holiness, or kedushas hayom. Interestingly, we recite this bracha on each Yom Tov Sheni, as well, although we have recognized the arrival of the same kedushas hayom on Yom Tov Rishon. Rishonim explain that Yom Tov Sheni is generally viewed as distinct from Yom Tov Rishon because it emerged from a doubt as to which one day, and only one day, was the holiday. One opinion in the Gemara actually holds that havdala be recited between these two days.⁹ In any event, they are seen as unique kedushos hayom and each warrants a new bracha.¹⁰

On the other hand, it could be known which day was Rosh Hashana, even when two days were observed. The deadline for testimony established a two-day continuum of Rosh Hashana — definitely, without any associated doubts.¹¹

This extended kedushas hayom (mi'dirabanan) begins at the conclusion of Elul. The term “yoma arichta” [long day] has been applied to Rosh Hashana to denote this fundamental difference. Some even suggest that Shehechyanu be omitted on the second day of Rosh Hashana because both days are a single unit.¹²

The accepted position is to recite the bracha nonetheless; one reason is that even during the times of the Sanhedrin, the second day of Rosh Hashana was established as the first of Tishrei and the basis for all subsequent holidays.¹³

However, in deference to the opinion that Rosh Hashana's status as yoma arichta does not warrant a new Shehechyanu, our practice is to place a new fruit on the table during Kiddush that would obligate us to recite the bracha regardless.

Alternatively, we may don a new suit or piece of jewelry that would normally warrant a Shehechyanu.¹⁴

One Long Day or Two?

Whether two days of Yom Tov are viewed as one or two kedushos carries several practical implications.¹⁵

The Gemara in Meseches Beitza teaches that an egg that was laid on Yom Tov following Shabbos may not be eaten, because the principle of hachana D'Rabba requires food items to be designated as edible foodstuff while still a weekday. In this case, the egg was not fully formed until Shabbos and so it remains prohibited when laid on Yom Tov.¹⁶ If the egg was laid on Yom Tov Sheni, it is permitted: If Yom Tov Sheni is the actual day of Yom Tov, the egg was fully formed on a

weekday. Alternatively, Yom Tov Rishon was the actual day of Yom Tov and no new limitations of hachana apply. However, this logic cannot be applied to Rosh Hashana. The two days of Rosh Hashana are yoma arichta, and we may not bifurcate them. An egg laid on Rosh Hashana is treated as if laid during a 48-hour continuum of Yom Tov, and is prohibited under hachana D'Rabba.¹⁷ Another example: Rav Chisda is of the opinion that on a Torah level, one may cook on Friday that is Yom Tov for the purpose of Shabbos, because a Yom Tov leading into Shabbos forms a kedusha achas continuum (rabbinically, we require an eruv tavshilin in this case).¹⁸

On the other hand, because Yom Tov Rishon is distinct from Yom Tov Sheni, as if they are independent holidays, we cannot prepare from one to the next. Even when no melacha is involved it is prohibited as tircha shelo l'tzorech (effort unnecessary for the day).¹⁹

Should we surmise that as a result, the yoma arichta status of Rosh Hashana allows us to prepare from one day to the next? This suggestion is rejected because most rishonim only accept the notion of yoma arichta when it produces a stringency.²⁰

Across Hilchos Shabbos and Yom Tov, Halacha views the starting point of the day as the critical juncture at which their respective laws set in.²¹ Therefore, Halachic factors that are in place when the day begins will continue as long as the kedusha persists.²² For example, although the prohibition of refuah (taking medication) applies to Yom Tov just as on Shabbat,²³

Chazal relaxed this restriction for Yom Tov Sheni. However, this leniency does not apply to Rosh Hashana; the second day is a continuation of the first, and so the prohibition that sets in when Rosh Hashana begins must extend until its conclusion, when the kedushas hayom ceases. We generally cannot introduce a change in the laws unless the two days are shtei kedushot.²⁴

Why reject a leniency due to yoma arichta? Even though Rosh Hashana would sometimes be observed as a single day, that did not necessarily happen. Very often, the witnesses would present early and only the first day would be treated as holy.²⁵

Furthermore, perhaps the unique status we have attributed to Rosh Hashana was only relevant at the time when kiddush hachodesh al pi hareiah was operative. Nowadays, it is certainly possible that Rosh Hashana could revert to a status of shtei kedushos, following the pattern of all other Yomim Tovim.²⁶

In summary, it is questionable how far to extend the yoma arichta designation.

Two Days of Judgement

Our discussion has revolved around the need and nature of a two-day Rosh Hashana. But the unique quality of Rosh Hashana is Yom HaDin, a day of judgement. We can understand blowing shofar each day if both days must be observed, but our tefillos also fervently reflect a repeat of divine judgement.²⁷

How can this be? Our practice of wishing friends and family an inscription in the Book of Life is discontinued at midday of Rosh Hashana, when judgement is complete. Nevertheless, Taz writes that we resume on the second night of Rosh Hashana.²⁸ Can there be two days of judgment?

Indeed, the Zohar²⁹ explains that the Divine Judgement is repeated because it is incomplete after day one. One explanation of this is as follows. The first day of judgement focuses entirely on the individual: reward and punishment befitting that person and his or her actions in the previous year. The second day, however, uses a wider-angle lens to see this person's judgement in the broader context of friends, dependents, and others in his or her environment. Unlike human judges, God's infinite wisdom includes endless calculations that determine how one person's destiny may impact negatively on someone who is undeserving. And so, even if the individual may not deserve it on his or her own, Heavenly mercy will be extended for the benefit of someone else. Perhaps a person did not merit a favorable *parnasa* for the year, but for the sake of that person's child, who is deserving, the funds will be granted. Perhaps one is deserving of certain suffering, G-d forbid; this may be averted if it would cause undue pain for a relative.³⁰

Broadly, this aspect of Divine providence is intimately linked to reward and punishment. A fascinating example of this is found in the writings of the Sfas Emes.³¹ The Gemara³² explains the advice of Mishlei to mean, "If a man should have a worry, he should share it with another." This is commonly associated with the psychological benefits of unburdening oneself. However, Chidushei HaRim explains that we would assume that we would share our stress with a confidante, an empathetic friend. Naturally, the friend would feel the pain personally. Heaven, assessing the resulting undeserved suffering of the friend, mercifully removes the suffering from both people.³³ This is the "yashrus" and perfection of Divine judgement. It is this type of judgement that Hashem utilizes on the second day of Rosh Hashana. Rav Yisrael Salanter explains that this kindness of Hashem in *din* is the meaning of Moshe Rabbeinu's praise, "Kel emunah v'ain avel, tzadik v'yashar Hu" — A faithful G-d, never false, True and upright is He.³⁴ To say that Hashem exhibits no iniquity is hardly a compliment. Rather, it refers to the infinite calculations employed when He examines the broad-ranging impact of judgement so that not even the smallest aspects of *din* could be perceived as injustice.³⁵

This also highlights a new dimension of the interconnectedness of each member of *klal Yisrael*: *mi k'amcha Yisrael, goy echad b'aretz* — Who is like you, Israel? A unique (and unified) nation on earth³⁶ The *achdus* or unity that we strive to achieve in relationships with others is not merely a goal; in this respect, it is already a reality that exists. The goal is to tap into that

achdus by making our lives more meaningful in the lives of others. The more that our behavior benefits someone else — emotionally, financially or otherwise — the more that our judgement extends beyond day one and reaches day two of Rosh Hashana.

We often underestimate or underappreciate the potential positive impact of our actions. For example, we often measure our presence in *shul* on a personal barometer, accruing the merit of *tefilla b'tzibur*. Rav Soloveitchik noted that we must also recognize how much that presence can propel and improve the *tefillas* of other members of the *tzibbur*, just as each and every instrument, even the smallest, completes the symphony orchestra. The same can be said of our consistent attendance and study in a *yeshiva* or community *beis medrash*.³⁷

The Zohar's insight into the two days and two judgements of Rosh Hashana adds new dimensions to this interconnection and *achdus*. Yes, there are two days of judgement. The more that we make a difference to others, the more Hashem sees our futures and our destinies inextricably linked to those of others. It matters *bein adam l'makom* when we matter *bein adam l'chaveiro*. That this aspect of judgement is so critical as to be highlighted on Rosh Hashana, the day of man's creation, brings new depth to the mantra of Rav Chaim of Volozhin, "Man was not created for himself; only to provide for others with any powers that he can muster."³⁸ Endnotes 1. Rosh Hashana 25b. 2. Rosh Hashana 18a. 3. Mishneh Torah, Kiddush HaChodesh 5:3. 4. See Ramban in Sefer HaZechut, Perek HaSholaiach and Sefer HaChinuch 4. 5. See Ritva Rosh Hashana 18a. See also Mishneh Torah, Kiddush HaChodesh 5:12. 6. Beitza 4b. 7. See: Rosen, Alan. *The Holocaust's Jewish Calendars: Keeping Time Sacred, Making Time Holy*. Indiana University Press, 2019. See also Matnas Chaim, Shabbos/Rosh Chodesh, pg. 212. 8. Beitza 4b-5a and Rashi; see also Mishneh Torah, Kiddush HaChodesh 5:8. 9. See Rashba Beitza 4b that we do not fundamentally reject this position. We do not follow it simply because it could cause a laxity in attitude toward Yom Tov Sheni. See also Meiri *ibid.* and Tzlach. 10. Another consideration is the desire to reinforce the gravity of Yom Tov Sheni; we repeat all blessings whenever relevant so that the second day is observed as seriously as the first, even though it emerges from a doubt (see Shabbos 23a and Sha'ar HaTziun 473:3). 11. See Ran and Ritva, Beitza 4b. 12. Tosfos (Sukka 44b) even suggest that for this reason, there is no question as to how we may recite a *bracha* on blowing the *shofar* on the second day of Rosh Hashana (unlike *brachos* on Yom Tov Sheni of other holidays that require explanation). See also Ran (*ibid.* 22a, Dapei HaRif). 13. See Beis Yosef O.C. 601. 14. This also relates to the suggestion of *achronim* to have the one blowing the *Shofar* wear a new suit on the second day when *Shehechyanu* is repeated, as well (Magen Avraham 600:3, Mishna Berura 600:7). It should be noted, however, that

contemporary poskim question the general practice of reciting Shehechyanu on fruits nowadays when such items are more readily available throughout the year. Rav Soloveitchik also questioned if it is appropriate nowadays to recite the bracha on a new suit (see forthcoming Batei Yosef, Yomim Noraim). 15 . See Aruch HaShulchan 600:3. See also Shut Hisorres L'Teshuva 2:120 regarding Yom Tov Sheni and panim chadashos for sheva berachos. 16 . Beitza 2a-3a; Mishna Berura 322:1; Shaar Hatziun 503:3. The Mishna teaches that an egg laid on a Yom Tov that does not follow Shabbat is also prohibited to avoid permitting the current case; Mishna Berura 513:1. 17 . Beitza 4a-4b; Mishna Berura 513:13,14. 18 . Pesachim 46a, Rashi ibid. 19 . Mishna Berura 503:1; 667:5. 20 . See Ra'avad Hilchos Eruvin 8:8; Magen Avraham 503:1. See also Biur HaGra and Biur Halacha (ibid.) and Keren Orah, Eruvin 39a, discussing if the Rambam disagrees and allows for leniencies as well, or only in unique contexts (see footnote at conclusion of this section). 21 . Rather than understand the "chalos" [onset] of kedushat hayom as perpetually renewed at every moment of Shabbat or Yom Tov, the halachot are determined by their application at the beginning (see Kovetz Shiurim, Beitza 18). 22 . See, for example, regarding muktza: Mishna Berura 667:2. Regarding eruvim, see Shulchan Aruch 516:2. See also Eretz HaTzvi chaps. 7, 9. 23 . Beitza 22a; Shulchan Aruch O.C. 496:2. 24 . See, however, Magen Avraham 516:1 for possible exceptions. 25 . See Biur HaGra O.C. 503. 26 . Rashba Beitza 5b s.v. Kasav. See also Rosh, Rosh Hashana 4:14 quoting Shut Rashi, Tosfos Rid Eruvin 39a, Meiri Beitza 4a, Shulchan Aruch HaRav, O.C. 503:3, Mishna Berura 501:34, Shut Avnei Nezer O.C. 451:1-11 and Igros HaGrid HaLevi, Hilchos Eruvin. 27 . See Shulchan Aruch O.C. 591:8. See also Mateh Ephraim 583:2 regarding eating of the simanim on the second night of Rosh Hashana, as well. 28 . See Mishna Berura 582:25. 29 . Pinchas, pg. 231. 30 . Kuntres Eitzos L'Zakos B'Yom HaDin (Rav Chanoch Karelstein), pp. 45-46 [cf. Michtav M'Eliyahu 2:74, where Rav Dessler explains that in the times of kiddush hachodesh al pi hare'iah, Providence would orchestrate the timing of the arrival of witnesses depending on whether the entire Jewish people were more in need of one or two judgements on Rosh Hashana]. 31 . Likutei Yehuda, Mishlei 12:25. 32 . Second interpretation, Yoma 75a. 33 . See also Agra D'Pirka 114. 34 . Devarim 32:4. 35 . Lev Eliyahu, Ma'arachos HaTeshuva (5), vol. 3 pg. 296. 36 . See Shmuel II, 7:23. 37 . Divrei Harav, pg. 149. 38 . Cited by his son, Rav Yitzchok of Volozhin in the introduction to Nefesh HaChaim.

From: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>
subject: **Rabbi Reisman's Chumash and Rosh Hashana Shiurim**

Topic – A Thought on the Upcoming Yomim Noraim I would like to share with you a thought as we try to have a focus as we go towards Rosh Hashana. We live for many of us in the most turbulent period of our lives. We are post Holocaust people and we are living through certainly the most turbulent year and a half that we have ever lived through. I would like to tell you something that I saw from Rav Yaakov. This is in the Emes L'yaakov on Nach Cheilek Beis, (so far only Cheilek Beis has been published before Cheilek Aleph) and there on page Kuf Pei Bais Rav Yaakov records the Hespel that he said in 1934 after the passing of the Chofetz Chaim. He says the following. We know that the Chofetz Chaim did a lot with an eye towards Moshiach. Many of his Seforim focused on Moshiach, the Kolel Kodshim was on Moshiach, he mentions the Sefer Likutai Halachos which deal with Halachos when Moshiach comes, even the Sefer Shemiras Halashon he speaks constantly about how Shemira from Lashon Hora brings Moshiach closer. That that the Chofetz Chaim focused about Moshiach Poshut Pshat the simple idea is because we want Moshiach to come. We want to have Zechusim so that Moshiach should come. That is certainly true. Rav Yaakov in his Hespel added something to that. He said something else. He said the Chofetz Chaim cared about the Jewish people and wanted them to be Zoche to be righteous to behave correctly in the demand of Hashem. Tzipisa L'yeshua. That you should live a life hoping for the Yeshua. Whether Moshiach comes now or doesn't come now, whether he comes soon or he doesn't come soon I don't know, but one thing I know, that every Yid is supposed to be Metzapeh, is supposed to have a strong desire for Moshiach coming. Then Rav Yaakov in recording his Hespel said that the purpose of the Chofetz Chaim was to show that everything about Moshiach is L'mayseh. He commanded them to learn Kodshim. Why? Because he wanted by Klal Yisrael that Klal Yisrael should be a people that are Metzapeh L'yeshua, that want Moshiach to come. Interesting, he adds that he writes my good friend Rav Dovid Leibowitz (1887 - 1941) who was a nephew of the Chofetz Chaim, he went to the Kollel Kovno. The Kollel Kovno was the premier Kollel in Klal Yisrael. The Kollel Kovno, Rav Yaakov was there. It was a Kollel where you went for 5 years and then you had to go out and find a Shteller. That was the way the Kollel worked in Kovno. Rav Dovid Leibowitz took leave of his uncle the Chofetz Chaim and left Radin to go to Lithuania to go to Kollel Kovno. Radin of course was in Poland. The Chofetz Chaim said to Rav Dovid Leibowitz you are a Kohen, you have to stay here to learn Kodshim. To that, Rav Dovid Leibowitz replied I have to learn Hilchos Shabbos. When Moshiach comes you have to know how to bring a Chatos so you have to know Kodshim. But you have to know is this Chillul Shabbos Mechayeiv a Korban Chatas. Is this type of Chillul Shabbos obligate a person in bringing a Chatas. I am also preparing for Moshiach because I

am going to learn Dinai Shabbos. To that the Chofetz Chaim replied as Rav Yaakov quotes it Al Zeh Yeish K'var Mishna Brura. On that I already wrote a Mishna Brura. Fascinating. Rav Yaakov says that the Chofetz Chaim in Mishna Brura very often and in the Emes L'yaakov there is a long list, very often Paskens if something is D'oraissa or it is D'rabbanan. What is the difference? Nowadays we keep D'rabbans and we keep D'oraissas. The Chofetz Chaim wanted to put into the Mishna Brura already the Halachos to know if you are Chayuv to bring a Chatas, only on an Issur D'oraissa do you bring a Chatas. At any rate, the point that Rav Yaakov makes here that was a Chiddush to me, I understood that the Chofetz Chaim was teaching Kodshim and talking about Moshiach in order to make Zechusim that Moshiach should come and that is true, but the Chofetz Chaim had another desire, that people should be Metzapeh L'yeshua, that people should desire that Moshiach should come. Rav Yaakov writes that the Chofetz Chaim felt that the Emunah in Moshiach was weakened, and therefore, he wanted to show Klal Yisrael. As we go in these turbulent times towards Tefillos which focus primarily on Malchus Shamayim, we should have this Tafkid, this idea, this purpose that we should be Metzapeh L'yeshua. As the Rambam says for Kevod Shamayim and that is something to focus on in our Davening. I would add to you that the second paragraph of Aleinu (ועל כן) if you are Askenaz it is (ועל כן בקנה לה) without the Vav. (ועל כן בקנה לה ר' אלקינו לראות מהרה בתפארת עוננו). It is a beautiful paragraph. Guess what? It talks about Moshiach's coming. (בקנה לה) we hope for Bi'as Moshiach. Say the second paragraph of Aleinu a bit slower. Say it with the old Yeshiva chant that you used to say it with in grade school. Of course you are not going to have enough time because in Shul they don't say Aleinu with enough time to actually say (ועל כן בקנה לה) properly. Okay, you will have to take an extra couple of minutes. Say it and be Metzapeh L'yeshua. We should be Zoche that if not Taf Shin Pei Aleph at least Taf Shin Pei Beis should be a Shana of the Geulah Sh'leima. A Gutten Shabbos, a Kesiva V'chasima Tovah to one and all and I ask you Mechila for the weeks that I was not prompt or I was not at all on the phone at this hour. I B'li Neder will try not to miss in the future. Kol Tuv! A Gutten Shabbos and a Gut Yar!

5768

Rabbi Reisman - Aseres Y'mai Teshuvah 5769

1) There is a Gemarah in Maseches Kedushin, which says when one does an Aveirah year in and year out, it is Naaseh Loi K'heter. It becomes like it is mutar to him. In the Divrei Yoel, he brings down from a Zaidah of his, that when a person does Teshuvah, it only has to be done on the Aveiros that you get used to, the first 2 - 3 times you did it. After those first times that you committed that Aveirah, it is considered doing the Aveirah, B'oines. That is the P'shat in Piskei Lanu al Avoinois

Rishoinim. Hashem should forgive those Aveiros, because after that we are Anusim.

The Noda B'Yehuda has a Teshuvah in Cheilek Aleph, Teshuvah Lamed Hai. He says if a Nazir drinks wine 5 times, you think he wouldn't get Malkus for the fifth time? He says it is not emes that it is an oines.

The Hamakneh in Maseches Kedushin, says that when a person gets used to doing an Aveirah, it is worse, because he knows it is an Aveirah, and he thinks there is nothing wrong in doing it.

The Meshech Chochmoh, in Parshas Vayikra, 5:11 יא ואם לא תשיג ידו לשמי תרים, או לשני בני-יונה--והביא את-קרבנו אשר קטא עשירת האפה סלת, לחטאת; לא-ישם עליה שמן, ולא-יתן עליה לבנה--כי חטאת, הוא disagrees. He says, the later Aveiros that are Naaseh Loi K'heter, are not as Chomer. For example, a person who misses B'rochos by Shacharis every morning, he is most probably missing his 90 Amens a day. Where does he start Teshuvah, should he start working on an Aveirah that is Naaseh Loi K'heter, or an Aveirah that he struggling with?

This connects to a sugya we had in the Yeshivishe Masechtos. There is a concept of Tichilsoi B'pshia V'soifoi B'oines. A person started by doing something wrong, he was a Pshia and he ended up being an Oines.

The sugya is in Maseches Bava Kama, Daf Chof Gimel and is in many different places in Shas. The easiest place that this is applied, is in a case where a person misses a Shemoneh Esrei, we know that you have Tashlumin, you can do 2 Shemoneh Esreis the next time. For example, if you miss Shacharis, you make up with 2 Minchas. That works only if you are an Oines. If you are a Poishaiah, you can not make it up. What about a case where someone could have davened, but he was doing something else at the time. Later, when it is the last moments to daven, he is an Onus, for example, he was on an Hatzolah call. It is Techilsoi B'pshia V'soifoi B'oines. Is there Tashlumin?

This shaila is found in numerous places, Oirech Chaim, Yoreh Daiah, Even Ezer, and Choishen Mishpot. In Yoreh Daiah in Siman Raish Lamed Bais, Seif Yud Bais, the Ramoh brings that it is a Macloikes Rishonim. The case there is that a person makes a Neder that he will do something and if he doesn't do it he gets a K'nas. He gave himself a week to do it, the first 6 days he was a Poishaiah, and the 7th day, something came up and he was an Oines.

The Ramoh brings a machloikes, the Rav and the Aguda. The Rav says you are an Oines, and the Aguda says Poishaiah. The K'tzois, Nesivos, Choishen Mishpot in Siman Nun Hei, Magen Avrohom in Siman Kuf Ches, Seif Koton Yud Aleph, they all jump on this sugya of Tichilsoi B'pshia V'soifoi B'oines, which is a machloikes in Hilchos Shevuos between the Rav and the Aguda, and they ask how come this Machloikes is not brought down in other places that these Halochos are brought down.

For example by davening, in Siman Kuf Ches, seif Ches, it says if you are Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes, you are an Oïnes, there is no machloïkes. Or a case we had in Maseches Kesubos, where a person gave a Get to his wife Al M'nas he doesn't return in 30 days. For 29 days he didn't want to come back. On the 30th day he wants to come back, however, the bridge falls down, so he can't get there. This is Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes.

Now, the Halachah is Yeish Oïnes B'gïtin. In Choïshen Mishpot, in Siman Nun Hei, it states the Halachah is this would be a case of Oïnes. So why Dafka in Hilchos Shevuus, is it brought as a Machloïkes?

The Chasam Soïfer in a Teshuvah in Choïshen Mishpot, Siman Mem Beis, answers, he holds like the Aguda that Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes is a Poïshaiah. What about the other cases? When something should have been done right away but because of your negligence, you push it off, and then an Oïnes comes along, you are a Poïshaiah, because you should have done it right away. However, like in the Get case, where you are not Mechuyav to come back the first 29 days, he can come back the 30th day. So then Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes is an Oïnes. This is the Yesoid of the Chasam Soïfer.

How it applies to Davening, do we say you should daven right away because of Zrizim Makdimin or not? If you were negligent bringing yourself to an Oïnes then you are a Poïshaiah.

Back to our sugya, if it is an aveirah that he grew up with, for example all his life he went to a shul where they spoke during davening, so he also talks during davening. And that is the Naaseh Loi K'heter, that type of Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes, where there is no guilt in the first place, that we can say is a Soïfoï B'Oïnes like those Achroïnim, (not that he shouldn't try to correct himself.) However, things that a person was once Zahir in and it's Tichilosoï B'pshia V'soïfoï B'oïnes, the Tichilosoï B'pshia was inexcusable, he had a lapse in Shemiras Hamitzvos, and now it is Naaseh Loi K'heter. That is worse, because the whole Oïnes is connected to the original Peshiah. A person should try to correct these things in which he was once more Zahir in. It is those old battles that you should work on first.

2) We say Zachrainu L'chaim in the first B'rochah of Shemonei Esrei, the Rishoinim ask, the Gemarah in Maseches Brachos, 34a (19 lines from the bottom) אמר רב יהודה לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו לא בשלש ראשונות ולא בשלש אחרונות אלא באמצעיות דא"ר חנינא ראשונות דומה לעבד שמסדר שבה לפני רבו אמצעיות דומה לעבד שמבקש פרי מרבו אחרונות דומה לעבד שקבל פרי מרבו ונפטר והולך לו says, we don't ask Bakashois in the beginning of Shemoneh Esrei, the first 3 Berochois. Now Mi Chomoïcha Av Horachamon is not a Bakashoh, however, Zochrainu L'chaim is a Bakashah?

Toïsafoï answers, (אל ישאל אדם צרכיו לא בג' ראשונות ולא בג' אחרונות. פי"ח ורבינו האי דוקא ליחיד אבל צרכי צבור שואלין ולכך אנו

אומרים זכרנו וקרובין ויעלה ויבא בהם ותדע דדוקא יחיד קאמר שהרי עיקר (ברכות אחרונות צרכי צבור הם) that Zochrainu L'chaim, we are not asking for ourselves, it is for the Tzibur, so that we can ask for in the first 3 B'rochois. So Loit Toïsafoï, if you say Zochrainu L'chaim, and you are only thinking of yourself and your family, it is a hefsek in the first B'rochah. So a person must be Zahir to think about the Tzibur during Zachrainu L'chaim.

The Ma'iri, gives a second Teretz, Zochrainu L'chaim, is a reference for a Ruchinusdika Chiyus. The Steipler has a beautiful letter, entitled Sheloïsha Seform Niftachim. He also talks about davening for a Ruchniusdika Chaim. That can also be davened for a Yochid, it doesn't have to be for a Tzibur.

Why So Upbeat on Yom HaDin; The Micromitzvah App is Here; Next Time, Chezky

Jonathan Rosenblum - Mishpacha Magazine

By demonstrating our confidence in the impending judgment, we show our recognition of Hashem's infinite love

AN apparent paradox lies at the center of our celebration of Rosh Hashanah. On the one hand, everything hangs in the balance on the awesome Day of Judgment. Even the angels are seized with fear, as we recite in Unesaneh Tokef: "Angels will be terrified, a trembling and dread will seize them, and they will say, 'Behold, it is the Day of Judgment.'"

On the other hand, we are upbeat and joyful. We cut our hair in advance, don our best festive attire, and enjoy sumptuous meals. Even in the most dour yeshivah, the special melodies of the day uplift and enlist all in enthusiastic singing. Despite the length of the davening, we neither enumerate our sins nor plead for mercy.

My brother Rabbi Mattisyahu Rosenblum ztz"l offers two resolutions of this paradox in Rays of Wisdom. The first begins with two oddities of human behavior, worthy of anthropological investigation of the sort usually reserved for primitive tribes. Why do so many people become so intensely involved in the fortunes of their local sports teams, manned by phenomenally well-paid athletes, with no particular attachment or loyalty to the city in which they now play? I once came into Chicago in the middle of spring training and asked a friend how he thought the Cubs would fare that year. He replied, "I couldn't care less, and I can't imagine why any adult would." I had nothing to respond.

Second question: Why in days of yore did so many march off so enthusiastically to battle, and their possible deaths, on behalf of kings with whom they would have scant contact and from whom they could expect little direct benefit if victory was attained?

Rabbi Rosenblum suggests that there is a strong human urge to be part of something higher and loftier than oneself and to thereby reveal a purpose to life above one's narrow self-interest.

We do not wish to view our lives as nothing more than the pursuit of our own benefit.

More frequently, that urge to be part of a kingdom, of something beyond ourselves, takes an ersatz form, such as fan culture. But for us, Rosh Hashanah is coronation day of the one true King; Hashem's Malchus and the first man came into existence simultaneously, as there is no king without a nation.

Rosh Hashanah, the day of man's creation, provides an opportunity to visualize a world in which His sovereignty is acknowledged by all, and from which iniquity has disappeared as a wisp of smoke. And that contemplation fills us with joy.

His second explanation of the festive quality of the day — and the one that moved me even more — lies in our confidence in a favorable judgment. The source of that confidence is our recognition of the infinite Divine love that permeates the Creation and underlies it.

Hashem did not require our service. Indeed, He needed nothing from us; He is, by His very nature, complete. Only His desire to give to Man, as the pinnacle of Creation, explains the Creation. That is the meaning of "ki olam chesed yibaneh — the world is founded on chesed."

But for that gift to be complete, we had to have a way of earning the good that Hashem wants to bestow upon us so that it not be nehamah d'kisufa, "bread of embarrassment" — i.e., unearned. Our means of doing so is by revealing His glory to the world.

Our judgment on Rosh Hashanah is based on how well we have filled that mission of giving kavod (honor) to Hashem and our determination to do so looking forward. But the entire system of reward and punishment, within which judgment is essential, is ultimately based on His unlimited love for us and desire to provide us with every manner of good, in particular the ability to earn His beneficence.

By focusing on the love underlying the system, Avraham Avinu was able to discover the Creator as the root of chesed. And we, his descendants, by demonstrating our confidence in the impending judgment, show our recognition of Hashem's infinite love. And in doing so, we merit to experience yet more of that love in the year to come.

The Micromitzvah App is Here

Elazar Yitzchak (Azi) Koltai, a"h, who was among those killed in the Meron disaster, embodied the ability of each of us to make the world around us a happier, more sustaining place.

The Koltais received a shivah visit from the local postman, who told them how Azi had often helped him distribute the mail to the building's mailboxes and never neglected to ask him how he was. Three Arab street cleaners also came to the shivah house, and related how Azi never failed to flash them his smile and thank them for keeping the street clean and the neighborhood looking good.

During shivah, the family coined the term "micromitzvos" for these acts of kindness that require little effort but pay big dividends in terms of making people feel good, and in which Azi excelled. It takes nothing more than a smile or a quick compliment to brighten another's day. Studies show that in a hospital setting in which members of the cleaning crew are treated as members of the team by other staff members, which generally depends on nothing more than the way they are addressed, they do a better job of keeping the wards clean, and thus safer.

To perpetuate Azi's memory and legacy, his parents, Rob and Sue Koltai, have now issued through the Azi Foundation a micromitzvah app in Hebrew, English, and Spanish, which can be downloaded at www.micromitzvah.org. Users identify some micromitzvah — which they are advised to then split into an even smaller daily action — they want to undertake over a 40-day period. The app sends daily reminders and charts users' progress. By the end of 40 days, the micromitzvah has hopefully become habitual.

I asked Azi's mother for some examples of the micromitzvos she had heard about thus far. Most were in the area of mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro: I will say good morning to my husband as soon as he returns from davening; I will call my mother every day this month; I will call one friend a day just to say hello; I will be sure to smile at my children when I pick them up from school. But others were in the realm of mitzvos bein adam l'Makom: I will say Modeh Ani with kavanah; I will make sure my children wash their hands as soon as they get out of bed, and we will call it our "Azi mitzvah": I will stand still, with my feet together, for the opening bircas hashachar; I will say birchos haTorah with intention.

I'm sure all my readers will be able to come up with their own micromitzvos to strengthen themselves or give chizuk to others, especially with the approach of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. And when you do, you will be carrying forward all the positivity that Azi Koltai, who was just past his bar mitzvah at the time of his passing, introduced into the world.

Next Time, Chezky

On a recent midnight flight from Warsaw to Tel Aviv, a young man slipped into the aisle seat next to me just as the plane was about to take off. We had met the previous day at Birkenau as a group gathered for Minchah. Then he was together with his father, but now he was headed alone to Israel for a few days of touring before returning to yeshivah.

The day before, he had told me he was a fan, and now he proceeded to prove it. "I remember you have written that if you sit next to someone on an airplane and can't get a column out of him, you consider that you have failed in some way," he reminded me, with a cheerful, expectant look on his face.

I replied that he had not been sufficiently medayek in what I wrote. I had specified that if I sat next to someone on a

transatlantic flight and did not have a column, I would deem it a failure. And in any event, I noted, we would be landing in Tel Aviv just over three hours later, at around 4 a.m., and I needed the sleep.

Chezky W., I do hope we'll meet again, and I'll have a chance to extract a column. In the meantime, I hope this will do.

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net date: Sep 22, 2022, 11:04 PM subject: A Small Step for Man; A Giant Step for G-d - Rosh Hashanah Essay by Rabbi YY

**A Small Step for Man; A Giant Step for G-d
It's Never of All Nothing
By: Rabbi YY Jacobson
Relativity**

An Odessa Jew meets another one. "Have you heard, Einstein won the Noble Prize?"

"Oh, what for?"

"He developed this Relativity theory."

"Yeah, what's that?"

"Well, you know, five hairs on your head is relatively few.

Five hairs in your soup is relatively many."

"And for that, he wins the Noble Prize?!"

Today we will discuss this "theory of relativity" in Jewish spirituality. What may seem small on one plane is seen quite differently on another.

What's the Novelty?

Teshuvah, or repentance, one of the greatest gifts that Judaism and the Torah have given humanity, is the idea that G-d gives second chances. This is a fundamental part of the Jewish experience and is written in innumerable places in Torah -- and it is the focus during this time of the year, as we welcome Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Which is why it comes as a surprise that Rabbi Akiva, the famed Jewish leader and Talmudic scholar living in the second century CE, some 1500 years after Sinai and the writing of the Torah, seems to have been surprised, inspired, and even astounded by the idea that G-d gives a second chance to the sinner who repents.

I refer to a statement Rabbi Akiva made which has since gained fame in Jewish songs, chants, and liturgy, and it is recorded in the Mishna.¹

אמר רבי עקיבא, אשריכם ישראל! לפני מי אתם מטהרין ומי מטהר אתכם? אביכם שבשמים! שנאמר (יחזקאל לו) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם, ואומר (ירמיהו יז) מקוה ישראל ה'. מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים, אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל.

*Rabbi Akiva said: How lucky are you, O Israel! Before whom are you purifying yourself, and who purifies you? Our father in Heaven! As it is written (Ezekiel 36), "I will sprinkle upon you purifying waters, and you will become purified," and it is said (Jeremiah 17), "Hashem is the mikva of Israel," just as the Mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel.*²

What innovation, what revolutionary idea is Rabbi Akiva teaching that has not been taught for over a thousand years? That G-d purifies the impure, forgives the penitents, and absolves the sinner? This is an axiom of Jewish thought dating back to Abraham! This idea is fundamental to Judaism itself. It is as old as Moses and the Jews of the Golden Calf, as Joseph forgiving his brothers, as G-d giving Adam a second chance after eating from the tree of knowledge. The entire concept and institution of Yom Kippur—discussed at length in the Book of Leviticus—is that G-d cleanses the people of Israel!

Comes Rabbi Akiva 1500 years after Yom Kippur was created, and declares a novelty! How fortunate are you Israel. Why? Because your father in heaven cleanses you from your blemishes. It seems that Rabbi Akiva has suddenly "discovered America," when in essence he is repeating an ancient axiom of all of Tanach!

The question is stronger: To support this thought, Rabbi Akiva quotes verses that were transcribed some 500 years earlier which clearly state this very truth! Yet even the verses he quotes are from Ezekiel and Jeremiah, rather than from the Five Books of Moses, which clearly state the same truth.³

Even if you can find some reason why Rabbi Akiva repeated this ancient idea, why did the Mishna have to record it? The Mishna is a collection of original Jewish Law, and not the place to record inspirational sentiments that do not teach us anything new and innovative.

Two Extra Words

Many times, when studying Torah we will find, that if there are two questions on the same text, one question will be answered by resolving the other. Here too, there is another problem on the concluding words of Rabbi Akiva:

מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל.
"Just as the Mikvah purifies the impure, so too does G-d purify Israel."

Every word in Mishna is precise. There is not an extra word used, not even for esthetical beauty. Every word of the Mishna was carefully edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince and is exact and necessary. Rabbi Judah chose from thousands of collected records of teachings and manuscripts and redacted in the Mishna only the best and most exact wordings.

In this statement of Rabbi Akiva, it seems, we have two superfluous words. It should have written simply, "Just as a Mikvah purifies, so too does G-d purify Israel." Why add the extra words, "purify the impure"? We all know that a mikvah is designated to purify someone who is impure! Who else would be going to the Mikvah but someone who is impure? Why state the obvious?

Yet, in these seemingly superfluous two words lies a wondrous secret. But first, we have to understand a little about the functioning of a Mikvah.

Two Types of Impurity

There are different degrees of impurity, and there are different methods of purification from these various states of impurity. [These were mostly relevant in biblical times and during the days of the Temple, when people had to be very careful to maintain their ritual purity in order to enter the Temple, or eat the sacred food of sacrifices. Today, we don't pay much attention to these ritual patterns; which is why most Jews would not tour the Temple Mount, since you may not enter the space of the Temple if ritually impure.]

For example, if one touches a dead rodent, he becomes impure for a day and can become pure simply by immersing in a mikvah and waiting for nightfall. On the other hand, if he touches a human corpse he becomes impure for a week and needs a lengthy process of immersing in a mikvah, as well as being sprinkled with a mixture of water and ashes of the red heifer.

Now imagine if someone has become impure, on both accounts, he both touched a rodent, and a human corpse. He is inevitably impure due to the corpse for a week regardless of whether he goes to the mikva or not for the rodent-tumah. The mikvah, usually potent for purification from rodent-impurity, seems now meaningless and impotent due to the stricter corpse-impurity that remains inevitably for a week. Is there any benefit of him going to the mikvah? It would seem not. He will anyway remain impure because he has also touched a corpse.

However, that is not the case. And here we discover something fascinating. The law is that a mikvah will purify and remove the lesser impurity even if the stricter degree of impurity remains!⁴

This then is the profound innovation of Rabbi Akiva. "Just as a Mikvah will purify the impure person" who is destined to **remain impure**, even **after** going to the mikvah, so too does G-d purify the penitent who still remains, in some ways, distant and separate from G-d!

A person who is not prepared to repent and to return to G-d fully, he is not ready to take the plunge and surrender away all of his sins and pet peeves, this person might think that G-d accepts all or nothing. He might think: Either I truly repent for everything, or I do nothing. Either I entirely change my life, or not bother at all. Since I know that I cannot make so many changes in my life, let me not even begin.

Imagine if someone—a borrower, an investor, a partner—owes you \$50,000, but really has neither the desire nor intention to pay you now. It's not that he denies that he borrowed the money, it's just that he cannot be bothered, and maybe does not have the money.

Then one fine morning, perhaps the day before Yom Kippur, your dear ungrateful and audacious borrower or partner shows up at your door announcing proudly: "I want to pay you \$5,000!"

"\$5,000?? What's that for? You owe me 50,000!!"

"I know, but seriously, I only feel like paying you back 5,000. For now, let's forget about the rest. We will deal with that another time. Ok? Deal, or no deal?"

How would you react? Chances are you would throw this man out head first, with his measly \$5,000. And rightfully so. The sheer chutzpah! What is he thinking?

How Lucky!

This is what Rabbi Akiva is talking about. As Jews we turn to G-d each year, and all of us, to some degree or another, feel some sense of remorse or regret for one or two or three things in our life that need to be mended. Not that we are ready to turn over a new leaf, not that we are ready to make the serious changes in our life, not that we are ready for a complete transformation, but there is that one little aveira, that one little sin, that one little lie or cheat, that is nagging me. And I really want to get it off my chest.

I may have hurt someone in a dramatic way and it sits on me; I may have done something wrong that is really perturbing me; I may have insulted someone in a nasty way and I am upset at myself; I may have been involved in something that is eating up on my conscience.

So I repent for just that one thing. I ask G-d, or whoever it was that I wronged, to forgive me for that one act. What is going to be with the rest of my issues I cannot be bothered, and I neither know nor care too much at the moment. I don't have time or energy to deal with all my sins. But this one thing I am ready to deal with.

Is this worth anything? Does G-d care for this type of repentance?

Comes Rabbi Akiva and says:

מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים.

Just as a Mikvah purifies the impure, the one who will remain impure even after the mikvah, the one who either way has contracted a much more severe and serious impurity which he is not dealing with right now, yet, the mikva works and will purify him at that moment for the lesser impurity, exactly so does G-d purify Israel!

Why? Why doesn't G-d act as any normal person would, and throw our measly attempt at reconciliation back in our faces?

To this Rabbi Akiva tells us:

מי מטהר אתכם? אביכם שבשמים!

Because G-d is our "Father in heaven," father who is anxiously waiting for the merest sign of positive movement from, us, his child. A good father will embrace and appreciate the tiniest effort his son makes to connect with him, regardless and oblivious to the fact that the son has done wrong in so many more areas.

Today, all psychologists and educators agree that the way to educate is by focusing and drawing attention to even the smallest positive successes of our children and building on

them. Education through criticism has been debunked and proven to be futile at best, and destructive at worst.

But Rabbi Akiva said this almost 2000 years ago. G-d is the ultimate loving parent. When he sees that a Jew makes even the slightest movement of Teshuva, regardless of how much he has left to go, G-d immediately embraces this movement with the deepest love, and purifies him just as the mikvah does.⁵

Fix One Thing

How many of us have not attempted something because we are afraid of failure? How many of us give up on our dreams because we know we will never fulfill them perfectly? How many of us remain paralyzed by perfectionism? How many of us look at things as all or nothing, and therefore do not begin jobs that we know we can never fully complete?

How many of us deprive ourselves of this gift of a mitzvah that is so dear to us, just because we are scared to become “completely religious?” We feel that if we do not get it all right, we will get nothing right, and it is not worth the effort? Rabbi Akiva is telling us that a Jew must know, that G-d values and cherishes every single mitzvah a Jew does. G-d embraced and cherished every act of change. Even if I regret one mistake in my life and change that, G-d accepts it fully and purifies me. Whatever you manage to accomplish, any step you manage to take forward, towards a better more inspired, G-dly life, is infinitely treasured by G-d who can purify even the one who still remains impure. It may be one small step for man; but a giant step for G-d.⁶

Footnotes ¹. Mishna end of Yuma. ². In the original verse, mikva means hope. G-d is the hope of Israel. Rabbi Akiva interprets it as a “mikvah,” a gathering of natural water. ³. He could have quoted for example the verse in Leviticus quoted earlier in this very Mishnah: For on this day He will forgive you, to cleanse you from all your sins...” You can’t get much clearer than this. ⁴. See for example end of Ch. 3 of Mishna Berachos. משנה זב שראה קרי ונדה שפלטה שכבת זרע והמשמשת שראתה ⁵. This is an innovation revealed and espoused quite fittingly by Rabbi Akiva, the great lover of Jews, and a man who himself made a long and arduous journey from being an illiterate shepherd who actually hated Torah and Scholars, to becoming the pre-eminent Sage and leader of the Jewish people through one of the most difficult moments in their history. ⁶. This novel interpretation in the Mishna was shared by the Lubavitcher Rebbe during a public address (“farbrengen”), as he concluded the study of Tractate Yuma on his mother’s yartziet, 6 Tishrei 5730, 1969. Part of it was published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 17 Parshas Acharei.

from: **Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig**

<rabbizweig@shabbatshalom.org> date: Sep 18, 2022, 9:00 AM

subject: Begin with the End in Mind

GOOD MORNING! Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins this upcoming Sunday evening, September 25th. Rosh Hashanah is a two-day holiday that begins on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei. The celebrations for the Jewish New Year are very different from those of the secular New Year, which is celebrated in many parts of the “enlightened” world by partying, drinking to excess, and watching a sparkly ball descend at midnight from a tower in Times Square.

Rosh Hashanah follows the contemplative month of Elul, during which we ought to undertake what Jewish tradition refers to a cheshbon hanefesh – an accounting of one’s soul. We are supposed to be self-reflective and take stock of how we did the previous year; what we did right and what we still need to improve upon. Rosh Hashanah follows this theme and it marks the beginning of the Ten Days of Repentance, which culminate on Yom Kippur – The Day of Atonement.

When I was in business school the phrase “Time is Money” was ingrained into my psyche. In prior columns I have explained why this is a complete and utter fallacy: Time is infinitely more valuable than money because time represents our potential and what we can accomplish and become. Money, by contrast, is merely a means to an end. Just as it is natural to make a complete accounting of how monies were spent or invested, we should be even more compelled to account for how we invested and spent our time.

Because time is so precious, every second counts. In fact, even a hundredth of a second is significant: it sometimes separates the Olympic gold winner – who becomes famous – from the Olympic silver winner – who is often quickly forgotten. Every year we are granted about 31,000,000 seconds to spend and this is the time of year when we should all look back and review how we invested those precious seconds. At the end of this column I will suggest some questions and themes that may help you in this process.

Typically, Rosh Hashanah is observed by Jews all over the world who attend synagogue to pray, hear the sound of the shofar (ram’s horn), listen to the rabbi’s sermon, reflect upon the past, and commit to correcting their mistakes. This is followed by celebrating with festive holiday meals.

Sadly, many (if not most) only make an effort to attend synagogue on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is therefore only natural that most synagogues charge enormous amounts for “tickets” to attend – it is their one opportunity to raise the monies needed to fund the operations of the synagogue. Reflecting on this, I realize that if I too only came to synagogue three times a year and had to spend most of the day there in prayer services and listening to the rabbi’s sermons while paying an exorbitant sum for that privilege, I also wouldn’t want to attend more than three times a year.

Because Rosh Hashanah is such an important part of Judaism we are compelled to understand what it's all about and what exactly we are trying to accomplish on this holiday.

Q & A: WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF ROSH HASHANAH AND HOW DO WE OBSERVE IT? According to Jewish tradition, Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment. The Talmud states (Rosh Hashanah 8a) that this is derived by from a pair of verses in Psalms: "Sound the shofar at the new month, at the time when it is covered, for the day of our festival. For it is a statute for Israel, a (day of) judgment for the God of Jacob" (Psalms 81:4-5). Thus, we pray that we are inscribed in the Book of Life for life, for health, and for sustenance.

Many years ago, I attended a trial of a good friend who was wrongfully charged with some very serious crimes and, if convicted, would spend decades of his life behind bars. The feeling in the courtroom was one of dread and palpable apprehension. I remember being very afraid for him and I could barely eat or sleep. Indeed, for many this is what Rosh Hashanah is all about. But this perception is a mistake.

According to Jewish tradition, Rosh Hashanah is a time when we celebrate with elegant clothes, festive meals with family and friends, and by sending gifts to others. This is based on the verse found in the Prophets: "He said to them, 'Go eat fat foods and drink sweet beverages, and send gifts to anyone for whom nothing was prepared, for today is holy to our Master. Do not be sad, for the joy of Hashem is your strength'" (Nehemiah 8:10).

How can we celebrate when our very lives hang in the balance? Ultimately, we have faith in the kindness and mercy of the Almighty – that He knows our hearts and our intentions and judges us with love and the knowledge of what is best for us. Therefore, we trust that He will accordingly grant us a favorable verdict and bless us with a sweet new year. But there is really a much deeper lesson to understand here.

When a person is being judged in a typical court of law, what is the best result that he could possibly hope for? The best possible outcome is that he be restored to the life that he had prior to entering the courtroom. In other words, he can only lose – he has no possible upside. In fact, after paying his attorney and court costs he is already far poorer than when he began. Essentially, he already lost; it's only a question of whether he also loses his freedom. That is a devastating situation in which to find oneself.

But Rosh Hashanah, our "Day of Judgement," is quite different. According to Jewish tradition, the world was created on the 25th day of Elul and man was created on the first of Tishrei. Thus, man was actually created on Rosh Hashanah! Why is this important?

The great medieval philosopher, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, explains in his classic work *The Way of God* that the Almighty created the world in order to bestow kindness on

mankind. The very purpose of creation was a gift so that man could experience the most amazing life.

But God, in His infinite wisdom, understood that a gift is never fully appreciated. As we know, a person often feels ashamed to accept a gift, and in fact a person only feels fulfilled when he has acquired something that he has earned through his efforts. Thus, man was given the opportunity to earn his existence.

Every Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of mankind's creation, we are given this opportunity to earn our existence. This is the EXACT opposite of a typical courtroom judgment. We can absolutely hope for improvements in every aspect of our lives and we have much to gain on our Day of Judgement, which is why Rosh Hashanah can be a day of amazing fulfillment and joy, one to be celebrated with friends and family.

Now, everyone wants to have a more meaningful and fulfilling life. We want God to bless us with an amazing year filled with every blessing imaginable. How do we begin to achieve this?

The main objective that we have to achieve on Rosh Hashanah is to actively accept God as our king and the ruler of everything in existence. If we carefully study the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah it becomes rather clear that the theme of God as our king is the major focus of the day. Our job is to define ourselves as living in a theocentric world, a world in which we are committed to living by His laws and bringing Him into our daily lives and into the lives of others.

Rosh Hashanah is much less about begging forgiveness from God than it is about establishing a relationship with Him and creating the rightful place for God in your life. The process of teshuvah – repentance – can only begin once a relationship is in place. (We will discuss the actual process of repentance further in next week's column.)

The key element to understanding Rosh Hashanah is remembering that life is a gift from the Almighty and therefore quite precious. Consequently, we are charged with making it meaningful and making sure that we live up to our potential and earn our continued existence. In this way we fulfill God's purpose for creation.

SOME QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN SYNAGOGUE AND/OR DISCUSS AT YOUR ROSH HASHANAH MEALS: Knowing what I know today, what advice would I have given myself going into last year's Rosh Hashanah? What am I doing to improve my relationship with God? What are the most important relationships in my life? What can I do to nurture those relationships this year? What am I doing to improve my relationship with myself? What would bring me more happiness than anything else in the world? Am I proud of this? Are there any ideals I would be willing to die for? What are my three most significant achievements since last Rosh Hashanah? What are the three biggest mistakes I've made since

last Rosh Hashanah? What project or goal, if left undone, will I most regret next Rosh Hashanah? What is the most important decision I need to make this year? What important decision did I avoid making last year? What did I do last year that gave me the strongest feeling of self-respect? If I could change only one thing about myself, what would that be? What are my three major goals in life? What am I doing to achieve them? Wishing you and yours a sweet New Year filled only with blessings, good health, and the peace of mind to enjoy it all!

From: Chabad.org <learntorah@chabad.org> date: Sep 25, 2022

subject: TORAH STUDIES: Rosh Hashanah - Yom Kippur

The Ten Days of Teshuvah

Adapted by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The following Sicha is about the difficulties of translation itself. The act of translation assumes that for every word in one language, equivalents can be found in another. But this may be untrue, especially when we are dealing with ideas that are central and unique to Judaism. We may then fall into the error of equating a Jewish idea with one drawn from another culture when the two are in fact dissimilar, even opposite. This is the case with the three words constantly on our minds during the Ten Days of Teshuvah. In English they are repentance, prayer and charity. How far these differ from their Jewish counterparts—teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah—the Rebbe emphatically explains.

1. The Service of the Ten Days

We express the hope that on Rosh Hashanah G-d blessed us with a “good and sweet year” to come, a year made fruitful by children, health and sustenance.

But there is no limit to goodness and blessing. Thus, during the Ten Days of Teshuvah we have the opportunity through our service, to cause G-d to grant us yet greater benefits from His “full and expansive hand.”

What is this service? It is, as we say in our prayers, “repentance, prayer and charity” which avert evil and bring the good. But the words “repentance, prayer and charity” are misleading. By thus translating the Hebrew terms teshuvah, tefillah and tzedakah, we are led into a false comparison of these three elements of the religious life as they exist in Judaism and outside it.

In fact, there are crucial differences. Teshuvah is not repentance. Tefillah is not prayer. And tzedakah is not charity.

2. Teshuvah and Repentance

“Repentance” in Hebrew is not teshuvah but charatah. Not only are these two terms not synonymous. They are opposites. Charatah implies remorse or a feeling of guilt about the past and an intention to behave in a completely new way in the

future. The person decides to become “a new man.” But teshuvah means “returning” to the old, to one’s original nature. Underlying the concept of teshuvah is the fact that the Jew is, in essence, good. Desires or temptations may deflect him temporarily from being himself, being true to his essence. But the bad that he does is not part of, nor does it affect, his real nature. Teshuvah is a return to the self. While repentance involves dismissing the past and starting anew, teshuvah means going back to one’s roots in G-d and exposing them as one’s true character.

For this reason, while the righteous have no need to repent, and the wicked may be unable to, both may do teshuvah.¹ The righteous, though they have never sinned, have constantly to strive to return to their innermost. And the wicked, however distant they are from G-d, can always return, for teshuvah does not involve creating anything new, only rediscovering the good that was always within them.

3. Tefillah and Prayer

“Prayer” in Hebrew is not tefillah but bakashah. And again these terms are opposites. Bakashah means to pray, request, beseech. But tefillah means, to attach oneself.²

In bakashah the person asks G-d to provide him, from above, with what he lacks. Therefore when he is not in need of anything, or feels no desire for a gift from above, bakashah becomes redundant.

But in tefillah the person seeks to attach himself to G-d. It is a movement from below, from man, reaching towards G-d. And this is something appropriate to everyone and at every time.

The Jewish soul has a bond with G-d. But it also inhabits a body, whose preoccupation with the material world may attenuate that bond. So it has constantly to be strengthened and renewed. This is the function of tefillah. And it is necessary for every Jew. For while there may be those who do not lack anything and thus have nothing to request of G-d, there is no one who does not need to attach himself to the source of all life.

4. Tzedakah and Charity

The Hebrew for “charity” is not tzedakah but chessed. And again these two words have opposite meanings.

Chessed, charity, implies that the recipient has no right to the gift and that the donor is under no obligation to give it. He gives it gratuitously, from the goodness of his heart. His act is a virtue rather than a duty.

On the other hand tzedakah means righteousness or justice. The implication is that the donor gives because it is his duty. For, firstly, everything in the world belongs ultimately to G-d. A man’s possessions are not his by right. Rather, they are entrusted to him by G-d, and one of the conditions of that trust is that he should give to those who are in need. Secondly, a man has a duty to act towards others as he asks G-d to act towards him. And as we ask G-d for His blessings though He owes us nothing and is under no obligation, so we are bound in

justice to give to those who ask us, even though we are in no way in their debt. In this way we are rewarded: Measure for measure. Because we give freely, G-d gives freely to us.

This applies in particular to the tzedakah which is given to support the institutions of Torah learning. For everyone who is educated in these institutions is a future foundation of a house in Israel, and a future guide to the coming generation. This will be the product of his tzedakah—and his act is the measure of his reward.

5. Three Paths

These are the three paths which lead to a year “written and sealed” for good.

By returning to one’s innermost self (teshuvah), by attaching oneself to G-d (tefillah) and by distributing one’s possessions with righteousness (tzedakah), one turns the promise of Rosh Hashanah into the abundant fulfillment of Yom Kippur: A year of sweetness and plenty.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. II pp. 409-411)

FOOTNOTES 1. Cf. Kuntres Bikkur Chicago, p. 23. 2. Cf. Rashi, Bereishit 30:8; Or Hatorah, Vayechi, 380a.

Peninim Al Hatorah **Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** **Va’ani Tefillah**

אל תזכר לנו עונות ראשונים – Al tizkor lanu avonos rishonim.
Recall not against us the sins of the ancients. The Maggid, zl, m’Dubno explains our plea that Hashem not respond to our ancient sins. Klal Yisrael is stuck between a “rock and a hard place.” On the one hand, we are in galus, exile, during which our lives are subject to the difficulties and challenges that are endemic to exile. Thus, our sinful behavior may be attributed to the exile. On the other hand, there is a valid reason for our being in galus; the sins that were the precursor to the punishment of galus. To whom does Hashem listen? The mekatreig, prosecutor, calls up the sins that brought about the punishment of, and are associated with, galus. There should be no lenience to sinners. The saneigor, defense, counter claims that while it is true that we have sinned, we would long ago have corrected our ways, if not for the troubles and challenges of the galus. To whom does Hashem listen? To whoever comes first. If the prosecutor brings forth our sins, he will have his claim in already, so, Hashem will be inclined to listen to him. If the defendant presents his position first, then the tzaros ha’shibud, troubles associated with the exile, will gloss over the sins that brought about the exile. We pray to Hashem not to recall the early sins presented by the prosecutor, because we cannot counter with our excuse of exile. The avonos should not be allowed to be presented rishonim, first, so that the defense of exile may precede them.

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subject: **Calendar Controversy**

Calendar Controversy

When Yamim Nora’im “Fell” on Disputed Days **Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

In the year 4681 (920), the greatest halachic authority in Eretz Yisrael, Rav Aharon ben Meir, proclaimed that the months of Marcheshvan and Kislev of the coming year (4682) would both have only 29 days. As a result, the next Pesach (4682) would begin on a Sunday and end after Shabbos, in Eretz Yisrael, and after Sunday, in Chutz LaAretz.

Prior to Ben Meir's proclamation, all had assumed that Marcheshvan and Kislev that year would both be 30 days long, which would result in Pesach beginning two days later -- on Tuesday, and ending on Monday, in Eretz Yisrael, and on Tuesday, in Chutz LaAretz. Thus, Ben Meir was pushing Pesach forward two days earlier than anticipated. Those communities that followed Ben Meir would eat chametz when it was still Pesach according to the original calculation!

Just as shocking, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur of 4683 would also be two days earlier. Ben Meir's ruling had Rosh Hashanah beginning on Tuesday and Yom Kippur observed on Thursday. The original calculation had Rosh Hashanah on Thursday, and Yom Kippur falling on Shabbos.

That year, most communities in Eretz Yisrael and Egypt observed Pesach, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah following Ben Meir's calendar; the communities of Syria, Bavel (today's Iraq), Europe and the rest of North Africa observed these Yomim Tovim two days later!

Thus, on Shabbos before Sukkos of 4683, Ben Meir's followers were reading parshas Ha’azinu and enjoying their Shabbos repasts; the other communities were fasting and observing Yom Kippur!

Why did Ben Meir observe the calendar differently? Why was his opinion rejected?

Creation of the Jewish Calendar

Our current Jewish calendar was instituted in the fourth century by Hillel Hanasi (not to be confused with his ancestor, the Tanna, Hillel Hazakein. Historians call Hillel Hanasi either Hillel the Second or Hillel the Third, but I will refer to him the way the Rishonim do.) Prior to this time, the Nasi of the Sanhedrin appointed special batei din that were in charge of determining the Jewish calendar, which included two areas of responsibility:

- Determining whether each month is 29 or 30 days.
- Deciding whether the year should be made into a leap year by adding the month of Adar Sheini.

A beis din of three judges representing the Sanhedrin, the main beis din of klal Yisrael, would meet on the "thirtieth" day of each month to determine whether this day was Rosh Chodesh and the previous month was only 29 days, or whether to postpone Rosh Chodesh to the morrow, which would make the day on which they met the last day of a 30-day month.

The determination of which day was Rosh Chodesh was based heavily, but not exclusively, on whether witnesses appeared in the special beis din on the thirtieth day to testify that they had witnessed the new moon.

In addition, the head of the Sanhedrin appointed a panel of judges who met during the winter months to deliberate and decide whether the year should have an extra month added and become a leap year. Many factors went into their considerations, including the weather, the economy, the condition of the roads, the shmittah cycle and, of course, whether the Jewish calendar year was early or late relative to the annual solar cycle.

In Eretz Yisrael

The Gemara (Berachos 63) states unequivocally that as long as there is a beis din in Eretz Yisrael that is qualified to establish the calendar, no beis din elsewhere is authorized to do this. This system worked well for thousands of years – from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu until about 300 years after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, which was during the time that the Gemara was being written. However, by this time, severe Roman persecutions took a tremendous toll on the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael, and its yeshivos suffered terribly. It was at this time that the head of the last main beis din functioning in Eretz Yisrael, Hillel Hanasi (usually assumed to have been a great-grandson of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi), established the Jewish calendar as we currently observe it. In establishing this calendar, Hillel Hanasi resolved that whether a year would be a leap year or not would be determined by a cycle of 19 years that includes a set schedule of 7 leap years. He also decided that the months of Tishrei, Shevat, Adar Rishon (when there is one), Nissan, Sivan and Av are always 30 days, whereas Teves, Adar (or Adar Sheini), Iyar, Tammuz and Elul are always only 29 days. The two months of Marcheshvan and Kislev would vary each year, depending on when the next year's Rosh Hashanah should be. The latter was based on a calculation of how long we estimate the moon to orbit the earth and decisions made by Hillel Hanasi regarding on what days of the week the Tishrei holidays should fall. Hillel Hanasi's established calendar allowed that a Jew anywhere in the world could make the calculations and determine the Jewish calendar. All he needs to know is the pattern of the 19-year cycle, and the information necessary to determine how long the months of Marcheshvan and Kislev are in a given year.

One noteworthy point is that, originally, each month's length was determined primarily by the witnessing of the new moon, whereas in the calendar created by Hillel Hanasi, the length of the months is predetermined, regardless of when the new moon appears. Only Rosh Hashanah is determined by the new moon, and, even then, there are other considerations.

History has proved the unbelievable clairvoyance of Hillel Hanasi's calendar. To understand what he accomplished, note that, at the time of Ben Meir, almost 600 years had passed since Hillel and Jewish communities had scattered across the entire known world. There were already, at this time, Jewish communities strewn throughout Europe and North Africa, what eventually developed into the Ashkenazim and the Sefardim, and throughout the Middle East and central Asia.

Yet, wherever Jewish communities lived, they observed the same Jewish calendar, whether they lived under the rule of Christians, Moslems or Zoroastrians. It is a fascinating historical fact that, although there was no absolute central authority to determine Jewish observance, Jewish communities that were spread out everywhere observed and continue to observe the identical calendar, without any error or dispute, probably without a single exception, other than the one incident we are discussing!

The Controversy

Rav Ben Meir was, without question, a gadol be'Yisrael who, in any other generation, might have been the gadol hador. However, Hashem placed him in the same generation as one of the greatest talmidei chachamim in history, Rav Saadia Gaon. Rav Ben Meir held that all of the Jewish people were bound to follow his ruling regarding Klal Yisrael's calendar, since his beis din was the most qualified one in Eretz Yisrael. He contended that the final decision on determining the calendar still rested among the highest halachic authorities in Eretz Yisrael, and that Hillel Hanasi's calendar had not changed this. At the time of Hillel Hanasi, the Jewish community in Bavel had surpassed that of Eretz Yisrael, both numerically and in scholarship, producing the greater talmidei chachamim. This is why the period of the Amoraim essentially ended earlier in Eretz Yisrael than in Bavel, and why the Talmud Bavli is more authoritative than the Talmud Yerushalmi. The main headquarters of Torah remained in Bavel for hundreds of years, including most of the period when the Gaonim headed the yeshivos of Sura and Pumbedisa in Bavel.

However, at the time of this controversy, both yeshivos, Sura and Pumbedisa, were weak, and Rav Aharon Ben Meir, who headed his own yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael, surpassed in learning the heads of both Babylonian yeshivos.

Enter Rav Saadia

At the time of the dispute, Rav Saadia Gaon was only 29 years old. Virtually nothing is known of his rabbei'im. We know that he was born in Egypt, probably the second largest Jewish

community at the time (after Bavel). At about 23 years old, probably already the greatest Torah scholar of his era, he traveled eastward, visiting the various Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael, Syria and eventually Bavel, becoming very familiar with the scholars there. Although very young, we see from later correspondence that he already had many disciples prior to leaving Egypt, with whom he maintained contact after he left.

Pronouncing his Verdict

About a year before he changed the accepted calendar, Ben Meir announced his plans. At the time, Rav Saadia was in Aleppo, Syria. When he heard of Ben Meir's intentions, Rav Saadia immediately addressed a succession of letters to Ben Meir, explaining that the established calendar was correct and should not be tampered with. Simultaneously, the authorities of Bavel addressed a letter to Ben Meir, written with tremendous respect and friendship, but sharply disputing his halachic conclusions.

Apparently, Ben Meir was unimpressed by the letters from either Rav Saadia or from Bavel. It appears that he then formalized his planned calendar change with a pronouncement made on Hoshanah Rabbah, from Har Hazeisim. Because of its proximity to the Beis Hamikdash, the Torah leaders of Eretz Yisrael held an annual gathering on Har Hazeisim to perform hoshanos. At the same time, they used the occasion to discuss whatever issues faced their communities and decided on plans and policies. Apparently, Ben Meir used this opportunity to announce the decision of his beis din to adjust the calendar in the coming year.

Indeed, the communities of Eretz Yisrael, and several (if not all) of those in Egypt followed Ben Meir's ruling and kept 29 day months for both Marcheshvan and Kislev.

After the two questionable roshei chadashim had passed, we find correspondence between Bavel and Eretz Yisrael, but now the letters are more strident. By this time, Rav Saadia had arrived in Bavel, and the next correspondence includes letters from the established leaders of Bavel to Ben Meir strongly rebuking his decision. Apparently, these letters were signed not only by the elders and scholars of the Bavel community, but also by a young Egyptian newcomer -- Rav Saadia.

At the same time, the leadership of Bavel as well as Rav Saadia addressed circulars to the various Jewish communities, advising them to observe the established calendar, not that of Ben Meir. Rav Saadia wrote his disciples in Egypt, advising them that all the leaders of Bavel had concurred to follow the old calendar and to proclaim Marcheshvan and Kislev as full months and to observe Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos accordingly. In his own words:

Close this breach! Do not rebel against the command of Hashem. None of the people would intentionally work on Yom Tov, eat chametz on Pesach, or eat, drink or work on Yom

Kippur. May it be the will of Hashem that no stumbling block be placed in your community nor anywhere else.

Rav Saadia was barely 30 years old and already he was viewed with such esteem that the established Torah leadership of Bavel requested that he join them in their correspondence on the issue!

Ben Meir's Retort

In reaction to the initial letters from the Gaonim and from Rav Saadia, Ben Meir sent his son to Yerushalayim to announce, once again, his planned calendar change. Ben Meir also wrote, in an aggressive and disrespectful tone, that final authority in all matters of the calendar lies with the Torah leadership of Eretz Yisrael. At this point, he began to write disparagingly about his antagonists.

Pesach was approaching and communities were bewildered as to what to do. Rav Saadia wrote a second letter to his disciples in Egypt. It should be noted that, notwithstanding the personal attack leveled against him by Ben Meir, Rav Saadia dealt specifically with the issue and refrained from any remark belittling his detractor.

Why did Rav Saadia not accept Ben Meir's assertion that the Torah leadership of Eretz Yisrael had the final say about these matters?

Rav Saadia wrote that Ben Meir's calculations were mistaken. The calculations that we use are all based on an old mesorah from Sinai, as can be demonstrated from the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 20). Thus, this is not a matter of opinion, but an error. Rav Saadia rallied support from the fact that, since the days of Hillel Hanasi, no one had questioned the accuracy of the accepted calendar.

Two Different Pesachs

Indeed, that Pesach, many communities followed Ben Meir, while others followed Rav Saadia and the Gaonim of Bavel. The controversy continued the next year, through the disputed Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

History has not bequeathed to us the final steps of this controversy, yet we know that, by the next year, the logic of Rav Saadia's responsa swayed the tide against Ben Meir's diatribes, and Rav Saadia became accepted as the gadol hador and its final arbiter in halacha.

Ben Meir blamed Rav Saadia for torpedoing his initiative, which probably is true. History knows nothing more of Ben Meir after this episode, and of no community that subsequently followed his approach. His opinion on any halachic matters is never quoted by later authorities.

Six years later, Rav Saadia was asked to assume the position of Gaon of Sura, the only time in history that the position was granted to an "outsider." Indeed, we have Rav Saadia to thank that the Jewish world, everywhere, always observes Yomim Tovim on the same day.

Rav Kook Torah**Rosh Hashanah: Awakening the Mind and Heart****Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

Yom Teruah

The Torah describes Rosh Hashanah as a “a day of teruah blasts” (Num. 29:1). What are these teruah-blasts of the shofar? What is their connection to Rosh Hashanah and the High Holiday theme of repentance and return?

According to the Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 34a, the exact sound of the teruah is a matter of dispute. Some say it is genuchei ganach, a groaning or moaning sound. According to this opinion, the teruah should be heavy, broken sounds called shevarim, like the sobs of a soul burdened with remorse and regret.

Others, however, say that the teruah is yelulei yalil, trembling cries and wails. This opinion holds that the blasts should be short, staccato bursts, like the uncontrolled wailing of a person in extreme anguish and grief.

What is the significance of this dispute? What does it matter whether the shofar sounds like groans or howls?

Stimulus for Change

When we examine individuals who have undergone great spiritual transformation, we find two basic patterns. For some people, change was initiated by a carefully considered process of logic and reason. Intellectually they realized that something was seriously amiss in their lives, and they sought to correct it. For others, on the other hand, the principal motive for change came from the heart. They were moved by a strong intuitive feeling that they had lost their true path, an overwhelming sense that their life had failed to fulfill their heart’s aspirations.

We might ask: which stimulus is truly fundamental to the teshuvah process? Which path is more successful in sustaining spiritual growth — through the cognitive analysis of the mind or through the stirrings of the heart?

This question is precisely the doubt regarding the sound of the teruah. The shofar-blasts are a wake-up call for change and teshuvah. As Maimonides wrote in the Mishneh Torah (Laws of Repentance 3:4),

“It is as if the shofar is calling out to us: ‘Sleepers, wake up from your slumber! Examine your ways and repent and remember your Creator.’”

Perhaps the shofar blasts should recall the heavy sighs of the introspective individual who realizes that his life’s direction is false. The shofar should sound like genuchei ganach, the groans of one whose objective assessments have lead him to the unavoidable conclusion that he has missed the mark in his life and goals. Or perhaps the shofar blasts are meant to mirror the emotional outburst of yelulei yalil, the cries of pain and anguish of one distraught by a torrent of emotions at losing his way.

Utilizing Both Mind and Heart

There is, however, a third possibility. There is an ancient custom that the shofar blasts are meant to sound like both genuchei ganach and yelulei yalil. This opinion holds that we should blow shevarim-teruah, combining groans and uncontrollable weeping.

This custom reflects the most complete form of teshuvah, one that incorporates both the intellect and the emotions. One begins with genuchei ganach, a cognitive realization that all is not well and change is necessary. This intellectual awareness then fosters a sense of remorse and grief so vivid that it awakens the most powerful emotions — yelulei yalil.

Maimonides similarly described the teshuvah process as progressing from cognitive decision to emotional remorse, “The sinner relinquishes the sin, removing it from his thoughts and resolving never to repeat it... And then he should feel remorse for his past misdeeds” (Laws of Repentance 2:2).

This is the most effective form of teshuvah, as it utilizes the strengths of both faculties, the emotions and the intellect. The advantage of emotions over cold logic is their ability to make a deep impression on the soul. On the other hand, change based on emotions alone, without a reasoned foundation, may be unsustainable in the long run.

The psalmist exclaimed, “Fortunate is the nation that knows the teruah-blast!” (Psalms 89:16). What is so wonderful about knowing how the shofar sounds? Rather, the verse means this: when we understand the true power of the teruah — when we know how to utilize both aspects, the genuchei-sighs of the mind as well as the yelulei-cries of the heart — then we can base our teshuvah on the solid foundation of reason and emotions together. With such teruah-blasts, “they will walk in the light of Your countenance” (ibid.) — we are assured of following a path of life enlightened by God’s light.

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II, pp. 328-329)

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