

BS"D



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ON NITZAVIM 5765 & ROSH
HASHANA 5766**

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From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2005 9:40 AM To: tw809@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Herschel Schachter - Remembering the Beginning

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Rabbi Herschel Schachter

Remembering the Beginning

In the tefillos for Rosh Hashana we mention that "today is the anniversary of the beginning of the world." This refers to the sixth day of creation, when Adam was formed. It is the anniversary of the first day of the history of mankind. The first five days of creation are considered "prehistoric", since there were no human beings around at that time.

In the tefillos we also emphasize that on this day of Rosh Hashana we commemorate what happened so many centuries ago on that first day of human history.

On Pesach we commemorate the historical events connected with yetzias Mitzrayim and are mindful of the lessons we learned from those events. On Shavuot we commemorate Ma'amad Har Sinai and all that it implies. So too on Rosh Hashana we commemorate the creation of Adam, and all that occurred on the first day of creation which is relevant for us today. This includes:

1. The Torah relates that man was created "btzelem Elokim" and the mishna points out that because of His love for man, G-d made Adam aware of this[1]. This concept of tzelem Elokim implies that man has tremendous potential to be original, creative, and to accomplish much in both a physical and a spiritual sense.
2. The medrash relates that G-d showed Adam all the beautiful trees in Gan Eden and warned him that if he sins he will be ruining G-d's beautiful world![2]
3. On that same day that man was created, G-d revealed Himself to him and communicated with him, commanding him regarding the "Noachite mitzvos" which are binding throughout all generations, and regarding not eating from the eitz hada'as, which was only intended as a hora'as sha'ah. Some philosophers who were not present to witness this communication find it logically impossible to conceive of such communication between the Infinite G-d and the finite human being. But our religion considers this one of the basic principles of faith, that however He accomplished it, G-d did reveal Himself to man and communicate with him, and will again reveal Himself to man in the future.
4. The Torah tells us that G-d did not cause the rain to fall until after Adam was on the scene to pray for the rain[3]. Not only do we believe that G-d can communicate with man, but we also believe that man has the power of tefillah and can communicate with G-d. From day number one we already started to pray.
5. Chava sinned with the eitz hada'as because she fooled herself into believing the words of the nochosh, that she "will become as great as G-d Himself." Many individuals are led to sin because they fool themselves into believing that they are someone other than who they really are; they join groups of people where they don't really fit in. To fool others is a serious sin; to fool oneself is a greater sin[4].
6. The Torah describes all the trees in Gan Eden as being extremely delicious and pleasant looking. And yet, the nochosh convinced Chava to sin with the forbidden fruit because it was so pleasant looking and delicious. Why would Chava be tempted to take part of the forbidden fruit when all the trees were equally appealing? That is human nature. We always imagine that "the stolen waters are sweeter," and the grass is greener on the other side. The real truth is that one can enjoy life just as much by keeping the Torah as by violating it.

7. The medrash interprets the Torah as to be telling us that Adam also ate from the forbidden fruit because Chava pressured him by her crying. Many people sin due to social pressures. People must do what is really correct and disregard what is politically correct. This indeed takes a lot of courage!

8. When G-d confronted Adam and questioned him regarding his sin, Adam responded (according to the medrash) "yes, I've eaten from the forbidden tree, and I will continue to eat!" Everyone who sins tends to rationalize his actions. Before sinning man can properly distinguish between right and wrong. But after sinning, the "tov vara" become confused. Man finds it hard to admit that he did anything wrong.

These fundamental principles, and many others, are called to mind on Rosh Hashana when we commemorate that first day of the history of mankind.

1 See Ramabam's commentary to Avos 3:14 2 See Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 1 3 See Rashi to Breishis 2:5 4 See Yemei Zikaron, by Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, page 208

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From: RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com

[<mailto:RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com>] Sent:

Wednesday, September 28, 2005 12:36 AM

Subject: **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns**

Jerusalem Post September 30, 2005 TWO

RALLIES

Last Saturday night two different gatherings took place in my Jerusalem neighborhood. One was a rally for "peace" sponsored by the Geneva initiative and led by Yossi Beilin. This group met outside of the house of Prime Minister, barely two blocks from my residence. The Prime Minister was not home since he was busy meeting with his Security Cabinet, planning a response to the barrage of Kassam rockets fired at towns inside Israel (1948 Israel) over the day. The "Peace" rally nevertheless continued apace following the timeworn script of all such rallies. A popular singer sings a soothing song about the rewards of peace, a stirring speaker – this time Yossi Beilin himself – delivers a harangue about how the Palestinians really want to live next door to us in peace but it is the Israeli refusal to accommodate their demands for Jerusalem, the right of return and the freeing of the murderers of innocents from prison that prevent the Garden of Peace from being revealed. All of this on a day when countless Israelis had to flee their homes in Sderot to avoid the rockets being fired by our peace partners. The schools in Sderot have been forced to close temporarily. A "work accident" killed many Palestinians in Gaza on Friday when a truck loaded with Kassam rockets exploded in the midst of a Hamas parade. Many Hamas "militants" were killed by their own hand in that event. Of course, that event is also Israel's fault, for if Israel did not exist why would they need those Kassam rockets in the first place? Yet, I have a hunch that even without us being around they would find use for those rockets on their own fellow Muslims who would dare to disagree with them. Look at Iraq! All of this self-apparent logic is completely lost on the Geneva gang who persist in living in their well financed, well publicized but utterly unrealistic dream world. Too bad for them and too bad for the rest of us also.

By my unscientific judgment to the naked eye, the "peace" rally was poorly attended. Its organizers placed a brave face on this, declaring that more people came than was expected, whatever that means. We all want peace and crave for quiet and serenity. But we would also like to live and survive and be able to raise our children and grandchildren in our own homeland in security and confidence. If the Geneva organizers could figure out a practical and realistic way to accomplish this without giving away the store, they would find a great outpouring of popular support for their program amongst the Israeli public, including me. However, as the current situation really is, the Geneva platform and its "peace" rally is just a caricature of itself.

The other gathering on Saturday night was the beginning of the season of selichot by Ashkenazic Jewry. Sephardic Jews have been hard at prayer of

selichot since the beginning of Elul but the Ashkenazim just began only on Saturday night. These selichot gatherings far outdrew the "peace" rally. The Days of Awe are approaching and Jews are searching for some spiritual sustenance to nurture them in these dark and dangerous times.

In my synagogue I noticed people at the selichot services that I had never seen before. I don't know the import of that. I just know that without some sense of spirit, tradition, attachment to Judaism and its people, land and history, life is very lonely, scary and empty. I therefore found the op-ed article about the unrepentant Jew that appeared in the Sunday issue of the Jerusalem Post very revealing. Here is the "empty wagon" personified. But the villain of the piece is naturally the Jewish religion. It is what makes the writer of the piece wander all over the world, stateless without ideals, purpose and hope. Estranged from his people and past, he lashes out at a religious coercion that is practically non-existent any longer here in Israel. The "peaceniks" say: "If only Israel would concede everything to the Palestinians the struggle would finally end." The rootless, estranged and embittered post-secularist Jew says: "If only there was no Judaism, then Israel would be an attractive place to live." To say that both have put the cart before the horse in their assessments of the reality of Jewish existence, survival and accomplishments is a gross understatement. It is precisely Judaism that fuels the State of Israel and gives it and the Jewish people as a whole the strength and resilience to survive and triumph in the face of overwhelmingly negative odds. The angst of the Jew who has separated one's self from one's people and heritage will not be easily assuaged by wandering from Paris to New York or South America. The call of selichot and the shofar of this season is a call to one's deeper inner self. Estrangement from that self is a loss for that person himself or herself but it is also a loss for all of us Jews and to the cause of Judaism itself.

Weekly Parsha September 30, 2005 NITZAVIM

There is a cynical but unfortunately accurate statement rife in the ranks of diplomats that treaties are made to be broken. We here in Israel have plenty of experience with that viewpoint and assessment of international life. However, in this week's parsha we are told that the Jewish people under the leadership of Moshe and just before his death entered into a treaty – a covenant with G-d that was never meant to be broken or unenforced. This covenantal treaty was not limited to its generation or its place and time. It binds those "who are here with us present today and those who are not present with us here today." It combines the past, present and future of Jewry and its destiny into one unified whole and it makes clear that there really is no escape for any Jew individually and certainly not for the Jewish people as an entity from the terms of that covenant. The past century bears harsh witness to the unsuccessful and tragically inept attempt by many Jews and Jewish organizations and movements to sever their ties with Jewish tradition, the Jewish people or the Jewish future. Hitler, Stalin, Arafat and their ilk took the terms of the covenant with G-d more seriously than did many of the Jews themselves. Too our sad learning experience, we have been taught that the old covenant of Moshe is still operative over three millennia later. The comfort that we may derive from this realization is that all of the other terms of that covenant – the great and good future that it guarantees to us and all humankind - are also still binding and actual.

The word "nitzavim" that gives this week's parsha its name means to be present and accounted for, to stand erect, to appear. There can be no better description of the duty of a Jew than this word "nitzavim." Every Jew is responsible to be present and accounted for. Every Jew must be a proud Jew, standing erect and strong in one's loyalty to tradition and Jewish values. The Torah specifically warns against any attempts to shirk one's duty, to be absent without leave, so to speak. It is tantamount to desertion on the field of battle, the most severe crime in warfare. Only if we view ourselves in the light of having to report "nitzavim" for holy duty can we truly appreciate the import of the covenant and its binding quality upon us. "Nitzavim" is not history alone – it is a never-ending always-renewing

challenge to the Jewish people as a whole and to each and every Jew individually. It is a call and challenge that cannot be ignored.

The parsha of Nitzavim always immediately precedes Rosh Hashana. It sets the tone for the days of mercy and forgiveness, for the heavenly judgments that mark the Days of Awe. On Rosh Hashana we pass before God, according to one opinion in the Talmud as "soldiers in King David's army." On Rosh Hashana, whether we wish so or not, we are all "nitzavim" before the heavenly court. If the rest of the year we are also to be counted as "nitzavim" than we can stand with pride and confidence before that court and pray for receiving its benign and merciful verdict.

B'virkat ketiva v'chatima tova – a good and happy year to all.

Rabbi Berel Wein



<http://www.yutorah.org/showShiur.cfm?shiurID=706063>

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Rosh Hashanah 1st day 5765

Preface 4 הקדמות:

a) שתי נשימות. There are הלכות about how the baal tokeah should breathe? Why? I would think breath is just way to get שופר to emit sound, the main thing is the sound. Apparently: the נשימה is part of essence of תקיעה – essentially a נשימה, which שופר converts into sound.

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

A שופר has to be naturally hollow.

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

d) Finally, last הקדמה, from kabbalah: How does creation begin?

What is created first? The first act of creation is צמצום, the creation of empty space. The first thing to be created is the fabric of empty space, which is arena in which creation takes place.

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

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

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

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

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

Said the Arizal – the אלקים גימטריא is 86 - פו. The אלקים גימטריא in אלף למד הי יוד ממילוי is 300 - ש. And the אלקים גימטריא in אלף למד הי יוד ממילוי is 200 - ר. So ר-ופ-ש consists of aspects of this שם which is the שם of בריאה.

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

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

that renewal by creating ourselves anew, as well.

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

The sound of the שופר brings us up short, it brings us face to face with the stark truth that we are created beings – that the עולם בורא has given us a finite time here on earth,, and that we will one day have to return that gift and give an accounting of how we used it. With every תקיעה שברים תרועה תקיעה we should feel that existence is being given to us, that life is being breathed into us for another year – we hope for a full year, and we should realize that next Rosh Hashana we shall have to give an accounting of how we used it. As we listen to the שופר, as we hear reverberating in it the echo of בריאה itself, as we receive that breath of life, let us resolve to use that breath of life well, to fill the life we are receiving with תורה and מצוות, with חסד and אהבת ישראל, with עבודה and תפילה, to the best of our ability. Let us resolve to use that life for the greater glory of the One Who gives it, and to walk in His light the sound of Whose might creation reverberates around us – as it says:

'אשרי העם יודעי תרועה ה'

באור פניך יהלכון

From: innernet-owner@innernet.org.il [mailto:innernet-owner@innernet.org.il] On Behalf Of Heritage House Sent: Saturday, September 24, 2005 11:59 PM To: innernet@innernet.org.il Subject: InnerNet - "7 Questions About Rosh Hashana" INNERNET MAGAZINE SEPTEMBER 2005 <http://www.innernet.org.il/catagories.php?pid=16> "7 QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ABOUT ROSH HASHANA" by Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf

Q1: Why don't we celebrate New Year's in January?

The calendar that begins in January and ends in December is known as the Gregorian calendar and was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. This calendar is based on an even earlier calendar, the Julian calendar, that was introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE.

The Jewish calendar not only is of much earlier origin, but also differs from the Gregorian calendar in numerous ways.

1) The Jewish calendar is based on the moon (lunar) and not the sun (solar).

2) The Jewish calendar contains a number of "new year" dates. This is like having a fiscal year that overlaps two calendar years. The month of Tishrei, which begins with Rosh Hashana, is the beginning of the year vis-a-vis the number of years, e.g., 5752, 5753, etc. The month of Nissan, the month in which Passover falls, is considered the beginning of the year with regard to the festivals (Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot) as well as for the establishment of the reign of a Jewish king.

Our calendar is based on the moon, and similarly the Jewish people are compared to the moon. No matter how dark life seems for the Jewish people, we must know that the "light" is already waiting to reappear. Jewish history is an ongoing portrayal of this principle. Also, unlike the sun, which is always present in its fullest form, the moon progresses in stages until it is full and radiant.

A Jew must look at life as a constant process of growth and development. Tiny beginnings can grow to their fullest potential, and even darkness can be overcome.

Q2: On Chanukah the menorah burned for eight days; on Passover the Jews left Egypt. What happened on Rosh Hashana?

The Talmud relates that Man was created on the first of Tishrei. This being the case, Rosh Hashana is a birthday of sorts for the human race.

In the Torah, the account of the creation of the first human beings states that Man was created, "in the image of God." Jewish tradition understands "the image of God" to mean that human beings possess free will. Our actions are not predetermined by any Divine, psychological or sociological forces; rather, we are free to choose and are thus responsible for the consequences of our actions. As will be explained later, on Rosh Hashana we celebrate our humanity by exercising our free will.

"Life is a gift. You appeared. You had nothing to do with it whatsoever. You had nothing to do with the color of your eyes, the color of your hair, the color of your skin, or how tall you were going to be. You stand with this gift of yourself. What are you going to do with it? G-d gave you self, gave you life, and gave you the world to live in. What are you going to do with that gift?" - Millard Fuller, Founder of Habitat for Humanity

Q3: Is Rosh Hashana a happy day or a sad day? Rosh Hashana is a happy day, a festival, and at the same time it is a very serious day. It is a serious day because it is the day of judgment, and it is a happy day because we are confident that if we understand the meaning of the day and use it properly, then we will indeed receive a favorable judgment.

Q4: Why does G-d judge us?

Because life is serious business. If we feel that we are being judged, we are more apt to treat life with the proper gravity.

Big G-d cares about little me. Judgment implies caring. If you don't care, you don't judge. Therefore, another way of understanding how Rosh Hashana is both solemn and joyous is seeing G-d's judgment, the fact that He cares about how we live our lives, as the surest sign of His love.

Q5: Why do we dip an apple in honey?

Because it tastes good! Also, because it represents our heartfelt wishes for a sweet year, not only for ourselves and our families but also for all the Jewish people.

1) On most fruit trees, the leaves appear before the fruit, thus providing a protective cover for the young fruit. The apple, however, makes a preemptive move by appearing before the leaves. The Jewish people are compared to an apple because we are willing to live out our Jewish lives even if this seems to leave us unprotected. We have confidence that G-d and the instructions in the Torah could never mislead us.

2) A bee can inflict pain by its sting, yet it also produces delicious honey. Life has this same duality of potential. We pray that our choices will result in a sweet year.

Q6: Why do we blow the shofar? Since Rosh Hashana is the anniversary of the creation of the world, it follows that it is also the anniversary of G-d being sovereign over the world. Rosh Hashana is a coronation of sorts, and thus we trumpet the shofar just like at a coronation ceremony.

In truth, Rosh Hashana marks the creation of Man, not the world. The actual creation of the world took place five days before the first human beings were created. In Judaism, the creation of the entire universe is marked by celebrating the creation of the purpose of the world: the free-willed human being.

The word shofar is related to the Hebrew word, I'shaper. The word I'shaper means "to beautify." The call of the shofar reminds us each of our own calling, the calling to live beautiful lives. Why does our King decree the celebration of holidays and the performance of mitzvot, commandments? Only as a way to guide us in the process of beautifying ourselves and the world we live in.

Q7: If you don't have a shofar, will a trumpet or some other instrument suffice?

No. Our sages teach us that it is specifically a ram's horn that must be used. The ram's horn is an allusion to the binding of Isaac that took place on Rosh Hashana, when a ram eventually replaced Isaac on the altar.

Abraham and Isaac, each in his own way, were prepared to give up everything for what they believed was right -- the will of their Creator. When we hear the sound of the ram's horn on Rosh Hashana, we are supposed to consider what sacrifices we would make for what we believe in as Jews.

- If things looked dire, would we go fight for Israel?

- Would we pass up a good job opportunity if it meant living in a place where our children's Jewish education would be compromised?

- Would we give up a week's pay if it were required to help resettle Soviet Jews in Israel?

- If hiding our Jewish identity would help get us the job, promotion or date we want, would we hide it?

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From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com [<mailto:ZeitlinShelley@aol.com>] Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2005 11:13 PM To: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com

Subject: On the Day of Judgment by Rabbi Moshe Weiss

On the Day of Judgment By Rabbi Moshe Weiss

My Dear Readership,

As you are either reading this article near Rosh Hashanah or right before the Day of Judgment itself, I'd like to take this opportunity at the very outset to wish you and yours a very health, happy, and wonderful New Year.

I would like to suggest that we are a club of sorts and how nice it would be if, during the course of Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, we would say a prayer for each other. This method of tefilah is very sweet in the Eyes of Hashem. As we are taught, "Kol hamispallel b'ad chavairo, v'hu tzarich la'oso davar, hu ne'ene techila -- Whoever prays on behalf of his friend and he too shares the same need, he is answered first."

So, G-d willing, I will pray for the health and well-being of my wonderful readership; for those who need a cure, for those who want children, for those who are seeking a mate, for those who seek wisdom in dealing with their children, for those who need employment, for those who need better marital bliss, for those who need peace of mind, and for the many who want from Hashem another year of good health and prosperity. And, it is my hope that all of you will find a few minutes to do the same.

We all know the score -- how important and critical these days are. We all feel scared as the chazan intones, "Mi yichye u'mi ya'mos --- Who will live and who (chas v'shalom) will die." There are certain very powerful steps we can take to upgrade greatly the quality of our life for the coming year.

We know that Hashem created a husband and wife as one. Indeed, forty days before the creation of each of them, He announced that they were destined for one another. This is so that their very programming should be a complement to each other. Therefore, it is Hashem's desire that they should live-out their lives together. Thus, if a husband fulfills his duty to his wife, and a wife is a proper partner to her husband, they merit another year -- even if they are otherwise undeserving. It is therefore a very strong defense, on the Day of Judgment, to pledge to Hashem that in the coming year we will try harder to make the lives of our spouses sweeter, happier, and more fulfilling. This is very, very meaningful in the Eyes of Hashem.

Another very effective method to upgrade greatly the quality of our lives is to forgive others for what they've done wrong to us. Burying hatchet, devolving grudges, and abolishing feuds create a strong atmosphere of midah k'neged midah, of measure for measure, where Hashem will forgive us in turn and bury our misdeeds. As the Gemora teaches us, "Kol hamavir al midosov, ma'avirin mimenu al kol p'sha'av -- Whoever looks away from the ills that others do to him will have his sins removed."

Yet another mission of Rosh Hashanah is to show Hashem that, at the beginning of the New Year as we coronate Him anew as our King, we are ready to define and crystallize our mission in life. Firstly, we will try to be more cognizant, on a daily basis, that we are Hashem's subjects. It is for this reason that throughout this season, we say twice daily, "L'Dovid, L'Hashem, Ori," for we try to live this motto of Dovid's -- that Hashem is my Light, my Guidance, my Illumination, and the decisive factor in my day-to-day decisions in life.

When we live with the constant awareness of Hashem, it is Hashem's pleasure to keep us around for a long, long time. For, after all, like we say in the wedding blessing, "Shehakol Bara Lichvodo -- Everything was created for His Honor," if we fit in the plan, Hashem welcomes us for a long stay.

We also know that, "Mizonosov shel Adom k'tzuvin lo, MeiRosh Hashanah -- A person's livelihood is fixed for him on Rosh Hashanah." Therefore, besides the obvious responsibility to pray fervently on Rosh Hashanah for a healthy annual income, it is also a time to learn, and pledge to practice, the discipline and lifestyle that our parnassa is from Hashem.

To illustrate what this means, let me share with you a beautiful parable from the Dubno Maggid. He tells the story of a pauper who is trudging along with a heavy backpack. A wealthy coachman drives by and offers him a ride. Gratefully, he climbs in but, even though he is sitting, he keeps the heavy burden upon his back. The driver says to him in consternation, "Why are you still schlepping your heavy pack? Put it down." The poor man replies that it is enough that he is receiving a ride, he doesn't want to trouble the coachman with burden of carrying the package too. The coachman laughs and says, "Either way, it's in the coach. You might as well put it down and enjoy the ride."

The Dubno Maggid says that it is the same with one's efforts at making a living. Of course, we can't roll back on our heels, saying that whatever we are supposed to get will come along anyway. Rather, we must make a healthy hishtadlus, the proper attempt, to get our annual stipend. But, it is foolhardy to be a workaholic by doing more than Hashem expects from us, like giving up praying a minyan, foregoing a fixed study session, studying with our children, or working inhuman hours. After all, Hashem is giving us the ride anyway. Why don't we put down our bags and trust in Him?

As the posuk says, "Hashleich al Hashem y'hav-cha, v'hu yechaltilecha -- Cast upon Hashem your burden and He will sustain you." In a similar vein, a contemporary saying might be that one who does more than the average hishtadlus is like being a person who is riding on a bus and, in order to make it move faster, pushing the seat in front of him. Unnatural hishtadlus is effective as that person on the bus.

So, on Rosh Hashanah it is very meaningful in the Eyes of Hashem when we tell Him that this year we'll spend more time with the family, more time in shul, more time with a sefer, more time on chesed, and leave the extra hours of income for Him to take care of.

Finally, it is urgent to remember the dictum of Chazal. "L'olam yispallel adam shelo yechele -- A person should always pray not to become sick." Let's not take our health for granted, but pray fervently for a good health, knowing that we're healthy without any need for a sudden test and scary doctor visits.

Once again, I would like to wish you, with all my heart, a Ksiva v'Chasima Tova u'Mesuka.

To receive a weekly cassette tape or CD directly from Rabbi Weiss, please send a check to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com. Attend Rabbi Weiss's weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush, Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Weiss's Daf Yomi shiurim can be heard LIVE on Kol Haloshon at (718) 906-6400. Write to KolHaloshon@gmail.com for details. (Sheldon Zeitlin transcribes Rabbi Weiss' articles. If you wish to receive Rabbi Weiss' articles by email, please send a note to ZeitlinShelley@aol.com.)

From: office@etzion.org.il [<mailto:office@etzion.org.il>] Sent: Thursday, September 29, 2005 6:19 PM To: yhe-holiday@etzion.org.il Subject: Special Rosh Hashana Package

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Yhe-Holiday: Special Rosh Hashana 5766 Package
<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/chag66/rh66.htm>
INDIVIDUAL REPENTANCE AND NATIONAL REPAIR

BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL

Translated by Kaeren Fish

THE SHOFAR IN ELUL

The Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 571:1) states:

It is customary to arise at midnight to recite Selichot and supplications from Rosh Chodesh Elul onwards, until Yom Kippur. However, the Ashkenazi custom is different: from Rosh Chodesh onwards they begin sounding the shofar after the morning prayer.

This is based on the Tur (ad loc.):

We learn in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer: On Rosh Chodesh Elul, the Holy One told Moshe, "Ascend the mountain to Me" -- and it was then that he ascended to receive the second set of tablets, and the shofar was sounded throughout the camp. Moshe ascended the mountain in order that they would not be led astray again to idolatry, and the Holy One was exalted by that shofar, as it is written (Tehillim 47), "G-d goes up with a teru'a..." Therefore, the Sages ruled that we should sound the shofar on Rosh Chodesh Elul every year, and throughout the month, in order to urge Israel to repent, as it is written (Amos 3), "Shall a shofar be sounded in the city [and the people not be afraid?]"

THE MONTH OF ELUL IN THE ISRAELITE CAMP

Let us attempt to recreate the scene during that month in the Israelite camp. The distance between "You shall be chosen unto Me" and "Leave Me, that I may annihilate them," was very short. A sense of failure had pervaded Israel from the 17th of Tammuz, when Moshe shattered the tablets, until Rosh Chodesh Elul. Benei Yisrael could not forget the moment when Moshe stood and prayed for them, while they were in seized by profound frustration. Then Rosh Chodesh arrived, and G-d told Moshe to ascend Mount Sinai once again. However, the anxieties were still present. It appeared that G-d had forgiven them and was prepared to "forget" the sin of the golden calf, but the nation still worried: just as G-d could put aside the sin of the golden calf, perhaps He could also put aside the great revelation of "I am the Lord your God."

She said to Him: "Master of the Universe -- if there is no forgetfulness before Your throne of glory, perhaps You will never forget my part in the episode of the golden calf?" [God] answered, "These, too, shall be forgotten" (Yeshayahu 49:15). Then she said to Him: "Master of the Universe -- if there is indeed forgetfulness before Your throne of glory, perhaps You will forget my part in the Revelation at Sinai?" He

answered: "And I shall not forget you" (ibid.). This is what Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rav Oshaya: What is the meaning of the words, "These, too, shall be forgotten?" This refers to the episode of the golden calf. "And I shall not forget you" – this refers to the Revelation at Sinai." (Berakhot 32a)

THE SOUNDING OF THE SHOFAR IN THE ISRAELITE CAMP

From this midrash in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer we learn an interesting lesson. The midrash teaches that the shofar was sounded when Moshe ascended for the third time, in order that the nation would not go astray after idolatry. How is it possible that there was still any danger of idolatry? Forty days had passed since the debacle of the golden calf, and Am Yisrael had already undergone a process of teshuva, repentance. Their only concern, at this stage, was what would become of the experience of the Revelation. How, then, is it possible that it was now necessary to sound in shofar in order that they would not be led astray after idolatry?

It seems that in order to understand this midrash, we must first understand the motivation for the golden calf. According to the view of many of the Rishonim – especially Rabbi Yehuda ha-Levi – Benei Yisrael were certain that they were on the correct path; they felt a need to do something. Rabbi Yehuda ha-Levi explains that they possessed an overabundance of initiative; they regarded themselves as especially religious. How could they keep silent for forty days after the Revelation at Sinai? Benei Yisrael sought something tangible; they were looking for religious experience. The giving of the Torah was not a spiritual experience. It was prophecy, transmitted to them in awe and terror. They were now looking for an experience, and they followed their feelings.

It was for this reason that Moshe was afraid that the nation would sin. He already knew that they would not fashion another calf – but perhaps they would make something else, based on a feeling that they had to find some way of expressing their emotion. Perhaps they would find some other means of expression that would also be idolatry. Therefore G-d commanded that the shofar be sounded, telling them: Every form of idolatry is wrong! It is not religious experience that you should seek, but rather to fulfill what G-d commands. Kavana (intention) is not enough; one must carry out the actions that G-d tells us to perform.

REPAIRING FAILURES

The Torah explains how we should go about repairing past failures. The process involves two stages, corresponding to God's commands to Moshe to ascend the mountain to receive the second tablets.

First, G-d told "Carve for yourself two tablets of stone." While the first tablets were inscribed by G-d Himself – "engraved by the finger of God" – here we are told that Moshe had to carve them himself. The same applies to teshuva. You cannot just rely on the atmosphere around you; you cannot suffice with the "Elul" feeling. Carve for yourself! From now, the tablets are no longer a Divine creation. And the engraving upon them is not Divine script. Thinking about teshuva is admittedly a positive thing, but in order to turn a process around, to change a personal trait, to chart a different course – one must hew deeply into oneself.

The second stage is "No one shall ascend with you, nor shall anyone be seen anywhere about the mountain." For the giving of the first tablets, G-d commands: "You shall ascend, and Aharon;" now – "no one shall ascend with you." The first tablets were given amidst thunder and lightning; now there is silence. Everything emanates from the deepest recesses of the soul; everything takes place quietly, in private. Moshe is ready to ascend Mount Sinai, thinking that he has already remedied Benei Yisrael's sin. He believes that they will no longer have any desire to go off seeking religious experiences; that all they will be interested in now is what G-d says. He ascends to receive the second set of tablets, which he is supposed to bring down on Yom Kippur. But before G-d gives him the tablets, He tells him that there is an important message that he must pass on to the people: G-d passed over

before him, and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord; mighty God, merciful and compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in kindness and truth, preserving kindness to thousands, forgiving sin and wrongdoing, but by no means clearing iniquity, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." And Moshe made haste and bowed to the ground and prostrated himself. (Shemot 34:6-8) "G-d passed over before him and proclaimed" – Rabbi Yochanan said: Were it not for the fact that this is written in the Torah, it would be impossible to say! This teaches us that the Holy One wrapped Himself like a prayer leader and showed Moshe the order of prayer. He told him, "Whenever Israel sins, LET THEM PERFORM this order before Me, and I shall forgive them." (Rosh Ha-shana 17a)

What is the meaning of the expression, "Let them perform this order before Me?" The ancient Sages taught: It is not enough to talk; one must do. We must cleave to God's attributes. Each personal attribute and trait must be translated into practical action, and everything begins with inter-personal relations. Benei Yisrael thought that only the relationship between man and G-d was important, that the problem was only idolatry, and that avoiding this was the most critical thing. But it is impossible to achieve full atonement and forgiveness from God, and to receive the Torah, if these thirteen attributes do not penetrate the consciousness of the nation and of the individual.

Concerning R. Yishmael's dictum, "Receive every person joyfully" (Avot 3:12), Rambam teaches: "One must receive every person – whether small or great, whether a free man or a slave, every member of the human race – joyfully..."

Teshuva begins between man and his fellow. It starts at home, and in the way I act towards other people – whether they are great or small, whether they share my culture or not.

People are so good at criticizing and analyzing, judging everything that happens. On the other hand, they are also good at whitewashing, at justifying their own behavior. When it comes to other people and what they do, it's the ability to criticize that comes to the fore. When it comes to my own actions, I have a long list of excuses. During these days, we must reverse this situation! We must be critical of ourselves, and excusing of others. We must receive everyone joyfully. The Gemara in Ketubot (111b) teaches: Rabbi Yochanan said: One who shows the whites of his teeth [i.e., smiles] to his friend is better than one who gives him milk to drink, as it is written: "...and teeth are whiter (lavan shinayim) than milk" - do not read "lavan" but rather "libun shinayim," i.e., whitening [or showing the white of] one's teeth.

We live in an alienated world. The way out of alienation must begin with us.

Now, during these days of Selichot and Divine compassion, we must relive that first Elul – that awareness of failure, the hewing of the tablets, the inwardness. Let us therefore begin to recite and internalize the attributes G-d taught Moshe.

Allow me to share with you a personal feeling. I have experienced the Days of Repentance during three very different periods in my life.

The first period was one in which Jews in the Diaspora lived in peace and quiet. The level of anti-Semitism was bearable. No one worried about what was going to happen in the future. There were some Zionists who spoke about the Jewish collective, but only as an ideal. Everyone worried mainly about himself – who would live and who would die, who in his time and who before his time.

Then came the Holocaust, when everyone focused on his own personal survival. Who spoke about the Jewish collective, the Jewish nation? People were worried about living to the next day.

Afterwards, when the State of Israel was founded, people turned their attention to the survival and condition of the People of Israel. This year especially, we are in a period in which our concern is not for our own personal survival. Despite the constant threat of terrorism – may the Holy

One protect us – in Israel we aren't worried about "What will happen to me?" Our main worry is: What will happen to Am Yisrael? What will happen to the State of Israel? What about Eretz Yisrael?

In such a period, a person thinks: When there are such great worries, what does it matter if I'm a little better or a little worse? Is that really the issue – my personal problems? There are huge national problems! We don't want to feel that we are putting aside all of Am Yisrael's worries and focusing only on ourselves.

We must be strong, and remember the Gemara that teaches: Rabbi Yochanan said: Great is teshuva, for it brings redemption. As it is written (Yishayahu 59), "A redeemer shall come to Tzion, and to those who turn from sin amongst Yaakov": What is the reason that "a redeemer shall come to Tzion"? Because of "those who turn from sin amongst Yaakov." (Yoma 86)

Here the prophet speaks of redemption, but not the full and final redemption. There is also everyday redemption. The final redemption is an exalted level, but first there is the redemption on the everyday level. We, with our personal teshuva, are doing something for all of Israel. Our teshuva is not cut off from what is happening to Am Yisrael; it is all connected!

Therefore, our personal introspection is not divorced from national concerns. It represents, in fact, active participation in the issues and concerns of the nation as a whole.

Let us pray to G-d that He give us the strength to remedy our faults and to return to Him wholeheartedly. May the Holy One send forgiveness, pardon and atonement to us and to all of Israel, and inscribe both Am Yisrael and each one of us for a good year. (This sicha was delivered on the first night of Selichot, Elul 5764 [2004].)



From: Aish.com
[mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com] Sent:
Wednesday, September 21, 2005 2:59 PM To:
Subject: High Holidays - For God's Sake
For God's Sake

by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

The challenge of our age: not to desecrate God's holy name with acts that profane all that He stands for.

Rosh Hashana begins Monday evening, Oct. 3rd, and continues until Wednesday night, Oct 5, 2005. Yom Kippur begins Wednesday evening, Oct. 12, and continues until Thursday evening, Oct 13, 2005.

Getting ready for the High Holy Days?

Let's see, there are two days of Rosh Hashana and then one day of Yom Kippur. That makes three in all. Not too hard to devote three days to God.

But it's not merely the days that are filled with lengthy synagogue services that matter. The truth is Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are just the "bookends" for a ten day period of repentance that is required for us to appreciate where we've gone wrong in the past year and to concentrate on how we can improve in the future. Ten days is exactly how long we need to begin the process of change and of Teshuva.

What's so special about ten? Just as we recite at the Passover Seder, "Who knows ten? I know ten. Ten are the Commandments" -- these ten days present us with the opportunity as well as the challenge to focus in on the ten major concepts of our faith.

Every day of the ten is devoted to one of the Commandments on the tablets. Not surprising, then, that the two days of Rosh Hashana are inseparable and form one unit. Even in Israel, where the other holidays are but one day, Rosh Hashana is observed as two. They correspond to the first two commandments, "I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" and "You shall have no other gods before Me."

These two and these two alone were heard by every Jew from the mouth of the Almighty Himself. After that, incapable of bearing more divine

revelation, they begged Moses to take over and serve as spokesman. These two commandments were given as one -- and so they remain as one to this day in a 48 hour holy day.

On the first two days of the ten days of repentance we therefore try to capture the full meaning of this double imperative. We blow the shofar to proclaim God's kingship over the whole world. We go to a stream of water for Tashlich to enact a ceremony reminiscent of the coronation of a king, symbolic of rulership that extends across the seas. Our emphasis is on the uniqueness of G-d and His dominion over Creation.

But all this merely serves to prepare us for what the Midrash identifies as the world's greatest challenge!

When G-d spoke at Sinai and uttered the words of the third Commandment, the Midrash tells us "the whole earth shook in fear." What was so frightening?

It was the relevance of a law that was addressed to people who had already accepted G-d but might now be guilty of a sin that to this day threatens our survival. "Don't take God's name La'shov" -- the Hebrew text is not "in vain" but "to what is vain." Don't misuse G-d to justify evil. Don't commit atrocities and justify them as holy because they are committed in the name of the Lord.

History is a horrible saga of iniquity rationalized as sacred service to Heaven. All we need do is to turn to the first murder of all time. Why did Cain murder his brother Abel? Because, a Midrash tells us, they had a religious dispute between themselves. One said "On my portion of land will the Temple be built" and the other said, "No, on mine." And so "for God's sake," brother slew brother.

How many victims has the world known of this violation of the third commandment? For centuries, the Catholic Church performed the most bestial crimes with their Crusades, justified because they were all done in the name of God. In our times, September 11th is a day of infamy not only for the atrocity associated with it but for the recognition that those who were responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocents shouted Allah Akbar- G-d is great! as they brought on their mass destruction.

The world cannot exist without God. Nor can it survive with using God's name to sanctify evil and violence.

Remarkably enough, the third day of the ten days of repentance has a special name that relates it to an important historic event. It is called T'zom Gedalia -the Fast of Gedalia. Jews fast on the day after Rosh Hashana because many years ago, in an act of fanatic extremism, a Jew was slain by fellow Jews -- in the name of God. It happened precisely on the third day of Tishrei, the day set aside for us to pay particular attention to the message of the commandment that calls on us not to dare rationalize wrong-doing as divine will.

Just a few weeks ago, the new pope, Pope Benedict, met with Muslim leaders. To his great credit, he acknowledged that Christianity has in the past committed the grave sin of "killing in the name of religion." With profound awareness of this blot on his faith's past, he urged Muslims to reflect on what is now being perpetrated in the name of Islam that threatens all of mankind.

"How many pages of history," he said, "record battles and even wars that have been waged, with both sides invoking the name of God, as if fighting and killing the enemy could be pleasing to Him. The recollection of these sad events should fill us with shame, for we know only too well what atrocities have been committed in the name of religion."

Perhaps sanity will prevail even among those who still see suicide bombers as holy martyrs and jihad murderers as divine messengers.

But it is something that we Jews must also confront as we reflect on the hatred within our own world, all too often justified as actions "for the sake of God."

"A fanatic," as Finley Peter Dunne pointed out, "is a man who does what he thinks the Lord would do if only He knew the facts of the case." There is an egotistical side to fanaticism that believes no one else is as wise or as

capable of coming to truth. Fanatics, William James pointed out, deify themselves, and that is why they can justify any kind of ungodly behavior.

The truth is we are not God. On the first two days of the holy period of the Ten Days of Teshuva, we must reinforce our acceptance of His power and His dominion. On the third we are challenged not to desecrate His holy name with acts that profane all that He stands for.

It is the challenge of our age. And it is a challenge we must meet -- "for God's sake" and for the sake of His name.

This article can also be read at:

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

Author Biography: Rabbi Benjamin Blech is the author of seven highly acclaimed books, including *Understanding Judaism: The basics of Deed and Creed*. He is a professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University and the Rabbi Emeritus of Young Israel of Oceanside which he served for 37 years and from which he retired to pursue his interests in writing and lecturing around the globe. He is also the author of "If G-d is Good, Why is the World So Bad?"

From: National Council of Young Israel Sent: September 27, 2005 9:41 AM
Subject: NCYI Divrei Torah: Parshat Nitzavim and Rosh HaShana Parshat Nitzavim 27 Elul 5765 October 1, 2005 Daf Yomi: Shabbos 152
Guest Rabbi: **Rabbi Howard Wolke**
Young Israel of West Hartford, CT

The Torah portion of Nitzavim is invariably read on the last Shabbat of the year. "Atem Nitzavim ha-yom kulchem... - You are standing, before your G-d... Every man of Israel... To enter into the covenant of your G-d and His vow, which your G-d has sealed with you today." (Devarim 29:9-11).

What innovation was there in this covenant in the Plains of Moav? B'nai Yisrael had already sworn to a Brit at Sinai 40 years earlier. The Ramban explains, "The first covenant, at the time of receiving the Torah, did not include a curse." It appears from the words of our sages that the new covenant was indeed a momentous event, in that it added a new element of mutual responsibility. From this time on, the actions of an individual were no longer his concern, a matter for private accounting with G-d, but were related to the nation as a whole. This was the beginning of the concept, "All of Israel are responsible for one another." (Gemara Shavuot 39a). This is true not only for violation of prohibitions, as is written, "Each man will stumble over his brother (Vayikra 26:37), implying that each person will be held responsible for his brother's sins (ibid), but also for positive commandments. As was taught by Ahava, the son of Rabbi Zeira, "One who has already recited any of the blessings can recite it again for others" (Gemara Rosh Hashanah 29a).

Rashi explains, "all of Israel are responsible for one another in performance of mitzvot." I am responsible not only to fulfill mitzvot myself, but also to see to it that other Jews obey mitzvot, too. If I recited Kiddush already, I may still recite it for another person and another (no limit) - to enable others to fulfill the mitzvah of Kiddush.

If I already heard the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, I can blow the Shofar for others to enable others to fulfill this mitzvah.

What a beautiful concept - Kol Yisrael areivin zeh b'zeh. It is not just a nationalistic nicety - but it has Halachic and ethical teeth to it. Areivin, from the word Ahrev, means not only responsible for, but also "a guarantee," a "surety." As Judah assured Jacob when he offered his son as a guarantee for Joseph's safe return (Ahrev et ha-naar). We must help guarantee the religious and physical well being of other Jews.

Rav Yisrael Salanter compared the Jewish people to the human body. When a person suffers a migraine headache or a broken limb, the pain is not localized. It is not only the head or arm that aches, but the person's entire body. So, too, when a Jew anywhere suffers physical pain or mental anguish, we all must feel the pain.

In the Torah portion, why did our mutual responsibility begin right before we entered Israel and not at Mt. Sinai? Perhaps this level of responsibility

was waiting until the completion of the Torah forty years later. Or, maybe it is dependent on Eretz Yisrael herself. The covenant did not take effect until the people crossed the Jordan River. This is the explanation given for the verse, "The secrets are for G-d and the revealed matters are for us and for our children forever" (Devarim 29:28). The Gemara in Sanhedrin (43b) comments: "This teaches us that nobody was punished for hidden sins until they crossed the Jordan, according to Rabbi Yehudah. But Rabbi Nehemiah asked him: When can one be punished for hidden sins? ... What it means is that just as G-d does not punish for hidden sins, so was there no punishment for even revealed sins until B'nai Yisrael crossed the Jordan."

The Maharal explains: "Eretz Yisrael is uniquely tied to the nation and therefore all of Israel who live there can be considered as a single individual. That is why when they entered the Land of Israel they became responsible for one another." Before entering the land, the people could be considered as separate entities; even if there was a unifying force, they were still separate. It was only in the land itself that the separate tribes were transformed into a nation, into a single body. This is what transformed mutual responsibility from a theoretical concept to a real physical obligation. This is being written just a few days after the hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and large areas of Louisiana and Mississippi. Our tefilot go out to our fellow citizens whose lives have been so uprooted. We each can also help in concrete ways, too by donating funds for all their necessities. Seeing the terribly painful videos of people being rescued from their rooftops and of the flooded homes underscores the realization of how precarious life can be. It demonstrates that as much as we want to believe that we are in control of our lives, much of what occurs to us is beyond our control.

We vividly see the enormous chesed performed by HaShem in the desert in providing us with all our needs and protecting us from all harm. Upon entry into Israel, the Manna was to stop. Instead of being given all of their needs, the people were now required to conquer the land, defend themselves and produce all that was necessary to sustain material and spiritual life. With those obligations starting, the responsibilities to one another also commence. The people were now forged into a single unit.

In a similar way, the entire world can be considered as a single unit. As was taught by Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon: "Since the world is judged according to the majority and the individual is also judged according to the majority, when one performs a single mitzvah he should be happy that he has brought a benefit to himself and to the whole world." (Kiddushin 40b). One single act can effect not only the person's neshama but also the entire world. Shabbat Shalom.

Ketivah va'hatimah Tovah.

Rosh HaShana 1 Tishrei 5766 October 4, 2005 Daf Yomi: Shabbos 155

Guest Rabbi: **Rabbi Ephraim Zaltzman**

Young Israel of Brighton Beach, NY

On Rosh HaShana when the world is being judged for the coming year, Jews hope that G-d has decreed for them a good and sweet year. Goodness, however is limitless, and G-d in His infinite mercy has given Jews the opportunity to make the coming year better. Still the period between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur - the ten days of repentance - has been granted to Jews to ensure, through their service of G-d, that on Yom Kippur He will bestow even more largesse than on Rosh HaShana.

Service to G-d in these days is as stated in the liturgy of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, in the U'Nesaneh Tokef prayer, tshuva, tfila, and tzedaka. These are commonly rendered in English as repentance, prayer and charity. Seemingly, they also exist in the non-Jewish world.

There are cardinal differences, however, between tshuva and repentance, tfila and prayer, tzedaka and charity. Indeed, repentance, prayer, and charity are not only poor translations but are really opposite of their meanings in the holy tongue of Hebrew. There is no adequate translation because their concepts do not exist outside Torah.

Let us look at each one separately, examining their respective meanings in the holy tongue and English.

Tshuva: Repentance means regret and contrition for sins of omissions of good deeds; and the resolve to start afresh. (Webster's new twentieth century dictionary). Many phrases in English literature (and in the literature of other languages) sound this theme of repentance: "to turn over a new leaf", "to become a new man". Tshuva means something very different. It emphasizes not the idea of "newness" but of return. (Stemming from the root "tashev" literally meaning return). A Jew is intrinsically good and wants to do good; sin is completely antithetical to his nature as explained by the Rambam in Hilchot Gerushin, Chapter 2. Rambam discusses a case when a person is obligated to give his wife a get (divorce) due to the ruling of beit-din. When he refuses "he is beaten until he says I'm willing". The Rambam asks, a get that is given by force is not valid. He explains that "every Jew wants to do all the mitzvot and distance himself from all sins but his evil inclination forces him to do otherwise" so when he is beaten, his evil inclination is broken and when he says "I'm willing" it is his true will and the get is kosher and the woman is considered no longer married. What an extraordinary halacha.

Tshuva, then, is the return to that essential, real self of a Jew. While a person is a composite of body and soul, in a Jew that soul is primary and the body secondary; and the soul of a Jew is no less than "a part of G-d above (Tanya, Chapter 2). A Jew through tshuva – reveals his true self and reasserts the souls master over the body. This is why tshuva is relevant to all Jews, even the completely righteous. tshuva is not repentance; the desire to atone from wrongdoing and start afresh would not apply to the completely righteous who do no wrong. tshuva is also, "the spirit shall return to the G-d who gave it" (Kohelet 12:7). The soul continually strives to come closer to G-d, it's source, and just as G-d is infinite, so even the completely righteous Jew, can rise even higher in his apprehension of G-dliness. The tzadik, the righteous, as well is always doing tshuva – returning to his source.

Tshuva is relevant also to the completely wicked. No matter how low he has fallen, hope is never lost. He can always do tshuva for he need not perform any revolutionary act, create a new existence. He need merely return to his inner self. (Likkutei Torah, Dvarim)

Tfila: "Prayer" is the idea of supplication, petition, (Webster's dictionary) one entreats G-d to grant one's requests. If nothing is lacking or there is no desire for anything, there is no "prayer". "Tfila on the other hand also means union with G-d (see Rashi, Breishit 30:8). In contrast to "prayer" with its emphases on G-d fulfilling one's request, tfila stresses man's striving to achieve union with G-d.

Thus, unlike "prayer" tfila is fully relevant even to those who are not in any need. tfila is not only the requesting of one's needs (although this is certainly an important part of tfila, Rambam tfila 1:2) but principally the instrument whereby a Jew and his maker are joined.

Tzedaka: Charity commonly means also gratuitous benefactions for the poor, the giver of charity is a benevolent person, giving when he need not, he does not owe anything, but gives because of his generosity. Tzedaka has a complete opposite meaning. Instead of connoting benevolence, it is the idea of justice-tzedaka from the root tzedek, meaning justice. It is only right and just that one gives tzedaka. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) A person is obligated to give to another, for the money is not his own. G-d has given the money to him on trust, for the purpose of helping others.
- 2) G-d is not beholden to man, yet gives him what he needs. A Jew must act in the same way, indeed, he is obligated to . He must give to others although not beholden to them and in return

G-d rewards him in the same manner. Because he has transcended his natural instinct and given when not beholden, G-d, in turn, grants him more than he is otherwise worthy of receiving.

The true Jewish meaning of tshuva, tfila and tzedaka, then, is a Jew returning to his true self - tzedaka; a Jew achieving union with G-d - tfila; a Jew acting justly - tzedaka. When Jews perform these services in the ten

days of repentance, then, notwithstanding the good granted on Rosh HaShana, G-d gives yet more on Yom Kippur.

May we all truly have a good and sweet year and most important, may we have a "Shnat Pdut" (Mussaf, Yom Kippur), a year of our long-awaited final redemption of this dark galut, amen kein yehi ratzon.

(Adapted from the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l)

From: Halacha [<mailto:halacha@yutorah.org>] Sent: Monday, September 26, 2005 9:43 AM To: Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview- Demystifying the New Fruit

Weekly Halacha Overview- Demystifying the New Fruit

By Rabbi Josh Flug

Demystifying the New Fruit

One of the well-known traditions of the Rosh HaShanah holiday is the eating of a new fruit on the second night. While, there is much symbolism in eating a new fruit to mark the new year, in reality, the new fruit serves to solve a halachic problem. This article will explore the background of the problem and which fruits qualify to solve the problem.

The Basis for the Second Day of Rosh HaShanah

The Mishna, Rosh HaShanah 30b, records the historical background of the second day of Rosh HaShanah. In earlier times, a new month was established based on an eyewitness account of the new moon. If witnesses would come to the beit din on the thirtieth day of the month declaring that they spotted the new moon, that day would be declared Rosh Chodesh. If it was the thirtieth of Elul, that day would be declared as Rosh Hashanah. If no witnesses would come on the thirtieth of the month, the next day is automatically Rosh Chodesh (Rosh HaShanah). One year, witnesses came very late in the day on the thirtieth of Elul declaring that they witnessed the new moon. Because of their late appearance, the Levi'im were not able to (properly) perform the Shir Shel Yom for Rosh HaShanah. Based on this incident, the rabbis instituted that the thirtieth of Elul would be observed as Rosh HaShanah whether witnesses come or not. If witnesses come before the afternoon, that day is the only day of Rosh HaShanah. If they come late in the afternoon, both days are observed as Rosh HaShanah.

Nowadays, although a new month is not established based on witnesses, the observance of two days of Rosh HaShanah continues. The Gemara, Beitzah 4b-5b, states that the two days of Rosh HaShanah are considered one kedusha (one elongated day). Therefore, an egg that was laid on the first day of Rosh HaShanah is prohibited on both days of Rosh HaShanah. This is in contrast to Yom Tov Sheni Shel Galuyot (the second day of Yom Tov observed in the Diaspora) which is considered a separate kedusha, and an egg that is laid on the first day of Yom Tov is permitted on the second day.

The Recitation of the Shehechyanu

At the beginning of every Jewish festival, the beracha of shehechyanu is recited to commemorate the periodicity of the festival. The Gemara, Eiruvin 40b, concludes that Rosh HaShanah is no exception to the rule and the beracha of shehechyanu is recited at the beginning of the holiday. The question arises regarding the second night whether another shehechyanu should be recited. Ostensibly, one should not recite a shehechyanu on the second night since the two days of Rosh HaShanah are considered one elongated day. Nevertheless, Rashi, Teshuvot Rashi no.116, rules that shehechyanu is recited on the second night of Rosh HaShanah. He claims that the second day of Rosh HaShanah is the primary day and therefore warrants its own shehechyanu. The elongated day is only significant with respect to an egg laid on the first day of Rosh HaShanah and similar issues.

Rabbeinu Asher, Rosh HaShanah 4:14, cites the opinion of the Ge'onim that one should not recite a shehechyanu on the second night of Rosh HaShanah.

The dispute between Rashi and the Ge'onim provides a dilemma for later halachic authorities. If one rules in accordance with Rashi's opinion and recites shehechyanu, according to the Ge'onim the beracha is considered a

beracha l'vatalah (a blessing recited in vain). However, omission of the beracha will not satisfy Rashi's opinion. Rabbeinu Asher cites Maharam MiRutenberg who provides a solution to this dilemma. He suggests that one should place a new fruit on the table while reciting Kiddush. By doing so, one may recite shehechyanu without any concern for a beracha l'vatalah. If Rashi is correct, there is an inherent obligation to recite shehechyanu. If the Ge'onim are correct, the shehechyanu recited during Kiddush is not considered a beracha l'vatalah since the shehechyanu serves a secondary purpose of providing a beracha for the new fruit. [See R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Minchat Shlomo 1:20, who provides a fascinating explanation as to why the shehechyanu is not considered a hefsek between Kiddush and the drinking of the wine (according to the Ge'onim).]

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 600:2, rules that one should place a new fruit on the table and recite shehechyanu on the second night of Rosh HaShanah. If there is no new fruit available, one should nevertheless recite the shehechyanu. Mishna Berurah 600:4, adds that a woman who wishes to recite shehechyanu when she lights candles should follow the same procedure.

Is There a Requirement to Eat the New Fruit?

The Gemara, Eiruvim 40b, is the source that one recites shehechyanu on a new fruit. Rashi, ad loc., s.v Akara, as well as Rambam, Hilchot Berachot 10:2, write that the beracha is recited upon seeing a new fruit. However, Rabbeinu Asher, Eiruvim 3:10, notes that common practice is to recite the shehechyanu at the time that it is eaten. Although Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 225:3, rules that one should recite the beracha upon eating the fruit, Rama, ad loc., rules that one may recite the beracha upon seeing the fruit. According to Rama, one should not be required to eat the new fruit on the second night of Rosh HaShanah. However, Mishna Berurah 225:11, based on Magen Avraham 225:7, rules that one may only recite a shehechyanu upon seeing a new fruit if one derives benefit from seeing it. If one only derives benefit from eating it, one can only recite shehechyanu upon eating it.

Nevertheless, it would seem that any obligation to eat the new fruit would only fall upon one who actually recites the shehechyanu. Those who hear the shehechyanu from someone else are not required to eat the new fruit because the concern of reciting a beracha l'vatalah only applies to one who actually recites the beracha. [Based on the comments of R. Auerbach, op. cit., there is no concern that the amen that is said in response to the shehechyanu will constitute a hefsek.]

Which Fruits Qualify for Recitation of Shehechyanu?

Rambam, op. cit., writes that shehechyanu is recited on fruits and vegetables with an annual bloom. Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 225, notes that it is implicit from Rambam's comments that those fruits with a semiannual bloom do not qualify for recitation of shehechyanu. However, Beit Yosef suggests that perhaps Rambam did not intend to exclude semiannuals, but rather fruits and vegetable species that have no specific bloom season. Based on the comments of Beit Yosef, Rama, Orach Chaim 225:6, rules that one may recite a shehechyanu on semiannuals, but not on fruits that have no specific bloom season.

Mishna Berurah 225:18, quotes the opinion of Shelah that one should not recite a shehechyanu on a fruit or vegetable that is not clearly recognizable as a product of the current season – even if it is in fact from the current season. Nowadays, with the advent of technologies that enable long term preservation of fruits and vegetables, and the mass importation of fruits and vegetables from other climatic regions, very few fruits are clearly recognizable as seasonal. R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 3:34, addresses this issue and rules that human intervention does not detract from the specialness of a fruit that is inherently seasonal. Therefore, in principle, one may recite a shehechyanu on a fruit from the current bloom, even if the same species of fruit is available throughout the year. However, as a matter of practical halacha, R. Feinstein only permits the use of such a fruit for the shehechyanu of the second night of Rosh HaShanah and not

for the shehechyanu that is recited on a new fruit throughout the year. [R. Feinstein adds that on the second night of Rosh HaShanah, one should not recite a shehechyanu on a fruit that one has not eaten in the past few months. This is seemingly based on a comment of Mishna Berurah 225:13, that if one did not recite shehechyanu upon eating a new fruit the first time, he may no longer recite shehechyanu on that fruit during that season.] The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting www.yutorah.org. To unsubscribe from this list, please click here.

From: Ohr Somayach Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2005 1:30 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Netzavim

TORAH WEEKLY Parshat Netzavim

Written and compiled by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2332>

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

INSIGHTS

The Twilight Zone "...Rather, the matter is very near to you - in your mouth, and your heart - to perform it." (30:14)

A true story. Few things are as fascinating to the modern mind as the occult. In spite of modern society's most treasured conviction that ultimately all phenomena are reducible to scientific equations, there lurks the lingering feeling that there is indeed a twilight zone ultimately beyond human knowledge and comprehension.

Not long ago in Southern California a group of people were invited to witness the powers of a certain witch. We're not talking here about a fairground charlatan; it seems that this woman had genuine access to the powers of impurity that are the basis of witchcraft.

She started off her presentation by inviting someone from the audience to ask her a question whose answer could have been known to none save the person himself. All hands shot up in the hall and she chose one at random. "Tell me what happened to me five years ago!" The woman closed her eyes for a moment, paused and replied confidently, "Five years ago, you were in a serious car crash in which you lost a kidney. Is that correct?" The man gasped and said, "That's amazing!" Without batting an eyelid, she selected another volunteer, "How much do I have in the bank?" Again she closed her eyes, "About 2½ million, give or take a few thousand." Again, the volunteer's face registered total astonishment. Slowly she worked her way around the room, revealing people's hiddenmost secrets, astounding her audience.

In the middle of the crowd sat an Orthodox Jew. What he was doing at this particular gathering is not clear to me but there he was. He too had his hand raised. The witch invited questions from the person to his right and to his left, above him and below him, but she seemed almost deliberately to be missing him out. People in the audience began pointing in the direction of the Jew, indicating that she should take his question. Eventually, there was no one else in the audience left for her to question save the Jew. There was nothing she could do. With great reluctance she turned to face the Jew. As she opened her mouth to address him the color seemed to leave her face; she steadied herself against the podium and then collapsed. People sitting in the front rows of the audience, including the Orthodox Jew, hurried to revive her. Slowly she returned to consciousness. As she opened her eyes she saw a bearded face looking down into hers. "Get him away from me! Get him away from me!" she screamed. She started to heave and then promptly vomited all over the floor.

We have no idea the power of spirituality that we create when we do a mitzvah.

We don't feel it. We don't recognize it. We make a blessing over an apple and eat the apple. Nothing seems to have changed. In fact, however, we have drawn down around us an invisible aura of holiness. We have become elevated and closer to G-d. We are more spiritual and the world is a more spiritual place. We don't recognize it, but someone whose essence is locked into the dark side recognizes it immediately and is repelled by it.

If this aura surrounds us when we do any mitzvah, think of how much holiness we can bring down when we do the mitzvah of Teshuva, of returning to G-d and seeking to bring Him back into our lives! This mitzvah of Teshuva predates the Creation itself. When we refocus those parts of our lives away from feeding the "other side" and plug them back into the true Source, the "faces of powers of darkness" must turn to a bilious green!

- Based on the Sfat Emet, and a story heard in the name of Rabbi Leib Kelemen

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

From: Aish.com [mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com] Sent: Sunday, September 25, 2005 9:07 AM To: Subject: New @ Aish.com - September 25, 2005

Rosh Hashana & Money

Emuna Braverman

On Rosh Hashana, our income is determined for the upcoming year. And no amount of cheating, extortion, or other ethical lapses will ultimately change it.

The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat."

Lily Tomlin's tongue-in-cheek comment definitely conveys an accepted truth. It seems to match the general public perception and it seems to be bolstered by newspaper headlines and television pictures of handcuffed CEOs.

We watch these Shakespearean-like tragedies in action. We shake our heads, mutter "Tsk, tsk" and murmur about the price of greed. It's easy to be condemnatory of others. It's easy to see their flaws. And when there's a lot of money at stake, our judgment is certainly clouded by envy. There is a glee in the voices of the newscasters as they detail the fate of another fraudulent company and its principals.

The important question for us is, "Are we any different?" Is it only the amount of wealth and power that separates us from those front page stories or do we really lead our lives in a more ethical way?

This is particularly pertinent every Rosh Hashana. Jews believe that one of the judgments the Almighty makes at this time is our income for the upcoming year. That means that no amount of cheating, extortion, cutting corners, small or outrageous fraud will ultimately change that figure. It means that no amount of selfish hoarding or frivolous spending will change that figure. It means that no amount of ignoring our families to put in long overtime hours will change that figure. It's ALL in His hands. And that's very hard to accept.

Of course we have to make a reasonable effort. We have to work enough that our income does not seem overtly miraculous. But beyond that, it's a matter of trust. In fact the only action of ours that could change our financial situation is to give tzedaka, charity. There is a promise in the Torah of "maaser, teaser", loosely translated as "If we really donate to the needy 1/10th of our earnings, G-d will make us rich." There's a worthwhile experiment!

Other than that, it's out of our hands. It's a funny thing. We seem to recognize that there are many areas of life where G-d is in charge. We pray to Him when a loved one is ill. We pray to Him to conceive children. And we pray even more as we raise them! But somehow the world of finance is unique. It's definitely an insecure world. And if we are totally dependent on market forces and subject to the cheating and manipulation of others, it is a very frightening one. It's very tempting to adopt an "each man for himself" attitude. Recognizing that the Almighty is in charge frees us from this anxiety. We're not victims. We're not reliant on market fluctuations. We have certainty because we have a trusting relationship with God.

In the same way that we wouldn't think of leaving our children without any means of sustenance, the Almighty won't abandon us.

Will we get all the riches and opulence we desire? Not necessarily; we'll get exactly the amount we need (and how we allocate our resources is up to us). We may believe we need more. We may even have a list of wonderful mitzvot we'll do with more money and more space. (Okay, and perhaps some new furniture and a little remodeling as well!) But the Almighty may still decide it's not what we need.

More is not always better for our spiritual or physical health. When we see the children of the very wealthy with their bodyguards or their distorted sense of privilege and corresponding lack of responsibility (as portrayed in the documentary "Born Rich"), we recognize that it is a very great challenge. And that few people are up to it.

In the time of the Talmud, it was understood that sailors and farmers had greater trust in G-d because they were able to see more clearly and directly His role in their livelihood. The more removed we are from "nature," the more we think it's up to us.

There is only one Source of security in this world. And He takes care of us every day, whether we recognize it or not, whether we like it or not (dependence is definitely uncomfortable). On Rosh Hashana, the Almighty inscribes for us our financial resources for the year. Let's pray that we have the strength of character to use them gratefully and wisely.

From: Aish.com [mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com] Sent: Tuesday, September 27, 2005 11:59 AM To: Subject: High Holidays - Embracing Rosh Hashana

by **Rabbi David Aaron**

On Judgment Day we tell the Creator to 'bring it on.' Why?

The oral tradition teaches that when we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana, the King, Who is sitting sternly on His throne of judgment, suddenly gets up and takes the seat of compassion. With just a blast of the shofar, the day is transformed from a day of judgment to compassion. How do we toot our way out of this frightening trial?

By accepting it and embracing it.

When we blow the shofar we are, so to speak, signaling G-d to judge us. Nowadays, when there's a court case and the judge wants to bring the court to order, he bangs a gavel to commence the trial session. But in the olden days the trial began with a blast of a shofar.

Now imagine you are summoned to stand trial before the King to be judged for your deeds of the entire last year. You are trembling, frightened, overwhelmed. Nonetheless, to everyone's surprise, you enter the court with excitement and joy. You confidently walk up to the judge's desk, grab the shofar and blow it. Everyone is absolutely shocked. You not only do not evade the trial, or deny the charges; you actually invite the judgment and anxiously announce "this is my day of judgment. I want no delay. Go ahead -- judge me now."

When we blow the shofar, we initiate the judgment. We are saying we want to be judged and we are not in the least afraid of the outcome. We joyfully accept the judgment and embrace it with love. How could this be?

Most people are either in denial of judgment or spend much effort evading it. January 1, the secular New Year, is also viewed by many as a day of judgment and personal evaluation. People often make resolutions for improvement in the coming year. However, that day has also become a time to get drunk. People make resolutions and then get smashed. I can understand why. Judgment is so painful, frightening and challenging. It is natural to just want to get drunk, run away, avoid and deny it.

The Psalms teaches, "Happy are those who know the secret of the blast of the shofar." What is the big secret? Couldn't anybody figure out how to blow a shofar?

The real secret of blowing the shofar is to know that when you lovingly accept and embrace judgment it transforms into compassion. This is because you realize that the One who is judging you is not only your King but also your Father, as the saying goes in Hebrew -- Avinu Malkeinu -- our Father is our King. He is judging you not because He is insulted by your behavior -- you get on His nerves -- so He wants to get back at you and slap you out. He is judging you because He loves you and cares about you. When you don't understand who is judging and for what purpose then you will naturally run from it. But when you understand that your Father is the Judge and all He wants is the best for you then you will lovingly embrace a day of judgment as an opportunity for change and growth.

If we deny our mistakes and avoid paying the consequences then we continue to make them and continue to hurt ourselves. I would rather be living in reality than denying it and living in illusions. When we transgress the mitzvot, our religious duties, we forfeit our mission to build God's kingdom on Earth and we ultimately cause harm to ourselves.

Our neglect to obey God's will becomes the source of our own personal destruction. Therefore, we tremble with joy on Rosh Hashana because we joyously accept the judgment. We understand the true meaning of judgment and we know that the Judge is our Father and He loves us. We know that no matter how harsh is the sentence that He decrees upon us it is exactly what we need to get in line, back on track, to fulfill our life mission.

Carl Jung once said that neurosis is a substitute for legitimate suffering. In other words, when we deny our suffering we end up suffering in other ways and cause ourselves more harm. I would say the same principle applies when we deny judgment and are not willing to accept the consequence of our behavior.

When we do that, we continue to hold onto the illusion that we are self-defined, existing independent of God, and this attitude generates feelings of alienation from the true ground, source, context and essence of our self, which is God. The feeling of alienation from God, Who is the source of all life and all pleasure, is the cause of all pain and sickness both physically and spiritually.

The very acceptance of the judgment helps to fix the cause of all our mistakes and sins because we realize that we are not independent of G-d and unaccountable. When we lovingly accept judgment, we put ourselves back on track. And having learned our lesson, the Judge gets up from His throne of judgment and sits on the throne of compassion.

This article can also be read at: http://www.aish.com/hhrosh/hhroshdefault/Embracing_Rosh_Hashana.asp
Author Biography: Rabbi David Aaron www.rabbidavidaaron.com is Founder and Dean of the Israelight Institute, and author of: Seeing God: Ten Life Changing Lessons of the Kabbalah; Endless Light : The Ancient Path of Kabbalah and The Secret Life of God: Discovering the Divine within You.

From: Jeffrey Gross Sent: Tuesday, September 27, 2005 7:07 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Nitzavim WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764

By **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav
SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: Is there any reason to have a new fruit on the table during Kiddush of the first night of Rosh Hashanah?

DISCUSSION: No, there is not. Many people mistakenly confuse the first night of Rosh Hashanah with the second night and place a new fruit on the table on both nights.(1) But there is no basis for eating a new fruit on the first night, and indeed, l'chatchilah, one should specifically remove any such fruit from the table when Kiddush is recited. This is because some poskim hold that the shehecheyanu recited during Kiddush, which is a blessing over the Yom Tov day, and the shehecheyanu that one needs to recite over a new fruit, are two different "types" of shehecheyanu blessings, and one cannot fulfill both requirements with one shehecheyanu blessing.(2) According to this opinion, even if the fruit were on the table during Kiddush, another shehecheyanu would have to be recited over the fruit when it is time to eat it. While this is not necessarily the opinion of all poskim, in order to avoid getting involved in this dispute one should remove the fruit from the table before Kiddush, and then recite shehecheyanu over it when he is ready to eat it during the meal.(3)

QUESTION: If a new fruit is not available for the second night of Rosh Hashanah, may shehecheyanu be recited during Kiddush?

DISCUSSION: Absolutely. The reason that we place a new fruit on the table during Kiddush on the second night of Rosh Hashanah is to satisfy a minority opinion which holds that no shehecheyanu is recited over the second day of Rosh Hashanah as we normally do on Yom Tov Sheini - the two days of Rosh Hashanah are halachically considered as one long day, and shehecheyanu over this long day was already recited during Kiddush on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. But the majority of the poskim disagree and hold that the two days of Rosh Hashanah are considered - in regard to this halachah - as two separate days, and a shehecheyanu must be recited over the second day as well. While l'chatchilah we look for a new fruit so that shehecheyanu could be recited according to all opinions, if for any reason a new fruit is not available,(4) we rely on the majority opinion and recite shehecheyanu over the second day of Rosh Hashanah.(5) Indeed, it is important to remember that even when a new fruit is on the table on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, the primary reason that the shehecheyanu is recited is not because of the fruit, but because of the new day of Rosh Hashanah. Thus the proper kavanah (intent) of the person reciting Kiddush [and all those who are yotzei with him] should be as follows: Primarily, the

shehecheyanu is being recited because another day of Yom Tov has arrived; and, secondly, in case this second Yom Tov day does not warrant a shehecheyanu, the blessing should be over the new fruit. (6) B'diavad, however, one does not need to repeat Kiddush if, mistakenly, his primary intent was to recite shehecheyanu over the fruit.(7)

QUESTION: Why is it prohibited to use bar soap on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

DISCUSSION: While it is universally-accepted that bar soap is not used on Shabbos, the exact reason for this is unclear. The poskim suggest several possibilities as to how this custom evolved:

* Certain types of bar soap were so abrasive that they actually uprooted hair, possibly transgressing the Shabbos Labor of Shearing.(8) This reason would no longer apply to soaps nowadays.

* Some poskim(9) compare using bar soap to crushing ice or snow into water which is prohibited(10) because of molid, transforming a solid into liquid. Similarly, when on washes with a bar of soap, a solid substance is changed into a creamy liquid. Other poskim, however, reject this comparison and maintain that using bar soap is not a violation of molid. (11)

* In the past, bar soap was not a solid, rigid bar like it is today, but rather soft and pliable with a wax-like consistency. Using it entailed smoothing and evening it out, thus possibly transgressing the Shabbos Labor of Memachek, Scraping.(12) Some poskim feel that this remains a problem even with some modern-day soaps, since the edges of the bar get rounded off and evened out when used. This is especially true when a started bar of soap has been left standing partially submerged in water, causing the bottom of the bar to become extremely soft and uneven. When this bar is used next, one inevitably smooths out the uneven surface of the partially melted bar.

* Memareiach, Smearing - a Shabbos Labor which is similar to Memachek - is also mentioned by some poskim as a reason to prohibit using bar soap. Apparently, they were referring to the smearing of the lather on the skin. (13) Although all of the reasons stated above are arguable and may or may not be applicable to modern-day bar soaps, it is still universally accepted that bar soap is not to be used on Shabbos. This longstanding minhag yisrael remains inviolate.(14)

QUESTION: Does the custom which prohibits using bar soap apply to liquid soap as well?

DISCUSSION: No, it does not. The majority of poskim,(15) and the prevalent custom follows their view,(16) permit the use of liquid soap on Shabbos. Since none of the previously mentioned concerns regarding bar soap apply to liquid soap, no custom was ever established to prohibit its usage.

A dissenting opinion is found in Igros Moshe.(17) Harav Feinstein wonders whether or not Smearing applies to liquid soap as well, since we can see that liquid soap becomes more runny and more "smooth" during the washing process. While he does not render a final ruling on this issue, he recommends that one be stringent, and he instructed the members of his household to be stringent in this matter.(18) In deference to Harav Feinstein's ruling, some people dilute their liquid soap [before Shabbos] so that it is considerably watered down.(19) But, as stated earlier, the prevalent custom follows the opinion of the poskim who permit using liquid soap without first diluting it. But not all liquid soaps are created equal. There are some liquid soaps that have a high viscosity level and pour out very slowly. These liquid soaps are more like thick oils and creamy lotions which are subject to the prohibition of Smoothing, and they may not be used on Shabbos. Short of using a viscometer, anyone can estimate the viscosity level of a particular liquid soap by pouring some out onto a level surface. If the liquid spreads immediately, like water would, then its viscosity level is low and it may be used. If, however, it begins to pool and does not spread right out, chances are that its viscosity level is high and one should not use this product on Shabbos.(20)

QUESTION: On Chol ha-Moed, may one allow a non-Jewish contractor to do construction work on his property?

DISCUSSION: The general rule is that whatever a Jew may not do on Chol ha-Moed, he may not instruct a non-Jew to do on his behalf either.(21) It is prohibited, therefore, for a Jew to hire non-Jewish workers to do work on his behalf on Chol ha-Moed. But in this case where one is not hiring workers who get paid by the hour, but rather, a contractor paid by the job and not by the hour or day, we do not consider it as if the work is being done on behalf of the Jew. Actually, it is being done by the non-Jew on behalf of himself - so that he may finish the job and get paid as quickly as possible.(22) Nor are we concerned that having workers on one's property would appear as if they are hourly workers working on behalf of the Jew - marees ayin. This is because nowadays, all construction jobs, both in the public and private sectors, are contracted by the job, not by the day or the hour. Thus it is obvious to all that the non-Jewish contractor is working on behalf of himself and not for the Jew, and marees ayin does not apply.(23)

This ruling applies only to a contractor who wishes - for his own benefit or convenience - to work on Chol ha-Moed. It is clearly forbidden, however, for one to explicitly instruct a contractor to work on Chol ha-Moed, or to deduct from the contractor's pay if he does not work on Chol ha-Moed. But in areas other than construction, where sometimes

workers are hired and paid by the hour or the day and sometimes by the job, it would be prohibited - because of marees ayin - to allow them to work on one's property on Chol ha-Moed, even if in actual fact they were hired for the entire job. This is because it may appear to those who are passing by that the workers are hourly workers working for the Jew on Chol ha-Moed, which is clearly prohibited.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Mishnah Berurah 600:5. 2 Ksav Sofer O.C. 26. 3 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:20; Halichos Shelomo 2:1-16). 4 In the U.S.A, especially, it is most difficult to find a shehecheyanu fruit, since almost all fruits are available throughout the year. 5 O.C. 600:2 and Mishnah Berurah. 6 One who intends the shehecheyanu to be solely over the fruit is actually making an improper hefsek between Borei pri ha-gafen and the drinking of the wine, since reciting shehecheyanu over a new fruit at this point has nothing to do with the Kiddush. It is only if the shehecheyanu is recited over the Yom Tov that it would not be considered a hefsek. 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:20. Halichos Shelomo 2:1-20); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:272; 2:303. 8 Rashi, Shabbos 50a s.v. lo, and Ran, ibid. 9 O.C. 326:10. 10 O.C. 320:9. 11 Mishnah Berurah 326:30. 12 Tiferes Yisrael, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 326:30. 13 See Minchas Yitzchak 7:20. 14 Ketzos ha-Shulchan 146:32; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 14, note 49). 15 Aruch ha-Shulchan 326:11; Kaf ha-Chayim 326:43; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Koveitz Teshuvos 1:25). 16 Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos 32:4. 17 O.C. 1:113. 18 In a personal conversation, Harav Feinstein stressed that he is aware that his opinion is a minority opinion and that it differs from that of the other poskim who discuss this matter. 19 Az Nidberu 10:16. 20 According to the Star-K, who used a viscometer in their testing, Softsoap Liquid Hand Soap and Softsoap Anti-Bacterial Liquid Hand Soap with Light Moisturizers, for instance, have a high viscosity level and may not be used on Shabbos, while Ultra Dawn Concentrated Dish Liquid/Anti Bacterial Hand Soap, as well as most regular liquid dishwashing soaps, have a low viscosity level and are permitted to be used on Shabbos. Kashrus Kurrents, vol. 24, no. 2) 21 O.C. 543:1. 22 Mishnah Berurah 244:7 and Beur Halachah s.v. oh liktzor. The halachah remains the same even if the non-Jewish contractor hires non-Jewish workers and he pays them by the hour or day; ibid. 23 Igros Moshe O.C. 3:35.

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