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A Mission Driven Life

Our Personal and Public Mission



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

One of the ideas that most deeply impacted my life was an article of Rav Soloveitchik in his book about the Yamim Noraim entitled “ימי זכרון”.

The article is simply entitled “שליחות”, perhaps best translated as “mission”. Rav Soloveitchik beautifully clarifies the **radical idea that G-d partners with human beings to fulfill His mission on earth**. The clearest place that this is mentioned is the appointment of Moshe Rabbeinu as G-d’s ultimate emissary to redeem His people. Could Hashem not have redeemed the Jewish People without human assistance? Was it really necessary to appoint an emissary of flesh and blood to be the great redeemer of His people? Clearly it was necessary as the verse states:

“ועתה לכה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל-פְּרַעֲהוֹ...”

“Come, therefore, I will **send you** to Pharaoh...” (Shemot 3:10)

G-d appoints Moshe as His *shaliach*. A great truth has been revealed here, maintains Rav Soloveitchik. The Master of the Universe, the transcendental and infinite One, appoints temporal man to bring eternal freedom for His People.

Rav Soloveitchik goes on to explain how **every person is born a shaliach-imbued with a Divine mission**. Their very birth, the generation they are born into, their family, community and geographic background, their personal qualities and traits which they were endowed with together

define the content and contours of their life mission.

It is not by chance that this article appears as the opening article of a book of Rav Soloveitchik’s ideas about the Yamim Noraim. After all, there is no better time than at the onset of the year to examine our lives very carefully and to ensure that our lives are a reflection of what Hashem wants from us. To ensure that we are fulfilling our unique G-d given mission.

Dual Life Mission, Dual Judgement

What indeed is our life mission?

If I could crystalize the essence of our life mission, I would say that it is a **dual mission which can be summarized in four hebrew words - תיקון ו תיקון עצמי - עולם** - **striving both to better ourselves and to make the world a better place**.¹

One is a **private** mission where our focus is on our individual selves alone, while the other is a **public** mission focusing on making a tangible difference to the lives of others. On Rosh Hashanah particularly, we are charged to do personal reckoning and deep introspection on how we are faring in both missions. This is the essence of the judgment on the two days of Rosh Hashanah.

Incredibly, we are all judged not once but twice. Two days of Rosh Hashanah - two different judgments. We are indeed judged once as an individual and the other as part of the collective. One is a reckoning of our

private mission while the other is of our public role.

We may fare exceptionally well in one but fail miserably in the other. These judgments together represent our dual mission and the essence of what G-d wants from every one of us.

A Remarkable Zohar

The source of this transformational idea about our dual judgment is in the Zohar, the great book of Jewish mysticism. The Zohar comments that the reason there are two days of Rosh Hashanah is indeed because there are two very different types of judgment. The judgment on the first day is called *Dina Kashia* – a harsh judgment, and on the second day, *Dina Rafia* – a weaker judgment. The first has the harshness of an exact strict judgment and the second is somehow blended with that of mercy.²

I heard a beautiful explanation from the Rebbe of Spinka one Elul regarding the two judgments on Rosh Hashanah. He connected it to the dual mission of every Jew as we mentioned above. Having two missions means that we require two separate judgments. We need to give a double reckoning both of how we have lived our lives as individuals and also how we have contributed to the Jewish people and the broader community.

On the first day, we are judged as a פרט, an individual, and on the second day as part of the כלל – the collective. On day one our personal life is under scrutiny. How hard have we worked to better ourselves; to improve our character traits, actions and motives. Are we a better person and Jew this year that we were the year before?

Even if we most certainly are, it is not enough. No man is an island and no-one can get away with living in splendid isolation, oblivious to those around them. For that there is a second day of reckoning. We may also be a child, a spouse, a parent, and are certainly part of a family, a community, a people and a world around us. What difference have we made to them? Has our role over the last year in each and



How do we know exactly how to fulfill each mission? What specifically should we focus on in order to fulfill each mission?

every one of these spheres of connection been the best we can offer.³

Weakness and Strengths

How do we know exactly how to fulfill each mission? What specifically should we focus on in order to fulfill each mission?

The Netivot Shalom suggests that our personal mission must be revolved around grappling with our **weaknesses and vulnerabilities** – the areas where we are the most in our moral and spiritual lives. Aiming to improve the counterproductive and dysfunctional behavioral patterns in all areas of our individual spiritual lives is the essence of our personal mission.⁴

Conversely, when it comes to our public mission we must focus on our **strengths and passions**. When we invest ourselves with single minded dedication to a cause that we feel most passionately about, using our G-d given strengths, qualities and skills, we can make a transformative difference to society.

A Complete Jew

In order to fulfill our life purpose and pass the dual judgment, we must succeed at both missions. Together they form the very essence of our mission. We may be judged in one way as an individual, but fare very differently with regard to our judgment as part of the Jewish people. We must be careful not to lose ourselves in either role to the exclusion of the other – we have to have it both ways. The dual judgment of Rosh Hashanah beckons us to aspire to be a complete Jew – to fulfill our dual mission. To aspire always to both heal ourselves and to heal the fractured world we live in. To concurrently prioritize both the course of our personal

spiritual lives and also the course of the lives of all those around us.

If we live as complete Jews, both individually and communally, perhaps we will no longer need two separate days. We will hopefully merit to be able to return soon to the original Biblical imperative of a one-day Rosh Hashanah: one day to reconnect with both our personal and public life purpose.

1. Bettering ourselves on a personal level became the salient focus of the Mussar movement. The mission of תיקון עולם is mentioned explicitly in the תפילות עלינו prayer which we say 3 times a day as well as being a centerpiece of the Yamim Noraim prayers – it says in the second paragraph
2. Zohar, Parashat Pinchas, 231b. It is worth pointing out that this mystical insight of the Zohar is based on a halachic anomaly about Rosh Hashanah. This festival is the only one that is observed for two days also in Israel. Originally in the Torah it was only a one-day festival, but at some point during the Second Temple period, our Sages extended it to a two-day festival, even in Eretz Yisrael. Being the only festival celebrated on Rosh Chodesh, the beginning of a new month, many difficulties arose as to the process of sanctifying the New Moon, then fully reliant on its sighting by witnesses who testified before the Beit Din in Jerusalem. It was not always clear which was the first day of the new month. In order to overcome these technical difficulties around doubtful lunar sightings at the beginning of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah became a two-day festival throughout the Jewish world. Based on this practical halachic rationale, the Zohar offers a deeper spiritual reason for this unusual change in the calendar.
3. The first day is harsh judgment, דינא קשיא, since we stand completely alone as individuals. The second day is a lighter judgment – דינא רפיא – since we are never alone when we are part of the כלל and contributing to its success. The merit of the community comes into play when we ensure that our individual destiny is inextricably linked with the destiny of the community – Klal Yisrael. I subsequently saw a similar idea mentioned by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in Michtav MiEliyahu Volume 2, in his discourse about Rosh Hashanah.
4. Rav Shalom Noach Berezofsky, Netivot Shalom, first shiur Parashat Re'eh.

The Sound of Silence – Seeking Hashem’s Unspoken Will



Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

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Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice his beloved son Yitzchak was the climax of the 10 divine tests he passed and the seminal expression of religious commitment. Surprisingly, we only have one mitzvah that commemorates this Akeida- the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. Chazal explain that the blowing of the shofar aims to remind G-d of Avraham’s commitment and our identification with it. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16a) explains that we therefore customarily use the horn of a ram - the animal Avraham sacrificed after he was told to spare Yitzchak.

Although the Akeida may not have taken place on Rosh Hashanah itself, it is the day we commemorate it because it is the day G-d and (therefore) we reflect on our religious identity and commitment. The essence and goal of Rosh Hashanah are Zikaron (the word the Torah uses - Vayikra 23:24), but the focus is Malchuyot. The way we merit G-d ‘remembering’ (viewing) us positively is by reaffirming and sharpening our commitment to Him - a resolute *kabbalat ol malchut Shamayim* (acceptance of the yoke of Heaven). Our identification with Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak expresses this clearly and firmly.

Interestingly, the symbol used to commemorate the Akeida is the ram’s horn. As opposed to an object that would have reflected Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak, we choose the horn that commemorates his sacrifice of the ram. Why focus on the less challenging sacrifice of the ram initiated by Avraham’s own volition as opposed to his heart-wrenching willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak

commanded by G-d Himself? Isn’t the latter a better expression of Avraham’s acceptance of G-d’s Authority and his commitment to His Will?

The significance of the sacrifice of the ram can be seen in the parsha of the Akeida as well. Two important postscripts of the Akeida narrative - Avraham’s naming of the place, (*‘Hashem Yir’eh* (has shown/been shown)) and his receiving of the divine blessings as a reward for his commitment - happen only after he sacrifices the ram. Why wasn’t Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak enough to merit him G-d’s blessings?

I believe the answer lies in the difference in how Avraham arrives at the decision to sacrifice the ram versus how he comes to the decision to sacrifice Yitzchak. The latter is, of course, a result of G-d’s express request that he do so. For the former, though, there is no command or request. After showing appreciation for Avraham’s willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak and telling him to stand down, G-d is silent. There is no mention of another sacrifice, no mention of the ram.

The Torah tells us that it was Avraham who searched for (*‘Vayisa Avraham et einav’*), found, and decided to sacrifice the ram. G-d had relieved him of his duties, but Avraham continued looking for opportunities to serve. Like in the beginning of the parsha, where, despite the intense heat, Avraham searched (note the similar phrase - *‘Vayisa Avraham et einav’*) for guests to offer chesed to.

Interestingly, the Torah tells us that the ram was caught in the thicket. Why are we told this detail? Chazal understood

this as an indication that the ram was placed there by G-d for Avraham to find. In fact, Chazal include the ram as one of the objects created during the six days of creation for this purpose. Though unspoken, it was G-d’s Will that Avraham follows up his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak with the actual sacrifice of the ram in Yitzchak’s place. In fact, it seems that Avraham saw the ram as something G-d had shown him by naming the place *‘Hashem Yir’eh’* to commemorate G-d’s having shown him the ram.

G-d directs us not only through his spoken word (the Torah and Halacha) but also through events and circumstances His Providence arranges. Man is expected to serve G-d not only by heeding His stated word, but by searching for the additional opportunities/expectations He sends our way.

It is this latter aspect of the Akeida that the mitzvah of shofar commemorates and focuses our attention on each Rosh Hashanah. Complete *kabbalat ol malchut Shamayim* means seeing ourselves as G-d’s creations charged with the mission of fulfilling His will. If we see ourselves this way, we would strive not only to fulfill G-d’s stated commandments but to determine and realize His unspoken directives as well.

May we learn from how we commemorate the Akeida to ‘remember’ how to live our lives as complete *ovdei Hashem* (servants of G-d) and merit through this G-d’s ‘remembering’ us and granting us life, welfare, and success in the coming year.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Haftarah for Nitzavim and Rosh Hashanah



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Nitzavim: "I shall surely rejoice in G-d"
(Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9)

This Shabbat we read the final haftarah of seven prophecies of consolation, replete with blessings of redemption. In contrast with Parashat Nitzavim which presents curses that will befall *Am Yisrael* if they violate the brit - "brimstone and salt and burning in all the land; it shall not be sown, nor shall it bear produce, nor shall any grass grow in it" (29:22), at the time of the redemption - "and your land will no more be called 'desolate!'" (62:4).

The parasha promises: if you will "return to the Lord your G-d and listen to His voice" (30:2), then "G-d will BRING BACK your captivity and have mercy on you, and He will RETURN and gather you from all the nations where the Lord your G-d scattered you" (30:3). Rashi comments: "The text should have read, 'He will RETURN your captivity.' Our Sages learned from this that the *Shekhina* remains with Israel, as it were, in the distress of their exile, and when they are redeemed He brings redemption to Himself, for He will return with them."

This principle is echoed in the closing verse of the haftara: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and His pity He redeemed them" (63:9). The covenant of love and identity of destiny presented in the parasha, is what ensures the ultimate redemption, and is a most worthy conclusion to the series of prophecies of consolation.



Rosh HaShana: Tefillat Chana: From Personal Prayer to National Anthem

Tefillat Chana assumes a central role in our *Rosh HaShana* liturgy. It is not only read as a *haftara* on the first day, but is also the basis for the centrality of the *Rosh HaShana* service - the *Mussaf brachot* of the *Amida*. According to Rabbi Yitzchak (Brachot 29a) the nine *brachot* of *Shemoneh Esreh* on *Rosh HaShana* are based on the nine references to "*Hashem*" by Chana in her *tefillah*. The *gemara* provides an explanation for this connection: "*De'amar Mar - B'Rosh HaShana Nifkada Sarah, Rachelle, ve'Chana*"; as one of the three barren women, according to *ChaZaL*, who were remembered on *Rosh HaShana* and thereby conceived, Chana assumes a central role in the day's *tefillot*. Some *Rishonim*, however, (e.g. Ritva) reject this explanation offered by the *Bavli* and quote other opinions, including the explanation of the *Yerushalmi*: Since Chana mentions *Hashem* as the judge over the world at the conclusion of her prayer, it is most appropriate that her *tefillah* serve as the basis for the *tefillot* on the Day of Judgement (*Tosafot Rav Yehuda haChassid*). Both opinions cited above seem rather difficult; After all, according to the *Bavli*'s explanation, Chana is one of three barren women remembered on *Rosh HaShana* - so why not choose references to G-d's name in the parsha of "*VeHashem Pakad et Sarah*"? The latter opinion as well is somewhat disturbing - if the basis for Chana's *tefillah* on *Rosh HaShana* is because of the marginal reference to judgement,

should we not search for a more apparent section in *Tanach* that deals with the subject directly!?

A closer look at Chana's *tefillah* in context will perhaps reveal a deeper connection between her prayer and those recited on *Rosh HaShana*. Chana offers her *tefillah* after the birth of Shmuel, and yet, her words are not considered those of praise, thanksgiving, *shira* or *hallel*, but rather, "*tefillah*" - containing a *bakasha* as well.

Chana is thereby addressing two issues in her prayer: Firstly, her personal salvation through the birth of her son, and secondly, a request for the salvation of *Am Yisrael*. Chana understands that through becoming a mother after being barren for so long, she has been a beneficiary of *Hashem*'s salvation. Instead of focusing solely on her own joy, she remembers the plight of her people and enjoins *Hashem* to catalyze salvation for all of *Am Yisrael*. Living during a period of anarchy with tribal leaders (*Shoftim*), Chana understands that the nation is in desperate need of spiritual and physical revival and assumes the pain and responsibility for praying on their behalf. She places the needs of her nation above her own as if to say- "as you saved me, *Hashem*, please save your nation".

ChaZaL saw the fulfillment of the *tefillot* of Chana through Shmuel who spiritually revived the people and anointed two *meshichei Hashem* (anointed kings) - Shaul and David. They therefore compiled a *tefillah* based on the structure of *tefillat Chana* through the nine *brachot* containing themes of *malchiyot*, *zichronot*, and

Continued on page 7

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: How many tekilot must one hear in shul?

Answer: The Torah calls the day of Rosh Hashanah ‘Yom Teruah’ – “Yom Teruah Tehiye Lachem - it shall be a day of shofar sounding for you.” (Bamidbar 29:1). This is the source for the obligation to blow shofar. An additional passuk of “**Veha'av-arta** shofar teruah ... **ta'aviru** shofar bechol-artzechem,” (Vakira 25:9) teaches us that every teruah must be preceded and followed by a tekiah blast. Because the Torah mentions the word ‘teruah’ three times total, there is a Torah requirement to hear nine blasts total, three rounds of tekiah-teruah-tekiah.

Over the years there became a doubt as to what the teruah blast sounded like. Is it what we call today shevarim? Or is it more similar to what we call today teruah? As a result of this doubt, Rebbe Abahu instituted that we should do all of the options: 3 sets of tekiah-shevarim-teruah, three sets of tekiah-teruah-tekiah, and three sets of tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah. This totals 30 blasts, and we blow these before musaf (Rosh Hashanah 34a, SA OC 590:2).

Additionally, we blow 30 blasts during chazarat hashatz, ten in each section of the musaf prayer (malchiyot, zichronot, and shofrot). Some have the custom to blow 30 blasts during the silent amidah as well. All of these blasts which are connected to the amidah prayer are only done when part of a tzibur, but an individual would not blow these (SA 592:1-2).

The blasts heard during the brachot of Shmoneh Esre are very significant and one must stand for them. They are called “tekilot d'myushav.” The blasts done before musaf carry less significance and are called “tekilot d'meumad,” because the

congregation is allowed to sit. However, ashkenazic practice is to stand during these blasts as well because during these blasts one fulfills his Torah obligation (as they come first). Some sephardim also have the practice to stand. (SA OC 585:1, Mishna Berurah 585:2, Kaf Hachaim 585:2, Ben Ish Chai Nitzavim 15).

Tosfot in Masechet Rosh Hashanah (33b) writes that the minhag is to hear a total of 100 blasts. Therefore, an additional 10 blasts are blown after musaf:

Tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah,
Tekiah-shevarim-tekiah,
Tekiah-teruah-tekiah.

Those who do not practice to blast the shofar during the silent amidah blow a total of 40 blasts after musaf to arrive at 100 blasts.

Question: If I speak in between the tekilot, do I need to go back and restart?

Answer: The brachot said before the tekilot are meant to cover all of the tekilot, and therefore, one should not speak (unless it is a matter pertaining to the brachot/tekilot) from the time of the brachot until the end of the tekilot after musaf (at the very least, one should not speak until after the blasts during chazarat hashatz - SA OC 392:2). One certainly must not speak during the tekilot or between the tekilot (Mishna Berurah 392:10-11).

One who speaks does not need to go back and make another bracha (ibid, 392:13).

Question: What is a woman's obligation in shofar blowing?

Answer: Women are exempt from the mitzvah of shofar blowing because it is

a time-bound positive commandment. However, most women are careful to make sure they hear the shofar. When a woman blows for herself, according to ashkenazim, she makes a bracha. If a man blows for a group of women, one woman should make the bracha on behalf of all of the women. According to sephardim, a woman who blows does not make a bracha (although some sephardim do practice that she makes a bracha).

Question: Can we switch shofar blowers in the middle?

Answer: Ideally it is best for one person to blow for the entire time (Rema OC 585:4). However, it is permissible to split up the blowing amongst others, and some maintain that this is ideal because it shows endearment to the mitzvah (Mishna Berurah 585:17). If the blower needs to be switched then certainly he can be switched. If the new shofar blower was present at the time of the brachot and intended to be yotzei in the bracha, he should not make a new bracha when taking over (SA OC 585:3).

Question: What is the latest point one can fulfill the mitzvah of shofar blowing?

Answer: One can fulfill the mitzvah throughout the entire day, from sunrise until sunset. One who blew after dawn but before sunrise has fulfilled his obligation (SA OC 588:1). After sunset before tzeit hakochavim, one can still blow but should not make a blessing (Mishna Berurah 585:1)

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*

תקציר פרשת נצבים

הרבנית שרון רימון



זָרַעְךָ לְאֶהֱבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ". **מילת הלב** היא בוודאי חלק מתהליך התשובה, אך היא גם חלק מתהליך הגאולה - ה' **מסיר את כל המכשולים המונעים מישראל התקרבות לה'**: שעבוד הגויים נפסק, עם ישראל חוזר לארץ הקודש, ונפסקים הייסורים והקשיים הפיזיים. מילת הלב היא חלק מתהליך זה, בו מוסרים כל הכיסויים והמחיצות המונעים את ההתקרבות בין ישראל לה'.

מילת הלב מעידה על **ההדדיות** של התהליך. תהליך התשובה ותהליך הגאולה משולבים זה בזה מפני שהם תהליך אחד, של שיבה הדדית של ישראל אל ה' ושל ה' אל ישראל. לכאורה, חלקו של ישראל בתהליך זה הוא התשובה, וחלקו של ה' בתהליך זה הוא הגאולה, אך החלוקה ביניהם איננה חד-משמעית. ה' שב אל ישראל ואיתם, וה' מל את לבבם כדי לאפשר את תשובתם, כדברי זכריה הנביא: "שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם".

השלב הראשון הוא התעוררות הלב לשמוע בקול ה'. התעוררות זו מעוררת את אהבת הקב"ה להניע את תהליך הגאולה. עם התקדמות תהליך הגאולה, עולה רצון לבטא את התעוררות הלב בכלים מעשיים, ובכך עולה התשובה לדרגה חדשה - תשובה מעשית של קיום מצוות. התשובה תלויה בגאולה, היות והגאולה מאפשרת חירות נפשית הנצרכת לשמיעת דבר ה'. כמו כן, גאולה איננה רק שחרור משיעבוד הגויים אלא תכליתה היא השיבה לארץ, המאפשרת קיום מלא של המצוות. כך, כל שלב של תשובה מקדם את הגאולה וכל שלב בהתקדמות הגאולה מאפשר עוד שלב בשיבה אל ה'.

על אף ששני התהליכים כרוכים זה בזה, יש הבדל מהותי ביניהם: תהליך התשובה נעשה בעיקרו על ידי ישראל, כתנועה מלמטה כלפי מעלה, ותהליך הגאולה נעשה בעיקרו על ידי הקב"ה, כתנועה מלמעלה כלפי מטה. יחד עם זאת, במוקד פרשת התשובה ניצבת מילת הלב, שמחברת בין שני התהליכים: היא אמנם חלק מתהליך התשובה אך היא נעשית ע"י ה': "וימל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת לִבְּךָ וְאֶת לִבָּב

רשתית התשובה הכתובה בפרשת ניצבים, עוסקת בשיבת ישראל אל ה' לאחר ריחוקם ממנו בעקבות חטאיהם, ויחד עם זאת שוזרת בתוכה עניין נוסף - הגאולה. לא זו בלבד ששני הנושאים מופיעים באותה פרשייה, אלא שהם חוזרים כמה פעמים ושזורים זה בזה לסרוגין. מה משמעות הדבר?

האברבנאל מפרש את הפרשה כנבואה המתייחסת לקורות העם היהודי בדורו שלו - גירוש ספרד. לפי דבריו, החזרות על פסוקי התשובה והגאולה נובעות מהתייחסות נפרדת לשתי קבוצות - היהודים שבחרו לשמור על יהדותם ובשל כך נרדפו וגורשו; והאנוסים - שויתרו על קיום מצוות בגלוי כדי להגן על עצמם. לכל אחת מן הקבוצות התורה מייעדת דרך אחרת של תשובה וגאולה. האברבנאל סבר שבדורו עמ"י חווה כבר את כל הקללות המתוארות בפרשת כי תבוא, ולאחר מכן חייבת לבא הגאולה, כמתואר בפרשתנו. בעל העקידת יצחק ואור החיים הקדוש ראו בחזרה על פסוקי התשובה שלבים שונים.

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shofarot. Malchiyot describes the majesty of G-d in the world, Zichronot - Hashgachat Hashem in the world, and Shofarot refers to the blasting of the horn of divine revelation and redemption at the time of *matan torah* and the final *geulah*. These *brachot* clearly express and are founded on the same ideas mentioned by Chana in her *tefillah* on behalf of *Am Yisrael*.

Although Sarah and Rachelle were also answered on *Rosh HaShana*, Chana's *tefillah*

serves as a basis for our *kavanot* particularly on The Day of Judgement. As we *daven* for personal requests of *teshuva*, Chana's prayer reminds us of the nature of the day of *Rosh HaShana* as a day of universal majesty of G-d over the world, particular guidance for *Am Yisrael*, and our hopes for nationalistic redemption. We learn from Chana that beyond our concern with individual requests, we must not forget to beseech G-d for the needs of

our community, our nation. The *tefillot* of *Rosh HaShana* must be infused with a spirit of nationalistic identity and communal concern. Our hope is, as *ChaZal* intended, that through identifying ourselves with the *tzibbur* of *Klal Yisrael*, Hashem answer our *teruot* and *tefillot* and redeem us, as He did through Chana, *ויירם קרן משיחו, ויירם קרן משיחו, ויירם קרן משיחו*.

What's New About Our New Year?



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

We are so used to the word “new” but the Torah asks us to stop and contemplate. To truly renew ourselves. What actually becomes “new,” in our world and in ourselves, at this time of year? Our Sages ask us to contemplate three things each day, as if they were new:

Torah: One of the most popular words in Devarim, which we read throughout the month of Elul, is היום – “today.” Again and again, as we read about entering the Land of Israel, we are asked to relate to past events as if they are actually happening to us this very morning, and not 3,000 years ago in the desert. “On this day the L-rd your G-d commands you” (Devarim 26:16). Rashi comments: “Each day, let them (the commandments) be brand new as if you had just been commanded to perform them.”

Elsewhere we read “On this day you have become the L-rd your G-d’s own people” (Devarim 27:9) and Rashi, in the same spirit of perpetual renewal, comments: “Let every day be in your eyes as the very same day you entered into a covenant with Him.”

Now is the most appropriate time of the year to refresh and renew our connection to the Torah, to think of it as a gift we just received this morning, and to visualize how the new year will look when a completely new light of Torah – one never seen before – shines upon it from within.

Eretz Yisrael: The Land of Israel is the Promised Land, the Holy Land, but is it a new land? Indeed, we justifiably tell ourselves and the entire world that we have an ancient, historical right to this Land. Nevertheless, we should never allow our relationship to the Land of Israel to become old or stale.

As the verse states, “And it will be when the L-rd brings you to the land of the Canaanites as he swore to you and to your forefathers, and He will give it to you” (Shemot 13:11), upon which Rashi elaborates: “‘And He will give it to you,’ that is, you should consider it as if He gave it to you on that same day and not as an inheritance from your ancestors.”

It does not matter where we live. We must create a personal, vibrant and emotional connection with the Land of Israel. We cannot rely only on what we were told by our great-great-grandparents. Again, the months of Elul and Tishrei are the perfect time to think about how to bring a new and authentic connection with the Land of Israel into our lives.

Marriage and Family: Throughout Devarim, we receive many instructions on married life and the education of our children – the questions children will ask, the answers we will give, and the manner in which we should educate them.

And it is precisely here, in what we think is our comfort zone, we are called upon to find something new.

Under the *chupah*, we say, “Behold, you are now holy to me, with this ring, according to the religion of Moshe and Israel.” A hundred years ago, Rabbi Tzvi Kunstlicher, in Be’er Tzvi, asked why we emphasize “according to the religion of Moshe and Israel.” He answered that our marital relationship should be the same as our relationship to the Torah given by Moshe to Israel – a relationship of daily renewal. That is, “every day should be like new,” as new as the day you stood under the *chupah*. Here too, we would be wise to devote time, thought and creativity to renew our most important relationships within the intimate surroundings of home.

Our Sages defined the biggest challenge of our times in this way: we should not take our greatest gifts – Torah, the Land of Israel, our families – for granted. The prevailing culture broadcasts a message that loyalty to a text (Torah), a Land (Israel), or fellow members of a covenant (family) are values that have vanished from the world. This culture sees newness as external to ourselves and not something to be sought or attained within.

On Rosh Hashanah, we are called upon to find new meaning in those elements of our lives that have stood the test of time – Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the sanctity of the Jewish family.



Two Thoughts on the Shofar

- Before blowing the *shofar*, we recite chapter 47 of Tehillim seven times,

“למנצח לבני קורח מזמור”

“For the sons of Korach, a psalm...” It is a very special moment.

So why at this very moment must we remember Korach's sons? Korach started the controversy against Moshe and Aharon. A controversy about honor, pride and personal gain, ending in tragedy – Korach and his whole congregation were swallowed up in the ground and died.

But what about Korach's sons? They did not die. At the last minute, they regretted their actions. To this day, we learn from them that one should never give up hope of repentance and returning to G-d.

Have we prepared for this moment of blowing the *shofar*? Were we in a mind-frame of learning and *teshuvah* and reflection during Elul? For many of us, the first day of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah arrives united, as if we never knew it was upon us, and we find ourselves standing in somber silence waiting for the shofar

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For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you - I have placed life and death before you, blessing and curse - and you shall choose life, so that you shall live - you and your offspring” (Devarim 30:19).

In this Passuk, Hashem presents us with some very clear options - "life and death, blessing and curse". The blunt nature of this choice makes the next words in the verse, "and you shall choose life" seem entirely unnecessary. Which sane individual, when offered a choice between life and death, would not choose life? When looking at the explanation of the Midrash Rabba, our question only grows:

"R' Chaggai says (in explanation of Hashem's words), "Not only did I give you two paths, but I went beyond the call of duty and told you, "and you shall choose life" (Midrash Rabba, Devarim 4:3).

Not only does Hashem seem to be giving us extremely obvious advice, but He is applauded for going out of His way and beyond the call of duty to let us in on this

counsel. An explanation can be found in a different Midrashic source:

"Lest Israel say, 'Since The Holy One Blessed Be He has placed before us two paths - the path of life and the path of death, we can go on whichever one we want'. Therefore (the Torah) comes to teach us there, "and you shall choose life, so that you shall live - you and your offspring" (Sifri Re'eh 1).

The Sifri then provides the parable of a man who stands at a fork in the road, at the entrance to two paths. One path is covered with thorns but after a short while becomes enjoyable to walk on. The other path starts off easily but after a short while is entirely covered with thorns. The man at the fork kindly advises passers-by what lies ahead and shows them the correct path the follow.

From this Midrash, we can extract two reasons why the advice "and you shall choose life" is truly necessary. First, the great gift of free will contains an inherent danger. Seeing as we have two paths before us, people may erroneously legitimise taking

the wrong path. The attitude of, "I have free will - I can do whatever I want" is a perversion of the true aim of free will. To avoid any confusion, Hashem sets two paths before us but clearly states, "and you shall choose life".

Second, from the parable, we see that in truth, the choice is not perfectly simple. In the short term, it may often be the case that the path of blessing appears far less attractive than the path of curse. In His ultimate kindness, Hashem stands at the fork in the road when presenting us the choice and encourages us, "and you shall choose life".

As we approach Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, rather than question Hashem's advice, we should question ourselves. Why, with such clear choices before us, do we still require Hashem's advice? What is preventing us from wholeheartedly running to the path of Hashem?

By choosing the path of life, may we all be written in the book of life.

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to blast. What can we do to compensate for our lack of preparation? "For the sons of Korach, a psalm..."

You can always connect and fix things, even now. It's never too late. This is the message for this one-time moment, once a year. You can always repair and improve. No matter where you have been the past year. No matter what your Elul looked like. Here, in just another second, we will hear the *shofar*, and together we will anoint G-d.

• Some data about the past year: Every 60 seconds the world watches more than four million videos on YouTube, sends

156 million emails, asks Google 3.5 million questions and sends about 20 million WhatsApp messages. What was once called the Information Highway is now the Information Intifada, attacking us with constant bombardments of data. No human brain is capable of absorbing so much information.

The main *mitzvah* on Rosh Hashanah is to hear the *shofar* - "Yom Teruah." Other nations mark their new years with street celebrations, a loud countdown, drinking and eating - while we gather inside to be silent and listen. As the outside world

becomes louder and louder, this silence for the *shofar* takes on added meaning and significance.

We are resetting the system. Stop talking and shouting and arguing. Remain silent and listen to a voice above words, texts and videos: "Blessed are you, O L-rd our G-d, King of the world, whom we have sanctified by His commandments and commanded us to hear the sound of the *shofar*."

Stop making the noise. Listen!

Shana Tova!

Why Judaism?



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

This week's parsha raises a question that goes to the heart of Judaism, but which was not asked for many centuries until raised by a great Spanish scholar of the fifteenth century, Rabbi Isaac Arama. Moses is almost at the end of his life. The people are about to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land. Moses knows he must do one thing more before he dies. He must renew the covenant between the people and G-d.

This nation's parents had entered into that commitment almost forty years before when they stood at Mount Sinai and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we shall do and we shall heed." (Ex. 24:7) But now Moses has to ensure that the next generation *and all future generations* will be bound by it. He wanted no-one to be able to say, "G-d made a covenant with my ancestors but not with me. I did not give my consent. I was not there. I am not bound." That is why Moses says:

Not with you alone am I making this covenant and oath; with you who are standing here with us today before the Lord our G-d I make it, and *with those, too, who are not with us today.* (Deut. 29:13-14)

"Those who are not with us today" cannot mean Israelites alive at the time who were somewhere else. The entire nation was present at the assembly. It means "generations not yet born." That is why the Talmud says: we are all *mushba ve-omed meHar Sinai*, "foresworn from Sinai." (Yoma 73b, Nedarim 8a)

Hence one of the most fundamental facts about Judaism: converts excepted, we do not choose to be Jews. We are born as Jews. We become legal adults, subject to the commands, at age twelve for girls, thirteen for boys. But we are part of the

covenant from birth. A bat or bar mitzvah is not a "confirmation". It involves no voluntary acceptance of Jewish identity. That choice took place more than three thousand years ago when Moses said "*Not with you alone* am I making this covenant and oath... *with those, too, who are not with us today,*" meaning all future generations.

But how can this be so? There is no obligation without consent. How can we be subject to a commitment on the basis of a decision taken long ago by our distant ancestors? To be sure, in Jewish law you can confer a benefit on someone else without their consent. But though it is surely a benefit to be a Jew, it is also in some sense a liability, a restriction on our range of legitimate choices. Why then are we bound now by what the Israelites said then?

Jewishly, this is the ultimate question. How can religious identity be passed on from parent to child? If identity were merely ethnic, we could understand it. We inherit many things from our parents – most obviously our genes. But being Jewish is not a genetic condition. It is a set of religious obligations.

The Sages gave an answer in the form of a tradition about today's parsha. They said that the souls of all future generations were present at Sinai. As souls, they freely gave their consent, generations before they were born. (Shevuot 39a)

However, Arama argues that this cannot answer our question, since G-d's covenant is not with souls only, but also with embodied human beings. We are physical beings with physical desires. We can understand that the soul would agree to the covenant. What does the soul desire if not closeness to G-d? But the assent that counts is that of living, breathing human

beings with bodies, and we cannot assume that they would agree to the Torah with its many restrictions on eating, drinking, sexual relations and the rest. Not until we are born, and are old enough to understand what is being asked of us can we give our consent in a way that binds us. Therefore the fact that the unborn generations were present at Moses' covenant ceremony does not give us the answer we need.

In essence, Arama was asking: Why be Jewish? What is fascinating is that he was the first to ask this question since the age of the Talmud. Why was it not asked before? Why was it first asked in fifteenth century Spain? For many centuries the question, "Why be Jewish?" did not arise. The answer was self-evident. I am Jewish because that is what my parents were and theirs before them, back to the dawn of Jewish time. Existential questions arise only when we feel there is a choice. For much of history, Jewish identity was not a choice. It was a fact of birth, a fate, a destiny. It was not something you chose, any more than you choose to be born.

In fifteenth-century Spain, Jews were faced with a choice. Spanish Jewry experienced its Kristallnacht in 1391, and from then on until the expulsion in 1492, Jews found themselves excluded from more and more areas of public life. There were immense pressures on them to convert, and some did so. Of these, some maintained their Jewish identity in secret, but others did not. For the first time in many centuries, staying Jewish came to be seen not just as a fate but as a choice. That is why Arama raised the question that had been unasked for so long. It is also why, in an age in which everything significant seems open to choice, it is being asked again in our time.

Arama gave one answer. I gave my own in my book *A Letter in the Scroll*.² But I also believe a large part of the answer lies in what Moses himself said at the end of his address:

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today. I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life - so that you and your children may live...” (Deut. 30:19)

Choose life. No religion, no civilisation, has insisted so strenuously and consistently that *we can choose*. We have it in us, says Maimonides, to be as righteous as Moses or as evil as Jeroboam.³ We can be great. We can be small. We can choose.

The ancients - with their belief in fate, fortune, *Moirai*, *Ananke*, the influence of the stars or the arbitrariness of nature - did not fully believe in human freedom. For them true freedom meant, if you were religious, accepting fate, or if you were philosophical, the consciousness of necessity. Nor do most scientific atheists believe in it today. We are determined, they say, by our genes. Our fate is scripted in our DNA. Choice is an illusion of the conscious mind. It is the fiction we tell ourselves.

Judaism says no. Choice is like a muscle: use it or lose it. Jewish law is an ongoing training regime in willpower. Can you eat this and not that? Can you exercise spiritually three times a day? Can you rest one day in seven? Can you defer the gratification of instinct - what Freud took to be the mark of civilisation? Can you practise self-control (which, according to the “marshmallow test”, is the surest sign of future success in life)?⁴ To be a Jew means not going with the flow, not doing what others do just because they are doing it. It gives us 613 exercises in the power of will to shape our choices. That is how we, with G-d, become co-authors of our lives. “We *have* to be free”, said Isaac Bashevis Singer, “we have no choice!”

Choose life. In many other faiths, life down here on earth with its loves, losses, triumphs, and defeats, is not the highest value. Heaven is to be found in life after death, or the soul in unbroken communion with G-d, or in acceptance



Choice is like a muscle: use it or lose it.

of the world-that-is. Life is eternity, life is serenity, life is free of pain. But that, for Judaism, is not quite life. It may be noble, spiritual, sublime, but it is not life in all its passion, responsibility, and risk.

Judaism teaches us how to find G-d down here on earth not up there in heaven. It means engaging with life, not taking refuge from it. It seeks not so much happiness as joy: the joy of being with others and together with them making a blessing over life. It means taking the risk of love, commitment, loyalty. It means living for something larger than the pursuit of pleasure or success. It means daring greatly.

Judaism does not deny pleasure, for it is not ascetic. It does not worship pleasure. Judaism is not hedonist. Instead it sanctifies pleasure. It brings the Divine Presence into the most physical acts: eating, drinking, intimacy. We find G-d not just in the synagogue but in the home, the house of study, and acts of kindness; we find G-d in community, hospitality, and wherever we mend some of the fractures of our human world.

No religion has ever held the human person in higher regard. We are not tainted by original sin. We are not a mere bundle of selfish genes. We are not an inconsequential life-form lost in the vastness of the universe. We are the being on whom G-d has set His image and likeness. We are the people G-d has chosen to be His partners in the work of creation. We are the nation G-d married at Sinai with the Torah as our marriage contract. We are the people G-d called on to be His witnesses. We are the ambassadors of heaven in the country called earth.

We are not better, or worse, than others. We are simply different, because G-d values difference whereas for most of the time, human beings have sought to eliminate difference by imposing one faith, one

regime or one empire on all humanity. Ours is one of the few faiths to hold that the righteous of all nations have a share in heaven because of what they do on earth.

Choose life. Nothing sounds easier yet nothing has proved more difficult over time. Instead, people choose substitutes for life. They pursue wealth, possessions, status, power, fame, and to these Gods they make the supreme sacrifice, realising too late that true wealth is not what you own but what you are thankful for, that the highest status is not to care about status, and that influence is more powerful than power.

That is why, though few faiths are more demanding, most Jews at most times have stayed faithful to Judaism, living Jewish lives, building Jewish homes, and continuing the Jewish story. That is why, with a faith as unshakeable as it has proved true, Moses was convinced that “*not with you alone* am I making this covenant and oath... *with those, too, who are not with us today.*” His gift to us is that through worshipping something so much greater than ourselves we become so much greater than we would otherwise have been.

Why Judaism? Because there is no more challenging way of choosing life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why was it so important that Moses renewed the covenant with the Children of Israel?
- Why do you think people so often choose to pursue wealth, power, and fame?
- How can you “choose life”?

1. Isaac Arama, *Akeidat Yitzhak*, Deuteronomy, Nitzavim.
2. *A Letter in the Scroll: Understanding Our Jewish Identity and Exploring the Legacy of the World's Oldest Religion* (New York: Free Press, 2000). Published in Britain as *Radical Then, Radical Now: The Legacy of the World's Oldest Religion* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).
3. Hilchot Teshuvah 5:2.
4. Walter Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test*, Bantam Press, 2014.

The Hint to the Gr”a



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

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The Ramban had a talmid named Avner who became a meshumad (apostate) and an important government official. One Yom Kippur, he sent for his teacher to appear before him, and then proceeded to slaughter a pig, cook it, and eat it. He then questioned the Ramban as to how many prohibitions punishable with kares had been violated, and disagreed with his teacher that it was not four, but five violations, debating with him the application of the rule אין איסור חל על איסור – a prohibition cannot take effect upon an existing prohibition.

In the end, the Ramban asked him what led him to apostasy. Avner replied that it was actually a derashah of his teacher that all mitzvos and world events are included in Parshas Ha'azinu. To Avner, this was something that was not possible, and he “became a different person.” The Ramban replied that he still held such a view, whereupon Avner challenged his teacher to show him his name in the parsha.

The Ramban went to a corner and prayed, and the following passuk came to his mouth:

אמרתִי אפאיהם אשביתה מאנוש זכרם –

“I had said, ‘I will scatter them, I will cause their memory to cease from man’” (Devarim 32:26). The third letter of each word spells out – “רִי אבנר.” When Avner heard this, his face fell, and he asked his teacher if there was any cure for his wound. The Ramban responded, “You have heard the words of the passuk,” and went on his way. Immediately, Avner took a boat without sailor or oar, and went wherever the wind would bring him.

Nothing more is known about him.

In a similar vein, the sefer Emunah VeHashgachah by Rav Shmuel Maltzan cites the statement of the Vilna Gaon

that all of world history is hinted to in Chumash Devarim, which was dictated to Moshe in such a way that there are hidden meanings contained within the words. When asked by Rav Chaim Volozhiner where the Gaon himself was hinted to in the Chumash, the Gr”a turned to the passuk in Parshas Ki Seitzei:

לך אבן שלמה וצדק יהיה לך – “A perfect and honest weight shall you have” (Devarim 25:15). The words אבן שלמה represent an allusion to his name, אליהו בן שלמה.

The Gr”a explained that his allusion is found in that parsha because it corresponds to the century in which he lived. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (97a) brings a tradition that the world is destined to exist for six thousand years – the first two thousand years of nothingness, the second two thousand years of Torah, and the third two thousand years the days of Mashiach.

If the sidrahs of Netzavim and Vayeilech are combined, there are ten sidrahs in Chumash Devarim. Combining these two sidrahs is apparently the way the Gr”a resolved the discrepancy between the statement of the Zohar that there are fifty-three sidrahs and our total of fifty-four sidrahs. Thus, each of the ten sidrahs contains references that correspond to events that will occur in each of the respective ten centuries of the sixth millennium.

We usually assume that the calendar year 1240 corresponded to the year 5000, counting from Creation. This is based on the historical tradition of the Gemara in Arachin (12b) that the Second Beis HaMikdash lasted for four hundred and twenty years. Therefore, the first century, from 1240-1340, corresponds to Parshas Devarim, the second century to Parshas Va'eschanan, and so on. Based on this calculation, the Vilna Gaon, who lived after

1740, into the sixth century of the sixth millennium, looked for his allusion in Parshas Ki Seitzei, which is the sixth sidrah in Chumash Devarim.

Rav Shmuel Maltzan, following this line of reasoning, suggests that the severe tochechah of Parshas Ki Savo, the seventh sidrah, corresponds to the subsequent century, from 1840-1940. No doubt, this century contained much evil and hardship that befell the Jewish Nation, culminating with the Nazi Holocaust.

It is noteworthy that the next sidrah, Netzavim-Vayeilech, discusses the eventual repentance and redemption of the Jewish Nation.

We read in our parsha (Devarim 30:1-5): “Then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where Hashem, your G-d, has dispersed you. And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. Then, Hashem, your G-d, will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will return and gather you in from all the peoples to which Hashem, your G-d, has scattered you...Hashem, your G-d, will bring you to the land that your forefathers possessed, and you shall possess it.”

The mitzvah of writing a sefer Torah is subsequently recorded in the passuk, “So now, write this Song for yourselves, and teach it to Bnei Yisrael” (31:19).

Indeed, we have been witness to an actualization of these pessukim, realized through the great Ba'al Teshuvah movement, Shivas Tziyon (Return to Yerushalayim), Hakamas HaMedinah, and the proliferation of the writing of sifrei Torah, in the current century, beginning after 1940.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha.

Comfort



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

The Parsha of course begins with “אַתֶּם נִצְבִּים הַיּוֹם כְּלָכֶם”, which Rashi explains is a statement by Moshe to calm down and comfort the Jewish people. The Jewish people were frightened after hearing all the curses mentioned in last week’s Parsha, as they thought they would do actions to anger Hashem and then not be able to stand with all of the curses. Therefore, Moshe started comforting them by saying “אַתֶּם נִצְבִּים הַיּוֹם כְּלָכֶם”, that they had angered Hashem many times in the מדבר, and nevertheless they are standing straight today. “הַרְבֵּה הִכְעַסְתֶּם לַמָּקוֹם וְלֹא עָשָׂה אֲתֶכֶם כְּלִיָּה”. Yet, the question is what sort of comfort is this. In the desert, it is true that they sinned to Hashem, but they had clearly paid a very steep price. An entire generation of people was lost, and did not make it into ארץ ישראל. So, while it is true that the nation was still alive and ready to go into the land, it is difficult to understand why Moshe used the דור המדבר as an example of people who angered Hashem but did not get destroyed.

The מכתב מאליהו develops an idea that is true in many aspects of life in general. Sometimes in life a person does well because he receives a spark of inspiration from above, or as is called דלעילא. Sometimes we are Davening and it feels so much stronger, not specifically because we put in any extra effort but simply because Hashem has given us an extra spark of inspiration at that moment. However, most times that is not the case, and we have to work for those moments of inspiration. אַתְּרוּתָא דַּלְתָּתָא, when the inspiration comes from below, from our



When we invest our own hard work, and get to a place of spiritual elevation because of our own struggles, then it can stick.

hard work. The מכתב מאליהו says that while both of these might result in the same element of elevation, when it comes from our hard work it has a permanence. “אַתְּרוּתָא דַּלְתָּתָא יֵשׁ לָהּ קִיּוֹם”. As the saying goes, “easy come easy go”, and the same thing would hold true by our spiritual growth. When we feel elevated merely as a result of Hashem giving us an extra amount of inspiration, such a growth does not last. Yet, when we invest our own hard work, and get to a place of spiritual elevation because of our own struggles, then it can stick.

We find this concept throughout Jewish history. At קריעת ים סוף, for example, everyone has tremendous levels of נבואה, perhaps even greater than the visions that יחזקאל saw. Yet, not everyone who experienced קריעת ים סוף ultimately turned out to be on the same spiritual level as יחזקאל, because the tremendous level reached at קריעת ים סוף was a gift from Hashem, while יחזקאל had to work very hard for his spiritual growth. By the לוחות as well, we find this concept. The first set of לוחות were a gift given from Hashem. They were given because of the זכות אבות, and even the physical stones themselves were presented to Moshe as

a gift in Heaven. However, the second set of לוחות, the ones that ultimately lasted, were given only through the hard work of the Jewish people. 40 days long of תשובה was necessary to receive the לוחות, and the stones themselves has to be personally chiseled by Moshe and brought up to the mountain.

Now, returning back to our Parsha, we can understand the comfort that Moshe was giving to the Jewish people. The generation that left Egypt left primarily based on זכות אבות, and it was really a gift from Hashem that they were able to leave. A real אַתְּרוּתָא דַּלְעִילָא, and ultimately that generation did not last, and was not successful at entering ארץ ישראל. Yet, the generation that was now about to enter the land grew up in the מדבר, during a time of punishment, and still made it through. Moshe was not simply saying that the nation angered Hashem but nevertheless is still alive, since like we said that would not really be a comfort. Rather, Moshe was turning to the nation that was about to enter the land, telling them that their inspiration came from their hard work. They did not just receive their inspiration as a gift, but rather grew up during a time of punishment, and worked on their own to grow spiritually. Thus, the fact that they are נִצְבִּים הַיּוֹם, standing in the present after all of their אַתְּרוּתָא דַּלְתָּתָא, is the greatest comfort, since it indicates permanence to all of their hard work.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

Advocating Life



Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau
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Avraham's 10th and final trial was the binding of Yitzchak. In his first one – “G-d said to Avraham, ‘Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the Land that I will show you...’” – Avraham is told to divorce himself from his past. His final trial is even more difficult, though. This time, he is told to renounce his future. His entire life’s work is being put to the test.

At the age of three, Avraham came to the conclusion that the world had a Creator, smashed his father's idols, and later threw himself into the fire at Ur Casdim in sanctification of G-d’s name. When he was miraculously saved from death, he began to “make souls,” i.e., gather a following to whom he would teach that the world has a Creator.

Avraham took in guests, and when they thanked him, he told them the world has a Host and there is no need to thank him. He also exemplified the obligation of ransoming captives when he saved his nephew Lot.

Through the relationship between man and his fellow man, he brought his people to an awareness of the relationship between man and G-d.



Through the relationship between man and his fellow man, he brought his people to an awareness of the relationship between man and G-d.

Positive action is not enough though.

One must also fight evil.

For example, Avraham fought against the worship of the fire-god Molech, which involved child sacrifice. This was an idolatry which embodied the transgression of the mitzvot between human beings and those between man and G-d.

Hence, during those three days on which he journeyed to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, we can but imagine what was going through Avraham's mind. Upon coming down from the mountain, he would have to tell everybody that he had sacrificed his son as a burnt-offering to G-d. This would undermine everything he had worked for, everything he had built and totally confuse the following he had attracted.

Nevertheless, “the two of them walked together.” Both Avraham and Yitzchak are committed to carrying out G-d’s command.

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa asks the following question: we blow a ram’s horn on the Day of Judgment to arouse the merit of the Binding of Yitzchak. But surely the ram’s horn recalls the fact that Yitzchak was not actually sacrificed? If the goal was to recall the binding, it would be more appropriate to hold up a slaughtering knife and proclaim that Avraham was ready to sacrifice his son with a similar knife.

The answer is that the blowing of the ram’s horn recalls the Almighty’s words, “Do not harm the lad, and do not do a thing to him.” We ‘remind’ the Almighty that He is opposed to human sacrifice.

We eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of the eternal promise, “Do not harm the lad.” We say, “Enough!” to death and indiscriminate killing and abuse. And we pray that the sacrifices cease and the Almighty will grant us life and a speedy and complete redemption.

Teshuva Is for Everyone



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Parshat Nitzavim deals with the mitzvah of Teshuva. The Ramban interprets the following *passuk* as the source for the mitzvah of Teshuva:

כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלְאת
הוא מִמֶּדָּה וְלֹא־רַחֲקָה הוּא:

For this commandment which I command you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away. (Devarim 30:11).

This *passuk* is referring to a mitzvah that is not out of reach. We are able to do Teshuva and return to the correct path. This is consistent with the previous *passuk*, which uses the term “*ki tashuv*” – when you return!

Often we think of Teshuva as being performed by a person who committed a serious transgression. In fact, this is something that is to be contemplated by each and every individual. Introspection is necessary in order to constantly improve upon ourselves and to become better human beings.

A story is told of Rav Saadia Gaon who informed his student of the following experience. Rav Saadia Gaon was traveling and stayed at an inn overnight. In those days, there was no internet or Rebbe cards and although Rav Saadia’s reputation preceded him, not everyone was familiar with how he looked.



We cannot be content with our level of spirituality. There is always room for improvement. Life is like climbing up a downward escalator. If we are not constantly climbing, we will descend!

When Rav Saadia arrived at the inn, he was treated well by the owner of the inn, given a comfortable room and a tasty meal. When he was checking out, another guest recognized Rav Saadia and greeted him with the utmost respect. Upon witnessing this, the owner of the inn was mortified and apologized. He told Rav Saadia ‘If I had known who you were, I would have treated you better.’ Rav Saadia was puzzled. He informed the innkeeper that the service he received was impeccable and that nothing was lacking. The innkeeper replied: ‘Yes, but had I known that you are Rav Saadia Gaon, I would have given you super treatment!’

Rav Saadia explained that he learned an important lesson from the innkeeper. Rav Saadia told his student: “Every single day I have a deeper appreciation of HaKadosh Baruch Hu; therefore, every single day of my life I should spend doing Teshuva

because yesterday I didn’t truly appreciate G-d’s greatness.” In other words, something was lacking in my *avodat Hashem* yesterday, given what I know today.

We cannot be content with our level of spirituality. There is always room for improvement. Life is like climbing up a downward escalator. If we are not constantly climbing, we will descend! If Rav Saadia Gaon felt he could get closer to Hashem each day, then we have plenty of room to improve our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu as well.

As we reflect upon our challenges and accomplishments over the past year, we should also carefully consider concrete new goals so that we can further enhance our *limud torah*, our *tefilla* and our acts of *chesed*. Determine what new shiur we plan to attend, or new sefer we intend to learn. How we will make an effort to catch minyan more often, or undertake to better understand the *tefilla*. Consider ways of assisting those less fortunate than us by both by volunteering our time and allocating our ma’aser money effectively.

As we are told in the parsha – it is up to us to engage in the act of Teshuva. “*B’ficha ubilvavcha laasoto*” – it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it (Devarim 30:14). May we be successful in identifying the areas in which we can improve, so that we can achieve *Teshuva Shlema!*

Teshuva Through Enhanced Shabbos Observance



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's parsha, Parshas Nitzavim, we learn about the mitzvah of teshuva, repentance. Not for naught is this parsha read before Rosh Hashana, as it reminds us of leaving our sins behind and returning in purity and holiness to G-d. "And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul, Then Hashem, your G-d, will return your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the peoples to where Hashem, your G-d, has scattered you" (Devarim 3:2-3).

Rashi teaches: "It should have written, 'Hashem your G-d will return (you from captivity).'" Our rabbis learned from here, as if it were possible, that the Shechina (Divine Presence) rests with Israel in the hardship of their exile. And when Israel are redeemed, G-d had redemption written about Himself, that He would return with them.

When we return to G-d in repentance, and listen to His voice (v.2), He will return us from captivity, and return to us, and return along with us (v.3).

R' Yitzchok Zilberstein shlita quotes a beautiful lesson from the Chida (Chaim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806), with an illustrative story related by the Ben Ish Chai (Chacham Yosef Chaim, 1832-1909, Baghdad).

"The Chida notes that the word **וּשְׁבַחְתֶּם**, and you will return (v.2), contains the letters **שב**, Shabbos, to teach us that a person cannot do complete teshuva unless he becomes more meticulous in his Shabbos observance."

The Ben Ish Chai related the following story: A widower married a widow, and

each one brought a child into the marriage: he a son, and she a daughter. Several weeks after the wedding, the husband began to suspect that his new wife was violating their marriage agreement by taking from the money that belonged to the couple and transferring it to her daughter. When the husband raised the issue with his wife and aired his suspicions, she responded by saying that she similarly suspected him of transferring their money to his son!

The two came to the Ben Ish Chai for advice, and the Ben Ish Chai said that the best idea would be to marry off the two children to each other, and give them the money that belonged to their parents jointly. The couple agreed and after their children were married, they no longer suspected each other and the love and friendship between them grew.

The Ben Ish Chai used this story to explain the concept of "Shabbat shalom." What connection is there between Shabbos and shalom, peace?

The answer, the Ben Ish Chai explained, is that during the week, people are unhappy, because their two inclinations are in constant struggle. The neshama, the soul, and the yetzer hatov (good inclination) pull the person toward the beis medrash (house of Torah study), but the body and the yetzer harah (evil inclination) pull him toward the temptations and desires of the physical world. Since it is impossible to satisfy both inclinations, the person is in a perpetual state of tension and struggle; the struggle between kodesh and chol (holy and profane), between tahara and tumah (purity and impurity).

However! When Shabbos arrives, even the body pulls the person towards mitzvos and avodas Hashem (service of G-d), for

the mitzvos of the day are enjoying Shabbos through tasty food, nice clothing, and the like.

On Shabbos, even our physical actions are rooted in holiness, so both the body and the soul delight simultaneously. In this way, Shabbos causes peace to reign between a person's two inclinations. This is the meaning of 'Shabbat shalom,' Shabbos that brings peace (Aleinu L'Shabei'ach, Devarim, p.394-395).

While we surely (hopefully!) strive to repent in many areas, both in mitzvos bein adam la'Makom and those bein adam la'chavairo, let us not forget that implied in the Torah dictum of **וְשָׁבַחְתָּ**, thou shall return unto Hashem, is the lesson that without enhanced shemiras Shabbos, one's repentance remains incomplete.

R' Simshon Pincus zt'l quotes the Shulchan Aruch: "One's speech on Shabbos should not be like his speech on weekdays. Therefore, it is forbidden to say, 'I will perform such and such work tomorrow,' or 'I will buy such and such merchandise tomorrow.' It is even forbidden to engage excessively in idle talk" (Orach Chaim 307:1).

R' Pincus notes that even our speech on Shabbos must be guarded and different! "If so, what is left to do the whole Shabbos day? The answer is that Shabbos is as its name implies. It is a day of shevisah, cessation. To cease from everyday life, and live for twenty-four hours with HaKadosh Baruch Hu. People unfamiliar with Torah life often think that keeping Shabbos is something arduous. They find it very hard to disconnect for twenty-four hours from the telephone, the radio and the car. They feel as if they were put in handcuffs.

"Similarly, there are those among us who find it very hard to refrain from weekday

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G-d's Thirteen Middot Ha-Rachamim (Part 2)



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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After the 3000 ‘troublemakers’ are punished, Moshe begs that G-d **forgive** Bnei Yisrael for their sin. However, G-d seems to have rejected Moshe’s eloquent request for forgiveness. Instead, G-d informs Moshe that the nation will be punished, but not immediately – rather only after Moshe will lead them to the Promised Land: “And now – go lead the people [to the Land of Israel]... **u-beyom pokdi u-pakadti**... – and on the day that I choose to punish – I will punish them for their sins”.

G-d’s ‘negative’ response to Moshe’s request leaves us with the impression that indeed He will fulfill brit avot – thus assuring that the nation will enter the Land of Israel; however, sooner or later they will be punished for their sins.

If you carefully follow this narrative in Chumash, a very strange predicament has arisen (that often goes unnoticed). Even though Bnei Yisrael will not be destroyed, G-d instructs Moshe to continue on to Eretz Canaan **without** brit Sinai.

As unthinkable as this may sound, G-d’s decision is very logical. Considering His conclusion that Bnei Yisrael are an ‘am ksheh oref’ – a stiff-necked people, and hence will not change their ways, there appears to be no other solution. After all, should He keep His **Shchina** in their midst, Bnei Yisrael would not be able to survive.

Fortunately for Am Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu is not willing to accept G-d’s decision. As we will see, his argument will set the stage for G-d’s declaration of His **middot ha-rachamim**.

At this point, Moshe Rabbeinu intervenes: “And Moshe beseeched G-d: ‘Look, you have instructed me to lead this people... but recognize that this nation is **Your** people!’ G-d answered: I will lead [only] you. But Moshe insisted: ‘Im ein panecha holchim

al ta’aleinu mi-zeh’ – Unless **Your presence will go with us** do not make us leave this place. For how should it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You **go with us**...”

Moshe’s refusal leaves G-d [‘kivyachol’] in a most difficult predicament. On the one hand, He cannot allow His Shchina to return – for according to the terms of **brit Sinai** – an am ksheh oref (Am Yisrael’s level) could not survive His anger, and would eventually be killed.

On the other hand, He cannot leave them in the desert (as Moshe now threatens), for **brit avot** must be fulfilled!

But, He cannot take them to the land, for Moshe is not willing to lead them **unless** He returns His **Shchina**.

Something has to budge! But what will it be?

It is precisely here, in the resolution of this dilemma, where G-d’s 13 **middot ha-rachamim** enter into the picture.

Just as G-d had promised Moshe, a new covenant, reflecting this enhanced relationship, is now forged: “And G-d came down in a cloud...and passed before him and proclaimed: Hashem, Hashem Kel rachum ve-chanun, erech apayim ve-rav chesed ve-emet, notzer chesed la-alafim...”

With this background, we can now better appreciate the Torah’s choice of words that describe these middot ha-rachamim.

Recall the six phrases that reflected **middat ha-din** that we found in our study of **brit Sinai**. Now, as we compare them, we will notice that each **new** attribute relates directly to one of these original attributes of **din** from the first covenant.

The following table (study it carefully), followed by a more detailed explanation, explains this rather amazing parallel:

FIRST LUCHOT	SECOND LUCHOT
1) Kel KANA	Kel RACHUM VE-CHANUN
2) POKED AVON.. le-sonai	POKED AVON AVOT AL BANIM..
3) OSEH chesed la-alafim... LE-OHAVAI	RAV chesed ve-emet NOTZER chesed l'alafim...
4) LO YENAKEH	VE-NAKEH, lo yenakeh
5) LO YISA le-fish'eichem	NOSEI AVON VA-FESHA...
6) CHARON AF	ERECH APAYIM

Note how each attribute from the original covenant switches from **middat ha-din** to **middat ha-rachamim**.

These striking parallels demonstrate that each of the new middot lies in direct contrast to G-d’s middot in His original covenant at Har Sinai.

"And Moshe hastened to bow down and said: 'If I have indeed gained favor in Your eyes – **let Hashem go in our midst** - 'ki' = **even though** they are an **am ksheh oref** – a stiff necked people, and you shall pardon our sin..."

Once these new terms are established, allowing G-d’s **Shchina** to remain even though Bnei Yisrael may sin, Moshe begs that G-d indeed return to be with His nation.

These Divine attributes of mercy now allow the Shchina to dwell within Yisrael even though they may not be worthy.

From a certain perspective, this entire sequence is quite understandable. For on the one hand, to be worthy of G-d’s presence, man must behave perfectly. However, man is still human. Although he may strive to perfection, he may often error or at times even sin. How, then, can man ever come close to G-d? Hence, to allow mortal man the potential to continue a relationship

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The “Cardiac Jew”



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Parashat Nisavim continues Moshe's warnings to Beneh Yisrael of the consequences of their failure to observe the Torah. After describing in great detail the catastrophes that G-d would bring upon them if they violate His laws, as we read in Parashat Ki-Tabo, Moshe now expresses concern that some among Beneh Yisrael will ignore his warnings: "Perhaps there is among you a man or woman...whose heart turns away this day from Hashem our G-d...when he hears these words of curse, he will bless himself in his heart, saying: All will be well with me for I shall follow my heart's wishes..." (29:17-18).

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1961) offers a novel interpretation of this final phrase – "for I shall follow my heart's desire" ("Ki Bi'shrirut Libi Elech"). The person that Moshe describes in these verses feels he can ignore the detailed laws of the Torah because he "follows his heart" – meaning, he is a good person, with a good heart and a fine character. He is polite, caring and sensitive, he deals honestly with people and treats them kindly. In this person's mind, that is really all that G-d demands. G-d does not really care whether or not he puts on Tallit and Tefillin, and if or

when he recites Berachot. Halachic details such as when he must stand or sit during prayer are entirely irrelevant, according to this line of thinking. What's important is "Sherirut Libi" – having a good heart, being good-natured and kind.

G-d reacts angrily to this attitude, as Moshe warns in the next verse, "G-d will not agree to forgive such a person."

It goes without saying that the Torah demands a good heart. There is no question that we must be honest, courteous, caring and good-natured people, and that if we are not, then all our Misvot are worthless. Good character comes before all else. But we must never think that this is all G-d wants from us. We are bidden to follow all the laws He commands us, all four sections of the Shulhan Aruch. The Torah does not approve of the "cardiac Jew," the Jew who has a good heart and feels that this is all that is necessary. A good heart is indispensable but insufficient.

Imagine a CEO who hands his employee a list of twenty tasks that he needs completed by the end of the workday. At 5pm, the employee goes over to his boss to say hello. He very warmly asks how the boss's

day went, how his wife and children are, and shows genuine concern for the boss and his family. He even gives the boss a box full of treats and gifts for his children, and offers to paint his house for him, free of charge, as a kind gesture.

"Thank you, that's very kind," the boss replies. "But before we get to that, what about the list of jobs I asked you to do today? Are they done?"

The employee replies that he hadn't done any of them.

This worker sounds like a very nice man, with a heart of gold, who genuinely cares about people and likes doing favors, but he utterly failed as an employee. The boss certainly appreciates his kindness, but he demands much more – that the employee does what he's told to do.

Hashem is our boss, and He has given us a list of jobs to do – all the Halachot in the Shulhan Aruch. We cannot pick and choose only those parts of Torah that naturally appeal to us and disregard the rest. We have been given the whole package, and we must always be committed to the whole package, so that G-d will approve of our "job performance" and continue "paying" us with His blessings.

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with G-d, a new set of rules is necessary – one that includes **middot ha-rachamim**.

In this manner, middot ha-rachamim can be understood as G-d's kindness that allows man to approach Him and develop a closer relationship without the necessity of immediate punishment for any transgression.

This explanation adds extra meaning to our comprehension and appreciation of our recitation of the Selichot. Reciting the 13 **middot** comprises more than just a

mystical formula. It is a constant reminder of the **conditions** of the covenant of the **second luchot**.

G-d's attributes of mercy, as we have shown, do not guarantee automatic forgiveness, rather, they **enable the possibility of forgiveness**. As the pasuk stated, G-d will forgive only he whom He chooses. To be worthy of that mercy, the individual must prove his sincerity to G-d, while accepting upon himself not to repeat his bad ways.

Thus, our recitation of the 13 middot serves as a double reminder:

- 1) Not to 'give up' in our strive towards holiness, for indeed middot ha-rachamim allow us to come close. Yet, at the same time:
- 2) To recognize that Divine mercy is **not** automatic.

This recognition should inspire one who understands the terms of this covenant to act in a manner by which G-d will find him worthy of Divine mercy.

Children of One Father



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
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The parsha begins (Devarim 29:9, 11), “You are standing here today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d, your leaders, your tribes, your elders, your officers, every Jewish person.... that you may enter the covenant of Hashem your G-d.” The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains the nature of this covenant. He posits that it is one of interpersonal responsibility. It means that every Jew has an obligation to ensure that those with whom he wields influence keep mitzvos and avoid aveiros. Guarantorship also means that Hashem will hold us to account if we abrogate this responsibility. In saying this, the Ohr Hachaim is addressing the following implied question: Why is this covenant of interpersonal responsibility “before Hashem your G-d?” Because each Jew is responsible for another, it is more logical for the covenant to be between the members of the Jewish community, and not between the Jewish people and Hashem. Why is the covenant of guarantorship a covenant between the Jewish people and G-d?

In the sefer Mesilas Yesharim, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, the Ramchal, outlines one of the highest levels of human attainment, that of a chasid, a pious individual. Although the Ramchal lived at the same time as the Baal Shem Tov, he uses the word “chasid” in the classical sense, not as it would later be used to connote a specific sect within the Jewish people with distinctive clothing and customs. He explains that the chasid is distinct from a “regular” good Jew. A good Jew avoids sins and does mitzvos. But he does so in order to accumulate reward in the world to come and because he fears punishment. His primary concern is his own spiritual wellbeing, so he does whatever he can to ensure that he and his immediate family and circle of friends are doing well, but he does not concern himself with the spiritual

or physical welfare of anyone outside his sphere of personal concern.

A chasid, on the other hand, is one who is not only motivated by his own reward and punishment. He keeps the same mitzvos and avoids the same aveiros as any other righteous Jew. But he does so not with his own wellbeing in mind, but to give pleasure and pride to the Master of the World. *That* is primary motivation. The chasid is therefore not satisfied if he does well spiritually while others are not doing well. Because he only wants to give Hashem pleasure and satisfaction, he cannot rest while Hashem’s other children are far from who they ought to be. He knows that this causes G-d pain, so he is not indifferent to others’ spiritual state. He does whatever he can for those within his own sphere of influence to help and encourage them to draw closer to their Father in Heaven. This way, he can fulfill his true goal, to give G-d more and more satisfaction from His children.

When Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, zy”a became very old, he was blind and extremely weak. During that period, he once said that if Hashem ever gave him the choice to switch places with Avraham Avinu, with all of Avraham’s merits and mitzvos, he would not trade. Why? Because in the end, G-d would still have one Avraham Avinu and one “Blinder Bunim, Blind Bunim.” While *he* would have had additional merits if he was Avraham, Reb Simcha Bunim’s only concern was whether such a trade would give anything new to Hashem. There would still only be one Avraham Avinu and only one “Blinder Bunim.” It would not create any net gain for Hashem.

We now understand the difference between the covenant in last week’s parsha, parshas Ki Savo, and the one in this week’s parsha. The covenant of parshas Ki Savo is one between each individual and G-d, where

each person is responsible for himself. But the covenant of parshas Nitzavim is one of interpersonal responsibility. The later covenant is also one between the Jewish people and G-d because the primary reason we take responsibility for others’ physical and spiritual wellbeing is our desire to give pleasure and satisfaction to our mutual father, the King of Kings. That is why the covenant is with “all of you...every Jewish person.” Because our main concern as Jews should not be only for ourselves, but for our Father in Heaven, we must not be indifferent to the welfare of any of His children.

This is the choice which must be foremost in our minds as we approach Rosh Hashana, when we acknowledge that Hashem will judge us “whether as children or as servants.” A servant is satisfied if he simply does the minimum necessary to receive his salary and avoid punishment by his master. The relationship is also not permanent because a master can sell or free his servant. But a child’s relationship with his father is permanent. And his main concern is not reward, punishment, or even simply doing his job. His main interest is in making his father happy. He would happily do something for his father even if he would not receive credit for it as long as it makes his father happy.

That must be our goal on Rosh Hashana. If we want Hashem to judge us like his children, then we must be loving children who are concerned with making Hashem happy than simply checking off all of our obligations in the big checklist in the sky. That is why we read parshas Nitzavim just before Rosh Hashana. By doing so, we take upon ourselves the mitzva of guarantorship, interpersonal responsibility, to internalize the realization that all Jews are one family, part of one precious team whose goal is to coronate Hashem as King and reveal His Presence in the world.

Whole, Broken, Whole

The Secret of the Shofar Sounds



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

On Rosh Hashanah, we produce three sounds via the shofar. The first sound is called tekiah, a single whole note. The second is shevarim, three shorter “broken” notes, which sound like three sighs. The third is called teruah, nine staccato notes in rapid succession, which sound like short sobs.

What do they represent? Tekiah reminds us that once we were whole. Each of us was born whole. Shevarim reminds us that in life we are plagued by questions, confusion, and disappointments; we become fragmented, and scattered, causing our existential sighs. Teruah reminds us how many people’s lives have been shattered through various negative experiences into tiny pieces. They are sobbing consciously or unconsciously.

But what do we do after each time we blow the sounds of brokenness? We blow the tekiah again. This reminds us that we can be restored to wholeness again.

What is more, following all of the shofar sounds, we reach the tekiah gedolah, three sounds. We reach tekiah gedolah, “the great tekiah”—one note that lasts as long as the shofar-blower has breath, a much longer note than the initial blast which began the cycle. Through surviving brokenness, we can reach an even deeper kind of wholeness than we knew before.

The sages of the Talmud offered the following teaching. A clay pot, being porous, is susceptible to tumah, ritual impurity, through contact with certain impure substances. If a clay vessel becomes tamei, the way to make it again tahor (ritually pure) is to break it and then glue it back together. Through the pot’s brokenness, in other words, wholeness is restored; it becomes pure again.

We too are made from clay, as Genesis describes, “G-d created the human being clay from the earth.” When we allow ourselves to be open to our own vulnerability and brokenness, we become capable of a deeper and more powerful wholeness than we knew in the first place. Tekiah gedolah packs its punch precisely because it arises out of scattered sounds. The places where we’re glued back together are places where the light of G-d can enter.

In the Rain

I once read an article, which related the following experience:

She had been shopping with her Mom in Wal-Mart. She must have been 6 years old, this beautiful red-haired, freckle-faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside. The kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the earth it has no time to flow down the spout.

We all stood there under the awning and just inside the door of the Wal-Mart. We waited, some patiently, others irritated because nature messed up our hurried day. I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I get lost in the sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world.

Memories of running, splashing so care-free as a child come pouring in as a welcome reprieve from the worries of my day. Her voice was so sweet as it broke the hypnotic trance we were all caught in. “Mom, let’s run through the rain,” she said.

“What?” Mom asked.

“Let’s run through the rain!” She repeated.

“No, honey. We’ll wait until it slows down a bit,” Mom replied.

This young child waited about another minute and repeated: “Mom, let’s run through the rain.”

“We’ll get soaked if we do,” Mom said.

“No, we won’t, Mom. That’s not what you said this morning,” the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom’s arm.

“This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?”

“Don’t you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, ‘If G-d can get us through this, He can get us through anything!’”

The entire crowd stopped dead silent. I swear you couldn’t hear anything but the rain. We all stood silently. No one came or left in the next few minutes. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say. Now some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a child’s life. A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into confidence, courage and faith.

“Honey, you are absolutely right. Let’s run through the rain. If G-d lets us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing,” Mom said. Then off they ran. We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. They got soaked. But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars.

“And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing.”

Shanah Tovah, a year of health, happiness, prosperity, peace and redemption.

Where Have I Been?



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Rav Shlomo Heiman, zt'l, Rosh Mesivta of Torah Vodaath, was renowned as a clear and deep thinker, and a dedicated master teacher. Each shiur he gave was an event filled with drama, suspense, passion and emotion. Rav Shlomo used every ounce of strength when teaching, and by the end would often pass out, completely exhausted.

One winter morning, Rav Shlomo arrived at the yeshivah amid a blizzard and found just four talmidim at shiur. Instead of cancelling, postponing or giving a scaled down version of what he had prepared, Rav Shlomo was all-in. He delivered a full shiur with all the dramatic flair and excitement as if he were addressing a full beis medrash. Concerned for the Rav's health and energy, one of the talmidim motioned to the room and whispered, "Rebbe, there's only four of us here..."

Rav Shlomo glanced around the near empty Beis Medrash and thundered, "Four talmidim? You only see four talmidim?! I'm speaking to you, your descendants, your future generations and students... there are hundreds and hundreds of Yidden learning Torah here today!"



Our sedra this week is a continuation of Moshe Rabbeinu's parting address, his 'final shiur' to Klal Yisrael: "You are all standing this day before Hashem... I make this covenant... not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day before Hashem and with those who are not with us here this day." (Devarim, 29:9, 13-14).

Rashi quotes Midrash Tanchuma (Nitzavim, 3), saying that all who were physically present at Mount Sinai — more than two million women, children and men, embodying the souls of all future Jews — experienced the Revelation of Matan Torah. Remembering this powerful fact brings us

back to our national and personal mission and baseline. All of us were standing there, completely present before the Infinite One.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that "Ha-yom, this day" is a reference to Rosh Hashanah, the day on which we all stand in judgment before Hashem. Therefore, on each year, Parshas Nitzavim precedes Rosh Hashanah, and at this critical moment it transmits to us words of reproach, encouragement and mussar, urging us to remember that no matter the deficiencies in our service of G-d, we are to believe in our connection with Hashem and to know that we can always repair what we have damaged: "For this commandment (teshuvah)... is not concealed from you, nor is it far away. It is not in Heaven... Nor is it beyond the sea... Rather, it is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so you can fulfill it!" (30:11-14)



Rebbe Aharon haGadol of Karlin strode toward the amud to begin Shacharis of Rosh Hashanah, with the customary niggun. As the Rebbe reached the end of that dramatic melody leading to the proclamation of "HaMelech," he fainted and collapsed in awe. The chasidim rushed to revive the Rebbe, who soon stood up on trembling legs, steadied himself, and continued to lead the relieved congregation in prayer. After the davening, the chassidim gathered around him to understand what had occurred.

The holy Karliner explained, "During the Roman siege of Yerushalayim, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai went to plead with Vespasian to spare the lives of the Jews of the Holy City. When he encountered Vespasian, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said, שלמה עלך מלכא שלמא עלך מלכא, "Peace upon you, O king, peace upon you." Vespasian's anger flared and retorted, "מחייבת תרי קטלא", You are liable for

two death penalties: first of all, you addressed me as the king, which I am אי מלכא אנא עד האידינא אמאי, Furthermore, לא אחית לגבאי, If I am the king, why haven't you come to greet me until now?" (Gittin, 56a)

The Karliner explained: "When I was about to declare "HaMelech", I suddenly remembered Vespasian's rebuke, and my heart grew faint. Standing before Hashem, coronating Him as the King of Kings, all I could think was the question, "If I am the King, why haven't you come to greet Me until now?"



Somehow, despite the clear message in our sedra, as well as the month-long Elul shofar blowing, extra davening, and emphasis on preparation for the new year, it seems that every year we ask ourselves: 'How is it already Rosh Hashanah — where have I been? I am not ready to approach Hashem this Yamim Nora'im!'

This Shabbos, as we prepare to 'stand' before Hashem and declare His Malchus on Rosh Hashanah, let us remember, בני קרוב אֵלֶיךָ: we are "very close"; there is no such thing as a space devoid of G-dliness. We all stood at Sinai; 'Far away' from Hashem is simply a construct. The right time and place for teshuvah is exactly wherever we are, "in our mouths and in our hearts". Hashem is waiting for us. The opportunity is right here, right now, and it all depends on us.

The question is not how many chevreh have shown up to the shiur. I need to ask myself, have I arrived? How much of me is 'here'? If we haven't been fully present in moments of holiness, tefillah or mitzvah observance, Rosh Hashanah is an opportunity for us to stand before the King and re-establish direction and intention — to let the Ribbono Shel Olam that we are 'all in', now and forever.

The Harmony of Torah Study

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

The last of the 613 *mitzvot* is to “write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, and place it in their mouths, so that this song will be for Me a witness in Bnei Yisrael.”

Most of the Torah commentators believe the “song” referred to here is the entire Torah. It is from this verse they derive the *mitzvah* that every Jew must write his own Sefer Torah, a *mitzvah* that can be fulfilled by underwriting even one letter, as a single missing letter can invalidate the entire scroll and filling in that letter can make the scroll “kosher” again.

G-d in His Torah is the greatest practitioner of the economy of language. Each word, indeed each letter, offers greater insights into meaning, allusions, inferences, and secrets using the four basic elements (PaRDeS – plain meaning, alluded meaning, derived meaning, mystic meaning) to uncover as many as 70 different interpretations of the text.

Rabbi Reiss uses the poetic image from Shir HaShirim to further explain the magnificence of Torah study: “The King brought me into His chambers.” When viewed from the outside, the castle is magnificent. However, as one enters and goes from room to room, his awe grows as he encounters greater richness and beauty in the furnishings and accoutrements of each room.

So too with Torah study. During a cursory reading, one can already recognize the Torah’s splendor. However, as one delves ever more deeply into the text, one marvels even more at the myriad nuances and

textures that continue to be revealed. The Torah must be appreciated as a whole more than for any particular part of it.

This is what King David meant, posits Rav Reiss, when he wrote, “The Torah of G-d is perfect (complete); it restores the soul.” Only when the Torah is studied and observed in its entirety (rather than piecemeal) does it have the ability to restore one’s soul. Just as one cannot remove even one spring from a clock and expect it to work, so too one cannot remove one piece of Torah and expect it to work on one’s soul.

Two of the symbols that grace our Rosh Hashanah table are the pomegranate and the apple. Rabbi Schwartz clarifies the differences between them. While we pray that we may be filled with *mitzvot* like a pomegranate, the Gemara in Berachot says that “even the emptiest of them are filled with *mitzvot* like a pomegranate.” Rabbi Schwartz cites HaGaon HaRav Dovid Povarsky in explaining that each seed in a pomegranate is separate, enveloped in its individual sac and not connected to any other seed.

In a similar way, a person can have many *mitzvot*, do many acts of *chessed*, but these may remain individual acts if one does not infuse these acts with the unifying element of spirituality, indicating life’s deeper spiritual meaning and purpose.

On the other hand, the apple has its seeds at its core, and everything else surrounds them. The apple, the meaning to our lives,

is dipped in honey to provide the sweetness our lives need to be meaningful. Each act of observance becomes meaningful when performed as a thread in the fabric of the whole, rather than as an isolated, perhaps even rote, action.

Torah is not just the black-inked words that prescribe and proscribe our actions, but also the white parchment upon which those words are written, the purpose and spirit of the laws without which observance becomes an empty shell.

That is why, says Rabbi Schlesinger, even if his parents wrote one, it is necessary for every individual to write his own Sefer Torah, to recommit himself to a life infused with Torah as his individual soul relates to G-d. And he must teach his children the entire song – not just the words – so they too will appreciate the beauty and majesty of the Torah to which they are heirs.

When *Bnei Yisrael* delve deeply into Torah study and give it voice, they sing the praises of G-d and bear witness to His sovereignty over the earth. As Rosh Hashanah approaches, let us write the score of the Torah on our hearts and join together in a joyous symphony of renewed harmony with all creation. Let the spirit and joy of a Torah life infuse our lives with meaning and may we merit the blessings G-d will bestow upon us in the coming year.

The Queen has Passed, Long Live the King



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

It is impossible not to mention the great funeral of Queen Elizabeth. Especially in the discussion of Rosh Hashanah, the Chazal were required to make comparisons between the human and divine realms. For example, in reference to the verse "Happy is the people who know the joyful shout" Chazal ask, "And other peoples have no trumpets and horns in the king's kingdom? If this is so, we as Jews must obviously understand something different by it as "knowers of the joyful shout".

When the Queen died this week, everyone wore black. When the king is enthroned on Rosh Hashanah, "we wear white and eat and drink and rejoice," for we are a people who "know the nature of G-d."

When the Queen dies, people will recount endless memories of what happened. When the King is crowned, the Jewish memory will look to the future. Thus, the unique expression will appear, "We remember..." and not "Remember when..."

When the Queen died, they played the flutes, with the sounds of soft music. When the King was crowned, He blew the shofar with a voice not at all classical, "and we will mourn before you like a beast".

When the Queen died, her carriage made a long ride before thousands of people

who stood there in silence. At the coronation of the King, we are the ones who go before him in a slow march, like sheep [bnei maron].

And when the Queen died, all the cameras were on the wayward son of the new king: Prince Harry, and his wife.

Why are they here, when they mocked the palace and chose another life?!

Here the inherent error and its name is revealed: "Our father - our king". Any other citizen would have been suspended a long time ago, but what to do, the palace pensioners are the king's son and his wife...

We are a people who "know the essence of G-d", He is G-d, but He is also a father, and if we have failed as children, you take responsibility, Father, for the imperfect creature You have created in your world...

According to Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, this is the central idea of this wonderful day, Rosh Hashanah: "For truly Rosh Hashanah is a great favor, for it is a time when the whiteness is covered, and to this G-d said, Atone for me that I have made the moon less! And it is a great favor for the world, because through it we can ask for atonement on Rosh Hashanah, and the Day of Judgment is set for the first month, when the Blessed One asks for atonement, so to speak..."

Do we "blame" the King for our failure? G-d forbid. We create a wonderful meeting point between father and daughter or son, because if only one side is always right, it is impossible to build a real relationship. Here there is no "forgiveness" but "pardon" between two people who get on each other's nerves after making a mistake. They are tired of judging each other, they just want to meet.

This is perhaps the crying desire of mothers in the chants on Rosh Hashanah, "I want a child!" I want to bring to the world the reality that you can not really judge someone until the end. I want to create that reconciliation, that unconditional love. He was wrong, but for this boy I prayed. He is a rough and cruel warrior, but when Sisera waits for him and laments about his mistakes and theirs.

Our Father, our King, do it for Your sake if not for ours. We did not ask for it, "Your soul, Your body, Your work, protection for Your work!"

We are in the year of the תשפ"ג. A year in which no party is free from mistakes, but we are part of the royal house, daughters of a King who were lost, a King's son who was replaced by a slave's son, You will miss us Father. G-d, we will protect Your human princes. G-d protect the prince.

Continued from page 16

talk on Shabbos. How can a person go through a whole day without chattering about mundane affairs? How can one just live life with Hashem alone!? This, too, is mesiras nefesh. It is a change in the form

of one's life" (Moadei Hashana, The Days of Awe, Elul & R"H, p.136).

Through striving to enhance our observance of Shabbos Kodesh, may we merit to return to Hashem in complete teshuva. Middah k'neged middah (measure for

measure), may He return to us and return our captivity, with the ultimate geula, may it be speedily in our days, When Hashem returns the returnees to Zion, we shall be like dreamers... (Tehillim 126:1).

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

Parashat Nitzavim includes a dire prediction of the curses that the nation will receive if they violate their covenant with G-d. One of those curses describes the land as follows:

גְּפְרִית וּמֶלַח שְׂרָפָה כֹּל-אֲרֶצָהּ לֹא תִזְרַע וְלֹא תִצְמַח וְלֹא יִעֲלֶה בָּהּ כִּלְיָעֵשֶׂב כִּמְהִפְכַת סֹדֶם וְעִמְרָה אֲדָמָה וְצִבְיִים אֲשֶׁר הִפּוּ ה' בְּאֶפּוֹ וּבַחֲמָתוֹ:

“All its soil devastated by sulfur and salt, beyond sowing and producing, no grass growing in it, just like the upheaval of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His fierce anger” (Devarim 29:22)

Israel will receive the same punishment as the denizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. An echo of this parallel can be found in the word for sulfur - גְּפְרִית. The only other time that word appears in the Torah is in the story of the destruction of Sodom:

וְהָיָה הַמָּסִיר עַל-סֹדֶם וְעַל-עִמְרָה גְּפְרִית וְאֵשׁ מֵאֵת ה' מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם:

“The LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from the LORD out of heaven.” (Bereshit 19:24)

The word גְּפְרִית, “sulfur,” was the basis of the modern Hebrew word גְּפְרוֹר, meaning “a match” (used to light a fire). The modern match was invented in the 19th century, and sulfur was used to create the reaction leading to the flame. Many other words were suggested, but גְּפְרוֹר became accepted, perhaps because Yiddish also had a word for match including the German word for sulfur.

There is another rare biblical word that looks similar to גְּפְרִית. When G-d commanded Noach to build the ark, He gave the following instructions:

עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי-גֹפְרִית תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת-הַתֵּבָה וְכִפְרָתָהּ אֶתָּה מִבִּיַּת וּמִחוּץ בַּכָּפָר:

“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make it an ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch.” (Bereshit 6:14)

The word for “gopher” is the Hebrew גֹּפְרִית, and this is its only appearance in the entire

Bible. Some say that it may be the origin of the Greek word kyparissos, which eventually made its way to English as “cypress,” another type of tree. From here the island of Cyprus got its name (as the land of cypress trees) as well as the metal “copper” (found on Cyprus).

Scholars say that גְּפְרִית and גֹּפְרִית don't share a common etymology. However, the Torah often uses unrelated words that look or sound similar to encourage literary associations. The story of the flood and the story of Sodom both have massive destruction raining from heaven (water / fire). The Tur, on Bereshit 6:14, points out this connection: עֲצֵי גֹפְרִית. שְׂרָפָה לִידוֹן בְּאֵשׁ וּגְפְרִית כְּאִנְשֵׁי סֹדֶם וְעִמְרָה:

“The [generation of the flood] was as deserving of fire and sulfur, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.”

When we see those letters, we think of the destruction.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

” לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם ” The greeting (for men) on Rosh HaShana is

In Parshat Nitzavim, (always read before RH) find 4 words in a row, each word containing a letter of the word **תכתב**, in that order.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

אֲבָרָה. כִּי מִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי (ל:ט-י)

Another set can be found at 30:9-10

Refer Nachal Kedumim (from the CHIDA) who connects these Sofei Teivot of **תכתב** with the famous Roshel Teivot of those 4 words making up the word **אֲבָרָה**.

אֲבָרָה. כִּי מִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי (ל:ט-י)

One set of 4 words can be found at 30:6



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TORONTO

Beit Tzion Congregation
Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto
Shaarei Tefillah Congregation

CROATIA

ZAGREB

Bet Israel Jewish Community of Croatia

CZECH REPUBLIC

PRAGUE

Prague Jewish Community

ECUADOR

Equador Jewish Community

FINLAND

HELSINKI

Jewish Community of Helsinki

GERMANY

KOLN

Jewish Community

GUATEMALA

Guatemala City Jewish Community

HOLLAND

AMSTERDAM

AMOS Amsterdam Modern Orthodox Sjoel

HONG KONG

CHABAD HK

Jewish Women's Association (JWA)

Kehilat Zion - Hechal Ezra

Ohel Leah Synagogue

The Jewish Community Centre

United Jewish Congregation (UJC)

ISRAEL

JERUSALEM

Amudim Beit Midrash for Women

Baer Miriam

Hashiveinu

Jacques Sueke Foundation

Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY)

Midreshet Emunah v'Omanut

Midreshet Eshel

Midreshet HaRova

Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya

Neve Hagiva'a

Shapell's/Darche Noam

Torat Reva Yerushalayim

Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi

Yeshivat Hakotel

Yeshivat Orayta

BEIT SHEMESH

Tiferet Midrasha

Kehillat Nofei Hashemesh

Yeshivat Ashreinu

Yeshivat Hesder Lev HaTorah

HERZLIYA

Mizrachi OU-JLIC Herzliya

MEVASERET ZION

Yeshivat Mevaseret

RAMAT GAN

Israel XP at Bar Ilan University

THE NEGEV

Mechinat Ruach HaNegev

MACEDONIA

SCOPIA

Jewish Community

MALTA

Jewish Community

PORTUGAL

PORTO

Rabbi Daniel Litvak

SERBIA

BELGRADE

Rav Isak Asiel

SOUTH AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG

Mizrachi Glenhazel Shul

SWEDEN

The Jewish Community of Stockholm

SWITZERLAND

BERN

Jüdische Gemeinde Bern

ZURICH

Mizrachi

UNITED KINGDOM

Mizrachi UK

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kol Hatorah Kulah

National Council of Young Israel

RZA-Mizrachi USA

CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy
West Coast Torah Center
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills
YULA High School
Young Israel of Century City

COLORADO

DAT Minyan
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue
The Denver Kehillah

CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue
Congregation Agudath Sholom
Young Israel of West Hartford

FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation
Hebrew Academy RASG
PlayHard PrayHard
Congregation Torah Ohr
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue
Pikesville Jewish Congregation
Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah
Young Israel of Brookline

MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park
Young Israel of Southfield
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach

Hari B'nai Zion Congregation
Young Israel of St. Louis

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County
Congregation AABJ&D
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC
National Council of Young Israel
Congregation Ahavat Achim
Congregation Ahavath Torah
Congregation Brothers of Israel
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston
Congregation Israel of Springfield
Congregation Ohr Torah
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill
Ma Tov Day Camp
Ohav Emeth
Pal Foundation
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center
Yavneh Academy
National Council of Young Israel
Young Israel of Teaneck

NEW YORK

Congregation Anshei Shalom
Congregation B'nai Tzedek
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere
Congregation Beth Sholom
Ramaz
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls
MTA - Yeshiva University
High School for Boys
Young Israel of Merrick
Congregation Beth Torah
Congregation Etz Chaim of
Kew Gardens Hills
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun
Congregation Ohab Zedek
Great Neck Synagogue
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth
Hadassah Synagogue
Irving Place Minyan
Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach
Kingsway Jewish Center
Lincoln Square Synagogue
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park

North Shore Hebrew Academy
Young Israel of Merrick
NYC Department of Correction
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University
OU-JLIC at Cornell University
Queens Jewish Center
Stars of Israel Academy
The Riverdale Minyan
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha
West Side institutional Synagogue
Yeshiva University High School for Girls
Young Israel of Hillcrest
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst
Young Israel of New Rochelle
Young Israel of North Woodmere
Young Israel of Oceanside
Young Israel of Scarsdale

OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla
Congregation Sha'arei Torah
Congregation Torat Emet
Green Road Synagogue
Fuchs Mizrachi School
Heights Jewish Center

PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel
Congregation Dor Tikvah

TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue
Robert M. Beren Academy
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath
Northwest Yeshiva High School
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

VENEZUELA

CARACAS

Ashkenazi Kehilla
Mizrachi Venezuela



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