



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

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**PARSHAT HA'AZINU & YOM KIPPUR 5784 • 2023**










**ISRAEL**  
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אֵיכָה יִרְדֹּף אֶחָד אֶלְפֵי  
וּשְׁנַיִם יָנִיסוּ רֶבֶבָה









דברים לב:ל

## INSIDE

### TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9




### PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 10
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 12
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 13
-  Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE 14
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
-  Michal Horowitz 16
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

### INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 21
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 22
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 23

### ISRAEL CONTENT

-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 24
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 24
-  Dust & Stars: This Week in Jewish History 24



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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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# Remember the Days of Old

## A Mitzvah to Study History ?



**Rabbi Doron Perez**  
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

The mainstay of this week's parasha is a powerful historiosophical song known as Shirat Haazinu. According to the Sages, it is both a reflective and prophetic song about Jewish history and destiny.

Toward the beginning of the song is a directive to remember the days of old – in short, to study the lessons of history.

”זָכֹר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם בִּינו שְׁנוֹת דֶּר וְדַר שְׂאֵל אֲבִיךָ וַיִּגְדֶּךָ  
זְקִינְךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְךָ”

“Remember the days of old; reflect upon the years of the different generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will inform you.” (Devarim 32:7)

### History vs Memory

The critical word which begins this charge to study our past is indeed not the word “study”, but “remember”. There is a pivotal difference between history and memory. In the Jewish view, history is first and foremost about collective memory. It is not, as some have said, external to ourselves – “His-story”, something that happened to somebody else that we study with dispassionate objectivity – but it is rather our story, about who we are and where we come from. It is something we are called on constantly to remember.

Indeed, the Torah constantly charges us to reflect on history with the word “זָכֹר” – to remember and never to forget. Our past is embedded in our memory and an intrinsic part of our identity. Always remember the Exodus from Egypt; how it forged your national birth and its decisive impact on Jewish fate and faith. Never forget the Revelation at Sinai and how it forever shaped your sense of mission and destiny. Remember the Shabbat as a reflection of both the purpose of creation and the meaning of the Exodus. Remember what Amalek did to you – a tangible symbol of the destructive

threat of unadulterated evil in the world. Remember, remember, remember. History is so critically important first and foremost – because it reveals our collective identity. Just as no individual could function meaningfully without any memory of their past, neither can a people. Just as our memories are integral to forging our identity, history is the collective memory of a people, nations, and families. Without history, we would lose our shared experiences, rendering us a drift in a sea of relative meaninglessness.

History reveals the essence of who we are, where we came from, what we collectively aspire to. What were the sacred beliefs, traditions and customs that our ancestors and forebears believed most strongly in and were prepared to live and die for. Who are we and what is our historic role in the world?

### Rabbi Hirsch and History

Rabbi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch sees in this pasuk<sup>1</sup> a specific charge to study our past and our history carefully.

He highlights how the Hebrew words שְׁנוֹת and יְמוֹת are distinguished from the regular plural of these words יָמִים and שָׁנִים. Whenever the Torah wishes to speak about a specific finite amount of days or years it uses the words יָמִים and שָׁנִים. However, when the Torah speaks about the unlimited sweep of time in its entirety it refers to it as יְמוֹת, days, and שְׁנוֹת, years, and this specifically is how the Torah refers to them in this pasuk. “Remember the days of old and understand the years of every generation”. The Torah is urging us to look back at previous generations across the sweep of time to both remember and understand. The word בִּינָה – understanding – in this pasuk means not just general knowledge but a deeper understanding of the relationship between the different generations, continues Rabbi

Hirsch, and how we can detect the patterns in history.

Rabbi Kook famously always wrote the word history in Hebrew not as the regular usage היסטוריה with a "ט" but rather היסטוריה with a "ת" as it meant הסתר-יה, the secret and hidden ways of Hashem. After all is not the collective history of humanity in general and the Jewish people in particular the way Hashem interacts with the world. History is the hand of heaven and the footprints of Providence as they guide and impact our collective lives on earth.

Is this not the essence of so much of Tanach? That through divine prophecy reflects on the messages and lessons from the beginning of time until the end of Tanach and the time of prophecy as the beginning of the First Temple?

Whether it was Moshe writing the Torah or Yehoshua, Shmuel, Gad and Natan, Yeshe-yahu, Yermiyahu, Ezra and Nechemia - they were writing an account of their divinely mandated spiritual reflections of what these times meant for eternity. It's this, specifically says the Rif - Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi, one of the great medieval commentators - that this *pasuk* refers to. It refers not to the study of history in general, but specifically to Tanach which is the prophetic view of the eternal lessons for future generations.

Rabbi Hirsch expands the learning of history not only to the generations reflected in the times of Tanach but also subsequent generations as they too contain important messages about who we are. He says: "Penetrate to the depths of the meanings of the times of the past. Understand the connection between each generation and the one that comes afterward, the generation of Adam, Enosh, of the flood and the dispersion - follow the patterns of the development of the family of man. Thereafter ask your father and he will tell you - inquire of your father about your history and he will tell you - he will present it before you as if it is still alive and vibrant in his heart. Request of your elders who will tell you - the elders who have acquired wisdom and understanding will unravel for you the meaning of your history. They will explain to you where you come from and what your historic mission is from the context of the trials and tribulations of the generations of yesteryear."

### Presentism and Perspective

One of the great challenges in every generation is the impulse to focus only on the here and now - something we could term presentism. Our only reality is what we're

experiencing at this moment and so often people forget about future aspirations and past reflection. This can especially be true in a generation such as ours, where enormous advancements have been made in technological advancement with the internet connecting an entire global world and artificial intelligence, which is the new vista of challenge and growth. This leads some to a sense of hubris, to feel that they are much smarter than previous generations or that the challenges today are so different and that there is not much to learn from those who came before. The truth though, is exactly the opposite.

The antidote to presentism is the gift of precedence and perspective.

It is rather difficult to drive a car forward if one doesn't look in the rearview mirror. We sometimes tend to think that our challenges are wholly unique and no generation has faced such challenges. With hindsight, with the study of history, we often realize that similar challenges, moral challenges, have been faced by previous generations and learning from the past offers us two enormous blessings from this perspective. The challenges we faced did not begin and end today. Many will face them in the future and countless others have faced them in the past. Many heroic figures emerge from history to serve as a guide, moral and spiritual guide, as to how we can best face our challenges today.

Without reflecting on our past, we would wander anchorless for the first time in life, repeating the same mistakes and tripping over the same stumbling blocks; as if the Flood, Babel and Sodom never happened.<sup>2</sup> We would have no precedent whatsoever to learn from past mistakes. If we learn from the failures and mistakes of others, we may avoid having to go through the pain of our own mistakes. As social historian George Santayana has famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

From perspective we draw inspiration.

We draw enormous inspiration from the heroic figures of yesteryear who faced enormous challenges and overcame them. Can any of us imagine trying to develop a perspective of who we are without the founding fathers and mothers of humanity and the Jewish people?

What would our world be like if we didn't have the characters of Adam and Eve and Noah and his family to reflect on after whom all human beings descend? Who would we be as Jews without the figures of Avraham

and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov, Rachel and Leah and Yosef? Of course, Yaakov eventually became Yisrael after whom we are named the Children of Israel. Without the trials and tribulations of Yosef and his brothers, the towering personalities of Moshe, Aharon and Miriam, our saviors from Egypt and our experiences there. How would we understand who we are as Jews without the perspectives of the great kings of Israel, Shaul, David and Shlomo and our great prophets? How shallow would we be today and how poor our perspectives of who we are and our mission on earth would be?

### Nothing to Learn From History ?

There is an erroneous view that learning from history is either a sign of weakness or totally unnecessary.

It was French philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and German philosopher Wilhelm Goethe who saw history as an escape from dealing with the issues of the present. They saw it as a weakness and a crutch needing to find heroes in the past because of a lack of heroes in the present.<sup>3</sup>

Others have claimed that there is nothing to learn from history since the whole enterprise is subjective. Those who write history do so from their own personal perspective, and those who look back learn the lessons that they subjectively want to learn. Henry Ford expressed similar sentiments when he quipped that "history is bunk" - worthless and teaches nothing. While it is true that there is an element of subjectivity in all our perspectives, and we can lose ourselves in subjective superficial nostalgic memories of the past, it is shallow and foolish to ignore the past based on these reasons alone. Throwing out the beautiful baby with the dirty water is never the solution.

### Bottom Line

History is our collective memory. It provides us with a crucial understanding of our identity; who we are and what we stand for. History is not just a subject of the past, it is the compass for the future. It is a great prism to learn from precedent from the past, gain perspective for the present and draw inspiration for our future.

1. See his commentary to the Torah, Devarim 32:7.
2. Sifrei Devarim 310 and Yalkut Shimoni, Haazinu.
3. Nietzsche, Dimdumei Shachar (Hebrew), Shoken Publishers, 1978 pg. 25 and 99.

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# More Than Just Kapparah



## Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
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### Day of Purification

Though we generally associate Yom Kippur with atonement, the Torah defines *taharah* (purification) as the day's goal:

כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתכם  
לפני ה' מטהרו (ויקרא טז:ל)

On Yom Kippur, Hashem atones for our sins in order to purify us.

The purification relates to both the Beit HaMikdash and the Jewish People.<sup>1</sup> This is why the Yom Kippur Torah readings detail the purification of both the Beit Mikdash (in the morning reading<sup>2</sup>) and the Jewish people (in the afternoon reading).<sup>3</sup>

### The Damage of Sin

We are familiar with how the concept of *taharah* applies to the context of **ritual** purity. We are not as familiar with its relevance to the non-ritual sense. What does *taharah* mean in a personal, spiritual context?

Understanding spiritual purity hinges on appreciating the impact that sin has upon us. Sin is not just wrong and damning; it also defiles our soul and spirit. *Mitzvah* fulfillment sanctifies; transgression defiles. Rav Chaim Volozhin<sup>4</sup> compared sin to the consumption of unhealthy food. Just as the latter damages us physically, the former taints us spiritually.<sup>5</sup>

### The Goal

לב טהור ברא לי אלוקים ורוח נכון חדש בקרבי  
(תהלים נא:יב)

Dovid HaMelech links *taharah* to the heart and spirit. The Shaarei Teshuvah<sup>6</sup> and Mesilat Yesharim<sup>7</sup> explain that *taharah* hinges upon motivation – the **why** of what we do (beyond **what** we do). *Tahor* people are motivated by their wisdom and fear of Hashem, not their base desires.

*Taharah's* focus on the heart helps us understand why the Rambam<sup>8</sup> sees *teshuvah* as addressing not just sin but also improper character traits. Purification is not just about correcting action but mainly about personal improvement.

### Our Role

The *pesukim* we have seen – about *taharah* in general (Tehillim) and Yom Kippur specifically (Vayikra 16) – describe Hashem purifying us. This explains our request in each of our Shabbat and Yom Tov prayers:

טהור לבנו לעבדך באמת

We ask Hashem to purify our hearts so we can serve him in earnest.

Crucially, though, the conclusion of the Yom Kippur *pasuk* – the word “*tit'haru*” – adds that we must purify **ourselves**.<sup>9</sup> The Kohen Gadol used this word at the height of the Yom Kippur atonement service to remind those in the Mikdash of their responsibility to purify themselves. His verbal response to those who prostrated themselves upon his utterance of Hashem's (most) sacred name was “*tit'haru*.” He emphasized that his *avodah* alone was not enough. Each person needed to purify himself.

When we make the effort to purify ourselves, Hashem completes the process for us. Shaarei Teshuvah<sup>10</sup> summarizes the process this way:

זהירנו הכתוב שנטהר לפני ה' בתשובתנו והוא יכפר  
עלינו ביום הזה לטהר אותנו

“The Torah commands us to purify ourselves through *teshuvah* before Hashem so He can purify us through His atonement.”

### How We Purify Ourselves

Most of us are familiar with the process and stages of *teshuvah*. But how do we purify ourselves? The *mishnah* at the end of Mesechet Yoma gives us direction by describing Hashem Himself as the proverbial *mikvah* in which we are meant to purify ourselves.<sup>11</sup> Hashem is totally disconnected from all sin and defilement. By reconnecting with Him, we return to a natural state of purity. Like the Kohen Gadol, who immerses himself ten times on Yom Kippur and then enters the holy cloud (created by the *ketoret*) within the holiest part of Hashem's sanctuary, we also “immerse ourselves” within our connection to Hashem.

After elaborating on this notion, the Maharal<sup>12</sup> emphasizes that, like immersion in

an actual *mikvah*, we **only** achieve *taharah* by connecting (through committing) ourselves **fully** to Hashem. Even a tiny *chatzizah* (separation) makes the “immersion” **completely** meaningless.

### Returning to Ourselves

On a more profound (yet simpler) level, our return to Hashem is a return to our natural, authentic selves.

This applies on two levels. Firstly, because our soul emanates from Hashem,<sup>13</sup> we need to look no further than inside **ourselves** to find His holiness. As the Torah writes: “It is not in the sky or beyond the seas but in our mouths and hearts.”<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, because our soul is of godly origin, reconnecting with Hashem ultimately reconnects us to our true selves. For this reason, Rav Kook explained that our return to Hashem regenerates our natural, holy soul.<sup>15</sup>

We find Hashem by looking inside ourselves and our true selves by reconnecting with Him.

Though *taharah* is always an important goal, Yom Kippur is when this self-purification is most possible and impactful. Let's make sure to take full advantage of the opportunity.

1. This explains the centrality of purity to Yom Kippur ritual, which can be seen in the need for *tevilah* (ten times by the Kohen Gadol and customarily performed by all males before Yom Kippur) and the custom to wear white.
2. Vayikra Perek 16.
3. Perek 18 describes sexual sins as defiling us in *pesukim* 20, 23, and 24. The next *pesukim* (25–30) describe how these sins defile the land as well. See also Bamidbar 35, which depicts murder as defiling the land.
4. Nefesh Hachayim 2:8.
5. In addition to the damage caused on the spiritual plane, the Gemara in Yoma (39a) depicts how sin damages even one's intellectual capacity (see also Or HaChayim to Vayikra 11:43).
6. 1:9.
7. Perek 17 – *Midat Hataharah*.
8. Teshuvah 7:3.

Continued on page 7

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Black & Red & White All Over



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

**T**he *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Rosh HaShana 1:3) contrasts the despair of non-Jews on days of judgement manifest through their wearing of black clothing and unshaven faces, with Am Yisrael who approach *Yemei HaDin* with confidence, shaving their beards and wearing white. The Rema (on Shulkhan Arukh OH 610:4) cited the custom of wearing particularly clean white clothing on Yom Kippur to emulate the ministering angels and to wear a *kittel* “which is white and clean and also the garment of the dead; this makes the human heart submissive and broken.” These explanations may be appreciated through a re-examination of the white clothing worn by the *kohen gadol* during the Yom Kippur service.

As we read and learn the *Seder Ha'Avoda* of the *Kohen Gadol* on Yom Kippur, we note that the high priest donned special “*bigdei lavan*” – white linen garments, each time he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim*. According to the Ramban (Vayikra 16:4), these vestments are to afford the *Kohen Gadol* the appearance of an angel (see Yechezkel 9:3 and Daniel 10:5) described as wearing a sacral linen tunic. Perhaps this is the source for the above custom as cited as the Rema's first explanation.

There are other times, however, when the priest dons linen garments as a reflection of a lower status of activity. When he removes the ashes from the altar in the morning, he does not wear his standard priestly clothing, but instead he dons the “*bigdei ha-bad*” (white linen garments). Similarly, his “*michnasayim*” (trousers) which are worn for a technical role of covering and not for “glory and adornment”, are referred to as “*bigdei ha-bad*”, of lesser importance. Perhaps on Yom HaKippurim he is meant to be

reminded of his lowly stature, facilitating his submission before Hashem in the Holy of Holies. Rashi explains (Vayikra 16:4) that in fact the high priest who generally wears eight golden vestments, officiates as a “*kohen hedyot*” – a regular kohen who wears four priestly garments.

As he does so, he is reminded of his pre-consecration as a *kohen gadol* during the seven days of *miluim*, preparing the *mishkan* and its vessels for the *Shechina*. He descends from his “golden” stature as he removes his usual clothing, and humbly re-prepares the *mishkan* for renewed revelation as he changes to his “elevated” priestly garments later in the day; his appointment renewed, revelation re-experienced. (See Rav Yoel Ben-Nun's article in *Megadim* vol. 8, pp. 34-39 wherein he compares the Yom Kippur service to the initial consecration of the *mishkan*).

Furthermore, as Aharon haKohen donned the white vestments generally worn by the *kohanei hedyot* as he entered the *Kodesh Kodashim* with the sacred incense, I can only imagine the poignant *Deja' vu* he must have experienced from the initial *miluim*. After all, his sons Nadav and Avihu wore those garments as they approached the *Kodesh Kodashim* with the incense and were consumed by Divine fire. Perhaps Aharon must revisit their deaths annually, reminding himself, and us, to submit to the commandments of Hashem, even at the cost of our spontaneous desires of closeness.

Lastly, the white garments of the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur remind us of the *metzora* – the leper whose healthy skin has turned white and is compared to a dead person; His “deathly” / *tameh* state interferes and obstructs his relationship with *kedusha* (the sacred). He may not enter the sacred community of *Am Yisrael*

nor enter the *mikdash*. In order to purify the *metzora*, a *kohen* must take two live birds, slaughter one, sprinkle the blood on the purificant seven times and send the live bird to the field (Vayikra 14:4-7). The blood, symbolizing life, revives and restores him to his healthy state of interaction with people and with Hashem in the *mikdash*. Similarly, the *kohen gadol* on Yom haKippurim must don white vestments, the garments of the dead, akin to the skin of the *metzora*, symbolizing the impediments that sin brings to our vibrant relationship with Hashem. But just like the *metzora*, he takes two goats (parallel to the birds – see Ramban Vayikra 14:4), slaughters one, sprinkles the blood on the *kapporet* seven times, and sends the live goat to the desert. And like the *metzora* whose healthy skin and sensitivity to life are restored, sprinkled with blood, the *kohen gadol* immerses and may then don his vestments of scarlet and gold.

As we wear white on Yom Kippur, we each revisit death/*tzara'at*, evoking the human heart to feeling “submissive and broken”. ונשלמה פרים שפתינו - we are also reminded of the blood of the sacrifices, and the gifted opportunity to revisit and relish life anew each year.

Wishing you all a year of vitality and relationships explored and restored!

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Some people have a very hard time fasting on Yom Kippur, and may have medical reasons not to fast. Whenever there is doubt, one should be in touch with a *halachic* authority. If that is not possible and there is truly a doubt, one should not fast and put their lives in danger, even if it seems to be a far danger. It is forbidden for a sick person to try to fast if he has been advised medically not to (Mishnah Berurah 618:5).

### Question: Is it better for me to go to shul and drink a little bit or complete the fast but at home?

Answer: Shu"t Chatam Sofer writes that it is better not to attend *shul* if you will need to break your fast. Even if one would only need to drink a tiny bit of water less than a *shiur*, it is still better to stay home (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata). Therefore, if one fears that walking to shul will cause him or her to break the fast, one should stay home and daven there to the best degree possible. If one feels incapable of fasting and davening at all, then it is better to give up on all of the *tefillot* for the sake of fasting, as fasting is a biblical command with a punishment of *karet*.

### Question: If I need to drink, what is the proper way to do so?

Answer: If one needs to drink, it is best to drink less than a *shiur*, which is a "*melo lugmav*" (enough to fill the mouth with one cheek inflated) in the span of nine minutes (Mishnah Berurah 618:20). Depending on the need, there is room to be lenient about the span of time: If there is a need, one can have a cheek-full every six minutes (Aruch Hashulchan), every four minutes (Kaf Hachaim, Shiurei Torah), and in *sha'at hadchat* (extenuating circumstances), every two minutes (opinion quoted in Shu"t Chatam Sofer).

How is a cheekfull measured? This *shiur* is half of a mouthful, and thus varies from person to person. You can measure

this easily: fill up your mouth with water and spit it into a disposable cup. Take another cup of the exact size and split the water evenly. The water in each cup is your *shiur* of "*melo lugmav*." Before Yom Kippur, mark the line on your cup where the water reaches and you can drink that amount each time.

Once somebody does not need to drink with *shiurim* anymore, they should stop drinking. Each drinking is a prohibition on its own (it is not as if once you break your fast it makes no difference if you continue).

### Question: If I need to drink, can I have juice?

Answer: The Nefesh Chaya writes that one may only drink water. However, most *poskim* write that one can drink something sweet as well (Rav S.Z. Auerbach, Rav Asher Weiss, Rav Ovadya). It seems that it may even be preferable: Yom Kippur is a Yom Tov, and once one is already drinking, it is better that it is enjoyable. Additionally, it may be that a sweet drink will help prevent him from needing food/drink at a later point.

### Question: What is the proper way to eat when necessary?

To the extent it is possible, it is better for one who needs to break his/her fast to drink and not eat. If eating is necessary, it is better to eat less than a *kotevet hagasah* (a type of dried date) in the span

of nine minutes. The *shiur* of *kotevet hagasah* is 30 cubic centimeters, about the volume of a regular matches box. (Even food which is that size only after being condensed is allowed to be eaten – Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

### Question: If I am eating using the shiurim, do I make a bracha before each time?

Answer: When eating or drinking with *shiurim*, one only needs to make a *bracha rishona* before the first bite/sip (unless the break in between was longer and there was *hesech hada'at*). No *bracha acharona* is made when eating/drinking with *shiurim*.

### Questions: Can I take pills on Yom Kippur?

Answer: A *choleh sh'ein bo sakanah* (one who is ill but not in mortal danger) who takes pills and needs to continue on Yom Kippur may do so without water. If water is needed to swallow, add something bitter or salt to a bit of water so that it is in a state people would not generally drink (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach). If the pill is sweet, put a layer of paper around it and swallow it that way.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

# פרשת האזינו - מותו וקבורתו של משה רבנו

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



**ב**תחילת ספר דברים (פרשת ואתחנן) התחנן משה אל ה' לעבור אל הארץ, ובפרשת האזינו נסגר המעגל, ומתברר שבקשתו של משה לא נענתה, והוא מצטווה לעלות את הר העברים ולמות שם:

עֲלֵה אֶל הַר הָעֲבָרִים הַזֶּה הַר נְבוֹ... וַיֵּרָא אֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶחְזָהּ: וּמַת בְּהָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹלֶה שָׁמָּה... כִּי מִנְּגִד תִּרְאֶה אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְשָׁמָּה לֹא תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (דברים ל"ב, מט-נב).

מותו של משה מחוץ לארץ ישראל מטלטל – כיצד יתכן שמשה רבנו, גדול הנביאים והמנהיגים שקמו לעם ישראל, לא יזכה להגיע אל הארץ המובטחת, אלא ימות בדרך?

גם יעקב ויוסף נפטרו מחוץ לארץ ישראל, אך בשונה ממשו רבנו, יעקב אבינו הובא לקבורה בארץ מיד לאחר פטירתו. יוסף ציווה על ישראל להעלות את עצמותיו לארץ, ומשה רבנו הוא זה שלקח את עצמות יוסף איתו ממצרים, כדי להביא לקבורה בארץ (שמות י"ג, ט). העלאת עצמות יעקב ויוסף לקבורה בארץ ישראל מעצימה את העובדה שעצמותיו של משה רבנו לא הועלו לקבורה בארץ. לפי פשט הפסוקים, משה רבנו אפילו לא מבקש זאת, אולם המדרש מתאר כיצד משה רבנו התחנן לפני ה' להיכנס לארץ לפחות לאחר מותו, והקב"ה סירב:

מלמד שאמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבון העולמים הואיל וגזרת עלי שלא אעבור מלך אעבור הדיוט; שלא אעבור חי אעבור מת; שלא אעבור בארץ אעבור במחילה. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: משה שמה לא תבוא שמה לא תעבור. **לא מלך ולא הדיוט, לא חי ולא מת, לא בארץ ולא במחילה** (מדרש תנאים דברים ל"ב, נב).

מדרש זה מדגיש את המשתמע מן הפסוקים – משה רבנו לא זכה להיכנס אל הארץ וה' סירב אפילו להביא את עצמותיו אל הארץ. הוא נפטר בדרך, על סף הכניסה לארץ, ונשאר שם. נראה כי מעבר לעונש על חטא מי מריבה (או כל סיבה אחרת

של רחל. שני הורים של עם ישראל, אשר לא זכו להגיע אל היעד אלא נפטרו בדרך, נשארו שם ולא הובאו לקבורה בצורה מסודרת. אמנם רחל נפטרה ונקברה בדרך בתוך ארץ ישראל, ואילו משה רבנו נפטר ונקבר בדרך אל הארץ, בשער הכניסה לארץ. ולא זו בלבד אלא שאף מקום קבורתו לא נודע.

ירמיהו (בפרק ל"א) נותן משמעות לקבורתה של רחל בדרך: כאשר בניה יוצאים לגלות הם עוברים בדרך במקום קבורת רחל, והיא בוכה עליהם ומתחננת לה', ובזכותה ה' מביטיח שישובו לגבולם. ניתן להשליך מכך על קבורתו של משה רבנו בדרך, בערבות מואב, בשערי הארץ: **כאשר ישראל יוצאים לגלות, הם פוגשים שם את דמותו של משה רבנו. לא במקום ספציפי, מכיוון שמקום קבורתו לא נודע, אלא בנוכחות רוחנית.**

משה רבנו הוא זה שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים, הפך אותם לעם, נתן להם תורה, והביאם עד אל שערי הארץ. **שם הוא נשאר לחכות להם, לכל אורך הדורות, וללוות אותם בתהליכי הגלות** – להמשיך לקבל עליהם את התורה גם כשהם מחוץ לארץ ישראל (כשם שקיבלו את התורה במדבר); לעבור את שנות הגלות הקשות עם אמונה ותקווה שיום אחד ה' יפקוד אותם ויעלה אותם משם (כהבטחת יוסף "פקד יפקוד אלקים אתכם והעליתם את עצמותי מזה אתכם"); ובבוא העת להצליח לקום ולצאת מהגלות, ולעשות את הדרך המורכבת של עליה לארץ, לקראת הגאולה (כשם שמשה הוציאם ממצרים והובילם במדבר).

**משה רבנו נשאר בגלות, בדרך אל הארץ, כדי ללוות את עם ישראל בתהליכי הגלות ולסמן להם את היעד: "והוצאתי אתכם... והצילתי אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם... והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ" (שמות ו', ו-ח).** רוחו ושליחותו של משה רבנו ממשיכים ללוות את עם ישראל בכל מסעותיהם. תורתו מחייה את רוחם; תפילתו מגנה עליהם; וקבורתו שם מחזקת אותם, שלתהליך שהם עוברים יש משמעות, יש תכלית, ויש מנהיג.

שהעלו המפרשים), צריכה להיות משמעות לפטירתו וקבורתו של משה מחוץ לארץ ישראל.

דמות נוספת שנפטרה בדרך ונשארה שם לתמיד, היא רחל אמנו: "וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית אֵל וַיְהִי עוֹד כְּבַרְתְּ הָאָרֶץ לְבוֹא אֶפְרַתָּה וַתֵּלֶד רַחֵל וַתִּקְשֶׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ... וַתִּמַּת רַחֵל וַתִּקְבֹּר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַתָּה הוּא בֵּית לְחֶם" (בראשית ל"ה, טז-יט).

רחל אמנו עברה דרך ארוכה ומלאת ייסורים לפני שזכתה ללדת את בנה הראשון יוסף. היא התפללה ללדת ילדים, אך נפטרה בלידת הבן השני, בנימין. היא לא זכתה להגיע אל היעד הנכסף ולגדל את ילדיה, אלא נפטרה בדרך, בשעת הלידה. באופן סמלי פטירתה וקבורתה היו בדרך, היא לא זכתה לגדל את ילדיה, לא זכתה להתיישב בארץ, ואף לא הובאה לקבורה עם כל האבות במערת המכפלה.

סיפור זה מזכיר את סיפורו של משה רבנו בכמה מובנים. משה רבנו קיבל שליחות להוציא את ישראל ממצרים, ולהביאם אל הארץ. ארבעים שנה הנהיג את ישראל במדבר, נתן להם את התורה, הלך איתם בכל מסעותיהם, ובסופו של דבר לא זכה להגיע אל היעד הנכסף, אל המנוחה ואל הנחלה בארץ ישראל, ואפילו לא הובא לקבורה בארץ.

רחל אמנו ומשה רבנו נפטרו בדרך, רגע לפני מימוש החלום שאליהם שאפו ויחלו. החלום אמנם התגשם, אך הם לא זכו לחוות זאת, ונשארו לעד "בדרך", בתהליך.

מעניין לשים לב שמשה רבנו מתייחס לתפקידו במונחים של הורות: הריון, לידה, ונשיאת התינוק: "הָאֲנֹכִי הָרִיתִי אֶת כָּל הָעַם הַזֶּה אִם אֲנֹכִי יִלְדֶתִּיהוּ כִּי תֹאמַר אֵלֵי שְׂאֵהוּ בְּחִיקוֹךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא הָאִמּוֹן אֶת הַיֶּנֶק עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעַת לְאֲבֹתָיו" (במדבר י"א, יב) בפסוק זה משה רבנו מנסה לטעון שהוא לא ההורה של עם ישראל, אך טענה זו דווקא מדגישה את העובדה שמשה רבנו הוא אכן כאב לישראל, אשר הולידם – הפך אותם לעם, ונשאם על כפיו לכל אורך הדרך.

דימויים אלה מקרבים בין דמותו של משה לדמותו

Continued from page 4

9. See Shaarei Teshuvah (2:14, 4:17), who sees this phrase as the basis of the unique *chiyuv* to do *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur.  
10. Shaarei Teshuvah 2:14.  
11. See Rambam Mikvaot (11:12), who also uses immersion in a *mikvah* as a model for personal

purification. Shaarei Teshuvah 4:17 also speaks of *teshuvah* as necessary for *taharah*. Obviously, purification is only possible once we have distanced ourselves from and atoned for our sins.  
12. Kitvei Maharal, D'rush L'Shabbat Shuvah.

13. Bereishit 2:7 with Rashi and Ramban.  
14. Devarim 30:11-14.  
15. Orot Hateshuvah 15:10. The morning prayer of Elokai Neshama builds off this idea.

# An Innocent Look at Yom Kippur



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

**T**he innocence of children. It seems to me that this is what we need as Yom Kippur arrives. Yesterday, on a Zoom meeting of Nifgashot, a workshop for girls, the special answers I heard taught me a great deal.

I asked the girls what they felt now that Yom Kippur is almost here and they answered: Joy. “This is the day we enter filthy and come out clean,” one of the girls wrote over chat. “This is the day that makes it possible to fix everything and start over. What’s more fun than that?” Sometimes from a glut of Midrash, commentary, and quotations we lose the simple and joyful message of this day: “For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you.”

We spoke about the custom of accepting upon ourselves a new commitment in the run-up to Yom Kippur. I asked which little commitment each of them was prepared to make and to keep. The answers were simple and wonderful. “Not to speak *lashon hara* (insulting or negative speech) during the first recess at school.” “Not to make friends with girls who ghost

מה זה “ראו עֲפָה, כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא”? הנה הפירוש שלו, שבהחלט נותן דלק ליישום החלטות ושינויים בימים האלה של אלול ותשרי:

”מי שיש לו איזה שכל קצת, יוכל להבין כי אין הזמן כלום, כי העבר אין, והעתיד עדיין, וההווה כהרף עין. נמצא שעיקר הזמן של האדם הוא רק זה הרגע שהוא עומד בו, כי העבר כי עבר ואיננו, והעתיד מי יודע אם יהיה ומה ייוולד בו, ואין לו לעת עתה רק זו הרגע. וזה בחינת “ראו עֲפָה, כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא”. ‘עתה’ דווקא. כי העיקר הרגע שהוא בו עכשיו, ולדלג באותו הרגע על מה שצריך לדלג, ולזכות למצוא את הטוב האמתי שיכולים למצוא בכל רגע ורגע. בני האדם טועים בזה מאוד, מה שמעמיקים במחשבותיהם על הזמן הבא והעתיד, כי לא ידע האדם כלל מה ילד יום. על כן, אין עצה ותחבולה אלא לדעת היטב כי אין לו לעת עתה אלא זה הרגע שעומד בו, ולקשר עצמו עכשיו לה’ יתברך”.

or bully other girls.” “To take care of my little brother and sister more joyfully.” “To wash the dishes when mother asks me to.”

When I asked what part of the day they liked the most, there was a division between *Kol Nidrei* (recited at the beginning of the evening prayers) and *Ne'ilah* (last of the five Yom Kippur services), but one of the girls wrote: “Even though I sometimes break the fast because I am young, it is still important for me to make it to the *Ne'ilah* prayer.” And another simply said: “The first bite of food after the fast. You feel like an angel.”

May we all merit, no matter our age, to connect with the essence of Yom Kippur in a similar fashion.



Between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we are likely to miss this week’s Torah portion, Ha’azinu, in which Moshe Rabbeinu continues to bid farewell to the nation with several eternal messages:

“Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will inform you.” Moshe

השיר היא כשהקולות משונים זה מזה וזהו עיקר הנעימות”.

כלומר, לכל אחד יש את התפקיד שלו בתזמורת הגדולה.

מעניין שהימים האלה, מרובי החגים, הם ימים שיש בהם הרבה “הוראות”. המון מצוות, תפילות, צומות, סליחות, שופרות – אבל הכול נעשה מתוך שירה. קחו את הלחנים והניגונים מכל בית כנסת, בכל סגנון ועדה, ולקחתם את הנשמה של החודש הזה.



ב“שירת האזינו” משה, למעשה, מתאר את כל העבר ואת כל העתיד של עם ישראל. הנה אחד המשפטים הדרמטיים בשירה הזו: “ראו עֲפָה, כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא, וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי. אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאַחֲיָהּ, מִחֻצְתֵי וְאֵין אֶרְפָּא, וְאֵין מִיָּדִי מִצִּיל”. הפסוק הזה עוסק באלוקים, אבל רבי נחמן מברסלב מתמקד דווקא במה שאנחנו צריכים לעשות, ושם את הדגש על המילה “עתה”.

gives counsel that after his passing, the younger generation should look to the previous generation for guidance. The world does not belong only to the young, but to the experienced as well.

“And Yeshurun became fat and rebelled.” Yeshurun is the nation of Israel. There is concern that, once the land of Israel is settled, the people will grow prosperous and fat and, when life is easy and comfortable, they will rebel against their historical values and identity. Moshe Rabbeinu warns them about the affluent society, about addiction to materialism and creature comforts. Wealth is a unique challenge of its own.

“For it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life.” Moshe Rabbeinu calls upon us to immerse ourselves in the Torah; otherwise, it will appear empty of meaning, heaven forbid, instead of a guidebook for life. Our task is to reveal its meaning and its beauty.

These are three gems among many in a Torah portion that we could easily miss between one holiday and the next.



ברגעי הפרידה שלו מהעם – משה מלמד אותנו לשיר: “ויכתוב משה את השירה הזאת ביום ההוא, ולמדה את בני ישראל” כך שפרשת השבוע החדשה, פרשת “האזינו”, היא פרשה שכמעט כולה מורכבת משירה. השירה המפורסמת הזו, “שירת האזינו”, מזכירה לנו – בדיוק כשמשנה רבנו נפטר, בדיוק עם תחילת השנה החדשה – דבר חשוב: התורה היא ספר מצוות וחוקים, אבל היחס אליה אינו טכני כמו אל אוסף פקודות. היא אמורה לעורר יחס רגשי, נפשי, כמו אל שירה, לא כמו אל דף הוראות הרכבה של “איקאה”. עולם הניגון נחשב לעולם גבוה יותר מעולם הדיבור היומיומי, וזוהי השירה שמשנה מותיר לנו.

הרב יחיאל מיכל הלוי אפשטיין כותב בספרו “ערוך השולחן”, לפני כמאה שנה, עד כמה חיוני בתוך השירה הזו הניגון של כל אחד מאיתנו:

“ואדרבא, זאת היא תפארת תורתנו הקדושה והטהורה, וכל התורה כולה נקראת שירה, ותפארת



# For the Shabbat Table



## Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Moshe came and he spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people – he and Hoshea bin Nun” (Devarim 32:44).

As we reach the penultimate Parsha of the Torah and Moshe makes the final preparations for his death, he makes a joint public appearance with his successor, Yehoshua bin Nun. Surprisingly, however, on Yehoshua's first act of national leadership, he is referred to by his previous name, “Hoshea.”

At the beginning of Parshat Shelach Lecha, prior to sending the spies on their mission, Moshe changed Hoshea's name to Yehoshua (Devarim 13:16). Ever since that day, he has been known as Yehoshua. So why in this week's Parsha is he referred to by his previous name?

“And why is he called Hoshea here? To teach us that he did not become arrogant, for even when he was given greatness, he lowered himself (in his self-opinion) like his beginnings” (Rashi, Devarim 32:44).

Rashi explains that specifically as Yehoshua begins his career in public office, he is called Hoshea as a sign of his humility. Position and power can destroy a person. The new-found fame, desire for popularity, constant attention and obsession with staying in power can make those in positions of leadership behave in entirely inappropriate ways. Yehoshua did not allow his position to go to his head. In his mind, he was still Hoshea and no different from the person he was at his humble beginnings.

Humility, one of the major prerequisites for *teshuvah*, plays a major role in

our prayers and thoughts at this time of the year. On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we prostrated ourselves before Hashem, fully accepting His majesty and sovereignty. “Like clay in the hand of the potter” and “stone in the hand of the cutter,” we recognized that everything we have and every talent we own comes from Hashem and every moment we are alive is due to His kindness.

Every single person, regardless of position or title, passes before Hashem for judgment, and every single person, especially those with positions and titles, must be wary of the dangers of arrogance. Ultimately, it is not one's title that is important, but how one uses that position to better the world.

Shabbat Shalom!

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# The Spirituality of Song



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

With Ha'azinu we climb to one of the peaks of Jewish spirituality. For a month Moses had taught the people. He had told them their history and destiny, and the laws that would make theirs a unique society of people bound in covenant with one another and with G-d. He renewed the covenant and then handed the leadership on to his successor and disciple Joshua. His final act would be blessing the people, tribe by tribe. But before that, there was one more thing he had to do. He had to sum up his prophetic message in a way the people would always remember and be inspired by. He knew that the best way of doing so is by music. So the last thing Moses did before giving the people his deathbed blessing was to teach them a song.

There is something profoundly spiritual about music. When language aspires to the transcendent, and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Jewish history is not so much read as sung. The rabbis enumerated ten songs at key moments in the life of the nation. There was the song of the Israelites in Egypt (see Is. 30:29), the song at the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the song at the well (Num. 21), and *Ha'azinu*, Moses' song at the end of his life. Joshua sang a song (Josh. 10:12-13). So did Deborah (Jud. 5), Hannah (1 Sam. 2) and David (2 Sam. 22). There was the Song of Solomon, *Shir HaShirim*, about which Rabbi Akiva said, "All songs are holy but the Song of Songs is the holy of holies."<sup>1</sup> The tenth song has not yet been sung. It is the song of the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Many biblical texts speak of the power of music to restore the soul. When Saul

was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with *Pesukei de-Zimra*, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing G-d's praises.

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called "the music of the spheres." This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, "The heavens declare the glory of G-d; the skies proclaim the work of His hands . . . There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music<sup>3</sup> carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world." Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for *Shacharit*, *Mincha* and *Ma'ariv*, the morning, afternoon, and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the *Yamim Noraim*, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation

for Torah, another for the *haftorah* from the prophetic books, and yet another for *Ketuvim*, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the Written Torah, and for studying Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. Jewish texts and times are not colour-coded but music-coded. The map of holy words is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of G-d on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they plead with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul.<sup>4</sup>

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading *Eichah* – the Book of Lamentations – with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words *Neue Kraft fühlend*, "Feeling new strength." That is what music expresses and evokes. It is the language of emotion unsicklied by the pale cast of thought. That is what King David meant

when he sang to G-d the words: "You turned my grief into dance; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, the late Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) told the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, "It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment."

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, "Look, it's new." "It's the same chocolate," she said. "No," he replied, "Look. It's changed." He had no past at all.

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we "remember" a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, "Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the



### Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.

future without being foreknown." Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than science.<sup>5</sup> Science analyses, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. G-d is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of G-d's song. *Faith is the ability to hear the music beneath the noise.*

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is "an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone."<sup>6</sup> He quotes Rilke: "Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its G-dly home."<sup>7</sup> The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs.

I once watched a teacher explaining to young children the difference between a physical possession and a spiritual one. He had them build a paper model of Jerusalem. Then - this was in the days of

tape-recorders - he played a song about Jerusalem on a cassette tape, and taught the song to the class. At the end of the session he did something very dramatic. He tore up the model and shredded the tape. He asked the children, "Do we still have the model?" They replied, No. "Do we still have the song?" They replied, Yes.

We lose physical possessions, but not spiritual ones. We lost the physical Moses. But we still have the song.

### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why do you think music plays such an important role in Judaism?
- Are there tunes and songs in our rituals and prayers that particularly speak to you?
- How can we ensure that we do not lose this Song?

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1. Mishnah, Yadayim 3:5.
2. Tanhuma, Beshallah, 10; Midrash Zuta, Shir HaShirim 1:1.
3. *Kavam*, literally "their line", possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument.
4. Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work.
5. I once said to the well-known atheist Richard Dawkins, in the course of a radio conversation, "Richard, religion is music, and you are tone deaf." He replied, "Yes, it's true, I am tone deaf, but there is no music."
6. Roger Scruton, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy*, Duckworth, 1996, p. 151.
7. Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, II, p. 10.

# Dinim Derabbanan



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

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**A**sk your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you. (Devarim 32:7)

The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) discusses why we may recite the phrase, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו – “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us,” in the *berachah* over lighting *neiros Chanukah*, as this *mitzvah* was never commanded by Hashem, but is rather rabbinic in origin. The Rambam records the *passuk* cited as the Gemara’s first response: “You shall not deviate from the word that they [the *Chachamim*] will tell you, right or left” (Devarim 17:11). This implies that every rabbinic command or prohibition is subsumed under this *mitzvah d’oraisa*. Although the *passuk* refers to the *Beis Din HaGadol* (Supreme Court), the assumption is that the same applies to the *gedolei hador* in every generation. In fact, the Gemara (Berachos 19b) cites only this *passuk* as providing the *Chachamim* with the authority to require observance of *mitzvos derabbanan*.

The first section of the Rambam’s *Sefer HaMitzvos* contains the fourteen *shorashim* (guiding principles) that determine whether a given *mitzvah* should be included in the count of *taryag mitzvos*. In the first *shorash*, the Rambam writes that *mitzvos derabbanan* do not warrant inclusion in this list, since they are collectively subsumed under the prohibition of לא תסור. This is in contrast to the view of the Bahag, who does include several *mitzvos derabbanan* in his *minyana* of *taryag*.

In contrast to the Rambam, the Ramban adopts the second *passuk* brought by the Gemara to provide for a Biblical source for the *mitzvos derabbanan*: שאל אביך ויגדך. The Ramban contends that שאל אביך ויגדך relates to an unresolved *halachic* dispute that is causing friction in the community: If a matter of judgement is hidden from you ... mat-

ters of dispute in your cities, You shall come to the *Kohanim*, the *Levi'im*, and to the judge who will be in those days ... You shall do according to the word that they will tell you ... you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you. (Devarim 17:8-11).

In this situation, the *Beis Din HaGadol* in Yerushalayim must be consulted to issue a *psak*, and לא תסור insists that the *psak* is binding on all of *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the *parsha* refers to a case in which the *Beis Din HaGadol* interprets a *din d’oraisa*, not when they invent a new *din derabbanan* like the *takanos* of Chanukah and Purim. In the latter case, there is no doubt that needs to be resolved; on a *d’oraisa* level, we know that Chanukah and Purim do not exist.

The Ramban claims that the Gemara in Berachos cited above did not present the prohibition of לא תסור as the binding force of *dinim derabbanan*. Instead, the Gemara cited this source as an *asmachta* (support), upon which the *Chachamim* relied when making rabbinic legislation. He argues further that it cannot be that *dinei derabbanan* are subsumed under the *passuk* of לא תסור. After all, if we are Biblically required to observe *dinim derabbanan*, what is the basis of leniency in a *sfeika derabbanan*? We should always apply the principle of *sfeika d’oraisa l’chumrah*, that an uncertainty pertaining to Torah law is decided stringently, even to *dinim derabbanan*!

However, we may ask a basic question on the Ramban’s opinion. The *passuk*, שאל אביך ויגדך, merely instructs us to learn from history, to take advantage of the counsel of the elders who have greater life experience; it is not a mandate. How can this *passuk* serve as the source of the binding force of all *mitzvos derabbanan* if it is itself not one of the *taryag mitzvos* of the Torah? Why are

we obligated to comply with the rabbinic laws if there exists no command in the Torah to do so?

Rav Elchonon Wasserman Hy”d explains that in the view of the Ramban, the real source of the obligation to abide by all of the *mitzvos derabbanan* is the fact that they represent the will of Hashem. In other words, it is the *passuk*, ואהבת את ד’ א-לקיך – “And you shall love Hashem, your G-d” (Devarim 6:5) that obligates us. That *mitzvah* demands of us not only an obligation of the heart, but an obligation of the body as well – to demonstrate through action that we love Hashem.

The Ramban continues to explain that whether we adopt the first or the second *passuk* is not merely an abstract question. In fact, it is nothing less than a matter of life and death!

A *zakein mamrei* is a *talmid chacham* who *paskens* publicly against the *psak* of the *Beis Din HaGadol*; the Torah considers this a capital crime. *Beis din* metes out bodily punishments such as *misah* (death) or *malkus* (lashes) only if one violates the warning of a *lo sa’aseh*, not if one merely refrains from fulfilling a *mitzvas aseh* (Yoma 81a). Thus, the *zakein mamrei*’s capital punishment is a result of his violation of the *lo sa’aseh* of לא תסור. In line with his view of לא תסור as the Biblical source of rabbinic injunctions, the Rambam (Hilchos Mamrim 4:1) rules explicitly that a *zakein mamrei* who challenges an *issur derabbanan*, such as that which prohibits *chametz* before *chatzos* on *erev Pesach*, receives the death penalty. The Ramban, however, disagrees and maintains that there is no punishment in this case. This is consistent with his opinion that the prohibition of לא תסור does not address *dinim derabbanan*.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

# To Be An Adam And Not An Ish



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There is a phrase that appears throughout Shas, one of them being in Bava Metzia (114B) where the Gemara teaches us “אתם קרויין אדם” – *Am Yisrael* (unlike other nations) has been given the title of *Adam*. What is significant about this name that it is given exclusively to the Jewish people? Seemingly if all of man comes from *Adam HaRishon* it should be designated for everyone!

The Pardes Yosef (Rav Yosef Patzanovski ZT”L) in his *peirush* on Chumash<sup>1</sup> explains that throughout the Torah there are names that are given to a human being, but the primary ones that are used are *Ish* and *Adam*. When man is described by the Torah as an *Ish*, he is being described as one who has superiority or is a master over others around him.<sup>2</sup> For example, the *pasuk* in Mishlei (22:7) which says “וְעֶבֶד לֹוֹה לְאִישׁ מְלוֹוָה” – The borrower is a slave to the master, the lender. An *Adam* on the other hand is not described with an elevated status over others, but rather is one who stands on his own, who develops himself without anyone making decisions for him.

*Adam HaRishon* was, in the beginning, a single human creature. Already when Chava was brought into the world the Torah began to use the term *Ish* and *Isha* as they now had the ability to impact and influence the actions of one another as well as be able to have control over another being. An *Adam* has a certain level of independence in that he has consistent control over his actions and beliefs. There is no superiority in the life of *Adam*, he serves as his own ruler with all that he does.



**An Adam focuses on ensuring that he continues on his own straight path without feeling pressure or a need to take over the path of others.**

We find in our world constant physical desires and pleasures that Man seeks are dependent on them being provided by other people. These pleasures are all subjective and can never have any measure of superiority over that of another. Shlomo HaMelech expresses in Koheles (4:4) that all the labour man is involved in is purely just coming as a result of the envy he has towards others. If not from outright jealousy then perhaps it is a result of comparing one's wealth to their fellow. How are we measuring the wealth that we have? How much of what we have or desire comes as a result of us being described as an *Eved* to the *Ish* we are striving to be and therefore feeling pressure and influence from others? When we live in the world of Torah, *mitzvot*, and *tefillah* we are in the world of *Adam*. Our *davening* and our learning is something that is really ours without the impact of an *Ish* and our *Avodas Hashem* is unique to you and only you.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky ZT”L (Emes L'Yaakov) asks a question of the *bracha* given in Parshas Vayechi<sup>3</sup> of “בְּרַךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל יְאָמֹר” – By you Yisrael will invoke *bracha* saying ‘May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe’.

Rav Yaakov asks why is it that this is the *bracha* we give to our children every Shabbos? What is the meaning of being like the sons of Yosef? He answers by explaining the uniqueness of Ephraim and Menashe is that they were the first members of *Am Yisrael* to be born and grow up separately from the rest of the Jewish people, yet they were not affected by the Egyptian culture and influence around them. They were people who were taught certain values and lived by them to the fullest. They stood on their own and owned who they were. Even in modern English, the phrase “be a man” implies the need of a person to be stronger and assert more dominance, that is what it means to be an *Ish*, the feeling that one must dominate his companions. An *Adam* focuses on ensuring that he continues on his own straight path without feeling pressure or a need to take over the path of others.

When used in the plural form, the word *Ish* turns into *Anashim*. Yet when the word *Adam* changes into the plural it remains the same, it cannot be changed. We must recognize the power of the individual Man and the ability he has to create an everlasting *derech*. May this *Shabbos Shuva* be a time where we affirm our place and what we truly believe in before we come before Hashem on Yom Kippur as individuals (כבני מרון) and show him the *Adam* that each one of us are and will continue to be.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

1. Vayikra 1:2

2. The Mishna in Maseches Yoma 1:5 uses the word “אִישִׁי” which translates there o mean “my master”

3. Breishis 48:20

# Cause and Effect



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**R**esilience' comes from the Latin, meaning to recoil or rebound. It implies that, over time, we can return to where we started. But, as any *Shoah* survivor will attest, real adversity cannot merely be shrugged off. It remains a part of you for the rest of your life.

The Israeli psychologist and Nobel Laureate, Professor Daniel Kahneman, points out that negative experiences loom larger and feel more intense than positive experiences. However, he maintains that it is possible to train ourselves to take better control of how our minds process these happenings. We can derive inspiration from the Torah account of creation: "And there was evening and there was morning." (Bereishit 1:5) Morning always follows evening; darkness always gives way to light. Recognition of the fact that adversity will always be followed by deliverance helps us withstand hardship and see that, just as there is a certainty about night and day, adversity can be an unavoidable and necessary part of what it is to be human.

Our *Yamim Noraim* Torah readings reflect this outlook. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we read the dramatic account of how Hagar and Yishmael, cast into a barren wilderness, drank their last drops of water and feared the worst. Hagar placed her child behind a bush, not wishing to see him die. But, at that moment of profound personal anguish, an Angel of Hashem appeared to her and said, "Do not be afraid, Hashem has heard the boy crying." (Bereishit 21:17) Hashem then opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.



**Recognition of the fact that adversity will always be followed by deliverance helps us withstand hardship and see that, just as there is a certainty about night and day, adversity can be an unavoidable and necessary part of what it is to be human.**

Similarly, on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we read how Avraham Avinu was about to do the unthinkable, to sacrifice his child in service of Hashem. Yet again, at the most critical moment, an Angel called out to Avraham, "Do not reach out your hand against the boy." (Bereishit 22:12)

On Yom Kippur, we read that when the *kikayon* plant, under which Yonah had been sheltering from the desert sun, was destroyed, his suffering was so great that he begged for death. From here Hashem taught Yonah a lesson: if he could grieve so profoundly over a plant, how much more precious were the lives of the inhabitants of Nineveh?!

All of these examples have something striking in common - their cause and effect.

Hagar and Yishmael were cast away because Hashem instructed Avraham to heed the concerns of Sarah. Yet, Hashem

then promised that "a great nation" would be descended from Yishmael.

The *Akeida* was a direct commandment from Hashem. Yet, He then made His timeless covenant with Avraham, saying, "I will greatly bless you and greatly multiply your descendants." (Bereishit 22:17)

Hashem destroyed the *kikayon*; but He then used Yonah's experience to teach us one of the most fundamental principles of Judaism: that all life is sacred.

While our tradition, therefore, justifiably encourages positivity amid adversity, the Rambam goes one step further. He observes that "the transition from trouble to ease gives more pleasure than continual ease." (Moreh Nevuchim 3:24) This is a challenging concept, particularly for those who have experienced great pain and suffering. Yet, the Rambam goes on to point out that "the Israelites would not have been able to conquer the land and prevail over its inhabitants if they had not previously undergone the vicissitudes of their travails in the wilderness."

Often, quite remarkably, it is in encountering significant challenges that people reach the most extraordinary levels of human achievement. Hashem has taught us repeatedly throughout our history, and reinforces very powerfully for us over the *Yamim Noraim*, that adversity is temporary. Eventually, the darkness will give way to the light and when it does so, we can emerge strengthened by the trust that we have placed in Him.

# Like Rain and Dew



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Listen, O heavens, and I will speak! And let the earth hear the words of my mouth! My lesson will drip like **rain**; my word will flow like **dew**; like storm winds on vegetation and like raindrops on **grass**. (Devarim 32:1-2)

**M**oshe Rabbeinu states that his lesson is like rain and his word like dew. What is represented by rain, and what by dew?

## Oral and Written Torah

The Hafetz Hayim posits that the second *pasuk* in the *parasha* corresponds to the first *pasuk*. The Written Torah is heavenly. It was dictated by Hashem to Moshe. The Oral Torah is more connected to earth. It is human clarification of the Written Torah.

The **Written Torah** is compared to **rain**. Both originate from the heavens. Like rain, the Written Torah is finite. There is a specific number of *pesukim* and a specific number of *mitzvot*. Similarly, rain is finite and discrete. One can place a bucket and catch all the rain that falls in a particular spot.

The **Oral Torah** is more like **dew**. Both originate from the earth. There is no way to count dew. It appears on the grass as a wet substance, not as drops. Similarly, the Oral Torah has no end. New commentaries are constantly being published.

We need to focus on both. The Written Torah is finite, yet how many of us can even name all 24 books of the Tanach in the proper order, let alone have completed learning them all? The Hafetz Hayim said that it is somewhat ironic that the written

Torah, which is finite, many have forgotten, while primarily focusing on that which is infinite, the Oral Law. We need to commit ourselves to study both the Written and Oral Torah.

## Significance of Grass

Rav Yosef Nehemia Kornitzer looks at the surface on which the rain falls: grass. Moshe expresses the hope that his words to Bnei Yisrael fall like “raindrops on **grass**.” Couldn’t we use a more royal metaphor? Perhaps comparing the words of Torah to raindrops on a sweet smelling rose, or the fresh fruit blossoming on a tree? Why the reference specifically to raindrops on grass? Rav Kornitzer answers: Sometimes, our hearts are so closed up that nothing gets through. We must prepare our hearts to internalize certain messages. It is like a field that must be prepared properly to enable produce to grow. If one does not plow, plant seeds, and tend the field, nothing will grow, no matter how much it rains. There is only one thing that grows without preparation: grass. When it rains, grass sprouts on its own.

Moshe Rabbeinu knew that Klal Yisrael would not always be on a high level. There will be times when the bare minimum is all one can hope for. Even if Bnei Yisrael are not prepared or inspired, the Torah should positively affect them like raindrops cause grass to sprout.

## Upon Your Heart

This reminds us of a famous idea expressed by the Kotzker Rebbe. The Torah tells us

קִּסְדוּ וְאָמַת, אֶל-יַעֲזְבֶהָ... כְּתִבֶם, עַל-לוּחַ לִבְךָ.  
(משלי ג:ג)

“Kindness and truth shall not leave you; bind them upon your neck, inscribe them upon the tablet of your heart.” (Mishle 3:3).

Why are we told to inscribe the words of Torah “**upon** the tablet of your heart” (*al luach libecha*) rather than “in your heart” (*b’libecha*)? The Kotzker Rebbe explains: Sometimes, we are not prepared to hear or accept something. In those instances, we need to place it on our hearts, close to our hearts, so that one day, when we are ready to open our hearts, it will permeate. Similar language is found in *Kriyas Shema* והיו הדברים אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך.

Let the soul hear it, and eventually “the earth will hear.” It will break through. The Torah is compared to grass – so that at the very least it can have a slight impact without requiring abundant preparation from *Am Yisrael*.

As we usher in the new year, let us allow ourselves to open our hearts and minds and internalize the beautiful words of the Torah!

# Hearing the Voice of Hashem



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**P**arshas Haazinu begins as Moshe calls upon the heavens and earth to bear witness, and to hear, the words that he will say to the *Bnei Yisrael*.

*Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth (Devarim 32:1).*

What is *Shirat Ha'azinu*, this song of *Ha'azinu*? It is an indictment of the sins of the nation, a prophecy of their punishment, and a promise of G-d's ultimate redemption that will come. As part of *Shirat Ha'azinu*, the *pasuk* tells us: *When the Most High gave nations their lot, when He separated the sons of man, He set up the boundaries of peoples according to the number of the children of Israel (ibid, v.8).*

What is the meaning behind these words: He set up the boundaries of nations according to the number of the children of Israel? What do the borders and boundaries of the nations of the world have to do with the *Bnei Yisrael*?

R' Shlomo Zalman Bregman, in his Short and Sweet on the Parsha (p.523-524, Feldheim), offers an important and relevant answer. He writes, "The mystical *sefarim* suggest that this *pasuk* contains a hint to the seventy root nations of the world. Everything that happens to them is actually for the benefit of *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem 'set the borders of the peoples' – including natural disasters and political events – according to the needs of the Jewish people and their adherence to the Torah.

"This was not always the case. The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) explains that in the twenty-six generations between the time Hashem created the world and *Matan Torah*, Hashem kept the world going as a function of His *chesed*. In fact, this is why the phrase *כי לעולם חסדו* (For

His kindness is eternal) is found twenty-six times in Tehilim 136! However, *after Matan Torah*, the way the nations of the world will go is dependent upon the behavior of *Klal Yisrael* and their allegiance to Torah.

"Chazal (Yevamos 63a and Rashi there), along with the *Drashos HaRan* (8), speak about many of these concepts. They write that misfortune comes to the world only because of *Klal Yisrael*. Sometimes things happen in a remote part of the world – perhaps in a faraway island – in order to awaken the Jewish people to the need for repentance, *teshuva*. It is Hashem's desire at that time that we experience fear and terror and proceed to improve our ways, so that calamity should not reach us as well, R"l (may the Merciful One save us).

"This concept is alluded to in Tzefaniah 3:6-7: *'I have eliminated nations, their towers have become desolate; I have destroyed their streets without passerby; their cities have become ruins, without people, so there is no inhabitant. I said, אַךְ-תִּירְאֵי אֹתִי, תִּקְהִי מוֹסֵר, just fear Me, accept My chastisement...'*"

R' Bregman concludes by noting that, "Chazal (Chagigah 12b) teach us: *'Woe to those people who see but do not realize what they are seeing!'* It would be a pity for so much upheaval to take place in the world if *Klal Yisrael* would fail to take heed or derive the proper lessons!"

How true are these words as we look at the world this past decade. From the COVID pandemic that began far, far away in a distant land, to the natural disasters, such as forest fires and floods, to political turmoil and chaos and upheaval the world over, to the recent disastrous and catastrophic American pull-out from Afghanistan... we may be inclined to

look at the world and its goings-on, and think, well I am safe here in my land, my country, my community, my town, those goings-on have nothing to do with me... Nothing could be farther from the truth!

*Hashem establishes the borders of nations, according to the number of the Children of Israel.*

Everything that unfolds on the world stage has a lesson for us, and ultimately, will affect us. We must heed the call of G-d when His voice thunders around the world!

*The voice of Hashem is in strength; the voice of Hashem is in beauty; The voice of Hashem breaks the cedars, yea, Hashem breaks the cedars of Lebanon (Tehillim 29:4-5).*

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, *zt'l*, teaches, "The Jew is involved in (world) events which at the outset seem to have no relevance to him... There are no neutral events in human history which the Jew may dismiss as irrelevant. The Jew is totally involved in all events and in all major struggles. Even now, the future welfare of the Jew is dependent upon the outcome of the titanic struggle between East and West. Even the final redemption of our people will be precipitated by the apocalyptic battle between Gog and Magog. Providence involves the Jew in great events. Willy nilly, the Jew plays his part on the universal historic stage" (Megillat Esther Mesorat haRav, p.56).

As Moshe Rabbeinu departs from his beloved nation, he leaves us with many truisms and final lessons. The lesson of our place and stature in the world, and *vis à vis* the world events specifically, is a lesson we would do well to remember. *The borders and boundaries of the nations are set according to the numbers of the Children of Israel.* Let us take heed of the voice of

*Continued on page 22*



# The Witnesses – 'Shamayim Va'aretz'



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**  
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In its preface, “shirat Ha’azinu” calls upon **shamayim** va-aretz [‘heaven & earth’] to bear witness. On the one hand, the very mention of this ‘Biblical duo’ beautifully ties together the end of Sefer Devarim with the very beginning of Sefer Breishit.

But why are specifically ‘heaven and earth’ summoned as witnesses? Although the answer may seem obvious at first, as we will see, there may be far more here than first meets the eye.

Rashi quotes the two classic answers:

1) An eternal witness: Heaven and earth exist forever and can thus serve as eternal witnesses. Whereas Moshe himself is mortal, he must summon the everlasting forces of nature as his witnesses.

2) An agent of enforcement: As explained in Devarim 11:13-17, ‘heaven and earth’ will reward Bnei Yisrael with adequate rainfall and plenty should they follow G-d’s covenant, and punish them with drought should they disobey.

Ramban begins his commentary by agreeing with the first reason brought down by Rashi [i.e. everlasting witnesses], and even offers additional proof from a similar incident – where Yehoshua designates a stone as an eternal witness to a covenant. However, afterward he adds a very interesting comment: “... these are the original **shamayim** and **aretz** that are first mentioned in **Breishit**. Since they are entering into a covenant with Israel, they are told to listen...”

Though somewhat obscure, a connection between Ha’azinu and the beginning of Chumash appears in the comments of Ibn

Ezra, as well. First, he quotes Rav Sa’adia Gaon’s suggestion that **shamayim** refers to the ‘angels in heaven’ and **aretz** to ‘men on earth.’ He then continues: “... or the testimony [refers to] the rain that will come from heaven, and earth that will give [the earth’s] produce. But what seems most correct to me is that they both exist forever [reason (1) above], and I have earlier alluded to the fact that the **neshama** (of man) is in the **middle** – between above and below...”

Following this ‘lead’ alluded to by both Ibn Ezra and Ramban, we will explore a possible thematic connection between the **shamayim** va-aretz in the first pasuk of shirat Ha’azinu and the **shamayim** va-aretz in the first pasuk of Chumash.

Both explanations quoted by Rashi personify **shamayim** and **aretz**, treating them as actual witnesses who will enforce the covenant. This understanding implies that the purpose of this summons to **shamayim** va-aretz is to **frighten** Bnei Yisrael, so that they realize that ‘someone’ is always there watching should they break the covenant.

However, one could suggest a different function of **shamayim** va-aretz, based on an earlier instance in Sefer Devarim, where Moshe Rabbeinu summoned **shamayim** va-aretz to witness his final charge to Bnei Yisrael at the conclusion of his ‘finale’ speech: “I call upon the **shamayim** and the **aretz** as **witnesses** today, for I am presenting the choice between life and death – the blessing or the curse – and you should choose life...”

After first identifying their function as ‘eternal witnesses,’ Rashi then cites a

different explanation, based on the Midrash: “Hashem tells Bnei Yisrael: **look** at the **shamayim** that I created to serve you – do they ever change from their regular pattern? **Look** at the **aretz** that I created to serve you...”

In other words, G-d’s selection of **shamayim** and **aretz** to witness the covenant is not in order to ‘scare’ us, but rather to ‘teach’ us that just as there is a purpose for G-d’s creation of heaven and earth, so too there is a purpose for His covenant with Am Yisrael.

This Midrash raises the fundamental question concerning the conclusions that man should reach when he contemplates the very existence of ‘heaven and earth’? What does man see in nature – pure coincidence? Are these ‘forces’ beyond human comprehension, or does man perceive an organized universe created by One G-d – for a definite purpose?

It is precisely this question that the first two chapters of Sefer Breishit attempt to answer. They teach us that what we perceive as nature – i.e. **shamayim** va-aretz and all their hosts – is a willful act of G-d. Man, the pinnacle of G-d’s creation, was charged to both serve G-d and to rule over nature.

At the same time, however, it is precisely **shamayim** va-aretz that may cause man to arrive at the exact opposite conclusion. He may indeed perceive Creation as an act of G-d, but the vast abyss separating **shamayim** and **aretz** seems too wide to bridge. Indeed, G-d is in heaven – but man remains on earth, with no means by which to connect to the heavens. G-d may exist, but there may be no ‘hashgacha’.

*Continued on page 18*

# Teshuva & Torah Learning



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The famous *haftara* read on Shabbat Shuva – the Shabbat in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – comes from the Book of Hoshea, and begins with the prophet calling to the people, “Return, O Israel, unto Hashem your G-d, for you have stumbled through your sin” (14:2). Hoshea then instructs us how to embark on this road of repentance: “*Kehu Imachem Debarim Ve’shuvu El Hashem*” – “Take with yourselves words, and return to G-d” (14:3).

Rav Aharon Kotler (1892-1962) explains that these “words” are the words of the Torah. In order to properly repent, one must devote time to the study of Torah.

In truth, this is stated explicitly in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, 935), which teaches: “If a person stumbled upon a sin for which he is liable to death at the hands of G-d, what shall he do so he may live? He should involve himself in Torah. If he was accustomed to reading one page, he should read two pages; to learn one chapter, he should learn two chapters.” The Midrash tells us that one can avoid the repercussions of his wrongdoing by

increasing the amount of time he spends learning Torah.

Why is Torah learning a crucial component of *teshuvah*? The Rambam famously lists the four elements that comprise the process of repentance – discontinuing the sinful behavior, remorse, confession, and committing not to repeat the sin in the future. All these stages are readily understandable, as they relate to the sin itself. But how does this additional component – Torah study – relate to the process of *teshuvah*?

The answer can be found in a well-known Mishna in Pirkeh Avot (3:6) which teaches that whenever somebody learns Torah, the *Shechina* (divine presence) is with him. Each and every time we open a Torah book, or listen to a Torah class, G-d is present. We are all very enthusiastic when we have the privilege of meeting with a famous *tzadik* for five minutes; but in truth, every time we learn Torah, we are together with G-d throughout the entire period we spend learning. He is right there with us each and every time we study Torah.

Sin creates distance between us and G-d. It severs the connection between us. We all

become frazzled when we are somewhere without a Wi-Fi connection, or without cellphone reception. But losing our connection with G-d is much more serious. G-d is the source of all blessing and goodness in our lives; when we lose our connection to Him, we lose our connection to everything that we need and want. *Teshuva* literally means “return.” As we cited earlier, Hoshea calls to us and pleads, “Return, O Israel, unto Hashem your G-d.” *Teshuva* is the process of rebuilding our connection with Hashem after having severed that connection through our misconduct.

As we think about the way we need to grow and improve during this period of repentance, let us include as well as resolution to increase the amount of time we devote to Torah learning. Our efforts to “return” to G-d, to rebuild and enhance our connection with Him, must include a commitment to Torah learning, which brings Hashem into our lives and brings us closer to Him. Let us make Torah study an important part of our *teshuvah* process during this season, and we will, please G-d, be worthy of being inscribed in the Book of Life and of being blessed with a year of joy, success and prosperity, Amen.

*Continued from page 17*

Even though man may perceive and recognize divine Creation, he can still question how that Creator relates to his own daily life.

The Torah provides the answer, presenting the ‘prophetic history’ of G-d’s relationship with man, himself a ‘mixture’ of **shamayim** and **aretz**. Each brit found in Chumash exemplifies this relationship.

We may now, therefore, suggest an additional reason for G-d’s invocation of **shamayim** and **aretz** to witness the covenant.

In the psukim in Parshat Vayelech that outline the **reason** for shirat Ha’azinu, G-d threatens ‘hester panim’ - hiding His face, the most severe punishment Bnei Yisrael can experience. This dreadful reality raises a critical theological question: how can Bnei Yisrael find G-d if He seems to pay no attention to them? G-d’s answer to this question is the **shira**. G-d expects Am Yisrael to find Him by contemplating their history and the reason for their existence. Even when G-d appears to conceal Himself, He continues to guide

our fate - like a parent who ‘punishes’ a child by ignoring him. The parent does so not because he doesn’t care, but rather to educate the child so that he’ll come to realize on his own the importance of parents.

The same ‘self-taught’ lesson that **shirat Ha’azinu** demands of us may be the lesson of the opening pasuk in particular. **Shamayim** and **aretz** are summoned as witnesses to help us recognize G-d’s **hashgacha**, even when it appears to be hiding from us.

# Never Disowned



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**M**oshe Rebbeinu concludes the 43 *pessukim* of his song in *parshas Haazinu* with an unprecedented statement (Devarim 32:46): “Pay attention to all of the words that I am testifying about you today...” This admonition to “pay attention” is not used anywhere else in the Torah. How is the message of the song of Haazinu so unique that it requires a special level of attention on the part of the Jewish people? The words of Moshe’s song are actually very harsh and difficult to listen to. Moshe even says (ibid. 31:21) that he knows the Jewish people will worship idols after he passes away and that “this song will bear witness against them.” But what is so unique about this ostensibly difficult song that Moshe wants them to pay attention to?

The Jewish people are called Hashem’s children three times in the song of Haazinu and the first instance is the most difficult (ibid. 32:5): “The corruption is not His. It is the blemish of His sons; a perverse and twisted generation.” Rashi explains this according to Targum Onkolus, “The corruption is theirs, not His. ‘It is the blemish of His sons.’ They were His children, and the destruction that they wrought is their blemish.” In other words, Rashi is saying that the blemish of Hashem’s children does not affect Him. Rather, they have only harmed themselves.

This *passuk* touches on a major dispute in the Gemara (Kiddushin 36a): “‘You are children to Hashem your G-d’ (Devarim 14:1): ‘When you are behaving as children, you are called children. When you are not behaving as children, you are not called children.’ These are the words of Rabbi Yehuda. Rabbi Meir [Baal Haneis] says, ‘Either way, you are called children.’”

According to Rabbi Yehuda, it is entirely possible that we can forfeit our right to be called Hashem’s children. That title is not absolute. We have to earn it. Rabbi Yehuda comes from the *beis medresh* of his rebbe, Rabbi Yishmael and follows his teacher’s general approach. According to Rabbi Yishmael (Mechilta D’Rabbi Yishmael 20), “‘Holy men you shall be to me.’ Rabbi Yishmael says, ‘When you are holy, then you are ‘to me.’” So according to Rabbi Yishmael and his student Rabbi Yehuda, we are only called Hashem’s children, we are only “His” when we earn that distinction by keeping Torah and *mitzvos*.

But Rabbi Yishmael’s adversary in disputes throughout the Oral Torah is Rabbi Akiva. And he takes a different approach on this issue (Avos 3:14): “The Jewish people are so beloved that they are called ‘children’ to the Omnipresent.” There are no conditions or qualifiers. The Jewish people are unequivocally called Hashem’s children. Rabbi Akiva was the head of the school of thought which emphasizes that our special relationship with Hashem is absolute and is not dependent on any outside factor, including our loyalty to G-d’s path. His closest student, Rabbi Meir, therefore perpetuates this outlook when he says, “Either way, you are called children.”

Rabbi Meir also brings four *pessukim* to bolster his position. First, he quotes the *passuk* in Yirmiyahu (4:22) where the Navi says about the Jewish people, “They are foolish children.” Next, he quotes the *passuk* (Devarim 32:20) which calls the Jewish people “children without loyalty in them.” Third, he quotes the *passuk* (Yeshayahu 1:4) where the Navi calls the Jewish people, “evildoing seed, corrupt children.” Rabbi Meir’s point is that even when we are foolish, faithless, and corrupt, we are still called Hashem’s children.

Rabbi Meir then concludes with one more *passuk* (Hoshea 2:1), “And it will be in the place where one will say to them, ‘You are not My nation.’ He [Hashem] will say, ‘They are the children of the Living G-d.’”

Why does Rabbi Meir quote all of these *pessukim* in the specific order in which he quotes them? He explains as follows: Even if the Jewish people are called children when they are “foolish,” one might think that this is only because one cannot blame the fool for his foolishness since he does not know any better; but that if the Jewish people sin intentionally, Hashem will disclaim them as His children. So the next *passuk* says that Hashem calls the Jewish people His children even when they lack faithfulness, when they sin because of the influence of their evil inclination. But one might think that this only applies when they sin because they are overcome by their desires, but not when they directly rebel against Hashem by worshiping idols. Rabbi Meir therefore quotes a *passuk* showing that even when we are “corrupt,” when we worship idols, we are still called Hashem’s children.

Rabbi Meir then takes it to the next level by saying that even though we are called Hashem’s children when we worship idols, it could be that one might think we would not be considered worthy, upstanding children. He therefore quotes the last *passuk*, which refers to the Jewish people, even when they worship idols, as upstanding “children of the Living G-d.”

On the last day of Moshe’s life, he wanted the Jewish people to know that even though he had harsh words for them, and knew that they would depart from Hashem’s ways, they must “pay attention” and never forget that no matter what happens, no matter how badly the Jewish people rebel or suffer because of

*Continued on page 22*

# Neilah Unlocked: The Prayer of a Soldier



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**A**braham Lewin, the author of a book in Yiddish entitled, *Kantonisten* (Cantonists) relates a moving incident on Yom Kippur in an unnamed Russian city.

The Cantonists were child-recruits in the Russian military. The Russian Tsar, Peter the Great (1672-1725), devised the system in which young men were drafted to serve in the military for prolonged terms. But it was Tsar Nicholas Pavolovich (1796-1855), who ruled Russia from 1825 till 1855, who ordered Jewish children to be drafted, and used the system to force Jewish children to accept Baptism. The children were literally stolen from their homes in the *shtetles* and forced to serve for six years as trainees and then another 25 years as soldiers. They faced severe pressure by all means, including torture, to become Christian.

It remains one of the most horrific sagas of Russian Jewish history. All Jewish communities of Russia were faced with the Tsars' quotas of providing young soldiers: ten recruits from every one thousand men. And it was mostly children and teens from age 7 and up. The Tsar issued the orders, the leaders of each town's *Kahal* (Jewish communal organization) which, for the most part, perceived non-compliance as not an option, provided the recruits, and the *chappers* (kidnappers) did the dirty work for a fee. It was usually the poor kids who were the recruits, and many *Kahal* officials profited from payments from the wealthy for their sons' exemptions.

And so, it happened on one Yom Kippur, that a particular Cantonist entered a shul. This very fact indicated that he most probably had never succumbed to the enormous pressure to accept Baptism. Had he

undergone Baptism, he would have been officially listed as a Christian and prohibited from ever entering a synagogue during the reign of Nicholas.

In recognition of his self-sacrifice, the congregation appointed the Cantonist to lead the *Neilah* (concluding) prayers -- the most hallowed moment of the year. The gesture clearly demonstrated one of great admiration for the man who tenaciously held on to his faith at all costs.

The soldier of Tsar Nicholas made his way to the front of the shul. Having forgotten almost all the religious training he had received as a child, including the ability to read Hebrew, he could not recite, nor lead the *Neilah* prayers. However, before the congregation, he expressed a powerful prayer from the heart, which shook the entire congregation.

He proclaimed: "Father in Heaven, what shall I pray for? I cannot pray for children for I never got married and have no hope to raise a family. I am too old to start now. I can't pray for life, for what value is such a life? It would be better for me if I died. I cannot pray to be able to make a living since Nicholas provides for my daily food; I do not need any money. The only thing I can pray for is, "*Yisgadal VeYoiskadash Shmei Rabah*," "May your name be blessed forever" (from the Kaddish).

When hearing these words, the entire congregation wept. They wept over the pain this Jewish soldier endured. They wept for the tens of thousands of other Cantonists who were forced to endure the same hardships, as well as their families.

They also wept when they saw and heard what a Jew is! At his core he asks for nothing; only for *Yisgadal Veyiskadash Shmei Rabah*.

If Judaism were the sport of baseball, then Yom Kippur's Neilah prayer would be the ninth inning of a World Series game. What is Neilah? It means closure. The Rabbis taught that this is the time right before the closing of the gates of heaven at the end of Yom Kippur, so it is our last opportunity to ask for what we need, to repent, to seal ourselves in the book of life.

Yet this insight is incomplete. Why is the prayer called Neilah, closure, when it is the final prayer before the closing of the gates of heaven?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe in 1963 shared a new insight into Neilah: During Neilah the gates of heaven are closed already, with you inside. During Neilah you are alone with G-d.

Yom Kippur, the sages say, is the wedding day between G-d and His bride. Thus, we dress in white, like a bride at her wedding. The traditional Jewish marriage ceremony culminates with the bride and groom entering a secluded room ("*cheder yichud*" in Hebrew) to spend time alone with each other. Yom Kippur too culminates with the *Neilah*, or closure prayer, so called because as the sun of Yom Kippur sets, the gates of heaven close—with us inside.

No matter who you are, where you are, where you come from, what you know or don't know, what you do or don't do—at this time of Yom Kippur, you are one with G-d. G-d invites you alone for an intimate moment with Him.

Every day we have three prayers — Maariv, Shacharis and Mincha. On Shabbat and every other Jewish holiday, we have a fourth — Mussaf. But only on Yom Kippur is there a fifth service — Neilah. This is because *Neilah* corresponds to the

*Continued on page 23*

# Yom Kipur: Tailor Made



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There was great rejoicing when a *shidduch* was made between the families of the Rhizner Rebbe, Reb Yisroel Friedman, and the Riminover Rebbe, Reb Zvi Hersh. As customary, when families came together to celebrate the *tenaim* or ‘engagement’ of their children, the two *mechutanim* were expected to describe their *yichus* and extol their genealogical and spiritual lineage. By each honoring their family histories, the *chasan* and *kallah* would begin their commitment to one another with holy pride and *achrayus*, a sense of spiritual responsibility for the future and obligation toward past generations.

After the Rhizner, a *tzadik* of royal bearing and presence, detailed his long line of spiritual luminaries from the Maggid of Mezritch back to King David himself, he turned to his *mechutan*, Reb Zvi Hirsch, and motioned for him to do the same.

Reb Zvi Hirsch had a different kind of background — he was not aware of being part of a chain of luminaries, nor did he learn how to be a rebbe with his father, as he was an orphan. As a child, he had spent time in the Beis Medrash of Reb Mendel Riminover, where he was known as Reb Zvi Hersh *Meshareis*, the ‘Minister’, meaning ‘the devoted attendant’ ministering to the Rebbe. Reb Menachem Mendel was so deeply impressed by his student’s modesty, scholarship and hidden righteous ways, that he instructed that Reb Zvi Hirsch become his successor.

“...My parents left the world when I was just an infant,” began Reb Zvi Hirsch, in front of the silent wedding party. “But I’m told they were honest, simple, G-d fearing *Yidden!* And before coming to the Beis Medrash of Reb Mendel Riminover, I was an apprentice to a humble tailor, who raised me with kindness. I learned two important lessons from my adopted father. Firstly, in our craft, it is our privilege and responsibility to mend old and worn articles of clothing as best as we

can. And secondly, we are to be especially careful not to ruin the new garments that have been entrusted to us to make for the future.” With that, the Riminover concluded his remarks, and sat down.

Choked with emotion, the great *Tzadik haDor*, Reb Yisrael of Rizhin, turned to Reb Zvi Hirsh and said, “My *heiligh mechusan!* That is indeed a most *chashuv* and admirable *yichus!* What a great honor it is for me to link with such a lineage, and what a great responsibility our children will bear together. May they make all of their holy ancestors proud!”



Rebbe Tanchuma shared a story that took place *בערובת צומא רבה*, on the eve of the Great Fast, Yom Kippur:

A simple tailor set out to purchase a fish to prepare in honor of the Erev Yom Kippur *seudah* and found the choicest of fish in the marketplace. A servant of the Roman governor did as well, and they began bargaining for it, bidding against one another until the tailor offered a whopping twelve dinars and won the purchase. When fish wasn’t served at the Roman governor’s dinner, he demanded an explanation from his servant, and was shocked to hear that a simple Jew would spend such an outlandish amount on a fish. When the tailor was summoned, he explained:

מרי אית לן חד יום, בקל חובין דאנון עבדין כל יומי שתא, הוא מכפר עלינו. וכד הוא אמתא לית אנו צדיכין ליקורי גתיה...

“Sir, we have but one, precious day when all of the sins of our previous year are forgiven, and we honor it greatly.”

Impressed by the sincerity and sacrifice of the tailor, the Roman governor allowed him to leave in peace. Upon returning home, when the tailor opened the fish to prepare it, he was astonished to find a precious gem inside — a reward from Heaven that sustained him all his days. (*Medrash Bereishis Rabba*, 11:4)

This Midrashic account is so central to our understanding of our *avodah* of Yom Kippur that it is mentioned by various Rishonim and numerous Halachic works. The Chasam Sofer reveals a deeper significance in the Midrash, as it highlights the protagonist’s professional identity, a seemingly insignificant detail immaterial to his *mesirus nefesh*.

There are families torn apart by *machlokes* and disagreement. Jealousy, politics and pettiness are ripping apart communities. On Yom Kippur, the headquarters of *tikun*, “mending” the past, Chazal wanted each and every one of us to know that we are called upon to become a “tailor.” In order to prepare for the *avodas ha-teshuvah* of this holiest of all days, we must get to work, right now, stitching back together the torn fabric of our family, our *chevra*, our community and nation.

There are new garments to create, as well. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *z’ya*, says: *shefa*, a flow of blessing, comes into the world to be received, contained and “clothed” in the natural world. In this sense, too, we are called to be tailors, to prepare and preserve well-fitting ‘garments’ for the Divine blessings that we must offer to our family and nation.

According to Midrash Tanchuma (Lech Lecha 2), our forefather Avraham was considered a “spiritual tailor,” dedicated to repairing the perceived tear in the relationship between God and mankind. May we follow in the ways of the *tzadikim* and begin this holy task by mending the fragmented aspects of our own lives and repairing our relationship with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. May we be careful not to ruin the new garments that we have made for the future, and make all of our holy ancestors proud. And most importantly, may we receive the precious reward from Heaven that will sustain us all our days: *teshuvah me-ahavah*, the work of returning to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* out of love.

# Divine Disgrace

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

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“**A** l chet ... bechillul Hashem – And for the sin ... through desecrating G-d's Name.” It is logical to assume that the opposite of this sin is the *mitzvah* of *kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying G-d's Name. If we understand the word *chillul* as creating a vacuum and emptiness, we can perhaps gain a better understanding of the scope of this sin.

The source for the *mitzvah* is in Parshat Emor where the Torah says, “And you shall not desecrate My holy Name.” It applies not only in public, but also in private. As Rabbi Mordechai Ezrachi notes, the purpose for which we were created was to glorify G-d's Name. If we claim that *kiddush Hashem* is only for others, we are desecrating our very essence and cheapening ourselves while minimizing His importance.

The Netivot Shalom based on the Rambam writes that sanctifying G-d's Name, is not just a public expression of dying to preserve the sanctity of His Name, but the very basis of Jewish life. Every time we restrain ourselves and win over the

yetzer horo, we sanctify G-d. The reverse is a desecration. When Avraham brought his son as an *akeidah*, he faced this battle. [*Akeida*”H is an acronym for *Al Kiddush Hashem*]. But the struggle was not totally over when Hashem stopped him and Avraham sacrificed the ram. There was another ram caught by its thorns (*bekarnov*) in the thicket. This is the struggle we face daily in the thicket of life. Every time we succeed, we create a ray of light and shine, as Moshe's face shone (*keren*) with light when he brought G-d's glory down to earth.

When we do a *mitzvah* without proper intent, we also make Hashem's Name hollow, cites Letitcha Elyon. That explains why Sukkot comes after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, for Sukkot is the ultimate *mitzvah* for *hiddur*, for beautification. As Rabbi Imanuel Bernstein writes, Yom Kippur puts ourselves into perspective and balance with our true purpose, and Sukkot does the same for our possessions. Through beautifying the *mitzvot*, we are, in fact, beautifying ourselves before G-d.

Rabbi Ochion notes that we are all ambassadors for Judaism everywhere we go, especially if we look Jewish. Therefore, it is important that our behavior reflect an exalted moral standard. When we act inappropriately, we may cause others to do the same, and potentially create a great *chillul Hashem* which is the severest of all sins. It is not only the action that has to change, but the person himself, writes Moda Labinah. For men, this can be through learning Torah and for women through working on *middos*.

The sin of *chillul Hashem* is so severe that the angels say there can be no forgiveness, as cited in Sichot Eliyahu. However, as we begin to recite *Neilah*, and the gates of heaven start to close, the accusing angels are barred from entering. We ask Hashem at the time of *Neilah* that He open the gates for us, His children, writes Halekach Vehalebuv. We want the opportunity to atone for desecrating His Name and again sanctify His Name, to declare Him as King over the entire universe.

Continued from page 16

Hashem as it is heard around the world, and recommit ourselves to living a life of Torah and *mitzvos*.

ה' לַמְּבוּל יָשָׁב וַיֵּשֶׁב ה' מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם  
[enthroned] at the flood; Hashem sat as King  
forever; ה' עַל לְעַמּוֹ יָתֵן ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם

- Hashem shall grant strength to His people;  
Hashem shall bless His people with peace (Te-  
hillim 29:10-11).

Continued from page 19

their sins, they will always be Hashem's precious children. He will always love us. So even though the *halachah* usually follows Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Yehuda, in this matter, we follow Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Akiva: “Either way, you are called children.”

Moshe called the Heavens and the earth as witnesses that the Jewish people heard his

message to them (Devarim 32:1). Why was this necessary? Why could he not have called Hashem Himself as the witness? The Rebbe Reb Yonasan Eybeschutz, zt”l, and others explain that because “You are children to Hashem your G-d,” Hashem Himself is disqualified to testify about us because he is a close relative, our Father!

That is why Moshe had to call Heaven and earth to testify.

May we all merit to remember that no matter what have done, we are Hashem's children. And may we all succeed in transmitting this awareness to our children; no matter what they do, Hashem and we still love them as children!

# A Poem



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**T**his year I worried about the children, I worried about my tender grandchildren. Every day, without meaning to, they breathed a breath of discord. Their delicate ears kept hearing foreign words like reform, dictatorship, democracy and relocation and wanted to understand them. They heard of "a rift in the nation," of roadblocks and demonstrations, of shame and pride and foreboding. I was worried that the protests, violence, and invective would spill over onto them. And after worrying, I suddenly trusted them. I understood that children are full of hope and laughter, that children can make up quickly even after a terrible fight. I remembered that on Yom Kippur, G-d trusts in us, His children, and tells us, "Surely, if you do right, there is uplift." And just as in the Yom Kippur War, when there was no coordination of intentions at the command level, the soldier will make the decisions on the field of the campaign. He will rise from this coup, in the Bakka Valley and fight for the life of another soldier, there, in the Bakka Valley. And He will have mercy on us.

We are the children of  
the summer of '23.

You mistakenly believed it  
would go over our heads,

The harsh words, the hatred,  
the polarization

The sign outside the house that read,

You forgot that we are the  
baby who held two women in  
dispute before the king,

You have forgotten how much  
courage a young person needs

When he hears parents who  
want to circumcise him

And the words strike his soul  
like a musical score:

reform, democracy, dictatorship,

Then like a dove fleeing  
from a coup in the city,

They hear the talk of rapid relocation,

Of those who are sure that  
perhaps, far from Zion,

May the cuckoo's shadow for-  
ever stand for them,

And every little girl knows that in  
the end she will come, the worm,

And the intense blue light will again  
remind us of a corrected situation:

A destiny has brought us here

And maybe this argument  
is already exhausting

But what's the use of running away?

When you promised a dove, an olive leaf

You promised peace at home

You promised childhood and blossom

You promised to keep promises.

Therefore we will not shout and  
therefore we will not be rude,

And we, the children, will  
try to maintain

What a whole country cannot do:

Just ask for forgiveness.

*Continued from page 20*

fifth and highest dimension of the soul — the Holy of Holies of the soul — which we access on this one day at this time.

The soul has five dimensions: *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah*, *Yechidah* (Spirit, Breath, Soul, Life, Oneness). They represent your functional biological life, your emotional life, your cognitive self, your transcendental aspirations, and your core

undefined essence, a mirror of Divine infinity and harmony.

They correspond to the five prayers in Judaism: *Maariv*, *Shacharit*, *Mincha*, *Mussaf*, *Neilah*. All days of the year, we're usually able to access the three dimensions of our soul; on Shabbat we access the fourth, *Chayah*. On Yom Kippur can we access the fifth layer of identity, *Yechidah* — the

oneness with infinite oneness. It is the most intimate, vulnerable, gentle part of the soul of the human being, unshielded by the defenses of the other levels. We reach it at the precise moment when *Neilah* is said, and when, at its conclusion, we declare *Shema Israel*: "Hear O Israel, G-d is our Lord, G-d is One."

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**

balashon.com

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

**P**arshat HaAzinu describes the terrible fate that Israel will receive if they abandon God. This prediction is written in the form of a song, which makes interpretation (and translation) difficult. But let's look at two of the verses:

אֶסְפָּה עֲלֵימֹו רְעוֹת חֲצֵי אֶכְלֵה־בָּם: מִזֵּי רָעַב וּלְחָמִי רָשָׁף  
יִקְטַב מְרִירֵי יָשׁוּר־בְּהֵמַת אֲשֶׁלַח־בָּם עִם־חֶמֶת זֹחֲלֵי עֶפְרָי:

"I will sweep misfortunes on them, use up My arrows on them. Wasting famine, ravaging plague, deadly pestilence, and fanged beasts I will let loose against them, with venomous creepers in dust." (Devarim 32:23-24)

Two of the words - חֲצֵי and קָטַב - have related meanings and provide an interesting story.

The first is the Hebrew word for arrow - חֵץ. Linguists connect the word חֵץ with the roots חצה and חצץ - meaning "to divide." One theory is that arrows were used to divide via

the casting of lots (see for example Yechezkel 21:26, and the story of the Roman emperor in Gittin 56a). From these roots we get such words as חֲצֵי - "half," חֲצוֹת - "middle of the day or night," and חֲצִיצָה - "division."

While those roots and words are common, the word קָטַב is far rarer in Biblical Hebrew. In our verse it is the word translated as "pestilence." It only appears in three other verses. In Talmudic Hebrew, קָטַב is the name of a demon.

Linguists say that the word is related to the Aramaic root קטב, meaning "to cut." It also has a similar meaning in the Arabic cognate, *qataba*, "to cut off." Not only is "to cut" similar to the verb "to divide", but there is a related Arabic word, *qutba*, also meaning arrow.

One possible related word to קָטַב is קֹטֵב, meaning "pole" (as in magnetic pole) or

"axis." This word was borrowed into Medieval Hebrew from Arabic where *qutb* had the same meaning. The connection between "axis" and "arrow" seems likely, but there isn't consensus as to why. Some say that both the arrow and the axis are based on a straight stick. Others suggest that the pole points to a target as an arrow does.

The connection between חֵץ and קָטַב continues in two verses in Tehilim where both nouns are mentioned:

לֹא־תִירָא מִפְּחַד לַיְלָה מִחֵץ יַעֲוִף יוֹמָם. מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפְלֵ יְהוָה  
מִקְטָב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים

"You need not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in the darkness, or the pestilence that ravages at noon." (Tehilim 91:5-6)

However, unlike the verses in HaAzinu, this is a much more positive description of the future.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

Which Bracha said during Tishrei is only said once a year?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Bracha on candle-lighting for Yom Kippur "L'hadlik ner shel  
yom hakippurim."



THIS WEEK in  
Jewish History

- Tishrei 8, 2935 (826 BCE):** The 1st day of the 14-day dedication festivities for the 1st Holy Temple in Jerusalem, built by King Shlomo (Solomon) as set down in 2 Chronicles 7:10.
- Sept. 24, 1950:** The last flight of Operation On Wings of Eagles (Magic Carpet) arrived in Israel. This secret mission airlifted 50,000 Yemeni Jews to Israel on 380 flights over 2 years.
- Tishrei 10, 1948 (1813 BCE):** Traditional birthday of Avraham, the first Patriarch of the Jewish people. A paragon of kindness, trust in G-d, love of his fellow man, and hospitality he is also credited as the founder of monotheism.
- Sept. 26, 1898:** Birthday of George Gershwin (Jacob Gershowitz), one of the greatest composers of popular songs including *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Porgy and Bess*, *I Got Rhythm*.
- Tishrei 12, 2047 (1714 BCE):** Angels informed Avraham that Sarah would bear him a son, and that Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed.
- Sept. 28, 1941:** 33,771 Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis in a ravine outside of Kiev, Russia. The two day massacre is immortalized in Yevgeni Yevtushenko's poem *Babi Yar*.
- Sept. 29, 2020:** In a 4-year campaign of terror throughout Israel which came to be known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Arabs murdered over 1,000 Israeli men, women and children.

The above is an abridged weekly version of *Dust & Stars*. To receive a free comprehensive post every day about the events and remarkable Jews who have changed the world, please subscribe: <https://dustandstars.substack.com/subscribe>





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