

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

Rosh Hashana To-Go

5769



Featuring Divrei Torah from

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

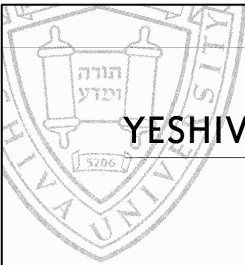
Rabbi Josh Flug

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Cantor Sherwood Goffin

Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer

Mrs. Daphna Fishman Secunda



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean, Center for the Jewish Future

Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual ספר will enhance your ראש השנה (Rosh HaShana) and your High Holiday experience.

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but also for a חברותא (a pair of students) that wishes to work through the study matter together, or a group for engaged in facilitated study.

With this material, we invite you, wherever you may be, to join our Beit Midrash להגדיל תורה (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to discuss Torah issues that touch on contemporary matters, as well as issues rooted in the ideals of this time of year. We hope, through this To-Go series, to participate in the timeless conversations of our great sages.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה

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Mrs. Daphna Fishman Secunda

From the Editor

The yamim nora'im (lit. Awesome Days) charge us emotionally and intellectually. The awe that we ought to feel during these days - during the month of Elul, Rosh haShanah, the aseret yemei teshuvah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret - is an emotion. Dr. Haym Soloveitchik evokes this emotional experience of awe in his Rupture and Reconstruction:

I ... prayed in a synagogue where most of the older congregants neither observed Sabbath nor even ate kosher ... Yet, at the closing service of Yom Kippur, the Ne'ilah, the synagogue filled and a hush set in upon the crowd. The tension was palpable and tears were shed ... 'who for life, who for death, / who for tranquility, who for unrest.' These people did not cry from religiosity but from self-interest, from an instinctive fear for their lives.

Yet the holy ShLaH (R. Yeshayahu Horowitz, colloquially known by the acronym of his magnum opus, Shenei Luchot HaBerit) notes that awe also has an intellectual component.

When one has complete love of Hashem, awe will sprout from that love ... The lover's love of the beloved comes from the good traits of the beloved, for the lover's soul also has some of those good traits ... But the [awe and] humility of the lover [that motivate him] to fulfill the beloved's desire are because he recognizes how much the beloved is better than him, just as a student recognizes how much his teacher is better than him.

Awe springs from an awareness of our proximity to Hashem in quality, but our distance from Hashem in quantity. For example, Hashem values compassion and kindness, and we also value compassion and kindness. Hence, we are motivated to love Hashem. Yet Hashem is infinitely compassionate and kind, while we are finite. Hence, we are motivated to fear Hashem and to humble ourselves before Him. The intellectual experience of awe requires awareness of our personal values and assessment of how consistently and intensely we adhere to those values.

Emotions do not speak English; the most stirring poems and stories only evoke emotions, but cannot completely capture them. Emotions lie between the lines, behind the words. Torah is described as "black fire upon white fire." Just as Torah's inky black letters are fires, the parchment's whiteness between them is fire. Rosh-haShanah-To-Go is Torah; we urge you to meditate on the white's secret as you read the black.

Rosh-haShanah-To-Go also addresses the yamim nora'im's intellectual component. As we reflect on our fidelity to the Torah's 613 mitzvot, our supreme values, it behooves us to pay special attention to the mitzvot unique to Rosh haShanah and its environs. Hence, these pages offer not only inspiration and direction for introspection, but incisive essays on the mitzvot and customs of the yamim nora'im.

We would like to thank Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel and Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future for their vision and support of the To-Go project. We also would like to thank the authors of the articles in this publication for giving so generously of their time. We would also like to thank all the important people who made this publication possible: Rabbi Ronald Schwartzberg, Shalom Silbermintz, Rabbi Phil Moskowitz, Ze'ev Felsen, and Chaviva Fischer. A special thanks as well to the Student Organization of Yeshiva.

We hope that our efforts inspire and edify you, and that Hashem will privilege us in the merit of our Torah study and introspection to enjoy the upcoming holidays together in Yerushalayim with Moshiach's speedy coming, amen.

Ephraim Meth

The Mitzvah of Shofar: Who's Listening?

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rosh Kollel, Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

A central theme on Rosh Hashana is the Mitzvah of Shofar. When the Torah describes the holiday of the first of Tishrei (what we call Rosh Hashana) it refers to it as Zichron Teruah (Vayikra 23:24) and Yom Teruah (Bamidbar 29:21). The entire Mussaf Tefilah, with its special character of Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot, is arranged around the blowing of the Shofar, as Rabbi Akiva exclaims in the Mishna in Rosh Hashana (32A): "If one doesn't blow [the Shofar] for Malchuyot why should he even mention them?" The only Mitzvah that is unique to Rosh Hashana is blowing the Shofar. Let us examine the precise nature of this celebrated practice.

The Torah states that Rosh Hashana is a Yom Teruah, a day of Shofar sounding, but it does not clarify the parameters of this obligation. It would seem from the wording of "Teruah" - "Shofar sounding" that the essence of the Mitzvah is the sounding – blowing - of the Shofar.

(The Shofar sounding of) a deaf mute, insane person or child cannot fulfill the public's obligation (to blow or hear the Shofar). This is the rule: Anyone that isn't obligated in a certain thing cannot fulfill the obligation of the public in that mitzvah.

Rosh Hashana 29a

חרש שוטה וקטן אין מוציאין את הרבים ידי חובתן. זה הכלל: כל שאינו מחוייב בדבר - אינו מוציא את הרבים ידי חובתן.
מסכת ראש השנה דף כט.

A person who *sounds* the Shofar must be obligated in the Mitzvah of Shofar, and hence a minor is excluded. We learn from this that *sounding* the Shofar is an integral part of the Mitzvah. However, there is another aspect of the mitzvah.

If one blows (Shofar) into a pit ... if the sound of the Shofar is heard, the mitzvah has been fulfilled, but if the sound of the echo is heard, the mitzvah has not been fulfilled.

Rosh Hashana 27b

התוקע לתוך הבור, או לתוך הדות, או לתוך הפיטס, אם קול שופר שמע - יצא, ואם קול הברה שמע - לא יצא.
מסכת ראש השנה דף כז:

We learn that sounding the Shofar alone does not suffice - one must also *hear* the sound of the Shofar. One who blows but does not hear the sound of Shofar does not fulfill his obligation; hence, once who blows into a ditch and hears only an echo falls short of fulfilling the Mitzvah, as the echo is not considered the sound of the actual Shofar.

These two Mishnayot teach us two different requirements of Shofar, sounding and hearing. Many commentaries debate which of these requirements is the essential, defining characteristic of the

Mitzvah, with a very important ramification: the blessing on the Shofar. Should the Nusach Haberacha (text of the blessing) follow the Tekiah (the sounding) or the Shemiah (the hearing).

The Rif (R' Yitzchak Alfasi of Morocco, 11th c.) in his summary of the laws of Rosh Hashana quotes a question that was discussed in his Beit Midrash:

They asked before the head of the academy: one who recited a blessing on the day of Rosh Hashana on the sounding of Shofar after reading from the Torah, and then spoke, must he recite the blessing on the Shofar blasts of the [mussaf] prayer, or not?

Rif Rosh Hashana 11a

שאלו מקמי ריש מתיבתא המברך יום
ר"ה על תקיעת שופר בטר ס"ת והשיח
צריך לברך על התקיעות של סדר ברכות
או לא
רי"ף ראש השנה דף יא.

The Rif implies that the Beracha of Shofar is on the Tekiah - the sounding. This opinion is also attributed to the Or Zarua (R' Yitzchak of Vienna, 13th c.) cited by the Shiltei Giborim on the Rif (ad loc.). He states that one should recite the Beracha "*Litkoah Bshofar*" just like one recites a Beracha on the recitation of Hallel "*Likro et HaHallel.*" However, The Rosh (R' Asher ben Yechiel, Germany and Spain 14th c.) in his Halachot (Rosh Hashana Perek 4, Siman 10) cites the Raaviah (R' Eliezer ben Yoel Halevi, Germany 12th c.) and the Behag (Author of the Halachot Gedolot) that we recite "*Lishmoah Bkol Shofar*" because "with the hearing of the sound of the Shofar he fulfills his obligation, and not with the sounding."

The Rambam (R' Moshe ben Maimon, Spain & Egypt, 12th c.) rules:

And one stands and recites the blessing: "Blessed are You, Hashem, Our God, King of the world, who sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us to hear the sound of the Shofar"

Rambam Hilchot Shofar 3:10

ואחד עומד ומברך ברוך אתה ה'
אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו
במצותיו וצונו לשמוע קול שופר.
רמב"ם הלכות שופר ג:י

In asserting that the central element of Shofar is the listening, and hence that the text of the Bracha should read "to hear the sound of the Shofar," Rambam is consistent with his definition of the mitzvah stated in the introduction to his laws of Shofar:¹

It is a Biblical commandment to hear the sound of the Shofar on Rosh Hashana

Rambam Hilchot Shofar 1:1

מצות עשה של תורה לשמוע תרועת השופר בראש
השנה.
רמב"ם הלכות שופר א:א

With this understanding, that the Rambam views listening to the sound of Shofar as the essence of the Mitzvah, we can resolve a seemingly difficult opinion of the Rambam. The Rambam (Laws of Shofar 2:4) records that one who heard the sound of Shofar but did not intend to fulfill his Mitzvah would not fulfill his obligation. Seemingly, this indicates that the Rambam considers Kavvanah, intent to perform a Mitzvah, an indispensable requirement, and if one did

¹ See also the Rambam's formulation in the "Koteret," heading, of the Laws of Shofar, and in the Sefer Hamitzvot, Aseh 170. The Rambam explains this position clearly in his responsum, Pe'er Hador, no. 51.

not have intention of fulfilling a Mitzvah, one would not fulfill it. However, the Maggid Mishna (ad loc.) notes that the Rambam seems to hold otherwise! In the laws of Chametz and Matzah the Rambam teaches:

One who ate Matzah without intent, for example, if he was coerced by gentiles or bandits to eat, he fulfills his obligation.

Rambam Hilchot Chametz Umatza 6:3

אכל מצה בלא כונה כגון שאנסוהו גוים או לסטים לאכול יצא ידי חובתו.
רמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה ו:ג

We see that if one ate Matzah, even without the intention of fulfilling the Mitzvah, one would still fulfill the obligation. Why is this not the case in the Mitzvah of Shofar; why does Rambam not issue a parallel ruling that if one heard Shofar, even without intent to fulfill his mitzvah, he fulfills his obligation?

Some suggest² that the Rambam distinguishes between two types of Mitzvot. When a Mitzvah is defined by an action, then any completion of that action, even without intent, fulfills the requirement. The mitzvah to eat matzah is primarily a mitzvah to act. Hence, eating Matzah without intention for the Mitzvah still satisfies the requirement. However, Mitzvot whose essence is in the person's experience and consciousness, such as ones that entail speaking or listening, require intent for fulfillment of the Mitzvah. According to our analysis, that for the Rambam the Mitzvah of Shofar is in the listening, it is very logical that fulfilling the mitzvah of Shofar requires intent.

This legal characterization, that the listening to the Shofar is the essence of the Mitzvah, complements the Rambam's understanding of the message and meaning of the Mitzvah.

Although blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashana is a mandate of the Torah, there is a hint in it. As if to say, "wake up sleepy ones from your slumber and the dozing ones arise from your sleep and examine your deeds and return with Teshuva and recall your Creator, those people who forget the truth with the silliness of the times and waste all their years on foolishness and emptiness that will not help and not save. Look to your souls and improve your ways and mistakes and abandon each one of you his mistaken path and his intention that is not good."

Rambam Hilchot Shofar 3:4

אע"פ שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמז יש בו כלומר עוררו ישינים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם, אלו השוכחים את האמת בהבלי הזמן ושוגים כל שנתם בהבל וריק אשר לא יועיל ולא יציל הביטו לנפשותיכם והטיבו דרכיכם ומעלליכם ויעזבו כל אחד מכם דרכו הרעה ומחשבתו אשר לא טובה.
רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ג:ד

The purpose of the Shofar is for us to hear its sound, its cry, and be inspired. This wordless cry is a call to better ourselves, to extricate ourselves from our current slumber that distances us from our Creator. Hearing the Shofar arouses within us the desire to improve our lives and seek a closer connection to Hashem. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903- 1993) expands upon this notion:

Once my father was standing on the synagogue platform on Rosh Hashana, ready and prepared to guide the order of the sounding of the Shofar. The Shofar-sounder, a G-d fearing

² Shemen L'ner quoted by Iturei Torah, volume 7 page 19. This answer resolves a similar difficult between the Rambam's ruling in the laws of Matzah and his ruling in the laws of Keriyat Shema.

Habad Hasid, who was very knowledgeable in the mystical doctrine of the "Alter Rebbe," R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, began to weep... .

The mystic understands the symbolic significance of the sounding of the Shofar- the concept of a plain note - whereby man attempts to pierce through lawful existence and reach the glory of the Atik Yomin, the Ancient one.

(Halachic Man, pp60-61)

The sound of the Shofar stirs us to reach for the heavens. It empowers us to transcend our past and connect to Hashem through sincere Teshuva. If we only sound the Shofar, without hearing the Shofar's sound resonate within our souls, we miss the essence of the experience and hence the essence of the mitzvah.

Each year, as we experience Rosh Hashana and the Mitzvah of Shofar, we have an opportunity to renew our connection to Hashem, to awaken from our slumber, and to be moved by the sound of the Shofar. Hopefully, this year we will listen closely to the Shofar's sound, in fulfillment of the letter of the law, and also be inspired by its unique spirit.

The Teshuvah Beyond Teshuvah

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

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The Challenge of Teshuvah

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

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

The Promise of Teshuva MeAhavah

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

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

⁴ See *Al HaTeshuvah*, chapter one.

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Yoma 86b.

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

⁷ *Masekhet Makkot*. 2:6. .

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

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

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

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

Talmud Torah as Teshuvah

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

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

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

⁸ *HaAmek Davar* to *Devarim* 30:10

⁹ *Devarim* 30:11.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Vol. 4 #26.

¹¹ *Devarim* 32:2.

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

¹³ *Mishnat Ya'avetz*, O.C. 54.

¹⁴ *Tanchuma*, Parshat Noach, 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ See *Menachot* 110a.

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

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

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

Teshuvah as Transformation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰ *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

²¹ *Sha'ar* 4, #16.

²² *Pachad Yitzchak* to *Rosh HaShanah*, 30.

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

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

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

Rosh HaShanah's Role as the Beginning of a New Fiscal Year and How It Affects Us

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As the Jewish New Year begins, we find ourselves in the midst of an economic downturn. Even if a person's income or job stability is not affected by the current situation, rising fuel and food costs have affected everyone. While the citizens of the U.S. look to the presidential candidates to provide solutions to this crisis, many of us see Rosh HaShanah as the day where the Almighty will decide the economic fate of each and every individual and the world as a whole.

The current economic situation has forced many people to make difficult decisions regarding their personal budget. In the Jewish community, these decisions include whether to apply for tuition assistance for their children's education and whether to cut back on religious expenses such as "delicacies" for Shabbat and Yom Tov.

In this article, we will present the various approaches in the Talmud and its commentaries on the impact of Rosh HaShanah on the economy. We will discuss what is included in the fiscal decisions of Rosh HaShanah. Furthermore, we will present various Halachic opinions regarding the practical applications of this discussion. This article will not attempt to provide solutions to particular economic situations and its purpose is only to serve as a forum for discussion.²³

What exactly is Determined on Rosh HaShanah?

The premise that Rosh HaShanah is the day on which one's annual income is determined is by no means an absolute truth. The Mishna states:

²³ It should be noted that the notion that the Almighty decides the economic fate of each individual assumes that the individual puts in the proper effort (*hishtadlut*) to ensure that he can support his needs. See *Mesillat Yesharim*, chapter 21, for a discussion of the relationship between the judgment of Rosh HaShanah and *hishtadlut*.

At four seasons [Divine] judgment is passed on the world: at Passover in respect of produce; at Pentecost in respect of fruit; at new year all creatures pass before Him [G-d] like children of Maron, as it says, 'He that fashioneth the heart of them all, that considereth all their doings'; and on Tabernacles judgment is passed in respect of rain.

Rosh HaShanah 16a (Soncino Translation)

בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון בפסח על התבואה בעצרת על פירות האילן בראש השנה כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו כבני מרון שנאמר היצר יחד לבם המבין אל כל מעשיהם ובחג נידונין על המים.
ראש השנה טז.

- Question: If judgment of man is on Rosh HaShanah, of what significance is the judgment on the grains, the fruit, or the water? Aren't those factors already included in the judgment of man on Rosh HaShanah?

The Rishonim (medieval scholars) present a number of answers to this question. First, Rabbeinu Nissim states:

Furthermore, I find it difficult that since man is judged on Rosh HaShanah, he is certainly judged on all of his experiences, on his grains, fruit, and all other matters. Therefore, in reality, doesn't all judgment take place on Rosh HaShanah? The answer that I prefer is that these three factors (grain, fruit, and water) are judged for the entire world at three periods of the year listed in the Mishna ... However, on Rosh HaShanah, all creatures pass before Him one by one and their portion of these three is determined.

Ran, Rosh HaShanah 3a, s.v. Matnit

ותו קשיא לי כיון שהאדם נדון בר"ה ודאי על כל המאורעות שלו דנין אותו על תבואותיו ופירותיו ושאר עסקיו כיון שכן הכל נדון בר"ה וניחא לי שג' דברים הללו נידונין לכל העולם בג' זמנים אלו השנויין במשנתנו וילפי הכי מדאמרה תורה לצבור שיביאו בזמנים הללו שמרצין עליהן אחד אחד בזמנו אבל בר"ה כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו אחד אחד וגוזרין עליו חלקו מדברים הללו.
ר"ן ר"ה ג. בדפי הרי"ף ד"ה מתני'

According to Rabbeinu Nissim, the judgments on Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot are a global determinant of how much grain, fruit and water will be produced over the course of the year. The specific allocation of those resources is determined on Rosh HaShanah.

Second, Ritva quotes the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam who provides a different answer to this question:

Even though we recite in the tekiot of Rav: 'And on the countries it is stated (on Rosh HaShanah) which are destined for hunger and which are destined for satiety' which implies that the judgment on hunger and satiety occurs on Rosh HaShanah and not on Passover, one can suggest that when the liturgy discusses hunger and satiety, it refers to a hunger of turmoil where creatures eat and are not satisfied, and that is the judgment that each individual receives on Rosh HaShanah. However, the judgment on abundance of grain or lack thereof is determined on Passover. Rabbeinu Tam also answered the question in this manner.

Ritva, Rosh HaShanah 16a, s.v. Matnit

ואע"פ שאמר בתקיעות דבי רב ועל המדינות בו יאמר איזו לרעב איזו לשובע דמשמע דבר"ה דנין על השובע ועל הרעב ולא בפסח, י"ל דרעב ושובע דאמרינן התם היינו רעב של מהומה שהבריות אוכלין ואינן שבעין וזה דין האדם בעצמו בר"ה אבל דין ריבוי התבואה או מיעוטה בפסח הוא, וכן פר"ת.
ריטב"א ר"ה טז. ד"ה מתני'

According to Rabbeinu Tam, the judgment on grains, fruit, and water happen throughout the year. However, a wheat farmer's ultimate judgment does not come from how much wheat he is able to harvest. Farmer A may have had a very successful year with grains. However, because farmer A's expenses both on the farm and in his home are greater, his income after expenses is less than that of farmer B, who has had a mediocre year. The judgment of Rosh HaShanah is on a person's discretionary income. This judgment will factor in the revenue from his judgment on the other holidays and increase or diminish other revenues and expenses accordingly.

Third, Ramban in his *Derasha L'Rosh HaShanah* and Ritva note that this issue was already debated by the Tannaim. The Tosefta states:

All are judged on Rosh HaShanah and their judgment is sealed on Yom Kippur. This is the opinion of R. Meir. R. Yehuda states: All are judged on Rosh HaShanah and the judgment of each is sealed in its time, on Passover on the grains, on Pentecost on fruit, on Tabernacles on water, and judgment of man is sealed on Yom Kippur. R. Yose states: Man is judged each day as it states 'You should remember Him every morning'.

Tosefta, Rosh HaShanah 1:12

הכל נידונין בר"ה וגזר דינו נחתם
ביוה"כ דברי ר"מ ר' יהודה אומר הכל
נידונין בר"ה וגזר דינו של כל אחד
ואחד נחתם בזמנו בפסח על התבואה
בעצרת על פירות האילן בחג על המים
וגזר דינו של אדם נחתם ביום
הכפורים ר' יוסי אומר אדם נידון בכל
יום שנאמ' ותפקדנו לבקרים.
תוספתא ראש השנה א:יב

We see from the Tosefta various approaches to the interplay of the judgment of Rosh HaShanah and the judgments of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. Ramban and Ritva assert that we follow the opinion of R. Meir, that all judgments occur on Rosh HaShanah, based on the Rosh HaShanah liturgy:

This is the day commemorating the beginning of your work, a remembrance of the first day 'For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob.' And on the countries it is stated (on Rosh HaShanah) which are destined for war and which are destined for peace, which are destined for hunger and which are destined for satiety.

Mussaf Service for Rosh HaShanah

זה היום תחלת מעשיך זכרון ליום
ראשון כי חק לישראל הוא משפט
לאלקי יעקב. ועל המדינות בו
יאמר איזו לחרב ואיזו לשלום
איזו לרעב ואיזו לשובע.
תפילת מוסף לראש השנה

The prayer's reference to Rosh HaShanah as the day of judgment on hunger and abundance indicates that all matters relating to a person's livelihood are determined on Rosh HaShanah. This prayer does not refute the interpretations of Rabbeinu Nissim or Rabbeinu Tam, but Ramban and Ritva nevertheless use this prayer as evidence that all judgments take place on Rosh HaShanah.

Ramban maintains, however, that Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot are still significant days for the judgment on grains, fruit and water:

We can prove this point from the Midrash of R. Akiva 'Why did the Torah command to bring the Omer offering on Passover and why did the Torah command to bring the bread offering on Pentecost and the water offering on Tabernacles, because Tabernacles is the

וממדרש דר' עקיבה אמת הוא
מפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו עומר
בפסח, ומפני מה אמרה הביאו
שתי הלחם בעצרת ונסכי מים
בחג, מפני שהחג זמן גשמי שנה

time (of judgment) for the rain of the year, etc.' G-d wanted to benefit the Jewish People that they can offer before Him something from each kind in the proper time in order that He can record their merits at the time of judgment on Rosh HaShanah.

Ramban, Derasha L'Rosh HaShanah

וכו' שרצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל שיתרצו לפניו בכל מין ומין בזמנו כדי שיכתבם לזכות בשעת הדין בראש השנה.
רמב"ן דרשה לראש השנה

According to Ramban the Almighty created opportunities to receive merits towards next Rosh HaShanah's judgment on grain, fruit, and water. Those opportunities exist on Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

- Question: How do these three approaches apply to contemporary times? How do they apply to sectors of business that are not directly affected by agriculture?

The Rishonim don't explicitly discuss how this Mishna applies to a non-agricultural society. It is possible that the Mishna's reference to grains, fruit, and water is indicative of three general categories in which one can categorize all goods and services. Alternatively, it is possible that all sectors that don't relate to grains, fruit, or water are judged on Rosh HaShanah. Grain, fruit, and water serve as exceptions to the rule.

This question requires analysis for the approaches of Rabbeinu Nissim and Rabbeinu Tam. While Rabbeinu Nissim's language implies that only grain, fruit, and water are judged at other times of the year, the current economic situation has certainly taught us that (almost) nobody is immune from the judgment on grain, fruit, and water. When there is an abundance of produce, the price of food is lower and the overall cost of living is less. Additionally, in most businesses, the price of produce somehow impacts operating expenses. According to Rabbeinu Nissim, the judgments throughout the year determine the gross world product. What is allocated to specific individuals is determined on Rosh HaShanah.

According to Rabbeinu Tam, personal income may also be determined at various periods throughout the year. Income that is not dependent on agriculture is either determined on Rosh HaShanah or is included in the judgment on grain, fruit, or water. Personal expenses are determined on Rosh HaShanah.

Ramban's opinion certainly does not require analysis. According to Ramban, all judgments occur on Rosh HaShanah. There is no actual judgment on Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Rather these holidays provide opportunities to merit a positive judgment on Rosh HaShanah.

R. Yonatan Eibeschitz presents an approach to this question that differs from the approach of the Rishonim:

One must understand that which we recite in the Mussaf prayer for Rosh HaShanah: 'And on the countries it is stated (on Rosh HaShanah) which are destined for hunger and which are destined for satiety.' This is ostensibly difficult because we have established that on Passover we are judged on grains whether they will provide sustenance or famine, G-d forbid. If so, what is

אבל יש להבין במה שאנו אומרים בתפלת מוסף ר"ה ועל המדינות בו יאמר איזו לרעב ואיזו לשובע. וקשה לכאורה הא קי"ל בפסח נידונים על התבואה אם שיהי' לשובע או לרזון ח"ו וא"כ מה טיבו של זה שאומרים בר"ה גזור איזו לרעב ואיזו לשובע

the purpose of that which we say that on Rosh HaShanah it is determined who is destined for hunger and who is destined for satiety? You should know that in this regard the Land of Israel is different than all other lands because Israel is the land of the Jewish People. and therefore Nisan is most significant because that is when the Jews left Egypt. For this reason, the dates of kings are recorded from Nisan. Similarly, the Omer is brought from the grains of Israel. Israel is the only country that is judged on Passover on grains. Other lands follow Tishrei for all matters, such as recording the dates of kings, and everyone is judged on Rosh HaShanah. That is why it states: 'And on the countries it is stated,' those countries refer to all countries outside of Israel.

Chemdat Yamim, Parshat Mikeitz

אבל תדעו כי בזה נשתנה א"י מכל שארי ארצות כי א"י סגולה לישראל כנודע וזה הכל בניסן כי בו יצאו ממצרים ולכך מלך ישראל הכל מניסן מונים וכן העומר בא מא"י וא"י היא מדינה פרטית שדנין אותה בפסח על זרע תבואות א"י אבל חו"ל ושארי ארצות הם בכלל נגזרים הכל אחר תשרי כמו מלכי א"ה מתשרי והכל נדונים בר"ה וזה שדייק ואומר ועל המדינות בו יאמר היינו חו"ל שהם בכלל מדינות.

חמדת ימים פרשת מקץ

According to R. Eibeschitz, there is a difference between the Land of Israel and all other areas. In Israel, the judgments on produce occur on Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. However, in the Diaspora, all judgments occur on Rosh HaShanah. This is why the liturgy specifically references "the countries" in the context of hunger and abundance.

The Judgment on Expenses

There are two passages in the Gemara that directly deal with the relationship between the judgment of Rosh HaShanah and personal income.

R. Tahlifa, the brother of Rabinai of [Be] Hozae learnt: The entire sustenance of man [for the year] is fixed for him from New Year's [Festival] to the Day of Atonement, except the expenditure for Sabbaths and the expenditure for Festivals and the expenditure for the instruction of his children in the Law; if he [spent] less [for any of these] he is given less and if he [spent] more he is given more.

Beitza 16a (Soncino Translation)

תני רב תחליפא אחוה דרבנאי חוזהא כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים חוץ מהוצאת שבתות והוצאת יום טוב והוצאת בניו לתלמוד תורה שאם פחת פוחתין לו ואם הוסיף מוסיפין לו.
ביצה טז.

R. Judah son of R. Shalom preached as follows: In the same way as a man's earnings are determined for him from New Year, so his losses are determined for him from New Year.

Baba Batra 10a (Soncino Translation)

דרש ר"י ברבי שלום כשם שמזונותיו של אדם קצובין לו מראש השנה כך חסרונותיו של אדם קצובין לו מראש השנה.
בבא בתרא י.

According to these two passages, both income (*mezonotav*) and expenses (*chesronotav*) are determined on Rosh HaShanah (with the exception of certain expenses). Ramban cites the second passage as a proof to his position that all judgments take place on Rosh HaShanah. Nevertheless, these passages can be explained according to the interpretations of the other Rishonim.

These passages do not present any difficulty for the approach of Rabbeinu Nissim. In fact, they seem to reinforce the idea that personal judgments take place on Rosh HaShanah. Only global resources are judged at other periods of the year. However, one must question how Rabbeinu Tam understands these passages. According to Rabbeinu Tam, expenses seem to be the key component of the judgment of Rosh HaShanah. If so, why do these two passages place a stress on income?

In order to answer this question, we must return to the question of when the judgment on income that does not relate to agriculture takes place. If it takes place on Rosh HaShanah, then we can explain that these passages refer only to miscellaneous income, and not to income related to grain, fruit, and water. If judgment on non-agricultural income does not take place on Rosh HaShanah, one must provide an alternative translation to the terms in these passages. *Mezonotav* does not necessarily mean income. Rather it can be interpreted as income after expenses. *Chesronotav* does not mean expenses, but rather unexpected losses. According to this interpretation, regular expenses are included in *mezonotav* and losses such as stolen property, property damage, and unexpected medical expenses are included in *chesronotav*.

Applying Rosh HaShanah's Judgment to Daily Life

How does one apply the previous discussion to one's daily life? Let us return to one of the aforementioned passages:

R. Tahlifa, the brother of Rabinai of [Be] Hozae learnt: The entire sustenance of man [for the year] is fixed for him from New Year's [Festival] to the Day of Atonement, except the expenditure for Sabbaths and the expenditure for Festivals and the expenditure for the instruction of his children in the Law; if he [spent] less [for any of these] he is given less and if he [spent] more he is given more.

Beitza 16a (Soncino Translation)

תני רב תחליפא אחיה דרבנאי חוזהא
כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו
מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים חוץ
מהוצאת שבתות והוצאת יום טוב
והוצאת בניו לתלמוד תורה שאם פחת
פוחתין לו ואם הוסיף מוסיפין לו.
ביצה טז.

The Entire Sustenance of Man - All profits that he will earn this year in order to sustain himself are fixed. This is how much he will earn this year. And he must be cautious not to spend excessively because he will only be given what was fixed for him.

Except for the Expenditures of Shabbat - It was not determined what one will earn for those expenditures and where it will come from. Rather, one will be provided with whatever he is accustomed to over time.

He is Given Less - Meaning, he will make less profit.

Rashi, ad loc.

כל מזונותיו של אדם - כל מה שעתיד
להשתכר בשנה שיהא נזון משם קצוב
לו כך וכך ישתכר בשנה זו ויש לו
ליזהר מלעשות יציאה מרובה שלא
יוסיפו לו שכר למזונות אלא מה שפסקו
לו. **חוץ מהוצאת שבתות** - אותה לא
פסקו לו מה ישתכר לצרכה ומהיכן
תבואהו אלא לפי מה שרגיל ממציאים
לו לשעה או לאחר שעה. **פוחתין לו** -
כלומר ממציאין לו שכר מועט.
רש"י שם

This passage of the Gemara states that expenditures relating to Shabbat and Yom Tov as well as tuition for teaching Torah to children are not included in the judgment of Rosh HaShanah. The

implication is that the primary purpose of this passage is to encourage people to spend money on these items without worrying how they are going to pay for them.

Yet, Rashi's comments indicate that there is another purpose to this passage. Rashi places a stress on the first half of the passage. We are not privy to the results of the judgment of Rosh HaShanah and we have no way of knowing how much money was allocated to us for the year. This is especially true in light of the previous passage that expenses and losses are also determined on Rosh HaShanah. Therefore, even someone with a fixed salary and a watertight contract cannot be too sure what his income after expenses is going to be for the coming year. Rashi tells us that for this reason, one must spend his money wisely and avoid excessive spending. In modern terms, Rashi might recommend maintaining a household budget that conservatively accounts for variable expenditures.

Mishna Berurah notes that one should not take Rashi's comments lightly:

The Gemara states that a person's income is determined on Rosh HaShanah. Rashi explains: 'And he must be cautious not to spend excessively because he will only be given what was fixed for him.' This is a great moral lesson for our generation, because due to our great sins, many people violate Rashi's comments and don't pay attention to their expenditures and don't avoid excessive spending. There have been many victims of this terrible practice that eventually brings people to theft and corruption and to great embarrassment.

Mishna Berurah, Bi'ur Halacha 529:1, s.v. V'Al

איתא בגמרא מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה וכו' ופירש"י לייזר מלעשות יציאה מרובה שלא יוסיפו לו אלא מה שפסקו לו עכ"ל וזהו תוכחת מרובה על זמנינו שבעו"ה הרבה אנשים עוברין ע"ז ולא ישימו לב איך להתנהג בהוצאות ביתם להרחיק דברים המותרים ורבים חללים הפילה הנהגה הרעה הזו שמביאה את האדם לבסוף עי"ז לידי גזל וחמס וגם לחרפה וכלמה. ביאור הלכה תקכט:א ד"ה ואל

Mishna Berurah testifies to a problem in his time of people spending excessively and then falling into all sorts of financial pitfalls. Mishna Berurah's warning is certainly applicable in today's times and to the current financial climate.

While Rashi recommends avoiding any excessive spending during the week, he seems to contrast this approach with one's approach towards expenditures for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and tuition for teaching one's child Torah. R. Ya'akov ben Asher, in discussing the laws of Yom Tov explicitly connects the two parts of the passage:

Even though every person must limit his spending, he should not be overly limiting on his expenditures for Yom Tov.

Tur, Orach Chaim no. 529

אע"פ שצריך כל אדם לצמצם יציאותיו אל יצמצם בהוצאת י"ט. טור או"ח ס' תקכט

According to R. Ya'akov ben Asher, the purpose of the first part of the Gemara's passage is to convey the importance maintaining prudent finances in one's home. The purpose of the second part of the passage is to convey the message that one need not be as conservative when it comes to expenditures for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and tuition for teaching one's child Torah.

However, one must still question if there is an upper limit on expenditures for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and tuition for teaching one's child Torah. Are there expenditures in this area which are deemed excessive? Should one completely ignore these expenditures in preparing a household budget?

These questions are most concretely addressed in a discussion about borrowing money in order to pay for these expenditures. The Gemara, prior to the discussion about these expenditures states:

R. Johanan said in the name of R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon: The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Israel: My children, borrow on My account and celebrate the holiness of the day, and trust in Me and I will pay.

Beitzah 15b (Soncino Translation)

אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי אליעזר ברבי שמעון אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל בני לוו עלי וקדשו קדושת היום והאמינו בי ואני פורע.

ביצה טו:

The Gemara implies that if one does not have the means to honor Shabbat and Yom Tov properly, he should borrow money in order to do so. Tosafot question this statement based on a comment of R. Akiva:

[According to R. Akiva who said:] Make your Shabbat like a weekday rather than become reliant on people.

Pesachim 112a

[לרבי עקיבא דאמר] עשה שבתך חול וחל ואל תצטרך לבריות.

פסחים קיב.

According to R. Akiva, if one's financial situation is such that he is left with the choice of either forgoing the additional expenditures necessary to honor Shabbat or to collect money from charity in order to honor Shabbat, one should forgo the additional expenditures. Tosafot ask: instead of collecting from charity, why doesn't this individual borrow money and rely on the guarantee of the Gemara that G-d will return the money?

That which it states 'make your Shabbat like a weekday rather than becoming reliant on people,' that only applies when he does not have the means to repay a loan.

Tosafot, Beitzah 15b, s.v. L'vu

והא דאמר עשה שבתך חול וחל תצטרך לבריות ה"מ כשאין לו לפרוע.

תוס' ביצה טו: ד"ה לוו

According to Tosafot, one may only borrow money for Shabbat expenditures if he has the means of repaying the loan. If he has no current means of repaying the loan, he should not take a loan and should subsist without the additional Shabbat expenditures.

One can question the comments of Tosafot: If in fact there is a guarantee that G-d will repay the money, why shouldn't he take a loan? R. Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter (the Gerrer Rebbe) answers:

Even though there is a guarantee from the heavens that one will be reimbursed for expenses relating to the holiness of the day, nevertheless, one may not borrow at someone else's expense based on this, but only if he has the means of repaying the loan through sale of an item.

S'fat Emet, Beitzah 15b, s.v. L'vu

והגם דלמצות קדושת היום מביטחין לו מן השמים לפרוע מ"מ מצד ממון חבירו אסור ללות על סמך זה ודוקא כשיש לו לפרוע ע"י מכירת חפץ וכדומה כדברי המהרש"ל אז מותר ללות.

שפת אמת ביצה טו: ד"ה לוו

One may rely on G-d repaying the loan for his own personal finances, but one cannot impose that level of reliance on others.

It is possible to add that when G-d does repay that loan, it is not clear and obvious what funds were provided for that loan. For example, a person may receive his regular salary only because he spent extra for Shabbat and had he not done so, he might have received a salary cut based on his judgment on Rosh HaShanah. Alternatively, his judgment on Rosh HaShanah may have called for damage to the transmission of his car and now that he spent extra for Shabbat, that damage was averted. Therefore, when it comes to one's own finances, the Gemara states that he should not worry about the additional expenditures and he should feel secure that he will net the same amount regardless of whether he spends extra. However, if he has no assets to repay the loan, he should not borrow money because he may spend G-d's "loan repayment" on his own personal needs without knowing it and eventually default on the loan.

The Vilna Gaon takes a different approach to understanding Tosafot. According to the Vilna Gaon, there is a word that must be amended in the comment of Tosafot:

The text of Tosafot should read: 'When he does not have someone to borrow from'.

Hagahot HaGra, Beitzah 15b, no. 1

כשאין לו ממי ללוות כצ"ל.
הגהות הגר"א ביצה טו: אות א

According to the Vilna Gaon, a person who does not have the means to pay for additional Shabbat expenditures should certainly borrow money. When R. Akiva states that it is preferable to forgo additional Shabbat expenditures, he is referring to a case of someone who cannot procure a loan.

Mishna Berurah comments:

The Vilna Gaon and Bach both imply that if one can procure a loan, he must borrow money and rely on G-d to help him repay the loan. Ateret Zekeinim implies that one should not borrow unless he sees a means of repaying the loan. It would seem that each situation must be dealt with individually.

Mishna Berurah, Sha'ar HaTziun 242:12

כן משמע מהגר"א, וכן כתב הב"ח, דאם יכול להשיג ממי ללוות צריך ללוות ויבטח בה' שהוא יעזרנו לשלם לו. ובעטרת זקנים משמע דלא ילוה אלא אם כן הוא משער שיהיה לו במה לפרוע, ונראה דהכל לפי הענין.

שער הציון רמב"ב

According to Mishna Berurah, there are times when one should borrow money and rely on getting repaid from G-d and there are times when one should not do that. Each situation must be dealt with individually.

When Mishna Berurah rules that each situation must be dealt with individually, one of the key factors in making this decision may be how reasonable it will be to pay off the loan. If, for example, a person is swamped in credit card debt and does not see any means of retiring that debt in the near future, he should not spend extravagantly for Shabbat and increase his debt. Rather, his Shabbat and Yom Tov expenditures should be on par with his weekday expenditures

(i.e. they should be kept to a minimum). However, if someone is currently having difficulty with cash flow, but expects that situation to improve over time, it is reasonable for him to take a loan to bridge his current cash flow problem.

The dispute about borrowing money for Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses may be reflective of a more general approach to dealing Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses. According to our version of Tosafot, one's Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses should be guided by what one can afford. According to the Vilna Gaon, one may take a more liberal approach to these expenses.

Nevertheless, perhaps even the Vilna Gaon will agree that there is an upper limit on these expenditures. She'eilat Rav is a collection of questions that were sent to R. Chaim Kanievsky, with R. Kanievsky's very brief replies. The author, R. Yechiel M. Rothschild, asked the following question: According to the Gemara, Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses are not included in one's allotment for the year. Does this mean that one should spend more than he can afford on lavish delicacies or perhaps the Gemara's statement is limited to the purchase of normal Shabbat expenses (such as wine, challah, fish etc.)? R. Kanievsky answered that one should adopt the latter approach and not buy inordinately expensive items for Shabbat²⁴. Therefore, it is possible that even the Vilna Gaon will agree that there is an upper limit on one's Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses and if one is having financial difficulties, one should not spend more than what a normal Shabbat meal demands.

Summary and Closing Thoughts

In this article, we presented the various approaches of the Rishonim in understanding when a person is judged on his personal finances. We showed how these discussions may apply to a non-agricultural society. We then discussed how some of these discussions may practically apply to daily life.

In closing, it is important to note that even after the judgment of Rosh HaShanah is written and sealed, it is still subject to change. The Gemara, in commenting on the various opinion of the Tannaim regarding when the judgment on grain, produce, and water occurs, comments:

R. Joseph said: Whose authority do we follow nowadays in praying [daily] for the sick and for the ailing? Whose authority? That of R. Jose. Or if you like I can say that it is after all that of the Rabbis, but that at the same time we follow the counsel of R. Isaac. For R. Isaac said: Supplication is good for a man whether before the doom is pronounced or after it is pronounced.

Rosh HaShanah 16a (Soncino Translation)

אמר רב יוסף כמאן מצלינן
האידינא אקצירי ואמריעי כמאן
כרבי יוסי ואיבעית אימא לעולם
כרבנן וכדרכי יצחק דאמר רבי
יצחק יפה צעקה לאדם בין קודם
גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין.
ראש השנה טז.

The Gemara initially thought that prayer is only significant according to the opinion of R. Yosi that there is a judgment each and every day. [See Tosafot, ad loc, s.v. *K'man*.] The Gemara concludes that everyone agrees that prayer is beneficial even after the judgment is written and sealed.

The Midrash adds that there are other things that can change one's judgment:

²⁴ She'eilat Rav 1:4

For R. Judan said in the name of R. Eliezer: Three things annul evil decrees, viz. prayer, charity, and repentance.

Kohelet Rabbah 5:6 (Soncino Translation)

אמר רבי יודן בשם ר' אלעזר שלשה דברים
מבטלין גזירות רעות ואלו הן תפלה וצדקה
ותשובה.

קהלת רבה ה:ו

The comment of the Midrash was incorporated into the Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur liturgy:

Repentance, prayer and charity remove the evil decree.

**Mussaf Services for Rosh HaShanah and
Yom Kippur**

ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה.

תפילת מוסף לר"ה וליוה"כ

The merits of repentance, prayer and charity are strong enough to undo the judgment of Rosh HaShanah. We should perform these activities in times of hardship, not only during the *Yamim Noraim*, but throughout the year.

Aseret Yemei Teshuva: The Bridge Between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur*

Rabbi Shmuel Hain

Rosh Beit Midrash, GPATS

Lost in the Shuffle

What is different about *these days*? When *Rosh HaShana* ends and we return to our daily routine for a week until *Yom Kippur*, this question should loom large. Subconsciously, we tend to overlook this period and treat the Days of Repentance as if we are in a holding pattern between the dramatic poles of *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*. After hearing the wake-up call of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashana*, we essentially press the snooze button for an additional week of sleep before begging for forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*. We may make the extra effort to perform mitzvot and refrain from committing sins, thereby increasing our merits during this grace period, but the tension of the Days of Awe is significantly diluted.

The Rambam, however, challenges us to make sure these days do not get lost in the shuffle:

*Even though repentance and calling out [to God] are desirable at all times, **during the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, they are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately** as it states [Isaiah 55:6]: 'Seek God when He is to be found'.*

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 2:6

אע"פ שהתשובה והצעקה יפה לעולם, בעשרה
הימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים היא
יפה ביותר ומתקבלת היא מיד שנאמר
(ישעיהו נה:ו) דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראהו
בהיותו קרוב.
רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ב:ו

* An earlier, more condensed version of this article was published in *Einayim LaTorah* in 1999. The current version was adapted from a *Shabbat Shuva Drasha* delivered at Young Israel Ohab Zedek in 2006. Several of the ideas were originally developed in conversations with *Mori V'Rabbi*, Rabbi Michael Rosensweig.

For the Rambam, *teshuva* during this interim period is different, in terms of both its desirability and its impact, than repentance at all other times of the year. Ideally then, these days should function as a bridge between the initial thoughts of repentance on *Rosh HaShana* and the ultimate cleansing of sins on *Yom Kippur*. An analysis of the *halakhot* and customs of the *Aseret Ymei Teshuva* highlights the singular nature of *teshuva* during this period.

Laws and Customs of Aseret Yemei Teshuva: Kiddush Levana, Din, and Marriage

As a general rule, halakha strongly encourages the performance of as many *mitzvot* as possible before our judgment is sealed on *Yom Kippur*.

A person should always look at oneself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If one commits a sin, that person's scale and that of the entire world tilts to the side of guilt ... If one performs one mitzvah, his or her scale and the scale of the entire world tips to the side of merit ... Therefore, it is customary for all of Israel to give profusely to charity, perform many good deeds, and be occupied with Mitzvot from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur to a greater extent than the rest of the year

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 3:4

צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב, חטא חטא אחד הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף חובה וגרם לו השחיתה, עשה מצוה אחת הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות וגרם לו ולהם תשועה והצלה שנאמר וצדיק יסוד עולם זה שצדק הכריע את כל העולם לזכות והצילו, ומפני ענין זה נהגו כל בית ישראל להרבות בצדקה ובמעשים טובים ולעסוק במצות מראש השנה ועד יום הכפורים יתר מכל השנה.
רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ג:ד

The Rambam notes that this stance stems from the fact that each and every *mitzvah* may tip the scale in favor of a positive judgment. However, there are several striking exceptions to this rule. The first is the custom to refrain from sanctifying the new moon (*Kiddush Levana*) during the Days of Repentance.

The custom is to not sanctify the new moon until after Yom Kippur because we are suspended in judgment and sanctifying requires happiness. I heard from one sage that on the contrary it is preferable to sanctify the moon during this time so as to add this mitzvah to your merits and perhaps tip the scales in favor of one's merits.

Levush (R' Mordechai Jaffe) O"C 602

אין מקדשין הלבנה אלא עד אחר יום כיפור מפני שאנו תלויים בדין וקדושה צריך להיות מתוך שמחת הלב כן הוא המנהג. ואני שמעתי בשם גדול אחד שאדרכא טוב שיקדשו אותה בתוך עשרת ימי תשובה כדי שתבא מצוה זו ותוסיף על זכויותינו הקודמת ואולי תכריע היא את הכף לזכות ביום הדין. וסברא נכונה היא כי זו היא משמחת הלב שתוסיף על זכויותינו ותכריע לזכות.

לבוש אורח חיים תרב

There is a story of a person who encountered an idolater at night and the idolater wished to kill him. The Jew requested from his captor that he be allowed to perform one mitzvah before his death, whereupon he sanctified the

כתב בסוף ספר אורח חיים מעשה בא' שפגע בו עכו"ם בלילה ורצה עכו"ם להרגו ובקש ממנו שיניחנו לעשות מצוה אחת קודם מותו ואח"כ יעשה אתו מה שלבו חפץ. והלבנה

new moon and while jumping up and down as is customary a miracle occurred and the wind picked him up and took him away to safety. I also heard that one who recites the sanctification of the moon is guaranteed to survive the month. I cited this to support the Levush's argument that it is better to sanctify the moon before Yom Kippur so as to ensure that a decree of death will not be issued against you for the coming year.

Elijah Zuta (R' Elijah Shapira) ibid.

היתה בחידושה וקידושה בפניו בכוונה גדולה ונעשה לו נס כשדלג וקפץ ג' פעמים כמנהג ונשארו הרוח וניצל ממנו. גם שמעתי שמי שקידש הלבנה מיום שקדש שוב לא ידאוג שימות באותו חדש. הבאתי זה כאן ללמוד קצת ראייה ללבוש דיותר מסתברא לקדש קודם יום כיפור שלא יגזור עליו מיתה באותו שנה.

אליה זוטא שם

- Why does our custom proscribe reciting Kiddush Levana during the Aseret Yemei Teshuva? Kiddush Levana should be no different than other mitzvot, which we attempt to perform specifically between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Indeed, we should attempt to perform Kiddush Levana more than we attempt to perform other mitzvot, because Kiddush Levana is no ordinary mitzvah; it has the power to rescue a Jew from a fate of death! The week before Yom Kippur is the perfect time to take advantage of this phenomenon!

A second counterintuitive custom observed by some during the Days of Repentance is to desist from trying court cases between disputants. The Levush objects to this custom on two grounds.

Some have the custom to not conduct court cases between man and his fellow. It seems to me that it is much better to judge and give decision in human affairs so that there may be peace among men on Yom Kippur. Moreover, our Sages have said: "Where there is justice, there is no judgment; and where there is no justice there is judgment." That is to say, if we do justice on earth below, there is no judgment from above, but if there is no justice below, there is judgment above. This being the case, if we do not judge below, the attribute of Divine Justice will be directed toward us, God forbid! Therefore, it seems to me that it is better to judge below and silence the judgment above.

Levush O" C 603

ויש נוהגין שלא לדון בין איש לחבירו בעי"ת. ונראה לי אדרבא יותר טוב הוא לדון ולפסוק הדין בין הבריות כדי שיהיה השלום ביניהם ביום כיפור ועוד הרי אמרו חז"ל "במקום שיש דין אין דין ומקום שאין דין יש דין" ר"ל אם נעשה הדין למטה אין הדין למעלה ואם אין נעשה למטה נעשה למעלה וא"כ אם לא ידונו למטה הרי מדת הדין מתוחה עלינו ח"ו. על כן נראה לי שיותר טוב הוא לדון למטה ולהשקיט הדין של מעלה.

לבוש אורח חיים תרג

- Why does our custom proscribe judging during the Aseret Yemei Teshuva? After all, judging promotes peace among men. Moreover, when courts judge properly on earth, the harsh judgment from Heaven is silenced. Why not take advantage of this supernatural phenomenon to silence harsh judgment before Yom Kippur?

A third peculiar custom of the Ten Days of Repentance is the prohibition of weddings.

*Question: Is it permitted to marry between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur or not?
Answer: I saw in Sefer Mateh Ephraim that*

שאלה: אי מותר לעשות נישואין בעשרת ימי תשובה או לא.

תשובה: ראיתי בספר מטה אפרים בסי' תר"ב שכתב נוהגין שלא לעשות נישואין בימים אלו (דהיינו בעשי"ת)

the custom is not to get married during these days ... I have found no source for the custom to prohibit marriage ... and I myself was married on the sixth of Tishrei. And on the contrary; the fulfillment of the mitzvah to procreate may tip the scales in favor of merit .

Melamed LeHoil (R' Dovid Zvi Hoffman) 3:1

וכן העתיק הרב ר' שלמה גאנצפריעד זצ"ל בקיצור ש"ע שלו סי' ק"ל ... אמנם יגעתי ולא מצאתי שום מקור למנהג זה וכמדומה מנהג זה לא נתפשט ולא נודע אף מגדולי הדור ואני בעצמי עשיתי נישואין שלי ביום ו' תשרי שנת תרל"ג לפ"ק ... ואדרבה כי קיום מצות פריה ורבי' יוכל להכריע לכף זכות, וכן עשיתי מעשה ואין שום אחד ממורי ורבותי וחבירי פוצה פה לומר שיש בזה שום נדנוד איסור ... אח"כ ראיתי בס' דרכי נועם בשם מו"ר הג' ר' עזריאל הילדעסהיימער ג"כ להתיר.
שו"ת מלמד להועיל ג:א

R. David Tzvi Hoffman, while noting that he himself had gotten married during *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, argues that fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *P'ru U'Revu* is sufficient grounds to justify weddings during this period since it may tip the scales of judgment in favor of one's merits. R. Shlomo Kluger (*Hokhmat Shlomo, Orach Chaim* 602:1) notes that getting married before *Yom Kippur* also produces a substantial fringe benefit - all of one's sins are forgiven!

- Why does our custom proscribe judging during the *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*? What better time is there to get married and take advantage of this spiritual rebirth than the Days of Repentance, when we are desperately seeking atonement for all of our sins?

Devices and Deliverance

The reason for the custom not to marry is that since our sages have stated that when one marries all of his sins are forgiven. Thus, before Yom Kippur one should not make attempts to achieve atonement, and if one does so, it is as though one raises his/her hand against the King ...

Hokhmat Shlomo O"C 602

הנה המנהג שאין נושאין עד אחר יום הכיפורים בטעם המנהג הזה נראה ... כיון שאמרו חז"ל הנושא אשה מוחלים לו על כל עוונותיו וא"כ בתחילת השנה אין לו לעשות השתדלות מחילת עוונות עד יוה"כ שהקב"ה בצירוף עצומו של יום מוחלין לו עוונותיו ואם משתדל קודם יוה"כ הוי כמרים יד במלך.
חכמת שלמה אורח חיים תרב

Perhaps we can suggest, along the lines of R. Shlomo Kluger, that the problem with all of these practices is precisely their extraordinary ability to achieve atonement. The *Poskim* deliberately proscribed any behavior or ritual, even full-fledged *mitzvot*, if the action could result in prematurely defusing the anxiety that one should feel during the week between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*. Each of the rituals discussed runs the risk of being exploited due to its ability to achieve the goal of a favorable judgment through non-conventional means. Blessing the new moon, with its supernatural powers that guarantee life, the hearing of court cases and its mystical ability to prevent a harsh divine judgment, and marriage ceremonies which trigger atonement for one's sins are all important religious acts. However, they are eschewed during the Ten Days of Repentance because they can be used as shortcuts to meet the objective of a favorable judgment.

We can now fully appreciate the unique theme of the days between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* and how they function as a bridge between the two. The focus of these days is not on the

ultimate goal of wiping clean one's slate of sins; if that were the case, we would be permitted to use any method or device to realize that objective. Instead of being goal-oriented, these days are to be viewed as an opportunity to undergo the process of transforming one's religious personality. Following on the heels of *Rosh HaShana* when the *shofar's* call awakens us to change our ways and to repent, the Days of Repentance are intended to facilitate this process of change. These days are not merely a grace period to add merits before we request, and hopefully receive, atonement on *Yom Kippur*. Rather, the inspiration and anxiety experienced on *Rosh HaShana* should be channeled towards comprehensively evaluating one's character and carving out a new, revitalized religious persona. The climax of this process is *Yom Kippur* when we can justifiably beseech God to grant atonement for our sins after having carried out this transformation of self. In a word, the emphasis of Aseret Yemei Teshuva is not forgiveness, but the process of repentance.

Gentile's Bread

This gimmick-free approach to the Days of Repentance, however, appears to be at odds with another custom. There is a custom (see Rema 603:1) to refrain from eating bread baked by Non-Jews during the Aseret Yemei Teshuva, even if one neither observes this stringency during the year nor plans to adopt it on a permanent basis after *Yom Kippur*.

- This practice appears hypocritical and even calls attention to one's past and future failings. How do we justify this practice? Is this custom merely a hollow act to add to one's merits before *Yom Kippur*?

Even one who does not normally refrain from bread baked by Non-Jews throughout the year, it is customary to refrain during the Ten Days of Repentance in order to conduct oneself in a purified manner and in order to recall that these days are different due to their elevated status than all the other days of the year.

Levush O"C 603:1

אפילו מי שלא נזהר מפת של גוי בשאר ימות השנה נוהגין להזהר בו בכל עשרת ימי תשובה כדי להנהיג עצמן בטהרה באלו הימים ולזכור שהם משונים למעליותא יותר משאר ימות השנה.
לבוש אורה חיים תרג:א

The Levush explains that this custom is not about adding to one's list of good deeds merely to attain forgiveness from Hashem on *Yom Kippur*. Rather, refraining from Non-Jewish baked bread is intended to highlight an ideal level of religiosity, even though circumstances may not enable us to maintain these lofty standards throughout the year. It enables us to act before Hashem like our true selves, as defined by our ambitions and aspirations.

This projecting of our true selves is another crucial element of the Days of Repentance. Many of us have experienced a post-*Yom Kippur* letdown over the years. The euphoria of completing *Yom Kippur* with the knowledge that our slates have been wiped free of sin dissipates a short time later, usually right after committing the first sin after *Yom Kippur*. Thoughts of déjà vu naturally creep into one's mind along with the mental image of one's slate filling up, once again, with blemishes between now and the next *Yom Kippur*. However, if we use the days between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* to develop a new persona, to reinforce and expand our spiritual

ambitions, and underscore this change by adopting, if only temporarily, certain stringent practices, we can avoid this seemingly inevitable letdown. Atonement will be achieved on *Yom Kippur*. But by shifting the focus from attaining absolution to experiencing process of transformation, the Days of Repentance will gain for us a new lease on life. Even if we stumble sometimes, or, due to practical considerations, we do not maintain the practices adopted during the Ten Days of Repentance, our true self can remain intact.

Seeking and Calling

How, then, are we to go about this transformation and take advantage of this singular *teshuva*?

"Seek (Dirshu) God when He can be found, call out to Him (Kira'uhu) when He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). Rabbah the son of Avuha said: These are the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashana 18a

דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראהו בהיותו קרוב ...
אמר רבה בר אבוב: אלו עשרה ימים
שבין ראש השנה ליום הכפורים
ראש השנה ית.

The verse cited by the cited by the *gemara* as the source for the unique repentance during the period between *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* provides us with a dual charge: “**Seek** God when He is to be found and **call** out to him when He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). The verse stresses two critical aspects of repentance and the search for God. The first verb, *Dirshu*, emphasizes the need for an intellectual element in repentance. True repentance requires a thorough, thoughtful examination of one’s deeds, similar to the process of *Drisha V’Chakira* performed by *Beit Din* to verify testimony of witnesses. Concomitant with this rational component, only an emotional element that acknowledges the urgency of the moment and involves calling out to God in prayer to assist us in our efforts to change will enable us to fully actualize the potential of the Ten Days of Repentance.

The Music of the Yamim Noraim

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

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

The Maharil

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

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

Rama 619:1

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

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

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

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

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

The Intention of the Maharil

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

²⁵ A Guide to Jewish Prayer, Schocken, 2000

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

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

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

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

The Missinai Melodies

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

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

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

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

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

The Kol Nidre

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

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

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

The Music of Kol Nidre

The melody as heard today in the Ashkenazic Synagogue did not exist in its present form until the middle of the 15th or 16th century. (Sephardic Jews recite *Kol Nidre* to a completely different tune.) It is the very last *Missinai* melody incorporated into the list of the sacred *Niggunei Maharil*, even though it was finalized many years after the period of the Maharil³¹. We do know that the singing of this “declaration” was instituted by R. Yehudai Gaon in the 8th Century, to be sung to a (non-specific) melody by his Chazzan in the academy of Sura, Babylonia. According to the 11th Century Machzor Vitry of R. Simcha ben-Samuel, it was to be chanted three times: first, in a low and soft voice, then gradually increasing with each repetition to full voice. This represents the entrance of a subject into the King’s palace with trepidation and his eventual standing before his king with confidence. In the *Sefer Maharil*, the Maharil is described as singing the text with “various tunes”

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

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

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






















The Component Parts of the Kol Nidre

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

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

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

The Yomim Noroim Maariv Borchu

It is Ma'ariv, the first night of Rosh Hashana. The Chazzan begins to sing the familiar, beloved melody of the Yomim Noroim Bor'chu: “Ah................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

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

Charlemagne and the Source of the Melody

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The History of the “Great” Aleinu

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

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

A Sampling of Other Missinai Melodies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Selected Minhagim of Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer

Rabbinic Coordinator, Orthodox Union

Rosh Hashanah, like all yomim tovim, is packed with unique halachos and minhagim. The busy pre-Yom tov season and active observance of the yom tov days themselves often prevent us from reviewing the laws and customs of each yom tov upon its approach. The Gemara (Pesachim 6a) states: “We are required to delve into and expound upon the halachos of Pesach 30 days prior to the festival.” This rule is derived from the example of Moshe Rabbeinu, who taught the laws of Pesach Sheini to B’nei Yisrael 30 days prior to the occasion of Pesach Sheini.³⁸ Before every yom tov, one must study its laws in order to gain an understanding of the approaching holiday and be capable of observing it to the fullest.

The need to prepare ourselves intellectually (and emotionally) in advance of upcoming festivals is thus not just a good idea; it is, rather, part of our religious tradition and the fulfillment of an important Torah axiom. This presentation will address some of the significant customs of Rosh Hashanah. The intent of this article is to promote greater understanding of the topics to be discussed, and this article is not meant to be used as a guide to practical halacha.

Simanim at the Rosh Hashanah Seudah

Abaye said: Now that you say that certain omens are of significance, one should accustom himself on Rosh Hashana to eat gourds, fenugreek, leeks, beets, and dates.

Horayos 12a

אמר אביי, השתא דאמרת: סימנא מילתא היא, [לעולם] יהא רגיל למיחזי בריש שתא קרא ורוביא, כרתי וסילקא ותמר. **מסכת הוריות דף יב.**

When eating fenugreek one should say “May it be Thy will that our merits should increase”. Leeks, “that our enemies be cut down”; Beets, “our enemies be removed”; Dates, “our enemies be stopped”; Gourds, “our judgment be torn up and our merits be called out before You”.

Shulchan Aruch O”C 583:1

כשיאכל רוביא יאמר: יה"ר שירבו זכותינו; כרתי, יכרתו שונאי ה'; סלקא, יסתלקו אויבינו; תמר, יתמו שונאי ה'; קרא, יקרע גזר דיננו ויקראו לפניך זכותינו. **שולחן ערוך אורח חיים תקפג:א**

³⁸ The Shulchan Aruch codifies the requirement to delve into and expound upon the halachos of Pesach 30 days in advance of the holiday (Orach Chaim 429:1), whereupon the Mishnah Berurah (ibid. s.k. 1) comments in the name of a host of rabbinic authorities that this dictum applies to all yomim tovim.

The Hebrew and Aramaic names of these foods can be understood to symbolize good omens. For example, the word “karsei” - leeks - has the same basic spelling as the Hebrew root “karas” - to cut down. Thus, leeks can be taken to signify a New Year wish and prayer that the oppressors of the Jewish People should be cut down. So, too, is the case with fenugreek - “rubya” in Aramaic - whose basic spelling is akin to that of the Hebrew root “rav” (to multiply); fenugreek is taken to signify that “our merits should multiply”.

Other foods which are not specified by Abaye in the Gemara are also eaten, due to their names having similarities with the blessings we seek as we enter the New Year. One such example is the pomegranate, which has hundreds of seeds (actually 613 of them), upon which we recite, “May it be God’s will that our merits be many like the pomegranate.” It is also customary to dip an apple in honey and to pray for a good, sweet year.³⁹

Most of the special foods which have symbolism are fruits and vegetables which one would normally not consume as independent servings during a meal. For this reason, the berachah of Ha-Motzi which is recited at the beginning of the meal does not cover these foods - for the rule is that only foods which are normally consumed as part of the regular course of the meal are included in Ha-Motzi. Other foods require the recitation of a separate berachah before eating them, and the leeks, gourds, pomegranates, dates and so forth of which one specially partakes on Rosh Hashanah night are no different. Unless one eats these foods with bread - which serves per force to include them as meal foods - he must first recite the appropriate berachah.⁴⁰ In the case of foods which necessitate the recitation of a berachah, it is proper to first recite the berachah, then immediately eat some of the food without interruption, and then to recite the special Yehi ratzon prayer.⁴¹ Some have a custom not to consume nuts on Rosh Hashanah, as the gematria (mathematical equivalent of the letters of the) Hebrew word “egoz” (nut, or hazelnut in particular) is similar to the gematria of the word “chet” - sin.⁴²

Judaism is a system of actions and beliefs which demonstrate fidelity to Hashem and His Torah. Why on Rosh Hashanah night is the symbolism of foods important? Isn’t it foreign to the authentic mandate of our faith?

The answer is that Rosh Hashanah - when God begins His judgment of us and His world - is a time when we declare God’s kingship and total mastery over the universe and we also appeal to God for compassion. During the Torah reading, we recount the miracles wrought by Hashem for His people and His world. The notion that God can manipulate the universe, its forces and features, as

³⁹ Rema 583:1

⁴⁰ See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 177:1.

⁴¹ Mishnah Berurah ibid. s.k. 4

⁴² Rema 583:2. There is a famous comment of the Kotzker Rebbe about this concept and the idea of symbolism in general. The Kotzker said: “The gematria of “chet” is also “chet.” The Rebbe intended to caution people not overemphasize the symbolic aspects of Rosh Hashanah and neglect the day’s core values and message of pouring one’s heart out to God and placing our trust in His mercy. To place primary focus on the symbolic parts of Rosh Hashanah to the exclusion of the day’s deep message and primary observances reflects a failure to grasp and internalize real meaning and purpose of Rosh Hashanah.

its Supreme King, is reflected by the seemingly minor customs of the simanim of Rosh Hashanah night. We take foods with benign, seemingly unimportant names which in actuality do not relate to the good wishes for which we pray as we recite each Yehi ratzon; however, by beseeching our King to grant us the blessings associated with a manipulation and heretofore totally unapparent interpretation of the name of each food, we recognize His ability to manipulate private and global affairs and forces, transforming and redefining our lives and fortunes in profound and unexpected ways. The simanim of Rosh Hashanah night are a miniature venue for us to express our commitment to God and our confidence in His true judgment as our Supreme King.

Sleeping on Rosh Hashanah Day

There are those that have the custom (based on the Talmud Yerushalmi) to not sleep during the day of Rosh Hashana, and this is a proper custom.

Rema O”C 583:2

וגם נוהגים שלא לישן ביום ראש השנה (ירושלמי), ומנהג נכון הוא.

רמ”א אורח חיים תקפג:ב

As it says in the [Talmud] Yerushalmi, one who sleeps on Rosh Hashana will have inauspicious fortune [lit. his fortune will sleep].

Taz O”C 583:3

דאיתא בירושלמי מאן דדמיך בריש שתא דמיך מזלי:

ט”ז אורח חיים תקפג:ג

There are individuals who – in their attempt to fulfill the words of this Yerushalmi (which is actually not found in our editions of the Yerushalmi) – are careful to arise on Rosh Hashanah morning by sunrise.⁴³ While it is certainly commendable to arise early on the Day of Judgment (and engage in Torah study or Tehillim), the practice of being careful to arise specifically by sunrise may not be consistent with the thrust of the Yerushalmi’s advice.

First, from a halachic standpoint, the day for general purposes begins at Alos Ha-Shachar (daybreak, when the sky begins to become light). Alos Ha-Shachar in New York City during September is between 4:55-5:30 AM, depending on the English date of Rosh Hashanah. As Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explained, “Haneitz Ha-Chamah” (sunrise) is the halachic commencement of the day only as it pertains to a select group of specific mitzvos which are bound by chronological shiurim (halachic measurements) within the daily time-frame (such as K’rias Sh’ma and korbanos - sacrifices), but the general day itself begins at Alos Ha-Shachar.⁴⁴ Therefore, those who interpret the Yerushalmi as advocating abstinence from sleep once it is day must really arise by Alos Ha-Shachar, which is much earlier than sunrise.

More fundamental, though, is the true thrust of the Yerushalmi’s statement. The daytime hours of Rosh Hashanah are a period of judgment. The Yerushalmi, taken at face value, means that one should not use the day for sleeping, as it is inappropriate to sleep while one is being judged On High; sleeping on Rosh Hashanah day reflects a nonchalant and perhaps insensitive and

⁴³ There is no established minhag to remain awake all night on Rosh Hashanah; the Yerushalmi’s words refer to sleeping on Rosh Hashanah only during the day.

⁴⁴ Shiurim L’Zecher Abba Mari v. 1 p. 110-112.

uncaring attitude about the magnitude, solemnity and import of the day, and it will result in an unfavorable judgment. It is very comparable to the first Shavuot, when the Midrash relates that our ancestors overslept and were late for Mattan Torah – the Giving of the Torah. To oversleep and arrive late at such an event is highly inappropriate, and the same message rings clear with regard to Rosh Hashanah.

This being the case, one should certainly use every free minute of Rosh Hashanah for spiritual purposes - at least during the daytime morning hours, when God judges the world and every individual - and not use that time for sleep or frivolous activity.⁴⁵ The intent of the Yerushalmi is that one not exhibit disregard for the Rosh Hashanah judgment by sleeping; it does not mandate that one arise specifically before daybreak (or sunrise!), but it means that one should not opt to nap or “sleep in” when he would otherwise be involved in Torah and tefillah. Arising at a normal time and then using one’s time properly does not contradict the sentiments and message of the Yerushalmi.

In fact - and apparently in support of this thesis - the holy Ari (the master kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) opined that one may sleep on Rosh Hashanah afternoon, as God’s mercy has by then been aroused.⁴⁶ The Ari’s objection to morning sleep was because that is the time of Din. We thus see that sleep is objectionable because it shows a nonchalant stance or a neglect of the seriousness of the Din, not because it is banned or inadvisable per se. The Chayei Adam 139:11 advises that one should study Torah on Rosh Hashanah afternoon and that one may nap a bit then if truly necessary. In addition, the Mishnah Berurah cautions that wasting time on Rosh Hashanah by sitting around and doing nothing is the equivalent of spending one’s time on Rosh Hashanah sleeping.

Torah Reading of Rosh Hashanah

The Torah reading on the first day of Rosh Hashanah is taken from chapter 21 of Sefer Bereshis, which briefly details the birth, naming, and weaning of Yitzchak, and then devotes much narrative to the eviction and tribulations of Hagar and Yishmael, and the dispute between Avraham and Avimelech regarding ownership of wells and the subsequent pact into which they entered.

The Haftarah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah consists of the story of the barren Chanah, her prayers for a child, and the joy which she expressed upon giving birth to the child (Shmuel) for whom she had prayed for so many years.

The Torah reading and Haftarah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah raise a big question. That is, how are the overall themes of these texts essential to Rosh Hashanah? While it is true that both stories speak of barren women whose prayers were answered in the affirmative (and we, too, seek such response to our own tefillos on Rosh Hashanah), the bulk of the Torah reading presents us with events (Yishmael, Avimelech) which seem unrelated to this theme. Similarly, there are many other miracles recorded in Tanach in which individuals’ prayers were answered with an overwhelming display of divine mercy. Why, then, are the story of Yitzchak’s birth, alongside the

⁴⁵ See Aruch Ha-Shulchan Orach Chaim 583:4 and Mishnah Berurah ibid.

⁴⁶ Mishnah Berurah 583:9.

events of Yishmael and Avimelech, as well as the actions of Chana and the birth of Shmuel, especially appropriate to the theme of Rosh Hashanah?

If we take a step back and look at the developments in Bereshis beginning with Yitzchak's birth, we can detect a sublime theme. The name Yitzchak - as is clear in many passages which relate to his birth - is due to the tz'chok - the laughter - which was precipitated by his birth. Laughter represents that which is unreal, which does not coincide with the world as we know it. Whether laughter is a response to extreme simcha⁴⁷ or an expression of disbelief, it connotes that which is beyond reality. Yitzchak's name, moreover, indicates that his persona was other-worldly, and as we know from the Midrash, quoted by Rashi, which describes Rivka's reaction to her first sighting of Yitzchak, he had an angelic, holy aura about him.

In light of the above, we can better understand the import of God granting Yitzchak to Avraham and Sarah as it pertains to Rosh Hashanah. A significant portion of our prayers to evoke God's mercy is in the framework of His remembering the uniqueness of B'nei Yisrael. This uniqueness is based on our spiritual qualities, and such qualities have enabled us to reach heights otherwise reserved for celestial beings. We thus ask God to refrain from judging us according to natural law and strict mishpat (justice), as this system is suited for those whose existence is earthly and relates to the material, mundane, and natural order of the world. We ask that those who are rooted in holiness and are really not based in the here-and-now world not be judged by its strictures. Rather, the supernatural qualities of B'nei Yisrael warrant God's middah (attribute) of Rachamim (compassion), as our inner potential and other-worldly qualities associate us with God in a much tighter bond, such that we are like His personal servants or emissaries, and we thus seek to be judged as such, reflective of our internally holy and elevated characteristics.

The other-worldly qualities of B'nei Yisrael - as epitomized by Yitzchak and the miracles of his birth - are then contrasted in the Torah reading against Yishmael's and Hagar's performances, as critiqued by the commentators. Hagar's actions when Yishmael was sick were based on self-interest, while Yishmael's behavior represented the lowest, most base side of Man. The Torah then further displays the other-worldly characteristic of B'nei Yisrael when it depicts Avraham Avinu's interaction with Avimelech. In that event, Avimelech approached Avraham because "he saw that God is with him," to paraphrase the passuk, which attests to the divine association of B'nei Yisrael. Furthermore, Avraham used the event of his covenant with Avimelech to praise God (establishing an "eshel"), such that the mundane, earthly qualities of the story's well were associated with an elevation of the mundane to the holy. This upward, heavenly thrust to bring all to God's service represents the role of B'nei Yisrael in the world. So, too, is it with the story of Chana. She clung to God and then dedicated her son to His service, and this association further reflects the other-worldly qualities of B'nei Yisrael which we pray will endow us with favorable judgment on Rosh Hashanah.

However, we may never be haughty. We must always bear in mind that our unique persona and mission are divinely gifted to us, and any self-aggrandizement on our part is an utter, severe distortion of our purpose and is thus a chillul Hashem (desecration of God's name).

⁴⁷ See Rashi based on the Midrash regarding the many joyous events which transpired on Yitzchak's birthday.

Akeidas Yitzchak – the episode in which God commanded Avraham to bring his son Yitzchak as a korban – is read in full as the Torah reading on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. The Akeidah, as this narrative is commonly called, occurred on Rosh Hashanah, and its theme reverberates through the mitzvos of Rosh Hashanah and permeates the day's liturgy. The shofar - a ram's horn - invokes memory of the Akeidah, and the beracha of Shofaros which is recited during the Rosh Hashanah Mussaf prayer, concludes, "and akeidas Yitzchak, for (the merit of) his descendants, may You remember today in compassion. Blessed are you, God, Who remembers the Covenant." The Akeidah is likewise a very prominent theme in many of the Selichos and other tefillos of the Yamim Nora'im (Days of Awe).

Why does the Akeidah play such a central role in Rosh Hashanah? There are so many other examples in which our ancestors put their lives on the line to show their belief and commitment to God (such as Nachshon at the Yam Suf, the Sea of Reeds, as well as over a dozen other personalities mentioned in the daily "Mi She'anah" section of Selichos). Why is it that the Akeidah is used as the prototype of such faith-based courage and its reward on Rosh Hashanah?

It should be noted that the Akeidah can be divided into two distinct parts. The first section ends when Avraham Avinu follows God's command and is about to sacrifice Yitzchak, at which point an angel tells Avraham that he should not do so and that he has proven his devotion to God. The second part of the story displays Avraham's persistence, in which he sees a ram in the thicket and insists on serving God with a korban - even though Avraham has already passed the test at hand.

The eternal promises and blessings which conclude the Akeidah are only granted after Avraham brings the korban. This seems to indicate that this latter act - under the circumstances - demonstrated an even higher level of service of God than the fulfillment of the initial Akeidah command. When Avraham offered the ram even after he had fulfilled his mission of the Akeidah, his act was one of love for God. Service of God out of love - which is on a higher plane than service out of fear - was the pinnacle of the Akeidah process. Avraham could have left Har Hamoriah after he passed the test and was told to hold back the knife. However, out of love of God, he insisted on bringing a sacrifice to show his devotion.

It is with this in mind that we enter Rosh Hashanah. For, as we mention daily in Selichos, we cannot expect to be vindicated in God's judgment on our merits. Any act of transgression - and certainly many such acts - is incongruous with our prayers for blessings of goodness and sweetness for the New Year. Such requests simply defy logic and proper judgment; if we have sinned, how can we expect rewards? However, we are taught that one thing supersedes the onus of judgment - the love relationship between God and His people. We thus ask God to recall that this higher plane of our relationship, the bond of love, should override the logic of inescapable judgment, so that we should be blessed to serve God with a renewed commitment each year. We call to God in prayer for His mercy and benevolence with the shofar of the Akeidah, as we invoke the merit of the Avraham's (and our) love of God, which can override the strict judgment which we would otherwise deserve.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ This concept would seem to explain the phrase in the chazzan's Shemoneh Esrei of Rosh Hashanah, "Od yizkor lanu ahavas Eisan - May He remember for us the love of Avraham" (Midrashically referred to as 'Eisan').

Tashlich

The Tashlich service has become a very popular Rosh Hashanah afternoon custom. However, recitation of Tashlich is not found in early halachic sources, and the Chayei Adam omits mention of it altogether. It is for this reason that many people do not recite Tashlich.

Darchei Moshe (ibid. s.k. 2) quotes the Maharil (in Hilchos Rosh Hashanah 9 p. 277) that Tashlich is modeled as a commemoration of Avraham's travel through deep waters on his way to perform the Akeidah, where he prayed, "Help, O God, for water has engulfed me to the point of death." (Tehillim 69:2 - from Yalkut, Vayera 99) We invoke Avraham's courageous performance of the Akeidah and the salvation that Hashem granted Avraham, as we beseech Hashem to remember the merit of our ancestors and to answer our tefillah as He did Avraham's.

In contradistinction, the Rema in Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) quotes the more well-known source for Tashlich: "And may You cast ("tashlich") all of our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Michah 7:19) This passuk, which is found in Michah in the context of Teshuva (repentance), portrays the vivid imagery of God cleansing the repentant sinner by tossing away his sins to the distant recesses of the waters. Our recitation of Tashlich adjacent to a body of water is akin to a live portrayal of this beautiful and stirring narrative, beseeching Hashem to recall the words of Michah His prophet and to fulfill them.

Although there are various customs, the primary pessukim included in the Tashlich service are Michah 7:18-20, Tehillim 118:5, Yeshaya 11:9, Tehillim 130 and 119:89. These verses depict the one reciting Tashlich in a state of spiritual despair, compelled to call out to God from the depths and asking Him to be aroused toward forgiveness, invoking God's promises to accept Teshuva and proclaiming God as the living and eternal King. The themes of Tashlich combine the motifs and liturgical expressions of the Aseres Y'mei Teshuva (Ten Days of Repentance) and Yom Kippur, serving as a transition from the theme of Hashem's Malchus (Kingship) of Rosh Hashanah - when expiation from sin is absent from our tefillos - to that of His drawing close to us as we cry out from the depths, as He seeks our sincere and heartfelt Teshuva (as highlighted during the Aseres Y'mei Teshuva and culminating on Yom Kippur).

One must keep in mind that Tashlich is a minhag which is not binding, and that there are no requirements to it. If one cannot recite Tashlich or must skip sections, there is absolutely no reason to feel bad or to think that he or she has failed to properly observe Rosh Hashanah.

It is customary to recite Tashlich after Mincha on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. If that day is also Shabbos, Tashlich is normally delayed until the following day (as people cannot carry Machzorim or Siddurim on Shabbos to use for Tashlich, unless there is an eruv that encompasses the area⁴⁹). According to custom, Tashlich may be recited until Hoshanah Rabbah - the final day of Sukkos - which marks the completion of the period of judgment commenced at Rosh Hashanah.

⁴⁹ Mishnah Berurah ibid.

The Personal and Collective Journey to Har haMoria

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The intensity that we experience on *yom hadin*, when we stand before God as individuals awaiting judgment, is heightened by the reading of *akeidat yitzchak*. While we may perceive a powerful connection between Rosh Hashana and the story of the binding, the deeper significance of this juxtaposition is not immediately clear. The rousing wail of the ram-horn blasts, which represent and define the emotions of the day, draws our attention further toward the depth of this enigma.

And it came to pass after these things, that God
"nisa" (lit. tested) Avraham.

Bereishit 22:1

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם.
בְּרֵאשִׁית כב:א

To begin our investigation of the connection between Rosh HaShana and the akeida, we will examine why God wanted to "test" Avraham by commanding him to sacrifice Yitzchak. Many medieval commentators seek to reconcile the concept of *nisayon*, understood in its literal sense as "test," with a presumption of Divine foreknowledge. Some commentators were so concerned about this conflict that they opted to resolve it by exchanging the problematic term, *nisa*, with the word *nasa*, meaning "[God] lifted up." Avraham Ibn Ezra points to the serious difficulties with this approach by asserting the fact that this interpretation is not consonant with the context of the akeida event.⁵⁰

The tenth century philosopher and biblical commentator R' Saadia Gaon⁵¹, as well as Maimonides⁵² after him, maintain the literal sense of *nisa* as test, yet reconcile it with Divine foreknowledge. Both interpreters maintain that while *akeidat yitzchak* was indeed a test, its purpose was not for the sake of God's knowledge, but for the sake of human knowledge.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ezra, Bereishit 22:1

⁵¹ Commentary on Torah, Bereishit 22:1

⁵² Guide of the Perplexed 3:24

Specifically, future generations would learn of the story of the akeida and would be inspired by Avraham's tremendous act of devotion.

Nahmanides also retains the literal sense of *nisa*. However, he sees the test as serving the personal goal of informing Avraham of his self-worth. For Nahmanides, the goal of the test was to actualize Avraham's inherent potential:

The matter of trial in my opinion is as follows: Since a man's deeds are at his absolute free command, to perform them or not to perform them at his will, on the part of one who is tried it is called a trial. But He who tries the individual, blessed be He, commands it [so that the one being tested may] bring forth the potential into actuality....

Ramban Bereishit 22:1

יקרא "נסיון" מצד המנוסה,
אבל המנסה יתברך יצוה בו
להוציא הדבר מן הכח אל
הפועל....

רמב"ן בראשית כב:א

The thirteenth century philosopher and biblical commentator, Gersonides (Ralbag) sees no contradiction concerning the literal understanding of *nisayon* and Divine foreknowledge.⁵³ He takes the opportunity to direct the reader of his biblical commentary to a more elaborate treatment of the matter in his philosophical work, "Wars of the Lord." There he explains that while God knows what will likely occur in the future, this future is ultimately determined by the individual choices of mankind. Specifically, according to Gersonides, God can predict whether certain basic patterns will occur, but when these patterns are connected to individual choices, He cannot know the future as determined. If He did, there would be no free-will inherent in human decisions.⁵⁴ Therefore Gersonides understands the trial of the akeida as serving the purpose of informing God of Avraham's devotion.

Rashbam (Rav Shmuel ben Meir), a twelfth century French commentator offers a fascinating approach to the akeida story. Rashbam, who is known for his fidelity to the literal meaning of the text, immediately takes note of the prelude to G-d's command to Avraham: "And it was after these things." He recognizes this introduction as evincing a link between G d's command to sacrifice Yitzchak and the previous Biblical account of Avraham's peace treaty with Avimelech. Rashbam suggests that the command to sacrifice Yitzchak is actually a punishment for making a treaty with the Philistine King. God was angry because Avraham had negotiated away land that was destined for his descendants' inheritance. The Rashbam writes:

In every place that it is stated "After these things," it is attached to the previous parsha. Here too, after the event in which Avraham signed a treaty with Avimelech... The Holy One Blessed Be He was angry at Avraham for this, because the land on which the Philistines were dwelling was part of the boundaries of the Land of Israel...

ויהי אחר הדברים האלה - כל מקום שנא'
אחר הדברים האלה מחובר על הפרשה
שלמעלה.... אף כאן אחר הדברים שכרת
אברהם ברית לאבימלך לו ולנינו ולנכדו של
אברהם ונתן לו שבע כבשות הצאן וחרה אפו
של הק' על זאת שהרי ארץ פלשתים בכלל
גבול ישראל...

⁵³ Ralbag, Commentary on the Torah 22:1

⁵⁴ Ralbag, Wars of the Lord, trans. Feldman, part II, chapter 4

Hence, the Rashbam renders the term *nisa* not simply as a test, rather as a form of criticism and torment:

Therefore, God "nisa" Avraham, meaning that he tormented and pained him ... as if to say, "You have become so arrogant because of the son that I gave you, that you have made a covenant between yourselves and their children; now sacrifice that son, and let us see how effective your covenant-making will be.

Rashbam Bereishit 22:1

לכן והאלהים נסה את אברהם קינתו וציערו ... כלומר נתגאיתו בבן שנתתיו לכרות ברית ביניכם ובין בניהם, ועתה לך והעלהו לעולה ויראה מה הועילה כריתות ברית שלך.
רשב"ם בראשית כב:א

According to Rashbam, God is commanding Avraham "to now bring Yitzchak as a whole burnt offering and see how your peace treaty will help you." Measure for measure, Avraham will not have a living son to whom to bequeath any part of the Divinely given land. This is clearly a rebuke of Avraham who should have expressed trust in God rather than succumb to the threat of a powerful enemy.⁵⁵

Based on Rashbam's interpretation, we can argue that the painful command of the akeida can be understood not as an isolated episode, but as one that follows a series of tumultuous events in Avraham's journey to becoming the first patriarch of the Jewish people. In this regard, it is worth comparing the first test of Avraham, that of *lech lecha*, with the *akeida*, the crowning jewel in Avraham's process of character and "nation building." In so doing, we can interpret these two *nisyonot* as the bookends of Avraham's spiritual journey. Indeed, in comparing the first and tenth of Avraham's tests, one notices a number of parallels. The most obvious is the detailed, almost rhythmic description of the tortuous personal sacrifice that God expects from Avraham:

Go for yourself out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house

Bereishit 12:1

לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך.
בראשית יב:א

Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go for yourself to the land of Moriah.

Bereishit 22:2

קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק ולך לך אל ארץ המוריה.
בראשית כב:א

The second significant parallel is the blind faith that is demanded of Avraham in these two commandments:

To the land that I will show you..

Bereishit 12:1

אל הארץ אשר אראך.
בראשית יב:א

And raise him up as a sacrifice on one of the hills that I will say to you..

Bereishit 22:2

והעלהו שם לעלה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך.
בראשית כב:ב

⁵⁵ Rashbam, Commentary on Torah Bereishit 22:1

Both phrases emphasize that Avraham must rely on God to point the way – “To the land and to the mountain *that I will show you*.” Finally, in both commands the deliberate use of the term “lech lecha” indicates that the text of the akeida is attempting to link this test with the earlier one. This connection is highlighted by the Midrash Tanchuma:

“Lech Lecha to the land of Moriah” - what is lech lecha? This last nisayon (test) is like the first test. The first was lech lecha from your homeland and birthplace, and this is lech lecha to land of Moriah.

Midrash Tanchuma Vayeira 22

ולך לך אל ארץ המוריה מהו לך לך נסיון אחרון
כנסיון הראשון, נסיון הראשון בלך לך מארצך
וממולדתך ונסיון אחרון בלך לך אל ארץ
המוריה.

מדרש תנחומא פרשת וירא סימן כב

Thus, the apparently separate challenges of these two nisyonot are in a sense two facets of the same test: God demands of Avraham utter reliance in the most difficult of situations, when the stakes are highest, and when they involve sacrifice on the most personal level⁵⁶.

If we only interpret the purpose of both nisyonot, lech lecha and the akeida, as to demonstrate Avraham’s level of sacrifice, devotion, and reliance to future generations, to Avraham himself, and to God, then the two nisyonot are redundant. Why, then, was the second test necessary? One might conclude that the most obvious reason for a second test is a “retest.” In other words, perhaps Avraham was not fully successful at the nisayon of lekh lekha, and therefore God challenged him again, not as a punishment but in order to offer him the chance to remedy his previous performance. This hypothesis can find support in the thought of Nahmanides who points to the “sin” that Avraham committed following the lech lecha command, when he left Israel in the time of famine:

His leaving the land, concerning which he had been commanded from the beginning, on account of the famine, was also a sin he committed, for in famine God would redeem him from death. It was because of this deed that the exile in the land of Egypt at the hand of Pharaoh was decreed for his children..

Ramban Bereishit 12

גם יציאתו מן הארץ, שנצטווה עליה
בתחילה, מפני הרעב, עון אשר חטא, כי
האלהים ברעב יפדנו ממות. ועל
המעשה הזה נגזר על זרעו הגלות בארץ
מצרים ביד פרעה.

רמב"ן בראשית פרק יב

Avraham’s unsuccessful performance in the lech lecha test necessitated the retest of Avraham’s devotion under similar personally challenging conditions.

Teshuva Gemura vs. Teshuva

Interpreting the akeida as “rectification” for an incomplete performance of the lech lecha challenge renders the akeida as a fulfillment of the *teshuva gemura* that Rambam describes:

⁵⁶ In the case of the akeida, the sacrifice is not only personal and hence difficult, but also represents a philosophical faith crisis for Avraham. The will of God demands that Avraham commit an act that is contrary to the notion of the ethical and moral God that Avraham has come to know through his philosophic inquiry. This act will not only require personal sacrifice, but reliance upon the truth and immutability of God’s essence.

[What is] complete Teshuva? A person who confronts the same thing in which he sinned and has the potential to commit [the sin again] and, nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of his Teshuva.

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 2:1

אי זו היא תשובה גמורה, זה שבא לידו דבר שעבר בו ואפשר בידו לעשותו ופירש ולא עשה מפני התשובה.
רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ב:א

The opportunity for teshuva gemura, absolute teshuva, emerges when the “sinner” is faced with a situation that mirrors the circumstances of his earlier downfall. The goal for the penitent is clearly defined and structured. In this “retest” he emerges heroically, having chosen wisely. This status of teshuva gemura is attained by Avraham in the climax of the akeida. The image of Avraham as the “ba’al teshuva” is a powerful link to the theme of yom hadin.

Rambam however, does not limit his discussion of repentance to his own notion of teshuva gemura. In the case of teshuva gemura there is a tangible end goal, and the individual when successful emerges triumphant from that test, with trophy in hand. Rambam also talks of another form of teshuva which is distinguished from the teshuva gemura. The second type of teshuva, has no limited or definable goal; rather it is a continual process consisting of steady evaluation and improvement of ways. It is not teshuva for a specific sin, but the will to change the pattern of behavior and direct oneself to a more spiritual existence. The ultimate goal of this continuous introspection and action is linked to the ultimate goal of our being, i.e. to serve God.

Teshuva for the sake of love

The understanding of teshuva as a life long process can be understood in light of Rambam’s philosophical outlook on the service of God. When Rambam introduces his conception of ahavat and yirat Hashem, love and awe of God, he emphasizes the cyclical nature of these pursuits:

What is the path to [attain] love and awe of Him? When a person contemplates His wondrous and great deeds and creations and appreciates His infinite wisdom that surpasses all comparison, he will immediately love, praise, and glorify Him, yearning with tremendous desire to know [God’s] great name, as David stated: “My soul thirsts for the Lord, for the living God.” When he continues to reflect on these same matters, he will immediately recoil and be afraid, appreciating how he is a tiny, lowly, and dark creature, standing with his flimsy, limited wisdom before He who is perfect of knowledge, as David stated: “When I see Your heavens, the work of your fingers ... [I wonder] what is man that You should recall him.” Based on these concepts, I will explain important principles regarding the deeds of the Master of the worlds to provide for a foothold for a person of understanding to develop love of God, as our Sages said regarding love: “In this manner you will recognize He who spoke

והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול כמו שאמר דוד צמאה נפשי לאלהים לאל חי, וכשמחשב בדברים האלו עצמן מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות, כמו שאמר דוד כי אראה שמייך מעשה אצבעותיך מה אנוש כי תזכרנו, ולפי הדברים האלו אני מבאר כללים גדולים ממעשה רבון העולמים כדי שיהיו פתח למבין לאהוב את השם, כמו שאמרו חכמים

and [thus] brought the world into being.”

Rambam Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:2

בענין אהבה שמתוך כך אתה מכיר
את מי שאמר והיה העולם.
רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה ב:ב

Rambam establishes love of God as inextricably intertwined with knowledge of God and His universe. He describes a cyclical pattern whereby the individual experiences an overflow of love for God that emerges spontaneously as a result of his attainment of knowledge. The spiritual experience of loving God leads to an inspiration and intense desire for furthered study of God and the universe. At the point of heightened awareness of God and His splendor, the man of speculation is automatically overcome by the potent experience of awe for God.

According to Rambam the love for God is an outgrowth of knowledge, and the two are directly proportional. The more knowledge the person amasses, the more profound becomes the emotional experience of love for God.

It is a well known and clear matter that the love of God will not become attached within a person's heart until he becomes obsessed with it at all times as is fitting, leaving all things in the world except for this. This was implied by the command: "Love God, your Lord, with all your heart and all your soul."

One can only love God as an outgrowth of the knowledge with which he knows Him. The nature of one's love depends on the nature of one's knowledge. A small amount of knowledge arouses a lesser love. A greater amount of knowledge arouses a greater love.

Therefore, it is necessary for a person to seclude himself in order to understand and conceive wisdom and concepts which make his Creator known to him according to the potential which man possesses to understand and comprehend as we have explained in Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah.

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 6:10

דבר ידוע וברור שאין אהבת
הקב"ה נקשרת בלבבו של אדם עד
שישגה בה תמיד כראוי ויעזוב כל
מה שבעולם חוץ ממנה, כמו
שצוה ואמר בכל לבבך ובכל
נפשך, אינו אוהב הקב"ה אלא
בדעת שידעהו, ועל פי הדעה
תהיה האהבה אם מעט מעט ואם
הרבה הרבה, לפיכך צריך האדם
ליחד עצמו להבין ולהשכיל
בחכמות ותבונות המודיעים לו
את קונו כפי כח שיש באדם
להבין ולהשיג כמו שבארנו
בהלכות יסודי התורה.
רמב"ם הלכות תשובה י: ו

Rambam's formulaic conception of "knowledge equals love" reflects the notion that there is no end or limit to one's love of God. Just as one journeys through life developing his intellect in pursuit of Divine knowledge, so too, the emotional correlative, love of God, increases throughout life.

The most supreme level of human love of God, in Rambam's thought, mirrors the passionate human love between a man and a woman. One may wonder why the Rambam chooses the most intensely passionate description of man's expression of love for God, the lovesick individual, as the finale for his discussion of teshuva:

What is the proper degree of love? That a person should love God with a very great and exceeding love until his soul is bound up in the love of God. Thus, he will always be obsessed with this love as if he is lovesick. [A lovesick person's thoughts are] never

וכיצד היא האהבה הראויה הוא
שיאהב את ה' אהבה גדולה יתירה עזה
מאוד עד שתהא נפשו קשורה באהבת
ה' ונמצא שוגה בה תמיד כאלו חולה

diverted from the love of that woman. He is always obsessed with her; when he sits down, when he gets up, when he eats and drinks. With an even greater love, the love for God should be implanted in the hearts of those who love Him and are obsessed with Him at all times as we are commanded: "with all your heart and with all soul." This concept was implied by Solomon [SS 2:5] when he stated as a metaphor: "I am lovesick." Indeed the totality of the Song of Songs is a parable describing this.

Rambam Hilchot Teshuva 10:3

חולי האהבה שאין דעתו פנויה מאהבת אותה אשה והוא שוגה בה תמיד בין בשבתו בין בקומו בין בשעה שהוא אוכל ושותה, יתר מזה תהיה אהבת ה' בלב אוהביו שוגים בה תמיד כמו שצונו בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך, והוא ששלמה אמר דרך משל כי חולת אהבה אני, וכל שיר השירים משל הוא לענין זה.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה י:ג

To answer this question of why the Rambam selected this comparison as the denouement of Hilchot Teshuva, we must revisit the Rambam's conception of the second type of teshuva, the life long teshuva. He posits that this form of teshuva has no finite goal, and therefore transcends any limitations. This form of teshuva is an ongoing service that accompanies one's lifelong pursuit of ahavat Hashem. It extends beyond the temporal confines of the yamin noraim. Most emphatically, it is a way of achieving a profound relationship with God based on ahava.

The Akeida as Embodying Teshuva

We have already posited that the akeida presented Avraham with an opportunity to accomplish teshuva gemura. However, Avraham's readiness to perform the akeida may be an actualization of the second type of teshuva, the teshuva l'tsorech ahava, as well. In his Guide of the Perplexed, Rambam talks of two major purposes for the akeida. One purpose is to recognize the clarity with which the prophets perceived their prophecy. Rambam maintains that prophecy is always transmitted in the form of a vision or a dream. Although the prophecy came to Avraham in the form of a vision, he never doubted the command of the akeida, and he never requested clarification. The second fundamental purpose of the akeida, according to Rambam, is the teaching and inspiration to the future generations. The lesson of the akeida is the boundless expression of man's love and fear of God. Avraham's deep devotion and love for God is highlighted by his thoughtful and deliberative mode in the consideration of the act of the akeida in the three days leading to his action.

As for the story of Avraham at the binding, it contains two great notions that are fundamental principles of the Law. One of these notions consists in our being informed of the limit of love for God, may He be exalted, and fear of Him - that is, up to what limit they must reach. For in this story he was ordered to do something that bears no comparison either with sacrifice of property or with sacrifice of life. In truth it is the most extraordinary thing that could happen in the world, such a thing that one would not imagine that human nature was capable of it. Here there is a sterile man having an exceeding desire for a son, possessed of great

ואמנם ענין אברהם אבינו ע"ה בעקדה כלל שני ענינים גדולים הם מפנות התורה, הענין האחד הוא להודיע אותנו גבול אהבת השם ויראתו עד היכן היא מגעת, וצוה בזה הענין אשר לא ידמה לו לא נתינת ממון ולא נתינת נפש, אבל הוא מופלג מכל מה שאפשר שיבא במציאות ממה שלא ידומה שטבע בני אדם יטה אליו, והוא שיהיה איש עקר בתכלית הכוסף לילד ובעל עושר גדול ואיש נכבד ובוחר שישאר מזרעו אומה, ונולד לו בן אחר היאוש איך יהיה חשקו בו ואהבתו אותו, אבל ליראתו הש"י

property and commanding respect, and having the wish that his progeny should become a religious community. When a son comes to him after his having lost hope, how great will be his attachment to him and love for him! However, because of his fear of Hashem, and because of his love to carry out His command, he holds this beloved son as little, gives up all his hopes regarding him, and hastens to slaughter him after a journey of days. For if he had chosen to do this immediately, as soon as the order came to him, it would have been an act of stupefaction and disturbance in the absence of exhaustive reflection. But his doing it days after the command had come to him shows that the act sprang from thought, correct understanding, consideration of the truth of His command, love of Him and fear of Him....

Moreh Nevuchim 3:24

ולאהבתו לקיים מצותו בו לולד האהוב
הוא והניח כל מה שקוה בו והסכים
לשחוט אותו אחר מהלך ג' ימים, כי אלו
היה רוצה לעשותו לשעתו בבוא המצוה
אליו, היה פעולת בהלה בבלתי השתכלות,
ואמנם עשותו זה אחר ימים מעט בא
המצוה אליו, היה המעשה במחשבה
ובהשתכלות אמתי ובחינת חק מצותו
ואהבתו ויראתו, ושאיין צריך להשגיח
בענין אחר ולא לעורר הפעלות כלל, כי
אברהם אבינו לא מהר לשחוט יצחק לפחדו
מהשם שיהרגהו או ירוששהו, אבל כדי
שיתפרסם לבני אדם מה ראוי לעשותו
בשביל אהבת הש"י ויראתו לא לתקות
גמול ולא לפחד עונש, כמו שבארנו
במקומות רבים....

ספר מורה הנבוכים חלק שלישי פרק כד

The mode in which Avraham deals with the challenges of his life prior to the event of the akeida, is representative of his life long process of teshuva which is l'tsorech ahava, for the sake of love. The intellectual and spiritual perfection that Avraham struggles to achieve throughout his life is for the sake of the expression of ahavat Hashem that culminates in the akeida. In this light, we can see each of Avraham's tribulations as rungs on the ladder of service aimed toward perfected love of God.

One might ponder why Rambam is interested in the fact that Avraham contemplated the akeida for three days prior to action. While the narrative of the text in Bereishit does not reveal Avraham's thoughts or considerations during the three day waiting period prior to the akeida, the midrash serves to elucidate the nature of Avraham's inner struggles.

The Satan accosted him and appeared to him in the guise of an old man. The latter asked him: Whither goest thou? Avraham replied: To pray. Said the Satan: For a man going to pray, why the fire and knife in his hand and the wood on his shoulder? Avraham answered: Peradventure we shall tarry a day or two, slaughter, cook, and eat. Said he: Old man! Was I not there when the Holy blessed be He did say of thee: "take thy son..." Notwithstanding an old man the like of thee will go and put away a son vouchsafed him at the age of a hundred. Avraham replied: just for this.- And if He tries more than this, canst thou withstand it? Said he: and more. The Satan retorted: Tomorrow He will tell thee, a shedder of blood art thou for shedding his blood! Avraham replied: Just for this.

As soon as he saw that Avraham was not to be moved, he went and

קדמו השטן בדרך ונדמה לו כדמות
זקן א"ל לאן אתה הולך, א"ל
להתפלל א"ל ומי שהולך להתפלל
למה אש ומאכלת בידו ועצים על
כתפו, א"ל שמא נשהא יום או
יומים ונשחט ונאפה ונאכל, א"ל
זקן לא שם הייתי כשאמר לך
הקב"ה קח את בנך וזקן כמותך ילך
ויאבד בן שנתן לו למאה שנה לא
שמעת המשל מה שהיה בידו אבדו
ומבקש מאחרים וא"ת יהיה לך בן
אחר תשמע מן המשטין ותאבד
נשמה שתחייב עליה בדין, א"ל לא
משטין היה אלא הקב"ה יתברך
היה לא אשמע ממך ... כיון שראה
שלא קבלו ממנו הלך ונעשה

assumed the form of a large river. Forthwith Avraham plunged into the waters which reached as far as his knees. He said to his young men, follow me. They plunged in after him. As soon as they reached midway, the waters came up to his neck. At that moment, Avraham, cast his eye heavenward and said before Him: Lord of the Universe, Thou didst choose me, and revealed Thyself to me and said to me: I am one and thou art one. Through thee shall My name become known in My word, so offer up Issac thy son before Me for a burnt offering. I did not hold back and behold I am engaged in Thy command, but now the waters are endangering life itself. If Isaac or myself doth drown – who will fulfill Thy way? Who will proclaim the unity of Thy name? Said God: by thy life! Through thee, shall the unity of My name be proclaimed in the world. The Holy One forthwith rebuked the spring and the river dried up and they stood on dry ground.

Midrash Tanchuma Vayera 22

לפניהם נהר גדול, מיד ירד אברהם לתוך המים והגיעו עד ברכיו, אמר לנעריו בואו אחרי ירדו אחרי, כיון שהגיע עד חצי הנהר הגיע המים עד צוארו באותה שעה תלה אברהם עיניו לשמים אמר לפניו רבש"ע בחרתני הודרתני ונגלית לי ואמרת לי אני יחיד ואתה יחיד על ידך יודע שמי בעולמי והעלה יצחק בנך לפני לעולה ולא עכבתי והריני עוסק בצוויך ועכשיו באו מים עד נפש אם אני או יצחק בני טובע מי יקיים מאמריך על מי יתייחד שמך, א"ל הקב"ה חייך שעל ידך יתייחד שמי בעולם, מיד גער הקב"ה את המעין ויבש הנהר ועמדו ביבשה.

מדרש תנחומא פרשת וירא סימן

כב

How can we interpret the significance of the conversation between Avraham and the Satan? Nechama Leibowitz z"l interprets the satan speaking with Avraham as symbolizing Avraham's inner voice with which he struggled during the three days prior to the akeida. An inner voice within Avraham serves to raise doubts and to dissuade him from performing the akeida. In this horrific struggle within Avraham the voices that speak out against the akeida are the emotional father who waited to have a child all these years, as well as the voice of the philosopher within Avraham that objects to the immoral command of God.⁵⁷

Chazal attempt to express the intense pain and torment that filled the three day journey to Har HaMoriah. The doubts and trepidations which Avraham experienced during his metaphorical battle with the Satan, afford us a more profound appreciation of Avraham's deep inner conflict with its ultimate resolution in submitting to God's command.

Avraham's determination despite his doubts to comply with God's wishes is represented in the midrash by the powerful imagery of the river waters rising up to meet Avraham's neck. Avraham's three day journey to Har HaMoriah represents not only the personal struggle of the akeida challenge, but Avraham's life long struggle of teshuva l'sorech ahava. It is his love for God that ultimately inspires Avraham to submit himself, both emotionally and intellectually to the Divine will.

Reading the Akeida on Rosh HaShana

There are powerful messages that resonate when we read the akeida on Rosh HaShana. We are reminded of Avraham's exemplary act of teshuva gemura at the moment of the akeida. In standing before God, we are stirred by the model of Avraham avinu who was tormented by the

⁵⁷ Leibowitz, Iyunim b'sefer Bereishit, p. 138.

pain of his inner failures and the personal crisis inherent in coming face to face with them. Most importantly, we are inspired by Avraham's lifelong process of teshuva, and glean from this the personal objective of cultivating our minds and souls toward ahavat Hashem, the most supreme lesson taught by Avraham's performance at the akeida.

Ma'aseh Avot Siman L'Banim (*The ancestor's actions foreshadow the descendants actions*): The lech lecha uttered in the two Divine commands to Avraham; directing him to the land of Israel, and pointing him towards Har HaMoriah, are reflective of the spiritual trek that we as individuals must embark on in our service of God. On Rosh HaShana, as we stand as individuals and as a collective before God, we are each reminded of our personal and collective Divinely inspired journeys of lech lecha.

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