

A Yamim Noraim Message

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union

Dear Friends,

What an unusual period this has been for each of us! For six months our world has been upended, transformed by the coronavirus. We have all had to live our lives differently, and in great measure, far more separately. The limits imposed by the pandemic have drastically changed our interpersonal contacts, affecting our physical interactions outside and inside the home.

This experience has highlighted the value of our relationships. We have become more aware of the hunger we feel for each other's company and friendship, and we notice the joy experienced any time we are able to come back together – even when distanced and masked.

Yet, as the pandemic remains a force to be reckoned with, many of us will find ourselves experiencing the *Yamim Noraim* alone, away from our shul and community. This is a difficult challenge, as it is this season where our shul and communal connection looms largest.

This is the time when we usually come together in shul, seeing each other, raising our voices together in song, and reciting the inspiring prayers along with the *Chazzan's* familiar tunes. So many of us will miss all of that this year.

Prayer at home on these important and holy days will not be easy.

But it will be profoundly effective.

There is a classic Talmudic passage (BT Yevamos 49b) that presents a contradiction between two verses, one that indicates that G-d is always there to hear our prayers (Devarim 4:7; כד' אלקינו בכל (קראנו אליו), and another that speaks of specific times when G-d is available to us (Yeshayahu 55:6;

דרשו ד' בהמצאו). The Talmud's resolution is to differentiate between the individual and the community. G-d is always available to the community, but not necessarily to the individual. There is, however, a time when G-d is accessible even to the individual, and that is the period of the ten days from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur.

Ironically, it appears that the days when we most value being with our community are the very days when we do not need them the most, the very days when even our solitary voice makes its way before G-d.

Rosh Hashana is the anniversary of man's creation. Man was created alone, as our Sages noted, indicating that every individual is an entire world for whom the entirety of creation would have been worthy. As such – noted מו"ר Rav Moshe Shapira z"l – it is fitting that on Rosh Hashana, even as we may stand alone, each of us has G-d's ear. On the anniversary of G-d's creating the world for just one person, every solitary person garners G-d's full attention.

We are hopeful that this modest booklet will provide some support to you as you face a very different *Yamim Noraim*. Along with your local shul and community we stand together with you, yearning, hoping, and praying that the coming year will bring with it great blessing, and allow us to come back together in good health and with profound joy.

With warmest wishes for a *Ktiva vaChatima Tova*, a happy and healthy new year.

Sincerely,

Moshe Hauer

One to One on Rosh Hashanah

Rivkah Blau

Davening by oneself at home can be an experience of one to One, the individual turning to God. Those of us who have not gone to shul for varied reasons—babies and toddlers at home, obstacles to getting to shul, illness—are already aware of this. We know that in-house we are not distracted by other members of the community or by trying to keep pace with the chazzan. If we think about Jewish history, we find that important encounters happened when an individual was alone before Hashem. If we examine our prayers, we find that many of them are in the singular voice. We may even look forward to davening at home.

When Hashem chose Avraham, who was still called 'Avram,' to be the first Jew, He said *Lech I'cha*, in the singular: "Go out from your country, and your birthplace, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation..and in you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12.1-3). His nephew Lot, his wife Sarah and others joined him, but the beginning of the Jewish nation was with one member.

A basis for our saying the afternoon prayer, *Minchah*, is a verse about Yitzchak being by himself: "And Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field at evening time" (Genesis 24.63). He was alone before God. What followed was his noting approaching camels; Rivkah, who is riding on one of those camels. descends from it. She will become his wife.

When Yaakov is running away from the wrath of Esau, Hashem appears to him while he sleeps and gives the same blessing he had given to Yaakov's grandfather: "and in you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 27.14). Hashem continues: "Behold, I am with you, and will watch over you in all the places where you go, and will bring you back to this

land; for I will not leave you until I have done all that I have said to you" (15). When Yaakov awakens and realizes what God has communicated to him, he calls the place Bet-el, "the dwelling of God," and makes a personal vow.

Twenty years later when he was returning with two wives, two maids and eleven children to his parental home, his anxiety was apparent and justified. He instructed his servants on what to say when they would bring gifts to Esau; he tried to protect his family. The night before meeting Esau "Yaakov was left alone" (32.25). He wrestled with the angel, the mysterious 'ish' until daybreak, when he received a blessing. He gave a name a second time, calling the place 'Peni-el,' "for I have seen God face to face, and my life has been saved" (31). For Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov the communication from God was One to one.

Consider our Biblical heroines and heroes: when Ruth went at night to find Boaz and seek his protection, she walked alone; when Esther was planning how to turn Achashverosh from an enabler of genocide into a protector of her people, she was a solitary Jew in the palace; when Daniel, who davened by himself in his home three times a day facing Jerusalem, was thrown into the lions' den, he was the single man—the only other presence in the den was the angel who closed the lions' mouths. Being alone before Hashem is where they found themselves.

It is where we are, as well. Take the Psalm that we began reciting on the first day of the month of Elul and will continue saying after our morning and night-time prayers through Sh'mini Atzeres. I will bold the singular expressions in Psalm 27 to demonstrate how close to Hashem one is in saying it: "God is **my** light and **my** salvation;

whom shall I fear? ...Though an army would besiege **me**, **my** heart would not fear...One thing I asked of Hashem...That I dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of **my** life...He will hide **me** in His shelter...I will sing and make music to Hashem...abandon **me** not...God of **my** salvation. Though **my** father and mother have left **me**, Hashem will gather **me** in. [For those of us whose parents have passed away, this is an especially poignant verse] Teach **me** your way, Hashem, and lead **me** on the path of integrity... Hope to Hashem, strengthen **yourself** and He will give **you** courage, and hope to Hashem.”

This is the sense we have when we daven by ourselves; we are trusting in God, one to One.

Guidelines for Those Davening at Home

Prepared by Rabbi Josh Flug

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The following guide is meant to serve as a guide for Teffila for those who will be at home over course of Rosh Hashana. Local times referenced below can be found at ou.org/zmanim

Erev Rosh Hashanah

- Candle lighting should take place 18 minutes before sundown. The beracha should conclude להדליק נר של שבת ושל יום טוב.
- Weekday Mincha should be completed before sundown.



First Day of Rosh Hashanah

First Night (Friday Night)

- An abridged קבלת שבת is recited that begins with מזמור שיר ליום השבת. מזמור מדליקין. should also be omitted.
- Both ושמרו and וחדש שופר are recited before the Amidah.
- Ma'ariv Amidah for Rosh Hashanah with proper insertions for Shabbos. There are a number of insertions into the Amidah that are recited throughout Aseres Yemei Teshuva.
- Vayechulu is recited after the Amidah (omitting the beracha "Magen Avos") followed by לדוד מזמור and then Aleinu.
- Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah with proper Shabbos insertions. Kiddush begins with יום הששי. Shehechyanu is recited.
- The traditional symbolic foods (simanim) are eaten on the first night together with their respective יהי רצון.
- Birkas HaMazon should include the insertions for Shabbos and Rosh Hashanah.
- If Ma'ariv was recited before nightfall, Kerias Sh'ma should be repeated after nightfall.

First Day (Saturday Morning)

- On Rosh Hashanah, the שיר של יום and לודוד ה' אורי are recited at the beginning of davening. Shir HaYichud and Shir HaKavod are omitted when davening without a minyan.
- Shir HaMa'alos is recited after Yishtabach.
- Birchos Kerias Sh'ma for Shabbos (הכל יודוך).
- Shacharis Amidah for Rosh Hashanah with the proper insertions for Shabbos. Avinu Malkeinu is omitted on Shabbos.

- The Torah reading for the first day is Bereishis 21:1-34, the maftir is Bamidbar 29:1-6 and the haftarah is from Shmuel I 1:1-2:10.
- The shofar is not blown on Shabbos.
- One should wait until the third hour to recite Mussaf. If a minyan in the community is reciting Mussaf earlier, one may recite Mussaf once they have started.
- Mussaf Amidah for Rosh Hashanah with proper insertions for Shabbos.
- Those who are davening without a minyan are encouraged to study and recite the piyutim that are added to Chazaras HaShatz, particularly ונתנה תוקף.
- Mincha Amidah for Rosh Hashanah with the proper insertions for Shabbos. Mincha should be recited before shekiyah (sunset).
- Seudah Shlishis should ideally be eaten before the tenth hour and preferably after reciting Mincha. If one did not do so, one may eat seudah shlishis until sunset.
- Preparations for the second day may not begin until nightfall.



Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

Second Night (Saturday Night)

- Candle lighting must be performed after nightfall.
- Ma'ariv should be recited after nightfall.
- Ma'ariv for Rosh Hashanah includes ותודיענו.
- Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah includes Meorei Ha'Eish, Havdalah and Shehechyanu (יקנה"ז). The new fruit should be placed on the table before Kiddush and is eaten after Kiddush. If one does not have a new fruit or new clothing, one may still recite Shehechyanu.

Second Day (Sunday Morning)

- On Rosh Hashanah, the שיר של יום and אורי ה' are recited at the beginning of davening. Shir HaYichud and Shir HaKavod are omitted when davening without a minyan.
- Shir HaMa'alos is recited after Yishtabach.
- Birchos Kerias Sh'ma for weekday (המאיר לארץ).
- Shacharis Amidah for Rosh Hashanah.
- The Torah reading for the second day is Bereishis 22:1-22:24, the maftir is Bamidbar 29:1-6 and the haftarah is from Yirmiyahu 31:1- 31:19.
- One should wait until the third hour to recite Mussaf. If a minyan in the community is reciting Mussaf earlier, one may recite Mussaf once they have started.
- If someone davening at home can blow shofar on his own, he should blow the first thirty sounds before Mussaf. The second thirty sounds should not be blown during the silent Amidah. One may blow 70 additional sounds after the Amidah, but there is no requirement to do so.
- If someone else is blowing on behalf of others:

- If the ba'al toke'a (shofar blower) already fulfilled his mitzvah, the berachos (לשמוע קול) (שהחיינו and שופר) should ideally be recited by one of the listeners. If the listeners are all women, the ba'al toke'a may not recite the berachos; they must be recited by one of the women.
- If the listeners are spread out across a large area, each person can recite his/her own beracha.
- Only 30 sounds are blown.
- If one is going to hear the shofar before the seventh halachic hour of the day, one should wait to recite Mussaf until after hearing the shofar.
- Mussaf Amidah for Rosh Hashanah.
- Those who are davening without a minyan are encouraged to study and recite the piyutim that are added to Chazaras HaShatz, particularly ונתנה תוקף.
- Mincha Amidah for Rosh Hashanah. Avinu Malkeinu is omitted on Shabbos. Mincha should be recited before shekiyah (sunset).
- Traditionally Tashlich is recited on Rosh Hashanah afternoon (not on Shabbos) next to a body of water. If this cannot be performed with proper social distancing measures, one can recite it any time until Yom Kippur. If it was not done before Yom Kippur, there is still some benefit in reciting it until Hoshana Rabba.

Motzaei Yom Tov/Tzom Gedaliah

- Weekday Amidah should be recited including Atah Chonantanu and the special insertions for Aseres Yemei Teshuva.
- Havdalah consists of two berachos: HaGafen and HaMavdil (no besamim or eish).

Expanding Our Horizons

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

In this essay, I hope to introduce to a fresh perspective on the Festival of Rosh Hashanah. In order to do so, I ask you to join me in a simple thought experiment.

Imagine that Rosh Hashanah began in a manner similar to Passover, to Pesach. The festival of Pesach begins with the Four Questions, the *Mah Nishtanah*. With these questions, we compare our behavior on this night with our behavior during the rest of the year. The rest of the year, we eat unleavened bread, *chametz*, but on this night, we need only *matzah*. And so forth.

Suppose we would begin Rosh Hashanah with similar questions. What might those questions be?

We might begin by asking why we eat a standard menu at our meals all year long, but on this night, we eat an apple dipped in honey, and a variety of other foods which are in some way symbolic of our hopes for the New Year. We could then proceed to ask why we utilize no musical instruments in our prayers during the rest of the year, but we sound the *shofar* repeatedly during our prayers on Rosh Hashanah.

I would like to propose another sort of question, one that calls for introspection, *cheshbon hanefesh*, which is of course the essence of our spiritual task at this time of year.

Here is the question: Why are our concerns during the rest of the year limited to ourselves and our close family, to our own narrow social group and to our immediate geographical environment? Yet, on Rosh Hashanah, we are called upon to expand our horizons to include not only the rest of the Jewish people but the rest of the human race. We engage in the coronation of the Almighty as *Melech al kol ha'olam kulo*, the King of the entire universe. We

become aware that not only are we being judged, but that every human being stands in single file before His seat of judgment. Those of us who live in the Diaspora do not restrict our prayers to our local communities but instead plead for *simcha le'artzecha vesasson le'irecha*, for "joy for Your holy land and happiness for Your city."

On this day, we celebrate nothing less than the birthday of the entire cosmos, *Hayom haras olam*. But during the rest of the year, the cosmos is notoriously absent from our spiritual consciousness.

Finally, for most of the rest of the year, we are content, perhaps even smug, in our self-evaluations. We restrict our awareness to the good deeds that we do, to the *mitzvos* that we perform. On Rosh Hashanah, we are tasked with expanding our awareness to include misdeeds that we have long forgotten, and even meritorious acts that were performed for improper motives. All year, we are satisfied with our actual behavior; on Rosh Hashanah, we are enjoined to consider the great potential that lies within us, but which we have hitherto largely suppressed.

Why is this night—or, better, this day and these next ten days—different from "all other days?"

I was inspired to formulate these questions by a remarkable passage in the classic Hasidic work, *Sfas Emes*, authored by that outstanding spiritual master, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter, the second Gerrer Rebbe. It is to be found in one of the Rebbe's sermons in the Torah portion we read several weeks ago, *Ki Setze* (*Deuteronomy 22:3-4*). Its context is the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah*, returning a lost object to its owner.

The text reads: “You should do the same with any lost property of your brother which he has lost, and you have found. You should not turn a blind eye to it. You should not watch your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen on the road and turn a blind eye to him.”

The Rebbe is fascinated by the phrase, repeated twice in two short verses, “turning a blind eye.” The Rebbe writes: “In order to properly fulfill the *mitzvah* of returning a lost object, one must develop the habit of never turning a blind eye, not to physical reality nor to spiritual reality. One must keep his eyes open, and only then can he restore lost objects, lost thoughts, and lost ideals.”

As I understand the typically terse remarks of the holy author of *Sfas Emes*, this is what he is saying: Generally, most of us go through life cautiously restricting our field of vision. We wear blinders designed to confine our field of vision to that which is directly before us. We turn a “blind eye” to so much, if not most, of our surroundings.

We limit ourselves to our own “four cubits,” our own *daled amos*. In the process, we fail to perceive the needs of others, the suffering of friends and neighbors, and the trials and tribulations of others in our community.

We certainly do not look beyond our own community. We are blind to the larger concerns of society. We are even blind to the wonders of nature. We “turn a blind eye to lost objects”.

The Rebbe insists that we must expand our field of vision to include the many “lost objects” that could be recovered if only we ceased to “turn a blind eye to them.” He masterfully concludes his brief sermon with the insight that there are many “lost objects” within our own souls, and that we must take notice of them if we are to be spiritually redeemed.

The Rebbe is bemoaning an aspect of human behavior which has long been observed by

others. Psychologists, for example, are fascinated by our tendency to avoid facing the full range of our experiences and emotions. Instead, we resort to defense mechanisms such as denial and repression in order to protect ourselves against discomfort, pain, and challenge. Psychotherapy is designed to help people to “open up” and become aware of the real sources of their problems. Thus, they come to learn of new options and are able to consider more effective alternative behaviors.

But one need not undergo formal psychotherapy in order to wake up from his habitual slumber. Rambam famously understands the sound of the *shofar* as a “wake up call” to rouse us from the slumber in which so many of us are customarily enveloped. Synagogue regulars have been hearing this “wake up call” every morning for the past months. All of us will hear it during the upcoming two days of Rosh Hashanah.

Rambam and Sfas Emes employ different metaphors to describe the same phenomenon. According to Rambam, we have been asleep and must arouse ourselves. According to Sfas Emes, we have been turning a blind eye to the full scope of our reality and must open our eyes to the full breadth of our surroundings.

How can we wake up? How can we open our eyes? These are the questions which we must each ask ourselves on Rosh Hashanah. But, unlike the answers to the questions we ask on Pesach, each of us must find his or her personalized answers to these questions.

Permit to me to suggest some readily available “alarms” or “eye openers.” I begin with an example that, in one way or another has impacted us all in the past month or so. I draw this example from the Almighty’s world of nature, a world in which we often fail to see His hand.

I begin by referring to the solar eclipse which we witnessed just a short time ago. Some of us went

to great lengths to directly observe this wondrous phenomenon. All of us were compelled, if only for a fleeting moment, to abandon our characteristic indifference to the celestial sphere and to “raise our eyes upwards and ask, ‘Who created these?’” (*Isaiah 40:26*). For those brief moments, we did not “turn a blind eye” to one of the feats of the Master of the Universe. We must all learn to somehow preserve those “open eyes”. We must recover our ability to wonder.

Soon afterwards, He allowed the forces of nature to impact His earthly creatures even more directly. I refer, of course, to the fierce hurricanes which deluged the city of Houston and the State of Florida, and to the earthquake which wrought such destruction upon the west coast of Mexico.

Let us face the sad truth. Most of us do indeed “turn a blind eye” to natural disasters that occur in faraway places. Even the media do not give much attention to volcanoes in remote Pacific islands or to tsunamis in Southeast Asia or the Eastern coast of Africa.

But none of the readers of this essay was able to “turn a blind eye” to the scenes of the flooded homes of people we know in Houston or Miami. The images of ruined synagogues and irreparably soaked Torah scrolls were much too vivid for us to simply shrug off. Thankfully, and to our credit as a Jewish community, we were not blind to these human tragedies and will persist with our compassionate and charitable responses.

Many seek to explain such events in theological terms. They seek to determine whether these hurricanes were punishments from Above, indications of the Almighty’s displeasure with His human creations. Some even seek to specify the sins which may have provoked His wrath.

I find such theological speculation futile at best, and often simply foolish. Rather, I suggest that

we use our temporarily opened eyes to envision two vital spiritual opportunities.

The first is the opportunity to confront our own vulnerability. We typically narrow our field of vision to our current conditions of health and success. We think that these conditions are permanent, that we are immune to illness and failure. We deny our mortality. As King David expressed it, “When I felt secure, I said, ‘I shall never be shaken.’” (*Psalms 30:7*)

The images we see of the instant destruction of an entire Caribbean island; the personal accounts we hear from friends and loved ones of lost homes, businesses and possessions, and even of narrow escapes from death, should eliminate our false confidence and convince us, once and for all, of our fragility. This is no small opportunity for spiritual growth, and Rosh Hashanah is the ideal time to take advantage of it.

But these recent catastrophes have proven to be an opportunity of another sort entirely. We can pride ourselves on not having turned a blind eye to their victims. We have seen the actions of first responders coming from distant places. Again, foremost among them have been the government of the State of Israel and many Israeli organizations. The Orthodox Union, and many other Jewish organizations across the United States, mobilized human and financial resources to assist the victims in their struggle to recover. These efforts dare not cease when the dramatic footage disappears from our TV or computer screens. Our eyes, once open, must remain open, and not just to victims of these disasters, but to all in our now expanded visual field who are in need.

Hopefully, we will not have to resort to such fearful events to help us expand our visual field. Hopefully, we can take our inspiration from the Torah itself, and from verses such as the one upon which the insight of the Sfas Emes is based: Do not turn a blind eye!

I am reminded of a remark by Rav Daniel Movshovitz, of blessed memory. He was the dean of the Yeshiva of Kelm, and was tragically murdered by the Nazis along with his students, colleagues, and the townspeople of Kelm.

The founder of that yeshiva was Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv, of blessed memory. He was known as the Alter, or “old man”, of Kelm, and he emphasized to his students the importance of being *nosei b’ol im chavero*, sharing your fellow’s burden. This is one of the values listed in *Pirkei Avos* as a prerequisite for becoming a true *talmid chacham*.

Many years after his passing, students at the yeshiva he founded worked hard to develop this virtue and to become a person who shared in his *chaver’s*, or fellow’s, burden.

One day, Rav Movshovitz, interviewed a candidate for admission into his school. He asked him, “What important character trait are you trying to develop?” The young man answered, “I am striving to become a *nosei be’ol im chavero*.”

To which Rav Movshovitz humbly responded, “I envy you. You are way ahead of me! I’m still trying to make myself aware that there exists a *chavero*, a fellow with a burden that I must share!”

Too often, we restrict our field of vision so that we fail to even notice those around us who are in need. There are *chaverim* in our immediate vicinity with all sorts of burdens—financial, emotional, and spiritual. We typically do not even see them, let alone help reduce their burdens.

I intend the thoughts that I have shared with you, dear reader, for myself, as well as for you. We all too often “turn a blind eye” to our surroundings, and we all can open our eyes and see a wider expanse.

I close with a poem by Harav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, which expresses his soulful search for a broader field of vision:

*My soul desires the breadths, the breadths,
The breadths of G-d.
Do not enclose me in any cage,
Neither physical nor spiritual.*

*My soul soars in the breadths of heaven.
The walls of the heart cannot contain her...*

*My soul soars beyond all these and flies upward,
Beyond anything that can be given a label,
Higher than any pleasure,
Higher than any pleasantness and loveliness...*

“I am sick with love.”

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Silencing the Satan

Shira Smiles

Adapted by Channie Koplowitz Stein

We all know that Hashem commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The basic number of sounds that need to be blown is thirty, yet we blow the shofar at a minimum of two cycles of thirty, one cycle immediately before the Mussaf Amidah and another cycle, the shofar of record, during the repetition of the Mussaf Amidah included in each section, in Malchuyot/Kingship, Zichronot/Remembrance and Shofrot. (Customs vary as to additional times the shofar is blown.) If we fulfill the mitzvah with one cycle of thirty sounds, why do we all sound the shofar an additional cycle, asks the Gemarra, and the Gemarra responds, "In order to confound the Satan."

How is it possible to confound and confuse the Satan year after year with the same ploy? Rashi explains that by blowing the shofar an additional thirty times, we are showing our love for mitzvah, thus nullifying the Satan's accusations. But, Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein notes that we have also performed *averos/sins*. The difference, continues Rabbi Bernstein, is that by repeating and thereby displaying our love for the mitzvah, we are showing that we value mitzvah performance and we identify it as our true essence. This evidence is what confounds the Satan and nullifies his accusations.

The Ohel Moshe, quotes Rabbi Levenstein z"l who explains this idea. When Hashem sees Bnei Yisroel doing all the mitzvah with love, He feels like a father toward his son, and is more inclined to act favorably, thereby silencing the Satan. However, one must be careful, for doing mitzvah grudgingly, without love, has the opposite effect. We should feel grateful for very mitzvah, for each offers us an opportunity to

show our love for Hakodosh Boruch Hu and silencing the Satan. As Rabbi Moshe Schwab z"l points out, the curses and calamities prophesied in *Devorim* will occur because we did not serve Hashem with gladness during times of abundance. It is not that we failed to observe mitzvah, but that we found no joy in their observance, and displayed no love of Hashem and His Torah. The *avodah/service/work* of Rosh Hashanah is to generate connection to and love of Hashem.

Of the two days of Rosh Hashanah, the first is more significant, writes Rabbi Schorr in *Halekach Vehalebuv*, citing the Ariz"l, for on the first day we daven for our *ruchniyut/spiritual* life while on the second day we daven for the *gashmiyut/material* things. However, on both days, we need to grow in our love for Hashem, for one of the constant mitzvah is to love Hashem with all *levovcha nafshecha umeodecha/your heart, all your soul and all your resources*. Taking the final letters of each of these, *lev, nefesh, meod*, we form an acronym for *devash/honey*. As we dip our challah or apple into the honey, we should internalize the knowledge that everything we have can be elevated to sweetness in love of Hashem. [Chatam Sofer z"l]

But before we think of the Satan as something "out there", we should pay attention to what the Ra"N says, that Satan is actually the *yetzer hora* within ourselves. Listening to the sounds of the shofar before the *Amidah* is meant to put us in the proper frame of mind and eliminate our distractions that empower the Satan.

So what should we be thinking about as we listen to the shofar blasts? Rav Dov Yaffe z"l suggests that we focus on listening for the sake of

observing the mitzvah with joy and by so doing to coronate Hashem as the King over ourselves and the world.

Rosh Hashanah is a day of truth. The liturgy is full of proclaiming the eternal truth of Hashem and of His word, writes Rabbi Roth z"l in *Sichot Eliyahu*. It is a day that we should be facing the truth of our own inner world as well. The shofar pierces the innermost part of ourselves to reach our inner truth. But who is blowing that shofar? While we may see a human *baal tekiyah* in our shul, continues Rabbi Roth z"l, the ultimate *Baal Tekiyah* is Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself. As the Prophet Zechariah says: "Hashem will appear to them... *VaHashem Elokhim b'shofar yitka* and the Lord Hashem/Elokhim will blow with a shofar..." (9: 14) We hear the sound of Godliness within ourselves that is awakened and wants to connect to its Creator. Therefore, fortunate is the nation that understand the sound of the shofar. These first shofar blast serve to silence all that comes between us and our connection to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, so that we can focus on that connection during the shofar blasts of the *Amidah*.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah we read about Hagar, Avraham's second wife, as she wandered in the desert with Ishmael, both thirsty after having finished the water they took with them. Hashem opened Hagar's eyes so she could see a well, a well that had been there all the time but to which she had been blind. Rabbi Yoffe z"l in *Shema Bni* explains that we too are blinded, as Hagar was, and we ask Hashem to open our eyes so we can see the spiritual well within ourselves and draw upon its waters to come closer to Him.

Rosh Hashanah is a day destined for release from enslavement, writes Rabbi Wachtfogel z"l in *Leket Sichot*. It was the day we were released from our enslavement in Egypt (not the day we left), and it was the day Yosef Hatzadik was released from the dungeon. It is the day we ourselves have the power to release ourselves

from the chains that shackle us to servitude to the fleeting and mundane so that we can enter the realm of *kedushah*/sanctity. The shofar, then, writes Rabbi Bernstein, is a reminder for the future shofar that will sound on that day when the great shofar will herald the coming of Moshiach, "And then will come those lost in the land of Ashur (Assyria) and those cast away in the Land of Mizrayim (Egypt), and they will bow down before Hashem on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim." Homiletically, the shofar is to help us return from a life that is caught up in the pursuit of *ashur*/pleasure or free us from the constriction of *meitzorim*/dire circumstances so that we can strive for a higher calling. Sound the shofar, and create confusion in the enemy camp. Don't underestimate the power of one small moment of *tekiyat shofar*, writes Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz z"l in *Sichot Mussar*. Free yourself from both of these chains, the good and the challenging, and anticipate the coming of Moshiach.

Does the Satan really think the extra shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah herald the coming of Moshiach? How can he be confused the same way every year? Perhaps it is not Satan but ourselves who are mistaken about the power of the shofar, writes Rabbi Friedlander z"l, in *Rinas Chaim*. Rabbi Friedlander z"l, expounding on the ideas of the Ramchal z"l, questions why the verses cited in the section of *Shofrot* focus on the shofar blasts at Sinai rather than on the verses citing sounding the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. To answer this question, we need to go back to the era of creation itself.

At creation, Adam was all good. Evil existed, but it was external to him, within the serpent. When Adam sinned, The evil and impurity represented by the serpent entered into his being and became intermixed with the good. The shofar blasts at Sinai were meant to reawaken the pure soul within Bnei Yisroel and signal a return to the purity of man as Adam was before the sin. Bnei

Yisroel trembled as they heard the shofar and accepted the Torah. However, because Bnei Yisroel had accepted the Torah, even though they sinned with the golden calf and impurity again entered within them, evil did not have the same power over them as before they received the Torah. Each Rosh Hashanah, when we hear the shofar, our souls are again awakened with the *teruah*, from the same root as “awakening” and we are roused to remove ourselves from evil, and to strengthen our straight path of good with the straight, strong sound of the *tekiyah*. Each year, as the shofar sounds, our resolutions bring us closer to hearing the sound of the great shofar. If we are not yet there, it is because we have not yet hearkened closely enough to the sound of the shofar and have failed to totally internalize its message. But the Satan got the message, knows what it means for us, and thinks that perhaps this is the sound of the great shofar, and he is confused,

The shofar blasts bring us back to that pure place at Har Sinai, to the clarity when Hashem revealed to us that there is none but Him. At that moment, writes Rabbi Roth z”l, we were on the same level as Adam at the beginning of creation, for the Ten Utterances/*Dibrot*/Commandments parallel the ten saying through which Hashem brought the world into existence. The ten verses that are part of each section of the Mussaf are meant to awaken within ourselves the vision of clarity that we had at Sinai and that Adam himself had before the sin. It is a vision that coronates Hashem not only as a King over the universe, but, more importantly, as the King and Sovereign of my life. With that clarity, I can subdue the *yetzer hora* and indeed bring the great shofar to herald the Moshiach today.

Rabbi Rothberg delves even more profoundly into the meaning of the shofar blasts at Sinai. In *Moda Labinah*, he reminds us that at creation, Hashem breathed into Adam a living soul, and Adam became a living being. At Sinai, Hashem

again blew the breath of life into Bnei Yisroel through the medium of the shofar. Who blew the shofar at Sinai? It was Hashem Himself. It became stronger and stronger with the power of Torah. The shofar of Rosh Hashanah parallels the shofar of Sinai, and breathes life into me as well.

The *Targum* interprets that Hashem breathed into Adam *ruach memalelah*/the power of speech. It is no coincidence then, that either introducing each verse or within each of the thirty verses cited there is a variation of *amor/say*, either as *leimor/saying*, or as *vene’emar*/and it is said. (These are translated in vernacular English as “it is written”, but the Hebrew root is “said”.) Through the breath of the shofar, Hashem blew into us both the commands with which He created the world and the Ten Utterances at Sinai, infusing us with the purity of those times. When we recite these verses as part of our prayers, we are symbolically recreating the world on both the macro and micro levels. That’s why Hashem appeared to us as the voice of the shofar, for He was breathing life into us in that way. Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah I must see myself as a conduit of that voice of God.

On this day, we have the ability to recreate ourselves, writes Rabbi Pincus z”l, and we have the ability to impact the entire world through our prayers and our actions. We need to believe that we have the ability to change. A small decision can have tremendous impact.

The Tolna Rebbe brings a completely different perspective to the purpose of the shofar. While the sounds confound and confuse the Satan, they are meant to bring calm to Bnei Yisroel. The *Haftorah* of the Second Day is among the comforting prophesies of Yirmiyahu to Bnei Yisroel. Bnei Yisroel has survived the sword, *haloch lehargiyah Yisroel*/and Hashem will lead us to tranquility. In *Ohri Veyishi*, the Tolna Rebbe posits that the Satan constantly tries to create confusion and distress within us so that we will not have the time or peace of

mind to observe mitzvot, and certainly not with joy. But the sound of the shofar will bring confusion to the Satan so that he cannot disturb us, and we will have the tranquility to observe God's mitzvot.

What are we distressing about? Usually it is about the future, or perhaps about the past. In order to achieve *menuchah hanefesh*/tranquility/calm, writes Rabbi Ostrow, we must live in the moment. The distractions and worries sabotage all that is good in our lives. Therefore, we do not blow the shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, so that we can retain the tranquility of Shabbat itself. If I can focus on the knowledge that Hashem gave me everything and sent every situation into my life expressly for me, whether joyous or challenging, for my benefit, I will not lose my tranquility and equilibrium, writes Rabbi Zvi Meir Silberberg in *Sichot Hitchazkut*. This in itself will confound the Satan. This is what I should strive for as I listen to the shofar blasts. I should strive to reconnect my breath with the breath of that shofar blast at Sinai that brought my soul and the souls of all Klal Yisroel in pure unity with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. May this year be the year we merit to hear the sound of the great shofar that heralds the coming of Moshiach.

Forgiveness

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

I don't know whether you ever noticed, but teshuvah, the whole cycle of repentance and forgiveness, plays no part in the early dramas of humankind. It doesn't in the story of Adam and Eve. As for Cain, God mitigates his punishment but he doesn't forgive him for his crime. There is no call to repentance to the generation of the Flood, or the builders of Babel, or the people of Sodom and the cities of the plain.

The first time God forgives is after the sin of the golden calf. He hears Moses prayer and agrees. "Although this is a stiff-necked people," he said, "forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance." And God did. Moses pleaded again after the sin of the spies: "Forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." And God replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked."

Why the change? Why does God forgive in the book of Exodus but not in the book of Genesis? The answer, I think, is extraordinary and it made a huge difference to me when I realised it.

The first recorded instance of forgiveness in all of literature is the moment when Joseph, by then

viceroys of Egypt, revealed his identity to his brothers, who had long before sold him as a slave. He forgives them. He says, it wasn't you, it was God. He said: "Don't be distressed or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." And it wasn't only then that Joseph forgave them. After their father Jacob had died, the brothers were anxious that now Joseph would take revenge. Once again Joseph forgave. And on that note the book of Genesis ends.

God did not forgive human beings until human beings learned to forgive. It took Joseph to bring forgiveness into the world. That is what God was waiting for. Had God forgiven first, He would have made the human situation worse, not better. People would have said, 'Why shouldn't I harm others? After all, God forgives.' We have to forgive others before God can forgive us.

So, before Yom Kippur, take time to apologise to others you may have offended. Forgive others who have offended you. Resentment is a heavy load to bear. Let go of it and you will travel more lightly. Now is the time to heal the wounds of the past. Then you will have more energy for the future.

Preparing Our Hearts for Rosh HaShanah

Rabbi Reuven Sasson

Translated and adapted by Shimon Apisdorf

Rosh HaShanah is the first of the Ten Days of Teshuva.

*On Rosh Hashanah we don't think about the past,
we only look to the future.*

Teshuva Begins in the Future

Rosh Hashanah *is* the creation of the world.

Every year, on this day, the world is completely renewed. Like we say in our prayers, “*This is the day, the beginning of Your deeds.*” And so, this year, on the first of Tishrei, 5780, creation happens, just like it did the very first time— “*This is the day ...*”

On Rosh Hashanah, we, and everything, begins anew.

If a person feels trapped in a desperate habitual cycle of mistakes; if time and time again he is unable to breathe new life, into life, he needs to appreciate that on this day everything is brand new. Creation restarts from moment one, from absolute nothingness. Within the newness of creation is the power and ability for each person to draw on that freshness, to tap into the power and pulsating potential of a crystal-clear new beginning that enables one to make a clean break from the past and embark on a whole new direction.

*On Rosh Hashanah we don't think about the past,
we only look to the future.*

*On Rosh Hashanah we don't do teshuva, we don't say the confessional vidduy,
we don't deal with our past sins and misdeeds.*

On Rosh Hashanah we only look forward. We focus solely on our deepest, holiest desires, on our desire to be an active partner in the recognition of God's majesty in the world. Yes, Rosh Hashanah is the first of the ten days of teshuva, but the truth is, the absolutely necessary first step in the teshuva process is to look forward, only forward, to the future. Liberated from the burdens of the past, and gazing into the future, our hearts are free to be filled with the most inspiring dreams; deep and genuine dreams that give us fresh strength, a fortified will, and new wings with which our spirits can soar above and beyond the habitual weight of the past.

Beware the Past

If the process of teshuva were to begin with focusing on the past, we could easily find ourselves drained of the strength needed to go forward. Immediately contemplating and dealing with all that went wrong, could lead us to a place where we see no hope in our lives for any alternative.

However, the powerful reality of Rosh Hashanah enables us to close our eyes to the past, to those parts of us that drain the life out of our lives, and to connect to the greatness of God, and the greatness of our Godly souls—our neshama—and to be filled with inspired hearts brimming with holy yearnings and a deep desire for *avodas Hashem*, for forging a profound and real relationship with the Creator.

Rosh Hashanah, and looking boldly to an unencumbered future, fills us with hope, and then with the strength to confront our mistakes and their roots within us, and to transform and

elevate them in ways we never believed were possible.

Crowning the King, Elevating Ourselves

Rosh Hashanah is the day of God's crowning, His inauguration.

With a human king, the pomp and ceremony of an inauguration is meant to highlight the magnificence of the king. That's not the case with God. The purpose of Rosh Hashanah is to highlight, extoll, and elevate *us*. The truth is, God's "greatness" is infinite and therefore it's beyond our ability to say anything that would actually highlight God's greatness. One can only praise or extoll the virtues of something that one can grasp. Can a small child praise the brilliance of a renowned professor? In fact, to ask a child to speak at an occasion honoring a great professor would actually be a slight to the professor.

That being the case, when we crown the King and extoll His majesty, the very fact of that event is a sign of God's "humility," so to speak. When we inaugurate God, we're not honoring God, rather God is honoring us. Rosh Hashanah is God's way of showing how precious we are to Him. It's highlighting the fact that we are so significant that we actually *can* have a relationship with the Creator. In this way, Rosh Hashanah extolls and elevates us. Within the very possibility of some sort of relationship to Hashem, is revealed our grandeur, a grandeur that is found in the fact that we are created, *b'tzelem Elokim*, in God's image. We, each of us, has this Godly essence, and *that's* incredible.

Therefore, the day of Hashem's inauguration as King is meant to bestow honor on His entire kingdom, and on His closest emissaries—*bnei Tzion*, the nation of Israel who rejoice in their King: For His honor is our honor, and His glory is our glory. We need to know, that though we stand in awe before God on Rosh Hashanah, this

is in no way meant to diminish us. Just the opposite, the very fact that we can stand in front of Hashem means that we are able to draw a sense of strength and honor from His strength and honor. This is why the Maharal says that the word *melech*, king, means that He bestows *shleimut*, wholeness, on the nation.

Judgement

Even the judgement that takes place on Rosh Hashanah comes from a recognition of the reality of our great stature. We are worthy of God's attention, and the fact that we are being judged at all is a testimony to our holy essence and our potential to live and actualize that rarefied sanctity in our lives. If we are being judged, then we are being encouraged to do better, to connect ever more deeply to our soul's—because we can—because we have been endowed with enormous potential.

What a lofty capability Hashem has placed in our hands. Through our Rosh Hashanah prayers, and our sounding of the shofar, we awaken God's Will to come and be completely manifest as the sovereign of creation. As the Ramchal says, "On the day of Rosh Hashanah, the blessed Master of creation stands, so to speak, as a King over His world. Therefore, it is the perfect time to pray for the total revelation of His sovereignty in the world ... and in this very regard, we need to do our utmost, for therein lays our goodness, and our strength."

May we soon merit to see the complete revelation of Hashem's majestic dominion.

The Physical, The Spiritual – The Balance

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran

At our core is a seemingly contradictory duality, a duality that poses challenges and creates tensions in nearly every waking moment. We possess a physical nature, which we share with every other being that walks the earth, and we possess a spiritual nature, unique among creatures and one imbued with the dignity and divinity of his Creator. We forever teeter between these dual facets of our nature, seeking to impart spiritual meaning to the physical, to give honor and grace to our place in creation.

The inherent tension of our duality reaches its apogee during our confession on Yom Kippur. The process of repentance and its accompanying recitation of the confession – Viddui – is, on the one hand, a singular manifestation of spiritual courage and psychological strength and, on the other, a statement of self-defeat; a clear-eyed recognition of human frailty, and unworthiness.

Sincere and authentic repentance depends upon the strength, ability and insight to accuse oneself not only of *doing* wrong but of the *inevitability* of such wrongdoing. Viddui acknowledges that one's intentions and deeds are unworthy and tarnished, a keening cry that, "I have sinned."

The irony – and the beauty – of the admission of necessary failure is impossible absent our unique spiritual greatness. Without such inherent holiness, self-accusation would be impossible – and meaningless. The Viddui experience requires the full tension of man's duality. Praise and shame are equals in the Viddui experience.

Our regret demands recognition. Yet, recognition is pointless unless we *simultaneously* have faith in our sacredness; in our ability to repent, to change and to be renewed.

Rav Soloveitchik Z'L derived these two contradictory and inseparable elements of the repentance experience from the Viddui recitation of the Jew who apportions his *Ma'asrot* during the fourth and seventh years of the *Shemita* cycle. Such a Jew boasts that he has not violated not even one iota of the commandments; he has fulfilled the mitzvah of *Ma'ssrot* to the letter.

"According to all your Commandments which You have commanded me: I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten. I have harkened to the voice of the Lord my God, I have done according to all that You have commanded me."

Such statement in praise of a man extolling his virtues as a God-fearing and obedient servant is categorized by the Sages as a "confession?" How is it possible to ascribe "confession," a word which conjures up images of weakness and helplessness, to a man elevated to the point of not having "transgressed any of Your commandments?" the Rav asked. But that is precisely the point. Only a person proud enough to announce that he has done "all that You have commanded" is also to be expected to humbly submit and admit that he has "not done according to all that You have commanded."

The one who possesses the insight and strength to *do* right is also expected to acknowledge that which is not right. The ability to recognize success is a prerequisite to admission of failure. Both derive from the same source; both lead to mutually exclusive conclusions – the nullity of being *and* the greatness of being.

The nullity of being leads to our Yom Kippur confession. The greatness of being leads to our *Ma'ssrot* confession. Both are rooted in our humanness, in the earth's dust we are made of

and the image of God we are formed in. Both of our confessions can, at times, be integrated. There are moments when the greatness of being can indeed overshadow the nullity of being.

On Kol Nidre night 1945, when the Klausenberger Rebbe Z'L addressed survivors from Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia in the Feldafin DP Camp, such a level of grace was achieved. Such grace was realized despite any "rational" awareness of the circumstances and historical context, an awareness that could easily lead one to focus on the nullity of existence. Yet, at least one person present reported that he "had never heard so powerful a speech and never will again. When he finished, more than two hours later, I was both emotionally drained and inspired for the best davening of my life."

What did this great Rebbe, who himself had lost his wife and eleven children to the Nazis, say to those who could still see and smell the stench of the crematoria? How could he speak of confessions to those who had witnessed such depravation? How could he speak of such things before the lost souls of millions of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and children?

The Rebbe stood with his *Machzor* in hand, calmly flipping through its pages. Periodically he would ask rhetorically, "*Wher haht das geshriben* – who wrote this? Does this apply to us? Are we guilty of the sin enumerated here?"

One by one, he went through each of the sins listed in the *Ashamnu* prayer and then the *Al Chait* and concluded that those sins had little to do with those who survived the camps. He analyzed each of the possible transgressions one by one, *Ashamnu*. "Have we sinned against Hashem or man? I don't think so." *Dibarnu dofi*. "We spoke no slander. We didn't speak at all. If we had any strength to speak, we saved it for the SS guards so that we could avoid punishment." And so, it went until the Klausenberger ended

the *Ashamnu* prayer and turned his attention to the more detailed *Al Chait*. Once again, he concluded with the pride of one whose greatness of being rises above the nullity of being; that the recitation of sins enumerated in *Al Chait* hardly applied to the worshippers in Feldafin Block 5A.

Al Chait she'chatanu lifanecha b'ones uvreratzon – for the sins that we have sinned before You under duress and willingly – "We certainly did not observe the mitzvot in the camps because we were forced to."

B'Yetzer hara – for the sin that we have sinned with the evil urge – "To sin with the *yetzer hara* you must first have possessions of your physical sense of touch. We were skin and bones, incapable of touching. We could feel only the corpses we carried out every morning. We could hear only the commands of our guards. Smell? Yes, we had a sense of smell. The stench of death was constantly in our nostrils. Taste? Only the gray of the watery soup they gave us, so we could have enough strength for another day's work. On these, I forget, we did have the *yetzer hara* for food, for the slop that we saw thrown to the pigs. What the SS officers would not eat they threw to the pigs.

"How we envied the pigs."

And so, the Rebbe Z'L eliminated the *Al Chait*s one by one, concluding by closing the covers of the *Machzor*.

Seeing the Rebbe close the *Machzor*, the witness was certain the Rebbe was finished. But then the Rebbe returned to his original question, "Who wrote this *Machzor*? I don't see anywhere the sins that apply to us, the sins of losing *emunah* and *bitachon* (faith and trust in G-d)!"

"Where is the proof that we have sinned in this fashion? How many times did we recite *Krias Shema* on our wood slats at night and think to

ourselves: *Ribbono shel Olam*, please take my *neshama*, so that I do not have to wake to this horror. 'I'm thankful before You who has returned my soul to me.' I do not need my soul. You can keep it. How many of us went to sleep thinking that we couldn't exist another day, with all *bitachon* lost? And yet when the dawn broke in the morning, we once again said *Modeh Ani* and thanked Hashem for having returned our souls."

"None of us expected to survive. Every morning, we saw this one didn't move and that one didn't move, and as we carried the dead out we looked upon them with envy. Is that *emunah* in Hashem? Is that *bitachon* in Hashem?"

"So, yes, we have sinned. We have sinned and now we must *klop al Chait*. We must pray to get back the *emunah* and *bitachon* that lay dormant these years in the camps. Now that we are

free, *Ribbono shel Olam*, we beg You to forgive us. Forgive everyone here. Forgive every Jew in the world."

Rav Soloveitchik Z'L taught that every confession expresses itself in the outcry: "I am black, and I am beautiful, Oh daughter of Jerusalem" (Shir HaShirim 1:5). When we fail to see the "beauty," we cannot hope to discern the "blackness."

Genuine repentance demands that the sinner view himself from the seemingly two contradictory viewpoints, which are the two fundamental truths of his being, the physical and the spiritual, the nullity of being and the greatness of being.

The Klausenberger Rebbe Z'L clearly saw both.

May Hashem grant us the strength, courage, humility and wisdom to see both as well.

The Transformative Power of Rosh Hashanah

Rabbi David Rabhan

A story that illustrates an awesome power of Rosh Hashanah is the story of Joseph in Egypt.

According to the Talmud, when Joseph went to sleep as a thirty-year-old man on Rosh Hashanah night, Joseph was incarcerated in the depths of an Egyptian prison.

Joseph was completely powerless. Joseph was completely alone; forgotten, forsaken and literally “sold out” by his brothers.

That Rosh Hashanah night Pharaoh dreamt the famous two dreams.

On Rosh Hashanah morning, Pharaoh shaken and disturbed by the dreams of the previous night turned to his trusted advisors to explain the mysterious dreams.

Unable to receive a satisfactory answer, Pharaoh accepted the advice of the butler and summoned Joseph from the depths of prison to appear in Pharaoh’s court.

Joseph who the night before had gone to sleep completely powerless, comes before Pharaoh, and in five minutes on Rosh Hashanah morning, Joseph is transformed from being an abject prisoner, to becoming the second most powerful man in the world.

Joseph’s dramatic turnaround on Rosh Hashanah teaches us that built into Rosh Hashanah is a transformative power, where G-d is willing to give us a completely new reality so we can start anew and fresh.

In the Kiddush on Rosh Hashanah night we will say, “And You gave us, Hashem our G-d, *with love*, this Day of Remembrance”. It is with love that Hashem gives the Jewish people the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, and with it the ability to start again, and leave behind the failures and mistakes of the past.

To paraphrase Rav Yitzchok Hutner, the day before Rosh Hashanah one can be hated and

despised by G-d, and then on Rosh Hashanah, by virtue of its transformative power, the past can be forgotten, and the individual can become loved and adored in Hashem’s eyes.

True, there is a judgment process, and it can be and is, scary and frightening. But ultimately, G-d created this paradoxical and special holiday known as Rosh Hashanah *with love*, so that we can transform ourselves into the very best people that we can become.

It is then no wonder that the angels come in front of G-d and ask “why aren’t the Jewish people saying Hallel on Rosh Hashanah”. The angels witness G-d’s kindness; the giving of a chance to completely wipe our slates clean, and the granting of an opportunity to dramatically change our lives. The angels witness G-d’s graciousness and are perplexed as to why the Jewish people aren’t saying Psalms of thanksgiving and praise.

G-d *reminds the angels* that the Books of the Living and Dead are in front of him, and therefore it is inappropriate for the Jewish people to say Hallel.

G-d has to remind the angels of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah because the gift of a new start on Rosh Hashanah is such a great kindness, that one *can literally forget* about the “other scarier” side of Rosh Hashanah, as the angels did.

Thus Rosh Hashanah is paradoxical, with many deep and seemingly conflicting themes but, ultimately it is a day of Simcha, as we eat festive meals and as the Holiday cancels out the Shiva period of mourning.

Rosh Hashanah is a true *Simcha Lerabim* – *happiness for the masses*, as the entire Jewish people are given the chance to be like Joseph and to dramatically transform our lives for the better.

“And though the holes were rather small...”

Rabbi Ari Kahn

In a daring and optimistic passage, the rabbis describe the Divine assistance¹ received by those who make even the smallest gesture of repentance:

Yassa said: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, make for Me an opening of repentance no bigger than the point of a needle, and I will widen it for you into openings through which wagons and carriages can pass. (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:3)

The Gaon of Vilna² focused on the odd language of this passage, which seems to be built upon a mixed metaphor: When referring to the eye of a needle, it would be more appropriate to use any of the words that denote a small gap, crack or hole. Instead, the word used is *petach* (opening), which is most commonly associated with an architectural gap such as a door or window. Alternatively, the contrast might have been drawn between the hole a pin leaves in a garment, rather than the eye of the needle, as compared to the wide gap created when a door is opened. The Gaon learned a very deep and significant lesson regarding repentance from the peculiar wording of this passage:

Sometimes, a small hole is of no significance. For example, when dough is left to rise, one may poke a hole in it that causes the dough to collapse, but the retreat is only temporary; soon enough, the dough will rise even higher than before. On the other hand, if one makes a hole in a garment – the hole is clear and permanent. The Gaon taught, based on this difference, that although God recognizes even the smallest gesture of repentance and responds with great largess, man’s gesture must be real, and not

merely a fleeting, halfhearted gesture that leaves no impression on our own inner world.

The examples used by the Vilna Gaon to illustrate this teaching seem far from haphazard or coincidental. The first image, of dough as it rises, is an image familiar to readers of the Talmud as a metaphor for the evil inclination.³ As dough becomes leavened, it expands and rises in a manner analogous to the human ego. Like the yeast in the mixture, sin draws all the other ingredients that comprise the human personality into the inflated sense of self-importance and self-sufficiency upon which the evil inclination feeds. Sticking a needle into the evil inclination, like poking a finger into a batch of rising dough, is a futile gesture; it makes a very temporary impression. This, the Gaon teaches us, is not the sort of repentant gesture that will stir God to come to our aid, to meet us along our path to repentance and guide us toward the light. Simply poking at the growing, festering mixture as it expands and rises actually helps the yeast work more effectively; this is not real *teshuva*.

On the other hand, a hole made in a garment is qualitatively unlike a hole in rising dough; it is permanent, discernible – a proper *petach* or opening. This second image employed by the Gaon refers to a “*begeh*,” a word rooted in the Hebrew verb *begehah*, betrayal: The first clothing appeared after Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree and became suddenly aware of their nakedness. The clothing worn to cover their innocence is, therefore, both a consequence of sin and a sign of their rebellion, their betrayal of the trust God had placed in them, and their loss of innocence.

The fight against sin is a difficult battle, and the message the Vilna Gaon hoped to convey in this

teaching is that we must be sincere, and make a real and discernible effort to change. Lip service or a bland poke at our own puffed-up egos will not suffice to convince God to come to our aid. Only when we feel the consequences of our own sin upon our shoulders, only when we become aware of how we have clothed ourselves in self-justification and continue to glorify our own rebellion – only when we make a hole in the garments of sin with which we cloak ourselves will we be capable of breaking through and tapping into God’s mercy. In a way, we may compare this hole to the tear a mourner makes in his or her garment, expressing a sense of loss and irreparable damage. And just as the torn garment cannot truly express the grief and pain of losing a loved one, the hole we make in our “clothing of sin” cannot fully express the remorse and shame that is the core of *teshuva*. Even so, just as the smallest tear is a permanent sign of mourning, so too the smallest hole in our tightly-woven web of ego and self-deception is guaranteed to arouse God’s Mercy. Even a hole the size of a pinhead becomes the starting point for a new relationship with God. Through that small but permanent *petach*, a world of *teshuva* is born.

[1] Also see Shabbat 104a.

[2] *Liqutei HaGra m’Vilna, Moadim* p. 252f.

[3] Talmud Bavli, Brachot 17a.

"דע מה למעלה ממך"

As Below, So Above

Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy of Tosh zy'a (d. 2015), the exalted Tosher Rebbe, was an extraordinary holy man, a towering figure of *Avodas Hashem* and *Kedusha*. Beloved for his impeccable *midos tovos* and unconditional love for every Jew, the Rebbe founded "Kiryas Tosh", a Canadian shtetl in memory and in honor of the Hungarian city destroyed during the War.

One frigid Yom Kippur morning in the Beis Medrash of Kiryas Tosh, a simple, unlearned Jew, a plumber, who had joined davening for the High Holidays, left the room during Mussaf, returning a few minutes later. His hands were streaked with oil and his shirt stained with grease, but he looked very pleased. "Now it won't be freezing here anymore," he announced to the others sitting in his section. Proudly, he told them he'd gone to the boiler room to investigate why the heating wasn't working in the Beis Medrash, and found a problem with the old oil tank, which he then repaired, and it restarted. *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs," he said.

Later that night at the Rebbe's tish following the fast, someone told the Tosher Rebbe the unfortunate story of this Jew, who was so unlearned that he was unaware that what he had done was completely forbidden according to Halacha.

The Rebbe looked pained, but just for a moment. His face then turned radiant, and with his signature sweetness told all of those assembled: "That he doesn't know is not his fault; he never learned! It's our obligation to help him, to teach him. But the depth of his words and his intentions, are a message for all of us: *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben* — 'If we live with warmth down here, if we are on fire with Torah, if our davening is 'warm', then we will create warmth in *Shamayim* as well!"



This is a theme that is present throughout the *Yamim Nora'im* liturgy, and is at the core of *Selichos*, where we return over and over again to the refrain of the *Yud Gimel Midos*, Hashem's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

Following the *cheit haMeraglim*, the sin of the spies, we experience Divine disappointment in our failure to believe in ourselves and Hashem's promise to deliver us into the Holy Land. Moshe pleads with Hashem to give the Jewish nation another chance:

Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this Nation
according to Your great kindness.

סְלַחֲנָא לְעוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגִדְל חֶסֶדְךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁאַתָּה לְעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַנֵּה

The Torah continues,

And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven them in
accordance with your word.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְדִבְרְךָ

(Bamidbar, 14:18-20)

A fundamental teaching pervasive throughout the writings of the students of the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* interprets a pasuk in Tehillim, *Hashem Tzilcha*, "G-d is your protective shadow" (Tehillim 121:5), and sheds 'light' on our *Selichos* liturgy. David haMelech's phrase also implies that Hashem's 'actions' in the world above are a reflection of our actions below. Physically, our shadow 'follows us' and moves whenever we move. Thus, whatever we choose and do in this world, the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, our Shadow, 'chooses' and does as well.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe / Sichos, 1955

תורת מנחם – התוועדות תשט"ז, חלק ג'

יש הטוענים: מי אני ומה אני, ומה נוגעת עבודתי וכו'. על זה ישנו מאמר הבעל-שם-טוב, הרב המגיד ואדמו"ר הזקן, בפירוש המשנה "דע מה למעלה ממך", שכל העניינים שלמעלה הם "ממך". וכמו-כן יש פירוש הבעל-שם-טוב על הפסוק "הוי' צילך", שכפי שיהודי עושה למטה, כך נעשה כביכול למעלה, מכיוון ש"הוי' צילך", בדוגמת צל האדם, שהצל נעשה כמו שהוא באדם.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l (*Alei Shur*, Vol. 2) suggests an explanation why a "shadow" acts as an apt metaphor for Hashem's protection of us. A shadow is unique in that it reflects whatever is held against the light. If our small finger is set before the light, the shadow created will be small. If our whole hand is held up, the shadow is greater. This is a way of framing Hashem's 'reaction' to us in the realm of faith. To the degree that we place our whole trust and reliance in Hashem, the more Hashem will provide what we need.

Vayomer Hashem, Salachti K'devarecha.... Rashi says this means *Bishvil mah she'amarta*, "because (as a result of) of what you said. Selichos helps us prepare us to stand before Hashem, with contrition and sincerity, formally addressing our missteps and shortcomings. We awaken the recognition that *Hashem Tzilecha*, "G-d is our Shadow," and is waiting to and willing to forgive us *k'dvarecha*, 'according to our words of request', according to our own will to be forgiven.

That our efforts, intentions, thoughts and actions are impactful and ‘influence’ the Divine response above is an approach found in both the teachings of the students of both the Ba’al Shem Tov and Vilna Gaon:

R’ Dov Ber, The Maggid of Mezritch d. 1772

תורת המגיד הק' ממזריטש, זי"ע א:ו

זה כלל גדול שצריך כל אדם להיות לו אמונה גדולה לזה, שמה שעושה מצוה, הן בלימוד והן בתפלה או שאר מצות, צריך לאמונה גדולה שבזה המצוה או הלימוד או התפלה מתעורר תענוג גדול למעלה בעולמות העליונים, ועושה בזה המצוה נ"ר ותענוג גדול להקב"ה ושכינתו.

וזה צריך לכוון בכל מצוה שעושה, ולכן צריך לעשותה בשמחה גדולה, ואז נקרא בן נחמד להקב"ה. ולא יאמר איך אפשר שאני אדם השפל אגרום תענוגים כביכול למעלה, ע"ז נאמר (משלי ט"ז) "ונרגן מפריד אלוף". י"ט

Nefesh HaChaim, Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1:4)

את תורת האדם כל איש ישראל אל יאמר בלבו ח"ו כי מה אני ומה כחי לפעול במעשי השפלים שום ענין בעולם, אמנם יבין וידע ויקבע במחשבות לבו שכל פרטי מעשיו ודבוריו ומחשבותיו כל עת ורגע. לא אתאבידו ח"ו. ומה רבו מעשיו ומאד גדלו ורמו. שכל אחת עולה כפי שרשה לפעול פעולתה בגבהי מרומים בעולמות וצחצחות האורות העליונים.

וקרוב לשמוע שגם זה בכלל כוונתם ז"ל באבות (פ"ב מ"א) "דע מה למעלה ממך". רוצה לומר עם כי אינך רואה בעיניך הענינים הנוראים הנעשים ממעשיך, אבל תדע נאמנה כי כל מה שנעשה למעלה בעולמות העליונים גבוהי גבוהים, הכל ממך הוא על פי מעשיך לאן נוטים, על פיהם יצאו ויבואו:

As the well-intentioned plumber of Tosh said, *Oib ess iz heis inten, s'iz heiss oiben*, "If it's hot downstairs, it will be hot upstairs." May we believe in Hashem's fiery love for us 'above', and in our ability to fix and restart ourselves here 'below'.

- 🗨️ How much do we really believe that Hashem is hearing our words and forgiving us?
- 🗨️ How much significance and importance do we subscribe to our prayers, apology and supplications before Hashem?
- 🗨️ Are we actually willing to be forgiven and to start our lives anew?
- 🗨️ What action points in our personal or religious lives will we be taking to 'start again'?

Kapparat: The Good, the Bad and the Meaningful

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A guided mekor sheet exploring the history and desirability of kapparat (flailing chickens around one's head as an atonement) this time of year. Learn alone, with the family, or with a friend.

Background**1. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16th century Cracow), Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 605:1**

The practice is to take a rooster for a male, and a hen for a female. For a pregnant woman they take two birds, as it may be a male. They choose white birds, as in Isaiah 1:18, "If your sins are like red wool, they will become white like snow." The practice is to give the kapparat to the needy, or to redeem them with money which is given to the needy. In some places they [also] go to graves and increase tzedakah, all of which is a good practice. The slaughter of the kapparat should be immediately after it is passed over him. And he leans his hands on it, like a korban. And they throw the innards on the rooves or in the yard, where the birds can take them.

וְנוֹהֵגִין לִיקַח תְּרִנְגוּל זָכָר לְזָכָר, וְלַנְּקֵבָה לְקֹחֵחִין תְּרִנְגוּלוֹת (ב"י בַּשֵּׁם תִּשְׁב"ץ), וְלֹקְחִין לְמַעֲוֵבֶרֶת ב' תְּרִנְגוּלִים אוֹלֵי תֵלֶד זָכָר; וּבֹחֲרִין בְּתְרִנְגוּלִים לְבָנִים, עַל דְּרָךְ שְׁנֵאמַר: אִם יִהְיוּ חֲטָאִיכֶם כְּשֵׁנִים כְּשֵׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ (יִשְׁעִיָּה א, יח) וְנִהְיֶה לִיתֵן הַכַּפָּרוֹת לְעֵנִיִּים, אוֹ לְפִדּוֹתֵן בַּמָּוֶן שְׁנוֹתָנִים לְעֵנִיִּים (מֵהַר"ל). וְיֵשׁ מְקוֹמוֹת שְׁנוֹהֵגִין לִילֵךְ עַל הַקְּבֵרוֹת וְלִהְרַבּוֹת בְּצַדִּיקָה, וְהַכֹּל מִנֶּהֱגָה יָפָה. וְיֵשׁ לְהַסְמִיךְ שְׁחִיטַת הַכַּפָּרוֹת מִיָּד לְאַחַר הַשְּׁחִיטָה עָלָיו. וְסָמַךְ יָדָיו עָלָיו, דְּמוֹת הַקֹּרְבָּן; וְזוֹרְקִין בְּנֵי מַעֲיָהֶם עַל הַגְּגוֹת אוֹ בַחֲצַר, מְקוֹם שֶׁהַעוֹפּוֹת יְכוּלִין לְקַחַת מִשָּׁם (טוֹר).

2. A shiur on Kapparat

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/932606/>

The Good

- Where in the following two sources might we see a precedent for Kapparat?
- If these two sources are a basis for Kapparat, what is the goal of Kapparat? Could using money suffice?

3. Bereishit 22:13

And Avraham raised his eyes, and he saw – behold, behind him, a ram, held in the thicket by its horns. And Avraham went and he took the ram, and he brought it up as a burnt offering, in place of his son.

וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחַר נֶאֱחָז בְּסִבְבֵּךְ בְּקִרְנָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹלָה תַחַת בְּנוֹ:

4. Vayikra 16:10, 22

And the goat on which the lot falls for azazel will stand, alive, before Gd, to atone upon it, to send it to azazel in the wilderness... And the goat shall bear all of their sins to a harsh land. And he will send the goat into the wilderness.

וְהַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעֹזָאֵזֶל יַעֲמִדְחִי לְפָנֵי ד' לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעֹזָאֵזֶל הַמִּדְבָּרָה... וְנִשָּׂא הַשְּׁעִיר עָלָיו אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵם אֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשַׁלַּח אֹת־הַשְּׁעִיר בַּמִּדְבָּר:

The Bad

Questions

- How many reasons do you see here for opposing Kapparot?
- Could these concerns be satisfied by using money for Kapparot?

5. Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet (13th century Spain), Responsum 1:395

Observers know that this is not actually a burnt offering or peace offering, just an empty practice altogether.

כל הרואה יודע שאין זה לשם עולה ולשם שלמים דוקא אלא דברי הבאי בעלמא.

6. Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet (13th century Spain), Responsum 1:395

I have found the practice has spread in our city, with other, similar practices. They slaughter an old chicken for kapparot for a newborn, and they hang the head with its feathers over the doorway, with garlic. And many empty practices which appear to me as the paths of the Emori, and I have pushed heavily against this. And with Divine favour, my words were heard, and none of this and the like remains in our city...

אני מצאתי מנהג זה פשוט בעירנו עם שאר דברים שהיו נוהגין כיוצא בזה. שהיו שוחטין תרנגול זקן לכפרה על הנער היולד וחותכים ראשו ותולים הראש בנוצתו בפתח הבית עם שומים. והבלים הרבה שנראו בעיני כדרכי האמורי ודחקתי על זה הרבה. ובחסד עליון נשמעו דברי ולא נשאר מכל זה ומכיוצא באלו בעירנו מאומה...

7. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (20th century Poland), Mishneh Berurah 605:4

The later authorities wrote: If there is no chicken, take a goose or other creature which is not suitable for the altar. Some say even fish.

כתבו האחרונים: אם אין לו תרנגול יקח אווז או שאר ב"ח שאינם ראויים להקרבה למזבח וי"א אפילו דגים:

8. Rabbi Avraham Danziger (18th century Prague, Vilna), Chayei Adam II-III 144:4

In truth, even though several gaonim recorded this practice, still, what is embedded in the heart of the masses is that the entire atonement of Yom Kippur depends on this, almost as though kapparot and eating matzah were equivalent mitzvot, and they think they have no atonement on Yom Kippur other than with a chicken. Through this they come to the sin of neveilah, Gd-forbid, for they push each other in great mobs, and the slaughterers are awake all night, in foul moods, and they do not sense the blade. If they would listen to me, and they don't want to cancel this practice, it would be better for them to wave money around their heads – as is already embedded in the heart of the ignorant that if they cannot acquire a chicken, they should circle money. For in truth it is found in early practices that they circled plants. This would be considered righteousness for them, and they would not stumble in the sin of neveilah, Gd-forbid.

ואמנם אף שכמה גאונים כתבו מנהג זה, מכל מקום מה שנשרש בלב ההמון שכל כפרת יום הכפורים תולה בזה, וכמעט שכפרות ואכילת מצה נחשב להם למצוה אחת וסוברים שאין להם כפרה ביום הכפורים אם לא בתרנגול. ועל ידי זה באים לידי איסור נבלה חס וחלילה, שדוחקין זה את זה בקהלות גדולות והשוחטים ניעורים כל הלילה בפנים זעופים ואינם מרגישים בסכין. ואי לדידי צייתי ואינם רוצים לבטל מנהג זה, טוב יותר היה להם לסבב על ראשיהם במעות, כמו שכבר נשרש בלב עמי הארץ שאם אי אפשר להם להשיג תרנגול, אזי מסבבין במעות, שבאמת כן מצינו במנהג קדמונים שהיו מסבבים בזרעים. ותחשב להם לצדקה, ושלא יהיו נכשלים באיסור נבלה חס וחלילה.

9. Rabbi Chaim David HaLevi (20th century Israel), Aseh Lecha Rav 3:20, explaining an earlier ruling

The Torah permits slaughter to eat meat – and even this is not ideal – but why increase slaughter that is not for food? It is known that the slaughter on Erev Yom Kippur for kapparot per the number of people in the home is great and massive, and they eat from it until Succot... And do we need to do this on the eve of the holy day specifically, to be cruel to creatures entirely unnecessarily, to butcher them mercilessly, at a time when we stand to seek life for ourselves from the living Gd?! There is proof to this from the Responsa of Mahari [Yehudah Yaaleh] 1:164, who said that the practice is not to slaughter on the Yom Tov of Rosh HaShanah...

אף שהתירה לנו התורה את השחיטה לשם אכילת הבשר, וגם זה אינו למהדרין, אבל להרבות בשחיטה ללא צורך אכילה למה לנו? והדבר ידוע שהשחיטה בעיוהכ"פ, לשם כפרות לפי נפשות הבית, היא רבה ועצומה, ואוכלים ממנה עד חג הסוכות... ולמה צריכים אנו דוקא בערב היום הקדוש, להתאכזר על בעלי חיים ללא כל צורך, ולטבוח בהם ללא רחמים, בשעה שאנו עומדים לבקש חיים על עצמנו מאת אלקים חיים. וראיה לזה מדברי שו"ת מהרי"א (ח"א סימן קס"ד), שהמנהג הוא שלא לשחוט ביום טוב של ראש השנה...

The Meaningful

Questions

- How many reasons do you see here to support Kapparot? How do they add to Sources 3 and 4 above?
- Could these goals be satisfied by using money for Kapparot?

10. Rabbi Jacob Weil (15th century Germany), Responsum 191 - Inspiration

He should contemplate that he is liable for death, like this creature. And this is the logic of sacrifices.

ויחשוב בלבו שהוא חייב מיתה כמו זה. והיינו טעם הקרבנות.

11. Rabbi Yosef Chaim (19th century Baghdad), Torah Lishmah 155 - Payment

[The word kapparot] is not like kapparah of a korban. Rather, here they call it kapparot like kofer nefesh [ransom]...

אין משמעות זה כמו כפרת הקרבן אלא כאן קורים אותם כפרות לשון כופר נפש...

12. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (16th century Cracow), Torat haOlah 2:1, citing Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra – Mystical deflection with Divine compliance

A korban is a substitute for a person's spirit, and through this he will be saved from the decree issued upon him from the heavens, for the word of the heavens will not be swayed if a bad decree has been issued for him. Only, Hashem creates reasons to fulfill the decree upon another target, to save this one. This is a person's ransom...

הקרבן הוא תמורת נפשו וע"י זה ינצל מן הגזירה שגזרו עליו מן השמים, כי דבר המערכה לא יסור אם נגזר עליו דבר רע, רק ד' יתברך מחדש סבות לקיי' הגזירה באחר כדי להציל את זה, והיא כופר נפשו של אדם...

Teshuva M'Ahava: Learning to Love Our Imperfect Selves – A Study Guide

For many of us, *Teshuva* seems like a daunting task. Rav Kook, zt'l emphasized that this feeling of Teshuva being too difficult to grasp, or being beyond our capabilities actually leads to further struggles, challenges and failings, as reflected in this short powerful teaching from Orot HaTeshuva

1. Orot HaTeshuva 10:4

עקר הנפילות באות מפני שאינו מאמין בקהלותה של תשובה

If only we believed in the ease with which we can do Teshuva! Let's explore a few important teachings which might offer us a totally different orientation to understanding what *Teshuva* is really all about:

2. Talmud Bavli, Yoma 86b

Reish Lakish said: Great is repentance, as the penitent's intentional sins are counted for him as unwitting transgressions, as it is stated: "Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity" (Hosea 14:2). The Gemara analyzes this: **Doesn't "iniquity" mean an intentional sin? Yet the prophet calls it stumbling,** implying that one who repents is considered as though he only stumbled accidentally in his transgression. The Gemara asks: **Is that so? Didn't Reish Lakish himself say: Great is repentance, as one's intentional sins are counted for him as merits, as it is stated: "And when the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby" (Ezekiel 33:19),** and all his deeds, even his transgressions, will become praiseworthy? The Gemara reconciles: This is **not difficult: Here,** when one repents **out of love,** his sins become like merits; **there,** when one repents **out of fear,** his sins are counted as unwitting transgressions.

אמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות שנאמר שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך כי כשלת בעונך הא עון מזיד הוא וקא קרי ליה מכשול איני והאמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכויות שנאמר ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם (חיה) יחיה לא קשיא כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה

🗨️ What is Reish Lakish teaching us here?

🗨️ How does Teshuva through love come to transform our intentional wrongs to merits?

3. Sefer Netivot Shalom

להיות ברותחין, שכבולעו כך פולטו, וזה גדר תשובה נמורה כשהוא באותו הכח וכו'. אמנם גם אם טיהר נפשו מכאן ולהבא, לא תיקן את חילול השם הנעשה ע"י העבירה אבל העושה תשובה מאהבה, וכמו שמפרש רבינו שהכונה בדרגה העילאית ביותר שיש במדת האהבה, שהוא חולה חולי אהבה להקב"ה, ע"י התשובה הוא מתקדש שם שמים, שאוהב להקב"ה אהבה גדולה ועזה, ועוזב כל מה שבעולם חוץ מאהבת הבורא, ובוה מתקן את חילול שם שמים שהי' ע"י עשיית העבירה. ע"י תשובתו באהבה בוערת להבורא ית', כה"ג דוקא נעקר החטא למפרע, ומכל חטא שעשה נוסף קידוש השם מחדש, שכל מה שהי' מקודם יותר רשע ועשה יותר עבירות, גדול יותר קידוש השם במה שאוהב להקב"ה אהבה עזה, וע"כ זדונות נתהפכו לו כזכיות. ועד"ו גם העושה תשובה בזקנותו יש לו דרך, היינו ע"י שיעשה תשובה מאהבה בבחי' חולה אהבה, שמתקן את החטא בשרשו, ובמקום חילול השם בא קידוש השם, וזו תשובה שלמה.

והנראה בזה, שכאשר האדם חוטא יש כאן ב' עניני פגם, האחד שמשחית ומטמא דמו ואבריו ברתחת דמו לעבירה, ועוד שחילל שם שמים ע"י העבירה. והדרך לתקן את הפגם שהשחית דמו ואבריו היא ע"ד שכי' בעבודת ישראל (עניני פסח) בפי דברי תו"ל כל שתשמישו בצונן רוחצו בצונן וכל שתשמישו ברותחין מגעילו ברותחין. שיש עבירות שאדם עוברם בלי רתחת הדם, ולא נתקלקל דמו, ואין התשובה ע"ז צריכה רתחת הדם דקדושה ורי לו בחרטה ובקבלה להבא, אבל אם העבירה היתה ברותחין ברתחת הדם לעבירה גם התיקון צריך

With every misdeed there are two areas of damage which occur-the impact on the individual and the aspect of Chilul HaShem which is introduced through that misdeed. The Rebbe quotes the Magid of Koshnitz as to how one must approach correcting or rectifying those mistakes. The Koshnitzer points to the halachic term (familiar to the Laws of Kashrut)- K'bolo kach palto-as the impurity enters, it must be purged- i.e., if a vessel became in contact with something not kosher that is cold, that impurity may be simply rinsed away, but if that **not** kosher item was boiling hot, then it requires equal heat to purge the impurity from the vessel. So too for Teshuva, explains the Koshnitzer.

When one does Teshuva M'Ahava, with sincere passion and love, it not only serves to repair the damage to the individual, but the transformation of that individual, as he becomes an example of how the Love of HaShem can be a mechanism to turn one's life around for the better, creates Kiddush HaShem-a sanctification of the Divine Name, in place of the chilul HaShem which was created by their previous behavior and conduct, transforming those intentional wrongs to the greatest of merits!

4. Sefer Shuvi Nafshi, HaRav Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (Shag"ar)

בניגוד למקובל קובע ר' צדוק:

עיקר התשובה הוא עד שיאיר ה' עיניו, שיהיו זרונות כזכויות,
רוצה לומר שיכיר ויבין שכל מה שחטא היה גם כן ברצון ה'
יתברך.³ (א)

התשובה, היינו שמשיב אותו דבר אל ה' יתברך, רוצה לומר
שמכיר שהכל פועל ה' יתברך וכוחו, אפילו המחשבה טרם
נוצרה בליבו של אדם... נמצא ה' יתברך נותן לו כוח או גם
בהעבירה, ועל ידי זה, אחר התשובה הגמורה הוא זוכה שזרונות
נעשין זכויות, כי גם זה היה רצון ה' יתברך כך.⁴ (ב)

משמעות העניין היא, שהתשובה הגבוהה - תשובה מאהבה, איננה הכרה
באחריות לחטא וחזרה ממנו,⁵ אלא דוקא התנערות ממנה, פרי התובנה

שכל מה שחטא היה גם כן ברצון ה' יתברך. בלשון אחרת: התשובה
הינה קבלת עצמך גם כחוטא, מתוך הארה שלא אני עשיתי את עצמי
אלא ה' יתברך. הדרך שבה מתגבר החוטא על הקונפליקט שבינו לבין
חיינו ועל חוסר שביעות הרצון שלו מעצמו, הינה דווקא בקבלת עצמו
כפי שהוא.

Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg-Rav Shagar (explaining two teachings from Tzidkat HaTzadik 40, and 100)- introduces us to Rav Tzadok HaKohein of Lublin's incredible understanding of Teshuva M'Ahava-

A person must take a step back and realize, that even their mistakes were part of the Divine plan and calculation! That for whatever reason, Hashem wanted us and even enabled us to make those bad choices, to take those missteps, in order for us to grow, learn and improve ourselves. In other words, Teshuva M'Ahava is the capacity to accept and love ourselves, despite our flaws and imperfections!

5. Orot HaTeshuva, Ch. 16

כל זמן שלא שב האדם מחטאו, לא סדר לו את ארחות תשובתו, הרי הוא
מנח תחת הסבל של בחירתו והאשמה של כל מעשיו, וכל תוצאותיהם
הרעות מטלות עליו. אמנם אחרי הארת התשובה מיד נמסרים למפרע
כל המגרעות שבחיינו, וכל המעשים, שלגבי ערפו של האדם אינם טובים,
ותוצאותיהם הן מרות לו, לרשות הגבה, וכלם נערכים מחוץ ליסוד חפשו
ובחירתו, ומצטרפים הם לרשות ההנהגה העליונה, רשות הגבה.

Rav Kook zt'l echoes this idea in the 16th Chapter of Orot HaTeshuva: The highest form of Teshuva is the ability to let go of guilt for the choices and actions which from our human perception seem to be bad, and return those choices and actions to the Divine calculation- to let go of the guilt that might be weighing on us, and enable us to move forward!

6. Sefer HaLekach V'HaLivuv, Rabbi Avraham Schorr

בספה"ק זרע קודש (פי' לך) מבאר, כי האדם
 חושב כי ברוב חטאותיו קשה לו
 לעשות תשובה, והיזר בא לאדם שא"א לו
 לשוב וממילא טפל לתוך יאוש ועצבות, אבל
 הלא תשובה הוא חסד ה', ואם אדם חושב
 כי חטאותיו הם גדולים מדי וא"א לו לשוב
 עליהם, הרי בזה הוא נותן גבול וקץ לרחמנותו
 של הקב"ה, והרי הקב"ה הוא בלי סוף
 ומכלית, ואין קץ לגודל רחמנותו, וממילא
 שערי תשובה פתוחים לעולם, ולכל אדם ובכל
 מצב שיהי נמצא האדם. והעיקר הוא שיבין
 האדם כי התשובה הוא ענין של מתנה הבא
 מגודל רחמנות הבורא ית', וממילא שיך
 תשובה על כל דבר ואין מקום ליאוש כלל.

The great Rebbe Naftali Tzvi of Ropschitz zt'l-taught a person might think that his many mistakes will make it too difficult for him to change and do Teshuva, their *Yetzer hara* might even convince them that it is impossible to change, and they might fall into despair or depression. But don't we realize and believe that Teshuva is a gift-an actualization of Hashem's unending compassion for us? If we think it is impossible to change, we are not only selling ourselves short, chas vshalom, but also suggesting that there is a limit to Hashem's unwavering compassion for every member of Klal Yisrael.

7. Sefer Ach Pri Tevuah, HaRav Tzvi Hirsh of Lisk

זאת אומרת, כי זה דרך הישר לפני כל איש, לידע ולהאמין כי תמיד
 בכל עת ובכל מצב יכול בודאי לשוב בתשובה לפני השי"ת, ותשובתו
 תקובל לפני הבורא ב"ה, להעלותו מבירא עמיקתא לאיגרא רמה, ורק כאשר
 האדם אינו מאמין בזה חלילה, ומדמה בנפשו כי אבדה תקוותו, אזי גדול
 עונו מנשוא ולא יאבה ה' סלוח לו.

The Liska Rebbe zy'a builds on this incredible idea introduced by the Rophitzer, a person should realize that one can always do teshuva, and his transformation and change will always be accepted by the Ribono shel Olam! When a person doesn't truly believe that they can indeed change, then they create a circumstance where they remain distant (at least in their own eyes) from Hashem- and they begin to perceive that all hope is lost.

8. Tzidkat HaTzaddik, Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, 154

כשם שצריך אדם להאמין בהש"י כך צריך אח"כ להאמין בעצמו

When a person truly believes in Hashem, then a necessary outcome of that faith and trust in HaKodosh Baruch Hu, is the capacity to believe in oneself! Hashem endows each of us with incredible kochot and strength, may we be blessed to look inward and begin to grasp and perceive those kochot and continue to grow and improve ourselves and the entire world.

🗨️ How does our belief in God manifest in our belief of ourselves?

🗨️ How are Teshuva of fear and Teshuva of love different from one another?