

# Young Israel Shomrai Emunah - Shofar Shorts <sup>ת"ש</sup>

September 3-4, 2021 - 27 Elul 5781 - Nitzavim - Light Candles by 7:17 - Havdalah 8:14  
September 6-8, 2021 - 1-2 Tishrei 5782 - Rosh Hashanah - Light Candles by 7:12 - Havdalah 8:08

The Shabbos Shorts is sponsored this week by Simi Franco in gratitude to Sylvia Dorfman & Esther Edeson for their help assembling the Kiddushes in a Bag, and by Goldie and her mom, Sheila Manevitz, with deep gratitude, in honor of Dr. Marc Katz for always being there!

## Mazal Tov

- **Esther & David Hornestay** on the birth of a great-granddaughter, Noa, to Shira & Barak Klammer of Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel, and also to the grandparents, Shari & Rabbi Stuart Klammer of Ramat Beit Shemesh.
- **Lois & Sid Meyers** on the engagement of their grandson, Eliyahu (Eli) Meyers, son of Hadassa & Dr. Oren Meyers of Cleveland, to Yehudis Dick, daughter of Esther & Simcha Dick of Toronto.
- **Eva & Nissy Moskowitz** on the engagement of their granddaughter, Leora, daughter of Gabi & Aryeh Moskowitz of Teaneck, NJ to Stephen, son of Leslie & Barry Yoffie of St. Louis.
- **Gloria & Arnie Sherman** and Sharon & Aaron Weinberg on the birth of a granddaughter, Aviva Maayan, to their children, Dahlia & Yoni Weinberg of Sharon, MA, and Mazal Tov to the big sisters, Yardena, Merav, and Ayelet, and to all the aunts, uncles and cousins
- **Rabbi Sanford H. Shudnow** on the selection of 3 of his original artworks in the Montgomery Art Association 2021 Paint The Town Art Show, Labor Day Weekend at the Kensington, MD Town Hall/Armory.

## Shabbos Schedule

Minyan locations are listed as B = Belonofsky Sanctuary, S = Social Hall. All Sephardi Minyanim take place in the Beit Medrash.

### Friday Night:

- Light Candles by 7:17, and not before 6:14
- Mincha: 6:20 (B), 7:20 (B), 7:15 (Sephardi)

### Shabbos Day:

- Shacharis: 7:00 (B), 8:45 (B), 9:15 (S), 8:00 (Sephardi)
- Mincha: 2:30 (B), 5:00 (B), 7:15 (B), 7:10 (Sephardi)
- Shabbos ends/Maariv: 8:14

### Divrei Torah:

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| • 8:45 Main Minyan   | Rabbi Rosenbaum        |
| • 9:15               | Rabbi Postelnek        |
| • Shiur after Mincha | Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold |

## YISE Youth Announcements

**Shabbos Groups** will take place this week from 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM, indoors. Masks required indoors for age 3+. Age 18-35 months will be located in the toddler room off the Lower Lobby. Ages 3-5 years will meet in the room behind the balcony. Ages 6-9 years will meet at Shomrai and walk over to the Yeshiva. For more information, contact Michal Merkin, YISE Youth groups coordinator, at [mmerkin@yise.org](mailto:mmerkin@yise.org) See flyer for details.

**Popsicles in the Park** - Shabbos afternoon, September 4, 4:00 PM in Kemp Mill Park. See flyer for details.

## Weekday Shiurim

Options for remote learning are listed below. For the latest list and times, go to: <https://wp.yise.org/remoted-learning-schedule/>

- **Rabbi Rosenbaum** - Daily - one chapter of Tehillim followed by a 15-minute Shiur on the Parsha. Monday through Friday 9:30 AM, **Zoom A**, will resume Thursday, September 9.
  - **Rabbi Rosenbaum** - Daily - one chapter of Tehillim, followed by a 15-minute Halacha Shiur. Sunday through Thursday 7:30 PM, **Zoom A**. Note new time. This Shiur will resume Sunday, September 19.
  - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Mussar Study Group for Women (spiritual self-improvement), Sundays at 9:30 AM, **Zoom A**.
  - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Gemara Shiur for Men, Tuesdays and Fridays, 6:00 AM, **Zoom A**, will resume Friday, September 17.
  - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Nach Shiur, Wednesdays at 11:00 AM, now learning Mishlei, **Zoom A**, will resume October 6.
  - **Rabbi Rosenbaum's** Women's Navi Shiur, now learning Sefer Shmuel, Wednesdays at 8:00 PM, **Zoom A**, will resume October 6.
  - **GWCK Sunday Kollel Brunch and Learn for Men** - Sunday mornings, 9:30 AM, **Zoom F**.
    - Rabbi Hillel Shaps - Unraveling the Navi: Melachim Aleph
  - **Rabbi Tuvia Grauman** - Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur, Sundays at 10:00 AM, **Zoom C**.
  - **GWCK presents CLAS (Community Learning at Shomrai)** - 8:15 PM - 9:15 PM. For more info. contact Rabbi Hillel Shaps, [hshaps@gwckollel.org](mailto:hshaps@gwckollel.org) 347-869-9361.
    - For Men:
      - Mondays: Rabbi Hillel Shaps - On the Same Page Gemara - in person (Social Hall) and on **Zoom F**, will resume September 13.
      - Wednesdays: Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman - Reading Responsa - **Zoom D**, will resume October 6.
      - Thursdays: Rabbi Avraham Sussman - Yesodei Hatorah Gemara Skills Building - **Zoom H**, will resume October 7.
      - Thursdays: Rabbi Grossman - Parshas Hashavua, 8:30 PM, **Zoom D**, will resume after Sukkos.
    - For Women:
      - Mondays: Mrs. Sara Malka Winter - Parsha Journeys, will resume after Sukkos.
  - **Semichat Chaver Program**, Tuesdays at 8:45 PM with Rabbi Hillel Shaps, now taking place in person in the Social Hall. For more information, please contact Rabbi Hillel Shaps: [hshaps@gwckollel.org](mailto:hshaps@gwckollel.org) Registration required at [gwckollel.org/scp](http://gwckollel.org/scp) will resume September 14.
  - **The Golden Network Presents: Rabbi Barry Greengart's** Shiurim for men & women, Monday - Parasha, Tuesday - Halachos, 8:45 AM, **Zoom B**. Shiurim will resume Monday, September 13.
  - **Rabbi Yitzchak Scher's** Shiur for Men and Women, Tuesdays, 1:30 PM, learning concepts of Elul and Yamim Noraim, **Zoom E**, will resume on September 14. "A Second Look - Stories in the Torah from a Deeper Perspective", will resume October 5.
  - **Rabbi Moshe Arzouan's** Advanced Gemara Shiur for Men, learning Maseches Bava Kama 7<sup>th</sup> perek Merubah. Wednesday evenings, **Zoom G**, will resume after Sukkos, time to be announced.
- Connection Details:** Go to <https://zoom.us/join/> and enter the meeting ID, or call 301-715-8592 and enter the meeting ID & password:  
Zoom A: ID: 416 963 9000, password 492019  
Zoom B: ID: 970 1398 4837, password 613  
Zoom C: ID: 978 8156 7874, password RabbiHyatt  
Zoom D: ID: 746 455 2195, password Learn  
Zoom E: ID: 713 7408 5130, password 045079  
Zoom F: ID: 349 754 2180, password Learn  
Zoom G: ID: 539 496 3506, password ygarwz  
Zoom H: ID: 803 356 4156, password Learn

## Rosh Hashanah Schedule

Minyan locations are listed as B = Belonofsky Sanctuary, S = Social Hall. All Sephardi Minyanim take place in the Beit Medrash.

### Monday September 6

- Light Candles 7:12 PM
- Mincha (Sephardi) 7:10 PM
- Mincha (B, S) 7:15 PM

### Tuesday September 7

- Shacharis (B, S) 7:30 AM
- Sephardi 7:45 AM
- Shofar - Ashkenazi 10:00 AM
- Mincha (B, S), followed by Tashlich 6:30 PM
- Mincha (Sephardi), followed by Tashlich and Maariv 6:40 PM
- Maariv (B, S) 8:00 PM
- Light Candles/Kiddush after 8:10 PM

### Wednesday September 8

- Shacharis (B, S) 7:30 AM
  - Sephardi 7:45 AM
  - Shofar - Ashkenazi 10:00 AM
  - Mincha (B, S, Sephardi) 7:05 PM
  - Maariv/Yom Tov ends 8:08 PM
- Shofar will be blown again on Tuesday & Wednesday in the Belonofsky Sanctuary at 4:45 PM.*

### Rosh Hashanah Drasha Sponsors

- Belonofsky Sanctuary sponsored by Simi & Sammy Franco in gratitude to Rafi Katz and Judah Lifschitz for their inspiring and beautiful Shacharis and Musaf Davening.
- Social Hall sponsored anonymously as a Zechus for a Refuah Sheleimah for Ephraim Avraham ben Rachel.

### Tzom Gedaliah - Thursday, September 9

- Fast Begins 5:23 AM
- Early Mincha (B) 1:45 PM
- Mincha (B, Sephardi) 6:50 PM
- Maariv (B) 7:40 PM

## ראש השנה תשפ"ב

### Kemp Mill Outdoor Shofar Blowing 5782

The shofar will be sounded at the following outdoor locations of each day of Rosh Hashanah, Tuesday, September 7 and Wednesday, September 8:

Location	Time(s)
Chabad of Silver Spring, 519 Lambertson Drive	1:00, 2:00, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00
Kemp Mill Synagogue, 11910 Kemp Mill Road	6:30
Yeshiva of Greater Washington, 1216 Arcola Avenue	4:00
Cosgrave Court	5:00
Spring Mill MCPS Building, corner of Kemp Mill Road and Fulham Street	5:30
North Belgrade Court	4:45
University Towers (grass field by pool, Warwick side)	5:00

- As endorsed by area Rabbis, 30 shofar blasts will be sounded.
- We will blow shofar in light rain but will cancel in case of dangerous weather (lightning, strong winds). Note that shofar blowing at the KMS and Chabad locations will be under cover.
- As these sessions could result in a number of people congregating in a relatively small area, mask wearing is encouraged.

We also are offering shofar blowing for those unable to leave their homes. We will not enter homes but will blow shofar from a front or back lawn. If you or someone you know needs this service, please contact Aron Trombka at [atrombka@gmail.com](mailto:atrombka@gmail.com) or 301-385-9348 by September 5.



## COVID-19 Updates

- Masks are required for ALL people in the YISE Arcola building, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, with the exception of children under the age of 3.
- There are no social distancing requirements in the YISE building. There are no in-person Kiddushes at this time.
- The Shul office is still open, but hours may vary.

Let us Daven to Hashem to keep all of us in good health and to return our lives to normal as soon as possible. In protecting each other as we navigate this unfolding situation, may we grow stronger as individuals and as a community.

## YISE Programs and Listings

**Welcome new members voted in last week at the latest board meeting:** Seth Cohen, Michelle & Yoni Goldstein, Elazar Ginsburg & Dr. Devora Moore, Baila & Adir Haim, Benjamin Kreitman, Maurissa & Chananyah Pinsky, Dr. Patricia & Dr. Eric Towler.

**The Annual Teshuva Drasha** - Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Monday, September 13, 8:30 PM. *See flyer for details.*

**The Yizkor Guide** will be available in Shul. If anyone would like a copy to use at home, please contact Simi at [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org)

**Understanding the 13 Attributes of Mercy** - A 3-part series with Rabbi Postelnek, Videos available online at:

<https://wp.yise.org/understanding-the-13-attributes-of-mercy>

**Order Lulavim and Esrogim from YISE** - Pickup will be on Sunday, September 19, 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM. Due to COVID-19 concerns, individual selection of Esrogim will not be possible. If you have questions about your order or if you are unable to pick up at the designated time, please contact [lulav@yise.org](mailto:lulav@yise.org) or call Josh Breitstein at 301-346-7838 as soon as possible to make arrangements.

**Ask the Rabbi** - Come join our virtual, interactive monthly program featuring Halachos of Shabbos and holidays! This month's topic: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos. Video available at <https://wp.yise.org/ask-the-rabbi>

**Kiddush in a Bag!** While we are not yet back to regular in-Shul Kiddushes, we are happy to now offer Kiddush in a Bag for the 8:45 and 9:15 Minyanim. To sponsor the Kiddush in a Bag, contact Simi Franco at [simi@yise.org](mailto:simi@yise.org)

**Rabbi Koss's Jewish History Class** will not take place in September. It will resume again in October. Shana Tova!

**Helping Hands Across Kemp Mill** is a part of YISE's Chesed Committee. The program helps members undergoing serious medical crises. We are always looking for volunteers to help. To be a part of this program by helping with meals, visitation, shopping, childcare, etc., contact: Melanie Karlin, 301-681-4740, [mkarlin@gmail.com](mailto:mkarlin@gmail.com) or Miriam Friedman, 301-754-1517, [mfriedman2@yahoo.com](mailto:mfriedman2@yahoo.com)

**The Rachel Bassan Horwitz Fund** is used for medical needs in our area, elsewhere in the US, and in Israel. In order to continue this much-needed medical fund, your financial help is needed! Tax-deductible contributions may be made payable to: YISE Charity SPECIAL Fund, c/o Norma Burdett, 11720 Lovejoy St., Silver Spring, MD 20902. Earmark: Bassan Fund. For more info: Norma Burdett, 301-593-5964 or Pearl Bassan, 301-649-3137.

**Shiurim from Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, ZT"L**, are available at <http://audio.yise.org>

## Happy Birthday! Happy Anniversary!

Looking for a way to celebrate someone's upcoming birthday or anniversary? For an \$18 donation, you can include the name (birthday) or names (anniversary) in this section of the Shabbos Shorts. Please send the following information to [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org): Sponsor name, birthday or anniversary date, name (birthday) or names (anniversary). The birthday or anniversary will be listed in the Shabbos Shorts based on the date of the event.

## Dvar Torah Dedications/Sponsor a Shiur

During this difficult time, we pray to Hashem that the day that we can all come together again in Tefillah and Torah study in good health arrives speedily. Until that point, YISE continues to offer a number of different remote learning options. These options are now available for sponsorship on an individual Shiur or a daily basis.

Sponsoring a Shiur or other Torah learning is a meaningful way to commemorate a Yahrzeit or honor a loved one. Sponsorships are also a great way to celebrate a Simcha or any other milestone, while helping YISE at a time when many of the Shul's other sources of revenue are not available.

1. The following individual Shiurim are available for sponsorship at \$18 (per day):

- Daily Morning (Monday through Friday) Tehillim and Parsha Shiur
- Daily Evening (Sunday through Thursday) Tehillim and Halacha Shiur
- Rabbi Rosenbaum's Sunday Morning Mussar Study Group for Women
- Rabbi Rosenbaum's Tuesday or Friday Morning Gemara Shiur for Men
- Rabbi Rosenbaum's Wednesday Morning Nach Shiur
- Rabbi Rosenbaum's Wednesday Night Navi Shiur for Women
- Rabbi Grauman - Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur, Sunday Morning

2. Sponsorship of the Morning and Evening Tehillim and Parsha/Halacha Shiurim together is available for \$25.

3. The 8:45 and 9:15 Shabbos Drashas are both available for sponsorship at \$54 each.

Please email [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org) to sponsor. Thank you for your support.

## Thank you to this past week's Shiurim sponsors:

### Rabbi Hyatt's Gemara Shiur

- **Yale Ginsburg** in memory of Rebbetzin Myrna Klavan, Z"L.
- **David Jaray** in honor of a Refuah Sheleimah to Rabbi Hyatt and in honor of Rabbi Grauman and all those who attend his Shiur.

### Rabbi Rosenbaum's Tehillim/Parsha/Halacha Shiur

- **Judy & David Marwick** in memory of Avi West, Z"L, on the occasion of his Shloshim.

### Rabbi Rosenbaum's Shabbos Drasha

- **Judy Morris** in honor of her husband Louis's birthday.

## Community Programs & Listings

**Condolences to Audrey Haar Siesser** on the passing of her mother, Ethel Haar. The funeral took place on Thursday. Audrey may be reached during Shiva at 443-257-8878 or [haar@mail.com](mailto:haar@mail.com)

**Tefilah Mehalev** - Those who would like to get into the High Holiday spirit are encouraged to listen to the beautiful tracks kindly recorded last year by Judd Lifschitz on his Tefilah Mehalev website [www.yomtovnusach.com](http://www.yomtovnusach.com)

**Pre-Rosh Hashana Virtual Symposium** - The Greater Washington Community Kollel invites men and women for an evening of inspiration, Sunday, September 5, 8:15 PM on **Zoom F**, featuring words of insight and inspiration from some of the Rabbis of our community, Rabbi Meir Bulman, Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum, Rabbi Yosef Singer, Rabbi Moshe Walter, & Rabbi Menachem Winter.

**The Mikvah Emunah Society of Greater Washington (MES)** is pleased to offer use of the Wallerstein Mikvah in Kemp Mill to men on Erev Rosh Hashanah and Erev Yom Kippur. One of several major changes from previous years is that there will be no showering at the Mikvah. It's important to check our website in advance for all the new rules and information: <https://mikvahemunah.com/men/> Thanks to all those who volunteered.

**The Golden Network** - Pre-Rosh Hashanah Class: The Trick of Teshuva - Rabbi Chaim Goldstein. Sunday, September 5, 10:15 AM - 10:45 AM. Pre-Yom Kippur Class: The Key to a Meaningful Yom Kippur Mussaf - Mr. Alan Sussman. Sunday, September 12, 10:00 AM.

All classes on **Zoom B**. For more information please call 301-732-1773, [director@goldennetwork.org](mailto:director@goldennetwork.org)

**Kemp Mill Toastmasters** - Monday, September 13, 8:00 PM - 9:15 PM. See what Toastmasters is all about and find out how you can become a more confident communicator. Contact Manasseh Katz at [secretary@kempmilltoastmasters.com](mailto:secretary@kempmilltoastmasters.com) for more info. Zoom meeting ID: 986 546 841, password: 3671

**Capital Kosher Pantry Pre-Yom Tov Collection** - Help us bring Simchas Yom Tov to our friends and neighbors! Please donate:

- Hygiene items; hand soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, floss, deodorant
- Yom Tov items: grape juice, honey, Shabbos candles, Havdalah candles, Yahrzeit candles

Drop-off locations: 1212 North Belgrade Road and Yad Yehuda, 1910 University Blvd. West. Financial donations at [yadyehuda.org/donate](http://yadyehuda.org/donate)

**Yad Yehuda Yomim Noraim Appeal** - Between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot, Yad Yehuda plans, B'ezrat Hashem, to distribute over \$85,000 to provide Shabbos and Yom Tov meals and Lulav and Etrog sets as needed to households across our community who are struggling financially.

These Yom Tov expenses are above and beyond the ongoing financial assistance we provide our recipient households every single month. Please help us bring Simchat Yom Tov to your fellow community members by donating generously at [yadyehuda.org](http://yadyehuda.org)

**Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur/Franco Foundation Appeal** - More of our community, hurt by COVID-19, rely on the Foundation to cover basic needs, such as rent, mortgage and utilities. Your entire donations go to support this safety net. Please send today to: The Franco Foundation, c/o Allan Franco, 613 Bromley Street, Silver Spring, MD 20902, or through Paypal, at [thefrancofoundation@gmail.com](mailto:thefrancofoundation@gmail.com) Tax ID: 52-2172267

**Lulav and Etrog sets** - The Franco Foundation will be offering to our local community Lulav and Etrog sets to those who are struggling financially. Please contact Allan Franco at [thefrancofoundation@gmail.com](mailto:thefrancofoundation@gmail.com) Your information will remain confidential.

**Help our Senior Neighbors** - What if you had to give up your car keys and depend on someone else to get you where you needed to go? This is happening to more and more of our senior neighbors. Consider volunteering with the Senior Connection to drive seniors to medical appointments, shopping, etc. Training and liability coverage are provided, and you can set your own volunteering schedule. COVID-19 precautions are followed for the health of drivers and riders. Contact [volunteer@seniorconnectionmc.org](mailto:volunteer@seniorconnectionmc.org), call 301-962-0820 or visit [www.seniorconnectionmc.org](http://www.seniorconnectionmc.org) for more information.

**Newly married? Growing family? Just need a budget check-up?** Izun is a community resource that provides free and confidential coaching to help you examine your budget and achieve financial stability. Email us at [barbara@getizun.org](mailto:barbara@getizun.org)

**Remote Night Shiurim from YGW** - Sunday 8:30 PM - 9:15 PM, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Blate; Monday/Wednesday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky; Tuesday/Thursday 9:00 PM - 9:30 PM, Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold. Register at [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN\\_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/1715843153121/WN_n6jNGqUpTpCN6ikCabUutA)

**Daf Yomi Shiur** currently meets online via a WebEx video conference. There is still room for a few more participants. Anyone interested may email Judd Lifschitz at [lifschitz@slslaw.com](mailto:lifschitz@slslaw.com) to be added to the invite list. Sunday 8:30 AM, Monday - Thursday 9:00 PM.

**Daily Halacha Program from Rabbi Eliyahu Reingold** - Receive one every day in your inbox. Visit [dvarhalacha.com](http://dvarhalacha.com) and click "Sign Up."

**Kemp Mill Village** is merging into the larger, well-established Silver Spring Village (SSV) as of September 1. All current members will have several additional months to try out the many services offered by Silver Spring Village. Non-members will also be able to experience a trial period to decide if they want to join. To learn more about SSV's varied offerings, visit <https://silverspringvillage.org>

**Silver Spring Gemachim** - For a complete list: [www.gemachexchange.com](http://www.gemachexchange.com)

The Week Ahead		Sunday September 5	Monday, Sept. 6 Labor Day	Tuesday, Sept. 7 Rosh Hashanah	Wednesday, Sept. 8 Rosh Hashanah	Thursday, Sept. 9 Tzom Gedaliah	Friday September 3	
Shacharis	Ashkenazi	6:00, 7:00, 8:15	5:30, 7:00, 8:00	<i>See Rosh Hashanah Schedule</i>		5:45, 6:05, 8:15	5:45, 6:15, 8:15	
	Sephardi	7:30	6:30			7:30	7:30	
Mincha / Maariv	Ashkenazi	7:15	<i>See Rosh Hashanah Schedule</i>			1:45, 6:50	See Shabbos schedule	
	Sephardi	6:20 *				6:50		
* Sephardi Selichot 6:20 followed by Mincha at approximately 7:10								
<b>Halachic Times:</b> Latest Alos Hashachar 5:25 AM, Earliest Talis and Tefilin: 5:53 AM, Latest Netz: 6:47 AM, Latest Krias Shema: 9:53 AM, Earliest Mincha: 1:39 PM, Earliest Shkia: 7:22 PM, Latest Tzeis Hacoachavim: 8:13 PM								

**Next Shabbos**  
September 10 - 11, 2021 - 5 Tishrei 5782  
Parshas Vayeilech/Shabbos Shuvah  
Light Candles: 7:06  
Havdalah: 8:03

Next Shabbos Shorts Deadline: Thursday, September 9 at 12 Noon  
Submit items for the Shabbos Shorts to: [announce@yise.org](mailto:announce@yise.org)  
Office Phone: 301-593-4465 Office Fax: 301-593-2330  
Eruv line: 301-593-5561 E-Mail: [office@yise.org](mailto:office@yise.org) Website: [www.yise.org](http://www.yise.org)  
Office Hours: Monday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM; Closed Tuesday/Wednesday;  
Thursday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM; Friday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum Yale Ginsburg - President  
Rabbi Yosef Postelnek - Asst. Rabbi Simi Franco - Office Manager

# A Quick Thought on the Parsha from Rabbi Rosenbaum

Nitzavim 5781:

## Seriously Optimistic

The following is kindly transcribed by a congregant from the video at

<https://wp.yise.org/shabbos>

This week's *Parsha* begins with the words **אתם נצבים היום**, you are all standing before *Hashem*. *Rashi* cites a fascinating *Medrash*. Last week's *Parsha* more or less ended with the **תוכחה**, with strong words of rebuke by *Moshe* for the Jewish people. *Medrash* says that after those strong words by *Moshe* the people were clearly very distraught, and very nervous because *Moshe* said if you sin in this way, and you sin in that way G-d will punish you terribly. So the *Medrash* says that *Moshe Rabeinu* now begins the next *Parsha* and says "Hey, **אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם**, for all the concerns that I just shared with you, for all dangers I just shared with you of not keeping the will of *Hashem*, of not fulfilling the will of *Hashem*, the bottom line is you are all here." So obviously it's not as scary as it seems. For all of the potential harsh justice from G-d, you've made it this far, you'll be okay.

The question is obvious. The *Ba'alei Musar* pose the question, if *Moshe's* goal in the rebuke was to intimidate the Jewish people, to make them realize the importance of observing the *Mitzvos*, then why in the world would he take away from whatever effect the rebuke had by saying don't worry you're still around, obviously G-d will be somewhat compassionate with you. What's the meaning here? And what the *Ba'alei Musar* explain is *Moshe Rabeinu's* goal certainly was to help the Jewish people understand how grave and serious the situation was. But what he saw in the Jews was they were dejected. They felt the situation was hopeless, and the moment a person feels not just that they have to be better but there is no way they can be as good as they need to be, they won't, because they have given up hope. So even though *Moshe Rabeinu* wanted to convey a strong message, what he realized was that the effect of the message was stronger than he desired, or it was taken in a way different than he desired because the Jewish people internalized the message to say it's hopeless. So he had to buck them a bit, so to say.

It's a very important thing to think about this time of year. If we're seriously introspective, as we are supposed to be come *Rosh Hashanah*, we think about the things that we haven't done as well as we should this past year. And if we're honest with ourselves, we ask ourselves what are the chances that we will really do better. How many times before have we tried to do better and we haven't succeeded. And the more a person allows these thoughts to float around one's mind, the more a person begins to give up hope on the whole process. And the idea that the *Ba'alei Musar* learn from this *Medrash* is so, so significant. This is a serious time of year, this is a year where we have to be introspective and we have to be reflective. But we also have to say to ourselves that G-d sees me as being a good person. G-d sees me as being a person of great potential. G-d realizes I'm not perfect. I realize I'm not perfect. But *Hashem* love me and *Hashem* wants to help me help myself in really growing, and really becoming a more productive person in all aspects of my life. If we come in with that attitude, of course we understand that these days are serious, but we also hopefully will not give up hope and will believe in our potential in doing just a little bit better over the year to come.

Have a good *Shabbos* and *Chasiva V'Chasima Tova!*



- 4 Groups:**
- 1. Ages 18-36 months**
  - 2. Ages 3-5**
  - 3. Ages 6-9 Boys**
  - 4. Ages 6-9 Girls**



**September  
4th!  
10:00-11:00am**

**Indoors**  
**Masks required  
(3+)**  
**Snacks to go**





Join YISE YOUTH for  
**POPSICLES IN THE  
PARK**

Shabbas Afternoon,  
Sept 4th @ 4pm

Kemp Mill Park (across from YISE)



**Come hear a Dvar Torah from the Rabbi, enjoy  
a refreshing treat, and have fun with friends!**

# BACK IN PERSON!

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# Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah  
via the Internet

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Shabbat Parashat Nitzavim

5781 - B"H

## Covenant & Conversation: R. Jonathan Sacks, z"l

**Defeating Death** - Only now, reaching Nitzavim, can we begin to get a sense of the vast, world-changing project at the heart of the Divine-human encounter that took place in the lifetime of Moses and the birth of Jews/ Israel as a nation.

To understand it, recall the famous remark of Sherlock Holmes. "I draw your attention," he said to Dr Watson, "to the curious incident of the dog at night." "But the dog did nothing at night," said Watson. "That," said Holmes, "is the curious incident." Sometimes to know what a book is about you need to focus on what it does not say, not just on what it does.

What is missing from the Torah, almost inexplicably so given the background against which it is set, is a fixation with death. The ancient Egyptians were obsessed with death. Their monumental buildings were an attempt to defy death. The pyramids were giant mausoleums. More precisely, they were portals through which the soul of a deceased pharaoh could ascend to heaven and join the immortals. The most famous Egyptian text that has come down to us is *The Book of the Dead*. Only the afterlife is real: life is a preparation for death.

There is nothing of this in the Torah, at least not explicitly. Jews believed in *Olam HaBa*, the World to Come, life after death. They believed in *techiyat hametim*, the resurrection of the dead. There are six references to it in the second paragraph of the *Amidah* alone. But not only are these ideas almost completely absent from *Tanach*. They are absent at the very points where we would expect them.

The book of *Kohelet* (*Ecclesiastes*) is an extended lament at human mortality. *Havel havalim... hakol havel*: Everything is worthless because life is a mere fleeting breath. Why did the author of *Ecclesiastes* not mention the World to Come and life-after-death? Another example: the book of *Job* is a sustained protest against the apparent injustice of the world. Why did no one answer *Job* to say, "You and other innocent people who suffer will be rewarded in the afterlife"? We believe in the afterlife. Why then is it not mentioned – merely hinted at – in the Torah? That is the curious incident.

The simple answer is that obsession with death ultimately devalues life. Why fight against the evils and injustices of the world if this life is only a preparation for the world to come? Ernest Becker in his classic *The Denial of Death* argues that fear of our own mortality has been one of the driving forces of civilisation. It is what led the ancient world to enslave the masses, turning them into giant labour forces to build monumental buildings that would stand as long as time itself. It led to the ancient cult of the hero, the man who becomes immortal by doing daring deeds on the field of battle. We fear death; we have a love-hate relationship with it. Freud called this *thanatos*, the death instinct, and said it was one of the two driving forces of life, the other being *eros*.

Judaism is a sustained protest against this world-view. That is why "No one knows where Moses is buried" so that his tomb should never become a place of pilgrimage and worship. That is why in place of a pyramid or a temple such as *Ramses II* built at *Abu Simbel*, all the Israelites had for almost five centuries until the days of *Solomon* was the *Mishkan*, a portable Sanctuary, more like a tent than a temple. That is why, in Judaism, death defiles and

why the rite of the Red Heifer was necessary to purify people from contact with it. That is why the holier you are – if you are a *Kohen*, more so if you are the High Priest – the less you can be in contact or under the same roof as a dead person. God is not in death but in life.

Only against this Egyptian background can we fully sense the drama behind words that have become so familiar to us that we are no longer surprised by them, the great words in which *Moses* frames the choice for all time: See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ... I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you and your children may live.

Life is good, death is bad. Life is a blessing, death is a curse. These are truisms for us. Why even mention them? Because they were not common ideas in the ancient world. They were revolutionary. They still are.

How then do you defeat death? Yes there is an afterlife. Yes there is *techiyat hametim*, resurrection. But *Moses* does not focus on these obvious ideas. He tells us something different altogether. You achieve immortality by being part of a covenant – a covenant with eternity itself, that is to say, a covenant with God.

When you live your life within a covenant something extraordinary happens. Your parents and grandparents live on in you. You live on in your children and grandchildren. They are part of your life. You are part of theirs. That is what *Moses* meant when he said, near the beginning of this week's *parsha*: It is not with you alone that I am making this covenant and oath, but with whoever stands with us here today before the Lord our God as well as those not with us here today.

In *Moses*' day that last phrase meant "your children not yet born." He did not need to include "your parents, no longer alive" because their parents had themselves made a covenant with God forty years before at *Mount Sinai*. But what *Moses* meant in a larger sense is that when we renew the covenant, when we dedicate our lives to the faith and way of life of our ancestors, they become immortal in us, as we become immortal in our children.

It is precisely because Judaism focuses on this world, not the next, that it is the most child-centred of all the great religions. They are our immortality. That is what *Rachel* meant when she said, "Give me children, or else I am like one dead". It is what *Abraham* meant when he said, "Lord, God, what will you give me if I remain childless?". We are not all destined to have children. The *Rabbis* said that the good we do constitutes our *totdod*, our posterity. But by honouring the memory of our parents and bringing up children to continue the Jewish story we achieve the one form of immortality that lies this side of the grave, in this world that God pronounced good.

Now consider the two last commands in the Torah, set out in *parshat Vayelech*, the ones *Moses* gave at the very end of his life. One is *hakhel*, the command that the King summon the nation to an assembly every seven years: At the end of every seven years ... Assemble the people – men, women and children, and the stranger living in your towns – so that they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.

Shabbat Shalom

The meaning of this command is simple. *Moses* is saying: It is not enough that your parents made a covenant with God at *Mount Sinai* or that you yourselves renewed it with me here on the plains of *Moab*. The covenant must be perpetually renewed, every seven years, so that it never becomes history. It always remains memory. It never becomes old because every seven years it becomes new again.

And the last command? "Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites and make them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them". This, according to tradition, is the command to write [at least part of] a *Sefer Torah*. As *Maimonides* puts it: "Even if your ancestors have left you a *Sefer Torah*, nonetheless you are commanded to write one for yourself."

What is *Moses* saying in this, his last charge to the people he had led for forty years, was: It is not sufficient to say, our ancestors received the Torah from *Moses*, or from God. You have to take it and make it new in every generation. You must make the Torah not just your parents' or grandparents' faith but your own. If you write it, it will write you. The eternal word of the eternal God is your share in eternity.

We now sense the full force of the drama of these last days of *Moses*' life. *Moses* knew he was about to die, knew he would not cross the *Jordan* and enter the land he had spent his entire life leading the people toward. *Moses*, confronting his own mortality, asks us in every generation to confront ours.

Our faith – *Moses* is telling us – is not like that of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, or virtually every other civilisation known to history. We do not find God in a realm beyond life – in heaven, or after death, in mystic disengagement from the world or in philosophical contemplation. We find God in life. We find God in (the key words of *Devarim*) love and joy. To find God, he says in this week's *parsha*, you don't have to climb to heaven or cross the sea. God is here. God is now. God is life.

And that life, though it will end one day, in truth does not end. For if you keep the covenant, then your ancestors will live in you, and you will live on in your children (or your disciples or the recipients of your kindness). Every seven years the covenant will become new again. Every generation will write its own *Sefer Torah*. The gate to eternity is not death: it is life lived in a covenant endlessly renewed, in words engraved on our hearts and the hearts of our children.

And so *Moses*, the greatest leader we ever had, became immortal. Not by living forever. Not by building a tomb and temple to his glory. We don't even know where he is buried. The only physical structure he left us was portable because life itself is a journey. He didn't even become immortal the way *Aaron* did, by seeing his children become his successors. He became immortal by making us his disciples. And in one of their first recorded utterances, the *Rabbis* said likewise: Raise up many disciples.

To be a leader, you don't need a crown or robes of office. All you need to do is to write your chapter in the story, do deeds that heal some of the pain of this

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world, and act so that others become a little better for having known you. Live so that through you our ancient covenant with God is renewed in the only way that matters: in life. Moses' last testament to us at the very end of his days, when his mind might so easily have turned to death, was: Choose life.

### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

“Not with you alone do I establish this covenant and this oath, but with those who are here with us standing today before the Lord our God and with those who are not here with us today.”

The Syrian refugee crisis has prompted public debate worldwide, especially in the U.S. presidential campaign, over the issue of immigration. Should a nation's top priority be to meet the humanitarian needs of people attempting to flee a war zone? Or should it be to emphasize national security concerns stemming from the terroristic affiliations of a portion of those seeking refuge?

Given that most of the people whose fate hangs in the balance are Muslims, the critical question underlying this debate is, what is the nature of Islam? Are we speaking of a religion of prayer, charity, and belief in one God? Or are we dealing with a cult of death, conquest and jihad? The fact that both of these definitions contain an element of truth is the source of our dilemma. Islam is at war with itself, as Muslims on both sides of these two irreconcilable aspects of the religion's identity vie for supremacy. And unfortunately, institutional Islam – Wahhabism, Sunni, Shia, and ISIS – believes strongly in Jihad and world conquest.

Does Judaism have a role to play in this debate? The answer to this question will explain several important questions on this week's Biblical portion, and, more broadly, will teach a critical lesson about our moral responsibilities to the world.

The covenant referenced in this week's biblical portion of Nitzavim is usually read on the Sabbath prior to Rosh Hashana. To which covenant does the Torah refer? To whom does God refer when He includes in this covenant “those who are not here with us today”? And what is the connection between this covenant and Rosh Hashana?

This covenant, in contrast to the two prior covenants (at Sinai and Arvot Moab), features the writing of the universal laws of morality on twelve stones, to be translated in all seventy languages of the world, and to be erected at the points of entrance into and exit from Israel. For what reason would the Bible have its laws translated into all seventy languages, if not to teach this morality to the world precisely in the place from which foreigners would travel?

Israel must bear God's message of morality and peace to the world and God, in turn, will guarantee Israel's eternity. It is our task as a people to educate the world towards recognition of a God of morality, love, and peace. This is the content of the Third Covenant.

Everyone need not become Jewish or worship God in the way we do. But everyone must be moral and ethical, and must not violate any other innocent human being, if the world is to endure. In the words of the prophet Micah, “Let all the peoples walk each one in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.” We believe in moral absolutism and ritual pluralism!

Regrettably, this is not the belief of institutional Islam today (see Bernard Lewis' Islam: The Religion and the People).

Fortunately, there is a precedent for a religion to alter its moral trajectory. For nearly 2,000 years, Christianity exploited its power to persecute non-Christians, especially Jews. Rivers of Jewish blood can testify to that ugly history. However, over the past 50 years, a change of historic proportions has

taken place in the way Christianity has come to view Judaism, symbolized by 1965's “Nostra Aetate”, the Papal Encyclical publication that affirmed the legitimacy of the Jewish covenant with God.

In contrast, a very different trend is taking place within Islam. Certainly there are millions of peace-loving Muslims who find the hijacking of their religion to be abhorrent. However, this silent majority has failed to prevent its co-religionists from co-opting Islam.

Judaism has a role to play in this debate. Our covenant of moral absolutism requires that we call upon Muslims to draft their own “Nostra Aetate”, a theological shift that would accept the legitimacy of other religions. Muslim spiritual and political leaders must declare – and then demonstrate – clearly and unambiguously, that Allah is a God of love, not of power, and that Islam is a religion of peace, not of jihad. This is an internal Muslim dispute, but it has global ramifications, and we have a vested interest in its outcome.

We now see the vital need for those who did not stand at Sinai and Arvot Moab – the seventy nations of the world – to stand with us when God's revelation, this Third Covenant, becomes universally accepted and realized. God's covenant must encompass Jew and Gentile alike. And this is why it is appropriate that this biblical reading precedes Rosh Hashana, when Jews must realize our true mission: to turn the wicked of the world towards a God of morality, to perfect the world under the Kingship of the Divine.

### **Dvar Torah: World Mizrahi**

#### **The Vaccination Confusion: Rav Doron Perez**

We live in a confusing generation. We live in a post-modern era where everything can be contested and everything can be doubted. Everything is subjective, it is an era of moral relativism. Also, we live in the generation of the internet. Children are exposed to any and every piece of information from every corner of the globe. Some of it constructive, while some is destructive and confusing.

This is a blessing, but also has within it a curse. That is one of the curses in last week's Parasha, when in the long list of curses we are told G-d will smite us, G-d forbid, with “confusion of the heart”. Many of us might recognize this wording of ‘Timhon Levav’ from the Yom Kippur prayers, when in the Vidui, the confession, we say to G-d we have sinned out of confusion of the heart.

During this pandemic, there is so much confusion. The Prime Minister of Israel has openly called for the one million Israelis who have not yet received the vaccine to go and get vaccinated. People are being called to get vaccinated: from heads of government, heads of healthcare systems, and rabbinic leaders from all communities.

Yet, somehow, there is confusion of the heart, for whatever reason that might be – conspiracy theories, anti-establishment or individual views.

May we all have clarity not confusion of the heart, and be blessed in this coming year for moral and spiritual clarity in all areas of life, and to overcome the pandemic and to be able to live in a much better, healthier world together. *[Excerpted]*

### **Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah: Rabbi David Kalb Teshuvah, Kappara and Independence**

In Nitzavim, the Torah states, “You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your God ...” Verse 10 goes on to list several different categories of people within the Jewish nation, from the heads of the tribes to the water drawers, standing before God.

Verse 11 indicates that all of these different types of people are “passing into the Brit (covenant) of the Lord your God.” This asserts that the community must connect to God and the mitzvot of the Torah directly. Moshe (Moses) cannot serve as an

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intermediary; every person has to enter into the Covenant directly.

The concept of a direct connection to God and the Covenant is further emphasized: “For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven that you should not say: Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?”

A relationship with God is not far away from you, and every person has the potential to have that relationship without an intermediary.

This idea of standing before God directly also plays out during the upcoming period of the Yamim Nora'im, particularly on Yom Kippur.

At a 1973 lecture, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik asked what the main difference is between how kappara (atonement) is achieved today versus the way it was achieved in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, the ancient Temple in Jerusalem?

Rabbi Soloveitchik based his answer on Rambam's Hilchot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance) which points out that kappara was accomplished in Temple times through korbanot (sacrifices). However, if the sacrifices were not accompanied by teshuvah (repentance), kappara was not attained.

Today, without a Temple and sacrifices, the only thing that achieves kappara is repentance. Teshuvah, once a condition to achieving atonement, is now the sole means of doing so. As a result, one could argue that today our experience of teshuvah is more intense and direct.

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel points out that one of the fantastic things about the Jewish approach to repentance and atonement is that it is carried out directly by the individual. No intermediary stands between the penitent and the person they wronged or before God. Rabbi Amiel writes: “Repentance originates in the infinite intellect that transcends time and nature. One principle directs it: Nothing stands in the way of the will. ... One can instantly transform one's self, leaping from the deepest pit to the highest Heaven ... human beings can transform themselves at any moment, renewing themselves at will to become new people.”

He continues in this vein, saying that when we transform ourselves, it is akin to being reborn, almost as if we have given birth to ourselves.

Both Rabbi Amiel and Rabbi Soloveitchik understood the idea that atonement is to be achieved without an intermediary. As much as the experience of atonement is more direct today, and we are not expecting a Kohen Gadol (High Priest) to make atonement for us, there is sometimes a tendency in some modern day synagogues to replace the intermediary of the Kohen Gadol with the intermediary of a rabbi or cantor.

Even in synagogues that are more participatory, where congregants are less dependent on a rabbi and cantor, the service itself can become an intermediary. To be sure, the service is integral to helping facilitate teshuvah, and the rabbi and cantor can be excellent guides in our teshuvah process. However, none of this can replace the experience of standing before those whom we have wronged, or to stand before God and asking forgiveness.

It is interesting we live in a DIY (Do It Yourself) society. People today are more directly involved in every aspect of their lives. We make our own investments and do our banking online. The same direct involvement that people have in business, journalism, and politics needs to be applied to the teshuvah process on the Yamim Nora'im, and to Judaism in general. As we engage in the process of repentance, let us do so directly, without any intermediaries. *[Excerpted]*

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Volume 27

Rosh Hashana Issue

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## The Person in the Parsha: R. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Willing to Change - Sometimes even the corniest of old jokes has a profound lesson to teach us. "How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?" In case you haven't already heard the answer to this example of tired "light bulb" humor, it goes like this: "Just one. But it has to be willing to change!"

This witticism, if it deserves that name, recognizes an important limitation of the profession of psychotherapy. It can only be effective to the extent that patients are motivated to cooperate with the process. Only if they are committed to doing the hard work of personal change can psychotherapists look forward to success.

Willingness to change is a rare trait among humans. People are frightened of anything new and adhere to the status quo even when it has brought them little benefit.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of the land of Israel, wrote a precious little book entitled *The Lights of Return*. In it he insists that the "human tendency to cling desperately to old ways and ancient habits is the sign of a spiritual malaise".

Rav Kook wrote this book early in his life. In his later years, he not only recommended it to others, but he studied it himself, especially at the time of year in which we now find ourselves.

For we are now in the waning days of the month of Elul with the High Holidays imminent. The theme of this period of the Jewish calendar is teshuvah, which, although usually translated as "repentance", is better translated as "return", or still better as "change".

A fundamental teaching of Judaism is the following verse from Ecclesiastes: "For no man is perfect in this world, doing only good and never sinning." We all need to improve, we all need to change. This is the central message of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the Jew.

The fundamental difference between optimists and pessimists is that the former believe that change is possible, whereas the latter believe that attempts to change are futile.

"You can't change human nature." "The leopard cannot change his spots." "Once a fool always a fool." These are the mottos of the pessimists, and the assumptions they make are the very stuff of the entrenched resistance to genuine change in our behaviors and attitudes.

Books have been written and countless sermons sounded with all sorts of advice as to how to go about change. Some believe that it is a slow, gradual, step by step process. Others insist that change requires a dramatic leap of faith and can be done in a transformational moment.

Some believe that change happens because of external circumstances, or social pressures imposed by other people. Others maintain that, on the contrary, change can be intentional and purposefully initiated by every person himself or herself.

Jewish texts recognize that there are two types of change; one indeed, a slow, painstaking path, and the other, a rapid and sudden personality shift. Jewish tradition recognizes that others influence and mold our paths, but that the ultimate responsibility for spiritual change lies with each of us ourselves.

I would like to share with you all one fascinating example of two individuals working together in a purposeful but deliberately incremental change process. It is to be found in the writings of a man

known as the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. His name was Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro, and his career as an outstanding pedagogue and teacher of adolescent boys was tragically cut off by the horrors of the Holocaust.

Rabbi Shapiro wrote a book aimed at his young protégés, giving them the following piece of advice to be initiated at the beginning of the school semester. He asks the student to imagine, if his name, for example, is Reuven, what "Reuven" might look like a month from now, six months from now, a year from now.

Once the young man has some sort of image of what his future self might be he can consciously begin to take steps to approximate this image. He can set specific goals and objectives to come closer to his self ideal, step by tentative step.

And every so often, he can monitor his progress, accelerating the process, modifying it if necessary, or slowing it down if things are going too quickly. The Rebbe encourages the young man to collaborate with a friend or a mentor as he goes through this process of self change and self-development.

At this time of the Jewish New Year, as many do around the time of the secular New Year, we all tend to make resolutions. Rabbi Shapiro's technique is but one of the numerous methods which can assist us in formulating such resolutions and in successfully executing them.

The sanctity of this season inspires us, like the light bulb, to be willing to change. We must turn to the wise and the experienced among us, be they living friends, mentors, and spiritual guides, or past scholars, rabbis, and teachers, for suggestions of specific techniques as to how to really change.

Judaism always insists upon the utility and the importance of textual study. At this time of year study is no less important than prayer. Especially if our study focuses upon finding ways to achieve desired change, and to maintain that change in the face of challenge and ever shifting circumstances.

Every time we wish each other a Happy and Sweet New Year, we are really saying, "I hope that you are successful in your attempts to change yourself and improve yourself in the coming year." It is in that spirit that I wish each of you, dear readers, a Happy and Sweet New Year!

## Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

**A Wordless Blast - By Harav Yehuda Amital zt"l**  
Remembrance before God - Happy is the nation that knows the blast of the shofar. O Lord, they walk in the light of Your presence. The Torah does not explicitly command us to **blow** the shofar on Rosh Ha-Shana. Rather, the Torah says, "It shall be for you a day of shofar blowing" as well as "a holy convocation with a remembrance of shofar blasts". The simple meaning of "a day of shofar blowing" is a day entirely characterized by the shofar blowing. The blow leaves its signature on the entire day. The Ramban explains in his commentary to the Torah that "a remembrance of shofar blasts" means that the Jews are remembered before God, as it says, "And you shall sound the trumpets... and it shall be for you a remembrance before God". In other words, the remembrance of the Jews before God on Rosh Ha-Shana is brought about by the shofar.

The Bach suggests that regarding the commandments of *sukka*, *tefillin*, and *tzitzit*, the rationales for the commandments are inseparable parts of their fulfillment. He notes that regarding

*tzitzit* the Torah says, "so that [*lema'an*] you will remember"; regarding *tefillin* it says, "so that [*lema'an*] God's Torah will be in your mouth"; regarding *sukka* it says, "so that [*lema'an*] your generations will know that I caused you to dwell in *sukkot*". In each case, understanding the rationale for the mitzva enables one to fulfill the commandment properly.

I believe the same is true regarding the blowing of the shofar. Both the blower and those hearing the shofar must keep in mind that by means of this mitzva, the Jewish people "remind" God and "are remembered" by God.

This understanding can resolve a question that the Ramban raised against Rashi. Rashi comments: "*Zikhron teru'a*" - A remembrance of the verses of *zikhronot* and the verses of *shofarot* (in the *Musaf* prayer of Rosh Ha-shana). The Ramban asked: How can this biblical verse be referring to the blessings of the *Musaf* prayer - are not these blessings a rabbinic (*de-rabbanan*) obligation? In light of the above, we can suggest that though mentioning the verses is a rabbinic rather than a biblical obligation, by saying the verses one fulfills the *mitzvat* of remembrance before God and "it shall be for you a remembrance of shofar blasts."

**The Language of the Heart** - Why does the Torah command us to be remembered before God specifically by means of the shofar blasts? Why should we speak with a language of symbols and sounds and not words (the way we tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt)? The answer is that the shofar expands and deepens the human voice. Man puts as much energy into the shofar as he can, and a sound far greater than his own emanates from the shofar.

The *teki'a* and *teru'a* blasts express more than words can. Regarding the receiving of the Torah, the verse says, "and the voice of the shofar became continuously stronger; Moshe would speak and God would respond with a voice"; the ever-strengthening voice hinted at the endless proliferation of Torah throughout the generations.

A person who turns to God faces a dilemma. Generally, turning to God in prayer consists of using words. However, human language was created for dialogue between **people**, between one finite creature and another. There is something tragic about the fact that a person must use human language when turning to God. Human language limits, constricts, and distorts. It cannot express what is found in the chambers of our hearts. Human speech is fundamentally different from divine speech. God, after all, uttered "Remember the Sabbath" and "Keep the Sabbath" in one statement. This is an entirely different mode of expression than human speech; it is a completely different essence. The blast of the shofar solves the dilemma, at least to some degree.

Rav Saadya Gaon enumerates ten reasons for the blowing of the shofar, and they have been copied into some *machzorim*. We can study these reasons, ponder them, organize them, but do they really express what is in the depths of our hearts? In the heart, things are not set forth in an organized way. Images, feelings, and thoughts rage in our hearts and

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fill them! Sometimes, though not always, we succeed in arranging things in our intellect. However, in the heart, everything is mixed together: ancient memories of the creation of the world, the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the destruction of the Temple, the kingship of God, the fear of judgment, and the voices of the prophets. The heart is an entanglement of thoughts and feelings, and we have difficulty communicating the authentic message found in our innermost hearts. We are incapable of expressing this in words or organized speech. God gave us the commandment of shofar, and through it we communicate to God the feelings of our heart – “For You hear the voice of the shofar, and listen to its blast, and there is none like You”.

**The Cries of a Mother** - The Talmud derives from a verse regarding the mother of Sisera that the *teru'a* is the sound of a whimper. The obvious question is: What have we to do with the mother of Sisera? Can we really learn the laws of the shofar from the mother of that wicked man, the enemy of Israel? Rabbeinu Natan draws an even stronger connection, asserting that the one hundred shofar sounds blown on Rosh Ha-shana parallel the hundred whimpers of Sisera's mother.

Even within a culture that is wholly false and repugnant, a mother worries about her son. Nothing is more natural than that. Our matriarch Sara and Sisera's mother differ in innumerable ways. Nevertheless, there is point at which they meet. There is a common denominator between the hundred whimpers of Sisera's mother and the six cries that Sara uttered when she heard about the binding of her son Yitzchak. Both expressed the natural fear of a mother for her child. This is also the power of the shofar blasts that come from the depths of the heart.

**The Shofar of the Akeida** - The origin of the shofar is that ram caught in the thicket by its horns. It is astonishing that Avraham is silent during the entire *akeida*. Aside from word “*Hinneini* – Here I am” at the beginning of the episode, the instructions to his lads, and his answer to Yitzchak, “God will show for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son”, Avraham does not utter a word. And then, at the climax of the *akeida*, the angel tells him, “Do not lay your hand upon the lad!”. What passed through Avraham's heart at that moment? Where is the author, where is the poet who can describe it?! Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Levi wrote that a righteous person should direct the power of his imagination to such lofty states such as the *akeida*, but we wonder: Where is the imagination rich enough to describe it?

Avraham seeks to express what is in his heart, but his power of speech fails him. Instead, “Avraham lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, a ram was caught in the thicket by its horns, and Avraham went and took the ram and brought it as a sacrifice instead of his son”. Avraham's glance towards the horns caught in the thicket is laden with unimaginably tense energy. We blow that same ram's horn, and thereby express the hidden thoughts and feelings that we cannot organize or put into words, “for You hear the voice of the shofar, and listen to its blast, and there is none like You.”

**Is Teshuva Easy or Hard?** R. Elyakim Krumbein Pay attention to the following statement, as well as to your instinctive inner reaction to it: “Teshuva is really easy!” If, like most people, you have any sort of experience in the realm of teshuva, your reaction is probably one of disbelief (“Nonsense!”) or perhaps a cynical brush-off (“Anything else I should know?”)

But how are we to react to a verse from the Torah itself – a verse familiar to us – expressing exactly the

same idea, only in fancier “biblical” language:

For this commandment which I command you today – it is not hidden from you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you might say, “Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Nor is it over the sea... For the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

According to Ramban, the words “this commandment” refer to the commandment of teshuva. The Rambam, in his Guide of the Perplexed, makes a similar claim regarding Divine service in general: it is not so difficult! According to the Rambam, this is precisely the message of Torah, distinguishing it from other religious approaches: “For this Divine Torah, which was commanded to Moshe... comes to ease the service of ritual and the tasks”. The verse cited above supports the Rambam's view.

If the Torah says that it is not difficult, how is it that we mess up? The answer to this question is hinted at in the very same verse: “It is not in heaven, that you might say...” The whole point is what one “says” to oneself. If one's perception is that something is difficult, then one will indeed find it to be so. There are some kinds of errors that become fixed in our thinking and which then become so difficult for us to let go of, that we are easily led to start finding ways to prove them. And once we have “proved” any aspect or element, we feel justified in asserting that we know, from experience, that the process of teshuva is exceedingly difficult.

However, more than the difficulty proves the perception of it, it turns out that the perception creates the difficulty. Because it is “supposed” to be difficult, we start off going about it in such a way that there is little chance of success: we try to force ourselves to undergo great or dramatic changes within a short time. Obviously, our measly measure of success then serves as further “proof” of how difficult teshuva is.

The truth is that trying to force something upon ourselves like this is an unripe form of teshuva that goes against human nature – it is “teshuva undertaken out of fear.” Real teshuva, the Torah tells us here, is “near to you.” It proceeds in harmony with a person's nature; it is “teshuva undertaken out of love.” Teshuva is a gradual, orderly, organic process, like the growth of a tree.

Teshuva “in the heaven” and “over the sea” - The Torah then goes into greater detail. Where does our mistake occur? One possibility is that we think that Divine service is “in the heaven,” something transcendental and lofty that lies beyond the capability of flesh and blood mortals. Only angels are perfect, we tell ourselves, and if our Divine service or our teshuva is not perfect, it is not worth anything. Alternatively, we might imagine that the Torah is “over the sea” – in other words, a distant reality that cannot be realized in this world. Our world is a roiling sea, full of disorder, and the idea of truly serving God in the midst of this chaos is simply absurd. Society around us is a maelstrom of materialism and false values, doubts, cynicism, and the pursuit of wealth and pleasure. Any pretense that man can serve God in such a place can only lead to despair; it would require swimming against an unstoppable deluge of apathy. All of this creates a mixture of imagined humility and self-pity: we are far from teshuva, both in terms of our very nature as human beings, and in terms of our utter helplessness in view of the influences around us.

The message that Moshe conveys above is that such thinking is wrong: “You have adopted a picture of reality that is not relevant; it will not lead anywhere useful. The truth is that teshuva is here on earth, on this side of the ocean, very close by!”

## Likutei Divrei Torah

This is the message that the Maggid of Dubnow conveys in one of his well-known parables, based on Yishayah's rebuke: “But you have not called upon Me, O Yaakov, for have you wearied yourself about Me, O Israel?”. The situation may be compared to that of a postman who trudges along, carrying a very heavy parcel. He finally arrives at the address and knocks on the door. The homeowner opens, takes one look at the postman puffing and panting on his doorstep, and immediately realizes that there has been some mistake – the postman has apparently mixed things up and delivered the wrong package. He tells him, “This delivery is meant for someone else; the package I'm expecting is a small, lightweight item.” Similarly, the prophet declares in God's Name: If you have “wearied yourself about Me,” then “you have not called upon Me.” You have heaped all these difficulties upon yourself; I never asked that of you.

Easy teshuva in practice - What is meant by the words “near to you”? It means that the Torah does not go against human nature; rather, it accords with it. When this principle is implemented, teshuva becomes “easy.” What does this mean in practice? An example might help illustrate.

What is achieved through difficult or intensive action, and what results from an easy action? We know that acting out of habit is easy, while breaking a habit is difficult. Instead of trying to break a bad habit, let us rather pay closer attention to our good habits. Our daily routine is full of them! Some of our automatic actions are in fact important mitzvot, from saying “*Modeh Ani*” upon awakening, to our daily prayers, our social interactions and relationships with family and friends, and so on. These are things that we do anyway, so they require no special effort on our part; the issue is just that we do them without thinking, and this is what our teshuva needs to address. Habit breeds uncalled-for disparagement and underestimation, and it is this attitude that must be corrected before anything else. That is the gateway to teshuva. Rav Charlap z"l explains that the first and most critical step in teshuva is entering this gateway.

The idea that “a sin drags another sin in its wake” means, according to Rav Charlap, that a person is fundamentally good and holy, and it is in fact unthinkable that he could sin – were he not drawn in that direction by the influence of a previous sin. But then we must ask, where did the first sin come from? How could sin ever appear on the horizon of a person's life as a real option? Rav Charlap's answer to this is that the first sin is not a real sin; it is not even failure to perform a mitzva. It is merely a degree of negligence in performing a mitzva. In other words, the mitzva is done, but without the proper attention and enthusiasm, such that its practical execution is “sloppy.”

Correcting this deficiency is the key, and it is precisely this that is “near to us.” We are speaking here of mitzvot that are already ingrained in us; the problem is just that we give them no thought. All we need is a very simple thought: If I'm already doing this mitzva, then why not really invest myself and do a more complete job of it? That's easy! And thus one small step is followed by another. The actions that are already deeply rooted in my life are harnessed as an engine for growth and progress.

Two sides to “teshuva out of love” - This is precisely the place of “teshuva that proceeds from love,” which includes two stages. First is our attention to the fact that this action that we repeat every day is actually a “mitzva”: a spiritual act expressing great value, which is part of our self-identity. This thought, if we place it “upon our heart,” arouses a feeling of identification and even spiritual elevation, and quite naturally we find

ourselves performing the very same action with a more profound awareness. Then, once we appreciate the greatness of these seemingly routine actions, we are ready for the next stage. Now we must ask what we are able to do right now in a beer way, easily, and without “going crazy.” For example, maintaining good spirits and acting with alacrity and vigor will lead to an improvement that will be readily apparent. The main thing is to be headed in the direction of repair. One small step is enough to count as part of our “teshuvah.”

The mitzvot that come easily to us are those that are natural to us. They are already part of our routine, and they do not require any great change within us; all we need is to express that which already exists inside us. I certainly believe in the blessings that I recite all the me, so if I am already reciting them – why not try to enter the “soul” of the blessing, to concentrate on it and to experience it? When I am engaged in my job, too, I give expression to my world of values: I am making a contribution to society (“The world is built on kindness”); I am striving for excellence (“Great is he who enjoys the labor of his hands”), etc. Thinking about this arouses inner will and thankfulness, and encourages me to take care to perform each task in a more complete way.

As a different example, let us consider walking to the synagogue. What is there to see in this simple action? There are many possibilities, depending on a person’s orientation and way of thinking. One might view it as walking towards a connection with God, joining the congregation, or connecting to the core of life. When one thinks about this, one’s enthusiasm is aroused and this in turn will elevate and enhance one’s prayer. The same approach and technique can be used to view chance personal encounters or other seemingly mundane situations in a new light.

Coping with “lows” - The nature of life is such that if a person enjoys a positive period of growth and fulfillment, a period of lethargy and heaviness is likely to follow. What is the purpose of these “low” times, when it sometimes appears to us that we are unable to uplift ourselves? During this me, a person remains just as he is, doing only what comes naturally to him – even in his spiritual efforts. Surprisingly enough, he discovers that his basic, “default” spiritual situation does not require maximal spiritual tension. He discovers that he is good even when he is not pushing himself to the limits. His regular, everyday lifestyle is already “as full of mitzvot and good deeds as a pomegranate,” and he is within the category of “teshuvah” even in this state. This thought gives him joy and depth of meaning.

In order to be a “ba’al teshuva” – someone who “engages in teshuva” on a constant basis, one has to love it. And this becomes possible when we focus on the good within us, in order to extract the maximum from it. May the Holy One, blessed be He, restore us to Him with a whole heart and a willing soul.

*[Translated by Kaeren Fish]*

#### **OU Dvar Torah: Rabbi Abraham Twerski, MD**

**Why Is It So Hard to Change? The Six Obstacles to Teshuvah** - “Of course a person should do teshuvah, but I am a bit puzzled. I observe Shabbos, I keep kosher and taharas hamishpachah. I daven every day, I attend a Daf Yomi shiur and I am honest in my business dealings. What exactly should I do teshuvah for?”

People may not actually say this, but some certainly think this way. Yet King Solomon said, “For there is no man so fully righteous that he always does good and never sins”. Even the greatest tzaddik is not free of sin. How, then, can a person who is quite far from being a perfect tzaddik not feel a need to do teshuvah?

Several psychological defense mechanisms tend to discourage an individual from changing, from doing teshuvah. The obstacles to teshuvah are denial, rationalization, trivializing, projection, habituation and ego.

1) Denial - Throughout Tanach, the prophets repeatedly exhorted the Jewish people to abandon their errant behavior, but as is evident from the Scriptures, they were not very successful. Isaiah explains why. “Surely you hear, but you fail to comprehend; and surely you see, but you fail to know. This people is fattening its heart, hardening its ears and sealing its eyes, lest it see with its eyes and hear with its ears and understand with its heart, so that it will repent and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9-10). No psychology text can improve on Isaiah’s description of denial. Because people are intent on doing whatever they wish, they resort to denial, one of the best-known defense mechanisms so that they are unaffected by the reality of what they see and hear. We are creatures of habit, and we are comfortable when we can do things without the need to exert much effort. Change is uncomfortable, and in order to avoid this discomfort, our minds block out those realizations that would call for change. The natural state of all matter—including human beings—is inertia, but one must force himself to overcome inertia in order to grow and change.

2) Rationalization - Denial enables a person to maintain the status quo. When reality threatens to overcome denial, the mind employs other defense mechanisms to reinforce the denial—such as rationalization. One of the themes in Proverbs is the tendency to rationalize. Ramchal says, “If a person is confronted with one’s laziness, one will doubtless come back with many quotations culled from the sages and the Scriptures and with intellectual arguments, all supporting, according to his misguided mind, his leniency with himself”.

Denial is not always possible, so the mind is very clever in rationalizing; in other words, justifying one’s actions by giving logical-sounding reasons for them. The Torah stresses the gravity of speaking lashon hara, for example, which requires both teshuvah vis-à-vis Hashem and forgiveness from the victim. Oftentimes one who speaks lashon hara may attempt to justify his behavior by claiming “But it’s the truth!” Defamatory speech is lashon hara, even if it is true.

3) Habituation - The Talmud says that when a person does a forbidden act several times, it loses its opprobrium. Habituation enables one to think that these transgressions are permissible. His conscience is lulled into thinking, It’s really not so terrible. Thus, even though the morning minyan begins promptly at 6:30 am and ends at 7:05, there are some minyannaires who habitually show up at 6:45 and leave before everyone else. They are so accustomed to arriving late and davening at breakneck speed, they see nothing wrong with it.

4) Projection - One who projects onto another will not be able to do genuine teshuvah. Sins committed against another person are not forgiven on Yom Kippur unless one has obtained forgiveness from the offended individual. The defense mechanism of projection turns things around: I did not offend him. He offended me. He should really be apologizing to me.

5) Trivializing - The tendency to trivialize halachah is another impediment in the road to teshuvah. I missed Minchah, but I was so busy at the office. Anyway, it’s not a big deal. Or, I chatted with my friend during the Reading of the Torah, but doesn’t everybody? (This is the only sin for which the Shulchan Aruch says, “There is no forgiveness.”)

6) Ego - Inasmuch as teshuvah for an offense against another person requires that one make

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amends and ask forgiveness, there is ego resistance to humbling oneself, apologizing and making restitution where required.

One of the axioms of human behavior is that a person will always choose to do that which is most comfortable for him. We find that an addict will not agree to change until he hits “rock-bottom,” i.e., that the pain incident to the addiction is greater than the pleasure it provides. This is equally true of the non-addict. Therefore, oftentimes individuals only agree to change when they have reached rock-bottom. But what can constitute rock-bottom for the non-addict? A person who contemplates his life goals and sees that his behavior is jeopardizing his reaching those goals may reach rock-bottom. But this requires giving serious thought to defining one’s goals and purpose in life. Confronting death can usually lead to such introspection. I recently attended the funeral of a great talmid chacham. A man next to me said somewhat somberly, “Reb Z. is taking along with him much Torah and mitzvos. What will I be taking along?”

The first chapter in Mesillas Yesharim is entitled “A Person’s Obligation in His World.” The theme of Mesillas Yesharim is the refinement of one’s character. Changing one’s character traits is a major challenge and is usually met with great resistance. Many times real change won’t happen until one realizes that unless one does so, his life is meaningless.

Uncompromised honesty is necessary to see through the psychological defenses that are a barrier to teshuvah. Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days of Penitence and Yom Kippur are days in which one should be inspired to evaluate the meaning of one’s life. Only when we are aware that we need “fixing” will we do teshuvah.

#### **Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org**

**Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky Rosh Hashana and Sinai** Klal Yisroel’s existence crystalized with the revelation at Sinai, and indeed two yomim tovim speak of Sinai. Shavuot, the holiday that focuses on the giving of the Torah, places the events at Sinai as its focal point. But Rosh Hashana also carries an extraordinary focus on Sinai, and that is rather puzzling.

In the Mussaf shemoneh esrei of Rosh Hashana we introduce the Shofros - undoubtedly the central feature of Rosh Hashana - via the shofar of Sinai. This is quite surprising. For although there was the sound of a shofar at Sinai, the shofar seemed to play but a minor role in the Sinai revelation. [The Kaf Hachaim also says that that is the reason we blow at the bimah - to mirror Sinai.] If one were looking for an event to elaborate on in Shofros, one could have chosen the akeidah, where the ram and its horn, as well as the zechus of the akeidah, seem to play a major role.

The phrasing of that section of Shofros is that Hashem, “revealed Himself at Sinai to teach us Torah and mitzvos, and You let them hear the majesty of Your ‘kol’, and Your sacred words”. There seem to be two communications here: the dibbur - sacred words - and the kol. One would venture to guess that these are two aspects of the revelation which express themselves in these two yomim tovim. But what are these aspects?

Let us first examine closely the concept of Malchiyos. At first glance Hashem’s malchus is but a mere conceptual prerequisite, i.e. it is only because Hashem is boss that we are obligated to fulfill His dictates. Therefore, we first establish that Hashem is king, and as king He commands and judges us as to how well we have obeyed. But if we look at the bulk of the Malchiyos prayer, malchus is not a mere prerequisite; rather the prayer is all about

establishing Hashem's malchus and realizing its fulfillment entirely.

One is therefore led to understand a much bigger picture of Hashem's malchus and His expectations of us. While there are detailed commands of what to do and what not to do, there is, more significantly, the sweeping vision of what it is that Hashem wants of the world. All the details of the various mitzvos come together to form a picture that integrates every element in creation. And that is malchus. Malchus is not so much the mere acknowledgement that Hashem is king; but more so that the world is His kingdom and it's meant to reflect in its entirety that vision that Hashem had for it when He created it. We, therefore, on the day of creation, start by expressing our yearning for the day that malchus will become totally revealed.

This grand vision was revealed to us at Sinai; for alongside the revelation of the particulars of Torah, Hashem revealed to us the big picture as well. When a person speaks, his dibbur-words define the specifics, but his voice-kol gives me the general sense of his emotions, etc. Hashem revealed to us at Sinai both the dibbur and the kol. The dibbur is the subject of Shavuot, and the kol is the focus of Rosh Hashana.

This adds another dimension to our cheshbon hanefesh on Rosh Hashana. It is not enough to merely ponder which details of the Torah am I following, and in which is my observance lacking. Perhaps, this is the point of Yom-Kippur, with its meticulously detailed vidui, based on the aleph-beis. And indeed, the passuk urges us, "k'chu imachem devarim v'shuvu el Hashem- bring your words with you and come back to Hashem."

But on Rosh Hashana we ask ourselves, is our vision of our life in consonance with Hashem's vision? Is our life's yearning to be btzelem Elokim; Adam as he was meant to be? Is our vision of the world, a world of "l'saken olam b'malchus Shakkaï"?

Let us first make sure that our "kol" is the "kol of Yaakov", and only then can we pay attention to each and every dibbur.

#### **Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah**

##### **The Haunting Sound of the Shofar Rabbi Ari and Laura Silberman**

The piercing sound of the shofar is our way of enthroning God, and is meant to inspire us to do teshuva (reflect on our actions, and literally, "return"). Jews around the globe, whether religious or secular, are struck by the sound. The Gemara (b.Rosh Hashana 33b) famously learns the nature of a teruah (one of the shofar blasts) based on the Aramaic translation in Bamidbar 29:1, of the word, yevava. This term refers to the sobs (vateyabeve) of Sisera's mother. Sisera was an enemy of Israel who in The Book of Judges (5:28) dies at the hands of Yael. His mother awaits his triumphant return, only to realize he has died, and begins sobbing. By connecting the shofar's blast to that of an enemy of Israel sobbing upon her son's death, rabbinic commentators strike at the heart of the shofar's haunting sound. It is the sound of a mother's – any mother's – cry for her son. It is a sound that none of us ever wants to hear, but in Israel as elsewhere, we hear too often. It is a sound that turns the order of creation upside down. Mothers, creators of life, should not have to mourn their children. In this way, the cry of Sisera's mother reflects the universality of the shofar's cry, the striking sound that everyone feels deep down.

How can this help us to understand Rosh Hashana and properly experience the shofar and its call to repent? Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's insight into the meaning of hirkhurei teshuva (thoughts of repentance) offers us part of an answer:

On the seventh day of Pesach, 5727 [1967], I

awoke from a fitful sleep. A thunderstorm was raging outside, and the wind and rain blew angrily through the window of my room. Half-awake, I quickly jumped to my feet and closed the window. I then thought to myself that my wife was sleeping downstairs in the sunroom next to the parlor, and I remembered that the window was left open there as well. She could catch pneumonia, which, in her weakened physical condition, would be devastating. I ran downstairs, rushed into her room, and slammed the window shut. I then turned around to see whether she had awoken from the storm or if she was still sleeping. I found the room empty, the couch where she slept neatly covered. In reality, she had passed away the previous month. The most tragic and frightening experience was the shock that I encountered in that half-second when I turned from the window to find the room empty. I was certain that a few hours earlier I had been speaking with her, and that at about 10 o'clock she had said good night and retired to her room. I could not understand why the room was empty. I thought to myself, "I just spoke with her. I just said good night to her. Where is she?"

Rabbi Soloveitchik is describing what the shofar should awaken within us. The raging storm of emotions, the sudden shock that our perceived reality has deceived us. Hirkhurei teshuva is the realization that our world is actually upside down, not right. Added to this realization is the feeling of loneliness and distance from the purity and holiness which embodies the natural relationship with God. As Rabbi Kook explains, it is through hirkhurei teshuva that we hear the voice of God calling to us. Truly, the experience of hirkhurei teshuva begins with a window flying open and an estrangement from what we think to be normal but ends in a reunion with our true selves. Rabbi Soloveitchik also uses the imagery of a mourner to explain the process of teshuva. The sinner banishes God from within his midst, but like some mourners, may not feel the magnitude of the loss immediately. Like mourners, Jews will eventually realize the emptiness and disorder of the lost connection. Yet, unlike with a loved one who has passed, at any moment we can realize our longing for Hashem, and return to Him.

The haunting cry of the shofar embodies this. It urges us to wake up and feel how distant our true selves have strayed from He who gave us life. We are shaken to the core because the Shechina (God) cries over her sons who have strayed so far and reminds us that such actions run against the universal order.

However, it is precisely during Rosh Hashana that we can sense Hashem's closeness. Metaphorically, the King is in the field (המלך בשדה); but He is also our father waiting for his children to come home. We certainly need to do our part to return, but we should know that Hashem is waiting with His arms wide open for us to come running into them.

##### **An Opportunity to Begin Anew**

##### **Rabbanit Devorah Evron [Excerpted]**

The commandment regarding Rosh Hashanah appears several times in the Torah, yet only one account in the Tanakh states that it took place on the 1st of Tishrei, on Rosh Hashanah itself.

The chapter describes a national assembly in Jerusalem in which Ezra the Scribe read from the Torah and his aides explained what he had read to the assembled crowd who had come to hear him. Ezra and Nehemiah were active in the period of Shivat Tzion, during which a group of those exiled by the Babylonians returned to Eretz Yisrael and joined the Jewish population who had remained after the exile. Upon their return, the leaders began reorganizing the Jewish population administratively, financially, and religiously.

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Ezra and Nehemiah then gathered the nation on the 1st of Tishrei in Jerusalem. They built a special wooden platform for the event, on which Ezra the Scribe stood and read from the Torah to the entire nation, a reading that lasted several hours, from sunrise until midday.

The Torah reading caused the nation to weep. Most commentators understand that they wept because they had not been fulfilling the commandments correctly. The Malbim (a 19th century rabbi and commentator) is more specific and says that Ezra read the verses relating to the 1st of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah. The people understood that that day was the Day of Judgment and so they wept out of fear.

According to the sages, the group that returned from Babylonia did not include many leaders. Although there were priests, Levites, and mevinim (comprehenders), most of those who returned lacked a Torah education.

If so, when the nation heard Ezra the Scribe read from the Torah they experienced a double blow. They did not understand the language in which the Torah was written, and they were unfamiliar with the text that was being translated for them. They wept for the loss of their national and religious identity in the broadest sense. They did not know how to fulfill the commandments of the Torah and they feared they had lost the opportunity to begin again.

Ezra and Nehemiah calmed the people in two ways, each providing solace for one aspect of the crisis. First of all, they sent them to eat and drink and care for those less fortunate. Based on these instructions, the people learned what to do on this festival and how to behave on a holy day. They prayed and read from the Torah and then ate and drank and provided for those who had not.

This is just as Maimonides decreed in Hilchot Yom Tov: "The children should be given parched grain, nuts, and sweetmeats; the womenfolk should be presented with pretty clothes and trinkets according to one's means; the menfolk should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no real rejoicing without meat and wine. While eating and drinking, one must feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and other unfortunates. However, he who locks the doors of his courtyard and eats and drinks along with his wife and children, without giving food and drink to the poor and the desperate, does not observe a religious celebration but indulges in the celebration of his stomach.... Rather, this is the appropriate measure: All the people rise up early in the morning to the synagogues and study halls to pray, and to read in the Torah about the topic of the day. [Then] they return home, eat, and go to the study hall, [where they] read and study until midday. And after midday, they pray the afternoon prayers and return to their homes to eat and drink for the rest of the day, until the night."

After the people received an explanation on how to observe the holy day, both with regard to the actual timetable of this festival and the values that lie at its heart, they were given an insight from which to begin again – "Do not be sad, for your rejoicing in the Lord is the source of your strength". Do not be sad, say the leaders, for you are Israel, you are God's exhilaration and joy. This is your fortress, this is your base, this is what strengthens you, and this is the starting point for procuring Israel's national and religious identity once again.

The story in Nehemiah teaches us that Rosh Hashanah is the ultimate opportunity to renew ourselves. This is the date on which we can begin anew even if everything has been forgotten. Ezra and Nehemiah taught the people in Jerusalem, and teach us today that repair is always possible, that we always have the opportunity to begin anew. All we need is to help each other remember.

In this week's *Parashah*, *Bnei Yisrael* enter into a new covenant with *Hashem*, as we read (29:11), "For you to pass into the covenant of *Hashem*, your *Elokim* . . . that *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, seals with you today." But why? Why was the original covenant at *Har Sinai* not adequate?

R' Ze'ev Wolf Halevi Olesker z"l (1700-1778; Galicia and *Eretz Yisrael*) explains: The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 54b) describes how Moshe transmitted the Torah to *Bnei Yisrael*. First, Moshe taught each lesson to his brother Aharon. Then, Moshe repeated the lesson for Aharon's sons, while Aharon listened again. The third time, Moshe taught Aharon, Aharon's sons, and the Elders. The fourth time, Moshe's audience included all of *Bnei Yisrael* as well. Thus, Aharon heard the Torah four times from Moshe, Aharon's sons heard it from Moshe three times, and so on. Moshe then left, and Aharon repeated the lesson again, so that his sons also heard it a total of four times, the Elders three, etc. Then Aharon left, and his sons repeated the lesson so that the Elders heard it a fourth time. Lastly, the Elders repeated the lesson, so that everyone heard it a total of four times.

It turns out, writes R' Ze'ev Wolf that most of *Bnei Yisrael* only heard the Torah. Indeed, that is all the only learning they had promised to do when they entered into the original Covenant: "*Na'aseh Ve'nishmah*" / "We shall do and we shall hear." That worked well as long as *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert, living near a centralized teacher. Now, however, *Bnei Yisrael* were about to enter *Eretz Yisrael* and disperse to the far corners of the Land. Henceforth, they would need to take more responsibility for their own education, especially if they were going to preserve the transmission of the Oral Law. That is why a new covenant was necessary. (*Derashot Ha'Razah*)

## Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. This week, we continue discussing the thirteen types of prayer identified in *Midrashim*.

R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) writes: "**Amidah**" / "standing" indicates that the person who is praying negates himself completely before *Hashem*. "Standing" is the opposite of "sitting," which is what a person does when he feels the heaviness of his own limbs. Thus, "standing" indicates a lack of awareness of one's physical self.

R' Pincus continues: From the *Midrash*, it appears that *Amidah* itself is a form of prayer, even if one does not utter a single word of supplication. The reason for this is that the essence of prayer is *Deveikut* / a connection with, and negating oneself before, *Hashem*--which, as noted, *Amidah* indicates.

R' Pincus notes that *Amidah* also connotes prophecy, the ultimate *Deveikut* with *Hashem* (see *Bereishit* 18:22--"Avraham was still standing before *Hashem*"). R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes (*Moreh Nevochim* III ch.51) that *Deveikut* means thinking about *Hashem* and being aware of His presence. This is, indeed, the common denominator between prayer and prophecy. *Seforim* say that a person is where his thoughts are. Thus, whether during prophecy or during (proper) prayer, when a person is actually speaking directly to *Hashem*, he is literally with Him. In light of the above, we understand, as well, the phenomenon that, during prophecy, the prophet's (except Moshe's) physical faculties are suspended. (*She'arim B'tefilah* p.130)

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**“For this commandment that I command you today – it is not hidden from you and it is not distant.” (30:11)**

R’ Moshe ben Nachman z”l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270) writes that this refers to the *Mitzvah* of *Teshuvah*.

R’ Moshe Zuriel *shlita* (former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Sha’alvim) observes that many people find *Teshuvah* difficult. We all feel as if we generally do what is right. Moreover, our Sages teach us that we should approach the Day of Judgment with the confidence that we will emerge vindicated and triumphant.

Nevertheless, R’ Zuriel writes, if we understood the depth of *Hashem*’s judgment, we would not be so complacent. Who can claim that he has not offended his spouse, family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. during the year? Do we realize the seriousness of this sin? Do we repent for it properly?

We are all familiar with the *Halachah* that *Teshuvah* does not atone for a sin against another human being unless the offended person is appeased. We therefore are used to asking our friends, “Do you forgive me?” And, of course, they say, “I forgive you.” But do they really forgive us, or are they simply too embarrassed or uncomfortable to tell us that they still feel hurt? Do we take steps to right the wrongs that we have committed, or are we satisfied with a pro forma apology?

Moreover, we forget that appeasing those we have offended is only the first step. We still must appease *Hashem* when we offend His loved ones. The *Gemara* relates that a great sage was severely punished because he came home late from *Yeshiva* and caused his wife to shed one tear as she sat by the window watching for him. She would not have wanted him to be punished, but *Hashem* does not tolerate even a small show of insensitivity from a person of stature. Even the fact that he was preoccupied with Torah study did not save him. True, we are not on the stature of that sage, but our sins are not as subtle, either.

Even when a person hurts another with the best of intentions, he is punished. We read at the beginning of *Shmuel I* (the *Haftarah* for the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*) that a man named Elkanah had two wives--Penina and Chana. Penina had children and Chana did not. Our Sages say that Penina used to goad Chana to pray for children by asking questions such as, “Have you bathed your children for school today?” Penina had the best of intentions; she wanted Chana to cry from the depths of her heart so that she too would give birth. And it worked! Nevertheless, Penina was punished severely.

And who has not offended his parents?! The *Halachic* work *Chayei Adam* (67:3) writes that even thinking negatively about one’s parents is a grave sin about which the Torah says (*Devarim* 27:16), “Cursed is one who degrades his father or mother.”

Therefore, concludes R’ Zuriel, let us all realize that we have sinned grievously. Let us ask for forgiveness from those we have offended and from our Father in Heaven. Then we truly will be able to enter *Rosh Hashanah* with confidence. (*Otzrot Ha’Torah* p. 664)

**“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your Elokim.” (29:9)**

R’ Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal z”l *Hy”d* (1885-1945; rabbi of, and *Rosh Yeshiva* in, Pieštany, Czechoslovakia) writes: I was lying in bed last night thinking about this verse in connection with the *Midrash* that comments on the verse (*Shmot* 3:14), “I Shall Be As I Shall Be.” Says the *Midrash*: “‘I Shall Be’ for the individual, and ‘I Shall Be’ for the many.” This teaches, R’ Teichtal explains (based on the writings of the *Maharal* of Prague z”l), that *Hashem* relates differently to the individual than He does to the nation as a whole. Every individual has *Bechirah* / free choice, and *Hashem* relates to each individual based on the choices he makes. In contrast, the nation as a whole has no free choice. Rather, *Hashem* will reign over us no matter what.

R’ Teichtal continues: The word “today” connotes eternity, as *Midrash Tanchuma* comments on the verse (*Devarim* 26:16), “Today, *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, commands you . . .” -- “The commandments should be new in your eyes as if they were given today.” In other words, the Torah was not given once; it is given over-and-over again, for all eternity. Our verse therefore means, “For all eternity, you are standing before *Hashem*.” Why is that so? Because I am speaking to “all of you.” (*Mishneh Sachir Al Ha’Torah*)

**“It will be when all these things come upon you--the blessing and the curse that I have presented before you--then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where Hashem, your Elokim, has dispersed you. You will return to Hashem, your Elokim, and listen to His voice . . .” (30:1-2)**

R’ Yisrael Meir Kagan z”l (the *Chafetz Chaim*; died 1933) asks: It seems from these verses that the generation in which *Mashiach* comes will have done *teshuvah*. In contrast, there are statements of our Sages implying that the generation in which *Mashiach* comes will be a very lowly one!

He answers: Both are true. The generation in which *Mashiach* comes will be a generation of extreme opposites. On the one hand, there will be Jews who will make every possible sacrifice to ensure their children’s Torah educations. Among that part of the nation, there will be a thirst for knowledge, and their hearts will be pained by their own ignorance and lack of *Mitzvah* performance. On the other hand, there will be Jews who will do whatever seems right in their own eyes, so far removed from Judaism that any rebuke would be hopeless.

One might ask, continues the *Chafetz Chaim*, why would *Mashiach* come in such a generation, when he did not come to redeem past generations that were entirely religious and seemingly more worthy? He answers: In early generations, the redemption was less necessary, since their faith was strong and there was no question that Judaism would be preserved. Indeed, the longer *Mashiach* delayed, the more merits the Jewish People as a whole accumulated because of their adherence to the Torah. Now, however, when a significant part of the Jewish People is becoming lost, further delay is counter-productive. Thus, *Mashiach*’s arrival surely is closer. (*Kuntreis Tzipita Li’shuah* ch.1)

# ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.

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## **GANTZ: SOLDIERS HAVE FULL BACKING TO NEUTRALIZE THREATS** (Arutz-7 9/1/21)

Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Wednesday addressed the death of Sgt. Barel Hadarya Shmueli, who was shot at close range during riots on the Gaza border, as well as criticism of the IDF's regulations for opening fire.

"I trust that they know how to draw the necessary lessons. The soldiers have full backing to act to neutralize anyone who has the means and intent to kill, according to the orders. The instructions for opening fire are set by the military echelon, and so it will continue to be," Gantz said.

Barel Shmueli passed away on Monday, over a week after he was critically wounded in Hamas-orchestrated riots on the Gaza border. The shooting raised questions over how the terrorist was able to get so close to the border fence and shot a Border Police officer at such close range.

This week, hundreds of soldiers took part in an online protest posted a message on their Instagram accounts claiming that the IDF senior command was preventing soldiers from defending themselves,

Military correspondent Roi Sharon reported that the protest follows claims that IDF forces at the riot where Shmueli was shot at close ranged asked for permission to open fire and were refused.

According to the military investigation conducted last week, this claim is incorrect. But the argument that IDF soldiers are put at unnecessary risk by commanders who refuse to let them defend themselves is not new.

## **SERBIA SETS UP TRADE OFFICE IN JERUSALEM, LOOKS TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH ISRAEL** (JPost 9/1/21)

The Representative Office of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS) began its operations earlier this month, according to a release by the organization.

The office, located in Jerusalem at the Margalit Start-up City (JVP) complex, will be focusing on strengthening Serbian presence within the economic, trade and science sectors of Israel.

The CCIS, which regards Israel as a "highly technologically advanced country," is tasked with formulating the conditions for a free trade agreement between the two countries, with interests lying in the IT sector, start-up consulting, healthcare, agriculture and food industry. Military industry, cyber, ICT services, wastewater treatment and tourism - although it notes "interest in cooperation of the two economies is reflected in almost all industries."

"Encouraging Israeli investments in the sectors of real estate, renewable energy, water resources management, environment, infrastructure, and transport, along with increasing exports from Serbia to Israel, will undoubtedly be the main tasks of the Representative Office," said Director of the Representative Office, and a former Purchasing Director of the Israeli Gaon Group Aleksandar Nikolić.

The opening ceremony for the CCIS is planned for November of this year, to take place in the presence of CCIS President Marko Čadež. This year also marks 30 years since Israel and Serbia established diplomatic relations.

## **ISRAELI NAVY, US 5TH FLEET HOLD 'HISTORIC' EXERCISE IN RED SEA** (Israel Hayom 9/2/21)

The Israeli Navy and the US Navy's Fifth Fleet held a joint exercise for the first time on Tuesday in the Red Sea, in an event the IDF Spokesperson described as "historic."

"During the exercise, the two navies practiced a variety of scenarios including defense and rescue operations," the IDF said.

"The exercise saw the two navies working side by side, learning together and

strengthening the connection and familiarity of the two nations' fleets. The exercise marks the beginning of joint efforts between the Israeli Navy and the US Fifth Fleet, as part of the transitioning of IDF matters to the US Central Command (CENTCOM). This is the first exercise of many planned to take place in the future," the Israeli military added.

The IDF released photos of American naval officers visiting an Israeli naval vessel in the Red Sea.

The exercise comes as regional tensions with Iran are high, and following a series of Iranian attacks on vessels of multiple countries.

"Conducting joint exercises with our allies and partners around the world demonstrates the shared goal of protecting and monitoring international waters vital to international trade," the IDF said. "The cooperation between the two nations' fleets works to this goal and further strengthens regional maritime security and stability. This partnership creates an opportunity for operational and professional development, and enables Israeli Naval superiority in the Middle East maritime arena."

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, head of Israel's naval operations, added, "This exercise marks the beginning of a cooperation that will expand and increase the scope of defense in the maritime arena to prevent terrorist activities."

## **ISRAELI RABBIS ASK POPE TO CLARIFY REMARKS ON JEWISH LAW** (YNet 8/25/21)

Israel's top Jewish religious authorities have told the Vatican they are concerned about comments that Pope Francis made about their books of sacred law and have asked for a clarification.

In a letter seen by Reuters, Rabbi Rasson Arousi, chair of the Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel for Dialogue with the Holy See, said the comments appeared to suggest Jewish law was obsolete.

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Hebrew Academy of Long Beach, NY	Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY
Hillel at Baruch College	Young Israel of Sharon, MA

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Vatican authorities said they were studying the letter.

At the audience, the pope, who was reflecting on what St. Paul said about the Torah in the New Testament, said: "The law (Torah) however does not give life. It does not offer the fulfillment of the promise because it is not capable of being able to fulfill it ... Those who seek life need to look to the promise and to its fulfillment in Christ."

Rabbi Arousi sent the letter on behalf of the Chief Rabbinate - the supreme rabbinic authority for Judaism in Israel - to Cardinal Kurt Koch, whose Vatican department includes a commission for religious relations with Jews.

"In his homily, the pope presents the Christian faith as not just superseding the Torah; but asserts that the latter no longer gives life, implying that Jewish practice in the present era is rendered obsolete," Arousi said in the letter.

"This is in effect part and parcel of the 'teaching of contempt' towards Jews and Judaism that we had thought had been fully repudiated by the Church," he said.

Relations between Catholics and Jews were revolutionized in 1965, when the Second Vatican Council repudiated the concept of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus and began decades of inter-religious dialogue. Francis and his two predecessors visited synagogues.

Two leading Catholic scholars of religious relations with Jews agreed that the pope's remarks could be seen as a troublesome setback and needed clarification.

"To say that this fundamental tenet of Judaism does not give life is to denigrate the basic religious outlook of Jews and Judaism. It could have been written before the Council," said Father John Pawlikowski, former director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

"I think it's a problem for Jewish ears, especially because the pope's remarks were addressed to a Catholic audience," said Professor Philip Cunningham, director of the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

"It could be understood as devaluing Jewish observance of the Torah today," Cunningham said.

Arousi and Pawlikowski said it was possible that a least part of the pope's teaching homily, known as a catechesis, was written by aides and that the phrase was not properly vetted.

Koch's office said on Wednesday he had received the letter, was "considering it seriously and reflecting on a response".

Francis has had a very good relationship with Jews. While still archbishop in native Buenos Aires, he co-wrote a book with one of the city's rabbis, Abraham Skorka, and has maintained a lasting friendship with him.

In his letter to Cardinal Koch, Arousi asked him to "convey our distress to Pope Francis" and asked for a clarification from the pope to "ensure that any derogatory conclusions drawn from this homily are clearly repudiated".

### **PALESTINIANS SAVE JEWISH WOMAN ATTACKED WITH STONES NEAR HEBRON (JPost 9/2/21)**

Three Palestinians saved a Jewish woman who was stoned near Hebron on Tuesday, Ynet reported.

The woman, a 36-year-old mother of six, was driving in the direction of Kiryat Arba when a group of unidentified men attacked her car and threw stones at her.

"I was driving, and suddenly I found myself in the opposite lane with strong pains and blood flowing from my head," she told Ynet. "I went back into my lane, and it's a miracle there wasn't another car.

"When I stopped the car, and I was dripping blood, I tried to see what happened. And that's when I saw a huge rock that hit my foot... I started to cry and scream, those were difficult moments. I tried to call the police and ambulance, but there wasn't any reception," she said.

"Suddenly three Palestinians arrived and tried to help. One of them told me he was a doctor and stopped the bleeding in my head, while another tried to call the rescue forces because he had a Palestinian network that had reception in the area. It went on like this for ten minutes with me just sitting

there and them waiting with me."

The woman added that it makes no sense that there is no way to call for help in that area. Eventually, MDA showed up and took her to the hospital.

"It's a miracle that I was saved," she said to Ynet. "I almost died."

### **SECRETIVE ISRAEL-UAE OIL DEAL ENDANGERS PRIZED EILAT CORALS (YNet 8/24/21)**

A symphony in splendid technicolor, the reefs are among the world's most resilient coral colonies against warming seas. They have also become an unlikely battleground, caught between Israeli diplomatic and business interests, and ecological groups that fear this natural treasure could be in danger.

A clandestine oil deal struck last year as part of the historic agreement establishing formal diplomatic ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates is turning Eilat into a waypoint for Emirati oil headed for Western markets.

Initially hailed as a move that could cement fledgling diplomatic ties and further Israel's energy ambitions, the deal is now in question after Israel's new government opened a review. The decision has upset investors and risks a diplomatic spat with Israel's Gulf allies.

The UAE and Israel, which normalized relations last year as part of the U.S.-brokered "Abraham Accords," have since signed over \$830 million in trade deals and inked numerous trade and cooperation agreements.

But the deal between the Europe-Asia Pipeline Company, an Israeli government-owned corporation, and MED-RED Land Bridge, a joint Israel-Emirati venture, remains a secret.

Senior officials in former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government — including his former energy, foreign and environment ministers — said they didn't know about the deal until it was announced last September, after the accords were signed at the White House.

The pipeline company, known as EAPC, was founded in the 1960s to bring Iranian oil to Israel when the countries had friendly relations. Its operations are shrouded in secrecy, ostensibly for security reasons.

Israeli environmental groups have asked the country's Supreme Court to halt oil shipments, citing EAPC's questionable safety record and the risk posed by parking supertankers alongside Eilat's fragile coral ecosystems.

As for an oil spill, it's "not a question of if it will happen, but when it will happen," said Assaf Zvuloni, a Nature and Parks Authority ecologist in Eilat. Even a small rupture or human error would have disastrous consequences, he said.

Israel suffered its worst ecological disaster in February, when a spill in the eastern Mediterranean coated virtually all of its 270-kilometer (170-mile) coastline with oil. The petitioners — three Israeli environmental groups — argued that incident would "be dwarfed alongside a massive oil spill" off Eilat. Israel long lacked natural resources. But that began to change after the 2009 discovery of natural gas in the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's first exports.

The deal with the UAE would expand this fledgling energy sector, with oil shipped across Israel in a pipeline to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon and on to European markets.

Yona Fogel, executive of one of the Israeli partners in the project, told public broadcaster Kan in June that the UAE deal "will produce for EAPC earnings of hundreds (of millions) and perhaps billions of dollars" without "raising the risk to the environment whatsoever."

Ksenia Svetlova, an ex-lawmaker and director of Mideast relations with the Mitvim Institute, an Israeli think tank, said the project is especially appealing because it provides an alternative to the Suez Canal. The canal, the main waterway for Gulf exports to the West, was paralyzed early this year when a massive tanker ran aground there.

The Emiratis are gaining "an alternative route, something that they can use in case they need to divert some of the tankers to this direction," she said.

But opponents say the potential cost is irreversible damage to a natural wonder. The EAPC terminal dominates a stretch of Eilat shoreline a kilometer (half mile) north of Israel's Coral Beach Nature Reserve. Its cranes and pipes

jut into the Red Sea's navy blue waters. The air reeks of petroleum.

For now, multitudes of corals still bloom on neighboring reefs, attracting fish in kaleidoscopic abundance.

A senior government official said Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office asked the Supreme Court for additional time to respond to the environmentalists' challenge. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

Israel's new environment minister has pledged to scrap the pipeline altogether and her ministry has frozen the company's planned expansion of operations, pending a government decision.

"The Gulf of Eilat is in real danger because of the Med-Red pipeline, and the state of Israel doesn't need to be the oil bridge for other countries," Tamar Zandberg said upon taking office in June.

No less important is a future spill's impact on tourism, Eilat's lifeblood. Meir Yitzhak Halevi, a freshman lawmaker who was Eilat's mayor from 2003 until June, said he was left in the dark about EAPC's operations and called for complete transparency.

An ecological disaster would also likely impact the ecosystems of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, all of which share the gulf's waters.

"We have a real potential loss to humanity and to global biodiversity," said Gidon Bromberg, head of the cross-border EcoPeace environmental group.

EAPC dismissed environmental concerns as unfounded, claimed "the inherent danger in the arrival of tankers is zero" and contended that hundreds of tankers docked at the adjacent Jordanian port of Aqaba in the past decade.

The company refused interviews, as did Emirati officials. But Israel Hayom recently quoted unnamed Emirati officials as saying canceling the deal "is definitely a violation" of diplomatic agreements and could damage relations.

Meanwhile, EAPC has confirmed it has initiated operations. At least eight oil tankers moored in Eilat in 2021, up from an average of one every five years, according to the court petition, which contends the agreement could bring over 100 oil vessels each year.

EAPC has had a poor safety record. A 2014 pipeline rupture spilled millions of gallons of crude oil in a desert nature reserve. In the 1970s, a series of spills nearly eradicated Eilat's coral reefs.

#### **DELTA WAVE CLAIMS LIVES OF 500 ISRAELIS IN AUGUST** (Israel Hayom 9/1/21)

IDF Military Intelligence warned this week that the opening of the school year was bound to lead to an increase in the coronavirus infection rate.

"There is a reasonable possibility that despite the extensive third vaccine campaign, the increase in the number of verified cases will continue to increase," it said, "which would, in turn, lead to a rise in serious cases, further burdening the healthcare system."

The task force called on the government to reassess its plans for the 2021-2022 school year based on the coronavirus situation throughout September and prepare to decrease educational activities significantly.

They further stressed that while an "artificial" increase might soon occur in the number of daily cases – due to the mass testing by parents of their children ahead of the school year – a more accurate reflection of the effects of the school year on morbidity will be known in several more weeks.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry reported that 526 Israelis succumbed to the coronavirus in August 2021 alone. Altogether since the outbreak of the pandemic, 7,043 Israelis have died of COVID.

Of the 145,868 Israelis the ministry screened for the virus on Tuesday, 10,947 (7.65%) tested positive. There are 83,542 active cases in the country, with 1,122 Israelis hospitalized. Of those, 217 are in critical condition and 172 on ventilators.

Israel has reported 1,066,352 cases since the epidemic began. Thus far, 5,974,921 Israelis have been partially vaccinated, 5,482,062 have received both doses, and 2,157,299 got their third jabs.

Meanwhile, the school year – which began on Wednesday – did not get off

to a good start. On the first day of studies, a teacher at Shamir Elementary School in Holon tested positive for the coronavirus.

At 10 a.m., the school contacted the parents, asking them to pick up their children and self-isolate for 10 days. They will be joining the 55,390 students already in quarantine.

Based on reports, the teacher took a COVID test two days before the opening of the school year, and when he did not receive his results, he took a rapid COVID test that came back positive.

#### **POLL: 52% OF ISRAELIS WOULD SKIP ROSH HASHANAH MEAL IF UNVACCINATED RELATIVES ATTEND** (Ha'aretz 9/1/21)

More than half of Israeli Jews polled in a recent survey have said that the presence of unvaccinated friends and relatives at meals over the upcoming High Holy Days could cause them to reconsider their own attendance.

The survey, released by the Israel Democracy Institute on Wednesday, polled 602 Hebrew speakers and 155 Arabic speakers and found that 52 percent of Israeli Jews were hesitant to attend any fall holiday meals if those included unvaccinated guests. The figure rose to 58 percent among individuals who self-identified as vaccinated. The percentage of individuals who replied that they "would forgo the holiday meals if they were to include unvaccinated people" increased with age, rising to 70 percent among Jewish respondents aged 55-64.

A full 43 percent of Jews polled said that including unvaccinated people in the holiday meals would not affect their decision, with that figure rising to 71 percent among unvaccinated respondents.

Asked to evaluate the performance of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government in handling the latest wave of the pandemic, 39 percent of respondents graded it a poorly while only 16 percent stated that they believed the government was handling it very well. On average, Israeli Jews gave the government a grade of 4.53 out of 10, while Arab Israelis assigned it a 5.54.

Among Jews, perception of the government's handling of the pandemic varied significantly according to their political orientation, with 70 percent of those on the left and 60 percent of those in the center viewing it positively, while 78 percent of those on the right described it in negative terms.

On Tuesday, State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman released a new report stating that the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been ridden with failures and calling out former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's centralized decision-making process, which saw him make decisions without them being discussed in the ministerial COVID-19 cabinet.

Almost half of respondents (49 percent) also replied that they believed current public health restrictions on the unvaccinated are too light, with a greater number of Jews (53 percent) taking this position than Arabs (32.5 percent). Forty-four percent of Arabs polled said they believe the current set of restrictions is appropriate. Only 25 percent of Jews indicated satisfaction with the rules as they stand now.

Fifteen percent of Jews and 12 percent of Arabs stated that the current restrictions are too heavy-handed. Bennett has pushed the current restrictions, combined with mass vaccination, as an alternative to another lockdown, which he said "would destroy the future of the country."

On Monday, the coronavirus cabinet approved further restrictions to halt the spread of the delta variant, including a plan proposed by Bennett to limit the number of worshipers at the Western Wall for selihot penitential prayers ahead of Rosh Hashanah to no more than 8,000 people.

At their meeting, the ministers also extended Green Pass regulations to all apply to staff at health and educational institutions, as well as employees at any site where customers are subject to the Green Pass rules. The rules make admission to various public locations for those over the age of three conditional on presentation of proof of vaccination or recovery from the virus, or a negative coronavirus test. Malls and stores are exempt.

About two weeks ago, new limitations on gatherings went into effect, capping the number of participants at events to 1,000 people in enclosed spaces and 5,000 at outdoor events without assigned seating.

In early August, the coronavirus cabinet decided to exempt worshippers at synagogues, mosques and churches from the obligation to present the Green Pass. The decision, which came at the request of Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit, imposed entry restrictions only on prayers involving more than 50 people.

In March 2020, the Health Ministry found that of the people infected in public spaces, more than 30 percent had visited synagogues and yeshivas.

While severe cases among the inoculated have declined in recent weeks, overall infections have continued to rise, reaching a record 10,947 on Monday – the same day that the number of COVID-19 deaths since the pandemic reached Israel last year rose past 7,000.

#### **MEMBER OF INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE: 'MAINTAIN JUST ONE BONFIRE ON MOUNT MERON' (Arutz-7 9/1/21)**

During a Wednesday morning meeting of the government committee for investigating the Meron disaster, Israel Police's Superintendent Michael Touboul said that in his opinion, just one bonfire lighting should be held on Mount Meron, and it, too, should be limited.

Forty-five people were killed in the deadly Lag Ba'omer stampede on Mount Meron, and dozens more were injured.

"Every year the gathering grows and increases. The mountain has become too small to hold that number of people. And we, with infinite creativity, try every year to examine options to expand the standing areas and the bleachers for sitting, in order to create more places so that the people arriving at the mountain will be able to stand safely," Touboul explained.

According to him, in recent years, the number of visitors has increased in a way which makes it difficult for the police to manage.

"Throughout the years, the mountain has changed for the better, in a way that expanded the standing areas, but what happens in actuality is that these upgrades invite more and more people, and in the end of the day the mountain becomes too small to hold [them]."

The issue of bonfire lightings, he said, is crucial to learning lessons from the disaster. "If this continues in the coming years, it will present a danger to those arriving on the mountain," he warned. "I would keep only one of the traditional lightings, and even that should be limited with regards to how many people and how much time we allot it."

"The other bonfire lightings I would remove from there, in an organized fashion. There are very organized areas at the bottom of the town of Meron. All of the bonfires can be held there. We can also find a place that overlooks the gravesite. That would solve [the issue of] the pressure."

Earlier, Health Ministry Director General Professor Nachman Ash, who was coronavirus czar at the time of the disaster, said that there had been "a proposal to limit each event at the site to 3,000 people."

"They needed to decide who would be responsible for this plan, and here no one wanted to take the responsibility. There was an argument between the police and the Religious Affairs Ministry. It was impossible to get the name of the responsible party, and so the submission of the guidelines was delayed."

#### **BENNETT AND BIDEN: THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP? (Douglas Bloomfield, JPost 9/1/21)**

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett launched his first trip to Washington with a pair of empty promises that he couldn't break if he wanted to – and everyone knew it. Nonetheless it was a big success.

For his right-wing settler constituency, he vowed there would be no Palestinian state on his watch, and for the Left side of his coalition – and the Americans – he promised no annexation of West Bank lands.

Annexation is off the table because it would scuttle the Abraham Accords and Israel's long-sought openings with secular Arab states. Trade, tourism and diplomatic relations with the moderate Arabs are too important to risk by appeasing his extreme nationalist supporters. Bennett still wants the big prize that eluded his predecessor: a deal with Saudi Arabia, the leading political, religious and economic player in the region.

Palestinian statehood is off the table not just because Bennett is opposed

but because the Palestinians cannot get their act together well enough to challenge the Israelis.

He brought US President Joe Biden a peace offering: no public fight over his desire to return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal scuttled by his predecessor.

Bennett said that despite his strong disagreement, he will not publicly campaign against the deal the way his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, did. He is keenly aware of the great damage Netanyahu did not only to relations with then-US president Barack Obama (whose vice president was Biden) but also to bipartisan support for Israel. Bennett has made repairing relations with Democrats and American Jewry a top priority.

Biden vowed Iran will "never" get a nuclear weapon, and he told Bennett "if diplomacy fails, we're ready to turn to other options." Biden still wants to return to the agreement, but the new more-extreme president in Tehran makes a deal look increasingly difficult.

Israeli officials doubt the US would take military action if Iran actually built a nuke, but their best hope is that international pressure and Israel's own arsenal will be an effective deterrent.

Biden wants to repair former US president Donald Trump's damage to relations with the Palestinians, but he has no delusions about reviving peace negotiations. Those are on the way-back burner.

The 85-year-old Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is in the 16th year of his four-year term, and he shows no interest in retiring. He is increasingly unpopular and refuses to groom a successor or hold a new election. His government is corrupt, inept and despised, and even with a willing Israeli peace partner, his maximalist demands would be a non-starter.

A top PA official, Azzam al-Ahmed, this week ruled out any peace negotiations under American leadership. He wants an international conference in which the US is just one party, along with the Europeans, Russia, the UN, China, Jordan, Egypt and South Africa at the table.

That's a non-starter – perhaps intentionally – since Washington is the only player with any serious clout with Israel and the one Israel trusts most (but not totally) to watch its back. More important, the US and Israel are the only ones who can deliver what the Palestinians want most – acceptance and legitimacy. As in the past, other countries have a supporting role to play, but only Washington can be the closer.

A source close to Bennett, the former leader of the settler movement, said, "there is no diplomatic process with the Palestinians, nor will there be one."

The prime minister told Biden that he will instead focus on security and economic cooperation with the Palestinians.

Biden is a long-time supporter of the two-state solution, but Israeli-Palestinian peace is not on his radar. The president knows the prospects are remote, the players aren't ready and has far more urgent things on his plate.

This week's final exit from Afghanistan marks Washington's full pivot from that part of the world to the Far East, specifically China.

High on Biden's agenda this week was to impress Bennett that Israel may be paying too high a price for its burgeoning business relations with China. Israel is a global leader in cybertech, as the NSO spyware scandal illustrated. That only heightened concerns about Israel's technological and economic cooperation with Beijing, which is notorious for computer hacking, violating intellectual property rights and breaking copyright laws.

Bennett, the son of American immigrants, understands the problem; he made his fortune in hi-tech in the US before returning to Israel to go into politics.

The most important outcome of the summit may be the rapport established by the two men. They're aware of the damage done by their mercurial predecessors. When it comes to US-Israel relations, Biden is more experienced than any prior president, with a keener understanding of the dynamics of internal Israeli and Palestinian politics.

By all accounts the meeting was cordial and friendly, lasting twice as long as planned. Bennett described Biden as "a leader who loves Israel, knows exactly what he wants and is attuned to our needs," and the president said, "We've become close friends." They also share an affinity for riding Amtrak.

The last thing either leader wants is a return of the abrasive Netanyahu, and that is a strong incentive for a friendly, productive relationship.



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# SHABBOS DELIGHTS

## TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

**Presented by Rabbi Menachem Winter, Rosh Kollel**

**From our archives**

**Seek G-d when He is found, call to Him when He is near. (Yeshaya, 95:6) "These are the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." (Talmud Yevamos 49b)**

Rosh Hashanah begins the Ten Days of Repentance that culminate with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Jewish New Year is a time of self-evaluation and introspection. Additionally, Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment on which all mankind come before G-d. It is on this day that all of our needs and successes for the coming year are set. For example, the quality of our health, the degree of success we achieve, and the hoped-for realization of our dreams and aspirations are all determined during the Day of Judgment.

Given that Yom Kippur is the day we ask forgiveness while we stand in judgment on Rosh Hashanah, it is extremely perplexing why Rosh Hashanah precedes Yom Kippur. It would seemingly be more logical to first utilize Yom Kippur, that great day of compassion and forgiveness, and only then come before G-d in judgment. Why is it reversed?

To answer this fundamental question we must first define the essence of Rosh Hashanah. It is not simply a court date with G-d, but rather it is an awe-inspiring day dedicated to realizing who we truly are, what our mission is, and how deeply connected we are to G-d. On Rosh Hashanah we not only acknowledge G-d's majesty and grandeur, but His personal involvement in our daily lives and all that transpires. We take further stock of our national legacy and the humbling responsibility placed upon us by the fact that G-d has chosen us to be His sublime and noble people. On the Day of Judgment we affirmatively express our acceptance of this special heritage and proclaim our fealty to our King and Father in Heaven.

It is only now, with this realization and our renewed commitment, that we can adequately begin the process of Teshuva - finding our way home. And it is through this clarity of purpose and mission that we are able to merit blessing and goodness for ourselves and our families. Let us make sure to take advantage of this special day to realize who we are, the depth and breadth of our special mission, and to firmly and lovingly forge a relationship with our Father, our King.

**Wishing you a Good Shabbos and a Sweet New Year!**

## SPONSOR

**This week's Shabbos Delights is sponsored by Manny and Loretta Sadwin to commemorate the yahrzeit of Loretta's father z"l Alter Eliezer Yitzchak ben Litman (Irving Smolar) on Erev Rosh Hashanah**

## TABLE TALK

### Point to Ponder

**And you will return "ad" "up to" Hashem your G-d... (30, 2)**

Repent Yisrael, "ad" "up to" Hashem your G-d... (Hoshea 14, 2). Rebbi Levi taught, "Repentance brings a person close to the Throne of Glory, as the verse says "ad," which means up until Hashem, your G-d." Rav Yochanan says that this phenomenon only applies when a person repents alone. However, when one repents along with a congregation, the repentance brings them to the Throne of Glory, since the word "ad" is inclusive, meaning all the way up to and including the Throne of Glory. (Yoma 86a)

Why is there no argument in regard to the intent of the word "ad" in our Parsha? Why is there only an argument regarding the verse in Hoshea?

### Parsha Riddle

**You are standing today, before Hashem, your G-d... (29:9) Those who speak untruths will not merit being in Hashem's presence (Sotah 42a).**

**Where is there a hint to that in this posuk?**

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

**Last week's riddle:**

**How many curses are there in Parshas Ki Savo?**

**Answer: 98**

## HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

### HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Nitzavim*, the Torah declares (29:28): "The hidden [sins] are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed [sins] are for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah." As we have previously noted, Rashi explains this to be a justification of collective Jewish responsibility: even if it is only individuals who sin, if the sins are public, the community has a duty to purge the evil from its midst, and it will be punished if it fails to do so. "All Israel are responsible for each other (*kol Yisrael areivim zeh la-zeh*)." The Torah fundamentally rejects John Stuart Mill's "harm principle," which asserts that

[T]he only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. (*On Liberty*, Ch. 1)

There is a great deal of discussion by *halachic* authorities of the parameters of this obligation to forestall sin (even by non-coercive means). One scenario that is extensively considered by modern authorities is the case of an *eruv* which has become invalid, but whose invalidity is not generally known, and people are thus unknowingly violating Shabbos by carrying in the absence of a valid *eruv*.

Many authorities maintain that at least in principle, people should be informed of the problem so that they may cease violating Shabbos although some maintain that the invalidity should not be publicly announced, since many will not desist from carrying anyway, and it is therefore preferable that they should remain inadvertent sinners rather than become deliberate ones, particularly in light of the fact that one who carries under the (good faith) assumption of a valid *eruv* has committed only a relatively minor infraction (*misasek*) even if it turns out that the *eruv* was in fact invalid. Individuals whom one is sure will desist from carrying should be privately informed (*Shemiras Shabbos ke-Hilchasah* Ch. 17 par. 25 and n. 109.)

Others maintain that it is preferable to publicly announce the invalidity, although one should nevertheless not specifically inform those whom one suspects will not refrain from carrying (*The Laws of An Eruv*, p. 181. Cf. R. Yaakov Ariel, *Hachrazah al Eruv she-Nikra*.)

PRESENTED BY

**RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH**

## KIDS KORNER

### Who Am I?

#### #1 WHO AM I ?

1. I will be for Moshiach.
2. I am for coronation.
3. I am for repentance.
4. I cause Hashem to "move."

#### #2 WHO AM I ?

1. I am not in heaven.
2. I am not overseas.
3. I am in your heart.
4. I am very close.

#### Last Week's Answers

**#1 Curses of the Tochacha (Rebuke)** (I am almost a hundred, I am quiet, I result from not listening, I am not wanted.)

**#2 Bikkurim** (I get tied, I get brought up, I am the first, I am waved.)

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