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סוכות





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DIVREI BRACHA:

Teshuvah, A Guide to Resilience in the Face of Crisis



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One of the most famous works on the broad subject of *teshuvah* is Rabbeinu Yonah's *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, a treatise that is often studied in advance of and during the *Yomim Neoraim*. In the very first paragraph (*Sha'ar* 1 No. 1), he writes that one of the greatest kindnesses that *Hashem* has bestowed upon us is that He has shown us the way to return to Him after we have sinned by leaving open for us the doors of *teshuvah*, and thereby allowing us, as he puts it, to escape from the trap in which we are often stuck because of our *aveiros*. The question is why accepting our *teshuvah* is considered such an act of kindness, such a favor, on *Hashem's* part. After all, the *Torah* tells us twice - both before the *Mabul* (flood) that destroyed all the world's inhabitants except for Noach and his family (*Bereishis* 6:5) and during its aftermath (*Bereishis* 8:21) - that man has a natural inclination to do that which is evil, and the *Gemara* in *Sukkah* (52a-b), citing the first of those *pesukim*, asserts that this inclination grows in its strength each day of one's life. It thus seems only fair that since *Hashem* Himself created man this way, if one is able to successfully fight and overcome this natural inclination, and sincerely return to Him in spite of it, *Hashem* should accept this person's *teshuvah*.

It is possible to suggest that *Hashem's* kindness here lies in the fact that, as the *Gemara* there (52b) notes, *Hashem* actually helps the person along this path of righteousness, and assists him in this battle against his *Yetzer Hara*. In other words, *Hashem* is not simply a passive observer who merely accepts the good things that the individual is trying to do, but rather, He takes an active role in helping him reach his spiritual goals; that is the favor which *Hashem* performs in the *teshuvah* process. As the *Gemara* says in *Shabbos* (104a), if one is trying to purify himself, he is assisted. In short, there is no such thing, as the *posuk* states in *Koheles* (7:20), as a person who

does only good and does not sin, but as Rashi there (*d"h ki*) adds, this fact should inspire a person to examine his behavior. If one does, he can "escape" his bad behavior and return to *Hashem*, and *Hashem* Himself is kind enough to smooth the way for him. Indeed, the *Midrash* in *Koheles Rabbah* (7:1:15) teaches that *Hashem* is angry when one does not take advantage of the opportunity He offers for *teshuvah*, likening him to a prisoner who failed to escape his cell through a tunnel that was provided by someone else. *Hashem* not only wants and accepts our *teshuvah*, but he actually helps us to achieve it.

There is, however, another way to understand *Hashem's* goodness in accepting our *teshuvah*. It is true that *teshuvah* can often be motivated by a person's genuine desire to change his ways and come closer to *Hashem*; this, it would appear, is the type of *teshuvah* upon which the Rambam seems to focus at the beginning of *Hilchos Teshuvah* (1:1), where he quotes as the source for this *mitzvah* certain *pesukim* regarding confession (*Bamidbar* 5:6-7), presumably referring to one who has sinned and decided on his own to repent. Further evidence can be drawn from the fact that he describes the process as being undertaken by one who is ready on his own to do *teshuvah* (*ki-sheya'aseh teshuvah...*). But sometimes, *teshuvah* is the result of an external motivator, something which can be classified as a crisis which the individual experiences, which causes him to realize that he had better make some changes in his life, lest things get even more miserable for him. The Ramban (*Devarim* 30:11) cites that particular *posuk* as the source for the *mitzvah* to do *teshuvah*, as does the *Semak* (*Mitzvah* 53), and in the context of the other *pesukim* there, the reference is to one who is suffering with the curses bestowed upon him in exile, far away from *Hashem*. Earlier in the *Torah* as well (*Devarim* 4:27-31), we find that pain and anguish sometimes are



what motivates one to do *teshuvah*; the *Ohr Hachaim* there (4:29) thus speaks of two types of *teshuvah*, one driven by a person's sincere recognition of his obligations to *Hashem*, and one generated by tribulation and suffering.

It can be easily understood why the former type of *teshuvah* would be accepted by *Hashem*. After all, the individual has taken honest stock of himself and his life, has recognized his shortcomings, and has now acted on a pure desire to return to Him. The latter type of *teshuvah*, however, seems at least somewhat insincere. The person is presently suffering, and wants simply to alleviate his painful condition; he has been beaten up, as it were, and doesn't want to get punched anymore, so he concludes that he has no choice but to change his behavior. The great kindness which *Hashem* shows us, as the aforementioned *Rabbeinu Yonah* said, may thus be that even this type of *teshuvah* is accepted. Indeed, *Rabbeinu Yonah* himself writes later in *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (*Sha'ar* 2 Nos. 1-16) that there are actually six primary motivating factors behind *teshuvah*, and the very first one he lists there (No. 2) is experiencing troubles. He then adds that it is in fact a manifestation of *Hashem's* kindness that He accepts this kind of *teshuvah* as well. The *Meiri*, in his *Chibbur Hateshuvah* (*Meishiv Nefesh* 1:2), has a similar, though certainly not identical, presentation; *teshuvah* motivated by suffering is the seventh category on his list. It may be noted in this regard that the *Gemara* in *Megillah* (14a) points out that the official decision to destroy the Jewish people by *Achashveirosh* and *Haman*, and the resulting sense of impending doom facing the Jewish community at that time, did more to inspire people to change for the better than all the prophecies, sermons, and exhortations of the *nevi'im*. And this, in turn, led to a reaffirmation and indeed a re-acceptance of the *Torah*, as noted by the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (88a). When the *navi*

Hoshea calls for repentance by crying out "*Shuvah Yisrael...*" (*Hosheia* 14:2), the reason he provides, as explained by *Rashi* there (*d"h Ki*), is that people have encountered many troubles because of their sins, and *teshuvah* is the only way out. *Teshuvah* motivated by crisis is thus valid as well, and can lead to very positive results.

One lesson which may be derived from this idea is that no matter how downtrodden and far away one may feel, no matter how much adversity one may be experiencing, it is always possible to "get back up." The *Midrash Shochar Tov* to *Tehillim* (40:5) thus states that a person should never feel that he is too far gone because of his sins and that his situation is therefore hopeless, but should rather do *teshuvah* and trust that *Hashem* will indeed accept it regardless of the motivation. Later on, the *Midrash Shochar Tov* (*Tehillim* 102:7) adds that *Hashem's* healing hand, as it were, is extended to anyone who does *teshuvah*, again, apparently regardless of what may have inspired him. The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (1:7) famously teaches (as many interpret it) that one should not despair, or abandon hope, due to experiencing adversity; the *Meiri*, in his *Chibbur HaTeshuvah* (*Meishiv Nefesh* 1:1) states that one should similarly not give up hope of being able to do *teshuvah*, adding, based upon a *Gemara* in *Berachos* (10a), that even if one feels a sharp sword upon his neck, he should still not give up hope of being the beneficiary of Divine mercy. On the contrary, an adverse circumstance can in fact bring one to *teshuvah*.

Finally, we may also suggest that just as the various crises of life should not lead one to a sense of despair and abandonment of hope with regards to the possibility of doing *teshuvah*, they should also not be impediments to one's ability to succeed and be happy in life in general. Despite being confronted with sometimes difficult challenges, one must exhibit resilience in the face of



adversity. And perhaps, part of the kindness which *Hashem* grants us when accepting even *teshuvah* motivated solely by pain and hardship is that He thereby teaches us this important lesson, that in life as well, one can rebound from failure and crisis. The nature of life is that we all experience difficulties and setbacks, but we cannot give up when confronted by them. The *possuk* in *Mishlei* (24:16) teaches that a *tzaddik* can fall down multiple times – but he gets back up! And perhaps that is in fact why he is a *tzaddik* – because when he gets up he is even greater than he was before.

The outgoing year – 5780 – presented all of us with previously unheard of and even unimaginable challenges. But we are still here, we are strong, perhaps even stronger than before, and we eagerly and confidently look forward to better things in 5781. The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (117a) tells us that what we call *Hallel* was instituted to be recited specifically following a period of *tzaros* – challenges and problems – which we ultimately survived. The *pesukim* at the end of the first paragraph of *Hallel* (*Tehillim* 113:7-9) speak of *Hashem* lifting up the destitute and downtrodden from the trash heaps and bringing them to great *simchah*; the Radak there (to *possuk* 9, *d'h moshivi*) explains that *Hashem* will turn nature upside down to do so. As we engage in the *teshuvah* process this *Yomim Neoraim* season, let us recall that it is indeed *Hashem* who controls nature as He sees fit, and can thus turn things around at any moment. Let us remain resilient, even in the face of the current adversity, and let us never give up or despair, not only of being able to do *teshuvah* successfully, but of being able to pursue and accomplish our life's goals and dreams.

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ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh Hashanah: Justice and Mercy

Rosh Hashanah provides an interesting problem, one that begs for solution; indeed, one that boggles the mind, leaving it in confusion. *Rosh Hashanah* is the anniversary of the greatest event in history: Creation of the human. Simultaneously, it is the human's day of judgement. Is the Human valourous? Should he exist? To be or not to be? That is the question.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes:

“ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים”
“On the day on which Hashem Elokim created heaven and earth” (*Bereishis* 2:4)

“We meet here a new name of God [ה-ו-ה] ...Let us first try to understand what is meant by the name Hashem. Even if the deep essential nature of God which is contained in this Name must always remain unfathomable to us, we still have to figure out what meaning of this name is meant to be accessible to us. Our Sages already tell us to take it as the Midas Harachamim, as the management of God exercised in love, as God being the God of Love for Humanity...as the transitive form of the Piel or Hiphil of the root hayah; not the existing one, but the one who gives, dispenses existence, causes existence.”

Similarly, the Rav, z”l, interpreted the Rambam’s first *halacha* (*Yesodei Hatorah* 1:1):

“יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון והוא ממציא כל נמצא וכל הנמצאים משמים וארץ ומה שביניהם לא נמצאו אלא מאמיתת המצאו”
The fundamental idea and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there is One who is the First Found, and he causes all other things to be found, on heaven and earth, and all that is in them is not found except through the truth of His being found

“All that exists in the Heavens and the earth exists only because He shares His existence with it.”

Rabbi Hirsch writes that God’s name means ‘the One Who gives existence’, indicating the dual facets in God’s name; it means the God of Love of humans, and the God of love of bringing into existence. What greater love is there than creating the human, who could not possibly earn his coming into existence. To love the human who will exist materially, and did exist only previously in the heart of his Creator. Thus, these two definitions conflate into one name of God. The God who unconditionally loves His creation that, as His name states, only He could cause to be. To this one can add the Rav’s definition of existence: To share the material reality of existence is to be subsumed into the existence of God. The bond of existence is a bond of love.

In *Collected Writings of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch*, [Volume II, Philip Feldheim, Inc., 1997], Rabbi Hirsch takes the reader on a tour of the Thirteen Attributes:

א. *He is the Source of all energy, the Impetus for every movement...*

רחום. *Compassionate ‘the womb’. He embraces all his creatures with the love of a parent.*

The reader is invited to peruse the other Divine Attributes in Rabbi Hirsch’s monograph to experience the unconditional love depicted in those scriptural terms. As he concludes, “They are not said in vain.”

Our thoughts are then muddled: On the day of creation of the human and such outpouring of love and compassion, are we then to be judged and examined under the fine lens of Divine Justice? Out of fear and panic we appeal:

אל תבוא במשפט עמנו כי לא יצדק לפניך כל חי
Do not enter into judgement with us; because no living thing can be innocent before You! [Machzor]

What sort of love is this?



Allow me to portray a familiar scene. New parents gaze lovingly at their newly born joy. What is on their mind? Will the infant be happy, successful in life, live up to the expectations of the parents? Will life treat the child with kindness? Will he have the skills and courage to meet future challenges?

What was God thinking when gazing at His infant creation, pondering the human gatekeeper made in His image as stated, "What then is man that You remember him? And the son of man that You are mindful of him? Yet You have made him slightly less than the angels; and with honor and dignity You have crowned him. You gave him dominion over the works of Your hands; You put everything at his feet." (*Tehillim* 8:5-7, *The Metsudah Tehilim*). What hopes our Creator had for His infant world! So, each *Rosh Hashanah* that ancient love resurfaces with that ancient anticipation, and so the examination begins. Has the creation disappointed the Creator, or has it lived up to expectation?

שמח ה' במעשיו

May the Lord take delight in His creatures (Tehillim 104).

"Whether or not He will have cause to take delight in His creatures is uncertain, for He Himself, of His own free will, made the attainment of His purposes on Earth dependent upon the voluntary obedience of a creature endowed with freedom of will, and thus with the capacity for straying from the right path." [Hirsch, *The Psalms*, Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1978]

In summary, the great love of the Creator that granted independence of will to the Human also created doubt as to whether the Human will develop into the person the Creator had anticipated. So, on *Rosh Hashanah*, to recall the Creator's love is to recall the capacity to achieve that love, and the juxtaposition of justice and mercy; also, of love and anticipation or disappointment.

אמר לו רבי שמעון אפשר ספר תורה חסר אות אחת וכתב לקוח את ספר התורה הזה ושמעתם אותו וגו' אלא עד כאן הקב"ה אומר ומשה אומר וכותב מכאן ואילך הקב"ה אומר ומשה כותב בדמע

Rabi Shimon said to him: is it possible that [Moshe Rabbeinu wrote] a Sefer Torah missing even one letter? The possuk relates that Hashem commanded Moshe "take this Sefer Torah, and place it..." [And yet, we know that the last verses in the Torah refer to Moshe's own death!] Rather, until that point, Hashem dictated the Torah and Moshe spoke and wrote it; from that point on, Hashem dictated, and Moshe wrote with his own tears (Menachos 30a).

Rabbi Herschel Schachter relates in *Nefesh HaRav*, [Reishis Yerushalayim, Yerushalayim 1985], how the Rav, z"l, was moved at the simple reading of "*bidima*", meaning "with tears". Why did Moshe cry? He knew that entering *Eretz Yisroel* was not to be. He was told about his passing much earlier. Why cry now, as we arrive at the last eight sentences of the *Torah*? What happened now?

The last eight sentences, explained the Rav, were not *Torah* yet, because Moshe still lived, in contradiction to the sentence that said he died. Since the sentence was not really true, it could not possess *kedushas haTorah*; it could not be *Torah*. That is, it could not qualify as *Torah* until it became true. So, Moshe cried because he left an unfinished *Torah*; *Torah* that would be finished only until after his passing, but not finished by him.

If we write a *Sefer Torah* throughout our lives by the *mitzvos* we do, character we develop, *tefilos* we daven, and the *Torah* we learn, will our *Torah* be completed during our own lifetime, or will there be some sentences left out, our *Torah* remaining incomplete? This is a valid concern on *Rosh Hashanah*, the day the human was created. Does He delight in our *Torah*?



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(’21)

Kavanos During Shofar: Perspectives from the Berditchever

Although the *shofar* elicits fear in all of us, the *Midrash* in *Vayikra Rabbah* tells us that the *shofar* represents *rachamim* (mercy). The *Midrash* explains (*Vayikra Rabbah* 29:5) that with the sounding of the *shofar*, *Hashem* Himself, *kavayachol* (so to speak), rises from His throne of judgment and sits on the throne of mercy. If this is the case, why are so many struck with fear at the sound of the *shofar*, when it actually represents mercy? In addition, what has *Klal Yisroel* done to deserve *rachamim* at the sound of the *shofar*? Rav Levi Yitzchak Of Berdichev, the *Kedushas Levi*, answers these questions with a *mashal* (parable):

A king once went hunting in a large forest. He got lost in the woods, and started asking directions from anyone he stumbled upon. Unfortunately, no one recognized that he was the king, and people were either unable or did want to take the time to help him. Finally, the king happened upon a wise man who recognized him. The wise man showed the monarch the quickest way out of the woods, and accompanied the king all the way back to the palace. The king, impressed by the wisdom and touched by the kindness of the wise man, appointed him his top minister. The king also ordered that the minister be given the finest clothing befitting his position.

Time passed, and the minister, forgetting who was responsible for him obtaining his prominent stature, sinned against the king. The king got wind of the minister’s transgression, and ordered that he be placed on trial. Knowing that he was in fact guilty of the transgression, the minister was full of fear. Desperate, the minister begged to be allowed to change into his old clothes before a verdict was rendered. The king granted his request. When the minister appeared before the king, the king was reminded of the great kindness the minister had shown him when he was lost. The king, overwhelmed with a feeling of mercy, forgave the minister, and restored him to his position of prominence.

Despite it being offered to all the nations, the only nation that accepted *Hashem*’s offer of the *Torah* at the time of *Matan Torah* was *Klal Yisroel*. Not only did they accept the Kingship

of *Hashem*, but they did so with great excitement, and declared *na’aseh* (we will do) before *nishmah* (we will listen). We are scared during *tekias shofar* because we are aware of the sins we have committed against *Hashem*, and are cognizant of the fate we really deserve. Yet we blow the *shofar* specifically because *Matan Torah* was accompanied by the call of the *shofar*. We sound the *shofar* to remind the *Ribono Shel Olam* that it was *Klal Yisroel* alone who accepted *Hashem*’s *Torah* and *Malchus*, and in this merit we hope to be worthy of His *rachamim*.

If we are in fact *zocheh* to *Hashem*’s *rachamim* during *tekias shofar* – what should we be concentrating on or hoping for during the *tekios*? The Berditchever answers that what we should be hoping for and what we should be beseeching of *Hashem* is the *geulah sheleimah*, the coming of the final redemption. What *chutzpah*! We know we are sinners, and are hoping for *rachamim*, and yet dare to ask for *Moshiach*? Perhaps another famous *vort* from the Berditchever can explain the request. One year, before the *shofar* was blown, the *Kedushas Levi* declared in a loud voice. “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, you have called *Rosh Hashanah* “*Yom Teruah*”, a day of blowing – and look how far your people have taken this *Yom Teruah* – we blow 100 sounds! Millions of *yidden* have blown 100 sounds for thousands of years – what do we ask for in return? As we say in the blessing of *Tekah Beshofar* every day three times, we are asking for only one *tekiah* – the *tekiah* of our freedom – which, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, You have yet to blow”.

This past year, as we were in solitude for so long, the *Torah* we have been learning since we came back to *yeshiva* is that much sweeter, and the sound of the *shofar* in *shul* means so much more to all of us. Our *kavanos* and concentration are stronger this *Elul*, and will be stronger still on *Rosh Hashanah*. May the beautiful sounds of our *kol Torah* and our strengthened *kavanos* during the *tekios* elicit *Hashem*’s true *rachamim*, so that we see the *geulah shelimah bimheirah biyameinu*.

Testing, Testing, One, Two, Three



Shneur
Agronin
('21)

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we read about the tenth trial which *Hashem* tested Avraham with - the *Akeidas Yitzchak*. Beginning in *Bereishis* 22:1, the *Torah* describes that *Hashem* “tested” Avraham through commanding him to sacrifice his beloved son Yitzchak. Though *Chazal* tell us that Avraham was tested ten times by *Hashem*, only with regard to this final and most substantial challenge does the *Torah* explicitly reveal that *Hashem* tested Avraham. On this point, the Ramban clarifies the true essence of a “test,” or *nisayon*. On account of *Hashem* imbuing every individual with generally irrevocable free-will, each person possesses the *potential* to follow either the righteous or wicked path during their life. In other words, each decision which we face represents a sort of moral Schrödinger’s cat - until we make a conscious choice and act upon it, the absolute outcome remains purely theoretical. Only when we decide what our next move will be does the result enter the realm of reality. Since, when *Hashem* tests us, He, in His omniscience, knows exactly how we will handle the challenge, the test itself only transforms a potential act of righteousness into a tangible part of our existence, for which *Hashem* can bestow His reward upon us. As a result, the *Malbim* comments that the tests we face serve the purpose of benefiting us, by not only acting as conduits for *Hashem*’s blessings to reach us, but by demonstrating our unique potentials in an objective manner.

The *Torah* emphasizes that this test takes place “after these things [events]” (*Bereishis* 22:1). What exactly does the *Torah* refer to? Rabi Yochanan explains (*Sanhedrin* 89b) that *Hashem* tested Avraham after the *Satan* accused him of acting selfishly and without proper recognition of *Hashem*’s kindnesses. After all, *Hashem* miraculously granted him a son and lengthened his life far beyond that of most people - thus, it seemed inconsiderate that Avraham would not offer a single animal sacrifice at any of his meals. In response, *Hashem* told the *Satan* that Avraham merely wished to provide enough food for Yitzchak, since he would be his successor, according to *Hashem*’s plan. Av-

raham’s lack of offering sacrifices did not constitute ingratitude. In order to prove that Avraham would always remain subservient to *Hashem*’s will with regard to Yitzchak, *Hashem* subsequently tested Avraham through the *Akeidah*. But, in light of what the Ramban explained, that *Hashem* already knows the eventuality of every decision which He places before us, the *Akeidah* included, why did *Hashem* need to actually test Avraham? Why couldn’t He simply tell the *Satan* exactly what Avraham would end up doing? Would that not sufficiently quell the *Satan*’s accusation?

In order to answer this question, one can refer to the *Malbim* referenced above, who writes that tests serve to clarify and concretize each and every person’s potential. Combining this principle with that of the Ramban, that the ultimate purpose of the tests we face remains solely to benefit *us*, since *Hashem* already knows the result, an interesting approach to *Hashem*’s response to the *Satan* reveals itself. *Hashem* did not need to prove anything *Himself* to the *Satan* - rather, the *Akeidah* would reinforce the iron resolve of Avraham in living life completely according to *Hashem*’s Will, by demonstrating to Avraham his own strength. Thus, *Hashem* effectively told Avraham not to pay heed should the *Satan* accuse him wrongly of selfishness, as Avraham himself could respond by calling upon the *Akeidah*, his valiant act of unshakeable fidelity to *Hashem*.

We can relate this understanding to how we view our own tests which *Hashem* carefully places before us every day. Not only do they present opportunities for us to strengthen our priceless connection to *Hashem*, but they additionally show us who we really are and what we are capable of. This *Rosh Hashanah*, may we all merit to succeed in overcoming our challenges and growing from them, knowing that *Hashem* crafts them according to each individual’s potential. Through them, may we come to truly recognize and make use of our abilities in serving *Hashem*, for this year and many more to come!



Yisroel
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Haras vs. Teileid

Each day of *Rosh Hashanah*, by *Musaf*, we say the phrase *hayom haras olam* following *shofar* blowing. Most *siddurim* translate the phrase to mean “today the world was born”. This, however, is not a very apt translation for the word “*haras*”. The word for a birth that is used significantly more often in the *Torah* is “*teileid*”. The word *haras* appears before the word *teileid* in many *pesukim*, because the word *haras* is more appropriately rendered as “conceived.” So, the question is, why do we use a word which really translates to “conceived”, when the word “born” would seemingly be a better choice for what is occurring on *Rosh Hashanah*?

One may be tempted to say that the word *haras* here also means birth, and the author was just using a general word, without any specific intention in mind. But on the other hand, there is no chance that the word would be used in such a general sense, because both the *parshiyos* we read in the *Torah* and *haftorah* in the morning contain both the words *haras* and *teileid*, by Sarah and Chana respectively. Therefore, there must be some significance as to why we focus on the concept of conception, both in the *Torah* sections of the morning and as we stand after just having heard the penetrating blasts of the *shofar*.

Perhaps one possible answer could be based on the idea of what Sarah and Chana both faced prior to giving birth. Both of these holy women were waiting for years and years to be blessed by *Hashem* with a child. They first proved their worth to *Hashem* with hundreds and hundreds of prayers. Maybe that is the lesson that the author wants us to derive from this word; not to forget the desire, the waiting, the yearning for the creation to come anew, for all of us to

be judged again, hopefully in the book of life, for a successful and fruitful year. We are to understand that nothing will come about unless we prove that we want, yearn, and *daven* for it.

Another reason for the use of the word *haras* and not *teileid* could be the period of time between the two. We know that a baby takes nine months to form, and perhaps we are supposed to feel a similar emotion as we wait for the Divine decree to be sealed on *Yom Kippur*. We are supposed to stew in our *tefillos* during the *Aseres Yimei Teshuvah*, and truly experience the pressure and fear of not really knowing what will happen come the “birth” of our decree. Perhaps this is why the *Gemara* says the world was really created in *Nissan*, and *Hashem* only *decided* to create the world on *Rosh Hashanah*, to show that the holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* is one inherently tied up with waiting. In fact, according to that opinion, *Rosh Hashanah* would literally be the day of the conception of the world, and not the day of its birth.

The third explanation is the use of the word *haras* could be to connect it to the word *horem* - parents. It is to remind us that we are *Hashem*’s children, and he is our parent; and, consequently, that he loves us as a parent loves his child. The word is therefore there to serve as a reminder to us that we are children of *Hashem*. However, that does not mean that *Hashem* will give us all mercy, as *Hashem* also has a *midas hadin* (attribute of judgement), that will ensure that we are judged on *Rosh Hashanah* in a true and honest way. So, we should remember as we say this phrase, that we are loved by *Hashem*, but we must also be sure to do proper *teshuvah* and bring ourselves closer to *Hashem* through *Rosh Hashanah* and the *Aseres Yimei Teshuvah*, so we will all be *zoche* to a sweet and successful new year.

ASERES YIMEI TESHUVA:

The Power Of Teshuvah



Noam
Steinmetz
(’21)

There is a *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (54a) which states that *teshuvah* is one of the seven things which *Hashem* prepared prior to creating the world. This is because *Hashem* planned to create Man with free will, which meant that sin would be inevitable. For this reason, *Hashem* gave us an opportunity to repent for these sins, built into the very nature of the world.

Even a small amount of *teshuvah* is incredibly significant. The *Pesikta Rabbasi* says that even the thought of *teshuvah* in one’s heart can lift them all the way up to the *Kisei Hakavod*, *Hashem*’s Heavenly Throne. Even the mere thought of *teshuvah* can be a great merit, as it is found in *Shemos Rabbah* that *Bnei Yisroel* were only freed from Egypt when *Hashem* saw that the sinners of *Klal Yisroel* thought about doing *teshuvah*; in other words, even though they had not yet done it or even resolved to do it. All the more so, doing the full act of *teshuvah* has an outstanding effect. The Rambam states that if a person’s sins and *mitzvos* are evenly balanced, and they do *teshuvah*, they will be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life. Rav Chaim Kanievsky explains that the *chiddush* of the Rambam is that *teshuvah* can tip the scale to the side of *mitzvos*, and can even bring a person to a level of being counted as a *tzaddik*. But why is it that *teshuvah*, which is only brought about by sin, can help tip a person’s “scale” to the side of life and merit? The Rambam answers that the effort required to do *teshuvah* is such that it actually counts as a *mitzvah*, despite the im-

petus being a past sin.

Rav Yitzchak Blazer further explains the Ramban to mean that on *Yom Kippur*, we have a special commandment to do *teshuvah*. However, if one fails to do *teshuvah*, that alone can be enough to tip the scales towards the side of guilt. This statement of Rav Blazer was used to explain a *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashanah* (31b) that states, “During the forty years before the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the strip of red wool (which was tied to the horns of the goat sent to *Azazel*) did not turn white (as it had in years in which *Bnei Yisroel* had been completely forgiven), but rather became red.” What does it mean that the string “became red”? It was already red! Rather, based on this answer of Rav Blazer, we can see that their failure to do *teshuvah* was a terrible sin in and of itself, and because of that, the string turned into an even darker shade of red.

May we all be *zoche* to have a meaningful *Aseres Yimei Teshuvah*, and may our *teshuvah* tip the scales in our favor. A *kesivah vichasimah tovah*!



Rabbi
Shimon
Kerner
Maggid
Shiur

My Only Competition Is Myself!

There is a joke about a Reform Rabbi who was in love with golf. He was so addicted that never a Saturday afternoon passed which didn't find him on the putting green. Rain or shine, this Rabbi never missed. One year, *Yom Kippur* fell out on *Shabbos*. He faced the obvious dilemma. On the one hand, how could he miss his weekly game? On the other hand, he had preached to his congregation about the importance of attending *Yom Kippur* services. Since this was one of the few days the Rabbi admitted was holy, how would it look if his congregants found out that he was playing golf on the holiest day of the year? His compulsion won out. But he didn't want to look like a hypocrite, so he snuck out before dawn and headed alone for the course. He would play his game and then head for the synagogue with no one the wiser. A furor erupted in heaven. The angels insisted that he not be allowed to get away with this behavior. A heavenly voice called out: "Fear not, he'll get his!" The Rabbi arrived, chose his club, positioned himself, took his swing, the ball went flying... HOLE IN ONE! It was the first time in his life he ever did that. Meanwhile, the angels were in a tumult. What happened to the retribution? The heavenly voice rang out once again, "Who is he going to tell?"

A basic component of human nature is the need to share our accomplishments, and to show that we are better than the next guy. A fascinating Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuva* 4) points to 24 things that are *me'akev es hateshuvah* - they hold a person back from *teshuvah*. One of the items on the list is "*hamiskabed biklon chaver-ro*". This is usually translated as one who gains honor at the expense of his friend. But perhaps we can translate it as one who evaluates his deeds by comparing himself to others. He gains honor by being satisfied with being better than the next guy. He doesn't choose to be his best, just "better than the rest"! He, therefore, is held back from repenting.

In *Parshas Ki Savo*, the *Torah* speaks of the declaration that one says when bringing his tithes. The *mishnah* in (*Megillah* 20b) calls this passage "*vidui ma'aser*", the confession of the tithe. However, when we look at the *pesukim*, this "confession" consists of declaring "*asisi kikel asher tzivisani*" - I have done in accordance with all that I was commanded. "*Vidui ma'aser*" hardly seems like an appropriate title for this sort of declaration. He is declaring that he's done everything exactly as he has been commanded! The Rav, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik *zatzal* once suggested that the *vidui* is in 1 letter - *kikel*, like all that I was commanded. In other words, I **basically** got it right. Every person needs to realize that life is not a competition against others - rather we're judged by what **we** are capable of, what **our** mission is, and whether we are being **our** best.

What causes complacency? One of the root causes is haughtiness. One who is haughty thinks that his level is right. Rav Eliyahu Dessler develops the idea of *nekudas habechirah* - literally "the point of choice", or where we personally stand *hashkafically*. People think "everyone to the right of me are religious fanatics, and all those to the left of me are *goyim*!" In reality, there are things that we struggle with, which for others are either not a struggle at all, or that they are not on the level to even consider. The goal of life, and these *Yamim Neoraim* in particular, is to move the *nekudas habechirah* so that this year's struggles will be different ones. Life in this world is by definition full of *nisyonos*. The goal is to grow spiritually, such that last year's struggles are off the radar, and to now face new struggles.

The second thing that contributes to the sense of complacency is not realizing that what we do is important. The story is told about a mother who wakes her son up for school, and the son says "why do I need to get up?" The mother responds, "because you're the principal!" The *Gema-*



ra (Kiddushin 40) says that one should always look at the world as *mechtzeh zakkai umechtzeh chayiv* - half meritorious, and half guilty. In other words, one should always think "my next action is important enough to determine the fate of the entire world!" The *shofar* of *Elul* and of *Rosh Hashanah* screams out to us saying "wake up!" Take away the DO NOT DISTURB sign! You're important. *Klal Yisroel* needs you! The world needs you!

We all have amazing potential - we dare not rob ourselves of what we are capable of. These special days are given to us to re-evaluate our mission in life and stop looking at others. The judgment of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* all boils down to realizing our *own* potential and setting our goals accordingly. We cannot, *chas vishalom*, allow ourselves to be lured into a sense of complacency, and be *miskabed biklon chaveiro*. Even if we each overcome one challenge, it will be a huge success. *Avinu Malkeinu, nah al tishiveinu reikam milfanecha* - let not this season go by without accomplishing **something**. *B'ezras Hashem*, in the merit of trying to live up to our potential, we will be granted a year of success in our *avodas Hashem*!



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YOM KIPPUR:

Our Beloved Ten - A Historical Perspective On The Ten Martyrs

On *Yom Hakippurim*, we say a heart wrenching *piyut* (liturgical hymn) about the ten martyrs (*asarah harugei malchus*) who were killed by the Romans. The piece is based on one of the smaller *Midrashim* called *Midrash Eileh Azkarah*. The poem discusses the way each of the ten martyrs were killed. This article will try to touch upon why the Romans wanted to kill the ten martyrs, and who each of the ten martyrs were, in order to fully understand this prominent part of the *Yom Kippur* service.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian (76-138) decided that ten *rabbonim* must be martyred as a punishment for the ten brothers who sent Yosef to Egypt. Hadrian justified this by referring to the *possuk* in *Shemos* (21:16) which says “if one kidnaps someone and sells that person, and there were witnesses that saw all of these occurrences, that person should be put to death.” Though this crime took place almost 2000 years earlier, and *halachah* does not allow for the descendants of sinners to be punished for the crimes of their parents, the Roman Emperor went ahead with the executions, claiming that there were “none like [these] ten” who were capable of rectifying this crime.

A few notes before we discuss the ten martyrs. Although they were killed at different points, the poem makes it sound like they were killed on the same day, in order to have a greater effect on the reader. Additionally, though in the different versions of the *Midrash* and the poems there are different orders of the ten martyrs, we will be listing the order from the *piyut* found in the *Yom Kippur machzor*. It should also be noted that in the version of this story recited on *Tisha B’av*, called “*Arzei Levanon*”, two of the ten are omitted. Although each poem doesn’t include all of the details of each death, we will try to highlight even those aspects of the stories which do not appear in the text.

1. **Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel** (10-70) was a *tanna* and the *nasi* (leader) of his generation. He served as head of the Great *Sanhedrin* at Yerushalayim during the outbreak of the First Jewish Revolt, succeeding his father, Rabban Gamliel I, after the latter’s death in the year 52, right before the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash*.

In those days of oppression, many joined the ranks of patriots who wanted to rebel and fight the Romans. Rabbi Shimon supported them very effectively. Even Josephus, the historian, who generally was not his friend, talks very highly about his great knowledge and capabilities. But Rabbi Shimon did not foresee the tragic results of the revolt, which ended in the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. He put all of his considerable means at the disposal of the war party, because he saw no other way out of the desperate situation. In this policy, he was at odds with most of the other *chachomim* of the generation, who urged peaceful relations with the Romans. In the *mishnah*, we find Rabbi Shimon’s name mentioned in connection with the laws concerning the offering of *korbanos*. When poor women, who had to bring an offering of doves after childbirth, were embarrassed by the steep price of the birds, he pledged that by the next day the birds would be available to them at a much cheaper price. Indeed, he was able to make his pledge come true. In another instance, Rabbi Shimon is mentioned in connection with the celebration of the *simchas beis hashoeva* on *Sukkos*. In the ecstasy of joy, he would juggle torches with great skill. He also was not too proud to personally entertain a groom and bride at their wedding celebration.

According to the chronological tables brought down by Rabbi Sherira Gaon, he was beheaded, along with Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha the *Kohen Gadol*, prior to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, although the historian Josephus Flavius mentions only the execution of “Yishmael” in Cyrene during the First Jewish–Roman War (66-68). The account is mentioned in, both, *Maseches Simchos* 8



(one of the minor *masechtos*), and in *Avos Dirabbi Nosson* (38:3), where Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel is given the title of *nasi*, along with the dignitary title of *rabban*. Before his death, he and his fellow jurists opposed the appointment of Josephus as military governor of the *Galil*, and sought to remove him from that post, but to no avail.

2. Rabbi Yishmael Hakohen ben Elisha *Kohen Gadol* was one of the prominent leaders of the first generation of the *tana'im*. Rabbi Yishmael came from a very distinguished family of *Kohanim Gedolim*, and he, too, was the *Kohen Gadol*. As a boy, he was unusually good looking and wise, and he was taken to Rome as a captive. The great Sage Rabbi Yehoshua *ben Chanania* came to Rome, probably as a messenger of the Jews in the Holy Land, to try to appeal before the Roman Emperor for a more lenient policy towards the persecuted Jews in the Holy Land. He learned that a Jewish boy was held captive in that city. He passed by the place where the boy was kept prisoner, and called out "who delivered Yaakov for a spoil, and Yisrael to the robbers?", quoting a passage from the prophet Yeshayahu (42:24). The boy's voice came back in reply, "was it not God, He against Whom we have sinned?" quoting the words of the prophet from the second part of the same *possuk*. Rabbi Yehoshua decided to spare no effort to ransom that boy, saying, "I am sure that boy will grow up to be one of our great *chachomim*." Indeed, for a large sum of money, Rabbi Yehoshua succeeded in ransoming the young boy, whom he took home, fed and clothed, and taught the *Torah* to daily. Before long, Rabbi Yishmael became well-known as a great teacher of the *Torah*. Rabbi Yehoshua himself now considered him as his colleague, and called him "my brother Yishmael."

Rabbi Yishmael is famous for the thirteen rules of interpretation (*middos*) of the *Torah*, which we recite daily at the end of the *korbanos* section of *shacharis*. His knowledge and sharpness of mind earned him the title "uprooter of mountains," for his discussion of a point of the *Torah* was lik-

ened to "tearing up mountains and grinding them against each other." His colleagues also likened him to a "department store", where one can get any merchandise he could desire; so too, someone seeking knowledge in any *Torah* or non-*Torah* subject could be certain that Rabbi Yishmael would have what to teach him.

Rabbi Yishmael faced his death by the hands of the Roman's without fear. The Roman ruler's daughter coveted Rabbi Yishmael for his physical beauty. When she was told that he would have to be executed as well, she asked that the skin of his head be flayed while he was alive, so that she could stuff the skin and look at his face. Rabbi Yishmael was silent throughout the entire gruesome process, until the servants reached the place on the forehead where the *tefillin* are placed. At this point, Rabbi Yishmael let out a scream, and his *neshamah* left his body. Both in his life and in death, Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha has been an everlasting source of inspiration to our people throughout history. (There is much more to be said about Rabbi Yishmael, which cannot be contained in these pages).

3. Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef (50-135) was a leading Jewish leader, a *tanna* of the latter part of the first century and the beginning of the second century. Rabbi Akiva was a leading contributor to the *Mishnah* and to the *Midrash Halachah*. He is also sometimes credited with redacting Avraham's version of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, one of the central texts of Jewish mysticism. He is referred to in the *Gemara* as *rosh lachachomim* (the head of the Sages).

He was a descendant of *geirim* (converts), and had been known for the first half of his life as an *am ha'aretz*, one who doesn't know proper Jewish Law. According to the *Gemara*, Akiva was a shepherd for Ben Kalba Sabua, when the latter's daughter, Rachel, noticed his modesty and fine character traits. She offered to marry him if he would agree to begin studying *Torah*, as at



the time he was forty years old and illiterate. When her father found out she was secretly betrothed to an unlearned man, he was furious. He drove his daughter out of his house, swearing that he would never help her while Akiva remained her husband. Akiva and his wife lived in such poverty that they used straw for their bed. The *Gemara* relates that once, Eliyahu the prophet assumed the guise of a poor man, and came to their door to beg for some straw to use as a bed for his wife after she had given birth. When Akiva and his wife saw that there were people even poorer than they, Rachel said to him, "Go, and become a scholar".

By agreement with his wife, Rabbi Akiva spent twelve years away from home, pursuing his studies. He would make a living by cutting wood from the forest, selling half for his wife's and children's upkeep, and using the other half for keeping a fire burning at night to keep himself warm and to provide light for his own studies. After twelve years of study, he returned home, with 12,000 disciples in tow. As he was about to enter his home, he overheard his wife say to a neighbor who was critical of his long absence: "If I had my wish, he should stay another twelve years at the *yeshivah*." Without so much as stopping inside, Rabbi Akiva turned around and went back to learn for another twelve years. This time, when he returned home, he was accompanied by 24,000 students. When his wife went out to greet him, some of his students, not knowing who she was, sought to restrain her. But Rabbi Akiva exclaimed, "Let her alone; for what is mine and yours, is hers" (she deserves the credit for our *Torah* study). Not knowing who he was, Ben Kalba Sabua also approached Rabbi Akiva and asked him for help annulling his vow to disown his daughter and her husband. Rabbi Akiva asked him, "Would you have made your vow if you had known that he would become a great scholar?" Ben Kalba Sabua replied, "Had I known that he would learn even one chapter or one single *halachah*, [I would not have made the vow]". Rabbi Akiva said to him, "I am that man". Ben Kalba

Sabua fell at Akiva's feet and gave him half his wealth.

The greatest *tanna'im* of the middle of the second century came from Rabbi Akiva's *yeshivah*; most notably, Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, Rabbi Yosi ben Chalafta, Rabbi Eleazar ben Shammai, and Rabbi Nechemiah. Besides these, Rabbi Akiva had many disciples whose names have not been handed down. The various aggados count them at 12,000, 24,000 and 48,000.

Rabbi Akiva is reported to have had a rabbinic relationship with Rabban Gamaliel dated to before their trip to Rome. Convinced of the necessity of a central authority for Judaism, Rabbi Akiva became a devoted adherent and friend of Rabban Gamaliel, who aimed to consolidate the Jews under the **nasi's** authority. However, Rabbi Akiva was just as firmly convinced that the power of the **nasi** must be limited both by the written and the oral law, the interpretation of which lay in the hands of the learned; and he was accordingly brave enough to act in ritual matters in Rabban Gamaliel's own house contrary to the decisions of Rabban Gamaliel himself. Rabbi Akiva filled the office of an overseer of the poor. Various rabbinic texts testify to his personal qualities, such as benevolence and kindness toward the sick and needy.

Rabbi Akiva took part in the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–136, but his role here cannot be historically determined. The only established fact concerning Rabbi Akiva's connection with Bar Kochva is that he regarded Bar Kochva as the promised **moshiach**; this is the only evidence of active participation by Rabbi Akiva in the revolution. Some modern scholars argue that Rabbi Akiva's thousands of students died fighting for Bar Kochva, but this opinion was first formulated by Nachman Krochmal around 200 years ago and has no earlier source. A *braisa* states that Rabbi Akiva suffered martyrdom on account of his transgression of Hadrian's edicts against the practice and the teaching of the Jewish reli-



gion, being sentenced to die by Turnus Rufus in Caesarea. As this story credits the execution to religious rather than political reasons, it may be evidence against Rabbi Akiva's having a role in the revolt. Rabbi Akiva's death occurred after several years of imprisonment, which places it at about 132, before the suppression of the Bar Kochva revolution; otherwise, the delay of the Romans in executing him would be quite inexplicable.

The death of Rabbi Akiva is usually rendered as some redacted form of three separate versions of the circumstances. The most common version of Rabbi Akiva's death is that the Roman government ordered him to stop teaching *Torah*, on pain of death, and that he refused. When Turnus Rufus, as he is called in Jewish sources, ordered Rabbi Akiva's execution, Rabbi Akiva is said to have recited his prayers calmly, though suffering agonies; and when Rufus asked him whether he was a sorcerer, since he felt no pain, Rabbi Akiva replied, "I am no sorcerer; but I rejoice at the opportunity now given to me to love my God 'with all my life,' seeing that I have until now only been able to love Him only 'with all my means' and 'with all my might'", as the *possuk* in *Krias Shema* dictates. (The *Talmud Bavli* has this as a response to his students, rather than to the executioner). At this point, he began to recite the *possuk* of *shema yisroel*, and upon reaching the word "*echad*" (He is One), he passed away.

4. **Rabbi Chanania Ben Teradion** was a *tanna* in the third generation of *tanna'im*. His residence was at Sichin, where he directed religious affairs as well as heading a *yeshivah*, which later came to be counted among the most prestigious *yeshivos*.

Rabbi Chanania administered the communal *tzedakah* (charity), and so scrupulous was he in that office that once, when money of his own, designed for personal use on *Purim*, chanced to get mixed with the charity funds,

he distributed the whole amount among the poor. Rabbi Elazar ben Yaakov II so admired Rabbi Chaninah's honesty that he remarked, "no one ought to contribute to the charity treasury unless its administrator is like Rabbi Chaninah ben Teradion". Compared to other *tanna'im*, only a few *halachos* are preserved from him. Among these was his ingenious proof that the *Shechinah* rests on those who study *Torah*.

He was arrested for teaching *Torah* in public. For this he and his wife were condemned to death, and their daughter to degradation (rape and forced prostitution). His death was horrific: wrapped in the scroll with which he had taught, he was placed on a green brush, which was then set on fire. Wet wool was then placed on his chest, to prolong the agonies of death. "Woe is me," cried his daughter, "that I should see you under such terrible circumstances!" Rabbi Chaninah serenely replied, "I should indeed despair were I alone burned; but since the scroll of the *Torah* is burning with me, the Power that will avenge the offense against the law will also avenge the offense against me." His heartbroken disciples then asked: "Master, what do you see?" He answered: "I see the parchment burning while the letters of the Law soar upward". "Open your mouth, so that the fire may enter and put a quicker end to your suffering" advised his pupils. But Rabbi Chaninah replied, "It is best that He who has given the soul should also take it away: no man may hasten his death." At that point, the executioner removed the wool and fanned the flame, thus accelerating the end, but in doing so, the flames caught onto him, and he burned to death as well.

5. **Chutzpis Hameturgaman** (the Interpreter) was a rabbi from the third generation of *tanna'im*. His title comes from his position as the interpreter of Rabban Gamaliel II: Rabban Gamaliel would speak softly, and Chutzpis would announce Rabban Gamaliel's words to the listeners. At one point, he lived in Tzipori, and had contact with rabbis



Elazar ben Azariah, Yesheivav the Scribe, Chalafta, and Yochanan ben Nuri. He is described as one of the Ten Martyrs in the *Midrash Eileh Azkarah*, where he is said to have been murdered and dismembered "one day short of his 130th birthday". According to one story, Elisha ben Avuyah, also known by the moniker "*Acher*", lost his faith after seeing Chutzpis's detached tongue lying in the dust after the murder.

6. **Rabbi Elazar ben Shamuah** was a rabbi in the 2nd century, of the fourth generation of *tanna'im*. He is frequently cited in rabbinic writings as simply Rabbi Eleazar. He was of priestly descent, rich, and acquired great fame as a teacher of *halachah*.

Rabbi Elazar was a student of Rabbi Akiva, but was not ordained by him due to the Hadrianic persecution. After Rabbi Akiva's death, however, Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava ordained Rabbi Elazar, together with Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yosi ben Chalafta, Rabbi Yehudah bar Illai, and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, at a secluded spot between Usha and Shefar'am. The ordainer was detected in the act and brutally slain, but the ordained escaped, and eventually became the custodians and disseminators of Jewish tradition. Mention is made of a controversy between Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Meir at Ardiska. He also maintained *halachic* discussions with R. Yehudah bar Ilai and Rabbi Yosi, and quite frequently with R. Shimon bar Yochai; however, he never appeared with them at the sessions of the *Sanhedrin* at Usha. Hence, it may be assumed that he did not return to the scene of his ordination. Wherever he settled, he presided over a *yeshiva* to which many students were attracted, including Rabbi Yosef and Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi. Thus, while his name does not appear in rabbinic lore as often as the names of his colleagues at the ordination, Rabbi Elazar had an significant influence on the development of the *Gemara*. Rav declared him to be "the most excellent among the sages", and Rabbi Yochanan expressed unbounded admiration for his large-

heartedness. According to *Arzei Levanon*, he was killed while reciting *kiddush* on Friday night; however, other sources seem to indicate that he was killed on *Yom Hakippurim*.

7. **Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai** was a *tanna* in the 2nd century. The identities of his early teachers are not known. From some versions of the *Tosefta*, it appears that Rabbi Tarfon was one of them, but that his regular teacher was Rabbi Akiva. It is related that he took leave of his wife and attended Rabbi Akiva's *yeshivah* for twelve or thirteen years without communicating with his family, at which point he got lost on his way home, as the roads had changed (*Kesubos* 62a). He was one of the few who, though not regularly ordained, were permitted to "argue cases before the *chachomim*". The *Midrash* states that he was the one killed on Friday night by *kiddush*.

8. **Rabbi Yeshevav**, the *sofer* (scribe), was a 3rd generation *tanna* and a colleague of Rabbi Akiva. He was known to be so generous that he had to restrain him from giving too much *tzedakah*. As he was being shoved toward the place of execution when he was arrested on a Monday, the day of the week on which he usually fasted, he implored his students to follow, so that he might instruct them in one last lesson: Remain loving and devoted to one another, he urged. Love peace and justice, and pray for the redemption of the Jewish people from this oppressive enemy. As he was being torn to death by wild dogs, a *Bas Kol* (Heavenly Voice) called out: Blessed be Rabbi Yeshevav the *sofer*, who never for an instant deviated from the law of Moshe.

9. **Rabbi Yehuda ben Dama** was arrested the day before *Sukkos*. He pleaded with the emperor to allow him to live one more day, so that he might be privileged to perform the *mitzvah* of sitting in the *sukkah* and blessing the *esrog* and *lulav*. "What reward will you receive for your insistence in observing these commandments?" the emperor mocked. Rabbi Yehudah replied quietly, "Oh,



how abundant is Your goodness which You have stored for them that fear You.” The emperor raged “you are a fool if you believe in life after death, in some sort of eternal reward!” “There are no fools greater than those who deny a living God”, argued Rabbi Yehuda. Incensed, the emperor ordered that Rabbi Yehuda be tied by his hair to a horse’s tail and dragged through the streets

10. **Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava** was a second century *tanna*. He courageously defied the Romans by teaching *Torah* publicly. He understood that if the Romans succeeded in carrying out their edict prohibiting the study of *Torah* and the ordination of *rabbonimi*, the Jewish people would not survive. The Roman edict stated that whoever ordained a Rabbi would be punished by death, whoever was ordained would be put to death, and the city where the ordination was performed would be razed. The aging, seventy-year-old Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava took five of the most promising young leaders to the uninhabited valley between the Galilean cities of Usha and Shefaram. He did not want innocent people to suffer for what he was about to do. In the secluded valley he ordained Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua. He placed upon their shoulders the responsibility for the continuation of Jewish life. A Roman patrol, roaming through the surrounding hills, saw them in the valley and turned to investigate. Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava noticed the soldiers closing in and pleaded “run for your lives!” “But, what will become of you?” his students implored. “We cannot leave you here!” “I have lived my life fully,” he said. “I will only slow down your chance to escape if you wait for me. You must live and teach, for I will die soon anyway”. The Roman soldiers caught and tortured Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava to death by piercing his body with three hundred iron spearheads. The five young **rabbonim** escaped, and became the leading sages of the next generation.

Why would we recount such horrible tragedies on a day which is considered one of the two happiest days on the Jewish calendar (*Ta’anis* 30a)? This was made part of the *Yom Kippur tefilah* because of the impact losing so many pillars of Judaism would have on the masses. As such, it has become one of the 'highlights' of the day, marking a point when the members of the congregation reflect on their own lives and the sacrifices that were made for their sake.

We should be *zoche* to serve God with the kind of dedication that our great Sages demonstrated before us.



Dovid
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(’20)

Sefer Yonah - You Can Run, But You Can’t Hide

Sefer Yonah, which we read on *Yom Kippur*, is an intriguing *sefer*. With the seemingly out-of-place epilogue of the *kikalyon*, to Yonah’s very name, this *sefer* raises more questions than it answers. But one question that is of particular intrigue is as follows: why did Yonah think it would be a good idea to run away from *Hashem*’s command?

To better understand this question, let us look back in history to the time period in which this story took place.

Our story begins in the kingdom of *Yisroel*, during the reign of King Achav ben Omri (around 3040), who is one of the few people to never be able to enter *Olam Haba* (*Sanhedrin* 102b). *Hashem* had sent *Eliyahu Hanavi* to try to get the Jews of the Northern Kingdom to repent. But, the people remained steadfast in their wicked ways. *Eliyahu* cursed the land and declared a famine, which ravaged for a little more than two years. As *Eliyahu* was journeying the country, trying to convince the Jews of the towns and cities to repent, he stopped in the city of Tzarfas. He was told that there was a widow of a prophet that had room for guests. The widow took *Eliyahu* in. One day, the widow’s only son fell deathly ill. Eventually, he stopped breathing and died. She went and knocked on *Eliyahu*’s door, and begged the *tzaddik* to help. *Eliyahu* agreed, and began to *daven*, pleading with *Hashem* to let the boy live. *Hashem* agreed to give *Eliyahu* the key of *techias hameisim* (revival of the dead), if only *Eliyahu* would return the key of rain to *Hashem*, thereby ending the famine (see *Taanis* 2a). *Eliyahu* agreed, and brought the boy back to life. That boy’s name was Yonah. Yonah became one of the four disciples of *Eliyahu*, and later a student of *Elisha*, who was *Eliyahu*’s top disciple.

Yonah had prophesied many times in his life, and had gone on many missions as a messenger of God, including appointing Yehu as king over *Yisroel*. But, his famous mission to Ninveh came about as he was entering Yerushalayim for the holiday of

Sukkos. In his moment of extreme pleasure at seeing the city of Yerushalayim, he was told by *Hashem* to go to Ninveh to warn the citizens of the city to repent. But Yonah made other plans: the *possuk* describes how Yonah fled from *Hashem*’s command, to the city of Tarshish. The rest of the story briefly goes like this: while on the boat to Tarshish, *Hashem* sent a storm. The crew of the ship threw Yonah overboard, at which point a whale swallowed him. While in the whale, Yonah did *teshuva*, and after three days, the whale spit him out near Ninveh, where he fulfilled his mission. The people of the city did *teshuvah*, sparing the city from destruction.

And that brings us back to our question: why did Yonah run away? This prophecy deeply disturbed Yonah. How would this mission help the Jews in their *teshuvah*? Would it be any different than the dozens of *nevi'im* that came before him and warned the people to revert from the evil of their ways? He came to the conclusion that by going to Ninveh, he would be putting the Northern Kingdom in mortal danger, since if Ninveh repented, they would have more merits than that of the Northern Kingdom (*Alshich*). The *Abarbanel*, *Malbim*, and the *Metzudas Tzion* each add that the people of Ninveh were warned, rather than being destroyed immediately like Sedom and Amorah, because they were destined to exile the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Additionally, Yonah knew that the citizens of Ninveh would have a very easy time repenting for two reasons. Firstly, the Pharaoh of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was their king, and would persuade them to repent (*IPirkei Dirabbi Eliezer*). And secondly, they repented out of fear, not love, which is a much easier process (The last concern was the first to come to fruition, because as soon as the news arrived from Ninveh, the *navi* Tzephanya (3:1) stated that he was astounded that it only took one prophet for the Ninvites to repent, but the Jews remained stubborn even after scores of prophets warned them).

Yonah ran away because he thought he



would be helping the Jews by not warning the citizens of Ninveh; he wanted Ninveh to lose this opportunity to gain *zechusim*, be destroyed, and thereby be unable to exile the Jewish people. In fact, he went so far as to try to commit suicide (*Ibn Ezra* and *Abar-benel*), as he refused to pray during the storm, and even agreed to be thrown overboard (*Alshich*, *Metzudas Dovid*, and *Mal-bim*).

A very important lesson can be earned from this *sefer*. The lesson is that no matter how hard you try, *Hashem's* Will always wins out. There is no escape from him or his strength. You can run, but you can't hide. Although Yonah did what he did for the right reasons (and the crew converted to Judaism because of it [*Zohar* and *Pirkei Dirabbi Eliezer*]). May we go into the new year with the lesson of the book of Yonah, that the *ratzon Hashem* will always win out, and that we should be strong enough to listen to it!



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The Mystery of the Goats - Under- standing Seir Leazazel

In describing the service in the *Beis Hamikdash* on Yom Kippur, the *Torah* prescribes a very peculiar *mitzvah* to be performed by the *Kohen Gadol*. The *possum* states:

וְנָתַן אֶהָרֵן עַל-שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִם גּוֹרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לְעִזָּאזֵל: וְהִקְרִיב אֶהָרֵן אֶת-הַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַיהוָה וְעָשָׂהוּ חֻטָּאת: וְהַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לְעִזָּאזֵל יַעֲמִד-חַי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לְעִזָּאזֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה

“And Aharon shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for Hashem and the other marked for Azazel. Aharon shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for Hashem, which he is to offer as a sin offering; while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before Hashem, to be forgiven through it, and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.” (Vayikra 16:8 - 16:10)

These *pesukim* describe the process of the *Seir Lashem* and the *Seir Leazazel*, in which lots were drawn to decide the fate of two identical goats. The goat marked “*lashem*” would be offered as a *korban* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, which the goat “*leazazel*” would be taken to the wilderness of Azazel, where it was thrown off a cliff. Before this, however, a red string was tied to the horns of the *Seir Leazazel*. If the string turned white as the goat fell from the cliff, it was a sign from Heaven that the people’s *teshuvah* had been accepted.

The *Ibn Ezra* comments the true reason for the *Seir Leazazel* is a ‘*sod*’, or secret, and is deeply rooted in *kabbalah*. However, he cryptically writes that the answer will be revealed “in thirty-three”. *Da’as Zekeinim* explains that this refers to thirty-three *pesukim* later, where the *Torah* speaks about the prohibition of bringing sacrifices to demons. He explains that this prohibition is about recognizing that these satanic powers are worthless compared to *Ha-*

shem, and the *Seir Leazazel* symbolizes these demonic forces. *Daas Zekeinim* also says that the *Ibn Ezra* holds that Azazel is a combination of two words, *l’az* and *azel* - to waste [and] to destruction - seemingly implying that this goat is meant to show us the futility of idolatry.

The Ramban seems to explain “in thirty-three” differently. He still holds that there is a connection between the commandment of *Seir Leazazel* and the prohibition of bringing sacrifices to demons, but unlike the *Daas Zekeinim*, he holds that this commandment is an exception to the prohibition. He cites the *Pirkei Dirabbi Eliezer Hagadol*, which says that this goat was a bribe for *Samael*, the angel of Esav, so that he should not interfere with the corresponding sacrifice being offered in the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *Seir Lashem*. The Ramban clarifies that this was not, *chas vishalom*, a sacrifice to Esav’s angel, but rather a fulfillment of Hashem’s will. He gives a *mashal* to explain this further; someone was once hosting a nobleman, and, at the nobleman’s request, he gave a meal to the nobleman’s servant. This action is not an honor to the servant, but to the nobleman. So too, our offering a “bribe” to *Samael* because *Hashem* said to do so is not an honor to *Samael*, but to *Hashem*.

This explanation for the *Seir Leazazel* cannot help but feel a bit anticlimactic. This would appear to be one of the main points of the *Yom Kippur* service, yet it itself seems to have no inherent significance. And furthermore, if the reason is either to show us the worthlessness of idolatry or to honor *Hashem*, why do we tie the red string to the goat? The whole process seems to have nothing to do with our sins being forgiven!

We can therefore suggest that these two interpretations of the *mitzvah* represent two aspects of our service of God on *Yom Kippur*. The first is that of established pray-



er, the liturgy which we follow throughout the day. The second is that of self-styled, spontaneous invocation, where we ask *Hashem* from the bottom of our hearts to have mercy on us. Both are necessary for our *tefillos* - one cannot succeed without the other. The commandments regarding *Yom Kippur* are found in the *parsha* of *Acharei Mos*, which begins with the aftermath of the deaths of *Nadav* and *Avihu*, *Aharon's* two eldest sons. They died because during the *Chanukas Habayis* (dedication) of the *Mishkan*, they brought an improper *ketores* offering, and were therefore punished. The *Shem Mishmuel* writes that the sin of *Nadav* and *Avihu* resulted from an unrestricted love for *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. In a spontaneous moment of ecstasy, they offered up the *ketores*, and were punished by *Hashem*. Their service was missing the key component of *yiras Shamayim* - fear of Heaven. Both fear and love are necessary to properly connect to God.

These two interpretations of the *Daas Zekeinim* and the *Ramban* correspond to these two fundamentals of *avodas Hashem*. The opinion of the *Daas Zekeinim* is *yiras Hashem* - the understanding that God runs the world, and nobody else. This is symbolized by our throwing the goat over the cliff, showing that all idolatrous forces are worthless. The opinion of the *Ramban*, however, is *ahavas Hashem* - loving God and doing what he wants. We show this by giving the bribe to *Samael* as *Hashem* willed, even though we do not understand it. Thus, the *Seir Leazazel* represents the two components of *Yom Kippur*, and indeed, of *avodas Hashem* as a whole - *ahavah* and *yirah*.

With this in mind, we can also understand the reason for the red string that we tie around the goat's horns. The *Torah* is telling us that we can only be forgiven if we incorporate both spontaneous and established prayer into our *avodah* of *Yom Kippur*. Merely chanting the words of the

machzor will not help us, but at the same time, an outburst of emotion not guided by the liturgical requirements is ineffective. We should merit to have both *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem* in our *tefillos* this *Yom Kippur*, and all year round.



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Neilah - The Seal Of Truth

If there's one word that sums up *Tefillas Neilah*, it's "*chasimah*," or "sealing." Only in *Neilah* do we change the text of our prayers and ask *Hashem* that we be *sealed*, not just written. Until now, our requests have all been forms of *kesivah*, writing: "*kasvenu*," "*uchtov*," and "*nekasev*." Now, we switch to "*chasmeinu*," "*vachatom*," and "*nechasem*", expressions of *chasimah*.

Maybe it's worth stopping for a moment to think about what that means. What is the symbolism of the seal? In his commentary to *Sanhedrin* 64a, Rashi explains that a king does not write his own decrees, but rather, he has them written for him by his servants. Then, when he reads and approves the text, he applies his wax seal to the document, thereby (quite literally) giving it his stamp of approval. Similarly, we believe that at this time, *Hashem* re-reads the decree of our fate for the coming year, and upon meeting His approval He seals it.

But let's go a bit deeper. What does it mean when *Hashem* gives His stamp of approval to our fate? If you read the *Gemara* upon which Rashi was commenting, another picture emerges. There, the *Gemara* tells the story of the *Sanhedrin's* attempt to kill the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) which drove people towards idolatry. They collectively fasted and prayed (sound familiar?) that *Hashem* remove this *yetzer hara*, because man was not strong enough to resist it. After three days (thankfully, we're done after one), a piece of paper fluttered down from heaven, on which was written one word: "*emes*", truth. This was understood by the rabbis to mean that *Hashem* had granted their wish. In the words of Rabbi Chanina, "*emes*" is the *seal* of *Hashem*.

What does that mean for us? It means that when we ask *Hashem* to seal us, we are praying that He declare that our fate is "*emes*," that our decree is exactly as

we deserve. Maybe that's not what we really want. Maybe we ought to be careful what we wish for! After all, who among us wants the fate he deserves? If we were happy with our deserved fate, what are we praying for? Isn't the point of *Yom Hakippurim* to cover over our sins, as the *Kapores* covered over the *Aron*?

So it would seem that "*emes*" is the last thing we would want. Why are we asking *Hashem* to seal us, when his seal of "*emes*" would seemingly only undo all the good *davening* we do on *Yom Kippur*?

I'd like to suggest that "*emes*" does not mean the absence of compassion or understanding. When *Hashem* seals our decree with His stamp of truth, it does not mean that our fate is exactly the sum of the punishment for our sins plus the reward for our good deeds. Rather, there is a new truth, a truth that only *Hashem* can find, which is not necessarily the result of our entire past year, but can be pulled from a single true moment.

The famous statement of Rabi Chanania Ben Akashya, which we quote at the end of every *shiur*, says that *Hashem* wanted to find merit for us, and therefore gave us a *Torah* full of *mitzvos* to perform. The idea is that with even one well-performed *mitzvah*, we could merit *Hashem's* grace. Similarly, on *Yom Kippur*, let us devote ourselves to *tefillah* with such dedication, that when we ask *Hashem* to "*chasmenu*" with His seal of truth, He will be able to seize this one moment, when we are tired, hungry, and weak, and say that this was our true selves, and that this will be our merit to be written and sealed for a *shanah tovah*.

SUKKOS:

Sukkos .. A Time For Teshuvah?!



Akiva
Kra ('21)

The *Yomim Tovim* of *Sukkos*, *Shemini Atzeres*, and *Simchas Torah* are generally thought of as a happy time, where we eat in a *sukkah*, shake the *Arbah Minim*, and dance with the *Torah* as we complete the yearly reading of all the *parshiyos* and prepare to start again. It's usually viewed as a change of pace from the two holidays that precede it in *Tishrei*: *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Those two Holidays are correctly characterized as times for serious self reflection and *teshuvah*. However, once the *shofar* blowing, *davening*, and *Yom Kippur* all come to an end, it seems that the time for *teshuvah* also does. After all, why would we stop blowing the *shofar* (which serves as a reminder for *teshuvah*) if the time for repentance wasn't over? It is for this reason as well as others that we have to wonder why one of the *mitzvos hayom*¹ during *Sukkos*, and the rest of the year, is still *Teshuvah*².

Teshuvah is something that one should do daily is by looking at the last words of *Maseches Megillah*: "Moshe decreed for the Jewish people that they should study and expound the *halachah* (laws) for the matter of the day. They should occupy themselves with the *halachos* of *Pesach* on *Pesach*, with the *halachos* of *Shavuot* on *Shavuot*, and with the *halachos* of *Sukkos* on *Sukkos*." The *Maharasha* questions why the holidays of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are not included. He answers this by saying that for each of the listed holidays in the *Gemara*, there are *mitzvos* particular to those days. However, *teshuvah*, the main *halachah* for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, are not unique to those days, since there is a *mitzvah* to do *teshuvah* every day. This is why they are not listed in the *Gemara*.

It is understood that *teshuva* can and must be performed throughout the year. As soon as one realizes that one has sinned, proper *teshuvah* must be done. In

One place from which we can learn that

1 A brief outline of those who learn that *teshuvah* is a *mitzvah*, and their sources: Ramban writes that *Devarim 30:11* refers to the *mitzvas* *asei* of repentance. He quotes two additional *pesukim* as sources for this *mitzvah*: *Ibid.* 4:30 and *Ibid.* 30:1. He writes that the *Torah's* use of verbs that can be understood as either future tense, or as imperatives; this indicates that *teshuvah* is both a promise for the future, and a positive commandment as well. Additionally, Rabbeinu Yonah writes at the beginning of *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*Sha'ar* 1:1) "We have been exhorted to repent by the *Torah* in a number of places." He clearly implies that aside from the tremendous kindness that God has shown us in giving us the opportunity to repent, He has also *commanded* us to repent. Additionally, the Smak (*Sefer Mitzvos Katan*) lists *teshuvah* as one of the 613 commandments. He learns this from *Parshat Nitzavim* 30:1-2. Although this is generally understood as a prophecy regarding the days preceding the Redemption, the Smak understands these *pesukim* to also be a commandment to perform *teshuvah*. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but instead a brief outline.

2 It is worth noting that Rambam takes a potentially different view. In his *Sefer Hamitzvos*, he does not list the commandment to perform *teshuvah*. The only reference he makes to it (in this work) is where he writes that there is a commandment to confess one's sins at the time one repents. We find something similar in his *Halachic* work, *Yad Hachazakah*, at the beginning of the first *perek* dealing with the laws of *teshuvah*: "If a person transgresses any of the *mitzvos* of the *Torah*... when he repents, and returns from his sin, he is obligated to confess before God, blessed be He, as it states: "If a man or a woman commits any of the sins of man... they must confess the sin that they committed." (*Bamidbar* 5:6). This refers to a verbal confession. This confession is a positive command." (*Hilchos Teshuva* 1:1). Here too, the Rambam makes no mention of a commandment or obligation to perform *teshuvah* for one's sins. He writes that there is a positive commandment which obligates a person to confess one's sins as part of repentance. There are a number of ways to interpret his opinion.



Pirkei Avos, Rabbi Eliezer says that we should “repent one day before [our] death”. Since no one knows his or her time of death, there is a constant obligation to perform *teshuvah*, as perhaps this could be the last day of one’s life. (*Avos* 2:10 and commentaries there). Additionally, it is recommended in *Mesillas Yesarim* that a person should do a *Cheshbon Hanefesh* (self-evaluation) every day.

Perhaps, we can better understand the need for constant repentance and daily *teshuvah* through a story from Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa *zatzal*. He tells a story of a young man who is getting on a train to go to Warsaw. However, confused in the train station, the young man accidentally gets on a train moving away from Warsaw instead of towards it. It’s an easy mistake to make, yet it takes him further and further from his destination.

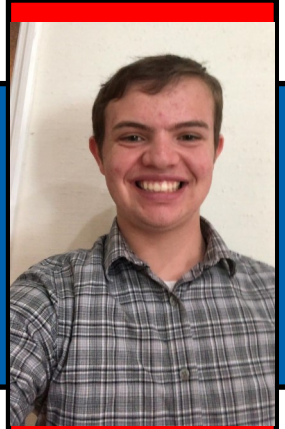
We can use this story to understand the need for *teshuvah* throughout the year. If we go on the wrong train (which we can compare to us sinning) and get off right away (do *teshuvah* that day), we will be able to continue our journey with almost no setback. We will even be more experienced, as we now know what mistakes we may make and how to avoid them. However, if we stay on our train until the conductor calls out the destination (which we can compare to the *shofar* calling out to us that *Rosh Hashanah* is approaching), we might be able to turn around and head in the proper direction, but we will be extremely far away from where we could’ve been.

Another comparison we can make is to checking a cut. If one has a cut, and they check on it daily, it will heal quickly. But, if one doesn’t check on it for long periods of time, it can become infected, and get to a stage in which it is very hard to be rescued from.

This is why *teshuvah* is still a *mitzvah* during *Sukkos* and the rest of

the year. We need it to make sure that our “trains” are going in the proper direction, and that our cuts are healing. It is true that our repentance is more accepted during *Elul*, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, but it is also extremely important the whole year. So, as we celebrate *Sukkos* and everything that it represents, may we all carry *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*’s message, that we should be constantly doing *teshuvah* and fixing ourselves, throughout our upcoming year.

The Key to Happiness



Yaakov
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(’22)

When the *Torah* speaks about *Sukkos*, it says “*vehayisa ach sameach*”- and you will be only happy (*Devarim* 16:15). The *Torah* is telling us that *Sukkos* has a central theme of happiness. During the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the event that manifested the great joy we are supposed to feel on *Sukkos* was the *Simchas Beis Hashoeivah*. The *mishnah* in *Sukkah* (52a) says that “One who hasn’t viewed the *Simchas Beis Hashoeivah* never experienced true *simchah*.” The *mishnah* continues to describe the great joy that was expressed throughout the night, with the *chachomim* dancing with torches and singing praises to *Hashem*. There were so many lights and torches that the *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 53a) says that a woman was able to separate wheat in her from the light that was produced from the event. The *Maharsha* explains that the light was a symbol of the great joy that encompassed that night. However, what is it about *Sukkos* that it causes its central theme to be *simchah*?

To answer this question, we need to understand the essence of the holiday and how the actions we do on *Sukkos* are connected to the achievement of proper *simchah*. In *Orchos Tzaddikim* (*Sha’ar Hasimchah*), the author writes that *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust in *Hashem*, are prerequisites for achieving proper *simchah*. Without *bitachon* and *emunah*, there is no room for *simchah* in one’s heart, because they will constantly be worried about different things in their life. The *possuk* in *Tehillim* (55:23) says “*hashleich al Hashem yehavcha vihu yechalklecha*”- throw your burden on *Hashem*, and he will sustain you. The *Metzudas Dovid* understands this *possuk* to mean that one should believe in *Hashem*, for *Hashem* will bear our burdens. One must have complete confidence in *Hashem* that He will protect us. The idea of *bitachon* is embedded into the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*; when we leave our homes and go live outside, we expose ourselves to

the dangers of the world, and we put complete trust in *Hashem* to protect us. We leave our *diras keva* (permanent home) and enter into a *diras arai* (temporary home) for seven days, putting our trust in *Hashem* that he will protect us while we sleep and conduct our meals in the *sukkah*. Additionally, the *Gemara* in the beginning of *Maseches Sukkah* (2a) brings the opinion of Rabbah, that the reason why a *sukkah* cannot be taller than twenty *amos* is because of the *possuk* which says “*lima’an yeidu doroseichem ki basukkos hoshavti es Bnei Yisroel*”- in order that your generations will know that I settled *Bnei Yisrael* in *sukkos* [in the *midbar*]. If the *sukkah* is larger than twenty *amos*, Rabbah argues, then it is unrecognizable as a *sukkah*! We see from this that the *sukkah* is supposed to remind us that *Hashem* protected us and still protects us. Therefore, the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* is an exercise in *bitachon* and *emunah*, which are necessary to achieve *simchah*.

Now that the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* helps us achieve the prerequisites for *simchah*, the term *simchah* needs to be defined. A definition for *simchah* can be found by the aforementioned *Simchas Beis Hashoeivah*, one of the happiest events of the year. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (30b), when discussing the seemingly contradictory statements of *Koheles*, points out that in one *possuk*, Shlomo *Hamelech* writes “*ulisimchah mah zeh oseh*”- and what does *simchah* do for me? However, Shlomo also writes “*vishabachtu ani es hasimcha*” (8:15)- and I praised joy. How could Shlomo write against happiness and also praise it? The *Gemara* resolves this contradiction by saying that Shlomo *Hamelech* was praising *simchah shel mitzvah*, joy of a *mitzvah*, and was criticizing *simchah she’einah shel mitzvah*, joy not emerging from a *mitzvah*. This is because true *simchah* is that which stems from creating a closer relationship with *Hashem*. When a Jew makes a step to proactively get closer to *Hashem* (through



mitzvos and *Torah*), that gives him true joy. This is also seen in the *possuk* in *Tehillim*, “*pekudei Hashem mesamchei leiv*”- the commands of *Hashem* make the heart happy. The learning of *Torah*, which is the word of *Hashem*, makes the heart happy, because learning creates that closer relationship with *Hashem*. This is also exemplified at the *Simchas Beis Hashoevah*. Although there is no direct *mitzvah* to sing *shiros* and *tishbachos* (songs and praises) to *Hashem*, I would like to argue that this is still a *simchah shel mitzvah*, for it achieves the same purpose of creating a closer relationship between *Hashem* and the one who is praising. Thus, it is evident that the *Simchas Beis Hashoevah* exemplifies what a true definition of *simchah* is. Because of all this, it is very logical why the holiday of *Sukkos* deserves an emphasis on *simchah*. The entire holiday represents the process that is needed to achieve real *simchah*.

It is clear that the essence of the holiday of *Sukkos* is based on *simchah*. However, why is *simchah* such an integral part of Judaism that there is an entire holiday completely dedicated to the topic? I think the answer lies in a *possuk* in the *tochachah* in *Parshas Ki Savo* (28:47), where the *possuk* says that the reason *Bnei Yisrael* deserved the curses predicted by the *pesukim* is due to the fact that they served *Hashem* without joy. Rabbeinu Bachya writes on that *pasuk* that doing a *mitzvah* with joy is an actual *chiyuv* (requirement), and goes further to say that there is a separate *mitzvah* of performing *mitzvos* with joy. In light of this, it is clear how integral the holiday of *Sukkos* is for the Jewish experience as a whole. *Sukkos* puts us in the right frame of mind as we enter a new year, to re-

mind us that Judaism requires more from us than just the action of the *mitzvah*. Rather, *Sukkos* teaches us that our *avodas Hashem* must be accompanied by genuine joy.

Sukkos: A Time For Unity



Samuel
Gorman
(’21)

In *Parshas Emor*, Moshe communicates the commandments pertaining to *Sukkos* to the Jewish people (*Vayikra* 23:33-44). Of the commandments listed in these *pesukim*, perhaps the two that are most closely associated with the holiday of *Sukkos* are the commandments of *Arbah Minim* (*Vayikra* 23:40) and *sukkah* (*Vayikra* 23: 2). These two *mitzvos* are quite interesting, and can teach us quite a lot about the holiday of *Sukkos*.

When introducing the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, the *posuk* uses a very interesting set of words. Rather than simply writing that the Jewish people should sit in *sukkahs*, the *posuk* writes “*kol haezrach biYisroel yeshvu basukkos*” - all citizens in the Jewish nation should live in *sukkahs* (*Vayikra* 23:42). The *Torah*’s use of the words “*kol haezrach* - all citizens” raises the question: why add these seemingly extra words?

The *Ramban* presents an answer to this question. According to the *Ramban*, these words are added in order to include all Jews in the obligation. By adding these words, the *posuk* is saying that all members of a Jewish household should live in a *sukkah*, not just one person per household. These words show that everyone is obligated in the *mitzvah*.

The *mitzvah* of *Arbah Minim* also raises a question. Why gather these four items? To answer this question, the *Vayikra Rabbah* (30:12) suggests that the *Arbah Minim* symbolize four different types of Jews. The *esrog*, which has both smell and taste, represents those who have both *Torah* and *mitzvos*. The *lulav*, which has no smell but comes from a tree that produces a fruit with taste, represents Jews with *Torah* but not *mitzvos*. The *hadassim*, which have smell but not taste, represent those with *mitzvos* but not *Torah*. And the *aravos*, which have neither smell nor taste, represent those with neither *Torah* nor *mitzvos*. The *Vayikra Rabbah* continues by saying that the gathering of these *Arbah Minim* symbolizes the

gathering of the four types of Jews. By gathering the different types of Jews together, the Jewish people become stronger as a group, as the *Torah* and *mitzvos* of one group make up for the shortcomings of another group. This symbolism is the reason for the gathering of the *Arbah Minim*.

The answers of the *Ramban* and the *Vayikra Rabbah* to the questions about “*kol haezrach*” and the *arbah minim* suggest something about the nature of *Sukkos*. The *Ramban*’s answer that the *posuk* used the words it did in order to include a greater number of people in the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* together with the *Vayikra Rabbah*’s idea that the gathering of the *Arbah Minim* symbolizes the gathering of different types of Jews, seem to suggest that *achdus* (unity) is a central theme of *Sukkos*. The *posuk* uses very specific words in order to include more people in the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, and the *mitzvah* of *Arbah Minim* symbolizes the gathering of many different types of Jews. And, as the *Vayikra Rabbah* points out, this unity strengthens the Jewish people as a group, and allows us to be judged more favorably. The Jewish people are stronger when there is *achdus*, and this seems to be a central theme of *Sukkos*.



Yeshurin
Sorscher
(’21)

Finding The Good, Even In The Bad

There is a famous story about a man who was late for an important meeting, and was looking for a parking spot. As he got more and more desperate, he looked up to the sky and proclaimed “\God, if you give me a parking spot I’ll commit to keeping all of the *mitzvos!*” All of a sudden, someone right in front of the building pulled out, giving him the perfect spot. As he finished pulling in, he said “never mind God, I found one myself.” We all instinctively know how ridiculous this man is; of course, it was God who gave him the parking spot! And yet, so often in our lives, we ourselves act like this man; when we *daven* for something and *Hashem* gives it to us, we are so quick to forget that he was the one who made it all happen in the first place.

This is where *Sukkos* enters the arena. After we have finished the harvest from last year and we have brought the *korban omer* on *Pesach*, which allows us to eat the new grain, we have a new imperative to realize that all this bounty is from *Hashem*. It is very easy for us, once we have something, to lose our appreciation for the gift. We forget who gave it to us, and how much it improved our lives for the better. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that this is the foundation of what *Sukkos* represents; it is specifically when we are likely to forget the source of all our bounty that we are told to leave our palatial houses, with all of their luxuries, and head into the *sukkah*. When we are forced to live outside and are confronted with the harsh elements, we will realize that *Hashem* is the One who grants us everything that we have. Without Him, we have nothing. The *sukkah* shows us that all the possessions in the world can only have value when they are used in the context of serving *Hashem*. It also shows us that everything that we do have is only ours since God gave it to us.

But what of those of us who feel that we have nothing to be thankful for; what if we feel that our lives are full of suffering? To

this, Rav Avigdor Miller, famed *rosh yeshiva* and a former *talmid* of our *yeshiva*, often writes that if only we were to look at all the good that we have in this world, we would no longer be bogged down by all of our suffering. Rabbi Mayer Schiller, one of the *maggidei shiur* in the *yeshiva*, often remarks that if we look at the creation, we can see so much about *Hashem*. For example, he explains, if one looked off the coast of Australia, he would be greeted with twenty-seven distinct species of clownfish. If one realizes the complexity and diversity of the creation which exists all around us, we would be amazed, and see the love that *Hashem* has for all of us. Thus, when we look at what we have, we should be filled with a feeling of gratitude and *simchah*. This is not to discount our pain and sorrow. Rather, Rabbi Miller is telling us that we have to look at things in the proper perspective, knowing that everything that *Hashem* does for our benefit. Additionally, from another perspective, as *Hashem* told *Iyov*, we cannot judge the justice of the Divine, since we are not privy to *Hashem*’s full plan. We are confined to our limited understanding, and this limit is a chance for us to have *emunah* (trust) in *Hashem*.

The lesson that we can all take home is that even when we are at the pinnacle of success or even when we feel that we have nothing, we can turn to the *sukkah* and see hope. We see that *Hashem* runs the world, and that everything that we have is directly from him. May we all merit to carry the lesson of the *sukkah* wherever we go in our life.

Aliyah Liregel in Post-Temple Times



Rabbi
Mayer
Schiller,
Maggid
Shiur

There is a puzzling Ramban in *Parshas Behar* which may serve as a springboard to exploring the status of *aliyah liregel* today. (*Aliyah liregel* is the thrice-annual pilgrimage to Yerushalayim, which occurred on the *yomim tovim* of *Sukkos*, *Pesach*, and *Shavuos*). In that *possuk* (*Vayikra* 26:1 -2) we read a seeming restatement of the prohibition of idolatry and *Shabbos* desecration, as well as of the *mitzvah* to “revere the Sanctuary.” Rashi posits on the first *possuk* that paganism and idolatry appear again here because the previous *parsha* speaks of a Jew who was enslaved by a Gentile; the connection between these two *parshiyos* is meant to emphasize that he not follow his master's ways in these two areas. The Ramban adds to this list by explaining the need for the Jewish slave to continue to “respect the Sanctaury” by “continuing to go there on the three pilgrimage festivals and have reverence for it (the Sanctuary) when he goes there.”

Why is visiting the Sanctuary seen as the equivalent of two of the most severe prohibitions in the *Torah*? We will return in due time to this question.

The *mitzvah* of ascending to Yerushalayim to bring three sacrifices, the *olas reiyah* (burnt offering of appearance), the *shalmei chagigah* (peace offering of celebration), and the *shalmei simchah* (peace offering of joy), is stated three times in the *Torah* (*Mishpatim* 23:17, *Ki Sisa* 34:23, *Re'eh* 16:17). According to the Ramban, this appearance in Jerusalem and the bringing of the obligatory sacrifices are linked, so much so that he writes, “one should be seen in the *azarah* (Temple Courtyard) on the first day of the festival and bring with him a burnt offering... one who comes to the Temple Courtyard on the first day and does not bring a burnt offering, not only does he not fulfill a positive commandment, but he violates a negative commandment, as it says, “he shall not appear before me empty handed.” (ibid). The *Sefer Hachinuch* also lists this empty-handed appearance as a transgression of a negative commandment (490) or as the *Minchas Chinuch* describes it there, as “a *mitzvah haba'ah b'avreirah*” (a *mitzvah* which comes about as a result of a

sin). As such, it would follow that nowadays, when we are unable to bring sacrifices, that the commandment to travel to Yerushalayim would be nonexistent as well.

The Ramban's position is possibly linked to his description of *mitzvah* to build the *Beis Hamikdash*; in his words, this commandment was given so that “it be prepared to offer therein sacrifices and celebrate three times in the year.” (*Hilchos Beis Habechirah* 1:1) The Temple thus exists only for receiving sacrifices, in the view of the Ramban.

The *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* also omit any mention of this obligation. Since they only list *halachos* which are in force today, it would seem that they follow the Ramban. In addition, the first *Tosfos* in *Chagigah* (d'h *hakol*, 2a) refutes an implication from Rashi which might indicate that there is an obligation to “be seen” in Yerushalaim (or perhaps the *Mikdash*; more on that distinction later). Such a formulation of the obligation would likely still be in effect even today.

And there the matter would seemingly stand, if not for an array of sources that reference *aliyah liregel* even after the Temple's destruction from assorted times in Jewish history. In fact, in *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, we find an early source for this intriguing practice: “just as a dove never leaves its cote, even if you remove its nestlings, so too Israel, even though the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, the three pilgrimages were never nullified” (1:2). The date of this *Midrash* is far from clear, but its sources are primarily from the *Talmud Yerushalmi* and *amoraim* who lived in Israel far after the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash*.

This fact points in the direction of the *Talmud Yerushalmi* in *Chagigah* (1:a), where we find the *chiddush* that there is an obligation of *re'iyas ponim* (being seen in Yerushalayim) in addition to that of *re'iyas korban* (having a *korban* in Yerushalayim). This startling position leads the *Yerushlami* to conclude that a minor who is exempt from *re'iyas korban* is actually very much required to ascend to Jerusalem. This is based on the *gezeirah shaveh* (which even the *Bavli* 3a assents to, albeit in a different context) linking the *mitz-*



vah of *Hakhel* (Devarim 31:11) to that of being *oleh liregel*. The minor exempt from *korban* is nonetheless obligated in *Hakhel*. Thus, the *Yerushalmi* concludes that this establishes an obligation of *re'iyas panim* as a stand alone *mitzvah*.

This approach is also that of the Ran (*Al Harif, Ta'anis* 2a), who explains the statement of Rabban Gamliel in the *mishnah* (*Ta'anis* 1:3) that we delay praying for rain in *Eretz Yisrael* until the seventh of *Cheshvan*, to allow those who came up for *aliyah liregel* to travel home without rain. The obvious question is, why should we maintain this practice after the destruction of the *Mikdash*? To this, the Ran says, "even after the destruction, there were those who gathered together from the environs to come to Yerushalaim for the *regel*, as is done today." Now, the phrase "there are those" does not seem to denote an obligation, but rather a practice that was common enough to delay our prayer for rain.

While we are attempting to dissect the nature of this practice, let us offer a few more citations that *aliyah liregel* was practiced after the *churban*. The Tashbatz, or alternatively, Rashbatz (R. Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (1381 - 1444; 3:201) writes, "The *kedushah* of *Eretz Yisrael* ceased, but the *kedushah* of the *Mikdash* and Yerushalayim persists. A support is that people are *oleh liregel* from Mitzrayim (Egypt) and other lands." He goes on to describe a miracle which he himself witnessed in Yerushalayim on *Shavuos*, that a standard *Beis Haknesses* in Yerushalayim was filled from wall to wall by *olim liregel*; over three hundred people, yet everyone had space. This "miracle" shows that the *kedushah* persists.

Sefer Chasidim (primarily authored by R. Yaakov ben Shmuel of Regensburg in Germany 1150 - 1217) says that Rav Hai Gaon used to go from Bavel to Yerushalayim every *Sukkos*, and circle around *Har Hazeisim* seven times on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. Whether this was form of *aliyah liregel* is unclear, but the fact is that this was a yearly practice, and, as we will see later, many held we can best fulfill *aliyah liregel* today from *Har Hazeisim*, because it allows us to see the

former location of the *azarah* (courtyard of the *Beis Hamikdash*).

The *Chasam Sofer*, in his *Toras Moshe* on *Chumash* (*Parshas Emor*), in explanation of why the horrific Tzafas earthquake of 1837 took place, offers that it was due to the neglect of settling in Jerusalem. There he writes, and restates in his *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer* (*Yoreh Deah* 233), that there is a "mitzvah of *aliyah liregel* today and it has been practiced by many." There is classic contradiction at work here, for in another *teshuvah*, he writes there is no obligation (*chov*) of *aliyah liregel* today. This difference may put us on the track for an important distinction between *mitzvah* and *chov*. We will return to this shortly.

Our goal thus far has been to eventually return to the Ramban we cited above, who equates *aliyah liregel* with the most fundamental of *mitzvos*. Let us first note for the record that Reb Moshe Feinstein, in the *Igros Moshe* (*Yoreh Deah* 3:122) states that it is "simple and clear" that neither a *chov* or even a *mitzvah* of *aliyah liregel* exist today, and that all those who sought to practice this over the centuries did it solely as "memory" of and a "yearning" for the building of Jerusalem and the coming of *Moshiach*. And, let us also note that one of the foremost Hungarian *poskim* of recent generations, Reb Menashe Klein, although ruling that there is no obligation, does view going up to Yerushalayim today as the fulfillment of a positive commandment of the *Torah* which he categorizes as "*kabbolas pnei haShechinah*" (greeting the face of the *Shechinah*). Echoes of this may be heard in this latter opinion of the *Yerushalmi* mentioned earlier, which posits a distinct *mitzvah* of "*re'iyas ponim*." *The Mabif* (R. Moshe ben Yoseph de Trani, 1505 - 1585) writes that "even though *Tosafos* in *Pesachim* says that those who live outside of *Eretz Yisrael* are exempt from the *chiyuv*, nonetheless the *minhag* of *aliyah liregel* does apply to them, and they receive great reward for this" (*Pesachim* 3a).

We will not discuss here the many fascinating *halachos* relating to this topic, such as those governing where is the place where this *mitzvah/minhag* can be fulfilled today, or whether and from where one must ascend on foot. Additionally, there is the opinion of the *Yerai'im*



(R. Eliezer of Metz, 1115 - 1175), who argues that charity may replace the *korban* in order not to appear empty handed (425). Surely, there is much food for thought there. This and many other questions are dealt with in the sources cited below.

For the moment we point out that Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (1910 – 1995) was very careful to look down on the *makom hamikdash* from an elevated vantage point on *yom tov*, in order to see the place of the *azarah*. Once there, he would recite the section of *yom tov musaf* which begins *umipnei chatoeinu* (because of our sins we were exiled from our land). This was the custom of many *Torah* giants who lived in the Holy Land. (For details, see the two sections on *aliyah liregel* today in *Hakosel Hama'arovi: Halachos Uminhagim*.)

The *Sefer Hachinuch* (*Mitzvah* 489) explains the meaning of the *mitzvah* of *aliyah liregel*. He writes:

"The roots (ie. reasons) of this commandment are in order that all of Israel see and place upon their hearts, through the act of the sacrifice which awakens the hearts, that all of them - from the small to the great - are God's portion and His inheritance, a holy and chosen people, those that guard His testimonies, the treasure from all the peoples under all of the skies [that] keep His statutes and observe His religion. Hence they come three times a year to the House of God. It is like their saying metaphorically, 'Behold, we are like slaves to God, entering and coming under the shade of His roof, relying upon His strength forever and ever in the love for Him and in the fear of Him; and no foreigner shall come among us, as we alone are the children of His house.' And with this act, our minds are aroused, and we place His fear into our hearts, and we fix His love into our thoughts, and we merit to receive His kindness and His blessing."

In short, as the chosen people, we come three times a year into *Hashem's* House, thus proclaiming that we alone are the children of His House. This is the great signifi-

cance the Ramban attaches to this *mitzvah*. It focuses, through a tangible act, our thoughts upon the greatest truths of our faith. Thus, particularly for a captive Jewish slave, surrounded by alien influences, his closeness and God's great love for him must be frequently reaffirmed.

All the discussions concerning the status of this *mitzvah* today seem to grant that some element of it remains. As we quoted from the *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, "Even though *Beis Hamikdash* has been destroyed, *Yisroel* has not stopped their footsteps three times in the year." (*Parsha* 5) The lingering holiness of Jerusalem and the *Makom Hamikdash* still creates an effect, and testifies to our unique status as *Hashem's* servants. In other words, "entering His House" is not limited to the actual *Beis Hamikdash*, but includes His chosen city and Holy Mountain. Thus, it is certainly meritorious if one can go to Yerushalayim on the three pilgrimage festivals. Further, even if we cannot "go up", we can still meditate upon the great truths so beautifully articulated by the *Chinuch*, which are surely worthy to fill our hearts and minds with passion for *Hashem* on this coming *Sukkos*.

(For further readings on the status of *aliyah liregel* today, perhaps the best place to start is the encyclopedic work mentioned above, "*Hakosel Hama'arovi: Halachos Uminhagim*" by Rav Shmuel Rabonowitz and Rav Yoseph Shulem Brownshtein (Western Wall Heritage Foundation:2009). In somewhat more abbreviated form, although very thorough, there is Rabbi Shimshon Hakohen Nadel's "On the *Mitzvah* of *Aliyah Liregel* Today" published in the *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Fall 2013. As far as those who prefer the spoken word, there is a detailed and appealing shiur on the subject Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb on YUTorah, entitled "Aliyah Liregel Nowadays: *Mitzvah* or Misnomer?" Any or all of the above can fill the *Sukkah* with many hours of in-depth *Torah* study over *yom tov*.)

SIMCHAS TORAH

What Day is Today?



Ezra
Schechter
(’22)

Today is the eighth day of *Sukkos*, but the exact status of the day is in question. Is today *Shemini Atzeres*? Is it *Simchas Torah*? Is it *Hoshana Rabbah* - but that was yesterday! The truth is, the answers to these questions are different depending on where you are. If you are in Israel, then today is both *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*. If you are outside of Israel, in *chutz la'aretz*, then the eighth day is *Shemini Atzeres*, while the ninth is *Simchas Torah*. In both cases, the 7th day is *Hoshana Rabbah*. What is the reason Israel and the rest of the world have different days? The answer is because back in the olden days, before you could go on your phone and check the calendar app to see which days *Sukkos* is, new months only started when the supreme court (*Sanhedrin*) saw the new moon and determined it to be a new month. This meant that people could not plan the days of the *yomim tovim* in advance, since they did not know when the *Sanhedrin* would determine the new month would begin. If Jews lived outside of Israel, it would take a long time for the word to get around that it was a new month, so they wouldn't know when the last month ended, and whether it had 29 or 30 days. It was therefore decided that the Jews outside of Israel would celebrate an extra day for all of the *yomim tovim*, in order to make sure that they would not be off by one in their celebration.

The question is, nowadays, we have calendars and the technology to know exactly when the months start. We now know precisely if the previous months had 29 or 30 days, so why do we still do two days of each *yom tov*? The *Gemara* discusses this question, and says that even though we have a set calendar, we should still "be careful with the customs of your forefathers that you have in your hands, for the government might make a decree, and you will make a mistake." (*Beitzah* 4b). This makes it clear that even with the set calendars and technology which we have today, that we should do what our ancestors did, and keep

two days of *yom tov* outside of Israel.

If we focus at the end of this quote - "...and you will make a mistake"- it seems that the reason for continuing to add an extra day is still because we are being cautious and fear a mistake. Nowadays, with our set calendar, we can easily check when *yomim tovim* will be far in the future, so a mistake is nearly impossible. If the reason that we keep two days is really that we may make a mistake, then nowadays that should not apply to us, since we have the tools to ensure that such errors will never occur. In light of this, why do we still add an extra day? Rav Chai Goan learns that the rule of keeping two days started in the time of *nevi'im*, and even from the days of Yehoshua ben Nun. With Ravi Chai Goan's approach, the *Sanhedrin*, that passed the rule of keeping two days, was filled with *nevi'im*. There is also a general rule that once a rabbinical law is passed by the *Sanhedrin*, then it stands until another court equal or greater in size and importance abolishes it. It would be impossible to get a court to come and get rid of this rule, since we would need a court that would be able to compare to a *Sanhedrin* filled with *nevi'im*. Therefore, even nowadays, outside of Israel, we have two days, one for *Shemini Atzeres*, and one for *Simchas Torah*.

Should Simchas Torah Be on Shavuos?

After a full year of reading through the *Torah*, we celebrate together on the *yom tov* known as *Simchas Torah*. Four months prior to this *chag* is the *yom tov* of *Shavuos*, where we celebrate receiving the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. This raises a question: if we celebrate receiving the *Torah* on *Shavuos*, how come we celebrate finishing a year's cycle of *laining* the *Torah* only months later? It would seem to make most sense that on the day we received the *Torah*, we should finish the years cycle of *laining* it.

A possible answer can be expressed in the following *mashal*: There once was a king who wanted to marry off his daughter. He came across a nice, simple man with great *middos*, whom he decided was the one for the princess. The man couldn't believe that he, some simple man, would be chosen to marry the king's daughter. After getting the offer from the king, the man replied that there must be something he doesn't know about his daughter, stopping the wealthier men in the area from marrying her. There must be something wrong with her. And to the king's surprise, the simple man declined the offer.

The king threatened to kill the man if he didn't agree to marry his daughter. The simple man realized that this wasn't getting worth getting killed over, so he decided that he was willing to marry the princess. After a short while of being married, he realized that there really wasn't anything wrong with her. She seemed to be perfect. The simple man decided to ask the king for another wedding. Confused by the request, the king asked the man why he wanted to celebrate his marriage again. The man responded that at the original wedding, his mind was on what he may be getting himself into. He was just trying to see what may be wrong with the king's daughter. Now that he sees how great the princess is, he wants a wedding where he can truly rejoice getting to have the princess as a wife and enjoy it to the fullest.

Similar to this, when we were standing by *Har Sinai* getting the *Torah*, we were doubtful, since every other nation had just rejected *Hashem's* offer. In fact, we were so close to rejecting *Hashem's* offer that *Hashem* actually picked up the mountain above us, and said that if we wouldn't accept the *Torah*, He would drop it on us. Our acceptance of the *Torah* was probably not out of 100% love for *Hashem* and the *Torah*. We didn't completely know what the *Torah* was like. But after a short while of experiencing the *Torah* and realizing how amazing and special it truly is, we want to rejoice again, out of complete love. We have already been living the *Torah* for some time, and now it is time to show our full *Simchas Torah*.



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