



Adas Torah Journal of Torah Ideas

Nitzachon

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Editors' Preface

It was a true joy to see our *kehilla's* pride in the first issue of *Nitzachon*, and in the Torah accomplishments it represents. *Mechayil el choyil*, we present to you our second issue, centering on the spiritual connection and inspiration we hope to achieve during the *yemei haratzon* of this coming year.

While the sobering events of 5774 will long be etched in our hearts and minds, so will the re-ignited and passionate *achdus* which has distinguished our people throughout these last few months. *Klal Yisrael's* exemplary demonstration of the three glorious traits for which it is distinguished – *harachmanim*, *v'habayshanim*, *v'gomlei chasadim* (*Yevamos* 79a) – flies in the face of those who question our virtue. We often assume that these traits are innate, yet the Maharsha notes, based on the *pesukim* quoted in the *gemara*, that this is only true for kindness and *g'milus chasadim* - the hallmark of Avraham Avinu which he instilled and ingrained into the very being of his descendants. The other two traits, however, were actually gifts from Hashem: *busha*, a gift that came with a Jew's acceptance of the yoke of Torah at Har Sinai, and *rachamim*, a gift that comes with a Jew's commitment to follow Hashem's *mitzvos*. Thus, the more a Jew studies Torah and the more firmly a Jew commits to keeping *mitzvos*, the more he or she will strengthen and polish the mercy, discretion, and kindness in his or her character and soul.

We hope that the first *yomim nora'im* issue of *Nitzachon* will help enrich our *Talmud Torah* and inspire our commitment to *shmiras hamitzvos*.

ובכן תן כבוד ה' לעמך, תהילה ליראיך ותקוה טובה לדורשיך.

Michael Kleinman

Yaakov Siegel

החוברת הזאת מוקדשת
לזכר נשמת האם היקרה
קמו בניה ויאשרוה
חוה גולדשין בת יעקב ע"ה

This journal is dedicated
in loving memory of
Eva Rich



Marilyn & Alan Rich and Family

In honor of our dear parents,
Mendy & Suri Kuppermann, שיחיו
&
Bobby & Melanie Rechnitz, שיחיו,
and in honor of our dear children
Elisha, Anaelle, Yakira and Meira; שיחיו

יהי רצון מלפני אבינו שבשמים שנהיה אנחנו
וצאצאינו, וצאצאי צאצאינו, וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל,
כלנו יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה
בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה ושנה טובה ומתוקה
לכל בית ישראל



Alain & Jacqueline Kuppermann

In honor of the birth of our son,

משה יצחק

May he grow up

לגדל לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים

In memory of our grandparents

משה שמואל בן נתן נטע הלוי ע"ה

חנה בת פרץ ע"ה

משה יצחק בן יוסף ע"ה

whose love of Torah continues to
inspire us everyday



Daniel and Annie Nagel

Yasher koach to all the people who
made Nitzachon possible



Eli and Alison Snyder



*Dr. and Mrs. Daniel
Wohlgelernter*

ראש וראשון



Rabbi Dovid Revah

Rabbi Avraham Lieberman

Guest Contributor

The Thirteen *Middos* of *Rachamim*

RABBI DOVID REVAH



Towards the end of *Ne'ila*, we say:

תמכתי יתדותי בשלש עשרה תבות בטוח אני באלה ובזכות שלשת אבות.

I have placed my reliance on the Thirteen Attributes... I trust in these and in the merit of the three Avos.

Although we have spent the entire Yom Kippur fasting, davening, and doing *teshuva*, we still fear that we have fallen short. In the final moments of Yom Kippur, we utilize our most powerful tool – the Thirteen *Middos HaRachamim*, the Attributes of Mercy. We invoke them repeatedly, and only then do we feel assured that we will merit a good judgment.

The source for this confidence is a *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (17b):

אמר רבי יוחנן: אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו. מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה. אמר לו: כל זמן שישראל חוטאין, יעשו לפני כסדר הזה, ואני מוחל להם.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Were this verse not written, it would be impossible to say it. This teaches that HaKadosh Baruch Hu wrapped Himself in a tallis like a shaliach tzibbur and demonstrated to Moshe the order of prayer. He said to him: Any time that Israel sin, let them perform before me this procedure and I shall forgive them.

The *gemara* continues:

אמר רב יהודה: ברית כרותה לשלש עשרה מדות שאינן חוזרות ריקם, שנאמר הנה אנכי כרת ברית.

Rav Yehuda said: A covenant has been made regarding the Thirteen Attributes that they are always accepted, as the pasuk says, "Behold I seal a covenant."

We mention this covenant in the introductory paragraph recited before the Thirteen *Middos*:

א-ל הורית לנו לומר שלש עשרה וזכור לנו היום ברית שלש עשרה.

God, You taught us to recite the Thirteen Middos; remember for us today the covenant of these thirteen.

Rabbi Dovid Revah has served as the Rav
and Mara D'Asra of Adas Torah since 2005.

Of course, we know that there are no shortcuts in life. Forgiveness requires more than simply saying a few words! What, then, do *Chazal* mean when they state that reciting the Thirteen *Middos* guarantees that Hashem will accept our *tefillos*? If, despite our *teshuva* and davening, we failed to avert a harsh judgment, why should mentioning Hashem's Attributes of Mercy change it?

To gain a proper understanding, it is necessary to examine when and why Hashem taught us the Thirteen *Middos*. It was at one of the darkest times in our history. *Klal Yisrael* were still at the foot of Har Sinai when they worshipped the *egel hazahav*, and Hashem told Moshe that He intended to destroy them. At that time of crisis, Moshe displayed unparalleled leadership through his powerful advocacy on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*:

ויאמר ה' אל משה ראיתי את העם הזה והנה עם קשה ערף הוא: ועתה הניחה לי ויחר אפי בהם ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול: ויחל משה את פני ה' אלקיו ויאמר למה ה' יחרה אפך בעמך אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים בכח גדול וביד חזקה: למה יאמרו מצרים לאמר ברעה הוציאם להרג אתם בהרים ולכלתם מעל פני האדמה שוב מחרון אפך והנחם על הרעה לעמך: זכר לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל עבדיך אשר נשבעת להם בך ותדבר אליהם ארבה את זרעכם ככוכבי השמים וכל הארץ הזאת אשר אמרתי אתן לזרעכם ונחלו לעלם: וינחם ה' על הרעה אשר דבר לעשות לעמו:

Hashem said to Moshe, "I have seen this people, and behold – it is a stiff-necked people. And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation." Moshe pleaded before Hashem, his God, and said, "Why, Hashem, should Your anger flare up against Your people, whom You have taken out of the land of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? Why should Egypt say: With evil intent did He take them out, to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from the face of the earth? Relent from Your flaring anger and reconsider regarding the evil against Your people. Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You told them, 'I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven and this entire land of which I spoke, I shall give to your offspring and it shall be their heritage forever.'" Hashem reconsidered regarding the evil that He declared He would do to His people. (Shemos 32:9-14)

Moshe argues that it would be a *chillul Hashem* if *Klal Yisrael* were destroyed, as Hashem has chosen us to be the vehicle to bring *kevod shamayim* into the world. Moshe continues to plead on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*, invoking the *Avos*, and Hashem accepts Moshe's *tefillos*. He will not destroy *Klal Yisrael*. Nevertheless, He does not intend to allow them to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

Moshe pleads once again, and Hashem relents, permitting *Klal Yisrael* to continue the journey, but with a condition:

וידבר ה' אל משה לך עלה מזה אתה והעם אשר העלית מארץ מצרים אל הארץ אשר נשבעתי

לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר לזרעך אתננה: ושלחתי לפניך מלאך וגרשתי את הכנעני האמרי והחתי והפרזי החוי והיבوسی: אל ארץ זבת חלב ודבש כי לא אעלה בקרבך כי עם קשה ערף אתה פן אכלך בדרך: וישמע העם את הדבר הרע הזה ויתאבלו ולא שתו איש עדיו עליו: ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל בני ישראל אתם עם קשה ערף רגע אחד אעלה בקרבך וכליטיך ועתה הורד עדיך מעליך ואדעה מה אעשה לך:

Hashem spoke to Moshe, "Go, ascend from here, you and the people whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land about which I swore to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov, saying, 'I shall give it to your offspring.' I shall send an angel ahead of you, and I shall drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivvite, and the Jebusite – to a land that flows with milk and honey, because I shall not ascend among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I annihilate you on the way." The people heard this bad tidings and they became grief-stricken, and no one donned his jewelry. Hashem said to Moshe, "Say to Bnei Yisrael, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I ascend among you, I may annihilate you in an instant. And now remove your jewelry from yourself and I shall know what I shall do to you.'" (Shemos 33:1-5)

Hashem tells *Klal Yisrael* that He will no longer rest His divine presence among them; they will now be led by a *malach*. *Klal Yisrael* are devastated, mourning the loss of their relationship with Hashem. Hashem explains that His withdrawal is actually for their benefit. The nation has shown that it is an *am keshei oref* and the people are likely to sin again. To sin a second time – in the presence of Hashem – would be unforgivable.

Moshe rejects this solution and gives an ultimatum – either Hashem leads them directly or ends everything in the desert:

ויאמר משה אל ה' ראה אתה אמר אלי העל את העם הזה ואתה לא הודעתני את אשר תשלח עמי ואתה אמרת ידעתך בשם וגם מצאת חן בעיני: ועתה אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך הודעני נא את דרכך... ויאמר אליו אם אין פניך הלכים אל תעלנו מזה... ויאמר ה' אל משה גם את הדבר הזה אשר דברת אעשה כי מצאת חן בעיני ואדעך בשם:

Moshe said to Hashem, "See, You say to me, 'Take this people onward,' but You did not inform me whom You will send with me; and You had said, 'I shall know you by name, and you have also found favor in my eyes.' And now, if I have indeed found favor in Your eyes, make Your ways known to me... He said to Him, "If your Presence does not go along, do not bring us forward from here... Hashem said to Moshe, "Even this thing of which you spoke I shall do, for you have found favor in My eyes and I have known you by name." (Shemos 33:12-17)

Hashem yields to Moshe's demand that He dwell in the midst of the people once again.

Moshe's successful advocacy on *Klal Yisrael's* behalf was brazen and heroic. But was it prudent? Hashem already explained that because of *Klal Yisrael's* propensity to sin, it would

be unwise and dangerous to allow the *Shechina* to return. Rejecting that logic and demanding Hashem's presence would seem to be setting the people up for failure!

There must have been some change that allowed Hashem to agree to Moshe's demands. That change was the transmission of the *Thirteen Middos HaRachamim*. Rashi comments:

ויאמר אני אעביר וגו' - ... לפי שאני רוצה וצריך ללמדך סדר תפלה, שכשנצרכת לבקש רחמים על ישראל. הזכרת לי זכות אבות, כסבור אתה, שאם תמה זכות אבות אין עוד תקוה, אני אעביר כל מדת טובי לפניך.

וקראתי בשם ה' לפניך - ללמדך סדר בקשת רחמים אף אם תכלה זכות אבות, וכסדר זה שאתה רואה אותי מעוטף וקרא י"ג מדות הוי מלמד את ישראל לעשות כן, ועל ידי שיזכירו לפני רחום וחנן יהיו נענין כי רחמי לא כלים.

"He said, 'I shall make all my goodness pass before you' - ... For I wish and need to teach you the order of prayer when you need to seek mercy for Yisrael. In your prayers, you reminded Me of the zechus Avos, for you thought that if the zechus Avos is finished, there is no hope - but I will pass all of My good before you. "And I shall call out with the name Hashem before you" - To teach you the order of requesting mercy, even if the zechus Avos is finished. This order in which you see Me wrapped in a tallis and calling out the Thirteen Middos - teach Yisrael to do so, and through their recalling before Me "Merciful and Gracious" they will be answered, for my mercies are never finished. (Rashi 33:19)

Hashem told Moshe: In your prayers, you invoked the *zechus Avos*, but that merit is finite and may not always be effective. I will teach you my Attributes of Mercy, which endure forever. Hashem's relationship with *Klal Yisrael* will henceforth be governed by these *Middos HaRachamim*. Following this new covenant, Hashem will never destroy them, even if they sin again. Rather, Hashem will be patient with them, helping them improve over time.

Sadly, Hashem's assessment of *Klal Yisrael* was borne out shortly thereafter with the sin of the *meraglim*. Once again, Hashem wishes to destroy *Klal Yisrael*, and Moshe must come to their defense:

אכנו בדבר ואורשנו ואעשה אתך לגוי גדול ועצום ממנו: ויאמר משה אל ה' ושמעו מצרים כי העלית בכחך את העם הזה מקרבנו... והמתה את העם הזה כאיש אחד ואמרו הגוים אשר שמעו את שמעך לאמר: מבלתי יכלת ה' להביא את העם הזה אל הארץ אשר נשבע להם וישחטם במדבר: ועתה יגדל נא כח אדני כאשר דברת לאמר: ה' ארך אפים ורב חסד נשא עון ופשע ונקמה לא ינקח פקד עון אבות על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים: סלח נא לעון העם הזה כגדל חסדך וכאשר נשאתה לעם הזה ממצרים ועד הנה: ויאמר ה' סלחתי כדברך:

"I will smite them with the plague and annihilate them, and I shall make you a greater and more powerful nation than they." Moshe said to Hashem, "Then Egypt - from whose midst You brought up this nation with Your power - will hear... Yet You killed this people like a single man! Then the nations that heard

of your fame will say, 'Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the land that He had sworn to give them, He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' And now may the strength of my Lord be magnified as You have spoken, saying, 'Hashem, Slow to Anger, Abundant in Kindness, Forgiver of Iniquity and Willful Sin, and Who cleanses, but does not cleanse completely, recalling the iniquity of parents upon children to the third and fourth generations.' Forgive now the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your kindness and as You have forgiven this people from Egypt until now." And Hashem said, "I have forgiven because of your words." (Bamidbar 14:12-19)

As he did after the *cheit ha'egel*, Moshe makes the argument that destroying *Klal Yisrael* will cause a *chillul Hashem*. In contrast to his prayer after the *cheit ha'egel*, however, Moshe does not invoke *zechus Avos* after the *cheit hameraglim*. The Ramban explains that this time, Moshe was unable to rely on their merits. The *Avos* loved *Eretz Yisrael* and sacrificed on its behalf, whereas *Klal Yisrael* rejected *Eretz Yisrael*. However, he was able to use the *Middos HaRachamim* to attain forgiveness.

It still remains to be explained why it is necessary for us to actually recite the Thirteen *Middos* in order to attain Hashem's mercy. Once Hashem agreed to utilize these *Middos* in our relationship with Him, why must we mention them?

Perhaps we can understand this based on a *midrash* quoted by Rashi in the context of Moshe's prayer after the *cheit hameraglim*:

ה' ארך אפים - לצדיקים ולרשעים. כשעלה משה למרום מצאו משה להקב"ה שהיה יושב וכותב ה' ארך אפים. אמר לו לצדיקים. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אף לרשעים. אמר לו רשעים יאבדו. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא חייך שתצטרך לדבר. כשחטאו ישראל בעגל ובמרגלים התפלל משה לפניו בארך אפים, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא והלא אמרת לי לצדיקים. אמר לו והלא אמרת לי אף לרשעים:

"Hashem, Slow to Anger" – for the righteous and the evildoers. When Moshe went up to heaven, he found HaKadosh Baruch Hu sitting and writing "Hashem, Slow to Anger." He said to Him: "For the righteous." HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to him: "Even for the evildoers." He said to Him: "The evildoers should be destroyed!" (Tehillim 37:20) HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to him: "I swear that you will need this!" When Yisrael sinned with the *egel* and the *meraglim*, Moshe prayed before Him, invoking the attribute of Slow to Anger. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Him: "Did you not tell me only for the righteous?" He said to Him: "And did you not tell me even for the evildoers?"

When Hashem first taught Moshe the *Midda* of *Erech Apayim*, Moshe thought that the *Midda* would only apply for someone who is generally righteous, but Hashem told him that it applies even for *resha'im*. Later, when Moshe attempted to appeal to Hashem's *Erech Apayim*,

Hashem reminded him that he initially thought the *Midda* should not apply to *resha'im*. Why was it so important for Hashem to remind Moshe of that discussion?

Although Hashem is willing to act with *Middas HaRachamim*, there is a potential danger in doing so. If someone does something wrong but does not see any subsequent consequences, he may conclude that either Hashem is unaware of what he did or indifferent to it. Alternatively, he may use the lack of Hashem's response to prove that in fact his behavior is correct. Either of these responses is catastrophic. If one discounts Hashem's awareness, it is a *chillul Hashem*, and if he thinks he is doing everything right, he will never have a chance to improve. To avoid this, Hashem may be compelled to punish the person. How can Hashem show mercy when this would lead the person to become oblivious to Hashem? Thus, Hashem must exercise *din*, judgment, for the individual's own benefit.

This is why it is essential that we recite the *Middos HaRachamim*. In order for Hashem to exercise *rachamim*, we must first be fully aware that He is doing so. We must be fully cognizant that our behavior is not acceptable and that we do not deserve any leniencies. We recognize that it is only Hashem's infinite mercy that allows us to receive a favorable judgment. This way, if, as we hope, we do merit a good judgment, we will accept it not as a testament to our good character, but rather as a manifestation of Hashem's *rachamim* and an impetus to do better the coming year.

In the *sefer Kadosh V'Nora Shemo*, Rabbi Yitzchak Goldwasser illustrates this idea with a *mashal*. A person boards a bus and the bus driver asks for his ticket. The man responds, "Why should I pay? Busses should be free!" We would expect the driver to throw the man off the bus. Busses are not free; if you don't want to pay, you don't deserve to ride. Now picture another scenario: A person boards a bus and the driver asks him for his ticket. The person puts his hand into his pocket and realizes that he has forgotten his wallet. He looks through his pockets for some change, but he can only come up with a dollar. Red-faced with shame, he turns to exit the bus. In this case, the driver may say, "Pay the dollar and don't worry about it." What is the difference? In the first case, the person does not accept responsibility or recognize authority. Letting him ride for free would simply undermine the whole system. In the second case, the person recognizes his responsibility. He would like to pay. It makes sense to let him ride for free this one time, knowing that in the future he will be more careful.

By reciting the Thirteen *Middos*, we are showing that we understand that we have fallen far short of expectations. We stand with shame in front of Hashem and declare:

ואתה צדיק על כל הבא עלינו כי אמת עשית ואנחנו הרשענו.

You are the righteous with regard to everything that befalls us, for You have exercised truth and we have done evil.

With that recognition, we are ready to receive Hashem's mercy.

The Torah Reading and *Haftara* on Yom Kippur: The *Parsha* of *Arayos* and *Sefer Yonah*

RABBI AVRAHAM LIEBERMAN

Guest Contributor



The *gemara* states (*Megillah* 31a) without any argument or discussion, that at *Mincha* of Yom Kippur, we read the *parsha* of the *arayos* (forbidden relations) and for the *haftara* we read *Sefer Yonah*.¹ The *parsha* of the *arayos* refers to the end of *Parshas Achrei-Mos* (*perek* 18), which consists of thirty *pesukim*, stopping just short of the start of *Parshas Kedoshim*. *Sefer Yonah* is one of the twelve books that make up *Trei Asar*, short *nevuos* (prophecies) that were put together in one book because of their length (*Bava Basra* 14b). *Sefer Yonah* contains forty-eight *pesukim*.

Rav Akiva Eiger (*Teshuvos* 1:24) was faced with a *halachic* dilemma that relates to the significance of the Yom Kippur *Mincha* Torah reading. A man was deathly ill and his physicians advised that he must eat on Yom Kippur. Because of his serious condition, a *minyan* was organized in his room. Could he be called up to the Torah for the morning reading despite the fact that he was not fasting? Rav Akiva Eiger ruled in the affirmative because the morning

¹ While the *gemara* prescribes the reading of *Sefer Yonah* as the *haftara* at *Mincha* on Yom Kippur, the universal *minhag* is to add the last three *pesukim* of *Sefer Micha* at the end. These *pesukim* begin with the words “*Mi kel kamocha*” and they include the thirteen *Middos* of Hashem, an integral theme of Yom Kippur. The custom of the *Geonim* (Rav Yehuda Gaon and Rav Amram Gaon) was also to add to the beginning of *Sefer Yonah* the last *pasuk* of *Sefer Ovadia* (*Ovadia* 1:21), starting with the words: “*V’alu moshi’im b’Har Tzion*” (which we recite each morning at the end of *Shiras HaYam*, right before *Yishtabach*). There are communities that still maintain this practice (*Minhag Roma*). The *Geonim* (*Siddur Rav Saadia*, p.371; *Otzar HaGeonim*, *Megilla*, p.62) also record a *minhag*, which is no longer practiced, to read *Sefer Bereishis* until the description of the creation of the first day at *Mincha* on Yom Kippur; some practiced this throughout the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*. The reason was to confuse the Satan.

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Torah reading discusses the *kedushas hayom*, the sanctity of the day of Yom Kippur, and does not relate to its status as a fast day. But what about the *Mincha* reading of the *parsha* of the *arayos*? Essentially, the question is why the reading at *Mincha* on Yom Kippur was instituted. Is this reading similar to the *Mincha* reading on other fast days (“*Vayechal*”), for which someone who is not fasting cannot be called up to the Torah?² Or was the Yom Kippur *Mincha* reading instituted because of the unique *kedushas hayom*, which would imply that one who is not fasting can be called up to the Torah, just as he can in the morning? Rav Akiva Eiger left this question hanging with the classical “*vetzarich iyun l’dina*” (“this demands further clarification”).

In order to understand this issue fully, we need to understand the purpose of the Yom Kippur *Mincha* Torah reading and the *haftara* of *Sefer Yonah*.

The Parsha of Arayos

Rashi comments on why the *parsha* of the *arayos* is read on Yom Kippur. He explains that since the *aveiros* involving *arayos* are common, if someone transgressed in this area, the reading will awaken him to repent. Tosfos adds two more reasons that the *parsha* of the *arayos* is read. First, the women dress up and adorn themselves on Yom Kippur and then come to shul,³ and the *parsha* is a reminder to act properly. Second (based on a *midrash*), the reading is actually a request to Hashem, asking that just as we are required not to reveal our nakedness, Hashem should not uncover and reveal our sins. Tosfos Ha-Rosh writes that the *parsha* of the *arayos* was chosen because all year long, people’s desires for these types of sins are prevalent, and immoral sins are committed even on Yom Kippur. As the *gemara* in *Yoma* (19b) states, the people will hear the reading and do *teshuva*. Similarly, the *Geonim* explain that this reading was instituted to remind anyone who sinned in these areas to repent and be forgiven, as without *teshuva*, forgiveness is impossible.⁴ The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Tefilla* 13:11) that this *parsha* is read in order to remind the person of his sin, embarrass him, and cause him to do *teshuva*. The Ran explains (*Megilla* 10b in the Rif) that since the desire for these sins is common, one must sanctify himself with holiness and stay away from them.

Although the explanations of all of these *Rishonim* emphasize the concept of *teshuva* as the core of this Torah reading, their nuanced words show us how each opinion is really different.

Why We Read Sefer Yonah

Rashi’s commentary printed in our *gemara* does not provide a reason for the selection of *Sefer Yonah* as the *haftara* for Yom Kippur. However, the Rashi commentary printed beside the Rif states briefly that *Sefer Yonah* is read because the people of Nineveh repented. Tosfos does not

² See *Orach Chaim* 566:6.

³ This point is mentioned in the *mishna* (*Ta’anis* 4:1), which records that “on Yom Kippur, the maidens of Yerushalayim would go out dressed in white garments and dance in the vineyards.”

⁴ See *Otzar HaGeonim*, *Megillah*, p.61.

record any reason. The *Mordechai* (*Megilla*, 831) simply states that *Sefer Yonah* is read because it includes the concept of *teshuva*.

If *Sefer Yonah* is about doing *teshuva*, why don't we start reading it during the month of Elul instead of on Yom Kippur? One explanation is that it is read right before *Ne'ilah* in order to beseech Hashem to judge us favorably even though we have not yet done complete *teshuva*, just like Yonah was judged favorably by the captain and the people on the boat even though they did not understand fully why everything was happening.⁵

The Vilna Gaon explains *Sefer Yonah* as a *mashal* (allegory) about the journey of the *neshama*. It is the story of our lives in this world. As we travel through life, at times we feel trapped in our sins and we need to know how to act. The story of Yonah teaches us both about *teshuva* and hope.

Others accentuate the lottery that figures in the story; we are not always sure why things happen to us. Still others explain that the message of *Sefer Yonah* is that everyone in this world has an important mission – to carry out Hashem's vision for the world – but we shirk our responsibility and run away from it like Yonah.

Rabbi Yehushua Ibn Shu'ib, who lived in Spain during the early part of the 14th century, explains that *Sefer Yonah* was chosen because it teaches that Hashem has mercy on all of His creations, including the people of Nineveh – so surely He will have mercy on the Jewish People as well. It is read specifically at *Mincha* time because that is a time of *ratzon Hashem*, when Hashem is more likely to accept our prayers. This is an auspicious time, when repentance is accepted with greater ease.⁶

Rabbi David Abudirham, who also lived in Spain in the 14th century, explains that the reason that *Sefer Yonah* is read on Yom Kippur is to teach us that because of one's sins, one cannot run away from Hashem. This very important idea is the primary explanation cited by many authorities, sometimes with attribution and most times without.⁷ The *Mishna Berura* (622:7) cites this reason in the name of the *Acharonim*. In the *Shaar HaTziyun* (footnote 6), which is usually reserved for short notes, he writes at great length to explain this concept. He explains that a person is prone to despair because of his sins. He thinks that there is no way to fix them, concluding that if Hashem will decree for him to die, so be it. The *Mishna Berura* writes that this is a mistake, because whatever Hashem wants to be fixed and corrected will be. Hashem's will is always fulfilled. The concept of *gilgul* (reincarnation) entails that man can return to this world many times until he remedies his sin. A person may experience the pain of death over and over so that Hashem's will is fulfilled and the person does *teshuva*. We similarly

⁵ See *Otzar HaRa'ayon VeHamachshava*, p.70.

⁶ See *Drashot ibn Shu'ib*, p. 512. He proves this point from the *gemara's* statement (*Brachos* 6b) that one should be careful about the *Mincha* prayer because Eliyahu HaNavi was answered at *Mincha* time. According to the Kabbalistic works, (*Zohar*, *Vayeitzei* 164; Rabbi Menachem Rekanati, *Parshas Vayeitzei*) Adam HaRishon's sin occurred at *Mincha* time. Therefore, in future generations, the best time to do *teshuva* is also at *Mincha* time, in order to be *mesaken* (rectify) the past. For example, *akeidas Yitzchak* occurred at that time because the gates of *teshuva* were opened.

⁷ See *Mateh Moshe* 878.

see from the story of Yonah that as much as he tried to escape from delivering his message to the people of Nineveh, eventually, Hashem's will was fulfilled.⁸

There are many and varied deep philosophical reasons suggested for the reading of *Sefer Yonah*. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (the Rav) explained that the main reason for reading *Sefer Yonah* is to show that Hashem cares for all people and that the entire world needs *teshuva*. On Yom Kippur, we begin by praying for *Am Yisrael* alone, but at the end of the day, we pray for all of humanity. The recitation of the *haftara* of Yonah reflects this idea.⁹

The custom of buying and selling *Maftir Yonah* for exorbitant sums is mentioned in both Sefardi and Ashkenazi sources.¹⁰ Rav Avraham Pallagi writes that people hasten to attempt to buy rights to it in order to achieve full repentance.¹¹ Rav Meir of Premishlan is reputed to have asked an individual who each year spent a large amount of money for *Maftir Yonah* why he did so. The man answered that it is because it is written that “the people [of Nineveh] repented from their evil ways” (*Yonah* 3:10). Rav Meir of Premishlan responded that the source of the custom is actually a different *pasuk*: “The captain approached him and said ‘How can you sleep so soundly? Arise! Call to your God!’” (*Yonah* 1:6). The reason that we read the *haftara* is to remind us not to sleep, but to **do**.¹²

Sefer Parparos Moshe offers an insight into why many wealthy people bid so much money for *Maftir Yonah*.¹³ He says that *Sefer Yonah* provides a great lesson in *emuna*, belief in Hashem, as we see that the *kikayon* that offered Yonah shade (*Yonah* 4:7-10) “materialized overnight and perished overnight.” Similarly, wealth can appear and disappear in a second. One who spends his money on this mitzva of purchasing this *haftara* shows that he acknowledges that everything is from Hashem, who in one second can give and in another second can take away.

8 He goes on to prove this point from the *mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (4:29): “And let not your evil inclination (*yetzer hara*) promise you that the grave will be an escape for you – for against your will you were created.”

9 See *Machzor Masores HaRav*, Yom Kippur, pp. 692-3.

10 In Chabad writings, this *haftara* is said to be a *segula* for many things, including wealth (*Sefer HaMa'amaram* [1951], pp. 91-92; *HaMelech B'Mesibo*, vol.1, p.73). The sixth Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, related that because of the significance of *Maftir Yonah*, his father, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, had his own *minyan* so that he would be called for it (*Yemei Bereishis*, p. 9, nt. 7). Other *poskim* have ruled against making a second *minyan* in order to give another person a chance for *Maftir Yonah* (*Rivevos Ephraim*, vol.5, 385:5, pp. 260-1).

Rav Yom Tov Singer (*Tal Talpiyos*, vol. 59, pp. 127-131) discusses the case of one who bought *Maftir Yonah* in the morning for a significant sum and then went home to sleep during the break. He then overslept and was late for *Mincha*. The *gabba'im* waited, but eventually had to give the *aliya* to someone else. Does the man who bid for *Maftir Yonah* still owe the money, even though he lost out on the *aliya*? Does the person who actually received it have to pay, and if so, must he pay the same amount that was pledged? Should the *gabba'im* have sold the *aliya* again? Should they share in the payment? After a long discussion on this topic, Rav Singer concludes that the *gabba'im* are not responsible. The person who actually received the *aliya* should pay the amount of the benefit he derived, although he is not compelled to do so. The one who pledged but lost out should also contribute to the payment, but he is also not obligated to. The moral is – don't fall asleep on Yom Kippur!

11 *Zechtei D'Avraham*, *drush* 7, p. 9.

12 *Alef Ksav*, vol.2, 606, p.48.

13 *Bereishis*, pp. 260-1.

The Brachos for the Haftara and Rav Akiva Eiger's Question

There is an important *machlokes* regarding the *brachos* recited after the reading of *Sefer Yonah* on Yom Kippur. The *bracha* that begins “*al haTorah v'al ha'avoda*” is recited on Shabbos and Yom Tov morning after the reading of the *haftara* as the fourth *bracha*, but it is not recited after we read the *haftara* on a fast day, neither in the morning nor at *Mincha*. Should it be recited on Yom Kippur at *Mincha*?

Rav Yosef Karo rules in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 622:2) that we do say the fourth *bracha* on Yom Kippur at *Mincha*, and that is the Sefardi *minhag*. This practice is rooted in the tradition of the *Geonim* (Rav Amram Gaon). Rav Moshe Isserles (the Rama), however, rules that the fourth *bracha* is not recited.¹⁴ The Rama's ruling is based on the view of many early Ashkenazi *Rishonim* (*Hagahos Maimoniyos*, *Mordechai*, *Maharil*, and *Sefer Minhagim*). The *Mordechai* writes (*Shabbos* 831): “The *haftara* of Yom Kippur is just like the *haftara* of any other fast day, and we therefore do not recite the fourth *bracha*.” The *Mordechai* clearly understood that the Torah reading and the *haftara* of *Minchah* on Yom Kippur were instituted not as an extension of its *kedushas hayom*, but rather just like other readings for fast days.

The Vilna Gaon (*Orach Chaim* 622:2) explains that this is essentially the *machlokes* between the Rama and Rav Yosef Karo. Rav Yosef Karo understood the reading and the *haftara* at *Minchah* as relating to the *kedushas hayom* of Yom Kippur, and he therefore maintained that the fourth *bracha* over the *haftara* is required, just as it is recited in the morning. In contrast, the Rama understood that the Torah reading and *haftara* were instituted just like the readings of any other fast day, and he therefore concluded that the fourth *bracha* should not be said over the *haftara*.

Rav Chanoch Henich Agus, the author of the *Marcheshes* (*siman* 14), uses this point to try to answer Rav Akiva Eiger's dilemma regarding whether a person who cannot fast on Yom Kippur may be called up to the Torah or the *haftara* at *Mincha*. The *Marcheshes* explains that according to Rav Yosef Karo, the *parsha* of the *arayos* has to do with the sanctity of the day, *kedushas hayom*, and one who is not fasting therefore may be called up to the Torah. However, according to the ruling of the Rama, the reading is related to Yom Kippur's status as a fast day. Therefore, one who is not fasting cannot be called to the Torah.¹⁵

Whatever the status of the reading and *haftara* at *Mincha*, we can internalize their message of *teshuva*, and may we be *zocheh* to the words that we say in the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Ne'ilah*: “You (Hashem) reach out to people who have sinned and Your right hand is extended to accept those who do *teshuva*.”

¹⁴ Rav Soloveitchik, following the custom of Volozhin, recited the fourth *bracha*. See *Nefesh HaRav*, p. 215, and *Pninei HaRav*, pp. 133-5.

¹⁵ The *Marcheshes* goes on to question why Rav Akiva Eiger did not suggest that the person who is ill eat less than a *kezayis* (size of an olive) within less than a *kdei achilas pras* (depending on different *poskim*, between three minutes to nine minutes). That way, the person is still considered fasting and would be allowed to be called up to the Torah. This is indeed the ruling of Rav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, *Halichos Shlomo*, vol. 2, pp. 54-56.

Rosh Hashana



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Areivus, Individuality, and Tzibbur

RABBI PINCHAS GELB



There are some things that we experience regularly for which there is not any word, although there should be. *Halachic* concepts sometimes fill this gap, providing language to enable nuance that otherwise would be blurred or absent. One example is the gradation between our identity as individuals and as members of a community. We find three different categories regarding this in *Hilchos Rosh Hashana* in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 594).

Areivus

The first category is “*areivus*.” The *Shulchan Aruch* quotes a *beraisa* in *Rosh Hashana* (34a) that states that a person may satisfy the obligation to blow shofar by listening to the shofar blasts of another. The Tur grounds this *halacha* in the general rule that, with certain exceptions, individuals can fulfill mitzva obligations for one another even after they have already discharged their own obligations.¹ Rashi explains (*Rosh Hashana* 29a) that this rule derives from the principle of “*kol Yisrael areivin zeh bazei*,” “all of Israel is a co-signer for (from the word *areiv*) – or, according to the Baal Shem Tov, is united with (from the word *ta’aroves*) – every other member of *Klal Yisrael*. “

This *halacha* of *areivus* in *mitzvos* appears to contradict the *mishna* (*Rosh Hashana* 29a), however, that a person can be *motzi* someone else in a mitzva only if he or she personally is obligated in the mitzva. Under this rule, if the one blowing the shofar already has satisfied his obligation for that day, he should not be able to be *motzi* another. Rashi and other *Rishonim* reconcile this ostensible contradiction by focusing upon the person rather than upon the specific mitzva act, establishing that the only requirement for the rule of *areivus* in *mitzvos* is for the individual to be obligated in the mitzva as a general matter. If someone is obligated to perform a mitzva, that person can fulfill the obligation of another individual even after having discharged his or her own obligation.

The implication is that one’s own obligation in a mitzva is not optimally or entirely satisfied until he or she has done whatever possible to facilitate the fulfillment of the

¹ This leaves aside the question of whether, according to the *Tur*, the mitzva is to blow (*Orach Chaim* 594) or to hear (*Orach Chaim* 585) the shofar.

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obligation by others.² Otherwise, if the individual were to have discharged his own obligation completely by performing the mitzva, then the default rule of the *mishna* – that individuals who are not obligated in a mitzva cannot be *motzi* others – would apply. The Ran (*Rosh Hashana* 8a in the Rif) states this explicitly:

תני אהבה בריה דרבי זירא: כל הברכות כולן אע"פ שיצא מוציא שהרי כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה במצות, וכיון שלא יצא חבירו כמי שלא יצא הוא דמי.

Ahava the son of Rabbi Zeira taught: With regard to all blessings, even though an individual has already fulfilled his own obligation, he can still fulfill the obligation of another because all of Israel are areivim for one another in mitzvos. Since his fellow has not yet fulfilled his obligation, it is as if he himself has not [completely] fulfilled his own obligation [either].

Accordingly, even a person who already has fulfilled his own personal obligation can blow shofar on behalf of others to enable them to satisfy their obligations because, although individuals are separate and distinct, the Torah was given to *Klal Yisrael* as a whole and each person's responsibility in a mitzva includes other people's obligations. As *Chazal* aptly and succinctly expressed the principle, all of Israel are *areivim* for one another.³

Mevakesh Rachamim al Atzmeinu

Surprisingly, however, the principle that individuals can be *motzi* others in *mitzvos* does not necessarily apply to prayer. The *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* continue by quoting the next line in the *gemara* (*Rosh Hashana* 34a) which contrasts the fulfillment of the obligation of shofar with that of prayer. Although an individual who has not blown shofar can satisfy his obligation by listening to the shofar blasts of another, an individual who has not prayed the nine blessings of the *amida* of Rosh Hashana cannot satisfy this obligation simply by listening to the prayers of another, even if both the listener and reader have this intention in mind.

Yet, why should *tefilla* be different than shofar or, for instance, *kiddush*? The *Tur* quotes the Ritz Gi'as explaining that it is because the *amida* was established to be said quietly and privately, and thus is an exception to the general rule. The *Beis Yosef* quotes the Ran who gives an alternate explanation that *tefilla* is to request "*rachamim*," and each person has to make this petition himself or herself. The *Mishna Berura* (594:2) states this even more emphatically that *tefilla* obligates everyone to request *rachamim* individually and not through an agent, "*velo al yedei sheliach*."⁴

2 See Rav Mayer Twersky, "As One Person with One Heart" (TorahWeb.org, 1999).

3 It is interesting that *Chazal* use the term "*areivim*" to express this principle, as opposed to a more direct term, such as "*ach-ra'in*," "responsible." One possible explanation is that is based on the *pasuk* in *Parshas Mikeitz* (*Bereishis* 43:9) when Yehuda tells Yaakov about Binyamin: "אנכי אערבנו מידי תבקשנו," "I will be his *areiv* and you can ask for him from my hand." Indeed, the centrality of this fiduciary relationship epitomized by Yehuda toward Binyamin may further explain why the *Beis HaMikdash* stands on the border between the area of *Shevet Binyamin* and *Shevet Yehuda*.

4 Even though the *Mishna Berura* brings the same explanation as the *Beis Yosef*, he reaches a different conclusion about

The *Targum Onkelos* consistently identifies the term “*rachamim*” with “*ahava*,” a loving relationship. Hence, the apparent anomaly that the capacity to be *motzi* others does not apply to prayer perhaps can be understood by the fact that there can be no proxies to a relationship. On Rosh Hashana and throughout the year, each person is obligated to seek a relationship with the *Ribbono Shel Olam* directly. Everybody needs to show up “*levakeish rachamim al atzmo velo al yedei sheliach*,” to seek to engage in the relationship with Hashem personally, ourselves.

Tzibbur

In the same section, the *Mishna Berura* presents an exception. Every person must be *mevakesh rachamim* individually “*ela im kein yesh asarah ve’az hu sheliach tzibbur*,” “unless there are ten and then [there] is a *sheliach tzibbur*.” In the presence of a *minyan*, a new *koach* of *tefilla* emerges – the ability of a *sheliach tzibbur* to be *motzi* the congregation in the *davening*. The *sheliach tzibbur* enables each individual to participate in the *tefilla* even when, for some particular reason, the individual is unable *levakesh rachamim al atzmo*. Within the community of the *minyan* we are able to lean upon the *sheliach tzibbur*.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt”l amplifies this further, as he would frequently say that there are two types of public prayer: “*tefilla betzibbur*,” and “*tefillas hatzibbur*,” prayer **with** the community and prayer **of** the community.⁵ *Tefilla betzibbur* means that ten people gather together but, although they are in the same room, pray individually. *Tefillas hatzibbur*, on the other hand, means that the entire *tzibbur* makes a single prayer to Hashem.

This derives from the example of the *kohen* in the *Mikdash* who would bring a single *korban* on behalf of the *tzibbur*. For instance, the *Shiltei Gibborim* (Rosh Hashana 12b in the Rif) states that the *am shebesados*, the populace who cannot *daven*, may discharge their obligation with the *chazaras hashatz* of the *sheliach tzibbur* because it is modeled after the *temidim* in the *Beis HaMikdash*.⁶ This is the *tzibbur’s* *tefilla*, and it is said by the *sheliach tzibbur* on behalf of the connected community. The *sheliach tzibbur* discharges the individual’s obligation because he is acting on behalf of each member of the *tzibbur*, and, indeed, on behalf of the *tzibbur* as a discrete unit and as a collective whole.

Conclusion

Thus, three categories along the trajectory from our identity as individuals and as parts of a group emerge from *Orach Chaim* 594. The term “*mevakesh rachamim al atzmeinu*” reflects the profoundly inalienable individuality that derives from our imperative to stand in personal prayer

whether or not this applies when the individual does not know the prayers. The *Beis Yosef* quotes the Ran that it would not apply in that circumstance because the *gemara* in *Brachos* 48b that a “*sofer*” can recite the blessing for an unlettered person would apply. However, the *Mishna Berura* states that the limitation with regard to *tefilla* applies even when the individual does not know how to pray. One individual simply cannot satisfy another person’s obligation to *daven*.

5 Rav Hershel Schachter, *Eretz HaTzvi* (New York, 1992), p. 48; see also Rav Hershel Schachter, *Nefesh HaRav* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 123-7; Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Shiurim L’Zecher Avi Mori*, vol. 2, ed. Rav Yitzchak Twersky (Jerusalem, 1983).

6 See “*Inyan Chazaras HaShatz*,” *Mesorah* 5 (March 1991), p. 6.

before Hashem. The concept of *areivus* reflects the default balance of individuals who remain individuals yet work together in spiritual aspiration. And the concept of *tefilla betzibbur* (and *tefillas hatzibbur*) reflects a third category of the pervasive and complete, albeit periodic, shared identity through prayer.

The Coronation of the King through the *Chesed* of Avraham

RABBI YAAKOV COHEN



We take many things for granted about Rosh Hashana. We call it the “Day of Judgment,” we blow the shofar, and we emphasize the theme of Hashem’s Kingship repeatedly. But the truth is that these concepts leave us with some serious questions.

One of the most powerful and prevailing questions about Rosh Hashana is why we don’t confess our sins on the Day of Judgment. If our entire year is based on our judgment on Rosh Hashana, why do we not even once ask for forgiveness on this day? We often note that Yom Kippur marks the *chasima*, the seal of our judgment, but the writing itself takes place on Rosh Hashana. Isn’t now the time to repent? In fact, it seems as though Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, should really come before Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment. We should first say that we’re sorry and rid ourselves of the *tuma* (impurity) caused by our sins, and then we can enter the *Yom HaDin* with a clean slate. Furthermore, it seems as though we walk around on Rosh Hashana as if we own the place. Not only don’t we say that we’re sorry, we take a break from the “court room” to go have a feast! How can we understand this?

A second question relates to the role of the shofar. The *Midrash Rabba (Parshas Emor 29:3)* states that when *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* hears the shofar blown, He rises from the *kisei din* (the throne of justice) and sits upon the *kisei rachamim* (the throne of mercy). It seems that the way we survive judgment on Rosh Hashana is not by saying we’re sorry, but rather by blowing the shofar. What is so magical about the shofar being blown that leads to a successful judgment?

Finally, the one word that seems to define Rosh Hashana is “*HaMelech*.” The theme of the day is our focus on the fact that Hashem is our King. Rosh Hashana may be difficult, but it is not complicated. Our ability to understand *Malchus* properly defines our judgment. If we get this element of Rosh Hashana right, we win; if we get this wrong, we lose. What, then, is the meaning of our acceptance of Hashem as *HaMelech*? More importantly, what is it that prevents us from doing so?

Din – Measure for Measure

There are two ways in which Hashem relates to us – through creation and through the manner in which He runs the world.

Every Shabbos is “*zecher l’ma’aseh bereishis*,” it reminds us of the fact that Hashem created

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the universe. But Hashem not only created the world, He created it through rules and order. The heart of a human being in Los Angeles is the same as the heart of someone in Tokyo. Essentially, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created the world with “*din*” – rule, law, and order. When we ponder existence, we not only marvel at the wonders of creation, but the system and sequence of it as well.

In contrast, the way that Hashem runs the world seems to entail no *din* at all. We simply cannot figure it out. We search in vain for a logical order of events, the law and order of existence. In truth, however, Hashem indeed governs our lives and all events through *din*, despite how difficult it is for us to see it. This explains why He first revealed Himself to us by declaring, “I am Hashem your God who took you out of the land of Egypt” (*Shemos* 20:2). Why did Hashem limit His greatness to the events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* instead of describing His creation of the world? Hashem introduced Himself to us as the God who took us out of Egypt in order to convey the message that just as He was involved in every element of creation, He has been equally involved in every aspect of worldly affairs. Just as Hashem created the world through *din*, He continues to control the world through *din*.

We desperately crave *din*, the sense of law and order. The reason we are so broken and confused at times of tragedy is not merely because of our pain, but also because of our endless search for *din*. We also seek *din* in our interpersonal relationships. If we give to someone, we want something in return; if we help our community, a family member, or a friend, we want to get something back. Is that not how it should work *al pi din*? What often blocks us from Hashem and one another is our desire and need for *din*.

By recognizing our need for *din*, we can understand how Hashem judges us on Rosh Hashana.

Chazal tell us (*Avos* 4:11) that every time a person does a mitzva, he creates a good angel, while every time he sins, he creates an accusing angel. What this means is that there is nothing that hurts a person that he himself did not create. We create that which spiritually affects us. The *malachim* can’t touch us unless we give them power; everything we do comes back to us, *midda k’negged midda*, measure for measure.

On Rosh Hashana morning at sunrise, it is *Yom HaDin* in *shamayim*. The *satan* is up and ready to demand harsh judgement as Hashem sits on His throne of *din*. From where does the *satan* get this power to demand *din*? From us! The *satan* has no independent power of *din*; he generates his energy from our own use of *middas hadin*.

We constantly question Hashem’s *din* and we question our friends’ *din*. We judge everyone around us, including God. We give the *satan* the right to sit in judgment because we are so focused on *din* every day. *Midda k’negged midda*, the *satan* shows up on Rosh Hashana, ready to enforce *din*. The *satan* gets one time a year to say, “How dare you question the Creator of the universe? You deserve *din*! You judge other people or hold a grudge? You deserve *din*!”

The Shofar and the Akeida

If our judgment were to be carried out this way, we would all be in trouble. Our salvation is found in the shofar.

The Torah reading on Rosh Hashana is the story of the *Akeida*. Avraham Avinu is prepared to sacrifice his beloved son, but he instead sacrifices a ram. Avraham pulls out a shofar – a ram’s horn – just as the *ba’al tokei’a* in shul is about to blow his shofar. Indeed, the shofar we blow reminds us of the *Akeida* at the crucial moment of *din* on Rosh Hashana.

Why is the *Akeida* so important, and why do we recall it with a shofar? After all, the ram was barely part of the event; it was only offered after Avraham passed the test and did not have to go through with the sacrifice of his son. Why is the shofar an appropriate symbol of the *Akeida*?

The *Akeida* was the greatest test in history. Avraham lived during a time period in which there existed a form of *avoda zara* called *Molech*, which people served by murdering their own children. Avraham Avinu spent his entire life fighting idolatry and human sacrifice. He spent much time and effort in his attempt to influence people not to murder their children. Thus, when Hashem commanded Avraham to offer Yitzchak as a *korban*, He was essentially telling him to give up everything – not only to lose his child, but also to demonstrate to the world that he was the biggest hypocrite of all time.

Rav Aharon Kotler explains further that the *Akeida* presents the greatest question on Hashem in history. All of Avraham’s other tests were simply tests, but at the *Akeida*, Hashem seemed to be going against His own promise. Hashem made a *bris* with Avraham that Yitzchak would be the child who would continue the lineage of the chosen nation. According to *din*, if Hashem says He will do something, it must be done. He cannot go against His word. If a *navi* gives two prophecies that contradict one another, the first one is deemed the *emes*. Avraham could have easily said, “I would love to follow Hashem’s command, but we had a promise! That’s the *din*!” Instead, Avraham figuratively said, “I am not questioning how Hashem runs this world. I will not judge Hashem.”

Of course, Avraham wanted to understand *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*’s ways, but he was not willing to question Him. If his Father in Heaven asked for something that ostensibly made no sense, Avraham both wanted and needed to give it to Him. In Avraham’s mind, the working principle was “*ein od milvado*.” He was willing to give up everything he had and all that he worked for his entire life if Hashem asked that of him.

When Hashem saw that Avraham was willing to sacrifice Yitzchak, He told him that he had passed the test. But Avraham felt that this was not about passing a test; this was about showing Hashem how he felt about Him. Avraham needed to give Hashem something – and he gave the ram.

Thus, we use the shofar to recall the *Akeida* because it shows Hashem how much we care about Him.

Coronation of the King

Avraham Avinu introduced the concept of *chesed* to the world. If a person operates with *din*, he views himself as the center of the world, not God. If I hold a grudge or feel the need to question Hashem’s actions, then everything is about me, not *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Avraham understood that his limited human brain would never and could never understand why

Hashem does certain things. Hashem is our King and our mission is to give to Him. *Chesed*, giving to our *Melech*, is unconditional.

On Rosh Hashana, as the *satan* in *shamayim* insists that we deserve *din*, the *Ish Chesed* walks in. Avraham takes over the show with the energy of *chesed*. He stands up as our progenitor and says that his descendants stand behind him. For a moment, I forgot that Avraham passed his spiritual DNA onto me, which gives me the ability to stop thinking only about myself. I hear the shofar, I remember Avraham, and in my heart, I make a decision. Am I about *chesed* or am I about *din*? Am I here for myself or for the *Ribono shel Olam*? As Avraham takes out the shofar and as we blow our shofar in shul, the *satan* disappears.

Returning to our original question, why do we not say that we are sorry even once on our Day of Judgment? On Rosh Hashana, we do not say, “give me,” and we do not say, “forgive me,” because both of those requests have the same common denominator – that this is about me. Instead, we celebrate Hashem’s coronation. We eat and enjoy because the King is coming to town. If we can attain a level on Rosh Hashana at which we stop worrying about ourselves and instead focus on God, we reach “*HaMelech*.” We enter into the world of the *chesed* of Avraham Avinu, as exemplified by the shofar. Hashem then says, “If you are all about *chesed* today, then I will switch to my *kisei rachamim* and remain there.”

The *Nesivos Shalom* teaches:

There are three new books that are opened on Rosh Hashana every year, and Hashem takes the pen and hands it to us. Every person is asked to put his name in the book that he wants. If you want to commit yourself in the coming year to being a tzaddik and to make life about your mission and about Hashem, then you write your name in the book of life. Who, then, are those who put their names in the books of beinonim and resha'im? They are those who are not interested in their mission or in God. They are here to receive what they want from God.

If we make Hashem the center of our world, we can confidently write ourselves in the book of life.

Let us try to take one moment every day to look up at the sky and say, “the Creator of all of this cares about me.” The *Borei Olam* has faith in me and knows my challenges. If I truly had the confidence that the Creator of humanity picked me to be a part of His holy nation, my immediate reaction would be, “Hashem, what can I do for you?”

The challenge of Rosh Hashana is to ensure that we do not fall into *din*, that we do not focus on what we want Hashem to give us. It’s all about *chesed*. As we hear the shofar, we should remember that Hashem loves each and every one of us so much and that He chose us for a reason.

This Rosh Hashana, we should be *zocheh* to focus on everything being about Hashem and what we can do for Him. If we are *mamlich* Hashem over everything that we do, we will merit that Hashem will remain on His *kisei rachamim* and declare that this year will be the year that we bring *Mashiach tzidkeinu*, *b’mehira b’yameinu*.

Go Big or Go Home

RABBI YAAKOV SIEGEL



What Kind of Change?

Come Rosh Hashana, everyone wants to change. A question that many ask is how much change is necessary. We often receive the advice to follow the approach attributed to Rav Yisroel Salanter: make small commitments to change behavior or *middos* in measured amounts. In the context of Torah learning, for example, commit to focus a bit more during one's *sefer limmud*; in *avoda*, perhaps commit to attend *minyan* more frequently; in *gemilus chasadim*, commit to befriend a person who deservedly has few friends. There are many benefits to smaller commitments. They are achievable and are therefore more likely to succeed, they prove to the person that he or she has the ability to change, and they accustom a person to growing in his or her *middos* and *avodas Hashem*, ultimately creating a virtuous cycle of success in spiritual growth breeding more successes.

In this essay, however, we will show that there is much more that can be accomplished on Rosh Hashana. We will study important elements of the philosophical background of Rosh Hashana that demonstrate that using one's inspiration on Rosh Hashana to commit to "baby steps" in one's personal *avoda* misses the dramatic opportunity for sweeping change that one can make on Rosh Hashana, and perhaps **only** on Rosh Hashana. While changes in small measures might be more effective throughout the year, and perhaps even during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, on Rosh Hashana we have the opportunity – and therefore perhaps the responsibility – to consider changes to our entire spiritual lives. In our commitments on Rosh Hashana, our approach should be "go big or go home."

The Day of the World's Creation?

During *Musaf* on Rosh Hashana, we declare the significance of the day:

היום הרת עולם. היום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי עולמים.

Today is the day of the world's creation, [and therefore] today the world stands in judgment.

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Conceptually, it makes sense that Hashem judges the world on the anniversary of its creation. The difficulty with this line of the *tefilla* is that the *gemara* says that Rosh Hashana was **not** the day of the world's creation:

תניא: רבי אליעזר אומר: בתשרי נברא העולם...בניסן נגאלו ובתשרי עתידין ליגאל. רבי יהושע אומר: בניסן נברא העולם...בניסן נגאלו ובניסן עתידין ליגאל.
We learn in a beraisa: Rabbi Eliezer says: In Tishrei the world was created... in Nisan [our forefathers] were redeemed [from Egypt], and in Tishrei we will be redeemed in the future [from our current exile]. Rabbi Yehoshua says: In Nisan the world was created... in Nisan [our forefathers] were redeemed [from Egypt], and in Nisan we will be redeemed in the future [from our current exile]. (Rosh Hashana 10b-11a)

The date of the world's creation is in fact subject to a *machlokes Tanna'im*.¹ The *gemara* tells us its conclusion:

חכמי ישראל מונין...לתקופה כרבי יהושע.
The Jewish sages count the years for the seasons according to Rabbi Yehoshua.

Rashi explains:

כשמונין תקופת החמה והלבנה, מונין מניסן לאמר מניסן נבראו.
When they count the seasons related to the sun and the moon, they count from Nisan. That is to say that [the sun and moon] were created in Nisan.

Thus, the *gemara* concludes that the world was created in Nisan, contradicting the *tefilla* of היום הרת עולם.²

Tosfos (*Rosh Hashana* 27a, "k'man") asks a similar question regarding a different line in the *Rosh Hashana Musaf*: "זה היום תחילת מעשיך זכרון ליום ראשון," "This is the day of the beginning of your handiwork, a remembrance of the first day." This statement only makes sense according to the view of Rabbi Eliezer, who maintains that the world was created in Tishrei. How can we daven with the assumption that the world was created in Tishrei, in accordance with the view of Rabbi Eliezer, when the *gemara* concludes that the world was created in Nisan, in accordance with the view of Rabbi Yehoshua? Tosfos strengthens his question by noting that Rabbi Elazar

1 Both Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua agree that the world was actually created five days prior, on the 25th of either Elul or Adar, and it was Man who was created either on the first of Tishrei or Nisan (*Peskita D'Rav Kahana* 23). Man's creation is likely considered to be the day of the creation of the world because Man's existence is the entire purpose of the world. This is also evident in the line from the *Rosh Hashana Musaf* discussed below: "זה היום תחילת מעשיך זכרון ליום ראשון," "This is the day of the beginning of your handiwork, a remembrance of the first day." According to Rabbi Eliezer, Rosh Hashana actually marks the day of the **end** of Hashem's handiwork. Nevertheless, the day of Man's creation is considered the beginning, as all of creation is merely a preparation for Man's existence and service of Hashem (see also *Bereishis* 2:5).

2 For this reason, *Birchas HaChama*, the blessing on the sun, is recited every 28 years in Nisan, not in Tishrei (*Shulchan Aruch* 229:2). See, however, the Ran on *Rosh Hashana* 3a, who offers an alternative explanation of this *gemara*, reconciling it with Rabbi Eliezer's opinion.

HaKalir, the 7th century poet who authored most of the more commonly recited *piyutim*, wrote *piyutim* for Shemini Atzeres based on the assumption that the world was created in Tishrei, but he also wrote *piyutim* for Pesach based on the premise that the world was created in Nisan.

We can add another question as well. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua agree that the world is judged on Rosh Chodesh Tishrei (*Rosh Hashana* 16a). According to Rabbi Yehoshua, if the world was created on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, why is it judged on Rosh Chodesh Tishrei?

Tosfos's answer is fascinating:³

אומר רבינו תם דאלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים. ואיכא למימר דבתשרי עלה במחשבה
לבראות ולא נברא עד ניסן.

Rabbeinu Tam says that both views are the words of the living God. It can be explained that [Hashem] entertained the thought to create [the world] in Tishrei, but it was not created until Nisan.

Rabbeinu Tam's idea also explains the meaning of "היום הרת עולם, היום יעמיד במשפט." That line can more precisely be translated, "Today is the day of the world's **conception**, [and therefore] today the world stands in judgment." While the world was created in Nisan, it was conceived by Hashem in Tishrei, and therefore stands in judgment on Rosh Chodesh Tishrei.

Many questions can be asked about this somewhat puzzling comment of Rabbeinu Tam. Perhaps the first should be: Why are we judged on the day on which Hashem **thought** to create the world, rather than on the day that He actually created it?

The Day of the World's Judgment?

Before answering this question, we must also consider our very premise – that the world is judged on Rosh Hashana. The famous *mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* (16a) states:

בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון... בראש השנה כל באי עולם עוברים לפניו כבני מרון.
At four times the world is judged... On Rosh Hashana, every living thing in the world passes before Him individually [for judgment].

The *gemara*, however, presents opinions that appear to differ from the *mishna*:

רבי יוסי אומר: אדם נידון בכל יום, שנאמר: ותפקידנו לבקרים (איוב ז:יח).
רבי נתן אומר: אדם נידון בכל שעה, שנאמר: לרגעים תבחננו (שם).

Rabbi Yossi says: Man is judged every day, as it is stated, "You examine us every

³ Many *Rishonim* offer answers to this question. One of the more poignant answers is that of the Ran (*ibid.*). The Ran writes that since Yom Kippur was the day on which Hashem completely forgave the Jewish People for their sin of the *egel hazahav*, it forever became a day particularly designated for divine mercy and forgiveness to the Jews. Hashem therefore purposely chose Rosh Hashana as the day of judgment so that the repentance of those who need ten days of repentance afterwards will culminate on Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness. In other words, even though Hashem set up our world with systems of both mercy and strict judgment, even the system of strict judgment was created lovingly, in a way in which the odds are slanted in favor of forgiveness and mercy for the Jewish People.

morning” (Iyov 7:18). Rabbi Nosson says: *Man is judged every hour, as it is stated, “and you test us at every moment” (ibid.).*

It seems that Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Nosson are both disagreeing with the *mishna*. Is it possible that they disagree with the universally accepted idea that man and the world have a unique judgment on the *Yom HaDin*, Rosh Hashana?

Do We Really Have the Power to Choose Our Destiny?

We can answer these questions by learning more about the concept of *bechira*, the free will that Hashem grants to Man to choose whether to do right or wrong.

Perhaps the most famous essay about *bechira* is found in *Michtav MeiEliyahu* (vol. 1, p. 113), where Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler presents his concept of *nekudas habechira*. Rav Dessler argues that there are actually few decisions over which Man truly has free will. Because of a combination of a person’s upbringing, habituation, and circumstances, most decisions are either too easy – he will nearly automatically choose the right – or too hard – he will most certainly choose the wrong. As an example, an ordinary frum *ba’alabos* does not truly have the choice whether to stop off at Red Lobster for dinner on his way home from work, nor does he truly have the choice to learn straight from when he comes home until 3:00 AM without any interruption. This *ba’alabos* only truly has free will at his personal level, his *nekudas habechira*. Perhaps he is challenged by learning for one hour without interruption, or maybe he must choose to double-check the kashrus of any food he is given to make sure it is up to his standard. Rav Dessler suggests that as this *ba’alabos* passes his tests, his *nekudas habechira* increases a level and he now faces more difficult tests – perhaps whether to keep *yoshon* or to add to his *sidrei limud*, for example. The same happens in reverse, *chas v’shalom*, if he fails his tests.

In short, a person is tested on a daily basis on his or her level, and as the person succeeds or fails, the level and difficulty of the tests rises or falls accordingly. Rav Dessler calls these daily *nisyonos* and the accompanying rises and falls in their difficulty “*bechira hapratis*,” specific *bechira*.⁴

There is another kind of *bechira*, however – the *bechira* to make radical changes or completely rethink how we live our lives. Rav Dessler calls this “*bechira haklalis*,” general *bechira*.

If you spent time in Beth Jacob’s *beis medrash* this summer within earshot of the Summer Kollel scholars, you will understand how *bechira haklalis* works. The recurring topic of discussion of the 19 and 20 year-old scholars, back from their first or second year of yeshiva in Israel, was what they were going to do with the next few years and with the rest of their lives. Will they go to UCLA or change their plans and go to YU? Should they return to Israel for *shana bet* or *shana gimmel*, or maybe make *aliya* with the hope of learning indefinitely or

4 Rav Dessler’s descriptions of *bechira hapratis* and *bechira haklalis* as well as their relevance to our discussion about Rosh Hashana are found in *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, vol. 2, pp. 67-69.

even joining the IDF? Whatever their decisions, they will likely now determine much of the rest of their lives, and perhaps their ultimate level of closeness to Hashem. These choices that they are making are not baby steps of improvement or, *chas v'shalom*, the reverse. They have an entire menu of options for their religious lives in front of them, and they are in many ways free to pick any choice from that menu, regardless of how similar or distant it might be from their plans at the end of high school, just a short time ago. That is *bechira haklalis*.

It is not every day, however, that we are on our summer break after yeshiva in Israel and have the ability to make these grand choices. While jobs, schools, carpools, and families tie us to our *bechira hapratis* decisions and challenges every day, perhaps these *bechira haklalis* decision points only come about two or three times in our lives. Rav Dessler argues, however, that while the decisions that we make every day are usually *bechira hapratis*, there is one major exception – Rosh Hashana. When we listen to *tekias shofar*, when we say *U'Nesaneh Tokef*, when we sing the tunes that we've been singing for hundreds of years, and when we walk to shul alone with nothing but our thoughts, we **do** have the ability to make decisions that can entirely change our lives. We **can** completely change our level of closeness to Hashem. We **do** have that menu of life directions in front of us and we **are** free to pick from any of its choices.

While the thought of dramatic changes to our complicated yet settled lives sounds impossible, the changes of Rosh Hashana do not take place on a whim. Rosh Hashana follows (hopefully) weeks of preparation and introspection, starting with Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Elul. But more importantly, it is the day of “*ala b'machshava l'vros*,” the day that Hashem was “inspired” to create the world. Hashem was *yachid b'olamo*, alone in His world of perfection, yet on Rosh Hashana, He was “inspired” to create our imperfect world and to challenge Man to restore its perfection. Rosh Hashana is therefore forever the day of inspiration, the day we can commit to make dramatic changes to **our** worlds, like Hashem did to His, and then have the strength and dedication to follow through.

We are Judged on Our Decisions⁵

Each day, and in fact every hour, we make decisions that impact our spirituality and closeness to Hashem. Hashem then judges us on our performance and determines whether we ascend or descend a level, after which He plans the next day's tests. These are the judgments of Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Nosson – “ותפקדנו לבקרים, לרגעים תבחננו” “You examine us every morning and you test us every moment.” Hashem's *gezar din* relates to the day-to-day because our decisions are choices of *bechira hapratis*. Rosh Hashana, however, is the day of *ala b'machshava* – of divine inspiration – and we can therefore make decisions that can redesign our entire lives. We aren't confined to ascending or descending one small step at a time. We can choose an entirely different life and a completely different relationship with Hashem! For this reason, the judgment on Rosh Hashana is “*mi yichyeh umi yamus ... mi ye'ani u'mi ye'ashir*,”—“who

⁵ The remainder of this essay deviates on some points from Rav Dessler's answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay. See *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, vol. 2, pp. 69-71.

will live and who will die, who will become poor and who will become wealthy.” We are judged regarding our entire lives because we have the ability to make choices for our entire lives.⁶

Opportunity Means Responsibility

Returning to Rabbeinu Tam’s answer, we might ask why Hashem needed both a day of “inspiration” on Rosh Hashana and a day of “creation” on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. The answer has become clear. The power given to us on Rosh Hashana is specifically that of “inspiration,” the ability to make choices that will begin sweeping change in our lives. Hashem gave us the gift of Rosh Hashana so that we can, at least for one or two days a year, breach the confines of the mundane *bechira hapratis* and have the opportunity to commit to the life-altering changes that *bechira haklalis* allows.

With every blessing and opportunity given to us by Hashem comes the responsibility and imperative to maximize and use the opportunity to its fullest. On Rosh Hashana, the day of inspiration – Hashem’s and our own – the enormity of our responsibility is clear. We can choose to become completely different people. We can choose to become completely different spouses, parents, and children. We can choose to become completely different *lomdei Torah*, *ba’alei avoda*, *gomlei chasadim*, *zehirim b’halacha*, and *ovdei Hashem*. Hashem blesses us with the strength to follow through on our difficult Rosh Hashana commitments and will perhaps make their fulfillment smoother, like the “baby steps” commitments that we can make during the rest of the year. Simply committing to learn for an additional few minutes or to do one more mitzva is something we can do any other day of the year. Let us make the most of this great *bracha* that Hashem gives us and maximize the power and promise of Rosh Hashana.

⁶ Rav Dessler uses this point to explain an enigmatic *gemara* (*Rosh Hashana* 17a). The *gemara* states that if an individual does *teshuva* during the year or chooses the opposite path, *chas v’shalom*, Hashem does not tear up his *gezar din*. Rather, if he did *teshuva*, Hashem will have his allocated rain fall in the most beneficial way possible, and if the opposite, He will have the rain fall in the least beneficial way. Rav Dessler explains that since it is usually only on Rosh Hashana that we exercise our *bechira haklalis*, Hashem’s broad *gezar din* is applied on Rosh Hashana. During the rest of year, when we exercise our *bechira hapratis*, Hashem will in small measures change the way He allocates our broader *gezar din*.

The Thirteen *Middos* of *Rachamim* as Explained by Rav Shimson Dovid Pincus zt”l¹

DR. MICHAEL KLEINMAN



ה' ה' א-ל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת נצר חסד לאלפים נשא עון ופשע וחטאה ונקח
(Shemos 34:6-7)

The ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur – appropriately called the *Aseres Yimei Teshuva*, the Ten Days of Repentance – are imbued with special qualities that bring *Klal Yisrael* closer to Hashem. The *gemara* teaches (*Yoma* 86a), “*Gedola teshuva, shemaga’as ad kisei hakavod*,” “Great is *teshuva*, which brings us to the Heavenly Throne.” During the year, *teshuva* works by bringing us closer to Hashem. Our *chata’im* bring about darkness, whereas closeness to Hashem is defined as the ultimate light. By coming closer to Hashem and His light, the darkness of our *chata’im* melt away, leaving us purified and renewed. However, during the *Aseres Yimei Teshuva*, the roles are reversed. *Chazal* teach (*Yevamos* 105a) that these days are days of closeness to Hashem, as the *pasuk* says, “*Dirshu Hashem b’himatzo*,” “seek out Hashem when He is found” (*Yeshayahu* 55:6). Instead of *teshuva* bringing us closer to Hashem, He brings the *kisei hakavod* to us! This is the great power of these ten days, and it is crucial that we tap into it.

The Thirteen *Middos* of *Rachamim*

The essence of these ten days is the *chesed* of Hashem, which is expressed by the Thirteen *Middos* of *Rachamim*. These *Middos* are the focus of the *selichos* throughout Elul, the *Aseres Yimei Teshuva*, and Yom Kippur, and comprise one of the central *tefillos* during this period.

The concept of these *Middos* can best be explained through a parable. A poor person

¹ This article is based on *Sichos Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt”l, Yamim Nora’im: Shalosh Esrei Middos Ha’Amuros B’Chanina*, p. 232.

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dressed in rags approaches a rich man and declares, “You are a great and wealthy man whose hand is always open to those who are needy!” The poor man does not need to ask the rich man for anything; it is evident from his statement what he is asking for. Similarly, when we invoke the Thirteen *Middos*, Hashem knows what we are asking for.

Why is the recitation of the Thirteen *Middos* so effective? In addition to the content of our *tefillos*, a powerful *chazzan* also has the ability to “pull at the heartstrings” of Hashem’s mercy. Evidence of this power is relayed by the *gemara* in *Bava Metzia* (85b), which describes that Rabbi appointed Rabbi Chiya bar Abba and his sons to lead the *tefilla* during a drought and Hashem immediately granted their request for rain.² What can we do today, when we no longer have a special *chazzan* like Rabbi Chiya bar Abba? The *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (17b) provides the secret. Rav Yochanan teaches that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to recite the specific formula of the Thirteen *Middos* whenever *Klal Yisrael* needs mercy. Were it not for Hashem’s directive, we would not be able to invoke these words. Hashem effectively puts his *tefillos* into our mouths; He is our *chazzan*!

Hashem has given us two precious gifts – a period of the year when He brings Himself closer to us as well as the words to call forth His mercy. We need only to have the proper *kavana* and we can bridge the gap between us and our Creator! In this article, we will examine the meaning of each of these powerful Thirteen *Middos*.

ה' ה'

The *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* divide the *pasuk* into thirteen *Middos* in different ways.³ We will follow the division used by Rav Pincus zt”l, who adopts the approach of the Arizal, the *Zohar*, and the Gra. According to this approach, the words “ה' ה'” are not part of the Thirteen *Middos*, but rather constitute a separate introduction.

The *gemara* in *Rosh Hashana* (17b) teaches:

ה' ה' – אני הוא קודם שיחטא האדם ואני הוא לאחר שיחטא האדם ויעשה תשובה.

Hashem, Hashem – I am there before a person sins and I am there after a person sins and does teshuva.

The *gemara* explains that “Hashem” is doubled here to teach us that the same Hashem is with us before and after our failures. What does it mean that He is “with us” before and after our misdeeds?

The world that we live in is completely soaked in the *chesed* of Hashem. Air and light are plentiful, as well as all of our basic needs. If we were to spend one day in a damp dungeon, the *chesed* that we take for granted would instantly be obvious. This *chesed*, however, can only exist

² The *gemara* elaborates that as they reached each phrase in the *Shemoneh Esrei*, their *tefillos* came to fruition. Finally, as they approached the *bracha* of *Mechayei Meisim*, there was a tumult in *shamayim* and the *malachim* disturbed their *tefillos*.

³ See Tosfos, *Rosh Hashana* 17b, s.v. *shlosh esrei middos*.

naturally, *al pi din*, when we are free of sin.⁴ One sin is all it takes to nullify the natural order of *chesed*, without which we are not entitled to air to breathe or light to see. Hashem grants us life so that we can do *mitzvos*; if we do not follow His will, there is no reason for Him to keep us alive.

Our world is one of measure and limitations. Nothing is infinite, even *chesed*. Once we fail, there is no longer a measure of *chesed* left for us in this world. Hashem needs to reinvent *chesed* in order for us to survive after sin. To give us more chances, Hashem creates a channel of *chesed* from *Olam HaBa*, the world defined by infinite and unlimited potential. These channels are opened during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* and whenever we invoke the divine prescription for mercy – the Thirteen *Middos*. This is the true mechanism of *rachamim*. Through a *chesed* of Hashem, He forgoes the natural *din* and mercifully allows us to have more chances to do *teshuva*.

This is the meaning of the doubling of “Hashem.” He is there to provide His *chesed* before we sin and He is there to keep us alive after the natural *chesed* should have been nullified.

א-ל

Throughout the Torah and *tefillos*, the name “E-I” connotes the awesome kindness of Hashem. People may perform wonderful acts of kindness, but no one will give away their bank account! Not so with Hashem; His *chesed* knows no bounds.

One of Hashem’s greatest *chasadim* to us was giving us the Torah and the opportunity to do *mitzvos*. Chazal teach:

יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה מכל חיי העולם הבא. ויפה שעה אחת של קורת רוח בעולם הבא מכל חיי העולם הזה.

Better is one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than the entire life of the World to Come; and better is one hour of spiritual bliss in the World to Come than the entire life of this world. (Avos 4:17)

The *Ba’alei Mussar* teach that if one could take all the pleasures of this world – the finest wines and choicest steaks, the feelings of bliss under the *chupa*, the elation after the birth of a child, the *nachas* at a grandson’s Bar Mitzva, the sense of accomplishment when making a *siyum*, and the satisfaction at the completion of a new shul – and put them into a pill, that pill would not provide the pleasure of even one hour of “*koras ruach*” of *Olam HaBa*. Yet observance of the Torah and *mitzvos* is even greater than that! The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Teshuva* 9:1) that all *mitzvos* were given to us so that we could gain life in *Olam HaBa* through their fulfillment. Therefore, when the *mishna* writes that *teshuva* and *mitzvos* in this world are greater than life in *Olam HaBa*, we see that the impact of a single mitzva is infinite.

How great is the *chesed* of Hashem! Each second we wear *tzitzis*, each line of Torah we learn, and each act of kindness we do enables us to reach the greatest heights. This is the

⁴ Yalkut Shimoni, Yechezkel 358.

chesed of Hashem that allows us to tap in to the unlimited potential of *Olam HaBa* and do *teshuva* in this world.

רחום

“*Rachum*” literally means “merciful” and represents the *Midda* of Hashem that shows His care for us. Despite His infinite greatness and our infinite lowliness, we believe that Hashem still cares for us and is intimately involved in our lives.⁵ Furthermore, Hashem not only cares for us, but also **feels** our pain.

To what can this be compared? Picture a man getting ready for Rosh Hashana in tremendous distress. However, he is not worried about the upcoming *Yom HaDin*, but rather finding the right tie to match his suit. Suddenly, a great *tzaddik* like Rav Yisrael Salanter stumbles upon the man, sees his distress, and inquires what is wrong. “Rebbe,” says the man, “I’m in terrible trouble. I can’t find the right tie to wear!” Rav Salanter would have great concern for this man, but he wouldn’t be worried about his inability to find a tie. The two men are in two completely different places, sharing nothing when it comes to what is important. Not so with Hashem. Even though we are immeasurably farther from Hashem than the two men in our parable, Hashem actually feels our pain and shares our lowly concerns!

חנון

“*Chanun*” signifies Hashem’s *matnas chinam*,⁶ His limitless free gifts. The *midrash* (*Shemos Rabba* 45:6) teaches that when Moshe Rabbeinu went up to *shamayim*, Hashem showed him all of the different “storehouses,” each for the benefit of a different deserving person. The biggest storehouse of all, however, was set aside for those who “Hashem gives to for free.” The idea that those who are undeserving receive unlimited gifts from Hashem goes against our natural understanding. It is a purely divine *Midda*.⁷

אריך

The *Midda* of “*Erech*” refers to Hashem’s willingness to delay our punishment. When a person receives an injury, he feels it right away. If he is hit in the head or stabbed with a knife, he won’t be able to continue going about business as usual. According to pure *Middas HaDin*, the act of one sin should be like a knife injury, which results in immediate pain, with the punishment being immediate removal from this world. But this is not how Hashem acts with us. Even though we are deserving of immediate punishment for our wrongdoings, Hashem extends more time to us to give us a chance to do *teshuva*.

5 In contrast, the early philosophers believed that God was too great to be aware of the minutiae of this world; see *Kuzari* 1:1.

6 See Rashi, *Devarim* 3:23, s.v. *va’eschanan*.

7 I would further suggest that the translation of “*chinam*” as “limitless” also applies to the concept of “*sinas chinam*.” Once one starts exhibiting the traits of *sinas chinam*, the negative possibilities and justifications are endless.

אפים

This *Midda* is connected to the previous one. “*Erech*” reflects one reprieve from punishment, while “*Apayim*” reflects two more, making three altogether. Three of something creates a

chazaka, which means it continues indefinitely. Therefore, the connotation of “*Apayim*” is that Hashem extends his “*Erech*” forever.

רב חסד

Until now, we have discussed the boundless, otherworldly *chesed* of Hashem. But upon whom does Hashem shower this kindness? The word “*Rav*” means “multitude.” Thus, “*Rav Chesed*” teaches us that Hashem does *chesed* to everyone. In this world, it is very difficult for one to treat each and every person with the highest level of kindness, but Hashem is different. Not only does He possess infinite *chesed*, but He also uniquely applies it to each and every individual.

אמת

We are not able to completely fulfill our desires in this world. For example, a father may want his son to be like Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, but this is not possible. In *Olam HaZeh*, we are not able to fulfill our true desires; we’re not even able to come close. Hashem is different. He is the only being that is truly able to keep His word.

We ask Hashem to send down this special *emes* to us. Without drops of real *emes*, we would not be able to accomplish anything in this world.

נוצר חסד

There are many acts of *chesed* that a person desires and intends to do, but actually putting them into action is a different story. People dream of all the *tzedakos* that they would support if they had the money, but there are many millionaires in the world who do not give as much *tzedaka* as they could.

Hashem, in contrast, is “*Notzer Chesed*.” “*Notzer*” is related to the word “*tzinor*,” “pipe,” which the *chesed* travels through. We don’t have the ability to translate all of our good thoughts into action, but Hashem can do so through the *midda* of “*Notzer Chesed*.”

לא לפים

“*La’alafim*” literally means “to the thousands [of people].” This implies that Hashem somehow limits His gifts to this world. How did Hashem’s *chesed* suddenly become restricted? When Hashem sends his basic and ubiquitous *chesed* to the world, everyone benefits equally. Moshe Rabbeinu and Pharaoh both received the same gift of air to breathe; when it rains, the fields of both the *tzaddikim* and *resha'im* receive sustenance. The *notzer chesed*, however, is reserved only for the deserving, those who observe the *mitzvos*.

נושא עון ופשע וחטאה

Hashem forgives *avon*, *pesha*, and *chata'ah*, each constituting a separate *Midda*. The *gemara* (Yoma 36b) explains that these refer to three types of sins. *Avonos* are done *b'meizid*, purposefully; *pesha'im* are performed out of *mered*, rebelliousness; and *chata'im* are done *b'shogeg*, accidentally. We can understand that Hashem can forgive the first two, despite the fact that they were performed intentionally. After all, in the cases of *avonos* and *pesha'im*, we know what we did wrong and we do *teshuva*. The real wonder is the fact that Hashem forgives the sins done *b'shogeg*. This is a true *chesed*, as these are wrongdoings that we don't even know about. They are actions that we don't consider to be sinful. Someone oversleeps *Shacharis* and says, "Nu, so I missed *davening*." Someone has a chance to do a *chesed* and passes up the opportunity, saying, "Nu, so I'll do it next time." These are sins that we don't even consider, let alone do *teshuva* for, yet Hashem forgives us. This is truly a powerful *Midda* of Hashem.

ונקה

"*V'nakeh*" means "and He cleans" and this *Midda* encompasses all of the previous *Middos*. The first twelve *Middos* set everything up, but they only take effect and are combined when "*V'nakeh*" is invoked. The final *Midda* makes it all real, actually erasing our sins and giving us a fresh start. This is the *tachlis* of reciting the Thirteen *Middos*.

Conclusion

The Thirteen *Middos* are a special gift from Hashem, a gift that we can use even in the most trying times. Although there are many more explanations of each of these *Middos*, I hope that the ideas presented here give the reader some points to focus on and serve as a springboard for a deeper understanding. May Hashem hear our *tefillos* and inscribe us all the *sefer chayim tovim*!

אשרי העם יודעי תרועה

The Essence of Teshuva and Tefilla

ADIV PACHTER



Teshuva out of Simcha

On Rosh Hashana, we do a *cheshbon hanefesh*, introspecting and reviewing our performance over the past year. There are two ways to do this. One can reflect out of *eimas hadin*, fear of punishment. Alternatively, one can cultivate a feeling of longing to be closer to Hashem, doing *teshuva* out of love for Him.

The *pesukim* describe that Ezra and Nechemia taught *Am Yisrael* how to act on Rosh Hashana:

ויאמר נחמיה...ועזרא הכהן הספר והלויים המבינים את העם: היום קדש הוא לה' א-להיכם. אל תתאבלו ואל תבכו, כי בוכים כל העם כשמעם את דברי התורה. ויאמר להם: לכו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים ושלחו מנות לאין נכון לו, כי קדוש היום לאדנינו, ואל תעצבו כי חדות ה' היא מעוזכם.

Then Nechemia... as well as Ezra the Kohen, the scholar, and the Levi'im who were helping the people to understand, said to all of the people, "Today is sacred to Hashem your God; do not mourn and do not weep," for the people were weeping as they heard the words of the Torah. He said to them, "Go eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, because today is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad; the enjoyment of Hashem is your strength." (Nechemia 8:9-11)

Rav Yehoshua Rokeach, the second Belzer Rebbe, notes that considering the fact that Rosh Hashana is "*kadosh*," sacred, it seems that it is not even permissible to perform the *cheshbon hanefesh* of the day solely out of *eimas hadin*. Ezra and Nechemia warn us that sadness and fear should not be the motives to repent; rather, we should become closer to Hashem out of love, through happiness and a longing to establish a closer bond with Him.

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The Belzer Rebbe uses this idea to explain *pesukim* familiar to us from our Rosh Hashana *tefillos*:

אשרי העם יודעי תרועה ה' באור פניך יהלכון. בשמך יגילון כל היום וצדקתך ירומו.
*Praises to the people who know the shofar's cry; Hashem, by the illumination of
 Your countenance they walk. In Your Name they rejoice all day long and through
 Your righteousness they are exalted. (Tehillim 89:16-17)*

The sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashana is intended to arouse us to repent and repair our relationship with Hashem. Should we go about *teshuva* by feeling downtrodden, depressed, and sad? Certainly not! Dovid HaMelech is teaching us, says the Belzer Rebbe, that we must understand the real message of the shofar. The word “תרועה” is from the same root as “רעות,” which means friendship. We are the “people who know the shofar’s cry.” We should approach our relationship with God as the ultimate friendship, through illumination, rejoicing and a state of exaltedness: “*B’ohr panecha yehaleichun... beshimcha yagilun.*”

The Belzer Rebbe notes that there are even opinions that question the permissibility of saying “*Avinu Malkeinu chatanu lefanecha*” on Rosh Hashana. However, since we preface our remarks about the fact that we have sinned by stating that God is our Father, we show that we have the correct focus; our relationship with God is like that of a father and son, a relationship of love. Just as a father is quick to accept a wayward son, Hashem will be open to our supplications if we approach Him out of love.

My grandfather, Rav Yehoshua Lindenberg *zt”l*, pointed out that this is the message of the *pasuk* that we say at Kol Nidrei: “*Ohr zarua latzadik, u’leyishrei lev simcha*” (*Tehillim* 97:11). The members of the Jewish nation are “*tzaddikim*” and “*yishrei lev*.” Collectively and as individuals, we must live lives filled with *ohr* (light) and *simcha* (happiness); this is what defines a Jew, and this is how real *teshuva* is achieved.

Teshuva out of Humility

The *Sefas Emes* (*Drush L’Rosh Hashana* s.v. *Ashrei Ha’Am*) teaches us another lesson that we can learn from the *pasuk* “*Ashrei ha’am yode’ei serua.*” Noting, as we saw above, that the word “תרועה” is from the same root as “רעות,” friendship, he adds that the word “תרועה” includes the word “תורה” and the letter “ע,” which is equivalent to seventy. This symbolizes the *shivim panim laTorah*, the seventy ways to explain the Torah. In order to have true *re’us*, we must internalize the lesson of the *shivim panim laTorah* – that every person in *Klal Yisrael* has a *chelek* in Torah; as long as one’s path falls within the confines of *halacha* and leads to God, there is no one preferred path. In order to achieve the level of accepting the *derech* of others, it takes a great degree of humility.

Humility is also necessary for the success of our prayers. Remarking on the miraculous victory of *Bnei Yisrael* over Amalek, the *gemara* states (*Rosh Hashana* 29a):

וכי ידיו של משה עושות מלחמה או שוברות מלחמה? אלא לומר לך: כל זמן שהיו ישראל
 מסתכלין כלפי מעלה, ומשעבדין את לבם לאביהם שבשמים - היו מתגברים.

Is it so that the hands of Moshe conducted war? Rather, when the Jewish People look to shamayim and turn their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they succeed.

The *sefer Galgal HaChaim* (Rosh Hashana 29a) writes that Moshe Rabbeinu was a *gilgul* of Hevel. The root of the name Hevel is related to *hevel peh*. As such, the true strength of Moshe stemmed from his *koach hadibur*, his power of speech. Based on this, the *gemara* means: Did Moshe really use his hands to do battle? After all, Moshe garnered his true strength through his *koach hapeh*. The *gemara* answers that indeed, *Klal Yisrael's* strength and success results when we turn our hearts to Hashem and cry out in *tefilla*, our *koach hapeh*.¹

It is fitting that Moshe Rabbeinu, the most humble man in history, teaches us this lesson about maximizing our speech by channeling our *koach hadibur* through *tefilla*. It takes humility in order to put our full faith in Hashem and recognize that we need to beseech Him in prayer. We cannot approach God with arrogance.

The *Imrei Yosef* of the Spinker Chassidic dynasty discusses the *tefilla* that we say in *Musaf* on Rosh Hashana: “*Ki zocher kol hanishkachos atah hu mei’olam.*” This teaches us the principle that whatever mankind forgets, God remembers. The opposite is also true – whatever mankind remembers, God “forgets.” The *Imrei Yosef* presents four possible scenarios. If a person does a good deed but constantly talks about how great a person he is for doing this act, flaunting his “holiness,” Hashem “forgets” that this person did that good deed and acts as though it never took place. Similarly, if a person commits a sin but cannot help but recall his transgression and regret his wrongdoing, Hashem “forgets” that this person sinned and acts as though it never took place. Conversely, if a person does a good deed, but he is not haughty about it, “forgetting” that he even did this mitzva, God appreciates his attitude and remembers his good act *l’tova*. However, if man sins and it doesn’t bother him one bit, if he goes about his day to day business without giving his sin any thought, God makes it His business to recall the sin. Humility is critical; we must make this trait a part of our very essence, as it is plays a pivotal role in our relationship with Hashem.

On Rosh Hashana, we are called upon to personalize our particular path, which enables us to reach God through humility and happiness, instead of arrogance and fear. May we all merit to truly understand and “know” the shofar’s cry, so that we can experience the illumination of Hashem and rejoice in His Name all day long.

¹ Rashi (*Bamidbar* 31:8, s.v. *b’cherev*) writes that Bilam tried to overcome *Bnei Yisrael* by using our power of speech; for this reason, we defeated him by using his power of the sword.

To Blow or to Hear: The Mitzva of Shofar¹

ASHER REVAH



The *Rishonim* disagree about the nature of the mitzva of shofar. Is it a mitzva to **hear** the shofar or to **blow** the shofar? This *machlokes* logically relates to another disagreement regarding the proper text of the *bracha* recited upon performing the mitzva – “*l’shmoa kol shofar*” or “*l’tkoa b’shofar*”² – but we shall see that they are not necessarily connected.

In his introduction to *Hilchos Shofar*, the Rambam writes that one of the *mitzvos* discussed in this section is the command “לשמוע קול שופר באחד בתשרי,” “To **listen** to the sound of the shofar on the first of Tishrei.” In the first *halacha*, the Rambam writes:

מצות עשה של תורה לשמוע תרועת השופר בראש השנה שנאמר יום תרועה יהיה לכם.
*There is a mitzva from the Torah to **hear** the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashana, as the pasuk says, “A day of blowing it shall be for you.”*

The Rambam clearly understands that the mitzva is to **listen** to the sound of the shofar. In contrast, the *Smag* writes (*mitzvas assei* 42):

מצות עשה לתקוע בשופר בראש השנה
*There is a positive mitzva to **blow** the shofar on Rosh Hashana.*

The Rambam’s Opinion

The *Yom Terua* (*Rosh Hashana* 29a) notes a number of questions that can be asked about the Rambam’s opinion. If the mitzva is only to listen to the sound of the shofar, why does the *ba’al tokei’a* have to have *kavana* to be *motzi* others, as the *gemara* requires? Their mitzva is to listen to him blowing; there is no need for the *tokei’a* to be *motzi* them! Furthermore, the *gemara* says that a

¹ Many of the ideas in this article are based on *shiurim* of Rav Meir Stern *shlita*.

² There are other variations of the *bracha* that are discussed by the *Acharonim*, such as “*al tekias shofar*.” In this article, my references to “*l’shmoa*” and “*l’tkoa*” are not meant to indicate that actual text of the *bracha*, but rather to the general concept that is emphasized in a particular authority’s opinion.

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mentally imbalanced person, a deaf mute, and a minor cannot be *motzi* other people in the mitzva. If the mitzva is to listen to the sound of the shofar, why do we care who blows it? In the end, the sound was heard.

The *Yom Terua* first suggests that in order to fulfill the mitzva of shofar, one needs to hear the shofar and blow the shofar at the same time.³ However, the *Yom Terua* concludes that this cannot be the opinion of the Rambam, since the Rambam states in his *Teshuvos* that “listening is enough to be *yotzei* the mitzva of shofar, not blowing.” Clearly the Rambam understands that the mitzva of shofar is only to listen.⁴

The *Aruch LaNer* explains that the mitzva of shofar is not to listen to a blowing of a shofar, but rather to listen to a **blowing of mitzva**. When a *shoteh* or *katan* blows a shofar, they do not have *kavana* to fulfill the mitzva. As a result, a person listening to them is not listening to the sound of a mitzva, but rather the sound of a shofar. This is no different than listening to a trumpet. One is not *yotzei* his *chiyuv* to listen to the sound of the shofar until he hears the sound of a shofar being blown for the mitzva. The Chazon Ish says the same would apply to a person who blows a shofar but does not have *kavana* to be *motzi* someone. Although it is the sound of a mitzva for the *ba'al tokei'a*, for his friend, it is no different than a trumpet. Anyone who is not included in the *ba'al tokei'a's* *kavana* is not *yotzei* since he is not hearing the sound of shofar of mitzva.⁵

The Smag's Opinion

The Rambam (*Teshuvos* 51)⁶ asks two questions on the opinion that the mitzva is to blow the shofar. First, if the mitzva is to blow the shofar, how is it possible for one person to blow on behalf of everyone? Whenever the Torah commands a mitzva to **do** an action, it is not possible to appoint a *shaliach* to perform it. Every person is required to personally perform the action. Thus, one person cannot take a lulav on behalf of the whole shul or eat matza to fulfill the mitzva for someone else. Similarly, if the mitzva is to **blow** the shofar, each person should be required to blow it on his own. Moreover, if the mitzva is to blow the shofar, it should not be necessary to actually hear the sound of the shofar. As long as one blew the shofar, he has performed the mitzva. However, the *halacha* is that if one did not hear the shofar, he has not fulfilled his obligation, even though he blew the shofar. Along the same

3 See *Shu't Sha'agas Aryeh* (6), who maintains that the mitzva of shofar is to both blow and listen. Interestingly, *Siddur Rashi* says to say *l'shmoa* and *l'tkoa* in the same *bracha*: “*al tekias shofar l'shmoa kol shofar*.” Although the word “*l'shmoa*” is missing in the manuscripts of *Siddur Rashi*, it is possible that *Siddur Rashi* maintains that both are necessary.

4 In addition, the Rambam questions the view of those who maintain that the mitzva is to blow, as we will see below. Clearly, the Rambam does not maintain that both blowing and listening are necessary. See, however, the *Emek Bracha*, who says that this is, in fact, the opinion of the Rambam.

5 See the *Yom Terua* for a different approach.

6 *Siman* 19 in some editions.

lines, the *Behag*⁷ quotes the *gemara* (*Rosh Hashana* 27a) that states that if one blows a shofar in a pit with his head above the pit, he has not fulfilled his obligation, since he only hears the echo of the shofar. If the mitzva is to **blow** the shofar, why is it necessary to hear the actual sound?

A third proof is brought by the Rambam in *Hilchos Shofar* (1:3). There is a difference between the mitzva of shofar and the mitzva of lulav.⁸ Whereas a stolen lulav may not be used because it is a *mitzva haba b'aveira* (a mitzva performed through an aveira), one may use a stolen shofar. The Rambam explains that the mitzva requires us to do something to the lulav – to shake it. The lulav is the *cheftza d'mitzva*, the object upon which the mitzva is performed, and such an object cannot be stolen. In contrast, the Rambam argues, the mitzva of shofar is not to blow the shofar, but to hear the sound that the shofar makes. The hearing of the sound is the actual mitzva, with the shofar serving only as an object through which the sound is produced. The problem of *mitzva haba b'aveira* only pertains to a *cheftza d'mitzva*, such as a lulav; it does not apply to a shofar, which is not the *cheftza*, but rather only the means of performing the mitzva.

The Rambam's proofs indicate that he understood the Smag to be saying that the mitzva is to perform an **act** of blowing, just as in the case of lulav the mitzva is to perform an **act** of shaking. However, it is possible⁹ that even the Smag agrees that the mitzva is not to do an act of blowing, but rather to **produce a sound** of a *tekia*. It is more similar to the mitzva of Megilla, which is not to do an act of reading, but to produce the words. Thus, whereas the Rambam holds that the mitzva is to **hear** a sound, the Smag says the mitzva is to **produce** a sound.

According to this understanding of the Smag, we can answer the three questions of the Rambam and the Behag. How can one be *motzi* someone else? If the mitzva is to produce a sound, we can apply the regular rule of “*shomei'a k'oneh*” (“the one who hears is like one who speaks”), as we do in the case of Megilla. Although the mitzva is to read the Megilla, one

⁷ Quoted by Rosh in *Rosh Hashana* 4:10

⁸ The *Yerushalmi* (*Sukka* 3:1) states that a shofar of *Avodah Zarah* is kosher while a lulav of *Avodah Zarah* is *pasul*. The *Yerushalmi* gives the reason as the shofar you are *yotzei b'kolo* (that blowing of a shofar is only a way to produce or to listen to the sound of a shofar) while lulav you are *yotzei b'gufo* (the lulav is the *cheftza d'mitzva*). By lulav since you are having *hana'ah* from the object of the mitzvah you are not allowed to use it, but by shofar, where it is only a way of doing the mitzvah, not the object of the mitzva, it is not *hana'ah*. The *Bavli* argues (*Sukka* 31b) that since *mitzvos* are not *hana'ah* a lulav of *Avodah Zarah* is also kosher as you are not having *hana'ah* from it. The Rambam applies the distinction of the *Yerushalmi* to shofar *hagazul*. Shofar *hagazul* is kosher since there is no problem of *mitzva haba b'aveira* since *b'kolo yotzei*, it is not the *cheftza* of the mitzvah. Lulav, however, is a *mitzva haba b'aveira* as *b'gufo yotzei*, it is the *cheftza* of the mitzvah. The *Ra'avad* argues that the *Yerushalmi* quotes another reason for the distinction of shofar and lulav. According to what we assume to be the Smag's opinion, the Smag could hold like both opinions in the *Yerushalmi* and would not have to say the two answers argue in the *machlokes* of *Lishmoa* and *Litkoah*. (It would be quite interesting if it actually was a *Machlokes Amoraim*).

⁹ It is *mashma* from the Smag as follows: He says the *bracha* is *litko'ah b'shofar*, to blow with the shofar, and not *litko'ah shofar*, to blow the shofar. Rabbeinu Tam, who we said holds that the *bracha* is on the action, the blowing, says the *bracha* is *al teki'as shofar*, on the blowing of the shofar, and not *al teki'as b'shofar*, on the blowing with the shofar.

person can read it for everyone and it is considered as if they all read it, based on the principle of *shomei'a k'oneh*. Likewise, in the case of shofar, one person can produce the sound and it is considered as if everyone made the sound.

Why is it necessary to hear the sound of the shofar? If the mitzva is simply to perform an act of blowing, this would certainly be a difficult question. However, if the mitzva is to produce a sound, one could argue that it is only considered producing a sound if one can actually **hear** it. The *gemara* in *Brachos* 15a states that even though the mitzva is to read *shema*, one is supposed to say it loud enough to hear it; according to some opinions, this is an essential component of the mitzva. It is not considered expressive reading if one does not actually hear it himself. It follows that in order for it to be considered as though one produced the sound of the shofar, one must hear it, and hearing an echo is not sufficient.

Why is a stolen shofar acceptable according to the Smag? If the mitzva is to do an act of blowing, then it should be exactly the same as the lulav. However, according to the Smag, the mitzva is to produce a sound, and the shofar is also only a means of producing the sound. It is thus still different than lulav, which is the *cheftza* of the mitzva.¹⁰

L'Shmoa or L'Tkoa

The Smag, who says that the mitzva is to **blow** the shofar/**produce** the sound, rules that the appropriate *bracha* for the mitzva is “*l'tkoa b'shofar*.” The Rambam, who says that the mitzva is to **hear** the shofar, rules that the *bracha* is “*l'shmoa kol shofar*.”¹¹

The Rosh (*Rosh Hashana* 4:10) quotes the *machlokes* between the Behag and Rabbeinu Tam¹² regarding the emphasis of the *bracha*. The Behag maintains that one should say the *bracha* of *l'shmoa*, while Rabbeinu Tam maintains that one should say the *bracha* of *l'tkoa*.¹³

10 See the Ra'avad on the Rambam *Hilchos Shofar* 3:1, which can answer the question on the Smag.

11 This *machlokes* is found throughout the *Geonim* and *Rishonim*. The *She'iltos* (Rav Achai Gaon) maintains that the *bracha* is *l'tkoa*, although *Shibbolei HaLeket* cites from the *She'iltos* that the *bracha* is *l'shmoa*. There is some uncertainty about Rav Yehudai Gaon's opinion, but there are *teshuvas* from Rav Hai Gaon and Rav Natrunai Gaon that say to recite the *bracha* of *l'shmoa*. Rav Amram Gaon maintains that one should say *l'shmoa* (some argue and say he says to say *l'tkoa*). Rav Sa'adia Gaon says to say *l'shmoa*. The *Sefer Yerei'im*, Smag, Smak, and Riaz maintain that the *bracha* is *l'tkoa*. The *Shiltei Gibborim* states that the Rif maintains *l'tkoa*, although the *Or Zarua* and the *Shibbolei HaLeket* cite a *teshuva* of the Rif that states that the *bracha* is *l'shmoa* and Rabbeinu Yerucham also maintains that the Rif holds *l'shmoa*. The *Machzor Vitri* maintains that the proper text is *l'tkoa*. The *Ravyah*, *Or Zorua*, Rabbeinu Yerucham, *Abudraham* and *Leket Yosher* cite a *Yerushalmi* that says to say *l'shmoa*, but we do not have this *Yerushalmi* and it is seems that the Ramban and Ba'al HaMaor did not have it either (see *Korban Nesanel*, *Rosh Hashana* 2:10). Rav Yitzchak Ibn Gaius, *Ittur*, Riva, Ravan, Ramban, *Roke'ach*, *Meiri*, and *Shibbolei HaLeket*, *Sefer HaPardes L'Rashi*, *Shu't Tamim Deim*, *Sefer Tanya Rabbasi*, *Sefer HaParnes*, *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mordechai*, *Orchos Chaim*, *Kol Bo*, *Abudraham*, *Tashbetz*, *Terumas HaDeshen*, *Maharil*, and *Leket Yosher* all maintain that the *bracha* is *l'shmoa*. Interestingly, the Ran in *Pesachim* says that the proper *bracha* is *l'shmoa* even though it seems that he holds that the mitzva is to blow. The *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* rule that the *bracha* is “*l'shmoa kol shofar*.”

12 Also see *Sefer Hayashar siman* 340

13 See the *Korban Nesanel*, who notes that this appears to contradict the Rosh's statement in *Pesachim* (1:10) that Rabbeinu Tam maintains that one should say *l'shmoa*. See *Hagahos Baruch Ta'am* (*Rosh Hashana*), *Hagahos Rav Baruch Frankel Teumim* (on the Rosh in *Pesachim*), and *Sdei Chemed* (*Rosh Hashana* 2:18).

It would seem that the *Behag* sides with the Rambam, who holds that the mitzva is to hear the shofar, whereas Rabbeinu Tam holds like the *Smag* and maintains that the mitzva is *tekia*. However, in explaining his reasoning, Rabbeinu Tam writes that the reason we make the *bracha* of *l'tkoa* is that “עשייתה היא גמר מצותה,” “the performance of the mitzva is the final part of the mitzva.” This language is difficult to understand. If Rabbeinu Tam holds like the *Smag*, he should simply state that the *bracha* is *l'tkoa* because the mitzva is to blow the shofar. It thus seems that Rabbeinu Tam agrees with the Rambam that the mitzva is not the blowing, but rather the listening. If so, why does Rabbeinu Tam maintain that the proper *bracha* is *l'tkoa*?

The Rambam (*Hilchos Brachos* 11:8) discusses if one should recite a *bracha* upon building a *sukka*, which is a mitzva. The Rambam states a rule: any time one creates the *cheftza* of a mitzva but still has to do another action in order to perform the mitzva, he does not make a *bracha* on the making of the *cheftza* of the mitzva. Therefore, although building the *sukka* is a mitzva, since one must sit in the *sukka* in order to complete the mitzva, the *bracha* should be recited when one sits in the *sukka*, not when one builds it. However, if the making of the mitzva is the final step, the *bracha* is recited upon it. The Rambam explains that this is why one makes a *bracha* upon building a *ma'akeh*, a fence around a roof. The Rambam seems to be saying that the actual mitzva is not the building of the *ma'akeh*, but rather the **existence** of the *ma'akeh* on the roof. The building of the *ma'akeh* is only a *hechsher mitzva*, like the building of a *sukka*. Nevertheless, in this case, we recite the *bracha* over the *hechsher mitzva* because the actual performance of the mitzva does not entail any additional action. The *bracha* is always said on the last action, which in this case is the building itself.

This may be what Rabbeinu Tam is saying. He may agree with the Rambam's view that the mitzva of shofar is hearing the *tekios*. However, he holds that since listening is not an action, the *bracha* should be recited on the *hechsher mitzva*, which is the blowing, since this is the last action performed. The Rambam disagrees and maintains that this situation is not parallel to the case of *ma'akeh*. Regarding the mitzva of *ma'akeh*, there is no action at all; the mere existence of a *ma'akeh* is the mitzva. In contrast, in the case of shofar, one must listen to the shofar, and the *bracha* can be recited on the listening.

Accordingly, it seems that both Rabbeinu Tam and the Rambam agree that the mitzva is to listen to the shofar, but Rabbeinu Tam holds that one cannot make a *bracha* on listening, since it is not an action, and the Rambam believes that one can make a *bracha* on listening.

The Rosh discusses a case in which the person who recited the *bracha* was not able to complete the *tekios* and someone else had to take over. Does the new *ba'al tokei'a* have to recite a *bracha* before he starts blowing? According to the Rambam, the *ba'al tokei'a* is simply enabling the congregation to fulfill their obligation to **hear** the shofar, which they will now continue to do. Similarly, according to the *Smag*, the *ba'al tokei'a* is fulfilling the mitzva to produce a sound on behalf of everyone through *shomei'a k'oneh*, and they continue to fulfill this mitzva. Thus, according to both the Rambam and the *Smag*, the new *ba'al tokei'a* would not have to recite a new *bracha*. However, if it is true that Rabbeinu Tam essentially agrees

with the Rambam that the mitzva is to hear the *tekios* but he maintains that the *bracha* is recited over the act of blowing, perhaps in his view the *ba'al tokei'a* does need to make the *bracha*. Since the *bracha* is recited over the actual blowing and only the *ba'al tokei'a* blows, perhaps only he needs the *bracha*.

Is *Teshuva* Difficult or Is It Just Us?

YITZI KEMPE



As we prepare ourselves to stand before the *Ribono Shel Olam* on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we begin to contemplate our accomplishments and downfalls of the past year. Did we fulfill the goals we set out to fulfill? Or were we lax in our attitude, deciding to push off our ultimate mission?

We aspire to become ideal *ovdei Hashem*, but we often fall short of that goal and sin along the way. Hashem recognizes that human beings are not perfect and therefore provides us with the opportunity to repent for our sins through the process of *teshuva*. However, this process is often difficult, as it is challenging to come to terms with our shortcomings. *Chazal* understood this reality. Thus, although we should ideally repent on a daily basis, they encouraged us to place an added focus on *teshuva* during the month preceding Yom Kippur.

What is *teshuva* and why is it so difficult for us to perform? The word *teshuva* originates from the root “*shuv*,” which means to return. A person returns to Hashem and leaves behind his past misdeeds. What is necessary in order to properly return to Hashem? The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Teshuva* 2:2) that there are four key components of *teshuva*: abandoning the sins by removing them from one’s thoughts, deciding in one’s heart never to repeat them, regretting having sinned, and confessing out loud. In the beginning of *Sha’arei Teshuva*, Rabbeinu Yonah enumerates twenty principles necessary in order to accomplish *teshuva*. The three most essential are abandoning one’s sins, regret, and confession.¹ It is clear from both the Rambam and Rabbeinu Yonah that *teshuva* is a process entailing recognition of having sinned and a decision to change.

In his sefer *Sifsei Chaim* (vol. 1, p. 185), Rav Chaim Freidlander, the former *Menahel Ruchani* of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, explains why *teshuva* is such a difficult process. In completing *teshuva* properly, a number of obstacles arise. First, one might not recognize that anything was done wrong. Alternatively, one might be aware of his improper actions, but rationalize them as correct. Unawareness of sin prevents a person from regretting and repenting for his actions.

The second obstacle, which stems from the first, is that once a person has sinned, he has a degree of *tuma*, impurity, within him. Rav Chaim of Volozhin (*Nefesh HaChaim*, *sha’ar* 1,

¹ Rabbeinu Yonah does not mention the commitment to never perform the sin again as a requirement of *teshuva*, as the Rambam does, instead viewing the decision not to repeat the deed as a result of abandoning the sin.

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ch. 6, in the note) quotes the *gemara* in *Yoma* (39a), which states that “anyone who spiritually defiles himself in this world spiritually defiles himself from above.” A person who sins creates a level of *tuma* that surrounds him. The *Sifsei Chaim* explains that this is the meaning of the *mishna* in *Avos* (4:5), “*Sechar aveira aveira*,” which teaches that the punishment for a sin is another sin. Committing sins creates a spiritual blockage in our souls and lowers our spiritual level. This increases our vulnerability to sinful temptations, in addition to preventing us from accessing greater spiritual heights and becoming closer to Hashem. Unless prevented, this can have a devastating cyclical effect, leading a person into the greatest depths of *tuma*. The *Gra* explains the *mishna*’s statement (*Avos* 4:2), “*aveira gorreres aveira*,” in a similar manner. A person’s desire to sin increases the more involved he becomes in sin. Conversely, the performance of a *mitzva* ignites a heightened desire to continue to fulfill more *mitzvos*, amounting to a growing level of spirituality.

A tragic outcome of sinning is the establishment of a pattern of behavior, which is a third difficulty in the *teshuva* process. Repeated sinning depletes a person of a sense of guilt and warps his values. The loss of sensitivity to sin allows the person to function as if sinning is permissible. Indeed, the *gemara* in *Kiddushin* (40a) teaches, “*Avar aveira veshana, hutra lo*” – when a person repeats a sin despite the knowledge that he has transgressed a commandment, he loses his sense of guilt and no longer requires rationalization of the action before repeating the sin. The act of sinning has become neutralized and guilt-free, and therefore not something to be avoided. A pattern has been born.

Not only can a person who continuously sins think that everything is permitted, Rav Freidlander adds, but the act of pursuing desires may actually be viewed by the person as a *mitzva*. This is a masterful tactic of the *yetzer hara*, keeping us mired in our sinful ways and creating a fourth obstacle to repentance. For example, according to the Ramban, someone who engages in overly indulgent consumption of food at the Shabbos meal with the intention of fulfilling *kavod* and *oneg Shabbos* is actually in violation of the command “*kedoshim tiheyu*,” “You should be holy” (*Vayikra* 19:1). Someone who wrongly thinks that he is involved in a *mitzva* will have an extremely difficult time repenting.

We may add a fifth reason that a person who sins will have a difficult time repenting. When a person sins, there is no outward expression of punishment. A lightning bolt does not come down from Hashem to inform him of the sin. The absence of immediate consequences for his actions may fuel the erroneous rationalization that his sin was not a serious transgression. In reality, however, the punishment lays in store for him and he will eventually have a rude awakening.

One transgression that does not fit this model is *lashon hara*. During the years that *Bnei Yisrael* traveled in the desert and during the Temple era, there was an outward divine expression of punishment for *lashon hara* – *tzara’as*. The punishment of *tzara’as* was a clear demonstration of Hashem’s disapproval of speaking *lashon hara*, immediately propelling the person to initiate the *teshuva* process by seeking out a *kohen* and remaining outside of the city to determine his status.

Why was the punishment of *tzara'as* the only manifestation of outward divine punishment? When one sins by speaking *lashon hara*, he overlooks the potential embarrassment that speech can cause another person. A simple comment about a person can dramatically damage his reputation. Applying the principles discussed by Rav Friedlander, one can rationalize *lashon hara* in several ways. He may say, "I am not transgressing. I am merely speaking and not inflicting physical harm. I always speak *lashon hara*. In fact, I am trying to do a mitzva by warning people about this person!" The *yetzer hara* has convinced him that he is acting properly by sinning. Hashem warns the gossip about the extreme consequences that mere words can have on their subject by afflicting the speaker with *tzara'as*, leading to his repentance through Hashem's mercy. Hashem sends him warnings through his house, clothing, and eventually his body. He is then sent to a *kohen*, who teaches him the way of Aharon HaKohen – to love *shalom*. The *kohen* sends him out of the city, where he ceases to engage in his daily activities and instead contemplates his actions and reevaluates the way he lives his life. This is a process of *teshuva* through the recognition of sin. Only when the gossip finally realizes that he has sinned can he bring a *korban* to come closer to Hashem and confess his sins. Hashem provides him with this opportunity to do *teshuva* and change the way he lives his life by sending him the sign of *tzara'as*, which arouses him from his rationalizations.

Unfortunately, due to the *yeridas hadoros* and our inability to see Hashem's hand in everything that occurs in our lives, it is difficult to recognize our mistakes and faulty rationalizations, and *teshuva* is thus very difficult for us. If we try to view everything in our lives as a message from Hashem, consider our actions and motivations carefully, and think about how we can become better *ovdei Hashem*, we will then be able to understand that *teshuva* is really very simple!

The Purpose of *Bakashos* in *Tefilla* According to Rav Soloveitchik

EITAN TASHMAN



T*efilla* is one of the focal points of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and it is a staple of our religious life. However, the common understanding of *tefilla* – specifically the *bakashos*, or petitionary prayer – raises a number of philosophical difficulties. After all, we are davening to the Omniscient Being. Why does He need our supplications to know what is best for us? He knows everything before we say a word! Moreover, as modern science has advanced over the past few hundred years, we are more aware than ever that the world works in a causal fashion; the confidence in cause and effect is the basis of all science. The deeper we inquire into the world, the more we see that things exist and change because of a set of rules. For example, we understand that people live longer nowadays because of the vast improvements in medical care, such as the discovery of antibiotics. When we turn to Hashem in prayer and ask for His intervention, are we expecting Him to fulfill our requests without a naturally apparent cause?

There are many models of *tefilla* presented in the wide range of Jewish philosophy. In this piece, we will focus on the model developed by a modern-day thinker and *gadol*, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, as presented in a collection of his essays, *Worship of the Heart*.¹

Rav Soloveitchik explains that people often ask these questions because they misunderstand the main purpose of *bakashos* in our prayers. Many people assume that we ask for things from God so that He will respond and fulfill our requests. Rav Soloveitchik claims, however, that even when prayer is not answered, it can still achieve its primary effect. As he puts it, “Acceptance of prayer is a hope, a vision, a petition, but not a principle or a premise. The foundation of prayer is not the conviction of its effectiveness” (p. 35). If the main objective of petitionary prayer is not necessarily to fulfill our wants and wishes, then what is its point?

Rav Soloveitchik provides an explanation of petitionary prayer that goes to the heart of what we are trying to accomplish in life. The primary goal of *tefilla* is not to get what we want,

¹ Toras HaRov Foundation (2002).

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but rather to develop a relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. We develop that relationship by recognizing that He hears our prayers and is ultimately responsible for our lives. Petitioning Him serves as a catalyst for reinforcing our faith that the things we need and want all ultimately come from Him. As Rav Soloveitchik succinctly explains, “The basic function of prayer is not its practical consequences but the metaphysical formation of a fellowship consisting of God and man” (ibid.). While the form of *tefilla* seems to indicate that we are only concerned with what we will get from Hashem, on a deeper level, *tefilla* is really about developing an intimate relationship, *dveikus*, with Hashem. We pray not to inform God of our troubles, nor to manipulate Him, nor necessarily with the expectation that He will grant our requests, but primarily to garner a deeper and closer relationship with Him.

In our day-to-day lives, it is difficult to feel a close relationship with Hashem. However, through *tefilla*, we have the opportunity to feel Hashem’s presence and thereby connect to Him in ways in which we are often unable to during the rest of our day. This is, in fact, our primary objective in life, as Dovid HaMelech teaches:

אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש, שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי.

One thing I have asked of Hashem, that which I request – that I sit in the house of Hashem all the days of my life. (Tehillim 27:4)

Yom Kippur



Rachel Margolies

Robert Millman

Yaakov Rich

Leigh Greenberg

Bracha Rich

David Manheim

What if I Don't Forgive You? The *Halachic* and *Hashkafic* Obligation to Seek and Grant Forgiveness¹

RACHEL MARGOLIES



*"To forgive is to set a prisoner free...
and to discover the prisoner was you."*
- Lewis B. Smedes

As a child, I clearly remember that part of the holiday preparations entailed the girls in the schoolyard going around to all their friends and saying, "Do you forgive me? Do you forgive me? Do you forgive me? I asked three times, so you have to!" But what if I don't forgive you? And what if I have offended someone and they don't forgive me?

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines forgiveness as "the process of ceasing to feel resentment or anger towards another person for a perceived offense, and/or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution." In Judaism, *mechila* (forgiveness) plays a role in our daily lives, with our nightly declarations of forgiveness, but we focus on it in particular during the Days of Awe. It is customary to begin the process of introspection in Elul, followed by the model of *teshuva*, in the course of which we repent and amend our misdeeds. As part of this *teshuva*, we ask *mechila* from those against whom we have sinned in order to enter Yom Kippur in a state of spiritual purity.

¹ The inspiration for this article came from a study mission in memory of my grandfather, Jack E. Gindi zt"l. Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya seminary in Yerushalayim focused on this topic of *mechila* and provided us with a range of sources in *Tanach*, *Halacha*, *hashkafa*, and psychology. I would like to dedicate this essay to my mother and grandmother, who have supported and believed in my Torah learning and teaching, and are role models on a personal, familial, and community level. Of course, I could not have done this without the support of my husband, who very patiently brought each *sefer* for me to see the text and helped me with my preparation.

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The Halachic Quest for Forgiveness

The *mishna* in Yoma (8:9) states:

עברות שבין אדם למקום, יום הכפורים מכפר. עברות שבין אדם לחברו, אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חברו.

Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and God, but for a transgression against one's neighbor, Yom Kippur cannot atone, until he appeases his neighbor.

The *mishna* alludes to the fact that there are two categories of sins – those between man and God and those between man and his fellow. Each is prescribed its own structure for forgiveness. The *Minchas Chinuch* (364:32) explains that when one commits a sin against his fellow Jew, he has actually transgressed twofold – once towards his fellow and once towards Hashem. Therefore, forgiveness must be granted from both Hashem and the offended party in order to atone for this sin on Yom Kippur. As long as one has not received forgiveness from the person he offended by attempting to appease and apologize, even Yom Kippur does not grant him forgiveness from Hashem.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuva* 2:9) details for us what “appeases his friend” means in practical terms:²

אע“פ שהחזיר לו ממון שהוא חייב לו צריך לרצותו ולשאול ממנו שימחול לו, אפילו לא הקניט את חברו אלא בדברים צריך לפייסו ולפגע בו עד שימחול לו, לא רצה חברו למחול לו מביא לו שורה של שלשה בני אדם מריעיו ופוגעין בו ומבקשין ממנו, לא נתרצה להן מביא לו שניה ושלישית לא רצה מניחו והולך לו וזה שלא מחל הוא החוטא, ואם היה רבו הולך ובא אפילו אלף פעמים עד שימחול לו.

Even if he returned the money he owed his [fellow], he must appease him and ask him to forgive him. Even if he only perturbed his fellow verbally, he must make amends and meet with him until he forgives him. If his fellow does not wish to forgive him, he should bring a line of three people who are friends with him and they will approach him and ask [forgiveness] from him. If he does not give in to them, he must bring people a second and third time. If he still does not give in, they should leave him alone, and that person who did not forgive – he is the sinner. But if it was his teacher, he must come and go even a thousand times until he forgives him.

One is obligated to appease his friend until he has received forgiveness. According to the Rambam, one must ask three heartfelt times. After that, he is absolved of the offense and the other party is considered a sinner.³

2 These *halachos* apply only once one has provided the legal monetary reparations for the offense.

3 The Rambam calls a person who refuses to forgive a “*chotei*.” The *Pri Chadash* points out that the sin is not “transferred” to the one who will not forgive. Rather, both parties are now considered “with sin,” since the offender remains with his sin and the one who will not forgive has transgressed the sin of being a cruel person by withholding forgiveness.

In his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*, the *Pri Chadash* (*siman* 606) defines what is meant by the “three times” that one must ask forgiveness. He writes that the Rambam maintains that one is not permitted to ask more than three times. According to the *Shulchan Aruch*, however, it is permitted, but not necessary, to ask more than three times. The *Pri Chadash* concludes that according to the Rambam, one must ask forgiveness three times in order to fulfill his obligation of appeasing his friend, but if his friend does not grant *mechila*, he may still be forgiven for the portion of the sin that is “before Hashem” on Yom Kippur. The *Pri Chadash* deduces this from the language of the Rambam, who writes that it is necessary to “*yiratzeh es chaveiro*,” to appease one’s friend, and not “*yisratzeh*,” to ask until the point that his friend is appeased.

The *Taz* (606:1) comments that according to the Rambam, the offender is still not forgiven for his sin *bein adam lachaveiro* until he receives explicit forgiveness. However, asking more than three times may be considered futile since the offended party has expressed that he does not want to forgive. The *Sfas Emes* (*Yoma* 87b) adds that asking more than three times may be considered *lifnei iver*, causing the one who refuses to forgive to transgress the prohibition of being an *achzar* (cruel person), which the Rambam discusses in the next *halacha* (*Hilchos Teshuva* 2:14).

But I Don’t Forgive You!

What happens, though, when the offended party truly cannot bring himself to forgive the person who hurt him?

Rabbeinu Bachayei (*Bereishis* 50:17) presents a fascinating perspective on the outcome of the story of Yosef and his brothers. When Yosef initially reveals himself to his brothers, he tells them that everything that happened was part of Hashem’s plan. It is because of what they did that he is now second to Pharaoh. Yet when Yaakov dies, the brothers are extremely fearful that Yosef will finally punish them for their actions, and they even go so far as to offer themselves to him as slaves. Yosef responds by reminding them that this was part of Hashem’s plan, reassuring them that he will continue to provide for them and their households. Rabbeinu Bachayei points out that since Yosef never outright forgave them for their actions and the brothers died with their sin, their souls were punished generations later with the tragedy of the *Asara Harugei Malchus* (the ten holy martyrs). Rav Moshe Feinstein quotes this comment of Rabbeinu Bachayei when he insists that two litigants at a *beis din* (rabbinical court) explicitly grant each other *mechila* after the verdict is rendered.⁴

The question of whether Yosef actually forgave his brothers is subject to a complex discussion among the commentators. But was he obligated to?

Although there is a mitzva not to hate another Jew in one’s heart (*Vayikra* 19:17), the Rambam explains (*Hilchos Rotze’ach* 13:14) that the prohibition of *lo sisna* only applies when the hatred remains in the heart. If it has been communicated, then one does not transgress this *aveira*. In fact, the Torah itself refers to someone that we are obligated to hate:

⁴ See the Artscroll biography *Reb Moshe*, p. 444.

כי תראה חמור שנאך רבץ תחת משאו וחדלת מעזב לו עזב תעזב עמו.

If you see the donkey of someone you hate crouching under its burden, would you refrain from helping him? You shall help repeatedly with him. (Shemos 23:5)

Based on this *pasuk*, the *gemara* concludes (*Pesachim* 113b) that one is in fact permitted – and at times obligated – to hate another Jew and not to forgive the sin he has committed. If one has witnessed a Jew committing an *aveira* even after being warned not to do so, one may hate him until he does *teshuva*. Nevertheless, the Torah tells us, we must set aside our feelings to help even such a person.⁵

What's In It For Me?

The Alter of Slabodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, expounds on this *pasuk* in his sefer, *Ohr HaTzafun*. Why is it that even when one is commanded to hate, he must go to extremes to overlook the hatred and help his fellow Jew? Tosfos on the *gemara* in *Pesachim* asks this question and explains that while we are allowed to hate the sinner, we are commanded to help him in order to prevent this hatred from becoming “*sina gemura*” – hatred of the person as a whole. No one is perfect. If we make the person's faults the sum total of who they are, this is *sina gemura*. *Sina gemura* may also mean that the *sina* completely encompasses the hater. The hatred is no longer only about the sin or only about the honor of Hashem.⁶ Instead, it is about a personal feeling and distance that is irreversible even when the sinner does *teshuva*.⁷ Rav Finkel explains that the Torah and its *mitzvos* were given to us in order to refine and develop us as human beings. It is for this reason, he says, that we are given the commandment to help the donkey of the one whom we hate. Hashem wants us to give to others – even when it is hard for us and even when we are justified in hating them.⁸

5 The *Meshech Chochma* (*Devarim* 22:4) writes that after the *cheit ha'egel*, the mitzva to hate a sinner no longer applies. Before the sin of the golden calf, we were entitled to despise people who did not abide by the values of the Torah. Such a person is likened to the “enemy” whose donkey is struggling. But after the sin, we are all flawed. Standards have dropped and role-models are absent. We are no longer entitled to despise a fellow Jew for what he does or does not do, although we may be displeased with his behavior.

The *Chazon Ish* comments in the name of the Maharam MiLublin that nowadays, everyone is in the category of not having been properly rebuked. This is because we neither have the environment of role models, nor the caliber of teachers and rabbis that make it unacceptable for anyone to abandon Torah values. We can no longer feel superior and guiltless about the conduct of our fellow Jews. The environment and teachers we are producing are sometimes responsible for lower standards of Torah commitment. We may be judgmental about peoples' actions, but never about them. Regardless of whether we may actually hate a sinner, however, the Torah commands us to overcome our feelings towards him and help him when he is in need.

6 See *Mishlei* 8:13. Rav Mayer Twersky describes this “proper” kind of hatred as “hatred with laser-like precision” – hating the sin and not the sinner.

7 See *Machatzis HaShekel* on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Choshen Mishpat* 272:11.

8 The *gemara* in *Ta'anis* (20b) relates the following story about the lengths to which one must go in order to forgive someone: Once Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Shimon was coming from Migdal Gedor, from the house of his teacher, and he was riding leisurely on his donkey by the riverside and was feeling happy and elated because he had studied much Torah. There chanced to meet him an exceedingly ugly man who greeted him, “peace be upon you, sir.”

He, however, did not return his salutation but instead said to him, “how ugly you are! Are all your fellow citizens as ugly as you are?” The man replied, “I do not know, but go and tell the craftsman who made me, ‘how ugly is the vessel that you have made.’”

In line with the idea that overcoming hatred refines us, let us take a closer look at what forgiveness does for the offended party. Shirley Lebovics, LCSW, writes the following about the personal development aspect of forgiveness:

Forgiveness has little or nothing to do with another person because it is essentially an internal matter. The crucial point to keep in mind is that when one forgives, they do it for themselves, not for the other... Forgiveness is a gift one gives to himself. It is not done FOR someone else. It involves identifying the situation to be forgiven, and asking oneself: "Am I willing to waste my energy further on this matter?" If and when the answer is "No," then the only option is to forgive. Choice is always present in forgiveness. One does not have to forgive, but by choosing not to do so, they must realize there are consequences to their choice. Refusing to forgive means holding on to anger, resentment and a sense of betrayal, which can make a person's life miserable. A vindictive mindset not only creates bitterness, but allows the offender to claim their victim even more powerfully. By reliving wounded feelings, we give the offender continued power over us. In other words, to withhold forgiveness is to choose to continue to remain the victim.

When someone wrongs us, we may experience many emotions, ranging from anger to confusion to excruciating pain. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, recognizes the reality that we may not be quick to forgive and that some deeds penetrate so deeply that we may feel that it is impossible to forgive. Yet Hashem also gives us the antidote to this. He gives us the option to set ourselves free of the anger, and He prescribes a path to emotional health. He knows that holding resentment within us will destroy us and those we hold dear, so He recommends that we give – precisely to those who have hurt us.

The opposite of *sina* (hatred) is *ahava* (love). Rav Dessler explains in *Michtav Mei'Eliyahu* (*Kuntres HaChesed*, ch.4) that the root of the work *ahava* is *hav*, which means "to give." If we want to build love, he says, we must give unconditionally, even (perhaps especially) when it is most difficult.

As we approach the Days of Awe, we find a common theme throughout the liturgy and commentaries. "*Mah hu rachum, af ata rachum*" – "just as He is merciful, so should you be

When Rabbi Eliezer realized that he had done wrong, he dismounted from the donkey and prostrated himself before the man and said to him, "I submit myself to you. Forgive me."

The man replied, "I will not forgive you until you go to the craftsman who made me and say to him, 'How ugly is the vessel that you have made.'" He [Rabbi Eliezer] walked behind him until he reached his native city. When his fellow citizens came out to meet him, greeting him with the words, "Peace be upon you, O Teacher, O Master," the man asked them, "Whom are you addressing thus?" They replied, "The man who is walking behind you." Thereupon he exclaimed, "If this man is a teacher, may there not be any more like him in Israel!" The people then asked him, "Why?" He replied, "Such and such a thing has he done to me." They said to him, "Nevertheless, forgive him, for he is a man greatly learned in the Torah." The man replied, "For your sakes I will forgive him, but only on the condition that he does not act in the same manner in the future."

The *gemara* explains that we learn from this story that the Torah must be written with a quill of reed. Just as a reed has strong roots but bends with the wind, so too should one who follows Torah be grounded solidly in his beliefs but also be easygoing and flexible when it comes to challenges.

merciful.” Think about how many times we have begged forgiveness from Hashem – yet time and time again He has welcomed us back with open arms and wiped our slate clean! We can’t help but feel overwhelmed with gratitude that He has forgiven us and still desires a relationship with us. During these days, as we approach Hashem to ask him for forgiveness, bear in mind that Hashem is observing how we respond to our fellow Jews. How willing are we to forgive? How willing are we to look past the sins and see the person? How willing are we to emulate Hashem’s model of pristine and untarnished forgiveness?

A Story For Yom Tov¹

ROBERT MILLMAN



Upon reading the first volume of *Nitzachon*, it occurred to me that although Torah erudition filled the pages of the journal, one very significant aspect of Jewish learning was missing – a compelling story imparting a message for all to absorb.

Throughout Jewish history, we have had storytellers who communicate spirituality by telling tales of *tzaddikim*. Is there anyone who has not listened to or read the tales of modern day storytellers Rabbi Hanoch Teller and Rabbi Pesach Krohn? On the simplest level, who doesn't like to hear a story? Children love listening to stories from the time they are very young, begging, "Mommy, Abba, tell me a story!" Often, the Rav of a shul will begin his *drasha* with a gripping *meshal* or story to stir the hearts of his congregants. The pages of the *gemara* are replete with *agaddic* stories that transmit a message to the *talmid*. Rabbi Yitzchak Birnbaum, a prolific writer and expert on storytelling, recounts that Chasidim say that when pious people tell holy stories, even *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* listens. To quote Rabbi Birnbaum:

Why did the Baal Shem Tov and other Chasidic rabbis praise, glorify, and extol storytelling, saying that telling stories about tzaddikim was equal to mystic study and to praise of God? Undoubtedly, because they knew its profound spiritual value and wanted Chasidim to engage in storytelling... God says... Did He not come down to Har Sinai and tell Moshe Rabbenu all the Torah's stories?

¹ When I read the preface to Adas Torah's first issue of *Nitzachon*, I was moved by the sincerity and simplicity of the messages written by Michael Kleinman and Yaakov Siegel. What better way to honor the tenth anniversary of the shul than by creating a journal of Torah ideas representative of the members of the *kehilla*. I have lived in the Pico-Robertson community for a long time, and I know of no other *shul* west of La Cienega that has ever embarked on such a project. It is a credit to the synagogue membership and to our *Mara D'Asra*, Rabbi Dovid Revah, and his Rebbetzin that Adas Torah continues to break new ground in the Westside Orthodox Jewish community.

This past year has witnessed a significant number of tragedies in our community, with people moving on to the *Olam HaEmes* at much too young an age. We at Adas Torah were significantly impacted by one of these tragedies, the untimely passing of Daniella Casper *aleha hashalom*, beloved mother of Gabriel and husband of Noam Casper.

I would like to dedicate this piece to the memory of Daniella *a"h*, a vibrant young woman who always had a smile on her face and was totally dedicated to *avodas Hashem*. May her *neshama* have an *aliya* and may her wonderful *bashert* Noam suffer no more sorrow. Noam, we at Adas Torah remember Daniella fondly and we think of you often.

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With all this in mind, I thought it would be appropriate to endeavor to include in each issue of *Nitzachon* a powerful story related to the time of year. As we approach the holiest days of our calendar, I hope you will be inspired and moved by the story that follows. Its source is unknown, but I am told that it is true, and it imparts many powerful messages that we can incorporate into our lives for the coming year.

A resident of Yerushalayim was traveling from the United States to Israel. Seated next to him on the plane was an older Jewish gentleman, Moshe Aharon Halevi, a Holocaust survivor. The *Yerushalmi* engaged him in friendly conversation and invited him to join him in his shul for the upcoming High Holidays. Moshe Aharon responded, "I cannot go to shul after what God did to me. He took my only son away from me. We were captured by the Nazis and sent to different camps. My beloved son was sent to one of the worst death camps. No one survived. My beloved son – so young, so full of promise... I stopped speaking to God and I can never go to shul. I believe in nothing and no longer observe the *mitzvos*."

In a very gentle manner, the *Yerushalmi* replied, "You could just come to *shul* on Yom Kippur so that you can say *Yizkor* for your son, to honor his memory." Moshe Aharon grumbled and the fellow figured he would never see him again.

In many *shuls*, after *Musaf* on Yom Kippur, there is an afternoon break before the commencement of *Mincha*. On this particular Yom Kippur, the *Yerushalmi* walked out of shul to go to a nearby park. Lo and behold, sitting in the park and eating a sandwich was none other than Moshe Aharon HaLevi!

Once again, the *Yerushalmi* engaged the Holocaust survivor in conversation. He told Moshe Aharon, "Look, it has to be more than mere coincidence that we ran into one another today. Why not come to *shul* with me for *Mincha* and *Ne'ila* and the end of the Yom Kippur holiday?" Once again, the Holocaust survivor did not seem moved. He said, "It has been forty years since I set foot in a *shul* and I am a bitter man. What good can come of it?" Nevertheless, miraculously, Moshe Aharon Halevi agreed to follow his new friend, as if stirred by something inside of him.

The *Mincha* service began with the Torah reading. After the first *aliya*, the *gabbai* called to the Torah a handsome man with three little sons, who accompanied him to the *bima*. The *gabbai* chanted, "*Ya'amod Yaakov Yosef ben Moshe Aharon haLevi*." Moshe Aharon could not believe his ears. When the *aliya* was finished, he approached the man. Was it possible? Could it be true? After all of these years? They stared at one another. Finally, the older man squealed in a shocked and cracked voice, "Yaakov Yosef?" The man replied, "Abba, Abba?"

Because of one man's simple warmth, concern, and kindness, and with obvious *hashgacha pratis* in play, father and son were reunited. Eventually, the father joined his son and family in *Eretz Yisrael* and rededicated himself to Torah, *mitzvos*, prayer, and God.

None of us knows what is in store for this coming year. Only *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* weaves the tapestry of mankind. May we all be inspired to rededicate ourselves to Torah, *mitzvos*, and coming closer to Hashem in the coming year, and may we all be *zocheh* to see the coming of *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.

The First Banned Book and the Yom Kippur *Avoda*

YAAKOV RICH



Central to the *Musaf* prayer of Yom Kippur is the *Seder Avoda*, in which we recite in elaborate detail, and with the accompaniment of *piyutim* and lavish poems, exactly what took place in the *Beis HaMikdash* on Yom Kippur. The climax of the *avoda* is the description of the *Kohen Gadol* as he exited the *Kodesh HaKodashim* after he completed the *avoda* and the prayers recited therein. We recite the poem “*Mareh Kohen*,” which heaps praise and expressions of beauty upon the *Kohen Gadol*:

אמת מה נהדר היה כהן גדול בצאתו מבית קדשי הקדשים בשלום בלי פגע.

כאהל הנמתח בדרי מעלה, מראה כהן. כברקים היוצאים מזיו החיות, מראה כהן.

*Truly, how glorious the appearance of the high priest was when he came forth
safely from the Holy of Holies, without affliction.*

As the expanded canopy of heaven was the countenance of the priest.

As lightning flares from the splendor of the angels was the countenance of the priest.

The poem continues, in alphabetical order, to compare the vision of the countenance of the *Kohen Gadol* to a long list of images of uncontested beauty.

Although the identity of the author of this magnificent poem is unknown,¹ his source of influence is obvious. The poem is noticeably parallel to a passage in the book of Ben Sira singing the praises of one “Shimon ben Yochanan HaKohen.”²

1 The poem “*Mareh Kohen*” is separated from the acrostic pattern of the *Seder Avoda* recited immediately before it, marking it as an independent composition. It is speculated by some that the author is the prolific early *paytan* Yosi ben Yosi, who is famous particularly for the *Sidrei Avoda* that he wrote for Yom Kippur, one of which is still recited in many Sefardic communities during *Musaf*. See A. Mirsky, “*Piyutei Yosi ben Yosi*” (1977), p. 29.

2 See E. Eliner, “*Seder Avoda LeYom HaKippurim*,” in *Ma’ayanot 9 – Yamim Nora’im*, vol. 1, p. 314. He writes:

הפיוט הזה קדום מאוד - כנראה מתקופת הפייטנים הקדמונים - אבל מעניין הוא שדוגמתו נמצאת עוד בתקופה הרבה יותר קדומה: הפיוט הזה הוא בלי ספק חיקוי למה שכתב בן סירא...

He was not the first to notice the similarity. Rabbi Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport already mentioned it offhand in his *Toldos Rabbi Elazar HaKalir* (1913), vol.1, p. 225.

M. H. Segal (*Sefer Ben Sira HaShalem*, pp. 343-344; my thanks to Rabbi Lieberman for providing this extremely useful

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מה נהדר בהשיגו מאהל ובצאתו מבית הפרכת: ככוכב אור מבין עבים וכירח מלא מבין
 בימי מועד: וכשמש משרקת אל היכל המלך וכקשת נראתה בענן: (בן סירא נ, ו-ח)

*How glorious was he when he looked forth from the tent; and when he went out
 from the Inner Sanctum! As the morning star from amid thick clouds; and as the
 full moon in the days of the festival. And as the sun dawning upon the temple of the
 King; and as rainbow seen in a cloud. (Ben Sira 50:6-8)*

Ben Sira is a book of proverbs that is not one of the twenty-four books of our *Tanach*; it is of the apocryphal books, works that were not included in *Tanach* either because they were written too late to have been divinely inspired to any degree³ or because they contained objectionable, questionable, or misleading material. Ben Sira was not an uncommon source for the early Jewish poets and one can find the phrases of Ben Sira ornamenting their prose quite often. But particularly in the case of the Yom Kippur *avoda*, much of the phrases and themes are taken directly from it. In fact, judging from the similarities between different versions of the *avoda* recitation that were written by different authors,⁴ some conclude that there must have been an earlier fixed text that was recited as the *avoda* that was later replaced by these poetic versions created by the *paytanim* – the text of Ben Sira itself.⁵

The status of apocryphal books as *halachically* appropriate reading material is

reference among others), who assumes the poem's authorship by Yosi ben Yosi (see n. 1), provides several specific similarities in phraseology between the *piyut* and the passage in Ben Sira. For example, in the *piyut*, we have “ככוכב הנוגה בגבול מורח”, and “כרואה זריחת שמש על הארץ כשושנת”, all of which use imagery from the verses quoted below. Also, “וכששנת” is comparable to Ben Sira’s “וכששן על יבלי מים”.

3 The *gemara* (*Yoma* 9b from *Tosefta Sota* 13:4) brings a tradition that *ruach hakodesh* ceased to exist after the era of the last three prophets, Chaggai, Zecharia, and Malachi. *Seder Olam Rabba* (ch. 30) relates that prophecy existed until the era of Alexander the Great, which began at most two centuries later.

Either way, Ben Sira was written too late to be considered divinely inspired. It is not difficult to determine a date for Ben Sira with relative accuracy. The book of Ben Sira was translated from Hebrew into Greek by his own (self-identified) grandson, who had moved to Egypt and who provides the date of his translation in a preface that he appended to the book, according to the years of the then-current king of Egypt. Scholars have determined the date to be 132 BCE, which places his grandfather in the early second century BCE or late third century at the earliest.

4 There are dozens of extant *Sidrei Avoda* that may or may not have been used at some point in time by some communities. The one that most Ashkenazic communities recite was composed by the *posek* and poet Meshulam ben Klonimus. Thirty-five such compositions are listed in I. Davidson’s *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (1924) and more have been discovered since then.

5 This theory originated with Cecil Roth (“Ecclesiasticus in the Synagogue Service,” *JBL* 71 (1952), pp. 171-178) and has been accepted without argument as far as I can tell. (Eliner also accepts this as probable.)

Roth compares several extant versions of *Avoda piyutim* and concludes that the “*Mareh Kohen*” passage replaced the passage from Ben Sira 50 based on the evidence of thirteen of the versions that conclude with a variation of this theme. Additionally, the entire last few chapters of Ben Sira (called “*Shevach Avos Olam*” – “Praise of the Leaders of the Ages”) records the praises of our ancestors starting with Chanoch (or Noah; see Segal, p. 307) and ending with the passage cited above in praise of Shimon ben Yochanan. Roth believes that this passage was recited in full in the original *Seder Avoda*, based on the tendency of the *paytanim* to provide a similar short history of Creation and our forefathers, usually until Aharon Hakohen, which leads them into the description of the Yom Kippur service (see also Mirsky, pp. 27-28.) The rest of the *Avoda* service was most likely originally a compilation of prose from the *mishnayot* and *Tosefta in Yoma*, which describe the service in the *Beis HaMikdash* on Yom Kippur.

questionable; in fact, a surface reading of a *mishna* in *Sanhedrin* would lead us to conclude that reading any of the apocryphal books is forbidden. If this is true, how could the text of Ben Sira have been inserted into our prayers? How could it even have influenced the *paytanim*?

The goal of this essay is twofold. The first goal is to justify the practice of reciting Ben Sira (or even Ben Sira-inspired material) by providing a *halachic* overview of the relevant sources. The second goal is to provide some background and significance to the passage of Ben Sira that influenced the poem “ *Mareh Kohen*,” which holds a prominent place in our *Seder Avoda*.

The Halachic Status of Ben Sira

The forbidden nature of Ben Sira presents itself in several sources from *Chazal*. Let us begin, as is appropriate, with the *Talmud Bavli*. The *mishna* in *Sanhedrin* (10:1) lists several individuals who are not destined for the “Coming Era:”⁶

רבי עקיבא אומר: אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים.

Says Rabbi Akiva: Also one who reads the external books [is not destined for the Coming Era].

These “external” or “outside” books are mysterious. We find no other reference to “ *sefarim hachitzonim*” in the Talmud.⁷ Luckily, the *gemara* attempts to clarify Rabbi Akiva’s statement:

רבי עקיבא אומר: אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים וכו’ תנא בספרי מינים. רב יוסף אומר: בספר בן סירא נמי אסור למיקרי.

Says Rabbi Akiva: Also one who reads the external books etc. It was taught: The books of heretics. Rav Yosef said: The book of Ben Sira is also forbidden to read. (Sanhedrin 100b)

First, the *gemara* brings an identification of what Rabbi Akiva means by “ *sefarim hachitzonim*” – he means heretical books. Then, Rav Yosef adds Ben Sira to the list of forbidden books. But what is the intention of R. Yosef? Is he classifying Ben Sira as a heretical book, to be included in Rabbi Akiva’s “ *sefarim hachitzonim*,” or is he teaching that even though Ben Sira is not included in the category of *sifrei minim*, it is nonetheless forbidden to read?

To answer this question, we find the following in the *Tosefta*:

הגליונים וספרי המינין אינן מטמאות את הידים. ספרי בן סירא וכל ספרים שנכתבו מכאן ואילך אינן מטמאין את הידים.

⁶ In Hebrew: “אין להם חלק לעולם הבא.” For a justification of this translation, see the discussion in S. Friedman, “ *Mei’olam V’Ad Olam*,” *Leshoneinu* 70 (2007), pp. 77-97. It should be noted that we are assuming that inclusion of someone in the list of people who are “not destined for the Coming Era” implies that that which he did is forbidden.

⁷ There is some discussion regarding the translation of “ *sefarim hachitzonim*.” Some have attempted to claim that “ *chitzonim*” should be understood as a class of people that held certain beliefs that *Chazal* deemed heretical, similar to “ *minim*,” see the discussion by N. D. Rabinowich, *Binu Shenos Dor VaDor* (1984), pp. 262-264. However, such a reading ignores the construction “ *sefarim hachitzonim*,” instead of “ *sifrei chitzonim*,” which even Rabinowich admits “requires explanation.” Thus, I will render simply “external books” or “outside” books.

The Gospels and the books of heretics do not defile the hands. The books of Ben Sira and any books written from then on do not defile the hands. (Yadayim 4:13)

In this context, a book that “defiles the hands” is one that is considered sacred and worthy of being in *Tanach*.⁸ All the books listed in this *Tosefta* are, by contrast, not holy and thus unworthy of canonization. What is significant here is that Ben Sira is listed separately from the category of heretical books in general, which (assuming that the *Bavli* does not disagree with this *Tosefta*) implies that the identification of the *gemara* of *sefarim hachitzonim* as *sifrei minim* does not include Ben Sira.⁹ Thus, Rav Yosef attempts to forbid Ben Sira either because he thinks that Rabbi Akiva intended Ben Sira to be included in the category of *sefarim hachitzonim* instead of – or in addition to – *sifrei minim* or because he wishes to introduce a new prohibition separate from that of Rabbi Akiva against the reading of Ben Sira.¹⁰

Compare this to the *Talmud Yerushalmi* in its elucidation of Rabbi Akiva’s statement:

רבי עקיבה אומר: אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים. כגון ספרי בן סירא וספרי בן לענה. אבל ספרי הומרים וכל הספרים הנכתבים מכאן והילך כקורא באיגרת. מאי טעמא ויותר מהמה בני הזהר וגו’ להגיון ניתנו ליגיעה לא ניתנו.

Says Rabbi Akiva: Also one who reads the external books – such as the books of Ben Sira and the books of Ben La’ana.¹¹ But the books of Homer and any books written henceforth are like one who reads a letter. What is the reason? “More than these, my son, beware [of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh (yegias basar).]” They were given for casual reading, but not for intense study (l’yegia). (Sanhedrin 10:1)

Before we discuss the *halachic* implications of the *Yerushalmi*, it seems clear that it considers Ben Sira to be within the category of Rabbi Akiva’s “*sefarim hachitzonim*.” Notice, however, that in the *Yerushalmi*, *sefarim hachitzonim* are not identified as heretical books like they are in the

8 See S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (1976), p. 102. (Henceforth, all citations of Leiman are from this book.)

9 The *girsas* of the Rif in Rav Yosef’s statement arguably does imply that Rav Yosef intends to include Ben Sira as a heretical book. See n. 26 below.

10 In quoting Rav Yosef, I have used the *girsas* that is found in the common Vilna edition of the *Talmud Bavli*, which follows more or less the texts of the Karlsruhe, Munich, and Florence manuscripts. However, there are variant texts worth mentioning. In MS Yemen and “Genizah fragment U,” along with “*Aggados HaTalmud*,” we find “ספרי בן סירא נמי כספרי מינים” and we find a similar version of in the Rif (see n. 26). In another Genizah fragment (Cam. West. Talm. I 106), we find “אמר רב יוסף: וספרי בן סירא נמי כספרים החיצונים דאמי” (See M. Sabato, *Ketav Yad Teimani L’Mesechet Sanhedrin (Bavli) U’Mekom B’Mesoret HaNusach*” (1998), p. 109; see also the discussion of J. Labendz, “The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature,” *AJS Review* 30:2 (2006), p. 358, n. 48-50.) The conclusion we reach above regarding Rav Yosef’s *halachic* intentions and below regarding his reasoning can be argued for all three texts, although with varying degrees of certainty.

11 No one is entirely sure what “Ben La’ana” is, although we can assume that it is an apocryphal non-heretical book just like Ben Sira. Some versions read “Ben La’aga,” and the parallel passage in *Kohes Rabba* (cited below) mentions “Ben Talga,” so it seems that whatever book it was, it did not take long for it to become forgotten and variant versions of its name inserted. See Leiman, p. 181, n. 370, for a summary of the theories.

Bavli. Thus, while the respective classifications of the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* are different – the *Yerushalmi* includes Ben Sira in the *sefarim hachitzonim* while the *Bavli* does not – neither consider Ben Sira a heretical book. The result is that according to the *Yerushalmi*, the book of Ben Sira was banned by Rabbi Akiva in his overarching ban on the “*sefarim hachitzonim*.” The *Bavli*, on the other hand, does not include the book in Rabbi Akiva’s ban, which included only heretical books, instead implying that it was banned much later by Rav Yosef (or that Rav Yosef included it in Rabbi Akiva’s ban), as Rav Yosef wished to give Ben Sira the same forbidden status.

It is necessary to further clarify this passage in the *Yerushalmi*. The *Yerushalmi* differentiates between the *sefarim hachitzonim* and the Homeric epics, in that reading the latter is comparable to reading a document – a benign activity – while reading the former is forbidden. But when the *Yerushalmi* asks, “What is the reason?” and concludes that “they were given for discussion, but not for intense study,” to which is it referring – to the *sefarim hachitzonim* or to the Homeric epics? It seems strange to conclude that the intention is to the works of Homer, as the use of the word “given” (“*nitnu*”) is odd in reference to secular books.

A related passage in *Koheles Rabba* sheds light on our *Yerushalmi*:

יותר מהמה בני הזהר. מהומה, שכל המכנים בתוך ביתו יותר מכ"ד ספרים מהומה הוא מכניס בביתו, כגון ספר בן סירא וספר בן תלגא. ולהג הרבה יגיעת בשר. להגות ניתנו ולא ליגיעת בשר ניתנו.

“And more than these (meiheima), my son, beware” – confusion (mehuma); for anyone who brings more than the twenty-four books [Tanach] into his house brings confusion into his house, such as the book of Ben Sira and the book of Ben Talga. “And much study is a weariness of the flesh (yegias basar)” – They were given for discussion, but not for intense study (l’yegia).¹² (Koheles Rabba 12:12)

This is quite clearly a parallel passage to the one in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* and may even be a variation of it,¹³ but with one exception: the *midrash* leaves out the classification of Homeric literature. Regardless of the reason for this, what is important is that while the distinction of the

12 This passage, as well as the one in the *Yerushalmi*, is based on *Koheles* 12:11-12:

דברי חכמים כדרבנות וכמשמרות נטועים בעלי אספות נתנו מרעה אחד: יותר מהמה בני הזהר עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ ולהג הרבה יגיעת בשר. *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are those that are composed in collections; they are given from one shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* The word “*meiheima*” in “*v’yesser meiheima*” is compared to “*mehuma*” in the *midrash*. “*V’lahag harbeh yegias basar*” is used in the final *drasha*, in which “*lahag*” is compared to “*l’hagos*” (even though the root is not the same) and “*yegias basar*” is expounded upon. The attention to the word “*nitnu*” at the end of the passage is probably a reference to the *pasuk* before: “*nitnu meiro’eh echad*.”

13 While the relationship between the passage in the *Yerushalmi* and the one in *Koheles Rabba* is clear, the nature of the relationship is less so. *Koheles Rabba* organizes the passage as an exegetical comment on the *pasuk* in *Koheles*, even citing the *pasuk* phrase by phrase. The *Yerushalmi* merely cites the *pasuk* once and then continues to bring the relevant expounded interpretation to the latter part. It seems that *Koheles Rabba* (which is a much later work than the *Yerushalmi*) was not based entirely on the *Yerushalmi*. Rather, it either expanded the *drasha* to include the first part of the *pasuk* or was aware of an earlier source or tradition on which the *Yerushalmi* itself was based.

works of Homer is omitted, the concluding clause – “They were given for discussion, but not for intense study” – remains. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that this clause refers to the first category of *sefarim hachitzonim*, which the *midrash* understands as “more than the twenty-four books” of *Tanach* and which includes Ben Sira. What this means is that a casual reading (*higayon*) of Ben Sira is permitted; it is only intense study of the book that was forbidden by Rabbi Akiva.¹⁴ Effectively, the *Yerushalmi* (and *Koheles Rabba*) is restricting the prohibition of “reading” external books to mean only serious study; a light reading or recitation is not included in the prohibition.

Let us now return to the *Bavli*. Although the *Bavli* understands Rabbi Akiva to be referring only to heretical books, it brings the statement from Rav Yosef to prohibit Ben Sira as well. This statement of Rav Yosef is immediately interrupted in the *gemara* by a discussion narrated by Abaye, Rav Yosef’s student, in which a justification is sought for banning the book of Ben Sira. Abaye quotes many verses from Ben Sira that one might find objectionable, but then finds parallel proverbs in the statements of *Chazal* or in *Tanach*, showing that they are not to be considered objectionable after all. Finally, Abaye concludes by finding a questionable verse in Ben Sira with no Talmudic or Biblical counterpart:

14 This conclusion, although presented here without alternative, is far from unanimous. There are in reality three possibilities: (1) “להגיון ניתנו ליגיעה לא ניתנו” is referring to the books of Homer and other secular literature. This is probably the most straightforward approach to the *Yerushalmi* in terms of the flow of the *gemara*. It is the approach that the *P’nei Moshe* (Rabbi Moshe Margolies) adopts in his commentary and that S. Lieberman assumes in his elucidation of the passage (*Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* [1962], p. 110). The practical result is that casual reading is permitted only for secular books like those of Homer, while books like Ben Sira are completely prohibited, even just to read occasionally. The downside of this approach is that it renders the passage from *Koheles Rabba* incomprehensible. If the editor of *Koheles Rabba* wanted to omit the phrase about Homer’s books, he should have also taken out this final phrase. One solution is to say that the redactor of this *midrash* was careless and was motivated by the zeal of removing a *midrashic* permissibility of reading secular literature while neglecting to complete the job by removing the full relevant passage (or that the omission was accomplished by a later editor or copier who was less learned). Alternatively, one could argue that the redactor misunderstood the passage in the *Yerushalmi* and thought that the phrase was referring to Ben Sira and the “external books” instead of the Homeric works. The former is indeed one of the solutions provided by Leiman (pp. 89-90), which he notes “has simplicity in its favor,” but which I find somewhat unsatisfying. Additionally, as I noted above, this approach has the additional drawback of assigning the word “*nitnu*” to secular works.

(2) The approach that I take – that the final clause refers to the *sefarim hachitzonim*. This has the benefit of the rendering the passage from *Koheles Rabba* understandable and, as I will show, reconcilable with the *Bavli*. On the other hand, the consequence of this approach is that there is no distinction between the status of the *sefarim hachitzonim* and that of Homer; both can be read casually “as one would read a document,” which negates the impression given by the *Yerushalmi* that it is trying to contrast the status of the two. However, this conundrum is solved without too much difficulty given the reason for the ban on Ben Sira, which we will discuss below. We should also note that the version of *Koheles Rabba* which reads “שכל המכניס בתוך ביתו יותר מכ”ד ספרים המומה הוא מכניס בביתו” implies that the *sefarim hachitzonim* should not be read at all, neither casually nor studiously (which would contradict our final clause if it were also referring to the *sefarim hachitzonim*). I agree with Labendz (p. 355, n. 38), however, that the language in *Koheles Rabba* is exaggerated and probably polemical, and that “bring into your house” is its way of saying “add to your library of studious works.”

(3) Reinterpret “להגיון ניתנו ליגיעה לא ניתנו” to mean that Ben Sira (and the other *sefarim hachitzonim*) is appropriate for recital (another valid meaning of “*higayon*”), but is not to be written down for further studying, like the books of the *Tanach* are. This is Leiman’s second solution (p. 90). However, although this approach avoids any logical inconsistencies, it seems slightly convoluted and thus unlikely.

אלא משום דכתיב זלדקן קורטמן עבדקן סכסן דנפח בכסיה לא צחי אמר במאי איכול לחמא לחמא סב מיניה מאן דאית ליה מעברתא בדיקני' כולי עלמא לא יכלי ליה.

Rather, it is [forbidden to read] because it is written [in Ben Sira]: "One with a thin beard is wise; one with a thick beard is senseless. One who blows the froth from his drink is not thirsty; one who asks 'with what shall I eat my bread,' take the bread from him. One whose beard is parted, no one is able to outsmart him."

After this conclusion of Abaye that there is indeed objectionable material in Ben Sira, the *gemara* continues with the remainder of Rav Yosef's statement:

אמר רב יוסף: מילי מעלייתא דאית ביה דרשינן להו.

*Said Rav Yosef: The admirable sayings within it [Ben Sira], we can explicate.*¹⁵

Rav Yosef then continues to cite some of the "admirable sayings" from Ben Sira.¹⁶

This ruling of Rav Yosef prompts the obvious question: If Ben Sira is forbidden to read at all, how could one "explicate" or make any use of any of the proverbs or quotations found within it? One way to approach this is the same way that we concluded according to the *Yerushalmi*; that is, Rav Yosef's prohibition against reading Ben Sira applies only to serious study, but casual reading is permitted. This way, one could learn the "admirable" sayings from the book of Ben Sira, but without an intense study of the entire book. This is the approach of the *Ritva*, commenting on a *gemara* in *Bava Basra* that quotes Ben Sira:

ואע"פ שקראוהו בסנהדרין בחלק ספרים החיצונים שמעינן מינה שלא אסרו שם אלא לעשות ממנו קבע אבל ראוי להגות בו בעתות ללמוד ממנו חכמה ומוסר משא"כ בספרי מינים ממש.

¹⁵ Again, I quote from the text in the standard Vilna edition. There is another important *girsā* here found in MS Yemen:

אמר רב יוסף: אע"ג דגנוהו לספרא דבן סירא כי הני מילי מעלייתא דביה גרסינן ליה.

Notice the mysterious reference to the fact that Ben Sira was "*nignaz*" (see n. 18). This extra phrase appears in the margins of MS Munich and MS Karlsruhe, except that Munich has "אי לאו דגנוהו" which changes the entire meaning of Rav Yosef and which most scholars believe is not to be accepted (except for L. Ginzberg, "*Some Observations of the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings*," JBL 41 (1922), p. 129). Also, notice the change from "*darshinan*" to "*garsinan*," which means essentially the same thing, except that one is usually used for Biblical texts and the other for Rabbinic texts.

¹⁶ I will discuss this passage in the *Bavli* in more detail in the next section below. For now, it is interesting to note that although Abaye is presented as responding to Rav Yosef, Rav Yosef never replies. The *gemara* only inserts a new "*amar Rav Yosef*" after Abaye is finished with his discourse. It is possible that Abaye is responding to Rav Yosef's statement in his absence or after his death and the *gemara* here presents it somewhat as a response to Rav Yosef directly with the preface of "*amar lei*." It is further possible that the *gemara* wishes to present the concluding statement of Rav Yosef as if it were a reply to Abaye's self-discussion, which would explain why it split Rav Yosef's saying in half.

This is further evidenced by the varying accuracy of the quotations from Ben Sira quoted by Abaye and then by Rav Yosef. Rav Yosef's quotes are all (save one) quite accurate according to the versions of Ben Sira that we now have, while three of the five verses that Abaye quotes simply do not exist (although Segal argues that one of them can be construed as a combination of several verses in Ben Sira) and the other two are merely similar to extant verses. (See B. G. Wright, "*B. Sanhedrin 100b and Rabbinic Knowledge of Ben Sira*," in *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom* [1999], pp. 41-50, for an analysis of the Talmudic quotations and their similarities to our Ben Sira, along with a discussion of the views of Segal, Lehmann, and Gilbert on the subject.) From the clear familiarity of Rav Yosef with the text of Ben Sira, it is difficult to imagine that he would not correct Abaye's false quotes were he presented with them. See n. 27 below.

Although in Sanhedrin, it [Ben Sira] is called one of the “external books,” we see from this that they only prohibited making a fixed study of it. But it is appropriate to occasionally casually study it to learn wisdom and ethics from it; this is as opposed to the actual heretical books. (Chiddushei HaRitva, Bava Basra 98b)

The Ritva retains the distinction of the *Bavli* that we discussed above between the heretical books that Rabbi Akiva banned, which the Ritva posits are altogether forbidden to read, and the book of Ben Sira, which was banned by Rav Yosef and which is only forbidden to study intensely. Recall that the *Yerushalmi* did not identify the “external books” as heretical, and thus the entire category of *sefarim hachitzonim* is permitted to read casually, but not to study in depth.¹⁷

The Ritva’s distinction was influenced by the fact that many *Tannai’im* and *Amora’im*, not only in *Bava Basra* but also throughout the *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, quote Ben Sira reverently, citing it in ways that are reminiscent of citations from *Tanach*, such as “*d’chshiv*” or “*shene’emar*.”¹⁸ This strange paradox of *Chazal* on the one hand shunning the book of Ben Sira to the point of forbidding its study while on the other hand valuing it by quoting its proverbs as Scripture has perplexed scholars and students of the *Talmud* for over a millennium.¹⁹ It has prompted many to analyze the sources that we have reviewed along with some of the quotations of Ben Sira found in the *Talmud* in order to understand the attitude of *Chazal* toward Ben Sira and why they may have banned its study.

17 According to this understanding, we can interpret the word “*korei*” in “*hakorei b’sefarim hachitzonim*” to mean “read studiously,” but not “read casually.” It is somewhat popular in scholarly circles to take this even further and to interpret “*korei*” as a public reading (*kria betzibur*), as we would read the Torah. This interpretation began with Nachman Krochmal (*Moreh Nevuchei HaZman* [1851], p. 119) and was accepted by many scholars, including, notably, Menachem Haran in his influential exposition of the status of Ben Sira (M. Haran, “*MiBa’ayot HaCanonizatzia shel HaMikra*,” *Tarbitz* 25:3 [1957], p. 251).

This idea, although reluctantly shown to be at least plausible by N. D. Rabinowich (p. 290-291), has not been accepted by any *halachic* authorities with the exception, very recently, of Rabbi Yeshaya Steinberger, “*Sefer Ben Sira V’Issur HaKria Bo*,” *Shana B’Shana* [1996], p. 434. (I am grateful to Paul Hamburg of the Center for Jewish Studies at UC Berkeley for sending me this article.) Also, as Leiman noted, in the *Yerushalmi* there is an additional occurrence of the word “*korei*” in “אבל ספרי הומרים וכל” “הספרים הנכתבים מכאן והילך כקורא באיגרת,” which if interpreted as anything other than casual reading would result in a difference of meaning of the same word in the course of a single passage. I do not think that this is too much of a problem, however, since the latter one is modified with “as one would read a document,” which can be explained as explicating the difference in meaning from the previous occurrence of the word.

18 In *Bava Kama* (92b), a verse in Ben Sira is even described as being “*baK’suvim*.” Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chayes (*Chiddushei Maharatz Chayes*, ad loc.) denies that this implies that Ben Sira was ever actually considered part of *Tanach*; he believes that Ben Sira was merely distinguishable from other material, like *braisos*, by the fact that it was written down. However, others, including Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman (see Leiman; p. 99), conclude from this that Ben Sira may have at one point been considered part of the *Tanach* until it was expressly excluded. (See also the *girsas* of Rav Yosef cited above in n. 15 implying that Ben Sira was “*nignaz*” by *Chazal*, which can be understood to mean that it was “taken out” of the canon.)

19 Rav Hai Gaon already briefly addressed the paradoxical relationship of *Chazal* regarding Ben Sira. He writes that *Chazal* quoted Ben Sira as they would quote any secular literature (“*lashon heduyot*”) to get across a point; see *Teshuvos HaGe’onim Kadmonim* (1848), p. 23b (*siman* 78). He does not elaborate, however, on the nature of the prohibition against reading Ben Sira.

The Reason behind the Ban

Until now, we have glossed over the precise definition of *sefarim hachitzonim* besides for translating the term as “external books” and noting that the *Talmud Bavli* identifies them as “*sifrei minim*” – heretical books. But we must examine precisely what is meant by “external” – external to what? As we have seen, *Koheles Rabba* replaced the term with “יותר מכ”ד ספרים,” which implies that it refers to any books external to the books of the *Tanach*. Besides for the *Yerushalmi*’s explicit permission to read the works of Homer, however, the definite article present in the phrase suggests a narrower interpretation of the term and implies that it is not quite any book that is external to the *Tanach* that it intends to prohibit. It seems clear that only books that are comparable to Biblical books, yet not strictly included in the *Tanach*, are what Rabbi Akiva had in mind – that which is typically referred to as the Apocrypha.²⁰

With this in mind, the difference that we noted above between the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* – that the *Bavli* identifies the *sefarim hachitzonim* as *sifrei minim* (which does not include Ben Sira) while the *Yerushalmi* does not (and includes Ben Sira in the classification) – becomes even more relevant. “*Sifrei minim*” in this case very likely refers to the books of the early Christians, who are quite often intended by the term “*minim*.” Rabbi Akiva lived at a time when the early Christians were flourishing and *Chazal* were attempting to subvert their influence over the rest of the Jews in Israel.²¹ It is therefore very likely that Rabbi Akiva would be referring to the early Christian post-Biblical books and prohibiting the reading – any reading whatsoever – of these books. The *Yerushalmi*, which instead of identifying Rabbi Akiva’s ban as being on Christian books, gives Ben Sira and Ben La’ana as examples of the *sefarim hachitzonim*, clearly has a different motivation in mind for Rabbi Akiva. But if such books are not heretical or objectionable in any way, why would Rabbi Akiva seek to ban their reading, albeit (as per the *Yerushalmi*) only studious reading?

Rabbi David Herschel Frankel provides the answer in his commentary *Shayarei Korban* to the *Yerushalmi*:

ונראה שספר בן סירא חיברו מקצתם לספר תנ”ך שגם בו ענינים ופסוקים כמשלי שלמה. ואינו דומה לו אלא כקוף בפני אדם שזה נאמר ברוח הקדש וזה נאמר מדעתו. ולכך נקראים ספרים חיצוניים, שאנו אין לנו אלא כ”ד ספרי הקדש וחלילה לחבר אליהם אפילו פסוק אחד חוץ מהם. ולכך אין לו חלק לעולם הבא שיש בזה בזיון לכתבי הקדש. אבל ספרי המירס שהכל מודים שאין בהם קדושה, אין איסור בקריאתם אלא משום איבוד הזמן.

It seems that the book of Ben Sira was joined by some to the books of Tanach, since in it too there are ideas and verses similar to those in Mishlei. But it is only as similar as a monkey is to a human, since one was written with divine inspiration and the

20 Anything else presumably would not need to be excluded as “יותר מכ”ד ספרים” by the *midrash*. There would only be a need to explicitly exclude works that some might think **could** be included in the *Tanach*.

21 For many scattered examples of this, as well as examples of sayings of *Tanna'im* of the time that may be construed as anti-Christian or as responding to Christian thought, including in the ideas of Rabbi Akiva, see E. Urbach, *Chazal: Pirkei Emunot V'De'ot* (1969).

other was written from human knowledge. Therefore, they are called "external" books, since we have only our twenty-four books [of Tanach] and heaven forbid to attach to them even one external verse. And thus, one who studies them is not destined to the Coming Era, since this is a disgrace to the Tanach. However, the books of Homer, to which nobody claims sanctity, there is no prohibition to read them save for waste of time.

Rabbi Frankel's theory is that the books of the Apocrypha were confusable with the books of *Tanach*, and he uses Ben Sira's similarity to *Mishlei* as an example. Rabbi Akiva's ban was intended to protect the Biblical canon from the inclusion of books that were not written with *ruach hakodesh*. This is eminently probable, first of all because Rabbi Akiva is also known to have made other decisions relating to what should be canonized into *Tanach*.²² More importantly, this theory makes sense of the *Yerushalmi*, explaining why it uses Ben Sira as an example (it is the most comparable to *Tanach*)²³ and why it contrasts it with the books of Homer, which it deems more acceptable reading; nobody would mistake Homer's books for something that should be included in *Tanach*.

Thus, the difference between the definitions that the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* give to the *sefarim hachitzonim* implies a different speculated reason behind Rabbi Akiva's ban.²⁴ However, even the *Bavli*, which views Rabbi Akiva's ban as being against Christian literature, cites Rav Yosef as introducing a prohibition on reading Ben Sira specifically. Why would Rav Yosef, centuries after Rabbi Akiva, introduce a new ban on something that was not included originally (according to the *Bavli's* understanding) in Rabbi Akiva's ban, and why would he single out Ben Sira of all the apocryphal books?

Some scholars speculate that by Rav Yosef's time, Ben Sira had become unknown in

22 This observation was pointed out by Rabbi Steinberger (p. 434), referencing Rabbi Akiva's ruling in the *mishna* in *Yadayim* (3:4):

אמר רבי עקיבא: חס ושלום, לא נחלק אדם מישראל על שיר השירים שלא תטמא את הידים, שאין כל העולם כלו כדאי כיום שנתן בו שיר השירים לישראל, שכל הכתובים קדש, ושיר השירים קדש קדשים. ואם נחלקו, לא נחלקו אלא על קהלת.

It is possible that Steinberger is reading too much into Rabbi Akiva's involvement in the canonization process.

23 Rabbi Aaron Cohen presents Ben Sira (from *Chazal's* perspective) as the bridge between the books of *Tanach* and the books thereafter; thus, when Ben Sira was prohibited as non-canonical, the other books written after it would obviously follow. See A. Cohen, "Al HaStirot B'Yachasam shel Chazal L'Sefer Ben Sira," *Ohr HaMizrach* 3 (1972), pp. 166-170.

24 The interpretation of Rabbi Akiva offered in the *Bavli* – that he intended to ban Christian (or other heretical books) – is what influenced the inclusion of this *mishna* and *gemara* in many discussions about reading general heretical or anti-Torah material. Some include this entire category of reading material within the category of *sifrei minim* and thus (following the *Bavli*) within *sefarim hachitzonim*. For example, Rabbi Ovadiah MiBartenura writes in his comments on the *mishna*:

בספרים החיצונים – ספרי מינים, כגון ספרי אריסטו היוני וחביריו. ובכלל זה הקורא בספר דברי הימים של מלכי נכרים ובשירים של ענבים ודברי חשק שאין בהם חכמה ולא תועלת אלא איבוד זמן בלבד.

It should be noted, however, that while this understanding is not followed by the *Yerushalmi*, nor by Rav Yosef in the *Bavli* (according to our understanding), they would nonetheless agree that heretical books such as the Christian New Testament books should not be read; they would merely claim that this is not the source for that ruling. For a more comprehensive view of how this *gemara* fits in with that area of *halacha*, see Dayan Moshe Swift's "Sefarim HaChitzonim B'Halacha," in *Sefer HaZikaron L'Chvodo U'Lezichro shel HaGaon HaGadol HaDayan Rabbi Moshe Swift zt"l* (1986), pp. 151-160.

Bavel until it was newly introduced to the population by way of the discovery of an old scroll or through influence from scholars from Israel, where it was then popular. Although Rav Yosef believed that there was nothing objectionable in it, he may have sought to have it included in Rabbi Akiva's ban on Christian literature so as not to leave people confused by its status, as it was becoming popular among local Christians, who may have even attempted to include it in what they considered the "Old Testament."²⁵ Theories such as this, however, ignore the passage in *Sanhedrin* cited above, in which Abaye goes to great lengths to find some material in Ben Sira that can be considered objectionable, which implies that Rav Yosef's ban was motivated primarily by the content of Ben Sira rather than the prevalent attitude toward its status.

According to our analysis of the sources so far, Abaye's statements in the *gemara* are indeed puzzling. The passage begins, "א"ל אבי מאי טעמא," which implies that Abaye is responding to Rav Yosef by asking what the reason is that he compares Ben Sira to the Christian Scriptures and prohibits its study. Then, when Abaye examines selected verses of Ben Sira, he judges them not by their inherent value, but by their similarity to other Biblical or Rabbinic proverbs. Finally, when Abaye concludes by citing one verse of Ben Sira that is not comparable to any other known piece of Jewish literature, he does not explain what he finds objectionable about the verse and seems to assume that the mere fact that it has no counterpart makes it offensive and that this is the reason that the book is not to be read. Rav Yosef, on the other hand, when he subsequently quotes verses from Ben Sira that he considers "admirable," makes no effort to compare them to other Biblical or Rabbinic sayings, but merely accepts their value by the independent worthiness of their content.

With the above in mind, the most likely explanation is that Rav Yosef is attempting to echo the sentiments of the *Yerushalmi*. In other words, while the *gemara* had brought the teaching that Rabbi Akiva's ban encompasses Christian literature, Rav Yosef, perhaps under the influence of sources from *Eretz Yisrael*, believes that Rav Akiva's intention was also to exclude

²⁵ This idea is promoted by Labendz, whose central thesis is that Ben Sira, while being popular in Israel throughout the centuries of the *Tanna'im* and *Amora'im*, was not available in Babylonia until the fourth century, when it appeared due to Mesopotamian Christian and Israeli Jewish influences. She sees this as a specific example of the more general thesis advanced by Richard Kalmin (*Jewish Babylonia Between Persia and Roman Palestine* [2006]) that there existed at that time a strong influence from the Eastern Roman provinces on the Persian border states due to shifts in population. She identifies Rav Yosef as a particular expert in Ben Sira (evidenced by the accuracy of his Ben Sira quotations, as opposed to those of all the other Babylonian *Amora'im*), which he studied when it became newly available and which allowed him to determine its Jewish status as appropriate reading. (This is in contrast to L. Ginzberg [p. 129], who thought that Rav Yosef had little knowledge of Ben Sira; when he quoted the teaching that he had learned from his teachers that Ben Sira was forbidden to read, he was unable to defend it from Abaye's challenges.) Labendz understands Rav Yosef as concluding that while the book of Ben Sira, which was then already sacred in the Christian world, may not be used, the oral traditions from Ben Sira that were already included in teachings of *Chazal* may be studied. Thus, the quotations of Babylonian *Amora'im* after R. Yosef became highly inaccurate.

Rabbi Steinberger suggests that the attitude of Rav Yosef (and *Chazal* in general) was influenced particularly by the inclusion of Ben Sira into the "Old Testament" by the early Christians. Especially once the Greek translation was included in the Septuagint, it would be difficult for the early Jewish reader of *Tanach* who wished to read the translations available to separate Ben Sira from the rest of the canon.

later quasi-Biblical books from the *Tanach*, which we have seen is the interpretation of the *Yerushalmi*. Rav Yosef's intention is to posit that the book of Ben Sira is the first of Rabbi Akiva's *sefarim hachitzonim* that are not divinely inspired and thus do not deserve to be canonized; the rest of the Apocrypha, having been written after Ben Sira, follows implicitly. Abaye's question to Rav Yosef challenges the assumption that Ben Sira is not divinely inspired. What in Ben Sira, asks Abaye, showed Rabbi Akiva that it was not divinely inspired? Thus, Abaye seeks to find something in Ben Sira that would imply that its source is not *ruach hakodesh*, namely verses that sound inherently uninspired, trivial, or devoid of content, and as such could not possibly be inspired by *ruach hakodesh*. Some of the verses he finds, however, are comparable to or can be interpreted as similar statements made by the Torah, Shlomo HaMelech, *Chazal*, or Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, in which case to question them as inanities would be to do the same to those similar statements. Finally, finding one verse that sounds like a nonsensical superstition without parallel in other Jewish literature, Abaye satisfactorily shows that Ben Sira indeed cannot be divinely inspired. The conclusion that Rav Yosef and Abaye reach at this point is that Rabbi Akiva, meaning not only to ban the Christian books but also the Apocrypha, fixed his demarcation of the Apocrypha as beginning with Ben Sira, since he determined that it was the first not to have been written with *ruach hakodesh*.²⁶

26 Even this interpretation of the *gemara*, while rendering it the most comprehensible in my opinion, has its problems. It seems strange that Abaye attempts to determine the divine status of Ben Sira by quoting unusual verses, which does not necessarily preclude it from being divinely inspired. Additionally, although perhaps we can understand a comparison to the Torah or *Mishlei* to illustrate the fact that something is not necessarily un-divine, a comparison to a proverb of *Chazal* or that of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi is not of the same status, their words are not divinely chosen either. Another problem emerges from the fact that not all the verses cited by Abaye sound unusually puzzling. For example, these are two verses that he quotes:

לא תעיל דויה בלבך דגברי גיברין קטל דויה.

Let not anxiety enter your heart, for it has slain many a person.

מנע רבים מתוך ביתך ולא הכל תביא אל ביתך.

Keep the multitude away from your house, and do not bring everyone into your home.

These verses sound quite normal, especially compared to the other verses quoted, in addition to the one with which Abaye concludes involving the nature of people's beards:

לא תינטוש גילדנא מאדוניה דלא לזיל משכיה לחבלא אלא צלי יתיה בנורא ואיכול ביה תרתין גריצים.

Do not strip the skin [of a fish] from its ear, lest you spoil it, but roast it [the fish with its skin] in the fire and eat it with two twisted loaves.

בת לאביה מטמונת שוא מפחדה לא יישן בלילה בקטנותה שמה תתפתה בנערותה שמה תזנה בגרה שמה לא תינשא נישאת שמה לא יהיו לה בנים הזקינה שמה תעשה כשפים.

A daughter is a vain treasure to her father. Through anxiety on her account, he cannot sleep at night – when [she is] a minor, lest she be seduced; in adolescence, lest she play the harlot; as an adult, lest she does not marry; if she marries, lest she bear no children; if she grows old, lest she engage in witchcraft.

The perplexity of this *gemara* has not been dealt with sufficiently or satisfactorily as far as I know. In a general sense, some understand that Abaye is attempting to determine that Ben Sira contains heretical statements, while others understand, like we have, that Abaye is merely looking for inanities. The former seems farfetched; what in these verses qualifies as heretical? David Levene makes the claim, which he backs up with an analysis of several Talmudic citations of Ben Sira, that *Chazal* in general were averse to quoting the deeply theological passages of Ben Sira directly and instead quoted from nearby, more benign verses with the understanding that the wider context of that passage is intended. See D. Levene, "Theology and Non-Theology in the Rabbinic Ben Sira" in *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference* (Durham, Upshaw College, 2001), pp. 305-320. Even he is not sure what that means for our *gemara*, but perhaps Rav Yosef and Abaye are attempting to make a statement about Ben Sira's philosophical views rather than his eccentric proverbs. Solomon Schechter (*The Expository Times*, vol. 11, p. 141) also maintained that Rav Yosef was relegating Ben Sira as heretical, which would imply

After Abaye's pursuit of senseless verses in Ben Sira, the concluding statement of Rav Yosef is telling: "The admirable sayings within it, we can explicate." That is to say, even though Ben Sira is not written with *ruach hakodesh*, it still contains worthwhile content. Although it is forbidden to study it for fear of a mistaken canonical status, there are passages within it worthy of being read, internalized, and quoted accordingly.

Such is the position regarding Ben Sira and the rest of the (non-heretical) Apocrypha in the era of the Talmud. Throughout Talmudic and Midrashic literature, even up to the time of Rav Saadia Gaon, what was considered the worthy and admirable content in Ben Sira was

that Abaye is searching for a verse that would deem it such.

On the other hand, the understanding that the intention here is to see Ben Sira as not heretical but rather as containing senseless material, seems to follow the path of several *Rishonim*. Rashi writes after the final verse quoted by Abaye: "כל הני דברי" ר"י: רב יוסף אמר אף ספר בן סירא נמי כספרי מינים דמי משום דכתיב בו דברים של הבל שאין בהם צורך.

רא"ש: רב יוסף אסר [נמי למקרי] בספר בן סירא לפי שיש בהן דברים של הבל שאין בהן צורך.

Although the Rif's *girsā* of "כספרי מינים דמי" is slightly troubling, it is ambiguous, and perhaps cleared up by Rabbeinu Yehonasan there:

רב יוסף אמר בספר בן סירא כלומר ספר בן סירא קרוי ספרים החיצוניים לפי שיש בהם דברי הבאי ומביא את האדם לידי ביטול.

As far as Rav Yosef's intention, this validates our approach; however, his addition of the reasoning that reading Ben Sira is "מביא את האדם לידי ביטול" which is found also in the *Yad Ramah* here, is strange, and I am not sure what to make of it. In fact, in all of these sources, the implication is that Ben Sira was prohibited to read because of its content, which includes "*divrei hevel*" or "*divrei ruach*," instead of because of its status as confusable with Biblical books (or, to use Leiman's term, its "Biblical pretensions"). I fail to understand, however, why a book would be forbidden to read (or especially categorize its reader as someone who "אין לו חלק לעולם הבא") merely for its inclusion of nonsense. Didn't the *Yerushalmi*, whose approach Rav Yosef seems to be emulating, distinguish between the Apocrypha and secular books such as those of Homer, which include plenty of nonsense? It is, of course, possible that these *Rishonim* are following our approach, i.e. that the inclusion of senseless material implies that a work is non-divinely inspired and makes it forbidden to study for the protection of the Biblical canon (and is even "מביא את האדם לידי ביטול" if it causes him to disrespect the Biblical canon). However, they fail to show that this is their intention.

quoted without hesitation,²⁷ both in *Eretz Yisrael* and in *Bavel*.²⁸ It is in this tradition that the passage from the end of Ben Sira in praise of Shimon ben Yochanan HaKohen was inserted into the climactic moments of the Yom Kippur *avoda*, and it was based on this tradition that the *paytanim* used the prose of Ben Sira to enrich their poetry in general.²⁹

27 We have seen above (n. 16) that some of the quotes that were attributed to Ben Sira are not actually found in any available version of Ben Sira. In general, the common inaccuracy of Talmudic quotations from Ben Sira has led many to conclude one of two things (and more probably a combination of both): First, many members of *Chazal* quoted Ben Sira from memory or popular proverbs were commonly attributed to Ben Sira, often in error. Second, the text of Ben Sira underwent a lot of development and evolution, resulting in variant editions and many verses that exist in some versions but not in others. The first of these points is likely a partial cause of the second. Rabbi Cohen (p. 169) has presented these phenomena as fortunate from *Chazal's* perspective; perhaps they even encouraged this, since they were intent on banning Ben Sira or preventing its canonical status, and corruptions in the text automatically deflate the book's credibility. Segal (pp. 40-41), on the other hand, sees these corruptions of the text as the very reason that *Chazal* (particularly Rav Yosef) were intent on forbidding it. He surmises that Abaye and Rav Yosef were working not with the full book of Ben Sira, but with a selection of famous quotations from Ben Sira, along with which were included many nonsensical sayings that had somehow made their way in. It is these corruptions that convinced Rav Yosef to ban the book for popular reading, as most could not differentiate between the accurate and the inaccurate; the "admirable sayings," which Segal takes to mean the accurate quotations, if they can be determined properly, can of course be used. (According to Segal, then, it is possible to understand that Abaye in *Sanhedrin* was looking for inane quotes not to prove that Ben Sira was not a product of *ruach hakodesh*, but rather to prove that their version of Ben Sira was corrupted.)

An additional claim sometimes offered is that there was more than one book attributed to Ben Sira, which may have overlapped. While *Chazal* shunned one of them, as is evident by the *gemara* in *Sanhedrin*, the other book, which perhaps is our extant version, they either did not know about or had no problem with. The first known proponent of this theory is an anonymous author of a page found in the Cairo *Genizah* elucidating the piece of *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin* in question, which makes the distinction between "*Sefer Ben Sira*," which is forbidden, and "*Mishlei Ben Sira*," which is fine. See S. Schechter, "A Further Fragment of Ben Sira," *JQR* 12 (1900), p. 461. Additionally, Yehuda Leib Ben-Zev, who wrote a Hebrew translation of Ben Sira (from the Greek and Syriac versions) in 1798, speculated in his preface (obviously, without knowing of the *Genizah* fragment) that *Chazal* may have been referring to the another version of Ben Sira. He suggests (although not completely seriously) that it may have been the "*Alphabet of Ben Sira*," a book which had been circulating that was commonly attributed to Ben Sira, but which he insists was not only not authored by Ben Sira, but contains ridiculous statements and falsities. (This includes a famous story claiming that Yirmiyahu was the father and grandfather (!) of Ben Sira. This story has fascinatingly made its way into much *halachic* literature regarding IVF, but Ben-Zev concludes that it cannot possibly be true.) However, given the passage from *Kohes Rabba*, which forbids Ben Sira merely as "more than the twenty-four books," such a claim is not acceptable.

28 There are, however, differences in the way that *Amora'im* in *Eretz Yisrael* quoted Ben Sira and *Amora'im* in *Bavel* quoted it. The *Bavli* will usually quote it similar to how it quotes verses from *Tanach*, e.g. "*d'chshiv b'sefer Ben Sira*." The *Yerushalmi* usually quotes it by writing, "*amar Ben Sira*" or something similar, instead of indicating that the quote comes from a book. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chayes, noticing this, writes that since the *Yerushalmi* had concluded that Ben Sira is only appropriate for casual reading ("*l'higayon nitnu*") and thus treats Ben Sira like a secular document, it does not use language like "*d'chshiv*," which would imply a higher status. The *Bavli*, on the other hand, which concluded that "*mili ma'alyasa d'is bei darshanin lehu*," allows Ben Sira to be referred to more respectfully.

Labendz (pp.354-356) provides another interesting theory. In order to exclude the book of Ben Sira from the canon, the *chachamim* in Israel had the approach of treating Ben Sira as if he were a member of *Chazal* instead of a member of the Biblical era. Thus, they quoted him the same way they would quote Rabbi Yochanan or Rabbi Akiva; they "rabbinized" Ben Sira. The *Bavli*, in contrast, treated it as a book, but sought to restrict its reading to some degree to exclude the possibility of its canonicity.

29 Although we concluded with the general understanding that it is permissible only to read Ben Sira casually, while a more intense study of it (besides for the isolated "admirable" quotes from *Chazal*) would be prohibited, it is possible that since the reason for this prohibition was a concern that it might be mistaken for canonical, today, with the Biblical canon being more stable, it would be permitted to study Ben Sira even in depth. See Rabbi Steinberger, p. 437; and Rabbi Cohen, p. 170.

Ben Sira's Lessons for the Post-Biblical Era

We have seen that *Chazal* were concerned about Ben Sira's status and the chance that were the people of their time allowed to study it, they would include it in *Tanach* among the divinely inspired books. Ben Sira, they felt, is too easily mistaken for a book that belongs in the *Tanach*. This is perhaps seen, as noted by Rabbi Frankel above, in the similarity of style between Ben Sira and *Mishlei*. No less notable, however, is the final section of Ben Sira, which sings the praises one-by-one of many of the renowned figures of *Tanach*. From Noach to the *Avos* to Moshe and Aharon, all the way to Zerubavel and Nechemia, Ben Sira extolls dozens of Biblical heroes, each with their unique praises. The final individual, for whom Ben Sira reserves perhaps the most admiration of all, is Shimon ben Yochanan HaKohen, whom many identify as the famous Shimon HaTzadik, a contemporary of Ben Sira's generation.³⁰

Some more stringent treatments of the prohibition against reading Ben Sira are found in modern *shailos u'teshuvos*. For example, in Rabi Aharon Grossman's *V'Darashta V'Chakarta* (2011), *Yoreh De'ah* 132, p. 187, he discusses a *shaila* regarding this issue from a colleague who was shocked to find a collection of apocryphal books among the *sefarim* that he inherited from his uncle, a renowned *talmid chacham*. Rabbi Grossman concludes that only casual reading of such books is permitted; but he does not consider the reason of *Chazal* to have been about canonical status. In *Shevet HaKehati* (2003), pp. 287-288, Rabbi Shammai Gross goes further and forbids any reading of Ben Sira at all, based on a strict reading of the Rif (see n. 26) and based on a comment of Chida that suggests (based in turn on the *Tikkunei Zohar*) that there exist secrets of the Torah in Ben Sira, which is why it may be forbidden for popular reading. Rabbi Gross concludes that only the quotations that were quoted by *Chazal* may be used and studied.

³⁰ This conclusion is actually the subject of voluminous literature and scholarly debate. The date of Shimon HaTzadik is uncertain. While certain classical Jewish sources (e.g. the Rambam, Meiri, and Abarbanel) understood that Shimon HaTzadik lived in the generation immediately following Ezra and Nechemia, this presents a host of chronological issues. (Rambam even writes that Shimon HaTzadik was the *kohen gadol* after Ezra, but there is no evidence that Ezra was ever *kohen gadol*. In fact, we know that Yeshua ben Yehotzadak was *kohen gadol* in Ezra's time; see *Chagga'i* 1:1; *Zecharia* 6:11; *Ezra* 3:2. See also R.C. Klein, "Was Ezra a High Priest?," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41:3 (2013), for a survey of early attempts to defend or reinterpret the Rambam's position.) Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities*, ch. 11-12), by contrast, lists six generations between Yeshua ben Yehotzadak and Shimon HaTzadik, following the lineage in *Nechemia* 12:10-11. (In the verses in *Nechemia* themselves, there is no indication that any of these descendants of Yeshua were *kohanim gedolim*, except for Elyashiv, who is identified as *kohen gadol* in *Nechemia* 3:1.) Rabbi Azariah de Rossi identified this discrepancy as a result of the discrepancy in the length of the Persian period. Those who count the Persian period as only 34 years (as in *Seder Olam Rabba*) can maintain that Shimon HaTzadik lived very early, immediately after Ezra and Nechemia, and also at the very beginning of the Greek period. Shimon HaTzadik is identified in *Avos* 1:2 as a teacher of Antignos, whose name bears undeniable influence of Greek culture; legends are recorded of Shimon HaTzadik meeting Alexander the Great. (Josephus records a similar legend with Yaddua, Shimon's grandfather, as the protagonist, prompting Abarbanel to speculate that Yaddua and Shimon are the same person!) Josephus lists another Shimon (henceforth Shimon II), the grandson of Shimon HaTzadik, as a *kohen gadol* in later years. It is this Shimon that many assume is the real Shimon HaTzadik, even though Josephus identified his grandfather as Shimon HaTzadik. This was already suggested by Rabbi Azariah de Rossi (*Me'or Einayim, Imrei Bina*, ch. 22) as a possibility (along with the possibility of Shimon the Hasmonean, which I will not entertain here). This theory was heavily advanced more recently by Solomon Zeitlin ("Shimon HaTzadik U'Kneset HaGedola," *Ner Ma'aravi*, vol. 2 [1925], pp. 137-142) and more influentially by G. F. Moore ("Simeon the Righteous" in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams* [1927], pp. 348-364. This theory of "Shimon II = Shimon HaTzadik" has become so widespread that it has been considered as good as fact in the scholarly world; only in the past few years has this begun to be questioned again (see J. C. VanderKam, "Simon the Just: Simon I or Simon II?" in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells* [1995], pp. 303-318; see also O. Amitay, "Shimon Ha-Šadiq in his Historical Contexts," *JJS* 58:2 (2007), pp. 236-249, who believes that Shimon I and Shimon II were both called "HaTzadik"). This also has a great effect on the determination of the time and span (and perhaps nature) of the *Anshei Knesses HaGedola*, of which Shimon HaTzadik is said to be of the remaining members (*Avos* 1:2).

Regardless, one of the main pieces of evidence for identifying Shimon II as Shimon HaTzadik is the very passage in Ben

One who studies this section of the book might very well conclude that Ben Sira was attempting to extend the Biblical era to include his own generation. From the continuity with which he presents the history and all the Biblical figures until Shimon HaTzadik of his own era, one might think that his own era is in fact the culmination of the Biblical period and that his book is the culmination of the Biblical books. Did *Chazal* have this in mind when they deemed Ben Sira too easily mistaken for part of *Tanach*? Perhaps.

But such a view is a misunderstanding of Ben Sira and of the final section involving Shimon HaTzadik.³¹ Arguably, it is not that Ben Sira is presenting Shimon HaTzadik as the culmination of Biblical figures, but rather as a model of how to relate to the prominent figures of the then-newly-completed *Tanach*. Ben Sira shows an awareness that the books before him constitute a sacred canon that cannot be added to. The heroes of this canon are the individuals whose traits we are intended to emulate, and no one did so better than Shimon HaTzadik. It is clear from the praises that are attributed to Shimon and the obvious throwbacks to the praises that were accorded to Biblical figures before him that Ben Sira intends to compare him to several of the figures from the previous chapters, to show how Shimon HaTzadik mirrors the actions and the qualities of his forebears. But it is not only necessary to emulate our heroic ancestors in deed and quality; it is also crucial to understand the world in which we live, to understand when it is suitable to mirror the actions of our ancestors directly and where the difference in our surroundings might make it appropriate to change our focus.

Of all the subtle comparisons that Ben Sira makes between Shimon HaTzadik and previous characters of *Tanach*, the one that we must pay attention to here is that between him and Aharon HaKohen. Aharon HaKohen is described in glowing terms, from his glory in the vestments of *k'huna gedola* to his meticulous carrying out of the services in the *Mishkan*. Shimon HaTzadik is described glowingly for the very same qualities, but with one very noticeable difference – the people are involved in the *avoda* as well.

Sira that we are examining. Because of the extreme detail with which Ben Sira describes Shimon HaKohen, the argument is made that Ben Sira must have himself witnessed Shimon in service as *kohen gadol*. However, this evidence, although used by Moore as one of the bases of his argument, is not very strong. In fact, H. Englander writes that exactly the opposite conclusion should be drawn; he thinks that the dripping language used by Ben Sira to describe Shimon “bespeaks the halo which only the passing of time can create.” Additionally, even if one accepts that Ben Sira refers to Shimon II, although Ben Sira piles accolades upon him, never does he indicate explicitly that he was ever called HaTzadik. It could be argued that the title “HaTzadik” was given to people with particular qualities instead of just general excellent leadership; see C. Tchernowitz, *Toldot HaHalacha*, vol. 4, p. 138.

Clearly, then, it is impossible to determine which Shimon was Shimon HaTzadik and whether or not he is the Shimon of interest to Ben Sira. But for convenience, we will refer to Ben Sira's Shimon as “Shimon HaTzadik” in this section.

31 The ideas expressed in the following paragraphs are primarily influenced by Alon Goshen-Gottstein (“*Ben Sira's Praise of the Fathers*” in *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference* [Durham, Upshaw College, 2001], pp. 260-266). The focus of Goshen-Gottstein's premise is that the structure of the “Praise of the Fathers” in Ben Sira frames the entire section up to the praise of Shimon ben Yochanan as its own unit, which ends with verses clearly marking the conclusion of the Biblical material. Only then does Ben Sira begin with the praise of Shimon in a way that shows a clear separation from the previous passage. Moreover, the language Ben Sira uses to describe Shimon shows that he is now attempting to do something different than what he has done in the previous section in praising the Biblical figures, as I will discuss.

אז יריעו בני אהרן הכהנים בחצצרות מקשה: ויריעו וישמיעו קול אדיר להזכיר לפני עליון:
 כל בשר יחדו נמהרו ויפלו על פניהם ארצה: להשתחות לפני עליון לפני קדוש ישראל: ויתן
 השיר קולו ועל המון העריכו נרו: וירנו כל עם הארץ בתפלה לפני רחום: עד כלותו לשרת
 מזבח ומשפטיו הגיע אליו: אז ירד ונשא ידיו על כל קהל ישראל: וברכת ה' בשפתיו ובשם
 ה' התפאר: (בן סירא נ, כ"ב-ל')

Then would the sons of Aharon, the priests, blow the trumpets of hammered metal. They would sound the blast and send forth a mighty sound as a memorial before the Most High. All the people together would hasten and fall to the ground upon their faces to worship before the Most High, before the Holy One of Israel. And the sound of song would break out and its brilliance would be esteemed above that of the sound of the multitude. And all the people of the land would shout for joy in prayer before the Merciful One. When he finished ministering before the altar and had presented to God what was His, then he would descend and lift his hands over all the congregation of Israel with the blessing of God on his lips and revering in the name of God.

Here is a striking change in the described *avoda* of Aharon and in that of Shimon. The multitude is worshipping with Shimon HaTzadik, while Aharon conducts the *avoda* seemingly alone; no notice is made of anyone else even being there. The reason for this is not hard to determine. Ben Sira lived when prophecy and *ruach hakodesh* had just been discontinued. The people everywhere were feeling noticeably less connected to Hashem and to His service. Not only were *batei knesses* becoming widespread in Jewish communities, but the people were becoming more involved in the *avoda* of the *Beis HaMikdash* as well. It is possible that Ben Sira is consciously pointing this out and using it as further praise of Shimon HaTzadik. Not only was he successful in emulating Aharon HaKohen, but he did so in a way that responded to the people of his time. Shimon HaTzadik remains a lesson to us not just to emulate the heroes of *Tanach* and of former generations, but to do so in a way that is appropriate to the challenges of our own generation.

Rei'ach Nicho'ach

LEIGH GREENBERG



During the time of the *Mishkan* and the *Beis HaMikdash*, the highlight of the year for the *Kohen Gadol* was the Yom Kippur service. Much advance preparation was required, including wearing special garments, fasting, and immersion in the *mikveh*. Through his performance of the Temple service (*avoda*), the entire nation of Israel obtained atonement for their sins from the past year.

While much of the Yom Kippur service was performed on most days of the year, many parts of the service were unique to Yom Kippur. Only on Yom Kippur was the *Kohen Gadol* permitted to enter the Holy of Holies in the *Beis HaMikdash*:

ולקח מלא המחתה גחלי אש מעל המזבח מלפני ה' ומלא חפניו קטרת סמים דקה והביא מבית
לפרכת. ונתן את הקטרת על האש לפני ה' וכסה ענן הקטרת את הכפרת אשר על העדות ולא
ימות.

He shall take a shovelful of fiery coals from atop the altar that is before Hashem, and his cupped handsful of finely ground incense-spices, and bring them within the curtain. He shall place the incense upon the fire before Hashem, so that the cloud of the incense shall blanket the ark-cover that is atop the [Tablets of the] Testimony, so that he shall not die. (Vayikra 16:12-13)

Although the incense mixture was the same as that used all year round for the twice-daily service, the day before Yom Kippur, the incense was ground again so that it would be the “finest of the fine” (*Kereisos* 6b). The aroma of this incense is termed a “*rei'ach nicho'ach*,” a pleasant smell (*Vayikra* 2:2).

What is the significance of this “pleasant smell”?

***Rei'ach Nicho'ach* in the Torah**

The phrase “*rei'ach nicho'ach laHashem*,” “a sweet smelling fragrance before God,” constantly reappears at the end of each of the Torah’s discussion of *korbanos*, sacrifices. It is mentioned over thirty times in *Vayikra* and *Bamidbar*. For example:

...והקטיר הכהן את הכל המזבחה עלה אשה ריח ניחוח לה’.

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... And the Kohen shall cause it to up in smoke on the altar – an elevation-offering, a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem. (Vayikra 1:9)

Rashi, citing the Sifra, explains that the pleasant smell indicates that “I have spoken and my will has been done.” When a sacrifice is brought with the proper intent and God’s will is fulfilled, it is described as creating a pleasant smell.

The Torah first mentions a sacrifice in the context of Kayin’s offering his fruits and Hevel’s offering the choicest of his flock:

ויהי מקץ ימים ויבא קין מפרי האדמה נמחה לה. והבל הביא גם הוא מבכורות צאנו ומחלבהו וישע ה' אל הבל ואל מנחתו ואל קין ואל מנחתו לא שעה...
After a period of time, Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground, and as for Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest. Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and to his offering he did not turn... (Bereishis 4:3-4)

The reaction to Hevel’s offering – “Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering” – indicates that it was an appealing sacrifice to Hashem. Although there is no mention here of a “satisfying aroma,” it is clear that Hevel’s intention was to do God’s will and his sacrifice was therefore accepted.

After the Flood, Noah offers sacrifices to Hashem and Hashem is pleased:

ויבן נח מזבח לה' ויקח מכל הבהמה הטהרה ומכל העוף הטהור ויעל עלת במזבח. וירח ה' את ריח הניחוח...
Then Noah built an altar to Hashem and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma... (Bereishis 8:20-21)

This is the first use of “*rei'ach nicho'ach*,” indicating that the sacrifice served its purpose of bringing the person closer to Hashem and dedicating him to Godliness.

The phrase “*rei'ach nicho'ach*” is used to describe offerings from the cheap to the costly, as well as the meal-offerings and wine libations.¹ This indicates that God is gladdened by simple offerings as much as fancy ones:

...כי תבאו אל ארץ מושבתיכם אשר אני נתן לכם. ועשיתם אשה לה' עלה או זבח לפלأ נדר או נדבה או במעדיכם לעשות ריח ניחוח לה'...
...When you will come to the land of the dwelling places that I give you, and you perform a fire-offering to Hashem – an elevation-offering or a feast-offering

¹ “You shall prepare a meal-offering, two-tenth [ephah] fine flour mixed with a third-hin of oil, and a third-hin of wine for a libation shall you bring as a satisfying aroma for Hashem” (Bamidbar 15:6-7). These offerings did not apply until the people entered the Land of Israel, but these laws were given in the desert to give the people the confidence that Hashem would indeed give them the Land.

because of an articulated vow or as a free-will offering, or on your Festivals, to produce a satisfying aroma to Hashem... (Bamidbar 15:2-3)

Fire reduces all sacrifices to ashes. After a *korban* has been offered, all that matters is its acceptance by God, not how expensive it was. What matters is that one reached out to God and that reaching out is accepted.

Indeed, when the *rei'ach nicho'ach* is rejected, it is a terrible punishment. In *Parshas Bechukosai*, Hashem presents the *Tochacha* (Admonition), a sobering account of the punishments and curses that will befall the Jewish People if they neglect the covenant. In the fifth of the five series of punishments, we find:

...ולא אריח בריח נוחחכם.

... And I will not savor your satisfying aroma. (Vayikra 26:31)

The Jewish People will no longer have a way of expressing God's will, the *rei'ach nicho'ach*.

The idea of a "pleasant smell" appears in other sources as well. In *Bereishis* 18, we read of the three angels who visited Avraham. Avraham ran to greet them and prepared for them a great banquet. The *midrash* describes (*Yalkut Shimoni Vayera* 18:8) that when Avraham ran to fetch a calf, the calf fled from him and went into the Cave of Machpelah. Avraham followed it into the tomb and found Adam and Chava lying there upon their beds. Lights were kindled above them and a sweet scent was upon them. Avraham consequently sought to acquire the cave as a burial plot.

The *midrash* (*Midrash Raba Lech Lecha* 39:2) compares Avraham to a vial containing the juice of the balsam tree that is fitted with a tight lid and left in a corner, where no one can smell it. Once the vial is taken out and carried it around, its sweet scent will disseminate. When God told Avraham to leave his home, it was in order to disseminate his sweetness.

The Significance of *Rei'ach*

The word "ריח," smell, shares its root and is linked to the word "רוח," spirit. Thus, we find:

ויאמרו אלהם ירא ה' עליכם וישפט אשר הבאשתם את ריחנו בעיני פרעה ובעיני עבדיו לתת חרב בידם להרגנו.

They [the foremen] said to them [Moshe and Aharon], "May Hashem look upon you and judge you, for you have made our very scent abhorrent in the eyes of Pharaoh and the eyes of his servants." (Shemos 5:21)

The word "*reicheinu*" is used to refer to the reputation of the people of Israel. The Israelite foremen complain to Moshe and Aharon that they have been made to look bad before Pharaoh; the reputation or spirit of the Israelites is "smelly" in the eyes of the Egyptians.

Some view the word "ניחוח" as coming from the same root as the word "נחת," satisfaction or pleasure. The *Sefer HaBahir* relates "ניחוח" to "נחה," serenity. This smell is a special fragrance

that brings down the spiritual energy of God, and consequently gives us serenity on earth.² The purpose of the *rei'ach nicho'ach* is to cause us to focus on the spiritual energy of God and thereby achieve serenity. The *rei'ach nocho'ach* smells sweet not in the physical sense, but in a spiritual sense.

According to Kabbalah, smell is the loftiest and most transcendent of the senses, the critical connection point between body and soul.³ Smell is the sense by which a person can come into contact with the finest of particles of a substance, which may even be at a distance. Smell is thus used as a metaphor for receiving the finest realization of something. The *rei'ach nicho'ach* is the smell of satisfaction, of fulfillment of wishes. It is not the smell of the offering that gives pleasure, but rather the fulfillment of God's will that provides spiritual satisfaction.

The Rei'ach Nicho'ach on Yom Kippur

Rav Hirsch writes:

The Kohen Gadol took coals out of the fire which flamed for everyone on the mizbe'ach from the side and turned towards the Holy of Holies, took his two joined handfuls from the ketores which daily smoked up to God, as an expression of the people's compliance to the Will of God... The true High Priest of the Jewish Law of God is nothing else but a ministration of the Will of God, completely subjugating his own ideas to the Divine Torah. To him the Altar-Fire is the Torah-Fire, the fire of the Law, and only that which is pleasing, giving satisfaction to God, is pleasing, giving satisfaction to him, only that which is rei'ach nicho'ach to Hashem is for Him rei'ach nicho'ach at all. He places the Altar-Fire on the Foundation of the Law of God, and for him, only such actions that are done under the Testing Eye of God and His Law which are done on the basis of that Law can be rei'ach nicho'ach for Hashem, can be pleasing and give satisfaction to God. (Rabbi Hirsch, Commentary on the Torah, pp. 431, 433)

For the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, the incense offering behind the curtain was a once a year opportunity to show that God's pleasure in the sacrifice is simply that we are doing His will.

2 The *Sefer HaBahir* ("Book of the Brightness") is an anonymous mystical work attributed to Nechunya ben HaKana, a first-century sage and contemporary of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. It is also known as *Midrash Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakana*. It is an early work of esoteric Jewish mysticism, which eventually became known as Kabbalah.

3 The Arizal (Rav Yitzchak Luria), one of the great Kabbalists, taught that the sense of smell is connected with the month of Adar, in which Purim takes place, because both of the heroes of Purim are connected to scent. The name מרדכי is derived from מר דרור, "flowing myrrh" (*Megilla* 10b), and Esther's real name was הדיסה (Esther 2:7), which stems from the word "הדיס," myrtle, which has a very sweet fragrance.

Yosef's Forgiveness and Yom Kippur

BRACHA RICH



Forgiveness is something we contemplate yearly as we approach Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days of the year. Beginning on Rosh Chodesh Elul, we start to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*, assessing what wrongs we may have committed against Hashem and our fellow Jews. We then spend the following forty days attempting to rectify these transgressions. The last day – Yom Kippur itself – marks the climax of our quest for forgiveness.

The idea of seeking forgiveness is not just a nice thing our teachers and rabbis have told us to do; rather, it is the foundation on which the entire day is built. The reason we use this day to atone is because it is the day on which Hashem finally forgave *Bnei Yisrael* for the most painful betrayal – the *cheit ha'egel*. This is alluded to constantly in the Yom Kippur davening when we utter the phrase “*vayomer Hashem salachti kidvarecha*,” a reference to Hashem’s forgiveness of the Jewish People after the sin of the golden calf.

It is hard for us, mere flesh and blood, to understand the concept of forgiveness because it is truly a divine action. It is not human nature to forgive someone who has sinned against us; our natural impulse is to desire revenge. As the *navi* Micha said (in a *pasuk* that we append to the *haftara* at *Mincha* on Yom Kippur):

מי אל כמורך נשא עון ועבר על פשע לשארית נחלתו.

Who is a God like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micha 7:18)

Our forgiveness of others reflects divine forgiveness; we cannot grasp Hashem’s ability to forgive, but we emulate Him on a smaller scale.

Did Yosef Forgive?

Although we are unable to comprehend Hashem’s forgiveness of *Bnei Yisrael*, we are able to grasp another instance of forgiveness that functions as a paradigm of man’s ability to forgive – the story of *mechiras Yosef*. Yosef HaTzadik was sold as a slave by (most of) his jealous brothers. After being guided by Hashem’s hand, he eventually reunites with his brothers and brings them to Egypt to live there with him. This narrative is often difficult for us to understand. Human beings are created with a rudimentary need to survive. How was Yosef

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able to embrace the very people who sought to destroy him?

We often infer – since the simple *pshat* offers us nothing to the contrary – that Yosef forgave his brothers. This seems implicit in the *pesukim* (*Bereishis* 50:16-21):

ויראו אחי יוסף כי מת אביהם ויאמרו לו ישטמנו יוסף והשב ישיב לנו את כל הרעה אשר גמלנו אתו: ויצוו אל יוסף לאמר אביך צוה לפני מותו לאמר: כה תאמרו ליוסף אנא שא נא פשע אחיך וחטאתם כי רעה גמלוך ועתה שא נא לפשע עבדי אלהי אביך ויבך יוסף בדברים אליו: וילכו גם אחיו ויפלו לפניו ויאמרו הננו לך לעבדים: ויאמר אלהם יוסף אל תיראו כי התחת אלהים אני: ואתם חשבתם עלי רעה אלהים חשבה לטבה למען עשה כיום הזה להחית עם רב: ועתה אל תיראו אנכי אכלכל אתכם ואת טפכם וינחם אותם וידבר על לבם:

Now Yosef's brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, "Perhaps Yosef will hate us and return to us all the evil that we did to him." So they commanded [messengers to go] to Yosef to say, "Your father commanded [us] before his death, saying, 'So shall you say to Yosef: Please, forgive now your brothers' transgression and their sin, for they did evil to you. Now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'" Yosef wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also wept and fell before him, and they said, "Behold, we are your slaves." But Yosef said to them, "do not be afraid, for am I instead of God? Indeed, you intended evil against me, [but] God designed it for good, in order to bring about what is at present to keep a great populace alive. So now do not fear. I will sustain you and your small children." And he comforted them and spoke to their hearts.

Nevertheless, conflicting approaches are found in the commentaries regarding whether Yosef was really able to completely forgive his brothers. Thus, for example, Rabbeinu Bachayei (ad loc.) states clearly that there was no forgiveness, writing that “we do not find any verse mentioning forgiveness by Yosef.” In contrast, Rabbi Chaim Palaggi (*Shu"t Chaim B'Yad*, *siman* 57, s.v. “*Ela d'im*”) concludes that Yosef forgave his brothers wholeheartedly:

We see that “they [the brothers] fell before him” ... “Yosef cried” ... “he comforted them and spoke to their hearts.” It seems that Yosef fully appeased his brothers. If so, how can anyone say that there was no explicit forgiveness?

In order to reach a conclusion regarding whether Yosef actually forgave his brothers, we must consider the more basic question of whether he was obligated to. The Rambam discusses the obligation to forgive in *Hilchos Teshuva* (2:10):

אסור לאדם להיות אכזרי ולא יתפייס אלא יהא נוה לרצות וקשה לכעוס ובשעה שמבקש ממנו החוטא למחול מוחל בלב שלם ובנפש חפצה.

It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and not be appeased [when asked for forgiveness]. Rather, he should be easily mollified and difficult to anger, and when asked for forgiveness by someone who wronged him, he should forgive wholeheartedly.

However, this *halacha* follows a series of *halachos* describing the sincerity with which

one must repent and ask forgiveness from one whom he wronged. There is no indication that the obligation to forgive extends even to one who is asked insincerely.

Thus, we must assess if the brothers were indeed sincere in their request for Yosef's forgiveness. The juxtaposition of their request for forgiveness to Yaakov's death seems to indicate that they were not. Instead, their motivations for seeking forgiveness seem to be in the interest of self preservation. This would explain why they made this request only now, long after Yosef revealed himself to them. The brothers did not actually feel the need to repent; rather, they were afraid that Yaakov's absence would lead Yosef to exact revenge. Accordingly, this is clearly not a sincere request for forgiveness, one based on regret and a desire to reconcile, but rather "repentance" out of fear of retribution. This is, in fact, how Rashi seems to interpret the *pesukim*. According to this perspective, Yosef would have been justified in refusing to grant forgiveness, as Rabbeinu Bachaye proposed.

On the flipside, according to the opinion that Yosef did forgive his brothers, it is possible that he was obligated to do so according to the *halacha*. The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Teshuva* 2:9) that one is obligated to request forgiveness up to three times from one whom he wronged. The *pesukim* only mention that the brothers sent messengers one time. One could argue that this is an indication that the matter was resolved and Yosef forgave them; otherwise, they would have had to continue to appease him.

The Forgiver of the Tribes

If we adopt the approach that Yosef did not grant his brothers *mechila*, then the misdeed of the *shevatim* must still be corrected. Indeed, the poem recited on Yom Kippur regarding the *Asara Harugei Malchus* presents *mechiras Yosef* as the cause of these events; the deaths of the ten martyrs are viewed as absolution for the sin on the cosmic level.¹

We find another connection between *mechiras Yosef* and Yom Kippur in the *avoda* performed by the *kohen gadol* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Meshech Chochma* (*Vayikra* 16:30, s.v. "*ki ata*") discusses the symbolism in the *korbanos* brought on Yom Kippur, a bull and a goat. The bull is a reference to the *egel hazahav*, the epitome of sins *bein adam laMakom*. The goat is a reference to *mechiras Yosef*, the quintessential sin *bein adam lachaveiro*, as the brothers slaughtered a goat to dirty Yosef's garment with its blood. Specifically the sins of the *egel* and *mechiras Yosef* are symbolized in the *kohen gadol's* acts of atonement on Yom Kippur.

The *Meshech Chochma* writes that this idea is reflected in the main *bracha* of the Yom Kippur *Amida*:

כי אתה סלחן לישראל ומחלן לשבטי ישורון בכל דור ודור...

For you [Hashem] are the pardoner of Israel and the forgiver of the tribes of Yeshurun in every generation...

¹ Of course, it is nonetheless difficult for us to comprehend how those who did not sin themselves were punished for the sins of others.

The phrase “pardoner of Israel” is a reference to Hashem’s forgiveness of the *cheit ha’egel* (when He said, “*salachti kidvarecha*”), which is representative of sins *bein adam laMakom*. The “forgiver of the tribes” refers to *mechiras Yosef* (as the tribes are not mentioned in any other *tefillos*), which represents all sins *bein adam lachaveiro*.

Lessons from Yosef

We can glean two very important lessons about *mechila* from the story of *mechiras Yosef*. First, although opinions differ regarding whether Yosef forgave his brothers, all agree that he did not cause any harm to them. He was able to accept the trials and tribulations he faced as the will of Hashem. We sometimes have a hard time granting *mechila* to others because we view them as the causes of our suffering. However, to do so is to grant them too much power; Hashem is the one who ultimately wields absolute control over the world. Those who harm us are using their *bechira* to interfere with Hashem’s plan. They are like patches of turbulence on a flight – an uncomfortable disruption that is eventually passed through on the path to the final destination. If we look at people who have hurt us through this lens, extending forgiveness becomes much easier. Like Yosef, we can see the good that Hashem has brought us through others.

The second lesson is that as the *Yamim Nora'im* approach, we must fully understand all aspects of the wrongs that we have committed against others. It is not enough to say that we are sorry out of fear of punishment or desire for reward in *Olam HaBa*. The acts of penitence should not be for selfish gain. We should request forgiveness because we truly understand the pain and suffering that we have inflicted on another.

Perhaps we think that what the *shevatim* did to Yosef was far worse than any wrong we have done to others, but the truth is that many of our transgressions are caused by the same motivations – jealousy, anger, and ego. When we speak *lashon hara* or embarrass or harshly chastise someone, we effectively throw them in a pit and degrade them, hoping that our words will suppress them and stop any further attempts to rise above our exalted thrones. But much to our dismay, these sins of *sinas chinam* only work against us, eventually coming back to cause us pain. Yosef’s brothers may never have fully atoned for their sin against him, resulting in the tragic episodes of the *Asara Harugei Malchus*. This may be one reason that the *piyut* concerning them is read on Yom Kippur – to stress the importance of wholehearted remorse and the sincere request for forgiveness that the ten brothers lacked.²

This Yom Kippur, may we internalize the lessons of *mechiras Yosef* by righting our wrongs and emulating the forgiveness that Hashem shows us on this holy day, bringing us one step closer to the *geula*.

2 Many communities also have the custom to read a *kina* about the *Asara Harugei Malchus* on Tisha B'Av. It is possible that part of the reason for this is also related to *mechiras Yosef*. Perhaps the sin of selling Yosef is not yet completely atoned for because many of us still commit similar wrongs against our fellow Jews. This may be related to the *sinas chinam* that is said to be the cause of this exile.

Yom Kippur: A Space Odyssey

DAVID MANHEIM



In the *Chumash*, the description of Yom Kippur as it applies to the people, as opposed to the service in the *Beis HaMikdash*, is brief and fairly self-explanatory. The way that the Rambam explains it, however, seems to differ slightly from the simple way we would understand the text. This difference lends an insight into the nature of what we are doing on Yom Kippur that can enhance our appreciation of the holiday.

Affliction or Rest?

The *pesukim* delineate two aspects of the day, which seem clearly distinct:

וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר: אך בעשור לחדש השביעי הזה יום הכפרים הוא מקרא קדש יהיה לכם וענייתם את נפשתיכם והקרבתם אשה לה': וכל מלאכה לא תעשו בעצם היום הזה כי יום כפרים הוא לכפר עליכם לפני ה' אלהיכם: כי כל הנפש אשר לא תענה בעצם היום הזה ונכרתה מעמיה: וכל הנפש אשר תעשה כל מלאכה בעצם היום הזה והאבדתי את הנפש ההוא מקרב עמה: כל מלאכה לא תעשו חקת עולם לדורתיכם בכל משבתיכם: שבת שבתון הוא לכם וענייתם את נפשתיכם בתשעה לחדש בערב מערב עד ערב תשביתו שבתכם:

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: But on the tenth day of this seventh month it is Yom Kippur; there shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall afflict your spirits and bring sacrifices to Hashem. Do no melacha on this day, for it is a day of atonement to atone for you in front of Hashem, your God. For any spirit that is not afflicted will be excised from its nation. And any spirit that does any melacha on this day, I will destroy that spirit from among its nation. Do no melacha; this is an eternal statute for all your generations, wherever you live. It will be a Double-Sabbath (Shabbos Shabbason) for you, and you shall afflict yourselves, starting on the evening following the ninth day, until the next evening, make this rest. (Vayikra 23:26-32)

To summarize this passage, we could say that Yom Kippur has two rules: rest from *melacha* and afflict yourself.

The *mishna* in *Maseches Yoma* (8:1) does not discuss the restriction on work, which is common to various holidays, and instead focuses on the requirement to afflict oneself. It

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begins, “*Yom Kippurim assur b’achila u’vashtiya*” – it is forbidden to eat, drink, and so on. The interpretation of affliction is discussed further in the *gemara*, and the guidelines are clearly intended to include all passive afflictions.

The Rambam, however, has a strange way of phrasing these requirements. In *Hilchos Shivas Asor*, he begins by discussing the restrictions on *melacha*, not that of the afflictions, notably deviating from the structure of the *gemara*. When he does discuss the afflictions, he seems to present them differently than the *gemara*. Thus, he writes (1:4):

מצות עשה אחרת יש ביום הכיפורים, והיא לשבות בו מאכילה ושתייה: שנאמר “תענו את נפשותיכם”...

There is another positive commandment on Yom Kippur, and that is to rest from eating and drinking, as the verse says, “Afflict your souls”...

The language here seems to indicate that the affliction mentioned is actually a form of resting. As is typical, the Rambam uses language differing from the *gemara* and other sources to direct attention to something.

The Rambam continues in the next *halacha* (1:5):

וכן למדו מפי השמועה שאסור לרחוץ בו או לסוך או לנעול את הסנדל או לבעול ומצוה לשבות מכל אלו כדרך ששבת מאכילה ושתייה שנאמר “שבת שבתון” – שבת לעניין מלאכה ושבתון לעניינים אלו.

Similarly, it is learned from tradition that it is forbidden to wash or anoint or to wear shoes or to cohabit. And it is a mitzva to rest from all of these in the same manner as one rests from eating and drinking, as the verse says: “It will be a Shabbos Shabbason (Double-Sabbath) for you” – it is a Shabbos from melacha and it is a Shabbason from these matters.

The *halachic* difference between these restrictions and those of eating and drinking, according to at least some explanations of the Rambam, is that the positive commandment of self-affliction is specifically about resting from eating and drinking, while the other afflictions are not part of the positive commandment. Regardless, the Rambam seems intent on making a conceptual point about the rest inherent in all of these afflictions.

The Nature of Yom Kippur

In a different, although ultimately closely related vein, the last *mishna* in *Maseches Ta’anis* quotes Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel as saying that there were never days happier than Tu B’Av and Yom Kippur. He explains that the young women would wear white dresses and then go out to attract a spouse. While the basic understanding of the *mishna* is that these days were for *shidduchim*, it is strange that Yom Kippur, a day that is called a day of afflictions, would be considered so happy. The *gemara* clarifies that we are happy on Yom Kippur because of the fact that our sins are forgiven, but the contrast between affliction and happiness still must make us wonder.

Another *mishna* about the nature of Yom Kippur also demands some explanation. The *mishna* in *Yoma* (8:9) discusses Yom Kippur's effect on the Jewish People. Rabbi Akiva cites a verse in *Yirmiyahu* (17:13) which calls Hashem the "*Mikveh* of Israel," explaining that just as a *mikveh* purifies the impure, Hashem purifies Israel. This comparison (although it makes a compelling song) seems somewhat lacking. Why is our experience on Yom Kippur – the forgiveness of our sins – comparable to becoming pure through immersion?

Connecting the Dots

The *Ba'alei Mussar* explain that the supreme achievement of Yom Kippur is that we are able to live, if only for a day, as angels, who require neither food nor drink nor any physical enjoyment. The *gemara* in *Yoma* seems to endorse this interpretation when it teaches us that the afflictions required are limited to passive ones; we are not supposed to sit in the hot sun, for example, to increase our suffering. We are afflicting ourselves, according to this understanding, only to the extent that the affliction achieves the goal of making us angelic.

Based on this, we can explain why the Rambam chose to discuss the afflictions as "rest" from certain activities. On Yom Kippur, we disengage from physicality in order to make ourselves angelic. This withdrawal, while characterized by a set of afflictions to our spirits, achieves something greater. The verses refer to affliction of the *nefesh*, the spirit, not of the *neshama*, the soul. Even animals have spirits; only humans have souls. The affliction on Yom Kippur is confined to our animalistic spirits, which are starved of the connection to physicality that they need to maintain ourselves. This allows our bodies to connect more directly with our souls, making us temporarily angelic. This is a clear parallel to our weekly experience of Shabbos, when we rest from work to connect to the spiritual. The affliction of Yom Kippur, as the verses subtly hint, create a sort of double Shabbos; they impose the restriction of non-physicality upon us.

A *Mashal* and the *Nimshal*¹

Imagine an astronaut on an extended journey to another solar system. He is prepared beforehand with a comprehensive set of instructions. When he boards the spaceship, he is hooked up to machines that will dispense IV nutrition and take care of his other bodily needs. Every week, a message on the computer tells him to turn off the rockets and reset the computers. He may feel that taking a day off per week to reset the computer systems is simply slowing him down, but as he may remember from his training, this step is needed for the maintenance of the ship. If he was paying attention, he might also realize that without these periodic rests, his body would begin to break down from the constant acceleration.

Many weeks into his journey, the computer displays a different message: during this reset cycle, remove your IV, unbuckle your harness, and don your space suit for a spacewalk. The astronaut is told to measure his trajectory, determine the necessary course correction, and then remount the rockets with the necessary course correction. Following this, he should spend the

¹ With thanks to R. Sheftel Weinberg's "Submarine Shiur," the inspiration for this idea.

rest of the day during which the motors are off doing a series of physical tasks, including eating normal food and stretching his muscles. This will allow him to recover from his extended lack of exercise and to continue on his journey. Of course, every action he takes over the course of this day is painful as his body recovers, as he stretches his atrophied muscles and uses his dormant digestive system – but that is not the point. The affliction is a mere byproduct of the actions he takes.

The astronaut knows that his vehicle is what keeps him alive on the way to his destination. He performs maintenance on it routinely, and if he does his job properly, he constantly ensures that the ship is operating at near-peak efficiency. Despite this, he must exit the ship into the inhospitable lack of atmosphere and perform new tasks that have nothing to do with maintenance of the ship – they have to do with him, the body inside the ship.

The *nimshal*, of course, is the path of a person in life. His physical body is necessary, but it is only the ship. The systems he resets every week are his spirit; his day of rest allows them to recover. The new set of tasks is Yom Kippur. It is a double rest – not just for the ship, not just for the systems, but also for the person inside. He must leave the ship, resting from using the automated systems that keep him alive under ordinary circumstances in order to have the space to stretch and recover while redirecting his energies for the coming year towards the correct goal.

When a person immerses himself in a *mikveh*, the act is spiritually significant, but also symbolic. The water represents Torah and holiness, and during our immersion, Hashem purifies us in order to give us the ability to serve him. When the waters of the *mikveh* surround a person, he knows that he cannot survive in that state. We cannot survive in the water, just as we cannot permanently last without food and water.

The Rambam clarifies that the key point of the “afflictions” is the restraint from food and drink, which places us in the state of rest from our physicality, allowing the *mikveh* of Hashem to work on us. We should remember, however, that we are not only afflicting ourselves – we are also immersing ourselves in a spiritual place to purify ourselves. While that state is inimical to physical survival, it affords us a tremendous opportunity. It is this opportunity that is the true source of the *simcha* that we have on Yom Kippur. What a shame it would be if the astronaut were to leave the ship, do all of his tasks, and re-enter his ship without at least once appreciating the view he has of the stars!

Sukkos



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Quashing the Rebellion of the Trees

RABBI YISROEL GORDON



וידעו כל עצי השדה כי אני ה'
השפלתי עץ גבה הגבהתי עץ שפל
הובשתי עץ לח והפרתי עץ יבש
אני ה' דברתי ועשיתי.

All the trees of the field will know that I am Hashem.

I have lowered the tall tree, raised the low tree.

I have dried the wet tree and given blossoms to the dry tree.

I am Hashem. I have spoken and I have acted. (Yechezkel 17:24)

Like the other *chagim*, Sukkos is introduced to us as a celebration of an agricultural event. This is the time of year that farmers bring home the crops that they have worked so long and hard to produce. It is *Chag HaAsif*, the festival of the ingathering of the harvest. However, unlike the other *Yomim Tovim*, Sukkos follows through on its agricultural motif with several fascinating *mitzvos*.

First, there's the *sukka*, built with the leftover stalks and vines from the harvest (*Sukka* 12a). Then we have the *esrog*, along with the *lulav*, *hadassim*, and *aravos*. Sukkos is when Hashem determines the year's rainfall (*Rosh Hashana* 1:2), and in the *Beis HaMikdash*, we had the mitzva of *nisuch hamayim*, the pouring of spring water on the altar: "Hashem says: Pour water before me on Sukkos so that the year's rainfall will be blessed for you" (*Rosh Hashana* 16a). Sukkos is also a deadline for the annual mitzva of *bikkurim*.¹

Clearly, Sukkos is about our relationship with the land and its produce. But what exactly is its message? What are all these agricultural *mitzvos* saying?

In order to understand the *Yom Tov* of Sukkos, we need to go back to the beginning of *Bereishis*.

Opening Shot

In *Bereishis*, we read the creation story, which includes the creation of trees. Like everything

¹ Although the procrastinating farmer has until Chanuka to bring his first fruits to the *Mikdash*, the mitzva to declare his appreciation for the Divine gift of Israel ends with Sukkos (*Bikkurim* 1:6).

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else in the universe, Hashem created trees with words, declaring, “עץ פרי,” “Let the earth sprout vegetation... fruit trees bearing fruit” (*Bereishis* 1:11).

Now, when you’re building a universe with words, you need to watch your diction. “Fruit trees bearing fruit” is redundant. Hashem could have said, “Let the earth sprout fruit trees,” or, “Let the earth sprout trees bearing fruit.” Why “fruit trees bearing fruit?” The *Midrash* explains that Hashem’s words were not redundant at all; they were chosen quite deliberately. Hashem was trying to create trees whose wood had the same flavor as their fruit. When He said, “fruit trees bearing fruit,” He meant that the very trees themselves should be fruity (Rashi ad loc. from *Bereishis Rabba* 5:9).

Strangely, however, things didn’t turn out that way. When the trees came into existence in the very next verse, a discrepancy appears. “וַתוֹצֵא אֶת-עֵץ הָאֵרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא... וְעֵץ עֵשֶׂה פֶּרִי,” “And the earth brought forth vegetation... trees bearing fruit” (1:12) – not “fruit trees bearing fruit,” just “trees bearing fruit.” The trees did not obey orders. They came into existence as ordinary fruit-bearing trees without any flavor in their wood.²

Why didn’t the trees behave and follow orders? The *Chizkuni*³ explains that what we are seeing here is nothing short of the survival instinct of trees. They didn’t want to be flavored; they were afraid of being eaten! The trees therefore disobeyed and came out bland.

Despite the compelling logic of the *Chizkuni*, it stands to reason that there are deeper issues at play. According to the Maharal of Prague⁴ (*Gur Aryeh*, *Bereishis* 1:11), we are not dealing here with a debate about the virtues of wood flavoring. Rather, the disobedience of the trees was actually the opening shot of an out-and-out rebellion. Here begins the eternal struggle between the spiritual and the physical, the divine and the mortal, heaven and earth.

In much the same way that a tree creates a fruit and sustains it with a constant flow of nutrients, Hashem created the physical universe and sustains its existence with a constant flow of divine energy and providence. Trees are therefore symbolic of the divine origin of all things and their fruit are symbolic of the physical products of that origin. In short, trees symbolize the Creator and their fruit symbolize the created.

By instructing trees to have the same flavor as their fruit, Hashem was issuing a policy statement with universal implications. The physical must not be more alluring than its origins, for then the physical will take center stage and the divine source will be overlooked and forgotten. This was Hashem’s concern and this was Hashem’s command, but the narcissistic earth rebelled. It wanted to forget its creator and focus on itself instead. In a clear statement of defiance, the trees made their fruit distinctive and flavorful, and their roots, trunks, and branches bland. The material

2 The idea of the created having a say in the process of its own creation is admittedly bizarre. How could an inanimate object rebel against the programming of its creator? A similarly problematic teaching appears in *Rosh Hashana* 11a: “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: All the acts of creation... were done with consent” [i.e. they were asked if they would like to be created and they said yes – Rashi]. See note 5 below.

3 Rabbi Chizkiyah ben Manoach Chizkuni (Provence, mid-13th century)

4 Rabbi Yehuda Lowe (1525-1609)

would reign supreme and the divine would be relegated to secondary status. This was the rebellion of the trees, and it was nothing less than a revolution against the monarchy of God.⁵

Man Joins the Fray

The trees fired the opening shot, but the entire universe craves independence. Man is no exception:

ויקח ה' א-להים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה. ויצו ה' א-להים על האדם
לאמר מכל עץ הגן אכל תאכל, ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו...
*Hashem the Lord took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work
it and to guard it. And Hashem the Lord commanded the man, "Of every tree of
the garden you may freely eat, but you may not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of
Good and Evil..."* (Bereishis 2:15-17)

We all know what happened next. Like the trees before them, Adam and Chava focus on the "fruit" and ignored the "tree." Violating God's single command, they eat the forbidden fruit. Suddenly, they find themselves transformed:

ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי ערומים הם...
The eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked...
(*Ibid.* 3:7)

What is the meaning of this? Since when do fruit make you feel naked?

Rabbi Baruch Sorotzkin offers an excellent explanation of these mystical events. Initially, Adam and Chava were perfectly comfortable in the nude. This is not because they lacked our sensitivities, but because they defined themselves differently. In their innocence, Adam and Chava saw themselves as souls and did not identify with their bodies at all. For them, the body served merely as a garment for the soul and they understandably felt no need to put clothing on a body that is itself clothing. However, when they focused on the forbidden fruit and allowed themselves to be seduced by externals, their self-image was altered. Externals became primary and they identified with their bodies. Suddenly, they felt naked.

The struggle of physicality against spirituality, earth against heaven, fruit against root, body against soul, and appearance against essence are all different fronts in the same Great War – the rebellion of the created against the Creator. There is a dark force inherent within all matter that wishes to declare physicality king.

Adam's sin gave the rebellion a second wind⁶ and the war continues, generation after

⁵ The created obviously has no say in its own creation, but there is a rebellious nature inherent in all things physical (cf. *Gur Aryeh* ad loc.). Said differently, the trees' behavior was dictated by the Creator and was His way of embedding rebelliousness into creation.

⁶ This explains why the land was punished together with Adam and Chava; cf. *Bereishis* 3:17 and Rashi to 1:11, s.v. *etz pri*. Taking things one step further, the *Ohr HaChaim* (3:17) suggests that had the trees obeyed, Adam and Chava would never have sinned.

generation, to this very day. But a small, devoted group struggles against these forces and declares God king. The counterrevolutionaries' base of operations? A *sukka*.

The Sukka

The Torah tells us to move out of our homes and into a hut, a "*sukka*" (*Vayikra* 23:42). Like every other mitzva, the *sukka* requires a sharp legal definition. What exactly is the difference between a house and a *sukka*? After all, some people live in huts all year round.

Halacha defines a *sukka* as a structure whose roof is entirely constructed from a type of material called *schach*. The Torah introduces prototypical *schach* when it tells us to build a *sukka* out of the leftover stalks and vines from the grain and grape harvest (*Sukka* 12a from *Devarim* 16:13). This brief statement establishes the three basic specifications for the roofing material of a *sukka*:

1. *Schach* must grow from the ground.
2. *Schach* must be detached from the ground.
3. *Schach* must be raw material, still in its natural state.

It is not for aesthetic reasons that *schach* must be in its natural state. The *gemara* teaches that in order to be kosher for a *sukka*, *schach* cannot be susceptible to *tuma*, spiritual contamination (*Sukka* 1:4). Anything that grows is immune from contracting *tuma* as long as it is connected to the ground. Even after it is harvested, raw materials remain immune to *tuma* as long as they are not manufactured into anything of use; only items of utility can contract *tuma*. Interestingly, fruit is an exception to this rule. Despite the fact that it is still in its natural state, fruit is also susceptible to *tuma* and is therefore invalid for use as *schach* (*Shulchan Aruch* 629:9).

Another unexpected law about *schach* is its height. The opening *mishna* of *Sukka* teaches that *schach* cannot be higher than twenty cubits off the ground (approximately thirty feet). The sages of the *gemara* debate the reason for this law, but the conclusion is in accordance with Rava, who explained it based on a *pasuk*:

בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסכת. למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות
הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים. אני ה' א-להיכם.

*During these seven days, you must live in Sukkos. Every citizen of Israel must live
in Sukkos. This is so that future generations will know that I had the Jews live in
Sukkos when I brought them out of Egypt. I am Hashem your Lord. (Vayikra
23:42-43)*

Since a *sukka* is a *sukka* by virtue of its having *schach* as its ceiling, *schach* must be readily visible in order to effectively remind the *sukka*-dweller of his ancestors in the desert. A ceiling that is twenty cubits or higher will not be within the ordinary field of vision of people in the room and is therefore invalid (*Sukka* 2a).⁷

⁷ The *Bach* (O.C. 625) infers from the *Tur* (ad loc.) that the *sukka* **must** remind us of the desert huts of our ancestors. If no

To sum up our findings: A *sukka* is a structure whose roof is made of *schach*, a natural material that grew from the ground and was later detached, but is still in its natural state and immune from *tuma*. This *schach* must be low enough so that it is noticeable to the people inside the *sukka*, reminding them of the huts that their ancestors used when they traveled across the Sinai Desert from Egypt to Israel.

If we can permit ourselves to ask a most elementary question, **why** is it so important for us to remember the huts of our ancestors? As amazing as it was, surviving the desert doesn't hold a candle to the transformative events of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Matan Torah* commemorated by Pesach and Shavuot. Why dedicate seven days to its memory?

Paradise Lost

For the Jews, life in the desert was nothing less than utopian. As the *Shechina* guided their journey, the Jews had no fields to farm, no businesses to manage, and no wars to fight. Their only pursuits were Torah, *mitzvos*, and experiencing the sublime pleasure of *deveikus* with Hashem. They may have been in the Sinai Desert, but the Jews were traveling in a virtual Garden of Eden.⁸

In the Sinai Desert, the entire structure of the natural world was peeled away and the Jews related to Hashem directly. Their dependence on daily miracles for survival – the *ananei hakavod*, the *manna*, and Miriam's well – forged a virtual umbilical cord between them and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Living in a state of constant God-awareness, they were simply incorruptible.⁹

Returning to our *sukka*, the message of the *schach* is clear. Once upon a time, our *schach* was rooted in the earth, and in that state it was immune to *tuma*. Like the Jews of the desert, it enjoyed a utopian existence, fully conscious of its dependence on its roots and fully protected from alien influence. But utopia does not last and the *schach* was eventually severed from its source.

We might expect the disconnected *schach* to be susceptible to all the rotting and spiritual defilement the world has to offer, but it doesn't happen. Miraculously, the *schach* remains pure. *Schach* maintains its immunity from spiritual malaise as long as it remains in its natural state, unchanged from the way it grew. By being true to its identity and not transforming itself

such thought comes to mind, the mitzva of *sukka* remains unfulfilled. The *Mishna Berura*, however, rules in accordance with the opinion of the *Pri Megadim* that this intent is ideal, but not imperative.

8 Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (Rebbe of Ger, 1847-1905) explains that although the mission of the Jews is to repair and elevate the physical world, in order to do so, they must first live outside of it. To be an effective master over nature, one must first exist independent of nature. This is what occurred in the Sinai Desert. After that experience, the Jews were empowered to elevate the physical realm by living naturally and performing the agricultural *mitzvos* in Israel (*Sefas Emes*, Balak 5647).

9 This is not to say that they were incapable of sin. On the contrary, just as man sinned in Gan Eden, the Jews committed some of the greatest sins of history in the Sinai Desert. However, they were living with the revealed presence of Hashem and as a result they always had solid rationalizations for their behavior. Although rationalized sins committed in God's presence are inexcusable, they are limited in their ability to corrupt the soul.

into something that it isn't, the *schach* remembers its origins and preserves its immunity to *tuma*.

Now we can understand why, unlike every other raw material, fruit is invalid for use as *schach*. Even though it has not changed from its original form, fruit is nevertheless susceptible to *tuma*. The original rebellion of the trees rendered fruit far more appealing than the branches on which it grew. This results in a fruit that quickly forgets where it came from. Falling far from its source, it lacks the wherewithal to withstand the contaminants of the world.¹⁰

Schach Story

In the days following Yom Kippur, when we wonder how to hold on to the spiritual gains of the Days of Awe, the *schach* inspires us with its ability to remain pure despite its distance from its roots. As the *schach* tells us the story of our ancestors, we realize that the *schach's* story is our story.

The Sinai Desert is history. Our relationship with Hashem today, while very real, is disconnected. Hashem feeds and protects us, but He does it from behind the façade of the local supermarket and the Department of Homeland Security. That puts a limit on our relationship. Our current state, outside the womb of the *ananei hakavod*, allows for spiritual contamination.

It is not only the world of our ancestors that is gone; the world of our grandparents is also gone. Today, God hides behind the virtual iron curtain of modern technology and naturalist thinking, and a growing windstorm of immorality and materialism blows through society. Uprooted and in danger of losing our bearings, our only hope for purity is to listen to the sage advice of the *schach*.

When man brings home the fruits of his labors, literal or otherwise, it is natural to feel a sense of accomplishment. He proudly exclaims, "My power and the might of my hand produced this wealth for me!" (*Devarim* 8:17). Full of himself, man forgets the God who provided the health, talent, and flow of providence that made success possible. It's not that he takes success for granted; he just thinks it is of his own making. Following the lead of the primordial trees – "Man is a tree of the field" (*Devarim* 20:19) – man relegates the Creator to secondary status.

So on Sukkos, at the time of the ingathering of the harvest, the *schach* reminds man that he is not a god and he is not the one who makes things grow. "Don't make yourself out to be something other than you are! You, together with your harvest, are the created. Hashem is the Creator." The better man internalizes this truth and recognizes God as the benevolent King who grants life, the better he humbles himself and forges a relationship with the true source of all existence. This preserves the purity of man, just as it preserves the purity of the *schach*.

¹⁰ Although produce must first get wet before it can contract *tuma* (cf. *Vayikra* 11:34; *Chulin* 36a), fruit and all other foods are disqualified for use as *schach* even before they get wet (*Mishna Berura* 629:28).

The *Zohar* calls the *sukka* the “Shade of Faith.” The *schach* has a timeless lesson to teach and the *halacha* wisely ensures that it remains in plain sight for seven days straight.

This is all fine and good for the Jew in his *sukka*, but it’s insufficient to quash the rebellion. The entire physical realm craves independence. Everything and everyone wants to forget where they come from and live free of God. To effectively fight this battle, we’ll need to utilize a loyal operative on the inside.

The Righteous *Esrog*

Not every tree sinned. There was one tree that did not follow the forest and did not rebel. The *gemara* relates that the *esrog* tree followed orders and grew its wood with the flavor of its fruit, as instructed by the Creator (*Sukka* 35a). This explains why the *esrog* is a symbol for *tzaddikim* (*Vayikra Rabba* 30; see also *Shabbos* 88a). The righteous tree bears righteous fruit.

The Torah describes the *esrog* as a “*pri etz hadar*” (*Vayikra* 23:40), which is usually translated as “beautiful fruit.” This is accurate,¹¹ but the *gemara* points out that the word “*hadar*” does have another meaning: “that which lives or dwells.” The Torah is not only describing the *esrog* as beautiful; it is also telling us that the *esrog* is a fruit that dwells on the tree (*Sukka* 35a).¹² While most fruit fall off the tree when they are ripe, the citron hangs on year after year.

The *esrog* fruit behaves this way because the *esrog* tree controlled its desire for independence, rejected the rebellion, and minimized the difference between its wood and its fruit. As a result, the fruit of this tree is perfectly comfortable staying home. Humble like its mother, it is in no rush to leave its birthplace and assert its independence. Here we have a living manifestation of the allegorical verse, “It is a tree of life for those who cling to it” (*Mishlei* 3:18). Pride in its origins is the hallmark of the *esrog* – and this is what makes it so beautiful. *Pri etz hadar*, indeed!

With this background, a little-known *midrash* becomes all the more astounding. According to one tradition (*Bereishis Rabba* 15), the Tree of Knowledge in *Gan Eden* was an *esrog* tree!¹³ What other tree had a better understanding of good and evil? This was the one tree that recognized its divine roots and understood that the superficiality of materialism has no right to supremacy over the inner beauty of the spiritual. Hashem commanded that the fruit of this tree be left alone, uneaten, to stand as a testament to its message. But Adam and Chava didn’t listen. They were seduced by the luscious, hanging fruit and they ignored the Source. Compounding their sin, they violated the one righteous tree in the garden.

11 This description of the *esrog* as a “beautiful fruit” has *halachic* implications. An *esrog* that lacks certain basic elements of beauty may be disqualified for use as a result (cf. *Sukka* 36a-b).

12 “‘Hashem said one [thing]; I heard two – for Hashem is mighty’ (*Tehillim* 62). [This teaches that] one verse can have multiple meanings” (*Sanhedrin* 34a).

13 There are different opinions regarding the Tree of Knowledge (see *Brachos* 40a; *Bereishis Rabba* 15), but all agree that it was not an apple. The idea that the Tree of Knowledge was an apple tree is a popular misconception arising from Christian sources.

Victory

We have lost many battles, but there is hope for the future. When we pick up an *esrog* on Sukkos, we are fixing Adam's sin.¹⁴ Together with the *schach*, the *esrog* reminds the world, the trees, and all of us that even as we focus on fruit, gather in the harvest, and rejoice in our material bounty, we must remain conscious of, and connected to, the Divine Source of all. This immunizes us to the spiritual dangers of our material blessings, strengthens our faith, and fills us with gratitude, but it does not stop there. Gratitude prods us to action. In the words of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto:

This inspiration can be intensified by focusing on the many good things that HaKadosh Baruch Hu does for man at all times and in every hour, and the great wonders that He does for him from the day he is born until his final day. The more a person focuses on and thinks about these things, the more he recognizes how indebted he is to the God that has been good to him... Obviously, man cannot repay God, so at the very least he should thank Hashem and fulfill His mitzvos. (Mesillas Yescharim, chap. 8)

As Sukkos educates us about the true nature of nature, our gratitude to the Creator evolves into loyalty and motivates us to serve Him. In this way, the *Yom Tov* fortifies the army of God.

When the Jews come out from before Hashem with their lulavim in their hands and their esrogim in their hands, we know that the Jews were victorious... (Midrash Rabba, Parshas Emor)

The forces of good are mightier than the forces of evil and Hashem has armed us with a varied and potent arsenal of agricultural *mitzvos*. Ultimately, with the help of Sukkos, we will emerge victorious in the great war of natural history, and when we do, we will be privileged to witness the final, prophesied surrender of the age-old rebellion of the trees.

אמרו בגוים ה' מלך ... ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ ירעם הים ומלאו. יעלו שדי וכל אשר בו
אז ירגנו כל עצי יער לפני ה' כי בא כי בא לשפט הארץ.
Declare among the peoples, "Hashem is King." ...Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad. Let the sea roar, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and all they contain. Then the trees of the forest will sing with joy before Hashem, for He is coming, He is coming to judge the earth.. (Tehillim 96)

14 Cf. Rabbeinu Bachayei, *Vayikra* 22:27, 23:40. For additional sources, see Rabbi Dovid Cohen, *Zman Simchaseinu*, chap. 27.

Transmitting the *Shira* of the Torah

RABBI DAVID MAHLER



Simchas Torah is unique among all other special days in the Jewish calendar in that it is not based on Biblical or Talmudic literature. It is a *chag* that emanated from within the Jewish People in order to express our love and appreciation for Torah. Whereas on Shavuot we commemorate the anniversary of the giving of the Torah to *Klal Yisrael* on *Har Sinai*, on Simchas Torah we simply rejoice in the fact that we possess the holy Torah. The focus of Simchas Torah is our completion of the Torah; the public Torah readings of every Shabbos throughout the year come to their conclusion on Simchas Torah. Interestingly, the particular *mitzvos* that we read about on Simchas Torah teach us how we should relate to the Torah that we are celebrating on this holiday.

Like any book, the Torah aims to convey a story, but in addition, the Torah is a book instructing proper *middos* and *derech eretz*. To that end, throughout the *Chumash* and in particular in *Sefer Bamidbar*, Rashi points out why certain stories are juxtaposed to one another. For example, Rashi notes (*Bamidbar* 13:2) that the story of the *meraglim* follows that of Miriam's *lashon hara* because the spies should have learned the lesson of how severe negative speech is from what happened to her, but they failed to do so. Rashi also explains (*Bamidbar* 16:1) that Korach's rebellion follows on the heels of *parshas tzitzis* because one of the mocking challenges that Korach flung at Moshe had to do with a particular *halacha* regarding *tzitzis*. Every narrative and *halachic* section must rationally weave into the one that follows.

However, as Rashi remarks in the very beginning of his *perush* on *Chumash*, the Torah is essentially a *halachic* work. It is a book of laws telling us how to act in almost every conceivable situation. It is the very first *Sefer HaMitzvos*. In fact, the only reason that the episodes of *Bereishis* were included was to make the point that *Eretz Yisrael* belongs to the Jewish People. This being the case, it can be argued that just as every *parsha* in the Torah must make sense sequentially, it must make sense *halachically* as well. There must be a flow between each *mitzva* in the Torah; *mitzva* #56 must connect to #57 and so on. Rashi hints to this notion when he explains the juxtaposition of *Parshas Nazir* to *Parshas Sota* (*Bamidbar* 6:2).

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In Tishrei, we have the privilege of reading the final few *parshios* of the Torah. They include a number of *mitzvos* that can be connected to one another to teach a profound idea necessary for the continued transmission of the Torah from generation to generation.

The 612th mitzva is *Hakhel*. This special event took place every seven years on the first day of *Chol HaMoed Sukkos* following the *shemitta* year. Everyone – man, woman and child – was required to attend the ceremony in the *Beis HaMikdash*. There, a platform was erected upon which the king would read specific portions from *Sefer Devarim*. Obviously, many of those who attended the event were unable to comprehend what was being read.¹ The *gemara* in *Chagiga* (3a) explains that “the men came to learn, the women came to hear. But for what purpose were the children brought? To give reward to those who brought them.”

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*mitzva* 612) writes that the reason for this mitzva is to demonstrate that the Torah is the very basis of Jewish life. It is what differentiates us from the nations of the world, and through it, we can attain the highest level of spiritual satisfaction. It is therefore important for the entire nation to come together on occasion to hear the reading of the Torah. This will reawaken and strengthen the national desire to serve Hashem and fulfill His *mitzvos*.

The Malbim (*Devarim* 31:12) explains how attending *Hakhel* will benefit the young children. Since they will not be able to understand the words of the king, their attention will be focused on absorbing the unforgettable sight of millions of Jews gathered together for the sole purpose of hearing the *dvar Hashem*. This will leave an indelible impression on their souls and inspire them to lead lives of *kedusha* and *tahara*.

Unfortunately, this particular mitzva is not practiced today, yet its eternal message is worth contemplating. When a child sees that his parents are excited about their own *Yiddishkeit*, a love for *avodas Hashem* develops inside of him as well.

This provides the connection to the 613th mitzva, the final mitzva in the Torah – the commandment that each Jew write his own *sefer Torah*. In presenting this mitzva, Hashem describes His work, the Torah, as a “*shira*” – a beautiful, uplifting song. *Shira* conjures up images of laughter and happiness. The message is that the proper *hashkafas hachaim* is to live a Torah lifestyle as if it is an exciting and enjoyable song. If our children absorb our excitement about *Yiddishkeit*, they will experience Torah as a *shira*.

Of course, on Simchas Torah, we not only complete the reading of *Sefer Devarim*, but begin *Sefer Bereishis* as well. Thus, it behooves us to connect the last and first *mitzvos* of the Torah together. How does the idea of creating an exciting Torah experience connect with the Torah's first command, “*peru u'revu*,” “be fruitful and multiply” (*Bereishis* 1:28)?

To find the connection, let us explore two different comments of the Rambam. The Rambam writes (*Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:3) that the principle of “*ha'osek b'mitzva patur min hamitzva*” – the rule that one who is involved in the performance of a mitzva is exempt from the performance of other *mitzvos* – does not apply to the mitzva of *talmud Torah*. If one is involved in Torah study, he is still obligated to perform other *mitzvos*. The reason, the

¹ The *Minchas Chinuch* (*mitzva* 612) notes that even infants were brought to *Hakhel*.

Rambam explains, is that one of the primary objectives of learning Torah is to be able to fulfill the commandments. Thus, if one is learning and the opportunity arises for him to perform a mitzva that cannot be fulfilled by anyone else, he is obligated to stop learning momentarily and involve himself in the mitzva; afterwards, he may return to his learning.

Elsewhere, however, the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Ishus* 15:2) that the mitzva of *talmud Torah* pushes off the mitzva of *peru u'revu*. A person can delay getting married in order to devote more time to learning. Perplexingly, the Rambam even writes that it is obvious that *peru u'revu* can be set aside for *talmud Torah*. Why is *peru u'revu* an exception to the general rule?

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein explains that our learning is usually defined as *limud al menas la'asos*, learning for the sake of acting. That is why one must stop learning to hear the shofar or Megilla, for example. In contrast, that is not the relationship between *talmud Torah* and the mitzva of *peru u'revu*. In fact, *talmud Torah* is part and parcel of *peru urevu*. It is not enough to simply father or mother children; we must know how to raise them *al pi hashkafos haTorah*, and that is only learned within the confines of a *beis midrash*. Studying Torah is a *hechsher mitzva* for raising children. Therefore, a person does not need stop his learning in order to get married and have children. *Talmud Torah* and *peru u'revu* are essentially different parts of the same mitzva.²

This explanation helps us draw the connection between the last mitzva in the Torah – the command to write a *sefer Torah* – and the first mitzva in the Torah – the command of *peru u'revu*. The idea that one should live Torah as a *shira* leads to the idea of not merely having children, but also raising children towards a meaningful and vibrant Jewish life. Living Torah in this fashion ensures the perpetuation of Torah to the next generation.

May it be that the *siyum* we make on Simchas Torah brings a smile to our faces, and may that smile be reflected on the faces of our children.

² *Sefer Kavod HaRav*, p.194-195

When the Rain Comes: The Ambiguous Nature of Rain on Sukkos

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While the very notion of rainfall on Sukkos may be completely foreign to individuals in certain parts of the world, in places where such meteorological events are more common, rain on Sukkos can stir mixed emotions. On the one hand, rain can preclude a sincere Jew from fulfilling a treasured mitzva; on the other, it can be a welcome excuse to escape the frigid nights and tepid food that many consider synonymous with the *chag*. The *mishna* in *Sukka* (28b), however, is quite unequivocal about the appropriate emotional response to rain on Sukkos, comparing the event to a servant coming to pour a cup for his master and the master throwing the contents of the pitcher back in his face. Rashi explains that rain is a “*siman kelala*,” a bad sign, indicating that Hashem is rejecting our service. The Vilna Gaon provides a slightly different interpretation, noting that while the servant is going to pour a cup for his master, the master throws the contents of **the pitcher** in his face. The servant is coming to dilute the strong wine of judgment from the *Yamim Nora'im* with water and Hashem is rejecting the attempt with rain. Whereas Rashi and the Gra differ regarding the nature of the mitzva and the rejection, it is clear from the *mishna* that rainfall on Sukkos signifies that our attempt to perform a mitzva has been rejected.

It is interesting that despite the lack of ambiguity in this *mashal*, a *machlokes* in a different *mishna* implies there is a little more to consider. In the first *mishna* in *Ta'anis*, Rabbi Yehoshua states that the appropriate time to start saying “*Mashiv HaRuach U'Morid HaGeshem*” is Shemini Atzeres, while Rabbi Eliezer holds that we start reciting this *tefilla* at the beginning of Sukkos. While the *halachic* practice follows Rabbi Yehoshua's view, Rabbi Eliezer's stance seems surprising in context of the *mishna's* statement in *Sukka*, which implies that we certainly do not want rain to fall on Sukkos itself. What is the basis of Rabbi Eliezer's opinion?

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There are other sources that further complicate the issue. For example, the *mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* (1:2) notes that there are several periods of judgment during the year, and on Sukkos we are judged regarding rain. In the *gemara* in *Sukka* (11b), Rabbi Eliezer (possibly *l'shitaso*) explains that the “*sukkos*” referred to in the Torah (*Vayikra* 23:43) in context of the holiday were actually the *ananei hakavod* that protected *Am Yisrael* when they journeyed through the desert. What is a cloud if not a rain factory? In addition, during the time of the *Beis HaMikdash*, Sukkos was the only *chag* during which the *nisuch hamayim*, the water libations, were performed. It seems rather curious that while rain on Sukkos is considered the ultimate form of rejection, the holiday is figuratively soaked in references to rain!

In order to reconcile this seeming contradiction, it is important to understand the true connection between rain and the Jewish People.

In *Sefer Devarim* (11:10-11), the Torah contrasts *Eretz Yisrael* and *Mitzrayim*; whereas *Mitzrayim* has a constant water source, the Nile River, in Israel we require rain from *shamayim*¹ to meet our agricultural and societal needs. While this can be understood as a superior aspect of *Mitzrayim* over *Eretz Yisrael*, in fact, the need to daven for rain affords *Klal Yisrael* the opportunity to dialogue with Hashem, to build a relationship. In a similar way, the *Imahos* all had trouble conceiving children because “Hashem loves the *tefilla* of the *tzaddikim*.”² To that end, when we daven for rain, we are building a relationship with Hashem.

As we are sadly aware from recent tragedies, our *tefillos* are not always answered immediately; instead, they can be stored up in *shamayim* to be utilized at the time Hashem sees fit. Similarly, the presence of clouds in the sky does not necessarily mean that it is currently raining. A cloud implies potential for rain. Sukkos is the time of the “*ananei hakavod*,” the time to dialogue with Hashem following our spiritual cleansing of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, to ask Him once more for a prosperous year and, as the Vilna Gaon explained, to dilute the possibly harsh judgment that was written and sealed over the *Yamim Nora'im*.

That is the tragedy of rain on Sukkos. While we attempt to fill the Heavens with our *tefilla*, Hashem responds by taking our *tefilla* for rain and throwing it back at us at the wrong time – a time when we do not need it nor want it, essentially letting that rain go to waste. The Torah's view of wasted potential is unmistakably negative, as we see from the *aveira* of *hotza'as zera l'vatala*.

The Torah continues in *Devarim*, “ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו,” “And I will give rain to your land in its proper time” (*Devarim* 11:14). With proper *avoda* (which, Rashi explains in 11:13, refers to *tefilla*), we receive rain when we need it and want it. Conversely, rain at the incorrect time implies that our *tefilla* was insufficient or unfitting. Additionally, in *Koheles* (which, unsurprisingly, is read on Sukkos), Shlomo HaMelech writes, “לכל זמן ועת לכל חפץ תחת השמים,” “Everything has its season and there is a time to every purpose under Heaven” (*Koheles* 3:1).

1 The implication is found in the word for sky itself, “שמים,” made up of “*sham*” and “*mayim*” – “water is there.”

2 *Yevamos* 64a.

Different times of the year have different “energies,” and it appears that one of the energies of Sukkos is the building of a relationship with Hashem through *tefilla* and the special *mitzvos* of the *chag*. In physics, the Law of Conservation of Energy states that the total energy of a closed system cannot be lost or created, only converted into different forms. A good example is a ball sitting at the edge of a cliff. At this moment, as it looks over the precipice, the ball has only potential energy and no kinetic energy, the energy of movement. But once it rolls over to the expanse below, that potential becomes kinetic; in fact, at the precise moment before it strikes the bottom, the ball has only kinetic energy and no potential. The kinetic energy comes at the expense of the potential. When it rains on Sukkos as we attempt to perform the mitzva of *leishev baSukka*, the loss of potential becomes all the more emotionally poignant.

The *tefilla* that is the subject of the *machlokes* in the first *mishna* of *Ta’anis* is “*Mashiv HaRuach U’Morid HaGeshem*,” in which we state that Hashem is the source of wind and rain. We do not ask directly for rain in this *tefilla*, in contrast to “*V’Sein Tal U’Matar*,” which we begin saying in the winter. In light of our discussion, it would seem highly appropriate to mention Hashem’s ability to create rain without directly asking for starting at the beginning of the *chag*. Why, then, doesn’t the *halachic* conclusion follow Rabbi Eliezer? A possible answer that someone suggested to me is that we follow the view of Rabbi Yehoshua because it is not worth the risk of even mentioning rain on Sukkos. If we recognize the power of our *tefillos*, then we also recognize the destructive power of a stray *tefilla*. It is not hard to imagine a pious but slightly negligent Jew accidentally blurring the lines between davening for the potential of rain and praying for rain itself, and we thus hold like Rabbi Yehoshua.

Our discussion highlights the importance and power of our *tefillos*. May all of our requests be answered in full and in their proper time!

Understanding the Place of Shemini Atzeres Among the *Shalosh Regalim*¹

DANIEL NAGEL



The *gemara* in *Sukka* (48a) calls Shemini Atzeres a “*regel b’fnei atzmo*,” a holiday in its own right.² Based on this principle, it is our practice to recite the *bracha* of *shehechyanu* on Shemini Atzeres, as the *shehechyanu* recited on Sukkos does not extend to Shemini Atzeres. In contrast, on the last day of Pesach, which is not considered a *regel b’fnei atzmo*, we do not say a new *shehechyanu*.

Notwithstanding this common practice, the principle of Shemini Atzeres being a *regel b’fnei atzmo* appears to be replete with contradictions.

1. **Name:** If Shemini Atzeres is indeed a separate holiday from Sukkos, why is it referred to as “*Shemini*,” “Eighth?” This name would seem to imply that it is connected to the seven days of Sukkos.
2. **Zman Simchaseinu:** Each *chag* has a unique theme. Pesach is *Zman Cheiruseinu*, Shavous is *Zman Matan Toraseinu*, and Sukkos is *Zman Simchaseinu*. If Shemini Atzeres is a *regel b’fnei atzmo*, it should have its own theme – yet Shemini Atzeres continues the *simcha* theme from Sukkos.
3. **Nisuch HaMayim:**³ While the Rabbanan maintain that *nisuch hamayim* is only performed on Sukkos, Rabbi Yehuda is of the opinion that it continues during Shemini Atzeres. If Shemini Atzeres is a *regel b’fnei atzmo*, why should the *nisuch hamayim* continue?

1 This article is based on the ideas of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik as presented in *Harirei Kedem*, vol. 1, article 151.

2 The *gemara* qualifies this statement and notes that there are six points of difference between Shemini Atzeres and Sukkos. These include the different *korban musaf* than the *parei hachag* of Sukkos and being called “*yom hashemini, chag ha’atzeres*” in *Shemonch Esrei*, instead of *Chag HaSukkos*.³

3 During the year, every *korban* brought on the altar included a wine libation (*nisuch hayayin*). Sukkos is the holiday during which we are judged on water – “*uv’chag nidunim al hamayim*” (*Rosh Hashana* 16a). Thus, a water libation was also brought with every *korban*.

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4. **Tashlumim:**⁴ The *gemara* records an opinion that on Shemini Atzeres, a person can bring *tashlumim*, a “make-up” sacrifice, for the *korban chagiga* of Sukkos. If Shemini Atzeres is truly a separate holiday, why can it serve as the “make-up” day for Sukkos?

These four questions focus on one common theme: why is it that for some purposes, Shemini Atzeres is considered part of Sukkos, while in other aspects it is considered as if it is a new holiday?

The Source of Shemini Atzeres

The Torah records a *parshas hamo'adim*, a lengthy section discussing the holidays, in three places: *Emor*, *Pinchas*, and *Re'eh*. Shemini Atzeres is only mentioned in two out of these three *parshios* – in *Emor* and *Pinchas*. In *Re'eh*, there is no explicit mention of Shemini Atzeres. It is conspicuously missing!

In *Emor* (*Vayikra* 23:34-36), the Torah presents the *din shevisas melacha*, the prohibition to work on *Yom Tov*. In this context, the Torah mentions Shemini Atzeres:

דבר אל בני ישראל לאמר בחמשה עשר יום לחדש השביעי הזה חג הסוכות שבעת ימים לה'.
ביום הראשון מקרא קדש כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו. שבעת ימים תקריבו אשה לה' ביום
השמיני מקרא קדש יהיה לכם והקרבתם אשה לה' עצרת היא כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו.
Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkos, a seven-day period for Hashem. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. For a seven-day period you shall offer a fire-offering to Hashem; on the eighth day there shall be a holy convocation for you and you shall offer a fire-offering to Hashem. It is an assembly; you shall not do any laborious work.

In *Pinchas* (*Bamidbar* 29:35-39), the Torah presents the *din korban musaf*, and the Torah once again mentions Shemini Atzeres:

ביום השמיני עצרת תהיה לכם כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו. והקרבתם עלה אשה ריח ניחח
לה' פר אחד איל אחד כבשים בני שנה שבעה תמימים. מנחתם ונסכיהם לפר לאיל ולכבשים
במספרם כמשפט. ושעיר חטאת אחד מלבד עלת התמיד ומנחתה ונסכה. אלה תעשו לה'
במועדיכם לבד מנדריכם ונדבתיכם לעלתיכם ולמנחתיכם ולנסכיהם ולשלמיכם.
The eighth day shall be a restriction for you; you shall not do any laborious work. You shall offer an elevation-offering, a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem: one bull, one ram, seven lambs within their first year, unblemished. Their meal-offering and libations for the bull, the ram, and the lambs shall be in their proper numbers, as required. One he-goat for a sin-offering, aside from the

4 On every holiday (Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos), a Jew is supposed to bring a *korban chagiga* on the first day of the holiday. If one is unable to bring the *korban* on the first day, he has the remaining days of the *chag* to bring the *korban chagiga*. This is known as *tashlumim*. The time period for *tashlumim* on Pesach ends on the last day of Pesach, because the *chag* is no longer in session.

continual elevation-offering, its meal-offering, and its libation.

In *Re'eh* (Devarim 16:13-16), the Torah presents the laws of *korban chagiga*, *aliya l'regel*, and the *korban simcha*. There, however, the Torah makes no explicit mention of Shemini Atzeres, although Chazal find a hint to it in the word “*ach*”:

חג הסוכות תעשה לך שבועת ימים באספך מגרנך ומיקבך. ושמחת בחגך וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהָלוּי וְהָגֵר וְהִיתוּם וְהָאֲלֻמָּנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ. שְׁבַעַת יָמִים תַּחַג לָהּ א-לֵהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ ה' א-לֵהֶיךָ בְּכָל תְּבוּאָתְךָ וּבְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ וְהִיִּית אִךְ שִׂמְחָה. שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל זָכוֹר אֶת פְּנֵי ה' א-לֵהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בַּחֲגֵי הַמִּצְוֹת וּבַחֲגֵי הַשְּׁבָעוֹת וּבַחֲגֵי הַסֻּכּוֹת וְלֹא יִרְאֶה אֶת פְּנֵי ה' רִיקִים.

You shall make the festival of Sukkos for a seven-day period, when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your wine cellar. You shall rejoice on your festival – you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, the Levite, the proselyte, the orphan, and the widow who are in your cities. A seven-day period shall you celebrate to Hashem, your God, in the place that Hashem, your God, will choose, for Hashem will have blessed you in all your crop and in all your handiwork, and you will be completely joyous. Three times a year all your males should appear before Hashem, your God, in the place that He will choose: on the Festival of Matzos, the Festival of Shavuos, and the Festival of Sukkos. And he shall not appear before Hashem empty handed.

It appears based on these three sources that Shemini Atzeres has a split personality. With respect to the *dinim* of *issur melacha* and *korban musaf*, Shemini Atzeres is considered a separate entity, an independent *regel*. But with regards to the *halachos* of *aliyah l'regel*, *korban chagiga*, and *simchas yom tov*, Shemini Atzeres is considered part of Sukkos and is only hinted to through a *drasha*. In that sense it is “Shemini,” the eighth day of Sukkos.

This *yesod* will help us answer our questions.

1. **Shehechyanu:** The *bracha* of *shehechyanu* follows the *korban musaf*. On Shemini Atzeres, we bring a different *korban musaf* than on Sukkos, and a new *shehechyanu* is therefore recited. In contrast, on the last day of Pesach, the same *korban musaf* is brought as on the previous days, and no new *shehechyanu* is recited.
2. **Zman Simchaseinu:** The theme of Sukkos, *zman simchaseinu*, is learned from *Parshas Re'eh*, where the idea of *simcha* is emphasized. Since Shemini Atzeres is not mentioned explicitly in *Re'eh*, we conclude that in this aspect, Shemini Atzeres is an extension of Sukkos.
3. **Nisuch HaMayim:** Perhaps it can be suggested that Rabbi Yehuda and the Rabbanan argue regarding whether the obligation of *nisuch hamayim* stems from the *kedushas haregel* or the *din korban*. Rabbi Yehuda connects the obligation of *nisuch hamayim* to the *kedushas haregel* of Sukkos. Since Shemini Atzeres shares the *kedushas haregel* with Sukkos, Rabbi Yehuda concludes that *nisuch hamayim* should

continue on Shemini Atzeres. The Rabbanan, in contrast, link *nisuch hamayim* to the *din korban*. Since Shemini Atzeres has separate *korbanos* from Sukkos, there is no *nisuch hamayim* on Shemini Atzeres.⁵

4. **Tashlumim:** The *tashlumim* sacrifice serves as a “make up” for the *korban chagiga*. As noted above, the *korban chagiga* is discussed in *Parshas Re’eh*, where Shemini Atzeres is considered part of Sukkos. As such, a person can offer the *korban chagiga* for Sukkos during Shemini Atzeres.

Now that we have provided a *halachic* framework to understand the concept of *regel b’fnei atzmo*, I would like to present a *machshava* to explain why Shemini Atzeres straddles the line of connectivity to Sukkos, yet strives to be its own independent holiday.

Sukkos is identified as the holiday for the all nations of the world. Seventy *korbanos* are offered during the seven days of Sukkos, corresponding to the seventy nations of the world. Sukkos is a day of judgment on water,⁶ and water benefits the entire the world. In contrast, Shemini Atzeres is the holiday of *Klal Yisrael* alone. In describing Shemini Atzeres, Rashi (*Vaykira* 23:26) cites a parable of a king who invites his sons to dine with him for a number of days. When the time comes for them to leave, he asks them to stay for one more day, since it is difficult for him to part from them. Hashem similarly does not want to part from us after Sukkos.

Putting these two concepts together, we can see that the profundity of Shemini Atzeres comes from its contrast to Sukkos. A friend only feels special when he is singled out from amongst others. Similarly, Shemini Atzeres, which represents the day that Hashem wants to spend exclusively with *Yisrael*, must be connected to and follow on the heels of Sukkos, a holiday for the entire world. The specialness of Shemini Atzeres is rooted in its exclusivity as well as its connection to Sukkos.

⁵ Rabbi Soloveitchik offers support for this theory based on another *machlokes* between Rabbi Yehuda and the Rabbanan regarding the required *shiur* for *nisuch hamayim*. Since the Rabbanan derive the obligation of *nisuch hamayim* from the *din korban*, in their view, the *shiur* mirrors that of *nisuch hayayin* and is therefore three *lugin*. Rabbi Yehuda, in contrast, argues that *nisuch hamayim* only requires one *lug*. Since the source of the obligation is *kedushas haregel*, its *shiur* is unrelated to that of *nisuch hamayim*.

⁶ *Rosh Hashana* 16a

סוכה שהיא גבוהה למעלה מעשרים אמה

ZACH PRAW



The *mishna* (Sukka 2a) states that a *sukka* taller than twenty *amos* is *pasul*, while Rabbi Yehuda maintains that it is valid. The *gemara* (2b) relates that *Heleni HaMalka* and her seven sons used to sit in a *sukka* that was taller than twenty *amos*, and the *Chachamim* did not tell her that she was acting improperly. Rabbi Yehuda brings this as a proof that his view is correct and a *sukka* can be taller than twenty *amos*. The *Rabbanan*, however, disagree and argue that this anecdote is not a proof. *Heleni HaMalka*, a woman, was exempt from the *mitzva*, as *sukka* is a *mitzvas aseil shehazman grama* (a time-bound *mitzva*) in which women are not obligated. That is the reason that the *Chachamim* did not criticize her, not because her *sukka* was actually valid. Rabbi Yehuda responds that although *Heleni HaMalka* herself was exempt from *sukka*, at least one of her seven sons must have reached the age of *chinuch*¹ and was obligated to sit in a valid *sukka*. Since *Heleni HaMalka* observed all of the *mitzvos d'rabbanan*, Rabbi Yehuda argues, it must be that her *sukka* was indeed valid, as she would not have had her sons sit in an invalid *sukka*.

Rav Akiva Eiger writes that this *gemara* implies that by listening to the *Chachamim* and making her children sit in a valid *sukka*, *Heleni HaMalka* was fulfilling a *chiyuv d'rabbanan* of *chinuch*, educating one's children. The problem is that the *Tosfos Yeshanim* (82a) says that the obligation to be *mechanech* one's children only applies to the father, and not to the mother. Thus, *Heleni HaMalka* was not required to have her children sit in a valid *sukka*, in which case there is no proof of Rabbi Yehuda's view that a *sukka* taller than twenty *amos* is valid.

We can answer this question based on a comment of *Tosfos* in *Brachos* (48b). *Tosfos* writes that a child also has a *mitzva* of *chinuch*. The *Steipler Gaon* (*Kehillas Yaakov*, *Sukka*, *siman* 2) interprets this *Tosfos* to mean that there are two aspects to the *mitzva*. There is a *chiyuv* on the parents – specifically the father – to make sure that the child does the *mitzvos*, and there is another *chiyuv d'rabbanan* on the child, who is obligated to do the *mitzva*. According to this approach, although it is true that *Heleni HaMalka* was not obligated to be *mechanech* her sons and make them sit in a valid *sukka*, her sons had their own *mitzva d'rabbanan* of

¹ The *gemara* defines this age as the point when a child no longer persistently calls for his mother when he wakes up in the night.

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chinuch to sit in a valid *sukka*. When the *gemara* says that Heleni HaMalka observed all of the *mitzvos d'rabbanan*, it was referring to the second element of the obligation of *chinuch* – that of her children. Since Heleni HaMalka was concerned about her children's *chiyuv d'rabbanan*, she would make sure that her children were sitting in a valid *sukka*. Thus, Rabbi Yehuda's proof that a *sukka* taller than twenty *amos* is valid still stands.

How Often is Simchas Torah? The Annual and Triennial Cycles

DANIEL WIESEL



Sukkos is immediately followed by an extra day of *Yom Tov* called Shmini Atzeres. Unlike Sukkos, during which we sit in a *sukka* and shake the four *minim*, there are no specific *mitzvos* associated with Shmini Atzeres. However, there is a custom to finish the cycle of Torah portions on Shmini Atzeres and celebrate the completion of reading the Torah with dancing and singing. Simchas Torah is a particularly identifiable Jewish holiday. While it may not have the near-universal name recognition of Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, the image of Jewish men circle-dancing with *sifrei Torah* is certainly a stereotype of Jewish celebration. In fact, the name “Shmini Atzeres” has been almost entirely replaced with “Simchas Torah” in common vernacular, especially in *Eretz Yisrael*, where Simchas Torah is celebrated on the only day of Shmini Atzeres.

In the midst of all the celebration, we may forget a simple question – where did this celebration come from? This article will explore the history of the Torah reading cycle from its inception in the time of Ezra to the current day, with a focus on the annual vs. triennial cycle.

Origins of the Torah Reading

The mitzva of *Hakhel* (*Devarim* 31) requires the Jewish king to read from *Sefer Devarim* once every seven years, on the Sukkos after the *Shemitta* year. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Megilla* 4:1) states that Moshe also instituted regular Torah readings on Shabbos, *Yom Tov*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and *Chol HaMo'ed*, and Ezra instituted Torah readings on Monday and Thursday mornings and on Shabbos afternoon at *Mincha*.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Tefilla* 12:1) states this concept slightly differently:

משה רבנו תקן להן לישראל, שיהיו קורין בתורה ברבים בשבת ובשני ובחמישי בשחרית, כדי שלא יהיו שלושה ימים בלא שמיעת תורה. ועזרא הסופר תקן שיהיו קורין כן במנחה בכל שבת... וגם, הוא תקן שיהיו הקורין בשני ובחמישי שלושה בני אדם, ולא יקראו פחות מעשרה פסוקים.

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Moshe established public Torah readings on the mornings of Shabbos, Monday, and Thursday so that three days would not pass without the people hearing words of Torah. Ezra established a public Torah reading on Shabbos at Mincha... and that three people should be called to the Torah on Monday and Thursday and no less than ten verses should be read.

In a later *halacha*, the Rambam states (*Hilchos Tefilla* 13:1):

המנהג הפשוט בכל ישראל שמשלימין את התורה בשנה אחת, מתחילין בשבת שאחר חג הסוכות וקורין בסדר בראשית, בשניה אלה תולדות, בשלישית ויאמר יי' אל אברם, וקוראין והולכין על הסדר הזה עד שגומרין את התורה בחג הסוכות, ויש מי שמשלים את התורה בשלש שנים ואינו מנהג פשוט.

The “pashut” custom among all Jews is to complete the Torah in one year. We begin the Shabbos after Sukkos and read “Bereishis;” the second week, “Eleh Toldos Noach;” the third week, “Vayomer Hashem el Avram [Lech Lecha].” We continue reading in this order until the Torah is completed on Sukkos. There are those that complete the Torah in three years, but that is not the “pashut” custom.

Design of the Annual Cycle

The Rambam in *Hilchos Sefer Torah* (ch. 8), relying on the Aleppo Codex, divides the Torah into *parshiyos* and lists the “closed” and “open” separations between the *parshiyos*. A “closed” separation is a space between the end of one *pasuk* and the beginning of the next *pasuk*. An “open” separation is when the next *pasuk* begins on the following line. Both separations mark the beginning of a new section.

Note that these are not the *parshiyos* read weekly in the annual cycle. The weekly *parshiyos* are groupings of the Rambam’s *parshiyos* into fifty-four separate *parshiyos* designed to be read over the course of one lunar year. References to “*parshiyos*” in the remainder of this article refer to the commonly-known groupings and not to those in the Rambam’s list.

Individual *parshiyos* are read either separately or combined with one other *parsha* to allow for some flexibility of scheduling. The flexibility is needed to accommodate the vagaries of the Jewish lunar calendar, in which *Yomim Tovim* may fall on Shabbos and thus push off the Torah reading for that week. Additionally, leap years require an additional four weeks of Torah readings. By combining certain *parshiyos* during a regular year and separating all or some of them during leap years or under other circumstances, the Torah is finished on Simchas Torah every year, regardless of how many Shabbos Torah readings are “on-cycle” or “off-cycle.”

The annual cycle, however, is not necessarily applied the same way in all locations. As noted, *parshiyos* are combined or separated to accommodate *Yomim Tovim* that fall on Shabbos and replace the regular *parsha* schedule. In *Eretz Yisrael*, which has only one day of *Yom Tov* for all *Yomim Tovim* (except Rosh Hashana), a *Yom Tov* that falls on Friday will not disrupt the regular *parsha* schedule. That same *Yom Tov*, however, will be observed for two days outside of *Eretz Yisrael* and will disrupt the *parsha* schedule outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. In these instances, the annual

cycles of *Eretz Yisrael* and *Chutz La'aretz* will no longer be in sync. This is only a temporary issue, however; the cycles are re-synced once the next “double-*parsha*” arrives and *Eretz Yisrael* reads a single *parsha* while *Chutz La'aretz* reads two.

Historical References to the Triennial Cycle

There are a number of sources for the *minhag* of a triennial cycle. The *gemara* in *Megilla* (29b) mentions in passing the *minhag* of the “*Bnei Ma'arava*” to read the entire Torah over the course of three years:

לבני מערבא דמסקי לדאורייתא בתלת שנין

The people of the West [i.e. Eretz Yisrael], who complete [the reading of] the Torah in three years.

As quoted above, the Rambam in *Hilchos Tefilla* mentions the triennial cycle, but says it “is not the ‘*pashut*’ custom.”

The common translation of “*pashut*” is “simple,” but that does not seem to fit here. A triennial cycle – particularly one that shortens each week’s reading so that what would be read in one week in the annual cycle is read over three weeks – is not any more complicated than a yearly cycle. An alternative translation offered is that “*minhag pashut*” means “widespread custom.” It should be noted that the Rambam does not even identify the communities that use the triennial cycle. He only mentions them and re-emphasizes that their *minhag* is not the “*minhag pashut*.”

Another source that makes passing reference to the triennial cycle is a book called *The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*. Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela traveled extensively throughout the Middle East between the years 1160 and 1173 and presented his travelogue to the residents of Castille upon his return in 1173.¹ During his travels he visited Egypt, including the city of Old Cairo. He writes:

Thirteen days’ journey from Chaluah stands Kuts, a city on the frontiers of Egypt, containing thirty thousand Jewish inhabitants. To Fayuhm five days; this is Pithom; it contains about twenty Jews, and has some remains of the buildings erected by our forefathers even to this day. Four days from thence brings us to Mizraim, or Memphis, commonly called Old Cairo. This large city stands on the banks of the Nile, called Al-Nil, and contains about two thousand Jews. Here are two synagogues, one of the congregation of Palestine, called the Syrian, the other of the Babylonian Jews (or those of Irac). They follow different customs regarding the division of the Pentateuch into Parashioth and Sedarim. The Babylonians read one Parasha every week, as is the custom throughout Spain, and finish the whole of the Pentateuch every year, whereas the Syrians have the custom of dividing every Parasha into three Sedarim, and concluding the lecture of the whole once in three years.

¹ This travelogue was published in 1848 as part of a collection of writings entitled *Early Travels in Palestine, Comprising the Narratives of Arculf, Willibald, Bernard, Sæwulf, Sigurd, Benjamin of Tudela, Sir John Maundeville, la Brocquière, and Maundrell*.

Design(s) of the Triennial Cycle

Many Conservative synagogues in the United States utilize a triennial cycle for Torah readings. However, an official cycle was only adopted relatively recently. In 1961, two members of the Rabbinical Assembly requested an official position from the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (the “Committee”), which sets policy for Rabbinical Assembly rabbis and for Conservative Judaism, regarding the triennial cycle adopted by the Conservative movement. Rabbi Jules Harlow, acting Secretary of the Committee, responded to the request but did not establish an official cycle. However, he accepted the custom adopted by a number of Conservative synagogues to split each week’s *parsha* (as it would be according to the annual cycle) into two parts, reading the first three *aliyos* between the previous Shabbos at *Mincha* and Monday and Thursday mornings, and reading the remaining four *aliyos* on Shabbos morning.

In 1977, the Committee adopted the triennial cycle “in principle,” but left practical implementation of the weekly Torah readings to individual congregational rabbis. In 1987, two distinct cycles were proposed to the Committee when Conservative Judaism was debating implementing a triennial cycle.

Rabbi Lionel Moses, in a paper entitled “Is There an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings,” proposed a re-organization of the Rambam’s *parshiyos* into 154 *sedarim*, which would be read consecutively over a three year period. Rabbi Moses attributed this cycle to the ancient triennial cycle of the *Bnei Ma’arava* referred to in *Maseches Megilla*.

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, in a paper entitled “Annual and Triennial Systems for Reading the Torah,” proposed a format that maintained the order of the *parshiyos* of the annual cycle, but read only one third of the *parsha* on any given week. After one cycle through the *parshiyos*, the next third of each *parsha* is read, and in the third and final year of the cycle, the last third of each *parsha* is read.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards ultimately adopted Rabbi Dorff’s proposal, and many Conservative synagogues utilize this cycle today.

Simchas Torah: How Often?

The annual cycle completes the Torah every year on the day after the last day of Sukkos (or the following day in *Chutz La’aretz*), so that Simchas Torah is celebrated every year. However, a yearly celebration makes little sense under the triennial cycle if the community is only one-third or two-thirds of the way through the Torah. How often, then, is Simchas Torah celebrated under the triennial cycle?

There is little historical evidence discussing how often Simchas Torah was celebrated by the *Bnei Ma’arava*, and the current practice of non-Orthodox Jews is not necessarily indicative of how often Simchas Torah was celebrated – if at all – in antiquity. However, *The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela* contains a reference to the practice of the community of Old Cairo:

They keep, however, the long-established custom of assembling both congregations to perform public service together, as well on the day of the joy of the law as on that of the dispensation of the law.

The “day of the joy of the law” is Simchas Torah and the day of the “dispensation of the law” is Shavuot. It is interesting to note that although the Syrian community in Old Cairo kept the custom of a triennial cycle, they still celebrated Simchas Torah every year, along with the Babylonian community.

The practice of the Old Cairo community may not have been the practice of the *Bnei Ma'arava* referred to in *Maseches Megilla*. The Old Cairo community practice may have been a compromise worked out between the two customs for the benefit of what was likely a small community of Jews.

Today, the Conservative triennial cycle assigns *V'Zos HaBracha* as a special reading for the extra day of *Yom Tov* following Sukkot every year.² The Conservative movement thus retains elements of the annual cycle by celebrating Simchas Torah every year, while weekly Torah readings are on the triennial cycle. Many Reform and Reconstructionist triennial cycles also read *V'Zos HaBracha* yearly on Simchas Torah. However, the Messianic movement's triennial cycle includes *V'Zos HaBracha* in the regular triennial cycle schedule, only reading it once every three years.

Much of the significance and many of the *minhagim* of Simchas Torah developed some time after the annual cycle became the “widespread custom” as described by Rambam. Therefore, it is impossible to attribute an annual celebration developed in connection with the annual cycle to ancient adherents of the triennial cycle. If the ancient *Bnei Ma'arava* did develop something akin to Simchas Torah, it seems likely that it would have occurred only upon completion of the Torah according to their triennial cycle.

² See <http://www.jtsa.edu/prebuilt/parashaharchives/trichart.pdf>

The Seven Ethereal Sukka Patrons

DAVID SCHWARCZ



The *Ushpizin* are the seven guests whom we individually invite into our *sukkos* during the seven days of Sukkos. The *Ushpizin* are not referenced in any standard Jewish texts except for the *Zohar* (vol. 3, p. 103b), which writes that the *Shechina* spreads Her wings over *Klal Yisrael* while the seven *Ushpizin* visit each family's *sukka* on each of the seven nights of the holiday.

The *Nesivos Shalom* (vol. 2, pp. 106-107) notes that the *Ushpizin* are a unique feature of Sukkos. Why are they not also part of the other two *Shalosh Regalim* festivals, Pesach and Shavuot?

Renewal of Creation

In order to explain the relationship between the *Ushpizin* and Sukkos, the *Nesivos Shalom* explains the overarching theme of “renewal of creation.” The Deists believed that God created this world based on scientific laws and that He no longer interferes with or manages world events. In contrast, Judaism maintains the belief in divine providence, *hashgacha pratis*. According to the *Nesivos Shalom*, divine providence is not an amorphous theory; rather, it permeates and enlivens every aspect of God’s relationship with creation. The *Nesivos Shalom* boldly posits that *hashgacha pratis* is not merely an article of faith.¹ It is, in fact, the mechanism and method for the annual and daily renewal of creation and the covenant between God and *Bnei Yisrael*. Indeed, *hashgacha pratis* animates our very existence by imbuing creation with a renewable life-force that advances civilization. In short, *hashgacha pratis* provides the building blocks of creation.

The *Nesivos Shalom* further explains that each year, God enhances creation with a new, vibrant, and vital divine life-force that pulsates throughout the very fibers of both the physical and metaphysical worlds. In turn, creation is transformed by this renewed life-force, thereby enhancing God’s relationship with creation. This renewal process takes effect on Rosh Hashana. On the Jewish New Year, *Bnei Yisrael* actively recognize this renewal through the coronation of Hashem as the master and prime mover of all aspects of creation.

¹ See Maimonides’ Thirteen Articles of Faith, articles 1-3, in his *Commentary on the Mishna, Sanhedrin* ch. 10.

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Significantly, the *Nesivos Shalom* emphasizes that each Rosh Hashana, Hashem introduces a new and unique aspect of creation through the renewal of His covenant with *Bnei Yisrael*. He finds support for this principle in Moshe's comfort to the nation after admonishing them with 98 horrific imprecations: "Today, all of you are standing erect before Hashem, from the heads of the tribes to the water drawers to enter into the Divine Covenant" (*Devarim* 29:9). "Today" refers to Rosh Hashana – the actual day on which the period of judgment commences (see *Yoma* 38a).

It is noteworthy that during this period – commonly referred to as the High Holidays, the *Yamim Nora'im* – the covenant between God and His people is renewed through the rituals performed on Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, and Shemini Atzeres. The *mitzvos* undertaken by each individual, family, and community lay the foundation for concluding the covenant for that year. Accordingly, each person enters into the annual covenant by joining *Klal Yisrael* anew and forming a personal and a unique relationship with Hashem. This vibrant relationship is infused with unique features, allowing the individual and community to interact with Hashem in a personal and symbiotic way. The covenantal relationship unlocks man's creative forces, enabling him to transform his mundane and vapid existence into a meaningful, transcendent life.

Experiencing the *Shemira Elyona*

The *Nesivos Shalom* posits that the initiation of Israel as the "Chosen People" occurred at our redemption from Egypt: "God went before *Bnei Yisrael* by day with a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel day and night" (*Shemos* 13:21). By dwelling in booths during their forty year sojourn in the desert, *Bnei Yisrael* garnered the "*shemira elyona* of the *ananei hakavod*" – the exclusive divine protection of the pillar of clouds. This divine protection of *Klal Yisrael* is not temporary or transient, but eternal.

The *Nesivos Shalom* further expands this concept by emphasizing that this divine protection of *Klal Yisrael* remains constant and is renewed every year in consonance with the annual renewal of creation on Rosh Hashana. By actively performing the mitzva of *sukka*, one merits entry in the *Am HaNivchar*, the Chosen People, thereby attaining a direct and exclusive relationship with Hashem. Hashem responds by showering His divine protection on each individual through the vehicle of "*shemira elyona*."

The *Nesivos Shalom* contends that contrary to the generally accepted belief, Sukkos is not a commemoration of the miracles of the pillar of clouds and fire. Rather, by observing the mitzva of sitting in the *sukka* with the other members of *Klal Yisrael*, we develop a personal relationship with Hashem and experience His unique "*shemira elyona*".

Why weren't individual holidays or *mitzvos* established for the other miracles that occurred in the desert, such as the well and the *manna*? To answer this question, we must envision the *sukka* as a canopy. Each individual Jew enters this temporary abode in order to interact with the *Shechina* and experience Hashem's personal divine protection anew. The

15th of the month of Tishrei is the propitious time at which we renew our marriage vows with Hashem and declare once again that we are the *Am HaNivchar*, the Chosen People.

The Role of the *Ushpizin*

Where do the *Ushpizin* fit into this process? In line with the interplay between the *sukka* and “*shemira elyona*,” the *Ushpizin* act as the catalyst to assist each person, on his respective level, to connect to and experience the divine presence. Of course, this begs the questions: Who are the *Ushpizin*? Why *Ushpizin*? And why are the *Ushpizin* only present on Sukkos and not on any other festival?

The *Ushpizin* are the seven “faithful shepherds” of Israel: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid.² These *Ushpizin* ushered in the era of *tikkun olam*, perfecting the universe under God’s dominion, commencing with our forefather Avraham, the progenitor of monotheism (*Bereishis* 12:1-9). Indeed, the three *Avos*, along with the other *Ushpizin*, successively perfected a significant aspect of creation.

Based on the *Zohar*, the *Nesivos Shalom* explains that the world has an internal clock whereby history moves towards perfection.³ The archetypes, or “*shiva ro'im*,” initiated the process of perfection by overcoming certain trials and rectifying one of the seven *middos*, seven virtues or positive attributes in Creation.⁴ The perfection of a specific *midda* results in a corresponding perfection in the Creation. Consequently, the *shiva ro'im*, who perfected the *sheva middos*, conferred upon their progeny the merit to conquer the seven indigenous nations that occupied *Eretz Yisrael* in the era of Yehoshua (*Yehoshua* 6:1-12:24).

In other words, the seven nations correlated, and perhaps embodied, *klipos*, negative attributes. *Klipos* are the yang to the *middos* yin. By confronting the seven nations, *Bnei Yisrael* addressed the obstructions to being virtuous and merited entry into and possession of the Land of Israel.

However, three of the seven nations – the Kini, Kenizi, and Kadmoni – were not conquered by Yehoshua. They corresponded to the three upper level *middos*: *Chochma*, *Bina*, and *Da'as*.⁵ They will be conquered in the future by the *Melech HaMashiach*, who will deliver

2 All seven are guests in every *sukka* throughout the seven days of Sukkos, but on each day, one of them leads the others as the guest of honor.

3 The philosopher G.W.F. Hegel was known for his conceptualization of a process of change in which a concept is preserved by its opposite, the idea of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Similarly, the *Nesivos Shalom* posits that Hashem has designated a calendar of events for the entire world that is the cause for change. The dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is evidenced in the Torah: The Jews are exiled in Egypt, leave Egypt, receive the Torah, rebel against Moshe and Hashem, repent, a new generation enters the Land of Israel only to once again rebel against the Torah, which leads to exile and then return from exile to rebuild the Temple, which is once again destroyed, leading to a fourth exile. The *Nesivos Shalom* cites from Chazal (*Zohar*, *Parshas Bereishis*, chapter 1) that the four exiles (Babylonia, Persia, Media, and Rome) are alluded to in the second verse of the Torah: “The land was *tohu vavohu v'choshech al pnei tehom*.” *Tohu* is Babylonia; *Vavohu* is Persia; *Choshech* is Media; and *Tehom* is Rome, the present, longest exile.

4 The seven *middos* are *Chesed*, *Gevura*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, and *Malchus*.

5 The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Parshas Emor* 23:98) states: The Rabbis say that the three nations that will in the future be given over to *Bnei Yisrael* are the Edomites, the Moavites, and the Children of Amon, as is written, “For I shall not give you an inheritance

upon the Jewish People the spirit of these *middos*.

The *Nesivos Shalom* notes that every year on Sukkos, the *Ushpizin* descend from their holy abode to help the *sukka* dweller to meaningfully engage in the process of perfection and encountering the *Shechina*. Indeed, the Sukkos festival follows Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur to afford each Jew the opportunity to complete the repentance process and reconnect with Hashem. Sukkos inaugurates the *olam hatikkun*, wherein the *Ushpizin* guide and direct each person, according to his individual spiritual level, to rectify his deficiencies and strengthen his relationship with Hashem and *Klal Yisrael*.

It is noteworthy that the *Ushpizin* actually open the portals and pathways to allow the *sukka* dweller to experience divine inspiration and connect with the heavenly abode. This transcendental experience, guided by the *Ushpizin*, occurs at the time when Hashem renews His connection to His Chosen People. The relationship is thus infused with multi-dimensional inspirations, heightening the *sukka* dwellers' senses and awareness.

Indeed, the upper levels of *Chochma*, *Bina*, and *Da'as* are engaged with, and receive inspiration from, the overflowing divine energy transmitted through the *Ushpizin* who descend from the upper worlds.

Why do the *Ushpizin* appear only on Sukkos? The answer, concludes the *Nesivos Shalom*, is that the atmosphere of the Sukkos holiday mirrors the upper worlds. The *sukka* dweller, when properly engaged in the process of *tikkun* as described above, creates a transcendental world. This heightened state paves the way for the *Ushpizin* to actively guide the *sukka* dweller to connect with Hashem.

In turn, the close bond we form with each of the *Ushpizin* expands our minds and souls and makes us more attuned to the divine calling. Dwelling in the *sukka* with the *Ushpizin* as our guides and Hashem as our active partner literally creates "heaven on earth"! The Sukkos experience is a microcosm of the future messianic period, when all dwellers on earth will perceive, acknowledge, and proclaim Hashem's oneness.⁶

from their land" (*Devarim* 2:9). Regarding Moav, it writes, "Do not distress" (*ibid.*). Kini is Esav, Kenizi is Amon, and Kadmoni is Moav. In the days of Mashiach, they will all be given over to *Bnei Yisrael* to fulfill God's promise. At the time that all of the Jews shall enter the land, the land will be fulfilled. Know that the land of Sichon and Og is part of the borders of those three nations. It is for this reason that the children of Gad and Reuven chose those areas as their portion of land, for in the future that parcel of land shall be elevated to the level of the three upper *sefiros* of holiness, even though they will not be sanctified until after the redemption. It is probably for that very reason that Moshe is buried there, for he corresponds to the aspect of *Da'as* [one of the upper three *sefiros*].

⁶ See *Sanhendrin* 105-108 for elaborate discussion of *Mashiach* and the time of his arrival.