



Editor-in-Chief:
Ariel Amsellem '15

Senior Editor:
Eitan Meisels '15
Michael Somekhi '15

Managing Editors:
Pinchas Gamzo '17
Jack Levkowitz '17

Layout Editor:
Eitan Tennenbaum '17

Marketing:
Joshua Aranoff '15
Yosef Hier '16

Distributors:
Eli Friedman '15
Jordan Lustman '15
Nathan Silberberg '16

Staff Advisor:
Rabbi Arye Sufrin

THE FLAME OF
OUR
ANCESTORS

*"The path of the
wicked is like pitch
darkness; they do not
know upon what they
stumble"*

- Proverbs 4:19

Tefillah Gems

Yosef Petlak '17

When "Good Enough" is Not Good Enough Rabbi Dov Emerson

Is there a more frustrating character than the one who squanders his potential? Whether it is observed on the sports field, in the political halls of power, or read about in a book, we reserve a very specific type of disappointment for the one who has talents but does not utilize them.

At the very end of *Parshat Ha'azinu*, Hashem brings Moshe Rabbeinu to the spot from which he can view *Eretz Yisrael* but only from afar. He was not allowed entry into the land as punishment for his famous mistake of striking the rock to produce water for *Am Yisrael*: "Because you, Moshe, trespassed against me among the Children of Israel at the waters of strife at Kadesh..." (*Devarim* 32:51). The *Gemara* in Tractate *Meilah* states that the word "*Mialtem*," translated here as "trespassed," has its roots in the concept known as "misuse," which indicates that Hashem saw the act of hitting as a serious violation of His command.

Rav Moshe Feinstein z'tl notes that even in the act of hitting the rock, Moshe was causing a sanctification of G-d's name. After all, when was the last time you hit a rock while thirsty and were suddenly provided with a cool beverage? Hitting a rock, which then produces water, is in fact an actual miracle. Yet, the Torah refers to this act as a "trespass," which implies that Moshe's mistake was that he did not sanctify Hashem's name, meaning he did not do as much he could have.

Rav Moshe suggests an incredibly powerful lesson that may simultaneously inspire and overwhelm us. G-d gives each of us a unique set of talents and strengths. How much of those strengths are we expected to use? We might be tempted to feel satisfied with what we have accomplished by only using a fraction of our talents and "coasting" along. G-d views that type of complacency in a very negative light as it indicates a waste of the talents He has bestowed upon us.

This is why the Torah viewed Moshe's act of hitting the rock in such an unfavorable manner. Yes, it may have raised awareness of G-d's presence by causing the miracle of water running from the rock. However, just because something positive happened does not mean it was good enough. Moshe could have sanctified Hashem's name in a much more significant way by speaking to the rock, and, by not doing so, he missed out on a valuable opportunity. The message? Our Creator does NOT consider "good enough" to be good enough. Hashem invests in each and every one of us because He loves us and wants us to achieve greatness. When we rest on our laurels, we are committing a serious sin of wasting the potential that Hashem has planted within us even if we achieve greatness.

Recently, I had the privilege of joining our YULA Class of 2018 on the Freshman Retreat (Where Cubs Become Panthers!). During an incredible team-building exercise where the group of boys was challenged to the breaking point, the counselor remarked: "**The only time you fail is when you quit.**" If we stop before we achieve greatness, we are missing out on what we were put on earth to accomplish!

As we approach the *Yamim Noraim*, we should stop and appreciate the tremendous gift that Hashem gives us in the *Teshuvah* process. We are given the chance to reconcile with Hashem and with our fellow man; we are given the chance to start over. Part of this process is recommitting to growth. We are more punctilious in our *Mitzvah* observance this time of year. We are more aware of our behavior. However, we must remember that if we are not pushing ourselves to the limit, then we are lacking in a key element of growth. The lesson of Moshe and the rock, that we must not be satisfied with "good enough," should inspire us to leave no stone unturned as we attempt to reconnect with Hashem during the *Yimei Ha'Din*.

During the period from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Shmini Atzeret, we add the Psalm of L'David (27) at the end of Davening. (Ashkenazim recite it after Shacharit and Arvit while Sefardim do so after Shacharit and Minchah.) One of the main reasons we say this Tefillah is because it contains many references to the Chagim. For example, the Midrash states that the words "Hashem Ori" in the first Pasuk elude to Rosh Hashanah. The next word, "Yishie," meaning Hashem is "my salvation," is a reference to Yom Kippur. The words in the fifth verse, "Ki Yitzpinaini B'Sukko - to meditate in His sanctuary" is a reference to Sukkot. The word "Lulei" in the 13th verse is comprised of the same letters, which spell Elul. This special prayer even has a Pasuk, which is unfortunately too relevant for our times: The 12th verse reads, "Deliver me not to the wishes of my oppressors, for there have arisen against me false witnesses who breathe violence." This could be a reference to the hardships the Jews have faced from their enemies in the past and even current times. The Gemara Brachot tells us that the last Pasuk, "Kavey El Hashem - hope for Hashem" teaches us a fundamental principal regarding Tefillah, which is especially important during the Yamim Noraim: If our prayers are not answered, do not give up, but continue to pray. Shana Tova!

The Lengths We Will Go To Nathan Bentolila '16

This week's *Parsha* contains Moshe's last address to *Am Yisrael* before he dies. Near the end of the *Parsha*, we read Hashem's last commandment to Moshe, "Ascend to this mount of Abarim [...] and see the land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel as an inheritance" (*Devarim* 32:49). Hashem had made it clear in *Parshat V'Etchanan* that Moshe would not enter the Land of Israel. When Moshe was told this, he talked to Hashem *Panim El Panim*, face to face, to try to convince *Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu* to let him enter the land. The question begs to be asked: Why would Moshe argue with Hashem face to face to try to let him into *Eretz Yisrael*? The Talmud tells us that Moshe wanted to fulfill certain *Mitzvot*, which could only be fulfilled in *Eretz Yisrael*. At the same time, I believe that Moshe also understood that when it comes to *Eretz Yisrael* one must risk everything to try and enter the land, even if that means pleading with G-d.

We are privileged today to be living in a time when we have *Eretz Yisrael*; yet, we are still living our comfortable lives in *Galut*. Only when life begins to become hard or dangerous do we pick up and move to *Eretz Yisrael*. To many Jews living in *Galut*, the Land of Israel is a secondary option. Moshe had everything he needed in the desert, but he was willing to give up all of that security and comfort in order to fulfill a few *Mitzvot*!

This can be explained through the story of Rabbi Zeira's journey *Eretz Yisrael*. When Rabbi Zeira went up to the land, he could not find a boat to help him cross the Jordan River, so he crossed using a *Metzra* (an unstable bridge made of ropes and logs). When he was asked why he would risk his life just to enter the land he replied, "Moshe and Aharon were not privileged to enter this place; who says I will be privileged?" (*Ketuvot* 112a). Rabbi Zeira did not wait for the next or easier opportunity to enter the land. This is exactly the attitude we should have when it comes to the Land of Israel.

If Moshe was willing to confront Hashem face to face on this matter, we should be willing to leave our lives in *Galut* and return to our true home of *Eretz Yisrael* and, *B'Ezrat Hashem*, we will be *Zocheh* to see the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* there.

Sincerity on Rosh Hashanah

Picture this: The entirety of the events that continue to transpire every day since the past year were all decided upon on the previous Rosh Hashanah. Take a moment to understand what that means; the governmental authorities that were overthrown, the war between Israel and Gaza, and every other significant (and minor) event were all decided upon approximately one year ago. Hashem has actually told us the extreme importance of this time. He even advised that we utilize the entire month of *Elul* to prepare for this day. Now, we must take advantage of Rosh Hashanah and earnestly lobby *Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu* so that He forgives us for our sins.

The following story demonstrates the importance of being sincere in our entreaties to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*: Two women asked a venerable Rabbi to fulfill different requests. The first woman remorsefully asked for forgiveness for each specific sin she had committed. The second unrepentantly asked for forgiveness for the various sins she has been engaged in. The Rabbi instructed the first woman to bring him a considerably large boulder from outside; he then commanded her to return it to its place. He then proceeded to direct the other woman to do the same but rather with multiple small rocks. The first woman was able to complete the task, for she was able to remember the place of the single large stone. However, the second woman was unable to return the rocks, for she did not remember where she took all of them.

Similarly, with the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah* right around the corner, it is essential that we all ask ourselves one question: "How have I failed others, and in what aspect have I failed myself in *Tikun Olam*?" We must introspectively contemplate these extraordinarily important questions in order to ensure that Hashem will forgive us. If we do not prod our souls for the mistakes we have made, *Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu* will certainly not forgive them.

Nonetheless, it is additionally crucial to analyze the "other half of the scale" and ask ourselves if we have been committed to performing *Mitzvot*. We must examine if we could have helped more people, prayed more fervently, or had more *Emunah* in Hashem. At length, the *Hishtadlut*, the effort, we put into our request for *Teshuva* will have great bearing on the quality of the events of our upcoming year.

HALACHIC ILLUMINATIONS FROM RABBI NACHUM SAUER

On Rosh Hashanah there is a custom to refrain from eating bitter, sour, or tart foods to symbolize having a sweet, pleasant New Year. The *Talmud* declares that symbolic acts have significance, which means that one should not belittle the customs regarding food eaten on Rosh Hashanah since they are also prayers for the New Year. There is a common practice to eat a pomegranate on Rosh Hashanah. The pomegranate's abundant seeds symbolize our hopes to come before G-d with an abundance of merits. The *Ben Ish Chai* emphasizes multiple times that one should eat a sweet rather than a sour pomegranate. Today, most pomegranates have a more pungent taste, which demonstrates that in Baghdad – the hometown of the *Ben Ish Chai* – they had sweet pomegranates.

Interestingly, the custom of dipping the apple in the honey has a much deeper meaning than simply symbolizing a sweet New Year. The *Zohar* calls the world to come a "*Chakal Tapuchin Kadishin*," an orchard of holy apples. Thus, apples are not only eaten for sweetness but also an auspicious sign with which to begin the New Year. Also, apples are pleasing to us in almost every way (taste, smell, etc.), so in that respect they does symbolize our hopes that the New Year will bring joy and success in all areas of life. A final reason that we use apples is that they are round, which reminds us of a crown; this symbolically reminds us that Rosh Hashanah is the day when we coronate Hashem as our king. This concept also applies to the reason for which we use round *Challot* on Rosh Hashanah. If a person cannot eat one or more of the symbolic foods on Rosh Hashanah because he either does not enjoy their taste or is allergic to them, he should look or point at the food while he recites the corresponding *Yehi Ratzon*. A person is not required to eat the food, but nevertheless, just reciting the prayer associated for that food has a significant effect. Most customs on Rosh Hashanah come from *Kabbalistic* concepts and should not be belittled or neglected.

Compiled By Jesse Hyman '16

Daniel Noghreyan '17

