

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayelech / Shuvah

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in honour of the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Gilad Gomolin**

### The Most Private Moment

**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

"And no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting when [the High Priest] enters to achieve atonement in the Holy until he leaves; and he will atone for himself and his household and for the whole congregation of Israel." (Vayikra 16:17) When the Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies to offer the *ketoret* (incense), the Torah declares that "*kol adam*" – no man – shall be allowed in. The simplest understanding of this verse is that no **human being**, besides the Kohen Gadol, may be there. From this perspective, this is an escalation of the general law of Yom HaKippurim that only the Kohen Gadol may perform the service in the Beit HaMikdash. When he reaches the most intense moment, when he comes face to face with the Divine, so to speak, no one may even be in the vicinity. Yom HaKippurim is the holiest day, and only the holiest person is worthy of serving.

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:5, 5:2) takes things further. "[This refers] even to those [angels] about whom it is written (Yechezkel 1:10) 'Their faces had a human face.'" Shimon HaTzadik, on his final Yom HaKippurim leaves the Holy of Holies and tells those surrounding him that he will die that year. He explains that each year an elderly man wrapped in white would escort him in and out – and this year that man escorted him in, but did not leave with him. He took this as a sign of his impending death. The students of Rabbi Abahu, upon hearing this story, assumed that this man was an angel, and wondered how he could enter the Holy of Holies, if no one was

permitted to be in the vicinity. To this, Rabbi Abahu responded that this "man" was no angel; He was G-d.

While the metaphorical meaning of this anthropomorphic Yerushalmi may be less than fully clear, the central idea emerges powerfully. On Yom HaKippurim, the Kohen Gadol, the representative of the Jewish people, enters the intimate space of G-d to beseech G-d for atonement. The relationship he has, and the Jewish people has with G-d is so intense that even the angels on high cannot be present; their connection to G-d pales in comparison to that of the Jewish people.

And yet, this passage is not the most radical reading of this verse found in the writings of our sages. A midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, Acharei Mot 21) takes the verse even more literally. It does not only mean that no one besides for the Kohen Gadol can be there, whether he be man or angel. The verse says "no man" shall be there. Literally, that would exclude the Kohen Gadol himself! "And Rabbi Abahu said: Is the Kohen Gadol not a man? Rather, it is as Rabbi Pinchas said: When the Divine spirit rested on him, his face would become fiery torches. About him the verse says, 'For the lips of a priest guard knowledge'. (Malachi 2:6)" The end of that verse reads, "And men seek rulings from his mouth; For he is a *malach* of the Lord of Hosts." While *malach* can mean 'messenger', this midrash takes it to mean 'angel'.

Thus, this midrash argues that in fact no human being may enter the Kodesh HaKodashim; even the Kohen Gadol must himself transform into an angel. Taken together with the Yerushalmi above (as both are statements of Rabbi Abahu), the conclusion is that all angels are barred from the Holy of Holies, except for the newly minted angel, the Kohen Gadol himself.

Yet another theme of Yom HaKippurim is reflected here: that on this day we manage to transcend our humanity. While we may not actually become angels and pray before the Ark, we too, as Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 46, explains strive to be angelic – avoiding eating and drinking, spending much of the day standing, and ensuring there is peace among us as there is among the angels in heaven (see Or Zarua Hilchot Yom HaKippurim 277). Yom HaKippurim is the day when the Jewish people enter the heavens, united to confront their Creator, confident that G-d, in His infinite kindness and love, will forgive them.

*G'mar Chatimah Tovah!*

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## **Shaarei Teshuvah**

**English: *Gates of Repentance***

**Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi**

**English ed. Feldheim (1999)**

### **Who is the author of the book?**

Rabbeinu Yonah was born in Gerona, Catalonia (Spain). He quickly became one of the greatest scholars of Sephardic medieval Jewry, comparable only to his cousin Ramban. Rabbeinu Yonah's father and Ramban's mother were siblings.

In his youth, Rabbeinu Yonah left Spain to learn in the yeshiva of Évreux, in Northern France. This Yeshiva was unique in its combination of deep analytic learning, following the methodology of the French Tosafists, and in its emphasis on fear of G-d and purity of thought, following the pietism of Chasidei Ashkenaz. Rabbeinu Yonah was deeply affected by his years there, and his later works show traces of the impact his teachers had on both his learning and thought. The integration of his Sephardic background with what he learned from his Ashkenazic Rabbis began a process – fully developed by the Ramban, Rosh, and others – which, to a large extent created the world of Torah as we know it today.

### **Why was the book written?**

An interesting tradition connects the writing of *Shaarei Teshuvah* with one of the most unfortunate events in Jewish history. In 1232, some thirty years after Rambam's death, a great controversy about his books and thought erupted. Rabbeinu Yonah who was a leading figure, used his connections in France to encourage the Tosafists to ban Rambam's philosophical *Moreh Nevuchim* and *Sefer HaMadda*. In the end, the controversy led to the burning of Rambam's book by the Inquisition; the latter led, ten years later, to the burning of the Talmud in Paris, destroying nearly all copies of the Talmud in France. Rabbeinu Yonah saw the burning of the Talmud as punishment for what had been done to the Rambam, and – according to tradition – wrote *Shaarei Teshuvah* as part of his own repentance for his share in the dispute. Some scholars reject this tradition, as they see *Shaarei Teshuvah* as a broader work, focusing on more than just repentance.

### **What are the book's main features?**

*Shaarei Teshuvah* is composed of four parts, or 'gates':

1. Twenty basic acts required from the penitent (such as regret, confession, and prayer).
2. Six motivations which bring a person to repent (such as old age, Torah learning, or suffering)
3. A list of mitzvot and their relative importance, so one will know for what he must repent.
4. The different requirements for atonement for each sin (*Teshuvah*, *Yom Kippur*, suffering and death)

As can be readily seen, Rabbeinu Yonah combined the fear of G-d he learned from Chasidei Ashkenaz, with the rigorous sorting and categorizing associated with the Sephardic method of learning.

The book, written in accessible Hebrew, became a classic *Mussar* book. As summarized by Professor Yisrael Ta-Shema, the book's strength lies in its direct and sincere appeal to the reader's common sense. Relying on the foundations of simple faith and daily experience, Rabbeinu Yonah assumes that all inspire to correct their paths, and his evident faith in us may wake the reader to repent.

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## **Israel's Rabbis: Rabbi Chaim David HaLevi**

Yaron Perez

### **Rabbi Chaim David HaLevi**

**Born: 5684 (1924) Jerusalem**

**Died: 5758 (1998)**

**Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Rishon L'Tzion 1950-1973**

**Chief Rabbi, Tel Aviv-Yafo, 1973-1998**

### **Life**

Rabbi Chaim David HaLevi grew up in Jerusalem, where he learned in Yeshivat Porat Yosef. He was ordained as both Rabbi and Judge by Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Ezra Atiyeh, as well as Nasi haYeshiva Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel. He decided to broaden his studies by attending the "Mizrachi" Seminar, and he learned English as well. He served as a Rabbi and educator for many years.

In 1951, Rabbi HaLevi was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Rishon L'Tzion, and in 1973 he was selected to serve as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yafo.

### **Legacy**

Rabbi HaLevi wrote many books, addressing almost all aspects of life. His books, including his *Aseh Lecha Rav* collection of responsa, demonstrate expertise in Halachah and Kabbalah. One of his most famous works is his five-volume *Mekor Chaim*, which presents classic halachic rulings and adds explanations from midrash and homiletic sources. Rabbi HaLevi received the 1997 Israel Prize for Torah Literature for *Mekor Chaim*. An abridged version, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Mekor Chaim*, has become accepted as a textbook in Israeli schools; students are tested on it in their matriculation exams.

Rabbi HaLevi's Torah was anchored in the thought of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, and he had a close friendship with Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook. In his writings, Rabbi HaLevi addresses issues of the ultimate Redemption and the Land of Israel. As part of his halachic and mystical outlook on the return to Israel as part of the Redemption, Rabbi Levi sought to renew the practice of blowing shofar in Jerusalem on Fridays, and he was one of the halachic authorities who permitted entry to sections of the Temple Mount nowadays, after proper preparations. Rabbi HaLevi was also one of the first authorities to establish, in a halachic work, the sanctity of Yom ha'Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. He saw in them the process of Redemption, as the days of mourning which occur between Pesach and Shavuot begin to be converted to days of celebration.

At the same time, Rabbi HaLevi ruled regarding the peace agreement with Egypt that the political leadership was empowered to give away land based on their assessment of the good of the nation, without rabbinic involvement. This position stemmed from a unique halachic outlook which did not see room for rabbinic intervention in broad areas which by right should be managed by the government. Within this view, Halachah leaves room for the government to make such decisions, and halachic authorities must incorporate it into their rulings. He also expressed this regarding the financial authority of the Israeli government, and the granting of equal rights for all Israeli citizens, which Rabbi HaLevi contended must be accepted as givens by contemporary halachic authorities.

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## Biography

### The Maharal of Prague

Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

Rabbi Yehuda ben Bezalel Loew (Maharal of Prague) was born in Posen, Poland in 1525. He studied independently in his youth and never attended a formal school or yeshiva. Yet, he achieved widespread fame for his vast knowledge of Talmud, aggadah, kabbalah and philosophy.

Maharal's first rabbinical position was in Nikolsburg, Moravia, where he served between 1553 and 1573. He was the main rabbinic authority in the city, and he was responsible for choosing the talmudic tractate that would be studied in each community. He moved to Prague in 1573, but he did not hold a formal rabbinic position. He taught in a local shul, where he was able to impart his methodology for learning to his students. He was also responsible for formalizing the chevra kadisha, which became standard in many other European communities. Ten years later, the Chief Rabbi position in Prague became available, but the Maharal did not receive the position, so he moved to Posen where he was appointed Chief Rabbi. In separate periods during the ensuing years he served as Chief Rabbi in Posen and in Prague, before retiring from his rabbinic duties in 1604.

Maharal's written works cover a wide spectrum of Jewish studies. Gur Aryeh is his commentary to Rashi's commentary on the Torah, and his Be'er haGolah discusses and explains difficult passages in the Talmud. He wrote a book on ethics titled Netivot Olam, and a commentary on Pirkei Avot titled Derech Chaim. He also wrote many works related to the Jewish holidays, including: Gevurot Hashem for Pesach, Or Chadash for Purim and Ner Mitzvah for Chanukah. His works on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot have all been lost.

Many legends claim that Maharal created a golem, a clay creature, to defend the Jews in Prague from anti-Semitic acts; most scholars deny the veracity of these legends.

Maharal died in Prague in 1609. He was buried in the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague, and his grave is visited by thousands of people each year.

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## Torah and Translation

### Teshuvah: A Return to the Start

The Maharal of Prague  
Netivot Olam, Netiv haTeshuvah 2  
Translated by Adam Friedmann

ובפרק יום הכפורים (יומא פו.), "א"ר חמא בר חנינא: גדולה תשובה שמביאה רפואה לעולם, שנאמר 'שובו בנים שובבים ארפא וגו'." רבי חמא בר חנינא רמי: כתיב 'שובו בנים שובבים' דמעיקרא שובבים אתם, וכתיב 'ארפא משובותיכם'! לא קשיא: כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה..."

דע לך כי התשובה היא לאדם מצד כי האדם נברא בהתחלתו בלא חטא, וכאשר הוא שב אל הש"י אז האדם חוזר אל התחלתו, ומפני זה ראוייה התשובה להביא רפואה לעולם כי הרפואה גם כן שהוא שב להיות כבתחלה. וכאשר בני אדם עושים תשובה וחוזרים אל התחלתם, העולם ג"כ חוזר אל התחלתו לתקן כל קלקול שהוא בעולם. ולפיכך אמר "גדולה תשובה שמביאה רפואה לעולם" כאשר העולם מתדבק בהתחלתו. והבן זה. ואמר "כתיב 'שובו בנים שובבים'" דמשמע מעיקרא כלו' דמיד שהוא שב יש לו רפואה, דכך כתיב 'שובו בנים שובבים'. וכתיב 'ארפא משובותיכם' שצריכים רפואה, ומתרץ הא על ידי אהבה כי מי ששב אל הש"י מאהבה בודאי תיכף ומיד ששב יש לו רפואה, כי מצד האהבה יש כאן תשובה גמורה, ואם שב מצד היראה אין כאן תשובה גמורה וצריך רפואה מן הש"י.

וזה ההפרש שיש בין העובד מאהבה ובין העובד מיראה, כי העובד מאהבה יש לו אהבה ודביקות אל הש"י מצד עצמו... אבל העובד מיראה היראה הזאת מצד הש"י, לכך רפואתו מן הש"י לא מצד האדם עצמו, דבר זה יש להבין מאוד.

"Rami Bar Chama said: Great is repentance, since it brings healing to the world, as it says, 'Return wayward sons, I will heal etc.' (Yirmiyahu 3:22) Rabbi Chama son of Chanina considered an apparent contradiction of verses. It says, 'Return wayward sons,' [implying that] they were only wayward initially, and it says, 'I will heal you from your waywardness' [implying that they are still wayward after returning]! It is not a contradiction; here it is [referring to] repentance from love, and here it is [referring to] repentance from fear." (Yoma 86a)...

Know that repentance is possible for a person because a person is created initially without sin, and when he returns to G-d the person returns to that initial state. Because of this it is appropriate for repentance to bring healing to the world, because healing is also a return to one's initial state. When people repent and return to their beginnings, the world also returns to its beginning and [this] mends all the ruin that exists in the world. Therefore, he said, 'Great is repentance, since it brings healing to the world,' [that is to say] when the world cleaves to its beginnings, understand this. And he also said, 'Return wayward sons' implying that they were only wayward initially.' That is to say that as soon as he returns he is healed, for this it is what is written, 'Return wayward sons.' And it is written, 'I will heal you from your waywardness' [implying that] they need healing. He answers that this (the first case) is by means of love, because one who returns to G-d out of love is certainly healed immediately upon returning, because by means of the love his repentance is complete. And if he returns because of fear his repentance is incomplete and he requires healing from G-d.

This is the difference between one who serves (G-d) out of love and one who serves out of fear. Because the one who serves out of love possesses love and cleaving to G-d which is rooted in himself... But the one who serves out of fear, this fear is rooted in G-d and therefore his final healing comes from G-d and not from himself. These matters must be understood very well.

Devarim 22:6-7 instructs, “When a bird’s nest chances to be before you on the road, in any tree or on the ground, chicks or eggs, and the mother sits on the chicks or the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall surely send away the mother, and the young you shall take for yourself, so that it will be good for you, and you shall have lengthy days.” Sefer haChinuch deduces two mitzvot from this passage: Not to take the mother with the young (Mitzvah 544), and to send away the mother bird (Mitzvah 545).

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (Aruch haShulchan Yoreh Deah 292:3-4) discusses whether one who is not interested in eggs should nonetheless take the opportunity to send away a mother bird and fulfill the mitzvah. He concludes that although this is an optional act when compared with obligatory mitzvot like shofar and lulav, it is nonetheless meritorious, and one should try to fulfill it. Others disagree, including Chatam Sofer (Orach Chaim 100), contending that one who does not desire the young should not practice this

mitzvah. For more, see Pitchei Teshuvah Yoreh Deah 292:1 and Chazon Ish Yoreh Deah 175:2.

The mitzvah of sending away the mother bird is a focus of rabbinical debate regarding whether one may “read the mind of G-d” and assign reasons for mitzvot. The Talmud (Berachot 33b) states that it would be inappropriate to claim that G-d has mercy upon the mother bird; this mitzvah is simply a decree, and not the product of Divine mercy. However, Rambam (Commentary to Mishnah Berachot 5:3; Moreh Nevuchim 3:48, and see Hilchot Meilah 8:8) and Ramban (Devarim 22) both discuss this mitzvah as emblematic of Divine mercy. One justification for identifying such themes within mitzvot is that these themes are designed to be lessons for us. There is no Divine trait or need involved, but rather the mitzvah is meant to educate us via these lessons.

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## Weekly Highlights: Oct 8 – 14 / 6 Tishrei – 12 Tishrei

**Many shiurim are off this week, but opportunities remain!**

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Oct. 8				
After hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
8:50 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Parshah	BAYT	Turk Beis Medrash
After musaf	R' Jonathan Ziring	Dvar Torah	BAYT	Main Shul
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Art of Piyut II	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Oct. 9				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
7:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Meaningful Work, Ethical Life	Yeshivat Or Chaim	In memory of Ann and Wolf Woznica and Rev. Alexander Goldstein z”l
Mon. Oct. 10				
10:30 AM	JLIC and Women’s Beit Midrash Pre-Yom Kippur Program at BAYT			
לשנה טובה נחתם לחיים טובים ולשלום				
MAY WE BE SEALED FOR A YEAR OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS AND TORAH AND SHALOM AND BLESSING!				
Wed. Oct. 12	Yom Kippur			
After musaf until minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Prophets of Teshuvah: Chanah, Yoel and Chaggai	BAYT	Milevsky Beit Midrash
4:15 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	

**Regular Shiurim Resume After Succot; have a great Yom Tov!**

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