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Heart and Mind

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered September 13, 1975)

There are two ways of relating to God, and hence two modes of teshuvah: the ways of the heart and of the mind, of feeling and of reason. The flame of faith, the אש דת, produces both warmth and light – warmth for the heart, and light to illuminate the mind. Religion can be conceived of as an appeal to the emotion or to the intellect.

These two approaches can be seen as opposed to each other in the prescriptions offered by two Tannaim, both of whose sayings are recorded in Avot. In one, Rabbi (Rabbi Judah the Prince) tells us: הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עבירה -- *consider three things and you will steer clear of sin*. “Know what is above you: a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds are recorded in a book.” Here is an intellectual formulation for teshuvah. You must know what is above you. You must elevate your thinking towards the higher goal, and you will realize, quite rationally, that man cannot hide from Providence, that all he does is of significance to the Creator, that there is a balance and a reason and a logic to all of life.

The second opinion is that of Akavia ben Mahalallel. He begins with the identical introduction that Rabbi does: “Consider three things and you will steer clear from sin.” But his three guide-posts are considerably different: “know from whence you came – the fetid drop; where are you going – the place of dust and maggots and worms; and before Whom you have to give an account – before the Holy One, the King of Kings, blessed be He.” Akavia is not appealing to our reason. He is addressing our existential concerns. He is touching our deeply felt awareness of our nothingness, our marginality and triviality and insignificance. He is reminding us of our purely biological origin, and that our end is nothing more significant than being food for worms. And he is compounding that by calling our attention to the fact that unbearably trivial as we

are, we must yet face the ineffable Source of all being....

These two casts of mind run like two threads through the fabric of Jewish religious experience. For instance, in the Middle Ages, it was Maimonides who represented the rationalist school, the idea that the highest goal of Judaism is daat, knowledge, the attainment of the right ideas about God. As opposed to him, we have a thinker like Rabbi Yehudah Halevi who maintains that the highest ideal is not knowledge but devekut, cleaving to God, the emotional experience of closeness to the Creator.

In more modern times, we find a similar division between the Hasidim and Mitnaggedim. The Mitnaggedim elevated the study of Torah to the highest rank of Jewish values, whereas the Hasidim cherished emotion, prayer, ecstasy. For the Mitnaggedim, the way to repentance begins with the study of Torah. For Hasidim, it begins with the turning of the soul and the heart to God; it is experiential.

Which of these approaches is the most authentically Jewish?

This is not an idle question. We face the problem practically and regularly in contemporary Jewish life. What shall we emphasize in the synagogue – adult education or prayers? There are those who have turned the entire service into a study session, with dialogues and monologues and lectures. There are others who turned the study of Torah into a “ruah” session, with singing and shouting and appealing to emotions. Shall our Jewish education be geared primarily to inform our children, and fill them with knowledge – as in the traditional yeshivot – or shall we try for something more inspirational, with a seminar system and all that goes with it? When we appeal to young people to come to Judaism, shall we base our appeal upon arguments or experience?

In a sense it all boils down to this: Is Judaism primarily

an objective system, a theology, a legally consistent way of life, rationally conceived and executed? – or is it addressed to our subjectivity, an orientation and way of life that must be experienced rather than thought through?

I suggest that the answer of our tradition is not either/or, but both/and response. We can choose either way, and preferably both. It all depends upon our own personality structure. Whether one – and there are very few such – is completely cerebral or completely emotional, all heart or all mind, he too can find his place in Judaism. Most of us are someplace in between; every human personality differs in the “mix” of rational and affective elements.

When, therefore, I say that we find elements of both reason and emotion in Judaism, I am not just stating the obvious and reasserting a truism. Rather, what I am saying is that Judaism is not monolithic, it is available and open to all kinds of personality, all varieties of human character. Whether you intend to be more logical or more feeling, more intellectual or more emotional, you can find that in Judaism which resonates and articulates with your own personality cast! There is therefore no excuse for anyone to pull away from Jewish life because it does not appeal to him. If you consider yourself intelligent and are put off by emotionalism, see if you can plunge into the sea of Talmud without drowning! If you feel apprehensive about the intellectual demands of Judaism, and are a more feeling person, then remember that in Judaism you have that which plays upon the full range of emotions, from genuine dread and awe through the highest reaches of pure ecstasy.

Let us now see how both of these elements are present in the various observances of this season.

The main part of Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is the *teruah*. The *tekiot*, the long blasts which begin an end to each shofar sound, are merely ancillary. But what is the *teruah* sound? The Rabbis were of two minds. Some identified it with our present *shevarim*, the three intermediate size blasts, and some maintained it is what we today call *teruah*, the staccato or series of nine very short sounds. What do these symbolize? The Rabbis referred to the three intermediate size blasts as *גנוחי גנוח*, sighing or groaning; the nine short blasts were identified as *ילולי מילל*, sobbing. What is the difference between them? The late Rabbi Kook, of blessed memory, said that the difference is this: sighing or groaning is the reaction to an intellectual effort. I take an account of my past, I consider what I have done rationally, and I come to the conclusion that I have

been a dreadful failure. I therefore sigh and groan. The *גנוחי גנוח* is therefore my response and my urge to repentance by means of the mind. *ילולי מילל*, uncontrolled sobbing, is obviously the sudden emotional awareness of the abyss that lies before me and into which I am toppling. It is an unmediated response of the heart, and this too leads to repentance.

What do we do? The answer is: all three. First we sound *tekiah-shevarim-tekiah* – the intellectual form of teshuvah. Then we do *tekiah-teruah-tekiah*, the purely emotional way. And then we combine them: *tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah*, representing the great majority of us who live on both plains, sometimes inclining one way and sometimes another.

During the Selihot season, we refer to God as *רב חסד ואמת*, One who is abundant in love and in truth. Love refers to His response to our emotional approach, truth to His response to our cognitive approach.

On Yom Kippur, when we come to the climax of the day during Neilah, we have the two most important prayers, each of which represents a different facet. First we say *אתה נותן יד לפושים -- You extend Your hand to the sinner, and are willing to accept him in repentance*. And then we cry out: *מה אנו מה חיינו מה צדקנו מה ישועתנו מה כחנו מה גבורתנו -- “what are we, what is our lives, what is our righteousness, what is our help, what is our strength, what is our power!”* The very repetition of the word *mah* is in itself a form of onomatopoeia, the sound of sobbing!

And then we turn to another paragraph which takes the other view: *אתה הברלת אנוש מראש -- You separated man from the very beginning out of the rest of creation*; he may be an organic, biological creature, but he has something that goes beyond the rest of natural life -- *ותכיריהו לעמוד לפניך -- You acknowledged man as something special, and made him worthy to stand before You*. It is his mind and his soul that marks him off from all the rest of the natural world. He is a creature endowed with a mind!

On Sukkot too we have both themes. The holiday is the *זמן שמחתנו*, the time of joy, the outpouring of great emotion. But the meaning of Sukkot is *ידעו דורותיכם*, in order that our generations know that and why God commanded us to dwell in Sukkot.

Perhaps all of this is most beautifully expressed in the Haftarah for this Shabbat Shuvah. Remarkably, on this Sabbath we read from three different Prophets, and all three taken together represent what we have been trying to

say.

The first one, from Hosea, is one in which we find an appeal to the Jewish mind to do teshuvah. “Return O Israel to the Lord your God *כי כשלת בעוונך*, because you stumbled on your sins.” The word *ki*, “because,” in itself is indicative of reasoning. The prophet tells us to recognize that we are bankrupt, that we are actually our own worst enemy. (That most sophisticated of all cartoon characters, Pogo, once said, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”) The prophet concludes on the note *מי חכם ויבן אלה נבון וידעם*, “*who is wise and he will understand this, discerning and he will know it.*” It is wisdom and knowledge and intelligence which Hosea stresses.

The second Prophet, Micah, addresses the Jewish heart. He appeals to God to return to us and love us and pity us: *יכבוש עונותינו*, “*may He subdue our sins*” – the language of emotion rather than reason; he is not asking that God discount our sins, but that He overwhelm them. And then what is by all means an emotional expression: *ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם*, “*And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins.*” One can almost feel with the prophet the power of his image, as if God were lifting the great burden of our sins from our backs and throwing it into the ocean in one great splash!

The third Prophet, Joel, offers us a combination of heart

and mind, reason and intellect. On the emotional level he tells us: *קרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם* -- “*Tear your hearts rather than your clothing*”; instead of rending your garments as a sign of grief, break your heart, because the Lord wants a broken heart. In the Temple, he tells us *ויבכו כהנים*, the priests will weep – sobbing again! The conclusion will be *גילו ושמחו*, you will be joyous and happy when God answers you. But his conclusion is on the intellectual level: *וידעתם כי בקרב ישראל אני*, “*And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel.*” Emotion and intellect are combined.

So, the three parts of the Haftorah for this Shabbat are the literary echoes of the three kinds of shofar sounds. Hosea represents the shevarim, the *גנוחי גנוח* of sighing, symbol of an intellectual calculation. Micah represents the *teruah*, the *ילולי מילל*, the uncontrolled weeping which is the way of emotion. And Joel represents the combination of both, the *tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah*.

So, Judaism does not fit us into a strait-jacket. It speaks to our minds – if that is the focus of our being; to our hearts – if that is where our life is centered; and it speaks to both of them, if – as is usual – we operate on both levels.

But whether to heart or to mind or to both, the message is crystal clear: “Return O Israel to the Lord your God.”

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Healing Leadership

Dr. Erica Brown

We usually think of leaders as ambitious drivers, people who stand in the front of the room, take charge, and direct others towards a particular goal. If they are kind and respectful, they engage followers with that kindness and respect. If not, their service can be fueled by the need for dominance and authority. Thoughtless ambition can result in callousness, ruthlessness, narcissism, and exploitation. In this week's Torah reading, we find a remarkable description of God that challenges this dominant paradigm: “See, then, that I, I am the One. There is no god beside Me. I deal death and give life; I wounded, and I will heal. None can deliver from My hand” (Deut. 32:27).

God's singularity, tied into life and healing, models a different leadership modality – that of Healer. In this verse, when God hurts people, God also brings solace and comfort. If God acknowledges that God hurts people, how

much more so can be do the same. Now, we, too, must heal the wounds we create.

Our sedra is not the first or only place to refer to God in the ‘first-person’ as a Healer. “You shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you” (Ex. 23:25). God says to the Israelites that He will have a sustaining and therapeutic presence throughout their wilderness years.

In the book of Isaiah, God is also described as binding up the wounded: “And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall become sevenfold, like the light of the seven days, when God binds up the wounds of this people and heals the injuries it has suffered” (Is. 30:26). Malbim explains that when someone breaks a bone, the bone must first be set properly and only then can the injury be healed. The broken bone is on the inside, thus the recovery must begin

on the inside first. Healing, he suggests, is both physical and emotional.

Later, we read a similar sentiment twice in Jeremiah. The first is a simple yet powerful request that God heal: “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise” (Jer. 17:14). Later, God promises future healing: “Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security (Jer. 33:6). In Psalms, we also find a verse that expresses human pain in need of repair: “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled” (Ps. 6:2). God is also described as the One to heal that pain: “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Ps. 147:3).

Nicholas Janni, in his book, *Leader as Healer*, discusses an abiding notion of leadership that is increasingly out of date: “In the old leadership model ‘great’ leaders are drivers of action, their goals primarily instrumental – maximize profit, growth and shareholder returns – and their relationships transactional. Dominated by a rational modality divorced from feeling and sensing, their power rests in the wielding of a metaphorical sword on the battlefield of relentless competition.” But today, especially post-pandemic, he contends that leaders cannot be effective if they are overly transactional. People need and are demanding a more humanizing path forward. “Healers are leaders who have highly developed rational minds but have also raised their emotional and physical ‘bodies’ to a similar pitch. They have explored and integrated wounded parts of themselves and developed higher levels of consciousness...”

Leaders should not only heal the wounds of others, but they should also find ways to name and integrate their own wounds into their leadership. The theologian Henri

Nouwen acknowledges as much in his book, *The Wounded Healer*: “Our service will not be perceived as authentic unless it comes from a heart wounded by the suffering about which we speak.” We are, all of us, the walking wounded. We are bruised by difficult life circumstances, losses, transitions, family challenges, insults the injustices of the world. We cannot pretend these do not exist. Recognizing our own wounds opens pathways of empathy for the wounds of others. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in *To Heal a Fractured World*, gives us this very charge: “If I were to sum up what faith asks us to be, I would say: a healing presence.”

The Talmud relays a remarkable and unexpected dialogue between the sage Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi and Elijah about healing leadership.

“When will the Messiah come?” Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asked the prophet.

Elijah replied: “Go ask him yourself.”

Rabbi Yehoshua asked: “Where can he be found?”

He replied: “At the entrance of Rome.”

Rabbi Yehoshua asked: “By what sign will I be able to recognize him?”

He replied: “He sits among the poor who suffer from various ailments; untying and tying their bandages” (BT Sanhedrin 98a).

If you want to know where the Messiah is right now, look to the poor and the one who bandages the poor. If we want the Messiah to come, we should do the same. The grand, dramatic gestures of leadership will be surpassed by the gentle and tender touch to the wounds of those who require healing.

Name a leader who healed you in some physical or emotional way. What could you do to pay the kindness forward today and help heal someone else?

Themes from the First Aliyah of Haazinu

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

Parashas Haazinu is referred to in the Torah as a “shirah” (Dev. 31:19). The Ramban explains that this because it is always recited as a shirah; this may be a reference to what the Rambam mentions (Hilchos Tefilah 7:13), that there are places in which Haazinu is sung every day.

Nonetheless, the content of the parashah is very

sobering; some suggest that the word is meant to convey “tzar” (R Avigdor Katz, in the Sefer Zikaron for R. B. Werner, cited in Pardes Yosef HaChadash); some connect it to the language of “ashurenu” (per Bamidbar 24:17) because of its predictions of future (Minchah Belulah). The Ksav V’HaKaballah asserts that the word shares the same root as the word for song, conveying “straightness”.

The Pardes Yosef quotes an idea from the Belzer Rebbe that our interaction with the negative themes of the parashah should be similar to how we interact with the korbanos today: through learning them, we should accomplish their purpose, rather than actually experiencing them.

The Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 31a) provides an acrostic to inform how the aliyos of the parashah should be divided: “*Hazi*” *v* *Lac*”*h*. However, there are as many as six views in the rishonim as to how this is manifested. The prevalent view is in accordance with that of the Rif and the Rambam (Hil. Tefilah 13:5, Shulchan Aruch OC428:5).

Rav Soloveitchik (Nefesh Harav p. 140-141) understood that this arrangement was a Torah requirement because of the obligation to read the Torah as it is written, “*k’khsava*”. Accordingly, he ruled that this applies even during the weekday readings, against the view of the Rama (OC 428:5, citing the Mordechai) and, like the Shiyarei Knesses HaGedolah.

Rabenu Bachya read a message into the phrase, understanding we are asking for “a return of the glory” and the Maharsha saw an allusion to the Ziv Panim of Moshe Rabenu.

R. Moshe Wolfson compared the word “*ziv*” to the similar word “*hadar*” used to describe the esrog, and noted the Talmud’s interpretation of the esrog as a fruit “*hadar b’ilan mishanah l’shanah*” that lives on the tree throughout all the seasons. So too, the Jews endure throughout all the vicissitudes of history, as the parashah will address.

The Rambam (Hil. Tefilah 13:5) notes another unique halakhah about this parashah: the aliyos of this parashah do not have to end on a positive note, because they effect a theme of tokhachah. R. Nossan Gestetner notes that this goal is thus enhanced by stopping on a note of mussar; as we aspire to Teshuvah M’Ahavah, which converts our intentional misdeeds to merits, the result of an uplifting stopping point is accomplished.

The parashah begins (32:1) with the words “*Ha’azinu HaShamayim v’tishma ha’aretz*”. The Sifrei notes that in Yeshayahu (ch 1) the language is reversed: “*Shimu*

shamayim v’haazini eretz. Apparently, “*ha’azanah*” is for closer proximity, while “*shmiyah*” connotes greater distance; the language conveys Moshe’s greater closeness to Shamayim (See Torah Temimah.)

Rashi explains that the Shamayim and Aretz will testify after Moshe is no longer present; the Ohr HaChaim specifies that “*Shamayim*” is the gedolim, while “*aretz*” is everyone else; they are witness to the covenant.

The rest of the Aliyah, as interpreted by the Chazal, alludes to many themes of Torah and Avodah. We are told that Hashem’s teachings can drop harshly, as rain; this is a warning to those who engage in Torah for ulterior motives (Taanis 7a), specifically those who do so to act contentiously with others (see Tosafos). By contrast, Torah is also presented as gentle dew; the Netziv explains this is a reference to drashos, which must be preceded by serious learning (“*likchi*”) and otherwise can lead to mistaken interpretations. The Torah is also compared to light rain, that fosters growth and development (Sifrei).

The words “*Ki Shem Hashem ekra Havu Godel L’Elokeinu*” (33:3) are cited as a possible source for the obligation of Birchos HaTorah (Berachos 21a); as the Maharsha notes, citing the Ramban, Torah is itself a name of Hashem. The Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvos aseh 15 indeed rules that Birchos HaTorah constitute a mitzvah d’oraysa, while the Ramban disagrees. The Sha’agas Aryeh suggests that the implication of the gemara (Nedarim 81a) that Yerushalayim was destroyed because of neglect of this mitzvah indicates it must be a Torah obligation; however, others suggest the reference is more to what the neglect represented, such as a disrespect to the endeavor of Torah study as a religious imperative. The Mishkenos Yaakov (Responsa OC, 63) rules that the berachos recited in public are d’oraysa. (Later (45a) the gemara connects this pasuk to the obligation of zimmun).

The Aliyah also identifies “*tzadik*” and “*yashar*” as separate concepts (32:4); as expanded upon by the Talmud. Rashi there notes that “*yashar*” is a higher level; the Netziv identifies this as perfection in the interpersonal realm.

The Whole Story

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z"l

In parshas Ha'azinu, Moshe tells the nation the shira, or song, that he had mentioned to them previously, at the end of parshas Vayeilech, as a foretelling of what would occur to them after his death. As an introduction to the shira, he tells them, "When I call the Lord's name, ascribe greatness to God" (Devorim 32:3). The Talmud (Berachos 21) derives from this verse that there is a Biblical obligation to recite a blessing before reading the Torah. Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl explains that this can be understood in accordance with the comment of the Ramban in his introduction to his Torah commentary, that the entire Torah consists of names of God, if the letters are combined in the appropriate ways. Thus, when one reads from the Torah, he is actually reading out the names of God. On a broader level, the Ramban is saying that the Torah is our way of connecting to God in this world. However, one may still ask, why is this requirement taught here, as a prelude to the shira that Moshe delivered to his nation, telling them of future events that would occur in their history?

Rabbi Sholom Noach Brozofsky of Slonim, in his Nesivos Sholom, asks a similar but somewhat different question. In parshas Vayeilech, in the midst of appointing Yehoshua as Moshe's successor, God tells them, "So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the bnei Yisroel, place it in their mouth, so that this song shall be for me a witness against the bnei Yisroel" (31:19). Although, as Rashi explains, the song referred to here is the shira in parshas Ha'azinu, this verse serves as the source for the mitzvoh incumbent upon each Jew to write a sefer torah. The Sefer HaChinuch explains that the verse means that we must write a Torah that includes within it the shira of Ha'azinu. The implication of this verse, concludes Rabbi Brozofsky, is that the shira in Ha'azinu contains within it the essence of the entire Torah. In what way, he asks, is this so? Rabbi Brozofsky offers an answer based on Ramban's observations on the shira, which I would like to expand upon and utilize to explain some other points in the parsha, as well.

Ramban writes that parshas Ha'azinu contains within it a brief version of all Jewish history, from beginning to end. The shira serves as a witness because it predicts all that will happen to us throughout our long exiles, and ends with a

promise of future redemption and recompense from our enemies. The shira begins by recounting the kindnesses that God bestowed upon the Jewish people from the time He took us as His people, discusses the role of the other nations within the scheme of history, and then speaks of the sins of the nation and their punishment. However, says the Ramban, this shira is our guarantee of redemption, as spelled out in its last verse, "Sing, nations, the praise of His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, He will bring retribution to His enemies, and He will appease His land and His people" (Devorim 32:43). This verse testifies to the eternity of the Jewish people as God's people, declares that their enemies are His enemies, and assures them of their ultimate redemption, whether or not they fully repent of their sins. Although Ramban disagrees with the Rambam on this last point, he bases his remarks on one opinion in the Talmud Sanhedrin, as he elaborates on in his work Sefer HaGeulah. Because of this central message, says Rabbi Brozovsky, the shira of Ha'azinu is considered as the most important section of the Torah, because it encapsulates God's purpose in creating the world and the path through which He actualizes it in history. As the Sifrei says, this shira contains the past, the present and the future, meaning, the entire history of the world, and God's presence in it behind the scenes. Perhaps for this reason, then, the source for the requirement of reciting a blessing before reading the Torah is mentioned in the prelude to the reading of Ha'azinu to the Jewish nation.

To expand on Rabbi Brozofsky's remarks, we may add the comment of the midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (1:1), that God looked into the Torah and created the world. A number of Jewish thinkers have explained this to mean that the history of the world reflects the contents of the Torah. Thus, when the Ramban explains the shira of Ha'azinu as containing within it an encapsulated version of all Jewish history, he is also saying that the essence of the entire Torah is contained in the shira. Based on this notion, we can now understand why God delivered this shira to Moshe and Yehoshua together, as we have seen in the verse we cited from parshas Vayeilech, and why Moshe and Yehoshua told it to the nation together, as we read in the end of our parsha, "Moshe came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he

and Hoshea (Yehoshua) son of Nun” (Devorim 32:44). Rashi comments that it was a Shabbos of a set of two, with Moshe giving over the leadership position to Yehoshua by having him lecture to the people in front of him, in his lifetime. Rashi does not, however, explain that it was specifically the shira of Ha’azinu that they taught together. Based on the explanation of the shira we have presented, the reason becomes clear, as we shall now see.

Immediately following the presentation of the shira to the people, God told Moshe, on that day, to ascend Mt. Nevo, view the land that he was not permitted to enter, “as Aharon your brother died on Mt. Hor.” (Devorim 32:3). Rashi explains that Aharon’s death is referred to because when Moshe witnessed the manner in which Aharon died, on that mountain, he longed for the same kind of death. Rav Dovid Feinstein, in his Kol Dodi to parshas Ha’azinu, notes that, on its face, Moshe’s manner of death was not the same as that of Aharon, because Aharon saw his son Elozor, being appointed as kohein godol, or high priest, in his place, dressed in the kohein godol’s clothing and ready to do his service, while Moshe was not succeeded by his own son, but by his disciple, Yehoshua. Rav Dovid answers that Moshe’s greatness as a leader was in his role as a teacher of Torah. The Talmud tells us that while a father brings his child into this world, a teacher brings his student into the next world, by teaching him the eternal Torah. Yehoshua,

then, as Moshe’s closest student, was considered by him as a beloved son. Thus, by appointing Yehoshua as his successor before he died, Moshe was, indeed, experiencing the same kind of death that Aharon experienced when he appointed Elozor in his place on the day that he died. Based on the explanation we have presented of the significance of the shira of Ha’azinu, as encapsulating the entire Torah, we may add that, by teaching the shira of Ha’azinu, together with Yehoshua, on the day that he died, Moshe was, in effect, teaching the entire Torah together with his successor on that day.

Parshas Ha’azinu is usually read during the period of the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This year it is read on the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, known traditionally as Shabbos Shuvah, because of the opening word of the haftarah read that day. Rabbi Brozofsky concludes his presentation of the Ramban’s approach to the shira of Ha’azinu by saying that, the main idea one should carry away from this period of the year is that, no matter how far we may have strayed from God, we are always His people, His children, and are never really lost. With this thought in mind, may we all remove, in this period, whatever separation that has developed over the past year between ourselves and God, and merit a wonderful new year.

It’s Raining Torah—Wait for It

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur entitled It’s Raining Torah and presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on October 8, 2022)

At the beginning of Parshas Haazinu—the song that is supposed to remain with Klal Yisroel through the generations—Moshe says: *Haazinu ha-shomayim va-adabeira, ve-tishma ha-aretz imrei fi*. Hashem calls the Heavens and Earth to witness. And what’s the first thing that Hashem says? *Ya’arof ka-matar lik’chi, tizal ka-tal imrasi, ki-si’irim alei deshe, ve-ch’rvivim alei eisev*. A four-fold metaphor. In four different phrases Hashem compares His word, His revelation, His Torah, to rain. Why is the Torah compared to rain? Rashi tells us straight off on a very pshat level: *Zo hee ha’eidus she-ta’idu — she’ani omer bi-fneichem Torah she-natati le-Yisra’el, she-hee chaim la-olam ke-matar zeh, she-hu chaim la-olam*. Hashem says I’m giving you the Torah. The Torah is like rain—it’s the source of life. With water, everything grows, plants can live, animals can live,

etc. Without water, a desert is a place of death, a place of nothingness. Why did Hashem give us the Torah? He is telling us, on a very pshat level, that it’s not because He is like a *melech basar ve-dam* who needs us to serve him, or because He needs favors or praise from us. It’s not because He needs honor from us. He gave us the Torah to give us life. Because the Torah infuses everything we do with eternity, vitality, depth, and with greatness. It makes our life worth living. I would add that I think that the reason the parsha opens with *Haazinu ha-shomayim va-adabeira, ve-tishma ha-aretz imrei fi* is the progression from heavens to earth. What is the one thing that we physically see coming down from the heavens to earth? It’s the rain. And what happens when it rains? Everything grows. We have life, we have everything we need. Without it we have death.

Likewise, whatever Hashem gave us from Heaven is for our life. That is the pshat level.

However, there are many, many different nuggets hidden in the exact wording of this pasuk. One that I think is very relevant, from the Chizkuni, says: Why is the Torah compared to rain? *Devarim she-ani omer lachem einam dvarim beteilim. Ela ke-sheim she-hamatar yored ve-ein ha-na'aso ve-tivo nikarim ve-nirim, ve-sof she-megadel peiros, af kach lik'chi ve-imrasi.* Says the Chizkuni, and I think everyone sees this in their life at a certain point. You plant seeds in your backyard, right? Every little kid plants little tomato seeds in their backyard. They go through that phase. And they ask their father when will the tomatoes grow? And the father answers: When it rains. And then it rains, and they go out the next day, there's no tomatoes there. The rain doesn't make anything happen immediately. Nothing suddenly sprouts from the ground when it rains. The rain is for the long term. So, says the Chizkuni: *Devarim she-ani omer lachem einam dvarim beteilim.* Why would you have a *hava amina* that the Torah would be *dvarim beteilim*? Because the person says: I tried to learn Torah, tried to do mitzvos, I tried to daven, and I tried to fulfill all my kabalos on Yom Kippur. And waited for my whole life to be transformed and everything to be different, tomorrow. And nothing happened. I tried to sit and learn. I tried to make a seder. And a week later I'm not learning any better than I did a week ago. And I'm not remembering anything, and I don't feel like I know anything. It can sometimes be so frustrating to invest in the long term. It can be so frustrating to learn Torah. And you start to think it's *dvarim beteilim*. But why? Not because you don't care about *ruchnius*. It's because you don't see it helping you in *ruchnius*. I tried and nothing happened. I tried, and didn't see a *roshem* in myself. And the answer,

says the Chizkuni, is: *Ya'arof ka-matar lik'chi, tizal ka-tal imrasi.* No, the Torah is like rain—it's not guaranteed to create anything immediately. You can't necessarily see the difference today. Anyone who knows anything knows that when it rains today, something will grow in a month from now, or in three months. And if it doesn't rain today, then nothing will grow. Likewise with Torah. We invested so much during *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, and yet sometimes you might say to yourself: what have I gained? What have I accomplished? I might as well give up. The person goes to Yeshiva, sits and learns all day, and then says: but what have I gained? What have I accomplished? I might as well give up. And the Torah tells us: No! The first thing Hashem wants to tell us: *Ya'arof ka-matar lik'chi, tizal ka-tal imrasi.* Just like when it rains, everyone knows nothing happens this second and this minute, and tomorrow and the next day. But you know it's going to make a difference months from now. Likewise, every effort we put in, in Torah, in mitzvos, and davening, we might not see the difference today, we might not see the difference tomorrow. But we're promised that eventually it will make a difference. And we'll look back a year later and say: I am a different person than I was then. We'll look back five years later, 10 years later, and say: My whole life was transformed. So first put in the hard work, even when you don't see the immediate results. May we will be *zoche* to take everything we accomplished, decided and thought about these *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, *Rosh Hashanah*, and *Yom Kippur*. And even though it'll be frustrating and even though it'll be hard, and we won't see immediate results, to invest and to keep up. *Im yirtze Hashem*, we will be able to look back at the end of the season and see the fruit that grew from the rain we invested, and live a transformed life filled with meaning and eternity. *Shabbat Shalom.*

Beyond Bechira

Rabbi Hershel Reichman

This week's parsha begins with Moshe's appeal to the heaven and earth. "*Haazinu ha'shamayim va'adabera v'sishma ha'aretz imrei fi.* Let the heavens hear as I speak and let the land listen to the utterances of my mouth." Rashi cites the Sifri that writes: Hashem told Moshe to tell the Jewish people, "Look at the sky and land that I have created to serve you. Have they ever changed their ways? This is a *kal va'chomer* that should persuade

you. These things never change. They never receive reward and are never punished, and they don't have children to worry about. They consistently do God's will. You, though, do get rewarded for doing good things. And if you would do bad, you would get punished. You also have children to worry about. Shouldn't you also consistently do the mitzvos without changing?"

At the beginning of his speech, Moshe addressed heaven

and earth because he wanted the nation to consider the character of the two. He wanted us to think that heaven and earth never deviate from their assigned functions and they continuously do what they do.

The question, though, is obvious. Heaven and earth are programmed. The laws of nature are immutable because they have no way of changing. People, though, have choice. We've been given the gift of choice by God. How could Hashem tell us that we should be as unchangeable as heaven and earth? For us, the consequences are much more severe.

If a person makes a bad choice, the punishment is terrible. If a person makes a good choice, the reward is immense. But heaven and earth have no choice. There is no *kal va'chomer*. You can't compare heaven and earth to people. People do have free choice, and we do change. If heaven and earth would have choice, and nonetheless they would choose not to change—despite not receiving reward—then it would be a good *kal va'chomer*. Then a person—who will receive reward—should also choose properly to do what's right. But heaven and earth have no choice. The sun must rise and must set. The ground must grow grass. What does this have to do with people?

First Choice

Shem Mishmuel has an interesting discussion about the gift of *bechira chofshis*. Hashem gave all people the power to choose, particularly between good and evil. Was it always this way?

The first people, Adam and Chava, were placed in Gan Eden. From the Torah it seems that Hashem's original plan was that they would not eat from the Tree of Knowledge and would stay in the garden forever. In that idyllic situation, were they supposed to make choices? Did they have *bechira chofshis* before they ate from the Eitz Hada'as? At first glance, one might think that they did have choices. After all, Hashem commanded them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and they did choose to eat from the tree. They clearly had the power to choose whether or not they would listen to Hashem.

Shem Mishmuel suggests another understanding. Maybe Hashem created them with limited choice. Adam and Chava only had free choice to choose whether or not to eat from the tree. But their choices in other areas were, in fact, limited. Aside from the Tree of Knowledge, they were not able to choose evil.

In our times, our free will is also limited in a sense. For

example, a person cannot choose to fly on his own. Our tradition tells us that angels do not have free will. They have great intelligence, but they cannot choose to do evil. Angels can only do good. A human being, though, is given the freedom to do good and bad.

Were Adam and Chava originally created with choice? Did they experience other challenges in which they had to make choices between good and evil?

Clear Choices

Regarding the era of Mashiach, the *mefarshim* disagree. The Ramban in Parshas Nitzavim writes that when Mashiach comes, the world will enter a new and different stage, the messianic era. Hashem will remove the choice to do evil. People will naturally avoid evil, just like a person knows he can't fly and therefore won't try. People will feel that it is impossible for them to do evil. It won't be part of their nature at all to have any temptations. They will be so repulsed and disgusted by the prospect of doing evil, it would be as appealing as eating someone else's vomit. The 613 mitzvos that we work hard to follow now will no longer challenge us once we are in the messianic era. We will be like Adam was before he sinned. *Bechira chofshis* will change.

The Rambam strongly disagrees. He writes that people will still have a *yeitzer hara* and will have to decide between good and evil. However, the environment will be positive and conducive to choosing good. People will know about Hashem and accept Him, and there will be peace among us. *Bechira chofshis* will remain but will be less of a challenge.

Regarding Adam and Chava, though, Ramban says clearly that they originally did not have a tendency to do evil, excluding that one area of the Eitz Hada'as. However, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 56) says that Adam was given several of the seven mitzvos bnei Noach. (He wasn't allowed to eat animal meat at all, so he was not prohibited from eating *eiver min hachai*, the seventh mitzva.)

So how would Ramban explain these mitzvos? If a person doesn't have a challenge, how could he have a mitzva or *aveira*? The very existence of a command implies the ability to defy it. And if a person wouldn't have the ability to defy the mitzva, how could he get credit for performing the mitzva when, essentially, he is merely acting as programmed?

For example, the human stomach is programmed to digest food. A person does not choose whether or not

to digest his food. Therefore, digesting food cannot be a mitzva. To eat could be a mitzva because I can choose not to eat. If Adam was commanded not to do idolatry or murder or have inappropriate relationships, doesn't this imply he had the ability to choose these actions?

Moving Beyond Choice

Shem Mishmuel teaches an interesting theory about the question of choice. Generally, people have choice. We face challenges and options and choose among them. Doing something one way is a mitzva; the other way is an aveira. For example, if I see someone left some money in the room, I have several options. If I would steal the money, I would commit an aveira. If I would leave the money there, I would perform a mitzva. I feel a temptation to take it because I would like more money. But the reason to leave it there is that I have loyalty to God or to people. I have an ethical sense.

The bechira question in this case is: should I follow my ethical sense, or should I give into my desire to have more money in my pocket? Hopefully, we would always choose to leave the money.

This is a typical example of bechira. It is rooted in the idea that the person feels a pull to do the aveira.

Shem Mishmuel points out that if I feel no pull at all to an aveira and it is completely meaningless to me, then we do not consider this a choice. It might be that I am so well trained to respect other people's money, it doesn't even occur to me that I could take it. Why would I want to take something that doesn't belong to me?

Many religious Jews often see gentiles eating non-kosher food. However, most of us have no temptation to eat non-kosher. Ham and eggs and bacon don't appeal to us. They simply do not tempt us, and so it's not a question of choice.

If we would develop our religious sensitivity properly in all 613 areas, then we wouldn't have to make choices. It would be so obvious that we would have to do the right thing, just like I don't feel any draw to eat the bacon or the treif pizza in the local shops.

The same would apply to any mitzva or aveira in the Torah. If I developed a proper sensitivity, I would only do mitzvos and not even consider aveiros. The evil side wouldn't even exist for me.

If a person would focus on the potentially horrendous punishments that could come to him or her in hell for doing an aveira, it wouldn't be possible for him to do it. For many centuries, Jews had magidim, traveling preachers who would

speak graphically about what it means to be in hell and all the suffering there. It really scared people then and it kept them in line. Would a person be tempted to stick his hand into a fire? No way. If hell has burning fires like that, no person would choose to enter into that situation.

Today, we are not motivated so much by this kind of talk. Hell is something that we choose not to think about. It is too frightening and stressful; we don't want to deal with it. This is a choice. If I choose not think about the suffering of sinners in hell, I now have temptation. The fires don't exist in my mind. Now I have to make a choice between good and evil. This is a graphic way of presenting this idea.

Training Not to Choose

There are many things that a person could think about and work on to achieve a level of self-perfection, a point at which he would be left with no choice but to do good.

The Gemara says that every morning Dovid Hamelech would wake up and daven shacharis. He planned to deal with matters of state immediately after davening. But invariably, as he walked to the royal chambers, he found himself in the beis midrash. Without even thinking about it, Dovid had a natural instinct to go study Torah. He didn't have to make a choice anymore. This was simply the way he functioned. Consider a person who gets used to davening shacharis for forty-five minutes. He simply can't pray in just fifteen minutes. Getting to that point involves time, training, and making the right decisions. But after that, you can turn on autopilot. That is how Dovid wound up in the beis midrash every morning.

Most of us do function on autopilot when we eat only kosher. For people who are used to keeping Shabbos, we are not tempted to turn on lights or electronics on Shabbos.

You can, and we do, reach the levels that the Ramban is talking about, in many areas. I am not challenged by that evil side because it is so beyond me that I can't even think of myself doing that. We become angels in this sense. This is a very interesting phenomenon.

If a person allows the temptation to be there, then he or she is presented with a choice. The Torah tells us, "You should choose good." *U'bacharta ba'chayim*. However, when there is no inclination to choose evil because there is no temptation, then people will do the right thing. But you cannot call that a choice. It is an instinctive way of living. A person who does not feel temptation will do the

right thing, whether it's keeping kosher or Shabbos, or being honest. This is beyond bechira, beyond the level of choosing to do good. We can choose to have a choice. We can also choose to move beyond choice.

Two-Stage Process

We can say that this is really what was going on with Adam. Ramban says Adam didn't have a choice; Rambam says he did. Adam had six mitzvos. Did he or didn't he have a choice?

There are two separate stages in this kind of personal growth. The first is when we learn a skill or a commit to a certain value. Consider a person who is beginning to keep kosher or Shabbos. Consider someone frum who recently married and is learning how to be a good wife or husband. At the beginning, they have to make good choices. Imagine that one spouse does something the other is not used to. How will you react? Will you get upset? Will you stay positive? At first, it is a matter of making the right choice.

You do so and continue. This is during the first or second year. But when people have been married for thirty-five years, they are beyond that. It's not an issue of deciding to deal with their spouse in a certain special way. We have dealt with this already and achieved a positive way of dealing with this situation—each spouse recognizes the other's strengths and weaknesses, and they work together as a team. It becomes expected, and not a matter of choice.

Many situations of Torah and mitzvos go through these two stages. The first is a bechira stage, in which a person may be tempted to make bad decisions. In stage two, after the person has made the good decision many times, it becomes ingrained as part of his character. At this stage, it is obvious that he or she will make the right choice each time. In a sense, stage one is real bechira chofshis, real challenge and decision-making. Stage two is an automatic process, beyond bechira, when the person functions like a programmed angel. This only develops as a result of the person programming himself to reach the level of automation. It becomes part of who the person is. When Dovid Hamelech started his day, he naturally and automatically walked to the beis midrash. That is where his legs walked, without an explicit decision.

How do we start? We begin our religious development at stage one. We have the challenges. We need to make the right choices and go through the process of self-perfection. Eventually we want to reach the level at which we are beyond choice and will always do the right thing.

The Snake's Bad Advice

Adam, experienced these two stages, as will all people after Mashiach comes. But, Shem Mishmuel says, instead of the present firststage bechira leading to post-bechira, the order will be reversed. Adam in Gan Eden experienced the reversed order. He started with a powerful instinct to do good. He was not tempted by evil at all in his six mitzvos. There was so much godliness in his daily experience. He spoke to Hashem, he lived in the Garden of Eden imbued with Hashem's presence everywhere, even in every leaf.

While he had the power of choice, Adam was instinctively driven towards good and did not have to struggle with evil.

But then the nachash came to Chava and spoke to her about the tree. In the first few lines of their conversation, Chava does not appear to feel any temptation for the tree. Then the snake told her, "If you eat from the tree you will be like Hashem. Wouldn't you like to be like Hashem?" The next pasuk then says that she looks at the tree and she felt a strong desire for its fruit.

Shem Mishmuel says at that point she left the awareness of God that had protected her and Adam from temptation until then. Once she and Adam spoke to the snake, they switched mindsets, substituting the da'as of the snake for the da'as of Hashem. Instead of rejecting the snake's claim, Adam and Chava started to consider the tree. They adopted the awareness of the nachash. Once they made the decision to block out the total awareness of Hashem and introduced the awareness of other things, they dropped from stage two (above choice) back into stage one. They decided not to have the instinctive, automated decision-making process to do good. They left that level and, following the snake's advice, they lowered themselves to the level of choice where they could feel temptation. They chose to make decisions, they chose to choose.

Once they began to consider the arguments of the snake, they thought that maybe the snake had a point. God never told them that eating from the tree could be a mitzva. This was a totally new theory. They wondered, "Maybe we should be like Hashem, and Hashem will agree with us." When Adam and Chava decided to consider the snake's ideas, they moved into the level of bechira.

They made the wrong choice. They regressed from stage two to stage one.

Messianic Choices

In the days of the messiah, we won't be angels. Ramban's

opinion that there will be no mitzvos is a very difficult opinion. The Rambam agrees that our instinct will be to do good. We will not be tempted by the foolishness of this world. We will see God everywhere. How could you think of going against your Creator Who gives you blessings in so many ways in all areas of your life?

But we can choose to pull our awareness away from Hashem. And then we would regress to stage one. The only temptation will be to remove ourselves from the tremendous awareness of Hashem, which will drive us to do His mitzvos with love.

Shem Mishmuel's analysis here is extremely powerful and resolves many questions.

The Heavens and Earth

Now we return to our original problem. Moshe told Bnei Yisrael to take a lesson from heaven and earth. Heaven and earth follow God's will without rebelling, and they get no reward, so we should also follow God's will. But heaven and earth don't have temptation! They have no choice. What is this kal va'chomer?

But now we understand that we can make a decision to move beyond temptation. We can become like heaven and earth. A human being like Dovid developed himself to the point that he had no choice but to go to the beis midrash. We, too, can have no choice. We have the power to move beyond choice. We can become like angels and not have to worry about making bad choices.

How can we get there? How can I use my heart, mind, and body to go beyond choice? It is possible and has been done. We are already doing it in many areas. We won't need to be stuck with bechira. This is the kal va'chomer. Moshe said, "Why must you stay at the level of bechira? Train yourselves so that you will automatically do the right thing, just like heaven and earth. You don't need to constantly struggle and worry about making the wrong choices. Be like heaven and earth. You can go beyond the struggle. You have a good reason, and you will receive s'char for going beyond choice." Even though Dovid had no choice but to walk to the beis midrash, he received reward because he got there through exercising his choice. Every time we walk down the street and don't feel the pull to non-kosher food, we get reward, since being beyond choice is a product of the exercise of our choices.

If a person would decide like Adam, God forbid, to forget about Hashem and put himself into temptation, he would be punished for that. Don't say, "I need a challenge."

You are beyond challenge. You should be like heaven and earth, go beyond choice.

Snake's Advice

This, of course, is an ideal, and not so easy to achieve. For people who were born frum, there is no question of choice in some areas, but other areas are difficult. For example, a gay lifestyle was never an issue for Jews. Avoiding it was so deeply ingrained in the culture of Jews of Europe and North Africa. They had proper relationships between men and women. But, today, in some places it has become a question of choice. This is a yeridas hadoros. We went from being instinctively good at it to having some circles in which people have to make a choice in this regard. Now, even though we have gone down, we still need to make the right choices.

Four hundred or 500 years ago, practically all Jews kept Shabbos. But then Shabbos became a matter of choice. It is sad when good things that were taken for granted become controversial issues that require people to make choices. Unfortunately, most of the things I am thinking of I don't want to discuss now. God's Will used to be obvious and now we have issues, controversies, and problems—and many choices.

Shem Mishmuel is telling us that the goal is to go beyond the choice. Make the choice not to have the choice.

This is often a question of environment. A young person has to make a choice about going to college. Pick a Jewish college, a frum college. How could someone say, "I will go to a regular university"? It is a place of temptation and will require many choices.

So, go beyond choice, choose the higher level. Why go to a school where they give tests on Shabbos? Why do you need to be tempted with a gentile girl sitting next to you in class? You can be in a men's or women's college. Why go into a co-ed, non-Jewish university, when you can choose a school that offers you a spiritually safe environment? The same thought process applies for our jobs, and the neighborhoods where we live. Choose a neighborhood where many religious people live. Of course, some people have logic for why they want to live in a place with fewer Jews. But you should be in a religious neighborhood. Your neighbors will strengthen you and your children.

Some of the meforshim say this was the advice of the snake. "You don't have enough temptations," said the snake to Chava. "Put the evil inside of you, so you will experience temptation, and your service to God will be greater." This is

not true. Life has enough challenges. God will send you the ones that you need. In the meantime, choose a conducive, supportive, and strengthening environment. Let your legs take you to the beis midrash.

Go beyond choice. If you are in a situation of choice, work on yourself so you can reach a level beyond choice. Be like Adam before the sin, like the world after Mashiach, where your world will support your choices.

Love & Longing for Eretz Yisrael

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

Five years ago, during the Aseres Yimei Teshuva, on 7 Tishrei 5779, Sunday, Sept. 16, 2018, Ari Fuld, “The Lion of Zion”, HYD z’l, 45 years old, was stabbed to death at the Gush Etzion Junction shopping mall. Ari made aliyah from NY in 1994, he was married and the father of 4 children. He was also the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, his grandmother a survivor of the death camps. He served in the IDF, and when, at age 40, he received his discharge papers from the reserves, he ripped them up and continued to serve. Before succumbing to his mortal stab wounds that day, he managed to chase (over a short distance and low wall) the 17 year old terrorist yemach shemo - who was running after Hilla Peretz, the falafel shop owner (who had minutes before served him lunch!), with his knife drawn. Tzitzit flying, gun at the ready, blood pouring down the back of his white shirt, Ari ran, and downed the terrorist (who survived the shooting R”L), and thereby saved Hilla’s life. Ari was passionate about Eretz Yisrael, Medinat Yisrael, Am Yisrael and Torat Yisrael, ultimately giving his life for the Land, the nation and the G-d he so loved. He was passionate about tefillah, specifically the prayer of Shema Yisrael, and passionate about the mitzvah of tzitzit.

As we come to the conclusion of the Chamishah Chumshei Torah, and the end of Moshe Rabbainu’s life, there is a recurring theme in the final conversations between Moshe and Hashem. Beginning in Parshas Pinchas - which is the beginning of the end for Moshe - Hashem tells him that he will see the Land, but to there he will not cross (Bamidbar 27:12-13). Unlike Yosef, another “Egyptian Jew,” whose remains merited burial in E”Y (Yehoshua 24:32), even this gift was denied to Moshe. All that was permitted was that he would gaze upon the Land.

At the end of Parshas Haazinu, Moshe is once again

Every person has challenges. Even Moshe Rabbeinu at his level had challenges. Let yourself struggle with the higher-level challenges. And let the lower-level challenges disappear so we can continue to grow. Our goal can be to make ourselves like heaven and earth, which is to do what is right because it is right, not because we make a choice.

May we serve Hashem at every level, both with our bechira and beyond bechira.

told: *עֲלֵה אֶל-הַר הָעֵבְרִים הַזֶּה הַר-נֹבֹ, אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, אֲשֶׁר-עַל-פְּנֵי יַרְדֵּן; וּרְאֵה אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶחָזָה - Go up this Mount Avarim [to] Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moav, that is facing Yericho, and see the Land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel as a possession (Devarim 32:49).*

And then, the very last words of G-d to the greatest prophet and servant of Hashem to ever live: *אֵת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה הָרְאִיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב - This is the Land I swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, saying, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but to there you shall not cross (V’zos HaBracha, Devarim, 34:4).* Surely, as we read these words - told to Moshe repeatedly - we feel a great sense of pathos, emotion and melancholy. The gift so many of us have merited - to walk the streets of the Land, kiss the stones of the Land, and enjoy the holy air of the Land - was denied to our holiest and greatest leader to ever live.

Aside from the answer of “sometimes G-d says no,” R’ Yissocher Frand shares another, deeper lesson that we learn from this. R’ Frand teaches in the name of R’ Uziel Milevsky, zt”l: The Jewish people have seven faithful “shepherds”: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid (The “Succos Ushpizin”). Each one of these shepherds corresponds to one of the Divine Attributes of the Sefirah-Count (Chessed, Gevura, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malchus). For example, Avraham Avinu is the father of chessed [kindness] ... Yitzchak manifests the attribute of gevurah [strength]. He willingly puts his neck on the altar, ready to be sacrificed.

What is the attribute of Moshe Rabbeinu? Moshe’s attribute is netzach [eternity] – that which lasts forever. Everything that Moshe Rabbeinu did in his life, he infused

with the attribute of eternity (nitzchivus). Everything he accomplished lasts forever. He was instrumental in the formation of Klal Yisrael, and our nation is la'netzach. Moshe Rabbeinu gave us the Torah, and Torah is la'netzach. So to speak, whatever he touched became "netzach".

The RS"O, with His exquisite Divine Providence, arranged things so that Moshe Rabbeinu could not himself bring the Jewish people into E"Y or build the BHM"K (which would never have then be able to be destroyed. It was necessary, however, for Hashem to destroy it, instead of destroying Am Yisrael; hence, Moshe could not enter the Land, nor build the BHM"K). However, the RS"O still wanted Moshe Rabbeinu to "touch" one facet of E"Y and He wanted it to be la'netzach. That eternal middah Moshe imbued into the nation was the capacity to desire and longing for E"Y. Moshe longed to see it, be part of it, and enter the Land (see Sotah 14a). This longing is something that Hashem wanted Moshe to experience.

This is why to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual, we all possess a connection with and a sense of longing for E"Y. For many people, it is such a strong desire that it motivates them even to sacrifice, create hardship for themselves, and permanently move to E"Y. Even for those of us who do not take that step, we really mean it when we daven "let our eyes see Your return to Zion with mercy". Where does emotional connection

come from? It comes from G-d asking Moshe to cast his eyes upon the beauty of E"Y and to bond with it, such that his soul would eternally long to be part of it. "Look at it. Want it. Desire it. Every single part of the Land of the Land" (cf. Devarim 34:1-3). Hashem was building the spiritual DNA of Klal Yisrael. The spiritual DNA of Klal Yisrael has within it a longing and intense desire for E"Y. וְרָאָה אֶת-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי גִתָּן לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶחָזָה (Haazinu, 32:49). And that now becomes a part of the eternal bond between E"Y and Am Yisrael, a bond that is truly la'netzach.

About his brother Ari HY"D, Hillel Fuld writes: Ari was a hero. But Ari was also my older brother. He was an uncle to so many nephews and nieces. He was a husband, a father, a son, a Torah scholar, a hardcore Zionist, a teacher, and a dedicated Jew. Ari was larger than life. It's been almost five years but on the one hand, it feels like yesterday, and on the other hand, it feels like it's fake, like it never happened. We miss Ari every day, but on this day that we express sadness, we remember Ari's life, we celebrate the man, and we remember that he gave his life for us to live safely in our home. Ari impacted countless lives through his work and millions more through his legacy. Ari was a giant of a man who taught us what one person can accomplish and that when something is so important, it's worth fighting for.

A Propitious Time for Repentance

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

On Sunday night, September 24th, the tenth of Tishrei, Jews, the world over, will gather in synagogues to begin the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Jewish tradition subscribes to the belief in "propitious times." For instance, the month of Adar is considered to be a propitious time for merriment. The month of Av is a propitious time for sadness. The time when the candles are lit for Shabbat is a propitious time to pray for the welfare of one's family. The time immediately before a marriage ceremony is considered to be a propitious time for the bride and groom to pray for their own well-being and for the well-being of others. The month of Tishrei is regarded as a propitious time for Teshuva, for repentance. As the prophet, Isaiah says in Isaiah 55:6, קְרָאָהוּ, הַשֶּׁם בְּהַמְצָאוֹ, דְרָשׁוּ הַשֶּׁם בְּהַמְצָאוֹ, קְרָאָהוּ, הַשֶּׁם בְּהַמְצָאוֹ, דְרָשׁוּ הַשֶּׁם בְּהַמְצָאוֹ.

בְּהַיְיֹוֹתָ קְרוּב, Seek G-d when He is to be found. Call unto Him when He is nigh. G-d is never "closer" to His creations than during the month of Tishrei.

For the Jewish people, the time of repentance is a joyous time. We do not dress in black, as is the custom of others, or express undue fear, because we know that G-d desperately wants us to repent and is always prepared to welcome the penitent back. The prophet Ezekiel 33:11, אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, חַי אֲנִי נְאֻם הַשֵּׁם אֲדֹלֵק אֶת-הַמָּוֹת, אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, חַי אֲנִי נְאֻם הַשֵּׁם אֲדֹלֵק אֶת-הַמָּוֹת, אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, חַי אֲנִי נְאֻם הַשֵּׁם אֲדֹלֵק אֶת-הַמָּוֹת, אָמַר אֱלֹהִים, חַי אֲנִי נְאֻם הַשֵּׁם אֲדֹלֵק אֶת-הַמָּוֹת. G-d does not desire for anyone to die. Rather that the wicked return from their evil ways and survive. It's as if the Al-mighty has set up a no-lose situation for His people to do Teshuva.

The rabbis take this concept even further with their remarkable statement found in the Talmudic tractates

מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין, צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדין, Berachot 34b and Sanhedrin 99a: In the place where penitents stand, even the most righteous cannot stand. The Chassidim explain this statement by portraying every human being as being connected to the Al-mighty by a would-be umbilical cord, a tether. When the person sins grievously, the connection is severed. When the person repents, the cord is tied together again. But, because of the knot, the cord is shorter, and the Ba'al Teshuva is now closer to G-d than even the person who has not sinned. Could it be that G-d is advising His people that the sinner has an advantage over the righteous, because repentance brings a sinner closer to Him? That's how desperately G-d desires repentance.

During the High Holidays we often refer to G-d as Aveinu Malkenu—our Father, our King. A king is remote, omnipotent and very majestic, while a father, a parent, is close, and very embracing. That is why we refer to G-d first as the father, and only then as king. To better explain this concept, I'd like to share with you a most meaningful song, The Arrogant Prince, composed by Chaim Salenger, that appears on the album, The Wayward Ram. The song is based on a story taken from Rabbi Isaac Blazer's classic book "Kochav Ohr," referring to the phrase "Our Father, our King" that is found in the Avinu Malkenu prayer. The lyrics are as follows:

There once was King
 And the King had a son
 And the son was a clever but arrogant prince
 And the prince would often act in open disdain
 And with bold disregard to his father the King
 And the King wanted hard to ignore it
 But in vain was the burden he bore
 So they banished the prince from the palace
 Though still what he wore
 Were his royal robes.
 Well, the prince went in search
 Of somewhere to begin
 And he came to a town
 But he felt out of place
 For the men were all miners
 And he a noble man
 With his long royal robes and his soft royal face.
 And they made him an honorary miner
 Digging down in some forsaken hole,
 But the robes that were once much finer
 Turned black as the coal

And badly tattered.
 So then, thought the prince,
 "I am far too elite.
 I must dress and behave
 Like the common folk do."
 So, he let grow his hair
 And he drank and he cursed
 And he became like the others, though possibly worse.
 But the King had a change of heart one day,
 And he longed for his wandering son.
 So somehow, they finally found him,
 But strangely enough,
 He'd forgotten who he was.
 Well, there stood the prince
 In his black tattered robes,
 Waiting out in the cold saying,
 "Please let me in."
 And the guard took one look
 At this strange, ragged man
 And said, "I know the prince.
 And buddy, you are not him."
 But the King heard the noise in the palace,
 And the pleading and the cries of someone.
 And he called to the guard, "Let him in,
 Let him in, let him in,
 That's the voice of my son."
 Avinu Malkenu,
 Our Father our King
 Please hear our voice,
 Please let us in.
 And though we are ragged
 And though we are wrong all along
 We know it's true
 Avinu Malkenu.
 Avinu Malkenu,
 Our Father our King
 Please hear our voice
 Please let us in.
 And though we are strangers,
 Deep in our voice is the cry
 Of your wandering son.
 Avinu Malkenu,
 Our Father Our King.
 The Kotzker Rebbe was once asked, where do you find G-d? He answered in Yiddish, "Vu m'lust ehm ah'rein,"
 Where you let him in!

I pray that during this High Holiday season, all of G-d's children will open their hearts to let G-d in, so that we may

all soon be the beneficiaries of the ultimate redemption, when peace will prevail throughout the world.

The Laws of Nature and the Laws of Morality

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

Moshe begins the song of Haazinu by calling heaven and earth to attention: האזינו השמיים ותשמעו הארץ אמרי פי – “Listen, o heavens, and I shall speak; and hear, o earth, the words of my mouth.”

Rashi explains that Moshe summons the heaven and earth to serve as witnesses to the warnings that he was now presenting, because the heaven and earth endure for all eternity. After Moshe's passing, Benei Yisrael might deny having heard the terms of the covenant. Moshe therefore calls upon the heaven and earth who can testify for all eternity that Benei Yisrael were forewarned about the consequences of breaching the covenant with God.

The Midrash offers a different explanation for why Moshe summons the heavens and earth. The natural world, the Midrash observes, never disobeys. It always fulfills God's will for the universe. The sun will never rise in the west or set in the east. It will never rise or set any earlier or later than it was programmed to. Nature has no will of its own; it does precisely what Hashem wants it to do, at the precise time and in the precise manner that it is expected to. As we recite each month in kiddush levana, שלא ישנו את תפקידם – the celestial bodies never deviate from their assigned task.

Rav Soloveitchik expanded on this idea, noting that unlike the forces of nature, mankind introduces its own subjective will in determining the laws of morality. People devise their own system of morality, their own definitions of right and wrong. Whereas nature obediently follows God's laws, people design their own set of laws for how to conduct themselves. We cannot negotiate with gravity; we cannot change the force of the earth's gravitational pull. But people reserve for themselves the right to negotiate with morality, to choose what is proper and what is improper. This is how Nazi Germany was able to perpetrate a genocide – because the people felt entitled to determine that a specific race needed to be exterminated for the sake of the world, that this was the just, ethical thing to do.

In the future, the world will come to recognize God's will as an immutable system, like the laws of nature. In

the מלכויות section of the Rosh Hashanah prayers, we pray and long for the time when ה' אלוקינו לבודך, על כל מעשין, God will be acknowledged as King over the universe. The Vilna Gaon explained that the word מושל denotes rule by force, whereas the term מלך refers to a king who is elected, willfully chosen and accepted by the people. The day will come when ה' למלך על כל הארץ – God's rule will be willfully accepted by mankind. And at that time, His will for the world will be treated just like natural laws, such as gravity, as an immutable, non-negotiable system, which is not subject to people's preferences and whims.

האזינו השמיים...ותשמעו הארץ. In outlining the terms of our covenant with Hashem, Moshe points to heaven and earth, and urges us to view God's laws the same way as we view the laws of nature, as a built-in feature of the world order, which cannot be adjusted based on our subjective attitudes.