



# שמע קולנו

**SHEMA KOLEINU: TISHREI 5784**

**DIVREI TORAH FROM OUR REBBEIM, FACULTY, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI**



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## INTRODUCTION



### HARAV MICHAEL TAUBES

ROSH YESHIVA

YUHSB '76

Rabbi Taubes serves as the *Rosh Yeshiva* of YUHSB and has been involved in *chinuch*, both formal and informal, as a *rebbe*, teacher, and administrator for more than thirty years. A graduate of Yeshiva College, Rabbi Taubes received his rabbinic ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, having studied for several years under HaRav Soloveitchik, and holds a master's degree in Jewish Education from Yeshiva University's Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. He is presently the Rav of Kehillas Zichron Mordechai in Teaneck, New Jersey, where he resides with his wife and family.

# THE YAMIM NORAIM: PROGRESSING FROM ROSH HASHANAH TO SIMCHAS TORAH (AND BEYOND)

The *passuk* in *Melachim Aleph* (8:2, part of the passage read as the *Haftorah* on the second day of *Sukkos*) refers to the month of *Tishrei*, the seventh month on the Jewish calendar (beginning with *Nissan*), as “*Yerach Ha-Eisanim*,” the month of the mighty. The Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* (11a) explains, according to one view, that this nickname derives from the fact that our *Avos* – Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov – who are described as mighty people, as the Gemara there subsequently documents, were born during that month. According to another view, however, this nickname alludes to the fact that this month is mighty in terms of its numerous *mitzvos*, a reference, as noted by Rashi there (*d”h detakif*), to the many *mitzvos* associated with the *Tishrei* holidays of *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkos*; in other words, *Tishrei* is a “mighty” month because it is a month during which so many *mitzvos* can be performed. Indeed, Rav Dovid Avudraham, an important thirteenth century authority, writes (*Seder Tefillas Rosh Hashanah*) that the reason Hashem judges us specifically during the month of *Tishrei* is that it is then that we have so many *mitzvah* opportunities (to stand us in good stead).

Clearly, the many *mitzvos* of this special month are laced with symbolism and special significance, but perhaps it may be suggested that there is an underlying, uniform theme, namely, the establishment of a sense of recognition and awareness of, a spiritual connection to, acknowledged dependence upon, and inner contentment with the Divine Presence in our lives. It is well known that based upon a *passuk* in *Yeshayahu* (55:6, which introduces the *Haftorah* on *Tzom Gedalyah* and other fast days), the Gemara later in *Rosh Hashanah* (18a) teaches that Hashem is especially “nearby” and “accessible” during the ten days from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kippur*; maybe in some ways His “proximity” to us extends just a bit further during this season. The primary *mitzvah* of *Rosh Hashanah*, which opens the season, is of course *Tekias Shofar*, which the Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4), among others, famously asserts is designed to awaken us from our (spiritual) slumber and call upon us to remember our Creator. This holiday thus takes us on the first step, providing the “alarm clock” which initially wakes us up and calls our attention to an awareness of Hashem. The sound of the *Shofar* piercing the silence represents a wordless cry to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and connects us with something beyond the ordinary, if only for a few moments.

On *Yom Kippur*, the most prominent *mitzvah* is the requirement to fast and abstain from certain other activities which normally contribute to one's physical comfort and pleasure. As such, on that day we focus almost exclusively on our soul, our spiritual side, behaving like *malachim*, the Heavenly angels who have no physical needs (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 619:2 with *Mishnah Berurah* No. 8), and are free from material and physical urges (see the Gemara in *Yoma* 20a which indicates that on this one day of the year we are not subject to the temptations of the *Yeitzer HaRa*). It is noteworthy that the *pesukim* in the Torah from which we learn that we must fast on *Yom Kippur* (*Vayikra* 16:29 and 31; 23:27 and 32; *Bamidbar* 29:7) specifically refer to the soul, as the “afflictions” of the day are meant to touch one's very soul. On this holiday, then, after we have been awakened to an awareness of Hashem, we are able to sharpen our spiritual relationship with and our inner connection to Him by imitating the angels and by spending the bulk of the day engaged in heartfelt prayer and supplication.



We cannot, however, maintain this angelic behavior indefinitely, because we are not in fact angels, but rather human beings. After the purely spiritual “high” of *Yom Kippur*, which it is to be hoped that everybody feels at least at some point during that long day, we thus look for ways to connect with Hashem on a more physical, a more human, plane. This brings us to *Sukkos*, when we eat, we drink, we sleep, we relax, we enjoy our fine wares – but we do so not in our home but in our *Sukkah* (see the Gemara in *Sukkah* 28b). As such, we recognize, by making this flimsy structure our permanent home for the week, as the Mishnah there dictates, that our protection and safety actually come from Hashem alone and we appreciate our complete dependence upon Him for our well-being. In addition, we wave the *Arba Minim* in all the different directions in order to symbolize being spared from the negative forces of nature and natural disasters (see the Gemara in *Sukkah* 37b), again highlighting our reliance on Hashem for our physical security. Properly understood, this holiday enables us to more fully appreciate not only our awareness of Hashem, and not only our connection to Him on the spiritual level, but also our trust in His assistance in our physical lives as well.

Which brings us to *Shemini Atzeres* and *Simchas Torah*. The famous phrase “*vehayisa ach sameiach*,” teaching us to rejoice on our holidays (*Devarim* 16:15), is interpreted by the Gemara in *Sukkah* (48a) as coming to include specifically (the night of) *Shemini Atzeres* in this obligation of *simchah*. The Maharatz Chayes there (*d”h Gemara Vehayisa*) wonders how the Gemara can use this phrase as an inclusive or more encompassing directive (adding *Shemini Atzeres* to the requirement) when the word “*ach*” in any *passuk* is generally used to limit or exclude something (see *Yerushalmi Berachos* 9:5), not to include something. He answers by citing the Vilna Gaon who explains that in fact here too the word “*ach*,” relating to rejoicing on *Shemini Atzeres*, serves to exclude something, namely, the *mitzvos* of *Sukkah* and the *Arba Minim*, which do not apply (Biblically) on *Shemini Atzeres*. In other words, on that day the mandate is to rejoice, and only to rejoice, without the other *mitzvos* which characterized the holiday of *Sukkos*.

Taking this idea a step further, we may propose that when we arrive at *Shemini Atzeres*, the culmination of the *Yomim Noraim* season, we are, it is hoped, able to experience the pure enjoyment of having a real relationship with Hashem. At this point, there is no longer any *Shofar*. No fasting. No *Sukkah*. No *Arba Minim*. There is only joy, as we have progressed from waking up to an awareness of Hashem in our midst, to honing a spiritual connection with Him, to acknowledging His necessary role in our physical lives, to a feeling of inner contentment, brought about by experiencing His presence. There can be no greater contentment for a person in life than the deep and very real consciousness that Hashem is with him, supporting and guiding him. If one truly experiences that sensation, no external trappings, no other *mitzvos*, are necessary; on this holiday, one can simply rejoice in that internal tranquility and serenity. And it is perhaps for this reason that the custom developed (in the days of the Geonim) to celebrate *Simchas Torah*, demonstrating our love for and pride in Hashem’s Torah, in conjunction specifically with *Shemini Atzeres*. For it should be our goal to take that which we have gained during the *Yomim Noraim* season, building up to this profound sense of pure happiness and contentment, and allow it to inform our lives even beyond the holidays. And the best way to do that, of course, is to enjoy and appreciate the Torah, Hashem’s word, which is with us at all times and can serve as a reminder of our relationship with Him throughout the year.



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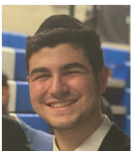
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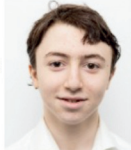
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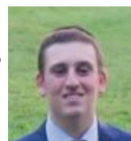
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# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

An American Rabbi once visited Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach shortly before *Rosh Hashanah*. The American Rav asked Rav Shlomo Zalman what he should encourage his *kehillah* to daven for; is there anything too petty, too small?

Rav Shlomo Zalman smiled and asked: what would a billionaire on the Forbes 500 list of richest people in the world think if he were seated on *Rosh Hashanah* next to the poorest of the vagabonds, and overheard him davening to become so wealthy in the coming year that by the following *Rosh Hashanah*, the billionaire would be working for him? The Rabbi, taking the bait, responded that a person making such ridiculous requests would be viewed as crazy. Rav Shlomo Zalman disagreed strongly. On any other day of the year, such a far-fetched request would indeed be considered grossly inappropriate, but on *Rosh Hashanah*, the entire universe is being recreated for the upcoming year, and with nothing set in stone, the sky is the limit for our prayers.

As proof, Rav Shlomo Zalman noted that the *Midrash* says that Chanah was barren for 19 years prior to the birth of her son Shmuel. Although she surely beseeched Hashem daily to grant her a child, the *haftarah* that we read on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* says that on *Rosh Hashanah*, she davened for a special child: *zera anashim*. Literally translated as “male offspring,” the *Gemara* (*Berachos* 31b) interprets this as a plea for a child who would be considered equal to Moshe and Aharon combined.

This would be quite a tall order even for a woman with a large family who had no difficulty conceiving, but for a woman who had suffered the anguish of being childless for almost 20 years, such a request seems absurd. Any other woman who had been barren for so long would be ecstatic just to conceive a healthy child. Why did Chanah make such an unrealistic request? Rav Shlomo Zalman explained that Chanah understood that on *Rosh Hashanah*, the only barriers to what we may ask for are self-imposed ones. She asked for a son who would lead the generation and after two decades of suffering, she merited to give birth to the great prophet Shmuel.

Indeed, the Chazon Ish says (*Sefer Orchos Rabbeinu*) that on *Rosh Hashanah* one can and should insert after the *Amidah* any personal requests – for health, *parnasah*, *shidduchim*, *shalom bayis*, etc. *Malchiyos* is expressed in feeling a personal relationship with G-d, making Him part of our lives, and showing that we are dependent upon the King of the universe for literally all our needs.

On the other hand, the Vilna Gaon, basing himself on the *Zohar*, says very emphatically that we shouldn't use the day that is reserved for proclaiming the kingship and royalty of G-d for personal requests. That can wait until the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and *Yom Kippur*. The one and only petition we should ask is *meloch al kol ha'olam*, the only concern we should have being *giluy kevod malchuso*. After all, we live in a world in which most people have no awareness of G-d and have no desire for any sort of relationship with Him. How can we reconcile these two views, the Chazon Ish's directive for personal prayer and the Vilna Gaon's instruction of sole focus on Hashem?

Rav Leib Chassman, in his last *shmooze* in the Chevron Yeshiva, on the last *Rosh Hashanah* of his life, explained by quoting an idea in the name of the Chofetz Chaim who gave the following parable: The czar of Russia went out to visit his kingdom. He began his grand tour in what was then the capital city – St. Petersburg. He marched through the streets of St. Petersburg and was given the honor due a monarch.



**RABBI  
SHIMON  
KERNER**

MAGGID SHIUR

YUHSB '77

Rabbi Shimon Kerner entered MTA as a 9th grader in 1973. A few years later, in 1984, Rabbi Kerner joined MTA as a faculty member, and has since taught all grades over the course of his time at MTA. Presently, Rabbi Kerner teaches a 10th Grade *Shiur*, as well as giving many *shiurim* to the larger *yeshiva*. Rabbi Kerner is also the Rav of Kehillat New Hempstead.



The ceremonies, the pomp, and the circumstance were not to be equaled.

He finished his tour of St. Petersburg and he went on to what was then the second most important city in Russia – Moscow. Moscow also put on a very impressive show. It was not as elaborate and extravagant as St. Petersburg, but it was still very, very impressive. And so it went from province to province and from city to city, town to town, and village to village throughout the country.

The czar was about to come into one of the smallest villages of the empire, far away from the capital. It was a town of peasants where they barely knew about the czar. The people had no grasp of his stature or the aura of his dominion. They were like hillbillies and were now being graced with a visit by the distinguished Head of State.

The custom here was that when a stranger came into town, they threw stones at him. They did not like strangers visiting their village. Before the arrival of the czar, the mayor of this little village got up and addressed the people. He told them, “Listen, the czar is coming. I must ask of you one thing: please don’t throw any stones! You don’t need to bring out a brass band. You don’t need to get dressed up in your holiday best, but at the very least don’t throw rocks!”

The mayor’s request was heeded. The czar came, he did not get much of a reception, but at least no one threw any stones at him. Tragedy was averted and his visit passed without negative consequences for this little village.

The Chofetz Chaim explained his parable: When the *Ribono shel Olam* visits this world on the Day of Judgment, he first visits the holy patriarchs. They give Him an ample *kabalas panim* (welcome) because they know who the *Ribono shel Olam* is. He then goes through the generations – Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Yehoshua, etc. The reception down through the ages is not as elaborate as with the *avos*, but it is certainly very appropriate. The Chazon Ish was in effect saying that we are like those peasants at the last stop on the czar’s grand tour of the country. We are like those subjects of the czar who had no idea who the czar was and what he represented.

We don’t appreciate who the King of the world is. For us to go ahead and say that our main request in life is “You should rule over the whole world and over all Your creations” is not really sincere. We are not holding at that level. But we need to show the *Ribono shel Olam* that we believe that everything comes from Him. By directing our pleas for *parnasah* and *gezunt* and *hatzlachah* and *shidduchim* and *nachas* (and the list goes on...) to Him, we are at least verbalizing our conviction that everything comes from the Almighty. If we tell that to the *Ribono shel Olam* and we believe it, that itself is a form of *kavod* to the *Ribono shel Olam*.

For sure, the *Zohar* is right and the Gaon is right. For sure, in the perfect world, we should be concerned about Hashem alone ruling over all His creations, and everyone knowing that He created them, etc., etc. But we are not on that level. So how do we show the *Ribono shel Olam* that He is the King and everything comes from Him?

We do it by saying: *Ribono shel Olam*, I NEED Your help. I need *parnasah*. I need a *shidduch*. I know that everything comes from You. This is an expression of accepting the yoke of Heaven – that He is in charge and from Him comes all. Therefore, because of our low stature, it is acceptable to pray for **our** needs to Him. This is the twenty-first century version of “*V’simloch atah levadecha al kol ma’asecha!*” (may You alone reign over all Your creations!)

The take-away message from Rav Shlomo Zalman’s answer to the American *rav*, and from the Chazon Ish, and from the *mashal* of the Chofetz Chaim, and from the Vilna Gaon is that the coronation of G-d on *Rosh Hashanah* is extremely personal – *kdei shetamlichuni aleichem* (*Gemara Rosh Hashanah* 16a, 34b, quoting Hashem’s instructions for us to say *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*, and why they should be said) – so that you will crown Me as King over you. We DO say *meloch al kol haolam* because we are finding the real us – the one who wants all the personal things they ask for – not for our own comfort, but for the glory of Hashem. I ask Hashem to help me use my strengths and talents productively – to help my family, my community, and to bring *kavod* to Hashem. I make commitments to become a better person to myself, my neighbors, my friends. I ask for health so I can be a better servant of the King. It is all *lemaancha Elokim chayim* - for Your sake. As we are about to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, let us remind ourselves that the blowing is our core *neshamah* calling out to G-d. Remembering the commitment of *Har Sinai*, committing to be the best version of me this year, and yes – it’s saying what the real me wants to say – *meloch al kol haolam*.

Rav Shlomo Zalman’s message is relevant to all of us. This year, let us remember the lesson of Chanah regarding the phenomenal power of the day, and that for one who appreciates it and davens accordingly, the sky is literally the limit.



# THE NEW WORLD; *ROSH HASHANAH* AND THE RECREATED MAN

## Creation of Matter, Time, Space, and Man

“Every day forms a new beginning of the creation... creation was not a one-time occurrence but rather an every-time recurrence, a never-ending process... Here lies the enormous difference between the work of man and the work of God. After man has finished a given work, the work does not need any preservation by its maker; the object can exist without any further contact with the maker. However, all things created by God need His constant preservation, or else they cease to exist... The [human] maker only shaped matter into a particular form; the fundamental substance existed independently of him... But God created the world out of nothing, hence its existence must be constantly preserved and maintained by His power, force, and momentum. And this is done by virtue of His goodness, *hamechadeish betuvo bechol yom tamid ma’aseh bereshis* [1]. Consequently, creation was not merely a historical, theological, and scientific phenomenon, but an ethical one as well. Creation and preservation are tokens of God’s goodness, His expression of love to what He created. Emergence out of a void necessitates God’s preservation in order to exist corresponding to God’s focus on the condition of mortal man. The human also needs God’s constant care, hence, *Rosh Hashanah* to determine whether the human deserves it. The need for God’s concern merge in man and nature.

Creation ex nihilo, *yeish me’ayin*, excites and challenges the imagination, but for a non-philosophical approach to the emergence of the material world from a void, one should redefine creation and reduce it to a more understandable level. A relatable description of the process of emergence from non-being into being would be reduction of the infinite to the finite or constriction of the timeless and spaceless to a materiality limited by time and space. Thus, the opening pasuk of the Torah: “In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.” This pasuk speaks of a world, as defined above, which possesses the dimensions of space and time. Heaven and earth are spatial, and the “beginning” speaks of the creation of time. “In the beginning. [This means] at the beginning of time, the very first moment which could not be a part of time, since time did not exist prior to it.” Rabbi Pelcovitz’s translation of the Sforno adding in his notes: As mentioned above, time itself was created, and did not exist before. It is to this that the Sforno alludes when he states that *bereshis* means at the beginning of time, the first instant, not a point in time separate from what previously existed.”

God created the world without pre-existing material, out of nothing. “The term ‘world’ can be applied solely to that which possesses the dimensions of space and time; ‘space’ referring to east, west, north, and south, upward and downward, and ‘time’ to past, present, and future....He, may He be blessed, is King, above, without end, and below, without limit...Now, although He is supra-spatial and supra-temporal, nevertheless He is also found below in space and time.” (*Sha’ar Hayichud*, chapter 7). As we say: *Adon olam asher malach bterem cal yetzir nivra*, “He is the eternal Lord who reigned, Before any being was created” [2]. When God created the world there was nothing else – only God alone. The world entered into reality with natural limitations imposed on it as home to man who is conversely not limited in range of thought, ambition, and passion.

The process of creation from a void into physical reality has indeed moral significance. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch elaborated on this point: “The contrary belief, that matter always existed...is not only a metaphysical lie which has robbed the theories of mankind as to the origin of the world and of the truth...but it is the much farther-reaching pernicious denial of all freedom of will in God and man, which undermines all morality. If the material that was there, [before creation] was given to the world framer He could only make the best possible world out of that material but not the absolute best world. All physical and moral evil would then unavoidably lie in the imperfection of the material...Freedom would be absent from the world. Blind pitiless necessity would rule the world together with its God and its men...*bereshis bara elokim*. Hereby all that follows stands or falls.



## RABBI MORDECHAI BROWNSTEIN

### INSTRUCTOR OF ENGLISH

Rabbi Mordechai Brownstein teaches Honors and non-Honors language arts. He entered the field of education as an instructor of Jewish Philosophy, Talmud, Chumash, and English Language Arts over 40 years ago - a career that personifies *Torah U'Madda*.

Rabbi Brownstein also serves as a College Guidance counselor. Additionally, Rabbi Brownstein is a practicing Rav in Brooklyn and has published Judaic works.



Everything, all material, all forms, everything existing has sprung from the completely free, all-mighty creative Will of God. Man created by God at *bereishis*, has, with all his moral imperfections, the ability to be adequate, in the highest degree of moral perfection, to the moral ideal set before him by his Creator. The possibility of his failing to do so, itself is part of his moral completion, more, it is the fundamental condition for his moral freedom of will.” The limitation of time and space are fundamental to the physical reality of our world; however, the ethical choices and decisions of the individual are free and unconditional. Nature does not possess free will, it cannot sin. Man possesses free will; he must beg pardon for his errors.

### *Slichos*/Man’s Recreation and Pardon

“Though repentance and tefilla are always appropriate, during the ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* it is most appropriate and immediately accepted as it says *dirshu Hashem behimatzo*” (*Rambam Teshuva* 2:6).

“It is customary to rise early to say *Slichos* and supplications from *Rosh Chodesh Ellul* until *Yom Kippur*” [*Shulchan Aruch* 561:1]

“Custom among *Ashkenazim* is different. *Rosh Chodesh*, they begin sounding the *Shofar* after *Shacharis*, some also after *Maariv*. They rise early to say *Slichos* on Sunday before *Rosh Hashanah*, [however] when *Rosh Hashanah* falls out on Monday or Tuesday, *Slichos* begins two Sundays before *Rosh Hashanah*” (*Rama*). From the *Shulchan Aruch* we go to find the source in the *Gemara*.

“One may query: Why would one be judged specifically on *Rosh Hashanah* more than other days? ... Answer: We can learn this from the *Pesikta* (23). It was said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer. Based on the pasuk *dirshu Hashem behimatzo* it was taught the world was created on the 25th of *Ellul*. Contradicting what was taught in the *Gemara* that Rabbi Eliezer said the world was created in *Tishrei* (not *Ellul*). They (in the *Gemara*) were speaking about its completion (completion of creation which in Rabbi Eliezer’s opinion was on *Tishrei* 1 though the process began on *Ellul* 25). Adam *Harishon*, whose creation was the climax, was created on the sixth day which was *Tishrei* 1” (*Rabbeinu Nissim Rosh Hashanah* 3a). That is the explanation. Though the process of creation began on *Ellul* 25, since, however it was completed on *Tishrei* 1 with the creation of Adam *Harishon*, Rabbi Eliezer maintains that the world was created in *Tishrei*. Even so, Adam sinned on the day he was created!

The custom of *Slichos* in Ashkenaz, as recorded by the Rama, seems to have been extrapolated from Rabbenu Nissim. Two points are thus clarified from what Rabbenu Nissim writes: 1] Creation began on *Ellul* 25, making it the first Sunday ever, and 2] was completed when the first human emerged on *Tishrei* 1, ate from the forbidden fruit, was judged, the verdict was a suspended sentence of one thousand years. These two points define the custom of *Slichos*. *Slichos* always begins on Sunday and extends until *Rosh Hashanah*, the conclusion of creation, the creation of man, and the sin and judgment of the first humans. Man recreates himself every year on the anniversary of his creation.

### *Rosh Hashanah*/Yom Kippur

In summary: The Sunday or *Motza’ei Shabbos* before *Rosh Hashanah* marks the birth of a new world but also the recreation of a new man – a new man whose whose fate is determined by his own *tefillah* and *teshuva*.

In an essay titled “Surrendering Our Minds To God,” Rav Soloveitchik declared, “The religious Jew accepts the entire *Torah* as a *chok*, both in regard to its immutability and also its unintelligibility. At the conclusion of the daily morning service, we find the affirmation: ‘I believe with perfect faith that this *Torah* will not be changed and that there will be no other *Torah* given by the Creator, blessed be His Name’ (*Maimonides*, Principles Of Faith). The laws of the *Torah* are thus above place or time. Moreover, the observant Jew never asks “why?” in regard to *mitzvah* obligations. He may ask “how is it performed?” or “what lessons are to be derived therefrom?” but not “why?” ...To be a loyal Jew is to be heroic, and heroes commit themselves without intellectual reservations. Only one who lacks the courage of commitment will belabor the “why?” [3].

On another occasion when experience of the world and man merge, the Rav made the following comment: “I remember how once, on *Yom Kippur*, I went outside into the synagogue courtyard with my father (Rav Moshe) just before *ne’ilah*. It had been a fresh day, one of the fine, almost delicate days of summer’s end, filled with sunshine and light. Evening was fast approaching, and an exquisite autumn sun was sinking in the west...into a sea of purple and gold. My father, a halachic man par excellence, turned to me and said, ‘This sunset differs from ordinary sunsets for with it forgiveness is bestowed upon us for our sins.’ *Yom Kippur* and the forgiveness of sins merged and blended here with the splendor and beauty of the world and with the hidden lawfulness of the order of creation and the whole was transformed into one living, holy, cosmic phenomenon” [4].

[1] Hermann Cohen’s “Philosophy of Judaism,” by Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Melber, chapter two, Jonathan David Publishers, 1968.

[2] Philip Birnbaum Translation.

[3] Reflections of the Rav, by Rabbi Abraham Besdin, WZO, Jerusalem, 1981.

[4] Halachic Man, translated by Lawrence Kaplan, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1983.



# RAV AKIVA YOSEF SCHLESINGER'S SHABBOS SHOFAR CONTROVERSY

Although *Rosh Hashanah* tends to always be a unique experience, this year, it will be a bit more unique. The reason being that the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* this year, is a *Shabbos*. In other words, on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* this year we will not be blowing *shofar*. This is considered standard convention at this point, but was it always that way? Just over a century ago, someone by the name of Rabbi Akiva Yosef Schlesinger tried to change this, he tried to make it that we blow *shofar* on *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah*.

Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger lived from 1837 to 1922, and in the year 1870 he moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. Rav Schlesinger did not only receive a Judaic education but he also received a secular education, and supposedly had a deep understanding of complex mathematics. He was a *talmid* of the Ksav Sofer and his father was a *talmid* of the Chasam Sofer, so Rav Schlesinger was brought up in a Hungarian style, “non-innovative” environment, which only makes his story more fascinating.

In his time as a Rav in *Eretz Yisrael*, he made some enemies. Firstly, he was openly against the system in Israel at that time of disincentivizing *aliyah* by not giving newcomers a cut of the money donations for within the first years of their arrival, and his disapproval of this arrangement gave him somewhat of a bad name from the start. Another reason for his dislike is that he followed four controversial *halachic* opinions. One, he attempted to undo the *cheirem* put in place by Rabbeinu Gershon which banned men from marrying multiple women, his logic being that he wanted to provide an opportunity for the men fleeing from Russia to marry even though they had not given their wives a proper *get*. Two, he was an outright supporter of the Radziner Rebbe's *techeiles*, which no one else supported. Three, he tried to reinstate the bringing of the *korban pesach bezman hazeh*. Four – and this is the one we will continue discussing – he wanted to permit the blowing of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah Shechal Lihiyos BeShabbos*.

We must first discuss the nature of the *issur* of blowing *shofar* for *Rosh Hashanah* on *Shabbos*. The Gemara in *Maseches Rosh Hashanah* has a bit of a back and forth as to why we do not blow, but in the first *mishnah* of the fourth *perek*, Rav Yochanan ben Zakai makes a *takanah* that anywhere that there is a *beis din*, they blow *shofar* on *Shabbos*. The *Sefer Ir Hakodesh V'hamikdash* documents that, in accordance with this *takanah*, Rav Schlesinger got a group of men to agree to meet up as a *beis din* on *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah* in order to *matir* him to blow *shofar*. In the end, the men were threatened to be excommunicated if they helped him with this plan so they did not end up showing up, but Rav Schlesinger blew *shofar* anyway.

Going back to the *takanah* of Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai, most *Rishonim* elaborated on this *takanah* by saying that the *beis din* that he was referring to was a *sanhedrin* made up of people with real *smicha*, the unbroken chain of *smicha* from Moshe Rabbeinu. Nowadays, that *smicha* has been lost, and instead one type of *smicha* that we give out is called “*Yoreh Yoreh*” *smicha*, which gives the receiver the right to *pasken halachah*, but it is not on the same level as the *smicha* that Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai seems to have been referring to.

To these *Rishonim*, Rav Schlesinger responded that it does not matter that we no longer have that type of *smicha*, the entire purpose of that *takanah* was to create a holy environment that could act in place of *Yerushalayim*.



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During the times of Rav Yochanan ben Zakai they did not have access to Yerushalayim so they had to centralize around the next best thing, a beis din. However, argued Rav Schlesinger, nowadays we have access to Yerushalayim! So we can just blow shofar there with no problem!

Furthermore, it is clear from the Mishna that the *Tannaim* did not want us to do away with *Shofar* on *Shabbos* entirely, they bent backwards trying to make *takanahs* to permit it.

So Rav Schlesinger determined that we must say that blowing *shofar* on *shabbos* is at least a *safek*, and considering blowing *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* is a *mitzvah dioraisa*, and we hold *safek dioraisa lechumra*, we must blow *shofar* on *shabbos*! But on the other hand, there is a *safek* in the other direction because there is a *safek issur dirabanan*, and we also hold *safek dirabannan lekulah*! Thus, Rav Schlesinger reasoned that not only is it permissible to blow *shofar* on *shabbos*, but it is incumbent upon us to do so.

No one really bought into this. Specifically, the Aderes - Rav Kook's father-in-law - publicly spoke out against this *psak*. However, the Aderes fell ill, and he realized that that year's *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah* might be one of the last times he would ever have a chance to hear the *shofar*. Although it is unclear whether or not the Aderes ended up going to this *shofar* blowing, he definitely considered going.

Looking back at the Gemara in *Maseches Rosh Hashanah*, the conclusion of the Gemara is that the real *issur* of blowing *shofar* on *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah* is that one might transgress the *issur* of carrying on *Shabbos*. So there is a real *issur dirabanan* of blowing *shofar*... but if you listen to a *shofar* blowing on *shabbos*, do you still get the *mitzvah dioraisa* of hearing the *shofar* being blown? This question is very important for our story because Rav Schlesinger was dead set on blowing *shofar* on *shabbos*, so everyone needed to know, could they potentially still be getting the *mitzvah* of hearing it blown.

There are many reasons why it should be a no-brainer not to go. Firstly, it would be giving an audience to an *aveirah*. Not only that, but it would also be encouraging this improper behavior of violating *issurei dirabanan*. However, in his sefer *Drush V'chiddush*, Rav Akiva Eiger writes that it would be 100% okay to go to this kind of *shofar* blowing, and it would in fact fulfill the *mitzvah dioraisa* of hearing *shofar* blowing.

However, there is a question raised, and I'm going to leave you with this. The *Sefer Kava Dekushiyasa* asks on the Rav Akiva Eiger, saying that when there is a *din derabanan* put into place, it is not something that one can just forego like that, the *Rabannan* are telling us that we literally do not have the capacity to complete that *mitzvah*, so if the *Rabannan* tell us not to blow *shofar* on *Shabbos* it means it is utterly impossible for us to properly blow *shofar* on *Shabbos*.

Everyone should have a *ksiva v'vchasima tova*, and enjoy this year's one day of *shofar* blowing.



# HOW TO APPROACH THE *TEFILLAH* OF *ROSH HASHANAH*

*Rosh Hashanah* is the first of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. When we think of the concept of *teshuvah*, we think about repenting for the sins that we committed and making sure that we correct our actions for the future. A critical part of this *teshuvah* is verbally expressing our sins and internally committing not to repeat them. On *Yom Kippur*, this takes the form of *vidduy*, a *tefillah* where we specify our wrongdoings from the past year. On *Rosh Hashanah*, however, there is no such *tefillah*. In fact, other than a brief mention in *Avinu Malkeinu*, there is no reference to our sins in the *tefillos* of *Rosh Hashanah*. Furthermore, there is even a custom brought down by the Rama (*Orach Chayim* 583:2) to refrain from eating nuts on *Rosh Hashanah*, because the Hebrew word *egoz* (nut) has the same numerical value of the word *cheit* (sin). This all begs the question, why on a day seemingly so central to doing *teshuvah* do we refrain from even mentioning our sins? Isn't the first step on the road to correcting our behavior admitting what we did wrong? If we are not doing so, what does this tell us about the true purpose of the day?

To answer these questions, let's shift our attention away from what the *tefillos* don't say and take a look at what our *tefillos* on *Rosh Hashanah* are actually focused on. The day is filled with the constant reinforcement of one critical and foundational idea of our faith: Hashem is our *melech*. In reality, the first step to doing *teshuvah* is recognizing that Hashem is the King of the Universe, and all of our actions should therefore be inspired by His will. Only once we clarify that Hashem is king and master of the universe can we ask ourselves about our purpose and reflect on our behavior through the proper lense.

*Rosh Hashanah*, in a way, is like Hashem giving us a job interview for the upcoming year. When interviewing for a job, it is not helpful to mention everything that one does poorly. Rather, a person wants to show their finer attributes and explain why they are qualified for the job. The same thing is true on *Rosh Hashanah*. Hashem wants to see how we fit into the larger picture of His universe, to see why we "deserve a job." This begins less with our actions and more with our attitude. On *Rosh Hashanah*, we take the first step towards *teshuvah* by reinforcing this attitude that Hashem is the king, and therefore, all of what we do should be about honoring His will. Following this focusing of our mindset, we can then delve into our specific wrongdoings throughout the *aseres yemei teshuvah* and ultimately on *Yom Kippur*.

*Rosh Hashanah* is a day where we coronate Hashem as King of the Universe. We mention in our davening that we yearn for the day that everyone will recognize Hashem as ruler of the world. *Baruch* Hashem, for the most part we are presently in a situation where we can openly practice Judaism without much fear. While we do need to be thankful for our ability to serve Hashem in the way we do now, along with everything else Hashem has given us, we are not yet at the point where the entire world recognizes and celebrates Hashem as King of the World. There are still people with certain beliefs and ideas which result in constant *chillul* Hashem. On *Rosh Hashanah* we are yearning for the day that the entire world will recognize that Hashem is not just as King of the Jews, but as king over the entire world. This message is expressed in *Aleinu*, a central part of the *chazaras hashatz* during the *Musaf* of *Rosh Hashanah*. The first paragraph talks about our uniqueness from all other nations, in the way that we recognize Hashem as the true master of the universe, while the rest of the nations bow to nothingness. The second paragraph is about the attitude that we need to have in mind on *Rosh Hashanah*, yearning for the day that everyone will recognize that Hashem is the only true God.



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# FOUR TYPES OF *TESHUVAH*?

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1) says "If a person transgresses any of the *mitzvos* of the Torah, whether a positive commandment or a negative commandment - whether willingly or inadvertently - when he repents, and returns from his sin, he must confess." The *Meshech Chochmah*, among others, is troubled by the fact that *teshuvah* is presented as a *mitzvah* in itself. If a person sinned in regard to a certain *mitzvah* or *aveirah*, the obligation to do *teshuvah* comes from those *mitzvos* or *aveiros* that were transgressed, not a separate obligation! Though this leads to a longer discussion about the role of *viduy* in the *teshuvah* process, the *Meshech Chochmah* reflects a concept that there is *teshuvah* built into our everyday lives, inherent in all the *mitzvos* and *aveiros* that one may do. On a similar note, the *baalei mussar* bring down that the purpose of Hashem creating days and nights, as opposed to one long existence, was to give us the chance to have new beginnings and reflect and repent for our actions.

Though we have explained that *teshuvah* is a *chiyuv* that is incumbent upon us every day of our lives, there are still some specialized times in which *teshuvah* carries an added significance. First and foremost, there is the aforementioned *teshuvah* that we are *osek* in every day of our lives, *teshuvah kol hashana*. The Rambam in his *Hilchos Teshuvah* (3:4) introduces the second type of *teshuvah*, *Teshuvah Rosh Hashanah*, in which there exists a special *chiyuv* to be awoken and inspired by the call of the shofar to do *teshuvah*. "*Uru Yesheinim Misheinaschem... v'chazru b'teshuvah!*", the shofar calls to us, "wake up from your slumber...and do *teshuvah!*". As *Rosh Hashanah* comes to a close, the third *teshuvah* is initiated - that of the unique *teshuvah* of the *aseros yemei teshuvah*, culminating in the fourth and final form of *teshuvah* - *teshuvah Yom Hakippurim*, with its own special *chiyuv*, "*lifnei Hashem titaru.*"

What exactly is the *teshuvah* of *Rosh Hashanah*? The *tefillos* of the day do not provide an immediate answer, as within them there exists no *al chets*, no *ashamnu's*, and even a *machlokes* over if the first line of *Avinu Malkeinu* (*chatanu lifanecha*) should be said at all. If we are to understand like the Rambam's criteria for *teshuvah* that necessitate at the very least an admission of guilt, how can *Teshuvah Rosh Hashanah* constitute as *teshuvah* at all? Some insight is provided in light of a discussion in the Gemara in *Kiddushin* regarding certain conditions on which a marriage can be initiated. Can a *kiddushin* be valid on the condition that the *chasan* is a *tzaddik*, the Gemara asks? Not only is it a valid *Kiddushin*, the Gemara answers, but even should the individual be a *rasha gamur*, the *kiddushin* stands, as we are certain there exists somewhere within him at the very least some form of *hirhurei teshuvah*. Understandably, many *meforshim* are troubled with this statement, seemingly establishing that some form of significant *teshuvah* can be done with no action whatsoever.

The story of the murder of Rabi Chanina Ben Teradyon, one of the *asara harugei malchus*, recorded in *Avodah Zarah* (18a), is evocative of a similar point. A Torah scroll had been wrapped around him by the Romans, which had then been lit on fire, with wet wool added in order to prolong his excruciating death. Rabi Chanina however, did not lose focus for one moment. In the midst of his torture, when asked by his *talmidim* what he saw, he responded "the *klaf* is burning, but the letters are going up to *Shamayim*." His *talmidim* begged him to open his mouth and allow the fire to reach him faster which would put a quicker end to this horrible torture but Rabi Chanina refused, he would die the way Hashem intended and not a moment sooner.



The executioner, a witness to this incredible spectacle and clearly moved, offered to take the wool off of him to reduce Rabi Chanina's suffering. The executioner wanted to know if this tiny act of mercy would make him deserving as well of the life in *Olam Haba* that Rabi Chanina would surely merit. Rabi Chanina swore to him that it would, and the executioner removed the wool and jumped into the fire himself. The Gemara relates that at that moment, a *bas kol* cried out "Rav Chanina *ben* Teradyon and the Executioner are invited to life in *olam haba*."

This story raises a similar question to the gemara in *kiddushin* in regards to *teshuvah* done by a *rasha gamur*. Just a thought of *teshuvah*, buried under layers of a completely evil personality is enough? One act of relative kindness, even in the midst of the act of murdering a *gadol hador* can be enough to allow a person into *Olam Haba*?! How can this be enough? Rav Soloveitchik explains that someone who promises to do *teshuvah* and yet has yet to do it, like the gemara in *Kiddushin*, is not yet a *baal teshuvah gemura*. However, his *hirhurei teshuvah* are indeed taken into account. By making up in his mind to change his ways, he has created what is considered a *chalos sheim tzaddik*, or the intimation of his status as a *tzaddik*. This the connection between these two gemaras of the executioner and of the *kiddushin*. While it is not *teshuvah gemura*, it is a sinner recognizing that the Master of the Universe and center of his life is only Hashem and nothing else, and then taking that recognition and allowing himself to be pointed in the direction of *teshuvah*. This is *teshuvas Rosh Hashana*, literally "*uru yesheinim!*" - the first step is simply waking up, and allowing yourself to be pushed in the right direction.

Once *teshuvas Rosh Hashanah* is complete, and one has acknowledged the direction in which he should be moving forward, he must begin the next step in his *teshuvah* process. Rabbeinu Yonah in his *Shaarei Teshuvah* teaches that while there exists a *chiyuv* all year long to do *teshuvah* for our *chataim*, there is a completely separate *chiyuv* for the *teshuvah* of *Yom Kippur*. Rav Soloveitchik in his *Al HaTeshuvah* explains that every *chet* is doubly harmful, it is both *mechayav* and *metamei*. Not only are we *mechayev* and liable to punishment for transgressing the word of Hashem, but in doing so we have been *metamei*, tainted ourselves with spiritual impurity as well, and distanced ourselves from Him. And so just as the *chet* is twofold, so must be the *teshuvah* - it must be both *mechaper* and *metaher*. Once one does proper *teshuvah*, Hashem can decide to be *mechaper* and pardon the sin and punishment. This is the meaning behind *Teshuvah* being *mechaper* for *aveiros*. *Mechaper* literally means "atone", but in the Torah the word *mechaper* also means to cover, like the *kapores* covers the *aron*. When Hashem is *mechaper*, it covers the *chet* so there is no punishment for it. However, this still leaves the soul as tainted as before and so Hashem is *metaher* us as well. This is *Teshuvas Yom HaKippurim* - "*ki bayom hazeh yichaper aleichem letaher eschem*". The last *mishna* in *Maseches Yoma* teaches that while human beings can do *teshuvah* and earn for themselves a pardon, only "*Avichem SheBaShamayim*" can be *metaher* us, and scrub us clean of the impurities we have dirtied ourselves with. The Gemara in *Yoma* further teaches that the *gematria* for "*Hasatan*" is 364 - because there is one day a year where the Satan has no control - *Yom Kippur*. The first Maharsha of the *masechta* expounds on this, asking why the *masechta* is called *Yoma*, day, and not *Kippur* or something more in the spirit of *Yom Kippur*. He answers that when a Jew reflects on *Yom Kippur*, all one has to say is "the day" and there remains not a doubt in anyone's mind what "*the day*" could be, the only day of the year that there is nothing and no one preventing our closeness to Hashem.

*Rosh Hashanah* is the decision, where we take the first step towards Hashem and express our desire to return to Him, and *Yom Kippur* is the end game, where Hashem takes that final step towards us and washes us clean. But clearly there is a journey that takes us from A to B - the journey of *teshuvas aseres yemei teshuvah*.

What is the *avodah* of the *aseres yemei teshuvah*? Both the Gemara and the Rambam explain the idea that this is the time of "*dirshu Hashem behimazto*", "*seek Hashem where He can be found*" which the Gemara explains to be referring to these very ten days. Strangely, the *Shulchan Aruch* focuses on two specific details of the *aseres yemei teshuvah* which seem to be somewhat minor in comparison to the other themes one might expect: The first is being *machmir* on *pas yisroel*, something that is merely a *chumrah*. Secondly, The Rama adds that if one is not sure if he committed an *aveirah*, he needs to do more *teshuvah* than if he certainly did an *aveirah*. Why these two things?

The Gemara in *Yoma* teaches that *teshuvah miyira* will turn an *aveira bimeizid* into an *aveira bishogeg*, and Hashem will not punish for it, but *teshuvah meahava* will even turn *aveiros* into *mitzvos*. How can this be? Rabbi Noach Oelbaum, in his *sefer Minchas Chein*, explains. When we do *teshuvah* Hashem answers us exactly as we ask. If *teshuvah* is done out of fear of punishment then no problem, Hashem will pardon the punishment, and consider one's sins as if they were done by accident. But when *teshuvah* is done out of love, out of a deep yearning just to repair the relationship between us and Hashem and become once again close to him, Hashem sees that our *chet* has become an impetus to become closer than we ever were before. Our recognition of our mistake has inspired us to yearn to be closer than we were even before the sin. We have turned our *chet* into a *mitzvah*. This is the *teshuvah* of the *aseres yemei teshuvah*, where we take the decision that we made on *Rosh Hashanah* and use that clarity to redirect our lives and put it into practice.

In a proper relationship, when you really love somebody, you wouldn't even consider doing things that have any chance of hurting that person. The same goes for our relationship with Hashem, doing *teshuvah* for definite *aveiros* can be done the whole year, but during the *aseres yemei teshuvah* we take upon ourselves special stringencies. We go above and beyond because this is a week of *teshuvah m'ahava*, and we don't want any strains on our relationship during this special time when Hashem is closer. We want to take what we decided and put it into practice, so that at the end of the ten days we can be *zocheh* to a complete *kapparah* and a renewed *kirvas elokim*.

Adapted with the kind permission of the author.



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# IT'S HOW YOU FINISH

The time has now come. We have now hit the time of *Rosh Hashanah davening* when we recite *Perek Mem-Zayin* of *Tehillim* seven times. As we say the words *lamnatzeiach livnei korach mizmor*, the sound of the *shofar* is soon approaching. After all of this time since *alef Elul* when we heard the *shofar* day after day, each time bringing forth the same message towards us. That message of *teshuva*. Now we are at the *Yom Hadin* ready to hear the *shofar* once again after a one-day hiatus. During the time of *tekias shofar* many people have different thoughts. Some people pay attention to the sounds, some people think about *teshuva*, and whatever a person is doing during that time, it is done with a tremendous amount of focus or thought. But what's another good *kavana* that a person could have during this time of *tekias shofar*?

The Shela Hakaddosh offers a great insight into a *kavana* that you and I can have during *tekias shofar*. Anyone who's ever heard the *shofar* in their life knows the three sounds of the *shofar* pretty well. We have a *tekiah* then a *shevarim* then a *teruah* or a *shevarim teruah* finished off by a *tekiah* at the end of each *shever*. The Shelah gives three different stages to symbolize each one of these sounds. First, you have the *tekiah* which symbolizes the time when you first came into this world. You were a straight line, just a straightforward innocent child at first. But then you hit the point of your life when you became a *shevarim*. You got some bumps in your life and became a little broken. But then you hit the point of your life when you became a *teruah*. You as a person are just completely broken, and it seems like you can never come back from this phase you are having in your life right now. You are in desperate need of a *yeshua*, and everything is going wrong for you. But as we know each *shever* finishes off with another *tekiah*. This *tekiah* is the light at the end of the tunnel. It's that straight line. Even though you as a person might be a *teruah*, the *tekiah* serves as a reminder that there is always hope for a person who's hitting such a low. Even though you feel so lost you can still become that person you once were. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov says *Ein Shum Yeush Ba'olam klal*, there is not lost hope in the world at all. We must always remember this even if we are so broken and lost, and become a *teruah*.

Finally, the *tekiah* at the end of each set presents an opportunity to become a better version of yourself than you ever were before. We can always go back to being that straight line that we once were. Once you see the opportunity, take it, because the last sound we hear is the *tekiah gedolah* which is symbolizing this new level you reached after *teshuva*, and what can be better than having purity after this past we had? May we be *zocheh*, no matter how broken we feel sometimes, to always find that *tekiah* that we need in our life, especially during these days of *teshuva* and *ratzon*.



# THE UNIQUE SIGNIFICANCE OF TORAH SHEBA'AL PEH ON ROSH HASHANAH

One of the most moving prayers of the entire year can be found in the *chazzan's* repetition of *Musaf* during *Rosh Hashanah*. *U'Nesaneh Tokef* manages to highlight the spirit of the day by describing all of the aspects of our lives that are waiting to be decided by Hashem. For example, it is up to Hashem to decide whether we will enjoy the blessings of peace or be forced to suffer and whether we will become impoverished or be enriched. After listing all the facets of our lives that hang in the balance, the prayer concludes by stating that *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* can overturn any negative decree. This last line of the *piyut* can pose a question. It is understandable that by performing *teshuvah* and *tefillah*, one can counteract an evil decree. However, why is *tzedakah* mentioned as the third and final action that one must perform to cause Hashem to pardon them? What is so special about *tzedakah* that puts it on the same level as *teshuvah* and *tefillah*?

In order to understand the importance of *tzedakah*, it would be helpful to analyze one *passuk* in *Krias Shema* that subtly hints to all three *mitzvos* mentioned at the end of *U'Nesaneh Tokef*. The *passuk* in *Devarim* (6:5) states that in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *ahavas Hashem*, “you shall love your God Hashem with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **might**.” *Chazal* comment that the word “heart” refers to *tefillah*. This is due to the fact that *tefillah* is a service of the heart. When one *davens*, they imbue the words that they utter with feelings and emotions, which is only possible to do by using one’s heart. The second main word of the *passuk*, “soul,” is concluded by *Chazal* to be referencing *teshuvah*. This is because the whole purpose of doing *teshuvah* is to purify one’s *neshamah* of all the wrongdoings that they committed.

The final words in *Devarim* 6:5, “with all your might,” is interpreted by the *Gemara* in *Maseches Brachos* to mean “with all your money.” The basic meaning of this phrase is that some people consider their money to be more important than their soul, so the *Torah* mentions money to clearly express the extent one must go to in fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *ahavas Hashem*. However, the fact that the *Torah* entertains the concept that some people believe that money is more important than their very souls is a very interesting one indeed. What is even more interesting is that this same concept is mentioned in *Mishlei* by Shlomo *Hamelech*, the wisest man to ever live. Shlomo *Hamelech* writes “*tzedakah tatzil mimaves*,” charity can save one from death. This furthers the idea that sometimes, money is more important than life itself. To understand this strange and seemingly mundane concept, it would be helpful to look at the *Avudraham* and his unique concept that each of the 613 *mitzvos* of the *Torah* correspond to a specific limb, organ, or sinew of the human body. According to the *Avudraham*, whenever someone performs a *mitzvah*, they give nourishment to the limb that the *mitzvah* corresponds to, not only in this world but also in *Olam Habah*.



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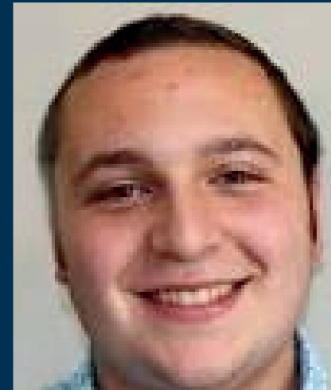
For example, consider a person who is deserving of being resurrected during *tehiyas hameisim* but throughout his entire life was very lax about his making of *berachos*. He will still be brought back to life, but he might be missing one of his fingers on his right hand which will serve as a permanent embarrassment for the rest of eternity. This is where the *mitzvah* of *zedakah* comes into play. By giving away one's hard-earned money, one is essentially giving up a part of himself. In order to acquire that money in the first place, one had to expend either great physical or mental efforts while working one's job. Therefore, offering one's money to someone else is like offering some of yourself to that person. Since one is giving up some of himself in this world, according to the *Avudraham*, Hashem allows that act to essentially fill in for a different *mitzvah* in the next world. This is why both the *Torah* and Shlomo *Hamelech* mention that sometimes money is more important than one's life, because by giving money to *zedakah* one is able to ensure that they will prevent any embarrassment and come back complete during the times of *tehiyas hameisim*.

Now it is possible to understand why *zedakah* is mentioned during *U'Nesaneh Tokef* as one of the three ways to avert an evil decree. By giving *zedakah* we do not prevent an evil decree from coming to fruition in this world; rather, we ensure that the evil decree of coming back incomplete during *tehiyas hameisim* and the eternal embarrassment that comes with it will never come to pass. Hopefully, we can all learn from *U'Nesaneh Tokef* and the *Avudraham* about the importance of giving *zedakah*. Even though giving *zedakah* might be difficult, it is after all giving up a piece of ourselves, by giving *zedakah* we can not only nourish our bodies in this world, but we can also save ourselves in the world to come.

*Shanah Tovah Um'tukah!*



# THE UNIQUE SIGNIFICANCE OF TORAH SHEBA'AL PEH ON ROSH HASHANAH



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If one were to mention the holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* to you, what would be the first thing that pops into your mind? Maybe it's the apple in the honey, maybe it's the long davening, but I would posit that the first thing to pop into most people's heads would be the *mitzvah* of *shofar*. There is perhaps no part of *Rosh Hashanah* more synonymous with the day than the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, which is why it's startling to think that the *shofar* is not mentioned explicitly in the *Torah* in connection with *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Torah* references *Rosh Hashanah* twice, referring to it once as "*yom teruah*" and another time as "*zichron teruah*." It is *Chazal* (*Rosh Hashanah* 23b-24a) who come along and teach us that the "*teruah*" referenced by the *Torah* must be done with a *shofar*. The *shofar* is mentioned explicitly in the *Torah* when referring to the commandment to sound the *shofar* on the *Yom Kippur* of the *yovel* year. The *gemara* learns that the apparently superfluous words of "*bachodesh HaShivi'i*" within that commandment teach that all "*teruos*" performed in *Tishrei* must be done using a *shofar*.

The question begs itself: How can it be that the *mitzvah* perhaps most synonymous with *Rosh Hashanah* isn't even mentioned explicitly in the *Torah* when talking about *Rosh Hashanah*? Why does the *Torah* instead choose to learn this out from an external source? What is the *Torah*'s message here?

In his sefer "*Imrei Baruch*," Rabbi Baruch Simon elaborates on an answer given by the Chasam Sofer. The *gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) explains why it is that we do two sets of *tekios*. One sitting and one standing (what we might refer to as the set before the *musaf shemoneh esrei* and the set during the *musaf shemoneh esrei*). Only one set is really required from the *Torah*, so why are two done? The *gemara* says that the reason is to confuse the *Satan*. When the *Satan* sees that *Klal Yisroel* cherishes Hashem's *mitzvos* so much as to do another set of *shofar* blasts, he will be confused in his attempt to bring accusations against them. How is he supposed to speak poorly of the Jewish people when he says how they go above and beyond for Hashem?

However, Tosfos raises an apparent problem with this *gemara*. Isn't instituting an extra set of *tekios* a transgression of *Bal Tosif*, the prohibition against adding anything onto the *Torah*? Tosfos answers by explaining that *Bal Tosif* does not apply to doing the same *mitzvah* multiple times. Blowing two sets of *tekios* is merely performing the same *mitzvah* multiple times and is therefore not an issue.

The Rashba gives an alternative answer to Tosfos' question. He explains that *Bal Tosif* only applies to an individual who decides to do something extra on his own accord, like a *Kohen* who decides on his own to add another *bracha* in *Birkas Kohanim*. However, *Chazal* have the right to establish whatever laws they want. The *Torah* itself gives them this right to establish what they see appropriate within the commandment of "*al pi hatorah asher yorucha*," "according to the law which they shall teach you."

The Chasam Sofer explains that the Rashba is teaching us a deep idea about *Chazal*'s enactments. *Chazal* are not considered transgressors of *Bal Tosif* when establishing a *mitzvah* because whatever they say is by definition a part of the *Torah*.

Using this *yesod* of the Rashba, we can explain how the two sets of *tekios* confuses the Satan.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) says that one of the purposes of *Tekias Shofar* is to cause us to accept Hashem's yoke upon ourselves, and the Chasam Sofer explains that it takes place specifically after *Kriyas HaTorah* in order to demonstrate our acceptance of the yoke of the Torah. The Satan, seeing how *Klal Yisroel* cherishes the *Torah* and the *mitzvos*, gets somewhat confused in his attempt to prosecute *Klal Yisroel*. However, his "confusion" is only partial, as he has only seen *Klal Yisroel's* acceptance of the *Torah Shebichsav* at this point. Maybe *Klal Yisroel* hasn't really accepted the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, of which the gemara (*Gittin* 60b) says is the portion of *Torah* that Hashem made his covenant with the Jewish people over. Only when the Satan sees the second set of *Tekios*, the "standing ones" that take place during the Shemoneh Esrei, which were enacted by *Chazal*, does he see *Klal Yisroel's* complete commitment to the entire Torah, including the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*. The Satan then gets totally confused in his attempts to accuse us.

It comes out that because our *bris* with Hashem is really over the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, it is our demonstration of our commitment to it through the standing *tekios* which causes the main confusion of the Satan. Perhaps we can now understand why it is that the obligation to use a shofar for the *tekios* is learned out from a *gezeira shava*, and is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. Hashem's covenant with *Klal Yisroel* is really over the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, and it's the main weapon we have to confuse the Satan. The fact that the obligation to use a *shofar*, such a central component of the *Rosh Hashanah* experience, is learned from a drasha of *Chazal*, demonstrates to us that it's really the power of the *Torah Sheba'al Peh* that helps us counter the Satan. May we use this *Rosh Hashanah* to be *mekabel* the yoke of the entire Torah upon ourselves. Both the *Torah Shebichsav* and the *Torah Sheba'al Peh*.



# WHY CAN'T I DO A MITZVAH DEORAISA?

This year, the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Sukkos* will be on *Shabbos*. Because of this, there will be two *mitzvos assei deoraisa* that we will not be able to fulfill: hearing the *shofar* and shaking the *lulav*. Even though we will hear the *shofar* on the second day of *Rosh Hashanah* and shake the *lulav* on all other days of *Sukkos*, when we do so we will only be fulfilling *mitzvos derabanan*.

But what exactly is the problem with blowing the *shofar* or shaking the *lulav* on *Shabbos*? If one were to answer that the *shofar* is an instrument and that a *lulav* is *muktzeh machamas gufo*, those explanations do not really work. By *shofar*, who cares that it is an instrument? Not being able to play instruments on *Shabbos* is a *derabanan*, and why should any *issur derabanan* override a *mitzvas assei deoraisa*? By *lulav*, even though it is a branch and branches are *muktzeh*, a *lulav* would not be מוקצה in this situation because it does have a use on *Shabbos*, that use being doing the *mitzvah* of *lulav* on the first day of *Sukkos*.

Turns out, these are not the reasons for not being able to blow the *shofar* or shake the *lulav* on *Shabbos*. The reason is a *gezeira* of Rabbah brought in *Masechtos Sukkah*, *Rosh Hashanah*, and *Megillah*. The Rabbis were aware that not everyone is an expert in *tekias shofar* and *netillas lulav*, and as a result they were concerned that people would carry the *shofar* or *lulav* to an expert to learn from them how to properly perform the *mitzvah*. Carrying the *shofar* or the *lulav* either to or from the expert's house would be an *issur deoraisa* as he would be carrying them four *amos* in a *reshus harabim*. Due to the possibility that someone might be over an *issur deoraisa*, Chazal made a *gezeira* that we don't hear the *shofar* or shake the *lulav* when the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* or *Sukkos* is *Shabbos*.

But this doesn't really solve our problem. We still have the issue that an *issur derabanan* should not be able to override a *mitzvas assei deoraisa*. One might even argue that this would be a violation of *bal tigma*, the prohibition of deducting from the *mitzvos* of the Torah. However, there is a rule that *yesh koach beyad chachamim laakor davar min hatorah bishv' ve'al ta'aseh*. This means that Chazal have power to "uproot" something from the Torah if it would make someone not do something that they would be doing otherwise. In other words, Chazal cannot make a *gezeira* that makes one have to violate a *lo saaseh*. However, they can make a *gezeira* that makes one not be able to do a *mitzvas assei* like in our case of *shofar* and *lulav*. This comes from a Gemara in *Yevamos* that says that the *rabanan* aren't allowed to uproot anything from the Torah, but in a case of *shev ve'al ta'aseh* it isn't considered uprooting. Also, they can only do this when there is a *chashash* that people will be over a *lav deoraisa* if they did the certain *mitzvah* that the *rabanan* are saying not to do. In our case, we are worried one might carry on *Shabbos*, which is an *issur deoraisa*.

However, in the *Beis Hamikdash*, they would blow the *shofar* and shake the *lulav* even on *Shabbos*. The reason why the *gezeira derabbah* about blowing *shofar* and shaking *lulav* did not apply there is because there is a rule called *ein shvus bamikdash*. A *shvus* is a rabbinical prohibition on *Shabbos*, like Rabbah's *gezeira*.

There is a Gemara in *Sukkah* that contradicts our practice. It says that if the first day of *Sukkos* falls on *Shabbos* in *Eretz Yisrael* they would shake the *lulav*, despite Rabbah's *gezeira*.

The logic was that the fulfillment of the *mitzvah deoraisa* on the first day was so important that it should not be restricted on *Shabbos*. This differed from *Rosh Hashanah* because on *Rosh Hashanah*, even in *Eretz Yisrael*, they were often not sure of whether the first or second day of *Rosh Hashanah* was the true day of *Rosh Hashanah*, and therefore in that case someone may have carried the *shofar* on *Shabbos* when the obligation to blow the *shofar* was only Rabbinical. We, however, refrain from shaking the *lulav* on *Shabbos* whether *Shabbos* is the first day or one of the other six. Tosfos says that in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *gezeira* wouldn't apply *bigvulin* but now it does. Hopefully, *Mashiach* will come *bimeheira biyameinu* and we will be back in *Eretz Yisrael* with the *Beis Hamikdash*, hearing the *shofar* and shaking the *lulav* even in a year like this when the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Sukkos* is *Shabbos*.



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YUHSB '25

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## MORDECHAI FLAMENBAUM

YUHSB '19

Mordechai Flamenbaum is an alumnus of MTA and is currently learning by Rav Yonason Sacks in Beis Medrash L'Talmud, Lander College for Men.

# TEKIAS SHOFAR ON SHABBOS

Every year we begin blowing shofar during Elul in anticipation of its blowing on *Rosh Hashanah* itself. On *Rosh Hashanah*, the *shofar* reminds us of numerous important themes of the day such as *teshuvah*, *Akeidas Yitzchak*, and crowning Hashem as king. This important Biblical *mitzvah* (*Sefer Hachinuch*, *Mitzvah* 405) is a once-a-year opportunity. *Rosh Hashanah* marks the day of judgment (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a), when matters of life and death are decided and the blowing of the *shofar* silences the *Satan* who attempts to prosecute us (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b).

The *shofar* marks a central part of the *Mussaf* prayer service and is blown during all three major parts of the service – *Zichronos*, *Malchiyos*, and *Shofaros*. The *Gemara* also emphasizes that the merit of *shofar* blowing allows Hashem to look favorably on us and helps our *tefillos* get answered (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a). Furthermore, the *shofar* evokes the merit of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, and the *Gemara* also warns that a year not beginning with *shofar* will conclude with the sad sounding of the *shofar* during fast days decreed due to communal suffering as punishment for not fulfilling this *mitzvah* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b).

However, this year we will *not* be blowing the *shofar* on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* because it falls out on *Shabbos*. Although biblically we are commanded to blow the *shofar*, the *Chachamim* enacted a restriction on blowing when *Rosh Hashanah* is *Shabbos*. This enactment was due to the *Chachamim*'s fear that one may carry the *shofar* in the street to the rabbi to ask him how to blow, violating the prohibition of carrying on *Shabbos* in the public domain (*Rosh Hashanah* 29b). This *halacha* is codified in *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 588:5), and is followed in all our communities.

The *Chachamim* have the authority to create safeguards for the *Torah*'s laws and they have the authority to even suspend a *Torah mitzvah*. Yet how are we to understand this in light of the tremendous merit that *shofar* brings on the Day of Judgment? Will we be unprotected against the *Satan*? Are we to fear the *Gemara*'s statement that a year not beginning with *shofar* will conclude with the sad sounding of the *shofar* during fast days decreed due to communal suffering, as punishment for not fulfilling this *mitzvah*?

*Tosfos* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b s.v. *She'ein Toke'in*) writes, citing the *Behag*, that this statement certainly does not apply when *Rosh Hashanah* falls on *Shabbos*, and we are not punished. But *Tosfos* does not explain further. What merit do we have to rest on that will help our *tefillos* be answered?

The *Meshech Chochma* writes (P. *Emor*, s.v. *zichron teruah*) that we know the Sages abolished *shofar* on *Shabbos* lest someone violate the *Shabbos* and carry the *shofar*. They did so because *Shabbos* has tremendous holiness and is a very important *mitzvah* as it represents the idea that Hashem exists and created the world. He further writes that the merit of being careful about *Shabbos*, so much so, that we are willing to follow the decree of the Sages and forgo the benefit of the *shofar*, lest the *Shabbos* be



violated and G-d's name be profaned, is itself a sanctification of G-d's name and is a spiritual self-sacrifice akin to the *Akeidah* that finds favor for us as much as the *shofar* would have.

We may suggest another answer based on what the Chasam Sofer wrote to another rabbi in one of his *teshuvos* (O.C. 108). The Chasam Sofer wrote that was he quite fond of saying over a particular *dvar Torah* about *Mussaf* on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *bracha* of *Zichronos* in *Mussaf* on *Rosh Hashanah* mentions *Akiedas Yitzchak* in order to evoke divine mercy on Judgment Day. The concluding section of the *bracha* requests of Hashem to recall the merit of Avraham *Avinu* who bound his son on the altar. We beseech Hashem to recall this merit on our behalf. Yet a few lines later, in the conclusion of the *bracha*, we refer to this event as *Akiedas Yitzchak*. Why does the *bracha* not conclude by referencing Avraham *Avinu*, who was willing to sacrifice his beloved son?

The Chasam Sofer answers that the reason we specifically mention Yitzchak is because in addition to the merit of being willing to be offered as a sacrifice, Yitzchak had an additional merit over Avraham, that of listening to the words of the *Chachamim*. Avraham, who had heard the command to sacrifice his son from G-d himself, can be likened to one who follows the Written *Torah*, where one receives Hashem's word directly. However, Yitzchak had only heard the command from Avraham second hand. This is likened to the Oral *Torah*, *Torah Shebe'al Peh* where Hashem's word is passed along by the *Chachamim*. In the latter, the recipient must trust that the message has been understood accurately and transmitted faithfully. Thus, Yitzchak has the additional merit of *emunas Chachamim*, trusting the *Chachamim*, because he believed Avraham and went along with the *Akiedah*, despite his own logic dictating that G-d couldn't possibly want a human sacrifice. It is this additional merit of Yitzchak, that of listening to the Sages, that we evoke in the conclusion of *Zichronos*.

Similarly, we can suggest that when we do not blow *shofar* on *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah* we show that we place trust in the wisdom of our Sages who decided through their understanding of *Torah* that preserving the sanctity of the *Shabbos* outweighs the *mitzvah* of *shofar*. By following their decree we connect to the *bracha* of *Zichronos* in a very powerful way that bolsters our merits before Hashem similar to how Yitzchak acted during the *Akeida* by showing allegiance to Hashem's messenger.

May we all be blessed with a happy, healthy, and sweet new year in the merit of our preserving the sanctity of *Shabbos*, and through our commitment to *Torah Shebe'al Peh* and our resolve to follow all the edicts of our Sages.



## RABBI SHIMON SCHENKER

### MENAHIEL

Rabbi Schenker, who currently serves as *Menahel*, has been teaching at MTA since 2001. He began as a Rebbe in the PTACH program based at MTA and then transitioned to become the Director of MTA's Learning Center as well as a beloved *Maggid Shiur* and later the Associate Principal.

Rabbi Schenker was the recipient of the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education in 2013. He delivers Halacha *shiurim* and teaches *chassan* classes in Passaic, New Jersey, where he lives with his wife and family.

# THE PARADOX OF ROSH HASHANAH TEFILLOS

Imagine if you were facing the king and he allowed you to make requests for that which you needed, but his granting of those requests were based on your actions and behaviors. You would ask and ask for the smallest detail if you thought he would grant it. Yet, almost ironically, on *Rosh Hashanah* we don't do that at all. We stand in front of the King while we are being judged along with the entire world, yet we don't systematically make any requests from Him. We spend the entire day praising Him and describing how we want Him to be a King over us, but perplexingly there is no structure in our *tefillos* on *Rosh Hashanah* to make even the most simple requests for our basic needs like we do three times a day, everyday in our weekday *Shemoneh Esrei*. The question, asks Rav Matisyahu Salomon, is why Chazal set up our *tefillos* so that on the day we are being judged we don't ask for anything, while every regular *shemoneh esrei* throughout the year is replete with requests?

Rav Salomon explains based on the *Sefer Nefesh Hachaim* (*Shaar 2 Perek 11*) that really the *tefillos* of *Rosh Hashanah* and weekday *tefillos* are the same, and are even interchangeable. They all have the same goal, to bring about the most *kavod shamayim*, the most honor for Hashem in this world. When we *daven* on *Rosh Hashanah* we spend the day telling Hashem that He is our King and bring out His honor to the world. Similarly, when we *daven* during the week and ask Hashem for knowledge, health, wealth etc., the goal is to ask for those things not to just bring ourselves physical pleasure but to have those items help us in bettering our service of Hashem in this world, and in that way to bring about *kavod shamayim*.

Rav Salomon explains this idea with a beautiful *mashal*. There was a king who adopted an orphan and raised him as his own son. This king made his enormous wealth by encouraging tremendous construction projects, with the condition that the contractors could only purchase their materials from the king's storehouse. One day, the orphan decided that he wanted to thank the king for all of his kindness to him and build him the most magnificent tower to honor him. When the orphan went to tell the king of his idea, he of course loved it and told his son that he can go and take materials for free for this glorious tower. The next day when the son went to cut the line and take the materials for free, the rest of the contractors who were waiting in line to pay for their materials became irate seeing that the son walked to the front of the line and took everything for free. The son responded simply, "you of course have to pay because you are building for yourselves, I am building for the glory of the king, so he is happy to share his resources with me".

*Rosh Hashanah tefillos* are the paradigm of what *tefillah* could and should be the entire year, to make requests but to make them like we *daven* on *Rosh Hashanah*, to build a beautiful edifice in this world for Hashem. May all of our *tefillos* be accepted this *yamim noraim*!



## ARE YOU *MOCHEL* ME? HOW WE SHOULD (AND SHOULDN'T) DO THINGS ON *EREV YOM KIPPUR*

One of the integral and most well known aspects of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, leading all the way up to *Yom Kippur*, is asking *mechilah* from those we may have wronged. For many, this leads to a familiar scene on *Erev Yom Kippur*, many texts and phone calls asking the same basic question – “are you *mochel* me?” This practice originated in what is brought down by the Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch* based on the Gemara in *Yoma* (85b), that *Yom Kippur* cannot be *mechaper* for *aveiros* that are *bein adam lachaveiro*. *Aveiros bein adam lamakom*, the Gemara explains, are forgiven on *Yom Kippur*, while *aveiros* that are *bein adam lachaveiro* cannot be forgiven by Hashem unless the victim of the *aveirah* grants forgiveness. This concept is taken even further by some: the *Pri Megadim* explains that in a situation where a given *aveirah* has elements of both *bein adam lamakom* and *bein adam lachaveiro*, Hashem will not grant *mechilah* until the victim does. Furthermore, the Vilna Gaon says that one cannot achieve any *kaparah* at all if he has any outstanding *aveiros* for which he has not gotten *mechilah*.

With these opinions in mind, let us shift our attention to the focus of this article, asking for *mechilah* on *Erev Yom Kippur*. To start, the common denominator of all the above opinions is that *mechilah* is a crucial part of the *teshuvah* process, both on our part and on Hashem's. As such, the common practice of many is to reach out to those in their circles and ask *mechilah* for anything they may have done in the past year. While this is an appropriate and encouraged practice, the way that is being done in the modern age may be becoming problematic. In fact, the “Are you *mochel* me?” texts that often go out may be missing one of the main points of the entire *teshuvah* season. For one, there are those who point out that asking for *mechilah* is more than just making up with the one who may have been wronged. There is another Gemara in *Yoma* (87a) that tells the story of Rav, who went looking before *Yom Kippur* for a certain butcher who had offended him. It is pointed out that though Rav was willing to brush off the grievance and forgive the butcher, he went looking for him anyway to give the butcher the chance to formally ask for *mechilah*. From this story, it is evident that there is more of a purpose to *mechilah* than just ensuring the victim is no longer hurting.

Indeed, the Gemara in *Brachos* (12b) says that whoever sins and is embarrassed of his actions is forgiven for all of his *aveiros*. It is clear that shame and embarrassment associated with *aveiros* is crucial to the subsequent request for *mechilah*. As such, when *mechilah* is asked via a quick text, there is a significantly diminished sense of submission and shame, sometimes with zero acknowledgement of any specific wrongdoing. In a similar vein, Rabbi Efreim Goldberg points out the backstory to the *asarah harugei malchus* who we read about on *Yom Kippur*: the Roman emperor heard of the story of *Mechiras Yosef*, in which the brothers committed an *aveirah* for which the Torah specifies death as a punishment.



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Considering the brothers were never punished for their actions, the emperor decided to put to death the greatest gedolim of the generation in their place.

There is, however, a glaring problem with this story. Don't we know that Yosef forgave his brothers for what they did to him, saying that it was all from Hashem? Rabbi Goldberg quotes a remarkable answer from Rabbeinu Bachya, who explained that despite what the pesukim say, Yosef never actually completely forgave his brothers, as he saw their apology as insincere and merely a way to avoid retribution from Yosef in his position of power. In that way, their *mechilah* was not effective and eventually led to the tragedy of the asarah harugei malchus. We now see an added concern that stems from an insincere apology, namely an equally insincere forgiveness on behalf of the victim.

The lesson for us is clear – when *mechilah* is asked insincerely simply because it's "what we're supposed to do," it often does not accomplish the intended effect. Not only might there be something lacking from a *halachic* perspective, the recipient of the request for forgiveness will not feel that it is sincere and in return grant a half-hearted "Yes, I'm *mochel*" response themselves. The lack of a proper request for forgiveness and the ensuing lackluster granting of that request lead to a situation in which the offender may not have achieved the *mechilah* he was looking for, and the victim is left with the sense that the person who wronged him is disingenuous and does not value their relationship. To avoid this all too common scenario, maybe consider a phone call or even an in-person meeting as opposed to that generic text – it can go a long way.

Hopefully, with these things in mind, we can achieve a greater sensitivity towards others and increase the quality of our relationships. In doing so, we can ask for and achieve proper and genuine *mechilah*, first from those around us and then from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.



# ASKING MECHILAH FOR LASHON HARA

When R' Yisroel Meir Hakohein published his *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*, he brought it to various *gedolim* for *haskamos*. R' Yisroel Salanter told him, "Leave your *sefer* with me, and I will read it and decide." When he returned, R' Yisroel said, "You write (4:12) that if one person spoke *lashon hara* against another, and that person ended up being harmed by it (i.e., the listeners believed the *lashon hara* and acted on it), he must come to him to ask forgiveness, and if the victim doesn't know about it, he must tell him what he said about him and ask for forgiveness. I don't understand – just because he wants to do *teshuvah*, does that give him the right to pain his friend even more by telling him what he said about him?" The Chofetz Chaim replied, "I took this *halachah* from Rabbeinu Yonah in *Shaarei Teshuva* 207." They discussed the Rabbeinu Yonah, but still could not agree.

The Chofetz Chaim then asked R' Yisroel to write him a *haskamah* and specify that his approval is on everything except this *halachah*. R' Yisroel replied, "I'm afraid not, because there are some people who don't read the full *haskamah*, and would just see my approval, and I would be guilty of causing others to sin (*lifnei iver*)." So the Chofetz Chaim left without a *haskamah* (Dirshu notes on *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*, quoting the *Sefer Meir Einei Yisroel* v. 6 p. 353).

Rav Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* heard from Rav Dessler in the name of Rav Yisroel Salanter that in such a case, one should ask for a general *mechilah* for anything he did, not telling the person exactly what it was (*Moadim Uzmanim* 1:54).

We are left wondering: What did Rav Yisroel Salanter do with the proof from Rabbeinu Yonah? Let's look at Rabbeinu Yonah inside:

"If the speaker of *lashon hara* wishes to repent, he must ask forgiveness from whoever he has harmed with his angry tongue, and he will not remember all his victims, for he has caused many wounds and pained many souls. Also, in many cases, even where he does remember harming others, they may not know that he brought misfortune upon them, and he will be embarrassed to tell them that he did harm to them. For *lashon hara* is a wound that is not recognizable, as it states in *Tehillim* (120:3-4), 'What further safeguard could one give or add to a cunning tongue? It is like the sharp arrows of a warrior.' This is why *lashon hara* is compared to an arrow: for when one draws his bow, he will often shoot arrows at a person without the person knowing who shot him."

It's clear from the analogy to the arrow that Rabbeinu Yonah is talking about a case where the victim already knows that someone has spread *lashon hara* about him, only he doesn't know who spread it. In that case, Rav Yisroel would agree that the speaker stepping forward and confessing won't cause the victim any additional pain.

However, what about a case where the victim suffered a loss (e.g. his *shidduch* was broken off, or he was denied a job) but never knew the real reason why? He might have assumed until now that it was because the girl simply didn't like him, or the boss found a more capable candidate. But when the speaker confesses, the victim will find out that negative information was spread about him. That's where Rav Yisroel held he shouldn't tell him.



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But the Chofetz Chaim says that even in this case one must tell him, as is clear from his words:

“And even if the other person does not yet know anything about this, he must reveal to him what he did against him in violation of *halachah*, and ask him forgiveness for it, since he knows that he was the cause of harm to the other person.”

So the Chofetz Chaim actually went a step beyond Rabbeinu Yonah, and it was in this step beyond that Rav Yisroel did not agree with him and therefore refused to grant him a *haskamah*.

So what does their disagreement hinge upon? Let’s remember: Rav Yisroel made two arguments: 1) Why should your doing *teshuvah* give you the right to hurt him? It’s better to suffer without *mechilah* rather than hurt him. 2) It really is possible to get *mechilah* without hurting him, by asking generally without specifying the sin.

The Chofetz Chaim disagreed with both of those arguments. On 1), he held that although it would cause the victim pain, he would still rather know what was said about him. A person does not want to be ignorant, even when knowledge is painful. Not only that, but sometimes it could be useful to know; he might take steps to correct the faults that people found in him. Rav Yisroel, on the other hand, may have held that a person would rather remain ignorant of painful information. Alternatively, he held that even if the victim himself would rather know, from the speaker’s standpoint, it would be wrong to disturb his ignorance and cause him pain.

On 2), the Chofetz Chaim held that *mechilah* without knowing the extent of the offense is like a *mekach ta’us* – a transaction on false pretenses. Let’s say A owes B a million dollars, and B forgot about it, and A goes to B and says, “If I owe you some money, are you *mochel me*?” and B says yes, that *mechilah* is invalid. Rav Yisroel, on the other hand, looked at *mechilah* as a *tanai*, a condition. The sinner doesn’t owe anything to his victim. It’s Hashem who punishes, not the victim. You have to do *teshuvah* to Hashem. Except that Hashem makes a condition and says, “For sins against your fellow man, I will take off the punishment only if you obtain *mechilah* from the victim.” For this purpose, a *mechilah* without knowledge of the crime is also considered a *mechilah*.

Either way, gaining atonement for *lashon hara* is a very difficult process. We must learn from this to be careful from the outset never to speak damaging information about another person!



# SEFER YONAH - YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE

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

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

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

Yonah had prophesied many times in his life, and had gone on many missions as a messenger of God, including appointing Yehu as king over Yisrael. But, his famous mission to Nineveh came about as he was entering Yerushalayim for the holiday of *Sukkos*. In his moment of extreme pleasure at seeing the city of Yerushalayim, he was told by Hashem to go to Nineveh to warn the citizens of the city to repent. But Yonah made other plans: the *possuk* describes how Yonah fled from Hashem's command, to the city of Tarshish. The rest of the story briefly goes like this: while on the boat to Tarshish, Hashem sent a storm. The crew of the ship threw Yonah overboard, at which point a whale swallowed him. While in the whale, Yonah did *teshuvah*, and after three days, the whale spit him out near Nineveh, where he fulfilled his mission. The people of the city did *teshuvah*, sparing the city from destruction.

And that brings us back to our question: why did Yonah run away? This prophecy deeply disturbed Yonah. How would this mission help the Jews in their *teshuvah*? Would it be any different than the dozens of *nevi'im* that came before him and warned the people to revert from the evil of their ways?

He came to the conclusion that by going to Nineveh, he would be putting the Northern Kingdom in mortal danger, since if Nineveh repented, they would have more merits than that of the Northern Kingdom (Alshich).



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The Abarbanel, Malbim, and Metzudas Tzion each add that the people of Nineveh were warned, rather than being destroyed immediately like Sedom and Amarah, because they were destined to exile the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Additionally, Yonah knew that the citizens of Nineveh would have a very easy time repenting for two reasons: firstly, the Pharaoh of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was their king and would persuade them to repent (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*).

Secondly, they repented out of fear, not love, which is a much easier process (the last concern was the first to come to fruition, because as soon as the news arrived from Nineveh, the *navi* Tzephanyah stated (3:1) that he was astounded that it only took one prophet for the Ninevites to repent, but the Jews remained stubborn even after scores of prophets warned them).

Yonah ran away because he thought he would be helping the Jews by not warning the citizens of Nineveh; he wanted Nineveh to lose this opportunity to gain *zechusim*, be destroyed, and thereby be unable to exile the Jewish people. In fact, he went so far as to try to commit suicide (Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel), as he refused to pray during the storm, and even agreed to be thrown overboard (Alshich, Metzudas Dovid, and Malbim).

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



## DID CNN GET IT RIGHT? WEARING GOLD ON YOM KIPPUR

In an article titled “Everything You Wanted to Know about Yom Kippur,” CNN reports [1] that “observant Jews do not bathe on the holiday, they do not wear leather shoes or gold jewelry.”

Refraining from bathing and wearing leather shoes are two of the five prohibitions on *Yom Kippur*, but is it correct that we should not wear gold jewelry on this sacred day?

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26a) explains that when the *Kohen Gadol* would enter the *Kodesh Hakadashim* on *Yom Kippur*, he did not wear four of his usual eight garments, since they had gold in them. The Gemara explains that this practice is based on the principle of *ein kateigor na'aseh saneigor* – an accuser cannot become a defender. Gold represents the sin of the Golden Calf and therefore stands as an “accuser” of *Klal Yisrael*. It would be inappropriate to use that when seeking atonement for *Klal Yisrael* on *Yom Kippur*.

Based on this Gemara, the custom developed that people would make sure not to wear gold on *Yom Kippur*. The *Pri Megadim* (*Teivas Gome, Parshas Acharei Mos*) writes that the reason of *ein kateigor na'aseh saneigor* should – strictly speaking – only apply to *Kohanim* and *Yisraelim*, but *Levi'im* and women, who were not involved in the sin of the Golden Calf, would be allowed to wear gold on *Yom Kippur*. However, the *Pri Megadim* writes that for the sake of peace and to prevent any group of people from feeling insulted, everyone should adopt this custom to refrain from wearing gold.

The *Mateh Ephraim* (609:11 in the *Eleph LeMateh*) raised the following difficulty on this custom based on the Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah*: the Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* (ibid.) says that this principle of *ein kateigor na'aseh saneigor* only applies to things that are coming to bring atonement. That being the case, if one is wearing a garment such as a *kittel*, which does not specifically bring atonement to the one wearing it, why should there be a problem to adorn it with gold material? The *Mateh Ephraim* explains that even though wearing a *kittel* does not bring atonement, since it hints to ideas of atonement and purity (as it serves to remind a person of the seriousness of the day and the need for *teshuvah*), it is proper not to have any gold in it.

R' Betzalel Stern (*Shu"t B'tzel HaChochmah*, vol. 6, siman 3) writes that according to the *Mateh Ephraim*, there should be nothing wrong with wearing gold jewelry or a gold watch, as these are items which do not bring atonement nor hint to the concept of *teshuvah*. He cites further proof to this from the Gemara (*Yoma* 37a) that describes how King Munbaz made the handles of the vessels out of gold on *Yom Kippur*. Since these vessels were not involved in the direct atonement of *Yom Kippur*, there was nothing wrong with having them made out of gold.

However R' Stern concludes that a person who does not regularly wear a gold watch should not do so on *Yom Kippur* due to the seriousness of the day. But, a person who wears a watch regularly may do so on *Yom Kippur*.



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Rabbi Apfel serves as a *Maggid Shiur* as well as Dean and *Mashgiach* for the 10th grade. An MTA alumnus as well as a graduate of Yeshiva University, Rabbi Apfel served as Shiur Assistant to Rabbi Yaakov Neuberger while learning at YU and continued to learn in the prestigious Wexner Kollel Elyon after receiving *Semicha* from RIETS. He also earned a certificate in Mental Health Counseling from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology.

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[1] <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/08/us/yom-kippur-meaning-trnd/index.html>



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# YOM KIPPUR SHOFAR BLOWING?

For many, the final moments of *Yom Kippur* during the *Ne'ila* service can be the most impactful. Specifically, following the *chazzan's* "musical" *kaddish* the *shofar* is blown and then everyone sings "*Leshana habaa b'yerushalayim*". What stands out most during these moving moments is the blowing of the *shofar*. To many this act may seem strange as the blowing of the *shofar* is generally correlated with and seen as a special *mitzvah* for *Rosh Hashanah*.

The Torah says that we blow the *shofar* to signify the *Yovel* year (*Vayikra* 25:9). This can't be the reason for *shofar* on *Yom Kippur* because we blow the *shofar* at this time every single year, not just on a *Yovel* year. Alternatively, the *Midrash* on *Koheles* states that a *bas kol*, heavenly voice, tells everyone that the fast has ended and they can go home and eat. Many *mefarshim*, including *Tsafos*, agree that the *shofar* blowing signifies the end of the fast (*Shabbos* 114b).

Additionally, there are some who explain that we're blowing the *shofar* to confuse/show our victory over the *satan*, who is believed to only regain control after *Yom Kippur*. The *Semag* even writes in his *sefer*, *Sefer Mitzvas Gadol* (69), that the *shofar* blow represents the *shechina's* ascent through the seven heavens, corresponding to the seven times we say "*Hashem Hu Haelokim*". He then quotes a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* which states: "*alah elokim bitruah hashem bekol shofar*", "Hashem ascends with the sound of the *teruah*."

There are also two major differing customs in regards to the actual blowing. Should it be one long *tekiah* or a set of *tekiah*, *shevarim*- *teruah*, *tekiah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* believes that the set is blown, while the *Rema* believes one long blast is blown (*Orach Chaim* 623:6).

In conclusion, the *mitzvah* of blowing the *shofar* is one of the most significant moments of *Yom Kippur* even though it actually takes place after the conclusion of the day. It signifies the start of a new fresh year and is then followed by a singing of "*Leshana Habah B'Yerushalayim*" which reminds us of how much we still don't have. We should all take a moment at the end of *Yom Kippur* to think about what we were lacking in the year before and what we can fix in the coming year.



## “YOUR FAVORITE DAY OF THE YEAR MUST BE *EREV YOM KIPPUR*”: MYTH OR MITZVAH?

A few years back, a song titled “Skinny Pinny” surfaced in the Jewish world. It was a parody of the concept of one eating more than is medically safe (which can definitely be an article, and *hashkafic* discussion, of its own) in order to spread a good cause called “Lose 4 Autism.” In the song, the singer exclaims, “Your favorite day of the year must be *Erev Yom Kippur*.” This seems to imply that *Erev Yom Kippur* is a full-day eating fest. Is this true? Obviously there is no *mitzvah* to completely stuff oneself on *Erev Yom Kippur* to the point that it would become unhealthy and/or dangerous, but is there a *mitzvah* to eat all day on *Erev Yom Kippur*?

We begin our search with the source for the basic *mitzvah* to eat on *Erev Yom Kippur* – there is a *braisa* quoted on *Berachos* 8b, *Pesachim* 68b, *Yoma* 81b, and *Rosh Hashanah* 9a that says,

דתני חייא בר רב מדיפתי: 'ועניתם את נפשותיכם בתשעה', וכי בתשעה מתענין? והלא בעשור מתענין! אלא לומר לך: כל האוכל ושותה בתשיעי, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו התענה תשיעי ועשירי.

*As Chiya, son of Rav from Difsai, taught: [The possuk says,] “And you shall afflict your souls on the ninth [of Tishrei].” [Chiya asks,] Do you mean to say we fast on the ninth?! We fast on the tenth! Rather, this possuk is teaching that whoever eats and drinks on the ninth is considered as having fasted on both the ninth and tenth.*

Rashi in *Yoma* explains that

והכי משמע קרא ועניתם בתשעה כלומר התקן עצמך בתשעה שתוכל להתענות בעשרה ומדאפיקה קרא בלשון עינוי לומר לך הרי הוא כאלו מתענה בתשעה.

This [*braisa*] infers from the *possuk* that “And you shall afflict [your souls on] the ninth” is as if to say that you should prepare yourself on the ninth so that you can fast on the tenth. And since the *possuk* teaches in the terminology of affliction, it teaches that it is as if you fasted on the ninth.

To summarize, Rashi says that the reason for eating on the ninth is to prepare for the tenth. This fits with Rabeinu Asher (*Yoma*, *perek* 8, 22), *Meiri* (*Berachos* 8b), and *Shiltos* (167), among others. However, what is very perplexing is that Rashi himself seems not to stay entirely consistent with this reasoning.

Rashi on *Rosh Hashanah* 9a never mentions the reason for eating – he just explains the *drashah* learned in the *braisa*. It seems that according to Rashi in *Rosh Hashanah*, this *mitzvah* is a stand-alone *mitzvah* with no reason needed for its institution.

Before we attempt to reconcile what seems to be a contradiction in Rashi, it is worthwhile to mention a few *nafka minas* (practical differences), which explains why this difference makes a significant difference in our *sugya*. One can learn two practical differences from Netziv in *Ha’emek She’eilah* on *Shiltos* 167, 12: A) if one isn’t fasting because they are sick, and B) if one knows they can fast without preparation by eating on *Erev Yom Kippur*. An additional *nafka mina* can be learned from the *Minchas Chinuch* in *Mitzvah* 313, namely, if women must eat. If it is a stand-alone *mitzvah*, it would be a *mitzvas aseh shehazeman grama* (a time bound *mitzvah*, which women aren’t required to perform), and they wouldn’t be *chayav* in eating. But if it was directly linked to *Yom Kippur* as a *mitzvah* of preparation it wouldn’t be a *mitzvas aseh shehazeman grama*, and women would be *chayav* in this *mitzvah*.



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YUHSB '22

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Now that we see how the difference makes a difference, we can continue to attempt to offer an answer for the *stirah* in Rashi.

It seems strange that in *Hilchos Shevisas Asor*, Rambam's section in *Mishneh Torah* for *Hilchos Yom Kippur*, he never mentions the *mitzvah* of eating on *Erev Yom Kippur*. And one can offer a simple answer for this by assuming Rambam didn't hold like the *braisa* and felt that it wasn't a *mitzvah* to eat on the ninth. However, this answer seems to be defeated when one looks at 3:2 in *Hilchos Nedarim*, when Rambam says,

"הנודר שיצום יום ראשון או יום שלישי כל ימיו ופגע בו יום זה והרי הוא יום טוב או ערב יום הכפורים הרי זה חייב לצום"

*If one vows to fast on every Sunday or Wednesday, and they then realize that it falls out on Yom Tov or Erev Yom Kippur, they are required to fast.*

Radbaz adds,

"סובר רבינו שאסור להתענות בערב יום הכפורים מן התורה דכתיב בתשעה לחדש וכי בתשעה מתענין והלא בעשרה מתענין אלא כל האוכל..."

Rambam holds that it's *assur* to fast on *Erev Yom Kippur mide'oraisa* since it says "on the ninth of the month." *Do you mean to say we fast on the ninth?! We fast on the tenth!* Rather, [this *possuk* is teaching that] whoever eats on the ninth is considered as having fasted on both the ninth and tenth. This implies that it's *assur mide'oraisa*.

But why would this *halachah* be placed in such an obscure spot? Wouldn't it fit better in *Hilchos Shevisas Asor*? The *Sefer Avodas Hayom* explains that since Rambam places it in a different spot, he clearly believes it's separate from *Yom Kippur* and thus a *mitzvah bifnei atzmah*, a stand-alone *mitzvah*. This concept is strengthened by the fact that Rambam learned it as an *issur de'oraisa*, thus rendering it technically separate from *Yom Kippur*.

But why would the *Chachomim* think to make a stand-alone *mitzvah* for no reason? One wouldn't assume that the *Chachomim* would randomly institute pointless *halachos*!

My eleventh grade *rebbe*, Rabbi Mendelson, explained in the name of his *rebbe*, Rav Ahron Soloveichik, that in each *din derabanan*, there are two components: the *tzuras hatakanah* and the *sibas hatakanah* – how the *din* was instituted and why the *din* was instituted. In many cases, although the *din* is made for specific reasons, we apply the *din* across the board through a *lo plug*. Rabbi Mendelson then brought this back to our *sugya*. He explained that despite there being a reason for the *takanah*, Rambam chose to focus on the *tzuras hatakanah*, and therefore he does not change the *din* based on the *sibah*. Through this answer we can spring into an answer to our question on the two contradictory Rashis. For *dinim derabanan*, and even sometimes for *dinim de'oraisa*, there are two components to the *din*: the *chiyuv* and the *mechayev* – the simple *din* itself and the reason behind it. In this case, the *chiyuv* is to eat on the ninth day, and the *mechayev* is to prepare for the fast. Rashi focused on the *chiyuv* in *Rosh Hashanah* and the *mechayev* in *Yoma*. In order to understand why Rashi focuses on the *chiyuv* in *Rosh Hashanah*, we must see the context of that *gemara*. The *gemara* there discusses the concept of *tosefes shemitah* – preparing *shemitah* before and continuing *shemitah* after the seventh year. One does not need to do much preparation before the seventh year. Therefore, in the context of this *gemara*, it wasn't necessary to mention the *mechayev* – preparation – because it doesn't help the *sugya*. Thus, Rashi doesn't mention it.

From the above *sugya* we can derive two concepts in the *mitzvah* of eating on *Erev Yom Kippur*: the *sibah/mechayev*, which is to prepare for *Yom Kippur*, and the *tzurah/chiyuv*, which is the plain *mitzvah* of eating on *Erev Yom Kippur*. Once we have this *chiluk*, we can now apply it to our original question. Is there a *mitzvah* to eat all day on *Erev Yom Kippur*? If you agree with Rambam that we only focus on the *chiyuv*, then yes, there would be a *mitzvah* to eat all day on *Erev Yom Kippur*. However, if you agree with most other *shitos*, there is only a *mitzvah* to eat as much as you need for the next day's fast, which most probably would not include eating small snacks at the beginning and the middle of the day.



# “KA’EILEH”

But wait, this famous (or infamous) word from *parshas Pinchas* appears in the *maftir* for *Pesach*, not *Sukkos*! This is because the *korban mussaf* for every day of *pesach* is the same; however, there is a different *maftir* for each day of *Sukkos*. Notwithstanding why, we will *be’ezeras Hashem* attempt to learn from this as well as from *Sukkos* in general.

The *Medrash (Vayikra Rabbah 30:12)* gives the famous comparison of the *dalet minim* to types of Jews. An *esrog* has both smell and taste, and is compared to those who have Torah in them as well as good *ma’asim* (and so, good *middos*); a *lulav* has taste but no smell, and is like those who have Torah but might not unfortunately be able to back it up with healthy *middos* and *yiras shamayim* (for example, Yеровam ben Nevat, who was a tremendous *talmid chochom* in terms of knowledge; he has no *chelek* in *Olam Haba* [*Mishnah, Sanhedrin 90a*]); *hadasim* have smell but no taste, and are compared to those great people who might be the tremendous *ba’alei chesed*, among other things, but are not the biggest in terms of Torah; *aravos* don’t have smell or taste, and there are, unfortunately, Jews like that in today’s world; many Jews don’t know they are Jewish.

The *Medrash* continues and says that we are all called upon to come together into a cohesive group. Those with good qualities will help those lacking to do *teshuvah*. And it is precisely at this moment of combining that Hashem is, so to speak, elevated. We can hold the holy *minim* and *daven* for all of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*’s children and lessen the many collective sins of *Klal Yisroel*. (One might wonder how there are any sins left if we got *kaparah* on Yom Kippur mere days earlier. Unfortunately, we might still have some sins left from lack of complete *teshuvah*, and also unfortunate is the fact that we might gather sins in the time between Yom Kippur and *Sukkos*. *Sukkos* is definitely, therefore, a time of needed *teshuvah*.)

*Sukkos* is known as *zman simchaseinu*, the time of our happiness. It is a time of, on some level, feeling less offended and angry about all the people who do wrong. Each day of *Sukkos* is a different *korban*, each *min* is a different Jew. We can’t just sit back and be all accepting all the time, but on *Sukkos* we can try to just be happy in the face of our differences and realize the inherent importance of every Jew. We can also use *Sukkos* as a time to *daven* for all those who are not as lucky as many of us are to be *frum*. When we take the *dalet minim*, Hashem delights in us all and is elevated from the collective group that is His people.



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# THE TRUE *SIMCHAS YOM TOV*

One of the *mitzvos* associated with the *Chag* of *Sukkos* is “*vesamachta bechagecha*,” which is interpreted as a *mitzvah* to be happy on *Yom Tov*. However, it is unclear from the *pasuk* what the definition of *simchah* in this context is and how one can accomplish it. There are many commodities, actions, and people that seemingly bring one to happiness, which leaves significant intrigue into what the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” is, as described by *Sukkos*. The *mefarshim* bring several explanations for how one can understand this *mitzvah* and the correct method of attaining happiness. The *Sforno* gives one explanation based upon the inclusion in the *pasuk* of the “*ger*,” “*yasom*,” and “*almanah*” in the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*.” He asserts that *simchah* is obtained by sharing the newly collected grains and produce with those who are less fortunate. This transaction will surely bring *simchah* to both the giver and the receiver who now has what to eat for *Yom Tov*. This is similar to the *Rambam*’s emphasis on the *mitzvah* of “*matanos la’evyonim*” as the main *mitzvah* of *Purim*, for the best form of happiness is achieved by making others happy. *Rabbeinu Bachya* offers a different approach that the *simchah* on *Sukkos* is meant to be solely focused on the joy attained from *Yom Tov*, as opposed to the *simchah* one gets from his relationship with his wife. The *simchah* on *Sukkos* should be one achieved from *ruchniyus* and not one focused on other *gashmiyus* pleasures.

Through all these interpretations of the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” one can still ask the persistent question of what is the relevance of this *mitzvah* specifically by *Sukkos*? The *Da’as Zekeinim* explains that the “*simchah shleimah*” attained by *Sukkos* comes from the culmination of the farming season; when after a long and strenuous process, the grains and fruits are finally gathered into the home to enjoy. This is a *simchah* not present on the other of the “*Shalosh Regalim*,” as there are still remaining steps left to take in the farming process. On *Sukkos*, one can finally have peace of mind and be able to completely direct his attention to the *Yom Tov*. The *Rambam* in his *Sefer Hamitzvos* explains that the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” by *Sukkos* is accomplished through the joyous playing of instruments and cheerful dancing performed during the *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva* in the *Bais Hamikdash* throughout the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*. The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Lulav* further elaborates on this ceremony and states that while everyone has the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*,” the playing of instruments and the dancing done during the *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva* are exclusively to be done by the *Gedolei Yisroel* and the average person must watch from the sides instead. The *Emes L’Yaakov* asks that if we have this great *mitzvah* by *Sukkos* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” that is accomplished through playing music and dancing, shouldn’t everyone have a chance to participate and not just the *Gedolei Yisroel*?

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Pesachim* 49a discusses the many horrors that will befall the family of a *talmid chacham* who exclusively increases his feasts. His home will be destroyed, his learning will be forgotten, he will become involved in conflict, be *michalel Shem Shamayim*, as well as the name of his father and cause infinite harm for all future generations to come from him. The *Gemara* asks what exactly it means for him to be “*marbeh*” his *seudos* such that it is the cause of this severe punishment. *Rava* answers that it means he was a “*tavern dancer*” which *Rashi* interprets to mean his behavior is like that of a clown, whose goal at a wedding is to cause excessive laughter among the attendees by intoxicating them with alcoholic beverages. This behavior is clearly disgusting and inappropriate and is a major *chillul Hashem*. The *Emes L’Yaakov* explains that if the average person is allowed to participate in the festivities of the *Simchas Beis Hashoeiva*, it will lead to promiscuous, improper conduct and become a massive *chillul Hashem* in the *Bais Hamikdash*. However, with regards to the *Gedolei Yisroel*, there is no doubt they will perform the *mitzvah* of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” properly and bring *simchah* for the *kavod* of *Hashem*. Nevertheless, the *Rambam* still points out that although most of *Bnai Yisroel* are prohibited from actively participating in the *mitzvah*, they still have a *chelek* in it which is achieved by coming to view and hear the *mitzvah* being observed in its proper manner. It is integral that the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov* be accomplished properly and appropriately and must not be a *simchah* brought upon by materialism and improper conduct, but rather one brought through the true revelry of the *Yom Tov*.



## ACHIEVING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE YAMIM NORAIM AND ARBAH MINIM

The *passuk* in *parshas Emor* tells us “*ulekachtem lachem bayom harishon pri eitz hadar kapos temarim va’anaf eitz avos ve’arvei nachal.*” The *Kli Yakar* on that *passuk* quotes a *Medrash* which tells us that *Sukkos* is *yom rishon lecheshbon avonos*, and quotes the following *mashal*: there was a king who went to one of his provinces to collect their taxes. When he was within ten *mil*, the leaders of the *medinah* went out to greet him, so he canceled a third of the tax. Within 5 *mil*, the common people went out to praise him, so he canceled another third of the tax. When he entered the city, all the remaining men, women, and children came out and praised him, so he canceled the whole tax, saying “what happened, happened, but now let us start anew.” The same process occurs on *Erev Rosh Hashanah* – the *tzadikim* fast, and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* cancels a third of their *aveiros*, and from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Yom Kippur*, the *yechidim* fast, and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* forgives another third of their *aveiros*, and on *Yom Kippur* everybody fasts and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* says to *Yisrael*, “what happened, happened, from now let us start anew.” From *Yom Kippur* until *Sukkos*, all of *Yisrael* are being *osek* in *mitzvos*, so on the first day of *Sukkos*, Hashem says, “today the *cheshbon* starts because you have not done *aveiros*.” The *Eitz Yosef* explains why Hashem says this twice, both by *Yom Kippur* and by *Sukkos*, since it’s not certain that you won’t do *aveiros* during the days between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos*, even if you’re being *osek* in *mitzvos*: Hashem says on *Yom Kippur*, “if you are standing to do *aveiros* then the *cheshbon* starts now.” But, after those in-between days pass and Hashem sees that you were *osek* in *mitzvos*, He says, “the *cheshbon* starts from now.” So the *Kli Yakar* asks, why is it called *yom rishon lecheshbon avonos* specifically by *lulav* and not by *Sukkos*? And why did the *Ba’al Medrash* need to bring the whole *mashal*? Just say that everything is forgiven on *Yom Kippur* and people are *osek* between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos*, so *Sukkos* is the first day for the *cheshbon*! The *Kli Yakar* answers that the *Ba’al Mederesh* wanted to answer two *kashas* – first of all, it says *yom rishon*, but it isn’t the first day. (And by the *sukkah*, it says 15th of the month, so don’t say it means the first day of *Sukkos* because then the *passuk* should have been consistent for everything.) And why does the *passuk* say *lachem* (and he says that it can’t be talking about *lulav hagazul* because the word *lachem* doesn’t sound like that, (*ayin sham*))? Rather, surely the 4 *minim* are *kneged* 4 groups of *yidden*: *pri eitz hadar*, which has both taste and smell, is *kneged ba’alei Torah umitzvos (tzadikim gemurim)*; *arvei nachal*, which has no taste or smell, are *kneged* the *reshaim*, who don’t have Torah *umitzvos*; *kapos temarim*, which have taste but no smell; and *anaf eitz avos*, which have smell but no taste. Both of those are *kneged* those who have Torah but no *mitzvos* or those who have *mitzvos* but no Torah (*beinoni*). That is why it says *ulekachtem lachem*, just like we find these three groups within, you take these 4 *minim* which correspond to them. And that is why it tells you the groups when mentioning the fact that it is *yom rishon lecheshbon avonos* – the 4 *minim* are telling you that everybody is not forgiven at the same time. First, *pri eitz hadar*, which are *tzadikim*, are forgiven on *Rosh Hashanah*, then *beinonim* during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and then even *reshaim* do *teshuvah* on *Yom Kippur*. And included in the tying of the 4 *minim* is the *inyan* of *teshuvah* because the Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* tells us that during the year, only *teshuvah* of a *tzibbur* is *mekabel*, but during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, even *teshuvah* *hayachid* is *mekabel*.



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Therefore, the *passuk* is telling us why we should be in one bundle more now than before because to be able to do full *teshuvah*, we need to be all together. This is what the *Kli Yakar* says.

And I wanted to add on a little bit, that through the *lulav*, we are connecting with the *tzibbur*, and through tying it together we are tying all of us together. And I wanted to use this to help explain one of my favorite *sugyas* of *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* (not that you should do it, but that it has great *lomdus*). The Gemara in *Sukkah* tells us that you can't take a *lulav* on the second day because of *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah*, and the Gemara there gives a *mashal*: a king was going by the tax house, and he told his servants to give a tax to the tax collectors from his treasury. His servants asked him, "doesn't all the tax go to you anyway?" He answered that all the passersby will learn from me and will not try to evade paying the tax. So too by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – he says that he hates *gezeilah* (gets this from a *passuk*). Even though the entire world belongs to *Hashem*, He says that from Me people will learn and evade themselves from *gezeilah*. The Maharshal changes the word *gezel* in the Gemara to *hagazul*. Asks the *Chiddushei Rabbi Re'uven* – what difference does that make between the two? And using this (and a *kasha* he had on a *Ritva* and a *Tosfos* to answer for them (*ayin sham*)), he says that the difference is that *hagazul* tells me that *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* only applies to an *aveirah* that turns the item into a *cheftzah* (an object) of *aveirah*. That is what *hagazul* means – a stolen item. The item inherently is considered and has a *shem* of a stolen item (because I acquire it through changing and have a *chiyuv tashlumin* of the specific item (look there for proofs)) versus if I had done an *aveirah* that was *assur* for me to do but didn't make the item itself an *aveiradik* item. (All this I heard from one of my *rebbeim*, Rav Belizon Shlit"a.) But, the question becomes, why is it that *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* only applies to something that the item becomes an *aveiradik* item? And why is the main topic of *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* discussed specifically by *lulav*? So perhaps it could be based off of the *Kli Yakar* – since I am connecting to the *tzibbur*, they are not going to want to connect with something inherently bad but will obviously want to join with someone even if he is an inherently evil person, but he wants to do *teshuvah*. So if the *aveirah* just goes on him, he is still not inherently bad. But, if he is going to try to join them with an inherently disgusting item (inherently *aveiradik* item), they are not going to want to join with him because they are associating with that inherently disgusting item. And that is why we are introduced to *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* by *lulav* – by *matzah*, the point of the *mitzvah* is to remember *Bnei Yisrael* coming out of *Mitzrayim* hurriedly, so whether it's disgusting or not, you're still fulfilling the *mitzvah*. By *lulav*, though, the point of the *mitzvah* is to connect, which isn't happening with an inherently disgusting object [1].

[1] Though there is a *Tosfos* quoted by the *Ritva* that *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* only applies to *mitzvos* of *ritzui* (giving to Hashem), such as *lulav* and *korbanos*, but it would not apply to *sukkah* or *matzah*, and the whole *svara* that I am saying fits very well. Since I want to give to Hashem I am not inherently disgusting, but if I am trying to give something inherently disgusting then it shouldn't be good.



# SHEMINI ATSERES AND SIMCHAS TORAH: ONE SIMCHA

*This article was adapted from TorahWeb.org, with permission from both TorahWeb and Rav Schachter. The original article can be found at [http://torahweb.org/torah/2002/moadim/rsch\\_sukkos.html](http://torahweb.org/torah/2002/moadim/rsch_sukkos.html)*

The prohibition against getting married on *Shabbos* is rabbinic in origin. It was part of the *gezeirah* against *mekach umemkar* (buying and selling) *shema yichtov* (lest one write by mistake). However the prohibition against marrying on *yom tov* or even on *chol hamoed* is biblical, based on the principle of *ein me'arvin simcha besimcha*. On *yom tov*, and even on *chol hamoed*, there is a *mitzvah* to rejoice, and one who marries is engaged in a different form of *simcha*, which detracts from the *simcha* of *yom tov*. (On *Shabbos* there is no *mitzvah* of *simcha*, hence no problem of contradiction.)

In Talmudic times, there were several differences between the practices of the Jewish community in Babylonia and the practices of the communities in *Eretz Yisrael*. One of these differences was regarding *krias haTorah*. In Babylonia, they would complete the reading of the entire Torah every year on the last day of *Sukkos*, hence the name *Simchas Torah*. In *Eretz Yisrael*, each *sedra* (read each *Shabbos*) was only about one third the length of the *sedros* read in Babylonia, hence it would take about three years to complete the entire Torah. *Simchas Torah* would only be celebrated once every three years, upon the completion of the entire Torah. Already in the times of the Rambam, the practice all over the world had followed that of *Bavel*, to celebrate *Simchas Torah* every year, on the last day of *Sukkos*.

The *Achronim* raise a problem regarding this practice: why is this celebration not in violation of the principle of *ein me'arvin simcha besimcha*? On *Sukkos* there is clearly a *mitzvah* of *simcha*, and the celebration of the *siyum* of the Torah also certainly involves an element of *simcha*. Why should we not insist on observing *Simchas Torah* only on a *Shabbos* or a weekday, as opposed to having the celebration on a *yom tov*?

Perhaps the answer to that question lies in the nature of the *yom tov* of *Shemini Atseres*. Each of the *yomim tovim* has its own theme. The theme of *Pesach* is the redemption from Egypt, on *Shavuot* it is *Mattan Torah*, and the theme on *Sukkos* is the ability of the Jewish people to have survived miraculously throughout the years of the *galus*. For seven days we leave our permanent home and dwell in the shaky *sukkah*, with very little protection. We rely on the Divine protection, which has maintained the Jewish people throughout the years, despite all odds against survival. In the language of Rav Kook *zt"l*, the continued existence of the Jewish people is a, "*halacha leMoshe miSinai*" (i.e., there is no rational way to explain it).

What is the theme of *Shemini Atseres*? The *halacha* declares *Shemini Atseres* as a separate *yom tov*, and is not merely the last two days of *Sukkos*. (This is the reason that the *bracha* "*shehechyanu*" is recited at the end of the *kiddush* on the evening of *Shemini Atseres* but not on the evening of the last days of *Pesach*. *Shemini Atseres* is a separate *yom tov*, and has not been celebrated since a year ago). What is the special theme of the new *yom tov*?

Rashi, in his commentary on the *Torah* (*Vayikra* 23:36), quotes from the *tannaim* that after the seven days of *Sukkos* are all over, and the millions of Jews have spent their *yom tov* in Jerusalem (fulfilling *aliya laregel*), *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* exclaims, "I love you so much; I find it difficult to say goodbye; please stay on another day." *Shemini Atseres* does not come to commemorate any particular historical event, but rather to emphasize *bechiras Yisrael*, the uniqueness of *Am Yisrael*. From all the nations of the world, the Jews alone were chosen to be designated as "*banim lamakom*," as "*bni bechori Yisrael*."

The entire uniqueness of the Jewish people lies in the fact that the *malach* (angel) teaches every baby the entire *Torah* before he or she is born. The *simcha* of the completion of the entire *Torah* is not something separate from the *simcha* of the *yom tov*. The whole essence of the *yom tov* of *Shemini Atseres* is interconnected with *Torah* study. Only through *Torah* study did we become the *am hanivchar*, and hence our *minhag* of celebrating the *simcha* of completing the learning of the entire *Torah* not only does not compete with the *simcha* of the *yom tov* of *Shemini Atseres*, it rather complements it and enhances it.



**HARAV  
HERSHEL  
SCHACHTER  
SHLIT" A**

ROSH YESHIVA AND  
ROSH KOLLEL,  
YESHIVAS RABBEINU  
YITZCHAK ELCHANAN  
YUHSB '58



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## EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO REJOICE

On *Simchas Torah*, we finish the yearly cycle of Torah readings and begin again from *Bereishis*. All Jews, men and women, young and old, learned and uneducated, participate in the celebration of this significant occasion, marked by joy and merriment. One could question why someone who didn't study Torah all year would celebrate *Simchas Torah*?

The explanation, which is frequently given, is as follows: When one once saw a non-observant Jew dancing and singing with all of his might on *Simchas Torah*, the man asked him, "Why are you rejoicing so much? Did you involve yourself with the Torah study throughout the entire year?" "While you are right that I was remiss in my involvement with Torah throughout the year, nevertheless, if I am invited to my brother's wedding, isn't it appropriate for me to dance and sing? Thus, though my brother is really the *ba'al simchah* today, I am actively rejoicing with him."

Even though this response is intriguing, it falls short in that *Simchas Torah* is everyone's celebration and everyone is a *ba'al simchah*, not just a stranger attending a family event.

The processions carrying the Torah are known as *hakafos*. The word "*hakafos*," which has the same root as the word "*makif*" (circling around), appears to have come from the fact that we round the bimah. However, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, provides a deeper meaning of the term "*hakafos*." According to him, it refers to "the extension of credit," as it is said in Pirkei Avos (3:16), "vhachenvani meikiph" (the shopkeeper extends credit). When one applies for credit and is notified that his application has been accepted, he is indeed very happy. Similar to this, Hashem, the "shopkeeper," tells every Jew on *Simchas Torah*, "I give you permission to rejoice with My Torah, though your record for Torah study and observance for the past year may not exactly be up to par, but dance today on credit, because I trust that you will make good during the coming year." The Jew is ecstatic when Hashem personally offers credit to him. May we all rejoice on *Simchas Torah* and live up to the expectations that Hashem has for us.



# HOSHANAH RABBAH: A FINAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TESHUVAH

The seventh and last day of *Sukkos*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, is the day where our judgment concerning the allotment water, which we davened for during the entirety of *Sukkos*, is sealed. The Gemara says (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b) that on *Rosh Hashanah* the people who are either *tzaddikim gemurim*, fully righteous, or *reshaim gemurim*, fully wicked, are immediately placed into their proper books. The rest of the people who are in between have their judgment suspended until *Yom Kippur*. The Zohar (*Vayechi* 220a and *Tzav* 31b), however, extends the deadline until *Hoshanah Rabbah*, stating that although the judgment is sealed on *Yom Kippur*, it is not “concluded” or delivered until then. Fittingly, *Hoshanah Rabbah* is turned into a day of intensity regarding *tefillah* and learning. Many people have the *minhag* to stay up the entire night of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, also known as *Tikkun Leil Hoshanah Rabbah*, and read the entire *Sefer Devarim*, the entire *Sefer Tehillim*, and go to the *mikvah*. These unique *minhagim* allow us to be fully immersed in *mitzvos* and *tefillah*. I could go on and on about all of the special *minhagim* of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, but I would like to focus on how this special intensity that we have specifically on *Hoshanah Rabbah* allows for a final chance of *teshuvah*. *Chazal* offer the following *mashal* to explain why this final *teshuvah* at this specific time has the ability to change our judgment for the good: Let’s say there was a harsh judgment decreed against someone for having disobeyed the king, but when the agents of the king go to the home of the perpetrator to carry out the king’s punishment, they find him joyously fulfilling all of the king’s decrees. The agents say, “This can’t be the one who rebelled against the king, he acts like a completely different person!” The king agrees that this must be someone else, and he is spared from punishment. Essentially, we are changing our identity and becoming engrossed in prayer allowing Hashem to see us as a changed person, even though it is only for a short period of time. Just as the king couldn’t see how the man who had previously rebelled against him had actually been the same person who was now happily following all of his rules, Hashem sees right through our past and only sees our present, where we are fully devoted to him *b’simcha*, and he rips up our previous decree as if it was never there.

On *Hoshanah Rabbah*, everything relates to prayer, including the *Aravah* that is taken, the many *hakafos* that are done (hence the name *Hoshanah Rabbah*, or “many *hoshanos*”, which are done when encircling the *bima* during the *hakafos*), and the last of the *ushpizin* being Dovid *Hamelech* (which is very fitting since he is considered the very embodiment of prayer through his *Sefer Tehillim*). However, we do not rely on our *zechusim* that we have earned previously throughout the year to boost our *teshuvah*, rather, we are dependent solely on our *tefillah* on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. The *Sefer Haminhagim* (Tirna) quotes the following Medrash: Why is it called *Hoshana Rabbah*? G-d said to Avraham, “I am unique and you are unique. I will give your children a unique day to atone for their sins,” and this is *Hoshana Rabbah*. He also quotes, similar to the Zohar, that, “If there is no atonement for your children on *Rosh Hashanah*, there will be on *Yom Kippur*; and if not, there will be on *Hoshana Rabbah* (*Hagahot* 216).” Furthermore, the *Mateh Moshe* also quotes this Medrash, and asks “Why was this promise specifically made to Avraham?” He answers that Avraham was only able to have an influence on the world after 21 generations of the existence from Adam. Or, metaphorically, “his light began to illuminate the world after 21 generations.” Similarly, *Hoshanah Rabbah* is 21 days after the beginning of the time that we begin to do *teshuvah*, *Rosh Hashanah*. Even if “our light is late in shining”, we still have *Hoshanah Rabbah* to redeem ourselves and do *teshuvah* (*Mateh Moshe* 957). Accordingly, the essential nature of the day is *tefillah*.

Included in the *tefillah* theme of *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the *aravah*, or willow branch, which is implemented into the prayer for rain. This is appropriate, as the *aravos* must be taken from *arvei nachal*, willow brooks, which grow near bodies of water. However, there is another beautiful reason for taking an *aravah* on *Hoshana Rabbah*. The Medrash tells us that the *arbah minim* are symbolic of the four types of Jews that make up *Klal Yisroel*. The *esrog* represents someone who has Torah and *mitzvos*, the *hadas* and *lulav* represent those who have either Torah or *mitzvos*, while the *aravah* is one who has neither Torah nor *mitzvos* (*Vayikrah Rabbah* 40:12). The *Aravah* is representative of the *Am Ha’aretz*, or the simple man. Many suggest that we beat the *aravah* on the ground to symbolize the punishment such a person will receive. However, on *Sukkos* we take all of the *arbah minim* together to show the unity that all of *Klal Yisroel* has, and how our *tefillos* have extreme potential. Even though this *am ha’aretz* may feel disconnected due to his lack of ability to learn, he still has the ability to daven to Hashem on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. Furthermore, we single out the *aravah* from every other one of the *dalet minim* to highlight the importance of the role of the *am ha’aretz* to *Klal Yisroel*. Although he may not have the ability to serve Hashem in the best way possible, when his *tefillos* are united with the rest of *Klal Yisroel*, Hashem sees him as if his identity is changed and he is now part of a bigger whole. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook suggests that we are not beating down the *aravos* themselves, rather we are beating the ground, using the *aravos*. Although someone may not be learned, he still can be “devoted to *mitzvos* through habit and instinct.” By beating the ground with the *aravos* we are not showing that we are punishing this Jew, rather it is to recognize that the *aravah* is “a natural, healthy power that is part of the arsenal of the Jewish people” (*Moadei HaRa’ayah*). Ultimately, we are all part of a bigger whole, and we must be able to recognize that when we all come together to daven and do *teshuvah*. On *Hoshanah Rabbah* we are a significantly more powerful force, and our *tefillos* will *im yirtzeh Hashem* be accepted.



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# SIMCHAS TORAH AND SHOEVA

An oft repeated refrain in the *selichot*, which appears dramatically toward the conclusion of *Neilah*, is:

הַעִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהַמְחוּזוֹת. הָיוּ לְחֶרֶף וּלְבִזּוֹת. וְכָל מַחְמֵדֶיהָ טְבוּעוֹת וְגִנוּזוֹת. וְאֵין שִׁיר רַק הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת.

The Holy City and the suburbs. Have become a disgrace and been looted.

All her treasures have been buried and hidden. And there is nothing left but this Torah.

(translation from *Mesoret HaRav Machzor*)

Simply understood, the *paytan* is mourning the lost glory of the *Beit Hamikdash*, and reminding us that all that remains of that splendor is the Torah. Perhaps there is more here than that, however. Maybe this is a life lesson. Maybe the *paytan* is offering advice on how to lead a Jewish life in the absence of *korbanot* and *nesachim* and all the miracles that we read about which occurred daily when the *Mikdash* stood. The advice is to hang onto the Torah, because the Torah has in it the glory and splendor of the *Mikdash*.

This might be the instructions *Chazal* were following when they created the holiday of *Simchat Torah*. We know that they did their job well, as *Simchat Torah* is a highlight of the year for many people. We dance and sing, taking pride in completing our annual reading of the entire Torah. We honor the greatest members of our shuls with special *aliyot* to the Torah. In many shuls various honors are auctioned off to the highest bidder. We make a special effort to include young children, dancing with them on our shoulders, giving them a group *aliyah*, and giving out flags and candy. There is even a *minhag*, no longer commonly practiced, to have candles lit in shul. Where did *Chazal* get all this from?

Perhaps *Chazal* had the message of that *piyyut* in mind. After all, if one hears a description of a celebration created by *Chazal* right after the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkot*, where there is tremendously joyous singing and dancing, where the elders of the community take a prominent role, where children are called upon to participate, where bright fires illuminate the night, we might immediately think of *Simchat Torah*.

But if you asked R' Yehudah *Hanasi*, he would tell you that it sounds an awful lot like the 5th perek of his Mishnah *Sukkah*, which describes not *Simchat Torah*, (which would not be invented for hundreds of years) but *Simchat Beit Hashoeva*.



Now one might argue that Chazal were merely using the Mishnah's description of *Simchat Beit Hashoeva* as a model for *Simchat Torah* because of the rule "*kol ditakun rabanan k'ein deoraisa takun*," which means that Chazal don't make stuff up, but rather rely on Torah paradigms. So if Chazal are looking to throw a party, they would naturally look to the best party ever, the one about which it says that if you've never seen it, you've never seen real partying. But perhaps the connection goes deeper.

It's important to remember that there is no holiday so uniquely "*galusdik*" as *Simchat Torah*. The thing it celebrates, the annual completion of the Torah, was not possible in Israel during the time it began, as Israel had a triennial cycle, completing the Torah only every three years. The date chosen for the celebration is not even *Yom Tov* in Israel (although today that permits Israelis to celebrate with bands and instruments and many other things which are prohibited on *Yom Tov*). So when Chazal created this annual "*siyum*" to celebrate the completion of the Torah and its restarting, perhaps they wanted to ground the celebration in the land of Israel and the *Mikdash*. Perhaps they meant to encourage us to see in it just a bit of the feeling Jews had many hundreds of years ago, when they were able to celebrate the drawing of the water for the *nisuch hamayim* in the *Mikdash* on *Sukkot*. And maybe, in so doing, we should cherish the Torah, as a *paytan* said, as the last remnant of the glory of the *Mikdash*.

One more thing: Using this idea it is possible to explain why customs grew up around *Simchat Torah* that violate *issurim d'rabbanan*. Two examples are dancing, which we still do, and lighting fires, which is no longer common. In both cases various *achronim* over the years permitted them for the sake of "*Kavod HaTorah*." Why are they so lenient? Perhaps it is this connection to the *Mikdash*. We know that, as a rule, *issurim d'rabbanan* were not enforced there, because Chazal were confident that *Kohanim*, who of course run the *Mikdash*, are careful and will not come to violate an *issur* of the Torah. Perhaps that's the logic here, as well. Because the celebration of *Simchat Torah* transports us back to the *Mikdash* and the *Simchat Beit Hashoeva*, it also elevates us to the level of *Kohanim* and therefore Chazal felt comfortable relaxing *issurim d'rabbanan*.

Perhaps we should keep that in mind when singing and dancing on *Simchat Torah*. We should celebrate with *Kavod HaTorah*, elevating ourselves so that our *simcha* can rival that of the *Simchat Beit Hashoeva* all those years ago.

# TISHREI TEASERS!

## CHALLENGING QUESTIONS BASED ON THE YAMIM TOVIM AND THEMES OF TISHREI

### YAMIM NORAIM QUESTIONS

1. What is an instance where you could read the Torah on five consecutive days, but on none of those days would you recite *Hallel*?
2. What is the greatest number of days that one can recite *selichos* before *Rosh Hashanah* in one year?
3. We read seven *pesukim* before hearing the shofar. The first is “*min hameitzar*,” and the first letters of the other six *pesukim* spell the phrase “*kra Satan*” – “tear up the accuser.” In which *tefillah* that is said every week do we find first letters that form this very phrase?
4. What are the only three *pesukim* in the Torah that refer to Hashem with the word “*melech*” – “king” – and what part of our *tefillah* connects these three occurrences?
5. The Mishnah Berurah says that if *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on *Shabbos*, when we do not blow the shofar at all, you may use the shofar for one specific purpose. However, you cannot use the shofar for that same purpose if *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on a weekday. What is this purpose?
6. In the *avodah* – the section of the *tefillah* that deals with the service of the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Beis Hamikdash* on *Yom Kippur* – we read the phrase, “*yotzei mipi Kohen Gadol*” – “[when they heard the name of Hashem] emanate from the mouth of the *Kohen Gadol*.” Why does the *tefillah* not say the much simpler “*kshe’amar Kohen Gadol*” – “when the *Kohen Gadol* said”?
7. Normally, a *bris* which is not on the eighth day after birth would not occur on *Yom Kippur*. Whose *bris* occurred on *Yom Kippur*, even though he was more than eight days old?
8. Which two *mitzvos* require the use of two identical animals?

### SUKKOS, SHEMINI ATZERES AND SIMCHAS TORAH QUESTIONS

1. We know the historical events that happened on *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Chanukah*, *Purim*, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Tisha B'Av*. But what happened on the 15th of *Tishrei*, the day we observe as the first day of *Sukkos*?
2. How can a *sukkah* which was *kosher* one year become invalid the next year, even though it is in exactly the same position and condition as the previous year, and nothing external has changed either (i.e., no trees have grown over it, etc.)?
3. In a year when the first day of *Sukkos* falls on *Shabbos*, there are at least five unique events that occur in Israel that do not occur in *Chutz La'aretz*. What are they?
4. When was the time from *Pesach* to *Sukkos* less than six months?
5. How many times a year are we obligated to eat? What are they?
6. How many times in *Tanach* does it discuss people sitting in *sukkos*?
7. When can a person be considered an inanimate object according to *halachah*?
8. How is the *esrog* unique among all other fruits?

## ANSWERS ON THE NEXT PAGE!

THESE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WERE ADAPTED FROM “TORAH IQ: THE GREAT TORAH RIDDLE BOOK” WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.



1. If *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on a Thursday, you will read from the Torah on five consecutive days, even though we do not recite Hallel on any of those days. We therefore read for *Rosh Hashanah* on Thursday & Friday, regular *parshas hashavuah* reading on *Shabbos*, Sunday which is *Tzom Gedaliah* “*nidcheh*” – moved to Sunday because you cannot fast on *Shabbos* – and the regular Monday morning Torah reading.
2. When *Erev Pesach* is *Shabbos*, *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on Tuesday. *Selichos* will then begin the previous Sunday for a total of eight days (only for *minhag* Ashkenaz).
3. The second line of the prayer “*ana bekoach*,” recited every Friday night immediately before *Lecha Dod*, contains six words. The first letters of these words spell “*kra Satan*” – “tear up the accuser.” Kabbalistic sources tell us that the prayer “*ana bekoach*” cryptically contains the 42 letter name of Hashem. It has 42 words (7 lines of 6 words each), and the first letters of each word unite to reveal the hidden name. This kabbalistic prayer also contains the concealed message to “destroy the accuser,” or the Satan, who is synonymous with evil in the world. The message of “tear up the accuser” is also contained in the verses recited immediately before the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* to hammer home the message that the Jewish people are standing before Hashem on the “*yom hadin*” – “day of judgment” – and need to bypass the accuser/Satan to have direct access to their creator in pleading their case for continued good life.
4. The only three *pesukim* in the Torah that refer to Hashem as “*melech*” – “king” – are found in the *Musaf* prayer of *Rosh Hashanah*. They are *Shemos* 15:18, *Bamidbar* 23:21, and *Devarim* 33:5.
5. When *Rosh Hashanah* occurs mid-week, a *shofar* may only be used for the purpose of blowing. The *Mishnah Berurah* (588:15) states that on *Shabbos Rosh Hashanah*, if there is nothing else available, one may use the *shofar* as a scoop to draw water or for another similar activity. However, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, as quoted in *Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah* (chapter 28, footnote 80), says that the position of the *Mishnah Berurah* was only relevant to times when they used the shofar to hold water. Today, it's not used to hold water and is therefore *muktzah machmas chisaron kis* (this position of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is not stated in the original edition of *Shemiras Shabbos* printed in 1965). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach adds that during the month of *Elul*, when the shofar is used for practice in preparation for *Rosh Hashanah*, a *shofar* is considered a *kli shemelachto le'issur*.
6. The *Hon Ashir* (*Mishnah Yoma* 6:2) quotes the Arizal, who says that the *Kohen Gadol* never actually said the name of Hashem during the *avodah*. He merely opened his mouth, and the name of Hashem miraculously came out and was heard.
7. The *Daas Zekeinim* (*Bereishis* 17:23) says that Avraham Avinu had his *bris* on *Yom Kippur*. He deduces this from the common word of “*be'etzem*” which occurs both by Avraham's *bris* and by the laws of *Yom Kippur*.
8. Two identical goats were needed for the *Yom Kippur avodah* (*Gemara Yoma* 62a) and two identical birds were needed to purify the *metzora* (*Mishnah Negaim* 14:5)

1. After the sin of the *eigel hazahav*, the *ananei hakavod* left the Jewish people. Only after Moshe returned on *Yom Kippur* with the second set of tablets and the message of Hashem's forgiveness, and only after the command to build the *mishkan* and the collection of materials for the *mishkan*, did the clouds return. This, according to the *Vilna Gaon* (*Kol Eliyahu* #84), was the 15th of *Tishrei*.
2. If nothing was done to prepare the *sukkah* for this year's holiday (i.e., it was untouched since last year), it is invalid. An essential requirement in constructing the *sukkah* is “*ta'aseh velo min he'asuy*” – “you must make it yourself and not merely utilize what is already there” (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 629:15). Therefore, if a *sukkah* is untouched from last year and still has its walls and *schach*, it is not a *kosher sukkah* for this year until you do a new action, like repositioning the *schach*. Some positive action (putting on or repositioning the *schach*, etc.) must be done to properly prepare it for the *chag*.
3. The five unique events that occur only in *Eretz Yisrael* when the first day of *Sukkos* is on *Shabbos* are: 1. We read seven *aliyos* for *Vezos Haberachah*. 2. We read *Koheles* on the first day of *Sukkos*. 3. We only take the *lulav* and *esrog* on *Chol Hamoed*. 4. We read *Bereishis* at *minchah* on *Shabbos*. 5. We read the Torah on a Friday night (at the end of *hakafos* on *Shemini Atzeres* in Israel).
4. Trick question: *Bnei Yisrael* left *Ra'amseis* on *Pesach* and traveled from there to *Sukkos* (*Shemos* 13:20). Rashi comments that the journey from *Ramses* to *Sukkos* took one day, and therefore, we have a case of *Pesach* to *Sukkos* in less time than the six months that it takes on the calendar!
5. We are required *mide'oraysa* to eat a *kezayis* of *matzah* on the first night of *Pesach* and to eat a *kezayis* of bread in the *sukkah* on the first night of *Sukkos*. We are also required to eat on *Yom Tov*, to fulfill the requirement of “*vesamachta bechagecha*” (*Devarim* 16:14). The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 604:1) rules that there is a Torah obligation on *Erev Yom Kippur* to eat, drink, and have a festive, food-filled meal, and Rashi (*Rosh Hashanah* 9a) explains that the reason for this is on account of Hashem's love for us, to enable us to tolerate the fasting. There is also a *mitzvah* to eat three *seudos* on *Shabbos* (*Gemara Shabbos* 118b).
6. *Bnei Yisrael* lived in *sukkos* while in the desert (*Vayikra* 23:43); Yonah sat in a *sukkah* (*Yonah* 4:3); in the time of Nechemyah, the people built *sukkos* to observe the holiday (*Nechemyah* 8:16); and Ben Hadad, the king of *Aram*, and his army camped in *sukkos* while laying siege to the city of *Shomron* (*Melachim* 1 20:12).
7. A person can be considered to be an inanimate object, according to *halachah*, when he is counted as a wall of a *sukkah* (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 630:12). A *sukkah* needs 2 walls and part of a third wall in order for it to be a *kosher sukkah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* explains that should the third wall fall down on *Sukkos*, one can ask a friend to stand where the third wall previously stood, and he would be constituted as part of a third wall, thereby making the *sukkah* *kosher*.
8. Rashi (*Vayikra* 23:40) comments that the *esrog* is unique among all fruits in that its bark and fruit have the same taste



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