

A Tishrei Companion



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The Tools That We Need!

By Rabbi Yonah Burr

תניא א"ר יהודה משום ר"ע מפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו עומר בפסח? מפני שהפסח זמן תבואה הוא. אמר הקב"ה הביאו לפני עומר בפסח כדי שתתברך לכם תבואה שבשדות. ומפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו שתי הלחם בעצרת מפני שעצרת זמן פירות האילן הוא אמר הקב"ה הביאו לפני שתי הלחם בעצרת כדי שיתברכו לכם פירות האילן. ומפני מה אמרה תורה נסכו מים בחג אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא נסכו לפני מים בחג כדי שיתברכו לכם גשמי שנה. ואמרו לפני בראש השנה מלכיות זכרונות ושופרות מלכיות כדי שתמליכוני עליכם זכרונות כדי שיעלה זכרוניכם לפני לטובה ובמה בשופר
(מסכת ר"ה טז)

The Gemara in Meseches Rosh Hashana relates a beautiful idea; "Says Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav Akiva, why does the Torah command us to bring the barley offering Pesach time? Because Pesach is the time that the crops are being judged, says Hashem, bring the barley offering before Me, so that I shall bless the produce in the fields for you. And why does the Torah say to bring the two loaves on Shavuot? Because on Shavuot the fruit of the trees are judged; bring before Me the two loaves, so that I will bless you the fruit of the trees. And why does the Torah say to pour a water libation before Me on Sukkos? So that the yearly supply of rain shall be blessed; and say before Me the verses of Kingship, Remembrances, and Shofros, so that you proclaim Me King, and so that you are remembered before me for good, and sound the Shofar!

The message is clear: true, Hashem Judges us, and our lives hang in the balance. But Hashem gives us the tools we need to not only have the merit to pass the judgment but to flourish and thrive.

Through the pesukim of Malchiyos, we can rededicate ourselves to Hashem and proclaim Him as our King. Through the beautiful verses of Zichronos, we recall the love and special

relationship that we have with Hashem. And finally, Hashem gives us the shofar, which has the power to arouse us and inspire us. Using these special tools, immersing ourselves in the davening, and enjoying our special closeness with Hashem is itself a merit to be inscribed for another successful year.

Wishing everyone a *כתיבה וחתימה טובה* and a year blessed with everything good!

The Sound of the Bugle

By Rabbi Yonah Burr

One Shabbos morning, while walking to shul, my young son shared a story he read with me. The mashal was so on target, and the message was so pure that it really made a strong impression on me. I would like to share it now with all of you. (credit to Binah Bunch)

Back in the day of the small villages, there were no fire departments. If, G-d forbid, a fire broke out, every member of the village would be called to help. Everyone would bring their pails or buckets of water and would all try to extinguish the fire. Everyone had to help without exception; there was no other way- not to mention that if they didn't get the fire under control, the entire town was at risk of burning down. The key to it all was to discover the fire in time; the earlier it was found, the greater the chance of putting it out in time.

A local villager once had the opportunity to visit the big city. What a sight to see! The hustle and bustle, the throngs of people, the stores and businesses were all exciting attractions indeed. All of a sudden, the villager heard a loud bugle sound, and everything was quiet; a sense of urgency overtook the city. "What's that sound?" asked the villager. One of the city dwellers

explained that the city had an elaborate 'fire protection system.' A special watch tower was constructed, and it was manned 24/7. As soon as the slightest wisp of smoke was sighted, a loud bugle was sounded, and that would alert the city to a fire. It was essentially a 'fire alarm'. This would alert the people to the danger before any damage would be done.

The villager was so impressed with this innovation that when he returned home to his village, he wasted no time building a watch tower of his own. He even volunteered to be the watchman! Sure enough, eventually there was a fire, and the village bugle was put to good use; the villager proudly blew the sound with all his might and alerted the villagers of the fire.

What do we do now? Everyone asked. The silly villager confidently answered, 'We don't need to do anything!' we sounded the bugle, and the fire should go out shortly!

The message is simple; indeed, the bugle was a terrific way to alert the people of the impending danger, but it alone would not solve the problem! It is simply a wake-up call, inspiring us to action. If no action is taken, nothing will be accomplished.

Hashem, in his kindness, gives us the opportunity to be inspired to renew our commitment to Him. He gives us Rosh Hashana, He gives us the beautiful prayers, and He gives us the powerful shofar. We have all the tools that we need. But they are just that; they are tools to improve. They alone will not do the job for us. Let us take this opportunity to be inspired and use the inspiration to get closer!

May we all be inscribed for a kesivah v'chasima tova!

The Dual Purpose of the Shofar

Rabbi Doniel Schon

There seems to be a contradiction regarding the function and purpose of blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashana. We are all familiar with the Rambam that states in Hilchos Teshuva (3:4) that although tekias shofar is a decree from the king, one aspect of it is oorah yisheinim m'shinaschem- it is meant to jar us awake from our slumber. We are preoccupied with our lives and forget about its ultimate purpose. The shofar is supposed to shake us from the monotony of day-to-day life and cause us to focus on our relationship with Hashem.

However, the midrash explains the concept of the shofar differently. Commenting on the verse "alah Elokim besrua Hashem b'kol shofar" (Tehilim 47:6) - Elokim goes up with a teruah blast, Hashem with the sound of the shofar- the midrash explains that Hashem starts to judge with the measure of strict justice (as the name Elokim represents Hashem's attribute of justice), and the blowing of the shofar causes Hashem to move to from the throne of justice to the throne of mercy (as indicated by the shift to the name Hashem at the end of that possuk, which refers to Hashem's attribute of mercy).

These two explanations seem to conflict - Is the shofar supposed to change us or change Hashem's perspective on us?

The Gemara in Maseches Rosh Hashana (34b) states, "recite before Me malchiyos (the verses discussing Hashem's kingship) to coronate Me as king; zichronos (the verses discussing reward and punishment) to cause your memory to be recalled for good; and with what - with the shofar." The Ritva explains that that shofar is what helps mikayim, reinforce, the first two. The shofar is the tool to enhance the verses and

concepts of malchiyos and zichronos. But exactly how does it serve this purpose?

For malchiyos it is simple –historically, the shofar has been used to coronate kings. So, when we blow the shofar, it should remind us that the day's main theme is to coronate Hashem as the king of the entire world. Just as people cheer loudly for their favorite political figure, they display lawn signs; they are very vocal and animate, so too we should show—at the very least -- the same degree of enthusiasm when we declare Hashem as the true king of the entire world. In fact, the Maaseh Rav mentions that the Gra was very happy by tekias shofar, as he crowned Hashem as king.

For zichronos – Rav Dovid Cohen quotes from the Mabit (Shaar Teshuva) that teshuva is likareiv laHashem meirichuk cheit – simply stated that the concept of teshuva is to draw one close to Hashem after sin had distanced him from Hashem. The Mabit continues to explain that the root of every sin is a lack of awareness of Hashem's presence. One would not break a law in front of a king of flesh and blood. One wouldn't speed in front of a police officer. How, then, can one sin in front of Hashem whose glory fills the entire world? One can only possibly sin if one does not feel the presence of Hashem. So, the shofar reminds us of Hashem's constant presence, reinforcing the idea of reward and punishment and preventing us from sinning in the future.

The verses for shofros in the shemoneh esreh are centered around the giving of the Torah and the future coming of Moshiach. The Ramchal explains that the shofar appears whenever good defeats evil or there is a revelation of the divine presence. The giving of the Torah was the ultimate revelation of the divine presence – an event in which every single Jew prophesized and experienced a clear connection to Hashem. The future coming of Mashiach will herald an even greater revelation of the divine presence. These concepts are

reinforced through the blowing of the shofar, which represents the revelation of the divine presence. The shofar blasts for this section should cause us to yearn for the future when we will experience the complete revelation of the divine presence with the arrival of Moshiach.

Now that we understand the idea of the shofar better, we can return to our original question. The verse states *ashrei ha'am yodiea teruah* (Tehillim 89:16) – fortunate is the nation that knows and understands the *teruah*. It is not enough to merely blast the *teruah* sound; rather we have to understand and connect with the message of the *teruah*. When we understand and are moved by the power of the shofar, which reinforces the concepts of *malchiyos*, *zichronos*, and *shofros*, that in turn causes Hashem to move from His attribute of justice to that of mercy.

May we merit a *K'siva V'chasima Tova* - a year filled with all of life's blessings.

Court Strategies

Rabbi Yosef Bauman

The Mishna (Rosh Hashana 16a) tells us that on Rosh Hashana, all inhabitants of the world pass before Hashem for judgment, like *B'nei Maron*. What does this cryptic term mean? The Gemara mentions three interpretations: "Here they explained it, like lambs, which when counted for tithing are led out through a narrow opening in a single-file line (Rashi). Reish Lakish says, like the elevated paths of *Beis Maron*, which are narrow paths where two people cannot walk side by side because of the deep drop on either side (*ibid.*). Rav Yehuda says

in the name of Shmuel, like the soldiers of the House of David, who would be counted one by one as they went out to war."

Rav Yitzchok Blazer, a prominent disciple of Rav Yisroel Salanter, asks, seemingly the Mishna is telling us a simple idea, that all members of the world come for judgment one by one. Why does the Mishna feel the need to add this detail, that their judgment is like Bnai Maron, whatever it means? What is the mishna adding when it mentions that the judgment on Rosh Hashana is analogous to B'nei Maron?

Rav Yitzchok answers that the Mishna is not merely explaining the simple concept of a single-file line. Instead, it addresses a seemingly perplexing point: for what purpose does Hashem need to judge all members of the world one by one? It is definitely within the ability of Hashem, who is all-knowing, to judge everyone simultaneously. The reason why Hashem chooses to judge in this manner is rooted in His great mercy and kindness and His desire to be able to pass a favorable judgment on us, as follows:

In truth, Hashem does not need to bring us to judgment to know if we are deserving because all is already known to Him. Nevertheless, Hashem conducts His Kingdom in a way similar to kingdoms on earth and only judges in the way of a court. As a result, even though Hashem knows that a person has sins on his record, this does not affect Hashem's judgement, until that person is brought in front of Him. However, once a person arrives for his personal judgment, Hashem's anger can be aroused now that He has acknowledged the person's sins. If everybody would come for judgment all together, their cumulative sins would arouse Hashem's anger towards them and pose a significant danger to them all. Therefore, because Hashem seeks to do kindness in His judgment, He judges each person by himself to minimize this danger. The earlier a person is judged, the better because those who come later can still feel the effects of the anger aroused by those who came before him.

So, who should have the privilege of being judged earlier when there is no anger? For this, Hashem has a system that allows the righteous to be judged first and merit a favorable outcome before the multitude of others' sins causes Hashem to be angry. How does one find favor in Hashem's eyes and merit to be judged before others? It is this point, says Rav Yitzchok, that the Mishna is bringing out- we pass in front of Hashem like Bnai Maron. "Bnei Maron" has three explanations, each of which points to a separate reason why one might merit being judged first, as we shall explain.

The first interpretation is "like lambs filing out of the pen to be tithed." Explains Rav Yitzchok, when the farmer opens the closed door of the pen just wide enough to allow the lambs out single file, the healthiest and strongest will push the others aside and be first in line. This is a parable for the Day of Judgement, when everyone wants to be judged first for the best chance at a favorable judgment. The righteous, who are mighty in their good deeds, will be allowed to come first for judgment based on their own merit and strength because Hashem desires to judge them favorably.

The third interpretation of the words "Bnei Maron" is "like the soldiers of the House of David." The order of the soldiers marching to war is determined by their officer, based on his preference, without necessarily an apparent reason. One of the Divine Attributes of Mercy is Chanun, that He is gracious, meaning that He is merciful to people who find favor in His eyes for reasons known to Him, even without real merit. The comparison is that Hashem also gives preference based on His own decision to someone who finds favor in His eyes, allowing him to come earlier for judgment and have a better chance at a favorable ruling.

Returning to the gemara's second interpretation, which R' Yitzchok says is most practically relevant to us, is "like the elevated paths of Beis Maron," which are too narrow for two

people to walk side by side. It is self-understood that the single-file line formed on these paths is not determined by strength or preference. Instead, whoever reaches the beginning of the path first will be first to proceed. The comparison to the Day of Judgement is that another way to merit being first for judgment, is to "show up earlier." Just as a group of people coming to buy train tickets at the counter will be served in the order they came, so too the judgment will be passed, first-come, first-serve. The way to show up early for judgment is to prepare oneself ahead of time, showing that he is concerned about the outcome. In this way, one can merit being first for judgment. Someone who is lackadaisical in preparing for the judgment is less deserving.

This is our obligation during these days, starting from Rosh Chodesh Elul, leading up to the days of Slichos, and continuing through Rosh Hashana and the Days of Repentance, ultimately culminating on Yom Kippur. One who takes advantage of this time from the beginning and spends it in personal introspection and repentance will benefit more from Hashem's mercy. If one has not been seriously involved in these preparations until now, let him wake up and secure as much mercy from Hashem as possible, and not wait until Yom Kippur, the conclusion of these Awesome Days.

Kesivah V'Chasima tova.

Taking Flight

Rabbi Nosson Nota Burr

Elul. The month quivers with a mixture of awe and fear as we prepare to crown Hashem king over us once again.

There are numerous acronyms and hints for the month of Elul. The most famous is from a passuk found in Shir

Hashirim. (6:3) The passuk says, "Ani L'Dodi V'dodi Li- I am to my beloved, and my beloved is to me," the roshei teivos of the words spell out "Elul." Interestingly, Shir Hashirim has another passuk that is very similar, yet with a slight change. In perek 2, passuk 16, it says, "Dodi Li V'ani Lo- My beloved is to me, and I am to him." What is the significance of the different orders?

Rav Asher Weiss explains this based on a Medrash in Eicha, on the passuk "Hashiveinu Hashem Eilecha." Klal Yisrael had a conversation with Hashem. We said, "Hashiveinu, bring us back." Hashem responded, "No. Hashiva Eilei V'ashuva Aleichem. You must first draw close to Me with Teshuva, and only then will I return to you by ending the galus and bringing you back to Eretz Yisrael. Take the first step in returning to me, and then I will help you."

This is what is going on in the two previously mentioned pesukim from Shir Hashirim. The first passuk (Shir Hashirim 6:3) puts the starting point with us; the second passuk (Shir Hashirim 6:16) with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. We had hoped that Elul would have been "Delul" with a daled, which would have been "Dodi Li V'ani Lo," but no, it is Elul of "Ani Ledodi vedodi li." We must first take responsibility to move closer to Hashem; only then will He draw close to us. Of course, Hashem is waiting to draw us close, but the clear message is that we must take the first action and show we are sincere. The message is clear. Hashem is waiting and wanting to draw us close to help us grow, but we must show we really want it. We must have a month of Elul that is not just Delul, but once we take the first step to Hashem, Hashem will help with the rest. As it says, "Open a hole the size of a needle, and I will open a hole the size that wagons can pass through." Rav Asher Weiss further explains that those wagons referenced are full of bracha and success in ruchniyus and gashmius.

R' Shamshon Rafael Hirsch describes a mashal that explains this idea further. We all know the famous passuk

"V'esah eschem al kanfei nesharim- and I carried you on the wings of eagles." Rashi explains why specifically an eagle is mentioned as opposed to any other bird. Says Rashi, an eagle, is safer than any other bird because it flies the highest, soaring above everything else. Additionally, most birds carry their young with their feet. Should an arrow be shot at them, it would hit the babies first. An eagle, however, carries its young on its back. She takes the arrow to protect her children.

From the perspective of the baby birds, there is a vast difference. For the majority of birds, all the effort comes from the parent bird. The baby just sits there and gets scooped up to receive all the protection its parent can offer. However, with the eagle, the mother cannot put the baby on her back. The eagle must make the effort to climb aboard. Once that effort is made, the eagle is given security and protection far above all the other chicks.

This is Hashem's message. Hashem is saying, "I am willing to offer you a flight to reach the greatest heights, help you, and take all the punches for myself, but only if you take that first step to hop on. Once you show Me Ani L'dodi, then I will pay you back with V'dodi Li."

May we all be inspired and really want to grow in Torah and Yiddishkeit this Elul and all year round. As long as we take the first step toward all the opportunities given to us, we will be zoche to siyatte dishmaya as Hashem will help us soar to be who we really want to become and help us become better and better Yidden.

The Opportunities of Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Yossi Rabinowitz

The Gemara (Rosh Hashana daf yud) tells us that on Rosh Hashana, Sara, Rochel, and Chana were remembered by Hashem to merit having children. Yitzchak Avinu, Yosef Hatzadik and Shmuel Hanavi were born from this 'remembrance'. (For this reason, we lein "Vayifkod Hashem es Sara" and read from the Haftorah the story of Chana on Rosh Hashana. See Shulchan Aruch 584:2 and Mishna Brura there.) The Gemara adds that Rosh Hashana was the day that Yosef Hatzadik was led out of prison.

It would seem that Chazal are not just telling us historical facts; rather it is a lesson for us to understand what our avoda is during these days.

The Magen Avraham (585:4) writes two reasons for the custom of blowing the Shofar on the right side of one's mouth:

1. To combat Satan who is referred to as standing on the right side (See Zecharia 3:1)
2. The left side already has the power of Tefillin, which is donned on the left hand.

From the Magen Avraham we see a connection between the Shofar and Tefillin in being machnia the Satan.

Yitzchak Avinu, who was eventually born from the 'remembrance' of Sara represents Yiras Shomayim. (See Beraishis 31:42) The Avoda of Rosh Hashana is through yirah. The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 32) teaches us that we do not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashana, even though it is a Yom Tov. The Rambam, in his explanation of the Mishna 4:6 explains 'since these are days of humility and fear (from Hashem) and escaping and running towards him. When a person develops Yiras

Shomayim it causes him to flee from worldly affairs that may cause him to stumble and damage his Ruchniyus development.

In explaining some of the purposes of blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashana, Harav Saadya Gaon writes: Since we are coming to accept the kingship of Hashem, we blow Shofar as it is also blown when coronating a king. A Shofar instills fear and awe into the hearts of those who hear it. The way we come to accept the kingship of Hashem is through our fear and awe of Him.

The fear of Hashem is not like other fears. The fear of Hashem brings a person to a state of happiness and fulfillment. (See Tanna Dvei Elyahu, Chapter 3)

Yitzchak Avinu, who represents the trait of Yiras Shomayim, was named Yitzchak, which means laughter—from Yitzchak Avinu reaching a true level of Yirah brought out laughter and happiness.

This concept of Yirah bringing out happiness is found by tefillin as well. The Pasuk says regarding Tefillin that the nations of the world will fear us because of it. (Devarim 28:10, Brachos 6) We also find an incident in the Gemara (Brachos 30) that an Amorah was in a state of great happiness because he was wearing Tefillin. Rashi explains that Tefillin is a testimony that the rulership of my creator is on me.

Yosef Hatzadik represents the concept of sanctifying oneself, as he did with the incident of Eishes Potifar. Tefillin represents this idea. We put Tefillin on our body opposite our mind and heart, which illustrates that we subjugate our passions and desires to the service of Hashem. Through the mitzva of Tefillin, one can free himself from the prison of his earthly desires and passions to a higher spiritual level.

This is the power of Rosh Hashana; just as Yosef left prison, each individual can leave his personal prison, become a king over himself, and properly accept the kingship of Hashem.

Shmuel Hanavi represents the power of Tefillah. The passuk (Tehillim 99:6) says "V'Shmuel bekarai shemo." Shmuel Hanavi was given the task to anoint David Hamelech, who said about himself, "Vanai tefillah" (Tehillim 109:4).

The Gemara derives many halachos from the Tefillos of Chana (Brachos 31). The 'remembrance' of Chana to bear a child came about through the power of Tefillah. This power brought Shmuel Hanavi, whose name represents the power of Tefillah, into the world.

The blowing of the Shofar is also a form of Tefillah. (The Brisker Rav zt"l brought down many proofs to prove this point). We say on Rosh Hashana by Mussaf "Ki atah shome'ah kol tekias amecha" which implies that it is not merely the mitzva of blowing shofar that Hashem notices, rather there is Tefillah that's being brought about through blowing the Shofar. Tefillah and Tefillin are both related to the words "Naftuli Elokim" (Beraishis 30:8), which means attachment (see Rashi there). Through Tefillah and Tefillin one attaches and subjugates himself to Hashem.

As we prepare for Rosh Hashana, let's try to bli neder work on these three areas:

- 1) The power of Yitzchak, which represents contemplating yiras shomayim.
- 2) The greatness of Yosef Hatzadik, who was able to uplift and sanctify his body by overcoming his challenges and running towards kedusha.
- 3) The opportunity of Tefillah, like Shmuel Hanavi, who showed us this power on Rosh Hashana when Hashem remembered his mother Chana.

Through using the power of Tefillin, which combats the powers of Tumah on the left side, and then blowing the Shofar on the right side with the deeper meaning behind these Mitzvos, be'ezras Hashem it will help us be zoche badin. Amen.

(Based on Halekach Vehalibuv from Hagaon Rav Avraham Schorr shlit"a, page 22)

Malchiyos: The Key to Teshuva and a Good Year

Rabbi Avrohom Abaron Weiman

Looking at Rosh Hashana, a few questions may arise. Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva. Teshuva is focusing on our Aveiros, feeling remorse (Charata), and preparing ourselves to discontinue the Aveiros we do (Azivas Hachait v'kabala al ha'asid) and begging Hashem to forgive us and purify our neshamos.

By the time we reach Rosh Hashana, we have started this Teshuva process by saying Vidui every day (for Nusach Sfarad four times a day), began davening Selichos and begging Hashem with the Yud Gimmel Middos Harachamim for Slicha V'chaparrah (forgiveness and atonement). However, suddenly, on Rosh Hashana, there's no Vidui and no Selichos and only minor reference to Aveiros.

Instead, the Tefillos on Rosh Hashana, which are based on the way that Malachim praise Hashem, focus on the future Geula that will bring the entire world to believe in Hashem, that He both created the world and controls everything that happens.

How are we to understand this? Why do we seemingly pause our Teshuva process of Vidui and Selichos, and why is Rosh Hashana the beginning of Aseres Yemei Teshuva since it seemingly has no relevance to Teshuva.

Another question can arise regarding the famous concept that on Rosh Hashana, Hashem judges everyone and

determines our fate for the upcoming year, our lives, health, wealth, suffering, pain, and much more. Being so, we may think that the best thing to do is to use Klal Yisrael's greatest tool, Tefillah, to daven for all of our needs and wants.

However, one who tries to do this on Rosh Hashana will be very confused and feel like he's swimming upstream since most of the Davening is about the Kavod of Hashem. Only very few parts focus on our personal welfare and the welfare of our family and friends. Why didn't the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah arrange the Tefillos for our personal needs on a day that it seems so necessary?

My Rosh Chabura Reb Yechiel Wolf shlit"a answered with a Mashal about a business that was owned by a man named Baruch:

Another year had gone by. Baruch was taking account of all his business transactions from the past year. Sadly, he was not surprised to see "once again" many bills overdue, checks that bounced because they were deposited too late, and many complaints about the efficiency of his business. He already knew the source of the problem and looked at Moshe's timesheet. Moshe had worked ten hours the past month and was backed up once again. Baruch knew that Moshe had a hard life; however, what was he supposed to do? He needs his business to function and run efficiently. Otherwise, he will lose his customers and his livelihood. He goes to discuss the matter with Moshe.

Let's analyze this situation. Baruch wants to help Moshe, but he also wants his business to be successful and run smoothly.

When Baruch comes to Moshe, how should Moshe respond? Let's discuss three possible responses:

1. He could pour out his heart, explaining all of his life's problems and how he needs more money and more paid time

off. As a caring individual, Baruch would sympathize but might need to lay him off to save his business.

2. Moshe could respond how he plans to work more efficiently and turn his life around to do his job correctly. Baruch would be thrilled to hear that. "It is so nice that Moshe recognizes the problems and is working on solving them," he would think.

3. Moshe could also respond by sincerely explaining how much he respects and admires Baruch and how he recognizes the importance of the business and truly wants it to succeed. This would touch Baruch's heart. "He really cares. How could I get rid of him?" he would think.

B'ezras Hashem, I will explain how the second and third responses are our key for Teshuva during the Aseres Yimei Teshuva.

On Rosh Hashana, Hashem is thoroughly investigating all of our deeds from the past year. How well have we done with our job to be Mekadeish Shem Shomayim, to do Mitzvos to elevate the world. Hashem sees where we have succeeded and failed. What should He do about our Avairos that have destroyed His world and desecrated His name?

How does Hashem want us to respond? The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah knew, and they put together the Tefillos for the Yamim Noraim. **Daven to Hashem, show Him and build in ourselves the recognition that the most important thing to us is Kavod Shomayim and the Tachlis Habriah. We want Kiddush Shem Shomayim. We want the world to recognize His greatness and praise Him like the Malachim.**

This is why the focus of davening on Rosh Hashana is Kavod Shomayim, because the first step for ourselves is to build our Cheshek (desire) for Hashem's goal for the world, to show Hashem we care about it, and Daven for it. Then, once we have the correct goal, we continue with the rest of Aseres Yimei

Teshuva, focusing on changing ourselves to accomplish this goal. Hopefully, when Hashem sees that we are serious, we care about Kavod Shomayim, and are trying to change ourselves, He will then provide us all we need to solve our problems for the coming year. Because a master who cares for his servants will provide them everything they need. We now can understand how focusing on both Kavod Shomayim and Teshuva is the key for our success and well-being for the coming year.

Harav Dovid Shustal shlit"a says that Rosh Hashana is the first step of Teshuva. The first step is not to focus on our Chatoim, but rather to set our goals and focus straight. We want the world to have more Kavod Shomayim. Only once we focus on this and strengthen our desire for it, then we spend the rest of the Aseres Yimei Teshuva focusing on stopping the Avairos we are committing and achieving forgiveness for them.

Now, it is very clear. Even though real Teshuva is searching for Avairos we have done, remorseing over them, and planning and working to stop doing them; there is a preliminary step we do on Rosh Hashana. We remind ourselves and strengthen our recognition that our primary goal is Kavod Shomayim. Then, once we are focused on our goal, we work on how we personally can bring more Kavod Shomayim with real Teshuva. Bezras Hashem, when we accomplish this, Hashem will provide us with a happy and healthy year.

The Power of Teshuva

Rabbi Yonah Burr

אמר רבי עקיבא אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרין ומי מטהר אתכם, אבי-
כם שבשמים, שנאמר וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם ואומר מקה ישראל
ד' מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל. יומא פה

Rabbi Akiva said: "Fortunate are you, Jewish People, before Whom do you purify yourselves, and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as it says, 'I will sprinkle upon you the pure waters and purify you; and as it says, the Hope-Mikvah of the Jewish people is Hashem; just as a mikvah purifies the impure, so does Hashem purify the Jewish People."

Rabbi Akiva compares our atonement to both a Mikvah, and the sprinkling of the Parah Adumah. What are these two elements of teshuva?

Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l explains:

The purification of a mikvah comes through our immersion; we must completely enter the mikvah without leaving any part behind. So, too, with our teshuva, we must strive to return to Hashem as much as we can, trying to rededicate ourselves without any reservations.

The sprinkling of the water represents achieving atonement that is beyond our reach; Hashem Himself will help us reach the levels we strive for, even when it is beyond our natural capabilities.

The Mabi"t, in his work 'Beis Elokim' explains that teshuva is not merely a way to gain atonement and avoid punishment; instead, it is achieving the closeness that we had with Hashem, before we sinned. And once we rekindle that relationship, the sins fall away naturally on their own.

This is the gift of Yom Kippur! The day itself carries with it the potential to reach levels that we are ordinarily

incapable of reaching- it is our job to try and maximize this special day to the fullest.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l writes that we must enter Yom Kippur with a strategy, determining where we need improvement and the practical steps to get there; like a businessman planning to make a profit, we must form our improvement plan.

Rav Yisroel gives us a tremendous insight as well; sometimes a certain challenge is easier to overcome than other times. For example, it might be easier to avoid loshon hara at certain times of the day than at different times. It's not all or nothing, we can resolve to avoid loshon hara at least at the easier times, and this small step will be the catalyst to eventual perfection!

May we use this special opportunity to the fullest and merit a G'mar Chasima Tova!

The Gift of Teshuva

Rabbi Dovid Yehuda Katz

The Gemara in *ירושלמי* tells us that wisdom was asked: What is the punishment for someone who sins? Wisdom answered, "חטאים תרדף רעה" (sinners will be chased by evil). Prophecy was then asked: What is the punishment for someone who sins? Prophecy answered, "הנפש החוטאת היא תמות" (the soul that sinned should die). Finally, Hashem was asked: What is the punishment for someone who sinned? Hashem answered, "יעשו" (repent and he will receive atonement).

The obvious question is, why was it that only Hashem gave the option for repentance, not wisdom or prophecy? Were they not aware that there is an option for repentance?

The *מסלת ישרים* in *רמח"ל* (chapter four) says that "according to the letter of the law, one who sins should be punished right away, without hesitation... and there should not be any rectification for the sin, because in reality how is it possible for a person to fix the sin that he has already committed? If someone kills his friend or commits adultery, how can he reverse the outcome of his actions? Is it possible to remove an act that was performed from reality? However, Hashem's attribute of kindness allows the sinner not to be punished immediately. Instead, punishment is sometimes postponed, allowing the sinner the opportunity to do teshuva. The gift of teshuva makes it so that when a person removes his intent from his previous actions, it is as if he uprooted his act to the point that it had never occurred.

It is clear from the *מסלת ישרים* that teshuva is not the letter of the law and not the way things should be; instead, it is only pure kindness that Hashem allows teshuva to remove the effect of one's actions.

Based on this concept from the *מסלת ישרים*, Rav Yerucham Olshin shlit"א explains the previous *גמרא* in *ירושל' -* *מי*, that the reason why wisdom and prophecy did not give the option for repentance is that in reality, and according to the letter of the law, one who sins should not be able to remove his sin from existence. Therefore, wisdom and prophecy answered correctly that the sinner will have to suffer or die. But Hashem, in his infinite kindness, created teshuva, a new reality in which a person can achieve atonement.

It is now self-understood that teshuva is not something to overlook *ח"ו* or to take for granted; instead, it is essential to all of us and truly is a gift. May we all be *זוכה* to take advantage of the gift of teshuva and merit a *gemar chasima tova*.

Sukkah: A Divine Embrace

Rabbi Doniel Schon

When the Torah describes the mitzva of sitting in a Sukkah, it mentions that we sit in the Sukkah in order to remember that HaShem caused us to dwell in sukkahs throughout our miraculous journey through the desert upon redeeming us from Mitzrayim. The Gemara in Maseches Succah debates whether the sukkahs we sit in commemorate the clouds of glory that enveloped the Jewish nation throughout the journey or the actual huts that the Jews lived in. But regardless, the Succah reminds us of the miraculous journey that HaShem led us through the desert. The Bach points out that since the Torah went out of its way to describe a reason for the mitzva of sitting in a Sukkah, it is imperative to actually contemplate the Jews' miraculous journey through the desert while one sits in the Sukkah to perform the mitzva in its most optimal way.

Many commentators ask - if the mitzva of dwelling in sukkahs is to remind us how HaShem took care of us through the desert, then why do we celebrate it in the fall? Pesach also commemorates how HaShem took us out of Mitzrayim, and we celebrate it in the spring when HaShem took us out. Why, then, is Succos, which also commemorates HaShem taking us out of mitzrayim celebrated in the fall?

The answer commonly given is that if we were to celebrate Succos in the spring, our sitting in the Succah would not be recognizable as being performed for a mitzva purpose. Many people leave their homes in the spring to go outside to enjoy the warmer weather, so if we observed Succos in the spring, it would not be recognizable as being done for a mitzva. However, in the fall, when people are generally leaving their summer homes and returning to their more permanent homes, when a Jew leaves his permanent home and enters a

more temporary dwelling, it is apparent that he is doing so for a mitzva purpose.

The Vilna Gaon offers a more profound explanation to answer the question. He says that when the Gemara mentions that we sit in a Sukkah to commemorate the clouds of glory, it is not referring to the general idea that there were clouds of glory surrounding the Jews through their journey, but specifically to the clouds of glory that returned to protect the Jewish nation after Moshe had obtained complete forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf.

The Vilna Gaon explains the timeline as follows. The possuk tells us that after the sin of the golden calf, the clouds of glory left the Jewish nation. On Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, Moshe had successfully lobbied Hashem to completely forgive the Jewish nation for the sin of the golden calf. On the 11th of Tishrei, Moshe instructed the nation to donate materials to construct the mishkan. On the 12th and 13 of Tishrei, the Jews brought an abundance of donations. On the 14th, the donated materials were distributed to the craftsmen. Then the next day, the 15th of Tishrei (the first day of Succos), the Jewish people began to build the mishkan, and the clouds of glory returned to their position protecting the Jews.

According to this interpretation, it is quite clear why we celebrate Succos exactly where it is in the calendar. We are not merely commemorating the event that HaShem protected the Jewish nation with the clouds of glory; rather, we are celebrating the fact that even though the sin of the golden calf caused the Jews to lose the protection of the clouds of glory, through our sincere teshuva, HaShem restored the clouds of glory, signifying that the Jews had regained their special connection to HaShem. Therefore, we celebrate Succos on the 15th of Tishrei, as that was the day that clouds were restored after the sin of the golden calf.

Rav Dovid Cohen, adds that this explanation of the holiday of Succos fits beautifully with the way the Vilna Gaon explains the give-and-take between Moshe and HaShem after the sin of the golden calf. At the beginning of Shmos chapter 32, HaShem informs Moshe that the Jews have sinned and that He plans on destroying them. Moshe immediately pleads on behalf of the Jews, and shortly after the Torah writes (32:14) *vayinachem Hashem al ha'raah aher diber la'asos*- HaShem reconsidered the punishment He planned on inflicting upon the Jews. However, even after this assurance, Moshe continues to plead with HaShem. Why did he continue? Hasn't HaShem already assured Moshe that He will not destroy the Jews?

The Rashbam explains that when Moshe asked HaShem *hodeinei na es dirachecha* – show me your ways (Shmos 33:13), Moshe was asking that HaShem personally lead the Jews into Eretz Yisroel. This was in response to HaShem mentioning *Vishalachtli lifanecha malach* – and I will send before you an angel (Shmos 33:2). Even though HaShem had already forgiven the Jews for the sin of the golden calf and would not destroy them, there would still be a punishment that remained – that they would be led by an angel, not by HaShem Himself. This is why Moshe continued to plead on behalf of the Jews, and Moshe did not back down until HaShem responded (Shmos 34:10) *hinei anochi koreis bris negged kol amcha e'eseh niflaos* – behold I will seal a covenant, before the entire nation I will make wonders. It was only at this point that HaShem had fully forgiven the Jews and exalted them to the lofty status that they were on before the sin of the golden calf. The Vilna Gaon comments that the *niflaos*- wonders (Shmos 34:10) referred to the return of the clouds of glory, because their return was the sign that HaShem had fully forgiven the Jewish nation and that they would be able to enjoy their previous special relationship with HaShem as had they never sinned at all.

So, this Succos, when we sit in the Sukkah and contemplate the huts and clouds of glory which HaShem protected us during our journey through the desert, let's also think about the fact that the Sukkah reminds us that HaShem is willing to take us back even after we've sinned. Hopefully, we have put the proper work into Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and can rejoice that we have fully restored our personal relationship with HaShem.

The Mechila of Sukkos

Rabbi Meir Simcha Katz

The Tur in the beginning of Hilchos Rosh Hashanah mentions a minhag to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah. As a source, he cites a Medrash in Parshas Emor that asks why when the Torah writes the mitzvah of lulav and esrog, does the Torah say "bayom harishon," on the first day- it's really the 15th day of Tishrei? The Medrash answers with a mashal. There was a city that was delinquent in paying their taxes to the king, and the king came with a big army to collect it. As he was 10 Parsa from the city, the chashuvim went out to beg him, we don't have what to pay, and the king forgave 1/3 of the debt. As he got closer, the beinonim went out and begged to forgive the debt, and he forgave another 1/3. When he came even closer, the entire city came out to beg him, and he forgave the final 1/3, and said let bygones be bygones. We'll restart from now. So too, says the Medrash, Hakadosh Baruch Hu comes to us to 'collect' from our aveiros we've done all year. On erev Rosh Hashanah the great people fast, and He forgives a 1/3. During the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, more people fast and He forgives another 1/3, and on Yom Kippur everyone fasts, and He

forgives the rest and says, let bygones be bygones, we'll start over again from now. The Medrash continues, that for the next four days, all of Klal Yisrael are busy with mitzvos, preparing their sukka and daled minim. On the first day of Sukkos, when we come to shul and say Hallel with our lulav and esrog, we find favor in hashem's eyes, and He says we'll start over again today. Therefore, concludes the Medrash, the first day of Sukkos is called the first day because it is the first day of counting aveiros. The question is asked: Hakadosh Baruch hu already forgave all our aveiros on Yom Kippur, and he already said we have a clean slate. What is added when we come on Sukkos with our lulav and esrog and say Hallel that we find favor in His eyes, that Hashem repeats that we'll start again with a clean slate?

I once heard a beautiful pshat. Imagine somebody embarrassed you in public and said something terrible about you that you couldn't show your face for a week after. You are justifiably upset at him, and you tell yourself, I'll never forgive him for what he did. But as we know, time is the healer of all wounds, and eventually, months later, when he comes to you, hanging his head in shame and begs you for mechila, you are willing to forgive him. However, what if, a little while later, he tries to befriend you? You tell him, listen, I forgave you, but just stay away from me! I never want to see you; every time I see your face, I think about how much you hurt me. So, too, one might think that with our aveiros, we rebelled against Hakadosh Baruch Hu; although he forgave us, he may be telling us, listen, I forgave you, but I don't want to have anything to do with you, and just stay away. But that's not the case! We come to shul and say Hallel with our mitzvos and Hakadosh Baruch Hu appreciates it! And he tells us again, we'll start over from now! Sukkos is a continuation of the mechila process of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Until now, Hashem only forgave the punishment of our sins, but our relationship may not have been fully restored. When Sukkos begins, and we go

to shul with our lulav and esrog and recite Hallel, Hashem demonstrates that he wants to be close to us; it's a higher level of mechila.

The Mishna says that when it rains on sukkos and we can't sit in the sukka it is a siman klala, because it's as though a servant comes to serve his master a pitcher of water and the master throws it in his face. Why is it specifically by the mitzvah of sukka that when we can't be mekayeim the mitzvah we say this, there may be other mitzvos that we sometimes can't do, and we say ones rachmana patrei? The answer is that the sukka is like sitting in Hashem's house, and Hashem wants to be close to us after forgiving all our sins. If rachmana litzlan he is pushing us out of his house, he's telling us that he's willing to forgive us but stay away. He doesn't want to see us. And that's a terrible siman klala.

May we be zoche instead to the Medrash that Rashi quotes in the pesukim of Shmini Atzeres, that at the end of all our avoda of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkos, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, I've enjoyed your company so much these past three weeks, kasha ali preidaschem iKvu imi od yom vtaaseh seuda ktana. It's hard for me when you take leave of me! Stay one more day, and we'll have a special time together, just you and me!

Sukkos - Living with Hashem

Rabbi Yehuda Y Silver

We know that Hashem was close to us during the month of Elul and especially during the Ten Days of Repentance. At

the end of Neilah, we blew the shofar to signal that Hashem has gone back to the Heavens (similar to the sounding of the shofar by Har Sinai, which allowed the Jews to go up the mountain, because Hashem's Presence was no longer there). However, we are taught that Hashem's Presence resides in our sukkah. So where is Hashem, in the Heavens or down on earth inside our sukkah?

The simple answer is that both are true because our sukkah is in the Heavens.

The Ramchal (Derech Hashem 4 8 2) says that besides the physical protection and comfort that the Clouds of Glory afforded Yisroel in the desert, they raised Yisroel up and separated them from all the world's nations. This caused the Presence of Hashem to reside on them, and they were not living in this world.

This occurred in the desert, but its effects are still felt today. This elevation happens to all righteous people; they are surrounded by a Heavenly light, which raises them above this lowly and mundane world. Also, this affects us at the time of Sukkos. After we draw ourselves close to Hashem during the Days of Repentance, we can experience this through the sukkah. Hashem was with us during the Ten Days of Repentance and takes us with Him when He ascends to the Heavens.

There is a story retold in *Touched by a Story 2* (by Rabbi Yechiel Spero) of Uncle Tuli, a survivor of the concentration camps who, after losing his wife and children, was too emotionally scarred to start life anew and lived with a nephew. One thing that was very dear to Uncle Tuli was sleeping in the sukkah, and even as he grew older, he never wavered from his commitment. One frigid Sukkos night when it was well below freezing, his great-nephew tried to convince him that he should not sleep in the sukkah, as it would harm his health and, therefore, was definitely exempt. Uncle Tuli responded that

every single night he has nightmares about the Nazis barging into his house and shooting his wife in front of his eyes. The only good night's sleep he gets the entire year is when he sleeps in the sukkah, in the arms of Hashem, where no one can harm him.

May we experience Hashem's closeness and loving embrace in the protection of the sukkah. Chag Semach!!

The Ushpizin – Our Seven Special Guests

By Rabbi Yehuda Y Silver

You just managed to get the Schach on before Yom-Tov, and of course, your kids 'decorated' the Sukkah with the myriads of preschool projects, Oorah posters, and Gedolim pictures. You are falling off your feet, but you made it! It is finally Sukkos! You walk into your Sukkah with your family, ready to make Kiddush, but wait! We need to invite the Ushpizin! Only after Avraham Avinu graces our table will we be ready to begin.

Huh?! Avraham Avinu is here? What is that supposed to mean? This mystery always intrigued me, so I went off to unlock the secret. There is a whole lot more depth and significance than presented here, but here are some of the basics.

Grasping G-d

Have you ever run out of gas? Well, Hashem created the world on Rosh HaShana, but only put enough gas for the world

to run for one year. Every year, Hashem 'recreates' the world for the following year.

A wealthy man once asked R' Naftoli Trop, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radin, "We say in Selichos, 'Like paupers and destitute people we knock at Your (Hashem's) door.' How can I honestly say that if I am wealthy and it is simply not true!?" R' Naftoli responded that a person doesn't have a 'chazaka', last year's wealth has no bearing on Hashem's decision for the coming year. In regards to the coming year, he is penniless. Hashem only gave him wealth for a year.

So, what is Hashem's purpose for creating the world this year? Well, why did Hashem create the world at all? The answer is to give humans a way to relate and experience Him. This relationship is experienced and built through learning Torah and adhering to the Mitzvos, and will culminate with the pleasures in the World to Come. On Rosh HaShana, Hashem recreates a world for that purpose, to give us the means and tools to build a relationship with him.

One last thought before we get back to our Sukkos guests. How are we supposed to relate to Hashem? Hashem is infinite and immortal. He is above and beyond any comprehension because he is not bound by the confines of creation and physicality, which humans are bound by. Chazal gave us the formula - act like Hashem. Hashem is kind, you be kind, Hashem is merciful, you be merciful.

Seven Sefiros

Catchy title, right? The basic concept of the seven Sefiros is that Hashem relates to this world in seven ways, and we are supposed to emulate Hashem in these ways, thereby building a relationship with Him. (These concepts are elaborated upon in the Tomer Devorah.) The seven Sefiros are: Chessed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchus.

Let's give a basic example. Hashem acts within this world

with Chessed, kindness. Every time we do an act of kindness, we are emulating Hashem and building a closer relationship with him.

Back to our guests. Avraham Avinu personified Chessed. He is the one who taught us to relate to Hashem through kindness. Yitzchok represented Gevurah, Yaakov – Tiferes, Moshe – Netzach, Aharon – Hod, Yosef – Yesod, and Dovid - Malchus.

To drive the point home a little better, there is a famous question: what was so great about Avraham offering his son by the Akeida? This is a common occurrence throughout the generations that we give up everything Al Kiddush Hashem, to sanctify Hashem's Name.

The Ksav Sofer answers that if not for Avraham's self-sacrifice, it would be impossible for us to do so. Avraham's action imbued it in our spiritual DNA.

The same is true for these seven sefiros. Hashem acts this way and commands us to emulate him. Still, it would be impossible to truly relate to Him through these seven ways without the 'sheva ro'im,' seven shepherds who personified these characters, thereby imbuing it in our blood.

Sukkos Sale

We could always grow in these seven ways, but on Sukkos is the 'Black Friday sales' for these seven middos. After Rosh HaShana, when Hashem created the world for us to experience and relate to Him, He brings us into His Presence, His Sukkah, where He acts in a concentrated form of these seven types of action. Therefore, it is easier for us to emulate Him in these ways.

Each day we focus on one middah. The more effort we put in, the more the returns on our investments.

Our first day's guest is Avraham, who brings along the framework to relate to Hashem through kindness. Try to do an extra act of kindness, a warm smile, a nice word.

The second day is dedicated to Yitzchok, who personified self-restraint. Get closer to Hashem by thinking before blurting out a snide remark.

Yaakov comes next with a focus on Tiferes – glory. Try to make a Kiddush Hashem, and show someone through your actions that keeping the Torah is rightfully a pleasurable experience.

The fourth day comes with Moshe's Netzach – infinity. Moshe gave us the Torah, the key to living above and beyond the mundane world. Delve deeply into Torah and beat the drudgery of the physical world.

Aharon exemplifies Hod – splendor. Hod is achieved through Hoda'ah, being grateful. Aharon loved peace and thereby drew people toward Torah, and the bedrock of peace is being grateful and appreciative. Thank your spouse and show them you appreciate who they are and what they do. This will bring peace and splendor to your home.

The sixth day, we focus on Yesod. Yosef set the stage for the flourishing of Yisroel in the decadence of Mitzrayim. Just like he was able to control himself with the temptation of the wife of Potifar, we should also control our eyes and minds, keeping them holy and pure.

The seventh day comes with a focus on Malchus, kingship. David was the quintessential king. He taught us to proclaim Hashem's Kingship in every facet of our lives, no matter how challenging or joyous. When something doesn't work out exactly the way you wanted, remember that Hashem is running the show, and all we are required to do is His Will. And remember, the more you put in, the more you take out.

Have a great Yom Tov!