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MIZRACHI

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# Crowning our King

## Personal and National Goals

What is the goal of Rosh Hashanah? We know that this holiday is commonly called *Yom HaDin*, Judgment Day. We could easily say that this description answers our question; that the goal of Rosh Hashanah is to judge creation. However, that is G-d's goal on this day, not ours. The Creator utilizes this day to assess all of His creations, but then what is our role, as the creations themselves?

It could be that this day is to be used as a day of repentance and reflection, to atone for past sins and set a course of improvement – but the prayers of Rosh Hashanah do not reflect these sentiments. There is no mention of sin in the Rosh Hashanah davening, and we do not have any prayers asking for forgiveness.

The *tefillot* of Rosh Hashanah express two main themes: judgment and *malchut*, the kingship of G-d. The emphasis on G-d's Kingship is found throughout the entirety of the Rosh Hashanah service. After Ma'ariv, in Tehillim 24, we say that G-d is the King of Honour. Before shofar-blowing, in Tehillim 47, we say that the Jewish people and all the nations of the world declare G-d as King, together with

happiness, song, and shofar blasts. Tractate Rosh Hashanah (16a) states that just as the shofar was blown as part of the crowning process of Jewish kings, on Rosh Hashanah we blow the shofar with the purpose of proclaiming G-d as our ultimate King. Thus, blowing the shofar on this holiday is another way that G-d's Kingship permeates the day.

However, we still have to understand what it means to declare G-d as our King. Why is it not enough to see Him as our G-d? And why does G-d need us to anoint Him?

G-d is described as King in many places throughout Tanach, but the first time He receives this name is after the splitting of the sea, when the people of Israel declared "G-d... rule as King forever" (Shemot 15:18). What caused the giving of this new title; why now? There is a common expression throughout many Jewish works, "There is no king without a nation." In other words, the *G-dliness* of G-d has nothing to do with us, but the *Kingship* of G-d is entirely dependent on how much we – His creations – relate to Him as King. This is why the Torah does not call Him a King until the people of Israel declare Him as such, after being led out of Egypt. Before that point,

there was no nation to accept Him, and therefore there was no kingship.

At the time of Shlomo HaMelech, this concept of the nation of Israel making G-d into a King is brought to the next level. When Shlomo became king, the Navi describes it as "sitting on the throne of G-d." How can Shlomo's throne be called the throne of G-d? When we live by the values of G-d, not only as individuals but as a nation – it demonstrates the fact that His people have accepted Him, thereby making Him King. The Kingship of G-d is a demonstration of His Nation actualizing His Will and Values.

Rosh Hashanah is the day we anoint G-d as our King, and when we take upon ourselves a renewed devotion to realizing our hopes and dreams – the actualization of G-d's will and values – as a nation and as individuals.

Wishing everyone a year of blessing and happiness, and much success in realizing all our hopes and dreams.

Rabbi Elan Mazer is National Director of Mizrachi Canada  
[mizrachi@mizrachi.ca](mailto:mizrachi@mizrachi.ca)

### Head

It is fascinating that the Hebrew for our New Year is Rosh Hashanah – the 'Head of the Year' – and not the more obvious term '*Reishit Hashanah*,' which means the beginning of the year.<sup>1</sup>

So why did our Sages pick this term – the head – to define the first festival of the year? It seems that the head and mind are the keys to understanding the essence of the day.

On the anniversary of Creation, we aim to envision and recreate in our mind the ideal world we would like to live in and the ideal role we would like to play in it.

It's a time of deep cognitive reflection. We examine our spiritual and mental paradigms, thought processes and mindset as we address the salient issues

<sup>1</sup> *Reishit* is the obvious word as it is not only the first word in the Torah – *BeReishit* – but it is also mentioned in Deuteronomy (11:12) as 'the beginning of the year' – *Reishit Hashanah*. It is also from this verse that the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah, 17b) learns the concept of judgment

## THE FESTIVALS OF TISHREI

# Head, Heart & Soul

of life in preparation for the year ahead. It's a time for big picture mind mapping rather than meddling in minutiae. There is no focus on individual actions nor any mention of sin – not one single confession – throughout the lengthy prayer service. We dare not get lost in the detail, lest we fail to distinguish the wood from the trees. It's not a time 'to be rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic,' but rather to ensure that we are heading in the right direction. The shofar is the instrument of the day and the echo of Jewish history calling us to recalibrate our moral course and reset our spiritual compass. Rosh Hashanah is an intense exercise in systematic and strategic spiritual thinking.

### Heart

Yom Kippur is all about Service of the Heart – *Avodah She'balev*.<sup>2</sup>

at the beginning of the year impacting the rest of the year, which forms the biblical basis for Rosh Hashanah being a Day of Judgment. Nevertheless, our Sages chose Rosh Hashanah as the name of the day and hence the name of the Tractate and the universally used name of the festival.

The ideal exists in our head, whereas actual change happens through the heart. Our inner will – our *ratzon* – is the engine of personal transformation. Yom Kippur is a day that rotates around the axis of will, want and desire. It demands a detailed spiritual makeover to align our will with the Divine Will in every area of life. That is why Vidui – personal confession – is the essence of the day. We strike our chest and heart dozens of times, acknowledging where we have deviated and expressing our deepest desire to return to the right path.

Where there is a will, there is always a way back. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; head and heart, ideal and real, macro thinking and micro planning, intertwine to give us unparalleled days of spiritual inspiration.

*Continued on page 4*

<sup>2</sup> Our Sages define prayer as *Avodah She'balev* – service of the heart (Ta'anit 2a, Rambam, Hilchot Tefilla 1:1.) Yom Kippur is a unique day of intense prayer encompassing five distinct prayer services.



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## Soul

Nevertheless, despite these spiritual peaks, something is sorely missing from this religious equation: Simcha – happiness and joy. Simcha is the true soul of Judaism, for at its core it is not only a religion but a celebration of religious life.<sup>3</sup>

The Yamim Noraim are truly Days of Awe. Throughout the 10 days of Repentance the theme of judgment, of “who will live and who will die,” creates an inescapable mood of sobriety, an undertone of fear and trepidation. Furthermore, in our plea for atonement on Yom Kippur, we have ‘afflicted’ ourselves by refraining from the basic normative life pleasures. In our quest for forgiveness and purity we have necessarily but unnaturally detached ourselves from the fullness of life. This tense and intense time has taken its toll.

And this is the reason why, explains Rav Kook,<sup>4</sup> Sukkot comes immediately after Yom Kippur. We are in desperate

need of an injection of joy to reinstate the vigor and vibrancy of life. Spiritual life had become imbalanced through the uplifting yet energy-depleting motif of judgment, fear and fasting. Sukkot restores the balance through a love of life, a celebration of mitzvot, with the festival’s unmatched ambience of joy, joie de vivre and rejoicing in G-d’s presence.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, if we look at the festivals of Tishrei as one unit, they encompass the complete religious experience in preparing for the year ahead. Through head, heart and soul they engage the totality of life. They express holy life as wholesome and spiritual endeavors as a harmonious aspiration for both body and soul. Intertwining love and fear, separation and integration, solemnity and celebration, they give us the blueprint to start the year in the best possible way.

<sup>3</sup> The verse explicitly states that the root cause of the terrible curses mentioned in Parshat Ki Tavo is serving G-d without happiness and joy

– “since you did not serve the Lord your G-d with happiness (Simcha) and with gladness of heart...” (Deuteronomy 28:47). It is clear that scrupulous observance of Torah and mitzvot devoid of Simcha is not a religious life but rather a spiritual curse.

<sup>4</sup> Orot HaTeshuva 9:10.

<sup>5</sup> The imperative of *simcha* on Sukkot is mentioned three times in the Torah, more than any other festival. One famous expression of this is stated in the Mishna (Sukkot 5:1), “That one who has not seen the Simcha of the water-drawing ceremony (which took place every evening on the intermediary days of the festival) has not seen Simcha in his life.” Moreover, Shemini Atzeret is the pinnacle of the Simcha of Sukkot and is solely dedicated to happiness, simply rejoicing in G-d’s intimate presence without a need for any command or action; neither Sukkah nor species, as the Talmud learns (Sukkah 48a) from the verse “and only be happy.” It is therefore no surprise that our Sages later instituted Simchat Torah on this festival (on the same day in Israel) as an expression of our joy at our very connection to Torah.

**Rabbi Doron Perez** is Head of the Mizrahi World Movement

# HAMIZRACHI

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# PRESERVING THE JEWISH NATIONAL COLLECTIVE

**T**he Mizrahi Movement has always been an integral part of the National Institutions since its foundation. It is an inextricable part of the extraordinary mosaic of the Jewish people. Mizrahi has played a significant role in the phenomenal success of a small nation that succeeded in returning to its homeland after 2,000 years of exile, in maintaining Jewish traditions and in keeping the Torah's commandments in the Diaspora. And it also played a significant role in my own childhood.

My family history is deeply rooted in the Zionist Movement in general and in the Mizrahi Movement in particular. My grandfather, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Halevy Herzog *zt"l*, was very close to the Mizrahi leadership. The head of the Movement, Moshe Chaim Shapira *z"l*, was like family, a close colleague and supporter of my grandfather. They worked together during the tumultuous years between the Holocaust and the revival of Israel. My grandmother, Rabbanit Sarah Herzog *zt"l*, helped coalesce the women's movement of Hapoel HaMizrachi and the Mizrahi Women's organization. She founded Emunah, the women's Religious Zionist organization, heading it until the day she died.

I have recently become Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, after more than 20 years in public service – 15 of them as a Member of Knesset, as a Minister in several

governments and as the Opposition Leader. I am familiar with the great challenges facing the Jewish people today, as well as understanding the central role played by each of the Zionist organizations, including Mizrahi, in confronting the internal and external challenges we face at this time and which threaten the unity of our people.

We, the Jewish people, have always shown talent for arguing amongst ourselves and generating diverse opinions – which has led to remarkable achievements.

However, we have always known how to remain unified and focus on our core values of continuity and integrity, as well as maintaining a connection to Judaism, tradition, the Land of Israel and the State of Israel. All this while facing challenges and disasters that no other nation has ever encountered.

However, our national missions have yet to be completed. As the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, I will continue to work to encourage Aliyah for anyone who so desires; to work with Jewish communities in Israel and in the Diaspora, and to reinforce Jewish identity. I will strive to work towards the continuity of our people by strengthening the dialogue between Israelis and Jews outside Israel, confronting the delegitimization of Israel and global anti-Semitism, advocating *Tikkun Olam* within Israeli society and beyond, and most

Isaac Herzog



Rav Kook

importantly, tackling alienation and division within the Jewish people.

To achieve these goals, each and every one of the Jewish movements and streams must work together, with commitment and determination; with open minds and the simple understanding that the Jewish people have always been comprised of various worldviews, movements and streams.

The Jewish Agency is the bridge connecting the Jewish people in Zion with the Jewish people in the Diaspora – I call that “Jerusalem” and “Babylon” – and it is the bridge that connects us all. It is incumbent upon us, a nation of 14 million people, to faithfully protect the unity of our people wherever we are, and to ensure that that unity remains intact – for our power lies in our unity. This is the Jewish Agency's mission.

I will conclude with an excerpt from the Prayer for the Peace of the State, written by my grandfather: “And our brothers, the entire House of Israel, protect them in all the lands where they are dispersed, and bring them quickly to Zion Your city and to Jerusalem, the dwelling place of Your Name.” Let it be so.

Wishing the entire Jewish people, in Israel and the Diaspora, a good and sweet new year.

**Isaac Herzog** is the newly-elected Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel

## Living Teshuva

*“For some time I have been struggling with an inner conflict, and a mighty force impels me to speak about teshuva [penitence]. All my thoughts are focused on this topic. Teshuva holds a primary place in Torah and in life. All the hopes of the individual and of society depend on it.”*

**S**o begins Rav Kook's introduction to *Orot HaTeshuva* (Lights of Penitence), perhaps his most popular work, first published in 1925. The compact book was beloved by its author, and Rav Kook himself would study its teachings during the month of Elul after morning prayers. One student reported hearing Rav Kook say, “I worked extensively on *Orot HaTeshuva*. Whoever studies it properly will find light in every word.” He also declared: “*Orot HaTeshuva* should be studied endlessly.”

What is so special about the book's outlook on *teshuva*?

### Teshuva – a Return to Life

*Orot HaTeshuva* illuminates the concepts of sin, punishment, and penitence. It explains that sin primarily harms the one who sinned, as it cuts him off from the roots of his very being, from the light of his soul. This estrangement is sin's worst punishment. *Teshuva*, on the other hand, redeems the sinner from this darkness. It rejuvenates him, restoring his previous state of life and joy.

The word *teshuva* literally means ‘return.’ It is not an escape from the world. On the contrary, it is “precisely through genuine, pure *teshuva* that we return to the world and to life” (*Orot HaTeshuva* 14:30).

Already in his introduction, Rav Kook described *teshuva* as an underlying force

that influences all aspects of life, not only the realm of the sacred: “*Teshuva* holds a primary place in Torah and in life.” Thus one who frees himself from unhealthy habits – this is also a type of *teshuva*. Additionally, Rav Kook posited that this powerful force is not limited to the failings and triumphs of the individual. It also applies to failures and successes of the nation and the entire universe: “All hopes of the individual and society as a whole depend on it.”



### National and Spiritual Revival

Rav Kook firmly believed that a secular national revival, the entire program of rebuilding the Land and the nation, could not succeed without a parallel revival in holiness, with lofty manifestations of this holiness expressed in both personal and public spheres.

But what path would lead the generation of rebirth to the gates of *teshuva*? The routine approach is doomed to failure. One cannot reach out to the idealistic youth of such a generation, brimming with life, vigor, and creativity, with a severe demeanor and punctilious

demands of small, everyday deeds – demands that they consider to be a sign of weakness and a feeble spirit.

No, the generation must be awakened via an optimistic spirit of greatness and courage. “*Teshuva* comes not to embitter life,” Rav Kook taught, “but to make it pleasant” (ibid. 15:6). “*Teshuva* is essentially a return to [our] origins, to the source of supernal life and existence in their wholeness” (ibid. 12:8).

In an article printed in *HaYesod* in 1934, he explained: “*Teshuva* is the great key to redemption. Many things inhibit *teshuva*, but the major obstacle, particularly to collective *teshuva*, is the misconception of *teshuva* as atrophy of the soul, as the enfeebling and debilitation of life. This false image also impairs the *teshuva* of the individual. But more than anything, it hinders collective *teshuva*, the *teshuva* of the nation.

“We must disclose the secret that the genuine *teshuva* of the entire nation of Israel is a mighty, powerful vision that provides reserves of might and strength, imbuing all of our spiritual and pragmatic values with a lofty spirit of vigorous, surging creative energy from the power of the Rock of Israel. This living *teshuva* flows not from isolated, fragmented souls, but from the treasury of the nation's collective soul, Knesset Yisrael .... In this way, the united soul of Israel is prepared to return to its former strength, as in days of old.”

*(Adapted from Sapphire from the Land of Israel, by Rabbi Chanan Morrison.)*

**Rabbi Chanan Morrison** is the author of several books on Rav Kook's writings [www.RavKookTorah.org](http://www.RavKookTorah.org)





## The Sound of SILENCE

Why do we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah? Our intuitive answer is that it reminds us of the Akeidah, Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Yitzchak. But the shofar is symbolic of a ram's horn, reminding us of Avraham's sacrifice of the ram after G-d told him to desist from sacrificing Yitzchak.

Shouldn't we be commemorating his willingness to sacrifice his beloved son? What's so hard about sacrificing a ram? Isn't Avraham's readiness to sacrifice his son at G-d's behest a far more meaningful expression of his acceptance of G-d's Will?

I think the answer lies in the difference between how Avraham arrives at the decision to sacrifice the ram and how he agrees to sacrifice Yitzchak. The latter is of course a result of G-d's express request. For the former though, there is no command or request. After showing appreciation for Avraham's willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak and then telling him not to "stretch out your hand against the youth," G-d is silent. There is no mention of another sacrifice; no mention of a ram.

So what now?

It's a dramatic biblical pause.

The Torah then tells us it was Avraham who "raised his eyes and saw," found, and decided to sacrifice the ram. G-d had relieved him of his duties, but Avraham

continued looking for opportunities to serve. Just like at the beginning of the parsha, where Avraham looks (note the exact same phrase – "Avraham raised his eyes and saw") for guests despite his pain and the intense heat.

Interestingly, the Torah tells us that the ram was caught in the thicket. What difference does it make where the ram was? Chazal understood this as an indication that G-d placed the ram there for Avraham to find. They even list the ram as one of the objects created during the six days of creation, specifically for this purpose.

What does this mean? It means that G-d wanted Avraham to follow up his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak with an actual sacrifice of the ram. Avraham needed no words to infer this. He knew. The fact that he named the place "*Hashem Yir'eh*" (G-d has shown/been shown) indicates that Avraham saw the ram as something G-d had intentionally put there for him.

And indeed, he only receives the Divine blessings as reward for his commitment after sacrificing the ram, not after showing his readiness to kill his own son.

This is a very powerful idea. G-d directs us not only through his spoken word (the Torah and Halacha), but also through the events and circumstances in our lives. It is all part of His Divine Providence. We are expected to serve

G-d not only by heeding His stated word, but by being alert to His 'silence' and seeing the additional opportunities He sends our way.

Even the rams in our lives – the challenges, the tests, the curve balls – are there for our benefit, to help us grow as individuals and to help us come closer to G-d.

Everything inside and outside of our lives is there because G-d runs the world.

This is the aspect of the Akeidah that we commemorate – and celebrate – with the mitzvah of shofar. Because completely accepting the yoke of heaven, recognizing G-d's *Malchut*, his Kingship over the world, means wholly seeing ourselves as His creations charged with the mission of fulfilling His will.

If we see ourselves this way, we will strive not only to fulfill G-d's commandments, but we will be constantly aware of the sound of His silence as well.

And that is a totally different level of living.

**Rabbi Reuven Taragin** is Educational Director of World Mizrachi and Religious Zionists of America-Mizrachi. He is also Dean of the Yeshivat HaKotel Overseas Program

## Sarah's SACRIFICE

Ask any child of the first story that comes to mind on Rosh Hashanah and they will probably say "Akeidat Yitzchak" – Avraham's willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak. But Chazal direct our attention to other stories too. Rabbi Eliezer teaches us that many seminal events occurred on Rosh Hashanah: the world was created, Joseph was released from prison, the harsh labor in Egypt ended, and Sarah, Rachel and Chana were all remembered as they conceived.<sup>1</sup>

The stories of G-d remembering these barren women are so central to the day that we read their respective narratives as the Torah and Haftarah readings on Rosh Hashanah,<sup>2</sup> to ensure a proper mindset and focus on the "Day of Remembrance."

Chana's story reminds us of personal and national prayers and commitment<sup>3</sup> whilst Rachel's tears, recounted by Jeremiah, remind us to cry and beseech G-d for mercy. What is the central message behind the first of the Torah readings though, i.e. the story of Sarah giving birth to Yitzchak followed by Yishmael's banishment from Avraham's home? At first glance, we marvel at the miraculous phenomenon of barren, post-menopausal Sarah Immeinu and recognize that G-d judges and remembers everyone on Rosh Hashanah. But the birth of Yitzchak is only recounted in the first seven verses of the chapter!<sup>4</sup> What is the significance of the continuation of the story?

We do not just read about the fulfillment of the Divine promise of a son through

Sarah, but we hear of her final act of sacrifice. She had already selflessly initiated the relinquishing of her potential status as primary matriarch when she gave her maidservant Hagar to Avraham as a wife to ensure the fulfillment of G-d's plan.<sup>5</sup> The ensuing story, which takes place 13 years after the birth of Hagar's son, Yishmael, recounts G-d's covenant (Brit Milah) with Avraham – he will bear a great nation but through Sarah, not Hagar. The juxtaposition of these stories underscores the connection between Sarah's sacrifice of her future and her ultimate reward. But that is not the end of the story.

After weaning Yitzchak, Sarah sees Yishmael "assuming" Yitzchak's role in Avraham's eyes. After all, for 13 years Avraham Avinu was convinced that Yishmael was the promised child and presumably educated him appropriately. Sarah Immeinu recognizes that Yitzchak is to fulfill that role and Yishmael's presence in the household is a distraction. However, she does not ask Avraham to send out his son; instead, she presents the quandary as a choice between wives – "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Yitzchak." Sarah implores Avraham to look at Yishmael as Hagar's son, and Yitzchak as her son, and to choose between the mothers, recognizing that Yitzchak is meant to inherit Avraham's legacy.

G-d then confirms Sarah's perspective and reassures Avraham that he should begin to detach himself from Yishmael

by looking at him as a "*na'ar*" (lad) and not necessarily as his "*ben*" (son).

Sarah's greatness is highlighted by her foil character. Sarah is willing to forfeit her own status for the sake of her "*ben*," whereas Hagar – alone with Yishmael in the desert – casts him afar to die as a "*yeled*" (i.e. child vs. son). Hagar detaches herself from her own son in his time of greatest need!

This is the message with which we open Rosh Hashanah – Sarah's willingness to forfeit her own status for the sake of her progeny. We too must be willing to submit ourselves to G-d's will, and when we do, we are rightfully rewarded. Sarah Immeinu reminds us (as does Avraham Avinu in the second day's reading) that our role is not to wait passively to see the products of a relationship between G-d and Am Yisrael, but to initiate with fortitude, confidence and sacrifice as we actively demonstrate our belief in the covenants forged with G-d!

<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a.

<sup>2</sup> Megillah 31a.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel I, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 16.

**Rabbanit Shani Taragin** is Educational Director of World Mizrachi and Religious Zionists of America-Mizrachi and a senior educator in women's higher educational institutions in Israel





## HOW CAN WE CONNECT OUR CHILDREN TO THE LONG SHUL SERVICES?

**T**he Gemara in Yevamot tells of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania's mother who would bring him to the Beit Midrash while he was still suckling "so his ears would cleave to the words of the Torah."

We all want to see our children becoming active in the community and taking part in the services. When a child sings *Anim Zemirot*, opens the Ark, leads the Children's Service, it's a good sign for a community that gives its children room to become equal partners. Taking children to kiss the Sefer Torah, to hear *Lecha Dodi* on Friday nights, imprints an affection for prayer and Torah on their young hearts.

become less cute gangly teenagers? And especially over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when the service is significantly longer?

Of course there are no magic pills, and the guiding principle should be your personal example. It is also worth remembering – and this will save you a lot of frustration – that there is a second half to the oft-quoted verse "Educate the youth according to his way" (Proverbs 22:6). And that is, "So even when he is older he will not deviate from it." In other words, the aim of your education is not necessarily that your seven-year-old should sit still in shul for five hours this year, but that they'll willingly and

need, IDF soldiers, for Jews all over the world, for Israel. These are perhaps more immediately relevant prayers that can arouse positive emotions and empathy.

**2. Partnership.** It is difficult to feel part of the service if you don't take an active part in it. Adults have their regular seats, their shiurim, their role on the shul board, but what do the youth have? Giving the youth assignments will strengthen their connection to the community, to the shul, and eventually to the prayers as well. You can be creative here and give them positions of responsibility within the shul framework.

**3. Youth Minyan.** Sometimes a youth minyan is an excellent solution. I have seen this advertised on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur too. In places where splitting the congregation is not a problem, you can institute another minyan that is perhaps a little faster, a little later and more appropriate to the needs of our young people. Not Musaf on Rosh Hashanah or Neilah on Yom Kippur, where they should experience the power of a full congregation, but other services are certainly possible. And there will always be adults who prefer to join the youngsters...

Tefilla can be a challenge. Involving children and youth symbolizes the continuity of our tradition from generation to generation, from the mouths of infants to youth and adults, "And they will all make one brotherhood to do Your Will with a perfect heart."

**Rabbi Matanya Yedid** is a lecturer in the Higher Institute for Torah at Bar-Ilan University and Head of the Educator Training Program at Michlelet Orot Yisrael



Photo: Huffington Post

Some communities have included strict rules for bringing children into shul. Obviously parents have to quieten or take out their offspring when they cry or disturb the service (yes, even if they themselves are in the middle of the Amidah), but that is no reason to forbid parents from bringing young children to shul. Educating our children to love and appreciate prayer and shul begins with the candy man and sitting quietly next to Mom or Dad.

That's all well and good but what happens when your cute little toddlers

faithfully do so when they're your age and have children of their own.

Here are three other suggestions how to connect our youth to prayer:

**1. Study.** By studying and understanding the words and the meaning, we can help our children – and often ourselves too – understand what they're saying. Make it personal, relevant. Teach them that they can insert personal prayers for anything at all that bothers them. It's also good to encourage them to pray for people they know who are sick or in

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Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon



## WHY IS CHANA'S PRAYER THE HAFTARAH ON ROSH HASHANAH?

**O**n the first day of Rosh Hashanah we read the story of Chana. Why was this Haftarah chosen? Our Sages attributed huge importance to Chana's prayer. The Talmud in Berachot 29a says that because the name of G-d appears nine times in Chana's prayer, we say nine blessings in the Musaf Amidah on Rosh Hashanah.

Chana's prayer, one woman's prayer, determines the prayers for the entire Jewish people! Apart from that, we derive many of the laws of prayer from Chana.<sup>1</sup>

Let us focus on some other important lessons. Firstly, Chana teaches us what to ask for and the aim of the request:

"And she vowed a vow, and said... if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid, and remember me... I will give him to G-d all the days of his life..."<sup>2</sup>

Her request comes with a vow. Sometimes we ask G-d for things but don't offer Him anything in return. We don't commit to doing anything. Chana makes a vow, and that vow is connected to the request she makes. Chana is not just asking for a free lunch. She is prepared to earn it.

And the request itself? She asks for a son, something she wants so much, yet she immediately promises to dedicate him to G-d. From here we learn that the aim of our requests should not be egotistical (so he'll help me/ so I can be happy/ so the family will continue...), but rather that we use what we have for the service of G-d.

Of course, we can ask G-d to bless us with abundance and a good life. But what is the deeper aim of our requests? Chana teaches us that our prayers should be aligned with our service of G-d rather than to achieve our own personal comfort.

Secondly, how many times do we pray for something, cry and plead, yet when



### One woman's prayer determines the prayers for the entire Jewish people

our prayers are answered, do we take the time to thank G-d? When Chana's request is answered, she immediately thanks Him: "And Hannah prayed, and said: my heart exults... because I rejoice in Your salvation."<sup>3</sup>

And another thing Chana teaches us is that we should include the entire Jewish people in our prayers, finishing her prayer with the words, "And He will give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."<sup>4</sup>

Apart from these fundamental elements, Chana emphasizes another key motif which is also central to Rosh Hashanah: "G-d kills, and makes alive... brings down to the grave, and brings up... makes poor, and makes rich... brings low, lifts up..."<sup>5</sup>

Chana expresses G-d's control over the world; His ability to change human

destiny. It is all in His hands. When we come in prayer before G-d, and particularly at this time of year, we feel just how dependent we are on Him.

In summary, we learn from Chana that

1. A prerequisite for prayer is our commitment to become better people in some way.
2. We must examine the aim of our request and not just the request itself. It cannot be just for our own pleasure but to add good to the world, to sanctify G-d's name.
3. We should express gratitude for everything we have, and particularly after our prayers are answered.
4. We should include all Jews in our prayers. That is why the blessings in the Amidah are in the plural. Even if we ourselves need good health or a job, we pray for the same thing for the rest of our people too.

Chana's prayer sharpens our awareness of G-d's absolute control of the world. We are not in control. We act, we work, we build, but G-d is behind us, pulling the strings and making sure it all works out for the good.

<sup>1</sup> See Berachot 24b and other places.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel 1, 1:11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 2:10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 2:6-8.

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## SHOULD THE ELDERLY FAST ON YOM KIPPUR?



**T**his is literally an old question. After all, our elders have fasted for generations. But this question has been given new meaning in recent times.

In Psalms (90:10) it says: "The days of our years are 70 years and if with strength 80 years."

Over the centuries, human life expectancy has risen considerably, and in many countries today, the average is 80 or more, as it is in Israel.

### Is age biological or physiological?

Physiological age can be very different from biological age. We find this in Judaism too. The Levites had to stop work in the Temple at age 50. Yet sometimes they could 'retire' later, if they could still sing properly (see Hullin 24a, and Rashi there.) And the Gemara talks about 80-year-old Rabbi Hanina who would "stand on one leg and put his shoes on."

Nevertheless, there are often added risks after 85, even for a person who is generally healthy. Studies have shown that 60% of patients around that age

were dehydrated when they suffered a first stroke. Other studies show that after three days of minimal drinking, the old person needs two weeks for his or her body to return to normal. In addition, our elders may not always be able to drink the necessary amount before a fast.

### What can we do?

When over-80s are weak, one must instruct them to drink, at least in *shiurim* (see below). Someone over 80 who feels strong and well, and wants to fast, can do so. From 90 upwards, a person should drink, at least in *shiurim*. Nevertheless, if someone over 90 feels good, does regular exercise and wants to fast, they certainly can, but should break the fast at the first sign of any nausea, dizziness, vomiting or the slightest weakness.

### What is drinking in shiurim?

A shiur is "*melo lugmav*," literally the fill of one's cheeks, which of course is different for everyone. It's easy to measure. Fill the mouth with water and spit it out into a disposable cup. Divide that amount into two using another cup. The amount in each of the cups is now *melo lugmav*. Before Yom Kippur you mark that amount on a cup and only drink that amount each time (see Nishmat Avraham 1, 5212:9). Or measure out the majority of a *revi'it*, which is less than 44ml, and preferably less than 38ml (there are shot glasses and even plastic bags that contain the required amount nowadays, which you can even discretely drink from in shul).

This amount (*melo lugmav*) can be drunk every nine minutes (Mishna Berura 5218:21 according to the Chatam

Sofer) and if necessary, every four or every two minutes.

Another option is a bitter drink, because a drink containing something bitter is even permitted for a sick person not in danger (see Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah 5:8).

### What is a bitter drink?

The Rambam says it shouldn't have a pleasant taste. It needn't be unbearable (Rav Elyashiv) but something repulsive that a normal person would not drink if he wasn't sick. You can add salt, a few chamomile teabags or drops of something bitter.

In this case, one can drink even more than *melo lugmav*, but if there is no special need to do so, one should drink this in *shiurim* too.

Of course, all the above relates to a person who is generally healthy. Once there are medical conditions involved, each case should be treated on its own merits, and in many cases the person should drink as normal.

When fasting could endanger life, do not fast and remember that the mitzvah of "And you shall live by them" is greater and more important than the fast. In this case, when a person has to drink, he is fulfilling a big mitzvah by drinking!

(Written with Dr. Ephraim Rimon, Geriatrics and Gastro Specialist.)

**Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon** is Head of Mizrahi's Shalhevet Educational Advisory Board, Chairman of the Halacha Education Center and Rabbi of Machon Lev





# THE Courage TO Grow

A Message for Yom Kippur

When I first read Jane Austen's *Emma*, it was the first time I had read a novel in which a character changes over time. Emma is a young woman who believes she understands other people better than they do. She sets about arranging their lives, with disastrous consequences, because not only does she not understand others, she does not understand herself. However, by the end, she is a different person: older, wiser and humbler.

Over 40 years have passed since I read the book and one question still fascinates me. Where did Western civilization get the idea that people can change? It is not obvious. The Greeks, for example, believed we are what we are and we cannot change. They believed that character is destiny, and the character itself is something we are born with, although it may take great courage to realize our potential.

This is precisely the opposite of the key sentence we say on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: "*Teshuva*, *tefilla* and *tzedaka* avert the evil decree." Look what happened to the people of Nineveh: "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed." But the people repent, and the decree is cancelled. There is no fate that is final.

The more I studied and researched, the more I realized that Judaism was the first system in the world to develop a clear sense of human free will. As Isaac Bashevis Singer put it, "We have to be free; we have no choice."

This is the idea at the heart of *teshuva*. It is not just confession or remorse. It is the determination to change. The decision to learn from my mistakes, to act differently in future, to become a different kind of person.

To paraphrase Rabbi Soloveitchik, to be a Jew is to be creative, and our greatest creation is our self. As a result, more than 3,000 years before Jane Austen, we see a process in which people change.

Take Moshe Rabbeinu. We see him at the start of his mission as a man who cannot speak easily: "I am not a man of words," "I am slow of speech and tongue," "I have uncircumcised lips." But by the end he is the most eloquent of all prophets. He changed.

One of the most fascinating contrasts in Tanach is between two people sometimes identified as the same person in two incarnations: Pinchas and Elijah. Both were zealots. But Pinchas changed. G-d gave him a covenant of peace and he became a man of peace.

Elijah was no less a zealot than Pinchas. Yet there is a remarkable scene at Mount Horeb after Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. G-d asks him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah replies, "I have been very zealous for the Lord G-d Almighty." G-d then sends a whirlwind, an earthquake, and a fire, in all of which He is not found, hinting He does not act harshly (as Elijah wants). He then speaks in a still small voice and asks Elijah the same question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" and Elijah replies in exactly the same way: "I have been very zealous for the Lord G-d Almighty." Elijah has not changed. At which point G-d tells him to appoint Elisha as his successor (Kings 1:19).

Elijah has not understood that G-d now wants him to exercise a different kind of leadership. He is asking Elijah to make a similar transformation to Pinchas but Elijah does not. Despite the momentous vision, even his words don't change.

So it was Judaism that introduced the idea that we can change through the concept of *teshuva*. We are not predestined to continue to be what we are. Even today, this remains a radical idea. Many biologists and neuroscientists believe that our character and actions are wholly determined by our genes.

They are wrong.

One of the great discoveries of recent years has been the scientific demonstration of the plasticity of the brain. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is Jill Bolte Taylor. In 1996, aged 37, she suffered a massive stroke that completely destroyed the functioning of the left hemisphere of her brain. She couldn't walk, talk, read, write, or even recall the details of her life. But she was a Harvard neuroscientist, so she was able to realize precisely what had happened to her.

With her mother's help, she exercised her brain every day for eight years. Eventually, she recovered all her faculties, using her right hemisphere to develop the skills normally exercised by the left. Taylor proved that by an effort of will, we can change not just our behavior, our emotions, or even our character, but the very structure and architecture of our brain. Rarely has there been a more dramatic scientific vindication of the great Jewish insight that we can change.

That is the challenge of *teshuva*.

There are two kinds of problems in life: technical and adaptive. When we face the first, we go to an expert. We feel sick, go to the doctor, she diagnoses us and prescribes a pill. The second kind is where we are the problem. We go to the

doctor, he listens, tests and says: "I can prescribe a pill, but it's not going to help in the long-term. You are overweight, underexercised and overstressed. If you don't change your lifestyle, all the pills in the world won't help." That is an adaptive problem.

Adaptive problems call for *teshuva*, and *teshuva* itself is premised on the proposition that we can change. All too often we tell ourselves we can't. We are too old, too set in our ways, too much effort. When we do that, we deprive ourselves of G-d's greatest gift: the ability to change. This is one of Judaism's greatest gifts to Western civilization.

It is also G-d's call to us on Yom Kippur. Where have we gone wrong? Where have we failed? When we tell ourselves the answer, we need the courage to change. If we believe we can't, we won't. If we believe we can, we may.

Yom Kippur poses the great question: Will we grow in our Judaism, our emotional maturity, our knowledge, our sensitivity, or will we stay where we are? Never believe you can't be different, greater, more confident, more generous, more understanding and forgiving than you are. May this year be the start of a new life. Let us have the courage to change.

<sup>1</sup> You can read her story in her book, *My Stroke of Insight*, or see her TED lecture on the subject.

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# A NEW YEAR, A NEW STANDARD OF CHILD PROTECTION FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

BY MEYER STERMAN



**Debbie Gross,**  
recipient of the Medal  
of Appreciation from  
the Israeli President for  
her work in combatting  
violence against women,  
feels that the best is still  
to come and launches a  
“Standard of Protection”  
campaign to create  
safe communities.

She sits and prepares for the Days of Judgment by reviewing cases of rape and violence towards battered children and women from the religious and ultra-Orthodox sectors. She records various stories she has encountered this year in coded language and puts them in her prayer book. “I will recite these stories in my prayers and say, ‘I have done my best to help these women. Now it is up to You, G-d, to guarantee their healing and rehabilitation,’” says Debbie Gross, director of Tahel – Crisis Center for Religious Women and Children. “Anonymity is the first rule in this place,” Debbie tells me just before we start the interview.

Tahel was established 25 years ago, when the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel realized that their typical centers were not suited to the needs of the religious sector. In order to provide an optimal response, Debbie Gross set up the Tahel hotline for women and children

from the religious and ultra-Orthodox sectors. It is easier to decide to make a call when you know there is an anonymous place that understands the sensitivities of your community.

Tahel’s beating heart is a small, closed room with two telephone stations. The function of the telephone operator is, in the simplest sense of the word, to save lives. Not only in cases of sexual assault, but also in cases of domestic violence and other crisis situations. Six months of training are required to answer the phones, which ring about 150 times a week.

The center is staffed 24 hours a day and on Shabbat there is someone on shift with an emergency beeper approved by all of the rabbinical authorities. It could be a life-saving device, if, G-d forbid, someone is raped or severely abused and decides to put an end to her life.

On the walls of the hotline room are iron-clad rules for the volunteers, instructing them how to manage a conversation as accurately and correctly as possible. “Check if the caller is in a safe place,” it says. “If she calls immediately after the attack, tell her not to take a shower and to keep her clothes,” and most importantly, “Do not ask ‘Why?’”

Tahel provides a wide range of services which include awareness-raising days in educational institutions, training educational staff to identify children who have experienced sexual abuse and violence, and self-defense workshops. In addition, Tahel runs training programs for organizations and managers, addressing specific needs by providing materials, training and supervision for those responsible for complaints about sexual harassment within the workplace. All of this is done while taking into consideration the specific religious and halachic

sensitivities involved. Tahel accompanies the victims through hospital procedures and criminal proceedings, including legal guidance for assault victims. Using its expertise, Tahel organizes international conferences on violence and abuse in the community, held every three years in Israel, with over 600 participants from all over the world.

## “We Became Informers”

A., supported by Tahel, lives in an ultra-Orthodox community in a peripheral Israeli town. Her three children attended one of the most sought after “cheders” in the area. Over the years, all the sons had the same teacher, a respected member of their community. But one day her eldest son reported to the school administration that the teacher had sexually abused him. “His little brother had begun studying in the same school and he didn’t want his brother to get hurt too,” A. tells us. The walls of silence collapsed. One by one the three children confessed to her that they had all fallen victim to unspeakable abuse.

“During the first two weeks, we were simply in shock,” she recalls. “We were with the children at home as we digested what had happened, the administration had to report to the police, and my children were summoned to testify...” For almost two years, A. and her children spent time in police stations and in courts. The teacher was indeed suspended from his post and eventually imprisoned. But what the family went through since they dared to break the silence was an ongoing nightmare. “It was a terrible time. We were completely isolated. We spoke with rabbis and they told us to ‘leave it,’ ‘get the children seen to,’ ‘move from the city.’ They tried to silence everything. People from the community came to our house, angry that we had gone to the police. One of the attacker’s relatives came to us and tried to offer money to keep us quiet. After the case reached the police, the attacker’s associates changed strategy and tried to ostracize us from the community. They embarked on a legal and social war of attrition. They teased my children, told them they were informers.”

This story and many others have motivated Debbie Gross to embark on a new project this year – “Tahel for Protection.” The Standard for Child Protection Certification (“Tav Tahel”) was developed to provide standardization and tools for implementing child protection policies and procedures in schools, organizations, communities and synagogues. This certification is based on the need for comprehensive policies to prevent sexual abuse and to provide tools for intervention in abuse cases. The certification process is intended to help the organization develop a comprehensive approach to the protection of children and to ensure proper reporting and intervention.

“If every school, community, synagogue, organization, factory and society adopts the Tav Tahel, we can certainly prevent or minimize most of the incidents,” says Debbie Gross.



“Over the course of my work, I have come across 25-year-old men who were sexually abused during bar mitzvah preparations or childhood sports activities, and girls who came to Israel a year after high school and reported harassment by the program’s staff. We are lacking professionalism, and this is the next goal I’m setting for myself.” Debbie sounds determined: “Do parents ask themselves if their synagogue has protection regulations? Does the rabbi speak about the subject in the community? Does the school have a curriculum that covers this subject? Does the summer camp have anyone who can identify abnormal behavior (of an adult or between children, who are now exposed to a great deal of sexuality on the internet)? Unfortunately, in my experience, most places have nothing, and where they do, it is extremely minimal.”

“You will be surprised to hear that I am in close contact with ultra-Orthodox rabbis as well as with liberal ones. In the ultra-Orthodox and Chassidic communities, we have rabbinical approval for educational materials, plays and workshops so that we can work within the educational institutions.”

## How can you actually reach every community in the world?

“I work with communities that invite me. People who want change and who want to create a protected community. In practice, the Tav Tahel sets a new standard; measurable criteria intended to provide a range of protection. How they apply the Standard is the community’s or institution’s choice. I do not have to be physically present in a community because that community can choose its own local services for child guidance and other matters. It becomes my job to ensure that the standard of the content is up to date, so that creating the Tav Tahel will enable me to achieve the goal of creating protected communities in the Jewish world.”

The news about Tav Tahel has already spread. This October (16-19), Debbie Gross has been invited to present at the Charleston Child Trauma Conference in South Carolina for professionals in the non-Jewish sector.

## What do rabbis say about your activities?

“You will be surprised to hear that I am in close contact with ultra-Orthodox rabbis as well as with liberal ones. In the ultra-Orthodox and Chassidic communities, we have rabbinical approval for educational materials, plays and workshops so that we can work within the educational institutions.”

## What is your hope for the New Year?

“Protected communities and protected schools are my dream. I hope and pray that we’ll get the job done. I hope that every person will realize that ensuring the safety of our children is their responsibility as well. The vast majority of cases can be prevented if there is proper guidance and an available system that could activate a red light for anyone in distress.”

To build a program in your community, or to help Tahel reach its goal of ensuring child safety in every community, contact Debbie Gross at [debbie@crisiscenter.org.il](mailto:debbie@crisiscenter.org.il)





# Sukkot

## OUR NEW SELVES IN OUR NEW HOME

A wonderful Chassidic teaching conveys that following the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when we feel purified and uplifted, we are convinced we now want our homes to be better than they were before. So we build a new home – a sukkah – a model we will carry with us into the coming year.

One area in which we can enrich our home life is *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality). This mitzvah is rooted in our collective souls from Abraham and Sarah opening their home to strangers. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik highlights five aspects of the mitzvah that imbue it with special significance:

### 1. It is Difficult and Uncomfortable

When we allow a stranger into our home he intrudes on our privacy, both physically and often emotionally. At times, having a guest means we sacrifice a part of our own comfort or privacy.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes his opinions may be different from ours as well. The Rav teaches that the quality of welcoming strangers into one's home reflects a spiritually noble attitude toward others. It reflects humility. A Jew feels far from perfection and is ready to learn from others.

### 2. Lightening the Burden of Others

Abraham knew what it felt like not to have a home. He was a wanderer for many years, lost in a strange land. This taught him and his descendants to feel for the stranger and to have compassion for those in need. We learned this lesson as a people from our

enslavement in Egypt. We felt the pain of being strangers and being homeless, and therefore knowing what this pain feels like, we will share in the distress of others. The Rav suggests that we had to experience 210 years of slavery because it molded our national personality into one of compassion and concern for our fellow man.

### 3. "My Home is My Castle"

The Torah rejects the doctrine of "my home is my castle" because it conveys two illusory ideas: first that the home gives ample protection and shields us in times of crisis. Second, that our home is our property and no one else can claim a share in it. We are vulnerable, and we neither have a home nor a castle. When we share our home with others we express the awareness that we are just "tenants;" our home is to be used for good and to help provide for others in need.

### 4. The Dignity of Every Person

Hospitality means appreciating each individual as a unique being before G-d. The Rav comments on the name of the Book of Shemot, "Names," which suggests the importance of every individual. As Rashi notes (Exodus 1:1), each star is part of a universe, yet each is numbered, named, and accounted for individually by G-d. Similarly, we also need to view each individual as a singular "star," recognizing their uniqueness, Divine spark and eternal value.<sup>2</sup> Opening one's home is a reflection that one is aware of the Divine essence in every human being.

### 5. The Almighty is the Great Host

G-d's hospitality allows the world to come into being and humanity to exist. Like Abraham, the Almighty invites us to share this world with Him. The mystics asked: Why did G-d create the world? Does G-d, the Almighty, infinite and eternal, need a frail, finite, transient world? Yes, they said, He needs the world in order to have another on whom to bestow kindness and mercy. The Rav refers to the Kabbalistic notion of *tzimtzum* – contraction: "By creating the world in general, and man in particular, G-d surrendered His aloneness and allowed a physical universe to share in His infinite being... He allowed something else to share with him what had been exclusively His own."<sup>3</sup>

Hence when we build our sukkot, our "new homes," we are emulating G-d. When we discipline ourselves to withdraw and share our space with others; when we practice compassion and kindness, we come closer to our most G-dly selves.

<sup>1</sup> Lustiger, Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Bereshit, 2012 p.169.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Clark, Wolowelsky, and Ziegler, ed. Days of Deliverance, 2007 p. 109.

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider** oversees rabbinic outreach training at the Gruss Kollel in Jerusalem and teaches in the US for the Ministry of the Diaspora

# The Preciousness of Transience

My aunt says air conditioners destroyed the bungalow colonies. People just felt too comfortable. Besides, it made everyone leave their porches and go indoors, changing the whole social climate.

We had this discussion in our Israeli sukkah. Surrounded by some of our best furniture, cozy and comfortable, the last thing we missed was an air-conditioner. But aren't we supposed to feel just a bit uncomfortable? How else will we remember we're in a Sukkah?

"The Torah said: emerge from the permanent residence and reside in a temporary residence." (Sukkah 2a)

The need to feel that a sukkah is not a permanent home influenced many halachic discussions: maximum height, minimal size, how it's made, and more. Living in an impermanent hut, we are reminded of the hardships in the desert and G-d's miraculous protection.

Here's the other side. A major principle on Sukkot is "*Teshvu Ke'eyn Taduru*" – sit in the sukkah as you would in a permanent home. This greatly affects the sukkah experience. It's what makes us schlep our favorite armchair outside, the number of meals we eat in it, even a husband and wife's ability to share their bedroom might be considered a necessary part of a permanent living experience.

We feel permanent within the temporary. We live in the moment.

The first verse in Kohelet, Ecclesiastes, is often translated as: "Utter futility! – said Kohelet – Utter futility! All is futile!" However, the word "*hevel*" (that appears 38 times in Kohelet), is not to be understood as futility, nonsense, or emptiness, but as transience. The verse means that everything is temporary and fleeting.

That is neither judgmental nor negative. It is a fundamental truth King Solomon assumes throughout his book: Our lives are finite. Nothing will last forever, certainly not us.

When Rabbi Yochanan finds the sick Rabbi Elazar crying, (Berachot 5b) he asks him why he is crying. Did you not study enough Torah? The hardships of earning a living? The loss of sons? Rabbi Elazar replies: "over this beauty that will decompose in the earth." Everything you asked about, I could handle. But I weep for your amazing beauty, Rabbi Yochanan, that like all of us shall be consumed in the dust. Rabbi Yochanan astonishes us with his answer: "Yes, we should certainly weep over this!" And they both cried.

When we watch a spectacular sunset, our breath is taken away. Something in this beauty touches eternity. We do not have the capacity to contain it. We desperately try to take it in, because it will be gone in seconds. We sense infinity in the essence of this fleeting moment. Nowadays, we immediately attempt to photograph, but we feel how pathetic that is. It is impossible to pocket this majesty.

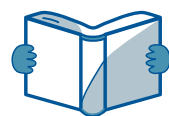
The source that gives this beauty its sublime transcendence also causes it to be transient, impossible to hold on to. Every brief blooming, each autumn fall, every sunset, evokes a longing, almost a distress. The experience of beauty carries an eternal life in the elusive moment and then... it's gone.

"Enjoy a life," Kohelet teaches us, "with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that G-d has given you under the sun." That is not the correct understanding of *hevel*! These are not meaningless days! If it was meaningless, what would be the point of investing in love? Kohelet is telling us: Treasure the days we were given together, because life is fleeting, and therefore invaluable.

We spend Sukkot in the temporary sukkah. Yet we understand nothing is really permanent. The home and life we consider stable are themselves impermanent. But within our home, we can also fulfill "*Teshvu Ke'eyn Taduru*." We can learn to experience the full beauty of every moment; in our personal, family, and communal lives. Remembering the desert Sukkot, we can also fully appreciate and cherish the immeasurable goodness our generation has been blessed with in Eretz Yisrael.

**Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel** is a Torah educator at Nishmat and Matan





## Ordinary Heroes

# The Gift of Life

Rabbi Stewart Weiss



I know Shai Chaim well. He was one of our son Ari's closest friends. They served together in the IDF's Palchan HaNachal, an elite anti-terror unit. During the Second Intifada – marked by almost daily terror attacks – the unit was involved in numerous missions to root out the perpetrators and protect Israeli cities.

Shai was an outstanding athlete and the beefiest, toughest kid in the unit, with huge forearms and a barrel-chested physique. My wife Susie, jokingly, would always tell Ari to stand behind Shai if there was any trouble, because he would block any incoming fire. Little did she know...

On September 30, 2002, Shai's unit was part of a raid on Hamas headquarters in Nablus's infamous casbah, where they uncovered a treasure trove of information on terrorist activities, lists of terrorists and planned future attacks.

Suddenly, Arab snipers hiding in a nearby building began shooting. Two bullets hit Shai and he slumped to the ground. Ari rushed to his side, shielding him with his body. A bullet penetrated Ari's lung and killed him instantly.

Shai was still alive but time was ticking. They airlifted him to a field hospital in Shavei Shomron, and then to Sheba Hospital at Tel HaShomer.

One of the bullets had lodged in his spine and he needed emergency surgery. Before he lost consciousness, Shai scribbled on a piece of paper, "My friend Ari was killed. Please be sure I get to his funeral."

Surgeons removed Shai's kidney and saved his life, but they could not remove

the bullet or repair the damage to his nervous system. He was paralyzed from the waist down. After 48 hours, the doctors told him he would live, but he would never walk again.

Everyone thought that was it for Shai. Everyone, that is, except Shai himself. He was determined to go on with life – after all, his very name means "the Gift of Life." Nothing would stop him from doing all the things he had dreamed of doing.

One of his first questions was whether he would have to give up on sport. "Not if you don't want to," the doctor told him. "You and only you will determine what you can do from now on."

That was all Shai needed to hear.

From that moment, he decided there would be no limits in his life. He spent four months in intensive rehab, working out strenuously with weights, strengthening his upper body and

learning how to ride and glide in his wheelchair.

Shai was a member of Israel's wheelchair basketball team at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing.

A year after the shooting, he married his girlfriend Tamar, an equally strong-willed kibbutznik who had helped nurse him back to health.

At their wedding – at which I had the honor of officiating – Shai stunned the crowd by "walking" down the aisle in specially-constructed, battery-operated leg braces worn under his pants. And Tamar held on to his arm as he "lifted" his right foot and broke the glass.

The glass wasn't the only thing broken that night; every heart melted as Shai invited his fellow occupants from the handicapped ward to join him in a special "dance of the wheelchairs," showing them that they too could be full participants in the joys of life.



The last photo of Ari (l) and Shai (r), taken just 15 minutes before they were shot

Shai and Tamar then left for three months touring in New Zealand and Australia. "Every soldier does a post-army hike," said Shai, "and I won't be cheated out of mine!" They hiked the mountains, snorkeled the Great Barrier Reef and even rode bikes together.

"That trip proved beyond a doubt that Shai could go anywhere and do anything he put his mind to," says Tamar.

Shai now drives a specially-equipped van.

**What Headline WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE TORAH?**

We have reached the finishing line. VeZot HaBeracha. Another cycle of Torah reading comes to an end. And begins again...

In the Midrash, we hear about the rabbis discussing the verse that best sums up the whole Torah:

One sage chose the verse of Shema Yisrael, the most famous declaration in Judaism.

Another suggested, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The first verse relates to our relationship with G-d and the second to our relationship with our fellow human beings.

But then the Midrash continues with another, perhaps more surprising suggestion. Shimon ben Pazi declares that he has found a more inclusive verse, which describes the daily Tamid

He helped build his own dream house, where he and Tamar live with their three children, one of whom is named for Ari.

And every year, on Yom HaZikaron, the Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers, Shai comes early to Ra'anana's military cemetery in his wheelchair. Not to avoid the rush but to clean and prepare Ari's grave for the hundreds of people who will visit.

I asked him where he gets his stamina and determination from. How has he been able to lead such an active,

productive life after such a crushing injury?

And this is what he said: "In life – as in the army, each one of us has a mission. G-d has chosen this mission for me. I don't look back on my former life; I look ahead, I look forward. To all the things I can and will do – for my family, my community and for Medinat Yisrael. I consider myself blessed."

**Rabbi Stewart Weiss** is Director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana

Sivan Rahav-Meir



sacrifice brought twice a day: "The one lamb you shall offer up in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer up in the afternoon."

The Midrash's conclusion is that the third verse is the best and it was chosen as the one that best sums up the entire Torah.

But surely it is teaching us a mere technicality in the laws of sacrifices. Why did the rabbis prefer it over Shema Yisrael and loving your neighbor?

Persistence. There is no glamor, drama or heroism in bringing the daily sacrifice. Just the daily routine that repeats itself twice a day, every day, morning and evening. A routine that is the essence of life itself.

One-time events with high peaks are wonderful. Who would not want to experience winning the lottery or a major competition? However, most of our lives are filled with routine tasks

like preparing lunch for our children and saying our prayers. It is not at all glamorous to carry out these tasks.

So the Midrash tells us that it is precisely these moments that are the most important ones in life.

Our life is what it is because of these moments. And we can only make the playoffs if we play well week in week out.

Yes, the pinnacle of our prayers is often seen as Neilah on Yom Kippur but it is also davening Mincha on any Tuesday afternoon.

The real pinnacle is to continue being faithful to our routine throughout our lives, even when there are many obstacles along the way.

**Sivan Rahav-Meir** is a popular Israeli journalist, broadcaster and author of #Parasha





# The Jews of India

**T**he Jews of India do not form one homogeneous community but rather comprise distinct groups, each with its own history and social composition.

The oldest of the Indian Jewish communities is that of Cochin (known today as Kochi). The earliest Jews were traders from Judea that came to the city in the year 562 BCE. That was a time when spices, ivory and peacock feathers were popular trade in Cochin. The beautiful 400-year old Paradesi Synagogue is still in operation to this day.

A second group of Indian Jews are those who settled in Madras (Chennai) who settled there shortly after its founding in 1640. Most of the Jews of Chennai were of Portuguese origin. A third group of Jews, the Bene Israel, claim to be descended from a group of 14 Jewish men and women who were shipwrecked on the coast of India during the times of King Solomon. Despite their isolation from Jewish civilization for many centuries, they observed the Shabbat, kashrut, circumcision and many Jewish festivals.

The Baghdadi Jews who came mainly from Iraq and Syria settled in Mumbai and Kolkata (Calcutta). The most famous of the Baghdadi Jews is arguably

the Sassoon family. The Magen David Synagogue was built by David Sassoon in 1861 and the Knesseth Eliyahoo Synagogue in Mumbai was built in 1884. The Jacob Sassoon School in Mumbai was built in 1864 which still provides Jewish studies for a small number of Jewish pupils despite the majority of the pupils being Muslim.

Tragically, on November 26, 2008, Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, a Chabad shaliach in Mumbai, was murdered with his pregnant wife Rivka at Nariman House where they ran a Beit Chabad. After being kept hostage for several hours by Pakistani Muslim terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba terror organization, the Holtzbergs were killed. The Holtzbergs were community builders whose hospitality and care for Jewish tourists and locals was legendary. Rabbi



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January (Photo: Avi Ohayon, GPO)

Hugh Raichlin



Holtzberg led the Friday night services at the Knesset Eliyahoo Synagogue. Due to the courage of their caregiver, Sandra Samuel, their son Moshe was saved from the attack, and Moshe and Sandra now live in Israel with Moshe's grandparents.

A group of Indian Jews known as the Bnei Menashe live in the north eastern states of Mizoram and Manipur. They practice a form of Biblical Judaism and claim descent from one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. A sixth group of Indian Jews are those known as the Bene Ephraim, a small group of Telugu-speaking Jews in eastern Andhra Pradesh whose recorded observance of Judaism is very recent, dating only to 1981.

Indian Jews are a religious minority in India, but have lived there without any incidents of anti-Semitism from the local populace. In fact, the closeness of the Jewish community to the local population has, over the years, been the reason for such a large number of local traditions entering Jewish tradition through cultural diffusion.

Most of the Indian Jews today live in Israel, where there are over 70,000 of them. In all, there are around 5,000 Jews in the whole of India today, with the majority concentrated in Mumbai.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Indian Premier Narendra Modi have of late developed a warm relationship in what is being hailed as the beginning of a new era of friendship between the two nations.

**Hugh Raichlin** is a lawyer who studies Jewish communities across the globe. He is a scholar-in-residence for Jewish heritage tours



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# What is the Greatest Challenge Facing Religious Zionism Today?

As Jews who love Torah and the State, we want to see our people in good health, returning to Zion, and keeping the Torah and mitzvot. After all, that's what we pray for every day.<sup>1</sup> But what is our biggest challenge?

Many of Religious Zionism's challenges have already been overcome. The State of Israel is an undeniable fact. The core of Torah learning and the majority of the people are already in Israel. And most of the people who are not here are absent due to practical reasons (family, elderly parents, work, etc.) or because they have no interest in being part of this great historic process (assimilation and other factors.) A small minority are not in Israel on principle or for ideological reasons.

And even Judea and Samaria is stable. Although not officially resolved, there is no-one who really thinks it is possible to evacuate hundreds of thousands of citizens from their homes. It is certainly an important political topic but not a challenge the Religious Zionist camp needs to address.

So it seems there is one piece of the "Torat Yisrael for Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael" puzzle still missing. We have a wonderful Land, Jews are here, and Torah is flourishing here in all of its glory.

But the people are not connected. We haven't managed to bequeath the sweetness of Torah to the people.

It bothers me that many Jews have never heard of Avraham or Yitzchak. They don't know anything about blowing the

shofar or Simchat Torah. They have only heard of Shabbat because of the supermarket law that forbids opening stores on Shabbat; they only know about prayer because of the debate around women's prayers at the Kotel.

The challenge is not outreach or getting people to do *teshuva*. A person who doesn't understand why they are Jewish and what they're doing in Israel will not stay. Not because it's worse here than anywhere else, but because they don't understand why the stores are closed for Shabbat or why someone who didn't serve in the army has to decide for someone who did who and how to marry.



## We haven't managed to bequeath the sweetness of Torah to the people

Why should we care? The national religious camp is strong and our path proven. No! Anyone who thinks they can still maintain a country while losing millions of Jews in the Diaspora does not understand the meaning of Torah or what a nation and a country is.

There is no one tribe that can build a country. It was our original 12 tribes who established the monarchy. They were completely different from each other. Some were more religious, some less. Some devoted time to Torah study while others went into business. They understood that "together the Tribes of

Israel"<sup>2</sup> was not a suggestion but the very essence of our being.

If one tribe feels that another tribe's existence is superfluous or dangerous it will be the end for us all. Indeed, there are those who think success will come when the secular/ultra-Orthodox/Reform disappear.

That won't happen so quickly. But our goal is not to convert everyone to Religious Zionism. What we do need though is to welcome and accept everyone in the tent of Avraham Avinu. Every assimilated Jew in North Carolina or Israeli emigrant from North Tel Aviv is one of G-d's lost children. Another silenced soul. And their progeny will ask us where we were when G-d's sons and daughters left Him, never to return.

The issue is not who has the right religious ideology. Everyone knows who continues to bear the flag. What is truly important though is how we carry this together into future generations? How do we revive interest in Torah and heritage – every Jew's Torah and heritage – among the Children of Israel?

Even if they don't keep all of His instructions, let us at least ensure they want to be part of His family.

<sup>1</sup> Three of the blessings in the daily Amidah prayer are for health, returning us in repentance, and the ingathering of the exiles.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 33:5.

**Rabbi David Stav** is Chairperson of Tzohar and Rabbi of Shoham

Religious Zionism in Israel has an historic task – to pave the way for the nation by connecting Torah to the fullness of life. Indeed, it is the Torah that inspires us to take responsibility for our country and to demonstrate dedication, love and unlimited contribution in all walks of life.

But are our children up to this task? A large percentage of the next generation is deserting us! Whether the figure is 35% or 50%, a society 'losing' a third of its young people needs to conduct a profound soul searching.

Let us stop, think, and reach operative conclusions. When the Kibbutz Movement discovered that its younger generation was not interested in continuing the cooperative lifestyle, it made the courageous decision to privatize the kibbutzim, erasing the very essence of what they stood for! I am not suggesting, G-d forbid, we give up our Torah, but we do have the obligation of confronting the changes G-d expects us to make!

One point very central to the discussion is that we inherited the concept of "*dat*" (religion) from the non-Jewish world. The word does not appear in the Torah.<sup>1</sup> In the non-Jewish world, religion is a collection of rituals and ceremonies. A person who participates in them is called "religious."

Yes, the Torah does contain mitzvot, but a Jew's relationship with G-d begins internally, with faith and love, rather than externally. Accepting the yoke of Heaven, "G-d is One," is conditional

upon "And you shall love G-d, with all your heart... and all your soul."<sup>2</sup> The foundation of a Jewish life is not being "religious" – but celebrating the life G-d gave us through faith, love and joy. Indeed, the Torah informs us that curses come to fruition because we "didn't serve G-d with joy and a gladness of heart."<sup>3</sup> So here's the question.

Are we transmitting to our children the power of a life of faith, love and joy in our service of G-d, or are we just passing on "religious" duties; the permitted and the forbidden? Is our education system giving our children a solid, deep, faithful foundation? Are we instilling them with a love for G-d and His Torah and an excitement in serving Him?

Moreover, how can we expect the next generation to continue to observe "religious rituals" without authentic knowledge; without faith, love and a passion for truth?

And another question. We have chosen to raise our children in an "open" environment but are we giving them the tools to cope with the incessant bombardment from secular and non-Torah media and academia?

Let's put it to the test. Here are five questions you can ask your children:

1. If you believe that G-d hears your prayers, why do you repeat the same thing three times every day? Give Him a break!
2. Isn't it racist to say "who distinguishes between Israel and the nations"<sup>4</sup>?

3. Do you really think those threads you wear make you a better person?
4. Why do you think you have a monopoly on Truth? I know it's legitimate to think differently from me, but you're sure you're right and I'm wrong – isn't that arrogant?
5. If we ever reach a situation in which the Arabs agree to a sustainable peace – aren't you prepared to hand over Judea and Samaria? Is land more important than human lives?

For years I have asked many of our children, after their 12 years of Religious Zionist school education, whether they have good answers to these questions; even if just to satisfy themselves. The vast majority... do not.

Try it out yourselves. If I'm right, it means we need to ignite extensive changes in how we live our Torah-oriented lives. Not only in the education system but everywhere.

If we can accept the facts with courage, faith and the willingness to change, we can repair, progress, and cultivate communities brimming with faith, love, joy, and closeness to G-d, His Torah, His People and His Land.

<sup>1</sup> It does appear in Megillat Esther (3:8).

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 28:47.

<sup>4</sup> From the Havdalah prayer.

**Rabbi Eli Sadan** is an Israel Prize Winner, Head of the Bnei David Institutions and the Founder of the Pre-Military Academies





## What's in a Word

# Watergate, Afula and Tashlich

**R**ichard Nixon, 37th President of the United States, was removed from office after the Watergate Scandal. The Watergate office complex was the Democratic Party's headquarters in Washington, into which the Nixon Administration clandestinely sent five agents to set up secret bugging devices.

Like many other Biblical place names in the United States (Jerusalem, Hebron, Shiloh, etc.) Watergate has its origins in Jewish sources. It was the name of one of the Temple gates in Jerusalem, which is connected to both Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot.

First of all, where was the Water Gate actually located?

Let us look at the Mishna (Sukkah 4:9): On Sukkot morning, "How was the water libation [performed]? A golden flask holding three *logs* (approx. 1.5 liters) was filled from the Shiloah [a spring south of the Temple Mount]."

The Kohen would go up from the Shiloah with his escorts, the priests and the people, via the Ophel – *בְּעֶפֶל*. The Ophel is a Biblical word (Nehemiah 3:27), meaning "going up".

As an aside, this is the same root as the word *וַיַּעֲפֹל* after the story of the Spies: *וַיַּעֲפֹלוּ לָעֵלֹת אֶל רֹאשׁ הָהָר* (Bamidbar 14:44), and the name *מַעְפִּילִים* given to those who attempted to make Aliyah to

Eretz Yisrael before the establishment of the State despite the British prohibition to do so.

It is also the root of the name of the city of Afula in the Lower Galilee, because one goes up to it from the Jezreel Valley.

Back to Water Gate.

At the upper end of the Ophel was the Temple Mount wall, through which the Kohen would (and will G-d willing) enter the Hulda Gate with the golden flask filled with water, accompanied by his escorts from the tunnels (which one can walk through today) through the courtyards of the House of G-d to the Water Gate.

The Mishna continues: "When they arrived at the Water Gate [one of the Temple's southern gates], they sounded a *teki'ah* [long blast], a *teru'ah* [a staccato note] and again a *teki'ah*," in order to fulfil the words of Isaiah the Prophet: *וַיִּשְׂאֲבֹתֶם מַיִם בְּשִׁשּׁוֹן*, "And you will draw water with joy" (12:3), because sounding the shofar heightens the sense of happiness.

And then the Kohen would go up the ramp to the altar and offer the water and the wine in the Temple every morning of the festival of Sukkot.

And what has the Water Gate got to do with Rosh Hashanah?

Dr. Avshalom Kor



Well, it seems that a verse in the book of Nehemiah hints to the fact that it was there that our custom of Tashlich was inaugurated: *וַיֹּאסְפוּ כָל הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל הַיְרֵחוֹב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמַּיִם*, "Then all the people gathered together as one man at the plaza before the Water Gate..." (8:1)

In the Tanach, the word *יְרֵחוֹב* does not have the same meaning – street – that is does in modern Hebrew today. Then it meant a plaza or a square. Ezra the Scribe stood on a wooden platform in the middle of the plaza in front of the Water Gate, read from the Torah from morning to noon, and the people began to cry, because they realized just how far they had distanced themselves from the words of the Torah. Those tears were shed in front of the Water Gate, in the afternoon, which could very well be the source of our custom of Tashlich, in which we 'throw away' our sins into the water on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah.

One gate opening so many doors to the wonders of the Hebrew language...

**Dr. Avshalom Kor** is an Israeli linguist and expert on Hebrew grammar and semantics

Photo of Dr. Avshalom Kor: Roy Admon



## Israel Insight

**I** conducted two speaking tours in Europe this summer, where I was confronted with the challenge of justifying Israel's actions on the Gaza border and even the country's very legitimacy as a nation among nations. I found that the deep psychological asymmetry employed by Hamas and Fatah as a strategic weapon against Israel – is working. The Palestinians exploit civilians by placing them in danger or condemning them to unending refugee life.

The ensuing misery gnaws away at the conscience of well-meaning and naïve observers around the world, and they find it hard to justify the "imbalance" in suffering between Palestinians and Israelis.

Furthermore, radical progressivism, which has captured much of political discourse in the West, makes liberals uncomfortable with the use of force by nation-states in almost all cases. Israel's "over-dog" position and its frequent recourse to military action to defend itself is then magnified and manipulated by malign and much less naïve actors to skewer the Jewish state.

Nevertheless, I found that there were five key "hasbara" strategies that had some impact on my interlocutors.

**First**, don't play the victimhood game. Alas, people don't care how many dunams of fine Israeli agriculture have been burned by Palestinian incendiary kites, how many Israeli women and children have been murdered by Hamas suicide bombers, or how many missiles Iran is giving Hezbollah to fire into Israel. The recounting of Arab atrocities, no matter how egregious, doesn't wash. Israel is simply not seen as the underdog.

# Winning Hasbara Strategies

David M. Weinberg



**Second**, history matters and needs to be re-stated – because it isn't known, and it goes to the core of Israel's case. Remind listeners that the Six-Day War was not an act of Israeli aggression, but a defensive war, and the Arab side lost fair and square. There never has been a Palestinian state. Settlements are not colonialist outposts but express a Jewish "right of return" to ancestral lands. Israel placed three full-scale peace proposals on the table over the past 15 years involving Palestinian independence and almost-complete West Bank dominion – yet Abbas rejected all offers and preferred to fight on.



**History matters and needs to be re-stated – because it isn't known**

**Third**, emphasize, repeatedly, that Israel seeks conflict resolution, not jihad; that Israel wants to resolve conflicts through compromise, not end conflicts by annihilation of the enemy. Say that Israel wishes to live at peace and cooperate with its neighbors, not to conquer Arabic and Islamic nations from Tunisia to Indonesia. No matter how ridiculously self-evident this seems, the repetition of this truth is extraordinarily important. It isn't obvious to many Europeans.

**Fourth**, speak about justice and the Jewish nation. It is simply not enough to explain Israel's security dilemmas or revisit Israel's diplomatic generosity towards the Palestinians. What's needed

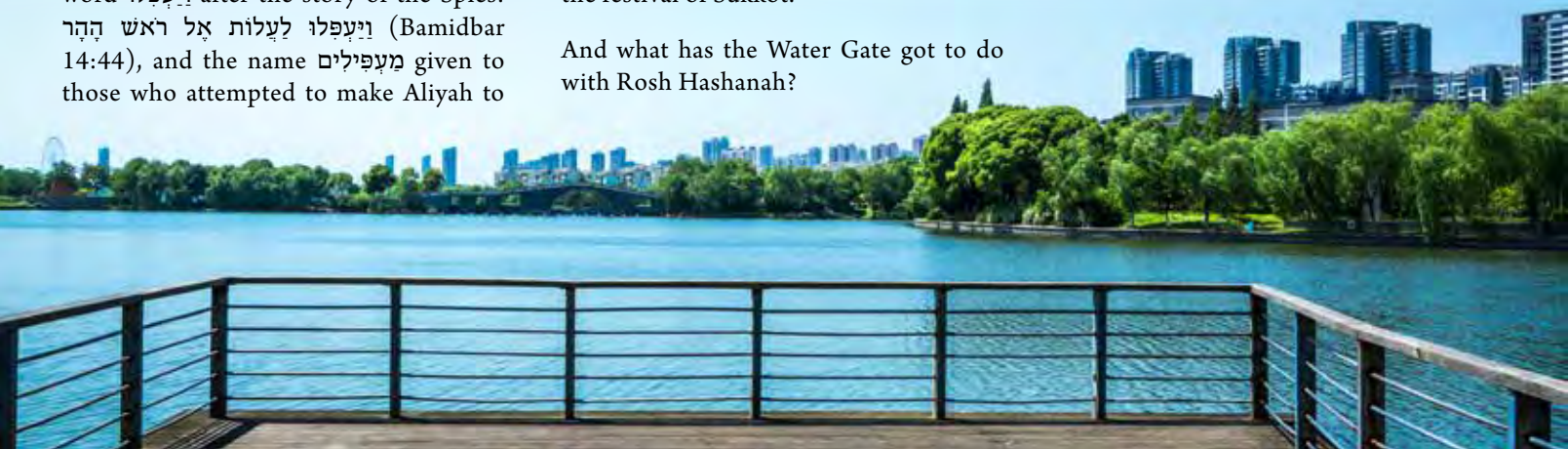
is a much more basic restatement of Israel's cause and purpose. Speak it loud and clear: Israel is a grand historic reunion of people and land, and a just and moral actor in the medieval and violent Arab Middle East!

**Fifth**, and most important of all, don't be embarrassed by Israel's strength. Admit to it. Celebrate it. As counter-intuitive as this may seem, especially in contrast to the "outstretched hand for peace" narrative described above, never apologize for using "disproportionate" force. Instead, articulate the reasons why and the circumstances under which Israel must use force to defend its homeland, and don't be shy about it. Largely, this means sharing Israel's dilemmas with your audience. It's okay to agonize a bit over the need to be a military power; dwelling on this is truly Israeli and it is humanizing. But never ask for forgiveness or suggest that Israel will pull its punches just to win a nice-guy award.

Forthright, unashamed talk has salutary impact. Without being nasty or unfeeling regarding our adversaries, one can convey a deep sense of sincerity and believability by verbalizing Israeli red lines and enunciating core Zionist commitments. People are forced to respect that, even if they won't impute to you awe-inspiring humanity. Better shock-and-awe than shrink-and-whimper.

**David M. Weinberg** is the Vice President of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies

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## ANY TIPS FOR DRIVING IN ISRAEL?!



**Editor's note:** We are happy to present a new feature: Yaniv Meishiv – “Yaniv Answers”. Our resident, totally unofficial Israeli guide will bring you insights into a lighter side of the Israeli experience you won't likely find in the usual news sources. Yaniv will also respond to reader's questions and observations (non-halachic of course). He can be reached at [yaniv@mizrachi.org](mailto:yaniv@mizrachi.org). Enjoy!

### QUESTION:

I am planning on making Aliyah soon and have been concerned about driving in Israel. What advice do you have for me?

### YANIV MEISHIV:

First, don't be afraid. I know that many people think that driving in Israel is dangerous. It's not. You just need to pay attention. A lot. All the time.

Even though the country was under British control for many years, we drive on the right side of the road (a holdover from Ottoman times), so if you're not making Aliyah from England, you should be able to hit the road right away. And Brits? Start driving on the left side and see what happens!

Our roads are amazing; parking, not so much.

In Jerusalem, for example, the shortest street is Rechov Hakaldi'im. You just try finding a parking space in its 11 meters (36 feet)! And, of course the Menachem Begin Highway, the longest street, also has no place to park, but it does have a cool tunnel! And as highways go, there is nothing like the high-speed, ultra-modern *Kvish Shesh* – Highway Six – from Haifa to Beer Sheva, on which you

have to pay for the right to go fast while terrified.

Okay, so America has Disney World on one coast – most visited site on the planet, hands down – and Disneyland on the other coast, with those thrilling, take-your-breath-away rides.

We in Israel can't quite match those parks, but we do have rides that are equally frightening. I'm talking about the rides on our highways; I mean every highway, every day! Israeli drivers – let me warn you, if you don't already know – don't drive; they aim! I think everyone was, or wanted to be, a tank commander. Lots of excitement at no extra cost when you're in the “fast lane” in the Jewish State – which, come to think of it, is just about every street in the nation.

Joking aside, here's a real slice of Israeli life: I was driving one day – seat belt, helmet, flak-jacket securely on, been through the safety drill – and I saw a guy trying to merge into traffic. Car after car went mercilessly by, and no one would let the poor fellow in. So, I – man of gentility and good manners that I am – slowed down to let him enter. Needless to say, the many drivers behind me immediately displayed their musical

prowess by furiously playing their horns! Some kilometers later, my lane started to merge into the one next to me. As I was now the one trying desperately to get in, I suddenly saw the same driver I had accommodated a few minutes earlier, and signaled for him to let me in. He looked at me for a moment, wagged his finger and shook his head. I couldn't believe it! He wouldn't return the favor?! I opened my window and said, “But I'm the guy who let you in back there!” He yelled back, “Because you were a *freier* (Yiddish for sucker) then, I should be one now?!”

I was flabbergasted, shocked, upset. I couldn't believe it. Is that any way to treat a fellow Jew? But as I finally merged and drove on, I saw something that changed my whole demeanor. Along the side of the road, a young lady had pulled over because of a flat tire. And who had stopped to help her? You guessed it – Mr. “I'm no *freier*!”

And that's Israel: Tough as shoe leather one second, soft as butter the next. A cut-throat on the causeway, but your best friend if you're truly in need.

It's enough – and you knew I'd end this way – to drive you crazy.

## SIMCHAT TORAH The Game is Never Over

Rabbi Berel Wein



The completion of any significant portion of Torah learning is always an occasion for Jewish celebration. Any *siyum* (a completion of a tractate of Talmud or Mishna) is usually accompanied by a feast to help commemorate the happy event. There is a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at having seen a difficult intellectual and time-consuming task to its successful conclusion. So it is naturally understandable that the occasion of our completing the annual cycle of Torah readings with the reading of VeZot HaBeracha on the final day of the Sukkot holiday makes it the most joyful day of the month of Tishrei.

Simchat Torah affirms our faith in Jewish continuity and our unshakable belief in the divinity of Torah that Moshe brought to Israel from Mount Sinai. It is the holiday basically created by the Jewish people itself, replete with customs and nuances developed over the ages that have hardened into accepted practice and ritual. Here in Israel, when Simchat Torah and Shemini Atzeret occur on the same day, Simchat Torah, the folk holiday, has almost pushed Shemini Atzeret, the biblical and halachic holiday, aside in thought and practice.

This is a practical example of how Jewish custom based upon intense love of and attachment to Torah frequently

overwhelms Torah ritual itself. And what makes Simchat Torah so special is the fact that we begin to read from the beginning of the Torah again immediately so that there is no gap in our study and devotion. This is usually the case with similar ceremonies in Jewish life where the completion of one tractate immediately leads to the beginning of study of another one.

In VeZot HaBeracha, the Torah ends on an apparently sad note, for the final part of the reading describes to us the death of our great teacher Moshe. He will never enter the Land of Israel but will only be able to glimpse it from afar. His generation has passed away, his sons will not inherit his position or power, and in his great gift of prophecy he is aware of the terrible problems that his beloved people of Israel must yet face and overcome through their long journey of destiny.

Yet the joy of the presence of Torah within our nation overcomes these feelings of melancholy. As long as the words and ideals of Moshe still live amongst the Jewish people then there is great reason to rejoice, for it means that we have not lost our way and that the eternity of Moshe and Israel is guaranteed.

The nations of the world resent the fact that somehow we still have a chance

to rejoice or attempt to live normal productive lives under terrible duress and distress. Simchat Torah comes to teach us that we should rejoice when we are able to do so and celebrate our existence and accomplishments even if things are not exactly as we would wish them to be. Completing the Torah reading is a matter of perseverance and so is all of Jewish life.

The Torah's description of Moshe's death is meant to impress us with the fact that Judaism is not the cult of the personality. Even when the greatest of Jews ever, Moshe, dies and leaves us bereft and alone, we are not to overly mourn and certainly not to despair. We may yet continue to rejoice with great vigor and vitality because the eternal Torah is still present within us. As far as we are concerned the game is never over. We suffer and fall but we are never defeated. That is the power that the Torah grants us and therefore it is the source of our great joy in celebrating the completion and simultaneous beginning of the reading of the Torah this year. So be it for all years to come.

**Rabbi Berel Wein** is Senior Rabbi of Beit Knesset HaNassi in Jerusalem and Director of the Destiny Foundation.

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Parents  
and  
Children

# Sukkot Trivia



Find the 14 Hebrew words connected to the holidays in Tishrei. Look vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Circle the words when you find them.



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ו | ך | ת | ו | ב | ך | ע | ג | ת | ק | ך | צ |
| צ | נ | ב | כ | ע | ג | ש | ס | ו | ת | ך | ע |
| ך | ה | ל | פ | ת | ו | ה | נ | פ | ב | צ | ך |
| ק | ח | ל | ז | ו | כ | ק | ל | ג | ע | ק | ר |
| ה | ת | ו | נ | ה | ס | ס | י | ס | ד | ה | א |
| ך | ה | ל | ה | ב | ו | ש | ו | ל | י | ו | ש |
| ס | ס | ב | ש | מ | ח | כ | ב | ק | ת | ע | ה |
| ל | א | ך | ה | י | ה | נ | ש | ה | ש | א | ש |
| כ | ך | ד | נ | ל | כ | א | ו | נ | ל | ה | נ |
| ל | ק | ע | ט | ג | י | פ | ז | י | ו | ר | ה |
| נ | ך | ד | ל | א | ך | ע | ר | י | ך | נ | ב |
| ך | ט | ש | ת | נ | א | ח | נ | ה | כ | ס | צ |
| ך | ל | ר | י | ה | ך | ו | ת | ח | מ | ש | ש |
| י | ו | כ | ס | ש | ג | פ | ט | ז | ך | ך | י |
| ג | ז | י | ו | ו | ך | ו | פ | כ | ס | ו | י |

|           |     |          |    |
|-----------|-----|----------|----|
| שופר      | 8.  | סוכה     | 1. |
| שמחת תורה | 9.  | יום כפור | 2. |
| ערבות     | 10. | תשליך    | 3. |
| תפילה     | 11. | לולב     | 4. |
| אתרוג     | 12. | הדסים    | 5. |
| כל נדרי   | 13. | תשובה    | 6. |
| ראש השנה  | 14. | צדקה     | 7. |

Credit: CAJE

## Chag Sameach!

### Want to win a prize?

Send your answers to [kids@mizrachi.org](mailto:kids@mizrachi.org) and you could win a Koren Children's Siddur

#### 1. Which of these is another name for Sukkot?

- A. Chag HaKatzir (Harvest Festival)
- B. Chag HaCola (Coke Festival)
- C. Chag HaGeshem (Rain Festival)
- D. Chag HaEtrog (Etrog Festival)

#### 2. Who are the Ushpizin (special guests) we invite into our Sukkah?

- A. Doc, Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Dopey, Bashful, Sneezy
- B. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon
- C. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David and Jonah
- D. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David

#### 3. The Lulav comes from which tree?

- A. Willow
- B. Date
- C. Apple
- D. Oak

#### 4. For your Sukkah to be kosher, it must be stable during:

- A. An earthquake
- B. Heavy traffic
- C. A normal wind
- D. A rainstorm

#### 5. Which of these is true about the roof of a Sukkah?

- A. It should have red tiles
- B. It should be made of the Four Species
- C. It must offer shade, but you should also be able to see the stars
- D. It hurts when you bang your head on it

#### 6. Which of these makes the Sukkah not kosher?

- A. It's nowhere near your house
- B. You build it in the park
- C. It's under a concrete ceiling
- D. It's on a boat

#### 7. What is the source of the Simchat Beit HaShoeva custom from Temple times?

- A. The Jews used to fill buckets with sand and bring them to the Temple
- B. They used to fill balloons with water and throw them at each other
- C. Bnei Yisrael brought water from the Gihon Spring and poured it on the altar
- D. An ancient rain dance in Jerusalem



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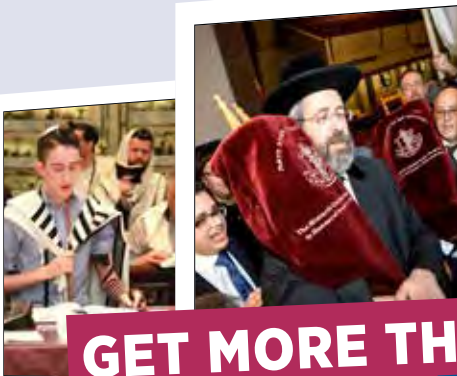
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