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29th ELLUL 5776 - 2nd TISHREI 5777
2nd October 2016 - 4th October 2016

ROSH HASHANA 5777

Community Parasha Sheet

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
Director, TAL



whose judging?

Just over a hundred years ago an Italian salesman was sent to far islands to assess the market there for shoes.

He scouted around for a few days and then headed for the telegraph office to contact company headquarters. He wrote back: "Research complete. Unmitigated disaster. Nobody here wears shoes."

The company ordered him back and upon his return a few weeks later, he gave in his report.

Not convinced, The Italian shoe manufacturer decided to send one of their fresh and hungry sales people with little experience.

On arriving on the first island and noticing that no one on the island wore shoes, excited and full of enthusiasm the salesman wired back: "The people here don't wear shoes and I am only on the first island. There is a tremendous market here for us. I will like to investigate further." By the end of his trip he had managed to convince the tribal chiefs to take on the new initiative and sent in an order for tens of thousands of shoes.



Life presents its opportunities and they are there for the taking. It depends on our outlook and whether we are ready to move forwards.

Life does not get better by chance – it gets better by change!

With that in mind I would like to discuss with you a most intriguing piece of Gemara.

The Gemara tells us that on Rosh Hashanah (32b) "the books that record who will live and who will die are open before G-d."

What does this expression mean? Are there only two possibilities life or death? What about all the people who are alive but their life is full of suffering? Isn't that decreed on Rosh Hashanah too? What about wealth, health and satisfaction from children?

This question unlocks for us the deeper meaning of the judgement of Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (17b) asks the interesting question. *Continued on P3*

CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS



a rosh hashana message from the chief rabbi

'On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed and on Yom Kippur it is sealed'

As we recited these moving words in the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer last year, we could hardly have anticipated the devastation that would be wrought by the relentless terrorist atrocities that would follow. The daily threat of

terror is one to which our brethren in Israel have long become accustomed, but that awful reality has largely been greeted by silence in the mainstream media. Global terrorism has spread its tentacles far and wide, making no

The power of prayer has always been and will always be a force for good

place on earth immune to this scourge. As the French philosopher and author Bernard-Henri Lévy has said, the world must now learn from the experiences of the Jewish State.

Never before in the history of human conflict has every innocent man, woman and child found themselves on the front line. As we endure an onslaught on our freedom, our democracy and our very civilization, what should our response be?

The *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer provides an answer: Repentance, Prayer, and Charity.

Repentance

Teshuvah comes from the Hebrew word meaning 'to return'. Over our High Holydays we are tasked with making a uniquely honest and comprehensive assessment of ourselves so that we can return to our natural state of piety and purity. Our global challenge is to return to the



1. What are the different names for Rosh Hashana?

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Rosh Hashanah starts – 18:22
2nd day Rosh Hashanah – 18:22
Rosh Hashanah ends – 19:21

values of human dignity, tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. That process must begin with ourselves and those upon whom we can make a positive impression.

Prayer

#PrayersForParis #PrayersForMunich #PrayersForBrussels. If these popular sentiments from social media are anything to go by, it seems that the world is rarely more united in prayer than after devastating terrorist attacks. In July, after a particularly brutal murder of a beloved Catholic Priest in Normandy, one Twitter user responded to my own message in despair: "The time for prayer is long gone," he said. I couldn't disagree more.

The Talmud describes prayer as *avodah shebalev* – the 'service of the heart' – because, in essence, prayer is about training oneself to love and serve God. The Hebrew word for prayer, *tefillah*, is linked to *tofel*, which means connecting to a greater power. We pray with a deep sense of humility and

responsibility because we understand that we can never simply be a 'law unto ourselves'. The power of prayer has always been and will always be a force for good; a spiritual connection with something greater than ourselves, elevating our souls and directly affecting our future actions. We will never fully comprehend the potency of our prayers or how things would have turned out without them but we do know that while terror thrives on a sense of narcissism and superiority, through prayer, we act with modesty and accountability.

Charity/Righteousness

The first Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rav Kook, taught that the antidote to causeless hatred is causeless love. Having embraced *Teshuvah* and *Tefillah* with all of the self-improvement that they require, we will have an instinctive and deeply rooted love for peace. But *Tzedakah* is the means by which we look beyond ourselves and turn that goodness into positive, meaningful action that will leave a lasting impact on the world around us.

Every one of us can increase the degree to which we give of ourselves to others, whether as part of an organised charitable campaign or by investing our time and energy into kindness and generosity. There is no degree of evil that cannot be overcome and outshone by an equal and opposite desire to do good for others.

Embracing more fully these three fundamental principles of Jewish life as a response to global hatred and violence might feel inadequate, even naïve. But, I believe that we are far more likely to change the world through positive action and leading by example, than simply by standing in judgement.

May this coming year be one filled with only peace and reconciliation among the peoples of the world.

Valerie and I extend to you all our very best wishes for a happy and fulfilling New Year.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
September 2016 • Ellul 5776



"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans"
— John Lennon, "Beautiful Boy"

Moshe's days are ending and, as his passionate words to his beloved people reach their crescendo, he implores us to "Choose Life, so that you may live!" (30:19) At first glance, it seems to be a tautology.

Why else would we choose life if not in order to live? To better understand his point, we might notice that Moshe encourages us to choose the noun rather than the verb. He does not ask us to choose to live, he asks us to choose Life. We are exhorted to embrace something far greater than exercise and a healthy diet.

Rabbi Bahya Ibn Pakuda (11th century) wrote in his *Hobot haLebabot* (Duties of

the Heart), "The days are scrolls, write in them what you wish to be remembered". His poetic analogy expresses to us that our lives are ours to create and that our choices will fill the blank pages with the story we write. Moshe, however, is focusing on how we respond to the aspects of life that happen to us rather than the "blank pages" that we affect and create. "Choose Life!", he says — the experiences, the circumstances, the trials, the triumphs, the joy, the pain, the hills and the valleys that come to us, so that we might truly live.

embracing life's unexpected turns and "leaning into", rather than reeling back from, the occasional discomfort such turns might cause, keeps us always engaged and saves us from becoming spectators to our own happenings.

We tend to spend our days developing ideas about what we would like to do and how we might like to live. Then, inevitably, life happens, and presents us with situa-

tions that weren't part of our planned programme. When that occurs, the manner in which we respond makes the difference between merely existing and actually living life. Moshe is suggesting that embracing life's unexpected turns and "leaning into", rather than reeling back from, the occasional discomfort such turns might cause, keeps us always engaged and saves us from becoming spectators to our own happenings.

The symbiosis of world and humanity is the source of life's magic. When we commit to being consciously present in the events of our epic, unfolding stories, we also expose ourselves to the serendipitous delights that we might never have anticipated. Life's events, both pleasant and painful, offer us an education unmatched by any formal system. On Rosh HaShana, this very question is posed to us for our consideration. Do we choose Life? As a congregation we answer an emphatic "yes" in our prayers. "Zochrenu LeHayim!", we say, "put us down for Life!" When we say those words, we also have the opportunity to think about what it means to us personally, and we remember, that when we choose life and learn from its lessons, we access the deeper and richer parts of our souls, and we shine.



2. Rosh Hashana is a day of judgement. Why then do we not say vidui and ask for forgiveness for our sins? You judge someone at the end of a period. Why then is Rosh Hashana at the beginning of the year?

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repentance' seems to be more lenient. The Mabit in his sefer 'Beit HoElokim' is more explicit and writes that as long as any teshuva is sincere it is accepted even if the person goes back to the sin. We can take from here, that even though we might go back to the sin, any teshuvah we do is important, as long as it is sincere.

The other question we asked was - what can we do about it? In order to answer this question, we have to know that as part of human nature we find change very hard. The Vilna Gaon once said that it is easier to learn the whole of Shas than to change one middah. Things are stronger at the beginning, but our motivation fades over time and we return to our habits.

So how can we make lasting change? I want to give some practical pointers to deal with recurring sins.

- **Make achievable goals** - While it is commendable to learn 18 hours a day, say tikken chazos and still make it up for neitz, it's not so practical. Try thinking about an achievable goal and then lower it and then go back and lower it again. We generally try to take

on too much too soon. It is better to make small and permanent steps.

- **Learn Torah** – The Gemara in Sota says that Torah protects a person from sin. The Gemara tells us that this is only during the time we are actually studying and not after. Yet R' Elyah Lopian writes in Lev Elyahu that mussar is different and can protect us even after we have closed the sefer.



- **Sustainability** – We can't make a change and not think about sustaining it. If we do, then we are setting ourselves up for failure. We need to think about practical ways we can keep from reverting back to our old behaviour. If we put ourselves in the same situation again we are likely to fail whereas if we can put our own

safeguards in place, we are more likely to succeed.

- **Talk it through with someone** – That might be a friend, spouse, Rabbi or even a therapist. Talking it through with someone can make it easier to think of practical advice as well as get a fresh perspective on it.
- **Think what we get from it** - Finally, when we have tried numerous times to try and stop doing something and have not been successful, it might be time to start thinking about what the sin does to us on an internal level. Sometimes the sin can fill some void that we have inside. For example, maybe when we speak Lashon Hara we feel that other people respect us and value us. This is based on an internal lack of self-worth and self-confidence. If we were to feel better about ourselves and deal with the internal issue we might find that it becomes easier to deal with the behavior.

May we all approach Rosh Hashanah with a sincere teshuvah.

בס"ד

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17.45pm Chazanut & Kria for Boys 7-10 Heichal Lea Brent Street NW4	9pm Current Themes Halachot & Parasha (W) Garrick Avenue NW11	8pm 1-2-1 learning Learn the topic of your choice (M) Tiferet Eyal Queen's Road NW4		8pm SHL program Dinner & Learn for YP singles (M) & (W) Adani Shul Clapton Common E59 AB

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STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM



The power of Forgiveness

Rabbi Abba (the scribe of the Zohar) once sat at the gateway of the Town of Lud.

He saw a traveler sit down on a pile of rocks at the edge of a mountain overlooking a cliff. The man was exhausted for his journey and immediately fell asleep. R. Abba watched this innocuous scene for a bit until to his dismay he watched as a deadly snake slithered out of the rocks making its way towards the sleeping man.

[R. Abba, who for some reason was immobilized and transfixed by this

unfolding drama,] suddenly watched as a new turn of events happened. A giant lizard jumped out between the rocks and killed the serpent.

R. Abba continued watching and saw that the man stood up and was perplexed to see a beheaded snake lying in front of him. He quickly gathered his possessions and rose to continue his journey. At that instant the pile of rocks he was sitting on collapsed and fell into the ravine below.

The man was about to wander off when R. Abba ran after him and recounted everything he had witnessed. R. Abba asked the man, "My friend to what do you attribute all these miracles that just transpired?"

The traveller at first did not want to be bothered but felt the sincerity of R. Abba's question and confided in him.

"Throughout my life I have never let a person harm me, and where I did not pacify him. Never have I gone to sleep without forgiving someone for hurting me in any way. Anyone who would hurt me would I endeavour, with all my heart, to resolve whatever animosity was between us. And lastly, I would turn the hateful situation to doing acts of kindness for the person involved in the misunderstanding."

When R. Abba heard this he burst into tears. This person's actions were greater than Joseph. For Joseph had to deal with his brothers; of course he was going to forgive his brothers. But this man forgives anyone and everyone who has harmed him. It is no surprise that God performs miracles on a daily basis for this blessed man.



RABBI RAPHY GARSON
OhrYisroel Synagogue
Elstree

a meeting with the boss

A few years ago I saw a beautiful analogy by R' Sheller of New York. He tells the story of one he stood in front of the large desk with his heart pounding. Essentially there was nothing to say. A task was expected of him and it was not completed.

He was standing in his boss's office. For 5 days he had been asked to report to him about the project. Every day another excuse was offered and his patience had finally worn thin. D-Day arrived and there they were the boss on one side of the desk, his employee on the other.

He prepared for the worst. He knew he had not fulfilled the job commitment and that led to the frightening conclusion that he was about to lose his job. His boss waved his hand and pointed to the chair alongside the desk for me to sit.

when Hashem introduced the 13 Attributes, He told Moshe yaasu lefanay keseder haze vani mochel lachem - Let the Jews perform the following service (of the thirteen attributes).. & I will forgive.

However, his boss then walked around the desk to where he was sitting, and grabbed a chair to sit down beside him.

"Do you know why I'm sitting here next to you?" he asked. "So that you know we are on the same team. I'm not here to scold you. I hired you because I believed in your ability and skills. As your employer it's my duty to ensure your success."

Friends as we stand here today on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, there is a palpable fear, like a trembling student standing in front of the principal or like an employee before his superior.

The central phrase that describes the 13 Attributes of Mercy that Jews recite to receive God's forgiveness is : "VAYAAVOR HASHEM AL PANAV VAYIKRA God passed before him (Moshe) and proclaimed..." implying that God Himself will call out the 13 attributes.

Rabbi Yochanan teaches us in the Talmud (Rosh Hashan 17b) that this verse teaches us *shenitatef*



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hakadosh baruch hu keshaliach tzibbuir - Hashem appeared to Moshe wrapped in a tallit as if He was the chazzan leading the *kehila* in prayer.

Hashem was demonstrating that He is with us, on our team, advocating and leading us back to the fold. He sat on our side of the desk, as the Medrash says that on Rosh Hashanah Hashem (figuratively) leaves His seat of strict judgment and moves over to His seat of mercy.

When R'Sheller received his boss's reassurance he was relieved. However


the conversation was not finished. He was waiting to hear a detailed plan of action that would fix the previous lack of commitment. He was assured that it would be on his desk that afternoon.

Rabbi Yochanan writes that when Hashem introduced the 13 Attributes, He told Moshe *yaasu lefanay keseder haze vani mochel lachem* - Let the Jews perform the following service (of the thirteen attributes).. & I will forgive."

Notice the text of Rabbi Yochanan. He didn't write, "Let the

Jews say the 13 attributes", but rather, "perform them..." Hashem wants us to emulate His ways, "Just like He is merciful, so too, you should be merciful."

The way to repair our relationship with the Almighty is to signal with our actions that although we have failed in the past, we are ready to get back to work. He wants our detailed plan of action that we are committed to fulfill on His desk, no later than Yom Kippur.







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6. What lies behind the name "Rosh Hashana", the "head of the year"?

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STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM



*rebbe shimon
bar yochai*

Besides authoring the 'Zohar', being a master of the oral Torah and a miracle worker, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (who lived in the 2nd century CE in the Holy Land) was one of the few Jews in history who spent every instant of his time learning Torah; no casual conversations, coffee breaks and certainly no vacations--only Torah.

So everyone was surprised when, the day after Rosh Hashanah he showed up at the door of his nephews' home and began to lecture them about the importance of giving charity to the poor.

Although they didn't really have money to spare and totally didn't understand the urgency of what he was saying, they listened attentively; when Rabbi Shimon spoke everyone listened.

"Give with an open hand," Rabbi Shimon adjured. "Don't worry about tomorrow, G-d will provide. And most important: write it all down. Every penny you give, write it down and carry the list with you at all times. I want to see a big sum at the end of the year." Rabbi Shimon made them promise and he left.

Almost a year later they had another strange visit--from a posse of Roman soldiers with an order for their arrest. Someone accused them of selling silk without paying the tax to the government. They began weeping and protesting their innocence but to no avail. Trembling with fear, they were led off to prison where they were given a choice: either pay an outrageous fine of six hundred dinar or produce an even more outrageously priced silk garment for the king, both of which were utterly beyond their means.

When Rabbi Shimon heard what had happened he immediately rushed to the prison and got special permission to visit his relatives.

"Where is the account of the charity you gave?" He asked. "How much did you give?"

"Here," they replied as one of them pulled the small parchment from his pocket.

Rabbi Shimon took the account and noticed that they had given almost six hundred dinar; they were just six dinar short. "Do you have any money with you?" he asked.

They produced six dinar that they had sewn into their garments in case they needed it. Rabbi Shimon took the money, bribed one of the officials, the charges were dropped and they were released.

Rabbi Shimon explained to them what had happened. "This past Rosh Hashanah I dozed off and dreamt that the government would demand of you six hundred dinars. That is why I told you to give charity, to negate the decree."

"Then why didn't you tell us about that?" they complained. "We would have given the money immediately and spared ourselves a lot of anguish."

"But then," replied Rabbi Shimon. "You wouldn't have done the mitzvah for its own sake."

(Midrash Rabbah, Vayikrah 34:12)

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Living with Mitzvos

ANSWERS

1. Rosh Hashana, as we call it, is named after it being "the head of the year". In the tefilla we refer to it as Yom Hazikoroin, the day of remembrance, as all our actions are brought and remembered before Hashem. In the Torah it calls it Yom Terua, after the commandment to blow of the shofar on Rosh Hashana. Another name it is called by is Yom HaDin reflecting that it is a day of judgement.
2. The focus of Rosh Hashana is not atonement. The time for that is on Yom Kippur. Rather, the day of Rosh Hashana is a time to commit ourselves as servants submissive to the will of Hashem – Kabbolas Oil Malchus Shomayim. A servant does not list his faults but rather that from now on he commits to carry out the will of his master. Mention of sins through vidui and the like goes against showing that this person can be loyal. It follows that first comes the commitment to be submissive on Rosh Hashana, then on Yom Kippur we put this into practice by saying vidui and showing remorse for having sinned in the past.
3. See answer 3. The judgement on Rosh Hashana is not simply about the past. This will be done after a person dies and then his whole life is reviewed and analysed Above. Rather it is about the future. How will the next year be depends on a commitment by a person to show how he can be a loyal servant to Hashem.
4. There is a big argument amongst the meforshim as to what the judgement of Rosh Hashana goes on. Tosfas (Rosh Hashana 16b) learns that it goes on judgement of the next world. The Ran learns that it is going on the din of this world.
5. The Ran (to Rosh Hashana 16a) brings that it was on this day, the first of Tishrei according to R' Eliezer, that Odom was created. On this day he sinned and was judged and was forgiven. This shows that this is a good day for man to be judged on.
6. A root and seed contains in it all what will be in the future. A head contains in it the main part of man that instructs the rest of the body of how to act. Rosh Hashana, the "head of the year" is where it is determined how the whole of the rest of the year will pan out. The whole future of the next year is decided on this one day.



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