

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE****VAYELECH/YOM KIPPUR****Haftarah: Hoshea 14:2-10, Yoel 2:11-27, Micah 7:18-20****SEPT. 14-15, 2018 6 TISHREI 5779****DEDICATION: In memory of David ben Sarina – David Gindi**

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**EDITORS NOTES****The Voice calling us to Teshuva**

We find ourselves in the period we call Aseret Yemey Teshubah, the ten days of repentance. Each of the seven days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur represents a day of the week and on that day this week, we can make up for the past 51 Mondays, Tuesdays or Shabbats.

A question came up last week when we were discussing the shofar. In the Torah, Rosh Hashana is called Yom Teruah - a day of blowing. We associate the shofar with Rosh Hashana. And when we blow the Shofar, we make the blessing of Shehechyanu. But what is the main blessing we make when blowing the shofar? Considering the name the Torah gives the day, shouldn't the blessing be "al teruat hashofar" or "lishmoa treuat shofar" to hear the blowing of the Shofar? The blessing is neither. The blessing is to hear the Kol or voice of the shofar. Does a shofar have a voice? Why Kol? What is the word voice coming to teach us?

When do we first see the word Kol? Rabbi Pinchas Friedman helped us to answer this question and opened up a window of deep understanding. I would love to share this with you as we approach Shabbat Shuvah and Kippur.

After Adam and Chava sinned by eating from the tree of good and evil, we read: "They heard the Kol, the voice or the sound of Hashem Elokim walking in the garden toward the direction of the sun; and the man and his wife hid from Hashem Elokim among the trees of the garden. Hashem Elokim called out to the man and said, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard Your Kol – your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I am naked; so I hid."

They heard a kol, a voice, even before Hashem asked the question. So what Kol or voice did they hear?

We begin these ten days with Rosh Hashana and end them on Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur recalls the day Moses returned with the second set of luchot after Hashem tells Moses, Salachti Kidvarecha – I have forgiven them as you asked. Yom Kippur is the reunification of Benai Yisrael with Hashem after the sin of the golden calf. Forgiveness is in the DNA of the dau. But why is Rosh Hashana called Yom HaDin?

Each time we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana we state the words, Hayom Harat Olam. Today the world was created. But when was the world created? The Talmud suggests that the first day of creation was in fact 6 days earlier on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Elul. Rosh Hashana is the anniversary of the creation of man.

We are told that man was conceived intellectually during the first hour of the day; HKB"H consulted with the ministering angels during the second hour; during the third to sixth hours man's physical form was created from the dust and soil; he was given a neshamah during the seventh hour; he was placed in Gan Eden in the eighth hour; he was commanded not to eat from the Eitz HaDa'at in the ninth hour; he transgressed this command in the tenth hour; he was judged in the eleventh hour; he was acquitted in the twelfth hour. HKB"H said to him: "This is a sign for your descendants; just as you stood before Me in judgment on this day and were acquitted, so, too, are they destined to stand before Me in judgment on this day and be acquitted."

The Arizal explains that all souls destined to be were wrapped up within the soul of Adam. Some belonged to tzaddikim, some to reshaim, some to thieves and some to gluttons. These various Neshamot instigated his desire to eat from the forbidden tree. Hence, the sin did not actually stem from him, but rather from them and I guess from us. So it is our souls who need to do teshuvah and to be acquitted

We read a verse again and again, Alah Elokim Betruah – Elokim rose up at the sound of the Teruah. Amonai bekol shofar – Hashem with the voice or Kol of Shofar. The rabbis tell the sound of the Shofar has the power to raise Elokim or the midat of din or judgment - from seat of Din being Hashem – the midah of mercy - to the seat of kindness.

The sound of the Shofar also has the power to cause us to repent.

So the question is, What did Adam and Chava hear after they sinned? What was the Kol of Hashem Elohim that preceded Hashem's question? Rabbi Friedman explained it was in fact the Kol shofar. Hashem wanted Adam and Chava to repent and also to move from seat of Din to mercy. That's why this chapter begins with the words, "And Hashem Elokim" formed man. Until now we have only Elokim, but Hashem understood that for man to survive He needed to add mercy to judgment for man.

As soon as Adam and Eve hear the shofar, they react with fear. Afraid, they run and hide. But this also pushes them to do Teshuvah; to realize their sin and to repent. Hashem then judges them, not with strict din, but with mercy. When we get to this time of year it can be the same for us. We hear the shofar and enter the ten days. We can think about what we have done, we can admit, regret, repent and commit to make a change and Hashem moves from the seat of strict judgment to the seat of mercy. When we make the blessing on the shofar, it is a reminder to Lishmoa Kol Shofar. Just as Adam on this day heard the shofar and was acquitted, so can we be acquitted.

The Imrei Noam comments on what we read in Ki Tabo. VeHaya Im Shamo'a Tishma LeKol Hashem Elokecha.

If you will come to listen to the voice of Hashem, That voice is the shofar. And we need to realize that when we hear the shofar, the sound is not only coming from the shofar in the synagogue. Hashem is supplementing that sound and blowing his shofar, his Kol for us to hear, to listen and be transformed. Realize that in this Kol of shofar

We must remember and consider Adam. He was created at the highest level and sinned and experience the greatest fall. In Hashem's mercy, Hashem picks up Adam from the depths and raises him up again. We read during these ten days of teshuva a special Psalm before Shema. Mema'amakim keraticha – From the depths do I call you. I do Teshuvah and although I am in the lowest pit, I can be raised to the highest level of olam habah

My daughter Mikhayla, created an image with the word Kol. One can see the amazing secret in this word. The first letter, the Kuf extends down into the pit we may find ourselves in. The vav represents the six rings trachea and calling out from the depths and the lamed is the tallest letter with its arm extending into the heavens.

No matter where we find ourselves, no matter how low we have fallen and no matter how deep the pit, if we cry out this week with our voices, reach up from the depths, then Hashem will grab onto us, he will lift us up and to the highest levels of olam habah. The place of the one who repents is greater than even the place of the righteous.

Shabbat Shalom and Tizku LeShanim Rabot  
David Bibi

### **The faith crisis of American Jewry By ZIONA GREENWALD**

The venerable Pew Research Center, whose previous studies of American Jewry broke the unsurprising bad news about the devastating rate of intermarriage, has just released a new study taking the religious pulse of all Americans.

Once again, the news is not good for us. The group with the highest percentage of respondents falling into the category of "Solidly Secular" – the bottom of the totem pole of the seven religious typologies classified by the study – are Jews. Among respondents who identified themselves as Jewish, 28% fall into that category, compared with 5% of Christians. Jews have a healthy percentage of respondents – 21% – who qualify as so-called "Sunday Stalwarts" (sub in "Saturday" for a more apt but still pithy moniker). But after that, the numbers drop off, then peak again at the other end of the spectrum. In other words, count out the Orthodox, whose ranks are thriving, and you are left with a withering faith group.

At first glance, I was not surprised by these findings. Upon closer examination, however, a more shocking picture came to light.

It's no secret that most American Jews are far from religious. At best, their observance revolves around some sort of Passover eve gathering passing as a Seder, perhaps a visit to synagogue on Yom Kippur, maybe even a menorah on the mantle come Hanukkah. But here's the rub: The Pew study defines "Solidly Secular" not merely as unaffiliated or non-observant. No, these "relatively affluent, highly educated" folks "reject... belief in the God of the Bible or any higher power at all." In other words, they not only lead a secular lifestyle – they don't even believe in God.

The third largest group among Jewish respondents, "Religion Resisters" (coming in at 17%), "largely do believe in some higher power or spiritual force (but not the God of the Bible)... At the same time, members of this group express strongly negative views of organized religion, saying that... overall,

religion does more harm than good.” (Predictably, both the Religion Resisters and the Solidly Secular are “generally liberal and Democratic in their political views.”)

For multitudes of Jews to have not only eschewed their heritage but completely shucked off any shred of faith, any relationship, however fraught, with their Divine Creator, gives new meaning to the term “lost souls.” Lost – but as we affirm again and again throughout these High Holy Days, never too far or too late to return to God.

Why such spiritually hostile individuals still choose to identify themselves as Jewish would make for an interesting examination in its own right. No matter the reasons, the apparent drift toward godlessness among American Jewry should set off alarm bells for Jewish leaders and major organizations.

The sobering situation in the US stands in fascinating contrast to the faith culture in Israel, where I now live. The disposition of even many secular Israeli Jews to hold fast to Judaism’s most fundamental tenets has been not only oft-noted but also confirmed by research. A study two years ago by the very same Pew Research Center found that half of Jewish Israelis believe in God with certainty, and another 27% also believe in God but with less certainty. This, although 49% (that is, a nearly equal quotient) describe themselves as “hiloni” (secular). Meanwhile, in a separate poll conducted back in 2012 by the Avi Chai Foundation, a whopping 80% of Israeli Jews expressed belief in God. (In contrast to American Jews, Israelis’ political attachments are far less predictable based on religious profile alone.)

Thus, the stereotype of the God-fearing secular Israeli is well-founded. The taxi drivers who wish you a “Shanah Tova,” the Sabbath-breaking neighbors who say “Shabbat Shalom,” the health fund workers who bless you with a “Refuah Shelaimah,” and the many fellow Jewish citizens who might not observe most of the mitzvot – all recognize to whom they owe their existence and will one day have to answer. In moments of crisis, they exclaim, “Hashem ya’azor.” When something good happens, they proclaim, “Baruch Hashem.”

Perhaps it is the existential insecurity of life in Israel that makes faith the natural, default position. Perhaps because God’s presence in the Holy Land is so manifest, so transcendent, it takes a special effort to deny. Perhaps the surrounding culture, the history on the ground in front of our eyes, acts as a lodestar.

None of which obtains to help awaken the souls of Jews in the US.

Let’s hope that Jewish leadership in the Diaspora’s largest outpost will be alarmed enough by the latest findings to take meaningful action, as they have failed to do since the Pew Center’s previous revelations about the declining demographic health of American Jewry due to intermarriage. The fading of G-d from the lives of American Jews calls out for spiritual life support.

Ziona Greenwald is a freelance writer and editor. She holds a J.D. from Fordham Law School and has worked as a court attorney and a magazine editor. A former New Yorker, she now lives with her family in Jerusalem

### Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

#### Va'yelech - Moshe bids farewell. A transition in leadership

- 1- Moshe goes to bid farewell to Benei Israel on the day of his death telling Benei Israel that he cannot come with them into Israel.
- 2- Moshe tells Benei Israel Hashem will help them triumph over their enemies in Israel.
- 3- Moshe gives Yehoshua hizuk since he will now lead Benei Israel. Moshe writes down the Torah
- 4- The mitsvah of hakhel (the king reads parts of the Torah in front of the entire nation)
- 5- Hashem tells Yeshoshua through Moshe that Benei Israel will sin and Hashem will hide his face. Hashem commands Moshe to write Ha'azinu
- 6- Hashem says Benei Israel will sin and the song of Ha'azinu will stand as witness that Benei Israel were warned of what would happen if they sin. Hashem gives Yehoshua hizuk as leader.
- 7- Moshe gives the Torah to the Leviim and elders. Moshe gathers Benei Israel to tell them the song of Ha'azinu that will be read in the next parasha.

#### Tips for keeping this year’s kabala

1. Write it down - Write it down (this is a big step. Before Kippur we are all pumped up but after Kippur it easily happens that we forget what our kabala was. We were planning to pick from a few different items and we can’t remember which one we actually chose. If we don’t remember what the kabala is it’s hard to keep).
2. Start early - Take on the kabala as early as possible and start keeping it right away. If we can get one or two weeks of keeping the kabala before

Kippur starts this is a big head start. Because before Kippur we are ready to take on anything but once Kippur ends it's a different ball game. So if we can get a head start this is a big step.

3. Keep track- Keep track of if we are keeping the kabala. Best thing to do is find an extra calendar in the house (maybe your school or shul sends you one). Keep the calendar by your bed or in your dressing room. Write on the top where the month is what the kabalot are. Then each night before bed, in the box of that date, put a check or an x depending on if you were good in keeping the kabala that day or not. If you miss a night on the calendar, or even many nights, no big deal. The key is just to keep track to remind us about the kabalot we took on. If we do this it is a big step.

4. Have a reminder- Write the kabala down in your siddur. One suggestion is to put it by the shir shel yom of Monday so we can see the kabala once a week and be reminded of what we took on.

5. Pray for it- For the first week after Rosh Hashana / Yom Kippur in each tefilah pray to Hashem that he will help you keep your kabala or kabalot. And specify the kabalot. (i.e., please help me Hashem that I should be more compassionate...). This will help us keep the kabala on our minds throughout the day.

6. Pick something you can track- Lastly, choose a kabala that you can easily monitor. If you say you want to be a more compassionate person that is hard to measure. But if you say you want to be more compassionate and as a result you will choose a different person each day to pray for in your amida so that is something you can monitor.

#### FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

##### **“Remember us for life, O King who desires life” (Amidah - Ten Days of Teshubah)**

During the Ten Days of Teshubah we ask Hashem for life. During our busy schedules we tend to take life for granted. On the night of Yom Kippur, all Jews around the world recite the Kal Nidre. Kal Nidre is another form of hatarat nedarim, which is an annulment of vows. Tradition has it that the Kal Nidre service originated in Spain. The Jews had a glorious period of growth and prosperity until the terrible Spanish Inquisition began. Many good Jews were forced to accept Christianity in order to save their lives. On the night of Yom Kippur they would secretly gather in caves and basements. There they would recite in front of all the people the words of Kal Nidre, to annul all of the vows of Christianity that they were forced to accept. What a struggle these people went through! How fortunate are we.

As I have mentioned many times, we must ask Hashem on a daily basis for long life with good

health. In our prayer of ohhjk ubhrfz, Remember us for life, we ask for life. However, we must have a clear definition of life in our minds as we ask for it. Rabbi Matityahu Solomon once said: life means different things for different people. For most people it means simply to live. However, to some people their house is their life. To some their car is their life, and to others, their baseball team is their life. A person must avoid making these things so important that they become that person's "life-wish," prompting Hashem to answer this foolish wish instead of granting him the most important gift of life. May Hashem grant us all long life in good health, Amen. Rabbi Reuven Semah

##### **“I will surely conceal My face.” (Debarim 31:18)**

The parashah describes the punishment that will come when the people stray from the service of Hashem. The people will reach the point that they declare, "It is because Hashem is not in my midst that all these evils have come upon me." Hashem then says, "I will surely hide My face from you." Seforno explains that when the people are making this declaration, they are recognizing that they sinned, but they feel that their sin is so great that they have pushed Hashem away, and that their teshubah would not be accepted. Hashem then responds that this is not so. He will always be within us and protect us, and our repentance will always be accepted. However He may sometimes conceal His presence from us.

This is a very encouraging concept. A person might feel a sense of despair and hopelessness when he reflects on his actions and finds himself lacking. After everything I've done, how can I possibly find favor in Hashem's eyes? From here we see that Hashem is ready and waiting for us to do teshubah and come back to Him. It doesn't need to be a total turnaround. We just need to take baby steps, little by little. As long as we are moving in the right direction, to rededicate ourselves to the service of Hashem, He will accept us with open arms, and make it easier for us to complete the process. May we all merit to be forgiven for our sins, and be blessed with a good and sweet New Year. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

##### **You Can't Hide**

During Minhah of Yom Kippur, we read the Book of Yonah. Yonah the prophet was ordered by Hashem to go to Nineveh and warn the people that if they did not repent, they would be punished. He refused this mission with good intention. Should the people of Nineveh, who were not Jewish, have heeded him, it would have had an adverse reflection upon the Jewish people who had defied the warnings and exhortations of the prophets. Yonah meant well,

but our Sages tell us he was wrong to defend the honor of the child (Israel) rather than the honor of the Father (Hashem).

To accomplish his goal he decided to flee to Tarshish. He chose a destination outside of Eres Yisrael because there Hashem does not reveal himself to prophets. Hashem thwarted his endeavors, and arranged that he be cast into the sea. There he was swallowed up by a large fish and spewed out on dry land. Ultimately he went to Nineveh and warned them of their imminent destruction due to their bad behavior.

Minhah is the last prayer of the day before Ne'ilah - the closing prayer. As we prepare to part with this very holy day, we read the story of Yonah which conveys the powerful message that there is no running away from Hashem. Hashem in His miraculous ways can find us wherever we are and our endeavors to flee Him are purposeless and to no avail. The Book of Yonah serves as a call not to run away from Hashem during the year, but resolve to adhere tenaciously to Hashem and Torah throughout the entire year. (Vedibarta Bam)

### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR** **The Easiest Misva**

Many of us find Teshuba to be a difficult, grueling process. We often feel too intimidated to even begin thinking about Teshuba and changing who we are.

And yet, ironically enough, the Torah indicates that Teshuba is actually the easiest Misva. Last Shabbat, in Parashat Nisavim, we read, "For this Misva...is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant from you... It is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart..." (Debarim 30:11-14). The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe Nahmanides, Spain, 1194-1270) explains these Pesukim as referring to the Misva of Teshuba. It is regarding this Misva that we are reassured that it is easy, that it is not difficult or distant, that it can be easily achieved.

The Torah does not make this point about any other Misva. We are never told that it is easy to observe Shabbat or Pesah. Yet, specifically when it comes to Teshuba, to changing our characters, which seems to be the most difficult Misva of all, the Torah tells us that is easy. How could Teshuba be an easy Misva?

To answer this question, we turn our attention to an esoteric comment of the Arizal (Rabbi Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) concerning the widespread custom to wear a Tallit on the night

of Yom Kippur. It is generally customary to ensure to put on the Tallit before sundown, so that we are able to recite the Beracha over the Tallit. Since a Beracha is not recited when putting on Sisit at night, and we want to "cash in" on every possible Misva before Yom Kippur, we try to put on the Tallit before sundown so we can recite a Beracha. The Arizal, however, held differently. He writes – astonishingly enough – that one does not recite a Beracha over the Tallit worn on the night of Yom Kippur, even if he puts on the Tallit before sundown, because the Tallit does not belong to him. Even though he paid for the Tallit and he wears it every day, it is not his. On Yom Kippur, the Tallit belongs to the Almighty.

How are we to understand this concept, that the Tallit on Yom Kippur actually belongs to God, and is not ours?

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) offers a beautiful explanation. God relates to us in many different ways. On some occasions, He relates to us as a mighty warrior, and at others as a loving father. Sometimes He acts as judge, and other times as a king. Forgive the expression, but we might say that God wears many hats, as it were, playing a wide range of different roles in our lives. On Yom Kippur, Rav Pincus says, God relates to us as a mother. More often than not, when a father is caring for an infant, he returns the infant to the mother as soon as the infant soils himself and his clothing and needs to be cleaned and changed. Fathers certainly enjoy coddling and spending time with their baby, but they rush to pass on the childcare responsibilities once there is filth involved.

Sin soils the soul. We cannot see the filth with our eyes, but the filth of sin exists, and the great Sadikim are able to sense it. On Yom Kippur, God comes to us as a loving, tender, caring mother to clean up our mess, to get rid of our sins and make us clean as new. We enter Yom Kippur like an infant that has just dirtied himself, and we emerge from Yom Kippur like an infant wrapped in his towel after his bath, fresh and clean. The Tallit, Rav Pincus says, symbolizes the "towel" in which God wraps us, like a mother wrapping her clean child. This is not our Tallit. After all, on Yom Kippur we are like infants, who own nothing. This is our "Mother's" Tallit, the Tallit which God wraps us in as He cleanses our souls.

The Sages describe Yom Kippur as one of the happiest days of the year. It is not a sad day; it is an exciting day, because becoming clean is exciting. We are transformed from a state of filth to a state of perfect cleanliness.

And this is why Teshuba is so easy – because it is the only Misva we do with God nearby as a loving mother helping us. God comes to clean us. As the Mishna says, “Fortunate are you, Israel! Before whom you are purified, and who purifies you? Your Father in heaven!” Hashem cleans us on Yom Kippur, He holds our hand and leads us through the process of repentance, and this is what makes it easy.

There is, however, one condition. A baby must cry out to his mother when he is dirty and needs to be cleaned. The mother won’t come unless she hears the infant’s desperate cries for help. And the same is true of us and our “Mother.” God comes to clean us only after He hears us crying for help. This means that at some point on Yom Kippur – and the earlier the better – we have to cry out desperately for God to come help us. We need to sincerely feel the discomfort of the accumulated filth on our souls, and to genuinely cry out to God to help us. He will then immediately come to clean us off like a mother devotedly tends to her child, and warmly wrap us in His Tallit, eliminating all our sins, leading us back to His service, and granting us complete forgiveness and the precious opportunity to begin the year with a perfectly clean slate.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein  
THE ZEALOTS AMONG US**

A great many decades ago when I was yet the student in my beloved yeshiva on the old west side of Chicago, I remember that one of my great teachers told us an anecdote that points to an eternal truth regarding people and their personal ideologies and beliefs. He said that both the cat and the owner of the house are opposed to rats and mice. The difference however is that the owner of the house prefers that there be no rats or mice that will invade the premises one lives in. The cat on the other hand hopes that rats and mice will invade the house so that it will be able to pursue and catch them.

There are many areas of strife within our society regarding matters that, on the surface, appear to be those of religious observance and Jewish culture. There are among us very good people who would like to see these areas of disagreement minimized, debated quietly and decided wisely. They prefer that ways be found to solve the technical issues that arise without escalating them to the areas of ideology, true faith and eternal reward.

However, there are those in both the religious and secular sections of Israeli society that are determined to invite the rats into the house so that they can be caught and that every tactical issue and problem must automatically be raised to the level of crucial social ideology and policy. These people are the zealots that exist within both elements of our society.

Unfortunately, these people are the ones that seem to drive the agenda and the discussions regarding all issues. They always claim to be either defending religion and Judaism or defending democracy, pluralism or other currently politically correct ideas. But it appears they are only expressing the zealotry that somehow exists within them that drives them to extreme statements and eventually, bad behavior.

Some decades ago, Jerusalem was subject to weekly demonstrations on Shabbat regarding the issue of vehicular traffic on the main street of the city that passed directly through the middle of a neighborhood exclusively populated by strongly observant Jews. The zealots in that neighborhood quickly organized many hundreds of people every shabbat afternoon, shouting insults at the drivers of the cars traveling on that street.

They also insisted on warring with the police that were called to somehow keep the street open and prevent acts of violence from taking place. The zealots in the secular community immediately organized counter demonstrations that stood on the other side of the very same street and shouted insults and threats to the religious Jews gathered opposite them.

This was a regular feature of Shabbat afternoon here in Jerusalem for many years until, almost magically, the issue lost its importance for both groups and the demonstrations and counter demonstrations disappeared. It appears that once in the midst of these almost choreographed demonstrations, the secular group notified the religious group that somehow they would be unable to mount their demonstration on the next given Shabbat for various personal and technical reasons. In response to this, the religious group generously agreed that it would

not mount its demonstration that Shabbat either since the mice would not appear there was no reason for the cat to exert itself.

Every society contains within it the malcontents and those who are always looking to stir up trouble and controversy. By so doing, they feel important and vindicated in their beliefs no matter what those beliefs may be. These people live for the turmoil and controversy that they are always attempting to create. The ideologies that they claim to represent are mostly specious, even irrelevant. Yet, the naïve and young are a willing audience for this type of zealotry because it creates the "other" that is necessary for zealotry to flourish.

Zealotry always flies in the face of reality. That does not allow one to accept the situation as it is but rather to try and force it to be the situation that one wishes it would be. In political contests and electioneering, this leads to very rough accusations and characterizations. Left unchecked it will eventually lead to violence, discrimination and autocratic rule.

In matters of ideology, it leads to censorship of thought and speech and demonization of others, no matter what the true circumstances and situation. A recognition of this type of behavior could enable our society to counter it and soften our debates and minimize our differences

**Rabbi Yosef Farhi**  
**KEEPING TO YOUR SCRIPT**  
**Yom Kippur**

One of the biggest problems facing the Orthodox is not being able to feel closeness with G-d. "Rabbi, I want to feel the Yomim Tovim more, I want my Shabbat table to be more spiritual, I want my prayers to have more fire in them..."

We are talking about good, Orthodox Jews who are trying. People who really are close to G-d, who really are trying to be good Jews, but not feeling closeness, not feeling connected. It seems that feeling closer is obviously much deeper than doing something different. It seems to be more about being something different.

I would like to look at our role of serving G-d from a fresh perspective. I will call it "the Yom Kippur perspective". There is a mitzvah to do teshuva every day of the year. What is special about the Teshuva of the Yomim Noraim, of the High Holidays?

The Teshuva that is to be made in these days is not just about what you have done. But about who you

have become, and all that is a result. Yom Kippur is about doing Teshuva because you are not doing your Tafkaid.

In the Viduy of Yom Kippur, we say something interesting. יאדכ יניא יתרצונ אלש דע. Before I was born, I had no worth. What? We are saying Viduy for how we were before our birth? What could we have possibly done wrong before we were born?

Before I was born, for almost 6000 years, my soul was waiting for this generation to be sent down by G-d. To be born into my family, with my parents and my siblings, into my community, and to be created the exact time I was created. At the precise, predetermined second. Your Neshama was destined to enter the world in exactly the minute it came, to exactly the parents you have and into the story that is specifically yours. Before I was born, I wasn't ready to be born, for my destiny had not yet begun. And this is what we say Viduy about. יתרצונ וישכנו. And now that I have been born, it is as if I had not been born. I was not worthy of being created by G-d until now, because before, I was not able to fulfill my tafkaid. I could not bring G-dliness to the world, in my unique way, until today. And now that I have been created, I am looking around at everyone else, copying others' ways of serving G-d, trying to be everyone else except myself! I waited so long to get on my unique stage for G-dliness, and I forgot the script!!! And now that I have been created, it is as if I have not been created.

This is the message of the story of Yonah, in its metaphoric version. (Vilna Gaon; Mishna Berurah 622 Sh. Tzi. 6) Each Jew comes down for a purpose; each soul is here on a mission. And sometimes, we try to run away from what we are supposed to be doing. And, when one runs away, G-d keeps sending the person back until the Tafkaid is done.

How do we know what our soul's mission is about? The Arizal taught his students that those things that you are having difficulty with are the reason you are here. And your Tafkaid is for those things that you are needed for. We need to dedicate our lives to where we are needed most. We need to dedicate our energies to those areas in which we can make our unique contribution.

Sometimes, your "lot" is to be a "holy being", something like the goat that is brought as a Korban for Hashem. And sometimes, your lot is to be like the "LaAzaze" I goat. To bring out G-dliness in what does not appear to be a G-dly way. I will explain.

Yom Kippur is the day that is like Purim. Purim is about Esther: a righteous woman who needed to be

in the most impure places. To defile herself. That was her mission. That was what she was needed for, in order to save the Jewish Nation. And that is what her Rabbi told her to do. Purim is about Mordechai, a great Torah Scholar, one of the Gedolei Hador, from the head of Sanhedrin, who needed to sacrifice his high level of learning in order to save Klal Yisrael. Esther and Mordechai are the ultimate example of living your Tefikid. And sometimes in life, you think that you are being a tzaddik, but by not living up to your soul's purpose, you can be this "passive-aggressive Haman". יִכְרַמְךָ נִמְה וְרָא יָב עֵדִי אֵלֶּךָ דַּע.

Rabbi YY Rubinstein said, in the name of his Rebbi, something very powerful. We know that Reuven saved Yosef from his brothers, by putting him in the pit. Then, the brothers sat down to eat lunch, and during lunch, Shimon and Levi decided to kill Yosef. Yehuda saved Yosef by selling him. Reuven came back to the pit, and Yosef was gone. Reuven tore his clothes, and asked his brothers what they had done. And, now, how was he to face his father?

Rashi asks, where was Reuven at the time of the sale? Why did he disappear, when his brothers sat down for lunch? Because Reuven went to do his fasting, to clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes, for his hasty act of moving his father's bed next to his mother, Leah's, so many years earlier. He was doing his holy thing.

But, Reuven! You could have saved us all from 210 years of slavery in Egypt, had you just stayed there at the pit and watched over your brother! Had you not been busy doing Teshuva, but instead, had kept your eyes on your brother in the pit, you could have gotten forgiveness for your mistake from your father, just by being responsible and saving your brother Yosef's life!! How many times do we not notice our "brother in the pit", because we are too busy with our own lofty levels of spirituality?

What do Reuven and the brothers have to do with Yom Kippur? EVERYTHING! What are the words in Yom Kippur Mahzor, immediately before the words mentioned about the fact that we are not doing our Tefikid? וְרוּשֵׁי יִטְבְּשֵׁל וְלַחֲמוֹ לְאַרְשִׁיל וְחָלוֹס הֵתָא יֵכ For You are the One who forgives Yisrael, and You forgive the Tribes! Why are we mentioning the Tribes on Yom Kippur? Because we bring the sacrifice of a goat to remind us that the reason why we suffer so much is for not taking responsibility for each other and atone for that sin. The Tribes dipped Yosef's striped coat in goat's blood and brought it to their father Yaakov.

How can a person who is being so frum, so holy, be like a Haman? Well, I can't think of something as aggressive as a Haman. But I can think of what would have happened if Esther had stayed away from Achashverosh. She could have let Haman do what he wanted to do. Because she was being holy. And the same could have happened if Mordechai would not stop his high level of continuous Torah study to guide Esther and take control of the situation.

So, how do we feel close to G-d? The Baal Shem Tov would say that if you want to speak to G-d, speak to the person who you have a hard time being nice to. Because G-d is right over his shoulder. קוֹקֵי יִתְיוֹשׁ I will place Hashem opposite me always. The word יִדְגַּל, the BSHT would say, is referring to the one opposite me, my opposition. But I would like to change that a drop, in line with the Arizal's way of discovering our Tefikid. G-d is there wherever you have opposition in life. To fix the Middah that is hardest for you to fix. Jealousy. Self Centeredness. Lust. Anger. Our soul was sent to this world to fix that Middah that is hardest to fix, and if we do not, the Middah takes over our life. The Shofar is the acronym of the words הַנְעִלוּ שָׂאֵר הַרֹפֵשׁ שְׂרוֹשׁ. The root of bad that is inside each and every one of us that if we do not uproot it it only gets worse. The Shofar blast is meant to wake us up and have us notice what we need to correct. No matter how many years we have been working on it, that is what we are here for. That is our Tefikid.

When you experience or encounter a difficulty in life, G-d is so close. He gave you that Tefikid. When you are facing a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, that is what G-d put us here for. Until you accept the fact that if you have no options, if you have difficulty, that is your Tefikid, the mission of your soul, until you humble yourself to the array of options that G-d puts in front of you, YOU WILL NEVER FEEL CLOSE. You might be very close to G-d, but you will not feel it, until you accept that your whole circumstance is part of your mission. And it is from that situation that G-d wants you to connect.

### **Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Second Mountain**

What do you do when you have achieved it all, when you have risen to whatever career heights fate or providence has in store for you? What do you do as age lengthens its shadow, the sun sinks, and the body is no longer as resilient or the mind as sharp as it once was?



That has become a major problem as life expectancy has increased in most parts of the world. There has been nothing quite like it in history. In America, in 1900, average life expectancy was around 41 years, in Europe 42.5. Today in Britain, for men it is 79, for women 83.[1] Much of that has to do with a huge reduction in infant mortality. None the less, the sheer pace in the rise in longevity – every decade since 1900, life expectancy has risen by about three years – remains remarkable. What will keep you young in spirit even if the body does not always keep pace?

The biblical case study is Moses, of whom we are told that even at the end of his life, “his eye was undimmed and his natural energy unabated.” At the opening of today’s parsha he says, “I am now a hundred and twenty years old. I can no longer come and go, and the Lord has told me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’” Rashi points out that the “I can no longer” does not mean that he lacked the strength. It means that he no longer had permission. The moment had come when he had to hand on the role of leader to his successor and disciple, Joshua. He himself stayed full of vigour, as the passion of his speeches in the book of Devarim, delivered in the last month of his life, testify.

To understand what Moses epitomises at the end of his life, two closely related concepts are helpful. The first is Erik Erikson’s idea of generativity, the seventh of his eight life stages. Relatively late in life, he argues, many people’s perspective changes. They begin thinking about legacy, about what will outlive them. Their focus often shifts from self to others. They may devote more time to family, or community, or care or voluntary work. Some mentor young people who are following in their career path. They make commitments to others. They ask themselves, how can I contribute to the world? What trace will I leave on those who will live on after me? What, in the world, is better because of me?

The second and related idea is David Brook’s concept of the second mountain. Speaking to people over 70, he found that early in their lives they had identified the mountain they were going to climb. They had specific aspirations about family and career. They had a vision of the self they wanted to become. By age 70, some had achieved it and were happy. Others had achieved it only to find it not entirely satisfying. Yet others had been knocked off the mountain by misfortune.

At a certain age, though, many identified a second mountain they wanted to climb. This mountain was not about achieving but about giving. It was less about external accomplishment (success, fame) than

about internal accomplishment. It was spiritual, moral; it was about devoting yourself to a cause or giving back to the community. It is often, he says, a yearning for righteousness, an inner voice that says, “I want to do something really good with my life.” This second peak, associated with later life, may well prove more significant to our sense of self-worth than the ego-driven ascent of the first mountain.

The case of Moses sets all this in dramatic perspective. What do you do if you have already achieved what no human being had ever done before or would ever do in the future? Moses had spoken to God face to face. He had become His faithful servant. He had led his people from slavery to freedom, put up with their complaints, endured their rebellions and prayed for – and achieved – their forgiveness in the eyes of God. He had been the agent through which God had performed His miracles and delivered His word. What else is left to do after such a life?

His closest friends and allies, his sister Miriam and brother Aaron, had already died. He knew that the decree had been sealed that he would not cross the Jordan and lead the people on the last stage of their journey. He would not set foot in the Promised Land. Unlike Aaron, whose children inherited his priesthood to eternity, Moses had to live with the fact that neither of his sons, Gershom and Eliezer, would become his successor. That role would go to his assistant and faithful servant Joshua. These were, surely, huge disappointments to set alongside the momentous achievements.

So, as Moses faced his own life’s end, what was there left to do? The book of Devarim contains and constitutes the answer. As it says in its opening chapter: “In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites ... On the east bank of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began expounding this law ...” No longer the liberator and miracle-worker, Moses became Rabbenu, “our teacher,” the man who taught Torah to the next generation.

The way he does so in Devarim is stunning. No longer, as before, does he simply articulate the law. He explains the theology behind the law. He speaks about the love of God for Israel and the love Israel should show to God. He speaks with equal power about the past and the future, reviewing the wilderness years and anticipating the challenges ahead.

Above all, coming at the subject from every conceivable direction, he warns the young people who will enter and inherit the land, that the real

challenge will not be failure but success; not slavery but freedom; not the bread of affliction but the temptations of affluence. Remember, he says again and again; listen to the voice of God; rejoice in what He has given you. These are the key verbs of the book, and they remain the most powerful immune-system ever developed against the decadence-and-decline that has affected every civilisation since the dawn of time.

That last month in Moses' life, which culminates in today's parsha as he finally hands over the reins of leadership to Joshua, is one of the supreme instances in Tanakh of generativity: speaking not to your contemporaries but to those who will live on after you. It was Moses' second mountain.

And perhaps the very things that seemed, at first sight, to have been disappointments, turned out in the end to have played their part in shaping this last chapter in that great life. The fact that he knew he would not accompany the people into the land, and that he would not be succeeded by his sons, meant that he had to turn into a teacher of the next generation. He had to hand on to them his insights into the future. He had to make the people his disciples – and we have all been his disciples ever since.

All of this suggests a powerful and potentially life changing message for all of us. Whatever our life has been thus far, there is another chapter to be written, focused on being a blessing to others, sharing whatever gifts we have with those who have less, handing on our values across the generations, using our experience to help others come through difficult times of their own, doing something that has little to do with personal ambition and much to do with wanting to leave some legacy of kindness that made life better for at least someone on earth.

Hence the life-changing idea: Whatever your achievements, there is always a second mountain to climb, and it may turn out to be your greatest legacy to the future.

[1] Life expectancy in the United States actually fell in 2016 and 2017, largely as a result of a massive rise in drug-related deaths. Obesity may be playing a part also.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL "And you shall afflict yourself" (Vayikra 22:27)**

The word "V'Initem" (afflict) stems from 'Ani' which means "poverty" or affliction in general and fundamentally means 'crying out', because the afflicted man cries out.

The word 'Anav' which denotes 'humble' means "one that behaves like a poor man (Ani), despite his lack of affliction. By fasting, men gain humility. "V'initem" (and you shall afflict yourselves) creates in you Anava (humility) and makes you thereby acceptable to Hashem.

On Yom Kippur we strive to rid ourselves of the arrogance which causes men to be disobedient and ungrateful and selfish and reckless. The fasting is helpful for this purpose, but it achieves more when we are aware of the purpose.

Yirat Hashem means Awareness of the Greatness of Hashem, and because of that a person is humble, anav.

Because of that he speaks politely to people; because of that he doesn't speak against people; because of that he doesn't hurt people's feelings; because of that he tries to be kind and helpful to people.

Then Hashem says: 'You are walking in the ways of Hashem; because I am holy you are trying to emulate Me'. That is the greatest beauty that you can give to Hashem. Just as He is merciful so you are merciful. When people try to do good things because they are Aware of Hashem, then they are investing their efforts into something worthwhile.

We can attain humility by expressing our deep gratitude in appreciating Hashem's countless forms of kindness which He is constantly bestowing upon us. These gifts weigh down on us and we are humbled since we cannot repay them. "How can I repay Hashem for all that He gives me" (Hallel)

Although Israel is fully aware of its superiority as Hashem's chosen and holy and beloved and blessed people, yet no nation is as ready to admit its own faults as frequently and as profusely as does Israel, especially on this day. Without losing sight of Hashem's supreme love for us, we afflict ourselves and gain in Humility. And we thereby incur Hashem's favor even more. "He adorns the humble (Anavim) with salvation" (Tehillim 149:4)

Adapted from "A Kingdom of Cohanim" by Rabbi Miller ZT'L