

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

YOM KIPPUR

OCTOBER 3-4, 2014

10 TISHREI 5775

DEDICATIONS: In memory of my grandfather, David Gindi, HaKohen

Our friend at Congregation Shaare Emunah are jointly sponsoring with Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi a special Teshuva Drasha by Rabbi Eli Mansour on Thursday, October 2nd 8:30pm. The event will take place at Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi (The Red Shul) located at 391 Oakland Avenue on the corner of West Broadway in Cedarhurst. Men & women of the community are invited & encouraged to attend.

We still have Lulav and Etrog sets available
Please let us know if you would like one for the holidays

SCHEDULE

Friday, October 3, 2014 – Ereb Yom Kippur

Selichot 6:15

Shahrit 7:00 AM

Minha (some put Tefillin) 3:00 PM

Candle Lighting 6:16 PM

Fast Begins 6:20 PM

Kal Nidre 6:30 PM

Saturday, October 4, 2014 – Yom Kippur

Shahrit 8:00 AM

Musaf 12:00 PM

Minha 4:30 PM

Ne'ilah Services 6:00 PM

Arbit 7:00 PM

Fast Ends – Habdalah 7:15 PM

Birkat Halebana – Blessing on the Moon

Breakfast sponsored by the Yusupov Family

In memory of their relatives slain in Bogdanovka on Yom Kippur H'YD

And By Baruch Kahn in memory of his mother Mirriam bat Rasha who passed away last Yom Kippur

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00AM, Mon at 6:55, Tues, Weds at 7:00

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited

MONDAY Night –Class with Rabba Yenai 7:00 –

Selichot Thank You Breakfast – Sunday morning October 5th at 9AM – All are invited

In appreciation of Dr Bellehsen, Dr Kahn, Rabbi Wagner and Rabbi Colish and all those who participated and made selichot possible each day. Please join us each morning through Yom Kippur for Selichot.

Pizza In The Hut!!! - Sunday, October 5 - 11:00AM -1:00PM - Draw, hang and put your own creative talents into a great mitzvah! Come and help decorate the Succah! Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach (Corner of Lafayette and Penn)

Simchat Beit HaShoava - Sunday Oct 12th at 7:30PM - Chol HaMoed. Together with our friends from JCAB at The Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach. The program will be led by Rabbi Sammy Intrator - formerly the Rabbi of the Carlebach Shul in NYC. Lots of singing, dancing and Divrei Torah.

MEMBERS ONLY MEETING – Sunday October 26th at 9:30 AM

Members in Good Standing for at least two years with no past due outstanding dues or pledges

Yom Kippur – Selected Honors Please place your bids in advance

**Open the Ark for Kal Nidre – SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Chaim
Sefer Kal Nidre – SOLD Jack and Patti Azizo on behalf of the Rabbis and the congregation**

Each of the additional Torahs brought out with Sefer Kal Nidre 2-12

2: Hal for Bobby

3: Hal for Albert

4: Hal for David Pinto

5: David for Hal

Looking for bids for Torahs 6-12

**All the Rimonim for all the Torahs SOLD Richard Soleymanzadeh For the Abittan children
Parnasa of evening service – \$2600**

Yom Kippur Morning

**Opening the Ark on Yom Kippur - SOLD Bobby and Hindy for David
Carrying The Torah SOLD Leon for Bechor Yadgarov
Carrying The Second Torah SOLD Leon for Nes Pinto**

**Carry the Haftara case SOLD Ely for Ari
Rimonim for all the Torah's SOLD Richard Soleymanzadeh For "one boy and one girl per Torah who
have never done it, or not done it recently"
Raise the Torah Hagbah SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Albert
Gelila Wrap the Torah SOLD – Purchased by Ernie for Yehuda Shetrit**

**Mashlim with Kaddish said in memory of a loved one - SOLD David for Albert
Haftara Yom Kippur Day SOLD Albert Yusupov for Rabbi David Bibi
Parnasa Yom Kippur SOLD Bobby and Hindy for Hal**

Yom Kippur Afternoon

**Opening the Ark Mincha on Yom Kippur – SOLD Richard S
for "For the Eldest member present in Temple for the Honor"
Carrying The Torah SOLD Richard S for "
For the Youngest Bar Mitzva member present in Temple who can carry the Torah for the Honor"**

Carry the Haftara Case \$600

**Rimonim for the Torah and Haftara Case's SOLD Richard Soleymanzadeh
For "one boy and one girl per Torah who have never done it, or not done it recently"**

Raise the Torah Hagbah SOLD Rose Pappo Allen for Ely

Gelila Wrap the Torah \$ 400

Maftir Yona \$3600 SOLD Albert Yusupov for Sam Yusupov

Parnasa Yom Kippur Mincha \$ 1800

Opening Ark Neila – \$3600

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YOM KIPPUR – 5775/2014

Candle Lighting: On Yom Kippur we do light Candles as we do on other Holidays.

Recite the following blessings on the candles:
 “Barukh Ata Ado-nay Elo-henu Melekh Haolam Asher Kideshanu Bemisvotav Vessivanu Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Hakippurim.”

The Observance of Yom Kippur

The observance of Yom Kippur is similar to Shabbat with some exceptions.

Starting Friday, October 3 at 6:20 PM certain laws take affect that become part of the observance of Yom Kippur. One must abstain from:

1. Eating or drinking
2. Showering
3. Marital relations
4. Wearing leather shoes
5. Using perfumes or ointments

Eating or Drinking

- Any amount of food or drink is forbidden.
- Children under nine years of age are not obligated to fast.
- Children between 9 and 10 years old should be taught to fast for a few hours.
- Children 11 years old should try to fast at least Yom Kippur eve and half the day.
- Boys thirteen and older and girls twelve and older are obligated to fast.
- Pregnant women are obligated to fast unless ordered by a competent physician not to. (Consult a Rabbi for further inquiry)
- Nursing women up to 3 days after childbirth may not fast.

Critically ill people with a competent physician's order to eat, may not fast.

- Smoking is strictly forbidden.
- One should note rinse or brush teeth

HOWEVER THOSE NOT ABLE TO FAST SHOULD NOT INDULGE IN FOOD OR DRINK.

Washing and Showering

One is permitted to wash their hands for the following purposes:

- Morning “Netilat Yadaim” (upon waking up)
- Before every prayer
- If they are clearly dirty
- After using the restroom
- Washing or rinsing eyes upon waking is permitted.

Marital Relations

Marital relations are forbidden on this day.

Wearing Leather Shoes

- It is forbidden to wear shoes made wholly or partially of leather.
- It is permitted to wear shoes made of wood, rubber, plastic, or any man made material that does not contain leather.

Using Perfumes or Ointments

- It is forbidden to use perfumes, ointments, or creams for pleasure or looking good.
- It is permitted, however, to use ointments and creams for medical purposes such as burns, infections, skin conditions, rashes, etc.
- It is permitted to use deodorant or antiperspirant.

Editors Notes

Rising to the Source of All Blessing

Yesterday afternoon, my daughter Mariyah texted me from school after one of her classes. She said she had a question that was bothering her. I called her back, but she was going into another class and she asked me to remind her to talk about it later that night. So at about ten last night, I called her as I would be away for the evening. During class, one of the students asked a question. “We learn that everything is decided on Rosh Hashana and sealed on Yom Kippur for everyone in the world including who will live and who will die. And we, as Jews, plead to be inscribed in the book of life. 99.9% of the people in the world do not even recognize this period of judgment? So why do they live and why do some of us die?”

I asked what her teacher's response was. She related that sometimes life is considered Olam HaBah; life in the world to come and that's the life we pray for.

I immediately thought of the sage Elisha ben Abuyah who was a colleague of Rabbi Akiba and a teacher of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes. He became a heretic after he saw a father instruct his son to get some eggs from a tree. The boy climbed the tree, sent away the mother bird, fell down and died. Here, the boy had fulfilled both the obligation to honor his father and to shoo away the bird. Both promise as a reward the gift of long life, yet he had not received a long life! Elisha became known as Acher or The Other . The Rabbis explain that the fallacy in Elisha ben Abuyah's analysis is that the phrase “long life” does not mean physically. Its referent is spiritual, i.e., in the Next World.

And I understood right away why anyone, let alone a 14 year old would be bothered by this answer. Imagine telling one's congregants that we are not praying for anything in this world, we are only praying for the future world. Half the crowd would disappear.

There is perhaps a better answer, but I wondered how to give it over in the time it would take to give an elevator pitch.

We are all born and our lives are highly influenced by our parents or DNA, by our environment and by our Mazal. Very often those factors can be limiting to the point where our lives seem pre-destined and pre-determined. The key is being able to rise above what is and what should be to what can be.

As Jews, do we believe in Mazal and astrological determination? Rabbi Chanina said, "Mazal gives wisdom, gives wealth, and Israel is affected by it." Rabbi Yochanan stated, "There is no Mazal for Israel". So which is it and if everything is in fact determined from our moment of conception, then what is the point of being judged for life or death or for a good year or bad year?

Rabbi Nissan Dubov writes, The Talmud states that there is a "Mazal of the hour." The time, day, and date when a person is born has an important influence on his destiny. The stars in the sky also form an important link in G-d's providence over the physical world. Between G-d and Man, there are many levels of interaction, the lowest being those between the angels and stars. The Midrash and Zohar state, "There is no blade of grass that does not have a "constellation"—Mazal—over it, telling it to grow." This means that G-d's providence works through the angels, but these angels in turn work through the stars and planets. We see that the Divine influence and flow comes through the angels, through the stars, and finally to earth. It is a channel through which spiritual forces flow down to the world and influence the physical.

To understand the idea behind Mazalot and destiny, let us go to our forefather Abraham who was the greatest astrologer in history. The verses tell us that Abram turns to Hashem and pleads, "O L-rd G-d, what will You give me, since I am going childless?" Abraham sees that his destiny is for him not to have children with Sarah.

And He took him outside, and He said, "Please look heavenward and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So will be your seed."

Rashi explains that Hashem took Abraham from outside his Mazal and He was telling Abraham: "Step outside your astrology," for you have seen in the signs of the zodiac that you are not destined to have a son. Indeed, Abram will have no son, but Abraham will have a son. Similarly, Sarai will not give birth, but Sarah will give birth. Rashi continues and explains that Hashem took him out of the terrestrial sphere and lifted him above the stars. This explains the expression of, "Please look", where instead of the word Roeh which typically means "to see", we use the word Habet which specifically means "looking down from above". It was as though G-d took Abraham to a place above the stars where he could look down upon them and would not be governed by them.

So when Rabbi Yochanan states, "There is no Mazal for Israel". He means that Israel has the ability to rise above their stars and to change destiny.

This I believe is the entire idea of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and the days between them. This is Tishrei where the letters are Taf, Shin and Resh – the last three of the alphabet form a ladder from the ground up to the symbolic yud. This is a period of the year where we have an opportunity to rise up above our world which the Rabbis call the world of Action, above the world of the Mazalot which the Rabbis call the world of formation, all the way up to the world of Creation which is the source of all blessing. This is the world of Teshuba of repentance as the Rabbis teach us that one who is repentant can reach an even higher level. This world is symbolized by Shofar and Shabbat and Torah. This is the Mekor Chayim – the source of life. This is the world where anything and everything is possible and where we have no limits. When Moses tells us to choose life he is telling us to access this special place of Chayim of life. This is the first day of the seventh month and we must always remember that it is in our hands to determine the months and the days as is explained in the laws of the court declaring rosh Hodesh or the new moon. We have the power.

I explained to Mariyah that one way of looking at Rosh Hashana is through this prism. Everyone in the world is judged. Everyone in the world continues on their destined paths. It is only us, the 1 in 1000 who have been given the gift of Rosh Hashana who can climb above fate and fortune, above luck and destiny to a place where we too can look down at the stars and where anything is possible.

Gemar Chatimah Tovah
Rabbi David Bibi

PS ... For homework, discuss this concept with your Rabbi from the perspective of the four letter name of Hashem. The upper Yud and Heh and then the Lower Vav and Heh. The lowest Heh represents our world. The Vav is the powers that govern it. The upper Heh is the source of life and blessing for our world and it is bonded to the upper yud. Power flows through the Vav. This is this time of year when we can climb up the Vav and raise the lower Heh to the upper Heh. Let me know how the conversations go

PSS ... The following is by Bruce Blakeman. Bruce is the newest member of our Synagogue. He is a strong supporter of Israel and defender of Jewish rights. Last week I was with Bruce when he spoke outside of Lincoln Center along with hundreds protesting against the Met's decision to go ahead with "The Death of Leon Klinghoffer". With no Jewish Republican Congress, it would behoove us to learn more about him and to offer our support and perhaps get a seat on that side of the aisle.

LIBERAL MAINSTREAMING OF ANTI-SEMITISM Bruce Blakeman

On October 7, 1985, Leon Klinghoffer, 69, a wheelchair-bound Jewish U.S citizen, was on a cruise on the Achille Lauro along with his wife Marilyn, to celebrate their 36th wedding anniversary, when four hijackers from the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) took control of the liner off Egypt. The liner had been sailing from Alexandria to Port Said, Egypt. The morning of the hijacking many of the passengers had already disembarked at Port Said, in Egypt, for a day trip to the Sphinx. For Leon Klinghoffer it was impossible to get on and off tour busses since he was wheelchair bound, so he and his wife Marilyn stayed on board. The Four Palestinian terrorists had planned to get off in Israel, just like the Klinghoffers. They had planned a terror attack and bloodbath in the port of Ashdod. Around midday the next day on October 8th, a ship's steward discovered the Palestinian terrorists cleaning their guns. The Palestinians panicked. They couldn't wait for Ashdod. They took command of the ship charging into the dining room, shooting into the air, while lunch was being served. "Get down! Get down!" shouted the terrorists, Leon couldn't get down. "Everyone to the deck!" the Palestinian terrorist demanded, Marilyn tried pushing Leon's wheelchair, or even just staying with him, "I'm not going anywhere without my husband." She was forced to go to the deck, without her husband, at gunpoint. "Don't worry," said the Palestinian terrorist to Marilyn. "He'll be taken care of." Marilyn and Leon surely exchanged a final glance as she was yanked away. The ship's passengers were forced to lie for

hours in the sun. Marilyn's head was smacked by a rifle butt.

As in Nazi Germany, as in the airport at Entebbe, the killers divided the prisoners: Jews here, non-Jews there. The Palestinian terrorists singled out Klinghoffer, a Jew, for murder, by shooting him in the forehead and chest as he sat in his wheelchair.. "He couldn't even defend himself," said a fellow passenger, a witness to the cold-blooded murder; "They said he was useless anyway." This sad event, one example out of the many thousands of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel terror attacks perpetrated against Jews begs to be portrayed and depicted for what it is a murderous anti-Semitic hatred of Jews and of Israel.

On October 20th, less than three weeks from today, the New York Metropolitan Opera will be debuting "The Death of Leon Klinghoffer", an opera that treats the victim and the perpetrators in a terrorist murder as morally equivalent. Many belonging to the New York liberal community have come out in support of an opera production that depicts and rationalizes both anti-Semitism and the murder of Jews. At a time when Jew hatred is on the rise around the globe, with anti-Semitic attacks occurring daily in the streets of European cities and as well as on the streets of New York, the Met's general manager Peter Gelb, a fellow Jew, has been commended for the Met being "true to its artistic mission."

It is now fashionable to trash both Christians and Jews in the name of art. In 2012, a Manhattan art gallery held an exhibit that included a so-called work of art called "Immersion" (Piss Christ) which was defended by liberals as a legitimate work of art. The defenders of the Met's decision to go on with the production of "The Death of Leon Klinghoffer" seems to endorse the idea that the hatred of Jews falls under the category of those ideas or beliefs that may be justifiably debated rather than condemning them similar to what would be done in response to a production seen as racist.

The production of "The Death of Leon Klinghoffer" is only the most recent example of how in recent years, anti-Semitism has crept in through the cracks from being a marginal occurrence to being accepted by mainstream society and given center stage at the Met for all the world to see and hear. That is exactly the meaning of an opera that equates terrorist and victim, and rationalizes the cold-blooded murderer of a wheel-chair bound man merely because he was a Jew.

The plague of anti-Semitism has grown in recent years shaking Jewish communal life to its core. The acceptance of anti-Semitic behavior and violence by mainstream society is largely in response to the glorification of terrorism when directed at Jews. Many Jewish liberal brethren are at the heart of this self-

defeating tendency to deny the true implications of anti-Semitic content in all facets of activity; the arts, in journalism, in economic policy, in academia, the list goes on and on.

This liberal attack on religion can only be explained in terms of both anti-Semitism and those who believe Government should be the only religion in America. Government is not a religion, although the socialists believe that it is.

As a candidate for the 4th Congressional District, I will advocate legislation that will prohibit, by law, the spending of taxpayer dollars on cultural expenditures which mainstream anti-Semitism and anti-Christian activities, regaining the moral high ground for all America.

THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“Confess upon it all the iniquities of the Children of Israel.” (Aharei Mot 17:21)

On the very holy day of Yom Kippur, from all the words of confession that are said so many times, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef ז"ל would cry uncontrollably when he said “רְתִירוֹת דּוֹתְלָם וּבִטְלָן - we wasted time from studying your Torah.” How strange! Why would Maran cry so hard when saying these words? Did he waste any time from learning? All of his days and nights were dedicated to intense learning. If he cried about wasting time and not learning, what is there for us?

We can answer with a simple parable.

Imagine a diamond dealer and an average person who were shown two diamonds, and only one was real. They were then asked to pick out the real one. The regular guy can be easily fooled into picking the wrong one because he is not a professional and cannot easily tell a real diamond from a fake. However a diamond dealer can immediately tell which is the real thing.

So too with Hacham Ovadiah. Only because he dedicated himself completely to non-stop learning was he truly the one who could understand and feel the value of every second of learning. Therefore he was so sensitive to every second, every fraction of a second, that was lost. As a result of that feeling, he cried so hard when it was mentioned in the confession.

May this be a year that we all taste the true sweetness of Torah learning.

Tizku l'shanim rabot! Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Gemara tells a story. There was once a drought in Israel which was causing a tremendous famine. R' Eliezer, the great leader of that generation ordered fasting and special prayers with twenty-four blessings, but they weren't answered. R' Akiba then got up and said "Abinu Malkenu, Our Father our King,

please have mercy on us," and rain came down. The students began to whisper, "How come the great R' Eliezer wasn't answered and R' Akiba, who was his student, was answered?" A voice came down from Heaven and said, "Do not think the student is greater than the Rabbi, rather the student overcomes his character traits which merited this miracle."

R' Salanter asks the obvious question:

Doesn't this mean that R' Akiba is still greater, since he overcomes his character traits? He answers that R' Eliezer came from very noble stock and therefore his personality was very refined from birth. His character traits were all positive. R' Akiba, however, whose ancestry had converts in it, had to overcome personality traits which he inherited. He had to perfect himself by overcoming his nature. Therefore, he merited to have miracles that Hashem also "overcame his nature" (so to speak) and allowed rain to come, even if not deserved.

We see here the power of overcoming one personality trait. If we refrain from responding when insulted, or hold back our anger when provoked, we can bring about miracles since we controlled our nature. We have experienced a difficult year and we all want to see Divine mercy and compassion. If we exhibit these very same traits then Hashem changes His nature and will bring us a year of health, happiness and prosperity. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Happiest Day of the Year

On the night of Yom Kippur, immediately following Kal Nidreh, we recite as part of our prayer service a verse from the Book of Bamidbar (15:26): "The entire Israelite congregation, and the convert residing in its midst, shall be forgiven – for the entire nation [transgressed] unintentionally" ("Ve'nislach Le'chol Adat Beneh Yisrael Ve'la'ger Ha'gar Be'tocham Ki Le'chol Ha'am Bi'shgaga").

The question arises, how can we possibly claim "Ki Le'chol Ha'am Bi'shgaga," that all the sins we transgressed over the past year were committed unintentionally? Did we not commit any willful sins the entire year? How can we honestly come before God and demand forgiveness on the grounds that all our sins were accidental?

The answer touches upon what is likely the most fundamental question concerning Teshuva. Why is God prepared to erase all our wrongdoing from our record? We understand that He is compassionate and prepared to forgive. But why does He go so far as to erase our sins from memory? It is as though He takes a video recording of our lives and deletes all segments that involve sinful behavior. Indeed, in this

same verse, we make reference to “the convert residing in its midst,” drawing a comparison to repentance and conversion. Just as Halacha treats a convert as a “newborn child,” and his past history prior to his conversion is completely erased, similarly, by performing Teshuva we are able to erase our shameful past. By now most of us probably take this for granted, but if we think about it for a moment, it is mind-boggling. On what basis does God rewrite our history?

The answer is that there is a spark of goodness, of sanctity, deep within the soul of every person. Regardless how far a person has fallen into the abyss of sin, this spark continues to burn; it is inextinguishable.

The Rambam, in a famous ruling, writes that if a recalcitrant husband refuses to give his wife a Halachic divorce, the court (in the times when it had the authority to do so) would beat him until he agreed to grant the divorce. Even though a Halachic divorce requires the will of a husband, a divorce given under this kind of duress is nevertheless valid, the Rambam writes, because in the husband’s subconscious, he wants to do the right thing. The Bet Din does not force its will upon the husband, but rather removes the obstruction from the true desire of his heart to do what is proper. Every person’s true intent is to do the right thing, but our hearts are sometimes “blocked” by obstructions that we simply need to remove to allow our true will to surface.

As we begin Yom Kippur, it is natural for us to feel discouraged. Why should we bother repenting? Do we even deserve God’s attention, let alone His forgiveness? We therefore proclaim, right from the outset, “Ki Le’chol Ha’am Bi’shgaga!” Our true intention is and always has been to do God’s will. We have been dissuaded and led astray by our evil inclinations, and our inner spark has been covered over by layers of darkness, but deep inside, we all want to do what is right. All our sins are indeed a “Shegaga,” a mistake, a careless swerve off the road. Our real intention is to do only the right thing.

And this is how Hashem can erase our record. Once we find that inner spark of holiness within our souls, it is determined that all our sins were “unintentional,” and can therefore be erased from the “video.”

Our Sages described Yom Kippur as one of the happiest days of the year. We are not despondent or dejected on this day. To the contrary, we are invigorated and inspired by the words that should be ringing in our ears throughout Yom Kippur – “Ki Le’chol Ha’am Bi’shgaga!” Yom Kippur is the day

which reminds us that deep inside, we are all good, we are all holy, and therefore God wants us to return to Him. He will not reject sincere prayer and repentance, because He sees that spark inside us which is never extinguished.

Three times a day, in our Amida prayer, we describe Hashem as “Ha’rose Bi’tshuba” – “Who desires [our] repentance.” If there was even a single Jew whose repentance God is not willing to accept, we could not recite this Beracha. The fact that we recite it proves that God desires the Teshuba of each and every one of us. There is no sinner on earth who cannot perform Teshuba, because there is no sinner on earth whose inner spark of Kedusha has been extinguished.

The Talmud in Masechet Aboda Zara tells the astounding story of Elazar Ben Dordaya, who was, literally, addicted to lust. He visited every Zona (woman of ill-repute) in the world, and at one point he traveled a great distance and spent an enormous fortune to visit such a woman. As he was with her, she mentioned to him that he could not repent. Her remark rattled Elazar, and he ran from her house, looked up to the heavens, and repented. As he wept, his soul departed, and a voice burst forth from the heavens announcing that he has earned a share in the world to come.

This story teaches that God will go anywhere – even to a house of ill-repute!! – in order to bring back one of His children who has gone astray. Just as a father will jump into a malodorous trash bin to save his child, similarly, God will go anywhere He is needed to inspire a sinner to repent. Even if everyone else has despaired from a certain sinner, God never despairs. He still sees that spark of Kedusha, and knows that this spark can ignite a raging fire of holiness and spiritual devotion.

Of course, this will only happen if we ourselves recognize this spark. We must trust in our ability to return, and in God’s willingness to accept us. And when we have this trust, Yom Kippur is truly the most joyous, most exciting, and most exhilarating day on the Jewish calendar.

Rabbi Wein

The holiest day of the year is upon us. The time of atonement and forgiveness, of introspection and self-analysis has again arrived. The unique quality of the day of Yom Kippur is that it is a day of cleansing. Just as our refraining from food and drink on that day helps cleanse us physically, so too does our participation in prayer, serious thought, recognition of

personal faults and a new commitment to do better in the future cleanse our souls.

We are all well aware that the buildup of plaque in one's arteries is dangerous to health, and that surgical and medicinal intervention is often necessary. Unfortunately, during the year a great deal of plaque has built up in the mental, emotional and spiritual arteries of our being. Yom Kippur is an opportunity to remove or reduce that plaque buildup and to focus our attention on staying healthy both physically and spiritually.

There is no easy way or shortcut to accomplish this goal. The Talmud records for us opinion, in the name of the great Rabi Meir, that merely passing through the day of Yom Kippur itself can accomplish this end without our active participation. However, Jewish law and tradition does not accept Rabi Meir's opinion as binding. Instead, human repentance is required in order for the cleansing process of Yom Kippur to be effective.

Yom Kippur is not to be viewed as a passive day of restraint and refraining but rather as a day of active participation in the process of cleansing our souls and purifying our emotions.

Because of this required conscious and active effort of repentance, Yom Kippur is transferred from being purely a day of rest into a day of wrenching emotional and spiritual activity. It is possible to sleep away the entire day and technically not violate any of the prohibitions. But it is unimaginable that if one does so that one has really experienced Yom Kippur.

The most difficult part of the day is not, in my opinion, hunger, thirst or physical fatigue - it is the necessity to honestly confront ourselves and face up to our weaknesses. We are required to focus on those areas in our life and in our relations to others that need attention and improvement.

We are all born with the gift of denial. Original man in the Garden of Eden, when confronted by God with the enormity of his sin, does not readily admit fault at all. He casts about to put the blame on others, and the others in turn lay their guilt upon still others. The ability to admit error is one of the most difficult psychological and emotional traits encountered in life.

Yet, without that ability and by remaining in constant denial of one's shortcomings, there is little hope for improvement and for achieving a more balanced and productive life. Yom Kippur can cleanse us and create us anew. But it cannot do so unless we are willing to face our own failings.

When the Temple stood in Jerusalem and the High Priest of Israel performed the public rituals of Yom Kippur, forgiveness, cleansing and personal improvement were somehow meant to be easier to obtain. However, even then under such optimal circumstances, the Jewish people did not truly exploit the opportunity of repentance. The result was that both Temples were destroyed.

In a strange way, Yom Kippur, over the almost two millennia since the destruction of the Second Temple, has become even more of a spiritual and emotional day. Since we can no longer rely on the Temple services or on the intercession of the High Priest on our behalf, we have become well aware that much depends upon us - and only upon us.

The removal of denial is the first step towards becoming a better person, building a stronger family, creating a more just and righteous community and strengthening our nascent state here in the Land of Israel. We should make a great effort not to allow Yom Kippur to slip away from us merely as a day of rest and restraint.

The gift of Yom Kippur is that for at least one day in the year we can be honest with ourselves and truly unite with our inner self and soul. Whether we do so or not is completely dependent upon each and every one of us - solely upon our attitude, thoughts, behavior and commitment on this holiest day of the year.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

I don't know whether you ever noticed, but teshuvah, the whole cycle of repentance and forgiveness, plays no part in the early dramas of humankind. It doesn't in the story of Adam and Eve. As for Cain, God mitigates his punishment but he doesn't forgive him for his crime. There is no call to repentance to the generation of the Flood, or the builders of Babel, or the people of Sodom and the cities of the plain.

The first time God forgives is after the sin of the golden calf. He hears Moses prayer and agrees. "Although this is a stiff-necked people," he said, "forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance." And God did. Moses pleaded again after the sin of the spies: "Forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." And God replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked."

Why the change? Why does God forgive in the book of Exodus but not in the book of Genesis? The

answer, I think, is extraordinary and it made a huge difference to me when I realised it.

The first recorded instance of forgiveness in all of literature is the moment when Joseph, by then viceroy of Egypt, revealed his identity to his brothers, who had long before sold him as a slave. He forgives them. He says, it wasn't you, it was God. He said: "Don't be distressed or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." And it wasn't only then that Joseph forgave them. After their father Jacob had died, the brothers were anxious that now Joseph would take revenge. Once again Joseph forgave. And on that note the book of Genesis ends.

God did not forgive human beings until human beings learned to forgive. It took Joseph to bring forgiveness into the world. That is what God was waiting for. Had God forgiven first, He would have made the human situation worse, not better. People would have said, 'Why shouldn't I harm others? After all, God forgives.' We have to forgive others before God can forgive us.

So, before Yom Kippur, take time to apologise to others you may have offended. Forgive others who have offended you. Resentment is a heavy load to bear. Let go of it and you will travel more lightly. Now is the time to heal the wounds of the past. Then you will have more energy for the future.

Instant Atonement (Let It Go)

By: Rav Uri Cohen

If you really want something in this life, you have to work for it. Now quiet, they're about to announce the lottery numbers. – Homer Simpson

People are always looking for the get-rich-quick scheme, the magic bullet, the bandaid solution. So with the approach of Yom Kippur, which is the best time for searching our souls, confessing our sins, and begging people and God for forgiveness, at least some of us are probably wondering, "Isn't there a way to get atonement (kapparah) without all that effort?" As we will see, there is indeed a way – but there's a catch.

The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah declares, "If someone is ma'avir al midotav, [in Heaven] they remove (ma'avir) all his sins."<2> Excellent! Just like in a commercial, you can clean up sins in no time at all!<3> Now all we need to do is figure out exactly what the Talmud is asking us to do. What is the meaning of the strange expression "ma'avir al midotav"? Let's look at three possibilities.

The same phrase appears in a different context in the Talmud. It happened once that at a time of drought in Israel, two of the greatest rabbis stepped up to offer prayers for rain. Rabbi Eliezer's prayer went unanswered, but Rabbi Akiva's prayer succeeded and brought rain. The rabbis were all atwitter, since it certainly looked as if Rabbi Akiva had won a spiritual smackdown. Suddenly a heavenly voice (bat kol) corrected them: "It isn't that this one is greater than that one, but rather this one is ma'avir al midotav and that one isn't."<4>

Now, aside from our first question of what this phrase means, another question comes to mind. Wasn't the heavenly voice contradicting itself? If Rabbi Akiva did this ma'avir al midotav thing, doesn't that mean he was in fact greater than Rabbi Eliezer? This question appears in the 1500s, in the book entitled Beit Elokim by Rabbi Moshe Trani of Salonika and Tzfat. He answers that while objectively speaking, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer were equally great, Rabbi Akiva deserved more credit. Rabbi Eliezer was a naturally nice person, for whom it was easy to do the right thing.<5> Rabbi Akiva, on the other hand, was a naturally nasty person; he himself admitted that before he became a talmid chakham himself, he wished he could bite a talmid chakham like a donkey – whose bite can crush bones!<6> For Rabbi Akiva, doing the right thing was very difficult, because he had to overcome (ma'avir) his character traits (midotav). In the merit of that extra effort, his prayer for rain was answered.

A different understanding of this story is offered by the Chokhmat Mano'ach, a little commentary that's printed in the back of the Talmud. He suggests that Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Eliezer were equally great in following the letter of the law, but Rabbi Akiva went beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mishurat hadin). For example, even when a court ruled that he didn't have to pay someone money, Rabbi Akiva reasoned that the law is only a minimum standard for him (midotav), and he would go beyond (ma'avir) it and pay anyway. In that merit of that extra effort, his prayer for rain was answered.<7>

The third explanation of ma'avir al midotav appears in the Talmud itself. Once Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehoshua was so sick that Rav Pappa advised the next of kin to prepare for the funeral. Later, Rav Huna made a total recovery, and Rav Pappa felt pretty silly! Rav Huna reassured him that in fact he had been about to die, but in an NDE (near-death experience) he heard God saying, "Since he doesn't insist on his own rights, don't insist [on taking his life]." This is attributed to a pasuk which says "He forgives sin and [passes by] offenses" (Mikhah 7:18). The Talmud

clarifies: Whose sin does He forgive? The one who passes by offenses.<8> In other words, if you can forgive other people for offending and hurting you, then God will reciprocate and forgive you for your sins. Rashi elaborates: Let's say people hurt you so much that you can carry around a measurement (midotav) of how much pain you're suffering and how much pain they deserve to suffer. If you can bring yourself to let it go (ma'avir) and forgive them, the Heavenly Court will do the same to you and let go of your sins, so you'll be forgiven. This is what we pray for when we say, at the end of every Amidah, "To those who curse me, let my soul be silent and like dirt (velimkallelai nafshi tidom)." Not that we want to turn the other cheek when attacked, but that afterwards we want to be able to forgive and forget.

However, there's a catch. As the next words of the Talmud put it, it's like a sheep's delicious fatty tail that has a thorn caught in it (alyah vekotz bah). The next words of the pasuk are "to the leftovers of His inheritance," and the Talmud explains that this amazing power of forgiveness works only for someone who can act like leftovers. To put it a little differently, whether ma'avir al midotav involves overcoming your bad character traits, going beyond the letter of the law, or truly forgiving other people, the only way you'll be able to do that is if you've developed a deep humility.<9> And that's not easy! To paraphrase Homer Simpson above, if you really want humility, you have to work for it.

So this instant atonement isn't as simple as we might have hoped. But at least it beats confessing all those sins!

NOTES

1. The Simpsons, Episode 8F24: "Kamp Krusty," original airdate 9/24/92. Written by David M. Stern.
2. Rosh Hashanah 17a.
3. Compare the tongue-in-cheek product called "Wash Away Your Sins – Moist Towelettes." <http://www.neatoshop.com/product/Wash-Away-Your-Sins-Moist-Towelettes>
4. Ta'anit 25b.
5. Rabbi Moshe Trani (1505-1585), Beit Elokim, Sha'ar HaTeshuvah, at the end of Chapter 4. <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=14113&pgnum=65>
6. Pesachim 49b.
7. Rabbeinu Manoach (13th century), Chokhmat Mano'ach on Ta'anit 25b.
8. Rosh Hashanah 17a. This appears right after the other quote (note 2 above).
9. Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1901-1978), Sichot Mussar, Section 2 (5732), #38 (p. 140).

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