

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYELECH/SHABBAT SHUBAH

Haftarah: Hoshea 14:2-10, Yoel 2:11-27, Micah 7:18-20

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 6 TISHREI 5776

We still have Lulav and Etrog sets available - \$50. Please let us know if you would like one for the holidays

Minha & Arbit 6:41 PM -Candle Lighting 6:41 PM

Going Forward Mincha will be at candle lighting on Friday evenings

Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings

Shabbat

Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 9:02AM

Shahrit 8:30 AM, Torah 9:45 and Musaf at 10:30

Kiddush this week has no sponsor and we have no sponsors going forward
PLEASE sponsor a Kiddush

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer

Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/

Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Bach at 5:00PM –

Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 5:00

Class with Rav Aharon at 5:30PM

Minha 6:00 PM - Seudat Shelishit 6:30 PM in memory of David ben Sarina

Rabbi David is scheduled to give the class

Birkat HaMazon 7:25 PM Arbit 7:30 PM – Shabbat Ends at 7:40

HATARAT NEDARIM FOLLOWS ARBIT AT 7:45PM

SUNDAY MORNING 7:15 and Shaharit at 8AM

DAILY MINYAN – Monday and Tuesday - Selihot 6:15 AM followed by Shaharit

Thursday and Friday – Shaharit – Yehi Shem – 7:00AM

YOM KIPPUR SCHEDULEEreb Yom Kippur Tuesday the 22nd

Selihot 6:15 - Shahrit 7:00 AM Followed by hatarat Nedarim

Minha (some put Tefillin) 3:00 PM

Candle Lighting 6:34 PM

Fast Begins 6:40 PM

Kal Nidre 6:50PM – Please out on talet by 6:50

Wednesday September 23 – Yom Kippur

Shahrit 8:00 AM

Musaf 11:00 AM

Minha 4:45 PM

Ne'ilah Services 6:15 PM

Arbit 7:20 PM

Fast Ends – Habdalah 7:33 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

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 give you the World To Come!**

Editors Notes

On Sunday evening as we were preparing for Rosh Hashana, the heavens opened up with a huge downpour. A half hour later as we were on our way to the Synagogue for evening services, the sun was shining brightly while scattered raindrops drizzled down upon us. And then looking east, there appeared in the sky something I had never seen. A huge rainbow with one leg in the Ocean and the other at the bay completely filled the sky. People around us were pulling their cars over and stopping so they could get out and take pictures. And everyone repeated aloud that they had never seen anything like it in their lives. Halacha cautions us based on the Talmud not to stare at the rainbow as the Rainbow is Hashem's messenger and reflects the Shechina. But it was difficult not to stare in awe.

After God brought the deluge that destroyed the earth during the time of Noah, He made a covenant with Noah to never again bring such devastation to the world, and He designated the rainbow as the sign of this promise. Therefore, upon seeing a rainbow, we give thanks to the Almighty for keeping this promise and maintaining the world despite our unworthiness. We made the blessing, Zocher HaBrit, (Ve)Neeman BeBrito, VeKayam BeMaamaro; thanking G-d, who remembers the covenant, and is faithful to His covenant, and keeps His promise.

And as we got to the Synagogue, a second rainbow appeared shadowing the first. OK, G-d, you have our attention. Now some will argue that a rainbow in reality is a "meteorological phenomenon that is caused by reflection, refraction and dispersion of light in water droplets resulting in a spectrum of light appearing in the sky." Basically, rainbows are caused by the splitting of white sunlight into its component colors by raindrops.

But to have a rainbow now and this rainbow and then a second rainbow moments before we step into court for the Day of Judgment is one of those Heavenly coincidences. One had to wonder, "What is G-d telling us"?

Although some Rabbis write that one may not inform others of a rainbow's sighting understanding the appearance of a rainbow as an ominous sign for mankind, indicating that God's wrath has been aroused and He would destroy the world once again if not for His promise to Noah. I stepped into the Synagogue, opened wide the eastern door and told those seated in that section to come look outside. Hacham Ovadia Yosef explains that it is a Mitzvah to inform others of the appearance of a rainbow in the sky. Given the fact that we were stepping into Rosh Hashana one could argue that conveying this information enables people to perform the Mitzva of reciting a Beracha. One more Mitzvah, especially when we are told that we stand at fifty-fifty and anything will weigh the scales in our favor. Furthermore, given the fact that a rainbow signals divine wrath, the sighting of a rainbow inspires a person to perform Teshuva – to repent - and improve his conduct.

We live in a time of unprecedented wealth and freedom for the Jewish people. Whatever was written or said about the Golden Age in Spain, this period is better. I doubt that since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish people had things so good. And of course we face daily tragedies, sicknesses, communal poor and the like, but the overall situation is one of where we have a country, freedom to practice our religion, the ability to protect and defend ourselves, and the luxuries that come with our relative prosperity. With all these things it becomes easy to forget G-d and to believe as the Torah warns, Kochi VeOtzem Yadi--my own power and prowess brought me all this prosperity. It's as we were warned in the Torah a few weeks ago. VaYishman Yeshurun Vayivat - And Jeshurun became fat and rebelled.

To me it was obvious. G-d who does so much for us and who we tragically and often ignore especially when we don't need him, was reminding, maybe asking, maybe begging us, his children, to let him in. And it dawned on me then that perhaps this was the theme to the entire Holiday. From the unusual rounded challot that we bake reminding us that we are asking G-d that just as a circle has no end, we want an unending blessing, to the special food we eat. Each of those is to remind us that Hashem has given us an incredible gift and we should appreciate the sweetness in everything.

The shofar we blow, as a wakeup call and as a reminder that G-d created the world and set us apart at Mount Sinai as his chosen people and that He will redeem us.

The Torah portion of the birth of Isaac to a mother who was physically unable to conceive or carry a child reminds us that anything is possible. And the Haftarah which goes even further telling of the prayer of Hannah and the birth of Samuel where Hannah's husband gave up all hope and told her that he was as good as ten sons and how Hannah reacts in prayer going so far as to demand a child.

I could hear G-d saying, please talk to me. I imagined a mother who prepares dinner for her huge family and serves them and then becomes invisible with no one thanking or even acknowledging her presence. G-d gives us everything and when do we stop and say, thank you? When do we stop and just talk?

We sound the Shofar on Rosh Hashana. It's our wakeup call and the opportunity to connect to G-d and to return home. We have ten days to journey back. We have ten days to answer the knock at the door. We have ten days to talk. Listen closely, G-d is ringing the bell, he's flashing the lights, he's put up this unforgettable rainbow. It's up to us to let him in.

There was a song playing in my mind, echoing again and again. It was Paul McCartney singing, Someone's Knockin' At The Door. Somebody's Ringin' The Bell. Someone's Knockin' At The Door. Somebody's Ringin' The Bell. Do Me a Favor, Open The Door And Let 'Em In.

Let's all let Him in!

Shabbat Shalom,
Gemar Hatima Tova

David Bibi

Ann Coulter accuses Republican candidates of pandering to 'f---ing Jews'

Controversial conservative pundit Ann Coulter posted a series of arguably anti-Semitic tweets at the tail end of Wednesday night's Republican debate, accusing the candidates of pandering to Jewish voters, including one posing the hypothetical question of: "How many f---ing Jews do these people think there are in the United States?"

Coulter, who has 660,000 Twitter followers, was reacting to the frequent mentions of Israel made by participants in the second televised Republican debate held Wednesday at the Ronald Reagan Library in California.

She first tweeted criticism of former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Florida Senator Marco Rubio and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's

support for Israel when answering the question "What will AMERICA [emphasis her's] look like after you are president?", asking "How many f---ing Jews do these people think there are in the United States?" She also wrote: "Good Grief, Huckabee is running for prime minister of Israel."

Coulter, who has expressed support for the candidacy of Donald Trump, then proceeded to posit that the candidates may just be trying to "suck up to the Evangelicals."

Coulter concluded her Twitter-storm by offering "How to get applause from GOP donors: 1) Pledge to start a war 2) Talk about job creators 3) Denounce abortion 4) Cite Reagan 5) Cite Israel."

Coulter has previously come under fire for alleged anti-Semitism. In a 2007 interview on CNBC's "The Big Idea," Coulter told Jewish host Donny Deutsch that she wants her dream America to be completely Christian, and that she wanted "Jews to be perfected, as they say," referring to Jews being converted to Christianity.

To answer Coulter's question, up to 7 million Jews live in the United States.

Good grief! Huckabee is running for PM of Israel.
— Ann Coulter (@AnnCoulter) September 17, 2015
Cruz, Huckabee Rubio all mentioned ISRAEL in their response to: "What will AMERICA look like after you are president."

— Ann Coulter (@AnnCoulter) September 17, 2015
How many f---ing Jews do these people think there are in the United States?

— Ann Coulter (@AnnCoulter) September 17, 2015
Maybe it's to suck up to the Evangelicals.

— Ann Coulter (@AnnCoulter) September 17, 2015
Christie also talks @ Israel in response to the question: What will AMERICA look like after you are president?

— Ann Coulter (@AnnCoulter) September 17, 2015
How to get applause from GOP donors: 1) Pledge to start a war 2) Talk about job creators 3) Denounce abortion 4) Cite Reagan 5) Cite Israel.

A FRIEND FORWARDED THIS TO ME. He prefers to remain anonymous.

An ikar mitzvah of Yom Kipur is teshuba. Viduy (Ana) is a crucial component of this teshuba and seemingly can only be fulfilled if one actually understands what he is saying that he did wrong. In the Kipur amida we insert the recitation of Ana asking Hashem to forgive us for the sins we have done. We list them out in a short format. The words are very succinct and even if one has the English translation it is difficult to tell what each word connotes. Considering it is imperative to recite this tefilah understating what we are saying and with heartfelt emotion below is an explanation of the words in the Ana along with some things we can be thinking.

Viduy

Ashamnu- We are guilty! Asham is from the root word shemama (destruction). Thus we are saying we are guilty and really we deserve destruction/punishment.

Bagadnu- Bagad means to betray. We were ungrateful and disloyal. We betrayed our covenant with you Hashem. Think of all Hashem gave us! Spouse, Kids, Family, money. We didn't appreciate the good Hashem gave us!

Gazalnu- We stole, we benefited from this world without a beracha, we stole time from our employer, we did genevat daat, we borrowed without permission.

Dibarnu dofi- Echad ba'peh and echad ba'lev (we said things that were not sincere). We falsely flattered people (attributing power to them and fearing them. We forgot Hashem that you are the only one with any power!).

Ve'lashon hara- Oh, how much lashon hara we have spoken! We sat as a group and spoke badly about people behind their backs. About our friends! How embarrassed would we be if they knew what we said! How terrible would we feel if others did that to us!

He'evinu- We led the straight person on a crooked path (this is relevant with our children. We taught them bad midot by the way we act at home. The bad midot they learn from the way we get angry or act impatient in front of them. The unimportant things they learned were important from what we spend time talking about on the table).

Ve'hireshanu- We made others into resha'iym (by judging them unfavorably and not giving them the benefit of the doubt. We did this to our kids!)

Zadnu- We did sins with kavana. We knew it was wrong and did it anyway!

Hamasnu- We took something against someone's will. We knew they wouldn't or couldn't say no and we asked anyway. Think of if we did this as a boss, spouse or parent.

Tafalnu sheker oo'mirma- We spoke lies. Oh how we lied in business. We didn't trust in Hashem!

Ya'asnu etsot ra'ot- We gave bad advice. We intentionally misled people.

Kizabnu- We said we would do things and didn't fulfill (think of all the resolutions we made from last year and didn't keep! We don't even remember what they were!).

(Ka'asnu) - We got angry (we raised our voice or were quick with our spouse, kids, employees or co-workers). The zohar discusses what a huge sin anger is. And by us it is a regular occurrence!!

Lasnu- We made fun of important things. We wasted our time with idle talk. We have wasted our lives in foolishness, time which we will never be able to

recover back! What are we going to answer to Hashem as to why we wasted the time he gave us! Why we wasted our time with silliness. Hashem gave us so many healthy years, what have we accomplished with our lives!!

Losasnu- We mocked and ridiculed others. We bullied others. We embarrassed friends and relatives in public.

Maradnu- We rebelled against Hashem

Ni'asnu- We angered Hashem with our sins

Ni'afnu- We committed sins of arayot (looking at the wrong things, doing the wrong things, going to places where we shouldn't be, touching those that are assur to us (even in an unaffectionate way).

Nishbanu la'shav ve'lasheker- We swore falsely. How many times we said we would do something and never did it.

Sararnu- We strayed. Our heart deviated from avodat Hashem (we ignored our responsibilities).

Avinu- We committed sins because of perverted reasoning

Pashanu- We sinned rebelliously.

(Pagamnu)- We blemished the upper worlds with our sins. We don't realize the effect our sins have!

Sararnu- We caused distress to others. Think of all the pain we caused our friends, kids, employees, co-workers. Think about that one person that we are just not nice to for some reason. Why!!

(Si'arnu ab va'em)- Oh how much pain and grief we caused our parents when we were younger!! How disrespectful and unappreciative we were. And even now we don't give them enough respect! We answer them back. We interrupt them when speaking. We treat their needs as a burden! How ungrateful we are!!

Kishinu oref- We were stubborn. We did not accept rebuke (instead we just defended our actions). We did not change our views even though we knew we were wrong.

Rashanu- We did something to deserve being called a rasha.

Shihatnu- We committed sins that corrupt our character. They include wasting seed, arrogance, anger, looking away from giving sedaka.

Tiavnu- We committed abominations (i.e., arayot)

Ta'inu- Instead of drawing closer to Hashem we distanced ourselves

Ve'ti'atanu- Trickery, pretending to be something you are not

Ve'sarnu me'mitsvotecha- Above we listed all mitsvot lo taaseh. Now we are saying not only did we do things we weren't supposed to but we also didn't keep your positive mitsvot. We didn't do the mitsvot asseh.

Oomimishpatecha ha'tovim- The "good" mishpatim is referring to the mitsvot ben Adam lehavero. A mishpat, as opposed to a "hok" is a mitsvah that has

some intuitive logic to it. And the epitome of this is the mitsvot between man and his friend thus they are referred to as the mishpatecha "ha'tovim".

Ve'lo shava lanu- The sins we didn't benefit us. It wasn't worth it! I gave up my olam haba for these foolish sins of fleeting pleasure! It wasn't worth it (let us dwell on this line as it shows that we regret our sins and regret is a vital component of teshuva).

Ve'ata sadik al kol haba alenu ki emet asita ve'anachnu hireshanu- The orot siduur on the bottom notes this is an important line that must be said with great devotion and humility. It is important because are acknowledging here that whatever punishment we get we deserve (and if we don't get that punishment it is only because of Hashem's great kindness. But really we deserve to be punished).

*The above is a compilation based on what the writer saw in the orot sidur, the avodat tefilah sidur, a class from Rabbi Eli Matalon, and an article on the viduy written by Rabbi Yosef Bitton. He also elaborated further on some points to help us better relate to some of these ideas.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading 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 as he will 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 with 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.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"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

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. Tizku Leshanim Rabot!
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Aseret Yemeh Teshuba- The Three Questions
Posed to Hillel

The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat (31a) tells a remarkable story of two men who wagered a large sum of money to be awarded to the one who could get Hillel angry. Hillel, the leading Rabbi of his time, was known for his extraordinary patience, and the two men bet on who could disturb Hillel to the point where he lost his cool.

One of them went to Hillel's house on Friday as Hillel was bathing. He called out to Hillel, and Hillel wrapped himself in a robe and came to the door. The man told Hillel that he had a question to ask: "Why are the Babylonians' heads round?"

Hillel replied, "You asked a great question," and explained that the midwives in Babylonia were inept, and their incompetence when delivering infants resulted in the awkwardly-shaped heads.

Hillel returned to the bath, and the man again knocked on the door. This time, he asked Hillel why the people of Tarmud had poor eyesight. Hillel again complimented the man for his "great question," and explained that these people lived "by the sands" which affected their eyes. The man knocked a third time, to ask Hillel why the people of Africa had wide feet. Hillel answered that these people lived by the water, and this made their feet wide.

At first glance, this story is told simply to demonstrate Hillel's limitless patience and humility, calmly and respectfully answering ludicrous questions posed to him as he was rushing to complete his Shabbat preparations on Friday afternoon. This itself would be inspiring and instructive for us, particularly during the period of the Aseret Yemeh Teshuba, the Ten Days of Repentance from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur. Upon further reflection, however, these three questions are deep and profound, and Hillel's answers were especially directed toward this critical time of year.

When the Gemara tells that this story occurred on Ereb Shabbat, it may very well mean that it took place on the eve of the great Shabbat – Yom Kippur, which the Torah calls "Shabbat Shabbaton." In the

final hours before Yom Kippur, Hillel was "bathing" – he was undergoing the process of cleansing which is to occupy all of us during this time. And it is from the perspective of this context, his intensive preparations for Yom Kippur, that Hillel responded to this man's questions.

The first question related to the "round heads" of the Babylonians. Elsewhere (Besa 16a), the Gemara calls the Babylonians "foolish" because they ate "bread with bread." This has been explained to mean that the Babylonians lived their lives as an endless cycle of working and eating. They worked to eat and ate to work; they worked to earn a livelihood which sustained them so they had the energy to work the next day. Their lives were "round," spinning around endlessly in this cycle, without any meaning, purpose or goal. Hillel explained that this was the result of the incompetent "midwives" – a euphemism for the Rabbis, those who are to guide the people's development much as a midwife guides the infant out of the womb. The Rabbis failed in their responsibility to lead and inspire the people to find a loftier meaning to their lives, and so the people found themselves mired in an endless rat race, without pausing to reflect upon and contemplate the meaning of it all.

The people of Tarmud are described as a promiscuous and hedonistic society (Yevamot 16), and thus the question was asked why their "eyesight" – their perception of life – was so poor. They viewed life as nothing more than an opportunity for pleasure, and this is what they spent their time pursuing. Hillel explained that this is because they lived in "Hol" ("sand"), which also means "workday." These people did not have the benefit of Shabbat, which refocuses our attention onto G-d and spirituality, reminding us that life is about far more than pleasure and indulgence. One who lives only in "Hol," without experiencing the spiritual delight of Shabbat, has a skewed perspective on life, thinking that fulfillment and satisfaction can be achieved only through physical indulgence.

Finally, Hillel addressed the question of the Africans' "wide feet," a euphemistic reference to wealth. Hazal elsewhere note that "feet" are symbolic of one's material possessions, as they enable him to "stand" and support himself. The Africans had "wide feet," Hillel explained, because they lived near the "water" – meaning, Torah, which is often compared to water. The secret to material success is regular involvement in Torah learning, as the Mishna in Abot famously exhorts, "If there is no Torah, there is no flour" ("Im En Torah En Kemah"). Of course, we must work for a

living, but the key to success lies in the time devoted each day to Torah.

This is what we need to think about as we “bathe” and try cleansing ourselves in preparation for Yom Kippur. As we reflect and take stock of our lives, we must consider whether we are living for a higher purpose, whether we have our priorities straight, and whether we set aside enough time each day for Torah. Hillel is teaching us that too many of us squander our lives, spending it in an endless pursuit of wealth and pleasure, without taking time to think about a higher meaning and purpose. Now, before Yom Kippur, is when we need to take a step back, consider what our real goals ought to be, and what changes we need to make in order to achieve them.

Rabbi Wein THE NEW YEAR

As part of our human nature, we begin a new year with great optimism and hope, though experience has taught us that there is no year that does not contain its share of problems. And some of the challenges that we may face, the very severe ones, are not given to easy solutions. Nevertheless, that in no way dampens our hopes for a year of goodness, success, health and accomplishment.

We are also aware that the old year left us a residue of unsolved issues. There are dangerous situations and clouded vision regarding our future and what actions should be taken to safeguard that future. The dividing line between the old year and the new year is marked on the calendar but in the reality, the old year simply merges into the new year, acquiring a new date but not necessarily marking any fundamental change.

Because of this, the Jewish new year is always ushered in by ten days of reflection, controlled behavior and repentance. This period of time is meant to ameliorate the influence of the old year, its problems and disappointments and to allow us to advance forward by admitting past errors, both personal and national.

As anyone who drives an automobile will tell you, good use of the rearview mirror is essential to safe driving. Well that metaphor applies to all facets of human life as well. And these ten days, of sober reflection and honest reappraisal of our past deeds, become for us the rear view mirror that will allow us to navigate the twists and turns of the new year – twists and turns that will undoubtedly appear on our road of national and personal life.

It is very difficult to admit error. Many if not most of us are controlled by preset ideologies that govern our worldview and our reaction to events and problems. It is easy for us to disagree, criticize and even vilify others because of their views and beliefs. It is very difficult for us to turn that very same spotlight on ourselves. Self-righteousness is a very prevalent human condition, especially amongst those that hold steadfast ideologies.

The ten days of repentance is a period of time that is meant to train us in the ability to see our own faults and assess our own weaknesses. It instructs us to look inward and not outward towards others. Jewish tradition teaches us that during this period of time no court sessions are scheduled that deal with legal disputes between people. During this time we should not be concerned with “winning” as much as we should be concerned with our own self-improvement and our ability to adjust and compromise with situations and with other people.

In my rabbinic experience and I have been a rabbi for close to sixty years, I have known people who have discontinued their legal cases against others after reassessing themselves during this ten day period. Admittedly this only occurred in a small number of instances and was not the norm. Nevertheless, the fact that it did occur, even if only once, showed me the power of true self-evaluation and of the ability to let go of previously held views and self-justification.

One of the great Hasidic masters said that the power of honest self-evaluation restores our soul and connects us to our Creator. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult, as any spiritual advance is resisted by our innate animalistic nature and inclination to blame others for our problems and failures.

One of the lessons of this holy period of the calendar is that in the overall scheme of the universe we are pretty puny and relatively insignificant. The arrogance of self-importance contributes to much of our strife and discomfort. We are quick to judge others and very hesitant to look in our own rearview mirror.

It hurts, physically and psychologically, to admit being wrong in behavior, speech or attitude. The hurt that one feels in making such an admission is as great as the pain one suffers from a physical blow. And because we know that it is going to hurt, we are very reticent to look at ourselves honestly and to reassess our lives.

Yet we also know that there is no gain without pain and that if we wish to be better people we must steel ourselves, to look at ourselves and our actions

honestly and truthfully. This is the time of the year to do so and in so doing we can justify our appeal to Heaven to grant us a truly good and beneficial new year.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Torah as Song

Moses' long and tempestuous career is about to end. With words of blessing and encouragement he hands on the mantle of leadership to his successor Joshua, saying, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today. I may no longer go out and come in, since the Lord has said to me, you will not cross this Jordan." (31:2). As Rashi notes, he says, "I may not" not "I cannot." He is still in full bodily vigour, "his eye undimmed and his natural energy unabated." But he has reached the end of his personal road. The time had come for another age, a new generation, and a different kind of leader.

But before he takes his leave of life God has one last command for him, and through him, for the future: "And now write for yourselves this song and teach it to the children of Israel, put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me among the children of Israel" (32:19). The plain sense of the verse is that God was commanding Moses and Joshua to write out the song that follows, that of Haazinu, (32:1-43). So Rashi and Nahmanides understand it. But the oral tradition read it differently.

According to the sages, "And now write for yourselves" applies to the Torah as a whole. Thus the last of all the 613 commands is to write – or at least take part in writing, if only a single letter – a Torah scroll. Here is Maimonides' statement of the law:

Every Israelite is commanded to write a Torah scroll for himself, as it says, "Now therefore write this song," meaning, "Write for yourselves [a complete copy of] the Torah that contains this song," since we do not write isolated passages of the Torah [but only a complete scroll]. Even if one has inherited a Torah scroll from his parents, nonetheless it is a mitzvah to write one for oneself, and one who does so is as if he had received [the Torah] from Mount Sinai. One who does not know how to write a scroll may engage [a scribe] to do it for him, and whoever corrects even one letter is as if he has written a whole scroll. [1]

Why this command? Why then, at the end of Moses' life? Why make it the last of all the commands? And if the reference is to the Torah as a whole, why call it a "song"?

The oral tradition is here hinting at a set of very deep

ideas. First, it is telling the Israelites, and us in every generation, that it is not enough to say, "We received the Torah from Moses," or "from our parents." We have to take the Torah and make it new in every generation. We have to write our own scroll. The point about the Torah is not that it is old but that it is new; it is not just about the past but about the future. It is not simply some ancient document that comes from an earlier era in the evolution of society. It speaks to us, here, now – but not without our making the effort to write it again.

There are two Hebrew words for an inheritance: *nachalah* and *yerushah/ morashah*. They convey different ideas. *Nachalah* is related to the word *nachal*, meaning a river, a stream. As water flows downhill, so an inheritance flows down the generations. It happens naturally. It needs no effort on our part.

A *yerushah / morashah* is different. Here the verb is active. It means to take possession of something by a positive deed or effort. The Israelites received the land as a result of God's promise to Abraham. It was their legacy, but they nonetheless had to fight battles and win wars. *Lehavdil*, Mozart and Beethoven were both born to musical fathers. Music was in their genes, but their art was the result of almost endless hard work. Torah is a *morashah*, not a *nachalah*. We need to write it for ourselves, not merely inherit it from our ancestors.

And why call the Torah a song? Because if we are to hand on our faith and way of life to the next generation, it must sing. Torah must be affective, not just cognitive. It must speak to our emotions. As Antonio Damasio showed empirically in *Descartes' Error*[2], though the reasoning part of the brain is central to what makes us human, it is the limbic system, the seat of the emotions, that leads us to choose this way, not that. If our Torah lacks passion, we will not succeed in passing it on to the future. Music is the affective dimension of communication, the medium through which we express, evoke and share emotion. Precisely because we are creatures of emotion, music is an essential part of the vocabulary of mankind.

Music has a close association with spirituality. As Rainer Maria Rilke put it:

Words still go softly out towards the unsayable.

And music always new, from palpitating stones

Builds in useless space its godly home.

Song is central to the Judaic experience. We do not pray; we daven, meaning we sing the words we direct toward heaven. Nor do we read the Torah. Instead we chant it, each word with its own cantillation. Even rabbinical texts are never merely studies; we chant them with the particular sing-song known to all students of Talmud. Each time and text has its specific melodies. The same prayer may be sung to half-a-dozen different tunes depending on whether it is part of the morning, afternoon or evening service, and whether the day is a weekday, a Sabbath, a festival or one of the High Holy Day. There are different cantillation for biblical readings, depending on whether the text comes from Torah, the prophets, or the Ketuvim, 'the writings'. Music is the map of the Jewish spirit, and each spiritual experience has its own distinctive melodic landscape.

Judaism is a religion of words, and yet whenever the language of Judaism aspires to the spiritual it modulates into song, as if the words themselves sought escape from the gravitational pull of finite meanings. Music speaks to something deeper than the mind. If we are to make Torah new in every generation we have to find ways of singing its song a new way. The words never change, but the music does.

A previous Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Avraham Shapiro, once told me a story about two great Rabbinic sages of the nineteenth century, equally distinguished scholars, one of whom lost his children to the secular spirit of the age, the other of whom was blessed by children who followed in his path. The difference between them was this, he said: when it came to se'udah shlishit, the third Sabbath meal, the former spoke words of Torah while the latter sang songs. His message was clear. Without an affective dimension – without music – Judaism is a body without a soul. It is the songs we teach our children that convey our love of God.

Some years ago one of the leaders of world Jewry wanted to find out what had happened to the "missing Jewish children" of Poland, those who, during the war, had been adopted by Christians families and brought up as Catholics. He decided that the easiest way was through food. He organized a large banquet and placed advertisements in the Polish press, inviting whoever believed they had been born a Jew to come to this free dinner. Hundreds came, but the evening was on the brink of disaster since none of those present could remember anything of their earliest childhood – until the man asked the person sitting next to him if he could remember the song his Jewish mother had sung to him before going to sleep. He began to sing *Rozhinkes mit mandlen* ('Raisins

and almonds') the old Yiddish lullaby. Slowly others joined in, until the whole room was a chorus. Sometimes all that is left of Jewish identity is a song.

Rabbi Yehiel Michael Epstein in the introduction to the *Arukh ha-Shulchan*, *Choshen Mishpat*, writes that the Torah is compared to a song because, to those who appreciate music, the most beautiful choral sound is a complex harmony with many different voices singing different notes. So, he says, it is with the Torah and its myriad commentaries, its "seventy faces." Judaism is a choral symphony scored for many voices, the written text its melody, the oral tradition its polyphony.

So it is with a poetic sense of closure that Moses' life ends with the command to begin again in every generation, writing our own scroll, adding our own commentaries, the people of the book endlessly reinterpreting the book of the people, and singing its song. The Torah is God's libretto, and we, the Jewish people, are His choir. Collectively we have sung God's song. We are the performers of His choral symphony. And though, when Jews speak they often argue, when they sing, they sing in harmony, because words are the language of the mind but music is the language of the soul.

[1] Laws of Tefillin, Mezuzah and Sefer Torah, 7:1

[2] Antonio Damasio, *Descartes error: emotion, reason, and the human brain*, London, Penguin, 2005

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 ZTL

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