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Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

Malchus: The Theme of Rosh Hashanah

Democracy may have diminished our yiras shamayim (awe of Hashem). In the Talmud and Torah literature we often find parables that attempt to enhance our yiras shamayim by saying, "If one were in the presence of a mortal king, how cautious one would be with one's words and deeds. How much greater should one's caution be in the presence of the Almighty King." This may not have much impact on us, since we do not relate to a mortal king today. We elect a president for a period of time, who does not have unlimited powers. To the contrary, his powers are limited by congress and the courts. After his term is over, he is an ordinary citizen. Even in countries that do have a king, it is usually a ceremonial position, with power resting in the hands of an elected government.

Compare that with the Talmudical account of R' Yohanan ben Zakai, whose disciples visited him when he was ill, and found him crying. They said, "Light of Israel, the pillar of right, why are you crying?" R' Yohanan replied, "If I was being led to trial before an earthly king, who is here today but in his grave tomorrow, who, if he is angry with me, his anger is not eternal, who, if he imprisons me, the imprisonment is not eternal, who, if he puts me to death, my death is not eternal, and I am able to appease him with words or bribe him with money, yet I would be fearful and cry, and now, that I will be led before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, Whose life and existence is eternal, and if He is angry with me, his anger is eternal, and if He imprisons me, the imprisonment is eternal, and if He puts me to death, my death is eternal, and I cannot appease Him with words nor bribe Him with money, shall I not cry?"

The disciples then asked him, "Our teacher, bless us." R' Yohanan replied, "May your fear of Hashem be as great as your fear of mortals." The disciples said, "Is that all you can say to us?" R' Yohanan replied, "I wish that it were so. You must know, when a person commits a sin, he says, 'I just don't want a person to see me (but is not concerned that Hashem sees him).'"

Shortly before his death, R' Yohanan said, "Remove all the utensils so that they shall not become tamei (contaminated) when I die, and prepare a chair for Hizkiyahu, king of Judah, who is coming to escort me" (Berachos 28b).

This interchange between R' Yohanan and his disciples is most

enlightening. We believe Hashem exists and is all-powerful, but this belief is an abstraction, and may not be enough to deter a person from sin. If we have the emotional experience of the awe we have standing before a powerful earthly monarch, we may perhaps be able to extrapolate and develop the awe of standing before Hashem, the King of kings. But in a democratic country, where one may freely criticize the president or the ceremonial king, this reference point is lacking. R' Yohanan tells us that without this reference point, we may be remiss in awe of Hashem. We do not know what it means to tremble before a king. Hashem said, "Recite verses of kingship before me, to enthrone Me over you...and with what? With the shofar" (Rosh Hashanah 34b). The prophet says, "If the shofar is sounded in a town, will the people not tremble?...When a lion roars, who does not fear?" (Amos 3: 6-8).

R' Yeruchem of Mir said, "When I saw a lion, I understood its enormous might, and that as king of the beasts, all animals are in awe of him. Primitive peoples, seeing the might of the sun, worshipped it as a god, not realizing that the sun is but one of His many servants" (Daas Chochmah Umussar vol.4 p.248). In our tefillos we pray, "Let everything with a life's breath in its nostrils proclaim 'Hashem, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kinship rules over everything.'" In our poverty of having an emotional experience of the awe of Hashem, we must extrapolate from objects that inspire us with awe, as a reference point for awe of Hashem.

"If the shofar is sounded in a town, will the people not tremble?" Beginning with the first day of Elul, we sound the shofar daily to inspire us with the awe of Hashem, that His Sovereignty is absolute. We must know that He controls everything in the universe, from the greatest galaxies to the most minute insects. The only thing that Hashem does not control is a person's moral decisions, because He has given a person freedom to choose between right and wrong,"

It is of interest that when Rosh Hashanah occurs on Shabbos, we do not blow the shofar. This is not only to avoid a person's carrying the shofar in a public thoroughfare, but also because the kedushah of Shabbos, and the awareness that Hashem created the world and is its only Master, can provide the appreciation of Hashem's sovereignty. On Rosh Hashanah we say, "Today is the birthday of the world." Shabbos, like Rosh Hashanah, is a testimony to Hashem's creation of the world.

Belief in the existence of Hashem is not yet malchus. Primitive peoples believed in the existence of G-d, but felt that G-d was too supreme to bother with this tiny speck of the Earth and with mere mortals. That is why, in our tefillos of malchus we pray, "Reign over the entire universe in Your glory...Let everything that has been made know that You are its Maker." The Israelites, upon their liberation from Egypt did believe in Hashem (Exodus 4:31), but it was not until they witnessed the miraculous dividing of the Reed Sea that they exclaimed, "Hashem shall reign for all eternity!" (Exodus 15:18). Only then were they convinced that Hashem controls the world and His Providence is over all things, animate and inanimate. This is why, on Rosh Hashanah we begin saying hamelech hakadosh. Kedushah means that Hashem is separated and far above everything in the universe, but He is also the melech, the King that operates and controls the universe.

Every day, we cite many berachos and say, Blessed are You, Hashem, Our G-d, King of the world. But precisely because we say these words so often, we do not concentrate on their meaning. Rosh Hashanah should give us a much greater appreciation of malchus, so that when we say the words, "Hashem, Our G-d, King of the world," we will think of Hashem's absolute sovereignty.

When we think of the infinite greatness of Hashem, and that by comparison we are less than infinitesimally small, we may lose our sense of significance. We must be aware that as creations of Hashem, we are endowed with a Divine soul, which makes us potentially great. This is why R' Yohanan, having expressed his utter effacement before Hashem, nevertheless told his disciples before his death. "Prepare a chair for

Hizkiyahu, king of Judah, who is coming to escort me." He knew that no less a personage than Hizkiyahu, king of Judah, would greet him.

Rosh Hashanah marks the sixth day of creation, the day on which Hashem created man and endowed him with a divine neshamah. We appreciate the malchus of Hashem, and are proud that we are privileged to be His subjects.

Editor's Note: This is an Excerpt from Rav Dr. Twerski's new book, Twerski on Machzor - Rosh Hashanah

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Posted by [pitputim](#) Isaac Balbin [September 20, 2011](#)

The following is an adaptation of small part of a Yohr Tzeit Shiur given by the Rav [Rav Soloveitchik ז"ל] in 1966. It is strongly based on the transcription copyrighted in 2001 by Josh Rapps and Israel Rivkin. I have made minor stylistic changes

Ki Tavo+Vayelech before Rosh Hashana

Ezra enacted a rule that we should read the ברכות וקללות in ויקרא פרשת (דברים) פרשת כי תבוא in ברכות וקללות prior to Shavuot and ברכות וקללות before ראש השנה (Megila 31b). The Rav ז"ל asked:

According to our order of reading the Torah, במדבר is always read the Shabbos prior to Shavuot and נצבים is always read the week prior to ראש השנה. Why do we deviate from the Takanas Ezra?

The ספר ויקרא distinguishes between the ברכות וקללות in תורת כהנים (ספר ויקרא) and תורת כהנים of ברכות וקללות (ספר דברים)—משנה תורה, one person reads the entire set, while the ברכות וקללות in תורה may be subdivided among several people). Why is there a distinction between them?

The Rav explained based on a 14:2 דברים רש"י

כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוהיך ...

רש"י explains קדושת עצמך מאבותיך as כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוהיך ... you possess *inherited* sanctity from your forefathers. However there is another type of sanctity that Moshe mentions:

בך בחר ה' אלוהיך להיות לו לעם סגולה

describes an amazing principle, that a Jew has two forms of sanctity, קדושה through יחוס מאבות ישראל. There is a second individual קדושה granted to each Jew, קדושת עצמך, your individual holiness, based on our selection as בני ישראל by Hashem.

The Rav asked what is the status of a משומד (someone who has become an apostate)? Does he retain complete קדושת ישראל or not? On the one hand there are sources in the גמרא that he remains a complete Jew (for instance his Kiddushin is valid, see Yevamos 47b). On the other hand, there are other sources that exclude him from various religious tasks (Shechita, Kesivas Stam and others, see Gittin 45b).

Which קדושה does the משומד lose? The Rav said that the inherited קדושה of a descendant of the patriarchs is irrevocable. However, the Rav felt that a משומד forfeited the second קדושה that is based on their personal selection as the chosen people of the Jewish nation.

A convert has both קדושות, as the הלכה says, he recites the ברכות ביכורים and he says אלוהינו ואלוקי אבותינו based on Abraham being called the father of a multitude of nations, אב המון גוים. He has an inherited קדושה from Abraham and he acquires the קדושת ישראל when he converted. If there are two קדושות inherent in Jews, and every generation has these two קדושות, they must be based on two separate ברית (enacted covenants). מצוות ברית קדושה is based on the obligation to fulfill מצוות (9:1) describes the observance of מצוות among the generations prior to תורה as the historical map of sanctity among the Jewish people. Each higher level of sanctity could be attained only through the acceptance of *additional* מצוות. Even though they underwent Milah and Tevila in Egypt prior to the Korban Pesach and the Exodus, בני ישראל needed an additional Tevila at Sinai. The Rambam says that since they attained new מצוות at Sinai, they had to undergo another

conversion process. In short, Mizvos are built upon ברית ברית, the enactment of a covenant with all the obligations therein.

A Jew has two distinct sources of obligation. The first is based on the original ברית ברית that derived from the patriarchs and was then expressed through Moses. This covenant obligates all successive generations, through our lineage connection—Yichus—to fulfil the מצוות מצוות. There is a second ברית ברית that is based on *individual* קדושה קדושה and is entered into by each and every generation.

Where do we find these two covenants? The first covenant is in בהוקתי בהוקתי and the second is in תבוא תבוא. Why do we need both covenants*? פרשת פרשת is the continuation of the ברית ברית in תבוא תבוא (according to Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon). At מתן מתן, Moshe read the הברית הברית while the Jews stood at סיני סיני. What did Moshe read to them? הו'ל הו'ל tell us that he read the Torah from Breishis through the story of the Exodus. The Sinaitic covenant was built on the Exodus that was in turn built on the covenant with the Patriarchs. In תורה תורה, Hashem mentions that He will recall the original covenant with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham. In other words, the entire Sinaitic covenant is based on, and is the continuation of, the covenant of the forefathers and transfers from generation to generation.

Therefore **Shavuos**, the holiday of Matan Torah, is associated with the ברכות ברכות that were given at סיני סיני. Even though the ברכות ברכות are recorded in בהוקתי בהוקתי, they are referred to and are connected to פרשת פרשת, when Moshe sprinkled the people and read the הברית הברית to them. These ברכות ברכות were part of the ברית ברית enacted with the Patriarchs. We read פרשת פרשת prior to Shavuos, because the entire concept of Yichus, Jewish lineage, is based on פרשת פרשת. The entire concept of **counting** the people derives from the sanctity of the Patriarchs and the lineage of the 12 tribes who trace that lineage back to Abraham. As it says in the Parsha, למשפחותם ולבית אבתם, ויתלדו על משפחותיהם ל' say that each one brought his lineage documentation (Shtar Yuchsin) proving that he descended from the patriarchs and their children.

The different levels of sanctity attained by each of the twelve tribes was derived from their connection to the קדושת אבות קדושת אבות of the previous generations. This is the Kedusha of אלוקי אלוקי. כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוקי. In Bris Atzeres read on Shavuos, we find the fulfillment of the statement כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוקי, the sanctity of each Jew based on his lineage. The Midrash says on the verse קלי ואנויהו זה, that Moshe emphasized that the קדושה קדושה did not begin with him (Moshe), but rather it began long ago through our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as expressed in אלוקי אלוקי. This is the essence of Shavuos, מתן מתן and ברכות ברכות of Ezra established that they should read about this covenant, the covenant that mentions the patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt that led to קבלת התורה קבלת התורה at Sinai, before Shavuos each year.

How do I know that this covenant extends to **subsequent** generations? I would not know it from בהוקתי בהוקתי alone. The Yichus, lineage described in פרשת פרשת teaches that the covenant also extends to me based on that Yichus.

The covenant based on ברכות ברכות and קללות קללות was not only given to the generation that stood before Moses prior to his death. Rather, this set of ברכות ברכות and קללות קללות was, and is, given to each and every individual generation. We are not bound to this covenant through lineage, or through the patriarchs. It is our own responsibility. As רש"י רש"י explains, וכן בהר השם Hashem has selected **you** and endowed each generation with a קדושה קדושה that is separate and distinct from the קדושה קדושה of the Avos. רש"י רש"י explains the verse ואת אשר איננו פה עומד עמנו היום (and those who are not with us this day) that the oath obligates the **future** generations of Klal Yisrael. Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel says explicitly that it binds all future generations. All succeeding generations stood before the Ark and Moshe and accepted the oath to observe the מצוות מצוות of Hashem. Therefore ברית ברית is a הזכרון הזכרון for ברית ברית, not only for the ברית ברית אבות אבות but also for the

משנה תורה משנה תורה in ברכות ברכות and קללות קללות. ראש השנה ראש השנה must be read prior to ראש השנה ראש השנה, however the story would be incomplete without **also** reading נצבים נצבים, since the connection to each generation, לא איתכם לבדכם אנוכי כורת הברית הזאת (not with you alone am I forging this covenant), is not found in תבוא תבוא, but rather in **נצבים**. Therefore, reading נצבים נצבים prior to ראש השנה ראש השנה is in total agreement with Takanas Ezra, as it is the continuation of the ברכות ברכות and קללות קללות in משנה תורה משנה תורה.

The Sinaitic covenant that was built on the patriarchs was a covenant created with the entire ישראל ישראל. Everyone, each and every יחיד יחיד, is included and responsible, because each of us belongs to the עם, to the עם, רבים רבים, the basis of the sanctity, is the עם, the עם. That's why the ברכות ברכות and קללות קללות are written in רבים רבים, plural, as it was given to the entire nation. However the ברית ברית was given in the singular form, to each and every יחיד יחיד. It is not just a ברית ברית with each successive generation, but rather it is a covenant with each and every individual *within* those generations.

Each of us stood before Moshe and the Ark and we accepted the oath administered by Moshe. Moshe is talking about each individual who might say in his heart לי שלום יהיה לי, I will go my own way. Moshe warns such an individual, that the retribution for this sin will be great. He is talking to each and every Jew, throughout *all* the generations.

* Really there were 3 covenants, with the third at Mount Grizim. But that was a different type of covenant based on Arayvus, acceptance of *mutual responsibility* for fellow Jews.

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Rosh Hashanah: Questions and Answers

Question: On Erev Rosh Hashanah, does one recite Aneinu during Minchah if he knows that he will need to break his fast after Minchah?
Discussion: Although there are a number of opinions regarding this case, the custom follows the Mishnah Berurah's² ruling that Aneinu is recited by one who is fasting even though he is planning to break his fast after Minchah. The only exception to this rule concerns the Sheliach Tzibbur: If he is planning to break his fast after Minchah, then he should not recite Aneinu during chazaras ha-shatz at all—neither as an independent blessing (as he normally would) nor as part of Shomea Tefillah.³

But minors, or adults who, for medical reasons, must eat before Minchah, should not recite Aneinu at all.⁴

Question: Is there any reason to have a new fruit on the table during Kiddush on the first night of Rosh Hashanah?

Discussion: No, there is not. Many people mistakenly confuse the first night of Rosh Hashanah with the second night and place a new fruit on the table on both nights.⁵ But there is no basis for eating a new fruit on the first night, and indeed, l'chatchilah, one should specifically remove any such fruit from the table when Kiddush is recited. This is because some poskim hold that the shehechyanu recited during Kiddush, which is a blessing over the Yom Tov day, and the shehechyanu that one needs to recite over a new fruit, are two different "types" of shehechyanu blessings, and one cannot fulfill both requirements with one shehechyanu blessing.⁶ According to this opinion, even if the fruit were on the table during Kiddush, another shehechyanu would have to be recited over the fruit when it is time to eat it. While this is not

necessarily the opinion of all poskim, in order to avoid getting involved in this dispute one should remove the fruit from the table before Kiddush, and then recite shehecheyanu over it when he is ready to eat it during the meal.⁷

Question: If a new fruit is not available for the second night of Rosh Hashanah, may shehecheyanu be recited during Kiddush?

Discussion: Absolutely. The reason that we place a new fruit on the table during Kiddush on the second night of Rosh Hashanah is to satisfy a minority opinion which holds that no shehecheyanu is recited over the second day of Rosh Hashanah as we normally do on Yom Tov Sheini — the two days of Rosh Hashanah are halachically considered as one long day, and shehecheyanu over this long day was already recited during Kiddush on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. But the majority of the poskim disagree and hold that the two days of Rosh Hashanah are considered — in regard to this halachah — as two separate days, and a shehecheyanu must be recited over the second day as well. While l'chatchilah we look for a new fruit so that shehecheyanu could be recited according to all opinions, if for any reason a new fruit is not available,⁸ we rely on the majority opinion and recite shehecheyanu over the second day of Rosh Hashanah.⁹

Indeed, it is important to remember that even when a new fruit is on the table on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, the primary reason that the shehecheyanu is recited is not because of the fruit, but because of the new day of Rosh Hashanah. Thus the proper kavanah (intent) of the person reciting Kiddush (and all those who are yotzei with him) should be as follows: Primarily, the shehecheyanu is being recited because another day of Yom Tov has arrived; and, secondly, in case this second Yom Tov day does not warrant a shehecheyanu, the blessing should be over the new fruit.¹⁰ B'diavad, however, one does not need to repeat Kiddush if, mistakenly, his primary intent was to recite shehecheyanu over the fruit.¹¹

Question: Should people who continue to rely on the lenient opinion of those poskim who permit drinking “company milk”¹² (chalav stam) throughout the year¹³ be encouraged to drink only chalav Yisrael during Aseres yemei teshuvah—just as they are careful to eat only pas Yisrael at this time of year?

Discussion: While this issue is not explicitly addressed by the poskim,¹⁴ we may assume that it is appropriate to be stringent about chalav Yisrael during Aseres yemei teshuvah. This is because the poskim suggest a number of reasons, all interrelated, as to why everyone should be careful to eat only pas Yisrael during Aseres yemei teshuvah, and the parallel between pas Yisrael and chalav Yisrael is obvious:

* So that we conduct ourselves with an extra measure of purity during these Ten Days of Repentance.¹⁵

* To serve as a reminder of the unique status of these days.¹⁶

* To beseech Hashem not to judge us stringently, just as we have adopted a practice which is not strictly required of us.¹⁷

Those who are lenient regarding chalav stam rely on a controversial ruling of some poskim who in the past—when chalav Yisrael was not readily available—reluctantly permitted the consumption of “company milk.” Clearly, then, for all of the reasons cited above, it is appropriate not to rely on this leniency during Aseres yemei teshuvah.¹⁸

1 Among Ashkenazim. Most Sefaradim, however, follow the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch that Aneinu is only recited as part of Elokai netzor in this case; Kaf ha-Chayim 562:8.

2 562:7.

3 Beur Halachah 562:1, s.v. aval.

4 Beur Halachah 565:1, s.v. bein. See also Shevet ha-Levi 5:60 and 8:131.

5 Mishnah Berurah 600:5.

6 Ksav Sofer, O.C. 26.

7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:20; Halichos Shelomo 2:1-16).

8 In the United States, especially, it is most difficult to find a shehecheyanu fruit,

since almost all fruits are available throughout the year.

9 O.C. 600:2 and Mishnah Berurah.

10 One who intends the shehecheyanu to be solely over the fruit is actually making an improper hefsek between borei pri ha-gafen and the drinking of the wine, since reciting shehecheyanu over a new fruit at this point has nothing to do with the Kiddush. It is only if the shehecheyanu is recited over the Yom Tov that it would not be considered a hefsek.

11 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:20; Halichos Shelomo 2:1-20); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:272; 2:303.

12 Although Shulchan Aruch rules that for milk to be kosher, the milking must be supervised by a Jew, some have argued that in the United States (and other developed countries) where government authorities closely monitor the dairy industry and strictly enforce the law against mixing other milk with cow's milk, government regulation should be tantamount to supervision. According to this opinion, the fear of being caught by government inspectors who are empowered to levy substantial fines serves as a sufficient deterrent, and may be considered as if a Jew is “supervising” the milking. Based on this argument, several poskim allowed drinking “company milk” (chalav stam), i.e., milk produced by large companies, without supervision by a Jew.

13 See The Monthly Halachah Discussion (Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 2001), pgs. 145-150, for a complete overview and analysis of this subject.

14 Obviously, the earlier poskim could not have dealt with this question, since chalav akum is forbidden according to all views all year round. It is only with the fairly recent introduction of chalav stam, which is permitted by some poskim during the year, that this question arises.

15 In Talmudic times, everyone was careful not to allow their food to become impure (chullin b'taharah) during Aseres yemei teshuvah; Tur quoting the Yerushalmi (Shabbos 3:3).

16 Levush, O.C. 603.

17 Chayei Adam 14:1; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 130:2.

18 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 609:1 and Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:12 who write that during Aseres yemei teshuvah we should be stringent when it comes to all questionable issues.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

When Tekias Shofar Goes Wrong

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Every year before Rosh Hashanah, Rav Goldberg reviews the halachos of shofar blowing with the shul's Baal Tekiah (shofar blower, also called a master blaster). This year, the Baal Tekiah, Reb Muttel, had more questions than usual.

“I have been a Baal Tekiah for several years now,” began Reb Muttel. “Each year, I feel a stronger sense of responsibility and privilege. Privilege, because it is through my shofar blowing that the whole shul joins Jews around the world in the coronation of Hashem as King. Also, the shofar is a wake-up call to teshuva and reminds us of many historical events in our history including Matan Torah and Akeidas Yitzchak. At the same time, it is an awesome responsibility to blow the shofar correctly, so that everyone fulfills his obligation of hearing Tekias shofar according to halacha.”

“Not every blast is perfect,” continued Reb Muttel, “and I'm curious to know when a blast is acceptable and when it must be repeated. I'd also like to know why sometimes I am told to repeat just a blast, and at other times I am told to repeat several. I have also been in shullen where the entire series of nine or more blasts was repeated. In short, I would like a deeper understanding of the halachos.”

Rav Goldberg realized that it would take several sessions to teach Muttel all the details of shofar blowing. Before presenting a synopsis of their discussion, an introduction is in order.

THE TORAH'S MITZVAH OF SHOFAR

As in many other mitzvos, there is no clear command in the Written Torah to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashana. The Torah does refer to Rosh Hashanah as “Yom Teruah,” but this could be translated either as “a day of crying,” a “day of praying” or a “day of shofar blowing.” It is the Torah Sheba’al Peh that teaches that there is a mitzvah min haTorah to blow shofar. The mitzvah is to blow a long straight sound, a Tekiah, then a broken sound, and then another Tekiah. These three sounds are repeated three times for a total of nine sounds.

“How do we know that Teruah is a broken sound in the first place?” asked Reb Muttel.

“Targum Onkelos translates the word Teruah as ‘yevavah,’ which means crying”, replied the Rav. “This teaches us that the Teruah is a broken, crying sound (Rosh Hashanah 33b). However, it is not clear from the Targum what type of crying sound ‘Teruah’ means. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 34a) reports that Rabbi Abahu was uncertain whether Teruah is a series of sobs (what we call Shevarim); a staccato, panting cry (Teruah) or a combination of both, first sobbing and then panting (Shevarim-Teruah). To be certain that we fulfill the Torah’s obligation, he mandated blowing three different series, each with a different broken sound. Each broken sound is blown three times to fulfill the Torah mitzvah and each one is preceded and followed by a Tekiah. Thus, Rabbi Abahu’s institution results in a total of thirty shofar sounds:

Tekiah, Shevarim-Teruah, Tekiah (TaSHRaT) three times,
Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah (TaShaT) three times,
Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah (TaRaT) three times.”

But why didn’t Rabbi Abahu institute to simply blow Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah, Tekiah (the TaSHRaT mentioned before) three times? This way, a person would blow all three varieties of broken sound three times, and each would be surrounded by two Tekiyos.

The Gemara explains that if the mitzvah is to blow only a Shevarim, blowing a Teruah immediately after the Shevarim is an interruption that invalidates the mitzvah. Similarly, if the mitzvah is to blow only a Teruah, then the Shevarim interrupts between the Tekiah and the Teruah and invalidates the mitzvah. Thus, the only way to fulfill the mitzvah correctly is to blow three series, one with each type of broken sound (Shevarim, Teruah, and Shevarim-Teruah) in the middle.

“This last statement of the Gemara teaches us an important lesson,” pointed out Rav Goldberg. “If one blows an inappropriate sound between the Tekiah and the correct broken sound, that series is invalid. Early poskim dispute how much of the series is invalid and must be blown again. The stringent opinion contends that one must begin the series again. The lenient opinion rules that it suffices to return to the most recent Tekiah; and that the earlier sounds are kosher (Tur end of 590). There is a very interesting story related to this dispute that we will discuss shortly.”

WHY DON’T WE BLOW A TERUAH-SHEVARIM?

The Gemara points out that Rabbi Abahu omitted a fourth option -- He did not require a Teruah followed by a Shevarim. The Gemara explains that this combination was omitted because the Torah’s Teruah is a broken sound that imitates human crying, and it is unusual for a crying person to pant and then sob afterwards; therefore, this sound cannot be what the Torah commanded.

AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION

There is another explanation why Rabbi Abahu instituted three different Teruah sounds. Rav Hai Gaon contends that the mitzvah of tekias shofar is fulfilled with ANY broken sound. In his opinion, blowing three times either TaSHRaT or TaShaT or TaRaT or any combination of the three fulfills the Torah mitzvah. In Rav Hai’s opinion, Rabbi Abahu instituted the blowing of thirty shofar sounds for a different reason.

In Rabbi Abahu’s day, communities blew the broken, crying sound in different ways. In some communities, Shevarim was blasted, others blew what we call Teruah (short, staccato sounds), while others blew Shevarim-Teruah. Rabbi Abahu was concerned that an unlearned person

visiting different communities might conclude that there is a dispute as to how to blow shofar. To avoid even the appearance of conflict, Rabbi Abahu instituted that all Jews observe all three customs.

Thus, we have two different explanations why Rav Abahu instituted the blowing of thirty shofar sounds. The first opinion, which is held by most poskim, contends that blowing thirty sounds guarantees that we have fulfilled the Torah’s mitzvah. The second opinion maintains that we blow thirty sounds to avoid the appearance of a machlokes.

AN INTERESTING STORY AND ITS EXPLANATION

Almost nine hundred years ago, on Rosh Hashanah 4905/1144, the shofar blower of Mainz, a community with many Talmidei Chachomim, erred in the middle of the blowing. After blasting two kosher rounds of “TaSHRaT” he made a mistake in the third round. Instead of blowing a three-part Shevarim and then a Teruah, he mistakenly blew two parts of a Shevarim and then began blowing the Teruah. Immediately realizing his error, the Baal Tekiah stopped blowing the Teruah after only one staccato beat. The question was how to continue.

A dispute ensued among the scholarly congregants. Some advocated that ALL the TaSHRaT soundings be blown again. Apparently, they contended that ANY inappropriate sound blown in the middle of the shofar blowing invalidates the entire series. Since TaSHRaT is blown to fulfill one interpretation of the Torah’s mitzvah, any inappropriate blast blown in the middle invalidates that entire attempt, and the series must be begun again.

Other opinions were more lenient. They contended that the sounds already blown need not be repeated. In their opinion, only a sound that has halachic status invalidates a series, not a sound that is neither a Shevarim nor a Teruah. Furthermore, they felt that in a case where the sounds need to be repeated, such as where an unnecessary Teruah was blown in the middle, one need return only to the Tekiah preceding the errant broken sound. Thus, in a case where someone blew in the third TaSHRaT Tekiah, Shevarim-Teruah, Teruah, the last Tekiah and Shevarim-Teruah need to be blown again, but no earlier sounds.

In Mainz, 1144, the first group had its way, and the Baal Tekiah started blowing again from the very beginning.

After Rosh Hashanah, the shaylah was referred to the gedolim, Rav Elyakim bar Yosef and the Raavan, who ruled that the second group was correct. The Raavan also contended that the extra blasts blown desecrated Yom Tov, since they were unnecessary, and blowing shofar on Yom Tov is permitted only to perform the mitzvah (Rosh, Rosh Hashanah 4:11).

Returning to Muttel’s lessons with Rav Goldberg, the Rav pointed out that if THREE Teruah sounds are blown in the wrong place, such as before the Shevarim is completed, the Tekiah before it is invalidated. This is because a Teruah blown before a Shevarim is an invalid sound. In this situation, the two opinions quoted above will dispute whether the first two rounds of TaSHRaT must also be blown again.

HOW LONG IS A TERUAH?

“I am confused,” protested Reb Muttel. “Why did you say that three short sounds are considered a Teruah? Doesn’t a Teruah have nine sounds?”

“Actually, not everyone agrees that a Teruah requires nine sounds,” the rav replied patiently. “According to Rashi, a Teruah need be only three sounds. The Riva and Rivam disagree, contending that the Teruah must be at least nine sounds. Since everyone agrees that a Teruah may have extra sounds, we blow a Teruah nine sounds long, which is kosher according to all opinions.”

What happens if the shofar blower blew a Teruah shorter than nine sounds?

According to Rashi, one has fulfilled the mitzvah, provided the Teruah was at least three sounds long. According to Riva and Rivam, one has not. The rav or posek in the shul will pasken whether to blow the Teruah again. The Mishnah Berurah (590:12) rules that it is unnecessary to

repeat the Teruah. However, if the rav rules that the Teruah should be repeated, the Tekiah preceding the Teruah must also be repeated. Since, according to Rashi, the short Teruah is kosher, blowing another Teruah without repeating the Tekiah interrupts between the Teruah and the Tekiah.

HOW LONG MUST THE SHEVARIM BE?

A Shevarim must be a minimum of three broken sounds, each called a shever. The shever should preferably be as long as three swift, staccato sounds (three “kochos”), making the entire Shevarim the length of nine staccato sounds (Mishnah Berurah 590:13).

However, there are opinions that each shever should be shorter than three staccato sounds, making the entire Shevarim about the length of six staccato sounds (Tosafos, Rosh Hashanah 32b; first opinion quoted in Shulchan Aruch 590:3; Mateh Efrayim). In some communities, the practice is to blow some of the Shevarim according to this opinion.

ANOTHER STORY FROM ROSH HASHANAH, 4905/1144.

“Is it kosher to blow a Shevarim of four or five sounds?” asked Muttel.

“To answer that, we must return to that memorable Rosh Hashanah almost nine hundred years ago in Mainz,” explained Rav Goldberg.

“After blowing Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah, twice without incident, the Baal Tekiah blew a successful Tekiah and then a Shevarim that was four sounds instead of the usual three. The congregation considered this sound invalid and made him begin the blowing of TaSHaT from the beginning, repeating a total of eight sounds (the entire TaSHaT twice and a new Tekiah and Shevarim). Rabbi Elyakim bar Yosef took them to task for two different reasons. Even if there was a need to repeat the blowing, they did not need to blow the two previous TaSHaT blowings again, since they were successful blowings. (As we learned above, they held that a bad sound invalidates the entire series.) In addition, Rav Elyakim ruled that the Shevarim of four sounds is perfectly valid; there is nothing wrong with adding an extra shever to the Shevarim (Tosafos, Rosh Hashanah 33b; Rosh). We rule, like Rav Elyakim, that an extra shever does not invalidate a Shevarim; however, it is preferable to blow a Shevarim that is exactly three sounds out of deference to the scholars of Mainz who disagreed (see Mishnah Berurah 590:11).

HOW IS THE SHEVARIM BLOWN?

Some poskim contend that each short shever sound should change pitch in the middle, either once or twice. Some people refer to these as “tu-u-tu” or “UU-tu” or “tu-UU” shevarim sounds.

Others contend that the shever sound should be without change in pitch – and should sound exactly like a very short Tekiah. Each community should follow the ruling of its rav or its established custom.

HOW LONG MUST THE TEKIAH BE?

There are several opinions. Whereas Ravad’s opinion is that every Tekiah must be nine kochos regardless of which broken sound it accompanies (Hilchos Shofar 3:4), Tosafos and most rishonim contend that the Tekiah must be as long as the broken sound that it accompanies. (Each “koach” is the length of a minimum beat. The entire Shevarim-Teruah can be blown in about three seconds. Therefore, the Tekiah before and after the Shevarim-Teruah should also be that long [Mateh Efrayim; Mishnah Berurah 590:14, 15]). Since the length of both the Shevarim and the Teruah are disputed, as mentioned above, the length of the Tekiah is also disputed. According to the Riva and Rivam, the combined length of a Shevarim-Teruah is about eighteen kochos, or perhaps a bit longer to accommodate the length of the pause in the middle.

According to Rashi’s opinion that the Teruah need be only three kochos and the Shevarim only six-to-nine kochos, the Tekiah accompanying the Shevarim-Teruah need be only nine-to-twelve kochos long.

Based on the above, the poskim conclude that the Tekiah for TaSHRaT should preferably be a bit more than eighteen kochos long, whereas the Tekiah for TaSHaT and TaRaT need be only nine kochos long.

What if the Tekiah ended earlier? It is not unusual for the tekiyos that

accompany TaSHRaT to be less than eighteen kochos long. Again, the rav will make the decision. (For example, the Mateh Efrayim rules that a Tekiah for TaSHRaT that was only nine kochos long is kosher bedei’evid, after the fact.)

SHOULD THE BLOWER PAUSE BETWEEN THE SHEVARIM AND THE TERUAH?

This interesting question is an early dispute. According to most opinions, there should be only a slight interruption between the Shevarim and Teruah of the Shevarim-Teruah (ruling of most rishonim, as explained by the Mishnah Berurah 590:18.) It should be noted that according to the Chazon Ish (Orach Chayim 136:1) and the Avnei Nezer (Orach Chayim #443), there should be no interruption whatsoever between the Shevarim and the Teruah. Some even contend that a significant interruption between the Shevarim and the Teruah invalidates the blowing (see Mishnah Berurah 590:16 and Shaar HaTziyun ad loc.). Rabbeinu Tam disagrees, maintaining that someone would not change from a sobbing cry to a panting cry without stopping for a breath in between. Therefore, he maintains that one should pause, although not extensively, between the Shevarim and the Teruah.

HOW DO WE RULE IN THIS ISSUE?

There are different customs. Some communities follow Rabbeinu Tam’s opinion and blow every Shevarim-Teruah with a brief pause in the middle (Rama 590:4). However, most congregations today follow the Chayei Adam’s recommendation that the Shevarim-Teruah of the first blowings (before Musaf) be blown without a pause, whereas the Baal Tekiah should pause between Shevarim and Teruah when blowing during the repetition of Shemoneh Esrei.

Incidentally, the shofar soundings blown during Musaf should be treated with the same degree of importance as those blown earlier. According to many poskim, they are the main mitzvah of shofar blowing (see Tosafos, Pesachim 115a s.v. maskif; Mishnah Berurah.)

WHAT IF A WOMAN CANNOT BE IN SHUL FOR BOTH SETS OF SHOFAR BLOWINGS?

Shofar blowing is one of the time-bound positive mitzvos (mitzvas aseh shehazman grama) from which women are exempt. Nevertheless, generations of women have been careful to hear shofar blowing, just as they are careful to shake the lulav and esrog on Sukos, another time-bound mitzvah from which they are exempt. Many poskim rule that since women have assumed responsibility to hear shofar blowing, they are now required to (Chayei Adam 141:7; however, see Shu’t Salmas Chayim #349, who disagrees). However, a woman does not need to hear more than thirty shofar sounds, although it is meritorious for her to hear the sounds blown during the repetition of Shmoneh Esrei.

DOES A WOMAN MAKE A BRACHA ON SHOFAR BLOWING?

The rishonim dispute whether one can recite a bracha on a mitzvah that one is not commanded to perform. Some contend that women should not recite the bracha, because one cannot say “asher kidishanu bi’mitzvosav vitzivanu,” “He who sanctified us in His mitzvos and commanded us,” when Hashem never commanded them to perform this mitzvah. Sefardim follow this opinion, and, therefore, Sefardic women do not recite a bracha on mitzvos such as shofar and lulav. Ashkenazim rule that one may recite vitzivanu even if one is not personally obligated, since Klal Yisrael collectively observes the mitzvos.

For the above reason, an Ashkenazic woman who did not hear the first blowings should recite the bracha before the shofar soundings during the repetition of Shemoneh Esrei or at the end of davening.

WHY DO WE BLOW SHOFAR BOTH DURING MUSAF AND DURING THE REPETITION OF SH’MONEH ESREI?

The shofar is blown to remind us of many things, including that it is a wakeup call to do teshuvah, and that it will herald Moshiach. The Gemara explains that we repeat the shofar blowings, that is, we blow both before the Shemoneh Esrei and during Musaf, in order to confuse the Satan and prevent him from prosecuting us (Rosh Hashanah 16b).

This is surprising. Is the Satan so easily fooled? Most of us have first-hand experience with the Satan, and have found him to be extremely clever. Does he not remember that we pulled the same prank on him in previous years and blew the shofar twice?

Tosafos explains the Gemara more deeply. The Satan is constantly afraid that Moshiach will come and put him out of business. The first time the shofar is blown, the Satan is very stressed. When he hears the shofar being blown for the second time, he is convinced that Moshiach has come, and that his job is over! By the time he realizes that it is just Rosh Hashanah again, he has lost his opportunity.

How nice it would be if we sat on the edge of our chairs waiting for Moshiach with the same intensity as the Satan!

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Let There Be Light

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm

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This article was originally delivered by Rabbi Lamm as a derasha in the Jewish Center in NYC on Rosh Hashana in 1961. One of the fascinating minor themes in our rabbinic literature concerning the Shofar is that of confusing and confounding Satan, the devil or angel of evil. Thus, we blow the Shofar all during the month of Elul, *larbev et ha-satan*, in order to confuse Satan as to when Rosh Hashana falls. Before sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashana we recite six verses from the Psalms, beginning with *Koli shamata*. The initial letters of these lines spell *kera satan*, destroy or confound Satan. And, finally, we sound the Shofar twice, one series before the Amidah and another during its repetition by the cantor, again *larbev et ha-satan*, to confuse Satan.¹ What does all this mean? Are we involved in a kind of game with the devil? Is this an echo of a non-Jewish mythology? I believe not. I believe that there is a far deeper Jewish thought in these words, one for which the expression *larbev et ha-satan* is a kind of poetic garment. This idea, of which Shofar comes to remind us, is that we right-thinking, well-meaning, loyal Jews — that we must not be confused! Satan always seems to be better organized and more efficient. The forces of evil and tyranny on the international scene are usually far more effective and disciplined than these of democracy and peace. The Satan within each of us is usually far more competent and energetic than our *yetzer tov*, our inclination for the good. For most people concentration, single-mindedness, and determination are more prevalent when they are in the casino than when they are in the synagogue. On Rosh Hashana we are invited *larbev et ha-satan*, to change roles with Satan, to confound him and, in turn, to learn from him the secret of how not to be confused. Confusion is, indeed, the hallmark of our times. We are confused by the daily anxieties of existence, the senseless anguish and the seeming emptiness of life all about us. We are confused by the apparently suicidal inclinations of world leaders who explode atom bombs with no thought to the irreparable damage inflicted upon generations unborn. We are confused by the conflicting claims pressed upon us by the differ in interpretations of Judaism, both those to the right and to the left of us. We are confused by the clash of religionists and secularists in the State of Israel. We are confused by the strange kind of world in which our children are growing up — indeed, by our children themselves, their dreams and ambitions, their fears and piques, their paradoxical, ambivalent attitudes towards us: rebelliousness on the one hand, love on the other. ¹ See Rosh Hashana 16b, esp. Yerushalmi quoted in Tosafot. Those of the younger generation are especially bewildered. The intense competition of diverse doctrines and different philosophies for the mind and heart of a young person invariably leave him or her deep in doubt and perplexity. Around his head there swirls a series of smiling salesmen, as if in some weird nightmare, each offering his product and clamoring for its acceptance. Which shall it be: Genesis or Evolution? Moses or Marx? Determinism

or Free Will? Shabbat or Ethical Culture? Neture Karta or Ben Gurion? Loyalty to parents and past or a clean break and new horizons? A generation is growing up that is genuinely confused. Of course, confusion is not a good thing. Philo taught that "confusion is a most proper name for vice." Indeed, many a sinister crime in our society has been lightly dismissed as the doings of "that crazy mixed-up kid," as if confusion were some delightful affectation to be expected of an adolescent. On Yom Kippur we confess to the sin of confusion: *al cheit she-chatanu lefanekha be'timahon levav*. And R. David Kimhi, the great grammarian, tells us that the word *larbev*, to confuse, is related to the word *erev*, evening or nighttime, because then all is confused and dim. Confusion is, surely, a darkness of the mind and heart. And yet the person gripped in confusion ought not to despair. The fact that it is regarded as a *chet* or sin means that it can be avoided or voided and banished. Confusion is often a necessary prelude to clarity and creativity. Before the world took the form it's Creator ordained for it, it was *tohu va-vohu*, void and chaotic, all confusion. Only afterwards, after the darkness on the face of the deep, the *erev* of *irbu*, did God command *yehi ore*, let there be light - and there was light. Creative thinkers or writers or artists know that immediately before the stroke of inspiration there must be a period of *tohu va-vohu* and *irbu*, of true confusion. In this spirit and with this knowledge, let us think of how we of this confused generation ought to respond to the challenge of Shofar to achieve clarity and emerge from our perplexity. Three ways of emerging from this perplexity commend themselves to us. The first way is consciously to have a scale of values. There can be no meaningful existence unless one knows what is more important and what less so, what is right and what is wrong. In Judaism, this scale of values is not a matter for every individual to invent for himself. It is contained in the Torah. To know values therefore, one must learn Torah. That is the first great requirement. Of course, that sounds so self-evident as to be a truism. Yet it is not always accepted. I have more than once been exasperated in discussing this fundamental question of the values of life with young people who prefer to argue from a confusion born of ignorance, and who are dogmatically certain that they cannot be enlightened by Torah. It is remarkable how a single semester of comparative religion can qualify a youngster to pass judgment on religion without ever having to read the Bible, study the Talmud, or even glance at the insides of a siddur. So it must be stressed again; the first way to climb out of the web of religious confusion is to study Torah — not just to read a bit, or discuss, but to study. After the *tohu va-vohu*, the chaos and the void, as we mentioned, there came the creation of light. Our Rabbis (Genesis Rabbah 3:4) observed that light is mentioned five times in this portion, and they asserted that it was *ke'neged chamishah chumshei Torah*, corresponding to the Five Books of Moses. Only through the study of Torah can there be that enlightenment that will form creative clarity out of formless chaos. Ignorance leads to a distorted scale of values and even greater confusion. Study alone can clear up perplexity. The second way of banishing confusion also sounds deceptively simple. It is faith. By this I mean not only faith in G-d but faith in the soundness of your values and faith that ultimately they will be clear to you even if now you are somewhat vague and do not understand them completely. You must have patience and confidence if you are to dissipate the clouds of confusion. When the Psalmist spoke those glorious words of faith, "even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me," he may have had in mind our problem, too. Even when mentally we walk through the valley of doubt and emotional perplexity, covered by the dark shadows of intellectual chaos, when our problems mount up on both sides of us like steep cliffs so that we seem dwarfed in a deep valley, even then we must not fear, for G-d is with us. Confusion can be cleared up by the faith that it will be cleared up. Here we can learn a lesson from Satan who always has faith in the persuasiveness his case.

The grafter is deeply convinced of the irresistibility of corruption. The unscrupulous advertising man knows for certainty that the shameless exploitation of sex will sell everything from cigarettes to convertibles. What we need is l'arbev et ha-satan, to change roles with Satan and learn from him confidence in our convictions and values. We must not be diffident in presenting our case to the world. We must not so lack confidence in our tradition that we allow the salesmen for Judaism to be not the genuine gedolei Torah, but outright secularists or half-assimilated political leaders. We must have sufficient faith in the irresistibility — and invincibility — of Torah that we will spare no effort in increasing the number and quality of day schools in the United States this year. During the year when we celebrate Diamond Anniversary of Yeshiva University, our faith is doubly justified - and must be twice as effective. Ha-Shem ro'i lo echesar, "the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" — or fail — was interpreted by one Hasidic sage to mean, I shall never fail (lo echesar) to know every moment that the Lord is my shepherd (Ha-Shem ro'i). With this confidence and faith and patience, we can overcome our confusion. Finally, in addition to obtaining a scale of values through the study of Torah, and having faith and confidence in them, we must be prepared to live practically and decisively by these same values. It is not enough to "have" values; one must live by them, or else they are meaningless. Just studying and having faith is not enough. One must act by them clearly and constantly. The eminent Harvard professor, the late George Foote Moore, once said that the difference between philosophy and religion is that religion does something about it. There must be a commitment in action. No young person - or even ancient person - can ever emerge from doubt or perplexity merely by pondering Judaism, You have got to take the plunge into the deep waters of the Torah and Talmud and actually swim in it, live it, you must experience Shabbat and Tefillin and the striving for Kedushah, you must practice Kashrut, refrain from Lashon Hara and Shaatnez. Unless you have tasted Judaism in actual practice, you cannot escape from your perplexity. You may study the doctor's prescription and have faith in his competence, but if you do not take the medicine you will not get well. In the Pirkei Avot we read that az panim le'gehennom, bosh panim le'gan eden. That means, literally, that a brash, brazen person will go to Gehennom, whilst the quiet, shamefaced person will enter a more cheerful residence - Paradise. One Rabbi, however, interprets this Mishnah as a complaint rather than a prediction. Why is it, he says plaintively, that when it comes to Gehennom, to doing evil and cooperating with Satan, we are always az panim, bold and decisive and brash? When it comes to gan eden, however, to good causes such as charity or attending Minyan or a lecture of Torah, we suddenly become bosh panim, shy, reticent, hesitant, withdrawn. If we are to escape the confusion of our times, we must be willing to live Judaism as decisively and as boldly as we ordinarily would be bold and decisive in indulging our own pleasures. My words, my friends, are meant for all people who are sensitive to the crises and demands of our times, but especially for young people who, in their first encounters with our bewildering civilization, still feel acutely and poignantly the anguish of confusion, the collision of cultures, and the impact of opposing standards and principles clashing head on. To you I emphasize that you have in Judaism, the ancient-yet-new Judaism, values tested in the crucible of history and found to be durable for ages yet unborn. Throughout all vicissitudes these values have been available to all who have been willing to study its sacred literature and discover its eternal light. Have patience with it, even as it has had patience with you and us for so long. Have faith that it will stand by you and justify your loyalty to it. But above all, do it, live by it, make it an integral part of your life, now not later, today not tomorrow. That is what Shofar tells you; ha-yom harat olam, today is the birthday of the world, today you create your own private world anew, and a great, noble, exciting, and meaningful world it shall be. For those of us who agree with this proposition, but who by

nature tend to take their time and procrastinate, who promise themselves to think the matter through but not right now — let me leave you with this one story told by Rabbi Hayyim Sanzer. A poor village woman with a large family one day luckily found an egg. She called her family about her and beamingly told them of the good news. "But," she said, "we are not going to eat it now. First we shall borrow a hen so that the egg will hatch, then this new chicken will lay eggs, and they will hatch more chicks. When we have enough we shall buy a cow, and by selling its milk we shall be able to buy many cows, then a wagon, and then..." And then, to her utter dismay, the woman looked down and realized that the precious egg had fallen to the ground and broken. Let us dispense with all the grand plans for the future. Let us put aside our well-intentioned promises and resolutions about how we shall pay attention to our Jewishness when we finish school - or when we are married - or when we have children - or when our children are grown up - or when we have retired. We must, like Abraham responding to G-d's command to proceed with the akedah, arise early in the morning. We must begin not later but now, this moment, with an iron determination to emerge from our confusion and live by Torah. For if we wait, time passes all too quickly, the egg has broken and the bubble of life has burst. Ha-yom harat olam. Today is the birthday of the world. Today each of us must create anew the patterns of his life. With the clear call of the Shofar, let us determine l'arbev et ha-satan, to confound all that is evil and bring clarity to our lives. Through Torah let there be light - and may we see the light, Amen.

A Rosh Hashana Sermon Elul 5765

By Rabbi Dr. Zalman Kossowsky

Zurich, Switzerland

Dear friends and landsleit from Zelva, Dereczin, Volkovysk, and the world over,

We gather to celebrate together the start of a new year, and experience together the Days of Judgment and Awe. As part of this celebration the customary greeting to family and friends is also a prayer and a blessing. We bless each other that we may be inscribed for the coming year in the Book of Life. We have been doing this for years, and for many it has become a formula that we use that does not necessarily make us aware of the reality that our grip on Life is actually very fragile.

Some of us, on the other hand, have had personal experiences which have burned such an awareness into our consciousness, but most of us, thank G-d, have been spared. We all, however, have been witness in recent times to the awesome and destructive power of storms and floods.

The pictures and the news from the Caribbean Sea, or from closer home, Thun and Engelberg, as well as those that we can still recall from the killer Tsunami last December, should give us pause, and push us to reflect on the question of how we would react were we in such a situation.

Rabbi Barry Gelman, the Rabbi of the United Orthodox Synagogue in southern Houston, said the following as he escorted some of his congregants fleeing the threatening Hurricane Rita:

"In the blink of an eye we've gone from being the comforting community, that embraced tens of thousands of homeless evacuees, to being the homeless evacuees — at least for the weekend. It's jarring that within a few days you go from being — in a humble way — the heroic community that stepped up and opened its arms and wallets and hearts, and now we may well be in the same situation. It's certainly a disturbing situation to be in."

When I read these words I truly sympathized with his pain and discomfort. Baruch Hashem the Jewish community of south Houston was spared the damage, pain and suffering that had befallen their brethren in New Orleans. But his words brought this awareness of the frailty of life again into sharp focus for me.

Sometimes the crisis can erupt within minutes. Other times there is some warning, but there is not the ability to change the unfolding course of events.

So my question tonight is: "How do we respond when the storm comes upon us?"

The storms, my friends, come in many and varied forms. But they come to all of us. And in part, these ten days should give us the incentive to think about that.

How should we respond? How could we respond?

Obviously each one of us could have a different possible answer. For me personally, as a believing Jew, I turn first to my Tradition and search there for some hints. And indeed in this context I find a significant development in the custom that we currently follow. In the Talmud itself - seeing lightning or hearing thunder or witnessing storm winds - were all considered as one class of events and two possible blessings were suggested. Over the centuries, however, the custom has emerged to distinguish between lightning and thunder and to make one specific blessing on lightning and the other on thunder and storms.

Some of you might be familiar with these blessings. In the Siddur we can usually find them, along with the other so-called occasional blessings, near the blessings on foodstuffs and the "bentching".

Today the blessing when we see lightning is:

Baruch ata Hashem ... oseh ma'asei Breishit – who has made the Creation

On Thunder, severe storms and earthquakes, however, the blessing is different:

Baruch ata Hashem ... shekocho u'gevurato maleh olam - whose strength and might fill the world

What can we learn from the present custom, which in fact does not follow the proscriptions of the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch.

The first lesson is that there is no such thing as a "random act of nature". Everything draws its strength from G-d and when we are witness to such events, we should also turn our attention to our relationship with G-d. And that idea underlies both blessings. In fact, all blessings are an attempt to focus on G-d and His relationship with us, and our relationship with Him.

Lightning, however, takes us a step further. Lightning is different from thunder. Thunder, even the loudest, can be just noise. Lightning, even the smallest, brings fire onto the earth. And that fire always destroys. Invoking G-d as the Creator can therefore be seen as an attempt to remind us that things that have been destroyed by the lightning, can also be rebuilt. And that is the lesson that I believe our Tradition is imparting to us here. That which has been destroyed by the storm need not be left in ruins. In fact, I would suggest to you that the Jewish perspective, which sees our prime mission in life as being a "partner with G-d in tikkun ha'olam – completing the Creation" would encourage us at this time to exercise major effort in helping with the process of rebuilding from the storms and the floods.

The other part of my answer to the question of how should we respond can best be answered with a story. In this case, a true story.

I quote:

On Nov. 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an awesome sight.

He walks painfully, yet majestically, until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clamps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor and proceeds to play. By now, the audience is used to this

ritual. They sit quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. They remain reverently silent while he undoes the clamps on his legs. They wait until he is ready to play.

But this time, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap - it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do. We figured that he would have to get up, put on the clamps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage - to either find another violin or else find another string for this one. But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes and then signaled the conductor to begin again.

The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity as they had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that.

You could see him modulating, changing, re-composing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them that they had never made before. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said - not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone - "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

End of story.

My friends, these words have stayed with me. Obviously we are not all artists like Perlman but maybe this is the definition of life - not just for artists but for all of us. Here is a man who has prepared all his life to make music on a violin of four strings, who, all of a sudden, in the middle of a concert, finds himself with only three strings; so he makes music with three strings, and the music he made that night with just three strings was more beautiful and more memorable than any that he had ever made before, when he had four strings.

So, tonight my friends, I would like to end with another quote from my colleague who said:-

". . .perhaps our task in this shaky, fast-changing, bewildering world in which we live is to make music, at first with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, to make music with what we have left."

I wish you much success. I wish you all, and your families, a k'tiva v'chatima tova may we all be inscribed and then sealed in the Book of Gefen – gesund, parnoseh and nachas.

Shana tova.

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Our Voices for Our King

Rabbi Chaim Strauchler

RIETS Class of 2005 Rabbi, Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Toronto

Throughout the year, we pray. Yet, prayer on Rosh Hashanah is different. We come to shul with a different set of expectations. We know that davening will be longer; we are prepared to listen to more elaborate tunes; we anticipate the haunting melodies of our youth. We have so much to pray for. We would expect that our prayers on this day would spell out our supplications for the upcoming year; it is, after all, those hopes that are on our mind. Interestingly, we do not find in the text of our prayers any list of requests. From the prayer Unetaneh Tokef, we know that on Rosh Hashanah we are inscribed and that on Yom Kippur we are sealed. This theme influences much of how we think about Rosh

Hashanah. We greet one another on Rosh Hashanah with the formula, may you be inscribed for a good year. Oddly, however, we push the request to be inscribed in the book of life to the edges of our prayers. We say the words zachreinu l'chaim (remember us for life) in the first blessing of the Amidah and the words u'ketov lechaim tovim (inscribe [all people] for a good life) in the second to last blessing. We do not place these blessings in the center of our prayers where requests normally belong. Why? In this article, I will argue that there is a reason for this absence of typical requests. Our prayers on Rosh Hashanah serve a radically different function from our prayers the rest of the year. We are not asking for anything on Rosh Hashanah. Rather, we are doing something with our prayers on Rosh Hashanah. What is it that our prayers are doing? Let me respond with a series of questions or clues. First, the Mishna Rosh Hashanah 4:6 describes the structure of our prayer at Musaf on Rosh Hashanah. There should be recited not less than ten kingship verses, ten remembrance verses, and ten shofar verses. R. Johanan b. Nuri said: if the reader says three from each set he has fulfilled his obligation. אין פוחתין מעשרה מלכיות מעשרה זכרונות מעשרה שופרות רבי יוחנן בן נורי אומר אם אמר שלוש שלוש מכולן יצא אין מזכירין זכרון מלכות ושופר של פורענות מתחיל בתורה ומשלים בנביא רבי יוסי אומר אם השלים בתורה יצא: The Mishna describes the three central elements of the Musaf prayer on Rosh Hashanah: malchiyot, zichronot, and shofrot – kingship, remembrance, and shofar. The Mishna instructs us that simply describing these concepts in the usual style of prayer is insufficient. We must list a 37 Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series• Tishrei 5773 series of ten texts to illustrate each of these concepts. If a person fails to include at least one such verse, he or she does not fulfill the obligation. This is striking: why would God need us to recite verses in our prayers? Are we trying to bring proofs to an argument by citing biblical evidence? Would God need such evidence? Second, when describing the construction of this Rosh Hashanah prayer, Maimonides (Hilchot Shofar 3:8) suggests that the choice of texts is open to the choosing of the person praying. These three intermediate blessings recited on Rosh Hashanah... [namely:] Kingship, Remembrance and Shofar - are each dependent on the others. In each of these blessings, one is required to recite ten verses reflecting the content of the blessing: three verses from the Torah, three from the Book of Psalms, three from [the words of] the prophets, and one more verse from the Torah. שלש ברכות אמצעיות אלו של ראש השנה ויום הכפורים של יובל שהן מלכיות וזכרונות ושופרות מעכבות זו את זו וצריך לומר בכל ברכה מהן עשרה פסוקים מעין הברכה, שלשה פסוקים מן התורה, ושלשה מספר תהלים, ושלשה מן הנביאים, ואחד מן התורה משלים בו, ואם השלים בנביא יצא. According to Maimonides, the text of the Rosh Hashanah prayer is not fixed. A person may choose any text that falls within the themes of malchiyot, zichronot, or shofrot. This stands in contrast to what Maimonides describes for the prayers of the rest of the year. In Hilchot Tefilah 1:4, Maimonides explains how the sages, upon witnessing the inability of their generation to formulate their own prayers, established fixed texts for the prayers. When the rest of the prayers of the year are fixed, why does the Torah allow us to choose the content of the Rosh Hashanah Amida? What's more: The recitation of concepts like malchiyot, zichronot and shofrot seems at odds with the normal agenda of prayer. Jewish prayer follows a set structure: shevach, bakasha, and hodaah; praise, supplication, and thanks. Our prayers have a logic and a decorum to them: we come before the King to make our requests. We cannot make our requests until we have first addressed the King with respect acknowledging the awesome opportunity that prayer affords us – we, mortal creatures, may stand before our immortal creator. After we have set forth our requests, we take leave by offering thanks for all the kindness that God has performed for us. For 353 days a year, a Jew prays this way. Yet at Musaf on Rosh Hashanah, we speak about kingship, remembrance, and the shofar. What are we asking for? Why are we praying? Finally, the Mishna Rosh Hashanah 4:5 tells us that the sounds of the shofar are to be affixed to the prayers of the day.

The order of blessings [in the Musaf Amidah is as follows]: [the reader says the blessing of] the patriarchs, [that of] mightiness and that of the sanctification of the name and includes the kingship-verses with them and does not blow the shofar. He then says the sanctification of the day and blows, the remembrance-verses and blows, and the shofar-verses and blows; and he then says the blessing of the temple service and the one of thanksgiving and the blessing of the priests. This is the view of R. Johanan b. Nuri. Said R Akiba to him: if he does not blow the shofar for the kingship-verses, why should he say them? No; [the rule is as follows]. He דבר ברכות אומר אבות וגבורות וקדושת השם וכולל מלכיות עמהן ואינו תוקע קדושת היום ותוקע זכרונות ותוקע שופרות ותוקע ואומר עבודה והודאה 38 וברכת כהנים דברי רבי יוחנן בן נורי אמר ליה רבי עקיבא אם אינו תוקע Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series• Tishrei 5773 says [the blessing of] the patriarchs and of the resurrection and of the sanctification of the name, and says the kingship-verses along with the sanctification of the day and blows the shofar, then he says the remembrance-verses and blows, and the shofar-verses and blows. Then he says the temple service blessing and the thanksgiving and the blessing of the priests. למלכיות למה הוא מזכיר אלא אומר אבות וגבורות וקדושת השם וכולל מלכיות עם קדושת היום ותוקע זכרונות ותוקע שופרות ותוקע ואומר עבודה והודאה וברכת כהנים Rabbi Akiva's comment assumes that the only reason to recite a specific section of the Musaf is that it accompanies the sounds of the shofar. At no other time of the year – does a mitzvah align or interfere with the recitation of a prayer. The performance of mitzvot and the activity of prayer are distinct experiences. In prayer, we communicate with God. In the performance of a mitzvah, we perform the divine will.²⁷ Yet, shofar is the one place where the fulfillment of the divine command is linked to prayer.²⁸ Why? To answer these questions and to decipher these clues, we must understand something about God. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in his 1974 teshuva derasha explains that our actions on Rosh Hashanah have an affect on God. The Almighty is the greatest subject, but He can also be an object. At times, He is influenced by human behavior... [The] Almighty displays his gentleness toward man. He is not only ram (רם) [great] but nisah. Nisah in the sense of being influenced and carried by others. Who influences the Almighty? The Jew who prays and is repentant... My melamed, like all the elders of Habad, referred to the first night of Rosh Hashanah as the Coronation Night. This is because it is the first occasion that the Jew gives a royal crown to the Almighty. The first time in the New Year that the Jew declares: "Our God and God of our fathers, reign over the whole universe in Thy glory... O Lord, King over all the earth." Who grants the royal crown to the Almighty? Who give the royal crown to the all powerful Master of the Universe. My melamed, along with many other poor Jews, granted the crown to the Almighty... It was a crown constructed of Jewish tears and endless sacrifice for Torah. It was adorned with the love of Jews for the Almighty.²⁹ The shofar is the clarion call with which we greet the entering King. The prayer of Rosh Hashanah is the pronouncement of people in a ceremony to greet their king. Our prayer at Musaf on Rosh Hashanah is not for us to seek out our needs. Rather, the prayer on Rosh Hashanah allows us to serve as actors in a great ceremony – we are the actors on the greatest stage the world knows, the spiritual expanse of human souls. God enters upon the blast of the 27 Prayer is itself a mitzvah according to Maimonides, but it is a commandment of a different sort from other actions that are prescribed by the Torah. Prayer is avoda shebelev – service of the heart. 28 The four-species are taken during Hallel but are not connected to the Amidah which is the central prayer. Talit and Tefillin are worn during prayers, but the fulfillment of these commandments is achieved immediately upon wearing them; they are thus not connected to prayer in and of themselves. 29 Rakeffet-Rothkoff, Aaron. The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik pp.153-154. 39 Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series• Tishrei 5773 shofar and upon the calls of our lips as we chant malchiyot, zichronot, and shofarot. The texts of the Torah that we

quote are not proof texts. Rather they are the embodiment of our participation in acknowledging the reign of the true king. The verses are essential to the function of these blessings. They do not prove an argument – rather they embody an idea that we shout as if we were at a political rally or in a massive stadium cheering on our team. The sounds of our voices are a compliment to the sounds of the shofar – they create the cacophony of excitement for God’s presence. The coherence of one chant to the next is irrelevant; it is the cumulative feeling of excitement and passion that matters. Therefore, we may choose our own verses to exemplify the ideas of God’s presence and power. Our prayers on Rosh Hashanah join together with the sound of the shofar to create the music that brings our King into this world. Prayer on Rosh Hashanah is about God. Our words serve to raise up God. Prayer at Musaf on Rosh Hoshanah is not about the needs of mankind – any content that includes requests for human needs is incidental. The preoccupation of the prayer at Musaf on Rosh Hashanah is God and God’s presence among mankind. The words of our prayer are not expressions of our innermost desires so much as choreographed elements within a great performance. Shofar is one such element – our prayers are another. As moderns who cherish our autonomy, the idea that our prayers are not for our own needs feels strange. Yet, with our prayers on Rosh Hashanah, we matter on the divine stage – we stand among those whose tears and endless sacrifice for Torah construct God’s crown. To be a part of something great often means more than just doing your own thing. This runs against our modern culture, but it speaks deeply to our souls.

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Is there a Mitzva to do Teshuva?

Rabbi Aaron Ross, PhD

RIETS Class of 2002

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The overarching theme of the forty day period that begins on Rosh Chodesh Elul and stretches until Yom HaKippurim (and perhaps even until Hoshana Rabba) is that of teshuva, repentance. Based on Isaiah 55:6 and other sources, we are instructed to “Seek Hashem when He is to be found”, and to thus spend this time of the year involved in introspection and in renewal of our commitment to God. However, while there is no question that teshuva is the major activity and idea of this time of year, is there actually a mitzva, a specific commandment, to do teshuva? If there is, then how is such a commandment fulfilled, and if there is not, then how are we to understand the myriad of sources that enjoin us to do exactly that? Rambam, in his *Sefer HaMitzvot* (Mitzvat Aseh #73), does not, at first glance, seem to include a specific mitzva of teshuva. He writes: That He commanded us to confess our sins and transgressions that we have sinned before God and explicate them along with teshuva. שצונו להתודות על החטאים והעונות שחטאנו לפני הא-ל יתעלה ולאמר. אותם עם התשובה. Based on the law that one has to offer a verbal confession when bringing a sacrifice, Rambam seems to indicate that there is a mitzva of verbal confession, and that the context within which this mitzva is done is that of teshuva. Similarly, in the heading to his laws of teshuva, Rambam writes that the commandment is for the sinner to return from his sin and to confess. Rounding out Rambam’s writings on this issue, the first chapter of the *Laws of Teshuva* indeed focus on the specific act of confession and in the very first law Rambam writes that when a person does teshuva, he is obligated to confess. In all three locations, Rambam acknowledges that one must do teshuva, but lists vidui, confession, as the specific mitzva to be fulfilled within that process. Sensitive to this nuance in Rambam, the *Minchat Chinuch* (mitzva #364) seeks to distinguish between the concepts of teshuva and vidui. He raises the case of a person who did teshuva insofar as he mentally regretted his sins and committed himself not to continue in his sinful ways, but did not yet verbalize his feelings via actual confession.

According to the *Minchat Chinuch*, if vidui is the active manifestation of teshuva then the teshuva cannot take hold until the vidui takes place. However, if the vidui is an independent mitzva, then perhaps such an individual can be forgiven for his sin and will simply have failed to perform the separate and distinct act of vidui, similar to someone who neglects to perform any positive commandment such as putting on tefillin. 25 Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series • Tishrei 5773

However, upon further consideration, the *Minchat Chinuch* distinguishes between mitzvot such as tefillin and teshuva. Tefillin are an obligatory commandment that one must atone for if he neglected to perform and can be subject to punishment for delinquency in its execution. But what if one were to not put on tefillin and then fail to do teshuva for that sin – would he be punished, as well, for his failure to repent for the first sin? It seems that such would not be the case- a person would only be held culpable for failing to do the sin of tefillin but not for failing to repent afterwards, and thus there is apparently a distinction between the two mitzvot. What emerges is that whether we are dealing with a mitzva of vidui or of teshuva, it is a mitzva that might be called a “meta-commandment”, insofar as it exists as a layer on top of other commandments. To take an example from the other side of the spectrum, a person cannot wake up in the morning and decide to do teshuva if he has not committed any sin. In order for him to be able to do teshuva, he must first do something else wrong, and once he does so the mechanism by which he repents is teshuva along with verbal confession. However, within this formulation another potential problem arises. In general, a Jewish court can administer the punishment of lashes to someone who violates a negative commandment (with the paradigmatic example being one who muzzles his ox while the beast is plowing his fields). However, there are no lashes given for a negative commandment which has a corrective positive commandment appended to it (lav ha-nitak la-aseh). If, however, we claim that teshuva is really connected to the specific sin which engenders it, then we would never be able to give lashes, as every single violation of Torah law would be connected to the positive mitzva of teshuva! The *Sdei Chemed* (Ma’arechet Ha-Lamed #91) raises this issue and cites the *Nachalat Binyamin*, cited by the Chida, who claims that we only apply the rule of lav ha-nitak la-aseh when the corrective measure exists specifically for the purpose of righting that particular sin. However, teshuva is not intrinsically linked to any particular commandment, and thus this rule would not apply here and we would be able to administer lashes despite the possibility that the individual may do teshuva. As such, we remain unclear as to the status of teshuva as a mitzva – it clearly cannot exist as an independent mitzva without some other mitzva triggering it, yet its inherent and intrinsic connection to that mitzva is tenuous at best. Rav Soloveitchik, in *Al HaTeshuva* (pp. 37-41) claims that the Rambam believes that teshuva itself, and not only vidui, is a mitzva. That being the case, how does he deal with the view of the *Minchat Chinuch* that reads Rambam the opposite way? He claims that teshuva falls into the category of commandments whose fulfillment and action are not identical. Whereas by lulav, one fulfills the commandment when he raises the four species, by teshuva one can fulfill his obligation to repent by going through the mental processes, but only the vidui is considered to be an action connected to teshuva (in halacha, thoughts do not count as actions). As such, Rambam follows his familiar pattern of first discussing the actual action involved in the mitzva in the first chapter of the *Laws of Teshuva*, even though the action does not encompass the full scope of the mitzva.¹⁵ 15 Similar to Rambam’s approach in his *Laws of Prayer*, where he begins with the rudiments of prayer itself, even though one’s thoughts and intentions comprise the essence of prayer. 26 Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series • Tishrei 5773 I would like to suggest that Rav Soloveitchik’s formulation may help to solve an intriguing detail in the second chapter of Rambam’s *Laws of Teshuva*. In the first law in that chapter, Rambam writes: What is complete repentance? This is when one has the opportunity to commit

a sin that he has previously committed and he is capable again of committing it and he separates himself from it and refrains from doing it because of teshuva (i.e. he resists the temptation because he has repented, not because there is any other impediment to his recidivism). זה שבה לידו דבר שעבר בו ואפשר בידו לעשות ופירש ולא? איזו היא תשובה גמורה... עשה מפני התשובה... The very next law begins with the question “And what is teshuva?”, which is then followed by a three step process of repenting including abandoning the sin, accepting not to commit it in the future, and offering a verbal confession. What is noteworthy and perhaps even strange in Rambam’s formulation is that the laws appear to be backwards. It would seem most logical to begin with the three step process of teshuva, and then write that a person can go a step further and achieve complete repentance if his teshuva is not merely an academic exercise but if he actually has the opportunity to sin again yet refrains from doing so since he has undergone the teshuva process. Why does Rambam place these two components of teshuva in the reverse order? Perhaps the answer is that Rambam is not speaking about two stages in one process of teshuva, but rather is speaking about two qualitatively different types of teshuva. The notion of “complete teshuva” is not regular teshuva plus one more step, but rather it is a completely different approach to repentance. I would like to suggest that someone who performs “complete teshuva” does not need to undergo the three-step process, but rather only has to experience that one excruciating moment of restraint. Why would this be so? A person who decides one day to repent for his misdeeds does so out of a general desire to improve himself and to return to Hashem, but not necessarily out of an immediate and overpowering sense of guilt brought on by his recent transgressions. As such, he is given a basic formula to follow that, performed properly, will reorient his way of thinking and set him on the path to repentance, what Rav Kook refers to (Orot HaTeshuva 2) as “gradual teshuva”. Once that is done, he must verbalize those thoughts, and thus the confession contains elements of all three of the steps – and Rambam’s formulation of the confession (Laws of Teshuva 1:1) indeed references the past sin, the regret, and the acceptance to not return to the sin in the future. In such a case, the commandment is teshuva in one’s mind, and the formal action is the verbalization of that teshuva in the form of vidui. However, one who has a moment of restraint does not need such a process. Taking Rambam’s example, imagine a situation of a man who has had an illicit relationship with a certain woman, and now is placed in a situation where it is possible to commit that same action again. Not only that, but his desire for her is still as inflamed as it previously was at the time of the original transgression. However, for some reason, he holds himself back and does not sin, BECAUSE he is repenting at that very moment! In a flash, he accomplishes the entire three-step process. He realizes that he did something wrong, he regrets having done it, and he not only accepts upon himself to not do it again in the future, but he resigns himself to resisting temptation at that very 27 Yeshiva University • A To-Go Series • Tishrei 5773 moment, what Rav Kook calls “sudden teshuva”! Such a person does not need a generic formula for teshuva – his teshuva is “complete”, as it exists not in his mental world but in an all-too-real reality. In this latter situation, there is no need for vidui. The confession, as we have explained, is merely the external expression of the penitent’s thoughts. However, in this case the external expression is uniquely bound up with the entire moment. His very restraint is more of an expression of his commitment to teshuva than any verbal confession could ever hope to be. Thus Rambam does not include vidui in his description of “complete teshuva”, as it is not necessary and would, in fact, be completely extraneous in such a situation. Only those who have to rely on a more detached form of repentance need to confess their sins as well. The vidui is not the actual mitzva, but, in most cases, it is the necessary externalization of the real mitzva of teshuva.

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The Musaf Prayer of Rosh Hashana **By Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon**

A. NINE BERAKHOT

The centerpiece of each one of our prayer services is the Amida, the silent, standing prayer, which usually follows one of two templates: the weekday nineteen-berakha (blessing; plural, berakhot) structure or the holiday seven-berakha structure. The first three and last three berakhot are basically the same in all cases, but the middle thirteen berakhot of bakkasha (request) on a weekday are replaced on holidays with one central berakha focusing on Kedushat ha-Yom, the sanctity of the day.

The Musaf (additional) prayers of Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Yom Tov and Yom Kippur all follow this model and contain seven berakhot. Only on Rosh Hashana does the Musaf prayer contain a total of nine berakhot: with the middle berakhot incorporating Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot, the themes of Divine Majesty, Remembrance and sounding the shofar, respectively. The source for including Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot in the Rosh Hashana service is found in the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 34b; all Talmudic citations are from there unless otherwise noted).[1]

The Holy One, Blessed be He said: “Recite before me Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot on Rosh Hashana.

“Malkhuyot — so that you may coronate Me over you as King;

“Zikhronot — so that your remembrance may come before Me positively;

“And with what? With a shofar.”

Yet, despite the addition of three additional themes, three berakhot cannot be added to the regular seven of Musaf, because the Rosh Hashana service may include only nine berakhot, not ten (Berakhot 29a): To what do the nine [berakhot] recited on Rosh Hashana correspond? Rabbi Yitzchak from Carthage said: “To the nine times that Channa mentions the Divine Name in her prayer” (I Shmuel 2).

How then do we incorporate the three special berakhot of Rosh Hashana into the seven berakhot of the standard Musaf prayer? The Mishna determines that one should include the blessing of Malkhuyot in one of the seven berakhot of the regular Musaf prayer, and the Sages argue about the precise way to go about this (Mishna 32a): according to Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri, the blessing of Malkhuyot should be incorporated in the third blessing, that of Kedushat ha-Shem (sanctity of God’s name), while according to the view of Rabbi Akiva, the blessing of Malkhuyot should be incorporated in the fourth blessing, the berakha of Kedushat ha-Yom.

Ostensibly, the amalgamation of these two themes into a single berakha violates one of the widely-accepted rules of berakhot. The Gemara in Berakhot (49a) asserts, “We do not conclude with two” — i.e., one berakha cannot encompass two discrete themes. As such, how is it possible to include the berakha of Malkhuyot within another berakha?

An answer to this question (at least according to the view of Rabbi Akiva, whom the halakha follows) may be found in the words of Rabbi

Chayim of Brisk, who explains that the berakha of Kedushat ha-Yom and the berakha of Malkhuyot are intrinsically linked. The essential theme of Rosh Hashana is the coronation of God as Sovereign over the world. Consequently, Malkhuyot may be incorporated into the berakha which deals with the uniqueness of the day. Indeed, the conclusion of the fourth berakha, “King over the entire land, Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance,” is shared by all the prayers of Rosh Hashana; it is not unique to the Musaf prayer, the sole place where the berakha of Malkhuyot is found.

Thus, the description of “King over the entire land” is the essence of Rosh Hashana, and one should mention it in all of the services of the day. Because of this, Rabbi Chayim rules that if a person concludes the fourth berakha with only “Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance” (comparable to the berakha recited on a regular Yom Tov) and omits “King over the entire land”, that person must repeat the Amida.[2] God’s dominion over the universe, “King over the entire land”, is the entire essence of Rosh Hashana, and a person who does not mention it does not fulfill the obligation.

The incorporation of these three special berakhot of Rosh Hashana is so central to the holiday that we find that some of the Rishonim assert that one should recite Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot in all the prayers of Rosh Hashana. The Baal ha-Maor suggests as much (Rosh Hashana 12a, Rif pagination):

In principle, Rosh Hashana should not have seven berakhot, but there should always be nine — whether at Arvit, Shacharit, Musaf or Mincha.

The Baal ha-Maor recognizes that “the custom handed down to us by our fathers and our fathers’ fathers is that we do not have nine in our prayers except for Musaf” — and he concedes that one should follow this in practice. Nevertheless, he believes that “In principle” — each of the prayers of the day should include nine berakhot.[3]

It is worth noting that the model which the Sages chose for the Musaf service is the prayer of Channa, mother of Shmuel. The Sages derive that just as God’s name is mentioned nine times in this prayer, so must the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashana contain nine blessings. The prayer of Channa indeed is a private prayer, in that she expresses gratitude for the son she was granted after long years of infertility; however, Channa include universal themes, e.g. “God will judge the ends of the land” (I Shmuel 2:10). Perhaps, the Sages seek to teach us through this that even when a person makes a personal request at the opening of the new year, each individual must see himself or herself as part of the greater whole: the entire Jewish nation and the entire world. One must seek personal redemption as part of the collective redemption.

B. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BERAKHOT

Each of the special berakhot of Rosh Hashana — Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot — is composed of three parts. Each opens with an introduction, which explains the theme of the berakha; it continues with verses from Torah, Ketuvim and Neviim which pertain to and develop this theme; and it concludes with bakkasha, asking God to favor us in accordance with the vision set forth in that theme.[4]

This can be seen in the berakha of Malkhuyot. The berakha opens with the familiar prayer of “Aleinu,” which describes God’s dominion over the entire universe and our anticipation of the day that God will remove false gods from the earth. (This passage was eventually adapted for use at the conclusion of every prayer service, but Malkhuyot is its original setting.) In the second section we cite verses which speak of God’s sovereignty over the universe; and in the conclusion of the berakha, we make a request for the future: “Rule over the whole world, in its entirety, in Your glory....”

This can also be seen in the berakha of Zikhronot. The berakha opens with an introduction describing God’s providence over the universe and His remembrance and attention to all He has created; next, we cite verses which exemplify that theme and establish it; and we conclude with a

request that God recall for us the merit of the Patriarchs, along with our own merits, thereby remembering us in a good light.

This can also be seen in the berakha of Shofarot. The introduction to the berakha details the Convocation at Mount Sinai, in which the shofar heralds in the Divine revelation within the world. Then we cite verses in which the shofar is mentioned, and we conclude the berakha with a petition to hasten the day on which the great shofar of redemption will be sounded: “Sound the great shofar for our emancipation”.

C. TEN VERSES

The centerpiece of the berakhot of Malkhuyot, Zikhronot and Shofarot is the citation of verses from across Tanakh. In each of these berakhot, ten verses are mentioned: three from the Torah, three from Ketuvim, three from Neviim, and finally an additional verse from the Torah. The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 32a) describes the reason for the Sages’ institution of citing ten verses for each berakha:

These ten [verses] of Malkhuyot, to what do they correspond?

Rabbi Levi said: “They correspond to the ten praises which David uttered in the Book of Tehillim.”

But there are far more praises than that!

Still, this is [the number] written in [the final psalm, which mentions] “Praise him with the blowing of the shofar” (Tehillim 150:3).

Rav Yosef said: “They correspond to the Ten Commandments which were said to Moshe at Sinai.”

Rabbi Yochanan said: “They correspond to the Ten Utterances with which the universe was created....”

As we know, in Tanakh (acronym for Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim), the books of Neviim precede the books of Ketuvim. Why then did the Sages place the verses of Ketuvim before the verses of Neviim in the Musaf of Rosh Hashana?

Admittedly, this question is not overwhelming; after all, many of the prophecies found in Neviim are subsequent to some of the compositions in Ketuvim. The Book of Tehillim, for example, was written by King David, and could be placed chronologically among the early books of Neviim, between the books of Shmuel and Melakhim. Thus the Ritva (32a, s.v. Rabbi Yosei) answers this question by explaining: in fact, Neviim and Ketuvim are essentially contemporaneous, and they have an equal level of holiness. According to him, the Sages chose to put the verses from Ketuvim first “so that [people] would not deride their holiness; to show that they are all imbued with Divine inspiration, [the Sages] instituted to say them first.”

Nevertheless, in the accepted order of Tanakh, we put the books of Neviim before the books of Ketuvim (see Bava Batra 13b), and it appears that the divergence from this sequence in the Rosh Hashana service requires an explanation.

One answer to this question — at least regarding the verses cited in the berakha of Shofarot — is offered by Rabbi Tzadok ha-Kohen of Lublin (Peri Tzaddik, Derush Le-Rosh Hashana, Vol. V, p. 168), who writes:

One may then understand why they established, in the text of the prayer, in the ten verses of Shofarot, to say the verses of Ketuvim before the verses of Neviim...

For in the verses from the Torah, the sounds of the shofar at the Giving of the Torah are cited, and they allude to the straight (tekia) sound at the beginning...

And in the three verses of Ketuvim, the issue of the mitzva of blowing the shofar on our part is mentioned, which is an allusion to the terua in the middle, as we have noted.

And in the three verses of Neviim, the sounds of the shofar in the end of days are mentioned, which will be the realization of the Divine perfection of the world, alluding to the straight (tekia) sound at the end, as we have mentioned.

Consequently, through this they have also instituted the order of the verses of Malkhuyot and Zikhronot in this sequence.

Rabbi Tzadok explains that the tekia, “the straight sound,” symbolizes the actions of God, which are straightforward and upright. The variable, staccato sounds of the terua and the shevarim are an allusion to the actions of human beings. Just as the order of sounding the shofar is tekia-terua-tekia, so too the Sages wanted us to open the verses of Shofarot with the shofar sounds made by God (described in the verses from the Torah), to continue with the human shofar sounds (as in the verses from Ketuvim), and to conclude once again with Divine shofar sounds (in the verses from Neviim). This alludes to the human role in the world and the interrelationship between God’s actions and human activity, and therefore the Sages arranged the verses of Shofarot in this manner.

In the formulation of the Rambam’s ruling on this issue (Hilkhot Shofar 3:8) we find a unique description for the verses of Ketuvim:

Three verses come from the Torah, and three from the Book of Tehillim, and three from Neviim, and a verse from the Torah concludes it.

Why does the Rambam rule that one should say three verses “from the Book of Tehillim” instead of ten from “Ketuvim” (as the Gemara phrases it)? Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (cited in Harerei Kedem, Ch. 26) explains that the goal of the verses of Ketuvim is to praise God through them, and therefore the Rambam emphasizes that one should mention verses from the Book of Tehillim specifically, which is (quite literally) the Book of Praises — paeans, songs and hymns to God. According to his view, one may explain in an additional way why we put the verses of Ketuvim before the verses of Neviim: since the essential aim of the ten verses is to praise God, and this aim is fully realized with the verses from the Book of Tehillim, the Sages chose to arrange the verses in such a way that the verses of Tehillim would be said in the middle of the sequence of verses and not at its end.[5]

Until this point, we have assumed that that the advancement of the verses of Ketuvim before the verses of Neviim reflects the special uniqueness of the verses of Ketuvim. However, in fact, it may be that the Sages chose that the verses of Ketuvim should precede the verses of Neviim specifically in order to position the verses of Neviim as the climax of the list. This is how the Ritva (s.v. Rabbi Yosei) explains the placement of the verses from Ketuvim before the verses of Neviim, “Because it befits the prophet’s honor to serve as the conclusion.”

Furthermore, it may be that the verses of Neviim serve as the conclusion not only because of the honor of the prophets and the importance of their books, but because of the content of these verses. The verses of Neviim cited generally deal with a vision of the future and with redemption. This is true of the verses of Malkhuyot: “And God will be king over the entire land” (Zekharya 14:9); the same is true of the verses of Zikhronot: “And I will recall my covenant with you in the days of your youth and I will fulfill for you an eternal covenant” (Yechezkel 16:60); and in the verses of Shofarot: “And it will be on that day, a great shofar will be blown” (Yeshayahu 27:13). As mentioned, the final portion of each blessing — after the ten verses — is bakkasha. As such, it is most appropriate for us to conclude the biblical portion with verses from Neviim, focused on the hopeful supplication for redemption; thus, these verses serve as a fitting segue to the bakkasha.

D. TENTH VERSE

As mentioned, after the recitation of the nine verses — three from the Torah, three from Ketuvim and three from Neviim — we complete the ten verses with an additional verse from the Torah. The Mishna (32a) asserts that the tenth verse should be from Neviim, however the Gemara cites the words of Rabbi Yosei (32b), that “whoever concludes with the Torah is praiseworthy”, and this is our practice.[6]

Regarding the placement of the tenth verse within the berakha, there is a discrepancy between the berakha of Malkhuyot and the berakhot of Zikhronot and Shofarot. In the blessing of Malkhuyot, immediately after the first nine verses, a tenth verse is cited: “And in Your Torah the

following is written, ‘Hear, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” On the other hand, in the berakhot of Zikhronot and Shofarot, the tenth verse is not cited just after the first nine verses. Rather, in these berakhot, the tenth verse (“And I will recall for them the covenant of the first ones;” “And on the day of your happiness and at your set times”) is cited in the concluding section part of the berakha — in the part of prayerful request — separate from the first nine verses.

Why are the tenth verses of the berakhot of Zikhronot and Shofarot separated from the first nine verses? The Tur (OC, Ch. 591) cites an answer to this question in the name of the Ra’avya:

Why did they distance them? This is because the verse dovetails with the language of the prayer.

The tenth verse, if so, is a verse of bakkasha.[7] Consequently, it is only appropriate to integrate this verse into the concluding section of the berakha — the section dealing with conciliation, petition and request — and not together with the rest of the verses, which are designated to recall the theme of the berakha and to support it with proofs from Tanakh.

ShofarotZikhronotMalkhuyot

Revelation of God’s Presence with the shofarProvidence and remembranceAleinu — God’s universal sovereignty Introduction

3 TorahProof 3 Ketuvim3 Neviim3 TorahProof 3 Ketuvim3 Neviim3

TorahProof 3 Ketuvim3 NeviimNine versesRequest 1 TorahRequest

1 TorahRequest 1 TorahTenth verse

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