



INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
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**The Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach, Rav Soloveitchik and The Other Wes Moore by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

It is amongst the most difficult laws in the Torah to understand. The Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach ceremony that is performed as part of the Yom Kippur Beit HaMikdash ritual appears primitive and brutal and even seems to run counter to basic Torah values. The notion of taking a goat and hurling it down a cliff, thereby achieving forgiveness for our sins, is difficult for us to accept. Indeed, Meforashim throughout the generations have struggled to understand the meaning behind what appears to be a peculiar ritual. However, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik offers an eye opening explanation that reveals the profound message of this mysterious Mitzvah. Moreover, the eye opening book *The Other Wes Moore* brings Rav Soloveitchik's interpretation to life and helps us grasp the elusive meaning of the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach.

**The Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach Ritual**

The Torah (VaYikra 16:5-10) describes the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach ritual as follows (translation from Mechon Mamre):

And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering. And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and set them before the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat upon which the lot fell for the Lord, and offer him for a sin-offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the Lord, to make atonement over him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

The Torah (ad loc. 21-22) continues:

And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of an appointed man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land which is cut off; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

The Mishnah (Yoma 6:6) describes the scene at the mountain:

"The Kohein who brought the goat to the desert tied a strip of crimson between the horns of the goat and then pushed the goat backwards down the cliff. The goat would roll down the mountain and be dismembered by the time it reached halfway down the mountain".

Rav Shmuel Goldin, in his *Unlocking the Torah Text: Vayikra* (page 114), eloquently articulates three questions that will help us unlock the meaning of this mysterious ritual:

What is the significance of the simultaneous selection of two goats? This question becomes even more intriguing in light of the Mishnaic dictate (Yoma 6:1) that the goats chosen should be as similar as possible in stature, appearance and in cost.

Why are lots drawn to determine the fate of each goat? Why not simply designate without resorting to a ceremony of chance?

Are the sins of the people truly transferred to the "head of the goat," as the text seems to indicate? Does the animal really become a scapegoat for our sins? Such an idea seems completely antithetical to Jewish Law and its prohibition of superstitious practice... To suggest that the Teshuva process can somehow be short-circuited through a magical act of transference of sins seems to fly in the face of all we believe.

Four Classic Approaches to the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach – Chazal, Abarbanel, Rav Hirsch and Ramban

The Gemara (Yoma 67b) lists the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach among five other examples of a Chok, a Mitzvah for which we do not have a rational explanation. Included in this list are other puzzling rituals such as Chalitzah and the Sha'atnez prohibition. This passage in the Gemara concludes that one should not regard these Mitzvot as an exercise in nonsense, since they were

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commanded by Hashem in His infinite wisdom. Thus, one can simply opt out of trying to discover meaning to the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach since it is a Chok.

Nonetheless, Meforashim endeavor to discover a reason for this Mitzvah.

Abarbanel (VaYikra 16:1-22) argues that the two goats whose appearance is very similar represent the twin brothers Ya'akov and Eisav, one of whom is chosen to serve as the ancestor of G-d's nation and the other destined to live a turbulent and violent existence. This ritual is conducted on Yom Kippur to remind us of our special role as descendants of Ya'akov Avinu.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (VaYikra 16:10) notes that on the one hand, one goat's blood reaches a more holy spot than the blood of any other Korban. On the other hand, the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach is sent much further outside the Beit HaMikdash than any other rejected Korban. The Torah is teaching that Hashem creates a level spiritual field in which we function. Whenever there is greater spiritual opportunity there is also a parallel greater potential for falling into a spiritual abyss. The opposite destinations of the two goats express the choice and free will that Hashem has bestowed upon us – a core lesson of spiritual improvement central to Yom Kippur.

Ramban (VaYikra 16:8) offers an incredibly bold suggestion to explain the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach:

On Yom Kippur, however, Hashem commanded us that we send a goat to the wilderness, to the "force" that rules in desolate places...and under whose authority are the demons referred to by Chazal as "Mazikim" (destroyers) and in the Chumash as "Se'irim," male goats.

Ramban clarifies that the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach is not an independent offering to the "force" of the wilderness. The gift to the wilderness, rather, is a fulfillment of G-d's will, comparable to a food provided by the caterer of a banquet to a servant at the host's request.

Rav Goldin (op. cit. p. 122) offers a compelling explanation of Ramban. He writes the following:

"[The gift constitutes] A healthy respect for the potentially destructive forces that inhabit our inner world. We must recognize the strength of our Yeitzer Hara (base instincts) and its unerring ability to undermine all valiant attempts at self-betterment. Attempted sublimation of the Yeitzer Hara is the surest way to grant it power over our actions. Instead we must acknowledge our "adversary"; respect its strength; and then turn that strength to our benefit.

Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach

While these and other classic explanations of the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach shed significant light and represent significant contributions to the age-old endeavor to explain this mysterious ritual, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's approach (presented in Reflections of the Rav, volume 1 chapter 4, especially page 46) appears the most satisfying and compelling.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that the two male goats were identical but their fates lead them in opposite directions, as determined by chance ("Goral," the lottery) decisions entirely beyond their control. The casting of lots decreed which was to go "LaShem," to be sacrificed within the Temple, and which to "Azazel," to be cast out of the camp of Israel, ignominiously to be destroyed. The secret of atonement is thus indicated in the ceremonious casting of the lots. It reflects the basis for the penitent's claim to forgiveness, that his moral directions were similarly influenced by forces beyond his control, that his sinning was not entirely a free and voluntary choice. Only the Almighty can evaluate the extent of human culpability in situations which are not entirely of man's making. Only G-d knows to what extent a man was a free agent in making his decisions. The Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach is thus a psychodramatic representation of the penitent's state of mind and his emotional need. Only by entering such a plea can man be declared "not guilty."

Rav Soloveitchik builds on Abarbanel's and Rav Hirsch's approaches of the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach representing the two paths from which we choose in life, taking it to the next level by showing how the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach expresses our plea for forgiveness to Hashem on Yom Kippur. While the Rav's approach does not excuse a sinner from his actions, it does offer hope and opportunity for understanding and forgiveness on the one hand, and the opportunity to improve on the other. Rav Soloveitchik's approach also fits with Ramban's idea of

respecting the power of the Yeitzer HaRa, which also constitutes a basis for forgiveness on the one hand, and a basis for opportunities to improve on the other.

The Other Wes Moore

Rav Soloveitchik's approach to the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach is brought to life by the highly regarded work published (by Random House) in 2010, The Other Wes Moore – One Name, Two Fates. The author summarizes the message of his book as follows:

Two kids with the same name, living in the same city. One grew up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated combat veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader. The other is serving a life sentence in prison for felony murder. Here is the story of two boys and the journey of a generation.

In December 2000, the Baltimore Sun ran a small piece about Wes Moore, a local student who had just received a Rhodes Scholarship. The same paper also ran a series of articles about four young men who had allegedly killed a police officer in a spectacularly botched armed robbery. The police were still hunting for two of the suspects who had gone on the lam, a pair of brothers. One was named Wes Moore.

Wes just couldn't shake off the unsettling coincidence, or the inkling that the two shared much more than space in the same newspaper. After following the story of the robbery, the manhunt, and the trial to its conclusion, he wrote a letter to the other Wes, now a convicted murderer serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. His letter tentatively asked the questions that had been haunting him: Who are you? How did this happen?

That letter led to a correspondence and relationship that has lasted for several years. Over dozens of letters and prison visits, Wes discovered that the other Wes had a life not unlike his own: Both had grown up in similar neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods, both were fatherless; they'd hung out on similar corners with similar crews, and both had run into trouble with the police. At each stage of their young lives they had come across similar moments of decision, yet their choices and the people in their lives would lead them to astonishingly different destinies.

Told in alternating dramatic narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, The Other Wes Moore tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a challenging and at times, hostile world.

Quality books allow one to vicariously enter and experience environments in which one would otherwise not have the opportunity to access. The intended power of The Other Wes Moore is to allow us to vicariously experience the challenges faced by those who struggle with being raised in inner city environments. From a Torah perspective, The Other Wes Moore provides a rare window of opportunity to vicariously experience the central theme and profoundly poignant power of message communicated by the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach – two people come from nearly the same background and environment, yet one merges as a spectacular success and one as a resounding failure. While one can never excuse The Other Wes Moore for the choices he made, experiencing and understanding his background helps us at least have some compassion for his predicament. It also helps us grasp the essence of our plea on Yom Kippur for forgiveness and the opportunity for improvement and redemption.

Conclusion

Far from being primitive and brutal, the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach expresses a highly sophisticated and poignant message, which touches the heart of the human condition and the fundamental moral-spiritual tension between justice and mercy. Our careful search for meaning in what at a superficial glance appears to be foolish has yielded rich and abundant fruit. The same applies for every Mitzvah. Any and every aspect of Torah and Chazal is rich with meaning and significance. Never dismiss any part of our holy Torah. If we do not grasp the full meaning of part of the Torah, we are confident that others in either the current or future generations will unravel the mystery. Our successful search to discover the meaning of the Se'ir HaMishtalei'ach helps us accept Chazal's teaching (Yoma 67b) regarding such Chukim, "Lest one argue that these

Chukim are a foolish waste, therefore the Torah states [in regard to Chukim] 'Ani Hashem' (I am G-d); you enjoy no right to dismiss His commands."

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**Rabbi Yakov Haber**

The Torah's Song; the Song of Torah

I

"Vata kisvu lachem es hashira hazos, v'lam'da es B'nei Yisrael sima b'pitem, I'ma'an tihye hashira hazos leid b'nei Yisrael - And now, write for you this song, and teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth, in order that this song shall be a witness for the Children of Israel!" (VaYeilech 31:19).

This verse is inherently vague. On the one hand, the context in which it is written - before Shiras Ha'azinu and immediately preceding verses predicting the Jewish people's entry into the Land of Israel, their turning to idol worship and subsequent punishment followed by: "and this song will testify as a witness" (v. 21) - indicates that the song being referenced is Shiras Ha'azinu, the song of Jewish History. On the other hand, the nearby verse, "And when Moshe finished writing down the words of this Torah in a scroll until completion" (v. 24) and the following command to the Levites, "Take this sefer Torah and place it on the side of the aron hab'ris, and it should remain there as a testimony" (v. 26) imply that the reference is to the entire Torah.

Indeed, the commentaries explain that two meanings inhere within the commandment of writing "hashira hazos": one referring to the specific portion of Shiras Ha'azinu and one to the entire Torah (see Rashi, Rabbag, Sha'arei Aharon). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 21b) teaches that even if one inherits a sefer Torah from his ancestors, he still has an obligation to write one himself and quotes the above-mentioned verse as the source for this ruling. This implies that the entire Torah is being referenced. But the Talmud (Nedarim 38a) also indicates that both Shiras Ha'azinu and the entire Torah are being referenced.

Many approaches have been suggested as to how the commandment "to write this song" can also imply the mitzvah to write the entire Torah. After all, the entire Torah is presumably not a song! Rambam (Hilchos Sefer Torah 7:1) famously explains that the commandment is primarily to write the song of Ha'azinu. But since the Torah cannot be written in separate mini scrolls (parshiyos, parshiyos), the entire Torah must be written. Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin zt"l (Netziv) in his Ha'ameik Davar (see also Torah Temimah) challenges this understanding since the Torah's intent might be to write Ha'azinu separately, just as there is a commandment to write the parshiyos of tefillin separately.

Netziv alternatively suggests that the phrase "this song" has a dual meaning. Firstly, it refers to the song of Ha'azinu; secondly it refers to the entire Torah. Because of this second meaning the plural "kisvu" is used since every Jew has an obligation to write a Seifer Torah. By contrast, only Moshe was commanded to write Ha'azinu. As to why the Torah is called a song, Netziv elsewhere (introduction to Ha'ameik Sh'aila, Kidmas Ha'Eimek 2:3) explains that there are two types of writing: prose and poetry, the later also being referred to as verse or song. Hashem formulated the Torah in a purposefully ambiguous manner to allow for multiple meanings all to be derived from the text.[1] As any student of the Talmud knows, Chazal are attuned to every extra letter, every textual anomaly, and every textual similarity from which many halachos are derived. (Also see Malbim's Ayeles HaShachar.) R' Akiva is famously described as deriving "mounds and mounds of halachos" from even the crowns on top of the letters (Menachos 29b.) In the aggados, midrashim, and in sifrei chassidus verses are interpreted b'derech haremez, by way of allusion, often taking them totally out of context. All of these meanings lie within the "song" of Torah, purposefully implanted by its Author to enable those who study it to extract those multiple layers of meaning from the text.[2] As an additional example, Malbim, in his commentary to Tanach, will often collect many different interpretations of the commentaries preceding him and show how each

interpretation is alluded to in the text. The Gaon of Vilna toward the end of his life worked on demonstrating how all the halachos of the Torah are alluded to in the text of the Torah.[3]

This important idea developed by Netziv gives us great insight as to the nature and complexity of how a finite text of the Torah can ultimately have infinite interpretations. The Torah is a manifestation of the chochmas Hashem. In the language of the Zohar, "Kudsha B'rich Hu v'Oraisa chad Hu - Hashem and the Torah are one." Learning Torah is, on a deeper plain, studying Hashem Himself. In one of the daily blessings recited over Torah study we refer to those who know Torah as "yod'ei sh'mecha - knowers of Your name." Ramban writes in his introduction to Torah that if we were to remove all the spaces between the words of the Torah and create different words by spacing them differently, we would be reading different names of Hashem. Rav Schneur Zalman Schneerson of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch, explains, based on kabbalistic sources, that each commandment represents a different aspect of Divinity. This gives us insight as to how the Talmud could describe Hashem as "wearing tefillin" (Berachos 6a) or "wrapping Himself in a tallis" (Rosh HaShana 17b). The mitzvos which we do are an allegorical representation of Divine ideas. The real "tallis" and "tefillin" are esoteric Divine concepts; the physical tallis and tefillin allow finite human beings to connect to these infinite concepts. The "song" of Torah with its multi-dimensional and even infinite layers of meaning provides for us a window into the Eternity and All-Encompassing nature of its Author.[4]

II

Yom HaKippurim was established originally as the Day of Atonement for the sins of K'lal Yisrael since it was on that day that Moshe Rabbeinu came down for the final time from Har Sinai with the second luchos. This central event was the climax of the kappara for the sin of the golden calf. In essence then, the Torah was given a second time on Yom Kippur. Since the second luchos were the ones that lasted, not the first, the Jewish people are perhaps more connected to this day of Matan Torah than even to Shavuos. The last mishna in maseches Ta'anis teaches that there were no happier holidays in Israel than Yom HaKippurim since it was the day of the giving of the Torah. Perhaps the reason that Shavuos is not listed is that since the first luchos were broken, we relate to Yom HaKippurim more intensely.

But of course, Yom Kippur is not just the day of the second Matan Torah; it also the "keitz s'lichah um'chilah", it is a day of national and individual repentance and return to G-d. It is a day whose very essence is infused with Divine Presence and mercy; it is a day we enter into as we would amikveh, not just a day that we experience - "Mikveh Yisrael Hashem", just as a mikveh purifies the impure, so HaKadosh Baruch Hu purifies Israel (mishna end of Yoma). Apparently, there is a strong link between Yom Kippur's role as a day of teshuva and kappara and its role as a day of Matan Torah.

Rav Betzael Zolti zt"l, the former chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, (Mishnas Ya'avetz 54:3-4) elaborates at length how teshuva is not just the commitment to not violate aveiros and not just the determination to perform the mitzvos properly, but to return to the totality of Torah and specifically its study - "and in it we will speak day and night". This is a manifestation of the highest form of teshuva, teshuva me'ahava, out of love. Among his other sources for this concept, Rav Zolti quotes the haftora for Shabbos Shuva wherein Hoshei'a the prophet adjures us: "Shuva Yisrael 'ad Hashem Elokecha ki kashalta ba'avonecha; k'chu imachem d'varim v'shuvu el Hashem - Return O Israel unto G-d for you have stumbled in your sin; take words with you and return to G-d." On this, the Sifrei (Ha'azinu 306:2) comments that the phrase "take words with you" refers to words of Torah. Similarly, we implore Hashem daily in the blessing of teshuva, "Hashiveinu Avinu l'Torasecha" and only afterward do we pray, "v'hachazireinu b'teshuva sh'leima l'fanecha".[5]

The song of Torah has to permeate our thoughts, our words as well as our actions. Perhaps demonstrating the idea of the Torah being called a song, the Torah is read with trop, musical notes, and the Jewish people have always traditionally sung the Talmud to a characteristic niggun. Just as a symphony has many different instruments each with their own purpose, all joining together to create a majestic, musical masterpiece, so too does each mitzvah elevate another



Noraim with the effort, the plan to recognize the things that we do that are wrong.

3. I would like to end with a comment regarding the Iran nuclear deal. Something generally, political, something very disappointing to us. But I would like to add a Nekuda, a thought, and something for the Yomim Noraim.

I had mentioned a number of years ago on Parshas Netzavim that the Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo does not end there. There is a piece broken off that is in Parshas Netzavim and that Posuk seems to be referring to the horrors of the results of some type of nuclear disaster. There it talks about a disaster, a destruction which is 29:22 (ולא תעלה) ולא תצמח, ואשר הפך ירוך, באפו ובחממו (כה כל ע-ע-ש: כמהפכת סלם ועמרה, אדמה וצבאים, אשר הפך ירוך, באפו ובחממו) a destruction that destroys the earth, that makes the whole place uninhabitable. Sounds like the after effects Hashem forbid of a nuclear disaster.

Why is this broken off from the rest of the Tochacha and is in Parshas Nitzavim? The Satmar Rebbe writes in a speech that he gave after the Holocaust which is in the Divrei Yoel, that we have suffered all of the tragedies of the Tochacha. After the Holocaust we have seen it all. What about the Parshas Nitzavim, the (גפרית ומלח, שרפה כל-ארצה)? He said for that Avraham Avinu's Tefilla helped. Avraham Avinu Davened that Sedom not be destroyed if (יש) (עשרה צדיקים, בתוך העיר). He knew that there were no 10 Tzaddikim in Sedom. But he Davened that if there are 10 Tzaddikim the destruction of Sedom should not take place. Although it didn't help for Sedom and Avraham knew it wouldn't, but it helped for generations later. This punishment the Posuk says is like (סדם ועמרה). That 10 Tzaddikim (בתוך העיר) protect Klal Yisrael. That is the protection that we rely on today. That is why this is separated from Parshas Ki Savo. We have a Haftacha that there will always be Tzaddikim. (לא-ימוש ספר). That the Torah will never cease to exist. There will always be the Lamed Vav Tzaddikim that protect Klal Yisrael. This is our protection. Now that the protection of the Umos Ha'olam to which we seem to have strived to get the Umos Olam to protect us from Iran, it doesn't turn into a protection from any other physical source. There is no protection. We have only one protection to turn our hearts to the Ribbono Shel Olam. What should we do? We were hoping to rely on the president of the United States and that we couldn't. Then on the congress of the United States and we couldn't. Well, I guess we will have to rely on the Ribbono Shel Olam.

(עצו עצה וחקר. דברו דבר ולא יקום. כי עמנו קל) We talk about the Goyim making plans (ותקפר) and HKB"H breaks them. (דברו דבר) they speak about plans (א) (ולא יקום). כי עמנו קל (יקום). That Posuk is in every Siddur right after Aleinu at the end of Davening. (ביום ההוא יהיה ד' אחד ושמו אחד). The Siddur brings this Posuk. (עצו עצה וחקר. דברו דבר ולא יקום. כי עמנו קל). Perhaps, just as Jews put so much effort into thwarting the Iran deal in Congress we should at least put some effort into Davening to the Ribbono Shel Olam. Maybe that is a proper small Kabbala for Yomim Noraim. That in the coming year when we say Aleinu we will add the 3 Pesukim that are brought right after Aleinu that start with (א) (ולא יקום). כי עמנו קל (ולא יקום). At the very least we will end the year by saying 1,000 more Pesukim. We say Aleinu 3 times a day over an entire year, we will end up with another 1,000 Pesukim to our credit with very minimal effort. So put effort into it and get it started. (ביום ההוא יהיה ד' אחד ושמו אחד). Eventually you will get into the habit of doing it and it won't be hard at all. Let's try to add that to our Davening. (אין לנו על מי להישען אלא על אבינו). May the coming year be a year of blessing, of Beracha for us individually and Klal Yisrael as a whole for a Gebensched Taf Shin Ayin Vav. Good Shabbos to all!

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Erev Yom Kippur  
Eating on Erev Yom Kippur

It is a mitzvah to eat and drink on Erev Yom Kippur and one should even lessen one's learning and work in order to eat more on Erev Yom Kippur.[3] It is forbidden to fast on Erev Yom Kippur. [4]

This mitzvah primarily applies during the day of Erev Yom Kippur and not the night of Erev Yom Kippur. [5]

Preferably one should eat at least one bread meal on Erev Yom Kippur. [6]

This mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur applies to women also. [7]

One should only eat light foods so that one shouldn't be stuffed and prideful during prayers of Yom Kippur. [8]

If Erev Yom Kippur is the Yahrzeit (annual remembrance of the day of the death) of one's parents, one should not fast but rely on the fast of Yom Kippur. [9]

Someone who can't fast on Yom Kippur (because of serious health issues) should still eat on Erev Yom Kippur. [10]

Some say that one should endeavor to continue to eat all day on Erev Yom Kippur, while others say that the mitzvah is to have a nice meal. [11]

Seudat Hamafseket

If one finished eating while it is still daytime, he may continue eating as long as he didn't have in mind that he is going to start the fast. [12]

Pills to ease the Fast

It is permissible to take a pill before Yom Kippur which will ease the difficulty of fasting. [13] However, others write that one should refrain from such pills except for a person who will be in great pain, have a headache, or the like from fasting on Yom Kippur.[14]

Prayers

There's is no Tachanun on Erev Yom Kippur. [15]

Some communities have the custom not to recite mizmor litoda on Erev Yom Kippur. [16] However, the sephardic custom is to recite it as we do on a regular weekday. [17]

The custom for sephardim is to recite Avinu Malkeinu in shacharit and mincha of Erev Yom Kippur. [18] The custom is also to recite hatarat nedarim immediately following selichot or shacharit on erev yom kippur. [19]

Kaparot

There is an old minhag (tradition) among Sephardim and Ashkenazim to do kapparot during aseret yimei teshuva (ten days of repentance) [20] and preferably it should be done on Erev Yom Kippur in the morning. [21] If one didn't do it before Yom Kippur one may do it on Hoshana Rabba. [22]

One may do kaparot over a woman who is a niddah. [23]

What should be used for Kaparot

One should take a male chicken for a male, female chicken for a female, and both a female and male chicken for a pregnant woman. Some take two female chickens and one male chicken for a pregnant woman. [24] If one cannot afford additional chickens for the fetus, one is certainly enough. [25]

A pregnant woman within 40 days of the pregnancy doesn't need to take a second chicken for Kapparot. [26]

A pregnant woman does not need to pick up all the chickens at once but it's sufficient to pick them up one at a time. [27]

If one is poor one may use a single chicken for the whole family. [28]

If one can't get a chicken one should take a goose or other animal which isn't fit for a korban. Some say one may even take a live fish. [29]

If one can't even do that then one should take money and circle it around one's head say **זה חליפתי תמורת כפרתי** and give it to Tzedaka. [30]

Some say that one should preferably use white chickens. However, many say that one shouldn't make a special effort to get a white chicken. Some say not to use a black chicken. [31]

If a man took a female chicken or a woman took a male chicken one fulfilled one's obligation yet it's preferable to repeat it with the correct gender chicken. [32]

Procedure

When one takes the chicken and circles it around one's head one should say **זה חליפתי תמורת כפרתי** [For the full hebrew text click here and for the full english text click here. [33]

When performing Kaparat a person should think about Teshuva (repentance) imagining that the 4 types of death sentences that are carried out on the chicken should be happening to me. [34]

The custom is not to do semichah on the chicken. [35]

The minhag is to give the slaughtered chicken to a poor person or to redeem it with money and then give it to a poor person. [36]

Covering the Blood

After the slaughtering the Shochet there is a unique opportunity to perform the mitzvah of Kisui HaDam (covering the blood) by covering the blood of the chicken with dirt that was set aside beforehand. [37]

Kisui HaDam (covering the blood) should be performed only after the shochet checks his knife to see that it was a proper slaughtering. [38] Before covering the blood, one should make the bracha 39] **על כסוי הדם בעפר.** [39]

Either the Shochet should perform the covering of the blood or if the owner of the chicken is G-d fearing and wants to perform the mitzvah the shochet is allowed to give him the opportunity and in such a case it's preferable that originally the owner should appoint the shochet as his agent in performing the sechita (ritual slaughtering). [40]

The dirt should be designated by verbally stating that this dirt is for covering of the blood of the chicken. [41]

Dirt should be placed beneath and above the blood of the chicken. [42]

Asking Forgiveness

Yom Kippur doesn't grant one forgiveness for one's sins between a man and his fellow until one appeases and receives forgiveness from one's friend. Therefore, it's especially important to appease one's friend on Erev Yom Kippur. [43]

If a person did a sin against his will because he was forced to do so, there is no obligation to repent. [44]

If one has money which is disputed and can be claimed by someone else even if that other claimant doesn't know one should tell them and then settle the dispute with the local Rabbi. In monetary matters one must not rely on one's own judgement because the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) fabricates many justifications. [45]

Children have a holy obligation to ask forgiveness from their parents because of Kibbud Av VeEm (respecting one's parents). Similarly, spouses should forgive one another. A student should ask forgiveness from his Rebbe if he lives in the city. [46]

It's forbidden to be cruel and not forgive but rather in one's heart one should completely forgive him for the offense. Even if it pained it intently one should not take revenge or harbor a grudge. [47] If one forgiving Hashem will forgive his sins, however, if a man is stubborn and doesn't forgive Hashem will act accordingly (Chas VeShalom). [48]

If a person who offended his fellow and asks forgiveness the friend shouldn't reject the appeasement unless it is intended for the benefit of the one who did the offense so that he is humbled and doesn't continue by doing that offense. [49] Nonetheless, if one is not granted forgiveness for the benefit of the offender one must be sure to remove any hate of the offender from one's heart. [50]

If one suspects that the person asking forgiveness from him will just repeat the wrong that he did to him, he isn't obligated to forgive him. [51]

If a person spread a bad name about someone else it is permitted not to forgive that person, however, it's preferable to be humble and forgive even in such a case [52] except for a Talmid Chacham who should not forgive easily (in such a case) especially when it's done for the benefit of the offender to change from his ways. [53]

If one is owed money but the borrower refuses to pay, then the lender doesn't need to forgive him. [54]

If a person said Lashon Hara about his fellow and it didn't cause any harm there is no need to ask forgiveness from that person, but still must get forgiveness from Hashem. [55]

If a person said Lashon Hara (evil speech) about his fellow that caused harm and his fellow doesn't know about it some say that one should just ask forgiveness from his fellow in a general way and not spell out that he said Lashon Hara against him, however, others say that one specify that one did speak Lashon Hara about him. [56]

Preferably the asking of forgiveness should be done in person unless there is a better chance of having the person accept your grant if done through a messenger. [57]

If you are sure that the person that you offended has forgiven you some poskim nevertheless require that you go and humble yourself before them and ask for forgiveness while and other poskim say that you have achieved the desired result and there is no need to go ask specifically. [58]

If one received forgiveness only outwardly but in his heart the person he offended is still upset some poskim say he hasn't fulfilled his obligation of asking for forgiveness. [59]

Tevilah

Some have the practice to dip (Tovel) in the mikvah on Erev Yom Kippur and it's preferable to do so before Mincha but some have the practice to do it after Seuda Mafseket as long as one does it before nighttime. [60] Some say that one should do it after 5 halachic hours into the day but if one is unable one may do it after Olot HaShachar (dawn). [61]

Some say that submerging oneself in the mikvah once is sufficient and some say three times. [62] The shaliach tzibbur should make an extra effort to fulfill this minhag [63]

No bracha is made for this tevilah. [64]

Even one who went to the mikveh before rosh hashana and remained pure until erev yom kippur should go back on Erev Yom Kippur. [65]

If it's painful for one to dip in the mikvah or one is unable to because of a weakness one may pour 9 Kav of water on one's head. [66] Taking a shower for the length of time it takes for 9 Kav (about 3.3 gallons) to come out is sufficient. [67]

Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur

After Shmoneh Esrei of Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur one should say Vidduy as printed in the machzor (siddur) before Ebkai Netsor and according Sephardim after Yehiyu LeRatzon and before Elokai Netsor. [68]

The Sephardic minhag is to say Avinu Malkenu at Mincha before Yom Kippur. [69]

The syrian minhag is to wear tefillin during Mincha on erev yom Kippur. [70]

Hadlakat Nerot of Yom Kippur

The minhag is to light candles on Erev Yom Kippur with a bracha. [71] However, the minhag of the Syrian Jews is not to recite the beracha. [72]

If a woman only says the bracha of Hadlakat Nerot, under extenuating circumstances a woman may have intention not to accept upon herself Yom Kippur with her lighting of the candles and then she would be allowed to go to shul by car after having lit candles. However, if she is not going to accept upon herself Yom Kippur, then she may not say the Shehechyanu bracha because once she says the bracha of Shehechyanu she has automatically accepted upon herself Yom Kippur and she may not then ride in a car to shul or the like. [73]

If a woman is going to recite Shehechyanu when lighting the candles for Yom Kippur she should be careful not to be wearing leather shoes at the time since the recital of Shehechyanu is an acceptance of Yom Kippur. [74]

The mitzvah of accepting Yom Kippur early

It is a mitzvah to accept Yom Kippur early in order to add from the week onto Yom Kippur. [75]

It's sufficient to add any amount of time before sunset. However, it's praiseworthy to add 20 or 30 minutes before sunset. (See footnote for background) [76]

Once one accepted Yom Kippur it is forbidden to eat or do any of the 5 prohibited activities of Yom Kippur. [77]

Nighttime prayers of Yom Kippur

If a congregation didn't say Kol Nidrei until after nightfall of Yom Kippur the congregation may say it. [78]

Yom Kippur morning prayers

According to some poskim, the beracha "Sheasa Li Kol Tzorki" should not be recited on Yom Kippur. [79] Others disagree. [80]

It's preferable to minimize in piyutim and selichot in order to start Mussaf before six and half hours. [81] However, if one did wait until after six and a half hours one should say Mussaf first and then Mincha unless nine and a half hours passed in which case Mincha should go first. [82] Some have the minhag to add Piyutim even during the Brachot Kriyat Shema, however, it's preferable not to add Piyutim there. [83]

The Minhag is to add Piyutim which are relevant to the purpose of the day. However, one shouldn't add so many not to delay saying Shema in its proper time. [84]

There's different minhag as whether to say the first **פסוק** of Mizmor Shel Yom HaShabbat on Yom Tov and Yom Kippur. [85]

A Talmid Chacham should not separate himself to learn Torah while the congregation is praying or saying selichot. [86]

It's preferable to say less Piyutim slowly instead of saying many Piyutim quickly. [87]

One should sure to say at least ten Vidduy's (confessions) on Yom Kippur. [88]The Mincha is to count one from Mincha of Erev Yom Kippur, one from Arvit of the night, four from the four prayers during the day and four from the four Chazarat HaShatz's. [89]

Making one hundred Brachot

It's a mitzvah to smell Besamim (nice smelling spices) and make the Bracha on them in order to get 100 Brachot on Yom Kippur. One may make this Bracha several times in the day as long as one had an interruption of thought. [90]

On Yom Kippur even though one can't make a hundred brachot by himself, it's preferable to have in mind to listen to the brachot made during the chazara of the shalich tzibbur. Some suggest that there's no obligation to get to a hundred brachot on Yom Kippur. [91]

For other details about making one hundred Brachot on Yom Kippur, see the Making one hundred Brachot daily page.

Prohibitions of Yom Kippur

It's forbidden to do any Melacha (lit. work) on Yom Kippur which would be forbidden to do on Shabbat. [92]

Muktzeh (moving certain objects) is prohibited on Yom Kippur to the same extent that on Shabbat Muktzeh is forbidden and not to the same extent it is prohibited on Yom Tov. [93]

One should not prepare food on Yom Kippur for after Yom Kippur. [94]

Eating on Yom Kippur

It is absolutely forbidden to eat or drink any amount of food on Yom Kippur. [95]

Everyone is obligated to fast on Yom Kippur including women who are pregnant or nursing (there is a serious medical concern one should consult one's Rabbi). [96]

It is permissible to swallow one's saliva on Yom Kippur. [97]

Someone for whom fasting Yom Kippur involves a serious health concern absolutely must ask a doctor and Rabbi whether he/she should eat on Yom Kippur. If the doctor (and Rabbi) ascertain that a person shouldn't fast then that person should not fast even if he thinks he doesn't need to eat. In such a case, one may not be strict upon oneself to fast as we are commanded to live by the Torah and not die by it (Chas VeShalom) and all the ways of the Torah are kind and pleasant. [98]

In cases when one needs to eat on Yom Kippur (see above) one should eat less than a 2/3 of a KeBaytzah and then wait Kedi Achilat Pras (according to some this is 9 minutes) before eating again, and for drinks less than a Meloh Lugmav and wait Kedi Achilat Pras or at least Kedi Shtiyat Revi't before drinking again. If the doctors assess that this is insufficient (after consultation with the doctor and Rabbi) one may eat as much as needed. [99]

A person who is a Choleh SheEin Bo skana is permissible to take medicine on Yom Kippur if it doesn't have a good taste. If one needs to have it with liquid one should have mouthwash. [100]

Someone who needs to eat on Yom Kippur (see above) doesn't need to make Kiddish. [101]

Someone who is suffering from a bad headache may swallow an Aspirin capsule alone. [102]

One who has a throat infection, a fever, or a headache may drink a quantity of water that is "less than the permitted amount" (2 ounces). [103]

A person with diarrhea's condition may be such that he must drink on Yom Kippur. [104]

If there is no doctor available to determine the medical situation, one with hepatitis may drink "less than the permitted amount" on Yom Kippur. [105]

Some cancer patients are prohibited to fast on Yom Kippur, while others, who are authorized by a doctor, are permitted to fast. [106]

Some weak, elderly people are prohibited to fast on Yom Kippur. [107]

A pregnant woman who is suffering from bleeding must drink on Yom Kippur. [108]

Surgery before Yom Kippur

One must postpone a non-emergency surgery until after Yom Kippur in order to be able to fast on Yom Kippur. [109]

Washing on Yom Kippur

It's forbidden to wash oneself in hot or cold water and even to stick one's finger in water on Yom Kippur is forbidden. [110]

If one got dirty it's permitted to wash that area in order to remove dirt from one's body. [111]

Upon waking up for Netilat Yadayim one should wash one's hands three times only up to the knuckles. [112]

If one goes to the bathroom one is allowed to wash one's hands three times up to the end of the fingers (by the knuckles) [113]

If one walked into a bathroom but didn't go and didn't touch a private place one should not wash one's hand but rather rub them on the wall or something similar unless it bothers his intent in prayers. However, someone wants to wash one's hands has what to rely on. [114]

Cohanim who are going to do Birkat Cohanim should wash their hands until the end of the hand. [115] However, some say that that the practice is that a cohen just washes until the knuckles. [116]

One may not wash one's face upon waking up, however, if one's face became dirty or if there's guk around one's eyes one may wet one's finger and clean in the area which became dirty. [117]

There's no obligation to wash one's hand prior to praying unlike the rest of the year. [118]

A bride for the first thirty days after her wedding may wash her face. [119]

Anointing on Yom Kippur

It is forbidden to anoint even a part of one's body with oil or ointment even if one is only doing so just to remove a bad smell. [120]

It is forbidden to spray oneself with deodorant on Yom Kippur. [121]

Wearing leather shoes

It's forbidden to wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur. [122]

According to some poskim, the beracha "Sheasa Li Kol Tzorki" should not be recited on Yom Kippur and Tisha BeAv. [123] Others disagree. [124]

Some say that one shouldn't wear shoes which have a raised heel so that one feels the roughness of the ground. [125]

Interaction between Husband and Wife

It is forbidden for a husband to sleep with his wife on Yom Kippur and furthermore, it is forbidden for them to sleep in the same bed. [126]

The minhag is that a man and wife may not even touch on Yom Kippur. [127]

It is forbidden for a man and wife to hug or kiss on Yom Kippur. [128]

Neilah

The Chazzan should make sure to finish Birchat Cohanim before sunset, however, after the fact it can be made with a bracha even after sunset as long as it's Bein HaShemashot and not certain night. [129]

The doors of the hechal should be opened prior to the recitation of neilah. [130]

Before neilah, the congregation should recite the piyut "Kel Norah Alilah" with joy and excitement. Afterwards, the prayer of "Ashre" followed by a chatzi Kaddish should be recited. [131]

Neilah should be recited approximately 30 minutes before sunset. [132]

If one mistakenly said "Kotvenu" instead of the proper nusach of "Chotmenu" during neilah one need not go back and repeat. [133]

The Keter Kedusha is recited in Neilah, just like in Mussaf. [134]

The congregation should continue to recite selichot until 20 minutes after sunset and then blow the shofar so that there is no concern that people will eat immediately afterwards because they think that Yom Kippur has already ended. [135]

Havdalah

For sephardim, there is no Besamim bracha in the Havdalah even if Yom Kippur falls out on Motzei Shabbat. [136] Nevertheless, it is proper that after drinking from the wine of havdala that the beracha on besamim should be said and then smell the besamim. [137]

For havdala after Yom Kippur only a candle that was lit from before Yom Kippur should be used, and not one that is lit after Yom Kippur specifically for havdala. If there is no candle that was lit from before, the beracha should not be recited. [138] However, if Motzaei Yom Kippur falls out on Motzaei Shabbat, you can still recite the beracha on a candle that was lit that night if you don't have one lit from before Yom Kippur. [139]

One should not eat before Havdala. However, if someone is very thirsty, they may drink some water. [140]

Footnotes at [www.halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Yom\\_Kippur](http://www.halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Yom_Kippur)

**Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:**

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Rabbi Wein**

**VAYELECH**

Moshe's fixation with the covenant between G-d and Israel, so evident in the Torah readings of the past two weeks, continues apace this week. Only now there is a note of desperation in Moshe's words and tone. He bluntly states that he knows that after his death the Jewish people will shirk the obligations of the covenant and fall prey to worshiping false gods and non-Jewish values. No matter how strong his teachings have been and how stern his warnings about the consequences of violating the covenant, he sadly realizes that the Jewish people will not withstand the allure of pagan cultures and decadent societies. Moshe is powerless to stop this process and he only tells them how it will play itself out. Eventually Israel will realize the error of its ways, repent and return to the obligations of the covenant and obey the rules set forth in that agreement between G-d and Israel. It is almost as though the covenant can have no real validity unless it is breached and the consequences forecast for such a breach actually occur. Only then will Israel truly value the terms of the covenant and

understand how significant that agreement is. Only when disasters strike and bad things happen do they truly appreciate the binding commitment between G-d and Israel, as represented and defined by the commandments and value system of the Torah. Jewish societies may be more observant or less observant from time to time but any reading of Jewish history shows us that the covenant is always in force. And that is the sobering message that Moshe delivers to the Jewish people at the end of his life and leadership. While the consequences of violating the covenant can be viewed in a negative light, and all of Jewish history tells of those negative aspects of violating the covenant, in its essence the covenant is the positive lodestone of Jewish life. It is the guarantor of our survival no matter what our shortcomings may have been or may be now. He promises us that the Lord will never forsake us. We are the necessary partner in this historic endeavor but G-d, so to speak, is the ultimate facilitator of the covenant and purveyor of its consequences. And even though Moshe knows that the Jewish people will stray, he does not give up hope about their eventual fate and role in human history. They will never completely forsake the Torah and its covenant and even if they are found wanting in their behavior, there will always be enough spirit left within them to resiliently cling to the covenant, no matter the difficulty. In the midst of all of the backsliding and assimilation that is afflicting the Jewish world today; there is a countercurrent of Jewishness. Many who would have been alienated from observance are now seeking the threads of their heritage. I am certain that that is also part of the vision that Moshe saw and communicated to all later generations at the end of his life on earth. Shabbat shalom Gmar chatima tova Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

**To Renew Our Days – Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Vayelech - Covenant & Conversation 5777 / 2016 on Spirituality** The moment had come. Moses was about to die. He had seen his sister Miriam and brother Aaron pre-decease him. He had prayed to G-d – not to live forever, not even to live longer, but simply, “Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan,” (Deut. 3:25). Let me complete the journey. Let me reach the destination. But G-d said No: “That is enough,” the Lord said. “Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.” (Deut. 3:26). G-d, who had acceded to almost every other prayer Moses prayed, refused him this. 1

What then did Moses do on these last days of his life? He issued two instructions, the last of the 613 commands, that were to have significant consequences for the future of Judaism and the Jewish people. The first is known as Hakhel, the command that the king summon the people to gather during Sukkot following the seventh, shemittah year:

“At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your G-d at the place He will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your G-d and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your G-d as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

There is no specific reference to this command in the later books of Tanakh, but there are accounts of very similar gatherings: covenant renewal ceremonies, in which the king or his equivalent assembled the nation, reading from the Torah or reminding the people of their history, and calling on them to reaffirm the terms of their destiny as a people in covenant with G-d.

That, in fact, is what Moses had been doing for the last month of his life. The book of Deuteronomy as a whole is a restatement of the covenant, almost forty years and one generation after the original covenant at Mount Sinai. There is another example in the last chapter of the book of Joshua (Josh. 24). Joshua had fulfilled his mandate as Moses’ successor, bringing the people across the Jordan, leading them in their battles and settling the land.

Another occurred many centuries later in the reign of King Josiah. His grandfather, Menasseh, who reigned for 55 years, was one of the worst of

Judah’s kings, introducing various forms of idolatry, including child sacrifice. Josiah sought to return the nation to its faith, ordering among other things the cleansing and repair of the Temple. It was in the course of this restoration that a copy of the Torah was discovered,<sup>2</sup> sealed in a hiding place, to prevent it being destroyed during the many decades in which idolatry flourished and the Torah was almost forgotten. The king, deeply affected by this discovery, convened a Hakhel-type national assembly:

“Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the Lord with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.” (2 Kings 23:1-3)

The most famous Hakhel-type ceremony was the national gathering convened by Ezra and Nehemiah after the second wave of returnees from Babylon (Neh. 8-10). Standing on a platform by one of the gates to the Temple, Ezra read the Torah to the assembly, having positioned Levites throughout the crowd so that they could explain to the people what was being said. The ceremony that began on Rosh Hashanah, culminated after Sukkot when the people collectively “bound themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of G-d given through Moses the servant of G-d and to obey carefully all the commands, regulations and decrees of the Lord our Lord” (Neh. 10:29)

The other command – the last Moses gave the people – was contained in the words: “Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites,” understood by rabbinic tradition to be the command to write, or at least take part in writing, a Sefer torah. Why specifically these two commands, at this time?

Something profound was being transacted here. Recall that G-d had seemed brusque in His dismissal of Moses’ request to be allowed to cross the Jordan. “That is enough ... Do not speak to me anymore about this matter.” Is this the Torah and this its reward? Is this how G-d repaid the greatest of the prophets? Surely not.

In these last two commands G-d was teaching Moses, and through him Jews throughout the ages, what immortality is – on earth, not just in heaven. We are mortal because we are physical, and no physical organism lives forever. We grow up, we grow old, we grow frail, we die. But we are not only physical. We are also spiritual. In these last two commands, we are taught what it is to be part of a spirit that has not died in four thousand years and will not die so long as there is a sun, moon and stars.<sup>3</sup>

G-d showed Moses, and through him us, how to become part of a civilization that never grows old. It stays young because it repeatedly renews itself. The last two commands of the Torah are about renewal, first collective, then individual.

Hakhel, the covenant renewal ceremony every seven years, ensured that the nation would regularly rededicate itself to its mission. I have often argued that there is one place in the world where this covenant renewal ceremony still takes place: the United States of America.

The concept of covenant played a decisive role in European politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, especially in Calvin’s Geneva and in Scotland, Holland and England. Its longest-lasting impact, though, was on America, where it was taken by the early Puritan settlers and remains part of its political culture even today. Almost every Presidential Inaugural Address – every four years since 1789 – has been, explicitly or implicitly, a covenant renewal ceremony, a contemporary form of Hakhel.

In 1987, speaking at the bicentennial celebration of the American Constitution, President Ronald Reagan described the constitution as a kind of “covenant we’ve made not only with ourselves but with all of mankind ... It’s a human covenant; yes, and beyond that, a covenant with the Supreme Being to whom our founding fathers did constantly appeal for assistance.” America’s duty, he said, is “to constantly renew their covenant with humanity...to complete the work begun 200 years ago, that grand noble work that is America’s particular



calling – the triumph of human freedom, the triumph of human freedom under G-d.”<sup>4</sup>

If Hakhel is national renewal, the command that we should each take part in the writing of a new Sefer Torah is personal renewal. It was Moses’ way of saying to all future generations: It is not enough for you to say, I received the Torah from my parents (or grandparents or great-grandparents). You have to take it and make it new in every generation.

One of the most striking features of Jewish life is that from Israel to Palo Alto, Jews are among the world’s most enthusiastic users of information technology and have contributed disproportionately to its development (Google, Facebook, Waze). But we still write the Torah exactly as it was done thousands of years ago – by hand, with a quill, on a parchment scroll. This is not a paradox; it is a profound truth. People who carry their past with them, can build the future without fear.

Renewal is one of the hardest of human undertakings. Some years ago I sat with the man who was about to become Prime Minister of Britain. In the course of our conversation he said, “What I most pray for is that when we get there (he meant, 10 Downing Street), I never forget why I wanted to get there.” I suspect he had in mind the famous words of Harold Macmillan, British Prime Minister between 1957 and 1963, who, when asked what he most feared in politics, replied, “Events, dear boy, events.”

Things happen. We are blown by passing winds, caught up in problems not of our making, and we drift. When that happens, whether to individuals, institutions or nations, we grow old. We forget who we are and why. Eventually we are overtaken by people (or organisations or cultures) that are younger, hungrier or more driven than us.

The only way to stay young, hungry and driven is through periodic renewal, reminding ourselves of where we came from, where we are going, and why. To what ideals are we committed? What journey are we called on to continue? Of what story are we a part?

How precisely timed, therefore, and how beautiful, that at the very moment when the greatest of prophets faced his own mortality, that G-d should give him, and us, the secret of immortality – not just in heaven but down here on earth. For when we keep to the terms of the covenant, and making it new again in our lives, we live on in those who come after us, whether through our children or our disciples or those we have helped or influenced. We “renew our days as of old.” Moses died, but what he taught and what he sought lives on.

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org, to: ravfrand@torah.org subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha **Parshas Vayeilech Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

**In Order To Give Reward To Those Who Brought The Children** The Torah introduces the mitzvah of Hakhel in Parshas Vayeilech. Hakhel is a national gathering held once every seven years in which all Jews – men, women, and children — come together to celebrate national unity and purpose: “Gather together the people – the men, and the women, and the small children, and your stranger who is in your cities – so that they will hear and so that they will learn and they shall fear Hashem your G-d and be careful to perform all the words of the Torah.” [Devarim 31:12]. The Talmud teaches [Chagiga 3a] an intriguing idea about Hakhel: “It was the week when it was the turn of Rav Elazar ben Azariah to give the lesson and the topic being discussed that day was the mitzvah of Hakhel. What did he expound? He expounded as follows: ‘Gather the nation, the men, the women and the children...’ We understand that the men came to learn and the women came to listen, but what purpose was there to bring the children? In order to give reward to those who brought them!” The Mei HaShiloach and other commentaries as well expound on this idea of “to give reward to those who brought them”. Is it just a question of getting reward for “schlepping” the kids? Perhaps for the same reward, the parents could have been commanded to carry along with them a sack of potatoes? It clearly means something more than that. The Mei HaShiloach interprets “giving reward to those who brought them” to mean that exposing one’s children to the events of Hakhel is going to make an impression on the children and eventually the parents will reap the reward of having children who in their youth were impacted

positively by the Hakhel ritual. Imagine what a sight that was! The closest thing we have to Hakhel today also comes out approximately every 7 years – every seven and a half years to be exact – the Siyum HaShas. When my children were younger, I made a point of taking them. It is an amazing sight. Even if they are only out there in the concourse buying their kosher hot dogs, seeing tens of thousands of Jews together is impressive. It makes a lasting impression. A person can ask himself afterwards “Was it worth it? I schlepped him, I took him out of school, I took him on the train, it cost me money. Was it worth it?” The Talmud teaches “to bring reward to those who bring them”. Exposing children to such a gathering DOES make an impression. In the long run, it will certainly be worth it! Eventually the parents will realize reward for these efforts. I know someone who made his own Siyum HaShas (marking the personal completion of studying the entire Babylonian Talmud). I asked him why he made a Siyum HaShas and he told me “My father made a Siyum HaShas when I was a boy and I saw what a big deal it was! I said to myself then, ‘When I get older I want to do that also!’” A parallel Mechilta in Parshas Bo quotes the same story as the Gemara in Chagiga with Rav Elazar ben Azarya, the mitzvah of Hakhel, and the explanation of why we bring the children — “in order to bring reward to those who bring them.” However, the Mechilta adds at the end, “Rav Yehoshua states ‘Happy is our Patriarch Avraham who can count Rav Elazar ben Azariah as one of his descendants.’” Why, we might ask, is Rav Yehoshua singling out Avraham Avinu in this statement? Should not Moshe Rabbeinu have nachas from Rav Elazar ben Azarya? What about Yakov Avinu, Dovid HaMelech, or Shlomo HaMelech? What is so special about Avraham Avinu and his connection to Rav Elazar ben Azariah? The answer is that the Almighty told us something about Avraham Avinu – why He chose him and why Hashem refers to as ‘Avraham the one I love’ [Yeshaya 41:8]. The Chumash provides the answer. It is no mystery. “For I have cherished him (ki yeda’ativ), because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem, doing charity and justice...” [Bereshis 18:19]. The Ramban interprets ki yeda’ativ to mean, “For I have chosen him”. I have chosen him, the Almighty testifies, because I know that he will give over the mesorah [tradition] to his children! Therefore, he is the first “patriarch”; he is the first ‘Av’. He knows how to preserve Yiddishkeit – he does it by commanding his children and household. When Rav Elazar ben Azariah makes the same observation and teaches, “Why did the children come to Hakhel? It is to bring reward to those who bring them!” he is echoing the teaching of the Patriarch Avraham. This is exactly the tradition Avraham instituted in Klal Yisrael. Therefore “Happy are you Avraham Avinu to be able to count Rav Elazar ben Azarya as one of your descendants.”

**Write This “Song”** I saw a beautiful observation in the sefer HaKesav VeHakabalah. The Torah teaches the very last of the six hundred and thirteen commandments in Parshas Vayeilech: “So now, write this song (haShirah hazos) for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth, so that this song shall be for Me a witness against the Children of Israel.” [Devarim 31:19]. From here we learn Biblical Mitzvah #613 – Writing a Sefer Torah. HaKesav VeHakabalah was a master of the Hebrew language (lashon haKodesh). He asks – why was Torah called a ‘song’? If we were asked to draw up a list of ten words which might be used to describe or summarize the contents of Torah, ‘song’ would very likely not be on the list. Yet the Mitzvah to write the Torah is expressed here as “write this song”. Why? HaKesav VeHakabalah writes the word shir [shin-yud-reish] (song) is related to the word yashar [yud-shin-reish] (straight). He explains “If you want music to be appealing, the musical notes need to follow one another in a perfectly arranged sequence to provide a harmonious melody.” Once music goes “off key,” it greatly bothers the listener. This is the essence of shirah: A flow, a precise sequencing of the components of the song – one note following another in carefully planned arrangement. When the notes are “off,” the song loses its pleasantness. If that is the case, it is obvious why the Torah is called shirah. The Torah is – as the prophet calls it “Sefer haYashar” [the Book of the Straight]. The pasuk alludes to this: “...behold it is written in the Sefer haYashar...” [Yehoshua 10:13]. The Torah is a book of yashrus – of being straight. The Netziv in his introduction to the Book of Bereshis writes that this book, in

particular, is “the book of the Yashar” because it is the story of the Patriarchs who were straight and upright (yesharim). The Netziv writes that the nations did not know that Avraham kept the entire Torah (even Eruvei Tavshillin) [per the teaching of Chazal], but they knew he was a “straight shooter”. They knew he was honest and upright. The word that defines Torah is Yashar – to be straight, to be honest, no tricks, no deception. This is what the Sefer HaYashar represents. Unfortunately, we live in a time when this principle is observed in the breach rather than in actuality. We hear all too many times stories about people who are “less than yashar”. Very less than yashar! We all cringe when we hear these stories, every time one of these scandals rears its ugly head. That is not the way it is supposed to me. A nephew of mine corrected a story I had heard involving Rav Aharon Soloveichik, zichrono l’bracha. Rav Aharon Soloveichik commuted by plane between Chicago and New York. He lived in Chicago, was a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Brisk there, and for a time served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva University. He travelled regularly between the two cities. One time, his mother-in-law, who lived in New York, wanted to visit her daughter in Chicago, but she did not like to fly. So Rav Aharon Soloveichik accompanied her back from New York to Chicago on the train. They came to the train station to purchase two tickets and the agent behind the counter said, “you’re in luck – today spouses go for free!” So Rav Aharon Soloveichik looked at the agent and said, this woman is not my spouse, she’s my mother-in-law! The agent responded, “We don’t look at marriage licenses.” Rav Aharon was insistent: “But she is not my wife. Let me see your supervisor!” The dialog was repeated with the supervisor. Rav Soloveichik protested that they should not be eligible for the free ticket because she was not his wife. The supervisor told him, “Listen here, you look old enough that she looks like she’s your wife! What do you care?” “No. She’s not my wife. I want to pay for her.” This is yashar. Rav Yakov Kamenetsky was a Rav in Toronto before he came to Torah VoDaath. One Purim, the community in Toronto gave him a silver platter. A couple of days later, a congregant saw Rav Yakov in downtown Toronto at a pawnshop. It looked like he was trying to pawn the silver tray he had received earlier that week as a present from his congregation. The congregant went back to the other members of the shul and said “What kind of a Rabbi do we have here? We give him a present and he pawns it!” The President of the shul called in Rav Yakov and demanded an explanation. Rav Yakov told them that the Magen Avraham rules that the presents a Rav gets from his congregation for Purim and Pessach are to be considered as part of his salary. “If it is part of my salary, I have to report it on my taxes so I have to know how much it costs. I went to the pawn shop to find out the fair market value of the tray so I could accurately declare it.” This is yashrus. This is the yashrus of which the Semag writes [Positive Command #74] that when the Almighty finally comes and redeems us, the nations of the world will say “He acted correctly (b’Din assa) because they are honest people (sh’hen anshei emes). However, if the Jews will cheat, the nations will wonder “What is this that G-d has done? He chose for Himself thieves and cheaters!” We daven the entire Rosh Hashana that we want Moshiach. We want G-d to rule over the entire world. There is a very simple formula for bringing Moshiach. We must first make ourselves into such people that the nations of the world will be able to say “Ah! Those Jews are so honest! The Almighty knew what He was doing by redeeming them!” — When that happens, Moshaich will come, may it be speedily in our time.

*The Times of Israel The Blogs :: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Parshat Vayelech (Deuteronomy 31:1 – 30) / Shabbat Shuva Yom Kippur: The day when our souls sing Thursday, October 6, 2016 Tishri 4, 5777*

Efrat, Israel — “Now, therefore write this song for you, and teach it to the People of Israel...” (Deut. 31:19)

Is Yom Kippur a happy day or a sad day? Many associate the Day of Atonement with solemnity and trepidation. Indeed, according to most translations, the Torah specifically states regarding this holiest of days, “you shall afflict your souls” (Lev. 16:29).

The great Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, however, suggests a radically different understanding of this day. “On Tisha B’Av, I can’t eat because I’m so sad,” he said. “On Yom Kippur I have no need to eat, because I’m so happy.” But what of the command to afflict oneself? What is the basis for his happiness?

In truth, his interpretation reflects a deep insight about the essence of the day, based on the fact that the Hebrew letters that form the root, “affliction” (ע-ג-י – “ayin-nun-yud”), are also the letters that form the root for expressions of joyous song. For example, the Torah states (Deut. 26:5) regarding the declaration of the farmer, who, filled with feelings of happiness, brings the First Fruits (Bikkurim) to the Temple: (“V’anita v’amarta” – “וישמרת ואמרת”), “you shall happily sing and declare...” with the proper musical cantillations.

Similarly, at the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the Torah (Ex. 15:21) reports, “And Miriam (happily) sang to them” (“V’ta’an la’hem Miriam” – “ושתען להם מרים”)

This gives us a fresh perspective on the aforementioned verse in Leviticus, which as we noted above, is usually translated as “you shall afflict yourselves”. However, re-reading the Hebrew original — “תענו את נפשתיכם” (t’anu et nafshoteichem) — in light of the above, we can accurately understand it as “you shall make your souls sing”. Indeed, the next verse explains why we should be happy: “For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to purify you; from all your sins shall you be purified before G-d.”

We can now gain an appreciation of the verse in our portion, Vayelech, that refers to the Torah as a song. In what way is the Torah a song? Because like a song, the Torah can bring us great happiness via the commandments, which allow us to ennoble and sanctify ourselves. In the same way that we enjoy a great high when we accomplish a difficult task and perform it well, so, too, does the song of the Torah allow us to rejoice in the potential of human nature and the ability of the human being to achieve a life of morality and holiness.

It is for this reason that the Day of Atonement is fundamentally a day of happiness. One might have thought that with all the fasting and the many hours spent in the synagogue, we should relate to the day in purely solemn terms. But Yom Kippur is not a fast of sadness. Rather, it is when we re-discover our great spiritual capacity to be like the angels who never need food or drink, soaring close to G-d, and transcending the physical. It is then that we understand the meaning of true rejoicing: spending twenty-five hours in fellowship with the Divine, without need of physical comforts. This experience opens the window to the spiritual rejoicing that gives us such great comfort and well-being.

Indeed, the custom in yeshivot is to ecstatically sing and dance with renewed vigor and dedication after the last Shofar blasts are sounded at the end of the Ne’ila prayer, at the conclusion of the fast. The excited students and teachers declare with their enthusiasm: Behold, we have transcended our physical selves. We have climbed upwards into the Divine embrace. We feel Your gracious compassion, and we are ready and hopefully worthy to attempt to perfect ourselves and the world.

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com subject: [Rav Kook Torah] **Rav Kook Torah Yamim Noraim: Complete Teshuvah** The focus of the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is teshuvah - return or repentance. We recite the Avinu Malkeinu prayer during this period, requesting:

“Our Father our King! Return us in complete teshuvah before You.” When is teshuvah full and complete?

Healing the Source

We can understand this phrase better in light of the request that immediately follows:

“Our Father our King! Send complete healing to the sick of Your people.”

What is “complete healing”? Often we are only able to alleviate the patient’s external symptoms. The true source of the illness, however, remains unknown or is untreatable. Such a treatment is only a partial healing. When we plead for complete healing, we are praying that we may succeed in discovering the source of the illness and completely cure the patient. Such a comprehensive treatment will result in full restoration of the patient’s health.

The same concept holds true for teshuvah. If we address a particular fault, we are really dealing with a symptom of a much larger problem. Correcting a specific sin is only partial teshuvah. When we ask for G-d’s help in attaining complete teshuvah, we seek a comprehensive teshuvah that corrects the root source of our various sins and character flaws. Such a complete teshuvah will restore our spiritual wholeness.

Elevated Perception

How does one attain complete teshuvah? In his book Orot HaTeshuvah, Rav Kook explained that this teshuvah is based on an elevated outlook on life and the world:

“The higher level of teshuvah is based on holy enlightenment and a penetrating perception of the beauty of Divine providence. This [elevated teshuvah] is the source and foundation for the lower teshuvah that corrects deeds and refines

traits. The basis for elevated teshuvah is none other than the foundation of Torah, in all of its roots and branches.” (15:6)

“Teshuvah that is truly complete requires a lofty perception, an ascent to the rarified world that is replete with truth and holiness. This is only possible by delving into the depths of Torah and Divine wisdom, to the mystical secrets of the universe.... Only the higher [i.e., mystical] Torah can break down the iron barriers that divide the individual and society as a whole from their heavenly Father.” (10:1) (*Silver from the Land of Israel*, pp. 72-73. Adapted from *Mo'adei HaRe'iyah*, p. 66. See also: *The Value of Life*. [ravkooktorah.org](http://ravkooktorah.org))