

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHIAT HA'AZINU-ROSH HASHANA-YOM KIPPUR-SUCCOT SPECIAL ISSUE · 5764-5 /2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 52

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### DIGITAL TORAH

*"...write this song for yourself and teach it to the Children of Israel." (31:19)*

We are living in the middle of a revolution. Little more than 20 years ago, the idea that you could link any computer in the world with any other computer was no more than the twinkle in the eye of a few gifted programmers. And today, that twinkle, with all its benefits and problems, is an everyday reality.

The digital revolution marches on, and its limits may not be reached for many years.

At the heart of the digital revolution is something called the binary code. Computers, digital cameras and scanners, CD's, DVD's, MP3's, and whatever other media are down the road, all come back to the simplest code that can be — the presence or the absence of an electric pulse; the turning on or off of a microscopic switch. Every digital device basically uses this fundamental code in ever more elaborate ways. But the root is always the same – "0" – no current or "1" – current.

The strength of digital is precisely because it is a code. Provided the original code can still be deciphered, the message can be regenerated *exactly* as it was originally, whether that message is a picture or a sound.

Let's take the example of Morse code. Morse code was a system of communicating widely used before radio was sophisticated enough to permit voice transmission. It consists of long and short sound pulses. For example "SOS" in Morse code is "... — ... / ... — ...", where the dots are short pulses and the dashes are long ones.

The beauty of this, and for that matter any code, is that the entire meaning of the message can be reconstructed provided that the original code is intact. It doesn't matter how much static or noise of other kind of interference surrounds the signal, provided you can tell a dot from a dash the original signal can be reconstructed perfectly.

This is not the case in an analog system. In an analog sys-

tem, the medium becomes part of the message. If the medium decays, so does the message. I remember as a young boy in England listening to the inevitable surface noise of my HMV gramophone, waiting for the opening bars of the music as the record spun at the dizzying velocity of 78 rpm. 45's 33's and cassettes weren't that better. (Remember 8-track cartridges?!) All these systems shared the same drawback: the medium was part of the message, the pops and scratches of needle meeting plastic or magnetic tape being shlepped across a magnet in the case of a cassette was part and parcel of the sound of music.

The digital revolution changed all that.

The whole of this week's Torah portion is written as a song. On a deeper level, the whole Torah is called a song: *"Write this song and teach it to the Children of Israel."*

The Torah is a book. Books are a digital medium. Provided you can make out the letters, you can recreate the original meaning of the words exactly. A book is not a painting or a photograph. Artwork is locked into the physical object itself. If it is degraded, it needs renovation if the original intentions of the artist are to be realized. Eventually, however, all physical things must rot and decay. They must end. Even the best preservation cannot go on forever. One wonders how much of the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile is still the original paint. If fact, how much to conserve, before you essentially re-create is an ongoing debate in the world of art conservation.

Words, however, are a digital medium. As long as you read the letters, the writer's original creation springs to life eternally. The same is true with song. If you can read the notes, you can sing the song the way it sounded when it was first sung, devoid of the scratches and the ravages of time.

The Torah is a book. It couldn't be any other way. The Torah is a song. It couldn't be any other way.

The Torah couldn't have been a photograph. It couldn't be a painting. The Torah had to be a "digital communication", for the Torah had to be handed down to the last generation with its meaning as crystal clear as it was at Sinai.

**A**lmost all of Ha'azinu is a song, written in the Torah in two parallel columns. Moshe summons the Heavens and the earth to stand as eternal witnesses to what will happen if the Jewish People sin and do not obey the Torah. He reminds the people to examine the history of the world and note how the Jewish People are rescued from obliteration in each generation — that Hashem “pulls the strings” of world events so that *Bnei Yisrael* can fulfill their destiny as His messengers in the world. Hashem’s kindness is such that Israel should be eternally grateful, not just for sustaining them in the wilderness, but for bringing them to a land of amazing abundance and for defeating their enemies. But this physical bounty leads the people to become over-indulged. Physical pleasures corrupt the morals of the people. They worship empty idols and powerless gods and indulge in all kinds of

depravity. Hashem will then let nations with no moral worth subjugate Israel and scatter them across the world. However, their only purpose is as a rod to chastise the Jewish People. When these nations think that it is through their own power that they have dominated Israel, Hashem will remind them that they are no more than a tool to do His will. The purpose of the Jewish People is fundamental — that man should know his Creator. Neither exile nor suffering can sever the bond between Hashem and His people, and eventually in the final redemption this closeness will be restored. Hashem will then turn His anger against the enemies of Israel, as though they were His own enemies, showing no mercy to the tormentors of His people. Hashem then gives His last commandment to Moshe: That he should ascend Mount Nevo and be gathered there to his people.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE LEGENDS

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### THE SECRET ENTRANCE

**W**hen the tribe of Yosef set out to conquer the city of Beit El, formerly known as Luz, there was a serious problem in locating the perfectly concealed entrance to the fortified city. Some advance scouts observed a resident of the city who had exited the city and asked him to show them the entrance. A giant luz tree stood in front of a cave which served as the entrance and only the city’s inhabitants were aware that the tree was hollow and could be traversed.

The scouts promised to reward this fellow with protection if he showed them the entrance. He pointed his



finger toward the mysterious tree and thus enabled the Israelites to conquer the city. True to their promise they spared the informer and his family. He subsequently moved to the Hittite area of the land and established a city which he named Luz. The kindness the guide showed to the Israelites was rewarded by this new city’s invulnerability to death. When its aged inhabitants grew weary of life they went outside the city walls to die.

This is cited by our Talmudic Sages as an example of the great reward for one who helps another in reaching his destination.

## ISRAEL Forever

### Parshat Ha'azinu

### RIGHT OF RETURN

**I**s it only the Palestinians who claim the Right of Return? This Shabbat, when there echoes in every synagogue the call of the Prophet Hoshea “Return, Israel, to your G-d”, we are reminded of another Right of Return which has special significance for Jews at this time of the year.

The Arab world refuses to relinquish its claim for the so-called “Palestinian refugees” to return to the homes they evacuated during the War of Liberation in 1948. It is absurd that so much of the world, with the proud exception of President Bush, gives any credence to this claim since the Palestinians in question were never evicted from their

homes but left them at the urging of their leaders who wished them to be evacuated in the wake of what they expected to be a rout of the Israeli defenders.

Perhaps the only way to understand this is to view it as part of a Divine plan to wake Israeli Jews up to their own “Right of Return”. Since there is little hope for radical fundamentalist Islam to return to its senses and halt its war of terror against the rest of the world, our only hope for peace and security for the year which has just begun is to exercise our own “Right of Return” to our G-d Who will protect Israel forever.

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## TWO SLAVES, TWO PASSAGES

The leniency shown by the Torah to a Jew who is redeeming the field he sold is deduced from the comparison it makes to the leniency shown in regard to the redemption of a Hebrew slave from his non-Jewish owner.

What is the source for interpreting the relevant Torah passages as dictating a benevolent policy towards any Hebrew slave?

The Sage Abaye quotes a *beraita* which rules that the owner of a Hebrew slave must treat him as an equal in regard to the food and bed he provides for him. The Torah passage cited in our *gemara* and a number of other places in the Talmud is the one dealing with the Jew who has been sold into slavery by the court because he lacked the funds to compensate the party from whom he stole. That slave is sold for a six-year period but can opt to stay on until the Yovel Year should he declare that he does not wish to leave you for he is fond of you and your family “since it is good for him with you” (*Devarim 16:16*). “With you” is interpreted as a command to ensure that he is treated as an equal in regard to the above-mentioned accommodations.

Tosefot raises a problem regarding the citing of this particular passage, for there is no language of command in it, only the report of the slave’s reason for continuing his servitude. The passage from which this obligation is deduced by our Sages is the one which actually commands the owner of the slave who sold himself out of desperate poverty to treat him not as a slave but that “as a hired worker shall he be with you” (*Vayikra 25:40*). It is therefore the opinion of Tosefot here and in other places that the text should be edited to replace the passage cited.

The Tosefist Rabbi Yitzchak in *Mesechta Baba Kama (87b)* comes to the defense of the existing text. Since the slave describes the conditions of equality he has enjoyed, it is an indication that this is the manner in which the Torah expects him to be treated and is tantamount to a command.

The question remains, however, why our *gemara* prefers this particular passage in *Devarim* to the other in *Vayikra*. The answer may be in a point raised by Maharsha (*Kiddushin 15a*) as to how we can extend the benevolent attitude shown to the slave who sold himself (*Vayikra*) to the one sold because

of his thievery, since there is a case to be made that the latter should not enjoy such favorable conditions as punishment for his crime. By citing a passage related to that kind of slave we have an indication that the equality explicitly commanded in regard to the other slave applies to him as well.

• *Erachin 30b*

## THE HOUSE IN THE WALL

“She let them down from the window with a rope, for her house was in the thickness of the wall and she lived in the wall.” (*Yehoshua 2:15*)

Thus came to a dramatic climax the spying mission of two agents sent by Yehoshua to discover the mood of the people in Yericho, the first city the Israelites were to conquer in Eretz Yisrael. After successfully concealing them from the government police pursuing them, the owner of this house in the wall, Rachav, revealed to them what they wanted to know. She then enabled them to escape from the shut gates of this heavily walled city by lowering them from her window to the area beyond the wall.

How to interpret the phrase “she lived in the wall” which appears after we have already been informed that “her house was in the thickness of the wall” is a matter of debate between Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yehuda, which has halachic ramifications.

When the laws of the Yovel year were in effect, the rule was that if a Jew sold a house in the walled city he had one whole year in which to buy it back. If he failed to do so it became the permanent property of the buyer and did not revert back to him in the Yovel year as in the case of a field of a house in an unwalled city. Should the house in question be one which is actually within the wall surrounding a city, it is the view of Rabbi Shimon that the outside wall of that house constitutes the wall of the city surrounding it, and the law of a walled city therefore applies to it. His proof is that the phrase “she lived in the wall” means that she lived within the walled city. Rabbi Yehuda disagrees because his understanding of that phrase is a stress that since her home was within the wall itself it was considered as if she lived only in the wall but not within the walled city.

• *Erachin 32a*

# BEGINNINGS ...

RABBI DR. AKIVA TATZ

**“Everything goes after the beginning.”**

**T**his statement of *Chazal* contains hidden depth. The moment of conception of anything which comes into existence must contain all the elements of the future of that thing. Just as all the genes of a human being are laid down at conception and thereafter all the physical features which manifest in the child as it develops are results of those genes, so too all phenomena in the world are a reflection of the elements contained, infinitely compressed, in their beginnings.

The moment of transition from non-existence to existence is the most potent, containing all. Thereafter, as the child develops, a critical phase follows, but not as critical as the first instant, and so on, each phase a revelation of the coding of the previous. The closer to the beginning, the more critical. Small effects at the genetic level will be much more far-reaching than larger effects during embryonic development, and effects at embryonic level more far-reaching than effects at the adult level. Therefore, the moment which demands greatest care, greatest intensity, greatest purity, is the very first.

Time is also a creation. The Jewish year is an organic entity. Its conception takes place on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. For this reason we are so extremely careful about trying to live correctly on Rosh Hashana and the subsequent days. The way one begins the year will determine how the rest of the year reveals itself. If one can form the genes of the year correctly, the fetus will develop correctly and the child and adult will be wholesome.

Mistakes in this phase will be very hard to correct later. Efforts made in the first ten days may prevent major “surgery” being necessary later. Each moment of Rosh Hashana should be utilized with exquisite care, only positive personality traits should be manifest, great control over anger and other negative traits should be exercised. Many have the custom not to sleep during the day of Rosh Hashana, at least not until midday — they want to lay down the genes of the year in consciousness and spiritual effort, not oblivion.

What should be the major focus of the day? Can one really correct all one’s personality faults in one day, or even ten? The answer lies in *Chazal’s* description of the human being. There is a description of a righteous person as a tree planted in good soil whose branches overhang bad soil. The meaning is that the root is good, the person is essen-

tially good, but no one is perfect and the branches overhanging bad ground represent the person’s shortcomings. However, some pruning will reveal roots entirely good. The pruning may take the form of suffering in this world — in the next world, the dimension of truth, the person will be revealed as wholly positive.

A negative individual is described as a tree planted in bad soil where branches overhang good ground. The root and essence are bad, but even the worst individual has positive actions and qualities. However, some pruning will reveal the essence as bad. The pruning may take the form of great happiness and reward in this world, leaving a clarified existence of negativity in the next.

This idea helps one to understand a difficult section in the Rambam. The Rambam states that on Rosh Hashana the righteous are sealed for life immediately, the evil are sealed for the opposite immediately, and those who are intermediate, neither righteous nor evil, hang in the balance until Yom Kippur. The Rambam says that these are people whose *mitzvot* exactly equal their *aveirot*. (Not necessarily in number, quality counts.)

The strange part of this discussion is that the Rambam goes on to say that most people are in this third category, that is exactly balanced between good and bad. Is it really possible that most people are exactly balanced in terms of their positive and negative actions?

The explanation, however, is that what is meant here is not an exact technical balancing of actions; what is meant is that most people are trees planted midway between good and bad soil — available for good and positive actions when the opportunity arises, when inspiration occurs, but unfortunately, available for selfishness and negativity when tempted. Most people have never made a conscious policy decision about what they are here for. Where is your tree planted? Its default position straddles the line. What is required at the moment of conception of consciousness, at the moment of conception of time, is a decision about who I am in essence, not about which technical actions need work — that will come later.

Rosh Hashana is a time for moving the core, making sure the tree is moved entirely into positive territory, the pruning is the second stage. Consciously choosing a positive direction, setting a spiritual goal and beginning movement in its direction is what Rosh Hashana must teach.

## ROSH HASHANAH Q&A ?

1. Why do we blow the shofar during the month of Elul?
2. Where in the written Torah text does it tell us explicitly that the first day of Tisrei is Rosh Hashanah?
3. We eat apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet year. Why do we choose apples above other sweet fruits?
4. What two blessings do we say before sounding the shofar?
5. Which Book of *Tanach* does the beginning of the *Tashlich* prayer come from?
6. What three barren women were 'remembered' by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah?
7. A person's yearly allowance is fixed on Rosh Hashanah, except for three types of expenses. What are they?
8. We refer to the binding of Isaac in our prayers when we say: "Answer us as You answered Abraham our father on Mount Moriah..." What was Abraham's prayer on Mount Moriah?
9. Why, even in Israel, are there two days of Rosh Hashanah, whereas other festivals in Israel are celebrated for only one day?
10. What halacha applies to the *shehechyanu* blessing on the second night of Rosh Hashanah which does not apply on the second night of any other holiday?

## ROSH HASHANAH Q&A!

### Answers to Rosh Hashanah's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. After the sin of the golden calf, Moshe went up to Mount Sinai to receive the second set of Tablets on Rosh Chodesh Elul. On that day, the Jewish People sounded the shofar to remind themselves to stray no more after idol worship. Also, the sound of the shofar strikes awe into our hearts and inspires us to return to the ways of Torah.
  - *Mishna Berura and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chaim 581*
2. Nowhere. The Torah calls it "a day of shofar blowing." (This is one of many examples showing how our observance depends on the continuous oral tradition dating back to Mount Sinai).
  - *Bamidbar 29:1*
3. Isaac blessed Jacob with the words: "The fragrance of my son is like the fragrance of a field which Hashem has blessed..." (*Bereishis 27:27*). The Talmud identifies this "field" as an apple orchard.
  - *Ta'anis 29b, Biyur Hagra*
4. "Blessed are You... who has commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar," and the *shehechyanu* blessing.
  - *Orach Chaim 581:2*
5. The Book of Micha (7:18-20).
6. Sara, Rachel and Chana. On Rosh Hashanah it was decreed that these barren women would bear children.
  - *Tractate Rosh Hashanah 10b*
7. Expenses for Shabbos, Yom Tov, and the cost of one's children's Torah education.
  - *Ba'er Hetaiv Orach Chaim 242:1*
8. He prayed that Mount Moriah should remain a place of prayer for all future generations (*Onkelos 22:14*). Also, he prayed that his sacrifice of the ram should be considered as though he had actually sacrificed Isaac.
  - *Rashi 22:13*
9. Before our current exile, we did not have a fixed calendar as we do today. Rather, the Supreme Torah court in Jerusalem determined our calendar on a month to month basis. They did this on the first day of every month, based on witnesses testifying that they had seen the new moon. Therefore, the people outside Israel had insufficient time to find out the exact date in time for the festivals. The "two-day festival" arose to correct this situation. In Israel, however, the people lived close enough to Jerusalem to find out the exact date of all the festivals except Rosh Hashanah. Since Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first day of the month, even those living in Jerusalem sometimes needed to observe it for two days, if the witnesses failed to arrive.
10. On the second night of Rosh Hashanah it is customary to wear a new garment or to have a new fruit on the table when saying the *shehechyanu* blessing. Thus, the *shehechyanu* blessing applies not only to the holiday, but to the new garment or new fruit as well. (This is done in order to accommodate the minority of halachic authorities who rule that no *shehechyanu* blessing be said on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.)
  - *Taz 600:2*

# Original Paintwork

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

## THE CYCLE OF SIN, REPENT & THEN SIN AGAIN, WHO ARE WE KIDDING?

A car wash is a great business. Within thirty seconds of driving out of the car wash your car has already lost 100% of its pristine gleam and within a week it starts to look like any other dirty car. So if people know that their car is going to get dirty, why do they bother spending the time and money to clean it in the first place? Sometimes Yom Kippur feels a lot like a car wash. Is there a person in the world who repented on Yom Kippur for all his sins and never sinned again? And most of us have trouble seeing even the smallest improvement from one Yom Kippur to the next. Isn't it all a bit of a waste of time? I mean, who are we fooling? Certainly not G-d. And if we're honest — not even ourselves.

Have you ever tried to clean a car that hasn't seen water in two years? It's almost impossible. The dirt and the grime

have eaten into the paint. It's impossible to make the car shine.

It's true that the gleam on our car when we leave the car wash is very short-lived, but there's a more important reason we make our weekly pilgrimage to the car wash. It gives us the possibility of returning to the shine of the original paint-work.

Yom Kippur is the same. The sheen with which we leave shul after Yom Kippur may wear off pretty quickly, but if we never experienced a Yom Kippur, soon we'd become so spiritually dulled that we would never be able to get back to the luster of our "original paint-work."

• Heard from Rabbi Chaim Salenger in the name of Rabbi Binyamin Jackobowitz

## YOM KIPPUR Q&A ?

1. Passover commemorates the going out of Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?
2. For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur *not* atone?
3. What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?
4. Why is the *vidui* confession included during the *mincha* prayer the afternoon *before* Yom Kippur?
5. On Yom Kippur we refrain from: working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?
6. In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?
7. Who wrote the prayer "*Unesaneh Tokef*" said during the chazan's repetition of *musaf*?
8. Why do we read the book of Yona on Yom Kippur?
9. In what two ways does *havdalah* after Yom Kippur differ from *havdalah* after Shabbos?
10. Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

The Ohr Somayach Family wishes you and yours and all of Israel a year filled with happiness, health and peace.

1. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.

2. Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone's feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

3. He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness.

• *Orach Chaim 606:1*

4. Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night.

• *Mishna Berura 607:1*

5. Eating, drinking, working.

• *Mishna Krisus 1:1*

6. a. Although any amount is *forbidden*, eating pork is not punishable by a *Sanhedrin* until one has eaten food equal in

volume to the size of an olive. Eating on Yom Kippur, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even a date-sized piece, which is smaller than an olive.

• *Mishna Berura 612:1*

b. Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of *kares* — spiritual excision, whereas eating pork does not.

7. “*Unesaneh Tokef*” was written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany about 1000 years ago.

• *Machzor*

8. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree.

• *Shelah Hakadosh*

9. After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from *havdalah*. Also, the source of the flame used for *havdalah* after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled *before* Yom Kippur.

• *Orach Chaim 624:3,4*

10. Building the *succa*.

• *Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5*

### Parshat Ha'azinu

## WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

### REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

## A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

**Question:** A very wealthy friend of mine was recently approached by the head of a promising young yeshiva for a major gift to his building fund. My friend has other commitments and is unsure of how much to invest in this institution. What is the right thing to do?

**Answer:** Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer, a renowned communal rabbi, author and lecturer residing in Monsey, New York, recently told us this story while visiting Israel to establish a new yeshiva, “Mesores Mordechai”, in Beit Shemesh. (The yeshiva, which is named for Rabbi Feuer's late great father-in-law, Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, *zatzal*, Rosh Hayeshiva of Telz, is for *Beit Midrash* boys from the USA.)

Rabbi Meir Shapiro, *zatzal*, the rav of Lublin who established the famous Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin, came out of his office one day in a very distraught mood. One of his students, Rabbi Pinchas Hirshprung (who later served for many

years as a renowned rav in Montreal), who was sitting outside the office, asked the rav what had happened to make him so upset.

“A Jew just came into my office with a bitter complaint against me,” explained the rav. “He told me that when I started the yeshiva and approached him for a donation he gave me a modest sum. Little did he realize until today what sort of a yeshiva I built and what quality students there are here. He claims that he is a very wealthy man who could have supplied me with all the money I needed for the yeshiva and he can't forgive me for not pressing him harder to gain such a great merit.”

“And you know what,” concluded the rav, “he is right!”

Tell your friend that he should devote the same serious thought to investing in this yeshiva as he would to a business investment and to make sure he doesn't miss out on a great opportunity.

## RETURN OF THE LOST TRIBES?

“**W**hat monument is that which I see?” (*Melachim II, 23:17*) This is the query which the righteous King Yoshiyahu put to the people of Beth El while he was in the midst of a campaign to eradicate every trace of idol worship in Eretz Yisrael.

They informed him that they had a tradition that this was the grave of the Prophet who had centuries before prophesied in Beth El to Yerovam, king of the separatist Kingdom of Yisrael, that the altar upon which he was about to perform idolatrous service would someday be the scene of a mass slaughter of idolatrous priests carried out by a descendant of King David named Yoshiyahu.

But what was this very Yoshiyahu, who was king of the Kingdom of Yehuda, doing in Beth El, which was in the breakaway Kingdom of Yisrael whose inhabitants had been exiled by the Assyrian ruler Sancherib?

The solution to this mystery is supplied by Rabbi Yochanan. The Prophet Yirmiyahu, he says, succeeded in bringing the exiled Ten Tribes back to Eretz Yisrael and they were united with the two tribes which made up the Kingdom of Yehuda under the rule of Yoshiyahu.

Rabbi David Kimche (RaDAK), in his commentary on Tanach, points out that more than 350 years had passed from the time that the Prophet was buried in this grave marked by a unique monument until it caught the attention of the king about whom the Prophet had prophesied. The tradition that this was his grave was transmitted from father to son, and as a result the remains of the Prophet were not burned along with the bones of the idolatrous priests which were removed from their graves.

It should be noted that Rabbi Yochanan’s version of what happened to the lost Ten Tribes is not the mainstream view, which is that they never returned.

• *Erachin 33a*

## RENTAL OR PURCHASE?

“**H**e loaned his money on interest and benefited from usury, so he shall not live.” (*Yechezkel 18:13*) This description of the fate in store for one who violates the Torah ban on usury serves as the source for Rabbi Yochanan’s position that the court does not coerce the usurer to return his ill-gained profit as it does a

thief. The Prophet’s words indicate, explains Rabbi Yitzchak, that the usurer is doomed to death and is not granted the option of compensation. (There is a slight variation in the text of Rabbi Yitzchak’s statement here from the way it appears in *Bava Metzia (61b)* where it is more clearly understood.)

Another application of this passage appears in the Midrash (*Shmot Rabba 31:6*). The term “he shall not live” is interpreted there as a Divine declaration that “one who lives on usury in this world will not live in the next”.

A story is told of a notorious usurer in a European town who exploited the poverty of his neighbors. When he passed away the Chevra Kadisha Burial Society decided to recoup the money which he had gouged from his borrowers by demanding an exorbitant price for his grave. The usurer’s family begrudgingly paid the sum but after the mourning period brought suit against the Society heads before a gentile court. The Chevra Kadisha heads turned to their spiritual leader, the Torah giant Rabbi Akiva Eiger, to represent them in court.

When the judge hearing the case asked the rabbi why the usurer’s family was charged a price way out of line with what others were charged, he was offered this explanation:

“It is the belief of Jews, your honor, that there will eventually be a resurrection of the dead. We therefore view the purchase of a grave as merely rental since the one buried there will eventually vacate it. A usurer, our Sages tell us, forfeits with this sin the privilege of resurrection. Remaining forever in his grave means that it is a permanent purchase for him. Your honor will certainly agree that there is a great difference in price between renting and purchasing!”

• *Temura 6b*

## The Weekly Daf

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# Succot Significance

**S**uccot celebrates the supernatural protection we, the Jewish People, enjoyed when G-d took us out of Egypt. In this sense, Succot is like Passover. While Passover celebrates our rescue from the Egyptians, Succot goes a step farther, celebrating our miraculous existence in the desert for forty years after that.

Thus, the major significance of Succot is a message of gratitude. If not for the food, water, and shelter G-d gave us in the desert thousands of years ago, we wouldn't be here today. Our gratitude to G-d never fades, just like you never stop being grateful to your parents for giving birth to you. So, for the seven days of Succot, Jews leave the protection of their roofed homes and live in huts covered only with branches, recalling the fact that it is not our homes, but G-d who protects us.

Regarding the connections between Succot and messianic times: According to the Prophet Zacharia, the nations who survive the final "War of Gog and Magog" will come to Jerusalem every year "to prostrate themselves to the King, G-d...and to celebrate the Succot festival." (*Zecharia 14:16*)

The Prophet Ezekiel describes the Jewish People prior to the "War of Gog and Magog" as living in an almost-messianic state, having been recently gathered from amongst the nations and living in prosperity in their own land. Then, the world's nations, led by "Gog" from the land of "Magog," will attack Israel in an attempt to put a final end to the Jewish People.

Magog is identified by the Talmud as "Gothia," the land of the Goths. The Goths were a Germanic people, in keeping

with the midrashic rendering of Magog as "Germamia" or "Germania."

Our miraculous victory against Gog is to occur during the Succot season, and those of our enemies who repent and survive will come to Jerusalem each Succot to celebrate the anniversary of our victory.

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch notes that "Gog" is related to the Hebrew word for roof. A roof, with its ability to shut out the heavenly influences of rain and sun, symbolizes man's imagined independence from G-d. The symbol of the roof stands in diametric opposition to the weak succa-booth. A succa, covered only by some meager branches, symbolizes our dependence on G-d. Thus, Gog's struggle is the battle of the "roof" against the "succa," in which those who believe only in man's ability to manipulate nature try to eradicate the Jews, whose very existence loudly nullifies this world-view.

The universal nature of Succot is also alluded to in the special Succot offerings, which were 70 in number. This corresponds to the number of primary nations of the world; i.e., the 70 nations descended from Noah (see *Genesis Chapter 10*). Seventy is also the numerical value of the Hebrew phrase "Gog and Magog."

#### Sources:

- *Book of Ezekiel 38*
- *Ibid. Commentary by Rabbi Moshe Eisemann, Mesorah Publications*
- *Yerushalmi Megillah 3:9*
- *Targum Yonatan 10:2, Bereishet Rabba 37:1*

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THE ENGINEER MAKES A STOP

**S**habbat Shuva, the Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when we read the Haftorah beginning with the Prophet Hoshea's call for all of Israel to return to their G-d, is a time for reflecting on the miracle of return in our generation.

The most amazing feature of this "*Teshuva Revolution*" is the fact that there are so many different catalysts for Jews of all ages making such a radical change in their lifestyle.

One such person was the engineer of a train in the Israel Railways. One day, as he was alighting from the engine he had driven to its destination, he saw a very religious-looking person running towards him. His first

thought was that this relic of the past was coming to complain about the speed of the train. To his pleasant surprise the fellow told him he simply wanted to thank him for driving the train which brought him to where he wanted to be.

For so many years, the engineer said to himself, I have been driving trains and no one ever thought of saying "thanks" to me. If observance of Judaism teaches a person to have such sensitivity and appreciation of others, then I better take a look at what it can do for me.

It was this incident which led to the engineer's joining those who heeded the Prophet's call to a full return to G-d.

## SUCCOT Q&A ?

1. According to the Torah, what three basic requirements define a material as valid for use as a succa roof?
2. If the succa causes discomfort (e.g., it's too cold) to the extent that under similar conditions you would leave your very own house, you are exempt from the mitzvah. Why?
3. What two things are forbidden to do outside of the succa all seven days of the festival?
4. What is the absolute minimum number of meals a person is required to eat in the succa during the seven day holiday?
5. Besides referring to the tree and its fruit, what does the word "esrog" mean literally?
6. What is the minimum length of a lulav?
7. What is the maximum percentage a person is required to add to the purchase price of his esrog in order to obtain an esrog of greater beauty?
8. On the Shabbos that occurs during Succos, we read the Book of Koheles, in which King Solomon refers to himself as "Koheles." Why is King Solomon called Koheles?
9. What prohibition could a person transgress simply by sitting in the succa on the eighth day of Succos?
10. We hold a *tallis* over the heads of the people who read the end of the Torah and the beginning of the Torah. Why?

## SUCCOT Q&A!

### Answers to Succot's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. It must grow from the ground, no longer be connected to the ground, and not be receptive to *tumah* (ritual defilement).
  - *Orach Chaim 629:1*
2. Because the commandment of living in a succa is to dwell in the succa for seven days the same way you dwell in your house the rest of the year.
  - *Mishna Berura 640:13*
3. Eat (an 'established' meal) or sleep.
  - *Orach Chaim 639:2*
4. One. Eating a meal in the succa the first night of Succos is a requirement. The rest of the festival, a person can eat 'snacks' which are not required to be eaten in a succa. (Outside Israel, one must eat a meal the second night of Succos as well. However, there is no *requirement* to live outside Israel!)
  - *Orach Chaim 639:3*
5. Beauty.
  - *Ramban Vayikra 23:40*
6. Its spine must be at least 4 *tefachim* (halachic hand-breadths).
7. 33.3%
  - *Orach Chaim 656:1*
8. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succos after the Sabbatical year.
  - *Rashi, Koheles 1:1*
9. *Bal Tosif* — "Do not add to the mitzvos." The commandment to live in the succa applies for only seven days. To sit in the succa on the eighth day with intent to fulfill the mitzvah transgresses "*bal tosif*."
  - *Orach Chaim 666:1*
10. It represents the wedding canopy, symbolizing that through the Torah we wed ourselves to Hashem.

# After the Return

BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER AND RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN  
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## ANIMAL AND ANIMALS

On Yom Kippur at Mincha we read as the *haftara* the entire Sefer Yona, which concludes with a Divine rebuke to the Prophet. Yonah is blamed for not showing sufficient compassion for “the great city of Nineveh which has within it more than 120,000 people who don’t know right from left and many *an animal*” (Yona 4:11).

The use of this singular term for animals serves as a basis for a position of the Sages in our *mishna* regarding the transfer of the sanctity of one sacrificial animal to another, which although forbidden results in both animals being sacred. These Sages contend that this transmission of sanctity from one animal to another can be effective to many other animals. The fact that the Torah passage describing such transmission speaks in singular terms of a “transfer of an animal to another animal” (Vayikra 27:10) does not serve as a challenge to this position, because the passage in Yona shows that the singular term “animal” can be a reference to many animals.

The question arises, however, as to why G-d used the singular term for animals in his rebuke to Yona.

One possibility is that it was intended to subtly communicate the message which Rashi quotes from our Sages that the term animal here is a critique of the city’s human inhabitants who were “great men with the sense of an animal in their failure to recognize Who created them.”

It may also be a way of distinguishing between the value of human and animal life, with only the former deserving of being counted.

• Temura 9a

## THE FORTY-YEAR MYSTERY

One of the most tragic chapters in Jewish history is the attempt of Avshalom to usurp the throne of his father, King David. The account of this rebellion which ended with the death of Avshalom is introduced with this passage:

“And it came to pass at the end of forty years that Avshalom said to the king: ‘I wish to go to Hebron to fulfill the vow I made to G-d.’” (*Shmuel II 15:7*)

What, asked Rabbi Yehoshua, is the meaning of the forty years mentioned in connection with Avshalom’s rebellion? The answer which Rabbi Nehorai offers in his name is that exactly forty years had passed since the people had petitioned their leader, the Prophet Shmuel, to appoint a king to rule over them (*Shmuel I 8:5*). This was considered a rebellion against both Shmuel and G-d as was expressed by G-d in His words to Shmuel in the subsequent passages (*ibid. 7-8*). There is a hint here that the seeds of Avshalom’s rebellion were already planted forty years earlier in the rebellion against the prophet-leader appointed by G-d.

By why did Avshalom wait till the end of forty years if he had such seditious ambitions?

Rashi, in his commentary in *Mesechta Nazir (5a)*, notes that Avshalom was aware that his father’s reign was to last forty years. He mistakenly assumed, however, that these forty years began with the people’s request for a king. In fact, during the first three years following that rebellion it was Shmuel and Shaul who ruled, and therefore David’s forty-year reign would still continue for three more years. Avshalom’s calculation was mistaken and his rebellion was doomed.

• Temura 14b

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## THE BOOK OF YONA Q&A ?

The Book of Yona is read during the mincha service on Yom Kippur.

1. Why do we read the Book of Yona on Yom Kippur?
2. How long was Yona inside the fish?
3. What did the sailors do when they saw their ship floundering in the storm?
4. In which well-known sea was Yona when he was inside the fish?
5. What did Yona do inside the fish?
6. How big was the city of Ninveh?
7. What length of time were the people of Ninveh given in which to repent?
8. How did the people of Ninveh react when they heard Yona's prophecy?
9. Why did Yona originally try to escape from delivering G-d's prophecy to the people of Ninveh?
10. Give another answer to question number nine.

## THE BOOK OF YONA Q&A!

### Answers to The Book of Yona's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree. (*Shelah Hakadosh*) Also, it teaches that even Yona could not flee from G-d. (*Sefer Hatoda'ah*)
2. Three nights and three days. (2:1)
3. They prayed to their gods, cast their vessels into the sea, and then drew lots to find out on whose account the storm came about. (1:5-7)
4. Yam Suf — The Sea of Reeds. (1:6)
5. He prayed. (2:2)
6. A three-day walk from end to end.
7. Forty days. (3:4)
8. They fasted, covered themselves in sackcloth, repented and returned all stolen property. (3:5-8)
9. He was afraid that if the non-Jews in Ninveh repented but the Jewish People did not repent it would look bad for the Jewish People. (1:3)
10. He was afraid that the people of Ninveh would think he was a false prophet, since he said that the city would be destroyed and it wasn't. (4:2)

## THE BOOK OF KOHELET Q&A ?

The Scroll of Kohelet is read on Shabbat during Succot.

1. Why do we read Kohelet during Succot?
2. Who wrote Kohelet?
3. What is the meaning of the words in the verse "Don't be too righteous?"
4. In the Book of Kohelet, King Solomon refers to himself as "Kohelet." Why?
5. In verse 1:2, how many "vanities" are referred to? Why this number?
6. The verse states "And the wise man's eyes are in his head." What does this mean?
7. "A time to cry and a time to laugh?" Which specific times are meant by the verse?
8. What example does Rashi give for the verse "Cast your bread upon the waters for after many days you will find it?"
9. Why was Man created?
10. Why is "the end of the thing is better than the beginning?"

## THE BOOK OF KOHELET Q&A!

### Answers to The Book of Kohelet's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. Kohelet teaches that the physical world is empty and fleeting, and that the purpose of life is mitzvah observance and awe of G-d. The succa also teaches this: It is a flimsy temporary structure which we enter for the purpose of doing G-d's Will.
2. Shlomo Hamelech. (1:1)
3. Don't transgress G-d's command even if you think you're doing a good deed by doing so, as did Shaul Hamelech (when he spared Agag the Amalekite king). (7:16)
4. Because he gathered (*kihale*) vast wisdom, and because he, as king, gathered the nation on Succot after the Sabbatical year. (1:1)
5. Seven, referring to the world which was created in seven days. (1:2)
6. At the beginning of a matter, he foresees what will be at the end. (2:14)
7. A time to cry: Tisha B'Av. A time to laugh: The Future, about which David Hamelech wrote "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter (Tehillim 126)." (3:4)
8. Yitro fed Moshe; later Moshe became his son-in-law and accepted him as a convert and Yitro's offspring sat on the Sanhedrin. (11:1)
9. In order to have awe of G-d and to observe G-d's commandments. (12:13)
10. Only at the end is it known that the thing is well done: whereas in the beginning it is yet unknown how it will end. (7:8)

## WHO'S ON FIRST?

**From: Scott in Ireland**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I am uncertain as to why Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment, precedes Yom Kippur, the Day of Repentance. Shouldn't we first repent, and then be judged?*

Dear Scott,

You ask a very good question, and you are right, repentance should precede judgment. In fact, there are several times during the year when our deeds are evaluated and we are advised to take inventory beforehand. This occurs at the end of cycles in time. For example, one should review and do *teshuvah* at the end of each day before going to sleep; on Fridays, before Shabbat; at the end of the month before the new moon; and during the last month, Elul, before the New Year, Rosh Hashana.

Therefore, the entire month of Elul is opportune for repentance in preparation for the Day of Judgment. During this month, special penitential prayers and supplications are recited, usually late at night or preferably very early in the morning before the daily morning prayers. Sephardim recite these *selichot* the entire month, while the Ashkenazim begin toward the end of the month before Rosh Hashana. [One who is unfamiliar with these prayers should feel comfortable reciting less quantity with more quality, than more quantity with less quality. After all, their purpose is not to pay empty lip service but to stir repentance.] In addition, Ashkenazim blow the *shofar* (ram's horn) of Rosh Hashana during the whole month in preparation for the Day of Judgment.

Our Sages taught (Rosh Hashana 17): "Three books are opened on Rosh Hashana, one for the iniquitous, one for the righteous, and one for those in the middle. The righteous are sealed for life, the iniquitous for death, while those in the middle are held over until Yom Kippur. If they repent they are inscribed for life, if not ...." It is for this reason that the intermediary days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are called the Days of Repentance, in which our efforts are intensified. This culminates in what you refer to as the Day of Repentance, but is more accurately translated as the Day of Atonement. This expresses our confidence that every "middle-of-the-roader" has completed his repentance, and G-d, in His great mercy, forgives, inscribes and seals us all for a year of life and blessing.

## WHO DID IT?

**From: Marcus in Delaware**

*Dear Rabbi,  
On Yom Kippur there is a very long list of transgressions that we are supposed to confess about. But I don't understand why I'm being dictated what I've done wrong. Anyway, most of those things don't even apply to me. I've never stolen, had an affair or killed anyone. Forgive me for saying this, but isn't this taking things a bit too far?*

Dear Marcus,

Your point is well taken, and a lot of people ask the very same question.

However, it is important to realize that while this part of the Yom Kippur service is "required reading", it is meant only as a "partial" list of things that a person may have done wrong, and should be used as an outline of the type of things needing improvement. A person can and should add to the list things that one knows he's done wrong but are not specifically mentioned. In this way, the "confession" or *vidui* is not being dictated to you, but is rather a list of suggestions that you are intended to personalize and tailor-fit.

Regarding not being "guilty" of the charges, even if a person has never explicitly transgressed any of the things listed there, it is still possible that he has done some of them in one way or another. For example, even if you've never outright stolen, you might have used something without permission, or subtly misled others – both are considered a form of "theft" in Judaism. Similarly, even if you've never actually had an affair, owning-up to illicit relations can include desiring and fantasizing in ways that may be very real. "Merely" embarrassing someone to the point that the blood rushes to his face, or, worse yet, causing him to become white in the face, is a form of bloodshed "tantamount" to murder in Judaism. Our Sages thus taught, "better one throw himself into a fiery furnace than embarrass someone in public" (Baba Metzia 59a).

Based on this, with some effort and strategic repentance, most people should be able to find some way in which they need improvement for everything enumerated in that list. Still, what about the truly righteous who are far from transgressing? As far as they are concerned, they scrutinize themselves much more than most people could imagine. For example, Rabbi Israel Meir Cohen, the *Chofetz Chaim*, was once heard weeping over a list of his "wrong-doings". It later became known that he lamented

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over not being able to account for five minutes of the parting year. Another beautiful message can be learned from the Ponavizher Rabbi who was once heard confessing intensely on Yom Kippur. His students, unable to believe that he was actually guilty of what he was saying, asked for an explanation. The Rabbi said that one must not think only of one's own fate, but for the spiritual welfare of every Jew as well. Doing *teshuvah* in this way helps others, and also spares them embarrassment as the entire community repents together. We also see this in the *Kol Nidre* service before Yom Kippur when the community announces its willingness to pray together with the transgressors.

## AT HOME IN THE SUCCA

**From: Jenny in Newport**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I understand that we are to consider the Succa as our permanent dwelling during the festival, while our houses are to be considered of secondary importance. For this reason, we are to eat, sleep and otherwise be in the Succa as we normally dwell in our homes. My question is, why then must we only be engaged in holy acts like learning or praying, and refrain from mundane acts or idle speech. Shouldn't we feel at home in the Succa, talking about whatever we want, or watching TV or whatever?*

Dear Jenny,

The Succa represents the Clouds of Glory with which G-d encompassed the Jews as they traveled in the desert. These clouds protected them from the heat of the sun and

sheltered them from rain or wild winds. They even miraculously smoothed out the ground before them such that they literally walked on the clouds, and served as a "dry cleaning service" that continuously permeated their clothing and prevented it from wear and tear.

Why did G-d choose to house them this way? To free them from the need to shelter themselves in order to have time to learn Torah and engage in spiritual pursuits that would bring them closer to G-d during those formative years between leaving Egypt and reaching permanent settlement in the Land of Israel. Once they settled the Land, not everyone was able to maintain that intimate connection with G-d, and the mundane pursuits of life raised challenges to their spirituality. Once a year, after they finished toiling to harvest the summer crops, G-d invited the Jewish people to rekindle the intimacy of those early years, under a star-studded canopy, enveloped in the Succa, in order to learn Torah, pray and reconnect with the Divine.

We too engage in a myriad of pursuits all year long – school, work, travel, TV and idle chatter too. The Succa is our opportunity to relocate our focal point from the fixed and permanent pursuit of the mundane, to the spontaneous spirituality of Sinai. By entering the Succa we are given the chance to immerse ourselves in the purifying remnants of those ancient Clouds of Glory, to be re-inspired and receive a spiritual uplift with which to infuse the coming year.

Therefore, during Succot, when we relate to our permanent homes as temporary while considering the temporary Succa dwelling as permanent, we are in fact expressing our reminiscent yearning for a time when the mundane will be secondary while spirituality will become the central focus of our lives, encompassing and permeating us with Clouds of Glory.

## I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Tishrei is called the seventh month because it has seven mitzvot in it: Shofar, fasting on Yom Kippur, succa, the Four Species: lulav, esrog, hadass and aravah.

• *Avudraham*

The word "shofar" is related to the Hebrew word "*shapair*," which means "to improve." The shofar blast tells us: "Improve your ways!"

"*Al Chet ...*" The word '*chet*'— sin — has a silent "*alef*" at the end. This indicates that a person does not sin unless he first forgets about G-d, who is called "*Alufo shel Olam*" — "Master of the World."

• *Ta'amei Haminhagim in the name of the Degel Machaneh Efraim in the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov*

One should dance and sing vigorously in honor of the Torah on Simchat Torah, just as King David danced ecstatically in front of the Holy Ark of the Torah. It was said about the Gaon of Vilna that he danced before the Torah scroll with all his might.

• *Mishna Berura 669:10*