

# מעני תורה

## ראש השנה - יום כפור - סוכות

### "A House of Prayer for All Peoples": Particular and Universal Themes in the *Tishrei* Holidays

Mrs. Shifra Schapiro  
*Tanakh*

Learning and working in an Orthodox environment, we do not face the same challenges as many friends and relatives in the workplace do during *Tishrei*. At Ma'ayanot, our days off for *yamim tovim* are built into the school calendar. For people in non-Orthodox institutions, it can be awkward to inform one's boss or colleagues: "I'm taking three of the next four Thursday-Fridays off," right when the entire office is back to serious work after a summer of long weekends. The *Tishrei* holidays make many Jews very aware of religion, and of the fact that religious observance sets us apart from the general culture and from the nations of the world. Indeed, on *Rosh HaShanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* we do encounter *HaShem* and should seize the opportunity to experience His presence and strengthen our special relationship with Him. But in addition to their particular, Jewish tint, *Rosh HaShanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* all have universal features as well. The texts of our *tefillot* are replete with reminders of the world at large. Thus, *Tishrei* is not only a time to remember our uniqueness among the nations, but also a time raise awareness of our role as world citizens, as participants in the general culture's progress and problems.

The prayers and *mitzvot* of *Rosh HaShanah* reflect its twofold nature. On one hand, *Rosh HaShanah* is a uniquely Jewish day. The *shofar*, according to Rav Saadya Gaon, is supposed to re-

mind us of the earth-shattering sounds at *Har Sinai*, and of the prophets' calls to repentance to the Jews throughout the ages. The Torah readings and *musaf* prayers recall seminal events in the formation of the Jewish nation: the birth of Yitzchak, *akei-dat* Yitzchak, and the birth of Shmuel *ha-Navi*. We sing "*anu amecha, ve-atah Elokeinu; anu banecha ve-atah Avinu...*" poetically celebrating our special relationship with *HaShem*. Of *Rosh HaShanah*, the *navi* Yeshayahu says in 55:6, "*dirshu HaShem be-himatz'o* – seek God when He is found." It is a time to profoundly reconnect with our Creator as individuals and as Jews.

Yet *Rosh HaShanah* is also universal. Another reason for the *shofar*, according to Rav Saadya Gaon, is anticipation of the arrival of *Mashiach*, which will be heralded by a *shofar*'s call. *Mashiach* will be a king who will unite mankind and teach all the nations to follow *HaShem*. *Rosh HaShanah* also marks the creation of Adam and Chavah, the parents of all humanity. When we acknowledge *HaShem* as king, we ask Him to "instill Your awe ... on all that You have created ... Let [all creatures] become a single society to do Your will wholeheartedly" (translation from Artscroll *Machzor*). After each set of *shofar* sounds in the *musaf* repetition, we say "*ha-yom harat olam; ha-yom ya'amid ba-mishpat kol yetzurei olamim* - today the world was conceived; today all created beings stand in judgment." Even if only the Jewish people are actually *davening*, we are praying for the world at large.

Ten days after *Rosh HaShanah*, we again encounter the duality of the universal and the particular on *Yom Kippur*. On one hand, *Yom Kippur* is a special day in Jewish history. It marks *HaShem*'s forgiving of the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, the day of Moshe's return from *Har Sinai* with the second tablets. The ancient national forgiveness on *Yom Kippur* engenders God's forgiveness of us personally as well. On *Yom Kippur* we face *HaShem* alone, with our unique collection of weaknesses and strengths, and beg for forgiveness and mercy. *Yom Kippur* is thus a uniquely personal day.

On the other hand, the *maftir* *Yonah*, which we read at *Minchah* on *Yom Kippur*, reveals the universal theme of *Yom Kippur*. *Sefer Yonah* depicts *HaShem*'s concern for the population of Nineveh, the capital of Ashur, which was the contemporary world power. *Yonah* 3:9-10 describes the *teshuvah* of the people of Nineveh and *HaShem*'s forgiveness of their transgres-

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sions in language that is strikingly similar to the description of *HaShem's* forgiveness of *Bnei Yisrael* for the Golden Calf (*Shemot* 32:12, 14). Yet it is *Yonah*, where *HaShem* extends His forgiveness to non-Jews, that we read on *Yom Kippur*, and not the story of *HaShem's* forgiveness of *Bnei Yisrael*. In addition, the non-Jewish city of Nineveh serves as the paradigm of *teshuvah*. The *Mishnah* (*Ta'anit* 2:1), describes the procedure a city would follow in declaring a fast and a period of repentance. They would take the Holy Ark into the street, place ashes on the heads of the leaders of the town, and the oldest among them would read *Yonah* 3:10 as a reminder of the proper way to do *teshuvah*.

The third *Tishrei* holiday follows the "dual nature" pattern as well. One way to understand *Sukkot* is as a specifically Jewish national holiday. According to *Vayikra* 23:43, *Sukkot* commemorates *HaShem's* protection of the Jewish people after *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*; the *sukkot* mentioned in the *pasuk* are either actual *sukkot* or the miraculous clouds (*anelei ha-kavod*) that *HaShem* provided in the desert. *Sukkot* also has a specifically Jewish national *mitzvah* – *aliyah le-regel* (ascent to *Yerushalayim* to celebrate the holiday). In *Devarim* chapter 16, which describes the three *regalim*, the words "*ha-makom asher yivchar HaShem* – the place that God has chosen," emphasizing the special relationship between God and the Jewish people, is a major motif.

The universal ideas of *Sukkot*, on the other hand, are in the *korbanot* and in the *haftarah*. *Sukkot* has a unique order of *korbanot*: 13 bulls on the first day, 12 on the second, 11 on the third, and so on for a total of 70 over the seven days of the holiday. According to the *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 55b), the 70 *korbanot* represent the 70 nations, for whom the Jewish people are meant to atone on *Sukkot* in order that the whole world be blessed with rain. The *haftarah* for the first day of *Sukkot* is from *Zechariah* chapter 14, which we read because *pasuk* 16 mentions coming up to *Yerushalayim* to celebrate *Sukkot*. But in *Zechariah's* messianic prediction, it is not *Bnei Yisrael* who are to come on *aliyah le-regel*, but the nations of the world, who will ultimately unite in recognition of *HaShem*. Thus the *korbanot* on *Sukkot* (and the *musaf* prayers that we recite in their stead) show that we are concerned with the physical welfare of the nations of the world, and the *haftarah* shows that we are also concerned with their ultimate spiritual welfare.

British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in the *Parashat Emor* essay in *Covenant and Conversation*, writes that the only one of the *shalosh regalim* (pilgrimage festivals) for which the Torah commands *simchah* twice is *Sukkot*: "Rejoice in your holiday: you, your son, your daughter, your servants, and the Levi, the convert and the widow in your gates. For seven days observe the holiday in the place *HaShem* will choose...and you shall be altogether joyful" (*Devarim* 16:14-15). The double joy, says Rabbi Sacks, corresponds to the dual aspect of the holiday: the particular and universal. On the one hand we celebrate *HaShem* as Redeemer, and remember His particular, unique intervention

in Jewish history by taking us out of Egypt and protecting us in the desert for forty years. On the other hand, we celebrate *HaShem* as Creator, who endows every person, regardless of religion or nationality, with a *tzelem E-lokim* (*Bereshit* 1:27).

My husband was once walking to *shul* on *Rosh HaShanah* and encountered a group of public school children playing ball. "Thanks, man," they told him – appreciating a day off from school (so the many Jewish teachers in the New York City school system could observe *Rosh HaShanah*). They were not exactly thanking my husband for praying on their behalf (even though he was), but they did form a momentary connection with him because of the holiday. If we take the universal aspects of the *Yamim Nora'im* and *Sukkot* to heart, we will not only spend time connecting with *HaShem*, but with fellow members of the world community as well. We will make sure to say *berachot* on our food, and we will be concerned that our food is produced in environmentally sustainable ways. We will buy clothing that conforms to the laws of *tzni'ut*, and we will make sure that the workers who produce our clothing in other countries are not exploited. We will take care not to speak *lashon ha-ra*, and we will ensure that the speeches and policies of our political leadership contribute to a strong state and country. We will take responsibility for our individual growth and for the world's development as well. We will echo, in our human way, *HaShem's* concern for the Jewish nation and the Torah, as well as for humanity at large.

#### All in the Name

Talia Friedman (10)  
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Names are very important and central to identifying any object. The many names of *Rosh HaShanah* are no different. The Torah refers to *Rosh HaShanah* as "*Yom Teru'ah*" and "*Zichron Teru'ah*," *Chazal* refer to *Rosh HaShanah* as "*Yom HaDin*," and we refer to *Rosh HaShanah* as simply *Rosh HaShanah*. Why the disparity? Why does the holiday have so many names and what does each name connote and teach?

R. Amnon Bazak explains the origin and importance of each name. The biblical names are the simplest names to understand since the Torah mentions them straight out in that form. *Vayikra* 23:24 reads "*Ba-chodesh ha-shevi'i be-echad la-chodesh yihyeh lachem shabbaton zichron teru'ah mikra kodesh* – In the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall have a restful day of remembrances with *shofar* blasts, a holy convocation." *Yom Teru'ah* is similarly explicitly mentioned and simple to understand; *Rosh HaShanah* is a day of recalling the past year and a day when the *shofar* is blown. But where does the name *Yom HaDin* come from?

Originally, when *Bnei Yisrael* had the *Mishkan* and then the *Beit HaMikdash*, *HaShem* judged all of *Bnei Yisrael* together. All of *Bnei Yisrael* was united by the central *Mishkan* that stood as a liaison between the *Shechinah* and the individual people. After the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, as R. Bazak quotes

Rav Kook to explain, each individual stands alone in judgment without the *Mishkan* mediating. Without a central nationhood and central place for the *Shechinah* to manifest, each individual holds his own part of the *Shechinah* and stands alone before the King. Once an individual is standing alone before God, the day becomes more intimidating and there is more focus on the process of being judged. *Chazal*, many of whom lived through the destruction of the second *Beit HaMikdash*, added the name *Yom HaDin* to reflect the change in focus from listening to the *shofar* to standing in judgment.

The third name given to this holiday, *Rosh HaShanah*, is slightly more difficult to explain. According to *Shemot* 12:1, *Nisan* is considered the first month of the year, so *Tishrei* is the seventh month of the year. While the world was created during *Tishrei*, *HaShem* did not reveal his sovereignty to *Bnei Yisrael* until *Nisan*. The Torah repeatedly refers to *Nisan* as the first month of the year since that is when *HaShem* redeemed *Bnei Yisrael* from Egypt. Technically, therefore, *Rosh Hashanah* should be the first day of *Nisan*.

As mentioned above, however, once the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed, *Bnei Yisrael* lost a lot of their national identity. They were no longer unified and capable of collectively pointing to a historical national event. Once *Bnei Yisrael* were dispersed among other nations, they started pointing to another day as the beginning of the year, the birthday of all mankind and not just of *Bnei Yisrael*. *Tishrei* is the *Rosh Hashanah* of every nation, since every nation originated on this day and everyone is judged in *Tishrei*.

Despite the universal appeal of a *Tishrei* New Year, we pray for the time when we will be able to call *Nisan* our *Rosh HaShanah*. Calling *Rosh Chodesh Tishrei* the *Rosh HaShanah* is a sign of our exile and dispersion. We await the year when *Bnei Yisrael* will be redeemed and unified so that we will no longer have to consider the birthday of all mankind as *Rosh HaShanah*, but rather will be able to recognize the national *ge'ulah* as *Rosh HaShanah*. May this *Nisan* be the *Nisan*, and this year be the year! *Le-shanah tovah tichateivu ve-techateimu*.

### A Wrinkle in Jewish Time Chaya Kanarfogel (711)

The upcoming Jewish year of 5771 is interesting in that it is a Jewish leap year. Very few people are aware of the many aspects of the Jewish calendar, especially why and when leap years occur. Understanding how we are able to elongate the year will help us comprehend how all *chagim* are set, and how Judaism views the way man should celebrate these *chagim*.

Most religious calendars follow either the solar (Christianity) or lunar (Islam) cycles. The Jewish calendar is unique in that it combines both the solar and lunar calendars into its year. Since

there is an eleven-day discrepancy between the two cycles, a month is added to the Jewish calendar every two to three years. The only month that can be added is the month subsequent to *Chodesh Adar*, and is commonly referred to as *Adar Bet*. The extra month is added at that time as opposed to other times in the year in order to ensure that *Pesach* is in the springtime, or *aviv*. This is the reason that most *rishonim* cite to explain why the year has to be elongated.

However, the source of *ibbur ha-shanah* (elongating the year), which can be found in *Gemara Sanhedrin* 11b, actually includes an additional reason. The *Gemara* says that a month can also be added to the year in order to ensure that the fruits will be ripe. Rashi explains that the concern is that the fruit will not be ripe in time for *Shavuot*, when *bikkurim* are brought to the *Beit HaMikdash*. Rambam adds in *Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh* that there are other factors that may influence the amount of months in the calendar, including the amount or size of animals in stock for *korbanot*.

These details all explain how the extra month is added to the year and under what circumstances it is applied. The question that remains is the fundamental one: why? Why are we able to add an entire month into the Jewish year? Of course, the *Gemara* tells us the technical reasoning behind the action. But why did the *Gemara* think that we could add time to the year that *HaShem* has set for us in the first place?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that *kedushat ha-yom* for a *yom tov* is created in two ways. The first is by making *issurim*, or prohibitions for that day. This separates the holiday from the weekday. The second way of making a day *kadosh* is simply when man feels the holiness of the day. If we did not treat them with respect and *kedushah*, says the Rav, then the *chagim* have inherently stopped being holy.

The Rambam explains that we are commanded to elongate the year as part of the *mitzvah* of *kiddush ha-chodesh*. It seems that according to the Rav, the Rambam's reasoning is that we were commanded to take charge of time by making each new month and new year holy. Although we are given some guidelines from *HaShem* as to when certain *chagim* should be, the year and its details are ours for the taking, because it is we who give our *chagim* holiness.

This idea also solves the query on the *Gemara* presented earlier. The *Rabbanim* felt it was necessary to include multiple reasons for adding a month in order to ensure that we would feel comfortable celebrating the *chagim*. Without *korbanot*, *Pesach* would not feel like a *chag*. In addition, *bikkurim* are crucial to making *Shavuot* special for us. It is these things that help us create *kedushat ha-yom*, and without our feeling like an *am kadosh*, the religious significance of the day is lost.

**Sukkot: Clouds or Booths?**

Michelle Zivari ('11)

The reason given in the Torah for the *mitzvah* of building a *sukkah* is found in *Sefer Vayikra*. The *pasuk* states: "So that your generation will know that in *sukkot* I housed *Bnei Yisrael* when I took them out of Egypt" (*Vayikra* 23:43). There is a *machloket* in the *Gemara* about what these *sukkot* really were. Rabbi Akiva believes that the *pasuk* is referring to actual *sukkot* that *Bnei Yisrael* dwelled in when they were living in the desert. Rabbi Eliezer says that the *sukkot* refer to the "Clouds of Glory" that *HaShem* gave *Bnei Yisrael* for protection (*Sukkah* 11b). What is the essence of this *machloket*? According to Rabbi Akiva, the *sukkot* that we build are meant to recreate a time when *Bnei Yisrael* had full faith in *HaShem*. According to Rabbi Eliezer, our *sukkot* commemorate a generous gift bestowed upon us by *HaShem*. It is possible that not only one or the other opinion holds true, but rather that both are acceptable. The theme of faith and the theme of divine gifts are both prominent in the festival of *Sukkot*.

Faith in *HaShem* is a huge part of *Sukkot*. *HaShem* says in *Sefer Yirmiyahu*, "I remember the kindness of your youth as you followed Me in an unsown desert" (2:2). *HaShem* greatly appreciated the display of blind faith by *Bnei Yisrael*. Perhaps that is why the holiday of *Sukkot* is celebrated right after *Yom Kippur*. *Sukkot* could have been celebrated any time, so why did *HaShem* place it right after *Yom Kippur*? It could be that, after the time of judgment, *HaShem* wants to remember *Bnei Yisrael's* greatness and why they are His beloved nation. There is a very interesting *Gemara* about *Sukkot*, which says that the other nations came to *HaShem* and said, "Offer us the Torah anew and we will accept it." *HaShem* answered, "You foolish people. He who prepares on *Shabbat* can eat on *Shabbat*, but he who made no preparations, what can he eat? Nevertheless, I have an easy commandment called *sukkah*, go and fulfill it." The non-Jews built their *sukkot*, but *HaShem* caused the sun to be very warm. Each non-Jew kicked his/her *sukkah* and left (*Avodah Zarah* 3a). The non-Jews could not sit in the *sukkah* because they did not have the same faith in *HaShem* as the Jews did. *Bnei Yisrael* followed *HaShem* into the desert, not knowing where they were going to sleep or eat, but just trusting that *HaShem* would take care of them.

Faith in *HaShem* and the idea of *HaShem* protecting us play well off each other. We need to have faith in *HaShem* that He will protect us, and consequently, *HaShem* will reward that faith by providing for us. We sit in the *sukkah* during harvest season. The Rashbam says the reason we commemorate the *sukkot* of the *midbar* is to remind us that everything we get comes from *HaShem*, including everything that is harvested. A

person should not think the food we acquire comes because of his/her own *koach* (Rashbam, *Vayikra* 23:43). We need to have faith that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will help us with our *parnasah* and with everything else in our lives. If we have that faith, *im yirtzeh HaShem* He will provide for us like He did in the desert.

**The Happiness of Sukkot**

Deena Fuchs ('13)

*Sukkot*, one of the *shalosh regalim*, is specifically called the "time of our happiness, *zeman simchateinu*." Another one of the *shalosh regalim*, *Pesach*, is also a very happy time because it celebrates the time that *Bnei Yisrael* were released from Egypt. However, *Pesach* is labeled as "*zeman cheiruteinu*," "the time of our freedom," not the time of our happiness. *Shavuot*, the last of the *shalosh regalim* and another happy holiday, is labeled as "*zeman matan Torateinu*," referring to the celebration of the day on which we received the Torah and is also not called "the time of happiness." Why is it that *Sukkot* is the only one of the *shalosh regalim* labeled specifically for its happiness? What do we do on this holiday that makes it the only one singled out for happiness?



The Vilna Gaon brings in another question to help answer this one. He asks: if we are living in *sukkot* to represent the *ananei ha-kavod* that once surrounded *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert in Egypt, in *Nissan*, why is it that we commemorate the clouds and build *sukkot* in *Tishrei*? The Vilna Gaon answers his question by saying that once *Bnei Yisrael* sinned by doing the *egel ha-zahav* (Golden Calf), the clouds were removed. *HaShem* told *Bnei Yisrael* that He would not bring the clouds back until Moshe was done *davening* for *teshuvah* and *Bnei Yisrael* were done building the *Mishkan*. Although Moshe had achieved forgiveness for *Bnei Yisrael's* sin on *Yom Kippur*, *Bnei Yisrael* did not finish building the *mishkan* until the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei*. This, suggests the Vilna Gaon, is the reason for our happiness on *Sukkot*. We are happy for the return of the *ananei ha-kavod* to *Bnei Yisrael* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei* and so we celebrate *Sukkot* accordingly.

Rabbi Label Lam offers another answer to this question and a *mashal* from a children's book titled *The Happiness Box* (by Bracha Goetz). In the story, there is a little child who moves with his family into a brand new house. Every day the deliveryman would come and bring another moving box. As the child marveled at what it could be inside, it would always end up being an appliance or something else from his old house. Seeing the child upset and distraught, the father would keep telling his child that the boxes were happiness boxes and when one goes inside of it, they have to think happy thoughts. The child would go inside every so often and eventually became a happier kid with more positive thoughts that stemmed from the happiness box.

Rabbi Lam explains that we too have a happiness box, our *sukkah*. While inside the *sukkah*, we must do as commanded of us, be joyous and happy and say words of *Torah*. If we do these things, our *sukkah* will too become a happiness box. The Vilna Gaon states that the *mitzvah* of *Sukkot* is the hardest *mitzvah* to fulfill mainly because of the hardships brought about by building, sitting, eating, and sleeping in the *sukkah*. Therefore, if we treat our *sukkah* like a happiness box, eventually our *sukkah* will turn into a positive and happy place to be.

*Sukkot* is the only holiday called “*zeman simchateinu*” because we are commanded to be happy. If we fulfill the commandment, then our attitudes towards *Sukkot* will evidently become more positive despite all of the challenging commandments attached to the holiday. Only then can we create the happiness of *Sukkot* for ourselves and fulfill “*zeman simchateinu*” to the fullest.

Articles used in composing this *devar Torah* can be found at the [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org).

### Forgiveness: Past and Present

Jennifer Lebowitz (’11)

When thinking of a certain *chag*, we are reminded of the festival’s activities. Thinking of *Shavuot*, we are reminded of learning with friends and classmates. *Pesach* gives us the memorable image of sitting around our *sefer* table, relating the miraculous story of *Yetzi’at Mitzrayim*. Upon thinking of the fear-filled *Yamim Nora’im*, we picture ourselves in *shul*, trembling as we reflect on the past and beg *HaShem* for forgiveness. There is a recurring paragraph said in the days leading up to *Yom Kippur*, and numerous times throughout the day: the Thirteen Attributes of *HaShem*: “*HaShem, HaShem, Kel Rachum ve-Chanun, Erech Apayim ve-Rav Chesed ve-Emet, Notzer Chesed la-Alafim, Nosei Avon ve-Pesha ve-Chatah ve-Nakeh.*”

After Moshe’s infamous breaking the tablets in reaction to the sin of the Golden Calf, *HaShem* instructs him to carve two new tablets as a sign of forgiveness. Moshe does so and then *HaShem* reveals His Thirteen Attributes, commonly known as the *Yud-Gimmel Middot*. Reciting these Thirteen Attributes of *HaShem* will always “invoke His mercy” (Artscroll commentary to the *Chumash*, 508).

These Attributes appear once again after the notorious sin of the spies, *Chet HaMeraglim*, in *Sefer Bamidbar*. However, if we look closely at the text, we will notice that in his prayer to *HaShem*, Moshe interestingly mentions only 6 out of the 13 attributes. He says “*HaShem, Erech Apayim, ve-Rav Chesed, Nosei Avon va-Pesha, ve-Nakeh* (14:18). Moshe omits certain traits of *HaShem* because he knows that, due to the immoral behavior of the spies, *Bnei Yisrael* were undeserving of the remaining Attributes. In addition, in his prayer for forgiveness Moshe omits a mention of the *brit* that *HaShem* made with

Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. He knows that because *Bnei Yisrael* were not keeping their side of the covenant, *HaShem* should not have to do so either. Moshe is prudent with his choice of words used to beg *HaShem* on behalf of *Bnei Yisrael*, and *HaShem* responds in *pasuk* 20, “*salachti ke-divarecha - I have forgiven as you have said.*”

On *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*, *HaShem* gives us the designated opportunity to gather together all of our thoughts and speak and pray to the Creator. *HaShem* instructs us to reflect on the past year, on the events that were thrown at us, the gifts that were handed to us, and more importantly, how we dealt with each situation and opportunity.

On *Rosh HaShanah*, we sit, we stand, and we walk. We look back, we reflect, and we notice. We notice the things in which we improved throughout the year, and we notice the things with which we struggled. On *Yom Kippur*, and during *selichot* leading up to the most serious day of the Jewish calendar, *HaShem* delivers us the much needed opportunity to recite His Thirteen Attributes countless times. We cry to *HaShem* and we cry to ourselves as we remind ourselves of the sins which we performed inadvertently, and sadly, the ones which we willfully performed. We plead to *HaShem* “*ke-rachem av al banim, ken terachem HaShem aleinu*” that just as a father had mercy on His children, so too *HaShem* should have mercy on us. If we look closely at our *machzorim*, we will notice that at the times during the *Yom Kippur* service when we mention this shuddering line, we also recite the quote from *Bamidbar* 14:20, “*va-yomer HaShem, salachti kedivarecha.*” Since *HaShem* has pity on us like a father has pity on his children, He forgives us according to our pleas.

It is also interesting to note that these lines are said together as a congregation, perhaps because the idea of “*kol Yisrael areyvim zeh la-zeh*” is especially relevant in this case. We are each responsible for each other, and during a fearful time, we come together as one community, one nation, and beg *HaShem* to have mercy on us, His children. May we each be *zocheh* to have meaningful and inspiring *tefillot* during the *Yamim Nora’im* and for the year to come.

### What Kind of Promise is That?!

Rachel Mendelson (’11)

In *Devarim* 16:15, it is written concerning *Sukkot*: “for *HaShem*, your G-d, will bless you, with all your produce and all your work...” The *pasuk* concludes with the imperative “you will be only happy, *ve-hayita ach sameach.*”

The question is, what does this phrase mean exactly? On the surface, it seems that it is more of a commandment, telling us to feel happiness on *Sukkot*. On the other hand, perhaps this *pasuk* is, in a sense, a prediction. If we keep the *halachot* regarding *Sukkot*, then happiness is sure to follow.

Rashi says that this phrase is interpreted “and you will be happy” and not “and you shall be happy.” How does Rashi know that this is a promise and not a commandment? He comes to this conclusion based on the phraseology of the *pasuk*. Whenever the word “*ve-hayita*” is written in the Torah it is in the context of a promise.

For example, *HaShem* promises Avraham (*Bereishit* 17:4):

“And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.”

And *HaShem* says to Yaakov (*Bereishit* 28:3):

“And you will be a community of peoples.”

Additionally, when *HaShem* describes the punishments that the people who do not follow the *Torah* will get, He says (*Devarim* 28:37):

“And you will be an astonishment, a proverb and a byword...”

We see from the examples above that *HaShem* is making a promise. If we fulfill the *halachot* of *Sukkot*, then we are granted happiness on the *chag*. However, this still leaves us with a question. In the same *pasuk* of this promise of happiness, the *Torah* commands “*ve-samachta be-chagecha* - you shall be happy in [the celebration of] your holiday.” This means that part of keeping the *halachot* of *Sukkot* includes being happy and rejoicing in the *chag*. What kind of promise of happiness is *HaShem* giving us on *Sukkot*, when we are already commanded to be happy then?

I would like to suggest that this promise of happiness is not a one-sided gift, but more of an exchange between *HaShem* and us. If we can be happy during the *chag* just for the sake of rejoicing in the fulfillment of His *mitzvot*, then He will return the favor by giving us even more reason for joy. By creating happiness within ourselves in honor of *Sukkot*, we are given more happiness.

### Examining the Process of *Teshuvah*

Yifa't Adler ('11)

As the *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* holidays draw near, we reflect on our deeds and behavior of the past year. The New Year is here, and though it is a celebration, it is also a solemn time, since we are all being judged before *HaShem*. Looking back, we remember some of our moments during the year that we are less proud of, as well as the moments when we showed exceptionally good *middot*. No one is perfect and we all have character traits that we need to improve for ourselves. Although we have transgressed, *HaShem* provides a way for us to start anew and repent for our sins. A New Year is a way to start fresh and ask anyone we may have hurt for forgiveness. During *davening* on *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we say “*u-teshuvah u-tefillah u-tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'a ha-gezerah.*”

By performing the *mitzvot* of *tefillah* and *tzedakah*, and by doing *teshuvah*, we can atone for our sins.

You may ask, how does one do *teshuvah*? In *Hilchot Teshuvah*, the Rambam writes that a person can achieve *teshuvah gemurah* with the following steps. The person has to be able to conquer the desire to repeat his original sin if he has the opportunity to commit the sin again. The person must regret committing the sin and feel in his heart that he does not want to commit the sin again. Most importantly, the person must confess his sin aloud admit specifically which sin he has committed. The Rambam notes that if the person performs all of the steps but does not verbalize his sin, then all else was useless. Based on this statement, we can conclude that the Rambam held that verbal confession is an integral, if not the most important, part of *teshuvah*.

We can see an example of the importance of confession in the actions of two famous characters in the *Tanach*, Yehudah and David *HaMelech*. In the story of Yehudah and Tamar (*Bereshit* 38), Yehudah demonstrates a true act of *teshuvah*. Er, Yehudah's first son, married Tamar. Before they had any children, Er died. Following the laws of *yibum*, Tamar married Yehudah's second son, Onan. Onan also died without having a child. Yehudah was hesitant to allow his third and youngest son Shelah marry Tamar, so he told Tamar to wait until Shelah had grown up. Tamar returned to her father's house. Three months later, during a trip to shear his sheep, Yehudah unknowingly slept with Tamar, whom he thought was a *zonah*. He gave the *zonah* his staff, signet and wrap as a guarantee of payment. Three months later Yehudah found out that Tamar was pregnant. He immediately ordered that she be burned for her sin. As she was taken out to be burned she said, “Whose staff, signet and wrap are these?” Yehudah recognized his possessions and said, “*tzadkah mimeni, ki al ken lo netatiha le-Shelah beni* – She is more righteous than I, because I didn't give her to Shelah my son.” Immediately after realizing his sin, Yehudah verbally acknowledged his sin, and therefore he was not punished. *HaShem* saw Yehudah's great act of *teshuvah* and forgave him for his sin.

David *HaMelech*, descendant of Yehudah, committed a similar sin. His repentance for the sin with Bat-Sheva, described in *Shmuel* II chapters 11 and 12, is also an example of *teshuvah gemurah* accompanied by a verbal confession. David *HaMelech* saw a beautiful woman, Bat-Sheva, but she was married. He wanted to marry Bat-Sheva so he sent her husband, Uriah, to the front line of the army and as a result Uriah was killed. Then Natan *HaNavi* came to David *HaMelech* and told him a *mashal* about two men, one rich and one poor. The poor man had one sheep that he took really good care of. One day a visitor came to the rich man. The rich man was reluctant to give the visitor one of his own sheep, so he took the poor man's only one. David *HaMelech* said that the rich man should be killed for his act of selfishness. Natan *HaNavi* told David that David was like the rich man because he stole Uriah's wife. Immediately after

realizing his sin, David said “*chatati la-Shem.*” After David’s confession, Natan tells David that *HaShem* has forgiven him for his sin. This story shows, again, that once we recognize and verbalize our sin, *HaShem* will forgive us.

Just as Yehudah and David *HaMelech* verbally acknowledged their sins and were forgiven, all of us should do the same as part of our process of *teshuvah*. We must feel the regret for our sins and confess our mistakes through speech. Putting our sins into words will force us to confront our wrongdoings, and then we will have the power within ourselves to make the necessary changes to correct our actions for the future.

May we all be *zocheh* to have a meaningful and spiritually uplifting *chag*. *Chag kasher ve-sameach* and *shanah tovah!*

### The Task of *Teshuvah* Shira Kaye (’11)

*Yom Kippur* is the chance of a lifetime – the one day a year when the *yetzer ha-ra* is out of the way and our opportunity for *teshuvah* is guaranteed. In R. Yosaif Asher Weiss’s *A Daily Dose of Torah: The Festivals and Days of Awe*, he says that the *gematria* of “*Satan*” is 364. This alludes to the fact that almost every day of the year we are swayed by the *Satan* to listen to our *yetzer ha-ra*. There is one day, however, when the *Satan* is forbidden to do his mission, and *Bnei Yisrael* are compared to “heavenly angels.” If we just think about it for one moment, this is an amazing insight. We have one day a year, *Yom Kippur*, when we are purified and seen as angels in the eyes of God. How can we not take this opportunity to repent as best as we can, to do a full-hearted *teshuvah*?

Though this chance is enough for anyone to want to repent fully before *HaShem*, changing is not as easy as it seems. We need to create the proper will and atmosphere for *teshuvah*. *The Book of Our Heritage: The Jewish Year and Its Days of Significance*, by Eliyahu Kitov, mentions a reason why the confessions on *Yom Kippur* are said ten times. The confessions are only effective if one has first decided to abandon *averot*. If one has not yet decided that, then reciting the *vidduy* is comparable to dipping in a *mikveh* while holding an impure object. *Vidduy* is therefore said numerous times in order to give us a chance to make the conscious decision to end sin, one of the first steps of the *teshuvah* process.

R. Eliyahu Kitov also cites a story which I think can help us repent completely and return to *HaShem*. There was once a man who sinned over and over again, in every kind of way. He began to feel remorseful, and asked a *tzaddik* how he could repent. The *tzaddik* told him that he must listen to everything he tells him to do, and the man immediately assented. He then told the man to go home and do whatever his heart desires, but on one condition: if somebody asks him “what have you done,”

he must tell the truth. The man returned home and whenever he desired to steal something, or do any other sin, he realized if somebody would ask him have you done such and such, he would have to tell the truth. Even the one time he did give in to his *yetzer ha-ra*, he immediately confessed and that prevented him from sinning in the future.

This message can apply to all of us. If we just realize that *HaShem* is the one to whom we have to tell the truth on *Yom Kippur*, then having the future intention to not sin is made easier. Furthermore, overcoming our *yetzer ha-ra* is made simpler. *HaShem* is all around us, and within each and every one of us. He is the one who gives us a working heartbeat, a loving family, a house to sleep in, food on our tables. We would not have any of those things if it were not for the Almighty. If we think about how powerful and giving He is, then on *Yom Kippur*, our desire and decision to always do the right thing will be a no-brainer. If somebody saved our lives, we would be eternally grateful to that person and do everything possible for him. *HaShem* goes even further than that; He gives us the gift of life. Whenever we find ourselves about to repeat that new piece of gossip to a friend, or too lazy to wake up in the morning to say the full *shacharit*, we must remember that *HaShem* is right there watching us, and knows the truth of everything we do. If we have these thoughts in mind, *iy”H*, He will fully forgive all of us, and we will be able carry the special opportunity of *Yom Kippur* throughout the rest of the year.

### The Thirteen Attributes: Magic Formula or Something More?

Shira Hanau (’13)

In the *Gemara* in *Rosh HaShanah* 17b, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that when the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, *HaShem* said to Moshe, “Any time Israel sins, perform this prayer procedure of the Thirteen Attributes of *HaShem*, and I will forgive them.” This makes *teshuvah* seem like a relatively simple process, which it clearly is not. Hundreds of books are dedicated to the subject, as is prayer in the entire month of *Elul*. If this prayer formula is not meant to be a magic spell that grants us forgiveness, then recital of the Thirteen Attributes of *HaShem* must then cause some change that enables *Bnei Yisrael* to receive forgiveness.

What exactly is this change? At first glance, the answer appears to be that when we internalize these attributes and emulate them, we become worthy of *HaShem*’s forgiveness. The *Gemara* does say to *perform* rather than merely *recite* the formula. This would mean that the Thirteen Attributes are a way of acting, rather than just paying lip service to *HaShem*. Perhaps the daily recitation of *selichot*, of which the Thirteen Attributes are the central feature, for two weeks before *Yom Kippur* reinforces these characteristics enough that by the time our last chance at forgiveness comes around on *Yom Kippur*, we are finally worthy of it.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin provides a deeper insight into this idea. In the first chapter of his book, *A Code of Jewish Ethics, Volume 1*, he tells the following anecdote. His friend, a teacher, would ask parents if it would mean more to them if their children said to them, "I love you," or if they said the same to their siblings. The majority would say the latter. Similarly, Rabbi Telushkin says, *HaShem*, the Father of all humankind, would prefer to see His children loving one another, rather than just loving Him.

Therefore, when we recite the Thirteen Attributes of *HaShem*, we begin to behave differently towards one another, in a way similar to how *HaShem* acts towards us. The *Gemara* says that if we are patient with others, then *HaShem* will be patient with us. Just as parents must behave towards others in the way they wish for their children to behave, how can we expect *HaShem* to judge us with mercy if we do not act in that way with our fellow human beings? When we treat our neighbors with love, compassion, and mercy, *HaShem* will be more receptive to our prayers.

Sources: *The Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy*, by R. Ezra Bick; *A Code of Jewish Ethics, Volume 1*, by R. Joseph Telushkin; *Slichot and the 13 Attributes*, by R. Yitzchak Berkovits.



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