

מעני תורה

תשרי

Tefillat Chanah: A Reflection of Rosh HaShanah

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At first reading, the beginning of *Shmuel Alef* creates a strong sense of continuity with the narratives and patterns of the *sefarim* that precede it in *Tanach*. Chanah's story reminds us of the *nashim akarot* in *Chumash*, and there are a number of linguistic parallels to the end of *Sefer Shoftim*. Specifically, *Sefer Shmuel's* opening, "Va-yehi ish me-Har Efrayim," is similar to phraseology that appears in the stories of *pesel Michah* and *pilegsh be-Giv'ah*. The *sefer* even begins with a *vav ha-chibbur*, which, as Abarbanel explains, explicitly connects *Sefer Shmuel* to *Sefer Shoftim*.

A deeper reading, however, reveals that the story of Chanah represents a fundamental turning point, on two separate levels. On the national level, while the story is initially presented as a continuation of the anarchic narrative of *Sefer Shoftim*, it ultimately describes the transformation to monarchy and a period of national stability. On the personal plane, though Chanah appears to have much in common with the *Imahot* who were childless, there are differences in her experience and approach that have profound implications for our conceptions of *tefillah* and *avodat HaShem*.

The fundamental difference between Chanah's experience and that of the *Imahot* is that Chanah's infertility did not have national implications, whereas the *Avot* had been promised by *HaShem* that they would ultimately have children who would form the beginnings of *Am Yisrael*. While this divine promise did not necessarily include the *Imahot*, it did guarantee that the families of the *Avot* would ultimately be blessed with descendants. Rabbi Shalom Carmy has referred to the prayer of the *Avot* in this regard as "tefillat ha-ye'ud" (prayer of destiny), because its role is to bring *HaShem's* promise from potential to reality (see *Bein Bakashat Ha-Avot le-Bakashat Chanah* in *Rinat Yitzchak* 5749).

Chanah, by contrast, was not the beneficiary of any divine promise. *Chazal* make this point vivid by means of a *mashal*: "Rabbi Elazar said, 'From the day that *HaShem* created the world, there was no one who called *HaShem* by the name "Tzevakot" until Chanah came and called Him by that name. Chanah said to *HaShem*: Master of the world, of all of the legions of hosts (*tziv'ei tzeva'ot*) that You have created in Your world, is it difficult in Your eyes to give me one son? It is a parable to a human king who made a feast for his servants. A poor person came and stood at the door, and said to them: Give me one slice of bread! And they didn't pay attention to him. He pushed in and entered before the king. He said to him: My master the king, of the whole feast that you made, is it difficult in your eyes to give me one slice of



bread?" (Berachot 31b). This *midrash* makes it clear that Chanah, like the beggar in the story and unlike the *Avot*, is owed nothing.

In addition to drawing a contrast between Chanah and the *Imahot*, the *midrash* also brings into focus the complex internal aspects of Chanah's story. First, it underscores her loneliness: Chanah walks through her life feeling like a beggar who has not been invited to the feast. Presumably, the servants in the *midrash*, who rebuff her entry, represent the people in her life, including Elkanah and Peninah, who do not give her comfort when she turns to them. Chanah's silence in prayer is another manifestation of her loneliness and her feeling that she can rely only on herself, rather than turning to other people for support and intercession.

However, Chanah's loneliness and silence contain a paradox; because her silent prayer is innovative, it is considered brazen by Eli. This brazenness is also reflected in the *midrash*, as the beggar in the *mashal* acts with outrageous *chutzpah* by pushing his way into the palace. In fact, many of the *midrashim* that describe Chanah cast her in an assertive, even confrontational light. They describe her as threatening *HaShem* that she will goad Elkanah into accusing her of being a *sotah* so as to be guaranteed the blessing of children that is granted to an innocent *sotah*; as "hitichah devarim klapei Ma'alah," throwing her words at *HaShem*; as accusing *HaShem* of not rewarding her properly for her observance of *halachah* (see *Berachot* 31b). There are also a number of indications in *peshat* that Chanah's response to her childlessness was not merely submissive. For example, the *pesukim* initially say about Chanah, "va-titpalel al HaShem," a usage which implies confrontation. The phraseology changes as Chanah gets what she wants; in 1:12 the *pasuk* says "le-hitpalel

lifnei HaShem" and in 1:26 it says "*le-hitpalel el HaShem.*" Furthermore, the fact that Chanah describes herself as speaking from torment and sorrow implies that she spoke with emotion, rather than in a measured tone. (For further discussion, see R. Avraham Walfish's article "*Chanah: Tefillat Tar'omet ve-Anavah*" in *Megadim* 20.)

Nonetheless, while *Chazal* interpret Chanah's behavior as assertive to the point of confrontation, there is no note of censure in their words; on the contrary, Chanah is presented as the paradigm of prayer. Presumably, Chanah's total belief in *HaShem's* ability to give her a son, and her dedication of her son to *HaShem*, make it clear that her intentions are holy and that her religious behavior is a model of faith.

The paradox of Chanah's *tefillah*, which brings together loneliness, humility and assertiveness, is symbolic of a paradox that is inherent within *Rosh HaShanah* as a *yom tov*. *Rosh HaShanah* is described in *Tehillim* 81:4 as "*ba-keseh*," which the *Gemara* interprets as related to the verb "*le-chasot*," referring to the fact that the moon is "covered" at the beginning of the month. Based on this characterization of the *yom tov*, Chasidic thought explores the connection of *Rosh HaShanah* to the quality of hiddenness and mystery. For example, the *Sefat Emet* explains that other holidays are related to the *mitzvah* of *re'iyah* (appearing in the *Beit HaMikdash*) and embody a sense of revelation and joy, but *Rosh HaShanah* is covered, cloaked and solemn. Its central *mitzvah* of *shofar* relies not on sight but on hearing, which is internal and hidden rather than obvious and visible. As Chanah's prayer represents solitude, loneliness, and inwardness, *Rosh HaShanah* is a holiday of mystery and of internal, solitary *avodat HaShem*.

At the same time, the *Yamim Nora'im* require an underlying belief in man's potential majesty and his ability to change his destiny through *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*. *Tefillat Chanah*, weaving together manifestations of submissiveness and power, represents the conflicting emotions of the *avodah* of *Rosh HaShanah*. May our *tefillot* this *Rosh HaShanah* be inspired by the dialectical feelings of surrender and of majesty that coexist in *tefillat Chanah*, and may *Am Yisrael* be granted a year of answered prayers.

A Tale of Two New Years: Same Names, Different Meanings

Meira Wagner ('17)

Being both Jewish and American, we take part in celebrating two New Years: one in January and the other generally in September. Despite the fact that both holidays bring in a new year and we get a break from school, *Rosh HaShanah* holds a different and deeper meaning.

On the surface both holidays seem similar: there are resolutions, celebrations, and fevered preparations. However, the

atmospheres surrounding these holidays are quite different, and when we take a closer look, we see that the holidays themselves differ significantly.

Both New Year's Day and *Rosh HaShanah* feature resolutions to begin to better ourselves. On New Year's Day, our resolutions are for us; we make promises to ourselves. On *Rosh HaShanah*, however, our resolutions involve a second party as well: *HaShem*. We promise to try to keep His *mitzvot* better and live up to the potential He has given us. Additionally, the resolutions we make on *Rosh HaShanah* deal with the internal: "I will speak less *lashon hara*"; "I will treat my little sister better," etc. When we make resolutions on New Year's, they generally deal with the superficial: "I will exercise more," or "this is the year that I am going to eat really healthy foods." While both holidays are surrounded by resolutions and commitments, closer inspection shows that they are, in fact, different.

We also take very different approaches when it comes to celebrating these two New Years. On *Rosh HaShanah*, we invite friends and family over to enjoy close-knit, wholesome meals. We pass around our favorite foods and our favorite bits of the rabbi's *divrei Torah*. With every bite and every word we are mindful to act in the ways of *HaShem* and to remember our resolutions and commitments. New Year's celebrations tend to go differently. Most commonly there are raucous parties with mirth and revelry all around. The overall mood is carefree and loose. When beginning the secular New Year, people wait excitedly as a ball is dropped in Times Square and then everyone shouts, "Happy New Year!" As in, "this year will be a good year!" The die is cast. The verdict is in. In contrast, on *Rosh HaShanah* we ask for a good year from God, and we understand that we will not know whether this wish will be granted until the year is concluded. When it comes to New Year's, there is no sense of nervousness about what is coming. On *Rosh HaShanah*, however, there is a trepidation tempering our joy. We are optimistic that we are in for a good year, but aware that *HaShem* has not yet sealed our fate.



Finally, the way we prepare for each holiday is different. For *Rosh HaShanah* we spend hours in the kitchen cooking up a storm and make last-minute runs to the supermarket for more apples and honey or to discover some new exotic fruit. Perhaps we send texts or make phone calls to anyone and everyone we know asking for forgiveness. We push ourselves to be ready, making ourselves the best we can be, thus giving *HaShem* reasons to inscribe our names in the Book of Life. However, when it comes to the secular New Year, there is no asking friends and family, teachers and classmates for forgiveness. We do not worry about *HaShem* judging us, and there is no anxiety about being written in the Book of Life.

It may seem that New Year's is more important than *Rosh HaShanah* because it brings about a new date that we always

forget to change on the top of our papers. However, though it may not coincide with the secular year, *Rosh HaShanah* welcomes the beginning of a year that starts when *HaShem* wants it to start. Jews alone begin their new year at this time, making it more special. It is our time to renew our relationship with *HaShem*.

While these two holidays share a name and superficial similarities, upon closer inspection we see that they are quite different. The resolutions we have on New Year's are not on the same level as those we make on *Rosh HaShanah*. The celebrations we attend on *Rosh HaShanah* are not like the ones during the New Year's. Surrounding New Year's, there is an air of excitement. When it comes to *Rosh HaShanah*, that excitement comes with nervousness as we are faced with the mistakes we made last year and the promises that we make for this new one.

To some extent both holidays offer us the opportunity to start anew. The most important difference, though, is that our commitment to improve ourselves in time for *Rosh HaShanah* starts NOW.

The Duality of the Shofar

Adina Rosenberg ('16)

Rav Soloveitchik explains that many *mitzvot* include both subjective and objective components. For example, saying *Shema* involves the act of recitation, the objective aspect, as well as the proper intention, the subjective aspect. Similarly, while fulfilling the *mitzvah* of the *shofar*, one is responsible both for hearing the sound of the *shofar* and for experiencing an internal awakening and a call to *teshuvah*. One should be sensitized



and motivated to take action, realizing the urgency and gravity of the month of *Elul* and of *Rosh HaShanah*. Rambam in *Hilchot Teshuvah* says that the *shofar* is a call to awaken from sleep; we are faced

with the realization and awareness of how our actions affect our relationship with God. Rambam highlights the importance of the duality of the *mitzvah* of hearing the *kol*, the sound, of the *shofar*. He emphasizes that aside from actually hearing its sound, there is a *kiyum she-ba-lev*, requiring a subjective, emotional response. Only when one has experienced this awakening to *teshuvah* has he completely fulfilled his obligation.

Rabbi Label Lam also discusses the importance of the *kol* of the *shofar*. Expanding on the Rambam's idea of the *kol* of the *shofar* acting as a call to *teshuvah*, Rabbi Lam suggests that the *shofar* also wakes up many sleeping questions, such as, "What

does this mean for me?" and "What in my life needs to change?" The sound of the *shofar* encourages us to ask these questions and experience a subjective, emotional response. The *kiyum she-ba-lev* of the *mitzvah* should motivate one to take action rather than to remain passive.

Man, created in God's image, was given the directive to imitate His ways, *le-hidamot li-drachav*. The Rav explains that man is not limited to simply performing acts, but his ability extends to imitation and fulfillment of the attribute of becoming a *nosei*, a subject. Man must strive to become subject and not object, one who influences one's surroundings rather than one who is influenced. This is shown in the *mitzvah* of hearing the *shofar*, where one must initially have the proper intention, causing a profound realization and experience that motivates him to take action, and influence his surroundings.

At this time of year, during *Rosh HaShanah*, we have a unique opportunity to reach God. We must take the gravity of the time and use it to adjust our outlook on life. Although it is hard, we must ask ourselves these questions and find the elements in our lives that need to change. In doing this, not only will we have the opportunity to influence those around us, but we will also be motivated to act, triggering both internal change and spiritual growth.

The Key to Teshuvah Is in Your Heart

Tamar Schwartz ('16)

The prime example of pure *teshuvah* is found in *Shmuel II*, *perek 12* – the story of David *HaMelech* and Batsheva. When Natan *HaNavi* shows David that he sinned, David differs from many other personalities in *Tanach* by immediately confessing, "*Chataiti LaShem*," "I have sinned before God" (12:13). He does not look for excuses or loopholes, but admits his sins – a sign of true humility, and the essential key to *teshuvah*.

Rambam writes in *Hilchot Teshuvah* that the essence of *teshuvah* is *vidui*, confession, a positive Torah commandment that must be done verbally. In *halachah 1* of *Hilchot Teshuvah*, Rambam describes that a person must admit his sin, feel shame for his mistake, and promise to never do it again. Rambam emphasizes the importance of *vidui* in the *teshuvah* process by explaining that no *korban* can atone for the person's sin until he confesses.

Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik quotes Rambam in his *sefer*, *Al HaTeshuvah*, and acknowledges that confession is the primary act of *teshuvah*. Yet he argues that the actual fulfillment of *teshuvah* itself is a necessary condition, and that without it there is no *vidui*. The *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*, according to Rav Soloveitchik, is essentially a *mitzvah* of the soul, rather than the body, much like *mitzvot* such as *tefillah* and "*ve-ahavta le-rei'acha kamocho*." These *mitzvot* require special concentration and emotional connection. Similarly, the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*, while requiring various steps and actions, must ultimately be fulfilled through the heart, through love of God.

This explanation, however, evokes more questions than answers. How is it that *teshuvah* is best done through our emotion, and through love for God? Shouldn't we act out of fear and apologize profusely? Isn't the point of *vidui* to feel embarrassed and ashamed?

In the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 86b), Reish Lakish states that *teshuvah* is great, "*she-zedonot na'asot lo ki-shgagot*," because intentional sins are counted as accidental ones. Reish Lakish also makes another statement that *teshuvah* is great, because "*zedonot na'asot lo ki-zchuyot*," intentional sins are counted as merits. The *Gemara* resolves this contradiction by attributing the first statement to *teshuvah* done out of *yir'ah*, fear, and the second, to *teshuvah* done out of love.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler explains that *teshuvah* done out of fear can be compared to a person looking back at the way she acted the previous day, ashamed of acting the way that she did, as she was unaware of what she now knows. *HaShem* turns our previous sins into unintentional sins, sins about which we simply could not have known better at the time. A person who does *teshuvah* out of love, on the other hand, feels immense guilt and remorse for his sin. He turned away from God and all of the privileges he was given, from the soul and mind that *HaShem* bestowed on him. The greater his sin, the greater his guilt, the heavier his heart becomes, and the closer he comes to God. The enormous guilt pushes the sinner to attain greater heights than he could have reached before sinning. Since all of his previous sins have been revealed to him, and he has recognized all that he owes to God, he can take those realizations and form them into personal strengths and positive characteristics.

This concept can shed light on Rav Soloveitchik's comment on Rambam. *Teshuvah* must be performed in the heart, because that is the ultimate way a person can use *teshuvah* to completely transform himself into a better person, a true servant of God. This is what our Sages meant when they referred to *tefillah* as "*avodah she-ba-lev*," worshipping God in one's heart.

Because of this notion, when we recite *vidui*, we cry out to *HaShem* for what we have done wrong, lament the relationship we have destroyed with God, and pledge to fix ourselves. Yet, the process of confession goes beyond just those words. We must also take the time to read through the *vidui* and internalize the confessions, making personal notes on where we have erred in this past year, and how we plan to change ourselves. It is not enough to promise change with our words; we must also do so in our hearts.

Why Do We Fast on *Yom Kippur*?

Leora Wolff ('16)

The *Pachad Yitzchak* has a novel understanding of the reason we fast on *Yom Kippur*. He explains that *Yom Kippur* really begins with *Shavu'ot*, when *Bnei Yisrael* received the *Torah*. At that time, *Bnei Yisrael* were supposed to have a perfect bal-

ance of spirituality and physicality. As we know, *Bnei Yisrael* failed in the days after *Matan Torah* by building the *Egel HaZahav*, the Golden Calf. According to the calculations of the Hebrew calendar, the *Egel* was built 40 days after *Matan Torah*, which was *Shiv'ah Asar Be-Tammuz*. In the aftermath of the *Egel*, Moshe *Rabbenu* appealed to *HaShem* to save the Jewish people for 40 days. Moshe went up on *Har Sinai* for the second time on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, and came down on *Yom Kippur*, bearing the second set of *luchot* and *HaShem's* promise of forgiveness. It is the understanding of the *Pachad Yitzchak* that we fast on *Yom Kippur* because it is the day of the true *Matan Torah*, when *Hashem* forgave the Jewish people, and we must act like angels so as not to succumb to our human frailty. Everything we do on *Yom Kippur* is to imitate the ways of angels, because the Golden Calf taught us that we are too flawed to accept the *Torah* as humans.

Ultimately, however, *HaShem* does not want us to be angels. According to *Kabbalah*, the greatest day of the year is *Purim*. That is why *Yom Kippur* is *Yom HaKippurim*, a day "like *Purim*," drawing a strong comparison between the two days. *Purim* is a day we indulge in human activities, striving to achieve the perfect balance between our spiritual beings and our physical realities. The ultimate message of *Yom HaKippurim* is that we must strive to embrace our *kedushah*, our angelic side, while still partaking in human activities.

Lessons from *Sefer Yonah*

Shalva Faber ('18)

The most important days of the Jewish year are *Yom Kippur* and *Rosh HaShanah*. *Rosh HaShanah* is a day of repentance, commonly known as a happy day, punctuated with the eating of new fruits and crowded family meals. *Yom Kippur* is commonly known as a sad day on which we fast for 25 hours. In truth, however, *Yom Kippur* is the most joyful day of the year: a day when we are meant to develop a special closeness with God while He sits in judgment of the coming year.

When we read *Sefer Yonah* during the *Haftarah* of *Minchah* on *Yom Kippur*, we learn about the importance of building a connection with God at the earliest opportunity. This lesson is not taught by an example of closeness, but rather by the difficulties *Yonah* faced as he did the opposite of what he was told. In *Sefer Yonah* (1:2), *HaShem* told *Yonah* to go to *Nineveh* to tell the people to atone for their wicked deeds. Upon hearing this, *Yonah* immediately fled to *Tarshish*. He should have realized that no one is able to run away from God, for He is always watching. The *perek* describes how *Yonah* paid for the boat journey to *Tarshish*, and then how *HaShem* sent great winds which threatened to destroy the ship.

Radak writes that it was not that God was going to break the boat, but rather the boat crew was nervous that the ship would break, thus they threw their belongings overboard. They then found *Yonah* asleep and angrily woke him up to explain his behavior. *Yonah* explained that his God, the God of the Jews,

was angry with him and had caused the storm. Malbim writes that the crew on the boat knew that it was a divine storm, since they could see other nearby ships at peace, while the "storm" was only affecting their ship. It was clear to them that the causative agent was on their ship. Thus, after talking to Yonah and realizing that it was he who caused the storm, they threw Yonah off the boat. Yonah then understood that the only way he would be saved was by davening to *HaShem* and begging for forgiveness for thinking he could flee.

After explaining himself, Yonah told *HaShem*, "I will bring sacrifices to you. What I have vowed I will fulfill, for salvation is *Hashem's*" (2:10). Yonah declared that he will do whatever it takes to do *teshuvah* for his sin of running away. Only then did *HaShem* tell the fish to let him go, and spit him onto dry land.

An important lesson to learn from Yonah is the necessity of recognizing the supreme position of God, not only in a global sense, but also in our individual lives. Yonah erred not only in failing to heed God's command, but also in assuming that his individual role was not important. Our conduct in both the big-picture items and the small, personal details is important to God, and through both we can strengthen our relationship with Him. *Yom Kippur* is our annual opportunity to revisit and celebrate that relationship, renewing not only our faith in *HaShem*, but also His faith in us.

Achieving True Happiness

Nina Miller ('16)

Rambam states, "Even though there is a *mitzvah* to be happy on all of the festivals, the festival of *Sukkot* took on a character of an even greater form of happiness and joy" (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shofar, Sukkah and Lulav* 8:15). What is it about *Sukkot* that qualifies it to have an extra form of *simchah*? By investigating the *mitzvot* performed on *Sukkot*, we begin to understand the nature of the holiday and the joy that comes along with it.

Vayikra (23:42-43) states the *mitzvah* to sit in a *sukkah*. "You shall dwell in booths for a seven-day period; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths. So that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I took them from the land of Egypt; I am *HaShem*, your God." Rabbi Azarya Berzon quotes Netziv who asks why the *Torah* had to specify that "every native in Israel" had to dwell in *sukkot* – isn't it obvious that every single Jew has to fulfill this *mitzvah*? Who might we have thought is not obligated? He also asks why the *Torah* adds in the phrase, "I am *HaShem*, your God" – what is this phrase teaching? Netziv answers his first question by considering the message behind sitting in *sukkot*. Leaving our permanent dwellings and going into temporary booths reminds us that none of our possessions is guaranteed. In fact, nothing in this world is actually permanent. We must



remember that everything we have is a gift from *HaShem*. But, Netziv continues, this message seems to address only the rich people, the ones who actually own land and permanent homes. Surely

poor people understand transience, so this message doesn't seem to apply. The phrase, "every native in Israel," therefore, teaches that poor people, too, must sit in *sukkot*. Furthermore, by mimicking our ancestors, who sat in similar booths in the desert, they learn never to despair. On *Sukkot*, everyone sits in temporary dwellings. It is a reminder to all classes that material possessions are not the most important, and are not what brings a person true happiness. Just as *HaShem* provided *Bnei Yisrael* with all of their needs in the desert, *HaShem* can provide the poor with their needs. This offers an unbelievable sense of hope and joy for the poor. It is also why the *Torah* adds the phrase, "I am *HaShem* your God." It is a reminder that *HaShem* is involved in our everyday lives, and He can bestow all good on a poor person. It is this knowledge that brings them comfort and happiness on *Sukkot*.

Another element of our *simchah* comes from the *mitzvah* of taking *lulav and etrog*. The *Torah* tells us, "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, the boughs of the myrtle tree and the willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before *HaShem*, your God, for seven days" (*Vayikra* 23:40). Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky (*Rejoice in Your Festivals*, pp. 149-154) explains that there are many midrashic interpretations of what the four elements mentioned in the *pasuk* actually are, in addition to the various lessons to be learned from this *mitzvah*. One *midrash* states that although Shlomo *HaMelech* was granted knowledge and wisdom greater than all men, these four *minim* bewildered him. Although he was *chacham mi-kol adam*, wisest of all men, he could not understand the symbolism of this *mitzvah*. Based on this *midrash*, we simply do not understand the reasoning and lessons behind the taking of the four *minim*. Yet, in addition to Rambam's statement that there is a special happiness associated with the holiday of *Sukkot*, there appears to be an added connection between happiness and this *mitzvah* based on the juxtaposition of the phrase, "And you shall rejoice before *HaShem*, your God, for seven days" to the laws pertaining to the *arba'ah minim*. Although we cannot understand this *mitzvah*, the *Torah* specifically commands us to be happy as we perform it. Rabbi Kanotopsky explains that there is a sense of joy and perfection when a Jew can rejoice on *Pesach* and thank *HaShem* for freeing us from slavery. He can also reach this level when he rejoices on *Shavu'ot*, thanking *HaShem* for giving us the *Torah*. In addition, he can reach this level on *Sukkot*, the time when we gather the fruit of the land. It is a natural time to rejoice and thank *HaShem* for the harvest. However, there is a higher level of perfection that a Jew

can reach at this time, and this may drive the added element of *simchah* home for us. A Jew is told to take the *arba'ah minim* and simply rejoice in performing a *mitzvah* of *HaShem*. *Sukkot* is the time to experience the *simchah shel mitzvah*, the joy that comes solely from fulfilling the word of *HaShem*, even though we may not fully comprehend it.

One more manifestation of this idea may be inferred from the traditional reading on *Shabbat* during *Sukkot*. If *Sukkot* is the time to be happy, then why do we read *Kohelet*, a sober and pessimistic text? There were actually times in Shlomo's life that he chose to praise happiness, as it says in *Kohelet* (8:15), "So I praised enjoyment, for man has no other goal under the sun but to eat, drink, and be joyful; and this will accompany him in his toil during the days of his life which God has given him beneath the sun." Yet, at other times he condemns it, as it states in *Kohelet* (2:2), "I said of laughter, 'it is mad!' and of joy, 'what does it accomplish!'" This seemingly contradictory attitude toward *simchah* is one of the many contradictions in *Kohelet* that almost led to its concealment in order to avoid confusion among the people (*Shabbat* 30b). The *Gemara* concludes, however, that we can reconcile this contradiction by differentiating between the two types of *simchah*. Shlomo *HaMelech* praises the joy that comes from fulfilling *HaShem's* command – *simchah shel mitzvah*. He condemns the joy that is achieved not by fulfilling the word of *HaShem*, the superficial joy that comes from one's physical and materialistic possessions and desires. *Sukkot* is a time when we differentiate between these two joys and focus on the genuine joy of fulfilling *HaShem's* word. The rich people leave their permanent dwellings and remind themselves that everything comes from *HaShem*, that nothing in this world is really permanent, and that the ultimate joy and perfection comes not from frivolity, but from fulfilling *HaShem's* commandments. The poor learn not to despair. Just as *HaShem* provided for *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert, He involves Himself in and cares for all *Bnei Yisrael*. The highest level of joy and perfection is reached among all of *Bnei Yisrael* when we each take the *arba'ah minim*, submit to the *ratzon HaShem*, and experience the pure *simchah shel mitzvah*.

When is an *Etrog* not an *Etrog*?

Sara Schapiro ('17)

The *Torah* says in *Parshat Emor* (*Vayikra* 23:40) that one of the *arba'ah minim* is the *pri etz hadar*. This has been established to mean the fruit called *etrog*. Rema writes in his *Teshuvot* (#117) that one day while he was in Cracow he heard from an old man that there is a fruit called a lemon. This lemon shares many important characteristics of an *etrog*, says the Rema, but it cannot be used for the *pri etz hadar*. Only an actual *etrog* is kosher. Furthermore, Rema and *Magen Avraham* write that even a fruit that is a hybrid (*murkav*) made from grafting a lemon branch onto an *etrog* tree is not an *etrog*.

The issue of a hybrid *etrog* is not discussed in the *Gemara* or the *rishonim*. It only appears in the *poskim* starting in the six-

teenth century. A story told by Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (R. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, v. 1 p. 252) about his father, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, can illustrate why this issue may not have been discussed. Rav Moshe Soloveitchik was challenged by another rabbi to say where the *halachah* regarding the prohibition of using a hybrid *etrog* is found in *Shulchan Aruch*. The rabbi was trying to test if Rav Soloveitchik would know that it is not found in the *Shulchan Aruch*, but instead is found in the *Magen Avraham*, a commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*. However, Rav Soloveitchik chose to make a different point. He said that the *Shulchan Aruch* does not say that an apple is invalid to be used as an *etrog*! The rabbi was taken aback because obviously you cannot use an apple as an *etrog*; it is not an *etrog*. Rav Soloveitchik explained that a hybrid is equivalent to an apple. They are both not an *etrog*. The reason no one discusses using an *etrog murkav* before the *acharonim* is that it was as obvious to the earlier generations as not using an apple.

However, Rabbi Avihud Swartz writes that it is not so clear cut that the hybrid cannot count as an *etrog*, because those who prohibit the use of a hybrid are making two basic assumptions which can both be challenged. The first is that the hybrid is really considered a lemon, not an *etrog*. This assumption can be challenged by a *Gemara* in *Sotah* (43b). In the context of a different *halachah*, the *Gemara* says that when you graft a branch onto a tree, the resulting hybrid fruit is considered the same as the tree, not the branch. If so, the fruit of an *etrog/lemon* hybrid should actually be an *etrog* if the tree is an *etrog* tree. The rabbis who invalidate an *etrog murkav* must argue that this statement is only relevant in the context of the *halachah* the *Gemara* is discussing, and is not relevant in *hilchot arba'ah minim*. The second assumption made by the anti-hybrid rabbis is that a lemon cannot be used for *pri etz hadar*. Rema, however, quotes an opinion saying that since the *Gemara* in *Sukkah* (35a) identifies an *etrog* by certain features, which are shared by lemons, lemons should indeed qualify as *pri etz hadar*. Ultimately, however, Rema rejects this opinion, saying that once the *Gemara* concludes that the *pri etz hadar* is an *etrog*, it is no longer up for discussion. The features mentioned in the *Gemara* are not the definition of an *etrog*, rather they are merely helpful indications to describe the fruit.

The majority opinion, quoted by the *Mishnah Berurah*, is that a hybrid is not kosher. While Rav Ovadiah Yosef agrees with this



opinion, he says that in a case of a double doubt (*sefek sefeka*), using a hybrid would be permissible. Therefore, if one has a fruit that may be a hybrid or may be a legitimate *etrog*, one can use it because there is always another doubt whether those opinions that allow the use of a hybrid *etrog* are correct. Another leniency that can be applied in the use of a hybrid *etrog* is based on the *Taz*, which says that a hybrid is invalid, not because it's a lemon and not an *etrog*, but because it's an *etrog* with a little bit of lemon mixed in. The *Shulchan Aruch* states (*Orach Chaim* 648:2) that an *etrog* that is missing a piece of the fruit is not kosher. A hybrid *etrog* is always missing a little bit of the fruit – the part that is a lemon. Based on this consideration, however, it would be permissible to use a hybrid after the first day of *Yom Tov* because the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 649:5) says that one can use an *etrog* that is missing a piece of the fruit after the first day of *Yom Tov*. In general, though, the *halachah* is clear that one should not use a hybrid *etrog*.

After having established that the *pri etz hadar* must be an *etrog* and not a hybrid, how can one differentiate between them? Some *poskim* say you can base it on the anatomical structure of the fruit, such as the size of the bumps on the fruit's skin or the layout of the seeds. Others think that the guidelines of the physical appearance of the fruit are too vague and not scientifically reliable. Therefore, one must investigate the trees in the orchard itself, and study them to see if they are the products of grafting or not. Once one has checked that an orchard's trees are producing kosher *etrogim*, it is not necessary to constantly recheck because one can rely on the tradition of those who first checked it out. However, problems can arise from time to time. For example, in 1877 people claimed that an *etrog* orchard in Yafo was really producing hybrids. This orchard was owned by Arabs who found it cheaper to make hybrids. So the rabbis went to check the trees, and while some trees were still kosher, others had been made into hybrids. After that incident the final decision was made by R. Meir Auerbach, the Rav of the Old *Yishuv*, that *etrogim* orchards must have *hashgachah* just like for the *kashrut* of food products.

Historically, in *chutz la-aretz*, people generally got their *etrogim* from "Yaneve" (Genoa), Italy, which the *Chatam Sofer* endorsed, or Corsica, Italy. However, due to the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) which made it difficult to trade with Italy, people began to get their *etrogim* from the Greek island of Corfu. Even when trade with Genoa opened up again, many Jews did not buy their *etrogim* there because questions remained about their status as hybrids. Starting in 1846, people began suspecting that the *etrogim* from Corfu were also hybrids. Two other factors also influenced Jews in Europe to stop buying *etrogim* from Corfu. Several pogroms against the Jews of Corfu made European Jews not want to support the oppressors of their brethren. Furthermore, newly found access to *etrogim* from *Eretz Yisrael* provided a better source for *etrogim*.

Nowadays people get *etrogim* from many different areas. *Eetrogim* are grown in Yemen, Morocco and other countries; there are wild *etrog* trees in the West Indies that are unlikely to be hybrids because they have not been tampered with. Additionally, many *etrogim* come from Israel. This year, however, poses a special challenge. There is a big controversy in *halachah* about using *etrogim* from Israel that were grown during *shemittah*. This topic is outside the scope of this article, but it means that some people will try to avoid the problem by getting their *etrog* from outside of Israel this year. This means that *etrog* merchants will have to make sure that they purchase their non-Israeli *etrogim* from *murkav*-free orchards in other parts of the world.

(Much of the information for this essay is taken from *Sefer Arba'at ha-Minim ha-Shalem* by R. Eliyahu Weissfish. R. Avihud Swartz's article can be found at <http://www.etzion.org.il/vbm/archive/yomyom/dafyomyomi/2014-03-10.php>)

***VeZot HaBerachah:* Who Wrote the Last Eight Verses? Ora Friedman ('17)**

A question that arises when reading the last eight verses of the *Torah*, which describe Moshe's death, is: who wrote them, Moshe or Yehoshua?

The *Gemara* in *Bava Batra* 15a brings down this dispute in a *beraita*. The *beraita* quotes the *pasuk* in *VeZot HaBerachah* (*Devarim* 34:5), "*Va-yamat sham Moshe eved HaShem, be-eretz Mo'av al pi HaShem,*" "Moshe the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord."

Rabbi Yehudah (some say it was Rabbi Nechemia) asks how it was possible for Moshe to write about his own death. Rabbi Yehudah (or Rabbi Nechemia) concludes that it is impossible, that Yehoshua wrote these verses. However, Rabbi Shimon asks, "Can a *Torah* be valid if even a single letter is missing?" In other words, how can even one letter not be from *HaShem*? No one has the same level of prophecy as Moshe *Rabbenu*, and Moshe is the only one able to convey *HaShem*'s word so precisely. Therefore, Rabbi Shimon concludes that for all the *Torah* except for the last eight verses, *HaShem* dictated the words to Moshe, and Moshe wrote them down. For the last eight verses, *HaShem* dictated them to Moshe, but Moshe wrote "*be-dema,*" tearfully.

In an article titled "The Last Eight Verses in the Torah," Rabbi Danny Wolf notes that at first glance, this *Gemara* seems to contradict the concept of "*Moshe emet ve-Torato emet*"; Moshe is true, and his *Torah* is true. This phrase implies two things: First, that *HaShem* transmitted the *Torah* to Moshe, and second, that the *Torah* is *emet*, divine truth. Each opinion in the *Gemara* in *Bava Batra* challenges one of the two implications. If we go according to Rabbi Yehudah (or Rabbi Nechemia), who holds that Yehoshua wrote the last eight verses, then how could we say that the entire *Torah* was transmitted to Moshe? If we go according to Rabbi Shimon's interpretation that Moshe wrote the last eight verses, how could the last eight verses be *emet*, truthful, if they did not happen yet when Moshe wrote them?

Another question that this *Gemara* raises is what Rabbi Shimon means when he says that Moshe wrote “*be-dema*,” “tearfully.” According to Rashba, Ritva, and *Yad Rama*, quoted by Nachshoni, Moshe wrote these last eight verses with tears instead of ink. *Ein Yaakov*, however, questions how the *Torah* could be written with tears. It does not seem possible for verses to be written with tears, for if they were, they would be illegible. Abarbanel concludes that the meaning of “*be-dema*,” with tears, is that Moshe wrote the entire *Torah* including the last eight verses with ink, but wrote the last verses while crying.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Danny Wolf’s question still remains. If Moshe wrote with tears, tears are not real writing, so how could we say that Moshe was the author of the *Torah*? If we say that Moshe actually wrote it, even while crying, then how could the words be *emet*, truthful, if they were written before the event actually happened?

Rabbi Wolf and Nachshoni quote the Vilna *Gaon*, who brings an incredible answer. The Vilna *Gaon* translates “*dema*” as “mixed up.” He uses *Shemot* 22:28 to prove this. The *pasuk* reads, “*melei’atcha ve-dim’acha lo te’acher*,” “Do not delay your fullness [which Rashi translates as *bikkurim*, the first fruits brought to the *kohanim*], and the bringing of your tithes [the bringing of one-tenth of your crops to the *kohen*].”

The root *daled-mem-ayin* means “mix.” Tithes are called *dim’acha*, with the root *daled-mem-ayin*, because before one sets aside one-tenth of his crops for a *kohen*, the tithe is mixed together with the other crops. Therefore, when Rabbi Shimon says that Moshe wrote the last eight verses of the *Torah* “*be-dema*,” it means that these verses were written in a mixed fashion that cannot be interpreted.

Rabbi Wolf writes that it seems that the Vilna *Gaon* bases his interpretation on Ramban’s introduction to his commentary on the *Torah*. Ramban says, “It seems that the *Torah* that was written with black fire over white fire in this manner, that the writing was continuous with no breaks between the letters.” Ramban is referring to *Chazal*’s opinion that the *Torah* was written two thousand years before the world was created. It had “no breaks between the letters,” and it was incomprehensible to man. What Ramban is really discussing is if the *Torah* is *emet*, truthful, then how could it have been written before the world was created and before anything written in the *Torah* actually took place? Ramban explains that there are two aspects to the *Torah*. The *Torah* includes certain truths that exist independently, but also certain truths that relate to the world. The *Torah* that was written in black fire on white fire, two thousand years before the world was created, was only relevant and believable to God. Only at Mount Sinai does the *Torah* become relevant to humans. Regardless, however, the *Torah* is always *emet*.

Similarly, according to the Vilna *Gaon*, Moshe *Rabbenu* did indeed write these verses before he died. However, when they were written they were comprehensible only to God and were incomprehensible to man.

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