

SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

QOL HA-QAHAL

קול הקהל



Issue 39: Rosh Hashanah / Yom Kippur
DEDICATED BY SARI AND EDDIE DANA



Dedicated by Sari and Eddie Dana

The SCA is dedicated to uniting our affiliate organizations based on our shared values in an effort to give our young people the tools needed to successfully perpetuate our way of life in the post-modern era.

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COMMITMENT TO HALAKHA ♦ RESPECT AND TOLERANCE ♦ INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY
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LEARNING AND EARNING ♦ MEDINAT YISRAEL

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QOL HA-QAHAL MISSION

To promote Torah throughout our community
by providing a platform for our rabbis, lay members, students and institutions.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hazaq u'barukh to all involved in the SCA's Tish'a Be'Ab program today. Each year, it gets better and better. My family was able to enjoy the lectures of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Rabbi Joseph Dweck, Rabbi Richard Tobias, Rabbi Joey Beyda, along with Charles Anteby and DJ Cohen. They were all thought-provoking and inspiring. But the hero of the day was undoubtedly Mrs. Emily Labaton, who reflected on the concept of "nehama," consolation. The standing ovation which she received was very moving and well-deserved.

It was interesting to hear her tell how Rabbi Labaton *a"h*, as a young rabbi, needed to quickly learn the proper way to console mourners, as he saw that skill becoming a significant part of his leadership role. The highlight of her message was when she said that Rabbi Labaton would agree with her that we must also evoke consolation towards non-Jewish suffering around the world, including mothers who are losing their children in the war in Aleppo.

Her 15 minutes of words flowed with sweet sincerity and solid conviction.

We hope we can hear more from Mrs. Labaton and all the terrific speakers for the SCA in the years to come.

Thank you for all that the SCA is doing for our wonderful community. Keep up your great and holy work!

Sincerely,

Sam Sitt
Executive Director, DSN Community Center

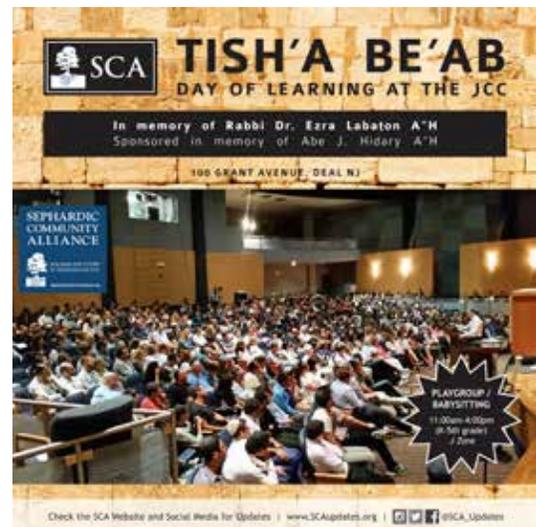
Dear Hymie,

I can't tell you how impressed I was with the Tish'a Be'Ab program yesterday. The amount of men, women, and children of all ages that came in droves to learn was incredible. By noon the JCC parking lot was packed. The whole day was a huge success.

What you and the SCA team are doing is changing the way we think about Torah classes. On behalf of the Hidary family, we are honored to have our dad's name attached to the SCA.

Keep up the fantastic work,

— *Morris Hidary*



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SEPHARDIC CUSTOMS

HATARAT NEDARIM TO KAL NIDRÉ

Mr. Joseph Mosseri

It's that time of the year again -- Tish'ah Be'Ab is over and Selihot season will be coming to usher in the High Holidays. But wait; between Tish'ah Be'Ab and *selihot*, we have another community event, **Hatarat Nedarim**. While growing up I never noticed anyone who didn't participate in Hatarah, but now each year I seem to be hearing from more people who are adamantly opposed to doing Hatarah. In this article I hope to properly show the origins and meaning of this custom, when and how it's done, as well as why we do it.

I would like to begin by mentioning that this custom of Hatarat Nedarim does not seem to have been practiced the way we know it today until about the 15th century of the Common Era. The custom, even though much older, became popular due to a statement in the *Zohar*, *Peqoudé* 249, which states:

Those that are condemned and excommunicated, are any people that uttered words that should not have been said, and then they uttered holy words of Torah, their mouths are considered fouled. These individuals will remain in a state of condemnation and excommunication for 40 days, during which time their prayers will not be heard.

By doing Hatarat Nedarim, the earthly court frees him and prays that the heavenly court will do the same. As such, we do the first Hatarah ceremony 40 days prior to Rosh Hashanah; because no one wants to enter the New Year and not have their prayers listened to.

In the most simple of terms, Hatarat Nedarim is the Annulment of Vows. I believe that it is this literal definition that turns people off. The detractors of Hatarah may say, "I don't make vows, and if I do, why should I just be able to annul them? If so, this custom of Hatarah is teaching people to never keep their word." However, there is much support

to say that this is not what Hatarat Nedarim is about.

There is a tractate in the Gemara called *Masekhet Nedarim* which is devoted entirely to the subject of vows. You would think that the main focus there would be how to upkeep our vows, yet surprisingly it focuses on the exact opposite! Instead of teaching us how to make and keep one's vows, it is filled with various ways to annul a vow. The Hakhamim ask how each vow might be nullified or rejected. They search for loopholes and circumstances which may make a vow obsolete. One such circumstance is: Are there any factors unknown to the vower that would have prevented him/her from making this vow?

Nevertheless, the Gemara shows us in numerous places the problems with making vows. Nedarim 22a says: "One who vows is like one who built an unauthorized altar, and one who fulfills his vow is like one who sacrifices on it." In Nedarim 77b, it says "He who vows even though he fulfills it, is called a sinner." Obviously, the Hakhamim saw vows as very problematic and, as such, always tried to scrutinize the vow to find even a small opening for a way out of it; they clearly saw them better annulled than fulfilled. The question is why? Why should vows be viewed as something sinful? If a vow was made, shouldn't the Hakhamim promote its fulfillment?

Hakham Abraham Hamway, in his *Bet El* (Livorno 1878), in his introduction to Hatarat Nedarim, states on page 145:

How well known it is that a person who vows, sins. Such a person not only sins but he is called evil. The Hakhamim state that because of vows, children die. When a person delays the fulfillment of his vows, he causes death to himself and the angels constantly mention his sins in the heavenly court; as such, he is denied salvation.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Therefore, he warns we should seriously consider Hatarat Nedarim and Hatarat Qelalot to prevent evil from befalling us. Many other Hakhamim wrote about the custom of Hatarat Nedarim at length, among them Hakham Haim Yosef David Azoulai in his *Siporen Shamir*, Hakham Haim Palacci in his *Mo'ed LeKhol Hai*, Hakham Refael Aharon Ben Shim'on in his *Nehar Missrayim*, Hakham Ya'aqob Mosheh 'Ayash in his *Derekh Haim*, Hakham Shem Tob Gaguine in his *Keter Shem Tob*, Hakham Ya'aqob Haim Sofer in his *Kaf Haim* and countless others. In fact, most of our Hakhamim from Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey, not only wrote about the laws and customs of Hatarat Nedarim, they absolutely enacted it in their communities yearly before the High Holidays.

Just to be clear, the *Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh De'ah 211:4)* states, that the vows we are referring to are strictly swears and promises a person makes to himself. This is the accepted view in all rabbinic sources and we will proceed to examine why Hatarat Nedarim is so important.

“Vows also create unnecessary walls and fences that can prevent a family and community from operating smoothly.”

In order to understand this better, it's important to recognize what motivates people to make vows. *Masekhet Nedarim* shows us time and again in the Mishnah and the Gemara that vows are generally made as a reaction to anger. Not only that, but a vow is in fact an expression of anger. These vows generally cause a disruption in people's lives. The moment of anger that caused a person to make a vow generally ends with that person abstaining from enjoying life because they can no longer intermingle with all people at all places. This is due to the fact that many vows involve reactions to perceived slights, insults and wrongdoings while interacting with people we know – business partners, friends, relatives, and neighbors. These relationships can end up becoming negative and bitter rather than positive and meaningful. As we all know through experience, a vow is usually made in haste and then regretted. Vows are very powerful - they can destroy life, family, friends, businesses, etc. Vows separate a person from the rest of the world, and they are dangerous because they can cause discord and strife between people who were once close friends. Vows

also create unnecessary walls and fences that can prevent a family and community from operating smoothly. How many people do you know who no longer talk to a family member because of such a vow? How many people do we refuse to talk to and how many places do we refuse to step foot in. WHY?

Nedarim 23b teaches that a person who does not want his vows to take effect throughout the year should stand on Rosh Hashanah and declare “all vows that I take this year should be null and void.” The efficacy of this tradition is discussed by the various commentaries. The Geonim generally reject the idea of a blanket *hatarat nedarim* and did not practice this in their communities. Haayé Gaon suggests that rather than a request for annulment, the congregation should recite the prayer as a request for forgiveness for all those who transgressed vows they had taken. Nevertheless, many follow the position of Rabenou Tam, who accepts the ruling of the Gemara as stated and permits a person to make a condition that all vows made during the upcoming year should be declared void. The declaration is made in a public

forum in order to make the matter known to all.

The text of Hatarat Nedarim in fact includes many things, not just vows, but promises, forgiven acts, acceptances, customs, swears, curses, etc. -- even bad dreams. Basically, anything that can hinder us from being complete individuals with ourselves and with the entire world should be annulled prior to Rosh Hashanah so we can begin the New Year afresh.

As stated, we have a custom of doing the first Hatarah 40 days prior to Rosh Hashanah, and some do a second one 40 days prior to Yom Kippour. All agree that the next Hatarot are made the morning of Rosh Hashanah eve and the morning of Yom Kippour eve. That's the way it was done for centuries but in the last number of decades the custom has adapted to societal norms and is now conducted on the Saturday night immediately prior to these prescribed times. Some have questioned the validity of doing Hatarah at night but *Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah 228:3* allows it.

The proper way for the Hatarah to be conducted is for all those present to stand silently while concentrating on the words being uttered by the congregational petitioner who reads the formula on their behalf to the rabbinical court of ten, or at least three learned men. Only the rabbinic tribunal should sit while everyone else stands. *Shulhan 'Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 234:56* states that if a woman cannot attend, her husband can represent her. In the old days, the Hakhamim used to go to the homes and do it for groups of women.

It is my belief that we do Hatarah a number of times because it is difficult for a person to breakdown and change his bad practices. By doing it again and again, a person should see the insistence of our Torah on watching our minds and tongues that cause us to vow. These Hatarot are also a preparation for the night of Yom Kippour when we recite the most famous Hatarah, Kal Nidré!

Yes, I know the Gemara said to annul these vows on Rosh Hashanah, but if you carefully read Yehezqel 40:1, you'll see

he refers to Yom Kippour as Rosh Hashanah. Leaving the Kal Nidré for the moment Yom Kippour begins, I believe, really drives home the point. We are poised to pray to Hashem for 24 hours to ask him to forgive all our sins, but we can't until we ourselves tear down the walls that divide us. We must stop our fighting, feuding, bickering, and holding grudges. Only then can we pray as a congregation and as a community, and we know that above all else what Hashem wants from us is UNITY.

That's what *Hatarat Nedarim OuQalot* is all about.

Tizkoo LeShanim Rabot, Ne'Imot VeTobot!

Mr. Mosseri is a noted expert on Sephardic customs. He welcomes all comments and feedback.



Slichot prayers and Hatarat Nedarim before Yom Kippour 2010 in the Western Wall, Jerusalem

LIGHTING CANDLES ON 'EREB KIPPUR

Mr. Morris Arking

In the fourth chapter of Masekhet Pesahim, the Mishnah taught that candles are lit (at home) for the night of Yom Kippur in a place where it is customary to do so, but that where it is customary not to light candles (at home) for the night of Yom Kippur, candles are not lit. The gemara (Pesahim 53b) adds that both customs have the same intention. The Tosefta (Pesahim 3:11) specifies that the intention was to prevent one from coming to sin. And the Ri"ף (end of Masekhet Pesahim) explains that the sin that they intended to prevent was marital relations (which is one of five prohibitions that are part of the observance of Yom Kippur). Similarly, HaRambam wrote (*Mishneh Torah* Hil. Sh'bitat 'Asor 3:10) that in some places it was customary to light candles for the night of Yom Kippur so that a man will not come to have relations with his wife (see *Mishneh Torah* Hil. Isure' Bi-ah 21:10 that prohibits marital relations in an illuminated room), and in some places it was customary not to light candles for the night of Yom Kippur since one might see his wife and become attracted to her and that might lead to marital relations. Rabenu Hananel and Rashi also explain the gemara like

In OH 6:10 Maran wrote, "There is one who says to recite a blessing upon lighting candles for Yom HaKippurim." But in OH 263:5 Maran wrote, "On 'Ereb Yom HaKippurim, when it (Kippur) doesn't fall on Shabbat, there is one who says not to recite a blessing upon lighting the candles and examine (what is written) later in *siman* 610." The *Shulhan Gaboha* (610:5) understood Maran as taking the position that one should not recite a blessing, but Hakham 'Obadyah Yosef a"ħ disagreed with the *Shulhan Gaboha* and explained Maran as requiring a blessing (Hazon 'Obadyah: Yamim Noraim pgs. 257-259).

According to the RaM"Ā (OH 610:3) the Ashkenazic custom is to recite a blessing before lighting the candles on 'Ereb Kippur, however the GR"Ā applied the rule of *safeq b'rakhot l'haqel* (one is lenient and does not recite a b'rakhah in case of a doubt) to the disagreement between the Rishonim with regards to whether or not a blessing is recited before lighting candles on 'Ereb Kippur and concluded that the blessing is not recited. Sephardic authorities who ruled not to recite the blessing based on

"Hakham Abraham Hamway concluded that even when Kippur falls on Shabbat a blessing is not recited..."

HaRambam and the Ri"ף based on the Tosefta.

This led the Mordekhi to write (Pesahim 609) that a blessing should not be recited upon the lighting of candles on 'Ereb Yom Kippur, since it is a custom (not a Rabbinic obligation), and the gemara (Sukkah 44b) taught that a blessing is not recited upon a custom. This position is also found in the *Orhot Hayyim* (Hil. Yom HaKippurim 25) the MaHaRi"ĀL (Hil. 'Ereb Kippur), the Radbaz (Heleq Gimal 476), and the *Pisqe' MaHaRam Riqanti* (164). However other authorities do require one to recite the blessing upon lighting candles for Kippur. These authorities include the Rosh (Yoma 8:27), the Tur (OH 610) and Rabenu Yeruham (*Netiv Zayin* Heleq Alef).

safeq b'rakhot l'haqel include the MaHaRi"ĀQaS, the *P'ri Hadash* the 'Erekh HaShulhan (all in OH 610) and Rabbi Yisshaq Palaji in *Y'feh L'Leb* (Heleq Bet) based on his father Rabbi Hayyim Palaji in *Ruah Hayyim*.

Hakham 'Obadyah Yosef a"ħ did not apply the rule of *safeq b'rakhot l'haqel* in this case since he considered it customary to recite the blessing, and the rule of *safeq b'rakhot l'haqel* is not applied when there is an established custom to recite a blessing. He considered it customary to recite the blessing upon the candles on 'Ereb Kippur based on the *Ben Ish Hai* (VaYeLeKh 9), the *Kaf HaHayyim* (OH 610:12), the *P'ri M'gadim* (Ot Alef), the *Hayye' Adam* (144:14) and others. However, the established custom in

Halab was that those that lit candles at home on 'Ereb Kippur did so without reciting a blessing. *Derekh Eress* (published in 1990) quotes this from Hakham Yisshaq Shehebar's summary of laws (published in Spanish) and from Hakham Yisshaq Za'afarani (pg. 124 [6] and pg. 194 [98]). Furthermore, Hakham Abraham Hamway (19th century) applied the rule of *safeq b'rakhot l'haqel* to the candles for Yom Kippur (*Bet HaKaporet*—"Hadlaqat HaNer" 17,9) and concluded that a blessing should not be recited before lighting.

What about reciting the blessing upon lighting the candles on 'Ereb Kippur when Kippur falls on Shabbat? With regards to this case the Mordekhi brought two opinions. He quoted Rabbenu Yisshaq who said that even though you do not recite a blessing before lighting the candles on 'Ereb Kippur when it falls on a weekday, when it falls on Shabbat you do recite a blessing. Then he quoted *Sefer HaMisvot* who said that even when Kippur falls on Shabbat you light without a blessing since the candles in this case are not for eating the meal like they are on a regular Shabbat. Likewise, the Radbaz also wrote that even when Kippur falls on Shabbat the candles are lit without a blessing since you do not eat with the light of the candles. But from HaRambam who wrote (*Mishneh Torah*

Hil. Sh'bitat 'Asor 3:10) that when Kippur falls on Shabbat everyone is obligated to light candles because lighting a candle for Shabbat is an obligation, it seems that one must recite the blessing, since it is an obligation and it is not dependent upon local custom. Also, Maran in *Shulhan 'Arukh* (quoted above OH 263:5) only suggested not reciting the blessing when Kippur didn't fall on Shabbat. Still in all Hakham Abraham Hamway concluded that even when Kippur falls on Shabbat a blessing is not recited since it is still a matter of disagreement among the authorities and the rule of *safeq b'rakhot l'haqel* still applies.

Lastly our community custom of lighting candles on 'Ereb Kippur without a blessing was recorded in our *Kol Yaakov Siddur* in the 2009 printing on the bottom of page 526. There it states that the custom of Aram Soba is not to recite a blessing upon the candles for Yom Kippur. It is stated plainly without differentiating between Kippur that falls on a weekday and Kippur that falls on Shabbat. This is consistent with Hakham Abraham Hamway's conclusion in his *Mahzor Bet HaKaporet*.

Mr. Arking is an expert on Sephardic Minhagim and regular contributor to Qol Ha-Qahal.



THE JEWISH MESSAGE TO MANKIND: AWARENESS

Rabbi Sammy Kassir

The Torah gives us many laws, statutes, and customs in order to imbue in us a sense of justice. The Torah wants to teach us that we must be aware. Once a person is aware of themselves, they can change, repair and build. Where is this concept found in the holidays? I would like to take three holidays, Tish'a Be'Ab, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Tish'a Be'Ab is a day of national awareness and national repentance. The nation as a whole has to collectively be together to rebuild the Jewish nation with the focal point being the Bet Hamikdash, the spiritual capital of the world. Together living our lives in the land that God commanded us to be, to develop ourselves, to do His commandments in order to be a beacon to the world. This is the nation that Hashem want us to

the ultra-orthodox - they don't love the State of Israel, they do not go to the Army and they, the ultra-orthodox look down on everybody else etc. etc.

We must take the national awareness of Tish'a Be'Ab to try to build bridges between all sections of Israel and try to relate to one another with mutual respect instead of hatred. I would like to provide two examples of how the bridges are possible to build. There was a great rabbi, Hakham Yaakov Mussafi (who was one of the rabbis of Hakham Yossef Rafal), who was an ultra-orthodox, anti-Israel, rabbi. During the Six-Day War, when Jerusalem was liberated and the fighting stopped, the soldiers came from the Old City by foot through Meah She'arim to the Army Base of Shcneller. They told Rabbi Musafi that the Army was coming through Meah She'arim. The Rabbi with all his students went to see

“This awareness has carried over to a new Jewish nation where 95% of the people put mezuzot on their front doors.”

be. If we make people aware of the spiritual side of the land; that being part of a land and that the Jewish people follow Hashem's ways- then everybody would want to be part of it; then all peoples would want to emulate our nation. Everybody would come to the Bet Hamikdash for their spiritual needs. If we introspect, we will rebuild the nation where everybody will love and respect the ones who think different.

Hatred will desist and people will internalize and act with mutual respect. Religious people are disappointed with secular people, because they run the country, they run the army, they run the businesses and they are sinners and you cannot work with sinners. Secular people look at the religious as primitive, wanting to stop progress, non-educated, trying to take us back to the middle ages, etc. etc. The traditional look down at

the soldiers. Rabbi Yaakov Musafi danced in front of the soldiers in appreciation. The soldiers asked him to make a prayer for the dead and he said that he couldn't because these people died on Kiddush Hashem and were on such a high level that he could not do them justice. They persisted and he did it out of love for the Jewish people and a deeper national awareness- a bigger picture. He was always thankful to the soldiers for liberating Jerusalem. And from then onwards, he went to pray at the Kotel Hamaaravi every Friday afternoon until he passed away in 1976. This story was told to me by my father-in-law, Rabbi Aharon Kohen A"H who was present during the war.

Let me tell you another story that illustrates the point of building bridges and focusing on the bigger picture. In 1968, on the 28th Iyar **all** the yeshivot in Jerusalem

recited the Hallel prayer. The following year, 1969, all of the Ashkenazi yeshivot stopped saying the Hallel prayer as to not give credibility to the Zionists who freed Jerusalem. In Porat Yosef in which I was present, I said Hallel for that year. It was not until 1970 because to be part of the yeshiva world, that Porat Yosef stopped. Just like on 9/11, in the time of tragedy and need, people overlook their own needs or things for the betterment of everybody else, as a nation we have to start thinking bigger. We have to make a Jewish nation that is going to be the light amongst the nations.

Yom Kippur is a day of personal introspection. It is a day where an individual has to look at how to fix themselves in preparing to walk with God and mankind. Repentance starts with awareness. Once we know what's wrong and that we have sinned we make ourselves aware of this, we make changes in ourselves for our own personal growth and this personal growth overflows to everybody else.

Yom Kippur is one holiday that all of Israel closes including the airport and all governmental offices. In 1948, only 47% of the people kept Yom Kippur and today over 80% of the Jews in Israel keep the tradition of Yom Kippur. This awareness has carried over to a new

Jewish nation where 95% of the people put *mezuzot* on their front doors. 98% of Jews in Israel today do something traditional and spiritual. Increased awareness will perpetuate greatness for the Jewish people.



Rosh Hashanah is the day that we focus our awareness on God as our King. We put the awareness of God, the King upon us and we put the greatness of the Kingdom of Heaven upon ourselves. In the past 40 years, we have brought almost 1,000,000 people back to traditional Jewish observance. They try their best to do *misvot* and to become better people. All of the prayers on Rosh Hashanah revolve around the awareness that God is our King. In the prayers, we have 3 parts, Kingship, remembering the good and the bad and shofar to awaken us and make us aware.

If we take the awareness of these 3 holidays: of our nation, ourselves and of God, Judaism and the Jewish people will be a light to the nations and a beacon to mankind.

Rabbi Kassin is the dean of the Shehebar Sephardic Center in Jerusalem, Israel.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

TISH'A BE'AB DAY OF LEARNING PROGRAM

Rabbi Moses Haber

Tish'a Be'Ab is a national day of mourning. It is a day where Jews from all circles unite to remember the tragic events of the first and second temple periods. This summer's Tish'a Be'Ab program was nothing short of that. Through the SCA's community-wide Day of Learning, our community members came together to learn about and mourn the destruction of the Temples and the history surrounding those times, as well as contemplate the future of our Jewish communities.

One of the goals of the SCA is to bring together representatives of each affiliate synagogue/organization to teach and inspire the widest spectrum of community members as possible to have a meaningful fast. Over 30

At this point the JCC auditorium and lobby were filled to capacity. Afterwards, our program continued with classes and lectures throughout the building. Mr. Charles Anteby and DJ Cohen gave a special SBH workshop on "dealing with challenges" to a group of over 200 community members of all ages.

The SCA vision that we as a community are stronger when lay leadership and rabbinical leadership work off of each other's strengths was on full display as President Mr. Hymie Shamah and board member Mr. Bobby Dweck worked together with the rabbis and teachers to keep the program and all of its many moving parts running smoothly.

"One of the goals of the SCA is to bring together representatives of each affiliate synagogue/organization to teach and inspire the widest spectrum of community members."

dynamic and thoughtful teachers from our synagogues, volunteer organizations, and community schools taught classes or gave workshops for adults, college and young professionals, and elementary school children throughout the day.

At certain times there were six classes being given simultaneously, each with an overwhelming amount of passionate attendees searching for meaning amidst the tragedies our people experienced throughout time. At 1 o'clock all adult classes were brought together to hear a video address from Lord Rabbi Jonathan Saks, a class from Rabbi Dweck and a special tribute by Mrs. Emily Labaton in memory of Rabbi Dr. Ezra Labaton.

Rabbis and teachers are essential to continuing the education of our community. The SCA acknowledges that it is a limited resource which we have to appreciate, foster, and grow. The Day of Learning was a day of introspection and inspiration due to our rabbis and teachers. The SCA would like to thank all of the teachers for helping to make the day a success. May we merit the full redemption in the coming year with this being the last Tish'a Be'Ab.

Rabbi Haber is Director of the SCA Women's, College and Young Adult Summer program.

Thank you to all educators for helping to make the Tish'a Be'Ab program a success

Mr. Charles Anteby

Mr. Edward Benjamin

Rabbi Joseph Beyda

Mr. David J. Cohen

Mrs. Doris Cohen

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YOM KIPPUR

“I SHALL BE SAFE, THOUGH I FOLLOW MY OWN WILLFUL HEART” (DEUT. 29:18)

Professor Nathan Aviezer¹

This week’s reading contains a perplexing statement regarding someone who has turned to idolatry yet thinks that the Holy One, blessed be He, will not punish him: “...he may fancy himself immune, thinking, ‘I shall be safe, though I follow my own willful heart’” (Deut. 29:18). This verse makes one wonder, since time and again the Torah stipulates the most severe punishment for a community or individuals who turn to idolatry, as in the second passage of the *Shema*:

Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For the Lord’s anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the Lord is assigning to you. (Deut. 11:16-17)

The Torah also contains two lengthy passages of admonishment, one over thirty verses long (Lev. 26:14-46), and the other over fifty verses long (Deut. 28:15-68), containing 98 curses that include a detailing of the most severe punishments that

will be visited on a person who turns to idolatry. After all these warnings, how could anybody conceivably think “I shall be safe” when worshipping other gods? What sense is there in ten verses (Deut. 29:19-28) again enumerating all these punishments, as we find in this week’s reading? What new point is Scripture making that does not appear in the previous passages of the Torah pertaining to idolatry?

The answer depends on understanding the world outlook of the idol-worshipper. In the modern Western world, a religious person is either a devout Jew or a devout Moslem or a devout Christian. One would not observe Jewish ritual alongside Christian ritual, or Christian alongside Moslem. This, however, was not so in the past. In the ancient world it was generally assumed that every people had its own gods.

For example, the main god of the Romans was Jupiter, and other gods accompanied him, including Ceres, the god of agriculture, and Mars, the god of war. But the Romans did not doubt the existence of the gods of other nations, like the Greek gods, with Zeus at the head of their pantheon, Demeter, the Greek god of agriculture,



Professor Nathan Aviezer

¹ Translated by Rachel Rowen

and Ares, the Greek god of war. Yet the Romans placed greater faith in Roman gods and therefore offered their sacrifices to them. In a year of drought, however, Romans would bring offerings to the Greek Demeter, as well, or before an important battle against a dangerous foe, Roman soldiers would offer sacrifices to Mars as well as Ares. The Romans did not view bringing sacrifices to Greek gods as in any way detracting from their faith in the Roman gods.

In fact, the idea that one can offer sacrifices to the gods of two different faiths at the same time is not unique to the past, nor limited to primitive tribes in central Africa. For example, in Japan, a developed and modern state in every respect, the typical devout Japanese might believe both in Shinto and in Buddhism. The home of devout Japanese contains two altars, one for gifts to the Shinto gods and another for gifts to Buddha. Shinto ritual is jolly and full of *joie de vivre*, therefore weddings are celebrated according to Shinto practice, but funerals in Japan follow Buddhist ritual, emphasizing the seriousness of life and soul-reckoning.

Believing in the existence of the gods of other peoples also explains the first encounter of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh. When the Holy One, blessed be He, sent Moses and Aaron to ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh said to them: “Who is the Lord that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go” (Ex. 5:2). Pharaoh had no doubt that Moses and Aaron were indeed sent to him by their God, the Holy One, blessed be He, for he believed that every

people had its own god. However, Pharaoh related to the God of Israel disparagingly, as to a lesser god, for he had never heard of Him (“I do not know the Lord”), and even considered Him a god with no power (“Who is the Lord that I should heed Him?”).

The purpose of the portents that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Moses and Aaron to perform was not to prove the existence of the Holy One, blessed be He, in whom Pharaoh already believed. Rather, it was to persuade Pharaoh that the Holy One, blessed be He, had power and influence.



*Water Is Changed into Blood,
Watercolor by James Tissot*

When Moses cast down his staff before Pharaoh and turned it into a serpent (Ex. 7:9), it was important for Pharaoh to know whether this sign attested to the might of the Hebrew God. Therefore, Pharaoh asked his wise men to replicate the sign. When the Egyptian sorcerers proved successful (“and the Egyptian magicians, in turn, did the same with their spells” [Ex. 7:11]), Pharaoh became convinced that he had no reason to fear the Holy One, blessed be He.

The same demonstration of power is repeated in the first three plagues: blood (Ex. 7:22), frogs (Ex. 8:3) and lice (Ex. 8:14). Pharaoh asked his magicians to replicate these miracles in order to check whether the Holy One, blessed be He, had more might than the Egyptian gods.

The main point for our discussion is that knowing whether the Holy One, blessed be He, existed was not

Continued on page 16

Continued from page 15

the issue for Pharaoh; the only question in Pharaoh's eyes was the amount of power and influence wielded by God.

Another illustration of this world view can be found in the book of Jonah, in the conversation between the pagan sailors and Jonah. The setting is well known (Jonah 1:4-7): Jonah refused to go to Nineveh as the Holy One, blessed be He, had commanded him, and instead boarded a ship setting sail in the opposite direction. To force Jonah to obey him, the Holy One, blessed be He, caused a tempest at sea, and the sailors on board, highly experienced professionals who had never seen such a violent tempest, understood that this was not a natural storm and concluded that the gods must be angry.

The sailors were asked to pray each to his own god ("cried out, each to his own god" [Jonah 1:5]), but to no avail. The tempest only grew stronger and "the ship was in danger of breaking up." By casting lots the sailors established that the tempest was due to Jonah, at which point they asked Jonah, "Tell us, what is your business? Where have you come from? What is your country, and of what people are you?" (Jonah 1:8).

This seems to be a totally incomprehensible dialogue. What was the meaning of these questions? When any moment was likely to be their last, why was it important for the sailors to know Jonah's occupation, place of residence, and citizenship? Jonah's answer was strange, as well: "I am a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of Heaven, who made both sea and land" (Jonah 1:9). Had anyone asked Jonah about his faith?

This conversation can be explained as follows: it was clear to the sailors that each profession had its own god, each city its own god, and each people, its own god. Perhaps Jonah had an influential god connected with his occupation ("what is your business?"), or a powerful god associated with his country ("what is your country?"), or a mighty god related to his people ("of what people are you?"). Perhaps, the sailors thought, praying to Jonah's gods would save them.

Jonah understood the questions and answered the sailors that the Hebrews have only one God, the Holy One,

blessed be He, who rules over the entire world ("who made both sea and land" [Jonah 1:9]). The important point for our discussion is that the sailors thought, as was common in their day, that there existed other gods, aside from their own, on whom one could, and even should, depend in time of need. They saw no harm done to their own faith by also turning to other gods.

Now let us return to this week's reading. The Israelite who turns to worshipping idols but thinks, "I shall be safe," does not necessarily think that idolatry means the person abandons the Holy One, blessed be He, and begins to offer sacrifices and address his prayers to other gods alone. He might think that if he does not stop believing in the Holy One, blessed be He, but continues to pray to Him and offer Him sacrifices, while also observing the religious rites of another people, that is perfectly alright in the eyes of the Lord ("I shall be safe").

But the Holy One, blessed be He, warns the Israelites here against any tendency to adhere to this mistaken approach: "Beware...Do not inquire about their gods, saying 'How do those nations worship their gods? I too will follow those practices'" (Deut. 12:30). The Torah stresses that such behavior is altogether unacceptable (Deut. 29:19-27). When it comes to the Jewish faith, one cannot have both "the one and the other."

Today, too, there is a tendency in certain Jewish circles to be tolerant of other religions to the extent of incorporating ritual elements of other faiths into Judaism in order to "improve" Judaism and make it attractive to the public. The Torah rules out any such approach *a priori*, as it says: "You shall not add anything to what I command you" (Deut. 4:2).

Professor Aviezer is Professor of Physics at Bar Ilan University and author of the books, In the Beginning: Biblical Creation and Science and Fossils and Faith: Understanding Torah and Science. In 2016 he was an SCA scholar in residence



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ROSH HASHANAH

ROSH HASHANAH 5777 MESSAGE

Rabbi Ilan Acoca

A few summers ago, we enrolled our younger son Nissim Shalom to the Vancouver Bike Camp. As he was about to leave the house, my wife saw trepidation on his face, and, speaking with him, it seems he was nervous about how he'd do at camp. He'd already started to ride a bike, but this was an event outside of the family setting with other kids his own age.

Having been reassured that everything would work out, Nissim began the fateful first day. When I picked him up at the end of the day, he was positively beaming! He was extremely proud that the counselor felt he was the best bike rider there and was to be moved from the expected level one to level three!

a roadmap! God has given us explicit instructions on how to return to the right path. This way, of course, is called *teshubah*.

Understanding we've made a mistake in our behavior, then demonstrating true contrition by making restitution, and, finally, devising a realistic response, should the identical circumstances which lead to our sin in the first place arise again, we are ready for a "return." I say "ready" because we attain the highest level of *teshubah* when we've been tested with the same situation which lead to our *'avera* (transgression). I hasten to say that, even if we are never again tested in exactly the same way, this does not mean our *teshubah* is not valid.

“God has given us explicit instructions on how to return to the right path. This way, of course, is called teshubah.”

A few days later, I picked up Nissim at camp and saw a drawn, sad face climb into the car. It turns out that he had fallen from the bike, got a scratch on his arm which one would have thought from his expression was a mortal wound, and, on top of this "tragedy," he had been stung by a wasp. Not a good day for our hero!

I hugged him, and, after a few minutes of silence, I told him things like this happen to everyone. He listened quietly, as I attempted to console and encourage him. We got home where his mother did what mothers do, and soon Nissim returned to his old (six-year-old) self.

This event got me thinking that, of course, discouraging things happen to adults too, and I thought of a line in my siddur (Livorno), "You give a hand to sinners because Your right [hand] is open to accept those who return [to the right path]."

We Jews are fortunate that we always have a way back, and, moreover, we don't have to go to the CAA or AAA for

We shall forever have the opportunity to do *teshubah*. The Rambam says (Hilchot Teshubah, 2A), "Even if one sinned his whole life and repented [only] on his dying day... all of his sins are forgiven." Simply put, it's never too late to stand up when we fall.

Let us remember that, whatever the adversity we confront as we struggle to live as Jews, our Father in heaven continues to care for us—and welcomes our *teshubah*!

As we near the High Holidays, I wish you all a sweet and happy year!

Rabbi Acoca is the author of The Sephardic Book of Why which will be available for purchase in 2017. Rabbi Acoca served as pulpit rabbi of Congregation Beth Hamidrash in Vancouver from 1999. In 2016 Rabbi Acoca became the Rabbi of Sephardic Congregation of Fort Lee and Rabbi in Residence of Ben Porat Yosef School in New Jersey.

David M Betesh, DMD

On **Shabbat Shubah** (Shabbat Vayeikh, Deuteronomy 31:1-30), the morning prayers are conducted in *maqam Mehayar* (this is a maqam within the *Bayat* family). Other sources cite *Maqam Hoseni*, which is related to *Matan Torah*, due to this being the time of year when we repent and reaccept the statutes of the

Torah upon ourselves. *Hazzanut*: All melodies should be associated with the High Holidays. *Nishmat*: *Asham VaZa' Mizedonehu*; *Shavat 'Aniyim: Ya Hasdakh Gali* (339); *El Hahoda'ot: Yisrael Abadekha*; *Qaddish: Ben Adama*; *Semehim: Lekha Eli*; *Mimisrayim: Ya Shema Ebyonekha*; *Naqdishakh: Yede Rashim*.

שבת שובה ליל שבת		ליל שני ראש השנה	
כרדאן כלולו	קדיש	למנצח על הגתית לאסף	מה מור
כל ענין בלבב פנימה	ראו בנים	חזן תחון על בניך לך נאבים	פזמון
יום שבת שובה	ה הוא קלרים	דלתי תשובה חי פתח לי	קדיש
זשפעת רביבים יוריד מזכולו	ה מולך	חגאו מתל מוצצרים	ראו בנים
תבעי גוא ולדנא הי	הללויה	יגדל להים תבעי תכם רפא כאווק	יגדל להים
אשם וזע מזדונהו	נשמת	יום ראש השנה שחרית	יום ראש השנה שחרית
כרהום יא ברהום	שועת	ה הוא קלרים ה הוא הלוקים	ה הוא קלרים
יחיד רם קי לעולם	להו	כרדאן כלולו	ה מולך
בן אדמה בן אדמה	קדיש	ה יום לך אעיון תונה	פזמון
לך לי תשוקתי	נשמחים	יה שומך ארוממן	פזמון ב
אשם לבי א כפים	מוצצרים	אותילה ללא אחלה פנגו	נשמת
יצו הל לרל שחל שש על ימי	קדושה	צארה בדון נגם	שועת
קר ה להיך שובה חמו היל לפנותטנו	שיר סת	צארה בדון נגם	להו
אבות הכנים ביהר שמתן כבר מצוק	כתב יתנו	חזקו וגילו כי שוד גמר	קדיש
שחר אבק שך	אין טליתו	אין כמק בשרג	שומחים
מנתת נשבת שובה	ואני תפלותי	עלא נגם ראו בנים אנג	מוצצרים
ואני תפלותי	קדושה	שיך סלאמה חגאזי	קדושה
יא גדאלא צארה קלבי	מוצצרי נשבת	נהקותה לק ישראל אכרו	שיר סת
בן אדמה בן אדמה	קדיש	כלק בקוליהא	כתב יתנו
ידי נכנים גדידק	ראו בנים	אין טליתו	אין טליתו
		מנתת ראש השנה	
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SHABBAT-TABLE TALKS: ROSH HASHANAH

Rabbi Ralph Tawil

Value: Internalizing the Meaning of the Shofar

One distinctive element of the holiday of Rosh Hashanah is the misvah of hearing the sound of the shofar. In fact, it is the only aspect of the day that the Torah mentioned. The Torah does not mention the first day of the seventh month, neither as “the New Year,” nor as the “Day of Judgment,” two ideas contained in the common name of the holiday. Rather, the day is either called 1) a day commemorated with loud blasts or 2) a day when the horn is sounded. The Torah does not give the reason for sounding the shofar, nor does it specify that the shofar is indeed the instrument to be sounded. The manner of blowing the shofar and its meaning are described in the rabbinic tradition and in the liturgy. This discussion will explore both of these aspects of the Shofar.

Discussion (the Shofar’s Sound)

For younger children: How does the shofar sound? Who can make the noise? (Let them take turns making the sound.)

The shofar blast consists of three basic sounds. A long sound known as 1) *teqi’ah*, and 2) two versions of a broken sound known as, a) *shebarim* (which is three or four shorter sounds) b) *teru’ah* (a rapid burst of short

sounds).

Help your children to identify the different sounds as you make them and then have them practice making the sounds.

What should we do when the rabbi is blowing the shofar in shul? (We must be very quiet and listen to the sound and think. We should not make the sounds ourselves, because that would disturb other people from listening.)

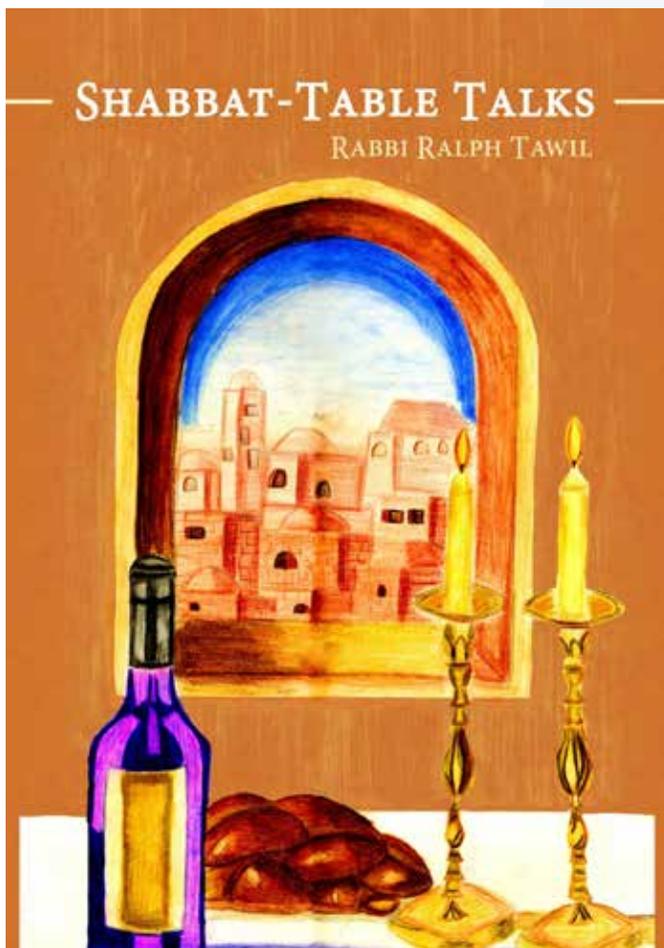
For older children, explain that the basic sound is that of a *teru’ah* (a broken sound) sandwiched between two *teqi’ot* (long, straight sounds). The Rabbis explain that the *teru’ah* should be like the sound of a person crying, but they differ as to the nature of that crying sound. It is comprised either of a) *shebarim* and *teru’ah*, b) *shebarim* alone or c) *teru’ah* alone. In order to exhaust all possibilities all three variations are tried:

Teqi’ah, Shebarim Teru’ah, Teqi’ah

Teqi’ah, Shebarim, Teqi’ah

Teqi’ah, Teru’ah, Teqi’ah

This basic set contains ten separate sounds (counting *shebarim teru’ah* of the first line as two sounds). In the



Sephardic tradition, it is repeated ten times during the prayers, making for 100 sounds of the shofar. The last sound of the shofar is a long *teru'ah* that is done at the end of the prayers. The shofar blower tries to extend that *teru'ah* to include 100 short sounds.

How is the sound made? (The shofar blower passes air through his pursed lips. The quality of that sound is improved by the resonance of the hollowed-out ram's horn that is the shofar.)

Discussion (The Meaning of the Shofar Sound)

Why do we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah? (Your children probably have some answers that they learned in school. Let them have a chance to show off what they know.)

The reason for sounding the shofar and the whole meaning of the holiday on the first day of the seventh month is omitted from the Torah. According to one opinion in the Talmud, this is the period when the world was created. Hashem's aspect of the mighty King, Creator of the universe is emphasized. The sounding of a fanfare upon the arrival of a king was a recognized practice from ancient times. For example:

With trumpets and the blast of the shofar, raise a shout before Hashem, the king. (*Psalms* 98:6)

This is one idea that connects the shofar with this holiday. So the shofar means the King (Hashem) is appearing.

Maimonides, in his "Laws of Repentance" (3:4), associates the sound of the shofar with the period of the Ten Days of Penitence that Rosh Hashanah ushers in.

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a scriptural decree, there is a hint contained in it. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying: "Wake up, O sleepers from your sleep, and slumberers from your slumber." Inspect your ways and repent—remember your Creator. All you who forget the truths for the trifles of times, and errantly waste all their years in chasing futility and emptiness, that will not help you and will not save, look into your souls and improve your ways and your actions. Each one of you should leave his evil ways and his improper thoughts.

What is the function of the shofar according to the Rambam? (It serves as a kind of alarm, to wake up people from their sleep.)



What does Rambam mean by "sleepers?" (Those who waste their time with meaningless things.)

What does Rambam mean about the "trifles of the times"? (The passing fads and concerns that have nothing to do with truth.)

This idea of the meaning of the shofar's sound can be connected to the first idea (of announcing the arrival of the king). In the presence of a great person, one becomes self-conscious and is worried about how one appears and sounds. In the presence of the King of Kings who knows our innermost thoughts, we will make sure that we banish all improper thoughts and actions.

Rabbi Tawil is the author of Shabbat-Table Talks (Tebah Educational Services, 2014).



ILEAD INTERVIEW WITH MR. RICHIE CHALME

ILEAD, the Joseph D. Beyda Leadership Program is now in its seventh year. Qol Ha-Qahal interviewed the Director, Richie Chalme after another successful cohort completed the program this August.

QH (Qol Ha-Qahal): What are the most important values that you try to instill on each trip?

RC (Richie Chalme): We have simplified our values to the ILEAD 4:

1. Build yourself
2. Build your nation
3. Build your history through the Tanach
4. Build a growth intellect

Our programming, from our hikes, presentations, and workshops to the personalities the Pioneers meet, are all fused with these core values and approach to life. We strive to open their minds to question, think, challenge and learn.

QH: How do you make these points important to young people?

RC: The ILEAD program is based on experiential learning. We don't simply speak to them, we discuss with them. We don't tell them about the significance of places, we learn about them in the Tanach and then hike them! For example: We don't preach teamwork, we exhibit it by tying a rope to each Pioneer, one to the other and allow them climb a mountain together; each one understanding my speed is their speed. My delay is their delay and so on.

The program is designed to help build the Pioneers with an approach to problem solving. For example, we will discuss the problem of "water" in Israel or a desert and then have them come up with ideas and solves for them. Eventually they learn about irrigation drip by seeing the technology first-hand and understanding that every challenge presents an opportunity to think and grow bigger.

When they are exposed to these types of activities and companies, the lessons become part of them as opposed to just information passing through.



QH: After another great year of ILEAD, what was the most notable feature of this year's trip?

RC: The real unforgettable moment happened on our visit to the Knesset. Professor Michael Oren, former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. and current Member of Knesset, shared with us his personal journey to success. From a young age he struggled with learning disabilities and was deemed unfit for leadership roles. Michael shared with us his formula for success as well his core beliefs. Perhaps inspired by Professor Oren, the Pioneers then led a series of prepared debates on issues central to the character of the Jewish state. This visit included an inspirational life story as well as the clear display of intellectual development by our bright young leaders.

QH: What is "Beyond the Limit"?

RC: Beyond the Limit is ILEAD's fellowship program. Every one of us have experienced inspiration in our lives. Either through a great person, speech, seminar, concert or production. Usually that inspiration tends to fade after a couple weeks or a month if we are lucky. "Beyond the Limit" is there for 3 purposes:

1. To continue building on the values, lessons that the Pioneers learned on their journey.
2. To create a platform so they can continue to question and search for their individuality and place in our community and nation.
3. To infuse their friends around them with the lessons and allow for them to share their experiences

through new ones with those that didn't have the opportunity to go on the trip.

Events that we often have include everything from Friday night discussions, workshops, hikes, and other fun events focused on 17-25 year olds.

QH: Who is this program open to?

RC: The ILEAD Israel Program is open to those finishing 11th grade, and takes place in the summer that they enter Senior Year. Beyond the Limit is open to anyone ages 17-25.

QH: Where do you hope the pioneers will be 5, 10, and 15 years from now?

RC: Super question. I can't write the script for the Pioneers as I think each have their own unique skill set they bring to their table. I can tell you what I would hope for and in return what would all expect from that hope. I would hope first and foremost, they would have an understanding of who they are and their strengths. With that they would have the ability to know that the world is their stage and their potential can take them wherever they want to lead. If that hope is true I would expect to see them in leadership positions in the community, Israel, business world, academia, and probably beyond things we think about today.

QH: If someone wants to find out more about ILEAD and "Beyond the Limit" what can they do?

RC: They can visit our website at www.ileadexperience.org or email info@ileadexperience.org to join our mailing list.





PARASHAT NISABIM

THE CHANCE TO RETURN

Rabbi Nissim Elnecavé

In our parashah, Moshe Rabbenu is nearing the closing of his address to the Jewish people. The entire nation stood in front of Moshe, and he spoke to them about the covenant that they were to enter, an everlasting pact with God. Moshe warned the people and told them to keep the commandments and the precepts stipulated in the Torah. He forewarned that there would be grave consequences if they were to transgress those commandments, yet he said that even after breaching the covenant, God would always give the nation the opportunity to repent, to do *“teshubah.”* He states, “And you should return to the Lord your God” (Devarim 30:2).

Quoting the midrash, Rabbi Avraham Haleva¹ writes in his Rosh Hashanah sermon that Rabbi Shemuel in the name of Rabbi Meyer suggested the following parable related to

messengers saying, a son that has shame can return to his father, is it not that he is humbling himself in front of his father?²

Rabbi Haleva then quotes a second midrash, he says that at the time that God created man, Adam, he lifted him above the many trees that were in the Garden of Eden. Then God said to Adam, look at my creation, how pleasant and beautiful it is. You are to know that everything that I have created, I have created it for you. Pay attention and set in your mind never to damage my world, because if you harm it, no one after you will repair it. What is more, by harming it you’d be causing the death of Moshe Rabbenu. The midrash then adds a parable: it states that this could be compared to a woman who while pregnant was thrown in prison. During her time in prison she gave birth to a child who grew up there with

“Rabbi Haleva says that when we look at the perfection and the beauty of creation, we understand its wisdom and the purpose of it all.”

repentance: The prince rebelled against his father, he broke his father’s rules causing him great shame. Eventually, because of his bad behavior, the son felt compelled to abandon and leave the palace. Hoping to bring him back, the king sent messengers time and again, begging him to return. But time and again, the prince informed the messengers that he felt terribly ashamed and he could not face his father after all that he had done. He said, I have not only broken the laws of my father, but I’ve also broken the laws of the king. However, when the king heard what the prince had said, he sent other

her. After some time, the mother died and the son was left in the prison with all the other criminals. One day the king passed by the gates of the prison. The young man saw the king and called out, “Your majesty, I was born here and it is here where I have grown up, under what transgression am I been kept in prison?” The king thought for a moment and said, “I do not know why.” Then the king said, “It is because of the transgressions of your mother that you’re in prison.”³

Indeed, one midrash seems to be deeper than the other. Commenting on the second midrash, Rabbi Haleva says that when we look at the perfection and the beauty of creation, we understand its wisdom and the purpose of it all. This statement is being directed to every human being, everything

¹ Rabbi Avraham Haleva was born in Jerusalem in 1858 to his father Rabbi Yishak Haleva. Rabbi Haleva was sent as messenger to a number of communities throughout the diaspora at the age of 29. Representing the Jewish community of Jerusalem in those days, was very prestigious, the most respected rabbis were often the ones sent to collect funds for the poor. Rabbi Haleva not only represented the Sephardic community, but also the Mugrabi Community and the prestigious Yeshiva of the Mekubalim, Bet El. He traveled extensively through Persia, the Arab lands, North Africa, Italy, and the Balkans. In the year 1900 he moved from Jerusalem to Leghorn. He passed away in 1921.

² Devarim Rabba 2:16.

³ Kohelet Rabba 7.

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in the universe seems to serve a greater purpose. Man must learn to do misvot and good deeds in order to build a better world. However, failure to understand its purpose and the misuse of what has been given to us, will bring great harm to our societies. He states further, it is not only the harm that one might bring to himself, but it is also the damage that could carry on for generations. If a society has become destructive and unstable, it might take generations for it to be repaired. If not restored in time, the next generations will suffer greatly for the transgressions of their elders, just as the son that was born in prison to his mother, he was left in prison because of the transgressions of his mother and for no fault of his own.

He explains further that a society that is destructive and unstable, will have great difficulty developing strong leadership. The leaders are limited by the circumstances that surround them. In other words, Moshe Rabbenu could not have attained a great status of prophecy and of humanity if the Jewish society had not been stable and supportive of his leadership.

Rabbi Avraham Haleva writes that the possibility of *teshubah* is a unique opportunity that has been given to humans. Man has the ability to reverse his or her course. Tehsubah will save man from many of the evil consequences and maladies that he or she might be facing.

However, often fear and shame or the belief that we cannot change, make us doubt and we hesitate to take the steps that we know will benefit us. Returning to the first midrash, Rabbi Haleva explains that there are times when one feels

that after amassing a number of transgressions, it becomes impossible to face God and ask for Him for forgiveness for those many transgressions. At times it seems that the burden has become too heavy and it seems that there is no way out. Nevertheless, he states that God is a loving father to all of us who are His creation. He waits for us like a parent who wishes his or her child to return and to be good.⁴

The “Days of Awe” are upon us once again, it’s a time to meditate and to think of the things that we want to repair and what we want to excel on. We must keep in mind that correcting those wrongs is of the essence as we attempt to reach higher goals. We must also remember that delaying from doing so, might not only harm us today, but might also be a detriment to the generations that will follow us. The beginning of the year is a special time, let us return and prepare for a great year, God is waiting for us.

Tizku Leshanim Rabot.

Rabbi Elnecavé was born in Mexico to a family originating in Ottoman Turkey and is the youth Rabbi in congregation Mikdash Eliyahu. In addition to being a community rabbi, he is a staff consultant to Yeshiva University, where his services are called upon to translate Ladino Jewish books.

⁴ Rabbi Avraham Haleva, *Minhat Avraham*, 1st Rosh Hashanah Sermon.

NISABIM/ROSH HASHANAH ROUNDBOUT

Rabbi Joseph Dweck

“When we try to collect information about the world around us, we tend to be guided by our biology, and our attention flows effortlessly toward the sensational – not the relevant so much as the sensational.”

— Nassim Nicholas Taleb, ‘The Black Swan’

Thanks to early human development we are used to thinking in clear terms of cause and effect. We tend to relate to much of our world through simple mechanics. If we are thirsty, drinking brings us satisfaction. If we are building a house, more work will lead to more apparent results. Yet, in our complex world, much of reality is in fact nonlinear. Not all actions yield direct and easily detectible results. Learning is not a purely causal endeavor. My learning does not necessarily grow in proportion to my studies. I might spend many years learning about something and only after a certain undetermined amount of time come to understand it. I cannot necessarily go through clear steps in order to fully absorb it. I might practice a sport but there is no

number of hugs and kisses we share or the number of times we say we love someone. We know that honor is not enhanced incrementally by individual acts but by a complex interrelationship of interactions, words, and gestures. To provide step by step instructions for such things would be futile. While relationships between variables are clear and constant in linear situations, nonlinear outcomes cannot be gauged by how much we put in but by the commitment to a process. Daily and committed practice and study creates a better musician, there are no defined mechanical steps. It is for this reason that Moshe asks us to choose ideals that are laid before us in perashat Nisabim rather than specific acts.

See, I set before you today life and good, and death and ill... (30:15)

Rambam emphasizes the fact that in the above verse, Moshe is charging us to choose a path in life rather than specific actions:

License is given to every human being. If one

“...we come to identify a world in which higher value exists through non-direct and nonlinear realities.”

clear indication of how many hours are required to gain particular levels of performance.

Many of us can become disheartened when our actions do not yield clear and immediate results. We become frustrated when the world doesn’t respond as easily as it would if we could just push a button. Fortunately, though, human beings need not live entirely in the world of cause and effect. We may share these perceptions with other animals but if we choose to live in our conscious minds, we come to identify a world in which higher value exists through non-direct and nonlinear realities. We know that love does not grow in direct ratio to the

wishes to turn towards a path of good and become righteous, the license is in one’s hand. If one wishes to turn towards a path of corruption and become corrupt the license is in one’s hand...as it says, “See I have set before you today life and good and death and ill...”¹

The reading of this parasha before Rosh Hashanah puts us into an effective mindset regarding our involvement on the day. Rosh Hashanah presents us with the question of whom we wish to become as opposed to what we wish to do. We are to choose whether we wish to become

¹ *Mishneh Torah, Teshubah, 5:1,3*

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righteous or immoral rather than to commit to specific New Year's resolutions. We choose a path instead of deeds because life and the nature of our relationship with God is not linear. It is an emergent system that grows through steady and committed endeavors; we achieve greatness in life through staying the course. For this reason, the Hakhamim steer us away from focusing on direct results regarding misvot.

Be careful with light misvot as with weighty misvot for you do not know what the misvot yield.²

What is worrisome is that in many of our current religious teachings it would seem that we have fallen back into the primal animalistic approach to life, tying all of our spiritual growth to causality. We focus on accomplishing specific misvot for specific outcomes, we are taught to say specific chapters of Tehillim (Psalms) in order to get responses for specific issues as if God is some grand computer in the sky that has calculated outputs for specific commands. To look at our own lives and our relationship with God in such a paradigm cheapens

² *Abot, 2:1*

Torah, our lives and our relationship with Him. A misva is precious because it is a step on a path to love and meaning. Reading Tehillim is not done in order to prompt God to do something for us but rather to speak to Him of our feelings and needs in the most beautiful poetry with the hope that our dialogue and expressions of care will cultivate a deep and passionate relationship with Him.

Our world is one where the linear realities of cause and effect are the exception and the nonlinear realities of emergent outcomes are the rule. It is a world that puts freedom and choice into our hands so that we might pour our hearts into the universe and wonder at the astonishing and unexpected fruits that it returns.

Rabbi Dweck is the Senior Rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi Community of the United Kingdom.



SEPHARDIC RABBIS

RABBI HAYIM ABULAFIA (1660-1744), FOUNDER OF MODERN TIBERIAS

Rabbi Yosef Bitton

The Abulafia family is considered one of the most famous Sephardic families of Castila, Spain, and according to their own traditions, they are descendants of David Hamelekh.

One of the most celebrated Rabbis of this family was Rabbi Hayim Abulafia, who was born in Hebron, Israel, in 1660. The family of Rabbi Abulafia moved to Yerushalayim and there Rabbi Hayim studied with the great luminaries of the time, Rabbi Shelomo Algazi and Rabbi Abraham Amigo.

From Yerushalayim he was sent to Turkey in a mission to encourage the thriving local community to support materially the Jews of Eres Yisrael. In Izmir (Smyrna) he met the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Israel Benveniste, who was so impressed with Rabbi Abulafia that he said about him that he was one of the greatest geniuses of his generation.

“When he was 80 years old, Rabbi Abulafia traveled with his family to Israel and began to rebuild the city of Tiberias.”

Rabbi Abulafia also lived for almost ten years in Sefat, where he served as the rabbi of the community. He said that he “had the great merit of being born in Hebron, raised in Yerushalayim, and officiated as a Rabbi in Sefat”, three of the four “holy” cities in Israel (we’ll talk about the fourth shortly).

In 1705 Rabbi Israel Benveniste died and the local community invited Rabbi Abulafia to take his place. Rabbi Abulafia accepted and directed for several years the Jewish community of Izmir, which had over 15,000 families (sic). He was respected and admired by Jews and gentiles. And had an excellent relationship with the Sultan, who consulted with Rabbi Hayim on all kinds of subjects.

While he was in Turkey, Rabbi Abualfia kept thinking

and worrying about Eres Yisrael. Rabbi Abulafia understood that his stay in Turkey might have been providential, not for him personally but for the future of Eres Yisrael. Thus his ambitious plan was conceived: to rebuild the city of Tiberias. Tiberias was the place where the last Sanhedrin functioned, after the destruction of the Second Bet Hamiqdash. Since those days, the city was destroyed and despite the efforts of Don Yosef Nasi and Doña Gracia Mendes almost a hundred years before him, it was never restored.

He found a politically opportune moment, when the Turkish Empire was very influential in the Middle East. And he inspired the wealthy and very generous Izmir Jewish community to support his mission.

When he was 80 years old, Rabbi Abulafia traveled with his family to Israel and began to rebuild the city of Tiberias.

He was engaged in creating jobs to stimulate Jews to settle in the city. And also founded schools and *yeshivot* to study Torah. He also founded the synagogue “*Es Hahayim*,” which exists to this day, in the place of the old synagogue of the Ar”i Haqadosh.

Rabbi Abulafia z “I died and was buried in Tiberias in 1744.

His most famous book is “*Es Hahayim*” a profound commentary on the Torah. According to Rabbi Hida, the book “*Es Hahayim*” cannot be understood from a superficial reading, the greatest benefit is to discover its great depth.

Rabbi Abulafia also wrote, “*Miqrae Qodesh*” explaining some difficult texts of the Talmud; “*Yosef Lemad*” another

commentary on the Torah; and “Shebut Ya’aqob” a commentary on the famous book “Ein Ya’aqob.”

Rabbi Bitton is the Rabbi of Ohel David U’shlomo of Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn.

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STUDENT CORNER

PROGRESSION AS A MEANS OF SURVIVAL

Ms. Raquel Shalam

In a world full of hundreds, even thousands of communities, I truly believe ours is set apart for its vibrancy, deep care for one another, strong family ties, and tremendous plethora of rich heritage. Besides these beautiful qualities, there is a certain pride I hold when I talk about my home, and humility in my membership of such a community. The main source of this is our special commitment to Torah. Neighborhoods and communities, Jewish and secular, have risen and fallen. Our very existence as not only a part of the nation of *'Am Yisrael*, but also as the Sephardic Syrian Community is astonishing. Misvot are done with an extra spice of *hidur* (beautification), synagogues are on every other block and are well attended, families are linked tight and *chessed* (charity) and kindness are flowing, dare I say, like milk

keep our beliefs alive. With this in mind, I came home panicking that my beloved community would disintegrate before my grandchildren got to see it.

My appreciation for the community translated into fear at what I stood to lose. I feared we'd succumb to the entropy of life; that we'd grow lazy, indifferent, or simply blind, and begin to turn religion into something centered around our own convenience. As opposed to living God-centered lives, we'd choose self-centered ones. I feared that we were beginning to throw away what has been so lovingly and painstakingly built for us. In these moments of distress, I realized we must not take what we have for granted if we plan for it to last.

“These classes were more than a series of lectures; they were pilates for the brain, aerobics for the Jewish heart, a dive in an Olympic sized pool, refreshing our yearnings to grow closer to our Boreh (Creator).”

and honey. There's a deep *emunah* in *Haqadosh Barukh Hu* providing a sense of meaning that many around the world can only dream of. How lucky are we to live it!

As I encountered my first year at college, I got a glimpse at different strands of Jewry. I spent time at a synagogue in Allentown where most members were well above my own age; I struggled to find contemporaries there, and it seemed as though the youth had either picked up and left or simply integrated themselves so deep within American society, shedding their religious practices and labels. This is not unique to Allentown; this is all over America and most of the world. The assimilation rate is staggering as fewer and fewer Jews are holding on to the practices that

In my return home, my worry was quelled as I took note of the incredible progress we've made, and particularly, the strides of the SCA Summer Learning Program. How could I possibly imagine the dissipation of this community when each week I sat in a room full of over 60 women as we learned words of Torah? These classes were more than a series of lectures; they were pilates for the brain, aerobics for the Jewish heart, a dive in an Olympic sized pool, refreshing our yearnings to grow closer to our *Boreh* (Creator). I am grateful beyond words to the SCA and the many brilliant rabbis and teachers of this summer's learning program. Probing questions have been asked, relationships have been formed, and progress is made

continuous through these feats. Let's applaud those who learned, those who taught, and those who brought the discussions back home to their family tables and spoke Torah amongst friends. Let us celebrate the progress we've made as a community and take note of the remarkability of what we have. Let us remember that we are indeed a strong and flourishing community and we must work to keep it that way.

I'm not blind to the problems we face, but I choose to see the progress we've made to catapult me towards further development. Progress may be a natural reality simply because of the knowledge acquired over time through trial and error, but this is not enough. Thus, we have a responsibility to continue this spiritual advancement. We are more powerful than we think and the repercussions of our choices extend largely beyond our eyes. We are faced with a question. Essentially, we must evaluate why

we do what we do and make the decision to accept 'Ol Malchut Shamayim (the yoke of the Kingdom Heaven). It is indeed a choice, and with it comes a duty. In order to continue to progress and thrive, we must note that actions are representative of our beliefs; being a theoretical Jew in this day and age is not an effective survival tactic.

I pray that we continue to upkeep the foundations and construct new additions to the home we've built for God and ourselves.

Ms. Shalam is a graduate of Yeshivah of Flatbush High School; she is currently a sophomore at Muhlenberg College, studying studio art, psychology and philosophy.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS:

Rosh Hashanah: Sunday Night-Tuesday, October 2-4

Tzom Gedaliah: Wednesday, October 5

Yom Kippur: Tuesday Night-Wednesday, October 11-12

Sukkot: Sunday Night, October 16-23

Shemini 'Asseret: Sunday Night-Monday October 23-24

Shimhat Torah: Monday Night-Tuesday October 24-25

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EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

THE BEST INVESTMENT IN OUR KIDS

Mr. Maury Litwack

Every time we say Shema, we promise to give our children a Torah education: “*ve’shinantam le’vanecha ve’dibarta bam.*” But as tuition at Jewish day schools and yeshivot skyrockets, many families struggle to keep this promise.

The Orthodox Union (OU), which is not just a kashrut organization, but dedicated to important issues like tuition, is tackling this challenge by working with the wealthiest investor imaginable – the government. We are doing so through an innovative project named Teach NYS.

The Sephardic Community Federation initially created Teach NYS, with the mission that Jewish schools deserve equal government investment. Teach NYS was then

City. They spent millions of dollars and created a network that brought hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers out to vote.

If horses have public advocates, so should Jewish children.

Back in 1965, Rabbi Herman Neuberger, the Executive Director of Ner Israel College and a prolific advocate for the Jewish community, wrote a Jewish Press editorial introducing the idea that we should pursue government funding for secular education for our yeshivot.

Finally, Teach NYS is doing exactly that - lobbying legislatures for education funding our children deserve.

*“This coming year, yeshivot will get \$150 million.
Sephardic schools alone will get over \$12 million.”*

expanded and brought under the umbrella of the OU. Together with 25 of the top Yeshivot in New York and a group of visionary families, a “first of it’s kind” organization was born, dedicated to aggressively raising government dollars for Jewish education in the way other causes pursue their respective interests.

When I worked in Congress, I learned how big businesses and causes secure government funding. They invest heavily in two areas: top lobbyists and getting voters to the polls.

Historically, funding for Jewish education hasn’t worked this way. But nowadays, a cause doesn’t even have to be that important to benefit from advocacy. Animal rights activists tried to ban horse-drawn carriages in New York

We hired the best lobbyists and political strategists. We brought leaders from the Sephardic community together with leaders from throughout New York. Together, they are all working with the top 25 yeshivot in the state including Barkai, Magen David, Flatbush, and YDE.

We are making major progress. Four years ago, before we started, the government allocated about \$40 million a year to yeshivot in New York. This coming year, yeshivot will get \$150 million. Sephardic schools alone will get over \$12 million.

The potential is so much more. I’ve helped win these battles in other states including in Philadelphia where now a majority of children there receive scholarship aid through the government. I’ve worked in Florida, and now one out

of every four kids there receives scholarship aid through the government. This means thousands and thousands of dollars per child.

But so much more is possible – and necessary. By funding secular education, one of our ambitious goals, the government would offer yeshivas huge financial relief – up to a third of a school’s budget. We also believe that parents should receive a tax deduction for their children’s religious education.

But to make these groundbreaking changes, we need to expand our efforts. Our budget is not nearly enough to accomplish these goals and members of the community don’t yet understand how important it is make their voice heard to the key decision makers in City Hall and Albany.

Here’s how you can help:

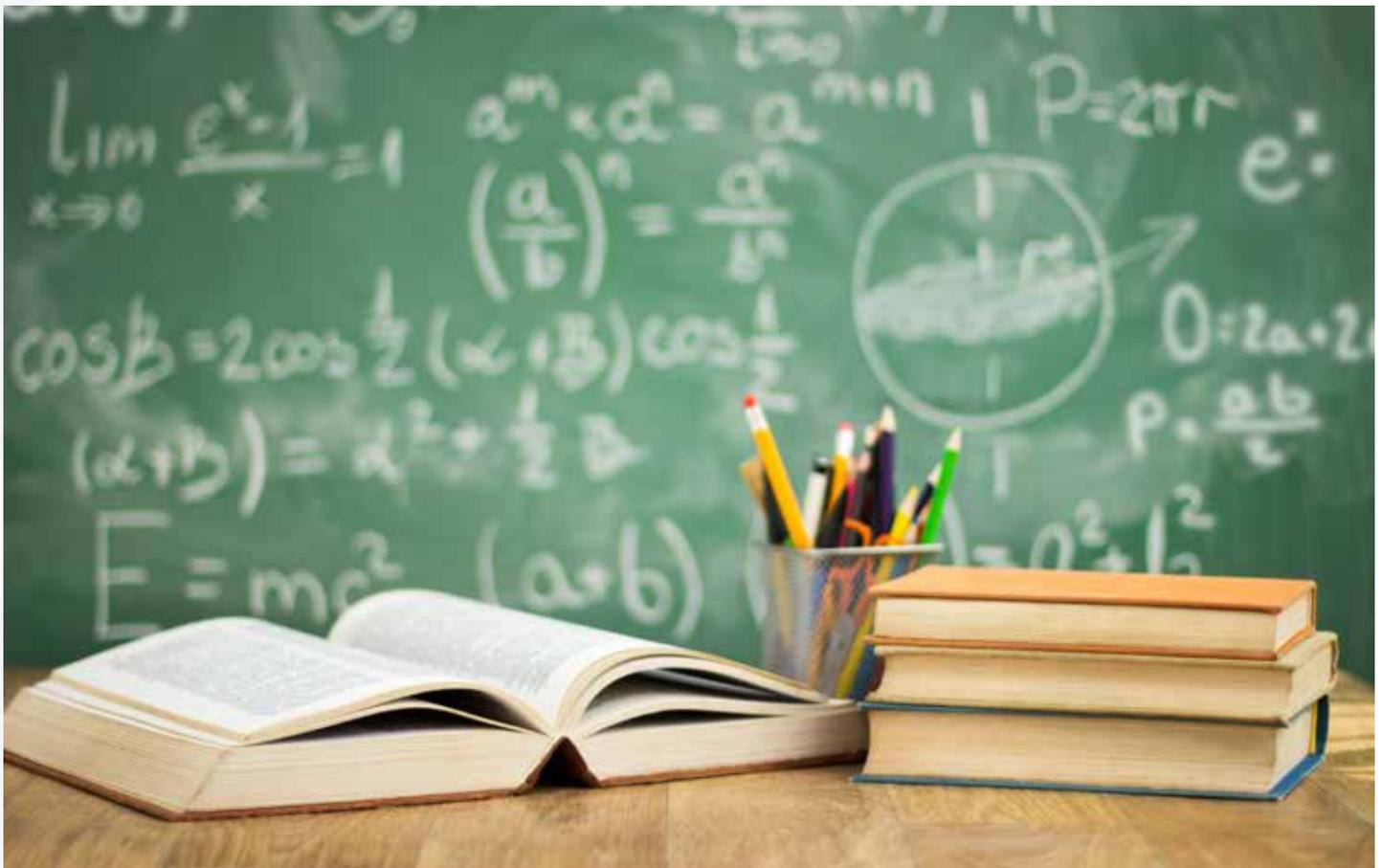
- Learn the facts: See how much money you save the state by sending your kids to private school and contact your local leaders to let them know:

http://www.teachnys.org/facts_figures

- Show up: Come with us to Albany to show our state leaders you care. Last year, only 12 people came. We represent 150,000 Yeshiva students. We need a BIG showing. Email ariellefm@ou.org to learn more.
- Support us: Invest our cause here: <http://www.teachnys.org/donate>

Given our success, it seems like Rabbi Neuberger’s advice was spot on. Let’s not wait another 50 years to get the job done. Our children are counting on us.

Mr. Litwack is Executive Director of Teach NYS and OU Director of Political Affairs. Prior to his time at the OU, he worked for 15 different elected officials in both Congress and local government.





SEPHARDIC HISTORY

NEVER FORGET OUR NOBLE HERITAGE

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נונכה אולבידיס מואיסטרה איסטוריה דיסטינגידה

Mr. Sheldon N. Goldman

Early History of Syria's Jews

The rise of Islam and its speedy conquest of Syria (633-640 CE) brought measures of surcease from persecution, but not completely. The peacefulness of Jewish life depended on caliphs and rulers, many of whom looked upon Jews without animosity. However, Aleppo was swept by contending military forces: Mongol, Byzantine, Mesopotamian, Persian and Egyptian. Jews felt the violence of the warring armies with each change of ruler. Soon after the almost unresisted sweep by the Arabian followers of Muhammed, regular and large scale trading become possible with increased relative safety. From time immemorial Aleppo had been the base and terminus for wide-scale trading caravans and benefitted from the expanded opportunity for trade. Even then, Jews were among the foremost commercial factors in the trade of the Orient. Jewish merchants travelled and

CE made Aleppo the northern capital of Syria. He built Aleppo's famous citadel, and in his days the city enjoyed great prosperity and fame.

In his migration from Egypt to Baghdad, the great Saadia Gaon lived in Aleppo for a number of years at the beginning of the 10th century, and in 921 CE he returned to the city to visit and confer with its rabbis. During the period, an event whose historic importance cannot be over-estimated occurred: the completion of the Keter of Ben Asher, or "Aleppo Codex," by Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher of Tiberias. This is perhaps the most sacred Hebrew text in existence, revered more than a millennium after its completion. The Keter Torah was corrected by Ben Asher. Maimonides relied on this authority for his "Hilkhhot Sefer Torah" (Laws on Writing a Sefer Torah). He actually cites the Torah text of Ben Asher as being particularly reliable (*hakol somkhin 'alav*)

"it might very well be that Maimonides sanctified and codified everything he found in the Aleppo Codex."

traded throughout the known world and dealt in silk, slaves, castor, marten, musk, camphor, and aloes, from Europe to India and China.

In 661 CE Damascus became the capital of the Caliphate under the Umayyads. That ended in 750 CE with the takeover of the Caliphate by the Abbasids and movement of the capital to Baghdad. In 929 Syria is annexed by the Hamadani kingdom. While Aleppo flourished during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, the Hamadani state established by Sayf al-Dawla in 944

and he used it as a "template" to correct other Torahs. This reliability stems from the fact that Ben Asher was a Masorete of high repute and Ben Asher's text was the "most perfect" example of what the Tiberians were trying to achieve. They had devised the system for vocalization and cantillation which is the one that we use to this very day. The Codex is the earliest-known manuscript comprising the full text of the Torah and vocalized with the *nequdot* and *taamim* of the Tiberian system.

In his "Hilkhhot Sefer Torah," Rambam provides the

detailed rules and requirements for a proper Torah scroll. The first area is the detailed list in Chapter 8 concerning *petuhot* (open sections) and *setumot* (closed sections). The other area is the arrangement of the “*Shira*” portions such as Haazinu on the parchment (e.g. the number of lines and how to handle the preceding and following narrative words). According to recent research, it might very well be that Maimonides sanctified and codified everything he found in the Aleppo Codex. The Codex was copied by the scribe Shelomo Ben Buya’a in the Land of Israel over 1,000 years ago. Soon after it was moved to Egypt and was finally deposited with the Aleppo community. The Codex was kept in a vault in the Cave of Elijah, under the Yellow Synagogue of Aleppo and closely guarded as the talisman of the community for over 600 years.

In 1060 CE the Seljuk Turks conquer Syria. In 1099 CE parts of Syria are conquered by the Latin Crusader state of Jerusalem. It was perhaps the prosperity of

Aleppo Jews in the 10th to 12th centuries that prompted Baghdad to send emissaries there. These individuals were usually rabbis who travelled to distant cities and lands to collect money for their specific academies or for communal needs.

Mr. Goldman is a retired Chemical Engineer who is a member of Congregations Beth Torah and Kol Israel. From 1978 through 2002 he was the Editor of the Beth Torah Bulletin. He was Secretary of Beth Torah from 1980 through 2005 and is still the Editor of the Beth Torah Calendar.



Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem (current location of Aleppo Codex)



FROM THE ARCHIVES



MAGEN DAVID STAR



Volume II Issue I

September 1994 / Tishrei 5755

ACHIEVING AWARENESS

by Rabbi Ezra Labaton



Prayer is at the core of Jewish living. We cannot conceive of a Judaism without *tefilah*. Many people go through the motions of prayer, but very few people actually pray. The High Holiday season is a time for joyous celebration, but it is also a time for intense prayer. As we await the *Yamim Noraim*, it is appropriate to take inventory, and explore the depths of prayer with the hope that our Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayers, will be experientially meaningful for us, and acceptable to *Bore Olam*.

Notwithstanding the complex dynamics that are involved in prayer, the core definition of prayer is simple. Rabbi Soloveichick sees prayer as the awareness of standing before G-d. Nothing more, nothing less. Whether we speak words of praise, request, or thanksgiving in prayer, this is all secondary to this awareness. Whether we understand the words of prayer or not, this too, is secondary to this awareness. Whether we pray with a large throng of people, or a small *minyán* of ten, prayer can still be reduced to this simple awareness.

How does one achieve this awareness? Not an easy question. Though G-d is real to most people, this necessary awareness is still hard to come by.

Perhaps the best route to this awareness is twofold. First, a person has to prepare himself/herself for prayer before actually praying. In a sense, one has to practice to achieve proficiency, which leads to this awareness. If one cannot read the prayers at all, much time is spent on the words alone of prayer and it's harder to see the broader picture of what prayer really is, and it is more difficult to achieve the awareness of before whom we are standing.

To achieve this fluency, we should all pick up a *mahzor* before the holidays and review the contents. In addition, we should attend the classes that we will have on the *mahzor*. By reviewing the prayers we will get the feel of entering into the world of prayer, before coming to synagogue. The prayer book should neither be a darkly lit road map, nor so familiar that the prayers become routinized. Rather, with proper preparation, the terrain will look familiar enough to be inviting rather than intimidating. Nor will it be so overly familiar that it becomes routine. With proper preparation the full depths of prayer can be reached, with the proper awareness.

Beyond preparation of the High Holiday prayers, one has to prepare oneself. How do we prepare properly for an event of great importance? For a wedding . . . for a Bar Mitzvah? First we focus on the event, trying to anticipate what it will be like. We allow ourselves to grow in excitement as the day approaches. We take practical steps to make sure that all will be in order when the great day arrives. As one can never enter the palaces of nobility without proper focus, anticipation, and preparation, all the more so as we approach the celestial palaces of prayer

on the High Holidays. We should be thinking of the awesomeness of the day, prior to the day, with all else taking, for the moment, a back seat.

Psychological preparation necessary for prayer is equal in importance to the knowledge of the prayers themselves in order to achieve the awareness of standing before G-d in prayer. But there is one further dimension. The days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are viewed as days of forgiveness. One can hardly stand before *Bore Olam* in prayer, fully aware of His presence, if he/she still harbors ill will towards another in his heart.

Basic to the day is resolving all issues of conflict, social, business, or family. There is not a day that goes by when I don't see some area of tension between people. The heart is by nature soft and kind. We should allow these natural feelings to flow out to others. We pray to be judged with softness and kindness. Thus we must judge others with softness and kindness. Once all this is achieved, we can stand before *Bore Olam* on the High Holidays, with the proper awareness, of before whom we stand . . . with quiet confidence and gentle humility.

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- ✓ This year Sephardic schools alone will receive over **\$12 million dollars** in government funding.
- ? **Next year? That's up to you.**
We are just getting started but **we need your help.**

About Teach NYS

Founded in 2013 as a project of the Orthodox Union, Teach NYS created the first-ever coalition of top Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivot in New York State – along with other visionaries in our community – to combat the tuition crisis through government funding.

In New York, non-public school children comprise 13% of the K-12 student population, yet they receive less than 1% of state school funding. Teach NYS advocates for more than 150,000 Jewish Day School and Yeshiva students in almost 400 schools across New York State to ensure our children receive every dollar they deserve.

Our efforts have been a resounding success as we've secured the largest amount of funding Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivot have ever received from the government. And we have only just begun.

Sign up today at **www.teachnys.org** and help us achieve even greater funding for our community and children!

Sephardic Community Alliance
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