

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Rav Eliyahu Dessler z"l (Michtav Me'Eliyahu II, pgs. 74-77) poses a very interesting question. We can understand how, in the davening of other Yomim Tovim (holidays) we can refer to the second day of Yom Tov as such, as our sages gave them the status and holiness of the holiday. Rosh Hashanah, however, is slightly different. We don't just refer to it as a "Holy Day," or even just as part of the "10 Days of Repentance." We constantly call it the "Day of Judgment," the day on which it is decided who will make it through the year, and what kind of year it will be. Indeed, this is true—of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. But since the judgment takes place on that first day (in the morning), can the same be said for the second day of Rosh Hashanah? How can we base so much of our services (the second day) on it being a "Day of Judgment" if it isn't?

Rav Dessler explains that there are two types of judgment. The first, which occurs on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, is for those who are attached to G-d, meriting His constant intervention and supervision. G-d provides all that they need (to continue their spiritual growth), and holds back those things that are either detrimental, or whose absence will cause further consideration of what has to be done for further growth. During the time of the first Temple in Jerusalem, this applied to most of the people, most of the time (and, as was discussed last week, to the entire nation as a whole). For those years (especially during the second Temple) when there were many who were not on this level, G-d made sure that no witnesses were able to testify to having seen the new moon (on what could have been either the last day of Ellul or the first day of Tishrei), causing there to be a second day of Rosh Hashanah, when the judgment for those not attached to G-d took place.

What was this judgment? Since their existence was not in their own merit, it would have to be based on the merit of others, or on what they could provide those that are attached to G-d. Even the righteous do not live in a vacuum, and depend on others for things physical (e.g. to produce the food they eat), spiritual (e.g. to make up the rest of a minyan) or a combination (e.g. to support their work, which consists of a physical contribution for a spiritual goal). Whether one not

attached to G-d merits supporting the righteous (in some way), and therefore merits another year of life/success is, according to Rav Dessler, the type of judgment made on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

There is a fundamental difference between the nature of the two days of Rosh Hashanah and the two days of other Yomim Tovim. The latter came about only because it was unclear to those far from Israel which day was Yom Tov, while Rosh Hashanah was made to be two days even when they knew that the "first" day was really the 30th of Ellul (i.e. when witnesses came after the afternoon offering was brought). For this reason, Rosh Hashanah is often referred to as a "Yom Arichta" (long day), considered in some ways to be one 48 (or 49) hour day rather than two 24 (or 25) hour days. This has ramifications for the Laws of Yom Tov, but can also explain how the services on the second half of this long day (i.e. the second day of Rosh Hashanah) can refer to it still being the "Day of Judgment."

We refer to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as "Days of Judgment," even though the judgment is made on Rosh Hashanah, and either confirmed or altered on Yom Kippur. In essence, there is a "judgment" on Yom Kippur whether or not to approve the previously made judgment, which is subject to revision until the end of Yom Kippur.

As we examine our actions leading up to, and during, this period of being judged, attempts are made to correct personal shortcomings. We promise G-d (and ourselves) that we will improve. Even if our judgment occurred on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, our final judgment is not until a little more than a week later, on Yom Kippur. Our actions during that week—the 10 Days of Repentance—play a significant role in that final judgment. Are we working towards strengthening our attachment to the Creator? Having a full week gives us the chance to live through many of our weekly activities after having made our "new" commitment to G-d, including the way we interact with our families and co-workers, the distractions of having to go to work, et al.

Included in this is the opportunity to make the most of our time—when we have the time. Typically, this is on Shabbos; a day dedicated for spiritual growth without the hustle-bustle of everyday life. On Rosh Hashanah, there are two days, with a large part of each already set aside for the service of G-d. How will we react to this? Do we dread having to spend so much time in a holy atmosphere, or do we relish the chance at

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA NEWSLETTER
DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB.
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG

**COPIES OF TORAS AISH ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE
FOLLOWING ADDRESS ON THE WEB (WWW) :
HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG**

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is solely the work of the AishDas Society, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

spiritual interactivity? After having been judged on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the second is a good test to see how our commitment is holding up. We are therefore "judged" based on our behavior on the second day, before the final determination is made on Yom Kippur. True, this type of "judgment" occurs every time (until Yom Kippur) we are faced with a situation that we "promised" would be handled better. But for improving our spiritual attachment, there is no better time than a day where worldly distractions are at a minimum and spiritual opportunities are at a maximum.

This year, with Rosh Hashanah leading into Shabbos, we have three consecutive days to foster spiritual growth. Using them appropriately (and looking forward to doing so twice more this Tishrei) can go a long way towards being inscribed for a healthy, productive year.

May we merit to be among those that are attached to G-d, or to at least to help those that are, and utilize every opportunity afforded us to increase that attachment. In that merit, may G-d grant us all, individually and as a nation, a year full of blessing.

© 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The final song of Moshe begins in this week's parsha of Haazinu. The song concludes with Vzot Habracha, the parsha that we read in the synagogue on Simchat Torah. Haazinu is the song of Jewish history throughout the ages. It has high notes and low notes to it. It portrays the agony of our exile and the steadfastness of both God and Israel in keeping the covenant between them under all circumstances. What makes the song so meaningful is that the rabbis of the Midrash interpreted it in a double sense - as referring to Israel but at the same time also referring to the nations of the world, even to our oppressors. A lesson of

importance is thus communicated to us. Israel does not live in a vacuum. The reaction of the nations of the world to us can influence our future and our path in history. And the corollary to this is that the nations of the world are judged in the scale of God's history of mankind. Their relationship to the Jewish people, its faith and values and life-style, is really a measure of their own qualities and goals. So many nations and empires have passed from the scene over our long history and they all were measured and judged by their relationship to Israel and its faith. Thus the song of Haazinu is a universal song, not meant only for Jewish ears and hearts but it is rather a song to be heard and appreciated by all humans.

This is in line with the dual quality of our prayer service on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. On one hand the prayers are purely Jewish in nature and goals, exclusive to the chosenness of the people of Israel. Yet, on the other hand, there is a strong message of universalism that pervades all of the High Holy Days' prayers. Judaism combines within it an exclusivity and a universalism at one and the same time. It is unique among all faiths to do so. Judaism sees the Jewish people as the experiment that will prove the entire theory of mankind and civilization to be possible and correct. In order for the experiment to work correctly it requires a certain exclusivity, a sterile laboratory if you will, uncontaminated by outside sources and influences. Yet the purpose of this experiment is to prove that all mankind is able to serve God and man and that human civilization can achieve a better world in spite of all setbacks and heartaches. Haazinu, which beckons to us all to listen to a song that often has discordant notes within it, nevertheless can and will lead to Vzot Habracha, blessings and hope and true achievements. The Torah assured us that this song of Haazinu/Vzot Habracha would never be forgotten by the Jewish people. It defines our nationhood and casts our eternity. It is timely and relevant under all circumstances and in all generations. Remembering the song is alone an act of teshuva - return to God and to our true inner soul and self. © 2004 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Rosh Hashanah ushers in a ten day period known as the Days of Repentance. The major question we must ask ourselves is precisely how to repent. Many of us are aware of our weaknesses and character flaws. Is there a specific methodology, is there a deeper understanding of self, which can help us in the very human but very crucial task of self correction and self improvement?

Rosh Hashanah is also called, "the day of the Truah", the word Truah relating to the sounds of the Shofar. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the particular commandment of this festival, the commandment of sounding the Shofar, will shed important light on the road to repentance.

Perhaps the very first question which presents itself concerning the shofar is one very unique aspect to this particular commandment. Usually, our commandments demand an active performance on the part of the individual: we are enjoined to eat the matzah, to read the megillah. Strangely enough, we are not commanded to blow the shofar; we are rather commanded—and so the very words of the blessing express—"to hear the shofar, to listen to its sound." Why is this particular commandment expressed in passive rather than active terms?

My revered teacher, Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in his work entitled "Days of Remembrance, makes reference to what appears to be a rather obscure talmudic discussion, but which in reality will help us immeasurably to understand the shofar and its meaning. The sages of the Talmud (BT Rosh Hashanah 29A) teach, "everyone is obligated in the blowing of the shofar including Priests, Levites and Israelites, proselytes and freed slaves....But one who is half slave and half free cannot perform the commandment for others, even for those who like him are half slave and half free. Rav Nahman insists that he cannot even blow the shofar for himself." Interestingly enough, Maimonides and all of the decisors I am familiar with agree with Rav Nahman's position—despite the fact that in the case of the reading of the megillah one who is half slave and half free is considered fit to read the megillah for himself. Why should the shofar be different from the megillah, both with respect to its blessing as well as with respect to the ability of one half slave and half free to perform the commandment for himself?

The answer can be found in a fascinating statement by Maimonides in which the great 12th century philosopher—legalist presents the significance of the sounding of the shofar: "Even though the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is commanded by the biblical text, this particular act expresses an important symbol, which is 'Awake, you sleepers, from your sleep and you slumberers from your slumber'" Maimonides is saying that the shofar is an alarm clock; it is a town crier, a rabbinical chastiser. But when the individual blows for himself, which in ordinary circumstances he is certainly able to do, whom is he awakening? If there is no one else in the room with him, for whom is he blowing?

I would argue that the individual is blowing for himself; he is attempting to arouse an aspect of his very own personality that is part and parcel of every one of us. The bible teaches, "and the Lord said 'let us make the human being in our image and after our likeness'"

The question plaguing all of the commentaries is, who is the "us" in that verse? To whom is G-d speaking? The Ramban gives what I believe is that best interpretation. After all, he says, the Almighty has just created on this 6th day the animals and beasts. G-d is speaking to those very brute creatures, who are limited in time and strength and who require nutrition, rest, sexual reproduction and excretion of waste. "Let us make the human being in our joint image", says G-d to these beasts. The human being will have 2 aspects, the animal as well as the divine. On the one hand the human being will be limited, unable to rise above himself, unable to change or perfect himself; on the other hand, he will contain a spark of the divine which will give him precisely that ability to sanctify and ennoble the physical aspects of his being and— in effect—to recreate himself as a partner of the Divine.

Sin emanates from the animal aspect of the human personality unrefined and undeveloped by the divine soul. If the human being is passive and left to his own resources, he will be guided by instinct alone and will of necessity fall prey to all of his weaker desires. Only if the human being activates his divine soul and works on repairing himself and the world around him will he succeed in expressing that unique divine image which makes him different from all other creations. Then he will succeed in the ultimate vision of Rosh Hashanah, "perfecting the world in the Kingship of the Divine".

The commandment of the shofar is that we listen to the shofar, that our passive animal personality become activated and aroused by our creative image of G-d. The divine soul within each of us must serve as an alarm clock to the more animalistic drives which propel us if we are indeed to repent. Hence the blessing is directed towards the animal part of the human being which must listen; and only if this aspect is aroused does repentance become possible.

Hence an individual who is half free and half slave may be able to read the megillah for himself; after all, only his free half is obligated to read and hear the megillah anyway. With the shofar however it is a very different story. Unless the human being succeeds in freeing his animal self which is enslaved to instinct does he stand a chance of repentance. An individual who remains half free and half slave cannot even blow the shofar for himself.

A story for children which is really a metaphor for adults, is the Lion King, which truly expresses the message I have just set down. Simba is a young lion prince who feels guilty for not having more actively saved his father from death. His uncle Scar is perfectly satisfied to watch Simba sink into passive despair, accepting the bad influences of a pig and a worm and entering into a state of 'akoona matata' or apathetic inactivity. The female lioness Nala and the elder monkey—sage teach him that every individual has a destiny given by the Divine. Everyone must confront his

feelings of guilt, find the road to the recreation of oneself and the development of one's destiny; only then can Simba emerge as the leader he is supposed to be. This is the message of the shofar and this is the message of repentance. © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Autumn Approaches. Before we even realize, the weather begins to turn, the colors deepen. We prepare for a new season. Our activities include adding layers of covering to provide protection against the cold weather soon to follow. Or so we think...For every Jew throughout the world, autumn's announcement—"Take cover!"—is preceded and overshadowed by a piercing call that brings a different, contradictory message: "Shed your 'cover'."

That vibrant call, made every year at Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year—is issued from the shofar, a ram's horn. When blown on Rosh Hashanah, it reminds us that prior to the conquest of Jericho, Joshua blasted the shofar and "the walls came tumbling down." At Rosh Hashanah, the season of introspection, we are taught that true self-analysis involves the breaking down of walls. We all wear masks, all kinds of disguises; penetrate those walls, the shofar says, remove the masks and allow the true persona to emerge.

A tale is told of a desperately sad man who sought counseling. After speaking with him, the doctor suggested that he begin intensive therapy the following week. To carry him over, the counselor offered the man a free ticket to see the famous comedian, Cornelius, who was in town that night. "He's hilarious," the doctor said. "He'll make you laugh...you'll feel better." With that, the man's face skewed in pain and he burst into tears. While his patient continued his bitter weeping, the doctor probed. "Why are you crying so? I've mapped out a plan to give you relief. Go see Cornelius, he'll help you." To this, the desperate man replied amid sobs, "But you don't understand. I am Cornelius." Billy Joel said it well: "Honesty is such a lonely word; everyone is so untrue." The shofar's first call is for real honesty.

Truthfulness can sometimes be bitter. Looking into yourself can be painful, especially if you think you have little to offer. Here again, the shofar teaches a lesson: Words do not emanate from the ram's horn, but rather a cry, a call whose sounds emerge from the breath of the inner soul, of the person blowing the shofar.

Mystics maintain that externally, some human beings may be evil, but if you look deeply into the inner being of any person, his or her "inner breath" you will find goodness. The shofar pleads: Return to that inner

core, retrieve the power of goodness which we so often overlook, but which is inherent in every person.

Yet another legend: A short apple tree grew beside a tall cedar. Every night, the apple tree would look up and sigh, believing that the stars in the sky were hanging from the branches of its tall friend. The little apple tree would lift its branches heavenward and plead: "But, where are my stars?" As time passed, the apple tree grew. Its branches produced leaves, passersby enjoyed its shade and its apples were delectable. But at night, when it looked to the skies, it still felt discontented, inadequate: Other trees had stars, but it did not. It happened once that a strong wind blew, hurling apples to the ground. They fell in such a way that they split horizontally, instead of vertically. In the very center of each apple was the outline of a star. The apple tree had possessed stars all along. The inner core was always good, and so it remains.

As with apples, all the more with human beings who must be good. After all, "God does not make junk". The stars we possess are the seeds of potential goodness; we have the power to rise, but also to fall. What we do with the inner goodness depends on the individual, on each one of us. We can fly higher than the clouds, or we can sink deeper than the fish. Such is the challenge of being human; majesty and failure are but a hair's breadth apart.

A final tale about an artist who found and made a sculpture of the most beautiful person anyone had ever seen. Years later, the artist decided that it would be interesting to sculpt the ugliest human being as a counterpart to his earlier work. One night, he found the perfect subject, sprawled at his very door...a dirty, hideous and drunken creature. The artist gently lifted this lost soul and carried him into his studio. He worked feverishly through the night to finish his sculpture. The next morning, in gratitude, he rose early to tend to his guest. The artist showered, shaved and dressed the man, only to discover that this pitiful figure was the very same person he had sculpted as the most beautiful person so long ago.

The sounds of the shofar—short and long, wailing and rejoicing: They offer us the choice for success or failure. Which shall it be? The shofar teaches...it's up to us. © 2004 *Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA*

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The epic poem of "Ha'azinu" describes the sins of Bnei Yisrael in the wake of the many acts of kindness by the Almighty, and the Divine anger because of the sins. The description of the punishment for these sins has what seems to be a contradiction. At first, G-d declares that the punishment will be that His

face is hidden: "And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be. For they are a contradictory generation, children who cannot be trusted." [Devarim 32:20]. This seems to imply that G-d will not be directly involved in the suffering of Bnei Yisrael. Rather, the very fact that the nation is handed over to its own fate is what will cause them to suffer, as is written in the previous Torah portion: "And I will be angry with them on that day, and I will abandon them, and I will remove my face from them and they will be prey, and many terrible woes will befall them." [31:17]. On the other hand, in this week's portion, a Divine punishment is described where G-d is directly involved. "They provoked me without any god, they angered me with their vanities, I will provoke them without any nation, I will anger them with a foolish nation. For a flame burned in my nostrils, blazing to the greatest depths, and it devoured the land and its crops and it kindled the tops of the mountains. I will gather evil against them, my arrows will be used up on them." [32:21-23].

Evidently the two different types of punishment are in retribution for the two major sins of Bnei Yisrael that are described in the beginning of the Torah portion (32:15-18). (1) Forgetting G-d: "They abandoned the G-d that created them, and they had contempt for the rock of salvation... You ignored the rock that gave birth to you, and you forgot the G-d who created you." [32:15,18]. (2) Turning to idols: "They will provoke His jealousy with strangers, they will anger Him with abominations. They will sacrifice to demons who are not divine, to gods that are not known. They will be new, recently appeared, not as imagined by your ancestors." [32:16-17]. The first sin, forgetting G-d, could be independent of idol worship. The opposite is also true: There were times when Bnei Yisrael worshipped idols while they continued to serve G-d. Yirmiyahu laments about this double sin, mentioning the heavens, which are called upon as witnesses in the beginning of the Torah portion. "Let the heavens take note of this... My nation did two evils: they have abandoned me, a source of the water of life, and they have dug broken cisterns, which contain no water." [Yirmiyahu 2:12-13]. (Note that Yirmiyahu uses other phrases that are reminiscent of Ha'azinu.)

Thus, each sin receives a different appropriate punishment. G-d's "hidden face" is a case of the Almighty "forgetting" His people ("G-d forgot, He hid His face" [Tehillim 10:11]). This is related to the people forgetting G-d, as noted, "children who cannot be trusted" (Rashi: "The fact that I raised them is not recognized, even though I created them in a good way they have turned away from it"). The other sin, turning to idol worship, raises the "jealousy" of the Almighty, gives rise to a punishment of fanaticism. ("Heim kin'uni"—see above).

The last section of the poem describes the eventual consolation, when G-d will judge His people

and avenge their oppressors. Then Bnei Yisrael will learn the two important lessons: (1) "Look now, see that I am the one", and (2) there is no other god with me" [32:39]. That is, then Yisrael will finally learn that our G-d is the one and only.

Kindness with Royal Authority

by Rabbi Yosef Glicksberg, Chief Rabbi of Givataim, Member of the Council of the Chief Rabbinate

"Establish your throne with kindness, and you shall sit on it in truth" [Rosh Hashanah prayer]. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev explained this with his own unique approach. Master of the Universe, if you want to truly sit on your throne, without uncertainty and without any disturbances, here is my advice: "Establish your throne with kindness!" If you act towards your children with kindness and mercy, the righteous people will not bother you, and you will sit on the throne in truth. However, if—G-d forbid—you do not act with kindness, we will turn to you with increasing prayers and cries, and you will not be able to sit peacefully on your throne.

The words of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak emphasize the powerful link between royal authority and kindness. The only justification for establishing a government is in order to do good and have mercy on the subjects, who have agreed to abide by the laws of the government. Therefore the reward of those who are kind to others is royalty. Ruth became known as the royal mother because by her actions she caused a book to be written that describes the reward given to those who are kind to others.

The kings of Yisrael are kind, and the kingdom of the heavens is the same, an authority of kindness and mercy. "Let your throne be established with kindness, and you shall sit on it with truth" (see Yeshayahu 16:5). The kingdom of the Almighty is "a throne of kindness" and if we accept His rule, we will automatically benefit from His great mercy, without any other relationship to other factors.

What is there about Rosh Hashanah that makes us confident that a miracle will occur for us? At this point, we have not yet heard the response of forgiveness that will be heard only on Yom Kippur! We have not yet immersed ourselves in purity and repentance in the Mikveh of Yisrael, G-d Himself, and the waters of purification have not been sprinkled on us. Only in another ten days will Yom Kippur arrive, described by the verse, "For on this day He will absolve you of all your sins, you will be purified before G-d" [Vayikra 16:30].

The most important aspect of Rosh Hashanah is the revelation of the light of royalty. "Recite for me the blessings of royalty so that you will make me a king over you. Recite the blessing of memories so that your memory will appear before me. How should this be done? By using a shofar." [Rosh Hashanah 34b]. The essence of a shofar is a blast before the king, as is written, "He has the blast of the sound of a king"

[Bamidbar 23:21]; "With trumpets and the sound of a shofar, sing the praises of the King, G-d" [Tehillim 98:6].

The shofar has a double role. The first is in relation to memory—as a result of the sound, the Almighty remembers us. The second role has to do with the royal kingdom. By blowing the shofar we acknowledge G-d's authority over us. Those who have the privilege of coming before the holy King while at the same time they accept His authority and declare it to the world are rewarded with life on Rosh Hashanah.

Let us hope and pray that on Rosh Hashanah G-d will rise up with the sound of a shofar from the seat of justice to the throne of kindness and mercy.

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

It Takes a Shtetl

During the course of the High Holy Day season the word "I" is hardly mentioned. The spirit of community triumphs over individuality. All of our many prayers, requests, confessions and proclamations take on one specific identification -- the plural -- we or us. "Remember us for life." "Inscribe us in the book of life." "We are like sheep."

There is hardly any individual prayer form -- it is mostly collective. Why should it be that way? Aren't the High Holy days a time of personal reflection? Why is there reference to the individual?

Obviously the power of a community impacts our individual prayer. Prayers and requests that arrive en masse seem to be more powerful, more effective. The Talmud tells us that it is almost impossible to disregard the will of a collective community. Yet how does the Almighty consider the needs of the individual when they are only brought forward as part of a communal bundle?

There was a proctor who earned extra income by administering final exams in schools that needed extra manpower. He had earned a reputation as an extremely strict monitor who would not let a student exceed the allotted testing-time even by a minute.

The proctor once had the occasion to administer a ninth-grade test. Amongst the students sat Chaim, a quick-witted youngster, who had a reputation for requesting extra time on tests. The proctor had heard of this boy's pleas and tactics but resolved not to give him a minute extra. The test began with the perfunctory warnings, "you have exactly one hour and thirty minutes to complete this exam. If you are even one minute late I will not accept your paper."

Sure enough, at the end of the allotted time the proctor collected all the tests and Chaim was still writing. "Please," he pleaded. "I need only two more minutes."

True to his reputation the proctor refused, but Chaim kept on writing. Exactly ninety seconds passed. Chaim approached the desk, test in hand. All the other test papers were neatly stacked in front of a stern-faced

instructor who refused to accept Chaim's papers. Chaim was aghast. This meant he would fail the test! Quickly he barked at the unfamiliar instructor.

"You must take my paper! Do you know who I am?"

The instructor shook his head as if he truly did not care. Once again Chaim repeated the question. This time, however, his voice was raised a few more decibels. "Do you know who I am? Do you know who my father is?"

This time the proctor retorted angrily. "I don't know who you are. I don't know who your father is. And to tell you the truth -- I really don't care!"

"Really?" questioned Chaim with a look of triumph on his face. "Great!" With that, Chaim grabbed the stack of test papers, shoved his own exam smack in the center of all of them and smiled proudly. "Have a nice day!"

Rosh Hashana is the day of judgment. Last year is over and now it is time to hand in our papers. Of course our Proctor allows us an extra ten days until Yom Kippur. But eventually he may declare, "time is up."

When we join together in prayer, in charity, and in true repentance our papers are all put together. Of course, we are responsible for our individual actions and they will be examined. But it is surely much easier to have our deeds judged favorably when they are presented together with an entire shtetl! © 1996 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Torah.org.

AISH HATORAH

What's Bothering Rashi?

by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek

After Moses' final oration (the book of Devarim) to the Children of Israel, he prepares for death. His death is orchestrated directly by God. Of course, this is the case for every man's death, but in Moses' case all the orchestration was explicit and is recorded in the Torah.

A drash that must be understood to be fully appreciated. "And Hashem spoke to Moses on that self-same day saying." (Deut. 32: 48)

"And Hashem spoke to Moses on that self-same day"—Rashi: "In three places it says 'on the self-same day.' It is said about Noah: 'on the self-same day Noah entered, etc.' when the light of day was in full view. Because his contemporaries said, 'By this and by that (an oath) if we sense him [entering the ark] we won't let him enter the ark and not only that, we will get sledgehammers and axes and smash the ark!' The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'I will bring him [into the ark] in mid-day. Let anyone who has the power to protest, do so.' Concerning Egypt, it is said, 'on the self same day Hashem took out, etc.' Because the Egyptians had said 'By this and by that, if we sense [them leaving] we won't let them go. And not only that, we will get swords and

other weapons and kill them.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said 'I will take them out [of Egypt] in mid-day. Let anyone powerful enough to protest, do so.' Here as well, concerning Moses' death, it is said 'on the self same day.' Because the Israelites said 'By this and by that, if we sense him [leaving] we won't let him [go]. The man who took us out of Egypt, split the Sea for us, and brought down the Manna for us, brought us the quail and raised up the well and gave us the Torah—we won't let him!' The Holy One, blessed be He, said 'Behold I will take him in mid-day etc.'"

This is a beautiful midrash which emphasizes the people's love and appreciation of Moses. It is important to stress this, considering all the trouble the people had made for him during the forty years of his leadership.

The drash is based on the fact that the Hebrew word "etzem," translated here as "self-same" and in the drash as "mid-day," is superfluous. The verse would have the same meaning were it omitted. The drash takes the word to mean "in the strength of the day." This is because the word "etzem" shares the same root as "strength."

As in Deut. 8:17: "My power and the strength of my hand ("otzem yadi") made for me this wealth." Thus the "strength of the day" becomes "in mid-day," when the sun is strongest.

Now let us question Rashi.

Some Rashi commentaries have questioned Rashi's statement: "in three places it says 'on the self-same day.'" They point out that there is another place, which Rashi doesn't mention here, where the words 'on the self-same day' appear. This is in parshat Lech Lecha (Genesis 17:23):

"And Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his home... and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that self-same day as God had spoken to him."

Rashi even comments on this verse in Genesis and says: "By day and not by night. He was not afraid of the scoffers so that his enemies should not say: 'Had we seen him we would not have let him do the circumcision and fulfill God's commandment!'"

Since Rashi commented on the verse, he was aware of it when he wrote his commentary on our verse. The question is: Why didn't he include it in his list of verses that had the words "on that self-same day"?

Can you see why? Can you see a difference between this verse and the three that Rashi does cite?

An Answer: The verse in Lech Lecha, while it has the same phrase, isn't used in the same way as the other three are. The three verses that Rashi cites all tell us that God made certain that no one would interfere with His plan. Noah was allowed to enter the Ark; the Israelites were allowed to leave Egypt. But in Abraham's case the point of the verse was different. It was Abraham's courage, not God's intervention, that was the issue. And since Rashi's whole point on our verse is to

show how Hashem made sure that His plan was executed, he cites only those verses that are relevant to this point.

But as we look at the last part of Rashi's comment, which refers to Moses' death, we could ask a question. Rashi says: "Here as well, concerning Moses' death, it is said 'on the self-same day.' Because the Israelites said 'By this and by that, if we sense him [leaving] we won't let him [go]. The man who took us out of Egypt, split the Sea for us, and brought down the Manna for us, brought us the quail and raised up the well and gave us the Torah—we won't let him!"

A Question: How is our verse about Moses' death similar to the case of Noah entering the Ark or to that of Israel leaving Egypt? A jealous mob could conceivably stop Noah from entering the Ark; incensed hooligans could possibly stop Israel from escaping their country, but how can any human stop another person from dying? How could the anxious Israelites prevent Moses' death?

An Answer: The next verses (32:49,50) tells us what God said to Moses on that "self-same day":

"Go up to this Mount Ha'avarim, Mount Nevo, which is in the land of Moab, that faces Jericho... and die on the mountain, upon which you are going up there..."

We see that a precondition for Moses' death was that he go up the mountain. He was to die on the mountain and first had to ascend the mountain. It was this ascension that the people thought they could prevent. If they stopped Moses from going up Mount Nevo, they would prevent his imminent death. Or so they thought. That is exactly what Rashi means when he says: "Because the Israelites said 'By this and by that, if we sense him [leaving] we won't let him [go].'"

© 2004 by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek & aish.com

RABBI RAYMOND BEYDA

You Cannot Hide

There once was a French Emperor who was fleeing from Russian troops that wanted to kill him. He ran into a shop owned by a Jewish fabric merchant. The merchant hid the Emperor under piles of fabric and the soldiers were unable to find him. After the enemy had left the Emperor thanked the merchant saying: "Ask for any three things that your heart desires and I will do all in my power to fulfill your requests".

The poor tailor thought for a moment and then said: "It would be wonderful if the Emperor could arrange to have the leaky roof in my shop repaired".

The Emperor responded angrily: "Is that all you can think of for a man of my stature and wealth to do for you. That is embarrassing for me."

"Well," said the simple peasant, "perhaps Your Majesty could remove the merchant who occupies the store opposite mine and eliminate the competition that affects my financial well being so negatively."

Again the ruler retorted in anger: The poor fabric merchant then presented his third wish. "Maybe the Emperor can reveal to me how he felt when the enemy troops were searching my premises and the King was lying motionless under the piles of piece goods."

"You arrogant one", cried the angry despot, "you will pay for your behavior with your life".

One minute before the executioner carried out the sentence the Emperor ordered him to release the prisoner. The Emperor turned to the trembling peasant and said, "Now you know how I felt while lying under the yards and yards of your fabric while my pursuers searched for me."

Rabbi Yaakov Naiman zt'l explains: When we pray to Hashem we ask for sustenance and a good, comfortable life. It is not proper to waste the opportunity to speak to the King of Kings about such petty matters. The top of our "wish list" should be: "Reveal the glory of your sovereignty upon us speedily". The halakha does not require one to go back and repeat his or her prayers if one were to neglect to recite the High Holy Day insertion of "Remember us for life". However, should one forget to say: "And therefore place your fear upon all of your creations..." one must repeat the Shemoneh Esre – because it is the essential thought of the entire Rosh Hashanah service. If we merit this then we have it all. It is as if a King asked a man what he would like. A wise person would request the hand of the princess in marriage and all other good things would follow naturally. So too—we should pray for Hashem to reveal His sovereignty and power and all other good things would follow "naturally".

If one prepares the prayers for the crucial days of Tishre one will notice that although everyone is being judged on Rosh Hashanah one only praises Hashem's sovereignty at this crucial time. No phrases of remorse or repentance are mentioned just praise to the King and request that He reveal Himself to the entire World. If He should respond positively to this noble request—THEN all good things would follow.

May we all focus our prayers properly and may Hashem respond positively by revealing His power and His love for us and may we see only good and blessing in the new year with the coming of Mashiah speedily in our days. Shanah Tobah. © 2004 by Rabbi R. Beyda and Torah.org.

RAV SHLOMO AVINER

Each to His Own Repentance

A story appears in the Gemara: "Rav Sheshet said, 'a yeshiva student who sits in fast - a dog has gained his meal'". Yet isn't fasting one of the ways to do teshuvah, both the Torah and prophets established fast days? But extra fasts are not suited to

that student. His repentance must be by adding study, not by fasting. Chazal define his teshuvah: if he was used to studying one page, he should study two pages and so on. This is what Rav Kook wrote too, "A Torah scholar has no correction by teshuvah except with the Torah and via the Torah". Moreover, if a student is a profound thinker, it's not enough that he increases the quantity of his study but his repentance must be by delving deeper into the Torah as well.

On the other hand, the repentance of an irresponsible state worker is not to study two pages, neither is the repentance of a glutton and a drunkard to study two pages, but to fast. Each depends upon the circumstances. Each person has his own service and his own mitzvah. Sometimes the Gemara will emphasize, "What is it you are most careful in?" For each person also has his own personal sin. This is why the expression in Pirkei Avot is "Anyone whose fear of his sin precedes his wisdom...", not that he is sin-fearing but he fears "his" sin. Each person has a particular sin which is his own, from which all his other sins emanate, and that person must make a special effort to overcome that sin. Each person has his own mitzvah, his own sin and his own task

Obviously the whole Torah belongs to the whole of K'lal Yisrael, yet each individual still has his own special emphasis. This can be compared to a highway which, although it is a public thoroughfare, has special lanes. Each person has his own teshuvah, each person has his own mission in his world.

We end the Yom Kippur prayers with "My G-d, before I was created I was insignificant", Rav Kook explains, "Before I was created - all the unlimited time from the beginning of time until I was created, there was obviously nothing in the world which had any need for me, for if I had been lacking for any purpose or to complete something then I would have been created and since I was not created until then, that is a sign that there was no purpose for my creation until then and there was no need for me except for the time at which I was created. For the time had arrived at which I must fulfill some purpose of completing reality", but, "Now that I have been created, it is as if I had not been created" - for I have not fulfilled my task, even though the task itself has been imposed upon me, I have not achieved it, therefore I am still insignificant.

Let us all strengthen ourselves to fulfill our own task and to complete our own teshuvah, "Each man at his camp and each man at his flag". © 1996 Machon Meir



<http://www.isracity.com/>