

AT THE ARTSCROLL YOM TOV TABLE

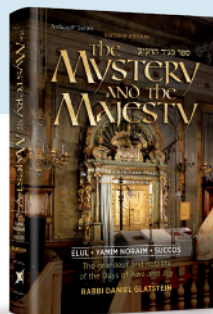
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

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YOMIM NORAIM

A TINY OPENING IS ENOUGH

The Mystery and the Majesty
by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein



Rav Meir Shapiro was invited to give a *derashah* (lecture) in a city he was visiting. His *derashah* focused on the verse in *Parashas Balak*, said at the beginning of *Shacharis*: “Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov - How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov” (*Bamidbar* 24:5).

The simple *pshat*, as explained by *Rashi*, is: “*Al shera'ah pischeihem she'einam mechuvanim zeh mul zeh* - He saw that the doors were not aligned.” Bilaam was very impressed by the modesty he noted in the arrangement of the tents of the *Bnei Yisrael*, as the doorways of their tents were not situated opposite their neighbors', preventing them from seeing into one another's homes.

LET US TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY.



Rav Meir Shapiro

Rav Shapiro explained the verse homiletically. The *Midrash* says that Hashem tells the *Bnei Yisrael*, “You open a small opening [of repentance],

as small as the point of a needle, and I will open for you an entrance to allow wagons to enter.”

Hashem is telling us that we must make one small improvement and then He will take us the rest of the way.

This is what pained Bilaam: He saw that the “doorways were not aligned” — a Jew's “doorway” of *teshuvah* is required to be only a tiny opening and then Hashem will open

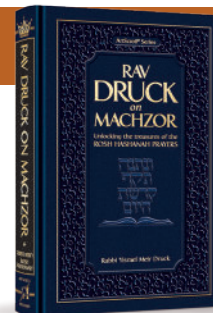
a vast entrance for him. Bilaam was very jealous that even the smallest effort on our part is matched many times over by Hashem. Bilaam was commenting on what he felt was an expression of Hashem's unparalleled love for *Klal Yisrael*.

Perhaps we can suggest that this concept is alluded to by the shape of the *shofar* that we

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SHOFAR

HORNS OF MESIRUS NEFESH AND REDEMPTION



Rav Druck on Machzor
by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Druck

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (Ch. 31) teaches that the ram that was created at twilight of the sixth day of Creation was utilized to its fullest, with no part of it going to waste: The ashes of that ram formed the base above the Inner Altar; its sinews were the ten strings of the harp that David Hamelech played; its skin was worn by Eliyahu; its left horn was blown at Har Sinai; and its right horn — which is larger than the left — is destined to be blown in the future. This final statement about the ram indicates that in its two horns lies all the spiritual power of the Jewish people, for these horns encompass both the *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice)

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Rav Yisroel Meir Druck

ARTS
SCROLLS
MESIRUS
NEFESH
AND
REDEMPTION

of *Akeidas Yitzchak* (the binding of Yitzchak on the altar) as well as the *mesirus nefesh* of the Jewish people's declaration of "*Naaseh v'nishma – We will do and we will hear*" at Har Sinai — which stemmed from the love of Hashem implanted in them through the *mesirus nefesh* of Avraham and Yitzchak.

Both *Akeidas Yitzchak* and *Mattan Torah* (the Giving of the Torah) are described in the Torah as occurring *bayom hashelishi, on the third day*. This is no coincidence, for the *Midrash* teaches (*Bereishis Rabbah* 56:1) that the third day holds great significance, as the verse states (*Hoshea* 6:2): "*Yechayeinu miyomayim bayom hashelishi yekimeinu v'nichyeh lefanav – He will heal us after two days; on the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him.*" The *Midrash* goes on to list several events that are described as occurring on the third day, including Esther's appearance before Achashverosh, which the rabbis say succeeded in the merit of *Mattan Torah*, and R' Levi says it succeeded in the merit of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, both of which took place on "the third day."

The connection between *Akeidas Yitzchak* and *Mattan Torah* goes further yet, for the *Midrash* (*Shocher Tov, Mizmor* 68) teaches that Har Sinai is Har HaMoriah, the place where Avraham offered Yitzchak on the altar; Har HaMoriah was uprooted from its place in Yerushalayim and moved to the Sinai Desert in order for the Torah to be given on it. In the future, the *Midrash* continues, Har HaMoriah will be moved back to its rightful place.

This powerful link between *Akeidas Yitzchak* and *Mattan Torah* is reflected in the two horns of the ram of *Akeidas Yitzchak* being

used at *Mattan Torah* and in the future, when the mountain on which the Torah was given will return to Yerushalayim and the great *shofar* of *Mashiach* will be blown from the right horn of that ram.

Based on this *Midrash*, Rav Chaim Kanievsky explained the following words, which we say in the *zemiros* of *Shabbos* in the song *Yonah matza vo manoach*: "*Diber bekadsho behar hamor yom hashevi'i zachor v'shamor v'chol pikudov yachad ligmor – The seventh day — remember and safeguard. And all His precepts should equally be studied.*" These

JEW'S THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS HAVE ACTED SIMILARLY, SACRIFICING THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN AL KIDDUSH HASHEM.

words seem puzzling, for the commandments of *Shabbos* — *zachor* and *shamor* — were uttered at Har Sinai, in the Ten Commandments, and not on Har HaMoriah.

According to the above *Midrash*, however, we can explain that Har HaMoriah — the site of *Akeidas Yitzchak* — was plucked from its place to serve as Har Sinai, upon which the Torah was given, and it is therefore accurate to say that the commandments of *zachor* and *shamor* were uttered upon it.


MESIRUS NEFESH IN OUR SPIRITUAL DNA

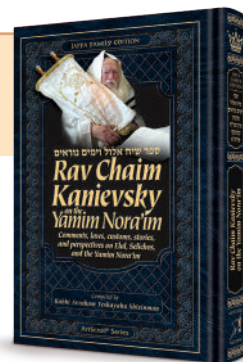
The idea that the *shofar* sounded at *Har Sinai* was the horn of the ram of *Akeidas Yitzchak* alludes to the idea that the *mesirus nefesh* mustered by the Jewish people at *Mattan Torah* was drawn from the *mesirus nefesh* of Avraham and Yitzchak. In

fact, they are called "*Avos*" — forefathers — because their ability to sacrifice themselves in sanctification of Hashem's Name was infused into the spiritual DNA of their descendants.

Some people wonder why Avraham's one-time act at the *Akeidah* was considered so astounding, considering that Jews throughout the generations have acted similarly, sacrificing themselves and their children *al kiddush Hashem*. In truth, however, this very ability to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem's sake is

rooted in Avraham's *mesirus nefesh* at the *Akeidah*, an ability that was subsequently instilled in all future generations of Jews. So it all started with Avraham Avinu, who gave the Jewish people the ability to be *moser nefesh*.

The right horn of the ram, which is larger, will be blown at the time of the final redemption, as the verse states (*Yeshayah* 27:13): "*V'hayah bayom hahu yitaka b'shofar gadol – And it is said: And it will be on that day that a great shofar will be blown.*" At that time, the redemption will be complete, and the world will be brought to its ultimate purpose and rectification. All this will be in the merit of *Akeidas Yitzchak*, which was passed down through *Mattan Torah* and will ultimately lead to the *shofar*-blowing of the future with the arrival of the *geulah sheleimah*. 



With the days of judgment approaching, it is appropriate for a person to ask forgiveness from anyone he might have harmed. Moreover, one who is asked forgiveness should readily forgive those who harmed him, for it is only appropriate that we forgive others before we seek forgiveness from Heaven. And when a person forgives others, Hashem responds in kind and forgives his sins.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky often says that one of the most important character traits to strengthen in preparation for the Day of Judgment is the attribute of *vitur*, giving in to others whenever possible.



Rav Chaim Kanievsky

MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GIVE IN TO OTHERS.

Chazal teach (*Rosh Hashanah* 17a) that one who forgoes his due measure [i.e., he does not insist on demanding what is due to him] is forgiven for his sins. Now, when we face judgment, a person should focus on this idea and make every effort to give in to others and to forgive them.

Rav Chaim adds that in general, forgoing one's own desires in order to give in to others demonstrates wisdom. A fool never gives in and stubbornly insists

on having his way; a wise man allows his wisdom to overcome his desires and therefore forgives and forgoes. In addition, a forgiving man is called "mighty," as stated in *Avos D'Rebbi Nassan* (Chapter 23): "Who is a strong man?...One who makes his enemy into his friend."

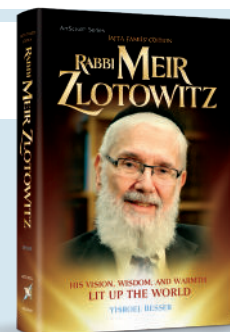
Rav Chaim adds an incident that occurred with Rav Shmuel Hanagid, a leader of Spanish Jewry during the eleventh century. Rav Shmuel was a close adviser to the king of Spain. He was once walking with the king when a person ran toward Rav Shmuel and began to insult him. The king was furious at the disrespect to his adviser and he ordered Rav Shmuel to cut the man's tongue out.

Rav Shmuel reacted differently. He sent the man gifts and showed him graciousness and attention, until the man began to admire Rav Shmuel and show him respect.

Sometime later, Rav Shmuel was again walking with the king when they passed the same man. This time, the man bowed and called out praises to Rav Shmuel. The king was furious. "Didn't I tell you to cut this man's tongue out?" he said.

"I did as you ordered," answered Rav Shmuel. "I cut out his evil tongue and replaced it with a good one."

Rav Chaim concluded: "A person who gives in to others saves himself from anger, hatred, fighting, and squabbles. He saves himself and his family from tragedy, simply by giving in." 🦋



One *Rosh Hashanah*, Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, the founder of ArtScroll, was sitting near his friend, Rabbi Yehuda Levi, in *shul*. There was some confusion in regard to a particular *minhag* and people were peering into their *machzorim* in confusion, trying to figure out what should be recited next. The two men looked at each other.

"You need to publish a *machzor*,"

Rabbi Levi said.

Reb Meir nodded. "By next year, *im yirtzeh Hashem*," he responded.

Rabbi Nosson Scherman translated the *machzor*, adding commentary and creating a special *Yom Tov* overview, the comprehensive, panoramic view of what the *Yamim Noraim* mean.

The first *machzor* in the series, *Rosh Hashanah*, led to an interest-

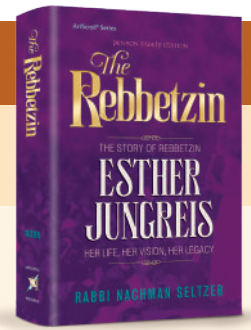
ing dilemma. The standard *machzorim* didn't generally include the full text of *Kaddish*.

Rather, the word "Kaddish" was printed as a direction, an indication to recite the prayer. *Rosh Hashanah* in the year following the

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THE SHOFAR OF BERGEN-BELSEN

The Rebbetzin – The Story of Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis would speak in locations across Israel, and her go-to person to arrange these speaking engagements was Rabbi Yisrael Gellis. When the Rebbetzin wanted to speak at Israeli army bases, Rabbi Gellis was the one who made the calls and set up the events. Rabbi Gellis called the air force and the navy on her behalf and drove her to many places that were off the beaten trail — places that the average citizen never saw or even imagined existed.

Rabbi Gellis recalled: “Watching the Rebbetzin in action was always fascinating. The soldiers were used to entertainment. Many of the country’s finest singers had a practice of making the rounds of the bases to give live performances. Many of them had been in the army entertainment unit themselves and were happy to return ‘home.’ And then along came the Rebbetzin, and not only wasn’t she a singer — she talked Torah to them! It was a sight to behold. Every single place she went, she somehow managed to captivate the audience. It was almost supernatural.

“The Rebbetzin was a master orator. Every speech held some of the same elements, yet every speech was different. In every speech, she shared a few of her memories from her Holocaust experiences. I remember when she told the story of the three hundred cigarettes and the shofar of Bergen-Belsen.

“In the days leading up to *Rosh Hashanah*,” the Rebbetzin began, “there were many meetings as the camp’s rabbinical leadership tried to determine if there was any chance

in the world for them to get hold of a *shofar* and a *machzor* for the *Yamim Noraim*. Many people will no doubt ask why on earth they were even thinking about such things when people were dying right and left, but of course the opposite is true — because what is life worth without being able to hear the *shofar* being blown on *Rosh Hashanah*? In their minds, there was no question that the sacrifice was worth the price.

“It was eventually determined

NEWS OF THE SHOFAR’S ARRIVAL SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE.



Bergen-Belsen, the site of untold suffering - and remarkable courage.

that it would cost them as much as three hundred cigarettes (a form of concentration camp currency) to obtain both a *shofar* and a *machzor* through the very active Bergen-Belsen black market. And so it was done — done with incredible

mesirus nefesh on the part of the Jews, who had nothing and yet managed to somehow collect three hundred cigarettes!

“It goes without saying that news of the *shofar*’s arrival spread like wildfire. Somehow, every Jew felt that having a *shofar* with them portended great things to come. All waited anxiously for the otherworldly moment when the *baal toke’ia* would put the *shofar* to his lips, sounding the blasts, begging Hashem to forgive His people.”

The Rebbetzin took a breath and continued her story.

“Near our camp was another camp, for Polish Jews. They, too, knew about our *shofar*, and they, too,

wanted — no, needed — to hear the sound of the *shofar* blasts: the *teki-os*, *shevarim* and *teruos*. But the *shofar* was in our hands. So they did what every Jew might have done - yes, even in the concentration camps. They crawled up as close as possible to the barbed

wire fences separating our camps and waited for the moment when the piercing sound of the *shofar* would be heard.

“And then it happened.

“The *baal toke’ia* lifted the *shofar* to his lips.

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Seconds later, the sound of the *shofar* rang out loud, plaintive, childlike. The young men lying beside the gate were transformed from concentration camp inmates into *Yidden* back in *shul* on *Rosh Hashanah*. *Yidden* listening to the *shofar*. *Yidden* the way they'd been years before the Nazis destroyed their world.

"But the sound of the *shofar* sounds like a siren. And the second the Nazis heard that siren sound, they came running from all directions. They were fast enough to catch the young men at the fence. Up went the clubs high in the air, and then down they came on the prisoners, again and again, harder and harder, yet no matter how they were beaten, they paid no attention. The Nazis had been reduced to nothingness as the *shofar* drove every other thought out of their minds — and they cried out with every fiber of their being, 'Baruch Atah Hashem, Elokeinu Melech ha'olam asher kideshanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu lishmoa kol shofar — Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to hear the sound of the *shofar*.'

THE SECOND THE NAZIS HEARD THE SIREN SOUND OF THE SHOFAR, THEY CAME RUNNING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS.

a few hundred people?

"In the end, my grandfather and the other *rabbanim* decided that everyone in the camp should learn at least one special prayer, one *tefillah* by heart. But which one? They discussed it for a while before making a decision. And so, in the days leading up to *Rosh Hashanah*, the *Yidden* of Bergen-Belsen memorized the prayer of 'Levochein Levavos — [Let us pray] to He Who searches hearts on the Day of Judgment,' by heart.

"There is no question," the Rebbetzin concluded, "that when Hashem came down to our camp that year and heard our prayer — there is no question that He searched our hearts, exactly as the prayer says, and knew that we had never wavered in our love for Him. Not even then. Not even in the darkness of Bergen-Belsen."

The story wasn't over yet.

"And what about the *machzor*?" she went on. "Didn't we need a *machzor* if we were to *daven* as a *tzibbur* (congregation) on *Rosh Hashanah*? But three hundred cigarettes didn't buy you *machzorim* for an entire camp. It bought only one. One *machzor*. How was that going to help

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machzor's release was slated to begin on a Friday night, so congregations would be reciting *Kabbalas Shabbos* before *Borchu*. The question was whether to insert the words "le'eila ule'eila," an addition appropriate for the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, following *Kabbalas Shabbos*, since accepting the *Shabbos* essentially means accepting *Rosh Hashanah*, or if the actual day of *Rosh Hashanah* starts only following the recitation of *Borchu*. There was no other *machzor* that clarified this issue, because the other *machzorim* simply said the word "Kaddish" without

THERE WAS NO OTHER MACHZOR THAT CLARIFIED THIS ISSUE.




printing the text.

The editors understood the responsibility before them and knew that they had to get it right.

Reb Meir and Reb Nosson went to discuss their quandary with Rav Moshe Feinstein.

"I can offer *sevaros* (reasoning) to both sides," Rav Moshe said, "but to establish a *minhag* (custom), you need more than logic. I think you should approach a few veteran *shamashim* of big *shuls* and ask them what the *minhag* is."

They went to ask Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, who essentially echoed Rav Moshe's answer, suggesting that they consult with experienced *gabbaim*. After embarking on a *gabbai*-interviewing tour, the decision was made to include the words *le'eila ule'eila*.

Over the years, Reb Meir would often wonder why both *roshei yeshivah* had offered the same suggestion, using a near identical phrase and stressing that they should ask more than one person. He was exhilarated when, after sharing the story in public, he was approached by a young *talmid chachami*, who showed him a source. In the *Levush*, the *Ba'al HaLevushim* writes a particular *halachah* and concludes, "This is the correct *halachah*, and I've even confirmed it with several *chazzanim yeshishim*, veteran *chazzanim*!" 

WHERE TO COME BACK TO

From the biography of Rabbi Dovid Trenk, *Just Love Them*, by Rabbi Yisroel Besser

On Rosh Hashanah during Rabbi Dovid Trenk's last years, when he already lived in Lakewood, he spoke in his *yeshivah* before *tekias shofar*, discussing *Akeidas Yitzchak*, which had been in that day's *Krias HaTorah*. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* tells



Avraham Avinu to sacrifice his son, and Avraham asks which son. Hashem says, "The son you love,"

and Avraham Avinu says that he loves them both.

"Come on," Rabbi Trenk said. "Let's be honest. Here he had one son who embodied perfect *yirah*, had never done an *aveirah*, and the other one who was a *pere adam*, wild and disobedient. Is it possible

"THE ANSWER IS THAT HE LOVED THEM BOTH EQUALLY."

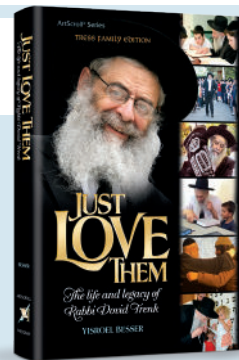
that a *tzaddik* like Avraham didn't know which son he loved more?

"The answer," Reb Dovid said, banging on the *shtender*, "is that he loved them both equally. He saw

the good side of Yishmael just as he saw the good side of Yitzchak. He saw the potential in Yishmael just as he did in Yitzchak. He loved both his sons."

It was quiet in the room, and then Reb Dovid concluded, "And that's why *Rashi* tells us at the end of the *parashah* that we see that Yishmael did *teshuvah*... Of course he did *teshuvah*! His father loved him and his father believed in him, so he had where to come back to..."

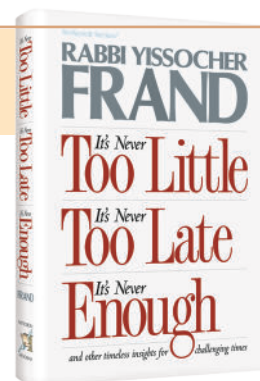
With that message — Reb Dovid's unconditional love for his *talmidim* and fervent belief in them — he was ready to blow *shofar*, ushering in the moment of *teshuvah*. 📖



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Interviews with: Rabbi Gedaliah Zlotowitz/
 Rabbi Yisroel Besser, Rabbi Meyer Yedid, Rabbi David Sutton, Rabbi Yaakov Feitman, Rabbi Paysach Krohn, and Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky





Teshuvah under pain, or with a gun to one's head, or in a vessel of boiling water, or lying in a hospital bed hooked up to machinery — are all acceptable forms of *teshuvah*.

In the courtroom of the human mind, this is surprising. Imagine someone coming to apologize for offending you, and then you notice that there is a person behind him holding a gun to his back, forcing him to apologize. You would conclude that in no way is this a real apology.

The concept of *teshuvah* under duress being accepted is so novel, in fact, that no less a personage than Adam Harishon was certain that it was invalid.

After Kayin murdered his brother Hevel, Hashem reprimanded him, and he confessed his guilt and begged for forgiveness. The *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 22:13) relates that Adam Harishon asked Kayin what happened while he was being judged, and Kayin answered, "I did *teshuvah*, and Hashem accepted it."

Adam Harishon clapped his hands to his face in shock and said, "Such is the power of *teshuvah*? I did not know!"

Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin (*Pri Tzaddik, Vayeilech/Shuvah* 13) notes that it is clear that Adam Harishon knew that *teshuvah* existed, but that he was surprised by how powerful *teshuvah* is.

Why?

Adam knew that there is *teshuvah mei'ahavah* — repentance that one undertakes out of love of Hashem. When a person feels that he has hurt someone whom he loves, his *teshuvah* is sincere.

Adam also knew that there is

such a thing as *teshuvah mei'yirah* — repentance undertaken out of fear of Hashem. Although less sincere, it still causes the wrongdoer to humble himself before

Hashem. But *teshuvah* under duress? Why should that work?

Indeed, it is a great *chiddush* (a novel concept).

The Talmud tells us that Hashem chose to accept the evil Menasheh's *teshuvah* in order to leave the door open for future *baalei teshuvah*. There would come a time when people would feel so far gone, so distant, that they would assume that there would be no hope for them to return to Hashem. Menasheh set a precedent for all future generations. Menasheh's story teaches us that even the worst of the worst can repent. If one who served every single idol available and attempted to eradicate all vestiges of Torah from *Klal Yisrael* could repent, then I'm sure that we can too, no matter how bad we consider ourselves. Why? Because Hashem really and truly wants us to return.

salem. Only one *berachah* stands out. We ask Hashem, "Hashiveinu Avinu l'Sorasecha — Bring us back, our Father, to Your

Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before You. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who desires repentance."

Why is this *berachah* different from all the rest?

The answer is simple. Hashem can do everything for you. He can give you knowledge, He can heal



Rav Yissocher Frand

HASHEM IS WAITING AT THE PROVERBIAL TELEPHONE FOR OUR CALL.

Have you ever noticed that all of the *berachos* in *Shemoneh Esrei* end by defining Hashem as One Who can provide the specific form of salvation that we seek? He is the *Chonein Hada'as* — the Gracious Giver of knowledge; the *Rofeh Cholei Amo Yisrael* — the Healer of the sick of His nation, Israel; *Bonei Yerushalayim* — the Builder of Jeru-

salem, He can build Jerusalem — all without your input. But He cannot do *teshuvah* for you.

There is one thing He does do, however. He profoundly desires your *teshuvah* and eagerly awaits the day when we will choose to return to Him.

This is true for every day of the

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year. We recite the *berachah* referring to Hashem as a *Rotzeh B'teshuvah* three times each weekday. But this is especially true for the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, during which Hashem is particularly close to us and waits at the proverbial telephone for our call.

The closest example I can give to describe our situation during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* is one that is poignant, but apt. Many of us know at least one set of parents who have suffered the horrible fate of having a child leave the fold. This is by far one of the most painful experiences a parent can have. Many of these children have severed all ties with their families, but the parents never give up hope. They wait and wait, certain that one day that child will come back. "He's turned the corner," they think to themselves. "He's coming home." They sit at that phone hoping that it will ring.

If that is true for a set of parents who have human emotions and will still remember their anguish even when the child returns, how much more is it true for Hashem, Who simply wants us to come back to Him, and Who can erase the past. As the *Rambam* puts it, "Yesterday [i.e., prior to doing *teshuvah*], the sinner was hated before Hashem, disgusting, cast away — an abomination. Today, he is beloved, pleasing, held close — a "friend."

We human beings do not easily forget being wronged. Hashem is different.

Hashem sends us a message: I am a *Rotzeh B'teshuvah* — I can't do *teshuvah* for you, but do I ever want you back! And when you come back, I will accept you with open arms, and the iniquities of the past will no longer exist."

How do we awaken the willpow-

er that lies dormant within us?

I know of only one method: making one *kabbalah* (resolution) — something taxing, but not overwhelming — and telling yourself, "I will do this, no matter what."

Kabbalos are like exercise. When a person feels that he is starting to develop a midriff bulge and he must exercise to get rid of it, how does he

**"I KNOW THAT
I OWE YOU A
LOT MORE THAN
THIS, BUT LOOK,
I AM SERIOUS
THIS TIME. I
AM ALREADY
STARTING TO
DO TESHUVAH."**

start? He wakes up in the morning and does five sit-ups. You and I know that five sit-ups are not going to get rid of that flab. But a determined person will continue to do five sit-ups for a week or two, then move up to ten, and then to twenty-five, and before long, he or she is back in shape.

Similarly, when you begin to make *kabbalos*, start off small, and build slowly until you become great. Don't try 100 sit-ups the first week. Don't accept upon yourself something that you cannot handle. It may seem noble, but when you drop it a week later, you'll have squandered your impetus to do *teshuvah*. Realize that no matter how miniscule a *kabbalah* seems, it is still effective — as long as you stick to it.

Teshuvah is not a matter of becoming a *tzaddik* overnight, but of

taking baby steps back to Hashem.

But aren't we supposed to be convinced on *Yom Kippur* that we are going to be perfect from now on? No. Rav Yisroel Reisman quotes his *rebbe*, Rav Avrohom Pam, as saying that a *kabbalah* is like a down-payment. When someone wants to purchase a used car from a private seller and requests permission to show the car to his mechanic and to his wife — make that, to his wife and to his mechanic — the seller will often agree, but only if the buyer leaves a deposit of, say, \$500. If the car is worth \$12,000, why does the seller accept a down payment of only \$500, a mere pittance when compared to the sale price?

The seller accepts it because that pittance shows that the buyer's intentions are serious.

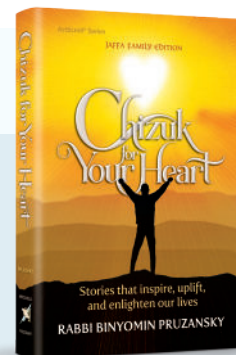
Until recently, one could purchase a house by putting down 10 percent of the sale price, taking a mortgage for the remaining balance. Why did the bank accept those terms? Because that 10 percent indicated that the customer was serious.

That is what we show Hashem with our *kabbalos*. We realize that it might take 30 years to complete our *teshuvah*, much as it will to pay off our mortgage, but we tell Hashem, "I know that I owe You a lot more than this, but look, I am serious this time. I am already starting to do *teshuvah*."

A *kabbalah* may seem pitiful when compared to the "outstanding balance," but this system really works.

Let me share another story about Rav Shlomo Freifeld. Approximately four decades ago, a fellow who was virtually uninitiated to the world of the Talmud walked into

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On *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, the Weinstein home was busy with *Yom Tov* preparations. Along with all the cooking and shopping, Mrs. Weinstein had to find the time and energy for her special-needs son, Chaim. Although he was a sweet and charming boy, he required constant care and devotion. In addition to Mrs. Weinstein's own efforts, a nurse came every day to help care for him.

Complicating matters that *Erev Yom Tov* was the fact that Chaim had developed a fever. Mrs. Weinstein knew that she had to monitor the situation carefully and make sure that the fever remained under control. That evening after *shul*, the Weinsteins had a table full of guests. After a beautiful meal, Mrs. Weinstein had a big clean-up to do. Finally, at 1 a.m., she was ready to get some sleep. However, when she checked on Chaim, she found that his forehead was still hot and his face flushed. Therefore, instead of getting a night's sleep in preparation for the next day's *davening*, Mrs. Weinstein spent most of the night at Chaim's bedside. Relief finally came at 9:15 a.m., when the nurse arrived.

Realizing that she was far too exhausted to go to *shul*, Mrs. Weinstein *davened Shacharis* at home. She missed the beautiful *shul davening* and the special feeling of closeness to Hashem that she always felt during these powerful *tefillos*. However, she also knew that she was where Hashem wanted her to be. She turned her eyes to Hashem and asked, "Hashem, I guess this is how You want me to serve You. I could have served You by going to *shul*, but I guess You want me

to go to bed."

Before going back to sleep, she opened up the book *Inspired*, which her husband had purchased for her as a *Yom Tov* gift. She found the page where she had left off and began to read. As the story unfolded, she couldn't help but be amazed at the *Hashgachah Pratis*. This story, in all its details, spoke directly to her heart. The story was about a *talmid chacham* from Monsey named Yonason, who was a great-grandson of Rav Yonason Steif, a *gadol hador* of the previous generation. Yonason had two daughters who were disabled and required round-the-clock care. Because his life was so con-

returned home. Drained from the experience, he collapsed onto the couch and fell asleep.

He had a dream in which his great-grandfather revealed to him that his mission in this world was to care for his two disabled children. The merit of being entrusted with these two holy *neshamos* was the reason he was living, and this merit would stand for generations.

"You may think that you are supporting them," said his great-grandfather, "but in reality,

**"YOU MAY
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Rav Yonason Steif

sumed with the care of his children, he wasn't able to learn or *daven* at the level he was capable of reaching. The girls' care took a toll on his life and he wondered why Hashem had given him such a difficult challenge.

He decided that he needed to *daven* at the *kever* of his illustrious great-grandfather in Woodbridge, New Jersey. There, he asked Hashem why he had to go through such difficult tests, and cried his heart out. After hours of beseeching Hashem for guidance, he finally

they are supporting you."

"But Zeide, it's too hard for me," Yonason protested.

"I'm begging you to make up your mind that you will do everything you can to withstand the *nissayon*, because this is your mission in life," his great-grandfather replied. "Stop your crying, because this is really the best life for you."

Mrs. Weinstein was amazed

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Sh'or YOSHUV and asked to join the *yeshivah*. As fate would have it, the *yeshivah* was studying *Bava Basra*, which happens to be the biggest *masechta* in all of *Shas*. The tome is so large that you can probably get carpal-tunnel syndrome if you hold it for too long. This newcomer came to his room on his very first

“THIS IS YOUR BAVA BASRA.”

night there and told his roommate, “I’m out of here tomorrow. Have you seen the size of that book? There’s no way I can learn the whole thing.”

The roommate hurried to inform Rav Freifeld of the newcom-

er’s decision. Drawing on his wisdom and understanding of the human psyche, Rav Freifeld summoned the *yeshivah*’s bookbinder



Rav Shlomo Freifeld

and instructed him to take the very first *daf* of *Bava Basra* and bind it between two covers.

“I know that you won’t be able

to write *Bava Basra* on the spine because it will be so thin, but at least write the letters *beis beis* as an acronym,” he concluded.

When the bookbinder came back with his craft project, Rav Freifeld summoned the newcomer and said, “This is your *Bava Basra*. You are going to study it with me until you know the *shakla*

vetarya [dialogue] of the *Gemara* backward and forward. When you finish it, I will make a *fleishige siyum* for the entire *yeshivah*, because you finished *Bava Basra*.”

Four decades later, that fellow is still sitting and learning. Rav Freifeld showed him that he could do it if he broke it down into baby steps.

Our *teshuvah* may not be as much of a watershed event. For us, it is not a matter of returning in one fell swoop. It is a matter of taking small, deliberate steps back to Hashem. 📖

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sound on *Rosh Hashanah*, which has a very small opening on the bottom, while the top has a much wider opening. This indicates that even if we sincerely open our hearts only a small amount to do *teshuvah*, Hashem will widen that small opening and elevate us.

Let us take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* and utilize this gift from Hashem by making even the smallest — albeit sincere — effort at coming back to Hashem with *teshuvah*. When we accept upon ourselves a modest attempt to improve, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* will provide *siyata diShmaya* and enable us to return to Him completely, *b’teshuvah sheleimah*. 📖

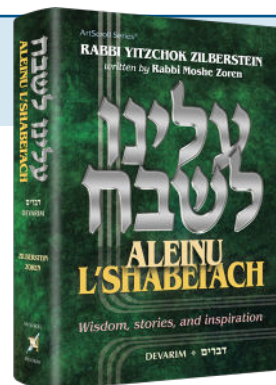
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that Hashem had sent her the story she needed to read at just the right moment. She understood that although she wasn’t able to go to *shul* to *daven* the way she would have liked, *davening* in *shul* wasn’t what Hashem wanted from her that day. He obviously wanted her to take care of her precious child. This was the mission before her, and if this was Hashem’s will, she would do it happily and to the best of her abilities.

Soothed and encouraged by the message of the story, Mrs. Weinstein finally drifted off to sleep for a few hours. She awoke refreshed, in time to go to *shul*

for *Mussaf*. There she heard the blowing of the *shofar* and *davened* her heart out, knowing that on that challenging day she had done the *ratzon* of Hashem.

We all are given challenges in life, and often, we feel resentment. But if we understand that this is the mission Hashem has given us, that this is indeed His will, how can we become frustrated? Instead, we must find the inner strength to do the best we can, and to believe that this is what we were meant to do. Although we may feel at times that Hashem is concealed from us, we must remember that He is always there to answer our call. 📖



The son of a Chassidic *rebbe* posed the following question to Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein: “My father, whose Chassidic court numbers only a few dozen Jews, has asked me to *daven* with him in his *shul* on *Rosh Hashanah*. I prefer, however, to *daven* in the *yeshivah* where I learn, since there are hundreds of other people praying there. What should I do?”

RAV ZILBERSTEIN UNDERSTOOD THAT HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE ROSH HASHANAH PRAYERS AT HIS FATHER'S SHUL WOULD ENHANCE THE FATHER'S STANDING IN THE EYES OF HIS CHASSIDIM.

As it happened, not only was he — the son — a *talmid chacham*, but he also had a beautiful voice, and Rav Zilberstein understood that his participation in the *Rosh Hashanah* prayers at his father's *shul* would enhance the father's standing in the eyes of his *chassidim*.

Rav Zilberstein told the son that he had no choice but to listen to his father, in accordance with the *halachah* in *Shulchan Aruch* (Yoreh Deah 240) that if a son wishes to accept a voluntary fast upon himself, but his father is opposed to the fast out of concern for his son's health, the son is forbidden to fast. That is because the obligation to honor a father is waived only for a *mitzvah*, not for a stringency or an act of piety such as a voluntary fast. In a situation where a *mitzvah* is not involved, a child must obey his parents. (The same would apply, for instance, if a child wanted to travel to graves of *tzaddikim* but his mother was apprehensive about it.)

Similarly, in this case, Rav Zilberstein told the son that he was obligated to listen to his father and pray in his *shul*, even though he would lose the advantage of praying with a larger congregation in the *yeshivah* and possibly other advantages. 📖

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Many years later, the Rebbetzin was again in Eretz Yisrael. One of her many speeches took place in a town called Ginat Shomron. There she spoke at a *shul* in a neighborhood called Neve Alizah. *Elul* was on its way. The Rebbetzin decided to tell the gathering the story of the *shofar* from Bergen-Belsen — the *shofar* that had impacted so many lives, the *shofar* that had sparked such incredible *mesirus nefesh*. She spoke, and there was not a dry eye in the room, as the audience relived the experience with her.

She finished her speech. There was a collective intake of breath. Suddenly, a woman stood up in the middle of the audience.

“That shofar,” she said.

“Yes?”

“I know that shofar. I know exactly what you're talking about!”

People looked at one another, then back at the Rebbetzin.

“Please explain.”

“My father,” the woman said, “my father was the rabbi in the Polish section right beside yours. I do not know if anyone ever told you what happened after that first day of *shofar* blowing.”

The Rebbetzin shook her head. “What happened?”

“The *shofar*, the precious *shofar*, was smuggled out of your side of the camp and into ours. It had been smuggled into the camp in the bottom of a very large pail filled with a coffee-like liquid and was blown by my father in our side of the camp on the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*.”

The two of them stared at one

another. There were no words.

“Rebbetzin, I still have that *shofar*. It's here. Right here in Neve Alizah. I'll never forget how we blew that *shofar* after liberation and took it with us, away from the horrors of Europe.”

She left the room. A few minutes later, she returned, the *shofar* of Bergen-Belsen clutched tightly in her hands. Only then did they lose control — two women, two daughters of men who had risked everything to blow the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, though it put their lives at risk.

The Rebbetzin hadn't seen the *shofar* in many years. Holding it, she looked at it, running her hands over its smooth sides. That moment in the Shomron was nothing less than a reunion. 📖

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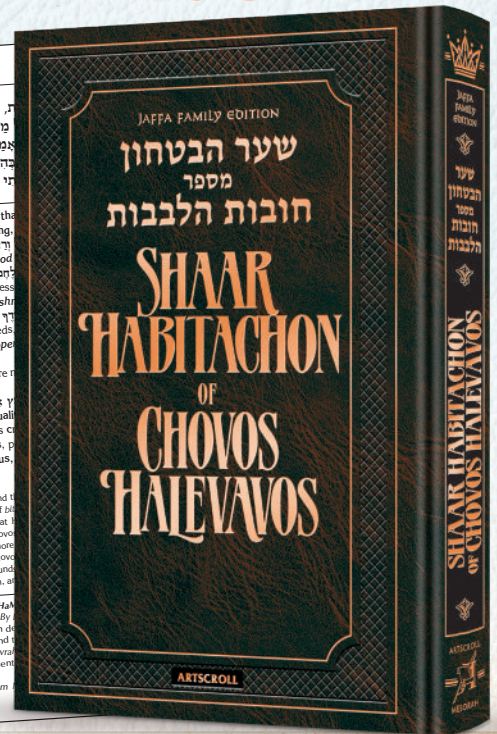
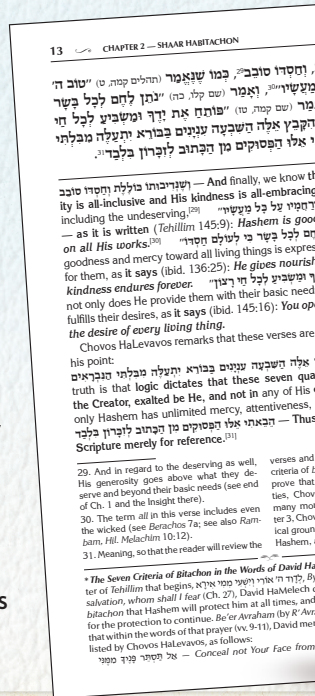
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