

AT THE ARTSCROLL YOM TOV TABLE

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

YIZKOR

THE POIGNANT PAST

Yamim Noraim with the Maggid by Rabbi Paysach Krohn



בְּכֹל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּר אֶת שְׁמִי אָבוּא אֵלֶיךָ וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ.

Wherever I permit My Name to be mentioned, I shall come to you and bless you
(Shemos 20:21).

Yizkor!

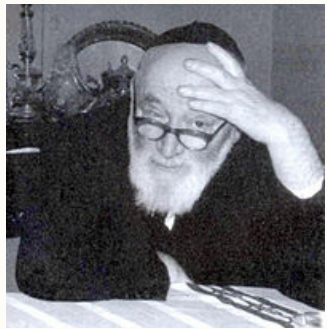
The word itself evokes a solemn response. To remember someone who is no longer alive is poignant and sometimes painful.

What was and no longer is leaves emptiness in the hearts of those who have loved and lost close relatives.

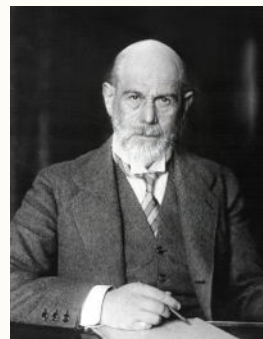
When we recite the *Yizkor tefillah*, we commit to give charity on their behalf as a source of merit for their souls.

In the following story, told to me by Rabbi Nachum Aaronson from Manchester, England, we are given a Torah perspective on an incident that some thought was insincere and insignificant. We are also taught never to rush to judgment; there may be more to an event than meets the eye.

The incident happened on *Yom Kippur*, with Rav Yecheil Yaakov Weinberg (1884-1966), a world-renowned *talmid chacham* and author of *Seridei Aish*. Before World War II, he was the *rosh yeshivah* of the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, and after his miraculous survival, he was a *rav* in Montreux, Switzerland, for twenty-two years. Rav Weinberg was brought to Montreux after the war by Rav Shaul Weingort; recently, his son, Rav Abba Weingort of Yerushalayim, printed this story in *Haggadah Seridei Aish*, which contains Torah insights and



Rav Yecheil Yaakov Weinberg



Walter Rathenau

interesting events in the life of Rav Weinberg.

At the outbreak of World War I, he escaped from Poland to Germany. Shortly after the war, he was in a *shul* in Berlin on *Yom Kippur*. As the congregants were about to start *Yizkor*, a limousine with a police escort drove up to the *shul*, and out stepped Walther Rathenau, a Jewish industrialist who was the German foreign minister during the Weimar Republic. Rathenau was a controversial figure. Anti-Semites hated him; in 1922, he was assassinated.

On this *Yom Kippur*, he entered the *shul*, said *Yizkor* for his late father Emil, and left. Many congregants were incensed by what they considered his audacity: to park in front of the *shul*, stay for just a few minutes, and then drive away. They considered such behavior rude and insulting.

After Rathenau left, there was a tumult in the *shul*, as people criticized his conduct. Rav Weinberg was upset at the vitriolic criticism, so he asked for permission to say a few words. His insight was remarkable.

Rav Weinberg began, "*Chazal (Chullin 92b)* teach that when Yaakov Avinu left Be'er Sheva to go to Charan, he had a sudden realization. He said, 'Both my father and grandfather prayed at Mount Moriah — I

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ARTSCROLL PUBLICATIONS

Rav Nosson Wachtfogel on Elul and Yamim Noraim



The *Mashgiach*, Rav Nosson Wachtfogel, was asked, “What are we supposed to work on in *Elul*?”

“I’m not sure,” he answered, “but I know what my *rebbeim* always said: If you work hard, sweat, and never stop — then you’ll get somewhere. You don’t get anywhere just because your father or grandfather was a big *rav*. No one has it ready-made. The entire essence of a person — everything he has — is based on how much he toils and sweats to serve Hashem. If a person doesn’t toil and doesn’t sweat, he doesn’t have anything.”

No drop of sweat ever goes to waste.

There’s No *Yiras Hashem* if You Don’t Work for It

If a person doesn’t try hard and work on his *yiras Hashem*, then he won’t have any *yirah* — even on *Rosh Hashanah*. Why? Because the natural instinct of *yiras Hashem* was taken away from us. Now, *yiras Hashem* depends entirely on our free choice. If someone doesn’t work on *yiras Hashem*, he will even do the opposite; he will choose not to have *yiras Hashem*! We only acquire *yirah* if we work hard for it.

Do You Learn *Mussar*?

The *Mashgiach* related that when Rav Leib

Chasman met Rav Yerucham Levovitz, he asked him, “Do you learn *mussar*?”

“*Baruch Hashem*,” Rav Yerucham answered. “I give *shmuessen* to the *yeshivah bachurim*.”

“Do you learn *mussar*?” Rav Leib asked again.

“*Baruch Hashem*,” Rav Yerucham said. “I say *mussar shiurim*, *vaadim*, and speak with *bachurim* about *mussar* and *yiras Shamayim*.”

“Do you learn *mussar*?” Rav Leib repeated.

The *Mashgiach* said emphatically, “Do you learn *mussar* or not?”

You can be busy inspiring others, giving *shiurim* and *vaadim* about *mussar*. All of this is *avodas hakodesh*, but still: Are you learning *mussar* or not?

Just Think About Today

The *Mashgiach* was asked, “What will happen after *Rosh Hashanah*? We’re just going to fall again!”

“No more words from the *yeitzer hara*!” he replied.

“The *yeitzer hara* always asks questions like these: ‘What’s going to happen afterward?’ Don’t think about afterward. Just think about today!”



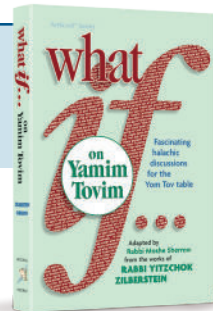
Rav Nosson Wachtfogel

“JUST
THINK
ABOUT
TODAY!”

Newest Releases



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Question:

Miri is already a *bas mitzvah* and she shows a special love for every *mitzvah*. Every *Rosh Hashanah*, she tries to fulfill the *mitzvah* of listening to the *shofar* being blown, and she planned to do so this year, as well. The week before *Rosh Hashanah*, her mother was talking on the phone and she heard her mother mention that she would love to go to *shul* on *Rosh Hashanah* to hear the *shofar*, but she did not feel that she could leave the house, as she had to take care of her younger children.

Miri is a very capable babysitter. In fact, she watches her brothers and sisters on a regular basis when her mother has to leave the house. For some reason, her mother did not ask her to watch the children for her on *Rosh Hashanah*. Her mother must have known that Miri would not want to miss out on hearing the *shofar*.

In any event, now Miri knows that, in reality, her mother would really like to go to *shul* to hear the *shofar*, and in their neighborhood, there is no ladies' *shofar*-blowing in the afternoon.

Miri wants to know if she should go to *shul* in order to hear the *shofar*, or if she should offer to babysit in order to allow her mother to go instead.

Which *mitzvah* is the greater of the two?

Answer:

There is certainly a precedent indicating that one must be more concerned for his own ability to fulfill *mitzvos* than for allowing his friend to do them instead (see *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, *Orach Chaim* 482 and 658).

Just as one's own life takes precedence to the life of his friend, so too does one's spiritual life take precedence to that of his friend's.

However, in this case, Miri is not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, as it is a *mitzvas asei shehazeman grama* (a positive time-bound *mitzvah*) from which women are exempt (see *Kiddushin* 29a).

The *mitzvah* of *kibbud eim*, in contrast, is certain-

ly obligatory. Even if Miri's mother did not ask her to stay home, that is her desire, and if Miri will do so, she will have fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *kibbud eim*. It is better to surrender a *mitzvah* from which according to *halachah* Miri is exempt in order to fulfill a *mitzvah* that is generally incumbent upon her.



Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein

**WHICH
MITZVAH
IS THE
GREATER OF
THE TWO?**

However, according to the *Rashba* (*Ye- vamos* 6a), the essential *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'eim* is limited to areas where the parent has a physical benefit: e.g., feeding the parent, dressing him, or accompanying him. If the parents have no physical benefit, there is no *mitzvah* for the child to honor them. This would seem to imply that Miri would not be doing a *mitzvah* by letting her mother hear the *shofar*.

Yet, there are three reasons to reject this argument:

1) There are opinions (see the notes of Rav Yerucham Fischel Perlow on the *Sefer HaMitzvos* of Rav Saadia Gaon, *Asei* 9) that differ with the *Rashba* and maintain that providing anything the parent wants is a fulfillment of *kibbud av v'eim*.

2) Some *poskim* understand that even according to the *Rashba*, there

is a *mitzvah* to fulfill any parental wishes. The only time it would be limited to where the parent has a physical benefit is when the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'eim* supersedes a different *mitzvah* (see *Biur HaGra*, *Yoreh De'ah*, at the end of 240, and *Yad Eliyahu*, *siman* 41).

3) Perhaps the *Rashba* merely meant to exclude something from which the parent has no real benefit. In our case, Miri's mother certainly has a great benefit from hearing the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, and if Miri will facilitate her mother's ability to perform the *mitzvah*, that would be a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *kibbud eim*.

Miri would do better by staying home to watch her siblings in order to allow her mother to perform the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, and Miri herself will gain the *mitzvah* of *kibbud eim*. 🏠

have passed it and have not prayed there.’

Immediately, he turned around and went back to Mount Moriah.

“Yaakov knew that Hashem is everywhere and that He can answer prayers wherever they are offered (see *Shemos* 20:21). However, Yaakov understood that it is important to connect one’s prayer to one’s parents. Thus, Rathenau should not be scorned for coming to *shul* to remember his father in prayer.”

Rav Weinberg added another thought: The place where Yaakov prayed would eventually be the site of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Yet, he did not give that as his reason for returning to that sacred place. He mentioned only that his father and grandfather had prayed there — and that compelled him to return.

Many years later, Rav Abba Weingort was giving a lecture in Modi’in, Israel, on the topic of *kibbud av va’eim* (honoring parents). In the course of his talk, he repeated the aforementioned comment by Rav Weinberg. When Rav Weingort finished speaking, a young

man exclaimed, “I can’t believe you just told that story! I am the grandson of Emil Rathenau! My mother [Edith Andrea] was Walter Rathenau’s sister.”

The young man went on to explain that he had grown up non-religious, but was once in an Orthodox synagogue in Hamburg, Germany, and was captivated by the melodies throughout the services. That was the beginning of his inspiration to come to Israel, where he eventually became a *baal teshuvah*. Walter Rathenau never married and had no children; the *baal teshuvah* was his nephew.

Rabbi Weingort notes that when parents are mentioned during the *Yizkor* service, they are “awakened” in heaven and a merit is brought to their souls.

“Who knows?” posits Rabbi Weingort.

“Perhaps that elevation of Emil Rathenau’s soul on that *Yom Kippur* caused him to merit that a grandson became a *baal teshuvah*.”

The eternity of *Klal Yisrael* depends on our attachment to previous generations. As Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach once said, “Only if we are linked to the past do we have hope of being connected to the future.”

“ONLY IF WE ARE LINKED TO THE PAST DO WE HAVE HOPE OF BEING CONNECTED TO THE FUTURE.”

YOM KIPPUR

BREAKING HIS FAST

Rav Chaim Kanievsky on the *Yamim Noraim*
compiled by Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Shteinman

One year, when Rav Chaim Kanievsky was unable to fast on *Yom Kippur* due to illness, he nevertheless ate the *seudah hamafsekes*, the pre-fast meal. He explained that the purpose of the meal is not just to garner strength for the fast; eating the meal is a *mitzvah* on its own even if a person will not fast. He added that even a child who is too young to fast fulfills a *mitzvah* by eating on *Erev Yom Kippur*.



Rav Chaim Kanievsky

grandfather, Rav Shmaryahu Yosef Karelitz (the *Chazon Ish*’s father), was once sick on *Yom Kippur* and knew that he would be

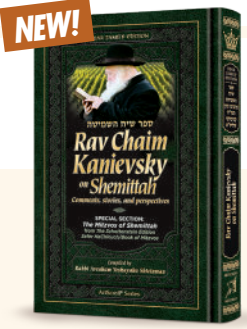
unable to complete the fast. Nevertheless, he approached the fast

with the attitude that he was obligated to be part

HE FASTED THE ENTIRE DAY...UNTIL TEN MINUTES BEFORE SUNSET.

of it and would fast until he could no longer do so. And so, he fasted the entire day, until, ten minutes before sunset, he broke his fast, calculating that at that point he could make it no longer. Once he could no longer fast, *halachah* obligated him to eat right then rather than force himself to wait just a few more minutes.





Some years ago, Rav Shlomo Zalman Grossman served as a *rav* in the Jordan Valley. When giving a lecture about *Shemittah* to a local community of nonreligious Jews, he discussed the *berachah* given by the Torah for those who observe *Shemittah*: the promise of a three-year bounty in the sixth year to tide them over until after *Shemittah*.

After the lecture, R' Grossman was approached by a farmer named Effi, who said, "Rabbi, if you guarantee me that I will see the Torah's blessing fulfilled, I will observe *Shemittah*."

"And what will you do during *Shemittah*?" asked R' Grossman.

"I will learn a bit and do some business," answered Effi. He added, "You are the only religious person I know. Can you give me this guarantee?"

Rav Grossman consulted with Rav Elyashiv, who said, "You cannot give him a guarantee, since some commentators explain that the Torah's blessing is not guaranteed to every individual but is rather given to the Jewish people as a whole. But you can tell him that if he observes *Shemittah*, he will not lose out. He will witness much *siyata d'Shmaya* in his activities."

Rav Grossman returned to Effi and said, "If you keep *Shemittah*, I can guarantee that you will not lose out in any way!"

This answer satisfied Effi and he agreed to observe the upcoming *Shemittah*. He left his fields unworked and spent the year as the secretary of his farming develop-

ment — a job that did not pay very well. Financially, Effi had a difficult year. As the only person in the development observing *Shemittah*, Effi was ridiculed by his neighbors. At one point, his neighbors offered to rent his farm equipment, which



HE HAD FIELDS FULL OF CELERY STALKS THAT GREW ABOVE HIS WAIST!

was sitting idle. Effi asked Rav Grossman whether he could rent the equipment to try and offset some of his losses. Rav Grossman responded that since his neighbors were Jews who were transgressing *Shemittah*, he was forbidden to rent them equipment to help them commit a sin. Effi accepted the ruling and stood firm by his commitment to observe *Shemittah*. He spent the year slowly drawing closer to service of Hashem.

Shemittah passed. Right after *Rosh Hashanah* of the eighth year, Effi and Rav Grossman drank a *I'chaim* to celebrate the fact that

he had withstood the incredible challenge of observing *Shemittah*.

Effi got ready to prepare his fields for planting. But there was a problem. In previous years, he would receive seeds from a government agency for agriculture. The agency distributed the seeds before the planting season, and Effi would pay for them later in the year, after he sold his crop. Now, he had missed the yearly distribution of seeds. He wanted to plant, but could get no seeds.

Effi reached out to friends and contacts, until one person in the Ministry of Agriculture told him, "Look, all we have left is a large amount of low-quality celery seeds, which no one wants. If you wish, I can give them to you for free. Otherwise, we will dispose of them."

Having no other choice, Effi took the celery seeds and planted them. He had been given so many seeds that he had to rent extra fields to plant them all. To everyone's surprise, his fields produced an enormous crop of celery — stalks of celery three times the usual size. He had fields full of celery stalks that grew above his waist!

"What will you do with so much celery?" Effi was asked. He had no idea; celery was not in such high demand. Nevertheless, he answered, "I did my part. Hashem will do His part."

Rav Grossman was worried as well. Effi's fields had produced enough celery to *continued on page 6*

supply the entire country for several months!

Sometime later, Rav Grossman received a call from Effi. “Come down to my fields at once,” Effi said. “You have to see this.”

The day before, Effi had received a call from his contact at the Ministry of Agriculture. “Tell me, Effi,” said the man, “what did you do with all those celery seeds I gave you?”

Effi replied, “You want to know what I did with them? I am eating celery, breathing celery, sleeping celery — they’re calling me ‘Mr. Celery!’”

“So you have a lot of celery?” asked the official. “Yes!” said Effi. “I have as much celery as you want!”

“That’s great!” responded the official. “The usual price of celery is fifty cents a head, but you can sell them now for \$3 a head — you might even get \$4 or \$5 a head. You see, in the last few weeks, a cold front passed across Europe. The weather is frigid there and people are staying indoors. Everyone is looking for vegetables, but all the celery is frozen. There is a really high demand now for celery in the European markets. After all, it’s freezing

and everyone wants soup, but you can’t make vegetable soup without celery! Hire as many workers as you can and I will arrange to ship the celery to Europe.”

Rav Grossman described the sight that greeted him when he arrived at Effi’s fields: Hundreds of Arabs from the surrounding villages, along with Jewish workers from the Jordan valley, were working day and night, harvesting the celery as fast as they possibly could. A line of trucks was waiting, and as soon as they were loaded, the celery was taken to the airport and flown to Europe. The entire stock of celery was gone so fast that when Rav Grossman looked for celery before *Pesach*, a few weeks later, not a single stalk could be found!

Effi grew very wealthy thanks to this windfall. He bought a luxury car and explained, “My neighbors all mocked me during *Shemittah*. I will call this car ‘the *Shemittah* Cadillac’ and show them all how Hashem helped me.”

He also bought a costly Arabian horse, which he called “the *Shemittah* horse.”

Effi grew increasingly religious as time passed. He studied Torah and became a *talmid chacham* who delivered lectures and inspired many people with his story of how Hashem rewards those who keep *Shemittah*. 📖

HALACHAH

WOMEN’S OBLIGATION IN SHOFAR

A Women’s Guide to Practical Halacha by Rabbi Eliezer Krohn, reviewed by Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum

The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 33b-34a) expounds verses from the Torah to instruct us to hear nine shofar blasts on the day of *Rosh Hashanah*. The nine blasts comprise three sets of *tekiah-teruah-tekiah*. However, we are unclear regarding the proper way to blow a *teruah*. Is it three medium blasts (*teruah*), many short blasts (*shevarim*), or both three medium blasts and many short blasts (*shevarim-teruah*)? We therefore sound each option, resulting in 30 blasts (see *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 590).

Although the *Gemara* (*ibid.* 34b) writes that it is best to hear these blasts during *Mussaf* when we recite the verses of *Malchuyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofaros*, we blow the shofar before *Mussaf* as well to confuse the *Satan*, since he sees our alacrity to perform this *mitzvah* (see *Rashi*, *Rosh Hashanah*, s.v. *K’dei*). It is widely

accepted to blow additional blasts equaling 100 in total, as indicated in the *Rosh Hashanah machzor*.

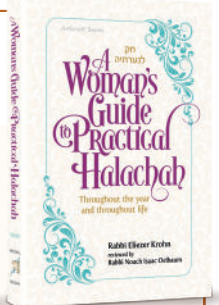
Women are exempt from time-bound commandments. Therefore, strictly speaking, they are not obligated to hear the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* (*Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 589:3). However, many *poskim* write that, over the generations, women have accepted this *mitzvah* upon themselves and it is therefore now an obligation upon them (see Rav Akiva Eiger, *hashmatos* 1). Since it is not a Torah obligation for women, it is customary that they are required to hear only 30 blasts, rather than all 100.

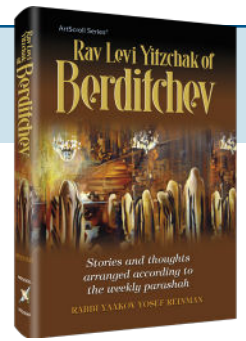
Once the *berachah* on the shofar has been recited, there should be no talking until all the blasts are finished at the end of davening (*Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 592:3). A woman who leaves after hearing only 30

blasts may talk after she has left the *shul*.

If one uses the bathroom during the *Mussaf* service, which is after the *berachah* on the shofar, she should recite *Asher Yatzar* upon exiting (see *Piskei Teshuvos* 592:4).

Because women are, strictly speaking, not obligated in hearing shofar, certain leniencies are allowed for them. Many have the practice to not eat or drink before fulfilling the *mitzvah* of hearing the shofar. For women, this is more lenient. Therefore, even if the men in her family have this practice, she might be granted permission to eat. Certainly, a woman who is very hungry, expectant, or nursing would be allowed to eat (see *ibid.* 585:2). One must be mindful that *Kiddush* needs to be recited before eating. 📖





One year, as the holy days of *Rosh Hashanah* drew near, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev sensed that a terrible decree against the people of Berditchev was about to be issued in Heaven. Perhaps it was because the insidious spirit of reform and modernity was seeping into the city, threatening to undermine the devotion of the people to the Almighty and the ancient traditions. Perhaps it was for some other reason. Be that as it may, an ominous cloud was gathering over the city of Berditchev while the people continued as before, oblivious that they were in danger of destruction.

Rav Levi Yitzchak, the perennial advocate for the Jewish people before the Heavenly Court, took it upon himself not to rest until the decree was annulled. He assembled the people of the city and exhorted them to renew their commitment to the ways of the Torah. His fiery words inspired the people, and they dedicated themselves with renewed fervor to the Torah, each according to his or her level, whether it be devoting more time and effort to learning, more and larger donations to charity, more acts of kindness or more concentration in the performance of the *mitzvos*.

On the first night of *Selichos*, just days before *Rosh Hashanah*, the people gathered in the *shul* at midnight. Rav Levi Yitzchak stood before the holy ark, ready to begin, but he was overcome with a feeling of unease. He sensed that despite all his efforts, despite all his protestations to the Almighty that the people had earned a reprieve, he had not been successful in rescinding the harsh decree. The sword still hung over the heads of the peo-

ple. Something had to be done.

Rav Levi Yitzchak asked his *gabbai*, his personal attendant, to fetch his coat. They were going for a walk. Together, they walked through the deserted streets of Berditchev under a moonless sky made even murkier by a thick cloud cover. Silent houses loomed in the darkness, the windows shuttered against the autumn chill.

"Where are we going?" asked the *gabbai*.

"I don't know," said Rav Levi Yitzchak. "We will know when we get there."

I HAD NEVER BEEN IN A TAVERN BEFORE, AND THE SIGHT SHOCKED ME.

They continued in silence, crisscrossing the city of Berditchev until the illuminated windows of the *shul* were nothing more than a glow in the distance. From time to time, Rav Levi Yitzchak would pause near a house for a moment, then he would shake his head and continue walking.

Finally, they came to a small hut at the very edge of the city. The hut was silent and dark with no sign of habitation.

"This is the place," said Rav Levi Yitzchak. "I feel a warm glow from within. Knock on the door."

The *gabbai* put his hand on the door. Despite the *rebbe's* detection of a warm glow, it was cold to the touch. The *gabbai* rapped on the door with his knuckles, and after

a few long moments, they heard shuffling from within. The door opened, and a wizened old woman stared up at them in puzzlement.

"Is that you, *rebbe*?" she asked, clutching at her throat.

"May we come in?" said Rav Levi Yitzchak.

"Please... I'm sorry I have nothing to offer you."

"Don't trouble yourself. We just want to talk."

The interior of the hut was bathed in the long shadows cast by the tiny flame of a candle. A *Tehillim* lay open right near the candle with minuscule droplets of wax hardening on the worn pages. The old woman offered her guests two stools, while she sat down on a rough bench beside the oven. She took one look at Rav Levi Yitzchak and burst into tears.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

"Because I am so ashamed."

"Ashamed? Why should you be ashamed?"

"Because I am a sinner," she said. "I have concealed my sin all these years, but now you discovered it and came to my door. My secret has been revealed, and so has my shame. I am ready to receive your rebuke, because I deserve it. But I beg of you, please help me. Tell me, *rebbe*, what do I have to do to atone for my sin?"

"What is your sin?" asked Rav Levi Yitzchak. "Tell me, and I will try to help you."

"I guess my story begins," she began, "when I was six years old. Both my parents died that

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HANGING ON A HAIR

continued from page 7

year, and I was left an orphan, all alone. My mother's sister took me into her home. My uncle and aunt were kind to me. They leased a *kretchma*, a tavern, from the local *poritz*, the nobleman who owned the land. My uncle would serve whiskey and beer to the peasants who came into the tavern, while my aunt cleaned and cooked. My job was to help my aunt with the house hold chores. I was forbidden to step foot into the tavern, which was usually filled with drunkards and rogues. This went on for a number of years. This is how I grew up. Life was fine, I guess.

"When I was fourteen, however, my aunt broke the rule for the first time. I don't remember exactly why she needed money so desperately, but she did and she sent me to the tavern to get some from my uncle. I had never been in a tavern before, and the sight shocked me. Some men were sitting at tables drinking and singing nasty songs, while others were staggering back and forth among the tables hoisting tankards of ale to one another.

"I saw my uncle on the far side of the tavern and I made my way across the room to him. As I passed one of the tables, a drunkard reached out and touched my hair. I screamed and ran away, but he grabbed a lock of my hair and yanked it loose. I was beside myself with shock and shame."

The old woman wept as she recalled that day in the tavern.

"My hair was my pride and joy," she continued, "as it is for any girl of fourteen. I took a pair of scissors and cut off all my hair, and I pleaded with the Almighty to forgive me and wipe away my sin. I knew I couldn't look my aunt and uncle in the face anymore, so I left them a note that

I was going away, and in the middle of the night, I stole away and went to the next town. I worked for a while as a maid in the homes of wealthy families, and then I met and married my husband, a simple Jew and a good man. He passed away a few months ago for no apparent reason. He wasn't sick. He didn't have an accident. He just died one day, just like that, and I think it is because of my sin. The Almighty is punishing me."

The old woman looked at Rav Levi Yitzchak with abject pleading in her eyes.

"And now you've found me out, *rebbe*," she said. "So help me. Please help me wipe away this sin once and for all. *Rosh Hashanah* is coming. Everyone is repenting and being forgiven. Maybe you can slip me in among them so that I too can be forgiven."

"Tell me," said Rav Levi Yitzchak, "what did you do with the hair you cut off on that day? Did you keep it?"

"Not all of it," she said. "But I did keep one lock of it to remind me of my sin at all times."

"Please give it to me," he said.

The old woman stood up and shuffled over to a cupboard in the shadowy corner of the room. She opened the bottom drawer and took out a small cardboard box, which she handed to Rav Levi Yitzchak.

"You have no need to cry anymore," he said. "You bear no guilt, and you have no responsibility for the death of your husband. It was not your fault. The Almighty has accepted your tears and your prayers. You will be blessed with a sweet new year."

He stood and turned to his *gabbai*.

"Come, let us return to the *shul*," he said. "We have what we need."


When they returned, they

found the *shul* packed with restless and curious people. It was very late, and they had still not begun the *Selichos*. And Rav Levi Yitzchak was nowhere to be found. His sudden entrance caused quite a stir as all eyes followed him to the front, seeking a clue to his mysterious departure and reappearance.

Rav Levi Yitzchak put on his *tallis* and stepped to the holy ark. He threw open the doors and placed the old woman's cardboard box inside.

"Master of the Universe," he cried out, "is there another nation as holy as Your own Jewish people? I came here straight from the simple home of a simple Jewish widow. When she was fourteen years old, an orphan living with her uncle and aunt, she had to go into a tavern to see her uncle, and the vile hands of a drunkard touched her hair. A fleeting touch, for she immediately fled. It was not her fault. She was completely innocent. Yet she has suffered feelings of guilt for all these years, because she was afraid that somehow she had allowed herself to be defiled. She has cried rivers of tears and poured out her heart to You with innumerable supplications. She even blamed her husband's untimely death on her supposed sin. And what does she want? Only that You, her Father in heaven, should accept her repentance and forgive her."

He took the box containing the lock of the old woman's hair and held it aloft. "Master of the Universe," he cried out, "who else is like Your people Israel? Don't they deserve Your compassion and forgiveness?"

Then holding the box in his hand, confident that the harsh decree had been averted, he started to say the *Selichos*. 

Rav Yaakov Bender on Chumash

I remember an older *Yid* I once knew, Reb Binyomin Bergstein. He was a *talmid* of Mir in Poland, then Shanghai. For a short period, the Mirrer *talmidim* who arrived in New York lived in Arverne, Queens, and then they moved to Brooklyn.

Reb Binyomin had joined his fellow Mirrers in Arverne, but he had stayed local, settling in Far Rockaway once the *yeshivah* moved. A quiet man, he was a tremendous *talmid chacham* and very well respected.

During the first years of Yeshiva Darchei Torah, we did not yet have a *minyán* on the *Yamim Noraim*, so I would return to Flatbush for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, *davening* at the Mirrer Yeshivah, as I had always done.

Reb Binyomin, a *talmid* of Mir through and through, would join me: to a true *yeshivaman*, there is no place at that time of year like *yeshivah*, and the *minhagim*, *niggunim*, and atmosphere of the Mir are essential to his *avodah*. In fact, Reb Binyomin was seen as an authority, and the *roshei yeshivah* deferred to him when it came to *minhagim*, knowing that he was a repository of *yeshivah* tradition.

On *Motzaei Yom Kippur*, I would attend to various errands in Brooklyn before going back to Far Rockaway, and Reb Binyomin would wait for me in *yeshivah*, learning with a *chavrusah*. He always assured me that he was in no rush, insisting that I take my time and he was fine.

I had a steady routine on *Motzaei Yom Kippur*. I would break my fast at the home of my parents-in-law, then help my father-in-law build his *succah*. After that, I would go buy *daled minim*, and only then return to pick up Reb Binyomin from the Mirrer *beis medrash*.

He would come out with his little *rensel*, his suitcase, and chat pleasantly with us on the way back home. It was usually well after midnight when we dropped him off and wished him a *gut yohr*, then headed to Far Rockaway.

That was our yearly tradition and we enjoyed it. It was a *zechus* to transport this man who had seen the glory of what was, and allow him to partake in the revival.

I remember how one year, his wife was not sure he could join us, as he was in the hospital with heart

pains. Before going to Brooklyn, I went to check on him. He saw me and climbed off the hospital bed, starting to get dressed to go out. I asked where he was going and he said, as if it were obvious, that he was coming with me. “*Yamim Noraim* one has to be in *yeshivah*,” he stated, and signed himself out of the hospital to join us.

When Reb Binyomin was *niftar*, I went to the *levayah*, mourning this humble *talmid chacham*. A young man approached and told me something that astounded me. He was the *Motzaei Yom Kippur chavrusah* of Reb Binyomin Bergstein, he said. They would learn until late, when I was ready to head home. And all those years, all that time, Reb Binyomin did not let him tell me this one detail — he would not make *Havdalah* until he was back home. He was still fasting. He never let on, because he did not want me to feel rushed.

But why, I wondered: Why didn’t he simply hear *Havdalah* in the Mir dining room and then break his fast along with everyone else?

The answer is poetry, and it exposes how it is possible for sophisticated human beings to share an emotion like others might share a bottle of wine.

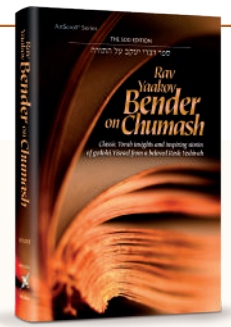
Reb Binyomin, whose wife happily let him go to *yeshivah*, who encouraged him to *daven* in the place he felt most comfortable at that time of year, had left her alone. He wanted to share the heightened emotion of the *Yom Hadin* in *yeshivah* with her, and the only way he could do that was by making *Havdalah* at home for her. She would hear *Havdalah* after the fast and eat something, but he wanted to make his *Havdalah* at home, before her. This was the part of the sacred day he could give her, so that is what he brought home, a little bit of the *kedushah*, of the *derhoibenkeit*, of the holy hunger of the *yeshivah*.

Someone with that sort of sensitivity was clearly not just in “*Yom Kippur* mode.” It takes the toil of years, day after day, of being connected, empathizing, feeling with, understanding, and contemplating the reality of the person you are married to. 📖



Rav Yaakov Bender

ALL THOSE YEARS, ALL THAT TIME, REB BINYOMIN DID NOT LET HIM TELL ME THIS ONE DETAIL...



NOT WASTING A MINUTE - THE VILNA GAON'S CALCULATION

Rav Gifter by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



As related by Rav Mordechai Gifter:

The Vilna Gaon once made a calculation before *Rosh Hashanah*. He went through the year and found that for six minutes in the year, he had not been engaged in Torah. Let's begin to learn from this how the Gaon thought of this commodity called time and how he spent his time, the most precious of commodities.



Rav Mordechai Gifter

A minute lost is lost forever. You lose a million dollars, you make it back. You lose a diamond, you'll get another one to replace it. You lose one minute, it's gone forever, never to come back. How careful must one be in counting every minute of life.

"I AM TAKING DIAMONDS AND THROWING THEM INTO THE SEA!"

That's how the Gaon lived.

Just make a calculation for yourself: There are 365 days in a year. Every day has 24 hours. Every hour has 60 minutes. Nu... count out how many minutes are in a year. And before *Rosh Hashanah*, the Gaon saw that there were six minutes wasted! And for those six minutes he wept!

Where do we stand when we hear such a thing? Do we know how many minutes we waste? Not in a year, in a month, or in a week. Are we aware of how many minutes we waste in a *day*?

Before we go to bed, we must figure out: How many minutes were wasted by us for no purpose whatsoever? Do we have such a calculation?

Time is one of the creations of *Hashem Yisbarach*, though He Himself is above time, far above time. And he wants it to be used for our benefit. Are we aware of it? Is this the way we have lived throughout our year?

When we come to Him on *Rosh Hashanah*, what are we going to bring to Him? What are we going to tell Him? "Look, *Ribbono Shel Olam*, look how we took care of this commodity." Is that what we are going to tell Him? And if we do know the truth, we are terribly ashamed.

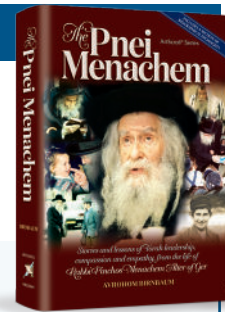
If we truly appreciated the value of time every time we were engaged in something valueless, we would stop immediately and exclaim, "Oy, *gevalt!* I am taking diamonds and throwing them into the sea!"

In speaking about the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, the *Rambam* writes, "*Remez yeish bo* — There is something for us to learn from this." And he speaks about those in this world who occupy their time with foolish pursuits.

The *shofar* is a wake-up call. It reminds us to stop wasting our time. 📖

NOT THE AGMAS NEFESH

The Pnei Menachem
by Avrohom Birnbaum



Reb Moshe* was very, very sick. The doctors decided that the only possible cure for his condition would be a transplant. Reb Moshe went to the Gerer Rebbe, the *Pnei Menachem*, at the end of *Elul* for a *berachah* for the new year and for a *refuah sheleimah*. He concluded by telling the *rebbe* that he was scheduled to undergo a transplant just after *Simchas Torah*.

Smiling, the *rebbe* replied, "We are at the start of a new year. Everything is new. Why do you have to prepare for the future? Certainly,



The Pnei Menachem

you will be healthy this year and will not need the transplant."

Reb Moshe left the *rebbe's* room in a state of euphoria! The terrible worry, the terrifying prospect of undergoing the extremely risky transplant procedure had been weighing him down, and now the *rebbe* had said that he wouldn't need it! Before leaving, he asked the *rebbe*, "So, should I cancel the procedure?"

"Certainly!" was the *rebbe's* swift reply.

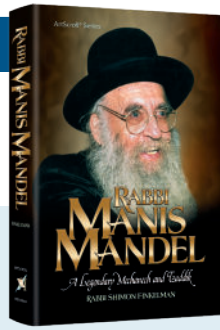
A joyous *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Succos* followed. Reb Moshe was able to *daven* with remarkable *simchah*, not weighed down by the specter of a dangerous transplant hovering over his head.

On *Erev Simchas Torah*, the *rebbe* told him, "Now that you are well, you can truly rejoice with the Torah with all your heart and soul." Those words further encouraged him, filling him with indescribable joy. It was as if he were a totally different person.

On *Motzaei Simchas Torah*, when Reb Moshe filed past the *rebbe* to take leave after such a wonderful *Yom Tov*, the *rebbe* stopped him and said, "Reb Moshe, you should know, you will have to undergo the transplant, but there is no reason to worry. You will recover quickly and be healthy again" *continued on page 11*

A REASON TO CRY

Rabbi Manis Mandel
by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman



A Flatbush resident related: I davened at Yeshiva of Brooklyn on Yamim Nora'im when Rav Menachem Manis Mandel was the baal Mussaf.

One year, a baal teshuvah named Danny arranged to eat the seudah at our home on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. I suggested that Danny daven



Rav Menachem Manis Mandel

HE LOOKS LIKE THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO HAS NO SINS TO CRY ABOUT.

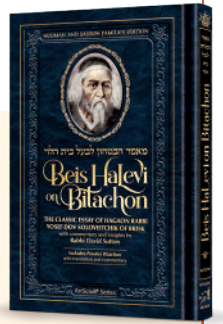
with me that morning to ensure that our schedules would coincide.

During the chazaras hashatz of Mussaf, I noticed that Danny was crying. That afternoon, during the seudah, I mentioned to Danny that he had seemed very emotional during the davening. He replied, "I'll be perfectly honest. I didn't understand a word of what I was saying. But I was watching the rabbi who led the services. He has a long white beard and looks like an angel — and he was crying. I said to myself, 'He's crying, but he looks like the type of person who has no sins to cry about.' Well, if he was crying, then I thought that I had better cry!"

FAITH

MAKING IT HARDER ON YOURSELF

Bais Halevi on Bitachon with commentary by Rabbi David Sutton



A humorous story is told of a young man from a family that had a shoe business who married a young woman from a family that had a diamond business. The wife advised her husband to join her family's business, which was far more lucrative than his family's enterprise. The husband declined and continued building his shoe business.

They lived a happy life, but the wife's brothers enjoyed greater luxury than they did. After many years, the husband turned to his wife and said, "You know, it's a really good thing that I stuck to selling shoes. After all, in the twenty years I've been doing this, not one person has ever walked into my shop and asked for a diamond. Everyone who walked in wanted shoes. Can you imagine what would have happened if I had sold diamonds? I wouldn't have made a cent!"

“CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I HAD SOLD DIAMONDS?”

"You're so silly," she replied. "You decided to sell shoes, so people come to you for shoes. If you had decided to sell diamonds, people would have come to you for diamonds."

The same is true with regard to our hishtadlus for parnassah. A person who decides that to earn a living he must work long, hard hours might attribute his success to his efforts: "It sure is a good thing that I didn't rely on bitachon. Look how successful I am putting in all this work!" But he fails to realize that if he had trusted in Hashem, he would have earned the same livelihood with less work.

NOT THE AGMAS NEFESH

continued from page 10

without any further worries."

The rebbe explained, "When I saw the tremendous mental strain and worry that you were suffering because you were so scared, I felt compelled to lift you up and encourage you. I knew that it was crucial that you enjoy the Yamim Tovim in a calm frame of mind, with simchah and an upbeat mood."

Completely stunned, Reb

Moshe quickly recovered his equilibrium and asked, "But rebbe, I canceled the appointment!"

"Call back and see if the slot is still open," the rebbe advised.

I WANTED YOU TO HAVE A YOM TOV FULL OF SIMCHAH.

Indeed, when he called back, he found out that the slot was still open and reserved for him. He underwent

the transplant and had a full recovery. After his recovery, he visited the rebbe, who greeted him with tremendous simchah, exclaiming, "Yes, from Heaven you were destined to undergo the transplant, but the gezeirah was only the transplant, not the agmas nefesh, the mental anguish. I wanted you to have a Yom Tov full of simchah. Thus, as soon as you canceled the appointment, I called your doctor back and asked him to hold the slot..."

Yom Tov for Children

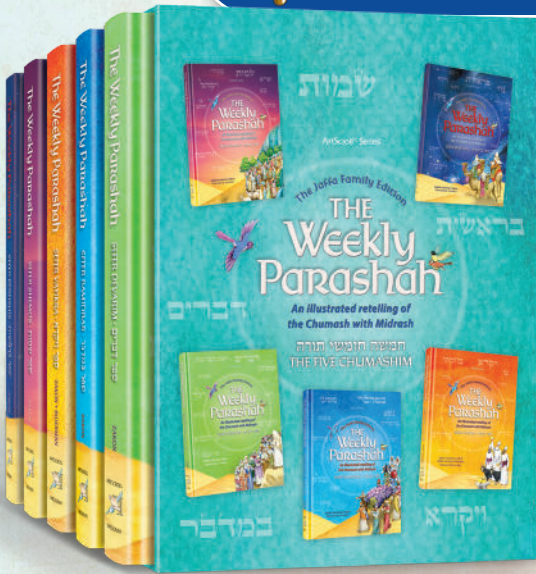
ראש השנה

Hashem Is King

On Rosh Hashanah we declare with all our might that Hashem is King over the entire universe, and He controls what happens to everything — from the largest galaxies to the smallest ant or virus. There is no other power in the world that makes things happen besides Hashem.

On Rosh Hashanah we pray for a good year, because on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem judges the ENTIRE WORLD. He judges the world to decide what the next year will be like.

We pray that Hashem should give us a sweet year — for us, our parents, our family and friends, and for all the Jewish people. We ask for a year in which we will feel a greater closeness and love to Hashem than last year.



FASCINATING FACTS

Sefardim blow 101 shofar blasts. Some Yemenite Jews blow forty-one.

The Holy Sound

All year long we are getting messages. Ring — time to wake up. Ping — there's a message for you. Honk — get out of the truck's way! The shofar, blown on Rosh Hashanah, is a message for the whole world. It announces to the Jews that Hashem's Day of Judgment has arrived. The shofar's holy sound wakes us up to do teshuvah for anything we did wrong this past year, and to draw closer to Hashem in the coming year.

When Hashem hears the powerful shofar blasts, He moves from His throne of strict judgment to His throne of mercy.

Why does the shofar blast bring Hashem to judge us with mercy?

One reason is because the shofar "reminds" Hashem of Akeidas Yitzchak, one of the greatest things that Avraham and Yitzchak ever did. Avraham was ready to shecht his beloved son. Yitzchak was ready to let his father do that. If that was what Hashem wanted, they would gladly obey.

Because of the Akeidah, Hashem wants to judge us, their descendants, with mercy. (Of course, Hashem doesn't forget anything! But when we blow the shofar, we are asking Hashem to focus on the great deeds of our Avos.)

WIN A \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD!

THE WEEKLY QUESTION

Question for Rosh Hashanah:

Why is a shofar bent, and not straight like a trumpet?

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

The winner of the Parashas Shoftim question is: YITZI KLEIN, Brooklyn, NY

The question was: What are the names of the women prophets mentioned in Tanach?

The answer is: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, Leah, Miriam, Devorah, Chuldah, and Esther Hamalkah.

