



AT THE ARTSCROLL YOM TOV TABLE

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L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

TESHUVAH

SLOW AND STEADY

Steps to the Throne by Rabbi Nosson Muller

NEW!



A man inspired to do *teshuvah*, as so many of us are on Erev Rosh Hashanah, aspires to immediate perfection. He sets lofty goals in every area of Jewish life, and promises himself that at this time next year, his slate will be impeccably clean.

The *baalei mussar* advised us against such an approach. It is impossible to fix everything overnight. Jumping too high and too fast will only lead to failure and frustration. Instead, they recommend a more measured process of *teshuvah*.

Make smaller resolutions, but make them iron-clad. Setting realistically attainable goals gives a person a chance to actually follow through. One concrete step forward will lead to another.

Climbing the ladder rung by rung turns inspiration into reality.

The *sefer Sass B'imrasecha* illustrates the benefit of a gradual approach to *teshuvah* with a humorous parable.

Yankel was a simpleton, and to pass the long winter nights, the residents of his town would play a game with his mind.

Everyone took a seat around the table, with Yankel at the head. A row of bills was laid out — hundreds, fifties, twenties, and tens. Alongside the bills, they placed a shiny silver half-dollar coin.

“Choose one, dear Yankel,” the men said with glee. “Whichever you take is yours to keep.”

To everyone's great amusement, he picked the shiny coin, night after night.

After a few weeks, someone called Yankel over to the side.

“I know you aren't the world's brightest fellow,” the man said, “but at this point, even you should realize what's happening here. Can't you see that

everyone is laughing at you, that the choice you keep making is the wrong one to make?”

“I'm not as big a fool as you think,” Yankel replied with a smile. “Let me ask you a question, my friend. If I choose the hundred dollar bill, will there be a game the next night? Of course not! The men would never play with me again! Let the men have their fun, but every night, I get to add another half-dollar to my growing stash!”

Moving too fast at the outset of *teshuvah* is like choosing that hundred-dollar bill. Alarm bells sound, and the *yetzer hara* immediately enters the fray. He will do everything he possibly can to stop the inspired Jew in his tracks.

Go slowly!

It will allow your progress to fly under the radar. Your evil inclination will let you stay in the game, and every day, another half-dollar will be added to your growing pile.

Eventually, your net gains will far outweigh the value of a solitary one-hundred-dollar bill.

But there is a caveat.

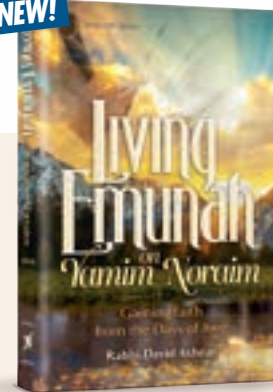
A person who is impure is forbidden to enter the Beis HaMikdash. What if such a man sticks his finger into the airspace of the Temple courtyard while his body remains outside? Has he transgressed this commandment?

In Talmudical terms, this is called *bi'ah b'miktzas*, partial entry, and is the subject of extensive discussion as to whether it is forbidden. To avoid possibly transgressing this prohibition, many

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The Lubliner Rav



הַיּוֹם הַרֵאשִׁית — Every Rosh Hashanah is the day of the world's "birth." The Rabbis teach us that every year on Rosh Hashanah, the world is recreated; we start anew. Whatever was before Rosh Hashanah has nothing at all to do with what will be after Rosh Hashanah. We say (in the *piyut* on Erev Rosh Hashanah), תְּכַלֶּה שָׁנָה וְקִלְוֹתֶיהָ, תַּחֲלֵה שָׁנָה וּבְרִכּוֹתֶיהָ, *May the year end with its curses, may the year begin with its blessings.*

On Rosh Hashanah, we recognize that Hashem is our King, that He is the only One in charge of our lives. Nobody else has any say about what happens to us, and everything that occurs on a day-to-day basis is a manifestation of His will. Nobody can take away anything from us or give us anything unless Hashem first decrees it. On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decides every detail of our lives for the coming year.

Whole new worlds open up for us with the onset of the new year. For people who are still waiting for a *shidduch*, now it could be decided that the right person will be found. For couples waiting to have children, now it could be decided that they will be blessed. For people suffering from illness, now it could be decided that they will be cured. For people struggling financially, now it could be decided that they will enjoy prosperity.

Our Sages teach us (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a) בְּרִאשׁוֹת הַשָּׁנָה יֵצֵא יוֹסֵף מִבֵּית:

הַאֲסוּרִים, it was on Rosh Hashanah that Yosef was freed from prison. Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman explained the significance of this remark. Yosef was not in a mere prison. He was in an underground dungeon in ancient Egypt, the conditions of which are probably impossible for us to imagine. Nobody knew he was there, and nobody could possibly help him. He was an eighteen-year-old boy who grew up in a wealthy, distinguished family, a young man who used to learn regularly with his father, Yaakov Avinu, the greatest *tzaddik* in the world — and who was now languishing in a dungeon. He was there because his own brothers sold him as a slave, and as a result of the very difficult test posed by Potifar's wife, which he managed to withstand with extraordinary strength, making a great *kiddush Hashem*. He could have wondered, *Is this what I get for being a tzaddik?* But he retained his faith for twelve years, without hearing from anyone and without receiving any news that offered a glimmer of hope.

And then, suddenly, Pharaoh needed someone to interpret his dream. Yosef found himself rushed out of prison, groomed, dressed in fine garments, and standing before the king of Egypt, who told him (*Bereishis* 41:39): אֵין נָבוֹן וְחָכֵם כְּמוֹךָ, "There is no one smarter or wiser than you," as he knew seventy languages. In an instant, Yosef became the leader of the civilized world, the manager of its economy. From the lowest depths of despair and

hopelessness, he rose overnight to the second most powerful position on Earth.

This is what can happen on Rosh Hashanah. A person can rise from the lowliest conditions, where he is forgotten and hopeless, to the greatest heights of success, joy, and prosperity. Nothing is too difficult for Hashem.

The *sefer Emunah Sheleimah* (*Parashas Nitzavim*) repeats a story told by Rabbi Menachem Stein.

A man from Petach Tikvah, by the name of Daniel, had been experiencing excruciating lower back pain for twelve years. He consulted with many doctors, both in Eretz Yisrael and America, but no one was able to cure him. For twelve years, he couldn't sit in a chair for more than fifteen minutes at a time, at which point the pain would shoot up his spine to his neck and force him to lie down. For six years, he had been taking a medication called Voltaren to help his back, but it was also potentially damaging to the liver. During that time, he couldn't learn Torah with his son, who was born at the same time the pain began. He would try to sit with him and learn Gemara, but after fifteen minutes he would have to stop. He couldn't be a good father or husband, and he became very depressed.

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THIS WEEK'S DAF YOMI SCHEDULE:

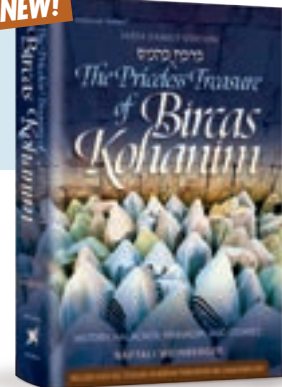
OCTOBER / תשרי

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3 א	4 ב	5 ג	6 ד	7 ה	8 ו	9 ז	10 ח	11 ט
Bava Basra 100	Bava Basra 101	Bava Basra 102	Bava Basra 103	Bava Basra 104	Bava Basra 105	Bava Basra 106	Bava Basra 107	Bava Basra 108

THIS WEEK'S MISHNAH YOMI SCHEDULE:

OCTOBER / תשרי

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3 א	4 ב	5 ג	6 ד	7 ה	8 ו	9 ז	10 ח	11 ט
Bava Metzia 4:3-4	Bava Metzia 4:5-6	Bava Metzia 4:7-8	Bava Metzia 4:9-10	Bava Metzia 4:11-12	Bava Metzia 5:1-2	Bava Metzia 5:3-4	Bava Metzia 5:5-6	Bava Metzia 5:7-8



The Kohanim in the Beis HaMikdash would perform Bircas Kohanim on the steps of the Ulam, or on a nearby platform (called a *duchan*, which is the reason the word *duchan* is associated with Bircas Kohanim), with their backs to the Holy of Holies.

Regarding this, the Gemara teaches (*Sotah* 40a), “R’ Yitzchak said: Let the awe of a congregation always be upon you, for when the Kohanim recite Bircas Kohanim, their faces are toward the people and their backs are toward the Shechinah (i.e., the *aron kodesh*).”

Rabbeinu Bachaye writes:

This is, in fact, a very perplexing matter – how indeed are the Kohanim permitted to turn their backs to the *aron kodesh*? The answer lies in the teaching of *Chazal* that the Shechinah rests upon the raised hands of the Kohanim, as the *Midrash* states (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 11:2): *He was standing behind our wall, observing through the windows...* (*Shir HaShirim* 2:9) — this refers to the Shechinah, which observes through the “windows” – that is, the spaces between the hands of the Kohanim, just as the Shechinah rested between the two *keruvim* in the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, there is no need for concern if the Kohanim face away from the *aron kodesh*, for at this moment the Shechinah is not resting in the *aron kodesh*,



Rav Chaim Kanievsky during Bircas Kohanim

but upon their hands, which are raised in front of them.

This gives rise to a deeper understanding the *pasuk* (*Yeshayah* 1:15), *u’vifarischem kapeichem a’alim einai mikem*, *When you spread your hands [in prayer], I will hide My eyes from you*; so says Hashem when He is angered by the sins of His people. But we may learn from this that at a time of favor, such as when the Kohanim spread their hands to bless the Jewish nation, the opposite is true. At that time, Hashem’s Presence is directly in front of the Kohanim, resting upon their hands.

Aruch HaShulchan (128:18) records this halachah as follows: “The chazzan calls out, “Kohanim!” whereupon the Kohanim turn around to face the congregation, with their backs toward the *aron kodesh*, in fulfillment of the phrase *koh sivarchu*, so shall you bless, which means standing face-to-face with those receiving the blessing, as one person speaks to another (*Sotah* 38a). How beloved are the Jewish people to the Holy One, Blessed is He, that He allows the Kohanim to stand with their backs to the *aron kodesh* in order to bless them!”

R’ Chaim’s Responsa About Bircas Kohanim

For over five decades, R’ Chaim responded in writing to requests for rulings and guidance regarding every area of Torah life. Graciously, he permitted the author to go through his huge archive and select the responses pertaining to Bircas Kohanim, the subject of this book. We urge the reader to study the underlying sources, not just the questions and answers, for a fuller understanding of the Rav’s rulings. R’ Chaim insisted that we caution the reader not to decide halachic questions based on these letters. For halachic decisions, a rav must be consulted for a definitive ruling. Here is a sampling of some of the over 550 teshuvos:

ברכה מכהן לישראל ואפילו שלא בשעת תפילה? תשובה: בודאי יש ענין.	נוסף בבית כנסת שני, ויש רק שני כהנים, האם ראוי לחלק, שכהן אחד יהיה במנין זה, והאחר בשני, או שמא עדיף שיברכו ב' במנין אחד, ובשני לא ישאו כפים כלל? תשובה: לכאורה עדיף שנים במקום אחד.	ובשני יש כהן אבל לא אקבל עלייה, מה עדיף? תשובה: ברכת כהנים עדיף	שאלה: מי שמטפל באביו החולה ביום כיפור ויש לו חצי שעה שיכול לצאת מבית הכנסת להתפלל (שחרית, מוסף, מנחה או נעילה), לאיזה תפילה כדאי ללכת? תשובה: לברכת כהנים.
שאלה: קשה לי, הרי היום הכהנים הם ספיקות, ואם כן כיצד יכולים לברך אקב"ו לברך את עמו ישראל באהבה, דלכאורה יהיו פטורים מברכה זו, מדין ספק ברכות להקל? תשובה: מוחזקים כהנים.	שאלה: האם החשיבות של ברכת כהנים הוא רק בנשיאת כפים בתפילה, או יש גם חשיבות של	שאלה: המתפלל שמונה עשרה ושמע ברכת כהנים האם צריך להפסיק? תשובה: אין חייב אבל יכול להפסיק ולשמוע, ונכון לעשות כן.	שאלה: נסתפקת, כשיש שני בתי כנסת אם אלך לאחד אקבל עלייה לתורה, אבל הרבה פעמים אין שם כהן לברך את העם,
שאלה: כשיש שני מנינים באותה שעה, כגון תפילת ותיקין שיש מנין			

HE IS PULLING FOR US

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On one occasion, Rabbi Stein tried to give him *chizuk*. “Daniel,” he said, “Rosh Hashanah is coming. Do you believe that Hashem is going to recreate the world anew? Do you believe that every one of us will also be created anew? Sarah Imeinu was born without a womb (*Yevamos* 64b), and the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a) tells us that on Rosh Hashanah, through her prayers, Hashem decreed that she should have a child. She never lost hope. She didn’t listen to the doctors who told her, ‘You’re wasting your time, you’re ninety years old, you’re incapable of having children.’”

The rabbi continued. “Do you know that there’s a halachah that if you didn’t see your friend for over a year and then you see him, you make the *berachah* מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים — Hashem revives the dead? Why do we say that *berachah* if the man didn’t die? Because the man went through a Rosh Hashanah and a Yom Kippur, and so he was created anew. Hashem gave him new life. So now you can say מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים on him.

“Daniel, you could receive a new back this Rosh Hashanah. Talk to Hashem, beg Him, pray with the belief that it could be done. Cry to Him and say, ‘Even if I’m not worthy to be healed for my own sake, please do it for the sake of my wife and child.’

“On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we take out the Torah and read about Sarah finally having a child after so many years. The Haftarah is about Channah having a child after a long time. Shouldn’t we be reading about the day of Rosh Hashanah? Maybe something about

judgment? Why this? Because our Rabbis want us to know the power of the day. Channah was created anew; Sarah and Rachel as well, and they were all answered through their *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah. Now is the time for change. We can have a new beginning. People who need wisdom, children, marriage partners, health, *parnassah* — this is the best time to make it happen.”

Daniel took the message to heart and accepted upon himself a *taanis dibbur* for both days of Rosh Hashanah, only speaking words of Torah or prayer. Every moment of Rosh Hashanah is so precious; the whole year is encompassed in those two days. Daniel prayed from the bot-

I’VE BEEN ON THESE MEDS FOR SIX YEARS; JUST GIVE THEM TO ME!

tom of his heart on Rosh Hashanah, throughout the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and on Yom Kippur.

Succos passed, Simchas Torah passed, and the month of Cheshvan began. On the fourth day of Cheshvan, Daniel’s medication ran out. He went to the doctor to get a prescription for another three months. But that day, his regular doctor wasn’t in. A twenty-nine-year-old physician, just beginning his career, was seeing his patients. Daniel was skeptical about keeping the appointment, but as it was a routine visit and necessary to renew a prescription, he decided to go ahead.

“Doctor,” he requested, “please give me a three-month prescription for Voltaren, half in pills and half in cream.”

The young doctor said, “What? Three months of that stuff could harm the body!”

Daniel said, “Please, I’ve been on these meds for six years; just give them to me.”


The doctor replied, “Please listen to me: I want you to take an ultrasound of your kidneys. Lower back pain could be a result of kidney problems.”

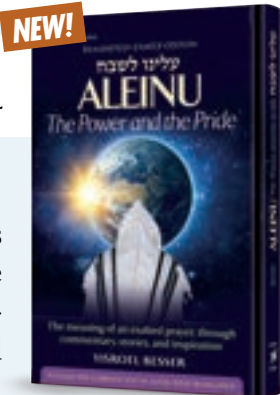
Daniel laughed and said, “I’ve been to top doctors all over the world and nobody ever mentioned a word about my kidneys.” But the young doctor persisted, and Daniel finally agreed. The results showed that one of his kidneys had a 22 percent blockage.

“That’s it!” the doctor said. “That’s what’s causing your pain.”

When Daniel’s regular doctor saw the results, he said, “I can’t believe it; he’s right! I never thought of this possibility all these years, and neither did any other doctor you consulted.”

Hashem prevented all those physicians from thinking of this likelihood, because Daniel was not meant to be healed yet. But now the time of healing had come, and Hashem brought the cure through this young doctor. Daniel’s kidney was treated and, *baruch Hashem*, the pain went away.

This is the power of one Rosh Hashanah. Let us take advantage of the opportunity we are given and go into this special day with a genuine desire to draw closer to Hashem. Let us focus on what is truly important in life. We recite in our prayers during the *Yamim Noraim: Zochreini l’chayim Melech chafetz bachayim*, “Remember us for life, O King Who desires life.” Hashem “desires life” — He wants to give us life even more than we want life. He’s pulling for us on Rosh Hashanah. 



עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל — *It is our duty to praise the Master of all.*

It is incumbent upon us to praise Him. “*Kelomar, chovah* — *As if to say, it is an obligation*,” writes the Avudraham in his *Seder Tefillos Rosh Hashanah*.

Similarly, the Mabit in his *sefer Beis Elokim* understands the word “*aleinu*” as highlighting the fact that Hashem does not require our praise — it is *we* who have a need to praise *Him*!

A chassid once went to speak with the Slonimer Rebbe, the *mechaber* of the *sefer Nesivos Shalom*. The chassid had been involved in a serious vehicular accident, and he had miraculously emerged without injury. He wanted to express his gratitude to the Ribbono shel Olam, and he asked the Rebbe to guide him as to how to properly repay the debt.

“If you are asking my advice,” the Nesivos Shalom said, “then I would suggest that you do not repay the debt!”

The Rebbe explained. “If you find some symbolic way of expressing *hoda'ah*, then you will have discharged this obligation, and then you will move on. Rather, instead of doing something, I think you should live your life like a *baal chov*, someone who is in debt, aware at every moment, with each decision and choice that you make, that He gave you your life as a gift.”

Aleinu leshabei'ach means that at every moment of every day, we are the ones obligated to give thanks, living in constant debt and not looking to discharge that obligation.

When a person undertakes to fulfill a vow, he uses the words “*Harei alei*, It is incumbent on me.” The Rokei'ach explains that this *tefillah* begins with the word “*Aleinu*, It is our duty,” because it is incumbent upon every Jew to live with an awareness of our Creator, the *Adon hakol*, and our role in His world.

As the Ramban (Shemos 13:16) writes: And this is the purpose of creation itself... And God has no desire, except that man should know and acknowledge the God Who created him. And the purpose of raising our voices in prayer and the purpose of *batei knessios* and

the merit of communal prayer is that people should have a place where they can gather and acknowledge that God created them and caused them to be, and they can publicize this and declare before Him, “We are your creations.”

It is why we were created, and the obligation we carry at every moment of life: *Aleinu leshabei'ach la'adon hakol* — It is our duty to praise the Master of all.

הוא אלקינו, אין עוד — *He is our G-d and there is none other*

Rav Mordechai Tzukerman, a *talmid* of the Chofetz Chaim, was revered as the *tzaddik* of Givat Shaul. A group of American *bachurim* once came to visit him during the month of Elul, seeking inspiration.

The *avodah* of the Yamim Noraim is great, he told them. We crown Hashem as King on Rosh Hashanah, focusing on His majesty and dominion, and we do *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur, trying to purify ourselves to get close to Him. This leads us to the joy of Succos, since we are finally able to connect with Him without any barriers keeping us apart. And what is the point of that connection?

The pinnacle, the purpose of the process, said Rav Mordechai, is when a Yid stands up just before the *hakafos* begin on Simchas Torah, and calls out with conviction and clarity that *ein od milvado*, there is nothing at all. There is just Him.

The point of all the awe and wonder of Mattan Torah was for Klal Yisrael to be shown that Hashem is God and there is no other, as the *pasuk* says.

Ein od. These words come at the climax of davening, meant to be recited when a person has completed his *tefillah*, filled with the clear sense that there is nothing else, no power or force but He. It is these two words, says Rav Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub, that are the point of the entire *tefillah*! 🌟

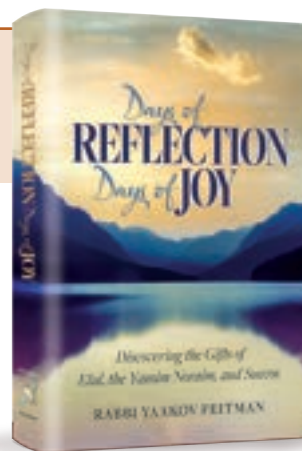


The Slonimer Rebbe

**DO NOT
REPAY
THE DEBT!**

THE FAILED AKEIDAH: A GUIDE TO SUCCESS IN LIFE

Days of Reflection, Days of Joy by Rabbi Yaakov Feitman



Klal Yisrael has been living from, and energized by, the Akeidah for millennia, and it never grows old. Every Rosh Hashanah, indeed every day, we invoke this merit anew. But the last of Avraham Avinu's *nisyonos* — the seminal tests he passed for all of us — was never actually completed. Let's compare for a moment. Avraham was thrown into a raging fire. That is a fact. He was commanded to abandon his birthplace and family, and did so. He never did offer Yitzchak as a sacrifice, however. Both Avraham and Yitzchak were certainly willing, ready, and able to so. But Divine intervention stopped the process. Can the Akeidah be said, then, to have occurred?

Rashi (*Vayikra* 26:42) in the name of Chazal teaches, "His ashes are piled up on the heavenly altar." But wait. Doesn't Rashi mean that the *ram's* ashes are available to obtain forgiveness and expiation for us? Yitzchak walked home alive and well with his father. Whose ashes are they anyway?

Rav Yonasan David, Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Pachad Yitzchok, Yerushalayim, offers an extraordinary answer (*Kuntres Succos, Maamar* 61), which can and should also change our lives, and our Rosh Hashanah. He points out that in *Shemoneh Esrei*, after all our requests of Hashem have been completed, we add one more *bakashah* in *Shema Koleinu*: "From before Yourself, our King, turn us not away empty-handed." This means that it is part of the eternal nature of man that he wishes to feel accomplished. He wants to see some result from his efforts and actions.

It is difficult to live with a meaningless or at least apparently fruitless endeavor. Thus we cry out during every weekday in *Shemoneh Esrei*, "Please make my actions effective in some way." This wish was expressed also by Yaakov Avinu to Lavan in these words, לֹאִי אֵלֶיךָ, הִיָּה לִי כִּי עָתָה רִיקָם שְׁלַחְתָּנִי אֵבִי, *Had not the G-d of my father...been with me, you surely have now sent me away empty-handed* (*Bereishis* 31:42).



Rav Yonasan David

Rav David continues to find a source for this yearning in the Mishnah's statement (*Avos* 2:1) that "all of your actions are recorded in a book." This means that everything we do not only leaves an impression, but in fact is recorded for posterity. A halachic analogy may be seen in the fact that witnesses must always warn a potential transgressor that his actions will result in a certain punishment. It is imperative that the sinner responds that he is about to perform the forbidden act "knowing that this will be the result." In order to be considered a purposeful transgressor (*b'meizid*), he must feel that he has impressed upon the witnesses his intention to commit a particular sin, with all its ramifications.

Celestial Ashes

Rav David returns to the Akeidah. Hashem Himself commands Avraham to slaughter his son, but it is the angel who tells him to stop. A careful reading of the *pesukim* reveals that the first time the *malach* speaks to Avraham he says, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him, for now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me" (22:12). The Rosh Yeshivah notes that the second time, the *malach* also adds, בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נָאם ה', *by Myself I swear — the word of Hashem* (22:16). Now, the words *ne'um Hashem* always reflect a higher level of occurrence. Here it means that in the earthly world Yitzchak was indeed spared and not killed. On the celestial level, however, the deed was fully accomplished, and in some fashion the ashes on the heavenly altar are indeed those of Yitzchak.

The moral, if we may use the term, is that through the offering of the ram, Avraham and

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Yitzchak's intentions were completely fulfilled. The Akeidah, far from a failure, was the ultimate success, for in the place that counts the most, the place of truth and finality, Yitzchak was offered. Perhaps not slaughtered, but certainly offered, and that has been a credit and salvation for Klal Yisrael ever since.

Rav Yonasan David does not quote the story, but the metaphor and its lesson are well known. A man is thrown into a miserable, dark prison where he is hooked up to a wheel by a chain. In order to be fed and not further tortured, he must turn the heavy wheel for agonizing hours at a time. Although the work is backbreaking, he wonders what machines or end results his labors have achieved. When he is finally released some years later, he is heartbroken to learn that it was an illusion. He had accomplished nothing, for his wheel was merely designed to keep him busy and occupied.

Hashem is nothing like the cruel inquisitors of that poor prisoner. Everything He asks of us and puts us in the position of doing has vast significance, whether it is the challenging mitzvot we must exert ourselves to fulfill, or the powerful seductions of the evil inclination that we must withstand.

Every Day Is a Test

Every moment carries eternal meaning and substance. Life is full of tests, and even when nothing seems to have happened, the other end of the wheel has built worlds, created heavenly mansions, and brought redemption ever closer. If, G-d forbid, one has sinned, the ramifications are equally significant, destroying and wreaking havoc where there could have been accomplishment. But no action or attempted change goes unnoticed or forgotten.

In the realm of child-rearing and *chinuch*, these words are of seismic proportion. Our beautiful educa-

tion system is not "outcome-based," but "effort-based." As a number of our greatest used to say, "*Unzers iz tzu tohn, nisht oifzutohn* — our job is to do, not to accomplish."

People with seemingly boring lives and professions wonder why they should bother getting up in the morning, let alone put energy into their lackluster day. But if everyone knew that each moment is precious, every day is a test, every hour has potential, life would be much more valuable and meaningful.

These days, we hear so many stories of lost souls and depression. One response must be Avraham and Yitzchak's "failed Akeidah." Without it, it is hard to imagine how we could function today. With it, we are the stars of the universe, able to try our best and not worry about the results.

This new year, let's go forward with pride, doing our very best, knowing that it can save the world, and ourselves as well. 📖

SLOW AND STEADY *continued from page 1*

have the custom to refrain from placing their hands in the gaps between the stones of the Kosel HaMaaravi.

However, the Rebbe of Lublin, in his *sefer Toras Chessed*, disagrees with this custom. He writes that although partially entering a doorway is indeed forbidden, that is because a door's intended use is to allow people to enter the area it opens into. Just standing in the doorway itself is enough to be considered as if they have already arrived.

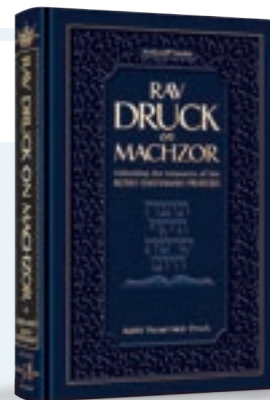
A small gap, though, leads to nowhere. Merely placing a hand inside the tiny gap in the wall doesn't reflect entry into the room behind it at all. The man remains entirely outside, and the law of partial entry does not apply.

A powerful message lies in this halachic distinction

of the Lubliner Rebbe, says R' Shaul Alter. Everyone understands that complete repentance is not achieved overnight. It is a long journey, and begins with small and incremental improvements. However, this reality cannot change the overall goal.

If we are satisfied with just our small initial repairs, without any intention of continuing on as we grow, our spiritual location won't change. When a partial entry is made without the intention of eventually going inside, we remain standing in the same place we were standing before. It will not be considered an entrance at all!

When a Jew undertakes small steps of *teshuvah*, he has partially entered the holy place he truly wishes to be. When the steps are taken with the goal of an eventual full entry in mind, it is immediately considered as if he has already arrived. 📖



זְכַרְנוּ לַחַיִּים — Remember us for life.

The Tur (*Hilchos Rosh Hashanah* 582) cites the opinion of some Geonim that the request beginning זְכַרְנוּ לַחַיִּים, *Remember us for life*, which we say in the first *berachah* of Shemoneh Esrei during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, should not be recited. Similarly, the Baal Halachos Gedolos writes that it should not be said, in keeping with the Gemara's teaching (*Berachos* 34a) that personal petitions should not be made during the first three or last three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei, but rather only during the middle blessings.

Why, then, do we have the custom to recite this addition?

One answer given is that the request of *Zochreinu l'chaim* does not refer to physical life in this world — a request that we would not be allowed to make in the first three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei — but rather to spiritual life, life that is לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹקִים, *for Your sake, O living God*.

In a similar vein, Rav Elchanan Wasserman *Hy"d* quoted his rebbi, the Chofetz Chaim, as noting that the type of life we are asking for in *Zochreinu l'chaim* is that which Hashem wants for us, as we say: זְכַרְנוּ לַחַיִּים מֶלֶךְ הַפֶּזַח בְּחַיִּים, *Remember us for life, O King Who desires life*.

In *Zochreinu l'chaim* we ask only for life, not for good life. Similarly, in the second addition to Shemoneh Esrei — מִי כְמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחֵמֵם, *Who is like You, Merciful Father, Who remembers His creations mercifully for life* —

we likewise mention only life, not good life. In the third and fourth additions, however, we do ask for good life: וּכְתֹב לַחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ, *And inscribe all the children of Your covenant for a good life*, and בְּסֶפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם וּפְרֻסָּה טוֹבָה נִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לַחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְשָׁלוֹם, *In the book of life, blessing, and peace, and good livelihood, may we be remembered and inscribed before You — we*



Rav Yisrael Meir Druck

and Your entire people, the Family of Israel, for a good life and for peace.

Why is “good life” mentioned only in the final two additions and not in the first two?

The Tur (582), citing the Maharam of Rottenburg, explains that when a person makes a request of someone else, it is proper to first ask for a small thing and then ask for more afterward. We learn this from Dovid HaMelech, who, in *Te-hillim* (19:13-14), requested Hashem's forgiveness in increasing levels of magnitude. First he asked: שְׁגִיאוֹת

מִי יֵבִין מִנְסֵי
תְּרוֹת נִקְנִי
Who can
discern
mistakes?

Cleanse me from unperceived faults. Then he asked: גַּם מִזִּידִים חֲשֹׁךְ עֲבָדְךָ, *Also from intentional sins restrain Your servant.* Finally, he asked: אֵל יִמְשְׁלוּ בִי אֲזִי אֵתָם וְנִקְיִיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רָב, *Let them not rule me, then I shall be perfect; and I will be cleansed of great transgression.* Similarly, we ask first merely for “life” and subsequently ask for “good life.”

The Tur's words are cited by the *Mishnah Berurah* as practical halachah.

Alternatively, the Vilna Gaon explains that in the first three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei we are asking for life in the World to Come — and in the World to Come, there is no distinction between “life” and “good life.” Life in the next world is by definition good, so there is no need to specify “good life” in the first two additions to Shemoneh Esrei. In the final blessings of Shemoneh Esrei, however, we are asking for life in this world, so we do need to specify that we are asking for good life.

This explanation of the Vilna Gaon also addresses the question we raised earlier, based on the Tur, of how we can ask for personal requests during the first three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei. Since we are asking for life in the World to Come, we can make this request even at the beginning of Shemoneh Esrei. 📖

...בָּנִים לֹא אֵמָן בָּם. — *For they are a generation of reversals, children whose upbringing is not in them (Devarim 32:20).*

The plain meaning of this *pasuk* has a decidedly negative connotation. A future generation, says Moshe Rabbeinu, will “reverse” the manner in which Hashem acts towards the Jewish people, causing His *rachamim*, mercy, to be supplanted by *din*, strict justice. This is because that generation will spurn the “upbringing” that they had received, rejecting good and embracing evil.

However, as we know, *ayin panim l'Torah*, the Torah has seventy facets. Each word of Torah can be interpreted on many different levels which include simple, homiletic, and esoteric interpretations.

The great Rav of Jerusalem, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, offered an original interpretation of our verse, which transforms it into a message of hope and rebirth.

In the year 5674 (1914), a distinguished group of *rabbanim* in Eretz Yisrael embarked on what came to be known as “The *Teshuvah* Campaign.” The *rabbanim* were led by “R’ Chaim,” as Rav Sonnenfeld was fondly known; Rabbi Ben Zion Yadler, the *Maggid* of Jerusalem; and Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who was then Rav of Jaffa.



Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld

This delegation traveled to settlements throughout Northern Israel, exhorting the settlers to embrace a life of Torah and observe the Land-related mitzvos.

In one settlement, Rav Kook delivered an impassioned address, exhorting the people to go in the ways of their ancestors and observe the mitzvos, in particular the mitzvah of *Shemittah* which is a great declaration of the farmer's faith in Hashem. When Rav Kook stepped down from the podium, one of the settlement's leaders arose and brazenly told the *rabbanim* that they were wasting their time.

“Leave us alone!” he shouted. “Your old-fashioned ways do not interest us. We will build a modern land with modern ideas and your own descendants will follow our lead.”

Upon hearing such blasphemy, Rav Kook burst into tears. R’ Chaim then ascended the podium and in a loud, confident tone declared:

Rav of Jaffa, and all those who are assembled here: It is true that at this point in time, matters do not look good for those like ourselves who strive to make this Land what G-d intends it to be — a land of Torah, of mitzvos, of faith in Hashem.

But I tell you with certainty: ki dor tahpuchos heimah, there will come a generation of reversals, banim lo aimun bam, children whose upbringing is not in them. Yes, the previous speaker and those like him are bent on raising a generation that will not know the Name of Hashem and the greatness of His Torah. But I assure you that a generation will come that will reject the empty, meaningless life of which you preach. That generation will reverse this terribly destructive approach. They will return to Hashem with all their hearts and will fill the Land with people who love the Torah and observe the mitzvos — including the precious mitzvah of Shemittah.

U'dvar eilokeinu yakum l'olam, But the word of our G-d shall stand forever.

Before *Shemittah* 5754 (1993-1994), a gathering of farmers in Northern Israel was held in Chatzor. Hundreds of farmers came to hear a major address by Rabbi Yaakov Meir Sonnenfeld, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah in Kfar Chasidim and a great-grandson of R’ Chaim's. In his address, Rav Sonnenfeld related the above story and concluded that the commitment of so many farmers to keep *Shemittah*

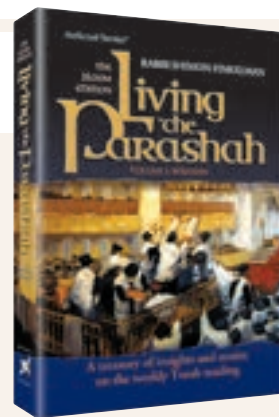
5754 was a fulfillment of his great-grandfather's words.

No sooner had he uttered these words than a very old man sitting in the crowd waved his cane to catch Rav Sonnenfeld's attention. He indicated that he wanted to ascend the stage and speak. Two men helped him up, and Rav Sonnenfeld gave him the podium. This is what he said:

I was there 80 years ago, at that settlement when that gathering took place. I vividly recall the settlement leader's harsh words, Rav Kook's tears, and Rav Sonnenfeld's fiery response. And I must confess: Neither I, nor any of the other settlers who were present, believed that Rav Sonnenfeld's words would ever come true.

This week, when I saw the posters announcing that there would be a major gathering for farmers who will be shomrei Shevi'is (observers of Shemittah), I felt that I simply had to come and tell everyone: Rav Sonnenfeld was right! The Land is becoming filled with those who are faithful to the word of Hashem. I never dreamed that I would hear Rav Sonnenfeld's great-grandson tell the story that I was witness to ...

U'dvar eilokeinu yakum l'olam, But the word of our G-d shall stand forever. 🇮🇱



Rosh Hashanah. One of the holiest days of the Jewish calendar. Yet, as opposed to the other festivals of Succos, Pesach, Shavuot and Yom Kippur, both the theme and *mitzvos hayom* are not clear cut and seem a bit vague at first glance.

What is the core theme of Rosh Hashanah? Is it that the first of Tishrei is the “birthday” of the world? The day mankind is judged? The day we accept Hashem as our King? Is *teshuvah* the core theme of the day?

And what is the main message of the *mitzvas hayom* of shofar? Are we to view the shofar mainly as the instrument we use to coronate our King? A call to repentance? A reminder about the judgment days of the future?

And why the focus on blowing the shofar in conjunction with three seemingly abstract and apparently unrelated concepts of זכרון, מלכות and שופרות? And why are these specific three items the central sub-themes of the day?

The sounds of the shofar are equally cryptic. It is a broken sound that is both preceded and followed by a straight blast. Why?

Given the holiness of the day and its central position on our calendar and in our lives, the *theme* of the day must be one that is equally central and crucial. So in trying to understand the day, let us identify and analyze what is perhaps the most central and crucial aspect of this world. If we are celebrating the birth of this world on the first of Tishrei, let us ask the most basic and critical question one can ask: Why did Hashem create the world?

Rav Chaim Lutzato answers this most foundational of questions in the first chapter of his classic work, *Mesilas Yesarim*.

Chazal taught us that man was created for the sole purpose of rejoicing in Hashem and deriving pleasure from the splendor of His Presence; for this is true joy and the greatest pleasure that can be found.

However, if Hashem would just keep us *neshamos* of *ruchni* and just give us “free” pleasure, that pleasure would not be earned and the ultimate *sechar* is reward that is earned. (As mortals, we can somewhat relate to this concept, though the extent that Hashem values earned reward, as opposed to free reward, is undoubtedly far, far greater and more complex than we can ever truly grasp.)

So Hashem created a material and physical world so that He can transform our *neshamos* of *ruchniyus*, clothe them in a body of *gashmiyus*, place us in a world of *gashmiyus* where He can hide Himself from us and test us, and then reward those *neshamos* after our job in this world is complete, based on the success and failures of our tests and tribulations. As *chazal* said, “This world is like a corridor to the World to Come.”

As the *Mesilas Yesarim* continues:

The place of the performance of the mitzvos is this world alone. Therefore, man was placed in this world first - so that by these means, which were provided for him here, he would be able to reach the place which had been prepared for him, the World to Come, there to be sated with the goodness which he acquired through them. As the gemara in Eruvin states, “Today for their [mitzvos] performance and tomorrow for receiving their reward.”

Rabbi Nosson Scherman explains this concept further in his Overview to ArtScroll’s Rosh Hashanah machzor:

Vilna Gaon explains that there is a fundamental difference between the words מלך, king, and מושל, ruler. The Hebrew word מושל, ruler, refers to a sovereign who reigns against the wishes of his subjects: he is someone we would call a dictator or tyrant. A מלך, king, on the other hand, though he may be an absolute monarch, rules with the consent and recognition of his subjects.

Although Hashem lacked no power before the creation of man, He had no one voluntarily to proclaim him King. The key word is ‘voluntarily.’ The angels had been created before man, and God can create infinite numbers of them at will. But angels have no evil inclination. They are purely agents of Hashem’s will; the possibility of doubt or rebellion does not exist among them. Consequently they are no more capable of free-willed acceptance of God’s sovereignty than is an army of robots. It is not that they are coerced to sing, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ like a captive population re-electing its leader in an election supervised at rifle-point. Rather they see the truth so vividly that there is no room for doubt. To the angels, Hashem is a Ruler, a Creator, a Master...but not a King. But man is different. Man can choose to recognize Hashem and His sovereignty, or deny Him. If man accepts Him, Hashem has become man’s King.

In an environment of *ruchniyos*, it is impossible not to see Hashem and thus impossible to earn reward. It is for this reason that Hashem created this physical world, a world of space and time, a world that can hide His presence, a place that can serve as the essential testing grounds for us to complete mitzvos and earn reward.

In essence, our “downgraded” physical world, during which our deeds are tallied and counted, is bookended on one end by the non-physical and non-accountable world *before* it, during which we, in our state of *ruchniyos* cannot possibly serve Hashem our King as *willing* servants. And on the other end, this world is bookended by the non-physical world *after* it, in which our reincarnated *neshamos* of *ruchni*, which went through the crucial stage of physical trials, can enjoy the presence of Hashem in an earned and unfathomably higher level.

The shofar plays a unique, yet unifying role in each of these “worlds”. When Hashem transitions our *neshamos* from its purely *ruchniyos* state to physical

continued on page 11

beings, He transitions from Ruler to King. The shofar then acts as an instrument that coronates. The first set of blasts are *tekiyos* of *malchiyos*.

During the second stage -our world of *mitzvos* and *aveiros*- the shofar acts as a means to inspire and awaken us to do what we are here in this world to do. To remind us that our acts here will be remembered in the next world and that this world is a world of *nisyonos* to overcome. Had we just been enjoying the presence of Hashem without *mitzvos* or *aveiros*, there would be a constant stream of free pleasure, and no need for remembering for a future era of reckoning; just a flow of pleasure, regardless of accountability. The middle set of blasts are therefore *tekiyos* of *zichronos*.

And when our job here is over, the shofar is used to usher in the era for which we were brought here in the first place. The great judgment days of the future, where the rewards we earned for our *mitzvos* are meted out as per the *mitzvos* we performed during our current stage of *nisyonos*. This last set of blasts are *tekiyos* of *shofros* and completes the entire picture of this world's purpose.

Rav Saadiah Gaon's Ten Allusions

As explained in the introduction to the shofar section of ArtScroll's Rosh Hashanah machzor, Rav Saadiah Gaon enumerates ten symbolic allusions in the *mitzvah* of shofar. The first one is:

Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of the day Hashem simultaneously created and became sovereign of the universe. We blow the shofar since it is customary to sound the trumpets at the coronation of a new king.

The next reasons he brings all have to do with the shofar's capability to inspire us to keep the Torah, do *mitzvos*, and recalls the greatest *nisayon* in history, Akeidas Yitzchok.

Just as a king may proclaim a period of amnesty before he punishes wrongdoers the shofar blast proclaims, 'Whoever wishes to repent- let him do so not, let him not complain later.

At Mount Sinai when the Jews accepted the Torah, the sound of the shofar continually increased and was very great. On Rosh Hashanah the shofar reminds us to renew that commitment.

The shofar reminds us of the admonitions of the prophets and their calls to repentance.

The shofar reminds us to pray for the rebuilding of the destroyed Bais Hamikdash. (The Bais Hamikdash was the epicenter of *avodah* and *kapara* for *aviers*.)

The shofar, a ram's horn, reminds us of Akeidas Yitzchak.

And the last reasons he bring all have to do with the judgment days of the future.

The shofar reminds us of the great and awesome

Judgment Day of the future which Zephaniah describes as a day of shofar blowing and shouting.

The shofar makes us yearn for the ingathering of the exiles, of which it is said: And it will be on that day, that a great shofar will be blown, and then they shall prostrate themselves to Hashem on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

The shofar recalls the resurrection of the dead, which will be accompanied by the sounding of a shofar as it is said: All inhabitants of the world and dwellers of the earth you shall hear when a shofar is sounded.

The reasons and order all perfectly line up with the stages we mentioned of, a) coronation, and then, b) keeping the *mitzvos*, and finally, c) judging and rewarding those *mitzvos*... זכרונות, מלכיות, ושופרות.

The Shofar's Sounds

The shofar's middle sound, the *teruah*, is broken. Additionally, its exact sound is a question that *chazal* debate. But the sounds preceding it and after it are clear and unbroken. The worlds before and after ours are domains of *ruchniyos* and purity; nothing about them are broken and nothing about them are up to human intervention or interpretation.

This middle world of ours, though, is a world of *shevarim*. A world that is purposely unclear and open to spats of rewardable good and bad. Its sounds and reverberations were dictated and decided upon in this world by mortals.

Even the timing of the groups of blasts seem to reflect this idea. Not all the *tekiyos* are blown at once, but rather during three basic periods. Only the middle period, called *tekiyos* of *amidah*, are blown during *Shemoneh Esrei*, which is our *avodah shebelev*. However, during the sets of *tekiyos* before and after those of *amidah*, we are passive listeners. Our obligation to proactively perform exists only in *this* middle world, this middle stage, this middle set of blasts. In the other stages, we simply *receive* sound, *receive* free and passive reward.

Incidentally, the *tekiah gedolah*, is only sounded in the "third" of the trio of sounds- in the culminating stage which heralds the Judgment Days of the future which embodies the highest level of connection to Hashem. It is a straight and long blast which we also sound *motzei* Yom Kippur, when the *avodah* of the *Yimei Hadin* are over, before wishing that *הבנויה בירושלים* and that the next era is ushered in.

May we merit hearing the *tekiah gedolah* in response to our *tefillos* of גדול לשופר בתקוה, and may that utopian era of earned reward dawn upon us speedily in our days. 🌟



The Pipeline for Blessings

The Jewish people do not win wars with their strength — only through their bitachon.

The war in Eretz Yisrael was frightening. Every day, the Arabs would launch missiles at the Jewish people. A siren would go off, warning everyone that a missile would soon land in the area. Everyone would run to find a nearby shelter. Almost every apartment building in Eretz Yisrael had a cellar where all the families would gather in case of missiles or bombings. There, they would wait until they heard another siren signaling that it was safe to come out. Some people brought their radios with them to hear what was going on.

It was a bright, sunny day in Yerushalayim when the sirens went off.

“Hurry, hurry!” young Yaakov Adler told his sister Chaya Esther. “We have to go down to the basement!” People were running all around and parents kept checking to make sure that all their children were with them.

“A missile just hit the gas line!” the radio announcer said.

“Oh, no!” Yaakov’s father exclaimed. “That will cause a fire in the entire neighborhood!”

One man started saying *Tehillim* out loud and everyone followed him. Some adults even started crying.

“I’m so scared,” Chaya Esther said to her mother.

Her mother gave her a tight hug. “Hashem will protect us, Chaya Esther,” she said softly. “We must have bitachon. Come, let’s daven together.”

Before long, all the girls joined Chaya Esther and her mother. They had so much *kavanah* that they almost didn’t realize when the siren signaled it was safe for them to come out.

“No pushing,” one man said to the children who were trying to get out quickly. Everyone wanted to see where the missiles had fallen and what was destroyed.

As they opened the door of the cellar, they blinked their eyes. They weren't used to the sunlight after being in the dark shelter for so long. Suddenly, a man ran toward them.

"Rabbi Adler, you're not going to believe this!"

"Is it good news?" Rabbi Adler asked hopefully.

"Just listen," the man said excitedly. "While we were all in the shelter, a missile hit the main gas line."

"Yes, we heard. What damage was there?"

"Nothing much!" the man said. "Right after the missile hit the gas pipe, another missile came, and guess what it hit? The water pipe!" he said, answering his own question.

Rabbi Adler was in shock. "You mean..."

"Yup, that's exactly what I mean," the man said, smiling widely. "When the gas line got hit and a fire broke out, the water line got hit, and put out anything that was on fire."

Rabbi Adler lifted his eyes. "Thank You, Ribbono shel Olam," he cried.

"But Abba," Chaya Esther said, tugging on his jacket. "If Hashem wasn't going to let there be a fire in the first place, why did any of the pipes need to get hit at all?"

"Excellent question, Chaya Esther. Hashem wanted us to see that He is taking care of us. Look, we are all so grateful right now. If none of this would have happened, we wouldn't feel the same gratitude and love toward Hashem that we feel now, after seeing how He protected us."

Sometimes we might be in a situation that makes us scared or nervous. Maybe your baby brother is missing! You daven very hard that he should be found. Soon, you see him sleeping in your closet! You might wonder, why did Hashem scare me for no reason?

But maybe it's not for no reason. Maybe there *was* a good reason. Maybe the reason is that Hashem just wanted to remind you of how much He loves you. You would have never thought about that if nothing was out of the ordinary.



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