

Volume

3

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

YAMIM NORAIM 5767/2006



**Aish Tamid
of Los Angeles**

ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה
מעבירין את רע הגזרה

**Prayer, Repentance and Charity
Remove the Evil Decree**

This volume published *l'zechus Refuah Sheleima*

**Pinchas -en Malka
Gavriel Moshe -en Hennyah
Aliza Chaya –as Miriam**

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defend Klal Yisroel this summer and all other times
that Eretz Yisroel has been in danger.

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Kindling a Fire That Will Burn for a Lifetime!

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Introduction

Rabbi Avi Leibovic is the Founder of Aish Tamid of Los Angeles. Under his vision, Aish Tamid has become the primary address and resource within the Los Angeles Orthodox Jewish community for targeted inspiration and individualized personal support. To date, the programming and services offered by Aish Tamid have reached over four hundred fifty (450) teens and young adults, ranging in age between 13 and 28 years old, in the Los Angeles community.

Dear friends,

On behalf of all the **Aish Tamid of Los Angeles (“Aish Tamid”)** students, families and friends, it is our pleasure to present to you **“Sparks of Inspiration”- Volume III.**

Indeed, this past year has been a year of tremendous growth for Aish Tamid.

Before our very eyes, we have seen the expansion of all of Aish Tamid programming and services for teens, young adults, parents and community, as well as the launching of several new cutting-edge and innovative Aish Tamid programs. *(Be sure to see the programming flyers in the appendix of this publication!).*

There is no doubt that many of the prayers of Aish Tamid students and parents have been answered since last Rosh Hashana, as we have all witnessed dramatic life changes and complete turnarounds in many of our student participants and families this past year.

It is truly remarkable to see how much has been accomplished in so little time, and Aish Tamid would like to thank you all for your genuine efforts and meaningful contributions in every area of our organization.

I think I can go so far as to say that, in many ways, *you* (the community) have truly inspired *us*...

Your sincere desire to see Aish Tamid flourish and thrive as a permanent resource for the Los Angeles community *has inspired us at Aish Tamid* to push ourselves harder and longer each day of the past year, l'shem shamayim, to give 110% of our energy to the needs of all our students and families.

Your personal participation in ongoing programming and continuous requests for more teen, family and community services *has inspired us at Aish Tamid* to aggressively increase our existing scope of services and programs.

In short, *your* outpouring of ongoing community support *has inspired us at Aish Tamid....to keep inspiring you!*

And, indeed, if there ever was a need for inspiration...the time is now.

Everyone would agree that it has been an extraordinarily difficult year for all of Klal Yisroel. It has been difficult for everyone, in all areas, and not just as it relates to the State of Israel. It seems that everywhere I go and everyone I speak to has some personal “bump” that they need to overcome, either in their family, their job, their religious observance or otherwise.

This past year has proven to us all that there is not only a pressing need for ongoing inspiration in many areas of our life, but more specifically, an

increased need for a more focused type of inspiration...something that I like to call “custom-tailored inspiration.”

It appears that it is no longer enough for us to just listen to an inspiring tape and/or shiur. Apparently, these days, everyone is looking for a private “shmooze” with their own “Rebbe” or “Rav”. An opportunity to open up and share their individual struggles and pains and work intimately in partnership with their Rebbe to come to a place of spiritual and emotional harmony.

Yes, it seems to me that “custom-tailored inspiration”, in a one-on-one setting, has moved a few rungs up the ladder in terms of essential spiritual needs and has become the primary ‘spark of inspiration’ for each of us to grow at our own level and at our own pace.

For those of us who have had the opportunity in the past to sit with a Rebbe and talk out personal matters in a quiet and intimate setting, we certainly know the short and long term benefits and can agree on its successful ability to uplift us and put us back on track towards our destination with a new-found passion and zest.

This simple concept of “custom-tailored inspiration” has been one of the driving forces behind Aish Tamid and the new **Pardes/Plan B program** that was successfully launched this past week for the students and families of Los Angeles by Aish Tamid.

By utilizing a comprehensive 10-month curriculum, a “15 seater” passenger van, a trained staff of Rabbis, clinical social workers, certified teachers and professional mentors, as well as many of Los Angeles’ top educational locations and resources (including but not limited to, museums, nature hikes, educational locations, etc.), the Pardes program will bring together educational, religious, rehabilitative and therapeutic service components in a non-traditional, progressive and intimate manner.

Pardes is not a camp. Pardes is not an after-school program. Pardes is five (5) day a week, full-day, alternative specialty school solution for many of the students and families in our own community. It fills “THE” biggest educational gap of our city.

By focusing on the needs of each individual high school aged student (AKA “custom-tailored inspiration”), this alternative specialty school solution will offer students a place to obtain a serious academic education, draw concentrated inspiration and receive family therapy and personal rehabilitation in a small indoor/outdoor setting.

This program was designed and established to make sure that every high-school age Jewish student in Los Angeles finally has an appropriate program to fit their individual disposition.

But, in many ways, it isn’t only the students who need the Pardes program...but rather, each of us! We each need a customized Pardes program for ourselves - no matter what our age.

In fact, I recently had a respected member of the community tell me that not only did he wish a program like this existed when he was in high school, but he seriously wanted to know if, from time to time, he could go around in the van with the students and participate in some of the Pardes hikes and other programs.

Not because he needed the hiking and exercise...but because he wanted the *chizuk* and “custom-tailored inspiration” himself!

After all, our sages teach us that "PaRDeS" not only means "garden" or "park", but also refers to four different approaches on how to understand sacred scriptures. This teaching is hidden in the word "PaRDeS" itself which is the acronym for "[P]shat (simple), [R]emez (hint), [D]rash,

(search), [S]od (hidden). Each layer and explanation of a Torah verse within the "PaRDeS" framework is deeper, richer and more intense than the last...Just like our children and their individual layered needs and....yes...just like our selves and our own unique needs...

We all have layers upon layers of personal complexities that we need to shed in order to uncover our true selves.

The month of Elul, Rosh Hashana, the ten days of repentance and Yom Kippur are the ideal times to start shedding our individual PaRDeS layers and uncovering our real selves.

Perhaps this, as Harav Moshe Weinberger, Shlitta of Aish Kodesh Congregation in Woodmere, New York explains, is the hidden meaning of the soul-stirring words "*Ve'chol Boyei Oylam Yavroon Lefanecha KivneyMaron, All Mankind Will Pass Before You Like Members of the Flock!*" that we proclaim with tears in our eyes when we say the "*U'nesaneh Toykef,*" "*Let us Now Relate the Power*", prayer every Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

What exactly does that mean? "*All Mankind will Pass Before You Like Members of the Flock*"??? Are we merely like sheep that are individually counted as we pass under a shepard stick? Is that all we are compared to and viewed as??? A unidentifiable member of the flock or sheep, *Maron*, that just simply gets counted and put back out to graze for another period of time until the next counting??? *Gevalt!*

Baruch Hashem, Chazal have opened our eyes to see the secrets and beauty of every little word within our *tefilla* services.

Chazal have taught us to not understand the word **Maron** as **Flock** or **Sheep** but rather to take the same letters of **Maron** (**Mem, Resh and**

Nun) and scramble them to get the word **Rimon (Resh, Mem and Nun)** which many of us know means...pomegranate.

Do you see the beauty of this Torah already?

Chazal is telling us that instead of reading the verse as “*Ve’chol Boyei Oylam Yavroon Lefanecha **KivneyMaron**, All Mankind Will Pass Before You **Like Members of the Flock!**”* it should be read and understood as “*Ve’chol Boyei Oylam Yavroon Lefanecha **Kivney Rimon**, All Mankind Will Pass Before You **Like Members of the Pomegranate!**”*

What? A Pomegranate? Are you sure? Yes, my friends, *Chazal* is not only clear, but amazingly inspiring at the same time...

You see... we were discussing above the idea of the **PaRDeS** and the many different approaches on how to understand sacred scriptures ([P]shat (simple), [R]emez (hint), [D]rash, (search), [S]od (hidden)). We discussed how each layer and explanation of a Torah verse within the "PaRDeS" framework is deeper, richer and more intense than the last and we also discussed how Elul, Rosh Hashana, the ten days of repentance and Yom Kippur are the ideal times to start shedding our PaRDeS layers and uncovering the real selves.

So listen to this...and listen closely...as this one Torah may completely change your approach and perspective towards *Teshuva* for this coming year.

The reason that *Chazal* teach us to read ***Kivney Maron, Like Members of the Flock*** as ***Kivney Rimon, Like the Pomegranate*** is because just like a pomegranate is always covered with a thick peel and bitter layer which has to be removed before the delicious sweet pomegranate seed can be uncovered, so it is with us.

During the *U'nesaneh Toykef* prayer, we beseech *Hashem* to not only look at us "*KivneyMaron, Like Members of the Flock* but instead to look at us *KivneyRimon, Like the Pomegranate.* "

"Hashem!!! Indeed, it may be true that on the outside...I have a bitter layer and thick peel of a pomegranate that is filled with sins and bitterness...If you would taste my sins, they would taste bitter like the peel of a pomegranate...I am hard and difficult to peel and change my ways....but, I promise you, Hashem...Gevalt...with all the tears I have to cry during my U'nesaneh Toykef prayer...If you only knew....If you only knew how sweet I really am on the inside...I'm like a pomegranate seed....underneath all the thick layers and peels of sin and bitterness... what a heliga yid I want to be and what a heliga yid a really am!!...then you would certainly Mavirin Es Roya Hagezera, Remove the evil of the decree!!!"

What a beautiful idea!

With the proper intent this one simple thought can carry you and inspire you far beyond the month of Elul and the period of Rosh Hashana, ten days of repentance and Yom Kippur...it can carry you for the length your life.

Whenever you feel depressed and hopeless regarding your personal sins and (temporary) inability to find the strength to change your life, you have to remember this idea. It is filled with hope, strength, inspiration and guidance.

Day after day, the role of Aish Tamid is to provide this type of hope, strength, inspiration and guidance to the students and families of the Los Angeles community, and to provide daily injections for "custom-tailored inspiration!"

It is my ongoing hope that the Los Angeles Jewish community continues to support our efforts. We need your help! And the students and families of Los Angeles need our help!

It is a mutual partnership.

This year, let us each continue to help each other because it appears that neither of us can be successful alone.

My bracha to you all...no matter what your age or background...is that this Yom Tov, we should try to adopt a PaRDeS perspective and approach to our *avodas Hashem* and *teshuva* process and recognize that, in fact, there are layers upon layers of complexities within us all...

That we should understand, appreciate and recognize that a little “custom-tailored inspiration” in a private setting with the Rebbe of our choice would do us all a lot of good..

And, most importantly, that we find the strength and courage to rekindle the Aish Tamid within ourselves, our families and Klal Yisroel so that this year filled with growth and *devekus* towards the *Ribbono shel olam* and his *Torah, B'simcha*.

K'siva v'chisima tova,

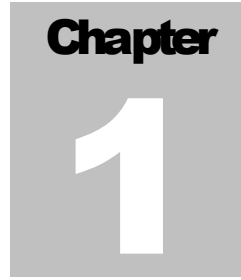


Rabbi Avi Leibovic
Founder/ Executive Director
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Know your Potential and Use It

By Rabbi Shlomo Price. Rabbi Price was a student at the Rabbvi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva of New York, Chofetz Chaim Yeshivah in Monsey N.Y., and the Mir Yeshivah of Brooklyn, New York. He lives with his wife and children in Telz Stone Israel, where he has been a Rebbi at Neveh Zion for the last 29 years. His sichot are posted on neveh.org and nevehzion.com.

There is a story they tell about the Rebbe of Kotzk.

He once confronted a young man who had come to his court, "Why have you come here?" he asked.

"I have come to find Hashem," the young man replied.

"Too bad, you wasted your time and money," the Rebbe said. "Hashem is everywhere. You could have found Him just as well had you remained at home."

"Then for what purpose should I have come?" the young man asked.

"To find yourself," the Rebbe answered, "To find yourself."

Part of finding yourself is realizing your potential and what you should be striving for in life.

I have often spoken about the sadness, frustration, and disappointment that I feel when I see people who don't realize their potential and how much they can accomplish in Torah and Mitzvos. Consequently, they never reach a fraction of their true greatness.

On Rosh Hashana, especially, we have to reflect on this point to a get true perspective of what we should be aiming for.

There are those who use their potential, but gear it toward the "success" that the secular world strives for. They either don't know, ignore, or don't evaluate properly the Torah understanding of Life.

And then there are those that just "chill out", "hang out", "get wasted" or "mellow out" etc. In reality, these are just terms that attempt to dignify what they are really doing. Nobody wants to admit that they are shirking their responsibility, refusing to face reality, and copping out on Life, which is precisely what they are doing. They want to somehow coast through life and its challenges by somehow escaping them and "sleeping" through Life.

Either way, this prevents people from reaching their "real" potential and attaining true happiness.

Imagine, if we would see someone burning or throwing hundred dollar bills out the window. [I admit that I would be the first one to run down and put them in my pocket]. If we cared at all about the fellow, it would hurt us to see him wasting or destroying what could be of great value to him and to others. Hopefully, we would try to explain to him the folly of his ways.

How much more so, when we see how people destroy their potential for Torah and Mitzvos, which is worth more than any amount of money.

In Neveh Zion, there is a tradition that on Shabbos, Festivals, and the High Holy days after praying, the boys make a procession and greet all the Rabbis. It is very beautiful and emotional. Sometimes, it even takes longer than the actual praying.

This past Rosh Hashana, I was especially moved by the bright young faces that radiated with the happiness and holiness of Rosh Hashana. As each boy passed by, we wished each other to be written and signed in the "Book of Life." It was then that I felt a mixed feeling of joy and sadness with tears welling up in my eyes.

I felt joy just looking at these fine prospects of future "Servants of Hashem," and realizing that I have the privilege of possibly helping them in some small way to realize their potential.

On the other hand, I had known many of these boys from before. I knew that they were not living up to even a fraction of what they could really do. It was then that tears welled up in my eyes as I remembered a very inspirational Gemoro in Berachos.

The Gemoro Berachos 5b relates a moving story about Rabbi Elozor and Rabbi Yochanan.

Rabbi Elozor was sick and Rabbi Yochanon went to visit him. When he saw that Rabbi Elozor's house was dark, Rabbi Yochanan lit up the house by revealing his arm [which shone from beauty]. At that point Rabbi Elozor started to cry and Rabbi Yochanan asked him, Why? Rabbi Elozor responded that he was crying because, "Such beauty is destined to deteriorate [decompose] in the ground [after death]." Rabbi Yochanan responded, "For this you should definitely [are right to] cry." The Gemoro concludes that at that point they both cried.

What I realized from this Gemoro was, that beauty that will eventually be destroyed, even by the natural process of death and burial in the earth [not through the deeds of its owner], is something to reflect and cry about.

It then struck me, how much more so, when beauty is literally buried in the earth by its very owner. When we don't reach our potential, we are taking our beauty and destroying it with our very own hands. "For this you should definitely cry."

One of the biggest problems is, that we have a big misunderstanding of our potential. We don't realize what we should accomplish and how much we can accomplish. We see in front of us a huge mountain [Torah and Mitzvos] to climb and feel that we weren't given the potential to do it.

The truth is that, in a certain way, we're right. With our own potential alone, without help from Hashem, we would not be able to climb to the top of the mountain.

However, when we use our potential **TO ITS FULLEST**, then, even though we won't reach the top of the mountain, Hashem will take us by the arms and lift us to the top.

Of course, we have to be honest and not underestimate our **FULL POTENTIAL**. Just look at the "**POTENTIAL**" that we muster up when it comes to money or something else that interests us. How many times have we read about people (or done it ourselves) who would camp out all night in the street to be on line to get a ticket to a big concert or some big baseball or football game.

If we think that we don't have too much "**POTENTIAL**" for Torah and Mitzvos, think again! It may just be that we don't have too much "**INTEREST**" in Torah and Mitzvos and that's why we think it's a lack of "**POTENTIAL**." If we would only put more effort into learning the beauty and importance of Torah and Mitzvos, then we will really understand what our "**FULL POTENTIAL**" is. I am reminded of a beautiful story with Eliyahu Hanavy that shows that this is a very common mistake. In *Tana Divey Eliyahu Zuta* Chapter 14 , Eliyahu Hanavy relates:

"Once I was going from place to place and I met an ignorant man who knew neither Chumash or Mishna and he was scoffing at me with words. I said to him, 'My son, what will you answer your Father in Heaven on the Day of Judgement?'

He replied, 'Rebbi, I have what to answer Him. They didn't give me from Heaven understanding and knowledge to learn Chumash and Mishna.'

I then asked him, 'What is your profession?'

He replied, 'A fisherman.'

I countered, 'And who taught you to bring flax and weave it into nets, throw it into the sea, and catch the fish?'

He answered, 'Rebbi, for this they gave me understanding and knowledge from Heaven.'

Finally I said [with wonderment], 'And if for bringing flax to make nets to throw in the sea to catch fish-for this they gave you understanding and knowledge from Heaven- and for words of Torah, about which it is said, [Devarim 30:14] 'For it is very close to you this concept [Torah] in your mouth and in your heart to do it.' For that they didn't give you understanding and knowledge from Heaven?'

At that point the fisherman, [who realized how foolish he looked with his erroneous logic], began to cry and I told him,

'My son, don't feel bad because all the other people in the world give this excuse...[about not being given understanding and knowledge for Torah] and yet their own deeds [the understanding and knowledge of their own profession] refute this excuse.' "

This story should help us to realize that we won't have this excuse either.

Rather we should understand the truth.

The bottom line is, that Hashem is telling us, "You do yours [climb as far as you can climb] and I'll do Mine [take you the rest of the way].

There are many Rabbis who expound on this point and bring beautiful proofs to it from the Torah. I will mention a few.

In "*Haoros*," by one of my Rebbeim, Rav Zeidel Epstien, shlita, on Bamidbar- Mamar 2-p.6 he brings Rashi (Bamidbar 3:16) who explains

how Moshe counted the Levites. Moshe was supposed to count the Levites from the age of one month. Moshe asked Hashem,

"How am I going to enter their tents to ascertain the number of their nursing babies (as this would be a breach of modesty)? Hashem said to him, 'You do yours, and I'll do mine.' Moshe went and stood by the door of the tent and the Divine Presence preceded him and a voice would come from the tent and say this and this many babies are in the tent...."

Rabbi Epstein asks the obvious question. If, anyway, the voice announced the number, then why did Hashem command Moshe to stand at the door of the tent? It seems to be for nothing!

He answers that there is a very important lesson that we can learn here about how Hashem acts with us.

"A person is obligated to do his, he must try, and cannot say, 'I can't.' It is upon you to do (what you can) and when you can't (do anymore) then Hashem will do his....and sometimes Hashem will help even above the laws of nature."

He also brings the Gemoro in Sotah 12b which says that when Pharaoh's daughter, Basya stretched out her hand to get Moshe from the river, (Shmos 2:5) a miracle occurred. Even though, Moshe was far away, and there was no way that her hand could reach it, she stuck out her hand anyway. Then a miracle occurred and her hand grew till it reached Moshe.

Here also the question arises, why did she stick out her hand when she saw that it was so far away? Did she actually think she would reach it?

Again we see that she believed that she to had make her best attempt [as feeble as it is] and to Hashem is the salvation. That's why this miracle occurred for her.

Rabbi Epstein warns us of the shrewdness of the Yetzer Haro-Evil Inclination.

He tries to convince us that we can't fight an angel...he persuades us to say that for us "there is already no chance..." and all kinds of things to get us to give up.

But we must know that there is no such situation as "you can't," and as long as you do what you are obligated to do, Hashem will help you.

He also brings the words of Rabbeinu Yonah in the beginning of the "Gates of Repentance." "...And it has been explained in the Torah that Hashem will help those that repent when it is not in their nature [capability] to do so. He will renew in them a spirit of purity to reach the level of Loving Him."

Rabbi Epstein concludes, "We have here a wondrous novel point in his words. That even if according to natural laws he really can't (repent), 'it is not in their nature [capability] to do so,' Hashem creates a special creation, a spirit of purity until he will reach the level of His Love."

In the sefer "*Achas Shaalti*," by Rabbi Yitzchok Zeev Josef, p.52, he uses this point to explain a perplexing Gemoro.

The Gemoro in Yuma 35b says:

"The Rabbis taught: A poor man, rich man, and the wicked man come to Judgement.

To the poor man they say, 'Why did you not learn Torah? ...Were you poorer than Hillel...(and yet he managed to learn)?'

To the rich man they say, 'Why did you not learn Torah?' If he says he was too busy with his property, they respond, 'Were you richer than Rabbi Elozor ben Charsom (who despite his wealth managed to learn)?'

To the wicked man they say, 'Why did you not learn Torah?' If he says I was handsome and preoccupied with my yetzer horo, they respond, 'Were you more handsome than Yosef (who withstood the wife of Potifar's

seduction [Bereishis 39:7...)?(so too you should have conquered your yetzer horo).'

Thus poor people will be held accountable because of Hillel, the rich because of Rabbi Elozor ben Charsom, and the wicked because of Yosef."

Rabbi Josef brings the "Pri Hoaretz," from Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitepsk who asks the following question about Yoseph.

The Chazal say [see Rashi in Breishis 39:11 and Gemoro Sotah 36b] according to one view that Yoseph was actually ready to give in to the seduction, but he was saved by a miraculous vision of his father that he received at that moment.

So how can he hold accountable the wicked, he was only saved through the miracle of the vision [not his own strength], and the wicked do not merit such miracles at the height of their desires?

Rabbi Josef then asks that in reality the whole Gemoro is baffling.

How are we to expect ordinary people to live up to the standards of these giants? Why do their exemplary actions obligate and set the standard for all people in all generations?

However, with the question of the "Pri Hoaretz" lies the key to understanding this Gemoro.

Had Yosef's salvation been through his own natural strength, it could be, he would not hold the wicked [who don't have Yosef's strength] accountable.

But now that we see that see that his salvation came through miraculous Divine help then he can hold them accountable.

Do you think that this special Divine help came for free? Did it come without Yosef first doing all he could to conquer his yetzer horo?

Of course not! The Gemoro (ibid.) relates how Yosef withstood all the seductions and punishments that the wife of Potiphar threatened him with.

He fought his yetzer horo with all of his might until he couldn't go further. That's why he merited this miraculous Divine help. [Later I saw that in the sefer "*Tuvicho Yabin*", by Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstien, Vol.II p.286 he says the same point in the name of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter].

And the truth is that this the way it always works. The Gemoro Kiddushin 30b says that our yetzer horo is stronger than we are and if not for Divine Intervention we would not be able to conquer it.

It was not a special miracle for Yosef. This is the way Hashem acts with anyone who uses his potential to its fullest to conquer his yetzer horo and can't go further. He will also receive a miraculous Divine help.

Based on the Gemoro Kiddushin, it's logical to deduce that Hillel and Rabbi Elozor ben Charsom also had tests beyond their strength and only because they used their potential till their fullest they merited Divine Intervention.

Therefore, these giants can hold all of us accountable, despite the fact that our natural strengths don't come anywhere near theirs.

Since their level did not hinge on natural strengths rather on using whatever strength they did have to its fullest.

So too, it can be expected that we should use our strength, as meager as it is ,to its fullest and then we also merit Divine help.

In "Reb Chaim's Discourses," by Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, p.99, he points out that every time we do what is demanded of us, it is Hashem who brings the results. He says,

"A person is obligated to do that which is demanded of him, and it is for Hashem to bring results. It is incumbent on man to act not to accomplish. Any other approach is a declaration of, 'My power and the might of my

hand have gotten me all this success (Devarim 8:17).' While this injunction literally applies to physical endeavors and accomplishment, it applies to the spiritual as well...

This idea finds expression in the prayer of R' Nechuniah ben Hakanah, 'I toil and am rewarded (Berachos 28b).' For it is for the toil itself that man is rewarded. To be more exact, the accomplishment and attainments are a part of the reward."

With this point he answers an apparent contradiction. It says in Pirkei Avos (4:1) "Who is strong? He who subdues his evil inclination."

On the other hand, it says in the Gemoro Sucah 52b, "Were it not for the assistance of the Holy One, [man] could not conquer [his evil inclination]" How then can Chazal attribute the subordination of the evil inclination to strength?

Rav Chaim answers, "The answer is that Hashem's assistance is commensurate to man's efforts. Man battles; Hashem conquers. If a man has succeeded in overcoming his evil inclination, it is indeed testimony to his strength."

I'm going to end off with a story that Rabbi Berel Wein tells from the "Apter Rov" Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel.

He once told his chassidim about a certain Jewish tavern owner that had many Gentile customers. The local priest was not too happy with this. He threatened his congregation that anyone frequenting the tavern would not receive confession.

The Jew was not phased and went out and bought a priest's uniform. He then offered that he would give confession to any of his customers who wanted.

Once a fellow came and confessed, "Father, I stole a rope." Whereupon the Jew prescribed that he give a ruble to the church.

"But Father, the rope was attached to an ox,"

"And what did you do with the ox?"

"I killed it and sold the meat."

"Then give another ruble to the church."

"But Father, the ox was attached to a wagon."

"And what did you do with the wagon?"

"I chopped it up and sold the wood."

"Well, that will cost you another ruble."

The Jew thought that he was finally finished with this guy, but he wasn't going. So the Jew said annoyingly, "Well, what do you want now?!"

"But Father, there was a child on the wagon."

"And what did you do with the child?!"

"I murdered him!"

The Jew was furious and he said, "You murdered a child and you come to me to confess stealing a rope!"

The Apter Rov told his Chasidim, "We do the same thing. On Rosh Hashana we come and confess to stealing a rope, when in reality we've murdered a child - the next generation - the vision - the world that we are supposed to build. What happened to him? That's the question. That can't be bought for a few rubles."

May Hashem help us to reach our potential to its fullest and build ourselves as well as the future generations. May we merit a *Kesiva Vchasima Tova*.

Rabbi Price

The Shofar of Rosh Hashana – An EMT Call

By Rabbi Shmuel Brazil.

Rabbi Brazil gives maagid shiur at Sh'or Yoshev Yeshiva in Lawrence, New York. For the last thirty (30) years, Rabbi Brazil has been successfully inspiring thousands of students and all parts of Klal Yisroel with his Torah teachings and original music compositions and melodies.

The passuk begins “*Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem.*” Rashi explains that there is a connection between the beginning of this parsha and the end of the previous one. Parshas *Ki Savoh* ends with the “*tochecha*” the enumerated punishments that the Jewish people will receive for abandoning Hashem's commandments. The listed punishments of this parsha are the second installation following those that were written in parshas *Bechukosai*. Subsequent to hearing the present warning, the Jewish people felt faint and assumed that they will never make it through them both. It is for this reason that Hashem tells them in the beginning of this week's parsha “*Atem nitzavim hayom.*” Even after you have sinned so much before Hashem, behold you still exist and stand before me today. This is proof that I will never destroy you completely.

The Chasam Sofer writes that if one adds the total of punishments in both parshiyos, the 49 of *Bechukosai* and the 98 of *Ki Savoh*, the outcome is 147 which corresponds to the years of Yaakov Avinu. Which corresponds to what the Tosfos in Pesachim 117 says that in Tehillim there is 147 chapters. Let us delve into the connection between these two.

Our *Chazal* tell us that the seal of Hashem is the trait of *emes* - truth. That is why we find that the end [seal] letters of the first three words in the Torah "*beraisbis barab elokim*" forms the word *emes*. Man, who was created in His image, must therefore strive to attain this *emes* within himself. As the Rabbeinu Yonah writes "*emes miyesodai hanefesh*" that truth is a fundamental principal of the soul. This concept is hinted again in the end letters of the act of Hashem placing the soul in the body of man as the Torah relates "*vayipach behapav nishmas chayim*" and Hashem blew within man a living soul whose end letters spell "*chosaim*" - seal, again referring to the attribute of *emes*.

But man alone was given the gift of *bechirah* to make moral choices together with the possibility of deviating from this *emes* by allowing himself to be attracted to *sheker* - falsehood. By doing so, one can sink to such a nadir of evil that the Torah in this week's parsha describes him as one possessing a "*shoresh poreh rosh velaanah*" a growth of a bitter grass within him. For every person has the power of growth which in *lashon hakodesh* is called "*tzemicha*". However, it all depends upon what one is growing and from which soil his roots nurture. The *tzemach* that is bitter refers to evil and specifically the "rah" of *Amalaik*. For we find the *gematriah* of *Amalaik* to be "*maar*" which means bitter. *Amalaik* attempts to persuade the Jew to follow his physical and material lusts without any concern of consequence. He removes him from the *emes* and brings him into the world of falsehood which momentarily caters and gratifies his desires. Following this lifestyle, one forgets completely about his soul and just focuses on his body. Because he has strayed away from his essential *emes*, he therefore requires "*tochacha*" warnings of punishment to bring him back once again to contact and be nurtured by his inner *emes*.

Let us review those numbers once again and we will see an incredible hint. The number of punishments mentioned in the *Tochacha* both one and two, together spell [the letters of *tzakik ches mem tes*] the word *tzemach tes* - the growth of *tes*. The letter *tes* represents *emes* for in *mispar katan* [the system of *gematria* where every number is reduced to a single number for example $59=14=5$] *emes* 441 equals 9. Unbelievably, we find that any number times nine equals nine in *mispar katan* [18,27,36,45,54,63 etc. The reason being that the passuk says [Mishlei 12,19] "*emes tikon la-ad*" that *emes*

lasts for ever. Therefore every multiple of nine remains a nine. In any case, we see that the purpose of Jewish punishment is only to serve as a means to get us back on the *nesbamah* track and growth in the *midah* of *emes*. Therefore we find that Adam is also in *mispar katan gematira* nine, for he alone from the entire universe was graced with the *chosaim* of *emes* from his Creator. That is also why he is called Adam which the sefarim say is also the word which can be read with the vowels "abdahmeh" which means I will model myself after You Hashem, particularly in the *midah* of *emes* which is your seal.

Now we can understand why the total number of punishments corresponds to Yaakov Avinu's life. The answer being that Yaakov Avinu strived during his lifetime to attain the *midah* of *emes*. By doing so, he made it accessible for his descendents to also reach that level and make a correction in their behavior in order to return to their innate *emes* radiated by their *neshamos*. The purpose of *tochacha* is to direct the estranged Jew to return to that *midah* of Yaakov Avinu. With this in mind, if we look a little more closer we will see another incredible hint to the *emes* of the above. As mentioned, we have a "*tochecha*" twice, one in *Bebukosai* and another in *Ki Savoh*. If you take the *gematria* of the word "*tochacha*" plus the letter "*bais*" which symbolizes two, the total will be 441 the *gematira* of *emes*! 49 and 98 equal the *midah* of Yaakov who lived 147. So too does the *gematriah* of *tochacha beis* equals the *midah* of *emes* of Yaakov.

This concept then also connects to the recital of Tehillim which possess 147 chapters. The *segulah* of Tehillim is that it can help us reconnect to our *emes* and therefore spare us from the two *Tochachas*! The Medrash says that Dovid Hamelech requested from Hashem that the reciting of Tehillim should be like *negaaim* the laws of *tzaraas* - "leprosy". According to above, this can be interpreted to mean that just as the *Kohain* only has to say "*tabor*" - clean' and the *metzorah* is *tabor* from his *nehgah*, so too just by saying Tehillim we can spare ourselves of the *negaaim* that are to befall upon us. The seforim say that the beginning passuk of "*Atem nitzavim Hayom*" is referring to Rosh Hashana. According to our explanation above, Rosh Hashana shares juxtaposition to *tochacha* whose purpose is to bring us once again to our inner *emes* and seal. Interesting to note is the fact that we end the beracha of the *rosh basabna Shemona Esrei* of Shacharit Mincha and

Maariv with the *midah* of *emes*: "*vetahair leebainu leavdecha bebemes ki ata elokim emes udevarcha emes vekayam labad*". For this is the essence and goal of the day to return to our *emes* because Hashem is *emes*. This process of returning to our *emes* is symbolized by the mitzvah of the day which is the blowing of the *shofar*. For the seforim say that in the pasuk mentioned above "*sboresh poreh rosh velaanah*," has the acronym of the letters of *shofar*. For it is the *shofar* that has the power to release him from the shackles of that bitter grass and dysfunctional growth patterns to once again realign himself with his true being. As Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim: "*Tik-oo bachodesh shofar. ki chok levisroal mishpat leelokay Yaakov*." We find that Dovid relates the blowing of the *shofar* on the Day of Judgment by the G-d of Yaakov. Why was Yaakov particularly chosen to symbolize Rosh Hashana and the blowing of the *shofar*? The answer follows our theme that the process of *teshuvah* is to return to that essential *emes* that lies within the Yid. Hashem's seal is *emes*, every *neschama* is *emes*, and the judgment of the day by Hashem is how much of that *emes* have one actualized during the past year.

When one has a medical emergency an EMT, emergency medical technician, is called immediately. But there is also what *Chazal* call a "*choli hanefesh*" sickness of the soul. In this scenario, there can also be an emergency when one did not cure his spiritual shortcomings immediately but rather let it deteriorate until he reached a state of real danger. On Rosh Hashana the Day of Judgment we also have a spiritual medical crisis. This is symbolized in the blowing of the *shofar*. Our *Chazal* tell us that the sounds of the *shofar* are the sounds of a person suffering severe sickness [*shevarim*] which could eventually lead to death if not cared for [hinted by the sounds of *teruah* representing cries of death]. However when blowing the *shofar*, one returns to the sound of *tekiah* which symbolizes sound spiritual health as before. Our *shofar* is our call for an emt that can save us from this spiritual medical emergency. For the *shofar* like an EMT can fix and stabilize our crisis and take us out of danger of severe judgment. Our *kol shofar* is the call for the spiritual EMT within us. [if you live in Eretz Yisrael you probably would have a greater appreciation of this *remez*] "*Atem nizavim hayom*" is referring to Rosh Hashana the Day of Judgment of our *emes*. That is why this parsha begins with the word "*atem*" which also spells the word *emes*. The purpose of *tochacha* and a day of judgment is arouse the individual to search deep down within himself to find his

personal *atem*, which is his *emes*, and make the necessary corrections. If one will do so, it is then that Hashem promises "*nitzavim hayom*" when Rosh Hashana passes you will merit to be standing in good grace before Hashem Elokaichem. Our *Chazal* tell us that when the *shofar* is sounded, the Satan trembles as he senses his days are numbered. As our *meforshim* explain, every Rosh Hashana *shofar* blowing contains within itself an echo of the final *shofar* blowing in the days of *Mashiach* "*vehaya bayom habu yitankab beshofar gadol*", when all evil will be eradicated and *emes* will reign throughout the land. The Satan and Yetzer Harah both fear the coming of *Zemach* of holiness represented by the dynasty of Dovid Hamelech as we daven in *Shemoneh Esrei* "*es tzemach Dovid avdecha mehaira satzmiach.*" It is that during the time of the *shofar* blowing that we must rededicate ourselves to the task of uprooting our allegiance to the sole gratification of our earthly demands and change our growth direction towards that of *nesbama* and *emes*. By doing so, as we uproot the bitter grass within us and will merit in its place to have a *Shana tovah umesuka* a good and sweet year.

Kesivah vechasima tova!

Rabbi Shmuel Brazil

Returning to Our True Essence!

By Rabbi Shaul Dov Felman

Rabbi Felman is one of the Rebbeim at Neveh Zion, located in Telshe-stone, Jerusalem. His clarity and ability to give over complicated Torah concepts in simple to understand terms has helped hundreds of bochurim over the years grow into Bnei Torah.

A custom that has been passed down by the “Chachmei Ashkenaz” is that on Erev Yom Kippur a “mock” whipping takes place in the synagogue, where one whips his friend exactly in the fashion that it was done in the time of the Sanhedrin. The “Kol Bo” makes a stipulation that he who did not perform this on Erev Yom Kippur may not proceed to do this on Yom Kippur itself. This minhag is still kept by certain congregations. Let us perhaps attempt to shed some light on the inner meaning of this seemingly strange custom.

The Gemmoro in Makkos 22b states, ”How foolish are those people that stand in front of a Sefer Torah and do not stand for a great man (reference to a Talmid Chochom), for the Torah says forty and the Rabbis came and reduced one.” In other words, the Torah for various transgressions set the punishment as forty lashes and the Rabbis came and made the modification to thirty nine. On a side point the Maharal points out that here lies a tremendous foundation, for there is no way in the world that someone would possibly be able to interpret forty as being thirty nine. No commentator, even if he is standing on his head can convince anyone that the meaning of forty is truly thirty nine. However, our Chazal are not merely interpreters of the Torah - they are the Torah itself. A Talmid

Chochom is essentially Torah. Therefore he can truly say that the meaning of forty is thirty nine.

Therefore, foolish is the person that stands up for a Sefer Torah and for a Talmid Chochom does not. What remains to be understood is why did the Torah choose to teach me that a person receives thirty nine whips in such a strange way? If the Torah means thirty nine, why does it say forty? After all, one should say what he means and mean what he says. The Maharal deals with this intriguing point as follows. The reason he explains a person is sentenced with forty lashes is because Ha-shem, we know, takes forty days to create the embryo. Seeing as Ha-shem troubled himself for forty days with the "Yetziras Havlad" and by sinning the person undid the purpose of his creation, it is befitting that he should be whipped forty times, one for each of those forty days. The Maharal adds that in creating the embryo, for thirty nine days Ha-shem creates the body - the Guf, and on the fortieth day blows in the soul - the Neshama. As far as sentencing is concerned the whole person sinned and therefore the whole unit consisting of the Guf and Neshama has to be punished. However, the Maharal continues, when it comes down to the whipping itself, one by one, representing day by day, when we come to the thirty ninth day the Guf has been totally atoned for. What remains is only the Neshama. The Neshama is pure. The Neshama did not sin, so it need not be punished.

Klal Yisroel undergoes a period of atonement of forty days, from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur. Forty days to atone for the forty days that Ha-shem troubled himself with the formation of man that finds himself now in a desperately sinful situation. On the thirty ninth day we whip, attesting to the punishment that the Guf would ultimately need to receive. However he who did not receive lashes on Erev Yom Kippur may not be whipped on Yom Kippur because Yom Kippur is the fortieth day, which corresponds to the Neshama and the Neshama need not be whipped.

This is the way we have to perceive the wonderful present Ha-shem gave us entitled Yom Kippur-the day of the Neshama. We return to our essence.

The concept behind immersion in a Mikvah is explained by Reb Tzadok as follows.

When a person immerses himself in a body of water, in which he can't have existence for any lengthy period of time, he must come out of that situation a new being. Similarly one may claim that is the idea behind the prohibitions of fasting and such on Yom Kippur. A person enters a situation when he can not continue to exist in, so when the day is out he is surely a new being. Truly, one need not totally become a new being. After a full day of fasting and intense prayer a person strips himself of physicality, and all that really remains on these very special days is the Neshama. He has returned to his true essence.

May Ha-shem bless us all with a Gmar Chasima Tova, may we merit true repentance and be able to get in touch with our true essence - that very special Neshama that was given to us by Ha-shem himself.

Kesivah vechasima tova!

Rabbi Shaul Dov Felman

“Listen Closely”

B Rabbi Nachum Kosofsky,

Rabbi Kosofsky is the Rav of Shaarei Tefila Congregation, Los Angeles, California.

Every holiday on the Jewish calendar has its own unique character. We identify each Yom Tov with the mitzvot and customs that are associated with the day. When we think of Rosh Hashanah, the first identifying feature of the day is, no doubt, the Shofar. Look at any illustration depicting a Rosh Hashanah theme from a New Year's greeting card to an advertisement poster, and there it is: the traditional ram's horn, the Shofar, usually being blown by a man in High Holiday synagogue dress. Sometimes, it's just lying there, resting on a Tallis, maybe neighbored by a machzor, waiting to be picked up and blown. It's the highlight of the Rosh Hashanah synagogue service, the clarion call to the Jewish spirit to awaken from our spiritual sleep and proclaim the Almighty as our King as we usher in the New Year.

But this year, the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos. So we don't blow the Shofar. We skip it. There is no clarion call of the spirit, no alarm clock for the Jewish heart, no piercing wordless cry to do repent and change our ways, no trumpeting coronation of our Creator and King, no plead to the Almighty to remember the ram of Avraham's sacrifice in place of his son Yitzchak.

We just skip all that. I guess I'll make some announcement in our shul like, "Sorry folks, no Shofar today. It's Shabbos. Please skip to page 440."

Why no Shofar on Shabbos?

One reason, as recorded in the Gemora (Rosh Hashanah 29b), is that the Rabbis were concerned that one may forget that it is Shabbos and come to carry the Shofar through a public domain thereby violating the sanctity of the Shabbos. Yes, it's worthwhile to suspend the ritual of the mitzvah of Shofar for the entire Jewish people, lest one careless Jew inadvertently violate the Shabbos.

There is another reason. The Gemora (*ibid*) observes a seeming contradiction between two verses in the Torah. One verse refers to Rosh Hashanah as *yom teruah* (a day of Shofar-sounding) (*Numbers 29:1*); whereas the other verse refers to Rosh Hashanah as a day of *zichron teruah* – a remembrance of the Shofar-sounding (*Vayikra 23:24*). The Rabbis interpreted the first text to refer to a regular weekday Rosh Hashanah when we actually blow the Shofar, and the second text to refer to a Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbos when we do not blow the Shofar, but merely remember it instead.

More than merely an injunction to protect against accidental violation of Sabbath rest, our refraining from Shofar blowing on the Shabbos is rooted in the words of the Torah itself. Shabbos is not the time to blow Shofar. It's the time of remembrance of the Shofar – the call of the Shofar that remains silent in our hearts.

As Rosh Hashanah approaches and we ready ourselves to stand before God in judgment and we engage in the timely pursuits of teshuva, prayer, and tzedaka, we call out to God and beseech Him for mercy and patience for our human sinful failures.

But, there are many of us who are silent, whose hearts are unmoved by these Days of Awe. They are our fellow Jews who have drifted far from their spiritual home, far from Torah life, far from prayer and devotion to the God of our ancestors. They do not come to the synagogue during these holy days. They do not engage with their history or their destiny as a part of the eternal Jewish people. They are spiritually lost and without place or purpose. And they do not even know it.

But they do cry. We do not hear it. They do not hear it either. Their souls silently cry out for someone to help them, “Help me, teach me, bring me close, and invite me into your home. I am your brother, your sister. I too am a Jew. Remember me.”

This is the Shofar call we don’t hear. It’s the silent Shofar of Shabbos. But, if we listen closely, we can hear it. We must hear it.

There are those of us who know how to make the noise of Rosh Hashanah, and there are those of us who do not know how. But we must *remember* them.

It’s easy enough. Engage in conversation with fellow Jews at work, with old friends and family, with neighbors, even with strangers we meet by chance. Speak about what it means to be Jewish, to live Jewish. Invite an estranged fellow Jew to our home for a Shabbos meal or to a meal in our Sukkah on Chol Hamoed. Speak about Shabbos, about Yom Tov, about eating Kosher, about family purity, about the stories of the Torah, the mitzvos of the Torah, about Jewish prayer and blessings, about religious family life, education, and community.

We would be surprised that many actually want to hear and will hear. But, we have to hear the silent crying voices in their hearts. We must listen closely. And when we listen, they too will listen.

Kesiva v’Chasima Tova,

Rabbi Nachum Kosofsky

New Eyes!

By Rabbi Shlomo Katz:

The Torah and music of Reb Shlomo Carlebach, ז"ל has inspired and strengthened Shlomo throughout his young career. Shlomo has been The Scholar in Residence to university campuses and synagogues to teach Torah, give concerts, and lead Melave Malkas and kumsitzim. He was the lead Baal Tefilla and spiritual guide in the Carlebach Minyan of Beth Jacob of Beverly Hills.

Shlomo is a credentialed Chaplain, and a current third year Rabbinical student at the flagship Torah institution of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin and Yeshivat HaMivtar in Efrat under Rosh HaYeshiva, Rav Chaim Brovender. He continues to tour and perform throughout Israel as well as the United States. His performances lift the crowd to the heights of ecstatic devotion, leaving one moved, inspired, transformed and hungry for more. There is no higher praise.

As fast as time flies by, G-d gives us moments which last forever.

For some, Rosh Hashanna and Yom Kippur are a huge test for which we need to cram during the month of Elul, but the truth is, Elul is both a review and a preparation. When Elul comes, we are taking a closer glance at all the moments we held onto, and all the moments we let go of. It's not just about the last few remaining weeks, it's the whole picture.

The eyes with which I use to look at the world during the month of Elul are different eyes.

These eyes have matured another year. For us yiddelach, these eyes have seen heaven, and as well, have sadly seen such darkness. Especially for us

yidden here in Eretz Yisrael, there is no way you can look at the world, at ourselves, or at G-d with the same eyes.

Tshuva has thousands of meanings, but this year the strongest meaning might be the simplest one - to go back to the moments which made us laugh, to return to the moments which made us cry and beg the Ribbono Shel Olam to fill this world with HIS Kavod, and no one else's.

What a world that would be, M'lo Chol Ha'aretz Kvodo...

Shlomo Katz

Reaching for the Stars

By Rabbi Gavriel Hershoff

Rabbi Hershoff has tremendous experience working with teenagers on all levels. In addition to spending four years at Yeshiva Ner Yaakov in Israel, where he specialized in working with young men 18-21 years old, he also is one of the most successful and popular Rebbes at YOLA. He recently completed his educational requirements at UCLA for CADAC (Certification in Drug and Alcohol Counseling) and has already volunteered several hundred hours at Beit Teshuva. Rabbi Hershoff has successfully created new bonds with Aish Tamid students through the “Teen-at-the-Bean” workshops for success program, and provides individual one-on-one counseling opportunities for Aish Tamid Students.

Expectations. Resolutions.

If G-d is so great, then he knows that I’m not changing my whole lifestyle, so who am I trying to fool?

In fact this year, I’ve resolved to be honest with myself and with G-d and not try to fool either one of us. Maybe through this way I’ll even manage to gain a few brownie points for honesty. Yet, it seems that every year I beat my chest and make all kind of commitments on how good I’ll be and after the bagels and lox at breakfast I’m back to normal....

The question it seems is what does Hashem really want from me?

What can I expect of myself? And where do my expectations for my kids come from? Are the expectations of my kids really expectations based on who they are, watching them grow day-by-day, or are they expectations created by the neighbor’s kid or even our own personal failures?

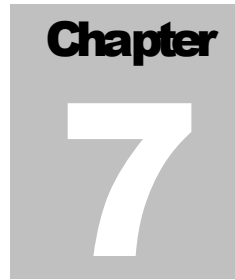
Once a year G-d comes a step closer, to us and says: “*My son, it’s just you and Me at the moment, let’s be real and honest about who you really are and at what level you’re holding. I desire to hear from you, I yearn to see you attempt grasp on the next rung of the ladder you climb. Show me, my son, that you are utilizing the tools I’ve given you to reach your potential and be a good investment in My world.*”

When on Har Hamoriah, Yakov Avinu dreamt of a ladder situated in the ground with the top touching the skies, the possuk describes the scene of angels as they ascended and descended the ladder. Clearly enumerated is the fact that the ladder reached the very heavens and that being a point which we focus on; we may fail to recall that the ladder was firmly grounded in the earth.

A powerful lesson can be derived from here, a person can only reach for the stars if his ladder is stabilized into the ground and each rung of his ladder is strong individually. True, we all wish to race up the ladder, yet we must bear in mind that the faster we rise the easier we’ll fall. This is one of the many tactics of the Yetzer Hara; he urges and incites us to bite off more than we can chew. Thus, causing us to fail, gain nothing and become even more disillusioned with ourselves (and our children). As the Yamim Noraim approach let us take this precious opportunity to do some introspection look *honestly* into ourselves and our families.

May our resolutions and expectations reflect who we are today, and no matter how small the commitment, we should strive for the next rung and be strong and solid.

K’seiva V’Chisima Tova,
Gavriel Hershoff



”Selach Lanu, Mechal Lanu, Kapeir Lanu”

By Rabbi Dr. Asber Nadler, Friend of Aish Tamid

Dr. Nadler, a practicing chiropractor and rabbi, is a friend to Aish Tamid since moving back from Eretz Yisroel a little more than a year ago.

Rabbi Nadler has been one of main chazanim at the weekly Aish Tamid Friday night minyan and has helped redefine what oneg shabbos means for hundreds of mispallelim which his beautiful and moving davening. Rabbi Nadler has also utilized his guitar playing techniques and singing skills by hosting several Aish Tamid Shabbos Mevorchim Melava Malka events in his home where students and friends have gathered to “welcome the new moon...with an inspiring tune!”

We all know the words “*Selach Lanu, Mechal Lanu, Kapeir Lanu*” from *Vidui* on Yom Kippur, and the universally known, sweet melody that goes along with it. There is something very unique about this prayer that some of us may have noticed. In comparison to our daily prayer in *Shemoneh Esrei*, “*Selach lanu,*” in which we ask for *selicha* and *mehila*, on Yom Kippur however, we also ask for *kapara*, by adding an additional prayer: *kapeir lanu*. As indicated by the name, Yom Kippur, this additional prayer doesn’t come to us as a surprise. *Kapara* is the root of the word, Kippur. We therefore ought to put effort into to understanding and internalizing what is meant by *kapara*, as opposed to *selicha* and *mehila*.

Selicha and *mehila* are associated with forgiveness. All year round we ask for forgiveness, and request a continued loving relationship in spite of our offense. *Kapara*, however, is associated with the concept of cleansing. On Yom Kippur, we also ask Hashem to cleanse us of our sins. *Kapeir lanu*. If

this is the definition of atonement, then The Day of Atonement, the name commonly used for Yom Kippur, accurately describes the essence of the day. However, it is not atonement, but cleansing of sin that is truly the essence of Yom Kippur. What do we mean by this? What is the difference between cleansing of sin and atonement?

Cleansing of sin may be understood as a process similar to washing clothes, a process in which we regain purity, internal clarity and awareness, a process that puts us “in touch” with ourselves, our surroundings, and our purpose in life. On Yom Kippur, we don’t just deal with wrongdoings. The *teshuva* “work” we do on Yom Kippur ought to focus primarily on the obscurity in our lives, the things we do with uncertainty, purposeless, carelessness, inattentiveness; it should focus primarily on introducing small resolutions that invoke awareness and sensitivity in the areas of life that need it most.

It is indeed not uncommon that at the closing of Yom Kippur one may sense a sort of clarity or attentiveness, an experience that he or she may never have known or felt beforehand. That very post-Yom Kippur feeling is a big part of what Hashem intended by giving us the gift of Yom Kippur!

There is no holiday presented in the Torah as a time for *simcha*, happiness and joy as much as the one that follows Yom Kippur, the holiday of Sukkos. A good reason for this is that no *simcha* can compare or even comes close to the joy of resolving obscurities in life or to the joy of acquiring inner awareness and sensitivity. Such is the *simcha* that results from the *kapara* process of Yom Kippur.

The Days of Awe are truly awesome. *Kapeir lanu!*
K'siva V'Chasima Tova!
Rabbi Dr. Asher Nadler

Rosh Hashana, the Day Will Judge

By Yossi Manela, Friend of Aish Tamid

Mr. Manela is one of the chazanim at the weekly Aish Tamid Friday night minyan.

In the sefer Michtav Me'Eliyahu, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler reveals to us, in the name of the Zohar, that shortly before a person passes away, he is granted a vision of Hashem in a way that he was never aware of in his life time. When the person dies, it is as a result of this great exposure. As the possuk in Shemos says, "No man can see Me and live", and the Zohar comments "but he does see Me when he dies".

On the other hand we find that a person on his deathbed should make a declaration that should he (G-d forbid), in his death pains, utter any word against Hashem, he annuls any such utterance in advance. How does this fit in with the Zohar discussed above?

The answer is that when a person realizes that his time in this world is coming to an end, there is a flash of insight – a vision of Hashem. But this vision of truth can lead to two very different reactions. If the person is a tzaddik, he will accept the will of Hashem, and deliver his Neshema to his creator. If he is a rosha, the knowledge that he will soon leave this world and all its pleasures, may lead him to vent his anger against Hashem. At a time of danger the yetzer ha-ra attacks and brings confusion into a person's mind, making it harder to make clear decisions.

On Rosh Hashanah we are to understand that we are subject to judgment. The solemnity of the day, the davening, the shofar, are all to arouse us to think seriously about ourselves and to take appropriate action. So if we

allow Rosh Hashanah to effect us and change our entire attitude, it will bring us to a higher *madregah*. If, we don't listen to the call of Rosh Hashanah, our situation can be *chav'sholom* be worse than before. The heart that didn't hear Hashem's call on Rosh Hashanah will be less likely to respond to any such call in the future. In this sense, it is Rosh Hashanah that judges us. May we merit to make this Rosh Hashanah a meaning full one, and to use it as an opportunity to climb to a higher *Madregah*.

K'siva V'Chasima Tova,

Yossi Manela

“4 1/2 Dead: Mechaya Hameisim”

By Michael Fink, Friend of Aish Tamid

The second bracha in our precious *Shemonei Esrei* is called the Bracha of *Gevurah*. The bracha is permeated with the bracha of *techias hameisim*. The question is how is it that the expression “*mechaya hameisim*” is repeated four times?

Furthermore, one can ask why the reviving of the dead is mentioned in the *Shemonei Esrei* at all? What is the significance of having that particular theme in the beginning of our daily prayer? Also, what is the connection between parts of the blessing have references to G-d as a redeemer and a healer of the sick?

Generally, when one looks at this blessing, it seems more of a confusion than a blessing.

The great Rabbi Yaakov Emden (1697-1776) in his *siddur* translates that the four *techias hameisim* - resurrections of the dead, are a reference to the four *chashuvei kemesim* - definitions of the living dead mentioned in the *gemarah* in *nedarim* 61a:

- blind person
- poor person
- a childless person
- *metzora* / spiritual leper

- He goes on further to say that the verse) *'umekayaim amunosoy lesbeni offor'* "You keep your promises to the ones sleeping in dust", a reference to someone asleep, as a sleeping person experiences a 60th of death.

The translation by Rabbi Yakov Emden, is at most a nice coincidence. How does his explanation solve all of our questions that we had above? It does not seem to explain our questions.

One of the most well known songs we sing on Passover is the "*dayenu*". It is known as a chronological account of the exodus of Egypt, a song of praise to G-d.

It states that all the events that transformed us from a people of slavery in Egypt to a free nation worshiping G-d in Israel is what we are being thankful for.

The song at one point goes as far to say that if G-d would have brought us to the base of Mount Sinai and *not* given us the Torah we would have been thankful and content.

The song's zenith ends with a hymn of praise that if G-d would have brought us into the land of Israel and not given us the *Bais Habechira* - House of choice, which is one of the names of the holy temple we would have been eternally grateful.

The '*dayenu*'s last stanza ends with the thankfulness; that if we would have been brought in to Israel and the *Bais Habchira* would *not* have been built, *dayenu*. Why end with *bais habchira*. In the middle of the song we see that if we would come before Mount Sinai and not gotten the torah, *dayenu*. It seems that such a thankfulness is much greater! Even today we have the torah and not the *bais habchira* - Temple. Doesn't that show us that we can live without the *Bais Habchira* / Temple but not without the torah?

In order to shed light on our perplexities, we have to first understand why the holy temple is called the '*Bais Habechira*'/ the 'House of Choice'

You see, the function of the holy temple was fairly simple; back in the day if one sinned, he/she went to the temple mount did the appropriate repentance, sacrificed some offerings, was cleansed of the effects of the sin and then went on their way.

The person had to go through this process. Because once the person started to go on the path of sin it was not possible to return unless one had divine assistance. We know of the concept; a sin causes another a sin and a mitzvah causes another mitzvah. That is the most common pattern of a sinner. The sinner did not suddenly wake up and decided that he doesn't want to keep kosher or shabbos anymore. There were a lot of little sins and misjudgments that led up to the bigger sins. Once the person is used to living with little sins and more serious sins, his judgment is so off that even if he wants to stop he can't. He has trained himself to sin until now; those are his habits and have become part of him. His muscle to repent and do the right thing has atrophied to the point that to lift himself and drink from the cup of salvation can only be done with divine assistance.

Hence the expression *Bais Habechira* / House of Choice.

The reference to the temple is not *mokom hamikdash* or, *bais hamikdash*. It is *bais habchira*, the G-dly gift of freedom of choice, can only be exercised when one has little to no spiritual and mental baggage. He has to be able to use his mind and move it about unencumbered by sin in order to make the right decisions and grow spiritually to serve his G-d and fellow man.

Once a person visits the *Bais Habchira* and rids himself of sin, the *aveira goreres aveira* symptoms will fall away and through the service, *avodah belev* and witnessing the service that the *levi* and *coben* are performing, he will get his true *bechira* / freedom of choice back.

If you encounter a genii and he offers you a wish what would it be?

Obviously a smart person would ask for wisdom, because ultimately the decisions following it are based on wisdom and most likely the right choices.

Here too we want to be mentally completely alert once we approach G-d in the *Shmonei Esre*.

In the first bracha we acknowledge the fact that Hashem is our Lord. And we know that because our parents down to the Abraham our forefather told us so. For that we do not really need wisdom. It is a statement of fact, a historical fact that connects us to G-d. Anyone can state such a fact - even a sinner.

In the second blessing we acknowledge the fact that without closeness our mental capacity will be skewed.

If we are 'half dead', *chashuv kemes*, meaning we are so preoccupied and distracted because of our physical situation is either very good or lacking, our having or not money, or children, Children, also having them or lack thereof. Vision, spiritual or physical. What is the blind man's reference point? His grasp of reality might as well be fiction, for he can only imagine it. *Metzora*, the leper is someone who is cut off from the community. Someone with sensory deprivation cannot function as a normal human being. We know that if someone is in solitary confinement his psyche is affected within 48 hours.

Rabbi Yakov Emden is pointing out in the most beautiful way that we better acknowledge that it is G-d that gives us true freedom of choice, it is He that makes sure that we are not walking around half dead, our judgment clouded with sin. The mental state of a *chashuv kemes*, a barren or a blind person is one of preoccupation, not reflecting reality. It is only with divine assistance that we can have a clear approach to G-d to begin with.

The third blessing is a very concise and short exclamation of *ata kadosh* - He is the Holy One. Because once we have clarity of mind that is the first realization. With a clear mind the exclamation of pointing to G-d and proclaiming that He is the Holy One is a natural reflex. That is why the blessing is short; it does not have to go into long windedness. It is not a logical formula, but an instinctive reflex based on a lucid mind.

Remember, *Chazal* say that the first three blessings in the *Shmoneh Esreh* are statements and not requests. If one has not concentrated on the meaning of them he has to return to the beginning and repeat it with full concentration!

The fourth bracha, which is the first *bakasha* / request, doesn't by accident deal with the issue of *Daa s*-knowledge. Again, if we do not have the godliness as our center it is futile to ask for personal needs. If those *bakashos* / requests are not centered on wisdom, clarity of mind and closeness to G-d, how do we know if we are asking for what is right for us?

First we have to have the knowledge that being close to G-d gives us the *chochmah* / wisdom to ask for the right things. Not only does that help us in our daily prayer, it clarifies what our position is. We are *benei bechira* and know what to ask for. We will receive it too in no time, for that is what G-d wants for us. To give us what is right for us.

The beauty of this is that we are actually going to get what we ask for. Prayer is not spiritual lottery games that has us asking for stuff and let's see what sticks!

May G-d grant us the wisdom to know what to ask for during the coming holy days.

K'siva V'Chasima Tova,

Michael Fink

OF SIDDURIM AND STOPWATCHES

By Moshe Rubin, Friend of Aish Tamid

Moshe originally met Rabbi Leibovic during his 2nd year of learning in Eretz Yisroel and has maintained a strong connection for the last 8+ years. Moshe has learned in various yeshivos including Neveh Zion, Bais Yisroel, and Ner Israel. He is a Graduate of Fordham University School of Law and is awaiting Bar results.

So here I am again. It is Elul. The build up to the holiest days of the year. Davening will be quite an experience. I will begin flipping pages to see just how long is left. I am actually trying not to talk until the end of the last shofar blast. Was 'davening' this long last year? I wonder who will be at tashlich.

What is the significance of the High Holidays? What about this significance requires preparation? Why should I care?

While any one of these questions could span numerous articles and spur countless discussions, this article will provide at least a platform serve as a basis for meaningful thought and hopefully allow the reader to transform a potentially tedious ritual into an engaging process.

Form vs. Substance

In the introduction to the classic *mussar* work Messilas Yeshtarim, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (better known to us by his initials as 'the Ramchal') refers to people of his generation who went to the utmost extreme to act in a devout way, engaging in such self-effacing behavior as