



**BNEI AKIVA**  
OF THE UNITED STATES & CANADA

# CHODESH TISHREI

▪ with Bnei Akiva ▪

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# LEARNING SHEET

???



**CHODESH TISHREI**  
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# SEDER HASIMANIM

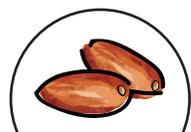
For Interesting recipes: [https://israelforever.org/israel/cooking/simanim\\_recipes/](https://israelforever.org/israel/cooking/simanim_recipes/)

The first siman that we will take is either a date or pomegranate, as they are from shivat haminim. Before we recite all the simanim, we will make a Borei Pri Ha'Etz on the date/pomegranate and take a bite, following which we recite the Yehi Ratzon and continue eating.

We do not recite Borei Pri HaAdama, as those foods were covered by Hamotzi.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.



**תמרים**  
DATES

**תם - finish, end**

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שיתמו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that there come an end to our enemies, haters and those who wish evil upon us.



**רוביא-לוביא**  
SMALL BEANS

**לב - heart, רב - many**

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שירבו זכיותינו ויתלבבנו

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that our merits shall increase and that You hearten us.



**כרתי**  
LEEK

**כרת - to cut down**

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שיכרתו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that our enemies, haters, and those who wish evil upon us shall be cut down.



**סלקא**  
BEETS

**סלק - to depart**

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שיתמו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that there come an end to our enemies, haters and those who wish evil upon us.



**קרא**  
GOURD

**קרא - to announce, קרע - to rip apart**

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתקרע רוע גזר דינינו, ויקראו לפניך זכיותינו

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that the evil of our verdicts be ripped, and that our merits be announced before you.



**רמון**  
POMEGRANATE

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה מלאים מצות כרמון

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate [is filled with seeds].



**תפוח בדבש**  
APPLES & HONEY

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה כדבש

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that You renew for us a year good and sweet like honey.



**ראש**  
FISH/RAM'S HEAD

(or the head of another kosher animal or fish)

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב

לדגים: יהי רצון...שנפרה ונרבה כדגים  
May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be a head and not a tail.

For fish: be fruitful and multiply like fish



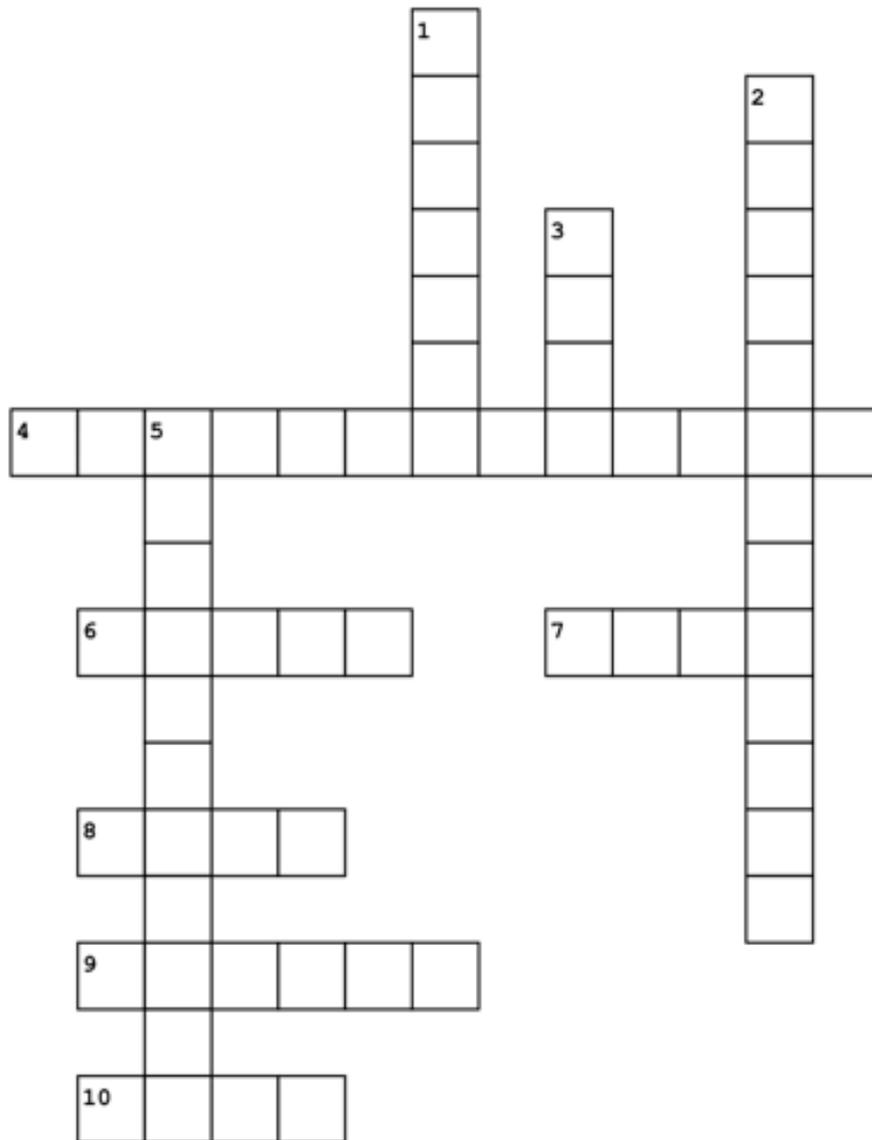
**גזר**  
CARROTS

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתגזור עלינו גזירות טובות

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that You decree upon us favorable judgements



# ROSH HASHANA SIMANIM



## Across

4. Sweet New Year
6. Our Enemies Shall be Removed
7. We Should Be Like the Head and Not the Tail
8. Our Enemies Destroyed
9. We Shall Have a Favorable Judgement
10. Our Enemies Should Be Crushed

## Down

1. Our Decree Should Be Torn
2. Our Merits Should Multiply
3. We Should Multiply Like Fish
5. We Should Have Many Merits



# CONVERSATION STARTERS

Rosh Hashana is the perfect time to reflect on the previous year; to think about how to grow, what mistakes we made, etc, yet also think about the year to come as well. What goals will you set for yourself? What would you like to accomplish? Print and cut out these conversation starters and discuss them around the Chag table, or perhaps have everyone pick one and that person needs to answer. In either case, you can certainly look forward to meaningful discussions.

One word to describe your year	Best thing you did for someone else this year	Most embarrassing moment of the year	Time you laughed the hardest this year	Something you learned to do that you never did before
Most noteworthy event	Biggest lesson learned	Favorite place visited this year	Most memorable moment of the year	Best advice you received this year
An achievement you are proud of this year	A compliment you received this year	Who you are most thankful for this year	What do I want to celebrate about last year? What am I grateful for?	What habits or feelings do I want to leave behind in last year?
What successes and wins did I have last year? What am I proud of from last year?	What were the two biggest breakthroughs or learnings I had?	What are the new ways I'm willing to think and be in this new year?	What inspiring word or words do I feel motivated by as I start a new year?	What habits and practical rules-to-live-by will I remind myself of daily or weekly this year?
	What is the best guiding question I want to ask myself all year ahead?	What dreams and initiatives do I invite in to have full play in this year ahead?	What specific accomplishments do I want to do by the end of 5781?	



# RECOMMENDED TUNES FOR PIYUTIM

- אתה הוא אלוקינו - Lemaancha
- ה' מלך ה' מלך ה' ימלוך - shabbos is coming, we're so happy (start from Adirei Ayuma)
- לאל עורך דין - Beshem Hashem (start from Lvochein Levavot)
- מלך עליון - Ani Maamin (Start with first words after 'Melech Elyon')/ Yedid Nefesh  
(both tunes)
- ה' מלך...כל שנאני שחק - Yona Matza (Start from Shinanei Shachak)/ Yachad Yachad
- ונתנה תוקף - Tfila L'Ani/Hamalach Hagoel (Start from UvaShofar Gadol Yitaka)
- וכל מאמינים - Tov Lehodot (fast tune) / Asher Bara (fast)
- ויאתיו כל - Lshana Haba'a
- היום הרת עולם - Avinu Malkeinu

Yom Kippur:

- אמרו לאלוקים/מעשה אלוקינו - David Melech/Yibaneh



# PIYUTIM FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

## ונתנה תוקף Unetaneh Tokef

Unetaneh Tokef is a powerful tefilla, taking its place in the heart of tefilla, leading right up to kedusha in Musaf of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. This piyut sets the tone for pleading for mercy and receiving our judgement, but also teaches us a central idea that is important to remember during these days. Hashem prefers that we do tshuva, over receiving a bad decree.

To illustrate this idea, please read the following 3 stories:



**Rabbi Yisrael Salant and the shoemaker** (Rabbi Dov Katz, The Musar Movement):

Late one night, Rabbi Israel Salanter walked past the home of an old shoemaker. The rabbi noticed that, despite the late hour, the man was still working by the light of a dying candle. “Why are you still working?” asked the rabbi. “It is very late and soon that candle will go out.” The shoemaker replied: “As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible to work and to make repairs.” Rabbi Salanter spent that entire night excitedly pacing his room and repeating to himself: “As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible

to work and to make repairs.”

Points to Ponder:

- How do you think Rabbi Yisrael Salant understood the shoemakers reply?
- Why do you think he was so excited about it?

### **The Peddler and the Rebbe**

There was once a peddler who would go town to town in search of things to fix. In his cart were tools of all sorts, screws, nails, spare parts; everything that one could imagine would be needed for fixing. Town to town, village to village he would push his cart, seeking some items he could fix to make a little money for himself to live off of. People would bring him all sorts of things: chairs, beds, tables, gardening tools, jewelry, shoes, saddles, kitchen utensils, anything that people would have in their homes.

One day in Elul, he came to a village and he couldn't find anything that needed to be fixed. He came to the main square, walked around the streets, and asked people individually, but nobody had anything that they wanted repaired. Desperate to earn some money, he tried offering discounts, and even begging people to give him



something to fix for a symbolic price, even if they didn't need the repair, but to no avail.

On his way out towards the next village, he passed by the Rebbe's house. The Rebbe looked out the window at the peddler and greeted him with a "Shalom Aleichem!" The peddler, delighted to see the Rebbe, responded in kind, and asked how he was doing, and if the Rebbe had anything that needed to be fixed. The Rebbe responded with a kind smile, and thanked him for asking. "No, I don't have anything that needs to be fixed. Be well, safe journeys."

The peddler, disappointed, turned to walk away, and continued on the road out of the village. As he neared the edge, he heard his name being called from a distance. When he turned around, he saw the Rebbe running after him. "What is it Rebbe? You have something that needs to be fixed?". The Rebbe caught his breath, gave the peddler a big hug and thanked the peddler profusely, and started to cry. The confused peddler, completely bewildered by what was happening asked the Rebbe what he did that caused the Rebbe to cry and thank him. The Rebbe said, "When you asked me if I had anything to fix, I first said no. But you left I realized I have so many things to fix." "So where are they?" asked the still confused peddler. The Rebbe replied, "No, not physical things. Midot, attitudes, things that I have done. You reminded me that with Rosh Hashana coming up, it is time to see what is broken inside of me, and start fixing it. So thank you." The Rebbe gave the peddler another big hug and blessed the peddler that he should merit to fix a lot of things in the near future. Both physical items, and midot.

### **Nobody needs fixes anymore**

The shadows of the concrete sidewalk posts were creeping away from the storefront as the bright sun rose over the nearby buildings across Yafo Street. An elderly man walks up to the store on this bright but chilly Yerushalaim morning. As he turns the key to open up the shutter, the street walks by and they exchange good morning greetings. For years now they have met every morning as they both start their work days.

Y - Boker tov Moti! Ma Shlomcha?

M - Baruch Hashem Hakol Bseder! Ma shlomcha Yaakov?

Y - Baruch Hashem Toda! How is your business going Moti? Everything ok?

M - So-so. I still have a few loyal customers, but nowadays people don't really want things fixed.

Y - Strange. I remember back in the day you wouldn't throw something out until it was broken 15 times. Did my nephew stop by? I heard his toaster broke so I suggested he take it to you.

M - Yeah, he stopped by. I gave him a quote but he said he preferred to get a new



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one. Said it was just a little bit more to pay for a new one at the store down the street. I tried to tell him that it will just break again in a year, but he didn't seem to mind. I guess why should you bother fixing something if you could always just buy a new one....

Y - Yeah, well, same with the municipality. If you had any idea how much new stuff they buy to replace things that could be fixed easily...

M - Maybe if they wouldn't be so quick to just replace everything they would take better care of their property in the first place and not need to replace as often. Have a great day Yaakov. Great to see you again.

Y - You too. Great day. See you tomorrow

M - I hope so...

### Points to ponder:

#### The Peddler and the Rebbe:

- How often do we usually think first of our physical possessions, instead of our spiritual or emotional? If you were to be asked, "do you have anything that needs to be fixed" - would you also assume first it was talking about physical possessions? What would you want to be fixed?
- How do we react when others remind us to correct our behaviors? Are we usually receptive?

#### Nobody needs Fixes anymore:

- Do our lives reflect that of Yaakov's nephew? Are we used to just throwing things away for convenience? Do we believe that fixing things is a value?
- How does this story reflect our relationship with Hashem?
- What does Hashem want from us?

We live in a reality today where almost everything is easily replaceable. If our phone is getting slow we can get an upgrade; appliance does not work - we get a new one instead of fixing; we eat on disposable eating-ware because we can just toss it out afterwards and no need to wash.

It's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just what it is.

However, we have a special relationship with Hashem, which gets renewed each year on these very days. This relationship cannot be replaced. It needs to be fixed and fixed until it has reached its full potential.

The Tfilla 'Unetaneh Tokef' starts out with a very harsh and serious tone. Hashem gives everyone their "expiration date" - looks through each and every one of us, counts us, remembers everything we've done, judges us. Who by fire, who before their time, etc.



But then the tfilla turns to comfort us. Just know, that you are only human. And Hashem knows you're human. And while you tremble in awe and fear of the judgment, realize that Hashem wants you to do Tshuva. Hashem does not desire your death, no matter how many bad things you have done, rather that you will return from your ways, and fix yourself.

Hashem does not throw us out like disposables.

Hashem doesn't chose a new nation because we no longer "work"

Hashem sticks to us, repairs us, and allows us to return.



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## וכל מאמינים V'chol Maaminim

This piyut lists the various different attributes of Hashem that we believe he has: all-powerful, righteous judge, eternal, does good to all, etc. The main idea that this piyut communicates is mentioned in the bottom line, right before the Aron would be closed in the Beit Knesset, "On that day, Hashem will be one, and His name will be one." Meaning, that everyone will recognize that everything in this world is all part of one G-d, and that everything stems forth from Hashem.

On a day-to-day basis, we tend to take a lot of things for granted, and this piyut comes to remind us how much Hashem does for us every single minute of every single day. In order to further understand this message, included below is a poem written by poet Walt Whitman, who gives us a great perspective on daily miracles in life that are at many times missed.

Miracles

Walt Whitman - 1819-1892

Why, who makes much of a miracle?  
As to me I know of nothing else but  
miracles,  
Whether I walk the streets of Man-  
hattan,  
Or dart my sight over the roofs of  
houses toward the sky,  
Or wade with naked feet along the  
beach just in the edge of the water,  
Or stand under trees in the woods,  
Or talk by day with any one I love,  
or sleep in the bed at night with any  
one I love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me  
riding in the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around  
the hive of a summer forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so quiet and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.



"Everything is a miracle. It is a miracle that one does not dissolve in one's bath like a lump of sugar."

- Pablo Picasso



To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.  
To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the  
ships with men in them,  
What stranger miracles are there?

Points to ponder:

- What other miracles would you include that you usually don't notice?
- What do you think the poet means by the words 'stranger miracles' in the last line?



## הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עוֹלָם On this day

On this day, the world came into being; On this day, He makes all stand in judgment— all the creatures of the worlds— whether as children, or as servants; if as children, have compassion on us as a father has compassion on his children! If as servants, our eyes are fixed on You until You favor us, and bring forth our judgment as the light, Revered and Holy One!

This prayer, said following the Shofar blasts during Musaf discusses the idea of how Hashem judges us - as a master to slaves or a father to sons. Over the course of our tefilla, and specifically on yamim noraim, there are many ways how we describe our relationship with Hashem. How should we approach Hashem? Beg for mercy? Seek comfort? Submit ourselves before him? Each relationship dictates a different way we turn to Hashem. Look at the following pictures, and think about how we should be approaching Hashem during these times:

### Relationships with Hashem:



Servant to a master



Our Father



Awesome King



Creator



Shepherd



Mighty G-d



Lover/partner

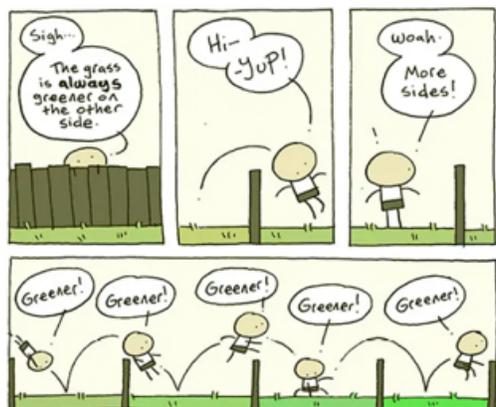
Points to ponder:

- What would you ask Hashem for as each one of these? How would you ask?
- Why do you think we have so many different types of relationships with Hashem?
- What do you think it means about our identity?

## וַיָּאֵתוּ כָל And all shall come to serve You

and bless Your glorious Name, and throughout the isles they shall declare Your righteousness. And peoples will seek You, who knew You not before; and they will praise You, those who live in every part of the earth, and they will say, always, "Magnified be Hashem. And they will offer to You their sacrifices, and they will abandon their idols, and they will be humiliated with their graven images, and they will turn with unanimous accord to worship You...."

This piyut illustrates for us what to expect in the end of days; everyone in the world will discard their previous gods and idols, and all will rush to serve Hashem, and the entire world itself, even the mountains and the trees will praise Hashem. But how will this come about? The reality which this piyut describes is one where it is clear that Hashem is the one and only true G-d. People will think to themselves how silly it was that they could have followed another god. Why did this happen? Let's think.

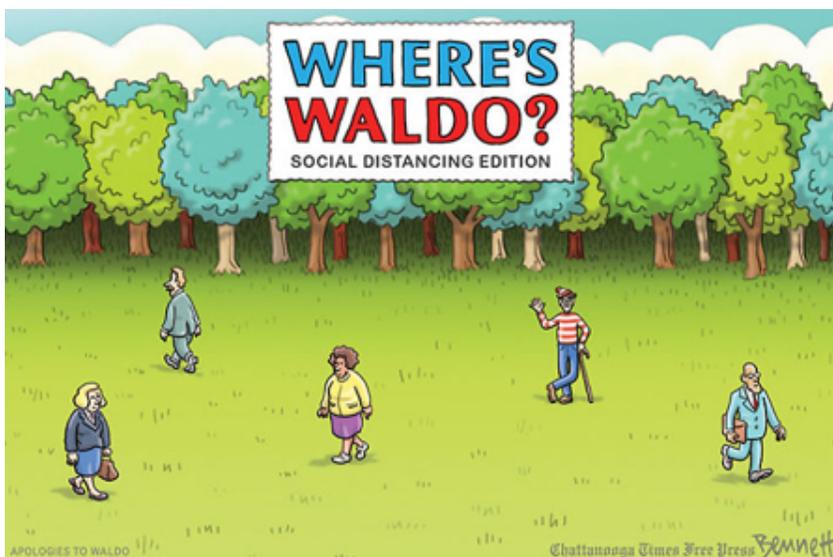


The grass appears to be greener on the other side. That's always what people thought about gods. "That guy's tree grow strong and fruitful. His god must be working, I'll do the same as him!" "That nation won the war. Their gods must be stronger than ours!"

We believe that Hashem is a just G-d, and therefore gives us good and blessings, but also harsh judgements, if necessary. It is sometimes tempting to look at someone else who doesn't follow the

Mitzvot and say - That guy has things pretty good. But it's not the truth. It's an illusion, just like the grass always being greener on the other side.

In this piyut, we are praying for the clarity, that everyone will recognize that Hashem is the one G-d - that the world's search for truth in Hashem will be apparent as finding waldo without the rest of the distractions on the page.



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In order to clarify this point further, let's do an experiment. Look at these 6 pictures below, and determine who you think would be the best leader, based solely on the picture.



Most likely you would have chosen number 5 (although it's possible that you chose something else.) How do I know? Because number 5 gives the best appearance of a leader, compared to the others, therefore making us believe that she would be most fit. Sometimes it may seem like other gods may give off the impression of being a true god, making it at times difficult to see the truth.

What we are hoping for in this prayer, is that it will be clear for everyone who the real G-d is, and nobody would mistake anything else for being a god.



# DAF LIMMUD: TSHUVA

Even though Tshuva is a mitzva that is required and relevant all year round, during the days leading up to Yom Kippur it is especially important to perform this mitzvah. The Rambam in Mishna Torah notes that Yom Kippur is the “deadline” for Tshuva and Mechila, and therefore we need to do whatever we can to make sure that we repent for our sins.

How exactly do we do that?

רמב"ם משנה תורה - הלכות תשובה ב'ב'

What is repentance? The sinner shall cease sinning, and remove sin from his thoughts, and wholeheartedly conclude not to revert back to it, even as it is said: “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Is. 55.7); so, too, shall he be remorseful on what was past, even as it is said: “Surely after that I was turned, I repented” (Jer. 31. 19). In addition thereto he should take to witness Him Who knoweth all secrets that forever he will not turn to repeat that sin again, according to what it is said: “Say unto Him... neither will we call any more the work of our hands our gods” (Hos. 14.3-4). It is, moreover, essential that his confession shall be by spoken words of his lips, and all that which he concluded in his heart shall be formed in speech.

ומה היא התשובה. הוא שיעזב החטא ויטהר את לבו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמר בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד שנקאמר (ישעיה נה ז) “יעזב רשע דרכו” וגו'. וכן יתנחם על שעבר שנקאמר (ירמיה לא יט) “כי אחרי שובי נחמתי”. ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם שנקאמר (הושע יד ד) “ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידינו” וגו'. וצריך להתודות בשפתינו ולומר ענינות אלו שגמר בלבו:

What are the stages of Tshuva that the Rambam lists?

In order to apply what we just learned about Tshuva, let’s look at the following story related in Masechet Taanit, and see if the Tshuva process is successfully performed in the story.

תענית כ"א א'ב'

The Sages further taught in praise of the reed: A person should always be soft like a reed, and he should not be stiff like a cedar. An incident occurred in which Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, came from Migdal Gedor, from his rabbi’s house, and he was riding on a donkey and strolling on the bank of the river. And he was very happy, and his head was swollen with pride because he had studied much Torah.

20b

He happened upon an exceedingly ugly person, who said to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, but Rabbi Elazar did not return his greeting. Instead, Rabbi Elazar said to him: Worthless [reika] person, how ugly is that man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you? The man said to him: I do not know, but you should go and say to the Craftsman Who made me: How ugly is the vessel you made. When Rabbi Elazar realized that he had sinned

תנו רבנן לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז מעשה שבא רבי אלעזר (בן ר"י) שמעון ממגדל גדור מבית רבו והיה רכוב על החמור ומטייל על שפת נהר ושמח שמחה גדולה והיתה דעתו גסה עליו מפני שלמד תורה הרבה

כ' ב'

נזדמן לו אדם אחד שהיה מכוער ביותר אמר לו שלום עליך רבי ולא החזיר לו אמר לו ריקה כמה מכוער אותו האיש שמא כל בני עירך מכוערין כמותך אמר לו איני יודע אלא לך ואמור לאומן שעשאני



and insulted this man merely on account of his appearance, he descended from his donkey and prostrated himself before him, and he said to the man: I have sinned against you; forgive me. The man said to him: I will not forgive you go until you go to the Craftsman Who made me and say: How ugly is the vessel you made. He walked behind the man, trying to appease him, until they reached Rabbi Elazar's city. The people of his city came out to greet him, saying to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, my master. The man said to them: Who are you calling my rabbi, my master? They said to him: To this man, who is walking behind you. He said to them: If this man is a rabbi, may there not be many like him among the Jewish people. They asked him: For what reason do you say this? He said to them: He did such and such to me. They said to him: Even so, forgive him, as he is a great Torah scholar. He said to them: For your sakes I forgive him, provided that he accepts upon himself not to become accustomed to behave like this. Immediately, Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, entered the study hall and taught: A person should always be soft like a reed and he should not be stiff like a cedar

כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית כיון שידע בעצמו שחטא ירד מן החמור ונשתטח לפניו ואמר לו נענית לך מחול לי אמר לו איני מוחל לך עד שתלך לאומן שעשאני ואמור לו כמה מכוער כלי זה שעשית היה מטייל אחריו עד שהגיע לעירו יצאו בני עירו לקראתו והיו אומרים לו שלום עליך רבי רבי מורי מורי אמר להם למי אתם קורין רבי רבי אמרו לו לזה שמטייל אחרך אמר להם אם זה רבי אל ירבו כמותו בישראל אמרו לו מפני מה אמר להם כך וכך עשה לי אמרו לו אעפ"כ מחול לו שאדם גדול בתורה הוא אמר להם בשבילכם הריני מוחל לו ובלבד שלא יהא רגיל לעשות כן מיד נכנס רבי אלעזר בן רבי שמעון ודרש לעולם יהא אדם רך כקנה ואל יהא קשה כארז

How many of the stages of Tshuva were you able to find in this story?  
Do you think his Tshuva was ultimately accepted?

The first source that we learned from Rambam's Mishna Torah indicated the basic steps that we need to take in order to do tshuva. If, in fact, we do those steps sincerely then Yom Kippur will atone for our sins, and we will be forgiven. However, if we do a sin to our fellow, then there is another parameter that we need to include in our process, taught to us by the Mishna:

משנה יומא ח'; ט'

For transgressions between man and God Yom HaKippurim effects atonement, but for transgressions between man and his fellow Yom HaKippurim does not effect atonement, until he has pacified his fellow.

עֲבֹרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם, יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר. עֲבֹרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחֵבֵרוֹ, אִין יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר, עַד שְׂיַרְצֶה אֶת חֵבֵרוֹ.

Do you think R' Elazar from the previous story had also met this parameter?

We do see that R' Elazar sincerely tries to do Tshuva, and get the "ugly man" to forgive him for the horrible sin that he had done. But was the "ugly man" justified in not accepting his apology, or for ultimately forgiving him only on condition?



Up until now, we had only discussed the requirements of the transgressor. Do you think there are also requirements of the person who the sin was committed against?

The Rambam adds another important element in his Hilchot Tshuva, this time regarding the one who was sinned against, which goes along perfectly with the message learned from our previous story.

רמב"ם משנה תורה - הלכות תשובה ב:י

It is forbidden for man to be ill-natured and unforgiving, for he must be easily appeased but unwidely to wrath; and when a sinner implores him for pardon, he should grant him pardon wholeheartedly and soulfully. Even if one persecuted him and sinned against him exceedingly he should not be vengeful and grudge-bearing

אָסוּר לְאָדָם לִהְיוֹת אַכְזָרִי וְלֹא יִתְפַּיֵּס  
אֲלֵא יְהֵא נוֹחַ לְרִצּוֹת וְקִשָּׁה לְכַעַס וּבִשְׂעָה  
שְׂמֵבִקֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ הַחוּטָא לְמַחֵל מוֹחֵל בְּלֵב  
שָׁלֵם וּבְנִפְשׁ חֲפִצָּה. וְאַפְלוּ הֵצֵר לוֹ וְחִטָּא  
לוֹ הִרְבֵּה לֹא יִקָּם וְלֹא יִטָּר

Sometimes, it may be harder to forgive than it is to apologize. That's why the Gemara and the Rambam come to teach us this lesson. As important as it is to ask for forgiveness, we need to reciprocate as well. It would be absurd to ask Hashem or our fellow for forgiveness, but at the same time refuse it for others.

Can you think of anything that you may have happened this past year that could apply to these important rules of Tshuva?



# A STORY FOR YOM KIPPUR

Rabbi Moshe Segal (a memoir): The Dangerous Shofar Blow

In those years, the area in front of the Kotel did not look as it does today. Only a narrow alley separated the Kotel and the Arab houses on its other side. The British Government forbade us to place an Ark, tables or benches in the alley; even a small stool could not be brought to the Kotel. The British also instituted the following ordinances, designed to humble the Jews at the holiest place of their faith: it is forbidden to pray out loud, lest one upset the Arab residents; it is forbidden to read from the Torah (those praying at the Kotel had to go to one of the synagogues in the Jewish quarter to conduct the Torah reading); it is forbidden to sound the shofar on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The British Government placed policemen at the Kotel to enforce these rules.



Kotel, 1928

On Yom Kippur of that year [1930] I was praying at the Kotel. During the brief intermission between the musaf and minchah prayers, I overheard people whispering to each other: “Where will we go to hear the shofar? It’ll be impossible to blow here. There are as many policemen as people praying...” The Police Commander himself was there, to make sure that the Jews will not, G-d forbid, sound the single blast that closes the fast.

I listened to these whisperings, and thought to myself: Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar that accompanies our proclamation of the sovereignty of G-d? Can we possibly forgo the sounding of the shofar, which symbolizes the redemption of Israel? True, the sounding of the shofar at the close of Yom Kippur is only a custom, but “A Jewish custom is Torah”! I approached Rabbi Yitzchak Horenstein, who served as the Rabbi of our “congregation,” and said to him: “Give me a shofar.”

“What for?”

“I’ll blow.”

“What are you talking about? Don’t you see the police?”

“I’ll blow.”



(Yakov Aharoni, Beiter activist and Etzel fighter, with the shofar he was sent with to blow at the Kotel, Motzei Yom Kippur, 1938)



The Rabbi abruptly turned away from me, but not before he cast a glance at the prayer stand at the left end of the alley. I understood: the shofar was in the stand. When the hour of the blowing approached, I walked over to the stand and leaned against it.

I opened the drawer and slipped the shofar into my shirt. I had the shofar, but what if they saw me before I had a chance to blow it? I was still unmarried at the time, and following the Ashkenazic custom, did not wear a tallit. I turned to person praying at my side, and asked him for his tallit. My request must have seemed strange to him, but the Jews are a kind people, especially at the holiest moments of the holiest day, and he handed me his tallit without a word.

I wrapped myself in the tallit. At that moment, I felt that I had created my own private domain. All around me, a foreign government prevails, ruling over the people of Israel even on their holiest day and at their holiest place, and we are not free to serve our G-d; but under this tallit is another domain. Here I am under no dominion save that of my Father in Heaven; here I shall do as He commands me, and no force on earth will stop me.

When the closing verses of the neillah prayer — “Hear O Israel,” “Blessed be the name” and “The L-rd is G-d” — were proclaimed, I took the shofar and blew a long, resounding blast. Everything happened very quickly. Many hands grabbed me. I removed the tallit from over my head, and before me stood the Police Commander, who ordered my arrest.

I was taken to the kishla, the prison in the Old City, and an Arab policeman was appointed to watch over me. Many hours passed; I was given no food or water to break my fast. At midnight, the policeman received an order to release me, and he let me out without a word.

I then learned that when the chief rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, heard of my arrest, he immediately contacted the secretary of High Commissioner of Palestine, and asked that I be released. When his request was refused, he stated that he would not break his fast until I was freed. The High Commissioner resisted for many hours, but finally, out of respect for the Rabbi, he had no choice but to set me free.

For the next eighteen years, until the Arab conquest of the Old City in 1948, the shofar was sounded at the Kotel every Yom Kippur. The British well understood the significance of this blast; they knew that it will ultimately demolish their reign over our land as the walls of Jericho crumbled before the shofar of Joshua, and they did everything in their power to prevent it. But every Yom Kippur, the shofar was sounded by men who know they would be arrested for their part in staking our claim on the holiest of our possessions.

