

Rosh Hashana
Yom Kippur
Sukkot
Companion Booklet

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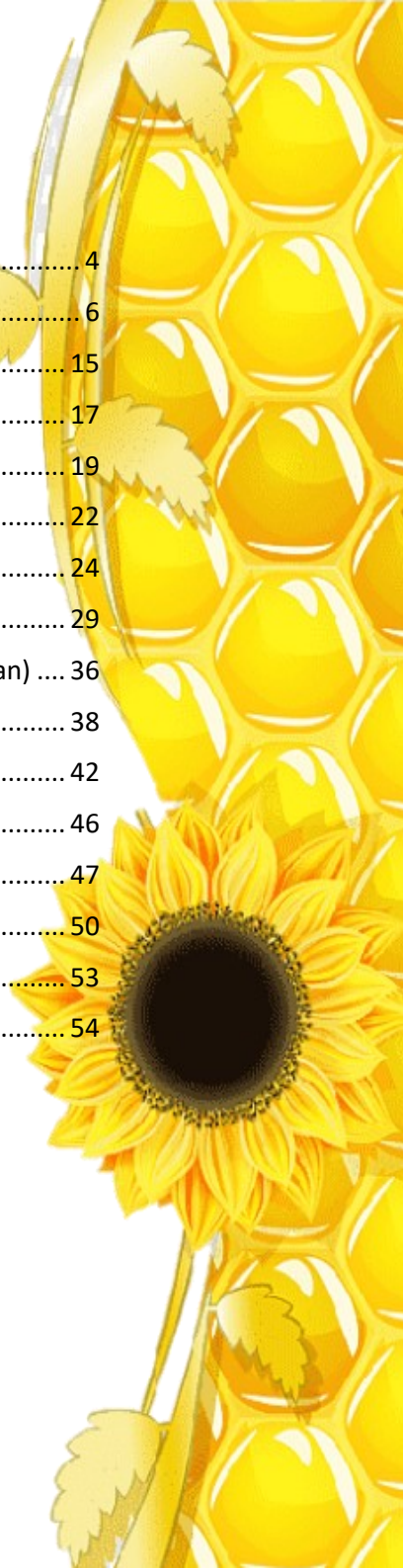




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Introduction

Rabbi Aaron Stroh, Leeds Kollel

Just a few months ago, we sent out a booklet for Shavuot, and the feedback we received was incredibly encouraging. Many people requested that we produce further booklets, and we are now delighted to present you with this booklet which covers many topics to do with the Yomim Tovim.

Who would've imagined last Rosh Hashanah what lay in store for mankind? How much has changed in the world over the past year? As we become accustomed to these changes, who even knows how long we will need to go on like this for?

Many have suggested that the year 2020 should be ignored as far as statistics go. Whether sizing up the economy, or defining school grades, we should merely record for the year 2019 followed by 2021. Let's just pretend that statistically, 2020 didn't even exist.

Being Jewish, we know otherwise. As we sat in shul last Rosh Hashanah, listening to the sound of the Shofar, and on Yom Kippur during the Neilah service, somewhere deep down we knew that our actions would impact the year to come. We drew the blueprint for the following year, starting on Rosh Hashanah and completing it on Yom Kippur, and finally submitting it. All we needed to do then was to wait. Wait to see the design that we had created.

Yes, the year progressed into something we could never have expected. The challenges and hardships were of the like that we've not seen before. Many lost loved ones, and everybody has been affected in some way. People await the day that the virus will become history, when they can return to normal life and move on.

Judaism teaches us otherwise. When faced with a challenge, we utilise the challenge. We grow from it, and become stronger in our commitments. If this is what the Al-mighty sent our way, then we will do our very best to use this opportunity for the good.

As we enter the new Jewish year, let us look back and pat ourselves on the back for rising to the challenge. Then let's dive deep into the high holy days and prepare a new blueprint for the year to come. The better we perform over the next few weeks, the brighter the

light will be as we emerge from the darkness. Let's utilise our opportunity well, so that we will have only good things to look forward to.

This booklet covers an array of topics connected to Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. We would like to thank all the writers who took the time out of their hectic schedules to send us these fantastic articles. We are sure they will be found to be uplifting and helpful to many readers. Our appreciation also goes to Mrs Rivky Salomon, for putting this booklet together in such a wonderful format.

Wishing you a happy and sweet new year!

The Leeds Kollel



The ABC of Rosh Hashanah

Rabbi Kupperman, Etz Chaim

This short and handy guide explains how to observe Rosh Hashanah and celebrate it in a spiritual and meaningful way.

The morning before Rosh Hashanah, Friday 18 September

"Hatarat Nedarim"- Annulment of Vows.

Declaration of the annulment of forgotten vows takes place at the end of the morning service on Friday 18th September. One may have said during the year something like "I will never again..." without meaning it, but in Torah terms, it is considered a legal vow, and not keeping it is a very serious offence. In order to approach Rosh Hashanah free from the sin of unfulfilled vows, one has to make a public declaration of annulment of any forgotten vows on the day before.

Consult with your rabbi how to do the Annulment of Vows, if due to the present situation you are not attending your synagogue.

Shabbat & the 1st night of Rosh Hashanah Friday eve 18 September

As the 1st day of Rosh Hashanah falls this year on Shabbat, one has to remember that the laws of Shabbat are different from the laws of a regular Yom Tov in more than one way. This guide will take you through these differences point by point.

Candles lighting

The Shabbat/ Rosh Hashanah candles should be lit no later than 6.56 pm (Leeds).

Before lighting the candles, you have to prepare a fire from which you will be lighting the candles for the second night of Rosh Hashanah. Although the laws of Festivals are more lenient than the laws of Shabbat, nevertheless it is forbidden on Yom Tov to create a

flame by rubbing a match against the box or using a lighter. One has to have a pre-existing flame such as a *yahrzeit candle* **lit before the first day of the Festival** from which they then can light a match, and use this match to light the candles for the 2nd day of Rosh Hashanah; this is permitted because this way you don't create new fire, but rather extend existing fire to other places.

The Blessings for lighting the candles should be recited **after** lighting the candles as on a regular Shabbat.

Two blessings are recited when lighting Shabbat & Rosh Hashanah candles; 1. *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Shabbat ve'Yom Tov.*- Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to light the lights of Shabbat and Yom Tov

2. *Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-haynu melech Ha-olam, she'he'che'yanu v'kee'manu v'hee'gee'anu la'zman ha'zeh* - Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, *King of the universe*, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Food preparation

As the first night and day of Rosh Hashanah are also Shabbat, cooking or reheating is strictly forbidden; any food that you want to eat warm should be placed on a Shabbat hotplate on Friday before 6.56 pm and a Shabbat urn should be boiled before Shabbat and left on a thermostat.

1st night of Rosh Hashanah prayers

Whether you will be saying the prayers in the synagogue, or, because of the situation, at home, you will surely be using your Machzor for Rosh Hashanah. This guide doesn't include detailed instructions for the prayers; following your Machzor will take you through the prayers in a clear step-by-step manner. Remember that the third *Beracha* of the *Amida* – the Silent Prayer, concludes with the words *Hamelech Hakadosh* – the Holy King, and not as it concludes on other days of the year- *Ha-el Hakadosh* – the Holy G-d. Also, be mindful to include in the Prayer all the special additions for Shabbat.

It is customary to greet others with: "L'shana Tova – Ketivah Ve'chatima Tova." This means: "For a good year – You should be written and sealed in the good Book of Life."

After the prayer, it is customary to greet each other with: "L'shana Tova – Ketivah Ve'chatima Tova." This means: "For a good year – You should be written and sealed in the good Book of Life."

For the Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah, follow your Machzor. Kiddush combines both themes – Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah; we start as for a regular Shabbat- Vayehi Erev... Yom Hashishi, then continue with Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah, not forgetting to add all the extra words for Shabbat in Kiddush as per instructions in the Machzor.

Symbolic Foods and good omens on Rosh Hashanah evening

After making the "Hamotzi" blessing, it is customary to dip the bread into honey instead of salt, symbolising our hope for a sweet new year.

After the bread has been eaten, we eat apple dipped in honey as a good omen to have a sweet year. This custom is performed in 3 stages: 1. **Before** the first bite, you recite the blessing; *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'eitz* - Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree. 2. Take a bite from the apple dipped in honey. 3. **After** the first bite you say; *Y'hi ratzon mil'fanekha Adonai eloheinu vei'lohei avoteinu sh't'chadeish aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah*- May it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our ancestors that you renew for us a good and sweet year.

Some people have a custom to eat pomegranate on Rosh Hashanah evening —just as pomegranates are full of seeds, so we hopefully will be similarly full of merits in the coming year. The pomegranate is eaten *before* the apple so stage 1 - reciting the blessing *Baruch atah Adonai...* is performed over the pomegranate, rather than over the apple, before the first bite. After eating a few seeds you say; *Y'hi ratzon mil'fanekha Adonai eloheinu vei'lohei avoteinu sh'narbe zechuyot kerimon*- May it be Your will, God, that our merits increase as the seeds of a pomegranate." Then you follow stages 2&3 with the apple as explained above; **you have to skip stage 1** as you already have made the blessing on the pomegranate.

Some people repeat the ceremony on the second night; some not. Whichever way you go will be right.

In the Grace after Meals, we add the inserts for Shabbat and Ya'ale V'yavo for Rosh Hashanah.

There is a consensus of all The Halachic authorities that the most important good omen on Rosh Hashanah is to avoid at all costs any feeling of anger.

Shabbat & 1st day of Rosh Hashanah, 19 September

The last time Rosh Hashanah coincided with Shabbat was 11 years ago. Over this time we may have forgotten the strange conflict generated by this coincidence. Blowing the Shofar is the sine-qua-non-element of Rosh Hashanah; the very definition of Rosh Hashanah in the Torah is *"the Day of Blowing"*. Yet, Shabbat's definition is *"the Day of Rest"*. Nothing is allowed to disturb Shabbat's tranquillity; not even the sound of the Shofar. In the conflict between the essential symbol of Rosh Hashanah and the essential symbol of Shabbat, Shabbat has the upper hand. As a result, this year, on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we won't get to hear the inspiring Shofar blasts. The Shofar, whose sounds normally signify the high point of the Rosh Hashanah service, will remain silent.

The absence of the sound of Shofar coupled with the impositions of coronavirus, which for some people mean staying at home and for some people mean participating in curtailed and hushed services in the synagogue, may feel like an ultimate dispiriting of Rosh Hashanah prayers. And yet not blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah can be a source of inspiration; to reach out to this source we have to remember the story of Prophet Elijah.

During Elijah's time, under the reign of the royal couple, Ahab and Jezebel, practising Judaism was much more difficult than during the coronavirus times. Ahab and Jezebel declared the worship of Baal and Asherah as the official national cult. The worship of G-d of Israel was outlawed and His prophets were mercilessly purged. Elijah escaped to the desert and protested to G-d bitterly; *"The children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant. They have torn down Your altars and they have killed Your prophets by the sword, and I have remained alone, and they seek my life to take it."* G-d's response couldn't be more unexpected. He doesn't try to answer any of Eli-

jah's allegations; instead, he instructs him – *“Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”* As Elijah stood waiting for the Lord to pass by, *“a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire – a still, small voice. And as Elijah heard [the still small voice, he knew that the Lord came, and] he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave, and behold a voice came to him and said: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”*

Every year the Shofar sounds clearly and loudly; as we listen to it we hear our cries, our sobs and tears. But this year is special; on this year G-d instructs us instead of listening to the thunderous sound of the Shofar to listen to the still, small voice. This year, G-d wants to ask us a question that is too sensitive and personal to be uttered in any but the softest of voices; “Perhaps once in 11 years, on Rosh Hashanah, instead of listening to your own cries and complains, you may listen to my quietly whispered question – “What are you doing here?”

There is no reason for Rosh Hashanah this year to be a lesser experience than every year. There is no reason on this Rosh Hashanah to take shortcuts in reciting the prayers; why should we miss any of the troves of inspiration that the Machzor is offering? Whether being in shul or at home, as we follow the Machzor page after page, the unusually quiet service enables us to listen to G-d's still, small voice and ponder what we are going to answer to His question.

Second Rosh Hashanah evening and day, 19-20 September

Preparations and candle lighting for the 2nd day

No preparations should be made for the second evening and day of Rosh Hashanah until Shabbat and the 1st day of Rosh Hashanah has terminated on Monday the 30th of September at 8.01 pm! Food may be cooked or heated only after this time.

Yom Tov candles should not be lit until the termination of Shabbat and the 1st day of Rosh Hashanah at 8.01 pm!

Because this year the 1st day of Rosh Hashanah is Shabbat, the prohibition of making preparations for the 2nd day during the 1st day is much more severe than on other years!!!

Even after 8.01pm one has to say '*Baruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh Lekodesh* – Blessed is the One who distinguishes between various levels of holiness', before performing any act that was forbidden on Shabbat.

Having in mind the laws of Yom Tov, one should remember that even after Shabbat has terminated the candles may not be kindled from a match, but only from a pre-existing flame burning since before Shabbat (you can light a match from a *yahrzeit* candle lit before Shabbat or from a pilot light). After lighting the candles, don't put off the match you used to light the candles; place it in an ash-tray and let it burn itself out.

The Blessings for lighting the candles (**after 8.01 pm!**) should be recited **before** lighting the candles as on a regular Yom Tov.

Again, two blessings are recited when lighting Rosh Hashanah candles; 1. *Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Yom Tov.* - Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to light the lights of Yom Tov

2. *Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-haynu melech Ha-olam, she'he'che'yanu v'kee'manu v'hee'gee'anu la'zman ha'zeh* - Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, *King of the universe*, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

2nd night of Rosh Hashanah prayers

Follow your Machzor for the prayers and Kiddush of the second night.

The Kiddush for the second night includes Havdalah, as it is the time of departure of Shabbat. For this Havdalah we don't use the *besamim*-aromatic spices. Direct your fingertips towards the Yom Tov candles and recite the B'rachah "*Baruch atah ... Melech haolam, borei m'orei ha-eish*". conclude the Havdalah part with the formula "*Baruch atah ... Melech haolam, Hamavdil ben Kodesh L'kodesh*".

As on the first night, conclude the Kiddush/Havdalah with the B'rachah Shehechyanu.

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah, a seasonal fruit which we have not yet tasted last year should be present on the table when the candles are kindled and during the Kiddush. Even in our spoiled day and age, you may find that, during the last year, you didn't yet have a chance to try Passion Fruit, Dragon Fruit, Granadilla, Mango-steen, Physalis or Rambutan.

This fruit is eaten following the Kiddush; some eat it before the Hamotzi and some after. Again, before eating the fruit, you should make the blessing; Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam borei p'ri ha'eitz - Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree. If you eat any other fruits after that (apple, pomegranate etc.), you don't repeat the blessing.

Prayers and Shofar on the second day of Rosh Hashanah 20th September

Although broadly speaking the service on the second day is similar to the service on the first day, there are quite a few differences; following the Machzor attentively will prevent any mistakes.

Blowing the Shofar

Today we are going to fulfil the obligation to hear the Shofar. The fact that we couldn't fulfil this Mitzvah on the first day only adds to our enthusiasm.

This is a short overview of how to observe this unique commandment:

There are three basic types of blasts when sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah: Tekiah, Shevarim, and Teruah:

- Tekiah blast- tuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu
- Shevarim blast –tuuu-tuuu-tuuu
- Teruah blast – tu-tu-tu-tu-tu-tu-tu-tu

The Shofar is blown in a series of various combinations of the three basic sounds. Each series consists of 30 sounds. These series are

performed three times:

The first time, with a special blessing recited by the *Tokea* (the person who blows the Shofar) before the Musaf service, when all 30 sounds are blown in one succession.

The second time, in groups of ten sounds each, at various points during the Musaf repetition.

The third time, just before the end of the service; this time, again, all the 30 sounds are blown in one succession.

The third series is only a custom and if someone left early and missed this series they have still fulfilled the commandment. However, in order to fulfil the commandment properly, one has to hear the first series **and** all the three groups of the second series. In case of great necessity (feeling unwell etc.), one may hear only the first series.

According to the Torah, it is absolutely forbidden to speak before the end of the second series about matters irrelevant to the service, as it constitutes a break in the fulfilment of the mitzvah.

Tashlich

Tashlich means to cast off. Every year this custom is performed on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, but again, because of Shabbat, this year *Tashlich* takes place on the second day.

Tashlich is recited while standing next to a body of running water, into which one symbolically casts off their sins. The ceremony includes reading the source passage for the practice, the last verses from the prophet Micah (7:19), "He will take us back in love; He will cover up our iniquities. You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Some additional psalms may be added; take your Machzor as you go to *Tashlich* and recite the prayers printed in the *Tashlich* section.

Surely we do not "get rid of our sins" just by standing there; the purpose of Tashlich is to generate reflection, deep introspection and commitment to change.

If *Tashlich* was not said on Rosh Hashanah itself, it may be said any-time during the Ten Days of Teshuva.

Havdalah

Rosh Hashanah terminates on Sunday at 7.59 pm. To celebrate its conclusion one has to recite Havdalah – Separation [between the holy and the mundane]. Unlike after Shabbat, we don't smell fragrances, neither do we light a Havdalah candle. The Havdalah is recited over a cup of wine. The order of Havdalah is; Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen- Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe Who creates the fruit of the vine. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam hamav'dil bein kodesh l'chol bein or l'choshech bein Yis'ra'eil la'amim bein yom hash'vi'i l'sheishet y'mei hama'aseh Baruch atah Adonai, hamav'dil bein kodesh l'chol- Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who separates between sacred and mundane, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of labour; Blessed are You, Lord, who separates between sacred and mundane.

Shanah Tovah!



The Effect of Mitzvot

Rabbi Yechiel (Jeremy) Conway – Minister, Queenshill Synagogue

Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgement – the day on which the whole world is judged. We are judged both individually and collectively. Increased performance of mitzvot helps to ensure a good year for each of us individually, for the community as a whole, and for the entire world.

Jewish tradition teaches that every Jew is as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds, but what exactly is a mitzvah? The word “mitzvah” is normally translated as “commandment” or “good deed”, from the root TZ-V or TZ-V-H. G-d is the commander, and the performance of each one of His commandments amounts to a good deed. There is also a deeper meaning that I believe encapsulates the essence of a mitzvah. Chassidic thought teaches that the root of the word “mitzvah” is “tzavta”, which means “connection”. Every mitzvah that we perform strengthens the connection between us and G-d. To elaborate, every Jew has a G-dly soul. The G-dly soul is connected on High by a rope that has 613 strands. That rope is the spiritual DNA of the Jew. Each strand of the rope represents one of the 613 mitzvot. The more mitzvot a Jew performs, the stronger the rope becomes. If a Jew becomes lax in the observance of mitzvot, the rope becomes weaker, but the connection always exists. The Jewish spark can always be reignited.

In Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), we are enjoined to be as careful in the performance of “minor” mitzvot as we are in the performance of “major” mitzvot, because we do not know the relative weight ascribed to each mitzvah. A mitzvah that seems to us to be small or minor could have tremendous consequences. “Mitzvah goreret mitzvah” – one mitzvah “causes” another mitzvah; it leads to the performance of another mitzvah. When we perform one mitzvah, we have a thirst to perform more. “S’char mitzvah mitzvah” – the reward for/consequence of a mitzvah is a mitzvah. Alternatively, and perhaps more accurately, the reward for a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself. The performance of the mitzvah itself is spiritually fulfilling.

The ideal is to perform mitzvot unconditionally, without expecting

to receive a reward, but that does not necessarily mean that we should not be aware of the potential effect or impact of the mitzvah.

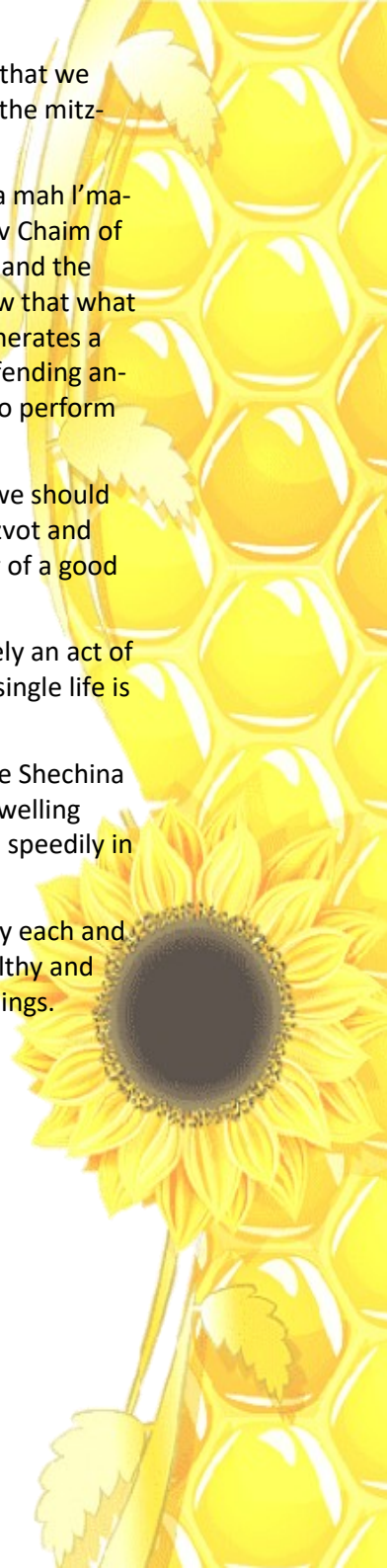
We are also enjoined to “know what is Above you” – “Da mah I’malah mimcha”. A non-literal reading, ascribed both to Rav Chaim of Volozhin (who was the prime disciple of the Vilna Gaon) and the Maggid of Mezritch (who was a Chassidic rebbe) is “Know that what is Above is from you!” Every mitzvah that we perform generates a huge amount of positive spiritual energy; it creates a defending angel to speak up on our behalf. It can also inspire others to perform mitzvot.

Maimonides, basing himself on the Talmud, states that we should regard the world as being evenly balanced between mitzvot and the opposite. Just one mitzvah tips the balance in favour of a good year and a good future.

Encouraging other people to perform mitzvot is effectively an act of spiritual lifesaving. We are taught that whoever saves a single life is credited with saving the entire world (Sanhedrin 4:5).

Ultimately, the performance of mitzvot helps to bring the Shechina (Divine Presence) out of exile and to make the world a dwelling place for G-d, with the coming of our righteous Messiah, speedily in our days. Amen!

K’tivah vachatimah tovah I’shanah tovah um’tukah – May each and every one of us be inscribed and sealed for a happy, healthy and sweet year, overflowing with material and spiritual blessings.



Apple 'n Honey

Rabbi Yisroel Cohen, Leeds Kollel

The custom of eating an apple dipped in honey on *Rosh HaShana* is widely known. The prayer recited while eating it (“*May G-d renew this year as a good, sweet new year*”) is also popular. However upon closer examination we can ask ourselves: how can we pray for a “sweet new year”; surely G-d knows what level I am on, and consequently what type of year I deserve? If I deserve a sweet year I will receive it; and if not, not. How would such a prayer change this?

The source of the custom of eating apples is from the story of Isaac giving the blessings to his son, Yaacov¹: וַיִּרַח אֶת רֵיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ: “וַיִּרַח אֶת רֵיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיִּאֶמֶר רֵיחַ בְּנֵי כְרִים שְׂדֵה אֲנֹשׁ בְּרַבּוֹ הִיא” and [Isaac] smelled the smell of [Jacob’s] clothes, blessed him and said: “See, the fragrance of my son is that of a field blessed by the L-rd”². On this verse the Talmud comments the fragrance was that of a field of apples³. Isaac sensed the sweet smelling apple orchard and proceeded to bless Yaacov.

However that is not the full story: The Talmud⁴ tells us not to read it as בְּגָדָיו / clothes, but as בּוֹגְדָיו / treacherous, rebellious ones. Isaac ‘smelled’ or foresaw Yaacov’s descendants sinning, as becoming rebellious. This would appear to contradict the above quoted comment: how could Isaac have sensed the sweet, pleasant aroma of an orchard and at the same time perceive that the descendants of this person were going to be sinners! How could he allow himself to dispense the blessings due to their sins?

However it is *because* they are sinners he gave them the blessings. It is *because* Isaac saw and knew that this people will be treacherous – and yet still ‘smelled’ so pleasant he felt confident to bestow the blessings. He recognised that this people had something tremendously valuable: they had a power to catapult themselves from being בּוֹגְדָיו, treacherous, to the sweetness of an apple orchard: they had the power of change. The Jewish People have – as foreseen by our forefather Isaac – a quality of being able to transform ourselves from the depths of sin to being as pleasant as an orchard.

This ability is found in the Torah itself as well. The Talmud⁵ relates on the festival of *Shavuot*, Rav Yosef would insist on a fine calf for

his festive meal, for - he said - if it wasn't for this day that the Torah was given he would be like any other Yosef. Rashi comments that Rav Yosef "became elevated" through the learning of Torah, he rose to a different level. He changed himself. Torah has that ability to transform, to change.

Honey also shares this power. Rabbeinu Yonah⁶ is quoted as saying that parts of bees found in honey are kosher. Honey has the ability to turn something that falls into it into honey itself! It can turn the non-kosher into kosher!

Perhaps this is an explanation of the verse in Psalms⁷: "מתוקים" "מִדְּבַשׁ, [Torah] is sweeter than honey". Torah's ability to change, to transform is even greater than that of honey: it is "sweeter" than honey.

Isaac foresaw Yaacov's descendants sinning; but he also sensed they were as sweet as an orchard: the apple signifies a sweetness, but a sweetness that comes through change, a transformation from being בוגדיו to בְּגָדָיו, from sin to forming the very clothing of our forefather Yaacov. How fitting and appropriate it is to take the apple, representing the power of change, and dip it into honey – another example of this idea.

It is this power we're reminding ourselves of on *Rosh HaShana*. G-d knows what we do deserve and what we don't. But we have this capability: the ability to change for the better, and if we use it and internalise it then we can indeed merit a "sweet, new year".

¹ Commentary of the *Vilna Ga'on* on *Shulchan Oruch* 583:3

² Genesis 27:27

³ Tractate Taanis 29b

⁴ Tractate Sanhedrin 37a

⁵ Tractate Pesachim 68b

⁶ Quoted by Rabbeinu Asher, Tractate Berachos Chapter 6, Siman 35)

⁷ Chapter 19

Hashem Loves You!

Ally Chait, WAC

If G-d has decreed the good fate of a person, they require no prayer; and if there is no such decree, how can prayer help to change the will of G-d in favour of a positive judgement? And similarly in reverse.

The answer is that the main purpose of prayer is not to change the will of the Holy One, but through the prayer, the worshipper themselves becomes changed, for they rise to a more elevated and lofty level.

Through our prayers,... as we rise from step to step, a Jew represents a brand new person. If a decree was issued for someone, then through prayer which presses our heart, we become someone different, who is no longer meant by the decree.

(Joseph Albo, Sefer Ha'Ikkarim 1425)

The Hebrew word for 'pray', unlike the English, is not synonymous with 'beg' or 'petition'. *Tefillah* derives from *Hitpalel*, literally 'judge oneself'; one assesses one's own insignificance and one's impotence in relation to G-d's omnipotence.

The reflective form indicates that prayer is directed at oneself rather than at G-d. In short, Jewish prayer is intended to *impress* more than to *express* oneself. The harder I pray, the more convinced I become that only G-d can help me, and that I need G-d's help. Prayer thereby turns me into a better and more deserving human being; in respect of all the favours for which I ask, I realise more and more my dependence on G-d and my own helplessness.

Prayer is the deepest instinct of the Jewish soul. Yet prayer has become difficult for contemporary Jewish people and they tell me that they have difficulty praying. They tell me that they are not sure how to offer their inner thoughts and feelings and identify with

their true inner spiritual self.

I tell people to stop worrying. To stop fearing that they need to feel something, or be overtaken by an emotion as if the sun suddenly appears on a cold winter's day.

A relationship with G-d is simply to be yourself. To recognise not just who you are, but what you can become and what G-d expects from you, and prayer is the vehicle – the phone line between mortal and maker.

It is okay to extend prayer beyond the words inside our holy *Siddur*. To picture, to think, to imagine and even to utter and speak in the language of our mother tongue – to depend and recognise this reliance on Almighty G-d. A relationship between two human beings is built upon time spent, experiences and stories shared – moments and encounters that create the 'us', the 'we' and the 'our'.

In the same vein, any attempt to paint Hashem's concern for us in human terms is blinkered. Physical beings have limits – Hashem does not. If Hashem cares about someone, it is limitless – without borders and confines. And if Hashem loves someone, that love breaks all boundaries and parameters.

Our relationship with Hashem dwarfs any human bond or connection. We simply use our human psyche and human emotion to create and maintain that closeness and faithfulness.

Every moment of our life has a Jewish element to it. 99.9 times out of 100, there will be a prayer, blessing or sacred text that will accompany that instance. G-d knows the real me or the real you, so much more than any other human being on earth. Through recognising G-d's presence in every aspect of our lives, we unwrap a new person – a new me and you – a higher more faithful existence that carries and merits a new and altered decree.

As we encounter the strangest and perhaps most isolated of High Holy Days that potentially most of us will ever have to experience, I am comforted and gladdened, albeit in the most challenging of times, by how society has embraced faith and its expression of prayer during this awful COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders of other faiths have shared with me the resurgence of religious engagement and how, despite the restrictions placed on com-

munal activities, worship has found a new home online. People have reached out in a way that they had not done so previously.

Times of fragility and vulnerability have always brought people to seek something stronger than human self, but we are as ever committed to share Judaism's all rounded place in life; its beauty, its joy, its comfort and its prayer.

Shema Koleinu – hear our voice – may Hashem bless each and every one of us in the book of life.



The Call of the Shofar

Rabbi Yossi Dansky, Leeds Kollel

This year for the first time I bought myself a Shofar. There were reports bandied around of a ban on wind instruments being blown in public places due to Coronavirus restrictions, and, unsure of whether I will get the opportunity to fulfil the mitzvah in shul this year, I didn't want to take a chance on this important commandment. In spite of my best efforts and going rather red in the cheeks, so far, my feeble blasts have done nothing more than disturb the neighbours and wake up the baby, much to my wife's annoyance! So, what is so special about the Shofar?

In truth, there are many deep and meaningful explanations behind this unique mitzvah and in this article, I'd like to try and touch upon two of them.

The Rambam (1138-1204) says, *"Even though the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana is a divine edict, nonetheless, there is an illusion contained within it, as if to say: 'Wake up from your sleep and your slumber. Examine your ways, do Teshuva, and remember your Creator'"*.

Generally, the state of sleeping is simply an absence of physical activity. However, spiritual sleep is actually the product of unceasing physical activity. The ongoing preoccupation with mundane concerns leaves no room for the soul's voice to be heard or its impact to be felt. Over time, things become rote, habitual, and we end up following the same daily routines, practically immune to any notion of self-improvement or spiritual idealism.

The blast of the shofar is a wake-up call to our spiritual, idealistic side. It is encouraging us to wake up and take charge of the direction we are taking. In hearing that call and allowing ourselves to take stock and reflect, even for a moment, there is no limit to where we can go.

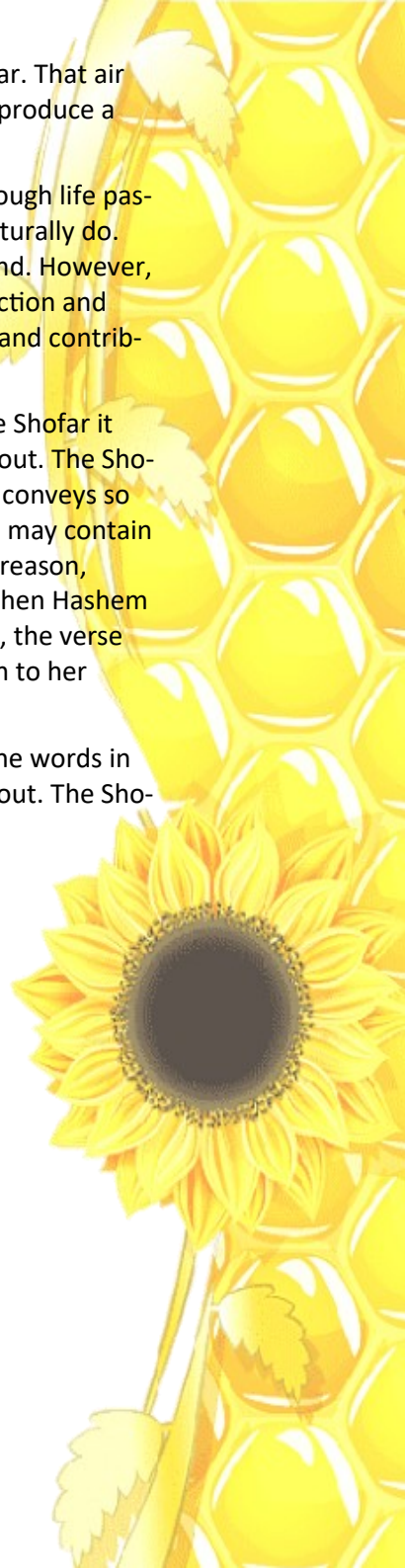
Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh (1808-1888) offers an incredible insight in this regard. The sound of the Shofar is produced when air is blown into it. Air is a free, readily available, natural resource and exhaling is an action done generally thousands of times a day. But

exhaling air will not produce any sounds from the Shofar. That air must be channelled with skill and direction in order to produce a sound.

This is the message of the Shofar. A person may go through life passively, automatically inhaling and exhaling as beings naturally do. But living like this will never produce a meaningful sound. However, by using the natural resources and applying focus, direction and effort, we can channel them to make beautiful sounds and contribute to the world.

Once the soul has been aroused by the initial call of the Shofar it hears it's calling. It uses the sound of the Shofar to cry out. The Shofar essentially produces a voice with no words. A voice conveys so much more than words, which are simply finite. Words may contain information but the voice conveys the person. For this reason, prophecy is referred to as a 'Voice' and not 'Words'. When Hashem instructed Avraham to listen to Sara's prophetic advice, the verse says, "Shema Bekolah – Listen to her voice", not "Listen to her words".

The sound of the Shofar is a raw sound, a raw cry. All the words in the world cannot convey the emotion of a child crying out. The Shofar is that cry.



Tashlich - Feeding the Ducks!?

Rabbi Nochum Salomon, Leeds Kollel

I would like to explain the interesting custom of “Tashlich” which we do every year on Rosh Hashanah. Tashlich literally means to ‘cast’ or to ‘throw away’, and is referring to our sins.

Let me start with three obvious questions.

Isn't it a strange custom for our Sages to tell us to go ‘feed the ducks’ on the holiest of days?

What are we doing? Are we literally throwing our sins away; is it that simple?

Why do we go specifically to water, are we merely ‘feeding the ducks’ or is it more meaningful?

I will start off with explaining what we do and then with G-ds help, try gain a clearer understanding and deeper meaning for this custom.

On the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, or the second day when the first falls on Shabbos (like this year), after the mincha services, we go to a river or a body of running water, preferably with living fish, or if impossible, to a running wellspring.

We recite a combination of tefillot and Kabbalistic correspondents starting with the verse from Micha ‘מי קל כמוך’ ‘Who, O G-d is like You?’ in which we say the words ‘ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם’ ‘And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins’ which correspond kabbalistically to the 13 Divine Attributes in Exodus 13:6-7 ‘ה' ה' קל' ...רחום וחנון...’. We also say the verses from Psalms 118:5-9 ‘מן המצר’ which correspond to the 9 Attributes in Numbers 14:18 ‘ה' ארך' ...אפים...’.

There is also a part of the Tashlich service where we pray for our livelihood and for money. Since money matters may lead to sins such as dishonesty and theft, therefore a fitting time to pray for an honest source of livelihood is during the Tashlich ritual; when we strive to divorce ourselves from transgression.

There is a powerful story told about the great Sage, the Chofetz

Chaim (the author of the – משנה ברורה the book of laws).

A wealthy man approached the Chofetz Chaim for a blessing for success in his business ventures. The Scholar responded “May it be G-d’s Will that you enjoy the money that was inscribed in your heavenly ledger on Rosh Hashanah and sealed there on Yom Kippur”.

The rich man was disappointed. “Who needs such a blessing, for G-d will assure this regardless?”

The Chofetz Chaim explained “To wish you more than was allotted on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is impossible. But to pray that you enjoy your precise portion is indeed good fortune! Some are motivated by greed and ambition to increase their wealth. Even two jobs aren’t enough for them; they are never satisfied without three! And behold, they do manage to earn much more than was allotted for them on Rosh Hashanah. But,” the great rabbi continued, “it is impossible for them to keep this extra money, because it is not divinely ordained. They will find that their fortune has caused them sorrows for they are condemned to suffer large painful losses to rid them of every extra unauthorised penny they earned!”

“Therefore,” concluded the Chofetz Chaim, “the greatest blessing is to earn exactly the amount determined at the beginning of the year, so as to enjoy every penny without the slightest pain of financial loss!”.

The Chofetz Chaim was also known to say “When someone tells me they are making a living but it wouldn’t hurt if things were a little better, I ask him ‘How do you know it wouldn’t hurt?’” G-d surely has the power to give a person more money. If He doesn’t, it is because having more would make things worse!

That is why the inclusion of this prayer in the Rosh Hashanah ritual is most appropriate, for Judaism teaches that one does not make a living, rather they *take* a living i.e. they acquire the portion of sustenance which was ordained for them by Above.

To explain the custom, let us understand where Tashlich comes from. All Jews worldwide, whether Sephardic or Ashkenazic, observe this custom of Tashlich, ever after being separated from one another by continents and centuries. Yet there is no mention of it whatsoever in the Talmud or early Rishonim. Even the Shulchan Aruch has just the barest of mentions. The earliest printed mention

of Tashlich is in the Maharil, but he does not say who instituted the practice, only that it is a Jewish custom. Tashlich therefore seems to be a manifestation of Israel's genius to devise ways of perfecting itself in the service of G-d.

Both the Sheloh Hakodosh and the Levush cite the same reason for the custom. When Abraham was challenged with the last of the ten tests of his life, the Akeida, G-d commanded him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Part of the test was that Satan had 'carte blanche' to try Abraham by weakening his devotion to G-d. Satan played on the emotions of Abraham who was on the way to give up his beloved son, however Abraham would not be swayed. Finally, Satan placed an impassable river in front of Abraham and Isaac. Nevertheless, they forged on into the water until it was up their necks. Abraham was ready to go on; neither logic, water, nor the threat of death could deter his resolve, but how could he do G-d's Will if the river were to drown him? He appealed to G-d and the river disappeared.

Abraham's determination had defeated the Satan and he continued to the summit of devotion to G-d. The Tashlich ritual is intended to recall that climatic episode on the way to the Akeidah; we go to a river, or some body of water to recall before G-d and ourselves how our forefathers defeated the master of evil at a river! Let it remind us of the goal for which we were created, the goal of serving G-d no matter how potent the force that attempts to dissuade us or force us to do otherwise, no matter how 'impossible' it is to do the right thing, because the most formidable obstacle is but a test of our devotion. And let it remind G-d that the spiritual seeds of Abraham are implanted in his children. The merit of the Akeidah therefore, is not a reminder of an ancient, irrelevant event, but an indication of an always present reality of Israel's potential for greatness.

Tashlich is not merely throwing our sins away; we are showing G-d our regret and our feeling of desire to be close to G-d by reminding Him of Abrahams event with water. It is therefore very appropriate that we go for a 'walk to the water'!

There is a special symbolism in the fact that Satan resorted to a river as his last attempt to force Abraham back. According to the Zohar, a deep river symbolizes בינה understanding. It symbolizes the ability to plumb to the depth of knowledge; to expand, develop and draw conclusions. 'There are waters' says the Zohar 'that raise wise people, and waters that raise fools.' Understanding is a precious

gift from G-d, but can be misused and corrupted by giving legitimacy and popularity to foolishness and worse! The key to Abrahams greatness was his understanding of truth; destroy that, and he could be pulled down from his spiritual heights.

R' Nosson Sherman writes another insight, that the core of Tashlich is the selection of three verses from Micha 7:18-20 which ask our merciful G-d to cast our sins **יִם בַּמְצוּלוֹת** into the depths of the sea. The Rema in Toras HaOlah finds in this expression another reason for the Tashlich custom.

The seas are by far the greater part of earth. The waters should have swamped the land and made human life impossible. Indeed, storms and tidal waves give us continuous reminders of the ocean's awesome power. At the beginning of creation, water covered everything; there was no dry land at all until G-d commanded the waters to form seas and expose the land.

That G-d created an overwhelming mass of water but by allowing the land to surface, reveals that the purpose of creation was to provide a place for a person to live and serve G-d. Rosh Hashanah inaugurates the days when one is judged by their Maker. How well have they served G-d? How well did they utilize the earth and its fullness that G-d gave them to use? How well have we achieved the purpose of our existence?

Standing before a body of water on the Day of Judgement, a Jew is reawakened to their mission on earth. The commentators cite the further symbolism of having fish in the water at which Tashlich is recited. The defenceless fish, prey to every net and hook, remind people that they, too, have no guarantee of safety. The unblinking eyes of the fish suggest the eternally vigilant and merciful eye of G-d. The fish, covered by the waters and are safe from the evil eye of jealousy is a parable to Israel which has been granted G-ds blessing of protection.

So many reminders to the conscience, sensitivity and awareness of the Jew. So much that connects us as a nation back to our roots of Abraham. How sad that we, as creatures of habit, are so prone to simply neglecting our purpose.

But no matter what has occurred over so many years and in so many countries, the Jew is reminded on Rosh Hashanah, or on whatever other day they go to Tashlich, that our ancestor was once

confronted by the Satan himself, but refused to let his determination dissolve; and by doing so, he planted a seed whose fruits we still harvest.

May we all merit to recognise G-d in our lives, be able to grow closer to Him and be able to come to a clear recognition to what we are doing 'at the river'. May we all be granted forgiveness and merit a healthy, happy & blessed year, and may these hard times quickly come to an end!



An Overview of Yom Kippur Laws

Rabbi Kupperman. Etz Chaim

Although Yom Kippur lasts for only approximately 25 hours, it is impossible to overrate its significance to our lives throughout the entire year.

Yom Kippur completely redefines our sense of responsibility. We may be unaware of it, but somewhere deep down we are cognisant of Yom Kippur all the time. We live with the knowledge that one can dodge responsibility for only so long; that the deadline for standing before the Almighty with a full report about our actions is a concrete date which is never more than a year away.

On the other hand, Yom Kippur also redefines our sense of hope. We know that we never can get too far from our G-d, our friends and our selves; that the opportunity to be cleansed, purified, forgiven and given a chance to start a new page is never more than a year away.

To have the full benefit of this amazing day one has to have a comprehensive understanding of its laws and customs; the summary bellow provides the basic knowledge.

Eve of Yom Kippur, Sunday 27th September

Asking forgiveness

"The sins which are between a person and his fellow Yom Kippur does not atone, until he appeases his fellow" (Talmud, Tractate Yoma 85 b.).

One should not leave asking forgiveness till the eve of Yom Kippur but if it didn't happen before this is your last opportunity to make amends. See this duty as a matter of utmost urgency!

Kapparot

For many people, the morning of the eve of Yom Kippur starts with the ritual of Kapparot.

Kapparot consists of passing over one's head three times the object, which serves as a *Kappara* – an expiation, while reciting the appropriate text.

In the past, the *Kappara* usually was a chicken which later was *shechted* and its meat was given to the poor – a perfect example of a chicken soup finding its way into a soup kitchen.

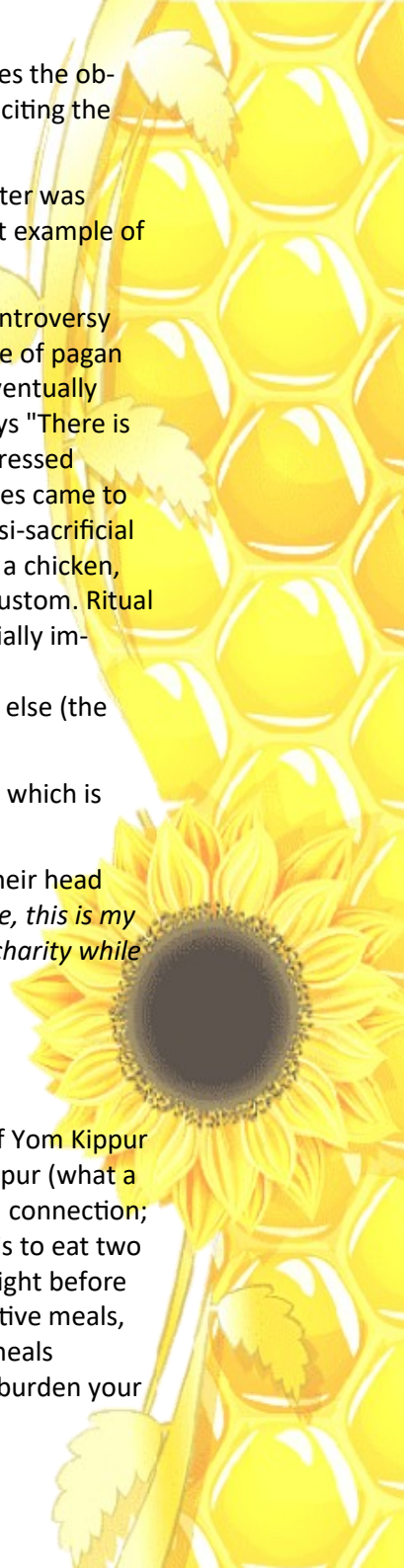
Since the early Middle Ages, the custom drew much controversy from leading rabbinic authorities who suspected it to be of pagan origins. Nevertheless, the custom refused to die and eventually gained wide acceptance. Apparently, as Rabbi Sacks says "There is no doubt that for many people an intention is best expressed through symbolic action. That is why, long after sacrifices came to an end with the destruction of the Temple, certain quasi-sacrificial acts such as Kapparot (the "penitential offering," often a chicken, before Yom Kippur), re-entered Judaism through folk custom. Ritual is the dramatic acting-out of an intention. This is especially important in the case of repentance, in which something (representing the old self) has to die so that something else (the new self) can be born".

Nowadays many people perform Kapparot with money which is later given to charity.

One performs Kapparot by revolving the money over their head three times and reciting each time - *This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my expiation. This money shall go to charity while I shall proceed to a good, long life and peace.*

Eating on the eve of Yom Kippur

The Sages said, "Whoever eats and drinks on the eve of Yom Kippur is rewarded as if they fasted on both days". So Yom Kippur (what a surprise) is not entirely free of the usual Festival – food connection; we just make it on the eve of Yom Kippur. The custom is to eat two festive meals, one in the early afternoon and another right before the commencement of the fast. Although these are festive meals, nevertheless no Kiddush is recited prior to them. The meals (especially the last one) should be light in order not to burden your digestive system too much before Yom Kippur.



Pre-fast tips from Aish.com

The key to an easy fast is to super-hydrate. Starting 24 hours before the fast, drink one cup of water every hour. Throughout the eve of Yom Kippur, consume a lot of beverages. This will not fill you up, since liquids are absorbed quickly. Yet it will ensure that you've absorbed enough fluids during the day to start the pre-fast meal well hydrated. Don't drink syrupy beverages, which provide empty calories. Best bet: Pure H₂O. Second best: diluted fruit juice.

Fruit, despite its high fibre content, is worthwhile since it carries a lot of water in a "time-release" form. Throughout the day, you can munch on water-rich foods like melon and grapes. At the final meal, drink a few glasses, because many foods need extra water to be digested properly. For dessert, substitute sweets with watermelon or other water-retaining fresh fruit. Finally, drink a cup of warm water to put a smooth finish on your pre-fast prep.

The nausea and headaches that many people experience during a fast are often the result of caffeine withdrawal. Prepare yourself by reducing caffeine intake in the days leading up to Yom Kippur – and then stop caffeine altogether 24 hours before the fast.

Start the final meal at least an hour and a half before the fast begins, so there is no rush to eat quickly.

Avoid salty foods such as pickles, cold cuts, cheese, canned fish, smoked fish and pickled brisket.

Plan the menu of the final meal so that it emphasises carbohydrates and low salt foods like pasta, potatoes, rice and bread (preferably brown rice and whole-wheat bread). These carbohydrates bond with water which your body can "drink" when it needs, to during the fast. Salads and other high-fibre foods should be minimised since they travel quickly through the digestive system and provide little long-term satiation. The final meal should include only small amounts of protein, which actually attracts and leaches water from your tissues.

A large part of successful fasting is in the mind.

Talking about your hunger will only focus your attention on food and make things more difficult. When you think about food, your body prepares itself metabolically to receive the food, causing the sensation of hunger. The key here is to distract your mind from

food. Fortunately, Yom Kippur provides an ample opportunity to be involved in the important task of Teshuva – spiritual self-improvement. The more you immerse yourself in prayer, the less you'll think about food.

Minchah

Even if you sometimes miss Minchah on an ordinary day, it is very important to recite Minchah on the eve of Yom Kippur. This Minchah includes the first of the 10 confessions that we are going to recite throughout Yom Kippur.

It is customary to donate some more money to charity Before Minchah.

The prohibitions of Yom Kippur (Partly adapted from chabad.org)

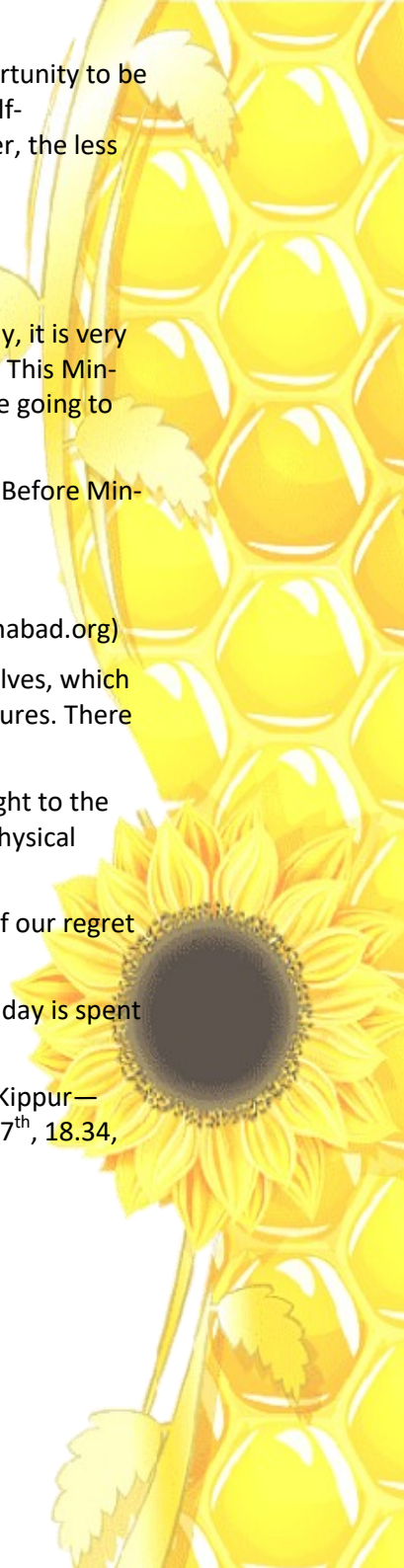
On Yom Kippur, the Torah instructs us to "afflict" ourselves, which means abstaining from an assortment of physical pleasures. There are two reasons for this:

- a. On this day, when our connection to G-d is brought to the fore, we are compared to angels, who have no physical needs.
- b. We afflict ourselves to demonstrate the extent of our regret for our past misdeeds.

Instead of focusing on the physical, the majority of the day is spent in the synagogue, devoted to repentance and prayer.

There are five areas of pleasure that we avoid on Yom Kippur— from sundown on the eve of the holiday - September 27th, 18.34, until the following nightfall - Monday 28th, 19.39.

- Eating or drinking.
- Wearing leather footwear.
- Bathing or washing.
- Applying ointment, lotions, or creams.
- Engaging in any form of spousal intimacy.



All these restrictions are part of the Mitzvah of Yom Kippur fasting. However, Yom Kippur is also called Shabbat Shabbaton- "Sabbath of Sabbaths", therefore all creative activities forbidden on Shabbat, e.g., turning on lights, driving, and carrying in the public domain, are equally forbidden on Yom Kippur.

Health issues

Generally one should fast on Yom Kippur even if it causes great distress. *This is true even if in order to fast a person must spend the entire day resting in bed, and will miss the synagogue services.*

If fasting involves health concerns, one should seek medical and halachic advice. Try not to leave the consultation to the last moment.

If upon a rabbi's instructions based on the recommendation of a medical professional one has to eat on Yom Kippur, they should not have bad feelings about it. While the healthy person fulfils a mitzvah by fasting, the ill person does a mitzvah by eating.

Importance of keeping the prohibitions of wearing leather footwear, washing and applying ointments

Contrary to the perceived notion, these prohibitions are not customs but effective prohibitions derived from the Torah. Admittedly some of them, as for instance washing, are more difficult to observe than the fast. Nevertheless one should not make the mistake of being negligent about these very serious prohibitions on the very day when we ask for atonement of our sins.

It is permitted to wash off, **with cold water**, dirt or perspiration; after waking up in the morning or going to the toilet one should wash only the fingers.

Lighting the candles before Yom Kippur

First light a yahrzeit candle which you will be using for Havdalah after Yom Kippur. You don't recite any blessing when lighting this candle.

If your parents have passed away, light a yahrzeit candle for them.

You don't make any berachah – blessing while lighting this candle either.

Light (in the same manner as every Shabbat) the Shabbat candles in honour of Yom Kippur. Prior to lighting the candles say the following Berachot:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-olam a-sher ki-deshanu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzvi-va-nu le-had-lik ner shel Yom Ha-Kippu-rim. - Blessed are You, L rd, our G d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the light Yom Kippur.

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-o-lam she-he-che-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-hi-gi-ya-nu liz-man ha-zeh. - Blessed are You, L -rd our G d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Going to Synagogue

Yom Kippur is the Holy of Holies of the Jewish year. The atmosphere in the Synagogue should be of sacredness and awe. All the Halachic authorities agree that if a person thinks that if in the Synagogue they may become engaged in idle talk, they should rather pray on Yom Kippur at home.

There is a custom not to wear golden jewellery on Yom Kippur.

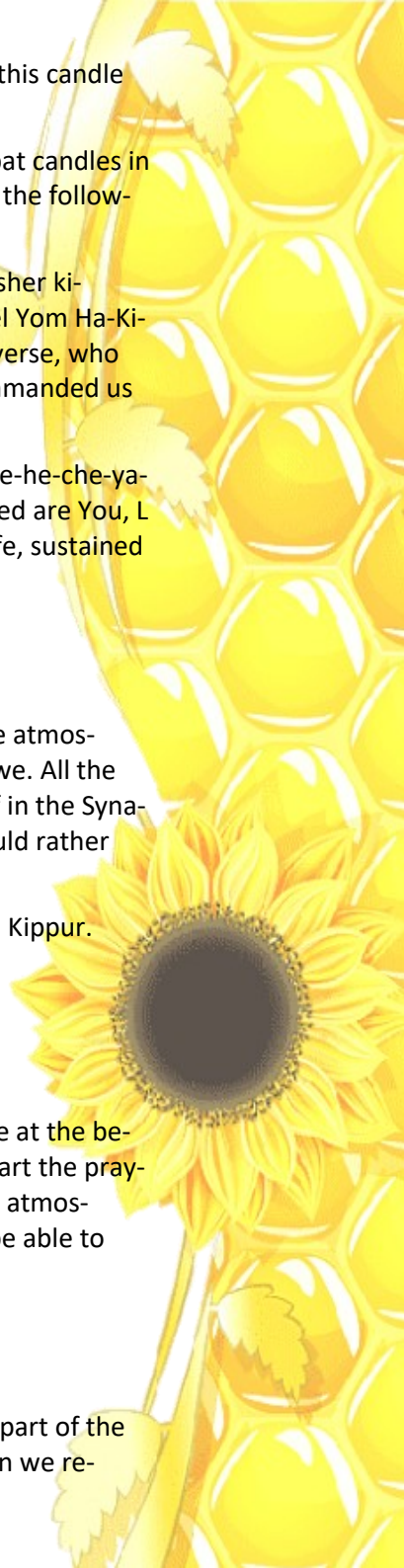
Monday 28th September

Prayer

Come to the synagogue as early as you can; if you come at the beginning your prayer will not be rushed. Also, you will start the prayers at the time when the synagogue has an eerie, quiet atmosphere; your prayer will feel very spiritual and you will be able to maintain this feeling for the rest of the day.

Yizkor

Although Yizkor – the Memorial prayer is not the main part of the day's prayers, it is nevertheless an important time when we re-



member our loved ones and make a spiritual connection with them. It's also a time to make a pledge for charity on their behalf; on a deeper level this is a time to make a pledge to preserve their legacy and live our lives in a way that they would expect from us.

Vidui – Confession

This is the most important part of all the prayers of Yom Kippur, as the purpose of the whole day is to admit our mistakes and to correct them. Even if you couldn't read any prayer, make an utmost effort to say the Vidui. Normally we recite the Vidui when we finish the main body of the Amida – the silent prayers. Unfortunately, even with the translation, it is difficult to see how some of the sins listed in the Vidui are relevant to us. It is important therefore to read a modern interpretation of the Vidui; these are available at the very end of the Artscroll Machzor and of the Chief Rabbi's Koren Machzor. If you have some personal regrets, say them in your own words when you reach the Vidui in your prayers.

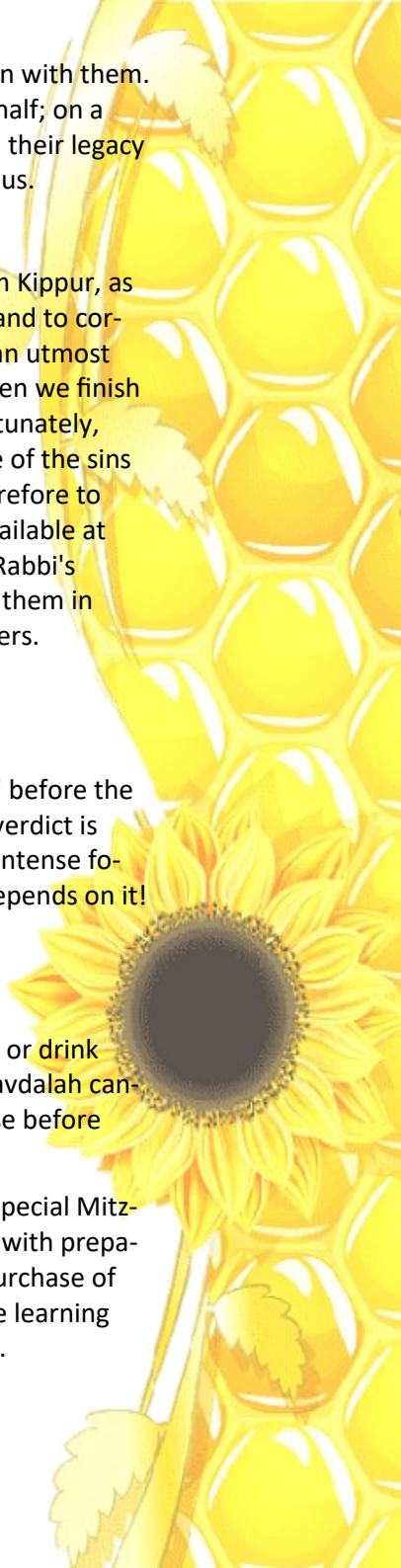
Neilah

Neilah means "closing the gates". This is the "last dash" before the gates of mercy in the heavens are closed and our final verdict is signed. Even if you are worn down by the fast, take an intense focus when you recite this prayer – all the coming year depends on it!

After the fast

Although the fast finishes at 19.39 it is forbidden to eat or drink before reciting or hearing the Havdalah. Instead of a Havdalah candle use the yahrzeit candle which you lit for this purpose before Yom Kippur.

Don't fall straight away to the mundane life! Do some special Mitzvah straight after Yom Kippur. The best thing is to start with preparations to Sukkot – the building of the Sukkah, or the purchase of the Four Species. If this is too difficult, spend some time learning the laws connected to the Sukkah and the Four Species.



Benefits of Restrictions on Yom Kippur

Rabbi Shimon Buckman, Formerly of Leeds Kollel

Source for the Restrictions

The Torah tells us in 6 different places the mitzvah to *afflict oneself* on Yom Kippur. The Gemora discusses the meaning of these vague words to *afflict oneself*, entertaining the idea that perhaps it refers to sitting in a freezing cold room.

The Gemora however concludes that it refers to abstaining from eating and drinking. The Rabbis later decreed an additional 4 Restrictions: Washing, Anointing, Comfortable Footwear and Marital Relations.

The Torah also decreed against doing the same forms of *melocho* (forbidden labour) as we find on Shabbos.

The Correct Perspective on the Restriction on Food and Drink

In general, when a certain type of food is forbidden, the Torah will state *you shall not eat etc.* With Yom Kippur however, the Torah phrases it as a *positive* commandment. The Commentators add that the restriction against food and drink are included in the Mizvah of *resting* on Yom Kippur.

On Eruv Tisha B'Av, the halachah is that, if possible, one should try to eat less than usual – in order to make the fast more difficult. Yet on Eruv Yom Kippur there is a mitzvah to eat all day – in order to make the fast easier!

The difference is as follows: On Tisha B'Av the purpose of the fast is to make us feel miserable; On Yom Kippur the purpose of the fast is to detach us from physical pleasures, thereby making us more spiritual and angelic.

With this perspective that the feeling of hunger is really a manifestation of a higher spiritual level, the fasting itself can actually become easier.

The Fast Comes Before Everything Else

There are only 2 Torah mitzvos on Yom Kippur: No *Melocho* and the Fast. All the laws regarding *davening* in Shul (or even at

home) are all of Rabbinic nature. The prayers of Yom Kippur are all extremely important, the fast nevertheless comes first seeing as it is of Torah origin. Therefore, if one is only able to fast by staying in bed all day, then one is obligated to do so.

Should one have any medical issues that may infringe on the fast, they should first consult with a Rabbi. The rule of thumb is that we do anything we can in order to minimise breaking the fast, yet we are still conscious of the mitzvah to look after your life. Thus when these two are in conflict, it must be deliberated by a Rabbi.

Washing

The purpose of the decree on the other 4 restrictions was in a similar vein to food and drink – to detach us from physical pleasures thereby making us more spiritual.

Washing doesn't just mean not to have a shower. It means that we must not come into contact with any water since even minimal contact can be pleasurable.

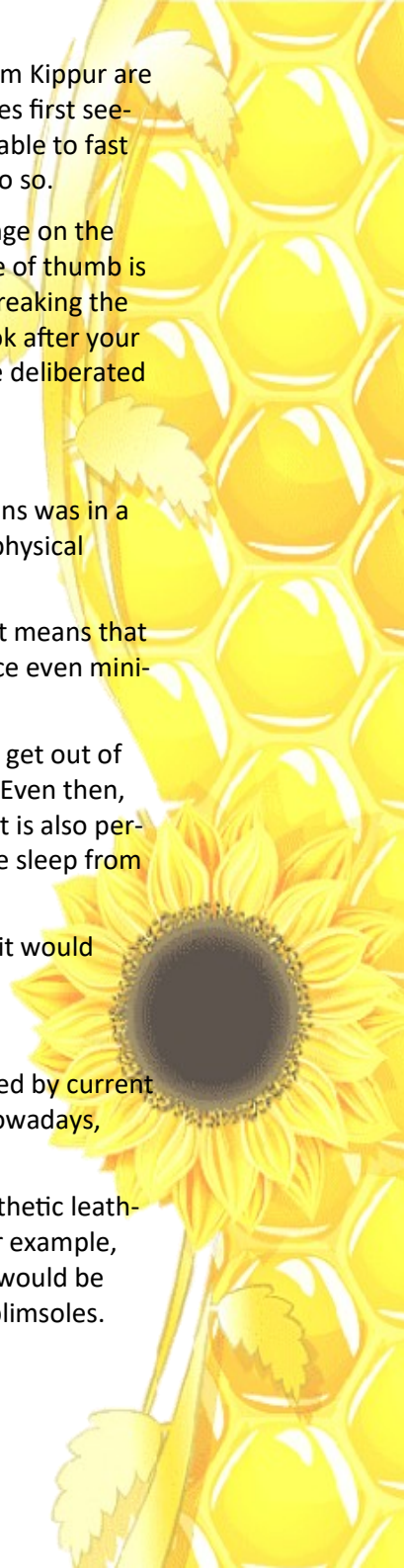
The main exception is washing our hands when we get out of bed (*netilas yadayim*) and after going to the toilet. Even then, one must be careful to wash only to the knuckles. It is also permitted for one to wet their fingers and then rub the sleep from their eyes in the morning.

One may not use perfume or aftershave, although it would seem that a spray deodorant would be ok.

Footwear

The restriction is against wearing, what is considered by current social norms, as comfortable outdoor footwear. Nowadays, that typically refers to leather footwear.

However, it will also include footwear made of synthetic leather if such shoes are typically worn in the street. For example, many forms of trainers. The type of footwear that would be permitted are shoes made of plastic, slippers and plimsols.



Kol Nidre - Arvit

Rabbi Jason Kleiman, BFA

Consider how Kol Nidre begins: The Rabbi proclaims in solemn assembly, in the presence of the Sifrei Torah, in the presence of all the congregation, “Biyeshiva shel maala, ubiyeshiva shel mata, al da’at Hamakom veal da’at hakahal, anu matirim lehitpalel im haabaryanim.” The meaning of these words is an amazing statement, where the community’s representative calls upon heaven itself, upon the Heavenly Court, to accept the presence and even the prayers of sinners who might be present.

By what authority can we do this? What is the source of the power that allows us, so to speak, to tell G-d whom to allow within our congregation? Where did this prayer originate? What compelled us to make it the first Yom Kippur prayer?

The answer lies far in the past. At the end of the Fifteenth Century, the Jews of Holland, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy were met with a wave of new immigrants, those who fled the Iberian Peninsula - those who survived and escaped the Spanish Inquisition. Many were not so lucky. Many sacrificed their lives rather than convert. Many more fled, but flight was extremely dangerous, especially because sea captains, who were pirates, would take the fare of the unfortunates, proceed a few miles offshore, throw them all overboard so that they could steal their belongings, and then they would return immediately for another boatload of lucrative human cargo. Some did survive, and joined the communities in countries to which they fled.

It was a dreadful trial, and many could not stand the test. Even today we find remnants of “Converso” communities in many parts of Spain, Portugal and parts of the rest of the world, who gave up their Jewishness, tried for a time to live secretly as Jews, but gave it up altogether in the course of time in fear of the dreaded Inquisition; for many caught backsliding were tortured, and often finally burned alive.

When the High Holy Days came, the converted Jews were sorely troubled, so a few of them found some excuse to make business trips abroad, to join at least on this night and day with their brother and sister Jews elsewhere in the world. They came to Jewish communi-

ties and found that some Jews resented those who had failed the test while they themselves had sacrificed so much. The Jews who had always lived in those countries were also troubled, and didn't know how to react to these secret Jews; should they be made welcome, or not.

As a result, the elders rose and solemnly declared, by the authority of the Court of Heaven as well as the court of earth, "We declare it lawful to pray with these unfortunate Jews, these 'sinners' (in Hebrew 'abaryanim')". They are our brothers and sisters.

This is the only use in the Mahzor, and indeed in scripture and rabbinic writing, of the word "abaryanim" for "sinners". In fact, in all of Halachic literature you do not find this word used in this way. Usually the sinner is called a "chote" or a "poshea" but not an abaryan. Abaryan has a double meaning: those who have gone beyond the boundary (hence sinner), and those from the land of Iberia! The abaryan – the Iberian, a hidden way of alluding to Marannos.

By what power can we do this? By the greatest power our people have: the great commandment of arvut, that we are all responsible each for the other. All Jews are responsible for each Jew, wherever they may be, whatever their trouble and suffering.

The Jews of Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, proved this, in those days of trouble and of multitudes of refugees, as Jewish communities had proven again and again in history, ever since Nebuchadnezzar dragged the first Jewish exiles to Babylon.

There was already a community in Babylon, small, but capable. Because, the Talmud, reading between the lines of the Bible – discovered a remarkable thing; that 10,000 of the people's leaders, "hecharash vehamasger," "artisans and craftsmen", were exiled 20 years before. Who were the so-called "artisans" and "craftsmen"? The Talmud looks behind the euphemism and proves that this was the community leadership, the Sanhedrin, the officers, the men of power, vision and statecraft. "What a blessing", says the Talmud, that G-d placed the first exiles into Babylon a generation earlier, to build the community, prepare the institutions, and to stand ready to receive their brothers and sisters when they would come, to care for them, heal their hurts take responsibility and finally absorb them. Because Kol Yisrael arevim ze baze. "All Israel are responsible one for the other."

It was not easy. The captives came in chains, dragged to a Babylonian victory celebration. The Jews who had already settled in Babylon were required by the conquerors to join in that celebration, and even to join in their taunts, crying out at the top of their voices, Nakte Barberaya, "The Barbarians" – meaning the Jews – "are captured and crushed". The Talmud describes how they went out to meet the fainting captives dressed in black beneath and in the obligatory festive white outside, running along the lines of captives, making believe they were shouting the required obscenities at them, Nakte Barberaya, Nakte Barberaya, and all the while pleading in whispers for news, "How is my uncle, what happened to my cousins, to my son, my daughter, my father, my mother", Nakte Barberaya, Nakte Barberaya.

Slaves were sold at auction. Their fellow Jews did everything in their power to ransom as many as they could; fed them, clothed them, found them domicile, taught them, absorbed them, because "All Israel are responsible for each other", Kol Yisrael arevim ze baze.

Eventually that community grew great. It produced the Babylonian Talmud, the greatest sages of our people of all time, and lasted for almost 2,500 years until modern times. It was the world's leading Jewish community for over a thousand years.

Again and again in history, wherever we lived, our people had born responsibility for each other, as Maimonides so trenchantly expressed, Ulemi aniyei Yisrael nosim eyneyhem; haleaku"m shesonin otan verodfin achareyhen? Ha eyn eyneyhem teluyot ela leacheyhen. "To whom do the unfortunate of our people look for help; to the gentiles that pursue and persecute them? Of course their help can only come from their brothers and sisters" (Hilchot Matnot Aniyim, 10:2). For all Israel are responsible for each other.

We are part of our people and today we are living once again through times of anti-Semitism and upheaval of coronavirus. We, too, must recognize our own responsibility, and in the words of Mordecai to Esther declare, "Who knows if not for this very moment and this very task were we placed here and given the ability to help!"

No matter where they are in the world or their individual circumstances, the concern for the plight of every Jew is a focus on Kol Nidre night, to make real the fact of arvut, that all children of Israel have a mutual responsibility for one another.

Whether we are able this year to go to shul or whether we are having to daven at home, we should remember that our prayers join with our brothers and sisters around the world and we are all in it together.

KOL YISRAEL AREVIM ZE LAZE. All Israel are responsible each for the other. Let no single Jew be left out! Let no single Jew suffer that with which Mordecai threatened Esther if she would not help, saying, "If you do not rise to the challenge, somehow we will find help from another quarter, but you and your household will be lost to the Jewish people". We are part of our people and must remain so. We all count. We all care. We are all responsible for each Jew, everywhere in the world. In the merit of our prayers and our acts this coming year, may Hashem bless you and grant you a good, healthy and happy year.

Shana Tova Um'tukah.



The Rabbi & the Priest

Rabbi Abroon Kramer, Leeds Kollel

A rabbi waiting at a bus stop outside a church experienced a rather bizarre incident. A Jewish woman walked out from the church, and upon seeing a rabbi she approached him and said “Do you know why I go to the church? It’s because they have something wonderful that we don’t have in Judaism.”

“Really?” said the rabbi. “And what’s that?”

“It’s the confessional,” she said. “You sit in this booth, and the priest is sitting on the other side of a partition. You say ‘Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned’. The priest says ‘You are forgiven.’ And presto. Forgiveness. You’re forgiven and you feel wonderful. Judaism just doesn’t offer that.”

“Madam, you are quite mistaken,” he said, “Judaism certainly has confession. On Yom Kippur, and even in our daily prayers we confess and God forgives. What do you mean when you say Judaism doesn’t have confession?”

“Rabbi, you don’t understand,” she replied. “At the church someone is listening”.

“Madam, *you* don’t understand,” said the rabbi. “The Jewish people also have Someone who is listening. Always. And not merely a flesh and blood human who doesn’t have the power of forgiveness.”

Let us test ourselves. Who do you relate with more: The rabbi or the lady?

If you truly are very holy, you will relate with the rabbi. In that case I would like to meet you, become your disciple, and humbly sit at your feet as you guide me in spiritual matters.

If however you are like the rest of us, then this is truly something that should be quite concerning. Why do we relate more with the woman? Why do we feel we don’t have Somebody listening?

This breaks down to two categories of people; Group A and Group B.

Group A

This group doubts the existence of God. They haven't met Him. Add to this the fact that millions of people around the world deny his very existence. We have yet to see a bolt of lightning striking down the deniers. Many things happen in the world that seem very odd, and according to our comprehension, if there were a God, things would look different. How could the holocaust have happened? Why is it that good things happen to bad people, and bad things happen to good people? Why is there so much suffering in the world?

This group in turn breaks down to two categories of people; Group Aa and group Ab.

Group Aa

This group have concluded that there is no God. If you are reading this article you are not likely to be from this group, so it is pointless to address this group. As they say, you cannot convert the converted.

Group Ab

This group doubts the existence of God, yet are open-minded about it. They are open to believing in a God, yet they struggle with these questions.

To this group we say: Your questions are valid. Truly perplexing issues. Yet they don't prove anything. If it would be demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that there is a God, these questions would not contradict that. The questions would remain as to why God does/does not do what I think he should be doing.

In truth, there are many shiurim/lectures to be found online, and in countless books and articles as well, that logically establish God's existence beyond a reasonable doubt.

Group B

This group believes in God. They have very few doubts about his existence. However, they do not see his involvement in their lives. Although on an intellectual level they "get" that there is a God, however they have a hard time feeling Him and His involvement in their lives.

I would like to focus on this group.

I have an acquaintance who I see every few weeks/months for the past 15-20 years. Recently, I saw him from a distance, and it appeared that his left eye was closed. I approached him to ask if all is well, to which he replied that he has been having muscle problems in his eye for the past two months. Most of the time, his eyelid won't open. However, that is the smaller of his problems. The bigger problem is that the muscle of the eye itself is also not functioning, and his left eye is facing downwards. Therefore, he is now seeing two separate views with his eyes. Not a double view, but two separate views. He has been to several doctors, and they cannot figure out why this is happening. (If you wish to say a prayer for him, his name is Avigdor ben Toiba).

This got me thinking: Normally eyes are synchronised. The two eyes are perched on top of the nose, one to the left and one to the right, "videoing" the scene in front of a person from two slightly different angles, thus giving a harmonised three-dimensional view. We never take the bother to even think about it. It just is the way it is. Why are we not amazed by this? Why don't we see hundreds of people walking around with their eyes not synchronised? What causes the muscles to hold the eyes perfectly in place?

This is merely a drop in the bucket of the wonders in the eyes. What causes the pupils to constrict when it's dark, and to dilate when it's bright? Do we realise that there are 120 million rod cells and 6 million cone cells in each of our eyes? The cornea, the retina, the eyelids, the aqueous humour that nourishes the cornea and the lens, and it just goes on and on. Without all of these existing and performing their functions, we would not be able to see, resulting in our lives being very downgraded. Did all of these millions of wonders just happen by themselves? If we "open our eyes" we will realise that the eyes require superfine accuracy and coordination of and between countless components. There is no logical reason they should all be functioning perfectly in the vast majority of times. To say it happens by chance would be like spinning dice a million times with every time landing a double-six!

The eye is just one organ in the body, and one body is just one of 7.5 billion people in the world, and humans are just a drop in the bucket of all the creatures in the world.

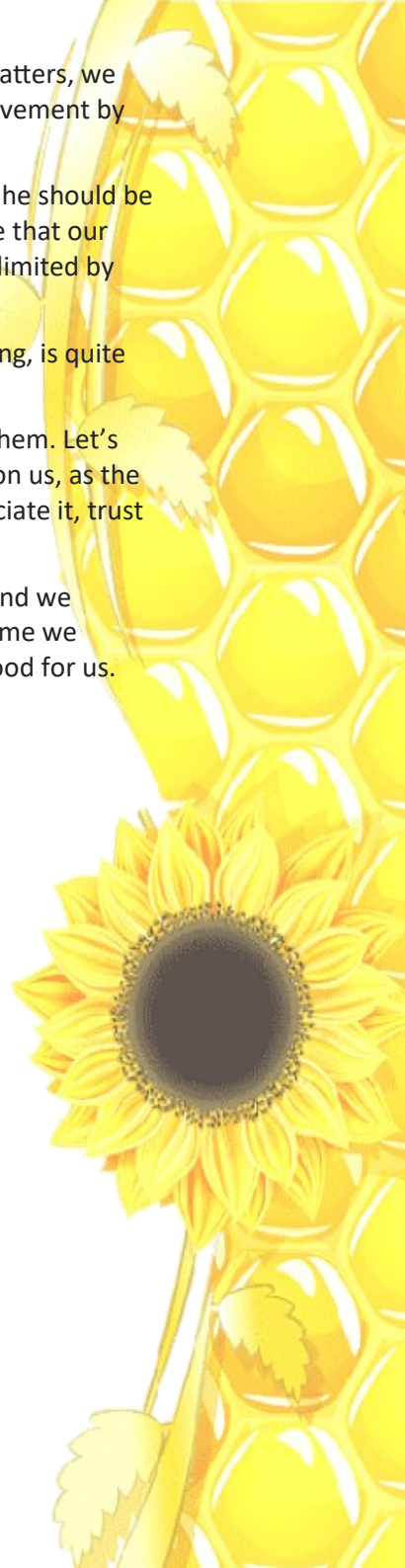
If we would train ourselves to contemplate on these matters, we would realise that there is just so much input and involvement by the One who creates it all.

Yes, we don't always see Hashem doing what we think he should be doing. However, we should humble ourselves to realise that our understanding of how things should be run is severely limited by the inadequacy of our brains!

We should feel confident that He knows what he is doing, is quite capable & involved, and listens to us.

At this time of year we renew our connection with Hashem. Let's take this opportunity to internalise that the onus is upon us, as the receivers of so much kindness, to think about it, appreciate it, trust him, and through that to connect with him.

We should ask him forgiveness for our shortcomings, and we should put forward our requests to him. At the same time we should bear in mind that only He knows what's truly good for us.



Heading into the Sukkah

Rabbi Avraham Gilbert, Eitz Chaim

Dear Friends,

As I write this article from my study, the rain is lashing the window pane. Autumn is usually damp in the UK, not the hottest time of the year. Yet with Sukkot dawning, especially hot on the heels of the Yamim Noraim, I have an irresistible urge to enter the Sukkah.

Why so? What are its features that beckon the Jewish soul to enter?

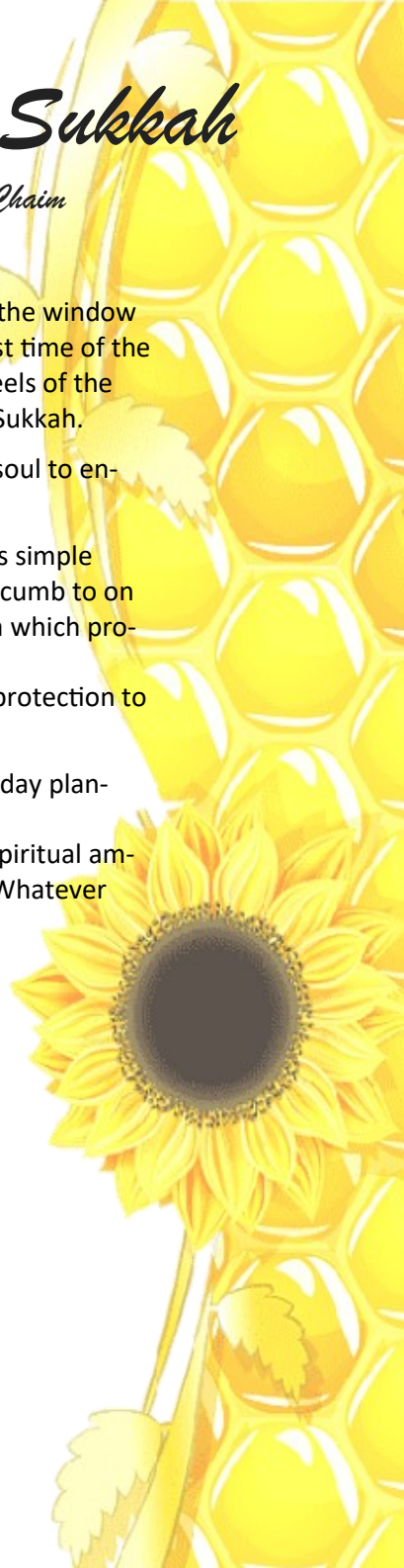
The answer I think is quite extraordinary! Apart from its simple structure, it is the feeling of Kedusha - holiness you succumb to on entering. The sukkah is a manifestation of the Shechina which protected the Children of Israel in the Wilderness.

Wilderness brings uncertainty. It has no borders, little protection to the elements and ravaged by time.

Our lives are similar, there is no certainty in our day to day planning. How much moreover in the light of Covid 19.

Yet the Sukkah, fragile in appearance but sturdy in its spiritual ambience, is our guiding emblem in our bitachon – trust. Whatever comes our way we stake our belief in Hashem.

May we all enjoy a happy and peaceful Sukkot!




Together in the Shaky Sukkah

Rabbi Yossi Dansky, Leeds Kollel

The days are getting shorter, the leaves are turning brown and everyone's heading indoors to the warmth and shelter of their cosy homes. Yet, year in, year out at this time of year, we Jews are heading outdoors, erecting flimsy huts and then moving in for the week! This doesn't seem very normal, but of course we have some very good reasons and, in any event, our perception of normal has been well and truly turned on its head this past year.

In our homes, surrounded by solid walls and 21st century insulation, we feel strong and secure and it is easy to forget Who is really in control. But when we sit in the Sukkah, the walls swaying in the wind and cold rain droplets diluting our chicken soup, we imbibe the powerful message of our own limitations and human frailty. Going into the Sukkah can be compared to going into lockdown. Pre-Covid, society seemed pretty okay. People were employed, had food on the table and many had even the means for trips abroad and other perks. Life was stable, predictable. And then suddenly, the rug was pulled from under our feet. We no longer knew what the next day would bring. With the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic, Hashem was introducing us to uncertainty, instability and a startling realisation that we are not actually in control. We cannot even decide when to step out of our front doors.

And indeed, living such a temporary way of life, has been acknowledged in the past. We read in the book of Bamidbar about the evil Bilaam who was on a mission to curse the Jewish people. Having reached the location in the desert where the Jews were encamped, he took in the sight of the Jews' tents spread out below the mountain upon which he stood. Astounded by what he encountered, he exclaimed, "Ma toivu ohalecha Yaakov – How good are your tents Yaakov!", words that became a part of prayer said every morning. Rabbi Yonasan Eibschutz (1690-1764) expounds on this verse, as follows: A Jew's residence in this world is very much like those who dwell in tents. Constantly moving and relocating, we are not content to stagnate, we are persistently seeking growth and always in transit. This world for us is only a station, never a destination.



Of course, for many of us, after spending so many months surrounded by the same four walls, moving into a cheerfully decorated Sukkah might provide a welcome respite and change of scenery!

There is another really incredible aspect to Sukkot that sets it apart from all the other Yamim Tovim. When it comes to Shabbat, it strikes you how much Shabbat is a time of personal growth and introspection. The laws of Shabbat are very much conducive to achieving this end. We are told not to travel more than a certain distance out of our location on Shabbat. If unexpected guests turn up, one would not be allowed to cook extra. All food for Shabbat must be cooked before and we cannot carry food in from another place outside of our property (that is without an eruv!).

Then we have the festivals, which are more about expansiveness and inclusivity. We are permitted to cook on Yom tov as needed, in the event of unexpected guests. We can also transport food from one place to the next. Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot are the three pilgrim festivals when the Jews travelled en masse, often a great distance, to the Bet Hamikdash in Jerusalem.

However, the festivals do have some aspects of a more narrow focus. While we may have guests round the seder table, in the times of the Bet Hamikdash, when they dined on the Pesach lamb sacrifice, everyone partaking of the meat had to have booked before Yom tov. It was eaten in family groups, all arranged beforehand. Even today, some people uphold a custom not to eat in other people's houses on Pesach.

On Shavuot we celebrate the giving of the Torah and it is regarded as the Yom Tov connected with Moshe. Whilst the entire nation surrounded the foot of the mountain, Moshe alone ascended the mountain. In the merit of Moshe, we received the manna, which tasted of whatever the individual desired. There would be a family dining together on manna and it was as if whilst one was having a fish meal, another was having meat and yet another was enjoying pizza. Together yet individuals.

We see a similar idea regarding Pesach. Pesach is the Yom Tov connected to Moshe's sister Miriam. It was in the merit of Miriam that we were sustained for 40 years in the desert by the life-giving waters of the well, known as "The Well of Miriam". The Chida (1724-1806) comments how the waters of the well tasted to its drinker

like whatever beverage they fancied.

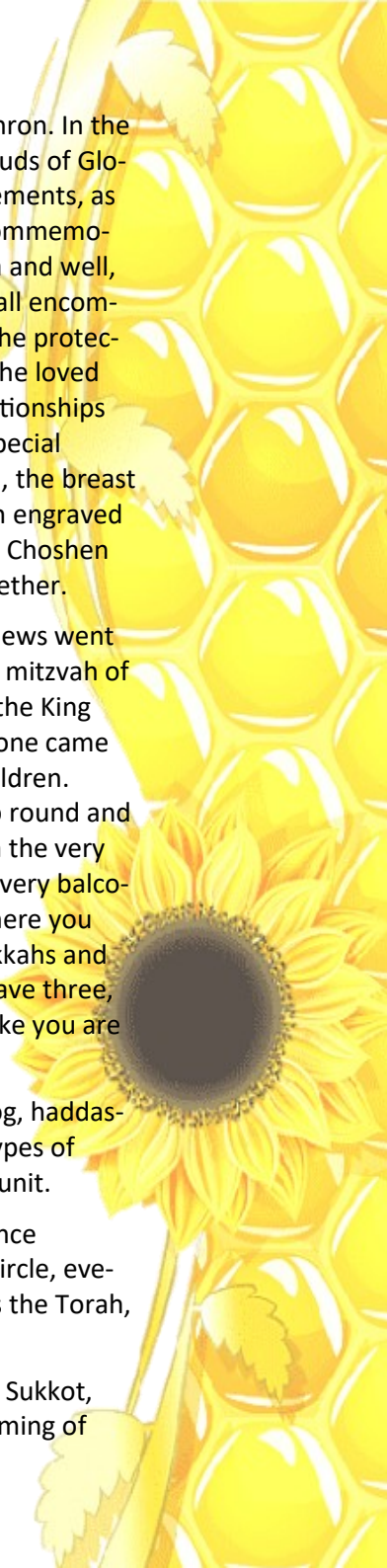
Sukkot is the Yom Tov connected to Moshe's brother, Ahron. In the merit of Ahron, the Jews had the "Ananei Hakavod – Clouds of Glory" in the desert. These clouds protected us from the elements, as well as from enemy arrows, and the festival of Sukkot commemorates these miraculous clouds. As opposed to the manna and well, which catered to the individual, the Jewish nation were all encompassed by the clouds of glory, together as one entity in the protection of the clouds. Ahron was the ultimate peacemaker, he loved peace and pursued it, dedicating his life to repairing relationships between people. As the Kohen Gadol, Ahron wore the special clothes of the Kohen Gadol, which included the Choshen, the breast plate, upon which were the twelve precious stones, each engraved with a name of one of the twelve tribes. Ahron wore the Choshen when he went into the Holy of Holies, bringing us all together.

Although Pesach and Shavuot were also times that the Jews went to the Bet Hamikdash, Sukkot stands out as the time the mitzvah of Hakhel took place. The entire nation assembled to hear the King read from the book of Devarim, the one time that everyone came together to listen to the King, men, women and even children. There is a custom on Sukkot to go Sukkah hopping; to go round and visit other people's Sukkahs, often seen here in Leeds. In the very populated parts of Israel, you end up with a Sukkah on every balcony and spare bit of pavement. It is an incredible sight. There you have everyone outdoors in the street singing in their Sukkahs and they all join in with each other's singing and often you have three, four, five households all singing together, often it feels like you are in one big Sukkah!

Also, on Sukkot we assemble the four species, lulav, etrog, haddasim and aravot. These four species represent different types of Jews. We take these and bind them together as a single unit.

Finally, Sukkot culminates in Simchat Torah when we dance Hakafot, in a circle. When a group of people dance in a circle, everyone is equidistant to the centre. The centre represents the Torah, we all have an equal share in the Torah.

Through us all coming together in this time of unity over Sukkot, may we merit the gathering in of our people with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.



The Joys of Life

Rabbi Binyomin Simcha Schwartz, Leeds Kollel

Picture this:

A groom arrives at his wedding, yet he's gloomy and glum. His bride, though bubbly and bright, is bewildered, "Are you not excited for our big day?!"

The groom is indignant, "Of course I am, don't you see how I've arranged such a phenomenal wedding, with dazzling décor, a mouth-watering meal, an orchestra... everything! I'm just not in the mood of actually being happy. But I don't understand, my mood is but one small component of the evening, can't it be overlooked?"

One of the fascinating, lesser known, commandments of the Sukkot holiday is (Deut. 16:14,15) 'Vesamachta Bechagecho Vehoyiso Ach Someach - You shall be happy on this holiday and be exclusively happy'. We've been given a mitzvah to endeavour to feel only pure joy for the entirety of the holiday.

At first this seems confusing, I'm sitting in my Sukkah, waving a beautiful Lulav and etrog, why is there a commandment to have joy? The other holidays, although happy occasions, don't have a specific commandment as such, which begs the question, why here?

In fact, one may wonder how could I even be commanded to be happy? Is it even a choice? Is it not just dependant on my personal mood and circumstances at the time?

Let us step back a minute, and together lets enjoy the panoramic view of our past month.

We've travelled through a dramatic few weeks, from the Selichot services to the shofar sounding on Rosh Hashana through the days of awe all the way to the introspection of Yom Kippur. Each day and period with its own special mitzvot, rites and rituals, culminating now with the holiday of Sukkot.

We've spent these past few weeks renewing, refreshing and reinforcing our personal relationship with G-D. On Rosh Hashana, we reflected; On Yom Kippur, we repented. We've corrected any slip

ups we may have had and G-D had granted us a clean slate. He looks at us now as new-borns, with only our good deeds still on record. It's as if we've been born anew – just better! Picture a friend that's been wronged, and when making amends they not only forgive, but actually choose to *totally* forget any previous connotations, yet they only remember the positives of the relationship. Its more than just a restart or a reboot, rather it's a gift that's phenomenally invigorating and actually startlingly refreshing! Coming out of this transformation, we are fresh people committed to a better year ahead with G-D ready to bestow on us a year full of blessings.

A new start is a gift, one that should leave any thinking person elated. In any relationship, such an opportunity would be relished. With G-D, it's simply dazzling. To think that my relationship with G-D is never over can be a boost to a person, unmatched by any physical opportunity any of us are likely to meet at any point in our lives. Every single year, no matter how much I've fallen, as long as I am ready to recommit, He will let me restart with a clean slate and accept me as I am with open arms.

The time in the Sukkah is referred to in Kabbalah as being in the 'Tzila D'mehemnusa - our private time in G-D's presence'. This is the launch of our new start. We simply need to tune into this, and ecstasy will fill our hearts.

With this, perhaps, we can understand this direction to be happy on Sukkot better. If I lack excitement on this Yom Tov, or even just feel a little blasé about it all, I may just be acting like our gloomy groom with his bewildered bride.

Every sensible person would agree that a groom who is miserable at his own wedding is not just missing one aspect of that evening, he evidently has something seriously wrong with his entire relationship. If his wife really meant so much to him, he would be swept along despite any mood swings that he may otherwise have endured. He just needs to take that little step back and look at the opportunity and delight of the moment, the beckoning call of his new start with a (hopefully!) loving and beloved spouse, and this perspective will automatically fill his heart with joy.

This is what Sukkot is all about. It's the opportunity to catch our breaths and look back at the feelings that the days have engen-

dered and what we have been privileged to have experienced, and the joy will seep into our hearts. The Torah is telling us with this commandment, about a phenomenal bounty of joy that's just waiting for us to tap into, with these few simple thoughts. The choice is ours, with a few minutes of introspection at the past weeks coupled with the endless opportunity for a fresh divine connection going forward, and the floodgates of joy will open up for us!

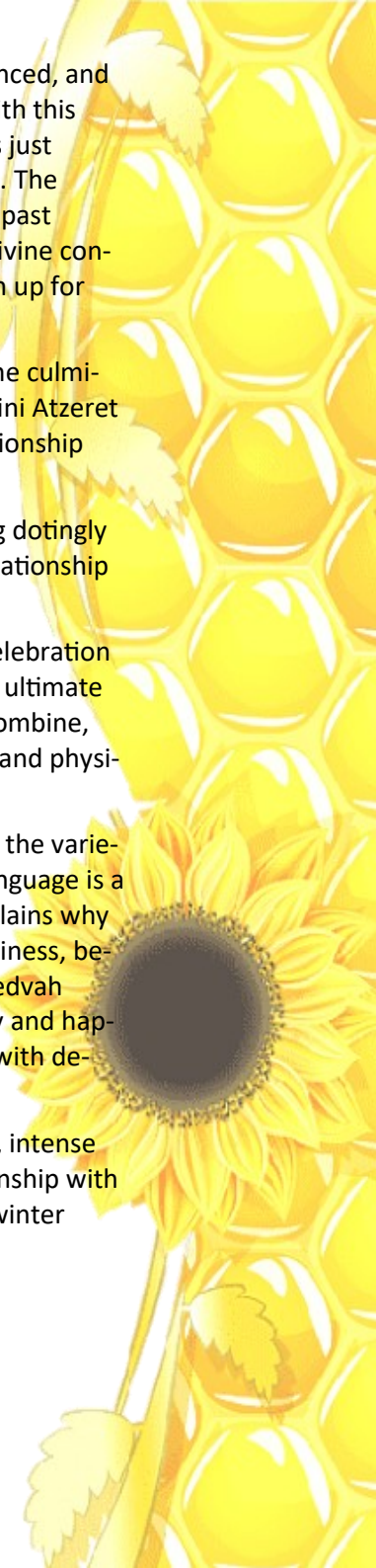
This analogy is personified at the climax of the holiday. The culmination of Sukkot is the final two days of the Holiday: Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. These days are the epitome of a relationship done right.

- Shmini Atzeret we are taught, is a loving G-D saying dotingly to us "Please don't go, I'm loving this newfound relationship with you, stay the extra day!"
- Simchat Torah: On this sublime day, we dance in celebration of the opportunity to study His divine wisdom. The ultimate connection is always when emotion and intellect combine, and Torah is the embodiment of this, as the divine and physical meet as a kaleidoscope of intense beauty.

It's told that the Eskimos have twenty different words for the varieties of snow flurries and the various kinds of blizzards. Language is a reflection of societies' focus and priorities in life. This explains why in Judaism we are inundated with words for joy and happiness, besides for 'Simcha', we also have Gila, Rina, Ditzah and Chedvah amongst others. Each one connotes different forms of joy and happiness in life, because... Judaism done right, is a Judaism with delight!

May we all merit to tap into this holiday of boundless joy, intense connection and the delight of a renewed personal relationship with G-D, and lets take it with us to empower us through the winter months ahead!

Chag Sameach!



Hoshana Rabbah

Rabbi Mendel Sufrin, BAA

The last day of Sukkot is called Hoshanah Rabbah, which means "The great Hoshanah"

It is so called because during the first six days of Sukkot (except Shabbat), we circle the Bimah once, while holding the Lulav and Etrog. A different prayer is said each day according to the Aleph-Bet and each phrase is followed by the word Hoshanah (which means 'Please save/help'). On the seventh day- Hoshanah Rabbah - we circle the Bimah Seven times and we say the word Hoshana numerous times, hence the name "The great Hoshanah".

This practice commemorates and corresponds to the circuits made around Yericho (Jericho) by Joshua and the Jewish people when they entered Israel. On each of the first six days they circled Yericho once, and on the seventh day they circled Yericho seven times (before the walls of the city sank into the ground). So too, on the first six days we circle the Bimah once and on Hoshanah Rabbah we circle it seven times.

This day is somewhat connected to Yom Kippur because although Hashem has inscribed and sealed us on Yom Kippur, any evil decree can be reversed on Hoshanah Rabbah, if the individual has done Teshuvah (repentance).

It is customary for men to stay awake the night of Hoshanah Rabbah and read through the entire fifth book of The Torah - Sefer Devarim. Some communities read it from a Sefer Torah. Many also recite the whole of Tehillim (book of Psalms).

After the Hoshanah prayers are completed in the morning, five Aravot (willows) which are bound together are taken and beaten on the ground five times.

During the day we eat a festive meal. We begin with Challah and we dip a piece in honey, symbolising a sweet new year. Many have the custom of eating Kreplech during this meal. Kreplech are pieces of dough with meat inside.

Wishing everyone a healthy, happy and sweet new year 5781.

Are we saying Goodbye?!

A reflection of the past few weeks!

Rabbi Yaakov Kohn, Leeds Kollel

We are told 2 reasons why the day of 'Shemini Atzeret' is such an extraordinary and unique day.

Our Torah relates to this day as 'Atzeret' a day of restraining. Rashi interprets these words in a fascinating way – in this past month we have celebrated many inspirational days from the moments of awe on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to the festive and joyous times on Sukkot, such occasions of closeness and connection to our Holy and loving Father! Then comes the time to say 'goodbye' as we enter the chilly and dark winter! So G-d tells us 'let's spend one more day together before we 'part'.

Nevertheless, Rashi elsewhere reveals a slightly different definition to this meaningful day. Over the Sukkot period in the Temple, the Kohanim brought up 70 offerings resembling the 70 nations of the world (the Torah counts 70 nations unlike 193 in the United Nations!). The day after, G-d informs us "Now I want to celebrate a day just with you, my Jewish people. **Just you and Me.**"

In this 2nd explanation there is no mention of any parting or of any 'goodbye parties' but rather just a close time together between Hashem and His people. So what is the real explanation?

Allow me to share with you a fascinating perspective that I heard regarding this. Yes, there is in fact 2 different types of people to which the Torah is referring to. There are those women and men who would have gained somewhat from the High holiday period, but didn't allow it to arouse and inspire them too much. For them, they will be going back to the winter, the people they were before, but our loving Father wants to have a day together before they bid farewell!

But let us imagine others who used the past few weeks to grow and climb, to fill their lives with doing Mitzvot and good deeds, to care for others and cultivate a beautiful relationship with the Almighty.

YOU ARE NOT SAYING GOOD BYE!

Rather, the towers that you have built will hopefully continue to stand, you will go into the winter and add on more floors to your skyscraper. The happiness and connection you have achieved will hold onto to, and Please G-d you will have a very special and meaningful year ahead.

Which group are we in?!

We can choose, it's up to us!!

