

L'Chaim



The Story of Yona is read on Yom Kippur

The streets of Jerusalem were full of Jews who had come to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. The Prophet Yona was among the happy celebrants until the prophecy came to him, saying: "Arise! Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against her, for their wickedness has ascended before Me."

For Yona, this was an unwelcome mission, for if the sinful people of that great, gentile metropolis were to heed his call and return to G-d, how would that reflect upon his recalcitrant brethren--those who had resisted the pleas of so many prophets? Wouldn't G-d's anger burn against them all the more? And the Ninevites, the bitter enemies of the Israelites, would be forgiven! No, Yona decided, he would not follow the bidding of his Master. He would flee. Never would he, even unwittingly, cause punishment to his beloved brethren. He would escape to the sea, and perhaps there, holy prophecy would depart from him and he would be free of the onerous command.

When he arrived in the city of Jaffa Yona blended into the general fray and hastened to find a ship bound for Tarshish. He approached the local seamen, but they told him all ships had set sail and there were none to be hired. Yona was almost frantic as his eyes scanned the horizon. Out as far as he could see there seemed to be a dark speck on the sea--could it be a ship? In what seemed to be an incredibly short span of time, it drew close enough to identify. Sure enough, it was a ship heading straight to port.

Even before it had time to anchor, Yona boarded and approached the captain. "Take me to Tarshish at once. Don't worry about passengers--I will pay the entire fare. Just make haste." The captain accepted the fare and set sail, but no sooner had they reached the open sea than a violent storm engulfed the ship. The frightened sailors tried to steady the ship, and desperately tried to return to port, but they were trapped in the swirling waves. Standing on the deck, they could see other ships passing by on peaceful waters. But for them, the sea churned with ever-increasing fury.

They decided to cast lots, and each time the lot fell on Yona. "Who are you and where are you from? What people do you belong to?" they asked.

"I am a Jew, and I fear G-d, Creator of the earth and the seas," he replied.

"What have you done to bring about this storm, and how can we stop it?"

Yona was resigned to his fate. He looked at them and replied, "Cast me into the sea, and the storm will abate."

But the sailors were unwilling to commit what would surely be murder. They tried to bring the ship to port, but to no avail. Finally, they agreed to test his word and lowered him partially into the raging waters. Immediately the storm ceased. When they pulled him out, it raged again. It was clear to them that they would perish unless they heeded his words, and begging forgiveness, they cast him into the sea.

Yona suddenly felt himself being swallowed by a huge fish. For three days and nights Yona lived inside the belly of the fish and prayed to G-d in total repentance. When he had returned to G-d completely, G-d caused the fish to swim near the shore and spit Yona out onto the beach.

He entered the huge city of Nineveh and proclaimed G-d's word: "In 40 days Nineveh will be overturned!" The people of the city believed him, and even the king sat in sackcloth and ashes and repented. They all repented both in word and deed. When G-d saw their sincerity and how they had turned from all their evil, He relented and pardoned the city.

Yona was sick at heart, for what he had so greatly feared had indeed transpired, and he prayed to G-d, saying, "Wasn't this why I fled to Tarshish, for I knew You would always pardon a sinner who returns to you, even these evil people! Now, death is more preferable to me than life!"

And G-d answered him, "Are you so deeply grieved that this huge and populous city has been spared?"

Yona left the city and built a booth in the eastern outskirts, intending to wait out the forty-day period to see if the Ninevites would indeed remain true to their resolve. The heat beat down relentlessly piercing his makeshift shelter, and the prophet slept fitfully through the sweltering night.

Overnight G-d had caused a leafy kikayon tree to sprout and shed a blessed coolness overhead. Yona was full of joy on account of the kikayon tree. The very next morning G-d sent a worm to attack the kikayon, and it withered and died. The sun beat down and an east wind blew, and Yona wanted to die. G-d said to him, "Are you so grieved on account of the kikayon?"

"Yes," replied Yonah, "I wish that I would die."

And G-d said to him: "You took pity on a plant which you neither planted nor labored over. It appeared overnight and vanished overnight. And I--should I not take pity on Nineveh, a great city in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people as well as animals?"

And Yonah was still.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

We are like clay in the Creator's hand (from the Yom Kippur prayers)

Bricks of clay can build an opulent mansion or a wretched hovel; so too it is with us. The only question is the type of edifice we wish to build -- a palace to bear testimony to G-d's glory, or a destitute and poverty-stricken shack. (Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli)

For the sin that we have sinned

When confessing our sins it is customary to beat the chest just over the heart as a symbol of repentance as each transgression is enumerated. Yet logically the opposite would seem to make more sense: Should not the heart strike out at the hand that actually committed the sin? Our intention, however, is the source of all transgression -- the lusts and desires of the heart that lead to sin. (Hegyonot Shel Ami)

For the sin that we have sinned with an insincere confession (literally "a confession of the mouth")

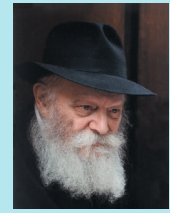
This type of sin is one to which we have already confessed, but have only given lip service, as it states in Psalms, "For my transgression I will tell; I am worried that I not sin." Although the lips may have declared their concern, the heart does not participate... (Torat Yitzchak)

How to repent

A Jew once came to the saintly Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin and cried, "Rebbe! I am a very great sinner and I want to repent." "So why don't you repent?" the Rabbi asked him. "I don't know how," he replied. "Where did you learn how to sin?" the Rabbi asked. "First I sinned, and only afterward did I learn that it was a sin," he explained. "In that case, you already know how to proceed," the Rabbi said. "All you have to do is repent. Afterwards you'll see that you did it properly!"



6:03 Candle Lighting Time
NY Metro Area
9 Tishrei / October 11
Fast of Yom Kippur begins 6:17 PM
Yizkor
Shabbat/Yom Kippur/Fast Ends: 7:00 PM



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The mitzva of teshuva, returning to G-d in sincere repentance, is a commandment independent of a specific time or place. Whenever a Jew commits a sin, G-d forbid, he is immediately obligated to do teshuva.

In this light, a Jew who never sins is technically exempt from the mitzva of teshuva, for he has neither misdeeds to regret nor a need to repair his relationship with G-d.

According to this simple explanation of teshuva, the comments of Maimonides concerning Yom Kippur are problematic: "Yom Kippur is a time of teshuva for all," he writes, "both for the individual and collectively...everyone is obligated to do teshuva and confess his sins on Yom Kippur."

The question raised by Maimonides' words is therefore two-fold: If a person is obligated to repent immediately after committing a sin, why repeat the process again on Yom Kippur? Furthermore, why would a Jew who never sinned need to do teshuva at all? Yet Maimonides maintains that "everyone," without exception, is obligated in teshuva on Yom Kippur.

The answer to these questions lies in the very essence of Yom Kippur and the uniqueness of the day itself. The teshuva one does on Yom Kippur is of a different nature than the teshuva that is required as a result of one's transgressions, and is an obligation that falls equally on every single Jew, regardless of his spiritual standing.

Throughout the year, the mitzva of teshuva is dependent on the individual's personal circumstances. If a Jew sins, he must do teshuva in direct proportion to the severity of the transgression. A person who never sins is logically exempt from this obligation.

On Yom Kippur, however, the obligation to return to G-d stems from the holiness of the day itself. On Yom Kippur, it doesn't matter whether a Jew transgressed, G-d forbid. For those Jews who may have committed a sin and not properly repented during the year, Yom Kippur offers atonement simply by virtue of its holiness.

At the same time, those individuals who have already corrected their behavior can reach an even higher level of teshuva on the holiest day of the year. Maimonides explains that every Jew must confess his sins on Yom Kippur, even those for which he has already done teshuva, as it states in Psalms, "For my sin is before me always."

This obligation applies even to tzadikim (the righteous), for "there is no righteous person in the world who does only good and does not sin." Every single Jew is obligated to thoroughly scrutinize his deeds on Yom Kippur, irrespective of his current level of observance.

The uniqueness of Yom Kippur -- a "time of teshuva for all" -- lies in the special bond between the Jew and G-d that is revealed on that day, a connection that transcends the limitations of the natural world.

Integral to this special relationship with G-d is the obligation to do teshuva in an ever-increasing and ascending manner, both for those who may not yet have done teshuva in the most basic sense and those who stand on a higher spiritual plane.

With true teshuva, every Jew can renew his commitment and attachment to G-d on Yom Kippur, and be blessed with a good inscription in the Book of Life for the coming year.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Vol. 29

Your Soup Is Ready

By Rabbi Eli Friedman

This is what I learned from my father:

A newly-married couple is sitting in their kitchen, the first morning of their marriage. The husband says, "Can I ask you for a bowl of soup?"

The wife is happy to help and she gets busy whipping him up a delicious bowl of soup. "I'm running out and I'll be right back," says the husband.

She finishes the soup and places the steaming bowl on the table and sits down to wait for him.

3,000 years later, he returns. And the soup is cold.

Is he disappointed that the soup is cold? Certainly not. 3,000 years will do that to soup.

He is not disappointed - he is overwhelmed and humbled by her devotion. She is still there, his house is still there, even the bowl of soup is still there. Sure it's cold, but that's no surprise. It's there - that's the surprise.

If you get a chance during Yom Kippur, catch a glimpse of the entire crowd in Shul, G-d bless them all!

Take a look at a People whose G-d asked them for a cup (613 cups actually) of soup over 3,000 years ago, and there they are, and there's the house (Shul). And there's the soup; everyone making their way through the Yom Kippur prayers G-d asked them for 3,000 years ago.

The soup is a little cold. But they have nothing to be ashamed of. They're protecting that bowl of soup with everything they've got. G-d cannot be disappointed. On the contrary, G-d must be flattered.

Could we all do a little more? Of course. But no matter - we're being proud Jews, we're celebrating His Holy Days, we're trying to read His language and do His Mitzvot, to give Him what He wants - we're nothing less than awesome.

There is nothing at all to wait for before Moshiach comes. Think to yourself how proud Moshiach would be if he walked into the room right now, and caught a crowd of Jews - the descendants of the people G-d asked for the soup - in the act of preserving what G-d wanted, so many difficult and painful years after He said He'd be right back.

If, during the Yom Kippur services, you're ever wondering whether you're good enough to ask for the kind of epic year you're asking for, don't worry. Look around the room, accept that you're part of something marvelous and supernatural, and be proud.

And let this sink in: whatever your struggles and flaws, they're nothing compared to the privilege and credit you have, because you are a central player on G-d's dream team.

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SLICE OF LIFE

The Shofar and the Wall

By Rabbi Moshe Segal



The narrow alley in front of the Western Wall

Editor's note: The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was twice destroyed — by the Romans in the year 69 CE, and by the Babylonians on the same date in 423 BCE. One wall remains standing as a living symbol of the Jewish people's ownership over the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem — the Kotel HaMaaravi or "Western Wall."

What follows is an excerpt (translated from the Hebrew) from the memoir of Rabbi Moshe Segal (1904-1985), a Lubavitcher Chassid who was active in the struggle to free the Holy Land from British rule.

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

on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The British Government placed policemen at the Kotel to enforce these rules.

On Yom Kippur of that year [1930] I was praying at the Kotel. During the brief intermission between the musaf and minchah prayers, I overheard people whispering to each other: "Where will we go to hear the shofar? It'll be impossible to blow here.

There are as many policemen as people praying..." The Police Commander himself was there, to make sure that the Jews will not, G-d forbid, sound the single blast that closes the fast.

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

"What for?"

"I'll blow."

"What are you talking about? Don't you see the police?"

"I'll blow."

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

I opened the drawer and slipped the shofar into my shirt. I had the shofar, but what if they saw me before I had a chance to blow it? I was still unmarried at the time, and following the Ashkenazic custom, did not wear a tallit.

I turned to person praying at my side, and asked him for his tallit. My request must have seemed strange to him, but the Jews are a kind people, especially at the holiest moments of the holiest day, and he handed

me his tallit without a word.

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

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

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

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

For the next eighteen years, until the Arab conquest of the Old City in 1948, the shofar was sounded at the Kotel every Yom Kippur. The British well understood the significance of this blast; they knew that it will ultimately demolish their reign over our land as the walls of Jericho crumbled before the shofar of Joshua, and they did everything in their power to prevent it.

But every Yom Kippur, the shofar was sounded by men who know they would be arrested for their part in staking our claim on the holiest of our possessions.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

In the Days of Selichos 5728 [September, 1968]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

A basic theme of Rosh Hashanah is that it effects the coronation of G-d as king of Israel and king of the universe, as expressed in our heartfelt prayer and request: "Reign over the entire world!"

Such a request implies the readiness to set oneself in full conformity with the divine sovereignty; that one is prepared to utterly submit to the divine king, to the point that one's entire being, and all that one has, is the king's alone. This is the meaning of kabalat ol—"the acceptance of the yoke" of the divine sovereignty, which finds expression in all areas of daily life.

In truth, every day must bring an acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, particularly when one recites the Shema. But there exists a most basic difference: on the daily level, kabalat ol, while being the inaugural and fundamental act of the day, is merely the basis upon which one's behavior throughout the day is predicated. Rosh Hashanah, however, is a time when submission to the sovereignty of Heaven is also the quality and content of the day, pervading the entire person and manifesting itself in everything he does.

Every period and every locality has its special qualities and its specific difficulties.

In our time, there is a prevailing trend in many circles toward increased self-sufficiency and independence, not

only in regard to material matters, but in ideological matters as well; an increasing unwillingness to submit to the established order, to accept things before they are fully understood by one's own mind, and so on. This, it would seem, represents a challenge to the concept of kabalat ol.

This is particularly the case in countries that are (relatively) young and which were established upon a foundation of self-initiative and youthful energy, and where this spirit characterizes the entire structure of personal and communal life—all of which make it more difficult to conform with the criteria of kabalat ol.

Notwithstanding the above, we have the axiom that G-d does not demand from a person something that is beyond his capacity. Since the submission to the sovereignty of G-d is the essence of Rosh Hashanah (and the foundation of all our deeds throughout the year), this is obviously applicable to all times and places. Certainly, it is possible and incumbent upon us to achieve a full acceptance of the divine kingship also in our time, and also in the above-mentioned circumstances.

Indeed, there is a special quality to our kabalat ol particularly in our time and in this part of the world. A person who is not conditioned to complete self-sufficiency but is accustomed to independence in certain areas but not in others—when such a person accepts something unquestioningly, this does not constitute a thorough and unequivocal acceptance. For such a person is accustomed to being told what to do and is often compelled to yield his will and modify his opinions. On the other hand, when a person who, as a rule, does not surrender his independence and his convictions is convinced that he must recognize and submit to a higher authority, this decision is made on a much deeper and more fundamental level and is substantiated by a total and immutable commitment.

the end of exile when You will acquire us again; come swiftly to have mercy upon us; proclaim that we are Your chosen people and we will acknowledge You as our G-d.

(From the Yom Kippur prayers)

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.
From the Archives

One of the unique points about Yom Kippur is the special service of the Kohein Gadol - the High Priest, who performed the Yom Kippur service on that day by himself.

For the part of the High Priest's service which was performed in the two outer halls of the Holy Temple, he wore gold clothing. The part of the service performed inside the Holy of Holies, however, was performed in plain white clothing.

Although the physical Holy Temple was destroyed - and we eagerly await its rebuilding - the spiritual Sanctuary within every Jew - his Holy of Holies - remains totally intact. Thus, each individual Jew is personally responsible to perform the special service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur.

The High Priest wore gold clothing for a large part of his special service to remind us that we should use the most precious and beautiful materials available in serving G-d; we should perform mitzvot in a beautiful and enhanced manner.

The white clothing of the High Priest, worn in the Holy of Holies, is a reminder though, that it is not enough to only do those mitzvot that involve us in material matters. Those mitzvot that are purely spiritual in nature, such as prayer and Torah study, must also be performed.

At the end of his service, the High Priest said a short prayer that the year should be a good year materially for himself, his tribe and all the Jewish people throughout the entire world.

This, too, is part of the service of every single Jew on the holiest day of the year and in the Holy of Holies of his heart. Each Jew on Yom Kippur should also pray for a good year not only for himself and his family, but for the entire Jewish people.

Shmuel Butman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקה

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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Spirits to Spirituality: Former Distillery Becomes Chabad Center



The former "Young Hearts Distilling Company" is now the home of Chabad Young Professionals in Raleigh, N.C.

The aroma of whiskey once permeated the air of this century-old brick building in downtown Raleigh, N.C. But soon, it will be filled with the scent of freshly baked challah and the sounds of prayer. In a boon for Jewish life in North Carolina, a former distillery is set to become the home of Raleigh's chapter of Chabad Young Professionals.

"There's a certain poetry to it," says Rabbi Zalmy Dubinsky, who, along with his wife Mushka, co-direct Chabad Young Professionals Raleigh. "Just as whiskey

takes time to mature and develop its character, we're creating a space where young Jews can grow into their identity."

The 8,100-square-foot space requires just minimal work to make it ready as CYP's new home, blending rustic charm with modern functionality. Its centerpiece is a versatile event space for Shabbat dinners and holiday celebrations, complemented by a dedicated sanctuary for daily minyanim. A 24/7 library and co-working area will allow members to use the space for all their needs. The rooftop deck offers downtown views, while a full-service kitchen supports preparation to fit the demand.

Customs

Why is there a repetition of certain verses during the closing prayer of Yom Kippur?

We say "Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad," once thereby accepting upon ourselves the yoke of Heaven with pure faith for the entire year. In addition, according to the Shlah, when we say the "Shema" out loud, having in mind that were we tested, we would willingly give up our lives to sanctify G-d's name, it is considered as if we actually stood firm in such a test. We say "Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto L'Olam Vaed" three times, for the past, present and future tenses, "G-d ruled, G-d rules, G-d will rule forever and ever." Lastly, we say, "G-d, He is G-d" seven times, to escort the Divine Presence from our midst through the seven Heavens.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Proclaim to all our love; walk in the midst of our camps; seek the redemption from our exile; reveal