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Rosh Hashana

Rosh Hashanah

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“If a person violates any commandment of the Torah – a positive or a negative command – whether this violation is intentional or unintentional, when one performs repentance and repents from the sin, he is

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Rosh Hashana & Shofar

- Why this Date?
- 4 Yearly Decrees
- The Prayers
- Why is Man Worthy?
- Shofar at Sinai?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16a commences with a Mishna, which states that the world is judged at four yearly intervals: on Passover for grain; on Shavuot for fruits; on Rosh Hashanah all members of mankind are judged; and on Succot, rain is judged. The Ran raises the obvious question that since man is judged on Rosh Hashanah, this judgment includes ‘all’ of man’s

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the Significance of SHOFAR

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by a student

taken from a Shiur by
Rabbi Israel Chait



What should a person have in mind when listening to the “Kol Shofar”, the sound of the Shofar? In Hilchos Teshuvah (3:4), Maimonides discusses the function of Shofar. Maimonides states that even though the voice of the Shofar is obligatory because of a decree of the Torah, there is also a philosophical concept. The voice of the Shofar is to awaken man from his slumber. It should cause one to investigate his actions, repent and remember his Creator. It is designed for those who forget the truth and waste their time in helpless and vain endeavors. It is to provoke them to analyze their souls, improve their ways and actions, and forsake their evil conduct and corrupt philosophies. This is a very large demand of an individual to be motivated to such a large degree by the simple voice of the Shofar. When one hears the Shofar it should prompt

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(Rosh Hashannah cont. from pg. 1)

Rosh Hashana

obligated to confess before G-d, Blessed Be He ... This confession is a positive command.” (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, laws of Repentance 1:1)

The period from Rosh HaShannah through Yom Kippur is devoted to the process of repentance. Each of us must attempt to engage in this fundamental process. What are we attempting to accomplish? What do we hope to achieve through this process?

Maimonides, in his Mishne Torah, devotes ten chapters to the Laws of Repentance. The quote above is a portion of the first law in this section. Maimonides explains that the violation of any commandment engenders a requirement to perform teshuva – repentance. Whether we sin through commission or omission, whether the sin is intentional or unintentional, we are required to repent. This repentance must be followed by vedoi – a verbal confession of the sin and a commitment to change our behavior. Maimonides emphasizes the importance of this verbal declaration. He explains that this declaration is a positive commandment of the Torah.

In short, Maimonides teaches us that wrongdoing requires a twofold response. We must perform teshuva and vedoi. Vedoi is a verbalization of the process of teshuva. We put into words our regret for past behavior and our commitment to change.

Which of these two responses is more fundamental – teshuva or vedoi? We would imagine that teshuva is the more essential element. However, Maimonides seems to indicate that vedoi is the more fundamental component. He explains that the vedoi is a positive command.

Apparently, Maimonides maintains that repentance requires a person to address the Almighty and declare one's contrition. Without the declaration, the process of repentance is incomplete. An unstated, internal sense of regret is inadequate. The repentant person must address Hashem and accept responsibility for his or her misdeeds.

This suggests that the process of teshuva is a prerequisite to vedoi. A person cannot make a meaningful declaration without an internal commitment. Therefore, in order to perform vedoi, teshuva must occur. Maimonides confirms this interpretation of his comments in the next chapter of his discussion of repentance. There, he explains that one who

performs vedoi without an internal commitment to change accomplishes little or nothing.[1]

“What is repentance? It requires that the sinner abandon the sin. And one must discontinue any contemplation of it. One must commit to not return to the behavior ... In addition, one must regret the past ... One should call upon Hashem as a witness that he will never return to the sin ... And one must declare these matters to which one has made an internal commitment.” (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:2)

Here, Maimonides describes in detail the process of repentance. He identifies five elements within the process. First, one must discontinue the sinful behavior. Second, one must refrain from even contemplating or fantasizing about the behavior. Third, the person must review past behaviors and feel sincere regret. Fourth, one must make a firm commitment to not return to the behavior. Maimonides then adds the person must verbalize these matters. This is the process of vedoi.



Maimonides' writings

What is Maimonides telling us about teshuva and vedoi? Maimonides begins with a question. He asks, “What is teshuva?” He then responds. He explains that the verbal

vedoi must follow the internal process. This is part of his description of teshuva. This strongly suggests that vedoi is part of the process of teshuva. It completes the process. How does vedoi complete the process? It seems that vedoi provides substance and finality to one's commitment. Through expressing one's thoughts in words, the person becomes more firmly committed to change.

It seems that Maimonides provides two different views on the role and significance of vedoi. In this chapter, vedoi is characterized as a part of the teshuva process. It is the element that lends finality to the process. This is a very different characterization than that provided in the first chapter. That characterization is described above. In the first chapter, Maimonides explains that vedoi is the fundamental response to sin. Teshuva is a prerequisite to a meaningful vedoi. How can these two views be reconciled?

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“One should not imagine that teshuva is limited to sins that involve some action – for example promiscuity, theft or larceny. Rather, just as one must repent from these, so one must seek out one’s improper attitudes and repent from them – for example, from anger, hatred, jealousy ...” (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Repentance 7:3)

In order to answer our question, we must consider another apparent contradiction in Maimonides’ treatment of repentance. We have discussed Maimonides’ description of the process of repentance. Let us now consider his position regarding the type of behaviors that require repentance.

In the law quoted above, Maimonides explains that the requirement to repent is not engendered solely by the violation of a commandment. We are also required to repent from improper attitudes or character traits. For example, we must attempt to abandon our hatreds and to temper and control our anger. We must evaluate all of our attitudes, identify our character flaws, and address them. In other words, even if a person has not violated a specific commandment, teshuva is required.

This conclusion does not seem to agree with Maimonides’ statement in the opening law of this section. In that law, Maimonides explains that teshuva and vedoi are required when a person violates a law of the Torah. This means that the violation of a commandment engenders the requirement to perform teshuva and vedoi. Some commission or omission must occur. This implies that poor attitude, alone, does not create an obligation to repent! How can these two positions be reconciled?

Let us return to our opening question. What are we attempting to accomplish through teshuva? What do we hope to achieve through this process? First, we must recognize that in sinning, we violate the Torah. We disregard the will of the Almighty. We rebel against the ultimate King. The vedoi that accompanies teshuva begins with the acknowledgment that we have sinned against the Torah. Through repentance, we attempt to earn atonement for this sin. We wish to avoid retribution or unpleasant consequences. In short, one objective of teshuva is atonement – kapparrah. But does teshuva have any other objective?

“Since one is granted volition ... one should endeavor to perform teshuva and vedoi in response to sin ...” (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Repentance 7:1)

Maimonides does outline another objective in the process of teshuva. In order to identify



Moses relays God’s message that the Jews find insight to repent by gazing at the serpent: the beast associated with evil speech.

this objective, we must consider the above quote. Maimonides explains that human beings are unique. We are endowed with freewill. We have the ability to choose between right and wrong. He explains that as a result of this faculty, we are required to engage in teshuva.

Why does the element of human volition engender an obligation to perform Teshuva? Freewill means that we are in charge of our self-improvement. To a great extent, we determine the degree to which we fulfill our individual potential. We decide whether we will squander our talents and lives, or whether we will strive to fulfill our potential.

We can only achieve personal fulfillment through an ongoing process of teshuva. In this process, we constantly reevaluate our lives and attitudes. We reconsider our personal mission

and constantly seek self-improvement. The objective is not to atone, but to purify – tahara.

In short, teshuva has two objectives. One objective is kapparrah – atonement for our sins. The second objective is tahara – personal improvement.[2]

This explains Maimonides’ position regarding which sins engender the obligation to perform teshuva. In the first chapter, Maimonides indicates that teshuva is a response to violation of the law. Maimonides is discussing the teshuva of kapparrah. Atonement is required when the law is violated. If the law has not been violated, the obligation to seek kapparrah is not engendered.

However, Maimonides teaches us that we should repent from improper attitudes and character traits. This is because, in addition to kapparrah, teshuva has a second objective. This objective is tahara – self-improvement. In order to achieve this objective, we must engage in an ongoing process of introspection. This process requires that we consider and evaluate our attitudes and character traits.

We can now explain Maimonides’ treatment of vedoi. In the first chapter of the Law of Repentance, Maimonides is explaining the process of atonement. In this process, the vedoi is the fundamental element. We have sinned against Hashem’s Torah. It is appropriate to verbally appeal to Hashem for forgiveness and atonement. Accordingly, vedoi is fundamental to achieving atonement. In this context, the vedoi is not merely the final step in teshuva. It is the essential element in the process of kapparrah.

However, teshuva is not merely a prerequisite in the process of achieving atonement. It is also a process that purifies and improves a person. In this process, the internal element is essential. Self-improvement requires thorough introspection. In the second chapter of the Laws of Repentance, Maimonides is explaining the process of teshuva. He describes it as a process of self-improvement. Its objective is internal change. In this context, vedoi completes the teshuva. It finalizes the internal commitments that result from the process of introspection. Therefore, in this context, Maimonides describes vedoi as the final element in the process of teshuva. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 2:3.

[2] See Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Al HaTeshuva, Part 1.

him to do teshuva. A total overhaul of the human personality is summoned by the Kol Shofar. One's entire approach to life has to be changed. Maimonides is not referring to teshuva – repentance – from a specific sin, but rather, a teshuva, which transforms the entire character of the sinner. How does the sound of the Shofar awaken a person to do teshuva? What is so unique about the Kol Shofar that can cause a person to redirect his life's energies and change?

It is apparent that the Kol Shofar must be related to a deep idea, which reflects upon human nature and stimulates one to change the focus of his life. The obvious question is what is this idea and how is it so compelling to evoke such a dramatic response. What is the philosophical principle that Maimonides alludes to?

The sanctity of the day of Rosh Hashana is described in the Torah as "Yom Teruah", a day of blasts. The Torah is very sparse in its description of the Kedushas Hayom, the sanctity of the day, other than saying it is a Yom Teruah. Why is the Torah so concise when describing the character of this day as opposed to Yom Kippur, where the Torah elaborates the sanctity of the day as a day of affliction? It is evident that these two words "Yom Teruah" must encapsulate the entire character of the day. This also reinforces the concept that the Kol Shofar strikes at the very heart of man, his very nature. The sanctity of the day as a Yom Teruah must embody this concept. How does the mechanical sound of a Shofar express the Kedushas Hayom?

Onkelos translates Teruah as a "yevava", weeping. The Yom Teruah is a yom yevava, a day of weeping. The Gemara teaches us that the yevava of the Teruah is expressed by the cry of the mother of Sisra. Sisra was a great warrior and waged many successful battles. His mother always anxiously awaited his return and celebrated his triumphs. However, at the time he was eventually defeated, she was looking out the window, anxiously awaiting his arrival as in past battles. As time transpired she started to realize that he was not returning and started to howl. Her crying is described as a yevava. It is that crying that the Kol Shofar replicates. What was so unique about her crying and why does the Gemara cite it as a paradigm for the Kol Shofar?

The Torah describes the Kol Teruah as the sound blown by the trumpets when the Bnei Yisrael moved their camp while traveling in the wilderness to the holy land. When God commanded Moshe to inform Klal Yisrael that it was time to embark, the sound of the Teruah summoned their departure. Onkelos again translates Teruah as a yevava, a cry. Rashi in his commentary states there were three factors that



were needed before the camp embarked: the word of God, Moshe's instruction and the Teruah. The traveling of the camp was more than just a practical phenomenon. It symbolized that the entire destiny of Klal Yisrael – the nation of Israel – was in the hands of God. They were in the wilderness and needed the providence and direction from God in order to survive. They were helpless and vulnerable and their destiny was determined by the system the Torah sets out for their embarking. Three essential components dictated their movements. It had to be the word of God as transmitted by Moshe and summoned by the sound of the Teruah. Thus, the Teruah is not just significant on Rosh Hashana, but it also played a role in the destiny of the nation as reflected in the wilderness. It is interesting to note that the destiny of man cannot be determined by the word of God alone. After the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we require the interpretation of the Oral Tradition by Moshe, our teacher. Without the Torah a person will certainly go astray. A person needs God to direct his destiny but he also needs the teachings of the Torah. Because of man's limitations God alone is not enough; he needs the guidance of the Torah. God does not function alone because the gap between God and man is great. Man, on his own, cannot scale the chasm that exists between him and his Creator. He needs the prophet; he requires the teachings of Moshe to assist him. If he endeavors to close this gap on his own he will undoubtedly fall prey to the philosophy of the idolaters. This failure is exemplified by every organized religion that attempts to close the gap between man and the Almighty. They create their own false and corrupt systems, which cater to their emotional needs and desires. The third element required in the camps' movements were the sound of the

Teruah. The sound of the Shofar is essential to shape the destiny of Klal Yisrael. Again we see that the Kol Shofar is not merely a mechanical sound but contains a vital message.

The sound of the Shofar is unique. It is a yevava, a cry. What is this cry? It is the inherent cry of every human that is part of his nature. It is the proclivity of man to cry, a cry of his state of depression. Why is man depressed? The Gemara in Nazir 3b tells of the story of a particular Nazirite about whom Rabbi Shimon Hatzadik commented. He said,

"I never ate the guilt offering of a defiled Nazirite except once. There was a handsome lad from the south who had beautiful eyes and wonderful locks shaped into curls. This lad shaved his head prompting me to question his actions. The lad responded that he was a shepherd and would gaze at his appearance in the well as he drew water for his flock. The lad said, 'Then I saw my evil inclination was overwhelming me and driving me from this world. I said to it, 'wretched one why are you arrogant in a world that is not yours...in the end you will be just maggots and worms'. The lad thereby said that he would shear his locks for the glory of God. Rabbi Shimon upon hearing the lad's response kissed him upon his head and said there shall be more Nazirites in Israel like you.'"

The Nazirite was insightful in recognizing that this is a world that is not his. This story personifies man's constant struggle with his yetzer hara, his evil inclination. This lad recognized that man is not in control. The life of instinctual desires and pleasures as proposed by the yetzer hara, only makes sense if man is in control. Instinctual pleasures cannot bring happiness in a world that

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is not man's. This world is God's world and is governed by the will of the Creator. The lures of the world of instinctual pleasures, fueled by the powers of one's fantasy, is shattered when man comes to the recognition that this world is not his. Man's existence in this world is tenuous and transitory at best, and reality belies the illusion of the world of the physical. This perceptive lad recognized that this is not man's world. Man is but a resident for a short duration. Man cannot control reality, but rather, he must conform to reality and the will of the Creator. Upon such recognition, man can cling to reality by embracing the Source of reality, and his soul can partake of an eternal existence.

The universal cry of mankind is the recognition that man is really not in control. Loss of control is a powerful psychological blow. Man desires to be powerful. The cry embedded in the human soul is that man is not in control and in reality, he is powerless. This world is not man's. He is totally vulnerable and at any moment he could be gone.

The mother of Sisra cried upon the recognition that he was vulnerable. The fantasy that he was invincible was shattered and she cried repeatedly. She cried the cry that exists within every created being. This world is not man's world. It is an "olam she-aino shelo", a world that belongs not to him.

The Torah chose the mechanical cry of the Shofar to convey that our destiny is in the hands of our Creator. This world is not our world that we can control. On Rosh Hashana it is a day of Teruah, a day where man cries and acknowledges that this is not his world. This recognition alone is insufficient: it must be accompanied by "Malchus Hashem", God's Kingship. This is the ultimate realization that this world is merely a reflection of God's will and God is the king. His royalty is proclaimed by mankind and is manifest by observing His creations. On Rosh Hashana Klal Yisrael blows the Teruah and proclaims the sovereignty of the Almighty. We are not depressed by the eternal cry of mankind, that this is not his world. We do not create man made religions to pacify our fears and allow us to deceive ourselves by continuing to live life based upon the false world of the instinctual pleasures. We recognize that this world is not man's. Our response is to proclaim the sovereignty of our Creator and cling to the source of reality. We recognize that our destiny is in God's hands and we live our lives as mandated by the teachings of his Torah. When we complete the initial set of our blowing, we recite a verse from Psalms, "Fortunate are the people that know the Teruah, Hashem in the light of your presence we shall

walk." This obviously does not mean that we know 'how' to blow the Shofar. We are fortunate that we understand the 'significance' of the sound of the Shofar. Our response is that we follow the light of God's presence and are blessed that we can live our lives based upon true reality, as expressed in the Kol Shofar. ■

the Beauty of Repentance

YAAKOV TRACHTMAN

Maimonides' Laws of Repentance - Chapter 2 Law 6;

"Even though 'The repentance' and 'The calling out' is beautiful at all times, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Hakipurim it is exceedingly beautiful and it is immediately accepted as it says: 'Search for God when he is found, call out to him when he is near'."

There are a number of questions on this Law:

1. What does it mean by the "beauty" of repentance?
2. What is special about the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Hakipurim?
3. Why does Maimonides use proper nouns ("The repentance", "the calling out")?
4. Why does he reference "The repentance" and "The calling out" in the singular form?
5. How does the added beauty make it accepted immediately?

To answer these questions we must first define beauty. I would like to propose a definition for beauty: beauty is that which attracts (a person) by virtue of itself.

When a person observes a beautiful thing and is attracted to it; it is not purely a subjective experience. Rather, it is actualizing something that the object had in potential all along. Because this potential to attract is ever-present in the object, we can call something beautiful even if it takes an expert to recognize its beauty.

Repentance is beautiful in this sense. The structure of repentance is a perfect, abstract structure; a phenomena which can instantaneously change someone from being distant from God, to being close to him. This produces a phenomenon such that the mind, which sees it

and its benefits, cannot help but desire. A person who sees these ideas is naturally drawn towards repentance.

During the Ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Hakipurim this beauty is enhanced. The special commandments and prayers, which are done during this time, bring the ideas of repentance and calling out into a whole new theoretical structure. Instead of only having a structure of the outline of repentance, the particulars are now given expression in the structure of the commands. We have "Shofar", "Slichos", and the Blessings of "Malchios", "Zichronos" and "Shofros" amongst many others; all of which create a symphony of Halacha and Hashkafa. This is what the verse means by God being "close", In his guide to the perplexed[i] Maimonides defines "closeness" of God, as knowledge of God. During these ten days, God presents us with a special opportunity for knowledge, which enhances the idea of repentance.

This also explains the use of proper nouns and the singular form. Maimonides is not talking about the actions of repentance and "calling out" but rather the abstract entities. As an abstract structure they are both part of the same institution of a person recognizing his place as distant from God, and the need to be close. This abstract entity "The repentance and calling out" is where the beauty lies. If he used a common noun it would imply that the beauty is only in the results.

We can now explain why repentance is especially accepted during this time of year. During the course of the year true repentance is only available to the highest-level person. It takes many years of study and perfection for the beauty of philosophical repentance to attract a person. During these ten days the added beauty of repentance is visible to everyone. Due to the intricacies of the legal structure everyone can be attracted to the reality of closeness to God. As soon as person is drawn towards it, naturally, he is accepted. He is no longer repenting due to an obligation but rather due to his souls yearning for and recognition of God. When this happens he has reached the quality of "Ahavas Hashem" which is[ii] "doing the truth because it is true" when a person serves out of love he is operating in the ultimate human framework where he will be accepted. ■

[i] Book 1 Chapter 12

[ii] Laws of Repentance, chapter 10 law 3

Yaakov Trachtman authors the blog
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Malchus Hashem

MATT SCHNEEWEISS

The following ideas were given over by Rabbi, though the presentation is my own.

We refer to Hashem as “Melech” or “King.” This idea of Hashem as King is so essential that a berachah is not halachically defined as a berachah unless it contains a mention Hashem’s “Malchus” (“Kingship” - a notion we will soon have to refine). We refer to the mitzvah of Krias Shema as the “kabbalas ole malchus shamayim” or “the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingship of Heaven.”

The theme of Malchus Hashem rises to prominence during the Aseres Ymei Teshuvah - the period of ten days between Rosh ha’Shanah and Yom ha’Kippurim. Malchus Hashem is one of the three themes of Rosh ha’Shanah: Malchiyos, Zichronos, and Shofros. Throughout these ten days we change the conclusion of the third berachah of the Shmoneh Esreh from ha’El ha’Kadosh (“the Holy God”) to ha’Melech ha’Kadosh (“the Holy King”), and the conclusion of the eleventh berachah to ha’Melech ha’Mishpat (“the King of Justice” or “the King, the Justice,” according to some Rishonim).

It would seem, then, that a person cannot adequately serve Hashem without understanding the idea of Malchus Hashem. Most people understand the analogy of “Malchus Hashem” to mean “Hashem’s Kingship.” Hashem is our King, we are His subjects, and the universe is

His kingdom, as we say, “Baruch atoh Hashem, Elokeinu, Melech ha’Olam.”

However, there are several problems with this understanding, as we shall see. For the sake of brevity, I am only going to mention two of them.

The first problem is raised by the lyrics of a well-known song. Of course, we can’t always bring a proof for a fundamental idea about Judaism from a song. In this case, however, the song was written by a great chacham (Rabbeinu Shlomo ibn Gabirol) and was approved of by the chachamim of our Mesora. The title of the song is Adon Olam. The first three stanzas read:

*Adon Olam asher malach
b'terem kol y'tzir nivra,
L'eis na'asoh b'cheftzo kol,
azai Melech Shemo nikra,
V'acharei ki'chlos ha'kol,
levado yimloch Nora*

*The Lord of the universe who was King
before any form was created,
At the time when His will brought all into
being -
then as “King” was His Name proclaimed,
And after all has ceased to be,
He, the Awesome One, will be King alone.*

Adon Olam poses a major problem to our understanding of Malchus Hashem: How can we say that Hashem was “Melech” before the universe was created and after it ceases to exist? If the universe is His “kingdom,” then we are faced with the following dilemma: Just as it is impossible to be a father without a son, or to be a master without a slave, so too, it is impossible to be a king without subjects. If so, how can R’ Shlomo ibn Gabirol say that Hashem was King before anything was created and after everything ceases to be?

The second problem can be found in the Mussaf of Rosh ha’Shanah. This tefilah is unique in several ways. One of its unique features is the requirement to say ten pesukim in each of the three berachos of Malchiyos, Zichronos, and Shofros. Each of these pesukim must correspond to the theme of its respective berachah. Thus, the pesukim of Malchiyos must be about Malchus, the pesukim about Zichronos must be about Zikaron, and the pesukim about Shofros must be about Shofar.

All of the pesukim in the section of Malchiyos explicitly mention the words “melech,” “malchus,” or “meluchah” . . . except for the last pasuk. The last pasuk of Malchiyos is perhaps the most well known pasuk in the entire Torah: “Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad,” “Understand, O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One” (Devarim 6:4).

The problem is: Where is Malchus Hashem in the Shema? The pasuk doesn’t use the word melech, and the theme seems to be Yichud Hashem (the Oneness of Hashem), not Malchus Hashem.

Sometimes the answer is contained in the question. In this case, the answer to both questions is right under our noses, namely, Yichud Hashem is Malchus Hashem. This idea was stated very clearly by the Rambam in the Sefer ha’Mitzvos:

“The Second Mitzvah is the commandment in which we are commanded regarding knowledge of the Oneness [of God], namely, that we should know that the Creator of Existence and its Primary Cause is One, as He stated, “Understand, O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One” (Devarim 6:4). In many midrashim you will find the Sages saying, “Al menas le’yachad es Shemi” (“for the purpose of unifying My Name”) and “Al menas le’yachdeini” (literally, “for the purpose of unifying Me” - obviously,

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(Malchus Hashem continued from page 6)

Rosh Hashana

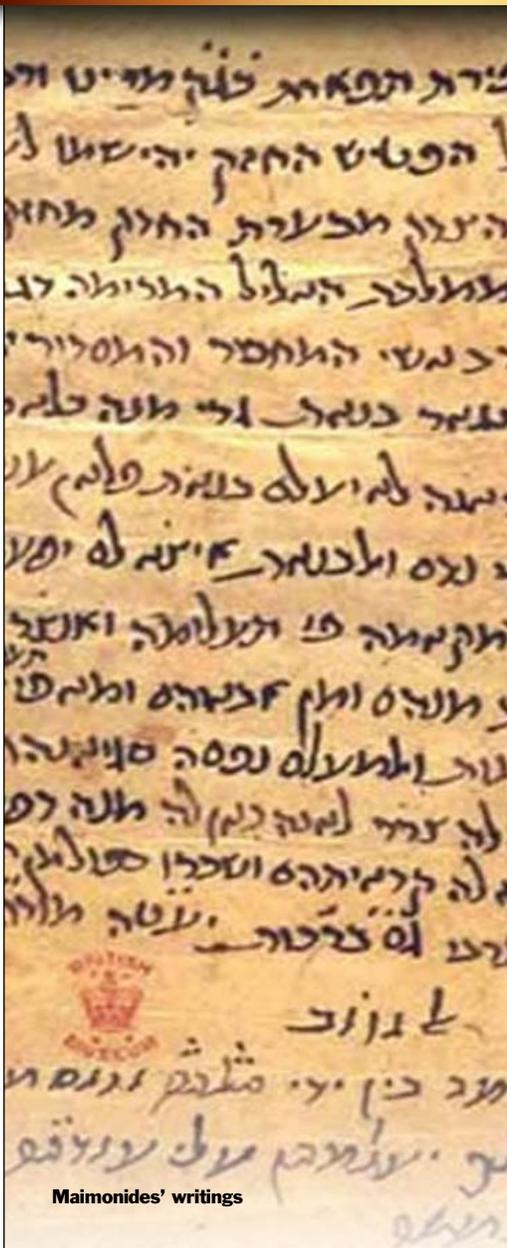
we cannot take this literally), and the like. Their intent in this statement is that the only reason He took us out of slavery and acted kindly and benevolently with us was in order that we should be a state of knowledge of [His] Oneness, for we are obligated in this. In many places this mitzvah is referred to as "the mitzvah of Oneness." This mitzvah is also called "Malchus," as the Sages say, "To accept upon oneself the yoke of the Malchus Shamayim," which means recognition and knowledge of [His] Oneness."

Thus, we see that according to Chazal, the idea of "Malchus Hashem" is the same as the idea of "Yichud Hashem." With this idea, Adon Olam makes sense. To say that Hashem was Melech before any form was created is to say that He was One before He created the universe. Likewise, to say that Hashem will be Melech after everything ceases to exist is to say that His Oneness will not be affected in any way when the universe ends. Lastly, we can understand the tenth pasuk of malchiyos. Even though the Shema doesn't mention any form of the word "Melech," it is nevertheless the perfect expression of Malchus Hashem, for explicitly states that Hashem is One.

There is one more question we must answer: How is Malchus a metaphor for Oneness? The Rambam may have supported his statement from the words of Chazal, but what were Chazal thinking when they decided to refer to the idea of Yichud Hashem by the analogy of Malchus?

Before we answer this question, let us briefly review the idea of Hashem's Existence and Hashem's Oneness. The Rambam writes (Commentary on Sanhedrin, Chapter 10):

"The First Fundamental Principle is the Existence of the Creator, praised is He. Namely, that there Exists an Existence which is perfect in all manners of existence, and this Existence is the cause of the existence of all other existences, and through Him their existence is established, and their existence stems from Him. And if one could entertain the thought of the removal of His Existence, the existence of every other existence would be nullified and they would not remain in existence. And if one could entertain the thought of the removal of all existence besides Him, then His Existence, may He be exalted, would not be nullified, and would not lack, for He, may He be exalted, does not need the existence of any other . . . all of them are dependent on His Existence. And this first fundamental principle is that



Maimonides' writings

which is indicated by the statement, "I am Hashem your God."

Hashem refers to Himself as "Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh" - the Existing Being Who Is the Existing Being, or the Inherently Existing Being. In other words, our existence is a contingent and accidental existence; at one point in time, we did not exist, and sooner or later, we shall cease to exist; we do not have to exist, but rather, we exist because Hashem wills it. Hashem's Existence, on the other hand, is Independent and Essential; He Always Existed, Exists Now, and Will Always Exist; unlike us, Hashem Must Exist. To suggest that Hashem could cease to exist is as absurd as the notion that water could cease to be wet. It is the nature of water to be

wet, and it is the Nature of Hashem to Exist, as it were.

"The Second Fundamental Principle is His Oneness, may He be exalted. Namely, that this Cause of everything is One, not like the oneness of a species and not like the oneness of a class, and not like one unified composite, which can be divided into many unities, and not one like a simple body, which is one in number but is subject to division and subdivision ad infinitum, but He, may He be exalted, is One - a Oneness unlike any other oneness in any way."

Hashem is One, and Only One. If our conception of God's Oneness contains any plurality whatsoever, then it must be incorrect. If our conception of God's Oneness is comparable in any way whatsoever to the oneness of anything else, it must be incorrect. God's Oneness is Absolute, unshared by and incomparable to any other oneness.

"King" is a metaphor for the unique, superlative member of a class. For instance, the "King Cobra" is the uniquely superlative species of snake; the lion is the "king of the jungle," since it is uniquely superlative among the other jungle animals; Elvis Presley is the "king of rock and roll," since he is the uniquely superlative rock and roll innovator. Likewise, Hashem is Uniquely Superlative among Beings. He is the Supreme Being, whose Existence is Absolutely Unique and Absolutely Superior. Thus, Malchus Hashem is not a metaphor for Hashem's rulership over His creations. Rather, it is a metaphor for His Absolute Uniqueness - Oneness which is unlike any other. To say that Hashem is Melech is to say that Hashem's Existence and Oneness are completely superior and utterly different than the Existence and Oneness of any of His subjects.

Rebbi formulated the idea in an eloquent, easy-to-remember expression: Malchus does not refer to Hashem's KingSHIP, but Hashem's KingNESS. It is not a metaphor for His rulership over His creations, for Hashem was King before the universe existed. Rather, Malchus is a metaphor for His Uniqueness, Distinctness, and Utter Superiority of Existence to all other beings. ■

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needs, such as fruits, grain and water. As such, separate judgments for each one of these three elements individually is redundant. The Ran answers that the fate of fruits, grains and water are in fact judged in their respective times. However, on Rosh Hashanah, God allots each human his 'portion' of these three.

But this still begs the question: is not the very fate of each of these forms of sustenance, for man? So if man's needs include these three elements, and he is judged on Rosh Hashanah, what is left to be judged concerning these elements at these three yearly intervals? To be clear: man is judged for all his needs on Rosh Hashanah, including what he will enjoy of fruits, grain and rain. So what is God determining on the holidays, which He has not determined when judging every individual person on Rosh Hashanah?

The Ran answers that on the holidays, God decrees what the "world" will receive. Meaning, how many crops and rainfalls will be granted to the "world community"...not the individual. On these three holidays, God determines what the world will receive. While on Rosh Hashanah, God decides what each individual will enjoy of those crops and rainfalls.

But why not determine both the bounty of the world, and every individual's portion, all in one day? What demands that individuals must be judged separate from crops and rain?

This Talmudic portion addresses God's two forms of providence: 1) providence of individuals (hashgacha pratiyos) and, 2) providence over the masses (hashgacha klaliyos). We learn that God invites the sacrifices of the masses at three yearly intervals, for these are opportune times for requests, as we will discuss shortly. During these holidays mankind takes advantage of the seasonal needs with more devoted prayer. Such greater devotion results in God's kinder response. And God's determination for the nation is meted out not based on individuals, but the status of the majority. But Rosh Hashanah is a time where each individual passes before God, as sheep under the rod.

Adam the First

The Ran teaches that Rosh Hashanah was the day when God passed judgment on Adam, and acquitted him. God then set this day of Rosh Hashanah for mankind to be evaluated and sentenced accordingly, just as Adam had experienced. But why must we follow the day of Adam's judgment? What need does this satisfy? The Ran taught that God commenced the universe's creation – Day 1 – on the 25th of Elul. This means that Day 6 of creation, when Adam was created, was the first of Tishrey, or Rosh Hashanah. On Day 6, the Ran says each hour had significance:

Hour 1: God decided to create man. Hour 2: He consulted with the angels. Hour 3: He gathered together the Earth's dust. Hour 4: He kneaded the Earth. Hour 5: He formed him. Hour 6: He was a lifeless entity. Hour 7: He threw into Adam a soul. Hour 8: He entered Adam into the Garden of Eden. Hour 9: He commanded him not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. Hour 10: Adam sinned. Hour 11: Adam was judged. Hour 12: Adam was acquitted. But for some reason, this design that Adam the First was judged on Rosh Hashanah demands that we too be judged on this day. Perhaps we might answer this parallel as follows.

Man was not only judged and acquitted on Rosh Hashanah, but he was created on this day too. Why is this significant? This teaches us that immediately after he was created, Adam the First could not resist sinning against God, for even one hour. "For man is not righteous in the land, that he does good, and never sins". (Eccl. 7:20) This means that man's very design makes him – us – subject to sin "as soon as we are in existence!" Sin is always "crouching at the door". (Gen. 4:7) And since this is Adam's design, it is our design too. But God acquitted Adam, and as King Solomon said, "no man is good, and without sin". It is inevitable that man sins. This explains why we require Yom Kippur as a fixed and repeating Day of Atonement. We will always fall into sin at some point. Therefore, God aligned our day of judgment to duplicate Adam's. This teaches us that just as Adam sinned and required judgment, but also a pardon...we too require judgment, for our sins are inevitable as well. We come to appreciate that it is by God's very design of the human being, that these High Holidays are essential.

Now, as man is judged on Rosh Hashanah, it is vital to our happiness this coming year that we review our knowledge, actions, values, personality traits, and Torah adherence 'before' Rosh Hashanah. This is accomplished in part by our early rise to recite Selichos. For if God inscribes us all "on" Rosh Hashanah, this must be based on our level of perfection as we 'enter' this holiday. While it is true that we can use the Ten Days of Repentance to improve ourselves and alter our decree, it is wise to start our self-evaluation process before hand. Of course, one who is aware of Torah values and understands the great good and sensibility a Torah life offers, will evaluate and improve himself on a regular basis throughout the year.

Rabbi Ruben Gober once spoke on the idea that Rosh Hashanah is not a time of requests, but of contemplating God's kingship: His role as man's Governor. Rabbi Gober taught that it is this very realization of God as our Creator and Ruler that raises us to a higher level, and entitles us continued existence. For God sustains only that which

conforms to His will...namely man. All of God's Earthly creations aim to direct mankind to a greater appreciation for the Creator. Nothing in God's creations serves another purpose, except man, when he sins. With this thought in mind, let us review another section of this Talmud.

In our Talmudic section, God says that we must bring three sacrifices of sorts, and each one will be effective in securing grain, fruits and water, respectively. But God says we are to bring these sacrifices on Passover, Shavuot and Succos. The question arises: what do the holidays have to do with securing grain, fruits and rain? If we understand the nature of the holidays, we will readily answer this question.

Holidays

The holidays are commemorations of God's intervention: He saved us from Egypt through miracles; He gave us His Torah on Shavuot – again with miracles, and He protected us by His clouds, a miracle we duplicate by building Succos to mimic those clouds all around us, and above us. On each holiday, God demonstrated His intervention through miracles, so we might know beyond any doubt that it was in fact God who performed all we experienced. I believe too, that the twelve stones erected on both sides of the Jordan River which we just read about, and a third set in the river, were again to prove God's providence: teaching future generations that we inherited Israel 'only' via God's intervention, and not our own might. For how else could twelve stones be erected on the river floor, unless God split the Jordan, as he split the Red Sea? And placing two more sets of twelve stones – with the Torah inscribed on all – on both sides of the Jordan, those ancient Jews effectively created a route map of how they entered the land of Israel! The first set of stones recalls our point of departure from outside Israel; the set in Israel proper shows where we arrived; and the set in the Jordan River proves "how" we entered the Land – through a miracle of the river being split. Now we can answer our question.

We pray for grain, fruits and rain on each of these three holidays, since it is an opportune time to do so. As we celebrate the holidays, we are reminded of those astonishing miracles God enacted to do some great good for the Jewish nation. And precisely as we are in the throngs of that elation and appreciation for God's age-old providence, we then pray for God's current intervention, to secure our sustenance for this year. That conviction of God's providence back then, now presently in our minds, fuels our prayers with a renewed realization and conviction that God intervenes. And that realization is what God

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desires we sense as He pours out His blessings. In other words, God gives His goodness to those who recognize that He is the source of all. Only that individual is deserving of God's blessings, since it is he who lives, as God desires. These gifts God grants us, in turn, will be appreciated properly: as God's doing.

Additionally, we request each area of sustenance at its season: on Passover which is harvest season, we request a good harvest of grain; on Shavuot we pray for fruits, and in the rainy season commencing on Succot, we pray for rain. In the hour of need, we align our conviction in God's historical providence, with our current request. We do so, since man may assume that seasons dictate our bounty independent from the Creator. But, by sacrificing at the seasons of certain crops and rains, we deny the assumed "independent" functioning of nature, and realize all is in God's hands. As He intervened for us back then in Egypt, He continues this relationship with us, and it is this relationship that we maintain by observing Torah.

This is an important lesson: God answers us more readily...when we are convinced of His abilities. When we realize it is not "nature", but God's will that sustains us with food and water...we are now entitled. This is because we have raised ourselves to a higher level, as individuals who view life as solely dependent upon God. And since we are living as God desires, He desires us to live! He then grants us our requests for sustenance.

Our appreciation is doubled by the fact that it was God who decided that we should bring the three offerings on these three holidays. God planned it out this way to offer us a myriad of opportunities to elevate ourselves at each and every turn. But we must engage in studying His Torah system to realize these truths, the hows and whys of Torah law, and appreciate what God is doing. We can never answer "why" He created mankind. But we can seek reasons for all of His mitzvos. In last week's Parsha Netzavim, Ibn Ezra explains that the essence of each Mitzvah is what is "in the heart". (Deut. 30:14) Ibn Ezra means that the true purpose of each and every mitzvah is to arrive at greater knowledge: that which is in the "heart". Of course we must 'perform' mitzvos. But the performance is merely an expression of human conviction. If one does not perform what he claims is a value to him, his values are not real. Therefore, knowledge must result in action, i.e., Mitzvah, in order to be termed a "conviction". But action is only necessary because God wishes that man to see where he fails to act, so as to eliminate the ignorance, which prevents his fulfillment of God's words. The true objective in every mitzvah is the knowledge gained which brings us closer to God.



Rosh Hashanah

The Talmud continues with this theme of performing certain actions on certain holidays. We stated that the three holidays addressing God's providence, are an opportune time to capitalize on man's appreciation for God's intervention, or providence, concerning our sustenance. But Rosh Hashanah, although a holiday, is not about providence. Rather, it is all about God in His capacity as ruler, or rather, "King".

God created many laws: Tefilin teaches that we are philosophically incomplete without Torah close by. We must demonstrate that as a human being without Torah, we are severely crippled even with all our limbs intact. Torah is a required organ of the human being, and Tefilin displays this lesson. Conversely, and ironically, circumcision addresses our incomplete physical natures, if we remain physically whole. Our lives are not primarily physical, but metaphysical. By tempering our sexual sensation through circumcision (as Maimonides teaches), we render ourselves better suited for a life of wisdom. Charity and visiting the sick perfect our morality, and spread good feelings among society. Each command addresses another facet of the multifarious human personality.

Holidays serve to reiterate certain essential truths. The truth taught via Rosh Hashanah is that God is King. Shabbos is different, as it reminds us of God as the Creator. It would then follow that Shabbos is more vital, since we observe it every seven days. We cannot go for longer without Shabbos. We must be mindful that the very existence of the universe, and our very beings, is an act of God, and not ourselves. "He made us, and not ourselves." (Psalm 100) Although quite an obvious lesson, King David wrote this, as he knew man's egotistical nature can obscure God's

responsibility from something this obvious. Shabbos is therefore indispensable each seven days.

Certainly after a year of struggling for financial success, and finding it, man will have steeped himself into a sense of independence, where he feels he is solely responsible for his successes. He will also embellish his fantasies of immortality over this past year. He needs to face his mortality, and Who really granted him success. "And you shall remember Hashem your God, for He [is the one] that gave you strength to create success..." (Deut. 8:18)

Now, just as on the three holidays whose purpose it is to recall God's providence, we seek His providence over our food...on Rosh Hashanah, we continue this practice of "combining common themes". That is, on the day we recall God in His capacity as our king, we blow the shofar. But how is shofar related to accepting God as our ruler and king?

Malchiyos - Kingship

The Talmud states that we first recite the prayers recalling many verses depicting God as king. We must truly accept God as our ruler. In doing so, we endorse God as king. His role as "king" – over mankind – is embellished when man accepts His rule. An amazing idea: on Rosh Hashanah we actually contribute to God's role as king by our acceptance of His rule. This idea is actually the words of the Talmud, "Recite the prayers of Kingship so you shall make Me rule over you."

Zichronos - Omniscience

We continue our prayers with the Zichronos, the prayers of God's all-knowing nature. The Talmud says, "God says, 'Recite the Zichronos so that your remembrance shall rise before me for good [judgment].'"

Now, we must ask why our recitation of Zichronos causes us to be remembered before God for a good judgment, more than our first prayer. Is not the first prayer of God as king, a more primary truth than God's omniscience? Is not the fact that God created the universe more primary, than His subsequent relationship to it? As this is so, we would assume that our recitation of that more primary prayer of kingship would entitle us to a good judgment, more than our recital of the Zichronos prayer. Think about it first...but the answer is as follows.

Why should God remember us and inscribe us for a good year? It is because we do something to deserve it. What God did when He commanded us in this Zichronos prayer, is that He offered us an

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opportunity to perfect ourselves, whereby, we will receive a better judgment. God desires the good for His creatures. He asked that we recite the prayer describing His all-knowing nature. Now, what happens when we do so? It is this: We reflect immediately on a certain area of His knowledge: His knowledge about “me”. Meaning, the intent in our recalling God’s omniscience, is to realize that this omniscience extends to man, primarily...to me. The result is that I now feel I must answer to God, since He sits in judgment on this day of Rosh Hashanah. This specific prayer where I recall God’s knowledge over all my thoughts and actions is a motivational prayer: it motivates me to seek His approval, so I must change. This regret is actually the first step in the process of repentance, and is viewed positively by God. God says, “Recite the Zichronos so that your remembrance shall rise before me for good [judgment].” He will improve our judgment because we now regret our actions, completely known to Him. Once a person realizes that God knows all, he views his sins as no longer hidden from Him, he sees his actions as evil, and this improves the person’s values, and his judgment from God. God need not punish man for actions that man will abandon independently.

We now understand that although Zichronos is not describing the more lofty capacity of God as King, it possesses the motivational aspect that drives man to regret and do Teshuva, repentance. This is why the Talmud singles out Zichronos as the catalyst for our improved judgment.

Shofaros - Revelation

The Talmud then asks “how” shall we convey our recognition of God as King and as omniscient? The answer is “through shofar”. Rav Avahu said, “God said ‘Blow the ram’s horn before Me and I will recall the binding of Isaac son of Abraham, and I will consider you as though you were bound [on the altar] before Me.’ We must ask how our simple act of blowing this ram’s horn renders us on par with Isaac, who sacrificed his life, and how this relates to Rosh Hashanah.

What is the significance of the ram? It was offered by Abraham in place of Isaac. As my friend Shaye Mann stated, it demonstrated that although Abraham now had Isaac back in his life since God rescinded His command to slay him, Abraham nonetheless remained attached to God, and sought to sacrifice something in Isaac’s stead. But our Talmudic section focuses on Isaac’s sacrifice, not that of his father Abraham. Isaac was ready to sacrifice his life for God. He realized the lesson God planned to create for all time that God is to be our sole desire in life. And the ram is representative of Isaac. So when we blow the ram’s horn, we in other words state that we emphatically agree with Isaac’s yearning to

sacrifice his very life to God. Therefore, as we agree with Isaac’s mission, to sacrifice his life, God views us on par with Isaac, and grants us equal merit: “I will consider it as though you sacrificed yourself on the altar”. But there is another idea in Shofar.

God Revealed

Where was the original shofar? What are the commencing words in the shofar prayer? The sidur refers to God’s Revelation at Sinai, where there existed the sound of a shofar that “grew exceedingly loud”. The Rabbis teach that man’s shofar blasts become weaker as he nears the end of that exhale. But God’s shofar blast at Sinai became even stronger with ever passing second. Ibn Ezra says this (Exod. 19:13) : “For the sound of the shofar was a great wonder – there was nothing at Revelation at Sinai that that surpassed it. For lightning, thunder and thick cloud [at Sinai] were [already] seen in the world. But the sound of the shofar was not heard until the day of the Ten Commandments”. We wonder: what is so amazing about this sound, and what is its relevance to Rosh Hashanah?

Let us consider: how does a shofar blast differ from lightning or thunder? What did Ibn Ezra say? He said that the Jews never heard a shofar, but natural phenomena were matters already experienced, and not as impressive. It appears that shofar is not natural. What then is something “not natural”? It is manufactured. But this requires a “Manufacturer”. This is the answer: shofar reveals the existence of one who is causing its sound...a shofar cannot blast by itself. When the Jews heard the shofar at Sinai, they realized an Intelligence must be causing this sound, and intended it for them. And when the sound did not weaken, but grew in its intensity, the Jews were frightened at the very existence of God! For man’s breath weakens. God used shofar at Sinai to make His existence and divine nature apparent to all.

The primary message of the shofar is that God relates to mankind. The Shofaros prayer commences “*You revealed Yourself in clouds of Your glory, unto Your sanctified people to speak with them.*” The first element described is that God revealed Himself, the second; “to His people”. Shofaros is highlighting a relationship between the Creator, and His people. So we have three prayers: 1) Malchiyos, which describes God as King (omnipotent); 2) Zichronos, which speaks of God’s omniscience; and 3) Shofaros, which reflects on these first two concepts, teaching that this omnipotent King who is also omniscient, has a relationship with mankind. We therefore commence our Shofaros prayers with a lengthy description of God’s revelation at Sinai. It was at Sinai that the shofar’s significance was born.

Revelation is the primary proof that God relates to man, the proof used to validate Judaism, and that which disarms all other religions of any similar claim. Revelation commences the Shofaros prayer, as Sinai was the event par excellence that embodies God’s relationship with mankind – a relationship forged on a basis of wisdom.

These three prayers and their concepts highlight the nature of Rosh Hashanah. They remind man of the true reality in which we live, although obscured each year by life’s distractions.

End Notes

Reflecting on Isaac’s perfection, we too must realize how significant must be God’s place in our lives: a primary lesson of Rosh Hashanah. We must accept His role as King, as this is reality. We must move past our yearly agendas, our subjective desires, and our petty emotions.

It is truly an amazing realization, that God created us. And He did so with a purpose for us. We live such temporal existences, but we have the potential for an eternal life. God created for us our beings, our souls, and a prospect of an eternal and blissful existence. That must stop each of us in our tracks, and make us yearn for it.

This Rosh Hashanah may be a turning point where we focus on what we are saying, and find a renewed interest in the many lessons Torah seeks to teach us. Patiently praying, we might contemplate our words, see new ideas, and reengage in rigorous Torah study, so we might discover a life where we “minimize our work, and maximize our studies”, as Ethics 4:12 suggests. If we are patient and think into what we are saying this holiday, we can make profound changes in our values for the remainder of our lives.

May each one of us be inscribed and sealed for a healthy, prosperous, tranquil, and enlightening year where Torah study and adherence becomes our priority! ■



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American to save Israeli Solider: How you can partake in this Mitzvah



This summer a 19 year-old Israeli Solider will get a new lease on life due to a selfless gift from Yosef Chiger, of Harrisburg Pennsylvania. Ayelet Katz, of Moshav Be'er Tuvia had been stationed in Tel Nof Air Force Base, where she worked as an assistant to the head of human resources, until she was forced to leave the IDF because of kidney failure and begin fulltime dialysis. Often Israelis in need of kidney transplants wait for years because of the shortage of organs; however with the help of the Halachic Organ Donor Society (HODS) Ayelet will be fortunate to receive an altruistic donation that will allow her to resume a healthy life in a matter of months. Chiger, married and the father of a five-year old daughter, will be traveling to Israel to donate his kidney and thereby giving Ayelet the ability to resume a full and healthy life. It was especially significant to Chiger that she is an Israeli and a solider, and that the transplant means that she will have a long productive life ahead of her.

The transplant is being facilitated by the Halachic Organ Donor Society, which facilitates altruistic kidney donations and educates Jews about organ donation and halacha.

HODS is raising \$15,000 to bring Chiger and his family to Israel. Contributions can sent to the HOD Society at 49 West 45th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY or via their website at www.hods.org.