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Happy Succos to all!*
The JewishTimes resumes Oct. 8th



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JewishTimes

*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

Volume IX, No. 35...Sept. 17, 2010

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IN THIS ISSUE

TESHUVA	I-3
VIDUY	I,4
TEMPLE SERVICE	I,5,6
SCAPEGOAT	6-8
YOM KIPPUR SACRIFICES	9-11
TESHUVA	12
SUCCOS	13
KOHELES	14-17

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High Holidays

Teshuva

RABBI BERNIE FOX

Communal and Individual Repentance

*For the commandment that I
have commanded you today is
not too difficult for you. Neither*

(continued on next page)

High Holidays

Viduy: Lost *in* Translation

RABBI DR. DARREL GINSBERG

Viduy takes the center stage on Yom Kippur, and is a dominant subject throughout all the tefilos and themes of the day. It is also the activity most closely associated with teshuva, functioning to bring us out of our state of sin. The conventional definition of viduy is "confession," the admission of misdeeds and sins, which would certainly be apropos to teshuva. Yet there is another usage of viduy in the Torah, introduced in Parshas Ki Savo. In that context, the above translation of viduy is quite awkward. The Rambam (Sefer Mitzvos 131), the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 607), the Semag (Mitzvah 138) and others all write about the commandment of viduy masser--and using the standard definition would be a "confession" of maaser. Looking through this area, and comparing it to the viduy

(continued on page 4)

High Holidays



Yom Kippur TEMPLE SERVICE

Written by a student – Based on a class by Rabbi Israel Chait

Rabbi Chait commenced his class, distinguishing between the central focuses of Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashannah focuses on God's Kingship. This means we are to recognize and accept upon ourselves God's absolute rule as expressed through His creation (omnipotence). God's role as Creator reserves for Him the exclusive cause for all that exists. This translates to absolute Kingship over all. Rosh Hashannah also focuses on His absolute Knowledge (omniscience). God alone knows all, and thereby He alone inscribes us for good or evil for this coming year. God's omnipotence and omni-

(continued on page 5)

(Teshuva cont. from pg. 1)

High Holidays

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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is it too distant from you. (Devarim 30:11)

And you will return to Hashem your G-d and you will listen to His voice according to all that I have commanded you today – you and your children with all your heart and all your soul. (Devarim 30:2)

One of the 613 commandments is the mitzvah of repentance – teshuvah. Teshuvah requires an evaluation of one's behaviors and attitudes. This evaluation is followed by a decision to change. Teshuvah is a very personal experience and an individual effort. The Yamim Noraim – the High Holidays – center upon the theme of teshuvah. Therefore, it is interesting that so much of the activity of the Yamim Noraim takes place in a community or congregation. We spend long hours in synagogue. Virtually all of our prayers are formulated as expressions of the thoughts of the community and many of the prayers we recite can only be recited in this public forum. Even our confessions, supplications, and prayers for forgiveness take place in this communal setting. These are days that require personal introspection. Why is so much of our time spent in a public setting? The two passages quoted above provide an important insight into the mitzvah of teshuva.

This insight will provide one response to our question.

In the first passage, Moshe admonishes the people regarding observance of a commandment. Moshe assures the people that they can perform this commandment. It is not too difficult or too complicated. They have the ability. To which commandment does Moshe refer? The commentaries offer various responses to this question. Nachmanides suggests an answer based upon the context of the pasuk. He explains that Moshe is referring to the mitzvah of teshuvah. Moshe is assuring us that we have the ability to renew ourselves.

We can change. Nachmanides contends that this passage is the source in the Torah for the mitzvah to teshuvah.

The second pasuk quoted above is from the same chapter of the Torah. In this passage also, Moshe discusses teshuvah. In the passages preceding this pasuk, Moshe predicts that the people will sin. They will be expelled from the Land of Israel and forced into exile. In our pasuk, he assures Bnai Yisrael that they will ultimately repent. Once the nation repents, Hashem will redeem His nation from exile. Nachmanides contends that this second passage is also the source of the mitzvah of teshuvah.



This raises a question. Every mitzvah is derived from a single passage in the Torah. Other passages may amplify and add detail. However, the basic command is derived from a single pasuk. In Nachmanides' comments he seems to ignore this principle. He identifies two separate passages as the source for the mitzvah of teshuvah.

Rav Ahron Soloveitchik Zt"l suggests an answer to this question. This answer involves two simple steps. First, Rav Soloveitchik suggests that the citing of two sources suggests that there are two different

commandments dealing with teshuvah. In other words, each passage is the source for a one of the two mitzvot of teshuvah.

Second, Rav Soloveitchik defines these two separate mitzvot. He explains that the first passage is directed to the individual. This mitzvah of teshuvah instructs the individual to repent. The second passage addresses the nation. It communicates another mitzvah of teshuvah. This second mitzvah is placed upon the community. We are required to repent as a congregation. In short, according to Nachmanides, there are two mitzvot of teshuvah. One is a commandment upon the individual to

(continued on next page)

(Teshuva continued from previous page)

High Holidays

repent. The second command admonishes the community to perform teshuvah.

This raises a new question. How are these two mitzvot different? Why are both needed? Why are the community and the individual commanded to perform teshuvah by two separate mitzvot?

Perhaps, the answer lies in again considering the context of these passages. This second passage appears in the context of a prophecy. The people will sin. They will be exiled. They will repent – as a community – and they will be redeemed. The mitzvah of communal repentance is presented in the context of national redemption. Teshuvah is described as the method for restoring Bnai Yisrael. This context reflects on the nature of the mitzvah. The context explains the basis for the communal imperative to repent. We must repent in order to restore Bnai Yisrael. We cannot be redeemed from exile without returning to Hashem.

The Torah is telling us that we have a mission and destiny as Bnai Yisrael. We are responsible for the fulfillment of this mission and destiny. We must be redeemed. We are responsible for our own redemption through the performance of teshuvah.

The Comparison of Torah to Rain

My lesson shall drop like rain, my saying shall flow down like dew -- like a downpour on the herbs, like a shower on the grass. (Devarim 32:2)

In our pasuk, Moshe compares the Torah to rain. Just as the downpour and the shower cause the earth's vegetation to grow, the Torah provides spiritual sustenance to its students. There is an important message in this comparison. Clearly, the pasuk tells us that Torah leads to growth. However, rain fosters growth in a unique manner. A comparison will illustrate the special role of water.

Imagine a person building a stone wall. The wall is constructed by laying out a row of stones. A second row is placed on top of the first. This process continues until the wall reaches the planned height. Each individual stone adds its own mass to the wall. The finished wall is no more than a combination of the original stones.

Let us contrast this with the effect of water upon vegetation. Water nourishes plants. It provides the plants with essential nutrients. It allows the plant to utilize other nutrients drawn from the

soil, air, and sunlight. The plant combines these various elements to create something new. The fresh leave growing from the stalk of the plant is not just a row of raindrops. The rain enables the plant to utilize its own creative ability to fashion a new product.

The stones and the rain are both used as ingredients in fashioning something new. However, the stones are merely combined into a structure. The rain unleashes the creative properties within the plant.

We can now appreciate the comparison of Torah to rain. The pasuk teaches us a very important lesson regarding Torah pedagogy. We are urged to carefully consider our objectives in transmitting Torah to our students. We should not treat Torah as a pile of stones. Our students are not a wall. In other words, we cannot settle for imparting to our students rote facts. This produces a student that is merely a collection of information. This is not adequate!

Instead, we must treat Torah as rain. The Torah should nourish our students. It should encourage the students' creativity. We want our students to contemplate the Torah they learn. They should apply their abilities to understanding the depth of the Torah's wisdom and appreciating its beauty. If we succeed, our students will grow into wonderful individuals. Each student's uniqueness will be nurtured by the Torah. ■



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(Viduy continued from page 1)

High Holidays

associated with teshuva, adds a new dimension to our understanding of this subject.

What exactly is this viduy maaser? After completing one's maaser obligations, one must travel to the Bais Hamikdash and declare as follows (Devarim 26: 13-15):

"I have divested my estate of sacred material, and I have also presented it to the Levi and also to the proselyte, the orphan, and the widow, totally according to Your command that You commanded me; I did not transgress any of Your commandments nor did I forget. I did not eat of it when grieving, nor did I devour it when ritually defiled, nor did I make use of it for the dead; I have heeded the voice of Hashem, my God; I have fulfilled everything that You commanded me.

View, from Your sacred residence, from the heavens, and bless Your people, Yisroel and the soil which You have given us, as You swore to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey."

The Mishna (Maaser Sheni 5:10-13) explains that what the person is "confessing" is that he performed all the commandments regarding designating produce and other food (i.e., terumah, maaser, bikurim) for kohanim, leviim and others, in their entirety and correctly. For example, when enunciating "totally according to your command," the individual is in reality saying that he performed the commandments of maaser in the proper order (maaser rishon before maaser sheni, etc.).

What type of confession is this??? Confessing involves admission of sin; yet in the case of viduy maaser, the individual is clearly expressing his precise adherence to the entire scope of the commandments of teruma, maaser, et al. How does the concept of confession have any bearing on something done correctly? One might argue that

there are really two completely different translations of "viduy." However, the Talmud, along with the major codifiers of mitzvos and other commentaries, do not differentiate between viduy of teshuva or viduy maaser, implying that one explanation should serve both situations. What, then, does viduy mean?

There are more basic questions that need to be asked about each of the viduyim. Beyond the fact that the application of the term "confess" to the appropriate completion of mitzvos seems difficult to digest, the question emerges as to why there is a need to review any of these actions. At the end of Succos, are we commanded to go to the Bais Hamikdash and declare our successful accomplishment of residing in the succah and netilas lulav v'esrog? At the end of Shabbos, are we obligated to travel to Yerushalayim and exclaim, "I kept Shabbos!" Of course not. Why is there a need to review your personal success here?

The role of viduy in regards to teshuva also needs to be analyzed. The Rambam, whose writings in Hilchos Teshuva serve as the foundation to our understanding of the phenomenon of teshuva, describes (Hilchos Teshuva 2:2) the process of teshuva as being one that involves removing oneself from the sin and resolving to never violate the commandment again. It is only at the end of the process that the Rambam writes that one is required to enunciate all that he has reviewed in his mind, and that this review is viduy. The question here is: what exactly is the importance of this verbalization? The person has, in his mind, seemingly completed the teshuva process. To say out loud what he has completed seems to be repetitious. Yet its importance cannot be overstated –there are numerous instances where the Rambam describes viduy as an integral part of teshuva.

So what is viduy? From reading the Rambam, viduy is clearly the last step in the entire teshuva process. At its most elementary, one

can posit that viduy is a form of verbal acknowledgement, reviewing that which the person accomplished in his mind. In general, to enunciate that which one is thinking packs a powerful punch, and has a huge impact on an individual. One can think about his dependence on God, but it is the recitation of tefila that ultimately affects the individual. The same is true of teshuva. Viduy is the auditory culmination of the process. Why is it necessary for teshuva? The Rambam describes the process of teshuva as a purely intellectual phenomenon – but it would be incomplete without bringing the person's emotions in line with the process. As a person organizes his thoughts and resolutely concludes he will not engage in this action in the future, there is still a residual emotional attachment that exists to the instinctual world he "visited." That last tie to that world of sin must be severed, and that is accomplished through the verbal acknowledgement of viduy. It is interesting that the beginning of the personal viduy (also seen in the kohein gadol's viduy described in the musaf) involves the person saying Anah Hashem, prefacing the viduy with the recognition of God. The mechanism employed to put the person in the correct framework, ensuring complete removal from the lure of the instinctual, is placing himself in the correct relationship vis-a-vis God. This seems to be the final act of teshuva, completing both the intellectual internalization of the process and the psychological break from the world of sin.

Let's now look at viduy maaser. The underlying problem is the apparent need to acknowledge the accomplishment of these mitzvos. We do not live in an agricultural society, so many of the emotions that emerge through being intimately involved in the process from planting to harvesting (and the many steps in between) do not directly impact us. However, there are certain concepts contained within the arena of the agricultural

that are universal. The process from planting to harvest is a long and difficult one. No doubt, when the produce is harvested, the completion of this long process, a person naturally reflects on this bounty being the result of his hard work. It is at this juncture the Torah introduces the mitzvos of terumah and maaser. Each of the mitzvos tied to the giving of produce to the kohen or destitute involves a demonstration of the limitations of our control in the natural world. To give up that which someone worked so hard on, from its inception to culmination, is not an easy task. One of the objectives in each of these commandments is to assist the person in realizing he is ultimately not the creator of his produce. Yet, even after completing all of these commandments, there is a lingering resistance to relinquishing his feeling of ownership, of power. The objective of the viduy here, in a similar vein to teshuva, is to help the person overcome this remaining resistance. The person recites this at the Bais Hamikdash, before God, reviewing his actions. He ends by asking God to now "bless" Bnai Yisrael. This request clearly indicates to the individual the nature of his dependence on God for all that he has. Once again, the appropriate view of the self in relation to God serves to ultimately overcome any resistances.

Clearly, precision in translation is crucial to understanding. Translating viduy as confession assumes an action which is not really part of the process while excluding a critical element. Viduy with teshuva is not a confession in the standard sense of the word. Rather it is the imperative to verbalize that which has been done and what he has gone through. By viewing himself in an objective way, accomplished through the acknowledgment of God, he is able to complete the process of teshuva. As we engage in tefila and teshuva this Yom Kippur, we should clearly understand the unique phenomenon of viduy and its ability to bring us to a greater level of yediyas Hashem. ■

science expressed together on Rosh Hashannah teach that God reigns over all, and is knowledgeable of all. Nothing is beyond His abilities, or His knowledge. There is no other cause for the universe and all that fills it.

In contrast, Yom Kippur's distinction is "God's ineffable name": the priests would recite God's ineffable name ten times in the Temple during Yom Kippur. Being prohibited to enunciate God's name normally, is to serve as our demonstration that we lack any knowledge of God, i.e., we cannot even mention His name, which would suggest we possess some idea about Him. Any description of God – even the meaning of His name – is unknown to us. But on Yom Kippur, this actual name of God is mentioned ten times. This indicates that on Yom Kippur, there is a closer relationship to God. What is this relationship?

Rabbi Chait stated that the very recognition of our ignorance about God's nature atones for our sins. How so? The answer is that through our recognition that we have no concept of God, this acknowledgement entitles us existence for another year. We thereby learn that our existence depends on obtaining correct ideas, and our admission of ignorance regarding anything related to God. We cannot know God, as the Torah says, "...for man cannot know Me while he is alive." So when we admit of this ignorance, we are in fact stating a truth, and when man is in line with truth, God's providence relates to him even more. The more knowledge we attain of truths, and the more we realize we are ignorant of God, that is how much more our lives are a reality before God and "worth" existence. In other words, as we continually grow in our realization that God is not physical, that He possesses no emotions, nor any quality existent in the universe, although we attain no positive knowledge of God, we



are in fact removing false notions about Him. This act of negating, positions us more in line with truth. Let us now examine the ideas obtained through the Yom Kippur service

After the normal daily service, the High Priest would slaughter the ox, one of many sacrifices on Yom Kippur. But before enacting the central service of this sacrifice – sprinkling of the blood on the Ark's cover – the High Priests is commanded to interrupt this ox service, and offer the incense in the Temple's Holy of Holies. Why this interruption? Additionally, the priest must wait until this room is entirely filled with the smoke of the burning incense. What is the meaning behind this waiting period?

The purpose is that the smoke is to create an opaque veil between the High Priest and the rest of the room of the Holy of Holies. This veil is an admission of the "veil" that exists between God and man. Maimonides states that Revelation at Sinai too was traditionally explained to have been a rainy

day, also a veil of sorts. The cloud and thick cloud at Sinai certainly teaches this lesson, that there is an infinite distance between God and man. Even when God "reveals" Himself by creating the miracles of Sinai – a closer relationship – nonetheless, only a distant relationship exists between God, who is far exalted from anything we can fathom, as mortal, created man.

So the High Priest must acknowledge that man is far removed from God, and only through this realization, is the High Priest permitted to then complete his offering. There is a danger that man may think he possesses some idea about God. Not only is this false, but until the High Priest admits of his ignorance through the incense's veil, he is prohibited to continue with his worship, lest he assume he is serving his own fantasy idea of God, and not the true God. For if we wrongly assume that we do in fact possess some truths about God, Temple worship would then be converted to heresy and idolatry. This explains the interruption of the ox sacrifice.

In another class given by Rabbi Chait many years ago, he cited the Talmud that described the most powerful human instincts as a "fiery lion exiting the Holy of Holies in the Temple". Rabbi Chait explained then, that this teaches us that the most powerful instinct is the "religious emotion". It is in Temple that man is subject to forming ideas about to whom he is serving. Therefore, the Talmud states that the "fiery lion" (a powerful and dangerous entity referring to the religious emotion) had exited. It is within service to God that man must be on his highest level of guard. For it is here that man religious emotions are heightened.

The next sacrifice is the goat of the people. So far there are two sacrifices: the High Priest's ox, and the peoples' goat. Why must there be two separate offerings for our sins? We derive a new insight: the priests require their own atonement. What additional atonement do they require? Why can't they join in the nation's goat sin sacrifice? The answer can only lie in the priest's distinction: Temple service. Meaning, even those who serve in the Temple by God's very command – the priests – are not immune to the instincts, which never cease to cause us to sin. As such, the priests must demonstrate that Temple service is not something that they can perform flawlessly. Therefore, they alone must be atoned through a separate animal. Had they joined the people with the nation's goat, this lesson would not be learned.

Rabbi Chait mentioned that there is no escape from the control of our unconscious and our emotional drives. This is our nature. Other religions wish to deny this aspect of man, but Judaism does not have heroes or saints, all man's sins are revealed in the Torah, even those of our greatest prophets. Judaism embraces the acceptance of reality, and foremost, this includes

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that we are instinctual by nature, that we have an unconscious, and that we possess emotional attractions for matters that the Torah prohibits.

We learn that Temple itself requires atonement, that is, we demonstrate through the priest's offering that Temple service is not an area in which man escapes sin - how profound an idea. In other words, we are not worthy of Temple. We make the Temple impure by not guarding ourselves from Torah defined impurities. And when we are in an impure state (contact with the dead for example) and we enter the Temple without purification, we defile the Temple, its vessels and its sacrifices. These sins all require atonement. We cannot properly relate to the requirements of Temple, so in Temple law itself, are the commands to offer atonements for Temple impurities that we commit.

I added that the Rabbis state, "the Day of Yom Kippur 'itself' is an atonement." What is meant by "itself"? I suggested that this means the following: Yom Kippur's existence as a fixed part of the calendar teaches our unavoidable need to be forgiven. We cannot escape sin, and we learn this as well from there being an eternally fixed day of Yom Kippur, even in the Messianic era. Although we will rise to a higher level of existence during this era, man's nature will still include instincts. Thus, our recognition that Yom Kippur is essential for our forgiveness impresses us with the idea that man is inherently flawed. Such an idea carves into man's heart his acceptance of his nature. This acceptance alone atones. How so? As we said, recognition of our nature raises us to be more in line with reality, and additionally, as we accept this reality, we may be moved to reflect on our flaws.

Rabbi Chait also taught that even on the Day of Atonement itself, Yom Kippur, there are infractions committed by the priests and man who cannot control all of their thoughts. Ironically, as we are being atoned for our sins of the year, we continue to have sinful thoughts crossing our minds, and these must be atoned for as well! This is why there are two additional sin offerings later on, in the day of Yom Kippur. To me, this is such a prime example of the honesty of Torah, that it is a system which embraces truth at every turn, and never considers there to be any area or service in which man is bereft of his instinctual nature, and thus, sin.

Now, although we stated that the priests must atone for their own Temple service infractions through a distinct sacrifice, yet, we are one people. Rabbi Chait stated that this is demonstrated by the command of the mixing of the blood of both offerings. The priest's animal blood and that of the animal of the nation are intermingled as one.

Returning to the idea that man cannot escape his instinctual drives, no matter how far he progresses in his perfection, Rabbi Chait mentioned the Scapegoat, the Sa-ir Ha-Azazel. The priest confesses the sins of all the Jews, and the Torah euphemistically states that the animal "carries off" our sins to the desert, where this Scapegoat is delivered to its certain death as it is dismembered upon its fall onto Mount Azazel's rocky slopes. Through this service, we attain recognition that the unconscious emotions in man will lead him too to a most certain, spiritual death.

This service is elaborated upon in the article entitled "The Scapegoat" which now follows. ■



RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by a student

the Scapegoat

The Scapegoat is a very unique sacrifice. All other sacrifices require slaughter and blood sprinkling, which is the fulfillment of the sacrifice and reflects the presence of atonement. However, the Scapegoat is brought to a desolate place and is brutally killed by being thrown over a precipice. Chazal teach us that the nations of the world criticize the B'nai Yisroel for its practice of the Scapegoat as being solely ritualistic and ceremonial. Although the gentiles have ritualistic practices, they are symbolic and their performances engender some emotional satisfaction unlike the Scapegoat. Judaism prides itself on the fact that one's commitment to the Torah is based upon his intellectual conviction and that its commandments are ethical and moral principles. We must therefore explain the significance of the Scapegoat and the intellectual insight the Torah is imparting to us.

The Eben Ezrah gives us a clue as to the secret of the Scapegoat. He states that a basic secret of the Scapegoat is after the word "azazel" and when you are 33 years old you will know this secret. If one counts 33 verses from the word "ha'midbarah", the word after "azazel", which appears in Leviticus, chapter 16 verse 10, one may get a clue. The verse that is being referred to is 17,7. The verse states: "They should no longer sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs that lead them astray. Rashi explains the word l'saerim to mean l'shaydim, unto the demons. The Eben Ezrah is teaching us that if one desires an insight into the Scapegoat he [sic] must recognize that adhering to this practice will lead one to the practice stated in chapter 7 verse 17. The Israelites will no longer turn astray and sacrifice to the demons as the nations of the world. We will explain this insight after we examine several salient laws with respect to the Scapegoat. It is interesting to note that the Rambam holds that the Scapegoat renders atonement without repentance for all commandments that are not punishable by kares, excision. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's position in the Talmud, although we do not rule like him, is that even the "day of Yom Kippur" itself effectuates atonement. We must appreciate how atonement works, if the sinner is not repentant. Halachically, Teshuva implies that one must return to God. His relationship with the creator must be

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rekindled as a result of his recognizing the cause of his sin and being able to elevate himself to a higher intellectual level. The individual is a changed person, one who is no longer drawn by the temptations of the instinctual nor the frailties of the emotional components of his nature, which causes

him to commit the sin. We therefore must understand how does the mere practice of the Scapegoat grant atonement to a sinner?

The last Mishna in the tractate of Yumah quotes a statement of Rabbi Akiva, which states "Happy are you Israel before whom you are purified, and

who purifies you, your Father in heaven." This is a puzzling statement. Anybody who performs Teshuva and returns to God, as a result of his own actions, is purified before God. This applies even to a Gentile. Why then does Rabbi Akiva specify a Jew; and furthermore it seems from his statement that Teshuva is extraneous to this purification process. We must try to comprehend Rabbi Akiva's teaching.

Nachmanides comments on the Eben Ezra, explaining the service of the Scapegoat discusses a Medrash. The Medrash says that the children of Jacob give Samael, their prosecuting angel, a bribe on Yom Kippur. This bribe is the sacrificial Scapegoat. It is given so that he should not annul their sacrifices. The Scapegoat has all the sins of the Children of Israel on its head, as set out in the verses in the Torah. The Medrash continues, "as a result Samael will see that there is no sin on Yom Kippur and will explain before God, 'Creator of the world, there is one nation in this world which are akin to the ministering angels. Just like the ministering angels are bare footed, so too on this day the Jews are bare footed'." Samael makes similar observations when addressing God with respect to eating, drinking, standing all day, making peace amongst themselves and being free of sin. In all these activities the Jewish people on Yom Kippur are comparable to the ministering angels. The Holy One upon hearing these testimonies from the prosecutor Samael, makes atonement for the altar, the sanctuary, the priests of Israel and for all the people of the assembly of Israel. This is the Agadah that the Rambam quotes to help us understand the Scapegoat.

This Agadah raises several questions: Who is Samael and how is he bribed? Originally the purpose of the bribe is so that the sacrifices should not be annulled, however the seeming result of the bribe is that it is responsible for the entire atonement of Yom Kippur. Maimonides, in his "Guide for the Perplexed" states that Samael is the appellation applied by our sages to Satan. The derivation of the word Samael is "Sam-El", the blinding of God. Samael represents that part of human nature, which blinds the individual from perceiving the ultimate reality, God. The Yetzer Harah and Satan are used interchangeably by Chazal and represent man's evil inclination which is rooted in his physical nature. Chazal use the term Satan, which implies something external to man, to signify that this part of man is not his essence. Rather the tzelem Elokim – intelligence – is man's essence. Chazal use the term Yetzer Harah to teach us that although it is not man's essence, we are nevertheless responsible for this part of us. The key to understanding the Scapegoat is appreciating its inexorable connection to the atonement of Yom Kippur. There were two goats, which were subject

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to the lottery. One was designated for God and was brought upon the altar as a sacrifice. The second goat was designated l'azazel and was the saer ha'mishtaleyach, the goat that was sent away to meet its final destiny in the desert. The atonement of the day of Yom Kippur was really a result of the goat that was designated l'azazel and not the one that was brought as a sacrifice. The atonement of Yom Kippur is unique because it atones for many sins, kalot vechamurot, lenient and stringent sins. Whereas a korban chatas is brought for a particular maaseh aveira, act of violation, and atones for that particular sin. On Yom Kippur "lifneh Hashem tetaharu", we are purified before God. The essential character of the day atones. This is a different type of forgiveness than a specific korban chatas, a sin offering. Yom Kippur is related to the state of the gavra, the individual. The day atones the individual. A person, who appreciates the sanctity of the day, demonstrates that he, as an individual, is worthy of forgiveness. Consequently, this new status results in the removal of the particular sins.

An understanding of the service of the Scapegoat gives us insight into the essential nature of the sanctity of Yom Kippur and its function as a purifier. The Scapegoat atoned for all the sins of the Jews. Leviticus Chapter 16, Verses 21 and 22 tells us that Aaron placed his hands on the Scapegoat and confessed all the sins of the Children of Israel and all their transgressions, and placed them on the head of the Azazel goat. How does this goat serve to forgive all the sins of the Jewish people? The Torah is teaching us that the sins of man are really separate and extraneous to his essential nature. Aaron was capable of removing all of man's sins and placing them on the head of the goat. The Scapegoat as stated, represents the Satan, man's evil inclination, the part of man driven by his fantasy. This service signifies that the part of man, which is based upon his emotions and fueled by his fantasy, is really not reflective of man's true essence, his Tzelem Elokim, his intelligence. This part of man, his instinctual nature, may be severed from his true nature. However, if man follows his fantasies and his evil inclination, he is doomed as the Scapegoat, to face a brutal and lonely death.

The Midrash quoted by Nachmanides can now be understood. We bribe Samael and give him the Scapegoat. We, as Torah Jews, recognize that the pursuit of the fantasy blinds us from perceiving "chachmas haboreh", the wisdom of our Creator. We acknowledge by the service of the Scapegoat, that there is a spiritually higher nature to man, his true essence that we value. As Torah Jews, we thereby attempt to lead our lives based upon the Tzelem Elokim. By bribing Samael, we acknowledge that there is a part of man's nature, which is

overpowering. However, we cannot deny our instinctual nature, but must acknowledge that it stems from the lower part of man's being, and as such, must be dealt with. If we deny our instinctual nature "Samael", it can have tragic consequences. On the contrary, we recognize the instinctual part of man's nature but acknowledge our life long struggle as Torah Jews to separate that part of our nature from the Tzelem Elokim. Only by "bribing" Samael and recognizing the potent powers of fantasy, can we hope to ever be successful in combating these forces and removing them from overwhelming our actions as Torah Jews. We demonstrate that ultimately if one is led astray by the powers of the fantasy, he will surely perish and be doomed to spiritual genocide.

The Scapegoat was taken to the desert by the "ish iti", a specially prepared man. This demonstrates that the ultimate destruction of the Scapegoat is not fortuitous. Rather, it is a necessary result that the pursuits of the fantasy will lead to one's downfall. That is why the ish iti was mezuman l'kach, was prepared for this job, to ensure and guarantee that the Scapegoat would meet its eventual destruction. This recognition by Klal Yisroel that we appreciate the overwhelming force of man's instinctual nature and constantly strive to overcome it and elevate our lives to a higher spiritual plane, makes us akin to the mal'achey hashares, ministering angels. This causes Samael to remark that on Yom Kippur the Children of Israel are like the Ministering Angels. The Ministering Angels are not under the influence of the instinctual, they are not swayed by emotions. Similarly on Yom Kippur the Jewish people demonstrate through the prohibitions of the day (eating, drinking, cohabitation, and wearing leather shoes etc.) that we abstain from these physical pleasures to demonstrate that there is a higher part to man's existence.

This explains how the Scapegoat atones for all sins. Since man recognizes this concept and appreciates that his physical existence leads him on the path of Samael, he must strive through chachma, wisdom, to live life based upon his Tzelem Elokim, and thus become a different type of person. Yom Kippur is a day of reality whereby he recognizes the dangers in his daily existence of Samael, but elevates himself on this day to be purified before Hashem. This explains that although a person did not do teshuva on a particular maaseh aveira, act of sin, but since he recognizes the consequences of Samael and that man's true essence is chachma, he has elevated himself to higher spiritual level and he is a being worthy of forgiveness.

We can now understand the reason why there are two goats, one for Hashem and one for azazel.

This represents man's dual nature, his intellect that is l'Hashem and his instinctual which is l'azazel. In order to have the sacrifice to Hashem, you must have the Scapegoat. One cannot be successful in his struggle as a talmid chachom unless he recognizes the lower part of human nature. Intellectual perfection cannot be achieved if one simply represses his instinctual nature. By repressing one's instinctual nature it still remains an influential part of his personality.

The many meticulous details with respect to the performance of the Scapegoat also evidences this concept. A person is driven to the life of the physical by many powerful forces. Each of these drives is shattered by the method of performance mandated by the Torah by bringing the Scapegoat. A person is drawn to the life of the material because of the enticements of the physical pleasures that one imagines is comforting when living an instinctual existence. This is why the Scapegoat is brutally thrown over the cliff to a torturous death. This represents that visions of physical pleasures are illusory and transitory and ultimately will result in a painful shattering of such false emotions. A person is also drawn to the life of the physical because he feels that material success garners respect and popular acceptance by the masses. Therefore the Scapegoat is sent out with one man, alone without any fanfare, to a desolate and lonely place in the desert. This demonstrates that leading a life of materialism will ultimately and invariably result in a lonely and desolate existence. Lastly, a person is fooled by the entrapments of a physical existence in order to insulate himself from the limited nature of such an existence and to cater to his fantasy of immortality. Thus the Scapegoat always meets the same destiny, a harsh and cruel termination, to help emasculate any such fantasies that a person may harbor.

We can now appreciate Rabbi Akiva's statement quoted in the last Mishna in Tractate Yumah. "Happy are the Children of Israel because they are purified before God." Although it might be possible in isolated cases for individuals to come to the true recognition of God, however, for a nation of people, on such a large scale, it is impossible. How fortunate are we Torah Jews who have a system of Torah and Mitzvos, (that contains the abstract and beautiful practice of the Scapegoat), a system based upon chachma that allows us to recognize man's true nature and remove ourselves from living a purely physical existence, the life of fantasy that ultimately leads to man's downfall. Therefore Rabbi Akiva exalts "how happy are we the nation of Israel that we are fortunate to such a blessing." ■



LESSONS *of the* Yom Kippur *Sacrifices*

*the
Religious
Extremes*

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Many people live by the principles of “modernity”, the feeling that “anything that preceded me must be outdated”. Some espouse the opinion of “animal cruelty” in connection with Temple sacrifice. Additional rejection of the sacrifices of Yom Kippur may arise due to their association with a long day of fasting, standing, and many uncomfortable restrictions. Are the Temple’s “ancient” sacrifices just that – archaic, inapplicable, and even brutal acts, deserving our abandonment? Must our religiosity comply with our subjective feelings, or must “we” comply with these practices and ideas, regardless of our opinion of their inapplicability?

As Torah Jews who respect that all in our Torah is God’s word, applicable for all time[1], we take a different road: we seek to discover the eternal truths contained in each of our precious Mitzvahs and ideals, instead of projecting our wishes on them. As Torah Jews, we know all that God commanded does not expire, as man’s nature does not expire. As Adam was created, and as the Jews existed at Sinai when they received these commands, so are we today: possessing those identical faculties and desires. As such, we are no less in need of the Torah’s sacrifices and their lessons. The sacrifices address our human nature today, and it is only due to our sins, that the Temple is non-existent, and our levels are degraded by its absence. But we may still perfect ourselves to a great degree by understanding the underlying ideas of the Yom Kippur sacrifices; we must study the characteristics and requirements of the sacrifices. We must review the Torah, Talmud, and our sages, such as Maimonides, Ramban, Rashi and Ibn Ezra.

Two Goats

I will address just two of the Yom Kippur sacrifices: the two goats upon which a lottery was cast. Two goats – preferably with similar visual features, height, and cost – were presented in the Temple. The priest would blindly draw a lot, which contained both God’s name and that of Azazel. Each goat was designated for the lot placed on it. The scapegoat – the one sent to its death off Mount Azazel – is described as “carrying all the sins of the Jews”[2]. This goat atoned for all sins, provided one repented. The other goat dedicated as a sin offering in the Temple atoned only for the sins of the Jews in their defiled entry to the Temple sanctuary.

What is the reason for the goat’s similarity? Why was their designation for either a sin offering in the Temple, or Mount Azazel, decided by a lottery? Why do we require two goats: cannot a single goat atone for all sins? What was significant about Mount Azazel? And why was there a service of

clouding the Holy of Holies where the Ark resided, included in the process of sacrificing these two goats?

Furthermore, we are struck by the Torah’s placement of the Yom Kippur sacrifices in Parshas Achrei Mos[3] immediately subsequent to the death of Aaron’s two sons who offered a “strange fire”: an offering not commanded by God. What was the gravity of their sin, that God killed them? And what is the connection between Aaron’s sons’ sin and the Yom Kippur sacrifices, that the Torah joins the two in one section? We also wonder what God means by His critique of Aaron’s two sons, “And you shall not come at all times to the Holy of Holies behind the Paroches [curtain] before the Kaporets[4] which is on the Ark, so none shall die...for in cloud do I [God] appear on the Kaporets”. [5] What is the stress of “for in cloud do I appear on the Kaporets”? What is the significance again of “cloud”? And finally, why, after concluding the section on Yom Kippur sacrifices, does the Torah continue with the restriction of sacrificing outside the Temple, with the punishment of one’s soul being cut off? In that section[6] God warns the Jews about sacrificing to demons [imaginary beings] and also warns about eating blood, which also meets with the loss of one’s soul. Maimonides teaches that the practice of eating blood was imagined by those sinners to provide them comradeship with assumed spirits, and that those sinners would benefit by such a union. Although the questions are many, I believe one idea will answer the all.

The Scapegoat

What is the significance of Yom Kippur? It is the day when we are forgiven. What does “forgiveness” imply? It implies that we sin. And in what does man sin? This is where I believe we can answer all our questions.

We readily answer that we sin by deviating from God’s commands. The worst sin, of course, is idolatry, where we assume the greatest error: other powers exist, besides God. If one assumes this fatal error, his concept of God is false, and his soul cannot enjoy the afterlife, which is a greater connection with the one, true God. This explains why those sinners who sacrificed to imaginary beings – demons – and those who eat blood, lose their eternal life. And even if these exact practices are not performed, but one harbors the thought that there exists powers other than God, be they powers assumed to exist in physical objects, or even in the Torah’s words...such individuals also cross that line of idolatry.

The Scapegoat – the one goat sent to its death off Mount Azazel – was to atone for all our sins. Sin emanates from a disregard of God and His word,

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but in its most grave form, idolatry. The Rabbis say that the Scapegoat is not sacrificed, but hurled from a peak downwards, to prevent us from assuming it is a 'sacrifice' to those demons, normally associated with the wilderness where Mount Azazel is located. By destroying the Scapegoat and not sacrificing it, we actively deny any claim of those desert-based demons, or truths about comradery with spirits by eating blood from sacrifices to demons. We wish to deny any and all claims of assumed powers, other than God. Our atonement is effectuated through the Scapegoat, by admitting the fallacy of idolatry, and the rejection of any intelligent existence besides God, His angels, or man. Nothing else exists that is self-aware; nothing else besides God, His angels, and man, possess any intelligence, or capabilities other than natural laws. The Scapegoat thereby undermines and utterly rejects man's path where he deviates from Torah practice. But there is another area of sin.

The Other Sin

"And they brought before God a strange fire, which He had not commanded them[7]". Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu expressed the other area of sin: man-made, religious practice. Although we assume sin to be solely identified as deviation from the Torah as seen in idolatry, sin also exists when we attempt to approach God, but with our own devices, as the verse states, "And they brought before God a strange fire...". "Before God" is the operative phrase. Nadav and Avihu intended to approach God, not in accord with His ways, but with their own. The Rabbis stated, "The Jews desired to contain the Evil Instinct. It exited as a fiery lion from the Holy of Holies. They attempted to restrain the lion by seizing its mane, but it let out a loud roar." Regarding this Talmudic metaphor, a Rabbi once asked what was most significant. He answered, "the fact that the instincts were exiting the Temple's Holy of Holies". What does this mean? It means that man's instincts are most powerful – like a fiery lion – in connection with the most religious of activities and locations: the Holy of Holies. We need not look far to realize this truth, as demonstrated in Jihads and other holy wars. Religion is a great target for man's instincts, as in this area he is greatly motivated. In unguided religious expression, man's emotions will take over, as seen in Aaron's two sons who wished religious expression of their own creation. The existence of so many divergent man-made religions proves this point that man wishes subjective religious expression.

It is this sin, I believe, that the second Yom Kippur goat addresses. This second, goat sin offering was brought in the Temple, and not sent to

the wilderness as the other, for it is this goat that addresses man's sin in the Temple. Man requires recognizing his sin in both deviating from God, and in approaching God. God too addresses these two deviances with His commands not to add to, or subtract from the Torah. Subtracting from the Torah parallels the Scapegoat, where man abandons Torah and God in place of demons; and adding to the Torah parallels the sin of Nadav and Avihu who expressed an addition to the Torah's prescribed commands, corrected by this second goat brought in the Temple to atone for the Jews' sins in Temple.

God's Arrangement of Torah Sections

We can now readily understand why God placed the Yom Kippur sacrifices in His Torah, between the sin of Nadav and Avihu and the prohibition to sacrifice to demons. It is because Yom Kippur sacrifice intends to address man's two areas of sin: the over religious sin seen in Nadav and Avihu, and the lack of religiosity seen in demon sacrifice, where one does not approach God, but runs from Him towards imagined imposters. Yom Kippur atones for us by directing our attention to the two areas of human sin: non-religious, and over religious. We are alerted to apply this lesson to our

own deviances. The non-religious person assumes more knowledge than God, as he feels he understands better how the world operates. He therefore creates his own demons, and worships them. He is lacking an understanding of the One Creator, as he assumes multiple forces. The over religious person feels otherwise: he feels safe, as he "approaches God" as did Aaron's sons. He feels with his intent to serve God, anything goes. He feels he can create new modes of religious practice, and that he will find favor in God's eyes. But the Torah's response for both is death of some kind. Thus, "any" deviation – even when our intent is to serve God – is construed by God as sin.

Perhaps the need for two goats is derived from our two areas of deviance. And perhaps, as one goat addresses the abandoning of God in idolatry, that same goat is unfit to address our faulted approach to God: idolatry is a far greater crime: idolatry errs about God Himself, while over religiosity errs about His will. But both goats are preferably identical, to teach that either goat satisfies one or the other requirement, since there is nothing in the goat per se that atones, but it is our understanding and conviction in their respective 'lessons', that truly atones for us. The lottery also contributes to removing any significance to either goat, as each was picked by "chance".

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Cloud

Why was there a service of “clouding” the Holy of Holies where the Ark resided, included in the service of Yom Kippur? And why was God’s response to Nadav and Avihu, “for in cloud do I [God] appear on the Kaporets”? Cloud was also present at God’s Revelation at Sinai. What is the commonality?

Nadav and Avihu violated the principle that God is unknowable, by assuming they knew how to approach God. Thus, God responds that He appears in cloud. What is cloud? It represents man’s blindness. Man is blind about God’s nature, and also about how to approach Him, without Torah. Nadav and Avihu’s sin was in their denial of their ignorance concerning God. God therefore reiterated to Moses and Aaron the concept of man’s blind ignorance, by describing how He appears in cloud. And again in our yearly Yom Kippur service, we must reiterate our agreement with our ignorant natures, by clouding the holiest of all places, the Holy of Holies. Our religious practice must contain a service that demonstrates our ignorance. Our atonement relies on a rejection of our instinctual, religious fabrication.

Application for Today

It is vital that in our approach to God, that we be so careful not to add to Torah commands, regardless of the popularity of new practices, even among religious Jews. Our barometer for what is God’s intent, is God’s word alone. We must not fall prey to our need for human approval, that we blindly accept what the masses of religious Jews perpetrate as Torah. If we are truly careful, and seek out authentic, authoritative Torah sources, we will discover what is true Torah, and what violates God’s words.

In a conversation with a dear friend recently, I was asked what I felt about certain Kabbalistic views. They included these: that cut fingernails are dangerous; that people might hurt us with evil eyes; that reciting the letters of God’s name offers man power; and other nonsensical positions. My first response was that there is doubt as to the authenticity of the Zohar, and further, Zohar is not the Torah given by God at Sinai. But regardless, I told this friend that if an idea makes no sense, it matters none if a Rabbi wrote it, for even Moses, the most perfected intellect erred. Therefore, no man alive today is infallible. So quoting the Zohar is meaningless, if the idea violates Torah and reason.

God gave each of us a Tzelem Elokim – intelligence – that we must engage, and not ignore. Regardless of the prevalence of practices in religious Jewish communities, we have intelligence with which we may discern what makes sense, and what is nonsense. It matters none if the practice is a sacrifice to demons, or a practice that

includes a Torah object like a mezuzah, a challah, or if one cites an accepted book authored by a Rabbi. We have the Torah’s authentic principles to guide us towards reasonable practices. Just as demons and their assumed powers are imagined, so are the powers assume to exist in challas, red bendels, mezuzas, or reciting Torah verses with the intent to heal the sick.

Religious deviance seeks substantiation by including Torah articles in man made practice, and as we learn from Nadav and Avihu, any deviation from God’s commands – even to approach Him – is a sin. If you are in doubt to the validity of a practice, study the Torah, read the Shulchan Aruch, or ask a Rabbi to show you a source. But if you find no source for a given practice, do not follow it. And many times with your mind alone, you can uncover the falsehood in popular claims.

This Yom Kippur, break free from what is popular, comfortable, or falsely promises success and health. “Teshuva, Tefila and Tzedaka”, repentance, prayer and charity, are what God deems as our correct response:

Do Teshuva from false notions and actions, regardless of their popularity, for you exist to follow God, not to impress your neighbor by copying their errors.

Pray to God to direct you to new truths, to forgive and purify you, and to help you abandon fallacy. And if your Hebrew reading is not excellent, pray in English or your own language, for prayer is meaningless if you do not understand what you recite.

And give charity to recognize your own insignificance, to break loose of our attachment to wealth, and recognize that God alone grants wealth. Assist others, recognizing them as God’s creation, and show them pity, as you wish God to show you.

Use God laws alone to secure your good life, and do not continue in the sins of abandoning God, or attempting to serve Him in way He did not command. The Scapegoat teaches that our imagination is destructive, and the goat sin offering curbs our over religious tendencies. We must learn where these lessons may apply to each one of us, for we all have false notions in connection with purely instinctual needs, and religious needs. Be guided by reason, by God’s precisely worded Torah. And may we all forgive, be forgiven, and enjoy a new year of life, health, wealth and happiness that can only come from careful Torah adherence. ■

[1] See Maimonides’ 13 Principles

[2] Lev. 16:22

[3] Lev. 16:1-34

[4] The Kaporets was the Ark’s lid formed of solid gold, with the figurines of two cherubim – childlike creatures with wings.

[5] Lev. 16:2

[6] Lev. 17:1-16

[7] Lev. 10:1

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High Holidays



Teshuva

— Rabbi Joshua Maroof —

Defining Teshuva

In order to resolve these difficulties, we must examine the concepts of sin and teshuva more carefully. Specifically, we must consider the fact that a person who violates one of the commandments is doing a lot more than acting inappropriately. His sin is not a random occurrence that can be viewed separately from his personal beliefs and convictions. On the contrary, through his action he is demonstrating something about his entire value system: he is making a statement about what he envisions - or does not envision - as his purpose in life.

An example will better illustrate this point. The Torah demands that we restrict ourselves to the consumption of kosher food. Eating kosher is instrumental to our development as human beings because it keeps us aware of our spiritual objective in life even as we are involved in taking care of our physical needs. Observance of kashrut demonstrates our belief that eating cannot be significant in its own right unless it is a means to our ultimate goal - the service of our Creator.

Hence, an individual who succumbs to temptation and consumes non-kosher food has not simply committed a technical violation of Torah law. He has indicated through his action that he is not fully dedicated to the philosophical principles of Judaism. He has not adopted an unequivocal set of life priorities - he remains torn between the lure of instinctual gratification for its own sake and his desire to develop his mind and soul. In a moment of weakness, his baser drives grabbed hold of him and overpowered his intellect, leading him to neglect an important commandment. The violation itself, however, was only a symptom of a more basic conflict within his personality.

When we become aware that we have committed a sin, then, this should serve as a stimulus to deeper reflection on the purpose of our existence. We should not write it off as a fluke but should perceive it as a sign that we have moved too far in the wrong direction philosophically, that we have not sufficiently clarified our ultimate priorities in life. We should realize that our action indicates that we are ambivalent about some aspects of the Torah's values and directives, and that, as a result, we still struggle with them in practice. This in turn should motivate us to immerse ourselves in Torah study in order to gain a clearer sense of the purpose of our existence and to increase our awareness of how important its teachings and mitzvot are for our development. We will emerge from this quest with a more definitive set of principles and priorities to guide our lives - and, as a natural result, we will feel compelled to abandon our misguided ways. This, in fact, is the reason why the Rambam uses the double language "when a person repents and turns from his si" when he introduces the mitzvah of doing teshuva. It is the internal, transformational process of self-reflection, value clarification and study that constitutes true teshuva - the behavior change is, as it were, a by-product of this monumental effort.

Teshuva - A Unique Commandment

Now we are in a better position to understand

why repentance must be counted as an independent commandment. It is not equivalent to simply resuming the observance of the mitzvah that has been neglected. Even if the Torah had not included a mitzvah to repent, a person who ate non-kosher food would be expected to return to a kosher diet as soon as possible in order to avoid further violations of the formal laws of kashrut. This change in behavior alone would be expected as a function of the original commandments to keep kosher, with or without an additional commandment to repent.

This change in behavior, however, would not constitute real teshuva. The commandment to do teshuva requires a complex set of operations that transcend the realm of behavior and focus on the values and beliefs of the sinner. When we commit a transgression, we are obligated to delve into our personal convictions and correct the philosophical error(s) that led to the sin. We are commanded to refine our understanding of our purpose in life and the choices we must make if we are to achieve that purpose.

Although the person who decides to resume his observance of kashrut will do his best to avoid future kashrut infractions, he will still be required - as a function of his past violations - to engage in the more introspective process of teshuvah at some point in time. By introducing a separate mitzvah of teshuvah, the Torah teaches us that we have not fully repented for our transgressions until we have taken the time to explore the depth of their significance. Superficial changes in our habits are not enough to satisfy the Torah's requirement of teshuva.

Returning "Before Hashem"

At this stage it becomes clear why doing teshuva is always described as returning to, or before, Hashem. It is true that the immediate stimulus to repentance is usually a specific violation of Torah law that occurs at a particular time in a particular place. However, the process of repentance moves beyond the superficial features of a transgression to an analysis of its underlying causes and a reflection on the ultimate purpose of our lives. Teshuva culminates not merely in the rejection of incorrect values, but in the sinner's rededication to the highest human priority - the quest for knowledge of Hashem.

As a result of his soul-searching, the penitent's awareness of his true position in the Universe has deepened tremendously; thus, he now stands in the presence of Hashem, humbly refocused on the meaning of his own existence. ■

Holidays



SUCCOS

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Reader: Can you please explain the relationship of the Lulav and Etrog to Succah. On most holidays, there is usually a relationship between the mitzvah and the holiday like maztah on Pesach, or the succah and Succos. What is the purpose of the Lulav and Etrog? I am finding it very hard to find any information. Of the many I have spoken to, little information is known. The main response I get is "we do it because we are commanded to by G-d". Well this of course is a given, but find it hard to accept as an answer.

Rabbi: In his book entitled Horeb[1], Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained a close relationship between the Succah, and the Etrog and Lulav. I will mention his ideas, followed by my thoughts - stimulated by Rabbi Hirsch.

The Succah, a minimalistic structure, is to focus man on a minimizing his material lifestyle. This teaches man that pursuit of the physical world is not the goal of our temporary, Earthly existence. The lulav too embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We demonstrate our thanks to G-d for His bountiful harvest. We realize G-d alone has complete dominion over the world.

The Talmud states, (Succah 37b) "Why do we wave the Lulav? R. Yochanan said, we wave out and back (horizontally) to the One who owns all four directions on Earth, and we wave the Lulav up and down to the One Who owns heaven and Earth".

Rabbi Yochanan - in my opinion - separated the two acts of waving "in/out" from "up/down" to teach us that there are two areas of G-d's dominion which we need to realize: G-d owning all four directions refers to something other than heaven and Earth. We see this clearly, i.e. that He is the Creator of all. This is why we wave up/down. But if up and down waving covers heaven and Earth, i.e., all creation, what is left to recognize about G-d's greatness? I believe it is to emphasize His dominion over man's actions - that G-d has complete knowledge of our travels on Earth (our actions) as alluded to by the "four directions", which is limited to Earthly activity. This subtle difference points us to the realization that there are two distinct areas in which we must attest to G-d's greatness: 1) G-d is omnipotent, He can do all, as He created heaven and Earth, 2) G-d is omniscient, He knows all, as He is aware of all our travels and actions.

Interestingly, these are the two main themes of the High Holiday prayers, "Malchyo" (omnipotence), and "Zichrono" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that our waving of the four species on Succos must demonstrate G-d's dominion in all areas; in His creation, and in His government of man.

Why must the Succah be temporal and frail by design? Succah breaks man away from his insecurities regarding his wealth. Man continuously and falsely attempts to compensate for physical insecurity by striving for riches. Man must strive to focus on

G-d as his Sole Benefactor, instead of relying on the work of his hands. The drive towards the physical as an end, removes G-d from man's life. Lulav contrasts Succah by emphasizing the use of the physical for the right reasons. We thank G-d - the Source of our bounty - replacing our faulted view of the physical, with this proper thanks to G-d for providing vegetation. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recognition of the 'Supplier' of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength.

It also makes sense that Succah - not Lulav - is used to demonstrate man's required break from the physical. Man's home is the one object which embodies Earthly permanence,...not so man's food. Therefore, I believe a frail home - a Succah - is used as opposed to fruits - which are consumed objects, and do not afford man the satisfaction of permanence. Since man does not attach himself to fruits as he does his home, the home is from where man must make his break.

Perhaps this is why we also read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon presents the correct philosophy for man, in relation to work, wealth, happiness, sadness, and primarily, in accomplishments. King Solomon states numerous times, "what extra is there for man in all is toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "All is futility of futility...". The Rabbis questioned King Solomon's statement, "How can King Solomon say all is futile, when G-d said in Genesis that the world is very good?" The answer is that Solomon was referring only to the physical as an end in itself as futile. When G-d said it was good, He meant that as long as it serves only as a 'means' to man's pursuit of wisdom. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and G-d.

In summary, Succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards G-d, the source of all our sustenance.

Fulfill the obligations of this Succos holiday. Adhere to the commands of eating, drinking, and certainly sleeping in the succah, even light naps. Make the scach (Succah covering) from detached plant life such as reeds, wood, or bamboo, so you may gaze through the gaps at the stars as you lie on your bed - recognizing your Creator, the Creator of the universe. Wave the lulav and esrog in all four horizontal directions demonstrating G-d's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave the lulav upwards and downwards, demonstrating G-d's exclusive creation of that which is up and down - heaven and Earth.

By living in these frail huts, may we strip ourselves of our own false security, and may our waving of the lulav and esrog redirect our security towards the One who provides a bountiful life - realizing that our ultimate protection and security comes from G-d. ■

[1] Soncino Press, 6th English Edition 1997, pp 132

Holidays



best philosophy for man to follow. The Rabbis intended on hiding his book. They were concerned, lest the masses misconstrue King Solomon's intent, and his words be gravely understood in a contradictory or heretical sense. However, the very fact that King Solomon wrote in such a fashion should draw our intrigue. As he could have written in a clear fashion, his purposeful, cryptic and seemingly contradictory style must carry its own lesson, aside from the underlying content.

Why did King Solomon write this way, and in this book only? (In contrast to Proverbs, for example.) Perhaps, when presenting a work on the correct philosophy, King Solomon wished to expose the false philosophies. To do so, he verbalizes the popular and "natural" base emotions. On the surface, it appears as though such verbalization is an endorsement. It may sound as though the King is vocalizing his own views. But in fact, he is not. He verbalizes false views so they may be exposed. Fallacy is not left unanswered, with no correction. King Solomon enunciates folly, and exposes the errors contained in these falsehoods, finally teaching the true philosophy.

Why did the Rabbis say they wished to store away this book of Koheles? Was it simply an expression of concern? Or, perhaps, this was an intentionally publicized sentiment. That is, the Rabbis wished to express this very concept; Koheles is in fact a series of statements, which only 'sound' like support for heresy. By making such a statement, the Rabbis meant to teach that one must understand that portions of this book must be read as articulations of false ideas, not a support of them, and solely for the purpose of exposing their fallacy.

Pay careful attention to King Solomon's commencing words, with them, he sets the stage for the rest of his work. If King Solomon instructs us on a correct philosophy, he imparts basic ideas on psychology. By doing so, he enables us to determine if a philosophy suits our design. Without knowledge of human psychology, we have no means to judge a philosophy as deviating or conforming to man's design.

Koheles

1:1) "The words of Koheles, son of David, king in Jerusalem."

King Solomon wished to inform us of his qualifications to expose truths herein. "Koheles" is a derivative from the root "kahal", meaning, a group. He grouped, or gathered much knowledge. He was the son of a wise man, King David. As "king", King Solomon had all at his disposal to gather to himself the wise of his generation. His ideas were tested against the best minds; hence, his conclusions deserve earnest attention. "Jerusalem" was the seat of wisdom. (Sforno)

We are informed of the King's outstanding circumstances to study Torah and life, and impart his refined findings.

1:2) "Futility of futilities, says Koheles, futility of futilities, all is futile."

If we count the referred number of "futilities", we derive the number "7". How? Each word "futile" in the singular indicates 1, and each in the plural, 2. So the phrase, "futility of futilities" contains 3 references. Seven "futilities" are derived by adding all instances in this verse. 7 is indicative of the 6 days of Creation plus G-d's rest on the seventh day. King Solomon associates futility with the Creation! The Rabbis asked, "How can Solomon deny what G-d said, "and G-d saw all that He made, and behold it (Creation) was very good?" (Gen. 1:31) But King Solomon did not suggest Creation is futile. His intent is that when Creation is not used properly, only then it is futile. But when used properly, G-d is correct, "it is very good."

So we must ask, "when is Creation not used properly, and when is it used properly? Additionally, aside from numerics, this verse must make sense in its plain reading. What is disturbing is what King Solomon means by "futility of futilities". I understand what a 'futility' is; if someone seeks something vain, or improper, we would call this a futility. But what is the additional futility to which King Solomon refers to as "futility of futilities"? What can be futile about a futility?

Rabbi Chait answered this question with novel insight; King Solomon's second "futility" is referring to "fantasy". Not only is the pursuit of money (for itself) a futile endeavor, but also one's fantasy about his plan - before he acts - is an additional futility. "Fantasizing" about any material pleasure is what King Solomon refers to.

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Koheles

Written by R. Moshe Ben-Chaim based on lectures by Rabbi Israel Chait

Introduction

The book of Koheles (Ecclesiastes) was authored by King Solomon, who was "wiser than all men..." (Kings I, 5:11). He wrote this book with Divine Inspiration. In it, he analyzes which is the

Not only is the acquisition a futility, but one's energies being used for fantasy prior to the acquisition is an additional futility. King Solomon teaches that man doesn't simply follow a emotional attraction, while his thoughts are blank. No. Man acts out his emotion as the last step in a series. Man's first step is his arousal; he then conjures up a picture-perfect fantasy. He imagines the abundant wealth and possessions he will soon acquire. But this is all fantasy. It is a futile use of his energies, which could have been used to study what true happiness comes from. This is valuable time lost. Fantasizing is a futility, in addition to the actual amassing of wealth.

Our first question is "when is the physical an evil or a good?" It is a good, provided one uses it as a means for a life of wisdom. All was created for the sake of man's search for truth. If man uses any part of Creation without this goal in mind, then the object forfeits is goal, and so does man. Of course, man has emotions, and they must be satisfied on some level. But satisfaction is so man is content enough to live a life as a philosopher. Torah does not prohibit overindulgence, but it also is not praised. "Kedoshim tihiyu", "Sanctified shall you be" teaches that even with what is permissible, man should curb his indulgence.

1:3) "What additional (gain) is there to man, in all his labor that he labors under the sun?"

What is King Solomon referring to here? Rashi explains this to mean "earnings plus extra". What "extra" is Rashi referring to? Is King Solomon criticizing one who labors to eat? This cannot be. But we do notice that he does not say "gain", but "additional gain". What is additional, over and above the earnings man receives for his labor? We must also ask a more primary question: what is so important about this question, that the King started his book with it?

One may view King Solomon's verse as his own question. But you may also read it as the King's verbalization of other peoples' question. Meaning, King Solomon is merely reiterating the futile thoughts on man's mind, not his own. King Solomon was exceedingly wise, let us not make the error of assuming his thoughts matched ours. In this verse, King Solomon points to an emotional need in man. This need is the "extra" which man seeks out, in addition to his earnings. What is this "extra"? It may be a feeling of honor one desires, so he works hard for decades to rise above others for this attention. He may wish to be viewed as a sophisticate, so he dons certain clothing and dines

at exclusive locations. But all these needs, emotional projections, or self-images, are of no use to one seeking the correct life. King Solomon correctly states, "what extra is there?" King Solomon teaches that man should be anchored in reality, and not strive to concoct a plan for achieving imagined goals. Honor is in one's mind, as is one's self-image of a sophisticate. Living in fantasy is futile. Only what is real, is worthwhile. Don't seek the "extra", the imagined self-images.

Rabbi Chait taught that King Solomon is exposing our base drive, underlying all others; the need for "accomplishment". Man is seeking to accomplish much in his life. Why? After one's needs are met, it appears that further accomplishment serves man's desire to remove insecurity from himself. Too often though, a realistic security grows into an abundance of wealth, which is never spent. This too is yet another emotion, but it is the primary, propelling force in man leading him to other imagined goals. This need to "accomplish" takes on many faces.

"Under the sun": The fantasy of immortality is essential, if one is to create his other fantasies. If we knew we were dying, we could not invest our energies into amassing wealth. We would admit our time is ending. The reality of our mortality would be too stark, and it would suck the air from our sails. For this reason, King Solomon ends this verse with "under the sun." He thereby teaches that the remedy to a life of fantasy is to contemplate that we have a 'term'. "Under the sun" means, on Earth, a place that is temporal. This dose of reality helps one to temper his energies, and accept his mortality. With this reality factor, man will not so quickly indulge his fantasies. He will be safeguarded to keep his attention to what is truly real - G-d's wisdom is eternal. In truth, man should be attached to what is eternal - G-d and His wisdom.

Sforno writes on this verse, (1:3) "And he (King Solomon) said this on man's work under the sun in matters which are transient. For what use is this, that it is fitting for an intelligent being to strive at all to achieve (these matters)?" Sforno teaches that regarding matters, which are transient and temporal, man must not invest any time into them. It is a waste.

1:4) "A generation comes, and a generation goes, and the land eternally stands."

What is the relevance of a "generation", and why do I need to know that one comes and goes? As we

read through the book of Koheles, we must determine whether a given verse is King Solomon's advice, or is it his voicing of the ignorant opinions of others. The verses will be either King Solomon's proper instruction, or his exposure of man's destructive emotional counsel. Be sensitive to the issues, and be mindful that this book was written by our wisest sage, and only after he analyzed man's behavior. Remember; he was King David's son, he was king, he had all the sages at his disposal to discuss and arrive at decisive, intelligent, and true concepts.

Clearly, with this verse, King Solomon attacks the core of the immortality fantasy, i.e., not only do individuals expire, but also so do generations! Individual man is dwarfed by a generation. The insignificance of the self is undeniably admitted in the face of "mankind". And in turn, mankind's expiration dwarfs one's individual, immortality fantasy. King Solomon wishes man to undermine this destructive fantasy of immortality. By doing so, man will not find the backdrop necessary for painting elaborate fairy tales for himself. He will be forced to confront reality, and will then be guided only by truth.

"...and the land eternally stands." If man is to truly accept his own mortality, there must be that which he recognizes "outlives" him. For if all would expire with one's own death, the immortality fantasy would be replaced with yet another destructive phantasm; the ego. If one was unsure whether the world continued when he was gone, he would thereby feed his ego. Therefore, King Solomon aligns man's expiration with the realization that the world continues - even without us. The knowledge that the universe continues without us, is the necessary measuring rod for our mortality. There must be something, to which we may contrast our lifespan, and that is the universe, which "eternally stands". Contrasting the eternity of the universe to one's own few decades, man is helped to confront his mortality.

1:5) "And the sun shines, and the sun sets, and unto its place it yearns (to) shine there."

This is a prime example of the universe's unrelenting nature. This sentiment substantiates the previous comment that only the world endures. It draws on an example of the most prominent, celestial sphere. We also learn that a created entity, undiluted with extraneous agendas, i.e., the sun, performs perfectly when it functions precisely in line with its nature, designed by G-d. Man would be wise to take this lesson to heart.

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But what strikes us is the term “yearns” being applied to an inanimate object. How can the sun “yearn”?

More than others, there is one element that is essential to our understanding of human psychology: the unconscious. This is the ever-functioning but hidden part of our emotional make up. We have many desires, fears, loves, hates, and numerous other emotions, that are completely hidden from our consciousness. We are truly blind to them. These emotions, wishes and fears are manifest in our dreams; they cause our “slips of the tongue”, and continually - from ‘behind the curtain’ - motivate us. If we do not analyze our dreams, and examine our actions and feelings, we lose out greatly. We forfeit our perfection, as we allow these unconscious forces to control us, and not the reverse. Perfection requires one to be in as much control of his actions and opinions as possible. Although many emotions are elusive and remain undetected, simply not reflecting on ourselves is unacceptable.

What is it that “yearns” to shine? What is “shining”? Perhaps King Solomon alludes to this unconscious, which does both; it “rises” and “sets”. It “rises”, as it pushes forth its force into what is in daylight (rising), i.e., consciousness. It also “sets”, as it recedes back into its hidden realm, the unconscious. It “yearns to shine,” means that the unconscious always seek to affect man, who is functioning in a waking state. “Yearning” to shine means that the unconscious forces are relentless in their “desire” to control our actions.

“And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the coming of dawn”. (Gen. 32:25) The verse says that Jacob was alone, yet he wrestled with someone - a contradiction. Rabbi Chait resolved this contradiction by explaining that Jacob was in fact alone, but was really wrestling with himself; Jacob was the “man”. Jacob was wrestling with his unconscious. “until the coming of dawn”, means that which could not exist in daylight, in consciousness. We see daylight referring to man’s consciousness, and night referring to the unconscious. Jacob was fighting with some internal, unconscious element in his personality, indicated by the struggle ending at daybreak.

I find King Solomon’s selected metaphor revealing; he uses the sun (shemesh) for this lesson. “Shemesh” also means a servant, a “shamashe.” Perhaps this is fitting, as the unconscious should serve us, not control us.

1:6) “It travels to the South, and circles to the North, circling, circling, travels the wind, and on its circuit does the wind return.”

If I remember correctly, Rabbi Chait explained this verse to mean that man continually sets his sights on new ventures. Traveling to the “South or North” means “making plans to accomplish new goals”. He wishes to “get somewhere” in life. But such a path is not favorable. Perhaps we learn that in truth, one only imagines that he is “progressing” when he meets his own, subjective goals. His desire to progress is only progress in his own terms, and not true progress according to Torah perfection. Man wishes to build empires, but in G-d’s eyes, they are meaningless, and in fact, man regresses with such activity. How does King Solomon indicate that such a desire is fruitless? “Circling, circling” describes a repeating pattern. One does not actually change his location, he circles on the same parcel of ground, not moving forward. This rotating activity is akin to one who does not see true progress in his life. Man imagines he progresses with his material successes and plans, but in truth, he keeps going in “circles”.

Here too King Solomon utilizes an appropriate metaphor; the “wind”. We too refer to man’s strength as his wind; “he knocked the wind out of me”, “he lost the wind from his sails”, “he popped your balloon”. King Solomon teaches that man directs his energies towards goals to give us a sense of worth. The underlying need for accomplishment has gone unchecked, and propels him to the “South and the North.” Instead, man should contemplate that his energies are better used in search of truth, instead of reacting to the unconscious, pushing him to make himself great through empire building, fame and riches. Such actions are the result of the imagination, and not a thought-out philosophy, which exposes such vanity.

1:7) “All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full, to the place where the rivers go, there they return to go.”

“Water” is the perfect object to embody this verse’s lesson, taught by Rabbi Chait. This verse is a metaphor for man’s libido; his energies. This great psychological, reservoir of energy is the cause for the previous verse’s teaching; that man has a great drive to accomplish.

Man’s energies are always “flowing”, and they seek to become “full”. “But the sea is not full”, that is, man does not become fully satisfied. As man’s emotions are satisfied, he again and seeks a new emotional satisfaction. Satisfaction, therefore, is

temporary. Where man’s emotions flow, “there they return to go”, i.e., it is an endless process.

“All the rivers go to the sea” indicates that all man’s energies have one focus for that period. Man is usually pulled in one direction, conveyed here by “sea”, one destination. It is interesting that “rivers” are also mentioned in Genesis, also in the commencing chapters. Is there a relationship?

1:8) “All matters are wearying, man is unable to describe them, the eye does not become satisfied in seeing, the ear does not become full from hearing.”

Why are the eye and ear unable to behold their complete sensations? Is King Solomon describing the ineptitude of these organs? Or, perhaps he means to point us towards understanding that element in man, which seeks to “behold all.” The latter would indicate that man has a desire to have complete knowledge in a given field - but he cannot. This desire stems from another need; security. Man wishes to have a complete grasp on matters, otherwise, he feels inept. This wearied state; King Solomon says is due to man’s attempt to secure complete knowledge. Man desires to be secure that he has all the answers. Man is better advised to accept his limited scope of apprehension, than to deny his feeble nature and strive for the impossible. Seeing and hearing are the two major senses used in learning. Being “unable to describe them”, teaches that man wishes to behold wisdom, so much that he can competently discourse on matters - he wishes self sufficiency, the removal of insecurity.

1:9) “That what was, it will be, and what was done, will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.”

What human attitude is King Solomon responding to here? Note that he addresses both the “what”, (things), and “events” (what was “done”). This encompasses all of man’s experiences on Earth: man relates either to objects, or to events, categorized as “space and time”.

King Solomon teaches that man seeks out “novelty”, looking for that which is new in objects, or in events. Why? What satisfaction does man imagine he will experience with something new, or a new event? Rashi correctly writes that in the universe, all has been created during Creation. Nothing afterwards can be created anew. In contrast, new ideas are in fact new to us, and afford enlightenment, and the invigoration that the soul is designed to seek.

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(Koheles continued from previous page)

Holidays

"Novelty" is not an ends in itself, but a sought after 'cure' for man's stagnation. Man inescapably seeks enlightenment, but he seeks it in the physical realm, "under the sun", the arena which King Solomon critiques. Man will only find the rejuvenating pleasure of novelty in the area of wisdom. All Earthly attempts to fulfill this need will result in dissatisfaction.

Novelty has a funny way of vanishing immediately. Something is "new", as long as it goes inexperienced. It is a "Catch-22." Before we attain something, or go somewhere, it is new, but we have yet to enjoy our imagined pleasure. And once we attain it, or get there, it is no longer truly new. How many times have we anticipated arriving at a new destination, only to be disappointed that when we arrive, the novel and alluring element of our vacation, i.e., being "there", goes unrealized. We are not "there", because once we get "there", it is now "here".

1:10) "There is a thing that you will say, 'Look at this, it is new', (but) it was already in history, that was before us."

This verse seems repetitive. Also, what is the specific "thing" to which King Solomon refers?

Rabbi Chait taught that this verse discusses the emotion of "modernity". Man wishes to feel that he lives in THE generation. We hear people ridicule ancient societies as backwards. We have electronics; we have something new. We live on the final frontier. We are different than all other generations.

Why do we wish to feel we are the most advanced generation? I believe such an emotion of modernity, attempts to deny mortality. If we live in the most advanced generation, this means, ipso facto, that no other generation may pass us: we will never die.

The cure for the imagined sense of modernity is to realize that others before us experienced what we do. Contemplating that other people have expired with history, forces us to recognize that what we experience as new, will also meet wit the same fate. We must identify with other generations - they have come and gone. We are no different. We too will go the way of the world. This realization, that all mankind faces the same fate, enables man to apply this truth to himself. King Solomon describes the problems and offers correct solutions. He desired the good for all mankind. This good, means knowledge of what is truth, and a dismissal of fallacy.



King Solomon describes so many of man's pitfalls. Did G-d design man with destructive elements? No, He did not, "and behold it is very good." He designed us with attitudes and emotions, which are to be studied, and directed towards living an extremely happy existence. "Ki yetzer lave ha-adom ra m'na-urav", "Mans' inclinations are evil from youth" (Gen. 8:21) means that only our "inclinations", not our faculties, are not steered by intelligence initially. They drive towards what is evil and harmful. But with devoted study and self-application of our knowledge, we are well equipped to direct our energies, emotions and attitudes towards the good. Man's mind is more powerful and convincing than his emotions. With intelligence and proofs, we are fully capable of attaching ourselves to the life outlined in the Torah.

By nature, man wishes to follow what he sees as true and good. This is our inherent design. As we study more and more, we abandon what is false, and naturally follow what is proven as good. Once we see a new idea clearly, we will naturally follow it. All that is required, is to devote many hours daily to study, and endure our research and analysis, until we arrive at decisively, clear and proven opinions.

Man's drives are only evil from youth. By nature, the emotions have a head start on intelligence. This does not spell inevitable catastrophe. Our continual Torah study will refine our thoughts, to the point, that we see with ultimate clarity, how to use our energies to attain a truly enjoyable and beneficial existence.

1:11) "There is no remembrance to the first ones, and also to the later ones

that will be, there will be no remembrance to them, with those that will be afterwards."

Facing mortality, so clearly spelled out in the previous verse, King Solomon now closes the loop by addressing man's final hope for mortality; to be memorialized in death. If man cannot achieve immortality in life, he still attempts to secure a memorial for himself. He wishes to go down in history. This fantasy strives at securing some vestige of his existence. But this will not be. How does King Solomon help man abandon such futility? He asks man to recall previous generations, and man cannot, "There is no remembrance to the first ones". This is an iron-clad argument against hoping for memorialization - it does not happen. King Solomon wisely advances man's thoughts to the future, as if to say, "You think YOU will be remembered? Let us see if this happens". The King's response: There is no remembrance to the first ones". It does not happen to them, it will not happen to you, nor to any future generation. Reality is the best teacher, and King Solomon places reality between man's eyes.

The Verses Defined

1. King Solomon's "Qualifications" to address this topic.
2. "Fantasy": The subject of Koheles.
3. "Accomplishment": Man's primary fantasy.
4. "Immortality": The backdrop necessary for fantasy.
5. "The Unconscious": The source of man's fantasy life.
6. "Progress": the goal of accomplishment.
7. "Libido": Man's unrelenting energies, seeking satisfaction, and propelling his search for happiness.
8. "Independence": Mans attempt to remove all insecurities by attempting to grasp complete knowledge.
9. "Novelty": Where it is, and is not found; an inherent need in man.
10. "Modernity": Striving for immortality in life.
11. "Memorialization": Striving for immortality in death. ■

*For more on Koheles, see our audio page for recorded classes, chapters I-VII:
www.Mesora.org/Audio
Lower-right section on page*



ONLY YOM KIPPUR CAN UNIFY THE JEWISH PEOPLE

by Rabbi Reuven Mann

At this time Jews around the world are observing the Ten Days of Repentance which culminates with Yom Kippur. It is difficult to comprehend but this holiday is probably the most widely observed religious event in on the Jewish calendar. I would say that Chanukah and the Passover Seder are the other holidays which are universally observed in some fashion. It is easier to see the appeal of these last two occasions as they celebrate the theme of physical and religious freedom in a festive and joyous manner. It is not so easy to grasp the pull that Yom Kippur exerts on even the most secular and unaffiliated Jews. It's a long a touch day without food or drink or any of the basic bodily pleasures such as washing and wearing shoes. There are no interesting activities that appeal to one's imagination. All we do is spend long hours reciting complicated prayers, pounding our chests, confessing our sins and appealing for Hashem's mercy. What is the underlying appeal that Yom Kippur holds for even the most non practicing Jews?

Things are not always as obvious as they appear. Jews may abandon the torah but deep within them there is an inexplicable, stubborn refusal to give up their intensity. They are not ready to commit to the Torah lifestyle, but they want a chance to affirm in a meaningful and authentic manner: "I am a Jew." They take pride in being Jewish for what other people is so envied and has made such sustained contributions to the intellectual and spiritual welfare of mankind. To a certain extent they are not entirely comfortable with their secular, non religious lifestyle. They are desperately searching for atonement and what could be a greater gift than Yom Kippur. The pain of the abstentions only adds to the attraction. The sinner wants to demonstrate that he truly cares, and is willing to endure the "suffering" to achieve a pardon for his sins. The majesty of Yom Kippur is that it unifies the Jewish people, if only for one day. On this day we can be joyful in the knowledge that all our brothers and sisters of whatever denomination are observing the same commandments in basically the same manner. Let us hope that this enhances our appreciation of the deeper significance of Yom Kippur and the importance of demonstrating true "Ahavat Yisrael" i.e. respect and love for all Jews regardless of the religious divides that separate us.

Shabbat Shalom