

# JewishTimes

VOL. XII NO. 21 — SEPT. 4, 2013

**ROSH HASHANNA 5774**

**THE  
PURPOSE  
OF  
SHOFAR**

**RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT**

**NEW  
YEAR  
MARKS  
CREATION  
WHEN  
GOD  
JUDGES  
ALL  
PEOPLE**

**WHO  
FAILS**  
**WHO  
DIES**

**WHO  
WINS**  
**WHO  
LIVES**

**WHO'S  
HAPPY**

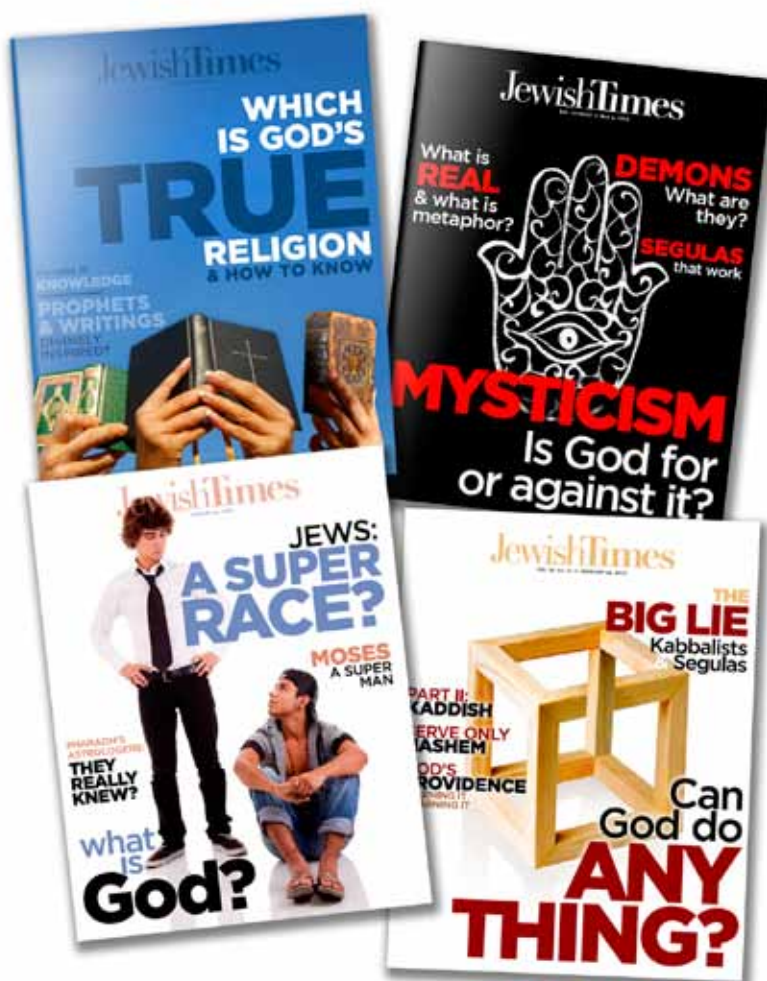
**HOW TO IMPROVE  
YOUR JUDGMENT**

Why advertise with us? Up to

**25,000**VIEWS

## Reason #2: Low Rates

[www.Mesora.org/Advertise](http://www.Mesora.org/Advertise)  
[ad@Mesora.org](mailto:ad@Mesora.org) (516)569-8888



# JewishTimes

The weekly journal on Jewish thought

Since 2002, thought-provoking original  
articles on Judaism, science, Israel and politics.



**JewishTimes**  
Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought

# CONTENTS



The Jewsihtimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: [subscribe@mesora.org](mailto:subscribe@mesora.org)

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

#### Contacts

We invite feedback at this address:  
[office@mesora.org](mailto:office@mesora.org)  
Ph(516)569-8888

#### Advertising

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

#### Donations

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

#### Content at Mesora.org

##### Jewishtimes Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

##### Philosophy Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

##### Weekly Parsha Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

##### Audio Archives

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

##### Interactive Classes

<http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLive>

##### Search

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

## 3 Letters

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

- 1) Torah is for all mankind
- 2) Responding to Syria
- 3) God's lessons: religious zeal can equate to idolatry
- 4) The goal of mitzvos
- 5) Other religions are false and evil

## 5 Noahides & New Year

**RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT**

Rabbi Chait responds to a Noahide's concern to observe the New Year properly

## 6 King w/o a Crown

**RABBI REUVEN MANN**

Rabbi Mann expounds on the Jewish New Year's central theme

## 10 Shofar's Significance

**RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT**

Rabbi Chait elucidates the core fundamentals behind the mitzvah of Shofar, offering a greater appreciation for the holiday and for this mitzvah in specific

## 13 Netzavim/New Year

**RABBI BERNIE FOX**

Rabbi Fox shares his insights into the Parasha and New Year

## 15 Who Lives & Dies?

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

Rabbi Ben-Chaim encourages the reader to reevaluate vital truths and use this New Year as a chance for real happiness, and true life

## LETTERS

### Torah is for All Mankind

**Reader:** Thanks for taking time to reply my question. My objection is that you seem more lenient to Islam than to Christianity, based on Maimonides' who view that Islam to not idolatry. But my reasoning is that Christianity and Islam – although not perfect – spread Torah throughout the world. I think God permitted their rise, since Jews are not so willing to reach out to other peoples who mistakenly are brought up in idolatrous belief systems of their parents. All human races are born as children who are naive about everything and innocently follow what they have being taught. Historically,

most societies of the world today have been changed by contact with missionaries who brought the bibles with them and show how to live a more ethical lifestyles which they are ignorant of, had not the missionaries brought it to them, be they Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons or others. I have never found an extensive or massive Jewish program aimed solely at teaching or reaching the people of the world with the message of the Torah. The basic assumption is, it is for us and only us. Whereas the world will be saved and only better as the proportion of the masses of the world follow the Torah Ideals. Think what a better

*(continued on next page)*

world our world will be if all the billions of soul living today who are Muslims are actually practicing Jews. Thanks so much.

**Rabbi:** I fully agree, Judaism must be made available to the world. This is God's plan. We must first educate the Jew, steering him/her away from the many "Jewish" idolatrous notions of youth and sharing beautiful Torah truths. Then, encourage such properly-educated Jews to reach out to Jews and gentiles who wish to study Torah and follow God's only given religion. This sentiment is repeated in our publications, and even on Jewishtimes covers.

Maimonides agrees with your assumption, that God allowed other religions to flourish. They spread God's fame throughout the world. But he does qualify that by saying Christianity is the worst evil: so many people died at its sword. Maimonides adds that God's ways are higher than ours (hidden) so we cannot explain His methods of allowing such evil. So he is clear, such religions are evil. They violate God's word at every turn, starting with the distortion of His Torah as the "unchangeable single religion for all mankind." ■

## Syria

**Reader:** What do you think about all the events in the news today as far as the Middle East, with a new war with Syria possible? What do you think the US should do about Syria? Do you think we are on the brink of WW3 and will Moshiach come before devastation, or must we go through the pains before his coming? What should/can I do? Should I not worry about such things?

Thank You.

**Rabbi:** If the US can prevent civilian deaths, as it says, without placing boots on the ground so we have no direct risk of life...we should consider doing so. In principle, the law of a Jew not standing idly by another Jew as he dies, applies to all people as well. God is not only concerned with the Jew. But we must also weigh the effects; an attack might precipitate retaliation against the US and Israel. Therefore, I cannot offer any sure answer, as there are too many considerations I know nothing about; the outcome is unsure in my mind. And one must not die to save another, "Who says his blood is redder than mine?" Also, "And live by them [the mitzvos]

and not die by them." We only sacrifice our own life for coerced idolatry, adultery and murder. But not other commands, unless coerced publicly to reject Torah (Maimonides). So we must not sacrifice our life to save another.

Regarding Moshiach, God will bring the him precisely when the moment is right, and the Rabbis say it is wrong to attempt to predict his coming. ■

## God's Lessons

**Rabbi:** "...for all the abominable things to God that He despises, do the nations do to their gods. [For] also do they burn their sons and daughter to their gods"...*"do not add to or subtract from the Torah."* (Deut. 12:31, 13:1)

Why does the prohibition to alter the Torah join the idolatrous prohibitions above? Originating laws or practices outside God's commands equates to idolatry. Both are acts of deviation from God's words. Do not be misled that the zealous or religious emotion is any more acceptable to God, when one adds to the Torah. At least two crimes exist in altering Torah: 1) one deviates from God's word, 2) one feels he/she knows more than God by altering His perfect Torah in the slightest, even with good intention. However, such "good" intention is truly evil.

God's method of warning us many times is through juxtaposition of three verses. ■

## The Goal of Mitzvos

**Rabbi:** A vital Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 30:14: *"Torah is not unreachable or distant, but it is in your mouths and hearts." This means that all mitzvos have their core value in the heart. And some of them have speech as their act, so as to strengthen the heart. And some commands are bodily performances in order that they are recalled verbally."*

Ibn Ezra makes it clear: the ultimate purpose of our Torah commands are to imbue us with God's wisdom. "Heart" means the mind. It is not mere action that God desires. Had this been so, we would not need a mind, but could be as dumb beasts. His Prophets warn us many times not to think that our sacrifices or Temple visits are inherently loved by God. Rather, God desires over all else, a mind that is convinced of truths, and a person who values those truths over all else. Actions bereft of

such knowledge are meaningless. God gave all peoples a mind, so we might arrive at an appreciation of God's brilliance. This offers man the deepest satisfaction. Nothing is more pleasing in the human experience. But as we are sensual beings, our ideas are affected by our speech and bodily performances. Therefore, according to Ibn Ezra, God's commands are not only in the heart or mind, but He commands us to speak to solidify our thoughts and ideas, and He commands we act so as to generate discussion, which again targets our thoughts. But our ideas are what's most important.

In the end, all mitzvos aim at imbuing us with new insights about the Creator, for this is our primary obligation: to know Him, love Him and stand in awe of Him. And this is only achieved through attaining correct ideas. Thus, Ibn Ezra teaches, "All mitzvos have their core value in the heart." ■

## Other Religions are False and Evil

**Reader:** Truth is very fundamental. However your claim that Judaism is the truth and other religions are false is not looking objectively at collective human history. Will the God that created the universe neglect all other humans and only communicate with the Jews? In the last 2000 years of the advent of Christianity, it has been a civilizing force that has brought tremendous benefit to most humanities, from the previously savage Europeans to the modern cannibalistic and pagan society of African and other primitives people and culture. Can a so called "false system" be responsible for so much good?

**Rabbi:** God created all people; He cares about them all equally. Torah is intended for all people. The Jew is to carry the torch. When Torah was given, other nations were too immersed in idolatry to recognize the true concept of God. Only Abraham's descendants carried on Abraham's monotheistic ideals, so they alone were worthy recipients of the Torah. But we are to teach all people, who wish to learn God's only religion. The Crusades, idolatrous rites and many evils are outgrowths of Christianity. It is a false system.

Kindly respond to the ideas in my previous article; what do you view as false, and what is your reasoning? ■



# Noahides and Rosh Hashanna

## Rabbi Israel Chait

**Noachide:** What is appropriate behavior for Noahides on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? I want to be very careful not to transgress by doing more than is permitted, not creating festivals for myself. But it seems to me – please let me know if I am mistaken – that at least Rosh Hashana is relevant to the whole world and perhaps I should mark it in some way.

And finally, I would like to know if there are particular prayers from the Siddur that are permissible for the Noachide to pray.

**Rabbi Israel Chait:** The Noachide should know that he too is judged on Rosh Hashanna by God just as the Jew and the rest of mankind. He therefore should pray all the prayers that the Jew prays, as he too is loved by God and through his repentance and prayer will be received by God and inscribed for a good year. Of course he must make some minor adjustments so that the prayer makes sense. For instance, instead of saying "our God and the God of our fathers", he can say "our God and the God of our Patriarchs" since he is not a direct descendant of the Patriarchs. But such obvious points are minor although they do require some awareness of what one is saying. But other than that technical point, all of the prayers, even the piyut (additional prayers) are applicable and beneficial to the Noachide as it is to the Jew. Indeed, the whole theme of Rosh Hashanna is that there is one Creator of the universe and all God's creatures should recognize Him. What then can be more correct before God than to have the Ben Noach recognize Him and pray to Him on this day? Indeed the Ben Noach is in a very special position to do an act that has a special value, a dimension which his unique position allows him to accomplish, which the Jew cannot. As it says in the prayers, "Let all those who dwell on the Earth recognize and know that [only] to You shall every knee bow down...and all shall accept the yoke of Thy kingdom..and God shall be the king of the entire Earth and He and His name shall be one."

The Ben Noach prayer has a very special place before God as part of the fulfillment of His words. May the one who asked the question be blessed with all of God's blessings for a wonderful and a spiritually fulfilling year.

There is one last point. In order not to violate making a holiday for himself since he is not commanded, the Ben Noach should not treat the day as a holiday by making it festive or imposing any prohibitions on himself. ■

# Rabbi Reuven Mann



## KING WITHOUT A CROWN

**R**osh Hashanah marks the beginning of the year and inaugurates the Ten Days of Repentance which culminate on Yom Kippur.

Every society has a distinct way of marking its new year. In America, it is a time of revelry and partying. Judaism is unique in the way it approaches the new year. While we dress up and eat a festive meal in honor of the day there is no partying. Rather, there is serious introspection and deeply moving prayer. Our attitude towards New Years day is totally at variance with that of the surrounding culture. What is the basis for this dichotomy?

In addressing this, we must ask, what exactly are we celebrating on New Years? America subscribes to a hedonistic value system which views self gratification as the highest goal of life. We do not regard ourselves as created beings and feel intrinsically entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." On New Year's we celebrate the existence of man and do so by indulging all the carnal pleasures we believe make life worthwhile.

Not so the Jewish People. We regard Rosh Hashanah as the birthday of the world. On this day we affirm and celebrate the most fundamental tenet of Judaism, Creation. We owe our existence to the Will of an Infinite G-d whose wisdom and glory permeate the universe. We acknowledge that Hashem brought us into being and endowed us with a "divine soul" so that we could know Him and emulate His perfect ways. Judaism categorically rejects the philosophy which

*(continued on next page)*

regards man as a highly advanced animal whose highest aim is the pursuit of pleasure.

Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment when all one's deeds are brought before the bar of absolute justice. An element of fear and dread permeates the prayers. In one of the most famous, "Unesaneh Tokef" we recite, "On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed, who will live and who will die..." We tremble at the thought that our future depends on a transcendental verdict over which we have no control. Is there anything we can do to influence the Heavenly Court in our favor?

The Rosh Hashanah prayers have been referred to as the most noble ever composed. What are Jews praying for at this time? Remarkably, we are not petitioning G-d for any personal needs. Rather, our focus is on Hashem and His Universe. We recognize that we are living in an imperfect world where injustice, hatred and cruelty prevail. Humankind is not acting in accordance with the intention of its Creator and this is a matter of great concern for us, His Chosen People.

The Rosh Hashanah service reflects the special mission of the Jewish people. The blowing of the Shofar proclaims the Coronation of Hashem as King of the universe. At the same time, we pray that Hashem will become the world's Ruler. Of course, the very notion that He needs our prayers is blasphemous. In reality, Hashem is the Master, but the world does not know it. He is, thus, a "King without a Crown." All of the evil which afflicts the world stems from man's denial of the true G-d and the worship of false deities which he has invented.

On this day we pray that the time will come when all idolatry will be cast away and Hashem, alone, will be acknowledged as the true and only G-d. When the world recognizes Hashem and seeks to emulate His perfect ways of justice and compassion, "nation will not lift sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." This is what Jews pray for on Rosh Hashanah and in that merit may our prayers for a good life be accepted by Hashem.

Shana Tova. ■

## Subscribe to the Jewishtimes...it's FREE.



Subscribe by emailing: [Subscribe@Mesora.org](mailto:Subscribe@Mesora.org)

You will receive our magazine each Friday morning and special issues throughout the year with original, thought provoking articles on Torah, Israel, politics and readers' letters.

Enjoy all 458 back issues free: [www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes](http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes)

## New Skywire Technology **60 Days Free Service!**

Low Rates  
High Quality

**Skywire**  
WiMax Voice / Data Network

Dear Xchange customer,

Xchange Telecom proudly invites you to participate in an exciting technology pilot – Skywire home phone service – utilizing our new state-of-the-art WiMax voice and data network. Skywire provides more reliable and higher quality voice and data at significantly lower rates.

Participants in this pilot will receive free local and long distance phone service for the first 60 days. During this pilot we will keep your existing wired phone service at no charge to you. If for any reason you are not fully satisfied, we'll switch you back to your original service without questions, and at no cost to you. Participants who have enjoyed this new technology and wish to keep their Skywire service will automatically be billed at our new, lower rates.

To participate in this revolutionary pilot and schedule an appointment for installation, please call us at (877)7-Skywire (877-775-9947) or e-mail us at [sales@SkywireNetworks.com](mailto:sales@SkywireNetworks.com)

—The Xchange Telecom Team

Prices include all taxes and surcharges

Voice-Only Plans	Voice / Data Bundle	Data Only (15/2)*	Additional Services
First Line \$39.99 Add. Line \$24.99	\$59.99 Includes voicemail & Internet (15/2) Add. voicemail \$19.99	\$24.99	Internet Filter \$9.99 Email Only \$9.99



Unlimited USA calling and all Features listed below:  
Caller ID w/name, Call Waiting, Anonymous Call Reject, Call Forwarding Variable, 3-Way Calling,  
\*69 Unlimited Call Return, \*66 Unlimited Repeat Dialing, Voicemail  
\*Rate valid during 12 month promotional period

[www.SkywireNetworks.com](http://www.SkywireNetworks.com)

**Clear and Fast. Skywire**

Limited Time Offer, terms and conditions apply. See [www.skywirednetworks.com](http://www.skywirednetworks.com) for details. Offer expires 10/1/2013



**Only**  
**KosherWine.com**  
*a division of Chateau de Vin*





# NYDESIGN.COM

Building loyalty and sales  
through design strategies



New logo and website



New logo and website for Xchange. Site redesign includes motion graphics, news scroll, drop-down menus, secure email, and a clean professional design. See it here: [www.xchangetele.com](http://www.xchangetele.com)  
**Contact NYDesign today. Professional design increases sales.**

## SERVED FIRMS

ABN Amro	MoneyLine
A&E Television	NEC
Breyer's Ice Cream	Nova
Burger King	Oscar de la Renta
Chanel	Pepsi
CNBC	Pizza Hut
Conde Nast	Ralph Lauren
Disney Films	Taco Bell
Entenmann's	Trade.com
Gloria Vanderbilt	W Hotels
Kawasaki	Warner Bros.
MasterCard	XChange Tel.



Above: Previous logo and website

## DESIGN

- Branding / identity
- Sites / touchscreens
- GUI / flowcharting
- Wire frames
- Package design
- Editorial design
- Illustration, icons

## STRATEGY

- Business strategies
- Business plans
- Metrics analysis
- Contract drafting
- Copy writing
- Presentations
- Interactive demos

## PROMOTION

- Advertising
- Banners
- Promo materials
- App planning/design
- Social networking
- Email marketing
- Landing pages



**NYDESIGN.COM**  
info@nydesign.com  
516.569.8888



# Is Torah mystical... or rational, just like God's natural laws?

It's time a book unveiled the truth.

Is Torah a set of incomprehensible mystical beliefs, as kabbalists suggest...or perfectly reasonable and brilliantly insightful?

Finally learn directly from Torah texts and our greatest Rabbis, precisely why mysticism is false, not Torah, and not God's will.

**Religion of Reason** unveils widespread "Jewish" mystical beliefs as false, and prohibited. Torah is presented in its rational and provable nature...just like God's natural laws. There are no powers besides God, and He prohibits belief in mysticism. Cryptic Talmudic stories are explained metaphorically as intended, and novel insights into many Parshas are revealed. Finally, Jews can understand the falsehoods they have accepted, and abandon them in place of true Torah.

Reviews are abridged due to ad space constraints. Full reviews at link below.

## REVIEWS



**RABBI REUVEN MANN** — Rabbi, Y. Israel of Phoenix

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim has written extensively on Jewish philosophy for many years. His ideas are rooted in a rational approach. He follows the great philosophers like Rambam and Saadia Gaon. He is opposed to all forms of "mysticism" and seeks to debunk all practices and beliefs which are rooted in superstition and contrary to reason. This work covers a wide variety of topics, of interest to contemporary; insightful analyses of Biblical narratives as well as the significance of many mitzvot. Rabbi Ben-Chaim demonstrates that Judaism can be harmonized with human reason. He is not afraid to ask the most penetrating and challenging questions as he is convinced that Torah is the Word of God and based on the highest form of wisdom. Jews who have a profound desire to make sense out of their religion will benefit greatly from reading this book.

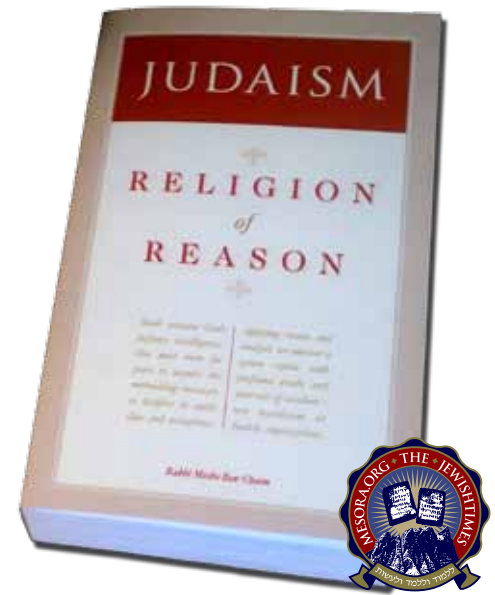


**RABBI STEVEN WEIL** — Executive Vice President, The Orthodox Union

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim asks critical, crucial and defining questions that any thinking Jew needs to ask. His method enables the reader to explore and engage our theology in a meaningful and serious way. Following the Rishonim, he forces us to define, weigh and analyze each phrase of chazal, showing there is no contradiction between an investigation of Science and an investigation of Judaism. Rabbi Ben-Chaim has written a work that addresses the thinking person of all faiths. This work speaks to the scholar and lay person alike and will help you gain insight into how the great Rishonim define how we view the world. Rabbi Ben-Chaim's website, Mesora.org is a very serious tool and resource for thinking human beings who want to engage and explore the Almighty, the Almighty's universe and do so within the realm of wisdom, rationality and intellectual honesty.

**Free 33-pg Preview:**

<https://www.Mesora.org/ReligionofReason>



## RELIGION of REASON

by JewishTimes' publisher  
Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



## PARTIAL CHAPTER LIST

Astrology	Red Bendels
Reincarnation	Kabbala
Praying to the Dead	Mysticism
Superstition	Miracles
Demons	What is God?
Bashert	"Jewish" Souls
Evil Eye	Talmudic Stories
Rebbe Worship	Metaphors
Segulas	Belief vs. Proof
Satan	Do Rabbis Err?
Angels	Gentile Equality
Western Wall Prayers	Man's Purpose



# the Significance of **Shofar**

**Rabbi Israel Chait**  
Written by a student

**W**hat should a person have in mind when listening to the “Kol Shofar”, the sound of the Shofar? In Hilchos Teshuvah (3:4), Maimonides discusses the function of Shofar. Maimonides states that even though the voice of the Shofar is obligatory because of a decree of the Torah, there is also a philosophical concept. The voice of the Shofar is to awaken man from his slumber. It should cause one to investigate his actions, repent and remember his Creator. It is designed for those who forget the truth and waste their time in helpless and vain endeavors. It is to provoke them to analyze their souls, improve their ways and actions, and forsake their evil conduct and corrupt philosophies. This is a very large demand of an individual to be motivated to such a large degree by the simple voice of the Shofar. When one hears the Shofar it should prompt him to do teshuva. A total overhaul of the human personality is summoned by the Kol Shofar. One’s entire approach to life must be changed. Maimonides is not referring to teshuva – repentance – from a specific sin, but rather, a teshuva, which transforms the

entire character of the sinner. How does the sound of the Shofar awaken a person to do teshuva? What is so unique about the Kol Shofar that can cause a person to redirect his life’s energies and change?

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

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

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

The Torah describes the Kol Teruah as the sound blown by the trumpets when the Bnei Yisrael moved their camp while traveling in the wilderness to the holy land. When God commanded Moshe to inform Klal Yisrael that it was time to embark, the sound of the Teruah summoned their departure. Onkelos again translates Teruah as a yevava, a cry. Rashi in his commentary states there were three factors that were needed before the camp embarked: the word of God, Moshe’s instruction and the Teruah. The traveling of the camp was more than just a practical phenomenon. It symbolized that the entire destiny of Klal Yisrael – the nation of Israel – was in the hands of God. They were in the wilderness and needed the providence and direction from God in order to survive. They were helpless and vulnerable and their destiny was determined by the system the Torah sets out for their embarking. Three essential components dictated their movements. It had to be the word of God as transmitted by Moshe and summoned by the sound of the

*(continued on next page)*

Teruah. Thus, the Teruah is not just significant on Rosh Hashana, but it also played a role in the destiny of the nation as reflected in the wilderness. It is interesting to note that the destiny of man cannot be determined by the word of God alone. After the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we require the interpretation of the Oral Tradition by Moshe, our teacher. Without the Torah a person will certainly go astray. A person needs God to direct his destiny but he also needs the teachings of the Torah. Because of man's limitations, God alone is not enough; he needs the guidance of the Torah. God does not function alone because the gap between God and man is great. Man, on his own, cannot scale the chasm that exists between him and his Creator. He needs the prophet; he requires the teachings of Moshe to assist him. If he endeavors to close this gap on his own he will undoubtedly fall prey to the philosophy of the idolaters. This failure is exemplified by every organized religion that attempts to close the gap between man and the Almighty. They create their own false and corrupt systems, which cater to their emotional needs and desires. The third element required in the camps' movements were the sound of the Teruah. The sound of the Shofar is essential to shape the destiny of Klal Yisrael. Again we see that the Kol Shofar is not merely a mechanical sound but contains a vital message.

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

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

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



(continued on next page)



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

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

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

The Torah chose the mechanical cry of the Shofar to convey that our destiny is in the hands of our Creator. This world is not our world that we can control. On Rosh

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

# XCHANGE TELECOM

SERVING BROOKLYN, NY  
HOMES AND BUSINESSES

**GREAT  
RATES ON  
SKYWIRE  
PHONE AND  
HIGH-SPEED  
INTERNET**

A FULL SUITE OF  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
AND DATACOM SOLUTIONS

**XCHANGETELE.COM**

**877.853.3443**

# Netzavim/ Rosh HaShannah

RABBI BERNIE FOX

## Let's Shape our Destiny

*You are standing this day all of you before Hashem your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, even all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in the midst of your camp, from the brewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water; that you should enter into the covenant of Hashem your G-d – and into His oath – which Hashem your G-d makes with you this day; (Sefer Devarim 29:9-11)*

### 1. Moshe's covenant does not include words of consolation

In the opening passages of Parshat Netzavim Moshe tells Bnai Yisrael that they stand before Hashem poised to enter into a covenant with Hashem. The specifics of this covenant Moshe outlined in the previous parasha. Essentially, this covenant focuses upon the consequences of observing or neglecting the commandments. Observance of the commandments will be rewarded with prosperity and wellbeing. Neglect of the mitzvot will provoke severe punishment, suffering and exile.

Earlier – in Sefer VaYikra – the Torah discussed the consequences of observing or neglecting the mitzvot. That discussion bears many similarities to the consequences outlined by Moshe in his

presentation. Both presentations begin with a description of the blessings that the people will experience in response to their adherence to the commandments. After describing these blessings, both presentations then describe the terrible suffering that will result from neglect of the Torah. However, there is one remarkable difference between the two presentations. Moshe's presentation ends with a description of the suffering. The earlier presentation describes the suffering but then continues with the assurance that Hashem will never abandon His people. They will experience tragedy, terrible suffering, and oppression. However, ultimately the people will repent and return to Hashem. Hashem will honor His covenant with the Patriarchs. He will redeem His people from exile and return them to the Land of Israel. Why does Moshe's presentation not include this element of comfort and consolation?

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall contemplate yourself among all the nations, where Hashem your G-d has driven thee. And you shall return unto Hashem your G-d, and hearken to His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and

your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul. Then Hashem your G-d will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the peoples, where Hashem your G-d has scattered you. (Sefer Devarim 30:1-3)

### 2. Moshe's belated consolation

In Parshat Netzavim, Moshe explains that despite the warning provided by the covenant, some will test Hashem and ignore the warning. They will abandon the Torah and even adopt idolatrous practices believing that they will somehow escape the terrible consequences described in the covenant. Moshe forewarns the people that there will be no escape. Violation of the Torah's precepts will be punished with destruction and astounding devastation. Ultimately, the people will be exiled. Moshe then adds that the suffering and afflictions of the punishment will eventually move the people to return to Hashem. When the people call out to Him He will respond. He will redeem His people even from the ends of the Earth and return them to the land of their ancestors. He will subdue the enemies of Bnai Yisrael and renew the blessings described in the Torah. In other words, Moshe provides a message of comfort and consolation. Hashem will never abandon Bnai Yisrael. The destiny of the Jewish people may include suffering and tragedy. But the ultimate redemption is assured.

In these passages, Moshe provides the consolation that he did not include in his description of the covenant. As explained above, the Torah's earlier description of the consequences for observance or neglect of the mitzvot included within it a message of consolation. Why did

(continued on next page)

Moshe exclude this message from his presentation of the covenant, only to append it immediately afterwards?

And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am Hashem their G-d. But I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their G-d: I am Hashem. (Sefer VaYikra 26:44-45)

### **3. The destiny of Bnai Yisrael and the message of Moshe's warnings**

It seems that there is a fundamental difference in the underlying messages of these two presentations. The earlier presentation in Sefer VaYikra was an exploration of the relationship between Hashem and Bnai Yisrael. In that context, the Torah explains that the relationship is predicated upon observance of its commandments. However, another aspect of the relationship is that it will never be severed. Although the destiny of the Jewish people will include suffering, oppression, even devastation and exile, ultimate redemption is assured. Redemption is inevitable because the bond between Hashem and His nation will not be broken.

The covenant presented by Moshe is not intended to describe the destiny of the people or the permanent character of the bond between Hashem and Bnai Yisrael. Instead, it ties the obligation to observe the Torah to positive and negative consequences. It is not intended to provide reassurance. It is a warning and admonition. Moshe ends his presentation of the covenant without providing an

assurance of ultimate redemption. Such an assurance would be out of context. It would not have been appropriate for Moshe to moderate the severity of his warning by including a message of comfort and assurance.

Why does Moshe append a message of consolation in Parshat Netzavim? In Parshat Netzavim, Moshe is no longer discussing the contents of the covenant. He is discussing the future and the destiny of the nation. He foresees a time in the future in which the covenant will be neglected and the nation will be punished severely and exiled. He shares this vision with the people. Moshe recognizes that this vision may dishearten the people. They are prepared to enter the Land of Israel. They await the blessings that Moshe has described. But Moshe is revealing that these blessings will be short-lived. The nation will abandon the Torah and the blessings will be replaced by tragedy. Moshe recognizes that this vision invites despondency and hopelessness. He responds with an assurance. The suffering will pass. The nation will be redeemed. The bond between Hashem and His nation will not be broken.

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his dust; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he whose help is the G-d of Yaakov, whose hope is in Hashem his G-d. (Psalms 146:3-4)

### **4. Will our destiny be secured this Rosh HaShannah?**

The message of the parasha could not be more relevant. The Jewish people are confronted by two possible futures. We have regained the Land of Israel and Hashem has fulfilled the promise to ingather our exiles from the

ends of the Earth. He has shielded us from the enemies who would destroy us and wipe out the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. We seem to be moving in the path toward ultimate redemption. However, there is another possible futures that can be imagined in our nightmares. The enemies of the Jewish people are becoming ever stronger. The number of countries in which Jews can live in safety and free of persecution decreases each year. The determination of our enemies to destroy the State of Israel and the Jewish people seems more virulent than ever. Our enemies both deny the Holocaust and fantasize of bringing about a second Holocaust in our lifetimes. These are not merely fantastic flights of imagination. These enemies, every day, come closer to creating the weapons of destruction that would enable them to visit upon us the destruction that they declare is their intention.

The world responds with warnings, admonitions, ineffective sanctions, and equivocations. Who will save the Jewish people from those who wish to destroy us, if not Hashem? Are we perhaps being signaled that we should recognize that our safety and security does not come from international treaties and promises of mutual assistance? Does not current dilemma communicate to us that we can only rely on Hashem?

Every Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur provides us with the opportunity to shape our destiny. We have the power to secure the blessings described by Moshe and to achieve the destiny assured by the Torah. Alternatively, we can postpone achievement of our destiny or even invite our own suffering. Is this the year that we will seize this opportunity to create joy and happiness for ourselves, our families and all of the Jewish people? ■



# WHO LIVES WHO DIES

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

## Recognize God as Creator, as the one and Only Ruler of the Universe

This is the objective of the Jewish New Year. Rabbi Reuben Guber once said that by becoming convinced of God's existence and accepting Him as the only force in the universe, we become worthy of life. God wishes that we live in reality and not believe in ghosts, spirits, forces, idolatry or anything except for Him alone. This is why He prohibits our belief in anything other than Him. God knows nothing else exists, since He did not create anything else.

## Every Human is Judged

We all wish the best for ourselves and our loved ones. We are fortunate to be alive and have this treasured opportunity to reflect on the truth that a single Creator made the world, including us. Our very lives are due to God's continued will that we live day by day. But through poor choices and falsehoods we can forfeit our lives. The New Year is a vital lesson that we are responsible for our actions. We literally sit in judgment. We have free will, but we are not free to live recklessly and ignore God's Torah. He created you and I, and all people for a specific purpose: to study His creations and His Torah. Doing so, we enjoy the best life, and also earn a great reward in the next world. No man, no matter how famous or rich, took an ounce of fame or a single cent to the grave. And most who seek fame and wealth do not enjoy life. They anguish for yet another venue in which to be applauded, and there's never enough money. King Solomon said such men do not enjoy sleep (Eccl. 5:11). Share this knowledge with Jew and gentile alike. Help others attain the good God wants for each one of His creatures.

God knows what makes man happy, as God created man, and the emotion of happiness. His promise that a life of Torah is the greatest satisfaction is proven time and again by those who study. Such people have come to realize that even without artifacts, we know God gave mankind a religion only once, at Mount Sinai. Such a story today could never have been accepted and become the single Jewish history, had Moses lied. No one would abandon his true history, and instead, follow Moses' story of a burning mountain, unless the story was true. Unanimous acceptance today of a mass event where a voice was heard by millions emanating from fire, is proof. We don't need artifacts. No other religion makes this claim. They are all false.

Realizing that God gave mankind a religion, the intelligent person stands in awe of God's kindness, and spends as much time as possible in pursuit of God's Torah wisdom. He is continually delighted by the marvels he or she finds in study. "Nothing compares to Torah study" was stated by one of the wisest men ever, King Solomon. Dignitaries attested to his wisdom, and God tells us He gave Solomon wisdom miraculously at age 12. We must therefore respect such a king who tells us nothing compares to God's Torah wisdom. We must strive to change our ways, immerse ourselves in study, and rely on God's promise that even with less work, He will support us.

Let not the concern for wealth turn you away from study and mitzvos. Rather, fear God's word, respect his Prophets and use Rosh Hashanna to reflect on prayer, and make a change this year.

## Repentance, Prayer and Charity can Avert God's Decree

No matter how far off the path we have strayed, we can earn life, happiness and success, if we change. Repentance, prayer and charity can avert God's decree on your life. So immediately do all three. If you don't know how, ask someone who does.

Reflect on the New Year prayers these few hours in synagogue. They contain such valuable lessons that can turn our lives around for the better, and even earn God's protection throughout the year.

And finally, commit yourself to set time to study and obtain the proofs of God and His Torah that will give you the security and firm commitment to live as He intended... for your own good.

*May you all be written for life,  
health and happiness! ■*





# Need home improvements, but not high costs?

**BBG Services provides affordable, quality home improvements.**

**Powerwashing of** decks, vinyl siding, concrete and brick pavers, sealing & concrete staining (algae mildew & mold treatment)

**Stucco** – patching & crack repairs

**Tile work** (ceramic, marble, vinyl) bathrooms, backsplashes, foyers

**Painting & Staining** – interior rooms, wood, cabinets, texture painting

**Minor Plumbing** – faucets, sinks, toilets, new shower heads

**Minor Electrical** – new light fixtures, ceiling fans, new switches, light timers, dimmers

**Drywall Repairs** – holes repaired, spackled, and painted

**Shelving** – for closets, bedrooms, laundry rooms, playrooms

**Molding** – door trim, window trim, base/cove molding, chair rail molding

**Recaulking/Regrouting** – tubs, showers, tiles, windows, doors

## Serving the NY/NJ Metro Area

**BBG@NYDesign.com**

**(845)659-0476**

**BBG Services**  
All your home improvement needs

Licensed & Insured – LIC# 2010-03250