

The Cubit

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These are the Generations of Noah

**Out of the depths have I called Thee, O LORD.
Lord, hearken unto my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of
my supplications.**

**If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
For with Thee there is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be feared.**

Psalm 130

From The Editor

B"H

I have just turned off the six o'clock news and put on a quiet CD.

Why? Because I cannot get the picture of Howard Lutnick (Chairman of Cantor Fitzgerald) out of my head.

Howard Lutnick's son started nursery school on Tuesday so he went into work late. His brother and 700 of his employees went in on time and everyone of them is missing, presumed dead, following the devastation to the World Trade Center.

Howard Lutnick went onto TV to explain how the company and it's employees world-wide felt about the overwhelming effect this act of terrorism has had on their lives. Howard's words haunt me still - that they must get back to work because now, they had 700 families to support.

The stories of bravery, death and survival that have emerged are astounding. Perhaps one of the saddest is the death of Father Mychal Judge, chaplain to the New York Firefighters, who was giving the last rites to firefighter struck by a woman who fell from one of the towers - Father Mychal was in turn killed by a piece of debris when the building imploded.

Last night, Professor Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, gave his Rosh Hashanah address to the nation. He spoke of the welcome that his grandparents

met when they came to live in London. How they fled from horror and certain death to life and hope.

I hope that those caught up in this horror, in the States, can link in to even just a little of the life and hope that those people who fled, early last century, the pogroms in Russia, the hate that was in Europe and came here to find life.

At Rosh Hashanah, as we are inscribed into the book of life and our good and bad deeds are weighed, I wish that that those who perished in the dreadful attack may also be inscribed too.

We can only hope and pray.

I say only, but really that is a very great thing - hope and prayer.

Liz ❖

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STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

A story for Shabbos from Ascent of Safed

www.ascent.org.il

Torrents of rain beat down on his face, but the tempest did not prevent Rabbi Leib Sarah's from reaching a village, only several hours before the beginning of Yom Kippur. He was some distance from his intended destination, but he was relieved to learn that in this village too there would be a minyan with which to pray – eight local villagers would be joined by two men who lived in the nearby forest. He immersed himself in the purifying waters of a river in preparation for the holy day, ate the meal which precedes the fast, and hastened to be the first in the little wooden synagogue. There he settled down to recite the various private devotions with which he was accustomed to inaugurate the Day of Atonement.

One by one the eight local villagers arrived in time to hear the words of Kol Nedrei – but there was no minyan, for it transpired that the two Jewish foresters had been arrested on some malicious lie.

"Perhaps we could find just one more Jew living around these parts?" asked Reb Leib.

"No," the villagers all assured him, "there's only us."

"Perhaps," he persisted, "there lives here some Jew who converted out of the faith of his fathers?"

The villagers were shocked to hear such an odd question from the stranger. They looked upon him quizzically.

"The doors of repentance are not licked even in the face of an apostate," Reb Leib continued. "I have heard from my teachers that even when one poles about in the ashes one can light upon a spark of fire..."

One of the villagers now spoke up.

"There is one apostate here," he ventured. "He is our paritz, the squire who owns this whole village. But he has been sunk in sin for forty years now. You see, the gentile daughter of the previous squire fell in love with him. So her father promised him that if he converted and married the girl, he would make him his sole heir. He didn't withstand the temptation, so he did exactly that."

"Did his gentile wife bear him any sons or daughters?" asked Reb Leib.

"No," they all chorused. "She died some years ago, and he was left childless."

"Show me his mansion," said Reb Leib.

He removed his tallis in a flash, and ran as fast as he could in

the direction of the mansion, with his white skullcap on his head and his white kittel billowing in the wind. He knocked on the heavy door, opened it without waiting for a response, and found himself confronting the squire. For a few long, long moments they stood in silence face to face, the tzaddik and the apostate. The latter's first thought was to summon one of his henchmen to seize the uninvited intruder and hurl him into the dungeon in the back yard. But the luminous countenance and the penetrating eyes of the tzaddik softened his heart.

"My name is Leib Sarah's," began the visitor. "It was my privilege to know Reb Yisrael, the Baal Shem Tov, who was admired even by numerous noblemen. From his mouth I once heard that every Jew should utter the sort of prayer that was first said by King David: 'Save me, O Lord, from blood-guilt.' But the word used for 'blood,' can also be translated as 'money.' So my Teacher expounded the verse as follows: 'Save me, so that I should never regard money as my Lord...'

"Now my mother, whose name was Sarah, was a holy woman. One day the son of one of the local gentry took it into his head to marry her, and promised her wealth and status if she would agree. But she sanctified the name of Israel. In order to save herself from that villain she quickly got married to an old Jewish pauper who was a schoolteacher. You did not have the good fortune to withstand the test, and for silver and gold you were willing to apostatize. Realize, though, that there is nothing that can stand in the way of repentance. Moreover, there are those who in one hour earn their portion in the world to Come. Now is that hour! Today is the eve of Yom Kippur. The sun will soon set. The Jews who live in your village are short one man to make up a minyan. Come along now with me, and be the tenth man. For the Torah tells us: 'The tenth shall be holy unto G-d.'"

The squire paled at the words spoken by this man with the singular face and who was clothed in white. And meanwhile, down the road, the eight local villagers

waited in shul, huddled together in frozen dread. Who could tell what calamity this odd stranger was about to bring down upon their heads?

The door burst open, and in rushed Reb Leib, followed closely by the paritz. The latter's gaze was downcast, and his eyelashes were heavy with tears. At a sign from Reb Leib, one of the villagers handed the apostate a tallis. He enveloped himself in it, covering his head and face entirely. Reb Leib now stepped forward to the Holy Ark, and took out two Scrolls of the Torah. One he gave to the oldest villager present, and the other to the paritz. Between them at the bimah stood Reb Leib, and he began to solemnly

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chant the traditional tune: "By the sanction of the Almighty, and by the sanction of the congregation, ...we declare it permissible to pray together with those who have sinned..."

A deep sigh broke forth from the depths of the broken man's heart. No man there could stand unmoved, and they all wept with him. Throughout all the prayers of the evening, and from dawn of the next day right until nightfall, the paritz stood in prayer, humbled and contrite. And as his sobs shook his whole body as he recited the confession the other nine shuddered with him.

At the climax of the Ne'ilah service, when the congregation were about to utter together the words Shema Yisrael, the paritz leaned forward until his head was deep inside the Holy Ark, embraced the Torah Scrolls that stood there, and in a mighty voice that petrified those present cried out: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One!" He then stood up straight, and began to declare with all his might: "The Lord is G-d!" With each repetition his voice grew louder. Finally, as he cried it out for the seventh time, his soul flew from his body.

That same night they brought the remains of the paritz to burial in the nearby town. Reb Leib himself took part in the purification and preparation of the body for burial, and for the rest of his life observed the yahrzeit of this penitent every Yom Kippur by saying kaddish for the elevation of his soul.

from: A Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Festivals

[This story for Yom Kippur is taken from A Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Festivals (Artscroll translations-adaptations by Uri Kaploon).] ♦



BRAINSTORMING WITH BAARS

Thoughts on Parshat Nitzavim-Vayelech

**Deut. 29:9 – 31:30 by Rabbi Stephen Baars ~
Aish HaTorah Washington**

**Provided by the Aish HaTorah mailing list details at
<http://www.aish.edu/>**

The reading, Parashat Shoftim falls on Sep 15th, this year.

"CHOICE EQUALS LIFE"

"Man is wise only while he searches for wisdom. If he thinks he has found it, he is a fool." - Rabbi Ibn Gevirol



The legendary real estate tycoon stared intently at his interviewer.

"Only two choices have I ever made in my life."

"And they were?" questioned the reporter.

"The first was when I decided to work seriously at being rich."

"And what was the second?"

"Recently, when I decided to retire."

"That's it?" the reporter said in amazement.

"I wish I had more", the tycoon responded, "but everything I ever did followed logically from these two decisions."

"And tell me", the reporter asked, "which was the hardest to make?"

"Without a question, the second."

"Then, I don't understand", the reporter said incredulously, "why did you make it?"

"Because," the tycoon said in a deep and soulful tone, "I realized that until that moment... I had only made one choice in my life!"



The essence of life is choosing. It is what makes us most human.

It defines who we are. It is the source of our greatest pride and our greatest pleasure. We laud our choices, holding them high for all to see: "Come see what I have chosen; see how clever and wise I am." When we stop choosing, we stop living. But finding meaningful choices is not easy.

In theory, you could choose whether to get out of bed or not, whether to eat or not, whether to go to work or not. But do you really have these choices? Is not doing them really a viable option?

A real "choice" has to have a reasonable alternative, the possibility to just as easily choose "Yes" as choose "No."

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If we could just as easily choose between eating or not eating, if both choices seemed equally desirable and good, our lives would be very scary indeed. Every day would be a battle within ourselves: "Should I eat, or shouldn't I eat?" In the end, many people might even choose to starve!

Imagine if all our actions involved such choice. We'd be a nervous wreck by the time we got to the office!

Such a life, though, would be thrilling and exciting beyond words. It's the kind of life mercenaries sell themselves for, the excitement of having to think through the most mundane of actions: "Maybe there's a land mine under my boot. Or maybe the car is booby-trapped."

As the choices of life diminish, the more meaningless it grows.



VIRTUAL REALITY CHOICE

In reality, however, difficult choices are something we tend to run away from. It looks great on TV, but who wants that kind of pressure?

Thus we have a paradox: The more we limit life by removing the choices, the more boring, repetitive and meaningless life gets. On the other hand, the more we confront difficult decisions, the more exciting life is - but the more pressure it has. What should we do?

What many people opt for is the "illusion" of choice. These illusions come in many shades. Popular hues include the soap opera, murder mysteries and the National Football League.

All these forms of entertainment are popular because they involve

people with whom we can identify as they live through their struggles. When Joe Montana steps up to the line of scrimmage, I can determine what I would do if I were him. I "call the plays" and make choices, albeit illusory ones. It's like a virtual reality life!

Business can be another shade of illusion. Isn't it exciting to decide where to invest and what to sell? But this, too, is not real choice.

This is really just a matter of being smart enough to understand the

principles, in which case you'll make more money than the next guy. There aren't necessarily meaningful alternatives. But it does give the "feeling" of real choices.

If the only result is that I can buy another car or take another vacation, then the choice is not very significant.



MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

The KGB officer knocked three times. "Does comrade

Kapolsky live here?"

"No!" came the stern reply from behind the tightly closed door.

The officer shrugged and walked away, only to return a half hour later. He knocked again three times, this time harder.

"Are you sure Kapolsky doesn't live here?"

"Very sure!" came the immediate answer.

"What's your name?" the officer questioned.

"Kapolsky."

"I thought you said Kapolsky doesn't live here?" Kapolsky replied,

"You call this living?!"



"Existing" is easy, but "living" requires active participation and choice. We can go through a whole year just existing, but living requires 365 days of choosing life. The Torah is telling us that mere "existence" equals death. Because if we're not growing, we're decaying.

For choices to be real and meaningful, there have to be consequences. Choices that have the greatest consequence are the most meaningful. For example, the day you decided to get married or the day you decided on your career were your most meaningful days. You grew as a person because you made choices. People who don't make choices... don't change and don't grow up!

You cannot have a meaningful life if you only occasionally do something meaningful. Meaningful lives require many meaningful moments.

But how can you make meaningful choices every day? What is there to choose from?

This week's parsha quotes G-d as saying: "Behold! I have put before you this day, life and good, death and evil... the blessing and the curse. Choose life in order that you will live, you and your descendants." (Deut. 30:15 - 19)

Both life and death are in front of us. Both are equally available.

But how do we "choose life?" Surely we don't "choose" life - that's like saying we "choose to breathe!"

What are some of the choices of life? For example:

- How should you be raising your child?
- How should you treat your spouse?
- What would you most want to do with your days?
- Should you work less and spend more time with your family?
- How about trying Shabbos?
- Or even spending meaningful time by yourself?

They are difficult to choose because it's so much easier to not think about them... to keep going on our accustomed path without evaluating it... to just "exist."

We say: "But then I can't... It's uncomfortable..."

If you want to stop this merry-go-round called "existing," then you have to make serious choices. It's time to drop the convenient answers. Get beyond what is comfortable. You have to be prepared to do something else, to give yourself real alternatives.

That's what makes up the choice of life. The choice of life cannot be passive because life is not passive.

Do you want to be here? Do you want to do what you are doing, or are you doing it because you did it yesterday, and yesterday you did it because of the day before? Can you trace back your life to some initial decision to become rich or famous or comfortable? Perhaps some time in college, did you put your life on automatic pilot - and forget to check the gauges? Without choices, you are no longer alive. And when you are no longer alive, you are no longer you.

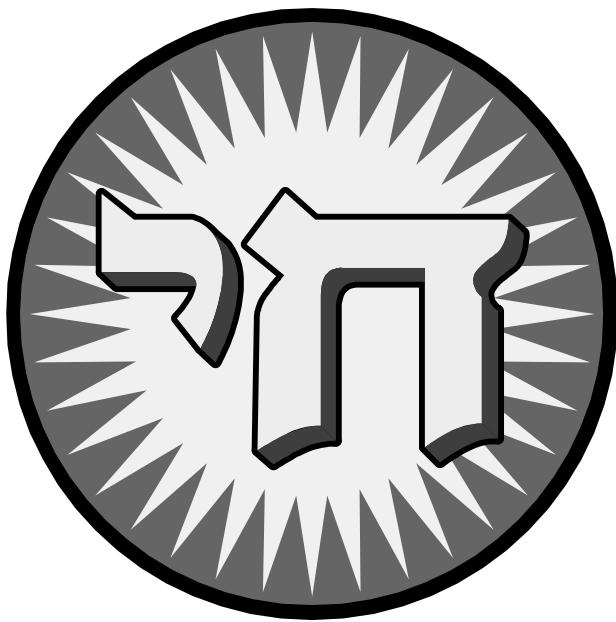


BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Question 1: What was the most difficult choice you ever made?

Question 2: What choice are you facing now? Are you dealing with it, or trying to go around it?

Question 3: Are you "living" or are you "existing?" How do you know? ❖



HOLIDAYS & FESTIVALS FOR SEPTEMBER

SELIHOT

STARTS: SUN 09-SEP-01 / 21-ELUL-5762 (1 DAY)

Recitation of penitential prayers prior to Rosh Hashanah and between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

ROSH HASHANAH

STARTS: TUE 18-SEP-01 / 01-TISHRI-5762

Ends: Wed 19-Sep-01 / 02-Tishri-5762

The Jewish New Year, observed for two days in Israel as well as the Diaspora, marks the commencement of the Ten Days of Penitence which reach their climax on Yom Kippur. An important observance of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar (ram's horn).

Rosh Hashanah is also known as 'Yom Hadin,' the day of judgment, since, according to tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, mankind is judged by God for its actions during the past year.

FAST OF GEDALIAH

Starts: Thu 20-Sep-01 / 03-Tishri-5762 (1 Day)

Observed in memory of Gedaliah ben Ahikam, the Jewish governor of Judea appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (Sixth Century B.C.E.) to govern the conquered Judean territory. Gedaliah achieved much for those of his people who had remained in the country. When he was assassinated (on Tishri 3), Nebuchadnezzar exiled more of the surviving population to Babylonia. These calamitous events shattered the last Jewish hopes for a peaceful restoration.

YOM KIPPUR

Starts: Thu 27-Sep-01 / 10-Tishri-5762 (1 Day)

The Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Marked by fasting and prayer, it is the day to ask forgiveness from man and from God and to offer restitution for any wrongdoing. According to tradition, one's fate for the coming year is sealed on this day.

HOLIDAYS & FESTIVALS FOR OCTOBER

SUKKOT (6 DAYS)

STARTS: TUE 02-OCT-01 / 15-TISHRI-5762

ENDS: 07-FEB-01 / 20-TISHRI-5762

The Festival of Tabernacles or Booths (Hebrew 'Sukkoth'). One of the three pilgrim festivals (the others being Passover and Shavuot) when, in ancient times, Jews made pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem. It derives its name from the 'sukkah' or booth, a temporary structure in which time is spent during the holiday to commemorate G_d's protection of the Children of Israel during their 40 years in the wilderness.

The first two days (in Israel the first day) are full holidays. The following five intermediate days, 'Hol Hamoed,' (six in Israel) are partial holidays.

Sukkot is also a harvest festival since it is the time of the

ingathering of crops in Israel. During the entire Sukkot festival, the Four Species (citron, myrtle, palm, and willow) are carried around the synagogue during portions of the service.

HOSHANAH RABBAH

STARTS: MON 08-OCT-01 / 21-TISHRI-5762

The seventh day of Sukkot, a half holiday, is marked by the recitation of many 'hosha-na' ("help us, we pray") prayers recited by worshippers carrying bundles of twigs from willow trees (which usually grow along river banks) as they make seven circuits of the synagogue. This practice is related to the tradition that on Hoshana Rabbah, final Heavenly judgment on the amount of rainfall to insure bountiful harvests is rendered.

SHEMINI ATZERET

Starts: Tue 09-Oct-01 / 22-Tishri-5762

The "Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly", the festival observed the day after Sukkot. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret also marks the completion of the annual cycle of Torah reading (see Simchat Torah) in the Diaspora.

SIMCHAT TORAH

Starts: Wed 10-Oct-01 / 23-Tishri-5762

The holiday of 'Rejoicing in the Torah' on which the year-long cycle of Torah (the Pentateuch) reading is completed and re-started.

SHABBAT & HOLIDAY READINGS FOR SEPTEMBER

Days start at sundown and end at sundown.

Thus Sat 5th XXX would start at sundown on Friday not midnight Friday night / Saturday morning.

Holiday	Date	Torah	Haf Torah
Shabbat	01-Sep	Deut. 21.10-25.19	Isaiah 54.1-10
Shabbat	08-Sep	Deut. 26.1-29.8	Isaiah 60.1-22
Selihot	09-Sep	No specific readings noted	
Shabbat	15-Sep	Deut. 29.9-30.20	Isaiah 61.10-63.9
Rosh Hashanah I	18-Sep	Gen. 21.1-34, Num. 29.1-6	I Samuel 1.1-2.10
Rosh Hashanah II	19-Sep	Gen. 22.1-24, Num. 29.1-6	Jeremiah 31.1-19
Fast of Gedaliah	20-Sep	am: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1-10 pm: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1-10	pm: Isaiah 55.6-56.8
Shabbat	22-Sep	Deut. 31.1-30	Hosea 14.2-10, Micah 7.18-20 or Hosea 14.2-10, Joel 2.15-27
Yom Kippur	27-Sep	am: Levit. 16.1-34, Num. 29.7-11 pm: Levit. 18.1-30	am: Isaiah 57.14-58.14 pm: Jonah 1.1-4.11, Micah 7.18-20
Shabbat	29-Sep	Deut. 32.1-52	II Samuel 22.1-51

SHABBAT & HOLIDAY READINGS FOR OCTOBER

Days start at sundown and end at sundown.

Thus Sat 5th XXX would start at sundown on Friday not midnight Friday night / Saturday morning.

Holiday	Date	Torah	Haf Torah
Sukkot I	02-Oct	Levit. 22.26-23.44, Num. 29.12-16	Zech. 14.1-21
Sukkot II	03-Oct	Levit. 22.26-23.44, Num. 29.12-16	I Kings 8.2-21
Sukkot III	04-Oct	Num. 29.17-25	
Sukkot IV	05-Oct	Num. 29.20-28	
Shabbat / Sukkot V	06-Oct	Exo. 33.12-34.26; Num. 29.23-31	Ezekiel 38.18-39.16
Sukkot VI	07-Oct	Num. 29.26-34	
Hoshanah Rabbah	08-Oct	Num. 29.26-34	
Shemini Atzeret (Yizkor)	09-Oct	Deut. 14.22-16.17, Num. 29.35-30.1	I Kings 8.54-66
Shabbat	13-Oct	Gen. 1.1-6.8	Isaiah 42.5-43.10
Rosh Hodesh	17 -> 18-Oct	Num. 28.1-15	
Shabbat	27-Oct	Noah: Gen. 6.9-11.32	Isaiah 54.1-55.5

"ABCs OF ROSH HASHANA"

Based on research by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus and published by Aish HaTorah : <http://aish.com>

The opportunity of Rosh Hashanah is too important to leave things to chance. Here's a handy checklist of what you'll need to know.



PRE-ROSH HASHANA

A key component of Rosh Hashanah preparation is to ask for forgiveness from anyone one may have wronged during the previous year. To whatever extent possible, we want to begin the year with a clean slate -- and without anyone harboring a grudge against us. One should also be quick to forgive those who have wronged him.

Many people have the custom to go to the mikveh before Rosh Hashanah after midday. A mikveh, which has the power to purify from certain types of spiritual impurities, can be an important part of the teshuva process.

Some have the custom of visiting a cemetery on the morning of Rosh Hashanah and praying at the graves of the righteous. Of course, we do not pray "to" the righteous, but only to God who hears our prayers in the merit of the righteous.

The morning before Rosh Hashanah, we perform "Hatarat

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Nedarim" -- annulling all vows. In Torah terms, saying something as simple as "I refuse to eat any more candy" can be considered a legal vow. Therefore, before Rosh Hashanah, we annul any vows, whether they were made intentionally or not. This is done by standing in front of three adult males (or 10 if available), and asking to be released from the vows that were made. The full text can be found in a Siddur or Rosh Hashanah Machzor.



THE FESTIVE MEAL

During the High Holidays, a round challah is used -- symbolizing fullness and completion. After making the "Hamotzi" blessing, it is customary to dip the bread into honey -- symbolizing our prayer for a sweet new year.

Then, after most of your slice of bread has been eaten, take an apple and dip it in honey. Make a blessing on the apple (since "Hamotzi" did not cover the apple) and eat a little bit of the apple. Then say, "May it be

Your will, God, to renew us for a good and sweet new year." (OC 583)

Why do we ask for both a "good" AND "sweet" year? Doesn't the word "good" automatically include "sweet?"

Judaism teaches that everything happens for the good. It is all part of the divine will. Even things that may look "bad" in our eyes, are actually "good." So when we ask God that the year should be "sweet" (in addition to good), it is because we know that everything will be for the good. But we also ask that it be a "revealed" good -- i.e. one that tastes "sweet" to us.

On Rosh Hashanah, we add the paragraph "Ya'aleh V'yavo" in Grace After Meals.



SYMBOLIC FOODS

On Rosh Hashanah, we eat foods that symbolize good things we hope for in the coming year. We contemplate what these foods symbolize, and connect with the Source of all good things.

The symbolic foods are based on a word game which connects the name of a certain food, to a particular hope we have for the new year. Here is a list from the Talmud of symbolic foods customarily eaten on Rosh Hashanah. (The food and its related meaning are written in capital letters.)

After eating LEEK or CABBAGE, say: "May it be Your will, God, that our enemies be CUT OFF."

After eating BEETS, say: "May it be Your will, God, that our

adversaries be REMOVED."

After eating DATES, say: "May it be Your will, God, that our enemies be FINISHED."

After eating GOURD, say: "May it be Your will, God, that the decree of our sentence should be TORN apart, and may our merits be PROCLAIMED before You."

After eating POMEGRANATE, say: "May it be Your will, God, that our merits increase as the seeds of a POMEGRANATE."

After eating the HEAD of a sheep or fish, say: "May it be Your will, God, that we be as the HEAD and not as the tail.

You can also use other foods and make up your own "May it be Your will..." For example, you could eat a raisin and celery, and ask God in the coming year for a "raise in salary" (raisin celery)!



ROSH HASHANA PRAYERS

Since there are so many unique prayers on Rosh Hashanah, we use a special prayer book called a "Machzor."

In the "Amidah" and "Kiddush" for Rosh Hashanah, we say the

phrase "Yom Teruah." However, if Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, we say "Zichron Teruah" instead. (If one inadvertently said the wrong phrase, he needn't repeat the prayer.)

The supplication "Avinu Malkeinu" should be said on Rosh Hashanah, except when Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat coincide, since supplications are not said on Shabbat. If Rosh Hashanah falls on a Friday, "Avinu Malkeinu" is not said at Mincha.

During the High Holidays, the curtain on the ark is changed into a white one, to symbolize that our "mistakes will be whitened like snow."

The chazan (cantor) for the High Holidays should not be chosen for his vocal talents alone. Ideally, the chazan should be over 30 years old, God fearing, learned in Torah, humble, and married. A learned man under 30 with the other qualifications is acceptable. Though it is preferable to allow an unfit chazan to lead services, rather than cause strife over the issue in the community.

Since it is a question as to whether the "She'hechianu" blessing should be said on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we are accustomed to eat a new fruit or wear a new garment and say "She'hechianu" upon it. When saying the "She'hechianu," one



Renew your spirit during
Rosh Hashanah

should also have in mind the mitzvot of lighting candles, "Kiddush" and hearing the shofar.



THE SHOFAR

The essential mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is to hear the sounding of the shofar. The shofar blasts after the Torah Reading are called "Tekiot M'yushav."

The minimum Torah obligation is to hear nine blasts. However, there is a doubt whether the sound of the shofar should be a groaning type of cry ("Shevarim"), or a sobbing weep ("Teruah"), or a combination (Shevarim-Teruah). Therefore, we perform all three sounds, each preceded and followed by an unbroken blast, "Tekiah." Three of each set results in 30 blasts total, which are necessary to remove all doubt that the Torah precept has been fulfilled.

It is customary to blow shofar in the same place that the Torah is read, so that the merit of the Torah will support us. The shofar should be blown during the daytime. In ancient times, when the Romans persecuted the Jews, the rabbis instituted blowing the shofar before Musaf, since the Romans had guards in the synagogues during the early morning.

The person who blows the shofar must stand. He should be instructed immediately before blowing to have intention to fulfill the obligation for all those listening. Similarly, all those listening should be reminded to have intention that their obligation is being fulfilled.

Before blowing, two blessings are recited: "to hear the sound of the shofar," and "Shechianu." Once the blessings have been made, one may not speak until the end of the shofar blowing.

Women may sound the shofar and say the blessing to accomplish the mitzvah. A child who is old enough to be educated regarding mitzvot is required to hear the shofar.

The shofar is not blown when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat.

The shofar used on Rosh Hashanah should be a curved ram's horn, and longer than four inches. It is permitted to use the shofar of an animal not ritually slaughtered. After the fact, any shofar is acceptable except the horn of a cow, ox or an unkosher species of animal.

In the "Amidah" prayer of Musaf, there are three special blessings:

"Malchiot" (praises to God the King), "Zichronot" (asking God to remember the merits of our Ancestors), and "Shofrot" (the significance of the shofar). During the chazan's repetition, we blow an additional 30 blasts in the various combinations.

It is the custom to blow 40 extra blasts at the end of services, bringing the total to 100. It is customary to prolong the final blast, which is called a "Tekiah Gedolah."



OTHER CUSTOMS

It is customary to greet others as follows: "L'shana Tova -- Ketivah vi-chatima Tova." This means: "For a good year -- You should be written and sealed in the good (Book of Life)."

One should try not to sleep or go for idle walks on the day of Rosh Hashanah. (The Arizal permits a nap in the afternoon.)

It is advisable to avoid marital relations, except if Rosh Hashanah falls on the night of the wife's immersion.

If a Bris Milah falls on Rosh Hashanah, it should be performed between the Torah reading and the shofar blowing.



TASHLICH

The "Tashlich" prayer is said on the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah by a pool of water that preferably has fish in it.

These prayers are symbolic of the casting away of our mistakes. Of course, it is foolish to think you can rid sins by shaking out your pockets. Rather, the Jewish approach is deep introspection and commitment to change. Indeed, the whole idea of "Tashlich" is partly to commemorate the Midrash that says when Abraham went to the Akeida (binding of Isaac), he had to cross through water up to his neck.

If Rosh Hashanah falls out on Shabbat, "Tashlich" is pushed off until the second day. If "Tashlich" was not said on Rosh Hashanah itself, it may be said anytime during the Ten Days of Teshuva.

Both the body of water and the fish are symbolic. In Talmudic literature Torah is represented as water. Just as fish can't live without water, so too a Jew can't live without Torah!

Also, the fact that fish's eyes never close serve to remind us that, so too, God's eyes (so to speak) never close; He knows of our every move.

This is the text of "Tashlich:"

Who is like You, God, who removes iniquity and overlooks transgression of the remainder of His inheritance. He doesn't remain angry forever because He desires kindness. He will return and He will be merciful to us, and He will conquer our iniquities, and He will cast them into the depths of the seas.

Give truth to Jacob, kindness to Abraham like that you swore to our ancestors from long ago.

From the straits I called upon God, God answered me with expansiveness. God is with me, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me? God is with me to help me, and I will see my foes (annihilated). It is better to take refuge in God than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in God, than to rely on nobles.

Many people also read Psalms 33 and 130. ❖

"HEY, THAT'S JUST HOW I AM"

by Rabbi Aharon Feldman and published by Aish HaTorah : <http://aish.com>

Free choice is the uniquely human trait. Tapping into this power is a primary goal of the High Holidays.



Why are we lazy? Why do we overeat? Why are we always getting angry?

If we are ever reprimanded for improper behavior, we usually have one ultimate response. "That's how I am." We are what we are.

This answer, in effect, is a way of saying that we are not responsible for our actions. We are saying that we cannot change ourselves because that is how we were constructed. In other words, we do not have the free choice to be otherwise.

"That's how I am" is such a popular response because, in fact, most of us do not believe that we have free choice. This is one of the characteristics of modern man.

There are good reasons why we like to avoid the belief that we have free choice. One is that it is more convenient for us to do so, for it helps us avoid guilt feelings for any of our shortcomings. We are interested in following our lower desires and do not want to feel guilty about our behavior. No one needs to feel guilty about a nature over which he has no control.

Another reason is the deterministic attitude of science which has permeated all levels of popular thought. The evolutionary description of the origins of man turns him into another animal. We are, like animals, a bundle of nerve-endings and emotional drives. Animals have no control over themselves. It follows that neither do we.

If our appetites and drives define us, then we have no reason to change. Philanderers, embezzlers and abusers do not have themselves to blame. They are merely victims of their natures. Do we find it difficult to get along with our neighbors? Our parents are at fault for not having given us the proper upbringing. Why are there so many people in jail? Society is to blame. And so the list goes on. We are all innocent bystanders, victims of a pre-determined world.



CROWNING THE KING

Rosh Hashanah is a time when we can begin ridding ourselves

of this attitude. This is the day, the first of Tishrei, which corresponds to that day when the first human was created. We, as well, are able in a sense to recreate ourselves on this day.

Man's creation was unique among all beings created before him. He was the first being with free choice. Only he could decide his fate. Only he could choose between good and evil. Only he could rise above his nature.

Man was given this unique quality because God wanted him to choose from his free will to recognize Him and to adhere to His laws. In fact, this is the purpose for which God brought all of creation into being. To do this, man had to have free choice.

This is why the Sages say, metaphorically, that on the first Rosh Hashanah, God was recognized for the first time as "King." Similarly, in our prayers on every Rosh Hashanah, we

address God as our "King." King in Hebrew has a special connotation. A king is a sovereign who is accepted willfully by his citizens, unlike a ruler who imposes himself on his subjects against their will. Since a "being with free will to choose" now existed, God could now be recognized for the first time as "King," willfully accepted by mankind.



ANOTHER YEAR

The first day of man's creation is also the day of his judgment. Because man has free will, he is responsible for his actions.

A responsible person has to answer for his actions. Just as on that first Rosh Hashanah man was given life, similarly on that day every year God judges man as to whether he deserves to live for another year.

This judgment depends upon whether or not man has used, and intends to use, his free will properly. If man chooses to use it to subordinate himself to God, he deserves life; otherwise he does not.

Choosing to subordinate our lives to the service of God is not an easy task. But it is not possible unless we bring home to ourselves that we have free choice to act as we want. For without the capacity to choose, how can we decide how to direct our lives?

Thus, the first step in approaching Rosh Hashanah and its judgment is to remind ourselves that we are free to choose. We are not merely highly developed animals. We are responsible human beings. We are unique in capacity for free choice. In fact, this is why we were created. We can choose to avoid arousing our lower desires, and choose to overcome them after they are aroused -- no matter how difficult this may be.

We never lose the capacity to control ourselves. We never lose

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the capacity to choose.

The holiday of Rosh Hashanah is a time when it is vital that we regain our belief in our free choice, and that there is

nothing stopping us from changing. The next time we feel like saying, "That's how I am," we should ask ourselves instead, "What would I prefer to be?"

A Sweet New Year

After reciting the Kiddush at the Rosh Hashanah evening meal, the Jews recite the Hamotzi-blessing over the Challah-bread. Then they dip it into honey and eat it.

On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, after eating the Challah with honey, they take a slice of apple, dip it into honey and recite the following prayer:

"May it be Your will to renew for us a good and sweet year." They then eat the apple with the honey.

Q. All year they dip the Challah-bread in salt. What is the significance of the honey on Rosh Hashanah?

A. This is to express our wish and plea for a sweet New Year. There are various customs regarding the foods which they eat on Rosh Hashanah. They all have a common objective -- to symbolize, whether by their name or sweet taste, our sincere wishes that G-d grant us a happy and sweet year.

In addition there is also a mystical reason which relates to the numerical value of honey.

The Hebrew word for honey is "Dvash." The numerical value of "Dvash" is 306 (4+2+300=306). This is the same numerical value as the words "Av HaRachamim" (1+2+5+200+8+40+10+40=306) - "Merciful Father." Thus, honey on Rosh Hashanah is an expression of confidence that our Merciful Father in heaven will grant us His blessings for a sweet year.

Another interesting point is made by our sages concerning the sweetness of honey and its relationship to Rosh Hashanah. Honey is produced as a result of the bees collecting sweet nectar from many flowers.

So too, the honey we eat on Rosh Hashanah symbolizes our prayer that G-d not judge us as individuals but as part of the entire nation of Israel (Klal Yisrael). This symbolic gesture is an expression of our wish that G-d will collect all the mitzvot and good deeds performed by everyone. Together, they will surely provide enough merits to assure that we all be blessed with a happy, healthy, successful and very sweet year.

Adapted from Torah Fax www.torahfax.net

STATEMENT BY RABBI BORUCH SHLOMO CUNIN ~ WEST COAST DIRECTOR, CHABAD LUBAVITCH

"Death has arisen in our windows.' Today, the United States has been struck by terrorist attacks, the likes of which we have never known in our great country.

"These horrific actions were not aimed at Americans or Capitalists, Jews or Gentiles. These vicious acts were heat-seeking missiles aimed at humanity's desire to fulfill its G-d-given mission on earth in a peaceful and civilized manner.

"No, we will not allow our spirits to be broken! We will find the inner strength to rise above this black day in the history of our world.

"As our hearts go out to the tens of thousands of victims and their families, we draw upon the wisdom and leadership of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. In times of tragedy and tribulation, the Rebbe calls upon us to heed the words of King David, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have established strength ..." We must gather our children, our future, and cry with them words of prayer and Torah to the Almighty. We must increase our charity to the poor and those less fortunate.

"Today our enemies have reminded us—in the most devastating manner—that all we have is each other and our shared desire to live in peace. We must stand together in a united front to protect

our world.

"As we desperately search for light, let us embrace the Rebbe's teaching: Light is unity. Let us unite through acts of goodness and kindness toward each other. By so doing, we invoke the G-d-given power to overcome all obstacles.

"Our Sages teach us that now, during the Hebrew month of Elul, Almighty G-d is 'in the fields' and especially open to our prayers. As we gather together in our synagogues, we beseech G-d to bring an end to this madness, mayhem and terror by sending Moshiach Now ... a time when death and war will cease to exist ... the time of our redemption. In the Rebbe's words heard across the globe, 'Moshiach is ready to come now. It is only up to us to increase our deeds of goodness and kindness.'

"May we merit that the Jewish New Year bring world peace and redemption."

