TESHUVAH IS THE DIFFERENCE

"This mitzvah", about which the verse speaks, is the mitzvah of teshuvah. It is noteworthy that earlier, in Parashas Re'eh, the Torah presents the choice to do teshuvah offered to the nation as a choice between "a blessing and a curse" (see 11:26). Here, in our parasha, however, in Verse 15, the Torah presents the alternatives as being between "life...and death". What is the reason for the different terminology used in the two contexts?

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his Meshech Chochmah, explains that in Parashas Re'eh, the mitzvah to do teshuvah had not yet been offered. Fulfillment of the Torah was simply presented as a choice between having a blessing or not. Here, however, the people were given the opportunity to attain forgiveness, pardon and atonement for their sins. When given such an offer, if one does not avail himself to take full advantage, he is guilty of serious neglect and dereliction. What was originally a choice between blessing and curse transforms into being a decision of life and death. If a person is faced with a threat of a curse, and he does not avoid it, his sin is great and compounded. The consequence of this neglect is that the sin now has more severe repercussions.

The verse points out how the heavens and earth were summoned to testify that the Jews had been given the mitzvah of teshuvah. As a result, the choice between blessing and curse intensified into being one of life and death. Accordingly, the Torah concludes by exhorting the nation "to choose life, so that you may live, even you and your children". This is a powerful message.

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HEAR OUR VOICE

Rabbi Yitzchak Sender notes that we might wonder why we say "משוער קולות" – "hear our voice" – in the Selichos and Yomim Nora'im davening. Would it not be more meaningful if we were to say "משוער תפילה" – "hear our prayer", or at least "hear our words"? What is the particular significance of insisting on this particular formulation of "our voice" – "קולות"?

Similarly, in the daily Shemoneh Esrei we say "יכל קולות תפילה ופתעום אמת", where we praise Hashem for hearing our prayers. Would it not be more praiseworthy to say "משוער תפילה" – "who accepts our prayers"?

In nusach Sefard we say "יכל קולות תפילה ולפי ה'" – "For You hear the prayer of every mouth." Why do we add here the words "לפי ה'" – "of every mouth"? Why doesn’t it suffice to refer to Hashem "hearing our prayers"?

The Shulchan Aruch (119:1) states that a person who wishes to add a personal request in his recitation of the Shemoneh Esrei prayer may do so. Thus, if a person wants to pray for the recovery of another, he may do so at the end of the blessing of "ברכה". If a person is in dire need of a livelihood, he may insert his request at the end of "ברכה על WORK" – "Bless, on our behalf..." However, in the prayer of "ברכה על משפחה" one can include all types of requests – for health, livelihood, forgiveness, etc. For this is considered the appropriate place for adding one’s own general all-inclusive needs and requests. Again, we might ask, where exactly in the prayer of "משוער קולות" is this inclusiveness indicated?

Rabbi Sender suggests an answer to these questions based on the following. There is a difference between "words – דברים" and "our voice – קולות”. When we speak the words of prayers, we express all our desires and requests. However, one’s “voice” alludes to more than that. It alludes to the fact that hidden in our subconscious, there

There is much more that we want to express, but either we cannot find the words or we don’t know what it is we want to say.
is much more that we want to express, but either we cannot find the words or we don’t know what it is we want to say.

The word “יָדַע”, “hear”, has a double meaning. It can mean simply to hear with one’s ears the words that have just been spoken. Yet, there is much more indicated in this word. In Yiddish we say “der herring”, to mean comprehension or understanding a deeper message than the simple meaning of the words that were expressed. The word “יָדַע” includes this meaning as well.

In the middle section of the Shemoneh Esrei we merely express the words of the petitions. In the “חַגָגוֹרָה יָדַע”, we plead with Hashem to understand our deeper feelings and the desires that lie buried in our subconscious minds and completely fulfill our pleas. This is why this prayer stresses “יָדַע”, our voices. It is an appeal for Hashem’s understanding. Thus we praise Hashem in the concluding berachah, “יָדַע יִשְׂרָאֵל”, because He hears and understands our most secret needs and desires. This is what we mean when we say “For You hear the prayer of every mouth”, for each mouth has a different message, and only Hashem can understand them all.

This, then, is the goal of our special prayers throughout the days of Selichos and Yomim Nora’im, as we call out to Hashem to listen to the deep recesses of our voices and to the full meaning of our cries.

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**DEVELOPING OUR STRENGTHS**

In Pirkei Avos (4:1), the Tanna, Ben Zoma, states “Who is wise? The one who learns from every person. Who is strong? The one who subdues his passions. Who is wealthy? The one who gets joy from what he has. Who is honored? The one who honors others.” The Bertenoro explains that Ben Zoma is telling us who is worthy of being praised for his wisdom, strength, wealth, and honor. Seemingly, this contradicts the statement of the Navi Yirmiyahu, who states (Yirmiyahu 9:22): “Thus said God, let the wise man not glorify himself with his wisdom and let the strong man not glorify himself with his strength, and let the rich man not glorify himself with his wealth.”

Rabbi Yaakov Aryeh Neiman, the author of *Sefer Darchei Mussar*, answers that one’s intrinsic wisdom, strength, and wealth are each a gift from Hashem. One cannot glorify himself for that which he received as a gift. A person’s task is to develop that gift into a positive character trait. A wise person becomes a seeker of wisdom, to the point of seeking wisdom from those who appear to be less wise. A strong person uses his strength to fine-tune his character traits by subduing his passions to become great in his interpersonal relationships. A wealthy person understands that his wealth is a function of appreciating that he has received all that he needs to carry out his task as a servant of Hashem.

Rosh HaShanah is the day we renew the coronation of Hashem as the King over creation. A king has access to all of the resources needed by his subjects to carry out their tasks. The focus of the avodah of Rosh HaShanah is to humbly reinforce our belief that Hashem is the source of all of our strengths, and our task is then to develop ourselves.

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**A SENSE OF TRESPIDATION**

Many years ago, just before Chodesh Elul, I had come to Yerushalayim for the first time. I went to a small shul on Shabbos afternoon after shkiah and this particular bais midrash had no lights on. The speaker was HaRav Bentzion Bruck, Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardik Yeshiva, and he was wailing with fear of the upcoming Y’mei HaDin. As he spoke, and it was getting darker and darker, his mood was becoming more serious and his voice was getting louder and louder. I had just recently arrived from America, where I had been hearing much about the current baseball pennant races in both leagues and other more mundane topics and not very much about the impending gzar din.

In the Aseres Y’mei Teshuvah we mention Aveinu Malkeinu. Referring to God as “Our King” is a very scary concept. A king expects things from his servants. A king does not always tolerate infractions by his servants. That which will happen to us over the course of the next year will be determined over the course of the 10 days beginning on Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur.

The Satmar Rebbe once made the following insightful comment on the pasuk in Tehillim (81:4): “יָדַע יִשְׂרָאֵל” – “Blow the shofar on the moon’s renewal, at the time (the moon is) hidden (יָדַע), appointed for our festive holiday.” Rosh HaShanah is the only Yom Tov on which the new moon is not yet visible. Since Rosh HaShanah falls out on the first of Tishrei, the holiday is observed when the moon is hidden. The Satmar Rebbe gave a deeper meaning to the “hidden” aspect of Rosh HaShanah, namely, the fact that we will not learn what type of Rosh HaShanah it was until the end of the year. Similarly, when people would approach my father, who was a ba’al tefillah for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur for many decades, and would ask him how the tefillos went that year, he
would invariably say: “I’ll tell you next year on Erev Rosh HaShanah.” Even more so, in the famous Yeshiva Beis HaTalmud of Kelm, which was noted for its “avodah” and “musar”, the Alter of Kelm put up a sign on his door before Rosh HaShanah stating that someone who makes it through Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur unscathed should recite the bracha of HaGomel.

Yet, HaRav Aron Soloveichik, in the name of the Vilna Gaon, said that one isn’t allowed to cry on Rosh HaShanah. It is one’s obligation to be in a state of simcha on this day and it is even prohibited to fast. How, then, should one proceed? The Torah calls Rosh HaShanah “Yom Teru’ah”. Rav Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900), Chassidic sage and thinker, one of the leading Torah scholars in the 19th century and author of Pri Tzadik, points out that the Shevarim and Teruahs, which are the broken sounds of the shofar (representing the crying out of a broken spirit), must always be sandwiched between two Tekios. The firm, unbroken, Tekiah sound represents simcha – joy. Rav Tzadok asserted that this captures the theme of the day. On the exterior, we must act and feel that it is a Yom Tov – a day of simcha, but on the interior – between the Tekios – we must have a terrible trepidation as we approach Yom HaDin.

May we all rise to the occasion in trepidation, but with a firm sense of confidence, and may we each be zoche to a kesiva v’chasima tova.

Rabbi Avraham Friedman, Rosh HaYeshiva

Dear Readers:

Rosh HaShanah ushers in the period known as the “Ten Days of Repentance”. We have already experienced the entire month of Elul, with the sounding of the shofar and with additional Selichos prayers. Yet, there is something different about the month of Tishrei and the increased intensity of the season, which changes the teshuvah dynamic and our response to it.

Teshuvah is a life-changing opportunity, and a fascinating vehicle for us to access insight and power into our lives. It is nothing short of a spectacular gift presented to us by Hashem, yet to some it remains elusive and just talk. How can we approach it and utilize it?

Let us first point out some common misunderstandings, whereby we can then discover how teshuvah can be mastered. A common feeling is for one to avoid serious consideration to do teshuvah due to one’s impression that his situation is hopeless. A person thinks that his sin-to-mitzvah ratio is out of control, and that he cannot imagine even beginning a process of teshuvah. How does one even start to conquer such a massive mountain of iniquities?

Furthermore, a person thinks back upon many years of experience, and he can become disillusioned. Perhaps he has tried different things in the past to change certain behaviors - trying to jettison certain bad habits, while at the same time to adopt other positive attributes. Yet, in retrospect, as with many “new-year resolutions,” many, if not all, such attempts have failed to be sustained. Therefore, with our arriving once again at another Rosh HaShanah, a person might have a feeling of hopelessness in the system. Why should he try if he is destined for failure?

These discouraging approaches are both big mistakes. On the one hand, teshuvah, even if it is merely begun, can have major implications in improving one’s mind-set and attitude in general, and it can result in significant changes in one’s conduct, changes which are by no means temporary.

“The Mashgiach”, Rabbi Yechezkel Levinstein, illustrates this situation with a parable. Someone owed a large sum to his friend, and he had no way to ever repay it. On the one hand he might try to avoid seeing his creditor, and if he did happen to bump into him, he might try to avoid mentioning the loan. This, however, would only cause the creditor to become irritated and upset due to the increased insensitivity and brazenness of this friend. Not only has he failed to pay, but he also has shown total disregard for him and all he has done for him. If, however, the debtor would offer even a simple gesture of paying five dollars, together with an apology and some meager attempt to negotiate to do whatever he could to respond, the creditor may take some solace, and he would react with understanding and by granting an extension to the borrower.

The lesson is that even if one feels his “line of credit” for his improper behavior has been over-extended, ignoring the situation is only making things worse. It is much better to make some gesture in the right direction, and one might very well thereby elicit favor from the heavens with an “extension” of a year of life and health in the Book of Life.

The second error, that of thinking that teshuvah is futile as one’s efforts each year do not result in meaningful or lasting changes, can be debunked as well. Teshuvah is a lifelong process, and the exercise of going through the process yearly is one that is cumulative. More often than not, as a person ages, changes do set in, and attitudes and actions are substantially improved. This does not happen unless one regularly goes through the motions, and participates in the Elul/ Rosh HaShanah/ Days of Awe routine.

As awe-inspiring as this time of year is, there is tremendous consolation in the very privilege of being offered the ability to leave behind our regrettable actions and deeds, and to return to the open arms of Hashem, a loving and accepting Father. We are assured that Hashem is waiting for us to make a move, whereupon we will find encouragement to continue along the path of life.

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Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor
Likutei Peshatim is prepared with great dedication under the devoted direction of Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Sumber, Managing Editor. With the dedicated assistance of Mr. Yaakov Shachter, Dr. Yakov Weil, and Mr. Jeremy Gottesman, who have given of their time, energy and effort, this major weekly project has been possible. The results can be seen in the inspirational, informative and thought-provoking Divrei Torah found in every issue. We hope that Likutei Peshatim enhances your weekly Shabbos experience, and that, with God’s help, we will continue to serve the Chicago Jewish community through Likutei Peshatim and other HTC Community Service shiurim and lectures.

We are pleased to list below the many Chicago area congregations and institutions which receive Likutei Peshatim every Erev Shabbos. Additionally, over 1,300 subscribers around the world receive the e-mail edition of Likutei Peshatim weekly. We are truly grateful to the Crain-Maling Foundation for their generous sponsorship of the e-mail edition.

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**Halachic Corner**

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<th>Shunah</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
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Rambam (Laws of Teshuva 2:2) answers the question as to what constitutes teshuvah, explaining that it is repentance to the degree that Hashem, Who knows all that is hidden, will testify that the person will never again repeat this sin. The mefarshim ask: “How can this be? Since man always has free will to do good or evil, to sin or not to sin, how can Hashem testify that a person will never repeat a particular sin? Isn’t this a repudiation of one’s free will?”

A sin does not occur in a vacuum. For example, a person who is pious and observes the mitzvos does not suddenly decide to eat treifah. A sin occurs when a person is in such a state that a particular act is not anathema to him. As a result, repentance is not complete if one merely regrets having done wrong. One must ask, “How did this sin ever come about? In what kind of a state was I that permitted me to commit this sin?”

True repentance, therefore, consists of changing one’s character to the point where, as the person is now, he can no longer even consider doing the forbidden act. Of course, there is always the chance that the person’s character may deteriorate, and if it does, he may sin once again. God does not testify that the person will never repeat the sin, but rather that his degree of repentance and correction of his character defects are such that, as long as he maintains his new status, he will not commit that sin.

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**Questions for Thought and Study**

1. Why do we divide Parashios Nitzavim and Vayeicheh (which are relatively short) when there are two Shabbosos between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos? Why don’t we divide larger parashios, such as Mattos and Masei?  
   See Ta’amie Minagligim הֶסֶרֹן

2. What did Moshe want to fix by having all of Bnei Yisrael stand together before he died?  
   See Rabbeinu Bachya 29:9

3. Why are כסף (sulphur) and מלך (salt) used in describing the covenant of the Torah that Bnei Yisrael were accepting?  
   See Chizkuni 29:22

4. What act is equivalent to all the mitzvos combined?  
   See Ba’al HaTurim 30:10

5. Which words hint that “לֵאוֹן (learning Torah) is equal to all of the mitzvos?”  
   See Rokeach 30:11

6. When we implore the merits of our forefathers ( RAID: רַעַד לְאַהֲבָה מַעְלָה פַּטַּלָּה) for us to be forgiven, why do we mention Yaakov, then Yitzchak, then Avraham?  
   See Ta’amie Minagligim הַרְשׁוּ חַיֵּי אָבִי

7. How does the change some make in Kiddush by saying הַשָּׁמֶשׁ לְהַכֵּן help to inscribe for us a good new year?  
   See Ta’amie Minagligim הַרְשׁוּ חַיֵּי אָבִי

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Halachic Corner is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father Gedalia Friedman. בְּרָכָה לְרַעַד לְאַהֲבָה מַעְלָה פַּטַּלָּה. May his memory be for a blessing.

Gedalia Freeman, מַעְלָה פַּטַּלָּה
The cRc Beth Din wishes our community the best for the coming Yemai HaDin, and a year of Mazal Tov. The cRc is proud to offer the third volume in the Kashrus Halacha series by Rabbi Dovid Cohen, published by the National Institute for Jewish Life. Please contact Rabbi Moshe Schecter for more information.

# Yachad and Jewish Inclusion!
Yachad wishes the community a happy, healthy, and sweet New Year. May we join together during this New Year of 5780 in our goal of providing Jewish education to all who need it and to support Hebrew Theological College.

Yachad thanks HaRav Avrohom Friedman, Rosh HaYeshiva of Beis Midrash L’Torah, for hosting the night of Parshas Vayelech, October 5, at 4:30 PM. Also, our annual Night of Inclusion! For information on the myriad of services offered to the entire community ages 7-70, visit Yachad.org/Chicago or email ChicagoYachad@ou.org. #BecauseEveryoneBelongs

# The Blitstein Institute
Blitstein Institute thanks HaRav Avrohom Friedman, Rosh HaYeshiva of Beis Midrash L’Torah, for giving an inspirational talk on “Teshuvah” to the students, alumnae and women of the community. HaRav Avrohom Friedman, Rabbi Binyomin Olstein and Rabbi Yaakov Sussman jointly led Hataras Nedarim.

Yachad welcomes the community and appreciates you! Thank you for supporting our mission of Inclusion! For information on the myriad of services offered to the entire community ages 7-70, including social activities, Shabbatonim, day, vocational and summer programs, Birthright and more, visit Yachad.org/Chicago or email ChicagoYachad@ou.org. #BecauseEveryoneBelongs

Yachad invites the community to Rabbi Zev Cohen’s Shabbas Shuva Drasha on Shabbos, Parshas Vayelech, October 5, at 4:30 PM.

The McKvah at Congregation Yehuda Moshe, 4721 W. Touhy in Lincolnwood, will be open on Erev Rosh Hashanah and Erev Yom Kippur 5:30 AM - 4:00 PM. Also, our annual Night of Knowledge will be Motzaei Shabbos, November 9.

Hillel Torah is seeking a Permanent Sub for the school year, beginning after Sukkot. This is a full-day position, where every day will be different and exciting, with involvement in all grades from K-8. The ideal person should be dynamic, knowledgeable and comfortable in both General and Judaic studies, and experienced in working with children. Please email your résumé to bitoffice@hilleltorah.org.

The cRc is proud to offer the third volume in the Kashrus Halacha series by Rabbi Dovid Cohen, published by the National Institute for Jewish Life. The cRc Administrative Rabbinical Coordinator, “Tevellas Keilim” covers the classic halachos of tevillal as they apply to modern utensils and situations, arranged according to the order of Shulchan Aruch YD 120 & 202. Order online at www.shopcrc.org.

The cRc Beth Din wishes our community the best for the coming Yemai HaDin, and a year of Rachamim veChaim veShalom.
Sukkot Fest is Thursday, October 17! Save the date for family fun, including inflatables, petting zoo, Krav Maga, British Swim School, Hot Shots Sports activities, crafts, face painting, community resource fair & more! Bernard Horwich ICC in W. Rogers Park. Register: jccchicago.org/sukkottest.

Please join women in the community for Chicago Community Kollel's Women's Division Special Shabbos Shuva Shiur given by Rosh Kollel, HaRav Dovid Zucker. Parashas Vayeilech, October 5th, at 4:45 PM, graciously hosted by Mrs. Voie Weinfeld, 6821 N. Francisco. Wishing all a kesiva v'chasima tova!

The next Chicago Community Kollel Shabbos Shuva in Lincolnwood for men and women will be held on Shabbos Shuva - Parashas Vayeilech at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Ruben, 6519 Central Park at 4:30 PM. Special Guest Speaker. Rosh Kollel. HaRav Moshe Francis, will speak on "Unusual Ways We Can Save Ourselves and Others From Sin".

The YU Torah Mitzion Kollel wishes the entire Chicagoland community a K'siva V'Chasima Tova! Thank you for making our community of learning a reality. Shana Tova.

Super Science Sunday fuses fun & learning for kids in grades N-8! Join us each week in our lab to explore exciting science experiments & activities. Girls grades 1-8 meet weekly at 10:15 AM, boys grades 4-8 at 1:45, & boys grades 1-3 at 3:30. We also offer special sessions for Kindergarten & Nursery students at 10:15, 1:45, & 3:30. Fall sessions begin Oct. 27. Space is limited, so be sure to reserve your spot now! Visit us at www.walderlab.org/sunday, email programs@walderlab.org, or 773-649-5360 for more info or to sign up.

Simcha Link Has Expanded! Simcha Link, the matchmaking division of Chicago Chessed Fund, recently welcomed two new shadchanim: Mrs. Hilary Kahn and Mrs. Naomi Homnick. The network now includes a total of 10 shadchanim focusing on the Chicago community! Services include: matchmaking, dating advice, résumé building and more. To find out more or to speak with a shadchan, visit SimchaLink.org.

Agudath Israel of Illinois is looking to hire an Executive Assistant to the Director of Government Affairs. The individual should be organized and responsible, possess good computer skills and written and verbal communication skills and be able to multi-task. If you are interested, please send your résumé & references, with “Executive Assistant Position” in the subject line, to HR@agudathisrael-il.org.

Agudath Israel is looking to hire a full-time Bookkeeper to assist in the Financial Department. The individual must have Quickbooks experience and be self-motivated, proactive, detail-oriented and work well in a fast-paced environment. Please email résumé and references, with “Bookkeeper Position” in the subject line, to HR@agudathisrael-il.org.

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Thank you Rosenblum’s World of Judaica for having Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst, Rabbi Yossi Fuerst and Rabbi Kalman Worch checking, approving & ensuring the kashrut of your lulavim & etrogim sets again this year, available for purchase at many beautiful sets to choose from. Call Rosenblum’s for their extended hours. Rosenblum’s is Chicago’s only source for Sukkah Depot products. Meet Elisha from Sukkah Depot - see the great choices of sukkahs. schach & wonderful Sukkah decorations. - The Greenbergs.

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The Wi-Fi Chevra recommends that you start your day with a Good Morgan! Good Morgan Cafe! Located in the Wi-Fi Building on McCormick Blvd., Good Morgan offers a delicious array of breakfast and lunch specials daily. Try their delicious Belgian waffles or omelet specials! Don’t miss their famous fried whitefish sandwich and other tasty sandwiches and wraps. Open daily 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

By Dr. & Mrs. Moshe Nitekman in memory of his father, Yitzchak and Avraham before him. Avraham had the wicked Terach for a father and Yitzchak for a grandfather. Nothing survives a fire like salt. Nothing burns in a fire like sulphur. The Torah is like fire – that which is written in it cannot be destroyed like sulphur in a fire. When a person sacrifices or gives a gift in fulfillment of a commandment (mitzvah) ("when you return - repent") just before the words "v’chasima tova!" (because of this mitzvah). The act of repentance ("return") is equal to all of the mitzvos. This is alluded to by the words "v’chasima tova!" (learning Torah) (1011).

The words "v’chasima tova!" (because of this mitzvah that...) (1010) are equivalent in meaning to the words "v’chasima tova!" (learning Torah) (1011).

Yaakov is the only forefather who had the merit of "v’chasima tova!" ("forefathers" – plural), as he had Yitzchak and Avraham before him. Avraham had the wicked Terach for a father and Yitzchak only had one forefather, Avraham.

Each of the words "v’chasima tova!" and "v’chasima tova!" is numerically equal (381) to 381, who is the number "chaim" that is appointed for writing in the heavens.

LIKUTEI PESHATIM HAS TORAH CONTENT - PLEASE TREAT IT RESPECTFULLY

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