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**Go for the Gold**

**By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

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**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

“*And it will be if you obey the L-rd, your G-d, to observe to fulfill all His commandments which I command you this day, the L -rd, your G-d, will place you supreme above all the nations of the earth*.” (28:1)

I come from the world of music and the arts. By age 26, I had co-produced a record that sold over 5 million copies. One thing that intrigued me when I became Torah-observant was meeting frum people who were fascinated to hear what some of the “stars” that I had met were like. I sensed an ever-so-slight tinge of FOMO. It's like: “We all know the Torah is true, there’s a Ribono Shel Olam, olam haba and all that, but I’d love to get some of that glatt olam hazeh if it wasn’t forbidden.”

Gentlemen, let me tell you – I wore the T-shirt – I wove the T-shirt. You are missing out on nothing. Except what it means to be a Yid. The Kotzer used to say if you really knew what it meant to be a Yid, you’d jump up and start dancing the Kazotsky.

Sometimes it takes a message from far away to make us realize exactly what we have: South Korea is one of the most tech, fast paced countries on earth. Robots bringing food to your table. There's technology the world hasn't even seen yet. Their education system is one of the most intense in the world. Butbelieve it or not, in South Korea, they learn Talmud in their schools.

About 25 years ago Korean educators became fascinated by the success of the Jewish people: here was a nation that endured exile after exile, pogroms, Holocaust, bloodshed, torture, and yet they somehow produced the most influential, radically transformative people on earth: Nobel prize winners, scientists, doctors, business leaders, thinkers way out of proportion to their numbers.

And the Koreans asked the same question the rest of the world has always asked: How? Why? How is it possible that people running for their lives seemed to live the most fruitful lives? But unlike other nations who nurture the poisonous illusion that the Jews conspire to control the world, the Koreans came to a much more honest conclusion: they said, maybe the Jewish people are more successful because their guidebook to life is wiser than any other guidebook.

They said, we want to understand the Talmud. We want to know why the Jews are so smart, why they're so resilient. The Torah says “baruch tihye mikol ha’amim” (Devarim 7:14) - the Jewish people will be the most blessed of all the nations. The history of the Jewish people shows that we have lived lives far richer than all others: We have built the strongest families, we have the healthiestmarriages, the most respectful and dignified ways of dealing with grief, with poverty, with death, the most compassionate ways of giving, the most loving way of guiding an orphan.

When you step back and look at human life as a whole, the Jewish people have lived better, fuller, deeper, more meaningful lives than anyone else on this planet. The next time you feel like you want to give up; that you’re fed up with having to control yourself at every corner; that you’re missing out on the good life; that life would be just so much easier if we didn’t always have to be on guard; remember, our guide to life has been tested and proven generation after generation.

Sometimes it takes other people, looking from the outside, to tap us on the shoulder and remind us that we got the gold. And what the world has is just so much tinsel town.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Tavo 5785 email of OHRNET – The Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Longing for Moshiach**



**QUESTION:** The Rambam writes in peirush hamishnayos that even if someone believes in Moshiach, it’s not enough. You have to desire he should come, otherwise you’re an apikoris. Why is this so?

**ANSWER:** The Rambam, this man says, considers a man an *apikoris* if he doesn’t *desire* Moshiach.

And the answer is that it states: חכה לו – *Wait for him* (Habakuk 2:3). It says it openly in the Neviim. Hope for him. Hope for Moshiach.

Now, if a person doesn’t hope for Moshiach, he doesn’t believe in Moshiach. If a person knew that Moshiach is something as portrayed by the *neviim*, a time of *k’vod Shamayim*, that ביום ההוא יהיה ה’ אחד ושמו אחד – The whole world will finally agree that we are right, ה’ הוא האלוקים, and this man is not desirous that it should happen then, then certainly he is a man full of faults.

We have to yearn for that time! You walk in the street today, you see people without hats. We have to yearn for the time when all the Jews wear black hats. That’s what we want. Every Jew should wear black hats! All the women should have their head covered, with *sheitlech* or whatever it is.

We want everybody to be *frum*. Everybody without exception. Once upon a time it was that way. Yes. Once upon a time, every Jew was a *frum* Jew. Yes, there were people with bad *middos*; they didn’t train themselves, *amei ha’aretz*. But everybody was an observant Jew. That’s the minimum that will happen when Moshiach comes.

So why shouldn’t a person long for Moshiach? Now, I’m not saying I do. That’s what we *should* do however. We should long for Moshiach because at that time, the glory of Hashem will be reestablished in the world.

October 14, 1999

*Reprinted from a recent email of Torah Avigdor based on a lecture delivered on. October 14, 1999.*

**Sparking the Soul**

**By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg**



During this past winter, Reb Tzvi Meir Silberberg, the Rav of Nachlas Yaakov, received a letter with the following story: The writer shared how his son got married in 2004 and was honored with family and friends attending the wedding from far and wide. Joining in the celebration was an uncle who, other than knowing that he was a Yid, did nothing about it. He lived in some distant country without a speck of Yiddishkeit.

Attempts were made to influence him, but he was set in his ways, not open to listening to anything they had to say. During the simchah, there was a Rosh Kollel who spotted him and made an effort to include him in the festivities. At one point, he even pulled him into the center circle, hoping to leave a positive imprint on his lost neshamah.

As a result, not only did the uncle not feel like a sore thumb, he even formed a fond relationship with the Rosh Kollel. In no way was the Rosh Kollel just looking for another friend. All his efforts were in the hope that nourishing the uncle’s pintele Yid would evidently sprout and grow into a tall tree, providing all with luscious fruit.

A few days later, the Rosh Kollel received a call from the family members requesting that he call the uncle. After seeing how well the two of them hit it off, he was asked to reach out to the uncle in the hope of fertilizing the tree that much more. Just a bit into the call, the conversation went flat. Neither had anything else to share.

Being Chodesh Elul and seeing a shofar resting on his desk, the Rosh Kollel had a rather novel idea. He blew a Tashr”at, Tash”at, and Tar”at, the three types of sets how the shofar is blown. Not knowing if the receiver even knew what they were, he asked if the sounds were at all familiar, and the uncle responded in the affirmative. The call lasted just a few more minutes until they ended.

Fast forward 14 years… Sitting at that chassan’s son’s bar mitzvah, the Rosh Kollel was approached by a someone who didn’t look familiar to him. The man expressed that he was that distant uncle who he had met years earlier, and unlike his previous course of life, he was now shomer Torah u’mitzvos

In utter shock, the Rosh Kollel questioned what had ignited the spark. To his surprise, the uncle confirmed that it had been the shofar blasts. They had shaken him to the core.

“Once I heard those sound waves,” explained the uncle, “I was unable to continue with my course of life. I grabbed onto that moment, and for the past several years, I never let go of it. Its potency charged my soul to embark on this ever-so-tall path of life. I stand here only because of those blasts, and thanks to you, me and my family are b”H fully observant Yidden.”

Concluding this letter, the writer points out that not only were these not the tekios of Rosh Hashanah, but they weren’t even valid for Elul. They were a few random blasts in the afternoon blown over the telephone. Nonetheless, their effect was everlasting. Literally. Repeating this episode, says Reb Tzvi Meir, I don’t know if this year’s tekios shofar will be the same as the previous one. After seeing such results from a non-observer, how much more can it effect a yes-observer? Tapping into tekias shofar, and into Rosh Hashanah in general, can leave a permanent

*Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5785 email of Zichru Toras Moshe*

**How Can We Jews Stand Together Before G-d**

**From the Head to the Foot?**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week we read the Torah portion, Nitzavim. The Torah portion of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. Indeed, It’s very first verse reveals its appropriateness: "You are standing this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d." "This day" refers to the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashana.

On Rosh Hashana every soul, great and small alike, stands before G-d, as it states, "Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers...your little ones, your wives...from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water."

Why do we stand before G-d? "So that you may enter the covenant of the L-rd your G-d." When all Jews stand before Him as a complete and unified entity, we become worthy of entering into His covenant on Rosh Hashana.

A covenant is designed to preserve the feeling of love that exists between two people. They establish a covenant at a time when their love is strongest, so that it will never weaken. This bond connects them to each other and ensures that their love will last forever.

So too is it with G-d's love for the Jewish people. His love for us is strongest on Rosh Hashana, as the previous month was devoted to removing our sins.

But how do we arouse G-d's desire to establish a covenant with us? By being united with one another. How are we to accomplish this, given the differences between individuals? This can be understood by the following analogy:

The human body is composed of many different limbs and organs. Some are more important, like the head; others are simpler, like the foot. But the head, no matter how important, needs the feet in order to move. The body achieves perfection only when all its limbs act in harmony.

In the same way, even the most important Jews ("your heads") require the simplest ones ("the drawer of water") in order to comprise a complete entity. And it is this unity that arouses G-d's desire to make a covenant with His people.

Our job is to achieve this unity between "head" and "foot." Every Jew must work on himself until he can recognize his fellow's unique qualities. It is beyond our capacity to judge a person's true worth. Even if one considers himself a "head" and the other fellow a "foot" (as it is human nature to inflate our own self-worth), the "head" still needs the "foot" in order to comprise a complete being.

Let us concern ourselves with correcting our own flaws and not heed the perceived flaws of others. Doing so will ensure that there is no time to look at others' imperfections!

In this manner we will achieve both self-perfection and perfection as a nation, and G-d will grant the entire Jewish people a good and sweet year.

*Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, vol. 2*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Nitzavim 5762/2002 edition of L’Chaim Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Volume 29.*

**All the Way to Heaven**

**By Rabbi Eliezer Abish**

In Israel, a young family with small children was excited to move into a new apartment building. Their neighbors were also young families, making for a friendly atmosphere. The Gold family lived on the ground floor, and the Silver family had just moved in upstairs. The two families got along well, with their kids playing together as they grew.

As time went on, the Silver family started to have a lot of success. They married off their children one after another, celebrating many simchas. Meanwhile, the Gold family faced struggles; none of their kids seemed to find matches. While the Silvers celebrated, the Golds felt left out and discouraged.

Despite their friendly relationship, Mr. Gold began to feel jealous. He thought, “Why are they so lucky while we’re struggling?” This jealousy created a rift between the two families, even though Mr. Silver hadn’t done anything wrong.

One day, Mr. Silver knocked on Mr. Gold’s door. “Shalom Aleichem,” he said. Mr. Gold braced himself for another announcement of good news. Instead, Mr. Silver said, “I’m here to ask for a favor. We want to extend our apartment, and I need your permission. The extension will block some of your sunlight.”

Mr. Gold felt annoyed. “You want me to give up my sunlight for you?” he thought. However, after discussing it with his wife, she suggested, “Maybe we should let them build. It’s not their fault they’re doing well. Let’s have a good eye and see if that brings us joy.”

Taking her advice, Mr. Gold agreed. He went back upstairs and said, “Yes, you can build.” Mr. Silver was grateful. “Thank you! This will make a big difference for us. You should be blessed in your home.”

Then Mr. Silver added, “I have one more request. We’ll need to go through your apartment to access the upstairs area during construction.” Mr. Gold felt a new wave of irritation but agreed. “Okay.”

When construction started, the sounds of hammers and drills filled the Gold family’s home daily for over five weeks. Mr. Gold chose to stay quiet, accepting the noise for the sake of his neighbor’s happiness.

Three weeks later, Mr. Gold’s eldest daughter got engaged, marking their first simcha in years. During the celebration, Mr. Gold spoke with his son-in-law’s father, who shared, “You know, I made just one phone call for this shidduch.”

Curious, Mr. Gold asked who it was. “I called a contractor friend who built in your building. He mentioned how you allowed his workers to walk through your apartment. That made a big impression on me. I thought, ‘Someone like that is who I want for my child.’”

When we break our nature and transcend beyond what we think we are capable of, extending ourselves for the well-being and benefit of others, Hashem takes note. And then He looks down upon us and considers all the ways He could shower us too with blessing and benefit. Going outside of ourselves for others doesn't just make a difference here. It makes a difference all way the way to Heaven.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Nitzavim 5784 edition of the Torahanytimes Newsletter.*

**Highlights of the 2025 Labor Day Hakhel Event**

**By Daniel Keren**

  

**From left to right: Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Rabbi Elya Brudny, Rabbi Meyer Yedid and Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff**

Many men and women took advantage of the Labor Day legal holiday to participate in the Flatbush Hakehl Yarchei Kallah Event held in the Agudath Israel of Madison shul. Hakhel is an organization dedicated to promoting a greater awareness of Torah-true values in our community. The inspiring program was sponsored by both the Mandel and Pomerantz families in memory of Liba bas Reuven, a”h, R; Chaim Uri ben Menachem, a”h, Rishka bas Mendel, a”h, and Meir Yakov ben Yehoshua, a”h.

The program began with a lecture delivered by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, mora d’asra of the host shul who spoke on the topic of “Hoshea Wrote the Shuva Haftorah,” part on an ongoing series of shiurim on Sefer Hoshea (Hosea), one of the books included in the Trei Asar, the Tanach book of the Minor Prophets.

Rabbi Reisman began by pointing out concerning the upcoming Yomim Noraim (the Days of Awe between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur,) the special Haftorah that we read on Shabbos Shuva, the Shabbos before Yom Kippur from the Perek Yud Daled (Chapter 14) begins with the words:

“Return, O ’Israel to the L-rd your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take words with yourselves and return to the L-rd. Say ‘You shall forgive all iniquity and teach us [the] good [way] and let us render [for] bulls [the offering of] our lips.” (14:2-3)

**The Uniqueness of Hoshea’s Prophecies**

This call to do teshuva (return to G-d in penitence), Rabbi Reisman declared is somewhat unique. Other naviim (prophets) gave calls to the Jewish people to do teshuvah and return to Hashem and the Jews they spoke to; their descendants are still around.

Hoshea, however was a navi whose prophecies were unique in that they were directed solely to the Jews of the Aseres Shevatim, the Ten Tribes that broke away the kingdom of Yehuda (the House of David) and this breakaway nation was unfortunately exiled and lost to history, with only a small segment of each tribe that joined the Kingdom of Yehuda and was thereby saved from spiritual destruction.

The Navi Hoshea call upon the Jews to do teshuva Yisroel. The Vilna Gaon interprets the second pasuk (verse) the Chapter Yud Daled that the Jews should abandon their sins.

Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) say about this Haftorah that Hashem declared to Reuven that you were the first to do teshuvah [regarding his sin of disturbing his father’s bed by moving it out of the tent of Bilha to the tent of his mother Leah.] But, Rabbi Reisman said, we know that Reuven really wasn’t the first to do teshuvah. We know that both Adam Harishon and Kayin did teshuvah.

**An Important Message from Rambam’s Hilchos Teshuva**

So, what was the uniqueness of Reuven’s teshuvah and the type of teshuvah that Hoshea was calling for the Jews to do. In Rambam’s Hilchos Teshuva there is, Rabbi Reisman explained a very important message. There are two types of teshuvah that are in a person’s mind. The first is that of an intellectual teshuva and the second is that of an emotional teshuvah. The important thing is however to bring one’s desire to do teshuvah and come closer to G-d into a maisah, a concrete action.

We read in the Sefer Iyuv (the Book of Job) that Hakodesh Baruch Hu asks the Satan if he has ever seen anyone as righteous as “my Iyuv.” The Satan responds if Hashem has actually ever challenged Iyuv to see if his life became difficult would he continue to still be righteous and have a strong connection and love of Hashem

From this, Rabbi Reisman said, we understand that even Hakodesh Baruch Hu’s testimony about the righteousness of Iyuv is not the same as the Olam Hamasai (the World of Action) and is not as important as a person like Iyuv actually doing the action of demonstrating his loyalty to Hashem.

**The Weakness of the Teshuvah of Ninevah**

Furthermore, Rabbi Reisman pointed out that we learn that in Sefer Yonah (the Book of Jonah) the teshuvah carried out by the inhabitants of Ninevah was that of an intellectual type of repentance, which was good enough to cause Hashem to temporarily rescind His decree to overturn the large city. However, since it was not a teshuvah done in the manner of b’maisa (a deed of action,) it was not long-lasting and eventually the inhabitants of Ninevah were destroyed.

Returning back to the teshuvah of Adam Harishon, it too was only of an intellectual manner and he never merited to return to Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden.) Reuven’s teshuvah on the other hand was in the nature of b’maisah. There was a rivalry between the offspring of Leah and the offspring of Rochel. Reuven was because of his sin [in moving his father’s bed to the tent of his mother] stripped by his father of the privileges that were to go to the first-born son.

Even though Reuven knew that Yosef, the son of Rochel was going to supplant as the first-born in the family, he took his teshuva to the higher realm of maisah by actively saving Yosef’s life by telling the other brothers to abandon their plan to kill Yosef. And that is why Chazal say Reuven was the first person to do teshuva [in the realm of action.]

Rabbi Reisman emphasized that Yiddishkeit is about actions, about doing positive acts that are sustainable. When a person does some good action, it has a beneficial effect on the doer and causes him to change into becoming a better person. The teshuva that Hoshea called upon the Jews to do is the same teshuvah of Reuven, that results in the commitment to follow through with a positive action – a teshuvah b’ maisah.

**Concrete Positive Action is an Extraordinary Challenge**

The thought of putting all the inspiration of these coming 40 days [from Rosh Chodesh Elul till Yom Kippur] into some concrete positive action is an extraordinary challenge. Hashem give us occasional moments of letting us know that He is aware of us. In those unique opportunities, it is for us to take the inspiration to the next level in carrying out our desire to come closer to Him and to do a proper teshuva b’maisah.

Rabbi Reisman concluded by challenging the audience to the timeless message of Hoshea, a tough navi whose prophecies are harsh rebukes. Don’t fail to take the inspiration of Elul [and Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, the special Ten Days of Teshuva] and bring them into maisah, positive deeds of action.

The second speaker at the Flatbush Labor Day Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Elya Brudny, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Mir Brooklyn who in his lecture focused on the topic of “Essential Lessons for this Elul.”

He began with Gemora in Rosh Hashana that expresses that all of the inhabitants of the universe pass by Hashem on this day like sheep. While this is happening, there is a global awakening amongst the billions of people.

**Recognizing the Severity of the Day of Yom Hadin**

The more a person is able to get into the mood of recognizing the severity of the day of Yom Hadin, the more this will benefit that individual. One should on this day rejoice because of his love for the Ribbono shel Olam and because we know that Hashem loves us.

This is a seeming contradiction, Rabbi Brudny pointed out. We have a fer of this day of judgement and yet simultaneously feel confident that we will be judged by Hakodesh Baruch Hu favorably [for life in the coming year.]

There is a Midrash in Parshas Emor that discusses a dispute between two parties that is brought before a court of justice. When they come out of the court, the person who was victorious communicates that fact by holding up high a lulav, a palm branch.

This is similar to the dispute on every Rosh Hashana. The Jews plead before Hakodesh Baruch Hu that we are being unfairly persecuted by the nations of the world. The non-Jews for their part argue before Hashem that He is being unfair by being partial to the Jew. Why this favoritism when most Jews in the world don’t even observe Hashem’s Torah mitzvahs? Yet, each and every Rosh Hashana, Hakodesh Baruch Hu still judges in favor of the Jews.

What is the avoda, service of Rosh Hashana, the first day of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva (the Ten Days of Teshuva that conclude with Yom Kippur.)? Rabbi Brudny answered that our service on this day is to really be zocheh (worthy) of achieving teshuvah.

**What is the Purpose of a Jew?**

Hashem created the world for a purpose – that mankind should recognize Him and serve Him and be subservient to Him. What is the purpose of a Jew and why are we Hashem’s favorite? What separates us from the rest of the human race to make us so special? We (Jews) have made a bris (covenant with G-d) based on our commitment to learn Hashem’s Torah and carry out His mitzvahs. If we recognize that we are being judged on our commitment to carrying out our bris, this is what is keeping the world in existence.

Half of the newspapers write about the “poor” Palestinians and the “wicked” Israelis (i.e. the Jews.) The Jews just 80 years after the end of the Holocaust are shamelessly besmirched, Rabbi Brudny said with the false claim of committing genocide. It is not just the savages in Africa that are saying these lies [in international courts of law,” but supposedly civilized countries [of the Western World] such as France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, etc. that are mouthing these shameless lies.

The Ribbono shel Olam should help us. On a deeper level we should rejoice in the knowledge that Hashem will on the basis of our teshuvah judge us favorable for the coming year.

**How to Achieve Teshuva from a Love of Hashem**

The third speaker at the Flatbush Labor Day Hakhel Event was Rabbi Meyer Yedid, mara d’asra of Congregation Shaare Zion and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Darchei Eretz. The topic of his inspiration lecture was “Teshuva Mei’Ahava is Within Your Reach.”

He began by noting that a general understanding of the concept of teshuva mei Ahava is that a person is making teshuva (repentance) out of a love for Hashem, rather than out of a fear of punishment.

In Shir Hashirim (the Song of Songs), a pasuk asks “What should we or can we do for our sister?” This refers to the day when everyone speaks about our sister – the Jewish people. This is a question not just for the Jewish people, but for each individual Jew as well.

This refers to the middos, our character traits. What should we do that this day (Rosh Hashana) should be one for rejoicing. Shlomo Hamelech says that we should build a wall of gold and that we should construct a door of wood.

What does it mean to be a wall or a door. A wall means that our values should be strong and permanent not just for the home, but also for the Beis Knesset, and for the office [where we work] or in the street.

What does a delet (door) mean? It symbolizes values that are not solid but change because of our desire to be popular with others or with members of our own family.

**Living in a World that Rejects Limitations**

Rabbi Yedid pointed out that we live in a world that doesn’t enjoy limitations. Although, we (as Jews) don’t live on the street, we are [unfortunately] affected by this atmosphere of the non-Jewish world that rejects limitations.

We find in the first story of Creation on day of the creation of Adam and Chava a most interesting concept. What was the first commandment that G-d gave the first human beings? The first thing Hashem commands them is not to eat from the fruit of a certain tree. How could that be Hashem’s first command?

The explanation is that the purpose of this creation is for us to live a life of enjoyment. Hashem wants us to live a life of Gan Eden, a world of pleasure. What are people doing – they are living for Gan Eden [the rewards of the next world.] We have, Rabbi Yedid said, to understand that in order to live in Gan Eden, we have to live within boundaries, limitations.

When you have a home that has boundaries, good values; than we can hope to regain [the pleasures] of the original Gan Eden [that mankind was expelled from.] Do we live with boundaries? Do we live with limitations from Hashem and appreciate them and love them? Because such lifestyle is the only way we can hope to reach and regain Gan Eden.

**Boundaries will Make Our Homes Secure and Protected**

Any person who is not strong like iron is not going to become a wise person. A person has to be strong and know which boundaries cannot be violated. With regards to relationships, we sometimes, Rabbi Yedid said, have to be soft. When we have boundaries, our homes will be secure and protected.

The fourth speaker at the Flatbush Labor Day Hakhel Event was Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff, rav of the Agudath Israel Bais Binyomin who offered insights on the topic of “Hashem’s Recent Moving Messages to Us: What We Need to Change.”

He began with a story about two childhood friends from the Kelm Talmud Torah. One day one of the friends runs into the Beis Medrash and tells the other friend about the story that had just occurred in the town’s market place. A Jew had asked a non-Jewish lumber merchant to deliver a load of lumber to his home and he would pay him upon receiving the wood. The non-Jew said he had to be paid in advance before he would bring over the lumber. The Jew was insulted and the two were about to get into a fight until another non-Jew ran up to the lumber merchant and told him – “This is the month of Elul before their holiday of Rosh Hashana. No Jew will do anything dishonest at this time. You can confidently deliver the lumber to this Jew confident that you will be paid promptly.”

**Rav Pappa’s Strong Question**

Rabbi Lieff declared that Elul is a time for us to find ourselves. Rav Pappa asks a strong question. What is a lost object not looking to be found. The answer is a person who has lost an envelope containing $50,000 in an unmarked envelope.

What is a lost object that is looking to be found? A shepherd trying to find a lost sheep and that sheep wants to be found by its shepherd. We are in these days of Elul like a lost sheep trying to be found by our Shepherd (Hashem.)

The yesod, foundation of Elul is to strengthen ourselves in Emunah to Hashem. Why do we recite L’David Hashem Uri during the entire month of Elul? We do so in order to strengthen ourselves in Emunah and to recognize that only Hashem can help us.

Rabbi Lieff spoke about Agam Berger, a hostage who was freed from Gaza. She recalled that every day she recited the Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. She not only said the Shema Yisroel, but she truly believe it. Every time she cried out Shema Yisroel, she was attaching herself to Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

**The Inspiration of the Brisker Rav**

When the Brisker Rav during the Second World War was trying to escape the Nazis (yemach shemam), he and his family had no passports or papers (visas). As they came to the border, there were the wicked Nazis soldiers who were barking out orders for people to show their papers. The Brisker Rav instructed his family to keep walking and thinking and saying to themselves – “Ain Od Milvado/There is no other (than Hashem.)” They passed the border without being stopped by the Nazis.

What is teshuva? According to the Rambam, yesterday the person was a disgusting abomination. And today after hearing the shofar (blown during the month of Elul) one who has been inspired to do teshuvah has come closer to Hashem and is now called by Hashem a yedid (a dear friend of Hashem.)



**Rabbi Maimon Elbaz**

Completing the Flatbush Labor Day Hakhel Event was an inspiring audio-visual presentation by Rabbi Maimon Elbaz, founder of Torah Shows titled “Turning Your Tefillah Around for Life.: How to Infuse Meaning, Special Simcha and Your Own Unique Geshmak into this Great Part of Your Day!”

*Reprinted from the September 11, 2025 edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Concise Guide to the High Holidays: 9 Short Insights**

**By aish.com**



***Not sure how to wrap your head around the High Holidays? Check out these insights, meditations, and tools to help you maximize this auspicious time.***

It's the Jewish new year, which starts with the High Holidays—[Rosh Hashanah](https://aish.com/how-to-celebrate-rosh-hashanah/) and [Yom Kippur](https://aish.com/yom-kippur/)—or what some call "the Days of Awe." Sounds boring? It shouldn't be. Put your emphasis on *awe*some as opposed to *aw*ful.

**1. What Is a Shofar and What Does It Have to Do with Rosh Hashanah?**

A [shofar](https://aish.com/revolutionary_shofar/) is a trumpet-like instrument that’s made by hollowing out, polishing, and shaping the horn of a ram. It’s blown on Rosh Hashanah, which is the first day of the Jewish year, and serves as a type of spiritual alarm clock. It reminds you that a new year is a new beginning, and that you need to wake up and think about your mission and purpose in life.

It also references the Torah reading that’s read in synagogues on Rosh Hashanah, which tells the story of the binding of Isaac. In that story, G-d told Abraham to offer up his son, Isaac, but at the last minute had him substitute a ram in his place. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his future for an ideal. Are you? And isn’t that something worth thinking about on the first day of the year?

**2. Why Dip an Apple in Honey?**

[Dipping an apple in honey](https://aish.com/why-dip-into-honey/) is a symbolic way of starting the year off on the right foot, and saying that this new year should be a sweet one.

But there’s a deeper reason, too.

The Biblical book, the Song of Songs, compares the Jewish people to apples: “Just like the apple is rare amongst the trees of the forest, so too is my beloved, Israel, rare amongst the maidens, or nations, of the world.” Being Jewish is special. Don’t take that for granted.

And honey—as in date honey, or silan—is descriptive of the abundance of the land of Israel, which the Torah calls “the land of milk and honey.”

In other words, dipping an apple in honey is more than just a fun mnemonic device, it’s a simple way for you—no matter where you live or what language you speak—to spend a minute thinking about your unique Jewish identity and ancestral homeland.

**3. Rosh Hashanah Is a Tool. Here’s How to Use It.**

The first day of the year is an opportunity for introspection and growth. Ask yourself these five questions to get in the zone:

What am I living for?

If I only had one year to live, what would I make sure to do?

If fear was no issue, what goal would I set out to accomplish?

What practical steps can I take to lead a healthier life?

What project or goal, if left undone, will I regret most not having accomplished next Rosh Hashanah?

At first glance, these questions are painfully simple, but try thinking about them anyway. It doesn’t take long to see that your aspirations and dreams are probably not in sync with your day-to-day. Rosh Hashanah is an opportunity to think about how you are going to change that.

**4. If You’re Going to Synagogue On Rosh Hashanah—Or Even If You Aren’t—Think About These Three Things**

The [Rosh Hashanah prayer service](https://aish.com/praying-on-rosh-hashanah-in-3-easy-steps/) is built around three themes: big picture clarity, accountability, and personal responsibility

Big Picture Clarity: called “Kingship,” this is a meditation on ethical monotheism (the idea that makes Judaism Jewish). Jews believe in one, omnipotent G-d, who created the world for your pleasure and benefit. The Torah—which translates as “instructions” in English—is your tool to enjoy it.

Accountability: called “remembrance,” your focus should be on what G-d remembers (which, obviously, is everything). Take stock of your failures and successes, and figure out what adjustments you need to make for the upcoming year.

Personal Responsibility: called “shofar,” your job is to internalize the message of listening to the shofar: wake up, get real, and put your plan into action.

**5. How The High Holidays Foster Positive Mental Health**

The High Holidays are a time for reflection, gaining perspective, taking responsibility, and committing to do better. They’re also an opportunity to gain self-awareness, to focus on spirituality, and to think about your interactions with other people.

This type of introspection is good for your mental health, as it helps you:

Clear your mind

Reduce stress

Increase feelings of optimism and hope

Strengthens relationships

The High Holidays are also experienced communally—whether you're going to synagogue, sharing meals with family and friends, or both—which creates a sense of belonging, social connection, community, and support.

**6. Don't Say "Sin," Say “Mistake”**

A major part of the Yom Kippur service is reading an exhaustive list of transgressions that starts, “For the sin…”

Although that translation isn’t accurate.

The better translation is, “For the mistake…”

The Hebrew word, *Het* (חטא), means “to miss the mark,” or “to be off,” or in other words, “a mistake.” Mistakes are manageable. You learn from mistakes. [You don’t learn from sin](https://aish.com/jews-dont-sin/), which implies a moral failing, or a rebellion against G-d.

You blew it. Figure out where you went wrong, make amends, and move on. Don’t wallow in the negativity or impotence of being a sinner.

**7. Don’t Wear Shoes on Yom Kippur**

In addition to fasting, you’re also not supposed to wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur. But there's a deep reason for that.

Mystically speaking, the shoe has the same relationship to the foot as the body does to the soul. Without shoes, your feet have nowhere to go, and without a body, your soul cannot connect to the physical world.

Stepping out of your shoes is, symbolically, like stepping out of your body. It's as if you're literally striving for transcendence.

In the Torah (in the book of Exodus), when Moses stumbles upon the burning bush, the very first thing G-d says is, "Take off your shoes,” because true spirituality is impossible without first quieting the desires and needs of the body.

That’s what you’re trying to do on Yom Kippur, too, and not wearing shoes—in addition to fasting and prayer—are powerful tools to help stay focused on the power of the day.

**8. Make a Plan for Growth**

A resolution isn’t a wish. Do these f[ive things to transform your next year](https://aish.com/10-questions-to-ask-yourself-this-rosh-hashanah/):

Set Goals: a clear target propels you to reach it

Take Responsibility: no one else can do the work on your behalf

Get Clarity: you can’t change if you’re not sure what you want to achieve

Take An Accounting: review your goals, check your plan, measure your progress, and adjust

Strategize: develop an approach to meet your challenges and to reach your goals

**9. The High Holidays Start and End with a Shofar**

At the very end of Yom Kippur, after a full day of fasting and prayer, someone blows a shofar, and that signifies the end of the day (and that it’s time to eat).

On a simple level, the shofar blast is a kind of celebration, indicating that you've hopefully internalized the lessons of the day, and that you're committed to living a more realized, better version of you.

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**Why No Nuts onRosh Hashanah?**

**And which nuts are included?**

**By Rabbi** [**Yehuda Shurpin**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/15169/jewish/Shurpin-Yehuda.htm)



**There is a custom, mainly among Ashkenazic Jewry, to refrain from eating nuts on**[**Rosh Hashanah**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4644/jewish/Rosh-Hashanah-2025.htm)**. There are different reasons given for this custom, each impacting the parameters of what (and when) exactly we refrain from eating.**

**Praying Properly**

One reason given is that nuts tend to increase saliva and phlegm, making prayer difficult. Since we do a lot more praying on Rosh Hashanah, combined with the importance of taking extra care on this day that our words are enunciated clearly, we avoid eating nuts.[1](javascript:doFootnote('1a746604');)

**Keeping Away From Sin**

A more mystical reason given is that the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word for "nut," אגוז (*egoz*), is 17. Seventeen is also the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word for “sin,” חט (*chet*), not as it's properly spelled, but as it’s pronounced. We stay far away from anything reminiscent of sin on Rosh Hashanah, nuts included.[2](javascript:doFootnote('2a746604');)

On [Rosh Hashanah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4644/jewish/Rosh-Hashanah-2025.htm), which is the day man was created and ultimately sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, we are extra careful both in eating symbolic foods with auspicious allusions and by avoiding those with negative connotations.[3](javascript:doFootnote('3a746604');)

**Additional Reasons**

Although the reasons cited above are the two classic reasons given, there are some additional reasons given as well.

Some explain that when nut trees are planted, their roots shouldn’t be covered, as it is not good for the plant, and likewise, we generally shouldn’t cover our sins. Nevertheless, on Rosh Hashanah itself, we specifically cover our sins (and we omit confession from prayer, etc.); therefore, we refrain from eating nuts.[4](javascript:doFootnote('4a746604');)

Additionally, some explain that a nut reminds us of our situation in exile. Just as a nut doesn’t get dirty when rolled in the dirt, as it is protected by its hard shell, so, too, during exile, our outsides may get dirty, but our insides, our souls, remain pure. Since nuts remind us of the exile, something negative, we refrain from eating them on Rosh Hashanah.[5](javascript:doFootnote('5a746604');)

**What Is a ‘Nut’? And When Not to Eat?**

Rabbi Moshe Isserles (the Rama), in his gloss to the *Code of Jewish Law*, writes that the custom is not to eat *egozim,*commonly translated as “walnuts.” Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, in his *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, writes that the custom is also not to eat *luzim*, which he defines as small *egozim* and is commonly translated as “hazelnuts.”

Rabbi Moshe Isserles cites the idea that the word *egoz*equals*chet*as the first and main reason to refrain from nuts, while Rabbi Schneur Zalman, in his [*Shulchan Aruch Harav*](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2087395/jewish/What-Is-Shulchan-Aruch-Harav-and-Why-Was-It-Necessary.htm), only quotes the reason that it increases saliva and phlegm, implying that this is the main reason for the custom.

Commentaries explain that if the reason for refraining from eating nuts is that *egoz* equals *chet*, then only actual *egozim*(walnuts) would be included in the custom. However, if the reason is not to increase saliva and phlegm, then it wouldn’t be restricted to just *egozim*, but other nuts (and nut-like foods such as peanuts[6](javascript:doFootnote('6a746604');)) as well.[7](javascript:doFootnote('7a746604');)

On the flip side, there are those who refrain from eating nuts until Sukkot or even Simchat Torah. This custom is based on *egoz* equalling the word *chet*. (Our judgments aren’t fully signed and sealed until the end of [Sukkot](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4126/jewish/Sukkot-2025.htm), so they refrain from eating these foods until then.) Thus, the custom would only apply to *egozim*.

While some are lenient (according to both reasons) regarding nuts that were baked into a cake and aren’t so recognizable, others have the custom to refrain from that on Rosh Hashanah as well.[8](javascript:doFootnote('8a746604');)

**Wait! Isn’t Egoz Also “Tov,” “Good”!?**

Before we can end this article, there is a glaring question that needs to be cleared up.

If you know a bit of Hebrew, you know that the word אגוז (*egoz*), “nut,” is also the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word טוב (*tov*), “good” (both equalling 17). So why do we assume that nuts are related to the word *chet*, “sin,” and refrain from eating them, instead of saying that they are related to the word *tov* and eat them like the other symbolic foods?!

Strangely enough, we can find the answer in a note that was inserted into many editions of Rashi's commentary on the Book of Isaiah.[9](javascript:doFootnote('9a746604');) The author of the note writes that he asked many scholars this very question, and he gives the following answer based on the verse in [Genesis 2:17](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8166/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#v17), “But of the [Tree of Knowledge](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/course_cdo/aid/3679037/jewish/Eden-Decoded.htm) of Good and Evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die.” The Zohar expounds on this verse to teach that one should avoid even good that is mixed with bad. Therefore, the author explains, although *egoz*equals *tov*, “good,” it also equals *chet*, “sin,” which means that it has a mixture of good and bad, and one should try to avoid even the good that is mixed in with the bad (and is not pure good) on Rosh Hashanah.

Interestingly enough, Rabbi Moshe Isserles, in his gloss to the *Shulchan Aruch*,[10](javascript:doFootnote('10a746604');) citing the Maharil (Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin, who is the source for the above-cited reason for not eating nuts on Rosh Hashanah), writes that it was the custom for children to play with nuts on Yom Kippur!

Commentaries[11](javascript:doFootnote('11a746604');) reconcile this and explain that [Yom Kippur](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4687/jewish/Yom-Kippur-2025.htm) is a day of atonement and forgiveness (as opposed to Rosh Hashanah, which is more a day of judgment). It is a day on which G‑d transforms our sins—with proper *teshuvah*—into merits. Therefore, on this day, the *chet*, “sin,” (of *egoz*) is transformed into *tov*, “good,” so *egoz* only equals *tov*! Therefore, it was the custom to give the children nuts to play with on Yom Kippur.

May all our sins be converted to only pure good, and may we all be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy and healthy, sweet new year!

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