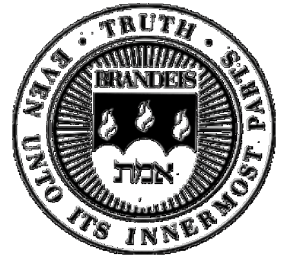




תורת אמת



A Weekly Brandeis Orthodox Organization Publication

1 Tishrei 5770 / 19 September 2009 Vol. XI Issue 4

ROSH HASHANA

Candle-lighting day 1: 6:33 pm
Candle-lighting day 2: 7:29 pm
Shacharit: 8:30 am (both days)
Sof Kriat Shema: **9:33** am
Sof Zman Tefilla: 10:35 am
Mincha 6:05 pm (both days)
Shkia day 1: 6:47 pm
Shkia day 2: 6:45 pm
Rosh Hashana ends: 7:27 pm
Slichot: 12 am
Tzom Gedalia begins: 5:19 am
Tzom Gedalia ends: 7:26 pm

Rosh Hashana in a Box

Day 1:

- Yitzchak is born and is given a *brit milah*
- Sarah wants Hagar and her son Yishmael to leave
- Hashem tells Avraham that He will make Yishmael into a nation
- Hagar and Yishmael are sent away
- Avimelech and Avraham make a covenant

Day 2:

- Hashem tests Avraham
- Hashem tells Avraham to give his son Yitzchak as an offering
- Avraham listens to Hashem
- Is about to sacrifice Yitzchak
- And an angel of Hashem tells him not to
- Avraham sacrifices a ram instead
- Hashem tells Avraham that He will greatly increase Avraham's children

whoohoo! that's us!

Name Change

By Rabbi Kaplowitz

As we prepare to enter the *yamim nora'im* (high holidays), our efforts of *Teshuvah* (repentance) grow more intense. Much of our thinking about *Teshuvah* is influenced by the Rambam's writings in *Hilchot Teshuvah*. The Rambam puts forth a challenging model of *Teshuvah*. Describing the proper way to do *teshuvah*, he writes in 2:4:

He/She should change his/her name, as if to say, "I am another, and I am not the same person who did those acts." He/she should also change his/her actions for the better, to a straight path, and be exiled from his/her place, for exile atones sin -- bringing a person to submission, modesty and humility of spirit.

I have always been troubled by this model of *teshuvah* because it implies that in order to do sincere and proper repentance we must radically break from our past. This radical departure is best signified by the insistence that the *ba'al teshuvah* change his/her name. While this model of *teshuvah* works for some people, it is not a model that resonates with many in our community.

There are other models of *teshuvah* that resonate more strongly with me. Many writers note that the word *teshuvah* means to return. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that "*Teshuvah*, repentance, signifies circular motion." We should therefore see ourselves as though we are standing on the circumference of a large circle. Even though it feels like the starting point gets farther and father with each step that we take, in truth each step brings us closer to our point of origin. Thus, the Rav writes:

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued on page 3)

Lugubrious Chag Sameach!

(Isn't Lugubrious Fun to Say?)

By Chaya Bender '11

Lugubrious (lu-gu-bri-ous) adjective—mournful, dismal, or gloomy, esp. in an affected, exaggerated, or unrelieved manner: lugubrious songs of lost love. Synonyms: sorrowful, melancholy. Antonyms: cheerful.

In Sunday School, students learn about *chagim* by doing various art projects. On *Rosh Hashana*, the table of every proud parent is filled with pipe-cleaner bees attached to apple-shaped cards. It is by this method that school children are able to begin to work the complexities of the *chagim* into their own framework. School children learn to grasp the gravity of *Yom Kippur* by making their own *machzor* and singing songs about fasting. The art-project-to-holiday-severity-ratio, from the view point of a student, is of a decreasing nature. The less projects one makes, the more serious the holiday. For example, there are no Tisha b'Av flower chains made in Sunday School. Using this highly regarded scientific art-project-to-holiday-severity-ratio, it would seem that *Rosh Hashana* is a joyous holiday with light-hearted themes. If you plug in the various art projects (*shofar* cookies, apple trees with pom poms, interactive *tashlich* ponds, etc.) to the equation, *Rosh Hashana* is pretty low on the art-project-to-holiday-severity-ratio.

This childhood notion could not be farther from the reality that Jewish adults experience every year. After all of the glitter has decayed from our projects of old, we see the true lugubrious themes of *Rosh Hashana*. Realistically speaking, this holiday marks the time of the year when our cases are being pleaded before the Crown. During the month

(Chaya Bender continued on page 3)

The Sound of Silence

By Aviva Zadoff '10

The holiday of *Rosh Hashana* has many laws and customs, but there is only one *mitzvah* given in the Torah which is specific to *Rosh Hashana*, the *mitzvah* of *shofar*. In *Bamidbar* 29:1 it calls *Rosh Hashana* a “*yom truah*,” and in *Vayikra* 23:24 it is called “*zichron letruah*.” The *shofar* is the integral part of our *Rosh Hashana* observance. And yet when *Rosh Hashana* falls on *Shabbat*, as is the case this year, we don't blow the *shofar*. We are told the reason we do not blow the *shofar* on *Shabbat* is that one might come to carry the *shofar* to take it to a teacher for practice. But if the crux of the meaning of the holiday is in the *shofar* how is it that we so quickly put it aside, and what is the holiday supposed to mean to us, how are we to observe it properly without having the *shofar*.

Both the *Talmud Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli* try to find the source of why we don't blow the *shofar* on *Shabbat*. In the *Yerushalmi* in *Rosh Hashana* 4:1 they explain that the two commandments in the Torah to hear and to remember the blowing of the *shofar* are correlated whether it is a weekday (where we hear the *shofar* being blown) or on *Shabbat* (where we remember the *shofar* being blown). The *Yerushalmi* then concludes that it is in fact a Torah commandment to refrain from blowing the *shofar* on *Shabbat*. The *Bavli*, however, rejects the attempt to say that it is a Torah prohibition and rules that it is a Rabbinic prohibition, and that because everyone is obligated in *shofar* but not everyone is expert in blowing it, one might carry the *shofar* in public more than 4 *amot* to take it to a teacher (this is the same reason we don't take the *lulav* on *Shabbat* or read *megilla*).

But it is agreed by all that in the *Beit Hamikdash* we blow *shofar* on *Shabbat*. So why do we seem to so quickly get out of the *mitzvah*? Being that this is the one *mitzvah* we are Biblically commanded to do on *Rosh Hashana*, we seem to be very willing to not do it.

In discussion of this *gezeirah* against the *shofar* on *Shabbat* there are comparisons to a *brit milah* that needs to be done on *Shabbat*. In that case a person could very well come to carry but we still do it on *Shabbat* (ask Sam and Reelee). The answer given by the Ran is that in the *brit milah* case an individual is responsible for it, and so if they forget to do it on *Shabbat* someone will be able to remind them, but *shofar* is a communal *mitzvah* and if we all forget then it is not likely to be remembered. The Ritva says that the cases are different because the *gezeirah* of not carrying added to the fact that it is possible to be observing *Rosh Hashana* on the wrong day makes the restriction of blowing *shofar* on *Shabbat* more understandable. With the case of *brit milah* it is assured it is on the 8th day, when the *mitzvah* is meant to happen.

So then what is *Rosh Hashana* without *shofar*? How can we go about fully observing *Rosh Hashana* by not observing the *mitzvah* of *shofar*?

Personally I believe the key is in the very commandment of the *mitzvah*. We are told to hear the *shofar* but we

are also told to remember the *shofar*. Even without blowing the *shofar*, it is still part of the holiday - we still use it as an inspiration. We still reference the *shofar* in our *tefillah* and in our observance of *Rosh Hashana*. The point of *shofar* is to remind us of *teshuva*, which we still are reminded of in our obligation to remember the *shofar* and its lesson. So there seems to be no *Rosh Hashana* without *shofar*, but even without those powerful blasts, the message of the *shofar* is still heard loud and clear.

Aviva is Hannah Montana's biggest fan.

*Her room looks like a twelve year old girl lives there—
plastered with Hannah Montana posters!*

Are You Worthy?

By Eitan Mosenkis '13

Credit: Rebbe Sholom Noach Berezovsky Z"l, author of *Netivot Shalom* and Alyssa Moore my *chevruta* for *Netivot Shalom*

The first Slonimer rebbe relates the following parable: There was a king who founded a state in order to reveal his kingship upon it and to do great kindnesses with its inhabitants, etc. He designated one day each year in which he would examine the people of his state and their deeds in order to see if they are worthy of his efforts. On the appointed day, a great fear came upon all the people, lest the king, upon examination, regret the state he established. Therefore, the people contemplated the root of the king's intentions in founding and building the country, and they accepted upon themselves from that day on to carry out all of their tasks for the purpose of those intentions. In this way, they caused the king to renew his will to uphold his state.

Rebbe Sholom Noach Berezovsky Z"l explains in *Netivot Shalom* that Hashem looks down on creation every *Rosh Hashana* and decides for each man, creature, and inanimate object, whether it is fulfilling the purpose for which it was created, or whether it is failing to do so and should therefore no longer exist in the world. While Hashem may judge us for our actions year round and reward or punish us accordingly, it is on *Rosh Hashana* that He looks at us as a whole and decides whether we merit to continue living. So too, Hashem looks at the world as a whole and determines whether it is fulfilling the holy purpose of creation. It is incumbent upon each of us to see ourselves as standing on the edge between life and death and even further, to see the world as balancing on that same edge with our merits the deciding factor.

Why then, is *Rosh Hashana*, which seems of such grave significance, a joyous day of feasting? Rebbe Sholom Noach tells us that *Rosh Hashana* carries with it not only the possibility of either being judged for death or for life, but also the possibility for life. We have the opportunity to renew our relationship with Hashem, and by our cleaving to Him, to be cleansed of our sins and start the new year completely free of our past mistakes.

לשנה טובה תכתובו ותחתמו

*Eitan used to put dogs in the toilet.
Or does he STILL do that?*

M O D A O T

- **Get Ready for Shana 5770** Happy New Year everybody! Have a happy, sweet Rosh Hashana!
- **Sponsor Kiddush!** Talk to Mimi to sponsor a BOO Kiddush for your very own special event!
- **Love Leining?** Interested in leining your Bar Mitzvah Parasha? Please contact new Gabbai Shlishi, Liora Mendelsberg at booleining@gmail.com. Make sure to specify which Parasha you would like to lein.
- **Shana Tova!**

(Rabbi Kaplowitz continued from page 1)

An individual Jew cannot sever himself completely from the Holy One. The community of Israel cannot travel on a straight path away from G-d. It is always on the path to return and repentance -- of going away from G-d and coming back to Him... The circle may be very large, it may have an immense radius, but those who follow its path always move in a circular direction. The community of Israel simply cannot escape from this circular route. G-d who is there after man sins bars them from doing so. (On Repentance, 90)

In this understanding of *teshuvah*, there is no need for a radical departure from our past because *teshuvah* is a return to our original connectedness with Hashem. It is not something foreign to us, but something at the core of who we are. We do not require a break from our past but a re-discovery and reclamation of it. Abraham Joshua Heschel writes in his book *God in Search of Man*, "We do not have to discover the world of faith; we only have to recover it. **It is not a *terra incognita*, an unknown land; it is a forgotten land**" (141).

Heschel adds one more element in our thinking about *teshuvah*. In addition to meaning "return" the word *teshuvah* also means "answer." As he so beautifully writes, "Return to G-d is an answer to Him. For G-d is not silent." Our first step in the *teshuvah* process is to sensitize ourselves to hear the voice of G-d calling. Only then can we respond in whichever way we deem appropriate. Wishing you a *shana tova* and a *ketivah ve-chatimah tova*.

Rabbi Kaplowitz Fun Fact: Rabbi Kaplowitz came up with the Beatles hit "Yellow Submarine."

(Chaya Bender continued from page 1)

of *Elul*, we take the time for introspection and stock taking and to review the deeds and spiritual progress that we have made over the past year. Chassidic master Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi likens the month of *Elul* to a time when "the king is in the field" and, in contrast to when he is in the royal palace, "everyone who so desires is permitted to meet him, and he receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all." What happens to those of us whom have not reached their full potential? What happens to those of us whom have not made spiritual progress? What happens to those who have not taken advantage of seeking out the King while he was most accessible to us? Are we doomed?! No, we are not doomed. Actually, this lugubrious notion could not be farther from the reality that Jewish adults experience every year. We read in our *machzor* on *Rosh Hashana* that '*Hashem ori v'yishui*,' 'Hashem is my light and my salvation.' It is explained in the *Midrash* that the word '*ori*,' or 'my light,' refers to *Rosh Hashana*, while the word '*yishui*,' or 'my salvation,' refers to *Yom Kippur*. This *midrash* is further explained by Rabbi Shach. On *Rosh Hashana* itself, the Day of Judgment, one has a very clear understanding of oneself. The faults and misgivings from the entire year that had before fallen through the cracks of the subconscious tend to resurface during this awesome Day of Judgment. It is in this was that one's inner self is 'illuminated.' It is when one stands in prayer and declares over and over again the Hashem is the King of the world and that He judges us on *Rosh Hashana* that we are forced to examine of spiritual status. Finally, with this clarity, we are able to change our ways and attain atonement on *Yom Kippur*, the true time of our 'salvation.'

With this in mind, let it be known that *Rosh Hashana* is not lugubrious (even though it is quite a fun word to say). Let us instead use the antonym of lugubrious: cheery. So, take out those worn out honey dishes that you made in the basement of Temple Beth Shalom and celebrate the wonders of *Rosh Hashana*. As it says in the *mishnah* at the end of Tractate *Yoma*, "Privileged are you, *Yisrael!*" May we all see the merits that we are granted this *Yom Tov* and all year long, and may we all have a *Shana Tova U'Metukah*.

Chaya is a one woman band: she plays guitar, keyboard and sings a capella!

SHORT VORTS

Relating to G-d

By Avi Snyder '13

What is the Jewish paradigm for how man ought to relate to G-d? This seems like a rather prescient question to ask as we approach the *Yamim Noraim*. After all, how are we to do *teshuva*, to return to G-d, if we don't know how to relate to Him in the first place?

Rabbi Dr. David Hartman of the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem proposes that we learn how we ought to relate to G-d from none other than the first Jew, *Avraham Avinu*. Rabbi Dr. Hartman observes that Avraham presents us with two contradictory paradigms. The first paradigm is that of Avraham arguing with G-d over the fate of *Sodom*. Avraham relates to G-d as an equal. As an equal, he can argue with G-d; he can question G-d's good judgment; he can even go so far as to call G-d out for being immoral. The Jew who relates to G-d with this paradigm is a questioning, challenging Jew. Although he implicitly accepts G-d's authority (otherwise, why would he feel the need to engage with G-d), that authority isn't accepted lying down.

The other paradigm, according to Rabbi Hartman, is that of Avraham at the *Akeidah*. Avraham's relationship to G-d during the *Akeidah* is characterized by absolute submission to the Divine will. G-d is not second guessed, even though His command seems not only immoral, but also demands the ultimate sacrifice from Avraham. G-d is accepted as absolute sovereign and King. The job of man is to accept the decree of the King with love.

Rabbi Dr. Hartman proposes that the paradigm Jews use to relate to G-d be that of Avraham arguing with G-d about *Sodom*. I would respectfully disagree and posit that there are times to relate to G-d as if we were equals with Him, and there are times when we must be Avraham at the *Akeidah* and unconditionally accept the sovereignty of the Almighty.

The *Yamim Noraim* are a time to be Avraham at the *Akeidah*. The first words the *shaliach tzibbur* for *Mussaf* on *Rosh Hashana* says is "Hamelech," "The King." The *Yamim Noraim* are the time where we "coronate" G-d, so to speak; they are the time when we accept the unchallenged kingship of the Almighty. This is the most effective way to begin the process of *teshuva*. In order to truly repent, to truly return to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, we need to humble ourselves before Him. Yes, we are created in the Divine image, but *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* are the time to remember that we were created from dust and will return to dust. Yes, we ought to question and challenge G-d, but in order to do *teshuva* we must acknowledge that at the end of the day His will reigns supreme.

College is a time of questioning. It's a time for each of us to discover ourselves and in that process to challenge that which we have learned from our parents, from our teachers, even from our G-d. And there is nothing wrong with boldly questioning G-d as *Avraham Avinu* himself did. But The *Yamim Noraim* ought to be a time not to challenge G-d, but to renew our faith in Him and his sovereignty over the world.

This *Rosh Hashana*, let us take a step back and stop questioning for a bit. Let us take some time and renew our faith, for only then will we be able to return to G-d with a full heart.

"Avi Snyder was my pre-frosh!!" -Rafi Kaufman

Knocking on G-d's Door

By Anna Hutt Fredman

(The following *dvar torah* was something I learned with Elisha this past Shabbat so it is really from both of us.)

Slichot, as we have experienced every night this week, can be a particularly difficult tradition to fulfill. The words of the *pi-yutim* are often unfamiliar, the late hour makes us tired, and the stress of the upcoming Judgment Day is emotionally draining.

In the *Hegryonei Halacha*, Rav Yitzchak Mirsky writes about *slichot* and draws attention to an oddity in one of the opening paragraphs we say every night, immediately following *Ashrei* and *Kaddish*. Two verses read:

“לא בחסד ולא במעשים באנו לפניך, כדלים וכרשים דפקנו
דלתך. דלתך דפקנו רחום וחנון. נא אל תשיבנו ריקם
מלפניך.”

“We have not come before you with (deeds of) kindness and good behavior. As destitute and poor people we knock at Your door. At Your door we knock, Compassionate and Gracious (G-d). Do not turn us away empty-handed from before you.”

The *Hegryonei Halacha* asks: Why do we repeat ourselves back-to-back? Why say “ – דפקנו דלתך דלתך דפקנו at Your door; at Your door we knock?” Are we not saying the same thing twice?

The answer, according to Rav Mirsky, is that the two instances of “we knock at Your door” have very different meanings. The first instance is one of shame, connected to the statement that we are destitute and poor – we are admitting to Hashem the lowly place from which we ask for His forgiveness. But the second “we knock at your door” is said with a note of confidence, connected to the request that He not turn us away empty-handed. In effect, the two similar utterances build off of each other. The first one admits our humility; the second one respectfully demands that, because of this very humility, Hashem hear us and answer us. When we utter these two verses in succession, we are saying, “We are coming to You without merits. But the fact that we are coming despite our situation should be seen as a merit in itself. For this reason, do not turn us away!”

So, even though it is easy to feel destitute in the spiritual sense as we approach an hour of nighttime *slichot* or a day filled with prayer on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, we should remember that the fact that we are there, asking G-d for forgiveness despite our situation, is meritorious in itself.
Shana Tova and Gmar Chatima Tova!

We finally spelled Anna's name right!

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