

OHRNET

VAYELECH TISHREI 5, SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

• VOL 33 NO. 1

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

A Little Bit of Moshe

“And Moshe went...” (31:1)

At the Sixth Zionist Congress at Basel on August 26, 1903, Theodore Herzl proposed an idea that Uganda should be a temporary refuge for Russian Jews. The Russian delegation stormed out of the conference chamber in fury. These delegates were by no means deeply religious individuals, but it was self-evident to them that this compromise might spell the end of a Jewish State in Palestine; instinctively they knew that the only place that the State of Israel could be established was in The Land of Israel.

At the beginning of Parshat Va’etchanan, G-d tells Moshe, “Ascend to the top of the cliff, and raise your eyes westward and northward, southward and eastward and see with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan River.”

Imagine how Moshe felt as he stood on top of that cliff, gazing out over the land that he longed to enter. The Land of Israel stretched out in front of him like a map.

So close.

G-d knew how much Moshe wanted to go into Eretz Yisrael, so why did He “tantalize” him in this way?

Each of the *Avot*, the Patriarchs, is associated with a specific quality: Avraham with *chesed*, kindness; Yitzchak with *gevurah*, self-control; Yaakov with *tiferes*, beauty. The quality associated with Moshe is *netzach*, eternity.

Everything that Moshe did was forever.

It was for this reason that Hashem gave the Torah through Moshe—because the Torah is eternal. Had Moshe entered the Land of Israel with the Jewish people, their entry would have been an “eternal entry”, after such an entry, the Jewish people could never again leave the land; but Hashem knew that the Jewish people would have to be exiled because they would not be able to maintain the high spiritual standards that the Land demands.

If they couldn't leave, and they couldn't stay, they would be caught, as it were, in a spiritual vise, and they would face the danger of annihilation.

It was for this reason that Moshe could not enter Eretz Yisrael. But Hashem wasn't tantalizing Moshe: that feeling of longing that Moshe had when he stood on that cliff gazing into the Land, that feeling entered the collective consciousness of the Jewish People for all time, so that even those delegates at the Zionist conference in Basle thousands of years later knew instinctively that only place that the State of Israel could be was in the Land of Israel.

"And Moshe went..."

The verse doesn't tell us where Moshe went. The spiritual masters tell that Moshe 'went' into the heart of every Jew in every generation in every place. A little bit of Moshe Rabbeinu in the heart of every Jew longs for the Land.

Throughout our long, long night of exile, the Jewish people have never lost that same longing for Eretz Yisrael that Moshe felt when he stood on the top of the cliff and gazed upon the land that he was not to enter.

YOM KIPPUR YIDDLE RIDDLE

Question: On one historic Yom Kippur, the entire Jewish people ate and drank and were praised for it by Hashem. When did this occur?

Answer: When King Solomon built the Temple, Yom Kippur occurred during its seven Inauguration Days. The Sanhedrin decided that not only must the Inauguration Sacrifices for the Temple be offered, but, moreover, the people must cook, eat, and drink on Yom Kippur or else the happiness of the Inauguration would be incomplete. (See Tractate Mo'ed Katan 9a.)

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KRIAT SHEMA AL HAMITAH (PART 25)

“The amount of sleep required by the average person is five minutes more.”

Wilson Mizener – American Playwright

Kriat Shema al Hamitah continues:

A song of ascents. Praiseworthy is everyone who fears Hashem, who walks in His paths. When you eat the labor of your hands, you are fortunate and it is well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the inner chambers of your home, your children like olive shoots surrounding your table. Behold! So shall be blessed the man who fears Hashem. May Hashem bless you from Tzion and may you gaze upon the good of Yerushalayim all the days of your life. And may you see children born to your children, peace upon Israel. (Tehillim 128)

Rabbi Moshe Met (1550-1605) was the Rabbi of several prestigious communities in Galicia and Poland. He was considered one of the greatest Halachic authorities in his generation. He authored numerous scholarly works, the most famous of which is “*Mateh Moshe*”, a compendium of Halachic rulings and *Mussar* discourses. In *Mateh Moshe*, Rabbi Met explains that the reason we recite Psalm 128 before we go to sleep at night is because it mentions vines and olive shoots. Our Sages teach (*Brachot* 57a) that both vines and olive shoots seen in a dream are considered favorable omens, bringing the dreamer manifold blessings.

Midrash Tanchuma explains that the verse “*When you eat the labor of your hands, you are fortunate and it is well with you*” teaches us that to build a lasting relationship with Hashem, we must not rely on miracles or on *zechut avot* – the merits of our ancestors; rather each person should toil, using the tools that Hashem has bestowed upon them, and then Hashem will bless them with success in their spiritual endeavors.

The chapter ends with the poignant and evocative words “*And may you see children born to your children, peace be upon Israel.*” We live in truly miraculous times. Growing up I would estimate that at least half of my class did not have grandparents at all. And, yet, *Baruch Hashem*, our generation lives the words of this psalm! I was once at a wedding when a distinguished Rabbi who I was extremely close to, a scholar of renown, was informed of the birth of his first great-grandchild. He burst into tears and couldn’t stop crying for several minutes. I had never seen him lose control of his emotions like that and when he finally composed himself, I asked him what had moved him so much. He told me that his father was not even forty when he passed away and he did not merit to see even one of his children under the Chuppah. And, now, here he was, having married off all of his children and some of his grandchildren, witnessing the establishment of a yet another generation. “It’s a miracle!” he kept repeating and shaking his head in disbelief at how blessed he was.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch writes that this beautiful chapter of Tehillim is a description of how a Jewish home should look: A home founded on *Yirat Hashem*, surrounded by children and grandchildren following in the path of their forefathers; a home that is a wellspring of *nachat* for our Father in Heaven. It is truly a beautiful depiction. A depiction that cannot occur without the grandiose dreams and aspirations that Jewish parents have for their children.

I read a very moving story about a Shabbat visit that Rabbi Yerucham Olshin, the venerated Rosh Yeshivah of the famed Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, made to Queens. At the reception in his honor on Friday night, a young boy made his way into the crowded room. He approached the head table and extended his hand to Rabbi Olshin. Rabbi Olshin gently took the child's hand and spoke with him for a few moments. And then, to the surprise of those present, the Rosh Yeshivah got up and left together with the boy. A short while later Rabbi Olshin returned alone. It transpired that Rabbi Olshin had asked the young boy where he learned. The boy told him that he travelled every day to a *cheder* in Brooklyn. Rabbi Olshin then asked him how he got from Queens to Brooklyn each day, and the boy told him that his mother drove him. The boy then mentioned that his mother had accompanied him to the house so that he could say "Good Shabbos" to the Rosh Yeshivah. On hearing that, Rabbi Olshin immediately got up and told the boy to take him to his mother, who was waiting outside in the cold. On finding her Rabbi Olshin showered the mother with blessings that that her beautiful, pure dreams and hopes for her son be realized!

To be continued...

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

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TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a Mitzvah is more beautiful when performed by someone who understands its significance” (Meiri, Bava Kamma 17a).

YOM KIPPUR

Mitzvos #313-317

At the time of Creation, Hashem designated one day of the year for repentance and atonement: the holy day of Yom Kippur (*Chinuch* §317). When He chose the Jewish people as His nation, this gift became theirs. In contrast with other nations, whose sins accumulate from year to year, the Jewish people emerge from every Yom Kippur with souls as pure and white as a *kittel*. Yom Kippur is also a day of intense Divine favor. On this day, Moshe asked Hashem to be shown His glory, and Hashem complied, showing him the thirteen Attributes of Mercy that we, too, recite on this day (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, Higger ed., ch. 45). Every Yom Kippur, Hashem invites us to come to Him and make amends, and all the Mitzvos of this day aim toward this goal.

Fasting weakens the body, humbles the spirit, and removes physical desires that distract the soul from cleaving to its Creator (*Rav Menachem HaBavli*). Additionally, the suffering of fasting takes the place of punishment for sins, and the metabolic burning of fat takes the place of burning the fats of offerings on the Altar (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:21). On the Kabbalistic level, all physical pleasures are associated with impurity, and it is necessary to abstain from them in order to attain complete purity (*Radvaz* §95).

As an additional measure of affliction, we do not wear leather shoes (see also *Yam Shel Shlomo*, *Yevamos* 12:12). We also abstain from all forms of labor, so that our minds will not be burdened with worries and we can focus all of our energies on seeking Hashem’s favor and forgiveness (*Chinuch* *ibid.*).

We recite the *Vidui* confession ten times on Yom Kippur, once in each silent prayer and once in each repetition of the Chazzan. These correspond to the ten times the Kohen Gadol recites Hashem’s Ineffable Name and the ten times he immerses himself on Yom Kippur (*Ran Yomah* 6a and *Maharil*, *Leil Yom HaKippurim*). Similarly, the prophet Yeshayah instructed the Jewish people to purify themselves in ten ways; there are ten verses of Kingship, Remembrance, and Shofar; and there are ten days of purification between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (see *Yerushalmi*, *Rosh Hashanah* 4:7 and *Rashi* to *Yeshayah* 1:16-17). Each confession raises us to another level of purity, the same way repeated scrubbing removes layer after layer of grime.

It is necessary to *say* the words of the confession and not just think them, because words are spiritual entities that have tremendous power — for good or for bad. Angels bring the words of confession before Hashem’s Throne of Glory and proclaim, “So-and-so has confessed to all his sins, and he has said that he regrets doing them!” Every time we recite the confession, the angels advocate again on our behalf. Though Hashem hears us and even knows our thoughts, He desires that the angels advocate on behalf of His people (*Radvaz* §75). Hashem is willing to reconcile with us on the basis of words alone — as long as they are sincere — and He even considers it as if we had brought an offering before Him (*Yoma* 86b). We beat our hearts, the seat of our passion, as if to say, “You, my heart, are the reason for these sins” (*Matteh Ephraim* 607:10 and *Koheles* 10:2).

The special Temple service of Yom Kippur must be administered by none other than the Kohel Gadol himself. In the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, we tap into the power of this service by reciting passages that describe it, substituting words and desires for actions (*Bamidbar Rabbah* *ibid.*). The Ketores-incense is particularly desirable, so to speak, before Hashem. On this day, the Kohen Gadol enters the Holy of Holies alone and places the Ketores before Hashem in the privacy of His innermost chamber, concealed from the gaze of the Accusing Angel, as it were, so that this essential offering be accepted favorably (*Radvaz* §310). We also silence the Accusing Angel by bribing it, so to speak, with the scapegoat, in the same way Yaakov appeased Esav with gifts (see *Radvaz* §379 at length).

The angels observe our every action on this decisive day, and they report back in the highest heavens. The Sages relate (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* *ibid.*): When the Accusing Angel sees that there is no sin to be found among the Jewish people on Yom Kippur, he declares before Hashem, “Master of the universe! You have one nation that is comparable to the angels in Heaven. The Jewish people abstain from eating and drinking, they do not wear shoes, they stand upright, associate peacefully, and are free of sin — just like the angels!” Hearing the Accusing Angel itself acknowledging the Jewish People’s righteousness, Hashem accepts their entreaty and atones for all their sins. Indeed, at the core, the Jewish people are angels, except that the evil inclination confuses them at times (see *Berachos* 17a).

At the conclusion of Yom Kippur, a Divine Voice proclaims: Go eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a glad heart, for your actions have found favor before Hashem (*Koheles* 9:7). We celebrate that evening as a miniature Yom Tov (*Tosafos*, *Yoma* 87b) and we resolve to maintain our newfound purity throughout the year, as the wise King Shlomo advises (*ibid.*, v. 8): “Keep your garments white at all times.”

INSIGHTS INTO HALACHA

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

5785 – The Rarest Year of Them All Part XVI

As detailed in previous installments in our series, our current year, 5785, is not only a rare one, but calendarically speaking, actually the hands-down **rarest** of them all. 5785 is classified as a *HaSh" A* year in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Thursday (*hei*), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being *shalem* (*shin* - 30 day months instead of possibly 29; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar), and Pesach falling out on Sunday (*aleph*).

A *HaSh" A* year is the rarest of years, and out of the 14 possibilities in *Tur*'s 247-year calendar cycle, this year type occurs on average only once in about 30.19 years (approximately 3.3 percent of the time). Indeed, at times there are 71 years (!) in between *HaSh" A* years. The last time this year type occurred was 31 years ago in 5754/1994. The next time will be 20 years hence in 5805/2044. The next several times after that are slated to be 27 years further, in 5832/2071 and then a 51 year gap in 5883/2122.

The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the *Mishnah Berurah* discusses these issues he writes “*ain kan makom l'ha'arich*,” that this is not the place to expound in detail, which is certainly good enough for this author.

Obviously, such a rare calendar year will contain many rare occurrences. This series has been detailing many of them over the course of the year. Let's continue on our journey through our unique year.

No *Parashas Vayeilech*

As we near the close of rare calendar year, it is worth stating that although it may seem odd to readers, in 5785 *Parashas Vayeilech* will not be *leined*. No, this does not mean that we will skip reading the *parashah* entirely. It just means that *Vayeilech* will be next year's Shabbos *Shuva*; hence by the time we get to its *leining*, it will already be the next year, 5786.

The reason for this is quite interesting. The *Tur*, when codifying the calendarical *halacha*, sets several necessary sign-posts in relation to *parshiyos*, time of year, and various *Yomim Tovim*. One of these is the dictum (seemingly a play on the words of a *pasuk* in the

beginning of *sefer Daniel*): “*Ba”G Hamelech Pas Vayeilech*.” This is referring to when the Rosh Hashana (“*Hamelech*” – The King) enters on a Monday or Tuesday (*Ba”G* - ב"ג), then *Vayeilech* gets split up, or crumbled (“*Pas Vayeilech*”), and read separately. This maxim is letting us know the rule of when *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* will be read as a double-*parashah* or be read as separate stand-alone *Parshiyos*.

This adage goes hand-in-hand with another rule, “*Kumu V’Tik’u*,” that *Parashas Nitzavim* always has to be right before Rosh Hashana. As the Gemara in *Megilla* (31b) explains, this is due to Ezra HaSofer’s *Takkana* that the curses in *Sefer Devarim* (meaning *Parashas Ki Savo*), need to be read prior to Rosh Hashana in order that “*Tichleh Shana U’Klaloseha*, the year and its curses may end” [and indubitably, its addendum, “*Tachel Shana U’Birchoseha*, the New Year and its blessings be ushered in”], to rapidly come true.

Tosafos, and seconded by the *Abudraham*, and then *Levush*, explains why this is. Since *Parashas Ki Savo* contains *tochachah* (rebuke), there must be a noticeable “buffer week” [practically, *Parashas Nitzavim*] between its reading and Rosh Hashana. Therefore, *Nitzavim* must be the stand-alone “buffer week” before Rosh Hashana, in order to emphasize that we are getting *Ki Savo* and its *tochacha* in just before Rosh Hashana, to enable a misfortune-free New Year. These rules, or more accurately, necessary points of *parasha* alignment (or realignment) during the year, are accepted as the *halacha* by all later authorities.

So synchronizing these instructions, if Rosh Hashana falls out on a Monday or Tuesday, then *Parashas Nitzavim* will be the stand-alone *parashah* right before Rosh Hashana and *Vayeilech* gets pushed off a week to (next year’s) Shabbos *Shuva*. Yet, when Rosh Hashana falls out on a Thursday or Shabbos, then *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* are combined as the last Shabbos of the year.

As this year (5785) Rosh Hashana fell out on a Thursday, *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* were combined as the last Shabbos prior to Rosh Hashana. Yet, in the coming year, 5786, Rosh Hashana will fall out on Tuesday. Hence, *Vayeilech* will end up being 5786’s Shabbos *Shuva*, and will not get to be *leined* at all the whole 5785.

This actually occurs pretty often, as does the opposite – sometimes we get to *lein Parashas Vayeilech* twice in a year – like will be done next year, in 5786 - once in the beginning of the year as the stand-alone Shabbos *Shuva*, and once again at the end of the year, as a *double-parashah* along with *Parashas Nitzavim*.

Nonetheless, in this author’s mind, it is quite fascinating that this remarkable coincidence occurs in our exceptional year.

Our fascinating journey detailing the many remarkable facets of our rare year will *IY"H* be continued...

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that “the Jew’s catechism is his calendar.” It is this author’s wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and its rare *minhagim*, this article will help raise appreciation of them and our fascinating calendarical customs.

This author wishes to thank R' Yosef Yehuda Weber, author of 'Understanding the Jewish Calendar,' for being a fount of calendarical knowledge and for his assistance with this series.

PARSHA OVERVIEW - VAYELECH

On this, the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent throughout the camp, bidding farewell to his beloved people, encouraging them to keep the faith. Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, G-d is with them, and will vanquish their enemies. Then he summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as the leader of the Jewish People. In this manner, he strengthens Yehoshua's status as the new leader. Moshe teaches them the mitzvah of *Hakhel*: That every seven years on the first day of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather together at the Temple to hear the King read from the Book of Devarim. The sections that he reads deal with faithfulness to G-d, the covenant, and reward and punishment.

G-d tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should therefore summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan*, where G-d will teach Yehoshua. G-d then tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful to Him, and begin to worship other gods. G-d will then completely hide his face, so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, and that they will be hunted by all. G-d instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song — *Ha'azinu* — which will serve as a witness against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to Bnei Yisrael.

Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah, and instructs the *Levi'im* to place it to the side of the *Aron* (Holy Ark), so that no one will ever write a new Torah scroll that is different from the original — for there will always be a reference copy.

Q & A - VAYELECH

Questions

1. Moshe said, "I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in..." How do we know this does not refer to physical inability?
2. Which of Moshe's statements to Yehoshua was later contradicted by Hashem's command?
3. Why does the Torah refer to Succot of the eighth year as though it occurred during the *shemita* year?
4. Why does the Torah command that babies be brought to the Torah reading?
5. What does it mean that Hashem "hides His face" from the Jewish People?
6. What function does the song *Ha'azinu* serve?
7. Which verse promises that the Torah will never be totally forgotten?
8. What is the difference of opinion regarding the placing of the Torah scroll which Moshe gave the *Levi'im*?
9. On the day of Moshe's death, why didn't Moshe gather the people by blowing trumpets as he normally would have?
10. Moshe said, "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly," but, in fact, this didn't occur until after Yehoshua's death. What does this teach us?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 31:2 - Because verse 34:7 says "His (Moshe's) eye never dimmed, and his (youthful) moisture never departed."
2. 31:7 - Moshe told Yehoshua to share his leadership with the Elders. Hashem later commanded Yehoshua to rule alone.
3. 31:10 - Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to the harvest.
4. 31:12 - To give reward to those who bring them.
5. 31:17 - He ignores their distress.
6. 31:21 - It warns what will befall the Jewish People if they abandon Torah.
7. 31:21 - "For (the Torah) will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring."
8. 31:26 - Whether it was placed outside but adjacent to the Ark, or inside next to the Tablets.
9. 31:28 - Blowing the trumpets expressed Moshe's dominion, and "there is no dominion on the day of death." (*Kohelet* 8)
10. 31:29 – That a person's student is as dear to him as himself; as long as Yehoshua was alive it was as though Moshe himself was alive.

Q & A – YOM KIPPUR

Questions

1. Passover commemorates the going out of Egypt. Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah. What historical event can Yom Kippur be said to commemorate?
2. For what kinds of sins does Yom Kippur not atone?
3. What should someone do if the person he wronged does not forgive him the first time?
4. Why is the Vidui confession included during the *mincha* prayer the afternoon before Yom Kippur?
5. On Yom Kippur we refrain from: Working, eating, drinking, washing, anointing, family relations and wearing leather shoes. Which three of these prohibitions are more severe than the others?
6. In what two ways does the prohibition against eating food on Yom Kippur differ from the prohibition against eating pork the entire year?
7. Who wrote the prayer "*Unesaneh Tokef*" said during the chazan's repetition of *musaf*?
8. Why do we read the book of Yonah on Yom Kippur?
9. In what two ways does havdala after Yom Kippur differ from havdala after Shabbat?
10. Ideally, what mitzvah should one begin immediately after Yom Kippur?

Answers

1. Moshe came down from Mount Sinai on the tenth of Tishrei with the second set of Tablets, signifying forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. Yom Kippur can be said to commemorate this event, the first national day of forgiveness for the Jewish People.
2. Sins committed against other people, including hurting someone's feelings. Yom Kippur does not atone for these sins until the perpetrator gains forgiveness from the victim himself. (*Orach Chaim 606:1*)
3. He should try at least two more times to gain forgiveness. (*Orach Chaim 606:1*)
4. Lest one choke while eating the pre-Yom Kippur meal and die without atonement, or lest one become intoxicated and unable to concentrate on the prayers at night. (*Mishneh Berura 607:1*)
5. Eating, drinking, working. (*Mishna, Kritot 1:1*)
6. (i) Although any amount is forbidden, eating on Yom Kippur is not punishable by a Sanhedrin until one has eaten food equal in volume to the size of a date. Eating pork, on the other hand, is punishable for eating even an olive-sized piece, which is smaller than a date. (*Mishneh Berura 612:1*) (ii) Eating on Yom Kippur incurs the punishment of karet – spiritual excision, whereas eating pork does not.
7. "*Unesaneh Tokef*" was written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Germany, about 1000 years ago.
8. The repentance of the people of Ninveh serves as an inspiration to us to repent, and shows us that repentance can overturn a Divine decree. (*Shelah Hakadosh*)
9. After Yom Kippur, the blessing over spices is omitted from havdala. Also, the source of the flame used for havdala after Yom Kippur must be a fire kindled before Yom Kippur. (*Orach Chaim 624:3,4*)
10. Building the succah. (*Rema, Orach Chaim 624:5*)

Life in the Fast Vein

Ivy Epstein wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If someone is sick and needs to eat on Yom Kippur, why not do so through intravenous? I understand that "eating" intravenously would not technically violate the fast. So why don't sick people check in to a hospital before Yom Kippur and "drink" intravenously, instead of actually breaking the fast?

Dear Ivy Epstein,

The obligation to fast starts on Yom Kippur itself, not before. Once Yom Kippur arrives, it's forbidden to hook up to intravenous, since blood will spill.

And before Yom Kippur, there's no obligation, *per se*, to prepare for the fast. Therefore, there's no obligation to hook up to intravenous.

And since there's no obligation to "eat" intravenously, it might actually be forbidden to do so if you don't need to. For one, inserting a needle is a transgression of the prohibition against unnecessarily wounding oneself. And who knows, intravenous may involve certain health risks, all of which may not be known at present.

- *Sources: Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 3:90*

Paying for Praying

John from Sweden wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Synagogue fees: Is it in accordance with Jewish law to take fees from local Jews just to attend the synagogue?

Dear John,

It is certainly the accepted norm to pay a membership fee to the synagogue in which one prays.

First of all, paying fosters a stronger sense of communal spirit; when a person pays for something, he comes to value it more than had he received it for free. Paying a synagogue fee tends to make a person feel more a part of the community.

But on a practical note, synagogues have tremendous expenses: Books, rent or mortgage, electricity, heat, water, furniture, cleaning supplies, structural maintenance, salaries, social services, etc. Who is supposed to pay for it all, if not the people who avail themselves of the synagogue's services? Even if charitable donors pay for many of these costs, why shouldn't each participant also contribute to the remaining costs according to his/her ability?

Please note: The above is a general description of the appropriateness of paying synagogue fees; it isn't a definitive ruling regarding any specific case. Rulings in such matters should be sought from a rabbi or adjudicating body (Beit Din) personally familiar with the claims of both parties.

- *Sources: Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 163:1*

Physical Feetness

Dr. Pinky from Australia wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the rationale behind the prohibition of not wearing leather shoes on Yom Kippur?

Dear Dr. Pinky,

The shoe symbolizes the physical body. Just as the shoe encases the lowest part of the body and allows it to ambulate in the world, so too the body encases the lowest level of the soul and allows it to ambulate and relate to the physical world.

Therefore, whenever G-d wants a person to relate on a totally spiritual level, ignoring the body, He commands him to remove his shoes. This was true when G-d spoke to Moses and to Joshua; it was true for the *kohanim* in the Temple in Jerusalem, and it is true for every Jew on Yom Kippur. We ignore the physical for one day a year, and to symbolize this we remove our leather shoes. Leather specifically, because it came from a living creature and hence symbolizes the body in a much more graphic way than other materials.

The shoe is also removed in a ceremony called "*chalitzah*," as follows: If one of two brothers dies childless, it is a mitzvah for the widow and the surviving brother to marry each other. If the brother refuses, then the widow is to remove his shoe, signifying that he does not deserve physical comfort or even a body, because he refuses to give a physical form to his deceased brother's soul.