

# OHRNET

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## YOM KIPPUR SPECIAL FEATURE

### The Essence of Vidui

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

I have a confession to make.

I really regret my mistake and I realize it potentially has serious repercussions. I resolve never to do it again and to be extra careful next time this happens. What was my huge error, that I am confessing its seriousness in a public forum? Due to my negligence (and quite possibly lack of sleep) several typos have found their way into previous articles.

I sincerely apologize.

Why did I start an article like this?

Why was it necessary for me to verbally enunciate the wrong I had done? Wouldn't it be adequate to just inform the readership that there were a few typos in previous articles and then just correct them? It would certainly be less embarrassing! Why the necessity to confess and say the words "I was wrong?" Isn't it enough to sincerely regret and resolve never to repeat my carelessness

This article sets out to explore the secret power of *Vidui* – the confession that we repeat numerous times on Yom Kippur. *Vidui* is vitally important! The two steps of "*charata* – regret" and "*kabbala al ha'atid* – resolution not to repeat a sin," are still insufficient for complete repentance without *Vidui*.

The *Sha'arei Teshuva* explains *Vidui*'s importance with a parable found in the Midrash (*Kohelet* 7:32):

There once was a group of prisoners who were in a maximum-security prison, where conditions were terrible. They were forced to do slave labor. They were tortured and tormented by their jailers. Over time they decided they must escape, so they dug a tunnel that led out of the jail. The night came when they all crawled through the tunnel, escaping to freedom. All, that is, except for one prisoner, who did not join them. The next morning, when the jailbreak was discovered, the guards discovered the one prisoner who had remained behind. Furious, they beat the hapless prisoner to a pulp, all the while yelling at him, "It wasn't bad enough for you here? If you'd suffered, then you would have looked for the first opportunity to escape! The fact that you stayed behind means that the conditions here weren't appalling enough for you! We aim to correct that, starting right now!"

We are all prisoners. Prisoners of the *Yetzer Hara*. We sit in a dark jail called *Olam HaZeh* where things aren't so hunky-dory. We are tortured by the scheming *Yetzer Hara*. We are persecuted by the falsehood and pain in this world. We don't see the light of G-d's Presence clearly and we are forced to search for Him in the darkness and distraction of this world.

But then we see a tunnel. We are given an opportunity to leave it all behind and escape to the freedom of being close to G-d. No distraction, no connection to the jail cell, to the shadows and physicality of this world.

That tunnel is the "Ten Days of Repentance," which leads us all the way out to the freedom of Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the day on which we don't eat or drink and are thereby completely disconnected from this world. On Yom Kippur we are free from the shackles that bind us to the physical world that we live in. On Yom Kippur we are free to feel the closeness of G-d's embrace.

The question is: Will we run through the tunnel?

Do I truly want to be close to G-d? Is that my deepest, most intense desire? If so, then when an opportunity arises where I can leave behind all that distracts me and keeps me confined to the darkness, will I jump at the chance?

Will I run through the tunnel into G-d's embrace or will I choose to remain behind in the prison because it's not so bad after all

Yom Kippur is all about essence. It's about stripping away the external and focusing on who we really are.

On Yom Kippur our *neshama* has its chance to proclaim that its deepest desire is to be close to its Source, to its Creator.

But what about the fact that we're not just souls – we are human beings with human weaknesses and failings?

That's where *Vidui* comes in. When one says the words "I sinned" he is externalizing the sin, proclaiming "It's not me. It's not my essence. It's external to who I am. My essence is my G-dly *neshama* that wishes to cleave to G-d! The sins that I commit are not who I am!" Verbalizing them is thereby externalizing them.

Yom Kippur is a gift from G-d. The question is: Will we run through that tunnel? Do we truly desire to be close to Him? Do we feel the pain of being stuck in a world in which the *Yetzer Hara* enslaves us to our physical desires? Will we jump at the chance to be free of its shackles? Can we make the statement that all of our sins are external and not who we truly are?

If so, then we will merit the incredible words G-d said to Moshe Rabbeinu: "*Salachti kidvarecha*" – *I have forgiven as per your request* – and to feel the intense closeness to G-d that is truly our innermost desire.

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# PARSHA INSIGHTS

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

## Living in the Present

*“And he (Moshe) went” (13:17) The Ramban writes: after sealing the new covenant with all of the Jewish People, they returned to their homes, and then Moshe ‘went’ and walked throughout all the camp to bid farewell to his beloved people and console them so that their sadness at his departure should not cloud their joy in the new covenant.*

The worst thing about the Summer Holidays is that they come to an end. I was sitting with my son on the beach watching the Mediterranean Sea cresting against the coast of the Land of Israel on the last day of our holidays and he said, “It’s amazing how the waves are so powerful, they rise so high, and a moment later they’re just so much foam. It’s a bit like the holidays. You have a wonderful time and then it’s gone.” It reminded him of an idea from the “Pachad Yitzchak” – Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner ז”ל.

The Talmud in Bava Batra 4a says that someone who never saw the Second Temple as rebuilt by Hordus (Herod) had no idea of what a beautiful building was. Herod built the outer walls of the Beit Hamikdash, the Temple, by using aquamarine and white Marmara marble. One layer projected and one layer was indented. Herod’s idea was to plaster over the marble and cover the entire wall with gold. Herod never heard Yiddish in his life, but he would have certainly appreciated the Yiddish words, *ungerpatchked* (overdone) and *ungerbluzen* (overblown). The Sages suggested that he should leave it the way it was, because the differing colored strata of marble resembled the waves of the sea. Chazal were not in the business of giving interior decorating advice, so there was obviously something much deeper in their words.

King David said in Tehillim, “You (Hashem) rule the grandeur of the sea; at the height of the waves You praise them (89:10).”

Although the crest of the wave is but for a brief moment, that is the moment when Hashem chooses to praise them.

Hashem had great joy in the building of the Beit Hamikdash. The Mishna says that when King Shlomo refers to “the day of the ‘joy’ of His (Hashem’s) Heart” (Shir HaShirim 3:11), he means the day that the Temple was built (Mishna Ta’anit 4:8) No one knew better than Hashem that both *Batei Mikdash* (Temples) would stand for but a few hundred years, and then, like a wave, come crashing to the ground. But, nevertheless,

That was the day of the ‘joy’ of ‘His Heart.’ The wave at its height, at its crest. Thus it was fitting that the walls of the Beit Hamikdash should resemble the waves of the sea; that it should be praised at its height even though its glory would pass.

There are many times in life when we know that things will not be as good as they are at the present moment, and nevertheless we always should focus on that wonderful moment that is the present and not become downcast by the thought that it may not, and will not, last forever. And that’s a very good lesson to take away from the end of the “summer holidays.”

*The Ohr Somayach family wishes you and  
your families*

*“Gmar chatima tova”*

*– may the coming year be one of much  
happiness and success for you.*

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Vayelech: *Me'ila* 9-15

### Where Did the Wine Go?

“Wine of the *nesachim* – at the beginning there is a prohibition of *me'ila*; once the wine has descended to the foundations, there is no prohibition of *me'ila*.”

As we have noted before in this column, property of *hekdesh* (dedicated for holy purposes in the Beit Hamikdash) must not be used for private benefit. A person who breaches the trust of appropriate use of *hekdesh* transgresses the prohibition of *me'ila*, as taught in Vayikra 5:15.

The Torah specifies that wine be poured on the Altar in the Beit Hamikdash to accompany the bringing of various offerings. The wine that was poured into special cups atop the Altar is called *nesachim* (libations). The wine for *nesachim* was made *kodesh* in the special vessels of *kodesh* in the Beit Hamikdash. Therefore, the wine to be poured as *nesachim* is subject to the laws of *me'ila*. However, once it was poured into the holes in the Altar, the prohibition of *me'ila* was no longer in effect since the mitzvah that it was designated for was already fulfilled.

How far down did the drainage system in the Altar go? And what is meant in the *mishna* by the *nesachim* “going down to the foundations”? The *gemara* on our *daf* cites a Tosefta from which we see that there are two different understandings of the foundations in the teachings of our Sages.

The Chachamim (the majority of our Sages) maintain that these drainage holes went very deep, from the Altar down to the watery depths of the world. On the other hand, Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Tzaddok asserts that they ran inside the Altar only until its bottom, but no further. According to him the wine that was poured into the Altar congealed inside at its base. Once every seventy years a delegation of young *kohanim* would descend a passageway and bring back the congealed wine, in the shape of fig-cakes, to the Courtyard of the Beit Hamikdash. There the congealed wine from the *nesachim* would be burned in a state of *kedusha* on the Altar due to it having a *kodesh* status.

Our *gemara* asserts that our *mishna* does not seem to be consistent with either of these teachings of our Sages regarding the final location of the poured *nesachim*. According to the Chachamim’s view that the wine went all the way to the depths, why is there a need for the Tana of the *mishna* to teach that once the wine descended there is no longer an issue of *me'ila*? Of course there is not since the wine descended into the watery depths and dispersed inside the earth. It no longer existed in the world!

The *gemara* answers that our *mishna* could be explained in a manner consistent with the view of the Chachamim, by qualifying the *mishna* with a specific scenario. Instead of allowing the wine to descend and flow to the watery depths, the *mishna* is speaking about a case where the *kohen*’s hand caught the wine that he poured into the Altar. Since the wine had in fact been poured for the mitzvah of *nesachim*, it is no longer *hekdesh*, and is exempt from the prohibition of *me'ila*. This is the halacha that the *mishna* teaches, and needs to teach, according to the Chachamim.

What is the challenge from our *mishna* to the opinion of Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Tzaddok? Since he teaches that the wine which descended to the base was collected periodically, and required burning on the Altar in *kedusha*, why does the *mishna* state that there is no prohibition of *me'ila* once the wine descended? Since the wine still has *kedusha* after going down, it should still be subject to the laws of *me'ila*, just as it was before it was poured.

The resolution offered for this challenge is similar to the answer given to the question raised on the view of the Chachamim – but with a twist. Again, says the *gemara*, our *mishna* deals with a case where the *kohen* placed his hand into the duct below the wine and caught the wine before it completely descended to the Altar’s base. Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Tzaddok would agree that once the wine is poured, the mitzvah of pouring *nesachim* is completed and there is no longer an issue of *me'ila*. So why does he teach in the Tosefta that after it “goes down” it still needed to be collected and be burned in a holy place due to its holiness?

The answer is that the Tosefta is speaking about when the wine descends *all the way to ground* of the Beit Hamikdash without being caught along the way. In this case the sanctified ground makes the wine *kodesh*, which requires it to be burned in *kedusha* as Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Tzaddok teaches. However, when the *mishna* states that if the wine “went down there is no *me'ila*,” this refers to an *interrupted* going down. Since the wine was caught by the *kohen*’s hand, it no longer had *kedusha*, and it did not ever regain a *kadosh* status since it never descended entirely to come in contact with the holy surface of the Beit Hamikdash.

- *Me'ila* 11b

# 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?"
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.

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# Yom Kippur 9A

## 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*)

## 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.)

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch*  
by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

## *Purposeful Presage*

**M**oshe completes the writing of the Torah and gives his final words of encouragement to the next appointed leader, Yehoshua. He then calls an assembly of the entire nation to speak the words of *Ha'azinu*, the song that will call the heavens and earth to serve as witnesses against the people, holding them to their commitment.

Before beginning this song, Moshe explains to the elders and the tribe leaders why: *For I know that after my death, you will become very corrupt and turn aside from the way that I commanded you, and the evil will befall you in the end of days...* What a parting message! Moshe has just cautioned them with a painfully detailed cause-and-effect rebuke of what will befall them should they betray the Torah, and is about to call the heavens and earth as witnesses to ensure that this message is taken with utmost seriousness. Why foretell the corruption so bleakly? Would this not leave the people in despair, knowing they stand no chance?

The purpose of this statement can be understood from a different vantage point. Nothing attests to the Divine origin of Moshe's mission like the admission and awareness that survey the past and foresee the future. Had "Mosaic" law been the product of Moshe's own mind, there would not have been a greater fool in the world than "this man Moshe!" From a human standpoint, what greater folly could there be than to give laws so completely opposed to, and at odds with, the attitudes and inclinations of the people for whom they are meant? The contrast is so great that the Lawgiver Himself knows full well that, for centuries to come, the people will still not have adapted themselves to the Law.

As Rav Hirsch points out in many places, the Torah is sprinkled with references, comments and recorded events that lead to the conclusion that the Torah came *to* the people, and did not emanate *from* the people. (See e.g., Shemot 19:10-13, 32:1 and Collected Writings I, pp. 183-186 and 189-190.) For example, in the story of the Golden Calf, the blatant betrayal only forty days after the clearest revelation, the *non sequitur* demonstrates just how far the people were from the truths and requirements of the law. It could not have emanated from them; instead, they must learn – over centuries, as it turns out – to adapt to it.

While this foretelling of their imminent future failing may not have been a comfort for the people standing before Moshe, its function becomes apparent from our perch, millennia later. If we now look back on these past millennia and of this "Book of Moses," we see with our own eyes that everything has come true in the course of time. In the end, precisely in times of dire suffering, the nation attached itself deeply to this Torah. For the Torah's sake, people endured martyrdom unparalleled in world history. This Torah became the "eagles' wings" on which G-d's providence bore Israel throughout its tumultuous journey through history.

Israel's essential task – to be a light unto the nations – could only be realized when we ourselves showed that even defectors can become effectual agents of G-d's service. Despite their sins, the Jewish people have always carried within them sparks that can and have spread, and sprouted life and truth in the fields of nations.

▪ Sources: *Commentary* 31:29; *Shemot* 32:1

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# ASK!

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## 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: *Iggrot 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.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Return to Sender: The True Meaning of Teshuva

Every year, on the Shabbat preceding Yom Kippur, we read the prophet Hoshea's famous words in the Haftara: "Return O Israel until Hashem your G-d..." (Hoshea 14:2). The Hebrew word *shuv/shuva* ("return") serves as the basis of the term *teshuva* ("repentance"), and cognates of *shuva* are used throughout the Bible to refer to repentance (e.g. Deut. 30:2). However, there is another Hebrew word which also means *return*: *chazar*. In fact, a lapsed Jew who returned to observance is colloquially known as somebody who *chazer b'teshuva* (literally, "returned through repentance") – a phrase that uses two different verbs meaning "returning." In this essay we will explore the implications of *shuv* versus *chazar*.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains that the two-letter root SHIN-BET, which is the core of the words *shuv/shuva/teshuva*, denotes returning to a prior place or situation. Other words with this root include *hashava*, "returning" a lost item (Deut. 22:1) or stolen goods (Lev. 5:23), because it addresses something that happened earlier in time and seeks to rectify it; *lehashiv*, "to answer," because the answer fills the hole previously created by the question; and *shev/yeshiva* "dwelling," because by settling in a given place one creates a "home base" to which he will always return. In all of these cases cognates of *shuva* are associated with returning to a place or situation where one previously stood.

Rabbi Pappenheim notes that the root SHIN-BET can also refer to reverting to one's natural state – even if one had never previously been in that state. In this spirit he explains that *shabbat* ("rest"), which also has the SHIN-BET root, denotes returning to one's natural state of rest. In this case, even if a person had always been harried with action, his rest is still considered a "return" because it goes back to his *natural* state even if it is not necessarily his *prior* state. (Rabbi Pappenheim writes that this is also the basis for the verb *lashevet*, "to sit," which is also a state of rest, as well as the word *shevi/shvuya*, "captive," whose freedom of movement has been curtailed by captors, as if stuck in a position of rest.)

Similarly, when Avraham's servant was charged with finding a wife for Yitzchak in Avraham's homeland Harran, he asked his master what to do if the suitable lady would not agree to leave Harran: "Should I return (*he'hashiv ashiv*) your son to the land from which you left?" (Gen. 24:5). Although Yitzchak had never been in Harran, he could still "return"

there since it was his father's homeland, and thus, by extension, could be considered his "natural place."

This theory is reflected in the prophet Yechezkel's words: "When a righteous man returns (*shuv*) from his righteousness and does iniquities, he will die through them. And when a wicked man returns (*shuv*) from his wickedness and does justice and righteousness, through them he will live." (Yech. 33:18-19, see also Yech. 18:21-27)

The Talmud (*Berachot* 29a) explains that "the righteous man who *returns* from his righteousness" is a person who had been a sinner, repented, and then *returned* to sinning. However, the Talmud does not explain that "the wicked man who *returns* from his wickedness" is a person who was at first righteous, then became evil, and then *returned* to his former righteousness. How then can the wicked man be termed a "returnee" from wickedness to righteousness if he had never been righteous to begin with?

The answer is that righteousness is man's natural state, and sinfulness is considered unnatural. Repentance – *teshuva* – brings one back to one's innate righteousness. Therefore, when a wicked person repents and becomes righteous he is considered to be "returning" to that natural state. Yet, the converse is not true: when a righteous person recants his righteousness and become a sinner, he cannot justifiably be said to be "returning" to anything, unless, as the Talmud explains, he had previously been a sinner.

With all this said we can now understand the etymological basis for the word *teshuva* – repentance. *Teshuva* denotes a person's journey to his natural sin-free state. He is "returning" to where he is supposed to be, regardless of whether he was once there before. *Teshuva* means returning to one's spiritual default position, his "home base." It is the quest for peace and tranquility, the return to one's roots. Moreover, the process of *teshuva* – where one harnesses the power of his regret for his past sins as fuel for personal growth – enables one to revisit the past and recast one's former sins as merits. When doing *teshuva*, one "goes back" to his previous deeds to make amends (in the same way that *hashava/lehashiv* attempt to fill holes previously created by questions or thievery).



Part of the *teshuva* process entails making an about-face and figuratively “turning oneself around” in a circle to correct course. The Hebrew word for this is *chazara*.

Interestingly, neither *chazara* nor its verb cognates *chazar/chozer* appear anywhere in the Bible.\* Rather they are Rabbinic (Mishnaic) Hebrew words, which variously mean to regret, recant, retract, repeat, return, or repent. Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1469-1549), also known in Latin as Elias Levita, notes that the standard way of translating the Hebrew word *sivuv* (“go around” or “circumnavigate”) in the Targumim is with the Aramaic/Syriac word *chazar* and its related cognates.

In short, *shuva* implies focusing on the goal of getting back to where one used to be, while *chazara* focuses on the act of

getting out of that rut in which one is currently stuck and making a U-turn.

\*NOTE: The closest word to *chazara* in the Bible is *chazir* (“pig”), whose root is also CHET-ZAYIN-REISH. In fact, Rabbi Menachem Ricanati (to Lev. 11:2) writes that the pig is called a *chazir* because in the future G-d will “return” to us the right to eat the pig. In this way, our relationship with the pig will, after a fashion, “reverse course.” (Note that Rabbeinu Bachaya and Rabbi David Ibn Zimra write that this should not be taken literally.) Ibn Kapsi also points out that the root of *chazara* appears in the Bible only in the word *chazir*, which he explains gets that name because pigs commonly turn around backwards to aimlessly walk in circles.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)

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## LOVE OF THE LAND

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### Mount Tavor

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.

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# PARSHA OVERVIEW

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## VAYELECH

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