teshuvah jewish self
ACTIVISM morality
sacrifice spiritual practice
social justice
TESHUVAH
jewish self
activism morality
sacrifice SPIRITUAL
social justice PRACTICE
teshuvah

מה אני?

What am I?

A collection of essays on self reflection and social action for the high holidays

An Uri L'Tzedek Publication

Table of Contents

2 **Introduction** FROM URI L'TZEDEK

3 **Contributors**

ROSH HASHANA

4-5 **When the World Began, When We Began** RABBI DR. YEHUDAH MIRSKY

6-8 **Freedom Bound: *Akedas Yitzchak*** DR. RICHARD A. COHEN

9-10 **Shofar: A Transcendent Wake-up Call** RABBI ARI WEISS

11-12 **The Reign of God** RABBI SHALOM CARMY

TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE

13-14 **A God That Repents and Seeks Liberation?** RABBI SHMULY YANKLOWITZ

15-16 **The Altar as Metaphor** RABBI MICHA ODENHEIMER

YOM KIPPUR

17-18 ***Kol Nidre*: How to (Un)Do Things with Words** DR. DAVID LANDES

19-20 **"And for the sin which we have committed"**
The Meaning of Collective Responsibility DYONNA GINSBURG

21-22 **Being a *Shaliach Tzibur*, a Servant of the Community**
Lessons from *Hineni heAni* RABBI MISHAEL ZION

23-25 **"They would fall upon their faces and say..."**
On the Significance of Prostration in the Yom Kippur Liturgy DR. BITI RO'I

26-28 **The Individual In the Crisis** RABBI DR. WALTER WURZBURGER

29-30 **Did the Ninevites Listen to Yonah or Isaiah?** EVAN FARBER

31-32 ***Neilah*: Confronting the Work of our Hands** ARI HART

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

Introduction from Uri L'Tzedek

> "Who shall go up on the mount of the LORD/and who shall stand up in His holy place? The clean of hands and the pure of heart/who has given no oath in a lie/and has sworn not in deceit. He shall bear blessing from the LORD/and bounty from his rescuing God. This is the generation of His seekers/those who search out your presence, Jacob." (Psalms 24:3-6, trans. Robert Alter)

The month of Elul leading into the days of judgment of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is a time of trepidation and introspection; a time when we reconcile who we are and who we want to be. It is a time for visioning an ideal world and a perfect self; a time when we regret falling far short of our goals. It is a time we ask the basic question the Psalmist asked millennia ago: "What is man that You should note him/and the human creature, that You pay him heed/and You make him little less then the gods/with glory and grandeur You crown him?" (Psalms 8:5-6, trans. Robert Alter)

Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays is an Uri L'Tzedek high holiday supplement that attempts to deepen, and perhaps, answer these questions by focusing on the ethical cultivation of the Jewish self. Our goal is to highlight the inherent moral and ethical themes of self-reflection that occurs during the *yamim noraim*, the 10 days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, by tying together textual analysis of the liturgy and the Jewish rabbinic and philosophical tradition, with contemporary activism and social justice work. These include teachings on the goals of repentance, reconciliation, activism and spiritual practice, finding God in an unjust world, the moral vision of Judaism, and sacrifice. It our hope that *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* will educate, challenge, and foster conversation among its readership, with a special focus on encouraging actions that will increase justice in the world.

Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays is a project of Uri L'Tzedek, an Orthodox social justice organization guided by Torah values and dedicated to combating suffering and oppression. Through community based education, leadership development and action, Uri L'Tzedek creates discourse, inspires leaders, and empowers the Jewish community towards creating a more just world.

Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays is Uri L'Tzedek's second publication that integrates social justice themes into rhythm of the Jewish year. Like the *Food and Justice Haggadah Supplement*, *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* incorporates Action Steps that suggest specific actions that the reader can take to move from learning to doing. As Rabbi Hasdai Crescas pointed out over six hundreds years ago, the *mitzvot* are the proper ends of study and reflection.

We are proud to thank Bikkurim: An Incubator for New Jewish Ideas and Joshua Venture Group for financially supporting this project. The commitments to Jewish innovation and social entrepreneurship from the staff, board, and funders of both these organizations have been essential to Uri L'Tzedek's growth. We would also like to thank the hundreds of individual as well as the Jewish foundations that support Uri L'Tzedek's critical work. A listing of the foundations and organizations that support us appear in on the inside back cover of this work.

Hillary Levison, Uri L'Tzedek's skilled Associate Director of Operations, served as the managing editor of this publication. Her dedication to all aspects of its editing and production of this project are very much appreciated. Aliza Weiss created the innovative design and aesthetic tone for *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* that integrate the leading themes of the publication with the joyous colors of the holidays. We would also like to thank the Uri L'Tzedek Board of Directors. As we continue to grow, they have been a deep reservoir of guidance and advice.

We would especially like to thank the contributors of *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* who volunteered their time, ethical insight, and religious imagination to this project. Many of them are our teachers and mentors and we appreciate their continued commitment to our project of Orthodox social justice.

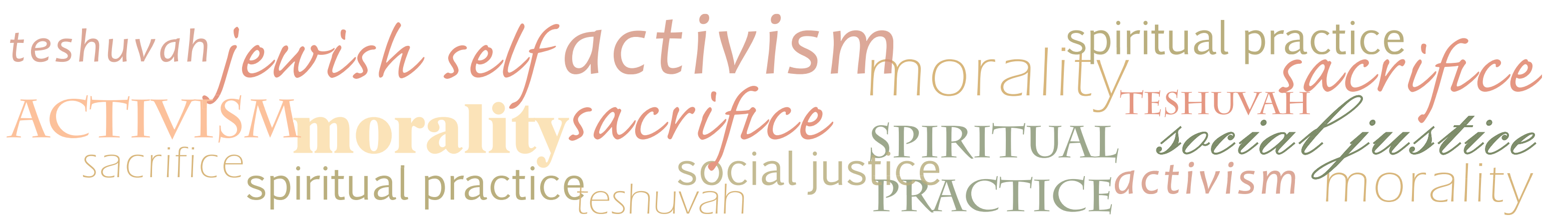
If you would like to further explore a thought or an idea in *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* or if you would like to join Uri L'Tzedek in its important work, please contact us! You can find us on the web at www.utzedek.org or email us at info@utzedek.org.

Finally, we would like to wish you all a *Shana Tova U'Metukah*, a meaningful and joyous new year. "We pray that the coming year by a year of blessing; a year of expansiveness, success, and permanence: a year of good life from before You; a year in which Your compassion will be stirred upon us" and all the inhabitants of the world. (*Musaf* Yom Kippur, trans. Artscroll siddur)

Ari Hart
Co-Founder, Uri L'Tzedek

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz
Founder and President, Uri L'Tzedek

Rabbi Ari Weiss
Director, Uri L'Tzedek



Contributors

RABBI SHALOM CARMY is co-chair of Jewish Studies Executive at Yeshiva College of Yeshiva University and editor of *Tradition*, the theological journal of the Rabbinical Council of America.

DR. RICHARD A. COHEN is currently the Director of the Institute of Jewish Thought and Heritage and Professor of Philosophy at the University at Buffalo (SUNY). He is also a board member at the Young Israel of Greater Buffalo in Buffalo, New York. He can be contacted at richacohen1@gmail.com.

EVAN FARBER is a commercial litigation associate at Reed Smith LLP in New York. He is the Treasurer of Uri L'Tzedek, the co-chair of the Young Lawyers' Division of the Anti-Defamation League, and a member of the Board of Directors of his shul, Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun on the Upper East Side, where he lives with his wife, Rebecca, and daughter, Charlotte.

DYONNA GINSBURG is the Director of Jewish Service Learning at the Jewish Agency. Previously, she headed Bema'aglei Tzedek, an Israeli social change organization dedicated to creating a more just Israeli society inspired by Jewish values.

ARI HART is a co-founder of Uri L'Tzedek. As a leader in the Tav HaYosher, Flaum's Appetizing, and Agriprocessor campaigns, and as a contributor to the *Huffington Post* blog, *Jerusalem Post*, and *Haaretz* magazine, Ari is working to put food justice on the American Jewish community's agenda.

DAVID J. LANDES, PHD is a private investor and independent scholar living in New York City and Teaneck, NJ.

RABBI YEHUDAH MIRSKY lives in Jerusalem and is currently writing a biography of Rav Kook, to be published by Yale University Press.

RABBI MICHA ODENHEIMER is the founding director of Tevel b'Tzedek, an Israeli-based NGO creating a Jewish platform for working with the extreme poor in the developing world. He lives in Jerusalem, Israel.

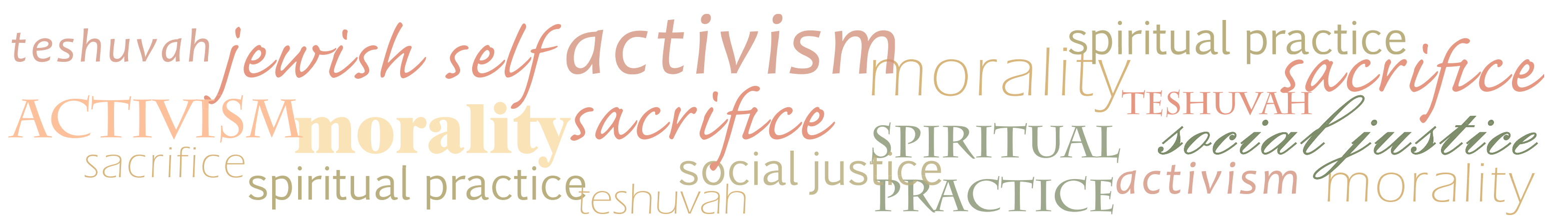
DR. BITI RO'I teaches Kabbalah and Hasidism at the Hebrew University and at the Shalom Hartman Institute (SHI). She has lectured and published articles on Jewish Philosophy, Kabbalah and Hassidism. While living in New York from 2004-2008, Biti taught at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Drisha Institute, and Yeshiva University's Stern College. She currently lives in Jerusalem with her husband and four children.

RABBI ARI WEISS is the Director of Uri L'Tzedek. Rabbi Weiss received his rabbinical ordination from YCT Rabbinical School in June 2007; he was selected as a Joshua Venture Group fellow, a prestigious honor bestowed upon Jewish leaders that show particular promise for social change and social entrepreneurship.

RABBI DR. WALTER WURZBURGER Z"TL, was a leading Modern Orthodox Rabbi and thinker. Rabbi Wurzberger was an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Yeshiva University, headed both the Rabbinical Council of America and the Synagogue Council, and served as a congregational rabbi. He was the author of *Ethics of Responsibility: Pluralistic Approaches to Covenantal Ethics* and *God is Proof Enough*. Rabbi Wurzburger passed away in 2002.

RABBI SHMULY YANKLOWITZ is the Founder and President of Uri L'Tzedek, Director of Jewish Life & the Senior Jewish Educator at the UCLA Hillel, and a sixth year PhD candidate in Moral Psychology & Epistemology at Columbia University. Rav Shmuly's book *Jewish Ethics & Social Justice: A Guide for the 21st Century* will be released in early 2012. Please see http://jewishsocialjustice.com/.

RABBI MISHAEL ZION is the co-Director, Director of Education of the Bronfman Youth Fellowships and the author of A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices and the Israeli bestseller *HaLaila HaZeh: Haggadah Yisraelit*. Originally from Jerusalem, Mishael was ordained by Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, and had previously taught at the Hartman Institute and Pardes.



When the World Began, When We Began

by Rabbi Yehudah Mirsky

As we celebrate a new beginning of the world, it's worth looking at a dispute in Tractate Rosh Hashanah of the Talmud over when the world was created: Some rabbis say in Nissan, the beginning of spring; others say in Tishrei, the start of autumn.

Nissan is when the Jews would leave Egypt, and is designated in Exodus 12:2 as "the first of the months of the year for you." The words "for you" imply that this is the start of the year specifically for the people of Israel, the starting point of a particular nation's history. To say that creation began in Nissan, therefore, is to imply that the rhythm of the universe follows the rhythm of this one people's life. Tishrei is the beginning of the rainy season in the Land of Israel, when new life replaces the brown fields of summer. Looking outward from where we live, Tishrei appears to be when nature - rather than history - is born. To say Tishrei is the moment of creation is to stress the universal, the beginning of a universe in which the people of Israel is just a small part.

Rabbenu Tam, the magisterial rabbi of 12th-century France, commenting on the Talmudic passage, concludes that "both [views] are the words of the living God": Tishrei was when the thought of creation arose in God's mind, he asserts; Nissan was when the actual work of creation began.

As theology, this suggests two things: First, there is a gap, a shadow, between thought and action, vision and completion, ideal and reality. That gap is not merely a product of human weakness; it is woven into the fabric of this world. Second, the idea of creation indeed encompasses the entirety of the world, as the clouds encompass the earth - but its actualization requires the concrete, real buds in real gardens, a real-live people in a specific time and place.

Both aspects, the universal and the particular, are essential to our fulfillment. Take away the specifics of place, language and kin that make us recognizable to ourselves, or the sense of humanity writ large that takes us beyond ourselves and ties us to everyone who has ever lived, and we are not fully human, or fully Jewish, children of the universal God.

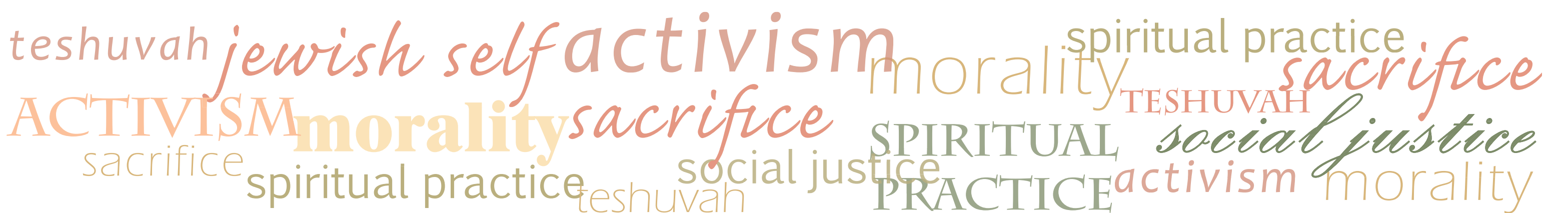
The universal and the particular are different aspects of creation. The tension between the two is made explicit by Rashi's first gloss on "In the beginning," a comment he may have written in response to the First Crusade: Creation and the subsequent narratives of Genesis, he says, are in the Torah because of the need to demonstrate the Jewish people's tie to their Land; otherwise, the Torah could have begun with the Exodus of Nissan. A particular people's story is embedded within the description of the universal beginning.

Through our history, the two aspects have always existed concurrently. Even the most seemingly insulated Jewries partook of wider currents of their times, and the most cosmopolitan forms of Jewishness retained particular ties of language and kin. Yet for different Jews, one aspect or the other inevitably predominates. Think of the Alexandrian allegorist Philo, drawing from Greek philosophy, versus the rabbis of the Talmud; the urbane philosophers of Muslim Spain and the haunted Ashkenazi pietists of the same era; the socialists and Zionists of Eastern Europe.

At times Jews reach for the universal, the ethic that recognizes all nationalisms and not only our own, the narrative in which all take their place as both victimizer and victim. There is justice in that effort, as there is justice in lucidly facing up to when it does and does not work. Jews also assert our very right to exist as a specific people in a specific place. And the meaning of that existence still reaches beyond ourselves; as Jews we work to heed one God of all, the widow's comforter and the parent of the orphan, and His presence in the world still crucially depends on us.

Our right to exist is not at odds with an ethic of universal brotherhood - rather it fills that ethic with content, and the recognition that universal values must be concretely embodied, by our particular selves as by others - or be nothing at all.

At the close of Lamentations we read: "Return us, God, to You, and we will return; renew our days as of old." What are those days of old? Midrash Eikhah Rabbah offers several interpretations: the glory



years of Solomon's Temple; the time of the patriarchs, when Esau, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob were all one family; the days of Eden. Each partial view offers some of the truth; in the final repentance and redemption the concentric circles will join, the universal and particular, will be one.

Until then, we are fated and challenged to try to bridge the gaps between intention and action, and universal and particular, between autumn and spring, that defines the world of creation. ■

A different version of this essay first appeared in the *Jerusalem Report* and is reprinted with permission.

"Our right to exist is not at odds with an ethic of universal brotherhood - rather it fills that ethic with content, and the recognition that universal values must be concretely embodied, by our particular selves as by others - or be nothing at all."

ACT Domestic violence and abuse affects women of all backgrounds. Jewish households also experience domestic violence. Through education and activism we can continue to break the cycle of violence. In the last year, Uri L'Tzedek has launched a domestic violence campaign in the Jewish community. Learn more at the Uri L'Tzedek website and contact info@utzedek.org to bring brochures to your local *mikvah* and synagogue.

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

We call the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac the "binding of Isaac," though nowhere does this expression occur in the biblical account, nor is the protagonist Isaac. Abraham, who preached against the practice of human sacrifice, who is a man of kindness, generosity and hospitality, teacher of the One G-d of all, Abraham is commanded by G-d – tested - to sacrifice his son Isaac, a young man of fine judgment. It is shocking. With what audacity does the Bible teach!

But the story's boldness is even more daring, for to sacrifice Isaac is to commit murder. Isaac has perpetrated no crime we know of. He has certainly had no trial. Even more, not only must Abraham murder an innocent, he must murder his own beloved son, nothing more heinous than which can be imagined. Surely no dread is greater than the parental fear that their children predecease them – G-d forbid!

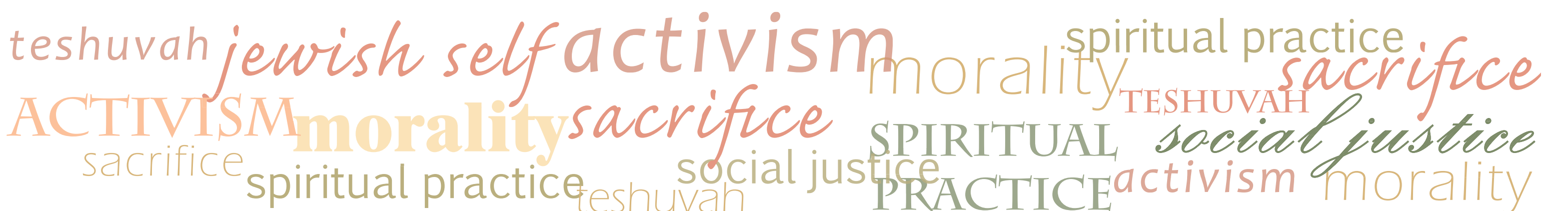
We know of Soren Kierkegaard's interpretation, for it has achieved world fame. Yet for us it remains an exegesis whose vanity and impiety have not been sufficiently appreciated. Kierkegaard would have the story teach that the highest religious relationship to G-d arises not only above selfishness, as all religions teach, but also above ethics, above morality and above justice. The so-called "knight of faith" is enjoined to obey G-d and G-d alone no matter what is decreed or demanded. G-d says commit murder, so murder one must commit. Thus does Kierkegaard sanctify religious fanaticism. The only truly religious person is the fanatic of G-d willing to do anything.

An entire theology follows from or more likely has been presupposed by such fanaticism: G-d absolute is G-d unbound, "free" with a freedom limitless and arbitrary. Neither father nor king, G-d is He who can do anything, anytime, anywhere, to anything and anyone, even beyond what humans in their finitude call reasonable or good. Thus senseless and immoral terror would become the supreme mark and privilege of divinity. The human counterpart is fatalism: true faith is blind faith, unquestioning, following orders, total submission without reservation, because any response less abjectly subservient – including the initiatives of decency, love of neighbor, kindness- would signal pride, egoism and infidelity.

May G-d save us from such excess and witlessness! Like so many zealous theologians, Kierkegaard is blinded by his own logic. Illuminated, he has apparently overlooked what strikes us as the telling and central moment of the whole story, namely, that Abraham does *not* murder Isaac. No one is murdered. Injustice does not occur. Ethics is not breached. It is shown, precisely in the face of the most extreme possible counter-current, that the One G-d demands nothing above morality and justice. Abraham and Isaac, mercy and justice, the love of father and son, together these receive the sanction of the living G-d.

To hold his view Kierkegaard – pseudonymously or not – must arrogantly usurp God's unique position, pretending per impossible to know Abraham's intentions, his will and interiority, not to mention G-d's own intentions. But Kierkegaard is neither G-d nor Abraham, nor can he be. Nor can we. Yes, Abraham lifted his arm above the bound Isaac. Yes, Abraham was holding a knife. Yes, we can hardly imagine the distress of Abraham, or the nature of his trust, his *emunah*. But no, Abraham did not kill Isaac. He sacrificed a ram. By what right, in relation to what texts, with what faculty of insight, can Kierkegaard construct his peculiar and indemonstrable interpretation that Abraham's exemplary faithfulness to G-d - not to mention G-d's expectations of Abraham - lies in a willingness to commit murder?

No, it is the height of conceit, not to mention impiety, immorality and epistemological impossibility. The lesson is quite otherwise, humbling and not egoist – but still ethical. Why should we not think, contrary to Kierkegaard, that Abraham's great trust in G-d comes in his anticipation, his hope, his extraordinary patience to the very last minute, to the very last second, that the true G-d, the truth of G-d, is the G-d of morality and justice? Is it perhaps Abraham who is giving G-d a chance, testing G-d and thereby is tested himself? "Abraham! Abraham!" What is



> "Do not, it teaches, be tempted by the absoluteness of G-d into thinking you too are absolute! G-d's majesty does not demand of you nor does it authorize fanaticism, blind faith, abject servility, but rather – and quite to the contrary – it demands a devotion which is responsible, for yourself, for your neighbor, and for all others. Be an adult before G-d, not a child."

certain is that Abraham raises himself to his moral height, to the nobility of his blessed paternity not only of Isaac but of the Jewish people and all peoples, the Abraham who loves and fears G-d and shows it precisely because he hears and obeys what is surely an angel's voice of loving-kindness. He is truly who he is insofar as he is yoked to and by the commands of the Torah which forever and always stays the hand of murder. "Thou shalt not murder," these are the words of the living loving G-d of Israel. "Justice, justice you shall pursue…" (Deuteronomy 16:20) Abraham, who has challenged G-d Himself to be just regarding Sodom and Gomorrah!

We know that the words of G-d which Abraham obeys are those which prohibit murder. So we must ask: if ethics is indeed never beneath G-d but is rather His very path – *halachah* – His unsurpassable Height, His Holiness, then why the *Akedah* story at all? Why the frightful command to murder one's own beloved son? The answer is as audacious and great as the story. And it is a lesson specifically aimed not at the atheist or unbeliever but at the genuinely religious person, we who celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the person who stands in the most precarious, challenging and unfathomable of all relations, the relation to G-d.

Do not, it teaches, be tempted by the absoluteness of G-d into thinking you too are absolute! *G-d's majesty does not demand of you nor does it authorize fanaticism, blind faith, abject servility, but rather – and quite to the contrary – it demands a devotion which is responsible, for yourself, for your neighbor, and for all others.* Be an adult before G-d, not a child. Stand up. Be upright by standing up for others! You think your relation to G-d authorizes you to nothing or to everything? Not at all! G-d's demands are much higher and much more difficult, they are *mitzvoth* – your devotion lies in G-d's command that you love your neighbor!

True religion does not demand stupefaction, servility or robotics, but human freedom. Not animal vitality but freedom bound to the exigencies and unreachable heights of morality and justice. Holiness is never an excuse for egoism or spiritual snobbery, to be sure, and never too is it an excuse for indifference, immorality or injustice! "And when you spread forth your hands," so said the prophet Isaiah teaching the ways of true sacrifice and prayer, "I will hide my eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make yourself clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:15-17) Love of G-d is premised on love of the neighbor – such is G-d's revelation.

Do not be deluded, the story also teaches, that religion is so far above ethics as to be degraded or reduced to a secular humanism by its binds to it. Nor, from the other side, do not think that ethics loses its freedom, when that freedom is restrained and guided by religion. Bound

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

freedom, freedom with an aim, a goal, a purpose, bound to the holy via the good, judgment just because justified – such an ethics is the great teaching of the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac, the teaching for which it is named. Called to the burden of this inordinate responsibility, at once thankful and praying for the strength of it, we tremble in hearing the blasts of the shofar.

The story is thus a great warning, one for which Kierkegaard apparently did not have the ear. Beware, it cautions, there is a very grave danger, a precipice, an abyss, that threatens in all monotheist religion: the paradoxical temptation of the absolute, of extremism, of the fanaticism of the slave, of the blind self-righteousness of would be "god-intoxicated" souls. It is the danger of the pretense to usurp God's place, to speak infallibly, to lord over the earth, the "holier than thou" holier than G-d Himself. No doubt, nothing in our finite existence is adequate to the Infinity of G-d. But Judaism teaches that humans and G-d do not stand naked, as it were, before one another. Neither G-d nor humanity is a philosophical or theological abstraction, a merely logical construction, a conceptual package of *omni-* this and *omni-* that. G-d is love, mercy, kindness, a personal and demanding love, a love we humans rise to and engage in loving our neighbors, for one loves G-d in return by binding oneself to G-d's demands found in His Torah, written and oral. Not to usurp G-d's place by a leap of faith, but to become worthy of G-d through the daily rigorous efforts of *mitzvot* – a far more difficult devotion, to be sure, but a path holy for humans.

The yoke of Torah is covenant, a mutual binding, of humanity, of G-d, even if this covenant can never be fully comprehended or completed from our side. Covenant is never a matter of intellect alone, not merely a legal contract or logical construction. Rather, it is thicker, richer, more demanding, more sensitive, with higher aspirations, a matter of sagaciousness, deliberation, judgment, perspective, care, of the adult will in action, the wisdom of deeds of loving-kindness, and the hard labors and perseverance to establish and maintain the laws and institutions of a justice which serves loving-kindness even in this unredeemed world.

Religion is thus neither blind faith nor blinded by faith. Rather it is an incomparable wakefulness, the moral vigilance and unshakable patience of responsibilities always pressing and never done with, the moral readiness – "Here I am" - of a life of *mitzvot* which is life lived for others. The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was fond of quoting Rabbi Israel Salanter who said: "The other person's material needs are my spiritual needs." *Mitvot* – not the vagaries but the precise requirements of G-d's exacting will - they are indeed "good deeds." Or, in the case of our Rosh Hashana services today and in much of our ritual life every day, they are training in good deeds, self-cleansing, preparation, fortification, atonement, shoring up, return (*teshuva*) of the morally bound will to its proper heights. "It hath been told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your G-d." (Micah 6:8) ■

Shofar: A Wake-up to the Beyond by Rabbi Ari Weiss

Imagination has been called many things in the Jewish tradition. It has been called the snake, *satan*, and the evil inclination. This is not the lofty imagination of the romantics that liberates and allows us to dream but the banal, everyday imagination that incessantly bombards us with its wants, desires, anxieties, and resentments.

The imagination has long been recognized as devious. In the 15th century the Biblical commentator and philosopher Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel commenting on the verse "And the snake was more cunning than all the animals of the field" (Genesis 3:10) wrote that: "Adam's imaginative faculty was more crafty than the imaginative faculty of all the other animals of the field. *Because human imagination is capable of making syllogisms and arguments appearing to be true...*The snake was understood by the Rabbis as symbolic of the imaginative faculty." (trans. Jose Faur)

According to the Abarbanel, imagination is dishonest to itself. It masks itself in the instruments of reason, which are syllogism and argument, to persuade us to act against the mandates of reason. In mimicking reason then, imagination projects its own fantasies about the world into the world. Imagination cannot imagine a world beyond itself. It is therefore deeply narcissistic.

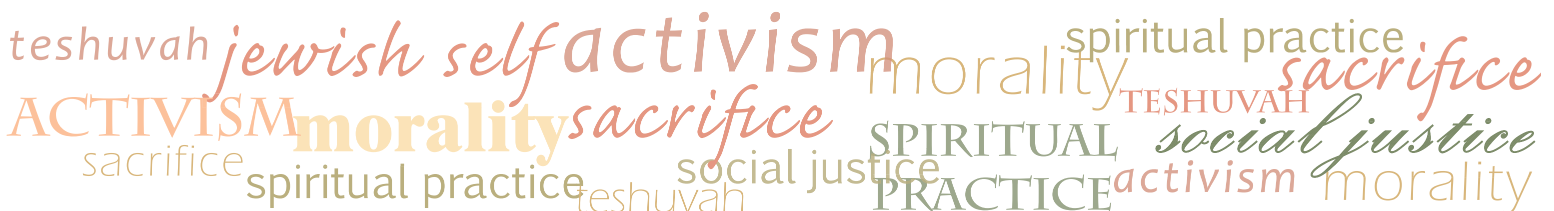
This insight into imagination's totalizing tendencies and the implications of these tendencies in thinking about spirituality and ethical life were put forward by the Rambam in his *Guide of the Perplexed*. For instance, in describing God, Rambam writes that:

> One who is always thinking about God and mentions Him repeatedly without knowledge, following only his imagination… he is not only outside the [divine] abode and far form it, but in my opinion, he is not truly mentioning God or thinking of Him because the term in his imagination that he is articulating verbally does not correspond to anything in existence. It is an illusion fabricated by his imagination as we have explained when discussing the attributes of God. (Rambam, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51, trans. Shlomo Pines)

If we understand God only based on what we imagine God to be then we worship only an imagined God, we worship only our imagination, we worship only ourselves. But life is greater and richer then just ourselves. How then can we move beyond ourselves to the good and the true, ethics and religion, the transcendent and the Other? What allows us to realize that we are greater than our wants and desires, needs and pleasures? How can we awake from the slumber of the self? Here, the meaning of the Shofar is critical.

"How then can we move beyond ourselves to the good and the true, ethics and religion, the transcendent and the Other? What allows us to realize that we are greater than our wants and desires, needs and pleasures? How can we awake from the slumber of the self? Here, the meaning of the Shofar is critical."

In describing Rosh Hashana, the Torah does not give much information. We are told that on the seventh month, on the first of the month, we shall have a Sabbath, that no work should be done, sacrifices should be offered, and that there should be a "commemoration with a horn blast." Why a horn blast? No explicit reason is given. Rambam in *Hilchot Teshuva*, the Laws of Repentance, writes that while blowing the Shofar



is a *gizarat hakatov*, a scriptural decree, there is a deeper meaning in its performance: The Rambam writes:

> Awake, awake you sleepers! Awake you slumberers from your slumber! Search your deeds, return by repenting, and remember your Creator. You who forget the truth by wasting time and go astray throughout the year by indulging in vanity and folly that are worthless. Be introspective and better your ways and actions. Let every one of you abandon your evil ways and thoughts that are not good. (Rambam, Mishnah Torah, *Laws of Repentance* 3.4)

According to the Rambam, the Shofar is a transcendental wakeup call from our self-indulgent thoughts and actions.

Be awake, the Shofar tells us, and remember that God created the world, not you. Reality is greater than you or your desires can imagine.

Awaken from your sleep! Be intentional with your time. It is easy to spend your time focusing on what you imagine the good to be, no matter how vain or worthless it actually is. Discriminate what thoughts and actions are good and worthwhile.

Awaken to justice! The custom to blow the Shofar one hundred times on Rosh HaShana allude to the tears of pain shed by the mother of Canaanite General Sisera. (Tosafot in Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 33b, s.v. *Shi'ur*) As if to say, the repeated call of the Shofar awakes us to the real suffering in the world; the suffering of another, of the Other. Do something about it! ■

The Reign of God by Rabbi Shalom Carmy

Rosh Hashana is about accepting the kingship of God; more precisely, the coronation of God as King; as we shall see, the two are not the same. The three blessings unique to the Rosh Hashana *musaf* , the additional service, *(malkhuyot/*kingship*, zikhronot /*remembrance*, shofarot/*sounding of the shofar*)* articulate this theme. What does it mean to accept His kingship? How is the experience of God's kingship on Rosh Hashana different from the obedience we owe Him throughout the year? What is the place of this experience in the annual progression leading up to Yom Kippur?

To accept God as king is, first and foremost, absolute commitment to His service. The *Shma* (the Lord is our God, the Lord is One), expressing our acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, continues with the commandment to love God with all our heart, and all our souls, and all that is ours. If we are serious about this commitment, we will desire to overcome all inclinations that impede our commitment, and we will strive to free ourselves of all ideologies that compete with God's absolute claim on us. In our culture the great ideological alternatives to such absolute commitment are the great movements of the left, such as Communism, socialism and liberalism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their counterpart political and economic ideologies of the right: nationalism and the apotheosis of the free market economy. Proponents of these outlooks may provide valuable insights, practical tools and even inspiring ideals: the religious individual can learn from them but not offer up the absolute allegiance that belongs only to God.

This commitment pervades Judaism: we proclaim it twice daily in the *Shma*. We all realize that the Rosh Hashana experience is distinctive, yet it is difficult for us to grasp exactly how. R. Hutner (*Pahad Yitzhak* on Rosh Hashana, #11) formulates the difference as follows: Throughout the year, we turn to God in order to commit our lives to Him. That surrender to His will translates into recognition of His absolute authority. In the Rosh Hashana liturgy, our intent is to proclaim His kingship, to crown Him and glorify Him, as it were. The commitment to obey is thus a consequence of the coronation.

"...while concentrating on our own religious and moral growth, and on our love and duties towards those who are near to us, we may forget our duties to those who do not dwell within our purview, who do not engage us personally."

R. Yosi (B Rosh Hashana 32b) ruled that the verse *Shma Yisrael* qualifies for *malkhuyot*, even though it does not contain the word *melekh*, or king, explicitly designating God as king. R. Yehuda disagreed. According to R. Hutner, the dispute is not whether the word *melekh* is required, but whether the theme of *Shma* is really that of Rosh Hashana. R. Yosi held that *Shma* contains both features of accepting God as king: He is "our God," meaning that we are committed to His service; and "God is one," which is a recognition of His uniqueness and sovereignty. For R. Yehuda, the combination of themes in this verse makes it inappropriate for the distinctive Rosh Hashana liturgy, which is exclusively devoted to the coronation experience.

The identification of divine unity with divine kingship points to the eschatological nature of the Rosh Hashana experience. To speak of the unity of God, and to speak of His sovereignty over the universe, presupposes a harmony between Creator and creature. "God will be king over all the earth. On that day will God be one and His Name one." (Zachariah 14:9) As the Talmud (Pesahim 50a) teaches, this implies that until that day, in some sense, the divine unity has not been fully realized. To be king is not merely to rule, but to reign; it is not only to deploy unlimited power, but to have one's kingship accepted by the kingdom. Hence the prominence of universal themes in the Rosh Hashana liturgy: in each *Amidah,* a series of blessings recited while standing, we ask God: "Cast Your fear on all Your creatures... that they shall become bound together

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

as one to do Your will wholeheartedly...” The daily commitment to God conveyed through the recitation of *Shma* is very much a matter of this world. The coronation that marks Rosh Hashana anticipates the *bayom hahu*, on this day, when evil is vanquished and God alone is king.

The daily recitation of *Shma* is inextricably linked to its continuation: “And you shall love God...” Accepting the yoke of Heaven, expressing the willingness to obey God absolutely, is a gesture of passionate love. Although we employ the third person to speak of Him, it is an act of coming closer. The Rosh Hashana liturgy of *malkhuyot*, by contrast, is about the coronation of God, as it were; the worshipper does not come closer to Him, but rather elevates Him, so to speak. When, reciting the *Alenu* “upon us” prayer that introduces *malkhuyot* on Rosh Hashana, we come to the line: “And we bow down and prostrate ourselves before the King of kings,” we physically prostrate ourselves. This unusual choreography underlines the distinctiveness of accepting God’s kingship on Rosh Hashana.

The casual participant in religious life, who has been brought up to think of the *Yamim Noraim,* 10 days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, as a marathon of self-examination and repentance, beginning in the month of Elul and reaching a climax on Yom Kippur, may be puzzled and even disappointed by this account of what actually happens on Rosh Hashana. It is a solemn day when God sits in judgment, and it is impossible to contemplate our judgment without thinking of making amends and seeking the opportunity to make a different and better future. Yet unlike the *selichot*, a series of penitential prayers and liturgy, of Elul or the week of *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*, the 10 days of repentance, or Yom Kippur, the Rosh Hashana liturgy is not marked by confession of sin or pleas for forgiveness and atonement. How is Rosh Hashana integrated in the progression leading up to Yom Kippur?

This is a question that is often ignored. Even people who believe in repentance and atonement find the idea of divine kingship too challenging. Those who understand and assent to the idea of absolute commitment may not grasp what Rosh Hashana adds to what should be a perpetual feature of religious existence. Perhaps it is precisely those whose most radical conception of life is *halachic* and moral, who see everything through the prism of uncompromising commitment and endless striving, achievement, failure and repentance, for whom the act of elevating God, independent of, and in some sense prior to, the fulfillment of His commands, stands apart from the primary tenor of our imperative-driven lives.

One could, in effect, separate the Rosh Hashana of *Hilchot Teshuva* 3:4, where Rambam, after stressing that the blowing of the shofar is a divine imperative without explicit rationale, *gezerat ha-katuv,* decree of scripture, connects it to an alarm signal awakening to repentance the spiritually asleep, from *Hilchot Shofar,* which present the liturgy without invoking the concept of repentance. In real life, however, these two aspects of the shofar, and the coincidence of Rosh Hashana and its liturgy with the season of repentance culminating in Yom Kippur, cannot be separated.

One element that Rosh Hashana contributes to the story of seasonal return to God is its universalism. The moral life, when earnestly and intensively lived, inevitably centers on our duties in the here and now. We are rightly suspicious of the kind of idealism that is always preoccupied with faraway affairs and neglectful in our relationships with those we see every day or indifferent to the excellence or mediocrity of our own spiritual existence. With this earnestness comes a corresponding danger: while concentrating on our own religious and moral growth, and on our love and duties towards those who are near to us, we may forget our duties to those who do not dwell within our purview, who do not engage us personally. Intense as our personal relation to God and to our neighbor may be, we are liable to forget that those who are remote from us are equally present to the eye of God, and that our individual and communal story is part of a long majestic story that begins with creation and anticipates God’s reign over all His creatures.

On Yom Kippur this vision remains, of the day when God, whose kingship we have accepted, becomes the One King of the universe, even as the confession of sin, the achievement of repentance, our resolve for the future, the humility that waits upon His forgiveness, take center stage. As I grow older, and each Yom Kippur becomes more important to me, the infinite horizon of Rosh Hashana has become ever more essential to me. ■

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice
ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice
sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

A God That Repents and Seeks Liberation?

by Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz

The month of Elul is a time in which we pause and reflect upon our past year to engage in *teshuva*, repentance. I often ask myself: Are we alone in our attempts to change and grow? The Talmud suggests that God actually engages in *teshuva.* (Megillah 29a) Can this radical suggestion that God grows, evolves, adapts with the times, and experiences redemption pass as an authentic Jewish theology?

The Torah itself states that a living God does *teshuva* according to Rashi's interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:3. A dynamic and evolving *shekhinah*, Divine presence, goes into exile and returns with us from exile, *uva l'tzion goel*, only when we restore the divine presence to the lower world and heal our relationship with God. Additionally, the *Midrash*, on countless occasions, suggests times where God changes positions, feels regret, learns from humanity, and even destroys previous worlds that prove to be a mistake.

Many of these stories should not be read literally but others may warrant the right to be interpreted literally when the spiritual truth exceeds logic. Rav Bachya Ibn Pakuda, the great 11th century Jewish neo-platonic mystic, argued that the "duties of the heart" are on a separate plane from rational natural physical reality. Certain truths can only be understood on an emotional and spiritual level. One is to "know God" with the heart.

> "In a world where billions of people live in poverty, orphans are put into slavery, and widows are raped, I can only relate to an immanent God that cries and suffers alongside us, *imo anokhi b'tzara*, who continues to experiment with the right balance of bestowed human determinism and freedom."

This *teshuva* is not a response to divine sin as that would not jive with traditional understandings of God. Rather it is in search of an evolved completeness, a wholeness that expands from 10/10 to 100/100 to infinite/infinite. God is the aggregate of power and good in the world and this aggregate can grow but God is always the total.

The great 20th century Jewish theologian Eliezer Berkowitz suggested that using moral attributes to describe God is not a sign of anthropomorphism. Rather attributes such as compassion, love, and justice are divine before they are human. *Teshuva* is a divine process before it becomes a human imperative.

God is absolutely free and free will is the constitutive means to all *teshuva*. In repentance, divine energy reinvigorates the world by the emanation of divine blessing, *shefa*, and divine self revelation emerges in every moment and being. In this *teshuva*, the divine essence, *atzmut*, remains constant but God's relationship to creation evolves as certain divine dimensions are affected by human action and moved in the direction of total synthesis and unity. It is only with this necessary human partnership that God's expansion and healing is brought into the world.

Rav Kook explains that the Divine can be experienced as a kaleidoscope of constantly shifting colors, describing not only a human phenomenological encounter but reality itself. God is intimately connected with humankind and hears and responds to our brokenness and scattered spiritual state, *pizur hanfesh*. Thus monotheism is not static but is dynamic and changing where the ten divine manifestations are constantly expressed and renewed. Reality does not exist as a non changing physical substance but is manifested as evolving experience.

Some have rejected the possibility of God changing as it may imply fallibility; however, change is not synonymous with failure. To state that God is not capable of expanding, growing, and adapting would be to limit divine omnipotence. Perfection

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

is not static or stale; perfection is a state of constant growth, in which possibility continues to reach newer and higher actualization. One sphere of actualization is the Sabbath when God's presence is manifest and healed in the world.

According to the Chabad concept of *dirah batahtonin*, G-d dwells in the earthly realm enabling interconnectivity between physical and spiritual dimensions of reality.

God contains the universe but is more than the universe. If the world evolves then God evolves as God is in relationship to a progressing universe and is affected by humans while the foundational Divine virtues remain the same. In a very real way, God's presence is expanded into the world when humans do holy acts achieving *Yihudah Ilaah*, higher unity, and *Yihudah taata*, lower unity.

I can no longer wrestle with theologies that seem logically sound but lack the capacity to open the heart.

One test for theological truth is if the soul is transformed when the truth is embraced.

Another test is whether it speaks to global injustice as the tradition teaches that *tikkun olam* is a divine-human partnership. In a world where billions of people live in poverty, orphans are put into slavery, and widows are raped, I can only relate to an immanent God that cries and suffers alongside us, *imo anokhi b'tzara*, who continues to experiment with the right balance of bestowed human determinism and freedom. The divine brokenness accompanies the journey of human brokenness and together we heal.

Why do I connect with a God that cries and changes? For me, if God is in captivity and exile with us and is redeemed along with us then there can be a real relationship. If God suffers along with all the oppressed victims of injustice then our liberations are bound up with one another and our experiences of immanence and alienation are intertwined.

If the capacity to do *teshuva* represents the pinnacle of the human condition then certainly repentance is a process in which we are to emulate God, *"halakhta b'drakhav"*. If the commandment to imitate the just ways of God were not to include self-improvement this mitzvah would be lacking as theology would be divorced from human actualization. God is an ideal for us only if we can actually emulate the divine ways. This image of God as One who grows, cries, and seeks liberation and unification motivates me ethically.

It is this understanding of God that has changed my life. One of the main reasons that God is rarely mentioned in Jewish social justice circles today is because our religious culture often retreats to abstractions rather than embracing theological models that are spiritually transformative and help to make us better. How many more Jews will we turn away from Judaism with irrelevant theology because it conforms to some medieval notion of logic?

Rav Kook taught that we are responsible for expanding, beautifying, and celebrating God's presence in this world. One way this is achieved is by seeking human healing and ensuring the progress of the human enterprise of creating a just and holy world. We cannot abandon the possibility of human and societal progress so easily and God can serve as our reminder and motivation that a better future for the oppressed is to come.

Rav Zev Wolf of Zhitomir explained that we cannot reach God's unity until we recover our own. Elul is not just a time for self help books and the Rav's "On Repentance" but also a time to look to the heavens and emulate dynamic growth and actualization as we work to heal a fractured world. ■

A different version of this essay first appeared in the *Jewish Week* online and is reprinted with permission.

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH
ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice
sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

The Altar as Metaphor by Rabbi Micha Odenheimer

In the ritual of *Kapparot*, atonements, performed on Erev Yom Kippur, a live chicken—a rooster for men, a hen for women—is swung around one's head. Passages from Job and from the Psalms are recited, along with a quasi-magical chant: "This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement. This rooster (hen) will go to its death /This money will go to charity, while I will enter and proceed to a good long life and to peace. The chicken is slaughtered, and the meat is given to the poor." *Kapparot* has been controversial since the practice first began many centuries ago. Rabbinic luminaries such as the Ramban (Nachmanides) and Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, opposed *Kapparot*, because it seemed to veer towards a violation of the biblical edict that no sacrifices should be performed outside the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. More recently, *Kapparot* has been opposed because of *tzaar baaley chaim*, cruelty to animals, that it entails. It is not a common ritual anymore—I personally have actually never seen it done, although many Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox Jews apparently do still do it.

Yet providing food to the poor as a form of atonement does have deep resonance in the tradition—and is also the subject of a short but very significant essay by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook in his work *Ein Aya*, a commentary on the *Aggada*, the homiletic portion of the Babylonian Talmud.

Rabbi Kook, one of the greatest rabbinic figures of the modern era and a true visionary thinker, was the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine until his death in 1935. Rabbi Kook takes as his starting point an enigmatic rabbinic statement in Tractate Berachot (55a) "Rabbi Yehuda says: the following three things lengthen a person's years: lengthening your prayer, lengthening your [time at your] table, and lengthening [your time] in the toilet." The Talmud explores Rabbi Yehuda's reasoning on why it is worthwhile to lengthen each of these activities, and when it comes to "lengthening your time at the table" writes "Because perhaps a poor person will come and you will be able to give him some food." In other words, holding lengthy meals means having food on the table for long periods of time—creating an environment in which it is easy to give sustenance to the poor, in a totally natural way, without undo embarrassment. The Talmud continues by comparing a person's "table"—by which they mean his generosity with food—to the altar in the holy temple. By connecting two passages in Ezekiel, the rabbis link the table to the altar, and conclude: "When the Temple was standing, the altar atoned for Israel. Now, a person's table atones for him."

The notion that *tzedakah* has an expiationary power is elaborated on more than once in the Talmud—for example, in the series of stories the Talmud tells which each end with the passage from Proverbs—"And *Tzedekah* saves from death." But Rav Kook uses his commentary to go beyond the simple equation of *Tzedakah* with sacrifice (the link between table and altar) in order to make a larger and more radical point. Personal *tzedakah* does indeed take the place of sacrifice but—but only when there is no possibility of building an "altar"—the institution which it has temporarily replaced: "Even though loving-kindness and generosity are the foundation of the world however they are done, still, we are required to understand and strategize in order to address the predicament of the poor and do everything we can to arrange and sustain our *Tzedakah* in such a way that they block poverty so that it does not spread in the world."

Tzedakah's real and primary goal is not alleviating poverty, but using our will and intellect in order to shape society in such a way that poverty's path is blocked and it cannot spread. In order to do this, Rav Kook continues, we need the power of the altar, which is "a symbol of the unity of the collective." When the holy temple was standing, with the altar in its midst, the power of the collective allowed us to create "great and worthy institutions, which allowed us to perform *tzedakah* on a national level." This Rav Kook says, is "the great face of *tzedakah*." Because of the exile, we no longer have this power, and in our lowly condition, we must cling to "private acts of *tzedakah*". These private acts are of great importance when there is no possibility of collective action. But when there is such a possibility—and

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice social justice teshuvah PRACTICE activism morality

> "Even though loving-kindness and generosity are the foundation of the world however they are done, still, we are required to understand and strategize in order to address the predicament of the poor and do everything we can to arrange and sustain our *Tzedakah* in such a way that they block poverty so that it does not spread in the world."

here Rav Kook was certainly thinking of the Jewish state which was his great hope for the near future—we must act collectively. "And certainly, when we have gathered together to create a national cooperation, that will be able to fix many matters, and to prevent poverty and want from many before they begin, then we reach much closer to the worthiness of the "altar", which is more than the value of the "table", and we are commanded to take part and to help this come about."

Rav Kook thus sees the responsibility of the collective, the nation, the state, whenever such collective action is possible, as creating a social structure that will stop poverty before it begins. Like many of the rabbinic luminaries of the first half of the 20th century, Rav Kook rejected laissez-faire capitalism and embraced the idea that the Torah's command was to attempt to create a society without poverty. Rabbi Shimon Federbush, whose classic book *Mishpat Hamelucha BeYisrael* is published by Mosad HaRav Kook with notes by Rav Kook's son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, quotes the elder Rav Kook's statement in a religious Zionist magazine as follows: "Without determining which economic system the Torah embraces, it is still possible to assert with surety that if all the laws of the Torah in the public and economic field were consistently kept, capitalism could not exist."

Rav Kook uses the word "*rechushanut*" –based on the root "*rechush*" or property—which was at the time the modern Hebrew word for unalloyed, unregulated capitalism, capitalism that privileged the right to private property and elevated it to the highest value within the social and economic system. While Judaism certainly respects the right to property—hence the commandment not to steal—it is not an absolute right by any means within *halacha*. The Torah system, with its laws legislating periodic land reform and debt forgiveness and forbidding the taking of interest clearly show. In the Talmudic period, laws regulating competition, known as *hasagat gvul*, and forbidding the commercialization of those sectors of the economy, such as *ochel nephesh*, essential foodstuffs, adapted these Biblical laws to the new, more urban environment of the Roman Empire.

If one follows Rav Kook's logic, it would seem that the *Kapparot* of today—the ritual sacrifice we must make in order to stand before G-d and be written in the book of life—might mean using our energies and our intellects to reverse the tendency so prevalent today to favor the private over the public, and thus to allow poverty when it might easily be prevented. ■

ACT The greatest level [of charity], above which there is no other, is to empower another Jew by giving him a present or loan, or making a partnership with him, or finding him a job.... On this the Torah says: "You shall strengthen the stranger and the dweller in your midst and live with them," (Leviticus 25:3) meaning, empower [your fellow] so that they do not become improvised or in need. (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, *Laws of Gifts for the Poor* 10:7)

In order to empower individuals around the world, join the Uri L'Tzedek lending group on Kiva (http://www.kiva.org/team/uri_ltzedek). Kiva is "a non-profit organization with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty."

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

Kol Nidre: How to (Un)Do Things with Words

by Dr. David Landes

Some years ago, an old friend of mine happened to visit me on Yom Kippur at my home in Teaneck, New Jersey. Sidney had limited prior experience of Orthodox Jewish life, having grown up in a Reform home, and at that time he was deeply committed to Buddhism. An inquisitive and spiritual person, Sidney was intent on experiencing that Yom Kippur as best as he could in an Orthodox fashion. He fasted, exchanged his shoes for a pair of flip-flops, and spent the entire day praying in several shuls in our neighborhood. I asked him for his impression of the services he attended when we regrouped at my house at the end of the fast. With a kind of shell-shocked look on his face, Sidney said that he had been overwhelmed by "all of the words" – the non-stop murmuring, chanting and singing of the words of the *machzor* by the multitudes of people through the course of the day.

I immediately understood that someone used to the meditative silence of a Buddhist temple would be taken aback by the cacophonous volubility of the traditional Yom Kippur service. Sidney's outsider's perspective, though, made me keenly aware for the first time of our heavy reliance on language to achieve our goal of divine forgiveness on Yom Kippur. Our active service of God on Yom Kippur – as opposed to the passive *inuyim*, torments, that we endure, like fasting – consists entirely of spoken words. Even during the "silent meditation" of the *Amidah*, we mouth words with our lips. And the sheer number of words that we recite over the course of the day is indeed astounding. I don't think I am alone in wondering, when looking at the *machzor* at the start of every Yom Kippur, how we will be able to get through the whole thing.

"*Kol Nidre* recognizes not only that we do things with words all the time, but that many of those things are pernicious and need to be undone."

It is fitting that before we begin the first formal prayer service of the holiday, before we unleash the torrent of words entreating God for our wellbeing in the coming year, we slowly and carefully recite *Kol Nidre*. Although in form, *Kol Nidre* is a legal declaration for the release of vows, I wish to suggest that *Kol Nidre* be understood as a prayer, a plea for divine assistance in the repair of our use of language.

The basic category of *neder*, vow, discussed by the Talmud in *masekhet Nedarim* is *nidre issur*, vows that create a prohibition of benefit or enjoyment. *Nidre issur* can have an impact solely on the one who makes the vow, as when the *neder* makes an item owned by the vow-maker forbidden to the vow-maker himself. *Nidre issur* can also have a significant and deleterious impact on interpersonal relations, as when items owned by the vow-maker are rendered forbidden to someone else, or when items owned by another person are rendered forbidden to the vow-maker. The complications that ensue when one person vows not to have any benefit from another person are discussed at length by the *gemara*. Considering the severe impact *nedarim* can have, it is understandable that *chazal* established mechanisms for their annulment by a *beit din* or an expert individual, a *yachid mumcheh*. It is for this reason the recitation of *Kol Nidre* was opposed by many medieval and early modern *poskim* – reciting the formula collectively in a synagogue, and not by an individual who specifies his vow before a *beit din* or *mumcheh*, is not *halachically* effective. In response to this objection, Rabbenu Tam, a 12th century Rabbinic commentator, emended the text of *Kol Nidre* from

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice
ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH social justice
sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice SPIRITUAL PRACTICE activism morality

addressing vows made in the past year, to vows made in the coming year.

Despite the dubious *halachic* efficacy of *Kol Nidre* and the rabbinic opposition it faced, it was not abandoned, and its recitation by the *chazzan* three times in the moving, mournful tone, as he is surrounded by the *sifre torah*, is one of the most solemn and stirring moments of the Yom Kippur service. Its continued presence in our liturgy, and the powerful emotions that it evokes, indicates that it is about more than the extinguishing of formal vows, the making of which has not been a common practice for some time. Although we are not in the habit of making legally valid vows, we effectively make *nidre issur* in our regular discourse, creating and perpetuating barriers between ourselves and others. This can take the form of overtly racist or intolerant statements, or the more subtle ways in which we exclude people through our language from the ambit of our concern, because of their seeming strangeness or difference or as the result of unresolved enmities. Simple examples are the many, mundane classificatory words we use, such as “us” and “them,” “Jews” and “goyim,” “frum” and “not-frum.” In our everyday language we close ourselves off from involvement and exchange with others, even without complying with the formal requirements for the making of a proper *neder*.

The proliferation of *nidre issur* may be better understood in light of a similar phenomenon explored by the language philosopher, J. L. Austin. In lectures first published in 1962 as *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin identified a form of language use that had been ignored by philosophers of his day. In their study of language, philosophers had focused on statements of fact or descriptions of a state of affairs. Austin refers to a statement of this type as a “constative.” Ignored, according to Austin, were statements that “do things,” whose very enunciation have an effect on the world. Austin calls statements of this type “performatives.” As an example of a performative, Austin offers the statement “I do” by a man, standing before a clergyman, who has just been asked whether he takes the woman next to him to be his wife. With the saying of “I do” under the right circumstances, the world changes, and the man and woman, unrelated individuals before, are husband and wife after. Another good example of a performative is the *neder*: through a properly formulated utterance, a thing becomes forbidden to oneself or to others.

As he analyzed the two forms of statement more closely in the course of his lectures and attempted to isolate the distinguishing characteristics of constatives and performatives, Austin had trouble maintaining a clear distinction between them. He discovered that pure forms were impossible to come by, and that there is a performative aspect to the most simple constative statement. Consider the statement “The cat is on the mat.” While purporting to report a state of affairs, the statement is also performing the actions of stating, affirming, and describing. It turns out that we are doing things with words all the time. What is true of *nidre* issur is true of performatives more generally. A formal setting is not necessary for our language use to have many of the effects of a *neder*, nor for a statement to function as a performative.

Kol Nidre recognizes not only that we do things with words all the time, but that many of those things are pernicious and need to be undone. However, we can only do so much on our own to reform our language, to eradicate the *nidre issur* that infects it, for our conscious awareness is limited and, as creatures of language, there is a limit to our understanding and control of the language we use. In order to purify our language of the barriers it erects which isolate ourselves from others in so many ways, we need divine assistance – a human *beit din* or a *yachid mumcheh*, or a language philosopher for that matter, can’t help us. In *Kol Nidre* the legal declaration for the annulment of vows becomes a prayer to God to undo and extinguish all the *nidre issur* that pervade our language, that they should be *“lo shririn ve-lo kayamin, be’telin u-mevutalin.”* Only after our language has been purified can we presume to use ever more words to appeal to God to inscribe our names in the Book of Life. ■

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

"And for the sin which we have committed": The Meaning of Collective Responsibility

by Dyonna Ginsburg

The Yom Kippur *vidduy,* the confessional prayer, comprised both of the shorter *Ashamnu* and of the longer *Al Chet* prayers is written and recited in the plural form. Unlike the Rambam's formulation of *vidduy* in his *Hilchot Teshuva* (Laws of Repentance), which focuses on individual culpability and appears in the first person singular ("I have sinned, trespassed, and rebelled"), the Yom Kippur *vidduy* stresses collective responsibility. Time and again, it highlights the shared nature of confession and forgiveness: "And for the sin which we have committed"; "We and our fathers have sinned"; "G-d of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, atone us".

Collective expressions of guilt in the *vidduy*, such as these, pose an interesting dilemma. What are we to do when encountering sins that we did not personally commit?

Rabbi Avraham Danzig, 18th century rabbinic commentator and author of the *Chayei Adam*, a *halachic* work dealing with laws discussed in the *Orach Chayim* section of the *Shulchan Aruch*, attempts to solve this dilemma. He encourages people to individualize their confessions and add personal enumerations of wrongdoing after each one of the general categories listed in the formal *vidduy*. Following his lead, many contemporary *machzorim* include recommended lists of sins from which people can pick and choose to supplement the canonized prayer.

Adopting this practice, when encountering sins in the *vidduy* we did not personally commit, many of us creatively read ourselves into the text, using poetic license to stretch the limits of particular wrongdoings. Alternatively, we approach the aforementioned dilemma by taking vicarious responsibility for others' sins, invoking the notion that "all Jews are responsible for one another."

It is worth considering the psychological effects of these approaches. In the first case, we incriminate ourselves even when we are not to blame, at least not on the most immediate and intimate of levels. By reading ourselves into sins we did not commit, we run the risk of deflecting attention from those we did and, simultaneously, diluting the gravity of sins as they were originally intended to be understood.

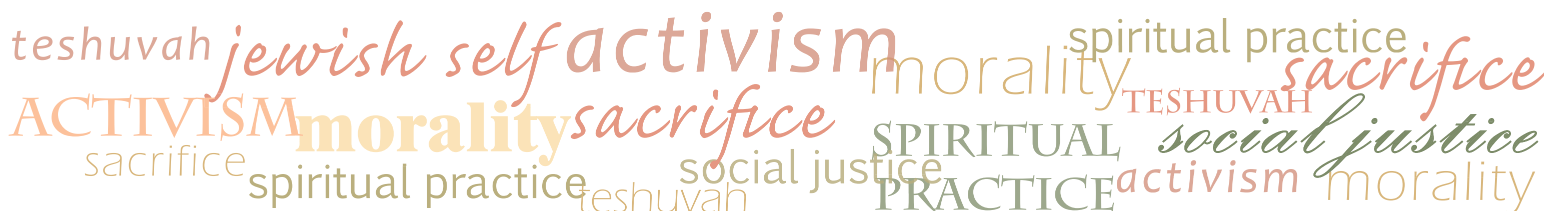
In the second case, we distance ourselves from wrongdoing, imagining a common destiny with fellow Jews, but abdicating ourselves of direct responsibility for the specific transgression cited. We hope that we are part of the solution, but don't assume that we are part of the problem. Asking "permission to pray with the sinners," we see wrong-doers as being outside of ourselves and, it is only through a generosity of spirit and a profound sense of Jewish Peoplehood, that we include them under the big tent.

In the first case, we individualize sins to the point of forgetting our responsibility as members of the collective; in the second, we collectivize sins to the point of forgetting our responsibility as individuals in creating and shaping our society.

Is it wrong, then, to read ourselves into the text or to invoke the notion that "all Jews are responsible for one another"? Far be it from me to make such a claim. There is inherent value in probing our own actions with a microscope; there is importance in appreciating the fact that the Jewish people include those with practices radically different than our own. But, while these approaches may be necessary, they are not sufficient.

We need to start asking ourselves systemic questions that challenge our own responsibility for society – questions that look at complex structures and our personal accountability in perpetuating them; questions that strike a balance between our responsibilities as members of the collective and as individual actors.

For example, when encountering the line in *vidduy* about illicit sexual relations, the innocent among us generally either bend over backwards to construe our own actions through this prism or use this as an opportunity to reflect upon the existence of sexual offenders in the larger Jewish community. But, rarely will we ask ourselves systemic questions, such as: What actions have I taken to fight sexual harassment in my own workplace? To promote



healthy and loving relationships in my community? To prevent objectification of women in society? To eradicate human trafficking and the sex trade – domestically, in Israel, and beyond?

When encountering the line in *vidduy* about financial misconduct, the blameless among us usually search the recesses of our memory to come up with some minor infraction or concentrate upon recent, high-profile business scandals involving Jews. But, when was the last time we pointed the finger at ourselves, asking what have we done, as consumers, to support ethical businesses and business practices?

Embedded within *vidduy* is an acknowledgement that the very act of confession may engender sin:

“ועל חטא שחטאנו לפניך בודוי פה”

“And for the sin which we have committed before You by verbal confession”

Rather than bring us closer to the ultimate goal of repentance, a botched *vidduy* leaves us worse off than when we started, adding yet another transgression to the long litany of infractions for which we beat our breasts.

What ruins *vidduy*? And, what is needed to avoid such an offense?

The Rambam in his *Hilchot Teshuva* offers one possible answer. The act of *vidduy* is complete only if it also includes an expression of remorse and a commitment to refrain from sinning in the future, in addition to an enumeration of wrongdoing. Like a person “who immerses in a ritual bath with a dead rodent in his hand,” one who verbally acknowledges his/her misdeeds, without renouncing them, makes a mockery of the process and renders all efforts at purification null and void.

The Rambam’s answer works well, if we are talking about spontaneous *vidduy*, initiated by an individual penitent on any day of the year. But, it is far less satisfactory in talking about the standardized *vidduy* enshrined in the five services of Yom Kippur. Neither *Ashamnu* nor *Al Chet* contains expressions of remorse and renunciation, which are linchpins of the Rambam’s understanding of *vidduy*. If we were to strictly superimpose the Rambam’s standards of *vidduy* on Yom Kippur, our prayers would be imperfect from the outset.

Perhaps, then, a flawed Yom Kippur *vidduy* is one that misses the point of collective expressions of guilt, leaning either to individual introspection alone or to diffusion of responsibility. It is only when we realize our role as individuals in shaping the societies and communities in which we live that we are truly worthy of forgiveness. “And the congregation of Israel will be forgiven … for the entire nation was in error.” ■

“We need to start asking ourselves systemic questions that challenge our own responsibility for society – questions that look at complex structures and our personal accountability in perpetuating them; questions that strike a balance between our responsibilities as members of the collective and as individual actors.”

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice SPIRITUAL PRACTICE social justice activism morality

Being a *Shaliach Tzibur*, a Servant of the Community: Lessons from *Hineni heAni* by Rabbi Mishael Zion

In the small *minyan* in Jerusalem where I spent the high holy days of my childhood, as the *shaliach tzibur*, leader of prayer, of *musaf* would rise to start his prayers, a hush of trepidation would go through the congregation. It is a trepidation that I imagine many *daveners* feel before *musaf*, as the chazzan opens the service with one of the most raw and open prayers in the *machzor: Hineni, heAni miMa'as*, Here I am. A person of impoverished acts.

> "In fact, the act of leadership must be done through a deep awareness of our flaws, not just our abilities."

The drama of the moment is immense. It emanates on the one hand from the *chutzpah* to dare lead the *Musaf* service, playing the role of the *Kohain Gadol* on Yom Kippur who enters the innermost places, and on the other hand the audacity to stand before the congregation and admit that one is deeply unworthy.

For me, the hardest word to utter in that prayer is its first one: "*Hineni*. Here I am." Who can say that today? Am I really here? Present? Ready to serve? Avraham had a *Hineni* before the *Akedah*. Shmuel had a *Hineni*. Moshe has a *Hineni* at the *Sneh*. Do I have a *Hineni*?

In a way, the prayer of *Hineni* is the basic prayer before taking any action. *Hineni* is the coda of the *shaliach tzibur*, the person sent by the community. The person who steps up to the plate to take action, to serve. And among the words of this prayer we can make out some important insights on taking action in the world:

The first insight is a basic awareness of one's own presence, one's own abilities. There are moments when we are called to serve. When our skills, abilities or wisdom can serve our community. At those moments, we must be present. Sometimes it might be less about our own skills and more about the lack of anyone else, as with Moshe's early leadership:

"ויפן כה וכה וירא כי אין איש"

(Exodus 2:12), "and he turned this way and that and saw that there was no man about", as Nachmanides interprets the verse: Moses saw there was no person to stand up to injustice, so he did. While Moshe's early attempts at leadership may have been rash and stumbling, eventually he is called again to be present for his people, and – after resisting for a while, like all good leaders – he agrees to serve. *Hineni*.

The second insight is the tension between being present, stepping up to the plate, and having an awareness that one is not worthy.

"הנני...באתי לעמד ולהתחנן לפניך
על עמך ישראל אשר שלחוני - ואף
על פי שאיני כדאי והגון לכך"

I have come to serve on behalf of my constituency – despite the fact that I am not worthy of this moment. Without that basic humility, no successful action can be taken. In fact, the act of leadership must be done through a deep awareness of our flaws, not just our abilities. As the prayer continues:

"ונא אל תפשיעם בחטאתי ואל
תחיבם בעוונותי"

"do not allow my own sins and shortcomings to bear on my actions on their behalf". In similar fashion, in leadership one's own flaws will almost always spill over into the work being done. An awareness of one's own shortcomings, and a concerted effort to prevent that spillover, is required.

On the other hand, a humility that prevents a person from being a leader when they are needed, is equally irresponsible. Rav Moshe Feinstein in his introduction to his responsa *Iggrot Moshe*, describes his own deep hesitation to take up serving as a leader and an authority in his community. But such a shying away can be lethal, he quotes from

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice
ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL TESHUVAH social justice
sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

the Talmud (Sotah 22):

"רבים חללים הפילה - זה תלמיד חכם שהגיע להוראה ואינו מורה"

"Multitudes has she slaughtered - that is the outcome of a student of Torah who can lead, who can *pasken*, yet shies away from leadership." For Rav Moshe this was his – almost begrudging – justification to begin writing *Teshuvot*.

Being a *shaliach tzibur* requires riding the tension between an awareness of one's own unworthiness on the one hand, and the obligation to serve wherever one has the capacity to do so.

And finally, *Hineni* reminds us that we cannot do it alone. We must find alliances, support, partnership. In this case, the prayer turns to angels. Many of us shift uncomfortably in our seats when Jewish liturgy discusses angels. But when push comes to shove, on the days of judgement, we must seek help wherever we can get it. Being a *shaliach tzibur* never means going at it alone, but rather galvanizing the voices of the community to join you in prayer, to join you in action. ■

ACT Launched by Uri L'Tzedek, the Tav HaYosher is a local, grassroots initiative to bring workers, restaurant owners and community members together to create just workplaces in kosher restaurants.

We can take collective responsibility for the food that we consume by:

1. Asking your local food establishments to join the Tav. It's free and easy to join.
2. Volunteer as a compliance officer or partnership builder.
3. Generate consumer support for the Tav through educational events and community outreach.

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

"They would fall upon their faces and say..." On the Significance of Prostration in the Yom Kippur Liturgy by Dr. Biti Ro'i

Yom Kippur is the only day of the year that Jews "fall upon their faces" or bow to the ground. This complete "falling" "on the face" is no mere symbolic leaning to a side, as is practiced throughout the year. Rather, it demands stretching oneself fully on the ground. How can a modern person relate to this "falling on the face" in which one's entire body touches the earth, humbled in the dust? Are we comfortable with this "falling" which implies a smashing down of one's position vis-a-vis God, making clear the human condition as a lowly creature, a worm in contrast to God's awesome eminence? How do we cope with such bodily positions which demand an admission of lowly stature?

A young woman once told me that her sister invited a college friend to an ordinary synagogue service in the middle of the week. The friend was in shock. This *Amidah*, standing prayer, was the first time in her life she had ever seen people bowing - not in a film about the emperor of Siam, but intelligent adults who otherwise might be in her classes - bowing.

How does the powerful modern person, master of him or herself, an individual, feel when bending the body? The Rabbis taught that the bending should be "until every vertebra is loosened". How does one perform a complete prostration?

How do generations of Jews feel, wearing lovely festive attire, loosening their ties and removing their glasses, wrinkling their clothes and stretching themselves out on the synagogue floor on Yom Kippur?

For me this is one of the high points of the Yom Kippur service. Once a year we can put aside our absolute "needs", the depth of seriousness that we assert for ourselves all year long. One who has never bowed on his or her face has never experienced the complete Yom Kippur service. The pre-Yom Kippur prayer, *T'filla Zakha*, breaks forth with an "I" unprotected by masks, titles or personal accomplishments, like one of the beasts, close to the earth.

The practice of "falling on the face" has a fascinating history. Bowing to the ground appears in the Bible both in the context of fear and awe in the presence of God, for example in the case of the prophet Ezekiel, and also in the context of intense prayer to ward off destruction by God. Thus Moses, after the sin of the golden calf, "I fell [upon my face] before God," (Deuteronomy 9:25) and similarly, Moses and Aaron attempting to appease the anger of God for the transgression of Korah, "fell upon their faces and said: O God, Lord of all breath of all flesh! When one man sins, will You be wrathful with the whole community?" (Numbers 16:22) [This is the source of the practice of falling on one's face in the *tahanun* prayer, according to the Tur, Orach Chayim 131.]

The Rabbis already understood bowing to the ground as a deeply powerful expression of prayer. Originally "falling on the face" involved prostration or bowing. The Rabbis understood that in prostration the worshipper drops his or her entire body to the ground, with hands and feet on the ground, and in bowing, one drops upon his or her knees, inclining the head to touch the ground (Berakhhot 34b; Maimonides, *Laws of Prayer* 5:13-14), but they decided to moderate the practice of falling on the face just as they moderated all of the bending and bowings of the liturgy.

Did they make this change to distinguish Jews from Christians of their time, who often bowed and prostrated themselves? Did they do it to distance their practices from those in the Temple, to distinguish between worship in the Temple, and Jewish practice in after its destruction ? Were they interested in emphasizing the literary and spiritual "worship of the heart" as opposed to physical worship? Were they concerned about the power of falling on the face when they proclaimed that nobody should fall upon the face in public prayer unless they are assured of a response as was Joshua the son of Nun? (Megilah 29b) Whatever the motivation, falling upon the face changed from a mass event in the Temple into the practice of only a few lofty individuals (eg. Rabban Gamliel, Rav Hiya bar Ashi, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Rav Papa). Falling upon the face was permitted to individuals only apart from public prayer. Only in his house or private garden might the righteous sage

bow to the ground and spread forth his prayer.

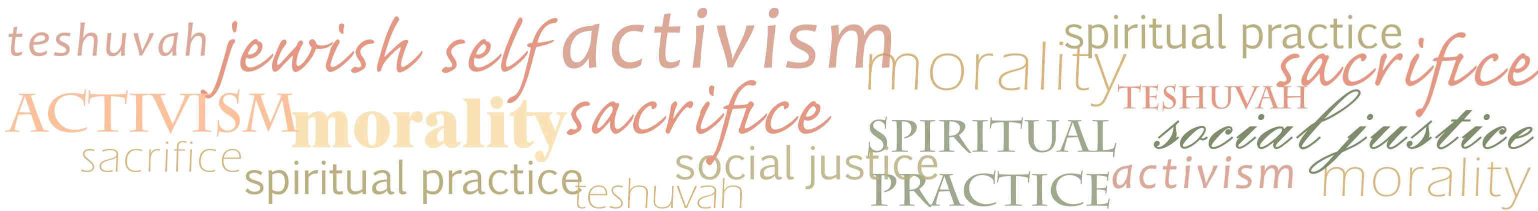
Both types of falling on the face, prostration with the hands and feet extended and bowing on the knees are physical and spirituals expressions found throughout the Bible, but they were almost completely removed from the liturgy after the destruction of the Temple. In their places we find more moderate physical expressions. Moderation in "falling on the face" caught hold from the time of the Rabbis to such an extent that we find references to nonsensical expressions such as: "we say the falling on the face" or "falling on the face while standing". These expressions point not to actual falling on the face, but to the distant remnants of this practice.

It is interesting to note that in contrast to the Rabbis' moderation of falling on the face, the Zohar actually expands and develops the practice. (Zohar 3 121a) According to the Zohar, falling on the face is an act of giving over one's life to death. The first verse in the Sephardic tradition of *tahanun* (traditionally called "falling on the face"), "To You, O God, I give my life" (Psalms 25:1) is understood literally by the Zohar. For this reason, and out of concern that the worshipper might not pray with the proper intention and full heart, Ashkenazim do not recite this chapter of Psalms, replacing it with Psalm 6 which has no reference to giving over one's life to death.

"Once a year we can put aside out absolute "needs", the depth of seriousness that we assert for ourselves all year long."

According to the Zohar, a person who takes three steps backwards at the end of the *Amidah* is not simply acting "as a servant leaving his master," (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 123) but as one separating from the tree of life and entering the world of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – the place of death. For this reason, *tahanun* is not recited in a shiva house, since the experience of death and cessation is already present and clear in such a house. Falling on the face, according to the Zohar, is a performative! act of death. The human being gives him or herself over to death in order not to die. He dies in order to live, in order to stand upon his feet and return to life. The greatness of the Zohar lies in the emotional and psychological depth in its understanding of the building blocks of religion and the structures of faith and worship of God. The Zohar did not push away fear of death, which defines the human experience and molds human existence (as expressed by Heidegger and other philosophers), but rather promotes a ritual of acting out death, allowing us to experience it in order to be freed from it. The fear cannot be pushed aside or denied, but must be worked through. Falling on the face is an act of working out, experiencing death on its lowliest level, giving up the lowly and ephemeral human life here on this earth.

On Yom Kippur in the Temple, prostration was the center of the day's worship service. After seeing to the daily sacrifice, the priest would begin the special service of Yom Kippur. Laying his hands upon the animal to be sacrificed, he would confess his sins and the sins of his household, and thus he would say, "O God, I and my household have committed iniquity, transgressed and sinned before You. O God, forgive, I

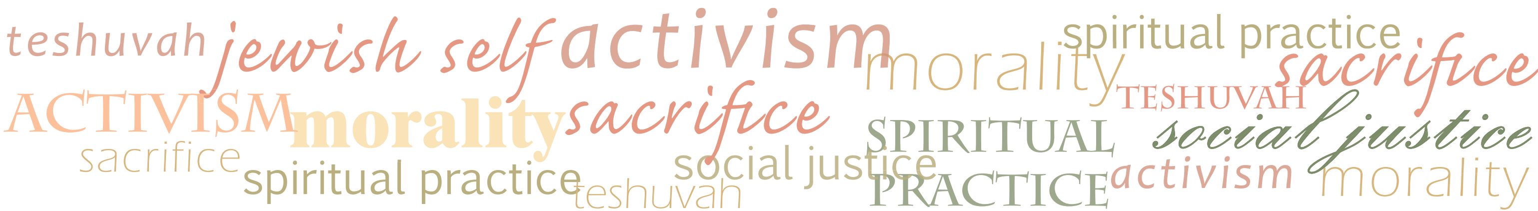


pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I and my household have committed and transgressed and sinned before You…" (Mishnah Yoma 3:8) In the Talmud Yerushalmi, a *beraita*, adds, "Those who were near would fall upon their faces, and those who were far away would say: Blessed is the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever! Neither group would move until it (the holy name of God) passed by them." (Yoma 3:3-4) And so we read (according to all liturgies of Yom Kippur going as far back as R. Eliezer HaKalir), "And when the priests and the people who stood in the Temple Court heard the Expressed Name come forth from the mouth of the high priest, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall down on their faces and say: Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever!" Rashi wrote that at the time of the prostrations they would confess their sins. He explains the words of the Gemara, "they would stand crowded together and bow with ample space" that when they would prostrate and fall down a miracle took place, the space expanded so that there were four *tefahim*, arm's length, between each person, so that none would hear the confession of the other, so that there would be no shame. (b Yoma 21a)

In the Temple everyone, not only certain groups as the Talmud claimed, fell on their faces when they hear the Name of God expressed. The Name is the essence, and when facing the essence of the Divine revealed in a verbal utterance nobody can stand at rest and with full worth. The liturgy of "falling on the face" of Yom Kippur imitates the Yom Kippur service of the Temple, just as other parts of the Yom Kippur service are reenactments of the Temple service. Every mention of the "Expressed Name" in the Temple was met with the bowing and prostration of the priests and the people in the Temple Court, and these ten prostrations are found in the Yom Kippur liturgy as well. In this liturgy the worshipper gives concrete form to the belief that one's existence is dependent upon God, that the worshipper is null and void in the face of God, that it is proper to give one's life to death, and thus one lies upon the ground unprotected, as one saying "Here I am before You," "I give myself to You," "What am I and what is my life?" "As a withered blossom, as a faded dream."

Today, in remembrance of the Temple worship, we fall upon our faces, stretching out our arms and legs, begging for forgiveness of sins, and giving over of our lives, peeling away the layers of titles and honors, we stretch our arms and legs on the ground, for if we cannot, for a single day, shed our selves when face to face with the awe of God, we have not advanced at all "from last Yom Kippur to this Yom Kippur." In other words, the meaning of confession is not only regret for specific sins, but as Maimonides wrote, repentance is also for ideas. (Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance* 7:3) On another level, repentance is for the situation of our existence in the world, because when the consciousness of death is denied and pushed away, and we live our aggressive) aggressive- is to much maybe content?… lives, resting happily on our successful achievements full of layers and honors, unable to fall upon our faces…would that we would be able "to fall" successfully even once a year. ■

English translation by Marcie Lenk



The modern preacher has of late assumed the Miltonic task of justifying the ways of G-d to man either because of his anxiety to bring a message of hope to a suffering and toiling humanity, or in order to sell a sugarcoated religion to his congregants. To be sure, nothing is further from the true nature of religion than the passive and apologetic role assigned to it by some of its professional servants. G-d is not on trial. There is no need to rally to his defense.

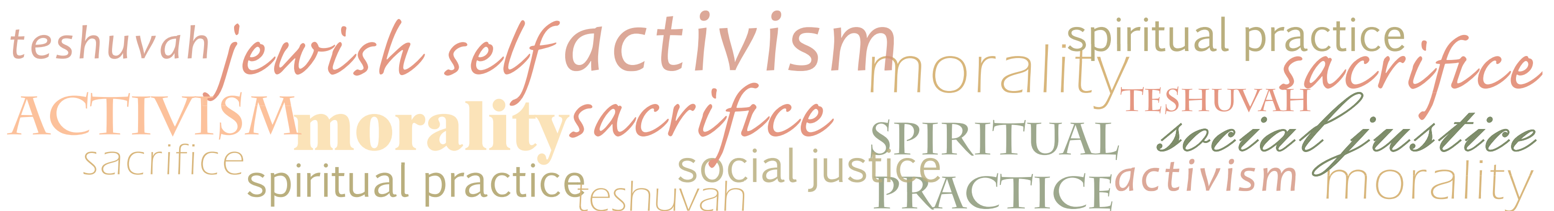
Yet let us remember that this is a day of Atonement, when we should be at one with our G-d. Let this be a real day of Atonement, when we face our problems as individuals. Let us pay attention to our personal relationship to the world and its G-d!

I do not mean to imply that man is a Robinson Crusoe living on an isolated island. But I heartily protest against the attitude that minimizes the importance and the sacredness of the human personality. A modern thinker called religion the opiate of the masses. Yet our so called scientific philosophy of life proves to be a much stronger opiate. For it enables us to shun all responsibility for the terrible chaos that has engulfed the universe. There is nothing left to the individual but to bewail his bitter lot which placed him in an age that produced a Hitler, a Mussolini and the other henchmen and gangsters. It is very tempting to wash our hands of all responsibility for the debacle of civilization. After all, what is the individual amidst all these powerful forces? Is he not merely a helpless ship tossed about by the political, social and economic waves? The truth of the matter, however, is that religion is no opiate at all. It offers no soothing sedative to calm the individual. It offers no protecting harbor from a stormy sea. Religion stresses the sacredness and the importance of the human personality. There is no alibi, no excuse for our failures, it says. We are responsible for our deeds.

On this Day of Atonement this message is brought home to us with extreme clarity and lucidity. When the Jews lived a normal life in *Eretz Yisroel* they assembled at this solemn hour, the holiest day of the entire year, at the holiest place, in the Temple of Jerusalem. The eyes of the entire people were focused on the *kohen gadol*, the High Priest, foremost member of the holiest tribe of the “Chosen People”. Imagine the awe that gripped the people, when its most saintly son entered the Holy of Holies to ask forgiveness for the sins of the nation. There, facing his G-d, stood the High Priest to give account for all the failures and shortcomings that undermined the structure of all Jewish existence. Who was to blame for the pettiness and the jealousies which have caused untold suffering to the nation? Upon whose

> “Religion stresses the sacredness and the importance of the human personality. There is no alibi, no excuse for our failures, it says. We are responsible for our deeds.”

The fact is that the tendency to defend G-d and religion has increased in intensity in these trying days because of the many questions that the laity asks the spiritual leader to answer. Many of us, for example, have come today to this place of worship in order to receive an answer to the question, “Where is G-d in this crisis?” We yearn for a message of hope in the face of the tormenting problems that demand a quick solution. A world gone mad with insane ideologies, a universe that is reduced to a vale of tears, the fate of a civilization on its last legs, all these deserve the attention of the pulpiteer, we feel.



shoulders rested the responsibility for the chaos that put man against man, nation against nation? The militaristic Romans? The idolatrous Babylonians? The Godless Assyrians? The faithless Egyptians? Did the High Priest blame the internal enemies of Israel, the profiteers, the politicians, the criminals? Nay! This is what be said: *"Ana Hashem chatasi avisi pashati l'phanecha Ani u'vaisi u'vnai Aharon"*, O Lord I have sinned! I have failed! I am guilty. I am responsible for the suffering of man. I caused all the agony, misery and injustice that shakes the structure of our ailing dociety.

Who utters these terrible words? A traitor to the cause of G-d? A criminal? A social outcast?

Nay, it is the *kohen gadol*, the High Priest, the chosen representative of the chosen tribe of a chosen people; he who represented the best, the highest, the noblest of Israel realized his responsibility. He began with a process of personal cleansing and repentance. Before he spoke of the sins of his people, he thought of his own. Before he blamed the world, he blamed himself.

Did he look for scapegoats? – the legions of Greece? The cohorts of Rome? The treacherous Sadduccess? The rich? The poor? – *"Ana Hashem chatasi avisi pashati l'phanecha Ani u'vaisi u'vnai Aharon"*, 0 Lord, he said, I have sinned, I have failed, I and my immediate family, the house of Aaron. We sinned, we failed, we are guilty. We brought all this suffering and agony to a stricken world.

After he blamed himself, he had a right to blame others: *"Ana Hashem chat'u avu pashu l'phanecha amcha beis yisroel"*, 0 Lord, they have sinned, they have failed, they are guilty. Naturally, we must not be shortsighted. Wrongs are committed by others. There are no two ways about it. Once we make a determined effort to cleanse ourselves from all defilement and contamination, we have a right to denounce others. Yet, we must never blame others in order to escape from our own sense of guilt. We must not run away from ourselves.

My friends, how badly have we need of this message today! We are always ready to denounce and blame others. How much time and energy do we waste in condemning the Nazis and Fascists! We witness a conflagration of the world that is unparalleled in history. A civilization goes to pieces, and we seek comfort and consolation in the thought that *"yadainu lo shaphchu es hadam hazeh"*, that our hands did not spill this blood. It is not our fault. We pity ourselves. We lament our fate and bemoan our misfortune. How deplorable it is to live in an age that denounces justice, goodness, morality and decency! We throw our hands up in despair and give up the struggle. We feel that we are merely a pawn in a gigantic chess game. What can we do in the face of all the demonic forces of evil?

My friends! How willing are we to blame the Nazis and Fascists for the chaos that engulfs our civilization! How gladly we accuse England and America for their failure to save the Jews who are being exterminated in wartorn Europe! We hold protest meetings and demand "action, not pity!"

We are always ready to condemn others. But do we ask ourselves these discomforting questions? Did I send a letter to my Congressman to intervene in behalf of these Jews? Did I join a national Jewish organization that strives to save these doomed people? Did I contribute my money to help those that still can be helped? Did I buy war bonds so that this war may be shortened?

I blame capital, labor, profiteers and racketeers. Did I refuse to patronize the black market? Did I donate my services to a civilian defense unit? I blame the leaders of the Jewish people for the lack of unity among American Jewry, for the deplorable condition of Jewish education. How about myself? Have I done anything to remedy these conditions? Let us all admit *"chatasi avisi pashati lphanecha"*, I sinned, I failed, I am guilty.

Let us now go one step further! After the process of personal cleansing, let us approach our own people. True, the world is shackled by the enslaving chains of Nazi tyranny and oppression. True, international law is violated, prisoners of war are executed. Indeed the world presents a terrible picture which cannot be described in words.

O yes, it is a degenerate world, a world that kills the innocent and the weak, that desecrates everything that is holy – a world of master-races and of slaves. But we in America have also failed miserably. Do we have to travel to Europe in order to discover racial persecution? Why not go to Detroit with its race riots? Couldn't we have stopped Hitler back in 1933? Of course, we could have, had we not adopted the policy of isolationism and appeasement! And so we behold a world of agony, misery, cruelty, injustice, brutality and tyranny. We are responsible for it. It is our world. No complaints! No excuses! No defense mechanisms! No passing of the buck!

"Chatasi avisi pashati l'phanecha Ani u'vaisi u'vnai Aharaon", I and my family, we sinned, we failed, we are guilty, we are responsible.

Once we have taken this bold step, we may venture to blame others, we may say: *"chatu avu pashu l'phanecha amcha u'vais yisroel"*, They sinned, they failed, they are guilty. Yes, atrocities are committed that are unprecedented in the history of mankind. The Nazis have thrown humanity back into the clutches of savagery, terror, fear and horror. They blot out the spirit of the dignity of man. They eradicate all remembrance of righteousness, justice, decency and humaneness. This indictment, however, does not bring any comfort since it stems from a feeling of self-complacency. For their atrocities are our atrocities, their crimes are our crimes, their murders are our murders. By indicting them, we indict ourselves. Had we abandoned our selfish attitude in the days before Pearl Harbor these brutalities would never have been committed. Each and every one of us is responsible for the debacle of civilization.

Do I not hear a voice from a corner: "How can you accuse me? I am not a politician? I have no influence. I cannot oppose the powerful political, social and economic forces. I am a helpless individual. Does not science maximize the importance of society and environment and minimize the significance of the individual?"

Friends! Let no one deceive himself! A chain is only as strong as its weakest link

During a recent trip, I came to a small community in New Jersey. At the entrance of the village, I noticed a big poster that read "America looks at you, Vineland!" I said to myself: "This is a small and insignificant community. It cannot boast of any important defense industry. How presumptuous on the part of so small a community to say, 'America looks at you, Vineland'!"

Suddenly, however, I realized the truth of this statement. We cannot win this war unless every city, every village, every hamlet, every family and every individual hears that voice. "America looks at you!" Every one of us must realize his responsibility towards his family, his community, his city, his state, his country and his humanity.

Friends, we are now approaching the solemn moment commemorating the *Avodas Yom Hakipurim* which once was the most sacred function of the High Priest. He confessed the sins of his people and atoned for his nation. Thus he attained forgiveness and thus he repaired the breaches in the crumbling foundations of the Jewish nation. Let us carry the lesson that the High Priest teaches us well in mind! Let us rededicate ourselves to the eternal fountain of Jewish hope that assures us: *"ki bayom hazeh y'chaper aleichem"*, that G-d will grant us atonement and will cleanse us from all defilement and contamination, and that he will lead us into a future that will be built upon the foundation of harmony and brotherhood, justice and righteousness. ■

ACT In his sermon, Rabbi Wurzburger asks the Jewish community in 1943, "did I send a letter to my congressman" to save the lives of Jews during the holocaust. Today, more then 12 million people in Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya have been affected by the worst drought in 60 years yet at the same time, Congress recently passed a budget that cuts food aid by 43%. Today, you can help preserve funding for food aid by writing you members of Congress; a template can be found at ajws.org. Today, you can donate money to save lives through unicefusa.org.

This speech was originally delivered by Rabbi Wurzburger on Yom Kippur in 1943. A modified version of this speech was published in *The Commentator*, Volume 66, Issue 12.

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice TESHUVAH ACTIVISM morality sacrifice SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

Did the Ninevites Listen to Yonah or Isaiah?

by Evan Farber

> "How often is our success built, in at least some minute way, on the backs of others, on their suffering or oppression?"

Both of the *haftarot* that we read on Yom Kippur speak to me deeply – but in very different ways. Isaiah's dramatic and powerful words ring like a clarion call when we read them in the morning, while the recitation of Yonah during the afternoon prayer of Yom Kippur often reinforces the more contemplative mood of that time of day. But the differences between these two *haftarot* are perplexing. Just as the two *haftarot* of Rosh Hashana have a specific and obvious connection – they both center on the prayers of women who became known as among Judaism's most famous and formidable mothers – one would expect that the two *haftarot* of Yom Kippur would bear some similar relationship to each other. Indeed, it would be strange if that were not the case.

On one level, if the *haftarot* of Rosh Hashana focus on prayer, the two *haftarot* of Yom Kippur could be seen as completing the trilogy: Yonah represents *teshuva*, repentance, while the morning *haftorah*, which commands us to "share your bread with the hungry, and bring the poor and outcast into your home" (Isaiah 58:7), focuses on *tzedakah*, or charity.

But can this be all? To the contrary, I'd argue that these two *haftarot* actually serve to demonstrate just how intertwined those two concepts of *teshuva* and *tzedakah* truly are.

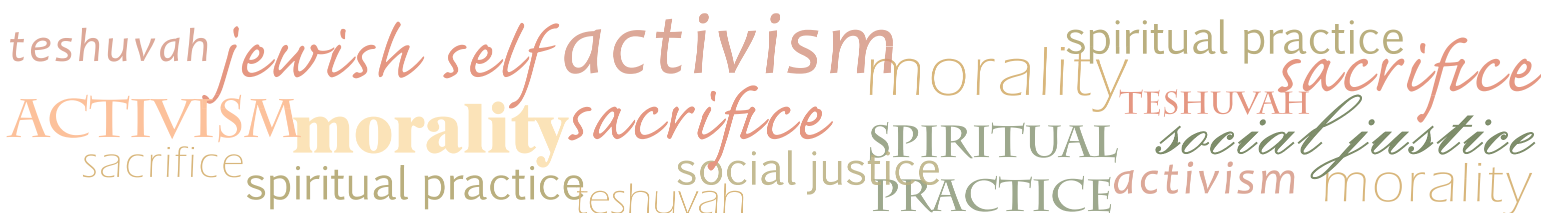
Let's take a step back. Over the years, many reasons have been offered why the book of Yonah is read on Yom Kippur. It is, unquestionably, a meditation on the nature of repentance. We see three different examples of *teshuva* in the first three chapters of the book: the gentile sailors on whose ship Yonah tries to flee (1:14-16); Yonah himself (2:2-10); and the people of Nineveh, after heeding God's warning spoken through his recalcitrant prophet. (3:5-9) Let us compare their repentance:

- *What was each person or group of people repenting from?* In the first chapter of the book, the sailors have seemingly done nothing wrong; they were simply afraid of committing wrongdoing by potentially murdering Yonah if they cast him overboard. The other penitents were worse: Yonah diffidently disobeyed God's command, while God says of the Ninevites that "their wickedness has arisen before me" (1:2). Thus repentance should have come most easily to the sailors, whose prior state had been comparatively benign.

- *What triggered each act of repentance?* Each act of repentance was seemingly triggered by the fear of destruction or death, though that fear is explicit in the case of the sailors (1:4, 11, 13) and the Ninevites, (4:4, 9) but not in the case of Yonah, for whom the text says simply that he was "in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights." (2:1) If that suggests that the catalyst for Yonah's repentance was not as dire, then his repentance may have been less desperate of a plea, but also less overtly utilitarian and "functional," that is, less goal-oriented.

- *How did each person or group go about repenting?* Each act of repentance involved prayer. (See 1:14, 2:2-10, 3:8) But only the repentance of the Ninevites involved more: fasting, sackcloth and ashes, a public display of the same "by decree of the king," and a declaration that "each person should return from his evil way and from the oppression that is in their hands." (3:5-9) Thus the prayers of the Ninevites, compounded with other elements of repentance – suggesting, perhaps, that their repentance was the most intense.

One critical lesson of Yom Kippur is that all three acts of repentance, despite their differences, were accepted by God and were ultimately



successful. God calmed the sea around the sailors' ship, caused the fish to cast out Yonah onto the dry land, and spared Nineveh from destruction. But of the three acts of repentance, the text elaborates on God's reaction to only one of them:

> "God saw their actions, that they had repented of their evil ways, and God relented on the evil which He had proclaimed to do to them, and He did not do it." (3:10)

On this verse, the Mishnah (Taanit 2:1) famously comments:

> It does not say of the people of Nineveh, "God saw their sackcloth and their fasting," but rather, "God saw their deeds, that they repented of their evil ways."

This lesson, perhaps, forms the true link between the two *haftarot* of Yom Kippur. The primary message of the book of Yonah is that the mark of sincere and complete repentance is not prayer, fasting, or sackcloth and ashes. Instead, what ultimately brings us closer to God is regretting and atoning for evil and oppression. That message is precisely same as Isaiah's key message in the *haftorah* that we read during Yom Kippur morning:

> "Why have we fasted and you did not see? We afflicted our souls but you did not know it!" Because on the day of your fasting you pursue your desires and exact your payments. You fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. You do not fast as on a day [when you desire] to have your voice heard on high. Is this the fast that I have chosen? . . . Rather, this is the fast I have chosen: Open the chains of wickedness! Undo the bands of burden! Let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke! Spread out your bread to the hungry, and bring the poor and outcast into your home. When you see the naked, clothe him, and do not hide yourself from your own flesh and blood. Then your light will shine forth like morning! (Isaiah 58:3-8)

Isaiah goes on, preaching again and again that what God desires is not prayer or fasting, but *action* on behalf of the poor and the oppressed.

This is a critical and captivating message. And it is the message that is not only repeated by Isaiah, but echoed by the conclusion that the Mishnah draws from the models of repentance in the book of Yonah.

Yet a problem remains with this rabbinic train of thought: it goes against the text! Unlike the explicitly recorded act of defiance from which Yonah himself repented, the evil deeds from which the Ninevites repented are nowhere explicitly spelled out. And unlike their fasting and prayer, which are detailed with specificity, their penitent *actions* are referenced in the broadest of terms.

The Midrash fills in this lacuna in the text with specific examples. The biblical commentator Radak quotes one example in particular: The Ninevites went so far in their repentance of their evil deeds that if someone had stolen a beam and used it in constructing a building, they would dismantle the entire building in order to return the beam.

What an odd example. Should we dismantle a skyscraper in order to return a single beam? But as a metaphor, this example could not be more apt: How often is our success *built*, in at least some minute way, on the backs of others, on their suffering or oppression? How often is there even some tiny taint of coercion or deceit in the midst of all that we have constructed or accomplished? Who among us has not gotten what we wanted by withholding important information from someone, criticizing or yelling at them unnecessarily, or failing to give credit where it was due? By overworking or underpaying a worker, misleading a competitor, leaning too heavily on a friend, or taking our family for granted? It is all too easy to dismiss that tiny taint as the inevitable cost of doing business or just getting by, or as collateral damage which is so small as not to be worth rectifying. We may even tell ourselves that it is impossible to go back and fix that now. But fixing that, says the Midrash, is the aspect of repentance that impresses God most of all.

May God give us the strength to fix whatever needs fixing, and may God grant us all a year of success and accomplishment that is built not on the suffering or slighting of others, but on companionship and partnership, peace, friendship, and love. ■

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

Neilah: Confronting the Work of our Hands by Ari Hart

It is dusk, on Yom Kippur. As the day is ending and the gates are closing, the *Neilah* service arrives in its full, incessant glory. For the fifth and final time, we recite the silent *Amidah* for Yom Kippur. As we sanctify the day, we begin with the familiar formula:

ותתן לנו ה' אלוקינו באהבה,
את יום הכיפורים הזה

God, our Lord, you have given us this Yom Kippur with love…

But suddenly, it shifts. A brand new, never before seen variation on the theme that we've recited so many times appears at *Neilah*:

קץ ומחילה וסליחה על כל
עונותינו, למען נחדל מעושק ידינו

An end and forgiveness for all our sins, in order that we refrain from using our hands to oppress

There are so many questions we can ask about this strange prayer.

Shouldn't it be a given that Jews are not supposed to be oppressors? Given the hundreds of *mitzvot* that structure a just society and require just actions, our story as a nation born in slavery, our historical reality over the last few thousand years, it seems pretty clear that a Jew should not oppress.

Another question we could ask: Why is this seemingly self controlled category, the use of our own hands, framed as a request from God? We normally ask God for things out of our control - health, safety, divine inspiration. What does God have to do with using our own hands for oppression? The desire to not oppress others would seem to lend itself better to personal resolutions - I will not abuse my workers this year, I pledge to curb my bigotry, etc.

And finally, why do we say this prayer in the communal? Most of us would look around at our families, friends and communities gathered for *Neilah*, and think, "they may have some faults, but these are good people. They are certainly not oppressors!" Yet suddenly our collective hands are oppressing others?

The painful truth? Your hands, my hands and everyone else we know hands are tools of oppression. They directly and indirectly cause suffering in the lives of God's creation - human, animal, and more. This is the reality of today's globalized world. We may not personally enslave children, but the money that we exchange for a shirt does support a system that enslaves children in Thailand who made that shirt. We may not personally exploit workers, but the tomato sauce we eat is very possibly made by someone who was cheated out of his/her wages, or was grown using chemicals that poisoned a local water supply, or was subsidized by a government at a rate that put the farmers in another country out of work. But even deeper than the realities of today's global economy, this has always been the reality of human existence. As much as we don't want to see it, the choices we make to secure our communities almost always exclude and harm others. The food that we eat comes at the expense of the animals we eat or exploit. The traps and poisons we set to rid ourselves of pests kill and maim millions of God's creatures. And of course, the words we utter have the potential to inflict tremendous suffering and pain - who among us does not harm to loved ones, friends or strangers regularly through our speech? Or the hurt and pain we cause ourselves? To live a life free of causing suffering to others is incredibly difficult, if not impossible. The Jainist monk comes to mind, wearing a mask to ensure she or he accidentally swallows no bugs, leading a life of chastity, abstaining from material possessions and family life; an honorable path perhaps, but not the Jewish one.

"Our hands: tools of oppression or tools of change?"

The *Neilah* prayer leaves us with no middle ground. The Jew on Yom Kippur must confront the terrifying real: oppression does not exist only in the hearts of serial killers and

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice teshuvah social justice PRACTICE activism morality

slave drivers.: it exists in your hands and mine. We are the oppressors we've been looking for.

Now, reflecting on this *Neilah* prayer in this way might lead one to feel defensive, guilty, apathetic or hopeless. But it does not have to. Once we realize this basic fact of our existence, new options become possible.

1. If we open ourselves to the oppression of our hands, we can learn how we are complicit in systems that exploit and oppress others.

2. Once we are aware of the oppression we take part in, we can make wise judgements, discerning where we have opportunities to make change and where we sadly cannot. Without reflection and awareness this is impossible.

3. Based on newfound awareness and discernment, we begin to act.

In the immortal words of the Rabbi Tarfon, the work is not yours to finish, but neither are you free to desist from it.

Nor must you work at it alone. The spiritual community gathers to express a collective desire for a different reality through prayer, then to learn how to move towards that reality, and then to act. We are in this together. And finally, the fight against our oppressive hands is not fought alone. We pray for change via God. Through partnership with God the liberator, the giver of life, lover of justice and righteousness with no need to exploit or oppress, we can begin to break free from our prison of exploitation and narrow self interest. May it be God's will that this year, that our hands continue transforming from the closed fists of oppression, whether acknowledged or unaware, distant or direct, intentional or accidental, into the wide open embrace of life, love and justice. Amen. ■

LAUNCHED BY **URI L'TZEDEK**, THE **TAV HAYOSHER** IS A LOCAL, GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE TO BRING WORKERS, RESTAURANT OWNERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TOGETHER TO CREATE JUST WORKPLACES IN KOSHER RESTAURANTS.

There are three criteria that a restaurant must provide its workers in order to qualify for the Tav HaYosher. All criteria are derived strictly from US, state, and local law.

1. The right to fair pay.
2. The right to fair time.
3. The right to a safe work environment.

NATIONWIDE, **OVER 90 RESTAURANTS** HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE TAV HAYOSHER!

THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED WITH TAV HAYOSHER!

- Become a Compliance Officer: The Tav HaYosher depends on trained volunteers who conduct regular compliance visits with all Tav HaYosher-certified restaurants.
- Advocate: Pick up the phone and call your local kosher restaurant. Ask for the owner or manager, and in a supportive, encouraging way, let them know you would like them to carry the Tav. This method of consumer activism has been very effective.
- Educate: Tell your shul, school, friends, relatives, whomever about the Tav! Give a drasha, write a blog post, send an email, help us get the message out!
- Donate: We do not charge restaurants for the Tav. That means we rely on donors like you to keep this work sustainable. Whether it's $10 or $10,000, every gift is crucial.

For more information, please send an e-mail to: tav@utzedek.org

---

EMPOWER THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

For the last four years, Uri L'Tzedek has created programs that have affected change in the Orthodox community. Help us create change just like you read about in the *Mah Ani? Self Reflection and Social Action for the High Holidays* by supporting one of our impactful programs.

Sponsorship Options

- **$36 Educational Materials**
  Creating customized source sheets for educational programs.
- **$72 Tav HaYosher certification**
  Insuring continued compliance at one restaurant.
- **$180 Sponsor a "Midnight Run"**
  Delivering food packages to the homeless.
- **$250 Sponsor a Tav HaYosher Compliance Officer**
  Training and ongoing support for one compliance officer.
- **$360 Sponsor a Social Justice Beit Midrash Session**
  Programming and Marketing costs associate with program.
- **$500 Sponsor a day of learning at a school**
  Engaging Jewish students in social justice and Halacha.
- **$1,000 Sponsor a Summer Fellow**
  Empowering future social justice activists.
- **$1,800 Support the Flaum's Campaign**
  Partnering with oppressed workers to fight for their rights.
- **$2,500 Launch Seeds of the Future**
  Promoting student involvement in the developing world.
- **$5,000 Expand Programming to LA,CA**
  Developing Uri L'Tzedek's presence on the West Coast.

Please make checks payable to FJC and indicate Uri L'Tzedek in the memo line.

Uri L'Tzedek Orthodox Social Justice 25 Broadway, 17th Floor New York, NY 10004

teshuvah jewish self activism morality spiritual practice sacrifice ACTIVISM morality sacrifice TESHUVAH SPIRITUAL social justice sacrifice spiritual practice social justice PRACTICE activism morality teshuvah

Uri L'Tzedek would like to thank our current and past sponsors for their continued support:

BLAUSTEIN

PHILANTHROPIC GROUP

The Covenant Foundation

Want to lead an innovative social justice campaign?
Want to gain valuable social entrepreneurship skills?
Want to meet other students who are passionate about social justice?

Become an AMOS Fellow Today!
Every Monday evening from October 3 -December 5, 2011

Leadership role in an **innovative Uri L'Tzedek campaign** such as the Tav HaYosher, Flaum's Appetizing, Prison Reform, Domestic Violence Awareness, or Micro-Finance

$250 towards seeding a social justice project

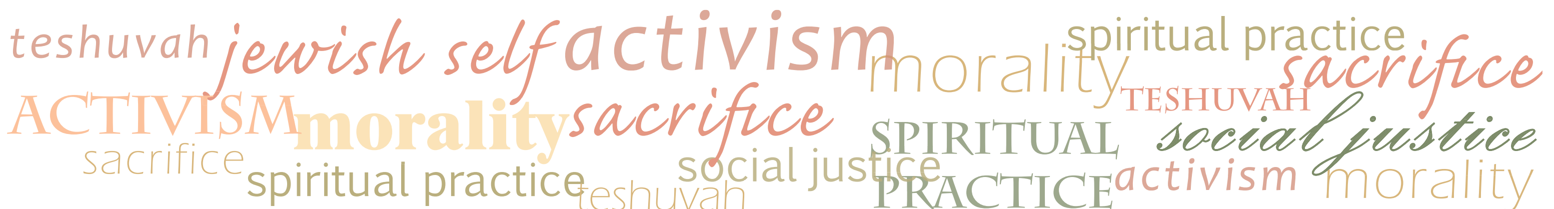
The AMOS Fellowship: inspired by the revolutionary prophecy of Amos: *But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty*

Develop skills crucial to non-profit work such as, **organizational development, fundraising, community organizing models**, **writing an effective op-ed**

Participate in a ***Shabbaton***, direct service **volunteer opportunities**, and much more!

To apply, or for more info, please contact David.Bookbinder@utzedek.org

www.utzedek.org



Editor in Chief Rabbi Ari Weiss
Managing Editor Hillary Levison
Design and Layout Aliza Weiss
Creative Consultant Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz
Creative Consultant Ari Hart

URI L'TZEDEK
ORTHODOX SOCIAL JUSTICE
25 Broadway, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10004
Telephone (212) 284-6540 Website www.utzedek.org Email info@utzedek.org