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Interview

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Yosef is a big hero to prisoners. Having been a prisoner, having prayed to Hashem, his release is obviously divinely ordained. He's a big hero and they relate to it. I tell the story very often.

Hamevaser: You were talking about how the Jewish congregation gives them a sense of self worth. Do you ever mention to prisoners halakha distinctions between Jews and non-Jews?

Rabbi Koslowe: On the question of Jews and non-Jews, my feeling is they need to recognize their Jewishness per se, how important it is, and their relationship [with] and *bitachon* in Hashem... *Asher bachar banu*. I mean, that's basically what I do. What I have to do is establish a common Jewishness, which brings them together, [in the context of] a Jewish community. Each in themselves can find their Jewishness. They escape from the humdrum of prison routine, come into my office... They have an opportunity with Hashem, [it's in] their hands.

Hamevaser: How, in a practical way, can the inmate participate in a Jewish community?

Rabbi Koslowe: Basically, they help each other. Help a fellow Jew, it's very important. It's a sense of community, so they band together. Without a family, a home, or a job, they're together. *'Arevim zeh bazzeh*, every Jew together...

When Am Hannivchar Fails

by David Silverberg

When dealing with the sins of *Benei Yisrael* recorded in *Chumash*, we tend to focus on "major sins," such as *Cheit ha'Egel* and *Cheit haMeragelim*. There is relatively little discussion of the *cheit* of *Ba'al Pe'or*, despite the fact that the number of Jewish deaths resulting from this particular *cheit*, 24,000, is the highest number of fatalities suffered by *Benei Yisrael* at one instance in the entire *Torah*. *Hoshea* explicitly indicates the severe nature of this particular sin: "I found Israel as pleasing as grapes in the wilderness; your fathers seemed to me like the first fig to ripen on a fig tree. But when they came to *Ba'al Pe'or* they turned aside to shamefulfulness; then they became as detested as they had been loved (9:10)." He presents the sin of *Ba'al Pe'or* as the cause of a dramatic change in the relationship between the Almighty and His people. As a result of this *aveirah*, *Benei Yisrael* were stripped of the status of "kevikkura vit'eina bereishitah," "the first fig to ripen," and relegated to a level at which they were "detested" by Hashem. What *cheit* could have possibly had such a devastating effect on God's attitude toward *Benei Yisrael*?

"While Israel was staying at *Shittim*, the people profaned themselves by whoring with the Moabite women who invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. The people partook of them and worshipped that god. Thus Israel attached itself to *Ba'al Pe'or*, and the Lord was incensed with Israel...

"Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midyanite woman over to his companions, in the sight of *Moshe* and of the whole Israelite community who were weeping at the entrance of the *Ohel Mo'ed*." (Bemidbar 25:1-3, 6)

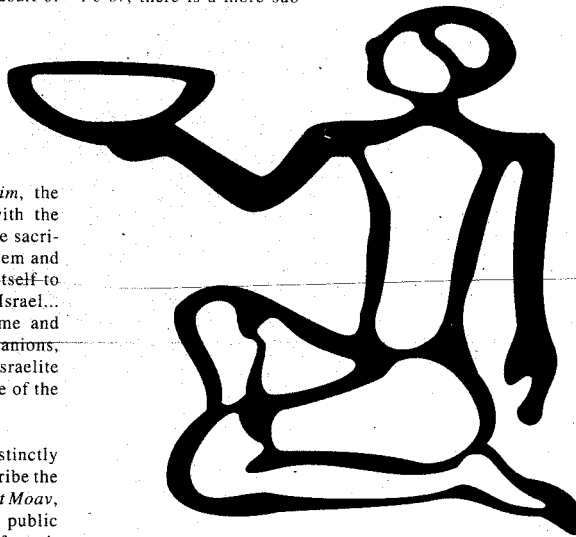
The *parshah* is composed of two distinctly different events. While the first *pesukim* describe the Jews' ritual and sexual involvement with *Benot Moav*, the latter section of the *parshah* relates the public immorality of *Zimri* and *Kozbi*. On the surface, it appears as though these two events are separate *aveirot*, as a different nation is involved in each of the two incidents. Yet, the fact that both events are presented in one *parshah* seems to point to the fact that the two *chata'im* have a very strong connection. However, the nature of the relationship is unclear. Could one have happened without the other?

A sinful alliance

To properly understand the sin of *Ba'al Pe'or*, we must carefully examine the circumstances surrounding the incident. Although the phrase *vayyachel ha'am liznot*, generally interpreted as "and the nation began to whore," implies that the Jews initiate the relations with *Moav* and *Midyan*, it is clear that this is not the case. After the plague, God instructs *Moshe* to assail *Midyan* for plotting against *Benei Yisrael*. *Chazal*, in *Sanhedrin* 106a, explain that because *Bil'am*, a Midyanite, conceived of the plot to seduce the Jews, *Midyan* was punished. This is extrapolated from *Bil'am*'s words to the Moabite king, *Balak*, after unsuccessfully attempting to place a curse upon the Jews at *Balak*'s request: "And now, behold, I go unto my people; come and I will counsel thee what this people shall do to thy people at the end of days (Bemidbar 24:14)." Yet neither in this *pasuk* nor in those following it do we find mention of a plot of sexual enticement. Actually, the entire oration focuses on *Benei Yisrael*'s ultimate achievement of overwhelming military supremacy over the Middle East. How do *Chazal* read into this *pasuk* a scheme

to seduce *Benei Yisrael*?

The explanation lies in the literary parallels between this *parshah* and *Shemot* 34:15-6: "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they go astray [*vezanu*] after their gods and do sacrifice unto their gods and they call thee and thou eat of their sacrifice; and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons and their daughters go astray after their gods and make thy sons go astray after their gods." The phenomena of *zenut* ("whoring"), the foreign nations' inviting the Jews to their sacrifices and intermarriage are presented as elements of a *berit*, a treaty. During the incident of *Ba'al Pe'or*, the Jews engage in these specific forbidden activities. While a superficial reading of the text gives the impression that what transpires is merely an exhibition of undignified frivolity, rampant hedonistic behavior and the repugnant worship of *Ba'al Pe'or*, there is a more sub-



stantial relationship between *Benei Yisrael*, *Moav* and *Midyan*: namely, a *berit*. This is expressed by *zenut*, the Jews' participation in Moabite pagan rituals and by the intermarriage between the two nations.

Bil'am's final oration to *Balak* and its relation to the events at *Ba'al Pe'or* now become clear. By prophesying, "A scepter comes forth from Israel; It smashes the brow of *Moav*," the prophet advises *Balak* not to launch a military campaign against the Jewish nation. Doing such will result in Israel's regional superiority and *Moav*'s destruction. *Bil'am* recommends the only remaining option available for *Balak*: entering into a peaceful agreement with the powerful and threatening Jewish nation. These are the roots of *cheit Ba'al Pe'or*, as *Chazal* point out. *Balak* heeds *Bil'am*'s counsel and, together with *Midyan*, precipitates *cheit Ba'al Pe'or*.

The second half of the story also indicates that a treaty is made between *Am Yisrael* and *Midyan*. *Zimri*, the tribal leader of *Shimon*, and *Kozbi*, a Midyanite princess, profane themselves in front of the entire nation. In several places in *Tanakh* we find the marriage of one leader to the daughter of another signifying a political agreement between the two constituencies. *Shelomo* marries Pharaoh's daughter and *Achav* marries the Tzidonian princess *Izevel*. Thus we may speculate that a social, if not political, alliance is formed between the tribe of *Shimon* and *Midyan*, signified by the union of their respective

heads of state.

Mashpi'a or mushpa?

If there is an official agreement between *Yisrael* and the two gentile nations, then perhaps the severity of the sin is not simply the Jews' promiscuity or the worship of *Ba'al Pe'or*. By signing a treaty with *Moav* and *Midyan*, the Jews enter into a cultural exchange with the two gentile nations. They now accept the culture of *Moav* and *Midyan* as a legitimate code of behavior. Although idolatry and intermarriage of and within themselves are certainly serious *aveirot*, the primary aspect of the sin of *Ba'al Pe'or* that ultimately leads to such a harsh plague is the Jews' acceptance of the Moabite culture.

By carefully examining *Hoshea*'s evaluation of *cheit Ba'al Pe'or* it becomes clear that this is indeed the nature of the sin. The *pasuk* claims that Hashem relates to the Jews as *bikkurim*, first fruits. Just as the first fig off the tree and the first grape from the vine are distinguished from the rest of the harvest and considered *hekdesh*, sacred, so too *Benei Yisrael* are elevated to the unique status of *Am Hannivchar*, the Chosen People. However, the Jewish farmer who sanctifies the first olives he picks off the branch and brings them to the *kohanim* in the *Beit Mikdash* is by no means indicating that the remaining olives are lacking any form of spiritual significance. The underlying idea of *bikkurim* and similar mitzvot, such as *terumah* and *ma'aser*, is the same concept posed by R. Yishmael in the introduction to *Torat Kohanim*. "Anything that leaves the whole, it does not leave to reveal only about itself, rather, it leaves to teach about the entire whole." By imparting the first fruits with a special level of *kedushah*, the farmer illustrates his appreciation for the sacred nature of all his fruits, as they all belong to Hashem.

The relationship between the *bikkurim* and the other fruits parallels that between *Benei Yisrael* and the other nations. The role of an *Am Kadosh* is to bring the Divine Message to the whole of humanity. We are to elevate the spirituality of mankind and to help all people realize God's dominion over the Earth. A people so intimately attached to the Creator represents His involvement and interest in all nations. As Rav Soloveitchik writes in the beginning of *Ma Dodeikh Middod*, (translated from the Hebrew) "The separation that was fashioned at Sinai did not bring about a detachment of the nation from the world... On the contrary, it directed the face of the nation... toward the whole world. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, Who chose His nation did not reject the whole of humanity. On the contrary, He obligated His nation to spread the living Torah, to bring every man closer to his Father in heaven and to serve the priests of Hashem who bear His message to the whole of humanity." (*Divrei Hagot Veha'arakah*, p.59) *Hoshea* tells us that just as the separation of *bikkurim* demonstrates the sacred nature of the rest of the fruits, so is it demanded of *Benei Yisrael* to elevate the level of religious awareness of all of mankind.

Hoshea continues, "But when they came to *Ba'al Pe'or*, they turned away to shamefulfulness." When the Jews enter into an official agreement with *Moav* and *Midyan*, they take on the cultural characteristics of these nations: pagan ritual and excessive indulgence in physical pleasures. "Thus Israel attached itself to *Ba'al Pe'or* and the Lord was incensed with Israel." Hashem's anger is kindled not

Ba'al Pe'or

continued from previous page

just over the idol worship or sexual relations per se, but rather over the Jews' adoption of foreign culture. The role of the Chosen People is to be *mashpi'a*, to influence, rather than to be *mushpa*, influenced. Therefore, as *Hoshea* asserts, they became "as detested as they have been loved." By allowing the other nations to dictate to them their cultural behavior, *Benei Yisrael* lose their identity as *Am Hannivchar*.

Benei Yisrael: bikkurim or chalalim?

Echoes of this understanding of the *cheit* appear in Midrashic literature, as well. The *Midrash Yelamdeinu*, commenting on the words, *vayyachel ha'am*, (25:10) compares *Benei Yisrael* at *Ba'al Pe'or* with a *bat kohen shezintah venitchalelah*, the daughter of a priest who whored and as a result was desecrated. What does the *Midrash* add through this comparison? And why are the Jews compared specifically to a *bat kohen*?

As alluded to by R. Soloveitchik in the passage quoted earlier, the relationship between the Jews and *Umot Ha'olam* exists in microcosmic form within the hierarchical structure of Jewish society. Just as *Am Hannivchar* bears the Divine Message to the other nations, so does the chosen tribe serve as God's messenger to the rest of the Jewish people. The *kohanim* are to serve as the prototypes of a spiritual existence from whom other Jews can learn *Avodat Hashem*. Thus a *kohen* who acts immorally demonstrates his inability, or unwillingness to carry out his priestly mission. When a *kohen* marries a forbidden woman, the resulting child is a *chalal*, one who does not have the status of a *kohen*. Violation of the

priestly code results in loss of *kehunah*. The *chatal* represents the failure of priesthood to serve as the source of spirituality for *Benei Yisrael*. The same is true of the daughter of a *kohen* who conducts herself immorally. She becomes a *chalah*, void of *kedushat kehuna*.

The *kohanim* of the world, *Benei Yisrael*, are bidden to follow standards higher than those adhered to by the other nations. The *cheit* of *Ba'al Pe'or* reveals that *Benei Yisrael* are not prepared to accept the challenges of an *Am Hannivchar*, to help all mankind appreciate *Malkhut Shamayim*. They then become like a *chalah*, a *bat kohen* who loses her sanctity when she loses sight of her mission.

Is Moav really guilty?

When one takes a close look, it seems that *Midyan* also assumes part of the responsibility for the events at *Shittim*. This becomes clear in *Bemidbar* 25:17, when God orders *Benei Yisrael* to smite the *Midyanim* for having plotted to seduce the Jews to sin. *Chazal* (*Bava Kama* 38b) point out that *Moav* was just as involved in the events as *Midyan* yet the instructions are to annihilate only *Midyan*. The *Gemara* explains: "Moav was spared for two righteous descendants of *Moav*, *Rut* and *Na'amah*." Why would Hashem allow *Moav* to emerge unscathed from the events at *Ba'al Pe'or* because of two converts? Perhaps this question relates to another major issue in the *Ba'al Pe'or* story: what is the nature of *Midyan's* and *Moav's* sin?

The relationship between *Am Yisrael* and the other nations is bilateral. We have thus far focused on *Benei Yisrael's* obligations as *Am Hannivchar*. But the gentiles have responsibilities as well. The *Sefat Emet* in the beginning of *Parshat Yitro* elaborates on the mechanism by which God's glory manifests itself in the world. The Jews, by

receiving the *Torah*, become the medium through which all mankind can come closer to Hashem. By submitting to *Kelal Yisrael* and by recognizing the Jews as God's people, the gentiles can attain a relationship with the Almighty. Hashem needs one nation on a spiritual level capable of receiving His word directly and thereby serving as a buffer

between Him and the rest of the world. But the system is effective only if the other nations admit to the supremacy of *Kelal Yisrael*.

Perhaps this explains the *cheit* of *Moav* and *Midyan*. The treaty which they initiate with *Benei Yisrael* is unlike other treaties, in which a weak nation submissively offers a peaceful agreement to a threatening power. In this

treaty, *Moav's* and *Midyan's* intent is to impose dangerous and influential forces upon the Jews. Thus *Moav* and *Midyan* deny *Am Yisrael's* role as the Divine Messengers. A nation reluctant to submit to God's nation is in effect refusing to accept Hashem's majesty and is therefore deserving of annihilation.

The eventual conversion of *Rut* and *Na'amah* is not a reason to spare *Moav*. It is, however, indicative of an important characteristic of *Moav*. If two converts are ultimately to be born to this nation, then this nation must still have the potential for *bittul*, the required submission to *Kelal Yisrael*. After all, rejecting one's religion in favor of Judaism is the clearest signal of *bittul*. Therefore, Hashem does not decree that *Moav* should see the same fate as *Midyan*. While both nations demonstrate their reluctance to accept *Benei Yisrael's* superiority, *Moav's* future reveals that ultimately it will submit to God's Chosen People and thereby recognize Hashem's dominion over the world.

The cheit of Ba'al Pe'or reveals that Benei Yisrael are not prepared to accept the challenges of an Am Hannivchar

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She'asani Kirtzeno: A Review Essay

by Uri Cohen

JEWISH WOMEN IN TIME AND TORAH.

By Eliezer Berkovits.
Ktav, 1990.

TO BE A JEWISH WOMAN.

By Lisa Aiken.
Jason Aronson, 1992.

THE VOICE OF SARAH: FEMININE SPIRITUALITY AND TRADITIONAL JUDAISM.

By Tamar Frankiel.
HarperSanFrancisco, 1990.

WARNING: Every discussion of women in Judaism, including this article, is bound to offend somebody.

Dr. Judith Bleich, in a symposium printed in a recent issue of *Tradition*, states that, "The single

level of men who are *sheleimim* (whole)." Yet she often complained bitterly about "the desecration of the honor of women and the lowering of their worth" by their exclusion from the obligations to perform time-bound *mitzvot* and learn Torah (*Mekor Barukh*, vol.3, pp.1949ff; don't bother with *My Uncle the Netziv*, which conveniently omits all the complaints).

Unfortunately, fear of feminism has prompted many Orthodox men to question the motives of such Torah-educated women. It's true that the non-Orthodox Jewish feminist movement of the 1970's did appear to be a threat to Orthodoxy (see Rabbi Norman Lamm's introduction to Rabbi Moshe Meiselman's *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law*). Twenty years later, though, it's clear that someone else took the brunt of the damage - the Conservative movement. Spear-headed by the women rabbis issue, egalitarianism ripped through their ranks. When the smoke cleared, their right wing was gone (to form the Union of Traditional Judaism, now hovering at the edge of Orthodoxy), leaving their movement with a course set for Reform.

years. One is a complaint, one borders on apologetics, and the third breaks new ground.

The late Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits's *Jewish Women in Time and Torah*, an expanded angry version of a chapter in his 1976 *Crisis and Faith*, is an angry critique from within the ranks. He starts with the longest-ever litany of Talmudic statements, both halakhic and aggadic, that seem to put down women. Berkovits is perplexed as to how these could be part of the Torah. His bandaid answer: they're not! Instead of dealing with them one by one, as previous writers did, he comes up with a Grand Unified Theory - one sweeping *chakirah* (dichotomy). It's simple: everything he thinks is positive about women is "Torah-taught", while everything he considers negative is "Torah-tolerated" - bad influences from ancient cultures, which the Torah once tolerated but which we must now eliminate. From now on, he decides, rabbis should allow women to put on *tefillin* and form actual *minyanim* (*barkhu* and all!)

Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is alive and mostly unchanged by feminism (contrary to Blu Greenberg's claims in the current *Lilith*; the career-vs.-home problem is prompted more by economic necessity than by ideology). Anyone who still thinks

Although I disagree with the liberal who told me this book was Berkovits's resignation from Orthodoxy, it looks as if Berkovits has stepped over the line here. This comes as no surprise to those who've read his 1983 *Not In Heaven*, which proposes that *halakhah* has been frozen and the rabbis must make radical changes to restore it to its original ethical concerns. In response, I'd like to quote the new Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Jonathan Sacks: "Blu Greenberg once wrote, 'Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a halakhic way.' But there is a corollary: where there is no halakhic way, there can be no genuine rabbinic will. The rabbinic will is not Nietzschean, carrying all before it. It knows defeat as well as victory; it senses where halakhah resists as well as where it yields (*L'eylah* #26)."

One more aspect of *Jewish Women in Time and Torah* proves troubling. One word that Berkovits constantly uses is "obviously." (The Modern Orthodox usually make a point of tolerance, so his extremism is a bit embarrassing.) To whom is it obvious that, say, women can now wear *tefillin*? Even rabbis well-known for leniencies in women's issues deny this one. Berkovits is a lone voice in the wilderness, and thus he screams to make himself heard. Even though he raises some valid points, his unacceptable understanding of the halakhic process will keep this book out of normative halakhic discourse.

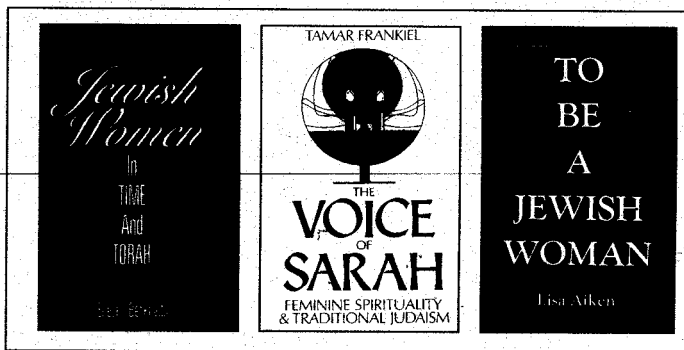
While Berkovits demands revolutionary change, Dr. Lisa Aiken is content with the way things are. An Orthodox psychotherapist who was once a feminist, she was dismayed to find no books on women in Judaism written by observant women.

feminism is a clear and present danger should wake up and trade in his 8-track tapes. But the Orthodox literature to deal with women's issues continues to assume the questioners are dangerous uneducated radicals, and so it takes one of two extremes: backlash and apologetics.

The backlash approach responds to the presumed hostility of the questions with a little hostility of its own. At its worst, it is vicious. A little book about "Real Judaism" actually says, "Now ladies, if you'll stop screaming so loudly I will explain what this means." So much for *kiruv rechokim*. At its best, it is typified by Rabbi Meiselman's book, which is often helpful but is, at its core, a polemic. Women don't like that; the kindest criticism of it is Lisa Aiken's: "written from a male perspective, with an analytical style that is more appropriate for talmudic study than for dealing with the dilemmas and emotions concerning observant Jewish women."

The other approach, apologetics, takes a pre-conceived notion and reads it into the sources, even if it's not there. A classic example is the book whose blurb crows that it "convincingly argues that the Bible and rabbinic literature have *always* [his emphasis] placed women at a higher spiritual plane than men." Dr. David Berger points out that, to the extent that an apologetic claim is not a plausible reading in its original context, it is dishonest. Furthermore, it is not "convincing." Women don't fall for that.

All of this brings us to the three books at hand, each of which has appeared in the last two



most dramatic change in the Orthodox community within the last century is the transformation which has taken place in the education of women." Seventy-five years ago, it was given that women didn't receive any formal Jewish education. Today, it is given that they receive twelve years of it, along with a general education. Even as recently as twenty years ago, almost no women went to Israel for a year after high school. Today, a new seminary opens there practically every year. Subsequently, there are many women continuing to learn Torah upon returning to America - more than ever before.

These women are not feminists - just ask them! They don't want to change *halakhah*. They don't want women's prayer groups. They just want to serve Hashem by learning Torah. (Witness the successful pressure for the Stern *beit midrash*.)

Sometimes, however, exposing women to Torah means exposing the Torah to strong questions. Let's face it: many aspects of Judaism really *look* like they have a negative attitude to women (e.g. *she'asani ishah*), and many Orthodox men add fuel to the fire by making patronizing or insulting comments about women.

When some Torah-educated women are bothered by strong questions, then, it is understandable. In fact, they have a historical precedent: Rayna Batya, granddaughter of Reb Chayyim Volozhiner and wife of the Netziv. The *Torah Temimah* (Rabbi Barukh Epstein) describes his aunt as "proper, wise, *tzenuah* (modest), and incredibly learned - around

The Many Faces of Teshuvah

This article is based on a lecture given by Rabbi Barry Freundel of Keshet Israel Congregation in Washington D.C. on Shabbat Shuvah 5752.

As the *Yamim Noraim* approach, we are shaken from spiritual complacency by the cry of the shofar, the call to *Teshuvah*. In truth, from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* onward, *Teshuvah* plays a primary role. From the first sounds of the shofar to the beating of the *Aravot* on *Hoshanah Rabbah* as a final attempt at *Teshuvah*, we are constantly reminded of the need for repentance.

As *Teshuvah* is a fundamental element in Jewish tradition, it is curious that we often fail to note many of the finer points of its process. It is commonly perceived that there is only one model of *Teshuvah*. Should an individual sin and thereupon regret his action, he must resign himself to correct his conduct and confess. Once this *Teshuvah* process is complete, it is considered as if the individual had never even sinned. While this is generally perceived as the sole procedure with which one can obtain forgiveness from God, *Rishonim* have developed very specific but different guidelines to attain the proper level of *Teshuvah*.

The *Teshuvah* prescribed by *Rabbeinu Yonah*, the author of the *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, appears to be an involved and lengthy process, whereas the *Teshuvah* of *Rambam* prescribed in the *Yad HaChazakah* seems relatively curt and simple. A third model, defined in the *Chovot Hallevavot* of *Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekudah*, seems to be a compromise between those of the *Yad Hachazakah* and the *Sha'arei Teshuvah*. Where do the different models originate, and how have the *Rishonim* reached their conclusions regarding their prescribed methods of *Teshuvah*? *Teshuvah*?

The firstborn of teshuvah

Chazal, in their comments on *Tanach*, consider several characters to be models of *Teshuvah*. An examination of these characters and their actions reveals the unique qualities of their repentance, and sheds light on the differences of opinion found in *Rishonim*.

The *Midrash* in *Bereishit Rabbah* 82:12 states, "Reuven is the firstborn for pregnancy, for birth, for birthrights, for inheritance, for work, for repentance, and even for prophecy." How is Reuven connected to repentance and what quality establishes him as the firstborn for *Teshuvah*?

From birth, *Reuven* assumes the responsibility of ensuring a loving bond between his mother and father. Describing

the birth of *Reuven*, the *Torah* states, "And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called him *Reuven*, for she said, surely the Lord has looked upon my affliction, now therefore my husband will love me" (Gen. 29:32). Apparently, *Reuven* takes this role to heart, bearing the burden of the strained relations between his parents. This underlying concern for their bond causes him to commit a sin that haunts him thereafter.

"And it was when Israel lived in that land [Canaan], and *Reuven* went and lay with *Bilhah*, his father's concubine, and *Yisrael* heard about it" (Gen. 35:22). Most commentaries explain that *Reuven* did not actually sleep with *Bilhah*, but rather took his father's bed from *Bilhah's* tent and placed it in his mother's tent instead. *Rashi* explains that *Reuven*

noted by the *Gemara* for his own act of repentance and is considered an originator of *Teshuvah*. In the famous episode in *Parshat Vayyeishev*, chapter 38, *Reuven's* brother, *Yehudah*, sins with his daughter in law, *Tamar*, after she disguises herself to entice him. According to the *Midrash*, *Yehudah* is confronted with his action in the presence of his entire family, while presiding over the trial of *Tamar*. Instead of concealing his guilt to protect himself, *Yehudah* instantly confesses: "And *Yehudah* acknowledged them and said, 'she has been more righteous than I'" (Gen. 38:26). Sensing the boldness of his action, the *Midrash* praises him by stating, "*Yehudah* said in his heart, 'it is better that I be embarrassed in this world, and not be embarrassed before my righteous fathers in the world to come.'" Whereas *Reuven* considered

this merely the first step towards achieving repentance, *Yehudah*, with this modest proclamation, considers himself absolved of the act he committed. Determined not to be hindered by past actions, he disregards his misdeed and continues his life free of guilt over past sins. Indeed, the *Gemara* in *Sotah 7b* sees *Yehudah's* admission of guilt as the impetus for *Reuven's* profession of his own sin. Thus, *Yehudah* can also be seen as an originator of *Teshuvah*. His *Teshuvah* comprises a single act -- admission of guilt; and a commitment never again to repeat the act. Once repentance has been attained, the sinner can disregard his sin and resume his service to God.

A middle ground

A third model recognized for his bold act of *Teshuvah* is King David. In the famous episode in *Samuel II:2*, David sleeps with *Batsheva*, the wife of *Uriah*, thereby impregnating her. After an unsuccessful attempt to conceal his actions, David intentionally sends *Uriah* to the battlefield to be killed. While some commentaries deny that David actually sinned, most assume that his actions were sinful. In accordance with the latter, the text indicates that *Natan*

was sent to hold David accountable for his reprehensible action.

Confronted by *Natan* with his act, David, instead of denying his misdeed, plainly admits, "I have sinned against the Lord" (*Samuel II*, 12:13). *Natan* then informs David that God will not kill him, but instead will kill the son that resulted from the sin committed. Seeing his newborn mortally ill, David prostrates himself before God, fasting and begging for mercy for himself and the child, even refusing any attempt at consolation. When the child ultimately dies, David rises, changes his clothes, and returns to his original stature. Questioned by his servants regarding his actions, David responds, "When the child was still alive, I fasted and cried because I said, perhaps God will find favor in my eyes and spare the child. But now that he has died why should I fast and cry? Can I bring him back? I am going to him, he is not returning to me" (*Samuel II*, 12:22-23).

This bitter statement offers insight into David's effort to achieve forgiveness. Although David had already acknowledged his wrongdoing, that was insufficient. There was also a procedure to follow to



felt that if Rachel, who had died, had caused anguish to his mother, then certainly *Bilhah*, Rachel's concubine, would do the same. Clearly, *Rashi's* interpretation relies on the underlying premise that *Reuven* considered it his duty to rectify any problem in his parents' relationship. *Reuven* thus rearranged the beds to achieve this goal. Essentially, *Reuven's* sin was prompted by this feeling of responsibility over the strained relationship between his parents.

Chazal, sensing *Reuven's* guilt over the act that he had committed, depict him as a truly tragic figure: After *Yosef* is sold by his brothers into bondage, the *Torah* states, "And *Reuven* returned to the pit and behold, *Yosef* was not in the pit" (*Bereishit* 37:29). *Rashi* comments that *Reuven* was not with his brothers as they had sat down to a meal. Busy lamenting over the sin he had committed, he refused to join them. Despite the fact that a reasonable period of time had elapsed from his commission of that sin, *Reuven* could never completely feel cleansed of his misdeed, and felt it necessary to constantly reflect on his failure. In this sense, *Reuven* is seen as the firstborn of *Teshuvah*, the founder of his own personal form of repentance.

Yehudah's clean conscience

Another prominent figure in *Bereishit* is

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The Mission of Motherhood

by Sally Rosen

On the first morning of Rosh HaShanah, Jewish congregations read Genesis 21, which tells the story of the birth of Yitzchak to Avraham and Sarah. The haftarah for this day comes from the beginning of the book of Samuel, in which Channah prays for and is granted a son, Shemuel. What is the connection of these two passages to each other? And furthermore, why were they chosen to be read on yom haddin?

Upon examination, the reader notices a great many similarities between the stories of these two women, Sarah and Channah. Both are initially barren, while their husbands have children from other wives: Hagar, in Sarah's case, and Peninnah, in the case of Channah. The fertile wife in each woman's life makes the barren protagonist unhappy: Sarah becomes inferior in the eyes of Hagar, causing the former to lash out in anger at Avraham (Gen. 16:4-5), and Peninnah consistently infuriates her co-wife, Channah, driving her to tears (ISam 1:6). In fact, the midrash (Yalkut Shim'oni 77) links the stories even more closely in adding that Channah, like Sarah, had been Elkanah's first wife; upon realizing that she could not bear children, Channah brought Peninnah into her house to enable Elkanah to perpetuate his family, much the way the Torah depicts Sarah's situation. Clearly, the stories are thematically related, so it is not surprising that they are read together. But the passages' individual messages and their application to Rosh HaShanah have yet to be explained.

Different motivations for motherhood

There are significant differences between the two women's motivations and goals, which may help clarify the different messages that the stories impart. The above-mentioned midrash suggests that Channah was motivated to bring Peninnah into her home, in the hope of being rewarded with a child of her own. This midrash fits well in context, for Channah's inability to bear children caused her great pain, as evidenced by her weeping, her refusal to eat of the sacrifices at Shiloh, and by her vow to give her offspring to Hashem if He would only grant her wish. That, however, does not appear to be Sarah Immeinu's motivation. When she offers Hagar to Avraham, Sarah is an elderly woman of seventy-five (cf. Gen. 12:4, 16:3, 17:17). She has virtually given up hope of having children, as she says, "Behold, Hashem has restrained me from bearing..." (Gen. 16:2). Also, Sarah's anger during Hagar's pregnancy stems from being treated as inferior in her own house; there is no indication that she would not have been satisfied with Hagar as a "surrogate" mother. By contrast, Channah's desire to have a child is clearly strong, despite the fact that Peninnah has children. Although Rashi, commenting on Sarah's statement,

*Channah
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woman: to have
a child*

"Ulay ibbaneh mimmennah" (Gen. 16:2), maintains that Sarah did in fact bring Hagar in the hope that she would herself conceive, it is perhaps more likely that Sarah means, "Perhaps my house will be built through her," i.e., that Sarah could raise Hagar's son as her own. Sarah focuses on continuing the line of Avraham, on producing an heir to the berit with Hashem, while Channah's interests lie in having a child for herself.

During the regalim, Channah refused to eat from the sacrifices at Shiloh each year, despite the preference that Elkanah showed to her by giving her a "manah achat appayim" (ISam. 1:5), a favorable portion to make her happy (Rashi, Raibag). She was so miserable that she wept at the table, and was so engrossed in her plaintive prayer that Eli HaCohen thought she was in a drunken stupor.

Why did Channah want a son so desperately?

Channah's reason for this despair, as previously mentioned, was not because she longed to provide Elkanah with a son. It was also not a search for someone who would love her, for Elkanah was clearly a compassionate, caring husband. Unfortunately, Elkanah misunderstood his wife, as he asked her, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (ISam. 1:8) Love was not what she lacked. In fact, Channah was even willing to give up her son, committing him to lifelong service of God! She seemed to simply want to bear a child, to rid herself of the bitterness she felt at being barren. Channah wanted to fulfill what she saw as her purpose as a woman: to have a child. (Rav Yitzchak Arama ascribes the same feeling to Rachel Immeinu, as she demanded of Yaakov, "Give me children, or else I die." (Gen. 30:1)) This is why nothing comforts Channah until Eli HaCohen promises that her wish will be granted (ISam. 1:17).

Whose son is he?

At the birth of Shemuel to Channah, the navi writes, "...Channah conceived, and bore a son; and she called his name Shemuel..." (1:20). This wording is significant when contrasted with the Torah's description of the birth of Yitzchak to Sarah: "And Sarah conceived and bore Avraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Avraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bore to him, Yitzchak... And Avraham was 100 years old when his son Yitzchak was born unto him." (21:2-5) The text clearly emphasizes that Sarah bore a child primarily for Avraham, while no such emphasis is present in the case of Channah and Elkanah's child, Shemuel. Channah names her son, but Avraham names Yitzchak. In fact, Yitzchak's name was divinely dictated to Avraham, for he laughed after Hashem informed him that Sarah would bear him a child who would be the heir to the berit (Gen. 17:15-19). By contrast, the name Channah gives to her child is Shemuel: "ki meishashem she'iltiv," "because I have

asked him from Hashem."

The setting of each story further illuminates the distinction: Avraham and Sarah's story takes place in their home, whereas Channah and Elkanah's occurs in the mishkan in Shiloh, far away from Elkanah's house. Another interesting contrast is that while both Yitzchak and Shemuel were going to be given up to Hashem - Yitzchak at the Akedah and Shemuel to serve in beit Hashem - Yitzchak returns home at the end, to continue the family that will become Yisrael, while Shemuel indeed stays in beit Hashem from the time he is weaned of his mother's milk.

Do we have a prayer?

A striking difference between Sarah and Channah is that Channah prays for a child, and her prayer is described in great detail. Indeed, many halakhot of tefillah are learned from Channah's beseeching prayer, including that one must actually say the words he or she is reading, that one must not pray too loudly, that one must have intense kavanah, and others. And Channah's second tefillah, maintains the midrash (Yalkut Shim'oni 80), includes the topics of each of the eighteen blessings in our main prayer, the shemoneh esrei. Thus, Channah's prayer is paradigmatic: a pure expression of one's deepest emotions, as she says, "and I poured out my soul before Hashem" (ISam. 1:15). We there-

fore read her story on Rosh HaShanah as testimony to the efficacy of tefillah.

The story of Sarah does not impart a lesson of prayer - in fact, prayer on Sarah's part is not mentioned at all. Rather, the message in Genesis 21 is one of hashggachah: Hashem will fulfill his promise to

Avraham and grant him descendants who will keep his covenant with God. Hashem's pekidah - remembering - of a previous promise is emphasized, as the portion we read begins with the words, "And Hashem remembered Sarah as He had said, and Hashem did unto Sarah as He had spoken."

These ideas, together, are appropriate for Rosh HaShanah, a time when Jews reexamine their relationship with Hashem, and renew their commitment to berit avot through days of intense prayer and introspection.

*Sarah focuses
on continuing
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with Hashem*

The Search for God at Sing Sing:

Hamevaser's Dov Chelst recently interviewed Rabbi Koslowe. Excerpts from the interview follow.

Hamevaser: How many prisoners take advantage of your services?

Rabbi Koslowe: They all do. It isn't only because of me. I've been around quite some time and am well known in the prison system. Your reputation develops over the years, and a rabbi, a chaplain... can do things. You know it's kind of mysterious, but you can accomplish things. And then, we have an active congregational life [in the prison]. There's a special room that we use for services. I didn't build a chapel, but I furnished it. We have an *Aron Kodesh*, we have a *Torah* there, we have seats. The men can come down there every morning to daven. Of the 30, at least 6 or 7 men come down every morning, before going off to their program, with *tallis* and *tefillin*. And I [got them there], one by one. I mean it took some time. I'm there at Sing Sing at least once a week.

We have an active service program, an active study program--Jewish history, Bible, *dinim*, ritual, Hebrew reading and writing. Then, I have an active counseling program, group and individual.

Hamevaser: This forty day period marks a time where most Jews feel a heightened need to do *teshuvah*. How do prison inmates identify with this period, if at all?

Rabbi Koslowe: Inmates can identify with *teshuvah* particularly [strongly]. Throughout the month of Elul, I'm there at least four or five times. During Elul, in my visits to the institution, I've told them that this is a month of preparation for the *Yamim Noraim* and particularly that *Rosh Hashanah* is *Yom haDin*. They are familiar with Judgment Day, having had the experience in courts and with the police before they entered the prison. They recognize and understand what Judgment Day means. Their judgment days have been very serious one in terms of incarceration, far different than judgment days that people outside face. Failure and success, sickness and health, are far more paramount to them in terms of *Yom haDin*. They've actually been under the gun and so when I speak of *Yom haDin* to them, they fully recognize that Hashem is going to judge them. I make it very clear to them that they're being judged for their behavior in the past, and that whether they will have a good year -- healthwise, successwise, homewise, etc. -- depends upon, to a great extent, the Law (of course, they're serving a prison term!) and *teshuvah*, in terms of their own personal *teshuvah* which is a basic and very important requirement. And, I harp, of course, upon the very fact that *teshuvah*

has many elements. There are twenty or thirty different stages and steps to *teshuvah* that *chazal* speak about. I particularly [emphasize] two or three ele-

life?

Rabbi Koslowe: Surprising as it may sound, they are very touched by God. I refer to Hashem's presence constantly. They have access to Hashem; there's no agent in between. We believe in *tefillah*. In fact, just the other day, I was using the well known chassidic story about the young man coming into shul, unable to daven. He picks up the *Machzor* upside down and says, *alef, beiz, gimmel*. Hashem puts the words together. I use that story very often. I've taught most of them to daven and most of them can read Hebrew, but not all of them. We get people coming and going.

They have a great respect for me and for the synagogue. They may do all kinds of things around the institution; there are fights, there are knifings every day. But the sanctuary is inviolate. They come, they have respect for it. In my one-to-one relationships with them, they raise a great many questions. I always give them the opportunity, after a short *devar torah*, to respond to me. It's always with the [perspective] that there is an omnipotent God who is in control of everything. Are they all believers? No. They'll say, "Look, Rabbi! I don't accept what you say." We talk about these things. I've visited cells where I find them crying, weeping.

The macho appearance outside the cell is [to hide any] sign of weakness. I have one-on-one counseling with them in their cells or group [counseling] in my office. We discuss God's presence and how important it is to them. They are as vulnerable and they believe as much, from what I can ascertain, as people outside.

A young man, now who killed his mother... sometimes he shrieks and screams and yells. It's very hard to control his crying. He's ridden with guilt. I mean, what more can you do? It's very hard. Do *teshuvah*. I can't help you any way out, you've sinned grievously. In a certain sense you go it alone. *Teshuvah* is available, if one persists, if one pursues.

Hamevaser: Do the inmates see God as a guiding power in their lives?

Rabbi Koslowe: Maybe, if you better understand what brings a person to prison, then you can cover *hashgachah*. For example, there are people there who are basically antagonistic. They are antagonistic against authority, any kind of authority. In psychology, it's called a subconscious or unconscious transference from the hateful authority of parents, or anyone else, and they transfer it to all authority. A policeman, a teacher, a rabbi, Hashem. Any aspect that they consider authority they resent and they're aggressive against. So in that respect, their aggression encompasses any figure or even transcendental authority. That's one thing that brings people to prison.

Then there's the problem of lack of self worth... Some of them have very low egos. They're not worth anything, in the eyes of Hashem or their fellow men. That's an important consideration.

Another question is the question of manhood. Once again, sex, community.

Another aspect is the question of disappointment, failure. We've been failures all our lives. We failed in the eyes of the community and in the eyes of the Almighty. Very effective. So, we do what we have to do. We're failures and disappointments anyway.



Rabbi Dr. Irving Koslowe (YC '40, RIETS '41) has served as the Jewish chaplain at Sing Sing prison since 1950. Now Rabbi Emeritus, he was the spiritual leader of the Westchester Jewish center from 1943 through 1986. Rabbi Dr. Koslowe earned a Masters degree in Education from N.Y.U. (1949) and a doctorate in Sociology from Yeshiva (1962). He has also taught in several colleges and universities in the New York metropolitan area.

ments of *teshuvah*. One, the recognition of guilt: I did it. They have to admit what they did. And then confession, *vidduy*. Our entire system of *ashamnu* and *al cheit* is filled with *vidduy*. And then, a resolve that they won't repeat, which is the climax of most *chazal*'s discussion of *teshuvah*. These are the three basic elements that I believe are very important to convey to them. Guilt, *vidduy*/confession and resolve not to repeat. If I can convey those elements successfully, I feel that they have a better understanding of what *teshuvah* is all about.

Hamevaser: How would you say an inmate's surroundings, namely the prison, affect his religious sense?

Rabbi Koslowe: In a prison, at Sing Sing and throughout the state, the bulk of the inmates are black and hispanic. In the prison environment, they're a minority, a very distinct minority. There is an effort to band together as a *kehillah*. It's my congregation. Our *beit kenesset* is called *Tikvah veShalom*. It's hope, the hope of going home and changing their lives. They band together almost out of a need for some community sociability and reaction. I would say of the 2400 men at Sing Sing now, about 90% of them are black and hispanic which leaves the white population at 10% of which the Jewish people are about 1% or 1.5%. They can come down and daven every morning; I've arranged for that. I have two Israelis, who are there for manslaughter or murder, and my clerk, a former physician, whom I've trained to conduct the service properly. I have a *ba'al korei* that reads the *sidra* on *Shabbos*. They're all there and they make *kiddush* afterwards. Saturday and Sunday are the two busiest days; I'm not there Saturday and Sunday or *Yom Tov*.

Hamevaser: In what way would an inmate feel God's presence or God's absence in his everyday

An Interview With a Prison Chaplain

Another issue is trust. They don't trust people. Hashem may not enter into the picture at all. They just don't trust people around them. That's a big avenue.

To what degree is it a concern with Hashem? It's a mixture of everything: lack of self worth, a hate of authority. When they recognize the great need for a belief and a *mitzvah*, they're on the road to some

physician who works in my office, had some background, but limited. He now davens everyday. He conducts the services for me. The fellow who is going to blow *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, he's serving 25 years to life for murder. I'm making headway with him. He has some antagonism; he obviously had some disbelief. It takes a great deal of time, and the measuring stick is hard. If I have him outside, you can see if the man starts to study every day, he learns, he goes to shul. There's some way of measuring what you've done. Inside the prison, though, I have no way to measure. They're locked inside their cells everyday.



Hamevaser: Have you ever had inmates that went out and there continued developing as Jews?

Rabbi Koslowe: My measuring stick is those people who I'm in touch with once they have left prison. I've conducted weddings for some of them, bar-mitzvahs for their children... They've taken some interest. So, the percentage of Jews coming back into Sing Sing is far lower than non-Jews that come back.

Prisons are very tough places. It's an animal kingdom and your life is at stake every day. Not mine, but inmates. It's a very difficult place. People say, "eh! Lock them away. What'll they do there?" There is no hard labor, but being locked up in a cell for a major part of the 24-hour period is a very difficult thing. Very few people could take being locked up. I walk in. I can walk out. They cannot. It is the removal of your essence of freedom. I couldn't spend a day there. I say so.

And then when I worked there when they had the death house, people who faced execution, that's a totally different perspective. In Sing Sing, there was a death house until the 1963 moratorium. I had 17 executions. There, the whole aspect of *teshuvah* is totally different. They're going to die, and their prayers for release have great limitations. They know they've been sentenced to die. Their only access to outside is if their cases are reversed and that happens rarely. So there, it's a different story. There, when they ask for relief, it's relief after death. A totally different aspect.

When a person is to be executed we take him out of the death house's regular row, where they're locked in all day and bring them into a special room. So the execution will take place on a Thursday night, for some crazy reason. Always Thursday night at 11 o'clock. So we take him out of the cell and bring him into a special area, on Wednesday afternoon. I spend all day from Wednesday noon until 6 o'clock explaining what's going to happen to him. Then Thursday, from 9 o'clock in the morning until execution, I stay with that person all day. They lock me in the cell with him at 6 o'clock that night. So, from 6 to 11,

we're locked in this one cell. I again review what's going to happen. We have all kinds of discussions. [A young twenty-two year old man said to me in that cell.] "What happens when I die? Is there a prayer that people say?" I say, "Yes. We say *kaddish*." "Yes! Well no one's going to say *kaddish* for me. I have no family," he said. I say, "Well, I'll say *kaddish* for you at least a month." He said, "Say it now. I want to hear it." I said, "You're alive, we don't say *kaddish* for the living." He said, "I wanna hear it." "OK! If you want to hear it." It's the only time in all my years in the Rabbinate that I said *kaddish* for a person while he was sitting opposite me. And you watch that man tremble. When you face death, when you're in the army, or when you lie in the hospital and the doctor walks in and says "you have two months to live," you never know... But here, you know eleven o'clock Thursday night you're going to be dead and you are, and they know that. It's the only situation in my total experience where a person knows the exact moment they're going to die.

There, the call to Hashem is intense, very meaningful, frightening in a way, and yet, very calming and assuring. Hashem will take care. *Vidduyim*. As much as we know, Hashem is concerned, particularly with the person who is *chovei*. So, it's a whole different ballgame. I've had 17 such occasions. I had the Rosenbergs, who were executed in '53, he and she, the only woman I walked to the chair with. So, the relationship between the chaplain, the inmate and the death house, the kinds of services and discussions and *hashkafah* of Hashem, that's one aspect of the death house.

"Who shall live. Who shall die." If you're a young man, you don't think of dying. You say the words. But, in prison, it takes on a different significance. In the death house, *mi yichyeh, mi yamat* is very significant. It's like when you're a sick person in the hospital who is told [his illness is] terminal. The relationships are intense, more intense in prison than in my congregation in the community.

Hamevaser: What do you mean by relationships?

Rabbi Koslowe: First with Hashem. Then with myself. When they say "Oh Lord, help me. I'm banged. I'm down. I've been put down as far as I can go," in many senses they are correct. They're down at the bottom.

People always ask me, "Why do you go there?" I say, "Look. Three times a day we say *mattir assurim*." If that doesn't refer to prisoners, then I don't know what does. Of course, high on *Rambam's* list of *mitzvot* is helping hostages, helping prisoners, *pidyon shevuyim*.

better understanding.

Hamevaser: How do Jewish inmates observe the *Yamim Noraim*?

Rabbi Koslowe: I'm not there, but I prepare everything for them. I have trained them for the davening. We're going to have *hataras nedarim*. We go through all the ritual that we possibly can to prepare them adequately so they have a regular *Rosh Hashanah*. I have kosher meals prepared; I'm bringing up chickens for the meals for *Rosh Hashanah* for them. The state provides vegetables and things like that. They'll have *ma'ariv* on Sunday night, with a meal afterwards. They'll have *shacharis* on Monday and they'll have a meal for them. On Tuesday, the same thing and the davening and the *tekios* and the *leining* will be done. I've taped a great deal of material. It's the best that I've been able to do with them and they'll know it's *Yom Tov*.

The *Yamim Noraim* are very important to the people in this institution, and we go all out to make sure that they recognize this in many ways. Outwardly, it is very easy to. Inwardly is the tough situation. Over the month of Elul, I've spent at least an hour or two with each person, thirty men in my count, in a one-to-one discussion of the significance of *Yom Tov* and their relationship with Hashem. How successful I've been, I can't measure. But, they all come, every Jewish man on the count who isn't locked for some violation, or isn't sick in the hospital. The thirty men who will gather in the little shul I have there, they'll know it's *Yom Tov*. They'll have the feeling.

Hamevaser: Have there been *ba'alei teshuvah* in Sing Sing?

Rabbi Koslowe: They're all *ba'alei teshuvah*. They come into the institution with very negligible background and education and negligible attendance of any shul, and they come from families that have great limitations. There's one person in there, of the 30, an Israeli, who has some background. My clerk now, a

Land and Its People: An Unbreakable Link by David Eisen

Developed from shiurim given by R. Yaakov Meidan

Throughout *Sefer Bereishit*, the *avot* are bestowed with blessings revolving around two central themes: *zera'* (progeny) and *aretz* (the land of Israel). From Avraham's initial encounter with God in *Lekh Lekha* (12:1-3) to Ya'akov's final blessing to Yosef in *Vayyechi* (48:15-16), these two motifs recur as a unit, referred to by Yitzhak as "*Birkat Avraham* (*Bereishit* 28:4)."

Avraham himself saw an intrinsic connection between heirs and the Promised Land when he asked God: "*Mah tittein li, ve'anokhi holekh ariri*" (*Bereishit* 15:2), "What can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless?" Avraham recognized the futility of possessing his own land in the absence of offspring to inherit it from him. While it is evident from here that any successful future for the land of Israel is contingent upon the existence of a nation of Israel, the reverse may be even more true: the nation of Israel thrives from its relationship to the land of Israel. That this relationship is indispensable is demonstrated in several Biblical narratives.

The bond is broken

Megillat Rut opens with the tragic story of Na'omi. She is widowed, bereft of her two sons, and too old to bear any more children; her family has apparently been denied the possibility of a future. Although a reason for the untimely deaths of her husband (Elimelekh) and sons is not given explicitly in the *megillah*, a simple reading of the text provides an explanation: "The second verse ends, "...they (Elimelekh's family) came to the country of Moav and remained there (*vayyihyu sham*)". Immediately following this statement, the text continues, "Elimelekh, Na'omi's husband, died..." From this juxtaposition, it seems that Elimelekh's sin was leaving Israel and settling in another land. It is interesting to note that the passages in *tanakh* parallel to this incident involve the ancestors of Na'omi and Elimelekh, the house of Yehuda (*Bereishit* 38), and Rut, the nation of Moav (*Bereishit* 19).

Elimelekh's behavior clearly echoes Rut's ancestor, Lot, who left the company of Avraham in Israel for *Sedom* and *Amorah*, more attractive land *chutz la'aretz* (*Bereishit* 13:5-13). (While the location of *Sedom* is unclear, it is fairly certain that Lot left Israel proper because *Tzo'ar*, a sister city of *Sedom*, appears in Yirmiyahu's prophecy about Moav (*Jeremiah* 48:34).) This *yeridah* wasn't merely a geographical change, but one exhibiting spiritual undertones. *Rashi* (*ad.loc. v.11*) quotes a *midrash* explaining that Lot's move expressed his desire to move away from God - he had no more interest in Abraham, in his deity, or, by extrapolation, in his legacy of kindness, outreach, and justness.

Quite similarly, Elimelekh, as a leader and financial bedrock of the Jews at the time of the famine, had an added responsibility to remain in Israel to provide support for his people (*Bereishit Rabbah* 28:3). His failure to do so showed a lack of interest in *chesed* comparable to Lot's. Additionally, the negative impact of *chutz la'aretz* on Elimelekh's

family in the form of his sons marrying non-Jewish women (*Targum* 1:4) involves the same leaving of Avraham's tradition that Lot perpetrated. The *ma'amar hazal*, "*Kol haddar bechutza la'aretz kemi sh'ein lo elokah* (*Ketuvot* 110b)," "Anyone living outside of Israel resembles one who has no God," rings true in both cases; the leaving of Israel, motivated by a lack of religion, further entrenched both families in lifestyles which ultimately lead to their near discontinuance. Lot's sons-in-law, married daughters, and wife died (*Bereishit* 19:14-26), leaving Lot alone with his two unmarried daughters. Elimelekh, Machlon, and Kilyon died, leaving Na'omi, well past her child bearing years, alone with her two widowed daughters-in-law. In both cases, leaving Israel threatened the family with termination.

Plucked from the past

Na'omi's and Elimelekh's ancestor, Yehudah, was involved in a similar escapade. Yehudah was the cause of Yosef's exile from his land and heritage (*Bereishit* 37:26-28), and was subsequently left; after the deaths of his two sons and his wife, with only his unmarried son (whom Yehudah was unwilling to have enter into a levirate marriage with Tamar) and widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar (*Bereishit* 38:1-12). *Seforno* (*ad.loc., v.1*) observes that this threat of familial discontinuance was retribution for leaving his father, Ya'akov, bereft of Yosef. This punishment for

In its deepest dimension, the purpose of yibbum is for man to achieve immortality and to maintain his land within the family.

the estrangement of Yosef from the ways of his fathers and from his land bears a marked resemblance to those inflicted upon Elimelekh and Lot.

All three of these incidents, in which leaving Israel threatens a family with imminent discontinuance, are resolved with a common solution: the performance of *Yibbum* (a levirate marriage).

Yielding to yibbum

In Yehudah's case, the text explicitly mentions the concept of *yibbum*. Yehudah tells his son, Onan, to go to his brother's wife "*veyabbeim otah*" (38:8), "and enter with her into a levirate marriage." In the end, of course, it is Yehudah himself who ends up assuring his family's continuation by unknowingly having relations with Tamar. Nonetheless, a "yibbum-like" construct emerges.

In Lot's case, the text only hints at *yibbum* element. His daughters lament, after the destruction of *Sedom*, "...*ve'ish ein ba'aretz lavo 'aleinu*... (19:31)," "...and there is no man in the land with whom to have relations (literally: "to come unto us")." The word *'alainu*, spelled here with an *'ayin* is significant in that the *Torah* uniformly uses the word *'aleinu*, with an *alef*, to mean "unto us". The only other time that the root *'al* with an *'ayin* is used is when the mitzvah of *yibbum* is given - "...*yevamah yavo 'alehah*" (*Devarim* 25:5). Using this textual parallelism, Lot's incident gains a status of *yibbum*, albeit a perversion of the mitzvah, since Lot's family name was continued through his impregnation of his

own daughters.

Rut's incident does not specifically mention the word *yibbum*. However, it is clear from the text's repeated use of the word *go'eil*, "redeemer," in chapters three and four that the mitzvah of *yibbum* is the topic at hand. Additionally, the entire context of Boaz's and Rut's union, as we will see shortly, points directly to the performance of *yibbum*.

It has already been demonstrated that the abandonment of the land of Israel poses a threat to generational continuity, which is reversible by implementing the mitzvah of *yibbum*. What has yet to be shown is how this mitzvah relates back to the land.

Artzah: A look towards the land

In each of the cases mentioned above, family property is returned to its rightful owner as a result of either the *yibbum* or the children born out of this union.

Lot, through his children, regains the land of *Sedom*, later known as *Ammon* and *Moav* (the names of his sons born to his daughters).

Yehudah's plot rejoins Rut's in the last chapter of the *megillah*, where *yibbum*'s connection to land is sharply pronounced. Boaz tells the *go'eil*, Elimelekh's closest living relative, and hence the rightful owner of his land - that in order to "redeem" the land, he must also "redeem" Rut, "...*lehakim sheim hammeit al nachalato* (4:5)," "to perpetuate the name of the deceased [Elimelekh] upon his estate." It is interesting that Boaz made Rut and the children she would bear an integral dimension of the transaction: the land was once again only significantly redeemed if the family could continue to possess and inhabit it. Yehudah, as well, is fulfilled here: Boaz, who ends up "redeeming" Rut, and with her, Elimelekh's land, is a direct product of Yehudah's union with Tamar. At the conclusion of this story, the *megillah* states: "*Ve'eileh toledot Peretz...veSalmon holid et Boaz...*" (4:18-20) - "This is the line of Peretz (Yehudah's son from his union with Tamar)...and Salmon begot Boaz." One may conjecture that the text specifically began listing the generations of *Beit Yehudah* with Peretz to underscore the importance of *yibbum* in a family's restoration.

Restoring a lost future

In fact, the concept of *yibbum* illustrates the synthesis of *zera'* and *aretz*. In its deepest dimension, the purpose of *yibbum* is for man to achieve immortality and to maintain his land within the family. The torah explicitly states that the reason for this mitzvah is to prevent the eradication of the deceased's name (*Devarim* 25:6). *Rashi* (*ad. loc.*, "*Yakum al sheim achiv*") comments that the brother who performs the *yibbum* also inherits the deceased brother's portion of their father's inheritance. *Ramban*, commenting on the case of Yehudah and Tamar (*ad. loc.*, v.8, "*Veyabeim otah...*"), observes that man's need to assure his deceased relative's immortality in this way preempted the mitzvah at Sinai. In fact, *Ramban* draws a direct parallel between this pre-Sinai story and the post-Sinai incident of Rut and Boaz.

It is possible to demonstrate that even the actual *halakhot* of *yibbum* are centered around this theme of maintaining a family's eternity. In *Yevamot 18b* a case is presented in which one brother (A) dies and a second brother (B) marries the deceased brother's widow. At this point, a third brother (C) is born. Soon after this occurs, B dies without having had any children with A's widow, leaving his act of *yibbum* incomplete. Generally, C is not permitted to perform *yibbum* with A's wife, since he was born after the A's death. (The third brother (C) is called "*achiv shelo hayah be'olamo*" - a brother who never co-existed with the deceased, and is therefore not permitted to perform *yibbum* with A's widow). However, Rav Shimon permits the union of C with A's wife in this particular instance, since B served as an actual extension of A by

marrying his widow. Since C did co-exist with B, he is considered to have co-existed with A, as well. In effect, the second brother's performance of *yibbum* served to provide the first brother with a metaphysical existence in this world. The essence of the mitzvah, then, is the fulfillment of man's general desire to achieve immortality.

Establishing eternity can be achieved through living in *Eretz Yisrael* and creating a dynasty in the Land. The land of Israel is a veritable foothold on immortality, since the land itself is everlasting, while man's days are numbered (*cf. Rashi Devarim* 32:1).

Adam and Cain: the first *yoredim*

The connection between the Land and eternity is also demonstrated by God's sentencing of Adam and Cain after their respective sins. When mortality was decreed upon Adam, he was immediately chased out of the *Eretz haChayim* (*Bereishit* 3:23-24). Similarly,

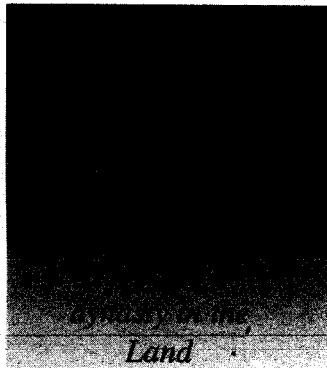
Cain's punishment for committing murder was the curse of having to wander about aimlessly (*Bereishit* 4:12). These punishments illustrate the concept that the lack of a connection to the Land is tantamount to death.

The rooting of oneself to the Land is described in *Isaiah* 65:22: "...*Ki khiyemei ha'eitz yemei Ami*," "The days of my people shall be as long as the days of a tree." A tree is a classic symbol of timelessness in its ability to regenerate itself - by virtue of its connection to the land. When it is uprooted, however, it loses this vitality. Similarly, the life source of man is his attachment to the Land, his medium for achieving eternity.

In a collective sense as well, the destiny of *Am Yisrael* is directly tied to the land. It is an accepted rule in *tanakh* and throughout Jewish history that when the Jewish nation does not follow in the ways of God, they are punished with exile. Conversely, the redemption of *Am Yisrael*, as envisioned by *Ezekiel* (37:4-14), is analogous to dry bones springing to life from the land, and regaining full vitality by reclaiming their inheritance in *Eretz Yisrael*.

The prophets saw Israel as the life-giving force of *Am Yisrael* to the extent that they often used the imagery of a mother and her children to represent the relationship between them. *Yish'ayah* (54:1) says, "*Roni akarah lo yaladah...ki rabbim benei shomeimah mibbenei ve'ulah...*" "Sing, barren woman who has not given birth...for the children of the desolate woman will outnumber those of the married woman." The obvious paradox in this *pasuk* can be solved if one understands the parable. The barren woman is Jerusalem and the land of Israel rejoicing at the prospect of *Am Yisrael's* return. When this does occur, the vitality of the nation will far surpass that of *Am Yisrael* in any other land (*Targum, ad. loc.*).

Finally, the oft-quoted phrase "*Veyeish tikvah le'achariteikh...veshavu vanim tivulam* (*Jeremiah* 31:16)," "And there is hope for your future...when children will return to their own borders", is the perfect synthesis of *Am Yisrael's* connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, and the guarantee of eternity in each. The single way to revitalize *Eretz Yisrael* is for her children (*banim*) to return home. Similarly, the only hope for the future of *Am Yisrael* (*banim*) is their return to *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of their fathers. A strong grip on this heritage is our only assurance of immortality.



Transition to Eternity

by Chana Meier

Two of the major periods in the Jewish calendar year both culminate with a holiday termed *atzeret*. In *Vayikra* 23:36, the last day of *Sukkot* is referred to as a separate holiday, *Atzeret*. In the Torah, the holiday of *Shavuot* is described simply as the fiftieth day after the first offering of the *omer*, or *Chag haBikkurim*. However, *Chazal* gave *Shavuot* the title *Atzeret* as well, evidence of the parallels that exist between these two holidays.

The literal definition of the word *atzeret* is stop, or end. A better understanding of the *atzeret* concept will yield not only greater insight into the essence of the holidays, but also a deeper understanding of their preceding periods.

Stopping twice

Shemini Atzeret and *Shavuot* share many characteristics. First, both are the climaxes of cycles of seven: *Shemini Atzeret* follows seven days spent in the *Sukkah* and *Shavuot* marks the end of seven weeks of preparation for receiving the Torah. Second, both festivals occur on what the *Maharal* would deem a supernatural plane. He explains that the number seven symbolizes the natural, best represented by the days of creation, whereas the number eight signifies something *lema'alah min hateva'*, extraordinary (*Ner Mitzvah*, p.23). Thus, because *Shemini Atzeret* follows the seventh day and *Shavuot* follows the seventh week, both go beyond the natural seven, and are part of a different realm. Third, these holidays mark the end of the two holiest periods of the year. *Shavuot* marks the climax of receiving the Torah and *Shemini Atzeret* marks the conclusion of the intense *deveikut* with Hashem which began on *Rosh Hashanah*.

The true significance of these holidays, however, remains unclear. *Rashi* on *Vayikra* 23:36, explains *Atzeret* as providing one extra day for Hashem to enjoy the company of *Benei Yisra'el*, for He finds it difficult to part with His children. *Ramban*

questions the logic behind *Rashi's* interpretation. If indeed the separation is so difficult, it is not beneficial for Hashem to retain His children for one more day. One more day would seem to intensify the closeness, rather than easing the parting. Therefore, there must be some other purpose to *Shavuot* and *Shemini Atzeret*. Not only do these holidays conclude significant periods, but each *atzeret* also heralds a change. They serve as an escort from one realm into another, from a period of the holiest times, an extended close encounter with the *Shekhinah*, to months which are not graced by this closeness. Thus, another theme of *atzeret* is accompaniment, *livui*.

An escort function

To understand this theme as it relates to *Atzeret*, one must examine the concept of *livui* in daily life. The halakhah recommends that a person who cannot be accompanied while travelling immerse himself in Torah learning (*Eruvin* 54a). This Torah learning serves as his escort. In addition, halakhah instructs one to escort his or her guests a certain distance upon their departure. In general, accompaniment serves as a symbol of a more meaningful connection between two people; though physically they might be separated, their essences can still be shared. Immersion in Torah, then, serves the same purpose. Torah represents eternity, and reminds the guest that he is a part of this eternity. *Maharal* explains the significance of experiencing *livui* either by Torah or by a person as means of connecting to *nitzchiyut* (*Chiddushei Aggadot*).

With this understanding of personal acts of *livui*, one can now turn to the *Targum Yonatan*, who in his commentary on *Bemidbar* explains that on *Shemini Atzeret*, Hashem accompanies people from their *Sukkot*, temporary dwellings, to their homes.

This same metaphor of accompaniment is seen on *Shavuot*.

Human perspective limits experience of God. We identify *midot* of God in order to mold ourselves in His image. *Chazal* comment on the words "vehalakhta bidrachav: Just as He is merciful, so you should be merciful...(Shabbat 133b)." Following Hashem's path means emulating His characteristics.

Our accompaniment of guests in only a reflection of God's escorting us. Both *Shemini Atzeret* and *Shavuot* mark our parting from Hashem. After an intense period of closeness to the *Shekhinah*, Hashem enables us to incorporate the spirit and messages of the two periods by giving us the gift of *atzeret*.

No need for action

The holidays of *atzeret* have specific characteristics which reflect their goal of transition. Whereas most other holidays contain *mitzvot ma'asiyot* to strengthen the message of the day, such as the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, both *Shemini Atzeret* and *Shavuot* lack actions or symbols. An

atzeret is a time for reflection; as its name suggests, it is a time *la'atzor*, to stop and recollect all that has come before. For other holidays, the vehicle implemented to relate to Hashem is action, while *Atzeret* involves an entirely different way of attaining *deveikut*. Its message transcends action.

Parshat Vayyeira begins with Hashem appearing to *Avraham Avinu*. There are two striking aspects of this encounter from which we can extrapolate deeper meaning. First, Hashem does not call to *Avraham* by name, and second, there is no content to this revelation! Hashem does not disclose a message or charge *Avraham* with a mission. *R. Leibel Eiger* explains that this bizarre revelation reflects the closeness of Hashem and *Avraham* (*Torat Emet*, beginning of *Vayyeira*). Their relationship was so developed that no words were necessary. Because we exhibit tremendous desire to become closer with Hashem during the month of *Tishrei* and the 49 days preceding *Shavuot*, we are capable of appreciating and benefitting from the day of *atzeret*.

Hashem offers the accompaniment of *atzeret* to help us assimilate the spiritual energies which we have amassed during those periods into the more mundane times of the year which follow. The individual himself must also contribute to these efforts.

Atzeret is a day to reflect on the immediate past and to plan for the future. *R. Hutner* says that the present must always be a time of anticipating the future by learning from the past. For example, a Jew mourns the destruction of the *Beit Mikdash* which occurred over two thousand years ago, while currently praying and working towards rebuilding it by mending mistakes of the past. It is our goal and duty to take advantage of the opportunity of *atzeret* and maintain the level of commitment and spirituality to Hashem throughout the year.



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Teshuvah

Continued from page 6

establish sorrow for his misdeed. Nevertheless, there is also a limit; one cannot forever dwell on the sins he has committed. After a proper effort has been made, nothing more can be done and life must continue.

Chazal articulate this notion in a statement in *Sanhedrin* 107a; "David said to God, 'Forgive me for my sin.' God replied, 'In the future, your own son Solomon will state in his wisdom, 'Can a man place fire in his pocket and his clothes not be burned? If a man walks on coals will his feet not be singed?' So too, one who sins with another man's wife cannot be cleansed." David asked, "To what extent should a man be burdened (i.e. forever)?" God replied, "Accept sufferings upon yourself [and you will be forgiven]." David therefore accepted suffering upon himself." David refused to accept the fact that a man should never be allowed to absolve himself of an iniquity, no matter how severe. There had to be a point at which the *Teshuvah* process would end, and forgiveness achieved.


Medieval parallels

These three models of *Teshuvah* can clearly be seen as the bases for the different methods of *Teshuvah* prescribed by various *Rishonim*. *Rambam* states, "What is a complete *Teshuvah*? It is when the act he has committed comes upon him again, and he does not repeat the act, although he can, because he has repented" (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 2:1). Complete *Teshuvah*, like *Yehudah's*, is the admission of guilt and the commitment never to repeat the sin. All other displays of remorse, be it crying out or even fasting, are called the "ways of *Teshuvah*" (ibid. 2:4), but are not integral to the *Teshuvah* process.

It is on this point that *Rabbeinu Yonah* takes issue with *Rambam*. Outlining the path to gain repentance, he establishes numerous guidelines necessary for achieving *Teshuvah*. They include remorse, abandonment of sin, anguish, pain and worry. One should be eternally embarrassed about the sins he has committed, and forever be conscious and even feel guilty about his shortcomings. *Teshuvah* is not a one-shot deal which can be accomplished and then forgotten. It is a never-ending process that must remain an indispensable aspect of an individual's life. This is clearly the *Teshuvah* of *Reuven*, the guilty and anguished son who could never allow himself to overcome his shortcomings. In the estimation of the *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, although *Reuven* was a tragic figure, he was positively consumed with a continued struggle towards self improvement.

Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekudah, the author of *Chovot Hallevavot*, offers a method which is the median between the brief *Teshuvah* process expressed by *Rambam*, and the extensive one prescribed by *Rabbeinu Yonah*. Outlining the elements of *Teshuvah* in Ch. 4 of his *Chovot Hallevavot*, *Ibn Pekudah* sets four guidelines for repentance: remorse for past sins, abandonment of sin, confession, and the acceptance never to repeat the transgression. While at first glance this seems similar to the view of *Rambam*, upon further scrutiny, it is evident that there is a fundamental difference here. *Ibn Pekudah* relates

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Thursday, September 24, 1992	Dr. Carl Feit, Associate Professor of Biology, Yeshiva University <i>"A Divine Hand or Just a Lucky Deal: Random Events in Judaism and Science"</i> Joel Jablonski Campus, Ruben Shul, 2:45 P.M.
Thursday, November 5, 1992	Rabbi Yaakov Neuberger, Rosh Yeshiva, MYP, RIETS and Mr. Jay L. Pomrenze, Vice Chairman, Yeshiva College Board of Directors; Vice President, Bankers Trust <i>"Halakhic Man Goes to Wall Street"</i> Joel Jablonski Campus, Ruben Shul, 2:45 P.M.
Wednesday, November 18, 1992	Mrs. Miriam Weilgus, Instructor, Touro College; President's Fellowship, Columbia University <i>"How Forthrightly Should Jewish History be Taught? Musings of an Orthodox Jewish Historian"</i> Stem College for Women, Room 718, 2:40 P.M.
Wednesday, December 9, 1992	Dr. Barry Eichler, Visiting Professor of Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Studies, Yeshiva University; Associate Professor of Oriental Studies, University of Pennsylvania <i>"Tanakh in its Ancient Historical Context: The Case of Biblical Law"</i> Stem College for Women, Room 718, 2:40 P.M.
Wednesday, December 16, 1992	<i>"Freedom of Inquiry: A Student Discussion and Symposium"</i> Joel Jablonski Campus, Ruben Shul, 8:00 P.M.

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five conditions for the fulfillment of each guideline. He also outlines five conditions for the fulfillment of each guideline. To accomplish remorse, one cannot simply say "I am sorry." Rather, he must lower himself in front of God, change his clothing and demeanor, and even cry out in worry and shame over his actions.

Ibn Pekudah is ultimately describing the *Teshuvah* of David. *Teshuvah* is not an action that can be quickly accomplished. It is a lengthy process and often a difficult one. Nevertheless, here *Ibn Pekudah* parts with *Rabbeinu Yonah*. While the process of *Rabbeinu Yonah* is an endless internal struggle, that of *Ibn Pekudah* is a process with an end. Achieving repentance may be a prolonged effort, but once that effort is made, the sinner can disregard his sin and renew

his relationship with, and commitment to God. The same David that cried out, on the floor, in remorse, begging for forgiveness, also realized that at a certain point, the process is completed and life continues. His *Teshuvah* is complete.

Perhaps, as evidenced in these various models, there is no right or wrong method to do *Teshuvah* and achieve forgiveness. The method required depends on the individual and his or her personality and temperament. Regardless of the method, the goals are the same. To establish a greater connection with God, and to serve Him to the best of our ability.

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Book Review

continued from page 4

The result is *To Be A Jewish Woman*. Rabbi Mordechai Tendler in his *haskamah* calls it "almost encyclopedic." It is certainly the only book which tries to cover all the topics relevant to women in traditional Judaism. Weighing in at a hefty 282 pages and bearing a thirty-dollar list price, it could serve as a textbook in a yeshiva high school course on women in Judaism (although, as far as I know, only one person currently gives such a course - Abby Lerner in Central and Shevach.)

To Be A Jewish Woman is divided into four sections: "Sources," dealing directly with the status of women in Judaism; "Prayer," including chapters on *mechitzah* and *shelo asani ishah*; "Marriage and Procreation," with a chapter each on major issues such as birth control and abortion; and "Women in Family and Community," including a section on child-raising. Throughout, Aiken starts from traditional sources and builds hashkafic structures to justify the tradition. Occasionally, she tosses in observations from her experience as a therapist.

Aiken is also the first traditional writer to look into the Lilith story. Although many Orthodox people have never heard of it, it became so powerful a symbol for non-Orthodox feminists that they named their magazine *Lilith*. According to the myth, Lilith was Adam's first wife, who refused to submit to him sexually, as she had been created from the same dust he was. Only after Lilith asserted her equality and independence by fleeing (to become queen of the demons) did Hashem create Eve - from Adam's rib, so her be-all and end-all would be to serve him. If this were true, it would make a good case for the old feminist diatribe that Judaism is utterly misogynistic. As Aiken correctly points out, however, the story comes from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*. Not only is that not an authoritative source, but it's a Medieval parody - which the Rambam himself ridicules. (A contemporary parallel would be Mel Brooks's "History of the World Part One.") One would think this knowledge would bury the Lilith myth once and for all.

Unfortunately, however, Aiken proceeds to undermine the point by using the story as part of a hashkafic concept! This brings us to the main problem with *To Be A Jewish Woman*. In Aiken's zeal to defend traditional Judaism, she feels compelled to answer every question about women. It's true that many of her answers are creative. (My favorite was when she takes the classic "women are exempt from time-bound *mitzvos* so they can take care of the family," and adds the twist that it's to prevent the low self-esteem which children might feel if they saw Mommy running off to do *mitzvos* while leaving them alone.) At least some of her answers, however, will strike the reader as forced and therefore apologetic (e.g. if *shelo asani ishah* really meant thanks "for not making me a woman," it would have used the word *nekeivah* instead). In any case, the book is worth reading for Aiken's original suggestions as well as for her thoroughness.

On a more depressing note, *To Be A Jewish Woman* will probably not satisfy those educated women who are bothered by women's issues. Perhaps this is because the book falls into the same old trap of assuming ignorant questioners. But is it possible that the reason we haven't yet found adequate answers is because we never will? Perhaps this is one of the areas of the Torah which we just can't fully understand (Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l hints at this in *Iggerot Moshe*, O.H. 4:49).

Even if this is so, our response as Orthodox Jews is the same - we follow it anyway. In fact, that was exactly the conclusion of Rayna Batya. After she heard and considered her nephew's elaborate explanation of women's issues, and it was clear she was no more satisfied than before, she ended her final complaints with a *tziduk ha-din* (justifying Divine judgment): "Hashem, You are just in all that is decreed upon

us, Your Torah is definitely true, Your judgments are very deep (*Tehillim* 36:7), nobody can say anything [to protest] (*Tehillim* 19:3), and blessed are You for making me according to Your will (p.1976)." It seems the bottom line must be such a *she-asani kirtzono*.

Even after giving up on answers, however, there is still something that can give *nachat ruach le-nashim* (*Chagigah* 16b). Just as a few years ago part of the non-Jewish feminist movement entered a "Second Stage" stressing family and femininity, so too some Jewish women recently started focusing on the feminine instead of the feminist. The first book of this genre is Dr. Tamar Frankiel's *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism*.

Very few women could write this book. Frankiel, who says she enjoys the struggle of living in both the camps of observance and of feminism, brings to her task nearly twenty-five years of studying comparative religion. At the same time, she makes it clear that Torah is the *ikkar* (main thing) - "my intention is to stand firmly

within the bounds of generally accepted halacha" - and she does.



the *Immahot* as "ensuring the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people." Frankiel sees them as "multidimensional...also great in their feminine spiritual achievements."

Frankiel channels her vast knowledge of feminine theology and psychology into deepening our understanding of Judaism. By selectively highlighting and by making connections (itself a feminine activity), she opens our eyes to new patterns and weaves a tapestry of themes. Perhaps Frankiel's *chiddush* (novelty) is clearest when she covers the same topics as Aiken, such as the three *mitzvot* set aside for women, and the *Immahot* (Mothers). While Aiken summarizes

Throughout *The Voice of Sarah*, Frankiel quotes objections of feminists (as she is extremely well-read in their literature). Instead of dismissing them, as we would expect from any other Orthodox book, she quietly explains why she personally disagrees. At the same time, she makes a point of rejecting "naive" solutions. They don't satisfy her either. Rather, she accentuates the positive, as Rav Kook says: "Pure *tzaddikim* don't complain about evil, but add righteousness. They don't complain about heresy, but add faith. They don't complain about ignorance, but add wisdom" (*Arpelei Tohar* 39). It is this attitude which distinguishes *The Voice of Sarah* from other books, and leads one to hope there will soon be more of its kind.

I want to conclude with two points. First, we can't expect any book to persuade. Both Aiken and Frankiel emphasize that they became Orthodox not by reading anything (it wouldn't convince them) but by experiencing observance first-hand. Second, if the male reader gains anything from the tentative conclusions of this article, I hope it is an increased sensitivity and a hesitation to judge harshly those women still bothered by these issues.

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A Trip to the Temple, A Shortcut to Atonement

by
Dani
Genack

Yom haKippurim, as titled, purports to be a day of *teshuvah* and *kapparah*. Surprisingly, though, these themes far from dominate *Avodat Hayom*. Reading through the *Avodah* section of the *musaf* of *Yom haKippurim* and *Mishnayot Yoma*, one gets a rather different impression: this is a day of intense *Gilui Shekchinah*, evidenced by the multiple mention of God's name. This theme of the *Avodot* culminates in the day's climactic close — the entrance of the *Kohen Gadol* into the *Kodesh Kodashim*. How may we account for this discrepancy: if *kapparah*, atonement, is our goal, where do we see its expression?

Historic atonement

To comprehend the connection between *kapparah* and *Gilui Shekchinah*, we must first explore a different connection, namely that between *Yom Kippur* and *kapparat cheit ha'egel*, atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. At first blush this reflects nothing more than a historical truth; *Yom Kippur* was the day on which God forgave His people, this forgiveness concretized in the transmission of a new set of *Luchot*. But conceptually the correlation runs deeper. *Yom Kippur* throughout the ages retains an aspect of *kapparat ha'egel*. Conscious of this fact, we conspicuously avoid reminders of that sin, ruling that the *Kohen Gadol*, upon entering the *Kodesh Kodashim* may not wear golden garments (*Rosh Hashanah* 26a). This idea most clearly surfaces in a *gemara* at the outset of *Yoma* (2a). There, commenting on a *pasuk* about the consecration of the *mishkan*, it notes, "as has been done this day so Hashem has commanded to do, to make atonement for you; "to do" refers to the matter of the red heifer, the words "to make atonement" refer to the work of the Day of Atonement." What possible connection could these commandments share? The answer, in light of the above, is patently clear. All three — *mishkan*, *parah*, and *Yom haKippurim* strive in some form, indeed, in different forms, to atone for *cheit ha'egel* (Cf. *Rashi Bemidbar* 19:2; *Shemot* 38:21).

Thus, we may understand the curious centrality afforded the *Kohen Gadol* on just this day; the *Avodah* is only *kasher* if performed by him (*Horayot* 12b). Why should this be the case? The *kohen gadol* — the descendant and successor of *Aharon*, the *egel's* creator — must be the one to correct the *cheit*. Therefore, as well, comes its cousin *halakhah*: in the context of this *avodah*, the *kohen* brings a personal *korban* in addition to the communal *chata'ot*.

Complete repentance

But we must not overstate the case. *Yom haKippurim*, if in part a rectification for *cheit ha'egel*, remains predominantly a day of repentance for all our sins. And yet somehow these themes coalesce. A better conception of how this is so will allow us to

resolve our initial dilemma as well.

The *mishkan*, we know, serves as a receptacle for the *shekchinah*, more precisely, as a means of preserving the *shekchinah* shown us at Sinai (*Ramban, Shemot* 25:2). Symbolically significant, then, in every year, on every *yud Tishrei*, the *kohen gadol* enters the *kodesh kodashim*. Approaching the *aron halluchot* he reenacts *Ma'amad Har Sinai, kabbalat halluchot*.

The parallels are striking. First, the *kohen gadol* must seclude himself in advance of his *avodah* even as *Moshe* required *perishah*, separation, prior to *kabbalat halluchot*. Indeed, this correlation is anything but forced; the *gemara* (*Yoma* 3b) utilizes *Moshe's* actions as the *mekor*, the source, for our *din*. Second, one of the most striking descriptions of *kabbalat hatorah* concerns the portrayal of a mountain surrounded by smoke. The Hebrew phrase for this, *ashan kulo* (*Shemot* 19:18) finds its counterpart in the laws of *Yom haKippurim*: the *kohen gadol* must delay his exit until the room fills with smoke, in short, until *kulo ashan* (*Yoma* 52b; *Rambam Avodat Yom haKippurim* 4:1). Third, the *shofar* blast capping *Yom haKippurim* mimics the one sounded on the heels of *Kelal Yisrael's* receiving the *Torah*. Finally, this allows us to explain the special significance — either as the source for all other instances (*Yoma* 81a) or, according to

Rambam (*Shevitat Asor* 1:6; see *Maggid Mishnah*), its only application — of *tosefet* by *innuyei Yom haKippurim*. We find an extension in only one other place — the *innuyim* of *Har Sinai*. It was there that *Moshe* added to the time of *Kelal Yisrael's* restrictions (*Yevamot* 62a).

The clean slate, past and present

The reason for this Sinaitic recreation returns us to our earlier query. We reenact *Ma'amad Har Sinai*, careful this time around to 'get it right.' We escape the *'egel's* clutches; we worship, but to God, and without any gilded garments. Yet this is incidental. We care not so much about correcting that sin as about returning to our pristine state of pre-sin. We attempt to atone by starting again, going back as it were to our holiest heights, prior to our spiralling fall down the stairway of sin.

Laws of conversion, *geirut*, are derived from *Har Sinai*; in returning to Sinai we invoke her laws, *ger shenitgayyer kekatan she'olad dami* — a convert is like a new-born child, his slate is wiped clean. The most striking illustration of this mentality may be found in the position of *Rebbi* (*Yoma* 85b). Not only does *Rebbi* allow for the efficacy of atonement without the individual's repentance, but his only qualifications parallel those found by *geirut*. *Rebbi* excepts from this leniency any one who is *porek ol, megalleh panim betorah* or *meifer berit bassar*. These first two categories of people renege on a convert's obligation to accept the *Torah's* authority, the last, on his requirement to be circumcised.

We ask for a fresh start even as we accept the *Torah* anew. Our *kapparah* is not rooted in specific acts of contrition, and thus may not seem recognizable as such in *Avodat Hayom*. It consists rather in a renewal of our covenant with God; we reenact *Ma'amad Har Sinai*, taking care to avoid the one *cheit* which began many, if not all, of our problems.

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