

15 September, 2001

\* This is the final edition of the current series for this year.

\* This week's speaker after davening in the Youth Minyan, will be Rabbi Leon Goldman.

\* There will be a shiur (Gemorah Brachos) at Mark Franck's house on Shabbos afternoon at 4:45pm.

Katanga

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# Caulfield Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

## THE APOLOGY FACTOR

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons (aish.com)

A few years ago I learned a valuable lesson about apologies. I was sitting in a classroom and it was a few minutes past the time that the class was scheduled to begin. We were waiting for the teacher to arrive, and when one of my fellow students walked in, I gave him a warm and hearty welcome: "Hello, Alan!"

After the class was over, Alan came up to me and said: "I was so mad at you that I wanted to punch you!" "What are you talking about?" I asked. Alan explained. When he walked in and I said a loud "hello," he thought I was trying to draw everyone's attention to the fact that he was late.

Of course, that wasn't my intention at all, and the only reason that my "hello" bothered Alan was because he was feeling self-conscious about his own lateness! But then I realized: It doesn't matter whether I'm right or wrong, and whether my insult was intentional or not. The fact remains that I hurt someone's feelings. And for that I must apologize.

Next time somebody harms you and then comes to apologize, notice how he does it. There are two approaches people use - what I call the "sincere apology," and the "selfish apology."

The sincere approach is short and sweet, and sounds something like this: "I'm sorry I hurt you. I'll be careful to see that it doesn't happen again." Clean, direct, no excuses. If you'd been hurt, wouldn't you feel better after receiving such an apology?

Next is the "selfish apology." It goes something like this: "I apologize. But I didn't do it on purpose. I had a hard day and I didn't realize what I was doing. And why are you so sensitive about this, anyway!?" This person has verbalized an "apology," but it is hollow because they have no regret. They really feel "it's not my fault and I didn't do anything wrong."

The type of apology not only fails to appease the person who was hurt, it actually makes things worse. Why? Because this "apology" is in effect saying: "The fact that my actions were hurtful to you is not really my problem. And since I don't regret my actions, I will not make an effort to change them. Therefore if a similar



circumstance occurs in the future, I would do the same thing and hurt you again!" What came under the guise of an "apology" actually turns into a great insult.

Apologizing can be a difficult, humbling experience. We may feel vulnerable, low and bad. But it doesn't have to be this way...

Imagine your jacket got stained. Of course you have to take it to the cleaners. But do you feel depressed when your clothes are stained? Of course not! You know that a stain is not a permanent part of the fabric.

Judaism says it's the same thing when we make a mistake. Our soul is the garment that gets stained. And we have to clean it. But making a mistake doesn't mean I'm inherently a bad person! In fact, the Talmud (Yevamot 79) says that a sense of shame is essential to the nature of a Jew.

A distinction needs to be made between "unhealthy" and "healthy" guilt. Unhealthy guilt is where you feel like a bad person. Healthy guilt is where you maintain the sense that you're a good person, while acknowledging that you used bad judgment and made a mistake.

Think back to a time you apologized. How do you feel afterwards? Cleansed! Getting it out is an expansive, cathartic, liberating release. We cleanse the stain and recapture that lost purity. We rectify the past and move forward.



This week's Parsha begins: "You are all standing here today before God" (Deut. 29:9). Allegorically, this is referring to Rosh Hashana, the day when every Jew stands before the Almighty and takes a long, hard look at who they really are.

This is the time of year to make a commitment to correct our mistakes. God is "close" at this time, and as the verse in this week's parsha says: "God will remove the barriers from your hearts" (Deut. 30:6).

There's a feeling in the air. Let's use it!

Thoughts for the week:

"If you don't have a goal ... you can't fulfil it."

"You declare that you do not hate Jews, you are merely anti-Zionist. And I say, let the truth ring forth from high on the mountain tops... When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews..." (Martin. L. King)

"Learning is not compulsory, but neither is survival." (W. E. Deming)

"He that will not reason is a bigot, He that cannot reason is a fool, He that dares not reason is a slave." (W. Drummond)

### Other Developments

- \* After shule on shabbos, Ari Bergman spoke of his recent trip to Perth to help run camps for Carmel College. Ari related how even in remote regional Buston, WA, he and the Carmel College school children found links to Judaism. Shkoiach and welcome back.
- \* At Shalosh Seudos, given Selichos were to commence that evening, Danny Karp gave a summary of the first two chapters of Rambam's Laws of Teshuvah. Yasher Koach.
- \* Last Friday night the Shule was treated by a visit from the Stropkover Rebbe Shlit'a. As well as giving an inspiring Dvar Torah, the Rebbe also davened Kaballas Shabbos after which many members took the opportunity to meet the Rebbe and receive his Brochos - which he extended to all of Klal Yisroel.

### PRE-SELICHOS - ELUL SHIUR NIGHT

Last Motzei Shabbos, the annual pre-Selichos Elul Shiur Night was held. As well as the well prepared, informative and inspirational speeches, a delicious Melava Malka was enjoyed by all. Yasher Koach to the hosts, Yirmie & Jordi Elkus and to all those who volunteered to speak; Moshe Shimon, Noah Fried, Simon Weinstein and Rabbi Meir Rabi. A short summary of the speeches follow;

Moshe Shimon spoke about 'Nachamu Nachamu Ami' - 'Be comforted, Be comforted, My Nation'. Moshe explained how the Children of Israel are one collective people and even though one may experience a personal tragedy, he can be comforted by knowing that as a community, Israel will triumph - 'Netzach Yisrael Lo Yishaker'. Moshe quoted from a series of letters written at the time of the Second World War in which people found solace in the victory and perpetuity of the people of Israel.

Noah Fried explained the famous Gemorah regarding Rabbi Yochanon Ben Zakai who managed to escape the siege of Jerusalem (at the destruction of the Second Temple) and request three things from the Roman Emperor; the city of Yavneh and its Rabbis, the family of Rabbon Gamliel to preserve the lineage of King David and a doctor to heal the elderly Rav Tzadok. Noah explained how these three things mirror the month of Elul, Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. The similarities are the importance of Torah learning during Elul - as occurred in Yavneh; the continual reign of the King - as on Rosh Hashona we accept the yoke of Hashem's reign;

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**Parsha Overview - Nitzavim**

On the day of Moshe's death he assembles the whole Jewish people and creates a Covenant confirming the Jewish people as the Almighty's Chosen People for all future generations. Moshe makes clear the consequences of rejecting God and His Torah as well as the possibility of repentance. He reiterates that Torah is readily available to everyone. Netzavim concludes with perhaps the clearest and most powerful statement in the Torah about the purpose of life and the existence of freewill: "I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil ... the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life that you may live, you and your descendants."

and fasting on Yom Kippur - as Rav Tzadok was famous for fasting for 40 years.

Rabbi Meir Rabi spoke about the human psyche and its ability to routinise our performance of Mitzvot and our feelings of Teshuvah during Elul. He explained that we become relaxed by its regularity - taking shortcuts by 'highlighting' the days, rather concerning ourselves with their significance and underlying processes. Rabbi Rabi used the parable of a person installing a faucet alone - without the requisite plumbing and infrastructure - and then expecting water to flow from it. He provided a tangible action plan for concentrating on routine things and infusing them with significance and meaning.

Simon Weinstein spoke about the Akaidas Yitzchok - read on second day Rosh Hashana. According to the Vilna Gaon it represents the way a Jew should approach Avidas Hashem. Avraham, who personified loving kindness required a test which would span all facets of his existence, otherwise people would have argued that all his good deeds were only due to his natural characteristics. Only by testing Avraham with something so challenging and contradictory to his entire being, could we be certain of his pure motives. By performing mitzvot beyond that which suit our lifestyle, we are shown the proper approach to Avidas Hashem in the way we are meant to - B'chol Levavcha, U'Vechol Nafshecha, U'Vechol Meodacha - 'With our hearts, with our souls and with our resources'.

### Announcements

- Katanga will be operating a crèche on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (including Kol Nidrei night). People wishing to enrol their children must do so as soon as possible. Children must be pre-booked in order to participate so please register now. For details and bookings, please call Jordi Elkus on 9528 6958.
- A special Yasher Koach and thank you to Mr & Mrs Schulim Kopperschmidt for kindly donating the new 'Hagbeh' seat in the Minyan. The Minyan looks forward to putting to great use the new, stable and specifically designated seat for many years to come.

- We take this opportunity to welcome all those who have come for Rosh Hashanah and farewell all those who are travelling abroad. Boachem and Tzeitchem Leshalom.

- Rosh Hashanah begins this coming Monday (17 September) evening @ 5:53pm and ends Wednesday evening at 6:51pm. Thursday (20 September) is Tzom Gedaliah - "The Fast of Gedaliah" which begins 4:34am and concludes 6:39pm. Please check you local standard times.

- Minyanim times for this coming week are: Shacharis on Erev Rosh Hashanah will be: first minyan @ 5am and second minyan @ 6am. Shacharis on Rosh Hashanah at 8:00am. Mornings: first minyan @ 6:15am, second minyan @ 7am. Mincha at 6:10pm followed by shiurim. Ma'ariv at 6:50pm.

Suggestions or comments regarding our website or newsletter? Email us - we would love to hear from you.



**Shabbat Shalom & Gut Shabbos to all!**  
**"The Editors"**