



**YOM KIPPUR 5781/2020**  
**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**  
**A Yamim Noraim Virtual Tour**



## Kol Nidrei, First Stop... CHELM

### **Problem Solved! A typical story of the Wise Men of Chelm:**

A group of citizens in the town of Chelm were busily engaged in digging a foundation for the new synagogue, when a disturbing thought occurred to one of the laborers. "What are we going to do with all this earth we're digging up?" he asked. "We certainly can't just leave it here where our temple will be built." There was a hubbub of excitement as the men rested on their spades and pondered the question. Suggestions were made and just as quickly rejected.

Suddenly one of the Chelmites smiled and held his hand up for silence. "I have the solution," he proclaimed. "We will make a deep pit, and into it we'll shovel all this earth we're digging up for the synagogue!" A round of applause greeted this proposal, until another Chelmite raised his voice in protest. "That won't work at all! What will we do with the earth from the pit?"

There was a stunned silence as the men tried to cope with this new problem, but the first Chelmite soon provided the answer. "It is all very simple," he said. "We'll dig another pit, and into that one we'll shovel all the earth we're digging now, and all the earth we take out of the first pit. The only thing we must be careful about is to make the second pit twice as large as the first one."

### **The Laughter of the Holy Maggid of Mezritch:**

While a certain rabbi was visiting Mezritch, he saw an old man come to the great ḥasidic master, Rav Dov Baer, known as the Maggid, and ask him to impose penance on him for his sins. "Go home," said the maggid. "write all your sins down on a slip of paper and bring it to me." When the man

#### **The Talmud on Foolishness:**

רֵישׁ לָקִישׁ אָמַר אִין אָדָם עוֹבֵר עֲבִירָה  
אֲמַר כִּי נִכְנַס בּוֹ רוּחַ שְׂטוּת

Resh Lakish said: No one commits a transgression unless the spirit of foolishness enters into them. (Sotah 3a)

brought him the list, he merely glanced at it. Then he said. "Go home. All is well." But some time later, the rabbi happened to see that the Maggid read the list and laughed at every line. This annoyed, even shocked him. How could anyone laugh at sins! For years he could not forget the incident, until once he heard someone quote a saying of the Baal Shem: "It is well-known that no one commits a sin unless the spirit of folly possesses him. But what does the sage do if a fool comes to him? He laughs at all this folly, and

while he laughs, a breath of gentleness is wafted through the world. What was rigid, thaws, and what was a burden becomes light." The rav reflected. In his soul he said: "Now I understand the laughter of the holy Maggid." (based on Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, pp. 109-110)

אַל־תִּבְתֵּל בְּרוּחְךָ לְכַעֵס כִּי כָעֵס בְּתֵיִק פְּסִילִים יָנוּחַ:

Don't let your spirit be quickly angered, for anger abides in the breasts of fools. (Eccl. 7:9)

### **The Talmud and Midrash on Anger, Foolishness and Sin:**

- Reish Lakish said: Any person who becomes angry, if he is wise his wisdom departs from him, and if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him... Rabbi Mani bar Patish said: Whoever becomes angry, even if greatness has been apportioned to him from heaven, he is brought low. (Pesahim 66b)
- Rabba bar Rav Huna said: When someone is angry, even the Divine Presence is not important to him... Rabbi Yirmeya of Difti said: One who is angry forgets his learning and increases foolishness... Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: And it is known that such a person's sins are more numerous than his merits... (Nedarim 22b)
- Elijah the Prophet said to Rav Yehuda brother of Rav Sala Ḥasida: Do not seethe with anger and you will not sin. (Berakhot 29b)
- Because Moshe Rabbeinu succumbed to anger, he succumbed to error...(Sifre Numbers 157)

### Gloria Steinem answers...

**Q.** What do you think it is about you that has allowed you to have an impact? I know that in the early days people used to lazily point to your attractiveness as an explanation for the attention you got, but what deeper qualities helped you become a leader?

**A.** ...If I had to pick one reason, it's because I have a sense of humor. That's crucial. It allows you to laugh at yourself and say when you're wrong. One of the things that Native American culture understands and we probably don't is that laughter is the only emotion you can't compel. You can't make anybody laugh unless they want to. I suspect that the people who last the longest, who continue to be trustworthy, are people with a sense of humor.

(NYT Magazine, September 13, 2020)

#### The Talmud on the rewards of changing one's mind:

כדתניא שמעון העמסוני ואמרי לה  
נחמיה העמסוני היה דורש כל אתים  
שבתורה כיון שהגיע לאת ה' אלהיך  
תירא פירש אמרו לו תלמידיו רבי כל  
אתים שדרשת מה תהא עליהן אמר  
להם כשם שקבלתי שכר על הדרישה  
כך אני מקבל שכר על הפרשה

Shimon HaAmasoni (and some say Nehemya HaAmasoni), would interpret every “*et*” in the Torah. When he reached: “You shall be in awe of [et] Adonai your God” (Deut. 10:20), he withdrew [from this method of exposition]. His students said to him: “Rabbi, all the ‘*et*’s that you interpreted, what will be with them?” He said to them: “Just as I received reward for my interpretative method, so I shall receive reward for my withdrawal [from it].” (B Pesachim 22b).

#### Some Upsides To Being a Fool...

##### Giving Joy to Others:

The *mitnagdim* [i.e., those who opposed Hasidism] were making fun of the rabbi of Lekhovitz on another occasion. But when they laughed he did nothing but smile and say: “God has not created a single creature that does not give joy to others. So I too have been created for the joy of others, for those who are near to my heart because my nearness is pleasing to them, and for you because you mock me.” The *mitnagdim* listened and grew silent and gloomy. (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 156)

##### Rabbi Nachman suggests:

טוב יותר להיות פתי יאמין לכל דבר, דהינו להאמין אפלו  
בשטותים ושקרים כדי להאמין גם בהאמת, מלהיות חכם ולכפר  
בכל חס ושלוה דהינו לכפר בשטותים ושקרים. ועל ידי זה נעשה  
הכל ליצנות אצלו וכופר גם בהאמת חס ושלוה. ומוטב שאקרא  
שוטה כל ימי ואל אהיה רשע שעה אחת לפני המקום” (עדויות ה  
:1)

It is written (Prov. 15:15), “A fool believes all things.” It is good to be such a fool. If you believe even that which is false and foolish, you will also believe the truth. You are better off than he who is sophisticated and skeptical

of everything. One can begin by ridiculing foolishness and falsehood. Eventually he will ridicule everything and end up denying even the truth. As one of our greatest sages said (Eduyot 5:6), “It is better that I be called a fool all my life than be wicked even one moment before God.” (*Siphot HaRaN*, Wisdom, #103; cf. Emet v’ Emunah #41)

##### Haim Nahman Bialik says of laughter:

So much for the language of words. But, in addition, “there are yet to the Lord” languages without words: songs, tears, and laughter. And the speaking creature has been found worthy of them all. These languages begin where words leave off, and their purpose is not to close but to open. They rise from the void. They *are* the rising up of the void. Therefore, at times they overflow and sweep us off in the irresistible multitude of their waves; therefore, at times they cost a man his wits, or even his life. Every creation of the spirit which lacks an echo of one of these three languages is not really alive, and it were best that it had never come into the world. (“Revelment and Concealment in Language” in *Revelation and Concealment -- Five Essays*, p. 26) (1915).

**Rebecca Solnit on the foolishness of cynicism:**

Cynicism is, first of all, a style of presenting oneself, and more than anything cynics take pride in not being fooled and not being foolish. But in the forms in which I encounter it, cynicism is frequently both these things. That the attitude priding itself on world-weary experience is often so naïve says much about the triumph of style over substance, attitude over analysis...

Naïve cynics shoot down possibilities, including the possibility of exploring the full complexity of any situation. They take aim at the less cynical, so that cynicism becomes a defensive posture and an avoidance of dissent. They recruit through brutality. If you set purity and perfection as your goals, you have an almost foolproof system according to which everything will necessarily fall short. But expecting perfection is naïve; failing to perceive value by using an impossible standard of measure is even more so. Cynics are often disappointed idealists and upholders of unrealistic standards. They are uncomfortable with victories, because victories are almost always temporary, incomplete, and compromised—but also because the openness of hope is dangerous, and in war, self-defense comes first. Naïve cynicism is absolutist; its practitioners assume that anything you don't deplore, you wholeheartedly endorse. But denouncing anything less than perfection as morally compromising means pursuing aggrandizement of the self, not engagement with a place or system or community, as the highest priority...

Accommodating change and uncertainty requires a looser sense of self, an ability to respond in various ways. This is perhaps why qualified success unsettles those who are locked into fixed positions. The shift back to failure is a defensive measure...

Naïve cynicism loves itself more than the world; it defends itself in lieu of defending the world. I'm interested in the people who love the world more, and in what they have to tell us, which varies from day to day, subject to subject. Because what we do begins with what we believe we can do. It begins with being open to the possibilities and interested in the complexities.

(“Naive Cynicism” in *Call Them By Their True Names*, pp. 52-53, 57, 58)

**The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

There is always in every human relationship and in every private life some place for humor, for the sparkle in the water of life. It is easy to understand the reason for much of the tension that engulfs us. Sometimes we take our own lives so seriously that there is scarcely room on the planet for any other life. There is a sense in which our own problems loom so large that they dominate our entire horizon, and all there is for us to think and feel is that which is central to our particular burdens. We may, all of us, have our moments when it seems that life is taking out all of its grievances upon us, that others around us are permitted to make their purchases at life's bargain counters while we are forced to pay and pay and pay all that the traffic can bear, and more. If this be our mood then there is no antidote quite like a central chuckle of the spirit. Humor may not be laughter, it may not even be a smile; it is primarily a point of view, an attitude toward experience—a tangent. It requires a certain quality of objectivity—the inspired ability to step aside and see one's self go by. To take in the total view is to establish perspective, and many things fall into place. What is extra, what does not belong, becomes the source of the overtone, the chuckle that restores the balance. There is nothing superficial here; there is no cruelty, as is indicated when humor becomes a weapon to embarrass and attack persons. True humor is a weapon, but it is used creatively when it is held firmly in the hands of a man who uses it against himself and his own antics. All the gods of depression, gloom and melancholy must shriek with alarm when there rings down the corridor the merry music of the humorous spirit. It means that fear is in rout, that there is deep understanding of the process of life and an expansive faith which advises the spirit that, because life is its own restraint, life can be trusted. What a deadly religion if it has no humor—what a dreary life where that precious venture has not emerged. Thank God for humor! (*Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 72-74)

**The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

The setting for hate often begins in situations where there are contacts without fellowship. That is, contacts that are devoid of the simple overtones of warmth, fellow-feeling, and genuineness. There is some region in every man that listens for the sound of the genuine in other men. But where there is contact that is stripped of fellow-feeling, the sound cannot come through and the will to listen for it is not manifest. What happens behind the walls of segregation when the reaction to segregation is positive resentment and bitterness? I am not unmindful that there can be and often is an abundance of sentimentality masquerading under the cloak of fellowship. I am remembering also that all through the years there have been isolated experiences of genuine fellowship. Even in the South the walls of segregation were sometimes transcended and a person behind the walls listened for and heard the sound of the genuine in the person on the other side. But this is rare....

Contacts without fellowship tend to express themselves in unsympathetic understanding. To be sure, there is understanding of a certain kind, but it is without the healing and reinforcement of personality. The energy and spirit of the persons involved are not available to each other. It is like the experience of going to a man's office to be interviewed for a job. In that stripping moment before being seated, when the full gaze of the other person is focused upon you, suddenly you wonder if your tie is crooked, or if one of the buttons on your shirt is missing, but you dare not look to find out. In such a penetrating, incisive, cold understanding there is no cushion to absorb limitations or to provide extenuating circumstances for protection...

Unsympathetic understanding is very easily activated into ill will. It may be quite an unconscious step or movement of the spirit. It may be a general or pervasive mood which influences the character of casual encounters or it may inform, quite intentionally, the pointed, face-to-face encounter. It breeds suspicion and inspires many little acts of no-faith. It creates an all-encompassing climate. This unsympathetic understanding may make the Negro say, "No white man can be trusted," or it may make the white person say, "All Negroes are liars and thieves." It makes the areas of contact become a no man's land where men move around as shadows in a world of shadows. (*Essential Writings*, pp 104-05)

## Yom Kippur Morning... PETAH EINAYIM (a real eye-opener)

**A little backstory:** By Biblical law, if a man dies childless, his brother should marry the widow, to carry on his deceased brother's name. Yehudah has three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. He marries Er to a woman named Tamar; Er dies childless. He marries Onan, to Tamar; he dies childless. So Yehudah promises his third son, Shelah (whose name means "hers") to Tamar ("Stay as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"). He has no intention of following through ("for he thought, 'He too might die like his brothers.'"). So Tamar is living in her father's house, waiting. Years pass. Yehudah himself is widowed. Then this happens...

### From Genesis 38:

יג ויגד לתמר לאמר הנה חמיק עלה תמננה לגו צאנו: יד ותסר בגדי אלמנותה מעליה ותכס בצעיף ותתעלף ותשב בפתח עינים אשר על־דרך תמננה כי ראתה כי־גדל שלה והוא לא־נתנה לו לאשה: <sup>13</sup>Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is coming up to Timnah for the sheepshearing." <sup>14</sup>So she took off her widow's garb, covered her face with a veil, and, wrapping herself up, sat down at **Petaḥ Einayim** (lit. **"Opening of the Eyes"**), which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, yet she had not been given to him as wife.

טו ויראה יהודה ויחשבה לזונה כי כסתה פניה: טז ויש אליה אל־הדרך ולאמר הבה־נא אבוא אליך כי לא ידע כי כלתו הוא ותאמר מה־תתן־לי כי תבוא אלי: יז ולאמר אנכי אשלח גדי־עזים מר־הצאן ותאמר אם־תתן ערבון עד ש־לחך: יח ולאמר מה הערבון אשר אתן־לך ותאמר חתמד־ופתיל־ומטף־אשר בגדך ויתן־לה ונבא אליה ותהר לו: יט ותקם ותלך ותסר צעיפה מעליה ותלבש בגדי אלמנותה: <sup>15</sup>When Yehudah saw her, he took her for a harlot; for she had covered her face. <sup>16</sup>So he turned aside to her by the road and said, "Here, let me sleep with you"—for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. "What," she asked, "will you pay for sleeping with me?" <sup>17</sup>He replied, "I will send a kid from my flock." But she said, "You must leave a pledge until you have sent it." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your seal and cord, and the staff which you carry." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. <sup>19</sup>Then she went on her way. She took off her veil and again put on her widow's garb.

כ וישלח יהודה את־גדי העזים ביד רעהו העדלמי לקחת הערבון מיד האשה ולא מצאה: כא וישאל את־אנשי מקמה לאמר אינה הקדשה הוא בעינים על־הדרך ולאמר לא־היתה בזה קדשה: כב וישב אל־יהודה ולאמר לא מצאתיה וגם אנשי המקום אמרו לא־היתה בזה קדשה: כג ולאמר יהודה תקח־לה פן נהייה לבזו הנה שלחתל הגדי הזה ואתה לא מצאתה: <sup>20</sup>Yehudah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to redeem the pledge from the woman; he couldn't find her. <sup>21</sup>He inquired of the people of that town, "Where is the cult prostitute, the one at Enaim, by the road?" But they said, "There has been no prostitute here." <sup>22</sup>So he returned to Yehudah and said, "I couldn't find her; moreover, the townspeople said: There has been no prostitute here." <sup>23</sup>Yehudah said, "Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock. I sent her this kid, but you didn't find her."

כד ויהי | כמשלש חדשים ויגד ליהודה לאמר זנתה תמר בלדת וגם הנה הרה לזוננים ולאמר יהודה הוציאה ותשרף: כה הוא מוצאת והיא שלחה אל־חמיה לאמר לאיש אשר־אלה לו אנכי הרה ותאמר הכר־נא למי החתמת והפתילים והמטה האלה: כו ויכר יהודה ולאמר צדקה ממני כי־על־כן לא־נתתיה לשלח בני ולא־יסף עוד לדעתה: <sup>24</sup>About three months later, Yehudah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot; in fact, she is with child by harlotry." "Bring her out," said Yehudah, "and let her be burned." <sup>25</sup>As she was being brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I am with child by the man to whom these belong." And she added, "Examine these: whose seal and cord and staff are these?" <sup>26</sup>**Yehudah recognized, and said, "She is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah."** And he was not intimate with her again.

כז ויהי בעת לדתה והנה תאומים בבטנה: כח ויהי בלדתה ויתן יד ותקח המילדת ותקשר על-ידו שני לאמר זה יצא ראשונה: כט ויהי | כמשׁיב ידו והנה יצא אחיו ותאמר מה-פּרצת עליך פּרץ ויקרא שמו פּרץ: ל ואחר יצא אחיו אשר על-ידו השני ויקרא שמו זרח:

27 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb! 28 While she was in labor, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first. 29 But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” **So he was named Peretz.** 30 Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerach.

**And who is Peretz?**

ואלה תולדות פּרץ פּרץ הוליד את-חצרון: וחצרון הוליד את-רם ורם הוליד את-עמינדב: ועמינדב הוליד את-נחשון ונחשון הוליד את-שלמה: ושלמון הוליד את-בעז ובעז הוליד את-עובד: ועובד הוליד את-דוד:

**This is the line of Peretz:** Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Ammi-nadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. (Ruth 4:18-22)

**What is Petach Einayim?**

**The Midrash says:**

א"ר אמי חזרנו על כל המקרא ולא מצאנו מקום ששמו פתח עינים ומה הוא בפתח עינים אלא מלמד... ד"א בפתח עינים מלמד שפתחה לו את העין ...

Rabbi said: We have searched through the whole of Scripture and found no place called Petach Enayim. What then is the meaning of Petach Enayim?... It teaches that she opened his eyes... (Bereshit Rabbah 85:7)

**The Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel says:**

בפתיחת עינים. כי נקרא פרשת דרכים 'פתיחת עינים' לפי שהאדם פותח עיניו כשבא לפרשת דרכים

“In Petah Einayim.” For a crossroad is called “Petah Einayim”, because a person opens their eyes when they come to a parting of the paths. (Gur Aryeh on Gen. 38:14)

**The Talmud on the Importance of Being Wrong:**  
 רבה בר רב הונא...דרש (ישעיהו ג, ו) והמכשלה הזאת תחת ידך: אין אדם עומד על דברי תורה אלא אם כן נכשל בהן  
 Rabba bar Rav Huna ...interpreted “And let this stumbling-block be under your hand” (Isaiah 3:6): A person cannot stand on [fulfill, truly understand] words of Torah unless they have stumbled in them. (Gittin 43a)

**On Not Shaming Another Person:**

והיא שלחה אל חמיה - לא רצתה להלבין פניו ולומר ממך אני מעוברת, אלא לאיש אשר אלה לו, אמרה אם יודה מעצמו, יודה, ואם לאו ישרפוני, ואל אלבין פניו. מכאן אמרו נוח לו לאדם שיפילוהו לכבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חברו ברבים:

“She sent to her father-in-law.” She did not want to shame him by saying, “I am pregnant by you,” rather “by the man to whom these belong.” She said, “If he acknowledges on his own, he acknowledges, and if not, I will be burned; but I will not shame him.” From here it is said, it is preferable for a person that he throw himself into a fiery furnace, but let him not make his friend’s face pale in public. (Rashi on Gen. 38:25)

## The Poets Understand:

### A door closes

The last time we met  
I wish the sun had been shining,  
I wish I had been as gentle  
with you as with my babies  
still wet from the womb.  
I wish I had better understood  
what you were saying, underneath  
the words, and addressed myself  
to those underneath words.

I wish you had seen me  
once more — a soft woman,  
worthy of trust, full  
of affection and respect.  
Instead you saw — what? --  
someone angry, demanding,  
dangerous. Instead we sparred,  
your heart on guard as if  
we had never trusted.

But then the moments  
when your eyes were full,  
they were saying something —  
what? I was so tight, intent  
on stories, pulling out of you  
stories I thought I needed, deserved,  
stories that seemed important.  
Instead I should have asked, *What are your eyes saying?*

A missed meeting is someone's fault,  
isn't it? And the temptation is great  
to blame, conclude the fault  
was his — if only he hadn't  
fought me, if only he had given  
what I asked for. And the pain  
is great to imagine the mistakes  
were mine — if not for me, it all  
would have turned out beautifully.

-- Merle Feld, *Finding Words*  
(New York, New York: URJ Press, 2011)

### The Place Where We Are Right

From the place where we are right  
flowers will never grow  
in the spring.

The place where we are right  
is hard and trampled  
like a yard.

But doubts and loves  
dig up the world  
like a mole, a plow.  
And a whisper will be heard in the place  
where the ruined  
house once stood.

Yehudah Amichai

## Two Theologians On Judging Ourselves and Judging Others:

### Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi:

Imagine that you are at the helm of the spaceship Universe, and you are asked to calibrate the karmic response of the Universe. You might think, if one could get a quick karmic response - for example, you do something wrong and you immediately get hit with the equivalent consequence - the Universe would run more smoothly. Maybe evil deeds will get the punishment they really deserve. But what would our life, our history, look like if that was the way of things? You would never be able to create anything. The backlash would be too harsh every time you made a mistake. So in the end, you decide to calibrate for a more forgiving Universe.

Think about this: if every time you drank a glass of chlorinated water from the faucet, your body responded the way it should respond to chlorinated water, without forgiveness, you would be in big trouble. In this sense, we have a very forgiving body, a very forgiving planet, and even a very forgiving society. If they were not forgiving, what would happen to karma? Say, if every time a mistake was made, the truly equivalent response was given, who could survive that response? Imagine if you never got a second chance. We might get slapped down so hard that we couldn't get up. It almost reinforces the wrong because we feel so down that we don't see the point in trying to get up. It leaves little room for hope and learning. If evil was always so strongly reinforced, time after time, by now we would be drowning in it. So there is a kind of forgiving element built into the universe. It isn't altogether forgiving, but it is a little bit forgiving. It gives us time; it gives us a chance to work things out. This is what is called *middat ha'rachamim*, the attribute of mercy.

It is said that when God created the world, in the beginning, He created the world in the attribute of justice...but seeing that the world would not be able to exist that way...He added the attribute of mercy. So there is just a little bit more good in the universe than there is evil. This creates a kind of karma buffer. Every year on Yom Kippur, we see that there is a chance of more karma resolving. It is something like a compost heap for karma. There is a lot of garbage that gets piled there, but if it gets put in this place, there is a chance to somehow do the composting. That is built into the universe. (*Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, pp. 66-67).

### The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman:

It is a very subtle temptation to decide that the negative deeds which flow from one's life to others are not expressive of one's real intent. There seems ever available some extra or extenuating circumstance that gives a ready alibi for such deeds. How easily the excuses come: "I have had a very bad day," or "For some reason I got up on the wrong side of the bed," or "I have met with so many personal reverses recently that,..." or "I have always had a quick temper; it is just one of those things..." Always there is a ready supply of excuses for the negative deed. Very rarely is one willing to face the fact, even when it is true, that the negative deed was what was really intended.

But when the picture shifts! The negative deed that comes from others to me is apt to be regarded by me as deliberate. It is very difficult for us to entertain any notion other than that it was intended... What we allow ourselves we only grudgingly admit for others.

There are two suggestions, simple but far-reaching. One is, that it is well to be mindful that so much which is negative has moved from one's self toward others that it is sound to practice charity toward others for the negative things that move from others toward one's self. This means the relaxing of the will to ascribe to others motives that one denies when the same motives are ascribed to one's self. The other suggestion is, that in the final analysis, judgment belongs to God. Every judgment that I pass upon my fellows is a self-judgment. Judgment can only be whole and creative when it takes place in a context of full and absolute knowledge. Full and absolute knowledge even of one's self is never possible; how can it be with reference to others? Again, it becomes us to say with true humility, "Judgment belongs to God"; and one can only pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" (*Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 37-38)

I seek courage to see the true thing. It is a fearful admission that courage is required to see the true thing. So much of my vision is blurred by my fears, my anxieties, my narrow self interests that I find difficulty sometimes in giving full range to a searching scrutiny. It may be that I suspect the effect on me of seeing things in their true light. Waiting in the quiet experience of worship I seek the courage, the push of God, to see the true thing in everything with which I am involved.

I seek courage to do the true thing. To see the true thing is not necessarily to do the true thing. It may be that it takes a heightened form of courage to do the true thing. The act carries with it its own commitment. The act of a person finally involves the person and he is required at last to back his deed. Therefore, to do the true thing places a searching liability on the integrity of the person who does the deed. We want always to escape the full liability for the deed. The truer the deed, the more the responsibility involves all of a man's life. I seek courage to do the true thing that my own life may not be double talk. Here, in the quietness of worshipful waiting, I seek courage to do the true thing.

*I seek courage to see and to do the true thing.*  
(*Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 166-67)

Never to be forgotten is the fact that the real possibility of failure, deriving from the constant threat of error, is one of the real challenges of growth. To guard against this and be prepared to deal with it when it occurs is an authentic discipline of the spirit. To be victimized by error and at the same time keep on making choices with integrity is to grow in grace. And for the religious man, it is to grow not only in grace but also in the knowledge and experience of God. (*Essential Writings*, p 44)

It is exceedingly difficult to keep from encouraging in oneself that which one condemns in other people. Vices are apt to take on the halo of virtues when they are part of one's own behavior, but seen in others they are regarded as being what in truth they are. If my neighbor squeezes the maximum amount of work out of a person for an absolute minimum of pay, I may certainly call it exploitation. If I do the same thing, I am apt to congratulate myself. What I would consider as a pose or pretense in my neighbor is apt to be called genuine when I do it. This tendency toward self-deception appears in one's attitude toward matters of social change. We tend to condemn in the system what we do not recognize in ourselves. Sins do not exist in general; they are specific, concrete, carrying their weight measured in terms of fearful accuracy. We do not sin against humanity; we sin against persons who have names, who are actual, breathing, human beings. The root of what I condemn in society is found at long last in the soil of my own backyard. What I seek to eradicate in society that it may become whole and clean and righteous, I must first attack in my own heart and life. There is no substitute for this. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, p 99)

It is of immeasurable comfort to remember that much of the chaos and disorder of our own lives is rooted in causes that are understandable; much of the evil in life is reasonable, in the sense that its roots can be traced and it is not necessary to place the blame upon the devil or some blind senseless process. The naked responsibility for human misery, you and I and ordinary human beings like us must accept. In this doomful fact there is the ground of hope, because it means that, in the creation of man, God provided for limitless resourcefulness, and because any situation, however chaotic, can be understood and reconstructed if we have no fear to do, if need be, the radical, the revolutionary deed. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, p. 27)

## Yom Kippur Torah Service... THE SITRA ACHARA

### From The Zohar - Sitra Achara as Division:

וְדָא חוּבְהָ דְהוּא נָחַשׁ קְדָמָא חֲבַר לְתַתָּא וְאַתְפָּרַשׁ  
לְעֵילָא. וּבְגִין כֵּן גָּרַם מַה דְגָרַם לְעֵלְמָא. בְּגִין דְאַצְטְרִיךְ  
לְאַפְרָשָׁא לְתַתָּא וּלְחֲבַרָא לְעֵילָא.... וְעַם כֹּל דָּא אֲצְטְרִיךְ  
לְמַנְדַּע דְאֱלֹהִים יְיָ כֹּלָא חַד בְּלָא פִירוּדָא. ה' הוּא  
הָאֱלֹהִים. וְכַד יִנְדַּע בַּר נֶשׁ דְכֹלָא חַד וְלֹא יִשְׁנֵי פִירוּדָא,  
אֲפִילוּ הֵיחִיא סְטָרָא אַחֲרָא סְתִילָק מַעַל עֲלֵמָא וְלֹא  
אֲתַמְשֵׁד לְתַתָּא. וְהֵינֵי רָזָא דְכְּתִיב וְהִיו לְמַאֲרוֹת. הָא  
קְלִיפָה בְּתַר מוֹחָא סְלִקָא. מוֹחָא אִוּר. סְטָרָא אַחֲרָא מְוֵת.  
אִוּר בְּחֲבוּר דְאַתְוֹן. מְוֵת בְּפִירוּדָא. וְכַד הָאִי אִוּר אֲסִתְלַק  
מִתַּמּוּ, מִתְחַבְרָא בְּאַתְוֹן מְוֵת דְפִירוּדָא....

This is the sin of the primeval serpent, who unites below but divides above. And because of this he caused what he caused to the world. The right way is to recognize diversity below but unity above... Therefore it is necessary for human beings to acknowledge that “Elohim” and “Adonai” are one and the same without any separation: “Adonai hu HaElohim” (I Kings 13:39); and when humankind will universally acknowledge this absolute unity, the evil power (*Sitra Achara*) itself will be removed from the world, and exercise no more influence below. This is hinted in the word *meorot*, which is made up of *or* (light), surrounded by *mot* (death), just as the brain, symbolic of light, is enveloped in a membrane symbolic of the *Sitra Achara* which is death. Should the light (*or*) be removed, the letters on either side would coalesce and form death (*mot*).... (Zohar I 12b)

### Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz explains:

Sitra Achara is that which defines the world as having two sides: one belonging to God and all that recognize [God's] sovereignty, and the other side, Sitra Achra -- all the rest. (*The Long Shorter Way*)

### On Opposition:

A man once asked the Rav (Shneur Zalman of Liadi) in jest: “Will the Messiah be a hasid or a mitnaged?” He answered: “I think a mitnaged, for if he were a hasid, the mitnagdim would not believe in him; but the hasidim will believe in him, no matter what he is.” (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, p. 270-71)

### Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz teaches:

“[To guide others] in the right way, one must not grow angry at them. For anger does not only make one's soul impure; it transfers impurity to the souls of those with whom one is angry.” Another time he said: “Since I have tamed my anger, I keep it in my pocket. When I need it, I take it out.” (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, p. 128)

### From The Zohar - Sitra Achara as Anger:

רִישָׁא דְנִקְוֹדָה, דְקִיָּמָא תְחוּת דְרַגְלֵי דִי בְּסִטְרָא אַחֲרָא... אִיהוּ רִישָׁא לְבַר דְחַד עֲרֻבּוּבָא דְחֻשְׁףֵי דְאַתְפָּשֵׁט. זֶדְכֵּד  
תְּנַנָּא נְפֻקָא מְגוּ רֻגְזָא תְקִיף, אֲתַפְּשֵׁט הֵהוּא תְנַנָּא, וְאִזִּיל רֻגְזָא בְּתַר רֻגְזָא, דָּא עַל דָּא... לְמַהוּי כֹּלָא רֻגְזָא תְקִיף.  
חֻכְד שְׂאֵרֵי תְנַנָּא לְאַתְפָּשֵׁטָא, דְחִיק מְגוּ רֻגְזָא בְּדְחִיקוּ דְחַד נִקְוֹדָה לְאַתְפָּשֵׁטָא, וּלְבַתַּר אֲתַפְּשֵׁט תְנַנָּא (ק"ל ע"א)  
דְרֻגְזָא בְּעִקְמוּ, כְּחַד חוּיָא חֲכִים לְאַבְרָשָׁא.

The tip of the point, which is situated below the [holy] levels, is in “the other side” (*Sitra Achara*)... the source of the opaque darkness that spreads. When the smoke started to come out of the furious anger, the smoke spread farther and farther, anger after anger, one upon another... so that all was a furious anger. And when the smoke began to spread it emitted from the anger the emission of a single point, that it might spread. Subsequently, the smoke of the anger spread out in a curling fashion, like the cunning snake, in order to do evil. (Zohar 242b)

### The Talmud on the Dangers of Anger:

וְהַתְּנִינָא, רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר מִשּׁוֹם חִילְפָא בַר אֲגָרָא שְׁאָמַר מִשּׁוֹם רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי: הַמְקַרֵּעַ בְּגָדָיו בַּחֲמָתוֹ, וְהַמְשִׁבֵּר כְּלָיו בַּחֲמָתוֹ, וְהַמְפִּזֵּר מְעוֹתָיו בַּחֲמָתוֹ, יִהְיֶה בְּעֵינָיו כְּעוֹבֵד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה. שֶׁכֶּן אוֹמְנוֹתוֹ שֶׁל יֵצֵר הָרָע: הַיּוֹם אוֹמֵר לוֹ עֲשֵׂה כֹךְ, וּלְמָחָר אוֹמֵר לוֹ עֲשֵׂה כֹךְ, עַד שֶׁאוֹמֵר לוֹ עֲבוֹד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה וְהוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹבֵד.

It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says in the name of Hilfa bar Agra, who said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri: One who rends his garments in his anger, or who breaks his vessels in his anger, or who scatters his money in his anger, should be like an idol worshipper in your eyes, for that is the craft of the *yetzer hara*. Today it tells him do this, and tomorrow it tells him do that, until it tells him worship idols and he goes and worships idols. (Shabbat 105b)

Once, in the synagogue in Tiberias, it happened that Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Yose differed so sharply about a certain ruling that in their rage a Torah scroll got torn. Rabbi Yose ben Kisma, who was there, said, “I shall be surprised if this synagogue does not become a house of idolatry.” And so it did. (Yevamot 96b)

### Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi on opposition, anger and change:

Now the first Temple was destroyed around the year 600 B.C.E., in a time known among some people as the axial age, the age "when things turned." That was around the time when Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zarathustra, the Buddha, Mahavira, Lao-Tzu, and Confucius were active. It was like a blip on the radar of the Global Brain, as if the Global Brain was having an “aha” moment. The big “aha” eventually disappeared, but there were some people who codified the "aha" in each situation, and religions were formed as a result.

Now what happens between these paradigms, say, when polytheism is making the transition into monotheism, which is deistic and anthropomorphic? When this is happening, the old starts to break down, and usually, a battle ensues. Can you imagine people saying, “No, no, not this kind of invisible God who looks like a human being! God is a bull, a calf!” That is why they chose the golden calf. It was the comfortable “old-time religion” of that period, sort of a throwback. When you decide to let go of the old paradigm, there is always a struggle. People who say, “We have to do it just as our parents did,” will insist and get very angry. It is a battle between two opposing points of view, different paradigms...(*Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, pp. 18-19)

### Rebecca Solnit writes:

Sometimes there are good reasons for a strong response, including the prevention of further harm. But more often, lashing out is a way to avoid looking inward. A 2001 study by Jennifer Lerner and Dacher Keltner found that feeling angry made people as optimistic about the outcome of a situation as feeling happy. In other words, anger may make people miserable, but it also makes them more confident and crowds out other, more introspective miseries: pain, fear, guilt, uncertainty, vulnerability. We'd rather be mad than sad.

In our political conversations, anger is constantly invoked yet rarely examined. What exactly is it? At its most basic, it is a physiological reaction to threat, one we share with other mammals. Anger manifests as a collection of somatic responses—accelerated heart rate, increased blood pressure, heightened body temperature—that are associated with alertness, focus, readiness to act. But the similarity to other animals ends there. Where a dog may growl, bristle, or bite you if you poke it with a stick, it will have no such reaction if you insult its god or its sports team or talk about someone you know who poked another dog. In fact, a good deal of clickbait journalism amounts to stories about someone, somewhere, poking another dog; our taste for indignation is a leash easily yanked.

For our species, with its imaginative and narrative capacities, challenges to one's status, beliefs, and advantages also register as threats. Human anger is a response to insecurity both literal and imagined, to any sense that our physical or social or emotional welfare is at risk. Attacks of fury can bring on strokes and heart attacks and blood clots. We routinely die of rage.

At its mildest, the emotion is no more than annoyance, an aversion to minor unpleasantness. Annoyance with an ethical character becomes indignation: not only do I dislike that, but it also should not have happened. Indeed, anger generally arises from a sense of being wronged. In this respect, my conviction that you should not have eaten the last slice resembles my conviction that we should not have bombed Iraq: in each case, I see an injustice and wish it to be righted. Anger that is motivated by more than a mammalian instinct for self-protection operates by an ethic, a sense of how things ought or ought not to be. But the sentiment's ethical component doesn't explain its psychological effects. Anger is hostile to understanding. At its most implacable or extreme, it prevents comprehension of a situation, of the people you oppose, of your own role and responsibilities. It's not for nothing that we call rages "blind."...

On social media, audiences give perfunctory attention to facts so that they can move on to the pleasure of righteous wrath about the latest person who has said or done something wrong... Anger-provoking content is more likely to succeed, more likely to 'stick,' not least because anger itself is a way the mind gets stuck...

Rage is not quite the same thing as outrage. You might say that the latter is motivated less by wrath at what has been done than by empathy for those it has been done to...

Most committed activists are motivated by love, though love and hate can blur: one can claim to hate on the grounds that one's hate is against what menaces what one loves... Some start out with love and make the long journey to hate unintentionally. Anger is not hate, but when the desire to harm that it can arouse settles on a designated target—that's hate...

As [Martha] Nussbaum points out, "People with an overweening sense of their own privilege ... seem particularly prone to angry displays." The more you expect to get your own way, in other words, the more upset you are likely to be at being thwarted; those who are most thwarted must learn to apportion their wrath with care. Indeed, the most deeply wronged are often the least interested in resentment... ("Facing the Furies" in *Call Them By Their True Names*, pp. 60-65)

### **The Sitra Achara and Its Delusions:**

Once the rabbi of Apt spoke of the world of illusion in which the souls of all those who die deluded by their own vanity stray. And he told this story:

"A few years ago during a very cold winter a poor man went to buy wood in the market place of our town. He wanted to warm the room for his wife who had just borne a child. There were only a few logs left and he was just about to purchase them when the head of the community appeared and outbid him. The poor man who could not pay a higher price begged him in vain to have pity on his wife and child. That night the woman and baby fell sick, and they died a few days later. The man survived them for only a short while; but on the very day he died the head of the community died too.

Then the souls of both men appeared to me in a dream. For the poor man had summoned his opponent to my court. I pronounced the judgment. Many times in the course of his life the head of the community had been brought before worldly judges on the complaints of those he had oppressed and tormented, but since he was well versed in all the intricacies of the law, he had always had the suits referred to one higher court after another until he managed to get himself acquitted. Even now, in the world of illusion, he seemed just as sure of himself as he had been on earth and appealed to a higher judge. [The higher judge] came without delay, but contrary to expectations he not only agreed with my judgment but pronounced an even harsher sentence.

'I'll teach the judge!' shouted the accused and again appealed to a still higher court. But when the court convened, his sentence was again raised.

'If I have to go to the emperor himself, I'll see this thing through!' shouted the head of the community.

By now he has gotten as far as the governor." (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 114)

**The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

During these turbulent times we must remind ourselves repeatedly that life goes on. This we are apt to forget. The wisdom of life transcends our wisdoms; the purpose of life outlasts our purposes; the process of life cushions our processes. The mass attack of disillusion and despair, distilled out of the collapse of hope, has so invaded our thoughts that what we know to be true and valid seems unreal and ephemeral. There seems to be little energy left for aught but futility. **This is the great deception.** By it whole peoples have gone down to oblivion without the will to affirm the great and permanent strength of the clean and the commonplace. Let us not be deceived. It is just as important as ever to attend to the little graces by which the dignity of our lives is maintained and sustained. Birds still sing; the stars continue to cast their gentle gleam over the desolation of the battlefields, and the heart is still inspired by the kind word and the gracious deed. **There is no need to fear evil. There is every need to understand what it does, how it operates in the world, what it draws upon to sustain itself.** We must not shrink from the knowledge of the evilness of evil. Over and over we must know that the real target of evil is not destruction of the body, the reduction to rubble of cities; the real target of evil is to corrupt the spirit of man and to give to his soul the contagion of inner disintegration. When this happens, there is nothing left, the very citadel of man is captured and laid waste. **Therefore the evil in the world around us must not be allowed to move from without to within.** This would be to be overcome by evil. To drink in the beauty that is within reach, to clothe one's life with simple deeds of kindness, to keep alive a sensitiveness to the movement of the spirit of God in the quietness of the human heart and in the workings of the human mind—this is as always the ultimate answer to the great deception. (*Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 110-11)

There is a dynamic quality in the residue which points up the paradox of hate. Hatred may become a foundation upon which the personality stands in an effort to establish a dreadful emotional security. It is possible for a personal significance to emerge on the other side of hate that becomes a form of self-validation. As such it is so intensely personal and private that it becomes a fortress for the ego structure. For a limited and on occasion extended time interval the individual seems to be impregnable. When this happens the very hatred itself becomes an internal rallying center for the personality. The energy generated may be regarded as the strength of a kind of neurosis. Surplus energy is created and placed at the disposal of the individual's needs and ends. The whole personality seems to be alerted. All kinds of supports for implementing one's affirmed or confirmed position are seized upon. A strange new cunning possesses the mind, and every opportunity for taking advantage, for defeating, for striking out against the enemy is revealed in clear perspective. An amazing quality of endurance emerges. It must never be forgotten that hate has an endurance capability in what it may inspire the human spirit to suffer and to sustain...

Hate also wills the nonexistence of another human being. It is not the same as willing the destruction of another person; such is often the aim of bitterness and hostility. Hate is at another and a more profound level; it undermines the very being of the other by affirming his nonexistence and accepting this affirmation as true and authentic. It is a withdrawal of sanction of the other as existing. The person is not destroyed, for this would be to acknowledge his existence, but it is to say that he is not there. **Of course this is a delusion, but it may be extremely functional in behavior. This is refined evil.** (*Essential Writings*, pp 105-06)

### **Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev on the Sitra Achara's Main Weapon - Our Yetzer Hara:**

When Levi Yitzhak was young, a rich man chose him for his son-in-law because of his amazing gifts—for such was the custom. As a mark of respect for his prominent father-in-law, they honored him in the first year of his marriage, by asking him to recite the passage, "Unto thee it was shown. . ." before the congregation in the House of Prayer, on the Day of Rejoicing in the Law. He went to the pulpit and, for a while, stood motionless. Then he put out his hand to take his prayer shawl, but laid it down again and stood without moving as before. The heads of the community bade the servant whisper to him not to weary the assemblage, but to begin. "Very well," he said and took the prayer shawl in his hand. But when he had almost covered his shoulders, he laid it back. His father-in-law was ashamed before the congregation, especially since he had often boasted of the excellent young man he had gained for his house. Angrily he sent him a message either to begin the prayer or leave the pulpit. But even before Levi Yitzhak was told these words, his voice suddenly rang through the hall: "If you are versed in the teachings, if you are a hasid," he said, "then speak the prayer!" And with this he returned to his place. His father-in-law said nothing.

But when they were at home and Levi Yitzhak sat opposite him at the festive board, his face bright with the joy befitting the day, he could contain himself no longer and shouted: "Why did you bring this disgrace upon me?"

The rabbi replied: "When I first put out my hand to draw the prayer shawl over my head, the Evil Urge came and whispered in my ear: 'I want to say "Unto thee it was shown" with you!'

I asked: 'Who are you that you regard yourself worthy to do this?'

And he: 'Who are you that you regard yourself worthy to do this?'

'I am versed in the teachings,' I said. 'I too am versed in the teachings,' he replied.

I thought to put an end to this idle talk and said contemptuously, 'Where did you study?'

'Where did you study?' he countered. I told him.

'But I was right there with you,' he murmured laughingly. 'I studied there in your company!'

I pondered for a moment. 'I am a hasid,' I informed him triumphantly.

And he, unperturbed: 'I too am a hasid.'

Said I: 'To what zaddik did you travel?' And he, again echoing me: 'To whom did you travel?'

'To the holy maggid of Mezritch,' I replied. Whereupon he laughed still more derisively. 'But I tell you that I was there with you and became a hasid just as you did. And that is why I want to say with you, "Unto thee it was shown."'

Then I had enough of it. I left him. What else could I have done?" (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, p. 203)

### **Rabbi Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov agrees:**

When the Evil Urge tries to tempt a person to sin, it tempts them to become all too righteous. (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, p. 153)

**The Reverend Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

There is a sound principle here: an idea held steadily on a point of focus in the mind tends to express itself in action. This accounts, in part at least, for the fact that a person who has been cruelly treated over a long time interval tends to treat others in the same way when the tables are turned. It is not simply the desire for revenge or to take out on someone else. The explanation is more deeply found in the fact that the sufferer has held his mind at dead center on the cruelty which he received until his own action pattern became integrated around cruelty. Left to himself, he behaves in accordance with the pattern that he has held steadily before his mind. This is not to argue that we should ignore the stone in the road or the cruelty to which one is subjected. But it is to remind us that we concentrate on either at our peril. Wise words—Where your treasure is, there is your heart also. Obviously, if we are to escape becoming evil in our behavior we must bring our minds to bear upon the good and hold them there on dead center until our lives are organized on that basis. We are living organisms; we are not things. We become like the things we love. How wonderful, because it places so large a share of our destiny in our own hands. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, p 88)

The assumption that, because a thing is right or good, it will take care of itself without anything else being done, is false. There seems to be present in life a dramatic principle that is ever alert to choke off, to strangle, the constructively creative. Those persons who are working on behalf of the avowedly evil in life recognize this fact and seek to utilize it to the full. Usually they proceed on the basis of a plan, or structure of orderliness, which harnesses all available resources to the ends which they seek. In a sense there is a recognition of the fact that the presuppositions in life are against them and they must make up for this by extra effort and concentration. The good must be worked at, must be concentrated upon, if it is to prevail in any short-time intervals. Religion assumes that, ultimately, the universe itself will not sustain the evil, but it does not assume that evil will not triumph in the short range. It is not enough to evict the devil; but something else must be put in his place and maintained there, or else he returns, refreshed and recharged, to deliver us over to a greater tyranny. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, pp. 51-52)

## Yom Kippur Morning... KODESH HAKODASHIM

ר' אבהו והא כתיב (ויקרא ט"ז:ל"ז)  
וכל אדם לא יהיה באהל מועד בבאו  
לכפר בקדש עד צאתו אפי' אותן  
שכתוב בהן (יחזקאל א':י"ז) ודמות  
פניהם פני אדם לא יהיו באהל מועד..  
Rav Abahu: Is it not written,  
"And no person shall come into  
the Tent of Meeting when he  
goes into the holy to make  
atonement until he goes out"  
(Lev. 16:17)? Even those about  
whom it is written, "Appearance  
of their faces was like a person"  
(Ezekiel 1:10) (i.e., the angels),  
were not in the Tent of Meeting.  
(Talmud Yerushalmi Yoma 27a)

### Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi writes:

From the middle to the end of the Book of the Beynoni [in the Tanya], Reb Shneur Zalman talks about how to acquire Awe of God and how to acquire Love of God, and in the end, he asks about "sanctuary." Where is the sanctuary for God? In the past, we always taught that the sanctuary is the Temple. And now Reb Shneur Zalman wants to talk about the temple within... At one point he says, "I'll teach you a way in which you can have the Awe of God." So he points out that you have a little Moses inside, and you have a Moses awareness that will get you to the Awe of God. He says, "You want to be able to love God. Imagine a great king who takes a poor *shmegeg* who hangs out on a dunghill into his palace and there shows him great love. How will that person respond? Will he not respond with love? And then you start looking at all the good God has done for you. Is it not the same situation? And should you not respond with Love?" (*Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, p. 181)

### Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev speaks of the Ark Within:

We are forbidden to think evil thoughts, for the mind of man is the Holy of Holies. In it is the Ark with the tablets of the law, and if he permits evil thoughts to arise within him, he is setting an idol up in the Temple. But when, in the midst of praying, the zaddik is seized with great fervor, when he kindles with flame and lifts his hands, it is as once, when -- in the Holy of Holies -- the cherubim pointed upward with their wings. (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I, p. 230)

### The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman speaks of *The Inward Sea*:

There is in every person an inward sea, and in that sea there is an island and on that island there is an altar and standing guard before that altar is the "angel with the flaming sword." Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon that altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing passes "the angel with the flaming sword" to be placed upon your altar unless it be a part of "the fluid area of your consent." This is your crucial link with the Eternal. (Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, p. 15)

### The Reverend Dr. Howard Thurman writes:

Whenever mind of man has been uplifted; whenever I have frustrated the temptation to deny the truth within me, or to betray a value which to me is significant; whenever I have found the despair of my own heart and life groundless; whenever my resolutions to be a better man have stiffened in a real resistance against some form of disintegration; whenever I have been able to bring my life under some high and holy purpose that gives to it a greater wholeness and a greater unity; whenever I have stood in the presence of innocence, purity, love and beauty and found my own mind chastened and my whole self somehow challenged and cleansed; whenever for one swirling moment I have glimpsed the distinction between good and evil courses of conduct, caught sight of something better as I turned to embrace something worse; whenever these experiences or others like them have been mine, I have seen God, and felt His presence winging near. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, p 145)

### **Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi writes on The Sanctuary:**

*May this be their solace, to be a comfort to them.*

You have a shrine room or perhaps a corner in your house where you keep your shrine—your "God corner." That is where you keep your candles, your incense, some pictures, and these kinds of things. Why do you put everything in this corner? Isn't God everywhere? Is there less of God in the bathroom than in your shrine room? I say yes. Well, it is not that God is less there, but my awareness of God may be less there. So I need to have signs that will draw me into that consciousness. Most of the time, what we do is create external means. And that is what sacred places are. Churches, synagogues, and temples are external means we have created in order to be able to say, "This is where God resides." So here comes Reb Shneur Zalman, saying, "In our heart, in our innermost being, is where God resides."...

I used to wonder, "What is it that makes a car go faster?" When I first got my driver's license, I couldn't understand how acceleration worked and it was explained to me that when you step on the gas, more fuel goes into the cylinder, so it makes a bigger flame inside. If the flame gets bigger, then, boom, boom, it goes faster. So I finally got it. Now, if I would like to get the engine of my soul to go faster, I have to light it up; I have to put in more fuel. And what is the fuel that makes it run? That fuel seems to be the study of Torah, the fulfillment of the commandments—that is what makes that fuel increase. When there is an increase of that fuel, it burns brighter. And when the flame burns brighter, more space is created in the sanctuary. There is more manifestation in the sanctuary, and there seems to be an increasing transparency... Do you see? There is sort of a gradual melting away of the opacity that exists until the flame burns at full throttle in the heart. (*Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, pp. 183-84)

### **Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi on "Inner Space":**

How does inner space get carved out? If I am totally living on the outside of myself, totally living in the world of action, if I never had to experience any suffering, I would not have any space for compassion either. In *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok describes the situation of a brilliant young man who must learn compassion. He is an *illui*, a genius. However, precisely because he is so brilliant, he is contemptuous of people less brilliant. So his father did something that for him was not easy to do: he raised his son "in silence," without speaking to him in a personal way, only when studying... [U]ltimately the father explains, "When I saw who my son would grow up to be, lacking compassion, I knew what I had to do. Without having experienced any suffering, he wouldn't have been able to become the Righteous Man the world needs, because he would not have that space carved out on the inside." So the chisel with which God carves out space in our consciousness, in our compassion, as it were, is the chisel of suffering...

The Ba'al Shem Tov says that the more conscious a person becomes of having committed a sin out of appetite, out of not knowing better at the time, the more the person comes to realize that it was a graver thing than previously thought. Consciousness is making the person see that. This is the suffering that scours out the soul.

Now, in the end, the Ba'al Shem Tov says, "When the king sees that the peasant's suffering is greater than a punishment would have caused, the king forgives the peasant." Forgiveness means that the peasant does not have to continue grieving over his sin. One of the great teachings of Judaism comes with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is when we go and say, "I've sinned; it's my fault, my great fault; I've done all these bad things in my life." But after Yom Kippur comes Sukkot, which is a celebration. So the notion is that I have to be able to celebrate after the atonement and really believe in it. One of the things that is considered to be a great wrong is if after I have done my penance and reconciled with God, I don't quite feel that God forgives me. That is like saying that I can sin bigger than God can forgive. Do you hear the chutzpah in that? My sin is so great that God is not able to forgive it. (*Wrapped in a Holy Flame*, pp. 42-44)

### **Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi on Yom Kippur:**

With the Temple gone, we no longer had that holy place to go to and find God. So where could we find God? In the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur—in other words, not in space but in time... As Jews, it is hard for us to speak of God being incarnate in the flesh, but we do speak of God being incarnate in time. And Yom Kippur is the clearest God-time that we have. There are twenty-six hours of Yom Kippur (reflecting, as noted earlier, the fact that the Divine name, YHVH, adds up to twenty-six). In other words, you add an hour before and an hour afterward to make Yom Kippur enriched, as it were, with extra time. So you can see how God shows up in time...

*(Wrapped in a Holy Flame, p. 18)*

### **Why is the Holy of Holies also called the *d'vir* (i.e., like *davar*, “word”)?**

#### **The Midrash posits:**

דְּכֹתֶה דְּבִיר, רַבִּי חִיָּא וְרַבִּי יֵנָאי, חַד אָמַר מִמְּקוֹם שֶׁהַדְּבָרוֹת יוֹצְאוֹת לְעוֹלָם, וְחַד אָמַר מִמְּקוֹם שֶׁהַדְּבָרוֹ יוֹצֵא לְעוֹלָם.

[R]egarding the Holy of Holies (*devir*), Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yanai [disagree]: one says from the place from which the commandments (*dibrot*) go out to the world, and one says from the place from which speech (*dibur*) goes out to the world. (Bereshit Rabbah 55:7)

#### **Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn says:**

“When you utter a word before God, then enter into that word with every one of your limbs.”

One of his listeners asked: “How can a big human being possibly enter into a little word?”

“Anyone who thinks himself bigger than the word,” said the zaddik, “is not the kind of person we are talking about.” (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 169)

### **The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman prayer to be a High Priest:**

*I will make of my life a High Priest of Truth.*

I will make of my talents, whatever they are, a High Priest of Truth. This I do when I use them to enrich life, to render life more human, to make life more gracious and personal than it would be otherwise. I recognize that my talents may be special endowments or they may be the result of the advantageous path along which my life has come from the beginning.

I will make of my remembering a High Priest of Truth. I purpose in my heart that I shall not use my memory to store up those things which fester, poison and destroy my living, my life, or the living and the life of others. I shall make it my study to preserve my soul in balance and liberty. I will use my memory to store up the excellent things of my experience. In this way I shall lay up treasures in Heaven.

I will make of myself a High Priest of Truth. I will recognize the supremacy of the Ideal of Godlikeness to which more and more, by His help, I will give myself. Despite the number of times I fail, despite all the limitations and inadequacies which beset me, by God's strength I will make of myself a High Priest of Truth.

*I will make of my life a High Priest of Truth.*

(Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, p. 51)

**From the Babylonian Talmud:**

ת"ר אבן טוען היתה בירושלים כל מי  
שאבדה לו אבידה נפנה לשם וכל מי  
שמוצא אבידה נפנה לשם זה עומד  
ומכריז וזה עומד ונותן סימנין ונוטלה  
וזה היא ששנינו צאו וראו אם נמחת אבן  
הטוען:

The Sages taught in a baraita:  
There was a Claimant's Stone in  
Jerusalem, and anyone who lost  
an item would be directed (lit.  
turned toward) there and anyone  
who found a lost item would be  
directed there. This finder would  
stand and proclaim, and this one  
would stand and give signs, and  
take it. And that is the place  
about which we learned in a  
mishna (Ta'anit 19a): Go and see  
if the Claimant's Stone has been  
washed away. (Bava Metzia 28b)

**Two Torah Texts on Returning Lost Objects****from Exodus (the ox of your enemy):**

כי תפגע שור איבך או חמורו תעה השב תשיבנו לו: כי תראה חמור  
שנאך רבץ תחת משאו וחדלת מעזב לו עזב תעזב עמו:

When you encounter your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him. When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him. (Exod. 23:4-5)

**from Deuteronomy (the ox of your fellow or friend):**

לא תראה את שור אחיך או את שיו נדחים והתעלמת מהם השב  
תשיבם לאחיה: ואם לא קרוב אחיך אלך ולא ידעתו ואספתו אל-תוך  
ביתך והיה עמך עד דרש אחיך אתו והשבתו לו: וכן תעשה לחמורו וכן  
תעשה לשמלתו וכן תעשה לכל-אבדת אחיך אשר-תאבד ממנו  
ומצאתה לא תוכל להתעלם: לא תראה את חמור אחיך או שורו נפלים  
בדרך והתעלמת מהם הקם תקים עמו:

If you see your fellow's ox or sheep gone astray, do not ignore it; you must take it back to your fellow. If your fellow doesn't live near you or you don't know who he is, you shall bring it home and it shall remain with you until your fellow claims it; then you shall give it back to him. You shall do the

same with his ass; you shall do the same with his garment; and shall you do the same with anything your fellow loses and you find: you must not remain indifferent. If you see your fellow's ass or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it; help him raise it. (Deut. 22:1-4)

**Rabbeinu Bahya reconciles the two:**

You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep go astray (Deut. 22:1). In Exodus 23:4, a similar verse appears, but there it states "your enemy's ox" rather than "your friend's." This teaches us that it is not enough for you to merely return that which your enemy lost, but you must make every effort to change that enemy into a friend. The return of your enemy's lost object should be the basis for uprooting the hatred between you, so that by the time you have finished returning it he will be your friend.

**Zohar Atkins writes:**

The health of a society may be measured by how seriously it takes the norm of reuniting lost objects with their owners. Not only does returning a lost object require honesty and effort, but it also requires the returner's ability to identify the returnee on the basis of the lost object alone—to see in what is present, who is missing... In a large, anonymous society, where objects are as interchangeable and trivial as persons, one might have the desire to return a lost object, yet have no way of knowing how to identify the owner. The ability to return a lost object thus means that one has a sensitivity to one's surroundings, that one is oriented. A society in which neighbors go the extra mile to return each other's lost objects is one in which the bonds of mutual care take precedent over short-sighted egocentricity... Talmudically speaking, the failure to return a lost object that one has the ability to return is likened to theft. But spiritually, it's deeper. The lost object represents an aspect of the owner's self. Returning a lost object is not just about restoring the owner's sense of self, it's also a pretext for building relationship with the person; for accompanying them in a moment of fragility, for hearing their story.

## We lose more than objects...

### And in the Jerusalem Talmud:

מה עיסקה דהדא אבן הטועים אלא כל מאן דהוה מובד מילה הוה נסב לה מן תמן וכל דהוה משכח מילה הוה מייביל לה לתמן.

What is the matter of the *even hato'im* (the stone of the wanderers/those who who err)? Anyone who lost something would take it from there, and anyone who found something would bring it there. (J Taanit 16b)

### A Midrash on the lost parts of our humanity:

אמר רבי יודא הלוי בר שלום, וא"ו זו כנגד ששה דברים שחסר הקדוש ברוך הוא מאדם הראשון לאחר שחטא. ואלו הן: זיו פניו, וקומתו, וחייו, ופרות הארץ, ונטרד מגן עדן, וחמה ולבנה... ולעתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא מחזירם... ואימתי? ביום חבש ה' את שפר עמו ומחץ מכתו ירפא (ישעיה ל, כו), מחץ מכתו של עולם ירפא.

Rabbi Yehudah the Levite, the son of Shalum said: **Six things the Holy Blessed One took from Adam after he sinned.** And they are: the light in his face; his stature; his life [i.e. immortality]; the fruit of the earth; he was expelled from the garden of Eden; the sun and the moon... **In the future, the Holy Blessed One will restore these things to man in the future...** When? "On the day that Adonai binds up the brokenness of God's people, and

heals the stroke of their wound" (Isa. 30:26), i.e., when God will heal the wounds of the world (i.e., when the Messiah comes). (Tanḥuma, Bereshit 6, Eleh Toldot)

## And sometimes it's we who are lost...

### Could Be Chelm:

There once was a man who was very stupid. When he got up in the morning it was so hard for him to find his clothes that at night he almost hesitated to go to bed for thinking of the effort he would have on waking. One evening he finally made a great effort, took paper and pencil and as he undressed noted down exactly where he put everything he had on. The next morning, very well pleased with himself, he took the slip of paper in his hand and read: "cap" -- there it was, he set it on his head; "pants" -- there they lay, he got into them; and so it went until he was fully dressed.

"That's all very well, but now, where am I myself?" he asked in great consternation. "Where in the world am I?" He looked and looked, but it was a vain search; he could not find himself. "And that is how it is with us," said the rabbi. (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 314)

### A commentary on the Talmud adds:

אבן טוען היתה בירושלים, כל מי שאבד אבידה נפנה לשם. נ"ל בס"ד, קרו לה אבן טוען, כי משם יוציא ויעלה המליץ הטוב על ישראל, טענה של זכות על ישראל לפני הקב"ה, לקבץ נדחי ישראל, ולקבל פושעי ישראל בתשובה, דכל זה דומה להשבת אבידה, כי יאמר המליץ, הנה המקום הזה אליו יבואו כל משיבי אבידה להשיב אבידה, והם ישתדלו ויבואו לכאן להכריזו כדי להשיב אבידה, ודבר זה נמצא בבשר ודם, וכל שכן שהקב"ה ברחמיו יקיים השבת אבידה, להשיב נדחי ישראל, ולקבל פושעי ישראל בתשובה:

There was a "claimant's stone" in Jerusalem. Anyone who lost something would go there. It was called the "claimant's stone" because from there come forth and arose a good counselor for Israel, who would advocate for Israel's merit before the Holy Blessed One, to gather in all the dispersed Jews, and receive

the sinners in teshuvah. For all of this is like returning a lost object. For the counselor says, "See, this is the place to which all come all returners of the lost to return them. And they make a great effort to come here and to call out, in order to return what is lost. And if this occurs with flesh and blood, all the more so the Holy Blessed One in compassion establishes the return of the lost, to bring back the dispersed Jews, and receive sinners in Teshuvah. (Sefer Benayahu ben Yehoyada on Bava Metziah 28b)

**A favorite Elul story of Rabbi Hayyim:**

A man lost his way in a great forest. After a while another lost his way and chanced on the first. Without knowing what had happened to him, he asked the way out of the woods. 'I don't know,' said the first. 'But I can point out the ways that lead further into the thicket, and after that let us try to find our way together.' So, my congregation," the rabbi concluded his story, "let us look for the way together." (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 213)

**Two Hasidic masters on loss and return:****Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonye teaches:**

השב תשיבם. לא לחינם הראו לך זאת, יש לך שייכות לזה: "השב, תחילה תחזור אתה בתשובה ואחר כך "תשיבם," תוכל להחזירם בתשובה גם הם וזהו שנאמר הקם תקים עמו, כשהגדול בישראל כולל עצמו ומתאחד עם אנשי דורו אז יכול הוא להקימם כן.

Return you shall return them. It was not in vain that they were shown to you; you have a connection to this. "Hashev" - first you return through teshuvah, and afterwards, "tashivem" - you will be able to return them also in teshuvah. And this is the meaning of the verse (Deut. 22:4) "raise you shall raise with him," when a leader in Israel include themselves and joins with their generation, then it is possible for the leader to uplift them thus. (*Toldot Yaacov Yosef*, Ki Tetze, on Deut. 22:1-3)

**The Sfat Emet (R.Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter) teaches:**

בפסוק לא תראה כו' והתעלמת כו' השב תשיבם כו' הקם תקים. יש לפרש כשאדם מרגיל עצמו כך שלא יוכל להתעלם מהפסד של חברו. הן בגשמיות הן בתיקון הנפש. אז בכחו להשיב אליו אבידתו ולהקימו. ומכ"ש באדם עצמו שענין זה נוהג כשא"י לסבול את הפחיתות שבו אז הוא נושע:

"You shall not see... and hide yourself... You shall return him... you shall lift." When a person habituates himself in this way, such that he cannot ignore his friend's loss, whether it be a physical or a spiritual loss, then he is able to truly return to him that which was lost and elevate it. And similarly, this applies to an individual themselves, that he will be able to bear the losses within himself. Then he may truly be redeemed. (Ki Tetze 1878)

**The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

It is in [man's] religious experience that he sees himself from another point of view. In a very real sense he is stripped of everything and he stands with no possible protection from the countenance of the Other. The things of which he is stripped are not thrown away. They are merely laid aside and with infinite patience they are seen for what they are. It is here that the great decision is made as to what will be kept and what will be discarded. A man may take a whole lifetime to put away a particular garment forever. The new center is found, and it is often like giving birth to a new self... There need not be only one single rebirth, but again and again a man may be reborn until at last there is nothing that remains between him and God. (*Essential Writings* p 44)

# Yom Kippur Minchah... THE VALLEY OF THE DRY BONES

Ezekiel 37:1-14

נְהִיְתָה עָלַי יַד יְיָ וַיּוּצֵאֵנִי בְרוּחַ יְיָ וַיְנִיחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת: וַיְהִי עִבְרֵנִי עֲלֵיהֶם סָבִיב | סָבִיב וְהִלָּה רַבּוֹת מְאֹד עַל־פְּנֵי הַבְּקָעָה וְהָנָה יְבֻשׁוֹת מְאֹד: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּר־אֱלֹהִים הַתְּחַיֶּינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַר אֲדָנָי יְיָ אַתָּה יָדָעְתָּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנְבֵּא עַל־הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבֻשׁוֹת שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְיָ: כֹּה אָמַר אֲדָנָי יְיָ לָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מֵבִיא בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם: וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גְּדִים וְהָעֲלֹתִי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר וְקָרַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר וְנִתְנִיתִי בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְיָ:

<sup>1</sup> The hand of Adonai came upon me. God took me out by the spirit of Adonai and set me down in the valley. It was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>God led me all around them; there were very many of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>God said to me, “O mortal, can these bones live again?” I replied, “O Lord God, only You know.” <sup>4</sup>And God said to me, “Prophesy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of Adonai! <sup>5</sup>Thus said the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am Adonai!”

וַיְנַבְּאתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַיְהִי־קוֹל כְּהִנָּבֵאִל וְהִנֵּה־רֵעַשׁ וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת עֶצֶם אֶל־עֶצְמוֹ: וַיְרֵאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה־עֲלֵיהֶם גְּדִים וּבָשָׂר עָלָה וַיִּקְרְבוּ עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר מִלְמַעְלָה וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הִנְבֵּא אֶל־הָרוּחַ הַנִּבְּא בְּר־אָדָם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־הָרוּחַ כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדָנָי יְיָ מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בָּאִי הָרוּחַ וּפְחֵי בְהַרְוִיגִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיְחִיּוּ:

<sup>7</sup>I prophesied as I had been commanded. And while I was prophesying, suddenly there was a sound of rattling, and the bones came together, bone to matching bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had grown, and skin had formed over them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then God said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, O mortal! Say to the breath: Thus said the Lord God: Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again.”

וַיְנַבְּאתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַתִּבּוֹא בָהֶם הָרוּחַ וַיְחִיּוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ עַל־רַגְלֵיהֶם חֵיל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד־מְאֹד: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בְּר־אֱלֹהִים הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה הִנֵּה אִמְרִים יְבֻשׁוּ עֲצָמוֹתֵינוּ וְאָבְדָה תִּקְוַתֵנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ: לָכֵן הִנְבֵּא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדָנָי יְיָ הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתַח אֶת־קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם וְהָעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם עִמִּי וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֲדַמַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְיָ בְּפִתְחִי אֶת־קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם וּבְהָעֲלֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם עִמִּי: וְנִתְנִיתִי רוּחִי בְכֶם וְחַיִּיתֶם וְהִנַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם עַל־אֲדַמַּתְכֶם וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְיָ דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי נְאֻם־יְיָ:

<sup>10</sup>I prophesied as God commanded me. The breath entered them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast multitude. <sup>11</sup>And God said to me, “O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.’ <sup>12</sup>Prophesy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>You shall know, O My people, that I am Adonai, when I have opened your graves and lifted you out of your graves. <sup>14</sup>I will put My breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil. Then you shall know that I Adonai have spoken and have acted”—declares Adonai.

Zohar I, 6b

וַיְהִי | בְּשָׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרִבְעֵי בַחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וַאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹלָה עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲרָאָה מְרָאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:  
In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in exile by the River K'var, the heavens opened and I saw visions of God.

הַדָּא הוּא דְכְתִיב (יחזקאל א:א') וַאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹלָה. הוּא דְרָגָא דְאֶקְרִי אֲנִי, הוּא בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹלָה. אֲמַאי. עַל נְהַר כְּבָר. עַל נְהַר דְנָגִיד וְנִפְיָק דְפִסִּיק מִימּוֹ וּמְבוּעוּי וְלֹא אֲנִיד כִּד בְּקִדְמִיתָא (כדבדקדמיתא).

This is what Scripture means by “And I was in the midst of the exile” (Ezekiel 1:1) -- the level called “T” was in the midst of the exile. Why? “By the river *Kevar*” -- by the river that used to flow but whose waters and eddies have ceased and it does not flow as it used to do.

**Yehuda Halevi argues:**

**The Sage:** The root of all wisdom was deposited in the Ark...as it is said: "Put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God" (Deut. 31:26). From there went forth a twofold wisdom, firstly, the scriptural knowledge, whose bearers were the priests; secondly, the prophetic knowledge which was in the hands of the prophets. Both classes were, so to speak, the people's watchful advisers... They, therefore, represent the head of the people.

**Al Khazari:** So you are today a body without either head or heart.

**The Sage:** You speak rightly, but we are not even a body, only scattered limbs, like the "dry bones" which Ezekiel saw [in his vision] (Ezekiel 37). These bones, however, O king of the Khazars, which have retained a trace of vital power, having once been the seat of a heart, brain, breath, soul, and intellect, are better than certain bodies formed of marble and plaster, endowed with heads, eyes, ears, and all limbs, in which never dwelt the spirit of life... (The Kuzari 2:28, tr. by Zohar Atkins)

**The Reverend Dr. Howard Thurman writes:**

There is a fallow time for the spirit when the soil is barren because of sheer exhaustion. It may come unannounced like an overnight visitor "passing through." It may be sudden as a sharp turn-in on an unfamiliar road. It may come at the end of a long, long period of strenuous effort in handling some slippery in-and-out temptation that fails to follow a pattern. It may result from the plateau of tragedy that quietly wore away the growing edge of alertness until nothing was left but the exhausted roots of aliveness. The general climate of social unrest, of national and international turmoil, the falling of kingdoms, the constant, muted suffering of hungry men and starving women and children on the other sides of the oceans, all these things may so paralyze normal responses to life that a blight settles over the spirit leaving all the fields of interest withered and parched. It is quite possible that spreading oneself so thin with too much going "to and fro" has yielded a fever of activity that saps all energy, even from one's surplus store, and we must stop for the quiet replenishing of an empty cupboard. Perhaps too much anxiety, a too-hard trying, a searching strain to do by oneself what can never be done that way, has made one's spirit seem like a water tap whose washer is worn out from too much pressure. But withal there may be the simplest possible explanation: the rhythmic ebb and flow of one's powers, simply this and nothing more. Whatever may be the reasons, one has to deal with the fact. Face it! Then resolutely dig out dead roots, clear the ground, but don't forget to make a humus pit against the time when some young or feeble plants will need stimulation from past flowerings in your garden. Work out new designs by dreaming daring dreams and great and creative planning. The time is not wasted. The time of fallowness is a time of rest and restoration, of filling up and replenishing. It is the moment when the meaning of all things can be searched out, tracked down and made to yield the secret of living. Thank God for the fallow time!

(*Deep Is the Hunger*, pp 89-90)

**The Kotzker Rebbe's responds to a miracle worker:**

The Kotzker was told that it was said that a particular tzaddik had the power to raise the dead. He answered: to bring the dead to life, this is a matter for the blessed Holy One. A tzaddik needs to bring the living to life.

**Rabbi Mikhal, speaking after his death in a dream to Rabbi Zevi Hirsch of Zhydatchov, says:**

Know that from the moment I died, I have been wandering from world to world. And the world which yesterday was spread over my head as Heaven, is today the earth under my feet, and the Heaven of today is the earth of tomorrow.

**Rabbi Simḥa Bunam says:**

"A person is always passing through two doors: out of this world and into the next, and out and in again." (Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* II, p. 250)

## The Talmud Envisions the Heavenly Realms:

- ר"ל אמר שבעה ואלו הן וילון רקיע שחקים זבול מעון מכון ערבות  
 Reish Lakish said: There are seven firmaments, and they are as follows: Vilon, Rakia, Shehakim, Zevul, Ma'on, Makhon, and Aravot.
- וילון אינו משמש כלום אלא נכנס שחרית ויוצא ערבית ומחדש בכל יום מעשה בראשית ...  
 1) Vilon, curtain, is the firmament that does not contain anything, but enters at morning and departs in the evening, and renews the act of Creation daily...
- רקיע שבו חמה ולבנה כוכבים ומזלות קבועין ...  
 2) Rakia is the one in which the sun, moon, stars, and zodiac signs are fixed...
- שחקים שבו רחיים עומדות וטוחנות מן לצדיקים  
 3) Shehakim, heights, is the one in which mills stand and grind manna for the righteous....
- זבול שבו ירושלים ובית המקדש ומזבח בנוי ומיכאל השר הגדול עומד ומקריב עליו קרבן שנאמר (מלכים א ח, יג) בנה בניתי בית זבול לך מכון לשבתך עולמים ומנלך דאיכרי שמים דכתיב (ישעיהו סג, טו) הבט משמים וראה מזבול קדשך ותפארתך  
 4) Zevul, abode, is the location of the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly Temple, and there the heavenly altar is built, and the angel Michael, the great minister, stands and sacrifices an offering upon it, as it is stated: "I have surely built a house of Zevul for You, a place for You to dwell forever" (I Kings 8:13). And from where do we derive that Zevul is called heaven? As it is written: "Look down from heaven and see, from Your holy and glorious abode [Zevul]" (Isaiah 63:15).
- מעון שבו כיתות של מלאכי השרת שאומרות שירה בלילה וחשות ביום מפני כבודן של ישראל  
 5) Ma'on, habitation, is where there are groups of ministering angels who recite song at night and are silent during the day out of respect for Israel, in order not to compete with their songs...
- מכון שבו אוצרות שלג ואוצרות ברד ועליית טללים רעים ועליית אגלים וחדרה של סופה [וסערה] ומערה של קיטור ודלתותיהן אש שנאמר (דברים כח, יב) יפתח ה' לך את אוצרו הטוב  
 6) Makhon, dwelling place, is where there are storehouses of snow and storehouses of hail, and the upper chamber of harmful dews, and the upper chamber of drops, and the room of tempests and storms, and the cave of mist. And the doors of all these are made of fire. How do we know that there are storehouses for evil things? For it is stated: "The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens" (Deuteronomy 28:12), which indicates the existence of a storehouse that contains the opposite of good.
- ערבות שבו צדק משפט וצדקה גנוי חיים וגנוי שלום וגנוי ברכה ונשמתן של צדיקים ורוחות ונשמות שעתיד להיבראות וטל שעתיד הקב"ה להחיות בו מתים  
 7) Aravot (skies) contains tzedek (righteousness), justice; tzedakah; the treasures of life; the treasures of peace; the treasures of blessing; the souls of the righteous; the spirits and souls that are to be created; and the dew that the Holy Blessed One will use to revive the dead. (Chagigah 12b)

### And One More Treasury:

אמר רבי שמעון בן פזי, אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, משום בר קפרא: כל המוריד דמעות על אדם פשר, הקדוש ברוך הוא סופרו ומניחו בבית גנניו, שנאמר: (תהילים נ"ו:ט) "נדי ספרתה אתה שימה דמעתי בנאדך, הלא בספרתך".  
Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said in the name of Bar Kappara:  
Anyone who sheds tears over an upright person, the Holy Blessed One counts their tears and places them in the Divine treasury, as it is stated: "You have counted my wanderings, put my tears into your bottle, are they not in your book?" (Psalms 56:9). (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 105b)

**The Vorker Rebbe adds:** A Yom Kippur machzor not stained with tears is like a Haggadah not stained with wine; you can tell it hasn't been used.

### How Do We Open the Gates? The Talmud says, when it's not about you:

<p>כְּשֶׁבִנָּה שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, בִּיקָשׁ לְהַכְנִיֵס אֶרְוֹן לְבַיִת קֹדֶשׁ שִׁים. דָּבָקוּ שְׁעָרִים זֶה בְּזֶה. אָמַר שְׁלֹמֹה עֲשָׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה רִנּוֹת, וְלֹא נִעֲנָה. פָּתַח וְאָמַר: "שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנְשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד". רָהִטוּ בְּתַרְיָה לְמִיבְלָעִיהָ, אָמְרוּ: "מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד". אָמַר לָהֶם: "ה' עֲזָו וְגִבּוֹר".</p> <p>חָזַר וְאָמַר: "שָׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם וְשָׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד ה' צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה", וְלֹא נִעֲנָה.</p> <p>כִּינּוּן שָׂאָמַר: "ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶל תִּשָּׁב פְּנֵי מְשִׁיחֶךָ זְכַרְהָ לְחֹסְדֵי דָוִד עֲבָדְךָ", מִנְדֵּן נִעֲנָה...</p>	<p>When Solomon built the Temple, he sought to bring the Ark into the Holy of Holies. The gates clung together. Solomon uttered twenty-four songs of praise, but he was not answered. He began and said: "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in" (Psalms 24:7). [The gates] ran after him to swallow him, saying, "Who is the King of glory?" (Psalms 24:8). He said to them: "Adonai strong and mighty, Adonai mighty in battle" (Psalms 24:8). He tried again saying, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, lift them up, you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in. Who then is the King of glory? Adonai Tzeva'ot; He is the King of glory. Selah" (Psalms 24:9–10), but he was not answered. When he said: "O Adonai Elohim, turn not away the face of Your anointed; remember the good deeds of David Your servant" (II Chronicles 6:42). He was immediately answered... (Shabbat 20a)</p>
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### Some final inspiration from the Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman:

The insight of the spiritual ["Jacob's Ladder"] is... that each man must face the figure at the top of the ladder. There is a goal. It is some kind of climax to human history. Every man must come to terms with the ultimate problem. How does he relate to something that is final in existence? In one way or another God and the human spirit must come together. Whatever things in life you believe to be true and valid, you and they must sit together in the solitude of your own spirit; and when you do what is on the agenda no form of pretension has any standing there. Even your most vaunting ambition may seem in such a moment to be filthy rags. The one searching item with which you have to deal is, how have you lived your life in the knowledge of your truth? This may not occur for the individual at the time of his dying, or at a moment of crisis, but as you turn the corner today in your own road, suddenly it is upon you. We are all climbing Jacob's ladder, and every round goes higher and higher. All who recognize this as a living part of their experience join with those early destiny-bound singers who marched through all the miseries of slavery confident that they could never be entirely earth-bound. (*Essential Writings* pp 132-33)

It may seem to be splitting hairs to say that Destiny is what a man does with his fate. Fate is given; Destiny is won. Fate is the raw materials of experience. They come uninvited and often unanticipated. Destiny is what a man does with these raw materials. A man participates in his fate almost as a spectator or perhaps as a victim; he does not call the tunes. It is important to make clear that this is only an aspect of human experience. To ignore the margin of experience that seems to be unresponsive to any private will or desire is disastrous. To ascribe responsibility for all the things that happen to one to some kind of fate is equally disastrous. It is quite reasonable to say that there are forces in life that are set in motion by something beyond the power of man to comprehend or control. The purpose of such forces, their significance, what it is that they finally mean for human life, only God knows. The point at which they touch us or affect us cannot be fully understood. Why they affect us as they do, what they mean in themselves, we do not know. Sometimes they seem like trial and error, like accidents, like blind erratic power that is without conscience or consciousness, only a gross aliveness. To say that those forces are evil or good presupposes a knowledge of ends which we do not have. The point at which they affect our lives determines whether we call them good or evil. This is a private judgment that we pass upon a segment of our primary contact with the forces of life. Out of this contact we build our destiny. We determine what we shall do with our circumstances. It is here that religion makes one of its most important contributions to life. It is a resource that provides strength, stability and confidence as one works at one's destiny. It gives assurance of a God who shares in the issue and whose everlasting arms are always there. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, 42-43)

There is something incomplete about coming to the end of anything. This is true even though it may be the close of something for the end of which we have longed for many days, or even years. There is the end of a long siege of illness, when the surge of new strength and vigor pervades one's entire body and the mind begins to pick up a fresh attack upon the world of men and things. The days in bed, the routine of the sick room, the frequent and periodic visits of the doctor, the solicitation of friends and loved ones, the silent watches, the night with the voices that can be heard only when "day is done"; all these have become a part of life's pattern. But this is over. There is the end of a voyage after days on board ship. The endless promenading on the deck, the long, lazy afternoons, the unique smell of the cabin, the new friends, the storms, the circuitous fascination of the sea, all this is behind at voyage-end. There is the end of friendship. The early days when affection was tender and the hours of anxiety during new unfoldings were safely passed; the period when tokens of testing were everywhere; the moments of mounting ecstasy when the sheer joy of aliveness overflowed, feeding all the valleys of the soul; the long days of tranquility when nothing happened because one had seeped quietly through all open things; then the end—no sharp break, no vast upheaval, only the quiet closing, one by one, of doors. There is something incomplete about coming to the end of anything. Even the end of life does not seem final, notwithstanding one's attitude toward life after death. The fact is, one never comes to the end of anything. Something always remains, some deposit, some residue that mingles with the stream of one's life forever. In a sense, there can never be an end of anything; something remains. This is what is meant by the words Tennyson placed on the lips of Ulysses: "I am a part of all that I have met." True also is it that all I have met is a part of me, forever. (*Deep Is the Hunger*, pp 132-33)