

סֵפֶר בְּקוֹרַת בְּהֵמָתָךְ

Sefer Bikorat Behem'techa

We Sefardi Jews begin saying *Selichot* prayers on the 2nd of Elul, when *Moshe* was on *Har Sinai* receiving the second *Luchot*.

The prevalent custom amongst Ashkenazic Jews, on the other hand, is to begin reciting *Selichot*/forgiveness prayers from the Sunday morning before *Rosh Hashanah*, unless *Rosh Hashanah* falls out on a Monday or a Tuesday (**as it does this year, 5776**), in which case *Selichot* begins a week earlier (**this year, 5775, Motzaei Shabbat September 5/Sunday morning September 6**), as we require at least four days of *Selichot* before *Rosh Hashanah*. (**Rama Siman 581:1**). *Mishna B'rurah* 581:6 explains that the reason that the preparation is no less than four days is because some had the custom to fast for ten days prior to *Yom Kippur* however, since one can't fast on *Rosh Hashanah's* two days, *Shabbat Shuvah*, and *Erev Yom HaKippur*, one had to begin fasting four days prior to *Rosh Hashana*.

Another reason for this is that we require at least four days of *Selichot* before *Rosh Hashana*. A *Korban* (**sacrifice**) in the *Bet HaMikdash* required four days of examinations to ensure it was blemish free and acceptable for the *Mizbeach* (**altar**).



רמב"ם הלכות תמידין ומוספין פרק א
 אין פוחתין מששה טלאים המבוקרין בלשכת הטלאים שבמקדש, ויהיו מוכנים קודם יום הקרבה בארבעה ימים, ואף על פי שהיו
 מבקרין אותו מתחילה לא היו שוחטין את התמיד עד שמבקרין אותו שניה קודם שחיטה לאור האבוקות, ומשקין אותו מים בכוס של
 זהב כדי שיהיה נוח להפשט.

The *Rambam* writes above in his *Hilchot Temidim v'Musafim*: *הקרבה יום הקרבה*,
 בארבעה ימים,

"They should be prepared four days before their sacrifice."

In his commentary to the *Mishna Arachin 2:5*, *Rambam* further writes that the source for this practice was the *Korban Pesach*/Paschal sacrifice brought by the Jews in Egypt. They were commanded to take the lambs four days before they were offered.

Concerning this *Korban Pesach* (***Shemot 12:4***) Rashi writes:

והיה לכם למשמרת: זה לשון בקור שטעון בקור ממום ארבעה ימים קודם שחיטה

This is an expression of inspection, that it [**the animal**] requires an inspection for a blemish four days before its slaughter.

He uses the root **בקור** *Bikor*/inspection.

So too each Jew should consider themselves as a *Korban Olah* on *Rosh Hashanah* and be ready to sacrifice themselves in atonement before Hashem, and thus utilize these four days (**or more**) to inspect their deeds and do *Teshuvah* for their sins (**blemishes**) and thus be pure when approaching *HaShem* on *Rosh Hashana*.

How does saying *Selichot* parallel checking blemishes? The *Mishna B'rurah* explains this with an incredible insight from the *pesukim* about the *korbanot* of *Rosh Hashanah*. Usually, the Torah describes our obligation to bring a *korban olah* with the words "V'hikravtem olah" "You shall offer an olah" (e.g. ***Bamidbar 28:19***); however, with regards to *Rosh Hashanah* the Torah says "va'asitem olah" "You should **make a korban olah**" (***Bamidbar, 29:2***). This difference alludes to the idea that the true *korban olah* of *Rosh Hashanah* is not the animal we *bring*; rather, we must "make" a *korban* by working on perfecting ourselves and sacrificing our inner animal's desires for Hashem's sake. Since we are offering *ourselves* as *korbanot*, it follows that we should inspect *ourselves* for four days– and this is accomplished through the four days of *Selichot* and *teshuvah* which precede *Rosh Hashanah*.

Besides saying the *Selichot*, how should this self-inspection process be done today?

With the help of Heaven I received an insight in learning the daily *Chabad* study *HaYom Yom* for 4 *Elul*, and to ascend the four days prior to *Rosh Hashanah* in *menschkeit* /humanity by focusing on improving our character:

מעלת מין האנושי, ישנם ארבעה תוארים: אדם - מעלת המוחין והשכל, איש - מעלת הלב והמדות, אנוש - החלישות באחד מהם בשכל או במדות, או בשניהם, גבר - מתגבר על עצמו להסיר המניעות ועיכובים להשיג אחת המעלות או בשכל או במדות, היינו דגבר עוסק עם האנוש להגביהו למעלת איש או אדם.

ומאחר דאפשר לעשות מאנוש איש או אדם, הרי בהכרח דגם באנוש ישנם כל אותם המעלות שישנם באיש וגם באדם

In describing the unique qualities of humankind, four terms are used: *Adam* refers to the quality of mind and intellect; *ish* to the quality of heart and emotion; *enosh*, weakness in either intellect or emotion or both; *gever*, who overcomes inner weakness and removes obstacles and hindrances to the attainment of an intellectual or emotional quality. I.e. *gever* works upon *enosh* to elevate him to the plane of *ish* or *adam*. Since it is possible to turn *enosh* into *ish* or *adam*, it is obvious that *enosh* already possesses the qualities found in *ish* and *adam*.

In summary, in Hebrew "man" has four distinct names: *adam*, *ish*, *enosh*, and *gever*. Each of these terms describes a special virtue of man, and a failing. As Rabbi Posner writes:

Adam refers to a man of wisdom and understanding; *ish* is descriptive of moral, emotive attributes; *enosh* signifies weakness in either intellect or emotions; *gever* denotes strength and mastery over obstacles, either in the realm of the intellect or of the emotions, whether or not the strength is innate or acquired.

Adam is the loftiest adjective, that of intellectual capacity. Through this trait a person, striving with mind and heart, achieves superiority over all Creation, not only over terrestrial creatures, but even over spiritual ones, such as the ministering angels and emanations. Though the angels (**on high**) are Abstract Intellects (**despite their bodily existence**)-since their conceptions are non-spatial and non-temporal, while those of humans are circumscribed by the limitations of time and space-still man is superior. For only man has been given the mission and ability to illumine the darkness of this physical world with the light of Torah and *mitzvot*, to make it a G-dly abode. The Abstract Intellects lack this ability. Moreover, they cannot even conceive that physical objects can serve as an abode for the Divine Majesty, or that a physical brain can conceive of G-d.

Man alone was chosen by G-d for this task. Therefore he is called the principal creature. He has no parallel among the higher or lower creatures. Indeed, since he is composed of the loftiest and the lowest components (**his body being formed from the lowest gross matter-dust of the earth, and his soul from the highest of all-part of G-d above**) man with his physical brain can grasp G-dly concepts even more thoroughly than can the angels. This dual composition of man, makes him superior to the heavenly creatures.

Our Sages in the Gemara point out that there are four distinct¹ terms for a human being: *adam*, *ish*, *gever*, and *enosh* (*Shabbat* 54b). Each means “person,” but they represent four distinct spiritual dimensions. For example, *adam* is considered the most elevated, as a person is created in the image of G-d. The *Zohar* mentions the same names, but hints to a different focus:

Zohar III:48

אָנָא בְּכַמְהָ דְרָגִין אֲתִקְרִי בְרַ נֶשׁ: אָדָם, גֶּבֶר, אֲנוּשׁ, אִישׁ. גְּדוּל שְׁבִכְלָם אָדָם. (מִשׁוּם) דְּכִתִּיב, (בְּרֵאשִׁית א) וַיִּבְרָא
 אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ. וְכִתִּיב (בְּרֵאשִׁית ט) כִּי בְּצַלְם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם. וְלֹא כְּתִיב, גֶּבֶר, אֲנוּשׁ, אִישׁ. אָמַר
 רַבִּי יְהוּדָה, אִי הָכִי, וְהָא כְּתִיב (וַיִּקְרָא א) אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם קָרְבָן לַיהוָה. (וְלֹא גֶבֶר, אֲנוּשׁ, אִישׁ) מֵאֵן בְּעֵי לְמִקְרָב
 קָרְבָּנָא. מֵאֵן דְּאִיהוּ חֲטָאָה וְכִתִּיב אָדָם.

We learned that man has names in different stages: *adam* (man), *gever* (male man), *enosh* (human), *ish* (person). The greatest is *Adam*, as written, "So G-d created man (**adam**) in His own image" (**Beresheet 1:27**), and, "for in the image of G-d made He man (**adam**)" (**Beresheet 9:6**), instead of using *Gever*, *Enosh* or *Ish*. Rabbi Yehuda said, in that case, it is written, "If any man (*adam*) of you bring an offering to Hashem" (**Vayikra 1:2**). Who needs to bring an offering? Only whoever sins [meaning who is of a lower level than *adam*]. Nevertheless it is written "*adam*."

The Kabbalistic tradition advises that each of these four aspects of the human being represents a different level of soul—in descending order: *adam* is *chaya*, *gever* is *neschama*, *enosh* is *ruach*, and *ish* is *nefesh*. In each soul level, there is a unique human capacity for immanence, transcendence, and transformation. There is also the *ma'aveh*, a damager, but this is a Talmudic, not a biblical, term. *Rav* teaches that a *ma'aveh* is a human damager (**Bava Kama 3b**). A *ma'aveh* is one who is alienated from the spiritual self. Though this terminology is complex and difficult to

¹ It is interesting to note that sometimes the Hebrew *ish* is translated as the Aramaic *gavra*, as in *Devarim* 25:5 where "to a strange man" לְאִישׁ זָר is rendered לְגִבְרַא אֲחֵרָן.

grasp, the idea is important—that each human being is composed of several spiritual dimensions.

Today, we often seek quick and profound spiritual highs (**external stimuli that spark elation and an intensity of emotions**). However, the Torah comes to teach that we should not look for thrills but for consistent spiritual commitment. We should change the way we search for spiritual transformation and follow the teachings of the Torah; with practice, exercise, and discipline, one can access inner worlds and the inner light that can be truly transformative.

One central part of spiritual reflection is temporal:

Akayva ben Mahalel says: Anyone who gives four things to his heart will sin no more: from where he comes, to where he goes, what in the future he will be, and who is his judge.

From where he comes—from a place of darkness.

To where he goes—to a place of darkness and gloom

What in the future he will be—dust and worm and maggot.

Who is his judge—the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He. (**Ethics of the Fathers 3:1**)

Another key aspect of spiritual reflection is eternal. One must attempt to access the eternal levels of the soul within the self in order to spiritually progress.

One important facet of discovering one's inner spiritual world is to learn from others and support others in their spiritual journeys. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter taught that another's physical needs are my spiritual needs. When we take care of others as *adam, ish, enosh, gevev*, and even when they are *ma'aveh*/damagers, we develop important spiritual depth in ourselves as well.

It is our task to see the spiritual complexity in other people and to humbly serve others. In the process, we continue to flourish in our own spiritual and religious complexity and grandeur. We must embrace these different existential human

characteristics, recognize our spiritual dimensions, and seek spiritual transformation through service.

Imagine next time you are speaking with someone casually that they are not mere flesh and blood [*adam/man is of dam/blood*] but that they are multi-dimensional spiritual beings with depths of spiritual worlds within them.

So, it came to me with the help of Heaven, that as you inspect your inner animals, **בְּקוֹרַת בְּהֵמָה**, called the *Nefesh Behemit*, we need to contemplate the source of all miss-takes, something called the Evil Inclination. The *Talmud* speaks of the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination. Following the *Mussar* tradition, the *Chovot HaLevavot* (***Shaar HaYichud* chapter 5**) explains thusly:

“You should know that your greatest enemy in this world is your yetzer hara. He is enmeshed in your spirit and mixed in to your abilities and character traits, he joins you and operates on all levels of your spiritual and physical senses. He rules over you, knowing your deepest darkest secrets, he advises you at every turn, whatever conscious or subconscious decision you consider whatever hidden or revealed path you seek to take, he is there guiding you. He constantly seeks to tempt your footsteps to tread onto the way he has laid out for you.”

Chassidut adds that the Good Inclination is the intellectual faculty of the *Nefesh Elokit* and the Evil Inclination is the emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. All negative character traits stem from the emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The intellect of the *Nefesh HaBehamit* just serves as a server to its emotions, the mind finds a way to fulfill the desire. Take for example the emotion of *Chesed*/ lovingkindness. In the *Nefesh Elokit*, the *Sefirah* of *Chesed* represents the soul’s love for G-d. In the *Nefesh HaBehamit* it is the capacity to love the material. This love can degenerate into lust and can be very destructive. Not everyone has the ability to totally transform and sublimate the Emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit* like the *Tzaddikim*. The intermediate level person will always have the struggle and it is for that

purpose that he has been created. Knowing how powerful the Evil Inclination can be how is one to bridle the Emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*.

And that is going to be a main task in your four days of inspecting your inner animal. These four final days of the year, "last dance, last chance to love," it seems, work well to focus on the four different names of *adam*/man, one each day, following the Chassidic system, described above. *Rosh Hashanah* is none other than the creation of *Adam Rishon*/ Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, and their first actions toward the realization of mankind's role in G-d's world.

Man, say our sages, is a universe in miniature. So just as creation as a whole is comprised of the pre-human world created on *Elul* 25 and the *adam*/human element introduced on *Tishrei* 1--so it is within the human being. And just as all elements of the macro-universe fulfill their purpose in creation via the deeds of man, so do all strata of the human "universe" attain fulfillment and realization through its distinctly human element, through the man in man. [**Lubavitcher Rebbe**]

Our sages categorize the entirety of creation as consisting of four "worlds" or "kingdoms": the "inanimate" or mineral kingdom; the vegetable kingdom; the animal kingdom; and "the speaker" kingdom--the human being. We hope to examine these inner kingdoms during the four final days before *Rosh Hashanah*.

Man, too, incorporates these four "kingdoms" within himself. There are occasions and pursuits in our life in which we resemble the inert mineral. We might be asleep, on vacation, at play, or engaged in any of the other forms of repose and recreation to which we devote a significant portion of our time. Obviously, we are physically alive at these times; we might even be greatly exerting ourselves and employing our keenest faculties. But spiritually, we are an inanimate stone. "Life," in its ultimate sense, is the endeavor to transcend one's present state--to grow and

achieve beyond what one is--while the function of our "mineral" pursuits is to sustain rather than produce, to conserve rather than create.

There are also times when we are in our "vegetable" mode--when our focus is on self-growth and self-development. With these activities, we exhibit signs of spiritual life, as opposed to the inertia of our "mineral" hours. Nevertheless, because they are confined to the betterment of self, these represent a limited, "botanical" vitality: we are growing upwards, blossoming and bearing fruit; but we remain rooted to the "spot" where nature has planted us.

A more dynamic vitality is exhibited by the "animal" in us--the instincts, passions and sensitivities by which we relate to others. With our faculties for love, awe and other emotions, we roam the terrain beyond the narrow spectrum of self, transcending the merely vertical growth of our vegetable element.

But we are more than the sum of our mineral, vegetable and animal lives; more than repose, growth and feeling. The *adam* in man, our quintessentially *human* qualities, are our intellect and our spirituality.

With our unique capacity for independent thought and discriminating intelligence, we transcend the self-defined world of instinct and feeling to view ourselves from the outside, and change ourselves accordingly. Thus the intellectual self is truly "alive"--constantly reassessing and redefining its perceptions and sensitivities. Even more transcendent than the intellect is our spiritual self, the "spark of G-dliness" within us that makes us the apex of G-d's creation. The intellect is "free" and "objective," but only in relation to the subjective emotions; ultimately the intellect is defined and confined by the nature and laws of reason. The divine in ourselves, however, knows no bounds, surmounting all constraints and limitations that might inhibit our relationship with our Creator.

It is when we engage our intellectual and spiritual faculties that we are truly our human self. It is in these moments--when we employ our mind to literally recreate ourselves through self-critique and the refinement of our character and behavior, and when we transcend all inhibitions of ego, feeling and even intellect to serve G-d without restraint or equivocation--that we rise to our role as G-d's partner in creation, as the only one of His creations who possesses the freedom to originate and create.

The four days represent an upwards ascension to the state of *Adam* created on *Rosh Hashanah*, and flow as such:

26 *Elul*: אָנוֹשׁ **Enosh**-- weakness in either intellect or emotion or both, related to *domeim*/mineral. (see page 10)

27 *Elul*: גֶּבֶר **Gever**--overcomes inner weakness and removes obstacles and hindrances to the attainment of an intellectual or emotional quality, related to *tzemach*/vegetative. (see page 13)

28 *Elul*: אִישׁ **Ish**--quality of heart and emotion, related to *chayah*/animal.
(see page 20)

29 *Elul*: אָדָם **Adam** refers to the quality of mind and intellect, related to *medaberet*/speaker. (see page 23)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that on the macrocosmic level, *Rosh Hashanah* teaches us that "Every אָדָם man is obligated to say: 'The entire world was created to serve me, and I was created to serve my Creator.'" That our "privilege" to exploit nature's resources to serve our own needs is also a duty and a responsibility, since it is through their contribution to our lives that all elements of creation can rise from the limitations of their "robotic" existence to share in the spiritually and transcendence of a אָדָם human deed. When we prove equal to this task, we not only rise above our created state but also raise the entire universe with us; when we fail to do so, G-d forbid, we not only debase our own humanity but also drag down with us everything that is partner to our existence.

The same applies to the microcosmic universe--the four-tiered life of man:

אָדָם

אִישׁ

גֵּבֶר

אֲנוּשׁ

Our "mineral," "vegetable" and "animal" endeavors are important--indeed, indispensable--components of our lives; but we must remember that also in this inner world, everything was created "for my sake"--to serve the אָדָם Adam human in me.

When the goal of our recreational, growth-oriented and experiential activities is to enable our intellectual and spiritual lives, they, too become partners to our transcendental endeavor to remake ourselves, and the world we inhabit, in the divine image imprinted within us; they, too, become אָדָם *human* endeavors, participants in the realization of the divine potential invested in אָדָם man.

The Ascent to Adam

26 Elul ²: אֲנוּשׁ *Enosh*-- weakness in either intellect or emotion or both, related

to *domeim*/mineral.

² Today is the Second Day of Creation. The *Midrash* points out here the Torah does not use the expression "*Ki Tov*" (**It was good**). On all the other days of Creation, the Torah says that "*G-d saw that it was good*". However, the Torah does not use this expression on the second day of Creation. The *Midrash* explains that on the second day, G-d made the firmament (*rakiah*) which divided between the waters above and the water below. This was the day when G-d introduced division (*machloket*) into the world. Therefore, G-d did not want to use the expression "*It was good*" regarding *machloket*. The *Midrash* continues, "If a *machloket* which is for the establishment of the world is not 'good', certainly a *machloket* which is not for such a lofty purpose, but rather is just to create disunity and arguments, is not good". Perhaps this too was a weakness in *Enosh's* generation, as we describe below.

הלכות עבודת כוכבים פרק ראשון

א. בימי אנוש טעו בני האדם טעות גדול ונבערה עצת חכמי אותו הדור ואנוש עצמו מן הטועים היה וזו היתה טעותם אמרו הואיל והאלהים ברא כוכבים אלו וגלגלים להנהיג את העולם ונתנם במרום וחלק להם כבוד והם שמששים המשמשים לפניו ראויין הם לשבחם ולפארם ולחלוק להם כבוד וזהו רצון האל

ב

In the first chapter of *Laws Concerning Idolatry*, *Rambam* outlines the history of man's recognition of the truth of the One G-d. Originally, man knew his Maker; but "in the generation of **Enosh** (**Adam's grandson**), humanity erred grievously, and the wisdom of that generation's wise men was confused; **Enosh** himself was among those who erred. Their error lay in that they believed that it would be pleasing to G-d if they were to venerate the forces of nature which serve Him, as a king desires that his ministers and servants be venerated. Soon they were erecting temples and altars to the sun and the stars, offering sacrifices and hymns of praise to them, believing all this to be the will of G-d."

The source is brought in the *Leket Yosher* in the name of a *talmid* of the *Terumat Hedeshen*; to begin on Saturday whilst still in the *Simcha* of *Shabbat*, and wearing *Shabbat* clothing. *Piskei Tshuvot* 581:2 As we mentioned earlier, when there are only four days of *Selichot* prayers, the first day would be *Motzai-Shabbat*, and this is the day of the quality of **Enosh**, which also means "human."

This connection with **Enosh** and *Shabbat* is important, for as our Sages [*Shabbat* 118b] teach: Whoever observes the *Shabbat* properly, even if he served idols as did the generation of **Enosh**, will be forgiven, as it says: Praised is the man who does this, guards *Shabbat* from desecration "Ashrei Enosh Ya'aseh Zot...[*Shomer Shabbat*] **me'Chalelo**" - we read this '**Machul Lo**' (he is forgiven)

How can keeping *Shabbat* achieve forgiveness for one's transgressions? In this case one even worshipped idols, which carries a penalty of death. How can it be that keeping *Shabbat* would earn *him* complete forgiveness?

Rabbi Aharon Karliner once stated that if one didn't feel or even endeavor to feel some of the spiritual delights of the World to Come on *Shabbat*, then when he goes to *Gan Eden*, even there, surrounded by the Divine Presence, he will feel none of the spiritual delights that are part of *Gan Eden*. He will be nothing more than a bench that the *tzadikim* sit on. *Shabbat* is a taste of the World to Come, a day of the *Neshama*, not a day of the body at all (**Zohar II 205b**). *Shabbat* is a day of connecting to G-d and rapture - total attachment to G-d, as it is written, "*Israel shall keep the Shabbat making it a day of rest for all generations, as an eternal covenant. It is a sign between Me and [the People] Israel that during the six days G-d made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he ceased working*

and rested (or withdrew to the spiritual or put the soul into Shabbat). (Shemot .31:16-17).

All of the 613 commandments have value even when one does them with no spiritual feeling. Performing *mitzvot* brings rectification to the world. The six days of working are the time for doing *mitzvot*. According to tradition, the human body is composed of a total of 613 identifiable limbs and sinews. Clearly the Sages understood that performing *mitzvot* is the explicit purpose of the physical body. *Shabbat* though, carries with it no specific physical *mitzvot*, and the Torah asks us to do only one positive *Shabbat* mitzvah: to sanctify it. Being that *Shabbat* is the day of the soul, it makes sense that the body and its *mitzvot* have no active role in *Shabbat*. If a Jew doesn't activate his soul and feel some of the spiritual delight inherent in *Shabbat*, then he is missing the entire essence of *Shabbat*!

The *Arizal* (in *Shaar Hakavanot*, explaining the differences between *Shabbat* and the holidays) expressed this in a very dramatic way. On all other holy days, the supernal unity between G-d and the *Shechinah* is affected by the prayers of the day. But on *Shabbat*, the essence of the day is unity and complete connection to G-d. The very essence of the day creates the divine unity. The message is that the divine service of *Shabbat* should be until there is a desire for G-dliness so strong that the *Neshama* wants to leave the physical and reunite with its divine source.

When one serves G-d on *Shabbat* with such desire, it is as if one's *Neshama* has actually gone out and returned to its source. If one was deserving of the death penalty for idol worship then it is as if it was already implemented. This is also hinted at in the language of the Sages "...anyone who keeps *Shabbat* according to all its laws..."

Now we can understand why the Sages said, "Anyone who *observes* [from the root word '*shamor*'] *Shabbat* according to all its laws, even if he worshiped idols with the same fervor as the generation of ***Enosh***, he is forgiven his transgressions". When one has elevated even the "*shamor*" aspect of *Shabbat*, and the physical aspects of *Shabbat* have become spiritual, then certainly G-d will forgive him his transgressions.

Enosh connotes weakness in either intellect or emotion.

The intellectual mistake was to focus on the parts [**division**] instead of the whole unifying factor, on nature instead of the Source.

Emotionally, we "fix" ***Enosh***, by increasing our desire for *Shabbat*.

This in turn helps to repair the *domeim*/inanimate part of us, also related to today. Many times we maybe doing the physical commandments but lacking the spiritual component. That happens unfortunately a lot with *Shabbat*, worrying about the details but forgetting the sacred energy.

One big step here is to build one's desire for *Shabbat* starting on Sunday, which is *Yom Echad B'Shabbat Kodesh*. In Hebrew, there is no word for Sunday, rather it is the "first day of the Holy Sabbath." So each day we proclaim our countdown to *Shabbat*, increasing our passion for it daily. **הַהֶפְכִי הַצּוּר אֶגֶם-מַיִם; חֲלָמִישׁ, לְמַעַיְנוּ-מַיִם**, this will turn "the [inanimate] stone into a pool of [passionate] water, the flint into a fountain of waters."

27 Elul : **גֵּבֵר** *Gever*--overcomes inner weakness and removes obstacles and

hindrances to the attainment of an intellectual or emotional quality, related to *tzemach*/vegetative.³

Today perhaps is most crucial, as we overcome the problems accessing our mind and heart. Therefore, a more extended contemplation is required.

Gever has the sense of **Gevurah**/strength, that which is needed to overcome issues. **Gevurah** moreover relates to *din*/judgment, and is part and parcel of the *Cheshbon HaNefesh*/self assessment we do during this time. *Rosh HaShanah* is *Yom HaDin*, the day of judgment, and this entire period corresponds to **Gevurah**/strength.

Who gives the *Gever*/rooster⁴ understanding

One of the first blessings of the day is:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנּוֹתֵן לְשִׁכּוּי בִּינָה לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה

³ Today is the Third Day of Creation, where G-d said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation" corresponding to *tzemach*/vegetative.

⁴In Hebrew, the word for rooster is "**Gever**". Early in the morning it is the call of the rooster that serves as the alarm clock, rousing man from his peaceful sleep, bidding him to begin his day's work. The rooster is the symbol of **Gevurah** severity, the opposite of kindness.

"Who gives the *sechvi* understanding to distinguish between day and night."

Some commentators to the Talmud translate the word "*sechvi*" as rooster, which is also called **Gever**, that we are thanking G-d for giving the wisdom to this animal to be the world's first natural alarm clock. This is the simple meaning, fitting in with our basic needs, the first of which is to wake up in the morning. However, the blessing also uses the word "*lehavchin*," which is used in Hebrew for a deeper type of differentiation than simply seeing the sun rise; this refers to a deeper understanding. Here the **Gever/sechvi/rooster** has "understanding", to help overpower through distinguishment any obstacles our intellectual achievement, the dark that clouds the light of insight.

Other Talmudic sages interpret the word "*sechvi*" as "heart." So that could associate **Gever/sechvi/rooster/heart**. The heart as the source of emotions here now may also be fixed by greater understanding between dark and light inside, between proper and improper emotional expression.

The **Gever/sechvi/rooster/heart** apparently refers to the capacity of man to differentiate between night and day. This, however, does not seem to reconcile the issue; why does man need deep intuition to tell between dark and light?

Some answer this by the fact that the rooster does not actually wait till daybreak to commence its crowing; it senses that day is about to begin, the first rays of the sun are soon to break the horizon, and begins its mission while it is still dark. The rooster senses the imminent light from within the darkness, a unique endowment to this animal. This is also an analogy to the endowment of human wisdom. Every day has periods of light, representing clarity, peace of mind, success. There are also spurts of darkness which can last for some time, times of confusion, challenges and difficulties. It takes a level of wisdom, patience and maturity - coupled with belief and trust - to not get caught up in the darkness, rather to find the light in the darkness and the silver lining in every cloud.

One needs to look at the rooster to derive inspiration that the darkness will eventually lead to light. With this the two commentaries of rooster and heart become one bigger reality reflecting upon the totality of the human experience; hence this is the first blessing recited.

This apparently reflects the Jewish attitude on life. The rooster crows only with the onset of day - but not when day turns into night. We always believe that no matter how difficult things might be, either individually or as a nation, there is always a brighter future in store. Things will be all right. We look at every new day with positive anticipation and excitement - the dawn of a new time to accomplish and grow and make a difference in the world.

One sage understands the **Gever/sechvi** rooster to be used symbolically in this blessing which praises G-d for creating the intricately connected eco-system that is our world: flora and fauna, animal and human, each element connected to every other. The rooster's crowing acts as a natural alarm clock for human beings; it is the first manifestation of this interconnection and of the many ways in which the entire natural world is meant for our benefit.

All the above requires a deeper intuition, "*lehavchin*," to use one's full faculties and understanding to plumb to the more subtle depths and nuances in the world and in our lives. Our ability to do so is a Divinely endowed gift, one that enables us to understand life itself, and is certainly worthy of our thanks to the One who gifted it to us! On this day of **Gever**, we contemplate our innate talents to make distinctions, those of the mind and of the heart.⁵

⁵ Early in the morning of the day preceding *Yom Kippur*, a white **Gever**/rooster is chosen, because white symbolizes the purity in service to G-d. This rooster now symbolizes man who has erred during the year. "*If his sins be red as scarlet, they shall become white as snow.*" With somberness and sincerity the man swings the rooster over his head three times. He hold the rooster in his right hand, the hand which is the side of kindness. "This is in my place" he chants three times, as he recites his prayers. The rooster is to be slaughtered. He should have been slaughtered for his sins, but for the kindness of G-d, a rooster reminds him that he may be deserving death for his iniquities. (**footnote continued on next page >**)

The rooster is taken to the ritual slaughterer, the "*shochet*". The *shochet* plucks several feathers from the neck of the rooster to make the slaughter easier and faster. He bends the rooster's head up, and pulls the sharp knife across the neck. In a split second the rooster is no longer alive. His body is hung upside down to allow the blood to drip out of the incision.

Gavra Rabbah/a Sage

We find a fascinating passage in the Gemara אמר רבא, כמה מפשאי שאר אינשי, דקיימי מקמי ספר—Rava said: How foolish are some people, who stand up in honor of a sefer Torah, but they do not stand up in honor of a "**gavra rabbah**", a great man. a Sage.

The *Maharit* provides us *Parashat Derachim* (*Drush* 24). He explains that there is a big difference between a Torah-scholar who is a "גברא רבה" and one who is not a "גברא רבה". The latter's greatness stems exclusively from the fact that he is learned and well-versed in the Torah. His greatness is due to the Torah. Therefore, the honor of a sefer Torah surpasses his honor, prompting the statement: "Since one rises before those who study the Torah, how much more so should one rise before the Torah itself?!" This, however, is not the category of Torah-scholar of whom Rava spoke. He was referring to a scholar who had already achieved the status of a "גברא רבה"—a great, renowned personage. This scholar has distinguished himself through his tireless devotion to Torah-study—clarifying and refining difficult, obscure *halachot* that are not explained in the Torah; they require extensive debate and dialectic. The honor of such a "גברא רבה" surpasses the honor of a sefer Torah. For, he is capable and adept at clarifying points of law that are not stated explicitly in the Torah.

We all have an inner גברא רבה, a Sage that explain our most difficult internal problems, whether they be intellectual or emotional. The trick is to access this, to open ourselves to the inner wisdom needed just to make it through the day. Once

The man looks at this rooster. Only because of the kindness of G-d, am I not punished, he thinks, for I, and not the rooster, am guilty of sin. The man does not eat from the rooster, instead, the rooster is given to charity. A kindness from G-d, spares the man, in return, the man gives the rooster to charity, that poor people who must fast on Yom Kippur may have food. The rooster does not bring atonement to man, but it arouses man to return with a true heart to G-d. The intestines too, are not thrown out to the garbage. They are given to the birds that they too, may eat. A kindness on this day is shown even to the ravens.

we take this seed, the kernal of truth we find, we fix our *tzemach* "vegetable" mode--when our focus is on self-growth and self-development.

Strength of Character

איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו. שנאמר (משלי טז), טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר.

Pirke Avot 4:1 recalls:

Who is strong/**Gibbor**? One who overpowers his inclinations. As is stated "*Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city.*"

This **Gibbor**/warrior is the **Gever**/man overcoming weakness through the use of **Gevurah**. **Gever** hints to our father *Yitzchak*, who was by nature fearful [**Pachad Yitzchak**], but also corresponds to the attribute of **Gevurah**/strength to battle those obstacles blocking our path. **Gever** has a numerology of 205 plus one for each letter equals 208, that of *Yitzchak*!

So, back to the *Mishnah*, whose message here is clear: dealing with and changing negative behavior is extremely difficult. Why does discipline and self-control need so much strength?

As mentioned above on page 6, Kabbalists explain that two forces operate on every one of us—the *Nefesh Behemit*/animal soul and the *Nefesh Elokit*/divine soul. The animal soul is the source of our ego, and encourages hedonism, aggression, laziness and emptiness. The divine soul is the source of moral reasoning and spiritual consciousness. It inspires an awareness of a higher purpose, and gives us

the ability to think rationally and objectively, making decisions for ethical behavior and giving appropriate responses to everyday experiences.

Each soul has its own dominant force. The animal soul is driven by instincts that are highly emotional, whereas the divine soul is dominated by the power of intellect and reason. Both souls fight for control of the person. Both struggle to shape our personality and define our identity.

This is where the challenge of self-control lies. The animalistic force is quick. It is emotional and instinctive, and prompts a very swift response. The divine soul is intellectual. It needs time to cognitively process the appropriate and moral response. So, when we are insulted, or provoked, or presented with temptations and ethical dilemmas, the immediate response will be the feelings generated by the instincts and explosive emotions of the animal soul. We are tempted to get angry or do the wrong thing before we give the moral reason a chance.

Self-control, therefore, needs the incredible strength of restraint. It requires holding back for just a few seconds between the things that happen to us and our response, creating a little space to think and process the point of view of the divine voice. It is what Stephen Covey calls the "pause button between the stimulus and the response."

Today and in general we need to train ourselves as a **Gever** not to act quickly and instinctively. We need to use the unique ability of the **Gever** being to stop and ask ourselves the question: is this wrong or right? It takes amazing strength to wait a few seconds, but those few seconds can be the difference between an animalistic act and a divine one.

So today if you are faced with a challenge, give yourself a few seconds for the voice of the soul *Nefesh Elokit* to be heard--to be overcome with the power of **Gever**--over the braying of your *Nefesh Behemit*.

The Gever trusts in Hashem

In a powerful affirmation that we quote in daily prayers as well as in the Grace After Meals, the Prophet *Yirmiyahu* tells us that trust spawns certainty, and certainty breeds success: *Baruch haGever asher yivtach baHaShem v'hayah HaShem mivtacho*—Blessed is the **Gever** who trusts in G-d; G-d will be his security.”

Perhaps this is the secret the **Gever** can share with us to overcome mental and emotional obstacles to our proper functioning: cultivating trust, a lifelong project.

This process calls for making room in our awareness for a Higher Power, relying on G-d as the source of all challenges and blessings. It means acknowledging this Source regularly, learning about G-d and communicating with Him on a regular basis, keeping His number on speed dial on our metaphorical cell phones. This can be achieved through meditation and prayer.

Rabbinic tradition prescribes praying three times a day, and making gratitude our first thought in the morning and last thought before sleep. Established times for prayer were introduced for the well-being of the individual—certainly not because G-d needs them. For prayer to genuinely augment our trust and calm our souls, it must be mindful. Who is G-d? Why am I connecting to Him in this way? How can I enhance my awareness of His dynamic presence in the details of my daily life?

Such practice of the **Gever** cultivates trust—and one who truly trusts in G-d's benevolent guidance will not be riddled with problems, nor with the gnawing feeling that something is lacking. Of course this doesn't mean life will be without challenges—as 3,800 years of Jewish history will readily attest! But our ability as **Gever** to cope with problems and follow through with effective solutions increases in direct proportion to the calm certainty that comes with knowing G-d is our caring and capable partner. And it is the **Gever's** trust that allows his life to flourish as the **tzemach**, growing upwards to the light, and to the Source above.

28 Elul: **אִישׁ** **Ish**--quality of heart and emotion, related to *chayah/animal*.

Today, as an **Ish**, we need to listen to the messages of our heart, the place of passion.

"To You, my heart has said, "seek My countenance"; Your countenance, HaShem I will seek." King *David* communed with his heart and found his deep **yearning** for *HaShem*. Even more, he realized that his longing for *HaShem*, was initiated and awakened by *HaShem*, Himself.

If the king invites his friend to visit him, it is inconceivable that that he will be denied entry to the palace. So too, since *HaShem* stirred King *David's* heart to seek Him, King *David* was **confident** that *HaShem* would answer his prayers. This confidence was built up through the prior step of yesterday's **Gever**.

Listen today to the yearning in your heart, that of the **Ish**, to seek and come close to *HaShem*. Pray to Him to show you compassion, and He surely will admit you into His presence and answer all of your prayers.

(Based on the commentary of the **RaMad Valli** to **Tehillim**)

To learn about the heart qualities of the **Ish**, let us examine three verses from the Psalms, the heartfelt renderings of King *David*, a man of great passion.

תְּפִלָּה, לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים "A prayer of Moshe, the **Ish** of G-d" (**Tehillim 90:1**)

Moshe was **אִישׁ** an **Ish**, a man of flesh and blood, but when he ascended Mt. Sinai, and survived without the physical food for forty days, he resembled **הָאֱלֹהִים** G-d.

Moshe upon his passing achieved the 50th gate of *Binah*/understanding, a quality of which the *Kabbalah* speaks "בִּינָה לִבָּא וּבָה הַלֵּב מִבִּיּוֹן." "**BiNah** is the heart (*HaLev*), for the heart (*HaLev*) understands (*maViN*).

Moshe was the only prophet who saw every Divine vision with clarity, free from any distortion. He also communicated these visions with perfect clarity. His heart did not blur the small still voice of the Eternal within.

It is noteworthy that this Psalm written by *Moshe*, in the beginning mentions two other names of man, **Enosh** and **Adam**, the former discussed above, the latter discussed below:

תִּשְׁב אֲנוֹשׁ, עַד-דָּכָא; וְתֹאמַר, שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי-אָדָם "You reduce **Enosh** to pulp, and You say, "Repent, O sons of **Adam**."

Enosh refers to man as frail, limited creature. [Malbim to *Tehillim* 8:5]

Adam is used to remind man of their potential to do *Teshuvah*.

Our second verse is

מִי-הָאִישׁ, הַחֲפִיץ חַיִּים; אֲהַב יָמִים, לִרְאוֹת טוֹב "Which **Ish** desires life, who loves days of seeing good"

Which **Ish** is passionate about life, about following the good path of the heart?

This **Ish** has internalized the **Gever** aspect in him to overcome the **Enosh** frailties:

- (1) Guard your tongue from evil
- (2) and your lips from speaking deceitfully.
- (3) Turn from evil and do good.

Radak notes that these two verses, King *David* discusses sins of thought, of speech, and of deed. The **Ish** whose heart desires life recognizes that it is the heart that controls how the organs relate to sin.

As *Rashi* says on the verse:

וְלֹא תִתּוֹרוּ אַחֲרֵי לִבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם : *and you shall not wander after your hearts*

The heart and eyes are the spies for the body. They are its agents for sinning: the eye sees, the heart covets and the body commits the transgression. -[*Mid. Tanchuma 15*]

The **Ish's** heart is always in the right place, the **Ish's** emotions are healthy and appropriate, so that his nature is to turn from evil and towards goodness.

The final verse concerning the **Ish** is:

מִי-זֶה הָאִישׁ, יִרְאָה יְהוָה? *Who is this, the Ish fearful of Hashem?*

The Midrash says that this is *Avraham*, who is called **הָאִישׁ** , and of whom it is written, "For now I know that you fear G-d." [note that his grandson *Ya'akov* was also called **Ish**, as in **אִישׁ תָּם** "an innocent man"]

One's heart should not truly fear those of mere flesh and blood, rather one's awe and respect should be directed the One Above, pure **יִרְאָה יְהוָה** *yirat Hashem*.

The **Ish** has perfected his emotions, his heartspace, his desire to return to come close to Hashem. The **Ish** has also perfected the *chayah* "animal" in himself--the instincts, passions and sensitivities by which he relates to others. By constantly seeking Hashem's presence, he does nothing to distance himself, which only brings him closer to his fellow.

29 *Elul*: אָדָם **Adam** refers to the quality of mind and intellect, related to *medaberet*/speaking.

Adam's offering of his inner *behemah*/animal

A man who shall bring near of you an offering to G-d (1:2) The verse does not say, "a man of you who shall bring near an offering," but, "Adam a man who shall bring near of you an offering"--the animal offering must come from within the person. It is the animal, בְּקוֹרַת בְּהֵמָתְךָ within man that must be "brought near" and elevated by the divine fire upon the Altar. (***The Chassidic Masters***)

Adam's inner purity

Why does G-d use the word *Adam* for "man" (**instead of the more common synonym *ish***)? To teach us that a person cannot offer to G-d what has not been honestly obtained by him. G-d is saying: "When you bring an offering to Me, be like *Adam* the first man, who could not have stolen from anyone, since he was alone in the world." (***Midrash Tanchuma; Rashi***)

When we speak of *Adam* as one who "was alone in the world," we are speaking of the very first hours of his life. Thus we are speaking of *Adam* before he partook of the Tree of Knowledge--of man still unsullied by sin. This is the deeper significance of the Torah's reference to the bearer of a *korban*/animal sacrifice--which has the power to obtain atonement for a transgression--as an "*Adam*." Every man, the Torah is saying, harbors in the pith of his soul a pristine "*Adam*," a primordial man untouched by sin. Even at the very moment his external self was transgressing the

divine will, his inner essence remained loyal to G-d; it was only silenced and suppressed by his baser instincts. It is by accessing this core of purity, by unearthing that part of himself that did not sin in the first place and restoring it to its rightful place as the sovereign of his life, that man attains the state of *teshuvah*-- return to his original state of perfection. (***The Lubavitcher Rebbe***)

And that, in short, is the work we are doing today, and during the upcoming 10 Days of *Teshuvah*.

Adam names his animals [his own inner psychic complexes]

Adam , who relates to the mind, had the particular knowledge to give each animal its Hebrew name through his power of speech, *medaberet*:

He brought [it] to man to see what he would call it, and whatever the man called each living thing, that was its name.

וַיִּבֵּא אֶל הָאָדָם לְרֵאוֹת מִה יִקְרָא לוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ
הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ

But these weren't random names picked out of a hat, mind you. According to the *Kabbalah*, the name of every creation is its life-source. The Hebrew letters carry a G-dly power, and, when put together in different formations, they give life wherever they are applied. Thus, all created things are directly affected by their Hebrew names, and the letters of which they are composed.

Here is a quote from the *Midrash* to Genesis 2:19:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create humankind, He consulted with His ministering angels, saying, "Let us make *Adam*." The angels responded, "What's so wonderful about this *Adam*?" So He brought each creature before the angels and asked them, "This creature, what is its name?" But they did not know. Then He brought the creatures before *Adam* and asked him, "This

creature, what is its name?" To which *Adam* responded, "This is *shor* [**Hebrew for ox**], this is *chamor* [**donkey**]..."

Adam was able to perceive the spiritual components of the creative spirit that brought every animal into being, and named with his power of speech *medaberet* each animal in conjunction with its spiritual configuration.

So too for us. While all animals have names, no so for our inner animal complexes, those based on the *Nefesh HaBehamit* mentioned earlier. To become an *Adam* means to name these inner animals and to offer them the altar, to become closer to the Source.

For example, we know of the expression "stubborn as an ox." A bit of stubbornness is good, too much, however, creates an obstacle for personal growth. Perhaps we need to examine our "ox complex" **בְּקוֹרְתַּי בְּהֵמָתַי**, and then offer those parts which are hindering our *teshuvah* process.

Another example is found in the *Pirke Avot*, where we are commended to be **וְקַל כְּנֹשָׁר** "light as an eagle" – As Rabbi *Shimson Raphael Hirsch* explains, we are to leave all earthy impediments behind and soar up to the Compassionate One. This is good, but the eagle is also a predator, which is why we cannot eat it. Perhaps as we examine our "eagle complex" we need to then "sacrifice" those personality traits in which we poach on others, attacking them, stealing their precious qualities for only our own use.

To fulfill *Adam's* role, we need to name our inner animals, our inner *behemit*, and inspect them **בְּקוֹרֵת בְּהֵמֵתָךְ** before we offer them on the spiritual altar of *Rosh Hashanah*.⁶

Adam's Positive and Constructive Thoughts

Adam we have learned has perfected the level of thought. The *Gemara Yoma 29* teaches us, counterintuitively, that "thoughts of sin are worse than sin." This demonstrates the high level that *Adam* seeks to achieve, channeling positive and constructive thoughts over those toward negativity.

In *Tomer Devorah*, Chapter 3, *Rav Moshe Cordovero* quotes: '*I know My thoughts which I think about you, says HaShem, thoughts of peace and not ill will, to give you a future and hope*'" (**Yirmiyahu 29:11**). One of *HaShem's* most precious attributes is His thoughtfulness and care for all of His creations. He compassionately oversees our lives and kindly provides us with all of our needs.

So *HaShem* continuously thinks positive, constructive thoughts for mankind. Even if we experience challenges, *HaShem* sends them for our ultimate good. *Adam* is created in the image of *HaShem*, and we must emulate Him by always looking for ways to help others. Befriend those in need of friendship and generate positive thoughts towards them. Reflect on how you can best benefit your friends and provide them with good advice. With such intent, we become *mensch*-like, in the spirit of *Adam*.

⁶ In my youth, I was troubled with eating issues, Once I realized that being "The Hunger Artist" was paving my path toward death, I called this complex "Auschwitz Man" and gathered the strength to not let it determine my daily choices and day-to-day existence.

Rosh Hashana and Us

On *Rosh Hashanah* we remember, and remind the world, that G-d created *Adam*--man and woman, G-d gave them the gift of life, and G-d laid down its rules: respect the life, family and property of your fellow, treat the creatures of your planet kindly, do charity and uphold justice. Do so not only because it makes sense to you, not only because it "feels right," but because you are a subject of G-d and you accept your Sovereign's decrees.

The creation of *Adam* enables the true purpose of Creation to be fulfilled. G-d created a world that conceals His presence, and He wants us to reveal Him. Only man -- who is endowed with intelligence and freedom of choice; the ability to accept G-d or reject Him -- can accomplish this. On the day of his creation, *Adam* realized that G-d is the Master of the Universe, and he said to the other creations:

בְּאוֹ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִכְרַעַה וְנִכְרַעַה לְפָנֵי יְהוָה עֲשֵׂנוּ

"Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before G-d our Maker.

Rosh Hashanah is the day when we follow *Adam*'s example, and accept G-d's kingship over us and the entire world. For this is the true head of the year: the time when G-d's goal in making the world started to be fulfilled.