LOWER ALABAMA L'CHAIM

HIGH HOLIDAYS EDITION
See Inside for the
HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

CANDLELIGHTING
SHABBAT TIMES
MOBILE ALABAMA

AUG 21 7:10 PM
AUG 28 7:02 PM
SEPT 4 6:54 PM
SEPT 11 6:45 PM*

*See inside for special blessings

Volume 3, Issue 4

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Dear Friends, This newsletter is a community effort sharing information, thoughts and inspiration of interest to Jews living in or passing through lower Alabama. It is my hope that you will find this newsletter educational and inspirational, and that it will help you experience your Judaism with renewed excitement. The Lower Alabama L'Chaim is a publication of Chabad of Mobile. For questions & comments, contact rabbi@chabadofmobile.com –*Rabbi Yosef Goldwasser*

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BECOMING THE BEST VERSION OF YOU by Rabbi Yosef Goldwasser

Wow—what a year it's been! So many special mitzvos, classes, events, and meaningful opportunities to grow, both personally and as a community. As we prepare for the coming year, it is a good time to reflect and think about what we can do to make this year even more meaningful and fulfilling.

There is a famous saying attributed to the great Chassid, Reb Zusha of Anipoli. He once said that he was not afraid that, after he passed away the Heavenly Court would ask him, "Why weren't you like Avraham Avinu?" or "Why weren't you like Moshe Rabbeinu?" Rather, he was concerned that they would ask him, **"Zusha, why weren't you Zusha?"**

Hashem gives each and every one of us unique qualities, strengths, and abilities that we need in order to fulfill our personal mission in this world. Hashem does not expect us all to accomplish the same things, because each of us faces different challenges and has been blessed with different strengths. What Hashem wants from us is to be the very best that we can be, to use the gifts He has given us and fulfill our unique purpose.

As we prepare for the coming year, let's take a few moments for a personal *cheshbon hanefesh* (self introspection) and ask ourselves:
What can I do this year to serve Hashem even better?

What is one mitzvah that I can take on that will bring more light into my life and into the lives of those around me? Is there a mitzvah that I have not been doing until now, or one that I have been doing but would like to do more often or with greater care and commitment?

Perhaps it is putting on Tefillin, putting up a Mezuzah on your door, lighting Shabbos candles, helping someone in need, visiting the sick, giving more charity, or setting aside a regular time to study Torah. Even one small step can make a tremendous difference.

There is so much darkness in the world today. Let us each be the one to add another act of goodness and kindness, another mitzvah, and another ray of light. Together, our light can overcome and outshine any darkness and help usher in the era of Moshiach, when the world will be filled with nothing but goodness and peace. *May it happen immediately!*

SOUTH ALABAMA KOSHER

Kosher Store

Mobile Kosher Market
451 Azalea Rd
mobilekoshermarket.com

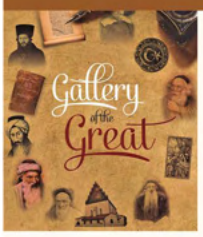
Kosher sections - Mobile

Publix (dry goods and freezer)
4628 Airport Blvd
Mobile, AL 36608

Facebook group

Kosher Finds in Mobile and Baldwin, AL

NEW SERIES! GALLERY OF THE GREAT by Rabbi Nissan Mindel



Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hyrkanos

Not far from Jerusalem there lived a rich man, one of the richest Jews of his time, by the name of Hyrkanos. He had a number of sons, one of whom was called Eliezer. Eliezer was not thought to be a scholar, able to understand the teachings of the Torah. He was brought up on the land, as were his other brothers. He spent most of his time plowing and planting, shepherding the sheep, and doing similar farm jobs.

Eliezer, was dissatisfied with his work. He felt a yearning for the great city of Jerusalem, where great Torah Academies and scholars were to be found. He often used to think about the Creator and His wisdom in managing the world: He used to walk about deep in thought as if in a dream, and his father and brothers considered him to be lazy and "good-for-nothing." They therefore took a dislike to him and gave him the hardest jobs to perform.

The brothers once went to the valley to plow, where the earth was soft, while sending Eliezer to a hill to plow, where the ground was hard and stony. Eliezer tried his utmost to plow smoothly, but the animal stumbled on a stone, fell and broke a foot. Eliezer decided to take advantage of the situation and once and for all leave home and go to study Torah.

When the brothers discovered that Eliezer had disappeared, they ran quickly and told their father that Eliezer had run away from home.

ELUL & THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

ELUL

A lot can happen in a year. Work, school, family. health-some days we flourish, others we flounder. Life moves along and promises are forgotten; that connection to G-d we committed to last year shows signs of stress. Well, thank G-d for a New Year: the "Days of Awe"—*Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*—are our time to recommit to our Creator.

But renewing a relationship is more than changing a status. To be better partners we've got to be better people and self-improvement takes hard work, commitment and consistency. New habits need time to take root. The Jewish month of *Elul* is that time before the New Year to review our deeds and spiritual progress of the past year. It is the open season for teshuvah (return to G-d), prayer, charity and increased love for our fellow man.

Chassidic master Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi likened the month of Elul to when "the king is in the field".
In contrast to when G-d is in His royal palace, during this month, "everyone who desires is permitted to meet Him, and He receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all."

ROSH HASHANAH FRIDAY NIGHT - SUNDAY NIGHT SEPT 11 - 13 2026

Rosh Hashanah, (Hebrew for "Head of the Year"), is the beginning of the Jewish year. Specifically, it is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, which highlights the special relationship between G-d and humanity: G-d not only wants a world with people in it, He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated with candle lighting in the evenings, festive meals with sweet delicacies during the night and day, prayer services that include the sounding of the ram's horn (shofar) except on Shabbat, and desisting from creative work.

YOM KIPPUR SUNDAY NIGHT - MONDAY NIGHT SEPT 20 - 21 2026

Perhaps some people see apologies as an admission of weakness or defeat, but they're actually the opposite. An apology is a sign of strength and love. A sincere apology will repair an enduring relationship that has been temporarily sidetracked or derailed by superficialities. On *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, we come together as a community to each say "Sorry!" to G-d and to make amends—but happily, wholeheartedly confident in His loving response *Yom Kippur* is a 25-hour fast from sundown on Sunday till Monday night. We spend the day in the synagogue, we abstain from eating, drinking, washing and anointing the body, wearing leather shoes, and marital relations.

THE HOLIDAY OF SUKKOT FRIDAY NIGHT - SUNDAY NIGHT SEPT 25 - OCT 2 2026

It's easy to feel spiritual after spending all day fasting and praying in a synagogue. Sukkot is about incorporating that energy into your ordinary life. *Sukkot* is a seven-day holiday, soon after Yom Kippur, that commemorates G-d's protection of our ancestors after our exodus from Egypt.

Sukkot means "huts", the Torah-mandated outdoor shelters we live in during the holiday. The *sukkah* (singular) surrounds us on all sides, symbolizing faith in G-d's all-around protection and care-not only in the spiritual life of the synagogue, but in our real life in the real world. Eating all our meals in the *sukkah* is representative of real life-with nothing but G-d Himself covering our every ordinary move.

About Sukkot

Sukkot is observed by doing in your *sukkah* pretty much everything you do in your house: eating, learning Torah, and just hanging out. A kosher *sukkah* is simple: some wind-blocking walls and a natural-vegetation roof that leaves more shade than sun, and you're set. Not sure how to build one? Just surf the Web. There's no shortage of affordable, easy-to-build *sukkahs* available in all sizes—even tiny portable ones for travel.

For seven days and nights, we eat all our meals in the *sukkah*. Each time you begin a meal in the *sukkah*, we say a special blessing. (See blessing on the right). During the holiday of Sukkot, we also do the special mitzvah of *Lulav* and *Etrog* each day of *Sukkot*, except for Shabbat. (See facing page for instructions.)

SHEMINI ATZERET - SIMCHAT TORAH FRIDAY NIGHT - SUNDAY NIGHT OCT 2 –4

On *Simchat Torah* (the holiday of rejoicing with the Torah), we don't only study the Torah—we celebrate it. We hold it, hug it, dance and sing with it. After all, G-d's manual for life is the greatest thing a Jew could possibly celebrate.

We read the last portion of the Torah. Since Torah study never ends, we also begin reading from the scroll's very beginning. This is to show that the Torah is beloved to us, and we are eager for a new cycle to commence.

The celebration is marked on *Simchat Torah* night and the following day with exuberant, boisterous dancing in the synagogue while holding the Torah scrolls. The dancing circles the synagogue's bimah (Torah-reading platform) seven times, while spirited Jewish songs are sung.

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

ROSH HASHANAH 1
EVE FRIDAY SEPT 11
Light candles at 6:45 pm
Say blessings 1 and 7

ROSH HASHANAH 2
DAY 2 SHABBOS SEPT 12
Light candles after 7:38 pm*
Say blessings 2 and 7

ROSH HASHANAH 2
DAY 2 SUNDAY SEPT 13
Shofar - Tashlich
Holiday ends 7:36 pm

SHABBAT SHUVA
FRIDAY SEPT 18
Light candles at 6:36 pm
Say blessing 3

SHABBAT SHUVA
SHABBAT SEPT 19
Shabbat ends at 7:29 pm

YOM KIPPUR
SUNDAY SEPT 20
Light candles at 6:34 pm
Say blessing 4 and 7
Fast begins at 6:19 pm

YOM KIPPUR
MONDAY SEPT 21
Yizkor
Holiday/fast ends at 7:26 pm

SUKKOT 1
FRIDAY SEPT 25
Light candles at 6:27pm
Say blessing 6 and 7
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 9*

SUKKOT 2
SHABBAT SEPT 26
Light candles after 7:20 pm*
Say blessing 5 and 7
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 9*

SUKKOT 2
SUNDAY SEPT 27
■ **Lulav** *Say blessing 8 and 7*
■ **Sukkah** *Say blessing 9*
Holiday ends 7:18 pm

SHEMINI ATZERET
FRIDAY OCT 2
Light candles at 6:19 pm
Say blessings 6 and 7

SIMCHAT TORAH
SHABBOS OCT 3 - Yizkor
Light candles after 7:11 pm*
Say blessings 5 and 7

SIMCHAT TORAH
SUNDAY OCT 4
Holiday ends 7:10 pm

*** Light from a pre-existing flame**

BLESSING #1

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל יוֹם הַזִּכָּרוֹן

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam asher ki-deshanu be-mitzvo-tav ve-tzvi-vanu le-hadlik ner shel Shabbat veshel Yom Hah-zee-kah-ron.

BLESSING #2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם הַזִּכָּרוֹן.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Ha-zi-ka-ron.

BLESSING #3

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Shabbat Kodesh.

BLESSING #4

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Ha-ki-pu-rim.

BLESSING #5

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Yom Tov.

BLESSING #6

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲ-דֹנָי- אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל יוֹם טוֹב

Bah-rookh ah-tah ah-doh-noi eh-loh-hay-noo meh-lekh hah-oh-lahm ah-sher ki-deh-shah-noo beh-mitz-voh-tahv veh-tzee-vah-noo leh-hahd-lik nayr shehl shah-baht veh-shehl yohm tohv.

BLESSING #7

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam She-heh-chi-yah-nu Ve-ki-ye-mahnu Ve-hi-gi-ahnu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

■ **BLESSING #8** The Lulav blessing is said before shaking the Lulav; Shechecheyanu (blessing #7) is added *the first time* we shake the lulav during the holiday of Sukkot

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לוּלָב

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu Al Ne-ti-lat Lulav

■ **BLESSING #9** The Sukkah blessing is said when we eat a meal containing bread or mezonot (cookies, crackers, or cake)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה

Baruch Atah Ado-noi Elo-hay-nu Melech Ha-olam Asher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tav Ve-tzi-vanu lay-shayv bah-soo-kah

POMEGRANATE BRISKET WITH CRANBERRY SUCCOTASH by Nadine Mendelsohn Ziskind

Photo: Amy Kritzer Becker

From MyJewishLearning.com/TheNosher Author: Amy Kritzer
Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 4hours Servings: 6

4 lbs Brisket trimmed to 1/4 inch fat
Salt and Pepper
2 TB Grapeseed oil or other high smoke point oil
2 medium white Onions, chop into large pieces
2 Garlic cloves, minced
2 cups Pomegranate juice
½ cup dry red Wine—use what you're drinking
1-2 cups Chicken broth
2 sprigs Rosemary
2 sprigs Thyme
2 ears Corn, shucked & removed from the cob
1 cup dried Cranberries or fresh Pomegranate arils
2 TB Extra Virgin Olive oil
2 tsp Honey
2 tsp red wine Vinegar
¼ cup Cilantro, minced
Salt to taste

Instructions

Preheat oven to 275° F.

1. Season brisket on all sides with salt and pepper.
2. In a large Dutch oven or oven-safe pot, heat the grapeseed oil over medium-high heat and brown the brisket on all sides, or about 5 minutes per side.
3. Remove the brisket to rest, lower heat to medium, and add in onions. Sauté until browned, about 5-7 minutes. Then add in garlic and saute for 1 more minute.
4. Add brisket back in over the vegetables, fat side down, and cover with pomegranate juice, red wine, and enough chicken broth so the brisket is covered about ¾ of the way. Add in rosemary and thyme.
5. Cover the brisket and braise in the pre-heated oven for 3- 4 hours or until fork tender. You can also cook the brisket on the stove top over medium low heat for the same amount of time.
6. Once cooked, remove brisket to rest and heat pan juices over medium- high heat until reduced by at least half and sauce is thickened. Strain and add salt and pepper if needed.
7. In a bowl, combine corn and cranberries. In a separate bowl, whisk together extra virgin olive oil, honey, and red wine vinegar. Toss with corn mixture and add in cilantro and salt to taste.
8. Once brisket has cooled, sliced against the grain and top with sauce and succotash. It is best reheated in a 200° F oven covered in its sauce to retain moisture.

Q & A CORNER: ASK THE RABBI

Q: "Why the Break Fast?

A: It's Not (Just) Because We're Hungry! It seems obvious enough: after fasting for 25 hours on Yom Kippur, of course we gather for a big "break-the-fast." But there's more to it than quieting our grumbling stomachs. Jewish tradition teaches that the meal on Motzei Yom Kippur (the evening after the fast) has a special significance of its own. It's actually meant to be a festive meal.

A Festive Time

The book of Kohelet tells us: "Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a gladsome heart, for G d has already approved your deeds." The Midrash explains that this verse is talking about the meal after Yom Kippur. We've just finished the holiest day of the year, a day when we rise above ourselves and are compared to angels. Our sins have been forgiven, and we emerge renewed. No wonder the moment has a festive quality!

In fact, the sages teach that a Heavenly voice goes out on this night, proclaiming: "Go and eat in joy." This meal is a celebration of the forgiveness and closeness to G d we've achieved. That's also one reason we blow the shofar at the very end of Neilah: to announce that the night that follows is a time of joy, when everyone should sit down to a proper, festive meal. Since not everyone might have realized this, the sages made sure the shofar blast would spread the word.

Because of this festive nature, we greet each other after Yom Kippur with warm, festive wishes, just like we do on other festivals and Shabbat. And while there aren't special food requirements, it's customary to wash for bread (and dip it into honey). The main thing is that the food should be tasty and celebratory.

A Source of Blessings

The Chassidic masters take it even deeper. They explain that this meal actually becomes a channel for the spiritual achievements of Yom Kippur to translate into material blessings throughout the year ahead.

From One Mitzvah to the Next

There's another beautiful custom for Motzei Yom Kippur: beginning preparations for the next holiday, Sukkot. Ideally, we start building the sukkah that very night, or at least talk about it. The idea is to move directly from one mitzvah to the next, ensuring that the spiritual momentum of Yom Kippur carries forward.

Send your questions to: rabbi@chabadofmobile.com

TEFILLIN FOUND ME IN MOBILE by Perry Kivolowitz

Growing up in New York City, Jewish culture was everywhere. In my early 20s, if you flipped through local public access TV, you might occasionally catch a broadcast of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. His intense presence commanded attention. But without an understanding of the language, I didn't stay tuned for long.

In recent years, recordings of the Rebbe's talks have become common on YouTube and Facebook. Many are now accompanied by English subtitles. The intensity I once only saw is even more evident when joined to his words.

My wife and I moved to Mobile three and a half years ago. The Jewish community here is small. Being a bit of a "stranger in a strange land," I felt the urge to seek out familiar community. Previously, I kept my distance from Chabad. I assumed that my limited observance would lead to discomfort or pressure. I expected a hard sell.

One day I get a phone call, the Chabad Rabbi. I tried to be polite. Rabbi Goldwasser, with sons in tow, came to the house. We *kibbitzed* for a long while about my genealogical research: I had dated the Kivelevitz family living in Lyubcha/Lubtch on the Neman River from the late 1600s up to the summer of 1942.

Having been invited, my wife Sara and I walked into Chabad of Mobile and found no pitch at all. Stepping through the doors quickly dispelled the preconception I harbored. What we found instead was a genuinely welcoming, delightful Jewish home. It was here at Chabad of Mobile, after 65 years of life, that I connected with the mitzvah of tefillin.

In the quiet moment, after the purposeful wrapping of the leather straps when one shares a private prayer, I discovered something I had avoided for decades. While prayer might sometimes drift into abstract thoughts or flights of fancy, binding tefillin does the opposite: it grounds me. It brings me back to the earth, reminding me precisely where and who I am.
During that silent prayer, I stand in truth. ***I am a Jew.***

There is a symmetry here I did not plan. The man I could not understand on a public access channel 40 plus years ago was the one who launched the worldwide tefillin campaign in 1967, days before the Six-Day War. Here in Mobile Alabama at 65, the mitzvah found me.

POETRY CORNER by Bina Goldwasser

THE ELUL WIND

Do you feel the Elul wind that floats beneath the summer sun?
Sniff approaching holidays though fall's not yet begun?
Feel your soul emerging as the seasons start to shift?
Shofar tug your heartstrings, give your day a little lift?

Feel a bit embarrassed to be lost within the field?
Deep within the stress and mess the new school year does yield
Planning for the holidays with tickets, menus, clothes
Though you know in essence it is not any of those
Do you feel the closeness of the easy access prayer,
Knowing that within your mess today He's also there?

Do you feel the cool relief from three sad weeks to mourn,
Turning into comfort and a time to be reborn?
After the permission to acknowledge all that's dark,
Gently nudged to fan the flames of an ever burning spark

Do you feel the old and new as cycles turns again?
Will this be a true new start or as it's always been?
Oh if we could really wipe the slate and come out clear,
Habits, hurts, and history not passed from year to year
Oh if we could spend this time away off on vacation,
Totally immerse ourselves in Elul's transformation

But today I'm grateful for the whiff, the nudge, the breeze
Soulful voice of shofar and my heart's responding squeeze
King's accessibility for issues big and small
Reassurance new year brings that things change after all

Please Hashem turn timid hope into reality
Take our extra little prayer, coins for charity
Take our thoughts of *teshuvah* and our moments of desire
How our hearts have turned to you although our bodies tire
Bless our efforts though they're small, You know they are sincere
Pull us up from deep afield with love, and draw us near
Bless us with a happy, healthy, strong and sweet New Year!

GALLERY OF THE GREAT *(continued from Page 1)*

Hyrkanos became very angry and declared that he would never allow Eliezer to enter his home again and he would receive no part of his fathers wealth.

Tired and hungry, Eliezer finally arrived in Jerusalem and wended his way to the great Yeshivah of Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai saw before him a young man of over twenty years of age, thin and pale but with a burning desire to learn the holy Torah. He soon noticed that Eliezer was greatly talented and he accepted him into his Yeshivah. Eliezer started learning with his whole heart and soul. Each day saw him rising higher and higher in his accomplishments and studies. He suffered hunger, but complained to no one.

One morning, Hyrkanos arrived in Jerusalem, having come to see Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai. He wished to obtain the great Rabbi's consent to his plan not to give Eliezer a part of his inheritance. Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai soon discovered that his pupil Eliezer was Hyrkanos' son. He did not tell Hyrkanos anything but just invited all the great scholars and prominent people of Jerusalem, Hyrkanos among them, to come into the Beth Ha-Midrash. When all the people were assembled, Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai called upon Eliezer to deliver a Talmudic discourse.

Rabbi Eliezer's discourse was full of Torah and wisdom. Everyone present was amazed by the lecture, and sparks of fire seemed to shoot forth from Rabbi Eliezer's mouth. Hyrkanos was more astonished than anyone else. He did not know whether he was dreaming or if it was really his own son Eliezer who had delivered that brilliant discourse.

Hyrkanos approached Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai and said: "I came to Jerusalem with the intention of depriving my son Eliezer of his portion of my riches. I have now decided, however, to give him all my wealth, including the portions his brothers were to receive." Eliezer absolutely refused to take the slightest amount which rightfully belonged to his brothers.

(To be continued in the next issue)

PREPARING TO APPROACH HASHEM by Stephen Gottlieb

As I continued my journey through Mishnah with Rabbi Goldwasser, we recently finished studying *Tractate Chagigah*. The Rabbi asked if anything had inspired me enough to write about. Being totally honest, my initial answer—to myself, not the Rabbi--was no. Much of the tractate focuses on the pilgrimage festivals, sacrifices, and the procedures surrounding them. While I found that interesting, I didn't see how those ancient laws applied to my life today nor to how we practice Judaism now.

As I thought about it, I realized I was looking at this tractate all wrong. There was a better way to look at it and a more important question I should be asking. Rather than asking what *Chagigah* teaches about sacrifices, I should have been asking what those sacrifices teach us about approaching Hashem.

These details are more than procedures. When we look beneath the surface, they remind us that coming before Hashem is not something done casually or on impulse. It requires preparation. The worshiper prepared to travel to Jerusalem. He prepared his offering. He prepared himself to enter a holy place. Each step reinforced the reverence due to standing before the Almighty.

After I shared my idea with Rabbi Goldwasser, he reminded me of a Mishnah we had studied a while ago in *Tractate Berachot*. It teaches that the early pious men would wait an hour before praying so they could direct their hearts toward their Father in Heaven. Although *Berachot* speaks about prayer and *Chagigah* speaks about the Temple service, both convey the same timeless lesson: approaching Hashem begins long before the first prayer is spoken or the first offering is brought. **It begins with preparing the heart.**

The Temple no longer stands, and we no longer bring the offerings described in *Chagigah*. Yet the principle remains as relevant today as ever. Before we pray, study Torah, or perform a mitzvah, do we pause long enough to remember before Whom we stand? Do we prepare our hearts, or do we simply rush through another obligation?

Perhaps that is one of *Chagigah's* enduring lessons. *Holiness is never accidental*. We approach Hashem intentionally, with preparation, reverence, and the desire to draw closer to Him.

Through our actions and devotion to Hashem, may we merit the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days, and all of these services and details will then once again be applicable.

A CLOSER LOOK AT TESHUVAH by Yehudah Silverwolf

We all have relationships we value. Spouses, parents, children etc. We nurture these connections, we treasure them, and sometimes... we harm them. We may speak out of frustration, we may neglect the relationship at times, but we know these slights can be corrected, that the relationship has the strength and room to accommodate our frail human shortcomings.

Correcting these shortcomings isn't typically a problem. We know when we have erred and our nature demands that we repair what we've harmed. The real challenge, at least for myself, is maintaining that special connection that makes these relationships so meaningful. I get caught up in work, chores, projects... the necessities of keeping a home functioning and life in general, that I can lose sight of the importance of nurturing my relationships the way they should be cared for.

In the chapter *Iggeret HaTeshuvah* of *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe explains that *teshuvah* is not only correcting wrongs, it is about maintaining and nurturing a connection with G-d. Teshuvah isn't just for those in need of repentance. It's for all of us. As we go into the month of Elul and prepare for the High Holy Days, I'm not going to be concerned with only correcting my sins. I'm going to meditate on the greater level of *teshuvah* and attempt to strengthen my connection to G-d, and by proxy, strengthening the other important relationships I've been blessed with.