

דיני חודש אלול ועשרת ימי תשובה וְחַג הַסּוּכּוֹת

SOME DINNIM OF THE MONTH OF ELLUL

AND THE *ASSERES YEMEI TESHUVAH* ("THE TEN DAYS OF PENITENCE")

AND THE YOM TOV OF SUKKOS

1. Already from ancient times the month of Ellul has been recognized by our Chachommim as a time when הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא is more favourably inclined, as it were, to accept again those who have failed to live up to the standard that He in His goodness prescribes for us in His Torah. Although it is true that הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא at no time despises he who repents sincerely, nevertheless we are told that during the month of Ellul and the *עֶשְׂרֵת יְמֵי תְשׁוּבָה* (the Ten Days of Penitence) הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא will receive again, with even more mercy and lovingkindness, those who return to Him. To bring this opportunity to our attention, the Shofar, the symbolic call to Teshuvah (repentance) is sounded in some communities from the beginning of the month until the Eve of Rosh HaShonoh. (But on Erev Rosh HaShonoh itself it is not sounded.) During this time of the year we try to improve our standard of adherence to the Mitzvos that it should be even better than usual so that it can be said in our favour that at least now we are making an effort to be worthy of being inscribed on the imminent Day of Judgement for a good and blessed new year.
  
2. From the Sunday before Rosh HaShonoh we rise up early in the mornings to say *סְלִיחוֹת* (Penitential Prayers) before *שְׁחֵרִית*. When Rosh HaShonoh falls to be on a Monday or Tuesday, Selichos commence the Sunday of the previous week. (Sefaraddim say Selichos from the beginning of the month of Ellul.) Before the Selichos it is necessary to wash the hands *Negel Wasser* and say the Brochoh *עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם* and the *בְּרָכוֹת הַתּוֹרָה*. These Brochos are not then repeated at *שְׁחֵרִית*. Those who are able to, should stand during the whole of the Selichos service, but if one finds this difficult then one stands at least during the *א-ל מְלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב* and the paragraph of the *שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת*. If one cannot attend a Minyan for Selichos then one may not say the *שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה מִדּוֹת* unless one reads that paragraph as one would read a portion of the Torah, that is, with the *נִיגוֹן* and *טַעַמִּים* (tune and cantillation) reserved for reading the Torah in public, nor should one say those parts of the Selichos which are in Aramaic.
  
3. On Erev Rosh HaShonoh it is customary to seek annulment of any vows or promises that one may have inadvertently uttered during the year. In a Shmittoh Year, a Pruzbul must be drawn up and completed, where this is needed. (Some follow the ruling that the Pruzbul must be drawn up and completed before the Rosh HaShonoh at the *beginning* of the Shmittoh Year.) Then, barbered and bathed and dressed in our best clothes in honour of the Yom Tov, we make ready to welcome this holy day. Mindful as we are of the awe of the imminent Day of Judgement, we are at the same time confident of the goodness and mercy of our Father in Heaven and that He will inscribe us all for a *שָׁנָה טוֹבָה*, a good new year. It must be borne in mind, however, that we cannot hope for forgiveness from HaShem for any wrongs that have

been perpetrated by us against our fellowman. The wrong must first be corrected and pardon asked from the person wronged — only then dare we ask that הקדוש ברוך הוא forgive us for having harmed our fellow.

4. Regarding the *davvening* on Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur it is earnestly recommended that one acquires a reliable and clearly-printed מַחְזִיר (Festival Prayer Book) in which to follow the *davvening* carefully. For the other days of the עֶשְׂרֵת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה note should be taken of the following points:
  - (a) In Kaddish, instead of לְעֵילָא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא, the words לְעֵילָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא are substituted.
  - (b) In the Shemoneh Esre, instead of הָאֵל־הַקְדוֹשׁ, the words הַמְלִךְ הַקְדוֹשׁ must be said (if one forgot, then unless one corrected oneself immediately, one must start the Shemoneh Esre again) and in the Brochoh of הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ the words הַמְשַׁפֵּט הַמְלִךְ are said. Also, the sentences זְכַרְנוּ, מִי כְמוֹךָ, וּכְתוּב, and בְּסִפּוֹר are inserted in the places indicated.
  - (c) In בְּרַבַּת הַמְזוֹן (the Grace after Meals) too, a special הַרְחֵמֵן is inserted in the place indicated. (Some have the custom to say this הַרְחֵמֵן until after Sukkos.)
5. During the Yom Tov meals we have the custom to eat of those foods which are associated with or are symbolic of the good things we ask הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא to grant us in the coming year, (e.g. an apple dipped in honey symbolising a sweet year) and various dishes, vegetables and fruits whose names or tastes are reminiscent of good and pleasant things, each family according to its custom and tradition, but sharp or bitter foods should be avoided.
6. We are commanded in the Torah to hear the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh HaShonoh. Because of the necessity to fulfil this Mitzvah properly, our Chachommim, of blessed memory, instituted that we hear many different arrangements of the sounds of the Shofar. It is forbidden to talk from the time that the Brochos for the Shofar are recited until the end of all the Shofar sounds, and careful attention must be given also to the Brochos themselves. One should have the intention that the Brochos are said on one's behalf, for which reason the response בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ is not made — only אָמֵן is answered.
7. The custom prevails that on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh HaShonoh we go to the river-side for the תַּשְׁלִיךְ (*Tashlich*) Service. If the first day falls to be on a Shabbos then, because we cannot carry the *Machzor* in the street on Shabbos, תַּשְׁלִיךְ is on the second day.
8. During the עֶשְׂרֵת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה we add in the בְּרַבַּת הַמְזוֹן, in the appropriate place, the prayer הַרְחֵמֵן הוּא יַחֲדֵשׁ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה וְלִבְרָכָה (as mentioned above). It is correct, too, that when writing to a friend at this time of year one includes the wish that HaShem should inscribe him to have a happy new year. Indeed, from the beginning of the month of Ellul,

when writing or communicating with friends one includes the wish that HaShem should grant them a **בְּתִיבָה וַחֲתִימָה טוֹבָה** and this is the practice until after Sukkos.

9. The custom prevails that in the morning of Erev Yom Kippur we perform the **סֵדֶר בְּפָרוֹת** (*Seder Kapporros*). Some do this with a live chicken but mostly it is done with money (usually an amount **ח"י**). The procedure is as follows: after saying the prescribed sentences the *Kapporros* is waved about one's head in a circular motion. The chicken is slaughtered and poor people are given either it or, better still, its value. If the *Kapporros* is performed with money, the money is given to **צְדָקָה**. People should not make the mistake of thinking that this rite achieves atonement for their sins: it is only symbolic and is to bring forcibly to mind that though deserving of severe retribution and a similar fate to that of this creature for sins committed, we hope and pray that **הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** will spare us in His great mercies now that we are sincerely repentant of our backsliding ways.
10. On the morning of Erev Yom Kippur, **מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה** is omitted (though some *do* say it) and Tach'nun and **לִמְנַיִח** are not said. **אָבִינוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ** is also omitted unless Yom Kippur falls to be on a Shabbos. On this day it is a Mitzvah to eat and drink more than usual and if one does so it is counted to one as if one had fasted this day, too.
11. As mentioned above, Yom Kippur does not atone for sins committed against one's fellow-man — the wrong must first be rectified and forgiveness asked for, and only then can one hope that **הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** will pardon one for having hurt a fellow-Jew. On the other hand, a person who is asked for forgiveness should not be cruel and heartless and refuse a sincere request for forgiveness, but he should act magnanimously and be forgiving, for does not each of us ask **הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** to be forgiving to us, too?
12. It is a Mitzvah to go to the Mikveh on every Erev Yom Tov to purify oneself from all **טומאות**, but especially so on Erev Yom Kippur. Furthermore, because we are now resolved to start afresh, just as a **גֵר**, when he becomes a Jew, is **טוֹבֵל** in a Mikveh, so too do we immerse ourselves in the Mikveh now as we return to **הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא**.
13. On Erev Yom Kippur, Minchah in *davvened* early in the afternoon and after Minchah we go home and take the final meal before the Fast begins. It is correct to wear one's Shabbos clothes for Minchah. After the quiet Shemoneh Esre (before **אֱ-לֹהֵי, נִצּוֹר**) we say the **וַיְדוּי** (*Viddui*, the Confession) but before that we say the Possuk **יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אֲמָרֵי פִי וְכוּ'** so that if the Chazzan starts to repeat the Shemoneh Esre while we are still saying the **וַיְדוּי** we can answer **אָמֵן, אֲמֵן, קְדוֹשָׁה, מוֹדִים**, etc., because **יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אֲמָרֵי פִי וְכוּ'** signifies the end of the Shemoneh Esre proper.
14. The **וַיְדוּי**, or Confession, which is a Mitzvah **מִדְּאוֹרַיִסוֹה** (*Mi'd'Oraiysoh*, meaning, from the Torah) is said in a stooping or bowed position as when bowing for **מוֹדִים**. It is good to mention explicitly (not necessarily in **לְשׁוֹן הַקְדוֹשׁ**) the **עֲבִירוֹת** for which one begs forgiveness

SOME DINNIM OF THE MONTH OF ELLUL — דִּינֵי הַחֹדֶשׁ אֶלּוּל וְעֵשֶׂרֶת יָמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה וְחַג הַסּוּפּוֹת

from **הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא**, but this must be done quietly so that no-one else can hear it. **אָבִינוּ מִלְכֵינוּ** is not said at Minchah.

15. The final meal before the Fast should consist of foods which are easy to digest and again should include foods which are symbolic of blessings, but spicy foods are to be avoided. One should finish eating while it is yet day (the latest time is advertised in the better kind of Lu'ach).
16. Since we cannot eat nor drink on Yom Kippur and it is nevertheless a Yom Tov — albeit of great solemnity — therefore do we honour this great and holy day with clean clothes and much light, but jewellery should not be worn on Yom Kippur by men or women.
17. The customary blessing of the children by both their father and mother before going to Shule on Yom Kippur Eve is based on the fact that the Gates of Mercy are now open and their prayers that their children be blessed to grow up into G-d-fearing Jews are sure to be heard by **הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא**. The parents may add their own blessings and prayers to the usual **פְּסוּקִים** of **וְשִׁמְךָ** and **וְיִבְרַכְךָ**, confident that **הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** will hear their pious wishes for their offspring.
18. The Tallis is worn at **עֶרְבֵית** on Yom Kippur night, and one should take care to put it on while it is yet day, and recite the usual Brochoh before doing so. Shoes made with leather are removed while it is yet day, too, for the wearing of such footwear is forbidden on Yom Kippur until the following night. On Yom Kippur it is also forbidden to wash oneself, except the *Negel Wasser* washing of the hands in the morning and for **אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵר**, when one washes one's hands only till the knuckles. (In the morning, one may pass the fingers while they are damp over the eyes, too.) Perfumes and anointing-oils may not be used on Yom Kippur, though during Yom Kippur day it is correct to smell various spices and, by making the prescribed Brochoh before one does so, so increase the number of Brochos one makes on that day to compensate for those that one cannot make on food and drink. It goes without saying that it is forbidden to let any food or drink pass one's lips for the whole of Yom Kippur and even to only rinse one's mouth is forbidden. Those for whom fasting the whole of Yom Kippur would pose a real danger to life should consult a competent Rav to ascertain whether or how they should fast on Yom Kippur. Doctors (even Jewish doctors) are not authorized to decide these matters on their own.
19. After **עֶרְבֵית** on **מוֹצָאֵי יוֹם בִּיפּוּר** (which should be *davvened* slowly) we go home to break the Fast, confident that **הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** has heard our Tefillos and granted us atonement, and after the meal we immediately start with the next Mitzvah with which **הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא** has favoured us — the building of the Sukkah.
20. The minimum number of walls of a Sukkah is two sides and a bit (the bit can be the door) and the main conditions in the walls are that they will withstand a normal wind and that they are proof enough against the weather that the wind will not blow out the candles. If possible, but

only *after* the סִכָּךְ has been placed in position, there should be fitted a roof which can be lifted back on hinges so that the סִכָּךְ can be covered as soon as it starts raining and with the roof lowered the interior of the Sukkah will be protected and not be spoiled by the dripping water. For the סִכָּךְ, any foliage is כֶּשֶׁר (some have for סִכָּךְ mats of interwoven twigs or sticks) but whatever it is, it may not be taken without its owner's permission. The main conditions in the סִכָּךְ are that it grew from the ground and that it is not a finished article (wooden ladders, for instance) and one should not use such finished articles even to hold down the סִכָּךְ כֶּשֶׁר.

21. There must be enough סִכָּךְ on the Sukkah so that there is more shaded and covered area than unshaded and uncovered area, even after any possible withering or drying of the leaves. Otherwise, the Sukkah is פְּסוּל (*Possul*, invalid). Care must be taken that no part to the extent of four *Tefachim* (about one square foot, or about thirty centimetres square) is left uncovered, this, even if the rest *is* covered properly, as this, too, would invalidate the whole Sukkah. On the other hand, although the more סִכָּךְ one uses the warmer will the Sukkah be, if possible the covering should not be too thick but should allow the stars to be visible at night. But in any case the Sukkah is פְּסוּל if the covering of סִכָּךְ is actually waterproof. (A thatched roof is therefore פְּסוּל.)
22. One must take care in those Sukkos which have a roof which is lifted back on its hinges not to sit under the overhang of the opened roof, for the overhang shelters the סִכָּךְ underneath it and it is as if one sat in a Sukkah with a covering over it. Care must likewise be taken that one's Sukkah is clear of the eaves of the house and of any trees.
23. The decorations used in making the Sukkah beautiful are forbidden to be put to any other use until after the Yom Tov and are therefore מוֹקְצָה (*Muktzeh*, that is, set aside and not to be moved) on Shabbos and Yom Tov. But one should not treat any of the materials or things used in the making of the Sukkah with any disrespect even after the taking down or dismantling of the Sukkah.
24. The Torah tells us to dwell in Sukkos for seven days, as it says: בַּסּוּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, "You shall dwell in Sukkos for seven days ..." this way to remember and commemorate how הַקִּדּוּשׁ בְּרֹדֶף הָיָא protected us when we journeyed from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel through the wilderness for forty years. Since the Torah uses the word תֵּשְׁבוּ, "you shall dwell," therefore everything that we do in the house throughout the year, on the Yom Tov of Sukkos we do in the Sukkah: eating, drinking, sleeping, learning, reading, conferring, playing, relaxing — but all with the underlying knowledge that the Sukkah is a holy place and it must be treated as such. Every moment one spends in the Sukkah throughout the days of the Yom Tov and חוֹל הַמוֹעֵד (*Chol HaMo'ed*, the Intermediate Days of the Festival) is a Mitzvah and some truly pious people do not have even a drink of water outside the Sukkah for the whole of Sukkos. Women, small children, an ill person and those that attend him are all exempt from the Mitzvah of Sukkoh.

25. Before every meal or snack of biscuits, cake or suchlike that one takes in the Sukkah (and which it is obligatory to have in the Sukkah) one makes the Brochoh: אֵלֹהֵינוּ ה', אֵלֵינוּ אֵתָהּ ה', אֵלֵינוּ אֵתָהּ ה', אֵלֵינוּ אֵתָהּ ה' — מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בְּסוּכָה — “Blessed are You, HaShem our G-d, Who has made us holy with Your Mitzvos and commanded us to dwell in the Sukkah.” If one forgot to make the Brochoh until one had started one’s meal (it is supposed to be said *before* the meal or snack) or even if one forgot until one had indeed *finished* one’s meal, one still makes the Brochoh because the very sitting in the Sukkah is a Mitzvah and seeing that one did after all eat a meal (or snack) in the Sukkah, one can make the Brochoh. The Brochoh is not repeated unless one leaves the Sukkah with the intention not to return for a long time (for instance, to go to Shule) but if one goes out of the Sukkah intending to return soon (for instance, to answer the door) then one does not make the Brochoh again — even if in the event one did not return for some considerable time. This is because at the time when he went out he intended to return shortly, and all the time he was out of the Sukkah, too, he had in mind to return soon, therefore his mind was on the Mitzvah all the time and it is considered as if there was no break in the Mitzvah.
26. On the first two nights of Sukkos it is obligatory upon every man to eat the meal — or at least a *k'Zayyis* (כְּזַיִיט) of bread, that is, bread the size of an olive, without delay — in the Sukkah. This is even if the weather is *not* permitting (for instance, it’s raining heavily) but in such a case one should wait as long as one can to start the meal so as to avoid eating it while it is raining. During the rest of Sukkos, if one is greatly and genuinely disturbed by the rain or cold (to the extent that if these conditions had existed in a room in one’s house one would have moved to another room) one may, if one feels like it, eat indoors.
27. We are commanded in the Torah that on the Yom Tov of Sukkos we are to take the Esrog and Lulav together with the branches of the myrtle and willow trees. The many Dinnim of what constitutes a *set of אַרְבַּע מִינִים* (Arba Minnim, the Four Kinds) are complicated and therefore it is earnestly recommended that they be acquired through a *יֵרֵא שָׁמַיִם*, a G-d-fearing person who is an expert in all the conditions that govern this Mitzvah.
28. During *חול המועד* (Chol HaMo’ed, the Intermediate Days of the Yom Tov) most kinds of hard, manual work are forbidden. It is likewise generally forbidden to do that work, even if it is not particularly hard work, by means of which one ordinarily earns one’s livelihood, unless it be a case where **(a)** one stands to lose a great amount of money if the work is not done, or **(b)** one otherwise will not have enough to buy oneself and one’s family food for the remaining days of the Yom Tov. For clarification as to whether or not these conditions apply to one, it is recommended that a Rav who is acquainted with one and knows one’s particular circumstances should be consulted beforehand.
29. Besides hard work, other things are not allowed on *Chol HaMo’ed*. They include: having one’s hair cut; shaving; washing clothes (except nappies and items needed for the Yom Tov); most buying and selling (except where conditions **(a)** or **(b)** above, applies); moving house; etc.. Marriages do not take place on *Chol HaMo’ed* (because of *אֵין מְעַרְבִּין שְׂמֵחָה בְּשִׂמְחָה*, that is,

we do not mingle two different kinds of rejoicing together because inevitably this will diminish each of them) but a *סְעוּדַת תְּנַאִים* is allowed, as is a *סְעוּדַת בְּרִית מִלְּהָ* or a *סְעוּדַת פְּדִיּוֹן הַבֵּן*. Travelling and outings are allowed on *Chol HaMo'ed*, as is ordinary writing (but not scribe-work, calligraphy or other specialist writing or drawing).

30. *Chol HaMo'ed* is really a kind of extension of Yom Tov proper, and even if, as we have seen above, certain kinds of work are allowed in special circumstances and which are not allowed on Yom Tov itself even given those circumstances, nevertheless we should not make the mistake of thinking, as unfortunately so very many people do, that it has not the sanctity nor the holiness of Yom Tov. On the contrary, our Chachommim, of blessed memory, expressed themselves very forcefully about this point and even went so far as to liken the person who desecrates *Chol HaMo'ed* to one who is *עוֹבֵד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה*. They stated further that even if a person has to his credit much Torah-learning and many Mitzvos and other good deeds but he desecrates *Chol HaMo'ed* — *אֵינֶן לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא*. For a person who treats the Yommim Tovim as if they are simply optional holidays for his own physical relaxation thereby denies their G-d-given origin and will tend to treat all the other Mitzvos of the Torah too as if they are merely for his own convenience and he will come to regard all the Laws of the Torah as if they are not of HaShem Who has commanded them.
31. Therefore, every G-d-fearing person will honour these Intermediate Days of the Festivals by wearing his best clothes, by enjoying food and drink and taking the air, and by engaging in Torah-learning and Mitzvos. In this way he will utilize these blessed days for bodily relaxation *and* spiritual uplift.
32. Concerning the Yom Tov of Sukkos and the Yom Tov that immediately follows it, *שְׁמִינִי אֶטְרֵס* (*Sheminni Atserres*) the Torah tells us to be happy, as it says: "וְיִשְׂמַחַתְּ בַּחֲגֹךָ" — "You shall rejoice on your Yommim Tovim." Our Chachommim, of blessed memory, tell us that these Yommim Tovim are the true climax to the *יָמֵים נוֹרָאִים* (*Yommim Noro'im*, the Days of Awe) that precede them. For whereas the Yommim Tovim of Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur bring us to revere *הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא* through the fear of Him, for the atmosphere of those days is such that we feel His Supreme Majesty and Almighty Kingship, the Yommim Tovim of Sukkos and Sheminni Atserres (with Simchas Torah) are Festivals when we are expressly bidden to rejoice in His Divine Presence and we are invited to serve Him out of joy and gladness. The Yommim Tovim of Rosh HaShonoh and Yom Kippur are therefore said to impel a *תְּשׁוּבָה מִיִּרְאָה* (*Teshuvah MiYir'oh*, a return to HaShem through our fear of Him) whereas the Yommim Tovim of Sukkos and Sheminni Atserres and Simchas Torah move us to resolve to comply with His wishes and commandments through true joy and our love for Him: *תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה*, (*Teshuvah Mei'Ahavah*, a return to HaShem through our love for Him) — a much higher spiritual plane. It is at this time of year, perhaps more than any other, that we are favoured through this lofty and sublime combination of awe and spiritual yearning and love for HaShem, to come closer to Him, that we can experience the true happiness of being the People of the Torah, a People near to *הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא*, He Who sanctifies His People Yisroel through the Festivals.

## HISTORICAL NOTE TO TSOM GEDALYOH

*Adapted from an article by S Kramer in the September 1963 issue of "HAMAOR"  
(The Journal of the Federation of Synagogues)*

It must be very difficult for someone who has never made a proper study of our history to appreciate the significance of the fast-day on the third of Tishrei associated with the name of the nobleman, Gedalyoh the son of Achikkom.

Most people simply have a vague idea that it is the anniversary of the assassination of the Jewish Governor of Judea appointed by Nevuchadnetzar after the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash. (As a matter of fact, the assassination happened the day before the anniversary, on Rosh HaShannah. Tsom Gedalyoh was fixed to be on the first weekday after Rosh HaShannah because we can't have a public fast day on a Yom Tov.) Yet we see that this tragedy is regarded as so calamitous that it warranted the establishment of a special fast-day to mark its anniversary and this date then took its place among the commemorations of other turning-points in our history.

We know the facts from Yirmiyohu HaNovvi, who is best qualified to give us a graphic account of this episode and especially so as he himself was there, at Mitzpoh, at the time. After the destruction of Yerushalaim, Yirmiyohu tells us, Mitzpoh had taken its place as the centre of government. Thus, even after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the state continued to exist, governed in the meantime from Mitzpoh. Gedalyoh had been charged by Nevuchadnetzar with the responsibility for rebuilding Jewish life among the remnants in Judea and of ensuring their loyalty to Babylonia and as long as there was a Jewish presence and a community in Eretz Yisroel, there was hope. After all, Nevuchadnetzar was here today but he will be gone tomorrow and after he was gone there was the possibility of the Jewish people, dispersed as they were, to return and join the Jewish community in Eretz Yisroel and begin the reconstruction of the People on its Holy Land.

For a few weeks all went well. But then Baalis, the king of the neighbouring country of Ammon, jealous of the new prosperity of the re-emerging Jewish state despite its conquest by Nevuchadnetzar, persuaded Yishmo'el, son of Nesanyoh, a scion of the royal House of David who had fled to Ammon to take refuge from the Babylonians, to return to Judea with the intention of assassinating Gedalyoh. As a matter of fact, our Chachommim do criticise Gedalyoh for his naïveté — for he was informed of the conspiracy but refused to believe it — and they say that even without accepting the report as true, he should have suspected the possibility and taken avoiding action. In the

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event, Yishmo'el ben Nesanyoh claimed that Gedalyoh had no right to be Governor when he, Yishmo'el was of the royal House of David. This, to his thinking, justified his jealousy and his anger — and his act of murder. His opportunity came when the Governor held a banquet on the Yom Tov of Rosh HaShannah. Yishmo'el and his followers, after “eating bread with him,” suddenly arose and slaughtered Gedalyoh and his retinue.

The consequence was that the remnants of the Jews, ignoring the pleas and warnings of Yirmiyohu, fled to Egypt and thus abandoned the land which had been Divinely promised to our forefathers. For the first time, after so many centuries of Jewish settlement, the Holy Land was without an organized Jewish community. This was the final tragic phase in the *Churban*. It can thus be said that this major national disaster set the seal on the foundations of a Diaspora (that is, the dispersion of the Jewish People away from their Homeland) which has lasted to this day. The inhabitants of the Kingdom of Israel had earlier been deported by the Assyrians. They were taken away, dispersed, lost, gone. Then those in the Kingdom of Judah were exiled by the Babylonians. Now, in addition to the Jewish settlement in Babylon, there was a new Jewish settlement in Egypt (although this was later decimated by Nevuchadnetzar). But no longer was there an organized Jewish community in Eretz Yisroel and even when a part of our Nation returned to Eretz Yisroel, it was only a part. The vast majority did not. Ever since, “the Diaspora” has remained and it has consequently been our grim lot to be at the mercy of other nations and to suffer unbearably at their hands throughout what has transpired to be the greater part of our history.

Approximately five sixths of our people are still dispersed throughout the world “in the Jewish Diaspora.” In some countries today, Jews have to be fearful of what the morrow may bring, while even in the so-called enlightened lands of the West one never knows whether or when the friendly attitude of the bulk of the population may change, *chas v'shollom*, as a result of circumstances.

All this should be borne in mind when the Fast of Gedalyoh comes round and it will then be realised that we fast not simply because a Tzaddik was murdered but it is because the ramifications of this tragedy have affected our history to this very day. In other words, it was not merely because of the assassination of one man that our Chachommim established a fast-day but because of the far-reaching consequences which followed in the wake of that assassination.

We mourn for the whole horror of our Exile and our inability to worship in the Beis HaMikdash as required. We fast to bring this home to us, so that we may return wholeheartedly to the way of life prescribed for us in our Torah and we pray sincerely that the full Redemption may come about in our own day.

# THE TENTH JEW

*Adapted from "The Prisoner and Other Tales of Faith"  
by Rabbi Salomon Alter Halpern and published by Feldheim.  
Reprinted here with the kind permission of Rabbi Halpern.*

In the second generation of Chassidim (in the latter half of the eighteenth century) there lived in the town of Rovno, in the Ukraine, a Rabbi known as Reb Leib Soreh's, one of the "hidden" Tzaddikim. Much of his time was spent travelling and collecting money for *Pidyon Shevuyyim* (to free people unjustly imprisoned) and other important, often secret, purposes.

Once, a few days before Yom Kippur, he was staying for the night at a village inn when heavy rains set in, rapidly converting the primitive roads into mere stretches of mud. The traveller was enquiring if anyone would still try to drive to the town where he had meant to spend Yom Kippur when he was told that there would be a Minyan in the village. Eight Jewish men and boys lived in the place and two men were to come in from a hamlet in the middle of the forest. There was a Sefer Torah, too. He understood that it was G-d's will that he should pray with these country Jews.

On Erev Yom Kippur, Reb Leib bathed in the river which ran by the village for *t'villah* in preparation for the holy day. He ate something from his knapsack and made his way quickly to the improvised Shule and prepared his soul for the Minchah prayer. The eight local Jews gathered, but they had to davven Minchah without a Minyan as the two guests had not yet arrived. They dispersed again to take the *se'udoh hamafsekkes*, the meal which precedes the fast.

His meal finished, the Rabbi went back to the little wooden Shule, put on his *kittel* and *tallis* and immersed himself in the private prayers before Kol Nidrei. Suddenly he realized a change in the room. The men were talking worriedly; the sun was going down and soon it would be time for Kol Nidrei, but the two had not arrived.

Then the door opened. But the man in muddy sheepskin coat and cap, who had come, was no Jew.

"Panke Rivkah sends me," he began, in the Ukrainian dialect known as "Goyish." "Yossel and Moshka were taken away this morning. The gendarme arrested them, for stealing, but Rivkah says it isn't true. She is crying all the time, and says you should pray for them."

Weeping started in the next room, where the women had assembled. Then the room was filled with babble, several people trying simultaneously to drag more information out of the peasant whilst others were discussing possible developments. Only the Rabbi did not take part. He was standing in his corner, whispering. "Master of the Universe! I thank You for making me stay here, that I may help free them. Since this is Your purpose, I rely on You to help me set them free soon. But must I really pray without a Minyan on this holy day?"

A moment later, he raised his voice: "Yidden, let us not forget the message sent to us: We were asked to pray for them, not talk or think of ways to help them. That can be done later.

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First we must pray, for I tell you that their being arrested just today, of all days in the year, means that their case is now, today, being considered in the High Court above. Our prayers, as well as their own, will decide the issue. Now, I have a feeling that we may still have a Minyan. Where have the men been taken to?"

A man answered: "The goy says they were taken to Rovno."

"If so," replied the Rabbi, "it is not they who will make up our Minyan. Has anyone been expecting another guest?"

No-one had.

"Does anyone know of another Jew living round here?"

"No," the villagers assured him. "There's only us."

The Rabbi persisted. "Perhaps there lives round these parts a Jew who doesn't mix with Jews? A *meshummad*, a Jew who converted out of the faith of his fathers?"

"A *meshummad*!" exclaimed several men at once.

"Certainly," said the Rabbi, "why not a *meshummad*? Can't he do *Teshuvah*? The doors of *Teshuvah*, of repentance, are never locked, even in the face of an apostate. I have heard from my teachers that when one pokes around, even in only warm ashes, one can come across a hidden spark from which one can kindle a fire. And will we not say, "We give permission to pray with sinners"? Why, is there a *meshummad*, then?"

The oldest man spoke up. "Yes, Rebbe, there is one here. It is fifty years now. A poor young man settled here. He wore modern dress and he took liberties with many laws. He was clever, though. He had learnt a little, and he could also write Polish and Russian. The *poritz*, the lord of the manor, engaged him as a clerk. Then the *poritz*'s only daughter fell in love with him and her father promised him that if he converted he could marry the girl and he would make him his sole heir and he — may his name be wiped out! — sold his faith for the *poritz*'s gold. For that boy is now the *poritz*, and a worse hater of Israel than any *shlecht shtick*!"

"And what became of the woman?" asked the Rabbi.

"She died long ago. There were never any children. No-one is left but that *meshummad* and he lives all alone with his old servant in his great big house on the top of the hill, just outside the village. He is a cruel master and is hard with his tenants but especially harsh with the Jews on his land. He doesn't even visit his neighbour *pritzim*."

The Rabbi closed his eyes for a moment. Then he said, quietly, but with a curious tone of emphasis: "He sold himself, did you say? ... and it is Yom Kippur of his fiftieth year? ... Isn't that a fitting time for a slave to be set free? "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year as a Jubilee Year and proclaim freedom throughout the land and you shall return, each man to his heritage and each man to the family of his fathers ..." We must try it. Where is his mansion?"

"You want to go to him? He'll have you thrown to the dogs!"

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“Don't worry about me,” replied the Rabbi. “A *shliach mitzvah*, someone engaged on a Mitzvah mission, has special protection. But pray that I may succeed. Pray for that poor lost soul and forgive him your personal complaints. If I should not be back in half an hour, start without me.”

With that he strode to the door, still in his *kittel* and *tallis*. He asked a boy to point out the way, then disappeared into the night.

Reb Leib hurried as quickly as he could up the hill to the mansion, his white *kappel* on his head, his *kittel* and *tallis* billowing in the wind. Soon he was at the top of the hill and at the gates of the mansion. All was in darkness. The place seemed to be deserted. Bravely, he walked up the wide driveway, expecting to be stopped or challenged, then through the high arch and up the stone staircase. He knocked on the heavy door and turned the iron handle. It was unlocked. He pushed the door open and entered the great entrance hall and suddenly found himself standing in front of the old *poritz*. The Rebbe met the shocked eyes of the *poritz* and for a few long moments they stood in silence, face to face, the apostate and the *Tzaddik*. Reb Leib's eyes held the *poritz* with a steady gaze, fearless and firm, confident in his mission. The initial anger of the *poritz* gave way under the kindly, penetrating gaze of the Rebbe. Despite himself, he found that he was almost mesmerised by the radiant face of the holy apparition standing in front of him.

“My name is Leib Soroh's” the Rebbe said quietly. “It was my privilege to know Rabbi Yisroel, the Baal Shem Tov, who was admired also by the non-Jewish aristocracy and noblemen. I once heard from his mouth that every Jew should pray to be saved from selling his soul for money, that money should never become one's god.

“My mother, of blessed memory, was called Soroh. She was a holy woman. One of the local Polish noblemen had taken it into his head to marry her. He promised her wealth and status if she would agree. But she sanctified the name of Israel and refused all his enticements. You did not withstand the same test and for silver and gold you betrayed your faith, the faith of a Jew. But you should know that there is nothing that stands in the way of sincere repentance. Nothing.

“You should know, too, that our Sages teach that there are some people who in one moment can earn their place in the World to Come. For you, that moment has come now. Tonight is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Jews who live in your village are short of one Jew to make up a Minyan. Come along with me and be that tenth Jew. Despite your past, if you sincerely repent now of your mistakes you will be accepted by G-d for He is forgiving and merciful. You are our tenth Jew and the Torah tells us, ‘The tenth one shall be holy to G-d.’ Come with me now!”

For a long moment the *poritz* looked at the Rebbe with a curious intensity. Then, without saying a word, he took his cape from the stand there in the entrance hall. As he wrapped himself in his cape, he called in the direction of his servant somewhere at the back of the hall that he was going out. “Don't wait up for me!” Taking his silver-topped walking stick, he walked with the Rebbe out into the gathering night.

Meanwhile, down in the village, the simple villagers, at first bemused, had become anxious. Then anxiety had changed to fear. Who is this strange holy man? And who knows what

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calamity he might bring upon them with his unheard-of ideas? But after a while they had opened their Machzorim and found some prayers to say. They were still sitting thus, trying to drown their perplexity in the private prayers in the Machzor, when the door opened and Reb Leib came in, still dressed in his *kittel* and *tallis*, closely followed by the *poritz*. The *poritz*'s gaze was downcast and at a sign from the Rebbe, one of the men handed the *poritz* a *tallis*. He enveloped himself in it, covering his head and face entirely.

The Rebbe stepped forward to the Aron HaKodesh and took out the Sefer Torah. Handing the Sefer Torah to the oldest villager present, the Rebbe started to intone the traditional declaration before Kol Nidre: "By the sanction of the Heavenly Court and with the sanction of this congregation, we declare it permissible to pray together with those who have sinned." The Rebbe then continued in the slow, sweet Yom Kippur tune with the Kol Nidre prayer, followed by Maariv.

There was a Minyan. How the Rebbe had achieved it, they had no idea. But there was the tenth man, in the south-east corner, a tall, gaunt figure hidden in the *tallis*. And from under the *tallis* showed the knees of blue velvet breeches, white silk hose and black polished leather shoes that went with the costume of the gentry of the period. And the simple men trembled ...

Trembling still, they followed their self-chosen Chazzan through the Service. Never, even on Yom Kippur, had they prayed like this before. Their tears flowed freely, their hearts were humble: when they came to confess their sins they found so many they had never thought of as sins, yet they found themselves willing to repent and mend their ways. Was not a greater miracle of *Teshuvah* going on in this very room? And somehow they felt that the achievement of forgiveness for themselves was bound up with that of the *poritz*, and they reached out to help him. When the Rabbi intoned: "May He raise up our prayers of evening ..." they felt themselves strangely lifted up. When he said: "For like clay in the hand of the potter are we in Your hand ..." they saw how crooked their souls had become in the bitter struggle for survival, and they besought the Potter to make them over ...

When the villagers left late at night, the strangers, the Rebbe and the *poritz*, were standing in their corners. When they returned the next morning, they found the two in earnest conversation, and kept away from them, until the Rabbi began the prayers. All day long the *poritz* remained on his feet, his face to the wall, swaying in prayer, now and then shaking with sobs.

When night came on, and they said the *Sheyimos*, the *poritz* put his head into the open Aron HaKodesh, and cried, ever more loudly, "HaShem is the true G-d!"

And with the seventh time, he collapsed.

Reb Leib himself took part in the purification and preparation of the body for burial and he stayed for the Baal Teshuvah's burial in the nearby Jewish cemetery. Then the Rebbe set out to work for the release of the arrested men.

And for the rest of his life, Reb Leib Soreh's observed the *yahrzeit* of the Baal Teshuvah every Yom Kippur by saying Kaddish for the elevation of his soul.

## “WHO BUYS HIS SERVANTS IN JUDGEMENT”

*A well-known Chassidic tale.*

*(This translation into English borrows heavily from the work of Maurice Samuel.)*

The Chossid was speaking. The Rebbe of Nemirov, he said, compared those cold and formal people who would study the words and grammar and syntax of the prayers, without appreciating the spirit and warmth of the prayers, to workmen who know the mechanics of a musical instrument and even know how to make such an instrument or how to mend it, but cannot play on it. “Their hands are often skilful, but their ears are stopped up; and when someone plays the instrument they have made, they cannot hear. Or else their hearts are stopped up; they hear but do not understand. And if there is among them an exceptionally gifted workman who does occasionally put the instrument to his lips, all he can do is imitate someone else’s melody.

“I myself,” added the Rebbe of Nemirov, “I am not a workman. I cannot make an instrument nor mend one. But, G-d be thanked, I can play on all of them.”

Concerning this special quality of prayer among Chassidim that is almost out of this world, another Chossid in that small group described a great experience. He did not mention the name of the Rebbe who was at the centre of what happened. It may have been the Rebbe of Nemirov; it may have been another. It doesn’t matter. The Chossid told it well.

“Joy within joy” he called the experience — a special encounter with the loftiness of prayer. It was connected with the services of Rosh HaShannah, the New Year — the time of the annual accounting and judgement in Heaven of mortals on earth. “And as you know,” he reminded his listeners “we Chassidim make a happy occasion of it. We aren’t like those who are terrified by the approaching judgement. We know that we are not being hauled before some foreign potentate or a human judge. It is our own Father in Heaven Who is going to judge us; and so, after prayers, we are confident that all will be well and we take a couple of glasses of brandy, and we dance.”

But on this Rosh HaShannah of which he tells, something quite out of the ordinary happened and made it the most memorable New Year in the memory of all those who were there.

The Rebbe had stood before the congregation, leading it in prayer. And what a prayer leader he was! All day long his voice poured out supplication and praise; for on Rosh HaShannah he permitted no one to take his place. And who would have wanted to? Who would have dared? As he stood there, the messenger of the Jewish People to the

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Throne of Glory, his voice was like a pathway from earth to Heaven, his prayers like a ladder, broad and unbroken, bearing the hopes of his people.

And then suddenly, a dreadful pause, a break. He had reached the prayer that begins: “All shall acknowledge sovereignty to G-d Who prepares Man for judgment.” The words rang out clearly. But those which followed: “To G-d Who searches hearts” ... “to G-d Who uncovers the depths,” were uttered uncertainly and hesitantly. And when he came to the words: “To G-d Who buys His servants in judgment,” his voice broke completely, and a frightful silence followed.

One second, two seconds, three — and every second an eternity. Dread spreads through the congregation; up in the gallery women feel faint.

And then the Rebbe comes to. A shudder passes through his body, and the tense and dreadful silence is broken by a joyous cry: “To G-d Who is merciful to His people on the Day of Judgment.” And the Rebbe prolongs the words in happy turns and trills and roulades, while his feet begin to move, as of themselves, as if in a jubilant dance. And the rest of the morning prayers continue with renewed strength.

Between the first and the second morning prayers, said the Chossid, the Rebbe explained what had happened. A very trifling matter, you would imagine; but wait.

As we know, when a man reads from the Siddur, the eyes run ahead of the lips. The lips say, “Who uncovers the depths,” but the eyes are scanning ahead, they are already at, “Who buys His servants in judgment.” And that is what happened with the Rebbe that morning of the Rosh HaShannah service. But there and then it occurred to him that the words made no sense! He simply did not understand them, had never understood them. What possible interpretation could one put upon these words, which declare that “G-d buys His servants in judgment”? And in the utter confusion of that moment the Rebbe suspended his prayer and fell silent.

As you may well imagine, the break was noted at once in the Higher Realms where the prayers of the righteous are cherished and treasured. Our Rebbe’s prayers halted! A calamity! Not to be endured! Why had he stopped? Because he was perplexed by a phrase! But his prayers were precious, they must not cease! Immediately the decision was made to reveal to him, in a vision, the meaning of the words, so that he might continue with the prayer.

And as the Rebbe closed his eyes in perplexity, the Heavens were cleft before him. And this is what he saw:

The chamber of the Heavenly Court. It is the Day of Judgement but the chamber is still empty. The prosecuting attorney, counsel for the defence, the judges, all are yet to arrive. The Rebbe looks around. The chamber has five doors. One in the right wall, with the sign: “Counsel for the Defence.” One in the left wall: “Counsel for the Prosecution.” Three doors at the front of the chamber, in the eastern wall, and in front of them the table and the scales. The middle door, which is closed, bears the legend:

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“Hosts of the Blessed.” The other two doors are open. Through the one on the right the Rebbe sees the Garden of Paradise. There the Patriarchs and the sainted ones are seated, bathed in the brilliance of the Divine Light, blissfully studying the Torah, their crowned heads bent over the sacred texts. Through the open door on the left the Rebbe sees the dark, grey labyrinths of Hell. Hell is empty and silent; on the Shabbos and Festivals — and Rosh HaShannah is a Festival, even if it is a serious Festival — the souls in Hell are given respite, there is no torment and no punishment. The fires still burn, as if it was “the everlasting fire which shall not be extinguished.” But the demons usually there are not there today. They are occupied with a special task.

And now the door in the right wall opens, and Counsel for the Defence enters, carrying under his arm the records of the good deeds of Mankind for the past year. Alas, a very small sheaf. A poor year it has been for good deeds. Counsel for the Defence observes that the door opposite is still closed. A bad sign, that. It is taking them too long to collect their records. The harvest of Mankind’s misdeeds, he knows, fills the storehouses of Hell and it is taking a long time to fetch them all for the trial. Counsel for the Defence drops into a seat and closes his eyes in frightened, sad anticipation.

The door in the left wall opens, and two demons enter, staggering under the load of their first bundle. The Rebbe can almost hear their bones creaking under the burden. They throw down the bundle onto the table and sing out loudly: “That isn’t even a tithe of the harvest! The demons are still collecting — whole treasuries are yet to come!”

Counsel for the Defence covers his face and groans. To himself. He doesn’t think that anyone cares and that’s why he groans to himself. The Court is not yet assembled, the residents of Paradise are busy with the Torah. He thinks that no one hears his groan.

But Counsel for the Defence is mistaken! For among the residents of Paradise there is the beloved, the unforgettable Rebbe, Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev, the Great Defender of the Jewish People. He hears the groan of anguish that bursts from the lips of Counsel for the Defence. Although he is among the children of bliss in the Garden of Paradise and the Day of Judgement holds no fear for the sainted ones, he has not forgotten those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death; he remembers that for those on earth below it is the fearful Day of Judgment. And if someone groans in Heaven, it is undoubtedly for them. Reb Levi Yitzchok interrupts his studies, looks up, and through the open door perceives the crushed figure of Counsel for the Defence.

He steals into the chamber and he sees the slender sheaf in front of the Counsel for the Defence lying opposite the vast bundle just dumped on the table in the place of the Counsel for the Prosecution and he understands at once what is happening.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev, most tender-hearted of all Jews, most vigilant in defence of his erring people, pleader with the Almighty for mercy towards mortals, Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev knows his people. Even though he is here in the celestial world, he recalls his own time down below and he feels for them. He relives the fear and senses in his every fibre how on this Day of Judgement, down on earth, they are

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contrite and sincerely repentant about all their misdeeds. He must do something to help them. But what? It takes Reb Levi Yitzchok just one instant to decide. He bends down and, straining himself to the utmost, picks up the bundle of malevolent records — and he throws it through the door at the left, down on to the glowing ashes of Hell.

Again two demons enter, bent double under a load of records and, with a heavy thud, drop their burden on the table in front of the scales. Without looking, they hurry out to fetch some more. The moment they leave, Reb Levi Yitzchok deals with this bundle as he dealt with the first. And so with the third and the fourth and the rest.

Finally it is Ashmodai himself, Satan, the Prosecuting Attorney, who enters, a broad grin on his malevolent face. But what is this? Help! The records! Where are the fat bundles? Not a sign of that opulent harvest! He looks around, sees the last bundle crackling and burning in Hell; looks around again, and sees Reb Levi Yitzchok sneaking back toward Paradise. He yells, “Stop, thief!” and springs over and grabs him by the arm. “Justice! I demand justice!”

The cry resounds through all the seven heavens. Patriarchs and saints, startled from their studies, are quickly summoned into the chamber. The centre door at the front opens and the celestial members of the Court file in hurriedly to take their places. But first, before the process can begin, there is an objection which must be addressed. A point of order.

“What is it?”

Before the Heavenly Assembly the Devil declares how he caught Reb Levi Yitzchok red-handed. He points to the fires of Hell, where the last bundle — it was the heaviest of all — is still smouldering.

Truth is truth! Reb Levi Yitzchok confesses — but he had to do something to help his people, didn't he? Nevertheless, justice is justice! The Devil is asked what sentence he demands. He too decides on the instant. He quotes the Scriptures — he would! — “The thief shall be sold for his theft.” Let Reb Levi Yitzchok be sold as a slave publicly, to the highest bidder. The Devil will, of course, join in the bidding. And no matter what it costs him, he intimates, he will find the price.

This is the law, and there is no appeal from it. Let the auction begin!

So they stand facing one another, the Devil on one side, all the saints from Paradise on the other, Reb Levi Yitzchok between them. The members of the Court watch. The bidding opens.

Father Abraham makes his offer: his Heavenly credit for the priceless gem of the Covenant, the first Jewish commandment; and he adds as bonus his credits for his famous hospitality. After him comes Isaac, whose contribution is almost as large: the credits for his readiness to be sacrificed on the altar by his father. Jacob follows: his possessions are his simplicity and truth, his dedication to duty and devotion to family while his brutish brother Esau went hunting and robbing. Then comes Rachel, with

## “WHO BUYS HIS SERVANTS IN JUDGEMENT”

her special distinction of self-sacrifice for her sister's honour and after her the other Matriarchs, each contributing her own glorious deeds. And row upon row of saints follow, each putting up, for the purchase of Reb Levi Yitzchok, whatever reward he had garnered during his sojourn on earth.

But it is the Devil himself against whom they are bidding, and he has treasures beyond computation. For every addition to the right pan, he throws a corresponding hunk into the left pan. He ransacks the earth, brings out forgotten wealth from beyond the hills of darkness, till the eyes become glazed over by the shameful display. The saints have exhausted their stocks, the two pans stand level, and in a last flourish the Devil takes the flaming crown off his own head and flings it into the auction. He must have Reb Levi Yitzchok at any price. The pan on the left begins to sink; it dips lower, lower.

Counsel for the Defence advances and throws in on the right the meagre records of the year's good deeds. In vain. They are not substantial enough to arrest the relentless downward dip of the pan on the left.

A crooked and vindictive grin spreads over the Devil's lips, and triumph flickers in his eyes. Oh, what a catch, what a haul, what a victory for Hell! Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev! Perhaps one of the most glorious figures in the Chassidic world after the founder himself, the holy Baal Shem Tov! Even before the pan has touched bottom the Devil places a hand on Reb Levi Yitzchok's shoulder and points significantly to the door on the left, the door opening on Hell. “This way, please.”

Horror runs through the ranks of the blessed. What! Reb Levi Yitzchok lost? It cannot be! And yet — what is to be done?

The horror and confusion increase — until they are suddenly stilled by a Voice. It is the Voice from the Throne of Glory.

“*I* buy him!”

And again, through the deathly silence: “I raise the bid! ‘For Mine is the earth and the fullness thereof’ — and I give the whole world for Levi Yitzchok!” And the Devil's face became black as thunder.

Reverently and with serene joy, the Chossid finishes his account:

“That's what the Rebbe told us in the pause between first and second prayers that Rosh HaShannah morning. You can well understand what happiness was ours that Rosh HaShannah!

“First, our repentance was accepted and the record of our sins were destroyed — which means a happy and prosperous New Year is as good as in our pockets. Second, Reb Levi Yitzchok redeemed. And third, to top it all, and perhaps best of all, the meaning of a text at last revealed: ‘To G-d Who buys His servants in judgment!’ That G-d Himself is ready to redeem His worthy, faithful servants.”

## THE PRICE OF AN ESROG

*From "The Prisoner and Other Tales of Faith" by Rabbi Salomon Alter Halpern  
and published by Feldheim. Reprinted here with the kind permission of Rabbi Halpern.*

Reb Itzig was walking with his head bent against the rain, which the wind was driving across the exposed field path. His heart was as heavy as his feet. Business had been bad again today. The heavy autumn rains had made many roads in these Hungarian flatlands impassable. Some villages were completely cut off. In others the peasants were too busy protecting their barns and saving what they could from exposed stacks to think of trading with him.

And there were only a few days to Sukkos! There would be no new clothes for his family this time.

He was amongst the bare fields of his village now. Soon he would warm himself in front of the fire. Thank Heaven he had been able in time to barter some merchandise for a load of wood. He wondered about the approaching frosts: would he be able to walk out in his bald sheepskin coat another winter?

One thing at least was sure. He had his Esrog and Lulav already. And what an Esrog! Ripe, yellow and spotless! But it looked as if he would be the only one in the village. The rain that had impaired his living here had cut the railways lower down, and the Esrogim had not yet arrived. He was glad now that he had accepted the Esrog offered him four weeks ago, which the dealer had received as a sample. Itzig had been doubtful at first, afraid it might spoil before Yom Tov, and the dealer owed him a good Esrog, one of the finest he could get. That had been the agreement they had made two years ago, when Esrogim had been so dear that Itzig could only afford one by sharing with neighbours. It was then that he had determined that never again would he miss an Esrog for lack of money. Ever since then, he had paid the dealer six kreutzer every Friday on the understanding that he would get an Esrog Mehudar every year regardless of the current price and pay any balance later.

And now the whole Community might have to be 'Yotze' with his Esrog, the Esrog of the poor peddler who sat behind the Bimah!

To be sure, the dealer had tried to buy it back, had offered fantastic prices. He had gone up to forty gulden. Forty gulden! What Itzig could have bought with forty gulden! But he had refused. He would not sell such a Mitzvah for a hundred!

And Zirel, his wife, had agreed. She needed a new dress urgently, and things for the children, but she understood the value of a Mitzvah, too.

A good wife, Zirel, thought Itzig. She did not complain if things were hard. She understood. She would not ask about the day's business. She would guess it, and say nothing. But she would have a glass of tea for him in no time; she would make him comfortable, tell him something clever his little Rivkaleh had said, or what the Rebbe thought of Shimela's reading. All the same, it was hard to come home empty-handed ...

## THE PRICE OF AN ESROG

Here was his cottage. He had hoped to be able to rebuild the north wall this year. It would have to wait ...

His wife greeted him cheerfully enough, but from the start Itzig sensed something in the air. When he had finished supper and started sipping his tea, he asked his wife what was the matter.

"Oh, Itzig," replied Zirel. "I have worried so much. The Esrog dealer has been again, and this time he brought three Baalei Battim from Debrecen. They have no Esrogim there at all, so the Rosh HaKohol there has sent Gabbo'im to all the Kehillos in the district to buy one at any price."

"Well," said Itzig, "you know that we are not selling ours. You told them so, didn't you?" He sat up tensely.

"Of course I told them, but they pressed me so hard. They offered a hundred gulden from the start, and then they offered more, laying it all out on the table, all those banknotes and gold pieces ... It made my head swim to see it."

"I hope you did not give in?" interrupted Itzig anxiously. "We could not sell a Mitzvah for money! And besides, our whole Kehillah wouldn't have an Esrog!"

"No, thank G-d, I did not sell it, though it was very hard to refuse. In the end they put four hundred gulden on the table! Four hundred gulden! And the arguments! G-d forgive me, I am only a weak woman. But I told them I would do nothing without you and they had to be content with that. They wanted to leave the money on the table, but I scolded them and they took it back. I would have gone mad with all that money in the house." She began to cry.

Itzig reassured her. "Now, now, Zirel, calm yourself. You did a great Mitzvah; not many would have had the strength. It was very wrong of them to press you," he continued when she was calmer. "But in any case you could not have given in to them even if you had wanted to. They know that they could not be 'Yotze' with the Esrog if you had sold it against my wishes. And we cannot sell our Mitzvah. There would be no blessing in such money. It is only a temptation sent to test us!"

There was a knock at the door. A man's voice called: "May I come in? Reb Itzig is in now, isn't he?"

"Yes, come in," answered Itzig. The man entered. He was tall and stout, his greying beard falling over a new-looking silk gabardine.

"Ah, Reb Mendel! Sholom Aleichem!" Itzig greeted him. "Take a seat. You came with the other Gabbo'im earlier?"

"Aleichem Sholom," answered the newcomer. "Yes, we came about the Esrog. But your wife could not decide without you. Have you thought it over?"

"I do not have to think it over," answered Itzig, with some sharpness. "I am sorry if you have no Esrog, but you cannot have ours. You can save your words: there is nothing more to be said about it."

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"Well, well," Reb Mendel calmed him. "I thought as much myself, but the others would not believe me. Do you know any place where we can find an Esrog?"

Itzig did not, and after they had talked a while of some local events, Reb Mendel got up to go. Itzig accompanied him.

"One more thing," said Reb Mendel when they were outside. "I am glad I came here, even if I did not get an Esrog. You see, I have never met anyone with such devotion to a Mitzvah as you and your wife. And listen to an old man: after this, G-d will send you prosperity. He could keep us all comfortable if we were worthy, but not everyone can resist the temptations that riches bring. But you have shown that money cannot corrupt you and I am sure you will have plenty of it soon. Now let me give you ten gulden — no, don't refuse. I don't mean it as a gift. Return it when you don't need it any longer. The wheel turns, you know, and if ever I or my children fall on bad times, you will help them in return." With this he went away, and Itzig was left standing, holding the banknote.

Well, that was enough to make a comfortable Yom Tov anyway. And as Reb Mendel had said, he did not have to regard it as a gift. He went in and told his wife but she was not as delighted as he had thought she would be and went about her work silently. At last, he asked her what worried her now.

She sat down by him. "Look, Itzig," she explained, "I know that I had to do what I did. I had to leave the decision to you. But all along I have been wondering if you were doing right. You should at least have asked a Shaaloh. We ask Shaalos on smaller things than this. If you had told the Rov what four hundred gulden mean to us, how much good can be done for us and others with all that money, maybe he would have decided otherwise. That is what worries me."

Itzig considered it. "There is something in what you say, but it does not need a Shaaloh. The position is so clear! On the one hand I have a Mitzvah, a Mitzvah that one can fulfil only once a year. On the other hand I have four hundred gulden. Here is cold, dead money, and there is the living Word of G-d. Is there any doubt what one must choose?" He thought for a moment. "And yet," he went on, "if you like, I shall ask a Shaaloh even now. But not of the Rov. I shall ask a Shaaloh of G-d!"

She looked up at him, puzzled: "What do you mean?"

"Look, Reb Mendel has given us ten gulden and he says he feels sure we shall be rich soon. You say maybe we should have taken the four hundred gulden. Now, even five gulden are enough to carry us over Yom Tov. We could buy a lottery ticket with the rest and if G-d really wants us to be rich, He can give us the money in this way. And if we do not win we shall have lost our five gulden, but at least we shall know that we are not meant to be rich, so that we did right in refusing to sell the Esrog."

His wife was satisfied with this solution and next morning Itzig bought a five gulden ticket for the State Lottery. The other five were spent on Yom Tov preparations.

Sukkos came, and a strange Sukkos it was. Itzig and his family got up early to say the Brochah on the Esrog in their Sukkah, for the Shammas was already waiting to take their Esrog round the houses so that the women could also fulfil the Mitzvah. In Shule, davvening took even longer than usual, for everybody had to make the Brochah on Itzig's

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Esrog. In Hallel, too, many made the Na'anuim with this one Esrog. Thus, Itzig's seat below the Bimah for the moment became the centre of the Congregation. But though Itzig was glad of the special merit that had come through him, he showed no conceit, so no one felt humiliated or envious.

But he was uneasy in his mind. He did not allow himself to regret his refusal of the money, but he wondered if he had been right to buy the lottery ticket. It was not likely that he would win anything, so he had probably wasted a lot of good money. But supposing he did win — and after all, he was hoping for that — would that not mean that he would receive the reward for the Mitzvah in this world and get nothing for it in the World to Come? This clever idea of "asking a Shaaloh of G-d" didn't look so clever to him now. It was beginning to look to him very much like "testing G-d," the sin for which the Jewish People had been so severely punished in the Wilderness.

At last, he took his problem to the Rov. The learned man listened to him and after considering for a moment said: "Reb Itzig, you have nothing to worry about. I wish people would do "sins" like this every day! You see, "testing G-d" means a case when someone doubts the power or the love of G-d and demands a miracle to prove it. But according to what you told me, you did not doubt G-d, but only your own worthiness. Also, a lottery win is not exactly a miracle. Someone who would not want to believe that it comes from G-d would still call it "chance." Although in truth, you know, it's exactly the opposite. I have heard this from my Rebbe, of blessed memory. He used to say: "The less you can influence the outcome of a thing, and the less it seems to depend on the so-called laws of Nature, the clearer is the hand of G-d in it." Those people who talk of "chance" as if it could decide anything are only cheating themselves, for "chance" means something happening without a natural cause to decide it, so how can they call it a cause in itself?"

That last part was too deep for Itzig, but the main thing was that there was no sin in what he had done. But what about the reward of his Mitzvah, he still wanted to know.

"Well," replied the Rov, "I can tell you on what this question depends. If a person wants the things of this world, money, honours or enjoyment, for their own sake, and he even does his Mitzvos in order to get such things, then his reward is paid off in this world. But if he serves G-d with a pure heart, and he wants money and other things only in order to be able to do more Mitzvos, then G-d gives them to him not as payment for his good deeds, but in order to help him to do more of them. Which of these applies to you, Reb Itzig, no man can tell you for sure, for only G-d sees the heart. But one can tell a lot from the outcome. If you win something, and you find that afterwards you are doing more good deeds and Mitzvos and learning more Torah than before, then you can assume it was sent as a help and not as the paying-off of Mitzvos. Anyway," he continued with a smile, "this Shaaloh is not a practical one just now. You haven't won yet. I hope from my heart, though, that you do win something. I should be glad to know that you have parnossah more comfortably."

With this blessing, the Rabbi sent Itzig home. But for a quite a long time he sat in his study wondering about the odd things people may do. Fancy this Itzig, who barely made a living, putting five gulden into the Lottery! In the end, he told himself, simple men in their innocence may succeed where wiser ones would not dare to begin. Itzig deserved

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to win a prize for his trust in G-d alone. "I should certainly like to know the end of this!" he mused. Then he turned to his Gemorroh again.

To Itzig, his Shaaloh was serious and practical enough. That evening, after Shemoneh Esreh, he said a private prayer: "Please, G-d, nobody knows if it is good for me to win, but You do know. I pray You, if it is not good for me or my children, don't let me win."

He felt better after that. And to make a start, he resolved firmly that of whatever he might win, much or little, he would give, not a tenth, but a fifth part, to Tzedokoh right away.

With a lighter heart he enjoyed Shemini Atzeres and on Simchas Torah he felt joyous as never before.

On the day after, he went out again with his sack, the peacefulness of the Yommim Tovim still in him. He made a few sales and was thankful. He felt that G-d was helping him.

He was wondering, however, what had become of his Lottery ticket. Days passed and the draw must have taken place already. Since he hadn't heard of it, he probably had lost. Nu! So be it!

One evening, as he was getting nearer home, he saw a small boy standing near the first house of the village, then running towards him. It was his Shimela. Breathlessly the boy told him that they had won a lot of money. "Mummy is quite ill from it!" he added. "She sent me to look out for you."

In the street people stopped to congratulate him, but he hurried home. He found his wife still very excited, and dabbing at her eyes. With difficulty she managed to tell him that they had indeed won — and the first prize! A hundred thousand gulden! He calmed her, and said: "Don't worry, Zirel. G-d gave us strength to live in poverty, now He will give us strength to be rich." Then he spoke the Brochah, "HaTov ve'HaMaytiv."

The next day, he travelled to town to receive the money and he put it into a bank. On the advice of Reb Mendel, he kept a fifth part, twenty thousand gulden, in a separate account. This was his Tzedokoh account, and he soon distributed almost half of it to people and organizations in the district. The other half he kept in the account for the time being, to be distributed later.

He decided to move to Vienna. He felt it was not good for him and his family that he should be the richest man for many miles around.

In Vienna he found good friends who advised him how to invest his money. He had sound business sense himself, and became a successful financier. But never did he spend less than five hours a day in learning Torah, and never was a deserving cause or needy person sent away empty-handed from his house.

One peculiarity remained with him all his long life: Every Sukkos he had to have the very best Esrog that money could buy. He would spend hours and hours choosing and selecting and often he would buy a dozen from different dealers before he was satisfied. When his friends chaffed him about this, he would reply: "Ah, but you don't know the value of an Esrog. I do."

## **SOME TIPS ON KEEPING YOUR *ARBA MINNIM* IN GOOD CONDITION**

Freely adapted from the factsheet compiled as a public service by Stephen Colman  
'The Arba Minnim Centre,' London, England *Tel. 020 8458 1827 and 020 8209 0231*

### **LULAV**

Keep your Lulav in a cool room, or in the Sukkah, away from the central heating so that it doesn't dry out.

### **ESROG**

When not in use, keep your Esrog tightly wrapped in the protective wool.

### **HADDASSIM and ARAVOS**

As soon as you bring them home, place them in a see-through plastic bag in which there is a little water and if possible keep them near the bottom of the fridge. Don't keep them in a dark bag wrapped up in a wet tea-cloth (with or without tinfoil) because mould grows best and fastest in a dark, damp and warm place. That's exactly the environment that encourages mould. Mould does not like light and cool places.

On Erev Yom Tov, cut away approximately one centimeter from the end of the stems and leave the Haddassim and Aravos to soak in a jug with a little water (approximately three centimeters) for an hour or so before tying to the Lulav.

On Yom Tov, either remove the holder with the Haddassim and Aravos (but do not remove the Haddassim and Aravos from the holder itself) and place it in a wetted, see-through plastic bag and place near the bottom of the fridge. Or keep the Lulav together with the Haddassim and Aravos in a long plastic transparent holder, with a few drops of water in the Lulav holder. (Keeping the Lulav with the Haddassim and Aravos submerged in a bath of water all the time involves serious Halachic problems and possibly might render them invalid.)

During the seven days of Yom Tov, should your Haddassim or Aravos appear to be drying out, a light spray of cold water or a little water in the Lulav-holder should revive them.

דיני עירוב תבשילין

**SOME LAWS CONCERNING ERUV TAVSHILLIN**  
**(PREPARING FOOD ON A YOM TOV FOR SHABBOS)**

1. Although it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov for Yom Tov, it is not permitted to bake, cook or prepare food on a Yom Tov openly and deliberately for the next day. This applies even if that next day is a Shabbos, whose holiness is greater than the holiness of Yom Tov.
2. This prohibition was enacted by our Chachommim to safeguard the special holiness and spirit of the Yom Tov. They saw a threat to the sanctity of Yom Tov in the very fact that, with the exceptions of cooking food and carrying what is necessary for the Yom Tov, the Torah prohibits Melochoh on Yom Tov. With Melochoh forbidden, people have much time on their hands on Yom Tov. At the same time, as said, the Torah explicitly permits us to cook food on Yom Tov. Our Chachommim were concerned that people would come to utilize the Yom Tov to do **all** their cooking, to put it away for year round use — after all, there's nothing else to do, is there? — and they were apprehensive that in time, Yom Tov would be robbed of its sanctity and become something like a Jewish National Cooking Day. So, whilst they did not enact a Rabbinical decree forbidding all cooking on Yom Tov (because the Chachommim will not generally make a decree to forbid completely that which the Torah explicitly permits) they did, however, curtail the cooking that may be done on Yom Tov by stipulating that this cooking can be only for the Yom Tov itself, with any left-over food permitted to be used on the following days. This is the basis of the Eruv Tavshillin, a means whereby food cooked on Yom Tov can be used for the Shabbos which immediately follows the Yom Tov. (Any leftovers from the Shabbos is obviously permitted on the following days.)
3. Thus, if Yom Tov occurs on a Friday and one needs to prepare food on the Yom Tov for the Shabbos (as invariably is the case) then an Eruv Tavshillin has to be set, that is, arranged, before the start of the Yom Tov. If Yom Tov is Thursday and Friday, then the Eruv Tavshillin has to be set on the Wednesday evening, before the commencement of Yom Tov. If Yom Tov is Friday and Shabbos, then the Eruv Tavshillin has to be set on Thursday evening before the start of the Yom Tov.
4. "Setting an Eruv Tavshillin" means that one sets aside some cooked food (at least the size of an olive) together with a baked bread or cake or Matzoh (at least the size of an egg). These items are then regarded as being the start of the preparation and cooking of the Shabbos food, started before the Yom Tov, and any further food preparation during Yom Tov for Shabbos is considered as merely the continuation of the initial preparation which was begun on the weekday before the Yom Tov. Thus the cooking for the Shabbos was not done entirely on Yom Tov and the dignity of Yom Tov is upheld — Yom Tov has not become merely the day of preparation for Shabbos.
5. At the same time, the institution of the Eruv Tavshillin also ensures that the Shabbos will not be treated disrespectfully, that the cooked food for the Shabbos after a Yom Tov should not be only the leftover cooked food of the Yom Tov. Through the Eruv

## SOME LAWS CONCERNING ERUV TAVSHILLIN — דִּינֵי עֵרוּב תַּבְּשִׁילִין

Tavshillin, therefore, our Chachommim ensured that the Shabbos is honoured with food cooked expressly for the Shabbos because the Eruv Tavshillin is indeed food cooked and baked for Shabbos and the Eruv Tavshillin arrangement implies that we are merely completing the cooking for Shabbos that was begun on the weekday preceding the Yom Tov. On Yom Tov we are, so to speak, merely “topping-up” the food that was prepared and cooked for the Shabbos.

6. When setting the Eruv, the appropriate Brochah is recited. (If there is no intention to make any preparations on Yom Tov for the Shabbos other than lighting the Shabbos candles on the Yom Tov, then the Eruv Tavshillin should be set but no Brochah should be recited.) After the Brochah, the declaration (in a language that one understands) is made, as follows:

***“By means of this Eruv, it is permitted to cook, bake, fry and to prepare food on Yom Tov for Yom Tov use and also for Shabbos use, and similarly to extend a fire on Yom Tov for use on Yom Tov and also if this will be for use on the Shabbos, and other permitted preparations on Yom Tov, for us who dwell in this house and indeed for all those who dwell in this town who might — this one time — have forgotten to make their own Eruv.”***

7. If the head of the family sets the Eruv Tavshillin, all members of the family are released from the obligation of individually preparing it. Where two families eat at the same table, then as long as each family does not eat its own food exclusively, they need only the one Eruv Tavshillin. The Eruv Tavshillin should be put away in a safe place till it is eaten.
8. Although it is preferable to cook and bake the food for the Eruv (to show how the Mitzvah is precious to one) the cooked food and the bread of the Eruv can all be bought in or can be taken from the freezer. The Eruv must be kept until all the cooking, baking, extending fire and other preparations one is making on the Friday for the Shabbos are completed. (If the Eruv Tavshillin was lost or mislaid before the Shabbos preparations were completed, a Rov should be consulted.) The preparation of the food on the Yom Tov should not be done late on Yom Tov day but should be done well before Shabbos commences. Otherwise, the cooking on the Yom Tov is blatantly not for Yom Tov use and the dignity of the Yom Tov is in danger of being compromised. However, if things were delayed and hardship would be caused if one did not have cooked food for Shabbos, one may cook and prepare food until shortly before the start of Shabbos. This leniency applies all the more so on the second day of Yom Tov.
9. The custom generally prevails that the Eruv food is eaten at the Se’udoh Shlishis on the Shabbos afternoon and the Chaloh (or Matzoh) is used as the second loaf at each of the Shabbos meals and is then eaten at the Se’udoh Shlishis. If the Eruv was not eaten on Shabbos, it doesn’t matter.
10. When Yom Tov is Thursday and Friday, although the Eruv Tavshillin is set immediately prior to the first day of the Yom Tov, on the Wednesday, nevertheless any cooking that is for Shabbos must be done on the second day of Yom Tov, that is, on the Friday.

**NOTICE**  
**PRODUCT RECALL**

Regardless of the make or year of manufacture, all units known by the generic term of “human being,” (“man,” “woman,” “human” etc.) are being recalled by the Manufacturer. This is due to a malfunction that arose later in the original prototype units codenamed ADAM or CHAVA, which has resulted in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. This defect is technically known as Serious Internal Non-morality, or SIN for short, and in many ways displays the characteristics of **A VIRUS**.

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, you are invariably infected with the SIN defect and should remedy the fault immediately to avoid further infection.

Some of the symptoms of the SIN defect are:

- [1] Loss of direction
- [2] Lack of peace and joy
- [3] Depression or anger
- [4] Foul vocal emissions
- [5] Selfishness
- [6] Ingratitude
- [7] Fearfulness
- [8] Rebellion
- [9] Jealousy

A Manufacturer-authorized repair service to correct the SIN defect is now provided and is available **FREE OF CHARGE**.

The Repair and Maintenance Technician (that’s the Name) has most generously offered to bear the entire burden of the staggering cost of these repairs. To repeat, there is **no fee payable**.

The number to call for repair, in all areas, is: **PRAYER** (772937). Please note, this is a direct line. Just make sure to dial correctly and you will be directly connected to the Help Desk straightaway.

Once connected, please upload the burden of SIN through the REPENTANCE procedure. (See Instructions Manual.)

Next, download ATONEMENT sent from the Repair and Maintenance Technician, into the heart component of the human unit. If the prescribed steps are followed exactly (see **“THE THREE STEPS”** in the Instructions Manual) then no matter how big or small the SIN defect is, our Repair and Maintenance Technician will replace it with:

- [1] Sense of direction
- [2] Peace and joy
- [3] Happiness
- [4] Patience
- [5] Kindness
- [6] Faithfulness
- [7] Self-confidence
- [8] Self-control
- [9] Gentleness

Please see the Instructions Manual **TORAH** for further details on the use of these fixes. Certain conditions do apply.

An additional feature is the **free of charge** upgrade which is available for all repaired units. This facility enables direct monitoring and assistance from the Repair and Maintenance Technician. Repaired units need only make sure to keep in contact with Him and He will establish a permanent link-up. This feature is offered to any subscriber. (Conditions apply.)

**WARNING: Continuing to operate a human being unit without corrections voids the Manufacturer’s warranty, exposes the unit to dangers and problems too numerous to list, and can ultimately result in the human unit being incinerated.**

Thank you for your immediate attention.

**PLEASE HELP TO SAVE OUR PLANET BY NOTIFYING OTHERS  
OF THIS IMPORTANT PRODUCT RECALL NOTICE.**