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The special significance of the Shofar, or ram's horn, which will be sounded during services these next two days of Rosh Hashanah, was explained by Maimonides as follows: Uru yeshenim mi-shenatkhem, "You who are asleep, wake up! You who are slumbering, arise! Search your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, you who forget the truth in vanities of the times.... Improve your ways, and abandon your evil deeds and thoughts." (Hil. Teshuvah, 3:4).

What kind of sleep is it that Shofar seeks to rouse us from? A moral slumber, of course -- a spiritual stupor in which our sensitivities are silenced and the soul sleeps. It is a diminishing consciousness, when God calls -- as indeed ^{the sound of} Shofar accompanied God's revelation at Mt. Sinai -- but man fails to answer; when we are where we are because we are -- unaware; unaware of God, unaware of fellow man, unaware even of our real selves.

Do you recall the aftermath of Jacob's lofty dream of angels ascending and descending the ladder that reached from earth to heaven? He woke up in a dreadful fright, because, as the Bible tells us, "indeed the Lord is in this place, v'anokhi lo yadati, and I did not know" (Gen. 28:16-17). Jacob was shocked at his own capacity for not being aware; for standing in the presence of his Creator, and yet making his bed thoughtlessly; for finding himself in a place of high holiness, and going to sleep calmly and unperturbed. "And I did not know" -- this is the self-accusation of the father of the Jewish people, and it is the challenge of the Shofar to all people at the beginning of the Jewish New Year.

How urgent that stirring call is for us today! Most of us are rarely knowingly ^{malicious} ~~evil~~; we are, rather, neglectful. We suffer not from bad intention, but from inattention. Our failure is not so much of conscience as of consciousness. We are, too often, blind to the sublime in life, insensitive to the holy, indifferent to the opportunities for noble achievement. The fault of so many of us is that at every step we can grasp the ladder leading to the gates of heaven -- but we are asleep, we are nonchalant^a, we are not even aware of it. "The Lord is in this place and I did not know it."

Here, for instance, is a husband who comes home and finds his wife irritated, ^{Or, one might take the reverse situation just as well.} overwrought, miserable. ^a One kind and sympathetic word, instead of a sharp retort, can often bring cheer and tranquility in place of fretfulness and tension. It is an opportunity for bringing a bit of heaven into an otherwise unhappy day at home. How unfortunate when we fail to realize this, when one word leads to another because lo yadati -- we did not want to know how to utter a kind word at the right time. ^a In business and professional life, despite the cynics who revel in their moral ignorance, we have daily opportunities to prove to colleagues and customers and competitors that a genuine human being -- particularly one who ^{is} ~~is~~ religious -- is honest and decent and fair. It gives us a chance to prove that the ladder of success can be a ladder of Jacob. How dreadful, how damaging to all we believe in and all we represent, when we can demonstrate that "the Lord is in this place" -- even the market place -- but "I did not know it!"

Whether it be business or domestic life, communal or political life, most of us err not in commission and malice, but in omission and oversight. It is the courtesies we withhold, the friendship we restrain, the understanding we fail to give, the pain of others we do not perceive, that are the expression of our failure to know the presence of God and the heart of man, and that thus cause us and others grief. No wonder that on Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement, the culmination of the Ten Days of Penitence ushered in tomorrow by Rosh Hashanah,

we confess to the sins we committed be'yodim uve'lo yodim, -- both knowingly and unknowingly. That last term refers not so much to sins committed because of ignorance, as much as to the sin of lo yadati "and I did not know" --- of having the occasion to be constructive and helpful, but letting it pass by unawares, unknowing, insensitive, indifferent. It is when we do not know, or do not want to know, or do not choose to know, that we are in real trouble. The real sin of lo yadati is when we fail in our moral knowledge, in our ethical awareness. It is from this spiritual lethargy that Shofar seeks to rouse us: uru yeshenim mi-shnatkhem, you who are ^{asleep,} ~~asleep~~, wake up!

At the root of our unawareness of all the opportunities for goodness lies our forgetfulness of the Source of goodness -- God Himself. There are not many people in our society whose hostility to religion is so open that it is of one piece with Pharoah's arrogant retort to Moses, lo yadati et Ha-Shem, "I do not know the Lord" (Exodus 5:2). Pharoah clearly did not want to know God. Moderns often tell themselves that they are religious -- yet remain guilty of the same basic attitude. When we confine God to one place called a synagogue or church, and act elsewhere as if He didn't exist -- that is not knowing God. When we assume His presence for one day a week or three days a year, and ignore Him the rest of the time, refusing to take God or His word, His Torah or His law into account in every single area of life without exception -- that is not knowing God. When we secularize our religious observance, so that it becomes merely one aspect of life amongst many others -- and then not necessarily the most important --- that is an expression of not wanting to know God. When the major religious activity on campus is circumscribed to a "Religious Emphasis Week," but the other ^{of} 51 weeks/college life smack more and more of pagan immorality -- so much so that one observer caustically dubbed this annual gesture to religion "Be Kind to God Week" --- that is a matter of choosing to be unaware of God, who demands man's heart and soul and strength, his total commitment, and is distinctly unimpressed by polite, respectful curtsies. Shofar summons us to allow religion and life to interpenetrate in a manner much more profound than

our current surface-religion, which has more face-value than faith-value.

9 But "to know" in a moral sense requires knowledge ~~in an intellectual sense~~ ^{as well}. And that, especially in Judaism, cannot be accomplished merely by willing it so. It requires ^{an} education in the Jewish tradition no less intensive than the general education our children receive. If the Holy Tongue remains strange to us, the Bible a closed book, the Talmud and Codes impenetrable secrets, the commentaries and ethical writings insoluble mysteries, then we cannot truly know God. "Indeed the Lord is in this place and I did not know."

But the unawareness of God and Godly opportunities is not the only insensitivity of which contemporary man is guilty. Linked with it is an agonizing indifference to his fellow man. It is, of course, not really a new problem. It is as old as man himself. After the murder of Abel by Cain, when God asks Cain where Abel is, and Cain answers lo yadati, ha-shomer ahi anokhi -- "I do not know; ~~is, and Cain answers with the famous or infamous~~ am I my brother's keeper?" ~~he prefaces this phrase with the words lo yadati, "I do not know."~~ When we shrug off responsibility for our brother, it is because we have chosen to ignore him. Not to want to know a brother is to repeat the crime of Cain.

This past year has seen a rash of ugly incidents in which apparently decent Americans have revealed a mean streak in our collective character. ~~during the year that is now ending,~~ In Queens, 38 people watched from the safety of their apartments while a young, innocent woman was slowly stabbed to death in the streets. Not one of these called the police --until it was too late. Lo yadati. In Albany, 4000 people raved like madmen and savagely encouraged a demented young man to leap to his death, hurling curses at him when he hesitated to entertain them with a dramatic suicide. The failure to know, to identify with another human being, exposed the murderer that lurks mysteriously within the hearts of even apparently mild men. In Atlantic City two people were drowning, whereupon those at the beach turned their heads away. In Brooklyn, hoodlums attacked a peaceful group of students, and adult passengers gaped from a passing bus without making any effort to protect the children from their pursuers. In New York City a woman was attacked in broad daylight, cried for help, and doors closed in her face. And so on and so on...

Cain rises again! Sodom resurrected!

The most surprising thing about all this is --- that we are still surprised by it. This cruel apathy, this cold indifference, this nefarious refusal to know our fellow men, is neither something out of antiquity nor something that suddenly cropped up this past year. It has, infact, been a major feature of our modern era. This is, let us not forget, the Age of Auschwitz, ~~there~~ when methodical slaughter decimated a continent and truncated a whole people. It is the age when the Nazis transformed the dignity of man into an unutterable obscenity; when the eyes of the German masses refused to see the cattle cars heading east with their cargo of emaciated human victims, when their ears refused to hear the cry for help, when their otherwise delicate noses refused to be offended by the stench of death. Ours is the era when ^{CITIZENS of WARSAW} ~~Poles~~ came out in their Sunday best to watch while the ~~Warsaw~~ Ghetto burned, and Ukrainians cheered while Jews were massacred at Babi Yar near Kiev. Shades of Cain! Lo yadati, ha-shomer ahi anokhi. "I do not know; I am not my brother's keeper?"

Yet this is not the only or even the natural condition of man. Not to care, not to know, is a disease, a distortion of the divine in man. Even during those sordid years of unspeakable tragedy when injustice became the norm and atrocities were regarded as commonplaces, there were cases of individuals who did seek out their fellow men, who shook off the lethargy of lo yadati, whose consciences were pricked by the message of the Shofar stirring them to break out of their primitive apathy, to relate to others, to be aware of them, to know and therefore to consider every man his brother's keeper. A most inspiring example is the conduct of so many Danes as related in the new book by Harold Flender, Rescue in Denmark. After reading for so long the depressing tale of man's monstrous madness, it is exhilarating to learn of his natural, spontaneous goodness and bravery. For instance: relating the unusual courage of a Danish ambulance driver in saving Jews at the risk of his own life, the author tells us that when the young Dane was later asked why he acted the way he did, he replied,

matter-of-factly, "What else could I do?" -- "a statement of refreshing contrast to what was said by so many Germans and other nationals who, when asked why they never lifted a finger to aid the Jews, replied, 'what could I do?'" Here is the ultimate difference between being aware and unaware. Remaining unaware, not wanting to know, not caring, enclosing yourself in a cocoon of callousness, leads to the conclusion -- so pitiful and contemptible -- "What could I do?" / Being sensitive to others, seeking them out, striving to know them in all their glorious variety and individuality, participating with them, leads to the glorious triumph of man over malice expressed as "what else could I do?"

Q Young people today whose visions are larger than a secure job, whose ambitions transcend the narrow limits of their own selfish interests, can find so many ways to involve themselves in the destiny of others and share the basic humanity that unites all men. ~~Particularly~~ ^{more than ever} Today there are so many exciting opportunities for selfless service in the advancement of mankind towards a nobler, loftier future. The Peace Corps allows us to draw closer to strange peoples all over the globe. The civil rights movement affords us the chance to extend the human fraternity to our own country, our own backyard, as well. The great new programs to combat poverty on an unprecedented scale open new vistas for those who do not want to be caught unawares of their fellow men. It is when we overlook such opportunities and remain unconcerned with man, created in the image of God, that -- as Jacob taught us -- we have much to fear. "For the Lord is in this place and I did not know it."

Whether it is God or man, or opportunities or responsibilities, we reach the fullness of our humanity when we increase our awareness and our desire to relate. We grow inhuman as we say lo yadati, I do not know, I am not interested. Even Jewish law reflects this view -- for Halakhah or Jewish Law so often expresses in legal terms concepts which are profoundly spiritual. The Talmud (B.M. 35a) offers a seemingly prosaic case of trusteeship: a man once entrusted some jewels ^(the friend raphael, "I do not know what I did with them.") to a friend. After a while, when he demanded the return of the gems, ^{The case,} was brought before the wise Rabbi Nachman, who declared: kol lo yadana peshiuta hi every argument of "I do not know" is to be considered a confession of guilt, ^{of} criminal

negligence. Therefore, zil shelim, go and pay.

Rabbi Nachman's decision is more than law; it is ethics and philosophy as well. For each of us is a trustee in whose hands God has placed many of His jewels. Our task in life is to be aware of these precious jewels at every trusteeship, if we should be negligent, if we should allow ourselves the moment and to guard them faithfully. But if we should fail in our dubious luxury of non-concern and non-involvement, so that when God, during these days of penitence and introspection, demands an accounting of us, all we can say is lo yadati, I don't know what I have done with them or how I have squandered them, then the verdict is unremitting and merciless: peshu'ta hi, zil shelim -- it is criminal negligence, go and pay!

There are indeed so many jewels the Almighty entrusts to us, and for which He demands an accounting. Children, for instance -- have we cherished them wisely, respecting the integrity of their own individuality without corrupting their sense of proportion with over-indulgence? Parents are another example: have we treated them like precious gems, bequeathed to us from the great past, repaying them in some measure for all they have lavished upon us? -- or do we become so involved in our own little worlds that we are unaware of them, of their special problems, especially the dull sense of emptiness which so often follows the end of an active career and in which their ^{heart} cries out for friendship and engagement? Our intellects are jewels entrusted to us, as are any special talents we may possess -- have we used them, or misused them? Leisure time is one of the great gifts of modern man: have we ⁿlearned to sanctify time, to exploit it to the advantage for the most people, or have we managed to "kill time" and nothing more? Rosh Hashanah is the season when God demands of each of us an accounting. Woe to the man or woman who can only say lo yadati -- I do not know, I did not care, I was unaware or unconcerned. Peshu'ta hi, zil shelim -- for this is criminal neglect, and for this one must pay -- in lost years, lost opportunities, lost possibilities, and, above all, a sleeping soul and a slumbering spirit. It is from this moral stupor that Shofar seeks to rouse us.

Ultimately, however, the awareness of God and His gifts, and people and their problems and hopes and dreams and destinies, depends upon man's awareness of -- himself. The Torah teaches: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" -- and unless a man learns to cherish his self, to know and appreciate the self God has given him, he cannot truly be said to love and cherish his neighbor.

By being aware of himself, we do not mean, of course, egotism or arrogance, not even the self-knowledge of the philosophers or the contemplation of the mystics or the insight of the psychoanalysts. We mean, quite simply, moral knowledge: the opportunity for a man to think quietly and serenely and in a sustained manner, without constant interruption, about his own life and values.

It is a sad reflection upon the nature of our times that the very suggestion seems eccentric, and the very idea of such introspection is almost unthinkable unless one is talking out his problems to a psychiatrist.

For speed is the hallmark of our civilization. Hurry and rush are characteristic not only of our technology, but also of our personal lives. Impatience and ~~busy-~~ ^{franticity} ~~ness~~ oppress us from all sides. "I have no time" is our stock-in-trade answer to every demand made upon us.

New Yorkers are especially subject to this malady -- and, in a somewhat lesser measure, so are all members of our society. We rush so through our daily chores, tyrannized by appointment book and telephone, that the sense of urgency pursues us into our leisure time and into our very homes, making it well nigh impossible to rest, to think, to enjoy our families and the fruit of all our labors, and above all: to know ourselves.

Perhaps we ought to accept a wise suggestion made by a group of Jewish pietists known as Bratzlaver Hasidim. They recommended that every day have at least one "dead hour." All our waking hours are full of "life" and nervous tension.

We attend to a myraid of details -- professional, business, social, domestic -- that clamor for our concern and care. Our minds are ablaze with so many external

relationships -- meeting bills, avoiding pitfalls, mollifying the offended, carrying out urgent plans. Our emotions become engaged, our sensitivities inflamed with real or imaginary hurts, our thoughts involved with a thousand disorganized matters.

But in all this preoccupation with others, and one's relationship with them, how about one's self? If I never commune with and get to know my own self, how shall I ever acquire the perspective wherewith to judge all my other activities and to discriminate between the trivial and the significant? How shall I ever truly know others?

Put aside one hour a day, then, as your "dead hour." During this time, be "dead to the world" -- and alive to yourself. Answer no calls, write no letters, talk to no one. Think leisurely of what really counts in your life. Assess the effects of the day on your inner life. Have I learned something from all this turmoil? Have I grown at all? Has my spiritual dimension been suppressed? Think of where you are going in life -- or where life is taking you; the difference is worth pondering.

If you are not the contemplative kind, then use the "dead hour" to read -- not newspaper or trade journals, but that which truly endures. Read the Biblical portion of the week, a commentary on the Prayerbook, devotional literature, anything that will lift you above the commonplace and the ordinary.

Set aside a "dead hour," and it will make the whole day, the whole year -- nay, all of life -- worth living. In this "dead hour" may lie the secret of a fuller life. Certainly, by getting to know yourself, you will want to know your fellow-man and the Creator of all men.

That indeed is how Shofar ought to bring us to our senses. By rousing us from the hypnotic spell of drowsy, dizzy busy=ness, and letting us learn to live with our selves on the highest plane, we shall learn too to relate to God and man.

For man is, as our Kabbalists were wont to say, the Shekhinah di-le'tata, the Divine Presence in miniature in this world; plumb the depths of man, and you will have an inkling of God too. And, at the same time, put your faith in God, and you will redeem your self.

When we will have undertaken this bold venture, we will be able to say, with the Psalmist, "I will fear no evil -- for Thou art with me."

For this New Year, let us each resolve to make his and her own self worth knowing, to reach outwards towards our fellow-men, and to reach upwards towards Almighty God, the Shepherd of all men.