

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Rosh Hashanah*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

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1660 45th St, Brooklyn NY 11204  
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# Torah Wellsprings - Rosh Hashanah

## Erev Rosh Hashanah

Erev Rosh Hashanah, just moments before Rosh Hashanah arrives, we say in Minchah, בָּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת, requesting that Hashem bless the year. There are just a few moments left in the year! What blessings can we hope to receive in this short period of time?

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zy'a* answers that we can't exist without Hashem's *brachos*, not even for a moment.

Someone once told Reb Shmuel Auerbach *zt'l* that his stock portfolio crashed on Erev Rosh Hashanah at three o'clock in the afternoon, and he lost a lot of money. We see that we need Hashem's blessings every moment.

And with Hashem's *brachos*, we can gain so much. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* asserted that one can earn a lot of money and attain other kinds of salvations, all on the final day of the year.

The Tur (581) writes, "The Ashkenaz (German) custom is to fast on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*. [In our times, many people fast until chatzos.] The Midrash Tanchuma states the significance of this fast: 'It can be compared to a country that owed taxes to a king, and the king came with his army to collect the debt. When the king was ten *parsaos* away, the country's leaders came out of the city to greet the king and explained that they couldn't afford to pay the large tax. The king agreed to forgive 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the debt. The king and his army continued

marching toward the country. The middle-class people came forward and cried to the king about their financial hardships, and the king agreed to relieve the country from another third of the debt. When the king got closer to the city, everyone came out to greet the king. At that point, the king forgave the final third of the debt.'

"The *nimshal* is that on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, *tzaddikim* fast, and Hashem pardons a third of our sins. During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the middle-level-Yidden fast, and Hashem pardons another third. On *Yom Kippur*, when everyone fasts, Hashem forgives the Jewish people entirely."

Erev Rosh Hashanah is a day for *tefillah*. The *Arugas Habosem* *zt'l* says that at the beginning of *Elul*, the *yetzer hara* says, "You still have a lot of time. You can daven later." And at the end of *Elul*, the *yetzer hara* says, "It is too late. You didn't daven until now, and you will begin now?" But it isn't never too late, and we can accomplish so much, even in the last few moments of the year.

*Tzaddikim* say that the final *Minchah* of the year rectifies all the *tefillos* of the year which weren't said with proper *kavanah*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Kol Bo* teaches:

On *Rosh Hashanah*, when the Satan recounts our sins, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* replies, "We can't believe you without proof. Bring two witnesses who will provide testimony." The Satan calls for the sun to testify that the *Yidden* transgressed the *mitzvos* of the Torah, and the sun agrees to

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1. Rebbe Sholom Shachna of Prebishta *zt'l* (father of the *Ruzhiner* *zt'l*) was in Chernobyl for *Rosh Hashanah*. He tried hard to daven *minchah* with *kavanah* but couldn't focus properly. Afterwards, his wife's grandfather, the *Meor Einayim*, told him that his *Minchah* was special and that it opened up the gates of heaven.

This is because he tried to daven with *kavanah*. This story reminds us that matters aren't always as we see them. We don't know what is valuable in heaven; all we can do is try our best.

come. The Satan then invites the moon to be the second witness, but the moon doesn't want to speak against the Jewish nation. The moon goes into hiding, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), בכסה ליום חגינו, the moon is concealed on Rosh Hashanah. It hides because it doesn't want to testify against the Jewish nation. And, without two witnesses to testify against us, we are acquitted.

The Noda b'Yehudah (*Tzlach, drush* 1:6-8) asks that the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 66) states that one witness is sufficient to testify that someone has an obvious מום, blemish. In that case, the sun can testify alone that the Jewish nation sinned with their eyes and ears, etc., and they have become בעלי מומים, blemished people (when one sins with his eyes, it's as though he is blind, and when one sins with his ears, it is as though he is deaf).

The Noda b'Yehudah concludes: The solution is *teshuvah*. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:12), והיה לפניך ערב, on erev Rosh Hashanah, ירחץ במים, rinse yourself with tears, וכבוא השמש, and then, when the sun comes to testify, his testimony won't be accepted, for even if one didn't yet complete the Teshuvah process, the tears will wash away the blemish. And then, יבוא אל תוך המחנה, you will be permitted to return to the camp, for you will be acquitted.

### Joy on Rosh Hashanah

Erev Rosh Hashanah, we don't say tachanun by Shacharis. The Avodas Yisrael (*Netzavim*) says that this hints that one shouldn't fall on his face from fear on Rosh Hashanah. The atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah should be one of joy mixed with fear. He writes, "Teshuvah must be performed with joy. One must have bitachon that Hashem won't abandon His nation. We don't say tachanun on erev Rosh Hashanah. Perhaps this shows that we don't need to fall

on our faces. Rather, we should stand before Hashem with love and joy."

The Tur (581) states, "The way of the world is that on a day of judgment, a person dresses in dark clothes, doesn't shave, and doesn't cut his fingernails because he doesn't know what the outcome of the judgment will be. But the Jewish nation doesn't do so. They dress in white and cut their nails [on erev Rosh Hashanah]; they eat, drink, and are happy on Rosh Hashanah because they are certain that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will perform miracles for them. Therefore, the custom is to take a haircut, launder clothing, and prepare good foods in honor of Rosh Hashanah."

Rosh Hashanah is a day of conflicting emotions because we experience fear and joy on this day. We stand in judgment, so we are afraid, but we are also happy and confident that Hashem will find a way to acquit us and grant us a good year.

Shulchan Aruch (597:1) states, "We eat, drink, and are happy, and we don't fast on Rosh Hashanah. However, one shouldn't eat until he is entirely full so that he won't have קלות ראש, lightheadedness on Rosh Hashanah, and he will have fear of Hashem on his face." This perfectly expresses the spirit of the day. We are happy, but not lightheaded, chalilah. Fear of heaven should always be on our faces.

The Mishnah Berurah explains, "Although Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment, nevertheless, the mitzvah בשמחה בהגך, to be happy on yom tov, applies to Rosh Hashanah, too, because Rosh Hashanah is called chag, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4) בכסה ליום חגנו, and it states in *Nehemiah* (8:10, regarding Rosh Hashanah) אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים... כי קדוש היום 'Go, eat fat foods and drink sweet drinks...for the day is holy to Hashem. Do not be sad, for the joy...is your strength.'<sup>2</sup>

2. The Avodas Yisrael zt'l (*Netzavim*) writes in the name of the Magid of Mezritch zt'l, "The tzaddikim, although they are very afraid, they trust in Hashem's salvation and kindness, and are determined to return

It states (Tehilim 96:11-13) ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ, "The heavens will rejoice, and the earth will exult...before Hashem for He has come to judge the earth." The Meiri (Chibur haTeshuvah 2:7) proves from this pasuk that we must be happy on Rosh Hashanah because Hashem judges the earth on this day, and we merit to be in His presence.

The Chinuch (311) writes, "Hashem performs kindness with His creations and reviews their deeds one day each year [on Rosh Hashanah] before their sins become too many. Their sins are still few, so Hashem forgives them. If He would only review their deeds once in a very long time, their sins would be many, and the world might be destroyed, *chalilah*. So, Rosh Hashanah is a very special day. The world's existence is dependent on this day. Therefore, it is proper to make this day a yom tov. It is among the special yomim tovim of the year."

As is known, Hashem's name הוי"ה can be spelled twelve ways, corresponding to the twelve months. Each month corresponds to another formation of Hashem's name הוי"ה. The formation for Tishrei is ויהי"ה. The Magen

Avraham (of Trisk) *zt'l* explains that this is because Chazal teach us that ויהי"ה represents joy, and we are supposed to be happy this month. Our happiness isn't limited to Succos but begins on Rosh Hashanah, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and Yom Kippur.

The Siforno (*Vayikra* 23:24) writes, "Although on this day, Hashem sits on His throne of judgment, it is proper that we rejoice because He is our King, and He will seek to do kindness and judge us favorably. As it states, 'כי ה' שופטנו ה' מהחוקקנו ה' מלכנו הוא יושענו', Hashem is our judge, Hashem is our King, and He will help us."<sup>3</sup>

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*) writes, "Rosh Hashanah is an awesome and fearful day. It is a day of judgment for the entire world. However, it isn't a sad day. It is a joyous day, the joy of teshuvah, ahavah, and deveikus..."<sup>4</sup>

It is appropriate to shed tears on Rosh Hashanah, but those tears should result from profound joy. The Chasam Sofer says that (Tehillim 89:17) בשמך יגילון כל היום, "With Your name they rejoice every day," is *roshei teivos*, בכי"ה, crying, because these are the tears of joy.

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to Hashem. Although their thoughts remind them of their aveiros, an indication of a kitrug in heaven, tzaddikim steer their thoughts away from their aveiros to think about teshuvah, to leave the aveiros from now on. They accept the yoke of heaven and trust in Hashem's immense kindness."

The Sma'k writes that we wear white clothing, which resembles tachrichim so that the joy of Rosh Hashanah should be in the spirit appropriate for the awesome day of Rosh Hashanah.

3. Reb Moshe Chaim of Slonim *zt'l* tell people who were excessively afraid of the Yomim Norai'm, "It isn't a band of thieves who are seated in the court, up in heaven. It is our Father in heaven, and we can trust He will save His children."

There was a *bachur* who was very afraid of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah. The Chazon Ish *zt'l* asked the *bachur*, "Why don't we say Tashlich when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos?"

The *bachur* repeated the reason written in the *Mishnah Berurah* (583:8). It is because people carry their *machzorim* to *Tashlich*, and on Shabbos, one isn't permitted to carry.

The Chazon Ish told the *bachur*, "For you, the problem isn't only carrying the *machzor*. For you, it is also that you are carrying your sins. Because I see you're carrying a heavy burden on your shoulders."

In this witty way, the Chazon Ish taught this *bachur* the proper attitude for Rosh Hashanah.

4. Sadness attracts strict judgment on oneself. Therefore, according to the Chasam Sofer, it is important to be happy on Rosh Hashanah, and then we will be judged with compassion and mercy.

Indeed, Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l said that when one is happy, he is able to cry whenever he wants to.

The Maharil writes that the first day of Rosh Hashanah is דינא קשיא, severe *dinim*. The second day is דינא רפיא, a softer judgment.

The Shaul u'Meishiv (מהדורה רביעא ח"ג קכ"ה) disagrees. He writes, "This idea that the first day is דינא קשיא, is difficult to understand because there are proofs that it isn't a harsh day, at all. The halachah is that we say *shehechyanu* on this day. We wouldn't say *shehechyanu* if it weren't a day of joy.<sup>5</sup> (We don't say *shehechyanu* during *sefiras ha'omer* because there is no joy due to the churban Beis HaMikdash.) If the first day was a sad day, a day of *dinim*, we wouldn't say *shehechyanu*. Therefore, it isn't דינא קשיא. It's a day when Hashem forgives our sins; it is a holy day. On this day, the *imahos* were remembered [to bear children], and all goodness and holy bounty comes from this day."

The Chinuch (311) writes, "Despite our joy, it is a day of judgment, so it is appropriate that we be afraid. This is why we don't say *Hallel* on this holiday. It isn't proper to sing *Hallel* while standing in judgment."

The Mishnah Berurah (584:1) writes, "We don't say *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah because the books of life and death are opened, so how can we sing? Although we are certain we will be acquitted and found innocent in the judgment, one must be afraid because of the awe of the judgment. In the merit of his

fear, he will be remembered [for a good year]."

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos Rosh Hashanah* 4) writes, "*Hallel* isn't said on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because they are days of avodah, humility, fear, and awe of Hashem. They are days to escape and to run to Hashem, days for *teshuvah*, tefillos, requests, and forgiveness. Therefore, *Hallel* and joy aren't appropriate on these days."<sup>6</sup>

Notice that the Rambam refers to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as days of fear and days "to escape and run to Hashem." Unlike most fears that cause people to run away from their fear, the fear of Rosh Hashanah draws people closer to Hashem.

As we say in *Selichos*, אתנסה מחמתך בצילך, "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This is the uniqueness of the fear of Hashem. It draws us closer.

Reb Bunim of Peshischa zt'l writes in a letter, "During these days, joy is concealed in fear. May Hashem grant us that it should be both, together."

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Brachos* 21.) writes, "Although, for humans, joy and fear are opposites, by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, they aren't. In fact, fear increases joy."

So, too, on Rosh Hashanah, we are afraid, yet we are joyous. In avodas Hashem, these two emotions aren't contradictory.

The blast of the shofar expresses fear and joy, the two emotions of the day. The *tekiyah* is a sound of joy, while *shevarim* and *truah*

5. According to the Raavad, one doesn't recite שהחיינו on the shofar because of the fear of the judgment.

Shulchan Aruch (584:2) states that it is customary that the person who blows the shofar gets an *aliyah*. The Levush explains, פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב, Torah makes people happy, and thereby, he will be able to blow the shofar with joy.

6. The Chasam Sofer taught another reason why we don't say *Hallel*. He explains that it is known that our ancestors join us in our *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is written, לא המתים יהללו י-ה, "the dead don't say *Hallel*"; therefore, we don't say *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Meiri (Rosh Hashanah 16.) writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is for the living and the dead, whether the future will be one of pleasure or distress, wealth or loss."

are the sounds of a broken heart. So, the shofar is the fusion of fear and joy.

Yitzchak Avinu represents fear of Heaven, which is why he is often referred to as *Pachad Yitzchok*, the fear of Yitzchak. Yet Yitzchak also means laughter, and happiness. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* writes, "It is possible he was called Yitzchak because his face shone with happiness, for there is no one happier than the person who truly fears Hashem and doesn't have any other fear."

### Meeting the King

At the beginning of *sefer BaMidbar*, Hashem instructs Moshe and Aharon to count the Jewish people. The Ramban (*BaMidbar* 1:45) writes that this was to give the Jewish people the opportunity to stand before Moshe and Aharon. The Ramban writes, "When one comes before the greatest *navi* [Moshe] and before his brother who was sanctified by Hashem [Aharon] and tells them his name, this is a merit for him, and it grants him life because he is being counted together with the Jewish nation. Moshe and Aharon will look at them with a good eye and pray for them."

Certainly, to be in Hashem's presence is a blessing, resulting in spiritual and material success. This occurs on Rosh Hashanah because Chazal tell us that on Rosh Hashanah, each person passes before Hashem, one by one.

To explain the joy, we repeat a true story that the Pnei Menachem *zt'l* related:

An admirer of the president of the United States heard that the president was visiting his neighborhood. He immediately jumped into his car, passed several red lights, and committed several other driving violations in his haste to get to the president. Many roadblocks and bodyguards were stationed to prevent people like him from reaching the president, but he managed to jump over them and catch a few words with the president. In a matter of minutes, the police

pounced on him, and he was arrested and sent to jail, but he said that it was all worthwhile for the few moments he spoke to the president.

This story helps us understand our joy on Rosh Hashanah. We stand before Hashem, and that is our greatest joy.

As the Berditchever Rav *zt'l* once said, "We say on Rosh Hashanah in the Unesaneh Tokef, *מי יחיה ומי ימות*, 'Who will live, and who will die...' All this is decided on Rosh Hashanah, but I don't care as long as You think about us."

To be at the forefront of Hashem's thoughts is our greatest privilege.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Radomsk *zt'l* (grandson of the Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l*) said, "Throughout the year, there is a curtain that separates Bnei Yisrael from their father in heaven, but on Rosh Hashanah, there is no separation." That is the joy of Rosh Hashanah.

Chazal tell us that on Rosh Hashanah, every Yid passes before Hashem *כבני מרון*, like sheep that pass through a gate, one by one. The Sfas Emes (5639) writes, "Although they know that Hashem is judging them, nevertheless, every Yid understands that it is a great merit to be remembered by Hashem. They consider it worthwhile to be judged by Him just so that Hashem will think about them. And in the merit that they feel privileged that Hashem thinks of them, Hashem remembers all the good they do, and Hashem leaves His throne of justice and sits on His throne of compassion. They deserve this because they understand that the greatest good they can receive from Hashem is that Hashem should think about them."

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we repeat the word *ובכן* in *shemoneh esrei* numerous times. The Abudurham explains that the word comes from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 4:16) *ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת*, "And then I will go to the king..." because, on Rosh

Hashanah, we come before the King, Hashem.<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect of the joy of Rosh Hashanah is that we, the Jewish people, were chosen to appoint Hashem king over the world. Reb Sadya Gaon says that this is one of the reasons we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah because it used to be the custom to blow horns at the inauguration of a king.

When we think about how simple and low we are, we understand the great joy. It can be compared to appointing a janitor to be the one to place the crown on the king's head. How happy he would be!

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz zt'l says that the roshei teivos of זכרונות שופרות spell שמ"ז. Add one more (the kollel), and it is שמ"ח. Our great joy on Rosh Hashanah is that we proclaim and appoint Hashem king.

### **Simanim**

One of the reasons it is important to be happy on Rosh Hashanah is because it is a good omen, a good siman, for the new year.

On Rosh Hashanah night, we eat simanim, such as an apple dipped in honey, and we daven for a good, sweet year.

The origin of this custom is the Gemara (*Krisus* 6), which states, סימנא מילתא הוא, signs have significance.

*Eliyahu Rabba* (quoted in *Mishnah Berurah*) writes, "The Shlah teaches that these signs remind the person to rouse himself to *teshuvah* and to daven for these matters."

Reb Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas Shlomo*) writes, "Eating these foods isn't a tefillah.

Eating is never a tefillah. Rather, we eat these foods to illustrate our trust that Hashem will give us a good year...and we say on them [that it should be a good year], so if *chas veshalom* there was a harsh decree, it will be turned over for good by our words. Amen, so shall be His will."

Words are powerful. Say it will be a sweet year is like a prophecy, which has the power to be fulfilled.

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, "On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד, 'Everything Hashem does is for the good.' וגם זו לטובה 'And this is also for the good.' Such words turn things over that everything will indeed be good."

The ultimate *siman* is to be happy on Rosh Hashanah. The Mishnah Berurah writes, "We do *simanim* as a good omen. Therefore, it's obvious that one must be cautious not to become angry on these days. In addition to the severe sin, one must make a good sign for the new year. He should be happy and trust in Hashem."

People in Yerushalayim would say, "If an apple dipped in honey is a sign for a sweet year, certainly, if a person is a 'sweet Yid,' by keeping a smile on his face and by greeting others warmly, what better omen can there be for a sweet new year?"

The Nesivos Shalom *zy'a* told the following story:

Rosh Hashanah night, in the home of a certain tzaddik, everything was going wrong. The *becher* filled for Kiddush spilled over the table before Kiddush. When he was cutting challah, the challah slipped from his hand and fell onto the floor.

7. Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l explains that the main lesson of the pasuk is ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת, "and then I will go to the king, which isn't proper." The pasuk refers to sinners who may be unworthy of coming to the King. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they can come to the King, and Hashem accepts their tefillos.

As we say in the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah, ומשוה קטן וגדול, "Hashem acts equally towards the small and the great people."

His rebbetzin didn't serve fish that night because it had burnt. She said, "I'm afraid that these are bad *simanim*. So many negative things are happening."

Her husband replied, "The main *siman* is a happy disposition. We eat meat and sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah because these foods make us happy, and happiness is a good omen for the upcoming year. Baruch Hashem, despite everything, we are happy. So, we have an excellent omen for the coming year."<sup>8</sup>

The great mekubal, Reb Yehudah Psayah zt'l sat at the head of his table on Rosh Hashanah night, dressed in white clothing, surrounded by guests. All went well until one of the guests moved the table, and the candles fell and blew out. It was now dark in the room. Reb Yehudah Psayah clapped his hands joyously and said, "It is all good. It is going to be a good year." But because it was dark, when his Rebbetzin came in with a large tray of fish, she slipped, and the tray dropped, sending fish and sauce across the floor. Reb Yehudah once again didn't allow this to ruin his mood. He stood up and went over to his wife to help her up. Without warning, he slipped on the fish sauce and fell to the ground, and now his once-white clothing was covered in fish sauce. Even

then, Reb Yehudah remained in happy spirits. He clapped his hands together and said that everything was wonderful.

And what was the outcome of all these negative *simanim*? He later said that he never had such a wonderful year. He found success wherever he put his hand; he created many *chidushei Torah* and had divine spiritual revelations. Because the most important *siman* is happiness, stemming from *bitachon* that Hashem will grant us a good year.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 18) relates a story of a poor chassid who gave *tzedakah* to another needy person on *erev* Rosh Hashanah during a famine. His wife was upset at him for giving away money they needed to *tzedakah*, so he spent that night in the cemetery.<sup>9</sup> In the graveyard, he overheard a conversation between two *neshamos*. One said, 'My friend, let's float around the world and listen in from behind the curtain [of heaven] to know which punishments are decreed for the coming year.'<sup>10</sup>

The second soul answered that she couldn't leave her grave because she was buried in a mat of reeds.

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8. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l explains that we don't eat sour foods on Rosh Hashanah to avoid making a sour face on Rosh Hashanah. We don't want to show a bitter face on Rosh Hashanah, for it will *chas veshalom* set an example for bitterness throughout the year.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer zt'l compared Rosh Hashanah to an architect who drew a blueprint for a beautiful building. Each mark of the pencil corresponds to something bigger. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint for the year. Therefore, we shouldn't frown on Rosh Hashanah. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l also said that one should utilize every moment of Rosh Hashanah because each moment becomes part of the blueprint for the coming year.

Someone told Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonimer zt'l that he didn't have enough money to buy a head of a fish, so he bought and ate the tail.

Reb Mordechai Chaim told him, "Did you at least say, 'May it be the *קץ*, end, of all our suffering.'" (In Yiddish, a tail is called *קץ*, ek, end.)

9. The *Iyun Yaakov* explains, "It seems to me that the chassid chose to sleep in the cemetery because he was afraid that if he remained at home, he might quarrel with his wife on Rosh Hashanah. He also didn't go to someone else's house to protect his wife's honor. He preferred to sleep in the cemetery so that no one would know about the fight.

So, the first soul went alone. When she returned, she told her friend, "Heaven decreed that all crops planted by the first rains of the season will be ruined by hail."<sup>10</sup>

The chassid, having overheard their conversation, planted his field by the second rain. Everyone's crop was destroyed in the hail that year except for his.<sup>11</sup>

The following year, on Rosh Hashanah night, he returned to the cemetery and heard the two souls conversing again. Once again, one of them asked her friend to float around the world to overhear the heaven decrees, and the other replied that she couldn't because she was buried in a mat of reeds. So, one soul traveled alone, and when she returned, she said that she heard that this year, the crops planted at the second rain will be destroyed by a disease called *shidafon*."

That year, everyone planted by the second rain (because they remember from the previous year that only the chassid's crops, planted at the second rain, survived). But a disease destroyed all the crops planted that year at the second rain. The chassid planted by the first rain, and his crops flourished.

When we think about this Gemara, we understand that the chassid had terrible *simanim* on Rosh Hashanah. We can't imagine worse *simanim*! His wife was angry at him, and he ended up sleeping in a cemetery! But despite the ominous signs, he became wealthy two years in a row! This is because the person's disposition and mood are even more important than the foods he eats. This chassid remained happy despite trying circumstances, and his happiness brought him success.

### The Awesome Judgment

We elaborated on the joy of Rosh Hashanah, and now it is time to discuss the balance, the immense fear that we have on Rosh Hashanah.

The Beis Aharon (*Netzavim*) writes, "The main thing is [that on Rosh Hashanah] everyone should draw fear to themselves. Either *yirah iloyah*, divine fear [the fear that stems from perceiving Hashem's greatness], or, if he isn't on this level, he should be afraid of the judgment. The main thing is that everyone must be afraid, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do *tzedakah* with us."<sup>12</sup>

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**10.** The crops of the first rain will be tall and strong, and they will break from the hail. The crops planted by the second rain will still be soft and flexible at the time of the storm, and the hail won't harm them.

**11.** The *Iyun Yaakov* writes, "In the merit of *tzedakah* [that he gave to the poor] he was rewarded, because he heard the spirits, and he knew when to plant..."

**12.** The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (Stolin) instructed two of his *chassidim* to study the section of *Reishis Chachmah* (*Shaar HaGehinom*) that describes the punishments of Gehinom. He told them to return in three months to report what they had studied.

Three months later, they returned, and the Beis Aharon asked one of them what he had learned. The chassid replied, "It was extremely frightening. *Reishis Chachmah* describes Gehinom in detail. I tremble just thinking about the great punishments that are in store for each *aveirah*."

The Rebbe replied, "You don't need to worry. We have a compassionate Father, and when we do *teshuvah*, Hashem forgives us."

Then the Rebbe asked the other chassid to repeat what he learned in *Reishis Chachmah*. He calmly repeated the ideas. It was evident that he wasn't afraid.

The Rebbe told him, "You must know this is only a *mashal*. Gehinom is far more severe than that."

A third chassid was present, and he asked the Rebbe, "Should one be afraid of Gehinom, or shouldn't he

The Baal HaTurim (Netzavim ד"ה את לבבך) writes, "From Elul on I am afraid before Hashem."

The Shlah Hakadosh (beginning of Rosh Hashanah) discusses the pasuk (Amos 3:8) אריה ארצה, "שאג מי לא יירא", "A lion has roared; who will not fear?" He expresses that the letters אריה stand for ארצה, ראש השנה, יום כיפור, הושענא רבה. On these days, who isn't afraid of Hashem's judgment?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaar HaYirah 101) writes, "From the beginning of Elul until Yom Kippur, one should be afraid and tremble from the fearsome judgment."

It states (Tehillim 119:120) סמור מפחדך בשרי, "וממשפטך יראתי", "My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I fear Your judgment." These words are gematriya 2090, the same as ארצה, ראש השנה, יום כיפור, נעילה, הושענא רבה.

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l told a bachur who did a very great aveirah, "How could you have not been afraid of the moments before tekiyas shofar?" The realization that he would be listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah should have filled him with fear of doing an aveirah.

A mashal is told in the name of Reb Chaim of Brisk zt'l:

A person planning to smuggle merchandise across a border can't sleep for nights because he fears getting caught. The wagon driver hired for this mission isn't as afraid because it isn't his merchandise. But when he approaches the border, he is also scared. There is one who isn't afraid at all,

and that is the horse. We say (Tehillim 32:9) אל תהיו כסוס כפרד, "Don't be like a horse, like a mule..." We shouldn't be like animals who have no fear at all. We are nearing the days of judgment; our baggage will be inspected, and it is appropriate to be afraid.

Once, Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt'l visited the beis din in Yerushalayim. The members of the court asked him whether he was involved in a dispute or some other case, and he replied that he was not. "So why did you come here?"

He replied, "I wanted to see how people act when judged. I saw some people saying Tehillim with much kavanah while waiting for their turn to come before the beis din, and I also saw others emotionally pleading their case before the beis din with all their strength. I thought to myself, "What is at stake here? Only money. On Rosh Hashanah, our very lives are on the line! Yet, it is Elul, and I see that everyone is calm and tranquil, and no one is worried."

The Tur (581) writes that people generally wear black clothing when tried in court because they fear they might be found guilty. The Jewish nation wears white clothing because they trust Hashem will perform a miracle for them and save them. The miforshim ask that they should wear colorful clothing.

The miforshim answer: Wearing decorated clothing doesn't demonstrate trust in Hashem because perhaps he isn't afraid of judgment. Maybe he doesn't believe he is being judged, so he is so calm and relaxed.

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be? You gave conflicting messages to your chasidim, and I don't know what to think."

The Rebbe replied, "If a person is afraid of Gehinom, he has nothing to fear. But if he isn't afraid, he has much to be afraid of."

Similarly, regarding the judgment of Rosh Hashanah, if we are afraid, we have nothing to fear. But if we aren't scared, we have a lot to fear.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu states, "יראתי מתוך שמחתו ושמחתו מתוך יראתי", "I was afraid amid my joy, and I was joyous in the midst of my fear." We can explain that if one is afraid, he certainly has reason to be happy because the fear is a segulah for a good judgment.



He replied, "I laugh at these matters. My yerid (market day) is Rosh Hashanah!"

The Beis Avraham zt'l repeated this story many times. Reb Yosef Weinberg correctly understood that what happens in the middle of the year isn't when it truly occurs. Everything is determined on Rosh Hashanah.

Fishermen cast a large net into the sea, and fish came and ate the bait, then stayed there for a while. Eventually, the fishermen raised the net out of the water, together with the caught fish. One fish told its friend, "We were foolish for spending so much time there. We should have taken the bait and left immediately."

The other fish replied, "After we took the bait, we were already in the trap."

The nimshal is that throughout the year, disappointing things occur, and people often say, "Had I been more careful, this wouldn't have happened." But those with emunah know that it didn't occur now. It was destined and decreed on Rosh Hashanah.

### A Concealed Holiday

We discussed the fear of Rosh Hashanah and that Rosh Hashanah determines what will be in the year. We now take this a step further to explain the pasuk, which refers to Rosh Hashanah as (*Tehillim* 81:4), בַּנְסָה לַיּוֹם הַגָּנוּ, "a concealed holiday." The Chofetz Chaim explains that it is called a concealed holiday because the results of the awesome judgment are concealed from us until they happen.

In Radin, before tekiyas shofar, there was a break (as there is in many batei midrashim). Some said Tehillim, some studied mussar, and almost everyone prepared themselves for the upcoming holy mitzvah. However, some bachurim took advantage of the break to see what was happening in other batei midrashim in Radin. They wanted to see how many people attended each beis medresh, who were the chazanim, and other trivial matters.

The Chofetz Chaim heard about this, and before tekiyas shofar, he spoke. He told a story that happened when he was young. The mother of a bachur of the yeshiva was niftar, and no one knew how to break this news to the bachur.

The father sent a telegram advising that they buy a new suit for the bachur, and in one of the pockets, they should place a note informing the bachur what happened to his mother.

The bachur was very happy with his new suit. He wore it proudly but didn't know what was in the pocket.

The Chofetz Chaim said that this is the meaning of בַּנְסָה לַיּוֹם הַגָּנוּ; there is a message concealed in the yom tov. We are happy, light, and cheery but don't know what is approaching and concealed.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18.) states, "On Rosh Hashanah, everyone goes before Hashem like בְּנֵי מְרוֹן. The gemara asks, "What does bnei maron mean?"

"Here, in Bavel, we say that it means בְּנֵי אֵמְרָנָא, like sheep." This refers to sheep who pass one by one through a narrow gate for maasar. Every tenth animal is hit with red dye to indicate that this animal is maasar, and it will be brought as a korban.

Now, the sheep are all playing together, frolicking in the pasture. If the one with the red dye knew what it meant (that he would soon be slaughtered), he wouldn't be so happy.

Similarly, people are happy, but what is concealed? What is the decree? That is hidden from us.

One of my grandfathers, Reb HersHKovitz zt'l, told a mashal of a person who was niftar. The chevrah kadisha placed his body on the floor of a beis medresh and covered it with a talis. The niftar had a young son, and the boy was playing in the beis medresh, and he began playing with the strings of the talis.

Someone told him, "If you knew what was hidden underneath, you wouldn't play with this talis." This is the meaning of בכסה בליום הגנו; something is concealed.

But everything can be overturned with teshuvah, tzedakah, and tefillah.

The Navi (*Shoftim* 5:1) writes, ותשר דבורה וברק, "Devorah and Barak sang on that day..." They praised Hashem that they won the war against Sisra.

In this song, they said (5:28), בעד החלון נשקפה, ותיבב אם סיסרא... מדוע בושש רכבו לבוא, מדוע אחרו מרכבותיו, "Sisra's mother looked out of the window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he delayed?"<sup>14</sup>

Why was Sisra's mother so worried? Sisra was a mighty warrior, and he won every war he fought. She should have assumed he would certainly win this war, too. Apparently, she thought, "True, he won every war until now, but maybe this time will be different."

Indeed, the past doesn't guarantee the future. And this is the fear of Rosh Hashanah.

So, although we are obligated to be happy on Rosh Hashanah, have positive thoughts, and trust that Hashem will grant us a good year, we also need fear to grasp the severity of the judgment. The fusion of both emotions is *mesugal* for attaining a good year.

### Another Reason for Joy on Rosh Hashanah

The fact that we don't know the future is also a reason to be happy on Rosh Hashanah because it is possible that it was decreed that all poverty, illness, and suffering of the past should disappear and that better times are approaching.

And that should be our primary focus because it is important to think positively on

Rosh Hashanah. Trust in Hashem and believe that Hashem has written very good decrees for you, which you will witness throughout the year.

We read the tochachah of parashas Ki Savo two weeks before Rosh Hashanah. Chazal explain that this is because we want the year with its curses to end (תכלה שנה וקללותיה) and a new year with its blessings to begin.

Also, before Maariv of Rosh Hashanah, we say the short prayer אהות קמנה. Its theme is once again that the curses of last year should end, and a new year with its blessings should begin (תחל שנה וברכותיה).

It is a new year, and everything can turn around for the better. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 54:) says that seven things are concealed from all people, and one of them is יום הנחמה, the day when all one's tzaros and worries will go away. Perhaps it will happen this year? Everything is decreed on Rosh Hashanah. This is the day that everything can turn around and become better.

In the *yotzros* of Rosh Hashanah, we say זכר לה יושב מערכות עובר להמיר בבטן אחות, "The One Who sits in heaven remembered her; a fetus to exchange in the womb of the sister."

This refers to when Leah davened that the child in her womb should become a female, and Hashem accepted her tefillos, and she gave birth to Dinah (see *Brachos* 60a; *Rashi Bereishis* 30:21).

However, we wonder, why do we say this on Rosh Hashanah?

Perhaps it is because it is a story of a miraculous turnaround. A son in the womb miraculously became a daughter. And that is the story of Rosh Hashanah. It is a new year, and brand-new things can occur. The

<sup>14</sup> Several laws of shofar are learned from this *pasuk* because the Navi calls her cries תיבב, and Onkelos translates the word תרועה as יבבא. This tells us that a shofar should sound like someone crying.

The Midrash states that Sisra's mother shed one hundred tears. This is the origin of our custom of blowing the shofar one hundred times on Rosh Hashanah.

reality of the past can turn over, and everything can become good.

The Imrei Emes of Gur *zt'l* said, "Yosef left prison on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, everyone can be freed from his own imprisonment, whatever it may be, on Rosh Hashanah."

Rebbe Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.2 *drush* 5) writes, "We say היום הרת עולם, 'The world *is* created today.' We don't say היום היה הרת עולם, 'The world *was* created today.' Similarly, we say זה היום תחילת מעשיך, 'This is the day, the beginning of creation,' and we don't say היה תחילת מעשיך, 'it was the beginning of creation.' Because every Rosh Hashanah, the world is created again. The Arizal elaborates on this.<sup>15</sup> And since it is a new world, we can expect a better world where the troubles of the past are gone.

On Pesach, we say in shemonah esrei זמן חרותנו, on Succos we say זמן שמחתנו, but on Rosh Hashanah, we don't say זמן בריאת העולם - the time of the creation of the world. This is because Rosh Hashanah is not a commemoration of the past. It is happening now. It is a brand new world, a better world, with more blessings and yeshuos.

Hashem blew life into Adam's nostrils, as it states (*Bereishis* 2:7), ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, "And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life." The Baal HaTanya says that this occurs every year by *tekiyas shofar*. Man becomes created again; he is a new person.

And since the person is new and the world is new, new things can happen. Better things can happen, and that is a reason to celebrate.

## Tefillah

Tefillos are always powerful, but tefillos said at the beginning of the year are particularly powerful.

It states (*Iyov* 22:28), ותגזר אומר ויקם לך, "You will decree, and it will occur." A Yid requests and Hashem grants his wishes. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 106., *Rashi*) teaches that this *pasuk* refers especially to tefillos said at the beginning of the year. Whatever you ask for at the beginning of the year is given to you.

The Gemara discussed a hired worker who didn't listen to his employer. He was instructed to plant wheat kernels but planted barley instead.

There was a flood that year; a river overflowed, and all the crops of his field (and other people's fields) were destroyed.

The hired worker claims that although he didn't follow instructions, he didn't cause any harm. Even if he had planted wheat kernels, the flood would destroy the crop.

However, the Gemara rules that he must pay for the damages. *Rashi* explains that the field owner can tell him, "Had you planted wheat kernels, it would have grown. At the beginning of the year, I prayed that my wheat crop should succeed. I didn't daven for a barley crop."

The Gemara holds the worker responsible for the loss because if he had planted wheat, a miracle would have occurred, and the crops would have been spared.

It is known that when it comes to money matters, the rule is המוציא מחבירו עליו הראיה, that

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15. Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* says that the awareness that the world was created today can save us in judgment. He writes:

"We have a valid argument [in the judgment] because we are like newborn children; therefore, we cannot be held responsible for our sins. The Midrash says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu acquitted Adam because of this logic. Hashem said, 'He is just a child. He was born today. He isn't so guilty for his sin and doesn't deserve to die.' The same can be said about us. On Rosh Hashanah, we are like children, born just today. Therefore, we say היום הרת עולם אם כבנים רחמנו, that the world was just created, so Hashem should have compassion on us."

to obligate someone to pay, you have to be sure that he owes the money. You can't obligate someone due to a "maybe." So, it seems that we are certain that the wheat crops would have grown due to the field owner's tefillos.

This Gemara shows the incredible power of tefillos, especially those said at the beginning of the year.

The Aruch L'Ner adds that tefillos said throughout the year are generally answered, but sometimes they aren't. But tefillos at the beginning of the year are always answered.<sup>16</sup>

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* wouldn't listen to *shidduchim* for his children unless he davened for their *shidduch* during the *yamim noraim*. Once, a *shidduch* was suggested for one of his children, and he

was pressured to look into it. He didn't want to consider it because he hadn't prayed for that child's *shidduch* on Rosh Hashanah. But due to the pressure, he proceeded with the *shidduch*. Sadly, the marriage didn't last long, *rachmana litzlan*. This is because success needs tefillos, ideally, tefillos at the beginning of the year.<sup>17</sup>

As a child, Reb Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss *zt'l* (the *gavad* of Yerushalayim) lived in a city some four kilometers from Pressburg. When the Germans entered his city, they ordered all the Jews to board trains. The Germans said they were taking them to a work camp, and whoever disobeyed would be shot.

The Jewish community didn't know whether to believe the Germans or whether it was a ruse to bring them to the gas

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**16.** A kehillah that needed a new beis medresh. They bought a beis medresh building from a prefab company. A crane came to the site, and as the construction workers were lowering the beis medresh with a remote control, some members of the beis medresh were also there, directing the workers exactly where they should drop the structure.

The members of the beis medresh were saying, "Right... A drop left. Go back a drop. No, now come forward..." until it was placed exactly where they wanted it.

Mission accomplished (and money collected), and the crane and the construction workers left the site. The shul members went inside to rejoice with their new beis medresh when they realized that they had made a significant error. They shouted, "The beis medresh was put in backward! The aron kodesh is on the wrong side!"

A child said, "What's the problem? Just say, 'Right, left, front, back' like you did before, and the problem will be solved."

The adults patiently explained that saying "right and left" only helps when the crane and the workers are there, not after they've left.

The *nimshal* is that the beginning of the year is an *eis ratzon*, and our tefillos are answered; our tefillos aren't as potent the rest of the year.

Although the *mashal* isn't entirely accurate because tefillah helps the entire year, nevertheless, there is an extraordinary power to tefillos at the beginning of the year.

**17.** Reb Pinchas Feldman Shlita, a rosh kollel in Yerushalayim, knows how to read palms and to tell the future. However, Reb Feldman doesn't see people from Rosh Hashanah until after Hoshanah Raba. He explains that there is no purpose to do so because the lines on the hand move every day at this time of year. (He explained that he reads the tiny lines on the palm. Most people don't recognize the movements, but he says that if you bring him pictures of your hand from two different days, from this time of year, he can show you where the lines have moved and changed.) This is because people daven a lot this time of year, so their destiny is constantly changing.

(I heard this from other palm-readers as well. They don't see people from Rosh Hashanah until after Hoshanah Rabba because their destiny is constantly changing.)

chambers. The rabbanim and community leaders didn't know whether to encourage the people to cooperate with the Germans or to encourage everyone to hide or escape.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss (still a child) was sent to Pressburg to seek counsel from the ראש הקהל of Pressburg.

The *Rosh hakahal* replied that their lives were in grave danger either way. The *rosh hakahal* added that the king of England arranged to save one thousand children and bring them to England. The *rosh hakahal* said, "I have some tickets to the children's transport, but I don't know who to save and who has precedence over whom. Since you came here, here's a ticket. Go and save yourself."

Reb Tuvyah gave over the bleak report to his city's community leaders, then went home to quickly pack his bags, said goodbye to his parents, and went on the transport. His mother's parting words were that he should never forget that he's a Yid.

Soon, he was safe on English soil with a thousand other children. A short while later, the king of England requested to see the thousand children he had saved.

The children stood respectfully on both sides of the road as the king drove between them.

Suddenly, one of the children, a courageous young boy, jumped forward and asked to speak to the king. The king's servants wanted to send the boy away, but the king stopped and called for the boy. The child thanked the king for saving him and the other children, "But it upsets me that the king's compassion isn't complete because I left my parents and family behind. How can I be happy with my salvation when I'm worried about the safety of my parents and family?" The king asked him for his parents' address.

Two weeks later, his parents and extended family arrived in England.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss zt'l recounted this episode and said, "There were another 999 children there. None of us thought to come forward and beg the king to save their families. Only this boy did, and he benefitted so much from that. Let this be a reminder that we should take advantage of the opportunities that come our way."

For our topic, let's take advantage of our power of tefillah, especially at this time of year. The King is present, as it states *דרשו ה' בהמצאו*. If we call out to Him, He will answer us and grant our requests.

### Tefillos for the Judgment

In the merit of our tefillos, Hashem will grant us a good judgment.

Reb Gedalyah Eismann Shlita is the mashgiach of Kol Torah. Erev Rosh Hashanah, someone asked him for chizuk for Rosh Hashanah, which was soon approaching. Reb Gedalyah replied, "There are still a few moments left to Elul. We can still benefit from the specialness of this time."

The man cried in anguish, "If only I knew that at the beginning of Elul!"

But it isn't too late. We still have many days for tefillah, and each can achieve so much. They are tefillos at the beginning of the year, which are very effective.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18.) tells us that each person stands before Hashem in judgment on Rosh Hashanah. The Gemara describes that they go before Hashem one by one, like בני מרון.

The Gemara offers three explanations for the בני מרון.

One is כבני אמרנא, like sheep. Rashi explains that this refers to sheep walking one by one through a narrow gate when counted for maasar. Every tenth animal is hit with a red marker to indicate that this animal is maasar.

The second explanation of בני מרון is מעלות בית מרון. This is a narrow passage atop a mountain in northern Eretz Yisrael. The road

is dangerously narrow. There is a slope on either side of the road, and only one person can pass at a time. This is how people pass before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, one after the other.

The third explanation is that בני מרון refers to the soldiers in Dovid HaMelech's army, who would go out to war, one by one, so they could be counted.

The first explanation is כבני אמרנא, like sheep. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l added that אמרנא can also be translated as speech. The Gemara is saying that the judgment will be כבני אמרנא, by how we daven. If we daven well, the judgment will be good.

The Gemara also says that the judgment is כחילות בית דוד, like Dovid soldiers. This can be translated as the judgment will be according to the amount of Tehillim we say during these days.

Reb Matisyahu Solomon Shlita was a chazan in Gateshead. When they came to the words תשובה, תפילה, וצדקה, everyone shouted, and Reb Matisyahu shouted even louder so that his voice would be heard. Blood came out of his throat and covered the words רוע הגזירה. (This machzor with the covered-over words is now in London.) That year, no one died young in Gateshead.

After we saw the benefit of tefillos at the beginning of the year, we understand that it is foolish to complain about the tefillos being too long. The long tefillos are for our benefit. We gain so much from each word at this time of year.

The Or HaMeir writes, "A rebuke to the many people of our nation who consider the long tefillos of Rosh Hashanah as a burden. There is nothing sweeter! The Master, Hashem, requests that we say Malchiyos

and Zichronos so that Hashem will remember us and bestow His kindness upon us. Hashem is solely seeking our benefit so that everything will be good for us. This is the explanation of the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 31:19) הבן יקיר לי אפרים אם ילד שעשעים כי מדי דברי בו זכר אזכרנו עוד, 'Efraim, My favorite son, a delightful child. Whenever I speak of him, I remember him more and more. Therefore, My inner self yearns for him; I will surely take pity on him...' The pasuk is saying, הבן יקיר לי אפרים אם ילד שעשעים, all Yidden are called Efraim, and they are before Me ילד שעשועים, a child whom I love. I certainly don't want to make things hard for him. Everything is for his good. מדי דברי בו זכר, and this that I command them to say Zichronos [and the tefillah is long], it is for their benefit, אזכרנו עוד, so I will remember them and bestow kindness on them."

Besides, why rush on Rosh Hashanah? Where are you going? If you want to chatter, Rosh Hashanah isn't the ideal time for that. The Baal HaTanya zt'l and other tzaddikim taught that one shouldn't speak too much on Rosh Hashanah.

The Kedushas Levi takes this a step further and recommends that people make a taanis dibur on Rosh Hashanah. He says that when the Satan comes to speak against the Jewish nation, the court will reply, "Shah! Don't speak. It is Rosh Hashanah today, and it isn't the right time to speak and to carry on conversation." When the Jewish nation is silent below, this is a fair statement to say to the Satan, above, in Heaven.

### Ask for a Lot

When we daven, we should ask for a lot. Don't be stingy with your requests because Hashem can provide for everything we need and all our requests.<sup>18</sup>

18. An angel once said to a person, "Ask whatever you want, and your wishes will be granted."

This person was blind, poor, and childless. What should he ask for? He can only ask for one thing, but he needs three salvations. He said, "I want to see my great-grandchildren eating off golden dishes." For this

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* told the following:

Once, a soldier saw an enemy soldier raise his rifle to shoot Czar Nicolai. The loyal soldier shouted, causing Nicolai's horse to jump, which saved Nicolai's life. The bullet hit the horse instead of Nicolai.

"You saved my life," Nicolai said to the soldier. "How can I repay you?"

The soldier replied, "I don't get along well with my commander; I want to be moved to a different brigade."

"Your request will be fulfilled," Nicolai said, "but you are a fool because you could have requested so much more. I would have granted your request even if you had asked to become the general."

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request to be fulfilled, he would need eyesight, wealth, and children.

When one is given the option to ask, he should ask wisely.

Czar Nicolai sometimes dressed like a simple person and mingled with the populace to hear what people were saying about him. Once, he spoke to four people at a bar, appearing like a regular citizen. He asked them, "If the king would grant you whatever you want, what would you request?"

One said, "I'd ask for a million dollars."

Another said, "I would ask for a mansion."

A third said that he would ask for a bank.

The fourth said, "I request that you leave us in peace and stop bothering us with your foolish questions. You're not the king and can't give us anything."

The king wrote letters to all four people. To one, he gave a million dollars; to the second, a mansion; to the third, a bank; and to the fourth, he wrote, "You wanted to be left in peace; therefore, I will do so."

These days, the King allows us to request whatever we want. We would be wise to be like the first three men and not like the fourth, who didn't recognize the potential before him.

The poor don't get too much when they go around in *beis midrash* collecting money. The *mispaelim* generally give small donations – a quarter, a dollar, and the like. But when a needy person visits the wealthy in their homes, he receives more significant donations. What's the difference? Why does he receive more in their homes than in the *beis midrash*?

Reb Tzaddok HaKohen *zt'l* explains that when the poor go around the *beis midrash*, they don't expect to receive much, and that's why they don't get it. When the poor man goes to the rich man's home, he expects to receive more, and therefore he receives more.

The lesson is that one receives according to his expectations; therefore, when we daven, we should raise our expectations, and then we will receive more.

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* said that people are also foolish when they ask for small things from Hashem, like a bit more money, or a drop more success, etc. They can ask for much more, and Hashem will grant their requests.

The Midrash ("נתן תתן" לעז ראה) tells a story that took place when Alexander Mokdon came to Eretz Yisrael. A Yid came forward and greeted Alexander and blessed him. Alexander appreciated the gesture and rewarded him with a city.

Alexander's servants asked, "He is a poor man. He would have been satisfied with a smaller present, too. Why did you give him a city?"

Alexander replied, "When one gives a gift to express appreciation, the present's worth should be according to the eyes of the

giver and not according to the receiver's perception."

The Lev Simchah *zt'l* repeated this Midrash and explained that when Hashem gives us gifts, it is according to how Hashem understands a present. We say in תפילת טל (on Pesach): דוד כערך העמד שמינו "Beloved, according to Your assessments, establish our name." This means that Hashem should give us kindness as *He* understands kindness, for that will be much greater than when it is according to our limited perception.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Hav! Hav!***

What should a person daven for on Rosh Hashanah? We have physical needs, spiritual needs, and we all need Moshiach. What should be our primary focus on Rosh Hashanah?

The *Zohar* says that those who daven for their personal needs on Rosh Hashanah are like dogs who shout, "*hav hav* – Give more! Give more!" From the *Zohar*, it seems wrong to daven for worldly needs; we should only daven for Moshiach and spirituality, but this isn't the accepted custom. We do daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah, and *tzaddikim* do say to daven for *gashmiyos*. They explain that this doesn't contradict the *Zohar* since we don't ask for *gashmiyos* for its own sake. We don't daven to become wealthy so that everyone will be jealous of us or so we can take luxurious vacations. Such *tefillos* aren't

appropriate on Rosh Hashanah. But when we daven for *gashmiyos* to have the peace of mind to serve Hashem, it is certainly permitted and even admirable to daven that way.

Rebbe Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* once said, "If you take apart all the *tefillos* of Bnei Yisrael, you will see that all of it is about money. But if you consider the essence of their money, it is all about *mitzvos*." Klal Yisrael uses their money to pay for chadarim and girl schools, to marry off their children, to make Shabbos and Yom Tov *seudos*, etc. In this sense, asking for *gashmiyos* is like asking for *ruchniyos*.

Therefore, when we daven for *gashmiyos*, it isn't a contradiction to the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* says we shouldn't daven for *gashmiyos* – and we don't. Even when we ask for *parnassah*, health, and all our other needs, it is to enable us to serve Hashem.

One year, before *tekiyas shofar*, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* told his students to daven for *parnassah* and all their worldly needs.

The students were surprised because they knew of the *Zohar* that says we shouldn't daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that when Hashem grants their *gashmiyus* requests, it will enable them to be devoted to *avodas Hashem*. Thus, even asking for *gashmiyos* can be considered davening for *ruchniyos*.<sup>20</sup>

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19. A candy store owner once told a young child he could take a handful of candies from the store for free. The child refused to take the candy himself, so the storekeeper scooped up a handful and gave it to him.

When he returned home, he explained why he didn't take the handful himself. "It is because the storekeeper's hand is larger than mine."

The *nimshal* is that we request that Hashem open His hand and grant us kindness. *Keviyachol*, Hashem's hand is much larger than ours, and when Hashem gives us kindness it will be more than what we can take or imagine on our own.

20. Another benefit of praying for material needs is that such a *tefillah* is often more sincere since these needs are heavily on people's hearts. The Tzemech Tzedek said that when one asks for his personal needs, it is *teshuvah iloya* (a very high level of *teshuvah*) because his words come forth with sincerity and truth from the depths of his heart to Hashem.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zy'a* also encouraged his chasidim to daven for their material needs on Rosh Hashanah. He said, "Those who don't ask don't get."

Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a* says, "The *Zohar* prohibits shouting "*hav hav* – Give more! Give more!" This prohibition is when he has enough, and he only wants more. But for one who doesn't have enough, there is nothing wrong with asking.<sup>21</sup>

We say in the Rosh Hashanah *Shemonei Esrei*, קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין אלוה-ה מבלעדיך. Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that here we are saying that Hashem is קדוש, extremely holy, and it doesn't seem right for us to ask Hashem for *parnassah* and other worldly matters.<sup>22</sup>

However, we say, אין אלוה-ה מבלעדיך, "There is no other G-d other than You." We are telling Hashem, "Perhaps it seems disrespectful to ask You for our worldly needs, but to whom else can we go to receive them? Who can help us if not You? Only You can give us our needs; therefore, it is proper that we request them from You."

### Tears

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59.) states, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the gates of tefillah were closed, but the gates of tears weren't locked." When we daven with tears, our tefillos are guaranteed to ascend.

The Arizal taught that although Rosh Hashanah is a yom tov, a joyous day, it is important to cry during the tefillah.

In many old machzorim, some tefillos (called *techinos*) are written in Yiddish. These

were written specifically for women, who in the past often couldn't read *lashon hakodesh*. However, in the past, there were also many *am aratzim* among the men who couldn't read *lashon hakadosh*. Yet no one composed *techinos* for them. Why is that? It is because we need the *tefillos* of women because they daven with tears. Tears break down all barriers.

Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* said he received a *kabbalah* that on the *yomim nora'im*, the women who stay home to take care of their children have their private channel that elevates their *tefillos* before Hashem's throne. This is partially because of the unique quality of *tefillah* with tears, which women excel in. These *tefillos* are always answered.

A young girl came to a jewelry store and liked a particular necklace on display. "Is that a real necklace?" she asked the merchant.

"It is real gold," the merchant confirmed.

"Can I see it?"

The merchant knew the young girl couldn't afford to buy the necklace. Nevertheless, he didn't mind doing her a favor and gave her the necklace to hold. Her eyes lit up. "How much does it cost?"

"A lot of money. Too much for a young girl like yourself," the merchant replied.

"I want to buy it," she said, "and I have money."

She opened her purse and took out seven dollars and eighty cents.

Startled by her determination, the merchant asked, "Why do you want the necklace so much?"

21. The tzaddikim of Karlin *zy'a* taught their chassidim to read *Parashas Haman* every day of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah because this is the time of year that Hashem is designating our *parnassah* for the entire upcoming year. Therefore, it is an ideal time to daven for *parnassah*.

22. It can be compared to going to a great, powerful king and telling him that you need help changing a lightbulb or a ride to the store. Some things aren't fitting to ask from a king. Similarly, it doesn't seem correct to ask Hashem for *gashmiyos*.

She replied, "Our mother died last year, and my older sister takes care of us. Today is her birthday, and I know she will be happy to get this necklace. I want to buy it for her."

"But it costs a lot more than \$7.80. I'm sorry. I have nothing in the store for that amount of money."

Hearing that, the girl began to cry.

The merchant's heart broke for this girl and her family. "You can have the necklace," the merchant said, accepting the seven dollars and eighty cents as payment.

Later that day, the older sister came to the store.

"Did my younger sister buy this necklace in your store today?"

"Yes."

"How much did it cost?"

The merchant explained, "My store doesn't have set prices. I quote a price, and the customer says a price. We negotiate until we settle on a price. Your sister negotiated well and convinced me to sell it for less."

We tell this story to demonstrate the power of tears. Tears touch the heart. When there are tears, you want to say yes. *Keviyachol*, something similar occurs when we cry before Hashem. Our tears open all gates, and our tefillos are answered.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* told the following *mashal*:

A prince imprisoned in a distant land because he had rebelled against his father, the king. The queen yearned to see her child, so she traveled a long distance and spoke to her son from outside the prison walls.

The son described the horrible conditions under which he is kept there. The queen took pity on him and threw him a key so he

could unlock the gate and go free, but the key didn't work.

"Perhaps it's the wrong key," the prince said.

"It's the right key," she replied. "The problem is you've been in jail for so long that the lock became rusty. The only solution is for you to cry. Your tears will wash away the corrosion, and the lock will open."

The *nimshal* is: When we *daven* with tears, this will open all locks and gates.

The Yismach Moshe told the following *mashal*:

"A king got angry at his servants, and they didn't know how to appease him. The *sar hamashkim* (the king's cup-bearer) came up with an idea. "I will serve the king the wine he likes most. The king will be happy and will certainly forgive us." The good wine is our tears. When we have tears, Hashem is appeased, as it says, מִלֶּךְ מִתְרַצָּה בְּדַמְעוֹת, "The King who is appeased with tears."

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* taught that one should pray *before* Rosh Hashanah that he should be able to cry on Rosh Hashanah. He said that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 42), צְמֵאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאַלְקִים לֹא אֵל חַי... הִיְתָה לִי דַמְעָתִי. Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צְמֵאָה נַפְשִׁי, "My heart thirsts; לְאַלְקִים, that on the day of judgment,<sup>23</sup> הִיְתָה לִי דַמְעָתִי, I should be able to cry."

A boss told his salesperson, "When a retail customer asks for a price reduction, you can deal with him yourself; you know how I do business, and you know what I would say. However, if a merchant comes to the store and wants to negotiate a large deal, send him to me, and I will deal with him."

Therefore, we say in *Selichos*, מְכַנְּסֵי דַמְעָה, הַכְּנִיסוּ דַמְעוֹתֵינוּ לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ מִתְרַצָּה בְּדַמְעוֹת [The *malachim*] who bring in tears, bring our tears before the King who is appeased with tears."

23. אֱלֹקִים is Hashem's name that represents judgment.

We tell the malachim that they can deliver our tears before Hashem, but nothing more than that. *Malachim* can't understand the depth, sincerity, yearning, and pain in Yiddishe tears; only Hashem can receive them.

The Rebbe of Piaseczna *zt'l hy'd* said during the Holocaust, "Did a *malach* ever experience the pain of being beaten up as Yidden do? Does a *malach* know the humiliation of being pursued and hunted? Did a *malach* ever experience hunger pangs?"

Therefore, we tell the *malachim* to daven for us (השתדלו והרבה תחינה), but when it comes to our tears, they should kindly just bring them before Hashem.

The *Alef HaMagen* (582:45 and see *Maaseh Rav, Gr'a* 207) writes that if one cannot cry, he should pray on Rosh Hashanah in a sobbing voice. This will stir his *kavanah* and arouse his merits Above. As it states (*Tehillim* 6:9), נִי שָׁמַע ה' קוֹל בְּכִי, "Hashem heard *the voice* of my cries."

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59) states that even when the gates of tefillah are locked, the gates of tears remain open. Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* offers a beautiful explanation on this Gemara. He says that the gates of tefillah are always open. That isn't the problem. The problem is that we daven without a heart. The heart is closed, so the tefillos don't go up. How do we open the heart? By davening with tears. When we daven with tears (and in a crying voice), that opens our hearts and awakens our *kavanah*, and when we daven with *kavanah*, the gates of heaven are wide open to receive our *tefillos*.<sup>24</sup>

We eat honey on Rosh Hashanah. The Rebbe of Gostinen *zt'l* said that דב"ש is *roshei teivos* שימי דמעתי בנאדך, "Place my tears in Your pouch."<sup>25</sup> Tears on Rosh Hashanah make everything sweet.

### ***Tehillim***

*Tehillim* is wonderful every day of the year, and Klal Yisrael says more *Tehillim* than usual during the *yomim nora'im*.<sup>26</sup>

**24.** It states (*Nechemyah* 8:10) that we should be happy on Rosh Hashanah. However, the Arizal teaches that we should cry on Rosh Hashanah. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (*Imrei Pinchas* ת"ש) explains that this isn't a contradiction. "We can compare it to the joy of a *chasunah*. The *simchah* is immense but mixed with apprehension, as everyone hopes the marriage will be successful and peaceful, etc. Similarly, on this great day of judgment, there is an immense joy because Hashem renews His *meluchah* (kingship), and we, human beings formed from the earth, have the privilege to proclaim Hashem as the king. Is there a joy greater than that? On the other hand, we cry because we don't know what the future holds."

**25.** Rebbe Naftali of Melitz *zt'l* said that when Hashem desires to write good things for the Jewish nation, the Satan dries the inkwell, and the ink doesn't write. We ask, שימי דמעתי בנאדך, "Place a drop of our tears into Your inkwell, and then you will be able to write with it."

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* said that דב"ש is *gematriya* אב הרחמן, compassionate Father.

**26.** There is a *segulah* to say the entire *Tehillim* twice on the first night of Rosh Hashanah.

One year, on the night of Rosh Hashanah, the *magid*, Reb Ben Tzion Yadler *zt'l*, gathered a group of older *bachurim*, and he said with them the entire *Tehillim* twice. All of them were engaged shortly after that.

There's an *askan* in Eretz Yisrael who had two boys and a girl in *shidduchim*, and nothing was progressing. They weren't even receiving offers. They did this *segulah*, and the three were engaged that year.

Another person who had the privilege of marrying off all his children had three couples who didn't have children. The father did this *segulah*. He said *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night; that year, all three of them were blessed with a child.

I've heard several other stories of people who received their salvation with this *segulah*.

Obviously, this is a very hard *segulah* to do. However, a family can divide up the *Tehillim* between themselves, so they say the entire *Tehillim* twice collectively.

A few years ago, I met a rav. He said, "You know I am not the type who runs after *segulos*. It isn't my way. But, twenty years ago, I didn't have children after twenty-two years of marriage, and someone put into my mailbox an article that discusses the *segulah* of saying *Tehillim* twice on the night of Rosh Hashanah. I did this *segulah*, and nine and a half months afterwards, I had my first and only child." He told me that this daughter is a *kallah*.

He also told me that he taught this *segulah* to a class of thirty older *bachurim*. On Chanukah, he received a phone call from one of the *bachurim*, who said he was the 29th *bachur* of the grade to get engaged.

Menachem Holzberg from Miami didn't have children for twenty years. He told me he heard about the *segulah* and said *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night. When he felt tired, he went outside to wake up. Nine months later, he made a *bris*. He says that they went to many doctors, but nothing helped. But reciting *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night was his salvation, and the child was born naturally.

There's a *yungerman* who lives in Bnei Brak. Rosh Hashanah, he awoke at 2:00 am and said twice *Tehillim*. His wife would often need to go to the hospital, but the year that he did this *segulah*, she didn't need to go to the hospital.

I don't know how these things work and why specifically *Tehillim* twice, but I found a wonderful source from the Dubno Magid *zt'l*.

The Dubno Magid tells a *mashal* of a *Yid* who lived among *goyim*. The *goyim* caused him much suffering. When the king came to his city, he wanted to tell the king what he was going through, but the *goyim* were there too, and they would tell the king not to pay attention to what he was saying.

The *Yid* sought counsel from a friend. The friend said, "The *goyim* are there in daytime. They aren't with the king at nighttime. Go to the king at nighttime and tell him what you are going through.

The *Yid* followed this counsel, and the king helped him.

The Dubno Magid says that the same is true with Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah, by day, there is a great judgment, and *mikatrigen* speak against us. But at nighttime, the court didn't begin yet, and the *mikatrigen* aren't present. Now is the time to plead before *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and your *tefillos* will be answered.

He writes that the *kadmonim* (*gedolim* of generations ago) discuss that it is good to daven Rosh Hashanah at night before the *mikatrigen* arrive.

The Dubno Magid writes that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Eichah* 2:19) קוּמִי רִנֵּי בַלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֵׁמֹרוֹת, שִׁפְכִי כַמַּיִם לְבָךְ (Eichah 2:19) "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of Hashem." נִכַח פְּנֵי ה' means that you are alone with Hashem at nighttime, then it is an excellent time to pour out your heart before Hashem, and your *tefillos* will be answered.

Erev Rosh Hashanah, the night of the *selichos* (called *Zechor Bris*), I received a call moments before I arrived at the Dushinsky *beis medresh*, where I was called to give a *drashah*. The person on the line was a famous lawyer from Eretz Yisrael. I explained that I didn't have time to take the call, but he insisted it would only take a minute.

He told me that his daughter is forty, and they are now going to break the dish for the *shidduch* that just occurred. Just a year before, he did the *segulah* of saying *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah evening. When I came to the *beis medresh*, I began the *drashah* with his story.

A *yungerman* from Beitar had four children in *shidduchim*, ages 23-28. He wanted to say *sefer Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night, but after the Rosh Hashanah *seudah*, he realized that it wasn't going to happen. So, he divided the *Tehillim* among his family. Each member would say about fifty chapters. They said the *Tehillim* with *hislachavus* for about forty minutes, and in this way, they finished the entire *sefer Tehillim* more than two times.

Throughout Rosh Hashanah, the Baal HaTanya *zy'a* was occupied either with his *machzor* or *Tehillim*.

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* also used every spare moment of Rosh Hashanah to recite *Tehillim*.

The Emek HaMelech *zt'l* writes the following story:

A simple person lived in a village near Leport. He only knew Tanach. He was *niftar* at an old age. Thirty days after his passing, he came in a dream to the *chacham* of the city, holding an old, worn *Tehillim* under his arm. The *chacham* asked, "Aren't you the person we buried recently?"

"Yes, it is I."

"What's that *sefer* under your arm?"

"It's a *Tehillim*. I came to warn you and the townspeople to escape immediately. When I was alive, I recited the entire *Tehillim* daily.<sup>27</sup> I did this for years, and the *Tehillim* I said protected the entire town, but now you no longer have that protection."

In the morning, the *chacham* gathered the entire town and told them his dream. Those who took the dream seriously escaped and survived, and those who remained perished.

The Emek HaMelech concludes, "From the day my father heard this story, he would say the entire *Tehillim* each week. Whoever says *Tehillim* regularly saves himself, his family, and his generation from all kinds of sorrow and distress and draws down from

heaven *brachos* and *hatzlachos*. Fortunate is the one who [says *Tehillim*], which benefits himself and his community."

The Noam Elimelech writes:

"Some people ask: How does *tefillah* help? How can a *tzaddik* pray for a sick person, and the sick person gets better? The answer is that man is connected to all worlds. When he sins, he becomes detached from his connection above, resulting in him getting sick, *rachmana litzlan*. When the *tzaddik* davens, he reconnects the person to his source, to where he was before. Automatically, he becomes healed. However, sometimes, the *tzaddik's* *tefillah* doesn't help, *chalilah*, because there is a *kitrug* [prosecuting angels who prevent the person from becoming reconnected to his source in heaven]. When that occurs, he needs to become attached to the *עולם הגדול הנקרא תהלה*, to the great world called 'Tehillah' because in this world there is a great light and the *kitrug* can't prevent him from reconnecting to his source. In that world, there is solely compassion, and everything is rectified. This is the reason Dovid HaMelech's songs are called *תהלים* because when one says *Tehillim*, he becomes attached to the world of *Tehillah*, where there is no Satan and no problems."

These amazing words give us a glimpse into the wonders of *Tehillim*. When we say *Tehillim*, we become connected to a compassionate world. Therefore, through *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs.

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All four children were engaged and married that year!

Year 5780, a youngster from Montreal wrote me, "I have eight children, four of them are married, and I have *nachas* from them. But the last *chasunah* I made was year 5773. I now have two *bachurim*, one is thirty and one is twenty-seven, and I have two girls, ages twenty-five and twenty-two. I did the *segulah* together with my children. Each of us took some chapters to say, and collectively, we finished *Tehillim* twice. That year, three of my children were engaged. I plan to say *Tehillim* this year as well, and hopefully, my twenty-seven year old son will also become a *chasan*."

He adds in the letter, "I am not a wealthy person, but I was able to marry them off without borrowing a penny."

27. The Shlah's version of this story is that he would finish *Tehillim* once weekly.

## Teshuvah

A chazan was studying the machzor before Rosh Hashanah to prepare the songs and tunes of the tefillos of *yomim nora'im*. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l told him, "The machzor is the same as last year. Instead of looking into the machzor, I advise you to look into yourself to see what needs to be improved."

Last week's parashah states (Devarim 29:9) *אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם*, "You are all standing this day before Hashem, your G-d." Notice that Moshe said *אתם*, you are standing before Hashem. It seems to imply that the nation was before Hashem, but Moshe himself wasn't. The Sfas Emes explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was telling Bnei Yisrael, "You are on a higher level than I am. You are before Hashem, and I am not, because Chazal say, 'The place where baalei teshuvah stand, the greatest tzaddikim cannot stand.'"

The Sfas Emes concludes that this is an encouraging lesson for our generation. We must know our potential and the levels we can reach, precisely because we live in a lowly generation. When we do teshuvah, we reach the highest levels.

It states (Devarim 30:5) *והיטבך והרבך מאבתך*, "He will do good to you, and He will make you more numerous than your forefathers." The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that Hashem made us greater than the avos hakedoshim because we are baalei teshuvah, and baalei teshuvah reach levels that the greatest tzaddikim cannot.

We begin the brachah of Malchiyos with *על כן נקוה לך*. The first letters spell *עכ"ן*. Chazal tell us that Achan created this tefillah when he was taken to be put to death. Chazal tell us the many sins that Achan committed. Why do we begin Malchiyos with the prayer he created?

This teaches us that even if we committed many aveiros, as many as Achan, we can do teshuvah, pronounce Hashem as King, and Hashem will accept us.

Before tekiyas shofar, we read Tehillim (47) *למנוחה לבני קרח*, a psalm created by Korach's children, who did teshuvah moments before they were swallowed into the earth. This too, reminds us that regardless of the past, we can always do teshuvah. The children of Korach did teshuvah, and so can we.

A counsel for teshuvah is to accept a kabbalah tova. Slonimer tzaddikim say that a good kabbalah is a protection in this world and the next world, but it has to be kept constantly.

The readers probably remember the Jersey City shooting attack on the 12th of Kislev תש"פ, at a grocery store, r'l. One yungerman, a melamed, was coming home from cheder when the shooting began. He was worried that his wife might be in the grocery because she had told him she would be there at about that time. Fortunately, he found his wife alive and well at home. She said she was planning to go to the grocery, but when she opened the door, she saw a package at the doorstep. It was some clothing she ordered right after Yom Kippur for the sake of tznius. (On Yom Kippur, when the chazan was singing Nesaneh Tokef, she made a kabbalah that she would wear a certain type of tznius clothing. she ordered it, but it took some time to arrive. It had arrived that day, just as she was preparing to leave for the grocery. She decided to put on this clothing before she went to the grocery, and that is when the shooting began. She was saved thanks to her kabbalah.

## A Broken Heart

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) writes, *כל שנה שרשה בתחלתה מתעשרת בסופה*, "Every year that (the Jewish nation) is poor at the beginning, will prosper at the end."

Tosfos translates *רשה*, poor, in the literal sense. He explains, "Since Yisrael are poor, they have a broken heart and are therefore worthy of Hashem's compassion."

According to Rashi, the Gemara doesn't mean they are necessarily poor, rather "They

act like they are poor on Rosh Hashanah and daven in a pleading manner. As it states (*Mishlei* 18), תחנונים ידבר רש, 'A poor man speaks with supplications.'" If they do so, the following year will be a prosperous one.

Rashi teaches us that it isn't proper to come to Rosh Hashanah with an attitude that "I deserve a good year." A person should feel undeserving and plead to Hashem for compassion. That attitude leads to better results.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26:) says that on Rosh Hashanah, we should blow a shofar that is curved because "On Rosh Hashanah, the more one bends his heart [with humility], the better." He should feel unworthy, pleading for mercy. That will help him receive a good judgment.

One year, the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* entered late to *tekiyas shofar*. Everyone was waiting until he came. The Chozeh explained that he didn't want to hear shofar before he found some good deed in himself, but he could only find faults.

Then he remembered that there was a day that he wanted to perform a particular mitzvah, so he asked his *gabai* to wake him early in the morning. But the *gabai* overslept, and the Chozeh couldn't do the mitzvah.

The Chozeh felt like rebuking his *gabai* for his negligence, but then he reconsidered, "Why did I want to wake up early? Because I wanted to do Hashem's will. Now it is Hashem's will that I shouldn't become angry." When the *gabai* came in, the Chozeh spoke kindly with the *gabai*, as usual. He didn't show any signs of anger. It was with this merit that he came to *tekiyas shofar*.

This story demonstrates the Chozeh's humble, broken heart. He felt that aside from that one good deed, he had no merits. It is with such feelings of humility that we should approach the *tekiyas* and *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah.

Before starting the *tekiyas*, Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* shouted, "Hashem! Only You know my broken heart," and then he began *Min HaMeitzar* and *tekiyas shofar*.

Reb Volf Kitzes *zt'l* was the baal tokeia at the Baal Shem Tov's minyan. One year, before Rosh Hashanah, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* taught Reb Volf deep kabbalistic thoughts he should concentrate on while blowing the shofar.

Reb Wolf wrote down the ideas to remember them when he blew the shofar, but he lost the paper!

That year, he blew the shofar amidst tears and with a broken heart, regretting that he couldn't blow the shofar with the *kavanos* the Baal Shem Tov taught him.

Later, Reb Volf told the Baal Shem Tov that he feared that the *tekiyas* didn't accomplish what they needed to achieve because he lost the kabbalistic thoughts.

The Baal Shem Tov replied that he had wanted him to lose the paper and that he should blow shofar with a broken heart. The Baal Shem Tov explained, "The kabbalistic thoughts (called *kavanos*) are keys that open the locks of heaven. Each kabbalistic meditation opens another lock. But a broken heart is an ax that opens all doors. Your *tekiyas*, blown with a broken heart, went straight up to heaven and accomplished everything."

The *baal makri* (the one who calls out *tekiyah*, *shevarim*, etc.) asked my grandfather, Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zy'a*, what kabbalistic *kavanos* he should have in mind when he calls out the *tekiyas*. Rebbe Dovid replied, "I don't know *kavanos* and you also don't know them. But one *kavanah* I will tell you. The *shevarim* is a small broken heart, and *truah* is a big broken heart."

Reb Velvel Eisenbach *zt'l* was from the elders of Yerushalayim. He was *niftar* a few years ago on Rosh Hashanah at 106. He repeated what he heard from his grandfather, to whom the following story happened.

When this grandfather was a child, he was by Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler *zy'a* for Rosh Hashanah. A balcony was built especially for Rosh Hashanah to accommodate the many guests who arrived for *yom tov*. But despite the added space, it was still extremely crowded. Reb Velvel Eisenbach's grandfather davened downstairs, but due to the intense heat, his grandfather, who was then a young child, fainted.

People threw water on the child and gave him water to drink. It was impossible to get the child outside due to the enormous crowd in the shul, so they brought the child near the *bimah*, beneath the opening in the ceiling, from where the people upstairs on the balcony heard the *tefillos*.

Lying there, he watched Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler approach the *bimah* for *tekiyas shofar* and was also able to hear the *vort* Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler said before the *tekiyos*.

Rebbe Aharon said, "It is written (*Tehillim* 47), עלה אלקים בתרועה, Elokim represents *middas hadin* (punishment). עלה אלקים, the *midas hadin* is raised and removed, בתרועה, with a broken heart.

The following words are ה' בקול שופר. This can mean ה' עלה... Hashem's compassion (represented by the name הוי"ה) will also ascend and leave us, בקול שופר when one thinks that everything is good, and he isn't worried at all."<sup>28</sup>

When the Rebbe said this, the entire congregation cried. The child became wet again, this time from the tears of the people upstairs and downstairs.

A king banished his son from the palace and his role in the government because of his misdeeds and appointed a minister to fill his son's role.

One day, the king regretted banishing his son and asked him to return. But the minister was worried that the son would return to his position in the government, which would mean that he would lose his job, so when the son arrived, the minister painted the son's face black. Now, the king wouldn't recognize him.

The son came to the king and said, "It's true that you can't recognize me, but look into my eyes, and you will see that I'm your son."

We say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, אדם כבנים... ואם כעבדים עינינו לך תלויות, that Hashem should judge us favorably, for we are His children. But if we are unrecognizable as Hashem's children, we request עינינו, that Hashem should look into our eyes and see that we rely solely on Him, and Hashem will have compassion on us and save us.

We look up to Hashem to save us because we recognize that we can't help ourselves. And Hashem, seeing our broken hearts, accepts our pleas and grants us a good year.

### Tears with the Shofar

One year, the Berditchever Rav *zy'a* raised his shofar and called out to the women's section, "The shofar needs to be rinsed out," and all the women began to cry. Their tears rinsed out the shofar.

The Arvei Nachal *zy'a* brings the following *mashal*:

A king was traveling with his son in a distant country. The king warned his son, "Beware of evil people because my enemies live here, and they want to hurt us."

But the prince wasn't careful, and the king's enemies captured him.

Once a year, the king had a custom to drive through that country. The prince

<sup>28</sup> שופר also means good, as we say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, שפרו מעשיכם, improve your deeds, and as the Gemara says, שפיר קא אמרת, "You said well."

planned to shout and scream on that designated day when the king passed his place of captivity. The king would hear him and rescue him.

But his captives knew the prince's plan, so they put him in an iron room where his voice wouldn't be heard.

The child had special stones he received from his father years before. These stones had an extraordinary power that, when thrown at an iron wall, the wall collapsed.

As the king passed through the city, the prince threw the stones at the iron walls, but the walls didn't fall. This was because only clean stones have this extraordinary power, and his stones weren't clean.

Realizing his chance for freedom was slipping away, the prince broke into tears. His hot tears fell on the stones, cleansing them.

The prince realized that his stones were sparkling clean. With renewed hope, he threw them at the wall, and the wall collapsed. The king was able to hear the prince's cries and saved him.

The Arvei Nachal explains that the shofar has the potential to break down the iron walls that separate us from our Father in heaven and to bring the long-awaited *geulah*. But it doesn't seem to be working, though. Why? The answer is the shofar works together with tears. It does not function properly when one blows shofar without a broken heart and tears.

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov, zt'l, fell ill one year and miraculously survived and lived for another five years. The Rosh Hashanah following the illness, my grandfather said to my father, "Last year, by shofar, you shed true tears at tekiyas shofar," implying that was what saved his life.

### **Teshuvah and Shofar**

The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (a Torah decree), the shofar is telling us something. The shofar is shouting, עורו ישנים משנתכם – Those who sleep, wake up from your sleep! Examine your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, all those who have forgotten the truth."<sup>29</sup>

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29. A baal teshuvah told the following story that happened to him:

"One Rosh Hashanah, I was in the hospital, and someone came to blow the shofar for us. I was non-religious at the time, and I was intrigued by the shofar. I asked many questions about the shofar, wanting to understand what the shofar was all about. I didn't quite get their explanations, so I told them how it appeared to me:

"I served in the Israeli Navy on a submarine. Under the water, the means of communication was Morse code. I was an expert in Morse code. I could send and decipher messages very quickly.

"A couple of years after serving in the navy (and after spending a long vacation in India), I saw an advertisement: The army was looking for a Morse code expert to be in charge of several submarines. To apply for the job, we had to be at a certain office between 10:00 and 12:00 noon. I arrived at 11:50. The room was packed with applicants, but no one was being called in. Music played in the background, and I sat down for a few moments and listened. Then I got up, brazenly opened the door to the office, and said, 'I came for the interview.'"

"Many people are waiting in line ahead of you," the secretary said. "And you just came. Please wait your turn."

"I didn't listen to her. I walked into the room and talked to the person in charge. After speaking briefly, I was hired for the job."

The Or HaMeir asks if the primary purpose of the shofar is to arouse people to *teshuvah*, why didn't the Torah instead instruct the rabbanim of each beis medresh to deliver a fiery mussar *drashah* to rouse people to *teshuvah*? Why the shofar?

The Or HaMeir answers with a *mashal*:

A town hired a man to stand guard on a mountaintop. If he sees thieves or any other impending danger, he will ring bells, shout, and warn the townspeople below.

Once, the man saw thieves. He shouted and rang his bells: "*Ganavim!* Thieves!" The wealthy people frantically ran out to save their properties, but the poorer folks weren't worried. They knew that the thieves weren't after them.

Another day, the guard shouted, "Fire! There's a fire!" This time, even the poor people ran to put out the fire because the fire could consume their meager belongings.

The Or HaMeir explains that if the rav of every congregation would give a mussar *drashah* instead of the shofar, people would say, "The *rav* isn't talking to me. He is speaking to others who need to improve in those areas."

For example, if the rav would speak about the importance of studying Torah with *hasmadah*, some people in the audience would think, "I'm glad the rav is speaking about this topic because there are many people in this beis medresh who should study more Torah," without thinking that the *drashah* applies to him. He believes he studies enough.

Whatever the rav speaks about, be it *tefillah*, *tzedakah*, or *middos*, there will always be those who think the rav is talking to others, not them.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the Torah wisely tells us to blow the shofar. The shofar shouts, "There's

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The interviewer went out to the waiting room and said, "Thank you all for coming, and I'm sorry about the delay. We have already hired someone. You can all go home."

"It isn't fair," they all shouted. "This man came in last. Why did you interview him before us?"

"Didn't you hear the music?" the man said. "Listen carefully. Don't you get it? It's Morse code. It says: 'If you've come for the interview, just open the door and come inside.' This man heard the message. You didn't. You are clearly not as fluent in the language as he is."

The irreligious man in the hospital said that he thinks the shofar is speaking a language, only it needs to be deciphered. If you could hear its words, you would hear the shofar telling us, "Just open the door and come inside. Come to Hashem. He is waiting for you."

Returning to the story, one person argued, "I heard the Morse code in the music, but I decided not to open the door because I didn't see anyone else doing so."

"That's not a valid excuse," the interviewer told him. "If you heard the message, you should have come in. Why do you care what other people are doing?"

The same is true with the Shofar. It is imploring us to do *teshuvah*, and it is inexcusable to say, "I heard the shofar's message, but I decided not to act upon it since I didn't see anyone else doing *teshuvah*." That's not a valid excuse. If you understand the shofar's call, open the door and run to Hashem.

**30.** Someone told a *gadol* about his *shalom bayis* problems.

The *gadol* told him, "The solution is to be *mevater*."

The man replied, "Of course, I know that, and I tell it to my wife all the time, but she doesn't get it. She isn't willing to be *mevater*..." This demonstrates people's tendency to think that only others have a problem, not themselves.

a fire, and we're all in danger!" It is a call to action for everyone.

### The Struggle

There are two types of people who do teshuvah. Some make a firm decision to improve their ways and, indeed, they never return to their old ways. Obviously, that is ideal when possible, but there are baalei teshuvah who can't do that. They struggle with their yetzer hara. They want to improve but encounter ups and downs, successes, and setbacks.

In *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר וּמֵאֲזִין תְּרוּעָה וְאַיִן דּוֹמָה לְךָ "You listen to the sound of the shofar, and you harken to the *teruah*, and no one is like You."

The words are simple enough to understand, but, like all words of the siddur, they contain much depth and meaning. Let us delve into these words.

We begin with some questions:

1) שׁוֹמֵעַ and מֵאֲזִין both mean "to listen," but there is undoubtedly a difference between them. What is it?

2) What is the קוֹל שׁוֹפָר and what is the תְּרוּעָה?

3) Why is שׁוֹמֵעַ phrased together with קוֹל שׁוֹפָר, while מֵאֲזִין goes with תְּרוּעָה?

4) Why does this *brachah* end with the phrase וְאַיִן דּוֹמָה לְךָ "There is no one like You"?

The *Pri Megadim* (592:1, quoting Reb Chaim Rappaport *zt'l* of Lemberg) explains that these words allude to the two levels of teshuvah discussed above. The firm, long sound of the shofar represents when one makes a kabbalah to improve, once and for all and never goes back to his old ways.

The choppy *teruah* represents the baalei teshuvah who improve and fall again. They pick themselves up and try once again to succeed in their teshuvah.

To whom is Hashem closer? We will see that Hashem is closer to those struggling with their teshuvah. These ideas are hinted at in the *brachah* we mentioned above. מֵאֲזִין means to listen from nearby, and שׁוֹמֵעַ is to listen from a distance.<sup>31</sup> Hashem is close to those who struggle with their *teruah*. Therefore, it states מֵאֲזִין תְּרוּעָה, Hashem hears the *teruah* from nearby, while שׁוֹמֵעַ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר, Hashem hears the voice of the shofar from a distance.

The *brachah* concludes:

וְאַיִן דּוֹמָה לְךָ, "No One compares to You."

The *Pri Megadim* explains that a human king prefers the company of perfect people. No one is like Hashem, Who listens from nearby to the imperfect people struggling to serve Him. Hashem is closer to them than he is to the *zaddikim* who have perfect success with their teshuvah.

The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) asks, "Why do we blow shofar with a ram's horn (שׁוֹפָר שֶׁל אֵיל)? Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Blow for Me with a ram's shofar so that I will remember *akeidas Yitzchok*, and I will consider it as though you were bound on the *akeidah* before Me.'"

We wonder, why does the Torah require specifically the ram's horn? If the purpose of the shofar is to awaken the merit of *akeidas Yitzchak*, any part of the ram would do. For example, the Torah could have given us a mitzvah to hold the ram's foot or some other limb. Why specifically the horn?

The answer is that the ram ran to the *akeidah*, but its horns got caught in a bush. It struggled to be part of the mitzvah but got

31. Moshe Rabbeinu said, הַאֲזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם... וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ "The heaven shall listen... The earth should hear..." Moshe, the אִישׁ אֱלֹקִים, was closer to heaven than to the earth; therefore, when he spoke to heaven, he said הַאֲזִינוּ that they should listen from nearby. To the earth, he called וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ, that it should hear from the distance.

caught midway until Avraham came and untangled it. It is the struggle that is so precious to Hashem that we seek to remember.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) says that we blow the shofar before Shemonah Esrei (תקיעת) (דמיושב) and again during Shemonah Esrei (תקיעת) (דמעומד) to confuse the Satan.

How does blowing the shofar twice confuse the Satan?

Tosfos (quoting the *Yerushalmi*) explains that in the future, a great shofar will be blown, as it states, וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל, "On that day, a great shofar will be blown..." In that era, the Satan will be judged and slaughtered. When the Satan hears the first set of *tekiyos*, "He is afraid, but isn't completely afraid." He fears this might be the shofar heralding the future world when the Satan will be eliminated, but he isn't sure. When he hears the shofar a second time, the Satan says, "This must certainly be the *shofar gadol*. The time of my destruction has arrived." Confused and frightened, he can't speak *kitrug*, *lashon hara* on the Jewish people.

We wonder, why is the Satan so afraid? Doesn't he remember from last year and years before that that we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah? Why does he suspect that this year may be different?

The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* answers that in each generation, it becomes harder to serve Hashem. The Satan thinks, "This year, due to all the challenges and hardship that the Jewish nation endured, they are far more precious than ever. The shofar I'm hearing is certainly the *shofar gadol* of Moshiach."

Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh *zy'a* once went to the *bimah* to blow shofar and saw through

the window a *davar acheir* (pig) eating in a Jewish field. He said, "I will not blow shofar until the *davar acheir* is removed from the Jewish field."

People chased the *davar acheir* out of the field, and when they returned, Rebbe Yechiel blew shofar.

This story was repeated each year by the Slonimer tzaddikim, *zy'a*. The Beis Avraham of Slonim, *zy'a* would say, "Such a story of the *Moosher* (Reb Yechiel of Moosh) I never heard before!" But it was somewhat of a mystery among the chassidim why this story was so special to the Rebbes. What did they see in this story that was so amazing?

Some chasidim thought that this story showed Reb Yechiel's ahavas Yisrael. He wouldn't blow shofar while a Yid's field suffered a loss.

Reb Mottel Slonimer *zy'a* corrected them. He said, "Why don't you understand?! Reb Yechiel of Moosh announced that he wouldn't blow shofar until the *davar acheir*, the *yetzer hara*, was removed from the Jewish hearts. That is the purpose of shofar! The shofar removes all the bad and the *yetzer hara* from the hearts of Yidden!"<sup>32</sup>

### **Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar**

The Shaar HaMelech (3:2) writes, "Before the *brachah* of *tekiyas shofar*, push yourself to cry a lot, especially when you answer amen to the *brachah*, because that's when it is decided how much money you will earn this year."

There are other indications that shofar is mesugal for *parnassah*. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 117) says, שׁוֹפָר וּרְדִיית הַפֶּת חֲכָמָה הִיא וְאֵינוּ מְלַאכָה, "Blowing shofar and removing bread from

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**32.** The Gemara teaches that *chilul Hashem* is only atoned for with death. Nevertheless, there are ways to get atonement without death. The Remak quotes the Gemara, which states, "[Hashem says] 'Blow with a ram's horn before Me so that I will remember *akeidas Yitzchok*, and I will consider it as though you sacrificed yourself before Me.'" When one internalizes the shofar's message, it is like he sacrificed himself before Hashem. It is like he died, so all his sins are forgiven.

the walls of an oven require talent but aren't *melachos* (on Shabbos)." Why does the Gemara juxtapose blowing shofar and taking out bread?

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that the Gemara hints that shofar is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught that the letters after עקר"ה are שופ"ר. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to have children. As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה, "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel and Chanah were remembered to bear children."<sup>33</sup>

The Zera Kodesh writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, the day the world was created, is a time *mesugal* for the barren to be remembered to bear children."

In the *Mussaf Shemonah Esrei* we say, מִי לֹא נִפְקַד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. The Imrei Noam *zt'l* says that נִפְקַד means to be remembered to bear children. He adds that the *roshei teivos* of נִפְקַד is הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, and הַיּוֹם is Hashem's name related to pregnancies, as it states, הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, "Behold you will be pregnant..." This hints that Rosh Hashanah is when Hashem remembers the barren, blessing them with children.

It states, וידגו לרוב בקרב הארץ, "They shall multiply like fish..." Tzaddikim taught that the *gematriya* of רוב בקרב הארץ is ראש השנה. This is another indication that Rosh Hashanah is *mesugal* to bear children.

In ונתנה תוקף we say, כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון. The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* translated these words as follows: כמה יעברון, Hashem judges how many women will enter עיבור, pregnancy, that year and וכמה יבראון, how many people will become בריא, healthy, and cured of their illnesses.

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* told a *yungerman* who was waiting several years for children that he should have *kavanah* by כמה יעברון, for this is a tested and proven *segulah* for the barren to bear children.

The Apter Rav *zt'l* (*Ohev Yisrael*) teaches that when we read וזה'פקד את שרה (that Hashem remembered Sarah to grant her a child), it is *mesugal* for פקידת עקרות, to bring down the salvation for bearing children.

The Mishnah (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:3) states שופר מאריך. One translation of מאריך is healing, and another translation of מאריך is to live long. Thus, we have a hint that with the shofar, one merits a *refuah sheleimah* and a long life.

The Midrash states, "When the Jewish people take the shofar and blow it before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, He stands up from the throne of judgment and sits on the throne of compassion."

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* explains how this happens:

Rosh Hashanah, Hashem finds Himself sitting on the throne of judgment to judge the Jewish people, and Hashem asks Himself, "How did I get here? Why should I judge the Jewish people whom I love?" Hashem

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**33.** In the haftorah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah (*I Shmuel* 1), we read about Chanah, who was sad because she didn't have children. Her husband, Elkanah, asked her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? I am better to you than ten children."

The Navi continues that Chanah ate but was still very distressed. She went to Mishkan Shilo and davened for children. After her *tefillos*, the Navi writes, ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד, "She ate, and her sad face was no longer."

So, at this point, Chanah davened with joy. The Chasam Sofer teaches that her joy helped her receive her salvation.

Chazal say, בר"ה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה, "On Rosh Hashanah Chanah was remembered," to bear a child, and it was in the merit of her happiness.

realizes that the Satan convinced Him to judge the Jewish nation. Hashem says, "If the Satan is so powerful and influential that he can convince Me to judge the Jewish nation, then the Jewish people are certainly not guilty of the *aveiros* they committed. How can they stand up against such a cunning Satan?"

With this thought in mind, Hashem abandons the throne of judgment and sits on his throne of compassion.

The Rambam writes, "I, Moshe ben Maimon, when the time for shofar came, took the shofar in my hand and I thought about Who commanded us to do this

mitzvah. My knees knocked against each other from fear, and then I began blowing."

The Gemara says about shofar, ביון דליברון, הוא כבפנים דמי, "Since the shofar arouses Hashem's memory [to remember the good deeds of the Jewish nation], it is as if it was blown inside the Kodshei HaKedoshim."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* quotes this Gemara and explains that when we blow shofar, it is like we are in the Kodesh HaKedashim, and therefore, we must listen to the shofar with immense fear as if he were in the Kodesh HaKedashim.

May we all be zocheh to be inscribed for a good year in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim gemurim*.



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