

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Rosh Hashanah



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Torah Wellsprings - Rosh Hashanah

Praising and Asking

One of the focuses in Elul should be to recognize all the *chesed* Hashem does for us and to praise Him for them. This idea is hinted at in the *roshei teivos* of מודים אנחנו לך, "We thank You and we praise Your glorious name...." (said in *Vayevarech David*). The *roshei teivos* of these words spell אלול, and the word מודים is in between the letters that spell אלול, because the *avodah* of Elul is to praise Hashem, and to recognize all the kindness He does for us.

Praising Hashem also includes thanking Him for saving us from *tzaros*.

The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) lists the ten miracles that took place in the Beis HaMikdash: לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקודש, ולא הסריח בשר הקודש מעולם, ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים... ולא כיבו גשמים אש של עצי מערכה, "No woman miscarried due to the scent of the *kodashim* meat, the holy meat never spoiled, a fly wasn't seen in the slaughter room...rain never put out the fire on the *mizbeiach*..." These miracles specify the *tzaros* we were saved from, not only the

gifts we received. This is certainly also a reason to praise Hashem.

The *tefillah* of *Modim* is about praising Hashem, so why do we add the request in *Modim*, during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* of "Inscribe all Yidden, with whom You made a covenant, for a good life?"

Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* (*Vayeira* ד"ה נותן) explains that whenever we praise Hashem, it is an ideal time to ask for more. As it states, הודו, כי לעולם חסדו, if you praise Hashem, the kindness will continue forever. So, we praise Hashem for the good we received, and we request that Hashem continue giving us these kindnesses, and even more than before.

We should ask for a good year in Elul, and once again, in Tishrei. As we will discuss later, the beginning of the year is a very special time to daven. And when we daven, we should request a lot. Hashem is כל יכול, He can do anything. When we ask for a lot, Hashem will grant it to us.¹

1. An angel once told a wise person, "Ask whatever you want, and your wish 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. So, the wise man said, "I want to see my great-grandchildren eating from golden dishes." To be granted this request, he would need to have vision, wealth, and children. The moral of this *mashal* is that when one is given the opportunity to ask, he should ask wisely.

Czar Nicolai sometimes disguised himself as a simple person and mingled with the populace to hear what people thought of him. Once, he sat with four people at a bar. He asked them, "If the king would grant you whatever you ask, what would you request?"

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

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

A third said 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."

When the king returned to his palace, he 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; your wish is granted. I will do so."

Reb Naftoli of Ropshitz *zt'l* told the following:

Once, a soldier spotted a soldier from the enemy's army raising his rifle to shoot Czar Nicolai. The loyal soldier shouted loudly. This caused Nicolai's horse to jump. 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 in the army. I want to be moved to a different battalion."

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

Reb 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, and the like. They can ask for much more, and Hashem will grant them their requests.

The Midrash (ילקוט מעם לעז ראה "נתן נתן") tells a story that took place when Alexander Mokdon came to Eretz Yisrael. A Yid came forward

to greet and bless Alexander. 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, its value 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 we say in תפילת דוד כערכך העמד שמינו טל (on Pesach): "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.²

Final Shabbos of the Year

The Sfas Emes (5655) writes, "We really should strengthen ourselves on the final Shabbos of the year [to keep this Shabbos properly], as Chazal say, 'If the Jewish nation keep one Shabbos, they will be redeemed immediately,' and Chazal (Shabbos 12a) say that

During these days, at the beginning of the year, when the King encourages us to request our needs, we should be wise, not like the fourth man, who failed to seize the opportunity before him.

People collecting money usually don't get too much from going around in the *beis midrash*. The *mispa'elim* generally give small donations — a quarter, a dollar, maybe five dollars. But when a needy person visits a wealthy person at his home, he receives far more. Why?

Reb Tzadok HaKohen *zt'l* explains that when someone collects in *beis midrash*, he doesn't *expect* to receive much, and that's why he doesn't get much. But when he 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 so much more.

2. A candy store owner once told a young child that he could take a handful of candies from the candy jar free of charge. The child declined to take the candy himself, so the storekeeper scooped up a handful and handed it to him. When he returned home, he explained why he didn't take the candy himself. "The storekeeper's hand is much larger than mine."

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

when we keep the Shabbos, יכולה היא שתרחם, this arouses Hashem's compassion on us."

The Yismach Yisrael (נ"י סוף אות א) quotes earlier tzaddikim who compared this Shabbos to a long rod. When one lifts one end of the rod, the other end rises together with it. So, too, when one elevates himself and becomes close to Hashem on this Shabbos at the end of the year, it will elevate the entire year, and the upcoming year will be one of goodness and blessings.

Beis Aharon (129b) writes, "We speak about this all the time. The Shabbos before a yom tov is the preparation for the yom tov, as it states (in Kiddush) תחילה למקראי קודש, the Shabbos brings kedushah into the upcoming yom tov."

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (אתם נצבים) writes, "The origin of all the *brachos* and kindness that occurs to the individual, and to all people, throughout the week, is drawn from the Shabbos that precedes it. We understand from this that the awesome day of judgment for Klal Yisrael, the yom tov Rosh Hashanah, on which our lives and *parnassah* are decreed, is all decided and drawn from the Shabbos before it. Therefore, Shulchan Aruch (128:4) states that we always read parashas Nitzavim before Rosh Hashanah, because the word היום alludes to Rosh Hashanah (Zohar Pinchas 231a, and it states נצבים היום). The concept that כולם עוברים לפניו כבני מרון, that all Yidden pass before Hashem in judgment" begins from this Shabbos. The clever will make use of this important day.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zy'a said that at *Shalosh seudos* [of every week] it is decreed how the entire week will be for this person. (Imrei Pinchas 442). So, this Shabbos is a very important Shabbos for us, and in particular, the *shalosh seudos* of this Shabbos is essential.

We gain so much from honoring the Shabbos properly.³

The Baal HaTanya, quoting the Magid of Mezritch, said why we don't say ברכת החודש this week, that this is because Hashem, Himself, says ברכת החודש for this month. The ברכת החודש of every month receives its strength from the ברכת החודש of this week (from the Shabbos before Tishrei). (Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak, p.193).

Preparation for the New Year

It is written (Hoshei'a 6:2), יחינו מימיו ביום השלישי, יקמנו ונחיה לפניו. The Vilna Gaon zy'a says that this *pasuk* refers to the *akeidah*. The *akeidah* took three days. The first two days were days of preparation; Avraham saddled his donkey, chopped wood, and traveled to Har HaMoriah for the *akeidah*. The third day was when the actual *akeidah* took place.

Chazal tell us that *parnassah* comes in the merit of the *akeidah*. The Vilna Gaon clarifies that *parnassah* is earned in the merit of the first two days, the days of preparation. Therefore, it states, יחינו מימיו, our life, and our *parnassah* come from the first two days. ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו, the reward of the third day is reserved and will be given to Avraham in Olam HaBa.

This is because Chazal teach us, "There is no reward in this world for the mitzvos". The reward is reserved for Olam HaBa. However, we are rewarded for preparing for the mitzvos.

Now are the days of preparation, for which we will earn a great reward also, in this world.

The Beis Avraham (Netzavim) writes, "Elul can be compared to erev Shabbos and Tishrei to Shabbos. The sefarim say that the bounty

3. The Imrei Pinchas adds that Shalashudes is called סעודה דזעיר אנפין, "the seudah of the small face," a hint that one should be humble and consider himself small at this meal. Reb Shmerel of Vorchivker zt'l adds that shalashudes is an ideal time to daven to achieve humility. Therefore, on this Shabbos, one should daven that he be humble on Rosh Hashanah. As Chazal (26b) say that on Rosh Hashanah, feeling unworthy is helpful for the judgment.

that comes from Shabbos to the weekdays comes specifically from Tosfos Shabbos (Friday afternoon and motzei Shabbos, the weekday hours that one adds on to the Shabbos). This is because the kedushah of Shabbos is very great [and it is too high to bestow blessings to the weekdays. Therefore, the brachos which come from Shabbos come specifically from *tosfos* Shabbos.] The same can be said about the bounty and brachos that come to us the entire year. They come specifically from the "tosfos teshuvah", the teshuvah and good deeds we do in Elul, before Tishrei arrives."

If most of Elul has passed, and one didn't begin doing teshuvah and good deeds, he should begin now, during the final days of the year. This will bring us bounty and blessings for the upcoming year.⁴

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 2a) states, "One day of the year is considered like a year." The Gemara says that this halachah is related to kings. If a king became king, even just one day before the end of the year, it is considered that he was king the entire year. The following day, when the new year begins, it will be written in documents "the second year to King Ploni." It is the king's second year, because the first year was completed in one day. The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l says that the same can be said about a person who accepts the yoke of Hashem's kingship on the final day of the year. It will be considered like he had made Hashem the King for the entire year. Even during the final moments of the day, before Rosh Hashanah, he can detach himself from the yetzer hara and accept Hashem as King. As the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:2) states, "What is teshuvah? A person should leave his sin, and remove it from his thoughts, and decide in his heart that he won't commit this aveirah anymore." One can have this thought a

moment before Rosh Hashanah as well, and it will be effective.

Once, on erev Rosh Hashanah, just a few minutes before Rosh Hashanah arrived, the Chiddushei HaRim told a chassid that it isn't too late to do teshuvah. It is the final day of the year, an opportune time for doing teshuvah, and as Chazal say, *מקצת היום ככולו*, part of the day is like the entire day. So, in these final moments, he can fix the day, and he can fix the entire year. All this can be achieved with sincere teshuvah.

In the piyut לא-ל עורך דין that we say on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, there is a phrase, *לצופה נסתרות ביום דין*, "To Hashem Who sees the concealed on the day of judgment." Divrei Shmuel zt'l explains that people prepare for Rosh Hashanah, hoping that they will be able to daven properly, but then, when Rosh Hashanah arrives, they might find that their hearts are closed, and they are unable to daven. They see others, who didn't prepare for the yom tov, and they seem to daven with *hislahavus*. The piyut tells us *לצופה נסתרות ביום דין*, Hashem sees the concealed. Hashem sees the brokenness of your heart, and Hashem knows how much you prepared for Rosh Hashanah, and these are your merits.

As the Tzemach Tzedek said to a chassid who complained that he prepares for tefillah, but when he davens, he finds himself unable to daven. The Tzemach Tzedek told him, "Why should you care? You already davened during your preparations." He was explaining that preparation for tefillah is part of the tefillah. So, regardless of whether he was able to daven with kavanah or not, he has tefillah, because of his preparations.

4. In the zemiros before Kiddush (אומר בשבחין) it states, *יהא רעווא קמיה דתשרי על עמיה דיתענג לשמיה במתיקין ודובשין*. The Beis Avraham (נצבים ד"ה תשרי) explains it as follows: *יהא רעווא*, it should be Hashem's will, *קמיה דתשרי*, that before Tishrei arrives, *על עמיה*, the Jewish nation should be aroused to teshuvah and to perform good deeds. *דיתענג לשמיה*, *במתיקין ודובשין*, and they should feel the sweetness of avodas Hashem, and then they will be blessed with children, life, and parnassah.

Erev Rosh Hashanah

The Arugas Habosem zt'l says that at the beginning of Elul, the yetzer hara tricks a person and says, "You still have a lot of time to daven and do teshuvah. You can begin later." At the end of Elul, the yetzer hara returns and says, "It's too late to begin now. You missed most of Elul, and now you will begin? " But it's never too late, and we can accomplish so much, even in the last few moments of the year.⁵

Tzaddikim say that the final Minchah of the year rectifies all the tefillos of the year which were said without kavanah. The Arizal says that all the tefillos of the year that couldn't go up can go up with the *Minchah* of *erev Rosh Hashanah*.⁶

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, just moments before Rosh Hashanah arrives, we say in Minchah, בָּרַךְ עָלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת, requesting that Hashem bless the year. But why do we ask for a brachah now? There are just a few moments left in the year!

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zy'a says that this isn't a question because we are unable to exist, not even for a short time, without Hashem's *brachos* and salvations.⁷

It could be the opposite, too. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l said that on the final day of the year, one can earn a lot of money and receive all kinds of salvations.

The Tur (581) writes, "The Ashkenazic custom is to fast on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*. [Many fast for half a day.] 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, together with his army, to collect the debt. When the king was ten *parsaos* away, the country's leaders came out to greet the king and explained that they couldn't afford to pay the large tax. The king agreed to forgive 1/3 of the debt. The king with his army continued marching toward the country [because he still wanted to collect 2/3rds of the debt]. The middle-class people came forward and cried to the king about their financial hardships, and the king agreed to relieve the country of another third of the debt. When the king got closer to the city, everyone came out to greet the king. 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,

5. Once, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, someone asked Reb Gedalyah Eisenman Shlita (Mashgiach of Kol Torah) for chizuk for Rosh Hashanah. 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!"

6. Rebbe Sholom Shachna of Prebishta zt'l (father of the Ruzhiner zt'l) was in Chernobyl for Rosh Hashanah. He tried to daven minchah with kavanah, knowing that this is from the most critical minchos of the year, but he had difficulty concentrating. Afterwards, Rebbe Nochum of Chernobyl zt'l (Rebbe Sholom Shachna's wife's grandfather) told him that the minchah that he had davened was actually very special, despite his trouble focusing on the tefillah. He told him that his minchah opened the gates of heaven because he tried so hard to daven with kavanah.

This story has many lessons. For one thing, it reminds us that we don't always know what is valuable in heaven and what isn't. Reb Sholom Shachna thought that his minchah wasn't so good, and Reb Nochum Chernobyler revealed to him how much his tefillah accomplished. Heaven saw it differently than he did. The same is with many deeds that we do. We sometimes think that it is a mediocre or insignificant deed, but Hashem views it differently.

7. Someone 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.

the middle-level Yidden fast, and Hashem pardons another third. On Yom Kippur, when everyone fasts, Hashem forgives the Jewish people entirely."⁸

Shulchan Aruch (581:2) discusses this fast, as it states, *נוהגים להתענות ערב ראש השנה*, "The custom is to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah."⁹ The question is that the Midrash (quoted in the Tur) states that tzaddikim fast on erev Rosh Hashanah. Why then does it mention here, that today, everyone fasts?

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos 11, תקצ"ב) answers that in the past, Hashem came to judge us, and in our times, Hashem comes to help us. Like in the mashal stated in the Midrash, when a king comes to demand taxes, it is proper that leading officials from the city should go out to speak to the king, and try to lower the taxes. But there are times when the king comes to help others, such as when he visits the ill in the hospital. At such times, those who are suffering the most should come forward to plead before the king for

his help. In our times, Hashem doesn't come to judge us, because He knows we will be found unworthy, and Hashem doesn't want the destruction of the world. Therefore, Hashem comes to help us. Therefore, everyone fasts on erev Rosh Hashanah, not only the tzaddikim. In our times, every person can plead, and Hashem will save them.

The Chasam Sofer said that this is the meaning of the words we say in Selichos, *לך ה' הצדקה*, Hashem comes to do kindness with us, therefore, *לא בחסד ולא במעשים באנו לפניך*, it isn't solely the tzaddikim who come before You. *בדלים ורשעים דפקנו דלתך*, we come to Hashem like poor people, begging for help. Therefore, *שומע תפילה עדיך כל בשר יבא*, everyone can come forward to pray to Hashem.

These ideas give us chizuk because we understand that the process of judgment has changed in our days to one of compassion. In addition, this lesson reminds everyone of

8. The Kol Bo teaches:

On Rosh Hashanah, when the Satan reports our sins, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "We can't believe you without proof. Bring two witnesses who can confirm your claims."

The Satan calls for the sun to testify that the Yidden transgressed the mitzvot of the Torah. The sun agrees to come. The Satan then needs a second witness, so it invites the moon to testify against the Jewish nation. The moon, however, goes into hiding, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), *בכסה ליום חגיו*, the moon is concealed on Rosh Hashanah. It hides because it doesn't want to testify against the Jewish nation. Without two witnesses, the Satan's words are not accepted, and 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*, a blemish. Why then, asks the Noda b'Yehudah, can the sun not testify alone? The sun can claim that the Jewish nation sinned with their eyes and ears, etc., and have become *בעלי מומים*, blemished people. (This is because 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 says that this is indeed a problem, and he concludes that 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 and with teshuvah, and then, *וכבוא השמש*, when the sun comes to testify, his testimony won't be accepted. For even if you haven't yet completed the teshuvah process, your 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.

9. Shulchan Aruch (581) brings the custom to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah. The Chasam Sofer (printed in many Shulchan Aruchs) adds that people who study Torah don't generally fast on erev rosh chodesh, because their fasting would result in them being weak and learning less Torah. Nevertheless, he writes, on erev Rosh Hashanah, even the Torah scholars are accustomed to fast, *לקבל פני המלך ית"ש*, to greet the face of the King, blessed be His name."

his obligation to do his part to plead to Hashem for a good year.

It states in halachah (581), "You should be cautious to choose the best, and most appropriate *shaliach tzibur* you can find, someone who excels in Torah and good deeds, that he should be the chazan for selichos and the yamim noraim..." It is also brought in the poskim that the chazan and the one who blows shofar should prepare for three days before Rosh Hashanah, checking their deeds and doing teshuvah because the community relies on them to plead on their behalf.¹⁰

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that in our generation, tzaddikim aren't as great as they were in the past, and we can't rely on the

chazanim as much as people relied on them in the past. Therefore, in our times, everyone should consider himself the chazan, and he should be occupied in teshuvah so he will be worthy to plead for himself, his family, and Klal Yisrael.¹¹

Teshuvah

It 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. These words imply that the nation was standing before Hashem, but Moshe himself wasn't. The Sfas Emes explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was saying to Bnei Yisrael, "You are on a higher level than I am. You are before Hashem, but I can't be so close to Hashem."

10. A chazan was studying the machzor before Rosh Hashanah, preparing the melodies and tunes of the tefillos. 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 improvement."

11. The Beis Yisrael of Gur zy'a related the following *mashal*:

The lion, king of the jungle, became angry at the animals of his kingdom and wanted to punish them. All the animals gathered and sought a way to appease the king, but they didn't know what to say or do.

The fox spoke up, "I have three hundred *mashalim* (parables) that I can tell the king to explain our situation and our point of view. He will certainly be appeased. Come with me."

The animals were relieved that the fox had a solution, and they all went together to the lion, the king of the forest.

After walking for some time, the fox told the animals, "I forgot one hundred parables. But do not worry. I still have another two hundred parables." They walked on.

A mile later, the fox said, "I forgot another hundred parables, but there's nothing to worry about. I still have one hundred parables to tell the king."

When they arrived before the lion, the fox whispered to them, "I just forgot the last one hundred parables. It is now up to us to cry and beg the king for mercy."

(The clever fox never had anything to tell the king. But he realized that their only hope was to go to the lion and plead, to arouse his compassion. Therefore, the fox told the animals he had three hundred parables so that they would follow him to the lion. And then he told them that it was up to them to do whatever they could to save themselves.)

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explained that chassidim go to their rebbe for Rosh Hashanah and rely on their rebbe to help them in their judgment. But the rebbe may tell them, "I am at a loss. I don't know what to say to Hashem, to pardon our sins, or how to earn a good year. Now it is up to you to pray and to do whatever you can to appease the King."

As a side note: Reb D. Shariro zt'l (quoted by Reb Chaim Palagi zt'l in מועד לכל חי) tells a segulah that on erev Rosh Hashanah, one should read the first section of parashas Ki Savo (Devarim 26:1-11, until the words והגד אשר בקרבך). Then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will announce, "This person paid up all his debts, and all his sins are forgiven."

As Chazal say, 'In the place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, the greatest tzaddikim cannot stand. You are at a level beyond where I can be.'

The Sfas Emes concludes that this is an encouraging lesson for our generation. We are a lowly generation, which is to our benefit, because when we do teshuvah, we reach the highest levels.

It states (Devarim 30:5) והיטבך והרבך מאבותיך, "He will do good to you, and He will make you more numerous than your forefathers." The Chasam Sofer zt'l wonderfully explains that Hashem made us greater than the *Avos hakadoshim* because we are *baalei teshuvah*,

and *baalei teshuvah* reach levels that the greatest tzaddikim cannot.¹²

A counsel for teshuvah is to accept a *kabbalah tovah*. Slonimer tzaddikim say that a good *kabbalah* is a protection in this world and the next world, but it must be kept continuously.¹³

Simanim

Shulchan Aruch (583:1) states, "Rosh Hashanah, one should eat רוביא...כרתי, סלקא, תמר, קרא. When you eat רוביא say יהי רצון שירבו זכותנו. When you eat כרתי say יכרתו שונאינו... Some have the custom to eat an apple sweetened in honey, and to say, שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה מתוקה, 'Make this new year a good,

12. We begin the brachah of Malchiyus with על כן נקוה לך. The first letters spell עכ"ץ. Chazal tell us that Achan created this tefillah when he was taken to die. Chazal tell us the many sins that Achan committed. Why should we use the tefillah that he wrote? It is to teach us that even if we committed many aveiros, as many and as severe as Achan, we can do teshuvah and pronounce Hashem as King. Malchiyus begins with Achan's tefillah, so we will know that regardless of the past, with teshuvah, we become worthy of proclaiming Hashem is king, and Hashem will accept us.

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

13. Shem MiShmuel (Shoftim 5671) writes, "Even if one sees that in the past, he accepted the yoke of heaven several times, and he didn't change his ways due to that, nevertheless, he shouldn't feel small. He should try once again. That is the strength of Bnei Yisrael... The same is with Rosh Hashanah. A person should make a *kabbalah* to be better for now on and not pay attention to the fact that he had made a similar *kabbalah* the previous year, and nothing came from it. He should believe that this time, he will succeed in changing his ways. In this merit, he will receive a good judgment."

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 11a) states, "Yosef was released from prison on Rosh Hashanah." The Chidushei HaRim zt'l asks why that is important to know. He answers that Yosef represents the *pintelle Yid*, the spark of kedushah that is in all of us. Rosh Hashanah is a mesugal time for it to come forth. Even if one is imprisoned by the yetzer hara, which doesn't permit him to serve Hashem properly, on Rosh Hashanah, he can go free. He can begin to serve Hashem as he desires to do. The month is called תשרי, which means שרי, open, free (שרי ואסר), because a person can become freed from the yetzer hara this month.

On the 12th of Kislev, תש"פ, there was a terrorist attack in Jersey City, in a grocery store, may Hashem protect us from all tzaros. One youngster, a melamed, was coming home from cheder when the shooting began. He was worried that his wife was in the grocery store, as she had told him she would be there at about that time. Fortunately, he found his wife alive and well at home. She told him she had planned to go to the grocery store, 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 Unesaneh Tokef, she made a *kabbalah* to wear a particular type of tznius garment. She ordered it, but it took some time to arrive. It had arrived that day, just as she prepared to leave for the grocery store. She decided to put it on before going to the grocery, and that is when the shooting began. She was saved thanks to her *kabbalah*.

sweet year,' and that is the custom. Some eat pomegranates and say, נרבה זכיות כרימון. And the tradition is to eat fatty meat and all types of sweet foods."

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "There are those who don't cook sour foods on Rosh Hashanah, such as borsht and the like. Those who eat fish—as a sign that we should multiply like fish—shouldn't cook it in vinegar."

The origin of this concept is the Gemara (*Krisus* 6), which states, סימנא מילתא הוא, a sign has significance.

But let us understand this some more. How do the *simanim* help make the new year a good year?

The *Mishnah Berurah* writes, "The *Shlah* teaches that these signs remind the person to rouse himself to *teshuvah* and to pray for these matters." When he eats the apple with honey, he is reminded that he wants a sweet year. When he eats the כרתי, he remembers that this year, he wants to see the destruction of the resha'im, that it should be יכרתו שונאיו. This rouses him to *teshuvah* and to pray for these matters.¹⁴

Reb Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas Shlomo*) writes, "Eating these foods isn't a tefillah. Eating is never a tefillah. Rather, we eat these foods to show our trust that Hashem will give us a good year...and we say on them [that it should be a good year]. If *chas veshalom* there was a harsh decree, it will be turned for the good through our words."

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, "On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, כל מה דעבד רחמנא לטב עבד, '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."

Mishnah Berurah writes, "We do *simanim* as a good omen. Therefore, it's obvious that one must be cautious not to become angry 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 of a sweet year, certainly, if a person is a 'sweet Yid', with a smile on his face, and greeting others warmly, what better omen can there be for a sweet new year?"¹⁵

14. The *Shlah* writes, How do we know that eating the כרתי vegetable will cause יכרתו שונאיו, that our enemies will be cut and destroyed? Perhaps it means the opposite, *chas v'shalom*, that our merits should be cut off! So, it is obvious that it isn't eating the foods that bring the good sign, rather it is the *teshuah* and the tefillah that arouses Hashem's compassion Above.

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

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

There was no fish to serve because it had burnt. His rebbetzin said, "I'm afraid that these are bad *simanim*. So many negative things are happening."

Her husband replied, "The main *siman* is our happy disposition. We eat meat and sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah because these foods help us be happy, and happiness is a good omen for the upcoming year. Baruch Hashem, despite everything, we are happy. So, that is an excellent omen for the coming year.

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 can *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 building. Each mark of the pencil corresponds to something bigger. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint for the year. Therefore, we shouldn't frown

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 to tzedakah, so he spent that night in the cemetery.¹⁶ 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.'

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

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."¹⁷

The chassid, having overheard their conversation, planted his field during the second rain. Everyone's crop was destroyed in the hail that year except for his.¹⁸

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 heaven's decrees. 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 remembered 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

on Rosh Hashanah. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* also said that one should utilize every moment of Rosh Hashanah because each moment is an important part of 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 *ek*, end, of all our suffering.'" (In Yiddish, a tail is called *ek*, ek, end.)

The great mekubal, Reb Yehudah Psayah *zt'l* sat at the head of his table on Rosh Hashanah night, dressed in white garments, surrounded by guests. All went well until one of the guests moved the table, and the candles fell and went 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 entered, holding a large tray of fish, she slipped and dropped the tray, sending fish and sauce across the floor. Reb Yehudah once again didn't allow this to ruin his mood. He went over to help his wife, but then he also slipped on the fish sauce and fell to the ground. 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 terrific.

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

16. 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 home, he might quarrel with his wife on Rosh Hashanah. He didn't go to someone else's house to protect his wife's honor. He slept in the cemetery so no one would know about their fight.

17. The crops that grew after the first rains will be tall and strong and break from the hail. The crops planted by the second rain will still be soft and flexible at the time of the storm and will survive the hail.

18. The *Iyun Yaakov* writes, "In the merit of *tzedakah* [that he gave to the poor] he was rewarded, and the spirits revealed to him the ideal time to plant..."

planted during 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! His wife was angry at him, and he slept in a cemetery! But despite the ominous signs, he became wealthy two years in a row! This is because a 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.

Positive Thoughts on Rosh Hashanah

It is important to think positive thoughts on Rosh Hashanah. Trust in Hashem and believe that Hashem has written very good decrees for you and for *klal Yisrael*, which we will witness throughout the year.

We don't know what is being decreed in heaven, but it is possible that it is being decreed that all poverty, illness, and suffering of the past should disappear. Trust in Hashem and think such positive thoughts, as this is a *segulah* for good things to occur.

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 *אחות קטנה*. 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). These should be our positive thoughts on Rosh Hashanah.

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?

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. Hashem accepted her tefillos, and she gave birth to Dinah. Initially, she had a male in her womb, and it was changed to become a female, due to her tefillos (see Brachos 60a; Rashi Bereishis 30:21).

However, we wonder why we say this on Rosh Hashanah.

Perhaps we can say that it is a miraculous story. A son in the womb miraculously became a daughter. This is the story of Rosh Hashanah. It is a new year, and brand-new things can occur. The reality of the past can turn around, 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."

Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.2 *drush* 5) writes, "היום הרת עולם, 'The world is created today.' ... Similarly, we say *זה היום*, 'This is the day, the beginning of creation.' ... Every Rosh Hashanah, the world is created again. The Arizal elaborates on this.¹⁹ And since it is a new world, we can

19. Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* says that the awareness that the world was created on this day can save us in judgment. He writes:

"We have a valid argument [in the judgment] because we are like newborns; therefore, we cannot be held liable 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."

hope for a better world where the troubles of the past are gone.

On Pesach, we say in *Shemoneh 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 new, better world with more blessings and *yeshuos* than ever before.

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 is 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. These should be our positive thoughts on Rosh Hashanah.

Tefillah at the Beginning of the Year

The Aruch L'Ner writes that throughout the year, our tefillos are generally answered, but sometimes they aren't. However, tefillos said at the beginning of the year are always answered.²⁰

20. A kehillah ordered a prefab beis medresh. A crane came to the site, and as the crane operator was lowering the beis medresh with a remote control, some members of the beis medresh who were there were directing the operator exactly where to lower the structure. They were saying, "Right... A drop left. Go back a bit. No, now come forward..." until it was placed precisely where they wanted it.

Mission accomplished (and money collected), the crane and the construction crew left. The shul members went inside to celebrate the new beis medresh when they realized they had made a grave error. They shouted, "The beis medresh is backward! The aron kodesh is on the wrong side!"

A child asked, "What's the problem? Just say, 'Right, left, front, back', like you said 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, there is indeed an extraordinary power to tefillos said at the beginning of the year.

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* wouldn't consider *shidduchim* offers for his children unless he davened for their shidduch *during* the yomim noraim. Once, a *shidduch* was suggested for one of his children, and he didn't want to consider it because he hadn't prayed for that child's *shidduch* on Rosh Hashanah. But a lot of pressure was placed on him to consider the shidduch, so he looked into it. The *shidduch* transpired, but unfortunately, the marriage didn't last long, *rachmana litzlan*. This is because success, for all matters, needs tefillos, and ideally, the tefillos said at the beginning of the year. (This isn't halachah l'maasah. Reb Yosef Chaim, with his high level, didn't want to make shidduchim without the tefillos of the yamim noraim, but this doesn't apply to all people. Nevertheless, it teaches us the importance of tefillah, especially during these days.)

As a child, Reb Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss *zt'l* (the *gavod* 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 if it was a ruse to send them to the gas chambers. The rabbanim and community leaders didn't know whether to encourage the people to cooperate with the Germans or to hide and escape.

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

It states (*Iyov* 22:28), וְתִגְזֹר אֱמֹר וְיִקֶּם לְךָ, "You will decree, and it will occur." 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 start of the year will be given to you. Miracles will happen, and your requests will be fulfilled.²¹

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 words בני מרון.

One is כבני אִמְרָנָא, like sheep. Rashi explains that this refers to sheep walking one by one through a narrow gate when counted for *maaser*. Every tenth animal is marked with a

The *rosh hakahal* replied that their lives were in grave danger either way, and he didn't know what to advise them. The *rosh hakahal* added that the king of England had arranged a children's transport 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 relayed the bleak report to his city's community leaders, then he went home to pack his bags quickly and to say goodbye to his parents, and then he left on the transport. His mother's parting words were that he should never forget that he's a Yid.

Soon, he was safe in England, 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 either side 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 shoo him away, but the king stopped and called over 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 freedom 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 of coming forth to beg the king to save their families. Only this boy did, and he benefited so much from that. Let this be a reminder to 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 דַּרְשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמְצָאוֹ. If we call out to Him, He will answer us and grant our requests.

21. The Gemara discusses a hired worker who didn't follow his employer's instructions. He planted barley instead of wheat, and since there was a flood that season, all the crops of his field (and of other people's fields) were destroyed. The hired worker claimed that although he didn't follow instructions, he didn't cause any harm. Even if he had planted wheat kernels as instructed, the flood would have destroyed 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 as I told you to, the wheat 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 worker is held responsible since a miracle could have occurred, and the crops would have been spared.

It is known that when it comes to money matters, the rule is הַמּוֹצֵא מִחֲבִירוֹ עָלָיו הַרְאָה, that the onus of proof is on the claimant. Since we obligate the employee to pay damages, it must be that we are sure that the wheat crops would have grown because of the field owner's tefillos.

This Gemara demonstrates the incredible power of tefillos, especially at the beginning of the year.

red marker to indicate that this animal is *maaser*.

The second explanation of מעלות בני מרון is that 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 חיילות בית דוד, 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 אמרנא, according to how we daven. If we daven well, the judgment will be good.

The Gemara also says that the judgment is כחיילות בית דוד, like Dovid's soldiers. This can be explained to mean that the outcome of the judgment will be according to the amount of Tehillim we say during these days.

It is foolish to complain about the long tefillos of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, etc. The long tefillos are for our benefit. All of our tefillos at this time are so powerful.

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."²²

Hav! Hav!

The Zohar says that those who daven for their personal needs on Rosh Hashanah are like dogs who shout, "Hav hav – Give! Give!" From the Zohar, it seems wrong to daven for worldly needs; only daven for Moshiach and spirituality. But this isn't the accepted custom. We do daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah, and tzaddikim encourage us to do so.

One year, before *tekiyas shofar*, the Baal Shem Tov zy'a told his students to daven for *parnassah* and all their worldly needs. His students were surprised because they knew that the Zohar 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*.²³

22. Reb Matisyahu Solomon zt'l was a chazan in Gateshead. When the *misparallelim* came up to the words תשובה, תפילה, וצדקה, everyone shouted, and Reb Matisyahu zt'l shouted even louder so that his voice would be heard. His throat discharged some blood and covered the words רוע הגזירה. (This machzor with the covered words is now in London.) That year, no one died young in Gateshead.

The Baal HaTanya zt'l and other tzaddikim taught that one shouldn't speak much on Rosh Hashanah. The Kedushas Levi takes this 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 conversations. There is a taanis dibur today." Instead of carrying on conversations, we should use our time on Rosh Hashanah to daven and benefit from the specialness of tefillos said at the beginning of the year.

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

Therefore, asking for gashmiyos doesn't contradict the Zohar since we don't ask for gashmiyos for its own sake. We don't daven to become wealthy to make our neighbors jealous or to 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.

Reb Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* once said, "If you take apart and look at the essence of 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 *chedarim* and girls' schools, to marry off their children, to pay for Shabbos and Yom Tov seudos, etc. In this sense, asking for gashmiyos is like asking for *ruchniyos*.²⁴

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

Reb Asher of Stolin *zy'a* says, "The Zohar discourages shouting "*hav hav* – Give more! Give more!" This is when one has enough, and he only wants more. But for one who doesn't have enough, there is nothing wrong with asking for it."²⁵

We say in the Rosh Hashanah *Shemoneh Esrei*, קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין אלוה מבלעדיך. Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that here we are saying that Hashem is קדוש, extremely holy, ונורא, and awesome, and it doesn't seem right for us to ask Hashem for *parnassah* and other worldly matters.²⁶ However, we say, אין אלוה 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 turn to help us? Only You can provide for our needs. Therefore, it is proper that we request them from You."

Tehillim

Saying *Tehillim* is wonderful every day of the year. 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.

24. Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 27), אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש, "I ask one thing from Hashem." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that Dovid HaMelech didn't want to ask for more than one thing because the Gemara (*Taanis* 8:) states that one shouldn't pray for two things at once. The Gemara's source is the pasuk (*Ezra* 8:23) ונצומה ונבקשה מאלקינו על זאת ויעתר לנו, "We fasted, and we asked Hashem for *this*..."

The question is, when we review our *tefillos*, we see that we ask for many things at once. A prime example is *Shemoneh Esrei*. We ask for intelligence, *teshuvah*, redemption, *parnassah*, *refuah*, and more.

But the answer is that all requests are essentially one: We are praying for *ruchniyos*. For that, however, we need *parnassah*, health, and more.

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

26. This can be compared to going to a great, mighty king and asking him for help changing a lightbulb or for 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*.

When I was alive, I recited the entire *Tehillim* every day.²⁷ 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."

Noam Elimelech writes:

"Some people ask: How does *tefillah* help? How can a *tzaddik* pray for a sick person, and the *choleh* gets better? The answer is that man is connected to all worlds. When he sins, he becomes detached from his connection above, resulting in sickness, *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.

There are special benefits to say *Tehillim* in Elul and during the days of the *yomim noraim*.

Throughout Rosh Hashanah, the Baal HaTanya *zy'a* was occupied either with his *machzor* or his *Tehillim*. The Brisker Rav *zt'l* also used every spare moment²⁸ of Rosh Hashanah to recite *Tehillim*.²⁹

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

28. People asked the Brisker Rav why he doesn't learn Torah on Rosh Hashanah, instead of saying *Tehillim*. He replied that when one learns, he sometimes has to look up something. During that time when he is looking for a *sefer*, he isn't learning, and he isn't davening. Therefore, he prefers to say *Tehillim*, because this keeps him occupied the entire time.

29. There is a *segulah* to complete 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 together they said the entire *Tehillim* twice. All of them got engaged shortly after that.

There's an *askan* in Eretz Yisrael who had two sons and a daughter in *shidduchim*, and nothing was progressing. The phones were quiet. They did this *segulah*, and the three children were engaged within the year.

Another person had the privilege of marrying off all his children, but three of his married couples were childless. The father did this *segulah*. He said *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night. That year, all three were blessed with children.

If it is hard to perform this *segulah*, the 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 to run after segulos. It isn't my way. But, twenty years ago, I didn't have children, and that was after twenty-two years of marriage. 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 later, I had my first and only child." He added that his daughter is a kallah.

He also told me that he shared this segulah with 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 twice Tehillim on Rosh Hashanah night was his salvation. The child was born naturally, just with Hashem's blessings.

One Rosh Hashanah, a yungerman from Bnei Brak got up at 2:00 am and said twice Tehillim. His wife often required hospitalization, but that year, she didn't need to be hospitalized.

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

Te Dubno Magid tells a mashal of a Yid who lived among goyim, and the goyim caused him much suffering. When the king visited his city, he wanted to tell the king what he was going through, but the goyim were also there, before the king, and he knew that they would convince the king to ignore his accusations.

The Yid sought counsel from a friend. The friend said, "The goyim are present during the daytime. They aren't with the king at nighttime. Go to the king at night 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 mikatrigim speak against us. But the court of heaven doesn't begin at nighttime, and the mikatrigim aren't present. Now is the time to plead before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and your tefillos will be answered. The Dubno Magid writes, quoting from the kadmonim (gedolim of generations ago), that it is therefore good to daven Rosh Hashanah at night before the mikatrigim arrive.

The Dubno Magid writes that this is alluded at in the pasuk (Eichah 2:19) קוֹמִי רִנִּי בַלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֵׁמוּרוֹת, שִׁפְכִי כַּמִּים לְבָרַךְ "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of Hashem." נִכַּח פִּי ה' means when you are alone with Hashem. That is an excellent time to pour out your heart before Hashem, and your tefillos will be answered.

Here are some more stories of salvations that occurred in the merit of saying Tehillim twice on Rosh Hashanah night.

One Erev Rosh Hashanah, the night of the selichos (called Zechor Bris), I received a call from a famous lawyer in Eretz Yisrael. I was still in the car, in front of the beis medresh "Dushinsky", where I was scheduled to deliver a drashah. I told him that I didn't have time to talk because I must give the drashah, but he insisted it would take only a minute.

He said that his daughter is forty years old. They waited all this time for her to become a kalah, and now they were moments before "*breaking the dish*", to finalize the *shidduch* that just occurred. He told me that exactly a year before, he did the *segulah* of saying Tehillim twice on Rosh Hashanah evening, and he had his salvation... (When I came to the beis medresh to give the drashah, I began the drashah with this story).

A yungerman from Beitar had four children who were all 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 hislahavus for about forty minutes, and in this way, they finished the entire sefer Tehillim *more* than two times.

Tears

The Arizal taught that it is crucial to cry on Rosh Hashanah. The Chasam Sofer says that (Tehillim 89:17) *בשמך יגילון כל היום*, "With Your name they rejoice every day," is *roshei teivos בבי"ה*, crying, because we should cry tears of joy.

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

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 to heaven, and our tefillos will be answered.³⁰

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* taught that one should pray before Rosh Hashanah that he should be able to cry on Rosh Hashanah. He

All four children got engaged and were 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 in the year 5773. Now I 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 got engaged. I plan to say Tehillim this year as well, and hopefully, my twenty-seven-year-old son will also become a chasan."

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

30. In many old *machzorim*, some tefillos (called *techinos*) are written in Yiddish. These were written for women, who in the past often couldn't read *lashon hakodesh*. However, in the past, there were many *am haratzim* among the men, as well, who couldn't read *lashon hakodesh*. Yet no one composed *techinos* for those men. Why is that? It is because of the importance of the tefillos of women. Their tefillos are very powerful because they daven with tears, and tears break through 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, they have a personal channel that elevates their tefillos before Hashem's throne. The few moments that they find to daven, and the few words they manage to say, go up before Hashem's throne, just like the day-long tefillos of the community in *beis medresh*.

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?"

She replied, "Our mother died last year, and my older sister takes care of us. Today is her birthday, and I know she would 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. There is 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,

said that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (Tehillim 42), צמאה נפשי לאלקים לא"ל ח... היתה לי דמעותי, Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צמאה נפשי, "My

heart thirsts; לאלקים, that on the day of judgment,³¹ היתה לי דמעותי, I should be able to cry."³²

accepting the seven dollars and eighty cents as payment.

Later that day, the shocked 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 merchandise doesn't have set prices. I quote a price and the customer counters. 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 was 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 him son from outside the prison walls.

The son told her about the horrible conditions under which he was imprisoned. 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 very long and the lock is rusty. The only solution is for you to cry. Your tears will wash away the corrosion, and the lock will open."

The *nimshal* is that *davening* with tears breaks through all heavenly 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 his favorite wine", he said. "The king will become happy and will certainly forgive us." The good wine is our tears. When we shed tears, Hashem is appeased, as it says, מלך מתרצה בדמעות, "The King who is appeased through tears."

31. אלקים is Hashem's name that represents judgment.

32. A boss told his salesperson, "When a retail customer asks for a price reduction, you can deal with him yourself because you know what I would say if he had spoken with me. 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*, מלך מתרצה בדמעות, "[The *malachim*] who bring in tears, bring our tears before the King who is appeased with tears." We tell the *malachim* that they can bring our tears before Hashem, but nothing more than that. The *malachim* can't deal with the tears themselves. This is because the *malachim* cannot comprehend the depth, sincerity, yearning, and pain of Yiddishe tears; only Hashem alone can. Therefore, only Hashem can receive the tears.

During the Holocaust, the Rebbe of Piaseczna zt'l *hy'd* said, "Did a *malach* ever experience the pain of being beaten and hit 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 bring them before Hashem.

Elef 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), "כי שמע ה' קול בכי", "Hashem heard the voice of my cries."

Similarly, Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zt'l explained the Selichos (יהי רצון מלפניך שומע ייג מידות) "כל בכיית", "It should be Your will, the One Who hears the voice of tears." This means that even if he can't cry, but he wants to cry and he makes a sound like someone crying, Hashem will also answer such tears and tefillos.³³

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 says that actually, the gates of tefillah are also open. The problem is that when we daven without a heart, the tefillos don't go up. It's the heart that's closed, not the gates of heaven. How do we open the

heart? By davening with tears. When we daven with tears (or in a crying voice), that opens our hearts and awakens our *kavanah*. Then, the gates of heaven will be wide open to receive our tefillos.³⁴

The Rebbe of Gostenin zt'l said that דב"ש (honey, which we eat on Rosh Hashanah) is *roshei teivos* שימה דמעתי בנאדך, "Place my tears in Your pouch."³⁵ Tears on Rosh Hashanah make everything sweet.

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, it will prosper at the end." Rashi explains, "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.³⁶

33. A rosh yeshiva who was wheelchair-bound told me that when he traveled, people working at the airport (both in Eretz Yisrael and in America) pushed him in a wheelchair to where he had to go. He was given first-class service, he passed through long lines, and went through special corridors that regular travelers can't go to, unless they pay a lot of money. But the rosh yeshiva received this service for free because of his physical handicap. We are the same, on Rosh Hashanah. Generations ago, there were tzaddikim who engaged in great avodos on Rosh Hashanah. But now we are simple, broken people. The bent shofar tells us that due to our broken state, we will now receive special, first-class service because we need this support and help.

34. 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 תס"ט) explains that this isn't a contradiction. "We can compare it to the joy of a *chasunah*. The *simcha* is immense but mixed with apprehension, as everyone hopes the couple will find success and harmony. Similarly, on this great day of judgment, there is 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."

35. 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, שימה 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 דבש is *gematriya* אב הרחמן, compassionate Father.

36. Reb Chaim Friedlander zt'l explains that the point isn't to *pretend* to be poor on Rosh Hashanah. That is the reality, because everything is decreed on Rosh Hashanah. Right now, one has nothing. On this day, it will be decreed what we will have this year. Even if one has a good *parnassah*, a lot of money in the bank, good friends and family who support him, etc., he must know that nothing is guaranteed. Everything can turn around in a moment. He should feel that he has nothing, and on this day, it will be decreed what will be the coming year.

Similarly, the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26:) says that on Rosh Hashanah, we 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 attitude will help him receive a favorable judgment.

One year, it took a long time before the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* came to the beis medresh, for *tekiyas shofar*. Everyone was waiting for him to come. The Chozeh explained that he didn't want to hear shofar before he found some good deed in himself, but he couldn't find any qualities. All he found were faults. Then he remembered that there was a day that he wanted to perform a particular mitzvah, and he asked his *gabai* to wake him early in the morning. But the *gabbai* overslept, and the Chozeh couldn't do the mitzvah. The Chozeh felt like rebuking his *gabbai* for his negligence, but he reconsidered. He told himself, "Why did I want to wake up early? It is because I wanted to do Hashem's will. Now, it is Hashem's will that I shouldn't become angry." When the *gabbai* came in, the Chozeh spoke kindly to him, as usual. He didn't show any signs of anger. When he reminded himself of this merit, he felt ready to come 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 *tefillas* on Rosh Hashanah.

Before starting the *tekiyas*, Reb Yissachar 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* for the Baal Shem Tov, at the Baal Shem Tov's

minyan. One year, before Rosh Hashanah, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* taught Reb Volf Kitzes deep kabbalistic thoughts to concentrate on while blowing the shofar. Reb Volf wrote down the ideas the Baal Shem Tov taught him, to remember 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 *kavanas* 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 so that he would have a broken heart. The Baal Shem Tov explained, "The kabbalistic thoughts (called *kavanas*) are keys that open the locks of heaven. Each kabbalistic meditation opens another lock. But a broken heart is an axe that opens all doors. Your *tekiyas* with a broken heart went straight up to heaven and accomplished everything."

The *baal makri* (the one who calls out *tekiah*, *shevarim*, etc.) asked my grandfather, Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zy'a*, what kabbalistic *kavanas* he should have in mind when he calls out the *tekiyas*. Reb Dovid replied, "I don't know *kavanas*, and you also don't know them. But one *kavanah* I will tell you. The *shevarim* is a small broken heart, and *teruah* 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 the ripe old age of 106. He repeated what he heard from his grandfather, who was in the beis midrash of Reb Aharon Chernobyler for Rosh Hashanah, when he was a young child. A

I know a youngster who earned a lot of money before Rosh Hashanah, enough to marry off all his children, according to the standards of his *kehillah*. That Rosh Hashanah, he felt a sense of self-sufficiency. However, that year didn't turn out well for him. This is because one must enter Rosh Hashanah with a feeling that he has nothing and is entirely dependent on Hashem's *chesed*. That attitude will bring him a good year.

balcony was built for Rosh Hashanah to accommodate the many guests, but despite the added space, it was still extremely crowded. This child davened downstairs, but due to the intense heat, he fainted.

The child was given water to drink, but it was impossible to get him outside, due to the large crowd, so they brought him near the bimah, where there was more space and air. The bimah was beneath an opening in the ceiling, from where the people upstairs could hear 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'*, Hashem's compassion (represented by the name *הוי"ה*) will also ascend and leave us, *chas v'shalom*, *בקול שופר*, when one thinks that everything is good, and he isn't worried at all."³⁷

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.³⁸

Tears with the Shofar

One year, the Berdichever 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* told the following *mashal*:

A king was traveling with his son to a distant country, and warned him, "Beware of evil people. My enemies live here, and they want to harm 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 planned to shout on that 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.

37. *שפיר* means good and well, as we say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, *שפרו מעשיכם*, improve your deeds, and as the Gemara says, *שפיר קא אמרת*, "You said well."

38. The prince wasn't acting appropriately, so the king banished him from the palace. His son used to work for the government, but he was dismissed from that position, and the king appointed a minister to fill his son's place.

Sometime later, the king regretted having banished his son and asked him to return. The minister heard about this and was worried that the son would return to the palace and to his position in the government, which would mean that the minister would lose his position in the government. So, when the son arrived, the minister painted the son's face black. Now, the king wouldn't recognize him.

The son came before 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*, *אם כבנים... ואם כעבדים עינינו לך תלויות*. This means that Hashem should judge us favorably, for we are His children. Even if we are unrecognizable, we request *עינינו* that Hashem should look into our eyes and see that we rely solely on Him, and Hashem should have compassion on us and save us.

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

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 out in tears. His hot tears fell on the stones, cleansing them.

The prince realized that his stones were now 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 *geulah*. But it doesn't seem to be working. We are still in galus. Why? The answer is that the shofar works together with tears. It does not function when blown without a broken heart and tears.³⁹

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 are sleeping, wake up from your sleep! Examine your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, all those who have forgotten the truth."⁴⁰

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

40. A baal teshuvah shared his personal story:

"One Rosh Hashanah, I was in the hospital, and someone came to blow shofar for us. I was non-religious at the time, and I tried to understand what the shofar was all about. They told me some explanations, and then I told them my explanation:

"I told them that I served in the Israeli Navy, on a submarine. The means of communication underwater at the time was Morse code, and I was a Morse code expert. I could send and receive messages very quickly.

"A couple of years after leaving the navy (and spending time in India), I saw an advertisement: The army was looking for a Morse code expert to be in charge of several submarines. The ad instructed interested applicants to apply on a specific day 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 arrived. Please wait for your turn."

"I didn't listen to her. I walked past her, straight into the room, and chatted with the commander. After speaking briefly, I was hired for the job."

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

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 noticed thieves or any other impending danger, his job was to ring bells, shout, and warn the townspeople below.

Once, the guard saw thieves. He shouted and rang his bells: "*Ganavim!* Thieves!" The wealthy people frantically ran to save their properties, but the poorer folk 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 cause them financial loss.

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 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." He doesn't think the *drashah* was intended for him. Whatever the Rav speaks about, be it *tefillah*, *tzedakah*, or *middos*, there will always be those who think the Rav is talking to others and not to them.⁴¹ Therefore, the Torah tells us to blow the shofar. The shofar shouts, "There's a fire, and we're all in danger!" It is a call to action for everyone.

Our Struggles to Serve Hashem

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) asks, "Why do we blow shofar with a ram's horn (שופר של איל)? 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.'"

A part of a ram is used, to arouse Hashem to remember *Akeidas Yitzchak*. But one can still ask why specifically the horn, the shofar, is used? For example, the Torah could have given us a mitzvah to hold the ram's foot or some other limb. Why specifically the horn?

We can answer that the ram's horn reminds heaven of the struggles and the hardships the Jewish nation goes through to do Hashem's will. Chazal tell us that the ram tried to run to the *Akeidah* to do Hashem's will, but it got tangled in the bush, and it couldn't come out, until Avraham came and untangled it.

So, we blow with the ram's horn (a) to arouse Hashem to remember the merit of

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

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

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

The man replied, "Exactly. I tell my wife all the time that the solution is that she should be *mevater*, but she doesn't get it..." This demonstrates people's tendency to think that others have a problem, failing to realize that they might be the one at fault.

Akeidas Yitzchak, (b) and particularly the horn/shofar, to arouse Hashem to remember all the struggles and hardships the Jewish people endure to perform Hashem's will.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) says that we blow the shofar before Shemoneh Esrei (תקיעת) and again during Shemoneh Esrei (תקיעת) 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, "והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול, On that day, a great shofar will be blown..." and then 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 the Satan is so afraid. Doesn't he remember from last year and from years before that that we blew 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, the tests become harder. Every year, it becomes harder to serve Hashem. The Satan thinks, "This year, due to all the challenges and hardship, the Jewish people are far more precious than ever." Therefore, he fears that the shofar he hears is the *shofar gadol* of Moshiach."

In *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, כִּי, "אתה שומע קול שופר ומאזין תרועה ואין דומה לך, 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) *מאזין* and *שומע* both mean "to listen," but there is undoubtedly a difference between them. What is it?

2) What is the *קול שופר*, and what is the *תרועה*?

3) Why is *שומע* phrased together with *קול שופר*, while *מאזין* goes with *תרועה*?

4) Why does this *brachah* end with the phrase *ואין דומה לך*, "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 two approaches to teshuvah. The firm, long sound of the shofar represents a kabbalah one makes to improve once and for all, and he 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? Hashem is closer to those struggling with their teshuvah. These ideas are hinted at in the *brachah* we mentioned above. *מאזין* means to listen from nearby, and *שומע* is to hear from a distance.⁴² It states *מאזין תרועה*, Hashem is close to those who struggle with their *teruah*, while *שומע קול שופר*, Hashem hears the voice of the shofar from a distance.

The *brachah* concludes: *ואין דומה לך*, "No One compares to You." No one is like Hashem Who listens from nearby to the imperfect people, those who are struggling

42. Moshe Rabbeinu said, *האזינו השמים... ותשמע הארץ*, "The heaven shall listen... The earth should hear..." The *Pri Megadim* explains that Moshe, *איש אלקים*, was closer to heaven than to the earth. Therefore, when he spoke to heaven, he said *האזינו* that they should listen from nearby. To the earth, he called *ותשמע הארץ*, that it should hear from a distance.

to serve Him. This is unlike a human king who prefers the company of the polished, perfect people. Hashem is closer to the people who struggle with their teshuvah, and their service is very precious to Hashem.

Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh *zy'a* once went to the *bimah* to blow the shofar, and through the window, he saw a *davar acher* (pig) eating in a Jewish field. He said, "I will not blow shofar until the *davar acher* is removed from the Jewish field."

People chased the *davar acher* out of the field, and when they returned, Rebbe Yechiel blew the 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 the tzaddikim see in this story that was so amazing?

Some chassidim 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 acher*, the *yetzer hara*, was removed from the Jewish hearts. That is the purpose of the shofar! The shofar removes all the bad from the hearts of Yidden!"⁴³

Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar

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

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

On 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 realizes that the Satan convinced Him to judge the Jewish nation. Hashem says, "If the Satan is so powerful 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 Gemara says about the shofar, בִּיּוֹן דְּלִזְכְּרוֹן הוּא כְּכַפֵּיִם דְּמִי, "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 Kodesh HaKedashim."

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 though we are in the Kodesh HaKedashim.

The Rambam writes, "I, Moshe ben Maimon, when the time for shofar came,

43. The Gemara teaches that *chillul Hashem* is only atoned for with death. This reality causes people to have a heavy heart, because they can't be cleansed entirely from their aveiros their entire lives.

Nevertheless, the holy sefarim teach us ways how we can attain complete forgiveness and atonement for our aveiros, including the severe aveirah of *chillul Hashem*. One approach is by listening to the shofar. The Gemara states that when we blow shofar, Hashem says, "I will remember *akeidas Yitzchok* and consider it as though you sacrificed yourself before Me." A sacrifice means that it is like we died. The Remak says that when we hear shofar, it is like we were sacrificed on the mizbeach before Hashem, and all our aveiros are forgiven, including the aveirah of *chillul Hashem*.

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 shofar."

There are many segulos and brachos that we earn from the mitzvah of *tekiyas shofar*:

Parnassah:

The Shaar HaMelech (3:2) writes, "Before the *brachah* of *tekiyas shofar*, 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."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 117) says, *שופר ורדיית הפת*, "Blowing shofar and removing bread from the walls of an oven require talent but aren't *melachos* (on Shabbos)." The Tiferes Shlomo explains that in this statement, the Gemara puts together blowing shofar with taking bread out of the oven to indicate that shofar is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

Children:

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught that the letters after *עקר* are *שופר*. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to have children. As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, *בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל ורחנה*, "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel, and Chanah were remembered to bear children."⁴⁴ 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, *מי לא*, נפקד כהיום הזה. The Imrei Noam *zt'l* says that

נפקד means to be remembered to bear children. He adds that the *roshei teivos* of *נפקד* is *כהיום הזה*, *הנך*, and *הנך* is Hashem's name related to pregnancies, as it states, *הנך הרה*, "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 *עובר*, 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 *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 *וה' 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.

Refuah:

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,

⁴⁴ In the haftorah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah (I *Shmuel* 1), we read about Chanah, who was upset about her being childless. Her husband, Elkanah, asked her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? I am better to you than ten children."

Chanah ate but was still very distressed. She went to Mishkan Shilo and davened for children. After her *tefillas*, 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 ורחנה*, "On Rosh Hashanah, Chanah was remembered," to bear a child, and it was in the merit of her happiness.

one merits a refuah sheleimah and a long life.

Malchiyus

On Rosh Hashanah, we crown Hashem and inaugurate His kingship over the world. Rav Saadyah Gaon says that one of the reasons we blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah is because it was customary to blow shofar when crowning a new king. We also say the ten pesukim of Hashem's malchus on Rosh Hashanah, called Malchiyus in the Mussaf of Rosh Hashanah. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16.) says *אמרו לפני מלכות כדי שתמלכוני עליכם*, Hashem says, "Say Malchiyos (in Mussaf) before Me so I will be made King upon you."⁴⁵ The Ma'or v'Shemesh explains that this means you should "say the Malchiyos on Rosh Hashanah wholeheartedly because then you will be

able to make Hashem King the entire year."⁴⁶ Throughout the year, we will have a clearer realization that Hashem is present, that Hashem leads us, and that Hashem is king, due to our accepting and recognizing Hashem as king on Rosh Hashanah.

Perhaps this is the reason Rosh Hashanah is called *יום זכרון*, "Day of Memory," because from this day, we are able to remember Hashem, all year long.

Speaking about emunah strengthens our emunah, as the Lechovitzer zt'l taught, (Tehillim 116:10) *האמנתי כי אדבר*, I believe because I speak about emunah. Throughout the Malchiyus and many tefillos of Rosh Hashanah, we pronounce that Hashem is our king, and that emunah remains with us the entire year.⁴⁷

45. The Rebbe of Dzurik, zt'l, said that the difference between a *מלך* and an *אדון* is that an *אדון* is a king who rules as *he* desires, without accepting advice from others. A *מלך* seeks advice from others. (One of the translations of *מלך* is to seek counsel from others. See Brachos 27: *אזל ואמליך בדביתהו*: "He went and conferred with his wife.") The Rebbe of Dzurik said that during the holocaust, Hashem acted as an *אדון* because He didn't accept the tzaddikim's counsel.

The Machnovka Rebbe zt'l (who was a son-in-law of the Rebbe of Dzurik) added that on Rosh Hashanah, when we say Malchiyos, and crown Hashem as king, one of the gains is that now Hashem will lead us like a *מלך* and not as an *אדון*, and He will take counsel from the tzaddikim.

46. Ma'or v'Shemesh writes, "Hashem created the entire world so that every creature should be aware of His kingship, that He rules over everything... Throughout the year, most people can't accept Hashem's kingship with perfection... However, on Rosh Hashanah, we accept Hashem's malchus with love and all our hearts. This enables us to make Hashem 'One' when we say Shema the entire year. Fortunate is the person who merits to have holy pure thoughts of uniting Hashem... during the forty-eight hours of Rosh Hashanah, because this will infuse him with kedushah and deveikus for the entire year. Each moment of Rosh Hashanah gives strength... to internalize the entire year that Hashem is King."

Pele Yoetz (Rosh Hashanah) writes, "If only a person's heart would be filled with yiras Shamayim on Rosh Hashanah... This grants chiyus to his soul for the entire year."

47. In Eretz Yisrael, Yom Tov is generally one day, while in *chutz le'aretz*, yom tov is two days. Rosh Hashanah is an exception. Rosh Hashanah is a two-day yom tov even in Eretz Yisrael.

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explained this with the Midrash (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta* 22) that says the ten days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah correspond to the Ten Commandments (see also *Yaaras D'vash* vol.2 *drush* 1). Accordingly, the first two days of Rosh Hashanah, which are the first two days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, correspond to *אני ה' אלקיך... ולא תהיה לך אלקים אחרים*, the mitzvos of believing in Hashem. *Emunah* must be 100% pure. There can't be any doubts. Therefore, it was established that Rosh Hashanah should be two days all over, and not because of any doubts. For most yomim tovim, yom tov is two days in *chutz le'aretz* due to doubt, *ספיקא*, because they lived far from Yerushalayim, and they didn't know which day was the true yom tov. But when it comes to emunah, there can't be any doubts. So, on Rosh Hashanah, the day we establish the emunah, yom tov is two days everywhere.

Throughout the year, the *chazzan* begins the *tefillah*, standing at the *amud*. On Rosh Hashanah, the *chazan* begins המלך from his seat, wherever he davens in the beis medresh, and only then does he go over to the *amud*. The reason for this custom is unknown (see *Nitei Gavriel*).

Perhaps it is to remind people that wherever they are, whatever tests and challenges they go through, they are in the most ideal place to announce Hashem as King from there.⁴⁸

It states (*Tehillim* 17:2), מלפניך משפטי יצא. The Damesek Eliezer *zt'l* explains, Hashem will make the judgment לפניך, as you want it. Whatever you want for the new year – health, wealth, whatever you desire – it will be yours, as you desire it. The only condition is, עיניך תחזינה מיישרים, that you look at everything through the eyes of *emunah*.⁴⁹

It states (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19) כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו "Whenever I speak of him, I remember him more and more. Therefore, my inner self yearns for him, and I will surely take pity on him" –

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said that Rosh Hashanah is two days in the entire world so that we can keep the concept in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם, "Everyone should join as one to do Your will..." We want to serve Hashem as one, without any divisions and differences between people.

48. Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* once heard a *chazan* say המלך, and he sensed that he said it with *gaavah*. When the opportunity arose, he approached the *chazan* and asked him why he didn't say המלך correctly. The *chazan* didn't understand what he meant, because he said המלך with the traditional tune. Reb Elyah Lopian explained, "When I heard you say המלך, I sensed that you also want to be 'king', and two kings can't wear the same crown."

One of the pious Yidden of Yerushalayim was a *chazan* for many years in the beis medresh זהרי חמה. He davened there on the *yomim noraim*, year after year. Once, before the Rosh Hashanah of year תרפ"ה, a respected person came from *chutz l'aretz* and requested to be the *chazan* that year. The *chazan* didn't know whether he should grant him his request or whether he should stand up for his rights and demand that he remain the *chazan* that year, as well. He asked Reb Shlomo Eliyashev *zt'l* (the *Leshem*). Reb Eliyashev replied, "When one suffers from a disappointment before the days of judgment, that is very helpful for him. It is *mesugal* for a good judgment. In any event, if it is *bashert* that you be a *chazan*, you will be a *chazan* somewhere else." And that occurred; a very respected community called him to be the *chazan*.

49. The Trisker Magid (Magen Avraham, beginning of *Vayikra*) writes that when Esther became queen, the king sent gifts to his subjects (see *Esther* 2:18, והנחה למדינות עשה). This is the custom of kings and queens; when they are crowned, they bestow gifts upon their subjects.

So, on Rosh Hashanah, when *keviyachol*, we have the privilege to crown Hashem as King over the world, Hashem bestows His many *brachos* on us.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states that the slavery in *Mitzrayim* ended on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, each person can be released from his problems on Rosh Hashanah.

It states (*Tehillim* 33:22) יהי חסדך ה' עלינו כאשר יחלנו לך. Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zt'l* explains: We ask Hashem to bestow His kindness upon us, even though He sees that we are unworthy. The reason is כאשר יחלנו לך; we trust in Hashem although we never saw Him. So, too, we request that Hashem should bestow His kindness on us, even when He doesn't see us as being worthy of His kindness.

We say in a *piyut* on Rosh Hashanah, נאפד נקמה סתרו יושר עצתו אמונה פעלתו אמת צדיק וישר. Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* explained: Sometimes a person feels, נאפד נקמה, that Hashem is acting with anger and that Hashem is against him. סתרו יושר, Hashem's attribute of וישר, correctness, סתרו is concealed from him because he doesn't understand why he deserves the punishments he is going through. עצתו אמונה, the counsel is to have *emunah* that this is Hashem's will. פעלתו אמת and then he will merit to understand that Hashem is acting towards him with the truth. צדיק וישר, and he will know that Hashem's ways are righteous and correct.

says Hashem." and we say this pasuk in the Malchiyus. Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz zt'l explains כי מדי דברי בו, I speak to myself, and I think about how often I remember Hashem, and I ask myself, זכור, "Is that called remembering Hashem? It isn't enough! אזכרנו Hashem מעי" "I must remember Hashem more!" לו, this arouses Hashem's compassion on him. Hashem will say, רחם, "Is my compassion enough? ארחמנו עוד, "I will have even more compassion on him."

The Awesome Judgment

It states (Devarim 11:12) מִרְשֵׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִיתָהּ, שָׁנָה, "From the beginning of the year to year's end." Rashi writes, מראש השנה נדון מה יהא בסופה, "From Rosh Hashanah, it is judged what will be in the end of the year."

Also, Rashi (Rosh Hashanah 8a) writes, שהקב"ה דן בתשרי את כל באי העולם כל הקורות אותם עד תשרי הבא, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges in Tishrei all people of the world, everything that will happen to them, until the next Tishrei."

When we think about this, our hearts are gripped with fear. Everything that will occur this year is decided, determined, and decreed on these two days of Rosh Hashanah.

Therefore, it states (Koheles 3:14) וְהָאֱלֹקִים עֹשֶׂה, שִׁירָאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי, "Hashem has acted so man will be in awe of Him." The Zohar says that this refers to Rosh Hashanah. The day arouses us to fear – to fear Hashem.

Rosh Hashanah is called יום תְּרוּעָה, a day of blowing shofar. As it states (Bamidbar 29:1) יום תְּרוּעָה יְהִיָּה לָכֶם, "It shall be a day of... shofar to

you." The expression יום תְּרוּעָה sounds like we blow the shofar the entire day, but that obviously isn't so. We blow one hundred times, and the mitzvah is completed. Why is it called יום תְּרוּעָה, which makes it sound as if the entire day is for shofar?

The Tzlach (Chagigah 14a) explains that יום תְּרוּעָה is describing to us the awesome atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah. Chazal tell us that the sounds of the shofar represent גנוחי גנה ילולי יליל, which means moaning and crying. The entire day is יום תְּרוּעָה, a day of immense fear.

But when we are afraid of Hashem, and when we are afraid of the judgment, there is nothing to fear. The purpose of the fear was accomplished, so we are safe, and there is nothing to fear. As it states (Tehillim 119:161) שָׁרִים רָדְפוּנִי הֵנָּם וּמִדְּבַרְךָ פָּחַד לִבִּי, "Princes have pursued me for no reason, but my heart has feared Your word." When princes pursue me, and I am in danger, I fear Hashem. Thereby, the purpose of the fear was accomplished. The primary purpose was to arouse me to fear Hashem, which I do, and therefore, there isn't anything to be afraid of.

Rebbe Reb Shmelka of Nickelsburg zt'l says that the roshei teivos of שָׁרִים רָדְפוּנִי הֵנָּם, "Princes have pursued me for no reason, but my heart has feared Your word" spell שופר, and the middle word is הֵנָּם, "for no reason". Because the sound of the shofar arouses fear. When we fear Hashem, however, הֵנָּם we have nothing to fear. The purpose of the fear was accomplished, and therefore, nothing bad will happen to us.⁵⁰

50. Mishnah Berurah (584:1) writes, "Although we are certain we will be acquitted and found innocent in the judgment, one must be afraid due to the awe of the judgment. In the merit of his fear, he will be remembered [for 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 full so that he won't come to קלות ראש, lightheadedness on Rosh Hashanah, and he should have the fear of Hashem on his face."

The Rambam (Pirush HaMishnayos Rosh Hashanah 4) writes, "Hallel isn't recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because they are days of avodah, humility, fear, and awe of Hashem. These 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."

Fear Fused with Bitachon

The Beis Aharon of Stolin zt'l said to two of his *chassidim*: "I want you to study *Reishis Chachmah*, the section that describes Gehinom (*Shaar HaGehinom*). When you finish, come back here to tell me what you learned, your thoughts, and impressions."

Both returned on the same day, and the Rebbe spoke with each of them individually. He asked one, "What did you discover in the *sefer Reishis Chachmah*, regarding Gehinom?"

The *chassid* replied, "The punishments of Gehinom are frightening. I tremble when I think about them..."

The Rebbe told him, "You don't need to worry. It isn't as terrible as you think. We have a compassionate Father in heaven, and everything will be o.k."

Then the Rebbe spoke with the second *chassid*. "Did you study the *Reishis Chachmah*? What were your impressions? What did you discover?"

The second *chasid* spoke nonchalantly, repeating what he learned, but it is evident that he wasn't afraid.

The Rebbe said, "You shall know that this is only a sampling of Gehinom. The punishments in Gehinom are far greater..."

There was another *chasid* in the room, who overheard the two conversations. He asked the Beis Aharon, "Should we be afraid of Gehinom, or shouldn't we be? I am confused because I just heard two opposite ideas. To one *chasid*, you said that Gehinom isn't so bad, and he doesn't have to worry about it, and to the other *chasid*, you said Gehinom is far worse than described in *Reishis Chachmah*! So, what is the correct way to think about Gehinom? Should we be worried about Gehinom or shouldn't we?"

The Rebbe replied, "If you are worried about Gehinom, you have nothing to worry about. But if you aren't worried about Gehinom, you have a lot to worry about."

We can say that the same applies to the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah. If you are afraid of the judgment, you don't have to worry about it. Hashem is our compassionate Father, and everything will be fine. But if you aren't afraid, you have a lot to be afraid of. It is true that Hashem has compassion, and He seeks ways to give us a good year, but we should approach the day of Judgment with thoughts of *teshuvah*, *tefillos*, and *trepidation*. It is actually the mixture of these two emotions, fear and *bitachon*, that everything will be good, which will grant us a good year.⁵¹

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 them, the fear of Rosh Hashanah draws people closer to Hashem.

As we say in *Selichos*, אֶת־כִּסֵּי מַחֲמַתְךָ בְּצִלֶּךָ, "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This is the uniqueness of the fear of Hashem. It draws us closer.

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, and it is written, לֹא הַמֵּתִים יִהְיוּ לֵהֱלֹל, "the dead cannot 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 their future will be one of pleasure or distress, wealth or loss."

51. An elderly Yid overheard someone speaking Yiddish. He looked closer and saw that it was from a non-religious young man speaking on the phone. From the few words he heard and from the forlorn look on the person's face, he understood that he must be in trouble. So, when the non-religious person put down the phone, the elderly Yid approached him and asked if he could help.

People were discussing the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah, and one person quipped, "We must believe that Hashem will give us a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah." The Brisker Rav told him that his calm attitude isn't bitachon. "Bitachon is only where there is fear. When one isn't afraid, there is no bitachon. That is not being aware of what is going on." Bitachon follows fear. We should be afraid on the days of awe, and then strengthen ourselves with bitachon, believing that Hashem will undoubtedly grant us a favorable judgment. In this manner, fear and joy merge. But if we aren't afraid at all, it could be that we are ignoring the reality of the occurring judgment.

The Tur (581) writes that most people wear black clothing when being tried in court and

their lives are on the line. However, the Jewish nation wears white clothing because they trust that Hashem will perform a miracle and save them.

We wonder, why do we wear white clothing on Rosh Hashanah? Why don't we wear colorful clothing since we are sure that we will have a good judgment?

The Prishah answers that wearing colorful clothing might imply that we aren't afraid of judgment. Perhaps we don't know that we are being judged, which is why we are so calm and relaxed. By wearing white clothing, the clothes of tachrichim, we show that we know there's a judgment, only we rely on Hashem to give us a good judgment. It is a joy and calmness that emanates from fear, not from denial.⁵²

The non-religious Yid thought to himself, "How can this old man help me?" But since he was so overtaken with his problem, he decided to unload his heavy heart, and to tell him what he is going through. He told the elderly man that he was caught selling drugs. His lawyer advised him to plead guilty, and that would at least lessen the punishment.

The elderly Yid said, "Come with me to a tzaddik. It seems that your lawyer isn't helping you. The brachah, though, can help you."

The irreligious Yid figured that he didn't have anything to lose, so he went with the elderly Yid to the tzaddik. As they walked, the irreligious Yid explained that his parents are Holocaust survivors, and after the war, they threw away their Yiddishkeit. The Yiddish language is the only thing that remained.

The tzaddik blessed the man with hatzlachah. The non-religious man believed in the strength of the tzaddik's brachah and told his lawyer that he had changed his mind and decided to enter a non-guilty plea.

For some reason, at the trial, there was a substitute judge, and not the judge who generally presides in that court. As the day proceeded, it seemed very bleak for the defendant. The evidence against him was incriminating, and his attorney seemed unprofessional. Aside from speaking a lot and rattling on and on, his lawyer didn't really say anything convincing.

However, when it came time to pass the verdict, the judge shocked all those present. He declared: "Since there is no incriminating evidence to convict the accused, he is found to be innocent and can go free."

After the court case, the lawyer revealed how they won the case. He explained, "This was the first case that I took on, and the judge is my grandfather. He wanted to build my self-esteem, so I would believe that I can win cases. He made sure that I won the first court case I represented..."

We see that when a lawyer has a grandfather in the court, there are better chances of winning the case. Certainly, when the judge is the grandfather of the person who is being accused. The judgment of Rosh Hashanah is judged by our Father in heaven. We can certainly trust that since we have a Father on the court, we will come out victorious.

52. Once, during Elul, Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt'l arrived at the beis din in Yerushalayim. The dayanim asked him, "Do you have a case today?"

He replied that he didn't.

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."

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) אִרְיָה שָׁאֵג, "A lion has roared; who will not fear?" He notes that the letters אִרְיָה stand for אֵל, לֹא יִירָא. 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) סֹמֵר מִפְּחָדְךָ בָּשָׂרִי, "My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I fear Your judgment." These words are gematriya 2090, the same as אֵל, לֹא יִירָא. הַשָּׁנָה, יוֹם כְּפוּר, נִעִילָה, הוֹשַׁעֲנָא רַבָּא.

It states (*Koheles* 3:14), וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה שִׁירָאוֹ מִלִּפְנֵי, "Hashem made it that we should fear Him." The *Zohar* (vol.3 98:) says this *pasuk* refers to Rosh Hashanah. Hashem established Rosh Hashanah, so we should learn to fear Him.

The Steipler Gaon zt'l would often repeat in the name of the Chazon Ish zt'l that the definition of *yiras Shamayim* in our generation is to believe that whatever happens to us throughout the year was decreed on Rosh Hashanah.⁵³

"So why did you come?"

He replied, "I wanted to see how people act when being judged. The people who come to beis din are in the midst of a financial dispute, their money being on the line, and I wanted to see their behavior. I saw some people saying Tehillim with a lot of kavanah as they waited for a ruling, and I saw some people animatedly pleading their case. Everyone is worried, everyone is anxious. I thought to myself, why don't we see people being as anxious and worried during Elul when the days of judgment are approaching? And this awesome judgment isn't merely about money. A person's entire future and life are on the line! So, I wonder how people remain so calm in Elul."

We liked to say that it is because people have bitachon and trust that Hashem will grant them good judgment. Halavay that was the source of their calmness. Perhaps it is also because people don't fully appreciate what is at stake.

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

A person who plans to smuggle contraband across the border can't sleep for nights. He is afraid that he will be caught. The hired wagon driver isn't as afraid because it isn't his merchandise. But when they approach the border, he also gets scared. The only one who is never afraid is the horse. We say (Tehillim 32:9) אַל תְּהִי כַסּוֹס כִּפְרָד, "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, and it is appropriate to be afraid, and then to calm our fear with bitachon.

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l told a bachur who committed a grave aveirah, "How could you not have 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 and prevented him from doing this aveirah.

53. A fly was bothering the Chazon Ish. His attendant tried to shoo the fly away, but it kept returning. The Chazon Ish said, "Leave it. It is a Rosh Hashanah fly." He meant that it was destined from Rosh Hashanah that this fly should bother him, and therefore, shooing it away wouldn't help.

This is the basic emunah of a Yid, to know that everything that occurs anytime during the year was destined and determined on Rosh Hashanah.

Rashi (*Rosh Hashanah* 8.) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges the entire world [on Rosh Hashanah, to determine] what will happen to them until next year Tishrei." As the year progresses, we will discover what was decreed in Heaven.⁵⁴

Sometimes, the judgment on Rosh Hashanah is for several years, and not solely for the upcoming year. The *Magen Avraham* (end of 591) proves this from Pharaoh's dream, which occurred on Rosh Hashanah. He

dreamed about seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. The future fourteen years were determined on that Rosh Hashanah.

Even if the judgment is for one year, it is sufficient to fill our hearts with fear. Think about the tefillah of וּנְתַנָּה תוֹקֶף, that we recite with immense fear and awe. מִי יַחִיד וּמִי יָמוּת... מִי יִשְׁלֹ, all these matters, and more, are decided on Rosh Hashanah.⁵⁵

54. We say in the Rosh Hashanah tefillah, הַיּוֹם הָרַת עוֹלָם. The Rokeach explains that הרת means pregnancy because everything that happens during the year has its origin – its pregnancy – on Rosh Hashanah.

55. Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l said, "I am not a heaven person. I don't know what was decreed on Rosh Hashanah. But after the year passes, I know exactly what was decreed last Rosh Hashanah."

Someone was niftar from pneumonia in the middle of the winter in Shevat. Reb Chaim Shmuelewitz zt'l said, "He didn't die from the cold and pneumonia. He was niftar when the sun shone brightly. His fate was determined on Rosh Hashanah.

During a global financial crisis, all wealthy people were worried about their wealth. However, Reb Yosef Weinberg zt'l was a rich person, a relative of the Slonimer Rebbes zt'l, and he wasn't worried at all. The Beis Avraham of Slonim asked him, "How do you remain calm when all wealthy people are so worried?"

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 they truly occur. Everything is determined on Rosh Hashanah.

A group of fishermen cast a large net into the sea with bait inside. Two fish swam into the net, ate the bait, and tried to leave after a while, but they couldn't; they were trapped. One fish told its friend, "We were foolish for spending so much time in the net. We should have taken the bait and left immediately."

The other fish replied, "When we took the bait, we were already trapped."

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.

Rosh Hashanah is called (*Tehillim* 81:4), בְּכֶסֶד לַיּוֹם חֲגִינוּ, "a concealed holiday." The Chofetz Chaim explains that it is called a concealed holiday because the results of the awesome judgment are hidden from us until they happen.

In Radin, before tekiyas shofar, there was a break (as 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 were in 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 his son and place a note in one of the pockets 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 Navi (*Shoftim* 5:1) writes, וְשֵׁר דְּבוֹרָה וּבָרַק בֵּן, "Devorah and Barak sang on that day..." They praised Hashem for winning the war against Sisera. In this song, they said (5:28), ... אִם סִיסְרָא, "Sisera's mother looked out of the window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he delayed?"⁵⁶

Why was Sisera's mother so worried? Sisera was a mighty warrior, and he won every war he fought. She should have assumed that he would undoubtedly 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. Nevertheless, together with our fear, we have bitachon that Hashem, Who loves us, will grant us a good year.

Joy with Fear

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

It states (*Tehillim* 96:11-13) יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ... לִפְנֵי ה' כִּי בָא לִשְׁפֹּט הָאָרֶץ, "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

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

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18.) states, "On Rosh Hashanah, everyone goes before Hashem like בני מרון. The Gemara asks, "What does בני מרון mean?"

"Here, in Bavel, we say that it means כְּבָנֵי אֲמֹנָה, like sheep." This refers to sheep that pass one by one through a narrow gate for maasar. Every tenth animal is hit with red dye as a sign 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. 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 בִּכְסֵה לַיּוֹם חֲגֹו; something is concealed.

But everything can be turned around with teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah.

56. Several laws of shofar are learned from this *pasuk* because the Navi calls her cries תִּיבֵב, and Onkelos translates the word תִּיבֵב as תְּרוּעָה. This teaches us that a shofar should sound like someone crying.

The Midrash states that Sisera's mother shed one hundred tears. This is the origin of the halachah to blow one hundred blasts with a shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

on this day, and we merit to be in His presence.

As is known, Hashem's name *הוי"ה* can be spelled twelve different ways, corresponding to the twelve months. Each month has another formation of Hashem's name *הוי"ה*. The formation for Tishrei is *והי"ה*. The Magen Avraham (of Trisk) *zt'l* explains that this is because Chazal teach us that *והי"ה* represents joy, and in this month we should be happy.

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' מחוקקנו ה' מלכנו הוא יושענו*, 'Hashem is our judge, Hashem is our King, and He will help us.'"⁵⁷

Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*) writes, "Rosh Hashanah is an awesome and fearful day. It

is a day of judgment for the entire world. But it isn't a sad day. It is a joyous day, the joy of teshuvah, ahavah, and deveikus..."⁵⁸

The Avodas Yisrael (*Netzavim*) 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, maybe to hint to us that we don't need to fall on our faces. We should stand before Hashem with love and joy."

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 may be destroyed, *chalilah*. Rosh Hashanah, therefore,

57. Reb Moshe Chaim of Slonim *zt'l* would tell people who were very scared of the Yomim Norai'm, "It isn't a band of thieves who sit in the Heavenly court. It is our Father, and we can trust that He will save His children."

There was a *bachur* who was terrified 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 brought in the *Mishnah Berurah* (583:8). It is because people carry their *machzorim* to Tashlich, and on Shabbos, one cannot carry.

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

58. Sadness draws 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.

It states (*Nechemyah* 2:1-2) *וַיְהִי בַחֲדָשׁ נִסָּן שְׁנַת עֶשְׂרִים לְאַרְתַּחשְׁטָא... וַאֲשָׁא אֶת הַנֶּזֶן וְאַתְנָה לְמֶלֶךְ וְלֹא הָיִיתִי רַע לְפָנָיו, וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִדּוּעַ פָּנֶיךָ כֹּה יָרֹד*, "It happened in the month of Nisan, the twentieth year of King Artachshasta... I carried the wine and gave it to the king. I had never before appeared downcast in his presence. So the king said to me, 'Why is your face downcast? You aren't ill. This can only signify that there is evil in your heart [and you are planning to rebel against me]. I became very afraid.' Why did the king think that Nechemyah wanted to harm him? Why was he so shocked to see that he had a sad face? Isn't it normal for people to be sad once in a while? Didn't the king know that people have ups and downs and experience mood swings?

But the answer is that when one is in the king's palace, everything he wants is before him, and he can also request anything he needs, so there is never a reason to be sad. This is why, when the king saw that he was sad, he figured he must be planning a rebellion. Rosh Hashanah, we are in the King's palace. We say *מלכות*, and declare Hashem's kingship. Everything we want is before us, and anything we need, we can ask for. Our faces should shine with joy. If we appear downcast, the King of the world will question it. Therefore, let us be happy on Rosh Hashanah, and we will receive all the goodness from Hashem.

is a very special day. The world's existence is dependent on this day. It is proper to make this day a yom tov. It is among the special yomim tovim of the year... 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 explains, "Although Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment, nevertheless, the mitzvah of *שמחה בחג*, to be happy on yom tov, applies to Rosh Hashanah, too, because Rosh Hashanah is called a *chag*, as it states (Tehillim 81:4) *בבסה ליום חגנו*, and it states in Nechemiah (8:10, regarding Rosh Hashanah) *אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים... כי קדוש היום לאדנינו, ואתה* '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."⁵⁹

The Maharil writes that the first day of Rosh Hashanah is *דינא קשיא*, severe *dinim*. The second day is *דינא רפיא*, a softer judgment. Shaul u'Meishiv (מהדורה רביעית ח"ג קכ"ה) writes, "This idea that the first day is *דינא קשיא* is difficult to understand because there is proof that it isn't a harsh day at all. The halachah is that we say *shehechiyanu* on this day. We wouldn't say *shehechiyanu* if it weren't a day of joy.⁶⁰ 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."

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."

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 *teruah* are the sounds of a broken heart.

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."

The Joy of Being in the King's Presence

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* related a story that will explain the joy of Rosh Hashanah.

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

59. The Avodas Yisrael *zt'l* (Netzavim) writes in the name of the Magid of Mezritch *zt'l*, "Tzaddikim, although they are very afraid, they trust in Hashem's salvation and kindness, and are determined to return to Hashem. Although their thoughts remind them of their aveiros, which these thoughts are an indication of the kitrug, which is happening in heaven, they 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.

60. 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 for the person who blows the shofar to receive 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.

committed 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 pass through them all, and he caught a few words with the president. In a matter of minutes, the police arrested him, and he was sent to jail. He said it was all worth it for the few moments he spoke to the president. This helps us understand the joy of Rosh Hashanah. Everything is worthwhile to be in Hashem's presence.

As the Berditchever Rav zt'l 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 are thinking about us."

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."

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 this privilege, Hashem thinks well of them. Hashem remembers all the good they do, and He goes off His throne of justice and sits on His throne of compassion. They deserve this because they understand that the greatest gift they can receive from Hashem is that Hashem thinks about them."⁶¹

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we repeat the word ובכן in *Shemoneh Esrei* numerous times. Abudraham 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. 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."

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

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

61. We can compare this to that which is written at the beginning of *sefer Bamidbar*, when Hashem instructs Moshe and Aharon to count the Jewish people. The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 1:45) writes that this was to give the Jewish people an opportunity to stand before Moshe and Aharon. The Ramban writes, "When one comes before the greatest *navi* [Moshe] and his brother [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, individually, passes before Hashem.