

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Rosh Hashanah



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com
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Torah Wellsprings - Rosh Hashanah

Hashem's Kingship

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16:) states that three sefarim are opened in heaven on Rosh Hashanah. One sefer is of perfect tzaddikim, one is of resha'im, and one of beinanim (people between tzaddikim and resha'im), and each person is inscribed in one of these sefarim. If he is written in the sefer of tzaddikim, he is immediately destined to have a good year with peace and blessings.

We are used to thinking that to be written in the sefer of tzaddikim, one had to have lived the previous year like a tzaddik, or at least, have done teshuvah and is therefore worthy to be called a tzaddik.

However, Toldos Yaakov Yosef (Re'eh) expresses it innovatively. He writes that it is dependent on how one plans to live the upcoming year. If he plans to live the year as a tzaddik (to be cautious with the mitzvos, etc.), he will be inscribed in the sefer of tzaddikim and immediately written for a good year of life and peace. If a person plans to live like

a *beinoni* or a *rasha*, he is inscribed in those books and will be judged accordingly.

One of the primary themes of Rosh Hashanah is announcing that Hashem is king and requesting that Hashem's kingdom be known to every creation in the world.¹ Many of the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah are based on this theme.

The mitzvah of shofar is also about proclaiming Hashem's kingship. Reb Saadyah Gaon explains that it is customary to blow shofar when crowning a king. Therefore, we have a mitzvah to blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah, because we crown Hashem as king on Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16.) says אמרו לפני מלכיות כדי שתמלכוני עליכם, Hashem says, "Say Malchiyos (in Musaf) before Me so I will be made King upon you."² 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."³ The segulah

1. 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 coronated, they give gifts to their citizens.

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 leave his problems on Rosh Hashanah.

2. 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 taking advice from others. A מלך asks for advice from others. (One of the translations of מלך is to seek counsel from others. See Brachos 27: אול ואמליך בדביתו: "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.

3. 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... Hashem chose us as His nation, to keep His mitzvos, and to declare His oneness twice a day (during Shema)... Throughout the year, most people can't accept Hashem's

of saying Malchiyos and thinking about the reality that Hashem is King will help you recognize that throughout the year.

It is known from the Lechovitzer zt'l that speaking about emunah brings us emunah. He said (Tehillim 116:10) *האמנתי כי אדבר*, I believe in Hashem because I talk about emunah. This is also alluded to in the words *אמרו לפני מלכות*, speak about Hashem's kingship. Repeat the pasukim of Malchiyos and say other tefillos on Rosh Hashanah about Hashem's kingship. Speaking about it will bring you the emunah.

Therefore, words and thoughts of emunah should constantly be on our minds during Rosh Hashanah. Think thoughts of emunah, such as, "Hashem sees everything. He leads us with hashgachah pratis. Everything that occurs is from Him..." Think these and similar thoughts, say the tefillos that discuss Hashem's Kingship until we will feel in our

bones the message that "Hashem is King." This emunah will draw onto us emunah and deveikus for the entire year.

Furthermore, the emunah will be our merit to be granted a good year.⁴

Yaaras Dvash (vol.2 drush 1) writes that the ten days of Aseres Yemei teshuvah correspond to the Aseres HaDibros. The first two days correspond to the first two of the Aseres HaDibros, *אנכי ה' אלקיך... ולא יהיה לך אלהים*, the two mitzvos that discuss having emunah in Hashem. Therefore, the ideal time to focus on emunah is the first two days of Rosh Hashanah.⁵

Shem MiShmuel (Nitzavim 5673) writes, "An important lesson for a G-d fearing Yid is that during the *yomim noraim*, he shouldn't be cold. Instead, he should perform all of the mitzvos of this seventh month with a lot of *hislahavus* and emotion. If he does so, he will succeed in the judgment.⁶ Each Yid will

kingship with perfection... [Due to aveiros and the yetzer hara's pull, it is hard for people to internalize the truth that everything is from Hashem.] However, on Rosh Hashanah, we should make Hashem our king with love and all our hearts. This will strengthen 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."

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

4. It states (Tehillim 17:2) *מלפניך משפט יצא*. This means that Hashem will judge us favorably, on condition that *עניך תחזינה מישרים*, we should look at everything through eyes of emunah.

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, Hashem should bestow His kindness on us, even when He doesn't see us as being worthy of His kindness.

5. Tosfos (Rosh Hashanah 33:) says that the one hundred shofar blasts we blow on Rosh Hashanah correspond to the one hundred sobs Sisera's mother cried when her son fell in battle. Chazal say that a malach counted her tears, and she cried precisely one hundred times.

We wonder about the connection between the mitzvah of shofar and a non-Jewish woman's tears over her wicked son's death. But we can explain that this is the lesson we want to learn on Rosh Hashanah. Everything is from Hashem, and even the number of a non-Jewish woman cries is also counted and is with hashgachah pratis. Nothing happens by chance.

6. Shem MiShmuel explains that even the very best of the goyim (חסידיו אומות העולם), don't perform their good deeds with *hislahavus*. When a Yid serves Hashem with *hislahavus*, this demonstrates that we are far

receive a good judgment in accordance with his hislahavus." Living with emunah in Hashem and knowing that Hashem hears us, watches us, and cherishes our mitzvos and good deeds will help us serve Hashem in this month with immense hislahavus. We begin attaining this emunah on the first two days of Rosh Hashanah. This is when we say Malchiyos and make Hashem our king and the King of all creations. We will know that Hashem is our King on Rosh Hashanah, and the entire year.

Teshuvah

It states in this week's parashah (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 telling Bnei Yisrael, "You are on a higher level than I am. You are before Hashem, as Chazal say, 'In the place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, the greatest tzaddikim cannot stand. It is a level beyond where I can be.'"

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

It also states in this week's parashah (Devarim 30:5) והיטבך והרבה מאבתוך, "He will do

good to you, and He will make you more numerous than your forefathers." The Chasam Sofer zt'l teaches a fantastic lesson. He 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.

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

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

Before *tekiyas shofar*, we recite Tehillim (47) למנוחה 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.

A counsel for teshuvah is to accept a kabbalah tova. Slonimer tzaddikim say that a good kabbalah is a protection in this world and the next world, but it must be kept continuously.⁷

It states in halachah (581), "You should be cautious to choose the best, and most appropriate *shaliach tzibur* you can find,

superior to even the best goy, and this helps us receive a favorable judgment on these days.

7. Many readers remember that on the 12th of Kislev תש"פ, a shooting took place at a Jersey City grocery store, r'l. May Hashem protect us from all tzaros. One yungerman, a melamed, was coming home from cheder when the shooting began. He was worried that his wife was in the grocery 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, 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. 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.

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.

A chazan was studying the machzor before Rosh Hashanah, preparing the songs 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."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that in our generation, the 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.⁸

Shabbos Selichos

The custom is to begin Selichos on a Motzei Shabbos. Leket Yosher (Orach Chaim vol.1 p.118) explains that people are happy on Motzei Shabbos due to the oneg Shabbos and the Torah they learned. A happy mindset is the correct mood for saying Selichos.

We say in the Selichos, באלה פנים נשפוך שיחים. The literal translation is, "With what face can we pour out our words?" This expresses our shame to speak before Hashem due to our many aveiros. However, we can translate it as a statement: באלה פנים, with the face we received on Shabbos, נשפוך שיחים, we can pray before You. This is based on the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 11:2) ויברך אלוקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו, "Hashem blessed the seventh day..." This means that Hashem blessed them with the shine of His face, and Hashem sanctified them with the countenance of His face.' On Shabbos, our faces shine with joy; with this

8. 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 that I can tell the king."

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

(From the start, the clever fox didn't have anything to tell the king. But he realized that their only hope was to go to the lion and to plead, to arouse his compassion. Therefore, the fox told the animals he had three hundred parables, so 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."

face, we can approach Hashem and beg for forgiveness.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* gave another reason why we begin saying Selichos specifically on Motzei Shabbos. It is based on the Chazal (Shabbos 119:) that says, "Whoever says ויכלו [at kiddush], becomes a partner with HaKadosh Baruch Hu in creation." A partner has permission to express his opinion. For example, a business partner can say how he wants the business to be run. So too, a partner in creation has a right to give his input on how he wants the world to be run. After Shabbos, after we became a partner with Hashem in creation, we have a right to express how we want Hashem to lead the world, and as a partner, Hashem will take our requests into serious consideration. We are partners, and our opinions matter.

We can also explain that we begin saying Selichos after Shabbos because in the merit of Shabbos, our aveiros are forgiven.

The *Siduro Shel Shabbos* says that שב"ת is roshei teivos for שבת בו תשוב – on Shabbos you shall repent. The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* (Divrei Emes, Matos) writes that he heard from Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* that Shabbos is the shorash (origin) of teshuvah. Indeed, the translation of שבת is to return to Hashem.

It states (Yeshayah 42:18), החרשים שמעו והעורים, הביטו לראות, "Deaf ones, listen! The blind, see!" The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks, how can the deaf hear? How can the blind see? He answers, "There are moments so lofty that even the deaf hear and the blind see."

Shabbos Selichos is such a time, when everyone is inspired with a holy urge to improve their ways.

Selichos

The *sefarim* write that the *yamim noraim* begin on the first night of *selichos*. Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l* said that the כתיבה וחתימה of Rosh Hashanah begins on the first night of *selichos*.

On Motzei Shabbos, we say the selichos במוצאי מנוחה, and each line begins with a letter of the alef beis, in alphabetical order. The exception is נו"ן וסמ"ך which are written in the same phrase, two words, next to each other, נא שגבם, "Please elevate them..."⁹ and the roshei teivos spell נ"ס, miracle. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* explains that we don't want to separate these letters because we want to imply that the days of *selichos* are *mesugal* for miracles.

The final line of this *piyut* states תראם ניסך, "Show them Your miracles..." During these days of *selichos*, we ask Hashem to show us His miracles and to grant us all our heart's desires.

We also say on this first night of Selichos, רצה עתירתם בעומדם בלילה, "Desire their prayers when they stand at night." The Munkatcher Rebbe (Shaar Yisachar Tishrei, Selichos, 43) explains that this means they stand up to the tests (which are called לילה, nighttime). They remain steadfast in their emunah, even when encountering difficult tests. We request that in this merit, Hashem should answer their tefillos.

It is the custom of Belzer chassidim to say the entire *Tehillim* on this day, in beis medresh, ברוב עם (many people together). Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zy'a* said that his *avodas Hashem* on the first day of *selichos* is greater than his Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur service.¹⁰

9. Although it states שגבם, the letter נו"ן is interchangeable with סמ"ך, as they are pronounced the same way.

10. When Rebbe Yissachar Dov was old and unwell, his *gaba'im* tried to convince him not to go to beis medrash for *Tehillim* on the first day of *selichos*. But he came to the beis medresh with *mesirus nefesh*. He said, "How can you prevent me from the great *hisorerus* and *hislachavus* of saying the יהי רצון after *Tehillim* together with the congregation?"

The Tur (581) writes, "Most people fast on the first day of *selichos*."¹¹

11. It is brought down in the Imrei Pinchas (445) that "Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* was very *machmir* to *tovel* on the first day of *selichos*, early in the morning, and on *erev* Rosh Hashanah, early in the morning, and on the two days of Rosh Hashanah... Although he was lenient [with *mikvah*], he was more stringent with the *tevilos* these days."

Reb Yaakov Landau *zt'l*, rav of Bnei Brak, generally contained his emotions. On the first night of *selichos*, he was the *chazan*. When he began *Ashrei*, his voice didn't show any emotion, but when he came to תהלת ה', he cried copiously and continued to cry throughout the *selichos*. It was almost impossible to hear his voice through his cries.

Once, before *selichos*, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* told the *chazan*, "Hoych! Hoych! Daven loudly because this will rouse the community to say *selichos* with *kavanah* and *hislahavus*. "Don't be afraid of becoming hoarse because others can take your place."

Someone asked Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*, "I'm a *melamed*, and Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deah 245:17) states that a *melamed* must sleep well. Perhaps I shouldn't go to *selichos* because that would cause me not to get enough sleep."

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld replied, "I don't see any *heter* for you not to wake up for *selichos*."

Leket Yosher (*Hilchos Taanis* 12, p.114) writes, "Once I asked my rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen, to permit me to eat during the days of *selichos*, so I would have the strength to learn as I do all days of the year. He replied that the scholars of the past also knew that fasting would make people weak and that it would be hard for them to learn. Nevertheless, they instituted the custom of fasting during *selichos*. Therefore, I can't permit you to eat."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* once traveled by foot because he couldn't afford to hire a wagon. Someone stopped his horse and buggy beside Rebbe Dovid and offered him a ride.

When they arrived at their destination, Rebbe Dovid thanked him and said, "I have a *beis medresh* in Lelov. Come there on the first night of *selichos*."

The man thought, "I did him a favor, and now he wants to take advantage of me and use me for his *minyán* for *selichos*. One thing is certain: I am not going to his *beis medresh* for *selichos*."

On the first night of *selichos*, Rebbe Dovid entered his *beis medresh* and looked around. The person who gave him the ride wasn't there yet, so he returned to his room.

A few times, he entered the *beis medresh*, looked around, and when he didn't see the person who drove him, he returned to his study.

At this time, the one who gave him a ride was in his home, in a village near Lelov. He thought, "Rebbe Dovid is a holy man, after all. He asked me to come to his *beis medresh* for *selichos*. Why shouldn't I go?"

He drove to the Lelover Rebbe's *beis medresh*. When the Rebbe came out this time, he saw him and immediately began the *selichos*.

After *selichos*, he told him, "You did me a favor this year, and I wanted to give you a *brachah*. I asked you to come on the first day of *selichos* since it is a great *eis ratzon* in heaven for the *brachos* to take effect. I give you a *brachah* that you and your descendants should enjoy immense wealth and long lives."

This account was relayed to me by the great-grandson of the recipient of this *brachah*. He attested, "I am a direct descendant of this individual, and I can testify that the blessing has been fulfilled. Throughout the subsequent generations, our family has experienced prosperity, and everyone has enjoyed long lives."

In our weak generation, most people don't fast. Nevertheless, we must remember that these are special days, and we should devote them to teshuvah and tefillah to arouse Hashem's compassion.

How to Say Selichos

Reb Shalom Schwadron zt'l said that when somebody knocks on your door, you have the choice to answer. But when someone pounds on your door, you understand that the person is desperate, so you open the door to see what is needed. Therefore, we say in selichos, דלתוך דפקנו רחום וחנון נא אל תשיבנו, "We are pounding on Your door... Don't have us return emptyhanded." We are pounding at Hashem's door, desperate for His atonement and salvation, and therefore, we plead that Hashem listen to our prayers.¹²

Tzaddikim tell a mashal of a person who was lost and was wandering around in a forest. He needed food and water and finally spotted a house. He knocked at the door, but the homeowner didn't answer. What did the man do? Did he walk away? Of course not. He didn't have anywhere else to go to. He desperately needed food and drink. He knocked again; he pounded and begged for mercy because he realized this was his only

chance for survival. Similarly, we knock at Hashem's doors, and if they are closed, we knock again, pound, and don't go away until our tefillos are answered because we realize we don't have any other option.

We say on the first day of selichos, רצה עתירתם בעמדם בלילות, "Desire their tefillos..." There are several ways to express tefillah, and עתירה is when one davens many, many times (see Rashi, Bereishis 25:21 ד"ה ויעתר). This is because we don't ask Hashem only once or twice for life, a good year, and atonement. We ask again and again because we recognize our utter desperation and dire need to have Hashem answer our tefillos.

Erev Rosh Hashanah

Erev Rosh Hashanah is a day for tefillah. The Arugas Habosem zt'l says that at the beginning of Elul, the yetzer hara says, "You still have a lot of time. You can daven later." And at the end of Elul, the yetzer hara says, "It's so late, 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.

Tzaddikim say that the final Minchah of the year rectifies all the tefillos of the year which weren't said with proper kavanah.¹³

12. When a poor person approaches a wealthy person for tzedakah in beis medresh, the rich person can say, "I'm sorry, I don't have money with me." But when the poor person comes to the wealthy person's home, he can't say, "I don't have any money with me." He is home. He surely has cash or checks. He can give if he wants to.

This is hinted at in words, דלתוך דפקנו; we are knocking on Your door, נא אל תשיבנו ריקם מלפניך, please don't send us away empty-handed. We are at Your door. You can fulfill all our heart's desires; please answer our tefillos.

13. Rebbe Sholom Shachna of Prebishta zt'l (father of the Ruzhiner zt'l) was in Chernobyl for Rosh Hashanah. He tried hard to daven minchah with kavanah but had difficulty focusing properly. Afterwards, his wife's grandfather, the Meor Einayim, told him that his Minchah was special and opened the gates of heaven. This is because he tried hard to daven with kavanah.

This story has many lessons. One is that it reminds us that the reality isn't always as we see it. We don't know what is valuable in heaven; all we can do is try our best.

Reb Gedalyah Eisenman Shlita is the mashgiach of Kol Torah. One Erev Rosh Hashanah, someone asked him 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."

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. There are just a few moments left in the year! What blessings can we hope to receive in this short period?

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

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

When we are *zoche* to Hashem's *brachos*, we have everything. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* asserted that on the final day of the year, one can earn a lot of money and receive all kinds of salvations.

Erev Rosh Hashanah is also an auspicious day to attain *kaparah*, atonement. The Tur (581) writes, "The Ashkenazi custom is to fast on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*. [In our times, many people fast until *chatzos*.] The Midrash Tanchuma states the significance of this fast: 'It can be compared to a country that owed taxes to a king, and the king came with his army to collect the debt. When the king was ten *parsaos* away, the country's leaders came out of the city to greet the king and explained that they couldn't afford to pay the large tax. The king agreed to forgive 1/3rd of the debt. The king and his army continued marching toward the country [to collect 2/3^{rds} 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 from another third of the debt. When the king got closer to the city, everyone came out to greet the king. At that point, the king forgave the final third of the debt.'

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

The Kol Bo teaches:

On Rosh Hashanah, when the Satan recounts our sins, Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "We can't believe you without proof. Bring two witnesses who will provide testimony." The Satan calls for the sun to testify that the *Yidden* transgressed the *mitzvos* of the Torah, and the sun agrees to come. The Satan then invites the moon to be the second witness, but the moon doesn't want to speak against the Jewish nation. The moon goes into hiding, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), בְּכֹסֶה לַיּוֹם חָגֵינוּ, the moon is concealed on Rosh Hashanah. It hides because it doesn't want to testify against the Jewish nation. Without two witnesses to testify against us, we are acquitted.

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

The Noda b'Yehudah concludes: The solution is *teshuvah*. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:12), וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ עֵרֶב, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם, rinse yourself with tears, וּכְבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, and then, when the sun comes to testify, your testimony won't be accepted, for even if you didn't yet complete the *Teshuvah* process, your tears will wash away the blemish. And then, יָבוֹא אֵל תּוֹךְ הַמַּחֲנֶה,

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

But it isn't too late. We still have many days for *tefillah*, and each can achieve so much.

you will be permitted to return to the camp, for you will be acquitted.

Joy on Rosh Hashanah

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

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

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 ויהי. The Magen

Avraham (of Trisk) zt'l explains that this is because Chazal teach us that ויהי represents joy, and we should be happy this month. Our happiness isn't limited to the yom tov of Succos but begins on Rosh Hashanah and continues in Aseres Yemei Teshuvah and Yom Kippur.

The Siforno (Vayikra 23:24) writes, "Although on this day, Hashem sits on His throne of judgment, it is proper that we rejoice because He is our King, and He will seek to do kindness and judge us favorably. As it states, 'כי ה' שופטנו ה' מחוקקנו ה' מלכנו הוא יושענו', Hashem is our judge, Hashem is our King, and He will help us."¹⁴

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos) writes, "Rosh Hashanah is an awesome and fearful day. It is a day of judgment for the entire world. However, it isn't a sad day. It is a joyous day, the joy of teshuvah, ahavah, and deveikus..."¹⁵

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

The Chinuch (311) writes, "Hashem performs kindness with His creations and

14. Reb Moshe Chaim of Slonim zt'l would tell people who were excessively afraid 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 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 written in the *Mishnah Berurah* (583:8). It is because people carry their *machzorim* to *Tashlich*, and on Shabbos, one isn't permitted to carry.

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

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

15. 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.

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, 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."

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

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 have קלות ראש, lightheadedness on Rosh Hashanah, and he will have the fear of Hashem on his face." This perfectly expresses the spirit of the day. We are happy, but not lightheaded, *chalilah*. Fear of heaven should always be on our faces. Rosh Hashanah is a day of conflicting emotions because we experience fear and joy on this day. We stand in judgment, so we are afraid, but we are also happy and confident that Hashem will find a way to acquit us and grant us a good year.

The Mishnah Berurah explains, "Although Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment, nevertheless, the mitzvah of ושמחת בחגך, 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 אל תעצבו כי חדות ה' היא מעוזכם '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."¹⁶

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

The Shaul u'Meishiv (מהדורה רביעית ח"ג קכ"ה) disagrees. He writes, "This idea that the first day is דינא קשיא is difficult to understand because there are proofs that it isn't a harsh day at all. The halachah is that we say *shehechyanu* on this day. We wouldn't say *shehechyanu* if it weren't a day of joy."¹⁷ (We don't say *shehechyanu* during *sefiras ha'omer* due to the churban Beis HaMikdash.) Therefore, it isn't דינא קשיא. It's a day when Hashem forgives our sins; it is a holy day. On this day, the *imahos* were remembered [to bear children], and all goodness and holy bounty comes from this day."

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

16. 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, an indication of a *kitrug* 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.

17. 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.

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. They are days to escape and to run to Hashem, days for *teshuvah*, tefillos, requests, and forgiveness. Therefore, *Hallel* and joy aren't appropriate on these days."¹⁸

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*, אֲתַנְסֶה מִחֲמַתְךָ בְּצִלְךָ, "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This is the uniqueness of the fear of Hashem. It draws us closer.

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

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

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

The blast of the shofar expresses fear and joy, the two emotions of the day. The *tekiyah* is a sound of joy, while *shevarim* and *teruah* are the sounds of a broken heart. The shofar is the fusion of fear and joy.

Yitzchak Avinu represents fear of Heaven, which is why he is often referred to as *Pachad Yitzchok*, the fear of Yitzchak. Yet Yitzchak also means laughter and happiness. The Sf

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."

Standing Before the King

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

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

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

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

18. The Chasam Sofer taught another reason why we don't say *Hallel*. He explains that it is known that our ancestors join us in our *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is written, לֹא הַמֵּתִים יִהְיוּ יְהִי, "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 the future will be one of pleasure or distress, wealth or loss."

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 **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."

Reb Saadya Gaon says that it used to be the custom to blow horns at the inauguration of a king. When we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, we announce Hashem as King.

When we think about our privilege on Rosh Hashanah, we understand the immense joy. Who are we to announce and crown Hashem? Who are we to stand before Hashem's throne, speak with Him, and connect with Him? This is our immense joy on Rosh Hashanah.

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz *zt'l* says that the *roshei teivos* of **זכרונות שופרות** spell **שמ"ה**. Add one more (the *kollel*), and it is **שמ"ו**. Our great joy on Rosh Hashanah is that we proclaim and appoint Hashem king. The great joy of Rosh Hashanah is that we do so as we stand before His glorified presence.

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 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 good they can receive from Hashem is that Hashem thinks about them."¹⁹

Simanim

On Rosh Hashanah night, we eat simanim, such as an apple dipped in honey, among other simanim.

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

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

Reb Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas Shlomo*) writes, "Eating these foods isn't a tefillah. Eating is never a tefillah. Rather, we eat these foods to 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

19. 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 passes before Hashem, individually.

good through our words. Amen, so shall be His will." Words are powerful. Saying it will be a sweet year is like a prophecy, which has the power to be fulfilled.

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, "On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, כל מה 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."

The ultimate *siman* is to be happy on Rosh Hashanah. The Mishnah Berurah

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

People in Yerushalayim would say, "If an apple dipped in honey is a sign of a sweet year, certainly, if a person is a 'sweet Yid,' by keeping a smile on his face and by greeting others warmly, what better omen can there be for a sweet new year?"²⁰

20. 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 he was cutting the challah, it 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 a 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, we have 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 beautiful building. Each mark of the pencil corresponds to something bigger. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint for the year. Therefore, we shouldn't frown on Rosh Hashanah. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* also said that one should utilize every moment of Rosh Hashanah because each moment 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 עק, end, of all our suffering.'" (In Yiddish, a tail is called עק, ek, end.)

The great mekubal, Reb Yehudah Psayah *zt'l* sat at the head of his table on Rosh Hashanah night, dressed in white clothing, surrounded by guests. All went well until one of the guests moved the table, and the candles fell and 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 flying across the floor. Reb Yehudah once again didn't allow this to ruin his mood. He stood up and went over to his wife to help her up. Without warning, he slipped on the fish sauce and fell to the ground, and now his once-white clothing was covered in fish sauce. Even then, Reb Yehudah remained in happy spirits. He clapped his hands together and said that everything was wonderful.

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

The Gemara (*Brachos* 18) relates a story of a poor chassid who gave tzedakah to another needy person on *erev* Rosh Hashanah during a famine. His wife was upset at him for giving away money they needed to tzedakah, so he spent that night in the cemetery.²¹ 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."²²

The chassid, having overheard their conversation, planted his field by the second rain. Everyone's crop was destroyed in the hail that year except for his.²³

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

That year, everyone planted by the second rain (because they 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 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 *simanim*! 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.

The Fearful Judgment

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 this calm attitude isn't considered bitachon. "Bitachon is only where there is fear. Not being afraid isn't bitachon." We should be afraid on the days of awe and 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.

21. 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 also 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.

22. 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.

23. 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..."

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

The answer is that wearing colorful clothing might imply that we aren't afraid of

judgment. Perhaps we don't believe we are being judged, which is why we are so calm and relaxed. But 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 that emanates from fear, not from denial.²⁴

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

He replied that he didn't.

"So why did you come?"

He replied, "I wanted to see how people act when judged. The people who come to beis din are in the midst of a financial dispute; their money is 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. And then 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 is on the line! So, I wonder how people remain so calm in Elul."

We would like to say that it is because they have bitachon and trust that Hashem will grant them good judgment. Halavay that was the source of their calmness. But perhaps it is also because people aren't fully aware of what is at stake. They didn't entirely appreciate what is being judged and determined on these awesome days. True bitachon, and the joy that we strive to have on Rosh Hashanah, emerges from fear of Hashem and fear of the judgment fused with bitachon in Hashem.

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

A person planning to smuggle contraband across the border can't sleep for nights for fear 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 too gets scared. The only one that never gets scared is the horse. We say (Tehillim 32:9) אֵל תִּהְיוּ כַסּוֹס כַּפֹּר "Don't be like a horse, like a mule..." We shouldn't be like animals who have no fear at all. We are nearing the days of judgment; our baggage will be inspected, and it is appropriate to be afraid and then to calm the fear with the joy of bitachon.

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) אֲרִיָּה שֹׁאֵג מִי לֹא יִירָא "A lion has roared; who will not fear?" He notes that the letters אריה stand for הוֹשַׁעֲנָא רַבָּא, יוֹם כִּפּוּר, נִעִילָה, הוֹשַׁעֲנָא רַבָּא. 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) סִמְרָ מִפֶּחַךְ בְּשָׂרִי וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יִירָאֵנִי "My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I fear Your judgment." These words are gematriya 2090, the same as אֲרִיָּה שֹׁאֵג מִי לֹא יִירָא, הוֹשַׁעֲנָא רַבָּא.

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

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.²⁵

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.²⁶

Sometimes, on Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is for what will occur in the next

several years. The *Magan 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 enough to fill our hearts with fear. Think about the tefillah of ונתנה תוקף, that we recite with immense fear and awe. מי יחיה ומי ימות... מי ישרו, all these matters, and more, are decided on Rosh Hashanah.²⁷

It states (*Koheles* 3:14), והאלקים עשה שיראו מלפניו, "Hashem made 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.

25. A pesky fly was bothering the Chazon Ish. His shamesh tried to shoo the fly away, but it kept returning. The Chazon Ish said, "Leave it. It is a Rosh Hashanah fly." He was saying 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 was destined and determined on Rosh Hashanah.

26. We say in the Rosh Hashanah tefillah, היום הרת עולם. The Rokeach explains that הרת means pregnancy because everything that happens during the year has its origin - its pregnancy - on Rosh Hashanah.

27. 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 Shmuelevitz zt'l said, "He didn't die from the cold and pneumonia. He was niftar from when the sun shone brightly - when his fate was determined on Rosh Hashanah.

There was a time when there was an international financial crisis, and all wealthy people were worried about their wealth. Reb Yosef Weinberg zt'l was a rich person, a relative to 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 it truly occurs. Everything is determined on Rosh Hashanah.

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, "After 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), בכסה ליום הגיו, "a concealed holiday." The Chofetz Chaim explains that

The Navi (*Shoftim* 5:1) writes, וְתָשֵׁר דְּבוּרָה וּבָרַק בֶּן, אֲבִינָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לְאִמּוֹ, "Devorah and Barak sang on that day..." They praised Hashem that they won the war against Sisera.

In this song, they said (5:28), בַּעַד הַחֲלוֹן נִשְׁקָפָה, וְתִיבָב אִם סִיסְרָא... מְדוּעַ בּוֹשֵׁשׁ רִכְבּוֹ לְבוֹא, מְדוּעַ אַחֲרָיו מְרַכְבּוֹתָיו, "Sisera's mother looked out of the

window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he delayed?"²⁸

Why was Sisera's mother so worried? Sisera was a mighty warrior, and he won every war he fought. She should have assumed he would certainly win this war, too. Apparently, she thought, "True, he won

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28. Several laws of shofar are learned from this *pasuk* because the Navi calls her cries תִּיבָב, and Onkelos translates the word תִּיבָבָה 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 halacha to blow one hundred blasts with a shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

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.

Positive Thoughts on Rosh Hashanah

It is important to think positively 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 definitely possible that it is being decreed that all poverty, illness, and suffering of the past should disappear and that better times are imminent. 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). That should be our aspiration, that should be our hope and positive thoughts on Rosh Hashanah.

It is a new year, and everything can turn around for the better. The Gemara (Pesachim 54:) says that seven things are concealed from all people, and one of them is *יום הנחמה*, the

day when all one's tzaros and worries will go away. Perhaps it will happen this year?

In the *yotzros* of Rosh Hashanah, we say *זכר לה יושב מערכות עובר להמיר בבטן אחות*, "The One Who sits in heaven remembered her; a fetus to exchange in the womb of the sister." This refers to when Leah davened that the child in her womb should become a female, and Hashem accepted her tefillos, and she gave birth to Dinah (see Brachos 60a; Rashi Bereishis 30:21).

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

Perhaps it is because it is a story of a miraculous turnaround. A son in the womb miraculously became a daughter. 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, "We say *היום הרת עולם*, 'The world is created today.' We don't say *היום היה הרת עולם*, 'The world was created today.' Similarly, we say *זה היום תחילת מעשיך*, 'This is the day, the beginning of creation,' and we don't say *היה היום תחילת מעשיך*, 'it was the beginning of creation.' Because every Rosh Hashanah, the world is created again. The Arizal elaborates on this.²⁹ And since it is a new world, we can hope for a better world where the troubles of the past are gone.

29. 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."

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.

Hashem blew life into Adam's nostrils, as it states (*Bereishis* 2:7), ויפח באפי 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 tefillos said throughout the year are generally answered, but sometimes they aren't. However, tefillos said at the beginning of the year are always answered.³⁰

30. A kehillah needed a new beis medresh. They bought a beis medresh building from a prefab company. A crane was brought to the site, and as the construction workers were lowering the beis medresh with a remote control, some members of the beis medresh were also there, directing the workers exactly where to lower the structure.

The members of the beis medresh 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), and 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 severe error. They shouted, "The beis medresh is backward! The aron kodesh was on the wrong side!"

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

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

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

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

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 whether it was a ruse to bring 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 or escape.

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

The *Rosh hakahal* replied that their lives were in grave danger either way, and he didn't know what to advise. 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 went home to quickly pack his

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l wouldn't listen to *shidduchim* for his children unless he davened for their *shidduch* during the yamim noraim. Once, a *shidduch* was suggested for one of his children, and he was pressured to look into it. He didn't want to consider it because he hadn't prayed for that child's *shidduch* on Rosh Hashanah. Due to the pressure, he proceeded with the *shidduch*. Sadly, the marriage didn't last long, *rachmana litzlan*. This is because success needs tefillos. Ideally, tefillos at the beginning of the year.³¹

It states (*Iyov* 22:28), וְתִגְדֹּר אֲמֹר וְיָקָם לָךְ, "You will decree, and it will occur." This pasuk discusses the power of tefillah, and 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 is given to you.

The Gemara is referring to a hired worker who didn't listen to his employer. He planted barley instead of wheat, and since there was a flood that season, all the crops of his field (and 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.

bags, said goodbye to his parents, and left on the transport. His mother's parting words were that he should never forget that he's a Yid.

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

The children stood respectfully on 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 send the boy away, but the king stopped and called for the boy. The child thanked the king for saving him and the other children, "But it upsets me that the king's compassion isn't complete because I left my parents and family behind. How can I be happy with my salvation when I'm worried about the safety of my parents and family?" The king asked him for his parents' address. Two weeks later, his parents and extended family arrived in England.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss zt'l recounted this episode and said, "There were another 999 children there. None of us thought of coming forth to beg the king to save their families. Only this boy did, and he benefitted 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 דְּרִשׁוּ ה' בְּהַמְצָאוֹ. If we call out to Him, He will answer us and grant our requests.

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

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

It is known that when it comes to money matters, the rule is *המוציא מחבירו עליו הראיה*, that to obligate someone to pay, you must be sure that he owes the money. You can't obligate someone if you are unsure he owes it. It seems that we are certain that the wheat crops would have grown because of the field owner's tefillos.

This Gemara demonstrates the incredible power of tefillos, especially those said at the beginning of the year.³²

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

The second explanation of *בני מרון* is *מעלות*. 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 *כבני 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.

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

32. The following story reveals the enormous power of tefilla, especially during the Yamim Noraim. As you will see from the sequence of medical records attached on page 25, tefilla during this period can literally smash the rules of nature and effect miraculous change.

A friend of ours didn't feel well throughout the summer of תשפ"ב. He went to a doctor for testing. The results showed a mutation in the JAK2 gene, indicating a severe illness r'l. Further testing confirmed that he was indeed stricken with the "dreaded Machala" r'l. The doctors recommended he begin immediate treatment at the Davidoff haemato-oncology clinic at the Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikva. He replied, "Yom Kippur is approaching. Please give me a chance to daven for my life on Yom Kippur." After begging and pleading, the doctors agreed to postpone the start of treatment until after Yom Kippur.

He went for testing again on the fifth of Cheshvan, which showed an improvement in the condition but nothing conclusive. As such, the recommendation was not to treat and return for further testing in a month. On the tenth of Kislev, another test was conducted; this time, the results clearly showed he was clean from the condition (In the words of medical record #4, "JAK2 שלילי" - Negative). His life was saved with the power of his tefillos.

Now, this isn't a story of a person who lived in the past or about one of the great tzaddikim of our generation. This is about a person who lives with us; a good Jew, but not known to be someone exceptional. The story demonstrates the power of tefillah, especially during this time of the year.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

with the covered words is now in London.) That year, no one died young in Gateshead.

We can now better understand that it is foolish to complain about the tefillos taking too long. The long tefillos are for our benefit for us to gain from each word at this time of year.

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

Hashem, requests that we say Malchiyos and Zichronos so that Hashem will remember us and bestow His kindness upon us. Hashem is solely seeking our benefit so that everything will be good for us."³³

Ask for a Lot

When we daven, we should ask for a lot. Don't be stingy with your requests because Hashem can provide for us all our needs and requests.³⁴

33. The Baal HaTanya zt'l and other tzaddikim taught that one shouldn't speak too 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 conversation." When the Jewish nation is silent below, this is a fair statement to say to the Satan, above, in Heaven. And instead of carrying on conversations, we can use our time on Rosh Hashanah to daven. Tefillos at the beginning of the year are extremely effective.

34. An angel once told a person, "Ask for 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 needed three. So, the wise man said, "I want to see my great-grandchildren eating from golden dishes." For this request to be fulfilled, he would need eyesight, wealth, and children.

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

Czar Nicolai sometimes dressed like 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 want, what would you request?"

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

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

A third said that he would ask for a bank.

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

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 the fourth, he wrote, "You wanted to be left in peace; your wish is granted, and I will do so."

During these days, at the beginning of the year, when the King encourages us to request our needs, we should be wise like the first three men and not like the fourth one, who failed to recognize the opportunity before him.

Poor people don't usually get too much when they collect money in beis midrash. The *mispaletim* generally give small donations — a quarter, a dollar, maybe five dollars. But when a needy person visits a wealthy person at home, he receives far more. Why?

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

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

Once, a soldier saw a soldier of the opposing army raise his rifle to shoot Czar Nicolai. The loyal soldier shouted, which caused Nicolai's horse to jump, and 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 brigade."

"Your request will be fulfilled," Nicolai said, "but you are a fool because you could have requested so much more. Even if you would have 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 and greeted and blessed 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, the present's worth should be according to the eyes of the giver and not according to the receiver's perception."

The Lev Simchah *zt'l* repeated this Midrash and explained that when Hashem gives us gifts, it is according to how Hashem understands a present. We say in תפילת טל (on Pesach): דוד כערבך העמד שמיינו, "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.³⁵

Hav! Hav!

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

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

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

35. 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 refused 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 gives us His kindness it will be far more than what we can take or imagine on our own.

The 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*.³⁶

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 so we can take luxurious vacations. Such *tefillos* aren't appropriate on Rosh Hashanah. But when we daven for *gashmiyos* to have the peace of mind to serve Hashem, it is certainly permitted and even admirable to daven that way.

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*.

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* prohibits shouting "*hav hav* — Give more! Give more!" This prohibition is when he has

enough, and he only wants more. But for one who doesn't have enough, there is nothing wrong with asking.³⁷

We say in the Rosh Hashanah *Shemoneh Esrei*, קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין אלוה מבלעדך. Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that here we are saying that Hashem is קדוש, extremely holy, and it doesn't seem right for us to ask Hashem for *parnassah* and other worldly matters.³⁸

However, we say, אין אלוה מבלעדך, "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? Who can help us if not You? 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, and Klal Yisrael says more *Tehillim* than usual during the *yomim nora'im*.

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 moment of Rosh Hashanah to recite *Tehillim*.

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

A simple person lived in a village near Leport. He only knew Tanach. He was *niftar* at an old age. Thirty days after his passing, he came in a dream to the *chacham* of the

36. 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 his words come forth with sincerity and truth from the depths of his heart to Hashem.

37. 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 designates our *parnassah* for the entire upcoming year. Therefore, it is an ideal time to daven for *parnassah*.

38. 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*.

city, holding an old, worn *Tehillim* under his arm. The *chacham* asked, "Aren't you the person we buried recently?"

"Yes, it is I."

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

"It's a *Tehillim*. I came to warn you and the townspeople to escape immediately. When I was alive, I recited the entire *Tehillim* daily.³⁹ I did this for years, and the *Tehillim* I said protected the entire town, but now you no longer have that protection."

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

The Emek HaMelech concludes, "From the day my father heard this story, he would say the entire *Tehillim* each week. Whoever says *Tehillim* regularly saves himself, his family, and his generation from all kinds of sorrow and distress and draws down from heaven *brachos* and *hatzlachos*. Fortunate is the one who [says *Tehillim*], which benefits himself and his community."

The Noam Elimelech writes:

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

These amazing words give us a glimpse into the wonders of *Tehillim*. When we say *Tehillim*, we become connected to a compassionate world. Therefore, through *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs.⁴⁰

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

40. 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 were engaged shortly after that.

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

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

I've heard several other stories of people who witnessed salvations with this *segulah*.

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

A few years ago, I met a *rav*. He said, "You know I am not the type to run after *segulos*. It isn't my way. But, twenty years ago, I didn't have children after twenty-two years of marriage, and someone put into my mailbox an article that discusses the *segulah* of saying *Tehillim* twice on the night of Rosh Hashanah.

I did this segulah, and nine and a half months later, I had my first and only child." He told me that this daughter is a kallah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Dubno Magid says that the same is true with Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah, by day, there is a great judgment, and mikatrigim speak against us. But the court didn'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.

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

The Dubno Magid writes that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Eichah 2:19) קוּמִי רִנִּי בַלֵּילָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֻׁמּוֹרוֹת, שִׁפְכִי כַּמִּים לְכָךְ "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of Hashem." נִכַּח פְּנֵי ה' means that you are alone with Hashem. It 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 were had in the merit of saying Tehillim twice on Rosh Hashanah night.

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

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

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

All four children got engaged and were married that year!

Year 5780, a yungerman 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. I now have two bachurim, one is thirty and one is twenty-seven, and I have two girls, ages twenty-five and twenty-two. I did the segulah

Tears

The Arizal taught that it is important 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* בנ"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.

In many old *machzorim*, some tefillos (called *techinos*) are written in Yiddish. These were written specifically for women, who in the past often couldn't read *lashon hakodesh*. However, in the past, there were also many *am aratzim* among the men who couldn't read *lashon hakodesh*. Yet no one composed *techinos* for them. Why is that? It is because we need the tefillos of women 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 have a private channel that elevates their tefillos before Hashem's throne. This is partially because of the unique quality of *tefillah* with tears, which women excel in. These tefillos are always answered.⁴¹

together with my children. Each of us took some chapters to say, and collectively, we finished Tehillim twice. That year, three of my children were engaged. I plan to say Tehillim this year as well, and hopefully, my twenty-seven year old son will also become a chasan."

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

41. 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, 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."

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* taught that one should pray *before* Rosh Hashanah that he should be able to cry on Rosh Hashanah. He said that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 42), צמאה נפשי לאלקים לא"ל חי... היתה לי דמעות. Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צמאה נפשי, "My heart thirsts; לאלקים, that on the day of judgment,⁴² היתה לי דמעות, I should be able to cry."

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."

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59) states that even when the gates of tefillah are locked, the

"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 *meshal*:

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 described the horrible conditions under which he was kept there. The queen took pity on him and threw him a key so he could unlock the gate and go free, but the key didn't work.

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

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

The *nimshal* is that *davening* with tears breaks through all heavenly locks and gates.

The Yismach Moshe told the following *meshal*:

"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. The king will become happy and will certainly forgive us." The good wine is our tears. When we have tears, Hashem is appeased, as it says, מלך מתרצה בדמעות, "The King who is appeased through tears."

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

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

Therefore, we say in *Selichos*, 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. *Malachim* cannot comprehend the depth, sincerity, yearning, and pain of Yiddishe tears; only Hashem can receive them.

The Rebbe of Piaseczna *zt'l hy'd* said during the Holocaust, "Did a *malach* ever experience the pain of being beaten 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 תחנון), but when it comes to our tears, they should kindly just bring them before Hashem.

gates of tears remain open. Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* offers a beautiful explanation on this Gemara. He says that the gates of tefillah are also always open. That isn't the problem. The problem is that we daven without a heart. The heart is closed, so the tefillos don't go up. How do we open the heart? By davening with tears. When we daven with tears (or in a crying voice), that opens our hearts and awakens our kavanah, and when we daven with kavanah, the gates of heaven are wide open to receive our *tefillos*.⁴³

We eat honey on Rosh Hashanah. The Rebbe of Gostinen *zt'l* said that דב"ש is *roshei teivos* שימה דמעתי בנאדך, "Place my tears in Your pouch."⁴⁴ 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, 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.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26:) says that on Rosh Hashanah, we should blow a shofar that is curved because "on Rosh Hashanah, the more one bends his heart [with humility], the better." He should feel unworthy,

pleading for mercy. That attitude will help him receive a favorable judgment.

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

Then he remembered that there was a day that he wanted to perform a particular mitzvah, so he asked his *gabbai* 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, "Why did I want to wake up early? Because I wanted to do Hashem's will. Now, it is Hashem's will that I shouldn't become angry." When the *gabbai* came in, the Chozeh spoke kindly to him, as usual. He didn't show any signs of anger. It was with this merit that he came to *tekiyas shofar*.

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

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

⁴³. 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* תפ"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."

⁴⁴. Rebbe Naftali of Melitz *zt'l* said that when Hashem desires to write good things for the Jewish nation, the Satan dries the inkwell, and the ink doesn't write. We ask, שימי דמעתי בנאדך, "Place a drop of our tears into Your inkwell, and then you will be able to write with it."

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

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

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

The Baal Shem Tov replied that he had wanted him to lose the paper and that he should blow shofar with a broken heart. The Baal Shem Tov explained, "The kabbalistic thoughts (called *kavanos*) are keys that open the locks of heaven. Each kabbalistic meditation opens another lock. But a broken heart is an ax that opens all doors. Your *tekiyos*, blown 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 *kavanos* he should have in mind when he calls out the *tekiyos*. Reb Dovid replied, "I don't know *kavanos*, and you also don't know them. But one *kavanah* I will tell you. The *shevarim* is a small broken heart, and *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 106. He

repeated what he heard from his grandfather, to whom the following story happened.

A child was by Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler zy'a for Rosh Hashanah. (The child was an ancestor of Reb Velvel Eisenbach, who was recently *niftar* in Yerushalayim at age 106. He repeated this story.) A balcony was built especially for Rosh Hashanah to accommodate the many guests who arrived for *yom tov*. But despite the added space, it was still extremely crowded. This child davened downstairs, but due to the intense heat, the young child fainted.

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

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

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

The following words are ה' בקול שופר. This can mean ה', Hashem's compassion (represented by the name הוי"ה) will also ascend and leave us, בקול שופר when one thinks that everything is good, and he isn't worried at all."⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶

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

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

One day, the king regretted banishing his son and asked him to return. But the minister was worried that the son would return to his position in the government, which would mean that he would lose his job, so

Tears with the Shofar

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

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

A king was traveling with his son in a distant country. The king warned his son, "Beware of evil people because my enemies live here and 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 and scream on that designated day when the king passed his place of captivity. The king would hear him and rescue him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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, by shofar, you shed true tears at tekiyas shofar," implying that was what saved his life.

Teshuvah and Shofar

The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (a Torah decree), the shofar is telling us something. The shofar is shouting, עורו ישנים משנתכם – Those who sleep, wake up from your sleep! Examine your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, all those who have forgotten the truth."⁴⁷

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, ואם כעבדים ענינו לך תלויות, that Hashem should judge us favorably, for we are His children. But if we are unrecognizable, we request ענינו 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.

47. A baal teshuvah shared his personal story:

"One Rosh Hashanah, I was in the hospital, and someone came to blow the shofar for us. I was non-

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. He would ring bells, shout, and warn the townspeople below if he noticed thieves or any impending danger.

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

Another day, the guard shouted, "Fire! There's a fire!" This time, even the poor

people ran to put out the fire because the fire could consume their meager belongings.

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

For example, if the Rav spoke 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," without thinking that the *drashah* applies to him. He believes he studies enough.

Whatever the Rav speaks about, be it *tefillah*, *tzedakah*, or *middos*, there will always be those who think the Rav is talking to others and not to them.⁴⁸

religious at the time, and I was intrigued by the shofar. I asked many questions about the shofar, wanting to understand what the shofar was all about. I didn't quite get their explanations, so I told them how it appeared to me:

"I served in the Israeli Navy on a submarine. Underwater, the means of communication was Morse code. I was an expert in Morse code. 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 your turn."

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

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

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

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

The irreligious man in the hospital said that he thinks the shofar is speaking a language, only it needs to be deciphered. If you could 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."

Therefore, the Torah wisely 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.

The Struggle

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) שומע and מאזין 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 when one makes a kabbalah to improve once and for all and never goes back to his old ways.

The choppy *teruah* represents the baalei teshuvah who improve and fall again. They

pick themselves up and try once again to succeed in their teshuvah.

To whom is Hashem closer? 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.⁴⁹ 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."

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

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

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

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

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

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

49. Moshe Rabbeinu said, האזינו השמים... ותשמע הארץ, "The heaven shall listen... The earth should hear..." Moshe, the 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 the distance.

The answer is that the ram ran to the akeidah, but its horns got caught in a bush. It struggled to be part of the mitzvah but got caught midway until Avraham came and untangled it. It is the struggle that is so precious to Hashem that we seek to remember.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) says that we blow the shofar before Shemonah Esrei (תקיעת דמיושב) and again during Shemonah Esrei (תקיעת דמומד) 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..." In that era, the Satan will be judged and slaughtered. When the Satan hears the first set of *tekiyas*, "He is afraid, but isn't completely afraid." He fears this might be the shofar heralding the future world when the Satan will be eliminated, but he isn't sure. When he hears the shofar a second time, the Satan says, "This must certainly be the *shofar gadol*. The time of my destruction has arrived." Confused and frightened, he can't speak *kitrug*, *lashon hara* on the Jewish people.

We wonder, why is the Satan so afraid? Doesn't he remember from last year and years before that that we 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, it becomes harder to serve Hashem. The Satan thinks, "This year, due to all the challenges and hardship that the

Jewish nation endured, they are far more precious than ever. The shofar I'm hearing is certainly the *shofar gadol* of Moshiach."

Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh *zy'a* once went to the *bimah* to blow 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 they 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 shofar! The shofar removes all the bad and the *yetzer hara* from the hearts of Yidden!"⁵⁰

Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar

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

50. 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 completely cleaned 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*.

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, חכמה היא ואינו מלאכה, "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*.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught that the letters after עקר"ה are שופ"ר. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to have children. As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנוה, "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel and Chanah were remembered to bear children."⁵¹ Zera Kodesh writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, the day the world was created, is a time *mesugal* for the barren to be remembered to bear children." In the *Mussaf Shemonah Esrei* we say, מִי לֹא נִפְקַד כְּהִיּוֹם הַזֶּה. The Imrei Noam *zt'l* says that נִפְקַד means to be remembered to bear children. He adds that the *roshei teivos* of נִפְקַד is הַנֶּחֱדָה, and הַנֶּחֱדָה is Hashem's name related to pregnancies, as it states, הִנֵּה הָרָה, "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 כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון, ונתנה תוקף we say, The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* translated these words as follows: כמה יעברון, Hashem judges how many women will enter עיבור, pregnancy, that year and וכמה יבראון, how many people will become בריא, healthy, and cured of their illnesses.

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

The Apter Rav *zt'l* (*Ohev Yisrael*) teaches that when we read וְה' פָּקַד אֶת שָׂרָה (that Hashem remembered Sarah to grant her a child), it is *mesugal* for פְּקִידַת עֲקָרוֹת, to bring down the salvation for bearing children.

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

The Midrash states, "When the Jewish people take the shofar and blow it before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 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?"

⁵¹ In the haftorah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah (*I Shmuel* 1), we read about Chanah, who was distressed because she didn't have children. Her husband, Elkanah, asked her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? I am better to you than ten children."

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

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

Chazal say, בִּרְ"ה נִפְקְדָה שָׂרָה רָחֵל וְחַנָּה, "On Rosh Hashanah, Chanah was remembered," to bear a child, and it was in the merit of her happiness.

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, כִּיֵּן דְלוֹזְכְּרוֹן הוּא כַּפְּנִים 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 if he were in the Kodesh HaKedashim.

We conclude with the holy words of the Rambam, who writes, "I, Moshe ben Maimon, when the time for shofar came, took the shofar in my hand, and I thought about Who commanded us to do this mitzvah. My knees knocked against each other from fear, and then I began blowing the shofar."

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

בס"ד

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אירופה:

לעימאנס
+44(0)191 430 0555

