

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Rosh Hashanah





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Rosh Hashanah

A new year is approaching, and everyone is seeking to merit a good year. We hope that in the upcoming year there will be no more troubles for Klal Yisrael. We hope that this year we will do complete *teshuvah* and be attached to Hashem, always. And primarily, we hope that Moshiach will come this year.

Hashem gave us Rosh Hashanah, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, Succos through Simchas Torah so we can merit all of the above. We must be wise and take advantage of the opportunity.

The Chovas HaLevavos (*Shaar Avodas Hashem* 9) teaches the following *mashal* (with some slight variations):

Kings are often greedy, and take advantage of their subjects to become wealthy on their backs. Even a loyal, devoted king costs a lot of money, taken from taxes. One republic, on an island near India, wanted to keep all their money for themselves, and not have to give away a large portion to the king.

They found a solution:

Each year they would take a foreigner, and make him their king, and at the end of the year they sent him back to his homeland. These kings would amass wealth, and they didn't know they would soon be sent away.

At the end of the year, the ministers would send the king back to his country, and all the wealth he amassed had to stay behind. It would all return to the people.

One year, a foreigner was crowned king with great honor, as customary. But this new king suspected the country was hiding something from him. Whenever he asked about it, they all said there wasn't any secret at all.

But the king wanted to get to the bottom of the matter, so he befriended one of the government officials, and asked him, "What is the secret of this country? What happened to all the kings before me?" The official replied, "At the end of one year, you will be sent back to your country. You will have to leave behind all the wealth you amass."

Throughout the year, the king amassed wealth —like all kings do — but he continuously sent his wealth back to his homeland. Large edifices were being built for him in his homeland, far away from this island. When the year was over, he was sent back home to the wealth he amassed.

The *nimshal* is, people think they will be in this world forever. So they amass a lot of wealth, but one day they will be taken away from it all... The wise understand we won't be here forever. They send their wealth — their Torah and mitzvos — to Olam HaBa. When they will get there, they will have the wealth they prepared.

This *mashal* teaches us to take advantage of the special opportunities given to us. We borrow this *mashal* to encourage people to take advantage of these days of *teshuvah* and *tefillah*.

At the beginning of the year everyone is like a king, because he can earn so much, for the entire year. Let's not squander the opportunity. If we will use our time well, we can reap the benefits throughout the year.

Three Days

The Nesivos HaMishpat advises people to take leave of the *yetzer hara* three days before Rosh Hashanah. That means, this year, when Rosh Hashanah is on Tuesday, one should stop listening to the *yetzer hara* from Shabbos. Because a *שונא*, an enemy, is *pasul* to serve as a witness, and we should try to make the *yetzer hara* our *שונא*, so he will be *pasul* for *eidus*.

Chazal teach that if you don't speak with someone for three days because you are

angry with him, he is a *שונא*. So, if we keep our distance from the *yetzer hara* starting three days before Rosh Hashanah, that makes him our enemy, and he will not be qualified to testify against us on Rosh Hashanah.

Halachah teaches that the *baal tokeia* and the *chazanim* should prepare three days before Rosh Hashanah, because the congregation is dependent on them for their success in their judgment.

The Chasam Sofer taught that in our generation the tzaddikim are not as great as in the past and we don't rely on the *chazanim* anymore. Therefore, the entire congregation should prepare themselves three days before Rosh Hashanah (and three days before Yom Kippur) so the *tefillos* will be accepted. ¹

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

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

The fox said "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 king of the forest. After walking some time, the fox said to the animals, "I just forgot one hundred parables, but there's nothing to worry about. I still have another two hundred parables." They walked further.

A mile later the fox said, "I just forgot another hundred stories, but there is nothing to worry about. I still have one hundred parables left 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 say what you can to appease the king."

From the start this 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 whatever they could to arouse his compassion. So the fox told the animals he had three hundred parables to tell the king, so they would follow him to the lion. But at the last minute he told them that it was up to them to say whatever they could to save themselves.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explained that chassidim go to their rebbe for Rosh Hashanah, and

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

Chazal tell us that *parnassah* comes in the merit of the *akeidah*.

The Vilna Gaon clarifies that *parnassah* is earned from the first two days, the days of preparation. Therefore it states, יחיינו מימיים, our life and our *parnassah* comes from the first two days. ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו, the reward of the third day is given to Avraham in Olam HaBa.

We should learn from this the great reward we will earn when we prepare for the awesome *yomim tovim* that are approaching.

Erev Rosh Hashanah

The Tur (581) states, "The custom in Ashkenaz is to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah... The Midrash Tanchuma states: This can be compared to a country that owed taxes to the king and didn't pay. The king came with his army to the country. When the king was ten *parsahs* away, the leaders of the wayward country came forward to greet the king, and explained to the king that

they don't have money, and can't afford to pay the large tax. The king agreed to drop a 1/3rd of the debt. The king and his army continued marching towards the country. Then the middle class people came forward and spoke with the king. The king agreed to relieve the country from another 1/3rd of the debt. When the king came even closer to the city, the entire city came out to greet him. Then the king agreed to waive the final third of the debt.

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

We see from this Midrash that Erev Rosh Hashanah is an important day. It is also a day for accepting the yoke of heaven and for teshuvah.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 2:) states that if a king was crowned on erev Rosh Hashanah, that day is considered his first year, and Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the second year of his rule. The Gemara calls it, יום אחד בשנה חשוב שנה, "One day in a year is counted like a year." Even if he became king erev Rosh Hashanah, a few moments before the end of the day, that is his first year, and

rely on their rebbe to help them in their judgment. But then the rebbe may tell them, "I am at a loss, just as you are. I don't know what to say to Hashem, to excuse our sins and how to earn a good year. Now it is up to you to pray and to do whatever you can, to appease the King."

Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of his second year.

Based on this principle, the Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that if one accepts on himself the yoke of Heaven, even on erev Rosh Hashanah (and even the last moments of erev Rosh Hashanah) it will be considered as if he carried the yoke of Heaven for an entire year. This means, even if a person didn't act properly throughout the year, everything can be rectified on the last of the year.²

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2)

states, "What's *teshuvah*? It's to leave the sin, to remove it from his thoughts, and to be determined never to commit this sin again." *Teshuvah* can be performed in a moment. Therefore, we shouldn't underestimate the greatness of erev Rosh Hashanah, for on this day, one can fix all sins he committed throughout the year.³

In Minchah of *erev Rosh Hashanah* we say, בְּרַךְ עָלֵינוּ אֵת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת, "Bless for us this year." There are only a few moments before the year is over. What type of blessing could possibly help us in this short time?

2. In the *Shemonah Esrei* of Rosh Hashanah, we say the *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19) כִּי מֵדִי קִימָה דְּבַרֵּי בּוֹ זָכוֹר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד עַל כֵּן הָמוּ מֵעַי לֹא רַחֵם אֶרְחַמְנוּ נָא אִם ה' explained, כִּי מֵדִי דְבַרֵּי בּוֹ, when I speak to myself in introspection of my sins, I tell myself, זָכוֹר, "Is that called remembering Hashem? Is the amount and the intensity of how I think about Hashem sufficient?" אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד, "I will improve and begin to remember Hashem more." הָמוּ מֵעַי לֹא, this arouses Hashem's compassion and Hashem says, רַחֵם, "Is how I act with this person called compassionate?" אֶרְחַמְנוּ עוֹד, "I will increase my compassion onto him. I will bestow even more goodness on him..."

3. The Kol Bo teaches:

On Rosh Hashanah, when the Satan tells our sins, Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "We can't believe you without proof. Bring two *eidim* who will say you are speaking the truth." The Satan calls for the sun to testify, and the sun comes. The Satan asks the moon to join him, but the moon doesn't want to speak against the Jewish nation. So it hides, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), בְּכֶסֶה לַיּוֹם חָגֵינוּ (the moon is concealed on the holiday of Rosh Hashanah). Since there aren't two witnesses to testify against us, we are acquitted.

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

The Noda b'Yehudah concludes: The solution is *teshuvah*. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:12), וְהָיָה לַפְּנוֹת עֵרֶב, when Rosh Hashanah is approaching, יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם, wash yourself with tears, וְכִבּוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, and then, when the sun comes to testify, his testimony won't be accepted. Then, יָבוֹא אֶל תּוֹךְ הַמַּחֲנֶה, the Yid will be permitted to return to the camp [of holiness] for he will be acquitted by the court.

But this isn't a question. Someone told Reb Shmuel Aurbach Shlita that at three o'clock in the afternoon, erev Rosh Hashanah, his stocks crashed and he lost a lot of money. Also, Hashem can bring great salvations in a moment (as the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* pointed out). So, the final moments of the year are very significant.

The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz *zy'a* said we request Hashem's blessings on Erev Rosh Hashanah, because we can't be without Hashem's *brachos* for even a minute.

The Frightful Judgment

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

In this song, they said (5:28), בעד החלון נשקפה ותיבב אם סיסרא... מדוע בושש רכבו לבוא, מדוע אחרו מרכבותיו, "Sisro's mother was looking out the window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he coming so late?"

Several laws of shofar are learned from this *pasuk*, because the Navi calls her cries ותיבב, and Onkelus on תרועה [זכרון] writes יבבא, because a shofar imitates the sound of crying.

The Midrash states that Sisro's mother

shed one hundred tears. This is the origin of our custom to blow the shofar one hundred times on Rosh Hashanah.

Why was Sisro's mother so worried about her son? Sisro was a powerful warrior; he won every war he fought. She should have assumed he would certainly win this war, too. Apparently, she thought, "He won every war until now, but maybe this time it will be different?"

The past doesn't promise the future.

Although we are optimistic that only good things will happen to us and to all Klal Yisrael (and the optimism and *bitachon* is a *segulah* for a good year, as we will discuss) nevertheless, a drop of fear – at least tucked in the subconscious – is in place (as this theme is elaborated on in the ונתנה תוקף).

Therefore, the *Zohar* (vol.3 98:) says the *pasuk* (*Koheles* 3:14), והאלקים עשה שיראו מלפניו, "Hashem made we should fear Him" is referring to Rosh Hashanah. It is definitely a frightening day, because our future is being judged.⁴

Rosh Hashanah is called (*Tehillim* 81:4), ובכסה ליום חגיגו, "a concealed holiday." Perhaps this is because the results of the judgment are concealed from us (until they happen).

4. Sometimes, the judgment on Rosh Hashanah isn't only a judgment for what will be this year, rather what will be in the upcoming years. For example, Pharaoh had his dream on Rosh Hashanah, and it foretold seven years of bounty followed by seven years of famine. That one Rosh Hashanah sealed the fate for the next fourteen years (see *Magan Avraham* end of 591).

We can compare this to a mother, who *rachmana litzlan* was *niftarah*, and the family sought counsel how to break this tragic news to her young son. They decided they would buy him a new suit, and put a note with the sad tidings into one of the pockets.

The *nimshal* is:

Rosh Hashanah, everyone is carrying a message in his pocket – it's his verdict for this year. But so far it's concealed, and no one knows what it is.

Another *mashal* is about a young son that was playing at his father's *levayah*. He was too young to understand why everyone was so solemn. The child began playing with the *tzitzis* that covered his father.

Fearing he may pull off the talis, someone told him, “Do you know who is under the talis? It's your father, whom you love, and whom you won't see again.” Similarly, some people are lightheaded on Rosh Hashanah, but it's not right. No one knows what is concealed on this day.

We pray and we trust that the “concealed” message will be a lot of good fortune and immense bounty. It is important to be optimistic on Rosh Hashanah and to think positive thoughts. Nevertheless, at least the subconscious must be aware of the great fright, so we can relate to the day with the proper fear and respect.

The first night of *selichos* we discuss the immense fear of Rosh Hashanah, זורחלים ורועדים מיום בואך חלים כמבכירה מעברת משאך

“They are afraid and they tremble from the day when You will come [on Rosh Hashanah]. They tremble like a woman who is having her first child...” The *Yismach Yisrael* (מאורן של ישראל למוצ"ש) (סליחות) explains:

“When a woman is giving birth to her first child, she is more worried about her labor pains than a woman who already went through labor before. But after she gives birth, she is very happy. Similarly, Bnei Yisrael are very afraid from the upcoming judgment. But in the end, they will be very happy... As it states (*Tehillim* 2:11), עבדו את ה' ביראה וגילו ברעדה, ‘serve Hashem with fear and rejoice with trembling.’”

Everything Becomes Sweet

Primarily, on Rosh Hashanah, we should be thinking happy thoughts. Therefore we should be thinking about how everything will turn around on Rosh Hashanah, and everything will become good, and all the troubles will end, *be'ezras Hashem*.

Sweet honey comes from pesky bees that cause pain and discomfort. The *Avnei Nezer zt'l* says we dip the challah and apple in honey to indicate that on Rosh Hashanah, all the hardships we had to deal with in the past disappear and become sweet.

When insects' limbs fall into honey, they sometimes become permitted to eat (see *Shulchan Aruch Yorah Deiah* 84) because everything dissolves and turns into honey. The *Shem MiShmuel* writes that this describes Rosh Hashanah, for it

all the bad of the past can turn sweet in the future.

The Imrei Emes *zy'a* said "Yosef left prison on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, everyone has his own personal imprisonment. He can be released to freedom on this day." (The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said this to a group of chassidim who came to him for Rosh Hashanah, and who had recently lost a lot of money. He was encouraging them that on Rosh Hashanah, everything can become good again.)

In the *yotzros* of Rosh Hashanah, we say, זכר לה יושב מערכות עובר להמיר בבטן אחות. These words describe how Leah prayed that the child in her womb should become a girl. (Dinah was born from this prayer.) How does this episode associate with Rosh Hashanah?

It reminds us that a new year has come, and things can change and become better than ever before.

A New Creation

Rebbe Yohonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.2 *drush* 5) says, every Rosh Hashanah, Hashem creates the world again. As we say, היום הרת עולם, "Today the world is created."⁵

Also, in *Shemonah Esrei* we say, זה היום

תחילת מעשיך, "This day, the beginning of your creation."⁶ It is a brand new creation, and we pray and we trust that it will be a better world than ever before, for us and for all Yidden.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* teaches that when we listen to shofar, Hashem blows new life into us, and we become a new person. Just like by the six days of Creation it states (*Bereishis* 2), ויפח באפיו נשמת היום, "Hashem blew a breath of life into Adam's nose," this happens annually when we blow the shofar.⁷

Blueprint

After Rosh Hashanah, Reb Eliyahu Dessler (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu Elul* p.74) would say, "I wasn't in heaven, and I don't know *beis din's* conclusion. However, I will know what happened there as the year passes."

We say, היום הרת עולם, "Today the world was created." The Rokeach explains that הרת means pregnancy, because everything that will happen during the year, has its origin — its pregnancy — on Rosh Hashanah.

Reb Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* compared Rosh Hashanah to an architect who draws up

5. If it were referring to the past, we would say היום היה הרת עולם.

6. We don't say, זה היום היה תחילת מעשיך. It seems the world was created today, again.

7. One won't buy a brand new piece of furniture if he sees a scratch on it. But if one already owns the furniture, he won't throw it out because of a scratch. The *nimshal* is the world is being created anew on this day, therefore there is a greater need and caution that everything should be perfect, without any *aveiros*. It's a new world, and we should do our part to make it a good world.

a blueprint for a great, beautiful building. Each mark of the pencil means something. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint for what will happen during the year.⁸

As 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.”

Pesach is זמן חרותנו, because Pesach commemorates our freedom from Mitzrayim. Therefore, in Shemonah Esrei and in *benching*, we say חג הפסח הזה זמן חרותנו. Similarly, Shavuos is זמן מתן תורתנו, because we are commemorating that Hashem gave us the Torah on Shavuos. But on Rosh Hashanah, we say יום תרועה, and we don't add זמן... This is because Rosh Hashanah doesn't commemorate the past. It is determining the future.

There was a time when there was a financial crash in the world, and the business people in Yerushalayim were also affected by it. They were anxiously waiting to see how matters would turn out. Throughout this time, there was a

special, wealthy Yid in Yerushalayim called Reb Yosef Weinberg z'l, and he didn't show any signs of worry at all. The Birchas Avraham noticed his tranquility and asked him how he maintains his tranquility when everyone is so worried. Reb Yosef Weinberg replied, “My market day is Rosh Hashanah. (מיין יריד איז ר"ה). On Rosh Hashanah it was decided what will be, and now it is being played out. There is no reason for worry.”⁹

Tefillah

What can one do to make the new year a good year? What can we do to sweeten the judgment?

There are several ways; we will begin with one of the primary ones: *tefillah*.

Wheat is more expensive than barley. The Gemara teaches that when one hired someone to plant wheat, and the worker planted barley, the worker is obligated to compensate for the loss.

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 106.) asks: What will the law be if the river flooded and all the crops of the town were destroyed? Does the worker need

8. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l taught that one should be cautious with every moment of Rosh Hashanah, because each moment is creating the blueprint for the upcoming year.

9. The Birchas Avraham was very impressed by this answer, and he repeated it several times.

A *yungerman* was *niftar* from pneumonia in the middle of the winter. Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l said, “Do you think he was *niftar* in the cold of the winter? He was *niftar* on Rosh Hashanah, when the sun was shining brightly.” Because the decree was sealed on Rosh Hashanah.

A fly was bothering the Chazon Ish zt'l, and as much as someone tried to shoo it away, the fly came back. The Chazon Ish said, “Leave it. It's a Rosh Hashanah fly.” It was destined from Rosh Hashanah that he should have this disturbance.

to pay for planting barley? Even if he had planted wheat, it would be ruined in the flood.

The Gemara answers that he is still accountable, as it states (*Iyov* 22:28), ותגור, אומר ויקם לך, "Whatever you decree occurs."

Rashi explains, "[The owner of the field can say] 'At the beginning of the year, I didn't pray that barley crop should succeed; I prayed that the wheat should succeed.'"

Had he planted wheat, the *tefillah* could have saved his crops. Therefore, he is liable for planting barley.

We learn from this Gemara the potential of *tefillah*, specifically at the beginning of the year. ותגור אומר ויקם לך, "Whatever you decree occurs." A miracle would be needed to save his crops from the flood, but his *tefillos*, said at the beginning of the year, had that potential.

The Gemara teaches that *tefillah* is always beneficial, and it is important to pray after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, too.

The Aruch Lener asks, so what is special about the *tefillos* of Aseres

Yemei Teshuvah? He answers that during these days the *tefillos* will *certainly* be answered.

Therefore, let's take advantage of the *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and all the days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Our *tefillos* can make the difference.¹⁰

Reb Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss *shlita*, the *gavad* of Yerushalayim, lived in a city about four kilometers from Pressburg. When the Germans entered his city, the community leaders didn't know whether it is wise to listen to the Nazi's demands, or whether they should tell the people of the city to evade all their decrees and to try to escape. The ראש הקהל sent the Reb Tuvyah Weiss (as a child) to Pressburg, to take counsel from the ראש הקהל of Pressburg.

The ראש הקהל of Pressburg told him that the situation was very bleak, and they needed *rachamei shamayim*. He also told him that the king of England sent a train to save one thousand children, and he received a thousand tickets to distribute among the children. "I don't know who to save, and who has precedence over whom, but since you've come here, take a ticket and save yourself."

10. Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* wouldn't listen to *shidduchim* for his children unless he davened for their *shidduch* on Rosh Hashanah. Once, a *shidduch* was suggested for one of his children and pressure was placed on him to consider it although he didn't pray for that child's *shidduch* on Rosh Hashanah. Sadly, this marriage didn't last too long, *rachmana litzlan*.

Reb Tuvyah gave over the report to the *rosh hakahal* of his city, went home, quickly packed his bags, said goodbye to his parents, and went to the transport. (His mother's last words to him were that he must always remember that he's a Yid.)

Soon, he was in England, with a thousand other children.

The king of England wanted to see with his own eyes the thousand children that he saved. The children stood on both sides of the road, and the king drove between them.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss says that standing next to him was a courageous boy. When the king's chariot came near, this boy jumped to the king's chariot. The king's servants wanted to send the boy off, but the king said he wants to hear what the child has to say. The child thanked the king for kindly saving so many children, "but it upsets me that the king's compassion isn't perfect, because I left my parents and family behind. How can I be happy with my own salvation when I'm worried about the plight of my parents and family..." The king asked him for his parent's address. Two weeks later, his parents and all his extended family came to England.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss Shlita emphasized that if the king was in his palace, this boy wouldn't be able to speak with the king. But since the king was outside his palace, the boy could approach the king and plead for his family. It states about

the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, דרשו ה' בהמצאו, "Search for Hashem when he is near." Hashem is now near, and if we approach the King we can accomplish so much with our *tefillos*. We just have to be wise, like that one child who took advantage of the moment. 999 children remained in their places; they didn't take advantage of the king's appearance. Only one child didn't let this opportunity slip away.

There is a *mashal* that describes the special power of *tefillah* we have these days:

No one can lift an iron wall. Even many men together can't lift it. But someone manning a crane can lift the iron wall with a push of a button.

Our *tefillos* during this time of year are empowered and more effective than the rest of the year. We can raise iron walls, and accomplish great things, which we couldn't accomplish with our *tefillos* the rest of the year.

The *yetzer hara* is aware that we have the power of *tefillah*, especially at the beginning of the year, and therefore he strives to take it away from us.

There's a famous ploy attributed to the *Polishe ganavim* :

They would go down to the port where wealthy merchants alighted with their precious cargo. The Polish *ganavim* would drop a coin to the ground, and wait until a wealthy man sees it and bends down to pick it up.

When a wealthy merchant would bend down to pick up the coin, the thief would grab the merchant's suitcase and run off with it.

This is what the *yetzer hara* does. He gets us occupied with some minor and foolish matter, and then we lose our peace of mind and we can't daven with *kavanah*. But if we dedicate ourselves to *tefillah*, there is so much we can accomplish.

Ask for a Lot

During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, some people ask for a drop more money, or a little bit more success, etc., but we can ask for so much more, and Hashem will grant it to us.¹¹

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz told the following:

Someone from the opposing army aimed his rifle at Czar Nicolai. A soldier saw this and shouted loudly. Nicolai's horse

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

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

Czar Nicolai would sometimes dress like a regular person, and mingle with the populace, to hear what people are saying about him. Once, he spoke to four people at a bar, and he asked them, "If the king will 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 requested 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 your hypothetical question is bothersome and a waste of our time."

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

Now are the days when the King is giving us the option to request whatever we want. We would be wise to be like the first three, and not like the fourth, which doesn't recognize the potential that is before him.

When the poor go around a *beis medresh* collecting money, they don't get too much money. The *mispalelim* generally give them small donations — a quarter, a dollar, and the like. But when the poor visit the wealthy in their homes, they get larger donations. What's the difference? Reb Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* explained the paupers don't expect to get too much money in the *beis medresh*, and that's the reason they don't. When the pauper goes to their homes, he expects to receive more, and therefore he receives more.

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

jumped, and the bullet hit the horse instead of Nicolai.

"You saved my life," Czar Nicolai said to the soldier. "Your shouts caused the horse to leap, and that saved me. How can I repay you?"

The soldier said "I don't get along well with the general of my platoon. I want to be moved to a different brigade."

"No problem," Nicolai said. "Your request will be fulfilled. But you are a fool! You could have requested to be the general, and I would have granted you that as well."

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* told this story to teach us that we shouldn't be like this fool, who asked for something petty and small. Our *tefillos* will be answered, so we should ask for a lot.

The Midrash ("ילקוט מעם לעז ראה" נתן תתן) states that when Alexander Mokdon came to Eretz Yisrael, a Yid came forward greet Alexander and to bless him. To express his appreciation, Alexander gave him a city as a gift.

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

Alexander replied, "When one gives a present, it should be a present in the eyes of the giver, and not according to the perception of the receiver."

The Lev Simchah *zt'l* repeated this Midrash, and explained with it a phrase from *דוד כערבך* (said on Pesach): תפילת מל, "העמר שמינו, "Friend, according to Your assessments, establish our name." This

means that Hashem should give us kindness as *He* understands kindness, for that will be a far greater kindness, than in accordance to our limited perception.

Everyone Can

In the *yotzros* of Rosh Hashanah we say, "ומשוה קטן וגדול," "Hashem deals equally with the small people and with the great people." This hints that people who are on a low spiritual level can accomplish great things with their *tefillos*, just like the greatest tzaddikim.

The word *ובכן* is repeated several times in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur *Shemonah Esrei*. The Abudurham explains that the word was taken from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 4:16), "ובכן אבוא אל המלך," "And so I will go to the king," because on Rosh Hashanah, we come before the King of the world.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zy'a* said, "The main lesson is from the end of the *pasuk*, "ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת, "and so, I will go to the king, which isn't proper." Even those people, who seemingly do not deserve to come to the King, can do so, and Hashem accepts their *tefillos*.

Hav! Hav!

It appears from the *Zohar* that one should primarily pray for *ruchniyos* (spirituality) on Rosh Hashanah. The *Zohar* says that those who daven for their personal needs on Rosh Hashanah are like dogs who shout, "hav hav — Give more! Give more!"

However, tzaddikim taught us there are exceptions to this rule. When one requests *gashmiyos* (material things)

and his intention is so he can serve Hashem better, it is permitted, and even advised, to daven for material matters on Rosh Hashanah.

One year, before *tekiyas shofar*, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* told his students to pray for their *parnassah* and material needs, even on Rosh Hashanah. He explained that since the *gashmiyus* will lead to improved *avodas Hashem*, it is called praying for *ruchniyos*.¹²

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zy'a* also encouraged people to daven for their material needs on Rosh Hashanah. He said, "Those who don't ask don't have."¹³

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin translated the following words, from the Rosh Hashanah *Shemonei Esrei*: קדוש אתה ונורא שמך, "You are holy, and Your name is awesome. [So how can I speak to You about money issues and other mundane issues? The answer is] ואין אלוהים מבעלדיך, I don't have another G-d other than You.

[Where else should I go to ask for *parnassah* and for my other needs if not before You?]"

Torah

We discussed how *tefillah* is mesugal to earn a good judgment. We now add that Torah study is also essential.

It states (*Shulchan Aruch* 585:1), "The custom is to blow the shofar at the *bimah* where the Torah is read." The Mishnah Berurah explains that we do so, "so the merit of Torah shall protect us, and Hashem will remember us *letovah* (in a good way)."

Similarly, studying Torah on Rosh Hashanah is conducive to be remembered for a good year.

In *Shofros*, said in *mussaf Shemonah Esrei*, it discusses the shofar of *mattan Torah*. Thus learning Torah, and making *kabalos* to improve in learning Torah will help us attain a good judgment.¹⁴

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

13. Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a* said "The *Zohar* prohibits shouting "*hav hav* — Give more! Give more!" This means that he has his needs, only he wants more. This is forbidden to request on Rosh Hashanah. But for someone who doesn't have enough, there is nothing wrong for him to ask.

The tzaddikim of Karlin *zy'a* taught their chassidim to read Parashas Haman every day of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Hashem is rationing our *parnassah* for the entire upcoming year, so we should daven for *parnassah*.

14. Rebbe Dovid of Tolne *zy'a* asked someone why he doesn't learn Torah. The man replied, "I don't have *yishuv hadaas* (peace-of-mind)."

The Rebbe told him, "One doesn't need *yishuv hadaas* to study Torah, because as one studies Torah, he receives *yishuv hadaas*."

Humble Beginnings

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) writes, "Every year that the Jewish nation feels poor at the beginning, will be successful in the end." Our feelings on Rosh Hashanah should be that we aren't worthy for a good year, but Hashem will grant it to us because of His mercy, love, and compassion. We shouldn't come to Rosh Hashanah feeling smug, as though we are perfect and we deserve a good year.

We use a curved shofar (and not a straight one). The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26:) explains, "On Rosh Hashanah, the more one bends his heart [and feels humble] the better." With that attitude, he will have a good judgment.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* came late for *tekiyas shofar*. He explained that he didn't want to begin the mitzvah before he found some good deed in himself, but (due to his humility) he only found faults. Then he remembered one good deed he performed. One day, he asked his *gabai* to awaken him early, because he wanted to do a certain mitzvah. The *gabai* overslept. By the time the Chozeh awoke on his own, it was too late to do the mitzvah. The Chozeh was planning to rebuke his *gabai*

harshly for his negligence. But then he reconsidered. "Why did I want to wake early? It's because I wanted to do Hashem's will. Now it's Hashem's will that I shouldn't become angry." When the *gabai* came in, the Chozeh spoke with the *gabai* as always. He didn't show any sign of anger. With this merit in mind, he came to *tekiyas shofar*.

One factor that we see in this story is the Chozeh's broken heart when he came to the *tekiyas*. He felt that he doesn't have any merits — aside from that one good deed. With these feelings of humility we should approach the *tekiyas* and *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah.

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

One year, before Rosh Hashanah, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* taught Reb Wolf Kitzes *zy'a* the kabalistic/chassidic intentions he should contemplate on when he blows shofar.

Reb Wolf wrote them down, so he could remember them when he blows shofar, but he lost the paper.

It states (*Koheles* 8), האלקים עשה את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבנות רבים, "Hashem made man straight, and they sought many thoughts." If a person's mind isn't straight anymore, how can he straighten it out? Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin *zy'a* replied, "With a *blatt* Gemara." Studying Gemara makes a person calm, tranquil, settled, back to thinking straight again.

On the *pasuk*, לא תקח שוחד, "Don't take a bribe," Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* explains that one shouldn't take *shochad* from the mitzvos. The mitzvos are endlessly precious and beloved. Sometimes this lures people to be so occupied with their performance that they forget to make Torah study a prominent focus in their life. The Torah urges us, don't take this bribe. Make Torah study prominent in our life.

He blew the shofar that year amidst many tears and with a very broken heart, because he regretted that he couldn't blow the shofar in the most ideal way, concentrating on the *kavanos* the Baal Shem Tov taught him.

After *mussaf*, he told the Baal Shem Tov that he lost the paper, and he forgot all the *kavanos*. He said he fears that this might mean the *tekiyos* didn't accomplish what they needed to accomplish... The Baal Shem Tov told him that he wanted him to lose the paper, because he wanted Reb Wolf should blow shofar with a broken heart.

The Baal Shem Tov explained, "The kabalistic thoughts (called *kavanos*) are keys that open up the locks of heaven. Each kabalistic meditation opens up another lock. But a broken heart is like an ax that opens up all doors and all locks of heaven. Your *tekiyos*, blown with a broken heart, went straight up to heaven and accomplished everything."

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

Reb Velvel Eisenbach *zt'l* (from the

elders of Yerushalayim, was *niftar* a few years ago on Rosh Hashanah, at the age of 106) repeated what he heard from his grandfather, who heard it from his grandfather — to whom the following story happened.

When this great-great-grandfather was a child he was by Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler *zy'a* for Rosh Hashanah. He davened on a balcony (which was built to accompany the many guests who came for *yom tov*). It was extremely crowded and he fainted. People threw water on the child to revive him and they gave him water to drink. They also brought him to the large opening in the floor, which opened to the *beis medresh* below, so he would have air.

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

The Rebbe said, "It is written (*Tehillim* 47), *עלה אלקים בתרועה*: *Elokim* represents *middas hadin* (strict justice and punishment). *עלה אלקים*, the *midas hadin* is raised and removed, *בתרועה*, with a broken heart. The next words are *ה' בקול שופר*. This can mean *ה' עלה... ה'*, the *middas harachamim*, Hashem's mercy, represented by the name *הוי"ה*, will also ascend and leave us, *בקול שופר*, when one thinks that everything is good,¹⁵ and he isn't worried at all."

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

When the Rebbe said this, the entire congregation cried. The child became wet again, this time from their tears.

Tears

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* writes, "The Arizal would cry a lot during the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah, even though Rosh Hashanah is a *yom tov*. On Yom Kippur, he cried even more. He would say that if one doesn't cry on these days, it's a sign his *neshamah* isn't complete."

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* taught that since tears on Rosh Hashanah is so precious, 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 דמעותי. Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צמאה נפשי, "My heart thirsts, לאלקים that on the day of judgment of Rosh Hashanah, היתה לי דמעותי, I should be able to cry."

In *Selichos* we say, מכניסי דמעה הכניסו, דמעותינו לפני מלך מתרצה בדמעות, "[*Malachim*] who bring in tears, bring in our tears before the King who is appeased with tears."

This can be explained with a *mashal*:

When a worker has worked in a store for a long time, he knows the ins and outs of the store, and therefore, the boss allows his worker to make deals with the costumers by his own discretion. If a consumer wants a deduction, this worker doesn't have to ask permission

from the boss, for he knows what the boss would say.

However, if a businessman wants to do big business with the proprietor of the store, the employee doesn't have authorization to do anything at all. All he can do is usher the businessman into the boss's office.

Similarly, we tell the *malachim* not to tend to our tears. They should just take the tears and usher them before Hashem. The *malachim* aren't able to understand the depth, sincerity, yearning, and pain that the tears of the Jewish nation contain, and being that tears are so powerful, we want that only Hashem should deal with them.

As the Rebbe of Piascnetza *zt'l hy'd* (who died in the Holocaust) said, "Did a *malach* ever experience the pain of being beaten up, as Yidden do? Does a *malach* know the humiliation of being pursued and hunted? Did a *malach* ever experience the pain of hunger...?"

Therefore, we tell the *malachim* to daven for us (השתדלו והרבה תחינה) but when it comes to our tears, they should kindly just bring them before Hashem. They shouldn't get involved with the tears, at all.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* taught, בכיה, בשמך יגילון כל היום *roshei teivos*, "In Your name we rejoice all day long." Because even when we cry, it should be with joy, and not with sadness and despair.¹⁶

16. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* (*Imrei Pinchas* ט"ס) asks that in *Nechemyah* (8:10) it

The benefit of tears is twofold: Tears rouse us to daven with more *kavanah*, and tears create a powerful *tefillah*, which is likely to rouse Hashem's compassion.

The *Alef HaMagen* (582:45 and see *Maaseh Rav, Gr'a* 207) discusses the importance to cry during the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*. Then he writes that if by nature one is unable to cry, he should pray in the sounds of someone crying, for this will rouse his *kavanah*, and arouse his merits Above. As implied by (*Tehillim* 6:9), "בי שמע ה' קול בכי", "Hashem heard *the voice* of my cries."

Because davening in the sound of crying rouses the person to daven with more *kavanah*.

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59) states, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the gates of *tefillah* were closed. As it states (*Eichah* 3) גם כי אזעק וואשוע שתם תפילתי, "even when I shout and I scream, the *tefilos* are closed."

Although the gates of *tefillah* were closed, the gates of tears were never closed. As it states (*Tehillim* 39) שמעה תפילתי ה' ושועתי האזינה אל דמעתי אל תחרש, "Listen to my prayers Hashem. Heed my shouts. I am certain you won't ignore my tears" (Tosfos).

Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* explains that the gates of *tefillah* are also open. The problem is that the gates to our hearts are closed. We don't daven with *kavanah*, and therefore the *tefillos* don't ascend. Crying opens up the heart, and then the gates are open to receive our *tefillah*.

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

A prince rebelled against his father, the king, and was imprisoned in a distant land for many years. The queen yearned to see her child, so she travelled the long distance, and spoke with her son from outside the prison walls.

The son told her how terrible it was in prison. She threw him a key to unlock

states we should be happy on Rosh Hashanah, however the Arizal teaches that if someone doesn't cry on Rosh Hashanah it's a sign his *neshamah* isn't complete. The answer is that it is similar to the joy of a *chasunah*. The *simchah* is great, but fear is there as well, as they hope the marriage will be successful and peaceful. So too, on this great day of judgment, the day the world was created, there is a great joy on this day, because Hashem is מחדש, renews, His *meluchah* (kingship), and we human beings, scratched out from the earth, have the privilege to announce Hashem the king and to shout to the entire world המלך. Is there anything more joyous than that? This is the reason we are happy on Rosh Hashanah, and it is a holiday. On the other hand, we cry because we don't know what the future holds, and what is concealed under the judgment that is being passed this day."

We eat דבש honey on Rosh Hashanah. The Rebbe of Gostinen *zt'l* said that דב"ש is *roshei teivos* שימה דמעתי בנאדך, "Put my tears in your bag." It shouldn't surprise us that the tears are hinted in the word דבש, honey, because every part of Rosh Hashanah, including tears and fear, is sweetened with deep happiness.

the gate so he could go free, but the key didn't work.

"Perhaps it's the wrong key" the prince said. "The lock isn't budging."

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

The *nimshal* is, if we wash our hearts with hot tears, we can break through all the walls that separate us from our Father in heaven. With tears, we are able to fully pour our hearts out before the Creator.

As mentioned above, tears also make our prayers much more powerful, because they arouse Hashem's compassion.

A young girl walked into a jewelry store and looked at one of the necklaces on display. "Is that a real necklace?" she asked.

The merchant affirmed that it was.

"Can I see it?"

The merchant didn't mind doing a favor for this young girl, so he opened up the glass case and gave her the necklace to look at.

"I want to buy it," she said.

"It costs money."

"I have money."

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

The merchant was slightly startled. "Why do you want the necklace?"

"Our mother died last year. My older sister takes care of us, and today is her birthday. I know she will like this necklace. I want to buy it for her."

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

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

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

"Yes."

"How much did it cost?"

The merchant explained, "My store doesn't have set prices. I quote a price, and the consumer says his price; we negotiate and we reach a conclusion. You sister bargained well with me, and convinced me to sell it for less."

This story illustrates how people will accede to your requests, when you touch their heart. Also, when you cry, it touches people's hearts, and they want to help you. *Keviyachol*, something similar happens before Hashem. When there are tears, the gates of heaven are open wide to answer our tefillos.

The Yismach Moshe said "A king was angry at his servants and they didn't know what to do to appease him. The king's *sar hamashkim* said, "I have good wine, which the king loves. I'll give him the wine; he will certainly become happy and he will forgive us." As it says, מֶלֶךְ מִתְרַצֵּה בְּדַמְעוֹת, "The King who is appeased

with tears." This is the good drink that appeases the King of the world.¹⁷

Techinos (supplications written in Yiddish) were composed, so the women who don't understand *lashon hakadosh* can also pray.

There were also many ignorant men (*am haaratzim*) in the past who didn't know *lashon hakadosh*. Why weren't *techinos* composed for them? It is because we primarily need the women's *tefillos*, because their *tefillos* are often said with tears, and tears break down all barriers.

Reb Elyah Lopian *zt'l* said he received a *kabbalah* that on the *yomim nora'im* the women who stay home to take care of their children have their own, individual channel that elevates their *tefillos* before Hashem's throne. Although they pray less, and they don't have the benefit of davening with a congregation, their few words of *tefillah* can accomplish what an entire holy *kehilah* accomplishes with many hours of *tefillah*. Partially, this is because of the special quality of *tefillah* with tears, which women excel in. These *tefillos* are always answered.

We've seen that tears open our hearts before Hashem, and *keviyachol*, it opens Hashem's heart to fulfill our requests. For both reasons, *tekiyas shofar* should be accompanied with tears. It will rouse us

to listen to the shofar with all our heart, and *kiviyachol*, it will rouse Hashem to save us and to take pity on us.

The Bardichover Rav *zy'a* once raised his shofar, and called out to the womens section, "The shofar needs to be rinsed" and they all began to cry.

The Arvei Nachal *zy'a* told the following *maschal*: Once, when the king was traveling with his son through a distant city, the father told his son, "There are evil people in this city who are against me. Be careful from them."

But the evil people kidnapped the prince, and they held him captive in that city.

On a designated day, each year, the king would pass through this city. The child knew about that, and he thought, "When my father passes through, I will shout loudly. He will hear me and save me."

However, his captives suspected the child would do this, so on the day the king passed through the city, they locked the prince in an iron cell, with now windows. Now, even if he shouts, the king won't hear him.

The child had special stones that he received from his father, years before. These stones had a *segulah* that when they are thrown at an iron wall, the wall collapses.

17. Rebbe Naftali of Melitz *zt'l* said that *דבש* is *roshei teivos* for *שימי דמעתי בנאדך*, "place my tears in Your pouch." He explained: When Hashem desires to write good things for the Jewish nation, the Satan dries the inkwell, so the ink doesn't write. We request, *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.

The king was passing through the city, and his son threw the stones at the iron walls, but the walls didn't fall down. This was because only clean stones have this special power, and his stones were filthy.

The child started to cry and his tears washed the stones. He threw another stone. This time the wall fell down. The king heard his shouts and saved him.

The Arvei Nachal explains that the shofar has the potential to break down iron walls that separate us from our Father in heaven. Technically, with this mitzvah, we should have merited the *geulah* long ago. It doesn't seem to be working, though. Why? The answer is the shofar works together with tears. It

will not function fully when one blows shofar without a broken heart and without tears.

Tehillim

Klal Yisrael have a custom to say more *Tehillim* these days.¹⁸

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

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

The Emek HaMelech *zt'l* writes that Reb Avigdor Kara *zt'l* writes in his *sefer* the following story:

In a village near Leport, there lived a simple person who only knew Tanach.

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

I know people who have practiced this *segulah*, and saw miracles.

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

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

A *yungerman* told me that his wife suffered from some illness and every few weeks she was hospitalized. One year he did this *segulah*, and she never returned to the hospital for that illness again.

Another person, who had the privilege of marrying off all his children, had three couples who didn't have any children. The father did this *segulah*, and that year all three of them were blessed with a child.

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

However, it is very hard to keep this *segulah*, and it isn't advised for everyone. If keeping this custom will prevent you from being awake and alert by the tefillos, it is better to refrain. It is more important to daven with *kavanah*.

However, even if one can't say the entire *Tehillim* twice, one can say some *Tehillim* on Rosh Hashanah night (and over the two days of Rosh Hashanah). Another idea is for a family to divide up the *Tehillim* between themselves so they end up saying the entire *Tehillim* twice.

He was *niftar* at an old age. Thirty days after his demise, he came in a dream to the *chacham* and tzaddik of the city, holding an old *Tehillim*. 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 tell you to warn the people of the town where I lived that they should escape. When I was alive I said the entire *Tehillim* daily.¹⁹ I did this for several years, and my *Tehillim* protected them, but now they don't have protection..."

In the morning, the *chacham* told the people of the town his dream. Those who escaped survived; those who remained perished.

The Emek HaMelech concludes, "From the day my father heard this story, he would say the entire *Tehillim* each week... For whoever says *Tehillim* regularly frees himself, his family, and his generation from all kinds of sorrows, and he draws down bounty, *brachos*, and *hatzlachos*. Fortunate is the one who is *זוכה ומזכה הרבים*, who does good for himself and for others."

The Noam Elimelech writes:

"Some people ask how *tefillah* helps. How a tzaddik can pray for an ill person and the sick person becomes better? Hashem doesn't change, [and if Hashem understood that this person should be ill, how does prayer change the situation?]

The answer is that bad never comes from Hashem's mouth. [Hashem never decrees that pain, illness, or hardships should befall people.] What happens is that man is connected to all worlds. When he sins, he becomes detached from his connection above, and the result is that he becomes ill, *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*. [There are prosecuting angels in heaven who prevent the person from becoming reconnected to his source, due to his sins]. When this occurs, he needs to become attached to the *עולם הגדול הנקרא תהלה*, to the great world called *Tehillah*... Because this world is solely a great light and the *kitrug* [prosecuting angels] aren't able to prevent him. In that world, there is solely compassion, *רחמים גמורים*, and everything is fixed. This is the reason Dovid HaMelech's songs are called *תהלים*, because with them, one can accomplish everything [because one becomes attached to the world of compassion called *תהלה*]. There is no Satan there and there are no problems (*אין שטן ואין פגע רע*)."

These amazing words give us a glimpse at the wonders of *Tehillim*. When we say *Tehillim*, we are being connected to the world where there is only compassion, where none of our bad deeds are mentioned. Through saying *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs.

19. The Shlah's version is that he would finish *Tehilim* each week

Simanim

Shulchan Aruch (583:1) states, “One should [be accustomed to] eat on Rosh Hashanah קרא תמרי, סלקא, רוביא...כרתי. When he eats the רוביא he should say יהי רצון שירבו זכויותנו. When he eats כרתי he should say יהי רצון שירבו זכויותנו... Some have the custom to eat an apple sweetened in honey, and to say, תתחדש עלינו שנה טובה מתוקה, 'Make this new year a good, sweet year' and that is the custom. Some eat pomegranates and say, גרבה זכויות כרימון. And the custom is to eat fatty meat and all types of sweet foods.”

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

The Mishnah Berurah writes, “We do these things for a good omen. Therefore, it's obvious that one must be cautious that he doesn't become angry during these days. In addition to the severe sin, one must make a good sign for the new year. Instead, he should be happy and he should trust in Hashem...”

People in Yerushalayim would say, “If an apple dipped in honey is a sign for a sweet year, certainly if a person makes himself a ‘sweet Yid,’ by keeping a smile on his face, and by greeting others warmly, better sign for the new year could there be?”

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

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* teaches that we don't eat sour foods on Rosh Hashanah because we don't want to make a sour face on this day. We want to show solely expressions of pleasure and satisfaction, for a good sign for the upcoming year.

The *meforshim* elaborate on how making *simanim* has an effect on the year.

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

For example, when he eats the apple in honey, he is reminded that this is a new year, and he wants it should be a sweet, good year. Then he does *teshuvah* to merit this and he prays for it. Similarly, with all the *simanim*, they are reminders that we want these matters, so we should do *teshuvah* and pray for them.

Reb Shlomo Kluger's (*Chachmas Shlomo*) approach is that these foods show our *bitachon* that it will indeed be a sweet, good year. More than the foods, it's the *bitachon* in one's heart, combined with his words, which proclaim that everything will be good that year. He writes, “The idea isn't that eating these foods is a *tefillah*, because there is no such concept of eating as a *tefillah*. Rather, we eat these foods to illustrate our trust that Hashem will give us a good year... We eat these sweet, good foods, and we say on them [that it should be a good year] so if *chas veshalom* there was a harsh decree, it will be turned over for

good by our words. Amen, so shall be His will.”

So according to Reb Shlomo Kluger, the *simanim* are demonstrations of our *bitachon*. We combine our *bitachon* with our words, and this turns over all harsh decrees for the good.

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, “On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, כל מה דעביד רחמנא למב עביד, ‘Hashem only does good.’ וגם זו לטובה... This turns things over that they should truly be good.”

The Gemara (*Brachos* 18) tells us, “A chassid gave a *dinar* to a poor person on *erev* Rosh Hashanah... His wife argued with him, so that night he went to sleep in the cemetery. He heard two *neshamos* [who were buried there] speaking with each other. One said, ‘My friend, let’s swim around the world and listen in from behind the curtain [of heaven] so we will know which punishments are coming down to the world.’”

The other soul said she can’t swim around the world, since she was buried in a mat of reeds.

So one soul went alone, and when she returned, she said to her friend, “Heaven decreed that all crops planted by the first rain will be ruined by hail.” The chassid

heard their conversation. Following this lead, he planted his field by the second rains. Everyone’s crop was ruined, except for his.

The next year he returned to the cemetery, and he heard the souls speaking again. One asked the other to join her on her travels to hear what will be decreed that year. The other said she can’t travel, because she was buried in a mat of reeds. So the soul went by herself. She returned and said, “I heard from heaven that the crops planted by the *second* rains will be destroyed by disease (*shidafon*).”

That year everyone planted by the second rains. They remembered that the previous year only the chassid’s crops prospered because he planted by the second rains, so they did so that year.

This time, the chassid planted by the *first* rains. His crops grew well; everyone else’s harvest was ruined.²⁰

When we think about this Gemara, we understand that the chassid had terrible *simanim* on his Rosh Hashanah. We can’t imagine worse *simanim*! His wife was angry at him and he ended up sleeping in a cemetery! But despite the bad signs, he became wealthy two years in a row! This is because even more important than the foods we eat, is the person’s

20. The *Iyun Yaakov* explains, “It seems to me that the chassid [slept in the cemetery] because he was afraid that if he remains at home, he might quarrel with his wife on Rosh Hashanah. He didn’t want to sleep in somebody else’s house, to protect his wife’s honor. He chose to sleep in the cemetery so no one should know about the fight. “In the merit of *tzedakah* [that he gave to the poor] he was rewarded, because he heard the spirits, and he knew when to plant...”

disposition. This chassid remained happy, despite having to go to sleep in the graveyard because his wife was angry with him. His happiness brought him two successful years.

The Nesivos Shalom zy'a told the following story:

A tzaddik came home from shul on Rosh Hashanah night, filled his *becher* for Kiddush, and the entire cup spilled onto the table. When he was cutting challah, the challah slipped from his hand, onto the floor. The rebbetzin didn't serve fish that night, because it burned.

"I'm afraid that these are bad omens," she said. "So many negative things are happening."

The husband said, "The main *siman* is our happy disposition. We eat meat and sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah because these foods make us festive and happy, and happiness is a good omen for the upcoming year. The main omen is not what we eat; it is the emotions within us. Baruch Hashem, despite everything, we are happy. So we are having a very good omen for the upcoming year."²¹

Joy

On Rosh Hashanah, we are happy because we trust Hashem will give us a good year. Our *bitachon*, and the

good *siman* that comes from our happiness, are helpful toward attaining a good successful year. As it states about Rosh Hashanah (*Nechemyah* 8), כִּי חֲדוּת ד' הִיא מְעוּזָהּ, "Your joy with Hashem is your strength."

The *Tur* (581, quoting a Midrash) writes, "No nation can compare to this nation... When a person is on trial, and his life is at stake, he wears black clothing, lets his beard grow, and he won't cut his nails, because he doesn't know what will be the outcome of the judgment. But the Jewish nation, on their day of judgment, wears white clothes, shave their beards, cut their nails. They eat, drink, and are happy on Rosh Hashanah, because they know Hakadosh Baruch Hu will make a miracle for them..."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (597:1) writes, "We eat and drink and are happy. Although Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgment, nevertheless, the mitzvah of וְשִׂמְחַת בַּחֲגֹךְ applies to Rosh Hashanah as well..."

Many people find this surprising. The judgment is so awesome; our future and the future of our family and the future of Klal Yisrael is being determined. According to our deeds, we are very far from being worthy, so how can we be happy?

21. Someone told Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonimer *zt'l* that he doesn't have enough money to buy a head of a fish, and he is worried how he will succeed that year without having this *siman*.

Reb Mordechai Chaim told him, "Buy a fish tail (which is called an עק, end, in Yiddish) and pray, יהי רצון 'May it be Hashem's will that it should finally be the עק, end, of all our suffering.'"

But we are happy, because it is our Father in heaven who is judging us, and He wants to grant us goodness. He seeks ways, within the laws of justice, to grant us a good year. The fear is great, and fear of Hashem should be upon us throughout Rosh Hashanah. But laced within our fear is immense joy.²²

An early source for the joy on Rosh Hashanah are the *pesukim* (*Nechemyah* 8:9-10). Rosh Hashanah morning, Ezra read the *sefer Torah* before the entire nation, and they were all crying, because they recognized they weren't keeping the Torah properly. It states, ויאמר נחמיה...ועזרא הכהן...לכל העם היום קדוש הוא לה' אלוקיכם אל תתאבלו ואל תבכו כי בוכים כל העם כשמעם את דברי

התורה, "Nechemya and Ezra said to the nation, 'This is a holy day for Hashem. Don't mourn. Don't cry,' because the entire nation cried when they heard the Torah. ויאמר להם לכו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים.. כי קדוש היום לאדונינו ואל תעצבו כי חדות ד' היא מעוזכם, 'Eat fatty foods and drink sweet drinks... because it is a holy day for our Master. Don't be sad. Your joy with Hashem is your strength.'"²³

An even earlier source is from the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 16:15), ושמחת בהגדך. The *Mishnah Berurah* (597:1) and the *Shaagas Aryeh* (62) say this *pasuk* applies to Rosh Hashanah, too. Because Rosh Hashanah is a חג, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), בכסה ליום חגנו.

22. The *Sma'k* teaches that there's a custom to wear white clothing on Rosh Hashanah because they resemble *tachrichim* (shrouds), to help us maintain the joy of Rosh Hashanah in the correct proportions.

Reb Moshe Chaim of Slonim *zt'l* would say to those who were excessively afraid, "It isn't a band of thieves who are seated in the court, up in heaven. It is our Father in heaven, and we can trust that He will save His children from the judgment."

There was a *bachur* who was very afraid of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah because of his sins. The *Chazon Ish* *zt'l* wanted to calm him. He asked the *bachur*, "When Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos, why don't we say *Tashlich*?"

The *bachur* replied that the *Mishnah Berurah* (583:8) teaches, "...When the first day of Rosh Hashanah is Shabbos, they go to the river on the second day. Perhaps this is because the river is outside the city [where there is no *eiruv*] and it is forbidden to carry. People generally take along *machzorim* to *Tashlich*. Therefore the *chachamim* established they should go on the next day [*Pri Megadim*]").

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

23. The *Avodas Yisrael* *zt'l* (*Netzavim* ד"ה אתם) explains that we don't fall on our faces and say *tachanun* on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, because a person shouldn't have a fallen face, these days. He should be happy and trust in Hashem.

Each month has a formation of Hashem's name הוי"ה. The formation for Tishrei is ויהי"ה. The *Magan Avraham* (of Trisk) *zt'l* explains that this is because ויהי represents joy, and we are supposed to be happy this month.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* proves that Rosh Hashanah is a *yom tov* as it states (*Rosh Hashanah* 4:1), *יום טוב של ראש השנה*, and therefore there is an obligation to be happy on Yom Tov.

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* writes that it is obvious that one should be happy on Rosh Hashanah since it is a Yom Tov. Why did Ezra and Nechemyah have to teach the nation to be happy? The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 19) says, "From after Ezra's time, Elul was never *me'uber* (thirty days)..." That year, Elul had thirty days instead of the usual twenty-nine, and the first day of Rosh Hashanah was the last day of Elul. Therefore Ezra and Nechemyah had to tell the nation to nevertheless be happy on that day. But it is certain that on Rosh Hashanah, we must be joyous.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (כ"ז אלול תק"ע) writes "Although Rosh Hashanah is an awesome and fearsome day, the Day of Judgment for the entire world, it isn't a sad day. On the contrary, one should especially have a happy heart of *teshuvah*, love, *deveikus*, and he should cry from joy. As it states, *בשמך יגילון כל היום*, "in Your name we rejoice all day

long," and the first letters spell *בביה*, crying [because we should cry with happiness]. But dejection and a broken heart shouldn't be experienced at all [on Rosh Hashanah] because they are associated with *kelipah* and *din*, and we shouldn't rouse *din* on this day..."

The Mahari'l teaches that the first day of Rosh Hashanah is *דינא קשיא*, harsh *dinim*, very stringent and severe. The second day is *דינא רפיא*, a softer judgment.

The Shaul u'Meishiv (מהדורה רביעא ח"ג) disagrees. He writes, "This idea that the first day is *דינא קשיא*, is difficult, because there are clear proofs that it isn't a harsh day. The halachah is we say *shehechyanu* this day, and we wouldn't say *shehechyanu* if it wasn't a day of joy.²⁴ We don't say *shehechyanu* in *sefiras ha'omer*, because there isn't joy, only distress, because of the Churban Beis haMikdash. If the first day would be a sad day, a day of harsh *dinim*, we wouldn't say *shehechyanu*. Therefore, it isn't *דינא קשיא*. It's a day when Hashem forgives our sins, a holy day. On this day the *imahos* were remembered [to bear children] and all goodness and holy bounty comes from this day..."²⁵

24. According to the Raavad, one doesn't say *שהחיינו* on the shofar because of the fear of the judgment.

We follow the opinions that we do say *shehechyanu*.

Shulchan Aruch (584:2) states that it is customary that the person who blows shofar should have 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.

25. Rosh Hashanah is also a day of immense fear. Yet, the element of joy must always be there. *חדות ד' היא מעוזכם*, in the merit of the happiness, we will be judged for a good year. The Navi (*I Shmuel* 1) tells that Chanah was sad because she didn't have children. Her

Why Are We Happy on Rosh Hashanah?

We've already stated a few of the reasons, and we will repeat them briefly here, with a few new reasons:

1. It's a mitzvah to be happy, since it's Yom Tov.
2. We have *bitachon* that Hashem will give us a good year. ²⁶
3. Happiness is a good siman for the new year.
4. On Rosh Hashanah, we crown Hashem as King of the world, and we are joyous to have that privilege. As Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer *zt'l* said, אין לך חיד מתוק מזה, "There is nothing sweeter than that."

4. We are also happy because Hashem meets with every Yid on Rosh Hashanah. And that is a reason to celebrate.

To explain this, we begin with a story that the Pnei Menachem *zt'l* once read and repeated:

Someone heard the president was just a few blocks away. So he jumped into his

car, passed two red lights, and committed several other driving violations to have the privilege to meet with the president. There were many body guards and obstacles preventing him from reaching the president. He jumped over all of them and spoke with the president for a few moments. The police caught up and arrested him, but he says it was all worthwhile, for the few moments he spoke with the president.

L'havdil, on Rosh Hashanah every Yid passes before Hashem כבני מרון, like sheep passing by, single file. The fear is immense, our deeds are being reviewed, but it is all worthwhile, to have a moment with Hashem.

The Sfas Emes (5639) writes, "Although they know that Hashem remembers them to judge them, nevertheless, every Yid understands that it is a great merit to be remembered by Hashem... and they consider it worthwhile to be judged by Him, just to have the merit that Hashem will think about us. Since they feel

husband, Elkanah, told her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? Why are you sad? I am better for you than ten children."

This encouraged her somewhat, and the Navi tells us that she ate a little, but she was still very upset. She went to Mishkan Shilo to daven for children. After her *tefillos* the Navi writes, ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד, "she ate, and she didn't have a sad face again."

The Chasam Sofer teaches that she merited bearing children because of her happiness. She succeeded in finding happiness in her life despite her misery, and in this merit she had her salvation. Chazal say, בר"ה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה, "On Rosh Hashanah...Chanah was remembered," to bear a child, and it was in the merit of her happiness.

26. On the words זכרון תרועה (Vayikra 23:24) the Seforno writes, "Although, on this day, Hashem sits on his throne of judgment...it is proper that we should rejoice even more, because He is our King Who will seek to do kindness with us, and to merit us in His judgment. As it states, כי ה' שופטנו ה' מחוקקנו ה' מלכנו הוא יושעינו, 'Hashem is our judge...Hashem is our King, and He will save us.'"

privileged and happy that Hashem is thinking of them, Hashem remembers them for good. Hashem leaves His throne of justice and sits on His throne of compassion. They deserve this, because they understand that being remembered by Hashem in judgment is the greatest good and the utmost present from Hashem.”²⁷

5. The Chinuch (311) writes, “Hashem does kindness for His creations and...reviews their deeds, one day each year, so their sins don’t become too many, so they can attain atonement... Their sins are few, and therefore Hashem forgives them. Even if there are sins that need to be cleansed, He punishes slowly, little by little. As Chazal (*Avodah Zarah* 4.) say, ‘To the one he loves, he punishes little by little.’ If He wouldn’t remember them only once in a long while, their sins would be so many, and the world would almost be destroyed, *chalilah*. So, Rosh Hashanah is a very special day. It lends existence to the world. Therefore, it is proper to make this day a *yom tov*, and it is counted among the special *yomim tovim* of the year.”

Fear

Together with our joy, we have immense fear.

As the Chinuch (stated above) concludes, “However, being that it is a day of judgment, therefore it states זכרון תרועה. The broken sound of the *truah* means everyone should break their strong *yetzer hara* and regret their bad deeds... This is the reason we don’t say *Hallel* on this holiday...because it isn’t proper to say *Hallel* when he is standing in judgment.”

The Mishnah Berurah (584:1) writes, “We don’t say *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah because the books of life and death are opened, so how can we sing *Hallel*? Although we are certain we will exit זכאי, righteous in the judgment, nevertheless, one must be afraid because of the awe of the judgment. In merit of his fear, he will be remembered לזכות,” to merit a good year.

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos Rosh Hashanah* 4) writes, “*Hallel* isn’t said on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because they are days of service, humility, fear, awe of Hashem, to escape and to run to Him, *teshuvah*,

27. At the beginning of *sefer BaMidbar*, Hashem told Moshe and Aharon to count the Jewish people. One of the reasons for this count, writes the Ramban (*Bamidbar* 1:45) is so they could stand before Moshe and Aharon. Standing before these two great tzaddikim was a great benefit for the Jewish nation. The Ramban writes, “When one comes before the greatest *navi* [Moshe] and his brother, the קדוש ה' [Aharon] and he tells them his name, this will be a merit for him and [a source of] life because he is being enlisted and counted together with the Jewish nation. Moshe and Aharon will look at them with a good eye, and pray for them...” Similarly, when we pass before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, it is a wonderful time for us. Hashem will certainly bless us with many *brachos* at that time. Just to be in Hashem’s presence is a blessing in itself, which results in spiritual and material success.

supplications, requests, and forgiveness. And for all of these matters, joy and revelry aren't appropriate."²⁸

Notice that the Rambam calls Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur days of fear and days, "to escape and run to Hashem." Unlike most fears that causes people to run away, this fear draws people closer to the One we fear.

Similarly, we say in *Selichos*, אַתְּכִסֶּה מִחַמְתְּךָ בְּצִלְךָ, "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This is the uniqueness of fear of Hashem. Fear of Hashem draws us in closer.

Reb Bunim of Pshesischa *zt'l* writes in a letter, "These days the joy and the worry are concealed in fear. May Hashem grant us that it should be both of them, together."

One must have two opposing feelings on Rosh Hashanah. He must be happy and trust in Hashem's compassion, and he must also be afraid, because of the judgment.

These opposite sensations aren't contradictory.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* (Stolin) told two of his *chassidim* to study the portion of *Reishis Chachmah* that describes Gehinom (*Shaar HaGehinom*) and he

told them to return to him in three months.

Three months later, they returned. The Beis Aharon spoke with one of them, and asked him what he learned.

The chassid replied, "It was extremely frightening. *Reishis Chachmah* describes Gehinom in detail, and the fear is unbearable. I tremble, just thinking about the great punishment that's in store for each *aveirah*..."

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

Then the Rebbe spoke with the other chassid. The Rebbe asked him to repeat what he learned in *Reishis Chachmah*. He nonchalantly repeated the ideas. It was obvious he wasn't afraid.

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

There was a third chassid present, and he asked the Rebbe, "I'm hearing two opposing ideas, and I don't understand how to relate to them. What is the reality? Is Gehinom frightening, as you told the second chassid, or should we be calm and unworried, as you told the first chassid?"

28. The following are the Rambam's holy words:

שלא היו קורין בהלל לא בראש השנה ולא ביום הכיפורים לפי שהם ימי עבודה, והכנעה, ופחד, ומורא מהשם, ויראה ממנו ומברח ומנוס אליו, ותשובה, ותחנונים, ובקשה כפרה וסליחה, ובכל אלו הענינים אינו הגון השחוק והשמחה
The Chasam Sofer taught another reason why we don't say *Hallel*. He says: We have a tradition that the *neshamos* of people's ancestors join them in their *tefillos* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is written, לא המתים יהללו י-ה, "the dead don't say *Hallel*" therefore we don't say *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

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

Similarly, regarding the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah. We *should* be afraid. In the merit of our fear Hashem will give us a good judgment. But if we aren't afraid at all, we have a lot to be afraid of.

The Beis Aharon (*Netzavim*) writes, "The main thing is [that on Rosh Hashanah] everyone should draw fear on themselves... What is the definition of fear? [The higher form of fear] is when one recognizes Hashem and is close to Him. This is called *yirah iloyah*, divine fear [fear from Hashem's greatness and awesomeness]. If he isn't on this level, he should be afraid of the judgment. The main thing is that everyone must be very afraid, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do *tzedakah* (kindness) with him."

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Brachos* 21.) writes, "Although in human beings fear and joy are opposites...by Hakadosh Baruch Hu it isn't so. In fact, the fear increases one's joy..."

Similarly, on Rosh Hashanah, we are very afraid, and we are very joyous. In Hashem's service, these two emotions aren't contradictory. One enhances the other.

The sounds of the shofar also express fear and joy. The holy *sefarim* write that *tekiyah* expresses joy, while *shevarim truah* are sounds of a broken heart.

Yitzchak Avinu's primary attribute was fear of heaven (*Pachad Yitzchok*). Yet his name was Yitzchak, which means laughter, happiness. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* writes, "It is very possible he was called Yitzchak because his face shone with happiness, because there is no one happier than the person who truly fears Hashem and doesn't have any other fear."

Teshuvah through Shofar

The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (a Torah decree) it is hinting to something. The shofar is saying, עורו ישנים משנתכם—wake up, from your sleep,... examine your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, those who forgot the truth..."²⁹

29. Someone told me the following: "One Rosh Hashanah I was hospitalized and someone came to blow the shofar for us. There was a non-religious Yid in the room who was intrigued by the shofar. He asked us a lot of questions; he wanted to understand what the shofar was all about. Then he told us his story:

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

"A couple of years after serving in the navy (and after spending a very long vacation in India) I saw an advertisement: The army was looking for a Morse code expert to be in charge of several submarines. To apply for the job, we had to be at a certain office between 10:00

The Or HaMeir asks, if the purpose of the shofar is to arouse people to do *teshuvah*, why doesn't the Torah say that the rabbanim of each beis medresh should deliver a *drashah* to rouse people to do *teshuvah*? Why do we need the shofar?

The Or HaMeir answers with a *mashal*: There was once a lad who was hired to be the town crier. He set on a hilltop and watched everything that happened

below. If there were thieves, or any other tragedy, he would clang his bells and shout and warn the townspeople down below.

Once, the lad saw thieves. He began shouting and ringing his bell, "*Ganavim!* Thieves! Thieves are approaching!" The wealthy people frantically went to save their properties. The poor people, however, weren't worried. The thieves weren't after their meager belongings.

and 12:00 in the morning. I arrived at 11:50. The room was packed with applicants, but no one was being called inside. 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.'

"There are many people waiting in line ahead of you," the secretary said. "And you just came. Wait your turn."

"But I didn't listen to her. I walked into the room and talked with the person in charge. After speaking for a few moments, 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've already hired someone. You can all go home."

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

"Didn't you pay attention to the music? Listen carefully. Don't you get it? It's in 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. So you're obviously not fluent enough in the language."

The irreligious man in the hospital said that he thinks the shofar is speaking a language, only it needs to be deciphered. It's telling us, "Just open the door and come inside. Change your ways and improve your connection with Hashem." We only need to understand the language of the shofar and listen to what it is telling us.

Returning to the story: One person waiting for the interview said, "I heard the Morse code in the music, but I decided not to open the door because I saw no one else was."

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

Similarly, concerning the shofar, it will be inexcusable to say, "I heard the shofar's message, I understood that it was calling me to do *teshuvah*, but I decided not to since I don't see other people doing *teshuvah*." That's not a valid excuse. If you understand the shofar's message, you should open the door and come close to Hashem, regardless of what others are doing.

There was another time when the lad shouted, "Fire! There's a fire!" This time, even the poor people ran to put out the fire, because a fire could consume everything they owned.

The Or HaMeir explains that if the mitzvah would be for the rav of every congregation to give a *mussar drashah* on Rosh Hashanah, many people would think, *the rav isn't referring to me*. If the rav would speak about the importance of Torah study, some listeners will be thinking, "I'm glad the rav is speaking about this, because there are many people here who should be studying more. But this *drashah* doesn't apply to me, because *baruch Hashem*, I'm a scholar and I study a lot."

If the rav speaks about *tefillah*, giving *tzedakah*, good *middos*, and so on, there will always be some people who will think the rav is speaking to others and not to them. Therefore, the Torah tells us to blow shofar. The shofar shouts, "There's a fire! We're in danger!" And this awakens everyone to do *teshuvah*. It is a call without words, and everyone is inspired to inspect their ways, to find where they need to improve.

The Preciousness of the Struggle

In the *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, *כי אתה שומע קול שופר ומאזין תרועה ואין דומה לך*, "You listen to the sound of the shofar and you to the *truah*, and there is no One like You."

We begin with some questions:

שומע (1 and *מאזין* both mean "to listen," but

there is certainly a difference between them. What is the difference?

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

3) The brachah states *ואין דומה לך*, "There is no one like You"? Why is this phrase added to this brachah?

We can explain as follows:

קול שופר is the *tekiyah*. It is one unbroken call, which represents the *teshuvah* of *tzaddikim* who make one strong resolve, and they never fall from it. We say, *כי אתה שומע קול שופר*. This means Hashem listens to their *teshuvah*, but it is on the level of *שמיעה*, when one hears from the distance.

ומאזין תרועה, Hashem hears from nearby the *teshuvah* of those who are *baalei teshuvah*, and they have many ups and downs like the hesitant, halting sound of the *teruah*.

ואין דומה לך, no One compares to Hashem. A human king doesn't pay extra attention to the imperfect people. His primary interest is in the important, special people. But Hashem is *מאזין*, listens from nearby, to the imperfect people who are struggling to do His will.

This commentary (with some variations) is stated in *Pri Megadim* (592:1) in the name of Reb Chaim Rappaport *zt'l* of Lemberg. He explains that *מאזין* means to listen from close up, and *שומע* is to listen from the distance. As Moshe Rabbeinu said, *האזינה השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי*, "The heaven shall listen and I will speak. The earth should hear my words."

Moshe, the איש אלקים, was closer to heaven than to the earth, therefore he said האזינה to the heaven, that they should listen from near. To the earth he called ותשמע הארץ, that they should hear from the distance.

The *brachah* is telling how Hashem is even closer to the *baalei teshuvah* who struggle to do His will. Hashem listens to them from nearby. And no king is like Hashem. Human kings aren't interested in lowliness. They don't hire imperfect people to work for them. But Hashem has special pleasure and yearning for those who are far, when they struggle to come back to Hashem.

On Rosh Hashanah, we blow the shofar thirty times before *mussaf* (תקיעות דמיושב) and then we blow again during *mussaf* (תקיעות דמעומד). The Gemara asks why we blow both times. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) replies, "It's to confuse the Satan."

Tosfos (quoting the *Yerushalmi*) explains, "It is written, והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול—On that day [in the future], a great shofar will be blown...'. The Satan is afraid of that shofar, because when it blows, he will be judged and slaughtered. When the Satan hears the first set of *tekiyos*, "He is afraid and he isn't afraid." [He fears that this may be the shofar heralding the future, when the Satan will be slaughtered, but he isn't certain]. When he hears the shofar a second time, the Satan says, 'This must certainly be the *Shofar Gadol* and the time has come when I will be destroyed.' This confuses him, and he isn't able to say *kitrug*

(*lashon hara* on the Jewish people in the heavenly court)."

We wonder why the Satan becomes so afraid when he hears the shofar. Doesn't he remember from last year, and from the years before, that on Rosh Hashanah we blow shofar, and it isn't the shofar of the Redemption? Why does he suspect that this year will be different?

The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* answered that in each generation it becomes harder to serve Hashem, which makes their *avodas Hashem* more precious. Therefore, the Satan assumes Moshiach will come *this year*. He thinks, "This year, the Jewish nation is more precious than ever before. This year, it probably is the *Shofar Gadol* of Moshiach."

By *Akeidas Yitzchak*, after Yitzchak was bound on the *mizbeiach*, Hashem told Avraham Avinu that he shouldn't sacrifice him. וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה איל אחר נאחו בסבך בקרניו וילך אברהם ויקח את האיל אחר נאחו בסבך בקרניו ויעלהו לעלה תחת בנו "Avraham raised his eyes and saw a ram, its horns were caught in the bush. Avraham went, took the ram, and sacrificed it instead of his son" (Bereishis 22:13). The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) asks, "Why do we blow shofar with a ram's horn (שופר של איל)? Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Blow for Me with a ram's shofar so I will remember *akeidas Yitzchok*, and I will consider it as though you were bound on the *akeidah* before Me.'"

We wonder, if the purpose of the shofar is to remind Heaven of *akeidas Yitzchak*, any part of the ram would do? For example, the Torah could have told us

to take a foot of the ram, or any other limb. Why is the mitzvah specifically with the horns?

the ram's horns were caught in a bush, and it couldn't get out. The shofar therefore represents challenges and struggles. The shofar was chosen for the mitzvah, because Hashem desires the struggle.

avodas Hashem would be simple and easy, there wouldn't be reward. Because of the struggle, our *avodas Hashem* is precious to Hashem.

Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar

The Shaar HaMelech (3:2) writes, "Before the *brachah* for *tekiyas shofar*, rouse yourself to a lot of crying, and especially when answering amen after the *brachah*, because at that time the

amount of *parnassah* you will get that year is written."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 117) says, שופר וורדיית הפת חכמה היא ואינו מלאכה, "Blowing shofar and removing bread from the walls of an oven requires talent, but they aren't *melachos* (on Shabbos)." Why does the Gemara juxtapose blowing shofar and taking out bread? The Tiferes Shlomo explains the Gemara is hinting that shofar is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught that the letters after עקרה are שופר. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to bear children. As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה, רהל ורחנה, "Sarah, Rachel and Chanah were remembered to be granted children on Rosh Hashanah."³⁰

30. The Zera Kodesh writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, when the world was created, it's time for פקידות עקרות, for the barren to be remembered to bear children."

In the *Mussaf Shemonah Esrei* we say, [מי לא] נפקד כהיום הזה, The Imrei Noam *zt'l* teaches that the *roshei teivos* of these words is הניך, which is Hashem's name for pregnancies, as it states, הניך הרה, "Behold you will become pregnant..." This hints that Rosh Hashanah is a time when Hashem remembers the barren, to bless 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.

חן כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון, we say, נתנה תוקף חן. The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* translated these words as follows: חן, Hashem judges how many women will enter עיבור, pregnancy, that year. and on Rosh Hashanah there's a judgment on how many people will become בריא, healthy, and cured from their illnesses.

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

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

The Throne of Compassion

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

The Ahavas Shalom *zt'l* explains:

When Hashem finds Himself sitting on the chair of judgment to judge the Jewish people, Hashem wonders to Himself, "How did I get here? Why should I be judging the Jewish people, whom I love?" Hashem realizes that the Satan convinced Him to judge them. Hashem says, "If the Satan is so talented, powerful, and influential, that he can convince even Me to judge them, then the Jewish people aren't guilty for their sins. How can they stand up against the Satan?" Hashem leaves the throne of Judgment and sits on his throne of compassion.

Listen to the Shofar with Immense Fear

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

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26) teaches that one cannot use an ox horn for a shofar, as it reminds heaven of the *egel*.

Similarly, the *cohen gadol* didn't wear gold when he did the *avodah* in the Kodsh Kadoshim on Yom Kippur,

because the gold clothing would remind Heaven of the golden calf.

The *cohen gadol*, however, may wear gold clothing outside the Kodsh Kadoshim. Gold becomes an issue only when he stands in the Holy of Holies.

The Gemara asks, the *cohen gadol* was only forbidden to wear gold inside the Kodsh Kadoshim. When he was outside the Kodsh Kadoshim, he wore gold. So why are we concerned about blowing the shofar with an ox horn? We aren't in the Kodsh Kadoshim?

The Gemara answers, *בין דלכרון הוא כבפניו דמי*, "Since the shofar arouses Hashem's memory [to remember our good deeds, and His love to us, etc.], it is like it's being blown inside the Kodsh Kadoshim."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* quotes this Gemara, and recommends that when we hear the shofar, we should listen with great awe and fear, similar to the awe and fear one would have when he enters the Kodsh Kadoshim.

A Good Eye

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25) states "Rebbe said to Reb Chiya 'Go to *עין טוב* (a city where there was a prominent *beis din*) and establish [Rosh Hashanah]."

עין טוב literally means "good eye."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that this Gemara hints that on Rosh Hashanah we should have a good eye.

A good eye means seeing the good in

others, forgiving others, helping others, and more. These attitude on Rosh Hashanah will help him in his judgment.

We will give some examples of עין טובה.

1. Hachnasas Orchim

The Alef Hamagein (583:4) writes "When one has guests on Rosh Hashanah, it is considered as though he concentrated on all the *kavanos* of the Arizal in his *tefillah*."³¹

2. Deeds of Chessed

A community near Radin asked a *bachur* from the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva to join them for Rosh Hashanah. They wanted him to speak Torah and *mussar*, to arouse them to do *teshuvah* on these holy days.

The *bachur* refused. He wanted to be with the Chofetz Chaim on Rosh Hashanah.

The Chofetz Chaim told the *bachur* the following important message: "A *mentch leibt nisht far zich* — man doesn't live for himself." A person came down to this world to help others.

The *bachur* conceded and went to the neighboring town for Rosh Hashanah.³²

Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh *zy'a* once went

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

Some people chased the *davar acheir* from the field, and only then did Rebbe Yechiel of Moosh blow 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 outstanding?

Most chassidim assumed that the story teaches concern for one's fellow man. Reb Yechiel of Moosh was about to blow the shofar, his emotions and fervor to perform the mitzvah were certainly at a peak, but this didn't cause him to ignore his fellow man's needs. His fellow man's property was being damaged, and he wouldn't

blow the shofar until this was taken care of.

Reb Mottel Slonimer *zy'a* corrected them. He said, "Why don't you understand!

31. The Arizal taught kabalistic thoughts to think while praying. The average person isn't able to incorporate those lofty thoughts into his prayer. However, when one has guests on Rosh Hashanah, it will be considered as though he concentrated on all the lofty thoughts.

32. Someone spent most of his Rosh Hashanah in the hospital helping his sick friend. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zy'a* said about that man, "He is a ben Olam HaBa." His prayers were fewer on that day, but Reb Shlomke knew that he will inherit Olam HaBah in merit of the *chesed* that he did and his concern for his fellow man.

Reb Yechiel of Moosh was saying that he's not blowing shofar until the *davar acheir*, the *yetzer hara*, is removed from the Jewish hearts. Because this is the purpose of shofar! The shofar removes all the bad and the *yetzer hara* from the hearts of Yidden!"³³

But let us not forget the first interpretation, because it is also essential. Other people's needs must always be kept in mind.

3. Tzedakah

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) states, תשובה תפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה, "Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah annul the harsh decrees." How does tzedakah annul harsh decrees?

The Leket Yosher answers in the name of החבר משה מיניץ:

It states (*Mishlei* 19:17), מלוה ה' חונן דל, and the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 10) explains that when one helps the poor (חונן דל), it is considered as though he gave a loan to Hashem. He is called מלוה ה', that he loaned to Hashem, because Hashem feels indebted to him.

Whenever there is a disagreement between the ליה and מלוה and they have to go to *beis din*, the מלוה has the right to

choose which *beis din* they should go to.

When one helps the poor, and is considered Hashem's מלוה, on Rosh Hashanah, he can choose that he wants to be judged in a compassionate court, and not in a court that judges more strictly (with *midas hadin*) and his wishes are filled, because he is considered the מלוה.³⁴

This is how tzedakah can help you in your judgment.

This also applies to deeds of *chesed*. As the Gemara (*Succah* 49:) states, "Gemilus chasadim is greater than tzedakah in three ways: (1) Tzedakah is solely with money, whereas one can do gemilus chasadim with money or with one's body. (2) Tzedakah is to the poor, gemilus chasadim is to the wealthy too. (3) Tzedakah is solely for the living, gemilus chasadim is for the dead, too.

4. Vitur

The Gemara (*Yoma* 23) says "Whoever is *maavir al midosov* [and is *mevater*] Hashem forgives all his sins."

In the *beis medresh* of the Rashash *zy'a* (*Nahar Shalom*) the *gabai* accidentally sold the same seat to two people for the Rosh Hashanah *tefillos*. When they both

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

34. Therefore, in נתנה תוקף we say, ויכון בחסד כסאך, with deeds of chessed, one has the right to decide which throne Hshem should sit on by the judgment, whether the throne of *din* or *rachamim*, .

came to the same seat, they realized there was a problem. They quickly went over to the *gabai* and asked him who bought the seat.

The *gabai* checked his files and admitted that he made a mistake. He sold the place to both of them.

One of them would need to be *mevater*... but neither of them wanted to. On Rosh Hashanah night, there weren't so many people in the Beis Medresh, and they both had a respectable place to pray. But they (and everyone around them) knew that the next morning there will be a showdown.

That night, one of the men had a dream. He saw beautiful caravans being led by *malachim*. "What's this all about?" he asked one of the *malachim*.

"Today is Rosh Hashanah, and these wagons are carrying your good deeds. They will be placed on the scale to determine what type of year you will have."

Soon he saw very ugly caravans being led by frightening-looking angels. "What's happening now?" he asked.

"These are your sins. They will be

placed on the other side of the scale." The man looked up at the large scale, and saw there were many more sins than merits, and the scale was tipping to the side of his guilt. He was frightened. What would the verdict of his judgment be? The *rosh beis din* ruled that he would die that year because of his many sins.

But then a compassionate angel arrived and said, "This man had a lot of *yesurim* (pain and troubles) this year and *yesurim* atones."

The angels began to remove several packages of sins from the scale, and it was just about equal, but it was still slightly tipped to guilty.

The merciful angel said "If this person was *mevater* (gave in to others, to avoid a *machlokes*) we can remove some more packages of sins. Let's check his deeds, to see whether he was *mevater*."

Still sleeping, the man realized that if he is *mevater* his seat, his life will be saved. "I'm *mevater*!" he shouted. "I'm *mevater*!" and then he awoke.

In the morning he quickly ran to the *gabai* and told him that he is *mevater* his seat to the other person.³⁵

35. Shame is also a form of *yesurim*, which removes many sins.

Someone suffering from a *dibbuk*, was brought to the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l, who was present, repeated that this *dibbuk* avoided G-d fearing people, but it especially enjoyed being near sinful people.

There was a great sinner in the room, and the *dibbuk* hugged him and kissed him, and listed all the sins he did. After doing this, the *dibbuk* didn't want to have anything to do with this man anymore. The people in the room asked the *dibbuk* about this, and the *dibbuk* replied, "After I revealed his sins in public, his embarrassment purified him. Now he's a tzaddik, so I don't want to have anything to do with him anymore."