

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
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Rosh Hashanah



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Torah Wellsprings - Rosh Hashanah

A Day of *Emunah*

Rosh Hashanah is a day of *Emunah*. On this day, we crown Hashem and inaugurate His kingship over the world. Perhaps this is the reason Rosh Hashanah is called יום זכרון, for it is a day to remember that everything is from Him.

In Eretz Yisrael, the Yom Tov (of Pesach, Shavuos, Succos) is one day, and in *chutz le'aretz*, it is two days. This is due to מפיקא דיומא, a doubt in the calendar. Since the *beis din* in Yerushalayim would establish when it was *Rosh Chodesh*, and countries that were far away from Yerushalayim didn't know when *Rosh Chodesh* was established, which caused them to be unsure when the first day of Succos was, and Pesach, etc. They, therefore, kept two days of *Yom Tov* מפיקא דיומא, out of doubt, because they didn't know when the real *Yom Tov* was.

This is not the case with Rosh Hashanah, for Rosh Hashanah is two days in Eretz Yisrael as well. Why is Rosh Hashanah different than the other holidays?

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explained it with the Midrash (*Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta* 22) that says that the ten days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah correspond to the Ten Commandments (see also *Yaaras D'vash* vol.2 *drush* 1). Accordingly, the first two days of Rosh Hashanah, which are the first two days of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, correspond to אנכי ה' אלקיך... ולא תהיה לך אלקים אחרים, the mitzvos of believing in Hashem and not worshipping *avodah zarah*. *Emunah* must be 100% pure. There can't be any doubts.

Therefore, it was established that Rosh Hashanah should be two days all over, and not because of doubts. Otherwise, in *chutz le'aretz*, people would be keeping these two days because they were in doubt, and we can't have any doubts when it comes to *Emunah*.¹

Since the theme of Rosh Hashanah is *Emunah*, there are many customs, *tefillos*, and halachos of Rosh Hashanah that express this theme. We begin with a few examples:

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

Perhaps it is to teach us a lesson in *Emunah*. People often think that their place or situation in life isn't conducive to success in *Avodas Hashem*. This custom demonstrates that your location and circumstances were pre-ordained by Hashem. It is precisely in that place that you will become aware of המלך, Hashem, the King!

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

1. The Imrei Emes *zt'l* gave another explanation why Rosh Hashanah is two days everywhere. In the Rosh Hashanah Shemonah Esrei we pray, ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם, "Everyone should join as one to do Your will..." We want to serve Hashem as one, without any divisions. On the day that we pray for this ideal, everyone keeps Rosh Hashanah the same, so we can serve Hashem as one.

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

Everything is Decreed on Rosh Hashanah

A fly was once bothering the Chazon Ish *zt'l*. Someone tried to shoo the fly away. The Chazon Ish said, "Leave it. It's a Rosh Hashanah fly." He intended that it was destined that on Rosh Hashanah, this fly should bother him, so there isn't anything that can be done.

In the *tefillah*, we say יום הזכרון הזה. This isn't similar to Pesach, Shavuot, and Succos, when we say, זמן חריתנו, זמן מתן תורתנו, זמן שמחתנו. Why don't we say זמן on Rosh Hashanah? This is because Rosh Hashanah isn't about commemorating what happened in the past. It is about the judgment that will be made that will determine the future.

As Rashi (*Rosh Hashanah* 8.) writes, "Tishrei, Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges the entire world, everything that will happen to them until next year's Tishrei."

As it states (*Devarim* 11:12), מראשית השנה ועד, and the Gemara explains, "From the beginning of the year it is judged what will be at the end of the year."

Sometimes, the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is for many years to come. The Magen Avraham (end of 591) proves this from Pharaoh's dream, which took place on Rosh Hashanah. That dream predicted the future for the next fourteen years.

We say, היום הרת עולם. The Rokeiach says that הרת means pregnancy. This is because whatever will happen during the year has its origin – its pregnancy – at the beginning of the year.

Rosh Hashanah is called a concealed holiday, as it states (*Tehillim* 81:4), בכסה ליום הגינו. Perhaps this is because the verdict of the judgment is hidden from us – until it is revealed to us as the year comes along.

When Rebbe Zusha of Honopoli *zt'l* collected money, he knew with his *ruach hakodesh*, how much money he would manage to collect. Once, he was with a partner. The partner wanted to move on to the next city, and Rebbe Zusha told him, "Not yet. We didn't get all the money that is destined for us here."

Rebbe Zusha's grandson said that he isn't on that level. When he comes to a city, he isn't able to predict how much money he will make. However, when he leaves the town, he knows how much money he was destined to earn in that city.

A tzaddik heard about this, and commented, "The grandson's level is even greater than his grandfather's." Because it is our *emunah* to believe that everything happens according to Hashem's plan.

Rosh Hashanah is the same. When Rosh Hashanah comes, we don't know what Hashem's plan is, and what to expect for the upcoming year. However, when the year passes, we can look back and say, "Now I know what was decreed on Rosh Hashanah."

Reb Eliyahu Dessler taught this idea. After Rosh Hashanah, Reb Eliyahu Dessler (*Michtav Me'Eliyahu Elul* p.74) would say, "I wasn't in heaven, so I don't know what the court in heaven decided. But I will know what was decreed after the year passes."

At a time of financial turmoil, when the stock market collapsed, and many people lost money, the wealthy Reb Yosef Weinberg *zt'l* of Yerushalayim was totally calm. The

Birkas Avraham *zt'l* asked him how he was able to remain so calm when all other wealthy people were panicking and trying to figure out what will be with their financial future. He replied, *מיין יריד איז ר"ה*, "My market day (when I earn my *parnassah*) is on Rosh Hashanah." The Birkas Avraham was very impressed with his answer. For that is the reality. The time for *parnassah* is on Rosh Hashanah.

The Coronation

Every day and every night, we say Shema and proclaim that Hashem is one. The Maor Vashemesh (*Rosh Hashanah* לפני אמרו ר"ה) teaches us a counsel that will help us say Shema properly. It is also a good idea to have *deveikus* throughout the year. He writes, "Fortunate is he who think about Hashem during the 48 hours of Rosh Hashanah, with love and yearning. Throughout the year, he will experience the sweetness of *Emunah* and *Deveikus*, and it all began from his thoughts of *Emunah* on Rosh Hashanah. Also, throughout the year, he will say Shema properly because of the *Kedushah* that he attained from accepting Hashem's sovereignty on Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16.) tells us that Hashem says, *אמרו לפני מלכות כדי שתמליכוני עליכם*, 'Say before me *Malchiyos* so I will be your King.' The Maor Vashemesh explains, "This means you should say *מלכות* (in the *musaf Shemonah Esrei* of Rosh Hashanah) with *kavanah*, *אמרו לפני מלכות כדי שתמליכוני עליכם*, so you will be able to accept Hashem as king throughout the year..." Because when we accept Hashem's sovereignty on Rosh Hashanah, this enables us to do so throughout the entire year.

This is a wonderful counsel; fortunate are those who take advantage of it. Who doesn't want *Emunah*? Who doesn't want *Deveikus*? Who doesn't want to say Shema properly? It all begins on accepting Hashem's sovereignty on Rosh Hashanah.

This counsel is easily attainable because the essence of the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah

is that Hashem should be crowned as the king over the entire world. For example, in *Shemonah Esrei* we pray, *מלך על כל העולם כולו...* ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו ה' אלקי ישראל מלך ומלכותו בכל משלה... ברוך אתה ה' המלך הקדוש... Every living soul shall proclaim 'Hashem the G-d of Yisrael is king and His kingship rules over everything... Blessed are you Hashem, the holy king."

Accepting Hashem as king means two things: (a) We must obey all His laws, (b) we believe that everything happens by His decree, and nothing happens by chance. We accept these truths on Rosh Hashanah, and this influences us, and the entire world, to always have this awareness.

Reb Sadyah Gaon gives ten reasons why we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. His first reason is related to our discussion. He writes, "The world was created on Rosh Hashanah, and Hashem became the king. When a king is coronated, people blow trumpets and horns before him to reveal to all that a new kingship has begun... Similarly, we proclaim Hashem kingship on us on this day [therefore, we blow shofar]. As Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim* 98:6) writes, *בחוצרות וקול שופר*, *הריעו לפני המלך ה'*, 'With trumpets and with the sound of the shofar we shall blow before the king, Hashem.'"

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) states, "Three *sefarim* are opened on Rosh Hashanah. One *sefer* is for the *רשעים גמורים*; one is for the *צדיקים גמורים*; and one is for the *בינונים* (those who are in between). On Rosh Hashanah, the *tzaddikim* are inscribed for life. The *resha'im* are inscribed and for death. The future of the *benonim* isn't determined until Yom Kippur. If they merit it, they will be inscribed for life. If they don't merit it, they are inscribed for death."

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* (*Re'eh*) explains that regardless of how one acted until now, one can be written into the book of *tzaddikim*. Because whether a person is a *tzaddik* or a *rasha* is based on what his plans are for the upcoming year. If a person plans

to be a tzaddik the forthcoming year, he is inscribed in the book of tzaddikim...

We understand from this that saying מלכות and accepting the yoke of Heaven on Rosh Hashanah will be for our benefit, on this awesome day of judgment. It will make us be immediately and promptly inscribed and signed for a good life in the Book of Tzaddikim. Because the judgment isn't only about what he was, instead, more importantly, what he wants to be.²

The Rebbe of Djurik *zt'l* said that מלך comes from the word להימלך, to take advice. There is another word for king; it is ארון. Hashem is called מלך because Hashem takes advice from the tzaddikim regarding how to run the world. There are times when Hashem is ארון, and He rules without following advice. The Rebbe of Djurik *zt'l* said that at the time of the Holocaust, Hashem was ruling as an ארון, because he didn't ask the tzaddikim how He should lead the world.

The Rebbe of Machnovke *zt'l* (son-in-law of the Djuriker Rebbe) said that we now understand the Gemara: אמר הקב"ה אמרו לפני מלכותי כדי שתמליכוני עליכם, "Say *Malchiyos* so I will be your king." By saying מלכות on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem will lead us as a מלך; He will take advice from tzaddikim, who arouse His compassion for us. He won't lead us in the way of an ארון.

Chazal (*Psikta d'Raw Kahan* ch.25) write that Hashem says, "I swear, that whoever waits for my kingship, I will testify for his good." The Shomer Emunah (*Maamar HaGeulah* 4) says that this refers to Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, we yearn and aspire for the time when Hashem's kingship will be revealed to all creation, and this causes Hashem to testify in our merit. And what more does a person need than Hadhem's testification, on the day of judgment?

On Rosh Hashanah, we make *kabalos* to remember Hashem more often. Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobel *zt'l* advised his chassidim to remember Hashem when they were learning Torah, too. He wrote to them that every fifteen minutes, they should remind themselves, "Before whom they are studying." Perhaps we aren't on this level. Nevertheless, we should increase the amount of time we think about and remember Hashem each day.

This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19) we say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו עוד על כן המו מעי לו רחם ארחמנו נאם ה'. Rebbe Mordechai of Lechovitz *zt'l* explains כי מדי דברי בו, I speak to myself, and I review my deeds. I think about how often I remember Hashem and I ask myself, זכור, "Is that called remembering Hashem? It isn't enough! אזכרנו עוד, "I must remember Hashem more!" When one takes it upon himself to remember Hashem more, המו מעי לו, this arouses Hashem's compassion. Hashem will say, רחם, "Is my compassion enough? ארחמנו עוד, "I will have even more compassion on him." All of this becomes his fate when he commits to thinking about his *Emunah* more often.

Erev Rosh Hashanah

Once upon a time, an armed battalion, with the king at their helm, marched towards a city to demand their overdue taxes. If the residents weren't prepared to pay, they would pay with their lives.

The people of the city were terrified. They were loyal citizens. They would pay the taxes if they could. But they simply didn't have the funds.

The king and his men were still quite a distance from the city when the elders of the

2. The Shem Mishmuel (*Nitzavim* תרע"ג) writes, "On the holy days of Tishrei don't be cold and disinterested. Perform the mitzvos of this month with a lot of *hislahavus*. Thereby, you will win the war against the *yetzer hara*...and you will emerge meritorious in the judgment. As it states, ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום, 'You, who are attached to Hashem, you are all alive today.'"

town went out to greet the king. The king sat with the city elders to hear them out.

The elders described to the king the terrible poverty that affected most of the citizens. "They sincerely wish they could pay the taxes, but they can't afford it."

The king said, "I will give them a deduction. They only have to pay 2/3's of the debt."

The king and his army marched on and met with another delegation from the city. This time it was the middle-class workers. They pleaded with the king to pardon the taxes, and the king replied, "I will relieve you from another third of the debt."

The king and his army marched on, and when they were just outside of the city, the entire town came out to greet the king. They wore ripped and patched clothing. Their poverty was evident, and they begged the king to erase the debt. The king did so, and he returned with his soldiers to his capital city.

The Midrash Tanchuma tells this *mashal*, and it is quoted in the *Tur* (581). The *Tur* writes, "The *nimshal* is, on *erev Rosh Hashanah* the tzaddikim fast and Hashem pardons a third of their sins. During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* the middle-class level Yidden fast, and Hashem pardons another third. On *Yom Kippur*, when everyone fasts, Hashem forgives the Jewish people entirely."

This source teaches us the importance of *erev Rosh Hashanah*. It is one of the most important days for the atonement of the Jewish nation.

There was once a person who was worried about the *aveiros* he had committed throughout the year. It was *erev Rosh Hashanah* – just moments before the new year began – and he had not yet started to do *teshuvah*. The *Chidushei HaRim zt'l* told him that he can still do *teshuvah* then, and it would be accepted. He explained, "Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 2:) say that even just one day of

a year is counted and considered as an entire year. As Chazal say, *יום אחד בשנה חשוב שנה*. Chazal also say, *מקצת היום ככולו*, that part of a day is like an entire day. Put both ideas together, and you understand that if you do *teshuvah* now, in the last few minutes of the year, it will be like you fixed the entire year. All your *aveiros* will be removed."

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2) states, "What's *teshuvah*? It's to leave the sin, to remove it from your thoughts, and to be committed never to sin again." *Teshuvah* is a decision, a commitment, and it can be done in a moment. The Gemara (49) says, *על מנת שאני, צדיק אפילו רשע גמור מקודשת שמא הרהר תשובה בדעת*, "[If a person gives a ring to a woman and says, 'Marry me] on the condition that I am a tzaddik,' even if he is a complete *rasha*, we say that [they might be] married. This is because perhaps he had even one thought of *teshuvah*." Once again, we see that a *rasha gamur*, a complete *rasha*, can become a tzaddik in a moment, with just a thought of *teshuvah*. Therefore, don't underestimate the potential of *erev Rosh Hashanah*. Don't feel that it is too late. On this day, you can atone for all the *aveiros* that you committed throughout the year.

The Kol Bo teaches:

On *Rosh Hashanah*, the Satan testifies against the Jewish nation and states all their sins. Hashem replies, "The Torah says that we listen to two witnesses. Bring two witnesses, and we will listen to your case."

The Satan calls the sun. The sun agrees to testify. Then, the Satan calls the moon, but there is no moon on *Rosh Hashanah*! It is *בכמה ליום חגנו*, the holiday that the moon hides. (The moon is concealed at the beginning of every month.) Hashem says to the Satan, "Without two witnesses, your case is canceled." And the Jewish nation is inscribed for a good year.

However, the Satan did get the sun on his side, and there are times that even just one witness is enough. An example of this is

the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 66), which states that one witness is sufficient to testify that someone has a **מום**, flaw. (A *cohen* with a **מום** can't bring sacrifices in the Beis HaMikdash. If he does, the sacrifices are invalid. One witness who testifies that a *cohen* has a *mum* has credibility.)

Based on this Halachah, the Noda b'Yehudah (*Tzlach, drush* 1:6-8) says that the sun can testify against the Jewish nation. He can say that they looked where they shouldn't have, they heard what they shouldn't have listened to, spoke forbidden words, and that they are flawed people – in a spiritual sense). It is like saying they are deaf, blind, mute, etc., because, in a spiritual sense, that is what happens when one doesn't safeguard his senses. The sun is believed because for **מומים** even one witness is sufficient.

To be protected, the Noda b'Yehudah concludes, the solution is to do *teshuvah*. This will remove all flaws. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 23:12), והיה לפניך, ערב, when Rosh Hashanah approaches, ירחץ במים, wash yourself with tears, וכבוא השמש, and then, when the sun comes to testify against the Jewish nation, his testimony won't be accepted. And then, יבוא אל תוך המחנה, the Yid will be permitted to return to the camp for the court will acquit him.

It states in the *Shulchan Aruch* (581:2) נוהגים, "The custom is to fast on *erev Rosh Hashanah*." This fast is observed by many.

Often, Torah scholars are advised not to fast (aside from the obligatory fast days) because fasts prevent them from properly studying Torah. The Chasam Sofer (on the *gilyon* of the *Shulchan Aruch*) writes that the fast of *erev Rosh Hashanah* is an exception. He writes, "The scholars for whom fasting disturbs their *avodas hakodesh* shouldn't fast on other days...but they should fast on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, to welcome the King, Hashem."

The Arizal says that all the *tefillos* of the year that weren't able to go up can go up with the *Minchah* of *erev Rosh Hashanah*.

Some are surprised that we say in the *erev Rosh Hashanah Shemonah Esrei* בך עלינו את השנה הזאת, "Bless this year..." How much of the year is left? What type of *brachah* can one get in such a short time?

There are two answers to this question: (1) The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz *zt'l* taught that one couldn't manage a second of his life without Hashem's blessings. Therefore, one shouldn't say, "There are only a few moments left until the new year, I can manage them on my own" because you can't live for a moment without *siyata dishmaya*. Therefore, we must ask for Hashem's blessings, even if they are just for the last moments of the year. (2) Even a short period of time, like a second, can be very influential and essential. The following story illustrates this point:

Someone once told Reb Shmuel Auerbach *zt'l* that his stocks crashed and he lost a lot of money at three o'clock in the afternoon, *erev Rosh Hashanah*.

So, yes, definitely, things can turn around in a moment. They can also turn around for the good, Hashem can bring great salvations in a moment. So, one can ask for *brachos*, even at the very end of the year (Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l*).

After *Minchah*, during the very last moments of the year, we say the *piyut*, אבות תכלה שנה וקללותיה תהל, "The year, with its curses, should end. Let the new year begin with its blessings!"

It seems that last year was cursed, and the upcoming year is blessed. The problem is that we say this prayer every year. While we now call this passing year a cursed year, last year, we called it a blessed year. And in a year, we call the upcoming blessed year a cursed year. Aren't we contradicting ourselves?

To answer this question, think about someone who earned fifty million dollars in just one year. He will call that year blessed.

The next year, he makes a billion dollars. This is the blessed year, and in comparison, last year was a cursed year. He only earned fifty million. This is our intention when we say the cursed year should end. We mean, in comparison to the blessings of the upcoming year, this passing year will be like a curse.

This prayer is called אהות קטנה, "the small sister..." Tzaddikim said this is hinting that we should have in mind the needs of others. We should be concerned about their suffering, and we should strive to help them in any way we can.

To Praise Hashem

One of the things we practice in Elul (and if we didn't do it until now, we could begin even on the last day of the year) is to recognize all the *chesed* Hashem does for us and to praise Hashem for them. This idea is hinted to in the *roshei teivos* of אנהנו מודים לך ומהללים לשם תפראתך, "We thank You and we praise Your glorious name...." (said in *Modim*). The *roshei teivos* of these words spell אלול, and the word מודים is in between the letters that spell אלול, because the *avodah* of Elul is to praise Hashem, and to recognize all the kindness He does for us.

Even if it is already the last day of the year, it isn't too late. Take a few moments to think about all the good you received the entire year or your whole life. Also, think about all the *tzaros* you were saved from. If you and your family aren't sick, that is a reason to praise Hashem. If you aren't poor, or if you didn't fall into debt, you should undoubtedly thank Hashem for that, too because we don't only praise Hashem for the good we receive but also for the *tzaros* that didn't afflict us.

The Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) lists the ten miracles that took place in the Beis HaMikdash. Among them, לא הפילה אשה מריה בשר הקודש, ולא הסריה בשר הקודש מעולם, ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים... ולא "A woman didn't miscarry from the smell of the *kodshim* meat,

the sacred meat never spoiled, a fly wasn't seen in the slaughter room...rain never put out the fire on the *mizbeiach*..." So, we see that Hashem performs miracles to save us from all kinds of problems, and we should praise Hashem for them, too.

During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, in *Modim*, we request: וכתוב לחיים טובים כל בני ברייתך, "Inscribe all Yidden, with whom You made a covenant and pact, for a good life." It isn't clear why this request is written in *Modim*.

The *Tiferes Shlomo zt'l* (*Vayeira* ר"ה נותן) explains that after we praise Hashem is an ideal time to ask for more. As it states, הודו, בי לעולם חסדו, if you praise Hashem, the kindness will continue forever.

Furthermore, a prerequisite for prayer is the belief in Hashem's kindness and faith that Hashem answers *tefillah*. In *Modim*, after we remind ourselves of Hashem's miracles and kindness, it is an opportune time to pray for a good year.

Three Days before Rosh Hashanah

Chazal teach that if you don't speak to someone for three days (because you are angry at him) he is a שונא, your enemy, and you cannot serve as his witness. The *Nesivos HaMishpat* advises people to keep away from the *yetzer hara* (the Satan) for three days before Rosh Hashanah. Because he will then be your enemy, and he is not allowed to testify against you on Rosh Hashanah.

The *poskim* say that the *chazanim* and those who will blow the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah 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, we don't rely on the *chazanim* anymore, because they aren't *tzaddikim* like they used to be years ago. Today, it is up to everyone to prepare themselves and to do the best they can to receive a good judgment

on Rosh Hashanah. Therefore, the entire congregation should prepare themselves three days before Rosh Hashanah (and three days before Yom Kippur) so that their *tefillos* will be accepted.³

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

Chazal tell us that *parnassah* comes in the merit of the *akeidah*. The Vilna Gaon clarifies that *parnassah* is earned from the first two days, the days of preparation. Therefore it states, יחיינו מימים, 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.

Now are the days of preparation, for which we will earn a great reward. The

reward for the mitzvah itself is reserved for Olam HaBa.

Daven for your *Gashmiyos* Needs

The *Zohar* (*Tikunim* p.22.) states, "Woe to people! Hashem is bound and fettered in *galus*, together with them. And it states, אין חבוש מתיר את עצמו מבית האסורים, a prisoner can't free himself from jail. Hashem's redemption is dependent on our *teshuvah*. Hashem is looking through the window... [the windows of the beis medresh, waiting for our *teshuvah*]... The *Shechinah* stands at the window and cries, as it states (*Shoftim* 5:28), בעד החלון נשקפה ותיבב; and the shofar symbolizes her cries... The *Shechinah* looks to see if anybody is doing *teshuvah* so that she can be freed from her imprisonment. As it states, לאמר לאסורים צא ולאשה בחשך הגלו, To tell the imprisoned, 'Go out!' To say to those in darkness, 'Go free!' but no one is doing *teshuvah*. Everyone is busy with their own needs and *parnassah*, and they strive to inherit this world... On Yom Kippur they

3. 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 he 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 lion, 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 forgot another hundred stories, but there's 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 the clever fox didn't have anything to tell the king. But he realized that their only hope was to go to the lion and to plead whatever they could, to arouse his compassion. Therefore, the fox told the animals he had three hundred parables, so they would follow him to the lion. And then he told them that it was up to them to do whatever they can to save themselves.)

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

shout like dogs, *הב הב לנא מוונא*, 'Give us *parnassah*, atonement, life! They are like dogs, because they ask for themselves, and they aren't doing *teshuvah*, and they aren't asking for the redemption of the *Shechinah*... They ask for food, clothes, *shidduchim*, but they don't ask for Torah..."

This *Zohar* seems to be saying that one shouldn't ask for his own needs on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If he does, he is like the brazen dogs. Instead, he should pray for Moshiach, and that the *Shechinah* should be redeemed, and that Hashem's kingship be revealed to the world. He can also pray for his personal spiritual needs, such as that he and his children succeed in Torah and have *yiras Shamayim*. It seems from this that one shouldn't daven for *parnassah*, health, and the like.

However, we are taught by the tzaddikim that we *should* daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This is the consensus of the *gedolei Yisrael*, from the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* to the Litvishe *gedolim* – such as the Chazon Ish (*Maaseh Ish* vol.3, 157) and Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l*.

Once, on Rosh Hashanah, before blowing the shofar, the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* told his students that they should daven for their worldly needs. He explained that this doesn't contradict the *Zohar*, because we only want *parnassah* and good health so that we can serve Hashem better and fully devote ourselves to Torah and tefillah. When this is your intention, you are ultimately praying for *ruchniyos*.⁴

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zy'a* said, "Those who don't ask don't have."

We don't need to look far to prove that we should daven for our *gashmiyos* needs. In the *tefillah* we say, *בספר חיים... פרנסה טובה וגזירות טובות*, and we ask for *gashmiyos*. Our intention should be that the *gashmiyos* should help us attain *ruchniyos*.

Rebbe Meir of Permishlan *zt'l* said, 'Ribono Shel Olam! If You make a synopsis of all Yidden's prayers, they are all about money. But if You make a summary of what their money is all about, You will find mitzvos.' Because with their money, they give *tzedakah*, send their children to cheder, buy the four *minim*, etc. It is all about mitzvos.

If one doesn't pray for his *gashmiyos* needs, that means he thinks he can manage those matters on his own. But, of course, he can't. One can't do anything without Hashem. Therefore, one should pray for his *gashmiyos* needs too.⁵

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* asks, we say in the Rosh Hashanah *Shemonei Esrei*, *קדוש קדוש אתה וגורא שמך*, "You are holy and Your name is awesome." So how can we ask You for our material, *gashmiyos*, needs? It doesn't seem proper to ask for such things from the great King. However, *ואין אלוה מבעלריך*, there is no G-d other than You. Where should I turn to get my needs, if not from You? Therefore I must ask You for my material needs, too.⁶

Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 27), *אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש*, "I ask one thing from

4. Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zy'a* expressed it this way: The *Zohar* prohibits shouting *הב הב*, "Give me more." It is referring to someone who has enough, only he wants more. But if he doesn't have all his needs, certainly he should ask for them on Rosh Hashanah.

5. The tzaddikim of Karlin *zy'a* taught that we should 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*

6. The Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l* said that when one requests for his personal needs it is *teshuvah iloya* (a very high level of *teshuvah*). Perhaps this is because when one asks for his personal needs, the words come out from a very deep place of his heart. It is a special *tefillah*.

Hashem." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that Dovid HaMelech didn't want to daven for more than one thing at a time. The source is the Gemara (*Taanis* 8:) which states, "In the days of Reb Shmuel bar Nachmani there was a famine and a plague. They wondered, 'What should we do? We can't pray for both things (as it isn't proper to declare a day of fasting and to pray for two matters). Rather, we should pray that the plague stop, and we will endure the hardships of famine.' Reb Shmuel bar Nachmani told them, 'I suggest that we pray there shouldn't be a hunger. Because when Hashem gives food, He gives it to the living.'" Hashem doesn't give food to people and then let them die in a plague. So, when they pray for food they will be saved from the plague, too.

The Gemara asks, "How do we know that one shouldn't pray for two things?"

The Gemara replies that it states (*Ezra* 8:23), ונצומה ונבקשה מאלקינו על זאת ועתר לנו 'We fasted, and we asked Hashem for *this*...'

The question is, when we review our *tefillos*, we see that we ask for many things at once. A prime example is *Shemonah Esrei*. We ask for intelligence, *teshuvah*, redemption, *parnassah*, *refuah*, and more.⁷

The answer is that all requests are one: we are praying for *ruchniyos*. For that, we need *parnassah*, health, and so much more.

Your Wish Is My Command

A *shadchan* once said to Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l*, "You have an excellent son. I have a wonderful *shidduch* for him..." But Reb Yosef Chaim didn't want to hear about it. The *shadchan* and others began to put pressure on Reb Yosef Chaim to consider

the *shidduch*, because it was indeed an especially good idea. Reb Yosef Chaim eventually agreed to consider it, and the *shidduch* was made.

Unfortunately, he didn't have *nachas* from this *shidduch*. The couple didn't have children, and they divorced.

Why didn't Reb Yosef Chaim want to listen to the *shidduch* initially? He explained that this was because he didn't daven for that son's *shidduch* at the beginning of the year. Rosh Hashanah time he still wasn't planning on marrying off that son during the year. Reb Yosef Chaim knew that everything is dependent on Rosh Hashanah, and since he didn't pray for the *shidduch* he was afraid to go through with it. As it turned out, his fears were well-founded.⁸

Many years ago, there was a G-d fearing farmer who davened with all his heart on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that his wheat crop should grow well that year. He added some more *tefillos* during Succos and Hoshanah Rabba, too. After the holiday season passed, he hired someone to plant the wheat, but the worker grew barley!

When the seeds began sprouting, and the farmer found out that the worker had planted barley, he rebuked him harshly. "Why didn't you listen to me? Wheat brings me a much greater profit. It is too late to change it now, but don't think I will forgive you for this felony. I will bring you to court and they will obligate you to pay me for the loss you caused me."

Before they went to court, another disaster occurred. The field was located near a big river. Since it was a very rainy year, the river

7. Also, Dovid HaMelech, after he proclaimed אהת שאלתי, that he asks solely for one thing, he expressed many requests. As it states, לחיות בנועם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו, אהת שאלתי... שבתו בבית ה'... לחיות בנועם ה'.

8. This is not a counsel of how to act, rather an awareness of the importance of *tefillah* for all our needs on Rosh Hashanah.

flooded, and all crops along the riverside were ruined.

When they went to court, the worker said to the judges, "Even if I had planted wheat, it would be ruined by the flood. I didn't cause him any loss."

"You caused him a great loss," the judges said. "Rosh Hashanah time, he prayed for his wheat crop. Perhaps, if you planted wheat, the river wouldn't have flooded, and his crops would have prospered. Because *tefillos* at the beginning of the year are very powerful. As it states (*Iyov* 22:28), ותגור אומר ויקם, לך, "What you decree, Hashem does."

This story is written in the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 106.). Rashi writes, "Whatever you ask for from the Creator [at the beginning of the year] e grants you.

Let us, therefore, take advantage of Rosh Hashanah, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and Succos, because during these days, ותגור אומר ויקם לך, "Whatever you ask for, Hashem grants you."

Perhaps the specialness of the *tefillos* at the beginning of the year is because it is before the heavenly court decided what will be this year. After the verdict is passed, it is harder to change the decree.

As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16.) states, יפה, "It is good for a person to pray, both before the heavenly tribunal convenes and after the verdict is set." The Aruch L'ner *zt'l* explains that *tefillos* said after the גור דין are sometimes answered and sometimes not. But *tefillos* said before the judgment is finalized are always answered.

When you daven, daven with joy, and trust that Hashem will answer your *tefillos*.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we read in the *haftarah* (*Shmuel* 1, ch.1) the story of Elkanah who was married to Chanah and Peninah. Peninah had children, while Chanah didn't. The *Navi* tells us that one day Elkanah said, "Chanah, why do you cry...? I'm worth more than ten children to you." ותקם חנה... ותתפלל על ה' "Chanah stood up...and she prayed..." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* notes that she didn't pray beforehand. She began praying after her husband gave her encouragement and solace. This is because she knew that *tefillos* said with sadness wouldn't be effective.

Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah, pray with joy and trust in Hashem, and Hashem will answer your *tefillos*.⁹

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 learned from the end of the *pasuk*, ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כרת, "and so, I will go to the king, which isn't proper." Even those people, who do not deserve to come to the King, can do so on Rosh Hashanah, and their *tefillos* will be answered.

9. The *Navi* states that after she prayed, ופניה לא היה לה עוד, "She didn't have a sad face anymore." The Chasam Sofer explains that her *tefillos* were answered in the merit of her *simchah*.

Ask for a Lot

There was once a wealthy couple who were childless. The husband wasn't able to travel to Permishlan, so he asked his wife to go to Rebbe Meir of Parmishlan zt'l and to ask him for a brachah for children. He told her to tell the rebbe that he was ready to lose his wealth, if that was necessary, as long as they would bear a child.

She said to the Rebbe, "My husband said that he is ready to keep his wealth, as long as he can have children." The rebbe laughed,

because he understood what she meant to say. The rebbe said, "But the way you said it is correct, because Hashem can give both: wealth and children. Why limit Hashem?" And that's what happened.

As it states, *וּמְלָאָהּ*, *וְאָמַרְתָּ*, ask for a lot, and Hashem will fulfill your requests.¹⁰

To teach people to pray for a lot, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zt'l told the following story:

10. People tell the following fable:

A malach once said to a person, "Ask whatever you want, and your wishes will be granted. But you can only ask for one thing."

This person was blind, poor, and childless. He said, "I want to see my great-grandchildren eating off of golden dishes." With this one request, he asked for sight, children, and wealth.

The nimshal is: When you are given the option to request, ask wisely. For our discussion, this means ask for big things. For example, ask for high madreigos, for you and your family. The heavens are open and the options are unlimited.

Czar Nicolai would sometimes dress like a regular citizen, so he could hear what the populace was saying. Once, dressed in this manner, he asked some people by a bar, "If Czar Nicolai tells you that you can ask for whatever you want, what would you ask for?"

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

Another said, "I'd request that he give me a mansion."

A third said, "I would ask for a bank."

The fourth said "I request that you leave us alone and you stop bothering us with your foolish questions. You're not the Czar and your hypothetical question is bothersome and a waste of our time."

The king wrote letters to the four people. To one he gave a million dollars; to the second, a mansion; and he gave a bank to the third. And to the fourth he wrote "You wanted to be left in peace, therefore we will do so. I won't be in contact with you anymore."

The nimshal is, Hashem, the King, gives us the option to request whatever we want. We would be foolish to lose this opportunity.

When people go around the beis medresh, collecting money, even the wealthy give small donations: a dollar or two. But when they go to the wealthy people's door, they receive much more money. Why do wealthy give more tzedakah by their homes than in the beis medresh?

Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen zt'l said that in the beis medresh, the collector isn't expecting to get more than a dollar, so that's all that he gets. He expects to get more by the wealthy man's home, therefore he receives more. It all depends on the expectation of the receiver.

The lesson for our topic is to expect a lot - because Hashem can give a lot - and then you will receive according to our expectations.

Czar Nicolai told a soldier, "Ask for whatever you want, and I will give it to you."¹¹

The soldier said, "I don't get along with the general who is in charge of my unit in the army. My request is for permission to transfer to a different unit."

Czar Nicolai said, "Your request is granted, but why did you ask for so little? If you had requested to be the general, I would have given that to you as well."

The lesson is, Hashem gives us the right to ask, so let's not limit our requests. Hashem can provide more and more and more.

The Midrash (ילקוט מעם לעזו ראה "נתן תתן") writes that Alexander Mokdon came to Eretz Yisrael, and there was a Yid who came forward to bless him. Alexander was thankful, and he 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 that's appropriate for the giver to give, and not according to the expectations of the receiver."

The Lev Simchah zt'l said that this is the explanation of תפילת מל (said on Pesach): דוד כערכך, "Friend, according to Your assessments, establish our name." This means that Hashem should give us His kindness as He understands kindness. That will be much more than we can even imagine.

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 one should pray before Rosh Hashanah that he should be able to cry on Rosh Hashanah. As it states (*Tehillim* 42), צמאה נפשי לאלקים לא"ל חי... היתה, לי דמעתי. Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צמאה נפשי, "My heart thirsts, לאלקים that on the day of judgment of Rosh Hashanah, היתה לי דמעתי, I should be able to cry."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l taught, בכיה (crying) is *roshei teivos* בשמך יגילון כל היום, "In Your name, we rejoice all day long." Because even when we cry, it should be with joy, and not with sadness and despair.¹²

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

The *Alef HaMagen* (582:45 and *Maaseh Rav, Gr'a* 207) discuss the importance of crying 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 in (*Tehillim* 6:9), בי שמע ה' קול בכי, "Hashem heard the voice of my cries." It wasn't real tears, but the voice was of someone who was crying.

When one davens in this way it enables him to have more *kavanah*.

11. The soldier shouted when he saw someone aiming his rifle at Czar Nicolai when the Czar was mounted on his horse. The horse leaped, when it heard the shout. The rifle shot hit the horse and not the Czar. The Czar was rewarding the soldier for saving his life.

12. We eat דבש honey on Rosh Hashanah. The Rebbe of Gostinen zt'l said that דבש is *roshei teivos* שימה דמעתי, "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 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 אצעק ואשוע שתרם תפילתי, "Even when I shout and I scream, the tefillos are closed." And although the gates of tefillah were closed, the gates of tears remain open. As it states (Tehillim 39) האזינה אל דמעתי אל תחרש, "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, and we don't daven with kavanah. Crying opens up the heart, and our tefillos are answered.

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 traveled 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 the gate so that he could escape to freedom.

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

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

The *nimshal* is, if we wash our hearts with hot tears, we can break through all the walls and barriers that separate us from our Father in heaven.

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 was compassionate, and he felt bad for this orphan. "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. Your sister bargained well with me and convinced me to sell it for a good price."

This story can help us understand the importance of tears in tefillah. It arouses Hashem's and allows the gates of heaven to open wide for our requests.

The Yismach Moshe told the following *mashal*: There was a king who was angry at his servants. They didn't know what they can do to stop his anger. One servant said, "I have a bottle of good wine. When the king

drinks it, his mood mellows, and we can convince him to no longer be angry with us."

The nimshal is related to tears. Tears are the good wine that appeases Hashem. As it says, מלך מתרצה בדמעות, "The King who is appeased with tears."¹³

There are many tefillos written in Yiddish. These were created for women who, in the past, didn't understand *lashon hakadosh*. There were also many ignorant men (*am haaratzim*) in the past who didn't know *lashon hakadosh*. Why weren't *techinot* composed for them? It is because we primarily need the women's tefillos, because it is easier for a woman to cry, and their tefillos, said with tears, breaks 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 *kehillah* accomplishes with many hours of *tefillah*. Partially, this is because of the special quality of *tefillah* said with tears, which women excel in. These tefillos are always answered.

Shofar with Tears

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

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

A king was traveling with his son through a distant city, and he said to his son, "I have enemies in this city. Be careful and stay away from them."

But the evil people kidnapped the prince. They held him captive in that city.

On a set day, each year, the king passed through this city. The child knew the date, and he thought, "When my father passes by, I will shout. He will hear me and save me."

His captives suspected that the child would do this, so on the day the king passed through the city, they locked the prince in an iron cell. There weren't even any 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.

As the king passed through the city, the son threw the stones at the iron walls, but the walls didn't collapse. The reason for this was because only clean stones knock down iron walls, and his stones weren't clean.

The child started to cry. His tears washed the stones. He threw a rock, and the iron wall fell. The king heard his son's 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

¹³ Rebbe Naftali of Melitz *zt'l* said that רבש is *roshei teivos* for שימי דמעותי 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, and the ink doesn't flow. We request, שימי דמעותי 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 רבש is *gematriya* אב הרחמן, compassionate Father.

blows shofar without a broken heart and tears.

Tehillim

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 first night of Rosh Hashanah, and he said with them the entire *Tehillim* twice. All of them were engaged shortly after that.

There's a community *askan* in Eretz Yisrael who had two boys and a girl in *shidduchim*, and nothing seemed to be moving. They weren't even receiving suggestions. 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 told me that three of his married children were childless. The father did this *segulah*, and that year all three of them were blessed with a child.

However, it is tough to keep this *segulah*, and therefore, it isn't advised for everyone. For example, if this custom will prevent you from being awake and alert by the tefillos, it is probably better to refrain. It is more important to daven with *kavanah*.

But we can do as much as we can. For example, perhaps we can say the entire *Tehillim* twice over the two days of Rosh Hashanah. If that is also too much, we can

divide the *Tehillim* among several people, and each person says his chapters. A third counsel is to say as much *Tehillim* as you can. When one does the amount that is fitting for him, it is also sufficient, and he will merit salvation, *be'ezras Hashem*.

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 Noam Elimelech writes that there is an עולם הגדול הנקרא ההלה, "A great world called *Tehillah*..." It is a world of immense compassion, and the Satan isn't able to say anything against him in that world. The Noam Elimelech writes, "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]. The Satan isn't there and there are no problems (אין שטן ואין פגע רע). "אין שטן ואין פגע רע", "There is no Satan and there are no problems" is *roshei teivos*, שופר, because shofar also silences the Satan.

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. And through saying *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs.

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..."¹⁴

14. 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

The Or HaMeir asks, why is the shofar needed? If the purpose of shofar is to rouse people to teshuvah, the mitzvah could have been that the rav of each community should give a drashah and motivate people to teshuvah!

The Or HaMeir answers with a *mashal*:

There was once a lad who was hired to be the town crier. He sat on a hilltop and looked down below. If there were thieves or any other danger, he would clang his bells to warn the townspeople to take action.

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

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 can consume everything.

The Or HaMeir explains that when people hear a mussar drashah, they often think, "These are all good ideas, but the rav doesn't

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 and 12:00 in the morning. I arrived at 11:50. The room was packed with applicants, but no one was being called inside. seMusic played in the background and I sat down for a few moments and listened. Then I got up, opened the door to the office and said, 'I came for the interview.'

"The secretary said, 'There are many people in line ahead of you. 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?"

"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."

One person 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?"

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, "Change your ways and improve your connection with Hashem." Like in the story, the shofar is saying, "Open the door [of heaven] and come inside to Hashem." We only have to pay attention to the words the shofar is telling us.

It isn't an excuse to say, "I heard the message, but I saw no one else was hearing the message, so I also didn't improve my ways." Because if you hear the message, follow what it tells you and return to Hashem.

mean me. He is referring to others." When the rav speaks about hasmadah in Torah study, the scholars think he is referring to the people who don't study Torah. They think, "He doesn't mean me. I study enough." Similarly, the unlearned think, "He means the scholars. They can learn more. I see them taking breaks sometimes. But the rav doesn't mean me, because what can I do, if I don't understand Torah? It isn't my fault." Whatever the rav will say, people will not take too seriously. Therefore, we blow shofar. No words are stated, just a call for teshuvah, and everyone understands we mean them. The shofar shouts, "There's a fire! We're in danger!" And this awakens everyone to *teshuvah*.

Torah

The custom is to blow the shofar by the bimah (see *Shulchan Aruch* 585:1). The Mishnah Berurah says that this is to give us the merit of Torah, which will help us come through victorious in judgment.

There are other associations between Torah and Rosh Hashanah. A primary example is the brachos of Shofros during the Musaf Shemonah Esrei. There we discuss the shofar that was blown by matan Torah.

Why do we mention matan Torah on Rosh Hashanah? The merit of the Torah helps us in judgment.

Therefore, in addition to alluding to Torah, it would be wise to spend time learning Torah on Rosh Hashanah. Even more importantly, it would be wise to accept on oneself to increase the amount of Torah that he studies. This will help him in the judgment, and it will grant him success in the highest pursuit that we can be involved in.

As the Gemara (Moed Kattan 9:) states, "Even the mitzvos don't compare to Torah." Rashi writes, "One doesn't do mitzvos and he studies Torah." There are exceptions to this rule, as the Gemara there explains, when no one can do the mitzvah other than you, you should be the one to do the mitzvah. Learning Torah is the greatest mitzvah of all.

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.¹⁵

15. Rebbe Dovid of Tolne *zy'a* asked someone why he doesn't learn Torah. The man replied, "I don't have *yishuv hadaas*."

The Rebbe told him, "You don't need *yishuv hadaas* to study Torah, because Torah study gives you *yishuv hadaas*."

It states (*Koheles* 8), האלקים עשה את האדם ישר והמה בקשו השבנות רבים, "Hashem made man straight and they sought many thoughts." If a person's mind isn't straight anymore, how can he rectify it? Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin *zy'a* answered that the mind is straightened out with a *blatt* Gemara.

Sometimes, people's love for mitzvos takes them away from their devotion to Torah. In *Pirkei Avos* it states that one acquires Torah with *מיעוט דרך ארץ*, a little *derech erez*. The *miforshim* explain that too much *derech erez* could prevent him from studying Torah. Now he has to speak with this person for a long time, and then he has to speak with that person, and he is left without attachment to Torah. Therefore, for success in Torah, *מיעוט דרך ארץ* is required.

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 lure and our love for the mitzvos shouldn't detach us from making Torah study our primary focus in life. The Torah urges us, don't take this bribe, and give yourself many hours of Torah study.

Shofar and a Broken Heart

One Rosh Hashanah, in the beis medresh of the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l*, people were waiting for *tekiyas shofar*, but the Chozeh of Lublin wasn't coming out of his room. They davened *shacharis* that morning with immense *kavanah*, and they were expecting to hear shofar after a short break, but the Chozeh wasn't ready yet.

He didn't want to go to shofar without a good deed, and he felt that he doesn't have any good deeds. (This was because of his immense humility. He didn't consider himself worthy, at all.)

Then he reminded himself of one good deed, and he felt ready to hear shofar. His good deed was that he once asked his gabbai to awaken him early in the morning, so he could perform a particular *mitzvah*. The gabbai overslept, and the Chozeh was upset that he lost this opportunity. He was about to rebuke the gabbai harshly, but then he controlled himself and he didn't show any sign of disappointment before the gabbai. With this merit, he felt he is ready to hear shofar.

One factor that we can learn from 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* once 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.

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 while concentrating on the *kavanos* the Baal Shem Tov taught him.

After *mussaf*, he told the Baal Shem Tov that he lost the paper and that he forgot all the *kavanos*. The Baal Shem Tov told him that he wanted him to lose the paper.

The Baal Shem Tov explained, "The kabalistic thoughts (*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 *tekiyas*, blown with a broken heart, went straight up to heaven and accomplished everything."

The *baal makri* (the one who calls out *tekiyah*, *shevarim*, etc.) asked Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zy'a* what kabalistic *kavanos* he should have in mind when he calls out the *tekiyas*. 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..."

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16:) teaches, "Every year that the Jewish nation feels poor at the beginning will be successful in the end."

We use a curved shofar. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26:) explains, "On Rosh Hashanah, the more one bends his heart [with humility] the better." Because on Rosh Hashanah, we shouldn't feel we are perfect or that we deserve a good year. Rather, we recognize our shortcomings, and nevertheless, we trust in Hashem's compassion to grant us a good year.

Many people came to the Rosh Hashanah of Rebbe Aharon of Chernobyl *zt'l*; the beis medrash was filled to capacity. A second floor was built, especially to hold the large community, but it too was very crowded. One child was on the upper floor and fainted

because of the heat and the large crowd. People threw water on him, gave him water to drink, and brought him near a large hole in the floor, right above the bimah so he could get some air.

Reb Velvel Eisenbach *zt'l* (from the elders of Yerushalayim) said that this child was his great-great-grandfather, and he said that their family has a tradition of what this grandfather saw and heard at this time.

Lying there, he watched Rebbe Aharon Chernobyler approach the *bimah* for *tekiyas shofar*, and he heard Rebbe Aharon's inspirational drashah, which he said before they performed the mitzvah. The Rebbe told the community that if they are humble and they feel broken by their aveiros, the midas hadin, harsh justice, will leave them, and they will merit a good year. In contrast, if they feel that they are worthy of a good year, they lose Hashem's compassion. He said that this is hinted to in the pasuk *עלה אלקים בתרועה*, Hashem's attribute of harsh justice goes away with a *teruah*, a broken heart. But Hashem's attribute of compassion might also go away, *בקול שופר*, if one feels that he is good and he doesn't have to improve his ways.¹⁶

When the Rebbe said these inspirational words, everyone cried, copiously.

The grandfather said that he became wet once again, this time from the tears.

Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar

The Shaar HaMelech (3:2) writes, "Before the *brachah* for *tekiyas shofar*, rouse yourself to cry a lot, and especially when you answer amen after the *brachah*, because that is when it is decided in heaven how much *parnassah* you will have that year."

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* found a hint that *shofar* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 117) says, *שופר ורדיית הפת חכמה היא ואינו מלאכה*, comparing blowing *shofar* with taking loaves of bread out of an oven.¹⁷ This hints that through the mitzvah of *shofar*, you will have bread, and you will have *parnassah*.

Rosh Hashanah is *mesugal* for the barren to bear children. Indeed, Chazal (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) say, *בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה*, "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel and Chanah were remembered to be granted children."

The Zera Kodesh writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, when the world was created, is the 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 *הג"ך*, which is Hashem's name for pregnancies, as it states, *הגך הרה*, "Behold you are 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*.

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

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

16. *שופר* 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.

17. They are both called *חכמה*, a wisdom, *ואינו מלאכה*, but not an actual prohibition, when done on Shabbos.

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

In particular, the mitzvah of shofar is *mesugal* for this. As the Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught, the letters after *עקרה* are *שופר*. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to bear children.

The Midrash states, "When the Jewish people take the shofar and blow before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Hashem gets 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 asks 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 and influential that he can convince even Me to judge them, then the Jewish people aren't guilty for their aveiros. How can they stand up against the Satan?" Hashem, therefore, leaves the throne of Judgment and sits on his throne of compassion.

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 Sfas Emes *zt'l* writes that when one blows shofar, he should be as afraid as someone is when he enters the *קודש קדשים* of the Beis HaMikdash. Because the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26) says, *ביון דלזכרון קא אתי כלפנים דמי*, "Since the shofar is to draw memory, it is like it is in the Kodesh Kadoshim."

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.

Awe and Joy

The Rabbeinu Yonah (*Brachos* 21.) writes, "For humans, fear and joy are opposing feelings. But for Hakadosh Baruch Hu it isn't so. In fact, fear increases one's joy..." This describes the atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah. It is a day of fear, but it is also a day of joy. These are two opposite feelings, but they come together on Rosh Hashanah.

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

We blow a *tekiyah*, a sound of joy, and a *shevarim* and *teruah*, sounds of fear. They come together on Rosh Hashanah.

Yitzchak Avinu is called *Pachad Yitzchok*, the fear of Yitzchak. His outstanding attribute was fear of Hashem. Yet his name was *יצחק*, which means laughter, happiness. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* writes, "It is 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."

The Yismach Yisrael (*מאורן של ישראל למוצ"ש*) explains what we say by the first night of Selichos: *זוחלים ורוועדים 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 explains:

"When a woman is giving birth to her first child, she is more worried about her labor pains than a woman who already gave

birth before. But after she gives birth, she is very happy. Similarly, Bnei Yisrael are very afraid of the impending 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.'"

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos, Rosh Hashanah* 4) writes, "Hallel isn't said on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because they are days of עבודה, והכנעה, ופחד, ומורא מהשם, ויראה ממנו service, humility, fear, yiras Shamayim to escape to Him. Days of *teshuvah* and for asking for forgiveness. ובכל אלו העניינים אינו הגון, השחוק והשמחה, therefore, it isn't proper to have laughter and light-heartedness."

This Rambam also alludes to the concept that fear isn't a contradiction to love and joy. Because the Rambam writes, ויראה מנו ומברה, ומנום אליו, the fear causes people to run and to escape to Him.

Also, we say in the Selichos, אתכסה מחמתך, ביצילך, "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This is the uniqueness of fear of Hashem, which doesn't exist by any other kind of fear. Fear draws us closer to Him.

Fear

The Beis Aharon of Stolin zt'l once said to two *chassidim*: "I want you to study *Reishis Chachmah*, the section that describes Gehinom (*Shaar HaGehinom*). Come back when you finish, to share your thoughts and impressions."

They returned on the same day, and the Rebbe accepted them one by one. He asked the first one, "Did you learn the *Reishis Chachman*? What did you discover?"

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

The Rebbe told him, "Even so, Hashem is our Father, and He is compassionate. You shouldn't live in a state of worry, rather trust in Hashem's kindness and mercy."

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

"Yeah, I learned about it," the *chassid* replied. "There are various severities in Gehinom" and he accurately listed all the ideas that are written in the *Reishis Chachmah* on this subject. He spoke about it like he was repeating a scientific book filled with information. He didn't show any fear at all.

The Rebbe said, "You shall know that the *Reishis Chachmah* just gives a small sampling of what Gehinom is all about. It is actually far worse than that."

The Rebbe gave opposite ideas to the two *chassidim*. To one he said that he doesn't have to worry about Gehinom, and he warned the other that Gehinom is far worse than it appears in *Reishis Chachmah*. One *chassid* asked the Rebbe, the Beis Aharon, for an explanation. "Should we be worried about Gehinom or not?"

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

The same applies to the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah. If you are afraid of it, you don't have anything to worry about. But if you aren't afraid, you have a lot to be afraid of.

The Beis Aharon (*Netzavim*) writes, "Most important, everyone should be afraid on Rosh Hashanah... What does fear mean? There is a very high level of fear called יראה עילעא, which is based on one's recognition of Hashem. But if one isn't on that 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."

Sisro's mother stood by her window and she cried one hundred tears when her son,

Sisro, didn't return from a battle.¹⁸ She said (see *Shoftim* 5:28) מדוע בושש רכבו לבוא, מדוע אחרו מרכבותיו, "Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he coming so late?"

Why was she afraid. Her son won every battle until then, why should this time be different?

The answer is that the past doesn't guarantee the future.

This is something to remember about Rosh Hashanah. People think that if everything was good until now, it would continue being so. But nothing is guaranteed. We should therefore be afraid of the judgment.

In fact, the reason Hashem gave us this judgment is to train us to fear Him. As it states (*Koheles* 3:14), והאלקים עשה שיראו מלפניו, the Zohar explains "Hashem made for us Rosh Hashanah so we shall fear Him."

The Mishnah Berurah (584:1) writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, we don't say Hallel, because the books of life and death are opened before Him, so how can we sing Hallel? We trust that Hashem will acquit us in the judgment, and we will be deemed זכאי and righteous, nevertheless, one must be afraid of the

judgment. In the merit of his fear, he will be remembered for a good year."

Similarly, the Chinuch writes, "We don't say *Hallel* on this holiday...because it isn't proper to say *Hallel* when he is standing in judgment."

The Joy of Rosh Hashanah

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 ושמחה בהגך 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?

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 an immense joy.¹⁹

An early source for the joy on Rosh Hashanah are the *pesukim* (*Nechemyah* 8:9-10).

18. Hilchos shofar are learned from her cries, because תרועה means crying. We blow one hundred times on Rosh Hashanah, corresponding to her one hundred tears.

19. 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..."

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' אלקיכם, 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 לבו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים.. כי קדוש היום לאדונינו ואל תעצבו כי הדות 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.'"²⁰

An even earlier source is from the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 16:15), ושמחת בהגיד, 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.

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, even though it was the last day of Elul, and not the actual, standard Rosh Hashanah. But it is certain that on Rosh Hashanah, we must be joyous.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (כ"ו 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 בכיה, 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 arouse *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 קכ"ה) 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 *shehechiyanu* this day, and we wouldn't say *shehechiyanu* if it wasn't a day of joy.²¹ We don't say *shehechiyanu* in *sefiras ha'omer*, because there isn't joy, only

20. 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 הו"ה. The formation for Tishrei is הו"ה. The Magan Avraham (of Trisk) *zt'l* explains that this is because והיה represents joy, and we are supposed to be happy this month.

21. 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 *shehechiyanu*.

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.

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 *shehechiyanu*. 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..."²²

The Imrei Chaim writes that the gematriya of the roshei teivos of מלכויות וזרונות שופרות spell שמח, with the kollel, to teach us that on this day we should be happy.

The chofetz Chaim told the following mashal (and it was repeated by Reb Nossan Vachtfogel zt'l):

Czar Nicolei was about to travel through Russia, and the cities of Russia were preparing for the time that he passes through their city. Each city organized the visit with immense honor. The most tremendous honor was displayed in Peterberg, and Moscow was next in level, for they also gave a lot of praise to the Czar. There was one city that had a strange custom. When a guest came to the city, they would throw stones. The heads of the city gathered everyone for an emergency meeting, and they told them, "The czar is coming to our city. We are not asking you to prepare flowers or a band and parade. All we ask is that you don't throw stones."

The nimshal is that each generation Hashem is expecting to see something else from them. There were the generation fo the avos, the Tana'im, the rishonim, etc. For our generation, the expectation is less, just all that is requested that we don't rebel.

The Trisker Magid zt'l (Magan Avraham, Ki Savo) proved that we should be happy in Tishrei from Hashem's name that is prominent in this month: והי"ה which Chazal say is an expression of joy.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (16) writes, "Why was Yeshayah different than all other nevi'im, that he spoke about the good and the consolement of the Jewish nation? It is because he would accept the yoke of heaven with joy."

An elderly yid heard a non-religious Yid speaking on the phone in yiddish. After he put down the phone, the elderly yid asked him if he can help, because he saw that the young man appeared very worried.

The non-religious yid thought to himself, "How can this old man help me?" But since he was so worried about his problems, he decided to unload and to tell him what he is going through. He explained that he was caught selling drugs. His lawyer says that he should plead guilty, and that will at least lessen the punishment.

22. Rosh Hashanah is also a day of immense fear. Yet, the element of joy must always be there. חרות ד' היא מעוכם, 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 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.

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

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

The tzaddik blessed the boy with hatzlachah.

At the scheduled trial, the judge didn't show up. A substitute judge presided over the proceedings. The prosecutor presented a solid case proving the guilt of the defendant. The defendant's lawyer spoke about the innocence of his client. (The irreligious yid asked the lawyer to plead his innocence because he trusted in the tzaddik's brachah.) The lawyer didn't present any convincing arguments that would acquit his client. Instead, he rambled on about the innocence of the accused. When it came time for the verdict to be passed, the judge surprising all those present by announcing, "Since there is no incriminating evidence to convict the accused, he is now set freed."

Afterwards, the accused asked the lawyer how they, so unexpectedly, won the case. The lawyer replied, "This was the first case that I took on, and the judge is my grandfather. He wanted to build my self-esteem, so I will believe that I can win cases..."

We see that when one has a grandfather in the court, he has good chances to win the case. We can certainly trust that since we have a Father in the court, we will come out victoriously.

It states (Tehillim 96:11-13) ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ ירעם הים ומלואו יעלו שדי וכל אשר בו... לפני ה' כי בא השפוט הארץ. לשפוט הארץ. "Heavens and earth will rejoice. The sea with everything that's in it shall thunder [their praises to Hashem]. The fields, with everything in them, shall rejoice. The trees of the forest will sing. Before Hashem, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the people and the nations with righteousness and truth." These pesukim express the great joy that prevails at the judgment. And it is also a description of the great joy of Rosh Hashanah, when Hashem judges the world.

The Siforno (Vayikra 23:24) says that זכרון תרועה means that we blow the shofar to show our joy with the King. As it states (81:2) הרנינו לאלקים עוזנו, 'rejoice before Hashem, our might!'"

The Siforno concludes, "In particular, we should be happy because Hashem is our king and he will judge us favorably..."

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,²³ shave their beards, cut their nails. They eat, drink, and are happy on Rosh Hashanah,

23. The Prishah asks, why do we wear white clothes? We should wear colorful, decorated clothes to celebrate our certainty that Hashem will give us a good year. He answers that colorful clothes doesn't show that he trusts in Hashem. Perhaps he simply isn't afraid of the judgment.

As the Brisker Rav zt'l said, bitachon doesn't apply for those who aren't afraid. Bitachon are for those who are afraid, but they strengthen themselves with their trust in Hashem that everything will be good. This is the reason we wear white clothes on Rosh Hashanah. We are afraid, but we trust that Hashem will give us a good year.

The Smak of Tzurich (mitzvah 91, note 276) writes that we wear white clothes to remember the tachrichim (shrouds). This tames his joy on Rosh Hashanah that it shouldn't get out of hand.

because they know Hakadosh Baruch Hu will make a miracle for them..."

In Selichos we say חסות בצילך הנה באנו "We came to protect ourselves under Your shadow." We trust in Hashem to help us in the judgment.²⁴

Simanim

Shulchan Aruch (583:1) states, "Rosh Hashanah, one should eat רוביא...ברתי, סלקא, תמרי, קרא. When you eat רוביא say יהי רצון שירבו זכויותנו. When you eat ברתי say יכרתו שונאינו... 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 tradition is to eat fatty meat and all types of sweet foods."

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

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

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

The *Mishnah Berurah* writes, "The Shlah teaches that these signs remind the person

to rouse himself to *teshuvah* and to pray for these matters." When he eats the apple with honey he is reminded that he wants a sweet year. When he eats the ברתי, he remembers that this year, he wants to see the destruction of the resha'im, that it should be יכרתו שונאינו. This rouses him to *teshuvah* and to pray for these matters.

So, according to the Shlah, it is primarily the tefillah and the *teshuvah* that help. The siman is to help him remember what he wants to pray for.

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 that proclaim that everything will be good that year, which makes it a good 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."

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, "On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, כל מה דעביד רחמנא למב עביד גום... 'Hashem only does good. 'גום זו לטובה. This turns things over that they should truly be good."²⁵

24. The Gemara (Bava Metziah 85:) tells that a calf was being brought to the shechitah, and it went under Rebbi's cloak. It was like he was requesting that Rebbi save him. Rebbi told the calf, "Go. You were created for that." This was considered as a lack in compassion, and Rebbi was punished for thirteen years with very great toothaches.

What did Rebbi do wrong? Aren't we permitted to slaughter animals? Isn't it true that animals were created so people can eat them?

The problem was that after the calf pleaded by Rebbi, it wasn't proper to send it away.

Therefore, when we go under Hashem's shadow, and we rely on Him to save us, Hashem will protect us.

25. Sometimes after the tefillah one feels, "I should have davened somewhere else. I would have davened better." But remember, everything is bashert. As Reb Shlomo Kluger says, say, "Everything is for the good."

Yet another approach is taught by Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas 481). He explains that Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint of the year, so what we do on Rosh Hashanah makes an imprint on the entire year.

Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer wouldn't say a drashah on Rosh Hashanah because he was afraid that he might say something negative, and that would make a negative imprint on the year.

He explains that we don't eat sour foods on Rosh Hashanah because we don't want to make a sour face, which would leave a sour imprint on the entire year.

When an architect draws up a blueprint for a building, each mark of the pencil means something. Similarly, one should be cautious with every moment of Rosh Hashanah, because each moment, and each deed creates the blueprint for the upcoming year.

According to his explanation, it seems that everything we eat, think, say, or do become part of the architectural plan for the upcoming year. When we eat apple dipped

in honey, intending that it should be a sign for a good year, this becomes part of the blueprint's drawing, and it will have a positive effect on the construction of the new year.

The Main Siman

People in Yerushalayim would say, "If an apple dipped in honey is a sign for a sweet year, certainly if a person is a 'sweet Yid,' by keeping a smile on his face, and by greeting others warmly, what better sign for the new year could there be?"²⁶

The Mishnah Berurah writes, "We eat these foods for a good omen. Therefore, it's obvious that one must be cautious that he doesn't become angry these days. Because in addition to the severe aveirah, one must be cautious to make a good sign for the new year. Instead, he should be happy and he should trust in Hashem..."

The Gemara (*Brachos* 18) tells a story of a chasid that gave tzedakah to the poor on erev Rosh Hashanah. His wife was upset about that; they got into a fight, so he slept

Keep a positive attitude, and then everything will be good.

As we say *צופה נפתרון*, and the Divrei Shmuel explains that Hashem knows how well you wanted to daven. He knows the desires of your heart. And if it didn't work out as you planned, don't let that break you.

Someone told the Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz that he prepares many hours for the tefillah, but when he gets to the tefillah, he doesn't daven well. He doesn't have inspraition... The Rebbe told him, "What difference does it make for you when you daven? You are davening before the tefillah" because that is when he had the inspiration.

Reb Shalom Shachna of Probisht zt'l was in the beis medresh of his grandfather, the Meor Einayim, erev Rosh Hashanah. The mekubalim say that the Minchah of erev Rosh Hashanah is very important, for it raises up all the tefilos of the year that didn't go up yet (see Ben Ish Chai, *Netzavim*, *דיני ר"ה ב'*). After Minchah, the Meor Einayim asked him, "Which kavanos did you have by Minchah? Many thousands of neshamos were fixed through your tefillah."

Actually, Reb Shalom Probishte didn't have any deep kavanos at that tefillah. When he approached Minchah of Rosh Hashanah, all of his levels left him, and he prayed word by word, simply with the translation of the world. He couldn't do more than that at the time. And that tefillah elevated many neshamos.

26. *די במה שיש* is *roshei teivos* for *די במה שיש*, things are good enough as it is. When one lives his life with this attitude, he will have a sweet and happy life.

that night in the cemetery.²⁷ He heard two spirits speaking. They were two people buried there in the cemetery. One of them said that she wants to fly around the world and hear from "behind the curtain" what decrees will be made for the new year. The other told her that she couldn't go along with her, so she should go herself.

She did that, and she returned with this information. "I heard that all crops that will be planted by the first rain will be destroyed in hail."

The chasid heard this conversation, so that year he planted by the second rain. Only his crops survived, and he became wealthy that year.

This chasid 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! This is because even more important than the foods we eat, is the person's disposition. This chasid remained happy, despite having to go to sleep in the graveyard, and despite his marital unrest. His happiness brought him success.

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

A tzaddik came home from shul on Rosh Hashanah night, filled his *becher* for Kiddush, but 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 omen is not what we eat; it is the emotions we have. Baruch Hashem, despite everything, we are happy. So we are having an excellent omen for the upcoming year."²⁸

Someone complained to his rav that his wife gave him the tail of a fish on Rosh Hashanah. The rav replied, "Did you say *שנהיה לינג*, that you should be a tail?" He meant to say that everything depends on your attitude and your words, and not so much on your deeds.

There is a well-known story that happened to Reb Yehuda Psayah *zt'l*: One Rosh Hashanah, he was with his guests at the Rosh Hashanah meal. He was dressed in his traditional white clothing, and an uplifted Rosh Hashanah atmosphere reigned in the home. But then, one of the guests pushed the table, and the candles fell. It became dark. His wife was bringing in the fish, but since it was dark, she accidentally dropped the tray. Reb Yehudah Psaya stood up to light the candles and to see what happened to the fish, but he slipped on the fish juices, and his white clothing became dirty.

27. The *Iyun Yaakov* explains, "It seems to me that the chasid [slept in the cemetery] because he was afraid that if he remains at home, he might quarrel with his wife on Rosh Hashanah, which he didn't want to do. 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..."

28. 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 *קע*, end, in Yiddish) and pray, *יהי רצון* 'May it be Hashem's will that it should finally be the *קע*, end, of all our suffering.'"

Reb Yehudah controlled his anger. He wouldn't let this ruin the Rosh Hashanah. At the end of the year, Reb Yehudah Psaya said that he never had such a good, sweet year. He had *siyata dishmaya* in everything

he did, and he merited uncovering many *chidushei Torah* that year, too.

Let us learn from this story to fill Rosh Hashanah with joy. That attitude is the most essential *siman* for the new year.