



המזרחי HAMIZRACHI

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PARSHA WEEKLY

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WORLD MIZRACHI Picture of the Week

Mazel tov to the Religious Zionists of America-Mizrachi (RZA-Mizrachi) on the election of its new national leadership at its Biennial Convention! Pace Cooper of Memphis, Tennessee will serve as the new President of RZA-Mizrachi, leading a strong team of National Board and Executive Board members. Stephen M. Flatow has assumed the role of Chairman. We wish the new leadership tremendous success as they continue strengthening and growing the Religious Zionist movement across America.

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World Mizrahi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrahi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrahi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.



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Changing the Evil Decree?

U'netane Tokef and the power of Teshuva, Tefilla and Tzedaka



Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

Iwould like to pose a difficult and painful question – is it really always possible to change the evil decree over the Days of Judgement?

Three years ago, over the *Yamim Nora'im*, it was decreed that over 1,200 people would be murdered in the Gaza Envelope on one day in the largest and most barbaric pogrom since the horrific Holocaust. Unfortunately, our beloved son Daniel, *HYD*, was one of those killed and then taken captive on that tragic day.

With two sons then combat officers in the permanent force, my wife and I prayed so hard for the well-being of our sons amongst all the soldiers of Israel. The prayers of all of our people and so many families for their loved ones were unable to change the terrible decree.

“Who by Fire” – a Haunting Prayer

Many of the dreadful and horrifying deaths that are mentioned in the famous and haunting *U'netaneh Tokef* prayer tragically happened to so many on that fateful day.

The prayer which evokes fear and trepidation:

How many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die; who shall live out his allotted time and who shall depart before his time; who [shall perish] by water and who by fire; who by the sword and who by a wild beast; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by

pestilence; who by strangulation and who by lapidation; who shall be at rest and who shall wander; who shall be tranquil and who shall be harassed; who shall enjoy well-being and who shall suffer tribulation; who shall be poor and who shall be rich; who shall be humbled and who shall be exalted.

Who imagined that in the year 2023 and in an independent Jewish State, so many Jews would wantonly be burned and tortured by wild human animals, harassed, tormented, and suffering unimaginable tribulations as the prayer emotively expresses?!

But then, dramatically, the prayer rapidly shifts - this terrible fate is not inevitable, and it can be changed. Despite the harshness of judgment and the meting out of evil decrees, the stirring prayer ends with the powerful declaration:

...תשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירים את רוע הגזירה.
And repentance, and prayer, and charity change the evil decree.

According to this prayer, there is a way to avert the evil decree - deep repentance and return to G-d, intense and heartfelt prayer, and charity and genuine generosity absolutely change the decree.

But do they?

So many people die every day of the year. So many died on that horrific day. Did all those who perished not daven and repent enough? Did that not give enough charity?

Clearly, it is not so simple. There are many factors beyond our limited understanding of Divine justice. The question of why the innocent and righteous suffer is amongst the greatest questions and quandaries facing all who believe in a kind, caring, and just G-d. How can the suffering of so many good people be reconciled with Hashem's absolute Divine Justice? This conundrum has confounded our greatest prophets and sages throughout the generations. We clearly do not have all the variables, don't see the full picture, and our understanding is finite. G-d runs His world according to absolute Divine justice, although we can't always fathom it.

The Evil within the Decree

So how does the formula work? Despite our best intentions, heartfelt prayers, earnest repentance, and commitment to charity, people die every day from sickness, accidents, or heinous acts. It seems that no matter what we do every year over this period, so many people suffer during the course of the year ahead.

I heard some years ago an ingenious insight of Rav Soloveitchik into the ותנה תוקף prayer based on a careful reading of the text. The prayer says that repentance, prayer, and charity change רוע הגזירה. The Rav explains that the accurate translation of this is not "the evil decree," which in correct Hebrew would've been "את הגזירה" but rather "רוע הגזירה" meaning "the evil of the decree."

This changes everything. It turns out that this prayer never claims that repentance, prayer, and charity change the evil decree. They clearly do not always have this impact. Rather, the prayer is claiming that these values can change the evil within the decree. Indeed, there are some decrees which an individual cannot change. It is beyond their scope and ability. However, it is always within our ability to change evil elements of the decree. Painful decrees cannot always be altered, but the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer clearly says many elements of pain and evil as part of the decree most

certainly can be changed as a result of repentance, prayer, and charity.

This incredible explanation of Rav Soloveitchik is helping me immensely in dealing with the loss of our Daniel.¹ Based on this interpretation, I have been processing our predicament in the following way.

Mercy and Meaning

If I can accept that, for some reason that we may never understand, it was decreed on Rosh Hashanah three years ago that this would be Daniel's last, it will open up a vista to deal with this ordeal. Indeed, the very thought is harrowing for me as Rosh Hashanah was the last time that I had both our sons Yonatan and Daniel together with us – *davening* together with me over the two days. They were both in the army over Yom Kippur and with us at different times over Sukkot.

So, if I can accept that there was an evil decree that cannot be changed, that very acceptance can help me move forward. To see that somehow within the ordeal of Daniel's terrible death and capture, so much additional pain and suffering has mercifully been removed. There is so much divine mercy, kindness, and compassion within the harsh and painful judgment.

Firstly, we couldn't have asked for a more merciful death. Despite 163 days of pain and challenge for us while hoping that Daniel was alive and would return home, we found out that it appears he had died instantly. Shot in the back of the neck with his head out of the tank, he seemingly died soon thereafter. He was never alive in the hands of Hamas. He never suffered and will never suffer. There is much mercy in this.

Secondly, we could not have asked for a more meaningful death. Daniel died while fighting for almost two and a half hours against a cruel invasion on arguably the most fateful day, not only of his life, but of the State of Israel. He died defending his people, living out his and our deepest values.

Thirdly, it was Daniel's decision and his decision alone to leave the safety of his tank position outside Nachal Oz. Nobody commanded him, and nobody forced him. He chose to be loyal to the pledge that he undertook when he entered the army to cling to the task at hand and do everything he could to save his fellow Jews and Israelis. He chose to charge into battle – it was his and his crew's decision.

Fourthly, he died "על קידוש ה'" – dying as a Jew and for being a Jew. This, according to our sages, is the highest spiritual level that a Jew can attain.

Fifthly, he died saving many other lives. Our sages say "A person who saves a life, saves an entire world." Daniel and his crew saved many lives, hundreds according to the head of the Southern Command of the IDF around the Nachal Oz base and *kibbutz*, which amounts to generations of people. Many soldiers died without firing a bullet or saving lives. Daniel had the merit to save many.

None of this can bring Daniel back. It does, though, soften the deep pain and challenge, adding measures of mercy and meaning around his passing.

Much evil within the harsh decree was mercifully removed.

There is much blessing even in a curse when we choose to live in Hashem's world.

1. With thanks to my friend and colleague Rav Shmuel Silber of Baltimore who enlightened me to this interpretation of the Rav many years ago. He shared this at the Shloshim shiur in Baltimore after the tragic passing in Elul of 2009 of Netanel Feigenbaum, son of our friends Roy and Bev from our Mizrachi Yeshiva community. Bev's sister and brother in law and family were part of Rabbi Silber's community. Wishing Rabbi Silber much Hatzlacha in his new position as the Executive Vice President of the OU in the US.

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Rosh Hashanah – How We Get Hashem to Remember



Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

The Central Role of Malchiyot

The Torah identifies two principal aspects of Rosh Hashanah: it is designated as a day of *te'ruah* (horn blowing), and its purpose is *zikaron* (remembrance). These concepts underpin two of the three central berachot in the Rosh Hashanah *Mussaf Amidah*, namely *Zichronot* and *Shofrot*.¹

Two central questions arise: First, what is the relationship between these two aspects, *te'ruah* and *zikaron*? Second, what is the significance of the third berachah, *Malchiyot*, which is not only incorporated in our *tefilot* but is also emphasized throughout Rosh Hashanah and *Aseret Yemei Teshuva*?²

In other words, why do we focus on *Malchiyot*, a theme not explicitly mentioned by the Torah, in connection with Rosh Hashanah?

Zikaron: Who Requires Reminding?

The answer hinges on clarifying whom *zikaron* is intended to remind and what they are meant to be reminded of. The Rashbam³ and Rashi⁴ maintain that the *shofar* aims to remind Hashem of the Jewish people (Rashbam) and of *Akeidah Yitzchak* (Rashi).⁵

The latter interpretation, grounded in the *Gemara*⁶ which states that the ram's horn is used to recall the *Akeidah* before Hashem, also accounts for the custom of directing the *shofar's* end upward. The *shofar* blasts are intended to ascend toward heaven.⁷

This raises an obvious question: Why would Hashem require a reminder? Is it possible that He does not remember?!

This question likely inspired the Rambam's alternative explanation of *zikaron's* objective. According to the Rambam,⁸ it is we who require reminding. The *shofar*

awakens us from the routine of daily life and refocuses our attention on Hashem. Although we recognize that Hashem created us and that our life's mission is to serve Him, we are frequently preoccupied and neglect to reflect on this purpose. On Rosh Hashanah, the day when humanity was created, the *shofar* reminds us of our status as His creations and encourages us to fulfill the objectives for which we were created.⁹

The *Sefer Hachinuch*¹⁰ uses the Rambam's perspective to elucidate our initial approach as well. The focus is not on what Hashem remembers, but on what He associates with us ("*lizkor lachem*"). Though Hashem remembers us and *Akeidah Yitzchak*, the question is whether He associates the *Akeidah* with us.

When we identify with *Akeidah Yitzchak* as a paradigm of our religious commitment, Hashem perceives us accordingly. This identification, reflecting our willingness to sacrifice and dedicate ourselves to *Avodat Hashem*, elicits Hashem's *rachamim* (mercy) and His blessings for a continued good life, which enables us to serve Him optimally.

The Interdependence of Zichronot and Malchiyot

This analysis clarifies the central role of *Malchiyot*. The mission we are intended to recall on Rosh Hashanah is fundamentally rooted in acknowledging Hashem as both our King and Creator. While the objective of Rosh Hashanah is *zikaron*, it is *Malchiyot* that enables this remembrance. The berachah of *Malchiyot* reminds us of – and gives us the opportunity to express our recognition of – the centrality of Hashem and *Avodat Hashem* in our lives. This enables the berachah of *Zichronot* to cultivate a positive self-image in Hashem's eyes.

This distinction elucidates the divergence between the Torah's description of Rosh Hashanah and the content of our *tefilot*. The Torah emphasizes the goal – *zikaron* – while our prayers concentrate on the means – *Malchiyot* – which facilitates the cultivation and maintenance of the *zikaron* mindset.

The *Gemara*¹¹ encapsulates this relationship between *Malchiyot* and *Zichronot* by quoting Hashem's explanation of the *Malchiyot berachah*: "For you to accept Me as king," while His explanation of *Zichronot* is "For your memory to rise positively before Me." Through the *Malchiyot berachah*, we articulate our commitment to Hashem; subsequently, through the *Zichronot berachah*, we request that Hashem regard us favorably.

The Shofar as the Common Facilitator

The *Gemara* concludes by identifying the *shofar* as the instrument designed to inspire the distinctive elements of each berachah.

In the context of *Malchiyot*, the *shofar* functions as a coronation horn. In addition to its general association with coronation, the *shofar* also recalls the instrument that announced Hashem's presence at Har Sinai.

Subsequently, in *Zichronot*, the ram's horn reminds both us and Hashem of *Akeidah Yitzchak*, which symbolizes the commitment our ancestors exemplified as a model for us to emulate.

Following the berachah of *Zichronot*, the *shofar* is sounded as part of *Shofarot*, which references the *shofar gadol* that will herald the ultimate redemption. After reaffirming our commitment to *Avodat Hashem* and cultivating a positive self-image through the *shofar*, we are then poised to petition Hashem for the final redemption.

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The King's Footstool

Rabbi Akiva and the Coronation We Are Called to Complete



Rabbanit Shani Taragin

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Two teachings of Rabbi Akiva, seemingly worlds apart in genre, reveal themselves, when placed side by side, as a single, powerful message for Rosh Hashana.

The first is *halachic*, and reflects a dispute among the *Tanna'im*. Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri maintains that *Malchuyot*, our declaration of Hashem's Kingship in the Mussaf prayer, belongs in the third blessing, *Kedushat Hashem*, without requiring the blowing of the *shofar*. Hashem is King whether or not we sound the *teruah*, and our prayer merely gives voice to an eternal reality.

Rabbi Akiva disagrees sharply. If the *shofar* does not accompany *Malchuyot*, he asks, why mention it at all? For Rabbi Akiva, *Malchuyot* belongs specifically in *Kedushat HaYom*, the blessing of Rosh Hashana itself, and is sealed by the blasts of the *shofar*. And, as the Gemara sharpens the dispute, it is bound to the tenth and final verse of the ten verses of *Malchuyot*: "*Shema Yisrael*." For Rabbi Akiva, whose own life culminated in stretching out the word *echad* as his soul departed (*Berachot* 61b), Rosh Hashana is not merely a day on which we acknowledge that Hashem reigns. It is the day on which we crown Him through the *shofar* blasts and reaccept the yoke of Heaven. *Malchuyot* is not merely a description; it is the act of making a king. A coronation, by definition, requires a herald: the blast of the *shofar*, and our own voices declaring our allegiance.

The second teaching is aggadic, almost the opposite in tone: quiet, tentative, even self-correcting. Daniel's vision (7:9) speaks first of "his throne," in the singular, and then of "thrones," in the plural, being set. Rabbi Akiva resolves the apparent

contradiction: one throne is Hashem's; the other is David's. Rabbi Yosi HaGelili is appalled: "Akiva, how long will you make the Divine Presence profane?!" He insists that both thrones belong to Hashem – one for *din*, judgment, and one for *tzedakah*, righteousness.

The Gemara then asks whether Rabbi Akiva accepted the correction. In *Sanhedrin* (38b), we receive the fuller answer: yes. Rabbi Akiva himself later teaches that there are "two thrones – one for *din* and one for *tzedakah*." But even that is not the final word. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya dismisses the entire discussion: "Akiva, what business do you have with aggadah? Go back to the *halachot* of *tzara'at* and *ohalot*!" And then the Gemara offers yet another resolution: perhaps these are not two thrones at all. Rather, there is **a throne and a footstool** (*kisei leishev alav, sharfra' la-hadom raglav*.) One is a seat. The other supports His feet.

Read separately, these appear to be two very different stories about Rabbi Akiva: in one, he triumphs – *Malchuyot* requires the *shofar* and culminates in *Shema*; in the other, he appears to lose the argument, first about David's throne, then about *din* and *tzedakah*, until the image of the human throne is reduced to something far more humble: a footstool.

But perhaps the two teachings are saying precisely the same thing but from opposite directions. Rabbi Akiva is the Tanna most insistent that Hashem's kingship is not merely a passive reality that we observe from the sidelines. It is something we are called upon to establish and manifest in the world. When Rabbi Akiva instinctively reaches for the image of a human throne standing beside the Divine throne, and is corrected until that throne

becomes merely a footstool, perhaps the correction is not a defeat of his idea, but its completion.

A footstool has no independent standing of its own. Its entire purpose, and its entire honor, lie in what it supports – i.e., the throne. That is precisely what the Davidic throne is meant to be. Not a rival kingship, not an independent sovereignty, and not a "partner" kingship. Rather, a human vessel through which the world can experience the reign of Hashem – i.e., a footstool beneath the feet of the King.

Tanach teaches us this idea in the tender words of the Rosh Hashana *haftara* read on the first day, setting the tone of the day. Chana, after bringing her beloved Shmuel to the *Mishkan*, beseeches Hashem once again – opening with thanksgiving and closing with her personal plea to a vision of Hashem judging the entire earth: "*Hashem yadin afsei aretz*" – Hashem will judge the ends of the earth. In the same sentence, she turns to a radically different hope: "*Ve-yiten oz le-malko, ve-yareh keren meshicho*" – He will give strength to His king and raise the horn of His anointed.

Remarkably, this is the first appearance of the words *melech* with *mashiach* anywhere in *Tanach* – spoken not by a prophet or a king, but by a new mother, before Israel even had a monarchy. Chana intuitively what Rabbi Akiva would later insist upon: the coronation of Hashem as universal Judge and the raising up of a faithful human king are not two separate aspirations. They are one. The human throne she prays for exists so that Hashem's kingship over *afsei aretz*, "the ends of the earth," can become tangible within human history, through a leader who knows whose footstool he occupies.

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Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Regarding shofar blowing, I am familiar with the ten kavanot (thoughts to keep in mind) that we must have according to Rav Sadya Gaon. Are there additional things that we should keep in mind during the blowing of the shofar?

In practice, for most people, it is not advisable to focus on so many different intentions. The primary intention is to fulfill the Torah obligation of hearing the shofar. One can also have the intention of proclaiming Hashem as King, as well as that He should remember for us the merit of the *Akeidah*. One can also have in mind heartbreak with a desire for self-improvement and *teshuvah*. In practice, I would suggest focusing on an additional point each time, and thereby drawing strength from the blowing of the shofar.

I will write to you about things that I try to do, but there is no *halachic* obligation in any of this. Each person should, in addition to the intention of fulfilling the obligation, focus on an intention that helps him grow and progress on Rosh Hashanah.

The Rambam¹ writes that there is a hint in the blowing of the *shofar* to sounds whose purpose is to awaken and shake a person. However, there is room to analyze this explanation. Although the *shevarim* may symbolize crying and create a sense of being shaken, *teruah* in *Tanach*

is actually a sound of joy, particularly associated with the coronation of a king: "With trumpets and the sound of the *shofar*, sound a *teruah* before the King, Hashem."² If so, it is not clear: Does the blowing of the *shofar* symbolize crying and brokenness, or the coronation of a king and joy?

The *shofar* blasts that cause us to experience brokenness remind us of the blasts surrounding the walls of Jericho. There too: a blast, breaking, and the falling of a wall. Similarly, it appears that the blasts are not, G-d forbid, intended to frighten us or bring us down, but rather to bring down the walls that separate us from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (see *Netivot Shalom*³).

There are real walls that our sins have created. Every sin creates a barrier and a wall between us and holiness. There are also virtual, imaginary walls that we ourselves have created. Through the *shevarim*, we try to bring down these walls. Certainly the imaginary walls, which deceive us into thinking that we are far from Hashem, but also the walls created by our sins. How do we bring down the walls created by sin? By understanding that the sins do not truly belong to us, they are external to us. We will try not to return to them, because in truth our souls are pure, and these sins are not compatible with who we are. The moment we reach this understanding, we bring down the walls!

After the *shevarim*, after we bring down the walls, we can reach the *teruah*. And what is the *teruah*? "Hashem his G-d is with him, and the *teruah* of a King is among him."⁴ Onkelos translates this as, "And the *Shechinah* of their King is among them."⁵ In other words, the *Shechinah* of Hashem connects the Jewish people and connects the Jewish people to Hashem. According to this interpretation, *teruah* is related to the word *re'ut*: friendship and closeness (see also Sforno there). After bringing down the walls through the *shevarim*, we arrive at closeness, friendship, a deep connection, and a great love between us and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Now we can connect with the King. Now we merit to sound the *teruah* before the King!

Before the *shevarim*, there are walls, there is distance. After the *shevarim*, after understanding that we do not want to repeat our sins and that they will not be part of us, there is tremendous closeness and complete *devekut* to Hashem.

Shanah Tova, b'ezerat Hashem.

● Compiled and Translated by Elan Finkelstein.

Continued from page 4

May our sincere and wholehearted acceptance of the yoke of Heaven inspire Hashem to regard us favorably and grant us blessings of health, success, and the ultimate redemption in the coming year.

1. *Vayikra* 23:24 and *Bamidbar* 29:1. See Ramban and Rabbeinu Bechaye to *Vayikra* 23:24.
2. See *Rosh Hashanah* 32a, which derives the saying of *Malchiyot* from the juxtaposition(s) of *zikaron* to the *malchiyot*-themed phrase "Ani Hashem Elokeichem." See also Sifri, *Bahaalotecha* 19, which derives from

the juxtaposition that *Malchiyot* needs to precede a reminder *Zikaron*.

3. Rashbam, *Vayikra* 23:24.
4. Rashi, *Vayikra* 23:24 and *Rosh Hashanah* 26b, d.h. *Kamah*.
5. The connection of the shofar to the *Akeidah* also appears in *Bereishit Rabbah* 56:10. See also *Shabbat* 131b; *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:3-4; Rashi, *Tehillim* 89:16; Ramban, *Vayikra* 23:24; and *Beit Halevi* 3, *Derush* 15, who all see the shofar as aiming to impact Hashem.
6. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.
7. *Shulchan Aruch*, OC 585:2; *Ye'arot Devash*, *Derush* 6.
8. *Hilchot Teshuva* 3:4. Compare with *Hilchot Ta'anuyot* 1:1-2 and *Hilchot Sta'm* 6:13. See also *Yerushalmi Rosh*

Hashanah 58:4; *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Vayishlach* 2; *Pesikta Rabati* 40; Ran, *Rosh Hashanah* 3a in Rif; Meiri, *Horayot* 12a; and *Kuntras Divrei Chalomot* (Rav Tzadok) 14, who all see the shofar as aiming to impact man.

9. These two understandings of the goal of the shofar are the backdrop to the question of whether the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* focuses on the blowing or hearing of the shofar. See, for example, *Ritva* to *Rosh Hashanah* 34a.
10. *Sefer Hachinuch*, *Mitzva* 331. See also the formulation of the Ba'al HaMa'or, *Pesachim* 28a in the Rif.
11. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.

קריאות והפטרות ראש השנה תפילת אמהות

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



בקריאות ובהפטרות של ראש השנה אנו פוגשים שלוש אמהות שנפקדו לאחר שנות עקרות ממושכות: שרה, רחל וחנה. חז"ל לימדונו כי "בראש השנה נפקדו שרה רחל וחנה" (מדרש שכל טוב, ויצא, ל', כא). אין זה מקרי: ראש השנה הוא יום הדין שבו נגזר גורל השנה כולה, ובו הוכרעה גם פקידתן של האמהות. יתרה מזו, זהו יום בריאת האדם והעולם. המשך הבריאה מתממש במצוות "פרו ורבו", שבה הופך האדם לשותף פעיל עם הבורא. לכן, ביום של התחדשות הבריאה, אנו קוראים על פקידת האמהות, ולצדן גם על תפילתה של הגר על בנה ישמעאל.

נעיין בקצרה בכל אחד מסיפורי האמהות שבקריאות של ראש השנה, ובמשמעות החורזת אותם:

1. פקידת שרה

"וְהָיָה פֶקֶד אֶת שָׂרָה כְּאִשָּׁר אִמֹּר וַיַּעַשׂ ה' לְשָׂרָה כְּאִשָּׁר דִּבֶּר: וַתְּהִי וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן לָקְנִי... (כ"א, א-ב). פקידת שרה מגיעה לאחר 25 שנות ציפייה מאז ההבטחה האלקית לזרע. לאורך השנים המשיכו אברהם ושרה בשליחותם להנחיל בעולם צדקה ומשפט. החשש שלא יהיה להם יורש, אשר ימשיך את דרכם בעולם מטריד אותם, אך הם ממשיכים לעמוד איתנים באמונתם: "וְהָאֵמֹן בָּה' וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צִדְקָה" (שם ט"ו, ו).

הולדת יצחק לעת זקנה היא נס גלוי המלמד כי הכל בידי שמיים, ושמו - יצחק - מבטא את הפליאה העמוקה מיכולתו של הבורא לשנות את המציאות מעבר לגדרי הטבע. סיפור הלידה הייחודי של יצחק מעיד על ייעודו למילוי הייעוד והשליחות האלקית.

2. תפילת הגר:

הגר איננה מאמהות האומה, אך סיפורה נקרא בראש השנה. לאחר שגורשה עם ישמעאל למדבר ומאגרי המים אזלו, היא עומדת חסרת אונים מול סכנת חיים ממשית. ברגעים אלו אין מילים - יש רק בכי. בעקבות הזעקה נגלה אליה מלאך, עיניה נפקחות והיא מגלה באר.

ונפש הוא דורש; מהי תפילה ותחנונים על החסר; מה קורה כשהילד איננו.

דווקא רחל היא האם המתחננת על בניה בבכי, ודווקא היא נענית ע"י ה': "כֹּה אָמַר ה' מְנַעֲי קוֹלְךָ מִבְּכִי וְעֵינֶיךָ מִדְמָעָה כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר לִפְעֻלָּתְךָ נָא אֲנִי וְשָׁבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ אוֹיֵב: וְיֵשׁ תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרִיתְךָ נָא אֲנִי וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לִגְבוּלָם" (ירמיהו ל"א, טו-טז)

רחל היא האם שמתחננת לפני ה' על בניה, שכל תהליך שהם עוברים יסתיים בטוב, ושגם לדרך תהיה משמעות מצמיחה.

פקידת האמהות בראש השנה איננה רק זיכרון היסטורי, אלא מצפן רוחני לרגעים של התחלה חדשה. שרה, הגר, חנה ורחל מגלמות ארבעה פנים של מפגש האדם עם בוראו בעת מצוקה וציפייה: האמונה בפלא שלמעלה מן הטבע; גילוי מקור החיים ברגעי משבר; התמסרות והקדשת החיים לייעוד נעלה; והתקווה ההכרחית עבור מי שצועד עדיין בדרך.

ביום שבו העולם נברא מאין ומעשינו נפקדים, תפילת האמהות מלמדת אותנו כי הדין והפקידה שזורים זה בזה: משברים ותהליכים מביאים את האדם אל שערי הדמעות והתפילה, ומהם נפתח הפתח אל הפקידה, החיים והישועה.

אנו נכנסים אל השנה החדשה בידיעה שקולנו נשמע, שיש שגר לפעולתנו, ושבכו האמונה להביא להתחדשות ולהוליד עולם ומלואו.

גילוי הבאר אינו רק הצלה פיזית, אלא סמל לגילוי מקור החיים והשפע: הפנייה לקב"ה בדמעות מחברת את האדם מחדש אל המקור ומשיבה לו את חיותו.

אם נעמיק במשמעות הסמלית של הארוע, נבחין שהגירוש של ישמעאל מבית אברהם התרחש בעקבות התרחקותו של ישמעאל מהמקור - מדרך ה'. בעקבות זאת, הגר וישמעאל תועים במדבר, רוחנית ופיזית, ועלולים להתייבש, עד מוות. רק **הפניה אל ה' מחברת אותם מחדש אל מקור החיות שלהם, ומאפשרת להם לראות את הבאר ולשתות ממנה.**

3. תפילת חנה ופקידתה:

אלקנה וחנה הקדישו את חייהם לקירוב העם למשכן ולעבודת ה'. אך כאב העקרות של חנה הוליד תפילה פנימית עוצמתית וסוערת, עד שעלי הכהן חשב בטעות שהיא שיכורה

תפילתה הפכה ליסוד בהלכות תפילה, משום שמתוך המצוקה הבינה שרק ה' יושיע. אולם חנה לא רק ביקשה לעצמה - היא נדרה להקדיש את הבן לעבודת ה' לכל ימי חייו.

בדומה לאברהם ושרה, גם חנה חפצה בבן שימשיך את המפעל האמוני ויקרב לבבות אל הבורא.

4. בכיה של רחל

בהפטרות היום השני נקראת נבואת הנחמה מירמיהו: "קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְּכִי תִמְרוּרִים רָחֵל מִבְּכָה עַל בְּנֶיהָ..." (ירמיהו ל"א, יד).

רחל ניסתה כל דרך להיפקד (בראשית ל') עד שהבינה כי ישועתה תלויה בתפילה לה' בלבד, וכך זכתה לבן - יוסף. אולם רחל לא זכתה להשלים את המסע ולחיות בארץ ישראל עם משפחתה ולגדל את בניה. היא מתה בדרך, בלדתה את הבן השני, בנימין, וכך נשארה לנצח בצדי הדרך.

אולי משום כך ירמיהו רואה בה את האם של עם ישראל, **המבכה על בניה, מצפה להם בכליון עיניים, ומלווה אותם בתהליך הקשה ביותר - ביציאה לגלות.** מי כמוה מבין מהו תהליך ואיזה מאמצי גוף

“But I Already Heard the Shofar at Selichot”



Sivan Rahav Meir

World Mizrahi Scholar-in-Residence

After a talk I gave recently ahead of Rosh Hashanah, a teenage girl came up to me and asked, “What is the most important thing my family and I should actually do on Rosh Hashanah?”

“Hear the *shofar*,” I told her. “That’s the central *mitzvah* of Rosh Hashanah.”

“Oh, then we’re fine,” she said. “We already heard the *shofar* during *Selichot* at the Kotel.”

That was when I realized I had gotten something wrong.

I had just given an entire talk filled with ideas for Rosh Hashanah – about the media, social networks, self-improvement – and somehow I had failed to explain the most basic thing of all.

I told her that hearing the *shofar* during *Selichot* is a meaningful custom, but hearing it on Rosh Hashanah is different: it is a Torah commandment. A special *berachah* is recited before the *shofar* is sounded, and while it is being blown, we remain silent and simply listen.

This year, since the first day of Rosh Hashanah will be on Shabbat when we do not blow the *shofar*, we will only hear it on Sunday, the second day of Rosh Hashanah. The *shofar* is usually blown between the morning and early afternoon, in *shuls* throughout the Jewish world. Many communities publish the times in advance, so it is worth checking. Or you can simply come to *shul* for the service.

The girl thanked me and said she would tell her parents. Then she added that until now, she had thought apples and honey were the main thing about Rosh Hashanah.

We are living at a time when there is such a deep desire to connect, to learn, to do more. But at the same time, many people are missing even the most basic practical Jewish knowledge.

So with all due respect to the short ideas and inspiring messages I post every morning, sometimes, before explaining that the word *shofar* is connected to *shipur*, “improvement,” we need to start with something much more basic: What are we supposed to do? Where do we do it? When? And how?

Don’t be embarrassed to ask. And don’t hesitate to explain it to someone else.

Thank you to the teenage girl from Or Akiva, who taught me an important lesson last night.

■ ■ ■

If I had not heard this story with the names of actual people, I would never have believed it. But Franny Weissman shared with me the following tale which, in fact, began more than 100 years ago:

“I came on *Aliyah* from the United States and got married to Evyatar, a native Israeli whose grandmother’s parents, along with two of her siblings, were murdered in Auschwitz. Ten of her siblings survived and nine of them decided to make *Aliyah* together, but one sister settled in the United States, never revealing to anyone that she was Jewish. She announced that after the Holocaust she would not bring children into the world, and eventually she married a non-Jew. She did not reveal her identity even to him.

“When her family tried to connect with her, she ignored them. Over and over again I heard the story of Aunt Adelle. There are more than 350 family members now in Israel, four generations, but she has always been the one piece missing from the puzzle.

“Two years ago, I was asked to travel to the United States to recruit girls for an educational program in Israel. My husband encouraged me to agree to the mission and said, ‘Even if you bring just one soul to Israel, it will be a great success.’ They

scheduled a lecture tour for me across the United States, and one of the lectures was in Florida. As it turned out, I was just five minutes from the home of Aunt Adelle. I couldn’t believe it. I knocked on the door, and asked for Adelle Schwartz. The housekeeper said that there was no one there by that name, but I realized that she had changed her name. I entered and saw someone who looked a lot like her siblings. I connected them through a video chat and they began to converse in Hungarian. Soon they were crying and sobbing. Even the housekeeper cried.

“Before we parted, I took her hand and said, ‘Adelle, Hitler is gone. The war is over. You have a large family now. You are not alone. No matter how far away you may be, you can always come back. Don’t let Hitler win. At the very least, come to Israel to be buried.’

“We parted with great emotion and stayed in touch. Recently, we received word from an American attorney that Adelle had passed away at the age of 102. We then learned that she had changed her mind: instead of being cremated, she wanted a Jewish funeral.

“We did everything we could to bring her to Israel – the country she had kept at a distance for most of her life. Her funeral was held at Moshav Nir Etzion, and she was buried in the family plot. We were all there, and it was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

“We saw with our own eyes the meaning of the verse: ‘Even if your exiles are at the end of the heavens, the Lord, your G-d, will gather you from there, and He will take you from there.’ (*Devarim* 30:4)

“As my husband had told me, ‘If you bring even one soul to Israel, it will have been a great success.’”

For the Rosh Hashanah Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

The traditional reasons for our Torah readings on Rosh Hashana are well-documented. The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 29a) teaches that Sarah Imeinu was remembered by Heaven on this exact date, leading to the birth of Yitzchak, which is the focus of our reading on the first day. According to the *Midrash*, the *Akeida* (which we read about on the second day of Rosh Hashana) also took place on this date, with a ram's horn clearly connecting the text to the meaning and practices of the day.

In addition to the traditional reasons for choosing these passages, a different theme highly relevant to this time of year appears in both the first and second day Torah readings.

On the first day, we read how following the birth of Yitzchak, tensions developed in Avraham's home which led to Hagar and Yishmael being sent away. The journey in the desert was not kind to Hagar and Yishmael. When they ran out of water, she cast her son under a tree and moved away because she could not bear to see him die. Then, in her moment of desperation and pain, an angel appeared

to her, provided her with words of encouragement, and then we read,

"And Hashem opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she filled the flask with water and gave the lad to drink" (*Bereishit* 21:19).

As is pointed out by the Sefat Emet, we are not told that a well suddenly appeared. Rather, Hashem opened her eyes. The well was always there. Salvation was already in place. All Hagar needed was to open her eyes and to realise what was already staring her in the face.

The story of the *Akeida*, which we read on the second day, is strikingly similar.

Following advice from Hashem, a parent and child (this time Avraham and Yitzchak) embark on a journey into the unknown. It reaches the point where the child's life is in danger, but at the crucial moment, an angel intervenes, provides a message of encouragement, and then we read,

"And Avraham lifted his eyes and he saw, and behold a ram caught in the thicket by its horns..." (*Bereishit* 22:13)

Avraham lifted his eyes, and there before him was the solution which had been there all along.

Hence, the Torah readings of the first and second days of Rosh Hashana combine to teach us a valuable lesson: Sometimes, when we sense that we are faced with the greatest possible challenges and there is no hope in sight, all we need to do is open our eyes and realise that the solution is already there.

Hagar did not see the well until her eyes were opened for her. Avraham did not lift his eyes to see the ram until he was spoken to by an angel. To open our eyes, our hearts and our minds, we need a wake-up call. And that wake-up call is the sound of the *shofar*.

May we indeed succeed in hearing the call of the *shofar* in order to open our eyes to the many blessings and opportunities which already await us.

Shana Tova!

Rosh Hashanah Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrachi Melbourne

What is covered in Shule on Rosh Hashana? What is covered at home on Shabbat and Yom Tov?

What connection is there between these two coverings?

See page 24 for the answer to the Parsha Riddle

On Rosh Hashanah, A Breath of Life



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

This message for Rosh Hashanah was published in The Forward on 22nd September 2014.

In the year that we are now parting with, it became dangerous once again to be a Jew. Israel, subject to sustained missile attack, discovered how hard it is to fight an asymmetric war against a terrorist group ruthless enough to place rocket launchers beside schools, hospitals and mosques. It found itself condemned by large sections of the world for performing the first duty of any state, namely to protect its citizens from danger and death.

Antisemitism returned to the streets of Europe. More than one hundred and twenty years after the Dreyfus trial, the cry "Death to the Jews" was heard again in Paris. More than seventy years after the Holocaust, the call of "Jews to the gas" was heard in the streets of Germany. There were times when it felt as if the ghost of a past we thought long dead had risen to haunt us. More times than was comfortable I heard Jews say, "For the first time in my life I feel afraid."

Let us stay with those fears and confront them directly. We are not back in the 1930s. To the contrary, for the first time in the almost four thousand years of Jewish history, we have simultaneously independence and sovereignty in the land and state of Israel, and freedom and equality in the Diaspora. Israel is strong, extraordinarily so. The success of the Iron Dome missile defense was the latest in an astonishing line of technological advances – not just military but also agricultural, medical and commercial – designed to protect, save and enhance life.

Israel has lived with the disdain of the world for a very long time. Even the most

lukewarm among us knows that it is infinitely preferable to have a state of Israel and the condemnation of the world than no Israel, no Jewish home, and have the sympathy of the world.

The unity Israel showed during the Gaza conflict was deeply moving. It reminded us that in a profound existential sense we remain one people. Whether or not we share a covenant of faith, we share a covenant of fate. That is a good state to be in as we face the *Yamim Nora'im*, when we stand before G-d not just as individuals but as a people.

As for antisemitism, rarely has it been more self-evident that the hate that starts with Jews never ends with Jews. The most significant enemies of the Jews today are the enemies of freedom everywhere. Worldwide we may feel uncomfortable, anxious. But there are parts of the world where Christians are being butchered, beheaded, driven from their homes and living in terror.

As for Muslims, one prominent academic recently estimated that of the hundreds dying daily, at least 90 per cent were doing so at the hands of their fellow Muslims. Bahai are at risk. So are the Yazidis. So in other parts of the world are Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and for that matter, atheists. No historian looking back on our time will be tempted to call it the age of tolerance.

Which brings us back to the *Yamim Nora'im*. There is a note of universality to the prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that we do not find on other festivals. On other festivals the key section of the *Amidah* begins, *Atah bechartanu mikol*

ha-amim, "You chose us from among all the nations." The emphasis is on Jewish singularity. On the *Yamim Nora'im* the parallel prayer begins, "And so place the fear of Lord our G-d, over *all* that You have made... so that *all* of creation will worship You." The emphasis is on human solidarity. And human solidarity is what the world needs right now.

One message resonates through these days: life. "Remember us for life, King who delights in life, and write us in the book of life for your sake, G-d of life." We sometimes forget how radical this was when Judaism first entered the world. Egypt of the Pharaohs was obsessed with death. Life is full of suffering and pain. Death is where we join the gods. The great pyramids and temples were homages to death.

Anthropologists and social psychologists still argue today that the reason religion exists is because of people's fear of death. Which makes it all the more remarkable that – despite our total and profound belief in *olam haba* and *techiyat ha-metim*, life after death and the resurrection of the dead – there is almost nothing of this in most of the books of the Bible. It is an astonishing phenomenon. All of *Kohelet's* cynicism and *Job's* railing against injustice could have been answered in one sentence: "There is life after death." Yet neither book explicitly says so.

To the contrary, King David said in a psalm we say daily: "What gain would there be if I died and went down to the grave? Can dust thank you? Can it declare your truth?"

Almost at the end of his life Moses turned

to the next generation and said to them: "Choose life, so that you and your children may live." We take this for granted, forgetting how relatively rare in the history of religion this is.

Why so? Why, if we believe the soul is immortal, that there is life after death and that this world is not all there is, do we not say so more often and more loudly? Because since civilization began, heaven has too often been used as an excuse for injustice and violence down here on earth. What evil can you not commit if you believe you will be rewarded for it in the world to come? That is the logic of the terrorist and the suicide bomber. It is the logic of those who burned "heretics" at the stake in order, so they said, to save their immortal souls.

Against this horrific mindset the whole of Judaism is a protest. Justice and compassion have to be fought for in this life not the next. Judaism is not directed to fear of death. It is directed to a far more dangerous fear: fear of life with all its pain and disappointment and unpredictability. It is fear of life, not fear of death, that have led people to create totalitarian states and fundamentalist religions. Fear of life is ultimately fear of freedom.

Continued from page 5

This Rosh Hashana, that prayer feels extraordinarily close to home. As Israel heads toward elections, our *tefillot* for the country's leadership can, and should, carry precisely the shape of Chana's prayer, and of Rabbi Akiva's teaching. We do not pray merely for a "great" leader by the world's definition: not for the loudest throne, the most powerful throne, or the most secure one.

We pray for leadership that understands its own place; leadership that recognizes that its authority is ultimately derivative – that it sits beneath something greater than itself. Leadership that becomes, in Rabbi Akiva's final image, a *sharfra*, a *hadom raglav*, i.e., a vessel through which *mishpat u-tzedakah*, (Yeshayahu's own description of the Davidic throne), become visible and tangible throughout this land.

A government, like the throne of David, is not ultimately measured by how high it

That is why fear of life takes the form of an assault against freedom.

Against that fear we say from the beginning of Elul to Succot that monumental psalm of David: "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom then shall I be afraid?" On Rosh Hashanah we blow the *shofar*, the one *mitzvah* we fulfill by the breath of life itself without needing any words. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the "anniversary of creation," we read in the Torah and *haftorah* not about the birth of the universe but about the birth of Isaac to Sarah and Samuel to Hannah as if to say, one life is like a universe. One child is enough to show how vulnerable life is – a miracle to be protected and cherished. On Yom Kippur we wear the kittel, a shroud, as if to show that we are not afraid of death.

Never before have I felt so strongly that the world needs us to live this message, the message of the Torah that life is holy, that death defiles, and that terror in the name of G-d is a desecration of the name of G-d.

The state of Israel is the collective affirmation of the Jewish people, a mere

stands beside Heaven, but by how faithfully it bears what rests upon it. Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri was not wrong. Hashem's kingship is eternal and unshakably true, regardless of our declarations. The world does not become more true because we say *Avinu Malkeinu*. Hashem does not become more King because we blow the *shofar*.

And yet Rabbi Akiva's entire life insists that truth alone is not enough. Truth must be embodied by man. Kingship must be proclaimed and the world must become a place in which that kingship can be seen.

From the sound of Rome's multitudes which made Rabbi Akiva laugh with hope rather than weep with despair (*Makkot* 24b), to the final *Shema* that left his lips with his last breath, Rabbi Akiva lived with the conviction that history itself can become a coronation of Hashem.

three years after emerging from the valley of the shadow of death, that *Lo amut ki echyeh*, "I will not die but live." Israel chose life. Its enemies chose the way of death. They even boasted, as did Osama bin Laden, that the love of death made them strong. It did not make them strong. It made them violent. Aggression is not strength; it is a profound self-consciousness of weakness. And the main victims of Islamist violence are Muslims. Hate destroys the hater.

Today it is not just Israel or Jews whose freedom is at risk. It is the whole of the Middle East, large parts of Africa and Asia, and much of Europe. Therefore let us approach the New Year with a real sense of human solidarity. Let us show, by the way we celebrate our faith, that G-d is to be found in life. The love of G-d is love of life. Let us take to heart King David's insistence that faith is stronger than fear. No empire ever defeated the Jewish people, and no force ever will. May G-d write us, our families, the people and State of Israel and Jews throughout the world, in the Book of Life. And may the day come when the righteous of all nations work together for the sake of freedom, peace and life.

Perhaps that is our task this Rosh Hashana as well. For the past three years, our soldiers, our mourners, our hostages, and our children in shelters have cried "*Shema Yisrael*" in the shadow of an ongoing crisis. We have witnessed, in ways both painful and profound, a nation wrestling with what it means to proclaim Hashem's Kingship not only in prayer, but in history.

May our *tefillot* this Rosh Hashana, followed by the choices we make at the ballot box, help build a human throne worthy of becoming Hashem's footstool. May our leadership become a vessel for *mishpat u-tzedakah*. And may the day soon come when the coronation we begin on Rosh Hashana is completed by the entire world: "*Ba-yom hahu yihyeh Hashem echad u-shemo echad*."

On that day, Hashem will be One, and His Name One.

Remembering the Beginning



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

In the *tefillos* for Rosh Hashana we mention that “today is the anniversary of the beginning of the world.” This refers to the sixth day of creation, when Adam was formed. It is the anniversary of the first day of the history of mankind. The first five days of creation are considered “prehistoric”, since there were no human beings around at that time.

In the *tefillos* we also emphasize that on this day of Rosh Hashana we commemorate what happened so many centuries ago on that first day of human history.

On Pesach we commemorate the historical events connected with *yetzias Mitzrayim* and are mindful of the lessons we learned from those events. On Shavuot we commemorate *Ma'amad Har Sinai* and all that it implies. So, too, on Rosh Hashana we commemorate the creation of Adam, and all that occurred on the first day of creation which is relevant for us today. This includes:

1. The Torah relates that man was created “*btzelem Elokim*” and the *mishna* points out that because of His love for man, G-d made Adam aware of this. This concept of *tzelem Elokim* implies that man has tremendous potential to be original, creative, and to accomplish much in both a physical and a spiritual sense.
2. The *medrash* relates that G-d showed Adam all the beautiful trees in *Gan Eden* and warned him that if he sins he will be ruining G-d's beautiful world!
3. On that same day that man was created, G-d revealed Himself to him and

communicated with him, commanding him regarding the “Noachite *mitzvos*” which are binding throughout all generations, and regarding not eating from the *eitz hada'as*, which was only intended as a *hora'as sha'ah*. Some philosophers who were not present to witness this communication find it logically impossible to conceive of such communication between the Infinite G-d and the finite human being. But our religion considers this one of the basic principles of faith, that however He accomplished it, G-d did reveal Himself to man and communicate with him, and will again reveal Himself to man in the future.

4. The Torah tells us that G-d did not cause the rain to fall until after Adam was on the scene to pray for the rain. Not only do we believe that G-d can communicate with man, but we also believe that man has the power of *tefillah* and can communicate with G-d. From day number one we already started to pray.
5. Chava sinned with the *eitz hada'as* because she fooled herself into believing the words of the *nochosh*, that she “will become as great as G-d Himself.” Many individuals are led to sin because they fool themselves into believing that they are someone other than who they really are; they join groups of people where they don't really fit in. To fool others is a serious sin; to fool oneself is a greater sin.
6. The Torah describes all the trees in *Gan Eden* as being extremely delicious and pleasant looking. And yet, the

nochosh convinced Chava to sin with the forbidden fruit because it was so pleasant looking and delicious. Why would Chava be tempted to take part of the forbidden fruit when all the trees were equally appealing? That is human nature. We always imagine that “the stolen waters are sweeter,” and the grass is greener on the other side. The real truth is that one can enjoy life just as much by keeping the Torah as by violating it.

7. The *medrash* interprets the Torah as to be telling us that Adam also ate from the forbidden fruit because Chava pressured him by her crying. Many people sin due to social pressures. People must do what is really correct and disregard what is politically correct. This indeed takes a lot of courage!
8. When G-d confronted Adam and questioned him regarding his sin, Adam responded (according to the *medrash*) “yes, I've eaten from the forbidden tree, and I will continue to eat!” Everyone who sins tends to rationalize his actions. Before sinning man can properly distinguish between right and wrong. But after sinning, the “*tov vara*” become confused. Man finds it hard to admit that he did anything wrong.

These fundamental principles, and many others, are called to mind on Rosh Hashana when we commemorate that first day of the history of mankind.

The Chofetz Chaim – Living “Tzipisa L'yeshua”



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

We live, for many of us, in the most turbulent period of our lives. We are post-Holocaust people, and we are living through certainly the most turbulent three years that we have ever lived through. As we go towards Rosh Hashana, I would like to share with you something that I saw from Rav Yaakov. This is in the *Emes L'Yaakov on Nach, Cheilek Beis*, and there, on page *Kuf Pei Bais*, Rav Yaakov records the hesped that he said in 1934 after the passing of the Chofetz Chaim.

We know that the Chofetz Chaim did a lot with an eye towards *Moshiach*. Many of his *seforim* focused on *Moshiach*. The *Kollel Kodshim* was on *Moshiach*. He mentions the *sefer Likkutei Halachos*, which deals with the *halachos* when *Moshiach* comes. Even in *Shemiras HaLashon*, he speaks constantly about how *shemirah* from *Lashon Hora* brings *Moshiach* closer. That the Chofetz Chaim focused on *Moshiach* – *poshut pshat*, the simple idea – is because we want *Moshiach* to come. We want to have *zechusim* so that *Moshiach* should come. That is certainly true.

Rav Yaakov, in his *hesped*, added something to that. He said the Chofetz Chaim cared about the Jewish people and wanted them to be *zoche* to be righteous, to behave correctly in the demand of Hashem. *Tzipisa L'yeshua*. That you should live a life hoping for salvation. Whether *Moshiach* comes now or not, whether he comes soon or not, I don't know. But one thing I know: every *Yid* is supposed to be *Metzapeh*, is supposed to have a strong desire for *Moshiach* to come. Rav Yaakov said that the purpose of the Chofetz Chaim was to show that everything about *Moshiach* is

l'maaseh. He commanded them to learn *Kodshim*. Why? Because he wanted *Klal Yisrael* to be a people that are *Metzapeh L'yeshua*, that want *Moshiach* to come.

Interestingly, he writes about Rav Dovid Leibowitz, who was a nephew of the Chofetz Chaim. He went to the *Kollel Kovno* in Lithuania, which was the premier *kollel* in *Klal Yisrael*, where Rav Yaakov went. It was a *kollel* where you went for five years and then you had to go out and find a *shtetler*. That was the way the *kollel* worked in Kovno.

Rav Dovid Leibowitz took leave of his uncle, the Chofetz Chaim in Radin, to go to *Kollel Kovno*. The Chofetz Chaim said to Rav Dovid Leibowitz, “You are a *Kohen*. You have to stay here to learn *Kodshim*.” To that, Rav Dovid Leibowitz replied, “I have to learn *Hilchos Shabbos*.” When *Moshiach* comes, you have to know how to bring a *Chatas*, so you have to know *Kodshim*. But you have to know: is this *chillul Shabbos mechayeiv a Korban Chatas*? Does this type of *chillul Shabbos* obligate a person to bring a *chatas*? I am also preparing for *Moshiach* because I am going to learn *dinei Shabbos*. To that, the Chofetz Chaim replied, as Rav Yaakov quotes it, “*Al zeh yeish k'var Mishna Berura*.” On that I already wrote a *Mishna Berura*.

Fascinating. Rav Yaakov says that the Chofetz Chaim in the *Mishna Berura* very often – and in the *Emes L'Yaakov* there is a long list – *paskens* if something is *d'Oraisa* or it is *d'Rabbanan*. What is the difference? Nowadays we keep *d'Rabbanans* and we keep *d'Oraisas*.

The Chofetz Chaim wanted to put into the *Mishna Berura* already the *halachos* to know

if you are *chayav* to bring a *Chatas*. Only on an *issur d'Oraisa* do you bring a *Chatas*.

The point that Rav Yaakov makes here that was a *chiddush* to me was understanding that the Chofetz Chaim was teaching *Kodshim* and talking about *Moshiach* in order to make *zechusim* that *Moshiach* should come, and that is true. But the Chofetz Chaim had another desire: that people should be *Metzapeh L'yeshua*, that people should desire that *Moshiach* should come. Rav Yaakov writes that the Chofetz Chaim felt that the *emunah* in *Moshiach* was weakened, and therefore he wanted to show *Klal Yisrael* how to strengthen it.

As we go in these turbulent times towards *tefillos* which focus primarily on *Malchus Shamayim*, we should have this *tafkid*, this idea, this purpose: that we should be *Metzapeh L'yeshua*. As the Rambam says, for *Kevod Shamayim*. And that is something to focus on in our davening.

Notice that the second paragraph of *Aleinu*, *V'al kein nekaveh lach*, is a beautiful paragraph. Guess what? It talks about *Moshiach's* coming. *Nekaveh lach* – we hope for *Bi'as Moshiach*. Say the second paragraph of *Aleinu* a bit slower. Say it with the old *yeshiva* chant that you used to say it with in grade school. (Of course, you are not going to have enough time, because in *shul* they don't say *Aleinu* with enough time to actually say *V'al kein nekaveh lach* properly... You will have to take an extra couple of minutes.) Say it and be *Metzapeh L'yeshua*.

We should be *zoche* that, if not *Taf Shin Pei Vav*, at least *Taf Shin Pei Zayin* should be a *shana* of the *Geulah Sh'leima*.

A *Gutten Shabbos*, a *Kesiva V'chasima Tovah* to one and all.

The Shofar of Arvut



Chief Rabbi David Lau
Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel

On the eve of the new year, we stand and pray that it truly be a good year, filled with blessings. This year, though, we won't merit blowing the *shofar* on the first day, since it falls on Shabbat, and we must guard against any Jew, G-d forbid, carrying four cubits in the public domain. The entire people of Israel forgoes that privilege for a greater one: the merit of devotion for the sake of all Israel, for the sake of Shabbat. May that merit stand for us all, with G-d's help, to be inscribed and sealed for a good life.

This reflects a tremendous level of care that the people of Israel show, all of Israel, toward the individual. I'd like to draw attention to the words of the holy Ohr HaChaim, who writes at the start of *Parshat Nitzavim* about the meaning of *arvut*, mutual responsibility. He explains that "all of Israel are guarantors for one another", meaning this responsibility turns all of us into one, into a single essence. We all become one nation. Each of us draws strength from standing not alone, but together with the whole community. Because of this, even when it's difficult for a person to cope, when he stands together with others, joined as one, there is the ability to overcome trials that would overwhelm him alone.

This reality of being one nation, one body, carries great significance. But the Ohr HaChaim adds something further: when I act as guarantor for someone, I join together with him – it's not just that I'm helping him, I'm helping myself, because I turn myself into a greater force, a greater capacity. This joining together is deeply significant, and the Ohr HaChaim expands on this point at length.

He raises another point worth considering, especially in these special days: what is our task on Rosh Hashanah? To crown the Holy One as King over us. We crown the One who entered into a covenant with us – at Mount Sinai, in the plains

of Moab, three times in the wilderness, and again upon entering the Land. This covenant means complete care: when a person makes a covenant with his fellow, it means that even if a third party comes to harm that fellow, the one bound by the covenant will come and join in, all as one. The moment someone dear to me is harmed, someone I share a covenant with, I cannot ignore it – I feel that the harm done to him is harm done to me.

Years ago I visited a high school, and the students asked me: "Why does the rabbi care if a store is open on Shabbat? This store sells only sealed products – there's no cooking involved, no roasting or baking, everything is sealed goods. So why not just go in and buy from it?" I told them: You should know that Shabbat is a sign of the covenant of the people of Israel – Shabbat is Israel's partner. The Holy One established it and said: Shabbat is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations. Only Shabbat and Israel share this partnership, this special bond.

And then I said to them: Tell me – if your mother walked into a certain store and the owner, G-d forbid, slapped her, would you go back into that store and buy from it? Wouldn't you, out of respect for your mother, feel that the slap he gave her burns on your own cheek? Of course you would. If you don't feel that, that's a problem – but you should feel it, that devotion, that connection, and understand that the moment the bond between a person and his mother is missing, he truly doesn't care when she's harmed.

When I have that special bond with my mother, and when I have a special bond with the holy Shabbat – we have a covenant with it – then whoever harms it, whoever strikes it, does so for the sake of his own small convenience, showing disrespect for her honor and holiness. I don't feel comfortable being there.

The Holy One made a covenant with us, with the entire people of Israel, and

we must remember that we are all one. This covenant is singularly special. Every morning, when I bind *tefillin* on my finger, I recall the words of the prophet: "I will betroth you to Me forever." Ours is a covenant of betrothal – we still feel, with the Holy One, the closeness and affection of an engagement, and the knowledge that a person guards his bond with his betrothed. The Torah is called a *morashah*, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob – but read instead *me'orasah*, betrothed. We love G-d and His Torah with no less devotion than exists between bride and groom.

And certainly, "there is no king without a people" – our essence is that we grant force to G-d's kingship. How? When we act as a people, not as individuals. When we are only individuals, that kingship is lacking its greater essence. No wonder that in *Parshat V'zot HaBerachah*, Moses says: "He was King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people gathered, the tribes of Israel together" – only when we stand together, as one body, as the whole people of Israel. As Rashi explains: only when Israel is formed as one union, not scattered into factions, is His kingship recognized over us.

This is the day of crowning the Kingdom, when we remind ourselves: "Hashem reigns, Hashem has reigned, Hashem will reign forever." But there is no king without a people – if we don't unite, we may fall short of complete kingship, for it must rest upon the whole nation together.

This is what the Ohr HaChaim teaches, and what we understand in these special moments as we pray: "Bless us, our Father, all of us as one." Through this may we merit the light of G-d's countenance, life, blessing, and peace for the year ahead – a year of good tidings, of *nachas* from our children, of health and joy for us all. May we see the redemption of Israel speedily in our days, amen.

Shabbat Shalom, and a good, blessed year.

KeVnei Maron – Passing Before Hashem



Rabbi Shalom Rosner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Machon Lev International program

In the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer recited on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we declare:

”וְכָל בָּאֵי עוֹלָם יַעֲבִירוּ לְפָנֶיךָ כְּבָנֵי מְרוֹן,
כְּבָקָרֹת רוֹעָה עֵדְרוֹ, מִעֲבִיר צֹאנוּ תַּחַת שְׂבָטוֹ...”

All human beings pass before You keVnei Maron – like sheep under the shepherd's staff, as he counts his flock one by one...

This phrase is drawn from the *Mishnah*¹:

בְּאַרְבָּעָה פְּרָקִים הָעוֹלָם נִדּוֹן... בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כָּל
בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם עוֹבְרִין לְפָנֶיךָ כְּבָנֵי מְרוֹן...

At four junctures the world is judged,... on Rosh Hashana all human beings pass before you like sheep....

The *Gemara*² records three explanations of this phrase, presented below in accordance with Rashi's interpretation:

- 1. Like sheep (keVnei imrana)** – as when sheep are counted one by one for tithing (*ma'aser behemah*) by passing through a narrow passage.
- 2. Like the ascent to Beit Maron** – a narrow mountain path, with a deep ravine on either side, where only one person can pass at a time.
- 3. Like the soldiers of King David** – as they were counted individually when gathering for war.

Each of these three metaphors expresses a different dimension of our relationship with Hashem and the meaning of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

1. Like Sheep – Submission to the King

The sheep is a symbol of submission and obedience, following its shepherd wherever he directs it. Likewise, when we describe ourselves as sheep before

Hashem, we affirm our absolute submission to His kingship.

On Rosh Hashanah we pray: “מְלוֹךְ עַל כָּל” – “Reign over the entire world in Your glory.” The Taz³ notes the double expression “*kol ha'olam kulo*” – “the entire world, all of it.” At times the word *kol* (“all”) is used to mean “most,” but here we stress that we ask Hashem to reign not only over the world as a whole, but over every part of it – and every part of us.

The Yeshuot Yaakov⁴ explains further: A human king can impose taxes, imprison or even execute, but he cannot govern people's thoughts and inner life. Hashem, however, is sovereign over body and soul, over our lives in this world and the next, over every thought, feeling, and action. Thus, when we accept His kingship, we declare Him King over *kol ha'olam kulo* – over all existence, and every part of ourselves.

To see ourselves as sheep, then, is to accept this complete submission to Hashem. By doing so, we guard ourselves from arrogance and anger. Hazal⁵ teach: “כָּל הַכּוֹעֵס כָּל מִינֵי גִיהֵנּוֹם שׁוֹלְטִין בוֹ” – “Whoever becomes angry, all kinds of Gehinnom rule over him”. The Rambam⁶ similarly writes: “כָּל הַכּוֹעֵס קָאֵלוּ עוֹיֵד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה” – “whoever exhibits anger, it is as if he engages in idolatry. Why is anger viewed so severely? Because anger stems from placing the self at the center, forgetting that everything comes from Hashem. To live with humility, like the sheep who follows its shepherd, is to recognize Hashem as the true source of all.

2. Like the Ascent of Beit Maron – Striving Upward

The second explanation likens us to travelers ascending the steep, narrow path of

Beit Maron. This is the image of constant ascent – the Jew is always called to grow, to climb higher.

This is the meaning of the Torah's description of Yehoshua bin Nun⁷:

”וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון נָעַר לֹא יָמִישׁ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵהָל.”

“His attendant, Yehoshua son of Nun, a lad, never left the Tent.”

At that time, Yehoshua was already fifty-six years old.⁸ Why, then, is he called a *na'ar* – a lad? Rav Yisrael Salanter explained that “youth” and “old age” are not merely measures of years, but states of mind. The old man looks backward, reflecting on what he has already accomplished. Youth look forward, are filled with plans, dreams, and aspirations. Yehoshua, though advanced in years, remained forever young – always looking upward, striving to grow.

This is what the prophet Hoshea⁹ means when he declares: “כִּי נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְבֵּהוּ” – *For Israel is a youth, and I loved him*. Hashem loves *Am Yisrael* for their youthful quality – their constant striving to advance and their refusal to become stagnant.

3. Like the Soldiers of David – Discipline and Precision

The third explanation compares us to the soldiers of King David, counted as they went out to battle. This imagery highlights discipline and precision. A soldier does not live for himself, but according to the command of his commander.

So too, a Jew is a soldier in Hashem's army. He must rise on time for prayer, fulfill *mitzvot* at their appointed times, and live with discipline in both *bein adam laMakom*

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The Shofar's Call



Michal Horowitz

Teacher, Lecturer & Author of "Able: Living With A Disability, A Torah View"

Rosh Hashana and the beginning of the year brings: *Celebration* – we were blessed with life the past year, and for this we celebrate and give thanks; *Hope* – we hope and trust that Hashem will accept our *tefillas*, and the new year will be one of blessing and redemption for our nation and land; *Awe* – we feel trepidation and reverence as we stand before the King on Coronation Day, and we recognize that our lives depend upon Him; *Repentance* – we cherish the opportunity to repent and return in purity and wholeness to Hashem, Who awaits our *teshuva* and takes us back with love; *Strengthening* – we feel strengthened as we stand on the cusp of a new year, looking ahead with resolve and determination, accepting the challenge to make the coming year one of productivity and success in *avodas Hashem*; *Silence* – we bow our heads, standing silently, as the blast of the *shofar* pierces our minds, hearts and *neshamos*, its powerful call stirring feelings deep within us, as we yearn for closeness with our Father in heaven.

The theme of the *Shofaros* section of *Mussaf* is the powerful call of the *shofar* and its eternal message.

The *shofar* is so important to the essence of Rosh Hashana that the *pasuk* tells us: *And in the seventh month, on the first of the month, a calling of holiness it shall be for you, all work of labor you shall not do, a day of the teruah blast it shall be for you (Bamidbar 29:1).* Interestingly, the *bracha* that is recited prior to the *shofar* blasts is "*lish'mo'ah kol shofar*", to **hear** the sound of the *shofar*. Thus, it behooves us to ask: What does *lish'mo'ah* mean? It must mean more than to just "hear" – as in the biological process of hearing – if it is so important to our *avodah* of crowning Hashem as *Melech* on this day.

In regard to the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, Rambam states:

"Even though the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana is a decree of the Torah, nevertheless,

there is an allusion in it. It is as if the shofar is saying: Wake up you sleepers from your sleep! Arise you slumberers from your slumber! Examine your ways and return in repentance and remember your Creator" (Hilchos Teshuva 3:4).

On this Rambam, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z'l, teaches, "These words constitute not only a moral message, but they bear *halachic* implications as well. By introducing the above "allusion," the Rambam suggests a new understanding of the *shofar* obligation. While *mitzvos* such as eating *matzoh* on Pesach do not contain any subjective component and demand no reaction to the significance of the physical act, the Rambam emphasizes here that aside from the auditory experience of hearing the *shofar*, there is also a *kiyum she'ba'lev*, an aspect of the *mitzvah* whose fulfillment requires a subjective emotional response... Even though there is an aspect of the *mitzvah* that is external and objective, "there is an allusion in it," i.e., an inner, emotional fulfillment, without which one has not truly and completely addressed the obligation inherent in the *mitzvah*."¹

Hence, the inner fulfillment means that we must not only biologically hear, we are to emotionally "hear" the *shofar* as well. It must pierce our essence and become part of who we are.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z'l, writes, "In Judaism faith is a form of listening – to the song creation sings to its Creator, and to the message history delivers to those who strive to understand it. That is what Moses says time and again in Deuteronomy. Stop looking; listen. Stop speaking; listen. Create a silence in the soul. Still the clamour of instinct, desire, fear, anger. Strive to listen to the still, small voice beneath the noise. Then you will know that the universe is the work of the One beyond the furthest star yet closer to you than you are to yourself – and then you will love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might.

In G-d's unity you will find unity, within yourself and between yourself and the world, and you will no longer fear the unknown."²

The blast of the *shofar* cries out to the deepest recesses of our soul, to hear the voice of Hashem in our lives, to recognize His handiwork in all of creation, to crown Him as King over ourselves every day of the year.

The *shofar* reminds us to focus on what is important in life and to live mindfully, where we pay attention to Hashem, our Father and our King, daily.

The *shofar* blast teaches us that to accept the unity of Hashem, we must first be prepared to *listen to Him*.

When we appreciate His *malchus* by integrating Torah and *mitzvos* into our daily lives, it is then that we can build a relationship with Hashem, for it is then that we are truly listening.

For the voice of G-d is heard – not in a great, strong wind that splits mountains and shatters rock, and not in an earthquake that shakes the earth, and not in a blazing fire, rather – in the still small sound, בקול דממה דקה (The phrase is part of the *U'nesaneh Tokef* prayer – cf. *Melachim I* 19:11-12).

And when we learn to still the noise of the world around us, and we learn to hear the voice of Hashem, we can then truly build a stronger, deeper, lasting and powerful relationship with Him. And it is this relationship that will sustain us through all times, and become our beacon and guide as we enter yet another year of life, in order to serve Him.

זכרנו לחיים מלך חפץ בחיים וכתבנו בספר החיים למענך א-לקים חיים. בברכת שנה טובה ומתוקה.

1. Soloveitchik, Rabbi Joseph B., *Machzor M'soras Harav Rosh Hashanah*, ed. Dr. Arnold Lustiger and Rabbi Michael Taubes (K'hal Publishing, 2008), p.447.
2. Sacks, Rabbi Jonathan, *Covenant & Conversation*, Deuteronomy (Maggid Books, 2019), p.69.

Yom Tru'a



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

According to *Chumash* the only unique *mitzva* of this holiday is that we are commanded to make a *yom tru'a* according to *Parshat Pinchas* (*Bamidbar* 29:2), or a *zichron tru'a* according to *Parshat Emor* (*Vayikra* 23:24). Each of these two phrases requires explanation. Why would “sounding a *tru'a*” have any connection to the beginning of the rainy season? Likewise, what does “*zichron tru'a*” imply?

To understand these phrases, we must consider how a *shofar* was used in biblical times. Today, a *shofar* is considered a religious artifact. If you are shopping for a *shofar*, you would inquire at your local “*seforim*” store or possibly a Judaica shop. However, in Biblical times, its use was quite different. Back then, if you were shopping for a *shofar*, you would have most probably gone to your local “arms dealer” – for the *shofar* was used primarily in war, as a *shofar* was used by military commanders and officers to communicate with their troops. Similarly, civil defense personnel used the *shofar* to warn civilians of enemy attacks and to mobilize the army.

Now, there are two basic types of “notes” that the *shofar* blower uses:

1. a *teki'a* – a long steady note (like DC current);
2. a *tru'a* – an oscillating short note (like AC current).

Usually, a *teki'a* long steady sound was used to signal an “all clear” situation, while the oscillating *tru'a* signal warned of imminent danger (like a siren sound today). This distinction between a *teki'a* and *tru'a* is easily deduced from the *mitzva* of the “*chatzotzrot*” (trumpets) explained in *Parshat Beha'alotcha*. According to that *parsha*, the *teki'a* was the signal for gathering the camp for happy occasions, while the *tru'a* was used as a signal to prepare for travel in military formation and war.

Hence, in biblical times, if someone heard a *shofar* sounding a *tru'a*, his instinctive reaction would have been fear, preparation for war, and/or impending danger.

With this background, we can return to *Parshat Pinchas*. The Torah instructs us to make a *yom tru'a* on the first day of the seventh month (29:1-2). Obviously, the Torah does not expect us to go to war on this day; however, we are commanded on this day to create an atmosphere that simulates the tension and fear of war. By creating this atmosphere in anticipation of the new agricultural year that is about to begin, we show G-d our belief that its fate – and hence our fate, is in His hands (and not nature's).

Therefore, to create this atmosphere of a “day of judgment,” to help us feel that our lives are truly “on the line” – in G-d's Hands, the Torah commands us to sound a *tru'a* with the *shofar*.

Now we must explain the phrase *zichron tru'a*, which is used to describe this holiday in *Parshat Emor*. The key to understanding this phrase lies in the *psukim* mentioned concerning the *chatzotzrot*. There, we find the link between *tru'a*, war, and *zika'ron*: “*Ve-ki tavo'u milchama be-artzechem... va-harei'otem be-chatzotzrot, ve-nizkartem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem...*” – When war takes place in your land... you should sound a *tru'a* with your trumpets that you will be remembered by (and/or that you will remember...) Hashem, and He will save you from your enemies” (see *Bamidbar* 10:8-9).

Here we find a special *mitzva* to sound a *tru'a* prior to, and in anticipation of, impending battle. To show our belief that the outcome of that battle is in G-d's Hands, and not in the hands of our enemy, we are commanded to sound a *tru'a*. Obviously, it was not the *tru'a* itself that saved *Bnei Yisrael*, but rather our recognition that the ultimate fate of the battle is in G-d's Hands.

We can apply this same analogy from war to agriculture. Just as the Torah commands us to sound a *tru'a* in anticipation of war – to remember that its outcome is in G-d's Hand; so too we are commanded to sound a *tru'a* on the first of Tishrei in anticipation of the forthcoming agricultural year – to remind ourselves that its outcome is in G-d's Hand as well.

Therefore, *Rosh Hashana* is not only a *yom tru'a* – a day of awe on which our lives are judged, but *Chumash* defines it as a day of *zichron tru'a* – a day on which we must sound the *tru'a* so that we will remember our G-d, in order that He will remember us. On this day, we must proclaim His kingdom over all mankind in recognition of His mastery over nature and our destiny.

In today's modern society, it is difficult to appreciate the importance of an agricultural year. Rarely do we need to worry about our water supply and other most basic needs. Nevertheless, especially in the Land of Israel, we are faced with other serious national dangers such as war and terror.

Even though we must take every precaution necessary against these dangers, the basic principle of the above *shiur* still applies, that we must recognize that the ultimate fate of the forthcoming year is in G-d's Hands, and that He will judge us based on our deeds.

Even though all the nations are judged on this awesome day, *Am Yisrael's* custom is to sound the *tru'a* specifically with the *shofar* of an *ayil* (a ram), a symbol of “*akeidat Yitzchak*” – a reminder to the Almighty of our devotion and readiness to serve Him.

With this *shofar*, together with our *tefillot*, our heritage, and our resolve to conduct our lives as an “*am kadosh*” should, we pray that G-d should not judge us like any other nation, rather as His special Nation.

Rosh Hashana - A Time to Stop Making Excuses



Rabbi Eli Mansour
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The Torah commands blowing a “Teru’a” sound on Rosh Hashanah (“Yom Teru’a Yiheyeh Lakhem” – Bamidbar 29:1), and the *Gemara* explains that this refers to a weeping sound.

The *Gemara* reaches this conclusion on the basis of *Targum Onkelos* (the ancient Aramaic translation of the Torah), which translates the word “Teru’a” as “Yebaba.” This word is derived from the root “Y.B.B.,” and the *Gemara* determines the meaning of this word from a verse in the Book of *Shoftim* (5:28). The context of that verse is *Beneh Yisrael’s* victory over the Canaanite army led by the general Sisera, who fled the battlefield and sought refuge in the home of a woman named Yael. As Sisera slept, Yael killed him, sealing *Beneh Yisrael’s* victory. The verse describes Sisera’s mother waiting by the window and crying – “Va’tey-abebe” – as she realized that her beloved son was not returning home. This proves that the word “Teru’a,” which is translated as “Yebaba,” refers to a crying sound. The *Gemara* explains that there are different kinds of weeping, which accounts for the different sounds which we blow with the *Shofar* (the sounds known as “*Shebarim*,” “*Teru’a*,” and “*Shebarim-Teru’a*”).

At first glance, it seems peculiar that Sisera’s mother’s cries form the basis of our understanding of the word “Teru’a.” Why would specifically her weeping serve as the model of the sound of the *shofar*? What connection is there between Sisera’s mother and *shofar* blowing?

The verses there in *Shoftim* tell that Sisera’s mother and her servants tried finding comfort by suggesting reasons why her

son was not returning home. Perhaps he was busy celebrating, or collecting the spoils of war. Not wanting to confront the painful reality that her son had been killed, Sisera’s mother tried in vain to comfort herself by imaginary tales.

People similarly use their creativity to avoid the painful reality that they have acted wrongly. It is exceedingly difficult to admit wrongdoing. In marriage, for example, when a couple has an argument, rarely does one spouse later say to the other, “I realize that I was wrong, I apologize.” Admitting error, guilt and wrongdoing is very uncomfortable. And so to avoid this discomfort, we come up with excuses. We think of creative reasons for why we did what we did in an attempt to exonerate ourselves and thereby save ourselves from painful feelings of guilt and embarrassment.

This is one explanation for the connection between Sisera’s mother’s weeping and Rosh Hashanah. Just as Sisera’s mother cried when she stopped making “excuses,” when she confronted the painful reality that her son was not returning home, Rosh Hashanah is the time for us to stop making excuses for our behavior, and to confront the painful reality that we need to improve.

In the Book of *Yirmiyahu* (2:35), G-d tells *Beneh Yisrael*, “*Hineni Nishpat Otach Al Omrech Lo Hatati*” – that He would be punishing them for saying, “I did not sin.” This is a truly remarkable verse. G-d does not punish us for sinning; as flawed human beings, we are prone to make mistakes, and He does not expect perfection. He punishes us not for our mistakes, but for

denying our mistakes. It is all but inevitable that we will commit sins, but we are expected to hold ourselves accountable, to admit our wrongdoing, to humbly acknowledge guilt, and to resolve to try harder.

This concept is taught to us by King Shlomo, in *Mishleh* (28:13), where he writes, “*U’modeh Ve’ozeb Yeruham*” – “...but he who confesses and abandons [his wrongdoing] will be given mercy.” We are not asked to be perfect; we are asked only to admit our imperfections and try to be better.

I saw an example of this principle during a cab ride to the airport. The driver was pulled over for speeding. When the cop asked him why he was driving so fast, he said, “Look, officer, it’s not my fault, I have a passenger who is late for a flight, I am just trying to do my job...” The policeman looked at him and said, “Hey, just tell me the truth.” The driver looked down and said, “Ok. I was driving too fast. I was wrong. I am sorry.” The cop politely asked him not to speed again, and let him go without issuing a ticket.

I thought to myself that this is precisely what Hashem wants of us. He is not looking to punish us for our sins. Rather, He wants us to stop making excuses, to take ownership of our mistakes, to be honest with ourselves, to admit that we do things wrong and that we need to try to be better. This is what the cry of the *shofar* is saying to us: to stop making excuses, and to honestly take stock of our actions in order to improve.

The Shofar Blast of Moshiach



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger

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Rosh Hashana is not a time for *drashos* or scholarly lessons. It is a time for inspiration and for pointing out the good in the Jewish people. I share the following thoughts in that vein.

The *shofar* is blown a number of times between the beginning of *Elul* and Rosh Hashana. *Tosafos* in Rosh Hashana (16b) explain that after the first set of *tekios*, the *Satan* is somewhat confused, but when he hears the second set, he is bewildered and convinced that the *shofar* announcing the arrival of *Moshiach* has been sounded.

What does this mean? Everyone knows when Rosh Hashana is, even the *Satan*. Why, then, would the second set of *tekios* make him think *Moshiach* has arrived?

The first *tekios* are the cries and *tefilos* of the individual. The *Gemara* describes how, on Rosh Hashana, all of creation passes before Hashem like sheep, one by one. In the *Beis Hamikdash*, sheep were counted individually for *maaser*, each passing through a narrow opening. So too, on Rosh Hashana, each person is evaluated individually. The *Satan* is not bewildered by that.

But “*bnei maron*,” the sheep passing before Hashem, has another meaning: the soldiers of David Hamelech. The second set of *tekios* represents the Jewish people as Hashem’s army. In those *tekios*, every Jew declares: “I am a soldier in Hashem’s army. My concern is no longer only my own needs. I am part of the nation for which I am fighting.”

When the *Satan* hears that, he is astounded. When Jews stop thinking only of themselves and become united as Hashem’s nation, he knows that *Moshiach* must be near. Then, as we say in the Rosh Hashana davening, “Hashem, let Your glory be seen in the world.”

All we want is to reveal Hashem’s glory. Yet how is His glory revealed when we must consult anti-Semites about where Jews may live and build in *Eretz Yisroel*?

How is His honor upheld when we must seek the approval of others before defending Jewish lives from our enemies? And how is His glory revealed when *talmidei chachamim* are forced into political battles over rabbinic leadership?

We are waiting for Hashem’s glory to be revealed through His nation.

The second set of *tekios* can therefore be understood as our cry for the pain of the Divine Presence still in exile. It is simply the cry: Where is Hashem’s glory? Where is the glory of Hashem, His people, and Yerushalayim?

When our *tekios* are not for our own interests, but for Hashem’s and the Jewish people’s interests, we cry: “Then Your name, Hashem our G-d, will be sanctified over Yerushalayim Your city... Give joy to Your land, jubilation to Your city... And they will gather to form one unit, to do Your will with all of their hearts.”

When the *Satan* hears those cries, he is convinced that *Moshiach* has arrived.

But there is another explanation, even deeper and almost impossible to express.

My father told me that in Mauthausen, the Nazis forced the Jews to haul enormous boulders. One day, his friend began losing his grip on a boulder. My father tried to help him, but he could not hold it. A Nazi guard, eating a sandwich, raised his gun with one hand and shot my father’s friend. He did not even pause to put down his sandwich. The *Satan*, the embodiment of evil, is not moved by the suffering of the individual. The first set of *tekios* does not bewilder him.

But the second set is different. These are the *tekios* of *Emunah* – the faith of my parents and grandparents, and of countless Jews who continued to believe after experiencing a *Gehinom* on earth. That is when the Jewish people sound the second set of *tekios*: when, after everything we have suffered, we continue to believe in Hashem. Such *tekios* can only herald *Moshiach*.

The second *tekios* are the cry of Tamar Fogel, who at twelve years old discovered almost her entire family murdered in their home in Itamar. Even after losing her parents and three siblings, she strengthened others in their faith in Hashem, His providence, and the mission of the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisroel*.

They are also the *tekios* of Rabbi Moshe Menachem Taubenfeld. His first wife and son were killed in a bus bombing. He later remarried and built a family of nineteen children. Then, in Tishrei 2010, their home burned down, destroying their possessions, manuscripts, heirlooms, and much of his wife’s life’s work. Her response was: “Let’s see what we have, not what we don’t have.” Rabbi Taubenfeld recalled a Holocaust survivor who had told a widow, “If I close my eyes, I see my wife and children being taken to the gas chambers. So I don’t close my eyes.”

That is the second set of *tekios*: a Jew who looks faithfully toward the future.

Every person has ups and downs, failures, discouragement, and crises. Yet after everything, we have come together to hear the *tekios*. We are still here. We have not given up. This is the *shofar* blast of *Moshiach*.

The Ahavas Yisroel of Vishnitz asked why the Rosh Hashana Torah reading ends with Ma’acha, the name of a concubine, rather than with Avraham and Yitzchak returning from the *Akeida* to Beer Sheva. He explained that “Ma’acha” hints to *Melech al kol haaretz* – “King over the whole world.” At the end of the *Akeida*, after our greatest tests, we recognize Hashem’s kingship. After all our tests, we are still here. We still sound the *shofar*. We still proclaim Hashem as King.

Hashem, please blow the great *shofar*, gather our dispersed brothers and sisters from the four corners of the world, and bring us all home.

Whole, Broken, Whole – The Secret of the Shofar Sounds



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

On Rosh Hashanah, we produce three sounds via the *shofar*. The first sound is called *tekiah*, a single whole note. The second is *shevarim*, three shorter “broken” notes, which sound like three sighs. The third is called *teruah*, nine staccato notes in rapid succession, which sound like short sobs.

What do they represent? *Tekiah* reminds us that once we were whole. Each of us was born whole. *Shevarim* reminds us that in life we are plagued by questions, confusion, and disappointments; we become fragmented, and scattered, causing our existential sighs. *Teruah* reminds us how many people’s lives have been shattered through various negative experiences into tiny pieces. They are sobbing consciously or unconsciously.

But what do we do after each time we blow the sounds of brokenness? We blow the *tekiah* again. This reminds us that we can be restored to wholeness again.

What is more, following all of the shofar sounds, we reach the *tekiah gedolah*, “the great *tekiah*” – one note that lasts as long as the *shofar*-blower has breath, a much longer note than the initial blast which began the cycle. Through surviving brokenness, we can reach an even deeper kind of wholeness than we knew before.

The sages of the Talmud offered the following teaching. A clay pot, being porous, is susceptible to *tumah*, ritual impurity, through contact with certain impure substances. If a clay vessel becomes *tamei*, the way to make it again *tahor* (ritually pure) is to break it and then glue it back together. Through the pot’s brokenness,

in other words, wholeness is restored; it becomes pure again.

We too are made from clay, as Genesis describes, “G-d created the human being of clay from the earth.” When we allow ourselves to be open to our own vulnerability and brokenness, we become capable of a deeper and more powerful wholeness than we knew in the first place. *Tekiah gedolah* packs its punch precisely because it arises out of scattered sounds. The places where we’re glued back together are places where the light of G-d can enter.

I once read an article, which related the following experience: A girl had been shopping with her Mom in Walmart. She must have been 6 years old, this beautiful red-haired, freckle-faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside. The kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the earth it has no time to flow down the spout.

“We all stood there under the awning and just inside the door of the Walmart. We waited, some patiently, others irritated because nature messed up our hurried day. I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I get lost in the sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world. Memories of running, splashing so carefree as a child come pouring in as a welcome reprieve from the worries of my day.

“Mom, let’s run through the rain,” she said. “What?” Mom asked. “Let’s run through the rain!” She repeated. “No, honey. We’ll wait until it slows down a bit,” Mom replied. This young child waited about

another minute and repeated: “Mom, let’s run through the rain.” “We’ll get soaked if we do,” Mom said. “No, we won’t, Mom. That’s not what you said this morning,” the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom’s arm. “This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?” “Don’t you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, ‘If G-d can get us through this, He can get us through anything!’”

“The entire crowd stopped dead silent. I swear you couldn’t hear anything but the rain. We all stood silently. No one came or left in the next few minutes. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say. Now some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a child’s life. A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into confidence, courage and faith.

“Honey, you are absolutely right. Let’s run through the rain. If G-d lets us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing,” Mom said. Then off they ran. Everyone stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. They got soaked. But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars.

“And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing.”

Shanah Tovah, a year of health, happiness, prosperity, peace and redemption.

Rosh Hashanah: In It Together



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Founder, Tzama Nafshi

Author of the *Baderech* series

Rebbe Pinchas Menachem Alter, *zy'a*, the Pnei Menachem of Ger (d. 1996), was widely respected as a wise and unassuming *tzadik*, and was a beloved *Rosh Yeshivah* of Yeshivas Sefas Emes. One year, in advance of the *Yamim Noraim*, the Pnei Menachem was learning with his student and *chavrusa*, Reb Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg, *shlit'a*, (the current Tolna Rebbe of Jerusalem), when the latter shared the following vort from the Yismach Yisrael of Alexander:

"In the *Musaf* davening of Yom Kippur, we describe how the *Kohen Gadol* "rejoiced" when mixing the blood of his personal offering together with the blood offered as part of the communal sacrifice on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. Until that point, the *Kohen Gadol*, in his exalted and singular role, was separate from the rest of the community. More than a technical, procedural aspect of the *avoda*, the mixing of the blood together united him with the rest of the *tzibur* – and this was a cause for rejoicing."

The Pnei Menachem took great pleasure in this teaching.

Soon thereafter, following the passing of his half brother, the Pnei Menachem inherited the role of *Gerrer Rebbe*, and accepted leadership and responsibility of the movement. As a Rebbe to thousands of *chasidim*, Reb Pinchas Menachem assumed a very public role. On the first Rosh Hashanah of his reign, he confided in his student, who by then had become the Tolna Rebbe, that the trappings of leadership and the perceived distance from the *chasidim* that came along with his new status were a challenge: "*Der vort badert mir zayer*, The vort you shared with

me (regarding the mixing of sacrificial blood) is bothering me greatly."

The Pnei Menachem was experiencing the same sense of isolation that the *Kohen Gadol* felt prior to performing the *avodah* of mixing the different bloods of the *Korbanos*. Seeking comfort, after *Yom Tov*, he asked his old *chevrusa* and *talmid* to accompany him on a late night journey to Kever Rachel.

As they approached the *kever*, Reb Pinchas Menachem was lost in thought and prayer and did not notice signage indicating that the regular entrance was closed off due to renovations. Suddenly, he was accosted by a security guard, shouting, "*Mah atah chosheiv?* What are you thinking? That you're different than others here? *Atah kemo kulam!* You're like everyone else! Go around to the other entrance around the back, like every other visitor!"

The Rebbe was taken aback, apologized for his oversight, and thanked the guard with a smile. "Yes, it is true – *ani k'mo kulam* – I am just like everyone else," he said, and joyfully entered Kever Rachel through the back entrance together with the rest of the *tzibur*.

■ ■ ■

Sefer Melachim describes in great detail the kindnesses performed by the *Isha Shunamis*, the Shunamite Woman, in hosting and providing for Elisha haNavi and his student, Gechazi. Wanting to express his appreciation, Elisha inquires if there is anything he can do for her: *Hayeish l'daber lach el haMelech?* "Can we speak on your behalf to the king?" Declining the offer, their hostess answers cryptically:

B'soch ami ani yoshevet, "I dwell among my people." (*Melachim* 2, 4:13)

The Zohar haKadosh provides context for the interaction: *Hahu yoma, Yom Tov d'Rosh Hashanah hava*, "That day was the holiday of *Rosh Hashanah*" (*Zohar*, 2:44:1). Elisha was not simply asking if the *Isha Shunamit* needed some *protektzia*, or wanted him to pull some strings with the authorities on her behalf. Being the start of a new year, Elisha haNavi was offering to intercede and *daven* on her behalf before Hashem, The King of Kings, who is coronated each year on Rosh Hashanah.

B'soch ami ani yoshevet, "I dwell among my people...."

The answer of the *Isha Shunamit* reveals a fundamental insight into the nature of Rosh Hashanah, and is an important reminder for this auspicious day. Each and every one of us has the privilege and opportunity to address the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, to approach the "King" directly, and to engage Him with our own words. On Rosh Hashanah we are on level ground with all of humanity, "dwelling among our people." We stand before G-d empowered by our connection to the greater *tzibur* and the community to which we belong.

This Rosh Hashanah may we strengthen our commitment to one another and awaken a deeper sense of mutual responsibility and connectivity. May we strengthen our dedication to improving the welfare of our brothers and sisters, for indeed, we are all in this together; *anachnu k'mo kulam*.

■ ■ ■

Excerpt from Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786)

Inner Illumination

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Tekiat Shofar, blowing the shofar, is a central part of the Rosh Hashanah service. In designing the structure of each section, Chazal meticulously chose seven verses to be recited responsively before shofar blowing, and three verses following the blasts. These verses direct our minds and hearts to focus on the objective of the mitzvah to blow shofar and indeed the objective of the Yamim Nora'im, the High Holy Days.

After blowing the first thirty shofar blasts, the chazzan calls out, “Ashrei ha'am yod'ei teruah, Hashem be'or panecha yehaleichun – Praiseworthy is the people that knows the shofar's cry; O Hashem, they will walk by the illumination of your countenance!” The latter part of the verse affords us a glimpse into the theme of the day and the power of the shofar.

Rav Elya Roth, zt”l, in *Sichat Eliyahu* quotes the famous idea that the moments during which the shofar is blown is akin to the moments the Kohen Gadol stands in the Holy of Holies to do the exclusive Yom Kippur service. When listening to the shofar blasts, each of us metaphorically enters “lifnai ve'lifnim,” into the innermost chamber of Hashem's presence. We

are judged on Rosh Hashanah “k'venei maron” as an individual. This is a unique experience as people are generally social creatures, we like to interact with others and often define ourselves in terms of our relationship with others. In contrast, on Rosh Hashanah we stand completely alone before Hashem. Rav Roth notes that this is one of the reasons that the word “emet,” truth, is repeated often throughout the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. We are given the opportunity to face who we are without pretenses, to confront our core self. In the innermost chamber, we encounter who we really are.

Rav Yehudah Leib Chasman, zt”l, shares a powerful parable to illustrate the dynamic of these moments. Imagine a simple villager who hears about a cinema. He is intrigued by the idea and saves up money to buy an entrance ticket to see a film. He enters the darkened theater and is entranced by the images he sees on the screen. One thing, however, bothers him terribly. Everyone is sitting in the dark! He imagines how much more they would enjoy themselves if they could see better and instinctively turns on the light. The people in the theater yell at him, “Fool!

Don't you know that the visuals only appear in the dark!”

On Rosh Hashanah, we are privy to the “ohr panecha,” the Divine illumination that allows us to see the fantasies we live and the misdirected goals that we chase.

In his *sefer* on *teshuvah*, Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein explains that all year we deceive ourselves into believing that we are the owner of the house, the business, we are the center of the universe. Indeed, we sometimes have the attitude that we ‘invite Hashem into our lives,’ but only at our own convenience. Rosh Hashanah is the time when we are gifted with the light of clarity; it is Hashem's world, and we must adjust ourselves to realign our values and mindsets with His. The theme of this section is that of restoring our vision; to walk and live in the “light of Hashem” – with His truth, His word, His command.

The shofar turns on the light, shining it into the inner recesses of our soul. It enables us to see our crafted illusions for what they are and only then can we live sincerely with the Divine truths that Hashem has set for us.

Continued from page 15

and *bein adam laHavero*. To be counted like soldiers means to live life not casually or haphazardly, but with loyalty and precision in the service of Hashem.

Conclusion

These three images – sheep, climbers, and soldiers – offer us a map for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and indeed for Jewish life. As sheep, we learn humility and submission to Hashem's kingship. As climbers on the ascent of *Beit Maron*, we commit ourselves to constant growth, never content with what we have

achieved. And as soldiers of King David, we embrace discipline and faithfulness, serving with exactness and devotion.

When we stand before Hashem on the Yamim Noraim, each of us passes individually, one by one, like *keVnei Maron*. It is a moment of profound intimacy, where Hashem looks not at the masses, but at the singular soul standing before Him.

May we merit to approach these days as humble sheep, aspiring youths, and devoted soldiers – and in doing so, may we be inscribed for a year of blessing, growth,

and closeness to the King of Kings – *Melekh Malkehei HaMelakheim*.

1. Rosh Hashanah 16a
2. ibid. 18a
3. Taz, Orakh Haim 582:3.
4. Yeshuot Yaakov, ad loc.
5. Nedarim 22a
6. Rambam, Hilkhos Deot 2:3
7. Shemot 33:11
8. See Ibn Ezra and Ramban to Shemot 33:11, who calculate Yehoshua's age at that time.
9. Hoshea 11:1

“It Shall be a Day of Sounding the Teruah...” – For You!



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

A year in which there is no *shofar* on the first day of Rosh Hashanah will always be a special year: a year marked by Shabbat. Sukkot will fall on Shabbat, Simchat Torah will be on Shabbat, and this year will also be the year of the letter *zayin* (5787): a year of *zechuyot* [merits], *zivugim* [matchmaking and unions], and *zohar* [radiance] – a year in which seven (*zayin* in gematria) heavens will open to our prayers...

But a year without *shofar* blasts on the first day of the holiday will forever remind us of that year, the terrible year of 5784 [2023–24]. The Hasidim will say of a year without the *shofar* the verse: “When there is no advocate to plead our righteousness, facing the accuser who recounts our sins, tell Jacob the words of law and justice.”

In other words: when the *shofar*, which is our advocate, is absent, what will protect us against the “accuser” – the mekatreg, the one who prosecutes us before Heaven – will be only “the words of law and justice.” This is an allusion to Shabbat, of which it is said at Marah: “There He gave them a statute and an ordinance.”

In other words, very serious protection is required against the accuser, and Shabbat is such a protection. But on what is called the “Day of Remembrance” [Rosh Hashanah], it is impossible not to remember that year, when Shabbat, seemingly, did not protect us from the terrible massacre that took place on the seventh day, in the seventh month – according to their calendar, and according to ours...

And therefore, in such a year, we will need the help of women more than in any other year.

The *shofar* is an imitation. An imitation of the sound of weeping: “It shall be a day of sounding the *teruah* for you – a day of wailing.” (*Targum Onkelos*)

The wailing of the *shofar* seeks to imitate the cry of a woman: Sarah weeping, Hagar weeping, the mother of Sisera weeping, Rachel weeping, and Hannah, “weeping bitterly.”

So, in the absence of the *shofar*, the synagogue needs “**the real thing:**” **the sound of women crying...**

Should one cry on Rosh Hashanah, or not?

It is customary to say that there is a disagreement between the *poskim* of the revealed, straightforward tradition – “You shall eat, drink, and rejoice!” – and the Kabbalists: “Anyone who does not cry during the sounding of the *shofar* testifies about their own soul that it is not properly rectified.” (*The holy Ari*)

But Rabbi Hutner, the great thinker, explains that the joy which is obligatory on this holy day can come only after weeping from the depths of the heart – a weeping that understands the fear of judgment and therefore can rejoice in the immense relief when the Holy One, blessed be He, rises from the Throne of Judgment and sits upon the Throne of Mercy.

The liturgical poet expresses it in the words: “**The eye weeps bitterly, while the heart rejoices.**”

This will be the wail of a woman sitting upon the birthstool: the woman who is so afraid, and the woman who cries with relief as she holds her newborn baby in her arms.

This year, **go to the synagogue**. Do not say: “There are no *shofar* blasts on the first day; I’ll go on the second day of the holiday.” When there is no *teruah* for you, **you women will be the *teruah***. Your silent voices will be our advocate before the accuser: “Her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard.”

How does one become a *teruah*?!

The Alter Rebbe explains the word *teruah* in three ways:

- **Shever** – brokenness, from the root *ra’ua*, something broken or fragile.
- **Re’ut** – friendship, connection, companionship.
- **Ratzon adir** – an immense desire, *re’uta de-liba*, the deepest longing of the heart.

Come with all the brokenness you have known. Come with friendship, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Come with the greatest desire of the heart that you possess. **This year, you are the *shofar* of us all.** Come to the synagogue and be our advocate. **The entire congregation places its trust in you.**

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



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In the Rosh Hashana liturgy, *Unetaneh Tokef* describes the Day of Judgment, when all who enter the world pass before G-d and every life is counted, remembered, and written. It contains this phrase: *וְכָל בָּאֵי עוֹלָם יַעֲבִירוּ לִפְנֵי כְּבִי מְרוֹן*. “All who enter the world You will cause to pass before You like *bnei maron*.”

The phrase comes from *Mishna Rosh Hashana* 1:2: “On Rosh Hashana, all the world passes before Him like *bnei maron*, as it is stated: ‘He Who fashions their hearts alike, Who considers all their deeds.’”

The *piyyut*, *Unetaneh Tokef* expands the *Mishnah*’s short phrase with four verbs – *תַּעֲבִיר*, *תַּחֲסֹף*, *תַּמְנָה*, *תַּקְדֹּד* – and the image of *קְבוֹעַר רוֹעֶה עֶדְרוֹ*, a shepherd inspecting his flock and passing them under his staff. Every life is not just seen but individually counted.

In *Rosh Hashana* 18a, the Talmud asks what *כְּבִי מְרוֹן* means and offers three explanations:

הָכָא תַּרְגְּמִימוּ: כְּבִי אִמְרָנָא. רִישׁ לְקִישׁ אָמַר: כְּמַעְלוֹת בֵּית מְרוֹן. אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: כְּחַיִּילוֹת שֶׁל בֵּית דָּוִד.

“Here [in Babylonia] they interpreted it: like sheep [kivnei imarna]. Reish Lakish said: like the ascent of *Beit Maron*. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: like the soldiers of the house of King David.”

The first explanation reads *מְרוֹן* through *אִמְרָנָא*, sheep in Aramaic – passing one by one through a narrow opening for maaser. This fits the shepherd imagery of the *piyyut*, which is why most people naturally hear *כְּבִי מְרוֹן* as sheep. The second, *כְּמַעְלוֹת*, describes a road so narrow that two people cannot walk abreast. This may refer to the mountain region of Meron in the Galilee, or it may preserve a reading of *Beit Horon*, a known ascent northwest of Jerusalem. Both readings share the same idea: each person passes alone, counted alone, seen alone.

The third explanation is the most rooted in history. The phrase *שֶׁל בֵּית דָּוִד*, the military image of David’s troops, likely preserves the phrase’s original meaning. The term *כְּבִי מְרוֹן* may derive from *כְּנוֹמְרוֹן* – “like a numeron,” a counted military unit, related to the Latin word for number. Roman rule brought this vocabulary into the Land of Israel and from there into Mishnaic Hebrew. Each soldier is counted, but each is also part of a larger formation – a different picture from the solitary sheep or the traveler on a narrow path.

Over time the foreign word became unfamiliar. The borrowed term *כְּנוֹמְרוֹן* shifted in pronunciation and understanding into *כְּבִי מְרוֹן*, which sounded more naturally Hebrew even though “children of Maron” has no clear meaning on its own. In Babylonia, the older tradition – “like troops” – survived even after the original term was no longer recognized. The other two explanations developed to make sense of what had become an obscure phrase.

Answer to the Rosh Hashanah Riddle (from page 9)

In Shule on Rosh Hashana, the *shofar* is covered whilst the *bracha* קול שופר is recited. At home, on Shabbat and Yom Tov, we keep the challahs covered whilst reciting *kiddush*.

Connection between these two “coverings”:

In *Orach Chaim*, *Siman* 271, the Tur cites a Talmud Yerushalmi which states that the challah should not be visible, so that it should not be “ashamed,” whilst *kiddush* is being recited over the wine. Normally, in a meal, bread has precedence over wine in the order of *brachot*, as wheat and barley are the first of the seven species with which *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed, and deserve to have first place in the order of *brachot*. Indeed, during the working week we first make *HaMotzi* before *HaGafen*. But on Shabbat and Yom Tov we must say *kiddush* before we eat. By making the *bracha* first on the wine, we are “embarrassing” the

challah bread. To spare the challah from embarrassment, we cover it.

In *Shu”t Avnei Nezer Chelek Beit*, *Siman* 431, the Sochatchover Rebbe explains that the *bracha* קול שופר can be embarrassing for the *shofar*, as we are not individually taking the *shofar* and blowing it, rather merely listening to its sound. By making the *bracha* on “hearing the sound of the *shofar*,” the focus is somewhat removed from the actual *shofar*. Each of us does not have to “take” or hold the *shofar*. The focus is more on the sound.

To save its “embarrassment,” we cover it during the *brachot* recited over it.

This is in contrast to other *brachot*, such as *על נטילת לולב*, where we individually have to take the *lulav* and the other three *Minim*, and the *bracha* is indeed focused on the *Arba Minim* themselves.

Other reasons for covering the shofar during the brachot recited over it:

- Sdei Chemed quotes a *Midrash* that at the *Akeidah*, Avraham hid Yitzchak whilst he built the altar, so that Yitzchak would not be disqualified by a blemish arising from a stone injury. As the *shofar* is a reminder of the *Akeidah*, we, too, hide it, recalling the merit of the *Akeidah*.
- VaYitzbor Yosef, *Siman* 11 writes that at the *Akeidah*, Avraham lifted his eyes and saw that behold there was a ram. Until that moment, the ram was “hidden.” We, too, hide the *shofar*.
- Others say that the hiding of the *shofar* is to impress upon us that the *mitzvah* is to hear the sound of the *shofar*, not to blow it. Indeed, for that reason the *nusach* of the *bracha* is קול שופר – to hear the sound of the *shofar*.



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