



THE LEARNING IS
FOR A MERIT FOR
THE HOLY AUTHOR
OUR TEACHER
HARAV SHIMSHON
CHAIM BEN REB
NACHMAN MICHAEL
NACHMANI.
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B'SIYATTA D'SHEMIYAH

ZERA SHIMSHON

Fascinating excerpts and intriguing discourses from the works of the great Gaon and kabbalist Morainu HaRav Shimshon Chaim ben Reb Nachman Michael Nachmani Author of *Zera Shimshon* and *Toldos Shimshon* who lived almost 300 years ago.

HE PROMISED THAT WHOEVER LEARNS HIS WORKS WILL SEE HELP WITH CHILDREN, LONG LIFE, AND PARNASSAH. MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEST TO THEIR PERSONAL SALVATIONS!

Rosh Hashana

אֶפְשָׁר מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא דִין, וְסִפְרֵי חַיִּים וְסִפְרֵי מָתִים פְּתוּחִין לְפָנָיו, וַיִּשְׁרָאֵל אוֹמְרִים שִׁירָה (ראש השנה לב):

Is it possible that while the King is sitting on the throne of judgment, with the books of life and the books of death open before Him, the Jewish people recite songs of praise? (*Rosh Hashana* 32b)

It is written in the *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashana*) that the *malachim* asked *Hashem*: why don't the Jewish people sing praise to *Hashem* by saying *Hallel* on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*? *Hashem* answered: Is it possible that while the King is sitting on the throne of judgment, with the books of life and the books of death open before Him, the Jewish people recite songs of praise?

The *Zera Shimshon* asks two questions on this *Gemara*.

First, what exactly was bothering the *malachim*? We know that *Hallel* is not said on every occasion — for example, it is not said on *Shabbos*, because there is no specific reason to say it. So why did the *malachim* assume that the Jewish people were supposed to say *Hallel* specifically on *Rosh Hashana*? What obligation were they failing to fulfill by not saying it that caused the *malachim* to criticize them?

Second, what is the meaning of *Hashem*'s answer?

It is written in *Tehillim* (101:1), "I shall sing of kindness and judgment". The *Gemara* in *Berachos* learns from this *possuk* that a person must praise *Hashem* not only when He shows kindness, but also when *Hashem* deals with him harshly. If so, why should the fact that the books of death are open and a person may be facing harsh judgment prevent him from singing praise? Even in such a situation, the *Gemara* teaches that a person should praise *Hashem*.

Zera Shimshon answers that the second question is really the answer to the first. This was precisely the *malachim*'s argument: since we learn from the *possuk* that one must praise *Hashem* for judgment just as for

kindness, the Jewish people should seemingly be obligated to sing praise even on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* even though that they are days of judgement.

Hashem answered that this is indeed true — but only *after* the judgment has been rendered. Once the *din* has been rendered, a person must accept and justify *Hashem*'s judgment and praise Him for it. Whatever *Hashem*'s verdict is, that verdict is given with our best interest in mind. *Hashem* loves us and does only what is truly good for us. But before the verdict is issued, while the case is still open and the *dayan* has not yet ruled, one cannot act as though he has already won. It is *paskened* in *Shulchan Aruch*, *Choshen Mishpat* (9:1), that just as it is *assur* to bribe a *dayan* with money, it is also *assur* to bribe him with words. Therefore, to sing joyous praise at that stage would give the appearance of *shochad*—of trying to curry favor with the Judge before the verdict is issued.

In other words, the praise itself is not the problem, we have to praise *Hashem* for everything He does. The problem here is the *timing*. Once judgment has been rendered, even *din* calls for praise. But while the judgment is still underway, that same praise could appear to be *shochad*—an attempt to influence the judgment.

It might seem a little strange that, according to the *Zera Shimshon*, *Rosh Hashana* is essentially a joyful day that is fitting for the recitation of *Hallel*. This is not the simple impression one usually has when thinking of *Rosh Hashana*. But, the truth is, this is not a novel idea of the *Zera Shimshon*. It is already stated in *Tanach*, in black and white—clear and big like *Kiddush Levana* letters!

The only place in *Nach* where the *Yom Tov* of *Rosh Hashana* is described is in *Nechemiah*, and there it is written:

"Then Nehemiah...and Ezra ..and the Levi'im...said to all the people, 'This day is holy to Hashem your God; neither mourn nor weep,' for all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Torah. And he said to them, 'Go, eat fat foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Master, and do not be sad, for the joy of Hashem is your strength'. And the Levi'im quieted all the people, saying, "Hush, for today is *kadosh*, and do not be sad. Then all the people went to eat and to drink and to send portions and to rejoice greatly, for they understood the words that they informed them of."

Rosh Hashana is the day that we re-coronate *Hashem* as King of the world. We therefore have to look within ourselves and improve whatever needs to be corrected so that we can be the best we can be, so Hashem will continue to give us the privilege to be His servants and emissaries. At the same time, there is great joy in recognizing *Hashem's* kingship and having the

opportunity of serving Him. In this sense, Rosh Hashana is a day of both introspection and joy.

As this is the last *Zera Shimshon* I will be sending in the year 5786, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who learn the Torah of *Zera Shimshon*. It means a great deal to know that his *Divrei Torah* are being learned, shared, and passed on.

I wish each and every one of you that, in the *z'chus* of learning the *Divrei Torah* of Rebbe Shimshon Chaim ben Nachman Michael, *Hashem* should answer all of your prayers and grant you and your families a *k'siva v'chasima tova*—a year of good health, prosperity, and many, many *besuros tovos*.

May we all merit to see the fulfillment of the final *beracha* of *Zera Shimshon* for those who learn his *Divrei Torah*: "They shall see the glory of *Hashem*, the beauty of our God. And He shall raise a banner to the nations, and He shall gather the lost of Israel," quickly and in our days, *amen*.

(Adapted by Rabbi Shevach Pepper from *Zera Shishmon Parshas Emor derush* 17)

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אין פוחתין מעשרה מלקיות, מעשרה זכרונות, מעשרה שופרות.

One does not recite fewer than ten *pessukim* in the blessing of *Malchios*, or fewer than ten *pessukim* in the blessing of *Zichronos*, or fewer than ten verses in the blessing of *Shofaros* (*Rosh Hashana* 32A)

It is written in a *Mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* (32a) that during the *Mussaf* of *Rosh Hashana*, one must not recite fewer than ten *pessukim* in the *bracha* of *Malchuyos* (Kingship), ten *pessukim* in the *bracha* of *Zichronos* (Remembrance), and ten *pessukim* in the *bracha* of *Shofros* (Shofar). Rebbe Yohanan ben Nuri says: If one recited three from each, he has fulfilled his obligation.

The *Gemara* asks: To what do the ten *pessukim* of *Malchuyos* correspond? Rebbe Yochanan answers: They correspond to the ten utterances through which the world was created.

Zera Shimshon asks: Why does the *Gemara* ask only about the ten *pessukim* of *Malchuyos*, but not about the ten *pessukim* of *Zichronos* or *Shofros*?

Zera Shimshon explains that while *Zichronos* and *Shofros* share a similarity, *Malchuyos* is fundamentally different from both.

How is this?

It is written in a *Mishna* in *Mesechta Taanis* that when there is a drought, a fast day is declared. The *Mishna* adds

that in the *davening* on that fast day, six *berachos* are added to the *Shemona Esrei*, two of which are the *Zichronos* and *Shofros* that we recite on *Rosh Hashana*.

The *Maharsha* explains that these two *brachos* are relevant to a fast day because *Hashem*, who loves us and desires to manage the world with compassion, does not bring affliction without reason. However, when we fail to act properly, we must face the consequences for our actions (or inactions), and this becomes the underlying cause of the drought (or other calamities). The *Maharsha* cites a *possuk* indicating that when we are punished, it can feel as though *Hashem* has forgotten us. Accordingly, being remembered signifies that we have repaired the damage caused by our sins so that there is no need to continue to afflict us. Therefore, by mentioning *Zichronos*, we are essentially asking *Hashem* to forgive us, heal the damage we caused through improper behavior, in order to remember us once again.

Just as *Zichronos* appeals to Hashem's remembrance of us, the *Maharsha* explains that *Shofros* likewise serves to

awaken divine mercy through the sound of the shofar to answer our prayers, as we see with Yehoshua, who blew the *Shofar* and *Hashem* helped them capture Yericho. Therefore, we recite *Shofros* during times of calamity, asking *Hashem* to redeem us from the punishment.

Since there are ten levels of *kedushah* within a person that are affected by our misdeeds, it becomes clear why ten *pessukim* of *Zichronos* and *Shofros* are recited—each *possuk* is said to rectify the damage at each level caused by our actions. We pray that *Hashem* will remember us and deliver us from affliction across all ten levels of *kedushah* that make up a person.

However, when it comes to *Malchuyos*, it is altogether different. Here we are not focusing on damage caused to ourselves rather we are simply acknowledging that *Hashem* is the sole sovereign power in this world and to submit to *Hashem's* rule. This being so, the *Gemara* asks why we recite ten *pessukim* in *Malchuyos* when seemingly one would be sufficient.

Zera Shimshon explains that the answer to this question is found in why the world was created in ten statements.

It is written in *Pirkei Avos* that the world was created with ten pronouncements instead of just one, in order to punish the *reshaim* who destroy the world, which was created with ten pronouncements, and to give a good reward to the *tzaddikim* who sustain the world, which was created with ten pronouncements.

The *Medrash Shemual*, a commentary on *Pirkei Avos*, explains that if the world had been created with only one pronouncement, it would have been so spiritual and refined that disobeying *Hashem's* commandments would have been impossible. The nine subsequent pronouncements were

necessary to gradually introduce more physicality into the world, allowing for the existence of evil and the *yetzer hara*.

At first glance, the *yetzer hara* seems to make life challenging and frustrating. It's challenging to leave a warm bed on a cold winter morning to daven with a minyan, or to step away from a meal to attend a shiur. The frustration can be even deeper when we lose control and speak harshly to a spouse, a young child, or someone we care about—only to be left with a sense of regret and guilt afterward. However, its existence is ultimately a great benefit for us. It presents challenges that enable us to earn our reward by overcoming them. Without the *yetzer hara*, there would be no struggle, and any enjoyment in *Olam Haba* would be incomplete, as it would feel like an undeserved handout. This system ensures that our reward is earned, sparing us the eternal embarrassment of enjoying it unearned. This idea can be understood on a very simple level as a young boy so eloquently put it when I asked if he enjoys compliments, "Only when I feel I deserve them."

Building on this, Zera Shimshon explains that the *Gemara's* answer regarding the recitation of ten *pessukim* in *Malchuyos* is to emphasize the need to declare and accept *Hashem's* sovereignty over all ten aspects of physicality in the world, not just a general or partial acceptance.

Yehi ratzon that this *Rosh Hashana*, *Hashem* grants us the strength to follow His *mitzvos* in every circumstance, helping us rectify our misdeeds and remember us. Through the sound of the *Shofar*, may He deliver *Clal Yisroel* as a whole, and each of us personally, from all pain and suffering, and may we all merit a *kesiva v'chasima tova*. (Adapted from Zera Shimshon, *Parshas Vayeilech*, *Derush* 6.)

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דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ: (ויקרא כג/כד)

Speak to Bnei Yisroel and tell them: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with Truah blasts. (Vayikra 23/24)

A *Braissa* in *Mesechta Rosh Hashana* (8b) quotes the *possuk* in *Tehillim* (81:5), "For it is a statute for Yisroel, a judgment of the G-d of Yaakov." From the first phrase alone, we would only know that Rosh Hashana is a day of judgment for the Jewish people. We derive that it is also a day of judgment for the nations of the world from the second phrase, "a judgment of the G-d of Yaakov." If so, what does the first phrase, "a statute for Yisroel," come to teach? It teaches that the Jewish people enter judgment first

—consistent with Rav Chisda's statement that when a king and his citizens are brought before *Hashem*, the king is judged first, either because it is not fitting for a king to wait outside for his subjects' trial to conclude, or so that he is judged before *Hashem's* anger intensifies.

The *Zera Shimshon* raises several questions. First, how do *Chazal* derive that *Hashem* judges the gentile nations from the words "a judgment of the G-d of Yaakov"? The *possuk*

only states that *Hashem* renders judgment for the G-d of Yaakov — nothing explicit about the nations. Second, if "the G-d of Yaakov" does refer to the judgment of the nations, why does the *Gemara* then ask about the phrase "a statute for Yisroel" — isn't the answer obvious, that it teaches Klal Yisroel is also judged on Rosh Hashana? Third, how can the *Gemara* derive that Klal Yisroel is judged before the nations from the fact that a king is judged before his citizens? A king and his citizens belong to the same body, so it makes sense for the king to go first — either as *derech eretz* or to be judged before *Hashem's* anger grows. But Klal Yisroel and the nations of the world are entirely separate entities. Why should one precede the other?

The *Zera Shimshon* answers based on the *Alshich's* explanation of the *pessukim* in *Tehillim* (75:7-8): "For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the wilderness comes elevation; for it is *Hashem* who judges — He brings down one, He raises another." The *Alshich* connects this to Yaakov Avinu's dream, in which he saw the spiritual force of Eisav climbing a ladder without ever descending — leading Yaakov to fear that Eisav's rule would last forever. The *possuk* comes to allay that fear: Eisav's power does not stem from his ancestry (Avraham, *motza*, coming from the east), nor from Yitzchak's life in the west, nor even from Klal Yisroel's sin of the Golden Calf, *midbar* — since *Hashem* accepted their *teshuva* and commanded the building of the *Mishkan*. Rather, Eisav's rule will end when Yaakov rises, for "it is *Hashem* who judges — He brings down one, He raises another." Eisav's dominance exists only because of Klal Yisroel's own shortcomings; as *Rashi* writes on "*u'leom mi'leom yeematz*"

(*Bereishis* 25:23), Yaakov and Eisav can never be great simultaneously — when one rises, the other falls, just as Tzur rose to power only through the destruction of Yerushalayim.

Based on this, explains the *Zera Shimshon*, *Chazal* derived from "a judgment of the G-d of Yaakov" that the judgment of Klal Yisroel is inseparably bound up with the judgment of the nations. When Klal Yisroel is judged favorably, the nations are automatically judged harshly, and vice versa — there is, in truth, only a single judgment governing both. This is why the *Braissa* then asks: since Yisroel and the nations are judged together, what does "a statute for Yisroel" add? It teaches that the Jewish people enter judgment first.

A question remains: if both judgments are so tightly linked, why are two judgments needed at all? Let *Hashem* judge the Jewish people alone, and the nations' verdict would follow automatically! The *Zera Shimshon* answers based on Rav Chisda's principle that a king is judged before his subjects. One might think that if the king is judged favorably, there is no need to separately judge his subjects, since his prosperity carries theirs. Yet *Hashem* judges both, because a favorable ruling for the king benefits his subjects only on the macro level — if the subjects themselves are found deserving, *Hashem* grants them additional, individual prosperity beyond what the king's merit alone would provide.

It is the same regarding the judgement of *Klal Yisroel* and the nations of the world. Although on macro level they are both dependent on each other, there can be small changes depending on how they actually acted.

HaRav Shimshon Nachmani, author of *Zera Shimshon* lived in Italy about 300 years ago in the time of the *Or HaChaim HaKodesh*

The *Chida* writes that he was a great *Mekubal* and wrote many *sefarim* including *sefarim* about "practical kabbolo" and asked that all of his *sefarim* be buried after he passes away except for *Zera Shimshon* and *Niflaos Shimshon* on *Avos*.

HaRav Shimshon Nachmani had one child who died in his lifetime (hence the name "*Zera Shimshon*") and in the preface he promises for people who learn his *sefarim* after he dies "... And your eyes will see children and grandchildren like the offshoots of an olive tree around your tables, wise and understanding with houses filled with all manner of good things... and wealth and honor..."

To dedicate a week of *Zera Shimshon* for a *yahrtzeit*, a *zechus* for a *refuah* or *shidduch*, or in honor of a *simcha* — contact:

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