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ROSH HASHANA

תשפ"ז

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What Happens over Here does NOT Stay over Here

Throughout the year, we all endure all sorts of challenges. *Refuah, shidduchim, parnassah, zera shel kayama, shalom bayis*, clarity and satisfaction in our *ruchniyus*. And then there are the “smaller” things. Relationships. Things not working out. Disappointments. Frustrations. Big or small, life happens.

And we all know the address. We know Who to turn to. In fact, every single day we say שמע ישראל and are *mekabel* upon ourselves עול מלכות שמים.

Which should make us ask: If we are already doing that every day, what exactly are we doing on Rosh Hashanah? What is different? What are we adding?

The simple answer is that you can't accept the authority of a King until there is a King in place. On Rosh Hashanah, we establish that Malchus. We inaugurate the King. We are ממליך Hashem. Once that is firmly established in our hearts and souls, throughout the year we can keep coming back to what we established on Rosh Hashanah.

But there is something much deeper, writes the Maor VaShemesh.

השם ברא תבל ומלאה, וכל העולמות כדי שידע כל פעול כי הוא פעול, ולהכיר מלכותו שהוא מושל בכל ומלך על כל הארץ, ולהגדיל שמו ולספר הדוד.

Hashem created the entire world, and all of the worlds, for one purpose:

that every creation should recognize its Creator. To know that Hashem made it, to recognize His Malchus, that He rules over everything and is King over the entire world, and to bring recognition and honor to His Name.

ואותנו לקח להיות לו לעם סגולה, ולשמור מצוותיו, ולייחדו בכל יום פעמיים באהבה, ולהמליכו בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת ובארבע רוחות השמים.

And from that entire world, Hashem chose us. He took us to be His Am Segulah, His special nation. Our job is to keep His mitzvos and, twice every single day, to declare His Oneness with love. When we say Shema, we are not just saying words. We are accepting Hashem as King over everything: the heavens above, the earth below, and all four corners of the world.

אמנם לא רבים יחכמו לקבל עול מלכות שמים שלימה, ולייחד כל מחשבותם לאמיתת מציאות ומלכותו, כי שאור שבעיסה מעכב.

But it is not so simple. Not many people are able to truly accept Ol Malchus Shamayim completely, to focus their thoughts entirely on the reality of Hashem and His Malchus. We say Shema every morning and every night, but to really live those words, to

actually feel and recognize that Hashem is King and everything is His, is much harder. The שאור שבעיסה, the yetzer hara, gets in the way.

והעצה לבוא לידי מידה זו, הוא להכין עצמינו להמליך ה' באהבה עזה ובכל לב ונפש בשני ימי ראש השנה.

So what is the answer? Rosh Hashanah. The two days of Rosh Hashanah are our opportunity to prepare ourselves to crown Hashem as King with tremendous love, with our entire heart and soul.

ועל ידי זה יוסיף אומץ לייחד אליהנו בעת אמרו שמע ישראל כל השנה, שיוכל לקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים בקדושה, על ידי המשכת הקדושה שהוא מושך עליו בראש השנה.

What happens on Rosh Hashanah does not remain on Rosh Hashanah. When a person truly accepts Hashem's Malchus during these two days, he draws down a kedushah that gives him the strength to say Shema Yisrael differently throughout the entire year. His ability to accept Ol Malchus Shamayim all year comes from the kedushah he brings upon himself on Rosh Hashanah.

ואשרי מי שהוא זוכה לקדש ולטהר עצמו ומחשבותיו, ולהכין עצמו לקראת ה' בכל המ"ח שעות שבראש השנה.

Fortunate is the person who understands what these 48 hours really are. Someone who works to purify himself and his thoughts and spends those 48 hours preparing himself and coming closer to Hashem.

שבזה ימשוך קדושה ודביקות ה' על כל השנה, שיוכל להיות דבוק בנועם ה' כל היום, וכל חלק מחלקי השעות שבראש השנה יתנו עזר וסעד לכל יום מימי השנה להמליך הבורא ברוך הוא.

Because those 48 hours can change the entire year. The kedushah and closeness to Hashem that a person draws down on Rosh Hashanah stay with him throughout the year. Every piece of Rosh Hashanah gives strength to another piece of the year. These are not simply two days we need to get through. These are the two days that give us the ability to live with Hashem as our King every day that follows.

This, says Rav Kalonymus Kalman Epstein, the Maor VaShemesh, is what means. Rosh Hashanah is not simply about declaring Hashem King for these two days. We do that all year round.

Rather, these 48 hours determine how we will be able to live with that Malchus for the year. Every hour we spend properly on Rosh Hashanah gives us strength for another part of the year, to say Shema differently, to turn to Hashem more naturally, to live in a constant state of what Dovid HaMelech writes, "השך על ה' יהבך והוא יכלכלך, *Cast your burden onto Hashem and He will sustain you,*" and to recognize Who is actually running our lives.

And this becomes very practical. Six months from now, a deal falls through that you were counting on. Someone

says something that really bothers you and you can't let it go. You're sitting in a doctor's waiting room, waiting for results. Your child is struggling and you have no idea what to do. Or it's nothing dramatic at all. You're running late, the car won't start, the house is chaos, and you're about to lose it.

In that moment, how naturally do we remember there is a King? How quickly do we find the address?

The Maor VaShemesh is telling us that there is a direct correlation. Those moments are being built right now. If we use these 48 hours to truly establish Hashem as our King, then when that random Tuesday comes around, we have somewhere inside ourselves to go back to. But if we sleep through it, rush through it, or simply try to get through Rosh Hashanah, we don't just lose a few

hours of Rosh Hashanah. We lose something from the year those hours were supposed to build.

Enjoy the time. Make the most of the time. Utilize every minute. Be *mamlich* Hashem. Sing His praises. Show Hashem that you know He is the address. Conduct yourself like a *ben shel Melech*. Don't rush the davening. Don't just get through another page of the machzor. Make it real. Now is the time.

Because what happens during these 48 hours doesn't stay in these 48 hours. We are building the way we will turn to Hashem, rely on Hashem, and live with Hashem for the entire year ahead.

The 48 hours of Rosh Hashanah do not merely mark the first 48 hours of the year.

These are the 48 hours that build the rest of the entire year ahead.



When His Anger is Smoking

In Parshas Nitzavim, the Torah warns against the frightening possibility of a person turning away from Hashem toward *avodah zarah*:

פֶּן יִשׁ בְּכֶם אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָה אוֹ
שִׁבְטֹת אֲשֶׁר לָבָּבוּ פְּנֵה הַיּוֹם מֵעַם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
לָלֶכֶת לַעֲבֹד אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם פֶּן יִשׁ
בְּכֶם שָׂרֵשׁ פָּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה.

Perhaps there is among you a man or woman, a family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from Hashem our God, to go and worship the gods of those nations; perhaps there

is among you a root flourishing with gall and wormwood.

The Torah then describes just how severe the situation has become:

לֹא יֵאבְדָה ה' סֶלַח לוֹ כִּי אִזּוּ יַעֲשֶׂן אָף ה'
וְקִנְיָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הָהוּא.

Hashem will not be willing to forgive him, for then Hashem's anger and jealousy will smoke against that man.

This is about as low as a person can fall.

If there were ever a place where a

person could declare *yiush*, this would seem to be it.

I'm unworthy. I've gone too far. Hashem Himself says He is unwilling to forgive me. His anger is literally smoking against me.

It is a frightening phenomenon to imagine, a petrifying place for a person to find himself.

Reb Nachman of Breslov famously teaches, אל תיפול לדי יאוש כי אין שום יאוש, בעולם כלל, “*Do not fall into despair, because there is no despair in the world at all.*”

But when Hashem Himself says, יִעֲשֶׂן אֵף ה', that His anger is literally smoking against this person, we may need to ask the Breslover *mashpi'im* in Uman whether Reb Nachman meant even here.

While I can't answer that, I can share an incredible teaching from Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa that may answer the question for us.

It's a *remez*, but the *remez* is so powerful, I'm not sure how it can't be *emes l'amito*.

Think about the shofar. The shofar is the call of teshuvah. It is meant to awaken us from our slumber, to bring us back to Hashem, to return us to the King.

Now, if I told you that somewhere in the Torah there are four consecutive words whose *roshei teivos* spell שופר, what words would you expect them to be?

Something about teshuvah? About returning to Hashem? About Malchus?

Probably.

Would you ever imagine that those four words would be:

שָׁרָשׁ פְּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלִעֲנָה

The very words describing the person steeped in *avodah zarah*, the person we just described as having fallen about as low as one can fall?

Well, look again. The *roshei teivos* are שופר!

The message, says Rav Simcha Bunim, is profound.

Every mitzvah has its own unique spiritual power. The unique power of shofar is that it can bring a *tikkun* even to someone who has fallen, *chas v'shalom*, into the deepest and most frightening places.

That is why שופר is hidden specifically here.

A person may come to Rosh Hashanah feeling that he has gone too far. It is no longer one mistake, one *aveirah*, one bad decision. He feels that something at his very root has been damaged.

And precisely there, hidden within the words describing that damaged root, the Torah gives us שופר.

The shofar tells him: You are not beyond repair. You are not too far gone. Even when the damage has reached the *shoresh*, there is still a way back.

Even the root can be repaired through the power of the shofar.

And perhaps we can take this one step further.

We begin the brachah of Malchius with על כן נקוה לך. The first letters

spell עכ"ן, the name Achan. Chazal tell us that Achan composed this *tefillah* as he was being taken to his death. Achan had committed many serious *aveiros*. So why would we begin Malchiyos, one of the central *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah, with a *tefillah* composed by him?

Once again, to remind us that even if we have committed many *aveiros*, even as many as Achan, we can still do teshuvah, accept Hashem as our King, and Hashem will accept us.

And again, right before *tekiyas shofar*, we say למנצח לבני קרח מזמור *a kapol* composed by the children of

Korach. They too had fallen terribly far, and only moments before being swallowed into the earth, they did teshuvah. Once again, right before the shofar, we are reminded: regardless of our past, we can always do teshuvah. The children of Korach did teshuvah, and so can we.

As we listen to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, remember: there is no *yiush*. Even in the most frightening places, Hashem is still there. No matter where we have been or how far we have fallen, the shofar is calling us back, because there is always a way back to the King.



No Tekios on Shabbos

The Mishnah in Rosh Hashanah 29b discusses the case of יום טוב של ראש השנה, *“the Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbos,”* and tells us that *tekiyas shofar* is not done because of the concern that one might carry the shofar four *amos* in *reshus harabim*.

After all that we know about the shofar, its power, and its ability to reach those who have sunk to the scariest places possible, what do we do without shofar on Shabbos?

We are seemingly missing out on the essence, the cure, the potential of the day.

The Baal Shem Tov is *mechazek* us with a fascinating *diyuk*.

He asks: Why does the Mishnah need to say יום טוב של ראש השנה, *“the Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbos”*?

ראש השנה שחל בשבת, *“Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbos”*?

He explains that the Mishnah is teaching us something fundamental: even when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos and there is no *tekiyas shofar*, nevertheless, it remains a complete יום טוב של ראש השנה. Nothing is lacking from the day.

How so?

On a regular day of shofar, says the Baal Shem Tov, the power of shofar is:

ישראל נוטלין שופרותיהו ותוקעין לפני הקב"ה
הוא עומד מכסא דין לכסא רחמים ומתמלא
עליהם רחמים.

“Klal Yisrael take their shofaros and blow before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and He rises from the Throne of Judgment to the Throne of Mercy and becomes filled with mercy upon them.”

That is what happens on a regular Rosh Hashanah. We stand before Hashem on the Day of Judgment and blow the shofar. Through the shofar, Hashem moves, כביכול, from כסא דין, the Throne of Judgment, to כסא רחמים, the Throne of Mercy.

But what happens when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos?

There is no shofar.

Shabbos itself accomplishes what the shofar normally accomplishes.

On Shabbos, as we say in Shacharis,

ביום השביעי נתעלה וישב על כסא כבודו, Hashem already moves from כסא דין to כסא רחמים. The *kedushah* of Shabbos itself awakens the *rachamim* that we ordinarily need the shofar to awaken.

That is why the Mishnah emphasizes זמן טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת without the sound of the shofar, nothing is missing. Rosh Hashanah is a complete Yom Tov. What the shofar accomplishes on a regular Rosh Hashanah, Shabbos itself accomplishes when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos.



Wheat and Barley

The Gemara in Bava Metzia 105b discusses a case of המקבל שדה מחבירו, someone who receives a field from another person to cultivate, and the crop is destroyed. Generally, אם מכת מדינה היא, מנכה לו מן חכורו, if the entire region was affected, the tenant can deduct from what he owes. After all, this wasn't his fault. It was a regional disaster.

But then the Gemara presents a fascinating case.

The owner specifically told the tenant, "Plant wheat," but the tenant went ahead and planted barley instead.

Then disaster struck.

Most of the entire valley was destroyed by wind, including the barley this tenant had planted.

So the tenant has a strong argument. Yes, I didn't listen to you. Yes, I planted

barley instead of wheat. But what difference did it make? Had I planted wheat, it would have been destroyed too. Look around. The entire region was wiped out.

But the Gemara suggests an even stronger response for the owner:

אילו ורעתה חיטי הנה מקיים בי "ותגזר אִמְרֵי יְהוָה לְךָ"

Had you planted wheat, the passuk of 'You shall decree a matter and it will be established for you' could have been fulfilled for me.

What does that mean?

Rashi explains:

מה שתבקש מן היוצר יעשה, ואני לא בקשתי מן השמים בתחילת השנה שיצליחי בשעורים אלא בחטין

What you request from the Creator, He will do. And I did not ask from Heaven at the beginning of the year



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that I succeed with barley, but with wheat.

In other words, don't tell me there was a natural disaster, and that my wheat would have been destroyed. At the beginning of the year, I asked Hashem for success with wheat. Maybe everyone else's fields would have been destroyed, but mine would have survived. You planted barley. That's not what I davened for.

Now, often we'll see an incredible quote in a Gemara or a Rishon, but it doesn't necessarily carry through to *halachah l'maaseh*.

But here the Shulchan Aruch, *Choshen Mishpat* 322:2, rules:

If the owner stipulated that the field be planted with wheat and the tenant planted barley instead, even if a plague of grasshoppers or wind destroyed most of the region, the tenant cannot deduct from what he owes.

Why? The Sema explains:

דיכול המשכיר לומר אלו לא שנית הי' מקיים
בי ותגזור אומר ויקם לך ואני לא בקשתי
מתחילת השנה מהש"ת שיצליחני בשעורי
כ"א על חיסוי בקשתי.

The owner can say: Had you not changed what I told you, perhaps "אמר ויקם לך" would have been fulfilled for me. I did not ask Hashem at the beginning of the year to grant me success with

barley. I asked Him for wheat.

Familiar words.

The exact words of Rashi.

Rashi wasn't just saying a nice *sevara*. He was describing a reality. A reality of what our *tefillos* at the beginning of the year can accomplish, and what Rosh Hashanah truly means.

We look around the world and see *teva*. Markets rise and fall. Industries struggle. Illness spreads. A storm can wipe out an entire region. Everyone is affected, so naturally, I should be affected too.

But Rashi is telling us: Don't be so sure. An entire valley can be destroyed, and one field can remain standing. Because that person stood before Hashem at the beginning of the year and asked for that wheat.

There is a Borei Olam behind what we call nature. And when a person stands before Him on Rosh Hashanah, davens, asks, and truly believes in the power of that *tefillah*, Hashem can design an entire world of circumstances and still have them pass right over his field.

That is not just a nice thought. The Shulchan Aruch, the code of law, carries that reality into *halachah l'maaseh*. The *tefillos* we say at the beginning of the year can shape the reality of the entire year ahead.

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