

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Shlita*

Rosh Hashanah



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Torah Wellsprings - Rosh Hashanah

Preparing for Rosh Hashanah

Chazal teach us, "There is no reward in this world for the mitzvos." The reward is reserved for Olam HaBa. Nevertheless, there are situations and ways that we can receive reward in this world, as well. For example, the Vilna Gaon zt'l teaches that, for *preparing* to do the mitzvos, we receive reward in this world.

For example, Chazal tell us that we receive *parnassah* and many other benefits *in this world* because of the *Akeidah* that Avraham and Yitzchak performed. The reward is even in this world, as it states (Bereishis 22:6) וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת הַמַּאֲכָלֶת, "Avraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife, to slaughter his son." Rashi explains that the knife, in this pasuk, is called *מַאֲכָלֶת*, which literally means "the eater" because (a) a knife eats into the flesh. (b) A knife prepares food for eating. (c) דבר אחר, זאת נקראת מאכלת על שם שיישראל אוכלים מתן שכרה, because Bnei Yisrael eat its reward." Klal Yisrael receive reward from the *Akeidah* – in this world. But why is that? Isn't there a rule that there is no reward for the mitzvos in this world?

The Vilna Gaon explains that we don't receive reward for the *Akeidah*. We receive reward for the two days before the *Akeidah* when Avraham *prepared* the *Akeidah*. For the *Akeidah* itself, the reward is in Olam Haba, but for preparing for the *Akeidah*, there is reward in this world.

The Vilna Gaon says that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Hoshei'a 6:2), יחיינו מימיו ביום השלישי, "יקמנו ונחיה לפניו". The *akeidah* took three days. The first two days were days of preparation when Avraham saddled his donkey, chopped wood, and traveled to Har HaMoriah for the *akeidah*. The third day was when the actual *akeidah* took place. Therefore, it states, יחיינו מימיו, our life, and our *parnassah* come as a result of the first two days. ביום השלישי יקמנו

ונחיה לפניו, the reward of the third day is reserved and will be given to Avraham in Olam HaBa.

We are up to the final days of Elul, when we prepare for Rosh Hashanah. We will be rewarded in this world as well for our preparations.

It is known that Shabbos brings brachah for the entire week. It is written in sefarim that the brachos come from Tosfos Shabbos, from the minutes we add on at the beginning and at the end of the Shabbos. Shabbos is so exalted, so beyond the gashmiyus world, that it doesn't bestow blessings in the gashmiyus realm of the world. Therefore, the many rewards that come from keeping Shabbos, such as *parnassah*, health, and so on, come specifically from Tosfos Shabbos.

The Beis Avraham (Netzavim) writes, "Elul can be compared to erev Shabbos and Tishrei can be compared to Shabbos. The sefarim say that the bounty that comes from Shabbos comes specifically from Tosfos Shabbos. The same can be said about the bounty and brachos that come to us throughout the entire year. They come specifically from the 'tosfos teshuvah', the teshuvah and good deeds we do in Elul, before Tishrei arrives."

In the *zemiros* before Kiddush (אומר בשבחין) it states, יהא רעווא קמיה דתשרי על עמיה דיתענג לשמיה במתיקין ודובשין. The Beis Avraham (נצבים ד"ה תשרי) explains it to mean: יהא רעווא, it should be Hashem's will, קמיה דתשרי, that before Tishrei arrives, על עמיה, the Jewish nation should be aroused to teshuvah and to perform good deeds. דיתענג לשמיה במתיקין ודובשין, and they should feel the sweetness of avodas Hashem, and then they will be blessed with children, life, and *parnassah*.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 2a) states, "One day of the year is considered like a year." If a king is appointed on the final day of the year, that day is the first year of his

kingdom.¹ The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l says that the same can be said about a person who accepts on himself the yoke of Hashem's Kingship on the final day of the year. It's considered as if he made Hashem King for the entire year. Even during the final moments of erev Rosh Hashanah, one can accept the yoke of Heaven, and it's as if Hashem was his King the entire year. Teshuvah can be done in a moment, as the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:2) states: "What is teshuvah? A person leaves his sin and removes it from his thoughts. He decides in his heart that he won't commit this aveirah anymore." One can have this thought a moment before Rosh Hashanah as well and come to Rosh Hashanah clean from aveiros.

Once, on erev Rosh Hashanah, just a few minutes before Yom Tov arrived, the Chiddushei HaRim told his Chassid that it isn't too late to do teshuvah. Chazal say, *מקצת היום ככולו*, part of the day is like the entire day. In the final moments before Rosh Hashanah, one can fix the day, thereby rectifying the entire year.

In the piyut *לא-ל עורך דין* that we say on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, there is a phrase, *לצופה נסתרות ביום דין*, "To Hashem Who sees the concealed on the day of judgment." Divrei Shmuel zt'l explains that people prepare for Rosh Hashanah, hoping that they will be able to daven properly, but then, when Rosh Hashanah arrives, they find their hearts are closed, and they are

unable to daven. They see others who didn't prepare for the Yom Tov, and they seem to be davening with *hislahavus*. The piyut tells us *לצופה נסתרות ביום דין*, Hashem sees the concealed. Hashem sees their broken hearts, and Hashem knows how much they prepared for Rosh Hashanah. This will help them in their judgment.

A chassid complained to his Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, that he prepares for tefillah, but when he davens, he finds himself unable to daven. The Tzemach Tzedek told him, "Why should you care? You already davened during your preparations." Regardless of whether one was able to daven with kavanah or not, he has tefillah because of his preparations.

The Arugas Habosem zt'l says that at the beginning of Elul, the yetzer hara tricks a person and says, "You still have a lot of time to daven and do teshuvah. You can begin your tefillos and teshuvah later." At the end of Elul, the yetzer hara returns. This time the yetzer hara says, "It's too late to begin now. You missed most of Elul, and now you will begin? " But it's never too late, and we can accomplish so much, even during the last few moments of the year.²

The Arizal says that all the *tefillos* of the year that couldn't go up can go up with the *Minchah* of *erev Rosh Hashanah*. Tzaddikim say that the final *Minchah* of the year rectifies all the tefillos of the year that were said without kavanah.³

1. This statement refers to the dating of legal documents, which were customarily dated according to the number of years a king had reigned. If a king was appointed on *erev* Rosh Hashanah, that very day is counted as his first year, and any documents written after Rosh Hashanah are dated as belonging to the second year of his reign.

2. Once, on *Erev* Rosh Hashanah, someone approached Reb Gedalyah Eisenman shlita, the Mashgiach of Kol Torah, seeking chizuk for the upcoming Yom HaDin. Reb Gedalyah gently replied, "There are still a few moments left of Elul. We can still draw from the specialness of this time." The man began to cry and said, "If only I had known that at the beginning of Elul..."

3. Rebbe Sholom Shachna of Prebishta zt'l, father of the Ruzhiner zt'l, once spent Rosh Hashanah in Chornobyl. As he tried to daven *Minchah* with deep kavanah—knowing that this *Minchah* is among the most precious tefillos of the year—he found himself struggling to concentrate.

Afterward, Rebbe Nochum of Chornobyl zt'l, his wife's grandfather, told him that his *Minchah* had been

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, just moments before Rosh Hashanah arrives, we say in Minchah, בָּרַךְ עָלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת, requesting that Hashem bless the year. But why do we say this brachah now, when there are just a few moments left of the year? What brachah could possibly come in these last few moments?

The Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zy'a* says that this isn't a question. We need Hashem's brachos every moment of our lives. We can't live, not even for a short time, without Hashem's *brachos* and salvations.⁴

The Tur (581) writes, "The Ashkenazic custom is to fast on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*. The Midrash Tanchuma states the significance of this fast: 'It can be compared to a country that owed taxes to a king, and the king came, together with his army, to collect the debt. When the king was ten *parsaos* away, the

country's leaders came out to greet the king. They explained to the king that they couldn't afford to pay the large tax. The king agreed to forgive 1/3 of the debt. The king, with his army, continued marching toward the country [to collect 2/3rds of the debt]. The middle-class people came forward and cried to the king about their financial hardships. The king agreed to relieve the country of another third of the debt. When the king got closer to the city, everyone came out to greet the king. The king forgave the final third of the debt.'

"The *nimshal* is that on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, tzaddikim fast, and Hashem pardons a third of our sins. During Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, the middle-level Yidden fast, and Hashem pardons another third. On Yom Kippur, everyone fasts, and Hashem forgives the Jewish people entirely."⁵

extraordinarily precious in Shamayim. Despite the difficulty, the very effort he invested opened the gates of heaven.

This story reminds us that we don't always know what is truly valuable Above. Rebbe Sholom Shachna thought his Minchah was lacking, yet Rebbe Nochum revealed how much it accomplished. Heaven saw it differently than he did. So it is with many of our deeds: what we dismiss as mediocre or insignificant may, in Hashem's eyes, shine with immense worth.

4. Someone once told Reb Shmuel Auerbach *zt"l* that his stock portfolio had crashed on *Erev Rosh Hashanah* at three o'clock in the afternoon, causing him a significant loss. It was a stark reminder that we need Hashem's brachah every single moment.

But the opposite can also be true. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt"l* taught that even on the very last day of the year, a person can earn great wealth and experience remarkable yeshuos.

5. The Kol Bo teaches a remarkable idea:

On Rosh Hashanah, when the Satan presents our sins before the Heavenly Court, Hakadosh Baruch Hu responds, "Your claims cannot be accepted without proof. Bring two witnesses who can confirm what you say." The Satan summons the sun to testify that the Jewish people have transgressed the mitzvos of the Torah. The sun agrees. Seeking a second witness, the Satan turns to the moon - but the moon refuses. As it states (Tehillim 81:4), בִּכְסֵה לַיִם חָגִינוּ, the moon is concealed on Rosh Hashanah. It hides itself so it will not testify against Klal Yisrael. Without two witnesses, the Satan's accusations cannot stand, and we are acquitted.

The Noda b'Yehudah (Tzlach, drush 1:6-8) raises a powerful question. The Gemara (Kiddushin 66) teaches that one witness is sufficient to testify that someone has a מוֹם, a blemish. If so, why can't the sun testify alone that the Jewish people bear the blemish of sin? After all, when one sins with his eyes, it is as though he is blind; when one sins with his ears, it is as though he is deaf. Spiritually, such a person becomes a בעל מוֹם. So why isn't the sun's testimony enough?

The Noda b'Yehudah answers that this is indeed a serious difficulty — and the solution is teshuvah. This,

Shulchan Aruch (581:2) discusses this fast, as it states, נִהְיָה לְהִתְעַנּוֹת עָרֵב רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, "The custom is to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah."⁶ (In our generations, many fast a half-day.) The question is, the Midrash (quoted above) states that tzaddikim fast on erev Rosh Hashanah. They are the first to fast, then the middle-level people, and on Yom Kippur, everyone fasts. Why did the custom change for everyone to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah?

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos 11, תקצ"ב) answers that in the past, Hashem came to judge us, and in our times, Hashem comes to help us. Like in the mashal stated in the Midrash, when a king comes to demand taxes, it is proper that leading officials from the city should go out first to speak to the king, and to try to lower the taxes. But there are times when the king comes to help people, such as when the king visits the ill in the hospital. At such times, those who are suffering the most should come forward to plead before the king for his help. In our times, Hashem doesn't come to judge us because He knows we will be found unworthy, and Hashem doesn't want the destruction of the world. Therefore, Hashem comes to help us. Therefore, everyone fasts on erev Rosh Hashanah, not only the tzaddikim. The Chasam Sofer said that this is the meaning of the words we say in Selichos, לַךְ ה' הַצְדָקָה: Hashem comes to do kindness with us; therefore, לא בחסד ולא במעשים באנו לפניך - it isn't solely the tzaddikim who come before You. כְּדִלִים וְכֹרְשִׁים דִּפְקֵנוּ דְּלִתֵּךְ, we come to Hashem

like poor people, begging for help. Therefore, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה עֵדִיךְ כָּל בָּשָׂר יֵבֹאוּ, everyone should come forward to pray to Hashem.

These ideas give us chizuk because we understand that the process of judgment has changed in our days to one of compassion. In addition, this lesson reminds every person of his obligation to do his part to plead to Hashem for a good year.

For the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we seek worthy and righteous *chazanim*, so their tefillos will be answered, and we will be granted a good year. As it states in halachah (581), "You should be cautious to choose the best, and most appropriate *shaliach tzibur* you can find, someone who excels in Torah and good deeds, that he should be the chazan for selichos and the *yamim noraim*..." It is also brought in the poskim that the chazan and the one who blows shofar should prepare himself for three days before Rosh Hashanah. They should check their deeds and do teshuvah because the community relies on them to plead on their behalf.⁷

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that in our generation, we can't rely on the *chazanim* as much as people relied on them in the past. We don't have tzaddikim like there were generations ago. Therefore, in our times, everyone should consider himself as though he is the chazan. Three days before Rosh Hashanah, he should be occupied with

he explains, is the meaning of the pasuk (Devarim 23:12), וְהָיָה לַפְנוֹת עָרֵב, on erev Rosh Hashanah, יִרְחֹץ בַּמַּיִם, wash yourself with tears and with teshuvah, and then, וּכְבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, when the sun comes to testify, its testimony will not be accepted. For even if one has not yet completed the full process of teshuvah, the tears themselves wash away the blemish. And then, יָבוֹא אֶל תוֹךְ הַמַּחֲנֶה, he may return to the camp, restored and forgiven.

6. Shulchan Aruch (581) brings the custom to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah. The Chasam Sofer (printed in many editions of the Shulchan Aruch) adds that those who study Torah generally do not fast on erev Rosh Chodesh, since fasting would weaken them and cause a reduction in their Torah learning. Nevertheless, he writes, on erev Rosh Hashanah even Torah scholars are accustomed to fast, לִקְבֹּל פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ ית"ש - to greet the face of the King, blessed be His Name.

7. A chazan was reviewing the machzor before Rosh Hashanah, preparing the melodies and tunes of the tefillos. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l told him, "The machzor is the same as last year. Instead of looking into the machzor, I advise you to look into yourself to see what needs improvement."

teshuvah so he will be worthy to plead for himself, his family, and for Klal Yisrael.⁸

Simanim

There are specific, special foods that we eat on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, such as the challah and apple dipped in honey, the head of a fish,⁹ and a pomegranate, etc. – for a good sign for the new year. Each community, according to their custom. This

is based on the Gemara (*Krisus* 6), which states, **סימנא מילתא הוא**, a siman (sign) has significance. It makes an imprint on the upcoming year.

Shulchan Aruch (583:1) states, “Rosh Hashanah, one should eat **רוביא, כרתי, סלקא**, **רוביא** When eating **תמרי**, **קרא**.¹⁰ **יהי רצון שירבו זכויותינו**. When eating **כרתי** one should say **יכרתו שונאיו**... Some have the custom to eat an apple sweetened in honey, and to say, **שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה מתוקה**, ‘Make this new year a good, sweet year,’ and that is the custom.¹¹

8. The Beis Yisrael of Gur zy’a related the following mashal:

The lion, king of the jungle, became angry at the animals of his kingdom and wished to punish them all. The animals gathered together, searching for a way to appease the king, but no solution came to mind.

The fox then spoke up and said, “I have three hundred mashalim that I can tell the king to explain our situation and our point of view. He will certainly be appeased. Come with me.”

The animals were relieved that the fox had a plan, and they all followed him toward the lion – the king of the forest.

After walking for some time, the fox told them, “I forgot one hundred parables. But don’t worry. I still have two hundred left.” They continued on.

A mile later, the fox said, “I forgot another hundred parables, but there’s nothing to worry about. I still have one hundred parables to tell the king, and that will be sufficient.”

When they finally arrived before the lion, the fox whispered, “I just forgot the last one hundred parables. It is now up to us to cry and beg the king for mercy.”

The clever fox never had any parables at all. But he understood that their only hope was to stand before the lion and plead, arousing his compassion. He therefore told the animals he had three hundred mashalim, so they would trust him and follow him to the king. Only then did he reveal the truth – that he could not help them – and that they must plead before the king themselves.

The Beis Yisrael zt’l explained that chassidim go to their rebbe for Rosh Hashanah and rely on him to help them in their judgment. But the rebbe may tell them, “I also don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to say to Hashem to pardon our sins. I don’t have the key to guarantee a good year. Therefore, it is up to all of you to pray and to do whatever you can to appease the King.”

As a side note: Rav D. Shariro zt’l (quoted by Reb Chaim Palagi zt’l in **מועד לכל חי**) teaches a segulah that on erev Rosh Hashanah one should read the first section of parashas Ki Savo (Devarim 26:1-11) until the words **והגר אשר בקרבך**. When one does so, HaKadosh Baruch Hu proclaims, “This person has paid all his debts, and all his sins are forgiven.”

9. When we eat the head of a fish, we say **שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב – “We should be a head and not a tail.”** When animals want to look at their tail, they must turn their heads around and look backward. We pray **שנהיה לראש**: that we should make full use of Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, investing in these days properly. If we do so, we won’t have to look back at the year with distress, wondering, “Why didn’t I take advantage of these holy days?”

10. **רוביא are small beans, **כרתי** is leek, **סלקא** are beets, **תמרי** are dates, and **קרא** is gourd.**

11. The prayer **שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה – that it should be a sweet, good year – explains why we eat honey, but it doesn’t explain why we specifically eat an apple. If the siman were only about sweetness, it**

Some eat pomegranates and say, *נרבה זכויות*, our merits should increase like the number of seeds in a pomegranate. The custom is to eat fatty meat and all types of sweet foods."

Mishnah Berurah writes, "There are those who don't prepare sour foods for Rosh Hashanah, such as borsht and the like. Those who eat fish as a sign that we should multiply like fish shouldn't cook it in vinegar."¹²

Mishnah Berurah writes, "The Shlah teaches that these simanim remind the person to rouse himself to *teshuvah* and to pray for these matters." When we eat the apple with honey, we are reminded to daven for a sweet year. When we eat *כרתי* and pray *שיכרתו שונאיו*, that our enemies should be cut off and destroyed, this rouses us to do *teshuvah* and to daven for this.¹³

Reb Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas Shlomo*) writes, "Eating these foods isn't a tefillah. Eating is never a tefillah. Rather, we eat these foods

to show that we trust in Hashem that He will give us a good year... When we eat these foods, we say [that it will certainly be a good year]. If *chas veshalom* there was a harsh decree, it will be turned over to good because of our words."

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds, "On Rosh Hashanah, after *shacharis*, one should say, *כל מה דעבד רחמנא לטב עבד*, 'Everything Hashem does is for the good.' וגם זו לטובה 'And this is also for the good.' Such words turn things over that everything will indeed be good."

One of the primary simanim for the new year is to have a happy disposition on Rosh Hashanah (obviously, joy mixed with fear, as we will explain later on). Mishnah Berurah writes, "We do *simanim* as a good omen. Therefore, it's obvious that one must be cautious not to become angry these days. In addition to the severe sin, one must make a good sign for the new year. He should be happy and trust in Hashem."¹⁴

would be enough to dip the challah in honey, or to dip any fruit or food into honey. What, then, is the significance of the apple, and what siman does it represent?

Perhaps we can explain that an apple is a beautiful fruit — both on the outside and on the inside. However, once it is cut, a slice of apple quickly turns brown or black, losing its beauty. But when dipped in honey, it can remain fresh and beautiful for a long time. We dip the apple in honey to express that on Rosh Hashanah, we are all beautiful and pure. During these days, everyone is doing *teshuvah*. By dipping the apple in honey, we show our desire that this purity and beauty should remain throughout the entire year, and that we should not become sullied by aveiros, chalilah.

12. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l explains that we don't eat sour foods on Rosh Hashanah because sour foods make a person form a sour expression. We don't want to show a bitter face on Rosh Hashanah. He compared Rosh Hashanah to an architect drawing a blueprint for a building: every small mark of the pencil corresponds to something much larger that will later be built. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the blueprint for the entire year. Therefore, we shouldn't frown on Rosh Hashanah.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l also said that one should utilize every moment of Rosh Hashanah, because each moment is an important part of the coming year.

13. The Shlah writes: How do we know that eating the *כרתי* vegetable will bring about *שיכרתו שונאיו* — that our enemies should be cut off and destroyed? Perhaps, *chas v'shalom*, it could mean the opposite, that our merits should be cut off. It is therefore clear that it isn't the eating of the foods that produces the good sign. Rather, it is the *teshuvah* and the tefillah that awaken Hashem's compassion Above.

14. People in Yerushalayim would say, "If an apple dipped in honey is a sign of a sweet year, then certainly if a person is a 'sweet Yid' — someone who smiles, greets others warmly, and brings sweetness to those around him — what better omen can there be for a sweet new year?"

The Nesivos Shalom zy'a told the following story:

The Gemara (*Brachos* 18) relates a story of a poor chassid who gave tzedakah to another needy person on *erev* Rosh Hashanah. He did this despite being poor, and it being a famine year. His wife was upset at him for giving tzedakah, so he didn't sleep at home that night. He slept in the cemetery.¹⁵ In the graveyard, he overheard a conversation between two *neshamos*. One said, 'My friend, let's float around the world and listen from behind the curtain to hear which punishments will be decreed for the coming year.'

The other soul answered that she couldn't leave her grave because she was buried in a

mat of reeds. "Go by yourself, and when you come back, tell me what you heard."

The soul went alone, and when she returned, she told her friend what she heard. She said, "Heaven decreed that all crops planted after the first rains of the season will be ruined in a hailstorm."¹⁶

The chassid who was lying in the cemetery overheard their conversation. That year, he planted his field after the second rain. Everyone else planted after the first rain, and their crops were destroyed in the hailstorm. His was planted later, and therefore, his crops prospered. He made a

One Rosh Hashanah night, in the home of a certain tzaddik, everything seemed to be going wrong. There were many negative simanim. Before Kiddush, a becher filled for Kiddush spilled over the tablecloth. When the tzaddik cut the challah, it slipped from his hand and fell to the floor.

There was no fish to serve because the fish had burnt. His rebbetzin said, "So many negative things are happening. I'm afraid these are bad simanim."

Her husband replied, "The main siman is our happiness. We eat meat and sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah because they help us feel joy, and happiness is the primary good omen for the coming year. Baruch Hashem, despite everything, we are happy. That is an excellent siman for the new year."

Someone once told Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonimer zt'l that he didn't have enough money to buy a fish head, so he bought a tail instead. Reb Mordechai Chaim told him, "Did you at least say, 'May it be the tail-end (פֶּה) of all our suffering?'"

The great mekubal Reb Yehudah Psayah zt'l sat at the head of his table on Rosh Hashanah night, dressed in white garments, surrounded by guests. Everything was beautiful and majestic — until the troubles began. A guest accidentally moved the table, causing the candles to fall and go out. The room was now dark. Reb Yehudah Psayah clapped his hands joyously and said, "It is all for good. It is going to be a good year."

But because it was dark, when his rebbetzin entered carrying a large tray of fish, she tripped and dropped the tray. Fish and sauce covered the floor. Reb Yehudah refused to let this disturb his mood. He went to help her, but he too slipped on the fish sauce and fell. His once-white garments were now covered in fish sauce. Even then, Reb Yehudah remained cheerful. He clapped his hands and said that everything was wonderful.

What was the outcome of all these negative simanim? He later said that he never had such a successful year. That year, everything he did prospered; he produced many chidushei Torah, and he experienced profound spiritual revelations. Because the most important siman is happiness — the joy that comes from bitachon that Hashem will grant us a good year.

15. The Iyun Yaakov explains: "It seems to me that the chassid chose to sleep in the cemetery because he feared that if he remained at home, he might quarrel with his wife on Rosh Hashanah. He did not go to someone else's house in order to protect his wife's honor. Instead, he slept in the cemetery so that no one would know about their disagreement."

16. The crops that grew after the first rains will be tall and strong and break from the hail. The crops planted by the second rain will still be soft and flexible at the time of the storm and will survive the hail.

lot of money that year because only his crops succeeded.¹⁷

The following year, on Rosh Hashanah night, he returned to the cemetery and heard the two souls conversing again. One of them asked her friend to float around the world with her, to overhear from behind the curtain what Heaven decrees for the upcoming year. The other replied that she couldn't leave her grave because she was buried in a mat of reeds. So, once again, one soul traveled alone. When she returned, she related that she heard the decree. This year, the crops planted after the second rain will be destroyed by a disease called *shidafon*."

That year, everyone remembered from the previous year that only the chassid's crops prospered because he planted after the second rain; therefore, they did the same. They planted after the second rain, while the chasid planted after the first rain. A disease called *shidafon* destroyed the crops planted after the second rain, and once again, only the chassid's crops flourished.

When we think about this Gemara, it's obvious that the chassid had terrible *simanim* on Rosh Hashanah. We can't imagine any worse! His wife was angry at him, and he slept in a cemetery! But despite the ominous signs, he became wealthy, two years in a row! This is because a person's disposition and mood are the main *siman*, and that is more important than the foods he eats. The chassid remained happy despite his circumstances, and his happiness brought him success.

Positive Thoughts on Rosh Hashanah

It is important to think positive thoughts on Rosh Hashanah. Trust in Hashem and believe that He has written very good decrees for you and for *klal Yisrael*.

We don't know what is being decreed in heaven, but there may be very good decrees for this upcoming year. Perhaps the decree will be that all poverty, illness, and suffering of the past should end and disappear. Trust in Hashem and think positive thoughts. This is *mesugal* for good things to occur.

We read the *tochachah* of parashas Ki Savo two weeks before Rosh Hashanah. Chazal explain that this is because we want the year with its curses to end (תכלה שנה וקללותיה) and a new year with its blessings to begin.

Also, before Maariv of Rosh Hashanah, we say the short prayer *אחות קטנה*. Its theme is that the curses of last year should end, and a new year with its blessings should begin (תחל שנה וברכותיה).

In the *yotzros* of Rosh Hashanah, we say "The One Who sits in heaven should remember her merit; a fetus to exchange in the womb of the sister." This refers to when Leah davened that the child in her womb be a female. Hashem accepted her tefillos, and she gave birth to Dinah. Initially, she had a male in her womb, and it was changed to become a female, due to her tefillos (see Brachos 60a). Rashi (Bereishis 30:21) writes that this is the reason the daughter born was named דינה, which means judgment. "Leah judged herself. She said, if this child will be born as a male, Rachel, my sister, will be less than the maidservants.¹⁸ Therefore Leah prayed,

17. The *Iyun Yaakov* writes, "In the merit of *tzedakah* [that he gave to the poor] he was rewarded, and the spirits revealed to him the ideal time to plant..."

18. The Imahos, with *ruach hakodesh*, understood that Yaakov Avinu was destined to father twelve sons. Bilhah and Zilpah had already borne two sons each, totaling four. Leah had given birth to six. At this point, ten sons had entered the world. If Leah's next child would also be a son, the count would rise to eleven, leaving Rachel able to bear only one—placing her below even the maidservants, each of whom had two sons.

and the child was exchanged and became a female.

It is a wonderful story of Leah's *mesirus nefesh* for her sister; nevertheless, we wonder why we say this on Rosh Hashanah. The Shem MiShmuel *zt'l* says that the child was changed from male to female on Rosh Hashanah. This is a reminder that on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem performs miracles for us and turns things around.¹⁹ It is a new year, and brand-new things can occur. The reality of the past can turn around, and everything can become good. As the Imrei Emes of Gur *zt'l* said, "Yosef left prison on Rosh Hashanah, and similarly, everyone can be freed from his personal imprisonment – whatever it may be – on Rosh Hashanah."

Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* vol.2 *drush* 5) writes, "We say היום הרת עולם, 'The world is created today.' ... Similarly, we say היום זה תחילת מעשיך, 'This is the day, the beginning of creation.' ... Every Rosh Hashanah, the world is created again (as is taught at length from the Arizal).²⁰

And since it is a new world, we can hope for a better world where the troubles of the past are gone.

On Pesach, we say in *Shemoneh Esrei* זמן חרותנו, on Succos we say זמן שמחתנו, but on Rosh Hashanah, we don't say זמן בריאת העולם, "The time of creation of the world". This is because Rosh Hashanah is not a commemoration of the past. It happens again each year. It is a new, better world with more blessings and *yeshuos* than ever before.

It states, regarding the creation of Adam HaRishon (*Bereishis* 2:7), ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, "[Hashem] blew into his nostrils the soul of life." The Baal HaTanya says that this occurs every year by *tekiyas shofar*. Man is created again. He is a new person.

And since the person is new and the world is new, new things can happen. Better things can happen.²¹

Moved by profound sensitivity, Leah davened that the child in her womb be transformed into a daughter. Her tefillah was accepted, and Dinah was born. Through Leah's selfless prayer, Rachel was granted the opportunity to bear two sons.

19. The Shem MiShmuel *zt'l* adds that Rosh Hashanah is a *mesugal* time for genuine change and personal improvement. If, on Rosh Hashanah, physical transformations can occur, then certainly spiritual change is possible as well.

20. Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* teaches that the awareness that the world was created on this very day can itself save us in judgment. He writes:

"We have a valid argument in the judgment, for we are like newborns; therefore, we cannot be held liable for our sins. The Midrash says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu acquitted Adam with this reasoning. Hashem said, 'He is just a child. He was born today. He is not so guilty for his sin and does not deserve to die.' The same applies to us. On Rosh Hashanah, we are like children, born today. Therefore, we say היום הרת עולם - that the world was just created - and Hashem should have compassion on us."

21. It states in Nechemyah (ch. 2, as explained in Rosh Hashanah 3b) that Nechemyah always appeared cheerful before the Persian king Artachashsta. One day, however, Nechemyah came before him with a sad expression, and the king immediately suspected that Nechemyah plotted to kill him. Nechemyah became very frightened and responded, הַמֶּלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם יִחְיֶה מְדוּעַ לֹא יָרְעוּ פָנַי אֲשֶׁר הָעִיר בֵּית קְבָרוֹת אֲבֹתַי חָרְבָה וְשַׁעֲרֶיהָ אֲכָלוּ בָאֵשׁ - "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be downcast, when the city of my ancestors' graves lies in ruin, and its gates are consumed by fire?" The king then asked what Nechemyah desired and sent him to rebuild the second Beis HaMikdash.

When we read this episode, we wonder: why did the king suspect Nechemyah wanted to kill him? He was simply sad one day. Doesn't everyone have days when they wake up on the wrong side of the bed and feel down?

Tefillah at the Beginning of the Year

Miracles will happen, and your requests will be fulfilled.²²

It states (*Iyov* 22:28), וְתִגְזַר אֲמֹר וְיָקֻם לָךְ, "You will decree, and it will occur." Rashi (see *Bava Metzia* 106.) teaches that this *pasuk* refers especially to tefillos said at the beginning of the year. Whatever you ask for at the beginning of the year will be given to you.

The Aruch L'Ner writes that throughout the year, our tefillos are answered, but sometimes they aren't. However, tefillos said at the beginning of the year are always answered.²³

The answer is that Nechemyah was one of the king's ministers, with access to immense wealth. Anything he wanted was within reach. There was no logical reason for him to be sad. Therefore, the king suspected that something darker was behind his expression.

The lesson for us is to be joyful on Rosh Hashanah. On this day, we declare *Malchiyus* - we proclaim that Hashem is our King and that we belong to His kingdom. When one stands before the King, nothing is lacking. We can ask for anything we desire, and we trust that the King will grant us abundant blessing. This awareness should fill us with happiness. There is no place for sadness.

22. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 106a) discusses a חֹכֵר - a tenant farmer - who failed to follow the landowner's instructions. The owner told him to plant wheat, but instead he planted barley. That year, a flood swept through the entire valley and destroyed all the crops. The question is whether the tenant is held responsible for the loss, or whether he can argue that even had he planted wheat, the flood would have ruined everything anyway.

The Gemara frames the issue as follows: Can the tenant claim that wheat would have been destroyed just the same? Or perhaps the landowner can argue: "Had you planted wheat, it would have occurred to me - וְתִגְזַר אֲמֹר וְיָקֻם לָךְ - that my prayers for the wheat field would be answered, and the crop would have succeeded."

Rashi explains that the landowner had prayed at the beginning of the year for the success of a wheat crop. He had not prayed for barley. Therefore, had the tenant planted wheat as instructed, those tefillos would have been effective, and the wheat would have grown well.

Rashi's emphasis is striking: the prayers said "at the beginning of the year" carry special power. From here we learn the unique potency of tefillos offered at the year's outset.

23. A kehillah accepted delivery of a prefab beis medrash. A crane arrived at the site, and as the operator lowered the structure with a remote control, members of the shul stood around directing him: "Right... a drop left... go back a bit... no, that's not the place... now come forward..." until the building was positioned *exactly* where they wanted it.

Mission accomplished—and payment collected—the crane and construction crew left. The shul members went inside to celebrate their new beis medrash, and only then did they realize their mistake. They cried out in distress: "The beis medrash is backward! The aron kodesh is on the wrong side!"

A child innocently asked, "So what's the problem? Just say 'right, left, front, back' like you did before, and it will be fixed."

The adults explained that those instructions only help when the crane and workers are present. Once they're gone, saying "right and left" accomplishes nothing.

The nimshal: The beginning of the year is an *eis ratzon*, a time when our tefillos are answered. Whatever we say then takes effect. After that window passes, our tefillos still help—of course—but they do not carry the same extraordinary potency as those offered at the year's beginning.

Although the mashal isn't perfect—because tefillah is powerful throughout the year—there is indeed a unique strength in the tefillos of the Yamim Noraim.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18.) tells us that on Rosh Hashanah, each person stands before Hashem in judgment. The Gemara says that everyone goes before Hashem one by one, like בני מרון.

The Gemara offers three explanations for the words בני מרון.

One is כבני אמרנא, like sheep. Rashi explains that this refers to sheep walking one by one through a narrow gate when counted for *maaser*.

The second explanation of בני מרון is מעלות בית מרון. This is a narrow path atop a mountain

in the north of Eretz Yisrael. There is a slope on either side of the road, and only one person can pass at a time. This is how people pass before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, one after the other.

The third explanation is that בני מרון refers to חיילות בית דוד, the soldiers in Dovid HaMelech's army, who would go out to war, one by one, so they could be counted.

The first explanation is כבני אמרנא, like sheep. Rebbe Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l said that אמרנא can also be translated as speech. The Gemara is saying that the judgment will be כבני אמרנא, according to how

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l would not consider shidduch suggestions for his children unless he had davened for that child's shidduch during the Yamim Noraim. Once, a shidduch was proposed for one of his children, but he hesitated because he had not davened for that child on Rosh Hashanah. After much pressure, he agreed to look into it, and the shidduch went through. Tragically, the marriage did not last long, rachmana litzlan. His point was that success in all matters requires tefillah—ideally the tefillos of the beginning of the year. (This is not halachah l'maaseh; Reb Yosef Chaim, on his lofty level, was particular about this. Still, it teaches us the importance of tefillah, especially during these days.)

As a child, Reb Yitzchak Tuvyah Weiss zt'l (the Gaavad of Yerushalayim) lived in a town four kilometers from Pressburg. When the Germans entered, they ordered all the Jews onto trains, claiming they were being taken to a work camp and threatening to shoot anyone who disobeyed.

The community was torn—should they trust the Germans or assume it was a ruse leading to the gas chambers? The rabbanim and leaders didn't know whether to advise compliance or escape.

Young Tuvyah Weiss was sent to Pressburg to seek guidance from the *rosh hakahal*. The rosh hakahal told him that the danger was grave either way, and he did not know what to advise. Then he added: "The king of England arranged a children's transport to save a thousand children. I have some tickets, but I don't know whom to save first. Since you came here, take a ticket and save yourself."

Reb Tuvyah returned home, relayed the rosh hakahal's words, quickly packed his belongings, said goodbye to his parents, and left on the transport. His mother's final message was that he should never forget he is a Yid.

Soon he was safe in England with the other children. Shortly afterward, the king of England requested to see the thousand children he had rescued. The children lined both sides of the road as the king drove past.

Suddenly, one courageous boy stepped forward and asked to speak with the king. The king's attendants tried to push him back, but the king stopped and called him over. The child thanked the king for saving them, but added, "It pains me that the king's compassion isn't complete. I left my parents and family behind. How can I rejoice in my freedom when I worry about their safety?" The king asked for his parents' address. Two weeks later, the boy's parents and extended family arrived safely in England.

Reb Tuvyah Weiss zt'l would recount this story and say: "There were another 999 children there. None of us thought to step forward and beg the king to save our families. Only this boy did—and look how much he gained. Let this remind us to seize the opportunities that come our way."

For us, the message is clear: let us seize the opportunity of tefillah, especially now. The King is present—דַּרְשׁוּהוּ בְּהַמְצָאוֹ. If we call out to Him, He will answer and grant our requests.

we daven. If we daven well, the judgment will be good, in our favor.

The Gemara also says that the judgment is כחיילות בית דוד, like Dovid's soldiers. This can be explained to mean that the outcome of the judgment will be according to the amount of Tehillim we say during these days. (According to this explanation, כחיילות בית דוד means Tehillim, which was written by Dovid HaMelech).

The Or HaMeir writes, "A rebuke to the many people of our nation who consider the

long tefillos of Rosh Hashanah as a burden. There is nothing sweeter! The Master, Hashem, requests that we say Malchiyos and Zichronos so He will remember us and bestow His kindness upon us. Hashem is solely seeking our benefit so that everything will be good for us."²⁴

We should remember that when we daven on these holy days, we should ask for a lot. Hashem can do anything, and he is able to give us a lot. If we ask for it, we will receive it, so why should we ask for a little?²⁵

24. Reb Matisyahu Solomon zt"l served as a chazan in Gateshead. When the mispallelim reached the words תשובה, תפילה, וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה - "Teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah remove the harsh decree" - the entire tzibbur cried out with great intensity, and Reb Matisyahu shouted even louder so his voice would be heard. His throat discharged some blood, and drops of blood landed on the words רוע הגזירה in his machzor. (This machzor, with those words stained in blood, is now in London.)

People understood the message: the words "the harsh decree" being covered over signified that the harsh decrees had been annulled. That year, no one in Gateshead passed away young.

The Baal HaTanya zt"l and other tzaddikim taught that one should speak very little on Rosh Hashanah. The Kedushas Levi goes even further, recommending that one undertake a taanis dibbur on Rosh Hashanah. He explains that when the Satan comes to speak against Klal Yisrael, the Heavenly Court will silence him: "Shah! Don't speak. Today is Rosh Hashanah. It is not a day for talking and carrying on conversations. Today is a taanis dibbur."

Instead of idle conversation, we should devote our time on Rosh Hashanah to tefillah and to draw from the unique power of prayers said at the beginning of the year.

25. Reb Naftoli of Ropshitz zt"l told the following story:

Once, a soldier saw someone raise his rifle to shoot Czar Nicolai. The soldier shouted. This startled Czar Nicolai's horse, and the horse jumped. The bullet struck the horse instead of Nicolai.

"You saved my life," Nicolai said to the soldier. "How can I repay you?"

This soldier didn't like his commanding officer. So, he asked the Czar to transfer him to another brigade so he could be under a different commander. Czar Nicolai replied, "Your request will be granted, but you acted foolishly. You could have asked for so much more! You could even have asked to become a general, and I would have granted your request!"

Reb Naftoli of Ropshitz zy"l said that we, too, can be foolish when we ask Hashem for small things - a little more money, a bit more success, or the like. When we pray, we stand before the One Who can grant us anything. Why ask for so little? We can ask for so much more, and Hashem will grant us our requests.

The Midrash (ילקוט מעם לעז ראה "נתן תתן") tells the following story, which took place when Alexander Mokdon came to Eretz Yisrael. A Yid came forward to greet Alexander Mokdon and to bless him. Alexander appreciated the honor the Yid gave him, and he rewarded this person with a city.

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

Alexander replied, "When one gives a gift to express appreciation, the value of the gift should be in accordance with the eyes of the giver, and not according to the eyes of the receiver."

The Lev Simchah *zt'l* repeated this Midrash and explained that we say in תפילת טל (on Pesach): דוד כערכך העמוד: שמינו, "Beloved, according to Your assessments, establish our name." This means that Hashem should give us kindness as *He* understands kindness, for that will be much greater than when it is according to our limited perception.

A candy store owner told a young child that he could take a handful of candies from the candy jar free of charge. The child said that he didn't want to take candies himself, so the storekeeper scooped up a handful of candies and gave them to him. When he returned home, he explained why he didn't take a handful of candy himself. He said, "The storekeeper's hand is much larger than mine."

The *nimshal* is that we request that Hashem open His hand and grant us kindness. Hashem's hand is much larger than ours. When Hashem bestows us His kindness, it will be far greater than what we can take on our own. Therefore, ask from Hashem, and ask for a lot, and Hashem will bestow His kindness upon us.

People tell the following parable:

An angel once said to a wise person, "You did a good deed, and therefore, Heaven decreed that you can ask for anything you wish, and it will be granted to you. What do you request?"

This person was blind, poor, and childless. What should he ask for? He can only ask for one thing, but he needs three. He so desired to be able to see, to be wealthy, and to have children, but he can only ask for one thing! He was wise and clever, so he said, "My wish is to see my great-grandchildren eating from golden dishes." This was a wise request, because for this one request to be fulfilled, he would need vision, wealth, and children. The moral of this parable is that when one is given the opportunity to ask, he should ask wisely.

Czar Nicolai sometimes disguised himself as a simple person. He mingled with the populace to hear what people were saying about him. Once, Czar Nicolai sat with four people at a bar. They didn't recognize that he was the Czar because he was dressed in regular clothes. The Czar asked them, "If you had the opportunity to ask the Czar anything you want, what would you request?"

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

Another said, "I would ask for a mansion."

A third said he would ask for a bank.

The fourth said, "I request that you leave us alone, and that you stop bothering us with your foolish questions. You're not the Czar, and you can't give us anything."

When the king returned to his palace, he wrote letters to all four people. To the first one, he gave a million dollars. To the second, he gave a mansion. He gave a bank to the third. To the fourth, he wrote, "You wanted to be left in peace; your wish is granted. I will do so. I won't talk with you anymore, and I won't send you any more letters."

During these days, at the beginning of the year, when the King encourages us to request our needs, we should be wise and ask for a lot. We shouldn't be like the fourth man, who failed to take advantage of the opportunity presented before him.

When people go around a *beis medresh*, collecting money, they generally don't receive too much money. The *mispa'elim* generally give small donations — a quarter, a dollar, maybe five dollars. But when a needy person visits a wealthy person at his home, he receives far more. Why?

Reb Tzadok HaKohen *zt'l* explains that when someone collects in *beis midrash*, he doesn't *expect* to receive much, and that's why he doesn't receive much. But when he goes to the rich man's home, he expects to receive more, and therefore he receives more.

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

Hav! Hav!

The *Zohar* says that those who daven for their personal needs on Rosh Hashanah are like dogs who shout, "*Hav hav* – Give! Give!" From the *Zohar*, it seems that it is wrong for a person to daven for his worldly needs. One should only daven for the coming of Moshiach and for spirituality.

But this isn't the accepted custom. We do daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah, and tzaddikim encourage us to do so. One year, before *tekiyas shofar*, the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* told his students to daven for *parnassah* and all their worldly needs. His students were surprised because they knew that the *Zohar* says we shouldn't daven for *gashmiyos* on Rosh Hashanah. The Baal Shem Tov explained that when Hashem grants their *gashmiyus* requests, it will enable them to be more devoted to *avodas Hashem*. Thus, even asking for *gashmiyos* can be considered asking for *ruchniyos*.²⁶

Therefore, the common custom to daven for *gashmiyos* doesn't go against the *Zohar*. This is because we don't ask for *gashmiyos* for its own sake. We don't want to be wealthy so we can have more honor, or so we can

take luxurious vacations. We daven for *parnassah*, and our other *gashmiyos* needs, so we will have peace of mind and the ability to serve Hashem. One certainly may daven in this manner.

Reb Meir of Premishlan *zt'l* once said, "If you look at the essence of all the *tefillos* of Bnei Yisrael, you will see that all of it is about money. But if you consider the essence of their money, it is all about *mitzvos*." Klal Yisrael uses their money to pay for *chedarim*, girls' schools, to marry off their children, to pay for Shabbos and Yom Tov *seudos*, and so on. In this sense, asking for *gashmiyos* is like asking for *ruchniyos*.²⁷

Reb Pinchas of Koritz *zy'a* also encouraged his chassidim to daven for their material needs on Rosh Hashanah. He said, "Those who don't ask don't get."

We say in the Rosh Hashanah *Shemoneh Esrei*, קדוש אתה ונורא שמך ואין אלוה מבלעדך. Reb Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that here we are saying that Hashem is קדוש, extremely holy, ונורא, and awesome. Therefore, it doesn't seem right for us to ask for *parnassah* and our other worldly needs from Hashem. How can one ask for these mundane and minor

26. Another benefit of praying for material needs is that such a *tefillah* is often more sincere since these needs lie heavily on people's hearts. The Tzemech Tzedek said that when one davens for his personal needs, it is *teshuvah iloya* (a very high level of *teshuvah*) because he is speaking to Hashem with sincerity and truth from the depths of his heart.

27. Dovid HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 27), אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש, "I ask one thing from Hashem." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that Dovid HaMelech didn't want to ask for more than one thing because the Gemara (*Taanis* 8:) states that one shouldn't pray for two things at one time. The Gemara's source is the pasuk (*Ezra* 8:23), ונצומה ונבקשה מאלקינו על זאת ויעתר לנו "We fasted, and we asked Hashem for *this*..."

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

But the answer is that all requests are essentially one: We are praying for *ruchniyos*. But to succeed in *ruchniyus*, we need *parnassah*, health, and more.

The tzaddikim of Stolin-Karlin *zy'a* advised their chassidim to read *Parashas Haman* every day of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah because this is the time of year that Hashem allocates our *parnassah* for the entire upcoming year. Therefore, it is an ideal time to daven for *parnassah*.

Reb Asher of Stolin *zy'a* says, "The *Zohar* discourages shouting '*hav hav* – Give more! Give more!' The *Zohar* is referring to someone who has enough, only he wants more. That isn't proper. But for someone who doesn't have enough, there is nothing wrong to daven for physical needs.

matters from the great King of the entire world, the King of kings? However, אין אלוהים מבלעדך, "There is no other G-d other than You." We are telling Hashem, "Perhaps it seems disrespectful to ask You for our worldly needs, but to whom else can we turn to help us? We don't have another G-d. Only You can provide us with our needs. Therefore, it shouldn't be considered disrespectful when we request these matters from You."

Tehillim

Emek HaMelech *zt'l* writes the following story:

A simple person, who only learned Tanach, lived in a village near Leport, and was *niftar* at an old age. Thirty days after his passing, he came to the *chacham* of the city in a dream. He was holding an old, worn *Tehillim* under his arm. The *chacham* asked, "Aren't you the person we buried recently?"

"Yes, it is I."

"What's that *sefer* under your arm?"

"It's a *Tehillim*. I came to warn you and the townspeople to escape immediately. When I was alive, I would say the entire *Tehillim* every day. (The Shlah's version of this story is that he would finish *Tehillim* once a week.) I did this for years, and the *Tehillim* I said protected

the entire town. But now you no longer have that protection."

In the morning, the *chacham* gathered the entire town and told them his dream. Those who took the dream seriously escaped and survived, and those who remained perished.

Emek HaMelech concludes, "From the day my father heard this story, he would say the entire *Tehillim* each week. Whoever says *Tehillim* regularly saves himself, his family, and his generation from all kinds of sorrow and distress, and he draws down *brachos* and *hatzlachos* from heaven. Fortunate is the one who benefits himself and his community."

Noam Elimelech writes that there is an awesome and exalted world in heaven called *Tehillah*. This is a world of immense compassion, and there are no *kitrugim* at all. He writes, "Dovid Hamelech's songs are called תהלים because when one says *Tehillim*, he becomes attached to the world of *Tehillah*, where there is no Satan and no problems."²⁸

These amazing words give us a glimpse into the wonders of *Tehillim*. When we say *Tehillim*, we become connected to an exalted world where Hashem's kindness prevails. Therefore, through saying *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs.

Throughout Rosh Hashanah, the Baal HaTanya *zy'a* was occupied either with his *machzor* or with his *Tehillim*.²⁹ The Brisker

28. We quote here the Noam Elimelech:

"Some people wonder: How does *tefillah* help? How can a *tzaddik* pray for a sick person, and the *choleh* recovers? The answer is that man is connected to all worlds. When he sins, he becomes detached from his connection above, resulting in illness, *rachmana litzlan*. When the *tzaddik* davens, he reconnects the person to his source, to where he was before. Automatically, he becomes healed. However, sometimes, the *tzaddik's* *tefillah* doesn't help, *chalilah*, because there is a *kitrug* [prosecuting angels]. When that occurs, he has to connect to the הגדול הנקרא תהלה, to the great world called 'Tehillah' because in this world there is a great light, and the *kitrug* can't prevent him from reconnecting to his source. In that world, there is solely compassion, and everything is rectified. This is the reason Dovid Hamelech's songs are called תהלים because when one says *Tehillim*, he becomes attached to the world of *Tehillah*, where there is no Satan and no problems."

29. The poskim (see Mishnah Berurah 581:3) say that it is proper to complete the entire *Tehillim* three times, from rosh chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur. The words of Dovid HaMelech, said with an outpouring of

Rav zt'l also used every spare moment³⁰ of Rosh Hashanah to recite *Tehillim*.³¹

heart, are our primary weapon to arouse Hashem's compassion and kindness.

Every Rosh Hashana, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l would awaken early, and at daybreak (עלות השחר), he was already in the beis medresh. He said פסוקי דזמרה with dveikus, and he served as the chazan for all the tefillos. He also blew the shofar. The tefillos were over an hour after midday. Then he ate the Yom Tov meal, which didn't take longer than half an hour. Then he returned to the beis medresh, and he said Tehillim with the community with an outpouring of the heart until the end of the day. (Ohel Elimelech, 342).

The Baal HaTanya would tell his students that on Rosh Hashanah, they should be cautious with two matters. One is that they shouldn't sleep too much. [Obviously, they should sleep the amount they need so that they will have *yishuv hadaas*. The Tanya meant that they shouldn't sleep more than they need.] The second matter is that they shouldn't speak idle talk (דברים בטלים). These counsels are good and wise for everyone to keep.

It states in Shulchan Aruch (582:9) וְנוֹתְנִין שְׂפָלָא אֶחָד אוֹמֵר לְחֵבְרוֹ לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתֵּב "It is customary for everyone to wish his friend, "You should be written for a good year." Notice that it doesn't state that we should say תִּכְתֵּב, that we wish our fellow man to be written *and to be signed* for a good year. It states solely that we wish them to be written for a good year. Indeed, the Magan Avraham quotes from the Rema m'Pano that we shouldn't say ותחתם. The Vilna Gaon's commentary, elaborates on this topic, whether ותחתם should be said or not. Reb Mordechai Gifter zt'l said that throughout all other areas of Shulchan Aruch, also in Choshen Mishpat and Yorah Deiah, etc., the הגהות הגר"א is written in very short and brief notes. It generally states עיין... ועיין, look in this and that sefer... without even saying what is written there, and what lesson he sees in them. With short words, he leaves it up to the student to understand his words. But when it comes to the question whether ותחתם should be said on Rosh Hashanah, the Gra elaborates immensely. This teaches us the severity of saying an extra word on Rosh Hashanah. Every word uttered on Rosh Hashanah has an effect on the entire year and shouldn't be taken lightly.

Regarding the importance of not sleeping too much on Rosh Hashanah, we quote the Yerushalmi (mentioned in Shulchan Aruch 583:2). The Yerushalmi states, מֵאֵן דְּדַמִּיךְ בְּרִישׁ שְׁתָּא דְּמִיךְ מְזִילָה, "Someone who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah, his mazal sleeps." It is known that on Rosh Hashanah, one must אָוִיס בַּעֲטָען, which means to beg Hashem for salvation and for a good year. We can also explain that אָוִיס בַּעֲטָען means to get out of bed. For this is the first thing: to wake up, to get out of bed, and to be involved in tefillos for a good year.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l compared someone who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah to a person who is sleeping in bed, and people come to wake him up. They shout, "There's a fire! Your property is getting ruined in the fire! Wake up!!" and he continues sleeping! He doesn't try to put out the fire. This can be the meaning of מֵאֵן דְּדַמִּיךְ בְּרִישׁ שְׁתָּא דְּמִיךְ מְזִילָה, "Someone who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah, his mazal sleeps." His mazal sleeps because he isn't davening and preparing for himself a good year.

30. People asked the Brisker Rav why he doesn't learn on Rosh Hashanah, instead of saying Tehillim. He replied that when one learns Torah, he sometimes has to look something up. During that time when he is looking for a sefer, he isn't learning and he isn't davening. Therefore, he prefers to say Tehillim, because with Tehillim, he will be utilizing every minute.

31. There is a renowned *segulah* to complete the entire *Tehillim* twice on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. A source to this custom is found in sefer *בית יששכר* (printed in Prague 250 years ago). He writes, "I read in a sefer that it is good to say the entire Tehillim twice on Rosh Hashanah night. Since *Tehillim* contains 150 chapters, and twice 150 equals the gematria of כפר - atone - this practice brings about kaparah, atonement, which we need on this day." (A hint to this custom was also found in the pasuk [Tehillim 81:8] אָעֲנֶה בְּסִתְרִי רָעַם, "I answered you with a thunderous reply when you called privately." כְּסִתְרֵי תֵיבוֹס is roshei teivos for ראש השנה, twice the sefer Tehillim on Rosh Hashanah.)

We don't know how these things work and why specifically Tehillim twice, but I found an excellent source from the Dubno Magid zt'l regarding the timing of this *segulah*.

The Dubno Magid tells a mashal of a Yid who lived among goyim, and the goyim caused him much

suffering. When the king visited his city, he wanted to tell the king what he was going through, but the goyim were also there, standing before the king, so he couldn't say anything. He knew that they would convince the king to ignore his accusations.

The Yid sought counsel from a friend. The friend said, "The goyim are present during the daytime. They aren't with the king at nighttime. Go to the king at night and tell him what you are going through."

The Yid followed this counsel, and the king helped him.

The Dubno Magid says that the same is true with Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah by day, there is a great judgment, and mikatrigim speak against us. But at nighttime, the court of heaven didn't begin, and the mikatrigim aren't present. Now is the time to plead before Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and the tefillos will be answered. The Dubno Magid writes, quoting from the *kadmonim* (gedolim of generations ago), that it is therefore good to daven Rosh Hashanah at night *before* the mikatrigim arrive. Hashem is near to us, and those who speak against us have not yet arrived.

The Dubno Magid writes that this is alluded to in the pasuk (Eichah 2:19) קוֹמִי רִנִּי בַלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֻׁמּוֹרוֹת, שִׁפְכִי כַּמִּים לִבְךָ "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of Hashem." נִכַּח פְּנֵי ה' means when you are alone with Hashem. That is an excellent time to pour out your heart before Hashem, and your tefillos will be answered.

Although for most people, saying *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night isn't the proper counsel — because it is important to remain awake on Rosh Hashanah and to daven with a clear, focused mind — that takes precedence over completing *Tehillim* twice. Nevertheless, we mention this *segulah* so that people appreciate the significance of *tefillah* on this night.

It is certainly worthwhile to say *Tehillim* once, or at least to recite some chapters. Another practical approach is to divide the entire *Tehillim* twice among family members, with each person saying a portion. Together, the family will have completed *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night.

The main point is to recognize the specialness of *tefillah* and *Tehillim* on this night, and for each person to do what is appropriate and manageable for them.

There was a family with four older children who had not yet found their shidduch, each for his own reason. During the first *seudah* of Rosh Hashanah, the family began discussing this *segulah*, and they were inspired to perform it. They divided the entire *Tehillim*, twice, among themselves, and after the *seudah* they collectively completed *Tehillim* twice. That year, all four children became engaged — each with a very good shidduch.

There is also a well known individual from Florida - everyone in Florida knows him. He waited twenty years without children, and all his efforts brought no results. One year, he said *Tehillim* twice on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, and he experienced his salvation. It was a miracle beyond the rules of nature.

Every year, we hear more stories of people who performed this *segulah* and merited remarkable yeshuos. Here is another example, merely one from among thousands:

Two brothers — one thirty two, one twenty eight. In the year תשפ"ג, the younger brother performed the *segulah* and said *Tehillim* twice. That year, he became a chassan. The following year, the older brother performed the *segulah*, and he too became a chassan that year.

Another story occurred in תשפ"ה. A father suffered from diabetes and was on dialysis. The doctors said he was not a candidate for a kidney transplant. On Rosh Hashanah night, his twenty five year old daughter said *Tehillim* twice. When she reached the end and wanted to present her request, she didn't know whether to daven for her father's healing or for her own shidduch. (It is important to note that one may ask for more than one yeshuah; the *segulah* is not limited to a single request. She could have davened for both matters, and for others as well. But she mistakenly thought she could only ask for one thing, and she didn't know which to choose.)

Finally, she came up with a clever idea: she davened that her father should come to her chasunah in good health. That year, both salvations occurred. Miraculously, the doctors found a donor whose kidney was a perfect match, and her father recovered. And the girl found her shidduch. The chasunah took place in Elul תשפ"ה, and her father attended — completely well.

Tears

The Arizal taught that it is important to cry on Rosh Hashanah. The Chasam Sofer says that (Tehillim 89:17) בשמך גילון כל היום "With

Your name they rejoice every day," is roshei teivos בכי"ה crying, alluding to the idea that the tears should be amidst a feeling of joy. Reb Pinchas of Koritz zt'l said that when one is happy, he can cry whenever he wants to.³²

There was another couple, four or five years after their chasunah, who had no children. The doctors could not identify the root of the problem, and therefore did not know how to help them. On Rosh Hashanah of תשפ"ה, the couple said *Tehillim* twice. That year, two months before Rosh Hashanah of תשפ"ו, they had a healthy child - born naturally, without any medical intervention.

Here is yet another salvation from תשפ"ה, in the merit of saying *Tehillim* twice. Someone performed the *segulah* on Rosh Hashanah night on behalf of a relative - an older single girl - that she should find her bashert. The next morning, the first morning of Rosh Hashanah, the girl decided to daven in the *beis medresh* of her *kehillah*. She had never davened there on Rosh Hashanah before, but this year she chose to. That same morning, a woman - the mother of an older bachur - also decided to daven there, although she had never done so on Rosh Hashanah. The mother noticed the way this girl davened and was deeply impressed. That moment was the first step toward a shidduch, and the girl ultimately married her son.

There is one more important point to mention. *Tefillah* always helps - especially on these holy days, and especially on the night of Rosh Hashanah. All the more so when one is able to say *Tehillim* twice on this night. This opens the heavens and brings salvation, as we have described. We are Yidden who believe in Hashem and in *tefillah*, and we believe in this with all our hearts and souls. Hashem shines His countenance upon us and shows us again and again - through the yeshuos that occur - that *tefillah* helps. Anyone who reflects on it can see great wonders that come through *tefillah*.

Nevertheless, we do not know Hashem's plans. Some people say they davened and did not receive the salvation they hoped for. Therefore, we clarify: we cannot know what our *tefillos* accomplish. We are certain that our *tefillos* achieve extraordinary things - without limit and beyond our greatest expectations. Sometimes the *tefillos* are answered for the matter we requested, and sometimes they bring other yeshuos.

We quote a letter we received recently:

It is important for me to give chizuk to people to perform the *segulah* of saying *Tehillim* twice on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. It is a special *segulah*, although not an easy one. A year ago, I said *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night for a particular yeshuah. The year passed, and the yeshuah I hoped for didn't come. Nevertheless, I consider it very important for me to tell others about the *segulah* because I am certain that saying *Tehillim* twice on Rosh Hashanah night helped me immensely in many other ways. As a teacher, I was on a field trip with my students and fell in a manner that, according to the natural order, should have caused severe head injury and endangered my life. Hashem saved me, and I emerged without any head wounds - only a few light injuries on my body. I saw clearly that Hashem was protecting me. I had several other wonderful yeshuos this year, regarding my *parnassah* and my health. Although I davened for something else, Hashem knew that it was more important to use my *tefillos* for matters I needed even more. Hashem took my *tefillos* and used them where they were most needed.

He concludes: "I hope this will encourage all those who are unsure whether to perform this *segulah*."

32. It states in Nechemyah (8:10) that we should be happy on Rosh Hashanah. Yet the Arizal teaches that one should cry on Rosh Hashanah. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l (Imrei Pinchas תת"ט) explains that this is not a contradiction.

"We can compare it to the joy of a chasunah. The simchah is immense, but it is mixed with a sense of apprehension, as everyone hopes the couple will find success and harmony. Similarly, on this great day of judgment, there is immense joy because Hashem renews His meluchah, and we - human beings formed from earth - have the privilege to proclaim Hashem as King. Is there any joy greater than that? On the other hand, we cry because we do not know what the future holds."

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59.) states, "From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the gates of tefillah were closed, but the gates of

tears weren't closed." When we daven with tears, our tefillos are guaranteed to ascend to heaven, and our tefillos will be answered.³³

33. In many old machzorim, there are tefillos—called *techinos*—written in Yiddish. These were composed for women, who in earlier generations often didn't understand, or couldn't even read, lashon hakodesh.

Yet in those same generations, there were also many men, *amei ha'aretz*, who likewise couldn't read or understand lashon hakodesh. Why, then, were *techinos* not written for them? Why do we find *techinos* for women but not for men?

It is because women daven with tears, and Klal Yisrael needs those tefillos. Their tefillos carry extraordinary power. Their tears break through all barriers.

Reb Elyah Lopian zt"l said that he received a *kabbalah* that on the *Yomim Nora'im*, the women who remain at home caring for their children have a direct channel that lifts their tefillos and places them before the Kisei HaKavod. The few moments they manage to find for davening, the few words they are able to say—these ascend before Hashem's throne and accomplish just as much as the many hours of tefillah offered by men who are fortunate to spend the entire day in the beis medresh, davening with the tzibbur.

A young girl once entered a jewelry store and noticed a necklace she liked. "Is that a real necklace?" she asked. "It's real gold," the merchant replied. "Can I see it?"

The merchant knew she couldn't afford it, but he handed it to her anyway. Her eyes sparkled. "How much does it cost?" "A lot of money—far more than a young girl like you could pay." "I want to buy it," she insisted. "I have money."

She opened her purse and poured out its contents: seven dollars and eighty cents.

Startled, the merchant asked, "Why do you want this necklace so much?" She answered, "Our mother passed away last year, and my older sister takes care of us. Today is her birthday, and I know this necklace would make her happy. I want to buy it for her."

"But it costs far more than \$7.80," he said gently. "I'm sorry—there's nothing in the store for that amount." Hearing this, the girl began to cry.

Her tears broke the merchant's heart. "You can have the necklace," he said, accepting the \$7.80 as payment.

Later that day, the older sister came to the store, shocked. "Did my younger sister buy this necklace here?" "Yes." "How much did it cost?"

The merchant explained, "My merchandise doesn't have fixed prices. I quote a price, the customer counters, and we negotiate until we agree. Your sister negotiated well and convinced me to sell it for less."

We tell this story to illustrate the power of tears. Tears touch the heart. When someone cries, you want to say yes. *Keviyachol*, something similar occurs when we cry before Hashem. Tears open all gates, and our tefillos are answered.

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

A prince was imprisoned in a distant land because he had rebelled against his father, the king. The queen longed to see her child, so she traveled a great distance and spoke to him from outside the prison walls.

The prince described the terrible conditions in which he was living. The queen's heart broke, and she threw him a key so he could unlock the gate and escape—but the key didn't work.

"Perhaps it's the wrong key," the prince said. "It's the right key," she replied. "The problem is that you've been in jail so long that the lock has become rusty. The only solution is for you to cry. Your tears will wash away the corrosion, and the lock will open."

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* taught that one should pray before Rosh Hashanah that he should be able to cry on Rosh Hashanah. He said that this is hinted in the *pasuk* (Tehillim 42), צמאה נפשי לאלקים לא"ל חי... היתה לי דמעות. Reb Shlomo Kluger explained, צמאה נפשי, "My heart thirsts; לאלקים, that on the day of judgment,³⁴ היתה לי דמעות, I should be able to cry."³⁵

Elef HaMagen (582:45 and see *Maaseh Rav*, Gr'a 207) writes that if one cannot cry (it isn't his nature to cry), he should pray on Rosh Hashanah in a

sobbing voice. This will stir his *kavanah*, and it will arouse his merits Above. As it states (Tehillim 6:9), כי שמע ה' קול בכי, "Hashem heard the voice of my cries."

Similarly, Rebbe Uri of Streisk *zt'l* explained the Selichos יהי רצון מלפניך שומע (יגמדות) "It should be Your will, the One Who hears the voice of tears." This means that even if one can't cry, but he wants to cry, and he makes a sound like someone crying, Hashem will also answer such tefillos.³⁶

The *nimshal* is clear: davening with tears breaks through all heavenly locks and gates.

The Yismach Moshe offered a similar *maschal*:

A king became angry at his servants, and they didn't know how to appease him. The *sar hamashkim*—the king's cupbearer—suggested an idea. "I will serve the king his favorite wine. Once he becomes happy, he will surely forgive us."

The "good wine," explained the Yismach Moshe, is our tears. When we shed tears, Hashem is appeased, as Chazal say: מלך מתרצה בדמעות - The King is appeased through tears."

34. אלקים is Hashem's name that represents judgment.

35. A storeowner once told his salesperson, "You don't need to ask permission to lower the price when a customer requests a reduction. You know how I run the business, and you know when to agree to lower a price. I trust you to respond correctly to an ordinary customer. But if a merchant comes in and wants to negotiate a large deal, send him to me. That is not for you to decide—I will handle it myself."

This is why we say in Selichos: מוכניסי דמעה הכניסו דמעותינו לפני מלך מתרצה בדמעות - "Angels who bring in tears, bring our tears before the King Who is appeased through tears."

We tell the malachim that they may carry our tears before Hashem, but nothing more. They cannot "deal with" the tears themselves. Malachim cannot grasp the depth, sincerity, yearning, and pain contained in Yiddishe tears; only Hashem can. Therefore, only Hashem can truly receive them.

During the Holocaust, the Rebbe of Piaseczna *zt'l* hy"d said: "Did a malach ever experience the pain of being beaten and struck as Yidden do? Does a malach know the humiliation of being pursued and hunted? Has a malach ever felt the pangs of hunger?"

Because malachim cannot comprehend human suffering, we ask them to daven for us — השתדלו והרבה תחינה — to advocate and plead on our behalf. But when it comes to our tears, we instruct them simply to bring those tears before Hashem. Only He understands them. Only He can answer them.

36. A rosh yeshiva who was wheelchair bound once told me that when he traveled, airport staff—both in Eretz Yisrael and in America—would push his wheelchair wherever he needed to go. He bypassed long lines and was taken through special corridors that regular travelers cannot use unless they pay a great deal of money. He received all of this service for free, simply because of his handicap.

So it is with us on Rosh Hashanah.

Generations ago, there were tzaddikim who performed lofty *avodos* on Rosh Hashanah. But today, we are simple, broken people. The bent shofar reflects our condition—our bentness, our brokenness. And precisely because of that, we receive special, first class assistance. We are given access to pathways that, in earlier generations, only the greatest tzaddikim could enter.

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59) states that even when the gates of tefillah are locked, the gates of tears remain open. Reb Eliyahu Dessler *zt'l* says it isn't that the gates of heaven are closed. The problem is that our hearts are closed, and therefore, the tefillos, said without emotion, don't go up to heaven. What is the solution? How do we open our hearts to daven emotionally? The answer is to daven with tears. When we daven with tears (or in a crying voice), our hearts become awakened, and we can daven with kavanah. When this occurs, the gates of heaven will open wide to receive our tefillos.

The Rebbe of Gostenin *zt'l* said that דב"ש (honey, which we eat on Rosh Hashanah) is *roshei teivos* שימה דמעתי בנאדך, "Place my tears in Your pouch."³⁷ Tears on Rosh Hashanah sweeten everything.

One year, the Berditchever Rav *zy'a* raised his shofar and called out to the women's section, "The shofar needs to be rinsed out," and all the women began to cry. Their tears rinsed out the shofar.

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

A king was traveling with his son to a distant country, and the king said, "Beware of evil people. My enemies live here, and they want to harm us." But the prince wasn't careful, and the enemies captured him.

Once a year, the king had a custom to drive through that country. The prince

figured that the king would hear his shouts and rescue him on that day.

But his captors knew the prince's plan, so they placed him in an iron room to muffle his voice. Years earlier, the child had received extraordinary stones from his father that had the power to break down iron walls.

As the king passed through the city, the prince threw the stones at the iron walls, but to no avail. The walls wouldn't collapse because the stones weren't clean. Realizing his chance for freedom was slipping away, the prince broke out into tears. His hot tears fell on the stones, cleansing them.

With renewed hope, he threw them at the wall, and it collapsed. The king heard the prince's cries and saved him.

The Arvei Nachal explains that the shofar has the potential to break down the iron walls that separate us from our Father in heaven and to bring the redemption. But it doesn't seem to be working. We are still in *galus*. Why? The answer is that the shofar works with tears. Together, they break down all barriers.³⁸

Teshuvah and Shofar

The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although shofar is a *gezeiras hakasuv*, the shofar is telling us something. The shofar is shouting, עורו ישנים משנתכם - Those who are sleeping, wake up from your sleep! Examine your

This is one of the profound benefits of tefillos said with tears. Our tears show how deeply we need Hashem's help, how much we rely on His compassion. And that alone can turn everything around for us.

37. Rebbe Naftali of Melitz *zt'l* said that when Hashem wishes to write good things for the Jewish nation, the Satan dries the inkwell so the ink cannot flow. Therefore, we plead: שימה דמעתי בנאדך - "Place a drop of our tears into Your inkwell, and then You will be able to write with it." Our tears become the ink through which blessings are written.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* said that דבש is *gematriya* אב הרחמן, compassionate Father.

38. My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l*, once fell gravely ill but miraculously recovered and lived another five years. The Rosh Hashanah following his illness, he said to my father, "Last year, you shed true tears at *tekiyas shofar*," implying that those sincere tears were what saved his life.

deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, all those who have forgotten the truth."³⁹

The Or HaMeir asks: if the primary purpose of the shofar is to arouse people to *teshuvah*, why is shofar needed? Instead, the Rav of each community and beis *medresh* should deliver a mussar *drashah* to rouse people to *teshuvah*. Why with a shofar?

The Or HaMeir answers that after a *drashah*, people say, "The Rav isn't speaking to me. I don't have the problem the Rav is referring to. It is a good *drashah* for others to hear, but I don't need it." When the shofar is blown, it is a call for *teshuvah* without words, and every person can find areas in which he has to improve. The Or HaMeir explains this with the following *meshal*:

A town hired a watchguard, who stood post atop a mountain. When he spotted thieves, he shouted and rang the bells to arouse the people below. "*Ganavim!* Thieves!" he shouted. The wealthy people frantically ran to protect their properties. However, the poor people knew that the thieves weren't after them and took it easy. Another time, the guard shouted, "Fire! There's a fire!" This time, even the poor people ran out to put

out the fire because the fire would cause them financial loss.

The Or HaMeir explains that if the Rav of every congregation would give a mussar *drashah* instead of blowing the shofar, people would say, "The Rav isn't talking to me. He is speaking to others who need to improve in those areas." The shofar shouts, "There's a fire, and we're all in danger!" It is a call for action to everyone.⁴⁰

Reb Yechiel of Moosh *zy'a* once went to the *bimah* to blow shofar, and saw from a window a *davar acher* (pig) eating in a Jewish field. He said, "I will not blow shofar until the *davar acher* is removed from the Jewish field."

The *davar acher* was chased out of the field, and the Rebbe blew the shofar.

This story was repeated every year by the Slonimer tzaddikim, *zy'a*, who found the story to be very inspiring. The Beis Avraham of Slonim *zy'a* would say, "Such a story of the *Moosher* (Reb Yechiel of Moosh)! I never heard a story like this one before!" But it was somewhat of a mystery among the chassidim why this story was so special to the Rebbes. What did the tzaddikim find so amazing?

39. The Midrash teaches: "When the Jewish people take the shofar and blow it before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Hashem rises from the throne of judgment and sits upon the throne of compassion."

The Ahavas Shalom *zt"l* explains:

On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem finds Himself sitting on the throne of judgment, preparing to judge the Jewish people. Hashem asks, so to speak, "How did I end up here? Why should I judge the Jewish people—My beloved nation?"

Hashem realizes that it was the Satan who persuaded Him to judge them. And Hashem says: "If the Satan is powerful enough to convince Me to judge the Jewish nation, then surely the Jewish people cannot be held fully responsible for the aveiros they committed. How can they possibly stand against such a cunning and relentless force?"

With that realization, Hashem abandons the throne of judgment and ascends to the throne of compassion.

40. Someone once told a gadol about his *shalom bayis* problems. The gadol told him, "The solution is to be *mevater* — to yield."

The man replied, "I know, and I tell my wife this all the time, but she refuses to be *mevater*."

This story illustrates how people often assume that the problem lies with others, without realizing that they themselves may be the ones at fault.

Perhaps it showed Reb Yechiel's ahavas Yisrael that he wouldn't blow shofar while a Yid's field suffered a loss.

Reb Mottel Slonimer *zy'a* corrected them. He said, "Why don't you understand?! The *davar achar* represents the *yetzer hara*. Reb Yechiel of Moosh announced that he wouldn't blow shofar until the *davar acher*, the *yetzer hara*, was removed from Jewish hearts. That is the purpose of the shofar! To arouse us to teshuvah and to remove all the bad from Yidden's hearts."⁴¹

Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar

The Gemara says about the shofar, בִּין דְּלִזְכְּרוֹן הוּא כְּבָפְנִים דְּמִי "Since the shofar arouses Hashem's memory [to remember the good

deeds of the Jewish nation], it is as if it was blown inside the Kodesh HaKedashim."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* quotes this Gemara and explains that when we blow shofar, it is like we are in the Kodesh HaKedashim, and therefore, we must listen to the shofar with immense fear as though we are in the Kodesh HaKedashim.

The Rambam writes, "I, Moshe ben Maimon, when the time for shofar came, took the shofar in my hand, and I thought about Who commanded us to do this mitzvah; my knees knocked against each other from fear, and then I began blowing the shofar."

Many segulos and brachos come from the mitzvah of *tekiyas shofar*:⁴²

41. The Gemara teaches that *chillul Hashem* is atoned for only through death. This reality weighs heavily on people, who fear they can never achieve complete cleansing from their aveiros throughout their lives. Yet the holy sefarim reveal pathways through which a person can attain full forgiveness—even for the severe aveirah of *chillul Hashem*. One such path is through listening to the shofar.

The Gemara states that when we blow shofar, Hashem says: "I will remember Akeidas Yitzchak and consider it as though you sacrificed yourself before Me." A sacrifice means it is as if we died. The Remak writes that when we hear the shofar, it is as though we ourselves were offered upon the mizbeach before Hashem, and all our aveiros are forgiven—even *chillul Hashem*.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16) teaches that we blow shofar twice: once before Shemoneh Esrei (תְּקִיעַת דְּמִיּוּשָׁב) and again during Shemoneh Esrei (תְּקִיעַת דְּמַעֲוִיד) — to confuse the Satan.

How does blowing the shofar twice confuse him?

Tosfos, quoting the Yerushalmi, explains that in the future a great shofar will be blown, as it says: וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם - "On that day, a great shofar will be blown..." On that day, the Satan will be judged and slaughtered. When the Satan hears the first set of tekiyas, "he is afraid, but not completely afraid." He wonders whether this might be the shofar of the future world, heralding his destruction—but he is unsure. When he hears the second set, he panics: "This must certainly be the *shofar gadol*. My end has arrived." Terrified and confused, he cannot speak *kitrug* or *lashon hara* against the Jewish people.

But we wonder: why is the Satan so afraid? Doesn't he remember from last year - and every year before - that we blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah? Why suspect that this year is different?

The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* answers: In every generation, the tests become harder. Each year, it becomes more difficult to serve Hashem. The Satan thinks, "This year, because of all the challenges and hardships, the Jewish people are more precious than ever." Therefore, he fears that the shofar he hears may indeed be the *shofar gadol* of Moshiach.

42. A princess once left her father's palace to take a long walk. Along the way she lost her direction and no longer knew how to return home. As she wandered, she stumbled over stones again and again, falling to the ground. Her clothing tore, her appearance changed, and she became so disheveled that she was no longer recognizable.

Parnassah:

The Shaar HaMelech (3:2) writes, "Before the *brachah* of *tekiyas shofar*, cry a lot, especially when you answer amen to the *brachah*, because that's when it is decided how much money you will earn this year."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 117) says, שופר ורדיית הפת, "Blowing shofar and removing bread from the walls of an oven require talent, but aren't *melachos* (on Shabbos)." In this statement, the Gemara puts together blowing shofar with taking bread out of the oven. The Tiferes Shlomo says that this indicates that shofar is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

Children:

The Baal HaTanya zy'a taught that the letters after עקר"ה are שופ"ר. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to have children. As the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 11.) states, בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה, "On Rosh

Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel, and Chanah were remembered to bear children."⁴³

Zera Kodesh writes, "On Rosh Hashanah, the day the world was created, is a time *mesugal* for the barren to be remembered to bear children."

In the *Mussaf Shemonah Esrei* we say, מִי לֹא נִפְקֵד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. The Imrei Noam zt'l says that נִפְקֵד means to be remembered to bear children. He adds that the *roshei teivos* of נִפְקֵד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה is הַיּוֹם, and הַיּוֹם is Hashem's name related to pregnancies, as it states, הֵנֵךְ הָרָה, "Behold you will be pregnant..." This hints that Rosh Hashanah is when Hashem remembers the barren, blessing them with children.

It states, וידגו לרוב בקרב הארץ, "They shall multiply like fish..." Tzaddikim taught that the *gematriya* of רוב בקרב הארץ is ראש השנה. This is another indication that Rosh Hashanah is *mesugal* to bear children.

Eventually, she found her way back to the palace. But when she reached the gate, the guards did not recognize her and refused to let her in. "I am the king's daughter," she insisted. "Let me in!"

The guards replied, "Every day people come here claiming to be members of the royal family. You cannot enter."

She raised her voice and cried out, "Father! Father! Even if you cannot recognize me, you can hear from my voice that I am your daughter!"

Similarly, we say to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: even if our many aveiros have rendered us unrecognizable, Hashem can still hear from our voices that we are His children. This is the essence of the shofar. It is our cry to Hashem, our declaration that - despite everything - we remain His beloved children.

43. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l said: We have no true grasp of the holiness of the Avos and Imahos. Yet from the Gemara - which teaches that they were remembered to bear children on Rosh Hashanah - we learn that even they could not merit children without the power of Rosh Hashanah. *Kal vachomer* we must invest deeply in these days. We certainly need the unique *segulah* of Rosh Hashanah to attain our salvation.

In the haftarah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah (I Shmuel 1), we read about Chanah, who cried and barely ate because of her anguish over not having children. Her husband, Elkanah, asked her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? Am I not better to you than ten children?"

Chanah then went to Mishkan Shilo and poured out her heart in tefillah. After she finished davening, the Navi says: ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד - "She ate, and her sad face was no longer." Chanah trusted that her tefillos were answered, and she became joyful. The Chasam Sofer teaches that her joy itself helped her merit her salvation.

Chazal say: בר"ה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה - "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah, Rachel, and Chanah were remembered." Chanah's remembrance came through the merit of her joy. Her happiness after davening opened the gates for her yeshuah.

In ונתנה תוקף we say, כמה יעברון וכמה יבראון. The Tiferes Shlomo zt'l translated these words as follows: כמה יעברון, Hashem judges how many women will enter עיבור, pregnancy, that year and וכמה יבראון, how many people will become בריא, healthy, and cured of their illnesses.

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

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

Refuah:

The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 3:3) states שופר מאריך. One translation of מאריך is healing, and another translation of מאריך is to live long. Thus, we have a hint that with the shofar, one merits a *refuah sheleimah* and a long life.

Reb Leibele Eiger zt'l said that Rosh Hashanah, the first day of creation, is certainly *mesugal* for attaining בני חיי ומזוני, children, life (and health), and *parnassah*, because all of these matters were given at creation. חיי, life, was given at creation, as it states (Bereishis 2:7) וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפִּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים "Hashem blew into his nostrils the soul of life." בני, the blessing for children was given at creation, as it states (ibid. 1:28) פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ "Be fruitful and multiply." מזוני, *parnassah*, was given at creation, as it states (ibid. 11) וַתֵּדְשָׂא הָאֲרֶזְךָ דָּשָׁא "let the earth sprout vegetation."

All *yeshuos* come on Rosh Hashanah, as we say in Mussaf (Zichroniyus) מִי לֹא נִפְקַד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. Reb Meir Shalom of Kalishin zt'l said that this can be translated as, "Who won't receive *yeshuos* on this day?" The word נפקד is similar to פקד from the pasuk וְה' פָּקַד אֶת שָׂרָה, that Hashem remembered Sarah and gave her a child. So, too, מִי לֹא נִפְקַד כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, there isn't a person who won't be remembered, to give him his salvation, on this day.⁴⁴

44. Reb Yitzchak Hutner zt'l said the following in his *hesped* for the Satmar Rav zt'l:

He cited Rashi (Bereishis 7:23), which teaches that the lion in the *teivah* struck Noach because Noach gave it its food slightly late. Rashi explains that Noach received his punishment in this world, as it says (Mishlei 11:31) הֵן צַדִּיק בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׁלָם - "A tzaddik is punished on earth." A tzaddik is repaid for his errors in this world. Thus, Noach was punished here for giving the lion its food a bit late.

But we wonder: why was this even considered an *aveirah*? Noach was working day and night feeding the animals. What is so terrible if he fed the lion a few minutes late? Does such a small lapse deserve punishment?

When we consider the situation, the answer becomes clear. This lion was the last of its species. All other lions had perished in the flood. Only two lions remained - the pair in the *teivah*. Noach may have had many excuses for being delayed, but when the consequences are so great, excuses do not suffice. The lions had to remain alive; nothing less was acceptable.

Reb Hutner implied that the Satmar Rebbe lived his early years in a generation filled with tzaddikim. That generation passed on, and the Satmar Rebbe was among the final remnants of that glorious era. Therefore, his *petirah* was an immeasurable loss.

We can also learn from this how careful we must be with Rosh Hashanah. The entire coming year - every event, every moment - is dependent on these days. We must treat them with utmost seriousness and not allow them to pass without attaining Hashem's salvations. If we fail to take advantage of this time, no excuses will help.

A plane travels far faster than a car. Why? Because a plane flies in the heavens - there are no obstacles, no turns, no traffic. It moves freely and swiftly. A car, however, must navigate pedestrians, traffic, and winding roads, and therefore must move slowly.

Malchuyos

Rav Saadyah Gaon says that we blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah because it is the custom to blow shofar when crowning a new king, and on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem is inaugurated as King of the world. In the Mussaf of Rosh Hashanah, we say "Malchuyos", the brachah that has ten pesukim about Hashem's Kingship. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16.) says אמרו לפני מלכות כדי שתמלכנו עליכם, Hashem says, "Say Malchuyos before Me so I will be made King upon you."⁴⁵ The Ma'or v'Shemesh explains that this means you should "say 'Malchuyos' on Rosh Hashanah with all your heart because then you will be able to make Hashem King

over you the entire year."⁴⁶ Throughout the year, we will have a clearer realization that Hashem is our king, that He is present, and that He leads us.

Perhaps this is the reason Rosh Hashanah is called יום הזכרון, "Day of Memory." It is because of this day that we can remember Hashem all year long.

The Lechovitzer zt'l taught, (Tehillim 116:10) האמנתי כי אדבר, I believe in Hashem because I speak about it." Speaking about emunah helps us attain it. Throughout the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah, we have many opportunities to announce that Hashem is our king, and that emunah remains with us the entire year.⁴⁷

The *nimshal* is that at the beginning of the year, before the judgment is finalized, we are able to "fly quickly." We can attain more *yeshuos* now than at any other time of the year. The pathways are open, the skies are clear, and the opportunities are immense.

45. The Rebbe of Dzurik zt'l said that the difference between a מלך and an אדון is this: An אדון is a ruler who governs according to his own will. He does not seek or accept the counsel of others. A מלך, however, is a king who consults with others. One of the meanings of מלך is "to seek counsel," as we find in Berachos 27: אויל ואמליך בדביתו - "He went and conferred with his wife."

The Rebbe of Dzurik explained that during the Holocaust, Hashem acted as an אדון, because He did not accept the counsel of the tzaddikim.

The Machnovka Rebbe zt'l - his son in law - added a beautiful insight: On Rosh Hashanah, when we say *Malchuyos* and crown Hashem as King, one of the great gains is that Hashem now leads us as a מלך, not as an אדון. He will accept counsel from the tzaddikim.

46. The Ma'or V'Shemesh writes:

"Hashem created the entire world so that every creature should recognize His kingship, to know that He rules over everything... Throughout the year, most people are unable to fully accept Hashem's malchus. But on Rosh Hashanah, we accept Hashem's kingship with love and with all our hearts. This empowers us to make Hashem 'One' throughout the year when we say *Shema*. Fortunate is the person who merits holy, pure thoughts of uniting Hashem during the forty eight hours of Rosh Hashanah, for this infuses him with *kedushah* and *deveikus* for the entire year. Every moment of Rosh Hashanah gives strength to remain aware the entire year that Hashem is King."

Forty eight is the gematria of מוח, meaning "brain." This hints that Rosh Hashanah is the מוח, the head of the year—and everything depends on the head. Woe to those who have even the smallest "hole" in their brain... for any deficiency in these days affects the entire year.

The *Pele Yoetz* (Rosh Hashanah) writes:

"If only a person's heart would be filled with *yiras Shamayim* on Rosh Hashanah... This grants *chiyus* to his soul for the entire year."

47. In Eretz Yisrael, Yom Tov is generally one day, while in *chutz la'aretz* Yom Tov is two days. Rosh Hashanah is the exception: it is two days even in Eretz Yisrael.

Throughout the year, the *chazan* begins the *tefillah*, standing at the *amud*. On Rosh Hashanah, the *chazan* begins saying המלך from his seat, wherever he davens in the *beis medresh*, and then he goes over to the *amud*. The reason for this custom is unknown (see *Nitei Gavriel*).

Perhaps it is to remind us that wherever we are, whatever tests and challenges we go

through, we are in the most ideal place to announce Hashem as King.⁴⁸

It states (*Tehillim* 17:2), מלפניך משפטי יצא. The Damesek Eliezer zt'l explains, Hashem will make the judgment לפניך, as you want it. Whatever you want for the new year – health, wealth, whatever you desire – it will be yours. The only condition is, עיניך תחזינה, מישרים, that you look at everything with eyes full of *emunah*.⁴⁹

The Beis Yisrael zt'l explained this based on the Midrash (Tana d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta 22), which teaches that the ten days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* correspond to the Ten Commandments (see also *Yaaras D'vash*, vol. 2, drush 1). Accordingly, the first two days of Rosh Hashanah - the first two days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* - correspond to אלהים אחד, the mitzvos of believing in Hashem. *Emunah* must be absolutely pure; there can be no doubts.

Therefore, Rosh Hashanah was established as two days everywhere - not because of any uncertainty. All other *Yamim Tovim* are two days in *chutz la'aretz* due to *safek*, *sfeika d'yoma*, because distant communities did not know which day was truly Yom Tov. But when it comes to *emunah*, there can be no doubt. On Rosh Hashanah—the day we establish our *emunah*—Yom Tov is two days everywhere.

The Imrei Emes zt'l added another beautiful insight: Rosh Hashanah is two days throughout the entire world so that we can fulfill the *tefillah* of Rosh Hashanah, ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם - “May everyone join as one to do Your will with a complete heart.” We want to serve Hashem as one, without divisions or distinctions between people. Therefore, there is no difference between those living in *chutz la'aretz* and those living in Eretz Yisrael. All unite together in serving Hashem with two days of Rosh Hashanah.

48. Reb Eliyahu Lopian zt'l once heard a *chazan* say המלך, and he sensed that it was said with a trace of *gaavah*. When the opportunity arose, he approached the *chazan* and asked why he had not said המלך properly. The *chazan* didn't understand - he had used the traditional tune.

Reb Elyah explained, “When I heard you say המלך, I sensed that you also wished to be ‘king.’ And two kings cannot wear the same crown.”

One of the pious Yidden of Yerushalayim served as the *chazan* for many years in the *beis medresh* Zeharei Chamah, davening there every year on the *Yamim Noraim*. Before Rosh Hashanah of the year תרפ"ה, a respected visitor from *chutz la'aretz* arrived and requested to be the *chazan* that year.

The regular *chazan* was unsure what to do - should he yield to the visitor's request, or should he insist on retaining his long standing role? He went to ask Reb Shlomo Eliyashev zt'l, the *Leshem*.

Reb Eliyashev told him, “When a person experiences disappointment before the Days of Judgment, it is very beneficial for him. It is *mesugal* for a good judgment. In any case, if it is *bashert* for you to be a *chazan*, you will be a *chazan* somewhere else.”

And so it happened. A very respected community called him to serve as their *chazan*.

49. The Trisker Magid (in *Magen Avraham*, beginning of Vayikra) writes that when Esther became queen, the king sent gifts to his subjects, as it says (*Esther* 2:18), והנחה למדינות עשה ויתן משאת כיד המלך. This is the way of kings and queens: when they are crowned, they bestow gifts upon their people. Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah - when we have the privilege of crowning Hashem as King over the world - Hashem, in turn, bestows His many blessings upon us.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 11a) teaches that the slavery in Mitzrayim ended on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly,

We begin the brachah of Malchuyos with על כן נקוה לך. The first letters spell עכ"ן. Chazal tell us that Achan created this tefillah when he was taken to die. Chazal tell us the many sins that Achan committed. Why do we recite a tefillah that he wrote?

Malchuyos begins with Achan's tefillah, for us to know that regardless of the past, we become worthy of proclaiming Hashem King when we do teshuvah, and Hashem will accept us. Even if we have committed aveiros, as many and as severe as Achan had, we can do teshuvah and pronounce Hashem as King.

Before *tekiyas shofar*, we recite Tehillim (47) למנוחה לבני קרח, composed by Korach's children, who did teshuvah moments before they were swallowed into the earth. This, too, reminds us that regardless of our past, we can always do teshuvah.

The Awesome Judgment

It states (Devarim 11:12) מִרְשֵׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִיתָהּ, שָׁנָה, "From the beginning of the year to year's end." Rashi writes, מֵרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה נִדּוֹן מֶה יִהְיֶה בְּסוֹפָהּ, "From Rosh Hashanah, it is judged what will be in the end of the year."

Also, Rashi (Rosh Hashanah 8a) writes, שֶׁהַקֹּב"ה דָּן בְּתִשְׁרֵי אֶת כָּל בְּאֵי הָעוֹלָם כָּל הַקּוֹרוֹת אוֹתָם עַד תִּשְׁרֵי הַבָּא, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges in Tishrei all

people of the world, everything that will happen to them, until the next Tishrei."

When we think about this, our hearts are gripped with fear. Everything that will occur this year is decided, determined, and decreed on these two days of Rosh Hashanah.

Therefore, it states (Koheles 3:14) וְהָאֱלֹקִים עֹשֶׂה, שֶׁיִּירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו, "Hashem has acted so man will be in awe of Him." The Zohar says that this refers to Rosh Hashanah. The day arouses fear in Hashem.

Rosh Hashanah is called יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, a day of blowing shofar. As it states (Bamidbar 29:1) יוֹם תְּרוּעָה יְהִיָּה לָכֶם, "It shall be a day of... shofar to you." The expression יוֹם תְּרוּעָה sounds like we blow the shofar the entire day. However, after we blow one hundred times, the mitzvah is completed. Why is it called יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, which makes it sound as if the entire day is for shofar?

The Tzlach (Chagigah 14a) explains that יוֹם תְּרוּעָה is describing to us the awesome atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah. Chazal tell us that the sounds of the shofar represent גְּנוּחֵי גִּנָּה יְלִילִי, which means moaning and crying. The entire day is יוֹם תְּרוּעָה, a day of immense fear.

When we are afraid of Hashem, and when we are afraid of the judgment, we must know that there is nothing to fear. The purpose of the fear was accomplished, so we

each person can be released from his personal struggles on Rosh Hashanah.

It says (Tehillim 33:22), יְיָ חֶסֶדךָ ה' עָלֵינוּ כֹּאשֶׁר יִחְלָנוּ לָךְ. Reb Moshe Leib Sassover zt"l explains: We ask Hashem to shower His kindness upon us even when He sees that we are unworthy. Why? כֹּאשֶׁר יִחְלָנוּ לָךְ - just as we trust in You. We trust in Hashem even though we have never seen Him. So we ask Hashem to bestow His kindness upon us even when He does not "see" us as deserving.

In a Rosh Hashanah *piyut* we say: נֶאֱמַד נִקְמָה סִתְּרוּ יוֹשֵׁר עֲצָתוֹ אֲמוּנָה פִּעֲלָתוֹ אֱמֶת צְדִיק וְיֹשֶׁר.

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev zt"l explained: Sometimes a person feels נֶאֱמַד נִקְמָה - as though Hashem is acting toward him with anger, as if Hashem is against him. סִתְּרוּ יוֹשֶׁר - Hashem's attribute of *yosher*, correctness, is hidden from him; he cannot understand why he deserves the suffering he is experiencing.

עֲצָתוֹ אֲמוּנָה - the proper counsel is to have *emunah*, to trust that this is Hashem's will.

פִּעֲלָתוֹ אֱמֶת - through that *emunah*, he will eventually merit to see that Hashem's actions toward him are true.

צְדִיק וְיֹשֶׁר - and he will come to recognize that Hashem's ways are righteous and upright.

are safe, and there is nothing to fear. As it states (Tehillim 119:161) שָׁרִים רָדְפוּנִי הָנֶם וּמִדְּבַרְךָ פָּחַד לִבִּי, "Princes have pursued me for no reason, but my heart has feared Your word." When princes pursue me, and I am in danger, I fear Hashem. When I fear Hashem, the purpose of the fear was accomplished. The primary purpose was to arouse me to fear Hashem, which I did. Therefore, there is nothing to be afraid of.

Rebbe Reb Shmelka of Nickelsburg zt'l says that the roshei teivos of שָׁרִים רָדְפוּנִי הָנֶם וּמִדְּבַרְךָ פָּחַד לִבִּי, "Princes have pursued me for no reason, but my heart has feared Your word" spell שׁוּפָר, and the middle word is הָנֶם, "for no reason". Because the sound of the shofar arouses fear. When we fear Hashem, הָנֶם, we have nothing to fear. The purpose of the fear was accomplished, and therefore, nothing bad will happen to us.⁵⁰

The Beis Aharon of Stolin zt'l said to two of his *chassidim*: "I want you to study *Reishis Chachmah*, the section that describes

Gehinom. When you finish, come back and tell me what you learned."

Both returned on the same day. The Rebbe spoke with them individually. He asked one, "What did you discover in the sefer *Reishis Chachmah*, regarding Gehinom?"

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

The Rebbe told him, "You don't need to worry. It isn't as terrible as you think. We have a compassionate Father in heaven, and everything will be o.k."

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

The second chasid spoke nonchalantly, repeating what he learned, obviously not afraid.

50. Mishnah Berurah (584:1) writes, "Although we are certain we will be acquitted and found innocent in the judgment, we must be afraid due to the awe of the judgment. In the merit of his fear, we will be remembered [for a good year]."

Shulchan Aruch (597:1) states, "We eat, drink, and are happy, and we don't fast on Rosh Hashanah. However, one shouldn't eat until he is full so that he won't come to קלות ראש, lightheadedness on Rosh Hashanah, and he should have the fear of Hashem on his face."

The Rambam (*Pirush HaMishnayos Rosh Hashanah* 4) writes, "*Hallel* isn't recited on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because they are days of avodah, humility, fear, and awe of Hashem. These are days to escape and to run to Hashem, days for *teshuvah*, tefillos, requests, and forgiveness. Therefore, *Hallel* and joy aren't appropriate on these days."

Notice that the Rambam refers to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as days of fear and days "to escape and run to Hashem." Unlike most fears that cause people to run away from them, the fear of Rosh Hashanah draws people closer to Hashem.

As we say in *Selichos*, בצִלְךָ אֶתְכֶסָּה מִחֲמַתְךָ בְּצִלְךָ - "I hide from Your anger in Your shadow." This expresses the uniqueness of *yiras Hashem*: true fear of Hashem does not push us away; it draws us closer, into His protective shade.

The Chasam Sofer offers another reason why we do not say *Hallel* on Rosh Hashanah. He explains that our ancestors join us in our tefillos on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and it is written, לֹא הַמֵּתִים יִהְיוּ יָדָא - "the dead cannot praise Hashem with *Hallel*." Therefore, we do not say *Hallel* on these days, when the souls of earlier generations are present with us.

The Meiri (Rosh Hashanah 16a) writes: "On Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is for both the living and the dead – whether their future will be one of pleasure or distress, wealth or loss."

The Rebbe said, "You shall know that this is only a sampling of Gehinom. The punishments in Gehinom are far greater..."

There was another chassid in the room who overheard both conversations. He asked the Beis Aharon, "So, which one is it? Should we be afraid of Gehinom, or shouldn't we?"

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

We can say that the same applies to the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah. If you are afraid of the judgment, you don't have anything to worry about. Hashem is our compassionate Father, and everything will be fine. But if you aren't afraid of the

judgment, you have a lot to be afraid of." It is the mixture of these two emotions, fear and bitachon, that everything will be good, which will grant us a good year.⁵¹

There was a conversation where the awesome judgment of Rosh Hashanah was being discussed. "We must believe that Hashem will give us a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah," one man concluded. The Brisker Rav told him that his calm attitude wasn't bitachon. "Bitachon is only where there is fear. When one isn't afraid, there is no bitachon. He simply isn't aware of what is going on." We should be afraid during the days of awe, and then strengthen ourselves with bitachon, believing that Hashem will undoubtedly grant us a favorable judgment. In this manner, fear and joy merge. But if we

51. An elderly Yid once overheard someone speaking Yiddish. He came closer and discovered that the voice belonged to a non religious young man speaking on the phone. From the few words he heard - and from the forlorn look on the young man's face - he understood that this person was in serious trouble. When the young man hung up, the elderly Yid approached him and asked if he could help.

The young man thought, "How can this old man possibly help me?" But his heart was so heavy that he decided to unburden himself and share what he was going through. He explained that he had been caught selling drugs. His lawyer advised him to plead guilty, which would at least lessen the punishment.

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

The young man figured he had nothing to lose, so he agreed. As they walked, he told the elderly Yid that his parents were Holocaust survivors who had abandoned Yiddishkeit after the war. The Yiddish language was the only thing that remained.

They came to the tzaddik and received a *brachah*. The young man believed in its power and told his lawyer he had changed his mind - he would plead not guilty.

For some reason, on the day of the trial, there was a substitute judge, not the usual one. As the proceedings unfolded, things looked bleak. The evidence was incriminating, and the attorney seemed inexperienced. He spoke endlessly, rattling on without saying anything convincing.

Yet when it came time for the verdict, the judge shocked everyone. "Since there is no incriminating evidence to convict the accused," he declared, "he is found innocent and may go free."

After the case, the lawyer revealed how they had won. "This was the first case I ever took," he said, "and the judge is my grandfather. He wanted to build my confidence so I would believe I could win cases. He made sure I won the first case I represented..."

We see that when a lawyer has a grandfather in the courtroom, the chances of winning are far better. And certainly, when the judge is the grandfather of the one being judged.

The judgment of Rosh Hashanah is presided over by our Father in Heaven. We can trust - deeply and confidently - that we will emerge victorious.

aren't afraid at all, it could be that we are ignoring the reality of the judgment.

The Tur (581) writes that most people wear black clothing when being tried in court and their lives are on the line. However, the Jewish nation wears white clothing because they trust that Hashem will perform a miracle and save them.

Why don't we wear colorful clothing, since we are sure that we will have a good judgment?

The Prishah answers that wearing colorful clothing might imply no fear at all. Perhaps we don't even know that we are being judged, which would explain why we are so calm and relaxed. By wearing white clothing, the clothes of *tachrichim*, we show that we know there's a ruling, but we rely on Hashem to give us a good judgment. It is a joy and

calmness that emanates from fear, not from denial.⁵²

The Beis Aharon (*Netzavim*) writes, "The main thing is [that on Rosh Hashanah] everyone should draw fear to themselves. Either *yirah iloyah*, divine fear [the fear that stems from perceiving Hashem's greatness], or, if he isn't on this level, he should be afraid of the judgment. The main thing is that everyone must be afraid, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do *tzedakah* with us."

The Baal HaTurim (*Netzavim* ד"ה את לבבך) writes, "From Elul on I am afraid before Hashem."

The Shlah Hakadosh (beginning of Rosh Hashanah) discusses the pasuk (Amos 3:8) אֲרִיָּה שָׁאָג מִי לֹא יִירָא, "A lion has roared; who will not fear?" He notes that the letters אֲרִיָּה stand for

52. Once, during Elul, Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt"l arrived at the *beis din* in Yerushalayim. The *dayanim* asked him, "Do you have a *din Torah* today?"

He replied that he did not.

"So why did you come?"

He answered, "I wanted to see how people act when they are being judged. The people who come to *beis din* are in the midst of financial disputes; their money is on the line. I wanted to observe their behavior. I saw some people saying Tehillim with deep *kavanah* as they waited for the ruling, and I saw others animatedly and passionately pleading their case. Everyone was worried, everyone was anxious. And I thought to myself: why don't we see people being just as anxious and worried during Elul, when the Days of Judgment are approaching? The judgment I am watching here is about money. But on Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is not merely about money – a person's entire future and life are at stake! So how do people remain so calm in Elul?"

We like to say that people are calm because they have *bitachon*, trusting that Hashem will grant them a good judgment. *Halavay* that this were the reason. Perhaps, though, it is also because people do not fully appreciate what is at stake.

A *marshal* is told in the name of Reb Chaim of Brisk zt"l:

A man planning to smuggle contraband across the border cannot sleep for nights; he is terrified he will be caught. The wagon driver is not as afraid – after all, it is not his merchandise. But as they approach the border, even he becomes nervous. The only ones who never feel fear are the horses.

We say (Tehillim 32:9), אַל תִּהְיוּ כַסּוֹס כִּפְרֵד – "Do not be like a horse or a mule..." We should not be like animals who feel no fear at all. As we near the Days of Judgment, we must feel fear – and then calm that fear with *bitachon*.

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt"l once told a *bachur* who had committed a grave aveirah, "How could you not have been afraid in the moments before *tekiyas shofar*?" The awareness that he would soon be hearing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah should have filled him with fear and prevented him from committing the aveirah.

אלול, ראש השנה, יום כיפור, הושענא רבא. On these days, who isn't afraid of Hashem's judgment?

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaar HaYirah 101) writes, "From the beginning of Elul until Yom Kippur, one should be afraid and tremble from the fearsome judgment."

It states (Tehillim 119:120) סֹמֵר מִפֶּחַדְךָ בָּשָׂרִי "My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I fear Your judgment." These words are gematriya 2090, the same as אלול, ראש השנה, יום כיפור, הושענא רבא.

It states (Koheles 3:14), וְהָאֱלֹקִים עָשָׂה שִׂירָאוֹ מִלִּפְנֵינוּ, "Hashem made it that we should fear Him." The Zohar (vol.3 98:) says this *pasuk* refers to Rosh Hashanah. Hashem established Rosh Hashanah, so we should fear Him.

The Steipler Gaon zt'l would often repeat in the name of the Chazon Ish zt'l that the definition of yiras Shamayim in our generation is to believe that whatever happens to us throughout the year was decreed on Rosh Hashanah.⁵³

Rashi (*Rosh Hashanah* 8.) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu judges the entire world [on Rosh Hashanah, to determine] what will happen to them until next year Tishrei." As the year progresses, we will discover what was decreed in Heaven.⁵⁴

Sometimes, the judgment on Rosh Hashanah is for several years, and not solely for the upcoming year. The *Magen Avraham* (end of 591) proves this from Pharaoh's dream, which occurred on Rosh Hashanah. He dreamed about seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. The future fourteen years were determined on that Rosh Hashanah.

Even if the judgment is for one year, it is sufficient to fill our hearts with fear. Think about the tefillah of וּנְתַנֶּה תּוֹקֶף, that we recite with immense fear and awe. מִי יִחִידָהּ וּמִי יִמּוּתָהּ... מִי יִשְׁלֶהָ, all these matters, and more, are decided on Rosh Hashanah.⁵⁵

53. A fly was bothering the Chazon Ish. His attendant tried to shoo it away, but it kept returning. The Chazon Ish said, "Leave it. It is a Rosh Hashanah fly." He meant that it had already been decreed on Rosh Hashanah that this fly should bother him, and therefore shooing it away would not help.

This is the basic *emunah* of a Yid: to know that everything that happens throughout the year was destined and determined on Rosh Hashanah.

54. We say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, הַיּוֹם הָרַת עוֹלָם. The Rokeach explains that הרת means "pregnancy," because everything that will occur during the year has its origin - its "pregnancy" - on Rosh Hashanah.

55. Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l said, "I am not someone who receives messages from Heaven. I do not know what was decreed on Rosh Hashanah. But after the year passes, I know exactly what was decreed last Rosh Hashanah."

Someone once passed away from pneumonia in Shevat, in the middle of the winter. Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l said, "He did not die from the cold. He was niftar when the sun shone brightly. His fate was determined on Rosh Hashanah."

During a global financial crisis, wealthy people everywhere were anxious about their fortunes. Reb Yosef Weinberg zt'l - himself a wealthy man and a relative of the Slonimer Rebbes - was the exception. He remained completely calm. The Beis Avraham of Slonim zt'l asked him, "How do you remain so calm when all wealthy people are so worried?"

He replied, "I laugh at these matters. My *yerid* - my market day - is Rosh Hashanah!"

The Beis Avraham repeated this story many times, because what happens in the middle of the year is not when it truly happens. Everything is determined on Rosh Hashanah.

A mashal is told of fishermen who cast a large net into the sea. Two fish swam inside and ate the bait - but

The Navi (*Shoftim* 5:1) writes, וְתָשַׁר דְּבוֹרָה וּבָרַךְ בֶּן, "Devorah and Barak sang on that day..." They praised Hashem for winning the war against *Sisra*. In this song, they said (5:28), ... בְּעַד הַחֲלוֹן נִשְׁקָפָה וְתִכַּב אִם סִיסְרָא... "Sisra's mother looked out of the window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he delayed?"⁵⁶

mother looked out of the window, crying... Why isn't his chariot here yet? Why is he delayed?"⁵⁶

Why was Sisra's mother so worried? He was a mighty warrior, and he won every

then found themselves trapped. One fish said, "We were foolish to spend so much time in the net. We should have taken the bait and left immediately."

The other fish replied, "When we took the bait, we were already trapped."

The *nimshal*: Throughout the year, disappointing things occur, and people say, "Had I been more careful, this wouldn't have happened." But those with *emunah* know that it did not happen now—it was destined and decreed on Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah is called (*Tehillim* 81:4) בְּכֶסֶה לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה - "a concealed holiday." The Chofetz Chaim explains: right now, it is concealed. The results of the awesome judgment will be revealed only when they occur.

In Radin, before *tekiyas shofar*, there was a short break (as in many *batei midrash*). Some said *Tehillim*, some learned mussar, and almost everyone prepared themselves for the upcoming holy mitzvah. But some *bachurim* used the break to wander around Radin, checking other *batei midrash*, seeing how many people were there, who the chazanim were, and other trivial matters.

The Chofetz Chaim heard about this, and before *tekiyas shofar*, he spoke. He told a story from his youth:

A *bachur* in the yeshiva became an *avel*—his mother was niftar. The question was how to break the tragic news to him. The father sent a telegram advising the yeshiva to buy the boy a new suit and place a note in one of the pockets informing him of his mother's passing. The *bachur* was delighted with his new suit and wore it proudly, unaware of what was hidden inside.

The Chofetz Chaim said: This is the meaning of בְּכֶסֶה לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. There is a concealed message. It is Yom Tov - we are happy - but something is hidden, and we do not yet know what it is.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a) states: "On Rosh Hashanah, everyone passes before Hashem like בְּנֵי מְרוֹן." The Gemara asks, "What does בְּנֵי מְרוֹן mean?"

"In Bavel," they explained, "it means כְּבָנֵי אֲמִרָא - like sheep." Sheep pass one by one through a narrow gate for *maasar*. Every tenth animal is marked with red dye as a sign that it is *maasar* and will be brought as a korban.

Now imagine the sheep frolicking happily in the pasture. If the one with the red dye knew what it meant - that he would soon be slaughtered - he would not be so happy.

Similarly, people are happy, but what is concealed? What is the decree? That remains hidden.

One of my grandfathers, Reb HersHKovitz zt"l, told a mashal: A man was niftar, and the *chevrah kadisha* placed his body on the floor of a *beis medrash*, covering him with a tallis. The niftar had a young son who was playing in the *beis medrash*. The child began playing with the strings of the tallis.

Someone told him, "If you knew what was hidden underneath, you would not play with this tallis." This is the meaning of בְּכֶסֶה לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה - something is concealed.

But with teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah, everything can be turned around.

56. Several laws of shofar are learned from this *pasuk*, because the Navi describes her cries as תִּכַּב, and Onkelos translates תִּרְעָה as יִבָּא. This teaches us that the shofar's sound should resemble the cry of a person.

The Midrash states that Sisro's mother shed one hundred tears. This is the source for the halachah to sound one hundred blasts on Rosh Hashanah.

war he fought. She should have assumed that he would undoubtedly win this war, too. Apparently, she thought, "True, he won every war until now, but maybe this time will be different."

The past doesn't guarantee the future, and this is the fear of Rosh Hashanah. Nevertheless, together with our fear, we have bitachon that Hashem, Who loves us, will grant us a good year.

Kabbalah Tovah

Shem MiShmuel (Shoftim 5671) writes, "Even if one sees that in the past, he accepted the yoke of heaven several times, and he didn't change his ways, nevertheless, he should try once again. Klal Yisrael has the strength to do so... A person should do this on Rosh Hashanah. He should make a kabbalah to become better from now on and not pay attention to the fact that he had made a similar kabbalah the previous year and nothing came from it. He should believe that this time, he will succeed in changing his

ways. In this merit, he will receive a good judgment."⁵⁷

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16b) says that מקרע גזר דינו של, changing one's deeds, שנינו מעשה אדם, rips up one's negative judgment. The Ritva says that the Gemara isn't referring to refraining from aveiros. That is teshuvah, and the Gemara isn't discussing teshuvah. Rather, the Gemara means to improve with deeds that are permitted. As the Ritva writes, מעשים של רשות שאינם הגונים קצת, "Permitted deeds that are slightly improper to do." When one changes his ways in these matters, it rips up the negative decree.

Certainly, if a person has bad habits that are forbidden to do, a *kabbalah tova* can help him become better. We are at the beginning of a new year, a time to make *kabbalos tovos*, good resolutions, which will remain with us throughout the year.

Slonimer tzaddikim have said that a *kabbalah tova* protects the person in this world⁵⁸ and the next world, but the *kabbalah* must be kept constantly, without fail.

57. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 11a) states, "Yosef was released from prison on Rosh Hashanah." The Chidushei HaRim zt"l asks why this is important to know. He explains that it teaches us that even if a person is imprisoned by the *yetzer hara*, which prevents him from serving Hashem properly, on Rosh Hashanah he can go free and serve Hashem as he desires.

The month is called תשרי, which can be understood as שרי - open, free (שרי ואסר) - because a person can become freed from the *yetzer hara* this month.

It states (Tehillim 61:7), ימים על ימי מלך תוסף. We can explain that ימי מלך are the two days of Rosh Hashanah, when we proclaim Hashem as King. We can also say that all ten days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* are ימי מלך, days when we crown Hashem. But that is not sufficient; rather, ימים על ימי מלך תוסף - add more days. Throughout the entire year, we should continue declaring Hashem's kingship and accepting the yoke of Heaven.

It states (Mishlei 31:27), צופנה הליכות ביתה. The Beis Avraham explains that a woman goes to the marketplace to buy what her home needs. This is the focus a person should maintain throughout his life - always preparing for ביתה, the time when he will return to his true home in Gan Eden.

58. On the 12th of Kislev תש"פ, there was a terrorist attack in Jersey City, in a grocery store—may Hashem protect us from all *tzaros*. One *yungerman*, a *melamed*, was coming home from *cheder* when the shooting began. He was very worried that his wife was in the grocery store, because she had told him she planned to be there around that time. Baruch Hashem, he found her alive and well at home.

She told him that she had indeed planned to go to the grocery store, but when she opened the door to leave, she saw a package on the doorstep. It was clothing she had ordered right after Yom Kippur for the sake of *tznius*. (On Yom Kippur, when the chazan was singing *Unesaneh Tokef*, she made a *kabbalah* to wear a particular type of *tznius* garment. She ordered it, but it took some time to arrive.) It arrived that very day, just as she was preparing

We blow a shofar from the narrow end, transmitting the sound through its wider end. It states in halachah (586:12) that if a person blows from the wider side, he hasn't performed the mitzvah. We can say that this hints to us that a kabbalah tova should begin with small things. For this is well known about kabbalos tovos. One doesn't have to take on difficult deeds. A small kabbalah tova is also significant. As Chazal say (Shir HaShirim Rabba 2:2) "If you open for me an opening the size of the point of a needle, I will open for you an opening as wide as the Ulam (of the Beis HaMikdash).

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l says that this lesson is alluded to in the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 25b) יפתח בדורו כשמואל בדורו, which can be understood as that if a person is יפתח, makes a small opening, a small improvement, he is precious to Hakadosh Baruch Hu like Shmuel was in his generation.

It also states in Yalkut Reuvani (Haazinu וְהֵאָסִיף) "אין בין גהנום לגן עדן אלא כחוט השערה בלבד, "The difference between Gehinom and Gan Eden is the size of a hairsbreadth." This can mean that one can elevate himself from being worthy of Gehinom to being worthy of Gan

Eden with a tiny kabbalah tova the size of a hairsbreadth.

It states (Tehillim 27:3-4) אִם תִּקְוֶה עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּיוֹמֵךָ אֶנִּי בּוֹטֵחַ, אֶחָד. Tzaddikim explain that this means בְּיוֹמֵךָ אֶנִּי בּוֹטֵחַ, I trust that Hashem will grant me a good year, אֶחָד, because of the one, small kabbalah tova.

The Mishnah (Avos 4:11) states, רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן אִיְיָקֵב אָמַר, הָעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אֶחָת, קוֹנֶה לּוֹ פְּרָקְלִיט אֶחָד. "When a person performs one mitzvah, he has acquired one advocate for the day of judgment." Reb Elyah Lopian zt'l asks why the Mishnah is written in the present tense. It should state, "If a person *performed* one mitzvah, he has acquired one advocate." Why does it state הָעוֹשֶׂה, that he performs it? Reb Elyah answers that the Mishnah means that one made a kabbalah tova that he will constantly perform. This is his פְּרָקְלִיט, his advocate for the day of judgment. The Mishnah emphasizes that even when it is מִצְוָה אֶחָת, a kabbalah to perform one mitzvah – and even if it is a small deed – that is sufficient to merit a good judgment.⁵⁹

May we all be zocheh to be inscribed and signed for a good year in the *sefer* of tzaddik gemurim.

to leave for the grocery store.

She decided to put it on before going out - and that was exactly when the shooting began. She was saved in the merit of her kabbalah.

59. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 16:) states that three *sefarim* are opened in Heaven on Rosh Hashanah: one for perfect *tzaddikim*, one for *resha'im*, and one for *beinonim*. Each person is inscribed in one of these books. If he is written in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim*, he is immediately destined for a good year, with peace and blessing.

We tend to think that to be written in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim*, a person must have lived the previous year like a *tzaddik*, or at least have done *teshuvah* and become worthy of that title.

However, the *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* (Re'eh) offers an innovative explanation. He writes that it depends on how one plans to live the upcoming year. If he intends to live the year as a *tzaddik* - to be careful with mitzvos, to improve his ways - he is inscribed in the *sefer* of *tzaddikim* and immediately written for a good year of life and peace. If a person plans to live like a *beinoni* or a *rasha*, he is inscribed in those books and judged accordingly.