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OVERCOMING SHAME AND SELF-DOUBT TO ANSWER THE CALL TO TESHUVA

In the early 1930s the Nazis ym"ts had gained significant political standing in Germany and were becoming a growing threat to the Jewish people. Rav Yerachmiel Cofnas recalled¹ a particular Shabbos, late in the afternoon, sitting in the home of the saintly Chofetz Chaim.² The room had already grown dark and the Chofetz Chaim pierced the silence when he began to speak in a low tone about the chevlei mashiach (the birth pangs of the redemptive process). It was clear from the tremor in his voice that he saw or at least sensed the atrocities of the Holocaust that tragically lay ahead. Klal Yisrael are in a grave situation and are approaching a very difficult period of time. We have to do teshuvah, daven, and accept upon ourselves to improve our ways so that HaKadosh Baruch Hu will save us... We must make a group of baalei teshuvah, to help bring the Mashiach. I will be the first to be registered on the "Chevras Baalei Teshuvah." I accept upon myself to increase my Torah and mitzvos as a merit for Klal Yisrael. Who is going to be the next one on the list? Who is the next one to put his name down on the "Chevras Baalei Teshuvah?"

The room remained silent. From the yeshiva leadership to the students who were present, nobody uttered a word. The Chofetz Chaim banged on the table.

"Who is next? Why are you silent?" He continued to bang as he began to cry bitter tears. "Eis tzora hee l'yaakov, a tragic time is upon us, it is the chevlei mashiach. You have no idea of the pain that Klal Yisrael is going to go through..."

We may wonder: Why did those holy Jews gathered in the Chofetz Chaim's home hesitate to respond to his desperate pleas? Or said differently, what impediments hinder us from confidently and wholeheartedly returning to Hashem?

The Necessity and Apparent Simplicity of Teshuvah

It appears that the Chofetz Chaim drew his instruction from Chazal (see Yoma 87b) as clearly codified in the words of Rambam, that teshuvah is a prerequisite for geulah.

"All of the Nevi'im commanded concerning repentance; the Jewish people will not be redeemed except by way of repentance. Indeed, the Torah long since assured us that in the end, at the close of the period of exile, Bnei Yisrael will turn to repentance and be immediately redeemed..." Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 7:5

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) describes six questions that each person will be called upon to answer when brought to judgment at the conclusion of our earthly existence. The questions address and reflect upon our commitment to fundamental Torah goals and values. However, the Avodas Yissaschar³ of Volbroz [Poland] speaks of a broader overarching question that we will have to confront as part of our heavenly accounting as well. The question, rhetorical in nature, is: why did we hesitate to actualize the opportunity of teshuvah? Sin is an unfortunate but inevitable part of the human experience.⁴ Yet Hashem has granted us the gift of teshuvah to right some of our wrongs. Why then do we often act as if teshuvah remains beyond our grasp?

Ironically, it seems from the Torah's presentation of teshuvah that it is in fact meant to be accessible and easily achieved.

The matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it. Devarim 30:14

If “the matter”⁵ is indeed so close, why do we live with a sense, albeit a false perception, that repentance is not so easy at all?

Facing the Shame and Finding Comfort in Our Unbreakable Bond
The Selichos that lead us to Rosh Hashana and officially begin the Yamim Noraim period⁶ open with the phrase, “lecha Hashem hatzedaka v’lanu boshes ha’panim” — You Hashem are charitable, and we are shame-faced. While the Jewish soul craves the opportunity to return to Hashem, the shame and embarrassment of sin is perhaps what makes it so difficult for us to face our Creator. We feel burdened by the failed promises of years past that weigh heavily on our minds and our hearts. But ultimately, we must find a way to “perform this mitzvah” despite the uneasiness and discomfort that we often feel in this spiritual cleansing process.

The sin of the Cheit Ha’egel was particularly shameful and devastating given the timing and context in which it occurred. Such a hurtful betrayal seemed like a sin from which the Jewish people would never truly recover. In fact, Rabbi Yitzchak is cited in the Gemara, Sanhedrin 102a, as stating that, “there is no punishment that comes to the world in which there is not a small portion of the sin of the Golden Calf;” indicating that we are still repaying our debts and living with its consequences until this very day.

Yet it is precisely after such an egregious sin as Cheit Ha’egel that the Jewish nation is introduced to a new and unique teshuvah “prayer technique” in the form of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.⁷

“Hashem passed before him and proclaimed: “Hashem! Hashem! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness; extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children’s children, upon the third and fourth generations.”

Throughout the Yamim Noraim, we return time and again to these expressions of Divine favor to guide us through the teshuvah process. The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 17b) notes how remarkable a gift these words are and emphatically recommends that they be used to achieve true forgiveness. The verse states: “And Hashem passed by before him and proclaimed” (Exodus 34:6). Rabbi Yochanan said: Were it not explicitly written in the verse, it would be impossible to say this, as it would be insulting to God’s honor. The verse teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl like a prayer leader and showed Moses the structure of the order of the prayer. He said to him: Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them act before Me in accordance with this order [i.e. let the prayer leader wrap himself in a prayer shawl and publicly recite the thirteen attributes of mercy] and I will forgive them. Rosh Hashana 17b (Translation from The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud)

The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy begin with the phrase “Hashem Hashem,”⁸ which the Gemara, Rosh Hashana 17b, so beautifully interprets, “I am Hashem before a person sins, and I am Hashem after a person sins and performs repentance.”

Hashem is encouraging us and inviting us into the teshuvah process by reminding us, despite our shame, that there is a constant bond we share with Him from which to draw strength.

Hashem calls out to us: “I knew the essence of your being before you sinned. I had awareness of your sin before you even committed it and I certainly know now what you have done. Nonetheless, I willingly choose to remain as your God. There is an eternal relationship that we share that sin cannot sever. We are bound with an unbreakable connection that no sin can dissolve. Your sin has left you with a (false) perception that we are no longer connected. But if you return to Me with sincerity, humility and heartfelt teshuvah, you will recognize that “Hashem, Hashem” — our bond was never truly broken. This lesson finds full expression⁹ in a costly failure that occurred in the early stages of settling the Land of Israel. After defeating Yericho, Yehoshua very clearly warns the nation to refrain from taking of the spoils of war; all is to

be consecrated to Hashem. Achan, a member of the tribe of Yehuda, surreptitiously violates Yehoshua’s command by taking from the consecrated possessions. As a result, Divine protection is somewhat withheld, and it leads to the tragic death of 36 Jews in the following battle against Ai. Hashem expresses His disappointment:

“The Jewish people have sinned. They have broken the covenant by which they were commanded. They have taken from the consecrated possessions.” Yehoshua 7:11

The Gemara, Sanhedrin 44a, in a startling series of comments, makes every effort to identify additional sins committed by Achan ranging from broad violations of the Five Books of the Torah to sexually immoral activity. Why does the Gemara delve beyond the text of the Navi to place additional guilt upon Achan? Why would Chazal actively seek to highlight the array of sinful behavior displayed by Achan?

The Chasidic master Rav Tzaddok hakohen of Lublin¹⁰ (1823-1900) resolves this very question by emphasizing the depth of the surprising and ironic conclusion to this Talmudic analysis of Hashem’s rebuke of Achan and the entire Jewish nation.

“Chata Yisrael” R. Abba bar Zavda said that from here it may be inferred that even when the Jewish people have sinned, they are still called “Israel.” R. Abba continues by citing the colloquial adage:

“Even when a myrtle is found among thorns, its name is myrtle and people call it myrtle.”

Rav Tzaddok explains that even in those painful moments of realization that we have been “caught” in a state of sin, at times an abundance of sin, we are still lovingly called “Yisrael.” Hashem’s outstretched right hand remains extended for those who have the courage and confidence to take hold of it. “I am Hashem before a person sins, and I am Hashem after a person sins and performs repentance.”

Rav Soloveitchik painted a picture and outlined a roadmap of the Yamim Noraim which helps us to overcome this self-doubt that can infiltrate the stability of our relationship with Hashem.

“Im ki’banim, Im ki’avadam.” On Rosh Hashanah, our relationship to Hashem is in doubt, as is evident from our equivocation in this liturgical portrayal, possibly as children, possibly as servants... In contrast, Yom Kippur represents “mercy in judgment.” Hashem then does not render his verdict as a monarch, but as a father, in accordance with R’ Akiva’s last statement in the Mishna of Yoma (8:9): “Happy are you, O Israel! Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you?”

“Your Father in Heaven.” A father does not generally render unmitigated strict judgment on a son. On Yom Kippur, we emerge victorious in judgment, because mercy is an intrinsic part of the judgment. Our relationship is no longer in doubt...¹¹

The Chofetz Chaim’s cry to join his “Chevras Baalei Teshuva” has yet to be fully answered. We should all believe that Hashem still desires us, despite our shortcomings, and answer his call.

Endnotes 1. Paneach Tzafunos: Rabbi Yerachmiel Cofnas (Biography) by Rabbi Moshe Boruch Katanka [pg. 71]. 2. Rabbi Yisrael Meir haKohen Kagan Zt”l (1838-1933). 3. Rabbi Yissachar Dov (Berish) haKohen Tornheim Zy”a (1803-1877). 4. Koheles (7:20) states, “For there is not one righteous man on earth who does good and doesn’t sin.” Note, however, Shabbos 55b for a discussion of four who never sinned. 5. There is, in fact, a discussion as to which “matter” the pasuk is referring to. This essay is following the understanding of Ramban, Sforno and Abarbanel who indicate that the specific mitzvah “matter” at hand is the mitzvah of teshuvah. 6. See Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 88:3. 7. Different suggestions are offered how to divide the phrases of the thirteen attributes. Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosafos, Rosh Hashanah 17b) has one approach; while the Arizal (Shaar Hakavanos – Drushei “va’yaavor”, drush 3) has a different understanding. 8. This follows the position of Rabbeinu Tam that the first two middos (attributes) are (1) Hashem and (2) Hashem. 9. See Sefer Yehoshua chapters 6-7. 10. Pri Tzaddik Parshas Tetzaveh, Siman 12; Lech Lecha Siman 3. 11.

Before Hashem You Shall Be Purified: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on the Days of Awe, pgs. 135-156 (Arnold Lustiger, 1998).
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Rosh Hashanah

How We Get Hashem to Remember

By Rabbi Reuven Taragin

The Malchuyot Focus

The Torah tells us two things about Rosh Hashanah – that it is a day of *terua* (horn blowing) and that its goal is *zikaron* (memory).

These two words are the basis for the *berachot* of *zichronot* and *shofarot*.

Two questions need to be asked. The first is the relationship between the two – *terua* and *zikaron*. The second is about the third *beracha* – *malchuyot* – that we not only add, but actually begin with, and emphasize throughout our Rosh Hashanah and *Aseret Yemei Teshuva* liturgy.

Why do we focus on *malchuyot* – the one *beracha* not mentioned (explicitly) by the Torah in reference to Rosh Hashanah?

Zikaron – Who Needs Reminding? The answer lies in understanding who *zikaron* aims to remind and how it does so. *Rashi*1 and the *Rashbam*2 on *Vayikra* 23:24 explain that *zikaron* aims to remind Hashem – of us (*Rashbam*) and of *Akeidat Yitzchak* (*Rashi*). This approach is based on the *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) that explains we use a ram’s horn to remind Hashem of the *akeida*.

1 The obvious question is why Hashem needs reminding? This is probably part of the reason why the *Rambam*2 explains *zikaron*’s goal differently. The *Rambam* understands that we are the ones who need reminding – the *shofar* reminds us of Hashem by waking us from the stupor of our normal routines. Though we know that Hashem created us and therefore our life’s mission should be to serve Him, we are often too busy to reflect and focus our lives on this mission. On Rosh Hashanah – the day Hashem created Man – we blow the *shofar* to remind us that we are His creations and that we should work to live up to the goals we were created to accomplish. The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*Mitzvah* 331) uses the *Rambam*’s explanation to explain the first approach as well. The question is not what Hashem remembers, but what He associates with us (*lizkor lachem*). When we identify with *Akeidat Yitzchak* as a model for our religious commitment, Hashem sees us in this same light. Our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for and commit ourselves to *Avodat Hashem* merits us Hashem’s *rachamim* (mercy) and His blessings for the continued good life we can use to best serve Him.

Zikaron Hinges on *Malchuyot*

We can now understand the centrality of *malchuyot*. The mission we are meant to remember on Rosh Hashanah is rooted in the recognition of Hashem as our King and Creator. The Torah focuses on the goal – *zikaron*. We focus on the means – *malchuyot* – which helps us develop and maintain the *zikaron* mindset.

This approach is summarized by the *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a), which quotes Hashem’s explanation of *malchuyot*’s goal as ‘for you to accept Me as King’ and then that of *zichronot* as ‘for your memory to rise positively before Me.’

The *Shofar* as the Common Facilitator

The *Gemara* concludes by presenting the *shofar* as the tool meant to inspire the unique aspects of both *malchuyot* and *zichronot*.

First, we use the *shofar* as a coronation horn. In addition to the general coronation symbolism, our *shofar* also reminds us of the *shofar* that proclaimed Hashem’s presence at Har Sinai for *Matan Torah*. We then use the ram’s *shofar* to remind us and (through this) Hashem of *Akeidat Yitzchak* – the symbol of the commitment modeled by our forefathers and ancestors for us to emulate. After the *beracha* of *zichronot*, we blow the

shofar as part of *shofarot*, which describe the *shofar gadol* that will herald the final redemption.

May our sincere and complete *kabbalat ol malchut shamayim* bring Hashem to view us in a way that merits Him blessing us with an upcoming year of good health, *hatzlacha* and the Final Redemption.

Footnotes

1 The connection of the *shofar* to the *akeida* also appears in the *Midrash Rabbah* (*Bereishit Rabbah* 56:10). See also *Vayikra Rabbah* (29 DH *Rebbe Yehoshua*) that also sees the *shofar* as aiming to impact Hashem.

2 *Mishneh Torah Teshuva* 3:4. See also *Yerushalayim* (RH 58:4) and the *Midrash Tanchuma* (*Vayishlach* 2), which also see the *shofar* as aiming to impact Man.

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Two Days and Two Judgements

by Rabbi Dr. Guy Matalon

The *Mishna* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) teaches that there are four times during the year when different aspects of the natural world are judged. For example, on *Pesach*, harvests are judged; on *Atzeret* (*Shavuot*), fruits are judged; and lastly, on *Succot*, water is judged. Humanity is judged on Rosh Hashanah. The *Mishna* says, “...all who are on the earth pass before Him, one by one, like ‘*bnei maron*.’” The term *bnei maron* is understood by the *gemara* in *Tractate Rosh Hashanah* (18a) in three ways: Firstly, like young sheep; secondly, like the stairs in the house of *Maron*, i.e., a narrow staircase that allows only one person at a time to climb; thirdly, like the soldiers of *King David* who were counted one by one before going into battle. Then the *gemara* adds, “*Rabba bar bar Chana* said in the name of *Rabbi Yochanan*, ‘They are all surveyed with one survey’.”

The *gemara* seems to teach us two contrary teachings: We are each judged individually, and, according to *Rabbi Yochanan*, we are judged all together. How are we to understand this?

Rabbi Dessler, in *Michtav M’Eliyahu* (Vol. 2 *Rosh Hashanah*) suggests that we have two types of judgments, and we find hints of them in Jewish sources. For example, the *Zohar* in *Parshat Pinchas* (231a) writes that *Rosh Hashanah* is always two days, where the first day is called “*din kashya*” (strong judgment) and the second day is called “*din rafya*” (weak judgment). The *Ramak*, *Rabbi Moshe Cordovero* (1522-1570), in his commentary on the *Zohar*, *Ohr Yakar*, explains that the first judgment is individual, whereas the second judgment is general.

On the first day we are judged according to our own merits and transgressions, and they are weighed using a qualitative scale known only to G-d, as the *Rambam* explains in *Laws of Teshuva* (3.4). On the second day we are evaluated according to our effect and influence on the Jewish People. That is, to what extent does the Jewish nation need us? It is theoretically possible that a person may be judged as an evil person (G-d forbid) on the first day, and yet his sentence would be overturned because of his role for the Jewish People.

As the old adage states, “If the king needs the services of the condemned man, he is brought back from the gallows.” If the Jewish nation needs a particular person because of what he does for the Jewish People, then even if he has more sins than *mitzvot* he is left to continue his important service to the greater society.

We cannot be sure how we would fare before G-d on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, but we can do *teshuva* (repent), increase our connection to *Torah* and strengthen our acts of kindness for others. Consider also taking a greater role for Jewish People. Make yourself indispensable to your family, to your community, to your people — and thereby may you merit to be judged favorably on the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*.

Rabbi David of Lalov used to say, “May we have a good year with big ‘*Kiddush Levana*’ letters!” A year where everyone can easily see the

goodness and blessings of the year, just as the letters of the Kiddush Levana prayer can be seen clearly even from far away.

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Halachipedia -

[Senior editor - Rabbi Ike Sultan]

Rosh Hashana

Rosh Hashana is the Jewish New Year which is both a holiday as well as a day of Judgement. Following Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur, there is a period called Aseret Yemei Teshuva, the Ten Days of Repentance. The laws and customs for Rosh Hashana and Aseret Yemei Teshuva are outlined below:

Customs of Erev Rosh Hashana

There are five main customs observed on Erev Rosh Hashana: 1) Laundering one's clothing. 2) Cutting one's hair. 3) Dipping in the mikveh. 4) Visiting the cemetery. 5) Giving tzedaka. [1]

Tachanun

Tachanun is not recited on Erev Rosh Hashana for Shacharit or Mincha, even though during Selichot which are said by night or at least before Netz Hachama we do recite the yud gimmel middot and the nefilat apayim.[2]

On the day before Erev Rosh Hashana, tachanun is recited at mincha. [3]

We do not blow the shofar on Erev Rosh Hashana and if one needs to practice blowing for the holiday, he should do so in a private room. [4]

Lashes

Some have the custom of receiving lashes on Erev Rosh Hashana, while others do so on Erev Yom Kippur.[5]

Visiting the Cemetery

Some have the custom to visit the grave-sites of righteous people on Erev Rosh Hashana. [6]

Fasting on Erev Rosh Hashana

...

Dipping in the Mikveh

The custom is to dip in a mikveh on Erev Rosh Hashana in honor of Rosh Hashana. [21] However this isn't required according to the law and therefore a beracha isn't recited and the laws aren't as strict. [22] If one cannot make it to a mikveh, he should try to spill 9 kav (approximately 12 liters) of water over himself, even if in the shower. [23]

A woman within her seven clean days of niddah and single women shouldn't go to the mikveh on Erev Rosh Hashana or Erev Yom Kippur. [24]

Hatarat Nedarim see Hatarat Nedarim - Yamim Noraim

Candle Lighting see Hadlakat Nerot of Yom Tov

The beracha on candle lighting for Rosh Hashana is "Baruch Attah... LeHadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov", without mention of "Yom Hazikaron." [25]

When Rosh Hashana falls out on a Friday night, the beracha for candle lighting is Lehadlik Ner shel Shabbat ViYom Tov.[26]

Sephardic women do not recite Shehecheyanu when lighting candles. Instead, they should have in mind to fulfill their obligation when they listen to Shehecheyanu during Kiddush.[27] Most ashkenaz women do recite shehecheyanu with candle lighting.[28]

Prayers of Rosh Hashanah

Note the relevant practices from Aseret Yimei Teshuva

Beginning Shacharit

There is a well known minhag that the Shaliach Tzibur for Shacharit, standing at his seat, begins his tefillah by singing out the ה in the word HaMelech in a melody. Once he completes the word, he approaches the amud and continues the rest of the sentence. [29]

Behavior During Prayer

Some have the minhag to stand bent slightly (hunched over slightly) during the Tefillot of Rosh HaShana and if one does so, one should make sure to stand straight for the end and beginning of each Bracha. [30] Some say it's preferable to stand straight for the Tefillot. [31]

Some have the minhag to daven slightly out loud during Tefillot of Rosh Hashana.[32] However, many authorities discourage this practice. [33] Some poskim encourage crying during the prayers of Rosh Hashana while some forbid it. [34]

HaMelech HaKadosh

If one forgot to switch from Atta Kadosh to HaMelech HaKadosh the first night of Rosh Hashana one doesn't have to repeat Shmoneh Esrei as long as one said the Yom Tov Shmoneh Esrei, however, if one said the weekday Shmoneh Esrei or on the day of Rosh Hashana or the second night of Rosh Hashana one should repeat Shmoneh Esrei. [35] Some disagree and hold that one needs to repeat Shemona Esrei.[36]

Yaaleh Veyavo

If one forgot Yaaleh VeYavo in Benching on Rosh Hashana during the day one does not have to repeat benching, but during the nighttime one must repeat benching. [37]

Brit Milah

If there's a Brit Milah in Shul on Rosh Hashana, the Milah should be preformed between Kriyat HaTorah and the blowing of the Shofar.[38]

Tzidkatecha

If Rosh Hashanah falls out on Shabbat, Sephardim still recite Tzidkatecha at Mincha, but Ashkenazim do not.[39]

Shofar

Mitzvah

It is a mitzvah from the Torah to hear the Shofar blows on Rosh Hashana. [40]

Text of the Bracha

The proper beracha is lishmoa kol shofar. However, if one recited litkoa shofar or al tekiat shofar, he fulfills his obligation. [41]

Shehecheyanu

The sephardic custom is that on the first day of Rosh Hashana, the beracha of shehecheyanu is recited after lishmoa kol shofar. [42] If the first day is Shabbat and therefore we do not blow the shofar, shehecheyanu is recited on the second day after lishmoa kol shofar. [43] If a sephardic person is blowing shofar for an ashkenaz congregation on the 2nd day of Rosh Hashana, then one of the ashkenaz congregants should recite the shehecheyanu. If the sephardic shofar blower, recites shehecheyanu anyway, the congregation has nevertheless fulfilled their obligation of reciting it. [44]

Standing for Shofar Blowing

The Ashkenazi custom is to stand even for the tekiot which are referred to as the tekiot dimiyushav, the 1st 30 tekiot, 3 sets of Tashrat, Tashat and Tarat.[45] A weak, ill, or old person can be lenient.[46] For Sephardim, the congregation should stand while the Baal Tokeah makes the Brachot on the shofar and then they may sit for the blows prior to Mussaf. For the blows during Mussaf and the Chazarat HaShatz, the congregation should stand.[47] The 30 tekiot after that are referred to as the tekiot dimeumad because one is required to stand for those. However, if one sat during these tekiot he has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation.[48]

One who couldn't go hear the shofar with a congregation and is having it blown for him at home, must stand for the shofar blowing.[49]

If a person just heard parts of the Chazarat Hashatz of Mussaf that make up the main part of Malchiyot, Zichronot, and Shofarot that would constitute enough of hearing Chazarat Hashatz to be considered as though one heard the shofar blasts in the context of Shemona Esrei (tekiyot al seder habrachot).[50] Others hold it is necessary to hear the entire thing.[51]

There is a minhag to keep the Shofar covered while it is not being used, including while the berachot on the shofar are being recited.[52][53] With this said, the Ba'al Tokeah should hold the shofar in his hand under the cover while he is making the berachot. [54]

Talking Between Blows

One should refrain from talking from when the beracha is recited until after all 100 tekiot are blown. [55] One should also try not to cough or yawn during the shofar blowing so as not to confuse any listeners.[56]

Some hold that one should not recite vidduy between the first set of shofar blows of תשר"ת and תש"ח or between תש"ח and תר"ת.[57]

Unsure if One Fulfilled the Mitzvah

If one is unsure if he heard the shofar or not, he should hear it again without a beracha. [58]

Blowing from the Right Side

Ideally, the shofar blower should try to blow it from the right side of his mouth, but this certainly doesn't prevent one from fulfilling his obligation if he doesn't. [59]

Who is Obligated?

Women are exempt from blowing or listening to the shofar. Nonetheless, it is a mitzvah for women to voluntarily hear the shofar. According to Ashkenazim she can recite the bracha or the one blowing can recite the bracha even if blowing only for women, while according to Sephardim she may not recite a bracha and someone blowing just for women also may not recite the bracha.[60]

A child who reached chinuch should hear the shofar being blown but can fulfill his obligation by blowing himself.[61]

Borrowing a Shofar without Permission

One may borrow a shofar to perform the mitzva without asking permission.[62] However, if the borrower has a cold, or if he suspects that the owner might be a finicky about germs, he should not use it without permission.[63]

If Rosh Hashana Falls out on Shabbat

If Rosh Hashana falls out on Shabbat, we do not blow the Shofar.[64] This is a rabbinic decree because there is a risk that one will take the shofar and go to an expert to learn how to blow it, and he will carry it four cubits in the public domain.[65]

Second Day of Rosh Hashana

In Kiddush of the second day of Rosh Hashana one should recite Shehechyanu. Since it is a dispute whether we should include Shechyanu it is proper to have a new fruit or wear a new garment and have that in mind while saying Shehechyanu.[66]

Some poskim hold that the new fruit should be tasted after kiddush before the Netilat Yadayim and Hamotzei.[67] However, others say one can wait until the meal.[68]

Simanim (Symbolic Foods)

Which Meals

There is a custom to eat certain fruits and vegetables as a good omen for the coming year on both nights of Rosh Hashana.[69] If one cannot, for whatever reason, eat one of the foods, he can simply point to the food and recite the Yehi Ratzon.[70]

Some have this minhag only the first night, but most do both nights.[71]

At Which Point in the Meal

Some have the custom to eat the Simanim before Hamotzi, while others insist on eating them after reciting Hamotzi and eating a Kezayit of bread.[72]

Which Foods

These fruits and vegetables include: dates, pomegranates, beets, gourd, black eyed peas, and fish head.[73] Some add apples in honey.[74]

There is a minhag of dipping the challah in honey on Rosh Hashana. [75]Some only dip the challah in honey[76], while others dip the challah in salt as well as honey.[77]

Some avoid eating walnuts ("Egoz") on Rosh Hashanah, as אגוז is the same Gematria as חטא (sin).[78]

Also, some avoid spicy or sharp foods on Rosh Hashana.[79]

Order of Simanim

If one is eating dates and other fruits, one should make a HaEitz on the dates because they're from the seven species with which Eretz Yisrael is praised.[80]

Some say that one doesn't make a HaAdama on vegetables during the meal.[81]

When to Recite the Yehi Ratzon

Some have the custom to recite the Beracha on the Siman, then the Yehi Ratzon, and then eat.[82] Others argue that doing so is an unwarranted interruption, so one should instead recite the Bracha of HaEitz, eat a little of the fruit, then make the Yehi Ratzon before continuing to eat,[83] while others hold that one should say the Yehi Ratzon prior to the Bracha.[84]

One may say the Yehi Ratzon's with Hashem's name.[85]

Sleeping on Rosh Hashana

It's a proper minhag not to sleep on Rosh Hashana. Someone who has a headache should sleep a little after midday in order to perform the mitzvot and prayers better.[86]

After the meal a person should go to the shul to learn according to his ability. Some have the practice of reading Tehillim twice over Rosh Hashana. A person who usually studies halachot should learn halachot rather than say Tehillim. In any event, one shouldn't waste time on this holy day of Rosh Hashana and wasting one's time on Rosh Hashana is like sleeping.[87]

Some poskim advise that it isn't appropriate to have tashmish on Rosh Hashana unless it is her Tevilah night.[88]

Minhag of Tashlich

Where and When?

The minhag is to say Tashlich near an ocean or river on the first day of Rosh Hashana.[89]

It is preferable for there to be living fish in the body of water. [90]

When

The minhag is to recite Tashlich on the first day of Rosh Hashana after mincha[91]

If one didn't get a chance to do it on the first day, one should still do it on the second day after mussaf[92], while others say to do it after Mincha.[93]

When the first day of Rosh Hashana falls out on Shabbat, some poskim say to postpone Tashlich, while others say just to say Tashlich then. [94]

What?

The custom is to recite certain pesukim that are printed in the machzorim. [95]

Many have the custom of shaking out their pockets as a symbol of throwing at one's sins. [96]

Many poskim suggest that men and women should avoid being there at the same time so that it doesn't become an inappropriate, mixed social scene on our day of Judgment. [97]

Who

In some communities, women do not attend Tashlich.[98]

Fasting on Rosh Hashana

It's forbidden to fast on Rosh Hashana. [99] Nonetheless, it's permissible to allow prayers to extend past chatzot (halachic midday) and fast until the afternoon. [100]

There is a mitzvah of Kavod and Oneg on Rosh Hashana since it is called "mikreh kodesh".[101]

Links

Yalkut Yosef Hilchot Rosh HaShanah and Yom HaKippurim (Hebrew, 5775)

Sources

1. Shulchan Aruch and Rama OC 581:4.

Fresh Clothing and Haircuts This is based on the Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 1:3 writes that unlike a typical person who is getting ready for judgment, the Jewish people wear fancy, white clothing and get haircuts because we have confidence in God's kindness and the outcome of the decision.

2. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 581:3, Kaf HaChaim on Shulchan Aruch, OC 581:73, Chazon Ovadia (Yamim Noraim page 46).

Mishna Brura 581:23 adds based on the Magen Avraham that even if the Selichot continue past Alot Hashachar, since they are typically said before that you would recite the Tachanun during Selichot. Kaf Hachaim 581:73 agrees.

3. Yalkut Yosef (Moadim page 21), Kaf Hachayim 581:74, Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 46

4. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 21

5. Kaf HaChaim 581:58

6. Rama 581:4. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:13 points out that we are obviously not praying to the dead people themselves as that would be Avoda Zara, but rather that Hashem perform kindness and listen to our prayers thanks to the merit of these great tzaddikim. Mishna Brurah 581:27 and Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 52, as well as the Sefer Ikarim 4:35 write likewise. see Rabbi Doniel

Neustadt for a lengthy discussion ...

20. Rama, Orach Chaim 581:2
21. Rama 581:4
22. Chacham Ovadia Yosef (Chazon Ovadia pg. 57 and Halichot Olam 2: page 225), Moed Likol Chai 12:11 based on the Rosh (Yoma 8:24) who quotes Rav Saadya Gaon who says to recite a beracha on going to the mikveh on Erev Yom Kippur and argues strongly.
see Chazon Ovadia pg. 59 in the note where he writes that if it is difficult for someone on Erev Rosh Hashana, can be lenient since the Shulchan Aruch only mentions the custom to go on Erev Yom Kippur
23. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 22, Chazon Ovadia (Yamim Noraim page 51, 57).
24. Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim page 59, although the Magen Avraham O.C. 606:8 does mention a practice of single women to go to the mikveh on Erev Yom Kippur for teshuva.
25. Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 62. see there where he writes that it wouldn't be a problem of a hefsek between the beracha and the candle lighting to mention yom hazikaron, but lechatchila one shouldn't do it.
26. Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 62
27. Chacham Ovadia Yosef (Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 62 and Shu"t Yechave Daat 3:34), Chesed La'afim 263:5
28. see Rabbi Ari Enkin
29. Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim 584:1, Shu"t Menachem Meishiv Siman 91 on reciting the word HaMelech before approaching the amud. The sefer Minhag Yisrael Torah explains the minhag to sing the π in a melody comes from the Gemara in Mesechet Menachot (daf 29) that Olam HaZeh (this world) was created with the letter π as it is a letter with a large gap on the bottom and a smaller gap towards the top. Those who wish to descend down a wayward path can do so with ease, while those who wish to repent and elevate themselves will be exalted amongst their peers. Similarly, the Shaliach Tzibur should request in his tefillot that Hashem should create an opening to receive our Teshuva.
30. Shulchan Aruch 582:4 writes that those who have the minhag to stand bent over for Tefillot on Rosh Hashana should stand straight at the end of the Bracha. Mishna Brurah 582:14 writes that starting from Baruch Atta Hashem through the beginning of the next Bracha one should stand erect so that it doesn't appear like one is adding the established bows of Chazal.
31. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:2
32. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 582:9 writes that one may daven out loud during Tefillot of Rosh Hashana and not worry about bothering others Davening since everyone has a machzor. Mishna Brurah 582:24 writes not to raise one's voice too much. Rav Mordechai Lebbhar (Magen Avot, Orach Chaim 582:9) writes how in some Moroccan communities, one person recites the entire silent Shemoneh Esrei out loud, and everyone else follows along silently.
33. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:2, Chaye Adam 139:2, Kaf HaChaim 582:17, and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's footnote on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:2. Kaf HaChaim 582:17 adds that if one doesn't have kavana another way one may raise one's voice slightly.
34. Rav Moshe Shternbuch in Teshuvot Vihanhagot 2:268 quotes the Vilna Gaon in his Sefer Maaseh Rav 207 that it is forbidden to cry, but also quotes the Arizal (brought down in Baer Heitev 584) that any person with a good soul would cry on Rosh Hashana. He claims that they aren't disagreeing, but rather that the Vilna Gaon is talking about crying from fear of the day of judgement and viewing the day as one of sadness and gloom. But if the tears come spontaneously from a longing for Hashem during the prayers, that it praiseworthy.
35. Chaye Adam 24:10, Sh"t Igrot Moshe 1:170, Rabbi Hershel Schachter in a shuir (min 43-45:30)
36. Mishna Brurah (Shaar Hatziyun 582:4). Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg in Moriah Elul 5759 22:10-12 p. 100 writes that one doesn't fulfill one's obligation since the theme of Malchut is a main theme of Shemona Esrei.
37. Mishna Brurah 188:19 quotes the Magen Avraham 188:7 who says one doesn't repeat Birkat HaMazon and the Eliyah Rabba who argues and the Mishna Brurah leaves it unresolved. Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 57:7(4) quotes both opinions and in note 25 he concludes that one doesn't have to repeat benching because it's a Safek Brachot LeHakel. Similarly, Rabbi Hershel Schachter in a shuir (min 41-43) mentions that some achronim hold that one doesn't have to repeat benching because there is an opinion that one is allowed to fast on Rosh Hashana. When asked whether this would be considered Safek Deoritta Lechumra he explained that even if one forgot Yaaleh VeYavo one fulfills the Deoritta obligation of benching it just that one didn't fulfill the din derabbanan to have a meal for Yom Tov.
38. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 584:4. Kaf HaChaim, Orach Chaim 584:28 quotes those who recommend waiting until the Tefillah is over, but Magen Avot ad loc. writes how the Minhag is like Shulchan Aruch.
39. Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chaim 595:1, Magen Avot ad loc.
40. Yalkut Yosef 583:1 (Moadim pg. 36) from the pasuk in Bamidbar 29:1 $\text{יִזְכֹּרְךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ}$
41. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 36
42. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 36, Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 116
43. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 36,48, Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 112, 116
44. Yalkut Yosef pg. 36, Sh"t Yabia Omer 1:29:11
45. Mishna Brurah 585:2
46. Shaar Hatziyun 585:2.
47. Yalkut Yosef 583:3 (Moadim pg. 36). Netsiv (Emek Hasheylah Bracha 171:2) explains that the practice of the Sephardim is to sit for the tekiyot d'meumad since one doesn't want to fulfill one's obligation with those tekiyot since the main tekiyot are the ones that are part of the Shemona Esrei (tekiyot al seder habrachot). Therefore, they sit in order to demonstrate that they don't want to fulfill their obligation. However, the one blowing stands because he might fulfill his obligation either way according to those who hold that having negative intent doesn't help to fulfill a mitzvah. The Ashkenazic custom he explains is based on the concern that there will be talking and so it is in our best interest to fulfill one's obligation when those tekiyot immediately following the bracha.

48. Mishna Brurah 592:2
49. Sh"t Haridbaz 4:25
50. Chazon Ish OC 137:5, Minchat Yitzchak 4:48, Yalkut Yosef (Yamim Noraim, 5775 edition, p. 212)
51. Griz (Chidushei HaGriz on Shas v. 2, 5732 edition, p. 224, on topic Baal Tosif on Tos R"H 28b), also cited by Mpeninei HaRav p. 164-6 and Moadim Uzmanim 1:8
52. Bei'ur Heitev Orach Chaim, end of Siman 593, see also Kitzur Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Kaf HaChaim Siman Katan 14.
53. There are two main reasons for this minhag, one rooted in fundamental Halacha (Torat Nigleh) and one rooted in Kabbalah (Torat Nistar). Shu"t Avnei Nezer (Siman 431), based on the Rambam, states that the main mitzvah is to hear the sound of the Shofar (fishmoa kol Shofar) and that one should cover the Shofar during the berachot so that the Shofar does not see its embarrassment that the beracha is on the sound and not on the body of the shofar itself- a similar logic as to why one covers the Challah from the beginning Kiddush on Shabbat until HaMotzei. The Elef HaMagen (Siman Katan 7) explains in the name of the Rada"l's introduction to the Zohar that the sounding of the Shofar corresponds to the Akeidah, when, according to the Midrash, Avraham hid Yitzchak so Yitzchak would not injure himself with the knife and become blemished, rendering himself unfit to be slaughtered at the Akeidah. Therefore, covering the Shofar is a remembrance to this aspect of the Akeidah. Finally, the Likutei MaHara'ach posits that one should cover the Shofar so the Satan does not power over it.
54. Kaf HaChaim Siman Katan 14 in the name of the Ben Ish Chai. The sefer Zeh HaShulchan (Siman 593) cites this as the minhag of various Gedolim and Tzaddikim. See also Siddur Yaive"z, Elef HaMagen Siman Katan 7.
55. Chaye Adam 141:9. Sh"t Minchat Yitzchak 3:44 and 4:47 says that Asher Yatzar may be recited during this time.
56. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 40
57. Yalkut Yosef (Siman 8 fnt. 31) unlike Or Letzion 1:39 who permitted. Or Letzion is based on Tosfos Pesachim 115a and Mishna Brurah 475:26. However, Rav Ovadia argued based on Ramban, Rashbatz, and Ran who seem to disagree with Tosfos.
58. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 37, Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim pg. 161
59. Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 41
60. Shulchan Aruch and Rama Orach Chaim 589:6. There is a major dispute surrounding women and the recitation of a beracha upon performing the mitzvot that are time bound, which they are exempt from. The Rambam (Hilchot Tzitzit 3:9) holds that since women are exempt from the Mitzvah of Tzitzit they can't make a Bracha on it (see also Hilchot Shofar Sukkah Vilulav 6:13 about sitting in a Sukkah). On the other hand, the Raavad (Hilchot Tzitzit 3:9) and Tosfos (Eruvin 96a, Rosh Hashana 33a, Kiddushin 31a s.v. lo mikadana) quoting Rabbenu Tam argue that even if women are exempt from a mitzvah they may recite the bracha if they opt to perform the mitzvah. The Maggid Mishna Hilchot Sukkah 6:13 explains the Rambam as saying that it is impossible to say VeTzivanu if a person is exempt from the mitzvah. Shulchan AruchOrach Chaim 589:6 follows the Rambam, while the Rama Orach Chaim 17:2 accepts the Rabbenu Tam.
 - o What emerges from the halacha is that Ashkenazim hold that women may recite the bracha upon a mitzvah that they are volunteering to do, while according to Sephardim they may not.
 - o Chacham Ovadia Yosef (Shu"t Yabea Omer 2:OC 6, Shu"t Yechave Daat 1:68, Chazon Ovadia Sukkot 149-151) very strongly encourages following Shulchan Aruch that women do not say the beracha.
 - o However, See Chida (Birkei Yosef 654:2) who opines that even Sephardim have what to rely upon to follow Rabbenu Tam and Kaf Hachaim Orach Chaim 17:4 who quotes this. Similarly, given the dozens of Poskim who rule that a Sephardic woman may recite the beracha and that that was the custom in their communities, Rav Mordechai Lebbhar (Magen Avot, Orach Chaim 589:6) writes that women from those communities may continue with their traditions, but others may not, as the Shulchan Aruch rules stringently and we would say Safek Berachot Lehakel.
61. Rav Yitzchak Yosef (Motzei Shabbat Netsavim 5779 min 29) explained that Rav Elyashiv Haarot Rosh Hashana and Gittin wrote that a child who reached chinuch needs to hear the shofar from an adult because the blowing of a child isn't considered the blowing of a mitzvah. However, Rav Yosef argued that it is considered a shofar blast for himself.
62. Magen Avraham 586:4, Mishna Brura 586:9. Halachos of Other People's Money pg. 68
63. Halachos of Other People's Money pg. 68 based on Aruch Hashulchan 14:11
64. Shulchan Aruch 588:5 based on Mishna Rosh Hashana 29b
65. Mishna Brura 588:13 based on Gemara Rosh Hashana 29b. see more on Chabad.org
66. Shulchan Aruch OC 600:2, Rabbi Eli Mansour pg. 10
67. Machasit Hashekel 600:22
68. Rav Elyashiv (cited by Ashrei Haish 3:14:4 and Dirshu)
69. The Gemara (Horayot 12a) says that a person should see gourds, fenugreek, leek, beets, and dates (though these definitions are the subject of controversy) on Rosh Hashana as a good omen. The Gemara (Keritot 6a) records the same statement with the text that a person should eat these fruits and vegetables as a good omen. Beit Yosef 583:1 notes the different versions and rules in Shulchan AruchOrach Chaim 583:1 that a person should eat these foods as a good omen.
70. Kaf HaChaim 583:6 writes that if one can't eat a certain food, he may just look at it and say the Yehi Ratzon nonetheless. Nitei Gavriel 29:24 agrees.
71. Eliyah Rabba 583:1 writes that the minhag is to eat simanim on both nights of Rosh Hashana. Machazik Bracha 583:2, Chazon Ovadyah (p. 93), Teshuvot VeHanagot 2:266 Yalkut Yosef Moadim pg. 29, Halichot Olam v. 2 p. 227 and Rivevot Efraim 6:308:1 agree. However, Bnei Yisachar 2:11 and Eishel Avraham MeButchach 583 explain the minhag of eating the simanim only on the first night of Rosh Hashana. Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:1 fn. 479) notes both traditions.
72. Rav Ovadia (Chazon Ovadyah, Yamim Noraim p. 93) writes in favor of after HaMotzi. Rav Mordechai Lebbhar (Magen Avot, Orach Chaim 583:1) writes how the Moroccan custom is to eat them before. However, he writes that since it's very easy to accidentally eat a Kezayit and complicate one's situation with respect to a Beracha Acharonah, many Poskim prefer one wait until

after HaMotzi, including Shemesh uMagen 3:72

73. Horayot 12a, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 583:1, Torat HaMoadim 4:1
74. Rama Orach Chaim 583:1
75. Magen Avraham 583:1, Mishna Brurah 583:3, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:9. Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:1) says they did this from Rosh Hashana until the end of Sukkot.
76. Nitei Gavriel (Rosh Hashana p. 209, n. 17) writes that the Chazon Ish and Stiepler's practice was to eat challah without salt on Rosh Hashana. See there for other sources on this matter.
77. Kaf HaChaim 583:4. See Nitei Gavriel (Rosh Hashana p. 209) for different minhagim about whether to dip the challah in salt on the same side as it is dipped in honey or on the other side. See there also for a difference in minhagim whether to dip the challah in salt before dipping it in honey or afterwards.
78. Rama Orach Chaim 583:2
79. Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:2)
80. Halichot Shlomo (1:17) writes that one should make the HaEitz upon the dates because they're from the seven species with which Eretz Yisrael was praised and they come before pomegranates on that list (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 211:4). Ben Ish Chai (Nitzavim #4) and Nitei Gavriel 29:4 agree. Kaf HaChaim 583:13 records the practice of some people to make a HaEitz on the apple to exempt the dates. He explains that perhaps they brought out the apple first, and in such a case, one need not wait for the dates to come out to make the bracha upon them. Rav Mordechai Lebhav (Magen Avot, Orach Chaim 583:1 fn. 472) reports how the Moroccan custom is to have the apples first and recite HaEitz on them, and that all the Machzorim list the Simanim that way. He argues that it's not an issue of Kedimah, because one doesn't really want to eat both the apple and the dates right now. This, he says, resolves Rav Shlomo Zalman's issue. Rivevot Efraim 8:558:3 writes that after making HaEitz on the dates, one may eat the apples prior to the pomegranates because the rules of precedence apply only regarding the Bracha, not regarding when each food should be eaten.
81. Chazon Ovadyah (p. 98) writes that one shouldn't make a Bracha upon the cooked vegetables because they're considered as part of the meal. Halichot Shlomo (1:18), however, writes that one should make a HaAdama upon the gourd and exempt the other vegetables. To avoid all doubt, Nitei Gavriel 29:18 writes that one should make a HaAdama on a banana. Chut Shani (Rosh Hashana p. 48) agrees. It is noteworthy to mention that Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 211:2 rules that when eating a food which is HaEitz and a food which is HaAdama one should make the bracha on the food which one prefers first.
82. Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:1) notes how this is the Moroccan Minhag and not an issue of Hefsek, since the Yehi Ratzon is for the purpose of eating.
83. Magen Avraham 583:2 quotes the Magalei Tzedek as saying that one should say the Yehi Ratzon in between the Bracha and eating. He explains that the Yehi Ratzon is a prerequisite for eating and thus does not constitute an interruption. The Magen Avraham, however, argues that it's not such a requirement to say the Yehi Ratzon, and as such it is preferable to say the Yehi Ratzon after taking a bite. Mishna Brurah 583:4 and Chazon Ovadyah (p. 93) agree with the Magen Avraham. Rabbi Eli Mansour writes this as well.
84. Rav Hershel Schachter (quoted in Halachipedia Article 5773 #3) said that it makes sense to say the Yehi Ratzon before the Bracha so that the Yehi Ratzon can function as a Tefilla and the eating as an action enhancing the Tefilla. Teshuvot VeHanhagot 2:266 agrees. See Chazon Ovadyah (pg. 93) who quotes the Chemdat Yamim who argues that one shouldn't say the Yehi Ratzon prior to the Bracha because that is a violation of asking for one's personal needs before praising Hashem (See Gemara Brachot 32a).
85. Mishna Brurah 583:2 writes that the text of the Yehi Ratzon begin with Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha Hashem Elokeinu VeLokei Avoteinu with Hashem's actual name. Teshuvot VeHanhagot 2:266 and Chazon Ovadyah (p. 93) agree. Nitei Gavriel 29:22, however, writes that from some poskim it seems that there was a text without Hashem's name. Rav Shlomo Zalman's minhag (Halichot Shlomo p. 12 note 70) was to say the first Yehi Ratzon with Hashem's name and the others with Avinu SheBaShamayim. He explained that he did so because it's difficult to have the proper kavana when saying Hashem's name. Similarly, the Steipler's minhag (Orchot Rabbenu vol 2, p. 175) was to say them without Hashem's name.
86. Rama (Orach Chaim 583:2), Chazon Ovadyah (Yamim Noraim, pg 183-4), Kaf HaChaim 584:38,39, Ben Ish Chai Parashat Nitzavim:11, Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 33, Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:2)
87. Yalkut Yosef (Moadim p. 33), Sh't Yechave Daat 3:44
88. Knesset Hegedola 581:8, Pri Chadash 581:4, Birkei Yosef 581:18, Machzik Bracha 581:4
89. Chazon Ovadyah (Yamim Noraim, pg 186), Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 44. The name of this ritual comes from a verse in Michah 7:19 which says כַּל תִּשְׁלַח בְּבִצְלוֹתַי, וְהָיָה לְךָ מִיָּמִין וּמִשְׁמָלָתְךָ מִיָּמִין. This minhag is mentioned by the Rama 583:2. Mishna Brurah 583:8 says that this is in remembrance of the akedat yitzchak, because the midrash says that on his way, Avraham had to cross a river, and when the water level was up to his neck he called out to Hashem and Hashem saved him. Rama in Torat HaOlah 3:56 explains that when one goes to an ocean or rivers and sees the greatness of Hashem's creations, he will immediately regret his sins and will be forgiven. The Kaf Hachayim 583:30 calls this an Ashkenazic minhag but adds that the custom in Jerusalem was to say it. Maaseh Rav 209 writes that the minhag of the Gra and his student Rav Chaim Volozhin was not to do tashlich at all, but Rav Moshe Harari in Mikraei Kodesh Rosh Hashana 14:note 4) writes that many people who generally follow the customs of the Gra do not follow him for this.
90. Mishna Brurah 583:8. Mishna Brurah elaborates that this is symbolic of our wish to be immune to the ayin hara and that we want to be as fruitful as the fish of the sea. Mateh Ephraim 598:4-5 also says it should be done with fish, but criticizes the minhag that some have of feeding the fish crumbs of bread. The Machatzit Hashekel 583:5 also says it is forbidden to throw food into the water.
91. Chazon Ovadia Yamim Noraim page 186. Rav Moshe Shternbuch in Teshuvot VeHanhagot 1:346 agrees but says that mincha should be said earlier in the day so tashlich could be said immediately afterwards because he doesn't think it is so simple that it's permissible to carry the sidur. Also see Moadim U'Zmanim 1:34 where he discusses this issue.
92. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 35, Sh't Torah Lishma 145, Ben Ish Chai Netsavim 12

93. Nitei Gavriel (Rosh Hashana 69:14)

94. Ben Ish Chai (Nitzavim 12) says to say it even on Shabbat. Kaf Hachayim 583:31 says that is the custom in Yerushalayim. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 35, Sh't Yabia Omer 4:47, Sh't Yechave Daat 1:53, Halichot Olam 2:pg. 231 say that you should do it on that day but if there is no eruv then you cannot carry a book with you. If there is a concern that people will carry books anyway, it should be done the next day. If there is an eruv however, one should do it. If one normally doesn't rely on the eruv to carry, in this case he can give it to a child to carry for him. Shvut Yaakov 3:42 quotes the Shnei Luchot Habrit that it should be postponed, but disagrees and says to say it on shabbat, and quotes the Mahari (Teshuva 136) as saying the same. This is also the ruling of the Mateh Ephraim 598:4, Shaare Teshuva 583:6. The Elef Hamagen 598:11 says to postpone it. Rabbi Eli Mansour says this is the custom of the Brooklyn Syrian Community based on the psak of Chacham Baruch Ben Chaim, and Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:1) writes in favor of postponing, as well, especially since people will make mistakes and end up carrying even if there is an Eruv. See Yabia Omer 4:47 and Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 34 for a summary of the opinions on this matter.
95. Yalkut Yosef Moadim page 35
96. The Mateh Ephraim 598:4 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 129:21. Eliya Rabba 596:3 writes based on kabbala that shaking out your pockets is like shaking off the kelipot (layers) that stick to us when we sin. Rabbi Eli Mansour points out that this is in no way a substitute for repenting, just a symbolic act to show that our repentance is sincere.
97. Aruch Hashulchan 583:4 and Elef Hamagen 583:7. Rabbi Eli Mansour, Ketzeh Hamateh 598:7 and Yalkut Yosef Moadim 35 say that women aren't obligated to do tashlich and therefore shouldn't in order to prevent inappropriate mingling between genders.
98. Magen Avot (Orach Chaim 583:1) notes how the Minhag in Morocco and Tunis was for the women not to attend Tashlich. He also quotes Erech HaShulchan as saying that women should not go, but, if they do, then the men should not go. Tashlich should not be used as an opportunity to mingle.
99. Shulchan Aruch 597:1, Chazon Ovadyah (Yamim Noraim, pg 180)
100. Mishna Brurah 597:2 writes that even though usually on Shabbatand Yom Tov one shouldn't fast until after chatzot on rosh hashana it's permissible to allow the davening to extend past chatzot. Rav Hershel Schachter on yutorah.org (min 40-42) explains that this leniency is based on the fact that there are opinions in the Geonim who even permit fasting completely on Rosh Hashana.
101. Shulchan Aruch HaRav 529:5

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The Essence of Aseret Yemei Teshuva

By: Rav Menachem Mendel Blachman

Many are familiar with the practice to avoid all Pas Palter during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, even if they are lenient to eat it during the rest of the year. This is quite a strange thing. If it's okay to eat during Tammuz, why can't we eat it during Tishrei? It's easy to say we are trying to be more frum, but honestly, do we think we can fool God?

What is the source of this practice? The source is brought down in the Tur (O.C. 603). He cites a Yerushalmi (Shabbos 3:3) where Rav Chiya tells Rav to eat his Chullin Al Taharas Hakodesh. Let's explain this. We know that holy objects such as Teruma cannot be touched by some impure factor, and if they are, they become prohibited. But regular food is perfectly permissible even if it becomes Tamei. Yet there were people who were careful to eat even their regular food with all the restrictions of Tahara, as if it were Kodesh. Rav Chiya told Rav that if possible, he should eat all his food with the kedusha of eating B'tahara—it's a value. Why is this so? There is no Halacha of eating Chullin in Tahara. So what's the point? Should we be more frum than God?

But then Rav Chiya tells Rav that if he is unable to eat his Chullin B'tahara all year long, he should do it at least for seven days a year. What are these seven days a year? The Tur cites the Raavya, who says that he received from his teachers that the seven days that Rav was supposed to eat Chullin Al Taharas Hakodesh are the seven days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The Tur explains that Rav Chiya mentioned "seven days" even though there are ten days of the Aseres Yemei Teshuva is that it is obvious that on Rosh Hashana one would eat Chullin B'tahara because Chayav Adam L'taher Atzmo B'regel—everyone should be Tahor on Yom Tov. Since we have two days of Rosh Hashana where Chullin B'tahara is a given and one day of Yom Kippur when we do not usually eat, we are left with seven days where Rav Chiya was telling Rav to be extra careful.

We have to understand what is so unique about Rosh Hashana. Apparently, this is a Halacha —on Rosh Hashana, there is a din that you eat Chullin B'tahara. We don't do this nowadays because we are all tamei meis anyway. Hypothetically, when the Para Aduma comes back, it is obvious that we will eat Chullin with all the sanctity and restrictions of Tahara on Rosh Hashana.

Coming back to our practice, the Tur continues that based on this, the practice in Germany is that those who ordinarily eat Pas Palter are careful not to eat this bread during Aseres Yemei Teshuva. We now have to ask a very simple question. Is this Halacha of Chullin Al Taharas Hakodesh a Chumra or a Ma'ala? Is it a questionable Halacha, and we should be careful during this season, or is it something that is essentially permitted and yet somehow it is better to eat everything B'tahara? It certainly seems to be the latter. It's not even like a Mitzva that you didn't have to do but if you do it, that's great. It seems to be valueless—it's like saying since you're kissing Mezuzos, why don't you also kiss the doorpost! Why would you care about Tahara when you eat Chullin? And on top of that, we extrapolate from this another Halacha of not eating Pas Palter, which also is permitted—the Rabbis said it is ok —yet there is a Ma'ala of not eating it during Aseres Yemei Teshuva. What we need to understand is what is the Ma'ala of Chullin Al Taharas Hakodesh and what it has to do with Pas Palter.

The Chayei Adam saw this as an idea of being frum, of taking on extra Chumros. But I do not think this is a logical conclusion, because Chullin B'tahara is not a Chumra—it is not a questionable situation where we decided to take a more stringent view. I would like to offer an alternative approach to this issue.

The Rambam writes (Hilchos Teshuva 2:6) that although it is obvious that anytime a person repents it helps—actually, we are supposed to repent every day—during these ten days, it is accepted right away. The source is Dirshu Hashem B'himatzu. Why is it that during this time period, a person request for forgiveness is granted immediately? Why at other times does it not work so quickly? God just puts me on hold? If He is capable of answering immediately—and he certainly is—what is the holdup?

Rosh Hashana is a unique day is because it is defined as Hayom Haras Olam, the birthday of the world. And because of this, Hayom Ya'amid Bamishpat Kol Yetzarei Olamim, we are taken to court. Why is this so? Why does the world's birthday mean judgement? And moreover, it isn't even true that it is the birthday of the world. The first day of creation actually was the 25th of Elul, and the 6th day, when man was created was Rosh Hashana. Yet Rosh Hashana is called the day the world was brought into being.

The answer seems to be rooted in the Pasuk, "Vayhi Ha'adam L'nefesh Chaya" (Bereishis 2:7). This means that man became the soul of all that exists. He is capable of giving purpose, meaning, and direction to all of creation. Until then, it was a disharmonious gathering of musicians without a conductor. Until man came along, we could look at all the phenomena that existed as non-life, because nothing was bound together.

As an analogy, only when man is alive is he called man—when he is a cadaver, then you say that this is a heart, this a spleen, etc. What puts man together into one cohesive entity is called Chayim—in that framework, we judge man as man, not as mere components. The interrelationship and interdependence between the various components within man is obvious only in the context of life. Without the concept of life, we would not see any relationship between the mind, heart, feet, etc. The same goes for Vayhi Ha'adam L'nefesh Chaya. It means that man is that which gives the world its essential identity—the identity of being "one."

So now we can understand how Rosh Hashana is called the birthday of the world. Since the world attained a certain purpose, meaning, and direction, a certain identity through man, the day of man's creation is called the world's birthday.

You now see the mission of Rosh Hashana in a totally different light. Man is in court because he is to be the embodiment of all creation. He is to be the Nefesh Chaya, that which gives harmony and unison to all existence. It is not you as yourself that is being evaluated, but rather you in your cosmic reality, you inasmuch as you have fulfilled your responsibility as Nefesh Chaya.

One more question. We say every day, "Hamchadesh B'tuvo B'chol Yom Tamid Ma'asei Bereishis," that creation is an ongoing phenomenon. The basic idea is that all of creation is nothing more than an expression of God's will and whim. He is the source of all reality. If so, there really is no such

thing as the past. Time is a creation just as much as space. And consequently, every moment of existence is simply an expression of God's will at that particular moment. He must will it constantly for it constantly to be. It has no real independence. Creation is not something that was; creation is an ongoing process. It is a constant "now."

If so, why aren't we judged every minute of the day throughout all of our lives? What's so unique about Rosh Hashana? Having a Din on Rosh Hashana only makes sense if you have an annual cycle that needs to be evaluated at that interval if it deserves to continue. But if God is creating everything now, if the entire cosmos is recreated every moment, why isn't it reevaluated every moment? How does it make sense to have just one day as a Yom Hadin? And moreover, how can Rosh Hashana be called the birthday of the world in any sense if the entire thing is recreated as much at this moment as any moment on Rosh Hashana?

God did not create something independent of Him. To the extent that He continues willing something to exist, it does. It is really a rather comforting idea. The only reason we are alive is because God wants us at this exact moment, with all of our shortcomings. There is no real past from God's vantage point. We see things in the past because we aren't really conscious of the ongoing creation of all reality. So it would appear that the idea of Rosh Hashana is not because it's really the birthday of the world, but rather because we perceive it as such. Now we really need to understand why this is the basis for a Yom Hadin.

The Ba'al Hatanya basically asks this question. He gives an amazing explanation that I want to explain. Let's say you make a decision to get married. After you get married, you are living your marriage because of that commitment. You continue wanting to do it, but it's not that you're constantly experiencing the proposal. The proposal was the basic catalyst for an ongoing will. But it is not the will of the initial commitment; it is the will of "Let's do what we committed to in the past." Usually, we don't experience the pleasure that made us want to make that decision, although from time to time we try to recapture it. That's what birthdays and anniversaries are about—trying to recapture the pleasure, that whole feeling that made you walk into this. The issue is not just to continue going, but in a sense to restart it.

Now we can start to understand Rosh Hashana. Yes, God recreates the world constantly. But the Ta'anug and the decision to create it only happened once, on Rosh Hashana. And the Ta'anug and decision is for one year. Each year, God wants to make a new decision. For one year, He is willing to continue acting because of an old commitment, because of an old Ratzon and Ta'anug. He does not want to be a Creator because of an old commitment forever. If we don't have a good anniversary party, He's off. That's what Rosh Hashana is for—to rekindle the Ta'anug to create a Ratzon for constant creation for another year.

In that context, the judgement on Rosh Hashana is very understandable. God said "Na'aseh Adam," which means that He was going to justify the reality of what He did for the last five days and create a cohesive idea called the world. Why did He do it? No one knows. He just wanted to. The will of God prior to creation is not defined by the created concept called logic. Logic is a created system; and if you have a will preceding the creation of logic, it cannot be defined or limited by logic. After God created logic and decided to express Himself through it, we ask if something is logical.

So the issue is not why He wanted, but what He wanted. He wanted to create a reality in which the world, through a lower level of consciousness, would become very much aware of where it comes from, that its total identity is nothing more than the expression of God's will. God created a stage in which all of reality will look at Him, find Him, and live a life in accordance with those findings. That's a world in which God can be king. What is a King? A king is not a CEO. A king is the embodiment of the national identity. In England, it's the House of Windsor. Louis XVI was the state called France. We are not talking about the President. The President isn't a national emblem. He's really a glorified shames. He has a job; he's an

executive that has to run a firm. When we talk about Malchus, we are talking about that which embodies the national identity. He has to answer to none, for all the country's legislation stems from him, and he is the embodiment of all the values of the nation. So if we talk about the fact that God wanted us to see His Malchus, it means He wanted us to understand that within Him lies our identity.

This is actually the basic Tefilla of Rosh Hashana. V'yeida Kol Pa'ul Ki Ata Fe'alto means that we really want to really know it, because the Sinai experience and all the attempts of the prophets to bring us in line with it have to some degree failed. A person usually still thinks that the world begins on his birthday, and without him, the world just didn't happen. That basically amounts to self-worship and putting God in the freezer. That's why we ask to really know that God created us. We want to know that we are not independent entities that created ourselves. We don't want to take our basic existence and identity for granted anymore. We want to understand that we are only here because God wills it.

We know a lot of things that aren't internalized. Real understanding means to internalize it. You can only have a meaningful emotional response to something when you understand it in that way. Cerebral knowledge is not enough. In fact, knowledge not internalized can be a burden. Chazal describe Eisav as Yodei'a Es Ribbono Umechavein Limrod Bo. He knows his God and rebels against Him. But if he would really "know" God, he wouldn't rebel. If he would identify himself as a function of the expression of Ata Fe'alto, everything would be different. If you internalize it, then V'yomar Kol Asher Neshama B'apo. Then, finally, when you say it, you're telling the truth—your truth. This may be the most essential part of the davening on Rosh Hashana. We hardly mention Teshuva on Rosh Hashana. But V'yeida Kol Pa'ul is the Matbei'a Hatefilla established by the Anshei Knesses Hagedola, which is the Ikar Hatefilla. Teshuva is peripheral on Rosh Hashana because I am not really trying to mend my ways but to have my head fixed.

So that's why God created the world—for you to really, truly acknowledge Him as the Melech. And God decides to test us on Rosh Hashana. Once a year, He says, "I've paid for your education, now let's see what you do with it. I'll let you in the house if you can justify the tuition. I did this for you so you can find something. And if you did, I'm so happy that I want to do it again. Maybe you'll do more! And I want you to be able look at every speck of reality and find God there. But if you're not doing it, then I don't want this. I don't want to do this because I did it once. I did it once for free because I wanted to. I did it once to put the world into a position that I should do it because you make Me want to do it." Every year, God says Na'aseh Adam. Rashi on that Pasuk says that God asked the angels if He should make man. And they start arguing against it—Ma Enosh Ki Tizkerenu. Man is a feeble, futile creature that is going to run around and do crazy things. God didn't want to take no for an answer at that point, so He created man. But do you know what happens the next year? He asks Na'aseh Adam once again. And do you know who is supposed to answer? Us. We are supposed to say, "God, this is a good investment, a great marriage. It's worth getting married again." He's expecting us to propose to Him.

This is Hayom Haras Olam, Hayom Ya'amid Bamishpat Kol Yetzurei Olamim. The question isn't whether you behaved. The question is how much you have identified yourself with that understanding of V'yeida Kol Pa'ul. To what extent has this been internalized? How much are we living a life with that focus?

Many years ago, my Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Hutner ZT"L, called me into his house and asked me a question: What are the two most important things in the Torah? I got very flustered and didn't understand what he was getting at. He then answered, "Assur Liyos Shoteh, V'assur Liyos Beinoni." Never be a fool, and never be mediocre. Because Beinoni doesn't just mean fifty percent Mitzvos and fifty percent Aveiros. It means you're mediocre. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 3:2) says that if you have one more Mitzva, you're safe, and if you have one more Aveira, you die. How could God be that way? Because of one Aveira more I am going to die? It sounds like a bureaucrat.

According to this, if you are at the fifty percent mark, why do Teshuva? Just put on Tefillin one more time! Why are we so nervous about this if all we are missing is a Mitzva? The answer is that the Mishpat is not on what you're doing, but rather on how much you are the Nefesh Chaya of existence. How much are you a person who sees in the world that God is a Creator? How much are your actions a reflection of that perception, which equals how much of you is really in those Mitzvos? Are you just observant, or are you religious as well? Are your sins just a lack of observance, or do they reflect the fact that you really aren't religious?

The issue is how much of you is involved in each action. How much are your mistakes or your good acts an expression of lacking or having this concept of V'yeida Kol Pa'ul Ki Ata Fe'alto. Rov Zechuyos means that in terms of his overall relationship with God, the person has more right than wrong in him, and his mindset is towards the positive. You can't count that because you would have to understand the totality of a person in the deepest sense of his psychological and metaphysical self, to be a Bochein Klayos Valeiv, to find out how much of him is really expressed in those Mitzvos and Aveiros. And as my Rosh Yeshiva pointed out, the worst thing is to be a Beinoni, because a Beinoni means that he has no Netiya to anything—he isn't drawn more to Tov than to Ra. He's just observant. He hasn't taken a stand—the religion hasn't really become part of who he is. Beinonim Teluyim V'omdim because their actions do not reflect any character at all. The Beinoni is characterless.

There is a note found in the back of Likkutei Torah from the Maharash where he writes that the Teshuva of the Rosh Hashana is not on Aveiros, but rather on how much Kabbalas Ol we have in our Mitzvos and how much Prikas Ol we have in our Aveiros. This is a basic idea in Chassidus—the issue of Rosh Hashana is the Malchus of Hashem, and the Mishpat is on how much Kabbalas Ol we have.

Now, we shouldn't comfort ourselves by saying, "Well, I am not constantly Poreik Ol" because the reason for that is that we don't have one to begin with. The Teshuva on Rosh Hashana is that I want to recommit myself to God's agenda. It's not enough to say, "I'll be good." We must recommit ourselves towards whatever we're doing. If the issue is that we're doing it without commitment, without real drive, then Rosh Hashana is the time to recreate that drive. To make an anniversary work, you can't have only one person doing it—you need both. God wants it only if we want it. This is the Avoda of Malchuyos.

Now we know why this birthday is also a day of Mishpat, and we know why it happens every year. Let's explain one more idea. The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 01b) cites a dispute concerning when the world was created—was it Nissan or Tishrei? Tosfos (Rosh Hashana 27a s.v. Kman), based on a contradiction between two piyyutim of Rabbi Eliezer Hakalir, explains that both opinions are true in some sense. The world was created in two stages. In Nissan, the world physically came into being. But Tishrei is the time that God thought and willed the world to be. In effect, then, we pasken that man was not created on Rosh Hashana. The biggest proof is that we recite Birkas Hachama, the Bracha that we make on the sun when it is at the same point in the sky at the time of year when God first created it, in Nissan. The Halacha is clear that we perceive creation as having occurred in Nissan. So why- is Tishrei the time of Haras Olam?

The answer is simple. The issue is not what God did, the issue is what He had in His mind. The issue is not when we went to the Chuppa, but rather when the pleasure that led to the commitment happened. In Tishrei, God so to speak proposed. That's when He wanted it. And that happens anew every year. He wants to want it again.

Let's discuss an old idea. You know why davening is hard? Because sometimes, we ask God basically to perform miracles for us. It is not easy to ask God to intervene within the natural laws of existence. When can we make requests like that? The laws of nature are not confining if we perceive that everything is an ongoing creation and that everything is just the will of God. And if that's how you look at reality, then you're not bothering God by asking him to override nature. Because for you, there is no system of nature;

there is only the ongoing will of God. And there was a person like that in history. His name was Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. One Erev Shabbos, his daughter accidentally lit vinegar instead of oil for Shabbos candles. When she realized, she came to him distraught, thinking they would have to sit in the dark for their Shabbos meal. He told her not to worry: “The One who decreed that oil should burn can declare that vinegar will burn.” And it worked.

The Mei Hashiloach explains that if you really understand that God created everything, and that all reality is nothing more than an expression of God’s will, then there is no set system—there is a constant ongoing creation of the system. You’re standing in the middle of Bereishis—it’s like it didn’t happen yet. So now, God can do it differently for you. The natural system is limiting only if you give it a sense of independence. If you daven like Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, you’re not really telling God to change things.

Aseres Yemei Teshuva are ten days in which we’re trying not to live a world that was, but rather to connect to a world whose creation is ongoing now. We are trying to connect ourselves to a consciousness of the reality of the world of now. We try to tell God that He not only gives us purpose and direction, but also that He is the ongoing source of our identity. You then lose a sense of total independence, and you can’t just walk away from Him anymore, because if He doesn’t want you, you don’t exist. When two people are very close, one can’t live without the other. My identity is that without you, I have no sense of existence. That is what you’re supposed to be doing on Rosh Hashana—recapturing that idea. No God equals no me. And then God says, “If there’s no you, there’s no Me, either.” God says “Atem Eidai V’ani Keil,” “You are my witnesses and I am God” (Yeshaya 43:12). Chazal say, “Eimatai Ani Keil? B’zman She’atem eidai.” God is the master only when we attest to it. The Maharal says that it doesn’t mean just that you say it, but that you perceive it, because the status of “witness” begins not when he says it in court, but when he sees it. When is God your master? When you perceive Him as such.

So that’s what Aseres Yemei Teshuva are, and if that’s how you daven, it happens immediately. There’s nothing to stop you, because you’re not bugging God to change nature. It’s now because now is when He’s deciding whether to recommit to the relationship He has with the world. The Ramchal’s lashon (Derech Ha-Shem 4:8:4) is that during Aseres Yemei Teshuva, the order and system of creation are being put together. It’s as if for ten days, you’re at a construction site of reality, and everything that will happen depends on how you “prod” God to set things up—things have not been set up yet. The year actually begins on Yom Kippur. Whatever happens to you during these ten days isn’t because of this year’s Mishpat—it is a function of last year’s Mishpat. The new Hanhaga starts after Yom Kippur, because for ten days, He’s creating the system. To the extent that you believe it, meditate on it, and internalize it is the extent to which you are a Ba’al Teshuva.

Let’s understand something. Is there really a difference between Kodesh and Chol? Both are the will of God. Kodesh basically means that we perceive God in something, a window to the heavens. A Makom Kadosh is one where we can perceive more transcendence. A Zman Kadosh means a time when you can stop the world and, if you cash in on it, you can create a deeper sensitivity to certain values. But nothing is inherently “Kodesh.” The only difference between Kodesh and Chol is that one is a place of sensitivity to God awareness and the other is less so.

The Gemara (Makkos 24a) says that Dover Emes B’lavavo refers to Rav Safra. Rav Safra had something to sell, but when someone came to buy it, Rav Safra was davening. The prospective buyer made an offer, but Rav Safra didn’t respond, since he was davening. The buyer figured that Rav Safra didn’t like the price he had offered, so he increased his offer. And this happened a bunch of times. When Rav Safra finally finished davening, he told the buyer that he would accept only the initial offer that was made, since in his mind he had accepted it. The Mordechai (Kiddushin 49b, Siman 495) explains, as does the Maharsha, that Halachically, he couldn’t take more than

that. You see, in mundane reality, decisions in the mind are not enough; they are meaningless in our world. What carries weight in our world is not mindset, feeling, or belief, but what you do. It has to be tangible, physically expressed. Therefore, in just because you wanted to sell something doesn’t mean that you sold it. You have to say it, you have to move it—you have to make a tangible transaction. There must be externality to your inner self—the inner self does not really exist judicially in this world. It’s terrible, but it’s the truth.

But when it comes to Kedusha, when you want to make something holy and give it to God, you don’t even have to say it. You can just think, “I want to give it to God,” and it’s His. The Gemara (Kiddushin 28a) states, “Amiraso L’gavoha K’mesiraso L’hedyot.” And the truth is that it doesn’t even need Amira. Even Machshava suffices, as the Pasuk says, “Kol Nediv Leiv Olos” (see Shevuos 26b). You know why? Because in the world that is closer to that which is real, the internal self is much more significant than the external self. For the real world is not the external phenomena, but the internal will of God for which the external is nothing more than an expression.

The Maharsha (Makkos 23b) writes that Rav Safra really lived an internal life, and he was so internal that Kodesh and Chol for him were all the same. He wasn’t doing the guy a favor and giving it to him at the first price. The moment he thought of selling the item at the first price, it belonged to the other guy. The Halacha changes for Rav Safra, for Rav Safra lived an internal life, one that that focused not on the externalities of reality but on the deeper reasons as to why things are happening. For such a person, the mindset is what really counts.

From this Mordechai, I better understand the concept of Chullin Al Taharas Hakodesh. It is not just being frum. Tahara is a very special thing. Normally, we are only sensitive to it when we touch Kedusha. But when we’re just living mundane reality, there’s no purpose of thinking of Tahara, because it’s just too far away. But if you look at everything that you do within the context of the source—of Kedusha—then Tahara is important for everything. The Maharsha says that just as Rav Safra looked at reality internally, and thus the world of thought counted substantively, a person who looks at the world internally will appreciate Tahara even in regard to things that are not Teruma or Kodesh.

That’s what’s going on in the Yerushalmi. The idea is not to be frum during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva. This Halacha reflects an internal reality, and in an internal reality, we live a world of Tahara—and it’s not restricted just to objects of Kedusha. And the same goes for Pas Palter. Broadly speaking, Pas Palter seems to be a sense of connection to certain societies that we should not be close to. But, as the Gemara and Rishonim say, people have to eat, so we have to let them be close to that world, so we’ll let them eat Pas Palter. But when you say that “you have to,” it really depends on your mindset. If you were sensitive to the Kedusha of Yisrael in its deepest sense, you probably wouldn’t have to eat that much bread. Can you imagine if the only way you get bread was to go into the worst section of New Orleans? I’ll bet you would diet. So the idea is to ask yourself how important eating bread is. I guess it depends on how much you appreciate what Kedushas Yisrael is. The issue isn’t eating bread—the issue is how important it is in juxtaposition to Kedushas Yisrael. How much do you understand that being nourished within a society that totally negates your whole mindset is a major issue? It’s not just frumkeit; it’s ten days of trying to live in the world of Tahara. On Rosh Hashana, it’s obvious that you don’t eat non-Jewish bread. And it’s obvious that you eat Chullin B’tahara, because Chayav Adam L’taheir Atzmo B’regei. You have to be holy on Yom Toy, for Yom Tov is nothing more than a window in the sky, a means to connect to the mindset of the Infinite. So how can you possibly think of not eating B’tahara.

During these days you’re expressing an aspiration to a different level of consciousness, to experience more of your true self. For these few days, we are more open to the sensitivities and ideas that are the background and source of this Halacha, and therefore, we are careful about this Halacha. We should have brought ourselves to a level of understanding during this period

where we wouldn't want to eat Pas Palter—and that is expressed in the Halacha. At least we should wish to want this. This is Aseres Yemei Teshuva.

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The Meaning of Rosh Hashanah: An In-Depth Analysis

Sep 25, 2016 | by **Rabbi Asher Resnick**

The Meaning of Rosh Hashanah: An In-Depth Analysis

Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of this misunderstood holiday.

Before discussing the specific aspects of any particular holiday, it is important to understand the uniquely Jewish perspective of time as well as holidays in general. The world at large views time essentially as a straight line. The present moment is a unique point along this line that never existed before and will never exist again. The past is completely finished and the future is yet to occur.

The Jewish model of time is a spiral. While time is certainly moving forward, it progresses ahead specifically through a seasonal cycle. Each year we pass through the same seasonal coordinates that are imbued with whatever spiritual potentials were initially established within them.

This is the significance of the Jewish holidays. They serve as signposts on the spiral of time to teach us which specific quality has been embedded into that particular season. When the Jewish people left Egypt at Passover time, for example, it showed us that both physical and spiritual freedom are incorporated within the fabric of every springtime. Whenever our cyclical journey through time encounters a holiday, therefore, we directly re-experience the quality of that time. In addition, whatever it is that originally occurred at that time actually occurs again every single year. Thus, every holiday is a metaphysical window of opportunity.

So, the key question regarding every holiday is – What is the particular opportunity that it presents us with? There are three clues which help us to uncover the meaning of each holiday.

First, what was the actual historical event that occurred the first time that this day was significant? And what was its metaphysical impact upon the Jewish people and the world? This is the most obvious question to ask. As we explained, it is specifically this metaphysical impact that recurs every subsequent year at the same time. This is what the holiday actually consists of.

Second, what are the various mitzvot, Rabbinical guidelines, and customs of the holiday?

If the Torah or the Rabbis tell us to do certain activities or to refrain from others during the holiday, clearly these do's and don'ts are designed to help us access its opportunity. Even the customs, developed from the subconscious of the Jewish people over the centuries, are rooted in an awareness of the unique potential of these days. The more one understands the particular tools that are appropriate for each holiday, the more one will understand the opportunities themselves that these tools are designed to access.

And, finally, what is the name of the holiday?

Judaism views Hebrew names as having tremendous significance. Far from merely serving as convenient labels, Hebrew names both identify and express the underlying essence of whatever it is that they are describing.

With these three clues to guide us, we can now begin to unravel the various layers of meaning and significance within each of the Jewish holidays.

Rosh Hashanah

Let's begin by thinking about some curious aspects of the High Holidays. We'll discuss three different questions and then try to resolve them with the help of our three clues.

What is Rosh Hashanah all about? In addition to its meaning as the “head of

the year”, we also refer to it as the “Day of Judgment”. Every single person in the world is judged individually on Rosh Hashanah.

In fact, the Talmud tells us that three different books are opened on Rosh Hashanah: The Book of Life – for those judged to be completely righteous, the Book of Death – for those judged to be completely wicked, and the Middle Book for all who are judged to be in between.

If Rosh Hashanah is really the day when every single person is evaluated for life or death, how would we expect people to act on that day? Wouldn't we expect people to spend the day fixing up past mistakes, pleading their personal cases, and praying for God to give them all good judgments?

What, in fact, did the Rabbis tell us to do on Rosh Hashanah? Curiously, there is virtually no mention of our own personal judgment in the Rosh Hashanah prayers. Instead, the prayers are all about the general condition of the world. We pray that the world will recognize God is its exclusive King, that He is aware of everything that occurs, and that the shofar of Mt. Sinai will demonstrate God's love and concern for all of mankind. These are certainly beautiful and meaningful prayers. The difficulty is why we would focus exclusively on the overall world situation just at the time when our lives are on the line? This is our first difficulty.

Now let's think about Yom Kippur. Why is it such a significant day? It is the “day of kapara” – the time of spiritual cleansing. It is the day that we are able to fix up the damage caused by our various past mistakes. That being so, wouldn't it be much more logical for Yom Kippur to come first, i.e., for the “day of cleansing” to precede the “day of judgment”? This is our second difficulty.

The third question arises from a discussion in the Talmud tractate Rosh Hashanah on the nature of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah. The Torah reading for the first day of Rosh Hashanah presents the story of Yishmael (the father of the Arab nation) pleading for his life (on Rosh Hashanah). The verse tells us that “God heard the voice of the lad where he was.” The Talmud explains that the words “where he was” do not refer to Yishmael's physical location. That would be completely superfluous. Where else would God be answering him other than the specific place he was in? Rather, the verse is speaking in terms of time. Based on this, Rebbe Yitzchak (in the Talmud) said, “A person is not judged (on Rosh Hashanah) except according to his actions of that exact moment.”

The commentaries explain that Yishmael was saved at that time even though his descendants were destined to hurt the Jewish people throughout later history. In other words, the negative future deeds of his descendants did not change his judgment at that time.

There is a different source quoted by the Jerusalem Talmud, however, which seems to go much further than this. It tells us that even if an individual was not pure and straight in the past, as long as he is pure and straight in the present, on Rosh Hashanah itself, then he will have a positive judgment.

These two different sources together (i.e., the positive judgment of Yishmael on Rosh Hashanah despite his descendants hurting the Jewish people later in history, and ignoring the fact that the person being judged was not pure and straight in the past) teach us a remarkable fact. It sounds like the judgment of Rosh Hashanah does not have to do with either the past or the future, but rather exclusively with one's situation on the day of Rosh Hashanah. This would seem to be telling us that even if the one being judged was evil during the entire previous year, as long as he was righteous on Rosh Hashanah, he would be judged as a righteous person. This, of course, runs counter to any notion of logic and fairness in the nature of judgment. This is our third difficulty.

To summarize, the three questions are:

Since we are all being judged for life and death on Rosh Hashanah, why don't we do teshuva or plead our personal case?

Why doesn't Yom Kippur – the “day of cleansing” – precede Rosh Hashanah – the “day of judgment”?

How can the judgment of Rosh Hashanah be exclusively a function of the day of Rosh Hashanah itself, irrelevant of the future and even of the past?

We mentioned previously that every holiday has three clues that help us to unlock its hidden meaning. Let's begin with the first one, its historical significance, to try to resolve these various difficulties.

What is it that actually occurred on the very first Rosh Hashanah? Although in the davening (prayers) of Rosh Hashanah it is referred to as "yom harat olam" (the birthday of the world), it was not actually the day of creation of the world, but rather the creation of mankind. The first Rosh Hashanah was day number six of creation, and the day upon which the first man, Adam, was created.

The Birthday of Free Will

Let's ask what may seem like an odd question – What is the great significance of the creation of mankind? Prior to day six, the Torah tells us that God had already created the entire physical world as well as a vast number of different forms of life. What, then, did mankind bring to the world that had not previously existed?

When the Torah describes the creation of mankind, it tells us that man was created "b'tzelem Elokim" (in God's image). One of the most central meanings of this fundamental concept is that human beings have the ability to exercise free will in relation to moral decisions.

To properly understand this, we need to appreciate the Jewish view of a human being. Every person has a body and a soul. The body desires physicality, the soul wants spirituality; the body is interested in short-term gratification, the soul in eternity. What is it that decides which side will prevail?

Judaism understands that there is a third component in the system – free will. Free will is what arbitrates this existential tug-of-war between the body and the soul. It is specifically the creation of free will, which epitomizes our very humanity, that we celebrate and relive every Rosh Hashanah. As Rav Berkowitz, a teacher of mine, once expressed it – Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of free will.

Free will Exists Only in the Present

It is significant that of these three different components within every human being – the body, the soul, and the free will – it is specifically the free will which exists exclusively in the present moment. For example, a person could live his life by a particular set of moral guidelines for many years and then, in an instant, decide to completely shift course. The state of one's free will is, by definition, whatever he chooses at that particular moment.

In contrast to free will, which exists only in the present, the state of both the body and the soul are almost entirely a function of the past. A person's physical health at any given time, for example, is mostly determined by their past diet and exercise even if they happen to deviate from that at the present. Similarly for the soul, it is generally the cumulative past behavior that determines one's spiritual health, not occasional changes afterwards.

Focus of Rosh Hashanah

Now if we put this point – that free will exists exclusively in the present, together with the cryptic statement in the Talmud that: "A person is not judged (on Rosh Hashanah) except according to his actions of that exact moment," we come to a remarkable insight – the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is specifically on the state of our free will. Let's try to understand what that means.

We generally assume that the focus of Rosh Hashanah is on the state of our soul – i.e., the spiritual repository of our actions of the previous year, not on what our free will is choosing at that particular time. This would explain why it seems so obvious that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah would be a cumulative evaluation based on our actions of the previous year.

The spiritual health of one's soul as a result of one's past behavior is obviously of critical importance, it just happens not to be the focus of Rosh Hashanah.

Everything that we have ever done, both positively and negatively, has affected our souls. And if this is left as is, these various impacts will be with us forever, in both this world and the next. Fortunately Judaism says that there is a way to minimize or even to eliminate the negative impact of our

past mistakes on our eternity. This mechanism is "teshuva" (return) and the result is called "kaporah" (a spiritual cleansing). This goal of kaporah is so important that we have a holiday devoted exclusively to its attainment – Yom Kippur (the "day of kaporah"). It is on Yom Kippur that we try to address our actions of the previous year and fix up all of our mistakes.

Since it is specifically Yom Kippur that addresses our behavior and situation of the previous year, what, then, is the purpose of Rosh Hashanah? We mentioned earlier that one of the clues to uncovering the essence of a holiday is to examine its name. The way that Rosh Hashanah is often understood, it would seem more appropriate for it to have been called "Sof Hashanah" (the "end of the year"), and for it to have been placed at the end of the previous year. However, it is actually called Rosh Hashanah (the "head of the year"), and, of course, it is situated at the very beginning of the brand new year. Besides reinforcing that the focus of Rosh Hashanah is not on our actions of the previous year, what else does the name teach us?

Potential in the Present for the Future

The essence of Rosh Hashanah is specifically this point – that it is the very beginning of the new year. Just as God originally created mankind as a completely blank slate on the very first Rosh Hashanah, similarly He creates every one of us anew with a similarly blank slate at the beginning of each new year. Rosh Hashanah is our once-a-year opportunity to establish a fresh new direction and reality in our lives. Don't get stuck in the past. Ask yourself: "If I was born this very instant, without the constraints of my various past habits and patterns, what would I do? How would I ideally want to live this brand-new year?"

This is what it means that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is a judgment on our free will, or in other words, on the choices and values that we express on the day of Rosh Hashanah itself. Since the new year is a completely blank slate for every one of us, God presents all of us with the opportunity to set up whatever values and parameters we would like to govern our brand new year. And then God gives us the type of a year that we ourselves actually chose. In other words, God gives us for this coming year as much as we want to do, not as much as we have done.

The fear and trepidation that is commonly felt on Rosh Hashanah isn't only a fear that God will be tough on us, but also because the opportunity of the day is so enormous. Imagine winning a contest which allows you to have five minutes inside of a department store where you can keep whatever you carry outside. The fear you would be likely to feel just before those five minutes begin is that you will not get all that you can out of this enormous opportunity.

Let's now return to our three original questions. Our first question was – "Why shouldn't we be spending the day fixing up past mistakes in order to receive the best possible judgment?" That was clearly based on our assumption that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah was a judgment on our actions of the previous year.

The key to understanding this actually comes from the third question – the puzzling statement in the Talmud that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is exclusively on the day of Rosh Hashanah itself. This told us that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is not on the state of our souls, but rather on our free will choices. Once we understand that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is basically an assessment of what we ourselves want for our coming year, it is obvious that our past behavior is not the point here. The relevant issue is whether we will appreciate what is truly valuable and make the proper choices for the coming year. This also explains why our prayers on Rosh Hashanah are that the entire world will come to a deep appreciation of God's existence, awareness and supervision. By making these the prayers of Rosh Hashanah, the Rabbis are teaching us the following critical lesson: Recognizing the needs of others, seeing ourselves as responsible for others, and understanding that the greatest need any of us have is to appreciate reality more deeply – are the most important values to base our upcoming year on.

Change for the Future Must Precede Fixing Up Past Damage

This leaves us with just the second question – Why Yom Kippur, the day of cleansing, didn't precede Rosh Hashanah, the day of judgment. On a simple level, this question was also based on the mistaken assumption that the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is a judgment on our actions of the previous year. It, therefore, seemed logical that God should allow us the chance to cleanse ourselves from our previous mistakes before He would actually judge us on them. However, even now that we recognize the judgment of Rosh Hashanah to be on the choices we will make on this first day of the upcoming year, the logic of Rosh Hashanah preceding Yom Kippur still needs to be understood.

Everyone is capable of choosing a new path in life, independent of their situation up until that point, anytime they really want to. This could be done anytime throughout the year, and all the more so on Rosh Hashanah. How likely is this, however, to occur? We are all carrying around a lifetime full of past habits and patterns. In light of this, how many people will be strong enough to simply make a decision to carve out a brand new direction in their lives? It would seem, therefore, that it would still make more sense for the purification of Yom Kippur to come first, and thereby help our choices on Rosh Hashanah for the coming year to be less impeded by all of our past mistakes.

Let's use an analogy to point out the mistake in this way of thinking. Imagine that you know someone who is an alcoholic or a drug addict. This addiction has damaged every aspect of his life – his family, his job situation, his friendships, etc. One day he comes to you and tells you that he has decided to fix up all of the damage he has caused. He has compiled a comprehensive list of all the mistakes he has made during the past number of years. And he is planning to go to every person that he hurt with these mistakes and ask for their forgiveness. As admirable as this certainly is, there is one obvious circumstance in which you would be likely to strongly discourage him – if he has not yet begun to work on the alcoholism or the drug addiction itself. You would tell him to direct his energy first and foremost to his personal life situation and direction. Not only because it is so much more fundamental, but also because if he doesn't address this first, it is likely that he will end up hurting many of these same people again in the future. As important as it is that he go to all of the people he has hurt and ask them for their forgiveness, it only makes sense for him to do this once he has straightened his life out first.

Let's try a second analogy to make this even clearer. Imagine a person whose car is full of dents and scratches because he has been such a poor driver. He goes to a body shop to get all of the dents and scrapes fixed up. The man in the body shop, however, tells him not to bother because this would likely end up being a waste of money. He recommends that this lousy driver first work on becoming a better driver. To merely fix up the damage to his car without first changing his poor driving habits would be pointless; it is inevitable that he will end up damaging his car all over again. Only once he has improved his driving, will it make sense for him to get his car fixed up.

Every human being makes mistakes. At least once a year we all need to take stock of ourselves and work on improving. Our spiritual improvement must occur in two different parts of ourselves – our free will and our soul. We need to examine our free will, meaning our values as well as how those values translate into a vision and direction for the future. In addition, we must assess the damage which our previous values and direction have caused to our souls as well as to others around us. Both tasks are critical. Working on our values and choices will determine the quality of our upcoming year, while working on the damage from our mistakes of the past will determine the nature of our soul. By the Torah placing Rosh Hashanah before Yom Kippur, it is telling us very clearly that the first step must be to work on our values and our vision. Only then can we be sure that the work we do to fix up the damage from our past mistakes will end up lasting.

New Direction

It is interesting that people usually assume that the effort required to fix up their soul (i.e., repairing the damage from their mistakes of the previous

year) will be much more time consuming than what will be necessary to work on their free will (i.e., improving their values and direction for the coming year). After all, to repair their soul will require first identifying and then rectifying every single mistake they have made during the past year. In contrast to this, we might imagine that improving our free will merely requires some basic introspection and making a few different resolutions for the new year.

Judaism, however, tells us that the reality is exactly the opposite. We have an entire month of Elul to prepare ourselves for Rosh Hashanah, and only one week after Rosh Hashanah to get ourselves ready for Yom Kippur. Think back to the two previous analogies. Isn't it obvious that the work involved in breaking an addiction is enormously greater than rectifying the damage that resulted from that addiction? And, similarly, with changing how one drives versus having the dents taken out of one's car? Changing our values and our vision involves changing who we are. Fixing up past mistakes, on the other hand, is basically a mechanical process. It is critically important, but it is mechanical nonetheless. Additionally, the more that we are able to make ourselves into brand new people for the upcoming year, the easier it will be to rectify our past mistakes through this process.

One of the biggest mistakes we all make is to allow our past to govern and determine our future. The defining quality of our free will, which is really what defines us as human beings, is that it is free and unencumbered. And it is the past, perhaps more than anything else, which is specifically what it is free of. While, as this expression itself spells out (and as Judaism would certainly agree), this is an obviously relevant consciousness for one to have the entire year, Rosh Hashanah is the time which is most ideal for its implementation. At least once a year, at its very beginning, we must take the time to think, not about what we have already done, but rather what we want to do; not about where we have already been but, instead, where we really want to go with our lives. This should give us the ability not only to fix up the damage from our past mistakes, but also to allow us to live an upcoming year which is truly new, not only in name but in reality.

For more in-depth essays, visit Rabbi Resnick's site at JewishClarity.com