

LIVING JEWISH

Tell Your Children

Shofars and Pickaxes

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Friedmann was a modest, G-d-fearing, Torah-observant Jew who lived in the Polish town of Józefów, not far from Lodz. He worked hard for a living, transporting merchandise from town to town. At night, he would study Torah until late, sitting in the attic so as not to disturb his wife and three children.

The residents of Józefów knew Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch as a kindhearted Jew who performed acts of kindness. The town's children especially loved him. Whenever Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch was there, it meant that someone was about to receive help. On Shabbat and holidays, he would distribute candies to the children, always accompanied by a loving pat on the cheek.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch inherited his generous nature from his father, Rabbi Eliezer Yitzchak, who was also beloved by the townspeople. Many of the residents of Józefów fondly remembered the wonderful aroma of the fine snuff that Rabbi Eliezer Yitzchak would distribute to them during davening. It was obvious that giving out the tobacco gave him even greater spiritual satisfaction than it gave pleasure to those receiving it.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch had one unusual hobby: collecting shofars. He served as the baal toke'a (shofar blower) in the synagogue in Józefów, and wherever his work took him, he would search for another new shofar. As Rosh Hashanah approached, he would choose the finest one from among his shofars to use for blowing.

Over the years, he accumulated dozens of shofars of every type. Some were long and some short, some narrow and some wide, and they came in black, white and brown.

The Precious Shofar

Then the day came when the residents of Józefów were gathered together with their fellow Jews from the surrounding towns and sent by the Nazis, may their name be erased, to the labor camps. Each person tried to hide whatever was precious to him beneath his clothing. Some concealed gold jewelry and other valuables; others hid holy books, pictures of loved ones, and



Selichot at the Kotel

similar items.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch hid a small shofar beneath his coat. He had acquired this shofar from Rabbi Yaakov, the son of Rabbi Aryeh Ganz, who was a Rabbinic judge (dayan) in one of the towns in central Poland. Rabbi Yaakov himself had received the shofar from a poor man as payment for assistance he had given him.

A Measure of Comfort

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch was sent to work on the railroad tracks. It was hard physical labor carried out under inhuman conditions. In the midst of this grim situation, he found a measure of comfort in the small shofar that remained constantly close to him. Whenever despair overcame him, he would put his hand beneath his clothing and lovingly touch his little shofar.

The days of Elul arrived. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch longed with all his heart to fulfill the custom of blowing the shofar during the days of mercy and selichot, even though he knew that blowing the shofar could endanger his life.

But what could he do? He revealed to his friends that he had a shofar, and they too became excited. But how could they blow it without attracting the attention of the dozens of German guards who were watching them with seven eyes? Then, they came up with an idea.

Blowing the Shofar

The next day, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch waited for a moment when the guards' vigilance had eased somewhat. He then signaled to his friends, who gathered around him and concealed him. Using the pickaxes they increased the pace of their work and created as much noise as possible.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch quickly pulled the shofar from beneath his clothing, placed it at the corner of his mouth, and blew. Everything happened with tremendous speed and noise, so that no one except those surrounding him could notice what was happening or hear the sounds of the shofar.

Encouraged by their success, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch and his friends repeated the feat the following day and throughout the days that followed.

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Shabbat Times

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat
Jerusalem	6:24	7:35
Tel Aviv	6:40	7:37
Haifa	6:31	7:37
Beer Sheva	6:41	7:36
New York	7:05	8:03



The Beginning of Your Works

The Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah we always read the Torah reading of Nitzavim. There is a hint to Rosh Hashanah in the opening verse: “You are standing firmly today”—referring to Rosh Hashanah, when the Jewish people stand before Hashem and prevail in judgment.

In addition to this hint, Rosh Hashanah is alluded to in another verse in the previous Torah reading, Ki Tavo: “This day, the L-rd, your G-d, is commanding you...” Yet, we immediately notice a difference between the two verses. In the first verse, it simply says “today,” while in the second verse it says “this day.”

Beginning and Remembrance

There are two themes of Rosh Hashanah hinted at in the phrase, “this day is the beginning of Your works; a remembrance of the first day.” (Musaf prayers)

The first theme is “this day is the beginning of Your works.” This refers to the great event that took place on this very day—the creation of mankind, on the sixth day of Creation. This event occurred on Rosh Hashanah itself. Therefore, Rosh Hashanah is called “the beginning of Your works,” because man, who was cre-

ated on that day, brought the entire creation to recognize its Creator, as we say: “Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow; let us kneel before the L-rd, our Maker.”

The second theme is “a remembrance of the first day.” Rosh Hashanah—the sixth day of Creation—is a remembrance of the first day of Creation, the 25th of Elul, when the entire world was created ex nihilo, something from nothing.

Man Reveals

The fact that the world was created from nothing and that its continued existence, at every moment, comes from the infinite Divine power is not apparent in the reality of the world. On the contrary, the world itself gives the impression that it possesses an independent existence and does not need Divine power.

We must think and contemplate in order to understand that this impression is mistaken, and that the world cannot exist for even a single moment without the Divine power that sustains it.

This is the significance of the sixth day of Creation—the day on which mankind was created: it reveals the Divine power within the world. Man himself possesses a Divine soul, and therefore it is man who

reveals G-dliness within the world.

Body and Soul

These two ideas correspond to the two ways in which Rosh Hashanah is alluded to in the two Torah readings, Nitzavim and Ki Tavo.

The word “today” alludes to the fact that Rosh Hashanah is “a remembrance of the first day,” because the Divine power is not openly revealed in the world.

By contrast, “this day” has the connotation of something revealed, since the word “this” can be used only regarding something that is visible. Thus, “this day is the beginning of Your works” alludes to the fact that Rosh Hashanah is the day of the creation of man, who reveals the Divine power within creation.

These two concepts also correspond to body and soul. The body conceals and hides the Divine truth, while the Divine soul reveals the Divine light and holiness within the world.

May we merit to be written and sealed for a good and sweet year, both materially and spiritually with the ultimate blessing, the coming of Moshiach now.

Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 24

From Our Sages

Hashem's Blessing

The Torah portion of Nitzavim, which begins with a reference to Rosh Hashanah, is read before Rosh Hashanah. In this portion, Hashem blesses the Jewish people in preparation for the new year. It says: “You are all standing this day”—standing firm and enduring, and prevailing in judgment. “This day” refers to Rosh Hashanah, as it is written, “Now the day came” (Iyov 2:1), which the Targum translates as: “And it was the great day of judgment.”

On this Shabbat, we do not bless the upcoming month in the usual manner. Rather, Hashem blesses the month, and through the power of His blessing, we bless the other months of the year.

(the Baal Shem Tov)

Good and Sweet

When dipping the apple in honey, we

customarily say: “May it be Your will to renew us for a good and sweet year.”

But is there such a thing as something that is “good” but not “sweet”? However, a “good” year isn’t enough, since even regarding something bad, we are required to say, “This too is for the good.” Therefore, we pray that the coming year will also be “sweet”, a good year in truth.

(Rabbi Shlomo of Melnitz)

A Warm Heart

Rosh Hashanah is the head of the year, and everything follows the head. Our Sages say regarding Rosh Hashanah: if Rosh Hashanah is warm, the entire year will be warm.

Thus, if on Rosh Hashanah a Jew's heart is warm and filled with holy enthusiasm, so too will be his conduct throughout the entire year.

(Rabbi Mordechai of Lubavitch)

Shochet and Shochet

Before he was revealed, the Baal Shem Tov used to conceal his greatness, earning a living from simple jobs.

For a certain period, he stayed in a village where he served as a ritual slaughterer (shochet). After he left his post, they brought another shochet in his place.

One day, a villager sent a fowl for slaughtering via his non-Jewish servant. The servant went out and returned with the live bird still in hand. The villager asked the messenger for the meaning of this, and the servant replied, “This shochet does not follow the proper procedure.”

The master asked, “what did the shochet do wrong?”

The servant replied, “when Yisraelik was the shochet, he would sharpen the knife with his tears, whereas this shochet took water from the pitcher to sharpen the knife. Would you give him [such a bird] to slaughter?!”

This issue of Living Jewish is dedicated in honor of the yahrzeits of my dear parents, Freidle bat Shmuel Tzvi and Shmuel Yaakov ben Yehuda. May you look down upon us from the World of Truth and be filled with Yiddishe nachas from all of your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and klal Yisrael. Dedicated by Tsivya Fox Dobuler.

Chassidus Page



Shabbat Selichot—Teshuva for Everyone

With the emergence of Chassidism, when many among the Jewish people had not yet delved into the depth and mystery of teshuvah, one of the points of disagreement between Chassidim and their opponents concerned the question of who teshuvah was for.

Chassidism taught that teshuvah is relevant to everyone, including tzaddikim and Torah scholars. The opponents, by contrast, argued that such an idea diminished the honor of the Torah, since the entire world exists only in the merit of the Torah and those who study it. Chassidism came and declared that even Torah scholars need to do teshuvah.

Chassidism teaches that even goodness is relative. What was good yesterday may no longer be good enough today. If an adult behaves like a “good child,” even though that behavior might be exemplary for a child, it is not the perfection expected of an adult.

This is the true meaning of teshuvah: “And the spirit returns to G-d, Who gave it.” (Kohelet 12:7) It is continual growth, an aspiration to cleave to the Almighty, and a desire to return the soul to its Divine source. Teshuvah is not necessarily about sins; it is about returning to the original Source—to G-d.

“If I Had Only Known”

A story is told about Rabbi Saadia Gaon, who once set out on a journey dressed simply, concealing his identity. In one place, he stayed for several days at the home of a Jew who welcomed him warmly, fed and provided him with drink generously, and treated him as an honored guest.

Word spread throughout the city that this unfamiliar guest was none other than the

famous Rabbi Saadia Gaon. The city's leading figures began streaming to the Jew's home to see the distinguished guest and engage him in Torah discussion.

The Jewish host watched all the visitors arrive and asked what was going on. He was told that the guest staying in his home was the renowned Rabbi Saadia Gaon.

Upon hearing this, the Jew fainted. When he recovered, he fell at the feet of his guest and began begging his forgiveness, apologizing that he had not treated him with the honor he deserved.

The Gaon asked him, “why are you apologizing? You hosted me wonderfully and gave me everything I needed.”

The Jew replied through his tears, “if I had known that you were Rabbi Saadia Gaon, I would have treated you with many times more honor!”

Teshuvah Even On Good Deeds

When Rabbi Saadia Gaon heard this, he said, “Master of the Universe, I too ask You for forgiveness for not serving You properly. If I truly understood Your greatness and Your exaltedness, I would serve You far more than I have until now.”

This story illustrates the Chassidic approach to teshuvah: even for our good deeds, we need to do teshuvah. As we grow in Torah and deepen our understanding of the greatness of the Almighty, we realize that the way we served Him yesterday was far below the level at which we now understand we should be serving Him. Therefore, we must live our entire lives in a state of teshuvah—returning from the way we have served G-d until now and moving toward an entirely new level of serving Him.

Shofars and Pickaxes

continued from page one:

As erev Rosh Hashanah arrived, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch resolved in his heart to observe the laws and customs of the day as fully as the circumstances would allow. Even under the conditions in which he found himself, he could not give up the prayers of the day and certainly not the shofar blasts. He had an excellent memory, and as a result, the entire Rosh Hashanah prayer service was engraved in his mind.

Early the next morning, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch and his friends went out, as usual, to their difficult work. He continued to daven as he worked, and he stirred the hearts of his friends standing around him with the precise melody of the Rosh Hashanah prayers. As on the previous days, they once again waited for the moment when the guards' vigilance would relax somewhat. When the opportunity arose, the friends gathered around Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch as he pulled the shofar from his clothing.

The Moment

This time, it happened as follows: the friends struck the work tools they held in their hands, while Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch blew Tekiah-Shevarim-Teruah-Tekiah. Those around him increased the noise, continuing to make a commotion and distract the Germans, while Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch continued with Tekiah-Shevarim-Tekiah, and finally concluded with Tekiah-Teruah-Tekia.

The shofar blasts that year were not like the blasts Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch had become accustomed to hearing every year in the synagogue. Yet they moved those who heard them in a way they had never experienced on any Rosh Hashanah of their lives.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Friedmann merited to survive the horrors of the war and immigrate to the land of Israel with his family and his shofar. He continued blowing the shofar for many more years, bringing merit to the many who heard him.

Our thanks to Menachem ben Moshe Berkovitz, one of Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch's friends who was present when this event took place, for sharing this story.

Moshiach Now

In the Merit of Joy

When Moshiach comes, the nations of the world will ask us, “how did you merit such wonders and miracles? And we will answer, “we merited this in the merit of joy.” This is what is stated: “Then they will say among the nations, ‘the Lord has done great things with these. The Lord has done great things with us; we were happy.’” (Psalms 126:2,3). “Then” - when Moshiach comes, “they will say among the nations” - the nations of the world will say about the Children of Israel, “the Lord has done great things with these.” The Children of Israel will answer them, do you know why “the Lord has done great things with us?” Because “we were happy.” (the Rebbe)



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Human Interest

Spreading Jewish Pride

Jewish rock band 8th Day recently wrapped up a spirited tour that carried its signature blend of upbeat music and Jewish pride to cities all across the United States. Known for songs that fuse contemporary sound with Jewish themes and values, the band used their tour to bring communities together for nights of music, unity, and celebration.

Each stop drew crowds of fans eager



to sing along, with the band weaving in messages about Jewish identity, resilience, and connection.

Beyond the concerts themselves, 8th Day used the tour as an opportunity to engage with local Jewish communities — visiting Chabad Houses and community centers along the way to connect more personally with fans of all ages.

The tour's energy reflected 8th Day's broader mission: using music as a vehicle to strengthen Jewish pride and bring people together, especially during a time when that sense of connection and identity feels more meaningful than ever.

adapted from COLlive

Cooking Tip of the Week

Minestrone Soup: Heat olive oil and add garlic, 1 cup carrots, and 1 cup onions. When onions soften, add salt, pepper, oregano and 1 cup tomato paste. Add 8 cups water or vegetable stock, simmer 20 minutes. Add choice of broccoli, cauliflower, beans, or zucchini. Simmer, add ½ cup pasta, and cook 10 minutes.

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Halacha Corner – Covering the Eyes During Candle Lighting

All mitzvah blessings are recited *before* performing the mitzvah. However, when lighting Shabbat candles, the blessing is recited *after* the candles are lit. This is because some halachic authorities maintain that the very act of reciting the blessing constitutes acceptance of Shabbat. Therefore, the woman would not be able to light the candles after reciting the blessing.

Thus, the woman first lights the candles, then covers her eyes and recites the blessing. She uncovers her eyes afterward. This way, the blessing is recited before she benefits from the light of the candles. This is the practice among all Ashkenazic communities and the majority of Sephardic communities.

Women customarily accept the Shabbat upon themselves when they finish lighting the candles. For this reason, one should not extinguish the match used to light the candles. Rather, it should be put down and allowed to extinguish on its own. If the match goes out while lighting the candles, one should not light it from a Shabbat candle. Instead, a new match should be used. It is customary to give charity before lighting the candles, and one should ideally pray Mincha beforehand.

After reciting the blessing, some women make various personal requests while their faces are still covered, since this is considered an auspicious time for one's prayers to be accepted—for herself, her husband, and her family. It is highly recommended to educate every daughter, from a young age, to light a Shabbat and Yom Tov candle (one candle until marriage). According to the custom of many communities, when a daughter lights before her mother, she may recite the blessing over her lighting without concern.

adapted from Rav Yosef Ginzberg, Sichat HaShevua

Farbrengen



Question: My wife and I often argue on Shabbat. Instead of becoming closer, we end up starting the week upset with each other, and the cycle repeats the following Shabbat. How can we break this cycle?

Answer: Spending more time together can sometimes lead to more conflict. Different opinions, unmet expectations, frustrations, and past grievances can surface, intruding on what husband and wife hoped would be a peaceful Shabbat. The goal is not to expect conflict never to happen, but to learn how to handle it when it does.

Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Life Rabbi Emeritus of Sydenham Shul in Johannesburg, once told of a young orphan boy who was misbehaving in class. The principal advised the teacher to spank him, so as to teach the boy to behave. But the teacher could not do it. Instead, while the boy was sleeping, he left him a note: "How are you?" The boy replied, "I feel bad." The teacher answered, "I understand."

Over time, the boy's behavior improved. Years later, the teacher met his former student, now a married man with a child. The young man took three small pieces of paper from his wallet. "Whenever things are hard," he explained, "I read these and remember that there are people who understand me." They were the three notes from years earlier.

There is a powerful lesson here for marriage. When conflict arises, our instinct is often to defend ourselves, argue our point, hurt or punish, withdraw, or sulk. Your spouse may say something hurtful or infuriating, and you may strongly disagree. But before defending yourself or proving your point, remember the ultimate goal: becoming closer. Because underneath the conflict, what the other person often wants most is to feel **understood**.

Understanding your spouse does not necessarily mean agreeing. It means trying to see the situation through their eyes and saying, "I understand why this is difficult for you." Each spouse's experience and perspective deserve to be respected, even when they differ. Even the best marriages have conflict; the key is how to navigate it. When we replace defensiveness with understanding and empathy, conflict can actually become an opportunity for greater closeness.

Aharon Schmidt, marriage and personal coaching: www.aharonschmidt.com

***** Marriage seminar for couples beginning Rosh Chodesh MarCheshvan (October 12th). Contact aharonschmidt@gmail.com to reserve your place.**



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