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A WELLSPRING OF CHIZUK

Shiurim of Rabbi Yissocher Yehuda Berko שליט"א
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ראש השנה

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ראש השנה

Selichos Erev Rosh Hashanah

YES, WE ARE WINNERS, BECAUSE
WE WANT TO BE GOOD

THE DAYS OF RACHAMIM AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELICHOS

These days of the month of *Elul* and *Selichos* are *Yemei Rachamim V'Ratzon*; since in these days Moshe ascended to Heaven to plead with the Ribbono Shel Olam to forgive *Klal Yisroel*. Following that, Hashem responded, סלחתי כדברך, - *I have forgiven as you asked*. He then revealed the thirteen *midos* of *rachamim* which we recite throughout *selichos*, *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, and especially on *Yom Kippur* during *Neilah*. The *Yud Gimmel midos* מידות י"ג are accessible even if one is undeserving; Hashem promised Moshe that if the *Yidden* gather together to recite these *midos*, He will bestow this mercy upon them, guaranteeing a *gebentched* year.

The Sephardim begin *Selichos* at the start of *Elul* were מידות י"ג is recited multiple times while Ashkenazim begin blowing the *shofar* and reciting the *kapitel* "L'Dovid Hashem Ori" after

davening were Hashem's name is mentioned 13 times to commemorate י"ג מידות של רחמים and of course Right before *Rosh Hashanah*, all of *Klal Yisroel* recites *Selichos*.

Now as we enter *erev Rosh Hashanah*, this day is utilized to specifically increase *Selichos*, often referred to as "*Zechor Bris*" after its central *tefillah*. This significant prayer begins with the plea, זכור ברית אברהם ועקידת יצחק, — *Remember the covenant of Avraham and the akeidah of Yitzchak*. We ask the Ribbono shel Olam to remember the sacrifice of Yitzchak and the promise made to *Klal Yisroel* to grant us all goodness.

THE THREE STAGES OF SELICHOS ACCORDING TO THE TRISKER MAGGID

We will share two remarkable thoughts on this extraordinary day of *Selichos*:

1) *The Trisker Maggid*, who wrote the *sefer Magen Avraham*, was the son of the renowned *Chernobyl Maggid* and

served as a *Rebbe* to thousands of *Chasidim* across Ukraine and Russia. In his later years, shortly before passing away, he lacked the physical strength to share deep *divrei Torah* at his *tisch*. He decided to record his teachings in a *sefer*, writing in the introduction: "Whoever studies these words of Torah, it is as if you visited me personally, and you shall be granted all *brachos*."

He notes that the period of *Selichos* has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The first day of *Selichos* serves as the beginning. Erev Rosh Hashanah, known as *Zechor Bris*, represents the midpoint. The final *Selichos* recited before *Yom Kippur* is referred to as *Shalosh Esrei Middos*, as we emphasize the Thirteen *Middos* on that day.

He explains that if you calculate the numerical value of these three significant days — the start of *Selichos*, *Zechor Bris*, and the final day before *Yom Kippur* — by multiplying 3 by the 13 *middos* of *rachamim*, the total is 39. In *Lashon Kodesh*, this numerical value corresponds to the word טל (Tal), meaning dew. Hashem reveals that from the very first day of *Selichos*, through Rosh Hashanah, until right before *Yom Kippur*, all these days combined create a *Tal shel Techiah* — a Dew of Resurrection.

During *Techias Hameisim*, Hashem will use this *Tal shel Techiah* to awaken the dead from their graves. *Chazal* teach us that this dew is generated through learning Torah, positive speech, *mitzvos*, and words spoken for holy purposes. From these righteous actions, clouds are formed and dew is created, through which Hashem will awaken everyone at the time of *Techias Hameisim*.

The Trisker Maggid teaches that if you begin reciting *Selichos* and continue until *Yom Kippur*, *davening* with all your strength, you merit the three sets of the Thirteen *Middos*. This equals the numerical value of *Tal*, granting you the *Tal shel Techiah*.

He concludes with these words: שיתמלא - *May Hakadosh Baruch Hu be filled with mercy for us*; יחדש לנו שנה טובה - *He should renew for us a good year*, של - *and grant us the sublime Tal shel Techiah*. שייהיה כתיבה וחתימה לחיים על כל ישראל - *so that all of Klal Yisroel may be inscribed for life*.

ZECHOR BRIS AND THE JOURNEY TO THE AKEIDAH

Rav Shlomo Kluger, one of the prominent *poskim* of the last two centuries, shares a remarkable insight into why we recite the prayer of *Zechor Bris* on Erev Rosh Hashanah. Why is it significant enough that we name the entire *Selichos* service of Erev Rosh Hashanah after it? He shares a fundamental idea that provides great encouragement as we enter the new year.

There are various opinions regarding the exact date *Akeidas Yitzchak* took place. Some say it occurred on Rosh Hashanah, while others believe it was on the holy day of *Yom Kippur*.

Rav Shlomo Kluger suggests that *Akeidas Yitzchak* occurred on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. Examining the timeline, Avraham Avinu journeyed for three consecutive days before reaching *Har HaMoriah*. When, then, did he set out for *Har HaMoriah*?

He must have started on the morning of Erev Rosh Hashanah, as the *posuk* states, וישכם אברהם בבקר - *And Avraham rose early in the morning.*" Rav Kluger explains that this is why we recite "זכור ברית אברהם עקידת יצחק" at that time, because it was on that morning that Avraham Avinu began his journey toward the *akeidah*.

However, he raises an obvious question: that was only the beginning. He was merely starting his travels. The actual *akeidah* took place on the third day. Why do we recite *Zechor Bris* at the very start of Avraham's journey; when he was only on his way there?

Though Avraham took Yitzchak up to the *akeidah*, the act was never completed. He placed Yitzchak upon the *mizbeach*, but Hashem said: "Do not harm him. I only told you to bring him up. I did not command you to slaughter him, *chalila*; take the ram instead."

Therefore, the physical act of the *mitzvah* of the *akeidah* remained unfinished. Of course, it's considered complete since he wanted to perform the *mitzvah*, he's credited it as if he did. Nevertheless, in terms of the actual physical deed, Yitzchak simply walked to the *akeidah*.

So, which part of the *mitzvah* of the *akeidah* was executed fully and 100%? The answer is "the walk toward the *akeidah* – the three-day journey – was fully completed." The Ribbono shel Olam wanted the journey to the *akeidah*, and Avraham Avinu fulfilled that requirement entirely.

When we invoke the merit of the *akeidah*, there are two components. There's the journey to the site, and then

there's the *akeidah* itself. The first part was finished, while the second part remained incomplete.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, we recall and *daven* about the first part of the *akeidah*, which was fully carried out. This is why we say the *selichos* זכור ברית אברהם עקידת יצחק on erev Rosh Hashanah, because on that specific day the walking to the *akeidah* started – and that portion of the *mitzvah* was completed fully.

The essence of the *akeidah's* merit lies in the journey toward a *mitzvah* and the desire to improve. When we wish to awaken the merit of the *akeidah*, we bring it up on Erev Rosh Hashanah, when Avraham Avinu was just setting out. He was merely traveling there. Yet, we already identify that as the merit of the *akeidah*.

APPLYING THE MERIT OF THE JOURNEY TO THE NEW YEAR

This is how we should approach the new year. On one hand, a person might feel broken and filled with shame. He assesses himself and analyzes his *Yiddishkeit*: How is my *davening*? How's my learning? What do my *middos* look like? How well do I guard my eyes and my speech?

But on the other hand, a person should ask himself: How many times did I try? Just as Avraham and Yitzchak journeyed to the *akeidah*, they tried to perform the *mitzvah*. How many times did I resolve not to speak *lashon hara*? How many times did I commit to guarding my eyes? How many times did I resolve to have *kavanah* during *davening*? How many times did I resolve to thank Hashem for

every little thing: for my eyesight, my heart that's pumping, my hands, my feet, and that everything functions correctly?

One could fill books with the resolutions and commitments made throughout the year. Yes, perhaps we did not complete them – however, the one key part that was finished was the journey to the *akeidah*; the yearning, and the desire to fulfill the will of Hashem.

This is the core of *selichos* on Erev Rosh Hashanah when we say *Zechor Bris*.

We say it regarding the first day of the journey, not the third, because that's when Avraham and Yitzchak began.

We must understand that when we enter Rosh Hashanah feeling broken, we must also strengthen ourselves. Yes, our history may be full of failures, but how many times were we successful in our efforts? Many! We **are** successful. Why? Because we're following the path of Avraham and Yitzchak, where the effort itself is a form of perfection. Through the act of trying alone, you awaken the merit of the *akeidah*.



Answering the Call from Shamayim

CROWNING HASHEM KING

CROWNING THE KING ON ROSH HASHANAH

One of the most momentous highlights of Rosh Hashanah is when the entire shul cries out with passionate emotion, "*HaMelech!*" At that supreme moment, we crown the Ribbono shel Olam as our King.

Throughout the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* – from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur – we insert the words "*HaMelech HaKadosh*" into the third *brachah* of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, and adjust the

blessing for justice to end with "*HaMelech HaMishpat*" (the King of Judgment). As the *Gemara* explains, during these sacred ten days, the Ribbono shel Olam judges the entire world and is universally recognized as King. By crying out and declaring "*HaMelech*," we explicitly acknowledge His supreme authority.

Yet, this raises a fundamental question: the Ribbono shel Olam governs the universe independently, without requiring our human consent or affirmation. Why, then, does He ask us

to proclaim Him as our King?

The *Gemara* points out one of the primary differences between the Rosh Hashanah *davening* and the rest of the year is that during *musaf*, we add three incredible *brachos*: *Malchios*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*. The *Gemara* says, "אמר ה' הקב"ה – meaning the Ribbono shel Olam is speaking directly to us. It is very rare to find in *Chazal* that the Ribbono shel Olam speaks to us in this manner. Yet here is a *Chazal*: אמר ה' הקב"ה – *Hakadosh Baruch Hu said*. And what is He asking of us? אמרו לפני מלכיות – *recite before Me Malchios*, "I want you to say *pesukim* that crown Me as King of the world," כדי שתמליכינו – *so that you shall make Me King over you, specifically over Klal Yisroel*.

Once again, we must ask: why does the Almighty invite us to crown him as King?

The *Gemara* continues, "I want you to recite *Zichronos*," various *posukim* regarding the incredible kindnesses the Ribbono shel Olam performed for us in the times of Noach, in Egypt, and so on; "I want you to remember these – כדי שיעלו זכרוניכם לטובה – *so that your remembrance shall rise before Me for good*." If you do so, He will remember you for good, and He will grant and bless you with a good year. The *Gemara* then asks, ובמה – *with what?* How should you perform these things? בשופר – *with the shofar*.

What deep message lies behind this personal invitation from the Ribbono shel Olam to crown Him as King, "specifically" through the blast of the *shofar*?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A KING AND A DICTATOR

To understand this fundamental concept, we must first examine an essential distinction made by classical commentaries.

While the Ribbono shel Olam is "Melech," the King of the Universe, we sometimes find Him referred to as "Moshel" – a dictator. The *posuk* says, כי לה' המלוכה – *the kingdom belongs to Hashem*, ומושל בגוים – *and He is a Moshel over the nations*.

What is the distinction between a *Melech* and a *Moshel*?

The *Vilna Gaon* explains *Melech* is a King, while *Moshel* is a dictator.

We all know that people respect a king; they look up to him, want him to be their ruler, and feel connected to him. But a dictator is a tyrant; he rules over people whether they like it or not, and he is not respected at all by the citizens of his country. He and the people share no connection.

"כי לה' המלוכה" means Hashem has the kingdom, which refers specifically to *Klal Yisroel*, because we want Him as our King. "ומושל בגוים," but for the rest of the nations, Hashem is a dictator. They do not truly want the Ribbono shel Olam to be their ruler; they want to do whatever works for them, committing *aveiros*, etc. But in reality, this does not help them, because Hashem reminds them that He is ultimately the Boss, whether they like it or not. However, since there is no connection and no respect, He is not a king to them, but a *Moshel* – a dictator.

CORONATING HAKADOSH BARUCH HU THROUGH THE SHOFAR

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, zt"l, the *mashgiach* of Mir, explains: Rosh Hashanah arrives, bringing a new year. It is the day the Ribbono shel Olam resolves to recreate the world anew for another year. And on this day, we inaugurate Him as King. As the *Chasam Sofer* points out, it is called יום גנוסיא של מלך – the day of the King's inauguration; it is the day we crown the King.

On this day our main duty is to crown Hashem as King from the depths of our heart's and fully accept him as king.

This is done by the *shofar* blowing as Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon points out that although the reason for the *mitzvah* to blow the *shofar* is not explicitly stated in the Torah – as it says, תקעו בחודש, שופר – blow the *shofar* on the new month, בכסה ליום חגינו, – at the hidden time for our *Yom Tov* day, because the moon is still small and hidden—כי חק: לִישְׂרָאֵל: it is a decree we perform without a stated reason, simply because Hashem wants it.

However, all the *mitzvos* without obvious reasons actually do have reasons; they are simply concealed. He reveals,¹ "I will tell you one of the hidden reasons." In ancient times, when a king was inaugurated, they would blow trumpets and play music. Even in modern times, state inaugurations feature musical instruments.

So too, on Rosh Hashanah, as we are inaugurating the Ribbono shel Olam as

King over the universe for another new year, it is fitting that we proclaim and crown Hashem with regal trumpet blasts – the sounding of the *shofar*.

Reb Yeruchem articulates an astounding principle: when Rosh Hashanah arrives, the Ribbono shel Olam, as it were, asks us for our vote of confidence. If He is not by *Klal Yisroel*, then while He remains the absolute Master of creation, His rule over humanity resembles that of a *Moshel*—a dictator whose authority is unacknowledged by His subjects.

This would be a profound *chillul Hashem*, that while the Ribbono shel Olam directs the world, no one recognizes His kindness.

It would mean that we do not acknowledge the infinite goodwill of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, in having formed such a delightful world. He created such magnificence – the skies, the land, the beautiful flowers, fruits, and vegetables. He created humanity; each human being contains countless billions of particles and cells, and what occurs within each person is remarkable. The body processes within a human being are extraordinary.

The Ribbono shel Olam generates this energy daily, as we recite: מודה אני לפניך מלך חי וקים שהחזרת בי נשמתִי - *Thank You Hashem, for You have restored my neshamah within me.* The Ribbono shel Olam bestows such infinite goodness upon us.

If Rosh Hashanah arrives and the Ribbono shel Olam isn't elected as King by *Klal Yisroel*, it's a tremendous disgrace. In such a case, the Ribbono shel Olam acts as a ruler, a tyrant.

¹ Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon

SHIRAS HAYAM AND VOLUNTARY KINGSHIP

However, Reb Yeruchem explains that when we come on Rosh Hashanah to inaugurate Him as King, as it says in our Maariv *davening* what the *Yidden* did at the Yam Suf after leaving Egypt: ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם – *His kingship they willingly accepted upon themselves*. They embraced Hashem as King with their whole heart and soul, because that is what they wanted. They were grateful to Hashem for all the miracles in Egypt. They thanked Him for being liberated from the Egyptians so that they could now serve Him freely.

– משה ובני ישראל שירו בשמחה רבה
Moshe and Klal Yisroel sang a song to You. They recited it with great joy and song, ואמרו כולם – *they all declared together*.

מי כמוך? – *who is like You among the heavenly powers, Hashem, who is like You, majestic in holiness*. They began extolling Hashem before the entire world. Then they declared, ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד – *Hashem shall be "King" forever and ever*. The Ribbono shel Olam should be King eternally.

This remarkable acceptance – embracing the Ribbono shel Olam as King with such willingness, just as the *Yidden* sang at the *Yam Suf* upon leaving Egypt – is exactly how we must accept the Ribbono shel Olam as King on Rosh Hashanah. We must do it voluntarily, and with great joy and song.

CROWNING THE KING MEANS THAT WE EMBRACE THE TORAH AND ACCEPT ITS MITZVOS

Reb Yeruchem goes on to ask: what does it mean to want Him as King?

He answers: It means accepting the Torah and *mitzvos* with your whole heart. The Ribbono shel Olam says, "I gave you the Torah and its laws; that is the ideal way of life." By accepting the Torah and *mitzvos* with love and passion, you are ultimately accepting Hashem. You are declaring that what Hashem gave us is the truth – and that means crowning Hashem as King!

When we accept the Torah and *mitzvos* with a full heart, it is a signal that we really believe in Hashem and that He is a favorable King who does only good for us and to us.

As the *Gemara* states the *pasuk* in *tehillim*, לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתי אל – *for I have given you a good teaching; do not forsake My Torah*. The Ribbono shel Olam gave us the Torah, the *halachos*, and *davening*. "כי לקח טוב" – *it is the finest gift anyone can receive*. And then He asks of us: please do not abandon My Torah.

Crowning the King means that we embrace the Torah and accept its *mitzvos*, making a powerful resolution for the new year – by doing so, we are accepting His *meluchah*.

But if a person does not accept the Torah and *mitzvos*, it means he is not truly accepting the Kingship of the Ribbono shel Olam. He is showing that he does not wish to follow the rules, or

that he follows them only because he is forced to. Observance out of coercion reflects the dynamic of a dictatorship rather than true allegiance to a beloved King.

By crowning Hashem as King willingly, we rectify the *chillul Hashem* that occurs when the rest of the world fails to acknowledge His rule. Our devotion restores the splendor and honor due to the King of the universe.

This is why we cry out "המלך" – *HaMelech* on Rosh Hashanah. We asked the question: "Does Hashem really need me to tell Him He is King?" He directs the world regardless! The answer is "yes" while He directs the world anyway, if we do not vote Him in as King, it would be a profound *chillul Hashem* – a disgrace and a terrible humiliation. Crowning Him removes that shame and restores the splendor of His crown.

However, merely calling out "*HaMelech*" is not enough. True coronation is achieved through an earnest commitment to keep His *mitzvos*. Shouting His title without adhering to His word lacks true substance. As Reb Yeruchem concludes: our essential task on Rosh Hashanah is *ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם* – to accept His kingship and Torah willingly and wholeheartedly.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SHOFAR AND THE TORAH

With this foundation established, we can better appreciate how these principles unify the specific *mitzvos* of Rosh Hashanah.

The blowing of the *shofar* happens at the *bimah* and it's blown right after we read from the Torah. What's the connection between the *shofar* and reading the Torah?

The *poskim* in *siman* תקפ"ח state that we blow the *shofar* at the *bimah* because the merit of the Torah ensures the *shofar* will achieve its purpose. Now if we blow the *shofar* – using it like trumpets or musical instruments to crown the King – but we do not intend to follow the rules, it isn't a genuine coronation. We might be offering Him a crown, yet we refuse to follow His laws; which is the exact nature of a dictatorship.

However, as soon as we finish reading from the Torah, we sound the *shofar* near the *bimah*, the very place where the Torah is read throughout the year, from its start to its end. It is there that we offer a crown to the Ribbono shel Olam, affirming our acceptance of His kingship. That is truly crowning the King.

When Hashem is crowned through the sounding of the *shofar*, it invokes immense mercy from Heaven, and it brings down incredible *brachos* for the upcoming year. The *malachim* get excited and they want to sing praises to Hashem. They wonder why *Klal Yisroel* isn't singing Hallel at such a poignant moment.

RESTORING HASHEM'S GLORY

Why are the *malachim* so excited to say Hallel?

The answer lies in this physical world: we face many trials that the *malachim* never get to experience. The reason the

malachim are so inspired to sing is because they are overwhelmed by our act of blowing the *shofar* and accepting the Ribbono shel Olam as our King. They yearn to sing because of the monumental moment when the *Yidden* crown the Ribbono shel Olam as King, battling their *yetzer hara* and accepting the Torah and *mitzvos*. This act restores Hashem's glory and invokes extraordinary *rachamim*.

When we reach *musaf*, the Ribbono shel Olam appeals to us and asks us personally to recite the *pesukim* of *Malchios* so that we accept Him as King. He tells the *Yidden* that the other nations aren't interested in Him.

When we left *Mitzrayim*, Hashem turned to *Klal Yisroel* and only we were the ones who followed Him into the *midbar* – a land unsown – unsure how we would sustain ourselves. As it says in the pasuk – לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה. Entering the frightening desert when we knew that whatever provisions we carried were insignificant compared to the long and brutal journey we faced. Yet, we followed Hashem with simple *emunah* that He will provide whatever we need.

At Har Sinai, when Hashem approached all the nations of the world and declared Himself King of the Universe, He offered them the precious Torah – from which even the *malachim* in Heaven did not want to part. When Hashem asked the nations if they would accept it, they all refused, causing a *chillul Hashem* to His honor. Who was the one that removed that desecration? Who crowned the King at Har Sinai by saying *Na'aseh V'Nishma*? It was us, the *Yiddishe kinderlach*.

We were there when the Ribbono shel Olam first called out to be recognized as King. Now, He turns to us again for the New Year, asking us to vote Him in as King. He says, אמרו לפני, asking us personally to say the *pesukim* that will crown Him again for the new year. He asks to be King specifically over us, because the other nations are not interested. To them, He is considered a dictator.

Once we accept Hashem as King, He wants us to recite the *posukim* of *Zichronos*. This *brachah* recalls all the incredible *chassadim* the Ribbono shel Olam has performed since the creation of the world through all generations. He promises that your remembrance will rise for good, and He will remember you and inscribe you for a good and positive life.

And how should all this be accomplished? Through the *shofar*, because, as Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon explains, that was the traditional way to inaugurate a king. In ancient times, when a king was inaugurated, they would blow trumpets and play music. Even today, at an inauguration of a prime minister or president, musical instruments are used.

So too, on Rosh Hashanah, we are inaugurating the Ribbono shel Olam as King for the new year, and we must do so properly, with "music" and a trumpet, which is why we blow the *shofar*.

MODERN DAY AKEIDAS YITZCHOK: MESIRAS NEFESH

Another reason for the *shofar*, as explained by Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon, is

that the *shofar* serves as a reminder of *Akeidas Yitzchok*, where a ram (איל) was used instead. Since the *shofar* is made from a ram's horn, it reminds us of the sacrifice of *Akeidas Yitzchok*.

Now what was the essence of *Akeidas Yitzchok*? It was an act of *mesiras nefesh* – self-sacrifice.

What constitutes self-sacrifice today? It is when a person fights their *yetzer hara* – resisting the urge to speak *lashon hara*, guarding their eyes, or overcoming the struggle to wake up early for *Shacharis*. *Davening* on time is an act of self-sacrifice; it's our modern-day *Akeidas Yitzchok*.

A *Yid* who walks the streets of today's modern world, dressed, acting, and speaking like a *Yiddishe* child, remaining separate and different from the surrounding nations, that is modern-day *Akeidas Yitzchok*. We're openly proclaiming to the entire modern world that we're different and proud to be so; that is our sacrifice.

When we blow the *shofar*, we remind the Ribbono shel Olam of *Akeidas Yitzchok* and declare that “we, too, practice this sacrifice all year long.” Hashem views this as the true inauguration of the King, as it shows our sincere dedication to Him. Consequently, He inscribes us for a good year.

May Hashem help us to have the right intentions of accepting the Torah and its *mitzvos* with our whole hearts. We should reflect on how privileged we are that the Ribbono shel Olam turns specifically to us.

We should feel a sense of pride in our greatness for answering His call and declaring *HaMelech* with all our hearts. With Hashem's help, we will be *zoche* to a good, *gebenchte* year!





Crying on Rosh Hashana During Davening

THE POWER OF TEARS AND JOY

PART ONE

THE POWER OF TEARS: BREAKING THE GATES OF HEAVEN

Chazal in *mesachta brachos* state that although all gates of Heaven were locked following the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, שְׁעֵי דַמְעוֹת לֹא נִנְעְלוּ – the gates of tears were never shut, they will forever remain open. If someone cries while *davening*, their tears pierce through and shatter the gates of Heaven.

The *Kedushas Aharon* of Sadigura shares a profound insight. He notes that in *Yiddish*, prayer is referred to as "davenen." He questions the true definition of the word *davening*. He suggests dividing the word in two, revealing its *Yiddish* meaning: דא וויינען – here one must weep. This teaches us that *tefillah* is innately accompanied by tears.

However, there are two distinct types of

tears in *davening*. The first are tears generated through pain and the internal brokenness of a person.

The *Toldos* explains in *Parshas Shelach* that when one *davens* with tears, they shatter the heavens, and his *tefillos* are valued in Heaven. Yet, there's an even higher level, and the second type of tears: *davening* with joy.

He cites the *Rambam* at the conclusion of *Hilchos Lulav*, who states that serving Hashem with happiness is an עבודה היא גדולה – a great service. One should realize this is an extraordinary act of *avodas Hashem*. Furthermore, he quotes the *Ari Hakadosh*, who says that if one is joyful while learning and *davening*, they merit access to outstanding treasures.

Thus, while crying allows a person to penetrate and break through Heaven's gates, *davening* with joy is even more powerful.

TEARS OF HAPPINESS AND THE OPEN GATES

Rabbi Shimon Kastelanitz, a renowned *Slonimer chassid*, quotes the following from Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov. When a person weeps, his cries pierce the heavenly gates. He then poses a question: What happens if someone *davens* and cries out of pure happiness? He explains that for such a person, the gates were never closed to begin with.

The standard gates of *tefillah* were shut after the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed. Right now, we're tasked with reopening them. Tears help us break those gates open.

However, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov says that if one *davens* with happiness, they express gratitude to Hashem for all the positive aspects of life; for their health, *parnassah*, and so on – this pathway was never closed. In fact, it never even had a door.

In these days, when we *daven* for a good, blessed year, we can *daven* with tears of brokenness – which have the incredible power to shatter the gates of Heaven. Or if you reach a higher level of thanking Hashem for the blessings in your life, those heavenly gates were never shut; they have always remained open.

THE SHIFT FROM ELUL BROKENNESS TO ROSH HASHANAH JOY

The Chasam Sofer suggests dividing the power of davening during the current

season into two parts. He says that during the days of Elul, one should cry with a broken heart; he should cry from pain.

However, once Rosh Hashanah arrives, such sorrow shouldn't be heard or reminded anywhere. At that point, it isn't necessary to have a broken heart; instead, we should be overflowing with joy.

The posuk says בַּשֹּׁמֵר יִגִּילֶנָּה כָּל הַיּוֹם - I shall rejoice in Your name all day, referring to Rosh Hashanah, when we celebrate the coronation of Hashem as King for the new year.

As Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon explains, this is the purpose of blowing the shofar. In ancient times, a king was coronated with shofars and trumpets, and that's precisely what we do on Rosh Hashanah. We recite "Malchiyos" by musaf. We cry out "HaMelech" during shacharis.

The Chasam Sofer says this must be done while rejoicing. When crowning and inaugurating a king, there's no weeping in sorrow; everyone is happy.

He explains it this way: The first letters of the words: בַּשֹּׁמֵר starts with Beis, יִגִּילֶנָּה with Yud, כָּל with Chaf, and הַיּוֹם with Hei. Together, these four letters spell בְּכִיָּה - weeping. On Rosh Hashanah, you should indeed weep, but those should be tears of joy. The Chasam Sofer concludes that if you cry from happiness, it accomplishes far more in Heaven than fasting for many days.



Crying on Rosh Hashana During Davening

THE POWER OF TEARS AND JOY

PART TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEARS AND THE EFFECT ON THE MAZALOS

Rosh Hashanah is a time that, on the one hand, is an incredibly joyous occasion, as it is the day we are inscribed for a good year. On the other hand, it is a day of *davening* and weeping. These tears possess profound significance, yet we must ensure that our crying does not stem from depression or angst.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Berachos* famously states – שער דמעות לא ננעלו – the gates of tears are never locked; even without the *Beis HaMikdash* and despite the erection of an iron wall, a person's tears can pierce through.

The *Hagahos Alfasi*,¹ in *Maseches Berachos*, states that כל מי שבוכה - a person who weeps while davening, כוכבים ומזלות בוכים עמו - the heavens, the stars, and the mazalos weep alongside him, ensuring their prayers are heard.

A person's *mazal* can sometimes prevent certain *brachos*, but *Klal Yisroel* has the power to rise above these signs. So too, a person's *aveiros* can also affect how his *mazal* interacts with him. However, when a *Yid* cries during *davening*, his *mazal* surrenders and joins in the weeping, no longer obstructing his path. Instead, it assists by pleading to Hakadosh Baruch Hu on the person's behalf.

The *Elef HaMagen* continues, citing the *Rishonim*, that even if one was already inscribed for an unpleasant year on Rosh Hashana – together with the *reshaim* – sincere *teshuvah* and tears can tear up that decree, allowing them to be inscribed among the *tzaddikim* instead.

He also references the *Zohar* regarding Basya opening the basket and seeing Moshe Rabbeinu crying. This represents *Klal Yisroel*; when a *Yiddishe* child cries, the *Ribbono shel Olam* is aroused to feel mercy and compassion for him.

¹ Also mentioned in *Elef HaMagen* on *Match Ephraim*, *Siman* 584

The *Zohar* suggests that when you cry, you should use those tears to wash your forehead to erase the *aveiros* inscribed there. You should also rub your hands with them, because, as we recite *Unesaneh Tokef*, a person's own hand signs their judgment. By washing away our *aveiros* through our tears, our hands will be pure to sign ourselves into a good year. Such is the immense power of tears!

THE ARI HAKADOSH ON WEEPING DURING DAVENING

In *Sha'ar HaKavanos*, Rav Chaim Vital cites three fundamental insights from the *Ari Hakadosh* regarding weeping on Rosh Hashanah. First, he notes that the *Arizal* wept extensively during the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

Second, the *Arizal* teaches that despite the moving words of the *tefillos*, inspiring melodies, or atmosphere of the *shul*, some people are not easily moved to tears. However, if one's heart spontaneously opens and tears flow without prior preparation or singing, it is a clear sign of a pure *neshamah*.

He concludes that if one doesn't get moved to tears from Rosh Hashana through Yom Kippur, it indicates a problem. One should then reflect inside and perform a *cheshbon hanefesh* accounting to rectify themselves.

Third, he explains that if one is suddenly overcome with tears during *Shemoneh Esrei*, it signifies that at that precise moment, they are being judged by the *Beis Din shel Ma'aleh*. One should utilize those precious moments with all their strength by making firm

resolutions for the upcoming year: promising the *Ribbono shel Olam* to be the best *Yid* possible, committing to guard one's eyes and speech, *davening* with passion, observing Shabbos and *mitzvos* with joy, and reciting *brachos* with proper *kavanah*. When tears fall, use that precious time, that *eis ratzon* to make sincere *kabalahs* for that is when you are being actively judged and inscribed.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN HOLY TEARS AND FORBIDDEN DEPRESSION

A primary concern arises when people weep out of bitterness and hopelessness. Rather than looking toward a bright future, they shed tearful tears of despair that lead directly to depression.

Such sorrowful, depressed tears are improper. While the *Arizal* encourages weeping, feeling depressed or falling into despair is entirely different. Many mistakenly assume that because the *Arizal* praised crying and noted that the gates of tears are always open, depression is somehow justified. Such *heilige* tears and depression do not go hand in hand.

In fact, the *Ari Hakadosh* in *Sha'ar HaKavanos* explicitly warns against tears born of sadness. He explains that if one *davens* throughout the year — and particularly on Rosh Hashanah — in a state of depression or gloom, such *tefillos* bring negative consequences rather than *brachos*. Furthermore, davening while depressed is not merely ineffective; it constitutes a transgression.

APPROACHING AND SERVING THE KING WITH JOY

To illustrate this concept, he cites a *Midrash* about a pauper who had never seen the king or his palace because the king always traveled in a closed chariot. After many years, the king finally invited the pauper into the palace, granting him access to every room. Overwhelmed by the splendor he had never before witnessed, the pauper entered the majestic realm with profound joy. As he passed through each chamber and ultimately stood before the king, he expressed immense happiness at the privilege of serving him and beholding the royal palace, weeping tears of pure joy.

This exemplifies the proper way to approach the King. By contrast, consider if the pauper had entered weeping out of bitterness, explaining to the king that he was crying over his poverty and miserable life.

The king would tell him to leave because he doesn't belong there. Anyone entering the king's presence must be joyful; one who serves the king should be full of happiness.

The *Ari Hakadosh* explains that when we *daven*, we are serving Hashem. It isn't proper and respectable to be in a state of sadness. When you have the merit to enter the majestic kingdom and the King's palace through *davening* - especially during *Shemoneh Esrei* when you enter the inner chamber and stand before the Ribbono shel Olam - the right way to honor Him is to be filled with joy.

The *Ari Hakadosh* teaches that an

incredible light descends upon a person during *davening*. This light is meant to elevate a person and grant them success in all areas of life, including health, livelihood, and family. However, he warns that if one *davens* while depressed, they block this divine light from reaching them.

He emphasizes that the proper way to *daven* is with deep humility and awe, recognizing the King's presence and standing before Him with reverence. Yet, simultaneously, one must experience immense happiness, akin to a servant who takes tremendous delight in serving the king.

This fulfillment makes even a person's physical existence incredibly happy, leading to a wonderful life where everything easily falls into place. Furthermore, he says that one will merit *Ruach Hakodesh*. While this may seem distant to some, the *Ari HaKadosh* is saying you will receive incredible, divine gifts.

JOYFUL DAVENING GIVES US THE ENERGY TO DO MITZVOS

The *Ari Kadosh* emphasizes that this principle applies to *davening* and every *mitzvah*, whether wearing *tzitzis*, reciting *Krias Shema*, or taking *challah*. Everything should be performed with happiness. He concludes by imploring us not to take his words lightly, for the reward for serving Hashem with joy is immense. and he finishes his discussion with a plea to every *Yiddishe neshama* he writes - please take his guidance deeply to heart.

What we learn from the *Ari Hakadosh* is a fundamental principle: we must be

happy when we *daven* and do *mitzvos*, especially on Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah is a time for forgiveness. It is the first day of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, so of course we have to do *teshuvah*. We also know that *teshuvah* while blowing the *shofar* has a tremendous power, as it is brought down in *Mag'a* מַג'א תִּקְפֵּ"ד מַג'א, in the name of the *Arizal* and *Shlah Hakodosh*. But we must remember not to mention any *aveiros* on Rosh Hashanah and not to be

broken, because it's *yom tov* – when the *Ribbono shel Olam* seeks to grant us a good and *gebenched* year. However, while weeping on Rosh Hashanah is powerful and significant, as we cited from the *Ari Hakadosh*, it must never be confused with depression.

With Hashem's help, we will *daven* and cry, yet, simultaneously, we will remain joyful. May we all be *zocheh* to a *gut gebentched yahr* - a year of *brocha*, *siyatta d'shmaya*, *nachas* and *hatzlacha*.



L'Shana Tova

THE POWER OF SPEECH ON ROSH HASHANAH

THE TRADITION OF EXCHANGING BRACHOS ROSH HASHANAH NIGHT

The *Yom Tov* of Rosh Hashanah spans 48 hours, which corresponds to the numerical value of the word *מח* (*mind*). It serves as the intellect of the year. Just as the brain functions as the primary control center for the human body, these 48 hours exert a profound influence over the entire year. Our actions during this time impact the year ahead.

The *Imrei Pinchos* emphasizes that we must be exceptionally careful with our

speech during Rosh Hashanah, as speaking positive words can elevate the entire year.

We are going to see how this *yesod* is brought down in *halacha*. The *Rema* notes in *Siman* תקפ"ג that on the night of Rosh Hashanah, following *Maariv*, one should wish their friend: לשנה טובה. תכתב ותחתם לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום. A *gut gebentsht yuhr!*" We wish each other to be blessed and inscribed for a good year.

This *minhag* is firmly established. In shul everyone exchanges *brachos*, children visit their parents, and people on the street stop to offer these well-wishes

to one another. We see how the power of speech has such importance and value that *halacha* requires us to speak positively and bestow *brochas* to one another.

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF "SEALED" ON ROSH HASHANAH

Looking closer into this *halacha* reveals a profound concept. The specific wording of the *brachah* is quite unusual. We say, "*Leshana Tova Tikaseiv*." The *Magen Avraham* cites the *Sefer Maglei Tzedek* (written during the era of the *Beis Yosef*), which instructs us to add the word "*Vesichaseim*" — and may you be sealed.

The *Magen Avraham* questions this: Who is actually sealed for a good year on Rosh Hashanah? Only the greatest *tzadikim*, who are pure and without *averios*. For the average person, while one is inscribed on Rosh Hashanah, full sealing comes later. It is only after the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, on Yom Kippur during *Neilah*, that we say "*Chasmeinu*" (May we be sealed).

Yet here we are, declaring and wishing one another to be sealed for a good year already on Rosh Hashanah. We address our friends as if they are *tzadikim* of such high merit that we can wish them to be inscribed and already sealed. What is the meaning behind this?

The *Magen Avraham* provides the following answer: Yes! We should speak these words and truly believe that our friends are *tzadikim*. These are profound words brought down in the *Shulchan Aruch* as an established custom among *Klal Yisroel*. When we reflect on it, this practice reveals a powerful principle regarding the weight of our words.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE WORDS

This teaching of the *Magen Avraham* highlights three key insights:

1. The Power Within Every Jew: Addressing your friend as a *tzadik* by wishing them to be inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah carries immense weight in *Shamayim*.

2. Encouragement Through Speech: Speaking to a friend in this manner offers powerful encouragement. When you convey that you view him as a *tzadik*, it infuses him with renewed energy, inspiring him to *daven* with joy and be blessed with an exceptional year.

3. Personal Introspection: Throughout Rosh Hashanah, a person should remind themselves of the blessings received from friends on Rosh Hashanah night. Remind yourself that a fellow Jew declared you to be a *tzadik* — a wish rooted in *Shulchan Aruch*. Internalizing these positive words leads to a *gut, gebentched yuhr*.

CREATING MALACHIM THROUGH OUR INTERNAL THOUGHTS

One might argue, "Perhaps if my friend says it, it has power. But who is to say I have that same power when I say it to myself?"

The *Maharsha* in *Maseches Makkos* addresses this. He cites the *Gemara* (also found in *Tana D'vei Eliyahu*): בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך בו מוליכין אותו — "*In the path a person wishes to go, that is where they are led.*" Whichever direction a person chooses for themselves,

Hashem helps them get there.

The *Tana D'vei Eliyahu* explains, and the *Maharsha* follows this logic, that if a person constantly reminds himself that he is a *tzadik* and inherently wants to do what is right, with every positive thought and word he creates a *malach* — in fact, thousands of *malachim*. These angels then influence his free will to ensure he actually becomes a *tzadik*. Such is the strength of positive thought and speech.

Conversely, notes the *Maharsha*, if one engages in negative self-talk and pessimistic thinking, he creates dark *malachim*. Even a good person can be steered toward a destructive path by the influence of negative internal dialogue.

This dynamic was evident in Bilam. By constantly dwelling on and speaking negative thoughts, those negative words ultimately became his reality.

Mida tova merubah - if we keep on thinking positive thoughts, we create thousands of *malachim* that are going to help us fulfill our thoughts and dreams.

On Rosh Hashanah, during those 48 hours that represent the *moach* (חמ) of the year, we must ensure we think and speak positively. Whatever *brachos* we receive from our friends — that we be inscribed and sealed for a good year — we should also claim for ourselves. By doing so, we will create incredible *malachim* that will naturally guide us along the path of *tzadikim* and ensure a blessed year.



The Seuda and the Simanim

THE POWER OF THE APPLE DIPPED IN HONEY

THE CUSTOM OF APPLE AND HONEY ON ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh Hashanah night is full of remarkable *minhagim* - custom uniquely fulfilled by all of *Klal Yisroel* - such as dipping an apple in honey or eating sweet fruits. These traditions are

neither a requirement, nor a *mitzvah*; it's a cherished *minhag*.

Based on the *Shulchan Aruch*, we see that this practice originates in the *Gemara*. The *Gemara* states that a *siman* – a sign – carries significant weight. At the start of the year, performing positive actions serves as a favorable sign. The *Gemara* suggests eating

various sweet fruits, as well as fruits and vegetables that have positive names, or look's appealing, taste good, or grow rapidly. The reasons for these *simanim* are brought down by the *Rishonim*.

The *Beis Yosef* further notes that one should even recite a "*Yehi Ratzon*" while eating. He explains that you should mention Hashem's name, just as you do during formal prayer. He specifies saying "יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקי ואלוקי" while eating the apple dipped in honey and all the other symbolic foods. He maintains that Hashem's name should be said over all the *simanim*.

The *simanim* are neither an obligation nor a *mitzvah*, yet they are recorded in the *Gemara*. Furthermore, we are instructed to recite a *tefillah* using Hashem's name, similar to *davening*. What are we trying to achieve here?

The *Magen Avraham* notes that some have the custom to recite the *brachah* "*Borei Pri Ha'etz*" and say the "*Yehi Ratzon*" before eating the apple, maintaining that this does not constitute an improper interruption.

Most people recite the *brachah*, taste the apple, and then say the "*Yehi Ratzon*." However, others follow the opinion cited by the *Magen Avraham* to recite the *tefillah* beforehand.

These intriguing *halachos* indicate that there is a profound deeper meaning behind these customs.

THE PROHIBITION OF דרכי האמורי

The *Gemara* often mentions a prohibition called דרכי האמורי – "the ways of the Amorim" – meaning one is forbidden from relying on omens. A person cannot say, "Because it rained today or because this event occurred, it means such and such will happen." The *Gemara* classifies this as the דרכי האמורי, and such thoughts are considered as *avodah zara*.

We are told: התהלך עמו בתמימיות - "*Be wholehearted with Hashem*." We must lead our lives with simple *emunah* in the Ribbono shel Olam.

Then why does the *Gemara* tell us to eat sweet things at the start of the year as a sign for a good year? Even more so, we are commanded to avoid eating sour things, as that might suggest a year that isn't good, *chalila*.

The *Maharsha* addresses this question, already raised by the *Rishonim*, asking why eating sweet fruits on Rosh Hashanah isn't considered דרכי האמורי, which is forbidden.

THE MAHARSHA'S PRINCIPLE OF POSITIVITY

The *Maharsha* provides a fundamental principle in response. He explains that דרכי האמורי refers to someone saying: "If it's sunny, I will have a good day. If it's rainy, I will have a bad day." That is forbidden.

However, if a person only focuses on the positive, saying: "If it's sunny, I will have a good day," without claiming that rain means the day will be bad, then the *Maharsha* says this is permitted. In fact, it is a positive way to approach life.

The *Maharsha* explains: Because we aren't addressing the negative side. We aren't discussing bad fruit; we're only engaging in positive acts; eating sweet things, thinking good thoughts, and feeling positive emotions.

As long as you focus on the positive without dwelling on the negative, such signs are permitted.

He explains that the *Gemara* encourages performing all sorts of positive signs at the beginning of the year - dip the apple in honey and eat *simanim* that look good, taste good, have beautiful colors, or grow quickly. What this teaches us is the importance of maintaining a positive outlook throughout the year, especially on Rosh Hashanah.

LET THE SWEET HONEY SHIFT US TOWARD POSITIVITY

But let's not forget to focus on ourselves! When eating the apple and honey, we often focus only on the fruit and miss the point. The primary goal is to ensure that you yourself become sweet. Make sure the sweetness doesn't stop at the apple. Ensure that the "honey" enters "you" and transforms your mind and heart. You should be filled with sweetness, as that is the entire purpose.

The primary objective is for us to adopt a positive outlook. As the *Maharsha* explains, maintaining a positive mindset serves as an extraordinary sign.

Therefore, as we dip the apple in honey alongside all the symbolic *simanim*, let us allow these customs to inspire our thoughts and feelings toward positivity and *bitachon*, trusting that Hashem hears our *tefillos* for a sweet and blessed year.



WALKING IN THE WAYS OF OUR TZADIKIM

Rosh Hashanah in Sanz

The *Sanzer Rav*, while a prominent *Chassidishe rebbe*, was widely recognized as the *Posek Hador* – earning the respect of all the *Litvishe*, Hungarian, and Ashkenazic *gedolim*.

Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathansohn, the *Shoel Umeishiv*, addressed the *Divrei Chaim* with exceptionally prestigious titles. A significant *halachic* question once arose regarding a woman seeking

to be released from her status as an *agunah*. The *Shoel Umeishiv* and his *Beis Din* granted her the release on the condition that the *Sanzer Rav* also sign the document. The *Shoel Umeishiv* stated that he would only permit her to remarry if the *Sanzer Rav* endorsed the *psak*.

Thus, the *Sanzer Rav* was uniquely positioned; he was a renowned Chassidishe leader with thousands of *Chassidim*, many of whom were distinguished *rebbe*s themselves. Simultaneously, he was highly regarded within the *Litvishe* and Ashkenazic communities.

THE MAN FROM BERLIN AND THE SANZER RAV

A story is told of a Jewish man from Berlin, a city known for its extreme modernity. Berlin was one of the first cities that fell to the reform movement, where universities were established. However, this particular *Yid* had heard of the *Sanzer Rav* and traveled to spend Rosh Hashanah with the Rav.

The *Sanzer Rav's* daily routine, particularly on Shabbos and *Yom Tov*, seemed to transcend time. The *davening* on Friday night didn't finish until midnight, followed by a festive meal that lasted until dawn. The *Chassidim* would rest briefly for an hour or two to regain their strength before beginning hours of *davening* again. This was followed by *kiddush*, several hours of learning, and the afternoon Shabbos meals. Ultimately, a Shabbos with the *Sanzer Rav* was a twenty-four-hour experience with virtually no sleep, a pattern that repeated every week.

On *Yom Tov*, the schedule similarly ran beyond the constraints of the clock. Being in the presence of the *Sanzer Rav* on *Yom Tov* required gathering strength beforehand, as no one wanted to miss a single moment of his sacred *avodah*.

When Rosh Hashanah arrived, the man from Berlin reached *Sanz* and was initially shocked by how things ran. Accustomed to German punctuality, he found the *davening* not following a set schedule. While he expected *maariv* to take a half hour, it stretched to two hours. He soon realized that day and night simply merged into one continuous event.

TWO REMARKABLE OBSERVATIONS

Following Rosh Hashanah, this man from Berlin made two remarkable observations that provide insight into the extraordinary atmosphere of *Yom Tov* in *Sanz*.

First, he noted that despite the unprecedented length of the *tefillos*, the lack of sleep, and minimal eating, he had never before felt as though he were experiencing Rosh Hashanah in *Gan Eden* as he did with the *Sanzer Rav*.

Second, he remarked that on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, *Shacharis* ended very late.

The delay was due to the *Sanzer Rav* spending an entire hour just reciting the *Krias Shema*. During this recitation, he would cry out, ready to serve Hashem with total self-sacrifice. The entire *shul* remained silent, observing every detail of his devotion.

Because *Shacharis* finished so late in the afternoon, they had to rush through *musaf* and *mincha* to begin the meal while it was still daylight. The *tefillos* of *Malchius*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros* took less than thirty minutes, as the *ba'al tefillah* had to hurry, omitting the usual melodies to ensure they finished before sunset.

The man then remarked, "Now I understand why the *Sanzer Rav* is called the *וואונדער רבי* - "Wonder Rabbi." While

the main musaf - with Malchius, Zichronos, and Shofros - only took half an hour, he witnessed that it took the Sanzer Rav forty-five minutes to recite Asher Yatzar.

These were the impressions of a Jewish man from Berlin, a city known for its extreme modernity, who spent time with

the tzadikim of old. May Hashem help us internalize these stories and reflect upon them.

Even if we cannot reach such heights, these accounts should broaden our hearts and minds to the levels these tzadikim achieved, inspiring us to elevate ourselves within our own lives.

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