

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



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ALAI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Caught by its Horn

In Shacharis of Rosh Hashanah, during the *piyutim* in *chazaras hashatz*, we say, מלך, זכור, אחוז קרן, לתוקעי לך היום בקרן, נורה קדוש King, remember that which was caught by its horn, for the sake of those who sound the horn to You today, Awesome and Holy One.

That which was caught by its horn is the ram which Avraham Avinu saw, caught in the thicket by its horns (Bereishis 22:12), after Hashem told him not to *shecht* Yitzchak. We invoke this as a *zechus* for Klal Yisrael who blow the shofar made of a ram's horn on

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Rosh Hashanah.

Why do we mention the *zechus* of the ram that Avraham Avinu brought in Yitzchak's place? The great *zechus* of the Akeidah is that Avraham Avinu was prepared to sacrifice his son. After Avraham passed this test, Hashem told him to sacrifice a ram instead. What is the significance of the ram that we should invoke it as a *zechus*?

Rashi cites a Midrash which says that the ram was running to Avraham, but the

satan surrounded it and entangled it in the trees in order to prevent it from reaching Avraham. This is a wonder: Avraham Avinu had just withstood his tenth *nisayon*, Akeidas Yitzchak. The *Ribono Shel Olam* had declared, Now I know that you are a *yerei Elokim* (Bereishis 22:11). What was the point of the *satan* continuing to obstruct him even after the crowning victory, by preventing him from bringing the ram as a *korban*?

We learn from here the unrelenting persistence of the *yetzer hara*, and the persistence that is required to confront him. The *yetzer hara* never relents, even after a person withstands many tests. As long as a person still breathes, the *yetzer hara* continues to pursue him; we can never relax from the struggle against it.

This is what we are saying before *tekias shofar*, מלך, זכור אחוז קרן. *Ribono Shel Olam*, we want to do Your will, but the *yetzer hara* is unrelenting. We fight to overcome it, and often succeed! But then we are again challenged again. Even when we are victorious, we find our path obstructed by another *nisayon*.

The ram which was caught by its horn is symbolic of the unrelenting challenges we face in avoiding *aveiros* and fulfilling the will of Hashem. As we stand before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and blow the shofar, we invoke the *zechus* of that ram and ask Hashem to remember that we too are struggling against a *yetzer hara* that never gives up.

ר"ה קודם התקיעות תשפ"ו

Focus on Fulfilling a Mitzvah

ויהי אחרי הדברים האלה ויגד לאברהם לאמר הנה ילדה מלכה גם הוא בנים לנחור אחיך.

It came to pass after these things that Avraham was told, saying: Behold, Milcah too has borne children to Nachor your brother (Bereishis 22:20).

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah we *lein* the parshah of the Akeidah. The final few *pesukim* which we *lein* relate the sons of Nachor, Avraham's brother, and tell us that his son Besuel had a daughter, Rivkah.

Rashi explains the connection between "these things" and the children of Nachor. *These things* refers to things that Avraham was inspired to reflect on after the Akeidah. When Avraham returned from Har Hamoriah he thought to himself: *Had my son actually been sacrificed, he would have died childless. Perhaps I should have married him to a girl from the children of Aner, Eshkol, and Mamrei.* Thereupon Hashem informed him that Rivkah, the girl whom Yitzchak was destined to marry, had been born. Why are these *pesukim* part of the *kriah* of Rosh Hashanah? We *lein* the parshah of the Akeidah on Rosh Hashanah in order to recall it as a *zechus* for Klal Yisrael on the day of judgment. So why not end the *kriah* after the *pesukim* of Hashem's blessings and promises to Avraham Avinu? What connection do these later *pesukim* have to Rosh Hashanah?

We can explain this based on an insight which the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*¹ writes in the name of his grandfather the Baal Shem Tov.

It was during the reign of Shaul Hamelech that Hashem commanded Shmuel Hanavi to anoint Dovid as king. Shmuel responded: *How can I*

1 Beginning of *Parashas Vaes'chanan*.

Getting Out of the Mud

The piyyut of *Unesaneh Tokef*, contains the following phrase: ותחתוך קצבה לכל בריותיך—*You decide an appointed measure for each of Your creatures.*

When people say these words, they generally think about the time span that Hashem decrees that a person will live, the amount of *parnasah* that Hashem will provide each of us, or the measure of the many other things for which we daven on Rosh Hashanah.

However, there is another *kavanah* in the

We do not seek any reasons for blowing the shofar other than the fact that it is a mitzvah.

measure decreed for each person. The amount that each person is expected to accomplish in his *avodas Hashem* is also decreed in Heaven. What makes us think that all that is decreed is the measure of what Hashem will grant us? Hashem also has expectations of each of

us. Each individual has unique abilities, and Hashem demands from each person according to his abilities.

A person once gave the Baal HaTanya a long *kvittel* listing his many material needs. The Baal HaTanya remarked, "You've done a thorough job listing everything you need from Heaven. You must also consider what Heaven needs from you."

As we begin a new year and turn to Hashem for all that we want from Him, we should remember all that Hashem wants from us.

As for people who focus on what they want from Hashem while they say ותחתוך קצבה, we can view that favorably by applying an insight we once shared on the *tefillah* of *Avinu Malkeinu*. There are five lines that begin with אבינו מלכנו בספר כתבנו. The first is "inscribe us in the book of good life"; then, we have several requests for success and health in *Olam Hazeh*; and then, the very last request: "inscribe us in the book of *selichah* u'*mechilah*." Why does the *tefillah* for forgiveness come last?

We can understand this in light of a story about Rav Moshe Leib Sassover. He was once traveling when his wagon became stuck in heavy mud. He turned to Heaven and exclaimed, "*Ribbono Shel*

Olam! I know that I deserve this punishment, but right now, while I am stuck in the forest, how can I do a proper teshuvah? Get me out of the mud, and as soon as I reach home I will do teshuvah."

This is our situation. We know that we have to improve our *avodas Hashem*, but we are so troubled by our material problems that we cannot properly focus on *avodas Hashem*. We therefore ask Hashem to give us *parnasah* and peace of mind, and then we will do teshuvah and merit *selichah* and *mechilah*.

This gives us an excuse to think about all our needs when we say ותחתוך קצבה. We have our worries about health, *shidduchim*, *parnasah*, and so on. We ask Hashem to take care of these problems so that we gain the peace of mind to focus on what is expected of us.

This is an excuse to think first about our material needs, but at the same time, we cannot forget that there is also a *kitzvah* regarding what is expected from us. Just as we turn to Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and ask Him for a full measure of all we need and want, we must remember that He also has a measure of what He expects from us.

יום א ר"ה תשפ"ו מאמר ג

Confusing the Satan

The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah (16a) relates an insight of Rabi Yitzchak about *tekias shofar*. The Gemara begins by asking: Why do we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah? The Gemara immediately interjects: "Why do we blow the shofar? רחמנא אמר תקעו!—Hashem said to blow the shofar!" The Gemara then explains that Rabi Yitzchak was asking: Why do we blow all of the sounds of the shofar before Mussaf and then blow them again during Mussaf. Rabi Yitzchok answered: כדי לעררב את השטן—in order to confuse the *satan*.

It seems that the question of רחמנא אמר תקעו was based on a mistake, which was immediately corrected. The questioner had not understood Rabi Yitzchak's point. Why, then, did Rav Ashi, who organized the text of the Gemara, include this exchange? He could have given us Rabi Yitzchak's question clearly, followed by his answer.

The truth is that this exchange teaches us something of the essence of the mitzvah of *tekias shofar*.

Rashi explains the idea of "confusing the *satan*": when Yidden fulfill the requirement of the mitzvah, and then continue performing the mitzvah beyond their obligation, this demonstrates love for mitzvot, and this love for mitzvot has the power to suppress the accusations that face us.

The Imrei Emes² relates an insight from the Chiddushei HaRim: The Gemara explains that blowing *tekios* from a shofar made of the horn of a ram reminds Hashem of the *zechus* of Akeidas Yitzchak. The first set of *tekios* thus benefits Klal Yisrael; which gives the *satan* an opportunity to shout that we fulfill this mitzvah for our own benefit. However, Yidden then continue performing the mitzvah—even after they have finished reminding Hashem of

the *zechus* of Akeidas Yitzchak. The repetition demonstrates that we are not performing the mitzvah simply for our own benefit, but for love of the mitzvah.

This is expressed in the statement: "Why do we blow the shofar? רחמנא אמר תקעו! Hashem said to blow the shofar!" We do not seek any reasons for blowing the shofar other than the fact that it is a mitzvah.

It is true that *tekias shofar* recalls the *zechus* of Akeidas Yitzchak, but that is not why we fulfill the mitzvah. Our intention is *l'shem Shamayim*. To demonstrate this, we go beyond the obligation and blow a hundred *tekios*. The extra *tekios* show that our connection to the mitzvah is not dependent on what we can gain from it. We fulfill the mitzvah simply because רחמנא אמר תקעו—Hashem commanded us to blow the shofar.

יום ב ר"ה תשפ"ו מאמר א

Focus on Fulfilling a Mitzvah

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go? *Shaul will hear and kill me* (Shmuel I 16:2).

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 8b) explains that this was a situation of likely danger, and therefore Shmuel asked how to deal with it. Hashem told him to take a calf with him and say that he is coming to bring a korban.

From this exchange it appears that Shmuel was not concerned about Shaul learning later that Shmuel had anointed Dovid. His concern was only for the present time: *How can I go?* The solution, too—pretending that he was going just to bring a korban—only addressed this concern. It did nothing to prevent Shaul from later hearing what had been done. This is a puzzle.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that Shmuel Hanavi was not afraid that Shaul might learn of his activities by word of mouth. Shmuel was confident that he could act with sufficient secrecy that the word would not spread. He was afraid only because a *melech Yisrael* has the intuition to know what his subjects are feeling. When he said *ושמע שאול*, he meant that Shaul would understand on his own. As long as Shaul Hamelech was king, he had the power to understand Shmuel's thoughts and feelings and realize where he was going. However, once Shmuel anointed Dovid Hamelech, Shaul would lose this power, and

therefore Shmuel was not afraid of Shaul later learning of what he had done.

There is a strong question that we can ask on this *pshat*. If Shmuel was afraid of Shaul knowing his thoughts and feelings, what would be accomplished by the ruse of taking a calf and saying that he is going to bring a korban?

What we must say to explain the holy words of the Baal Shem Tov is that taking along a calf for a korban was not simply a ruse to mislead people. Rather, once Hashem had instructed him to go to the location of Dovid and bring a korban, Shmuel's mind became focused on the korban. From that point on, his thoughts and emotions were engrossed in fulfilling this mitzvah. Only once this was fulfilled would his mind turn to anointing Dovid.

With this introduction, we can understand a great lesson in the pesukim about Nachor's children which adds an element to the *zechus* of the Akeidah.

According to Rashi's insight, *It came to pass after these things* that Avraham thought to himself: Had my son actually been sacrificed, he would have died childless. Why did Avraham only think about this on his way back from Har Hamoriah? This realization

should have occurred to him as soon as he was instructed to sacrifice Yitzchak.

The answer is that from the moment that Hashem commanded him to bring Yitzchak as a korban, his thoughts and feelings became completely focused on fulfilling this mitzvah. There was no room in his mind for reflections about anything else. Only after the mitzvah was completed did Avraham have the leisure to reflect whether he should have already found a wife for Yitzchak.

This adds a dimension to the greatness of Avraham Avinu and his devotion in following Hashem's command. His mind was so completely focused on fulfilling the *ratzon Hashem* that even thoughts about the future of his own son had no place in his mind while he was carrying out the mitzvah of the Akeidah.

This is why it is part of the kria of Rosh Hashanah. We are not only reminded of the Akeidah itself, but also of the complete devotion of Avraham Avinu, whose every thought was focused on fulfilling the command of Hashem. This is the *zechus* that we invoke as we stand before Hashem on the Yom HaDin.

יום ב'ר"ה תשפ"ו מאמר א

The Shepherd's Own Flock

כְּרֹעֵה עֶדְרוֹ יִרְעֶה בְּזֵרְעוֹ יִקְבֹּץ טְלָאִים.

Like a shepherd who pastures his flock, with His arms He gathers up the lambs (Yeshayah 40:10).

The metaphor of this pasuk comes into play in the *piyut* of *Unesaneh Tokef*. The *piyut* describes the way that Hashem inspects the deeds of each individual: *נבקרת רועה עדורו, מעביר צאנו*—*Like a shepherd inspecting his flock, making his sheep pass under his staff*.

The Radak draws our attention to the word *עדורו*—*his flock*. A shepherd often watches the sheep of other people; but here the pasuk emphasizes that Hashem is compared to a shepherd who is watching *his* flock, meaning the shepherd's own personal sheep.

When watching other people's sheep, a shepherd does his job and makes sure to return

3 *Vaes'chanan, d"ho yevuar* 1.

4 *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Zuta* 19.

the sheep unharmed. But when watching his own sheep, he cares for each one and devotes his attention to the welfare of each and every sheep. This is the kind of shepherd to which the Navi compares Hashem.

The *Kedushas Levi*³ explains even more sharply the emphasis on *his flock*. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 5b) says that a shepherd is suspected of stealing by grazing his flock on private property; however, this applies only to one who watches his own sheep. A shepherd who works for other people is not suspected of grazing the flock on private property, because "a person does not sin if he has no personal benefit."

Chazal⁴ say that Yaakov and Eisav divided the world so that Olam Hazeh is the portion of

Esav and Olam Haba is the portion of Yaakov. This means that all the pleasures of this world are really the property of Esav. Hashem, however, can choose to give some of this world to Yaakov. In this sense the pasuk describes Hashem as treating Klal Yisrael as shepherd who watches his own flock; he grazes *His* flock on property that belongs to others.

Accordingly we may understand the description in *Unesaneh Tokef*: *Like a shepherd inspecting his flock ... You determine an appointed measure for all Your creations, and inscribe their verdict*. We beseech the *Ribono Shel Olam* to treat us as *His* flock and inscribe us for a year filled with good things.

קידור למשוררים תשפ"ה

Tzom Gedaliah

Rosh Hashanah	First Night	Second Night	Motzei Y"t
Brooklyn	6:53	7:51	7:49
Lakewood	6:54	7:52	7:52
Baltimore	7:03	8:00	7:59
Chicago	6:46	7:47	7:45
North Miami	7:11	8:03	8:02
Los Angeles	6:46	7:41	7:40

The Gemara in *Rosh Hashanah* (18b) explains the tragedies that occurred on each of the four fast days that are *midivrei kabbalah*. Three of them are related to *churban Beis Hamikdash* and *galus*. Then the Gemara says: *The third of Tishrei is the day when Gedaliah ben Achikam was assassinated. Who killed him? Yishmael ben Nesaniah killed him.* The Maharsha explains why the Gemara notes that Gedaliah was killed by Yishmael ben Nesaniah. It is a uniquely tragic aspect of the death of Gedaliah that he was killed by a fellow Yid, during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. This is a time when every Yid is inspired to examine his deeds and do teshuvah. Yishmael should have reconsidered his evil plan. Yet he nevertheless carried out this terrible deed in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

The Maharsha then interprets a pasuk in Hoshea (6:2) as alluding to this event. יְחִינּוּ מִיָּמִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יִקְמְנוּ וְנִחְיֶה לְפָנָיו — *He will revive us from two days, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before Him..* The Maharsha interprets as follows: During the first two days of Tishrei, we daven for life. On the third day [on which Gedaliah was assassinated], we must daven that Hashem raise us up from this tragedy, in addition to davening that He decree life for us.

One of the things we learn from this Maharsha is how serious is the expectation that we examine our deeds and do teshuvah in the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*. Even the wicked Yishmael was expected to be inspired at this time. How much more so must we use this time for introspection and teshuvah.

ס"ג שבת תשובה תשפ"ה מאמר א

From the Desk of the Rosh Yeshivah

As is known, davening at *kivrei tzaddikim* requires purity and preparation beforehand.

I believe that by adding special *sedarim* in the morning and evening beyond the regular schedule, and through your conduct and good deeds, you are worthy of this distinction; surely your prayers will be accepted with mercy and favor.

May you merit the fulfillment of all your hearts' desires; may Hashem guard your going out and coming in

With the *berachos* and *tefillos* of one who loves you,

Shaul