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Rosh Hashanah

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 6:30pm

Candle lighting 2 day after night fall

Holiday Ends: 7:25pm

R' T 7:57pm

We would like to show our deepest תשובה to our generous donor who made it available for us to continue printing the newsletter. May Hashem grant him with a good, happy, healthy and successful new year. May Hashem help that his children will grow to be big Talmidei Chachamim.
Thank you.

INSIGHTS FOR ROSH HASHANA

RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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SUBJECT RABBI SHAY TAHAN

The crying voice of the shofar

The Torah says that the blowing of the Shofar must be done in sets of three:

תקיעה, תרועה, תקיעה.

Tekiah is the long voice, and it sounds before and after each Teruah, referred to by Chazal as a simple sound.

The word תרועה is defined as a crying voice since we learn this from the mother of Sisra, who was the army general of Hatzor. When the army of Sisra was returning from war, she didn't see her son and therefore started crying, worried that something bad might have happened to him.



The Gemara says that since we don't know if her crying was that of long sounds or short sounds, we do both, so as to cover all bases. The longer sound is called Shevarim שברים: (three longer sounds), and the shorter sounds are called Teruah תרועה: (nine very short sounds).

The Aruch Hashulchan (סי' תקצ"ג) explains that the two types of crying classify two types of people. The longer sound of Shevarim is a crying voice of a more prestigious person who cries long sounds, as its says: ויאנחו בני ישראל מן (אנחה) while the shorter sounds represent the crying sound of more senseless people, as the pasuk indicates: הילילו כל שותי יין (ויאל אה).

What is the message the Torah is sending by telling us to blow in a way that imitates two classes of people?

The Rambam explained that the purpose of blowing the Shofar is to wake us up from our spiritual slumber. Accordingly, it seems that the Torah is telling us that we have to wake up from these two deficiencies and cry over living with these bad habits. The deficiency of what the Shevarim represents is to repent and cry over the foolish way of our life; as the long crying sounds of the Shevarim comes to tell us that we shouldn't behave like a prominent person, better known as a 'big-shot'; rather we must have some humility. Moreover, since we learn this sound from the way the mother of the evil Sisra was crying, the message is that although she behaved as though she was important, in reality she was very cruel (we learn that from the conversation she had with those who came to comfort her). The same may be said by us, many times we too behave as important and prominent people, when the reality is far from that.

But I think the message of the Shofar is much deeper than that. Let us explore how people are judged on Rosh Hashanah, and see if we can glean some insights into this matter as well.

The three books of Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (ראש השנה טז, ב) says that on Rosh Hashanah, three books are opened to inscribe upon them the fate of all people: the righteous are written to a good life, the evil are signed to death, and those who are in between called-בינוניים, must await Yom Kippur for their verdict to be sealed.

The obvious question seems to

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arise, we see that many righteous people die throughout the year, as do many wicked people remain alive. This seems to be a direct contradiction to the above Gemara!

The Rishonim address this question and argue what the judgment is for.

Tosfot (שם ד"ה ונחתמים) say that the judgment that this Gemara is referring to isn't for this lifetime, but the next life – עולם הבא. Which means that on Rosh Hashanah everyone is judged on whether they will have eternal life in Olam Haba or not. The destinies of the righteous and wicked are decided on immediately, while those who are in between must wait for Yom Kippur. The verdict for this world is decided for all on Rosh Hashanah, and sealed on Yom Kippur (according to the Vilna Gaon).

The Ramban (בספרו שער הגמול דרשה לר"ה) on the other hand says that the judgment is for this world in this lifetime. The meaning of the Gemara's statement about the righteous and wicked isn't referring to the righteous and wicked people; rather it's referring to all people, and who's going to receive a "good" judgement (will be exonerated), and who will receive a "bad" judgement (who will be found guilty).

Lehalacha, the Rema says that the custom is to wish one another that they be sealed immediately in the book of life on Rosh Hashanah. This clearly follows the Ramban's opinion who says that the middle class are waiting for their judgment to be sealed on Yom Kippur, thus we wish them to be part of the Righteous who don't wait but are sealed on Rosh Hashanah.

The Vilna Gaon says that we Pasken like Tosfot who holds that everyone's verdict is sealed for them on Yom Kippur, thus wishing one that his verdict should be sealed on Rosh

Hashanah doesn't make sense.

At the time we blow the Shofar, our judgment starts; then we all stand on heavenly trial for all of our actions.

As mentioned above, the judgment on Rosh Hashanah is divided into three classes of people, corresponding to the three types of blowing of the Shofar. The initial Tekiah, which is the simple long sound, describes the judgment of the righteous, whose judgment is simple and straight to the point, and thus the verdict is decided immediately. The Teruah, which is made of different and more complex sounds, resembles the judgment of the middle class, which is more complex and not decided until ten days later, on Yom Kipur, after much deliberation. The final Tekiah, which is again, simple and long, represents the verdict of the wicked, whose verdict is given over immediately.

Another explanation to the reason we do those two different sounds of Shevarim and Teruah is based on the above explanation that there are two types of judgments taking place on Rosh Hashanah; one for this world and the other for the next. According to this, the two different sounds of the Shofar represent these two important trials. The longer sounds of Shevarim, which represent importance as explained above, illustrate the judgment of the next world which is understandably much more important than this world, while the short sounds, called Teruah, the sound of the the less important, indicate that we are being judged for our life this world as well.

Chazal tell us that each person should view himself as if he is in the middle class. Therefore, each person should make sure to pay close attention at the time of the Teruah blowing and feel the above. He should feel that the long and short sounds indicate that we should cry for our behavior of feeling like big-shots and for living a foolish life, and cry for the two worlds; this world, and more importantly, the next world.

ROSH HASHANA VERDICT

The day of Rosh Hashana-Judgment Day is fast approaching, and although the most important technique to get a good verdict is to improve our ways and repent our sins, there are also some more ways that Chazal have taught us which, when implemented, can be very helpful in ensuring a good outcome and our being written in the book of life.

Chazal said (ראש השנה יב,ב):

"כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו", meaning, one who overlooks the wrong things done to them by others, will be reciprocated appropriately, as in heaven they overlook and forgive his sins. Rashi explains this as follows: sometimes one might be insulted or hurt, and by instinct would want to insult back. In that instant, if he were to

keep quiet, in return Hashem will do the same to the many times we 'insulted' Him by sinning.

This is what the Torah teaches us is the meaning of מידה כמידה, measure for measure. Just as we didn't pay attention to his wrong-doings, heaven won't pay attention to our wrongdoings. But the Gemara says that this works only if the person is doing so out of modesty and humility, not for other reasons. The commentaries explain that sometimes a person keeps quiet because he understands that by not answering, we actually gets the other more annoyed and with that he 'gets back at him' better, or sometimes we may feel that its "beneath us" to answer such a person. Keeping quiet for those reasons wouldn't grant us the wonderful reward of overlooking our sins. Rather, we

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should think that since the person insulting me is more important than me, it would be wrong of me to answer.

Another way which can allow us a good verdict is based the following Gemara (ראש השנה טז,א):

בתחלתה מתעשרת בסופה כל שנה שרשה

Meaning, a year which is poor at the beginning, will end up rich. Now of course rich and poor doesn't mean only in monetary aspect, but in everything which a person needs.

Chazal promise us here that if we are poor on Rosh Hashana, that year will turn out very good.

Rashi explains that this works even if we aren't really poor and we do have all that we need, none the less we should 'play' as though we are poor, since we appear poor before Hashem, Hashem will have mercy on us and will give us a good year.

The meaning is that we should pray with low and pleading voice as it says:

"תחנונים ידבר רש".

Another technique we can use to try and secure a favorable judgement is if we look favorably at others, even when things appear to be sinful, as the Gemara says (שבת קכז,ב):

הדן חבירו לכף זכות דנין אותו לזכות

And to the extent we go to do so, same they do to us, as the story brought there of Rabbi Akiva who worked for Rabbi Eliezer for three years. At the end of the three years upon completing his work period, before going back to his house, Rabbi Akiva asked for his salary, the request was turned

down because Rabbi Eliezer claimed that he didn't have any money at the moment, and so Rabbi Akiva went back home empty handed. A month later Rabbi Eliezer came to Rabbi Akiva's house with his salary, asking him what was he thinking when he said he couldn't pay him? Rabbi Akiva replied that he sincerely didn't think for a moment that he was trying to avoid paying and he knew that he didn't have anything to give him, and once he'll have the money the salary would be pay in full. The Gemara concludes that whoever behaves in such a manner is granted to be judged by heaven favorably, understanding their negative actions as well.

Finally, we shouldn't forget the main mitzva of the day which is the blowing of the shofar.

The Gemara tells us that when the Shofar is blown Hashem remembers the great sacrifice of Yitschak Avinu and will Judge us favorably.

The gemara adds that the shofar blowing gets the Satan (who is the prosecutor at the heavenly trial) confused, allowing the defender to advocate on our behalf.

Because of the importance of the effect of this mitzvah, we must make sure that it's done correctly.

Unfortunately, there are Baalei Toke'a who blow the shofar beautifully; but not precisely according to Halacha, resulting in not fulfilling the requirements, which subsequently means that the entire congregation doesn't fulfil the Mitzva as well. As a result, aside from missing out on the Mitzva of the day, they also miss out on the aforementioned opportunity to be remembered favorably and confuse the Satan at the time of his prosecution.

May we all be judged favorably and have sweet new year.

CONFUSING THE SATAN

The Gemara (ראש השנה טז,ב) says that on Rosh Hashana at the time we blow the Shofar the Satan, the prosecutor against each and every one of us in the heavenly court, gets confused and can't continue prosecuting. There are several ways mentioned in the words of the Rishonim to understand the reason for this statement. Rashi says that the fact we blow the Shofar twice, (once while sitting and another standing) proves to him that we love doing Hashem's Mitzvot so much, that we even them! This act gets him so confused and he immediately falls silent.

The Ra'avad explains that the Satan is permitted to prosecute only one time. Therefore, at the first blowing he can prosecute; after this he isn't allowed to prosecute anymore. Thus, we blow a second time to accomplish a Mitzvah without any outside interference, and the Sa-

tan has no power,

The Rashba and the Ran say that the Satan actually refers to our Yetser Hara and getting the Satan confused means to subdue that Yetser into doing Teshuva.



Rav Akiva Eiger has a unique explanation based on a Chazal that when a person repents from love his sins turn into merits, and since we blow the Shofar more than required, that proves that we are repenting with love to Hashem; hence the Satan doesn't want to speak about our sins because every sin he points out is being recorded as a merit.

But I would like to pay close attention to the Aruch's explanation (mentioned in Tosfot).

MONOLOGUE VS DIALOGUE

According to the Aruch (תוס' שם ד"ה בדי) the Satan becomes a bit confused when he hears the blowing of the Shofar the first time. But when he hears it the second time, he becomes frightened thinking that it's the blowing announcing the arrival of Mashiach, and he knows that once Mashiach comes he will no longer exist. This causes such confusion, that he can't continue prosecuting.

To explain this better let's look at the following words of the Gemara:

The heavenly judgment is on the way we are now, ignoring how we will be in the future.

The Gemara (ראש השנה טזב) says that whenever Hashem judges someone he doesn't look at how he will be in the future, though Hashem knows his status in the future. We learn this from Yishmael: when Yishmael was dying from thirst, Hashem wanted to save him, but the angels objected, with their [accurate] claim that his descendants will end up murdering the Jewish people. Hashem answered them that since at the present moment he is righteous, we won't look into the future but rather at the way the person is at this moment.

This idea is contradicted from what the Torah teaches about a kid who steals money from his parents in order to buy meat and wine. The Torah instructs his parents to take him to Bet-Din to prosecute him. Although for stealing a few dollars and eating meat one isn't liable the death penalty, the Torah foresaw that this is only the beginning; it starts as such and eventually leads to a scenario where this kid becomes addicted to such a lifestyle, and when he won't find money to satisfy his needs he will rob and kill to get the money needed.

We see here that the Torah does ask to punish someone for his future misdoings.

The Mizrahi addresses this question and answers that in the case of the kid, since he already started his bad behavior he can be prosecuted according to the future. Unlike the case of Yishmael who was righteous at the time. But the Mizrahi doesn't explain why it is so.

If I would offer my humble explanation to this, I would say that it is surprisingly reversed from the way we think. The Torah actually wants to save this very kid who, right now is not doing anything so terrible nor committing any major sins, from getting to the end of the road where he will be a real criminal. The reason he'll end up doing all those terrible things is because when he starts doing so, he'll end up addicted to this lifestyle and in all likelihood not be able to stop. Therefore, armed with the knowledge that upon commencing this pattern of behavior, it would already be too late to stop himself; it's better for him to die now, while he's still righteous, than end up doing such bad things. While dealing with Yishmael however, since he would be sinning willingly and not by force of addiction, it's better to wait to punish him until he is actually at fault for his bad actions, than stopping him now.

We can conclude from here is a very scary insight. It's possible for a person to do seemingly "minor" sins and still be punished severely due to the potential of those crimes.

The one who actually prosecutes us on the above matter is the Satan, and therefore we must constantly find ways to be saved from his harsh words. The way to do that is by expressing to him that the Mashiach is coming and with that the concept of sinning ends (as per the explanation brought above from the Aruch). When that happens, it's no longer possible for him to prosecute us anymore based on our future, since at the point that Mashiach appears there is no way to keep sinning in the future, thus we are saved from the above prosecution. That is precisely what happens when we blow the Shofar; the Satan thinks that the Mashiach is coming and he gets confused by that, resulting in our ultimate salvation.

EXCERPTS FROM THE NEW SEFER



שמה. ובאמרו תהלים בהכנעה מעמקא דלבא וכוונתו על חפצי שמים, והדברים עתיקים דברי אלהים חיים אמורים מפי קדוש האלהי דוד המלך זכותו יגן עלינו, בודאי יעשו פרות ומצא כדי גאלתו, ויכתב בספר חיים טובים שהם חיי הנפש, כמו שכתבתי לעיל בערך סליחות עין שם".

וכן בתשובות והנהגות (ח"ב סימן רעא) הביא שהגריז"ס נהג לבלות את יום ראש השנה באמירת תהלים בכוונה ותחנונים שיש בזה גם בקשת כפרה מחילה וסליחה ותשובה

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