



*"Praise Him sun and moon
praise Him all bright stars
for He commanded
and they were created."*

King David: Psalm 148

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The Jewish New Year

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Unlike man-made celebrations of the secular New Year, accompanied by self indulgence, drunkenness, and the inescapable self realization that the partiers celebrate nothing other than the celebration, through the laws pertaining to the Jewish New Year, God continues to direct us to absolute truths in our never ending search for reality.

Our new year, Rosh Hashanna, Judaism focuses on a singular concept that God is the King, the Ruler of the universe. We make no personal requests. Rather, we praise God, His absolute omniscience and omnipotence through precisely formulated prayers. Our prayers accompanied by the Shofar blasts, emphasizes this one theme:

"And so too Hashem our God, instill your awe upon all your works, and Your dread upon all that You have created. Let all works revere You, and all creatures prostrate themselves before You. Let them all become a single society to do Your will wholeheartedly. For as we know Hashem our God, that the dominion is Yours, might is in Your hand, strength is in Your right hand, and Your name inspires awe over all that You have created."

Regarding this idea of God's complete rulership, Talmud Rosh Hashanna 16a records a Mishna stating, "on Rosh Hashanna, all those who enter the world pass before God (in judgment) like sheep". The Mishna quotes a source, Psalms 33:16 - "Who forms at once their (man's) hearts, Who understands all their doings."

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BIRTH OF STARS

(Photo above) Hubble Provides 'One-Two Punch' to See Birth of Stars in Galactic Wreckage
Two powerful cameras aboard NASA's Hubble Space Telescope teamed up to capture the final stages in the grand assembly of galaxies.

The photograph, taken by the Advanced Camera for Surveys (ACS) and the revived Near Infrared Camera and Multi-Object Spectrometer (NICMOS), shows a tumultuous collision between four galaxies located 1 billion light-years from Earth. The galactic car wreck is creating a torrent of new stars.

The tangled up galaxies, called IRAS 19297-0406, are crammed together in the center of the picture. IRAS 19297-0406 is part of a class of galaxies known as ultraluminous infrared galaxies (ULIRGs). ULIRGs are considered the progenitors of massive elliptical galaxies.

ULIRGs glow fiercely in infrared light, appearing 100 times brighter than our Milky Way Galaxy. The large amount of dust in these galaxies produces the brilliant infrared glow. The dust is generated by a firestorm of star birth triggered by the collisions.

IRAS 19297-0406 is producing about 200 new Sun-like stars every year - about 100 times more stars than our Milky Way creates. The hotbed of this star formation is the central region [the yellow objects]. This area is swamped in the dust created by the flurry of star formation.

The bright blue material surrounding the central region corresponds to the ultraviolet glow of new stars. The ultraviolet light is not obscured by dust. Astronomers believe that this area is creating fewer new stars and therefore not as much dust.

The colliding system [yellow and blue regions] has a diameter of about 30,000 light-years, or about half the size of the Milky Way. The tail [faint blue material at left] extends out for another 20,000 light-years.

Astronomers used both cameras to witness the flocks of new stars that are forming from the galactic wreckage. NICMOS penetrated the dusty veil that masks the intense star birth in the central region. ACS captured the visible starlight of the colliding system's blue outer region.

IRAS 19297-0406 may be similar to the so-called Hickson compact groups - clusters of at least four galaxies in a tight configuration that are isolated from other galaxies. The galaxies are so close together that they lose energy from the relentless pull of gravity. Eventually, they fall into each other and form one massive galaxy.

This color-composite image was made by combining photographs taken in near-infrared light with NICMOS and ultraviolet and visible light with ACS. The pictures were taken with these filters: the H-band and J-band on NICMOS; the V-band on the ACS wide-field camera; and the U-band on the ACS high-resolution camera. The images were taken on May 13 and 14.

Credits: NASA, the NICMOS Group (STScI, ESA), and the NICMOS Science Team (University of Arizona)

Torah and Superstition

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

What does the word Torah mean? Many interpretations have been given. Most people understand it to mean teachings or learning. Accordingly, we find in Leviticus 10:11, "ulehoros" and to teach, or more accurately to interpret and legislate. There is no doubt that the word Torah has the same root as "horah" teaching, legislating. But is that all it means? Sometimes we find the word in the singular form as Deuteronomy 1:5 "...Moses began to explain this Torah," or in ibid 4:44, "and this is the Torah Moses

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Forgiveness - Selichah

RIVKA OLENICK

"...nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." Leviticus 19:18. "If your brother has wronged you in your property, forget it at once even if he has not asked you to do so; what he took was not yours, and he did not take anything from you. Where injury has been done to your person or honour, be easily appeased as soon as your brother asks for forgiveness and desires to be reconciled. He who soon forgives is soon forgiven. If you are really good, if humility is one of your qualities, you will forget hurts and insults without pardon being asked of you; like the well known chasid, you will never lie down to sleep without being reconciled with the whole world, all of which God covers with the wings of His peace."

(Samson Raphael Hirsch from Horeb.)

In order that we can to "return to God" Who covers the whole world with the wings of His peace there must first be a genuine desire for selichah, forgiveness from those we have sinned against. Asking to be forgiven by God must be rooted in love and fear of God. We have a realization that we are really one nation, designated to be His holy nation, chosen by Him. In asking for God's forgiveness we are aware that we have lost our way, and that only through the process of tshuvah can we find our way back to the Master of the World.

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Torah and Superstition

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placed before the people of Israel." At other times we find it in the plural such as in Leviticus 26:46, "These are the ordinances, the judgments and the Torahs," or as in Gen. 26:5, "my commandments... my ordinances and my Torahs." Why is there a necessity for two forms of the word? Indeed in the above examples the word Torahs would seem to be superfluous since teachings is already included in the terms ordinances, judgments and commandments.

Let us see how the word Torah is used in the Bible. In Leviticus 11:46, after the Bible gives a detailed account of the complex laws of the clean and unclean animals, it states, "This is the Torah of the animals and the birds and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that swarms on the earth." We may clearly infer that the word Torah means a system of laws. Torah means a logically structured, internally consistent and conceptual system of law given by God to man. The Bible contains many such systems. There is a system of laws concerning leprosy (not an exact translation). Accordingly, the Bible states in Leviticus 13:59, "This is the Torah of the plague of leprosy...." Again, when the Bible is giving a detailed account of the laws of the uncleanness that involve contact with the dead, the Bible states, "This is the Torah, when a man dies in a tent...." God's law contains systems. All individual systems are then subsumed under one major system. The word Torah usually refers to the major system, but sometimes the Bible wishes to connote all the individual systems. Hence, when God praises Abraham for keeping His commandments, in Gen. 26:5, it uses the plural form "Toros." The Bible wishes to convey the message that Abraham kept every detail of all the systems of law that God had given to him.

It is clear to anyone who has read Leviticus, even in a cursory manner, that the systems of the sacrifices, the kosher laws, the laws of uncleanness, the sexual restrictions, etc., are complex and in need of interpretation. Even the plain meaning of the Biblical text cannot be ascertained without interpretation. Take, for instance, the verse in Leviticus 11:8, "From their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch, they are unclean to you." Does this mean that if a camel dies in the street, no one is permitted to remove its carcass and it must remain wherever it dies until it rots? This is obviously absurd. Or take the verse in Deuteronomy 23:25, "When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until

you have satisfied yourself; but you shall not put any in your vessel." Does this mean that people can just go into someone's vineyard and eat to their heart's content? Even the most primitive society could not survive with such a violation of another's rights of ownership and defiance of justice.

Interpretation is indispensable for the laws and the systems of the Bible. But the question is, whose interpretation? It cannot be anyone's, because then there would be no law whatsoever; each person would interpret things to suit himself. There must then be one authoritative body to interpret the Torah. The Bible speaks of such an authoritative body in Deut. 17:8-11. But who is that authoritative body today? Can we identify it? We are fortunate that God has made it singularly easy for us today to know whose interpretation He wishes us to follow. In Isaiah 59:21 God states through His prophet Isaiah, "and as for Me, this is My covenant with them (the people of Israel), saith the Lord, My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of the seed's seed, saith the Lord, for henceforth and for ever." We thus have God's promise that the words of the Torah and the proper approach to Torah shall never cease among the nation of Israel. Now there is only one group which has consistently studied, interpreted, taught and legislated Torah for the past two thousand years (and before as well) and they are the Talmudic scholars of Israel. Of all the sects of the period of the Second Temple, only the Pharisees have remained. God's promise has been fulfilled to the Talmudic scholars who have kept and established the Torah law throughout the generations. So it is a relatively easy matter to identify, in our day, the ones to whom the interpretation of Torah has been entrusted. In earlier times it would be a more difficult task. One would have to study the claims of the various groups and use his God given intellect to determine which group is authentic and which is fraudulent. In our times, thank God, it is an easy matter. No religious group of any significance keeps the Torah laws or claim they understand them. Anyone who takes the laws of the Bible seriously, that is, as the word of God, must make recourse to the only institution that has meticulously studied the Torah laws throughout the ages the Talmudic scholars.

The oral law, or Talmud, does not merely add facts to the written description of the Torah's laws, it gives us a unique approach to these laws. Talmudic laws result from a specific reasoning and methodology. This methodology gives us great insight into the systems of law of God's Torah. To appreciate the beauty of

these insights one must have achieved a level of Talmudic scholarship; much as to appreciate mathematical beauty one must first have attained a certain level of mathematical knowledge. Thus the praises of the Psalmist about the beauty, love and appreciation of God's laws (see Psalms 19:8-11 and Psalms 119) cannot really be understood by the uninitiated or layman. To paraphrase the Psalmist is Psalms 1:2, the delight in God's law goes hand in hand with total devotion to the study of God's law. This is a full time commitment that only very few people are able or willing to make. But just as there is much knowledge a layman can gain even though he is not an expert in scientific methodology, there is much knowledge one can gain regarding Torah without being a Talmudic scholar.

One important principle that emerges from the Talmudic approach is that there is no religious taboo in Torah law. A few examples will help make this clear. We all know that pig is a prohibited food for the Jew according to Torah law. Yet, in Deuteronomy 6:11 we read that when the Jewish people enter the land of Israel they will find homes filled with all kinds of good things which they will be able to partake of. The oral law identifies these good things as inclusive of foodstuffs, even pig. The people were permitted upon entering the land to consume all prohibited foods they find at the time. The Bible, interestingly enough, refers to these very prohibited foods as "good." Thus even though the Torah prohibited certain foods they are not considered "bad." The prohibition is merely to teach man to exercise control over his appetitive desires not that there is anything "unclean" about a pig or camel or horse. God does not, so to speak, like the cow more than the donkey. They are all equally His creation. In a similar vein the Rabbis of the Talmud have stated, "Do not say, I dislike the flesh of the pig, but rather, I like it but God has decreed that I abstain from it." If one abstains from pig because he thinks it is "bad" in some sense, he is functioning on a primitive taboo level not on the level which God has prescribed for him so that he gain perfection as a human being.

According to the oral law, if one piece of non-kosher meat becomes mixed up with two pieces of kosher meat (under certain circumstances) all three pieces may be consumed. It is clear from this that the Torah does not consider the non-kosher piece of meat to contain any soul contaminating element. What contaminates the human soul is the failure to abide by God's law and gain the perfection it affords man. In a similar manner, it should be understood that the laws of the menses, Leviticus 15:19, 25, 18:19, 20:18, have nothing in common with menstrual taboos found in primitive societies. Even on a practical level, the

two are incommensurate. A woman may be menstruating biologically, but not Halakhically, that is, according to the formula of the Torah, and vice versa.

Religious rites and practices revolve around two institutions, taboos and symbolic performances. The former is negative, the latter positive. (A primary example of the latter is the Eucharist). Just as the Torah is free of taboos it is equally free of symbolic performance. About this last point, I know, the reader will express disbelief. Is it not true, he will say, that the unleavened bread eaten on the eve of Passover symbolizes freedom and the bitter herbs slavery? Does not the Bible state that the fringes with its blue thread remind one of all God's commandments? The medrash explains that the blue color reminds one of the sea, the sea of the heavens, and the heavens of the infinity of God. Is not all of the above symbolic?

Here we approach a subtle but fundamental point of Torah philosophy. We must distinguish between an act whose very essence is to act something out, or experience something emotionally, and one which has ideational content related to it. Allow me to elaborate. The Talmudic analysis of mitzvot gives each of God's commandments a very detailed and precise formulation. Each commandment has a logical structure at the root of which is a concept. This concept is structural rather than philosophical. The performance of mitzvot must be done in strict compliance with the formula of the commandment. There is also a philosophical ideational component that is associated with each commandment, for example: In the performance of the eating of the unleavened bread, even if one knew nothing of the exodus from Egypt, as long as he complied with the proper definition of the performance of eating, he will have fulfilled the commandment. Conversely, if one did not eat the unleavened bread in conformity with the proper formula, although he may have had the most profound thoughts about the exodus from Egypt, he did not fulfill the commandment.

The same is true for the commandment of fringes. Even if one never looked at his fringes, as long as he wore them in accordance with the prescribed formula for the mitzvah, he fulfilled the commandment. If, on the other hand, one hung the fringes on his wall, as was the practice of the Karaites, although he may have thought about God every time he entered his home, he did not fulfill the commandment. While this sounds strange to most people it makes perfect sense to the Talmudist. Those who do not understand Halakha Talmudic law, cannot appreciate the beauty of the abstract formulae in God's Torah. They can, at best, only relate to some basic idea. People are

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usually attracted to performances that symbolize religious notions. God, in His Torah, saw it differently. The Torah's religious performance is the bringing into reality of abstract Halakhic ideas. There is very little explanation given for the vast majority of the laws. (It is for this reason that even gentiles who believe the Torah to be the word of God have never been attracted to the commandments though the Torah repeatedly stresses their significance). Even the oral law is sparse in this area. The Torah has veered away from symbolic performance.

There are two reasons for this: 1) The Torah wishes to reach man primarily through his appreciation of the intellectual world of abstract thought. Only when one's mind and appreciation of knowledge has been developed can one expect to arrive at true religious philosophical ideas. Rather than giving man fixed philosophical explanations, which of necessity would be simplistic, God gave man a system of Torah which perfects his mind and his personality. He then becomes capable of searching out for himself the deep philosophical meaning behind God's Torah. The Torah values most of all knowledge discovered by man through his own creativity. 2) The Torah saw a great danger in symbolic performance even if this performance is associated with correct ideas. Symbolic performance is the basis of the most primitive religious practices, practices which the Torah abhors and warns incessantly against. In Torah, God created an unique institution through which man can worship Him through Halakha. This religion stands alone as the only one totally devoid of primitive expression. Through its practice man is converted from an instinctual creature to one who is capable of standing in God's presence.

The Jewish New Year

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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Metsudas Dovid understands this as, since God created all people the same, He therefore understands all people equally, and this understanding of us is limited only to God - as God is Judge. One who judges accurately possesses the entire truth about His created beings.

Ibn Ezra offers a different explanation, understanding the verse in Psalms slightly different: "The One Creator (of) their hearts, Who understands all their doings." Ibn Ezra teaches us a subtle idea. His explanation of the verse is as follows: "There is One Creator - and there cannot be many - therefore He alone understands all their doings." Ibn Ezra states, precisely due to God's oneness, does God judge people. I ask, "Why does the reality that God is one, demand that God judge man?" How is God's judgment of man a natural outgrowth of His being one?

Ibn Ezra teaches thus; God judges mankind, thereby teaching us that there is a Judge, One God. The very act of God judging us, is an essential lesson. It teaches the most fundamental idea, i.e., Unity of God. As only God judges, no other being or entity can judge.

God judging man targets many goals. I feel Ibn Ezra derived from this institution of judgment, that man must recognize God as the Ultimate Ruler. This is the main idea: Being judged is not primarily so man takes account of his actions, as an ends in itself. Rather, being judged is so man recognize the existence of The Judge. There is a Being with ultimate knowledge and power - the Creator of all reality.

"Then You Hashem will reign alone over all Your works, on Mount Zion, resting place of Your glory, and in Jerusalem Your holy city, as it is written in Your holy writings, "Hashem shall reign forever, your God, oh Zion, from generation to generation, praised be God".

By definition, God does not share His Oneness. He possesses the distinction of Oneness exclusive of all 'others'. We stand in judgment, thereby attesting to His eternal, independent reign. The idea of God is inherently bound up with the concept that God knows all of man's actions. We cannot understand any concept of God without His absolute knowledge of our actions. This necessitates our act of repentance before Him. According to Ibn Ezra, standing in judgment is truly a testament to God's unique role as Ruler. The Creator knows His works, as the verse says, "The One Creator (of) their hearts, Who understands all their doings." By definition, "He alone understands all their doings." We therefore attest to His reign by standing in judgment.

This command to substantiate God's reign as King by adhering to the laws of Rosh Hashanna implants the most basic of ideas. God is One. □

Shofar Blasts and The Ten Days

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I wished to convey to you some basic ideas regarding Rosh Hashanna. Below, I have categorized various ideas contained on the holiday, the shofar, and statements from the Talmud.

The Shofar - A reader asked why we are commanded in shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanna. It is a basic question, and an essential one. I wonder how many of us truly understand the ideas God wishes we derive from shofar.

A story of a Sisra occurs in Judges 4:16. After his army was completely wiped out, Sisra fled on foot to seek a hiding place. Yael deceived him into believing she would protect him. As a charade, she hid him. He asked for water, but she gave this wearied general some milk. He drank and fell asleep, as Yael planned. Using this opportunity as Sisra was completely vulnerable, she drove a peg into his skull and killed him. Sisra's mother anticipated her son's return from war with great booty. Upon his delay, her hopes disintegrated into weeps of despair as the grim reality set in that Sisra was not returning, he was dead. Sisra's mother's weeps form the basis of the shofar blasts, as her cries displayed her acceptance of reality. Our shofar blasts - mimicking her sobbings - represent acceptance of the ultimate reality, the recognition of God as the King. We must awake from our slumber, "uru yshanim may-shinaschem", "awake you sleepers from your sleep." Blowing the shofar in the form of long and short blasts - like the long and short sobs of Sisra's mother - we cry in recognition of a reality abandoned, and strive to realize the reality of our Creator, and a time now to make amends.

Mount Sinai also contained the shofar blast as a central theme. In that eternally, unmatched miraculous event that was witnessed by millions. The shofar at Sinai again - indicates the ultimate reality, that God revealed proof of His very existence at this one-time event. The shofar prayers actually commence with the account at Sinai, showing just how essential that event was and that it is eternal. Additionally, the account of Sinai repeats the shofar's presence many times. It was highly significant. The shofar stands out as a powerful reminder of our acceptance of the reality of God - the Ruler of the

universe.

The Talmud cites the reason for our selection of the ram's horn, Rosh Hashanna 16a:

"Rabbi Abahu asked, 'why do we blow with the shofar of a ram?' God said, 'blow with the shofar of a ram, in order that I recall the sacrifice of Isaac son of Abraham. and I will render it as though you sacrificed yourselves before me.'"

The ram is what Abraham offered in place of Isaac, God saw Abraham's complete devotion to His will, instructing Abraham not to slay his only son. The ram was caught in the thicket by its horns. So the rams' horns have significance before God - significantly, the event of sacrificing oneself to God.

A bent shofar is also used - as opposed to a straight shofar. This embodies the concept that we are to be bent over physically before God.

Malchyos (Kingship) - Zichronos (Remembrance) - Shofros (Shofar) - Our prayers comprise these three categories. The Talmud (Rosh Hashanna 16a) says as follows,

"God said, say before Me on Rosh Hashanna, Kingships prayers, Remembrance prayers and Shofar prayers. Kingship-so you make me your King, Remembrance-so your Remembrance rises before Me for good, and with what shall you accomplish all this? With Shofar prayers."

Accepting God as King is first and foremost. It is upon this that all reality is based. What we see during our entire lives is no other than all that God created. We therefore praise God for all His creation. God is King.

Remembrance prayers means to teach that God takes notice of our lives and doings. And not only Jews, but all mankind. For this reason, we state that God remembered Noah and the Flood. He was not a Jew, but he was God's creature. And this alone suffices God's recognition. He wills all people exist. The prayer contains the sentiments that God sees all, nothing is hidden, that He sees to the end of all generations, and judges all of mankind. Even unto man's innermost thoughts, all is clear as day to God. God knows all.

Now that we have come this far in the prayers, i.e., 1)we understand that God is King (Kingship), and 2)He knows all (Remembrance), therefore we make recourse to relating to Him via shofar in our Shofros prayers - third in the sequence. He is the One to relate to - 1)the King. He will 2)recognize our call, so we conclude with calling out to Him 3)via the

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Forgiveness - Selichah

RIVKA OLENICK

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Tshuvah is a difficult task however, God commanded us to do this and so, we are capable of it. Before we ask God to forgive us for the sins we commit against each other shouldn't we first reflect on the purpose of our lives? Otherwise, why should God forgive us? Why should our fellow Jew forgive us? Are we sincere in asking each other's forgiveness? Are we asking for His forgiveness in order to truly return to Him, or is it just "lip service" to get through another year, to make it "under the wire" with the hope that our fate will be sealed with life.

How many of us try to look back at the end of our day and ask ourselves: How did I act, what did I say or do that might have harmed another person? Can I really go to sleep in peace? "Who can discern one's own errors? Clear me from hidden faults" said King David in his Psalms 19:13. We can help each other to discern our errors and point out to each other with compassion when we are doing wrong. We are each obligated to rebuke with kindness and concern for each other's well being. We should look closely at our own ways and ask: "How am I living my life?" The Jewish people cannot afford not to do tshuvah. No one can afford to miss or ignore the opportunity to repent, only a fool would choose not to. How many of our brothers and sisters have we lost to the vile, filth of Arab nations who call themselves servants of God. Who have absolutely no fear of God, and no love for His divine Torah, but who want to destroy every trace of His chosen nation whom they refer to many times in their corrupt book, Koran as infidels and non-believers.

We, the Jewish people are the "true servants of God." It is our job to make every effort possible, with our heart, our soul and with all our might and demonstrate continuously to the world that our purpose is to be an "eved Hashem", a servant of God. We are supposed to be "the light" unto the nations but pathetically we are "the target" of the nations.

We must use our opportunity every day to talk to God through real and true prayer, prayer that we merit only because of the Avos, the Fathers. In our Selichot prayers we say: "Thy people and thy heritage hunger for

thy goodness, thirst for thy kindness, and long for thy salvation; let them know and understand that mercy and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God." We are asking God through our tshuvah to forgive us as a community and restore us as the Klal that He designated as "holy." We beg Him to answer us as He answered Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, our Forefathers at the Red Sea, Moses at Horeb, Aaron, Phineas, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Hezekiah, Hannaniah, Mishael and Azariah, Daniel, Mordecai and Esther, Ezra, the righteous, the pious, the perfect and the upright. He answers the poor, the broken-hearted, the lowly in spirit - but He does answer!

Do not pass up this opportunity to save your own life, and to be written in the Book of Life- what could be more important? Start now with Selichos and continue during the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Give Tzedaka. Look into your flaws with the serious intent to change and to work on yourself. Attach yourself to Torah knowledge that is our guide as Jews. In it we have all the tools and instruction we need. Be optimistic and strong in your tshuvah, but just "do it."

"Lord in heaven, we entreat thee, as a slave entreats his master. We are oppressed, and dwell in darkness; our souls are afflicted with much distress. We have not the strength to propitiate thee, O Lord; do it for the sake of the covenant which thou didst make with our forefathers." □

Shofar Blasts and The Ten Days □

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shofar. We thereby demonstrate that we desire to follow the only true reality that God is our central focus.

To demonstrate that these three themes are not singular experiences, we quote numerous verses from all three sections of Scriptures, from Torah, from Prophets and from Writings. This teaches us that they are divinely, intended themes, permeating the Law, and central ideas by which to live.

Written and Sealed - What is the concept of being written for a fate on

Rosh Hashanna, but not sealed with a fate until Yom Kippur?

Talmud Beitzah, 16a states, "Kol mezonosav shel adam ketzuvim lo m'Rosh Hashanna ad Yom Kippur..."

"All man's needs are decided for him from Rosh Hashanna until Yom Kippur, excluding his needs for Shabbos, the Holidays and his son's Torah learning. If (in these three) he spends little, he is given little, if he spends much, he is given much."

The reason for God's intervention in these three areas is that they represent man's view of reality. Man's expenditures on Shabbos, the holidays and Torah education represent his true value system. Shabbos celebrates God as Creator, the Holidays as God's intervention in our lives, and Torah education for his son as man's wish for his most treasured object, his child - i.e., a display of his real values. Throughout the year, man may alter these values, and thereby receive varying degrees of providential support from God. Such providence underlines when man is functioning in the right path, and when he is not.

Similarly, during these Ten Days of Repentance, man understands that God is about to seal his fate for the coming year. This terminality is inescapable, and hence, man is acting without distortion. His true values surface and he shows his true colors. It is therefore the one time during the year where man demonstrates his innermost virtues, and it is now, that he is most fit to be judged.

It is interesting that Rosh Hashanna is both the catalyst of man's best performance, and simultaneously, it is the focus of his attention, in that he recognizes God as King. It is both the means and the end. An unusual phenomena.

Let us use Rosh Hashanna as it should be, as a chance to refocus ourselves on the reality of God's existence and ultimately a redirection of our energies from the mundane to the sublime, as this is how God says we will find our utmost fulfillment and happiness. God created man long ago. He did so as an act of kindness that other beings may recognize and appreciate His infinite wisdom. He created a world which exudes wisdom at every turn. Let the shofar wake us up from emotionally attractive, trivial and temporal involvements, and conversely, let us realize what is eternal, of unmatched value and what is truly best for us as God's creatures.

May we all be written and our fate sealed for a good life. □

תכתב
ותחתם
לד'יכם
טובים

*"May you all
be inscribed
and sealed
for good lives"*

Moshe Ben-Chaim

Rivka Olenick

and

The Mesora Staff