

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Rosh Hashanah*

Compiled by  
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## Rosh Hashanah

### *Segulos of Tekiyas Shofar*

The Shaar HaMelech writes that one should answer amen with *kavanah* to the *brachah*, לשמוע קול שופר, because it's written in *sefarim* that this particular amen is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Gemara says, שופר ורדיית, הפת חכמה היא ואינו מלאכה, "Blowing shofar and taking out bread (that's baked on the oven wall) is a special talent, but they aren't among the thirty-nine *malachos* of Shabbos" (*Shabbos* 117). The Tiferes Shlomo teaches that since the Gemara discusses shofar together with רדיית הפת, it is a hint that shofar is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* taught that the letters after עקרה are שופר. This implies that shofar is *mesugal* for the barren to bear children. As the Gemara says, "On Rosh Hashanah, Sarah,

Rachel, and Chanah were remembered," and were able to bear children.

The Rambam writes, (*Teshuvah* 3:4) writes, "Although blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a *gezeiras hakasuv* (a Torah decree) it is hinting to something. The shofar is saying, עורו ישנים משנתכם—wake up, from your sleep,... Examine your deeds and repent. Remember your Creator, those who forget the truth..." This is the most renowned *segulah* of the shofar; it rouses people to do *teshuvah*.

The Baal HaTanya *zy'a* teaches: Every year, on Rosh Hashanah, when Yidden blow the shofar, they become like a new person. By Creation, it says, ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, "Hashem blew a breath of life into Adam's nose" (*Bereishis* 2). This happens annually when we blow the shofar.

The entire world becomes new on Rosh Hashanah. In the *tefillah* we say, היום הרת עולם, today the world *is* created. (It doesn't say היום היה הרת עולם, today the world *was* created, rather it is created anew each year, on Rosh Hashanah.)

Every Rosh Hashanah, we are created anew and the world is new. Therefore, Rosh Hashanah is an ideal time to change one's behaviors and ways, and to act like an entirely new person.

Someone told me the following: "One Rosh Hashanah I was hospitalized and someone was blowing the shofar for us. There was a non-religious yid in the room who was intrigued by the shofar, and asked us a lot of questions, because he wanted to understand what it was all about. Then he told us his story:

"I served in the Israeli Navy," he said, "in a submarine. Under the water, the means of communication is with the

Morse code. (Morse code is a signal system comprised of sounds. Two sharp beeps represents one letter, two long beeps is another letter. One long beep and one short one is a third letter, and so on.) I was an expert in the Morse code. I could send and decipher messages very quickly.

"A couple of years after serving in the navy (and after spending a long time in India) I saw an advertisement: The army was looking for a Morse code expert to be in charge of several submarines. To apply for the job, we had to be at a certain office between 10:00 and 12:00 in the morning. I arrived at 11:50. I saw a packed room with applicants, but no one was being called inside. There was music was playing in the background and I sat down for a few moments, and listened. Then I got up, brazenly opened the door to the office and said, 'I came for the interview.'"

"There are many people waiting in line ahead of you,"

the secretary said. "And you just came. Wait your turn."

"But I didn't listen to her. I walked into the room and talked with the person who was in charge. After speaking for a few moments, I was hired for the job."

The interviewer went out to the waiting room and told everyone that they can go home. "Thank you all for coming and I'm sorry about the delay. We've already chosen someone. You can all go home."

"It isn't fair. This man came in last. Why did you interview him before us?"

"Did you pay attention to the music that's playing? Listen carefully. Don't you get it? It is in Morse code and it's saying, 'If you've come for the interview, just open the door and come inside.' This man heard the message. You didn't hear, so you're obviously not fluent enough in the language."

That's how the irreligious man in the hospital understood the meaning of shofar (and we're sharing it here because his interpretation is beautiful and true). The shofar is speaking a language. It's telling us, "Just open the door and come inside. Change your ways and improve your connection with Hashem." We only need to understand the language of the shofar and understand what it's telling us.

One person waiting in the waiting room said, "I actually heard the Morse code in the music, but I decided not to open the door because I saw that no one else was."

"That's not a valid excuse," the interviewer told him. "If you heard the message, you should have come in. Why do you care what other people are doing?"

Similarly, concerning the shofar, it will be inexcusable to say, "I heard the shofar's message, I understood that it was calling me to do *teshuvah*, but I decided not to since I

don't see other people doing *teshuvah*." That's not a valid excuse. If you understand the shofar's message, you should open the door and come close to Hashem, regardless of what others are doing.

### ***Tehillim***

On these days of *teshuvah*, Klal Yisrael have a custom to say (more) *Tehillim*. (There is a *segulah* to say the entire *Tehillim* twice on the night of Rosh Hashanah. I know people who've done so, and they talk about the *yeshuous* they had. But this is hard for most people. However, any amount of *Tehillim* one says on Rosh Hashanah is *mesugal* for *yeshuous*.) It is a very good idea to say (extra) *Tehillim* during the days of Selichos, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and on Yom Kippur (and on every day of the year) as well, each person, according to his abilities.

The Noam Elimelech reveals one of the wonders of

*Tehillim*, and how it brings *yeshuous* for people:

"Some people ask how *tefillah* helps. How a tzaddik can pray for an ill person and the sick person becomes better. Hashem doesn't change, [and if Hashem understood that this person should be ill, how does prayer change the situation?] The answer is that bad never comes from Hashem's mouth. [Hashem never decrees that pain, illness, or hardships should befall people.] What happens is that man is connected to all worlds. When he sins, he becomes detached from his connection above, he falls, and then he becomes ill, *rachmana litzlan*. When the tzaddik davens, he reconnects the person to his source, to where he was before...and automatically, he becomes healed. [However] sometimes, the tzaddik's *tefillah* doesn't help, *chalilah*, because there is a *kitrug*. [There are adversary angels in heaven who prevent the person from becoming

reconnected to his source, due to his sins, and then, even the tzaddik's *tefillos* can't bring him back to his original place.] When this occurs, he needs to become attached to the עולם הגדול הנקרא תהלה, to the great world which is called Tehillah... Because this world is solely a great light [of holiness and compassion] and the *kitrug* [adversary angels] aren't able to prevent him. In that world, there is solely compassion, רחמים גמורים, and everything is fixed. This is the reason Dovid HaMelech's songs are called *Tehillim*, because with them, one can accomplish everything [because he becomes attached to the world of compassion, to the world called Tehillah]. There is no Satan there and there are no problems (אין שׂמץ ואין פגע רע).

These amazing words give us a glimpse at the wonders and powers of *Tehillim*. When we say *Tehillim*, we are being connected to the world where there is only compassion,

where none of our bad deeds are mentioned. Through saying *Tehillim*, we can attain all our needs. Therefore, it is definitely worthwhile to say (as much as possible) *Tehillim* during these holy days.

### The Great Battle

Someone complained to the Tiferes Shlomo zy'a that he doesn't have any respite from the *yetzer hara*. "Sometimes I conquer the *yetzer hara*, and I ignore his enticements, but I know that it won't be long before the *yetzer hara* will return and win me. I want to conquer the *yetzer hara* once and for always, but I don't know how I can do this?"

We certainly empathize with his struggle, because the same happens to all of us. Each person has his own, individual, *yetzer hara* and tests, but whatever they are, it is very hard to overcome them. For example, someone is trying to improve his *ahavas Yisrael*. He doesn't want to have negative thoughts about

people. There are times when he succeeds, but there are times when he fails. He isn't able to shake the *yetzer hara* off forever. Another example is someone who wants to say *brachos* with *kavanah*. There are times when he remembers, and there are times when he forgets. He wants to win the *yetzer hara* and not have to deal with him anymore, but it remains a constant struggle.

Each person has similar examples, the *yetzer hara* comes to people in different ways, and never lets them go. The struggle exhausts people, for they think that there's no purpose. Therefore, this man asked the Tiferes Shlomo for counsel, so he could win the *yetzer hara*, once and for all. The Tiferes Shlomo told him that it is impossible to avoid the battle. His struggle is exactly how *avodas Hashem* is supposed to be. A person must fight the *yetzer hara* again and again and again. This is the expected pattern, and this is how *avodas Hashem* appears.

The Tiferes Shlomo explained to him, "The Torah doesn't say *כי תצא לנצחון*— when you go out to victory, the Torah says, *כי תצא למלחמה*— when you go out to war. The goal is the war, the battle. Your role is to just keep on trying, and never to give up. If you do so, you've won the war."

The Midrash says that we carry the four *minim* on Succos to demonstrate that we won the war. Because the four *minim* represent weapons, and the one who wins the battle is the one who holds the munitions.

The holy *sefarim* ask, if he won the war, why is he still holding onto the arms? He could put them down. But the answer is, the winner of the war with the *yetzer hara* isn't the person who conquered the *yetzer hara* until it no longer entices him to sin. That is an unrealistic expectation. Only a select few reach this level, where they totally destroy the *yetzer hara*. Generally, one



wins the war with the *yetzer hara* when he continuously puts up a battle against him.

At a *tisch*, the Yesod HaAvodah asked one of his Chassidim (who had come from a different town) "How did you come here?"

"By donkey."

"What would you do if you you'd fallen off the donkey, on the way?"

"I would get back on, and continue traveling to the Rebbe."

"And if you fell down a second time, what would you do?"

"I would mount the donkey again."

"And what would you do if you fell a third time?"

"Rebbe," the chassid said, "What should I do? Just sit on the ground and cry? There's no choice. I would mount the donkey and try to get to the Rebbe again."

The entire beis medresh was silent as the Rebbe and the chassid had this exchange.

Then the Rebbe said to all his chassidim, "No matter how many times you fall, just get up and try again. There is no choice. There is no other way."

For example, if a person is trying to refrain from speaking *lashon hara*, and he fails, he should try to be careful the next time. And if he is trying to overcome his anger, and he became angry, he should make another resolve to be calm and collective. Keep on trying, because trying is the purpose. That is called winning the battle against the *yetzer hara*.

We use the horn of an איל, ram [an adult sheep] for a shofar. As the Shulchan Aruch states, "It is best when the shofar of Rosh Hashanah is from an איל... although all shofros are kosher..." (586:1). The Gemara asks, "Why do we blow shofar with a ram's horn? Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, 'Blow for Me with a ram's shofar so I will remember *Akeidas Yitzchok*, and I will

consider it as though you were bound on the *akeidah* before Me” (*Rosh Hashanah* 16). Avraham Avinu sacrificed an איל by the *akeidah*, and therefore we use the איל's shofar, to arouse this fond memory in heaven.

We can ask, if the purpose of the shofar is to remind heaven of *akeidas Yitzchak*, any part of the ram would do? For example, the Torah could tell us to take a foot of the ram, or any other limb. Why is the mitzvah specifically to blow shofar?

The answer is, by the *akeidah* it's written, וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו, וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה אֵיל אַחֵר נֹאחַז בְּסֶבֶךְ בְּקֶרְנוֹ, “Avraham raised his eyes and he saw that behold there was a ram; its horns were entangled in a bush” (*Bereishis* 22:13). The ram struggled to escape, but its horns were caught in the bush, and it couldn't get out. The shofar therefore represents challenges and struggles, and the shofar was therefore

chosen for the mitzvah, because Hashem desires the struggle. If *avodas Hashem* would be simple and easy, there wouldn't be reward, and our service wouldn't be spectacular. But because of the struggle, our *avodas Hashem* is precious to Hashem. There are times that we fail —it's only natural that we don't succeed at times — but the goal and success, is when we keep on trying, again and again.

Reb Yitzchok Hutner *zt'l* wrote the following (in a letter): "We have a problem: When we discuss tzaddikim, we look at the final results, the accomplishments they achieved, the heights they reached, and we skip over their struggles, the times they had great conflicts with their nature and with the *yetzer hara*. We have the impression that these tzaddikim were born tzaddikim. Everyone praises the Chofetz Chaim for his caution never to speak *lashon hara*. But who knows about all

the battles, struggles, and even the failures and disappointments that he endured, as he fought the *yetzer hara* [until he reached his perfected, high level]. This is merely one example, among the thousands.... My request is, when you think of *tzaddikim*, don't think that they were always at peace with their *yetzer tov*. See them standing in a great battlefield, with hardships and letdowns. When the *yetzer hara* is storming within you, know that at these times you are very similar to the *tzaddikim* whom you seek to emulate... Specifically in the areas where you fail the most, you have the potential to sanctify Hashem's name."

The Mishnah says, אהמא ואשוב אהמא ואשוב אין מספיקן בידו לעשות תשובה, "If one says, 'I will sin and then I will repent. I will sin and then I will repent,' [Heaven] will not enable him to do *teshuvah*" (*Yoma* 85:).

A person may think that it is

safe to sin, because he can rectify it afterwards with *teshuvah*. Therefore, the Mishnah warns, if one sins with the intention of doing *teshuvah* afterwards, he will not succeed, because Heaven will prevent him from repenting.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zy'a* explained this Mishnah *bedrech drush*. He explained: אהמא ואשוב אהמא ואשוב, if a person says to Hashem, "If I sin, I will repent. And if I sin again, I will do *teshuvah* again. I will never stop doing *teshuvah*, regardless of how many times I fail." אין מספיקן בידו לעשות תשובה, that he will succeed in his *teshuvah*. Because the main thing is to get up and try again, and that is the essence of *teshuvah*.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2) teaches us the recipe for *teshuvah*. He writes, "What is *teshuvah*? The sinner should...decide in his heart that he will not sin again... The

One Who knows the concealed will testify that he will never return to this sin again..." In the Rambam's words, ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם.

The Chidushei HaRim asks, how does Hashem testify that this person will never sin again? Is it ever certain? Can a person be guaranteed that he will never sin? It is written הן בקדושי לא יאמין ושמים לא זכו בעיניו, "Hashem doesn't have faith in the holy [*malachim*]..." (*Iyov* 9:15). Everyone is at risk, so how does Hashem testify that he will never sin again?

The Chidushei HaRim answers that the key word in this Rambam is לעולם. Hashem testifies that he will not remain with this sin לעולם, forever. It is possible that he will sin

again, as there is no guarantee for perfection, but Hashem testifies that he will not remain there forever. He will always get up again, and strive to improve his ways.<sup>1</sup>

In the *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, כי אתה שומע, קול שופר ומאזין תרועה ואין דומה לך "because You listen to the sound of the shofar and you listen to the *truah*, and there is no one like You."

Notice the two expressions of listening stated here: שומע and מאזין. We can ask: (1) what is the difference between these two forms of listening? (2) Why is שופר put together with the word שומע (as we say קול שופר שומע) and why is תרועה put together with מאזין (as we say תרועה ומאזין)? (3) Why do we finish the *brachah* with ואין דומה לך?

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1. On Yom Kippur, the *Cohen Gadol* would say אחת, אחת ואחת, אחת ושתיים, אחת ושלוש, אחת וארבע... The Imrei Emes explains that the most precious moment for Hashem is when one makes a strong resolve to improve his ways. Afterwards, he may have ups and downs, but it is this first firm resolve which is so precious to Hashem. That is the reason the *Cohen Gadol* continually repeats *achas* (one) representing that first moment that he accepted upon himself to improve his ways.

The Pri Megadim (592:1) in the name of Reb Chaim Rappaport *zt'l* of Lemberg answers: מאזין is listening from close by, and שומע is listening from the distance.<sup>2</sup>

The קול שופר is the long, straight sound of *tekiyah*, and it represents the great tzaddikim who are strong in their resolutions and never fall from them. After they decide to do good, it remains firm, and they never fail.

The choppy תרועה represents the people who struggle with their *yetzer hara*. Sometimes they do good, and sometimes they stop. They are on and off with their *avodas Hashem*.

Hashem is closer to the people who struggle. Therefore, by the תרועה, by the people who have ups and downs, it says, מאזין תרועה, Hashem listens and

pays close attention to them. However, שומע קול שופר, Hashem listens to the perfect tzaddikim *keviyachol* from afar. As Chazal say, "The greatest tzaddikim cannot stand in the place where *baalei teshuvah* stand." Hashem is *keviyachol* closer to the people who are struggling with their *yetzer hara* to do Hashem's will.

We conclude the *brachah*, ואין לך דומה לך, "There is no one like You," because indeed, there is no one like Hashem, who desires the imperfect ones. A human king who wants to appoint a minister will search for a person who is most likely to do a perfect job, without failures. Similarly, someone looking to hire help him in his business, will seek a partner who is an expert in the field, someone who will do a good job, without erring.

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2. Moshe Rabbeinu said האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי. Here too, both forms of listening are stated. Because of Moshe's holiness, he was closer to heaven than to earth. Therefore, to the heavens he said, האזינו, listen from nearby. And to the earth, Moshe said, ותשמע הארץ, the earth should hear from the distance.

But no one is like Hashem who has pleasure from the imperfect Yidden who serve Him. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes they fail, but they continue trying and they continue their attempts to become better people. As the Or HaChaim teaches, **גַּי הַנֵּצַח**, the *neshamah* left heaven and came down to this world, **לְמַלְחָמָה**, to wage war with the *yetzer hara*. The goal is the war, and never to lose hope.<sup>3</sup>

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3. On Rosh Hashanah, we blow the shofar thirty times before *mussaf* (תְּקִיעוֹת דְּמִיּוּשָׁב) and then we blow again during *mussaf* (תְּקִיעוֹת דְּמַעוּמָד). The Gemara asks why we blow both times. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16) replies, "In order to confuse the Satan."

Tosfos (quoting the *Yerushalmi*) explains: "It is written, **וְהָיָה בְיוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע**—On that day [in the future], a great shofar will be blown...'. When the Satan hears the first set of *tekiyos*, he is afraid and he isn't afraid. [He fears that this may be the shofar heralding the future, when the Satan will be slaughtered, but he isn't certain]. When he hears the shofar a second time, the Satan says, 'This must certainly be the *Shofar Gadol* [heralding the future] and the time has come when I will be destroyed.' This confuses him, and he isn't able to say *kitrug* (*lashon hara* on the Jewish people in the heavenly court)."

We wonder why the Satan is afraid when he hears the shofar. Doesn't he remember from last year, and from the years before, that on Rosh Hashanah we blow shofar, and it isn't the shofar of Redemption? Why does he suspect that this year will be different?

The Satmar Rebbe *zy'a* answered that in each generation it becomes harder to serve Hashem. (We see this happening today. Every year the *yetzer hara* develops new tactics to snare people into his trap.) Hashem has a special pleasure from people when they pass extremely difficult tests. Today, more than ever, Hashem has immense pleasure from the Jewish nation. Despite the hardships and challenges, people are standing up to the tests. Indeed, those who serve Hashem in our generation deserve special credit. The Satan knows all of this, and that is the reason he suspects that Moshiach will come *this year*. Although last year, the redemption didn't come, but this year, the Jewish nation is more precious

**"The Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah..."** (*Rosh Hashanah* 29)

On Rosh Hashanah, we should experience various emotions. (1) We should have fear, because on this day, we are judged, and our future is at stake. (2) We should be brokenhearted, because we know how distant we are from living a life of Torah and mitzvos as one should. (3) And we should also be happy because it is a Yom Tov, and for other reasons, as we will discuss:

The Tur quotes a Midrash that says, "Which nation can compare to this nation, who know the ways of their G-d... The way of the world is that when one is in judgment, he dresses in black, wraps himself in black, lets his beard grow, doesn't cut his nails, because he doesn't know the outcome of the judgment. But the Jewish nation wear white, dress in white... they eat and

drink and they are happy on Rosh Hashanah because they know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will perform a miracle for them..." (582).

Similarly, the Siforno (*Vayikra* 23:25) writes, "[On Rosh Hashanah] Hashem sits on his chair of judgement... and we should rejoice immensely, because He is our King, and He will judge us with kindness..."

We are also happy because on Rosh Hashanah we have the privilege to proclaim Hashem king over the world. The Or HaMeir writes, אין לך חיד מתוק מזה, there is nothing sweeter than to have this opportunity.

Regarding Rosh Hashanah, it states, "Nechemyah... Ezra... the Levi'im... said to the entire nation, 'Today is holy for Hashem your G-d. Don't mourn and don't cry... ויאמר להם לכו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים ושלחו מנות לאין נכון לו כי קדוש היום לאדונינו ואל תעצבו כי חדות ד' היא

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than ever before. This year, he thinks, it probably is the *Shofar Gadol*.

מעוֹזֵבִים, He told them, 'Eat fatty foods and drink sweets, and send food packages for those who don't have anything prepared, because today is a holy day for our Master. Don't be sad, because your joy in Hashem will give you strength" (*Nechemyah* 8:10)....<sup>4</sup> "

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* writes that it is obvious that one should be happy on Rosh Hashanah since it is a Yom Tov. Why did Ezra and Nechemyah need to teach the nation that they should be happy? The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 19) says, "From [after] Ezra's time, Elul was never *me'uber* (thirty days)..." That year, Elul had thirty days instead of the usual twenty-nine, and the first day of Rosh Hashanah was in a way, the last day of Elul. Therefore Ezra and Nechemyah needed to tell the nation to be happy, since it

was nevertheless Rosh Hashanah. But it is certain that on Rosh Hashanah, we must be joyous.

On Rosh Hashanah the joy is contained and somewhat concealed, because Rosh Hashanah is also a day of immense fear. Yet, the element of joy must always be there. *היה מעוֹזֵבִים*, in the merit of the happiness, we will be judged for a good year.

The Navi (I Shmuel 1) tells us how despondent Chanah was because she didn't have children. Her husband, Elkanah, told her, "Why do you cry? Why aren't you eating? Why are you sad? I am better for you than ten children."

This encouraged her somewhat, and the Navi tells us that she ate a little, but she was still very upset, and she went to Mishkan Shilo to daven for children. After her

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4. The Yesod HaAvodah taught, *היה מעוֹזֵבִים*, Hashem is joyous, when you strengthen yourself [and do *teshuvah*].



*tefillos*, the Navi writes, והאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד, "she ate, and she didn't have a sad face again."

The Chasam Sofer teaches that she merited bearing children because of her happiness. She succeeded in finding happiness in her life, despite her misery, and in this merit she had her salvation. Chazal say, בר"ה, נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה, "On Rosh Hashanah...Chanah was remembered," to bear a child, and it was in the merit of her happiness.

Therefore, together with our fear and our broken heart, we should have joy on Rosh Hashanah, because (1) it is a Yom Tov, (2) we have the privilege to proclaim Hashem king over the world, and (3) because we are certain that Hashem will perform

miracles for us and grant us a good year.<sup>5</sup>

### Fear

We've discussed the happy attitude of Rosh Hashanah. Now let's discuss the atmosphere of fear.

We cited above the Rambam, which teaches that the shofar announces עורו ישנים משנתכם, and it arouses us to do *teshuvah*. The Or HaMeir asks, if the purpose of the shofar is to arouse people to do *teshuvah*, why doesn't the Torah say instead, that the rabbanim of each beis medresh should deliver a *drashah* to arouse people to do *teshuvah*? Why do we need specifically the shofar?

The Or HaMeir answers with a *mashal*: There was a lad who was appointed by the

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5. Reb Yisrael Salanter zy'a saw someone sad on *erev Yom Kippur*. Reb Yisrael Salanter told him, "If you sinned, why do I need to suffer?" A sad continence affects others. Reb Yisrael called such a person בור ברשות, הרבים, a public hazard. One should conceal his feelings of dejection, so he doesn't bring people down together with him, and ideally, he should be happy, too.

community to be their town crier. He sat on top of a hill and watched everything that was happening below, ready to call out any problems or dangers that were approaching the town.. Once, the lad saw thieves. He began shouting and ringing his bell, "*Ganavim!* Thieves! Thieves are approaching!" The wealthy people quickly went to save their properties, but the poor people didn't budge. The thieves weren't after their meager belongings, they figured. Another day, the lad shouted "Fire! There's a fire!" This time, even the poor people ran to protect their belongings, because a fire can consume even the little bit that they own.

The Or HaMeir explains that if the rav of a community gives a *drashah* and speaks about the importance of Torah study, some scholars may think, *the rav isn't referring to me, since I study Torah*. Similarly, if the rav speaks about *tefillah*, giving *tzedakah*, or about good

*middos*, some people will think that the rav isn't addressing them – only others. Therefore, the Torah tells us to blow shofar. The shofar shouts, "There's a fire! We're in danger!" And this awakens everyone to *teshuvah*.

Indeed, the Maharil compares the call of the shofar to someone standing on top of a hill, shouting, "Fire! Fire!" The shofar is like an alarm, telling people to be careful because our future is at stake. What will be in the upcoming year is being judged. (The Baal Shem Tov once repeated this Maharil before he blew the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.)

The Rambam writes, "I Moshe ben Maimon, when the time for shofar came, took the shofar in my hand, and I thought about Who commanded us to do this mitzvah. My knees knocked against each other in fear, and then I began to blow shofar."

The Gemara says, "When one makes a lulav [he binds the

four species] he should say שהחיינו... When one makes a succah, he should say שהחיינו."

The Raavad asks, why doesn't the Gemara also say that one should say שהחיינו when he makes a shofar?

The Raavad replies: We are afraid of the judgment, and therefore we aren't in the joyous mood, appropriate for saying שהחיינו.<sup>6</sup>

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 26) teaches that one cannot use an ox horn for a shofar. One explanation is because the ox reminds heaven of the *eigal*, and it isn't proper to arouse this association when blowing shofar.

For this same reason, the *Cohen Gadol* didn't wear gold clothing Yom Kippur when he entered the Kodshei Kadoshim. The gold clothing is associated with the golden calf, and we don't want this sin remembered at this time.

The Gemara asks, the *Cohen Gadol* was only forbidden to wear gold inside the Kodshei Kadoshim. When he was outside the Kodshei Kadoshim, he wore gold. So why are we concerned about blowing the shofar with an ox horn?

The Gemara answers, בין דלזכרון, הוא כבפנים דמי, "Since the shofar arouses Hashem's memory [to

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6. Yet, when we blow shofar, we do say *shehechyanu*. This can be compared to someone who is on a plane for the first time. He is frightened. There is a steward, standing in front of the aircraft, showing all the safety features: "The pillows under your seats double as a float in water, and can be used in case the plane collapses in the sea... There are four doors on this aircraft... Check which door is closest to you, in case of an emergency... There is oxygen above..." And everyone on board is afraid. But when the plane begins to take off, everyone feels the excitement and the joy of travel and the fears dissipates. Similarly, we are afraid of the great judgment, but when we have the opportunity to do the mitzvah, our joy silences our fear, and we are able to say *shehechyanu*.

remember our good deeds, His love to us, etc.], it is like it's being blown inside the Kodshei Kadoshim."

The Sfas Emes taught that we should derive from this the immense fear we should have when we hear the shofar. We should consider ourselves standing before Hashem in the Kodshei Kadoshim, and listen to the *tekiyos* with this fear.<sup>7</sup>

### **A Broken Heart**

The Baal Shem Tov taught his student, the Toldos Yaakov

Yosef *zy'a*, the *kavanos* (kabalistic thoughts) that he should have by *tekiyas shofar* (when he called out the *tekiyos*). But on Rosh Hashanah, the Toldos forgot everything. He came to the *tekiyos* with a broken heart, and was crying the entire time, because he had forgotten everything. Later, the Baal Shem Tov told him, "The *kavanos* (kabalistic thoughts) are keys that open doors. Each *kavanah* opens a different door. But a broken heart opens up all doors."<sup>8</sup>

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7. Someone heard that the president of his country was just a few blocks away from him. He wanted to have the privilege to speak with him. It is rare to see the president, certainly it isn't every day that one could speak with him. So he jumped into his car, passed through two red lights, and committed other driving violations, to catch up to the president. He was placed in jail, but he says it was worthwhile. For a couple of minutes, he spoke with the president.

*L'havdil* endless times, on Rosh Hashanah, every Yid passes before Hashem כבני מרון, like sheep walking in single file. The fear is immense, but it is all worthwhile, to have a moment of standing before Hashem.

8. The Rebbe of Radshitz *zy'a* once came late for *tekiyas shofar* and the entire community was kept waiting for him. When the Rebbe came, he said that the Chozeh of Lublin *zy'a* was also once late for *tekiyas shofar* because he didn't want to hear shofar before he found some merit in himself. Because of his immense humility and broken heart, he didn't find any qualities. Then he remembered of the time when he asked his

The Kedushas Levi *zy'a* once raised his shofar, and said to the women in the women section, "The shofar needs a rinsing," and they all began to cry.

The *baal makri* (the one who calls out *tekiyah*, *shevarim*, etc.) asked my grandfather, Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zy'a*, what kabalistic *kavanos* he should have when he calls out the *tekiyas*. Rebbe Dovid Biderman replied, "I don't know *kavanos* and you also don't know. But one *kavanah* I will tell you. The *shevarim* is a small broken heart, and *truah* is a big broken heart..."

The Arvei Nachal *zy'a* told the following *meshal*: A king was once traveling with his son,

distant from his palace. He told his son, "I have enemies in this city. They want to harm us. Be careful from them." But the enemies kidnapped the king's son, and they kept him captive in that city.

On a set day, each year, the king would pass through this city. The child knew the date, and he thought, *When my father passes by, I will shout loudly. He will hear me and save me.* His captives, however, knew that the child would do this, so on that day, they locked him up in a sealed cell, where there were iron walls on all four sides. Now, even if the child would shout, the king wouldn't hear him.

But the child had special

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*gabai* to wake him up early in the morning, because he wanted to perform a certain mitzvah. The *gabai* overslept, he didn't wake up the Chozeh in time. The *gabai* also forgot to prepare *negel vasser* for the Chozeh, so he had to wait even longer. The Chozeh was very upset and he was planning to angrily rebuke the *gabai* for his negligence. Then the Chozeh reconsidered. He said to himself, "Why am I upset? Because the *gabai's* negligence prevented me from doing Hashem's will. Right now, it is Hashem's will that I shouldn't become angry..." When the *gabai* came in, the Chozeh didn't say anything. With this merit, he came to *tekiyas shofar*."

stones that he received from his father, years ago. These stones had a *segulah* that when they were thrown at an iron wall, the wall would topple over.

The king was passing through the city, and his son was throwing stones at the iron walls, but the walls didn't fall down. Because only clean stones have this special power, and his stones were filthy.

The child started to cry and his tears washed the stones. He threw another stone. This time the wall fell down. The king heard his shouts and saved him.

The Arvei Nachal explains that the shofar has the potential to break down iron walls that separate us from our Father in heaven. Technically, with this mitzvah, we should have merited the *geulah* long ago. It doesn't seem to be working, though. Why? The answer is the shofar works together with tears. It will not

function fully when one blows shofar without a broken heart and without tears.

Reb Velvel Eisenbach *zt'l* was from the elders of Yerushalayim. (He was over a hundred years old and was *niftar* a few years ago on Rosh Hashanah.) He repeated what he heard from his grandfather, who heard it from his grandfather – to whom the story happened.

This grandfather (Reb Velvel Eisenbach's great-great grandfather) was by Rebbe Ahron Chernobler *zy'a* for Rosh Hashanah, when he was but a child. He was davening on the balcony (which was built special for Rosh Hashanah, to hold the many guests who came for Yom Tov). It was extremely crowded and the child fainted. People threw water on him and revived him and brought him to the large opening in the floor, which opened to the *beis medresh* below, so he would have air.

Lying there, he was able to watch Rebbe Ahron Chernobler approach the *bimah* for *tekiyas shofar*. He was also able to hear the *vort* that Rebbe Ahron Chernobler said before the *tekiyas*. The rebbe said, "It is written (*Tehillim* 47) עלה אלקים בתרועה: Elokim represents *middas hadin* (strict justice and punishment). It is raised and removed with תרועה, with a broken heart. ך represents *middas harachamim*, Hashem's mercy. This can also depart, *chas veshalom*, בקול שופר, when one thinks that everything is well,<sup>9</sup> and he isn't worried at all."

When the rebbe said this, the entire community cried. The child became wet once again, this time from their tears.

Reb Shlomo Kluger ז"ל taught that one should pray before Rosh Hashanah that he be able

to cry on Rosh Hashanah. He said that this is alluded to in the words (*Tehillim* 42) צמאה לאלקים, נפשי, my heart thirsts, that on the day of judgment... היתה לי דמעתי, I should be able to cry.

Before starting the *tekiyas*, Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz ז"ל shouted "Hashem! Only You know my broken heart." And then he began *Min haMeitzar* and *tekiyas shofar*.

The Yismach Moshe said "A king was angry at his servants and they didn't know what to do to appease him. The king's *sar hamashkim* said "I have good wine that the king loves. I'll give him the wine; he will certainly become happy and will forgive us." It says, מלך מתרצה ברמעות, "The King who is appeased with tears." This is the good drink that appeases the King of the world.

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9. שופר also means good, as we say in the Rosh Hashanah *tefillah*, שפרו מעשיכם, improve [make good] your deeds..." and as the Gemara says, שפיר קא אמרת, you said well.

**This Year**

On *erev Rosh Hashanah*, we daven *Minchah*, and say, בַּרְךְ, עלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת, "Bless for us *this year*." Why do we say this, a few moments before the year is over? What type of blessing could help us, in this short time?

A rav once told me that someone told him that at three o'clock in the afternoon, on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, his stocks crashed and he lost a lot of money. He learned that even the final day of the year is very significant.

The Divrie Chaim of Tzanz zy'a said that we request Hashem's blessings on *erev Rosh Hashanah*, because we can't be without Hashem's brachos and help for even a minute.

**Three Days**

Tzaddikim advise people to depart from the *yetzer hara* three days before Rosh Hashanah. That means, this year, when Rosh Hashanah

begins on Monday, one should strive to leave the pull of the *yetzer hara* from Friday. Because a שׂוֹנֵא, an enemy, is *passul* to serve as a witness. Chazal teach that if you don't speak with someone for three days because you are angry with him that is a שׂוֹנֵא. Therefore, if we keep our distance from the *yetzer hara* for three days before Rosh Hashanah, he will be our enemy, and will not be able to testify against us on Rosh Hashanah.

Halachah teaches that the *baal tokeia* and the *chazzanim* should prepare three days before Rosh Hashanah, because the community is dependent on their service, for their judgment and new year. The Chasam Sofer taught that in our generation, there aren't as great tzaddikim as there were in the past, and we don't rely on the *chazzanim* anymore. Therefore, the entire community should prepare themselves three days before Rosh Hashanah (and three



days before Yom Kippur) so the *tefillos* will be accepted.<sup>10</sup> 6:2). The Vilna Gaon *zy'a* says that this phrase is referring to the *akeidah*. The *akeidah* took

It is written, יהיינו מימיים ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו (Hoshei'a were days of preparation,

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10. The Beis Yisrael of Gur *zy'a* related the following *mashal*:

The lion – king of the jungle – got angry with the animals of his kingdom, and wanted to punish them. All the animals of the jungle gathered and sought a way to appease the king, but they didn't know what they can say or do.

The fox said "I have three hundred *mashalim* (parables) that I can tell the king to explain our situation and our point of view. He will certainly be appeased. Come with me."

The animals were relieved that the fox had a solution, and they all went together to the king of the forest. After walking some time, the fox said to the animals, "I just forgot about one hundred parables, but there's nothing to worry about. I still have another two hundred parables." They walked further.

A mile later the fox said, "I just forgot another hundred stories, but there is nothing to worry about. I still have one hundred parables left that I can tell the king."

When they came before the lion, the fox told them "I just forgot the last one hundred parables, too. It is now up to you to say what you can to appease the king."

From the beginning, this clever fox didn't have anything to tell the king. But he realized that their only hope was to go to the lion and to plead whatever they could to arouse his compassion. So the fox told the animals that he had three hundred parables to tell the king, so they would follow him to the lion. But then he told them that it was up to them to say whatever they could to save themselves.

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* explained that chassidim go to their rebbe for Rosh Hashanah, and rely on their rebbe to help them in their judgment. But then the rebbe may tell them, "I am at a loss, just as you are. I don't know what to say to Hashem, to excuse our sins and how to earn a good year. Now it is up to you to pray and to do whatever you can, to appease the King."

when Avraham saddled his donkey, chopped wood, and traveled to Har HaMoriah for the *akeidah*. The third day was when the actually *akeidah* took place.

Chazal tell us that *parnassah* comes in the merit of the *akeidah*.<sup>11</sup> The Vilna Gaon clarifies that *parnassah* is earned from the first two days, the days of preparation. Therefore it states יחיינו מימים,

our life and our *parnassah* comes from the first two days. ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו, the reward of the third day is given to Avraham in Olam HaBa.

We learn from this the greatness earned from preparation. Let us prepare for Rosh Hashanah, and may we merit a *kesivah ve'chasimah tovah!*

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11. The Zohar teaches that merely saying the *parasha* of the *akeidah* saves from many deaths.