

Mesilah

AN INITIATIVE OF KOLLEL RABBONIM TZVI ASHKENAZI, AMSTERDAM

mesilah.amsterdam@gmail.com

ראש השנה September 6-8, 2021 Issue 41



THE SECRET FOR A GOOD YEAR

Rabbi David Szejnhauer

Rosh Hashana is coming, and it's at this point that we start to think about how our year went, how many things we promised to do but in the end didn't manage to do them, how many goals we set for ourselves and didn't manage to fulfill them. At this point we can say to ourselves: why try again, anyway nothing is ever enough; I'm still the same person. Or sometimes we think: I don't know what to change, I've done enough, "G-d and I are friends", look how others do less than me etc.

We all want our year ahead to be good, but what do we have to do to achieve this? Is it enough to rely on the fact that the past year was good and assume that nothing more needs to be changed? Or if I want something to change next year do I have to make huge changes in my behavior and only then will my year be better?

The Mishna in Rosh Hashana says: The world is judged in four seasons, **Pesach** for the harvest, **Shavuot** for the fruits, on **Rosh Hashana** we are all judged individually, and on **Sukot** for the water. And in these days G-d asks us to give something small of the abundance that he himself gives us every year, so that we can continue receiving from him.

On **Pesach** we have the Mitzva of bringing the *Omer* offering (a small amount of our new harvest), on **Shavuot** we bring the "*Korban Shtei Halechem*" (two loaves brought to the Temple), on **Sukot** we have the Mitzva of "*Nisuch Hamaim*" (they poured on the Mizbe'ach a certain amount of water). But what do we bring on Rosh Hashana?

On Rosh Hashana G-d asks us to blow the Shofar so that we remember Akedat Yitzchak, when Yitzchak was taken to be sacrificed by his father Avraham, but what has this got to do with Rosh Hashana?

The answer is that we all have tests in life, like Avraham and Yitzchak had, but we must remember that these tests are sent to us by G-d so that we can grow. However, in order to grow we have to be moving, so on Rosh Hashana G-d asks us to take a small step to show that we are interested, and from there He can help us to continue, but without some small movement He cannot help us. We don't have to have big goals, and then regret that we didn't meet them, but rather show an interest in changing, setting small but meaningful goals. Saying that we have nothing to change is lying to ourselves and also abusing the way in which G-d showers us with His abundance.

WE CAN DO IT!

Rabbi Efraim Arnstien



One of the four requirements for proper Teshuva (repentance) is refraining from transgressing. [The other three are: remorse for having committed the sin, verbal confession to Hashem and finally a sincere commitment not to repeat the sin in the future.]

Part of the challenge of overcoming the *Yetser Hara* (evil inclination) is the fear that we lack the ability to be successful in doing so. That is in fact one of its tactics - it comes across as unconquerable. And that's one of the big lies the *Yetser Hara* broadcasts. [The other big lie is that it makes the forbidden act look more tempting than the real-life experience.]

The Gemara (Sukka 52a) gives a glimpse into the future: Hashem will slaughter the *Yetser Hara* in front of the Tzadikim and the Resha'im (wicked people). To the Tzadikim, the *Yetser Hara* will look like a high mountain; to the Resha'im it will appear to be just a small hair. The Tzadikim will cry in disbelief saying "how did we manage to conquer such a tall mountain?" On the other hand, the Resha'im will be crying tears of pity, admittingly saying "how did we not overpower such a tiny hair!?"

The question on this Gemara is clear: what is the *Yetser Hara* comparable to, a mountain or a hair? The answer to this is, that really the Resha'im are right. We can be victorious because we have Hashem's help when we sincerely try. However the Tzadikim are correct too with their imagination because the *Yetser Hara* did appear like this invincible obstacle.

Chazal have told us that one who comes to purify himself, he will get Heavenly assistance to accomplish his good intentions. Our great Rabbis have advised to rather make a small and realistic change for the better; this way there is a greater chance the commitment will last.

Ksiva Vachasima Tova

We wish all our reader and all of Klal Yisroel a **בתיבה וחתימה טובה. A happy sweet new year!**

This edition of Mesilah has been dedicated by

Yechezkel/Chezi Noach

לע"נ הוריו דוד מתנה בן סלמן ז"ל וויקטוריה בת מרים ע"ה



Q: How many sounds of the shofar are needed to be heard to fulfil the mitzvah?
In a case of emergency are there any leniencies?

A: The verse says (Vayikrah 29:8) regarding Yovel "you shall sound a broken blast on the Shofar". The Hebrew words the verse uses is "*veha'avarta shofar*" which literally means "you shall cause to pass through the shofar". This alludes to the law that when we blow the shofar we blow a blast without interruption, which is called a tekiah.

Since this word is said before the word "*teruah*" which means a broken blast, we learn that before blowing the Teruah one should blow a Tekiah before a teruah. The verse (ibid.) ends with the words "shall you sound the shofar" again using the Hebrew word "*ta'aviru shofar*" which alludes again to the sound of a tekiah. This teaches us that a tekiah must also be blown after the teruah.

In the Talmud there are three opinions as to what the Torah was referring to with teruah, a broken blast.

Either it is a sound of sobbing which we commonly refer to today as the teruah, or it is a sound of groaning which we refer to today as a shevarim. Yet a third opinion says it's the sound of both them together – a shevarim-teruah.

Since we don't know the correct explanation, we have to blow each one of the above sounds. Each time we blow one of the above sounds we have to also blow a tekiah before and after, as demonstrated above.

The word teruah is written three times in the Torah and therefore the Talmud teaches that a teruah has to be blown three times and each time with a tekiah before and after. Based on the above facts we therefore have to blow each one of the different sound three times and each time with a Tekiah before and after. This is three sets of blasts, two of nine sounds and one of twelve sounds. One set is tekiah, teruah, tekiah, three times. Another one is tekiah, shevarim, tekiah three times and the third is tekiah, shevarim-teruah, tekiah three times. This totals thirty blasts.

In case of an emergency and one is not able to even blow the above thirty blasts, there is an opinion that one can rely on blowing only ten blasts, three sets of blasts. One set tekiah, teruah tekiah, another tekiah, shevarim, tekiah, and the third tekiah, shevarim-teruah, tekiah. This opinion is based on the understanding that the three suggestions of the meaning of teruah in the Torah are not suggesting that each one is the only explanation of the word teruah. Rather the three opinions all agree to each other and the word teruah in the Torah is referring to any of the three.

Q: Why do we continue blowing during the prayers?

A: In the Talmud (ibid 34b) Rabah says "Hashem says recite before Me on Rosh Hashanah verses of kingship so that you may accept My sovereignty upon you. Say verses of remembrance so that your remembrances should come before Me favourably. And with what should these verses be recited? They should be recited with a shofar."

Based on this, Chazal instituted that the Shofar should also be blown within our prayers on Rosh Hahshanah. The way they instituted it was that we blow another three more sets of blasts during the *mussaf* prayers.

Q: Why do we still continue blowing after the prayers have finished?

A: One of the sources the Talmud brings as to what the sound the teruah is, is from the story of Sisrah (Sefer Shoftim, 5) who went to the battlefield but was killed. The verse describes how Sisra's mother sat by the window awaiting her son's return: "through the window she looked and she cried". The one hundred sounds that we blow on the shofar is a custom that corresponds to the amount of words said in her lament as she waited.

The connection between this story and the blowing of the Shofar needs a lot of understanding. However, a glimpse into the connection is we blow a shofar on the day of judgment is Yitzchack offered himself as a ram. We take a horn from a ram to arouse Hashem's compassion to Yitzchak's descendants. The story of Sisrah's mother is another example of the compassion of a mother to her child, again serving to evoke Hashems compassion for us, His children.

