

Mesilah



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Crying for Change in Current Circumstances

An Overview of the Sound of Teruah

Rabbi Simcho Stanton

The *mitzvah* of *tekias shofar* is one of the most inspiring *mitzvos* in our yearly calendar. As we stand on *Rosh Hashana* in solemn silence and listen to the penetrating blast of the shofar, we can't help but feel moved and exhilarated, ready to renew our energies in service of *Hashem*.

There are of course numerous ideas associated with this fascinating *mitzvah*. Of note, we are taught that the *shofar* is a wake-up call, calling on us to reflect on the past year and remedy our faults. Others have suggested that the *shofar* heralds the presence of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, as we mark the Worlds' birthday by coronating Him once again as our King.

In line with the current series of *shiurim* which I've been fortunate to give, I'd like to share another insight into this beautiful *mitzvah* based on the teachings of Rav Samsom Raphael Hirsch.

The Torah describes the shofar blast with the word *תרועה*, a word that is found in a number of different places in the *Torah*. Although this is the name commonly associated with only one of the various tones which we blow on the shofar, this term in its more general sense is the *Torah* expression for blowing the *shofar*.

This word appears on another occasion when detailing the same *mitzvah* (*Bemidbar* 29:1), but also is to be found in connection with the *mitzvah* of *yovel*, the jubilee year, on which a different *shofar* blast signals freedom for all slaves and a return of property to the original ancestral owner (*Vayikra* 25:9). On two other occasions, however (*Bemidbar* 10:5-6, 9), the *Torah* instructs the blowing of *teruah*, not by means of a *shofar* but by trumpets instead; when *Moshe* wished to inform the people that they would break camp, or wished to signal trouble and cry for help, he would blow the *teruah* as well.

What seems to be the common denominator between

these instances of *teruah* blowing? In all the above cases, the *teruah* call for an "act of intervention that can alter the current circumstance" (Rav Hirsch). Informing the people of an imminent move to a new location, rallying the people to abandon their current activities and prepare their physical and spiritual arsenal for battle, and setting all slaves free – the *teruah* is always the alarm bell sounded to effect a change in the status quo.

The very sound of the *teruah* demonstrates this concept. As opposed to the *tekia* which is a straight sound, the *teruah* is a broken sound, not unlike the sound of crying. When a person experiences something distressing, something unexpected and different from the norms of everyday life, they may be moved to cry. Their cries inform those around them that something is not as it should be, and consequently, a change is likely to follow; following our earlier observations, this can be seen as a three-stage process: breaking camp, preparing for challenging circumstances, but ultimately, returning home to a more complete existence than the one which was previously experienced.

This is the first and most primary duty of *Rosh Hashana*. As we recognise *Hashem's* sovereignty and realise the distance which we may have placed between us and Him over the past year, we allow the *shofar* to penetrate our minds and hearts and break down the inertia of 'status quo'. Then, we'll begin to break camp and move forward, first by sizing up to the internal enemy who wants to hinder our pursuit of spirituality, and then, upon his defeat, by returning home as better and more wholesome individuals. May the *shofar* achieve these goals this *Rosh Hashana*, both for us all as individuals, and also for our brothers and sisters in *Eretz Yisrael* and around the world who so desperately need a redemption in our unfortunate 'status quo'.

לעילוי נשמת ליטל ימימה בת לאה לילי עליה השלום

The Special Power of the First of Tishrei

Rabbi Yossi Krausz

By definition, *Rosh Hashana* hails the beginning of a new year. In general, we understand that it is for that reason that it is a day of judgment, to decide fate and destiny for the coming year. But the *Ran* challenges this premise and presents new ideas which shed fresh insight.

The *Mishna* in *Rosh Hashana* (15a) tells us that there are four periodical judgements every year. On *Pesach* is the annual judgement for produce, on *Shavuot* for fruits of the tree, on *Sukkot* for rain, and finally on *Rosh Hashana* we are judged as individuals and over how much of the above bounty we will receive.

When we examine the timing for these particular judgements, they seem logical. *Pesach* is the time when produce begins to grow, *Shavuot* is close to the time when the fruits sprout and *Sukkot* heralds the arrival of winter, the rainy season. And so, we understand that the judgement of blessing takes place immediately prior to its season. But a human being has no seasons; he functions identically all twelve months of the year, so what is the connection between *Rosh Hashana* and the welfare of Man?

Says the *Ran* that although it states that Creation took place in the month of *Tishrei* (at least according to one opinion, see RH 12a), in fact the first day of creation was on the 25th of *Elul* but we mark creation with the creation of man which was on the first day of *Tishrei*. Now, Man sinned on the very day he was created by eating from the *Etz Hadaas* and was summoned to judgement that same day. Although he was forgiven, he was nonetheless driven out of *Gan-Eden*. The *Midrash Rabbo* (*Bereishis* 29) relates how *Hashem* told Adam that his forgiveness today is an indication for his children that they too will stand judgement this very day every year and will emerge victorious. This is the deeper connection between *Rosh Hashana* and its judgement, because it was designated from the start to be a day of pardon and victory in judgement.

From this we understand that the judgement on *Rosh Hashana* is not merely judgement ahead of the new year but rather that *Hashem*, in His loving kindness, instituted the annual reckoning at a time potent for His compassion and forgiveness so that we, His precious children, should indeed succeed in our judgment and merit a blessed and fruitful year.

Good Deeds, Good Motives

Rabbi Doedie van Dijk

One of the names of the day of ראש השנה is יום הדין — the Day of Judgment. On this day, הקב"ה sits on His special throne of judgment.

When we take a look at the תפילה of ראש השנה — which, by the way, is a very important and necessary part of our preparation towards the ימים נוראים if we want to take something away from this holy and precious day — we find in the זכרונות that הקב"ה recalls everything that was ever done from the beginning of the creation of the world until now.

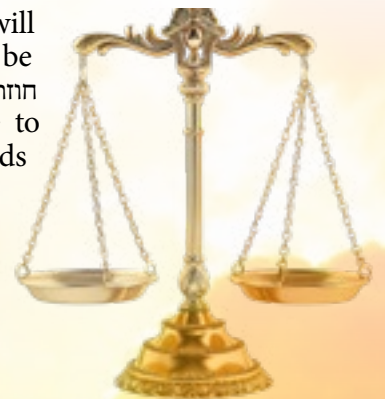
It is written “ויצרי מעללי איש”, which means a person's motives behind his deeds. If someone, ה'ו, commits a sin but his motives were לשם שמים, even though he will be judged for his sin, הקב"ה will not ignore his motive and He will judge it too. If someone fulfils a מצוה but his motives were not so good, even though he will be rewarded for the מצוה, his motive will not be ignored and הקב"ה will judge it too.

We see from here the importance of refraining from doing deeds with bad motives, even though the deed itself involves חטא.

Not always is a person aware that his motives are bad—often he is blinded by the fact that the deed itself is good.

The main way for a person to distinguish if he has good or bad motives is simply to sit down for a few minutes, go through his whole plan, speak it out, and ask himself if his motives are לשם שמים or not.

ב'עזרת ה' we will all be זוכה to be חוזר בתשובה שלימה and to be able to control our deeds and motives. לשנה טובה תכתיבו.



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